GULF TIMES

THURSDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13866
September 17, 2026
Rabia II 6, 1448 AH
www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals
published in QATAR since 1978

Draft law on precious metals and gemstones approved

■ Pharmaceutical registration body revamp okayed

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani chaired the Cabinet's weekly meeting yesterday at the Amiri Diwan.

The Cabinet approved a draft law on precious metals and gemstones and referred it to the Shura Council. Prepared by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry with the Qatar General Organisation for Standards and Metrology, the law will replace 1978 legislation and tighten oversight of the sector in line with international standards, protecting consumers and market participants.

Ministers also approved a draft decision reorganising the Permanent Committee for the Registration of Pharmaceutical Companies and Their Products, replacing a 2000-era decision and updating the committee's mandate to keep pace with modern registration practices.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi said the Cabinet also reiterated a string of foreign policy positions.

Ministers condemned Houthi ballistic missile and drone attacks on civilian targets in the Saudi cities of Khamis Mushait, Abha and Taif, which wounded a number of civilians and damaged homes and vehicles, calling the strikes a shameful and reckless aggression that breaches Saudi sovereignty and international law.

They also condemned the drone strikes launched from Iraq that targeted the East-West oil pipeline in Saudi Arabia's Riyadh and Medina regions, describing the attack on civilian and economic infrastructure as a dangerous escalation and reaffirming that Saudi Arabia's security is inseparable from Qatar's own and from the collective security of the GCC. To Page 6

Qatar backs diplomacy for lasting peace

Qatar supports all diplomatic efforts to ensure freedom of maritime navigation and pave the way for a comprehensive agreement that brings lasting peace to the region, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani said yesterday. He was meeting Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, who is visiting Qatar. The two sides discussed bilateral co-operation and ways to strengthen it, along with the latest regional developments, particularly diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination aimed at de-escalation and promoting regional security and stability. (**QNA**)

Qatar unveils endowment fund for diabetics

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has launched a dedicated endowment fund to support diabetes patients, marking the latest addition to its healthcare endowment programme.

The initiative, rolled out by the ministry's General Directorate of Endowments, is designed to build sustainable endowment resources whose proceeds will be channelled directly towards helping patients meet treatment costs and securing medicines and essential medical supplies.

Hassan al-Marzouqi, director-general of the General Directorate of Endowments, said the fund had been structured to respond to a pressing community healthcare need and to lighten the financial load carried by beneficiaries battling the chronic condition.

He said the initiative falls squarely within the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs' 2025-2030 strategy, reflecting a broader push to harness endowment giving in service of public health priorities.

By tying charitable endowment resources to a specific and recurring medical need, the fund offers a model that could be extended to other chronic conditions as the ministry builds out its healthcare endowment portfolio in the years ahead.

QCB hikes rates

The Qatar Central Bank announced yesterday an increase in its deposit interest rate (QCBDR) by 25 basis points to 4.10% , following an assessment of the State of Qatar's current monetary policy.
ACB said in a post on X that the Monetary Policy Committee decided to raise the lending rate (QCBLR) by 25 basis points to 4.60% , and to increase the repo rate (QCB Repo Rate) by 25 basis points to 4.35% . The Qatar Central Bank announced that the decision to raise the interest rate will come into effect starting today. (**QNA**)

Qatar unveils bumper events calendar

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Qatar Tourism has launched the Qatar Calendar 2026-2027, listing more than 560 events staged in partnership with nearly 780 stakeholders, spanning culture, entertainment and sport.
Delivered through Visit Qatar, the calendar serves as a unified national platform bringing together the country's event lineup for residents and international visitors alike.
Promotion will be stepped up, with monthly print distribution rising to 35,000 copies and digital reach extending to 120 countries through Qatari embassies, alongside Visit Qatar's website and app.
HE the Chairman of Qatar Tourism Saad bin Ali al-Kharji said the calendar linked Qatar with the world, reinforcing tourism as a pillar of economic diversification under Qatar National Vision 2030. He said the sector's push to lift tourism's GDP contribution to 12% by 2030 was supported by digital accessibility, the Hayya Platform, and visa-free entry for over 100 countries.
HE the Managing Director of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy Hassan bin Abdullah al-Thawadi said Qatar was drawing on 2022 FIFA World Cup infrastructure and expertise to host the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 and the Asian Games 2030, with Qatari talent increasingly leading international tournaments.
CEO of Visit Qatar Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi said platform users had more than doubled to 230,000 in 2026, from 105,000 in 2025, alongside 1.6bn social media engagements. A unified digital ticketing platform will launch by year-end. Qatar welcomed over 5mn visitors in 2025, with hotel occupancy above 71% and tourism supporting more than 163,000 jobs.
Visit Qatar also signed co-operation agreements with Qatar Rail, the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, MELT Live and Aspire Zone Foundation. Qatar Rail CEO Jassim Mohammed al-Ansari said the deal would integrate Doha Metro and Lusail Tram services into the events and tourism sector, supporting a more seamless visitor mobility experience. Page 12

Qatar and Nauru establish diplomatic relations

Qatar and Nauru signed an agreement yesterday to establish diplomatic relations, pledging to strengthen friendship and co-operation.
The agreement was signed at Qatar's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York by HE Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani and Nauru's Permanent Representative to the UN Lara Erab Daniel. Both the sides affirmed their commitment to promoting mutual understanding and co-operation, guided by the UN Charter and international law, particularly the principles of international peace and security, equality among states, and respect for national sovereignty and territorial integrity. (**QNA**)

Qatar condemns Houthi drone attack on Makkah amid outrage

Qatar has strongly condemned a Houthi drone attack targeting the holy city of Makkah Al-Mukarramah, describing it as a violation of religious, moral and humanitarian principles.

A Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement yesterday said Doha condemned in the strongest possible terms any attempt to threaten the sanctity of the holy city and its Masjid Al-Haram, Islam's holiest mosque.

The statement described the attack as a "shameful" act of aggression and a "blatant" provocation of the sentiments of more than a billion Muslims around the world.

It further stressed that the sanctity and security of the holy sites and the safety of those visiting them must not be targeted, threatened or used in conflicts.

The statement warned that actions endangering Makkah and the Islamic holy sites would constitute a grave escalation and disregard their religious and spiritual significance to Muslims.

Qatar expressed full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and said it supported measures taken by Riyadh to protect its security, territory, Islamic holy sites and pilgrims.

The ministry also reaffirmed Qatar's categorical rejection of attacks on civilians and holy sites, and called for respect for the sanctity of religious sites and for them to be kept away from the consequences of regional conflicts and escalation.

Earlier, AFP reported Houthis as denying they had launched an attack on Makkah, but the accusation prompted a chorus of outrage from around the Muslim world.

Last week, the Houthis seized control of the entirety of Yemen's Red Sea coast and the Bab Al-Mandab Strait, a vital artery for Saudi oil exports as the wider Middle East war chokes off the Strait of Hormuz shipping route.

Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry condemned the targeting of Makkah as a "cowardly terrorist attack" and reaffirmed the kingdom's right to "defend the security of the two holy mosques, the pilgrims, and the entire Saudi territory".

One Makkah resident who spoke to AFP on condition of anonymity said they "saw a few people panicking, running to the window to see what happened" after locals received an alert on their phones warning of an attack.

But, they added, "life is normal in Makkah".

Sheikha Al Mayassa: Qatar's culture rooted in heritage

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

> "We looked at how culture can engage our communities, bring us to our history and our past, which is why we opened the MIA as our first project, followed by Mathaf, and the NMoQ"
>
> — HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums

Qatar's cultural development has been guided by an ambition to remain firmly connected to its heritage and identity while engaging with ideas and communities around the world, according to Qatar Museums (QM) Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

"It was about rooting ourselves in our heritage and our identity, but also having a global perspective to the world," HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said during a conversation with internationally acclaimed artist Olafur Eliasson at the recently concluded 15th Berlin Art Week 2026.

The talk, 'Art, Patronage and Cultural Stewardship', explores cultural investment, artistic practice, environmental responsibility, and the relationship between artists and cultural institutions.

Speaking about Qatar's cultural development over several decades, Sheikha Al Mayassa placed the country's museums, public art programme and international cultural partnerships within a wider national vision guided by human development and the growth of a knowledge-based society.

"Bringing art is not my effort; it is a national vision that I belong to. I belong to a family that believes in human development and investing in people as its first and foremost resource," she said.

"We looked at how culture can engage our communities, bring us to our history and our past, which is why we opened the Museum of Islamic Art as our first project, followed by Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, and the National Museum of Qatar."

She added: "It was about rooting ourselves in our heritage and our identity, but also having a global perspective to the world. In parallel to that, we were creating opportunities for cultural diplomacy." To Page 6

New laws regulate real estate joint ownership, animal health

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has officially ratified Law No 11 of 2026 regarding the Owners' Union, according to the Official Gazette issue No 17, issued by the Ministry of Justice. The law established a legal framework for the management, maintenance and administration of jointly owned properties and their common areas.

The law applies to real-estate development projects and jointly owned properties, whether completed, under construction or undeveloped, while excluding buildings used entirely for government administration, hotels and tourism facilities governed by the relevant tourism legislation, and other facilities that a cabinet decision may exclude.

Under the law, an Owners' Union must be established when a jointly owned property has three or more units of subdivided units, including the developer or plot owner for qualifying unsold units.

The law and its implementing regulations also allow unions to cover more than one property. Once officially registered, the union acquires a separate legal personality and independent financial liability. Applicants may submit registration applications electronically or on paper, and the competent authority must decide within 15 days. If the application is rejected, the decision must state the reasons, and applicants may file a grievance with the Minister of Municipality within 30 days.

The union's financial resources include contributions imposed by the General Assembly on owners, investment returns, donations and other approved revenues — a dedicated operating account funds the association's obligations, including managing and maintaining common areas. The union is responsible for protecting the property and its common components, carrying out maintenance, restoration and reinforcement, preserving its architectural character, arranging relevant services and obtaining insurance where required. It may also seek compensation from parties responsible for damage to the property or common areas.

The law applies to real-estate development projects and jointly owned properties

Owners must pay annual contributions and maintenance expenses, comply with decisions of the Board of Directors and General Assembly, report changes in ownership, and refrain from damaging the property or common areas. Where an owner fails to undertake necessary internal repairs that could harm other owners or the building, the competent authority may carry out the repairs at the owner's expense, adding 25% to the actual repair cost, without prejudice to the possible criminal liability. Owners are also responsible for the costs that may arise from violations committed by their tenants or occupants.

The law gives the union mechanisms to recover unpaid contributions. Following prescribed notices, continued non-payment for three consecutive months may lead the Board to request procedures to cut electricity and water services to the unit. Such action is subject to grievance procedures and cannot be implemented until the relevant grievance period has expired or the grievance has been decided.

The union can claim the property and its related shares if the owner doesn't pay their financial obligations. Developers or plot owners may collect up to two years of the union contributions before handing over a unit, subject to the executive regulations.

The General Assembly must meet at least once a year and may be convened when required.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has issued Law No 12 of 2026 on Animal Health, which was published in the Official Gazette issue No 17, establishing a comprehensive framework for preventing and controlling infectious, epidemic and zoonotic diseases among animals and protecting the country's livestock resources.

The law replaces Law No 1 of 1985 on animal health and covers animal owners, veterinary professionals, animal facilities and animal products. It is scheduled to take effect six months after its publication in the Official Gazette. The legislation assigns the Ministry of Municipality, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, responsibility for epidemiological surveillance, disease testing, and implementing necessary health measures.

It also provides for public awareness campaigns, vaccination programmes, establishing a livestock database and animal identification system, and vaccinating animals under appropriate veterinary supervision.

Under the law, animal owners must notify the competent department within 24 hours of suspecting or being informed that an animal is infected and must arrange a veterinary examination. Owners and veterinarians must also report diseases included in the schedule attached to the law. Suspected or infected animals must be isolated at locations designated by the authorities, and owners may not dispose of the animals or their products without the required approval.

'Supporting priority groups crucial for resilient societies'

HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi said, "By strengthening families, empowering women, supporting priority groups, fostering active and responsible communities, and promoting productive and independent lives, we are building a more cohesive and resilient society for generations to come."

This came during Qatar Foundation partner university, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, (CMU-Q)'s Dean's Lecture Series where Her Excellency discussed Qatar's strategic roadmap for social development and its role in building a resilient and empowered society.

During her lecture, HE al-Nuaimi presented the Ministry of Social Development and Family Strategy 2025-2030, "From Care to Empowerment", outlining its approach to building a resilient society in alignment with Qatar's Third National Development Strategy and Qatar National Vision 2030.

She noted that the strategy features five interconnected pillars: strengthening family unity, women's empowerment, supporting vulnerable groups, building social solidarity, and comprehensive social protection, as to enhance life quality and social cohesion.

Al-Nuaimi explained that the strategy represents a breakthrough in Qatar's social development approach, emphasising that its success requires collective action and collaboration across government, the private sector, civil society, and the wider community.

"Our vision is to move from care to empowerment, creating the conditions for individuals and families to thrive and contribute fully to society. By strengthening families, empowering women, supporting priority groups, fostering active and responsible communities, and promoting productive and independent lives, we are building a more cohesive and resilient society for generations to come," said HE the Minister of Social Development and Family.

The presentation was the first instalment of CMU-Q's Dean's Lecture Series for the new academic year. For more than 15 years, CMU-Q has welcomed leaders in government, industry and academia to the Dean's Lecture Series, hosting more than 80 speakers from across Qatar and around the world. (**QNA**)

Amir congratulates Mexico president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to the President of the United Mexican States Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo on the occasion of her country's Independence Day. (**QNA**)

Amir sends cables of congratulations to governor-general of Papua New Guinea

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to the Governor-General of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea Sir Bob Dadae on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. (**QNA**)

Minister of state receives copy of credentials of Turkish envoy

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received yesterday a copy of the credentials of the ambassador of the Republic of Turkiye to the State of Qatar, Yakup Caymazoglu. HE al-Muraikhi wished the ambassador success in his duties, emphasising utmost support to enhance bilateral relations and foster closer co-operation in various fields. (**QNA**)

MoJ-Qatar Television programme to promote legal awareness

In co-operation with Qatar Television, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) launched a programme under the title of "Rule of Law", as part of a partnership aimed at enhancing legal culture and spreading awareness of rights, duties, and legal procedures related to the daily lives of citizens and residents.

With 16 episodes in its first season, the programme presents simplified, interactive legal content featuring legal professionals, lawyers, academics, experts, and specialists. It addresses topics and issues relevant to the lives of the community members, thereby helping to make legal concepts more accessible and providing reliable legal information in a clear manner.

With 16 episodes in its first season, the programme presents simplified, interactive legal content featuring legal professionals, lawyers, academics, experts, specialists

The programme will address a range of topics, including patient rights and legal responsibilities related to healthcare services; tenancy and real estate issues; contracts and agencies; labour and employment rights; family, personal status, and inheritance matters; as well as consumer protection, financial obligations, and commercial transactions.

The programme will also cover issues associated with digital transformation, such as cybersecurity, digital extortion, privacy and personal data collection, and the safe use of social media, in addition to matters regarding insurance, loans, mortgages, and dispute resolution through mediation and arbitration. The topics will extend to cover children's rights, family protection, and legal liabilities in business activities, while providing the public with an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the legal issues they face, thereby fostering communication between specialists and members of the community.

This initiative reflects the Ministry of Justice's commitment to enhancing legal awareness, fostering a culture of respect for the law, and leveraging national media to disseminate legal knowledge to the public - all in alignment with the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030) to build a society founded on justice, knowledge, and the rule of law. (**QNA**)

Qatar, Singapore ministers co-chair High-Level Joint Committee

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Singapore Dr Vivian Balakrishnan co-chaired the meeting of the implementation monitoring mechanism of the High-Level Joint Committee between the State of Qatar and the Republic of Singapore, held yesterday in Doha.

