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Doha Festival City

BUSINESS | Page 1

Qatar FDI surges 559% to \$3bn as GCC's global market share leaps six-fold

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Doha set to host World Investment Forum in October

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

The UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) will hold its ninth World Investment Forum (WIF) in Doha from October 25-27, in partnership with Qatar, to foster dialogue and partnerships among governments, investors, and businesses on investment and development.

Under the theme "Investing in the Future", the forum will examine how investment can support sustainable development and build resilience amid heightened uncertainty. Discussions will span AI, critical minerals, energy, infrastructure, sustainable finance, tourism, culture, and emerging opportunities, including in the space economy.

Nan Li Collins, chair of the UN Sustainable Stock Exchange Division, said day one will focus on supply chain security, economic recovery, and regional integration, with a session alongside the GCC Secretariat. Day two will explore technology, capital, and societal progress, including an dedicated AI track co-chaired by the International Telecommunication Union.

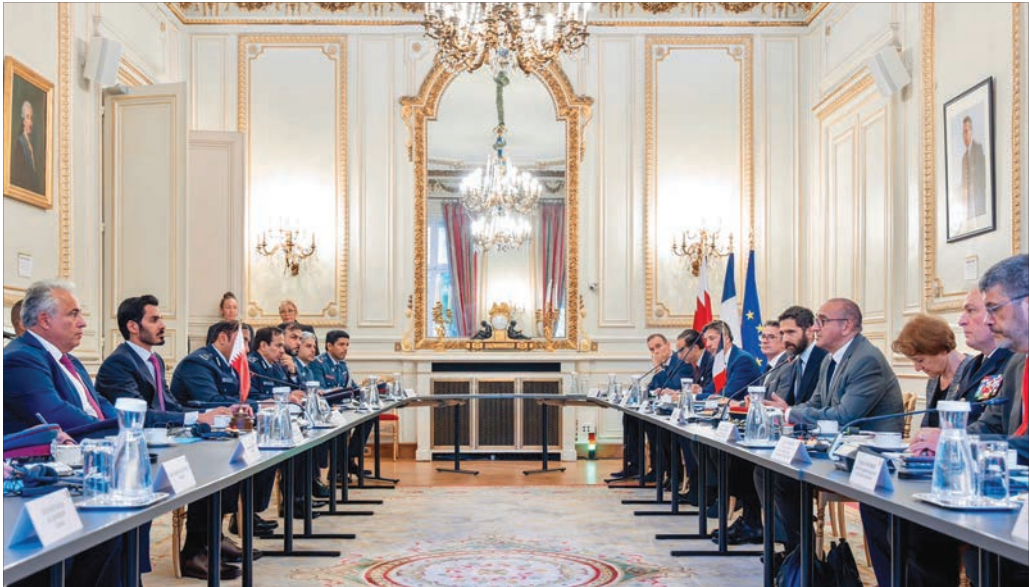
Qatar Investment Authority, Qatar Development Bank, Qatar Stock Exchange, Qatar Foundation, and Qatar Museums are engaged as partners, with Invest Qatar positioning Doha as a regional investment destination.

UNCTAD expects delegations from over 100 countries and more than 20 ministers and agency heads, including UN Tourism leadership. **Business Page 1**

Qatar welcomes first leisure charter flight from Armenia

Qatar yesterday marked a new chapter in its inbound tourism growth, welcoming the country's first leisure charter flight from Yerevan, Armenia, at Hamad International Airport (HIA) — a milestone that underscores both the diversification of source markets and the steady expansion of leisure travel. Operated by FlyOne in partnership with Rustar Tour Operator, the service links Yerevan and Doha through a weekly Airbus A320 rotation. Running until 15 May 2027, the charter programme is projected to bring around 6,500 Armenian visitors to Qatar over the contracted period. **(QNA)**

Qatar, France review security ties



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez during his ongoing visit to France. They discussed bilateral co-operation and ways to strengthen and develop it further, particularly security, and exchanged views on issues of mutual interest. **(QNA)**

Qatar backs efforts on free navigation



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani has reiterated Qatar's support for all diplomatic efforts aimed at a resolution that ensures freedom of maritime navigation and paves the way for a comprehensive agreement achieving lasting peace in the region. He was speaking during a phone call yesterday with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. They discussed co-operation between the two countries and ways to bolster it, along with the latest regional developments, particularly diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination aimed at de-escalation and at enhancing security and stability in the region.

Back to school: Gates reopen today

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar's schools reopen today for 419,373 students, with six new public schools adding 3,600 seats, 3,000 buses on the road and 14,561 subsidised places on offer across 649 public and private schools and kindergartens.

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education said academic, administrative and operational preparations for the 2026-2027 academic year have been completed to ensure an organised and effective start.

The Cabinet praised the ministry's readiness, pointing to continued gains in the education sector — particularly work to raise the efficiency of teaching staff, strengthen curricula and expand high-quality education in step with scientific and technological developments.

The six new public schools cover different educational stages and are spread across several areas of the country. Maintenance and renovation works have been completed at existing public schools.

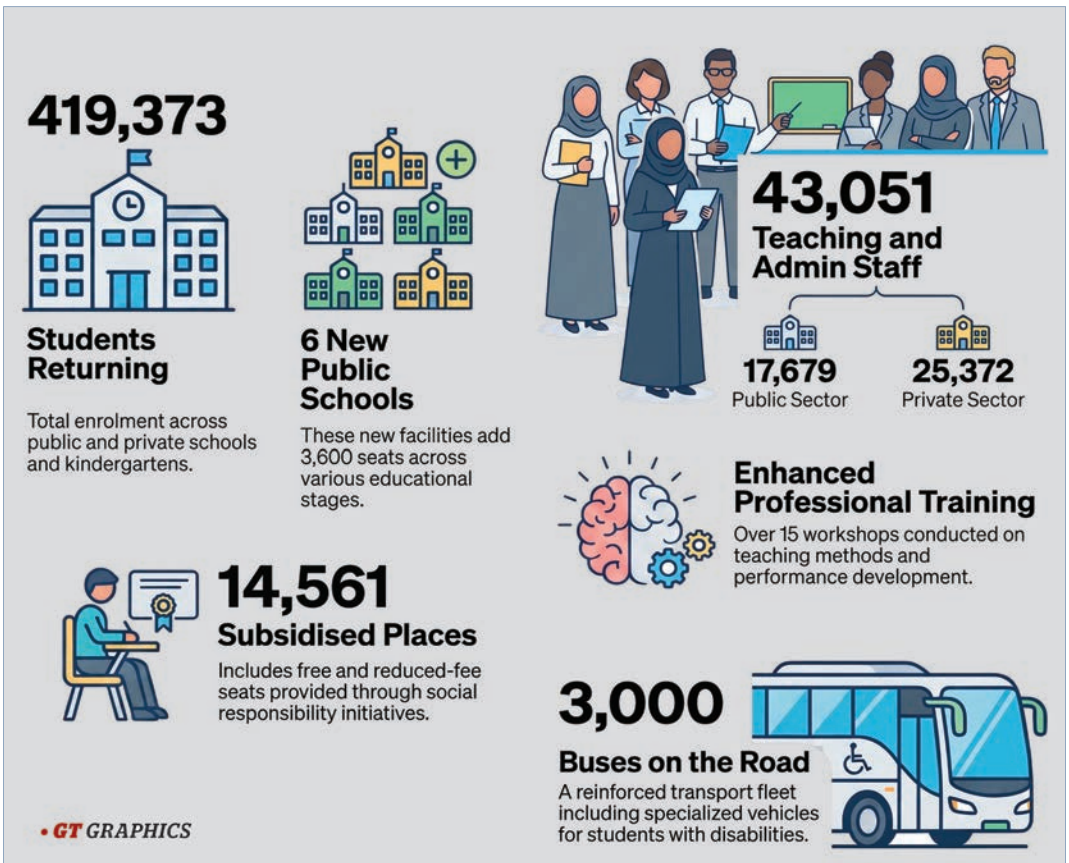
Public schools and kindergar-

tens have 17,679 teachers; private schools and kindergartens employ 25,372 teachers and administrators. To fill teaching vacancies, 210 teachers have been appointed from the Tamouh programme, run by the ministry in co-operation with Qatar University's College of Education.

The annual educational meeting included more than 15 training workshops on educational practices, teaching methods and performance development. The ministry also honoured participants in the Qiyadat, Tamheen and Bedaya Mwafqa programmes. Approved training programmes will continue through the year via the Training and Development Centre.

In the private sector, 156 nurseries are operating, with seven more undergoing licensing and expected to open during the academic year. A further 81 nurseries serve children with disabilities in mild cases requiring integration.

The 14,561 seats made available through the private schools' social responsibility initiative include free and reduced-fee places as well as seats supported through the educational voucher system, widening choice for students. **To Page 11**



Fanar showcases Qatar's strides in Arabic AI: expert

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar is cementing its position as a regional leader in artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation through Fanar, a domestically developed Arabic AI platform that reflects the country's ambition to pioneer digital innovation, according to a leading Qatari AI expert.

Fanar is Qatar's first Arabic generative AI platform, developed by the Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI), and reflects the national ambition to lead in digital innovation in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Digital Agenda 2030.

"Fanar, the Arabic-centric large language model developed by QCRI, is a homegrown AI system built to serve the language, culture, and values of the country and the region, and a concrete demonstration of what sovereign AI capability looks like in practice," Dr Aref al-Tamimi, senior manager of the National Cyber Security Research Lab at QCRI, told *Gulf Times*.

Dr al-Tamimi said Qatar has worked to diversify its economy beyond oil and gas under its National Vision 2030, resulting

Fanar, the Arabic-centric large language model developed by QCRI, is a homegrown AI system built to serve the language, culture, and values of the country and the region, and a concrete demonstration of what sovereign AI capability looks like in practice.

Dr Aref al-Tamimi
Senior Manager, National Cyber Security Research Lab at QCRI



in various initiatives such as Fanar.

"Through its National AI Strategy, and through institutions such as the Qatar Computing Research Institute and Hamad Bin

Khalifa University (HBKU), the country has made real strides in AI research, Arabic language technologies, cybersecurity, and digital transformation. Fanar is a concrete dem-

onstration of what sovereign AI capability looks like in practice and gives Qatar a solid foundation on which to build a genuinely competitive and sovereign AI ecosystem," he explained.

Built for the Arabic-speaking world, Fanar is a cutting-edge multi-model AI platform that understands and generates Arabic text and audio with depth, accuracy, and cultural sensitivity. From dialect-rich conversations to voice and image processing, Fanar delivers seamless, intelligent interactions to empower governments, educators, creators, and businesses to navigate the Arabic AI landscape.

The researcher noted that an independent AI system does not mean shutting out the world. "International co-operation remains one of the great engines of scientific progress, and it should stay that way. But co-operation must be balanced with self-reliance, and that requires deliberate action on several fronts," he noted.

According to him, countries should invest in modern computing infrastructure capable of training and deploying large AI models domestically, such as Fanar, alongside secure national cloud platforms and trusted data repositories. **To Page 11**



QC launches urgent response to Nepal's flash flood disaster

Qatar Charity (QC) has announced that it will launch an urgent humanitarian response and distribute blankets to people affected by the devastating floods that struck Nepal on Wednesday.

Immediately after the floods, the QC activated its Emergency Response Cell within the Humanitarian Operations Department.

Meanwhile, its Crisis and Information Centre continues to closely monitor the evolving humanitarian situation.

Qatar Charity remains in direct and continuous contact with its field office in Nepal to assess urgent humanitarian needs, based on the office's co-ordination meetings with the relevant Nepalese authorities and its monitoring of humanitarian response efforts in the affected areas.

The most urgent life-saving humanitarian needs of flood-affected people in Nepal include ready-to-eat hot meals, mattresses and blankets, emergency health care, infant formula, and emergency shelter.

Reports issued by Nepal's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority on Thursday, indicated that 10,000 families re-



quired urgent humanitarian assistance.

According to the reports, 165 bodies have been recovered, 247 people remained missing, and 73 people were injured.

The floods also caused extensive damage to infrastructure, destroying 35 motorable bridges and 45 suspension bridges and damaging at least 40km of paved roads.

The authority said that heavy rainfall and difficult terrain were hampering search and rescue operations.

The US Geological Survey described the event as a debris avalanche and flash flood, likely triggered by a rapid slope failure involving a glacier.

It also noted that a second seismic event was recorded approximately three hours later.

Al-Misnad holds meeting with Yemeni minister

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with Yemen's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Dr Afrah al-Zouba, who is visiting. They discussed bilateral co-operation, relations and ways to support and strengthen them, in addition to issues of mutual concern. - **QNA**



Al-Khulaifi receives phone call from Syria's foreign minister

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi received a telephone call yesterday from Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Asaad al-Shalbani. The call dealt with discussing bilateral co-operation between the two countries and the means to enhance it, the latest developments in Syria and in the region, and issues of joint interest. - **QNA**



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QM opens applications for Unesco cultural heritage workshops

Qatar Museums (QM) has opened applications for "Conventions 101", an October 2026 workshop series introducing Unesco's cultural conventions and their role in safeguarding heritage for future generations.

Organised through the Doha Empower Programme, the series is aimed at university students and young professionals interested in culture and heritage, with applications closing on September 10.

The three interactive workshops will examine cultural property protection, world heritage and intangible cultural heritage through practical exercises, simulations, debates and group activities.

The programme is organised by the QM's International Co-operation and Government Affairs Department in partnership with the Qatar National Commission for Education, Culture and Science and the Unesco Regional Office for the Gulf States and Yemen.

Sessions will be held on October 13, 14 and 29 from 8.30am to 1pm. Qatar residents may apply for a limited number of in-person places, while applicants across the wider Arab world may participate by livestream.

Applicants must register in advance through the official application form linked in Qatar Museums's LinkedIn announcement.

Selected participants from Qatar and the broader Arab region will be invited to attend and contribute to the Youth Empowerment Forum 2027 in Doha.

Back-to-school shopping drives retail activity

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The local retail sector is seeing a strong seasonal boost as families step up spending on school uniforms, bags, stationery and electronic devices ahead of the start of the new academic year.

Bookshops, shopping centres and retailers have reported increased footfall over the recent days, as parents seek to complete their children's school requirements before classes begin.

Many families have accompanied their children to the market to choose their bags, stationery colours and designs, adding to the lively atmosphere across retail outlets.

Some sales representatives said the final days of the summer holiday have brought a noticeable increase in demand, making the back-to-school period one of the key retail seasons of the year.

A wide range of products at different price points, combined with local and imported options, is helping retailers attract consumers across different budget segments.

School uniforms are among the most sought-after products, with retailers expanding dedicated sections offering approved colours and sizes, alongside school shoes and sportswear.

Some stores are also promoting multi-item packages and seasonal discounts to encourage larger purchases.

It has been noticed that many parents are

increasingly looking for uniforms that balance quality, comfort and durability, particularly given the high temperatures during the early months of the academic year.

Lightweight and breathable fabrics are therefore attracting considerable interest.

School bags are another major sales category, with retailers offering extensive collections featuring contemporary designs and popular characters, superheroes and football stars.

Lightweight and durable models with multiple compartments are particularly popular, as parents look for practical designs that can accommodate books, notebooks and school supplies without placing excessive weight on students.

Meanwhile, promotional bundles have been enhancing sales, with some retailers offering free lunch boxes or water bottles with selected bags.

Such offers can reduce the overall cost of purchasing school essentials separately and provide an additional incentive for families.

Stationery has also recorded strong demand, covering notebooks, pens, pencils, colours, rulers, erasers, sharpeners and cases for organising school supplies.

Notebooks remained among the strongest-selling items in spite of introducing more digital tools to learning.

A high-quality 80-page notebook is priced at around QR12, while a pack of 12 60-page notebooks is available for approximately QR14, bringing the cost per notebook to around QR1.50.

However, the growing role of technology in



Many families have accompanied their children to the market to choose their bags, stationery colours and designs, adding to the lively atmosphere across retail outlets.

education is reshaping back-to-school spending.

Retailers are promoting tablets, laptops and printers, with instalment plans and buy-now-pay-later services helping families spread the cost of larger purchases.

Some companies are also offering educational bundles that combine devices with software and learning applications.

Educational games that blend learning with entertainment are another emerging category, reflecting the increasing use of digital tools to support students' skills and engagement.

The expansion of technology-related purchases is giving retailers an additional revenue stream during the traditionally busy back-to-school period, while payment plans are making higher-value products more accessible to households managing multiple school-related expenses.



Qatar's 3rd summer festival for camels caps preliminary races ahead of final showdown

The curtain fell yesterday evening on the preliminary races of the third Summer Festival for Purebred Arabian Camels 2026, with the staging of the fifth and final preliminary race, showcasing fierce competition for qualification spots in the final race.

The race featured strong competition across 25 races for female and male camels, amid a highly competitive atmosphere and heightened rivalry among camel owners from Qatar and various Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states.

In the first main race for female camels, the winner clinched the title with a time of 2:53.00 minutes.

The second main race for male camels was also fiercely contested, with the winner finishing in 2:51.59 minutes, while the second- and third-place finishers clocked 2:52.21 and 2:53.19 minutes, respectively.

With the curtain falling on the fifth preliminary race, the festival has now reached the final stage of its multi-day preliminary rounds that were packed with fierce competition.

The races showcased a host of promising names and bloodlines that will compete in the festival's final race, which is reserved exclusively for camels finishing among the top 10 in all qualifying races.

The festival builds on the successes of previous editions and serves as an important platform for camel owners and trainers to compete in fiercely contested races during the summer season, in an atmosphere that reflects the depth of Qatar's enduring sporting and cultural heritage in camel racing. - **QNA**

Eight DFI-supported films selected for 2026 Venice International Film Festival

The Doha Film Institute (DFI) is celebrating another major milestone with eight DFI-supported films selected for the 83rd Venice International Film Festival.

Taking place on September 2-12 at the Lido di Venezia, the festival will feature DFI-supported films across four key programmes: the Orizzonti Competition, Venice Spotlight, the Venice Gap-Financing Market, and Final Cut.

"Great cinema begins with a voice that needs to be heard," said DFI chief executive Fatma Hassan Alremaihi. "At DFI, we believe in giving bold filmmakers the support they need to transform distinctive experiences into stories that can travel far beyond its origins."

