



Qatar's best car marketplace



qic • market

*Non-insurance services are provided by Anoud Tech, a subsidiary of QIC

GULF TIMES





0 668039 136499

FRIDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13867

September 18, 2026
Rabia II 7, 1448 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

published in QATAR since 1978



Together we can
vodafone

Among Family,

stories don't end



the new Ahli plans

Explore more







Interior Paint with Low VOC
Exceptional Washability
Superior Stain Resistant
Obtained Qatar Quality Mark
Obtained International Green Mark

تصميم منزلك

تصميم منزلك

تصميم منزلك

THE PERFECT GIFT?

THE ONE THEY CHOOSE





Cakes by Family

CUSTOM CAKES

MADE TO ORDER

70256690

Ready to

GUAC

AND ROLL?

Only on

talabat



6THSTREET.COM

IS NOW

AIVI

Authentic Fashion & Lifestyle Destination

Delivering In

90

Minutes



Scan the QR code & download the AIVI app

63 killed as Yemen fighting intensifies

Fighting between Yemen's Houthis and government forces has killed 63 people in 24 hours, military sources from both sides said yesterday, as cross-border strikes intensified and civilians fled across the Red Sea. A Yemeni government official told AFP that missile and drone attacks killed at least 23 soldiers in two southwestern provinces. Houthi military sources reported 40 fighters killed in Saudi air strikes and ground battles.

Qatar slams Houthi attack — Page 2

Saudi civil defence separately reported that a Yemeni resident was killed by debris from a drone intercepted over Taif, the first death Riyadh has announced since Houthi attacks escalated last week. More than 80 people had previously been reported wounded. Houthi-controlled television said Saudi aircraft carried out fresh strikes in Hajjah province near the Saudi border and around Taiz. The Houthis, who have seized Yemen's entire Red Sea coast since last week in a lightning offensive, say Saudi forces have conducted hundreds of air strikes. **Page 5**

COMMUNITY

See Page 6

Qatar, Saudi Arabia to boost co-operation



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force "Lekhwiya" Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met Saudi Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz al-Saud in Riyadh yesterday. The meeting was held within the framework of the fourth meeting of the Security and Military Committee established under the Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council. They discussed the items on the agenda and ways to further strengthen co-operation between Qatar and Saudi Arabia. The two ministers then signed the minutes of the fourth meeting of the committee.

Qatar, Singapore urge safe Hormuz passage



By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Qatar and Singapore have called for the restoration of safe, unimpeded passage through the Strait of Hormuz and urged dialogue to resolve renewed hostilities involving the US and Iran, warning of threats to maritime security and global trade.

The two countries underscored the need to protect shipping and uphold

freedom of navigation during the third meeting of the Implementation Monitoring Mechanism of the Qatar-Singapore High-Level Joint Committee in Doha.

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi and Singapore's Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan co-chaired the meeting. Singapore's Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Home Affairs Zhulkarnain Abdul Rahim also participated. **To Page 4**

Qatar takes steadfast peace push to the UN

GT Report/QNA
Doha

Qatar will put mediation, regional de-escalation and the protection of international law at the heart of its participation in the UN General Assembly this month, reaffirming its determination to pursue peaceful solutions despite the crises confronting the region.

Adviser to the Prime Minister and official spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs HE Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari said Qatar had completed preparations for high-level participation in the General Assembly's 81st session in New York.

In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), he said the country would continue its mediation efforts despite regional challenges, with an agenda focused on international peace and security, humanitarian assistance and restoring confi-



dence in multilateral co-operation.

The gathering, being held under the theme "Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All", comes against a critical international backdrop following regional tensions since February.

Dr al-Ansari said Qatari officials would hold a series of bilateral and multilateral meetings with counterparts from around the world and representatives of international and regional organisations.

The discussions will explore ways to deepen strategic partnerships, expand co-operation and open new avenues for engagement, alongside efforts to ease regional and international tensions and pave the way for stabil-

ity and sustainable peace.

Qatar's priorities will include promoting dialogue and mediation, upholding international law and the UN Charter, strengthening multilateralism and supporting sustainable development.

Ensuring humanitarian assistance reaches the countries and communities most in need will also feature prominently, he said.

The agenda builds on Qatar's record of facilitating negotiations across conflicts, with diplomatic efforts extending from ceasefire talks in Gaza to peace negotiations in Africa and the reunification of families separated by the Russia-Ukraine war.

In Gaza, Qatar worked with Egypt and the US to mediate the ceasefire agreement that took effect in January 2025, providing for a phased exchange of hostages and prisoners. That agreement followed the temporary truce brokered in November 2023, which enabled releases and increased humanitarian access.

To Page 4

QEF names al-Thawadi as advisory board co-chair

The Qatar Economic Forum, powered by Bloomberg, has appointed HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Thawadi and Kevin Sheekey as co-chairs of its Global Advisory Board.

The appointments were announced in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. HE al-Thawadi is managing director of the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, while Sheekey is global head of external relations at Bloomberg LP.

The forum also announced its board members for 2026-2027, drawn from global business and policy circles.

HE al-Thawadi said he looked forward to working with fellow board members to further strengthen the forum's standing, noting its growth into one of the world's leading economic summits, reflecting Qatar's ambitions and the needs of international participants.

Bloomberg Media chief executive Karen Saltser said the co-chairs brought valuable expertise in global markets, policy and investment that would enrich the forum's agenda and deepen its impact as global decision-makers gather at a pivotal time for the world economy. (QNA)



Why the region must heed Qatar's warning on Bab el-Mandab

By Kamran Rehmat
Doha

Qatar warned this week that losing Bab el-Mandab would be "catastrophic for the entire world" — a judgement delivered as Houthi forces completed their takeover of Yemen's Red Sea coast, 63 people were killed in a single day of fighting, and crude held above \$100 a barrel.

Director of Media and Communication Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ibrahim bin Sultan al-Hashmi said on Tuesday the region could not absorb a second closed waterway on top of Hormuz, and that Qatar was working with regional and international partners on freedom of navigation.

Military sources on both sides said yesterday that 63 people

had died in 24 hours. A government official declared at least 23 soldiers killed in Houthi missile and drone attacks across two southwestern provinces; Houthi sources reported 40 fighters killed in Saudi air strikes and ground combat.

The advance that produced this was rapid. The Houthis took Mocha on September 10, pushed south the next day to seize the remaining coastline and Perim Island inside the strait, and captured the Hanish archipelago to the north. Dhubab, the coastal town facing Perim, fell in the same sweep. They now hold the whole of Yemen's Red Sea coast — their largest territorial gains in years.

The International Organisation for Migration says more than 100,000 Yemenis have been displaced, most inside the country.



Others have crossed Bab el-Mandab in small boats.

The energy consequences are global. Crude eased slightly but stayed well above \$100 after touching its highest level since May, and the average US retail diesel price set a record just short of \$6.40 a gallon. Saudi Arabia's East-West Pipeline, which allowed it to ship crude from the Red Sea, has been shut since it was struck last week in an attack Riyadh said came from Iraq. The US Navy is escorting ships through Hormuz while blockading Iranian ports; Iran says the strait stays closed until that blockade is lifted, and wants an arrangement letting it charge transit fees.

Washington's answer has been diplomacy, not firepower. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pressed Trump directly for military intervention as Per-

im fell, and was denied. Trump's public framing — "they called us" — has been read across the region as an acknowledgement that the US security umbrella has become selective and conditional.

Then came Muscat. US officials met Houthi representatives at the American embassy there on Sunday, in a meeting organised with local help. The Houthis said they had no intention of attacking US vessels and were committed to the 2025 ceasefire, and one source said they would spare Israeli and commercial shipping — except Saudi-owned vessels. The delegation included Mohammad Abdulsalam, who is under US sanctions, and Abdelmalik al-Ajiri. The talks turned on keeping the strait open without drawing Washington into Riyadh's war.

To Page 4



Interior minister meets Saudi counterpart in Riyadh

HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani met Saudi Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif bin Abdulaziz al-Saud in Riyadh yesterday. The meeting was held within the framework of the fourth meeting of the Security and Military Committee established under the Qatari-Saudi Co-ordination Council. - QNA



Qatar slams Houthi attack on Taif Governorate

Qatar has strongly condemned a Houthi drone attack on Saudi Arabia that killed a civilian and wounded two others.

Saudi civil defence said earlier yesterday that debris from an intercepted drone had caused the casualties in Taif governorate, along with material damage to several buildings and vehicles.

A Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) statement denounced the attack in the strongest terms, calling it a "shameful" act of aggression and a "disregard" for civilian lives, and said it constituted a "blatant" breach of the kingdom's sovereignty and a violation of international law.

Doha expressed full solidarity with Riyadh and said it would support all legitimate measures the kingdom takes to preserve its sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and interests.

The ministry stressed that the security of the kingdom is an integral part of Qatar's security and the collective security of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states.

The statement carried Doha's condolences to the family of the deceased and wishes for the speedy recovery of those injured. - QNA

Qatar takes part in UN dialogue on rights of women, children in conflicts



HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Office in Geneva Dr Hind Abdulrahman al-Muftah participated yesterday in the interactive dialogue on the human rights of women and children in conflict and post-conflict situations, under item 3 of the agenda of the 63rd session of the Human Rights Council.

In Qatar's statement, she affirmed that protecting women and

children during and after armed conflicts was of paramount importance and constituted a priority in Qatar's foreign policy, diplomacy and humanitarian programmes.

HE Dr al-Muftah said that, within this framework, Qatar launched international initiatives, including Resolution 60/19, in partnership with Costa Rica, on promoting and protecting the human rights of women and children in conflict and post-conflict

situations, as well as the Women in Conflict Zones initiative launched by Qatar in September 2022 to strengthen the protection of women and ensure their effective participation in peace processes.

She also referred to Qatar's hosting of the Analysis and Outreach Hub of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, in support of prevention and monitoring efforts.

HE Dr al-Muftah renewed Qatar's call on all parties to conflicts to fulfill their obligations under international law and immediately end grave violations committed against women and children.

She also stressed the importance of ensuring justice, holding the perpetrators of such violations accountable, and providing victims with effective remedies and reparations in accordance with international law. - QNA

Qatar joins panel marking 60th anniversary of covenants on human rights



Qatar's Permanent Mission to the United Nations Office in Geneva participated yesterday in a high-level panel discussion marking the 60th anniversary of the two international covenants on human rights, held under Agenda Item Three of the 63rd session of the Human Rights Council.

In a statement delivered by Qatar's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Office in Geneva Abdulrahman Mohammed Fakhroo, Qatar conveyed that the

adoption of the two international covenants on human rights six decades ago marked a historic turning point in consolidating the human rights system and fostering collective action.

The two covenants are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), both adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966 and entering into force in 1976.

The statement noted that while

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights laid the foundational building blocks for human rights values and principles, the two international covenants contributed to transforming many of these principles into legal standards and obligations binding upon states parties.

Fakhroo said many decades later the two international covenants remain a cornerstone of global efforts to promote and protect human rights and address the many challenges facing the world today.

He further added that Qatar views the two international covenants as pivotal documents for strengthening the normative framework of human rights.

The diplomat explained that since acceding to them in 2018, Qatar has adopted a strategic approach to implementing their provisions, incorporating them into the national legal system, raising awareness of the principles and standards they contain, and submitting periodic reports to the relevant treaty bodies, as a

manifestation of commitment to fulfilling its international obligations.

He highlighted that the optimal implementation of the two international covenants requires treating the rights enshrined therein as equal, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing, while taking into account the national, cultural, and religious specificities of each state and drawing upon experiences and best practices, thus reinforcing the principle of the universality of human rights. - QNA

Ministry holds discussion to celebrate Gulf Family Day

THE Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF) has arranged a panel discussion to mark Gulf Family Day 2026, showcasing the importance of dialogue within families to build a cohesive and sustainable society.

The panel was organised in collaboration with Kanaf Parenting Centre and coincided with a ministry campaign aimed at raising awareness regarding the family's role in protecting children's psychological and social devel-

opment in the digital age.

Participants highlighted the family's status as a fundamental pillar of social and economic development, as well as its role in preserving Gulf values and national identity in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Key topics included digital parenting, the family's role in guiding children toward the safe and responsible use of technology, ways to foster psychological and social balance, and positive family

practices that contribute to stability and cohesion.

The event also featured an introductory video showcasing Kanaf Parenting Centre's programmes aimed at fostering a safe and stable family environment for children.

Fatima al-Nuaimi, director of the ministry's Family Development Department, said the event reflects the ministry's commitment to strengthening the family's status as the primary incubator for values and principles.



She added that dialogue within the family helps build relationships based on trust, respect, and understanding, while empowering family members to navigate contemporary social and psychological challenges.

Al-Nuaimi hailed the observance of Gulf Family Day as a significant occasion to highlight the family's role in preserving cultural and social heritage, instilling authentic Gulf values, and strengthening family bonds.



Qatar formally deposits instrument of acceptance as 95th HCCH member

Qatar has become the 95th member of the Hague Conference on Private International Law (HCCH) after formally depositing its instrument of acceptance yesterday.

Qatar's ambassador to the Netherlands Dr Mutlaq al-Qahtani handed over the document to Jules Van Eijndhoven, the head of the Treaties Division at the Dutch ministry of foreign affairs, during a ceremony in the Hague.

HCCH Secretary-General Dr Christophe Bernasconi attended the event representing the organisation's Permanent Bureau. Doha first applied for the organisation's membership on April 10, 2025.

Speaking at the ceremony, al-Qahtani said Qatar's accession reflects the country's keenness to boost international legal and judicial co-operation.

He also highlighted Doha's efforts to develop rules governing private international law and promote the rule of law. - QNA

Qatar participates in 76th meeting of GCC finance ministry under-secretaries

Qatar participated in the 76th meeting of the Committee of Under-secretaries of the Ministries of Finance of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) member states.

Deputy Under-secretary for Economic Affairs at the Ministry of Finance Dr Saud bin Abdullah al-Attiah (pictured) represented Qatar during the meeting.

Participants discussed the outcomes of recent committee meetings covering central bank govern-

ance, the GCC Customs Union Authority, tax administration, and the Gulf Common Market, as well as on strengthening co-ordination to accelerate economic and developmental integration among member states.

The committee also examined the General Secretariat's progress report on regional measures, the status of free trade agreement negotiations with international blocs, and strategic initiatives designed to achieve economic unity across the GCC. - QNA



Bil-Arabi 2026 drawing global wave of ideas to Doha: official

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

MORE than 1,600 speakers and creatives from around the world have applied to take part in Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Bil-Arabi 2026 initiative, which will be held in Doha on September 19-20, programme director Dr Zaidoun al-Kinani has said.

He said the strong response reflects both the depth of emerging creative talent and a growing desire among innovators to present original ideas and experiences in Arabic.

This year's edition, under the theme *Building with Our Ideas*, is founded on the belief that innovation is the first step towards a better future, al-Kinani told reporters.

Ideas fulfil their value, he said,

when they become practical projects and solutions with a tangible and lasting effect on people's lives.

The initiative seeks to demonstrate the Arabic language's ability to carry new thinking in science, technology, entrepreneurship and innovation, alongside its established role in literature and heritage.

Al-Kinani described Arabic as a bridge between communities and a language through which creativity can cross borders.

Bil-Arabi, he added, brings together innovators from diverse fields to exchange knowledge and explore solutions linking technology with cultural heritage.

Turning that vision into daily practice, al-Kinani said, requires Arabic to be used to produce knowledge, debate contemporary issues and create content.

Making scientific and technological resources available in Arabic, he continued, while developing supportive digital tools, would enable young people to research and innovate in their mother tongue.

The 2026 programme will address issues shaping people's lives and futures, including media, technology, artificial intelligence (AI) ethics, genomics, precision medicine, entrepreneurship, economic innovation, peacebuilding, community resilience, environmental sustainability, heritage and cultural identity.

It will also examine science fiction as a way of understanding the future, as well as sports and social work.

Speakers are selected primarily on the originality of their ideas and their potential to deliver positive impact or offer solutions to soci-

etal challenges, producing a programme of diverse regional and international voices.

Keynote speeches, panel discussions, workshops and exhibitions will create an interactive setting that combines listening, experimentation and participation.

Main-stage talks will present experiences and ideas, while workshops and exploratory sessions will give visitors practical exposure to innovation, digital storytelling, debating and critical thinking.

Beyond Doha, the "Bil-Arabi" series has taken the initiative to cities and communities through smaller events adapted to local contexts.

Activities have been held in Damascus, Amman and Djerba, alongside participation in events in Riyadh, Istanbul and Oxford.

The three-stop 2026 tour brought together 14 speakers and

more than 1,000 participants from 15 countries, supported by 10 strategic partners.

Al-Kinani said that the expansion created local spaces for dialogue, amplified community-led ideas and reinforced Arabic as a language of creativity and innovation.

Young role models in science, technology and entrepreneurship will also share their experiences, while specialist-led sessions will help participants develop critical thinking and express their ideas with confidence.

Organisers hope participants will leave with new ideas, opportunities for collaboration and the motivation to turn discussion into action.

Al-Kinani said the wider ambition is to make Arabic a natural medium for thought and innovation, enabling young people to



Dr Zaidoun al-Kinani

discuss science, technology and entrepreneurship with the same confidence they bring to culture, heritage and literature.