The meeting discussed co-operation relations between the two countries, ways to support and develop them, and the implementation of outcomes from the implementation monitoring mechanism meetings, thereby strengthening bilateral ties across various fields.

Both sides voiced satisfaction with the progress achieved. They also agreed to follow up on the implementation of the third meeting's outcomes through diplomatic channels and specialised technical working committees, and to hold the fourth meeting of the implementation monitoring mechanism in Singapore in 2027. (**QNA**)

12th Qatar Patient Safety Week begins today

The 12th Qatar Patient Safety Week will get underway today under the slogan "Safe Care for Life!".

Organised by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), the week-long initiative will focus on the theme "Safe Care for Non-Communicable Diseases," highlighting patient safety risks and preventable harm associated with non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and promoting integrated, person-centred and multidisciplinary care informed by behavioural insights.

The initiative aims to strengthen the safety, quality, continuity and effectiveness of healthcare, while empowering patients, families, caregivers, healthcare professionals and other stakeholders to play an active role in delivering safe care. It will also promote shared decision-making, diagnostic safety and medication safety.

Qatar Patient Safety Week targets patients and caregivers, healthcare practitioners, healthcare facility managers, policymakers and healthcare leaders, as well as civil society organisations. It encourages informed participation, adherence to treatment plans, effective communication, medication safety and accurate diagnosis, while supporting the development of reliable healthcare systems and the monitoring of patient safety indicators.

Throughout the week, the MoPH will organise a range of awareness activities and events, including the dissemination of patient safety messages through its digital platforms and a media campaign across various communication channels. An awareness event will also be held at the Ministry's headquarters for employees, visitors and healthcare sector professionals.

The program will also include virtual awareness sessions and webinars for healthcare professionals and members of the public. Healthcare facilities across Qatar will participate by organising educational and awareness activities for staff, patients and visitors, contributing to the promotion of a culture of quality and patient safety across healthcare institutions.

Qatar Patient Safety Week is an annual national initiative launched by the MoPH in 2014 through its Healthcare Quality Department. It aims to promote healthcare quality and patient safety among healthcare professionals and service users, while fostering sustainable collaboration among the Ministry, healthcare providers and patients to help ensure safer healthcare in the State of Qatar. (**QNA**)

Carrefour كارفور

هذه العروض متوفرة فقط في كارفور هايبر ماركتس قطر (سيتي سنتر، فيلاجيو، لاند مارك، قطر مول و إزدان الوكرة)

17, 18, 19 September — **Offers are only available in Carrefour Hypermarkets** (City Center, Villaggio, Landmark, Mall of Qatar & Ezdan Al Wakrah) — ١٧، ١٨، ١٩ سبتمبر

From store to door
Free delivery in 60 mins
Minimum order of 99 QAR.
Download the Carrefour App now

كل احتياجاتك تصل لبابك مجاناً في 60 دقيقة
الحد الأدنى للطلب هو ٩٩ ريال.
حمل تطبيق كارفور الآن

Product	عربي	Price	Unit
Pomegranate, Egypt	رمان، مصر	4.50 QAR	Per KG
Apple royal gala, Azerbaijan	تفاح رويال جالا أذربيجان	7.00 QAR	Per KG
Baby rocket 100g, Local (Qatari product منتج قطري)	جرجير صغيرة ١٠٠ غرام، محلي	4.75 QAR	Per Pack
Italian cake	كيك إيطالي	9.75 QAR	Per PC
Blueberry 125g, South Africa / Zimbabwe	توت أزرق ١٢٥ غرام، جنوب أفريقيا / زيمبابوي	7.75 QAR	Per Pack
Raspberry 170g, Morocco	توت العليق ١٧٠ غرام، المغرب	15.75 QAR	Per Pack
Blackberry 170g, Portugal	توت أسود ١٧٠ غرام، البرتغال	16.50 QAR	Per Pack
Shrimps 60/80 500g, UAE	روبيان ٦٠/٨٠ ٥٠٠ غرام، الإمارات	10.00 QAR	

16 - 19 September ١٦ - ١٩ سبتمبر

- Onion red, Egypt — بصل أحمر مصر — 2.75 QR Per KG
- Mango keitt / Heidi / Naomi / R2, Egypt — مانجو مصر — 8.00 QR Per KG — MyCLUB 10% credited as MyCLUB points
- Zain sunflower oil 1.8L — زيت دوار الشمس زين ١.٨ لتر — 12.50 QR
- Anchor milk 2.25kg — حليب أنكور ٢.٢٥ كجم — 54.50 QR
- Perla chicken tenderized breast 2kg — صدر دجاج بيرلا ٢ كجم — Frozen — 28.00 QR
- Jelp clean facial tissue — مناديل وجه ٢٠٠ ورقة، طبقتان — 5 Pieces — ~~18.00~~ 9.75 QR

WOW!

Cosmoplast — Cosmoplast storage box assorted — صندوق تخزين متنوعة — 13L — ~~26.00~~ 15.00 QR

Also available

22L	25.00 QAR	~~32.00 QAR~~	٢٢ لتر
33L	30.00 QAR	~~43.00 QAR~~	٣٣ لتر
55L	45.00 QAR	~~59.00 QAR~~	٥٥ لتر
82L	69.00 QAR	~~89.00 QAR~~	٨٢ لتر
132L	89.00 QAR	~~115.00 QAR~~	١٣٢ لتر

VIP — VIP oakland spinner hard trolley assorted — حقيبة سفر متنوعة — 4 WHEEL 55 CM — ~~159.00~~ 119.00 QR

Also available

69 CM	149.00 QAR	~~189.00 QAR~~	٦٩ سم
80 CM	169.00 QAR	~~219.00 QAR~~	٨٠ سم

- Fleece or flannel blanket assorted — بطانية متنوعة — ~~49.75~~ 12.75 QR Per PC
- Mens polo shirts assorted — بولو رجالي متنوع — ~~29.75~~ 11.50 QR Per PC
- Mens pants assorted — بنطال رجالي متنوع — ~~29.00~~ 17.75 QR Per PC
- Hisense UHD TV 65A61Q — تلفاز هايسنس — 65" — 1499.00 QR — 379.75 QAR × 4 monthly instalments

لا تفوّت الفرصة!
احصل على أفضل العروض على هاتفك

Don't miss out!
Get the best deals on your phone

Scan to subscribe

Doha conference to put social impact at heart of sustainable development

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Doha will host the fourth International Scientific Conference on Social Responsibility on September 21, bringing together academics, researchers, experts and representatives of government, private-sector and non-profit organisations.

The 2026 event, titled "From Action to Impact: Measuring the Societal Impact of Responsible Practices in Sustainable Development", is organised by the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies in co-operation with the International Islamic University Malaysia, Qatar National Library, the Regional Network for Consulting and the Arab Journal of Social Responsibility.

The organising committee announced conference details at a press briefing held yesterday at its headquarters. Dr Mohamed bin Saif al-Kuwari, International Ambassador for Social Responsibility and conference chair, told reporters that the event is being held under the honorary patronage of HE Dr Hamad bin Abdulaziz al-Kuwari, Minister of State and President of Qatar National Library. He said the conference would place measuring societal impact at the centre of discussions on the future of social responsibility and sustainable development.

Dr Mohammed bin Saif al-Kuwari

Dr al-Kuwari said social responsibility is undergoing a fundamental shift, with institutions increasingly expected to show not only what initiatives they have implemented but also how those efforts have changed lives and communities. He said the conference would promote a move from a "culture of action" to a "culture of impact", looking beyond the volume of activities to assess the results, changes and value generated across economic, social and environmental spheres.

Several organisations will be honoured for corporate practices that have created social impact, while an award will be presented for the best scientific research paper. The fifth issue of the Arab Journal of Social Responsibility will also be launched.

Khalid al-Rumaithi, vice-president of Internal Communications at QNB Group, said the group's sponsorship reflected its belief that social responsibility has become an integral part of corporate strategy and of the role institutions play in advancing sustainable development.

Culture ministry bags accreditation from Global Innovation Institute

The Ministry of Culture has achieved a new institutional milestone, with the 'This Is Qatar' encyclopedia receiving Innovation Endorsement - Tier 3 accreditation from the Global Innovation Institute (GInI), the third and highest level of endorsement. The recognition reflects the encyclopedia's ability to deliver innovative cultural and knowledge-based value, as well as the ministry's capacity to translate innovation into practical applications and tangible outcomes with measurable impact.

The accreditation further advances the development of the 'This Is Qatar' encyclopedia, which was launched during the opening of the 35th Doha International Book Fair as a modern knowledge and documentation platform showcasing the history of the State of Qatar, its cultural identity and national achievements.

The encyclopedia is based on an integrated system combining knowledge-based content, historical documentation, multimedia, interactive solutions and modern content-presentation methods. This enables Qatar's history and national heritage to be presented in a contemporary manner while expanding access to cultural content for different segments of society and in multiple languages.

The ministry added that receiving this international accreditation reflects its commitment to establishing innovation as a key enabler of institutional cultural work and to developing initiatives capable of creating sustainable cultural and knowledge-based value, alongside employing modern technologies and methods in producing and providing access to content.

The ministry affirmed that the achievement represents a step within a broader path toward developing national cultural projects and strengthening their ability to preserve national memory, reinforce identity, and showcase the history and achievements of the State of Qatar, thereby supporting its cultural and intellectual presence at the regional and international levels.

The accreditation also underscores the ability of national talent at the Ministry of Culture to develop cultural initiatives in accordance with international standards and to strengthen Qatar's presence in the fields of cultural and institutional innovation. The Global Innovation Institute affirmed that the Ministry of Culture is the first ministry in the State of Qatar to receive Innovation Endorsement-Tier 3 recognition for one of its initiatives, adding this achievement to the Ministry's efforts to develop its institutional framework and promote excellence and innovation in the cultural sector. (**QNA**)

The Highmore welcomes back Nigel Miles Thomas for *Sherlock Holmes: The Death and Life*

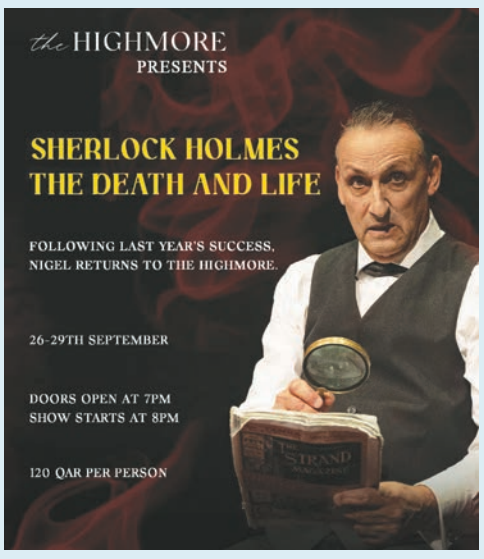
Following three successful theatrical productions at The Highmore, acclaimed theatrical performer Nigel Miles Thomas returns to the venue with his latest production, *Sherlock Holmes: The Death and Life*, taking place from September 26-29.

A returning favourite among The Highmore's theatre audiences, Nigel Miles Thomas has previously brought his distinctive theatrical style to the venue through sold out performances like *Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act*, *Sherlock Holmes: A Xmas Carol*, and *Of Mice and Men*. His upcoming appearance continues a successful theatrical relationship with The Highmore, offering audiences another opportunity to experience his captivating approach to live performance.

Sherlock Holmes: The Death and Life delves into the world of the legendary detective through a theatrical journey filled with mystery, intrigue and unexpected twists.

The production explores the enduring character of Sherlock Holmes and the fine line between his celebrated life as the world's most renowned detective and the mysteries surrounding his supposed death. As the story unfolds, audiences are taken through a series of revelations that challenge what they know about Holmes, his legacy and the events that shaped his remarkable life.

Blending suspenseful storytelling, dramatic characterisation and the unmistakable atmosphere of a Sherlock Holmes mystery, the production promises an intimate and engaging theatrical experience, brought to life through the performance of Nigel Miles Thomas.



Guests are invited to step into the mysterious world of Sherlock Holmes and experience an evening of live theatre in the distinctive setting of The Highmore.

The event will be held at Waldorf Astoria Doha Lusail's The Highmore, with doors opening at 7pm and the show starting at 8pm. Tickets are priced at QR120 per person, with Nigel Miles Thomas performing. For information and bookings, e-mail TheHighmore@waldorfastoria.com, call +974 4456 5778, or WhatsApp +974 6683 4814.

QMC chief meets GCCJPPI director general

HE the CEO of the Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Director General of the Gulf Co-operation Council Joint Program Production Institution (GCCJPPI) Sheikh Mubarak Fahad al-Jaber al-Sabah. The meeting discussed aspects of media co-operation and ways to enhance and develop them between the two institutions. It also addressed various media and production topics and projects of mutual interest, as well as mechanisms to support and advance joint Gulf media efforts in a manner that meets the aspirations of the GCC states. (**QNA**)

QC allocates $1mn to support Yemeni refugees in Djibouti

Qatar Charity (QC) has allocated an initial $1mn for emergency assistance to Yemeni refugees who have fled their homes amid escalating hostilities.

The International Organisation for Migration said violence along Yemen's western coast had displaced over 85,000 people inside the country and forced more than 2,000, mostly women and children, to seek safety in Djibouti.

A Qatar Charity statement said the urgent package would focus on meeting the most pressing basic needs of affected families, who undertook what it described as "perilous journeys" to reach safety along Djibouti's northern coast.

The package includes emergency shelter and essential non-food items, hot meals and ready-to-eat food assistance, safe drinking water, primary healthcare services, support for water, sanitation and hygiene services, and nutritional support for mothers and children.

The agency added that the move aims to strengthen support for host areas and communities facing mounting pressure because of the influx of refugees.

It said the intervention was being implemented in coordination with the relevant authorities and humanitarian partners to ensure that assistance reaches the most vulnerable families as quickly as possible.

The urgent package would focus on meeting the most pressing basic needs of affected families

One of the largest humanitarian and development organisations in the world, Qatar Charity provides life-saving assistance to those hit by conflicts, persecution and natural disasters and create durable solutions for poverty using sustainable development programs in social welfare, water and sanitation, education, nutrition and economic empowerment. (**QNA**)

Scientific Excellence Award to open online applications on Oct 1 with new categories

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Online applications for the 20th Qatar Scientific Excellence Award will take place from October 1-31, the award's Electronic System Committee has announced.

Winners are due to be announced on February 1, 2027, with the awards ceremony scheduled for April 18, 2027.

The timetable and application procedures were outlined at an introductory meeting on the award's electronic system. Officials explained registration, access methods and eligible categories, and highlighted updates introduced for the new edition.

The committee urged candidates to apply during the first one or two weeks of October, allowing enough time to obtain technical assistance and resolve any problems or queries before the deadline.

Mohammed Suleiman, vice-chairman of the Electronic System Committee, said the award website provides guidance documents, nomination forms and details of the conditions and procedures for each category. Applications must be submitted through the electronic system, he said, while PDF files on the website are intended for reference only.

Winners are due to be announced on Feb 1, 2027, with the awards ceremony scheduled for April 18, 2027

A dedicated technical support service will receive enquiries and reports of system issues, with a specialised team aiming to resolve them within 48 hours. Teachers and principals at public and private schools may use their existing credentials, while private-school applicants without Ministry system access can register for a new account.

Suleiman said the system automatically recognises an applicant's details, personal identification number, and category, directing school-based applicants by grade level or education stage. Candidates outside the school system can choose from the Bachelor's, Master's and PhD categories.

The Master's and PhD sections now feature three classifications: Science, Engineering and Information Technology; Humanities and Social Sciences; and Medical, Biomedical and Health Sciences. The change is intended to help applicants identify the field matching their specialisation and reduce errors during submission.