"At a time when authentic voices and diverse perspectives matter more than ever, cinema has a vital role to play in preserving memory and expanding our understanding of one another," she said. "We are proud to stand behind filmmakers whose work challenges conventions, deepens empathy and expands the possibilities of meaningful cinema for audiences today and generations to come."

Selected for the Orizzonti Competition, dedicated to films representing new aesthetic and expressive trends in international cinema, is *House of the Wind* by Bernard Auguste Kouemo Yanghu.

Featured in Venice Spotlight, which showcases a curated selection of innovative and creatively origi-

nal works, is *Conversation with the Sea* by Muayad Alayan.

Two DFI-supported films have been selected for the Venice Gap-Financing Market, which connects filmmakers with potential collaborators and financiers to complete their projects.

They are *Faux Bijoux*, a feature narrative by Jessy Moussallem, and *Wolfmother* by Ismael El Iraki.

Four DFI-backed projects will be presented through Final Cut in Venice, the industry programme supporting films in post-production and connecting filmmakers with international industry partners.

The four are *A Quarter to Thursday* by Sofia Djama, *Eldorado, The Taste of the South* by Alaa Eddine Aljem, *Occupational Hazards* by Bassel Ghandour, and *Plague* by Youssef Chebbi.

The eight-film presence at Venice underscores the DFI's long-standing commitment to investing in filmmakers at different stages of their creative journeys, from development and financing to international exposure.

Through its funding, talent development and industry initiatives, the DFI continues to champion filmmakers to help build a more diverse, sustainable and interconnected global film ecosystem.

To date, the Institute has supported more than 1,000 films from over 85 countries, strengthening the pathways for independent cinema to reach audiences worldwide.

مؤسسة الدوحة للأفلام
Doha Film Institute

Israel says it targeted Hamas commander in Gaza hospital compound

AFP
Gaza City

Israel's military said that it struck a Hamas commander within the compound of a Gaza hospital yesterday, while the territory's health officials said Israeli strikes elsewhere killed three people.

It is the latest bloodshed to occur in the war-shattered territory despite a US-backed ceasefire that took effect in October 2025.

Druze factions block students from sitting exams in row with Syria govt

Armed factions in Syria's Druze-majority Sweida province have blocked students from travelling to sit for official exams, demanding that they be held instead in the areas they control, drawing condemnation from the Damascus-appointed governor.

Sweida city and other parts of the southern province are run by local armed groups and are the last areas outside the grasp of Syria's new Islamist authorities, who have been trying to establish control over the entire country after toppling longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in 2024.

Tensions have run high ever since clashes last year between the Druze and government-aligned forces that spiralled into some of the worst internecine violence the country had witnessed since Assad's fall.

The authorities had scheduled an exam session yesterday in the government-controlled north of the province for students who were unable to take the test two months ago due to the tensions.

However, Druze fighters in Shahba, north of Sweida city, said in a statement on Friday that "all roads are completely closed to the movement of students and proctors to examination centres outside the area", insisting that tests should be held in their areas instead, citing security concerns.

Sweida governor Mustafa al-Bakkur condemned the move yesterday, saying: "Outlaw gangs are working to make the future of Sweida's students a political bargaining chip to be manipulated as they please."

He said that around 150 students were still able to sit for their exams, some of them having left Druze-controlled areas days prior to avoid any obstacles.

The education ministry said in a statement that it "regrets that not all of our students were able to reach the examination centres".

In July 2025, clashes erupted in Sweida between Druze factions and Bedouin fighters, with security forces intervening on the side of the Bedouins along with other tribal groups.

In the end, more than 2,000 people were killed, including 789 Druze civilians, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor.

A committee formed by the Syrian government said it had documented the killing of 1,760 people. - AFP

The military said it struck a Hamas commander who "was hiding within the compound" of Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the central city of Deir al-Balah, but was unable to immediately confirm if he had been killed.

It said the commander, who it did not name, advanced "attacks against IDF troops and Israeli civilians" and was hit in a structure adjacent to hospital buildings.

The hospital reported that three people had been injured in an Israeli strike near a warehouse close

to the maternity ward inside the medical facility.

The military said steps had been taken to "mitigate the risk to civilians", adding that it had warned Gazan medical authorities two days earlier about "the cessation of the use of medical facilities for terrorist purposes".

Earlier in the day, Al-Aqsa Hospital reported one person killed by Israeli fire in the eastern area of the city.

The Israeli military said it was checking the reports.

In Gaza City, the civil defence agency, which operates as a rescue force under Hamas, said an Israeli strike near a roundabout in the Tel al-Hawa neighbourhood killed two people and injured several others.

When contacted by AFP, the Israeli military said it struck a "military operative" in the area.

Israel has kept striking Gaza and its forces have made further inroads despite a US-brokered ceasefire announced in October, with Israel insisting that it must

eliminate threats from Hamas, following the events of October 7, 2023.

Israeli operations in Gaza have killed at least 1,313 people since the ceasefire came into effect, according to the Palestinian territory'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 the death of one civilian contractor.

6,000 seafarers still stranded in Strait of Hormuz: IMO

The UN's International Maritime Organisation (IMO) said around 6,000 seafarers remain stranded in the Strait of Hormuz amid the US-Israeli-Iranian conflict that broke out on February 28.

IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez said that six months after the conflict began, up to 400 ships carrying around 6,000 seafarers remained unable to depart the Gulf safely.

The number had previously stood at around 20,000 seafarers aboard 2,000 ships.

He noted that the Strait of Hormuz, a vital international waterway through which around 20% of global oil supplies pass, remains largely closed to maritime traffic.

IMO spokesperson Josephine Latu-Sanft said thousands of seafarers in the region continue to live and work under conditions

of heightened risk and uncertainty.

She added that the impacts of the crisis were grave in both the short and long term, warning that disruptions to vital supply chains for fuel, fertilisers and other essential commodities would have repercussions for communities and economies worldwide.

The IMO said it had so far verified at least 70 attacks on international shipping since the conflict began. - QNA

Israeli settlers stage new attack on home in West Bank's Qusra village

Reuters/AFP
Qusra, West Bank

Dozens of masked Israeli settlers attacked homes surrounding the occupied West Bank village of Qusra yesterday, the first major attack since a siege by settlers in the area earlier this month drew an international outcry.

The settlers surrounded a Palestinian home, throwing stones while seven Palestinians were trapped inside, according to witnesses who spoke to Reuters.

Saddam Oday, one of those trapped, said the Israeli military fired tear gas into the home and detained the residents inside while letting him go.

He said the Israeli military had not detained any of the settlers and had allowed them to leave.

The owner of the house, Luay Bayruti, said when the military arrived they handcuffed, blindfolded and beat those inside, before later releasing them.

AFP footage of Qusra yesterday showed dozens of Israeli forces deployed to the site.

The Israeli military said in a statement that troops and border police forces had arrived on the scene to remove "rioters", and protect the residents inside the house.

The military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on why they had reportedly fired tear gas at the house and detained and beaten the residents.

It said soldiers and border police forces were dispatched "following reports that Israeli rioters had arrived in the area and that violent clashes had occurred, including stone-hurling toward Palestinians and additional civilians".

"Upon their arrival, the security forces identified dozens of rioters who had barricaded themselves inside a Palestinian home while Palestinian residents were inside," a military statement said, adding that it was "aware of reports of Palestinian injuries".

It said forces had worked to remove the settlers from the house, separate the groups, and confiscate vehicles "that were suspected of having been used to reach the area".

The vehicles would be used as evidence in



a police investigation that has been opened, the military said, adding that forces continued to operate in the area "to prevent further disturbances and restore order".

"The security forces strongly condemn all forms of violence," it said.

Bayruti said that after calling the Israeli military for help, he and six others were trapped inside the home for more than an hour as settlers threw stones.

Bayruti showed a Reuters reporter his bandaged arm, which he said had been injured by a stone during the attack.

Oday, a medic, said four of those trapped had suffered injuries due to the tear gas, and two had suffered injuries from the stones thrown by settlers.

The attack occurred a few hundred yards away from three homes to which settlers laid siege this month, drawing international condemnation and a massive Israeli military deployment that residents say has kept them effectively trapped in their homes.

Weeks later, Israeli forces continue to operate in the area while settlers still roam the surrounding hills.

"They spotted the residents working on their house, which is still under construction and they started throwing rocks," said Loui Ridi, a Palestinian-American whose home was one of the three under siege this month.

He said he watched yesterday's attack occur from his home.

Ridi said he had seen near-daily encroachments of Israeli settlers into the area surrounding his home, despite the heavy Israeli military presence in the area.

Israeli settlers jump over the garden wall as they make their way towards a Palestinian home that is under construction in the village of Qusra. - AFP

Above, right: Israeli soldiers arrive in the village of Qusra. - AFP

Right: Palestinians look at the house in Qusra that came under settler attack, and the Israeli military who arrived. - Reuters



settlements illegal under international law regarding military occupations.

Israel rejects this, viewing the area as disputed rather than occupied.

More than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements in the Palestinian territory among some 3mn Palestinians.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967.

According to an AFP tally based on data from the Palestinian health ministry, Israeli forces or settlers have killed at least 1,103 Palestinians in the West Bank, including civilians, since the start of the Gaza war in October 2023.

Israeli figures show at least 48 Israelis, including civilians and security personnel, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations during the same period.

Lebanon archaeological finds showcase rich heritage despite war

By Rita El Hage
AFP

From a Roman temple to ancient olive presses, Lebanon keeps turning up archaeological treasures even as the latest Israel-Hezbollah war has caused excavations to grind to a halt at precious heritage sites in the country's south.

Important discoveries in recent years include the remains of columns and bases from a Roman temple in Maasser al-Shouf

Left: Civil defence forces attempt to extinguish a blaze that erupted after Israeli bombardment in Lebanon's southern coastal city of Tyre. - AFP

in the mountains southeast of Beirut, nestled next to a millennia-old cedar forest.

"A whole system was built around this temple", which dates to between the first century BCE and the second century CE, said Myriam Ziade, regional antiquities official with the culture ministry.

She said the site was turned into a Crusader fortress between the 12th and 13th centuries.

The local municipality reported finding huge stone blocks on the hill in 2017, and excavations began five years later with a team from an Italian university, with the dig revealing the ruins of the large temple, she told AFP.

Archaeologists are to soon resume work at the site, located "on a network of roads leading from the Mediterranean coast to the Bekaa valley" in the country's east, she said.

The eastern city of Baalbek has one of Lebanon's best-known landmarks: a stunningly well-preserved Roman temple complex set against the mountainous border with Syria.

Lebanon is brimming with archaeological finds showcasing its rich history over thousands of years, from the Phoenician, Persian, Roman and Byzantine periods, the Crusades, and Arab and Islamic sultanates and empires.

After Iran-backed Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war in March, triggering heavy Israeli airstrikes and a ground invasion in the south, the United Nations cultural agency Unesco last

month added several Lebanese sites to its World Heritage in Danger list.

They include the southern coastal city of Tyre, home to a Roman triumphal arch and a second-century hippodrome.

The list also includes five castles in south Lebanon's Jabal Amel area, among them the Crusader-era Beaufort fortress, which Israeli forces captured in May.

Sarkis Khoury, head of antiquities at Lebanon's culture ministry, told AFP that the war had forced archaeologists to switch tack.

We are "now focused on protecting endangered heritage in southern Lebanon and in the Bekaa, particularly in the Baalbek region", he said.

"Excavations in dangerous areas have come to a halt, and archaeological missions are going through a period of minimal activity throughout Lebanon, especially in the southern regions", Khoury said.

He said foreign archaeological teams had stopped going to Lebanon.

Still, some work continues.

In Batroun, a northern coastal city home to the ruins of a small Roman amphitheatre, an archaeologist was surrounded by tools and papers, documenting the latest finds as waves lapped rocks nearby.

Samar Karam, in charge of archaeological sites in north Lebanon, said a Roman-era olive press was found on private property along with pottery weights and items for textile production.

On another nearby property overlooking an ancient sea wall, excavations revealed

two stone quarries "one Roman and the other Phoenician", she said.

The ruins of rooms from Phoenician, Persian and Roman periods have been uncovered, their pink or grey flooring helping to distinguish them.

Archaeologists have found pieces of Greek pottery, as well as rooms and large jars for storing goods from the harbour, discoveries that Karam said showed the ancient city's "lively commercial activity".

Tombs in the city date to a variety of historical periods, she added.

In Beirut, whose history spans over 5,000 years, Laure Salloum oversees archaeological excavations in the chaotic modern city.

She said current digs were "really construction projects" where workers had stumbled across historical treasures.

A recent discovery uncovered the remains of a Roman-era olive press, while work was ongoing in central Beirut in search of "the remaining part" of a Roman hippodrome, Salloum said.

The hippodrome was initially unearthed years ago when excavations began for a commercial and residential complex.

Other accidental discoveries in the city have included a 2,000-year-old Roman bathhouse.

Such finds often cause development plans to grind to a halt.

"We're constantly making new discoveries", Khoury said. "Lebanon is at the crossroads of a region that has been full of crises for thousands of years."



This photograph taken in April from the northern Israel shows Israeli tanks and military vehicles along a road between destroyed houses in southern Lebanon. - AFP

Soldiers’ mutiny rocks Niger capital as junta back in control

AFP
Abidjan

Mutinying soldiers led armed clashes in Niger’s capital yesterday, alarming residents, but the ruling junta said it had largely wrested back control after hours of heavy exchanges around some of its most sensitive sites.

But while the fighting had subsided later, the rebel troops were said by a regional security source and an African diplomatic source to still be holding two barracks around Niamey, including one at a large air base near the capital’s airport.

When the fighting broke out, shortly after midnight, soldiers blocked access to the presidential palace and to the national television station, Tele Sahel, which went off the air for just over an hour, before being restored around 10:00am. Niger’s ruling junta later declared on state television, that it “gradually took back control” after hours of clashes. “There was an attempt by insurgents from the Nigerien armed forces to enter the presidential palace,” a security source told AFP, adding that “they were pushed back by the presidential guard”.

Niger’s defence minister, General Salifou Mody, said that a group of soldiers held some troops hostage at a barracks in Niamey and opened fire at “certain sensitive sites” in the city, without specifying which ones. “The prompt reaction of the defence and security forces made it possible to contain this heated moment and they gradually took back control of these sites,” he added.



A general view of the Niamey 101 military base in Niamey. (AFP)

Mody’s statement on TV called on the population to “remain calm and freely go about their business”.

Niger has been ruled for three years by a military junta led by General Abdourahamane Tiani that has struggled to contain violence flaring in the west African country for around a decade.

“Everything is calm again, we can’t hear any more shooting,” a resident of the Yantala district close to the presidential palace said late in the morning yesterday.

The gunfire began in the early hours of morning, prompting the military to issue a statement on its social media pages urging people to stay calm and “avoid sharing unverified information”. “Our defence and security forces have been mobilised for the defence of the homeland,” the statement said.

One local resident told AFP that there was “heavy gunfire and explosions” at Base 101 in Niamey, a claim confirmed by several other witnesses. Junta supporters called for “sincere patriots” to demon-

strate in support of the authorities at a major Niamey square.

By late afternoon, a few dozen people had converged on the square, where military music praising General Tiani was playing while a platform intended for speeches was being set up.

Neighbouring Algeria condemned yesterday’s events and pledged support for the Niamey government. The first shots were heard at about 1:00am local time and continued until daybreak, according to a video published by a local journalist filming the area around the airport.

Another local resident said he heard “bursts of gunfire” at about 7:00am local time, adding that the weapons heard “are not the kind that militants on motorbikes can carry”. “I went to get credit for my phone. I saw a military vehicle heading towards the base that had to turn back,” he said.

Another resident in the west of Niamey said he heard sporadic small-arms fire at about 5:00am.

Videos online showed armoured vehicles deployed to reinforce the neighbourhood near the airport.

Niamey airport has been targeted twice this year by militants, first by the Islamic State in the Sahel (EIS) in January, then in late June by its rival, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), the Sahel branch of Al-Qaeda.

The militant groups not only target civilians and the military but are also struggling for dominance over each other in the Sahel, and especially in Niger. Twenty assailants were killed and four soldiers wounded in the January assault, authorities said at the time.

In June, at least 11 soldiers and two civilians were killed, as well as 22 attackers, according to the defence ministry. Both attacks were repelled by the army. The EIS and JNIM are also active in neighbouring allies Burkina Faso and Mali, which are also ruled by military juntas that seized power in coups.

The three countries quit the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) bloc, turned their backs on traditional Western partners in the fight against violence, especially France, and sought closer ties with Russia.

Air Force Base 101, located within the international airport complex, is home to the headquarters of Russia’s Africa Corps in Niamey and the command of the unified force of the Alliance of Sahel States, of which Niger is a member with Burkina Faso and Mali.

The site is sensitive. Between December and January, it hosted a large shipment of uranium concentrate, which was held up while awaiting export. No movement of the shipment has been identified since.

Rocas: Dark vestiges of colonial-era plantations

AFP
Sao Tome and Principe

Conceicao Moreno is a descendant of agricultural workers, of whom many were brought by force from other African nations to Sao Tome and Principe to labour on colonial-era plantations.

“My grandmother lived here, my father was born here and I was born here too. It’s our heritage, in a way,” Moreno said, pointing to the crumbling walls of the former Sundry plantation on the island of Principe.

It is one of six “rocas” (pronounced ro-ssas), or plantation estates, that were built on slavery and forced labour and added to Unesco’s World Heritage List last month.

Most of the “rocas” have been abandoned, presenting a major preservation challenge for the small archipelago in the Gulf of Guinea. However, they have drawn interest from private investors keen to develop the tourism potential of the buildings steeped in history.

Established by Portuguese colonists in the second half of the 19th century, the plantations intensively cultivated sugar cane and later cocoa and coffee.

They initially used slaves who were later replaced by contract labourers forced to live and work in harsh conditions.

Sao Tome, off Africa’s west coast, had a steady supply of slaves passing through as the last staging post on the trade route before ships left for the Americas.

After Portugal abolished slavery in 1869, workers became “contract” employees, brought,

often by force, from other Portuguese colonies – Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde – as well as Gabon and the Congo.

The “rocas” had agricultural land, industrial infrastructure, residential areas and social facilities, Unesco said. They illustrate “the operation of a large-scale colonial agro-industrial system, based on forced migration and labour” from the late 19th century to the mid-20th century, Unesco added.

