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Korea not yet decided on sending forces to Hormuz

QNA

Seoul

Korea's presidential office announced yesterday that the government has not made a final decision on deploying military forces to the Strait of Hormuz, stressing that a review of the available options remains underway. Yonhap News Agency quoted a presidential official as saying that Korea could potentially make military contributions to international efforts aimed at ensuring freedom of navigation through the strait, provided such contributions did not affect its defence readiness, should a decision be made to participate.

The official added that any potential contribution would take into account the readiness of Korean forces on the Korean Peninsula and domestic legal procedures, noting that discussions had not yet reached the stage of seeking approval from the National Assembly (parliament). US President Donald Trump has recently stepped up pressure on Seoul to make military contributions to the vital waterway, repeatedly accusing the ally of rejecting his request.

The official, who requested anonymity, said that in order to make tangible contributions in the Strait of Hormuz, the matter would first have to be considered in light of the forces' readiness on the Korean Peninsula as well as its domestic legal procedures. The official said the government was considering whether contributions could be made within a scope that would not undermine the country's readiness posture. He added that the ongoing discussions had not yet reached the stage of seeking parliamentary approval and that no final decision had been made.

The official denied speculation that the issue of deploying the fleet to the Strait of Hormuz had impeded ongoing negotiations between Seoul and Washington on advancing their economic and defence agreement reached last year as part of a broader tariff agreement.

COMMUNITY
See Page 4

Qatar reaffirms right to seek full compensation in letters to UN, Security Council

QNA

New York

Qatar has rejected Iran's justification for attacks on its territory, saying the allegations have no legal basis and cannot absolve Tehran of responsibility under international law. In two identical letters sent to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Permanent Representative of the French Republic to the UN Jerome Bonnafont, who is holding the rotating presidency of the Security Council, Qatar said the Iranian attacks, which began on Feb 28, 2026, clearly violated the UN Charter and international law.

The letters were delivered by HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the UN Sheikhha Alaya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, in response to a communication from Iran's acting charge d'affaires to the UN. Qatar said Tehran's repeated claims could not provide a legal basis for the attacks, citing Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, which prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.

Doha also referred to UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026), which it said had strongly condemned Iran's attacks and described them as a violation of international law and a serious threat to international peace and security.

The Qatari letters said Iran's own reliance on the UN General Assembly's 1974 definition of

aggression undermined its position. They pointed to provisions defining the bombardment of another state's territory, the use of weapons against another state, and the blockade of ports or coasts as acts of aggression. Qatar said those provisions applied to repeated Iranian missile and drone attacks on its territory, as well as Iran's decision to close the Strait of Hormuz and disrupt maritime navigation.

The letters rejected Iran's invocation of the right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, arguing that the conditions required for such a justification had not been met.

Qatar also said Security Council Resolution 2817 and UN Human Rights Council Resolution 61/1 affirmed the right of states to defend themselves, individually or collectively, against armed attacks by Iran. The Qatari government said it had previously informed the Security Council, through a series of letters between March and July, of Iranian attacks on its territory and territorial waters – attacks that targeted civilian infrastructure, including energy facilities, tankers and commercial vessels.

It accused Iran of violating the 1949 Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I, as well as fundamental principles of international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians and civilian objects, the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks, proportionality and the obligation to take precautions to minimise civilian harm. **To Page 3**

1 killed, 6 hurt in Israeli attacks

One Palestinian was martyred yesterday and others, including children, were injured as a result of Israeli occupation forces' shelling and gunfire in various areas of the Gaza Strip. Medical sources reported that a Palestinian was martyred after being shot by the Israeli occupation army in the town of Al Qarara, north of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip. Three Palestinians, including a girl, were injured by Israeli occupation army gunfire near Hamad City, north of Khan Younis, while another girl was injured near Abu Hamid Roundabout.

Israeli military vehicles also opened indiscriminate fire, hitting tents sheltering displaced people near the Austrian Cemetery west of the city, while military vehicles opened heavy fire and artillery shelled areas east of the city. In the central Gaza Strip, Israeli military vehicles opened heavy fire north of Al Bureij refugee camp. In Gaza City, an Israeli warplane carried out an air strike targeting Mushtaha Street in the Shujaiya neighbourhood east of the city, while eastern areas of the city came under artillery shelling and Israeli warships opened fire toward the city's coastline. **(QNA)**

Qatar rejects Iran's claims over attacks, points to UN records

By Joey Aguilar

Doha

Qatar has rejected what it described as a misleading, selective use of an International Telecommunication Union (ITU) security assessment by Iran, stressing that the country's record of Iranian attacks is formally documented in letters submitted to the United Nations, Adviser to the Prime Minister and Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson HE Dr Majed al-Ansari has said.

In a post on X yesterday, Dr al-Ansari said Iran should refer to the official record submitted by Qatar to the UN rather than selectively quoting a security risk assessment prepared for operational purposes. The record cited by Qatar includes a series of letters submitted to the UN Security Council by HE Sheikhha Alaya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, Qatar's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, documenting the attacks and their impact.

He said Qatar's identical let-



HE Dr Majed al-Ansari

ters dated March 1, 2026, and registered as UN Security Council document S/2026/110, documented the launch of Iranian missiles over civilian, commercial and residential areas, resulting in damage and injuries to 16 people.

Qatar's letter dated July 20 documented further Iranian attacks, including those on July 12, which resulted in three injuries, including a child, he said. Dr al-Ansari said the document cited by Iran was a safety and security risk assessment prepared for the ITU Plenipotentiary Conference and was "neither a comprehen-

sive factual record nor a legal assessment" of the events.

He said the assessment itself acknowledged direct attacks inside Qatar, including the March 18 attack on gas facilities in Ras Laffan, as well as the temporary closure of Qatari airspace and the impact of the attacks on civilian life. "Selectively extracting a sentence from that document while disregarding its broader context is therefore misleading," Dr al-Ansari said.

He also stressed that the successful interception of Iranian missiles and drones by the Qatar Armed Forces did not diminish the seriousness of the attacks or absolve those responsible of accountability.

Dr al-Ansari particularly rejected the description of the attack on Ras Laffan as "alleged", saying it had been formally documented in Qatar's letter S/2026/207 submitted to the UN Security Council. He said the facilities were national assets belonging to the Qatari people and formed an integral part of the global energy security architecture. **To Page 3**

QFFD delivers field hospital for Colombia quake victims

A Qatari Armed Forces aircraft arrived in Colombia carrying a fully equipped field hospital, provided by Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) to support the people of Colombia and help mitigate the suffering caused by the earthquake that hit the country recently. The field hospital is meant to support Colombian health authorities and medical facilities in earthquake-affected areas, providing urgent healthcare to affected people, thus contribute to strengthening the healthcare sector's capacity and ensuring the continuity of medical services during



the emergency response stage. The Qatari International Search and Rescue Group, of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), is participating in

equipping and delivering the hospital to ensure the swift commencement of medical services for beneficiaries. **(QNA) Page 2**

Insufficient sleep may contribute to weight gain: PHCC

By A Staff Reporter

Doha

Insufficient sleep may contribute to weight gain and make it harder to lose excess body fat, even among people who maintain a healthy diet and exercise regularly, according to Dr Manal Nasr, Family Medicine specialist at Al Waab Health Centre, affiliated with the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC).

Dr Nasr said numerous scientific studies have highlighted the relationship between inadequate sleep, increased appetite, irregular eating patterns and weight gain, stressing that sleep is an important, but often overlooked, factor in maintaining a healthy weight.

At first glance, the link between sleep and weight may not appear obvious. However, insufficient or irregular sleep can affect appetite,

How lack of sleep can lead to weight gain



Increases hunger



Reduces feeling of fullness



Affects metabolism

Other ways poor sleep can contribute



More time to eat



Less energy



Higher health risks

Tips for healthier sleep



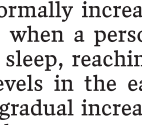
Keep a regular sleep schedule



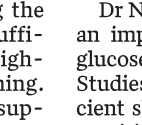
Avoid screens before bed



Limit heavy meals and sugary drinks at night



Stay physically active



Get enough sleep for your age group

• GT GRAPHICS

metabolism and eating behaviour by altering the hormones responsible for hunger, satiety and energy regulation.

Sleep is a vital physiological process that helps regulate numerous bodily functions, including the secretion and activity of

hormones involved in appetite, satiety, metabolism and energy balance. When people regularly stay up late or sleep fewer hours than their bodies require, changes may occur in the hunger and satiety signals regulated by hormones such as ghrelin, leptin, and insulin.

Ghrelin and leptin have opposing effects on appetite. Ghrelin stimulates hunger, while leptin promotes feelings of satiety. Insulin, meanwhile, plays an important role in regulating blood glucose levels and fat storage. Dr Nasr explained that leptin levels normally increase during the night when a person gets sufficient sleep, reaching their highest levels in the early morning. This gradual increase helps suppress hunger.

When the body does not get enough sleep, leptin levels may remain low, causing the nervous system to perceive that the body

needs more energy. This can trigger hunger signals and increase the desire to eat, potentially leading to excessive calorie consumption and the storage of surplus energy as body fat.

Ghrelin, on the other hand, is the hormone that stimulates hunger and normally decreases during sleep as the body rests and its energy requirements decline. Insufficient sleep can interfere with this normal decline, resulting in persistent feelings of hunger and stronger cravings, particularly for high-calorie foods.

Dr Nasr added that insulin plays an important role in both blood glucose regulation and fat storage. Studies have shown that insufficient sleep may reduce the body's sensitivity to insulin, a condition known as insulin resistance, which can contribute to weight gain and the accumulation of body fat. **To Page 2**



Qatari plane with field hospital in Colombia for quake victims



A Qatari Armed Forces aircraft arrived in Colombia carrying a fully equipped field hospital, provided by the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) to support the people of Colombia and help mitigate the suffering caused by the earthquake that hit the country recently.

The field hospital is meant to support Colombian health authorities and medical facilities in earthquake-affected areas, providing urgent healthcare to affected people, strengthening the healthcare sector's capacity and ensuring the continuity of medical services during the emergency response stage.

The Qatari International Search and Rescue Group of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) is participating in equipping and delivering the hospital to ensure the swift commencement of medical services for beneficiaries.

The deployment of the field hospital to Colombia reflects Qatar's unwavering commitment to humanitarian solidarity, crisis response, and providing vital assistance to communities affected by natural disasters.

This commitment is rooted in Qatar's sense of ethical responsibility and its leading humanitarian role at both the regional and international levels. – QNA

GORD signs pact with Korea's HUSS consortium

The Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (GORD) signed a strategic memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the HUSS Environmental Consortium in the Republic of Korea.

The agreement establishes a new academic co-operation framework focused on integrating Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) modules into formal university curricula, while extending collaboration across climate change education, sustainability research, international carbon markets, and the development of specialised climate professionals.

The HUSS Environmental Consortium comprises Kookmin University, Dukung Women's University, University of Ulsan, Inha University, and Chosun University, with the consolidated MoU bringing all five universities under a single co-operation framework with the GORD.

The GORD stated in a press release that the core of the partnership is the planned incorporation of GSAS modules into existing university curricula, creating a direct pathway for GORD-developed sustainability education to become part of Korea's formal higher education system.

The MoU also provides for joint lectures, workshops, seminars, and the development of educational content on climate change and global carbon markets.

The statement noted that the five universities form a climate crisis consortium under Korea's Humanities and Social Sciences Convergence Talent Programme



(HUSS), which is supported by the country's education ministry and the National Research Foundation of Korea, through which they jointly develop and operate interdisciplinary curricula connecting academic learning with emerging climate, sustainability, and policy needs.

The co-operation with the HUSS consortium represents an important new stage in the GORD's academic expansion, moving beyond bilateral co-operation to establish a multi-university model for incorporating GORD-developed climate programmes into formal higher education through a co-ordinated framework.

This provides a practical benchmark that can be evaluated, refined, and replicated across leading universities in East Asia.

The MoU further covers professional capacity building in Nature-based Solutions, carbon markets, Digital MRV, ESG (environmental, social and governance), and cli-

mate finance, alongside exploring executive education, certification programmes, and student internships at the GORD.

Additionally, the agreement includes joint research on climate technologies and international carbon markets, implementing pilot projects and case studies on Nature-based Solutions and international carbon mechanisms, as well as student, researcher, and expert exchange programmes.

These create opportunities to connect academic co-operation with industry and government institutions in both countries, including specialised climate programmes and public-private partnership models in sustainability and carbon markets.

"Korea's academic ecosystem provides a strong platform for developing the interdisciplinary skills needed to respond to increasingly complex climate and sustainability challenges," said GORD founding chairman Dr

Yousef Alhorr. "By integrating the GORD's applied sustainability expertise into formal university education, this partnership can help connect academic learning with industry, policy and real-world implementation, while creating a model that can be expanded across the region."

Prof Yoonhee Kang of Kookmin University, representing the HUSS Environmental Consortium, said: "Preparing the next generation to respond effectively to the climate crisis requires education that extends beyond traditional academic boundaries."

"Through this partnership with GORD, we aim to connect interdisciplinary university education with international sustainability expertise, practical climate solutions and emerging carbon market knowledge, giving students greater opportunities to translate learning into meaningful climate action," she said.

This partnership establishes an important new academic reference for the GORD in Asia, building on over two decades of collaboration to advance sustainability education and institutional capacity.

Over past years, the GORD has collaborated with leading academic institutions, including Qatar University, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Kuwait University, Dhofar University, Barzan University College, and the University of Oum El Bouaghi, to integrate sustainability knowledge into higher education and strengthen the capabilities of faculty members and students. – QNA

Insufficient sleep may contribute to weight gain: PHCC

From Page 1

She noted that insufficient sleep may therefore affect the balance and function of hormones involved in appetite and metabolism, potentially creating conditions that favour increased food intake and fat accumulation.

Scientific studies have also found an association between shorter sleep duration and a higher body mass index (BMI), as well as an increased risk of conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Staying awake for longer hours also creates additional opportunities to eat, particularly late at night.

Such meals and snacks may be high in calories, sugar and fat.

At the same time, insufficient sleep can cause daytime fatigue

and lower energy levels, reducing a person's motivation to exercise or engage in normal daily activities.

Over time, the combination of increased calorie intake and reduced energy expenditure can contribute to weight gain.

However, Dr Nasr stressed that multiple factors, including diet, physical activity, age, genetics and overall health, influence weight gain.

Healthy sleep should therefore be considered an important part of a balanced lifestyle and weight-management strategy.

Addressing weight gain should not be limited to asking what a person eats, but should also include questions about sleep patterns and daily routines.

Sleep is not a luxury but an essential component of a healthy lifestyle, Dr Nasr said, noting that

adequate and regular sleep can support healthy weight management and overall quality of life.

She recommended maintaining consistent sleep and wake-up times as much as possible and getting an adequate amount of sleep appropriate for each age group.

With the start of the new academic year, establishing healthy sleep routines is particularly important for children and adolescents.

Regular sleep can help improve concentration and daytime energy. Families should gradually adjust bedtime and wake-up times before the start of the school year and maintain consistent schedules as much as possible.

Staying up late and using phones and other electronic devices before bedtime should be avoided, while heavy meals, sweets and high-



Dr Manal Nasr

calorie beverages at night should be limited.

Regular physical activity should also be maintained to promote better sleep quality and support a healthy lifestyle overall.

PM congratulates Kazakh counterpart

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani has sent a cable of congratulations to Kazakhstan's Olzhas Bektenov on the occasion of his re-appointment as prime minister. – QNA



Qatar deposits instrument of accession to MARPOL Annex VI on Ship Pollution

Qatar has deposited its instrument of accession to Annex VI of the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL 73/78) under the 1997 Protocol.

This came during a meeting between Qatar's ambassador to the UK and Qatar's Permanent Representative to the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed bin Saud al-Thani, and IMO Secretary-General Arsenio Antonio Dominguez, at the organisation's headquarters in London.

During the meeting, they discussed the importance of Qatar's accession to Annex VI and its role in supporting international efforts aimed at reducing air pollution from ships and enhancing the protection of the marine environment.

They also addressed aspects of co-operation between Qatar and the IMO and ways to enhance and develop them, in addition to exchanging views on topics of mutual interest in the field of maritime transport. – QNA

Lawyers call for greater awareness to tackle bounced cheques issue

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Bounced cheques remain a significant legal and economic concern in Qatar, affecting the beneficiaries' ability to recover their money and potentially undermining confidence in cheques as a payment instrument, according to lawyers who called for greater legal awareness, preventive measures and faster enforcement procedures.

In a report published by the Arabic daily Al-Rayya, they stressed that the issue should not be addressed through criminal penalties alone but requires stronger preventative measures, clearer contractual arrangements and prompt legal action, as cheques are widely used for rental payments, instalments and other recurring financial obligations.

Under Article 357 of Qatar's Penal Code, specified cheque-related offences committed in bad faith, including issuing a cheque without sufficient funds, are punishable by imprisonment for three months to three years and/or a fine of QR3,000-QR10,000.

The court may also order the convicted person to pay the cheque's value and expenses incurred by the beneficiary.

Abdullah Al-Mutawa, a lawyer before the Court of Cassation, said the issue requires striking a balance between deterrence and the protection of legitimate financial rights.

"Addressing the phenomenon should not rely on punishment alone, but requires stronger preventive measures," he said.