Applicants may complete their forms in stages, save information and return to it before final submission. They can also edit details, cancel an application that has not been submitted, or begin a new one within the application period.

The committee advised users to select "Save and Continue" after entering information under each criterion. The system flags mandatory fields and will not allow an application to be completed unless the user provides the minimum required information and supporting evidence.

Doha College Class of 2026 secures places at leading global universities

Doha College celebrates the outstanding university destinations of its Class of 2026, as graduates take their next steps at leading universities and institutions across the UK, US, Europe and beyond.

Following an exceptional year of academic achievement, members of the Class of 2026 have secured places at some of the world's most highly regarded universities, reflecting the hard work and varied interests that characterised the cohort throughout their time at Doha College.

Across the UK, graduates have secured offers to prestigious institutions including Imperial College London, University College London (UCL), King's College London, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and the University of Manchester.

More than 72% of pupils applying to UK universities received offers from Russell Group institutions, which are recognised for their academic excellence and world-leading research.

Success extended across the Atlantic, with nine members of the Class of 2026 progressing to universities in the United States. Among them, two secured places at Ivy League institutions: one graduate joined the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, and another progressed to Cornell University.

The destinations of the Class of 2026 demonstrate the increasingly global pathways available to Doha College graduates. Of the cohort, 86 are progressing to the UK, nine to the US, 24 to destinations across Europe, 20 across Asia and the Middle East, 6 to Canada and 4 to Australia.

At the centre of Doha College's Vision and Mission, Inspiring Minds, is an ambition to help every pupil unlock their passions and potential, develop the highest expectations of what they can achieve and consider the positive impact they can make on the world around them.

The breadth of subjects and opportunities explored by the Class of 2026 during their time at Doha College is reflected in their chosen fields of study.

Engineering emerged as the most popular degree pathway, closely followed by Medicine. The strong representation of pupils progressing into Medicine is particularly significant given the highly competitive nature of entry to medical degree programmes. Graduates are also pursuing Accounting and Finance, Law, Economics, Business and a diverse range of other degree pathways.

These destinations follow an exceptional set of A Level results for the Class of 2026, with 63% of grades awarded at A*-A, 84% at A*-B, and 95% at A*-C.

Individual performances were equally impressive. The highest-achieving pupils secured outstanding combinations of A* grades, including one pupil achieving five A* grades including the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ)*, alongside pupils achieving four and three A* grades.

These results provided a strong foundation for graduates as they competed for places on demanding courses and at highly selective universities around the world.

As they begin the next stage of their journeys, they take with them not only the knowledge and confidence developed through their Doha College education, but the values and strength of character that will help them make the most of the opportunities ahead.

MoECC observes Ozone Day

Qatar highlighted its commitment to protecting the ozone layer and promoting sustainable cooling as the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) marked World Ozone Day 2026 yesterday.

The event, under the patronage and in the presence of HE Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, highlighted the importance of international co-operation to protect the ozone layer and address climate change.

Held annually on September 16, this year's observance followed the theme "Global Action for a Cooler Planet."

The celebration included the recognition of students who won the top three positions in the ministry's "Best Illustrated Short Story on Ozone Layer Protection" competition, organised in co-operation with Qatar Reads, an initiative of Qatar National Library.

Faisal Misfer al-Misafri won first place, followed by Al Maha Hisham Kazem in second and Ali Mohamed al-Marri in third.

Students from schools that won the scientific research competition on the Minamata Convention on Mercury were also honoured. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education organised the competition in co-operation with the Ministry of Education.

In the preparatory category, Al Ghuwariyah Joint Girls School took first place, followed by Al Shahaniya Preparatory Girls School in second and Al Shamal Preparatory Boys School in third.

In the secondary category, Rawdat Bent Mohamed Secondary Girls School won first place, followed by Qatar Technical Secondary Girls School and Qatar Technical Secondary Boys School in second and third places, respectively.

The celebration also marked the 10th anniversary of adopting the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which strengthened global efforts to promote sustainable cooling and reduce refrigerants' environmental and climate impacts.

Qatar Cool was also recognised for its environmental initiative in refrigerant management and reclamation through a specialised refrigerant gas reclamation facility, highlighting the private sector's role in supporting sustainable environmental practices.

The ministry reiterated Qatar's commitment to the Vienna Convention and Montreal Protocol and its continued efforts to raise environmental awareness, promote sustainability and support climate protection.

QNB Group marks Blue Pledge anniversary

QNB Group has organised the inaugural edition of 'Marine Life Awareness Month', a new annual campaign held each August to mark the anniversary of the QNB Blue Pledge, which was launched in 2025.

The initiative featured activities in Qatar and across the group's international network, bringing together employees, families and local communities to help protect marine ecosystems and reduce plastic pollution.

Throughout the month, QNB entities across several coastal markets translated the group-wide commitment into locally relevant action, ranging from beach clean-ups and waste reduction to environmental education and employee advocacy. Together, these activities demonstrated how a shared pledge can inspire practical action and create a platform for sustained environmental impact.

In Qatar, Marine Life Awareness Month focused on mobilising employees and reinforcing the shared responsibility behind the Blue Pledge. Employees reaffirmed their commitment to environmentally responsible practices by highlighting the actions they had taken over the past year and the role individuals can play in protecting marine ecosystems.

Their messages were shared across the Group's social media platforms to raise public awareness, encourage more sustainable everyday choices and inspire wider community participation.

QNB executives also reaffirmed the group's commitment to marine conservation, placing the pledge within QNB's broader environmental, social and governance strategy and net-zero ambition. The initiative supports the environmental objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Recognising that lasting environmental progress depends on education, QNB Tunisia marked the anniversary by engaging employees and their children. During an educational visit to the Salammbô Oceanographic Museum, children explored Tunisia's marine heritage and learned about biodiversity, ocean conservation and the importance of preserving natural resources.

QNB Indonesia demonstrated the measurable impact of employee participation through its 'Berawal dari Kantor', or 'Starting from the Office', programme. The initiative encouraged employees to manage waste more responsibly at work and at home.

The programme also brought employees and their children together for an activity focused on waste management and ocean conservation. After learning how to sort waste correctly, participants collected litter around the head office and transformed discarded plastic into artwork inspired by the ocean and marine life.

QNB Egypt brought the Blue Pledge to life by inviting employees to learn, create and take meaningful action. During an interactive workshop, participants explored practical ways to rethink everyday waste, recycle responsibly and give discarded materials a new purpose.

Employees built on this experience by making personal commitments through the Blue Pledge Wall, an ocean-inspired interactive installation illustrating how individual choices can collectively make a difference.

QNB Egypt extended the campaign to the North Coast through a series of public-facing activations. These included an aircraft displaying the #QNBBluePledge flag, a branded beach courtyard featuring flags carrying the message 'Sustainability is our responsibility', and a dedicated booth where staff distributed eco-friendly giveaways.

Employees in Türkiye, France, and Switzerland participated in the 'Choose to Reuse' campaign, which focused on turning environmental awareness into a simple, practical workplace habit.

Employees received branded reusable water bottles made from recycled plastic, helping to reduce reliance on single-use plastics. The campaign demonstrated how small, consistent behavioural changes can contribute to reducing plastic waste and building a more environmentally conscious workplace culture.

As the Blue Pledge enters its second year, QNB Group remains focused on expanding environmental awareness, encouraging responsible behaviour and creating opportunities for its employees and communities to contribute to the protection of marine ecosystems.

Hundreds join beach clean-up drive

The Ministry of Municipality Public Cleanliness Department's Beaches and Islands Section has carried out several beach clean-up campaigns at Zekreet, Simaisma Family Beach, Abu Samra, Ras Abu Fontas and Al Jasasiya as part of the activities marking the World Cleanup Day 2026.

The campaigns aimed to raise environmental awareness and promote a culture of clean beaches and coastal protection. A total of 469 participants from government entities, civil society organisations, private-sector volunteers, schools, and community members took part in the campaigns.

The initiatives resulted in the removal of approximately 1,603kg of general waste, recyclable materials, wood, bulky waste and marine grass debris.

Accordingly, Mohamed Faraj al-Kubaisi, Assistant Director of the Public Cleanliness Department, said the World Cleanup Day activities represent an important opportunity to strengthen community partnerships and raise environmental awareness across society. He noted that strong participation by government and private entities, schools, volunteers, and community members reflects a growing culture of shared responsibility for protecting the environment and beaches, while supporting the Ministry of Municipality's efforts to achieve a clean and sustainable environment.

Meanwhile, Hajaj al-Kubaisi, head of the Beaches and Islands Section, said the campaigns achieved positive results in participation and in the quantities of waste collected and sorted. He affirmed that the Beaches and Islands Section continues to implement awareness programmes and field campaigns throughout the year to maintain the cleanliness of beaches and islands and encourage different segments of society to participate in protecting the coastal environment.

He also praised the co-operation of various government entities, private-sector organisations, schools, youth centres, and volunteers, highlighting their role in the campaigns' success. He stressed that co-ordinated community efforts help raise awareness of the importance of preserving natural resources.

The beach clean-up campaigns also involved the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change; the Friends of the Municipality team of Al Shehaniyah Municipality; the municipalities of Al Shamal, Al Rayyan and Al Daayen; the Public Parks Department; the Mechanical Equipment Department at the Ministry of Municipality; Al Jumailiyah Youth Centre; Simaisma Youth Centre; Lavajet Company; and a number of students from Lubaba Bint Al-Harith Primary School for Girls.

QCS launches 'Let's Draw a Smile' campaign

Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) launched the "Let's Draw a Smile" campaign this September to raise awareness of childhood cancers, as part of its ongoing efforts to promote health awareness across the community, emphasise the importance of healthy lifestyles, and support children living with cancer and their families.

The campaign features a range of awareness programmes and activities targeting children, parents, and other community members. These include in-person and virtual lectures and workshops highlighting childhood cancers, key signs and symptoms that require attention, and the importance of health awareness in recognising and responding early to any unusual changes.

"Let's Draw a Smile" campaign also places particular emphasis on encouraging healthy lifestyles from an early age. As part of these efforts, QCS is organising healthy cooking programmes and workshops for children and their families to promote sound nutritional practices and encourage healthy habits that can become part of their daily lives.

As part of the campaign's humanitarian and community-focused efforts, QCS has also launched a fundraising initiative to help support the treatment costs of children with cancer, in collaboration with many selected restaurants and cafés.

Under the initiative, QR5 from every beverage purchased at participating outlets will be donated to support children's treatment, offering members of the community a simple and meaningful way to contribute to

Mona Ashkanani

their treatment journey.

Mona Ashkanani, general manager of Qatar Cancer Society, said that "Let's Draw a Smile" reflects QCS's vision and its belief that awareness and support go hand in hand. She emphasised that addressing cancer extends beyond healthcare alone and requires a supportive community environment that fosters hope and stands alongside children and their families throughout the treatment journey.

She called on individuals and institutions across the community to engage with the campaign's activities and participate in its awareness and humanitarian initiatives, stressing that every contribution, no matter how small, can make a difference and bring a smile of hope to a child's face.

She added: "This initiative reflects the importance of collective efforts among community organisations, the private sector, and individuals in supporting people living with cancer and strengthening their ability. A simple everyday action can become a meaningful contribution that makes a real difference in the life of a child and their family."

Fuel for Thought: Keeta meets The MESTOUR Method at M7

There are certain creative disciplines where technique is only the beginning; where years spent observing, experimenting and working at the highest levels eventually develop into something far more instinctive, a method of seeing, understanding and creating. This October, Keeta joins internationally established artistic director Ilham Mestour as hospitality partner for The MESTOUR Method, bringing together food and creativity as the advanced, invitation-based masterclass for professional hairstylists arrives at M7 Creative Space from October 11–15.

Developed through decades of Mestour's work across luxury fashion, editorial and celebrity styling, the five-day programme moves beyond the mechanics of hairstyling to explore artistic judgement, precision and the professional standards behind the craft. With places intentionally limited and participants selected through a formal application process, it is designed for working professionals looking not simply to learn another technique, but to challenge and further refine their own creative language.

For Keeta, supporting the programme is also part of a wider interest in the communities shaping contemporary Doha. As hospitality partner throughout the five days, the brand will support the experience at M7, entering a rather interesting intersection where food meets fashion, design, education and creative exchange.

"Creativity has an extraordinary way of moving between disciplines, and we believe the most interesting communities are built when those worlds are given opportunities to meet," says Jane Liu, General Manager of Keeta Qatar. "For Keeta, supporting The MESTOUR Method is about contributing to an environment that encourages talent, learning and creative exchange. As we grow in Qatar, we want our presence to extend beyond the service we provide every day and into the ideas, people and creative communities that continue to shape the country."

Speaking about the collaboration, Ilham Mestour, Founder and Creative Director, The MESTOUR Method, said, "Talent flourishes when vision is met with meaningful support. Keeta's partnership allows us to turn creativity into education, confidence and real opportunity, empowering a new generation of talent to contribute to Qatar's growing creative and cultural landscape."

For Keeta, the collaboration also continues a growing conversation with the creative communities shaping Doha. As part of its first anniversary in Qatar, the brand collaborated with Qatari artist Mubarak Al Thani on We Are Doha, a visual tribute to the city that reimagined its architecture, structures and everyday movement through art. The MESTOUR Method takes that engagement into another creative discipline altogether, using hospitality as an enabler of talent, learning and exchange, while bringing international expertise into conversation with Qatar's evolving creative landscape.

QATAR

Adviser to PM attends Washington Forum

Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs HE Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari participated yesterday in the Washington DC Forum, organised by Concordia in partnership with the Embassy of the State of Qatar in the United States of America. During his remarks at the forum, Dr al-Ansari stressed the importance of continuing to strengthen Qatar-US relations and further developing areas of co-operation between the two countries in a manner that serves their mutual interests and supports regional and international security and stability. The forum dealt with the partnership and strategic relations between the State of Qatar and the United States, as well as the most prominent regional and international developments of mutual interest. The forum provided an opportunity to exchange views on several current issues and to underscore the importance of dialogue, co-operation and international partnerships in addressing shared challenges. (**QNA**)

Qatar Rail, Visit Qatar sign MoU to improve access to Qatar's events

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

The partnership between Qatar Rail and Visit Qatar will help improve visitor access to events and tourist destinations while promoting public transport options across the country, Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail) CEO Jassim Mohammed al-Ansari has said.

The MoU, signed by al-Ansari on behalf of Qatar Rail and Visit Qatar CEO Engineer Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi, aims to strengthen the link between the country's rail-based public transport network and its tourism and events sector.

In a statement sent to reporters, al-Ansari said the partnership would use Doha Metro and Lusail Tram services to help visitors access destinations and events and raise awareness of public transport options across the networks.

"The MoU signed with Visit Qatar reflects Qatar Rail's commitment to strengthening the role of public transport in supporting the tourism and events sector in the State of Qatar," he said.

Jassim Mohammed al-Ansari

He added that the MoU seeks to establish a strategic partnership between the rail-based public transport system and the tourism sector, supporting easier access to events and tourist destinations across the country.

The partnership is also intended to support Qatar's efforts to develop a more integrated and sustainable tourism experience and strengthen its position as a destination for tourism and events, al-Ansari pointed out.

The agreement comes as Visit Qatar launches its Qatar Calendar 2026/2027, bringing together more than 560 events, festivals and championships taking place across the country.

The calendar provides citizens, residents and visitors with information on upcoming events, allowing them to plan their trips and experiences in advance. It also aims to improve co-ordination across Qatar's events sector while supporting tourism, hospitality, retail and other economic activities.

As part of its efforts to make events easier to discover and access, Visit Qatar has also introduced new digital developments.