Sundry plantation still has its old stables with their fortress-like appearance, a Portuguese colonial-style manor house, small white-stone chapel and a row of “sanzalas” where plantation workers lived.

They bear witness to a darker past when the estate was a nearly self-sufficient system of booming agricultural production.

The buildings “preserve the collective memory of Sao Tome and Principe from the colonial era to the present day”, the two-island nation’s culture chief Emir Boa Morte said.

“Some have already disappeared since colonial times, others have been merged, there has been a decrease. But despite all that, there are still around a hundred of them,” he added.

Nationalised by the country’s Marxist-Leninist rulers in the late 1970s, the “rocas” were privatised in the 1990s but failed to survive the economic decline of the world’s former leading cocoa producer.

The vast majority of the “rocas” – some still inhabited by former workers and their descendants – are little more than run-down buildings, often unsanitary and overgrown with weeds.

4 migrants arrested for stoning Ceuta soldiers

AFP
Ceuta

Four Moroccan migrants in Spain’s enclave of Ceuta were arrested yesterday for throwing stones at a patrol of Spanish soldiers, one of whom fell and injured himself while pursuing the assailants, a police spokesman told AFP.

It was the second such incident to occur in recent days in the tiny territory located in North Africa, following the arrests on Thursday of 12 Moroccan migrants who threw stones at a Spanish military vehicle, injuring one of its four occupants.

Eleven of those 12 were deported to Morocco, according to local reports.



Migrants await a Red Cross food distribution at the Trampolin beach in Ceuta. (AFP)

Ceuta remains a source of tension, politically and security-wise, for Spain since tens of thousands of migrants crossed over into it from Morocco on July 30 and 31, triggering alarm among Madrid’s EU partners.

Most of those migrants left in subsequent days, but thousands remain in Ceuta, wandering the streets and sleeping on beaches of the territory whose population is 80,000.

Ceuta residents protesting

against the presence of the remaining migrants clashed with police on Thursday, prompting Spain’s government to appeal for calm.

Madrid is seeking ways to reduce the number of remaining migrants in Ceuta without breaching EU and international asylum and migration laws.

The EU’s commissioner for migration, Magnus Brunner, said on X yesterday that Spain had asked for help from the European Union’s border control agency Frontex, the police co-operation agency Europol and the EU Agency for Asylum.

“We are already working on the request and will take a swift decision,” Brunner said, calling the situation in Ceuta “challenging”.

Bus crash in Zimbabwe kills 27

AFP
Harare, Zimbabwe

A minibus carrying churchgoers collided head-on with a truck in central Zimbabwe, killing at least 27 people, police said yesterday, in the latest deadly road crash to hit the country.

The crash occurred at around 1830 GMT on Friday near Chivhu, about 140 km south of the capital Harare, police said. The foreign-registered haulage truck was overtaking another vehicle when it collided with the minibus, which was carrying worshippers to a conference.

Both vehicles were carrying an “unknown” number of passengers, police said. Seven people were injured in the crash. Footage shared on social media by public broadcaster ZBC showed the mangled minibus charred to a shell, with the truck coming to rest on the opposite side of the road.

The crash occurred in a flat, remote stretch of road, with low vegetation lining the roadside and open terrain beyond. Traffic accidents are common in Zimbabwe, where roads are riddled with potholes due to years of underfunding and neglect.

For everyday transport, many Zimbabweans rely on the privately run minibus taxis, known locally as kombi.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender No.	Subject	Tender Fee	Closing Date
AT/C/1355/26	Staff Medical Insurance for 1 Year	QR.500/-	03.09.2026

The tender documents are available for collection from the Finance Department (Tel.: 44465612) of The Torch Doha upon presentation of a formal letter of authorization on Company letterhead and copy of the Commercial Registration.

The closing time will be 12.00 noon on the closing date mentioned above, any offer arriving thereafter will not be considered.

Tenders are to be submitted in duplicate in a sealed envelope (**Technical and Commercial envelopes separately**) addressed to The Chairman, General Tender Committee, The Torch Doha and deposit in the tender box available at The Torch Doha Purchasing Office located in Al Waab Street, Aspire Zone.



Qatar Chemical Company Limited
Al Dafna – Amwal Tower – First Floor
P.O. 24646 Doha / Qatar – Tel. 44847111 – Fax 44847695
Website: www.qchem.com.qa

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDERS

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	QC/TC/M/126/26	OVERHAULING OF CONTROL VALVES FOR Q-CHEM, Q-CHEM II, RLOC & RLP ON CALL-OFF BASIS	QR 500,500	12:00 hrs on 8th October 2026

Brief Scope:
COMPANY requires services of qualified, experienced, and competent Contractors to carry out control valve overhauling services for facilities located in Mesaieed and Ras Laffan. Contractor shall deploy dedicated, suitably qualified, and sufficient manpower resources to perform the required services in full compliance with COMPANY requirements, applicable regulations, and the terms and conditions of the Contract. CONTRACTOR shall also provide all necessary equipment, tools, materials, consumables, and other resources required to execute the services safely, efficiently, and to the satisfaction of COMPANY.

Tender Documents for the above description can be obtained as follows:

A. Pay to Bank and send the original receipt with authorization letter via email
For each tender pay a **non-refundable document fee of QR 1,000/-** Payable to Q-Chem, Bank Account (Contract Services - Tender) – Account Number 001-242007-003 with HSBC Bank) and submit the original receipt with an Authorization letter on Tenderer Company Letterhead with ID copy of the Tenderer representative via email to **tadvertising@qchem.com.qa** In the authorization letter Tenderer shall nominate a single focal point with contact mobile number, **official email address**, office number, fax number for the communications related to this tender for the transfer and receipt of the tender documents. **The Bank receipt must indicate the tender number and the tenderer name (company name).**

B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email
Tender documents issuance from **30th August 2026 to 3rd September 2026, 8am-12noon**

C. Proposal details
Proposals should be valid for **240 days** from the tender closing date.

D. Submission of Proposals
Guidelines for Electronic Bids Submission is attached in the Tender documents.



Invites qualified bidders to participate in the following tender:

Effective from 01st July 2023. Bids from Local Suppliers and Contractors (companies established under the Law of State of Qatar) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal (<https://icv.qa/en-US>) by Tender closing date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned / notified) will not be accepted. Local companies that have been established for less than 2 years are exempted from this requirement.
For further details, please visit ICV portal (<https://icv.qa/en-US>).

Sel No.	Tender Reference and Description	(i) Deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding	(ii) Tender fee (non-refundable)	(iii) Tender Publication on ARIBA	(iv) Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1	RFP- P10-01-384 Five years contract for the provision of security guard services for QAPCO premises	02 nd Sep. 2026	QAR 1000.00 Payment by 02 nd Sep. 2026	03 rd Sep 2026	QAR 150,000.00	20 Sept 2026, 12:00 Noon

i. Interested bidders to communicate their willingness to bid and contact details to QAPCO Procurement (procurement@qapco.com.qa) indicating company name, address, telephone, official E-mail, etc. latest by the deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding indicated above. Reference Number and Description of the tender must be mentioned in the email.

ii. Non-refundable tender fee as indicated above is payable to QAPCO through **QNB account # 0013-001688-060** only at any QNB branch latest by the date mentioned above (Tender Number, Subject and bidder name are to be stated in the payment receipt)

iii. Tender link will be sent via email notification from ARIBA system to the confirmed bidders. Tender Document will be accessible only after attaching the evidence of the tender fee payment in ARIBA by the bidder followed by Qapco approval. QAPCO shall reply with the access to “ARIBA eSourcing RFP event” along with necessary instructions and guidelines for the bid submission.
ARIBA Registration: Bidders who are not registered in QAPCO are requested to complete the registration process during the tendering period (Details on ARIBA registration can be accessed via QAPCO website www.qapco.com)

iv. **Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee):** Original tender bond must be delivered to the following address, at the latest by Bid closing date & time:
Qatar Petrochemical Company (QAPCO) Q.P.J.S.C.
QAPCO HEADQUARTERS. P.O. Box 756,
Building: 12, Zone No. 92, Street No. 556, Muaitheer Leafawiyat Steet
Mesaieed, Qatar
Tel: 4033 8109

Attention: Procurement Department

Bidder to attach copy of tender bond to the offer in ARIBA. **Offer without Tender Bond will not be considered.**

Tender Clarifications: Please send your queries with tender reference and description to email procurement@qapco.com.qa

For more information about QAPCO, please visit our website: www.qapco.com

Walmart settles US government’s opioid lawsuit, which sought billions, for \$50mn

Walmart will pay \$50mn to settle a US government lawsuit accusing the nation's largest retailer of fuelling a nationwide opioid epidemic by unlawfully dispensing prescriptions from its pharmacies, the Department of Justice said on Friday. The payout is far less than the billions of dollars in civil penalties that the Justice Department had said Walmart could owe when the lawsuit began in December 2020, near the end of President Donald Trump’s first White House term.

Walmart did not admit liability, and in a regulatory filing called the settlement amount “immaterial.” Net income for the Bentonville, Arkansas-based company totalled \$11.7bn in the six months ending on July 31. The Justice Department had accused Walmart of having repeatedly violated the federal Controlled Substances Act since 2013 by missing “red flags” as it failed to track and report suspicious opioid prescriptions. It said some Walmart compliance officials knew that some prescribers operated as

“pill mills” but filled prescriptions for them anyway.

The lawsuit had been one of the Justice Department’s most significant cases against a single company over the opioid epidemic.

Walmart’s settlement also calls for tighter oversight of pharmacists, and a hotline for employees and patients to report suspected illegal dispensing of the painkillers. “Today’s settlement proves this department is committed to putting Americans’ flourishing first,” Associate Attorney General

Stanley Woodward said in a statement. In 2022, Walmart agreed to pay \$3.1bn to settle thousands of lawsuits by state and local governments over its pharmacies’ role in the opioid crisis.

More than 905,000 people in the US died from opioid overdoses between 1999 and 2025, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Annual deaths began declining after 2022, the agency said. Walmart said: “We are pleased to resolve this matter and will continue supporting the

exceptional work our pharmacists do every day for patient care.”

A joint stipulation dismissing the case was filed on Thursday in the federal court in Wilmington, Delaware. Other companies targeted over opioids included Purdue Pharma, which pleaded guilty to criminal charges in 2020 related to its painkiller OxyContin after filing for bankruptcy protection, and the drug wholesaler Cencora, formerly known as AmerisourceBergen. In March 2024, US District Judge Colm Connolly narrowed the Wal-

mart case, dismissing claims that Walmart failed to report suspicious prescriptions to the US Drug Enforcement Administration, and that Walmart pharmacists failed to document red flags associated with prescriptions.

Connolly let the government pursue a claim that pharmacists dispensed prescriptions that Walmart compliance personnel knew were invalid. A fourth claim, that pharmacists dispensed prescriptions they knew were invalid, also remained pending. **(Reuters)**

Chinese company CXMT sues Pentagon

Reuters
Washington

China’s top memory chipmaker, ChangXin Memory Technologies, sued the Pentagon on Friday over being placed on a list of companies the US believes are aiding Beijing’s military.

The company was designated a Chinese military company by the US Defence Department under the Biden administration and was retained on the list by the Trump administration. “CXMT is not affiliated with the Chinese military,” the company said in the lawsuit. “CXMT designs, produces, and sells its DRAM chips for civilian and commercial use, not for military use,” the company said.

The company is seeking to overturn the designation and remove the company from a Pentagon list that can trigger government contracting restrictions and reputational damage, a court filing showed.

CXMT is China’s top maker of dynamic random-access memory chips, which are widely used in smartphones, personal computers, servers, artificial intelligence systems and other electronics.

CXMT has an ambition to break into the US in the long term. The lawsuit, filed in the US District Court for the District of Columbia, names the US Department of Defence, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, Deputy Defence Secretary Steve Feinberg and Assistant Secretary of Defence for Industrial Base Policy Michael Cadenazzi as defendants. CXMT argues that the Pentagon’s decision was “arbitrary,” lacked evidentiary support and violated its due-process rights.

According to the complaint, the Defence Department first designated CXMT as a Chinese military company in January 2025.

US judge throws out confessions of alleged 9/11 mastermind: report

AFP
Washington

A US military judge ruled Friday that confessions made by alleged 9/11 attacks mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to FBI agents are inadmissible and cannot be used against him at trial, *The New York Times* reported.

The ruling comes just before the 25th anniversary of September 11, 2001, attacks that killed nearly 3,000 people in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania.

This week, the trial date for Mohammed and three others accused plotters was set for June 5, 2028 at the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Mohammed, also known as “KSM,” was considered one of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden’s top lieutenants before he was captured in March 2003 in Pakistan.

Prosecutors have already excluded statements that Mohammed made after his capture when he was held by the CIA in overseas prisons and subjected to brutal treatment including waterboarding before his transfer in 2006 to Guantanamo, the *Times* reported.

But the trial judge Lieutenant Colonel Michael Schrama has concluded that Mohammed’s

subsequent interrogations in 2007 at Guantanamo were also inadmissible.

“The prosecution has failed to prove by a preponderance of the evidence that Mr Mohammed’s statements to the FBI were voluntarily given,” Schrama wrote in his ruling, which was not immediately released to the public. The *Times* said its unclassified contents were confirmed by several lawyers who had seen it.

A spokesman for the US military court did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

Schrama cited an “unbroken continuation of the CIA’s psychological conditioning and severe coercion,” and also found that FBI agents intentionally failed to tell Mohammed that he had a right to be silent and to consult a lawyer.

Prosecutors can appeal the ruling.

Mohammed’s trial has been repeatedly delayed and a plea deal that would have seen the death penalty taken off the table was withdrawn last year following protests from the relatives of some victims of the 9/11 attacks.

Much of the legal jousting in the 9/11 defendants’ cases has focussed on whether they could be tried fairly after having undergone torture at the hands of the CIA.

Trump to mark 9/11 at Pentagon

US President Donald Trump said Friday he would mark the 25th anniversary of the September 11, 2001, attacks at the Pentagon – but angrily denied skipping a memorial in New York because of a row over a speech.

The New York Times reported that Trump originally intended to commemorate the day with remarks at the site of the

Twin Towers but changed his plans because the memorial’s organisers do not allow speeches.

Asked by reporters why he was not going to New York for the anniversary, Trump replied: “Because I’m going to the Pentagon.”

When asked why he could not attend both locations, Trump repeated his answer. **(AFP)**

Trump in poll mode as US midterms loom

AFP
Washington

From trolling Canada about a lake to suddenly talking about Kim Jong-un, US President Donald Trump’s recent distractions speak louder than words. The former reality TV star has long been known for his reliance upon a simple tactic: when you don’t like what’s being said, change the conversation.

But the 80-year-old’s recent stunts appear to be even more targeted than usual at wrestling the news away from the Iran war and the economy as difficult midterm elections loom in November.

“This president specialises in diversions,” William Galston of the Brookings Institution told AFP.

The war on Iran is proving a major drag on Trump’s approval ratings, which polls show are consistently in the low 30s, but there is no end in sight to the conflict as it hits the six-month mark.

The Atlantic reported that the White House’s strategy was to try to push the conflict into the background, avoiding more military action and focussing on less newsy economic measures against Tehran. One way of doing that is by making people look the other way.

On Thursday, Trump signed an order to rename Lake Ontario, on the border with Canada, as “Lake America.” The move followed days of a headline-grabbing trade war with Canada, reinforcing the “America First” narrative Trump sells to his political base.

Democrats blasted what they called a “juvenile” move. “It’s a pathetic attempt at distraction, and it’s working families who are paying the price,” Democratic Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said after the lake announcement.

A week earlier, Trump suddenly brought up the prospect of talks with North Korean leader Kim, despite having rarely mentioned the subject since returning to office in January 2025.



Donald Trump arrives in Washington DC aboard Marine One from Houston on the Ellipse near the White House yesterday. **(Reuters)**

Trump lavished praise on Kim, whom he met three times in his first term, while bashing US ally Republic of Korea and downsizing joint military drills with Seoul. He has also been even more talkative than usual about his makeover of the White House – although Democrats say that makes him look out of touch.

On Friday the billionaire president was posting about “cleaning and regrouting the Granite” at the White House entrance.

After his handpicked candidates won in a number of primaries ahead of the midterms, the two-time president is apparently convinced that he is the best way to deliver a result for Republicans.

“Pretend I’m on the ballot,” Trump told Fox News on Wednesday.

Trump is also planning to buy television ads about his own record ahead of the elections – when many of the Republicans fear that they will lose control of Congress – using a \$400mn political war chest.

The White House has been pushing the message, highlighting this week what it said were “14 recent wins” on everything from suppressing mail-in ballots to stepped up deportations of

migrants. Yet Trump faces major challenges in getting the conversation to where he wants it.

The Iran war remains a quagmire for a president who promised not to get America involved in more foreign wars.

If oil prices, and therefore the cost of living, remain high then the economy will likely remain the single biggest issue with voters in the midterms. “It’s hard to change people’s minds when you’re talking about things they’re experiencing directly,” said Galston, of the Brookings Institution.

The White House has also lost one of its most powerful messengers, after formidable Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt stepped down, saying she wanted to devote more time to her children.

Trump’s own star could dim too as he enters the lame-duck phase of his presidency after the midterms. But he will still be able to stay in the spotlight by creating suspense over whom he endorses as his successor in 2028.

Trump has also dropped repeated hints about running for a third term as president himself.

That is barred under the US constitution – but a bet against the US President has often proved a risky one.

US military families ride ‘roller coaster of emotions’ over 6 months of Iran war

Reuters
Washington

Since the US went to war with Iran six months ago, Courtney Sanders has been helping soldiers’ families fill the gaps left by their loved ones. There are school pickups to co-ordinate, lost incomes to supplement – and the ever-present separation anxiety. “It’s like being on pins and needles all of the time,” Sanders said.

She leads the Chicagoland chapter of Blue Star Families, the nation’s largest nonprofit serving military families, and her own daughters are in the US Navy. The US has more than 50,000 troops stationed across the region and has deployed thousands of additional Marines and sailors to support the war effort.

Eighteen US service members have been killed and more than 750 wounded. During the war’s on-and-off fighting, shuttle diplomacy and failed peace talks, military families have experienced a “roller coaster of emotions,” Sanders said. “The moment that you feel you’re able to take a breath, you get gut-punched again.”