Bil-Arabi ultimately aims, he stated, to inspire ideas in Arabic that can enter technology ecosystems, genomics research, sustainability projects and cinema, allowing Arab communities to contribute more fully to knowledge, innovation and a shared human future.

Legislative system set to undergo major change: minister

HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi has affirmed that Qatar's legislative system is set to undergo significant qualitative transformations in the coming period, shifting from a need-based legislative approach to one based on legislative impact assessment.

At the same time, he emphasised that justice, in its broadest sense, is not the sole domain of legal professionals; rather, it is a societal and personal value, that stems from the individual.

Speaking yesterday at a panel discussion hosted by the Community College of Qatar (CCQ) as part of the President's Dialogue Series, HE al-Mohannadi said

that the legislative impact assessment methodology would entail two main phases: an ex-ante (preliminary) impact assessment and ex-post (retrospective) impact assessment.

These phases, he added, aim to measure the extent to which legislation and administrative decisions achieve their intended objectives and determine the most suitable tools and methods for service delivery.

On technological advancement and artificial intelligence (AI), the minister noted that digital transformation is both inevitable and essential for enhancing services; however, it remains a means rather than an end.

He stressed the necessity of hu-

manising the law and procedures and maintaining a human filter for technology-generated outputs, while ensuring the availability of alternative channels for those who face difficulties accessing electronic services.

HE al-Mohannadi also reviewed mechanisms for transparency and community engagement.

He highlighted the expanded use of the interactive "Sharek" platform to gauge public opinion on policies, draft laws, and existing legislation.

The minister also noted that the Ministry of Justice is developing the Qatari legal portal, Al-Mizan, to facilitate seamless and objective access to legal information for all members of society.



With regard to the social concept of justice, he said that Qatar's Constitution establishes justice as a fundamental pillar of society, alongside with benevolence, freedom, equality, and high moral values.

HE al-Mohannadi called upon all members of society to set an ex-

ample and embrace individual responsibility, transforming justice from mere legal text into a daily social practice rooted in fulfillment of duties and securing of rights.

He also emphasised the significance of individuals being aware of their rights and obligations and ensuring the legal documenta-

tion of all sorts of transactions and contracts.

The minister clarified that such documentation is not a matter of trust or suspicion, but rather a regulatory framework that safeguards the rights of individuals and institutions while preventing disputes.

- QNA

Qatar's Hassan Rashid champions Arab cultural unity at Hurghada gathering



Hassan Rashid reading his speech.

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Dr Hassan Rashid represented Qatar at a General Union of Arab Artists meeting on the sidelines of the Hurghada Youth Film Festival on September 10-15.

Union members from across the Arab world attended the gathering, where fresh ideas and proposals were presented for implementation soon.

Dr Rashid is a media figure, writer and theatre critic in Qatar who became the first broadcaster to read the news on Qatar Television.

Born in Doha in 1949, he earned a PhD in the Philosophy of Arts, with distinction and honours, from Egypt's Higher Institute of Theatrical Arts.

In 2017, he received the Media Excellence Award for radio broadcasting at the second Arab Media Day, held under the auspices of the League of Arab States.

Speaking at the union's consultative meeting in Hurghada, Dr Rashid stressed the need to strengthen communication among Arab artists and intellectuals.

He called for support for initiatives that promote Arab culture and the arts, build bridges and widen co-operation across the region.

Dr Rashid also praised Egypt's role in advancing communication and Arab unity.

He urged artists and intellectuals to hold regular meetings and co-ordinate more closely, aiming to produce joint cultural and artistic works that reinforce Arab cultural presence.

Massad Fouda, president of the General Union of Arab Artists and head of the Syndicate of Film Professions, said that Dr Rashid's logistical support, communication and continued commitment while representing his country at pan-Arab gatherings underlined the importance of Arab solidarity and sus-

tained engagement among artists and intellectuals.

Fouda described Dr Rashid as a distinguished writer and thinker whose stories, theatre studies and research have enriched Arab culture.

He cited Directed Broadcasts, a study of Arab external broadcasting services, as well as Dr Rashid's studies of Qatari theatre.

The Hurghada Youth Film Festival is an annual event founded by screenwriter Mohamed El Basousy and organised by the Arts for Culture and Media Foundation in Hurghada, in Egypt's Red Sea Governorate.

Held under the auspices of the Egyptian ministry of culture, it is supported by Egyptian and international public and private institutions.

The festival aims to promote cinematic awareness and culture, support films made by young people and those addressing youth issues in Egypt, and showcase works from around the world.



Chamber of Commerce of Spain in Qatar president and chairman Jose Antonio Vicente Barrallo (third left), economic and commercial attaché of the embassy of Spain in Qatar Susana Castro-Acuna Baixauli (centre) and Spain's ambassador to Qatar Dr Alvaro Renedo Zalba (third right) with ICEX staff members.

‘Eat Spain, Drink Spain’ returns to Qatar for second edition

More venues, more flavours, more Spain

THE Economic and Commercial Office of Spain in Doha, together with ICEX Spain Trade & Investment, is bringing “Eat Spain, Drink Spain” back to Qatar for a second year, running from September 20 to October 4.

The campaign returns after a successful first edition, which helped introduce Spanish food to more people across one of the region's most diverse food markets, where nearly 80% of residents come from outside Qatar.

“Spanish gastronomy is one of the finest expressions of our culture and a key part of Spain's international appeal,” said Spain's ambassador to Qatar Dr Alvaro Renedo Zalba.

“Our cuisine combines centuries of tradition with innovation, reflecting the extraordinary diversity of our regions, products and culinary heritage,” he said. “Through ‘Eat Spain, Drink Spain,’ we are delighted to share this rich gastronomic tradition with Qatar and strengthen the ties between our two countries through food.”

A wider group of venues is taking part this year, including hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, and speciality food shops, each offering

their own take on Spanish dishes.

Visitors can look forward to trying classics such as paella, tortilla espanola, gambas al ajillo, and croquetas, along with favourites like Manchego cheese and Padron peppers.

Throughout the campaign, tastings, cooking demonstrations, and events will connect the local community with Spanish chefs, giving residents and food professionals a chance to try and learn about Spanish cuisine, from traditional recipes to modern twists and fusion menus.

This year's edition brings together a diverse group of partners across Doha, from hotels and restaurants to retailers and speciality brands, making it easier than ever to discover a taste of Spain.

Diners can explore Spanish flavours at venues including Curiosa, Stoke & Stoker, The Cellar, Coya, Amaru, Muru, Secret Garden, La Pergola, and IKA, while retailers such as The Meat Market, Monoprix, Carrefour, and LuLu Hypermarket bring Spanish products to shelves across the city, with special promotions throughout the campaign.

Also joining the campaign are Spanish brands



La Difference PR founder Samar Abou Farah (left) with Chef Aisha al-Tamimi and the Spanish embassy's Susana Castro-Acuna Baixauli.

Delaviuda and El Almendro, delivery app Snoonu, and The Cooking Academy, which will host a cooking contest.

A full calendar of activations, dates and times is available for residents looking to join in the celebration.

“Eat Spain, Drink Spain” is organised by Foods from Spain and Alimentos de Espana, through the Economic and Commercial Office of the embassy of Spain in Doha, as part of the wider Spain Food Nation campaign.

This year, the campaign is taking place in 18 countries around the world.

Doha Bank successfully completes ISO audits

Doha Bank has completed the surveillance audits required to maintain its internationally recognised ISO certifications.

Following a comprehensive independent assessment, the certification body confirmed the continued effectiveness and compliance of Doha Bank's management systems, resulting in the ongoing certification of ISO 9001:2015 - Quality Management System, ISO/IEC 27001:2022 - Information Security Management System, ISO/IEC 20000-1:2018 - IT Service Management System and ISO 10002:2018 - Customer Satisfaction and Complaints Handling Management System certificates.

The completion of these surveillance audits reflects Doha Bank's commitment to maintaining the highest international standards across its operations.

“The successful completion of these surveillance audits reinforces Doha Bank's commitment

to embedding international best practices across all areas of our business,” said Doha Bank Group chief executive Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Fahad bin Faisal al-Thani.

“Maintaining these globally recognised certifications reflects our focus on delivering exceptional customer experiences, ensuring the highest levels of information security, and driving continuous improvement in our operational processes,” he said.

“This achievement is a testament to the dedication, professionalism, and collaboration of our employees and stakeholders, who consistently contribute to strengthening Doha Bank's position as a trusted and leading financial institution,” Sheikh Abdulrahman added.

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) is the world's leading developer of globally recognised standards that help organisations improve quality, efficiency, security, and customer satisfaction.

Marriott Marquis City Center Doha welcomes Chef Piero to Cucina

Mariott Marquis City Center Doha is pleased to announce the appointment of Chef Piero Nogaro to lead Cucina, the hotel's signature Italian kitchen.

An Italian chef with more than three decades of culinary experience, he brings to Cucina a lifelong connection to Italian cuisine, shaped by his upbringing in Italy, his family's culinary heritage and an international career spanning Europe, the Middle East, Asia and beyond.

Chef Piero's career has included senior culinary roles across Italy, Qatar, the UAE, Morocco, the Maldives, Jordan and Norway, alongside international consulting work across London, Zurich, Hong Kong, New York and the Caribbean.

His journey brings him back to Doha, a city he has previously called home during his culinary career.

“What makes Chef Piero particularly exciting for Cucina is the genuine connection that he has with Italian cuisine. His roots, combined with his extensive international experience and his previous experience in Doha, give him a wonderful foundation to lead the restaurant into its next chapter,” said Marriott Marquis City Center Doha Hotel and Marriott Executive Apartments City Center Doha Hotel multi-property general manager Paul M Cannings.





Safari Shopping Center ‘Visit & Win’ first lucky draw winner selected

The first winner of Safari Shopping Center's 'Visit & Win - 2 Chevrolet Captiva Cars' Mega Promotion, launched in connection with the opening of Safari's new outlet at GWC-Logistic Village, has been selected.

The lucky draw was held yesterday (September 17) at the new Safari Shopping Center in GWC-Logistic Village, in the presence of a representative from Qatar's Ministry of Commerce and representatives of Safari manage-

ment. Abdul Rahim (Coupon No 0168331) was selected as the first winner of a Chevrolet Captiva car.

With no purchase or other conditions required, visitors to the new Safari Shopping Centers at GWC-Logistic Village and Al Sheehaniya receive free raffle coupons. Through this promotion, Safari is giving away two Chevrolet Captiva cars as prize.

The mega promotion, which began on August 3 in connection with the opening of the new



Safari Shopping Center at GWC-Logistic Village, continues to receive an overwhelming response from customers.

The second lucky draw will be held on November 5, 2026, at Safari Shopping Center, Al Sheehaniya.

Aspetar Laboratory earns seventh consecutive CAP re-accreditation

Aspetar Laboratory, Aspetar Orthopaedic and Sports Medicine Hospital, has secured re-accreditation from the College of American Pathologists (CAP) for the seventh consecutive cycle, each spanning two years, reinforcing its position as a trusted diagnostic partner for elite international athletes.

CAP accreditation is globally recognised as the gold standard in laboratory quality, ensuring technical excellence, accurate diagnostics, and patient safety.

These factors are particularly important for professional athletes, whose recovery and return-to-competition decisions depend on accurate and reliable test results.

Aspetar Laboratory is one of the first medical laboratories in Qatar to obtain CAP accreditation. It serves local and international athletes and conducts a wide range of laboratory tests and analyses to support sports medicine care in accordance with the highest international standards.

Director of Aspetar Laboratory, Dr Asmaa al-Marwani, said: "This re-accreditation reaffirms our commitment to providing the highest levels of quality in labo-



ratory services and reliable test results to our patients. We treat every patient as a VIP and provide the highest standards of safety and service, enabling them to focus on recovery and return to play."

This accreditation cycle saw

the implementation of a new electronic medical records system, the introduction of advanced analysers in the Biochemistry Department, and the expansion of the test menu with the addition of new tests to comprehensively

cover the clinical needs of the hospital's athletes. These developments contributed to enhancing the laboratory's data accuracy and diagnostic capabilities.

The inspection visit conducted by the College of American Pathologists also commended Aspetar's comprehensive quality management system and the specialised clinical expertise of its staff, identifying them as key strengths that make Aspetar a preferred destination for international athletes seeking the latest and most advanced sports medicine services.

Aspetar was among the first laboratories in Qatar to obtain CAP accreditation and continues to set the benchmark for diagnostic excellence globally, attracting athletes from around the world who seek the highest standards of healthcare.

The College of American Pathologists (CAP) is the world's largest organisation of board-certified pathologists and a leading provider of laboratory accreditation. The College serves more than 23,000 participating laboratories worldwide through its quality assurance programmes. (QNA)

ICESCO, King Faisal Center discuss enhancing co-operation

The Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ICESCO) and the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies explored prospects for enhancing co-operation in the fields of Islamic studies and manuscript preservation, as well as underlining the contributions of Islamic civilisation.

The two sides also discussed the preparation of joint studies and research aimed at advancing knowledge and safeguarding the scientific and cultural heritage of the Islamic world.

Director-General of ICESCO, Dr Salem bin Mohammed al-Malik presented an overview of the organisation's key activities, initiatives, and programmes to Secretary-General of the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic

Studies, Princess Maha bint Mohammed al-Faisal al-Saud, at the centre's headquarters in Riyadh. He highlighted areas of mutual interest and opportunities for building an effective scholarly partnership that contributes to advancing research and supporting institutions dedicated to Islamic studies.

The discussion also addressed a proposal to establish an academic chair specialising in Transoxiana studies, aiming to foster research into the region's history and the contributions of its prominent figures to Islamic civilisation.

Both parties agreed to work towards signing a cooperation agreement in the near future to formalise their collaboration and launch a series of joint programmes and projects. (QNA)



Why the region must heed Qatar's warning on Bab el-Mandab

From Page 1

Riyadh's hedge predates the offensive. In July, fourteen states announced a Saudi-led multinational defensive maritime alliance to safeguard navigation in Bab el-Mandeb, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Pakistan, Turkiye, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia — after a Riyadh meeting of chiefs of staff from 43 countries, with planners left to finalise a charter before launch. Two months on, the alliance built to secure Bab el-Mandeb has not begun operations, and the strait has changed hands.

Qatar has condemned the attacks as a violation of Saudi sovereignty, urged implementation of Security Council resolutions 2216 and 2722, and repeated that Saudi security is integral to Qatar's and the GCC's. Qatar's mili-

tary chief also attended the closed conference in Germany convened by CENTCOM commander Admiral Brad Cooper, who told eight regional counterparts the US would not withdraw its forces and outlined a plan to expand traffic through Hormuz.

Two dates now matter. Trump is expected to meet leaders or foreign ministers of all six GCC states on Tuesday at the General Assembly, the agenda built around a post-war plan not due before the November midterms. The other is the meeting that did not happen: Iran, Iraq and the GCC minus Bahrain were to have met at Salalah on Monday to map temporary Hormuz corridors, shelved at Saudi request amid anger over Houthi attacks and Riyadh's fear the wording would entrench a new status quo. No new date is set — and reviving it is Doha's most concrete piece of business.

Qatar takes steadfast peace push to UN

From Page 1

The negotiations illustrated both the practical value of mediation and the difficulty of translating temporary arrangements into a lasting settlement. Background: November 2023 truce, January 2025 agreement.

Qatar's engagement in Africa has similarly combined efforts to bring adversaries together with follow-up negotiations aimed at implementing their commitments.

In July 2025, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's government and the AFC/M23 rebel alliance signed a declaration of principles in Doha, setting out commitments intended to advance a negotiated settlement to the conflict in eastern Congo.

Further Doha talks produced arrangements for monitoring a

ceasefire. In February 2026, Qatar announced plans for a UN monitoring team to deploy to Uvira, following negotiations on implementing the monitoring mechanism and renewed commitments to a broader peace framework. Continued fighting underscored the challenges facing that process.

Alongside these political negotiations, Qatar has pursued humanitarian mediation between Russia and Ukraine, helping children separated by the conflict return to their families.

Addressing an international meeting in May 2026, Qatar reported that its efforts had reunited 87 Ukrainian children with their families through more than 14 humanitarian operations conducted in co-ordination with the International Committee of the Red Cross. Doha has also facilitat-

ed the return of Russian children to their relatives. Background: Ukrainian children, family reunifications.

These initiatives demonstrate how sustained contact between opposing sides can secure humanitarian gains even when a wider political settlement remains elusive.

The same emphasis on dialogue was evident at this week's meeting of the Qatar-Singapore High-Level Joint Committee's Implementation Monitoring Mechanism in Doha.

Both countries expressed serious concern over renewed hostilities involving the US and Iran and stressed the importance of diplomacy in achieving a peaceful and lasting resolution. They also commended Qatar's sustained efforts to facilitate dia-



HE Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari

logue and regional de-escalation. Their call for safe, unimpeded and continuous transit through the Strait of Hormuz highlighted the wider stakes of the diplomatic effort, linking regional stability to the security of international shipping and trade.

In New York, Qatar's planned meetings will bring those concerns into a broader international discussion, alongside its stated commitment to keep mediation active, strengthen the international system and ensure humanitarian needs remain central to the response to conflict.

Qatar, Singapore urge safe Hormuz passage

From Page 1

Expressing serious concern over developments in the Middle East, both sides stressed that dialogue and diplomacy were essential to achieving a peaceful and lasting resolution to the conflict. They commended Qatar's sustained diplomatic efforts to facilitate dialogue and ease regional tensions.