These include a unified digital ticketing platform scheduled to launch in the fourth quarter of this year and a new Widget feature in the Visit Qatar app.

The Qatar Calendar is available across Visit Qatar's digital platforms, providing event updates and enabling residents and visitors to plan their experiences throughout the year.

MoL wraps up heat-stress safety campaign

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Labour (MoL), represented by the Occupational Safety and Health Department, has concluded its three-month 2026 awareness and inspection campaign on the risks of heat stress. According to a statement by MoL, the campaign was part of its ongoing efforts to enhance occupational safety and health standards and protect workers from risks associated with working in hot weather, in line with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the ministry's strategic objectives of providing a safe and sustainable working environment.

Throughout the campaign, MoL intensified its awareness and inspection efforts, targeting workers, employers and various relevant groups at workplaces, in partnership with several government and private-sector entities and strategic partners, foremost among them the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and the Workers' Support and Insurance Fund. This is alongside private-sector institutions and companies, contributing to delivering awareness messages to a broad segment of beneficiaries and enhancing compliance with preventive measures aimed at reducing the risks of heat stress.

The campaign featured an integrated program of awareness and inspection activities, including seminars, workshops and educational lectures, alongside intensified field inspection visits to monitor compliance with occupational safety and health requirements and the approved preventive measures during the summer period.

These efforts have contributed to strengthening workers' safety and reducing the risks arising from exposure to high temperatures.

The campaign also featured positive engagement and a broad response from employers and workers to the guidance and requirements issued by MoL.

This contributed to increased awareness of the preventive measures to be followed at workplaces and strengthened compliance with occupational safety and health requirements, including the regulation of working hours and rest periods, the provision of drinking water and suitable rest areas, and the implementation of the necessary precautionary measures to protect workers during periods of high temperatures and humidity.

Deputy PM meets Singaporean FM

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali al-Thani met with Minister for Foreign Affairs of Singapore Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and his accompanying delegation, during their visit to Qatar. During the meeting, they discussed several topics of mutual interest and explored ways to enhance and develop bilateral relations. Senior officials and military officers from both sides attended the meeting. (**QNA**)

Sheikha Al Mayassa: Qatar's culture rooted in heritage

From Page 1

This approach has shaped QM's development of cultural institutions and public art across the country, while establishing partnerships and exchanges with artists and organisations internationally. HE Sheikha Al Mayassa described this work as part of long-term national planning in which cultural infrastructure is accompanied by investment in people, knowledge and creative talent.

The conversation with Eliasson drew on a relationship spanning more than a decade. The artist has undertaken several major projects in Qatar, including the permanent public artwork Shadows Travelling on the Sea of the Day, unveiled in 2022 in the desert of northern Qatar, just north of Al Zubarah, a Unesco World Heritage site since 2013.

In 2023, QM also staged Olafur Eliasson: The Curious Desert, his first solo exhibition in the Gulf region. Presented at the National Museum of Qatar and at a site in the Qatari desert, the exhibition considered the natural environment through installations responding to sunlight, water, wind, movement and perception.

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said Eliasson's approach showed how collaboration with an artist could extend beyond an exhibition and contribute to wider conversations around knowledge and the environment.

"It was about taking the knowledge from what we have and improving it with the process of the exhibition," she said. "You wanted to leave something behind after the exhibition, and that was very important for you — not just in terms of an art legacy, but also knowledge creation and sharing of information that can empower the community to be better environmentalists and to take more care of our environment."

Photo courtesy of HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, posted on her Facebook page.

The conversation also addressed how museums and cultural programmes can introduce younger audiences to subjects including sustainability, environmental responsibility and changing social attitudes. HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said that providing young people with knowledge can encourage them to consider new ideas and eventually develop their own solutions.

She also spoke about the relationship between Qatar's contemporary cultural programme and its heritage, citing Eliasson's permanent installation near Ain Mohammed, where visitors can encounter the artist's contemporary work alongside a restored heritage village and aspects of Qatari cultural life.

The juxtaposition, she said, creates an experience in which local heritage and contemporary artistic practice exist alongside one another — an approach that captures Qatar's wider cultural ambition to remain grounded in its history while maintaining an outward-looking international perspective.

Moreover, the discussion also turned to the human experience behind cultural planning. Responding to Eliasson's comments on art's ability to connect with people on a deeply personal level, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said that people remain at the core of Qatar's cultural investment. "My job is to facilitate and empower, and design spaces for human beings to engage and for artists to create," she said. "When I say our investment has been about human development, it's human beings at the core of it."

She noted that achieving this requires long-term planning, from developing museums and cultural districts to conserving heritage buildings and integrating contemporary art into public spaces. Qatar's cultural plans, she said, are often developed over five, 10 or 15 years, giving institutions and programmes time to respond to the communities they serve.

She also pointed to Qatar's current cultural calendar as an example of providing audiences with different entry points into art, heritage and contemporary ideas. The Qatar Creates Fall/Winter 2026–27 season features exhibitions and programmes across Qatar Museums and its partner institutions, spanning modern and contemporary art, design, heritage, fashion, photography and public art.

Draft law on precious metals and gemstones approved

From Page 1

A further condemnation was directed at renewed Iranian attacks on Jordan, which the Cabinet said flagrantly violated Jordanian sovereignty and territorial integrity, in breach of international law, the UN Charter and the principles of good-neighbourly relations.

The Cabinet reviewed a Ministry of Education and Higher Education report on progress made in the first half of 2026 in implementing the National Framework for Promoting Values and Morals in Qatari Society, a Shura Council-driven initiative aimed at safeguarding national identity and social cohesion in line with Qatar National Vision 2030. It decided the ministry would continue overseeing implementation in co-ordination with relevant entities.

The meeting closed with a review of Qatar Tourism's 2025 annual report, along with outcomes of Qatar's participation in the 114th International Labour Conference in Geneva in June and the first session of the Global Dialogue on Artificial Intelligence Governance, also in Geneva, in July.

FIPRESCI establishes jury at Doha Film Festival

The International Federation of Film Critics (FIPRESCI) and Doha Film Institute (DFI) announced a new partnership, with a FIPRESCI jury at the upcoming edition of Doha Film Festival (DFF), taking place Nov 19-27, 2026.

The collaboration brings together two institutions committed to cinema as a space for cultural exchange, discovery, and critical dialogue.

Built on 15 years of Doha Film Institute's commitment to authentic storytelling, DFF is a dynamic platform for world cinema that inspires dialogue, reflection and connection. It is the bold next chapter in the Institute's enduring mission to nurture regional talent, deepen cultural understanding and amplify unheard voices.

The festival offers a vibrant meeting point for international cinema lovers, a stage for powerful stories and a launchpad for a new generation of voices in film that are redefining the global landscape with depth, nuance, and truth.

At the heart of DFF is an international programme that brings established filmmakers and emerging voices together, reflecting the diversity and dynamism of contemporary world cinema.

Featuring four principal competition strands: International Feature Film Competition, International Short Film Competition, Ajyal Film Competition, and Made in Qatar Competition, DFF spotlights distinctive cinematic voices, emerging talent and stories that offer fresh perspectives on our rapidly changing world.

The competition programme is complemented by an expansive out-of-competition selection and public programme, including gala screenings, talks, panels, family screenings and community events, creating opportunities for filmmakers and audiences to engage beyond the screen.

Chief Executive Officer of Doha Film Institute and Festival Director of Doha Film Festival, Fatma Hassan Alremaihi, said, "Independent cinema thrives when bold filmmakers have the freedom to tell the stories they believe in, and when there are critics willing to champion, question and preserve those voices.

Film criticism is an essential part of the ecosystem that keeps independent cinema vibrant, ensuring that important films are not only seen, but understood, discussed and carried forward. We are delighted to welcome FIPRESCI to Doha and to create a space where critics and filmmakers can engage across cultures, discover new voices and contribute to a richer global conversation around cinema."

The festival is rooted in DFI's extensive year-round work supporting filmmakers through funding, training and talent development, highlighting the Institute's longstanding commitment to helping distinctive voices from Qatar, the region and beyond reach international audiences.

For FIPRESCI, the partnership represents an important expansion of its international network and its commitment to creating meaningful encounters between critics, filmmakers, festivals and audiences across diverse cultural and geographical contexts.

FIPRESCI President Ahmed Shawky said, "At a moment when some of the most dynamic developments in contemporary cinema are emerging beyond its traditional centres, FIPRESCI considers this exchange an essential part of its international mission.

Establishing a jury in Doha further strengthens this network and reflects the Federation's continuing commitment to ensuring that film criticism remains genuinely international in its perspectives and encounters".

The FIPRESCI DFF Jury will comprise three film critics, who will evaluate films presented in the International Feature Film Competition. At the conclusion of the festival, the jury will present the FIPRESCI Prize to the film it considers the most significant achievement in the competition. Further details regarding the jury composition and selection will be announced in due course.(**QNA**)

The new BMW 7 Series: A tribute to dedication

Alfardan Automobiles unveils the new BMW 7 Series in Doha.

Alfardan Automobiles, the official importer for BMW in Qatar, has introduced the new BMW 7 Series in Doha following its regional premiere, bringing the brand's flagship luxury sedan to the Qatari market with a focus on progressive design, advanced technology and refined comfort.

The latest evolution of the BMW 7 Series combines a commanding, monolithic presence with intelligent digital features and carefully crafted details. Now in its seventh generation, the flagship sedan continues BMW's nearly five-decade tradition of innovation while combining driving comfort with the engagement expected of the brand.

"Introducing the new BMW 7 Series in Qatar is a proud moment for Alfardan Automobiles and an important milestone in our long-standing partnership with BMW Group," said Ayman Berjawi, general manager, BMW – Alfardan Automobiles. "Customers in Qatar have a deep appreciation for craftsmanship, innovation and personalised luxury, qualities that have defined the 7 Series for nearly five decades. This new generation brings them together in a flagship experience that feels both progressive and unmistakably BMW."

Since its debut in 1977, the BMW 7 Series has introduced technologies and concepts that have influenced the luxury-car segment, from safety systems and new operating concepts to increasingly sophisticated digital features. BMW says the latest model represents the most extensive update ever carried out by the BMW Group and serves as a technology leader, introducing Neue Klasse innovations into existing models.

Distinctive luxury design

The new 7 Series introduces BMW's latest luxury-class design language, featuring a monolithic exterior, the new illuminated BMW Iconic Glow kidney grille and minimalist crystal headlights. Reduced surfaces, a defined character line and refined detailing shape the side profile, while redesigned rear lights create a clean, contemporary appearance.

Customers can further personalise the sedan through BMW Individual, with 130 paint colours, 12 upholstery variants and more than 500 two-tone colour combinations. A new Dual-Finish paint concept is a world first for BMW, combining a matt lower body with a manually applied metallic upper finish and a hand-drawn coachline. The process takes more than 75 hours and involves more than 20 specially trained employees at BMW Group Plant Dingolfing. Each vehicle undergoes 12 painting stages, with extensive manual preparation and finishing.

A high-tech interior

Inside, the new 7 Series combines leather, cloth, wood, crystal glass and metal with modern technology to create a luxurious passenger environment. Key features include the new BMW Panoramic iDrive with BMW Operating System X and the debut of the BMW Passenger Screen.

Rear passengers can also access the optional BMW Theatre Screen, supporting 8K streaming, gaming and video calls. A new ambient-light concept, Bowers & Wilkins sound system with Dolby Atmos, panoramic glass sunroof, four-zone automatic climate control and the Travel & Comfort System add to the comfort-focused cabin.

The sedan also features upgraded seats, including optional Executive Lounge seating, automatic doors and a digital interior mirror.

BMW Panoramic iDrive is supported by intelligent voice control through the BMW Intelligent Personal Assistant, including Amazon Alexa+ AI technology. Other digital features include improved BMW Maps navigation, smartphone integration, BMW Digital Key Plus, digital M content and regular over-the-air software updates.

Multiple powertrain options

The new BMW 7 Series is available with combustion engines featuring 48V mild-hybrid technology, plug-in hybrid systems and fully electric variants. The electric models use sixth-generation BMW eDrive technology with innovative cylindrical cells, delivering an electric range of more than 720km under the WLTP cycle.

BMW also highlights intelligent charging solutions, charging-optimised route planning and adaptive recuperation.

Driving dynamics & safety

The 7 Series continues to combine luxury-sedan comfort with BMW driving dynamics. Standard adaptive two-axle air suspension with electronically controlled shock absorbers supports both ride comfort and handling.

Optional chassis technologies include Integral Active Steering, Adaptive Chassis Control Professional, and roll stabilisation, while M Sport packages and three M Performance models add sporting character. Advanced driver-assistance systems incorporate artificial intelligence and BMW Symbiotic Drive. Standard Park Assist and AI-supported parking-space detection and manoeuvre planning simplify parking, while additional systems support partially automated driving.

BMW 7 Series Protection

For customers requiring enhanced security, the BMW 7 Series Protection combines luxury with high levels of ballistic and explosive protection. It features the BMW Protection Core, multi-layer armouring using steel, special alloys, composite materials and bulletproof glass. The vehicle has VR9 certification, with VPAM 10 classification available as an option.

A new special-protection version based on the latest 7 Series is in the final stages of development.

Sustainability & production

BMW says it has incorporated sustainability throughout the new 7 Series life cycle, from resource-efficient development and manufacturing to the use phase. The BMW i7 benefits from secondary materials, renewable energy, sixth-generation battery technology and wheels containing high levels of recycled material.

All variants of the new 7 Series are produced on a single line at BMW Group Plant Dingolfing in Lower Bavaria, which also serves as a lead plant for the rollout of Neue Klasse technologies into BMW's luxury models.

Alfardan Automobiles

Established in 1996, Alfardan Automobiles is the official importer of BMW and MINI in Qatar. The company operates high-end showrooms and state-of-the-art service centres supported by trained personnel, advanced diagnostic technology and BMW Group headquarters.

After more than two decades of partnership with BMW Group, Alfardan Automobiles continues to expand its investments and presence in the country, offering customers access to BMW and MINI models and after-sales services.

S Africa pushes back against US visa curbs

Reuters
Johannesburg

South Africa on yesterday criticised new US visa restrictions, saying the measures were driven by fringe groups that falsely claim to represent the country's white minority.

The restrictions, announced by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Tuesday, renewed tensions between Washington and Pretoria after several months of relative calm.

Relations have been strained since last year by US President Donald Trump's repeated claims that white South Africans face systemic persecution.

White South Africans are, on average, much wealthier and more likely to be employed than Black South Africans. The policies criticised by Trump are intended to address inequalities that are a legacy of apartheid.

"The announcement once again, aligns with the mischaracterisation of South Africa's domestic policies," South Africa's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"It is our sovereign right to put in place laws that address the nation's concern over centuries of racial injustice," it said, calling for continued engagement through diplomatic channels.

It was not clear who would be impacted by the new visa restrictions. The US said the measures would target foreign nationals responsible for, or complicit in, laws and policies that enable race-based discrimination, but did not identify any individuals.

South Africa's Foreign Minister Ronald Lamola was en route to the US yesterday to attend the UN General Assembly in New York, a ministry official said in a statement.

The US Ambassador to South Africa said in a post on X earlier yesterday that the visa restrictions were "only the first step in a series of escalatory measures".

"As has been made absolutely clear, the time for endless 'dialogue' has run its course," the post said. "As a result, the consequences… are necessarily going to be severe."

The Trump administration has already barred South Africa from attending the G20 summit in Miami in December, despite South Africa being a founding member of the bloc.

Syria parliament votes to abolish terrorism court established by Assad

Syria's parliament voted yesterday to abolish an Assad-era terrorism court and nullify the legal effects of its rulings, state-run Al-Ikhbariya TV reported, in one of the first significant legislative moves by the country's new assembly.