These are familiar pressures for the partners and children, mothers and fathers, of American troops.



An American flag flies outside the home of the family of fallen US soldier in New York City. **(Reuters/File Photo)**

But the suddenness of the Iranian conflict, and its fitful pace, have had a compounding effect, relatives said.

In a Blue Star Families poll of some 200 active-duty military families in early March, 81% reported elevated stress from the Iran conflict.

The group has responded by stepping up its programming, creating online resource hubs, hosting webinars and in-person meet-ups, and matching military spouses going through a deployment for the first time with those who have been through it before.

Many service members’ deployments have been extended unexpectedly.

The USS Abraham Lincoln

aircraft carrier went more than 200 days without a port call and military outlets reported suicide attempts and declining morale among its 5,000 sailors and Marines.

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said the reports “completely misrepresented” the conditions on board. Some military families find themselves in financial straits.

National Guard members, for example, often work regular jobs when they are not deployed. The sudden loss of their main paycheck can make it hard for those left behind to keep food on the table, Sanders said.

“There is a huge misconception in the civilian world

that if you are in the military, all of your bills are taken care of,” she said. “And that is just frankly not true.”

In a statement, the Pentagon said: “We see these families (and) we hear their concerns. We will do whatever is necessary to provide the resources, assistance, and stability they need and deserve during these challenging times.”

Shannon (last name withheld on request), an Army spouse and mother of three in North Carolina, tries to tune out the news and the political debate surrounding the war.

In February, her husband deployed to the region with five days’ notice and could only contact her sporadically for the first several months.

Although they have maintained near-daily communication since June, “there are a lot of emotions,” Shannon said, “especially when people are dying over there.”

Her children started therapy over the summer. She tries to be strong in front of them, but cries sometimes when they’re not around.

Soon after her husband’s deployment, Shannon joined an Army-sponsored soldier-and-family “readiness group” within her husband’s unit, helping organise meal trains and other support for family members in need.



GULF HELICOPTERS COMPANY (GHC) Q.P.S.C.

BIDS INVITED FOR ASSET DISPOSAL

Gulf Helicopters invites sealed bids from interested buyers for the following:

Item Description	Qty	Make/Model	Year	Minimum Bid (QAR)
Pick up (White)	1	Nissan D/C- Mileage 303,216 km	2003	8,000
Desktop Computers	21	GOMA / ASUS	Unknown	1,500
Network Switch	2	ZyXEL	Unknown	2,000
KVM Combo	2	Austin Hughes	Unknown	
KVM Switch	2	GEFEN	Unknown	
Rack PDU	4	GOMA	Unknown	
Visual Theatre Projector	10	BARCO F35 WQXGA	Unknown	1,000
Ducted Split AC	18	Unknown	Unknown	

Inspection: Available from **30th August to 03rd September 2026**, between **09:00 AM and 12:00 PM**.

Bid Submission:
Interested buyers may submit their bids on **or before 03rd September 2026 at 12:00 PM** to **adcsec@gulfhelicopters.com** or submitting the sealed bids addressed to secretary of Assets Disposal Committee of Gulf Helicopters Company. (Attention: Secretary of Asset Disposal Committee, Gulf Helicopters Company Head Office,P O Box: 811, Al Areesh Street,Ras Abu Abboud, Doha, Qatar Tel: 44333856)

The management of Gulf Helicopters Company reserved the right to decide about bids and potential buyers. It is the discretion of the management of Gulf Helicopters Company to accept or not accept any bids for any reason whatsoever.

Judge deals blow to Trump moves to deport pro-Palestinian activists

Reuters
Washington

A federal judge on Friday ruled that laws that President Donald Trump’s administration used to cancel visas and initiate deportation proceedings against non-citizen college students based on their pro-Palestinian advocacy and criticism of Israel are unconstitutional. US District Judge Noel Wise in San Jose, California in a blistering ruling chastised the US State Department and US Department of Homeland Security for how they had deployed provisions of federal immigration law to target non-citizens for deportation for expressing views they wanted to suppress.

The judge, an appointee of

Democratic President Joe Biden, said that in the US, free speech, including the freedom to criticise the government and its leaders, was evidence of the strength of the country’s democracy.

“That strength is diminished when members of our society — citizens and non-citizens alike — must self-censor and ‘behave’ or suffer the government’s retaliation,” she said.

Wise’s ruling focussed on how the Trump administration, from March 2025, began revoking visas and detaining non-citizens who engaged in pro-Palestinian advocacy on campus, starting with the arrest of Columbia University graduate Mahmoud Khalil, who is fighting separately to avoid being deported.

Those arrests formed the basis

of a lawsuit that was filed in August 2025 by Stanford University’s student newspaper, The Stanford Daily, which alleged that some of its writers with student visas had refrained from covering pro-Palestinian student protests and topics related to the Middle East conflict as a result of the administration’s policies.

The newspaper’s lawyers argued that two provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act that the administration relied upon to cancel student visas and initiate deportation proceedings violated the US Constitution’s First and Fifth Amendments as applied to constitutionally protected speech.

Those laws allowed Secretary of State Marco Rubio to render non-citizens deportable if he personally determined someone’s action

“compromises a compelling foreign policy interest” and allowed him to revoke someone’s visa at his discretion.

Wise agreed with the newspaper, saying that when a non-citizen’s speech is the reason behind a visa revocation and deportation determination, “the government is singling out that speech for disfavoured treatment based on its viewpoint or content.”

Conor Fitzpatrick, whose group Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression represented the student newspaper, in a statement said the ruling “proves that free speech isn’t a privilege, but the inalienable right of every man, woman, and child.”

The ruling was similar to a decision last year by Boston-based US District Judge William Young, who

similarly found the administration had acted unconstitutionally by adopting a policy of revoking visas, arresting, detaining and deporting foreign students and faculty engaged in pro-Palestinian advocacy.

Wise in her ruling expressed concern the administration had moved on to target people for expressing other types of views it disfavoured, saying eventually the “targets may include anyone in the US who exercises their freedom of speech to simply express opinions the government does not like.”

“This downward spiral is antithetical to our Constitution that recognises our right to speak freely,” she wrote. “Here you can simultaneously hate the content of a person’s speech and love the country that cherishes the freedom to allow it.”

Mexico arrests 8 smugglers of migrants to US

AFP
Mexico City

Mexican authorities on Friday reported the arrest of eight alleged members of a criminal gang that smuggled migrants through tunnels to the US.

Mexico has long been a transit country for migrants, primarily from Central America, who attempt to reach the US. According to the authorities’ investigation, the gang, known as “La Tia” (The Aunt), smuggled people through tunnels in the border city of Ciudad Juarez that led to the US.

The criminal group is also involved in other crimes such as drug trafficking, kidnapping and extortion.

The alleged leader of the gang was among those arrested in the operation carried out in the states of Jalisco and Chihuahua.

Agents seized two pickup trucks, 31 cell phones and electronic and computer equipment, the Mexican Navy reported in a statement.

The investigation into this group began in January following a complaint filed by the US Department of Homeland Security, “which exposed a possible network trafficking people...to that country,” the Mexican Attorney General’s Office said in a statement.

A few weeks ago, Mexico and the US reinforced security in Ciudad Juarez to prevent the passage of migrants and criminal groups through air and ground operations.

Hungry bears wander into US homes, shops

Reuters
Colorado

Matt Errico was sitting on the toilet when he heard noises in his Colorado home. The roofer got up and found two young bears about the size of golden retrievers standing in his hallway. After a staring match, they bolted out of the front door.

Errico has had bears get into his garbage before but the home invasion earlier this month was a first.

“I’ve definitely never heard of bears inside, you know, cubs inside someone’s house,” Errico said of bear encounters in his small mountain town of Granby, about 92 km northwest of Denver. The black bears, also spotted in a Granby vape shop, are among thousands heading into towns and cities across the U.S. West in record numbers.

Bears have wandered near a school in Santa Fe, New Mexico, climbed a tree near a farmers market in Denver and startled humans in other ways across the country after the driest winter in memory wiped out plants, grasses, berries and nuts that form around 90% of their diet, according to bear experts and state wildlife agencies.

The animals’ incredible sense of smell is drawing them to human food. That is leading to record bear deaths in some states as hundreds are euthanised, run over, shot and even electrocuted as they interact with humans, according to wildlife agencies.

West’s aridification expected to continue, experts fear bears may become habituated to human food and even stop hibernating should winters become too warm and wild food too scarce.



A bear stands on a tree in a residential area in Denver. (Reuters)

“It’s like testing the bears in a way that they’ve never been tested before, and testing humans,” black bear expert Jon Beckmann said.

Development has moved people into areas where bears used to forage for food. At the same time, bear populations have rebounded in states like Nevada, where they were largely wiped out over a century ago. Black bears are now the healthiest of the world’s eight bear species, with between 17,000 and 20,000 in Colorado alone, according to state authorities.

That state is bearing the brunt of encounters after its human population more than doubled in the last 50 years, pushing homes into bear country around cities like Colorado Springs and Vail. Colorado, which only has black bears, has had more than 7,000 sightings in 2026, more than the previous full-year record in 2019, according to the state’s wildlife agency. There have been at least six bear attacks in the state.

Around 1.5% to 2% of sightings end in euthanasia, according to Jonathan Livingston, a spokes-

person for Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Bears are typically killed when they are deemed dangerous, such as when they attack humans or break into homes. Conservation groups like the Colorado Bear Coalition say the animals too often pay with their lives for human negligence, and wildlife agencies should do more to prevent conflicts. If people alert authorities to bears early, officials can usually avoid euthanasias by scaring off the animals, Livingston added.

Officials and landowners in New Mexico have killed 187 bears this year, the most since 2011, according to the state’s wildlife agency, which has relocated 35 adults and 16 cubs. A bear killed a man in New Mexico last week, police reported, marking the state’s first fatal attack in 25 years.

Utah authorities said they have euthanised 39 animals in 2026, already a record for any full year.

In Montana, sightings are too numerous to count, with grizzlies moving into areas they have not visited in decades, the state’s wildlife agency said.

US, Ecuador forces strike alleged drug-smuggling boat

AFP
Washington

The US military intercepted and destroyed an alleged drug trafficking boat in the Eastern Pacific on Friday in a co-ordinated operation with Ecuador, officials said.

US Southern Command (Southcom) said in a post on X that its forces intercepted a vessel “operating as a floating refuelling station” in the Eastern Pacific. The vessel was operating “in support of the Los Choneros violent narco-terrorist organization,” it said, referring to one of Ecuador’s main drug trafficking and extortion gangs.

Southcom said those on board were escorted to Ecuador before US forces destroyed the vessel.

Grainy video footage accompanying the post showed a boat on fire following a large explosion. “Working together with our Ecuadorian partners, our coalition dealt a decisive blow to a narco-terrorist operation responsible for moving significant amounts of drugs through the region,” Southcom said.

The US military launched operation “Southern Spear” in early September, with President Donald Trump arguing that Washington is effectively at war with drug cartels operating out of Latin America. More than 200 people have been killed in strikes in the Caribbean Sea and Eastern Pacific Ocean since then.

US has not provided definitive evidence that the vessels it has been striking are involved in drug trafficking.

Trump administration mulling deal to give away part of Yosemite park

AFP
Washington

President Donald Trump’s administration is considering giving a section of the renowned Yosemite National Park to a private developer, a lawyer for the company confirmed to AFP on Friday.

The National Park Service has been holding talks with Nevada-based Kingsbarn Realty Capital to build an access road from an 83-acre private property just outside the park to Yosemite’s entrance, in exchange for land elsewhere, lawyer Lanny Davis said.

The news was first reported by the outlet NOTUS and caused an uproar among conservationists and opposition Democrats, who have fiercely objected to moves by the administration to roll back protections of public lands — including pushing to reinstate road building and logging in national forests. But Davis, who described himself as a lifelong “progressive Democrat,” framed the road as a green move, on the grounds that it would shorten trips to and from the currently undeveloped property, cutting emissions compared to the current circuitous route.

“Without a direct access route, every trip from the Hazel Green area requires a significantly longer drive — twice as long, at a minimum — on unpaved forest roads and thus more air pollution,” Davis said. “The new access road

would be safer for drivers and generate substantially less vehicle emissions.”

He also stressed the land exchange proposal — which would involve supplying Yosemite National Park with a parcel of land elsewhere — “is expressly provided for under federal law and will not reduce the land area of the park.”

The Interior Department earlier said negotiations had taken place but rejected the idea, reported by NOTUS, that there had been political pressure to reach a predetermined outcome.

“Any land exchange or access proposal involving National Park Service lands would be subject to all applicable federal laws, regulations and Departmental policies, including required environmental review and public notification processes,” the agency said, adding: “No final decisions have been made.”

Kingsbarn CEO Jeff Pori has business connections to people close to the president, NOTUS reported, and federal election commission records show he has made donations to the Republican National Committee and Trump-aligned fundraising committees.

The National Parks Conservation Association, an advocacy organisation, called the move an unlawful “attack.” “The Trump administration’s attempts to dismantle America’s conservation legacy are now taking aim

at Yosemite with this secretive, backroom deal,” said Mark Rose, the group’s senior Sierra Nevada program manager.

The Yosemite NPS Employees Union said it was “appalled” by the ceding of public lands for private interests, calling the proposed trade “antithetical to what we stand for” as stewards of the park. There was a previous proposal to develop a road through Yosemite when the 83-acre parcel outside the park had a different owner. That plan was rejected under the administrations Republican George W Bush and Democrats Barack Obama and Joe Biden, NOTUS said. Former owner Lewis Geyser sued and lost, first in a lower court in 2007 then at appeal in 2012.

First protected in 1864, Yosemite National Park in California’s Sierra Nevada mountains is internationally acclaimed for its spectacular granite cliffs, glaciers, waterfalls, sequoia trees and wildlife.

“Yosemite is one of California’s natural wonders, and must be protected from further development. The courts struck this project down once, but this administration appears hellbent on moving forward in the face of opposition from the public, Congress and the courts. But the only thing the administration cares about is whether there is money involved,” Democratic Senator Adam Schiff of California, a fierce critic of Trump, said.

Ecuador’s ex-president Lenin Moreno convicted of corruption

An Ecuadoran court on Friday convicted ex-president Lenin Moreno (pictured) of accepting bribes from a Chinese company that built the country’s biggest hydroelectric dam.

The Attorney General’s office said that Moreno, who governed from 2017 to 2021, was among four people convicted in the case involving the construction of the Coca Codo Sinclair dam by China’s Sinohydro. Moreno was vice-president under socialist president Rafael Correa at the time of the alleged corruption, between 2007 and 2013. He succeeded Correa, with the latter’s backing, but later fell out with his mentor by shifting to the right and aligning himself more closely with the US.

The court in Quito has not yet sentenced him.

Moreno remains free pending his sentencing. Prosecutors have asked for him to receive a six-and-a-half-year prison term. The 73-year-old paraplegic, who served as the UN special envoy on disability issues, insisted Friday after the ruling that he had never received “a single cent” from Sinohydro. He blamed the case on “the Correa regime,” saying his former-backer-turned-rival, who has also been convicted of corruption but is exiled in Belgium, “promised to take revenge on me.” (AFP)



ANNOUNCEMENT

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THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR

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within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Robusta coffee climate resilience ‘an internet myth’: study

Reuters
Sao Paulo

A new study has challenged the widely held belief that robusta coffee is more resilient to climate change than other varieties, with its lead author in an interview calling it an “internet myth” based on flawed research that overlooked the crop’s drought intolerance and other vulnerabilities.

Often derided as cheap filler compared with arabica beans, tens of millions of bags of robusta coffee are supplied to global markets each year, the majority from Vietnam and Brazil. The findings, published late on Thursday in the Wiley journal Sustainable Development, are a challenge for those



An agronomist shows a coffee plant at the Campinas Agronomy Institute (IAC) in Brazil. (Reuters/File Photo)

advocating robusta as a means of weathering climate change in the coffee industry.

As demand for robusta grows around the world, any reassessment of its climate resilience has implications.

Earlier this month, a Vietnamese coffee official told Reuters that adapting to climate change was no longer a future concern but an urgent necessity to safeguard output.

Media, farmers and re-

searchers often point to robusta’s heat resilience as the coffee industry’s answer to climate change, but the new paper in Sustainable Development found that previous assessments should be considered provisional at best.

It cited research errors such as treating irrigated farms as optimal growing areas. Robusta’s greater resilience to climate change is an “internet myth” that emerged about a decade ago, Aaron Davis, senior research leader of crops and global change at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the paper’s lead author, said.

“I found it troubling that people weren’t interpreting the science correctly and that they were advocating robusta as the saviour of the coffee sector under climate change,”

Davis said. “Robusta is more heat-tolerant than arabica, but it’s drought-intolerant.”

Producers such as Brazil, Vietnam and India lack climate suitability for growing robusta, the paper found, pointing to the use of irrigation to ensure that the coffee plants receive enough water.

Earlier studies have sought to highlight robusta’s resilience, suggesting the beans are more resistant to drought and act as a boon for farmers.

Any expansion of robusta coffee production must account for the crop’s vulnerabilities, the paper said, adding growers in some regions already face irrigation problems.

The study added that there are inherent risks to relying on irrigation for robusta’s profitability.

Sumo moves to beat Japan summer heat as temperatures rise

Sumo chiefs are planning measures to beat Japan's increasingly punishing summer heat, including avoiding venues that don't have air conditioning and lightening the load on weary wrestlers.

Japan sweltered through its hottest summer on record last year and parts of the country have hit 40C in recent days.

Like elsewhere, human-induced climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of dangerous weather in Japan, scientists say.

Sumo wrestlers have been in action throughout August, taking part in a gruelling annual summer tour that sees them perform at venues all around the nation.

Tour chief Takadagawa, who goes by one name, told reporters that changes would have to be made to protect their safety.

"We can't do it in places that don't have air conditioning in summer," he said this week.

Wrestlers held exhibitions this month in at least one venue that

had no air conditioning around the ring or in the changing rooms, local media said.

Takadagawa, a former wrestler who is now a stablemaster, said sumo chiefs also plan to reduce the number of annual tour dates, starting from next summer.

"The schedule has been 90 days until now but we are looking to reduce it to around 70," he said.

"To reduce the physical strain we will have wrestlers stay in the same place for nearby venues and incorporate two- or three-day tournaments.

"We won't make them undergo excessive travel," he added.