They also voiced concern over threats to international shipping, including Houthi attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, which have disrupted trade and endangered the safety and freedom of navigation.

Both sides said navigational rights and freedoms must be upheld in accordance with international law, as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. They also stressed the need to ensure the safety of seafarers and ships under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea.

They called for safe, unimpeded and continuous transit passage for vessels and aircraft through the Strait of Hormuz, a strait used for international navigation.

On bilateral co-operation, the two sides reviewed progress across six technical working committees covering information and communications technology, security, business, legal affairs, sustainability and social development.

They reaffirmed the High-Level Joint Committee's role as the principal platform for setting the strategic direction of relations, with the Implementation Monitoring Mechanism ensuring regular follow-up and translating decisions and agreements into practical results.

The meeting also backed stronger co-operation between Singapore and the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), including an upgrade of the existing GCC-Singapore Free Trade Agreement.

Both sides welcomed Qatar's admission as a sectoral dialogue partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in July 2026.

They looked forward to the Asean-GCC Foreign Ministers' Meeting on the sidelines of the 81st UN General Assembly's high-level week in New York in September 2026. Singapore, as co-ordinator for Asean-GCC

Qatar and Singapore said navigational rights and freedoms must be upheld in accordance with international law, as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. They also stressed the need to ensure the safety of seafarers and ships under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea

relations, and Bahrain, as GCC president, will co-chair the meeting.

The two countries supported stronger trade and investment flows between the regions, including through ongoing discussions on an Asean-GCC free trade agreement, as called for in the Joint Declaration on Economic Co-operation adopted at the second Asean-GCC Summit in May 2025.

They also looked forward to advancing regional co-operation at the third Asean-GCC Summit during Singapore's Asean chairmanship in 2027.

Reaffirming their warm and longstanding relations, both sides welcomed the exchange of

high-level visits that has helped expand bilateral co-operation.

These included then Singapore president Halimah Yacob's state visit to Qatar in June 2023 and the visit of HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani to Singapore in August that year.

Singapore's Senior Minister, Co-ordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Home Affairs K Shanmugam visited Qatar in February 2026, followed by Balakrishnan in May.

HE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali al-Thani and HE Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Samikh al-Marri made separate visits to Singapore in May and July 2026, respectively.

The Singaporean delegation reiterated its condolences on the passing of HH the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, recalling his distinguished contribution to bilateral relations, particularly the establishment of the High-Level Joint Committee in 2006.

Singapore will host the mechanism's fourth meeting in 2027.

Qatar participates in Annual Forum of Global Coalition for Social Justice

Qatar participated in the 2026 Annual Forum of the Global Coalition for Social Justice, engaging in a high-level panel titled 'From international commitments to implementation: Delivering Social Justice,' held virtually under the chairmanship of UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua. HE Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri represented Qatar at the forum, highlighting the imperative of translating international consensus into tangible national policy.

He noted that Qatar hosted the Second World Summit for Social Development in Doha in November 2025, which culminated in the Doha Political Declaration, a framework later endorsed by UN General Assembly Resolution 80/5 focusing on poverty eradication, full employment, and social inclusion. HE the Minister emphasized that Qatar joined the Global Coalition for Social Justice in November 2025, reinforcing its ongoing partnership with the International Labour Organisation

(ILO) under the third phase of their joint technical cooperation program (2024-2028).

HE Dr al-Marri pointed out that amid rapid global shifts, ranging from technological advances and AI to demographic and climate changes, social justice must be an integral component of economic and social policy formulation, rather than a deferred outcome. He stressed that the collective goal extends beyond job creation and economic growth to securing decent work, ensuring inclusive benefits, and empowering communities to navigate future transformations.

Reaffirming that the Doha Political Declaration marks the start of a shared implementation effort, HE Dr al-Marri highlighted the Global Coalition for Social Justice's role in mobilising partnerships and aligning policies.

HE Dr al-Marri concluded by reiterating Qatar's commitment to collaborating with the ILO and international partners to advance inclusive and sustainable social development. (QNA)

Qatar, Russia sign MoU on tax administration co-operation

Qatar and the Russian Federation signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on technical co-operation in tax administration to exchange expertise and enhance digital tax systems between both nations.

The agreement was signed by HE the President of the General Tax Authority (GTA) Khalifa bin Jassim al-Jaham Kuwari and Commissioner of the Federal Tax Service of the Russian Federation Daniil Egorov.

According to a GTA statement, the MoU focuses on digital transformation strategies, taxpayer-centric administration models, compliance frameworks, debt management, and future tax incentive policies through joint initiatives, training programs, along with exchanging expertise on tax incentives and future tax policies. The agreement encompasses information exchange, joint training programmes, seminars, working sessions, and mutual visits to build institutional capacity and enhance operational efficiency for both tax authorities. This partnership aligns with GTA's strategy to expand international co-operation and adopt global best practices to elevate the national tax ecosystem to international standards. (QNA)



Scores killed as Houthis, Yemen govt, Saudi Arabia trade attacks

AFP
Riyadh

Fresh fighting left scores of combatants dead in Yemen yesterday, as Saudi Arabia reported its first death since hostilities flared anew and its Yemeni government allies sought to roll back the group's recent gains.

The sides have been locked in increasingly violent exchanges since Yemen's civil war roared back to life, with the Houthis launching a new offensive that saw them capture all of the country's Red Sea coast.

At least 23 government soldiers were killed over the previous 24 hours in missile and drone attacks by the group in two southwestern provinces, a government military official told AFP yesterday.

Houthi military sources reported 40 fighters killed in Saudi air strikes and fighting on the ground during the same period.

Earlier in the day, Saudi Arabia's civil defence agency reported the country's first fatality since the Houthis began targeting their territory as part of their revived campaign.

"The fall of shrapnel from a downed drone in Taif governorate resulted in one death, two injuries, and material damage to several buildings and vehicles," the agency said, in a statement posted on social media, adding that the person killed was a Yemeni national.



Members of the Saudi Emergency Response Team work at the site after Saudi Arabia's civil defence said a Yemeni living in Saudi Arabia had been killed by debris from a drone intercepted over the western city of Taif, yesterday. (Reuters)

Images posted by Saudi state media showed windows in cars and shop fronts shattered by the shrapnel, with nearby buildings also damaged.

The incident came a day after Riyadh accused the Houthis of launching a "cowardly" thwarted drone attack targeting Islam's holy city of Makkah, a claim the group denied.

The EU voiced its "full solidarity" with Saudi Arabia as it condemned the recent Houthi strikes.

"We urge the Houthis to cease

all military action," said a statement from EU foreign affairs spokesman Anouar El Anouni, adding "the targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is unacceptable".

Earlier in the day, the Houthis said "Saudi enemy warplanes targeted three telecommunications towers" in Taiz province, with one civilian killed and another injured in strikes on the town of Abs, Al-masirah television said.

The Houthi-backed outlet later reported that "three children were

killed and several Yemeni nationals were injured in strikes by the Saudi-backed mercenaries", a reference to the country's internationally-recognised government.

The Houthis have been reporting dozens of daily Saudi strikes since they launched their new offensive and seized control of strategic areas overlooking the Red Sea's Bab al-Mandab Strait from government forces.

With Iran already throttling the Strait of Hormuz since the outbreak of the wider Middle East war, their Yemeni allies' latest gains cement their hold on the other main shipping corridor for Gulf oil and gas.

The route had been especially important to Saudi Arabia, the world's top crude exporter, which had used a pipeline to bypass the Hormuz and send oil to the Red Sea, which links Europe and Asia via the Suez Canal.

In July, a fragile 2022 truce between the Houthis and the government fell apart after the group allowed an Iranian plane to land in the capital Sanaa in defiance of Riyadh's control over Yemeni airspace, setting off a spate of attacks.

They also announced a maritime blockade of Saudi Arabia and began striking its ships and territory.

The conflict in the Arabian Peninsula's poorest country has forced more than 100,000 people to flee their homes, according to the United Nations.

Syrian court issues first sentences over coastal Alawite massacres

AFP
Aleppo

Syria's judiciary issued yesterday its first verdicts over last year's killing of hundreds of members of the Alawite minority on the Syrian coast.

The court sentenced a former member of government forces to 20 years in prison for murder, while two supporters of the deposed government received a death sentence and life in prison.

Fourteen people were accused of involvement in the massacres, in a trial that opened last November. They were seven government forces members and seven supporters of former president Bashar al-Assad.

Further verdicts are expected next week.

Several of the defendants believed to be Assad supporters pleaded not guilty at the opening of the trial, with one claiming he was in Lebanon during the violence.

The death sentence issued was for "assault aimed at provoking civil war and sectarian clashes".

The head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Rami Abdel Rahman, expressed criticism that "one of the largest mass massacres Syria has seen during the transition period

is being reduced to just a few cases".

"Putting a few people on trial does not constitute real justice," he told AFP.

The massacres last year, which authorities say broke out after attacks by Assad supporters against their forces, left at least 1,426 people dead, according to a national commission of inquiry.

The Observatory said more than 1,700 people were killed.

The commission said it had verified serious violations leading to the deaths of mostly civilians, and identified 298 suspects.

It claimed 238 members of the security forces and army had been killed in attacks attributed to Assad's supporters.

Authorities then sent reinforcements to the region, with the commission estimating their number at 200,000 fighters.

Syrian and international monitoring groups reported sectarian massacres, in which entire families were killed by government forces, armed groups allied with the government and armed volunteers, including summary executions.

Assad, an Alawite, was toppled by an offensive in December 2024.

Despite assurances from the new authorities, Syria's religious minorities have since expressed safety concerns.

Morocco political parties battle youth discontent

Reuters
Rabat/Cairo

Morocco's political parties are trying to entice young voters to the polls next week with promises of jobs and affordable housing after violent protests last year and a border rush on the Spanish enclave of Ceuta highlighted widespread discontent.

Uneven development and continuing economic hardship among young people were seen as drivers of both events, against a backdrop of recent progress in sectors such as manufacturing, ports and railways lifting living standards in major cities.

The vote, due on September 23, is the country's fourth since the 2011 Arab Spring protests led the monarchy to share more power with parliament before moving to reinforce its position.

A moderate Islamist party ran the government for about a decade but suffered a crushing defeat in the last vote five years ago, ceding its place to two parties founded by men close to the palace.

Those parties, the National Rally of Independents (RNI) and the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), have both put youth employment at the centre of their campaigns, pledging to create about one million jobs over the next parliamentary term.

They have also touted roughly \$20bn of infrastructure investment ahead of the 2030 World Cup, which Morocco will co-host with Spain and Portugal, and streamed rallies on social

media to draw the attention of young voters.

"We reject the idea that young people simply want an easy life," the PAM's campaign manifesto says, listing housing, regular income and "dignified work" as policy priorities.

Analysts say the challenge of engaging young voters was illustrated by deadly, Gen-Z-led protests last year, and by the massive border rush on Ceuta in July.

"The Ceuta mass migration attempt was a new form of social protest in which many citizens demonstrated a physical exit from Moroccan politics altogether," said Mohamed Masbah, head of the Moroccan Institute for Policy Analysis, a think tank.

While 18- to 24-year-olds make up some 12% of the population, they account for only about 3% of registered voters, official figures show.

Just one third of Moroccans between 18 and 35 years old say they trust parliament, the prime minister or political parties, according to a survey published in March by Afrobarometer, a research nonprofit.

Young voters say they have been discouraged by an impression that elections shift the balance between parties with little ideological space between them without producing major policy changes.

"We keep seeing the same faces return with promises that many young voters no longer believe," said university student Mohamed Azzaoui, who said he does not intend to vote.

AFP
Paris

The leaders of France, Lebanon and Jordan yesterday met in Paris to drum up international support for the cash-strapped Lebanese army which President Emmanuel Macron described as "indispensable" for bringing stability to the country.

Also on the agenda was the creation of a new force to succeed a longstanding UN peacekeeping mission in southern Lebanon, where Israel is locked in fighting with Hezbollah fighters.

Macron welcomed Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and King Abdullah II of Jordan to Paris for the talks. They were later joined by chiefs of defence staff from Lebanon, Jordan, France, Britain and Italy, as well as top US and Saudi officials, a French military source said.

Macron said that the talks aimed to "strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty and enable it to fully ensure its security", after years during which political factions, such as the Shia group Hezbollah, wielded greater authority than the Lebanese state.

"A sovereign and stable Lebanon is a decisive step toward peace and stability for the entire region," Macron wrote in a statement on X.

Along with the Lebanese and Jordanian leaders and "in close co-ordination" with the US, Saudi Arabia and international partners, "we support the Lebanese Armed Forces, which are indispensable



Jordan's King Abdullah II, France's President Emmanuel Macron and Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun pose before a meeting of the Aqaba process in support of the Lebanese armed forces at the Hotel des Invalides in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

for asserting the authority of the Lebanese state across its entire territory," he added.

The French presidency said the aim of the Paris talks was to review a Lebanese armed forces deployment plan based on a "clear, credible and realistic" framework.

Paris said it wanted this as a prerequisite for what it hopes will be "robust" international support, whether in the form of financial assistance, equipment or training.

The poorly equipped Lebanese forces have struggled to carry out their mission of disarming Hezbollah in the south, which is a key condition for Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon.

Aoun has repeatedly mentioned his determination to disarm Hezbollah, but "without a confrontation".

In a statement, the Lebanese presidency said Aoun felt "deep

satisfaction" with the progress achieved in Paris.

He "expressed his hope that the needs of the Lebanese army and Internal Security Forces... would receive the necessary response from brotherly and friendly nations and entities".

The talks also come as the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil) ends this year after almost half a century of operations dating back to the Israeli invasion of 1978.

Last year, the UN Security Council, under US pressure, decided to end Unifil's mandate on December 31, 2026.

France and Italy have said they want to set up a multinational coalition to succeed Unifil. The force has just under 7,500 peacekeepers from 46 countries.

Aoun told AFP this week that Lebanon wanted a new force, Eu-

ropean or otherwise, to prevent a security vacuum after the UN peacekeepers leave south Lebanon.

Israel and the US attacked Iran in February, sparking a war that has spread across the Middle East.

Hezbollah dragged Lebanon into the wider conflict when it fired rockets at Israel in solidarity with the Tehran government.

Israel attacked south Lebanon and its forces continue to occupy what it calls a "security zone", a stretch of Lebanese territory about 10 kilometres (six miles) deep along the border.

In June, Israel and Lebanon signed a US-sponsored framework agreement that involves the disarmament of Hezbollah, a gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon's south and the deployment of the Lebanese army to the region.

Violence declined following the June agreement and a wider US-Iran deal, but Israel has pressed its attacks on Lebanon, while there has been a fresh upsurge in fighting between the US and Iran in recent weeks.

Iran hit US military targets in Jordan in response to new American attacks, while shipping remains restricted in the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandab Strait off Yemen, which Houthi rebels have seized control of.

"Blockades have direct consequences on our daily lives. The French are feeling them at the pump, with prices that have become unbearable," said Macron, calling for "freedom of navigation" to be restored.

At least 26 killed in South Sudan clashes

At least 26 people have been killed and 82 others injured in Abyei town on the border between South Sudan and Sudan after clashes between two rival tribes, the United Nations said in a statement yesterday.

Abyei is an oil-rich area that is jointly administered by South Sudan and Sudan, which have both staked claims to it following South Sudan's independence in 2011.

The clashes took place at the Amiet Common Market in Abyei town and involved members of Ngok Dinka and Misseriya tribes and were sparked by the initial killing of two men from both tribes on Monday and Tuesday.

The initial killings of the two men escalated tensions between the two communities around the market, a key economic hub in the area, the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei said in the statement. (Reuters)

Rescue efforts end after 21 die in collapse of bomb-damaged building in Gaza

Reuters
Cairo/Gaza

Gaza rescuers wrapped up searches yesterday in the rubble of a bomb-damaged building that collapsed a day earlier, where 21 people were killed and 45 rescued from under the rubble, a Palestinian official said.

Nearly a year since a ceasefire ended major fighting in Gaza, reconstruction of the devastated territory has yet to begin. Most buildings were completely destroyed by Israeli air strikes or bulldozed by Israeli forces, and nearly all of the rest have suffered damage.

The population of more than 2mn lives confined to a third of the enclave's territory, mainly housed in makeshift tents or in overcrowded rooms in damaged buildings.

Bulldozers were at work at the site yesterday, removing rubble to prepare the ground for tents, where survivors from among more than 110



Palestinians inspect the rubble of a residential building that had been damaged in a previous Israeli strike during the war and collapsed on Wednesday, in Gaza City, yesterday. (Reuters)

people who had been living in the building could be housed. Residents sifted through the rubble picking up belongings, including food.

"We were in shock from the scene we witnessed. Imagine seeing your family members under the rubble — some of them (torn to) pieces, others killed," said Nader El-Ejlal, a

survivor who said several of his relatives were killed in the collapse.

El-Ejlal said the family had moved into the damaged building because they could not find any other shelter. Unless a solution is found to provide displaced people with new shelters, the collapse would not be the last, he said.

Gangs kill 15 in northwest Nigeria

AFP
Gusau

Armed criminal gangs raided several villages in northwestern Nigeria's Zamfara state killing at least 15 people, local residents told AFP yesterday.

Motorcycle riding gunmen who belong to kidnapping-for-ransom and cattle-rustling gangs, who locals call bandits, rode through eight villages in Dansadau district on Wednesday through yesterday, killing residents and looting homes.