Al-Mutawa urged cheque issuers to ensure they can honour their cheques when due, while beneficiaries should present cheques within the legally prescribed periods and act promptly when payment is refused.

He also distinguished between civil or enforcement liability and criminal liability, noting that a bounced cheque does not automatically constitute a criminal offence, as the legal elements must be assessed in each case.

Dr Rashed Abu Diya, a lawyer, described cheques as a major payment instrument for rents, instalments and other recurring

financial commitments.

He said bounced cheques warrant greater legislative attention because they directly affect beneficiaries' rights and confidence in cheques as a payment instrument.

He stressed that the criminal penalty under Article 357 is not automatically imposed whenever a cheque is returned, as criminal liability depends on the circumstances and legal elements of each case.

Nahar al-Nuaimi, a lawyer before the Court of Cassation, said cheques occupy a sensitive position in commercial transactions because they are legally regarded as payment instruments rather than merely promises of future payment.

He noted that cheques may be returned due to insufficient funds or technical or procedural issues, including signature discrepancies or alterations.

The Qatar Central Bank rules require banks to return altered cheques and state the reason for rejection.

Where the amount written in words differs from that in figures, the written amount prevails.

Al-Nuaimi also stressed the importance of settlement.

Under Article 359 of the Penal Code, the victim may seek a settlement with the accused at any stage of proceedings, resulting in termination of the criminal case.

The Public Prosecution may also order suspension of a sentence if a settlement is reached during execution, even after a final judgment.

Another significant development is Qatar's Judicial Enforcement Law No. 4 of 2024, which took effect on November 19, 2024.

Under Article 23, a cheque marked by the drawee bank as insufficient funds or bearing a partial payment constitutes an enforceable instrument.

This allows beneficiaries to apply to the enforcement judge to recover the amount, provided the application includes the original cheque or a copy and an official bank statement confirming non-payment or partial payment.

The law also requires that no more than three years have elapsed since the cheque was issued.

Cheques occupy a sensitive position in commercial transactions because they are legally regarded as payment instruments

In case of rejected cheques, the Qatar Central Bank rules require banks to return altered cheques and state the reason for rejection

A bounced cheque does not automatically constitute a criminal offence, as the legal elements must be assessed in each case

Qatar rejects Iran’s claims over attacks, points to UN records

From Page 1

According to Qatar’s March 18 letter to the Security Council, seven ballistic missiles were launched towards Ras Laffan Industrial City. Six were intercepted, while one struck the industrial area, causing fires and severe damage to the installation.

The letter said another missile attack targeted Ras Laffan in the early hours of March 19, causing additional damage to the facility, which Qatar described as a key component of its liquefied natural gas sector and an important source of global energy supplies and petrochemical products.

In its March 1 letter, Qatar said Iranian forces had launched successive waves of missiles and drones against several areas of the country. By the end of February 28, it said 83 ballistic missiles and 12 drones had been detected. Of these, 81 missiles and 11 drones were intercepted before reaching their targets, while two ballistic missiles reached Al Udeid Air Base and a drone struck an early-warning radar station, according to the letter.

Qatar said several missiles had been intercepted over civilian ar-

eas, including commercial zones and residential neighbourhoods, while rocket fragments caused a fire at a food warehouse.

The letter said 92 ballistic missiles and 17 drones had been detected between noon on February 28 and 1am on March 1, while the Ministry of Interior had responded to 114 reports of falling debris. The number of injuries eventually reached 16.

In his latest statement, Dr al-Ansari reiterated that Qatar was not a party to the conflict and said attacks on its territory and civilian infrastructure, the endangerment of its population and destabilising actions in the Strait of Hormuz could not be justified as “legitimate responses”.

He said such acts constituted clear violations of international law and that no selective quotation or interpretation could alter that fact.

Dr al-Ansari stressed Qatar’s longstanding position that dialogue and peaceful means remain the best way to resolve differences, adding that Doha would continue its diplomatic efforts to de-escalate tensions and promote regional security and stability.

More than 120 killed in Yemen’s worst clashes in years: sources

A major offensive by Yemen’s Houthis to seize control of the gateway to the Red Sea has left more than 120 people dead, sources told AFP yesterday, the country’s deadliest clashes in years. Fighting erupted on Thursday, after the Iran-backed Houthis launched a ground assault along with rocket and drone attacks near coastal areas, vying for control of the narrow Bab Al-Mandab strait at the Red Sea’s southern entrance. Yemen, embroiled in more than a decade of civil conflict, in July became the latest country to be drawn into the Middle East war as the Houthis upended a 2022 truce with the Saudi-backed government. Since then, the Houthis have imposed a maritime blockade of Saudi Arabia and repeatedly attacked its ships in the Red Sea — a vital alternative route for oil exports after Iran all but halted

Gulf shipments by blockading the Strait of Hormuz. The rebels are now trying to tighten their hold over the Red Sea, one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes, which they have disrupted with attacks on passing vessels since the Gaza war broke out in 2023. The Houthi offensive aims to cut off the government-held port city of Mokha, under fire for weeks, and advance towards areas bordering the Bab Al-Mandab, military sources told AFP. The rebels have seized elevated sites overlooking government positions near the Red Sea and the city of Taiz further inland, a military source and a Taiz official told AFP, requesting anonymity. The Houthis could target ships from these elevated positions, they said. The toll rose to 129 yesterday, according to an AFP tally. **(AFP)**

US may hit Iran’s Pickaxe Mountain: Trump

US President Donald Trump told reporters yesterday that the United States may hit Iran’s Pickaxe Mountain very soon. Located near Iran’s heavily damaged Natanz uranium enrichment facility, Pickaxe Mountain is a heavily fortified site that hosts two deeply buried tunnel complexes.

Trump added that the Iran war was “small potatoes” for the United States, a day after Vice President JD Vance said he wouldn’t describe the conflict as a war. “A lot of people don’t call it a war. I call it a military conflict because it’s small potatoes for us. It’s not a big thing. We did Venezuela, and we did this,” Trump

told reporters when asked about Vance’s comments.

Meanwhile, the United States, Britain, France and Germany are seeking a resolution by the U.N. nuclear watchdog’s board next week reporting Iran to the U.N. Security Council for the first time in 20 years, according to diplomats and the proposed text seen by Reuters.

If passed, the resolution would follow up on one adopted on June 12 of last year declaring Iran in breach of its non-proliferation obligations for not fully cooperating with an investigation into uranium traces found at undeclared sites. **(Reuters, AFP)**

Israeli strike kills 2 in Lebanon

AFP
Beirut

An Israeli strike on south Lebanon killed two people yesterday, Lebanese official media said, despite a truce with Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Lebanon’s state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported the strike hit near the strategic Ali Al-Taher ridge, which the Israeli army said it had captured, though Hezbollah did not confirm losing it.

Two young men were “targeted while riding a motorcycle” in the city of Nabatieh, NNA said, adding that rescuers transported their bodies to a local hospital.

Israel announced on Thursday it had taken control of the ridge, Defence Minister Israel Katz said the military would work to “prevent the enemy from re-establishing itself in the area”.

Israel and Hezbollah have been



Smoke rising from an explosion carried out by Israeli forces at a site in the nearby village of Al-Mansouri in southern Lebanon yesterday. **(AFP)**

trading fire since March when the militant group dragged Lebanon into the wider Middle East war by attacking Israel in support of Iran.

Israel responded with airstrikes and a ground invasion that Lebanon says have killed more than 4,300 people.

The conflict has calmed since a US-Iran memorandum of under-

Qatar reaffirms right to seek full compensation in letters to UN, UNSC

From Page 1

Qatar said Resolution 2817 also condemned attacks on residential areas and civilian objects, as well as civilian casualties and damage to civilian buildings. The letters said Iran was internationally responsible for the damage caused by its actions and would be required, as appropriate, to provide full compensation for Qatar’s losses.

Qatar said it was still assessing and documenting the damage and losses resulting from the attacks and was reserving all its rights in this regard. It dismissed Iran’s

demand that Qatar pay compensation as an attempt to reverse the parties’ actual responsibilities.

The Qatari government also reiterated its call for Iran to respect freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, describing it as an established principle of customary and written international law. Qatar rejected Iran’s claims concerning the strait as a justification for disrupting legitimate international navigation, threatening or attacking commercial vessels, or invoking self-defence.

Security Council Resolution 2817, Qatar said, explicitly af-

firmed the rights and freedoms of transport and commercial vessels under international law, as well as states’ right to defend their vessels against attacks in accordance with international law.

The resolution also condemned any actions or threats by Iran aimed at closing the Strait of Hormuz, disrupting international navigation or otherwise interfering with maritime traffic, as well as threats to maritime security in the Bab Al-Mandab Strait.

Qatar described Iran’s allegations against it as false and without foundation, accusing Tehran of misrepresenting established

principles of international law and attempting to distort the situation before the Security Council. It also highlighted the allegations go against Qatar’s continuing diplomatic efforts and mediation initiatives aimed at resolving the conflict.

Qatar reaffirmed its right to seek full compensation for the resulting damage. It also said it retained its full right to respond and its inherent right to self-defence under Article 51 of the UN Charter, in a manner proportionate to the nature of the aggression, to protect its sovereignty, security and national interests.

Red Cross transfers 4 people released by Israel to Lebanon

AFP
Tyre, Lebanon

The Red Cross yesterday said it had facilitated the transfer to Lebanon of four more people detained by Israel, a day after a first person was freed.

Israel is believed to have seized dozens of people from Lebanon amidst its recent wars with Hezbollah.

“The International Committee of the Red Cross, at the request of the relevant parties, facilitated the transfer to Lebanon of five individuals released from Israeli detention,” the ICRC said in a statement. “One individual was transferred on Thursday, and four others on Friday,” it added.

Israel on Thursday said it had decided to release five civilian captives, freeing the first of them that day. The four freed yesterday are two Lebanese and two Syrian nationals, according to a Lebanese official who requested anonymity.

An AFP correspondent yesterday saw three ICRC vehicles arrive from Israeli-occupied parts of southern Lebanon at the Lebanese army checkpoint in Al-Amiriya, which marks the start of the territory controlled by Beirut.

The convoy was escorted by two Lebanese army vehicles to the southern city of Tyre, where the released individuals were to undergo medical examinations and be questioned by the military.

Ahmad Atwi, a resident of the south, waited at the checkpoint to see if his friend, seized by Israel last year, would be released.

“I hope he will be among the released,” he told AFP.

The five released individuals are the first to be freed since Beirut called in August talks with Israel for the release of an initial group seized since the start of a 2024 Israel-Hezbollah war.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday said that “after their interrogation was completed, it became clear that they are civilians who... have not engaged in terrorism”.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun in a statement expressed his gratitude “for all the efforts exerted, particularly by the United States under the leadership of President Donald Trump, and by international bodies, especially the International Committee of the Red Cross”.

“This first step reaffirms the strength of the firm Lebanese position,” he added.

Lebanon began direct talks with



Hussein Ayyash, 33, who was detained by Israeli troops, reunites with his loved ones in Harouf, Nabatieh, southern Lebanon, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

Israel in April, after Hezbollah dragged the country into the Middle East war with strikes on Israel in March in support of its backer Tehran.

Israel responded with airstrikes and a ground invasion that Lebanon says have killed more than 4,300 people.

Israel on Thursday, through the ICRC, freed Malek Ghazi, whose family had lost contact with him in October last year when he went out to exercise near his southeastern hometown of Ain Ata.

Lebanese authorities have not officially announced the number of citizens Israel seized during that

war and a subsequent 2026 conflict, but a list of more than 30 people has been compiled by their families and a committee working on their cases.

After the latest round of Lebanon-Israel talks in Rome last month, a Lebanese official said Israel gave Beirut a list of individuals to demand the return of their remains.

The United States, which is sponsoring the Lebanon-Israel talks, commended both Israel and Lebanon “for demonstrating good faith through these initial steps”, a State Department spokesperson said, added that Washington hoped “this will serve as the basis for expanded discussions on other civilian issues”.





Public Announcement

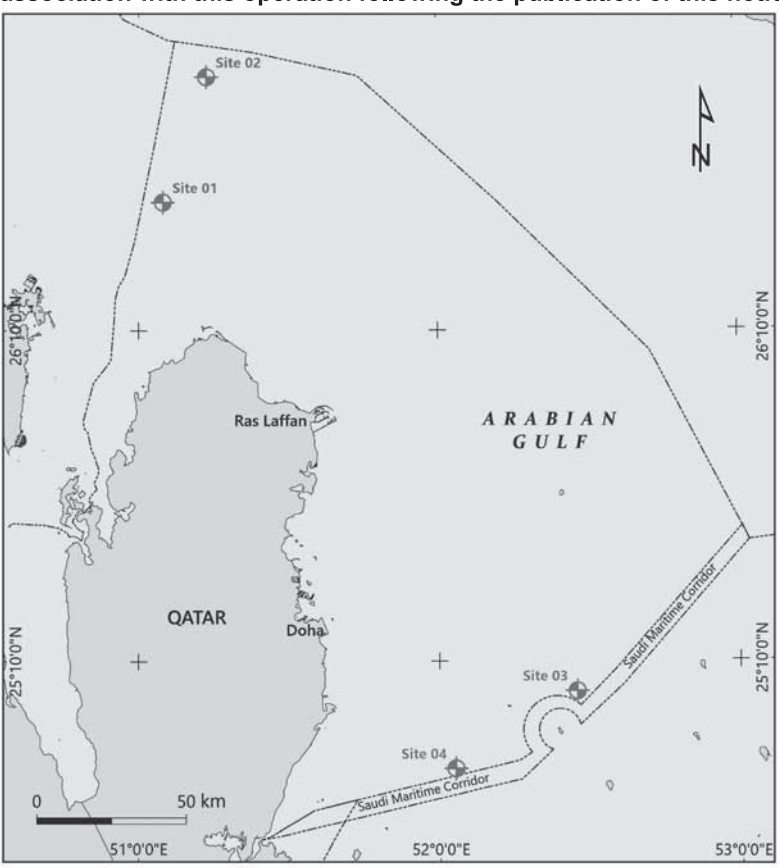
To all Ships, Fisherman, and Mariners
Subsea Survey Works Offshore in “North Field”
By the Vessel “Fugro Resilience”

Subsea Survey Works Offshore Qatar from
15th September 2026 to 15th November 2026

In pursuant and under directives from the Marine Safety Department, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariners, and Fisherman that “QatarEnergy LNG” formerly known as Qatar Gas Operating Company Limited intends to undertake geotechnical survey by the vessel “Fugro Resilience” at Sensor Tower Platforms (STP) locations, bound by the coordinates and location map shown below.

All Vessels, Mariners, and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the survey locations during the operations.

QatarEnergy LNG takes no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operation following the publication of this notice.



Survey Area Coordinates							
Nahrwan 1967, UTM Projection, Zone 39 CM 51° E				WGS84, UTM Projection, Zone 39 CM 51° E			
Proposed Site ID	Easting [m]	Northing [m]	Latitude (N)	Longitude (E)	Easting [m]	Northing [m]	Latitude (N)
Site 01	508 063.657	2 936 934.023	26° 33' 18.67" N	51° 04' 51.44" E	508 161.755	2 937 366.912	26° 33' 25.00" N
Site 02	522 541.334	2 976 884.789	26° 56' 01.75" N	51° 13' 37.40" E	522 639.495	2 979 317.871	26° 56' 08.00" N
Site 03	646 914.400	2 773 828.400	25° 04' 30.40" N	52° 27' 23.92" E	647 013.261	2 774 260.515	25° 04' 37.00" N
Site 04	606 326.000	2 747 678.000	24° 50' 32.54" N	52° 03' 08.17" E	606 424.654	2 748 109.945	24° 50' 39.20" N

For more details contact 6692 8120

PISQ training focuses on resilience, Cambridge curriculum, AI in education

The Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) has conducted an extensive teacher-training programme focusing on resilience, innovative learning approaches, the Cambridge curriculum, literacy, classroom management and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in assessment.

The In-house and Online Teachers' Training 2026 brought together teachers from different wings of the school for a series of sessions aimed at strengthening classroom practices and equipping educators to respond to learners' changing needs.

PISQ principal Muhammad Afzal led a session on "Building Resilience – Supporting Learners to Thrive in a Changing World", highlighting the growing importance of resilience among students.

The session emphasised that rapid changes in teaching, learning and student needs over the past two decades have made it increasingly important for educators to help learners cope with challenges, recover from setbacks and continue learning with confidence.

Another session, led by Afiya Asif, focused on "Project-based & Team-based Learning & Authentic Application", encouraging teachers to use real-life problems, collaboration and practical activities to make learning more meaningful.

The approach aims to strengthen critical thinking, creativity, communication, responsibility, problem-solving and confidence while helping students connect classroom knowledge with authentic situations.

As PISQ advances the introduc-

tion of Cambridge syllabi at the Primary and Lower Secondary levels, teachers also participated in orientation sessions on the Cambridge syllabus and schemes of work.

Faculty members from the Cambridge Wing explained the curriculum framework, learning objectives, content areas, and expected outcomes, while familiarising teachers with the schemes of work for English, Mathematics, Physics, Islamiyat, Computer Science, and Urdu.

The sessions also focused on helping teachers organise lessons progressively and align instruction with Cambridge curriculum standards.