The Counter-Terrorism Court was established in 2012 as then-President Bashar al-Assad sought to suppress an uprising against his rule, and it was used to prosecute thousands of Syrians for terrorism-related offences. The move formalises the court's abolition after Syria's new authorities had already treated it as defunct. In June 2025, President Ahmed al-Sharaa issued a decree dismissing 67 judges who had served in what he described at the time as the "abolished Counter-Terrorism Court".

Syria's March 2025 constitutional declaration had also called for abolishing the effects of what it described as unjust rulings issued by the court, including returning confiscated property.

The United Nations Human Rights Committee said in 2024 that the 2012 law establishing the court failed to adequately provide key judicial guarantees and raised concerns over arbitrary detention, torture or ill-treatment, and the court's independence. It also noted that the court was permitted to depart from ordinary procedures during prosecution and trial.

The UN's International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism said in a 2024 report that the Counter-Terrorism Court formed part of the judicial system through which detainees held by Assad-era security agencies could be prosecuted. The report documented widespread and systematic torture and ill-treatment across the government's detention system. (**Reuters**)

At least 60 killed in gold mine collapse in Sudan

Reuters
Khartoum

At least 60 people were killed in a gold mine collapse in Sudan's West Kordofan state on Sunday, three local sources told Reuters, while a local rights group said some more miners could still be alive underground and appealed for urgent rescue efforts.

The Kordofan Observatory monitoring group said yesterday that more than 70 artisanal miners were dead or missing after a series of adjoining mining shafts collapsed at the al-Zara mine in the Fouja area, northwest of al-Nuhud. Citing eyewitness accounts, the group said a survivor emerged on Tuesday and reported that others were still alive underground.

It said no specialised rescue teams had intervened and fragile, sandy ground was hampering residents' attempts to rescue miners and recover bodies using their own hands and basic tools.

The three local sources, speaking to Reuters yesterday, attributed the high death toll at the remote site to a lack of safety procedures and rescue equipment.

Sudan is one of Africa's largest gold producers, but the vast majority of its gold is produced through dangerous artisanal mining and later smuggled out of the country.

Gaza apartment block collapses, killing 21

AFP
Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

Rescuers excavate rubble to retrieve bodies from a collapsed building in the Tal al-Hawa area of Gaza City. (**AFP**)

Gaza authorities said yesterday that 21 people including five children had died after an apartment building collapsed from damage sustained in earlier Israeli strikes.

The six-storey building, which had four apartments per floor, crumbled overnight onto nearby homes and tents in the Tal al-Hawa area of Gaza City. The vast majority of buildings in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed in Israeli strikes throughout the war with Hamas, according to the UN.

At Gaza City's Al-Shifa Hospital, AFP journalists saw weeping men carrying children's bodies wrapped in white shrouds. "These buildings are nothing but ticking time bombs," said Ahmed Al-Ajla, whose uncle and other relatives were killed in the collapse.

The building, which was housing more than 100 displaced people, had sustained damage from previous Israeli strikes, the civil defence agency said. It said its teams, "after hours of arduous work… recovered the bodies of 21 people who had been trapped under the rubble."

The civil defence said it had also helped transport 45 injured people to hospital. The building was hit multiple times in 2024 and March 2025, leading to warnings for Gazans not to go back. With no other choice left, a great many people are occupying damaged buildings, which are risky to live in.

Earlier yesterday, AFP footage showed the building reduced to an immense pile of shattered concrete, towering over a team of rescuers in high-visibility vests conducting a desperate search.

Excavators bearing Egyptian flags worked to remove the debris, while rescuers and volunteers carried out the dead. "My friend and neighbours live in this building. I came to help my friend retrieve some clothes and mattresses. He currently has no shelter or home," Mohannad al-Mashharawi saus.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said it had supplied materials to help the search effort at the request of local authorities.

The ensuing Israeli military campaign has killed more than 73,700 people, according to Gaza's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the UN.

With so many Palestinians left homeless, and major shortages of construction materials, many Gaza residents have taken the risk of moving into the shaky buildings.

The UN's humanitarian coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territories, Ramiz Alakbarov, said he was "devastated" by the news: "Today's tragedy underscores the grave risks faced by families living in these structures and the urgent need for safer alternatives. No one should have to risk their life simply to find a safe place to shelter."

Gaza's civil defence agency has identified around 2,000 buildings in the territory that it says are at risk of collapse. Israel has allowed additional aid into Gaza since the declaration of a US-brokered ceasefire in October 2025. But Israel has kept its strikes and has restricted the entry of a range of equipment that it says could also have military use.

Yemen village left deserted after Houthi shelling

AFP
Al 'Akad, Yemen

In a tiny village perched on a mountain in Yemen, all the doors are padlocked, a children's swing hangs motionless and silence reigns after residents fled the shelling of pro-Iran Houthi fighters.

Like tens of thousands of people across Yemen who have fled their homes for less violent regions, the vast majority of residents of Al-Akad have left since the Houthis' lightning offensive engulfed their village.

For now, only the bravest have returned, if only to check whether their homes are still standing.

"I came to check on our house and the houses of some of our neighbours and make sure they are safe," said Abdallah Hassan Ahmed, one of just two residents an AFP journalist saw in the village.

He held out a large bunch of keys that he said his neighbours had left with him, adding it still wasn't safe to return.

He recounted how he and his family fled under the bombs as Houthi fighters pressed their offensive in Al-Akad, situated on the side of a mountain 950 metres above sea level.

"Everyone just grabbed their children and left. We had no choice," he told AFP.

Yemen, the region's poorest country, relapsed into war in July after years of relative calm.

Fighting between the Houthis and Saudi-backed forces loyal to the internationally recognised government intensified dramatically in recent days, displacing more than 100,000 people, according to UN data.

The Houthis, who have for years controlled swathes of north Yemen, recently advanced at lightning speed into the south, seizing areas around the Bab al-Mandab Strait, which is crucial to global energy flows.

Further inland, in the Taiz region where Al-Akad sits, people cannot return to their villages because of the risk of shelling, according to Ahmed. As a result, the village's alleyways remain deserted, and the colourful doors of home after home are locked shut.

Another resident named Basem Abdullah al-Nuwaihi also braved the journey to inspect his home.

"All the families are either in camps or neighbouring villages," he told AFP.

China's FM urges Iran, US to show restraint, revive talks

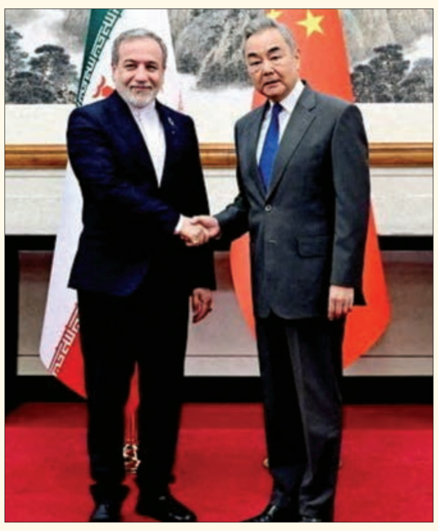
Reuters
Beijing

China encourages Iran and the US to remain rational, exercise restraint, return to the interim peace deal they signed in June and "engage in substantive consultations," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Iranian counterpart in Beijing yesterday.

"We urge all parties to take effective measures to reopen the Strait of Hormuz at an early date" to safeguard the stability of international energy transport and supply chains Wang said, according to China's foreign ministry, adding that China "does not want to see regional tensions to spill over further into Yemen and the Red Sea."

Tehran and Washington should "rebuild the negotiation mechanism based on the consensus reached so far," Wang told Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, who is on a one-day visit to Beijing.

"Iran, while fully prepared to powerfully defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity and safeguard its security...


Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi meets with China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in Beijing, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

against aggressors, welcomes diplomatic solutions that ensure the rights of the Iranian nation," Araghchi said, according to Iranian state media.

The talks between the two diplomats came a week ahead of an expected meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump in Washington.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Tuesday said Trump and Xi would continue discussions on Iran and China's financial links to Tehran, which Washington has been seeking to shut out of Western financial systems.

Beijing, the main buyer of Iran's oil, had repeatedly stressed the need to restore normal and safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, but has largely refrained from directly challenging Tehran's threats to shipping.

"The current situation once again demonstrates that the existing security architecture in the Middle East is inadequate and needs to be reformed and strengthened," Wang said on Wednesday.

China stands ready to promote peace, fairness and justice in the region, and its policy toward Iran has remained consistent and stable, he added.

China urges EU to 'avoid' proposed ban on equipment suppliers

China urged the European Union (EU) yesterday to reconsider a proposed ban on network equipment from Chinese firms such as Huawei and ZTE, calling the measure "discriminatory".

The European Union wants to ban suppliers seen as "high risk" under cybersecurity proposals set out in January in its Digital Networks Act.

Its proposal, currently being negotiated between the EU parliament and the governments of the 27 member states, is the latest of several measures targeting China, with whom trading relations have soured in recent years.

The act does not cite Chinese firms by name but once identified, telecom operators would have three years to phase them out of their networks.

China's foreign ministry urged the EU to "avoid taking discriminatory restrictive measures", warning it would hurt the European economy.

"The EU's relevant approach is detrimental to others, without benefiting itself," ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a news briefing.

"It will only cause Europe to miss out on opportunities for digital transformation and development... and undermine the confidence of companies from various countries in investing in Europe," he said.

European telecoms bosses have also opposed the ban.

An open letter signed by 17 top executives on Tuesday said the proposed measures would increase their investment costs.

The letter did not cite China in particular but said that a blanket ban on certain suppliers from outside the EU would impose "up to 40bn euros ($46bn) in replacement costs on our sector".

Spokesperson Guo added yesterday that he hoped the EU would "listen attentively to the rational voices from various sectors in Europe". (**AFP**)

Malaysia to invite Myanmar leader over Rohingya refugees' repatriation push

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said yesterday he will invite Myanmar's coup leader turned civilian president Min Aung Hlaing for an official visit in a bid to expedite the repatriation of Rohingya refugees.

Anwar announced in July that Myanmar had agreed to take back 5,000 members of the persecuted Rohingya minority, in a rare repatriation push that has prompted concern from rights groups.

Malaysia hosts more than 215,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with the UN refugee agency, including more than 126,000 Rohingya from Myanmar, its largest refugee community.

Both countries say a first wave of nearly 1,500 Myanmar nationals will be repatriated voluntarily in late September, although it is unclear how many Rohingya will be included.

Anwar said the diplomatic move was aimed at finding a solution to the Rohingya refugee issue, which has fuelled growing concern among locals.

"So two weeks ago, I told the Home Ministry and cabinet ministers that I would invite the Myanmar president to make an official visit to Malaysia," the premier said during a podcast interview on Wednesday.

"Why did I invite him? I invited him because I want to tell him that we can be friends and trade. We can accept Myanmar, but they must accept (its refugees) back," he added.

He said the repatriation could be carried out in stages if Myanmar was unable to receive all 200,000 refugees at once.

The repatriation plan was announced after Malaysian authorities detained more than 100 Rohingya who had gathered outside the UN refugee agency's office in Kuala Lumpur.

The refugees were being threatened with eviction from an informal settlement in northern Penang state.

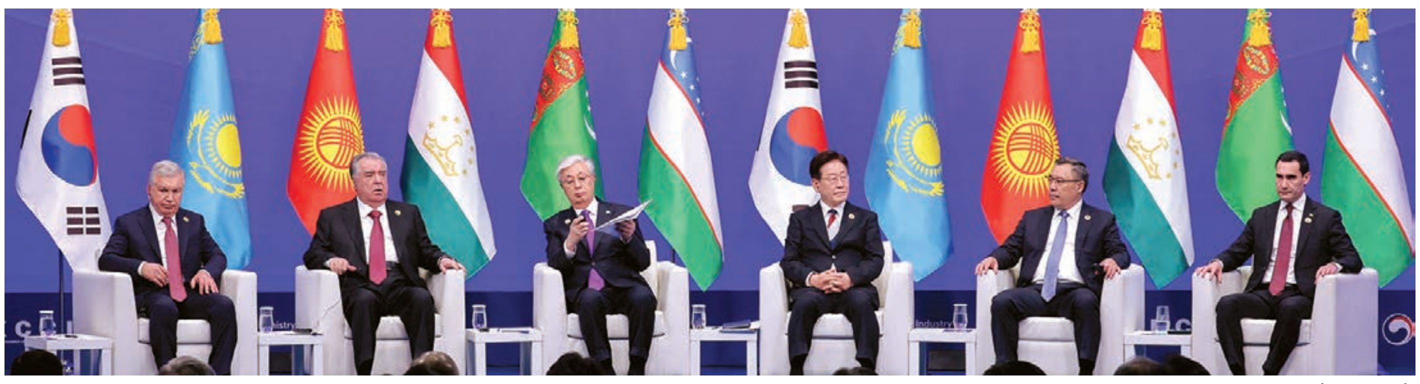
They were later released after officials confirmed they held valid UN documentation.

Myanmar earlier this month pledged "safe and dignified" returns for its citizens displaced abroad, after the United Nations and rights groups raised concerns about the upcoming repatriation of 1,500 people from Malaysia.

Malaysia, which shelters one of Southeast Asia's biggest refugee populations, is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and does not formally recognise refugee status.

AFP fact-checkers have found that Rohingya refugees in Malaysia have been targeted by online disinformation campaigns that rights advocates say are fuelling xenophobia and intimidation.

Many of the Rohingya escaped Myanmar during a brutal military crackdown in 2017.


Korean President Lee Jae Myung and leaders of central Asia countries attend the Korea-Central Asia Business Summit 2026 in Seoul, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Korea puts critical minerals at forefront of CA summit

Reuters
Seoul

Korea's first Central Asian summit brought together the leaders of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

Republic of Korea's President Lee Jae Myung hosted the country's first summit with the leaders of five Central Asian countries yesterday, putting critical minerals, energy and supply-chain cooperation at the centre of Seoul's push to deepen ties with the resource-rich region.

The summit brought together the leaders of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and capped three days of bilateral meetings that produced more than 70 agreements and memorandums of understanding spanning energy, mining, infrastructure, technology and investment.

Speaking at a business forum after the summit, Lee said Korea was seeking to expand co-operation beyond resource imports and deepen industrial partnerships.

"Beyond simple raw materials trade, we must strengthen cooperation across the entire critical minerals value chain, from exploration and refining to high-value materials processing and finished-product manufacturing," Lee said.

He said Seoul would support those efforts through Korean-led rare metals centres in Central Asia, aimed at promoting joint research and workforce training.

The summit marks a new phase in Seoul's engagement with Central Asia, as the resource-poor country seeks to diversify supplies of crude oil, uranium and other strategic minerals, while expanding opportunities for its companies.

The meeting established a framework for regular biennial leaders' summits, with Kazakhstan set to host the next gathering in Astana in 2028.

Korea and Kazakhstan this week signed agreements covering nuclear energy, crude oil and critical minerals and upgraded ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

Meetings with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan also produced accords covering strategic minerals, energy, infrastructure, trade, investment and digital technologies.

At the business forum, SK Group Chairman Chey Tae-won highlighted opportunities to expand co-operation.

"We will expand critical minerals cooperation beyond simple development to encompass the entire supply chain, from refining to materials production," Chey said.

Chey also called for stronger cooperation in renewable energy and nuclear power.

Korea has pursued deeper economic ties with Central Asia and other Eurasian partners under its New Northern Policy launched in 2017, seeking to diversify supplies of energy and strategic minerals while creating new opportunities for Korean companies.

Indonesia's choking wildfire, haze worsen breathing woes

Reuters
Pontianak, Indonesia

Indonesian housewife Mimi Marlina rode a motorbike through thickening haze blanketing the city of Pontianak on Borneo island, making a foray to buy groceries and supplies as the Southeast Asian nation battles raging forest fires.