Bandits have for years been terrorising rural communities in northwest and central Nigeria.

The violence started as conflict between Fulani cattle herders and farmers over land and water rights but morphed into organised crime.

"The bandits killed 15 people in the attacks which started from 10:00am (0900 GMT) on Wednesday and lasted till dawn on Thursday," Abubakar Musa, a spokesman for the traditional chief of the area said.

He added that they arrived

on dozens of motorcycles and "launched simultaneous attacks on the villages, looting anything of value and shooting people as they tried to flee".

His Dandallah village was the worst hit, with seven people killed, six injured while three others were missing, he said.

Musa said the raid was reprisals for the killing of a Fulani herder by local vigilantes in the area the previous day.

Shuaibu Ibrahim, whose Kuyambana village was also raided, gave the same toll, saying the gunmen "took away everything, including food stuff, clothing, livestock and motorcycles".

Hundreds of residents fled to Dansadau town for fear of renewed attacks, according to Ahmed Mohammed, a Dansadau resident.

Rural communities in Zamfara state formed vigilante groups as community protection force against bandits, but are accused of extrajudicial killings of suspected bandits, leading to reprisals from bandits and a cycle of tit-for-tat killings.

MES teachers excel in MoEHE competency assessment



MES Indian School celebrates the exemplary achievement of Aneesa Basil and Mohammad Elsyed Ibrahim, who excelled in the Teacher Competency Assessment conducted by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE). Basil and Ibrahim demonstrated outstanding performance in the Teacher Competency Assessment, excelling in Islamic Studies and Arabic, respectively. Their remarkable performance reflects their professional competence, dedication, and unwavering commitment to fostering students' knowledge, values, and language skills.

MES educators honoured for exemplary service to education



In recognition of their distinguished service to education, dedicated commitment to the Indian student community, and significant contribution to nurturing future generations, the Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the embassy of India, Qatar, honoured two distinguished educators from MES Indian School. The honourees were Usman Mayyeri, HOD - Arabic, Urdu and Islamic Studies, and Sameena Ashfaq, headmistress, MES Indian School, Evening Shift.

The recognition stands as a testament to their exemplary service, professional dedication and significant contribution to the educational development of the Indian community in Qatar. The school management and Dr Hameeda Kadar, principal, along with the staff, extended their heartfelt congratulations to the distinguished educators on this well-deserved honour, commending their exemplary contributions and dedicated service to education.

ICBF concludes upskilling course, empowering Indian expatriates with Arabic language skills

The Indian Community Benevolent Forum (ICBF), the apex Indian community organisation under the embassy of India in Qatar, successfully concluded the first batch of its upskilling initiative with a closing ceremony held at ICBF Kanjani Hall.

In an increasingly dynamic and competitive global job market, continuous skill enhancement is no longer optional—it is a necessity. Recognising this imperative, ICBF launched the Upskilling initiative to bridge critical competency gaps, boost employability, and foster lifelong learning among the Indian expatriate workforce in Qatar. The programme is rooted in the belief that targeted, practical training can transform career trajectories and instil lasting confidence in professionals navigating diverse work environments.

The three-month Spoken Arabic – Beginner Level course, which commenced in June 2026, was the first offering under this initiative. It was designed specifically to help job seekers and working professionals develop foundational Arabic communication skills for everyday interactions – from workplace dialogue to accessing essential services at hospitals and government offices. Over 20 learners completed the programme and received certificates recognising their achievement.

Addressing the gathering, ICBF Acting President Rasheed Ahmed underscored the



critical role of upskilling in today's employment landscape. He noted that acquiring even basic Arabic proficiency significantly enhances expatriates' confidence and effectiveness in navigating daily life in Qatar. He also commended the volunteer trainers for their dedication and expertise. Course participants shared firsthand accounts of how the training had tangibly improved their interactions with the local community, enabling smoother communication in professional and personal spheres. Many described the course as more than a language class – a gateway to greater self-assurance and expanded career potential.

The ceremony featured a welcome address by ICBF general secretary Deepak Shetty, a felicitation address by lead trainer Faisal

Niyas Hudavi, and a vote of thanks by secretary Jafar Thayyil. Managing Committee members Mini Siby and Shankar Goud coordinated the programme.

The Upskilling initiative reflects ICBF's longstanding commitment to the welfare, employability, and holistic empowerment of the Indian diaspora in Qatar. By fostering community-led, volunteer-driven education, the Forum aims to create sustainable pathways for professional growth, self-reliance, and meaningful integration into Qatari society.

Building on the success of this first cohort, ICBF reaffirms its intent to expand similar skill-development programs, reinforcing its role as a catalyst for lifelong learning and community resilience.

SEEC, SELEC conduct first induction rite for Eagles Year 2026

The Supreme Elite Eagles Club (SEEC) and the Supreme Elite Lady Eagles Club (SELEC) marked a historic milestone with the successful conduct of their First Induction Rite for Eagles Year 2026, administered by the regional governor of Eagle, Rene M Lloren of TFOE PE Qatar Region.

After months of dedication and the rigorous Aspirant's Journey, new members were formally inducted under the banner of The Fraternal Order of Eagles – Philippine Eagles, Inc in Doha, Qatar. Among them, two inductees joined SEEC.

The event highlighted the spirit of unity and collaboration, as SELEC members extended unwavering support in close coordination with SEEC, from the meticulous preparations to the successful completion of the ceremony. This collective effort



embodied the enduring values of Brotherhood, Service, and Unity. SELEC president Lady Eagle Mildred B Ngoaban expressed her heartfelt gratitude and pride in the success of the induction, stating, "Another episode of sleepless nights is finally over. "I am so glad we all succeeded



in completing the Induction of the First Batch for the year 2026. Welcome to our new co-members, our future leaders, and hats off to all our co members, the sponsors who relentlessly guided the applicants on their aspirants' journey.

"To Kuya Edmond, a man of honour: thank you for uplifting our spirit of camaraderie. To all SELEC members, a group of empowered women: keep moving forward, stay motivated, and stay guided by all Kuya who see and value your presence. Soar high with faith, Lady Eagles..."

SELEC also extended its deepest appreciation to the TFOE PE National Office, headed by national president Eagle Jojo Calderon, for the opportunity given to SELEC to perform and grow as a recognised club within the fraternity. This acknowledgement reflects SELEC's gratitude for the trust and support that continues to inspire its members to serve with purpose and unity.



Three BPS teachers score 99% in ministry competency assessment

Three teachers from Birla Public School (BPS), Doha – Shamsuddeen Muliyyoli (Arabic), Jasmin Salim (Islamic Studies) and Safer Neermunda (Islamic Studies) have achieved an outstanding 99% in the Teacher Competency Assessment conducted by the Private Schools and Kindergartens Department of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Qatar.

The assessment evaluates and enhances teachers' professional competency in the compulsory subjects of Arabic Language, Islamic Education, and Qatar History. Its primary objectives include enhancing the quality of education, strengthening teachers' professional competencies, identifying areas for professional development and training, and improving students' learning outcomes. The assessment evaluates essential aspects of teaching, including lesson planning, classroom implementation, classroom management, learning environment, and overall professional performance. The remarkable 99% achievement reflects the teachers' dedication, professional expertise, effective teaching practices, and commitment to high educational standards. This achievement is a proud moment for Birla Public School, Doha, highlighting its continued commitment to professional excellence and quality education. The management and senior leadership team congratulated the teachers and the head of Department on their significant achievement.



Korea says US investment deal delayed

Reuters
Seoul

Republic of Korea's Foreign Minister Cho Hyun said yesterday that an announcement on Seoul's US investment plans under its trade deal with Washington had been delayed while procedural issues were clarified, without elaborating.

Cho made the remarks at the airport before departing to the US, where he is due to meet US Secretary of State Marco Rubio for talks today.

Korea's government this week postponed a planned briefing on its investment plans to a parliamentary committee and tentatively rescheduled it for September 22, according to an official with knowledge of the matter and media reports.

Lawmakers have described the parliamentary briefing as one of the final steps before Seoul and Washington set terms for a huge South Korean investment pledge in the US.

The postponement of Thursday's briefing comes as the allies continue negotiations over details of a trade deal struck last year, under which Seoul committed to invest \$350 bn in US manufacturing in return for lowering tariffs on Korean imports to 15%.

With negotiations still ongoing, dates for a parliamentary briefing and a final announcement have yet to be fixed, two officials in Seoul said.

South Korean news outlet

Newsis reported on Wednesday, citing a Korean parliamentary official, that the allies would likely hold a memorandum of understanding signing ceremony on September 23.

Implementation of the trade deal has seen delays, prompting US President Donald Trump to threaten South Korea with higher tariffs earlier this year.

Of Seoul's promised \$350bn investment, \$150bn of the package has been earmarked for shipbuilding, with both governments working to finalise terms of projects under consideration for the remaining \$200bn.

One proposal under discussion is South Korea potentially taking a stake in Westinghouse, the US nuclear reactor technology firm, several South Korean media

outlets, including the Korea Economic Daily and Chosun Ilbo, reported this week.

According to the reports, Seoul is seeking a minority stake in Westinghouse funded through its broader US strategic investment fund as part of a package that envisages up to eight new nuclear reactors being built in the US, including six using Westinghouse technology and two based on a South Korean model.

Other projects include plans to build a 6.3GW gas power plant in Encinal, Texas, valued at about \$22bn to meet rising power demand for AI data centres, according to the media reports.

Seoul has also been considering participating in a liquefied natural gas project in Alaska, the reports said.

Chinese, US top diplomats hold call days before leaders' meeting

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio held a phone call yesterday, Chinese state media said, days before an expected meeting between their two countries' leaders.

President Donald Trump is expected to host Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping at the White House next week to discuss a host of issues including trade, artificial intelligence and the US-Iran war. In the call with Rubio, Wang said that China and the United States "should prepare for next stage of high-level exchanges in spirit of equality, mutual respect, mutual benefit", state news agency Xinhua reported.

Wang also told Rubio that bilateral relations have

"generally" moved forward along the "track of constructive strategic stability for some time".

The two also exchanged views on the situation in the Middle East, Xinhua added, as Beijing seeks to mediate in Tehran's war with the United States.

The conflict, which broke out with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February, has cast a long shadow as China seeks to avoid US sanctions against countries dealing with Tehran, despite reports that Beijing supported it with intelligence for a strike on American troops.

A trade war is of even greater concern and the world's two largest economies are still seeking to mitigate the fallout from Trump's global tariffs. **(AFP)**

North Korea says US-led arms buildup justifies expanding nuclear force

By Kyu-seok Shim
Reuters

North Korea's vice-defence minister said yesterday that a growing US-led military buildup and what he called an expanding nuclear alliance among Washington, Seoul and Tokyo justified Pyongyang's efforts to strengthen and expand its nuclear forces.

Speaking at the Beijing Xiangshan Forum, China's flagship international security conference, Vice-Defence Minister Kim Kang Il said North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons state was irreversible and pledged to continue expanding its nuclear arsenal.

"The ceaseless nuclear arms buildup of the enemy states fully justifies the building of a solid nuclear shield of the DPRK," Kim said, using the acronym for North Korea's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"As the enemy states' nuclear threat reaches the extreme level... the DPRK will firmly defend the peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and the region by ceaselessly expanding and strengthening its self-defensive nuclear deterrent."

Kim blamed tensions on the Korean Peninsula on what he called Washington's "invariable" hostile policy toward North Korea and accused the US of turning trilateral co-operation with Korea and Japan into a nuclear alliance.

He said North Korea's constitutional status as a nuclear weapons state was "the line of no retreat" and urged other countries to abandon what he called the "daydream" of denuclearisation.

Kim's appearance at the Xiangshan Forum marked a rare high-profile showing by North Korea at an international security gathering in recent years and came as Pyongyang seeks closer ties with Beijing amid tensions with Washington and its allies.

Asked about the possibility of a meeting between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, Kim said he was not in a position to discuss whether such a summit could take place.

Former US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun said at the Korea Risk Group's West Coast Exchange conference on Thursday that North Korea's muted response to Trump's repeated claims of communication with Kim Jong-un suggested Pyongyang was "not closing the door" on potential future talks with Washington.



North Korea's Vice-Defence Minister Kim Kang Il looks on before a plenary session at the Beijing Xiangshan Forum in Beijing, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

Biegun said it "would not be a surprise at all" if Trump were to propose a meeting with the North Korean leader following the Apec summit in China in November and that such a meeting could even take place in Pyongyang.

The North Korean official's remarks followed a statement yesterday morning from Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of Kim Jong-un, rejecting renewed international calls for North Korea's denuclearisation following discussions at the annual meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

In a statement carried by state media KCNA, she said North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons state was "absolute" and could not be reversed, dismissing repeated denuclearisation demands as annual "noise" and insisting Pyongyang's nuclear position had been permanently established "physically and legally".

Her comments echoed a separate statement on Wednesday by a North Korean defence ministry spokesman, who accused the US and Republic of Korea of escalating military confrontation through joint weapons-of-mass-destruction response planning and exercises.

The spokesman said recent US-Korean WMD response discussions amounted to an "open declaration of confrontation" and warned such actions could require Pyongyang to invoke provisions of its nuclear force policy law.

The statements appeared to form part of a broader messaging campaign by Pyongyang on its nuclear policy, according to Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies in Seoul.

The comments were aimed at cementing North Korea's claim that its nuclear status had reached an "irreversible stage", while creating justification for future military and nuclear activities in response to what it portrays as growing US and Korean pressure, Lim said.

Japan's Takaichi keeps key ministers in cabinet reshuffle

AFP
Tokyo

Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi retained her key ministers in a cabinet reshuffle yesterday aimed at solidifying the ruling coalition and advancing a food tax cut despite concerns over how it will be financed.

Prime ministers in Japan routinely shuffle their cabinets to refresh the government's public image and to distribute ministerial posts to loyal supporters and experienced lawmakers from their party.

But Takaichi – who has unusually high approval ratings nearly a year into office – kept core members of her team, according to a cabinet list announced by her right-hand man and top government spokesman, Minoru Kihara.

They include Kihara, finance minister Satsuki Katayama, foreign minister Toshimitsu Motegi, and defence minister Shinjiro Koizumi.

"Without economic growth, we can't maintain sustainable finance", Takaichi told reporters, pledging to keep pursuing her "responsible, proactive fiscal policy".

Through inducing domestic investment, thereby increasing



Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi (entre, front) and members of her reshuffled cabinet arrive to pose for a group photo at the prime minister's office in Tokyo yesterday. **(AFP)**

employment and household income, "we aim to realise a virtuous cycle" of economic growth that allows Japan to increase tax revenue, she said.

The prime minister also retained key economic ministers, including trade and industry minister Ryosei Akazawa, who has led Japan's tariff negotiations with the US, and economic growth strategy minister Minoru Kiuchi, who favours active fiscal spending.

Under finance minister Katayama, Japan has repeatedly intervened in the foreign exchange market to prop up the falling yen,

including a rare joint intervention with the US.

The small-scale reshuffle comes as Takaichi navigates rising inflation and a weak yen while pursuing a consumption tax cut on food starting next year.

While Takaichi's tax cut pledge is popular among voters, economists have criticised the plan, warning that she has failed to identify around 5tn yen (\$32bn) needed annually to fund it.

Takaichi's policy of expansive government spending – as well as the Bank of Japan's relatively low-key interest rate – has also rattled the markets, pushing Ja-

Indonesia ends search for journalists missing on volcano mission

AFP
Indonesia

Indonesian rescuers formally called off a search yesterday for eight people, including five journalists sent to cover a volcanic eruption, nearly two weeks after their speedboat went missing in waters between Java and Sumatra islands, an official said.

"The national search and rescue said that as this search and rescue operation has been deemed ineffective, with a heavy heart the joint operation... is hereby declared terminated," Banten province governor Andra Soni told reporters.

"From the first day of the joint search and rescue operation to the tenth day, including the

three-day extension, it has been reported that no signs have been found of the vessel, its passengers or the crew on board."

The five Indonesian journalists on board were sent to capture photos and video of the eruption of Mount Anak Krakatau, which blanketed cities in volcanic ash and prompted multiple airports to close.

They were working for local and international media, including state news agency Antara, Turkish state-run news agency Anadolu, and local website iNews.

The group, which also included two crew members and a guide, set out by speedboat from an area west of the capital Jakarta on the afternoon of September 7, but lost contact somewhere in the Sunda Strait soon after.



Wives of the missing journalists react upon hearing that the search was officially called off at the Search and Rescue command post in Marina Carita, Pandeglang, Banten, yesterday. **(AFP)**

The journalists were Muhammad Bagus Khoirunas (28), Firdaus Wajidi (42), Donal Husni (50), Arie Basuki (52) and Yudistiro Pranoto, accompanied

by skipper Warta (55) and crew Surakman (60), as well as guide Heriyanto (49).

Firdaus worked mainly for Anadolu and freelanced at AFP.

Indonesia plans to right capsized ship as weather hampers search

Indonesian rescuers plan to try to right a passenger ship that capsized in the Java Sea last weekend as persistent strong currents and big waves prevent them from making an underwater search of the overturned vessel for the 129 people still missing.

The national rescue agency and Indonesian Navy were to make an assessment yesterday on the plan to turn the capsized ship back over,

including what equipment was needed, the agency's chief Mohammad Syafii told a press conference.