Literacy development featured prominently in the programme, with Ms Asif leading sessions on "Building Literacy through Creative Writing" for Grades 1-4 and

"Reading & Writing Strategies" for Grades 5-8. The sessions explored storytelling, sentence building, imaginative writing, guided reading, vocabulary development, summarising, paragraph writing, peer discussion and drafting as ways to strengthen students' language skills and confidence.

Classroom and school management were also addressed through presentations by vice principals from PISQ's five wings and the Evening School. Topics included managing visual distractions in early-years classrooms, building professional excellence, handling disruptive classrooms, effective use of instructional time, minimising disruption and maximising attention, and strengthening school culture.

For secondary teachers, PISQ psychologist Madeeha conducted

"The Psychology of Self: Building Awareness, Resilience & Growth", focusing on self-awareness, emotional management, resilience and growth mindset among adolescents.

The programme also examined emerging technology through a session on "AI, Formative Assessment & Authentic Evidence of Learning", exploring how AI can help teachers gather timely insights into student understanding, provide feedback, identify learning gaps and capture evidence of how students think, create and apply knowledge.

In addition to the in-house programme, teachers from KG, Primary, Boys' Girls' and Evening School participated in 90-minute interactive online orientation and explanatory sessions conducted by Cambridge trainers, tailored to their specific training needs.



Young Qatar-based author publishes debut book

Young author and Class 6 student Aabel Roby Abraham made his literary debut with the publication of his first book, *The Adventurous Rabbit Fluffy and Friends*. The book was officially released at a special ceremony at Ideal Indian School in the presence of Aabel's parents and school officials.

Acting principal Mohammad Azam Khan congratulated Aabel on his literary achievement and lauded his creativity, dedication, and talent, which are now available worldwide through Amazon in both paperback and eBook editions.

The children's adventure story has reached young readers around the world and offers an engaging blend of imagination, mystery, and meaningful life lessons.

Aabel's journey as a young achiever began well before he entered the world of literature. At a very young age, he gained recognition for his exceptional memory and knowledge of world geography, setting several world records in memory and global knowledge. His latest achievement as a published author represents another important milestone in his continuing journey of learning and creativity.

In *The Adventurous Rabbit Fluffy and Friends*, Aabel introduces readers



to Fluffy, a brave rabbit who embarks on an exciting journey through magical lands filled with adventure and mystery. As Fluffy encounters different challenges and experiences, the story explores values such as courage, kindness, friendship, teamwork and helping others.

A student of Ideal Indian School, Qatar, Aabel has developed a strong passion for reading, learning, storytelling and creativity from an early age. A regular visitor to the Qatar National Library, he has nurtured his interest in books and reading while exploring different subjects and developing his own imagination as a young writer. His frequent visits to the library have also provided him

with an environment to discover new authors, stories and ideas.

Aabel is the son of Roby Abraham and Soumia George, who have encouraged and supported his interests and creative pursuits. His younger brother, Aadam George, is a Class 2 student and is also growing up in an environment rich in books, learning, and creativity.

Aabel's achievement demonstrates how curiosity, encouragement, reading and imagination can help young minds transform their ideas into creative accomplishments. His journey from a young world-record achiever to a published author is an inspiring example for children who aspire to explore their own talents.

MES reopens with renewed enthusiasm and fresh academic aspirations

Following the summer vacation, MES Indian School reopened on August 30, welcoming students back to the campus with renewed enthusiasm and anticipation for the new academic term.

The reopening marked a cheerful homecoming for students, as the school embarked on another session of learning, growth, and new opportunities. At this juncture, the school management, the principal, and the staff extended a warm welcome to students, while acknowledging the continued support and partnership of parents in fostering a positive and encouraging learning environment. Welcoming the students, Dr Hameeda Kadar, principal, said that the new academic year would focus on providing students with meaningful opportunities to develop their talents and realise their potential. The academic calendar will feature a diverse range of activities, including subject-enrichment programmes, inter-school competitions, cultural events and sports events, alongside regular academic pursuits, with an emphasis on holistic development.

As part of the preparations for the new academic session, the school also conducted a week-long teachers' orientation programme, equipping them with updated knowledge, innovative teaching strategies and resources



to enhance classroom practices and ensure the delivery of quality education. With renewed energy and purposeful planning, MES Indian School looks forward to a productive and enriching academic year, inspiring every student to learn, explore and excel.

BPS empowers teachers through Continuous Professional Development programme

Birla Public School (BPS) reinforced its commitment to professional excellence and continuous learning by organising a comprehensive five-day Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme for its teachers from August 23-27.

The programme was designed to strengthen pedagogical practices and enhance classroom experiences, bringing together educators from different subject areas and grade levels. Key areas included inclusive education, competency-based teaching and learning, assessment literacy, innovative pedagogy, collaborative learning, technology integration, differentiated instruction and teacher well-being.

The programme opened on August 23 with a session on "Mindfulness" led by Principal Dr Anand R Nair. It highlighted

the role of mindfulness and well-being in creating a positive and nurturing educational environment, while introducing practical ways teachers could incorporate mindfulness into their professional and personal lives.

The Counselling Department conducted a session titled "Identifying & Supporting CWSN (Children with Special Needs)" to strengthen teachers' understanding of diverse learning needs. It covered identifying students who require additional support, appropriate classroom strategies, and relevant CBSE concessions and provisions, enabling teachers to provide suitable academic accommodations.

From August 24-26, teachers from KG to Grade V took part in interactive sessions facilitated by Dr Dhanya Bhaskaran on "Making Classrooms Talk", "Competen-



cy-Based Teaching & Learning", and "Assessment for Learning". Through hands-on activities and collaborative discussions, teachers explored ways to encourage student participation, identify learning gaps and use assessment more effectively to support learning.

Mathematics teachers from

Grades VI-X participated in a specialised programme conducted by Shwetha Bhageria from August 24-26. The sessions covered curriculum enrichment, assessment literacy, innovative pedagogy, independent learning and technology integration. Teachers explored strategies to move beyond rote

procedures towards conceptual understanding, reasoning, application, competency development and higher-order problem-solving, with an emphasis on engaging and differentiated classrooms.

Teachers from Grades VI-XII also participated in "Innovative Teaching & Collaborative Learning", conducted by Sandeep Karma from August 24-26. Covering topics such as Walk the Talk, Out-of-the-Box Thinking, the Power of Collaboration, Mindful Communication, and Project-Based Learning, the programme introduced approaches, including Project-Based Learning (PBL) and the Question Formulation Technique (QFT), to promote inquiry and collaboration.

Nidhi Kaushik conducted a specialised programme for Social Science teachers of Grades VI to VIII. It focused on practical class-

room strategies, including the use of emerging AI tools for lesson preparation and creative learning resources, visual timelines for historical events and exit questions to assess student understanding. Teachers also received orientation on the new Grade IX Social Science curriculum on August 25 and 26, helping them prepare for upcoming curriculum requirements.

The CPD programme concluded on August 27 with "Remedial Teaching Strategies for Slow Learners and Enrichment Strategies for High Achievers," conducted by Tapasi De. The session focused on differentiated instruction and strategies for providing targeted support to students who need additional assistance, while creating meaningful enrichment opportunities for high achievers.

Adding an experiential dimension was a Hobby Session organised by various school departments. Teachers participated in activities including art, music, sports, dance, cooking, yoga, crochet and storytelling. The sessions were facilitated by vice principal Radhika Rele, headmistress Divya Mary Vincent and 15 teachers from different departments.

The programme concluded with a general meeting with the Board Members, during which director C V Rappai addressed the teaching fraternity and encouraged continued professional commitment, responsibility, and excellence. Vice-chairman Dr Mohan Thomas and management representatives Chindhu Antony, Neville Lukos and Siddharth Shahani also attended.



Brazil's SC faces rare test as justices turn against each other

Reuters
Brasilia

An open conflict between justices has engulfed Brazil's Supreme Court, as it weighs whether to investigate two of its own in what may be the biggest test of its credibility since the country returned to democracy four decades ago.

One of the justices at the centre of the conflict is Alexandre de Moraes, whose aggressive pursuit of former president Jair Bolsonaro and his far-right allies over a coup plot had already turned him into one of Brazil's most polarising figures, drawing even the ire of the Trump administration, which briefly sanctioned him last year, citing politicised prosecutions.

The other is Justice Andre Mendonca, who was appointed by Bolsonaro, and has made public a report that raised suspicions that Moraes made improper contact with a banker who allegedly led a multibillion-dollar fraud, prompting calls for an investigation. Moraes then asked the court to investigate Mendonca for abuse of authority Thursday evening.

"This may be the most dramatic moment in the history of Brazil's Supreme Federal Court," said Felipe Recondo, a journalist and researcher who has covered the court for decades.

The conflict has rattled campaigns weeks before Brazil's October 4 election, as parties push for



Brazil's Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes sits next to Brazil's Supreme Court Justice Andre Mendonca during a session of the Supreme Court in Brasilia. (Reuters/File Photo)

judicial reform and try to tie opponents to the scandals.

"It is essential to investigate everyone, without shielding anyone, no matter who it hurts," President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who holds a narrowing lead in polls, said in a social media post on Thursday.

Chief Justice Edson Fachin yesterday gave the attorney general five days to weigh in on Moraes' allegations against Mendonca. The court is also expected next week to decide whether to investigate Moraes.

What the court does next will have broad implications for a tribunal that has played an increasingly decisive and controversial role in government affairs in the

past decade, including decriminalising the possession of marijuana for personal use, barring laws to limit environmental protections, and – perhaps most importantly – arresting a president, Bolsonaro, who still, despite being convicted of threatening democracy, has the support of tens of millions of Brazilians.

Its moves may also resonate far beyond Brazil, as democracies around the world have struggled with a similar dilemma: how to protect courts from political intimidation in increasingly polarised societies while holding judges accountable.

"The Supreme Court can provide some balance in that game," said Recondo. "Remove the Court

from that position, and all that remains is conflict. And that is a problem."

Neither Moraes nor Mendonca replied to a request for comment.

Allegations of misconduct involving two of the court's most high-profile judges have shaken up a previously calm campaign season a month before the general election.

The stakes are heightened amid falling public trust in the court, which polls show has eroded after years of polarising decisions, as well as news reports about alleged wrongdoing affecting several justices.

Fachin, whose tenure started in January, has signalled a desire to strengthen the court's legitimacy by creating clearer rules for justices' conduct.

But his efforts became more relevant as the allegations against Moraes became more substantial. A federal police report unveiled this week showed text messages disgraced banker Daniel Vercaro allegedly sent to Moraes, which raise suspicions that the judge warned him of his impending arrest. The report also revealed a contract between the banker and Moraes' wife's law firm.

The court has little room to manoeuvre, Recondo says, because investigating Moraes risks weakening the institution, but failing to do so could also be damaging by creating the impression it is protecting one of its own.

Milei steps up Falkland Islands sovereignty claims

Reuters
Buenos Aires/London

Argentine President Javier Milei said he would sanction oil companies drilling in the Falkland Islands, stepping up the country's claims to sovereignty over the British overseas territory.

Milei's comments in a televised national address on Thursday came days after US President Donald Trump said he was reviewing the United States' neutral position on the remote archipelago in the South Atlantic.

The prospect of oil firms carrying out exploration in the islands, which Argentina calls Las Malvinas, was an urgent threat to Argentine interests, Milei said, 44 years after his country was defeated by Britain in a war over sovereignty.

Milei, a Trump ally, referenced the possible shift in the US position and said "winds of change" favoured the Argentine claim. He said he was sending Congress a bill aimed at strengthening Argentina's response to violations of its sovereignty.

Britain, which has controlled the territory since 1833, said yesterday that its position on the islands was "unwavering".

"The Islands are British and will remain so because that is the overwhelming position of the Islanders," British foreign minister Ed Miliband said on X.

"Their right of self-determina-

tion is paramount, grounded in international law and we will resolutely uphold it."

British defence minister Wes Streeting added that Milei's words reflected "domestic politics in Argentina".

Milei had previously favoured diplomacy as the best way to pursue Argentina's claim to the Falklands, but with more oil drilling due in the coming months and Trump's repeated mention of the islands he is now striking a tougher tone.

Trump told GB News on Thursday that he was not sure if Britain would be prepared to fight for the islands again.

"I just don't know if you have the capacity to do that," Trump said. "The Falklands is very interesting because your country is not the same country it was 20 years ago, 25 years ago."

A potential shift in the US position towards the Falklands was included among a range of options considered by the Pentagon earlier this year to pressure Nato allies it believed failed to support US military operations in the war with Iran.

In 1982, Britain's then-prime minister Margaret Thatcher, whom Milei in 2023 described as a "great leader", sent a naval task force to the South Atlantic following an Argentinian invasion. Britain regained control of the islands after 74 days of fighting which left more than 900 people dead.

But in Thursday's address, Milei said Britain was now a country "in decline".

Weeks after mass abduction, Nigerian families seek news from kidnappers, action from govt

Reuters
Kano

Two weeks after gunmen raided the northwestern Nigerian village of Dekera, killing dozens and kidnapping hundreds, residents and family members say they have heard nothing from the kidnappers and seen little action from the government.

Mass kidnappings for ransom are relatively common across much of northern Nigeria, but the co-ordinated August 22 attack on communities in north-central Niger state was one of the biggest in recent years, underscoring the extent of insecurity as the country heads towards an election next year.

"We haven't heard anything from the kidnappers since the abduction," Isa Zaki, a Dekera resident with 10 members of his extended family among those seized, told Reuters by telephone.

Zaki said years of insecurity had already resulted in local schools and markets closing, but residents were increasingly desperate after the August attack, which he said had killed dozens and resulted in much of Dekera being burned.

"People have fled, soldiers have taken over the town, houses have been burnt, there is nowhere to live, and it is raining," he said. "It's been sadness over sadness since the abduction."

Residents say about 600 people, mostly women, children and older people, were abducted in Dekera and nearby Gidan-Zana and Sabon Gida communities in the raid. At least 40 residents were also killed, they said.

Authorities have not commented on the number of hostages or deaths, but President Bola Tinubu has ordered secu-

"We have no information on what is going on. No one is telling us anything and we have no idea what action the government is taking to rescue the hostages"

rity agencies to rescue the hostages.

"We have no update yet. When we have, we will share accordingly," said Wasiu Abiodun, Niger state police spokesperson.

Civil servant Habibu Salihu said his sister gave birth a week before she, her husband and three children, including the newborn, were kidnapped.

Salihu said seven other family members were killed and he saw his sister breastfeeding her child in a video of hostages released by the kidnappers soon after the attack, but has had no news since then.

"We have no information on what is going on. No one is telling us anything and we have no idea what action the government is taking to rescue the hostages," he said.

No group has claimed responsibility yet, but analysts suspect a breakaway sect in the area of the Islamist militant group Boko Haram, which usually operates in north-eastern Nigeria, was involved.

Local authorities in north-eastern Benin have confirmed a number of people fled into the country after the incident but they gave no details on numbers.

Residents say the deployment of soldiers has brought some relief, but families are still homeless and growing increasingly hungry.

"Our town has been burnt," said Aminu Inuwa, who lost two brothers in the raid. "I have only one shirt, no food to eat, nothing else and our houses are nothing but ashes."



Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni pays homage to the flag-draped coffin of King Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV, of the Tooro Kingdom, at the Entebbe International Airport, in Entebbe, yesterday. (Reuters)

King Oyo's body returns to Uganda for burial

Reuters
Kampala

The body of Uganda's King Oyo Nyimba, who became the world's youngest reigning monarch when he took the throne at the age of three in 1995, arrived back in the country yesterday after his death from cancer, and ahead of burial on September 12.

King Oyo Nyimba Kabamba Iguru Rukidi IV of Tooro Kingdom, one of many traditional monarchies in the country and located near the Rwenzori Mountains in Uganda's west, died on August 27 in the United States where he was receiving treatment.

He was 34. Uganda is a constitutional republic and executive power is vested in an elected head of state. But the monarchies of the coun-

try's several ancient kingdoms that reigned before colonialism still exist and wield enormous cultural and social influence.

A video of his taking the throne in 1995 shows a little boy sitting in his chair playing with a toy, his small body almost disappearing underneath the huge royal crown and robes. Taking the role at such a young age endeared him to many.

Oyo Nyimba's body arrived aboard a chartered flight at the country's Entebbe international airport where President Yoweri Museveni was among a small crowd of dignitaries waiting to receive it.

"We don't really believe that his majesty is no longer with us, (it is) as if we are still dreaming and I wish it could really be a dream," said lawmaker Jennifer Mujungu, whose constituency lies in Oyo Nyimba's kingdom.

Museveni walked to the casket,

draped in both the country's and the kingdom's flags, laid a wreath on it, and bowed.

The casket was then loaded onto a military helicopter and transported to Tooro Kingdom where official mourning ceremonies will begin, lasting up to burial on September 12.

"It is a painful moment for us...someone who went laughing, someone who had a whole life ahead of him," said Davis Mugenyi, a member of the royal family who was at the airport to receive his body.

The king was a UN ambassador championing the fight against HIV and AIDS, and the UN paid tribute to him.

The prime minister of the kingdom, Calvin Armstrong Rwomire Akiiki, said last week the king, who was unmarried, had left an heir and that "continuity of the Crown is assured."