Japan experiences about 1,300 heat-related deaths annually.

Fijian rugby player Saimoni Vunilagi died in Japan earlier this month after being taken to hospital with symptoms consistent with severe heatstroke.

Authorities have adjusted the timing of several cultural and sporting events in recent years because of the heat. (AFP)

Mass prayers for rains in Indonesia



Indonesian women attend mass prayers for rains, as haze from wildfires blankets the area, at the compound of the Mujahidin Grand Mosque in Pontianak, West Kalimantan province, Indonesia, yesterday. (Reuters)

Chinese rescuers zero in on Tibet mudslide site

Risk of lake burst wanes

AFP, Reuters

Beijing

Chinese rescuers were progressing yesterday towards the epicentre of a deadly mudslide at the Tibet-Nepal border that has left hundreds missing, as a lake that had threatened more damage has drained, state media said.

The massive wave of mud and debris swept into Tibet's border hub of Gyirong on Wednesday, killing at least seven people and leaving 554 missing in that area, according to figures published early yesterday by China's Xinhua news agency.

More than 500 rescuers had reached the heart of the devastation by Saturday, the agency reported.

But state broadcaster CCTV said late yesterday that the lake was "discharging naturally" and had been "essentially drained", citing China's ministry of water resources.

Satellite images from Thursday to Saturday morning suggest that water in the lake, which straddles the border between China's Tibet region and Nepal at the confluence of two rivers, has been slowly flowing out and gradually reducing the reservoir, state broadcaster CCTV reported, citing the Water Resources Ministry.

By yesterday afternoon, parts of the lake bed had become visible, CCTV reported.

The ministry said satellite imagery of the lake on the Purepu Tsangpo river showed it covered 99,000sq m (1.1mn square feet) early yesterday, roughly the size of 14 soccer pitches, having shrunk by 21,000sq m since Thursday.

A glacier collapse on Wednesday sent a torrent of rock, ice, mud



Fire and rescue personnel conduct search and rescue operations at the site of Gyirong Port days after the August 26 mudslide which destroyed the port, in Gyirong County, in China's western Tibet region yesterday. (AFP)

and debris through Himalayan river systems, sweeping away a border port complex linking Tibet with Nepal, killing hundreds and leaving thousands missing.

Experts and authorities have warned of an extremely high risk of secondary disasters in the valley, particularly from the lake formed by glacier debris, which could threaten rescue operations downstream.

With water draining naturally, Water Resources Ministry experts said search and rescue operations downstream could continue safely if outflows remain low or manageable and recede completely within two to three days.

Rescue workers could be notified promptly to evacuate if any abnormalities appear at the lake, with warnings issued more than 30 minutes in advance, CCTV cited the experts as saying.

State-owned engineering and rescue company China Anneng, which has been monitoring the lake since Thursday, has deployed radar

and drones around the lake for 24-hour surveillance, CCTV said.

Initial overflow from the lake on Friday temporarily halted rescue work before a subsequent assessment deemed the risks manageable.

Authorities have also flagged another, larger body of water at the foot of the glacier collapse.

"We estimate its area to be over 120,000sq m, but its depth is currently unknown," said Chen Hongqi, a senior engineer at the Ministry of Natural Resources' Geological Disaster Technical Guidance Center.

Flood risks will remain until both lakes have fully drained, an official with Nepal's Disaster Management Authority has said.

The US Geological Survey said the disaster on the Tibet-Nepal border was caused by a glacial collapse that sent a torrent of debris downstream.

While the exact cause of the collapse is unclear, climate change is causing glaciers to melt

worldwide, increasing the risks of such disasters.

Rescue efforts in Tibet continue to be hampered by rain, the closure of access roads and rugged terrain.

Footage aired by CCTV showed helmeted firefighters crossing treacherous waters in inflatable boats or being airlifted one by one to the other bank by a powerful drone.

It also showed excavators and bulldozers attempting to reopen access routes.

The weather service forecast light to moderate rain across most of the area until Sunday.

A total of 2,141 rescuers were near the Gyirong site, Xinhua reported, including the more than 500 in the worst-hit area.

On Friday, 499 Chinese nationals and 555 foreigners were said to have been transported out of the disaster zone in southwestern China.

Chinese officials have put the number of foreigners missing in Tibet at 260.

'Heated exchanges' for Japan MPs on China trip

AFP

Tokyo

A group of Japanese lawmakers seeking to patch up ties with China in Beijing looked to have made little headway this week, with one member saying there were "many heated exchanges".

Long-frosty ties have worsened since Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi suggested in November that Japan could intervene militarily in any conflict over Taiwan, which Beijing insists is its territory.

China in response warned its citizens against travel to Japan and imposed trade restrictions that have reportedly led to big drops in supplies of vital rare earth minerals to Japanese firms.

The delegation in Beijing this week comprised a member of Takaichi's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and two opposition lawmakers including Shin-ichi Isa from the Centrist Reform Alliance.

"Both sides shared the understanding that this visit to China was about creating an atmosphere conducive to normalisation," Isa told local media in Tokyo on Thursday.

"(But) were many heated exchanges, and the Chinese side's tough stance was made clear," he added.

Senior Chinese official Lu Kang told them that "unless (Japanese) statements and perceptions concerning Taiwan change, China's

stance will not change," Isa said.

Isa added though that the fact that the delegation travelled to China at all represented "a step forward from a situation in which there was no exchange at all".

Japanese media cited an unnamed source as saying that the Chinese side said they highly valued opportunities to hold face-to-face meetings.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a regular briefing on Thursday that authorities would release information on the meeting in due course.

"The root cause of the serious difficulties in bilateral relations lies in the erroneous remarks and actions on Taiwan and in the fields of military and security made by those running the Japanese government," Lin said, according to a transcript.

"Our position remains unchanged that China is an important neighbour and we will comprehensively promote strategic relationships of mutual interest and build constructive and stable relationships with China," Japanese government chief spokesman Minoru Kihara said on Friday.

"It's precisely because that there are challenges and concerns in our relationships that we believe it's important to hold dialogue with China on various levels and closely communicate. We will continue to respond calmly and appropriately with our national interest in mind," Kihara told reporters.

Two killed in oil tanker fire off Korea

Two crew people were killed on Thursday after a fire broke out aboard an oil products tanker off Republic of Korea, the Yonhap News Agency reported, citing the Coast Guard.

The 7,333-ton vessel was carrying 18 crew members, including seven foreign nationals, Yonhap said. The two victims were found dead in the engine room, Yonhap said.

The remaining 16 were rescued by the Coast Guard. The ship was in waters off Incheon and the blaze was extinguished at around 4am on Friday. Authorities suspect the fire started in the engine room, but did not spread to the vessel's oil cargo tank, the report said. (Reuters)

Thailand's southern insurgency leaves villagers trapped in a cycle of fear

Reuters

Chanay, Thailand

Security guard Ni-arfan Doloh was taking a routine photograph for his nightly report on Saturday when five masked men carrying rifles emerged from inside a government office in Thailand's southern Narathiwat province.

"I was shocked," said Ni-arfan, 25, recalling how they led him and another guard behind the Chang Phueak sub-district office, instructed them to sit with their hands behind their backs, and promised no harm would come to them.

The masked men then set fire to the building, one of at least 78 incidents in a coordinated wave of arson, bombings and other attacks across four provinces in Thailand's insurgency-hit deep south last weekend, injuring three people.

No group has claimed responsibility. The provinces bordering Malaysia, where a slow-burning insurgency waged by separatist movements has killed more than 7,800 people since violence flared in 2004.

Confined mostly to Thailand's deep south, the violence has rarely intruded into the idyllic beaches and glimmering temples that make the country one of the world's top destinations for millions of tourists each year.

But it has long shaped life in these rural provinces, dotted with rubber plantations and fishing communities, and the recent spate of attacks has heightened fear and mistrust, even as Bangkok seeks to revive peace talks.

The latest targets included government buildings, businesses and convenience stores, vehicles and utility poles, while an explosion damaged railway tracks and disrupted train services.

Two hours after the office was torched, Solae Doloh and his three friends were riding back home from a camping trip along a nearby road when they suddenly came under fire.

Solae said he was hit in the stomach by gunfire that appeared to come from a military helicopter circling overhead - an account backed by another witness and a village headman who was in the area.

"I stopped my motorcycle and lifted both my arms," said Solae, 21, speaking with a bandage over his stomach.

"They shot us in the first round, but didn't hit anyone. After we went on, they came around to the front and shot at us again."

The Thai military has vehemently denied that its troops fired from the helicopter. A regional commander told reporters that the aircraft was surveying the area.

Village headman Nuseng Lateh, 61, said he recognised the group as they passed by the burning office before the shooting, adding that they had previously gone through a security checkpoint, where no weapons had been found on them.

Police are investigating the shooting, and local lawmakers and community representatives have also called for an independent inquiry to determine how Solae was shot.

"Deep down, I hope we will receive justice but I'm afraid they will accuse us of being insurgents," said Hasan Toema, 27, one of Solae's friends.

Despite living through repeated bouts of violence, the shooting has deepened a sense of insecurity among some residents, including Solae's older brother, Matohae Doalo.

"I don't want to go out anywhere alone," the 27-year-old



Solae Doloh, 21, who was shot in the stomach on August 22 amid coordinated violence in Thailand's deep south, at a hospital in Narathiwat, Thailand, on Wednesday. (Reuters)

said. "This happened to my brother, so I am afraid it will happen to me, too."

Peace talks between the Thai government and insurgent groups

to end one of southeast Asia's long-running conflicts began under Malaysian facilitation in 2013 but have repeatedly stalled, yielding little tangible progress.



Rescuers dig into tunnel as missing toll from Nepal, China flood nears 3,000

AFP
Bidur, Nepal

Rescuers in Nepal and China yesterday battled to locate thousands of people missing days after a deadly, tsunami-like wall of water and debris swept through the Himalayan region, engulfing entire villages.

Figures from both countries put the number of missing close to 3,000, with 682 bodies recovered — and reports of some dead possibly swept downstream as far away as India.

In a breakthrough late yesterday, the Nepali army was able to insert a pipe into a tunnel at the Trishuli 3A hydroelectric site where workers are believed to be trapped.

“We have already started sending air through the small opening, and we will now begin excavation work and send the rescue team inside,” Home Minister Sudan Gurung said in a statement.

More than 100 workers may still be alive and trapped inside such tunnels, with rescue efforts focused

on the Trishuli 3A and 3B sites.

Rescue worker Kawan Koirala, from the Nepal Scout Disaster Response Team, said they were struggling in thick, leg-sucking mud.

“People want their family member’s body back, either dead or alive, but we cannot find them... you can see the mud,” he told AFP, exhausted after an 18-hour shift.

“It is very traumatic for me too. It is my first time seeing these types of things. Everywhere is mud. We faced flood in Nepal before, but not like this.”

Survivors face an agonising wait to learn the fate of missing relatives, and the prospect of rebuilding their lives from nothing.

“All the settlements near the river were swept away,” Buddhi Ram Dangol told AFP in Nepal’s Nuwakot district. “There is nothing left.”

At Bidur’s army base, a key rescue hub in the same district, relatives crowded around lists of rescued people pasted on a wall.

“I have come here looking for my son,” said Kalka Sharda, scanning the list in desperation. “He was a labourer at the hydropower plant, but



A drone view of people walking on a road and houses in mud, following deadly flash floods and mudslides at Devghat, Nuwakot district, Nepal, yesterday. (Reuters)

I can’t find his name, and the authorities are not saying anything.”

In an area home to vast energy infrastructure projects, Nepal’s disaster authority listed 933 hydropower workers among the missing, along with 517 foreigners, including trekkers and Hindu pilgrims to Tibet’s sacred Mount Kailash.

“The urgency is on rescue and saving lives as much as we can,” he said, appealing for specialised assistance, including heavy-lift drones and technology to help locate people who are trapped.

He also called for forensic testing kits to identify bodies and freezer units to store them, saying bodies that have been in water could decompose at a faster rate.

“Our own healthcare capacity is very limited to put these bodies in a frozen state for a long time,” he said.

Emergency teams worked flat-out to find survivors as widespread devastation left communities short of food and water.



An excavator helps people to collect some of their belongings from their house at Trishuli, in Nepal’s Nuwakot district, yesterday. (AFP)

Fears of further flooding have compounded the search for the missing.

The deluge of ice and mud caused huge lakes, and one of these formations has become a risk of further floods.

In Tibet, where Chinese authorities are the only source of informa-

tion, Beijing had paused its rescue operation at the hardest-hit area of Gyirong over the risk of renewed flooding.

On the Nepali side, soldiers were trying desperately to drill through to 100 people trapped in tunnels at multiple hydropower projects yesterday.



Army personnel carry rescued children at Trishuli camp in Nepal’s Nuwakot district yesterday. (AFP)

The prime minister’s office said teams had begun “clearing mud and debris” to open the entrance, while a specialised Indian tunnel rescue unit had arrived to help, with a Chinese team on its way.

Nepal’s expert mountain rescue teams — used to aiding climbers on the world’s highest peaks, including Everest — are also joining the search.

“We do similar work on the mountains, with rescue operations for people trapped in risky places so I believe our skills will be useful,” Tul Singh Gurung, president of Nepal National Mountain Guide Association, told AFP.

Workers rescued from other dam projects along the Trishuli valley described a disaster that unfolded with terrifying speed.

Nepal reported a death toll of 675 people yesterday.

There are 2,426 people, including hundreds of foreigners, who are out of contact in the country.

Hope was fading for some still waiting desperately for news.

Kalka Sharda, in Bidur, was searching lists of rescued for his 18-year-old son Vinod Sharda, a hydropower plant labourer.

“I don’t think there is any hope left,” he said. “Because, if he was alive, he would have found a way to get in touch.”

Nepal floods trauma ‘enormous’: Red Cross

AFP
Geneva

The Nepal-Tibet flood disaster has left an “enormous” level of trauma, the Red Cross said on Friday, with early estimates suggesting 93,000 people may have been affected.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the world’s largest humanitarian network, fears the death toll from Wednesday’s disaster, already above 500, will continue to rise.

“Due to roads and bridges having been washed out and both cell coverage and electricity cuts, we have not yet been able to access some of the hardest-hit areas,” said David Fisher, the IFRC head of delegation for Nepal.

“The trauma of this event is enormous,” he told a Geneva press conference, speaking from Kathmandu.

“Thousands of homes have been destroyed or suffered significant damage. We believe that at least 93,000 people have been affected and in great need.”

Nepal’s Red Cross has begun providing emergency relief, including food, water, hygiene kits, mattresses and blankets.

The floods and landslides that struck Nepal and China’s autonomous Tibet region saw a tsunami-like wall of water bury homes, smash

bridges and sweep away vehicles.

UN aid chief Tom Fletcher said on X that the United Nations was “moving at speed to save lives”.

Lila Pieters Yahia, the UN resident co-ordinator for Nepal, said drinking water was being airlifted into affected areas.

“The damage is just incredible,” she told the press conference, speaking from the field, adding that more than 40 bridges had been destroyed or badly damaged and “over 40 kilometres (25 miles) of road completely destroyed”.

She said search and rescue operations were the government priority.

“We haven’t seen a mountain hazard event like this for a very, very long time,” Kamal Kishore, head of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, told the press conference.

“It’s really immense and we are still coming to grips with the extent the damage.”

He said the disaster was still unfolding in an ecosystem where one disaster could trigger “a range of cascading hazards”.

The UN children’s agency Unicef, said at least 14 children were confirmed dead.

“Sadly, we’re only seeing the beginning of this tragedy,” spokesman Ricardo Pires told reporters.

“For those who survived, the emergency is far from over. Children now face increased risks of disease, malnutrition, violence and exploitation, as well as the psychological impact



A woman rescued from flash floods grieves at Trishuli camp in Nepal’s Nuwakot district yesterday. (AFP)

of what they have experienced.”

He said 18 schools had been destroyed and another 20 damaged, with an estimated 10,000 children urgently needing support to continue their education.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said eight health workers were missing and six health facilities had been damaged.

“The priority is to ensure continuity of health services,” WHO spokesman Tarik Jas-arevic said.

He said the UN health agency had delivered surgical masks and gloves and body bags to Nepal.

India steps up its Himalayan region’s glacier monitoring

AFP
New Delhi

India is stepping up monitoring of its Himalayan regions bordering China and Nepal, days after deadly floods apparently triggered by a glacial collapse, authorities said yesterday.

While the exact cause of the collapse is unclear, climate change is causing glaciers to melt worldwide, increasing the risks of such disasters.

“Since we share a border with Nepal, as a neighbour, and also have a similar geographic situation... we have asked our department to monitor all the glaciers and known glacial lakes in the region,” said Madan Kaushik, state disaster management minister in India’s Himalayan state of Uttarakhand.

“We have asked our teams to be vigilant and monitor if a similar situation is emerging anywhere in the state,” he told AFP.

Uttarakhand is one of the most ecologically sensitive regions of India, with 1,266 glacial lakes, according to government figures.

Himalayan glaciers, which provide critical water to nearly two billion people, are melting faster than ever before due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters, scientists warn.

Melting glaciers and thawing permafrost can also destabilise mountain slopes and increase the risk of landslides.

Experts say climate change, coupled with poorly planned development, is increasing the frequency, severity, and impact of the disasters.

UN, Nepal warn of climate threat

AFP
Kathmandu

Nepal’s foreign minister and the UN climate chief yesterday warned of the growing threat from global warming to the Himalayas, as rescuers race to find thousands missing after torrential flooding along the border with China.

While the exact cause of the collapse is unclear, climate change is causing glaciers to melt worldwide, increasing the risk of such disasters. Nepalese Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal said he had spoken by phone with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi, agreeing to increase the sharing of “real-time hydrological data”, according to a statement. Wang, in a Chinese foreign ministry statement, said Beijing had “shared crucial information with Nepal, including disaster area imagery, satellite and hydrological data, as well as early warnings about upstream barrier lakes”.

Wang added that “China and Nepal are bound by mountains and rivers, sharing a common destiny”. Khanal earlier told reporters that Nepal needed greater research to “understand the changing dynamics of the Himalayan ecosystem” and the risks they pose to the landlocked country, encircled by India and China.

That includes not only risks “to Nepal and the downstream community, but also to our northern neighbour, to China, as well,” Khanal said. Himalayan glaciers, which provide critical water to nearly 2bn people, are melting faster as the planet heats, exposing communities to unpredictable, costly disasters.