"We can still hold it off with medicines, but I'm concerned that if this persists, it will lead to worse illnesses," said the masked 45-year-old mother of two children who are battling respiratory problems, from coughing and sore throats to fever.

The province of West Kalimantan on Borneo, home to Pontianak, is one of the areas worst hit by Indonesia's most intense wildfires in 11 years as "super-El Niño" weather conditions drive up temperatures and cause punishing droughts.


People travel on a river boat as thick haze from forest and land fires blankets Benua Melayu Darat village in Pontianak, yesterday. (**AFP**)

Despite wearing a mask, Mimi said she herself was labouring for breath in the widespread haze and pollution spikes, which often push air quality to hazardous levels.

Volunteers are going door-to-door in the province, handing out cylinders of life-giving oxygen to residents and firefighters struggling to breathe, in a campaign called "Rumah Oksigen", or Oxygen House.

The air has also turned unhealthy in neighbouring Singapore and Malaysia because of the transboundary smog, often called haze in Southeast Asia's humid weather, for a mix of smoke from clearing land for farming, soot and tiny suspended particles.

"Visits for respiratory illness cases are on the rise due to the fires," said Popong Solihat, head of a public health clinic in Pontianak.

More than 12.5mn people have been exposed to haze caused by fires across seven provinces on Indonesia's islands of Borneo and Sumatra, health ministry data shows.

The numbers battling wildfire-related respiratory illnesses in those provinces have more than doubled to 113,336 by September 9, versus 50,891 on September 1.

In the first 11 days of September, Solihat's clinic treated 187 cases of breathing difficulties, compared to 422 for all of August.

"And the daily visits now could range between 80 and 120," he added.

Families desperate for news as 129 still missing four days after capsize of ship in Indonesia

Desperation and frustration are growing among families of the 129 people still missing following the weekend capsizing of a ship in Indonesia's Java Sea, as persistent heavy seas and bad weather continue to restrict search-and-rescue operations.

Yesterday, the official death toll stood at six people with 108 rescued and 129 unaccounted for, tallies that have not changed since Sunday.

"I hope we would use our advanced military equipment, we buy them to help people, right? Or else what for? For war? We likely will not go to war," said 37-year-old Fauzi, who has been waiting for news of seven family members, including his mother.

Fauzi, who goes by one name, said that after four days of waiting at the rescue command centre in Banjarmasin for promised updates about the search, his hopes have begun to fade. "We do not hope much but what we need is certainty," he said.

The Coast Guard and Navy have been unable to launch underwater search-and-rescue operations because of waves of up to 2.5m (8.2 feet) and strong winds near the capsized vessel, I Putu Sudayana, the head of Banjarmasin's rescue agency, told Reuters.

Yesterday, six ships were deployed for a surface search, Putu said, along with helicopters and aircraft.

Maria Dethan, 21, has stayed in the command centre since it was set up, anxiously waiting for news of her brother Samuel.

"Every time I am about to eat, I always remember my brother because I believe he has been starving for days," she told Reuters, saying she needed some certainty from authorities. (**Reuters**)

Philippines' ex-president Duterte appears before ICC judges for first time

Reuters
The Hague

Former Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte appeared in the courtroom yestrday for the first time since being transferred to the International Criminal Court 18 months ago to face murder charges regarding his war on drugs.

Duterte, 81, served as president from 2016-2022, before being charged with crimes against humanity for setting up, funding and arming death squads that targeted narcotics peddlers and users. He was arrested and taken to The Hague in March 2025.

Dressed in a black suit and white shirt, Duterte did not speak in court, but sat quietly sipping water during the proceedings. He stood and waved to family members in the public gallery.

"We're happy that he has finally appeared and that he looks OK. In fact, he looks like he has put on weight," said Llore Pasco, whose two sons were killed during Duterte's war on drugs, watching a television broadcast of the hearings from Manila.

In court, Presiding Judge Joanna Korner asked prosecutors to find ways to shorten the trial, set to begin in November, due to the defendant's age and health.

"It's important this trial goes ahead as quickly as possible," she said, pressing parties to limit the number of witnesses and focus on key evidence.

Duterte's attorney, Peter Haynes, called disclosure by the prosecution "enormous and impossible" and said his team could never examine tens of thousands of pieces of evidence in time.

"If I had a younger and healthier client, I would request pushing back the trial by six months," he said.

Details of Duterte's condition were not discussed in open court Wednesday, but his lawyers have said he suffers from cognitive decline that affects his memory and daily functioning, and is not well enough.

In January, ICC judges said Duterte's health was good enough for him to follow proceedings and requested his presence in court, rather than by video link from the detention unit.

The warrant for Duterte says he was responsible for a widespread and systematic campaign that led to thousands of killings between 2011 and 2019, including his time as the mayor of the southern city of Davao.

ICC prosecutors have said as many as 30,000 people may have been killed in the crackdown, the details of which were reported in a Reuters investigation.

Police said 6,200 suspects were killed during anti-drug operations. Duterte said he instructed police to act in self-defence and told supporters he was ready to "rot in jail" if it meant ridding the Philippines of illicit drugs.


Former Philippines president Rodrigo Duterte appears before the International Criminal Court in The Hague, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Burnham to make ‘difficult decisions’ as inflation rises

AFP
London

UK Prime Minister Andy Burnham said yesterday that he was ready to take “difficult decisions” as higher fuel prices from the Middle East war drive up inflation ahead of the government’s coming budget.

The Consumer Prices Index rose 3.1% in the 12 months to August, up from 2.9% the previous month, the Office for National Statistics said.

The figure, which met analysts’ expectations, piles pressure on Burnham and his finance minister John Healey to ease the cost of living for households in the Labour government’s budget update next month.

“We will take difficult decisions to make sure the economy remains on track,” Burnham said during a visit to a McLaren car factory south of London.

While acknowledging that the impact of the Middle East war on inflation was “a challenge”, he said the government “won’t take risks with people’s living standards”.

Since entering government in July, Burnham has offered the British public some relatively low-cost relief such as cheaper bus fares and a tax cut on electricity bills.

Prime Minister Andy Burnham looks at a car on the production line during a visit to the McLaren Technology Centre in Woking, Surrey, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

But sceptics have warned that financial constraints mean he will struggle to find wiggle room to fund bigger commitments.

To tackle persistently high consumer prices, the US Federal Reserve is expected later yesterday to lift interest rates, following a similar move by the European Central Bank last week.

The Bank of England, however, is forecast to maintain its benchmark interest rate at 3.75% today as the UK economy struggles for growth.

Responding to yesterday’s figures, Healey said “the war in the Middle East is impacting on inflation worldwide, not just here at home. In our bills, our weekly shop and at the petrol pumps”.

With central bank interest rates on the rise — and government bond yields reaching multi-decade highs in recent weeks — Healey has pledged to maintain strict fiscal discipline.

But he has not been drawn on whether this means his budget on October 28 will include new tax rises to help reduce Britain’s debt pile.

Healey has previously committed to following the fiscal rules laid out by his predecessor Rachel Reeves, which state that day-to-day spending must balance with government tax receipts.

While the UK economy unexpectedly managed to grow in July, price pressures are set to ramp up towards the end of the year as higher energy costs feed through to the wider economy.

Crude oil and gas prices have surged this month as the US-Iran war witnessed a flare-up, adding to concerns about inflationary pressures worldwide.

“With the situation in the Middle East looking increasingly fraught, the expectation is that inflation will continue to climb until the end of the year at a minimum,” said Richard Carter, head of fixed interest research at Quilter Cheviot.

“For the government, today’s figures are a kick in the teeth for an administration that wants to make easing the cost of living its central mission,” he added.

Britain to appoint envoy to Venezuela

AFP
Caracas

Britain said Tuesday it was upgrading diplomatic relations with Venezuela, hailing the country’s attempts at political transition and paving the way for the appointment of an ambassador in Caracas.

The announcement comes as Venezuelan parties negotiate the recovery of frozen gold reserves from the United Kingdom, which withheld them when Nicolas Maduro was in power.

Various countries have re-established diplomatic relations with the South American country since US forces ousted president Nicolas Maduro in January.

“The UK and Venezuela have agreed our intention to upgrade our representation to Ambassador,” Chris Elmore, minister for Latin America, wrote in a parliamentary statement.

Elmore said recent events in Venezuela had created an “important opportunity” for democracy.

Since Maduro’s capture, interim leader Delcy Rodriguez has effectively done Washington’s bidding, opening up her country’s mining, electricity and oil sectors to foreign and private capital.

Her government also released a statement announcing improved relations with Britain.

Britain supported US-backed transition talks between the interim government and parts of the opposition, Elmore said.

“The UK considers that this moment calls for pragmatic engagement to help advance a credible transition and to encourage further reforms,” he said.

US President Donald Trump recently dismissed the notion that Venezuela would hold elections in the near future, with Rodriguez echoing his comments.

Oliver Blanco, Venezuela’s deputy foreign minister for North America and Europe, welcomed Tuesday’s decision, as well as the chance to recover “resources that rightfully belong to Venezuelans.”

He was referring to the reserves frozen in the Bank of England, which opposition figure Juan Guaido asked London to hold when Maduro was president.

In August, the transition talks agreed to work toward securing their release.

Delegates say they plan to use the reserves worth $1.9bn to aid victims of the devastating June 24 earthquakes that killed over 6,500 people.

Sri Lanka summons ex-first lady in charity graft probe

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lanka’s police summoned former first lady Shiranthi Rajapaksa yesterday for questioning over allegations that her charity misused donations, tightening authorities’ anti-corruption drive.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake’s government has revived long-dormant graft investigations involving members of the once powerful Rajapaksa family, which dominated Sri Lankan politics for nearly two decades.

The Financial Crimes Investigation Division (FCID) served the summons shortly before Shiranthi, 73, boarded a flight to Singapore for medical treatment, family spokesman Manoj Gamage told reporters in Colombo.

“She was given the FCID notice minutes before she boarded the aircraft,” Gamage said, rejecting suggestions she was attempting to leave the country to evade investigators.

“She is not trying to flee the country but travelling for medical treatment.”

Police said the FCID wanted to question Shiranthi over the 10mn rupees ($30,750) collected in donations by her Siriliya Saviya charity for a PET scanner intended for a local cancer hospital.

Investigators have told a court that the scanner had already been donated by the Chinese government, but the charity allegedly continued to solicit donations and misused the funds.

Gamage has denied any wrongdoing, saying the money had not been misappropriated.

He said Shiranthi, who has been undergoing eye treatment, would return to Sri Lanka after her medical procedures and had no intention of absconding.

The rest of the family have also faced legal troubles.

The former first lady’s eldest son, opposition lawmaker Namal Rajapaksa, is being investigated over allegations linked to a 2013 Airbus aircraft deal signed during his father’s presidency.

He was slapped with new charges of money laundering yesterday linked to the same Airbus transaction and remanded in custody until September 23.

The Rajapaksa family has consistently denied corruption allegations and dismissed the cases against them as politically motivated.

Mahinda Rajapaksa served as president from 2005 to 2015 and remains one of Sri Lanka’s most influential political figures, despite the decline of the family’s fortunes since mass protests ousted his brother Gotabaya Rajapaksa from the presidency in 2022.

Members of a search and rescue team carry the body of a victim from the inside the Chilime Hydropower Project tunnel, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Weeks after Nepal flood, thousands still missing

Reuters
New Delhi

Nepali authorities said yesterday that only about 7% of the bodies recovered after the devastating flood have been identified, underscoring the scale of the work involved in helping thousands of families find out the fate of loved ones.

Weeks after the torrent of mud, rocks and water was unleashed by a glacial collapse, relatives continue to seek answers from authorities as hopes of finding survivors fade.

About 5,200 people remain missing, including 636 foreigners, after the disaster swept through mountain communities and hydropower sites, killing at least 1,399 people, Nepal’s National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority said in an emailed statement to Reuters.

The agency said it collected DNA samples from 1,206 bodies and 1,889 samples from family members of the missing.

Despite that, overall only 105 bodies have been identified and handed to family members, it added.

Authorities have deployed thermal drones and helicopters in the search and brought in specialists to rescue workers trapped in tunnels.

The search for the missing has led to a few remarkable rescues of people trapped in tunnels of Nepal’s hydropower plants.

But the once regular flow of information about the rescue effort has slowed, families of foreign nationals said.

“Narrow airspace, difficult geographical mountainous terrain and scale of debris deposited are the major challenges on locating the missing,” the department said.

It added that it was providing regular updates to embassies and families through direct and indirect channels.

New Zealand parliament passes India trade deal

New Zealand’s parliament yesterday passed legislation to implement a free trade agreement with India, under which tariffs on about 95% of New Zealand exports to India would be eliminated or significantly reduced.

The legislation passed by a vote of 93-29, with support from the opposition Labour Party.

More than half of all products covered would become duty-free from the day it takes effect.

“For exporters, the benefits are immediate and substantial,” New Zealand Trade Minister Todd McClay said in a statement.

“We expect this high-quality agreement to enter into force this year, delivering on our promise to complete a free trade agreement with India this term.”

Under the deal, all Indian goods will receive duty-free access to New Zealand. Wellington has also agreed to invest $20bn in India over the next 15 years.

Both nations originally signed the trade agreement in April.

Two-way trade totalled $2.29bn in the year to June 2026, with India ranking as New Zealand’s ninth-largest goods and services export market.

The trade deal will become effective after both nations complete their respective ratification procedures. (**Reuters**)

English village votes to ‘secede’ from UK over asylum centre plan

AFP
London

An English village of around 350 people announced yesterday that a vast majority of residents had voted yes in an “independence referendum” staged to protest plans to house over 1,200 migrants in a nearby facility.

Piddington in central England, 25 kilometres (15 miles) from the university city of Oxford, has grabbed headlines with its tongue-in-cheek breakaway vote.

The village’s parish council announced that with 312 ballots counted, 285 had voted to secede from Britain over plans to house asylum seekers in a nearby disused military site, in a symbolic vote with no recognised legal basis.

Residents were handed a ballot paper with the statement: “I support Piddington seeking to secede from the United Kingdom and pursuing self-determination.”

The local parish council chair Tim McNally said that the village will now be known as the “principality of Piddington”.

McNally told Sky News: “For us, it’s about proportionality — how does a small village of 350 odd people assimilate with 1,250 males?”

He accused the government of “trying to rush this whole plan through”.

This aerial image shows a former military base where the government has proposed housing some 1,200 asylum seekers in Bicester, near Piddington, Oxfordshire, north-west of London. (**AFP**)

“I think what this result shows is that Piddington campaigners have done an incredible job to highlight their concerns about the proposed asylum centre,” the leader of Oxfordshire county council, Tim Bearder, told the BBC.

The council chief warned the planned centre “will be a lightning rod to the far-right, who come here to protest” and “potentially attack” asylum seekers.

But Culture Secretary Lisa Nandy told the BBC that a former military base “is a better option for housing asylum seekers” than hotels or rented accommodation.

“We do have to house people somewhere while we get a grip on the asylum chaos... and that base will go ahead,” she said.

Around Britain, regular protests have been staged in towns and villages against the housing of asylum seekers in hotels and other facilities.

The Piddington referendum was a play on the British comedy film “Passport to Pimlico”.

In the 1949 classic, a small group of Londoners discover treasure and declare independence making them exempt from post-war rationing and other bureaucratic restrictions.

“I voted to leave the United Kingdom,” 76-year-old Piddington resident Herbert Owen, told AFP during the vote, saying it felt like the government did not “care” about the bucolic village in the Oxfordshire countryside.

“We have a village hall, a 12th-century church and a playing field — and that’s it,” another villager Ian Darby, 63, said, questioning how the migrants would spend their time.