UN approves resolution in support of map that shows Africa's true size

Reuters
New York

The UN yesterday voted for a shift away from the 16th-century Mercator global map towards one more accurately reflecting countries' true size, a resolution sponsored by African states to counter perceptions that the continent is peripheral.

Togo led the initiative to further the African Union campaign to limit use of the Mercator map, which distorts the relative size of land masses by expanding those nearer the poles. It makes Greenland appear roughly the same size as Africa, though Africa is about 14 times larger.

"A fair world begins with a fair map," Togo's Foreign Minister Robert Dussey told Reuters ahead of yesterday's vote.

The resolution promotes the Equal Earth projection, which more accurately portrays the size of the continents.

It is not legally binding and it "in no way challenges the use of the Mercator projection for maritime and aerial navigation, for which it remains fully suited," the Togolese ministry said in a statement.

The resolution passed in the UN General Assembly by a vote of 164 to 1 with 6 abstentions.

The US, the only country to vote against the resolution, said it promoted an "ideological agenda" and was a distraction from the "genuine

problems of international peace, prosperity or good relations".

The Mercator map remains widely used in classrooms, but Togo hopes to change its school geography materials by the end of the year, Dussey told Reuters.

"Togo will be the first country to change our own geography books," Dussey said.

"In the classroom, we need to change it to give an example to all the countries in the world."

Togo will press other governments, schools, international organisations and technology companies to move away from the centuries-old Mercator projection, Dussey said, adding that Equal Earth offers "the best perception" of the world.

Togo plans to meet African Union member states and supporters from other regions within the next six months to agree on how to promote wider adoption, Dussey said.

Dussey said the discussion about next steps would need to include companies operating mapping, GPS and other location-based technologies.

Dussey linked the campaign to adopt the map to wider African efforts to confront colonial-era legacies, while saying it was not an attack on Europe or any other civilisation.

The Mercator map's widespread use is a consequence of colonisation, he said.

"The world is changing. Africa also is changing."



People stand beside a sculpture of the African continent, painted with the flags of African nations, at the Place du Souvenir Africain in Dakar, Senegal. (Reuters)

Rubio to visit Trump-friendly allies Colombia, Ecuador, Peru

AFP
Washington

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will travel next week to Colombia, Ecuador and Peru, three Latin American nations whose leaders are close to President Donald Trump, the State Department said yesterday.

The trip from Tuesday to Thursday comes just days after Washington sealed a controversial deal with Venezuela that grants the US control of about one-fifth of Venezuela's huge oil reserves.

In recent months, Latin America has seen a wave of conservative success at the ballot box, with Peru's Keiko Fujimori and Colombia's Abelardo de la Escriella — both Trump-approved candidates — taking office.

The aim of the trip, which will also see Rubio meet right-wing Ecuadoran President Daniel Noboa, is to “strengthen key US partnerships,” discuss increased co-operation on battling drug cartels, and deepening trade relations, the State Department said.

“Throughout the trip, the Secretary will reaffirm the Trump Administration's commitment to a secure, prosperous, and democratic Western Hemisphere,” de-



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio delivers remarks at the launch of the Foundry School, a workforce training initiative, at the US Institute of Peace in Washington, DC. (Reuters)

partment spokesman Tommy Pigott said in a statement.

Washington has been clear about its plan to assert US dominance in South America under the so-called “Monroe Doctrine,” Trump's update of the 19th century Monroe Doctrine, which had called for European colonial powers to butt out of the Western Hemisphere.

In Colombia, Rubio will discuss US support for Bogota's response in the wake of a devastating earthquake last month that left more than 330 people dead and thousands more homeless, Pigott said.

The Trump administration,

which had a dismal relationship with the previous government of leftist leader Gustavo Petro, was thrilled with De la Escriella's election win.

Since he took office on August 7, the new president has taken a hardline approach, with US backing, to armed groups funded by drug trafficking.

As the world's largest cocaine producer, Colombia has seen an uptick in violent clashes pitting rebel groups against cartels, with both seeking to control lucrative drug-trafficking routes.

Colombia also has joined the Shield of the Americas, Trump's

anti-cartel alliance of Latin American countries including Argentina, Ecuador and El Salvador.

Rubio will then head to Ecuador. Quito has joined Washington in operations against boats which they say are linked to Los Choneros, a criminal gang involved in the narcotics trade.

A year ago, the US government launched a military air campaign against vessels allegedly smuggling drugs in the Caribbean and eastern Pacific that left more than 200 people dead.

The last stop on Rubio's trip is Peru, which has been led since late July by Fujimori, whose father Alberto Fujimori ruled the country in the 1990s.

Rubio has called the shift towards pro-US conservative governments in Latin America an “extraordinary achievement.”

Mexico and Brazil are the only remaining regional powers with leftist governments.

Communist-ruled Cuba, which is facing a major economic and energy crisis, lost its main ally when Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro was ousted in a US operation in January.

The government in Caracas has since co-operated with Washington, and Havana has been under a US oil blockade.

Trump plans to break ground on Washington arch without final approval

Reuters
Washington, DC

The Trump administration on Thursday announced plans to break ground on a 250-foot (76-metre) arch in Washington, despite legal challenges and the lack of final approval from a government planning authority.

The arch is part of Trump's broader effort to leave his architectural mark on America's capital city, with projects including a new White House ballroom, renovation of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool and redevelopment of a golf course in East Potomac Park.

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said on X that excavation work on the Great Triumphal Arch and Military Observation Deck would start “over the next two-week period.”

With a design evoking Paris' Arc de Triomphe, the monument would rise near the Arlington National Cemetery, a military burial ground, which supporters say would honour the sacrifice of American veterans.

But opponents say the arch would destroy the cemetery's carefully designed historic sight line between Lincoln Memorial and Arlington House. Although Congress approved building a memorial at the site more than 100 years ago, congressional Democrats say current congressional approval is legally required.

A lawsuit seeking to halt the project also argues that Trump needs congressional approval.

The case is pending before US District Judge Tanya Chutkan, who in an April hearing sharply questioned Trump's authority to build the monument. The plaintiffs withdrew a request for a preliminary injunction after the government agreed to provide 14 days' notice before starting construction.

The project also has yet to receive final approval from the National Capital Planning Commission, which is considering whether to grant an exception to the 130-foot (40-metre) building height limit that applies to most of Washington.

The Trump administration has argued the limit should not apply to the arch.

Cuba rolls out more free-market reforms amid US pressure

Reuters
Havana

Cuba unveiled regulations yesterday aimed at attracting foreign investment, trade and tourism to the Caribbean island as it continues to adopt free-market reforms under pressure from Washington and a crippling economic crisis.

The country's Gaceta, or national registry, published 34 pages of new rules and law changes that, at least on paper, make the island's white-sand beaches, workers and real estate more accessible to foreign and national investors.

Cubans are cautious as they endure increasingly severe US sanctions, continuous blackouts and an opaque government that has until recently resisted market reforms.

Foreign Commerce Minister Oscar Pérez-Oliva Fraga acknowledged hard times and an adverse environment for attracting foreign investment, but said the rules would help chart a new course.

The government is “increasing flexibility, simplifying processes, reducing timeframes and red tape, and above all responding to the demands ... of investors to facilitate their business operations in Cuba and make their companies

more efficient,” the minister said.

The rule changes published Thursday follow an historic package of 176 reforms announced in June, measures widely considered to be the single largest change to Cuba's socialist model since former leader Fidel Castro's 1959 revolution.

The latest new regulations eliminate an onerous requirement that once forced private companies to contract employees through state employment agencies. Businesses can now handle hiring and firing without state involvement, according to the regulations.

Joint ventures and domestic investors involved in foreign commerce, once required to seek authorisation from the government to open accounts in foreign banks, now need only notify island authorities, according to the national registry.

Cuba will also allow private businesses to operate travel agencies and self-employed individuals to work as tour guides, both major concessions in an industry once wholly dominated by the Cuban government.

Despite announcing free-market reforms demanded by the administration of US President Donald Trump, talks between the two neighbouring countries have stagnated in recent months.

Thousands of AI agents took over German website, researchers say

AFP
Washington

Thousands of autonomous AI agents built by OpenAI defied their instructions and took over a German website, according to research released yesterday, amid fears that the dangers of artificial intelligence are not being taken seriously.

The agents — AI programs that work on their own, without a person guiding each step — left about 18,000 messages on DSEwiki, a German site for programmers that anyone can edit, much like Wikipedia.

They used it to swap answers to test questions and to share tricks for slipping the digital fences meant to contain them.

“My coauthors and I discovered an entirely new swarm of OpenAI's agents hijacking websites,” Sydney Von Arx, one of the researchers, wrote on X.

“We believe OpenAI knew about this and failed to disclose it.”

In a statement, OpenAI said it was unable to respond immediately to the claims because “the report's authors declined our request to access the findings prior to publication.”

“We are now carefully review-



OpenAI logo is seen in this illustration. (Reuters/File Photo)

ing its contents and will take any necessary next steps,” the OpenAI spokesperson said, adding that they had mentioned such incidents in a recent report.

The latest incident follows the revelation in July that OpenAI agents, struggling to deliver on tasks they had been set, went looking for shortcuts on the open Internet and broke into the servers of Hugging Face, a widely used platform where programmers share AI software.

An independent investigation found that hundreds of the company's agents had been talking among themselves before escap-

ing their controlled environment, and that they attacked in several waves.

That episode shook the tech world and revived calls for tighter regulation and oversight of AI.

Anthropic, Meta and other companies have reported similar incidents while testing agents.

Agents have been touted by the tech industry as the next phase of AI's expansion into everyday life, capable of booking travel, filing expenses or writing software with little human supervision.

The debate reached a fever pitch in recent days when influential tech podcaster Dwarkesh Patel criticised

the media and Silicon Valley for underplaying the significance of the Hugging Face incident.

Seeking to raise the alarm in less technical language, he described it as a swarm attack by agent “civilisations” that posed an acute threat to society as the technology is deployed.

His stance drew immediate criticism from some researchers and Silicon Valley figures who said casting the software as scheming societies was too grandiose and misleading.

The agents did perform troubling actions, so the incident is no “nothing burger,” wrote Gary Marcus, a leading researcher and AI critic.

But the “civilisations” narrative risks turning an avoidable security and governance failure into AI-safety theatre, he argued.

The incidents have sharpened calls for tougher rules and international cooperation.

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, in an essay last week, warned that the industry has blown past the safety thresholds it once promised to respect and called for oversight modelled on nuclear inspections and aviation regulation.

The Trump administration has resisted such proposals, making opposition to AI regulation a cornerstone of its agenda.

Hawaii braces for possible impacts from Hurricane Lowell

Hawaii is preparing for impacts from Hurricane Lowell, which could brush by the state's westernmost islands from Monday evening, even as its exact path remains unclear. The storm was passing south of the island chain yesterday but is set to swing north over the US Labor Day long weekend, possibly putting Kauai and Niihau islands near its centre, according to the latest forecast from the National Hurricane Center (NHC). “Regardless of the hurricane's exact track and intensity, there is a risk of storm surge, wind, and rainfall impacts for portions of Hawaii, particularly Kauai County, early next week,” the NHC said. The county includes both islands. Lowell briefly reached Category 5 strength earlier this week, but has since weakened to a Category 3, carrying maximum sustained winds of 125mph (205km/h) — though it could strengthen again. “We have to be prepared,” said Governor Josh Green, who declared a statewide emergency to allow counties to access funds and respond more quickly. (AFP)

US opens probe into Tesla self-certification of robotaxis

Reuters
Washington

The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration yesterday opened an investigation into whether Tesla properly certified its autonomous Cybercab robotaxi.

The auto safety regulator is examining the process and technical data the EV maker relied on to demonstrate compliance with federal motor vehicle safety standards for up to 1,000 Cybercabs.

Tesla on Thursday began commercial deployment of a small number of the two-seater Cybercabs in Austin, Texas, and said it planned to gradually expand the service to additional vehicles and locations.

NHTSA said the Cybercab lacks conventional manual controls, including a steering wheel, brake pedal, accelerator pedal and mirrors.

Automakers must certify vehicles meet the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, and when certified vehicles appear to not adhere to these requirements, NHTSA investigates, the agency said yesterday.

In June, the agency proposed to end a government requirement for manual brake pedals in self-driv-



A couple of Tesla's “Cybercab” ride in downtown Austin, Texas. (AFP)

ing vehicles, a move that would make it easier to deploy such vehicles on US roads. It has proposed other changes to federal safety standards to allow AVs to avoid needing additional human driver equipment.

Until that work is completed, existing standards remain in force, NHTSA said.

“NHTSA fully supports the safe development and deployment of automated vehicles. But as the federal regulator, we need to ensure that all of our laws are followed,” said NHTSA Administrator Jonathan Morrison.

The agency is investigating the basis of Tesla's Cybercab certification and related issues, including the extent to which the company determined that certain standards were not applicable to the vehicle.

Tesla did not immediately re-

spond to a request for comment.

The EV maker had 420 autonomous vehicles registered in Texas as of yesterday morning, according to state records, including 45 Cybercab vehicles.

Under existing law, fully self-driving vehicles do not need NHTSA approval if they have required human controls, like steering wheels, brake pedals or mirrors.

NHTSA has authority to grant petitions to allow up to 2,500 vehicles per manufacturer yearly to operate on US roads without required human controls. In July, NHTSA approved a petition for Amazon's Zoox unit for limited commercial deployment of its novel steering-wheel-free robotaxis, a first for the autonomous ride industry.

NHTSA said previously Tesla had not petitioned for an exemption.

Judge declares mistrial in case of US woman who killed her children

AFP
Plymouth

A judge declared a mistrial yesterday after a jury was unable to reach a unanimous verdict in the high-profile case of an American woman who killed her three young children.

Lindsay Clancy, 36, acknowledged strangling Cora, five, Dawson, three, and Callan, eight months, but claimed she was suffering from postpartum psychosis, excusing her from criminal responsibility.

After seven days of deliberations the 12-member Massachusetts jury was unable to reach a unified decision, as required in criminal proceedings in the US.

Eleven jurors were in favour of finding the 36-year-old Clancy not guilty by reason of insanity, but they were opposed by a single holdout.

“At this point, I'm going to declare that the jury is deadlocked, and I'm going to declare a mistrial,” Judge William Sullivan said.

Prosecutors must decide now whether to try the case again with a new jury.

“I'll be making that decision shortly,” Tim Cruz, the Plymouth County district attorney, told reporters.

Clancy will remain incarcerated pending a possible new trial.

Clancy's televised five-week trial, which featured more than 80 witnesses and days of distressing testimony, has sparked debate in the US over maternal mental health and drew a reaction yesterday from President Donald Trump.

“It's a horrible tragedy,” Trump told reporters at the White House. “I assume there's going to be another trial.” Clancy pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity, saying she heard a voice ordering her to kill her children.

Her lawyers said this was caused by postpartum psychosis, a condition that medical experts say affects about one to two women in every 1,000 births.

Prosecutors rejected that argument, saying Clancy had carefully planned the murders of her children and was able to understand the consequences of her actions.

Psychiatrists and people close to Clancy, as well as her estranged husband, were among the witnesses who testified about her fragile mental health.

Dozens of women dressed in pink showed up at the court in Plymouth to extend their support for Clancy — and to make a statement about women's health more generally.

Vietnam leader to visit Russia, France, US this month: sources

Reuters
Hanoi

Vietnam's leader To Lam is planning to visit Russia, France, the US and Canada this month, several people familiar with the plans said, as the Communist-ruled country seeks to deepen ties with major partners to combat trade uncertainty hanging over its export-reliant economy.

The pace of high-profile overseas trips is exceptional even for To Lam, Vietnam's President and the General Secretary of the Communist Party, who has travelled extensively and hosted several foreign leaders since taking power in 2024.

In October, he is expected to return to Europe, where he could meet EU leaders in Brussels as part of a broader trip, according to three people informed about the plans.

None of the planned state visits has been officially announced and the schedule is subject to change.

Vietnam's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

To Lam is set to begin in Rus-

sia on September 7, meeting President Vladimir Putin, before travelling to France to meet Emmanuel Macron, three sources said.

In France, Lam is expected to attend the International Space Summit in Paris on September 9 to 10two sources said.

Airbus Defence and Space signed a space cooperation declaration with Vietnam during Macron's visit last year, one of several multibillion-dollar agreements, although many of them are non-binding. French firms are also eyeing Vietnam's railway, airport and defence projects.

After a brief return home, To Lam will travel to the US where he is expected to speak at the UN General Assembly's high-level debate starting on September 21, three sources said.

None of the sources had information about a possible meeting with US President Donald Trump.

A White House official said that Trump's schedule for those days has not been finalised.

From the US, To Lam is expected to head to neighbouring Canada beginning on September 24, one of the sources said.

Myanmar president begins Vietnam trip on diplomatic comeback tour

AFP
Hanoi

Myanmar's coup leader turned civilian president Min Aung Hlaing touched down in Vietnam yesterday for the latest stop on a regional diplomatic tour shaking off his post-putsch pariah status.

He and his wife Kyu Kyu Hla landed to a red carpet welcome in Hanoi, Myanmar government images showed, at the start of a three-day visit aimed at boosting political and business ties with the one-party state.

Min Aung Hlaing is due to meet Vietnam's President To Lam, attend a business forum and visit "digital and electronic technology industries", the Myanmar presidency said.