Khanal said climate change required international action. “We always highlight that Nepal contributes less than or just about 0.01% of greenhouse gases but we, the people of Nepal, are one of the major victims of the changing climate and its impact,” he added.



This handout satellite image shows the glacier on Mount Langtang Lirung in Nepal, before its collapse on August 26. (AFP)

“So we request the global community also to come together to preserve the Himalayan ecosystem.” UN climate chief Simon Steill meanwhile said in a statement that the “sudden glacial collapse and flash flood is a devastating reminder of how fragile these mountain environments can be.” “We also know a warming climate, driven by humanity burning colossal amounts of coal, oil and gas, is making tragedies like this one, and so many others around the world, much more likely, frequent and severe, with vulnerable communities often hardest hit,” he added. Melting glaciers and thawing permafrost can also destabilise mountain slopes, increasing the risk of landslides and other hazards.

Indian official urges food firms to be ethical amid labelling, ingredients row

By Aditya Kalra
New Delhi

One of India’s strictest food safety commissioners has urged companies to be more ethical and not maintain different nutrition standards in India and abroad, reacting to a Reuters story that revealed varying approaches on recipes and labelling. The comments from Tukaram Mundhe, the Food Commissioner of India’s Maharashtra state, come amid anger and debate among consumers and health experts after Reuters reported this week that companies make different versions of the same products to comply with local regulations, tastes and spending capacity.

For example, a can of Fanta sold in London has 63 calories, but the same-sized product in India contains three times as much sugar and 185 calories. “Where are ethics in this? Companies should not only abide with legal compliances but also practice ethical behaviour. Why the different standard,”

Mundhe told Reuters on Friday when asked about the findings, marking the first comments from a government official on the story.

“They have responsibility towards society,” he added. Coca-Cola, PepsiCo and Nestle — key players in the over \$100bn Indian food and drinks market — did not respond to requests for comment on his remarks. Mundhe has become India’s most high-profile state food safety chief for his strict enforcement drives in Maharashtra, the country’s richest state and home to Mumbai. His teams have raided small and big establishments in recent weeks, including Domino’s, McDonald’s and many more, shutting some for poor hygiene.

Reuters also reported this week that companies such as Coca-Cola and groups representing Nestle, PepsiCo and others lobbied successfully against India’s plan to have front-of-pack warning labels, even though those companies voluntarily have put them on their products in many European markets for years.

India’s federal food regulator buckled after a tense March meeting where a Coca-Cola executive argued warning labels were pointless because they won’t prevent consumers from otherwise having sugary foods, and because Indian doctors had done a good job telling patients what to avoid, Reuters reported. Mundhe in a LinkedIn post, where he shared the Reuters story, rebutted that remark, saying: “Warning labels don’t insult consumer intelligence, they respect it.”

“The argument that doctors already advise patients misses the point: prevention should not depend on already being sick,” he wrote.

India’s Supreme Court has criticised New Delhi for delays on front-of-pack labelling and called for their urgent implementation. Amid the public debate, Nestle global CEO said this week the company wants India to consult with manufacturers when drafting rules for front-of-pack health labelling on food and drinks to ensure it is done “scientifically”.

Filipino educators chart responsible path for AI in the classroom

By **Joey Aguilar**
Staff Reporter

As artificial intelligence (AI) tools become ever more common in daily life, educators are moving beyond the initial debates over blanket bans and toward the harder work of building practical policy frameworks, rethinking pedagogy, and erecting ethical safeguards. That was the emergent consensus at a panel discussion organised by the Embassy of Philippines in Doha on Thursday, titled “Makabagong Paraan ng Pagkatuto: Pagtuklas sa mga Oportunidad at Hamon na Kaakibat ng Paggamit ng Artificial Intelligence sa Silid-Aralan” (New Way of Learning: Exploring the Opportunities and Challenges in the Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom).

Held in partnership with the Association of Filipino Educators - Qatar (AFE-Q), the event formed part of the embassy’s continuing observance of Buwan ng Wikang Pambansa, which carries the theme, “Wikang Filipino at AI: Kasangkapan sa Pananaliksik at Tulay sa Yaman ng Impormasyon.” The gathering brought together educators, parents, and other stakeholders in a



dynamic exchange of views and experiences on the implications of AI use in the classroom setting. In his remarks, Philippine Ambassador to Qatar, Mardomel Celso D Melicor said that although AI now sits at the forefront of discourse on modern life, many questions remain about its use, its morality, and its ethical component. “AI has proven to be a disruptor,” he said. “Using our imagination and proper prompts, it has altered our perception of what is possible.” Nowhere is this disruption more apparent, he added, than in the classroom. The question of how AI has disrupted traditional teaching and learning was taken

up by a panel of Qatar-based Filipino educators and research specialists: Precioso Tano, PhD; Julie Ann Real, PhD; and Brayn B Biazon, PhD. Research grants specialist Raymond Carasig, EdD, served as moderator. For learners, the panelists highlighted how AI has altered the means by which students acquire knowledge. In fact, they said, the ease with which answers to questions can be generated by chatbots appears to have replaced the struggle associated with traditional learning. To adapt to this new paradigm, the panelists said educators must redesign their approaches



to instruction and evaluation. Classroom integration, they argued, requires pairing AI with authentic assessments, hands-on learning, oral validation, and

other real-world exercises. These strategies can be deployed to gauge student competencies accurately while mitigating unhealthy reliance on AI. For

teachers, the panelists said various AI tools have proven helpful not only in discharging day-to-day tasks, but also in developing schoolwork that accounts for the unique learning styles and needs of students. They admitted, however, that factors such as age, degree of exposure to digital learning tools, and receptiveness to non-traditional ways of learning may deter some teaching staff from making full use of AI learning tools. One way to address this, they said, is for learning institutions to invest in continuous professional development, particularly on AI. This would ensure that faculty remain proficient in emerging technologies and shifts in instruction. Equally important, they added, is for school leadership to establish frameworks that emphasize responsible, ethical, and meaningful AI application while guiding students toward thoughtful engagement. The panelists agreed that although AI brings its own set of opportunities, particularly in learning, it still cannot replicate the core strengths of human educators. Qualities such as empathy, emotional intelligence, mentorship, and value-formation remain uniquely human domains that will always be essential to holistic student development.

King Haakon pays tribute to late father in first speech

AFP
Oslo

Norway’s new King Haakon VIII yesterday addressed Norwegians for the first time since taking the throne, paying tribute to his 89-year-old father who passed away the day before.

“Above all, you were a person who always stayed true to your values and commitments,” Haakon said of the late King Harald V in a televised speech.

The new regent said it had been a “powerful and moving experience” to see the thousands of Norwegians who had gathered since Friday outside the Royal Palace in Oslo with “flowers, tributes and candles.” “We are in mourning, yet at the same time it brings comfort and strength that so many are grieving together with us,” the 53-year-old said.

Visibly moved, he also noted that his father and mother, Queen Sonja, would have celebrated their 58th wedding anniversary on Saturday. “Happy wedding anniversary, dear Mum,” he said, choking back tears. Flags flew at half-mast on Saturday as scores of Norwegians flocked to the palace, adding flowers to the masses already on the ground after more than 20,000 people paid their respects Friday. The late king enjoyed massive support, despite the slew of scandals that dogged his family in the final stretch of his 35-year reign.

Haakon thanked his father for being “a good dad” to him and his sister Martha Louise, and acknowledged that he now faced a “great task himself.” “He constantly reminded us in the family that each of us must do things in our own way. Find our own form. Be ourselves,” Haakon said. “Now it is my turn,” he declared.

Tributes have poured in from European monarchies and world leaders, including US President Donald Trump who hailed the memory of “a strong, proud, and greatly respected man”. Earlier Saturday, King Haakon held audiences at the palace with the leaders of the Church of Norway, parliament and supreme court.

He also received Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store for a viewing of the late king’s casket, which was brought to the palace from Oslo University Hospital Friday evening. Store was seen speaking informally to mourners outside the palace earlier Saturday, weaving through the crowds and shaking hands. A national period of mourning has been declared. No date has been set for the late king’s funeral. King Haakon will swear an oath of allegiance in parliament on Tuesday. City halls across Norway set out condolence books on Saturday for the public to write personal messages.

Oslo Mayor Anne Lindboe, who had called off her own wedding on Friday due to the king’s death, was the first to write a message in Oslo’s City Hall.

“Dear King Harald, you didn’t need a crown to be a king. Thank you so much for everything you have done for our city. We will never forget you,” she told reporters she had written.

One of the first members of the public to write a message after the mayor, Unni Zetterquist Thorsen, 68, told AFP she had thanked the late king for his “patience and strength through difficult times in Norway”.

King Haakon and his wife, Queen Mette-Marit, are not expected to be crowned in a ceremony -- Norway abolished coronations in 1908. But, like his father and grandfather before him, the new king could



Norwegian PM Jonas Gahr Store looks at floral tributes, outside the Royal Palace, in Oslo. (Reuters)

choose to have his reign blessed during a ceremony at Trondheim Cathedral, where Norwegian monarchs were crowned between 1814 and 1906.

King Harald was widely seen as the embodiment of an open and tolerant Norway, and praised for

leading a monarchy that was modern and modest.

Harald had been in hospital in Oslo since August 17, suffering from haemolytic anaemia, a condition caused by an abnormally rapid destruction of red blood cells that leads to fatigue and shortness of



Norway's new King Haakon VIII makes his first speech to the nation at the Royal Palace in Oslo. (AFP)

Norway enters new era

Norway yesterday opened a new chapter in its history under King Haakon VIII. Flags flew at half-mast as scores of Norwegians flocked to the Royal Palace in Oslo, adding flowers to the mountains already on the ground after more than 20,000 people paid their respects Friday. The late king enjoyed massive support, despite the slew of scandals that dogged his family in the final stretch of his 35-year reign.

“He has always struck me as someone with a great deal of integrity and simply a genuinely good person,” 34-year-old Martin Lillebo told AFP. Lillebo, who had come to lay flowers with his wife and two young children, noted that Harald, who ascended the throne in 1991, was the only monarch he’d known. He was “king for pretty much exactly as long as I’ve been alive.”

King Haakon held audiences at the palace on Saturday with the leaders of the Church of Norway, parliament and supreme court. King Haakon will swear an oath of allegiance in parliament on Tuesday. City halls across Norway put out condolence books on Saturday for the public to write personal messages. King Harald was widely seen as the embodiment of an open and tolerant Norway, and praised for leading a monarchy that was modern and modest.

Harald had been in hospital in Oslo since August 17, suffering from haemolytic anaemia, a condition caused by an abnormally rapid destruction of red blood cells that leads to fatigue and shortness of breath. The regent faced mounting health problems in his final years, forcing him to scale back his official schedule. But he always ruled out abdicating, adamant that he had taken a lifelong oath before the Norwegian parliament. **AFP**

breath. The regent faced mounting health problems in his final years, forcing him to scale back his official schedule. The past year has been a turbulent one for the Norwegian royal family.

Queen Sonja, also 89, was briefly admitted to hospital in May due to heart problems. New King Haakon’s wife Mette-Marit is under

scrutiny for her ties to the late Jeffrey Epstein. In June, Mette-Marit’s son from a relationship prior to her marriage to Haakon, Marius Borg Hoiby, was sentenced to four years in prison for two rapes, a sentence that is under appeal.

Suffering herself from a serious lung disease, Mette-Marit, 53, underwent a lung transplant in July.

Removal of veteran journalist sparks political storm in Italy

Italian opposition parties have denounced an attack on press freedom after state broadcaster RAI removed a veteran journalist as presenter of its flagship investigative programme, while government allies have welcomed the move. The case has reignited a long-running debate over the independence of RAI, whose board is appointed by parliament and the government and whose editorial direction critics say is shaped by the ruling coalition of the day.

RAI late on Friday announced the removal of Sigrifido Ranucci after nine years at the helm of *Report*, one of Italy’s most watched and influential current affairs programmes. “I will no longer host *Report*,” but I will lead the most important battle of my life: the fight for press freedom,” Ranucci said after learning of the decision.

The “Ranucci affair” has dominated Italian media coverage for weeks, and his removal was the lead story in Italy’s main newspapers on Saturday. The case began with a bomb attack outside Ranucci’s home in October last year, which initially drew messages of support for him from across the political spectrum.

Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, whose party had often been the subject of investigations by *Report*, condemned the “serious act of intimidation” and the government said Ranucci’s police escort would be strengthened. However, the stance of ruling politicians changed abruptly when businessman Valter Lavitola, a longtime associate of Ranucci’s, was arrested this month and, according to his lawyer, told prosecutors that he had ordered the attack. Authorities have found no evidence Ranucci had prior knowledge of the bombing, but Lavitola’s arrest triggered a stream of articles in pro-government media alleging a plot to boost Ranucci’s popularity ahead of a possible move into politics.

The political reaction to his removal reflects deep divisions over RAI, whose governance critics have long said is vulnerable to government influence. — **Reuters**

Iceland votes on EU membership talks

AFP
Reykjavik

Icelanders voted yesterday in a referendum on whether to resume membership negotiations with the European Union, expected to be a tight race that will be closely watched in Brussels.

“I think that we should be a part of a bigger unity. I think it’s worth looking into it,” Unnur Jokulsdottir, a 71-year-old retiree, told AFP after casting her ballot in Reykjavik’s City Hall.

In contrast, Olafur Thorsson, a 53-year-old fish trader, said he was sceptical.

“I used to like the European Union back when it was a good thing. But today it’s become a sort of big economic prison,” he told AFP.

The country of just under 400,000 people applied to join the EU in the wake of a 2009 financial crisis that devastated its economy. Membership talks were then suspended in 2013 when a eurosceptic

government came to power. Thirteen years later, the referendum result is expected to go down to the wire, with a poll by analyst firm Maskina on Friday giving the ‘Yes’ a slight edge with 50.4 per cent of the vote, a gap within the statistical margin of error.

“This has been a tight race, extremely exciting,” Social Democratic Prime Minister Kristrunn Frostadottir said after casting her vote in the capital.

She added that the campaign had “lifted discussions about the EU, about Iceland’s place in the world, about our general geopolitical situation and status to a higher level.” Debates have mainly revolved around domestic and economic issues, even if rising international tensions, with the war in Ukraine and US President Donald Trump’s ambitions for neighbouring Greenland, have featured in discussions. Voting began at 9am and closed at 10pm. With no exit polls and given the tight race, the first reliable results were only

expected late Saturday at the earliest. The around 273,000 voters are being asked to answer ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ to the question: “Should Iceland resume accession negotiations with the European Union?”

If the ‘Yes’ side wins, an accession agreement would be negotiated with Brussels and then put to a new referendum on actual membership. The issue of fisheries — a pillar of Iceland’s economy and over which Reykjavik wants to retain exclusive control — would have to be hammered out with Brussels, which this time around appears more willing to compromise.

A ‘Yes’ would give Iceland “a stronger position when we are going to negotiate with the European Union,” Foreign Minister Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir, a staunch proponent of resuming negotiations, told AFP. “They bet-ter get us a good deal,” she added.

With Iceland’s economy now flourishing, some voters see no reason to discuss EU member-

ship, since the country already has access to the single market as a member of the European Economic Area. The flip side of Iceland’s regained prosperity is soaring inflation and interest rates. Some households are paying nine per cent interest on their mortgages, making the prospect of joining the eurozone — with its much lower rates — very appealing.

“I have children and nobody can buy a house because it’s too expensive,” Bryndis Magnadottir Munka, a 55-year-old tour guide, told AFP as she arrived to vote dressed in Iceland’s national costume.

“We’re not voting yet if we’re going to do it or not, it’s just to see what they have to say. And I want to see what they have to say,” she added.

Meanwhile, for 79-year-old retiree Julius Rafnsson the ‘no’ wins out “because I’m thinking of my country” On the global stage, the return of war in Europe with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has shaken established security doctrines.

Moderna vaccine boosts hopes of wider use of mRNA technology

The personalised cancer vaccine being developed by Moderna and Merck has boosted hopes that mRNA technology could open up a new avenue of treatment, but the available evidence is still limited. Interim data from a large trial showed the experimental vaccine, when combined with Merck's blockbuster immunotherapy Keytruda, helped reduce the risk of melanoma recurrence and spread in patients whose tumours have been surgically removed.

Known as intismeran autogene, the vaccine is designed to target mutations unique to an individual patient's tumour. Once surgeons remove a tumour or cancerous lesion, the companies sequence it, looking for unique cancer mutations. The companies use those to create a customised vaccine that targets up to 34 mutations unique to that specific patient's cancer.

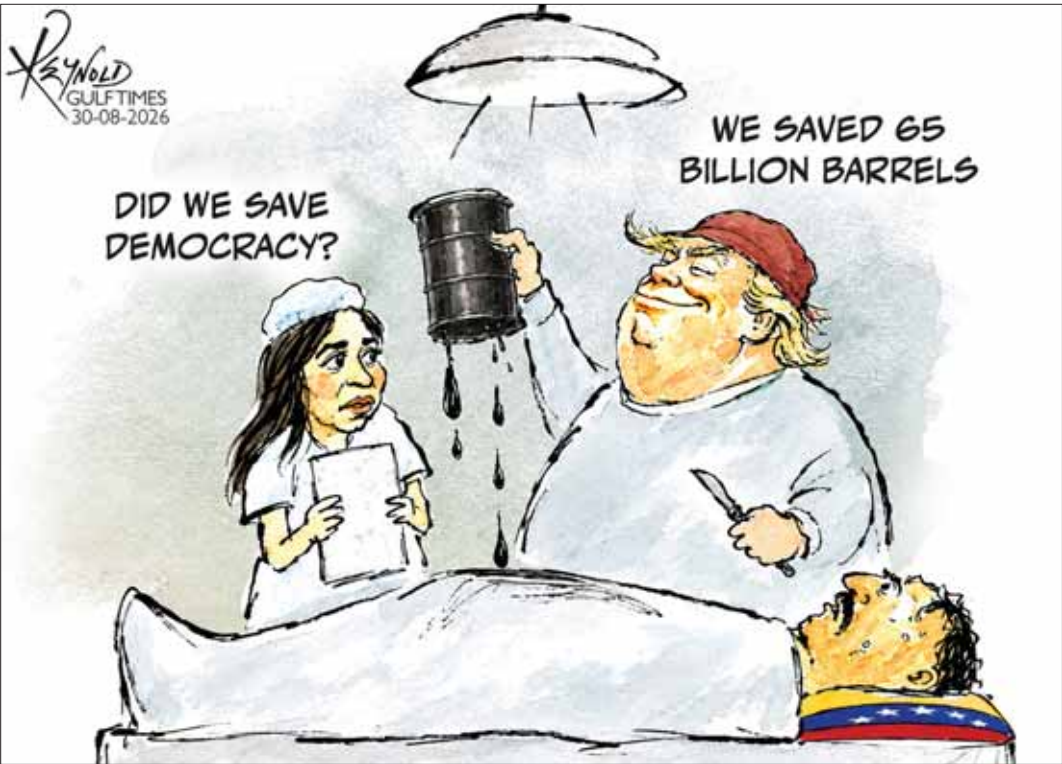
With up to nine doses of Keytruda, infused every six weeks, plus up to nine doses of the customized mRNA vaccine, the treatment trains the immune system to recognize and attack

cancer cells. Experts believe the treatment may work best in highly mutated cancers such as melanoma, where abundant tumour-specific mutations provide more targets for the vaccine to attack.