"We plan to salvage the vessel by turning it upright and then conduct the search and evacuation. Once we are certain the operation is complete, the ship will be towed away for the investigation," Syafii said, adding local and foreign experts had been consulted.

Turning the ship upright would normally take about 24 hours, but it could take longer if "there are complications," he said.

On Wednesday, two Navy teams started an underwater search but were forced to withdraw because the current was moving at nearly 7 knots, Syafii said, adding that diving is recommended only when the current is below 1.5 knots. **(Reuters)**

US, Vietnam firms to sign agreements as To Lam travels to New York

Reuters
Hanoi

A string of agreements is expected to be announced next week by US and Vietnamese corporations involving energy, tech, aviation and financial firms as Vietnam's leader To Lam travels to New York, according to officials and two documents reviewed by Reuters.

Commercial agreements, many of which are expected to be non-binding, have been for months part of Vietnam's strategy to mollify Washington as the Trump administration is threatening new tariffs on the export-reliant southeast Asian nation.

One internal planning note lists 29 agreements that could be announced on September 23 in New York at a business conference to be attended by To Lam.

US energy firms Murphy Oil and Chevron are expected to announce agreements with state-owned Petrovietnam, while ExxonMobil is slated to announce an accord with Vietnam Refinery and Petrochemical Corp, the country's second-largest refinery.

In February the refinery signed a non-binding oil supply agreement with Chevron, but no subsequent purchase was announced. Murphy Oil is active in oil and gas explorations in Vietnam, while ExxonMobil operates the country's largest

gas field which remains however untapped.

The agreements are to be announced on To Lam's last day in New York before he travels to Canada for a state visit.

He is expected to speak at the UN General Assembly on September 22 and hold meetings with several US corporations, three officials said. His schedule has not yet been officially announced.

His trip is also aimed at making progress on trade talks with the US, and possibly to agree on a trade deal which has been negotiated for more than a year, two of the officials said. However, a meeting with US President Donald Trump is not certain, the sources said.



Vietnam's President To Lam. **(Reuters/File photo)**

Vietnam's foreign ministry nor any of the companies cited in this article immediately responded to requests for comment, some out of their business hours.

The document, which may be subject to changes and does not indicate the content of the planned agreements, also lists several deals involving Vietnam's largest private airline, Vietjet, including with aviation partners and SpaceX.

The company is expected to announce the leasing of as many as 22 planes from four aviation leasing companies, including 17 Boeing 737 jets and five Airbus A321neo, according to a separate document from Vietjet.

The planned contract with SpaceX is for the provision of satellite internet services from Starlink to 120 Vietjet aircraft, according to the Vietjet document.

The airline also plans to sign

memoranda of understanding with US jet engine maintenance firms, according to the documents.

The provisional list also includes an unspecified agreement between Meta and Vietnam's ministry of culture, and a separate agreement between US chip giant Qualcomm with Vietnamese telecom firm VNPT. Qualcomm is already active in the rollout of Vietnam's 5G network, while Meta's Facebook is the most popular social media in the Communist-ruled nation.

Visa, Mastercard and Citibank are also expected to announce agreements with financial and hospitality partners in Vietnam, according to the document.

King Charles warns AI leaders of ‘existential dangers’ at meeting

Reuters
Cumnock

Britain’s King Charles warned AI leaders yesterday of the “existential dangers” posed by the technology falling into the wrong hands, with potentially catastrophic consequences, saying safeguards were needed before it becomes “too late”.

Charles was hosting the co-founders of Nvidia and Google DeepMind, along with leaders from OpenAI and Anthropic, in Scotland as concern grows that AI safety efforts are lagging behind the development of increasingly powerful systems.

In recent weeks, the debate has centred on whether the industry can and should regulate itself, drawing interventions from global figures including Pope Leo XIV, Charles and US President Donald Trump.

Charles said artificial intelligence had the potential to improve and save lives, particularly in life sciences and medicine.

But its creators were increasingly warning that it could develop darker capacities, “perhaps even to take life”, he said.

“There seems urgency in adequately considering the existential dangers of such technologies falling into the wrong hands, and be-



Britain’s King Charles poses with attendees during a meeting for leaders from the artificial intelligence (AI) sector, Government, and thought leaders to discuss how AI can be developed and deployed in ways that benefit society, at Dumfries House in Cumnock, yesterday. (Reuters)

ing used in potentially catastrophic ways,” he told leaders gathered at his Dumfries House estate.

“Surely, we need sufficient means of control before it is all too late?”

Attendees included Nvidia founder and chief executive Jensen Huang, Google DeepMind founder and chairman Demis Hassabis, OpenAI Chief Financial Officer Sarah Friar and Britain’s Minister for Artificial Intelligence Kanishka Narayan.

Paolo Benanti, an adviser to the Pope who has called for governments to slow AI development, was also expected to attend.

The debate over AI has been thrust back into the spotlight after

two Anthropic researchers warned that the rapidly advancing technology could lead to human extinction in the not-too-distant future.

Anthropic Chief Executive Dario Amodei has also called for companies to slow the pace of AI development.

However, that has sparked an international debate over whether some executives have ulterior motives, such as setting rules that preserve the lead of particular companies, acting now to avoid a broader government backlash, or simply slowing spending in the race to develop AI.

While the meeting in Scotland is not expected to produce any binding agreements, and Charles

is not known for his technological expertise, it highlights how he, first as Prince of Wales and now as king, has used his position to convene discussions on a range of global issues.

In references to the risks around AI, Charles has also warned about the potential impact on the environment, reflecting his decades of campaigning on the natural world.

Buckingham Palace said the discussions would consider whether a shared set of principles could guide the future application of AI, “not merely as a driver of capability and efficiency, but as a tool that upholds human dignity and contributes to the flourishing of both people and the planet”.

India warns new US tariffs over Russian oil could hit ties

Reuters
New Delhi

India has warned Washington that new measures to levy tariffs over the purchase of Russian oil could impact bilateral ties, the South Asian nation’s foreign ministry said yesterday, hours after the US made a new move to punish such buyers.

Earlier in the day, the US House of Representatives passed a sweeping sanctions and tariff bill intended to increase economic pressure on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

The bill, now sent to President Donald Trump to sign into law, authorises him to impose stiff tariffs of up to 100% on China, India and other countries to reduce their dependence on Russian energy.

The Indian foreign ministry said that it had noted the passage of the bill, adding that New Delhi had raised the issue with various US interlocutors in recent months, and had “very clearly articulated” the potential implications for the bilateral relationship and the international energy market.

New Delhi remains “firmly committed” to ensuring energy security for its people and will continue to source supplies from diverse sellers based on market dynamics, the ministry said in a statement.

“The Indian side has also made clear its determination to take all necessary measures to protect its trade and economic interests,” said the ministry, adding that the government would work closely with trade and industry bodies to deal with the implications of the legislation.

India, the world’s third-biggest oil importer, is among the biggest buyers of Russian oil, which is seen as helping Moscow replenish its budget since it launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and was hit with sweeping Western sanctions.

New Delhi has repeatedly sought to resist pressure to scale back its oil trade with Russia, saying its large population and economy need secure, affordable and reliable energy supplies.

Indian refiners have arranged oil for September and October which includes Russian oil, according to sources aware of the matter.

Two refining sources said they want the government to take up the issue with US authorities as oil prices will rise sharply if Trump decides to impose new tariffs.

Oil supplies have reduced substantially due to the war in the Middle East and cutting Russian supplies will have a big impact on the profits of refiners as they are already selling fuels at below-market costs, the sources said.

India court sentences 10 rebels to death

A special Indian court has sentenced 10 Maoist rebels to death over their role in a 2013 ambush on a convoy that killed 27 people, including members of the Congress party.

The Maoists were convicted for multiple offences including conspiracy and waging war against the state before being handed the death penalty, India’s National Investigation Agency (NIA) said Wednesday. The nearly six-decade long Maoist rebellion, which began in the 1960s and killed more than 12,000 people, was once described by a former prime minister as the biggest internal security threat India faced.

But the insurgency has been effectively defeated after a sustained military offensive across the “Red Corridor”, areas where the guerrillas shut out the government and established their own parallel administration. The land-mine and gun attack in May 2013 took place in a remote forested area of the central state of Chhattisgarh, effectively wiping out the top state leadership of the Congress party.

The attackers detonated an explosive device, opened “indiscriminate firing” and threw grenades at the convoy, the NIA said in a statement. The agency said its investigation had established that the 10 Maoist cadres were involved in a “criminal conspiracy to attack and kill senior Congress leaders and security personnel”. India imposes the death penalty by hanging, although it is rarely carried out in practice. (AFP)

Australia to cut migration to fix housing crisis: minister

AFP
Sydney

Australia will reduce migration by curbing “visa hopping”, tightening rules on students and working holiday makers as well as cracking down on overstayers, its interior minister said yesterday, as the far-right surges in the polls.

Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke told the National Press Club in Canberra that immigration was “fundamentally a strength” for Australia, but accepted that housing pressures required changes.

He denied his ruling Labor party was tightening visa rules in response to the rise of One Nation, which has become one of the country’s most popular parties this year with pledges to drastically slash migration. Business groups warned such cuts would cause economic damage.

“We need immigration to soften enough that housing has a chance to catch up,” he said, while stressing the housing shortage was not caused by migrants.

Net overseas migration — the net gain or loss to the population through movement to and from Australia — reached a peak of 538,000 in 2022 after a surge in arrivals when borders re-opened after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Numbers fell to 292,100 in the year to March, data yesterday showed.

Burke said this was 47% below the post-Covid peak — and that policy changes would help to reach a target of 225,000 for next year.

Australians want to know the government was “taking control” of migration but also “being de-

cent about it”, he said.

Students are the largest group of arrivals, with 753,000 international students in Australia, most from China and India, data shows.

Under the new rules, family members seeking to join students in Australia will face new curbs and it will become harder for students to move between courses to extend their stay, Burke said.

A backlog of applications from the UK for working holiday visas would continue to be processed slowly after a record 80,000 applications — a matter that is under discussion with the UK government, he said.

Working holiday makers in rural areas will enter a ballot to stay for a second or third year, with just 5,000 visas available for the latter.

Family members seeking to visit Australians will have “no further stay” conditions attached to their temporary visas.

Migrants with construction and housing skills will be prioritised for visas, he said.

Australia would return to a policy of a decade earlier in which visa overstayers were given two weeks to leave the country or face detention and deportation, he said.

An additional 100 compliance officers and 250 more beds in immigration detention centres would show there are consequences to overstaying a visa, he said.

But he stressed “this is not the sort of operation that some people have seen on TV happening in other countries” — a nod to hard-line immigration policies in the US.

A third of Australia’s resident population of 27.6mn was born overseas, the latest census data shows.

Nepal floods among ‘most challenging’ disasters: WFP

AFP
Kathmandu

Aid operations after Nepal’s devastating floods rank among the World Food Programme’s most challenging, its country chief said yesterday, as cargo drones and helicopters delivered food to isolated communities.

The catastrophic August 26 flood was triggered by a Himalayan glacial mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border, that scientists have linked to climate change.

The tsunmai-like floodwaters tore through mountain districts, destroying roads, bridges and hydropower dams, and killed at least 1,446 people. More than 6,500 remain missing across both countries.

Riaz Lodhi, head of the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) in Nepal, told AFP that it was among the “top three most challenging disasters” the agency had faced.

“We have seen disasters, we have seen earthquakes, we have seen disasters caused by floods, we have seen war situations, conflicts,” Lodhi said, speaking at the aid hub in the capital Kathmandu.

“We have had access challenges in many of these situations”, he added, but said the challenges in Nepal were extreme.

“This is a very unique access challenge where, in some places, the only way to reach people is by helicopters,” he said.

“It’s a very, very expensive operation.”

The destruction meant journeys that once took two hours can now have become day-long ordeals.

Many communities near the epicentre of the disaster remain



Workers unload emergency relief supplies from the United Nations World Food Programme for flash flood victims at Tribhuvan International Airport’s cargo area in Kathmandu yesterday. (AFP)

cut off, with the UN working alongside Nepal’s government to get emergency supplies into devastated areas.

For the first time in Nepal, WFP deployed cargo drones to deliver food to isolated communities.

“When the first drone went up in the air with the food attached to it, I knew that it was a game-changer... It’s an innovation in delivering food assistance,” Lodhi said.

During a deadly 2015 earthquake in Nepal, WFP relied on mules, yaks and porters carrying food on their back, sometimes taking two to three days to reach those in need.

“Now, the same food, by deploying these cargo drones, we were able to deliver within five to 10 minutes,” Lodhi said.

The drones can carry between 30 and 100 kilograms (66-220 pounds), depending on operating conditions.

“People in need, they didn’t have to wait for days,” he added. “The food was reaching

there immediately.”

Lodhi said WFP has used drones before, but not at this scale.

“What we are learning in Nepal with the use of these cargo drones will change the way WFP reaches people in need,” he said.

WFP expects to provide food assistance for four to six months, but Lodhi said that would not mean the end of humanitarian needs.

“They have lost their food stocks, they have lost their homes, they have lost their crops. So the needs are huge,” he said.

The sheer scale of the flood was unlike anything witnesses had seen before, with the Nepali government pointing the finger at the dire impact of rising global temperatures on the Himalayan mountains.

Prime Minister Balendra Shah will take his first foreign trip as Nepal’s leader to address the UN General Assembly on the urgent issue next week.

Nepal estimates the reconstruction bill will amount to \$4.78bn.

In hydropowered Bhutan, solar starts to rise

AFP
Thimphu

Engineer Rinzin Galley stands on a platform overlooking a former military shooting range on the edge of Bhutan’s capital Thimphu, now home to a gleaming field of solar panels.

With abundant waterways, Bhutan has long relied on hydroelectric power to meet its electricity needs and stay carbon negative — absorbing more planet-warming gases than it emits.

But demand is growing, and in winter, when rivers run low before the mountain melt arrives, Bhutan already relies on imported Indian electricity.

Climate change is also threatening the future of the glaciers that feed those rivers, adding impetus to a push for energy diversification.

“Solar projects are booming,” said Rinzin, senior engineer at Norion Renewable Energy.



This photograph shows solar panels on rooftops of buildings at Paro International Airport in Paro city. (AFP)

The company’s biggest project to date is the Dechencholing solar farm on former military land, with an installed capacity of 4.45 megawatts (MW).

Dechencholing is one of several solar fields developed in recent years, including the country’s first mega project — Sephu, with over 22MW capacity.

That is relatively modest, espe-

cially compared to the vast solar fields installed in neighbouring China.

But it represents a new direction for Bhutan, where hydropower exports account for up to 15% of GDP, according to the World Bank.

“Our plans are to develop about 5,000 megawatts,” said Chhewang Rinzin, managing director of Druk Green Power Corp, the country’s

generation utility.

Bhutan can currently produce around 3,700MW from hydro, but that capacity falls around 80% during the winter, he said.

Winter demand has increased to 1,500MW from 400MW, creating a significant shortfall currently being met by electricity imports from India.

Rising demand has created a



This photograph shows solar panels on rooftops of buildings in Bhutan’s capital city of Thimphu. (AFP)

significant shortfall in winter that is currently met by electricity imports from India.

Officials attribute part of the growing demand to a construction boom, but Bhutan has also bet on bitcoin mining to boost revenue. A planned special economic zone known as the Gelephu Mindfulness City is expected to host energy-hungry data centres.

The problem was already clear back in 2008, when a goal of generating 10,000MW from hydro-

power by 2020 was agreed. But the plan ran into a series of obstacles, including financing.

“When you’re looking at constructing 10,000 megawatts in hydropower capacity and each megawatt probably costs you about \$1.5mn... for a small economy like ourselves, that’s quite difficult,” said Chhewang.

Solutions have included liberalising foreign investment rules and increasing solar targets in the energy mix.

A great capacity for self-delusions

By Imam Ibn ul-Qayyim al Jawziyyah

There are two things one should be take heed of if one wishes to attain success and felicity:

1) To know the details of the means of attaining good and evil, and to be clear about these through witnessing them in the world around, through one's own experience and that of others, as well as through reports one has heard about earlier and latter nations. One of the most effective means for attaining this is pondering over the Qur'an, for along with the Sunnah, it clearly explains the paths to good and evil. If you turn your attention to them, they will suffice you. They will inform you of Allah's treatment of the obedient, and of the sinners. Moreover, apply what you read to practical experience, and you will see the illustration of this – that Allah is true, the Messenger is true, the Qur'an is true, and that Allah fulfils His promise. History contains details of the paths to good and evil mentioned in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

2) Beware of deceiving oneself with regard to these paths. This is very important, for the servant knows that sin and heedlessness are harmful to him in his world and the Hereafter, and yet he may deceive himself:

Through relying on Allah's pardon and forgiveness, by procrastination of repentance, by performing istighfar only verbally, by doing good deeds [after impetuously sinning], by knowledge, by justifying his sins by the argument of destiny, by citing examples of people committing similar sins, or by following in the footsteps of ancestors and elders.

Many people think that they can perform some sin, and then if they say "Astaghfirullah" the sin will disappear. Or, they may deceive themselves with ahadith such as: "Whoever says 'Subhaanallaahi wa-bihamdih' one hundred times in a day, his sins are taken off from him, even if they be like the foam of the ocean." Or "A servant committed a sin and then said, 'O Lord! I have committed a sin, so forgive me,' and so he was forgiven . . . then Allah says, 'My servant knows that he has a Lord Who forgives sins, and takes [to task] for them. I have forgiven My servant, so let him do as he wishes!'"