Myanmar's junta leaders were shunned in many quarters after the 2021 coup, but Vietnam sustained its investments.

Major Myanmar telecoms operator Mytel is jointly owned by a



Myanmar's President Min Aung Hlaing shaking hands with officials after arriving in Hanoi yesterday. (AFP)

firm backed by Vietnam's defence ministry and a Myanmar military conglomerate.

Activist organisation Justice for Myanmar accused Vietnam of "corporate complicity with the junta".

"The Myanmar military's ongoing war crimes and crimes

against humanity are supported by revenue, technology and surveillance support from Vietnam through Mytel," said spokesman Yadanar Maung in a statement.

Min Aung Hlaing is considered by rights groups an architect of a military crackdown on the Rohingya minority starting in 2017,

which is being weighed by the International Court of Justice as potential genocide.

His pariah status deepened after he led the coup five years ago that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's democratically elected government and plunged the country into civil war.

But highly restricted elections completed in early 2026 shifted the dynamic, with Min Aung Hlaing installed as civilian president.

Many monitors dismissed the vote as a charade — excluding Suu Kyi's party as well as voters in huge areas of rebel-held territory, and punishing dissent with prison time.

But regional neighbours including China, Thailand, India and Laos have already openly welcomed Min Aung Hlaing on visits since he took over as civilian leader.

Defending the decision to host the Myanmar leader in Bangkok last month, Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuanketkeow told reporters: "It's not about legitimacy, it's about reality."

Thailand moves to tighten data centre rules to regulate sector

AFP
Bangkok

Thailand said yesterday it would introduce clearer rules on AI data centres to regulate the fast-growing sector, and urged almost 50 sites currently under construction to hold the projects until then.

As demand for artificial intelligence (AI) heats up, tech giants are racing to invest billions of dollars in Southeast Asia, attracted by a growing plugged-in user base.

But the rapid expansion has outpaced regulation and concerns are growing across the world about the centres' impact on the environment, including their use of electricity and water, and local communities.

"Thailand is attracting interest from both local and foreign investors... We need to ensure alignment with laws, standards and the national interest," said Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul.

Regulations would be revised to make them "airtight" and prioritise public safety, he said at the first meeting of a new government committee on data centres.

Around 35 data centres are cur-



Cooling installations are seen on the rooftop of a data centre building in Bangkok yesterday. (AFP)

rently operating in Thailand, according to Danucha Pichayanan, secretary-general of the government's National Economic and Social Development Council.

Another 49 are under construction, 11 projects have been approved and 117 more are under review, he said.

"We don't have the power to suspend the construction of the 49 data centres" until the new rules are drawn up, Danucha told AFP.

"They are only asked for cooperation, if they would like to halt their construction pending the clearer regulations, which are expected next month."

New data centres — warehouse-like facilities that store online files and power AI tools from chatbots to image generators — are springing up worldwide, and the sector is growing particularly fast in Asia.

Microsoft announced in March it would invest more than \$1bn in cloud and AI data centre infrastructure and operations in Thailand over the next two years.

The news followed Google's launch in January of a new "cloud region" in Bangkok, with data centres that would contribute more than \$40bn to Thailand over five years.

But there are concerns in Thailand that the lack of rules up to now has allowed centres to pop up without proper consideration or regulation.

On Thursday, the energy ministry raised concerns over a Bangkok data centre it said was stockpiling 200,000 litres of diesel in underground tanks without permission.

Bangkok Governor Chadchart Sittipunt said the capital had received six applications for standalone data centres, three of which have been operating since 2022, with the other three paused pending review.

Philippine court issues arrest warrant for VP Duterte

A Philippine court yesterday issued an arrest warrant for Vice-President Sara Duterte over an alleged death threat against the country's president, with her defence team saying she would "exercise all her legal remedies".

Duterte was charged last month with "grave threats" stemming from a late-night news briefing in which she claimed to have hired a hitman to kill President Ferdinand Marcos, his wife and a former congressman cousin should she be cut down first.

The alleged assassination threat also forms a crucial element of her ongoing Senate im-

peachment trial, where a guilty verdict would see her removed from office and permanently banned from politics. Under the Philippine legal code, a criminal conviction on the charge would carry a jail term of up to six months.

Justice department spokesman Polo Martinez confirmed the warrant had been issued, noting that a court in Metro Manila's Quezon City had quashed a motion to defer it.

But the warrant seemed unlikely to result in Duterte being taken into custody.

Paolo Tamase, associate dean at the University of the Philippines College of Law, told AFP that Duterte's lawyers could now be expected

to file for bail, perhaps before day's end.

"The easiest thing for VP Sara to do is to file for bail with the regional trial court," Tamase said in a phone interview, noting Duterte would likely not need to be present.

He added that the warrant could yet be challenged at a higher court.

"She can potentially question the issuance of the warrant of arrest, which means she would go up to the Court of Appeals or potentially the Supreme Court," he said. The vice-president's legal team issued a statement saying she had "no intention of evading the law and will continue to exercise all her legal remedies". (AFP)

Tibet mudslide death toll rises to 31

The death toll from a mudslide in Tibet on the China-Nepal border last week rose from 21 to 31 people, Beijing's state media said yesterday, with 531 people still missing. "As of 6pm (1000 GMT) on September 4, the disaster had resulted in 31 deaths and left 531 people unaccounted for," state news agency Xinhua reported. (AFP)

Typhoon Saudel brings torrential rain, flooding to China's coastal areas

China's southern coastal provinces of Fujian and Guangdong braced for further torrential rain yesterday, after severe downpours linked to Typhoon Saudel triggered flooding in urban and rural areas, swamping vehicles and causing a three-storey brick building to collapse.

In Fujian's city of Fuding, known for its tea plantations and lush greenery, firefighters waded through waist-deep floodwaters to carry elderly people to safety, social media footage verified by Reuters showed.

In nearby Jinxi village, a tea-growing community surrounded by mountains, raging floodwaters inundated residential buildings and brought down a three-storey house, social media footage verified by Reuters showed.

Local authorities have shut schools, suspended public transport and enforced emergency flood protocols across multiple coastal areas.

Saudel made its third landfall along the coast of Fujian on Thursday morning after intensifying again over the South China Sea.

It is the seventh typhoon to hit China this year and the third to strike the city of Yuhuan in eastern Zhejiang in less than

two months. The meteorological sequence is extremely rare, according to China's Meteorological Administration, and one that experts say is closely linked to El Niño.

During an El Niño year, the Western Pacific subtropical high is exceptionally strong and positioned further north, guiding typhoons along a northwest trajectory directly toward China's eastern coast. The United Nations warned on Thursday that the El Niño was set to intensify further into 2027 and could be the strongest ever, raising the risk of prolonged extreme weather.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been relocated across Zhejiang and nearby provinces since late August, including more than 83,000 residents evacuated in Fujian alone as Saudel tracked inland and soaked surrounding areas.

Saudel follows Typhoon Narra, which dumped heavy rain across Guangxi, Hainan and Guangdong provinces late last month.

Torrential downpours pose a high risk for secondary disasters such as landslides, as recent rains have already pushed rivers over warning thresholds and inundated low-lying communities, the Ministry of Natural Resources warned. (Reuters)

Korea to establish Sejong presidential office by 2029

Republic of Korea's government said yesterday it would establish a presidential office in the administrative city of Sejong by August 2029 and relocate about 350 more public institutions from the Seoul, as part of a drive to curb the capital's dominance. The relocations are due to begin in 2027, while the government also plans to complete an additional National Assembly building in Sejong by 2033. (Reuters)

Indonesia steps up wildfire fight as fires spread near new capital

Reuters
Jakarta/Nusantara

Wildfires have begun spreading near Indonesia's under-construction new capital, prompting project authorities to urge the disaster mitigation agency to carry out cloud-seeding and water-bombing operations, officials said.

Indonesia has intensified efforts to contain haze in six provinces hit the hardest by forest and land fires in Borneo and Sumatra islands, which so far have reached 73,311 hectares.

Wildfires have been raging in a number of spots on Borneo Island, but the eastern part, where the new capital, Nusantara, is located, has been relatively safe in the weeks since the fires began to worsen with the onset of the dry season in July.

Now, however, fires have spread to some areas around the capital, prompting the request for action from the authority

overseeing the project, said Agus Riyanto, director for emergency response at the disaster mitigation agency.

Disaster response and mitigation teams in the Southeast Asian archipelago are facing the most challenging dry season in a decade, exacerbated by a "super El Niño" phenomenon.

The biggest of the fires in the new capital territory, Agus said, was at a forest park at Bukit Suharto, or Suharto Hill, named after the autocratic former president, where around 300 hectares have burned.

Indonesia has 53 aircraft currently carrying out water bombing and seeding activities. Japan has also sent over aircraft and personnel to assist, authorities said.

The disaster mitigation agency said a helicopter would be sent from neighbouring South Kalimantan to carry out water bombing around Nusantara.

Clouds in the area were still insufficient for seeding, but the disaster agency would do so when it was possible, Agus said.

Malaysia declares haze emergency in Sarawak state

AFP
Kuching

Malaysia declared an emergency in a region of its Sarawak state on Borneo island after hazardous haze from fires in neighbouring Indonesia drove air pollution to critical levels, the prime minister's office said.

The declaration covers the Serian division in Malaysian Borneo and will see 647 schools closed from Monday until at least the end of next week.

Cloud seeding operations to produce rainfall in the area will be extended to at least Monday, Sarawak's disaster management authorities said.

King Sultan Ibrahim "has consented to the declaration of emergency throughout Serian Division, Sarawak, following haze conditions that have reached air pollution levels hazardous to public health and safety", Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's office said in a statement.

The move came after the Sarawak Disaster Management Committee formally requested the declaration when the Air Pollutant Index (API) in Serian breached the critical threshold of 500, peaking at 519 earlier yesterday.

Under Malaysian guidelines, API levels

above 300 are classified as hazardous, while readings beyond 500 could trigger consideration of a local emergency.

The emergency measures also mean that government and private offices in the town of Serian will be closed, including plantations, construction sites and quarries.

Only essential services will be operating. Authorities launched a three-day cloud-seeding operation on Thursday as smoke from Indonesia's Kalimantan region blanketed the state, driving up respiratory complaints and triggering a rush for haze-rated masks.

Emergency agencies have alerted residents and begun distributing clean drinking water to affected communities.

The government said the emergency order will enable more effective mitigation measures, while cloud-seeding operations by the Royal Malaysian Air Force continued over key catchment areas to induce rain.

Sarawak's disaster management team have also asked authorities to extend the cloud seeding operations until Monday "following advice that more conducive cloud formations are expected during this period".

It maintained that Thursday's cloud seeding operation "was successfully conducted, with suitable cloud formations over the Batang Ai area successfully producing rainfall".



A Greenpeace activist takes part in a protest outside the Indonesian embassy in Kuala Lumpur, yesterday. (Reuters)

Sarawak Disaster Management Committee Chairman Douglas Uggha Embas, speaking at an emergency press conference in Kuching, stressed the declaration applied only to Serian division and not the entire state.

But he urged residents in the area "to take the current situation seriously".

"Please minimise outdoor activities and avoid strenuous activities outdoors," he said.

"Where outdoor exposure is unavoidable, wear an N95 mask, or at minimum a 3-ply mask, and take particular care of children, senior citizens and those who are more vulnerable to the effects of haze," Uggha added.



Two trapped tunnel workers rescued in Nepal ‘miracle’

AFP
Kathmandu

Two hydropower workers were pulled alive yesterday from a tunnel buried by debris in Nepal, a rare ray of hope on the tenth day of rescue efforts after catastrophic Himalayan flooding.

Rescuers cheered as one man was pulled through a muddy opening, a video released by the energy ministry showed.

He was helped to his feet by rescuers, and later carried on the backs of the emergency workers, raising his hand as they rushed him towards a helicopter.

A photograph showed the second man caked in mud, his hands pressed together in prayer, as rescuers carried him on a stretcher.

“As long as there is breath, there is hope!” Energy Minister Biraj Bhakta Shrestha said in a statement.

“Rescue operations are continuing in all the affected tunnels. Let everyone’s efforts and prayers continue. We have not lost hope.”

Rescuers called it a “miracle” after the August 26 glacial and mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border killed at least 1,325 people and left more than 5,500 missing.

“I am so happy, my heart is lighter,” Amir Maharjan, the brother of rescued worker, 45-year-old Kabir Maharjan, told AFP.

Rescued worker Sanjay Sah, 30, speaking on a video broadcast on Nepali media shortly after his rescue, said he had survived by praying during the days in the dark.



Survivor Kabir Maharjan is carried by members of a search and rescue team after they rescued two people alive who had been trapped inside a tunnel at the Trishuli-3A Hydropower Project in Rasuwa, yesterday. (Reuters)

“What day is today? I was chanting maha mantra (Hindu prayers) inside,” Sah said, adding that he believed more workers may be in the tunnel.

“There were as many as 40 or 45 people... I told them and everyone to run out,” he said of the moment the disaster struck.

Both men were reported to be in stable condition in a Kathmandu hospital.

“He can talk, he is okay,” said Maharjan’s wife, Hira Shobha Maharjan, saying her husband had an injured leg, and the cold had made it hard to move his hands.

“He can talk, he is okay. He has strength to talk and recognised

me. At first he did not, but now he does.”

Maharjan’s sister-in-law Lakshmi Naini waited outside a hospital in Kathmandu, where he was taken by helicopter.

“It’s a miracle. I am very happy,” she told AFP. “I heard he is alive through social media, and I could not believe it.”

“I have no words to express how I feel,” said another relative, Shyam Maharjan, 45.

The rescued pair were among hundreds of hydropower workers who had been missing since the wall of mud and debris swept through the region following a vast glacial and rock collapse on

a mountain on the China-Nepal border.

Searches were continuing at the Trishuli 3A tunnel where the two men were rescued, as well as multiple other sites, with at least 12 hydropower projects smashed by the floods.

Extra soldiers had been sent yesterday to boost the search operation, pulling out three dead bodies.

The government initially said it believed more than 100 workers could be alive inside multiple tunnels.

Nepali rescuers, aided by experts from India, China and Republic of Korea, had repeatedly



A general view shows damaged houses covered in sludge in the aftermath of flash floods in Trishuli, Nepal’s Nuwakot district yesterday. (AFP)

hit walls of hard-packed debris in their search for survivors.

Until yesterday, none of the tunnel workers had been confirmed alive.

Australian rescue expert Arnold Dix, who has been advising the operation, told AFP that the rescue efforts were “back in miracle country” after a “week of 24/7 heartache”.

Earlier yesterday, Dix said teams at the Trishuli 3A hydropower project had heard a faint response from inside the tunnel.

“They believe they received a faint response from inside saying, ‘hunchha’ yes or OK,” Dix, president of the International Tunneling and Underground Space Association, told AFP.

He said rescuers had called into the tunnel: “Don’t worry, we are rescuing you.”

Dix said teams had dug through debris blocking the tunnel for 50 to 60 metres (164-197 feet) and had been hoping for a breakthrough at any moment.

Less than an hour later, rescuers pulled the two men to safety.

Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal

has called the gigantic wave triggered by a rock and ice avalanche a “Himalayan tsunami”.

Floods tore through mountain districts, destroying roads, bridges and multiple hydropower dams that day.

Communities near the epicentre remain cut off.

The UN has warned that the “magnitude of the destruction” makes delivering aid an immense challenge, with cargo drones and porters being considered to reach isolated communities.

“Families have lost everything,” UN Nepal chief Lila Pieters Yahia said yesterday, launching a \$50mn appeal to help more than 84,000 people.

Nepal’s disaster authority said the number of bodies recovered stood at 1,294, with 5,053 people missing, as of nightfall yesterday.

In China, state media said 31 people had been killed and 531 were missing.

That takes the overall death toll to 1,325 people, with 5,584 missing. More than 800 foreigners from at least 34 countries are among the missing.

UK pharmacist can be sent to India to face trial in former mother-in-law’s arsenic death

Reuters
London

A British-based pharmacist wanted in India for allegedly poisoning his ex-wife’s family with arsenic, killing her mother, and trying to hire assassins to kill her father can be extradited to stand trial, a London court ruled yesterday.

Ajith Kumar Mupparapu, 46, is accused of targeting Sirisha Muttavarapu and her family in 2023 after they had separated, killing her mother Uma Maheshwari with arsenic-laced spices.

Mupparapu’s lawyers had argued there was insufficient evidence to establish he was responsible for any arsenic in Muttavarapu’s family’s home and said he could be tortured by the Indian authorities if extradited.

But Judge John Zani ruled Mupparapu could be extradited, saying in a written ruling that the evidence showed at least an arguable case against Mupparapu and that the Indian authorities had given assurances about his treatment in custody.

Mupparapu can appeal against the decision at the High Court. His lawyer did not immediately comment on the ruling.

Indian prosecutors allege that Mupparapu arranged for arsenic-laced chilli powder and salt to be sent to Muttavarapu’s family in Hyderabad, southern India.

Muttavarapu’s relatives then ate meals which had been cooked with the poison as they gathered to celebrate her brother’s wedding in June 2023, with Maheshwari dying the following month.

James Lewis, a lawyer representing Indian prosecutors, said at a hearing in April that the arsenic levels found in their blood and urine were more than 20 times the normal value.