Cancers with high mutation rates, such as lung and colon cancer, could be promising targets because they may be more readily recognised by the immune system, Dr Michael Atkins, deputy director of the Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center, said.

It is not clear that the vaccine technology will work against other cancers, he added. Merck and Moderna have several large trials underway in patients with non-small cell lung cancer whose tumors have been surgically removed.

Moderna is also studying the intismeran/Keytruda combination in mid-stage trials of patients with bladder and kidney cancers as well as in early-stage trials in pancreatic and stomach cancers. Data readouts from numerous trials are expected in the next year or two, according to the company. — Reuters



Qatari women: A journey of empowerment

QNA
Doha

Under a legislative and institutional system that has consolidated the status of Qatari women, the journey of empowering them has become a model that reflects investment in human beings and their role in building society and achieving sustainable development, as long as the laws and constitutions guarantee women's rights to education, work and active participation in various fields, while providing a supportive environment to achieve a balance between their family role and their contribution to national development.

Feminist models have gained educational and academic paths full of achievement and transformation, through which women have moved from learning and specialization positions to the fields of scientific research, academic leadership and knowledge creation, benefiting from the opportunities of education, higher education, scholarships and professional development that have contributed to building national competencies capable of contributing in various sectors.

Supportive environment

The supportive environment provided to Qatari women in the education sector enabled them to overcome all the challenges that stood in their way, and they began to occupy important administrative positions in the education sector, through which they achieved a tangible impact, because from their point of view education is not just teaching, but a message, a responsibility, a profession, a behaviour evaluation, and leaving a real impact.

Official studies and statistical bulletins issued by the Department of Educational Planning, Policies and Innovation at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) pointed out that 4,031 female Qatari teachers taught in government schools and more than 30 taught in private schools.

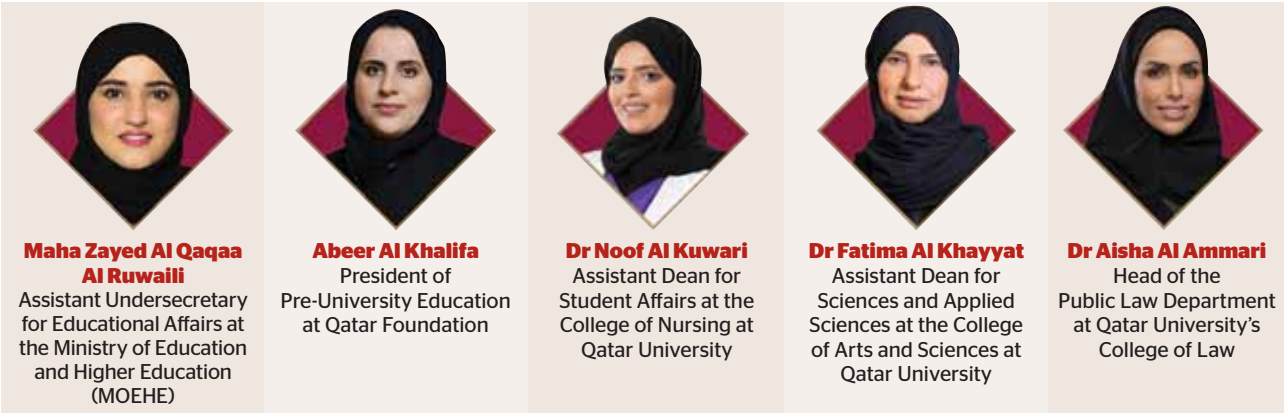
The same studies showed that the number of Qatari women working in the educational administrative sector amounts to 5,176 in government schools and more than 50 in private schools. This highlights Qatari women's standing and their ability to manage educational institutions that offer the best educational models, in light of educational experiences and tools.

In this regard, Assistant Undersecretary for Educational Affairs at MoEHE Maha Zayed Al Qaqaa Al Ruwaili affirmed that the presence of Qatari women has been closely linked to the development of the educational system since the launch of formal education in the State of Qatar. She noted that they were among the first national cadres who contributed to building the modern school, and then their role expanded to include the fields of administration, guidance, supervision, research and development, reaching leadership and decision-making positions.

The Assistant Undersecretary said in a special statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the arrival of women to lead the MoEHE represents one of the most prominent milestones in the journey of Qatari women in the education sector. She noted that HE Sheikh Ahmed Al Mahmoud assumed the position of Minister of Education in 2003 as the first Qatari woman to hold a ministerial role, after a distinguished educational career that began in the educational field and progressed through a number of leadership positions.

She added that the presence of women in the leadership of the ministry continued with HE Buthaina bint Ali Al Jabr Al

Driving transformation in education, research and leadership, the success of Qatari women reflects investment in human beings and their role in building society and achieving sustainable development



Nuaimi assuming the position in 2021, followed by HE Lolwah bint Rashid bin Mohammed AlKhater in 2024, reflecting the continuity of the role of women in assuming the highest executive positions in the education system.

Al Ruwaili explained that the importance of this journey is not limited to women assuming the position of minister, but extends to the broad female presence at various leadership levels within the ministry, where women occupy a large number of leadership and supervisory positions, including assistant undersecretaries, department directors, heads of sections, mentors and supervisors. This active female presence confirms the pivotal role of women in leading and developing the educational process, and participating in shaping its directions and making its decisions.

She noted that the 2025/2026 academic year witnessed a remarkable growth in the number of female students joining the scientific and specialized tracks in government schools, as the number of students enrolled in the scientific track reached 6,541, an increase of 4.2% compared to the previous academic year, while the number of female students in specialized schools reached 376, with a growth rate of 12.2%.

Al Ruwaili emphasized that these indicators reflect the growing trend of female students towards scientific and specialized paths, and the success of the ministry's efforts in expanding quality educational options for them, which enhances their presence in the fields of science, technology and specializations related to future needs, and supports the building of more diverse academic and professional paths that are responsive to national development priorities.

Pivotal role

In a related context, President of Pre-University Education at Qatar Foundation Abeer Al Khalifa said Qatari women continue to play a pivotal role in shaping the future of education and preparing generations capable of contributing to the nation's advancement. She said their academic qualifications, professional expertise and leadership capabilities reflect Qatar's vision of investing in human capital.

Speaking to QNA, she said indicators from Qatar Foundation's Pre-University Education sector reflect the growing and influential presence of Qatari women across educational and administrative levels. Eighty percent of Qatari female employees hold higher academic qualifications, while women account for 66% of Qatari educational leaders. Qatari women also represent 75% of the sector's total Qatari workforce.

She explained that these figures are more than statistical indicators; they demonstrate the strong commitment of Qatari women professionals to excellence and professional development. They also underscore the success of the inclusive and supportive educational environment provided by Qatar Foundation, which empowers women and creates opportunities for them to grow, advance and play an active role in leading education and innovation.

Al Khalifa affirmed that Qatari women have been key partners in building an integrated education system at Qatar Foundation since its establishment, which was founded on a joint initiative and forward-looking vision of the late His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa aAl-Thani, and Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation.

She noted that Qatari women today continue to play pivotal roles as teachers, leaders, education specialists, researchers and change-makers, contributing actively to the development of the education system and preparing generations equipped to meet the demands of the future.

Lifelong learning

Meanwhile, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at the College of Nursing at Qatar University Dr Noof Al Kuwari highlighted another dimension of Qatari women's empowerment, bringing together professional practice, academia and institutional leadership. She said her academic and professional journey has been guided by a commitment to lifelong learning.

In remarks to QNA, Dr Al Kuwari said her career began in clinical practice in 2014, when she became the first Qatari nurse to join Sidra Medicine. The experience strengthened her professional expertise and deepened her passion for nursing before she moved into academia eight years later, where she sought to contribute to the education and development of future Qatari nursing professionals.

She said her academic journey has included several significant milestones, including a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Calgary in Qatar, followed by a master's degree from the University of Glasgow in 2019 and a postgraduate certificate in pain management from the University of Edinburgh in 2021. In 2024, she became a Fellow of the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

She described her appointment as Assistant Dean for Student Affairs at Qatar University as an important leadership milestone in her career, adding that she

hopes to pursue a doctoral degree as the next step in her academic journey.

Dr Al Kuwari explained that academic work is a mission for her that goes beyond the boundaries of a job, combining teaching, scientific research, and community service, and offers a genuine opportunity to create a lasting impact that extends beyond the classroom.

She added that the role of a university professor is not limited to transferring knowledge, but also includes building students' professional character, fostering critical thinking, and instilling values of responsibility, commitment, and excellence. She stressed her commitment to using scientific research to develop innovative solutions that advance education and healthcare practices, and emphasized that students' success and achievements are an extension of the academic mission and a true investment in people.

Key advantages

On the applied academic side, Assistant Dean for Sciences and Applied Sciences at the College of Arts and Sciences at Qatar University Dr Fatima Al Khayyat affirmed that her academic career has been a continuous journey of learning and development, beginning with a bachelor's degree in zoology and culminating in a doctorate in medical entomology, which represented a pivotal stage in strengthening her research and scientific capabilities.

In similar statements to QNA, Dr Al Khayyat said that moving into academia as a faculty member allowed her to interact with students and prepare a new generation of researchers. She explained that Qatari women have been able to achieve many of their academic and professional goals thanks to the support provided by the state in the fields of education, scientific research, and leadership.

She highlighted the key advantages made available to Qatari women in the academic sector, including scholarships, particularly for postgraduate studies, research grants, an advanced scientific environment, modern laboratories, and training courses in leadership and the development of teaching methods, which have all shaped her academic journey.

She added that her research focuses on building the research capabilities of Qatar University students and developing environmentally friendly methods for pest control, thereby contributing to the protection of people and the environment and achieving sustainable development, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

She explained that academic work, for her, represents more than just a job, but a mission and a responsibility toward society. Among the most notable

challenges she faced during her career was balancing between the demands of teaching, academic research, and professional development, and her responsibilities as a mother.

Dr Al Khayyat also highlighted the main challenges she encountered as a Qatari academic in the field of scientific research, which requires patience and perseverance, particularly in applied fields that depend on fieldwork and laboratory work. She noted that collecting samples and data under different environmental conditions presents a challenge for researchers, especially for women working in this field.

Educational mission

In turn, Head of the Public Law Department at Qatar University's College of Law Dr Aisha Al Ammari addressed an important aspect of the journey of Qatari women in academia and the legal field. She explained that her academic journey was an important milestone in her intellectual and personal development, highlighting the key transformations she experienced, including exposure to diverse cultures, societies, and intellectual and religious backgrounds. This helped broaden her horizons, strengthen her ability to understand others and respect differences, while at the same time deepening her commitment to her identity, values, and beliefs.

In an exclusive statement to QNA, Dr Al Ammari said that academic work represents an educational mission for her before it is a profession. She explained that the role of a university professor goes beyond imparting knowledge to shaping students' character, instilling values, and contributing to the preparation of a generation capable of responsible thinking and sound decision-making. She stressed her commitment to making the classroom an environment in which every student feels valued and cared for, and ensuring that the professor's impact extends beyond the course curriculum.

Regarding the benefits she gained from the supportive environment for empowering Qatari women, Dr Al Ammari noted that Qatar's commitment to women's empowerment, together with the stimulating environment provided by academic institutions, had a significant impact on shaping her academic and professional career. It gave her the confidence to pursue her ambitions, complete her studies, and work in academia within an environment that values competence and provides genuine opportunities for growth and excellence.

She noted that this experience also contributed to developing a more mature and independent personality, expanding her academic and professional network, and gaining human and educational experiences that enriched her perspective. She affirmed her commitment to representing Qatari women in an exemplary manner through dedication to excellence, preserving identity and values, and respecting diversity.

Regarding the main challenges she faced, Dr Al Ammari explained that adapting to a new academic system in legal studies, one based on critical thinking, analysis, constructing legal arguments, and applying principles to facts, was a challenge, compared to relying primarily on memorization and recalling information.

She explained that she overcame these challenges through perseverance, openness to learning, and trial and error. This contributed to developing her analytical and legal reasoning skills and strengthened her ability to engage in continuous learning. She considered these challenges among the most important factors in shaping her academic character.

Fanar showcases Qatar’s strides in Arabic AI: expert

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“Countries must invest in people. Universities, research centres, and industry must pull in the same direction to educate the next generation of AI scientists, engineers, and entrepreneurs, supported by policies that encourage responsible AI development and nurture local startups. Qatar has embraced this principle for years; its sustained investment in education and research, from Education City to HBKU and QCRI, reflects a long-standing belief that human capital is the nation’s most valuable resource,” Dr al-Tamimi highlighted.

Fanar champions the Arabic language, preserving its depth and heritage while ensuring it thrives in the digital age. It cre-

ates AI that masters Arabic, not just speaking the language but understanding it at its deepest level. Fanar generates video, images, and audio with deep contextual understanding, bringing content to life across multiple formats.

Dr al-Tamimi said that open AI models are not a complete substitute for commercial platforms. “Running advanced AI still demands serious computing power, deep technical expertise, and continuous maintenance, precisely the capabilities that Sovereign AI investment is meant to build. For most countries, the realistic path is a hybrid one: combining open models with carefully selected commercial services, while ensuring that the capabilities that matter most remain firmly in local hands,” he added.

Back to school: Gates reopen today

From Page 1

School transport has been reinforced with 3,000 buses of different sizes, alongside 122 buses and 400 cars allocated to students with disabilities. On health and safety, the ministry has approved 26 food companies to supply government-school canteens and drawn up a list of food items meeting approved health standards. Schools have completed security and safety requirements and strengthened air-conditioning and cooling services.

Class schedules and student allocations have been finalised, and textbooks and educational supplies made available. Orientation sessions were held for new employees on ministry policies, plans and regulations. Administrative and teaching staff began their duties on August 23, giving schools time to complete final preparations before students return.

Turkiye summons Ukraine ambassador

AFP
Istanbul

Turkiye summoned Ukraine’s ambassador over attacks this week in the Black Sea against a Turkish vessel, and against a second ship that came to tow the first, the country’s foreign ministry said yesterday.

The attacks happened on Wednesday and Thursday, the ministry told AFP.

“During the meeting, Turkiye warned about the absolute need

to ensure the safety of people, of assets, of navigation and of the environment in the Black Sea,” the ministry said in a statement.

It said the Turkish container ship Lider Bordo Mavi was hit on Wednesday while it was off the Russian coast on the Black Sea. The next day, the ship Lider Kocatepe sent to tow the cargo vessel was also targeted, the ministry said.

The ministry did not say whether there were any casualties in the attacks.

According to local Turkish media, the container ship was

towed to the Turkish port of Samsun.

Ankara has been calling for weeks on Ukraine and Russia to suspend their attacks on civilian vessels in the Black Sea. Each of the warring countries has been seeking to damage the other’s sources of export revenues as part of their conflict, which Russia started in 2022 with its full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Turkish commercial ships are active in the Black Sea, sailing under various countries’ flags, and several have been

hit by drones suspected to be launched by Ukraine.

Turkiye, a Nato member country that maintains relations with both Kyiv and Moscow, has not joined Western sanctions levelled against Russia.

On August 8, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called for a “moratorium” on Black Sea attacks.

“The conflict has spread across the whole Black Sea,” he said at the time, complaining that “they are attacking all commercial shipping without distinction”.

Ukraine’s nuclear plant has lost power supply: IAEA

AFP
Vienna

The Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine has been without off-site power for more than a week and is currently relying on emergency diesel generators, the UN’s nuclear watchdog said yesterday.

The plant, which needs power to keep its six non-operating reactors cool, has only a ten-day diesel supply on site, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in a statement.

It has not had a delivery to an off-site storage facility in about six months, but the plant had been supplied with diesel Thursday and Friday from another off-site location, the IAEA added.

“The current situation once again shows why reliable external power and secure supply routes are indispensable for nuclear safety and security”

“The availability of diesel fuel is of paramount importance whenever a nuclear power plant loses off-site power,” said IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi.

“The current situation once again shows why reliable external power and secure supply routes are indispensable for nuclear safety and security”

The plant lost its regular power supply “following military activity on the northern side of the Dnipro River”, the statement said.

The Vienna-based group said it was trying to negotiate a local ceasefire to allow repairs to electrical lines.

On Friday, the IAEA said there had been three incidents this week involving drones at the Zaporizhzhia plant, injuring two employees, and raising renewed safety concerns.

The plant, in southern Ukraine, was seized by the Russian army in March 2022, just weeks after its full-scale invasion.

Both sides in the conflict regularly accuse the other of attacking the site on the banks of the Dnipro river that marks the frontline in the sector.

IAEA teams have had a permanent presence at the plant since September 2022. Zaporizhzhia’s six reactors have been shut down since 2022.

Russian strike blows up arms depot near Kyiv, killing 37

AFP
Kyiv

Russia struck an arms depot near Kyiv overnight, sparking fires and explosions that killed 37 people and wounded dozens of others, authorities said yesterday.

AFP reporters saw plumes of black smoke pouring over the capital’s western suburbs, while videos published by Ukraine’s rescue services showed homes near the blast epicentre in flames.

The attack was the second to hit a munitions depot near Kyiv in less than two months, with officials expressing anger that arms were still being stored so close to residential areas.