A resident places his ballot in a box at the local village hall in Piddington, Oxfordshire, north-west of London. (**AFP**)

“It is a takeover of our village, it’s four times the people of this village. They are going to want to get out and about (locally) and that raises serious issues,” he said.

“I’ve lived here, my whole life... I won’t really feel safe enough to walk around anymore,” 17-year-old student and part-time stablehand Dita Jackson told AFP.

According to the government, the proposed centre would be used for a minimum of 10 years to house single adult male asylum seekers.

The “safety and security” of the migrants, staff at the base and the local community would be “of the utmost importance”, it said.

The centre-left Labour Party, in power since July 2024, is phasing out the use of hotels as migrant accommodation, a policy it inherited from the previous Conservative government.

It has vowed to completely end their use by the end of this parliament, due in 2029, turning instead to ex-military bases.

OPINION

Canada as 'associate member' of EU?

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said on Wednesday she wanted to open the door for Canada to become the European Union's first "associate member". Earlier this week, Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney - who was in Strasbourg to listen to von der Leyen's annual State of the Union address - said Canada was seeking a "unique alliance" with the EU but not membership.

There is currently no such status as "associate member" set out in the European Union's treaties - though various versions of an associate-type of membership have been floated in the bloc over the years. Most recently, Germany suggested Ukraine be an associate member as an interim stage to full accession, though the proposal failed to gain traction as some EU capitals pushed back. Carney is seeking new alliances amid repeated threats by US President Donald Trump against Canada's sovereignty.

Both sides want to forge deeper cooperation to counter US and Chinese economic dominance as well as preserve democracy and the rules-based international order, which they see as under threat. In her speech, von der Leyen said the two sides would create a "common prosperity and economic space". This would include joint work on manufacturing, a tech alliance, integration of defence industrial bases, the Arctic, AI, energy and critical minerals.

Implementing such an 'associate' status would be unprecedented and may be legally complex.

Canada would become a rule-taker with no say on policy if it entered the Single Market without full membership like Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein who are members of the European Economic Area. Canada's rules have historically been geared towards its biggest trade partner, the United States.

The quest for a deeper alliance between Canada and the EU will not impact the path to accession for European candidate states -- but it may serve as an irritant if Canada is perceived to be getting special treatment. Accession negotiations and aligning with EU norms is a long process that often requires candidate nations to push through politically sensitive reform. Full membership can only be granted to European states and provides access to the bloc's €18tn ($20.77tn) Single Market, voting and representation, EU funding and legal recourse to the European Court of Justice. Ukraine saw Germany's proposal for "associate membership" as "unfair" as Kyiv would participate but with no voting rights.

The EU has said it could admit new members as soon as 2030. Montenegro, Albania, Ukraine and Moldova are the most advanced among candidate countries. — Reuters

The transatlantic disenchantment

By Rory Miller

President Donald Trump spent last weekend in Ireland. The main purpose of his two-day visit was to attend the 2026 Irish Open golf tournament, held this year at the Doonbeg course he has owned and operated since 2002. But he also found time to meet with the Irish president and prime minister, to call for a united Ireland, which effectively means the end of British rule in Northern Ireland, and to promise to end all tariffs on Irish whiskey sold to the US.

What gained no mention during his visit was that it occurred in the middle of the Irish presidency of the European Council, which began in July and ends in December 2026. This presidency rotates between EU members every six months. The holder of the office plans, coordinates and chairs the meetings held by the council, except for those dealing with foreign affairs.

On one level, the presidency's focus on internal, rather than external, EU matters explain why the Irish presidency gained no mention during the Trump visit. But the visit does provide an interesting opportunity to consider the actual state of US-EU relations, and by extension the transatlantic relationship between America and Europe, the foundational partnership of the post-World War II international order.

Things on that front are not good. As the 'Wall Street Journal' recently reported, the possibility of a strategic "breakup" with Washington is an increasingly common subject of discussion among senior EU officials. One driver of such thinking is the Trump administration's Nato 3.0 approach. This aims to reduce the US military presence in Europe and place more responsibility for Europe's defence on Europeans. Leaving aside the issue of who pays for Nato and the interconnected tensions over how to handle the Ukraine-Russia war, during the last six months there have been several other substantial and substantive foreign policy differences that illuminate the broader deterioration of transatlantic relations.

These include the refusal of EU countries during the war with Iran to back President Trump's call for the formation of an international coalition to secure shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. "This is not Europe's war", explained Kaja Kallas, the EU's top diplomat. President Emmanuel Macron of France was even more to the point: "We are not party to the conflict and therefore France will never take part." Outside of the Middle East, US and EU officials also recently clashed over the appointment of a new High Representative to Bosnia and Herzegovina, after Washington demanded, and gained, the removal of the German official who held the post. In response, the EU threatened to pull funding of a US-backed regional energy pipeline.

Those in Europe who do not view these and other US-EU tensions as evidence of a coming transatlantic split consider the current crisis as a temporary phenomenon that will correct itself once Donald Trump is no longer in the White House.

Many Republicans and Democrats in Congress who remain keen advocates of the transatlantic alliance share this hope. But it is also worth remembering that this growing rift did not begin with Trump's presidency. Ideological differences, including over Europe's preference for the non-militarisation of disputes, multilateralism and internationals institutions, are by no means new. Two decades ago, the American strategic thinker Robert Kagan argued that on many of the issues that matter most, including these ones, the US and EU no longer "share a common view of the world".

The downward spiral in relations has also been fuelled by EU attempts to compete with the US for global influence since the early 1990s. During the Cold War, Europe resented playing second fiddle to the US but had little choice. Instead, it took advantage of the US willingness to pay for keeping Russia out of Europe to focus on reducing its military spending and building-up socio-economic development and the expansion of the EU.

Once the Soviet Union collapsed, the EU hoped that it could transform its economic success into political power. The goal was to offer itself as an alternative to US leadership on the foreign policy issues that mattered most to Europe. The first opportunity to do so came in the early 1990s in Yugoslavia – the location of the summer's EU-US diplomatic stand-off.

But "the hour of Europe", as the Luxembourg politician Jacques Poos described it at the time, was short lived. The EU could not agree on the use of force in Yugoslavia and its attempts to prevent war by offering economic incentives and making economic threats was a complete failure leaving the US with no choice but to step in and take the lead. President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia summed up the situation in 1993: "Only the US can save us from annihilation: If they do not come there will soon be no Muslims left. The Europeans will debate till we are all dead".

The Yugoslav debacle—and the US success in forcing the warring parties to the negotiating table in Dayton, Ohio, in 1995—highlighted Europe's ongoing need to rely on US military power and political influence in the post-Cold War era.

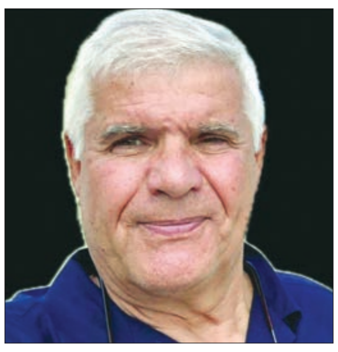
So did Washington's almost total domination of the security and diplomacy tracks of the Iran and Israel-Palestine issues since the 1990s. Europe has always believed that history, geography and trade relations give it a right to play a central role in the Middle East. But the more the EU attempted to assert itself as a player on these key regional issues during the Clinton, Bush and Obama presidencies, the more it was marginalised, rebuffed or obstructed.

Whether driven by ideology or competition or both, the deep-rooted differences that divide the US and the EU on the world stage have been evident since the end of the Cold War. While the upcoming US mid-term elections may mark the beginning of the end of the Trump era, these differences will continue to fuel US-EU tensions in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and elsewhere long after the current president has left office.

• *The writer is professor of International Politics and director of the Small States and Energy Studies Programs at Georgetown University in Qatar @RoryDavidMiller*

US President Donald Trump speaks to members of the media before boarding Air Force One to leave from Shannon Airport, western Ireland, after attending the final day of the Irish Open golf tournament in nearby Doonbeg. (**AFP**)

The narrowing choice



By Jamil K Mroue

On Sunday night a meeting was called off. Foreign ministers from Iran and the Gulf states were due to sit together on Monday in Salalah, in Oman. It would have been their first meeting since the war began on February 28. The subject was narrow and practical: how to let commercial ships pass again through the Strait of Hormuz. The meeting was postponed with no new date. Bahrain had already refused to attend. Tehran says Riyadh asked for the delay.

That is where the region stands today. The most modest piece of diplomacy on offer — a technical arrangement about shipping lanes — could not survive the weekend. The price is visible in numbers. Brent crude traded between $106 and $108 on Monday, a four-month high, after rising more than nine per cent in a week. Before the war it was near $66. Saudi production has fallen to its lowest level since 1990. On September 11, the kingdom shut the East-West pipeline after drone attacks. That pipeline was built to carry 7mn barrels a day around Hormuz. It was the answer to a closed strait. Now it is closed too. Every route around the crisis has acquired a crisis of its own.

A policy that cannot be read

The question is no longer whether the region can absorb more pressure. It cannot. The question is whether Washington will change course. At present American policy is hard to read. In a single weekend this month President Trump said Iran was "probably" behind the pipeline attack, though neither Riyadh nor Baghdad said so. He refused a request from Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for strikes against the Houthis, after two telephone calls. He said the Houthis had telephoned Washington and did not want to fight.

His Secretary of State had already told allies that no major military operation is expected before the congressional elections on November 3. Meanwhile the Treasury sanctioned companies and individuals in Iraq, Lebanon, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates — four partners — while leaving untouched the movement that had just seized the Bab al-Mandeb strait.

Governments cannot plan around this. So they buy insurance elsewhere. Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan signed a joint defence agreement in Makkah on August 7. Oman negotiated directly with Tehran. India hosted a Brics summit that produced the first text Iran and the UAE could both sign. None of this was designed to exclude the United States. All of it was designed to survive American unpredictability.

There is a second course. It is harder to begin and far easier to predict. A policy with a stated aim and a published method produces outcomes that everyone can see and price. That is its advantage. Markets, ministries and armies can all plan against it. Unpredictability has no such advantage. It buys nothing except the next week.

What the war is costing at home

This region is home to nearly a billion people. Their governments have spent this year doing one thing: managing security. Budgets that were meant for clinics, classrooms and industry have been redirected to air defence, fuel subsidies and emergency payments. Lebanon counts more than 4,300 dead since March and over 340,000 people still displaced. Iran's inflation runs at 82 per cent year-on-year and 134 per cent on food. Nearly 46,000 Yemenis were displaced in a single week this month.

This is not a temporary diversion of resources. It is a habit. A state that spends a decade prioritising security over productivity does not simply return to development when the shooting stops. It loses the institutions that deliver development, and it loses the argument for its own authority. After decades of tension, the legitimacy of governments across this region is in decline. That is the deepest cost of the present course, and it does not appear in any oil price.

Europe has its own stake. European economies import energy through these waters and sell into these markets. European governments want a role in the world that is larger than crisis management on their southern shore. They cannot have it while the Mediterranean's eastern end is a permanent emergency. Stability here is not charity towards the Arabs. It is European industrial policy.

A mourner reacts during the funeral of Palestinian girl Amal al-Mughair, 8, who was killed in an Israeli strike on her tent on Tuesday, according to medics, in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip. (**Reuters**)

The question no one wants to name

Every one of these problems leads back to one place. Palestine is the epicentre of the region's condition, and it has been for three generations. An unresolved conflict in Israel and the occupied territories has bent American policy in this region for decades. It has decided which governments Washington supports, which resolutions it blocks, and which wars it joins. The United Nations has voted on this question more often than on any other. More than 140 of the UN's 193 member states now recognise the State of Palestine. Britain and eleven other countries announced restrictions on trade with the settlements on September 8. The Foreign Secretary used the phrase "ethnic cleansing". This is not the developing world speaking. It is Washington's closest allies.

The ground has also shifted inside the United States. Gallup reported in February that 57 per cent of Americans now support an independent Palestinian state — close to the highest figure Gallup has ever recorded, first reached in 2003. For the first time since Gallup began asking in 2001, Americans no longer sympathise more with Israelis than with Palestinians: 41 per cent side with the Palestinians, 36 per cent with the Israelis. Among Americans aged 18 to 34, a majority — 53 per cent — sympathise with the Palestinians. Republican sympathy for Israel has fallen ten points since 2024, to its lowest level since 2004. An American president who moved on this question would not be defying his public. He would be following it.

The visible outcome

The outcome of such a move can be described precisely, which is rare in this region. A settlement on Palestine produces a peace agreement between Israel and the Arab and Islamic world — not a series of separate bargains, but one framework. It gives Iran a reason and a route to abandon confrontation with Israel and the United States, because the argument that sustains the confrontation would be gone. It removes the single grievance that every armed movement from Beirut to Sanaa uses to recruit. And it converts more than 140 governments from critics of American policy into supporters of it.

For the US, that is the fastest available repair to its standing in the world, and the cheapest exit from a drift towards wider confrontation. American prestige has not been damaged by weakness. It has been damaged by association with a condition it refuses to resolve. The choices are narrowing. The region cannot make this decision for Washington. But it can stop pretending that the alternative — another decade of managing symptoms while the disease is untreated — is a policy at all.

• *Jamil K Mroue is Lebanese writer and previous editor of Al Hayat newspaper in London and The Daily Star in Beirut.*

GULF TIMES
CHAIRMAN
Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka
DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR
Kamran Rehmat
P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
editor@gulf-times.com
4435 0478 (News)
4446 6404 (Sport)
44466636 (Home delivery)
facebook.com/gulftimes
X.com/gulftimes_Qatar
instagram.com/gulftimes
youtube.com/GulftimesVideos
To Advertise: gtadv@gulf-times.com
Display: 4446 6621 **Classified**: 4446 6609 gtcad@gulf-times.com
Subscription: circulation@gulf-times.com

A revolt is brewing in US against use of corporate money in election

Reuters
Columbia Falls, Montana

More than 15 years after the US Supreme Court reshaped American politics with its Citizens United campaign finance ruling, Montana voters will decide this November whether to make their state the first in the nation to bar corporations from spending money on elections through a ballot initiative.

It's a test case for a novel legal strategy that sidesteps the 2010 ruling rather than challenging it head-on — and taps into growing, bipartisan anger over the pervasiveness of so-called dark money in elections. "Americans are losing the belief that they have any influence over our politics," said Tom Moore, a lawyer with the Center for American Progress left-leaning think tank in Washington and the legal architect of the movement.

With similar, co-ordinated efforts underway in over 30 states, Montana could help set a critical precedent, experts say, and potentially lead to another showdown at the Supreme Court.

Hawaii's legislature passed a similar law earlier this year, inspired by those behind the effort here. That the measure made the ballot in Montana was deeply surprising at first. Yet people remain deeply suspicious of money in politics, according to interviews with voters, historians and political scientists.

It's a sentiment widely shared across the US. A Brennan Center for Justice survey this year found 79% of Americans across parties would support a constitutional amendment to restore limits on political spending.

No independent public polling has been done on Initiative 194, dubbed the "Montana Plan." It has been championed by populist Democrat Sam Forstag in his run for the US House of Representatives and former Republican Governor Marc Racicot, though the state Republican party and some business groups are opposed.

Steve Hadnagy, a self-described conservative libertarian in the copper-mining town of Butte, said he plans to vote "yes" on I-194 to prevent corporate money flowing in from out of state.

"They're dumping millions of dollars into elections here, setting up the candidates they want in power who will do what they ask," he said. "I think people want to do something about it."

In Citizens United, the Supreme Court ruled that corporations and unions have a First Amendment right to spend unlimited money on elections independent of individual campaigns — giving rise to super PACs and 501(c)(4) nonprofits, or C4s, which can spend unlimited "dark money" on elections without disclosing their donors.