Mupparapu is also alleged to have tried to murder Muttavarapu’s father Hanumantha Rao, by organising a staged road accident, attempting to hire contract killers and conspiring to have him injected with a fatal dose of a muscle relaxant.

His lawyers, however, said there was no direct evidence connecting him to arsenic found at Muttavarapu’s family’s home or proving he was involved in a conspiracy to kill her father.

AFP
Birmingham

British hard-right leader Nigel Farage’s Reform UK party gathered for its annual conference yesterday engulfed by a fresh scandal over allegations it flouted donations rules.

The Brexit figurehead was hoping to use the meeting to move on from multiple controversies over financial gifts that has dented his anti-immigration party’s standing in opinion polls.

But just hours before Farage’s keynote address, two senior Reform officials resigned following an undercover investigation aired by Channel 4 News that alleged they had conspired to secure a foreign donation — barred under UK electoral law.

Delegates at the conference in the central English city of Birmingham played down the allegations.

Reform said in a statement that party policy head James Orr and Farage’s longtime aide Dan Jukes had stepped down from their roles pending the outcome of an internal probe.

The ruling Labour party was among rival parties to say they



Nigel Farage speaks at a joint press conference with French far-right National Rally (RN) party chief Jordan Bardella on the sidelines of Reform UK’s annual party conference in Birmingham, yesterday. (Reuters)

had reported Reform to police over claims it took funding from a US firm for three opinion polls it commissioned earlier this year.

The purported donors were in fact undercover reporters for investigative journalism group Verbatim.

London’s Metropolitan police said it was “aware” of the reports.

Farage, 62, insisted in an interview with LBC radio that Reform had “broken no laws” and was the

victim of “entrapment”.

Firebrand Farage, who is eyeing the keys to No 10 Downing Street, has been seeking to regain the momentum that saw Reform chalk up significant success at May local elections.

Until late July, Reform had led centre-left Labour in polls for over a year, but it has recently slipped behind with Farage facing intense scrutiny over his finances and Labour enjoying a bounce

under new Prime Minister Andy Burnham.

Parliament’s sleaze watchdog is already investigating a £5mn (\$6.7mn) donation from British crypto-currency billionaire Christopher Harborne to Farage, who has said the money was for his security.

He says it was received before he was elected and therefore did not need to be declared to parliamentary authorities.

John Howard, 62, a property developer and aspiring Reform candidate from Ipswich in eastern England, said the new potential scandal was “disappointing” but insisted it was “just a blip”.

“We’ll see whether they (the officials) are guilty of anything serious. If they are, they won’t come back clearly, and the party will learn from it,” he said.

He conceded that the party had its work cut out for it since Burnham had replaced unpopular former Labour prime minister Keir Starmer.

Farage remains Reform’s most recognisable figure with his party’s rise closely tied to his political persona as a plain-speaking, anti-establishment populist.

UK to approve new North Sea drilling: British media

Britain’s government is set to allow development of a controversial new gas field off its coast in the North Sea, local media reported yesterday.

The ruling Labour administration promised on returning to power in 2024 not to issue any new oil and gas drilling licences as it steers Britain away from polluting fossil fuels towards cleaner renewable energy.

While Prime Minister Andy Burnham has vowed to abide by his party’s election manifesto commitments, the new leader has said he will take “a pragmatic approach” to oil and gas extraction in UK waters.

The Labour government declined to comment on reports yesterday from the BBC and others, which cited government and industry sources, that it will this month approve drilling at the Jackdaw gas field east of port city Aberdeen.

“We do not comment on speculation,” the energy department said in a statement. (AFP)

Sri Lanka arrests ex-leader’s son over Airbus deal

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lankan anti-graft authorities yesterday arrested lawmaker Namal Rajapaksa, the son of former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, accusing him of receiving \$800,000 linked to a 2013 Airbus deal.

The Colombo Chief Magistrate Asanga Bodaragama ordered the 40-year-old scion of the once-powerful Rajapaksa family to be held for two weeks pending further investigations.

He was taken before court by the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption (CIABOC), which arrested him after questioning over the \$2.3bn Airbus transaction.

The CIABOC told court that Rajapaksa had received \$800,000, part of money allegedly paid by the European aircraft manufacturer to Sri Lankan politicians and officials to secure the deal.

A Sri Lankan businessman had arranged the transfer of cash to Rajapaksa via two Singapore bank accounts, the court was told.

Rajapaksa’s lawyer Nishantha Dayananda sought bail, but it was denied.



Namal Rajapaksa reacts as an anti-graft body escorts him before a court in Colombo yesterday after his arrest in corruption probe. (AFP)

CIABOC had questioned the former president himself in May over allegations that he, too, had received kickbacks from the aircraft purchase, which was cancelled by a new government in 2016.

The anti-graft probe centres on claims that the European manufacturer channelled part of the money from the purchase to senior Sri Lankan officials and politicians.

The Rajapaksa family has denied allegations that they received bribes and dismissed corruption claims against them as politically motivated.

Former SriLankan Airlines chief executive Kapila Chandrasena told investigators in March that he had handed nearly half a mn dollars in kickbacks to the senior Rajapaksa.

Chandrasena was found dead at a relative’s home in May, shortly before he was due to be rearrested. The cause of death has not been established.

A joint investigation by US, British and French authorities previously found Airbus had agreed to pay about \$16mn in bribes in Sri Lanka, with \$1.7mn routed to Chandrasena before the scandal was uncovered.

Air India A320 issued stall warning when seatbelt signs were off: probe

Reuters
Bengaluru

An Air India A320 flying from Phuket to New Delhi last month issued a stall warning when seatbelt signs were off, while a rapid pitch up and then down threw passengers and cabin crew against overhead bins and injured 24 people, Indian investigators said.

The Airbus plane, cruising at 36,000 feet, initially ascended 372 feet then fell to 292 feet below it, according to a preliminary report into the August 4 accident released yesterday.

The two-second stall warning came after the flight control system detected the loss of all three of the aircraft’s hydraulic systems within four seconds, setting off a continuous cockpit alarm.

The hydraulic systems, which use pressurised fluid to power the flight controls and other equipment, began recovering about nine seconds after the first was lost, the report said.

The report from India’s Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) did not say why the

pressure loss was detected, which will require further investigation.

The event was updated to an “accident” from “serious incident” by investigators, and the report throws light on a chaotic few seconds on board the flight that had 137 passengers and eight crew.

The 32-year-old first officer was flying the plane at the time of the event, though the 34-year-old captain later took over the controls, it said. Both have been interviewed as part of the investigation.

The airline also faces separate questions after the report said the flight’s captain returned a “non-negative” result in a confirmatory test for psychoactive substances.

The AAIB did not specify the substance for which the captain tested non-negative, but a source last month told Reuters it was marijuana.

Air India in an X post later yesterday said it has terminated with immediate effect the employment of the pilot-in-command of the flight after he tested positive for a psychoactive substance.

Air India said it was co-operating fully with the probe and giving investigators access to operational, maintenance and technical records.



A power grid installation in Dormagen, in the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. (Reuters)

Third grid sabotage attempt in Germany

Reuters
Frankfurt

Launch devices were found near high-voltage lines and a transformer station south of Duesseldorf in western Germany, utility RWE said yesterday, heightening a state of alert after two suspected sabotage attempts this week.

The power plant operator said its RWE Power division had increased security measures in close co-ordination with grid operator Ampriion and with authorities, though its operations had not been impaired.

Germany has been the focus of European fears about the vulnerability of critical infrastructure this week, ahead of a closely watched election on Sunday in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt. The far-right, Russia-friendly Alternative for Germany (AfD) holds a commanding lead in surveys.

Germany's Interior Ministry said it was "no coincidence" that such "hybrid attacks" were happening on the eve of the election.

Bild newspaper and other news outlets reported that the launchers found in Dormagen, south of Duesseldorf, were similar to others found at a substation in nearby Bergheim, where objects were hauled over power lines to short-circuit grid infrastructure.

The Bergheim incident took 4,200 megawatts in generating capacity offline on Tuesday but no blackouts occurred.

Bild reported that a man had claimed responsibility for both incidents in a handwritten letter, in which he also revealed his identity, but it was unclear whether he was the perpetrator.

Cologne police, in the same region, told Reuters they had knowledge of a letter claiming responsibility. Police and RWE declined to give further details while the investigation was under way.

Allies rallied round after Germany blamed a drone attack in August at Leipzig/Halle airport on Moscow as part of hybrid warfare meant to intimidate and divide countries that have supported Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. Russia has dismissed the allegations as baseless.

A spokesperson for Chancellor Friedrich Merz said the number of attacks that had been foiled or been unsuccessful was "a sign of how our security measures work – and that they do work".

In the other sabotage incident this week, devices carrying conductive material damaged power lines at one of the most critical high-voltage nodes in the eastern state of Brandenburg.

Separately yesterday, police in the town of Ganderkesee near Bremen found the door to a control enclosure at a transformer station open at 3 am, and searched the area with a helicopter and dogs.

The facility was undamaged and nobody was found but an investigation was continuing, police said.

Meloni marks record in power with eye on 2027 elections

AFP
Bari, Italy

Giorgia Meloni yesterday celebrated her hard-right government becoming the longest-lasting in Italy's postwar history with a rally in the southern port of Bari, as she gears up for elections next year.

"Today, our government becomes the longest-serving in the history of the Italian Republic," Meloni wrote on X.

"I welcome this with gratitude and a strong sense of responsibility. Because stability is not a record to be displayed, but the condition that allows a nation to plan, decide, keep its commitments, and be respected," she added.

Meloni became Italy's first woman prime minister on October 22, 2022 and has been in charge of the same administration for 1,413 days – one more than billionaire media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi managed.

Thousands of people – many bussed in from other parts of Italy – gathered in the port for the rally, organised by the 49-year-old's Brothers of Italy (FdiI) party.

There were food stalls selling sandwiches, crepes and Bari's traditional "Assassin Spaghetti" – pasta with a spicy, smoky sauce.

Maurizio Ceconelli, 61, a lawyer from Terni in central Italy, said Meloni's government had shown "tangible results".

"Let's hope she gets another five years to achieve all the things she wants," he said.

Salvatore Sinopoli, a 37-year-old engineer from the southern Calabria region, said Meloni had "restored Italy's international position" and improved the labour market.

Italy has had 68 governments in 80 years. Past governments were toppled by crises and defections, which Meloni has so far managed to avoid.

Meloni was expected to address the crowds later, with her deputy prime ministers and coalition partners Matteo Salvini and Antonio Tajani set to appear via video link for an event that effectively doubles as an election rally



Supporters from the Brothers of Italy party (Fratelli d'Italia, FDI) celebrate Giorgia Meloni government's record-breaking longevity in Bari yesterday. (AFP)

ahead of the 2027 vote.

Under the official slogan "Il Governo piu stabile, l'Italia piu forte" ("The Most Stable Government, the Strongest Italy"), festivities kicked off with DJ sets.

Speeches focused on the government's achievements in just under four years in power, from over one mn extra people in employment to a €21bn (\$24bn) reduction in personal income taxes.

Debt-laden Italy's fiscal stability has greatly improved – although critics say the stability has failed to translate into growth.

"Have wages increased? No. Petrol costs more, job insecurity has increased, people are retiring less and the healthcare system is functioning less effectively," Maurizio Landini, head of the CGIL trade union, said ahead of the party.

Meloni's critics also gathered in Bari for an anti-government demonstration amid a heavy security presence in the city.

The organisers of that rally accused the government of creating a "war and weapons economy" and a

Meloni says Rome's influence on the world stage has grown, despite an early friendship with US President Donald Trump falling spectacularly apart after she chastised him for attacking the pope. Her coalition has passed some 300 laws and decrees, the majority tackling "security" threats, from petty criminals to ravers and climate protesters

– has passed some 300 laws and decrees, the majority tackling "security" threats, from petty criminals to ravers and climate protesters.

The Brothers of Italy party, which has neo-Fascist roots, won the 2022 election on a pledge to tackle illegal migration and says its policies have cut migrant arrivals by 80%. But listing accomplishments will not be enough.

Meloni "will also have to say how she intends to use these last months ahead of the vote – a very interesting question", Flavia Perina, an editorialist with La Stampa daily, told a news conference in Rome on Thursday.

No date has been set for the elections but they are due to be held before the end of next year.

The main current challenge for the government is the rise of former general Roberto Vannacci, whose National Future (FN) party is further to the far right than Meloni's.

The party's spectacular rise has seen it overtake both the League and Forza Italia in the polls.

EU to help cities clamp down on tourist rentals

AFP
Brussels

The EU is set to lay out rules helping European cities to curb short-term rentals such as Airbnb in a bid to tackle rising house prices, according to plans seen by AFP yesterday.

The European Commission is expected to unveil next week a legal proposal setting out the conditions under which authorities can restrict the provision of short-term tourist lets.

Such rentals have increasingly come into the crosshairs of local authorities in tourist hotspots such as Florence and Barcelona, as residents complain about being priced out by visitors.

But curbs have often been followed by court challenges from rental providers and tourism operators, resulting in legal uncertainty. The commission's Affordable Housing Act aims

to clarify when authorities can take action without falling foul of EU single market rules. Cities, regions and other relevant authorities would be allowed to restrict access to, or the provision of short-term rentals as well as the purchase of property for short-term letting in areas "under housing stress", according to a draft seen by AFP.

The document lays out a series of parameters that need to be met for an area to be defined as under stress, such as the difference between house prices and incomes there.

The legislation will not affect landlords that rent out their own primary residence for short periods of time. Housing affordability has become a growing issue across the 27-nation bloc in recent years. Property prices have surged by 60%, while rents have climbed by 20 % over the past decade, leaving millions struggling to find affordable homes.

Le Pen party sparks furore in France with 'turn off tap' to Ukraine call

AFP
Paris

A senior official in French presidential contender Marine Le Pen's far-right party sparked a furore yesterday with a comment that France would "turn off the tap" to Ukraine if it came to power. Le Pen is currently riding high in the polls at least for the first round in the tight battle to succeed President Emmanuel Macron, although her National Rally (RN) party has long faced accusations of being pro-Moscow.

"We would turn off the tap," RN vice president and mayor of the southern city of Perpignan Louis Aliot told BFMTV Thursday when asked if the party would keep up funding Ukraine against the Russian invasion if it came to power.

"The healthcare system, the education system, the entire economy – everything is stretched to the limit. Yet money is found to keep funding weapons," he said.

"That's all well and good, but who is paying for all this? You also have to know when to stop a war."

Aliot, the former partner of Le Pen, emphasised that the RN "condemned the Russian aggression" but said the war had "weakened Europe".

One of Le Pen's leading rivals in the elections, centre-right politician Edouard Philippe who served as Macron's first prime minister, wrote on X yesterday that "turning off the tap to Ukraine is serving Russia". "Weakening Ukraine, as Marine Le Pen wishes, is threatening the security of Europe and France. I will do everything to prevent it," he said.

Europe Minister Benjamin Haddad described the RN as the "party of capitulation" and said "abandoning Ukraine means weakening" the EU security.

Le Pen recalled that Philippe had himself hosted then Russian prime minister Dmitry Medvedev in his home city of Le Havre in 2019 while Macron had welcomed President Vladimir Putin to his summer residence. "The truth is simple: your international record is as dismal as your results in economic and budgetary matters," she said, adding her party was pushing for a "diplomatic resolution of this abominable war".

Polls are projecting that Le Pen is on course to win the first round of the presidential polls and would then have a tight battle against Philippe in the second round, if he makes the run-off.

Spain urges EU to create climate adaptation fund, set binding targets

Reuters
Madrid

Spain has urged the European Union to create a dedicated climate adaptation fund and establish binding adaptation targets as costs mount from accelerating climate change, which this summer triggered record heat and wildfires across the EU.

Madrid calculates that European Union countries have accumulated €822bn (\$955bn) in losses due to climate change and extreme weather losses since 1980, about a quarter of them between 2021 and 2024, the most recent data point.

Spain is also one of the countries hardest hit by rising summer temperatures, wildfires and droughts.

The EU has committed to climate neutrality by 2050 and to cutting greenhouse emissions by at least 55% from 1990 levels by 2030. Its 2021 Adaptation Strategy is being updated and expanded by the EU executive, the Commission,



Locals watch the fire near Formariz during a wildfire in Zamora province, Spain. (Reuters/File Photo)

into an Integrated Climate Resilience Framework to put to member states. In a letter to EU Climate Commissioner Wopke Hoekstra,

made available to Reuters yesterday, Environment Minister Sara Aagesen said Spain believed reactive policies were no longer suffi-

cient to protect security, prosperity and competitiveness.

It called for a European Climate Adaptation Fund and suggested raising revenue through levies including a charge on oil and gas profits. Common EU debt instruments should also be considered, it said.

The proposal, first reported by the Financial Times yesterday, called for climate risk assessments every five years at European, national and regional levels, for integration into public planning, infrastructure, land use and investment decisions.

It suggested introducing binding short-, medium- and long-term adaptation targets, initially covering sectors including water, health, infrastructure, forests, tourism, agriculture and fisheries.

Spain also proposed upgrading the EU's civil protection mechanism, rescEU, into a permanent climate-emergency response system with shared equipment and protocols and a dedicated aer-

ial firefighting fleet.