Both Russia and Ukraine have intensified long-range strikes on each other in recent months, pushing civilian casualties to their highest level since Moscow invaded in 2022.

“Those who allowed this to happen must be held accountable for their decisions... ammunition cannot be stored near homes or other residential areas,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a post on X.

The blast forced hundreds to evacuate and damaged multiple homes, including a care facility for elderly and disabled people, he added.



This photograph shows smoke rising following a Russian air attack in Kyiv yesterday, (AFP)

At least 37 people were killed, among them the mayor of the nearby town of Dmytrivka, Kyiv region governor Tymur Tkachenko said on Telegram.

Residents in the area told AFP the explosion was “terrifying”.

“We thought we were being bombed. No one knew it was a detonation,” said Yana Doneli, resident of a nearby town.

The depot was owned by the Ukrainian military and stored

drones, shells and other munitions, Zelensky said in a video address.

Zelensky blamed the incident on “horrific negligence”, saying ammunition should not have been stored there.

Ukrainian prosecutors said they had opened an investigation into criminal negligence.

“On 28 August at around 8:10pm (1710 GMT), an unmanned aerial vehicle... fell on or struck

the grounds of an enterprise in the town of Myla,” the office of Ukraine’s prosecutor general said.

Myla is a small town on the outskirts of western Kyiv.

“A large-scale fire broke out on the enterprise’s grounds, and detonation began,” prosecutors added.

The prosecutor’s office said that its investigation would focus on “the legality of the... storage of explosive objects and materials on



A Ukrainian rescuer stand next to a truck with a spray of water as they work to extinguish a fire in a warehouse following an air attack at an undisclosed location in the Kyiv region yesterday. (AFP)

the enterprise’s grounds”, as well as whether the owner, whom it did not name, had the “necessary permits and approvals”.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Sergiy Korytsky expressed regret that a “lesson” had not been learned following a previous deadly strike on a munitions depot near Kyiv in July.

That investigation revealed serious failings on the part of a state-owned company, which did not comply with regulations regarding the proximity of residential buildings.

“In the fifth year of the full-scale invasion, making the same mistakes over and over is criminal negligence,” he said on Telegram.

“Everyone responsible, without exception, must face severe punishment so that such situations never happen again”.

Russia launched at least two missiles and 267 drones at Ukraine between late Friday and early yesterday, according to the Ukrainian air force.

In addition to the depot strike,

Russian attacks on Ukraine killed three people on Saturday, including a two-year-old infant in Kyiv and a 14-year-old girl in the capital’s outer suburbs, officials said.

In Russia, Ukrainian strikes killed three people in the Belgorod region and caused a fire at a warehouse belonging to Russian retailer Ozon, officials said.

A strike on the city of Sevastopol in Crimea killed one person, according to Sevastopol’s Russian-installed governor.

US-led diplomatic efforts to end the conflict, Europe’s deadliest since World War II, have been at a standstill for months.

Russia has demanded sweeping territorial and political concessions from Ukraine, which Kyiv has ruled out as tantamount to capitulation.

Earlier this week, US Central Intelligence Agency Director John Ratcliffe visited Moscow on an unannounced trip, amid escalating tensions in the four-and-a-half-year war.

French far-right accuses left of threatening ‘civil peace’

AFP
Chalons-en-Champagne

The French far-right yesterday accused the left of seeking to “undermine civil peace” should Marine Le Pen win the presidential election next spring, underscoring the increasingly confrontational tone of the campaign. With less than eight months until the vote, far-right leader Le Pen, 58, remains the front-runner in the polls.

Analysts say the appeal of political extremes is growing in France, and recent surveys show that Jean-Luc Melancon, the divisive leader of hard-left France Unbowed (LFI), may have the best chance of reaching the run-off against Le Pen. Speaking at an agricultural fair in the northeastern town of Chalons-en-Champagne, Jordan Bardella, president of Le Pen’s anti-immigrant, euro-sceptic National Rally (RN) party and her choice for prime minister in the event of victory, said he was concerned by calls from the left for “civil disobedience” if the RN comes to power.

Bardella, 30, said they amounted to “an admission of weakness from the left, which hates democracy and is calling into question the fundamental principles



President of French far-right party Rassemblement National Jordan Bardella speaks to the press as he visits the agricultural fair in Châlons-en-Champagne, northeastern France, yesterday. (AFP)

of the rule of law and the electoral process”. “The attitude of France Unbowed at the start of this campaign is deeply worrying,” said Bardella. “They are already seeking to undermine civil peace in our country”.

Mathilde Panot, parliamentary leader of France Unbowed, and Greens leader Marine Tondelier have recently said they would support “civil disobedience” in the event of an RN victory. Some observers say the campaign is increasingly at risk of becoming

a contest dominated by populist anti-establishment forces, raising concern among investors about the prospect of a run-off between the far-right and the hard left.

Bardella said he was concerned about Melancon’s “true intentions”. During a first presidential debate on Thursday, Melancon, 75, vowed to “disobey” European decisions that contradict the wishes of French voters and pressed ahead with his proposals to cancel a chunk of France’s public debt.

“France Unbowed and Monsieur Melancon do not want to win this presidential election,” said Bardella. “They do not want to protect institutions, they want to destroy them”.

Analysts say that a crowded field of candidates from the centre, centre left, centre right and right risks fragmenting the moderate vote in the first round, boosting the far-right.

Bruno Retailleau of the right-wing Republicans (LR) said on Friday he would not be dropping out of the race in favour of former prime minister Edouard Philippe, who is seen as the best-positioned right-wing candidate to reach the run-off, or of any other candidate.

Retailleau said that some of his supporters said they would back the far-right if he withdrew from the race.

A Le Pen victory would mark a turning point in modern French history, making her the first far-right leader to take power in France since World War II. According to a survey published by Medef, the country’s main business lobby, this week, a majority of French business leaders are concerned about the impact that the next president’s economic policies could have on their companies, with 82 percent saying they were pessimistic.

‘Not cricket’: documents reveal rare Australia-New Zealand diplomatic spat

New Zealand officials hit out behind closed doors at their Australian counterparts over a “unilateral” breach of a treaty they dubbed “in poor form and certainly not cricket”, documents obtained by AFP showed.

The trans-Tasman neighbours enjoy strong cultural and diplomatic ties but have been known to clash – most notably over sport and who invented the pavlova, a meringue-based dessert.

But documents obtained under official information laws by AFP also revealed tensions behind the scenes this year over a controversial change to a tax treaty between the antipodean partners. In a briefing to ministers, New Zealand officials said Australia’s decision to “unilaterally” override their treaty obligations “without consultation or negotiations” was “in poor form and was certainly not cricket”.

Under the changes to the law, non-resident New Zealanders can face additional taxes when buying property in Australia. In response to the briefing, officials were urged to “fight this much harder”, the documents show.

Foreign minister Winston Peters and finance minister Nicola Willis sent a letter in April to their Australian counterparts decrying the taxes as “inconsistent with Australia’s treaty commitments to New Zealand”.

The language is less testy than during a low ebb of ties in 1981, when Australian cricket captain Greg Chappell ordered his younger brother Trevor to bowl an underarm delivery to prevent any chance of a New Zealand win in a move widely seen as unsportsmanly.

New Zealand’s then-Prime Minister Robert Muldoon condemned it as an “act of true cowardice” and said it was “appropriate that the Australian team were wearing yellow”.

New Zealand officials may hope their protests deliver a similar outcome now as they did back then – a law change which prevents a similar controversy in the future.

In response to an inquiry from AFP, a spokesperson for Australia’s Department of the Treasury said: “Treasury continues to engage closely with New Zealand counterparts on this and other matters as part of the current renegotiation of our tax treaty.” (AFP)



Migratory bird hunting season boosts falcon sales at Souq Waqif

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The falcon market in Souq Waqif has seen a noticeable revival over the recent period, with falcon sales rising by an estimate of 60% compared to the previous period, mostly pursuant to the announcement by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) of the opening of the migratory bird hunting season from early September through mid-February.

Falcon traders noted that demand is being driven primarily by a considerable number of Qataris preparing early for the hunting season, alongside visitors from

other Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

While most purchases are made in person, traders said some Gulf customers also buy falcons through shops' social media accounts, with sellers arranging delivery to buyers in their home countries.

Such seasonal surge is expected to continue through the coming months, with traders anticipating additional shipments of falcons from several countries, including Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria, beginning in September.

Prices vary significantly according to the falcon's type, origin and characteristics.

Traders said that Shaheen falcons start around QR30,000, while Gyrfalcon start at approximately QR20,000.

Gyr-Shaheen falcons command higher prices, starting about QR50,000, while Wakri falcons (Lanner Falcon) are among the more affordable options, ranging from QR2,500 to QR5,000.

Other varieties available in the market include Sudanese Wakri falcons priced at around QR2,000, British Garmousha falcons at approximately QR4,000, and Spanish Gyr falcons starting at around QR10,000.

However, traders noted that prices can range from around QR2,000 to QR20,000 or more depending on the type and specifications of the bird, with premium falcons reaching considerably higher levels.

Meanwhile, the seasonal increase in falcon purchases is generating demand for hunting equipment and accessories.

Souq Waqif shops are stocking a broad range of products, including gloves, hoods,

Traders at Souq Waqif are reporting a surge in the sales of falcons as well as hunting equipment and accessories

carrying cases, bird stands, knives, nets, hunting clothing, binoculars and other equipment used during hunting trips.

Prices cover a wide range of budgets.

Gloves start around QR50, with imported Dutch models reaching QR500.

Hoods start about QR30, while Mongolian models are priced around QR100 and customised versions around QR150.

Falcon carrying cases are available from about QR60-70, while bird stands cost around QR60 and hunting mats around QR80.

Nets range from QR15 to QR30, while hunting knives are priced between QR50 and QR200, depending on type and origin.

Specialised optical equipment is also available, with a German-made binocular model starting around QR2,800.

Other accessories include falcon leg leashes priced at QR30-50, with customised versions reaching QR150, as well as specialised nets for catching birds of prey priced from around QR50 to QR100.

Accordingly, traders stressed that buying a falcon is only the beginning of the preparation process, as newly purchased birds generally require training to restore or develop their hunting readiness.

One trader noted that falcons may need around 15 days of training after purchase to become accustomed to their new owners and perform effectively during hunting.

Other sellers noted that trained birds may require a shorter period of conditioning, including lure-bound training, in which the falcon is encouraged to pursue prey such as pigeons and houbara bustards.

Thus, the availability of trained falcons has become an important selling point as buyers seek birds that can quickly return to hunting activity once the season begins.

Further, the local market is benefiting from growing interest among Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) visitors.

Traders said customers from neighbouring countries often purchase falcons during visits to Qatar, while others complete transactions remotely through social media.

Several shops provide shipping services to Gulf countries, allowing customers to purchase falcons without being physically present in Qatar.

Traders expect this channel to remain active throughout the migratory bird season, particularly among enthusiasts who regularly participate in the traditional hunting activity.

With new shipments expected to arrive in September, traders anticipate that market activity will continue strengthening, potentially remaining elevated through January, when the hunting season is in full swing.



Five laps, 30 minutes: Run the Dome brings new indoor challenge

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

Runners raced through Aspire Dome and its basement in Qatar's newest indoor challenge, completing five extended laps within 30 minutes at the inaugural "Run the Dome 2026" event this weekend.

Organised by the Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) on August 28-29, the first edition combined community fitness with a competitive speed-race format inside the air-conditioned venue.

A dedicated women's race opened the programme on Friday morning, followed by open races later in the day and yesterday, with the top finishers awarded on the final day.

Ahmed Mohammed al-Hassan, championship director and executive director of facilities and



Ahmed Mohammed al-Hassan

events at the AZF, said the event was created to introduce a different type of race to Qatar while serving both recreational runners and more experienced athletes.

"For us, it is very important to have new events in Aspire and in Qatar overall, covering the needs of the community and professionals at the same time," he told *Gulf Times*.



The central challenge was not only speed, but the course itself. Aspire Dome's standard international athletics track measures

200m, so organisers extended the route into the building's basement to create a 1km lap. "Designing the track to be safe

and extending it to 1km for each lap was a big job," he said. "We wanted to give participants a different atmosphere and experience."

Competitors were required to complete five laps, covering close to 5km, within a 30-minute target.

Al-Hassan described the format as a departure from conventional mass-participation road races, where families, children and runners of different abilities usually share the same course.

"This kind of race is different. It is a challenge race," he said. "You can run the five laps within 30 minutes. That is the challenge."

The event was open to participants aged 18 and above, with categories including runners over 50.

Faster competitors who had demonstrated a sub-20-minute time over 5km were grouped separately and scheduled later, help-

ing preserve the competitive pace of the event.

Al-Hassan said most runners completed the course within the target, while those finishing later had already gained a goal for a future edition.

"That is the challenge for them for next time and what makes them passionate to join us again," he said.

Aspire Dome was selected to give runners a safe, climate-controlled option during Qatar's summer.

Al-Hassan said the AZF plans to hold the race every summer, while feedback requesting categories for children and families will be considered.

"Aspire's vision is to support the community and sport, including health," he said. "That is why we try to create different events that cover the community's needs."

5km of unity as Malaysians in Qatar celebrate 'Merdeka'

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

Malaysians in Qatar marked the approach of Independence Day with a 5km walkathon at Doha Festival City, bringing families together in a celebration of unity, friendship and pride on Friday.

The Malaysian Association in Qatar (MAQ) organised the event ahead of Malaysia's Independence Day on August 31.

Malaysia's ambassador to Qatar Faizal Razali attended the event as guest of honour alongside members of the Malaysian community.

Held as part of Malaysia's National Month celebrations, the walkathon offered a relaxed, family-friendly way to commemorate Merdeka ("independence" in the Malay language) while reconnecting

with friends and fellow residents.

Community spirit was at the heart of the celebration.

Rather than limiting the occasion to a formal ceremony, families and individuals walked side by side, turning the route into a shared expression of belonging among Malaysians living abroad.

The Malaysian embassy said the gathering demonstrated the community's strong sense of togetherness and provided an opportunity to strengthen friendship and *ukhuwah*, or bonds of fellowship, while celebrating the "spirit of Merdeka".

For expatriate families, national occasions can become an important connection to home.

They allow younger generations to take part in familiar traditions and help long-term residents maintain links with Malaysia's history, culture and identity.

The walkathon also formed part of a



wider calendar of activities being organised by the embassy and Malaysian associations in Qatar throughout August and September.

The programme marks both Independence Day and Malaysia Day 2026, extending the celebrations beyond a single date.

The embassy encouraged Malaysians across Qatar to continue participating in community programmes and uphold the values of "unity, mutual support and pride in Malaysia".

The walkathon gave those values a visible form, with participants moving to-

gether, supporting one another and sharing the occasion in an informal public setting.

The event also reflected the role of community associations in helping residents preserve its cultural ties while contributing to Qatar's diverse social landscape.

The president of Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre-University Education (PUE), Abeer al-Khalifa, has affirmed that PUE schools and education centres are fully ready for the 2026-27 academic year.

She told the Qatar News Agency (QNA) that preparations for the new academic year were carried out through an integrated institutional process encompassing planning, policies, educational content, and operational readiness, ensuring a smooth and effective start.

Al-Khalifa noted that the PUE network of 15 schools and education centres serve 9,434 students from 56 nationalities, including 8,735 Qatari students, which represent more than 92% of the total student population.

The official added that 1,197 students newly enrolled in its schools this year, including in pre-kindergarten, in Awsaj Academy's Prime Programme and in the Aca-

QF's PUE ready to receive 9,400 students in new academic year

ademic Bridge Programme.

Meanwhile, 833 students newly enrolled in the regular academic stages.

Al-Khalifa said that 950 of PUE's 1,885 employees – of 70 nationalities – are teachers and learning leaders across its schools, while 1,731 of its total number of employees hold direct teaching and educational roles.

This diversity enriches the network and positively impacts students' educational experience.

Filling 97% of vacancies, around 200 teachers have been recruited before the start of the academic year, al-Khalifa added, highlighting that the QF focuses on attracting the right talent rather than simply filling vacancies and making rushed appointments.

She said that preparations for the new academic year centred around four main areas: school

planning, including performance assessments and targeted feedback; policy reviews and updates, including the mobile-phone-free school campus policy among others; educational content and facility development, including the inauguration of Qatar Academy Sidra's new building and the launch of an Arabic-language assessment tool and an Islamic civilisation course, among others; and operational readiness.

With regard to strengthening educational and leadership capabilities, three main priorities were focused on, al-Khalifa said: school leadership appointments and reshuffling as well as redefining roles and responsibilities; providing the teaching staff with professional development opportunities; and linking professional development to performance.

The official highlighted in this

context that an event was organised to bring together around 100 education sector leaders with the aim of aligning vision and priorities ahead of the start of the academic year.

She noted that 950 teachers and learning leaders underwent training programmes covering three main areas: digital literacy, artificial intelligence (AI), and assessment redesign in alignment with the 2026-30 AI strategy.

Al-Khalifa affirmed that Qatar Foundation's school network enjoys a high level of readiness based on clear indicators and evidence, enabling the new academic year to begin with clear priorities and defined success criteria.

The PUE, she added, is also working to strengthen its institutional measurement framework through academic achievement and stakeholder perception in-

dicators, with work underway to develop a third measure for educational outcome quality.

In order to ensure a balanced distribution of students and limit classroom density, the official said that the QF relies on four interconnected mechanisms, the first being a centralised admissions system managed by a single body governed by a unified admission policy and publicly stated criteria applied across the entire network, and the second being capacity planning, setting an annual capacity limit for each school and grade level based on available space, programme needs, and approved regulatory standards.

The third mechanism, she continued, involves managing demand through offering diverse educational options, whereas the fourth mechanism is the continuous monitoring of classroom den-

sity and linking figures to capital planning.

Al-Khalifa said these mechanisms take the form of inaugurating Qatar Academy Sidra's new building, managing waiting lists centrally as a network, and offering parents' alternative options across the network based on student needs and educational paths.

Recurring capacity pressures at any particular location, she said, are addressed through space expansion or redistribution plans, rather than increasing the number of students in classrooms.

She noted that having an integrated educational system with diverse programmes and tracks makes it possible to match students with the educational paths best suited to them, rather than adding pressure on a single school.

Expanding multiple pathways through International Baccalaureate schools is one of the priorities for the current academic year. – QNA