Known corporate contributions to federal outside political groups rose from $13mn in 2010 to more than $600mn so far this year, according to OpenSecrets.

In Montana, independent political expenditures rose from $33,000 in 2008 to $162mn in 2024, according to the Transparent Election Initiative, the group behind the Montana Plan. And that's just the money that's possible to track.

"No one knows how much corporate spending is pouring into elections," said Craig Holman, a longtime campaign finance expert at Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy group.

The Montana Plan doesn't attempt to overturn Citizens United — it works around it by targeting corporate powers rather than corporate rights. Corporate powers are granted by state governments, which have the authority to redefine or revoke them.

I-194 would bar all "artificial persons" from political spending, including unions, C4s and any Corp doing business in the state, even if they're not chartered in Montana. It would not stop wealthy individuals from spending freely — but they would no longer be able to do so anonymously.

Jeff Mangan, Montana's former commissioner of political practices — the state agency that monitors and enforces campaign finance and disclosure laws — now leads the Transparent Election Initiative and spearheads the Montana effort. He said one of the biggest impacts of the flood of corporate cash into politics is that elected officials no longer answer to their constituents first. Sitting members of Congress must now raise tens of thousands of dollars a day to remain competitive, he said. "So when that's their priority, somebody gets pushed aside, and it's generally the voters," Mangan said.

Opposition to the plan has been led by Montana's business community. Lorraine Clarno, CEO of the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce, said her group has used contributions from local businesses to educate the public about other ballot measures, from school levies to jail funding.

The Montana Chamber of Commerce filed an unsuccessful lawsuit to keep the initiative off the ballot and its president, Todd O'Hair, said he views I-194 as plainly unconstitutional.

An Afghan woman and a boy walk down a dry riverbed at Zhari district in Afghanistan's Kandahar province. (**AFP**)

Countries urge Taliban to respect women's rights

AFP
United Nations

More than 40 countries yesterday called on the Taliban government to immediately remove all restrictions on the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan.

Last month marked five years since the Taliban returned to power and imposed what the UN called "suffocating restrictions" on Afghans, especially women.

Around 2.4mn Afghan girls and young women are currently deprived of secondary education, according to Unesco.

"Since August 2021, the Taliban have implemented a policy of gender-based segregation, virtually erasing women and girls from public life and severely restricting their access to education, healthcare and employment," said Jerome Bonnafont, France's representative to the UN, speaking on behalf of the 43 signatory countries.

They include numerous European countries, as well as Liberia, the United Arab Emirates, Mexico and Japan.

"Women who refuse or are perceived to refuse to comply with these restrictions face arrest and arbitrary detention," Bonnafont continued, speaking ahead of a Security Council meeting on the situation. "Their supporters and perceived critics of the Taliban rule also face detention and reprisals."

The signatories urged Taliban authorities "to immediately lift all restrictions on the rights of women and girls, in all their diversity, and to put an end to all human rights violations."

Despite the country's dire humanitarian situation, with much of the population living in poverty, forced returns to Afghanistan are continuing.

More than 400,000 Afghans have been forcibly returned this year, according to the UN, primarily from Iran and Pakistan.

UN chief sounds alarm on AI risk

Reuters
United Nations

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned yesterday that rapidly advancing artificial intelligence poses risks that cannot be ignored, putting him at odds with President Donald Trump who has argued existing safeguards are sufficient.

Speaking ahead of next week's UN General Assembly gathering in New York, Guterres said the need for stronger oversight would be a major focus of his talks with global leaders coming to the city.

"We cannot afford to ignore concerns that have been raised, especially by those on the front lines of the development of AI," said Guterres.

"It's the first responsibility of any government to protect its citizens — including from the threats of AI."

Public alarm about the potential danger posed by AI is growing, after Anthropic researcher Jacob Coxon said last week he had resigned, in part because "people building AI earnestly believe that it could kill us all by the end of the decade."

Leaders of some of the industry's largest companies called for slowing the pace of the technology's development.

US House faces test on Russia sanctions bill

AFP
Washington

The dome of the US Capitol Building in Washington, DC. (**AFP**)

US lawmakers are slated to vote yesterday on sweeping new sanctions designed to squeeze Russia over its war in Ukraine, as the full-scale invasion grinds through its fifth year with no peace settlement in sight.

The package — which would be Congress's first major legislative move against Moscow since Donald Trump returned to the White House — sailed through the Senate in an 86-11 vote last month.

But its fate is less certain in the House of Representatives, where Republican leaders may need Democratic support to compensate for holdouts in their own ranks. The legislation targets Russia's energy and defence sectors, President Vladimir Putin and other senior officials, as well as Moscow's so-called shadow fleet of tankers used to circumvent Western sanctions.

It would also give Trump authority to impose tariffs of up to 100% on major buyers of Russian oil and gas — including potentially China and India — in an effort to choke off revenue financing Moscow's war. The White House backs the measure, and Trump has said he would sign it.

But its broad tariff powers have produced an unusual split among Democrats, who overwhelmingly support Ukraine but have resisted handing Trump greater authority over trade.

Gregory Meeks, the top Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, called the bill "deeply flawed." He said, "White House lawyers drafted the current text to maximise President Trump's authority to impose new import taxes on the American people, and to minimise any obligation to actually impose new sanctions on Russia or its enablers."

Meeks said he would support the legislation if the secondary tariff provisions were removed, but Republicans rejected amendments aimed at narrowing them.

Several Democrats nevertheless appear prepared to back the measure, while some Republicans oppose sanctions on free-market.

Supporters argue that tougher economic pressure is needed, with Russian attacks continuing across Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has urged Congress to pass the sanctions package, saying greater pressure is needed to force Moscow toward negotiations.

"So now Putin is losing 30,000 his soldiers per month... it's many losses, but he doesn't want to stop this war," Zelensky said during a July trip to Washington that included a meeting with Trump.

Images show heavy damage from Iran strikes targeting US bases: Report

AFP
Washington

Adestroyed aircraft, shredded tents, trailers that have been ripped apart: images taken by US troops show significant damage from Iranian strikes targeting American military assets in the Middle East, CBS News reported.

The undated images — taken at a base in Saudi Arabia and two facilities in Kuwait — were provided to CBS by American personnel on condition of anonymity, the outlet said late Tuesday.

"This is major damage to our bases that hasn't been communicated to the American public," CBS quoted one US service member as saying. "We're standing there with our eyes closed getting punched in the face," the service member added.

The Pentagon's inspector general released a report earlier this week that said the military's Central Command (CENTCOM) — which is responsible for US forces in the Middle East — had reported widespread damage to American facilities and equipment.

CENTCOM said Iranian strikes "damaged and destroyed hundreds of buildings and structures at US bases" in the Middle East, the report said.

"In addition, dozens of US aircraft were destroyed or damaged" during the war, the report said.

The Defence Department estimated the cost of the war at $33.4bn as of June 29, but that figure "does not include costs for infrastructure repairs," according to the report.

Meloni scraps tax for most cars

Italy is abolishing road tax for 14.5mn cars and motor-bikes, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said yesterday, in a move estimated to cost the country's strained state coffers more than €2bn ($2.31bn).
The decision comes as the government seeks ways to boost support ahead of a national election next year.
"Today, the government is eliminating one of the taxes most hated by Italians," Meloni said. The benefit will apply to motor-bikes and 70% of small, medium-sized cars. (**Reuters**)

Russian strike destroys warehouse of Zelensky's former TV studio

A Russian strike has destroyed a warehouse in Kyiv that stored props for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's former TV studio, the company said yesterday, adding that its staff were unharmed.
Zelensky co-founded the Kvartal 95 production company in 2003, while working as a comedian. The studio has produced some of Ukraine's most popular television shows including a comedy series about a fictional president that propelled Zelensky to fame. "As a result of yet another attack by Russian drones, a warehouse where our studio's props were stored has been destroyed," Kvartal 95 said on Facebook.
The company shared images showing what appeared to be a warehouse in flames, while another showed charred rubble scattered across the floor.Zelensky spent much of his early career working in television, including in Russia.
In 2013, he co-presented Russian state TV's New Year's Eve show. Kvartal 95 ceased work in Russia following Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014. (**AFP**)

EU's von der Leyen wants Canada to become bloc's first associate member

Reuters
Brussels

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday she wanted to open the door to Canada becoming the EU's first "associate member" in a push to forge new links among allies in "an openly hostile world".

European Union lawmakers gave a standing ovation after she made the proposal and then walked over to embrace Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney, who was in the European Parliament to hear her annual State of the Union address.

New partnerships were needed "in the cold fragility of today's world," von der Leyen told the assembly in Strasbourg, without detailing what associate membership would mean.

The 27-nation bloc faces war at its borders, with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Both the EU and Canada have also been facing stiff rivalry on trade and other issues from the administration of US President Donald Trump and from an increasingly assertive China.

"I said we must urgently reimagine our partnerships. So, I would like to work with you on opening the door for Canada to be the first associate member of the EU," von der Leyen said.

The EU and Canada "see the world with the same eyes: from AI to climate change, from the Arctic to geopolitics. And we have stood together: on Ukraine, on defence, on raw materials and on supply chains. But above all... Europe and Canada believe in democracy," von der Leyen told the assembly.

Carney welcomed von der Leyen's proposal for "a far stronger, more ambitious alliance in the future," his office said, adding: "Canada and Europe should secure our strategic autonomy through deep co-operation in the full range of strategic capabilities."

He did not mention associate membership.

It will be up to EU member states, and not von der Leyen alone, whether her proposal, which left some EU watchers befuddled, goes ahead.

The EU has historically resisted flexible alliances that have no legal status. EU members were lukewarm in reacting to Germany's proposal in May of associate membership for Ukraine as a stepping stone to full accession.

EU President Ursula von der Leyen greeting Prime Minister Mark Carney during her annual keynote address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France. (**AFP**)

One EU diplomat expressed surprise at von der Leyen's proposal, saying "nobody really knows what it means."

The diplomat added there were concerns that the European Commission chief "is overpromising and won't be able to deliver."

Fabian Zuleeg, chief executive of the European Policy Centre think tank, said he would not expect significant economic gains for either side, but that there was potential in "standing up together" against Trump's economic coercion and in working together on economic security.

However, he said one risk was that words were not followed by substance, which would "end up making us weaker rather than stronger."

Carney's European trip follows the collapse of Canada-US trade talks last month, sparking a series of back-and-forth tariff measures.

He has pledged to double Canada's non-US trade in the next decade as the country pivots away from its southern neighbour amid an increasingly acrimonious trade war.

In her speech, von der Leyen said the EU and Canada will work together across sectors. "We will work on intelligent manufacturing. We will create a tech alliance. We will integrate defence industrial bases. We will make the Arctic a flagship joint project," she said.

"Partnerships are a strategic choice for Europe. But they also respond to the fracture in the international rules-based system," she added. "This is a partnership not against anyone else."

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Heorhii Tykhyi, said his country welcomed deeper ties between the EU and Canada and would closely watch what comes next.

"We are also interested and are examining what it will specifically entail and how close the integration will be," the spokesperson said.

QT unveils Qatar Calendar 2026-27

QNA
Doha

Qatar Tourism (QT) launched the Qatar Calendar 2026-2027, featuring over 560 events in partnership with nearly 780 key stakeholders to showcase a diverse range of cultural, entertainment, and sports activities.

Delivered through Visit Qatar, the calendar serves as a unified national platform consolidating the country's event lineup.

Promotional efforts include increasing monthly print distribution to 35,000 copies, alongside international digital distribution across 120 countries in co-ordination with Qatari embassies, as well as on Visit Qatar's website and mobile application.

HE Chairman of Qatar Tourism and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Visit Qatar Saad bin Ali al-Kharji stated that the calendar acts as an integrated system connecting Qatar with the world while promoting events to local and international audiences.

Al-Kharji added that tourism remains a vital pillar of national economic diversification under Qatar National Vision 2030, emphasizing continued investment in major projects, digital solutions, and strategic public-private partnerships to enhance Qatar's global competitiveness.

HE Managing Director of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy Hassan bin Abdullah al-Thawadi emphasised the importance of leveraging the advanced infrastructure and expertise gained from the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 to host major future global events, including the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2027 and the Asian Games 2030.

Speaking at a panel discussion on the sidelines of the Qatar Calendar 2026-2027 launch, al-Thawadi stated that Qatar has solidified its position as a global hub for event management expertise, relying increasingly on Qatari talent in international tournaments.

He added that the Qatar Calendar expands the impact of sporting events beyond stadiums by integrating sports passion with cultural, entertainment, shopping, and culinary experiences. CEO of Visit Qatar Eng Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi detailed initiatives to boost awareness of the calendar, including monthly print runs of 35,000 copies, outdoor advertising contracts, cinema screen promos, and dedicated in-flight promotional videos on Qatar Airways flights.

Al-Mawlawi noted that user activity on the calendar's platform reached 230,000 users in 2026, up from 105,000 in 2025, alongside 1.6bn social media engagements this year.

He announced that a unified digital ticketing platform linked with Visit Qatar will launch by the end of the year, while the Hayya Platform prepares to release new incentive packages for visa holders. Highlighting tourism metrics, al-Mawlawi revealed that Qatar welcomed over 5mn visitors in 2025, with hotel occupancy exceeding 71% (10.8mn room nights) and the tourism sector supporting over 163,000 jobs in the local labour market.

Al-Kharji emphasised the role of tourism and major events in driving broad economic value across hospitality, retail, and transportation, while supporting job creation and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Speaking during a panel discussion at the launch of the Qatar Calendar 2026-2027, al-Kharji noted that these efforts support Qatar's goal to increase the tourism sector's contribution to GDP to 12 % by 2030. Al-Kharji stressed the importance of digital tourism and accessibility, highlighting seamless travel experiences facilitated by the Hayya Platform and visa-free entry procedures for citizens of over 100 countries.

He underscored joint collaboration between Qatar Tourism, the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, and public and private sector partners to sustain Qatar's position as a global hub for tourism and mega-events. Reflecting on the legacy of the FIFA World Cup 2022, he noted that the tournament reshaped regional perception, expanded advanced infrastructure, and boosted visitor numbers, leading to a doubling of arrivals in 2023 compared to 2022.

Al-Kharji added that Visit Qatar targets specific international markets through tailored campaigns, such as the Hayya Summer initiative launched in May, which attracted significant family tourism from Qatar, the GCC, and neighboring regions.

Glimpses from the event where Qatar Calendar 2026-2027 was launched in Doha.

On the sidelines of the events, Visit Qatar signed several memorandums of co-operation and strategic partnerships with prominent entities and institutions in the country, including Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail), the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, MELT Live, and Aspire Zone Foundation.

The memorandums strengthen existing strategic relationships, consolidate frameworks for co-operation, and establish a common platform that will enable the parties to develop promising opportunities through future events and initiatives, as well as other areas of mutual interest, drawing on their shared visions and ambitions and complementary expertise. Further details on the key projects and initiatives to be implemented under these memoranda will be announced in due course.

In this context, Chief Executive Officer of Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail) Jassim Mohammed al-Ansari said the memorandum of understanding signed with Visit Qatar reflected Qatar Rail's commitment to strengthening the role of public transportation in supporting Qatar's tourism and events sector. He added that through the partnership, Qatar Rail looked forward to leveraging Doha Metro and Lusail Tram services to facilitate visitors' access to various destinations and events, and to raise awareness of the public transportation options provided by its networks, thereby contributing to an integrated, world-class mobility experience at events throughout the year.

Al-Ansari added that the memorandum was intended to establish a strategic partnership supporting greater integration between Qatar's rail-based public transportation system and its tourism sector. He noted that the partnership formed part of the two sides' efforts to facilitate and support visitors' access to events and tourist destinations across the country, in line with Qatar's plans to develop a more integrated, sustainable tourism experience and further consolidate its position as a leading destination for tourism and events.