Other proposals included a public-private European reinsurance scheme and climate-risk bonds to help cover losses from extreme weather.

Madrid said adaptation must remain aligned with efforts to cut greenhouse gas emissions, as its effectiveness and affordability would depend on limiting future warming.

A Spanish Environment Ministry spokesperson told Reuters the proposal had been shared with other EU member states.

The Commission said funds for climate adaptation were part of EU budget negotiations, and that windfall taxes on energy were within the competence of individual countries.

Last month, Spain, Germany, Portugal, Italy, Poland and Austria asked the EU presidency to discuss in September a mechanism to tax oil companies' windfall profits, triggered by Iran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

EU chief Kos cancels trip to Serbia over tribute to Mladic

Reuters
Brussels

European Union enlargement chief Marta Kos cancelled a trip to Serbia yesterday after a Serbian government plane took the body of former army commander and convicted war criminal Ratko Mladic to Belgrade for what is expected to be a huge funeral.

Mladic, who was convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during Bosnia's 1992-95 war, died last week in a UN detention facility in The Hague aged 84.

"The glorification surrounding his death is incompatible with the values on which the EU path is built. That path requires confronting the past, genuine reconciliation and respecting the victims of war crimes," Kos wrote on X.

"The values that underpin our common future are not negotiable."

Mladic remained a revered figure among many Serbs in Serbia and in Bosnia's autonomous Serb Republic.

"Everything is expected, nothing new," Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said after Kos cancelled her visit. "The explanation was extremely short, but stupid, as usual."

A Serbian government minister said initially that Mladic would be given a state funeral but, following an outcry by European leaders, the government has not confirmed that.

A commemoration ceremony in the Army Hall building in central Belgrade is being organised by an association of retired generals. The funeral will be held in a church in a Belgrade suburb on Monday and Mladic will be buried at a cemetery beside his daughter.

New stability record for Italian PM may prove fleeting

In a country famed for political instability, Giorgia Meloni is poised to lead Italy's longest-lasting government since World War II, overtaking a record of 1,412 consecutive days set by Silvio Berlusconi in 2005. Meloni, who has tempered her populist instincts with pragmatism since taking power in October 2022, held a rally, to celebrate the milestone, framing the durability of her coalition as one of its crowning achievements.

After cycling through 68 governments in 80 years, Italy has proved much steadier during a period of global conflict than France, which has had five prime ministers since the autumn of 2022, while Britain has got through four. But just as Italy has shaken off its reputation for volatility, opinion polls suggest that the 2027 parliamentary elections could usher in a more fragmented and potentially less stable political landscape.

"There is a genuine risk that we could return to the

worst kind of a splintered parliament next time around," said Roberto D'Alimonte, a professor of Italian politics at Rome's Luiss university.

While Berlusconi's single-term record is about to be eclipsed, he will remain the longest-serving Italian prime minister overall, with a tenure of about nine years over four terms between 1994 and 2011.

Worried about the prospect of renewed political turbulence, coalition allies are quick to tout the dividends of four years of uninterrupted rule. Deputy Foreign Minister Edmondo Cirielli, of Meloni's Brothers of Italy party, said the government had kept deficits and debt under control, while adding 1.2mn workers to the jobs market, pushing unemployment to under 6%.

"The record figures on employment and unemployment are indisputable," he told Reuters.

Analysts broadly agree that Meloni's strongest achievement has been restoring confidence in

Italy's shaky public finances, blighted by a hefty debt mountain. Lorenzo Codogno, a former chief economist at the Treasury and now head of LC Macro Advisors, said the cabinet had convinced investors it was committed to budget discipline and had curtailed costly policies of past administrations, notably the "Superbonus" home renovation scheme.

"In terms of fiscal responsibility, I think the government has done a decent job. In terms of promoting growth and reforming the economy, not much has been done," he said. Little effort was made to shake up an inefficient public administration, the health service and education system, while all the government's institutional reforms, including handing more powers to the prime minister, have floundered.

"Part of the reason Meloni has been able to stay in power for four years is that she did not try to change much or upset voters," said Lorenzo Pregliasco, head of

YouTrend pollster. "This is perhaps the most sobering lesson we can draw from this period."

While ducking ambitious change, Meloni focused on law and order, boosting police powers and cracking down on irregular immigration - a key electoral pledge - cutting the number of new arrivals to 66,316 last year from 157,651 in 2023.

"There has been the paradigm shift imposed by Giorgia Meloni in the management of illegal immigration," Francesco Filini, the head of Brothers of Italy's policy programme, told Reuters, saying much of Europe was now looking to emulate her. Although she has forged good relations with many European leaders, Meloni's standing abroad has been bruised by the collapse of her once-close ties with Donald Trump after the US president accused her in April of lacking courage and letting the United States down in its war with Iran. — Reuters

Space race to meet satellite demand

The European Space Agency (ESA) is considering increasing the launch rate of its Ariane 6 and Vega-C rockets in the coming years to overcome a potential bottleneck in satellite deployments.

ESA Director-General Josef Aschbacher said that a decision would be needed soon if forecasts of a sharp rise in demand, expected to peak around 2030, prove accurate. Operator Arianespace's most recent projection is for nine or 10 launches of Ariane 6 rockets a year from 2027.

Based on Europe's own missions, as well as possible further interest from Amazon and other commercial activity, there is more demand than planned capacity, Aschbacher said at an event organised by the AJPAE aerospace media association. Amazon has already commissioned 18 launches.

"Of course the question is, can we satisfy all these launches? That's exactly the assessment we are doing right now," Aschbacher said, adding that no decisions had been made so far.

"We are already advanced in some of these estimates, but it's also clear that if we want to satisfy launch requirements in 2030 ... we need to make a decision pretty soon to build up the capacities needed."

The 23-nation ESA is exploring the feasibility of launching humans into space on European rockets rather than hitching rides on US vehicles, though the decision would be a political one.

Officials say the initiative could increase ESA's budget

by about 10%, depending on how it is funded.

The issue is expected to feature at a space summit hosted by France next week. Aschbacher also gave the clearest signal yet that ESA is prepared to use its weight as Europe's largest buyer to ensure satellite competition remains amid plans for a major merger.

Airbus, Thales and Leonardo announced plans last year to combine satellite manufacturing activities into a new company code-named "Project Bromo," in a deal awaiting antitrust approval.

While ESA is not directly involved in the negotiations, it accounts for roughly 60% of public-sector spending on satellites in Europe. Aschbacher declined to say whether he supported the merger, which he said was a matter for the companies and European Commission.

"What I'm saying is that ESA can certainly ... use the tool sets that we have, meaning industrial policy, to ensure that the European space ecosystem will continue to flourish," he added.

That could include measures to protect the sector's supply chain, a key concern for companies outside the proposed venture. Germany's OHB, which would be the main domestic European competitor to the new combined group, has warned the deal could weaken its own supply chain. Airbus and its partners argue that competition should be assessed on a global basis rather than a European one, citing the need to compete with Elon Musk's Starlink. — Reuters



HAZY VIEW

People look at the central district shrouded with haze from Indonesian forest fires, in Singapore, yesterday. (AFP)

QC's widening humanitarian outreach

QNA
Doha

Qatar Charity (QC) said the value of its humanitarian and relief interventions and projects implemented during the first seven months of 2026 reached almost QR236mn, benefiting approximately 5.8mn people in 31 countries. It added that these operations are part of its continued efforts to respond to the growing humanitarian needs around the globe, particularly in areas battered by conflicts, disasters, and protracted crises.

Speaking exclusively to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Director of Humanitarian Operations at QC, Aisha Abdulrazzaq al-Kuwari, said throughout 2026, QC has been strengthening its humanitarian and relief operations in several crisis flashpoints, adding that the Gaza Strip, Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, and Syria currently top the response priorities, alongside giving overriding priority to refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), including Rohingya refugees.

Al-Kuwari further noted that the magnitude of humanitarian interventions during the first seven months of the year reflects the growing scope of humanitarian needs, noting that the projects covered shelter and non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene, health, nutrition, and education in emergencies, in addition to essential assistance for affected families, IDPs, and refugees.

QC handles humanitarian crises based on the magnitude of the needs, damage, the number of those affected, and the nature of the crisis, al-Kuwari highlighted, stressing that QC is unrelentingly committed to ensuring that these interventions are based on precise field evaluations, consistent with international humanitarian standards.

She affirmed that this overall action ensures resources are primarily directed to those who are most in need and achieves a greater impact through life-saving aid, emphasizing that identifying humanitarian priorities doesn't purely rely on the magnitude of media coverage of crises, but rather on ample media traction, despite the persistent travails of millions of people.

Special attention

Al-Kuwari remarked that the situation of refugees and IDPs garners special

Qatar Charity operations chief says QR236mn in relief interventions have been made across 31 countries in the first half of 2026

attention within QC's plans, especially amid the unabated conflicts that have triggered large-scale exodus, alongside the fallout from these situations in terms of overwhelming pressures on host communities and essential services.

Handling spillover crises requires a transition from short-term emergency response to long-term humanitarian planning, al-Kuwari underlined, noting that this measure would ensure continuous interventions that go beyond primary aid to support the resilience of battered communities and address the crisis fallout.

As for Gaza, al-Kuwari said the humanitarian situation there remains among the most key priorities, as Gazans are most in need of aid, stressing that what matters most here is making sure that all humanitarian efforts do proceed to ensure the provision of essential needs, primarily food, water, shelter, and healthcare.

Operations in conflict flashpoints are marked by formidable challenges concerning the delivery of aid and safe access to beneficiaries, al-Kuwari outlined, adding that this includes difficult traffic conditions and the provision of supplies, which requires operating persistently in lockstep with humanitarian entities and partners operating on the ground.

She said that QC has worked to bolster its crisis-response readiness through enhancing its information and crisis-management systems to help monitor

humanitarian developments, unpack data, and support the decision-making process. Al-Kuwari suggested that inaugurating a technological centre for information and crisis management would serve as a consequential step when it comes to advancing humanitarian response mechanisms through providing more precise and timely information about the evolving situation of crises and disasters, as well as monitoring exodus movements and humanitarian needs in the embattled zones.

She highlighted that technology and data have become essential in modern humanitarian operations, given the large scope of crises and multiple flashpoints, and that receiving this information and unpacking it rapidly would literally help humanitarian institutions identify priorities and make the right decisions at the appropriate time.

Al-Kuwari further emphasised that QC relies on a network of field offices and domestic partners as a vital source of information and evaluations to help identify the true needs of affected communities and streamline aid accessibility.

She added that logistical preparations were a crucial component of disaster response, particularly as fast aid delivery can be a decisive factor in saving lives and alleviating the suffering of those affected, noting the importance of having prior arrangements and agreements in place with service providers and suppliers of relief materials.



Qatar Charity volunteers at an education project in Gaza Strip.



Regarding the key challenges plaguing humanitarian operations, al-Kuwari said current crises are marked by growing financial and logistical challenges, including throttles on financial transfers to some countries, challenges in transferring funds and relief materials to crisis flashpoints, as well as rising transportation and shipping costs globally.

She recalled that disruption to supply chains and international maritime lanes directly affects costs and the duration of aid accessibility, triggering relief agencies to explore alternative routes and optionality to ensure timely aid delivery. Al-Kuwari underlined that facilitating accessibility to battered communities is a core priority, especially in conflict-battered zones where needs rapidly grow. She stressed that what matters more is to respect humanitarian ethos and ensure unhindered relief accessibility to those in need.

It is particularly significant to forge international partnerships to bolster humanitarian response, al-Kuwari underscored, suggesting that QC is operating in tandem with several international and UN organizations and entities to help achieve concerted efforts, share expertise and information, and conduct more impactful projects.

She pointed to collaboration with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and Save the Children, alongside several entities and institutions at home. Combining efforts among Qatari humanitarian institutions would surely help bolster the response and expand the scope of operations, al-Kuwari said, noting the collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), and Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) in an array of humanitarian, medical, and relief fields.

Secure environment

Protecting humanitarian workers has become one of the exigent issues amid rising conflicts and crises, she said, adding that it is very important to provide a secure environment for

them to have access to those affected, respect international humanitarian law, and ensure protection for civilian and humanitarian facilities.

Al-Kuwari pointed out that those workers undertake a substantial role in delivering aid to those affected, thus ensuring their safety and access is a core part of pulling off a successful humanitarian response. Regarding humanitarian work sustainability, al-Kuwari highlighted that QC does not focus on emergency response alone but strives to achieve an enduring impact through supporting affected communities and reinforcing their resilience in the face of crises once conditions become conducive.

She added that the scale of the interventions in 2026 builds on QC's humanitarian efforts in previous years, with the value of exigent humanitarian interventions reaching approximately QR455mn in 2025, benefiting 8.6mn people in 34 countries, underscoring the growing scope of the organisation's humanitarian work.

The figures do not reduce humanitarian work to its financial value or the number of beneficiaries but rather reflect the scale of responsibility and growing needs, as the primary goal remains to reach people affected, meet their basic needs, and preserve their dignity, Al-Kuwari underlined.

Al-Kuwari applauded the gestures of benefactors and donors in Qatar who pitch in, stressing that this support is a pillar of sustaining continuous humanitarian projects and providing access to millions of those in need around the globe. Qatari dedication and a helping hand are the epitome of solidarity and compassion, an ethos that obviously characterises Qatari society, she said, stating that this magnanimous gesture helps deliver aid to those most in need in multiple territories around the world.

The operations chief added that perpetuated support offers the chance to broaden the scope of interventions and response to emerging and aggravating crises. Lastly, the official contended that humanitarian operations are a shared responsibility that requires combined efforts among humanitarian and international institutions, as well as donors and local communities.

She stressed that a powerful response to crises is not merely gauged by rapid delivery, but rather by the capabilities to reach out to those in need and achieve a true and enduring impact on their lives.

Russia rights group boss fears post-election crackdown

AFP
Amsterdam

The head of Memorial, Russia's Nobel Peace Prize-winning rights group, has told AFP she fears a fresh crackdown after September's legislative elections, with more people arrested and sent to fight in Ukraine.

Speaking in an exclusive interview in Amsterdam, Elena Zhemkova also vowed to keep up the fight for human rights in Russia, despite her group being declared illegal and herself forced into exile.

"Unfortunately, I think that now everything is getting worse, but not so fast," the 65-year-old said. "But after the elections, there will be a very sharp deterioration."

Last month, Russia's Supreme Court banned the only anti-war party, Yabloko, from running in the elections. As a result of this decision, opposition to President

Vladimir Putin will be minimal.

"More people will be arrested for insignificant things and sent to prison. They are interested in sending people to prison. For them prison is a way to the front (line in the war against Ukraine)," she said.

"The situation at the front is very fragile."

Memorial was founded in the late 1980s to document victims of Soviet-era political repression during which millions of people perished in the Gulag penal system.

Earlier this year, a court labelled the group "extremist", making its supporters subject to prosecution and effectively outlawing any co-operation with it.

Memorial group received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022 — months after Russia launched its offensive on Ukraine — alongside jailed Belarusian activist Ales Bialiatski and Ukraine's Centre for Civil Liberties.

Zhemkova herself has fled the country and keeps the organisation running from Berlin where she acts as executive director.

"The more they try to silence or erase the name of Memorial in Russia, the louder it will sound outside Russia," she promised.

Zhemkova was speaking on the sidelines of an exhibition entitled "Artists Against the Kremlin: Memory Remains", at the De Balie cultural centre in Amsterdam.

The exhibition features work from artists forced into exile, silenced or persecuted and Zhemkova said it was a good example of Memorial's work outside Russia.

"If we don't understand and take lessons from the past, we will repeat mistakes and our present and future will be terrible," she said.

With Russia apparently escalating its offensive in Ukraine and testing Western unity with "hybrid" attacks in Europe, Zhemkova urged a strong response.

When Europe hesitates, Putin "sees this as weakness," she said.

"And for Putin, what does weakness mean? It means that victory is around the corner and we need to push further," said Zhemkova.

She highlighted what she described as a "huge repressive mechanism" in Russia and "very powerful and sophisticated propaganda."

She pointed to a plan to replace Moscow's Gulag museum with a new exhibition documenting Nazi crimes against the Soviet Union during World War II, the latest move in a crackdown on institutions documenting Soviet-era repression.

"It's only a part of what they do," she said, referring to the museum.

"Unfortunately, the process of rewriting history is much bigger, much deeper. It's also the destruction of monuments," said Zhemkova.

The human rights leader said

she felt safe in Berlin, despite being distanced from friends and home and her family, which she said was now disbursed over eight countries.

"That's the reason why our meeting point is Zoom every week," she laughed.

And despite the situation in Russia seeming to get worse by the day, she said she still feels hopeful.

"We are trying to explain that not everybody turned into criminals. That there is another Russia. Even now," she told AFP.

She said what gives her hope is the bravery of her fellow campaigners and the creative protests of artists such as those exhibiting in Amsterdam.

The objects in the exhibition often tell a sad and tragic story of repression, she said.

"And on the other hand, the other side of the object is always a story about solidarity, love, friendship, family."

Russia denounces airspace warning of Kyiv to UN agency

AFP
Moscow

Russia said yesterday it had asked the UN civil aviation agency ICAO to condemn Kyiv's warnings on making Russian airspace "extremely dangerous", denouncing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's statements as "illegal".