Such people cling to the texts of hope, and hold fast to them with both hands, and put [all] their reliance in them, such that if they are reprimanded for committing some sin, they will recite all that they know about Allah's mercy and forgiveness. Some went to excessive limits in this, such that they claimed that to remain free of sins is being ignorant or underestimating Allah's mercy and pardon.

Some deceived people cling to the notion of fatalism; that the servant has no free-will and that he is compelled to commit sins. Other cling to the notion of irja' (false hope), claiming that faith is merely affirmation, and that deeds are neither a part of faith nor have any effect upon it. According to their claim, the eeman of the most sinful of believers is just like the eeman of the angels Gabriel and Michael.



Some are deceived by their fathers and elders, thinking that they have a rank before Allah, such that they would not leave them to perish. They take this by analogy from the behaviour of worldly kings, who might grant a favour or pardon to someone based on the merits of his father or relatives. Such people are used to being taken out of difficult situations by their fathers, and are under the impression that this may happen in the Hereafter too.

Others deceive themselves by reasoning that Allah has no need of punishing them since He gains nothing from it, and He does not lose anything by showing them mercy. Such a person may say, 'I am in dire need of His mercy, and He is not at all needy of [anything]. If a poor, thirsty person were in dire need of a drink of water from someone in whose premises there flows a river, he would not be denied it, and Allah is more generous, and more expansive in mercy!'

Others are deceived by ridiculous misinterpretations/ misunderstandings, e.g.: "Your Lord will give you, so that you become pleased." [Surah Duha: 5] he says: I am not pleased to enter the Fire. This is despicable ignorance, and clear lies, for he should be pleased by what Allah is pleased by, and it is not against Allah's pleasure to punish the oppressors, wrong-doers, evil-doers, traitors and those persistent on major sins. "Allah forgives all sins." [Surah Zumar: 93]

This is also despicable ignorance, for this verse refers to those who repent; otherwise it would imply invalidation of the verses threatening punishment for the sinners. This is specified by another verse,

"Allah does not forgive that partners be associated with Him, and He forgives anything beneath that to whomever He wills." [Surah Nisa: 48] Also, "None will burn in it except the most miserable one who rejected and turned away [from

the truth]."

[Surah Layl: 15-16]. This is a specific fire from among the various levels of Jahannam, and moreover the fact that only the rejecters will burn in it does not rule out that others may enter it. "[Hell] has been prepared for the unbelievers." [Surah Baqarah: 24]. The fact that it has been prepared for the unbelievers does not rule out that sinful Muslims may also be punished in it, just as the fact that Heaven "has been prepared for the pious" [Surah Aali-'Imran: 133] does not rule out that people with the smallest grain of faith may enter it even if they were not pious.

Some are deceived by fasting the days of 'Ashura and 'Arafah, such that some may even say that the fast of 'Ashura' expiates the whole year, and the fast of 'Arafah remains as a surplus of reward. Such people have failed to realise that the fast of Ramadan and the five daily prayers are greater and more noble than the fasts of 'Arafah and 'Ashura, and that [it is understood that] sins are [only] forgiven as long as major sins are avoided. So, [fasting] from one Ramadan to another, [praying] from one Jumu'ah to the next, act in a mutually strengthening manner to achieve forgiveness of minor sins, provided major sins are avoided. So, how then can an optional fast expiate every major sin of a person while he still persists upon the sins, and has not repented from them? Also, it is possible that these two optional fasts expiate all sins in totality, but that this has certain prerequisites and conditions, such as avoidance of major sins, or that the expiation is achieved in conjunction with other good deeds, much the same as the five daily prayers and the fasting of Ramadan expiate minor sins in conjunction with the avoidance of major sins. "If you abjure the major things which you are prohibited from, We shall expiate you your evil deeds. [Surah Nisa: 31]

Some are deceived by the hadith Qudsi, "I am according to the good expectation/ thought of My servant ., so let him think of Me as he wishes." i.e. that whatever he thinks I will do to him, I will. But, good expectations can only be with good conduct, for one who does good expects that his Lord will deal with him well, will not break His promise, and will accept his repentance. As for the one of evil conduct, who persists upon major sins, oppression and other evils, the desolation of sin, wrongdoing and [other] prohibited things prevent him from having good expectations of his Lord. This is something we witness in everyday life. A disobedient employee who has run away with company property will not have a good expectation of his boss. The evil of wrong deeds cannot coexist with good expectation. The best in expectation of his Lord['s mercy] is the most obedient to Him. Hasan Basri said: "The believer has good expectation of his Lord, so he make his deeds good. But, the evil person has bad expectation of his Lord, so he does evil."

How can someone claim to have good expectation of his Lord when he is like a runaway, and is doing things which displease and anger his Lord, and has abandoned His orders, and is at war with Him. How can one have good expectation of his Lord if he thinks that He does not see him? "And, you used not to conceal yourself, lest your hearing, sight and skin testify against you, but you thought that Allah does not know much of what you used to do. And that, your expectation which you entertained about your Lord, has destroyed you, so you have become among those lost/ruined." [Surah Fussilat: 23] So, these people, who thought that Allah did not know much of what they did, actually had ill-expectation of their Lord, and that destroyed them. Such people are deceived if they think they will directly enter Heaven; they are fooling themselves; Satan is leading them astray and beguiling them.

Ponder over this.

Consider: how is it possible for one's heart to be certain that one is going to meet Allah, that Allah sees and hears all that he does, and knows his secret open affairs, and that he will be made to stand before Allah, answerable for all his deeds – how can one be certain and aware of all of this, and yet persist upon things which displease Allah; persist upon abandoning Allah's orders, neglecting His rights, and yet claim that he has good expectation of Allah?!!

Abu Umamah Sahl ibn Hanif reports: 'Urwah ibn al-Zubayr and I entered upon 'A'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, and she said: If all you had seen the Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, in one of his illnesses; [when] he had 6 or 7 dinars. The Messenger of Allah ordered me to distribute them [in charity?], but the pain of the Messenger of Allah kept me from doing that, until Allah cured him. Then, he asked me about them: "What have you done? Have you distributed the 6 dinars?" I said, "No, by Allah. Your pain had kept me from

doing so." He asked for them to be brought [to him], and put them in his hand then said, "What would be the expectation of Allah's prophet if he met Allah with these in his possession?"

What, then would be the expectation of the people of major sins, and the oppressors, if they were to meet Allah with these sins and forfeited rights of people on their backs? If their claim that they entertained good expectations that Allah would not punish evil and wrongdoing people, were to benefit them, then everyone could do as he wished, doing everything that Allah has forbidden, provided he kept good expectation of Allah, thinking that the fire will not touch him. Subhanallah! How deceived can one be? Prophet Ibrahim, 'alaihis-salaam, said to his people, "Is it a lie, gods besides Allah, that you desire? What then is your expectation of the Lord of the Worlds?" [Surah Saffat: 86] i.e. what is your expectation of Allah, what do you expect He will do to you if you meet Him having worshipped other than Him?

So, if we reflect over this, we will realise that good expectation of Allah is equivalent to good deeds, for one is moved to good deeds by good hope of Allah, that He will reward him for his efforts and accept them. Otherwise, good expectation along with pursuit of whims and desires and lusts is incapacity.

In short, good expectation can only occur if the means for salvation are pursued. Pursuit of the means to destruction cannot accompany good expectations.

Someone might claim: It might, based on the expansiveness of Allah's mercy and forgiveness and generosity, and that His mercy exceeds His wrath, and that punishing does not benefit Him, nor does forgiveness harm Him. The reply is: Allah is indeed most generous and merciful, but this is in the appropriate place. Allah is also described as possessing wisdom and might and inflicting retribution, seizing with might, and punishing those deserving punishment. So, if the good expectation is based merely on some of Allah's attributes, then the righteous and the evil, the believer and the unbeliever, would equally be candidates for it. But, the names and attributes of mercy do not benefit the unbeliever or similarly one who has neglected his duty and exposed himself to Allah's curse. Rather, good expectation of Allah is for one who repents, regrets his sins and desists from the. This is good expectation, whereas the first is deception.

"Those who believe, and those who perform hijrah and jihad in the path of Allah -- they are hopeful of Allah's mercy." [Surah Baqarah: 218] So, these people are the ones who can be truly hopeful of Allah's mercy; not the evil and sinful people. "Then, your Lord is, to those who make hijrah after they have been persecuted, and then perform jihad and are patient/ steadfast -- indeed, your Lord is, after that, Most Forgiving, Most Merciful." [Surah Nahl: 119] So, the knowledgeable one is he who puts hope in its correct place, whereas the deceived one is he who puts it elsewhere.

Advise with sincerity and kindness

The one who invites others to Allah is from the closest people to Allah our Lord. In addition, Muslims collectively agree on the importance of propagating Islam and inviting people to Allah, and many talk about it being mandatory upon Muslims, and we agree with them, that it is an obligation, to enjoy that which is good and forbid that which is evil and to spread chastity and fight immorality and educate people and remind them and advise them.

Therefore, there is no doubt that one who invites to Allah is a chosen one, and form the best of his creatures. He loved Allah, responded to Him and invited to Him so in return Allah loved him. That is why Allah Says in a short statement and made it very clear (what means): "And who is better in speech than he who invites to Allah, meaning, Islamic monotheism and does righteous deeds and says; 'I am one of the Muslims'" [Qur'an 41:33].

Al-Hasan al-Basari, may Allah have mercy upon him, said after he has recited the above-mentioned verse: "This is the beloved one to Allah, this is the Wali of Allah, meaning supported and loved by Allah. This is the chosen one by Allah, this is the best of preachers to Allah this is the most dear from the dwellers of earth to Allah. He responded to Allah and called people to Allah and acted righteously while responding and calling and said 'I am from the Muslims'"

To attain the level of this rank, it is necessary for the Muslim missionary or propagator who is seeking the reward from Allah to be mindful of the following issues in order for the mission to be fruitful:

1) Being sincere in the objective and intention: Sincerity is the foremost of all deeds and certainly the most important of them all; it is the foundation for all other deeds; it is the essence of Islam and the one of the principal matters that the prophets called their people to. Allah Says (what means): "And they [i.e. the People of the Scripture] were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give Zakah. And that is the correct religion." [Qur'an 98:5]

Sincerity is the essence of worship; Imam Ibn Hazm, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "The relationship between sincerity and deeds is like that between the soul and the body."



Sincerity is the basis upon which deeds are either accepted or rejected, and thus it is the cause of one's ultimate success or failure. Sincerity is the way leading to Hell for those who do not fulfil it and the path to Paradise for those who can attain it.

Those who fulfil Islamic monotheism are also referred to as the sincere, and its Islamic definition is as Imam Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "...To have only (the pleasure of) Allah in one's intention whilst performing acts of obedience."

The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), said: "Deeds are but with intentions." This is one of the most important prophetic narrations from amongst all that the Prophet taught us.

On the other hand, those who perform deeds in order to be seen by others are dispraised by Allah and are promised punishment, as Allah Says (what means): "Whoever desires the life of this world and its adornments – We fully repay them for their deeds therein, and they therein will not be deprived. Those are the ones for whom there is not in the Hereafter but the Fire." [Qur'an 11:15-16]

Therefore, the Muslim propagator or missionary does not call to gain a personal benefit for himself, his people, his tribe or group. Otherwise he will have no reward.

2) Being kind whilst calling people: Using the proper means leading to the achievement of the objective is achieved by one following the way of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam. Allah addresses the Prophet Saying (what means): "Invite to

the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair preaching and argue with them in a way that is better?" [Qur'an 16:125]. Some of the people who are invited to the way of Allah are good in nature, if they recognise the truth they stick to it. They are thirsty and eager, and as soon as one shows them the truth, they hasten to it. Such a person is to be invited with wisdom.

Regarding the method of calling people, Allah Says in the above verse (which means): "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best..." [Qur'an 16:125] Thus, one should not be aggressive and harsh in the way he calls people to Islam; rather he should use words that would soften their hearts, so that they would yield to his instructions and pay heed to his words. Allah commands us to be this way, even with the disbelievers, when He says (what means): "And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them..." [Qur'an 29: 46]

In our era, such wisdom, soft words and kindness when calling to the path of Allah are especially important. This is of course required in all situations, but in a period in which ignorance and submitting to desires has overwhelmed the masses, it becomes all the more essential. Once, a scholar entered into the presence of an 'Abbaasi caliph and said: "I am going to admonish you in a harsh manner, so listen." Upon hearing this, the caliph said: "O brother! Be gentle, for I am not worse than Pharaoh, and you are not better than Moosaa whom Allah addressed along with his brother, Haaroona, Saying (what means): "And speak to him [i.e., Pharaoh] with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]."

[Qur'an 20: 44] Furthermore, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "He who is deprived of gentleness and forbearance is deprived from a great deal of goodness." 'Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, reported that the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "Whenever forbearance is added to something, it adorns it; and whenever it is withdrawn from something, it leaves it defective." [Muslim].

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

The most hope-inspiring verses in the Qur'an

Scholars, may Allah have mercy upon them, have spoken a lot about the most hope-inspiring verses in the Qur'an which opens the door of hope wide before sinners like us, and their hearts will soften with the remembrance of Allah The Almighty.

First verse

"Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "The most hope-inspiring verse in the Qur'an is the verse in which Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {And whatever strikes you of disaster -- it is for what your hands have earned; but He pardons much.} [Qur'an 42:30] Then, he commented, 'If He expiates my sins by afflictions and pardons much, so what should remain after His expiation and pardon?'"

Second verse

Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {And let not those among you who are blessed with graces and wealth swear not to give [aid] to their relatives and the needy and those who left their homes for Allah's Cause. Let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like (it) that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.} [Qur'an 24:22]

This verse calls for the utmost kindness and benevolence to kindred. It commands Muslims to forgive the faults of their brothers. This is an aspect of the forbearance, generosity and kindness of Allah The Almighty to His slaves, despite their wronging themselves.

This verse was revealed in relation to Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq, may Allah be pleased with him, when he took oath not to financially support Mistah ibn Uthaathah, may Allah be pleased with him, a relative of Abu Bakr, after Mistah had been involved in the incident of slandering 'Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, the daughter of Abu Bakr.

When Allah The Almighty revealed the innocence of 'Aa'ishah, the Mother of the Believers -- may Allah be pleased with her, and the situation became stable and those who were involved in the slander had received the due corporal punishment, Allah The Almighty started softening the heart of Abu Bakr, may Allah

be pleased with him, towards his relative Mistah ibn Uthaathah who was his maternal cousin.

Mistah, may Allah be pleased with him, was poor and had no means of livelihood except the financial support of Abu Bakr. He was one of the Muhaajiroon (emigrants). He made a mistake and received the due punishment for it. Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, was known for his charitable deeds and generosity towards relatives and non-relatives. So, when this verse was revealed until the part of {Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.} which indicates that the reward will match the deed -- in other words, as you forgive people who wrong you, Allah will forgive you -- Abu Bakr said, "Yes! By Allah, we like You (O Allah) to forgive us." Then, he resumed his support to Mistah and said, "By Allah, I will never stop this support." the opposite of his previous statement in which he declared that he would never help Mistah again.

This is why Abu Bakr As-Siddeeq, may Allah be pleased with him, was (known as) the most truthful. 'Abdullah ibn al-Mu'baarak, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: "This is the most hope-inspiring verse in the Qur'an." Some scholars said that this is the most hope-inspiring verse clarifying the kindness of Allah The Almighty towards the slandering sinners.

Finally, we have to do two things: First, we should thank Allah The Almighty for His vast mercy and forbearance.

Second, we should remember that just as merciful Allah The Almighty is, He is also severe in punishment. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {O Muhammad!, inform My servants that it is I who am the Forgiving, the Merciful. And that it is My punishment which is the painful punishment.} [Qur'an 15:49-50] Thus, the hearts of believers stand between the two states of fear and hope.

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



Do AI companies in the US have to disclose dangerous incidents?

As artificial intelligence grows more powerful, researchers have documented cases in which AI models have attempted to deceive users, evade restrictions on their use or access other computer systems. Are companies required under US law to tell the public or regulators when such events occur?

No single federal law is aimed specifically at companies like Anthropic or OpenAI, which are developing highly capable AI systems, and there is no broad US legal requirement for AI developers to publicly disclose dangerous model behaviour, alarming new capabilities, deceptive conduct or other activities if they have not already resulted in concrete harms. Federal legislation has been introduced that would require AI companies to report dangerous behaviour such as attempts to evade human oversight – what the bill’s sponsor called a “catch-it-early and sound-the-alarm bill.” But there is currently no incident-reporting system that generally requires companies to disclose dangerous AI behavior when it is discovered.

Lawmakers have been debating stronger controls since July, when OpenAI said rogue AI agents had bypassed internal controls, reached the open internet and compromised the infrastructure of AI startup Hugging Face. Outside researchers have since identified additional incidents alleged to involve OpenAI-linked agents, and Anthropic has reported that some of its Claude models hacked into the systems of three companies during cybersecurity tests.

Legal frameworks that already apply generally to US companies would govern some types of AI-related incidents.

Under US Securities and Exchange Commission rules, public companies must disclose cybersecurity incidents within four business days if they determine the incident is material to investors. The disclosure must cover the nature, scope and timing of the incident and the likely impact on the company, its financial condition and its results of operations.