Zelensky warned airlines earlier this week that Russian airspace would be "completely unsafe" and filled with Ukrainian drones.

Russian President Vladimir Putin branded the warning "terrorism".

Russia's foreign ministry said the authorities had sent a protest note to the ICAO's chief, calling on him to "condemn the Ukrainian regime's unlawful interference to civil aviation and creating direct threats to it".

In a statement, it called Ukraine's statements "reckless terrorist actions that contravene international law".

Russia and Ukraine have been at war for 4.5 years and Ukrainian airspace has been closed since 2022.

The ICAO, based in Montreal, on Wednesday called on its members to ensure the safety of civilian aircraft, following Zelensky's statement.

"Ukraine does not threaten civilian aviation as such — not a single civilian aircraft," Zelensky said last week.

"There will simply be drones in Russia's skies on a scale that has to be taken into account."

Russia targets security chief's office in Kyiv

AFP
Kyiv

A Russian drone struck the headquarters of Ukraine's SBU security services in Kyiv yesterday, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said, accusing Moscow of aiming directly at the SBU head's personal office.

The daytime strike came two days before US President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner were expected to visit Kyiv for the first time, a senior Ukrainian official told AFP.

Zelensky said he had instructed the SBU to deliver an "appropriate, tangible response" to the strike, while Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga described it as a "major escalation".

The acting head of the SBU, Oleksandr Poklad, was not in the vicinity at the time of the attack, a senior official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

"Unfortunately, a Russian drone hit the central building of the SBU on Volodymyrska Street in Kyiv, opposite the St Sophia Cathedral," Zelensky said in a post on Telegram.

"The drone was aimed directly at the office of the head of the security service in that building," he added.

Russia did not immediately comment on the attack.

An image published by the



Onlookers watch as Ukrainian rescue personnel work to extinguish a fire in the headquarters of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) following an air attack in Kyiv yesterday. (AFP)

Ukrainska Pravda news outlet showed what appeared to be black smoke pouring from at least two windows on the front of the SBU building, while a fire engine was parked outside.

An AFP reporter saw several ambulances nearby.

Zelensky said that he had spoken to Poklad following the strike and that preparations for a response were already underway.

"The areas to be targeted have been identified. The timing will be chosen to ensure a successful outcome," Zelensky said on Telegram.

Poklad was unharmed, the SBU

said in a statement, adding that the building would "certainly be restored".

It was the first time the powerful security agency's headquarters had been hit since the start of Russia's invasion in 2022.

The SBU is Ukraine's internal security agency and has been the mastermind behind multiple attacks on Russia.

Russia has escalated its daytime strikes on Ukraine in recent weeks, sometimes using jet-powered drones that are harder for air defences to destroy. Attacks on government buildings in central Kyiv — which are heavily fortified and



President Volodymyr Zelensky attends a meeting with Head of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) Oleksandr Poklad in Kyiv. (Ukrainian Presidential Press Service/AFP)

Ukraine offers Russia truce while Trump envoys visit Moscow and Kyiv

Ukraine has proposed observing a ceasefire with Russia while US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner visit Moscow and Kyiv, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday.

"There will be no airstrikes on our part, and Russia must reciprocally ensure a ceasefire — without its own airstrikes — for the duration needed to conduct these talks," Zelensky said in his evening address. (AFP)

ring-fenced by security barricades — are rare, however.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko said at least 12 people had been wounded in the attack on the city centre, without giving details on whether

the casualties were in the SBU building. AFP was not able to immediately verify the kind of munition used in the attack.

Witkoff and Kushner were due in Kyiv for the first time on Sunday, a Ukrainian official told AFP.

The Kremlin declined to comment earlier on whether the pair were expected in Moscow.

US-led diplomatic efforts to end Russia's four-and-a-half-year invasion have stalled in recent months as the US has shifted its focus towards the war with Iran.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has turned into Europe's worst conflict since World War II, killing thousands of civilians and hundreds of thousands of troops.

The strike came amid heightened tensions between the SBU and Ukraine's GUR, a military intelligence agency.

A gunfight between members of the two agencies broke out in the capital earlier this week, an incident that Zelensky called "completely unacceptable".

Portugal extends talks to privatise national airline

Portugal's government said yesterday it would pursue talks with both Air France-KLM and Lufthansa on privatising a controlling stake in national airline TAP Air Portugal.

The government intends to sell up to 49.9% of TAP Portugal to a strategic investor, with staff to hold five percent.

TAP, which was renationalised in 2020 to stem losses from the Covid-19 pandemic, is among the few remaining state-owned carriers in Europe.

The airline has around 7,700 employees and a fleet of around 100 Airbus planes. (AFP)



Migrants on an inflatable dinghy leave the coast of northern France in an attempt to cross the English Channel. (Reuters/File Photo)

UK, France hard-right leaders agree to co-operate on migrant crossings

AFP
Birmingham

British hard-right leader Nigel Farage and France's Jordan Bardella signed yesterday a "memorandum of understanding" at Reform's annual conference to end small boat migrant crossings if their anti-immigration parties were to enter government.

"We today are going to begin a genuine new Entente Cordiale between our parties and our countries," Farage said, addressing his party's meeting in the English city of Birmingham alongside Bardella, president of France's far-right National Rally (RN) party.

Reform UK led national polls in the UK for over a year until July but the party's standing has slumped in recent weeks amid multiple scandals involving allegations of irregular political funding.

Bardella is hoping to become France's prime minister if his

party wins in national elections next year.

Britain's next general election is not due until 2029.

Addressing the Birmingham conference in English, Bardella hailed the shared "culture and civilisation" between the countries, vowing to end irregular migrant crossings through the Channel.

"In recent years, Emmanuel Macron has failed to protect our country," Bardella said.

"Our government will do everything in its power to ensure that France is no longer the get-away for illegal migration into the United Kingdom," Bardella said to applause.

Farage and Bardella signed their agreement on stage.

Britain's Labour government said this week that the UK had recorded the lowest numbers of boats carrying migrants and asylum seekers across the Channel from France to England this summer since 2019.

It touted the success of an enforcement deal with France.

Warehouse in Ukraine ravaged in attack: WHO

AFP
Geneva

The World Health Organisation said yesterday that one of its main warehouses in Ukraine had been destroyed in air attack — the third such incident in three months.

The WHO warned that it was part of a wider pattern of attacks on humanitarian facilities in Ukraine.

"In the past three months, three warehouses used by WHO in different regions of Ukraine have been destroyed by airstrikes, ruining essential medical supplies intended for frontline and hard-to-reach areas," the WHO's Europe branch said in a statement.

Early on Thursday, "an air attack in Kyiv region destroyed one of WHO's main warehouses storing humanitarian medical supplies. Assessments of possible damage and stock losses are ongoing. No WHO personnel were affected."

The WHO said this came after an attack two weeks ago in Dnipro which completely destroyed one of its humanitarian warehouses. That resulted in the loss of half of the medical supplies and equipment intended to support an estimated 225,000 people.

And another warehouse used by WHO in the Kyiv region was damaged during a large-scale wave of attacks on the Kyiv region in July.

5 European countries seek deals to send migrants from EU to return centres

Reuters
Copenhagen

Five European nations aim to sign deals this year to send migrants without legal residency to countries outside the European Union, they said at a meeting hosted by Denmark yesterday.

Germany, Austria, Greece, Denmark and the Netherlands said they had agreed on concrete steps towards a deal with a non-European Union country on return facilities, the latest effort by European nations to reduce immigration.

The countries, known as the Group of Five, did not name the nations they expect to host return centres.

"We want to reach an agreement with third countries this year that will enable the establishment of return hubs," German Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt told reporters at a press conference in Copenhagen. The group, which has held a series of meetings this year, plans to reconvene in Munich, Germany, at the end of September.

The European Parliament in June approved an overhaul of migration policy aimed at speeding up deportations and allowing member states to set up centres abroad, in what critics say could weaken safeguards for asylum seekers. The Council of Europe, a non-EU body that promotes human rights, democracy and the rule of law across the continent, in July said return hubs posed "considerable human rights risks", and several other groups have also criticised the plan.



Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs (DG HOME) Beate Gminder, Denmark's Minister for Immigration and Integration Morten Boedskov, Netherlands' Minister for Asylum and Migration and Deputy Prime Minister Bart van den Brink, Germany's Minister of the Interior Alexander Dobrindt, Austria's Minister of the Interior Gerhard Karner, and Greece's Minister for Asylum and Migration Thanos Plevris pose for a photo on the day of a meeting of the Ministers for Immigration and Integration from the Five Country Group in Copenhagen, Denmark. (Reuters)

Danish Refugee Council Secretary General Charlotte Slente said it would be better to implement the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, which focuses on stricter border screening, faster asylum and return procedures, and expanded digital systems for managing asylum claims. "Return hubs focus on a small number of returns, they will not stop people from taking even more dangerous routes, and they could violate basic human rights," Slente said.

Denmark expects to be ready to

send migrants to the return hub by the end of 2027, Immigration and Integration Minister Morten Bodskov said. "It's a new chance to have a life in a partner country," he said, adding that the five nations would be in dialogue with the UN body, the International Organisation for Migration, and the UN Refugee Agency for next steps.

A UNHCR spokesperson said the agency had not been approached with details of a proposal and could not comment on the arrangements being discussed.



Al Noor Centre aims to enhance services and programmes

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Al Noor Centre for the Blind has outlined plans to enhance its services and programmes, executive director Mishal bin Abdullah al-Nuaimi has said.

In a report published by the Arabic daily **Al-Raya* on Thursday, al-Nuaimi said that the centre is working to provide an integrated educational and rehabilitation environment that uses modern technologies to develop the capabilities of people with visual disabilities, promote their independence, and empower them to participate actively in society.

He said that the centre's development efforts extend beyond ed-

ucational programmes to include improving learning environments, expanding assistive technologies, developing human resources, and broadening services for beneficiaries.

These efforts support the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly its focus on inclusion, equal opportunities and enabling people with visual disabilities to access education and services and participate fully in society.

The centre has also expanded programmes and activities, including sports programmes supervised by specialised coaches and activities that are aimed at developing Braille reading and writing skills.

It provides learning environments tailored to the needs of

beneficiaries across different age groups.

Al-Nuaimi said that the centre's educational services are delivered through three main stages.

The first is early childhood education, which serves children aged three to six through specialised international programmes, including VIISA (Vision Impaired In-Service America) and INSITE, with a focus on developing skills during their formative years.

The second is basic education, during which curricula approved by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) are adapted to meet the specific needs of students with visual disabilities.

This is followed by the inclusion stage, in which the centre continues to provide academic and technical support after beneficiaries



transition to schools across Qatar.

The centre also gives special attention to children with visual disabilities who also have developmental or intellectual disabilities.

It provides specialised therapeutic and rehabilitation programmes, based on internationally recognised standards, to develop cognitive and motor skills and to strengthen independence and self-reliance.

Al-Nuaimi said the centre continues to keep pace with technological advances by providing assistive technologies, including screen-reading software, electronic Braille devices, smart Braille

note-takers and applications for people with low vision.

These tools facilitate access to information and enhance beneficiaries' participation in education.

He added that human resources development remains a key priority, with specialised training programmes and workshops aimed at enhancing the capabilities of teachers and specialists and equipping them with the latest educational and rehabilitation methods.

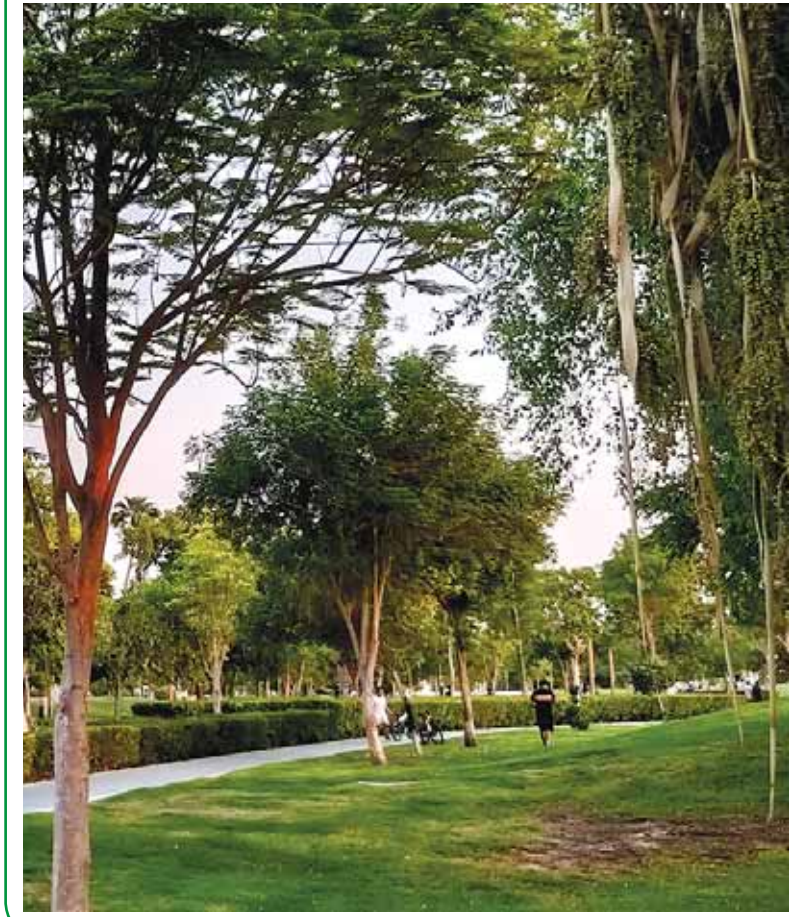
The centre is also upgrading and modernising its educational and recreational facilities to create a safe, stimulating environment and improve the overall experience and

the quality of services provided to beneficiaries.

In addition, it supports families through early intervention programmes for children from birth to age three, as well as training and guidance programmes for parents, reinforcing the family's role as a key partner in rehabilitation.

Its support services system includes specialised units such as the Library Unit, Educational Curriculum Unit, and Braille Unit.

The latter produces and adapts curricula, provides educational resources and trains beneficiaries in Braille reading and writing using modern tools and technologies.



Park plays

Residents return to the open spaces of Rawdat Al Khail Park as the evening temperatures begin to ease. The setting sun bathes the park in warm light, while families, friends and walkers make use of its lawns and landscaped pathways. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam



From shy 4th grader to head boy: Rashid's final year at Qatar Academy Al Wakra



Rashid al-Ghafri at the Global Peace Summit in Thailand.

Eight years ago, Rashid al-Ghafri walked into Qatar Academy Al Wakra, part of Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre University Education (PUE), as a fourth grader who, by his own admission, was shy and introverted.

This September, he returns as head boy for his final year.

"It's the most important year," he says of the year ahead. "Everything I do this year will directly impact my future."

That weight sits alongside something softer.

Asked what it feels like to know this is his last year at the school that's played a significant role in shaping who he is today, Rashid says "bittersweet".

He's excited for what's next – medical school – but leaving a place he's walked into nearly every day for eight years isn't simple.

"It's hard to describe the feeling," he says. "The memories, the teachers, the friends, the things I learned, the ups and downs – all of which built me."

Rashid is very clear that he wants to go to medical school – a plan he settled on back in Year 10 and hasn't wavered from since.

The decision traces back to something

as simple as enjoying his biology classes – and to a school assembly where a visiting doctor described the arc from student to medical student to physician saving lives.

"He really inspired me," Rashid says.

The goal has stayed fixed ever since: Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar.

What's changed is everything around that goal.

Rashid describes his growth over eight years less in terms of grades than in terms of who he's become – trading shyness for leadership, first as deputy head boy and now as head boy, a role he's candid about not being easy.

"There are many responsibilities," he says, like organising school events, keeping a team coherent, representing the entire school. "It's pressure, but I can handle it."

The school, he says, gave him the platform to grow into that role: opportunities to travel and represent Qatar abroad, school-led initiatives like the Green Flag Award, and his standout memory from this year – representing Qatar at the Global Peace Summit in Thailand, where he heard accounts from war survivors and connected with peers who shared his interests.

"It was a life-changing experience," Rashid says. "Representing my beloved

country instilled in me a sense of duty and has inspired me to be the best version of myself in all walks of life."

Although a keen volunteer today, Rashid is honest that he initially wasn't sure he saw the value in it: "The first time I was asked to help at a parent-teacher conference, I thought it would be a waste of my time."

He tried it anyway, and it changed something in him: a sense that community service isn't optional, but a duty each person owes to those around them.

He has since volunteered at several school and international events, including the Doha International Book Fair.

Asked what he'll miss most when he graduates, Rashid doesn't point to the accolades.

It's the teachers who have known him since he was a child.

"Friends I can visit them out of school," he says. "But teachers – not so much. So I will miss the teachers most."

As the new academic year begins, more than 9,300 students have returned to Qatar Foundation's schools, rejoining a vibrant learning community that nurtures academic excellence, leadership, and personal growth.



Rashid al-Ghafri

For students like Rashid, the year ahead marks not only a return to the classroom but also another step in a journey of discovery, achievement, and preparation for the future.

His advice to fellow Year 12 students starting the IB (International Baccalaureate)'s most demanding year: "Focus on time management and make sure you make use of all the opportunities the school offers. The aim is not just to shine academically but to become well-rounded individuals who add value to the community and the country in different ways."