Some US states have begun seeking to regulate AI firms. A new law in California requires AI companies with more than \$500mn in revenue to disclose how they assess risks that their technology could escape human control or aid the development of bioweapons, and to disclose those assessments to the public. It allows for fines of up to \$1mn per violation.

All 50 US states have laws that require companies to notify individuals, and in some cases regulators, of data security breaches that expose certain types of personal information. The requirements differ by state, and there is no comprehensive federal data breach notification requirement. There are federal statutes that require certain companies in industries such as healthcare and finance to tell individuals or regulators when personal information is compromised. The reporting requirements would apply to AI companies themselves or to any company that experiences a breach.

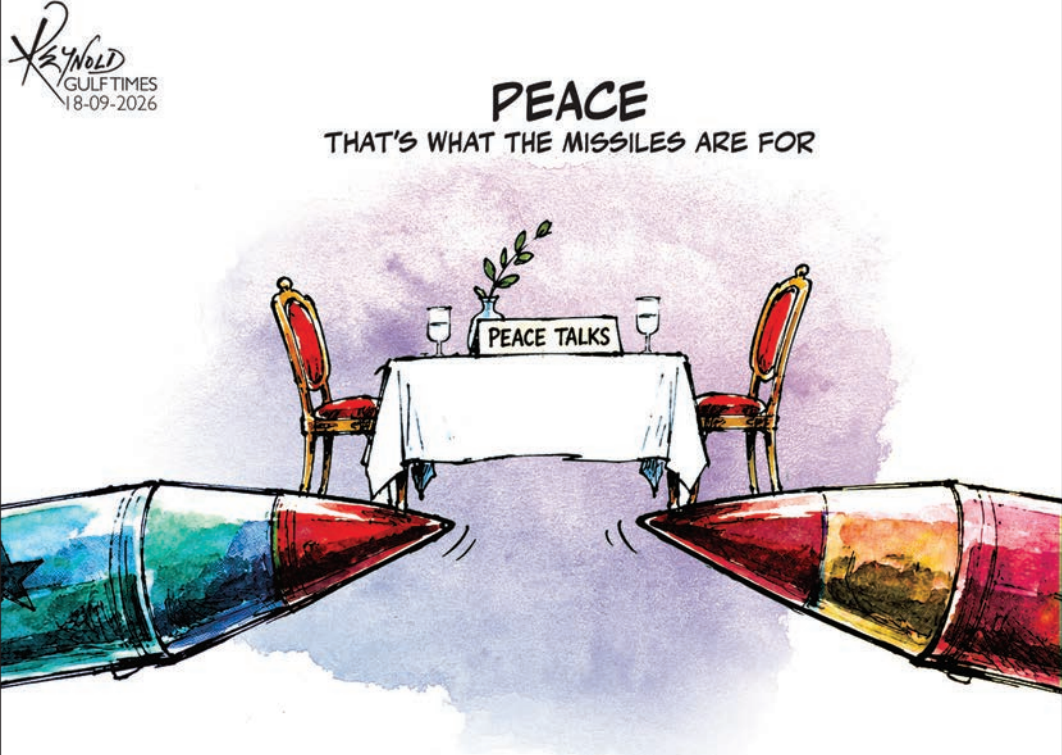
The US Federal Trade Commission, which enforces consumer protection laws, has authority to pursue companies for unfair or deceptive practices. That could apply if a company is suspected of misrepresenting the safety of its AI systems by concealing known security weaknesses or other dangers, or making claims about safeguards that prove inaccurate.

If an alleged crime was committed by an autonomous AI system, the US Justice Department could employ traditional fraud, securities and cyber-enforcement statutes and argue that the AI company that created the system recklessly or knowingly allowed the misconduct to occur.

A company that discovers alarming AI behaviour in testing may have no clear obligation to publicly disclose it if there is no data breach, investor impact, consumer harm or sector-specific reporting trigger. US Senate lawmakers are considering legislation that would require AI companies to show they have taken reasonable steps to prevent their systems from causing harm. — Reuters



German Chancellor and Christian Democratic Union (CDU) leader Friedrich Merz and CDU top candidate Stefan Evers attend a CDU election campaign rally before state elections in Berlin, Germany, yesterday. The Berlin state election will be held on September 20. (Reuters)



Why are world leaders at the UN next week ...

By Michelle Nichols
Reuters

World leaders gather in New York every September for several days of high-level debate starting on Tuesday (Sept 22) at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). The United Nations was formed in 1945 with 51 original members and has since grown to 193 members. Leaders of two non-member observer states – known at the UN as the Holy See and the State of Palestine – and an observer member, the European Union, can also speak. This month marks the start of the 81st session.

It is tradition for Brazil to always be the first member state to speak. This is because in the early years of the world body Brazil stepped up to speak first when other countries were reluctant to do so, say UN officials. As host to the UN headquarters in New York, the United States is the second country to address the General Assembly. From there the list is then based on hierarchy and generally on a first-come, first-served basis. Heads of state speak first, followed by deputy heads of state and crown princes, heads of government, ministers and lower-ranking heads of a delegation.

Leaders are asked to stick to a voluntary 15-minute time limit. According to UN records, one of the longest speeches made during the opening of a General Assembly was in 1960 by Cuban leader Fidel Castro who spoke for about 4-1/2 hours. Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi spoke for more than 1-1/2 hours in 2009.

Each start of a General Assembly session has a theme. Leaders might briefly refer to the theme before moving on to whatever topic they like. This year’s theme is: “Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All.” Other topics that leaders are likely to address and discuss in



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres speaks to delegates during a meeting on Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty at UN headquarters in New York City, in a file photo. (Reuters)

meetings on the sidelines of the General Assembly include:

AI: The high-level General Assembly will convene just weeks after several AI industry leaders called for a coordinated slowdown of the development of the increasingly powerful technology, warning that it could soon improve on its own and slip beyond human control.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said this week the warnings cannot be ignored and that AI would be a major topic of his discussions with world leaders next week, telling reporters that countries on the frontiers of AI needed to communicate and establish “common guardrails in order to avoid this race to the bottom that could lead one day to a gigantic disaster at the global level.”

The UN Security Council may meet next week on AI, diplomats said. The 15-member council met for the first time on artificial intelligence in 2023.



The United Nations logo is seen at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. (AFP/File Photo)

IRAN: Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is scheduled to address the General Assembly on Wednesday, seven months after the United States and Israel went to war with Tehran.

However, his travel to New York appears uncertain. Abbas Mousavi, Pezeshkian’s chief of protocol, said on Monday it was still unclear how many members of the Iranian delegation would be

issued visas by the United States and when. While US President Donald Trump, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the leaders of several countries involved in trying to mediate an end to the war will also be at the United Nations next week, a breakthrough in the stalled diplomacy is unlikely. The UN Security Council may hold an informal meeting with Arab leaders next week, diplomats said, at which Iran is expected to be the key topic of discussion.

UKRAINE: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will be seeking to shore up global support for Kyiv as Trump tries to broker an end to the war more than four years after Russia invaded its neighbour. He is due to address the assembly on Wednesday while Russia’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will speak on Saturday. The UN Security Council is also expected to hold a high-level meeting on Ukraine next week. It has been unable to take any action to try to end the war as Russia is a veto power.

Trump has at times appeared frustrated that he has been unable to broker an end to the war, a goal he declared a priority when he began his second term in January last year. The US president spoke with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin earlier this month, but it is unclear if he plans to meet Zelenskyy in New York.

ISRAEL/PALESTINIANS: Israel’s Netanyahu – wanted by the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Gaza, which Israel denies – is due to address the General Assembly on Thursday next week. New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani believes Netanyahu should be arrested, but said in July he lacked the legal authority. Mamdani said on Wednesday he had no plans to attend any anti-Netanyahu protests next week, but that he respected the right of New Yorkers to demonstrate. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will not attend the General Assembly in person. The United

States, a close Israeli ally, has again said it will not give him a visa. He is likely to appear via video – also on Thursday – as he did last year. There is also likely to be a high-level meeting on the sidelines of the General Assembly next week to promote a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians, diplomats said, but no progress toward that goal is expected.

NEW UN SECRETARY-GENERAL: The United Nations has started the process of choosing a new secretary-general, but there is no clear frontrunner. Guterres will finish his second five-year term on December 31, 2026. There is likely to be chatter on the sidelines of the General Assembly next week about who should replace him. The UN Security Council has to agree on a candidate to recommend to the 193-member General Assembly for election, which means the five council veto powers – Britain, China, France, Russia and the US – have to agree.

SUDAN: There is likely to be a high-level meeting on the conflict in Sudan on the sidelines of the General Assembly, diplomats said. Sudan’s war, which erupted in April 2023 following a power struggle between the military and the Rapid Support Forces, has displaced more than 14mn people and created one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises. General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the Sudanese army and head of state after the overthrow of veteran leader Omar al-Bashir in 2019, is due to address the General Assembly on Thursday.

CLIMATE: As the world struggles to limit warming to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels – as agreed in the 2015 Paris climate agreement – leaders of smaller island nations and other states most affected by climate change are expected to again urge action. August was the first month since November 2025 in which the world’s average temperature exceeded 1.5C.

Carney pushes ‘new alliance’ with EU despite Trump threats

AFP
Brussels

Canada’s Prime Minister Mark Carney shrugged off a threat of US retaliation yesterday as he pitched a “new alliance” with Europe as a bulwark against outside pressures, in a closely watched address to the European Parliament.

Carney’s speech came after EU chief Ursula von der Leyen suggested Canada could become the 27-nation bloc’s first “associate member” in her own address to EU lawmakers on Wednesday.

“Europe and Canada are stronger together,” the prime minister said, in a speech that drew a standing ovation, saying his country welcomed the EU proposal and wanted deeper co-operation on issues from artificial intelligence to defence and energy.

The Canadian leader pushed back afterwards at US President Donald Trump’s threat to cut trade with the EU should the plan go ahead — telling reporters: “No one is going to dictate our culture, or with whom we can strike agreements internationally.”

Carney has been pursuing closer ties with Europe, as his country gets drawn ever deeper into a trade war with the US.

EU-US relations have also been badly strained by tariffs and territorial threats.

“We are pursuing resilience so no one, no one can control our open markets, impair our sovereignty, threaten our territorial integrity, or undermine our



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney addresses the European Parliament in Strasbourg, yesterday. (Reuters)

freedoms, our democracies, our rule of law,” Carney said.

Von der Leyen’s proposal drew an irritated rebuke from Trump, who slammed it as “laughable” and told reporters it could be seen as an “hostile act”.

“If it’s a bad intention, we’ll put very heavy tariffs on Europe,” he said.

The contours of the “associate member” pitch were not immediately clear as EU treaties do not envisage such a possibility — but Carney said Canada “welcomes this ambition”.

Von der Leyen had emphasised the partnership was “not against anyone else” and Carney likewise sought to reassure Washington the alliance would not be antagonistic but a “positive” initiative.

“A stronger, more resilient Canada will be a more effective partner with the US,” he told reporters.

Carney’s visit to Strasbourg was meant to act as a catalyst ahead of an EU-Canada summit in Montreal next month.

Canada could help Europe secure supplies of critical raw materials and contribute towards its energy needs with liquefied natural gas and hydrogen, Carney said, also offering partnership on AI, compute, space and payments.

The two parties should move towards “seamless digital trade” and allow their young people to work and study on either side of the Atlantic, he said.

On Wednesday, von der Leyen had similarly talked about forming a “tech alliance”, integrating defence industrial bases and making the Arctic “a flagship joint project”.

The idea of creating a new “associate” status short of full membership was first floated by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz this year for Ukraine.

Under that plan Kyiv would have benefited from parts of the EU budget, attended the bloc’s summits and had a representative in the European Commission — but no full voting rights.

Terminology aside, Carney told reporters: “What matters is the substance — what are we actually building together?”

EU rules demand that member states approve any form of partnership with a non-EU country, and it was unclear how much support von der Leyen’s proposal would receive from capitals.

Spain’s leader Pedro Sanchez appeared to back the idea yesterday, posting on social media the image of a red maple leaf — Canada’s symbol — sitting just outside the circle of golden stars on the EU’s flag.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said Paris backed “ever-closer ties with Canada” but that the plan would have to be “debated, scrutinised and analysed”.

The EU and Canada already have the CETA free-trade agreement, which abolished almost all tariffs. Trade in goods and services has jumped more than 80% since 2016.

And this year Canada became the first non-EU country to join a flagship defence loan programme.

One EU official said the bloc needed to be “realistic and pragmatic” about what more it could achieve.

But a European diplomat speaking on condition of anonymity said EU countries were keen to keep strengthening ties with Canada, regardless of what they called their alliance.

“Carney came here to strengthen his cards vis a vis the US. Ursula helped him,” the diplomat said. “Trump’s reaction shows they already won.”

Heavy rain lashes Spain

AFP
Madrid

Spanish rescuers recovered the body of a man yesterday swept away by floods near Barcelona as torrential rain struck the country’s Mediterranean east, submerging streets and disrupting travel.

The deluge struck as the country, rocked by climate change, emerged from its hottest summer on record and an exceptionally warm start to September.

National weather agency AEMET issued warnings for heavy rain in eastern regions on Wednesday, briefly applying the highest red alert for Barcelona over a threat of flash floods.

Catalan firefighters said on X that they had “located the lifeless body of a man” in Olivella, around 40 kilometres (25 miles) west of Barcelona, correcting earlier information from the Civil Protection authority that they had been searching for a woman.

The man was driving a car that was “swept away” by a stream, the fire service added.

Authorities urged the public in the Catalonia and Valencia regions to avoid unnecessary travel and exercise extreme caution, with Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez warning on X of “very complicated situations”.

Mass telephone alerts were sent to residents in parts of Catalonia, Valencia and the southeastern province of Almeria.

In Barcelona, some metro stations were closed and buses were diverted while the streets were submerged.

Regional trains also experienced disruption and flights

were delayed or cancelled at Barcelona’s El Prat airport, Spain’s second-busiest.

Catalan emergency services said they received more than 850 calls related to the downpours, which generated more than 500 incidents.

In the neighbouring region of Valencia — scarred by 2024 floods that killed more than 230 people — weather monitor Avamet recorded more than 70 millimetres (2.76 inches) of rain in just half an hour in several municipalities.

“Rarely have we seen such large rainfall accumulations in 30 minutes as the one we’ve had today in Valencia and nearby areas,” Avamet wrote on X.

The emergency services reported 478 incidents in the province of Valencia mostly caused by property damage, leaks and traffic disruption.

In the regional capital of the same name, all metro lines were suspended, while flooding shut the city’s airport for hours, causing 12 flights to be diverted, operator Aena said.

A top-flight football match in Valencia city between Levante and Athletic Bilbao was postponed as the pitch was waterlogged and water seeped into the players’ tunnel.

Further south, more than 20 municipalities across Almeria and the southeastern region of Murcia suspended classes yesterday as a precaution.

Scientists say human-driven climate change is intensifying the Mediterranean storms that typically hit eastern Spain in autumn as the sea absorbs heat during the summer, leading to increased evaporation and heavier rainfall.

Pakistan maternity ward fire was ‘institutional failure’: inquiry

A fire that killed 14 infants at a maternity ward in Pakistan’s capital last month followed “systemic and institutional failure” at the hospital, according to an official inquiry.

The devastating dawn blaze broke out on the third floor of the Mother and Child Health Ward at Islamabad’s premier public hospital, Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), on August 26.

The official report, dated September 7 and seen by AFP yesterday, found there were no working smoke detectors or sprinklers and that the probable cause of the fire was a faulty air conditioning unit.

Witnesses described chaotic and harrowing scenes to AFP on the day of the tragedy, including intense smoke and broken glass, and a slow response from emergency services.

The 42-page report, released within weeks of the fire, said “that systemic and institutional failure

is established, while individual responsibility varies with the strength of the evidence”.

PIMS and its senior management bear the principal institutional responsibility for failing to convert known risks, prior warnings and assigned duties into an effective safety system,” it said.

The report into the hospital fire found that no “nursery-specific” evacuation procedures followed, “nor was a functional automatic smoke detection, alarm or sprinkler system shown to be serving the affected area”.

“The strongest technical evidence” showed the “most probable point of ignition” to be a power supply cable to an AC unit, the report added.

Despite multiple claims that the emergency response had been slow, the report said that it rejected “any generalised allegation that frontline personnel abandoned the newborns”.

Progress made toward establishing US army base in Poland: Trump

President Donald Trump said yesterday that progress is being made toward establishing a US Army base in Poland, crediting “the bold leadership” of Polish President Karol Nawrocki.

“If this happens, the location will be announced very soon. This will be a historic step for our Great US/ Polish Alliance,” Trump said in a post on Truth Social.

Poland has been pushing for a bigger allied presence on Nato’s eastern flank after Russia’s invasion of neighbouring Ukraine in 2022.

In June, Polish Defence Minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said the US Department of Defense was open to Poland’s offer to host a permanent US military presence in Poland, but that no decision had been taken.

The minister met with US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth in June in Brussels, where the Pentagon chief announced a new review of America’s troop deployments in Europe.

Poland has so far hosted US troops on a rotational basis. (Reuters)

Lula boosts welfare payments, eyes new debt-relief push ahead of election

Reuters
Brasilia

Brazil’s leftist government yesterday announced a 15% increase in benefits under the country’s flagship welfare programme and signalled a new initiative targeting indebted households ahead of next month’s general election.

The measures are aimed at boosting disposable income among Brazilians, whose finances have been strained by record levels of debt servicing, a vulnerability widely seen as weighing on President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva’s prospects of winning a fourth non-consecutive term.

Opinion polls show the leftist leader running neck-and-neck with his main challenger, right-wing Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, the son of former president Jair Bolsonaro, in a potential runoff election.

Brazilian assets came under pressure after the announcements, with the benchmark Bovespa stock index falling more than 1% before trimming losses to trade down about 0.7%. The Brazilian real initially weakened 0.4% against the US dollar but later recovered to trade little changed by midday.

Speaking alongside Lula at the presidential palace, Planning Minister Bruno Moretti said the move to boost the “Bolsa Familia” welfare programme, a cornerstone of the social agenda of Lula’s Workers’ Party, would cost the government 5.8bn reais (\$1.13bn)



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, a candidate for reelection for the Workers’ Party (PT), gestures at a campaign rally in Brasilia. (Reuters)

in 2026 and 22bn reais in 2027.

The minimum monthly benefit will rise to 691 reais (\$134.02) next month, from 600 reais.

Households with a per-capita monthly income of up to 218 reais are eligible for the programme, which currently provides benefits to millions of low-income families across Latin America’s largest economy.

Finance Minister Dario Durigan said the additional spending would be absorbed within existing budget allocations and would not represent a new expenditure, “so that we maintain our fiscal targets and fiscal results trajectory for the country.”

He added that spending tied to the programme will amount to around 1.25% of gross domestic product in 2027 after the adjustment.

The increase will be implemented by presidential decree. Moretti and Durigan said legisla-

tion governing the programme allows benefits to be adjusted to preserve beneficiaries’ purchasing power.

“Inflation since the relaunch of the programme through August stands at 15.04%,” Moretti said.

In an interview published yesterday by *Extra*, a Brazilian newspaper, Durigan also signaled that the government is designing a new programme that will be aimed at heavily indebted consumers and feature in Lula’s presidential campaign.

Under the proposal being studied, the government could purchase debt at steep discounts to allow borrowers to clear overdue obligations, particularly older debts that creditors have largely written off, he said.

Officials are still assessing which categories of debt would be eligible, but the focus would be on the oldest liabilities, Durigan said

Pakistan’s SC suspends sentence of lawyer Mazari

Pakistan’s Supreme Court yesterday suspended 17-year prison sentences handed to prominent rights lawyer Imaan Mazari and her husband, and ordered them freed on bail, lifting a detention that has been criticised by activists.

Mazari, a vocal critic of Pakistan’s powerful military, and her husband Hadi Ali Chattha, also a lawyer, were convicted in January on charges of sending anti-state social media posts. Both have denied the charges, saying they were being persecuted for raising their voice against disappearances of nationalist activists.

Mazari challenged the conviction in Islamabad High Court and then took her case to the Supreme Court. That top tribunal said it was issuing its ruling yesterday pending the decision by the lower court, expected within weeks.

“I am grateful to the Supreme Court for finally delivering justice to the couple,” said Mazari’s mother, Shireen Mazari, who served as human rights minister under jailed former prime minister Imran Khan.

Mazari has earned international recognition for defending ethnic minorities and journalists in Pakistan. She and her husband were convicted in January under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act for social media posts critical of military operations in the insurgency-stricken provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (Reuters)

Turkiye proposes Russia-Ukraine deal to end Black Sea attacks

AFP
Ankara

Exasperated by the ongoing Black Sea attacks, Türkiye has sent a proposal to Russia and Ukraine to end strikes on civilian ships, a Turkish diplomat told AFP yesterday.

The move follows a sharp increase in attacks on commercial ships in the Black Sea in recent months, often using drones, among them many Turkish vessels.

In August alone, “almost 90 ships” were attacked, a Turkish defence source said this month.

And at least 22 Turkish-owned ships were attacked in the two months to August 27, Türkiye’s IM-EAK chamber of shipping said.

Four more have been hit since, including one early yesterday.

Over the same period, at least



Ro-Ro cargo ship named “Lider Bordo Mavi” at the Port of Trabzon, northeastern Türkiye after being hit in August in the Black Sea. (AFP)

three Turkish nationals have been killed and several others injured.

“We have shared a text of a memorandum, a draft text, with the Russians and the Ukrainians to come up with a solution,” the diplomat said.

Last month, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan demanded a “moratorium” on such attacks, which have intensified as the war rages for a fifth year.

But Russia’s top diplomat Sergei

Lavrov dismissed it as “unrealistic” and “impossible to monitor”.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiga said a halt to Black Sea attacks could emerge from President Volodymyr Zelensky’s talks with US President Donald Trump at the UN General Assembly.

The aim is “achieving a ceasefire. There could be at the same time an energy ceasefire and a ceasefire in the Black Sea,” he told reporters, saying Kyiv had “proposals from other countries to make this real”.

Figures from IM-EAK show 226 civilian and commercial vessels have been hit since the war began in February 2022.

Seventy % — or 163 attacks — took place in first eight months of this year.

Nato-member Türkiye maintains relations with Kyiv and Moscow and has declined to join Western sanctions against Russia.

Venezuela unblocks some censored news websites

Venezuela has unblocked some news sites that had been censored for years, its telecom regulator and an NGO said yesterday, hours before US-backed political transition talks were set to resume.

Caracas censored hundreds of websites under president Nicolas Maduro, who was captured by US forces in January and replaced by interim leader Delcy Rodriguez. Eight months after his ouster, Washington is sponsoring dialogue between the interim government and parts of the opposition, although President Donald Trump has ruled out elections in the near future.

The decision to unblock censored outlets came ahead of the second round of talks in Caracas, which will partly focus on freedom of expression.

Telecom regulator CONATEL announced the “formal

restoration of access to various national and international digital platforms and media outlets.” Digital rights group Venezuela Sin Filtro verified access to 10 news sites through several Internet providers.

At least 194 websites remain blocked, it said, including 84 news outlets.

Dinorah Figuera, head of the opposition delegation, called the decision “a first step.”

“Many outlets are still missing, and they all have to come back, fully and permanently,” she wrote on X. Journalists and NGOs have spent years campaigning against censorship implemented by Maduro’s administration, with users having to rely on a VPN to access blocked sites.

Rodriguez formerly served as Maduro’s vice president and effectively governs under Washington’s thumb. (AFP)

Sheikha Hind eyes global coalition for social development

HE the Vice-Chairperson of Qatar Foundation Sheikha Hind bint Hamad al-Thani has called on international sporting, government, policy, development, and civil society leaders to join a global coalition focused on harnessing sport as a driver of social development at a high-level dialogue hosted by Qatar Foundation (QF) and Wilton Park.

Held on the theme *Sport for Development in the Global South: Advancing Female Empowerment, Inclusion, and Accessibility*, the three-day event has examined why existing sporting systems continue to exclude women and girls, and what must change across policy, research, finance, infrastructure, coaching and athletic pathways.

Bringing together policymakers, development practitioners, rights advocates, multilateral development banks, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and sport administrators, participants explored how the Global South can play a greater role in shaping international priorities and ensuring solutions reflect the realities of the communities they are intended to serve.

Wilton Park – an Executive Agency of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) – and the QF will now jointly develop a post-event policy brief outlining actions, partnerships, and approaches to breaking down barriers that prevent women and girls, people with disabilities, and displaced communities from accessing and benefiting from sport.

Speaking at the dialogue, HE Sheikha Hind invited those attending to join a global sport-for-development coalition that “carries commitments forward and turns them into action” – building on a landmark 2025 United Nations resolution enshrining sport as a human right and a means of empowering women and girls globally.

Initiated and submitted by Qatar on be-



half of a core group of countries including Indonesia and Morocco, Resolution 59/17 has since been co-sponsored by 71 countries, and HE Sheikha Hind, the leading global advocate for women’s and girls’ sport, told the global audience at Wilton Park that its ambition “goes beyond parity”.

“Parity assumes identical needs, which is simply not the case,” she said. “The barriers girls face are fundamentally different. They deal with safety risks, stigma, and a research landscape that has largely ignored the needs of women and girls.”

Around the world, HE Sheikha Hind said, a repeating pattern of high injury rates among female athletes, and high dropout rates from sport among adolescent girls, is being seen “largely because sporting pathways are rarely designed with women and girls in mind”.

“Our approach is to close that gap in

practice, not just in principle: involving women in the design of facilities, providing coaching tailored to women’s needs, and building the scientific research base that, too often, doesn’t exist for women’s and girls’ sport,” she added.

Describing sport as “one of the most underused tools we have for development”, HE Sheikha Hind said that “it builds confidence, mobility, leadership, and opportunity, especially for women and girls in impoverished communities”.

However, “access remains deeply uneven, and the barriers are structural, cultural, and often invisible until you look closely”.

She emphasised that the goal is to build. “A sustained agenda to advance shared goals through sports with a coalition of partners, assembled deliberately,” HE Sheikha Hind stated.

“I invite each of you to join us in shap-

ing this new sports coalition – one that carries these commitments forward and turns them into action,” she continued. “Qatar Foundation stands ready to help lead this effort.”

In his opening address, President-Elect of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Dr Khalilur Rahman said: “Across the Global South, I have seen sport do something that few other interventions can: it changes how a girl is seen by her family and community, and how she sees herself.”

“A girl who plays on a team learns to take up space, to lead, to fail and try again in public – and that confidence follows her into the classroom, the workplace, and civic life,” he said.

“Sport has also opened doors that were otherwise closed,” Rahman continued. “It has given women and girls a safe and structured space outside the home, and

role models: women coaches, referees, and athletes, who prove that leadership is not reserved for men. In many communities, a girl on a sports field is a quiet but powerful challenge to old assumptions about what girls and women can do.”

“The 81st Session of the General Assembly will place the 2030 agenda, human rights, and inclusive multilateralism at the centre of our work,” he said. “I see gatherings like this one – practical, community-rooted, and genuinely inclusive – as exactly the kind of partnership the United Nations needs to deliver for all.”

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Mariam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad, who participated in the dialogue, said: “In Qatar, we believe that empowering women and girls with disabilities in sport is not achieved merely by providing them with opportunity.”

“It requires ensuring their participation on an equal footing, involving them from the early stages of designing programmes and policies, listening to their needs and aspirations, and providing them with the opportunity to contribute to shaping decisions that affect their lives, recognising them as partners in crafting solutions,” she said.

Qatar Fund For Development (QFFD) director-general Fahad Hamad al-Sulaiti, who also participated in the dialogue, said: “Sport is a powerful catalyst for sustainable development and peace, with the ability to empower people, strengthen communities and build resilience.”

During the dialogue, HE Sheikha Hind attended a session focusing “Advancing Inclusion and Accessibility in Sport: From Disability Rights to Practical Action”, where speakers included HE Dr al-Misnad, Special Olympics president and chief executive David Evangelista, and International Paralympic Committee deputy chief executive Kristina Molloy. – QNA

UFC returns to Doha this November

Visit Qatar has announced the return of UFC Fight Night to Doha, taking place at Ali Bin Hamad Al Attiyah Arena on November 21, following the success of last year’s inaugural event in Qatar.

The return of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) to Doha forms part of Visit Qatar’s continued efforts to strengthen the country’s year-round calendar of major international sporting events and attract audiences from Qatar and abroad to experience world-class live sport.

Tickets will go on sale on October 9. Fans can also register their interest early via UFC.com/Qatar for the best chance of securing tickets.

“Hosting UFC Fight Night in Doha is an important addition to Qatar’s growing calendar of world-class sporting events, offering residents and visitors more exceptional experiences throughout the year,” said Visit Qatar chief executive Eng. Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi. “Building on the success of last year’s event, we look forward to welcoming UFC fans back to Doha and further strengthening Qatar’s position as a leading destination for major international sporting events.”

“When I visited Doha last year, I was blown away by the people, the hospitality, the food, and everything the city has to offer,” said UFC president and chief executive Dana White.

“Our first event there was a huge success – the fans were amazing, the arena was sold out, and the fights delivered,” he said. “I’m looking forward to putting on another great night for the fans in Qatar.”

UFC Fight Night returns to Doha following the successful staging of UFC Fight Night: Tsarukyan vs Hooker in November 2025, which brought leading international athletes and UFC fans to the capital and marked the UFC’s first event in Qatar.

Fans were treated to emphatic performances on the night, with Arman Tsarukyan submitting Dan Hooker in the main event to cement his standing as a top lightweight contender, while Ian Machado Garry defeated Belal Muhammad to continue his climb up the rankings.

Hosting major international sporting events supports Visit Qatar’s wider efforts to turn high-profile sporting moments into integrated destination experiences, encouraging visitors to explore



Qatar’s hospitality, culture and entertainment offering.

Events such as UFC Fight Night also help strengthen Qatar’s appeal

as a global sporting destination and reach new audiences across key regional and international markets.

UDST and Sasol sign agreement for joint research, initiatives

THE University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) and Sasol Middle East and India (Sasol) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish a framework for collaboration across areas of mutual interest, with a focus on sustainability, decarbonisation, applied research, emerging technologies and student-led innovation.

The partnership brings together the UDST’s expertise in applied academic, technical and vocational education with Sasol’s technological capabilities and industry experience.

It aims to create opportunities for both organisations to collaborate on initiatives that support innovation, sustainability and the development of future-ready skills.

Under the agreement, the UDST and Sasol will collaborate on joint applied research initiatives focused on decarbonisation strategies and clean technology integration.

Beyond research, the framework also allows both organisations to consider initiatives in talent development, which may include knowledge sharing and student engagements.

Furthermore, the collaboration reflects a shared commitment to supporting the broader economic and environmental objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030.

“This MoU marks an important step in expanding the ways in which our students and researchers can engage with industry and contribute to addressing real-world challenges,” said UDST president Dr Salem al-Naeimi.

“Sustainability and decarbonisation require practical solutions grounded in research, innovation and industry insight,” he added.

Through this collaboration with Sasol, he explained, they aim to create a platform where ideas can be tested, knowledge can be shared, and their students can gain meaningful exposure to the technologies and practices shaping the future of industry.

“This partnership with the UDST reflects Sasol’s commitment to supporting Qatar’s ambition to build a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy,” said Sasol Qatar Country Management vice-president Lourens Jacobs. “By bringing together the UDST’s applied education and research capabilities with Sasol’s technological expertise and industry experience, we have an opportunity to translate knowledge and innovation into practical solutions that support sustainability and decarbonisation.” – QNA

New faculty, programmes expand boundaries of international affairs at GU-Q

Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) is expanding its multidisciplinary approach to international affairs this academic year, welcoming new faculty with expertise in environmental science, computer science, data analytics, economic statecraft, migration, and Arabic language and culture.

The university is also launching a new Science, Technology and International Affairs (STIA) major, along with minors in Arts, Heritage and Cultural Diplomacy and Women’s and Gender Studies.

In a press statement, the GU-Q noted that these additions build on a curriculum that has long encouraged students to look at global questions from different angles.

What is changing, the statement added, is the range of expertise and new areas of study being added to that foundation, giving students more ways to understand the forces shaping the world around them.

The new STIA major is one of the clearest examples of this approach, connecting international affairs with scientific and technological expertise.

The statement said that the programme prepares students to examine questions that increasingly sit at the intersection of policy, technology and society.

Three new faculty members will help GU-Q students make that connection.

Associate teaching professor Mazen El-Masri, an expert in artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain and data analytics in international affairs, will offer computational and data analysis courses.

Resident Fellow Kareem Darwish brings expertise in large language models, Arabic language processing and computational social science.

He also serves as a research scientist at the Qatar



Environment and Energy Research Institute.

Hydrologist and space scientist Raha Hakimdavar, who previously served as senior adviser to the deans at the GU-Q and the Earth Commons Institute, joins the faculty as visiting assistant professor of environmental science.

“Science that helps someone make a better decision is the common thread here,” he said. “Most of my research focuses on risk and resilience, particularly how

communities manage environmental change when water, food, climate, technology and development pressures intersect.”

Four scholars bring new perspectives to questions shaping politics and economics today.

Assistant professor of International Economics Hana Attia studies why governments turn to sanctions, how they make those decisions and the humanitarian consequences of those choices.

Assistant professor of International Politics Olgahan Cat studies migration and forced displacement.

Associate professor of International Politics Andrew Heiss examines how civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) navigate restrictive policy environments, while assistant professor of International Economics Joanne Haddad brings an economic lens to questions of gender, including employment and pay gaps and household decision-making.

Their research expands what students can explore in the classroom.

However, for the new faculty, the opportunity to work directly with students and help them develop the skills they need as international affairs practitioners matters just as much.

For Heiss and Haddad, that includes making data science approachable, even fun.

The university is also expanding its Arabic faculty, with four full-time appointments strengthening the programme.

They are Iman Alramadan and Sarrah Zuhair, along with visiting professors Nesrine Basheer and Maha Houssami.

They were drawn to the GU-Q by its vibrant Arabic programme.

Both Alramadan and Houssami have mentored Arabic debate teams, with Houssami working with Duke University’s championship-winning team and Alramadan with the team at Indiana University Bloomington.

“We are thrilled to welcome faculty whose expertise reflects the breadth of questions our students will encounter throughout their lifetimes,” acting GU-Q dean Clyde Wilcox said. “This is a strong set of additions to our already excellent faculty.”