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Oil tankers on fire after hitting mines in Hormuz

Iran's Revolutionary Guards yesterday said two oil tankers were on fire in the Strait of Hormuz after hitting mines in the waterway at the heart of the Middle East war. Tehran seized control over Hormuz after the start of the war in late February, choking off the strait that normally carries about one-fifth of global oil consumption. "A supertanker in violation of regulations, carrying more than 2mn barrels of crude oil and attempting to pass illegally through the Strait of Hormuz, struck a mine, triggering an explosion and a fierce fire," the Revolutionary Guards said. The statement did not specify the exact location of the incident. Later yesterday, Guards said "a second offending supertanker was engulfed in a massive blaze after hitting a naval mine," adding it also carried "more than 2mn barrels of crude oil" and was attempting to pass the Strait. The origins of the load and the tanker's flag were not immediately disclosed. Flanked by Iran to the north and Oman to the south, the Hormuz strait is about 30km wide at its narrowest point. Since taking control of the strait, Iran has demanded that all ships seek its authorisation before transiting. "The tanker attempted to cross the strait with US support... by deactivating all its tracking systems," the Guards added, also posting a video of a vessel in flames during the night. (AFP)

19 dead, 25 hurt in India stampede

At least 19 people were killed and two dozen more injured yesterday in eastern India after a stampede that occurred during sudden rainfall at a religious gathering, officials and Indian media said. West Bengal's Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari told reporters the fatalities included a seven-year-old girl, adding that 25 other people were injured outside a pavilion "in a stampede" at the festival of Durga Puja in the city of Kolkata. "Six bodies have so far been identified," Adhikari said. A senior police official at the scene told AFP an announcement caused "commotion" after it started raining at night and the "crowd waiting outside the pavilion was pushing, pulling and rushing forward and fell on the ground, leading to the stampede." (AFP) **Page 9**

Egyptian parliament set to decide on Saudi military support today

AFP
Cairo

Egypt's parliament will hold an emergency session today after President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi asked lawmakers to authorise support for Saudi defences against attacks by Yemen's Houthis, if requested by the kingdom. Saudi Arabia leads a military coalition supporting Yemen's internationally recognised government, at war with the Iran-backed Houthis.

Egypt joined the Saudi-led intervention in 2015, although its role has largely focused on securing Red Sea shipping routes rather than frontline combat operations.

Since Yemen's war reignited in July, the Houthis have stepped up their attacks on Saudi targets, including energy facilities and Riyadh's international airport, where 13 people were killed in an attack last week. The Houthis have also blockaded the Bab el-Mandab Strait, a strategic maritime choke-point whose importance has surged since Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, forcing Saudi Arabia to rely on Red Sea routes to export its oil.

Speaking at a graduation ceremony at the Egyptian military academy, Sisi said it was "inconceivable" for Cairo to stand by while Saudi Arabia was "harmed or its security and stability threatened". "Egypt, of course, with the



directives of His Majesty King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, will carry out any measure to protect you or defend you," he said.

He added that any deployment would require parliamentary approval and asked lawmakers to convene in an emergency session to grant authorisation "if it is requested of us".

"I'm not talking about fighting anyone or attacking anyone," Sisi said. "We are speaking only about defence."

Shortly after Sisi's request, state-run *Al-Ahram* newspaper reported that parliament would convene in an emergency session on Sunday, but gave no further details. *Al-Akhabar*, another state-run newspaper, said the session would be held at 1pm. The remarks come a month after a visit to Cairo by Saudi leader Mohammed bin Salman, during which Egypt reiterated its support for any measures taken by Riyadh to safeguard the kingdom's security.

A spectacle of culture and crafts



As the change in season brings cooler, crisp evenings, Souq Waqif truly comes alive as the vibrant cultural heart of Doha. A favourite gathering spot for tourists and locals alike, crowds are drawn into its labyrinth of sand-coloured alleys glowing with traditional lanterns, intricately woven rugs, and aromatic spices. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Ashghal plans new schools, parks and healthcare projects

Urban beautification remains another major component while development initiatives cover sports facilities, reconstruction of schools and facility upgrade for CCQ in Lusail among others

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) is preparing to implement a new package of infrastructure and public service projects, including fire safety upgrades at 50 additional schools, the construction of new classrooms at 16 schools and the development of storage facilities for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE).

The projects are part of the authority's second package of development works and are outlined in the state's Internal Achievements Book for 2025-2026. The planned works also include the demolition and reconstruction of two schools, Muadh bin Jabal School and Rawdat Rashid School, alongside improvements to the facilities of the Community College of Qatar (CCQ) in Lusail for both male and female students.

The college project will cover the renovation and maintenance



of facades, entrances, courtyards, boundary walls and gates, while the authority will also undertake the development of sports facilities under its second package in preparation for the Asian Games Doha 2030. Another project involves the development of Ras Laffan Hospital as part of efforts to improve healthcare infrastructure and public facilities.

Further, Ashghal, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Finance, plans to tender several new projects covering sports facilities, healthcare centres, maintenance works and new buildings. The proposed tenders are intended to support infrastructure development and improve the operational efficiency of public facilities.

Urban beautification remains another major component of the authority's upcoming programme. Plans include the construction of an outdoor air-conditioned walkway and landscaping works at Qatar University, aimed at improving the campus environment and pedestrian facilities. The authority also intends to establish six parks, known locally as neighbourhoods parks, in Umm Al Abiriya, Umm Qarn, Al Khor, Al Thakhira, Al Saja and Al Thumama.

Landscaping and beautification works are planned around the Passports Building in Al Tarfa and the Civil Defence Building in Al Jumailiyah. The programme also includes the construction of a pedestrian walkway around Al Karaana Village to improve walking facilities for residents. Additional projects include the design, supply and installation of lighting for the Unity Arch, as well as the establishment of an advanced nursery in Al Thumama. **To Page 2**

Doha 2036 bid aims to transform lives through sport

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Fatma Sultan al-Kuwari, CEO of the Doha 2036 Olympic and Paralympic Games Bid Committee, has highlighted Qatar's ambition to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games, emphasising the potential of the event to create a lasting legacy that extends beyond sports infrastructure and venues. Al-Kuwari said Qatar had strong reasons to pursue its ambition, pointing to the country's experience in hosting major sporting events and the skills and knowledge gained through organising international competitions. In a post on Qatar International Media Office platform, she noted that the Doha 2036 bid is currently in the continuous dialogue phase,



Fatma Sultan al-Kuwari

during which interested bidding entities explore their ambitions and determine when they intend to pursue hosting the Games. According to al-Kuwari, the legacy of hosting a major sporting event should not be measured solely by infrastructure or sporting facilities, but also by its impact on individuals and communities. She highlighted the opportunities such events create for young people to

discover sports, volunteers to gain new knowledge and experience, and athletes to compete and achieve their first victories. "We want the Games to really transform every individual that lives in Qatar and in the region," al-Kuwari said. She added that the proposed Games could demonstrate how sport and culture can inspire hope and drive positive change around the world. Reaffirming confidence in Qatar's ability to deliver major international events, al-Kuwari said the country consistently fulfils its commitments. Qatar's bid ambition reflects a broader vision of using the Olympic and Paralympic Games as a platform to encourage participation in sport, develop skills, empower communities and create a lasting legacy for future generations.

Awqaf leverages Friday sermons to promote child safety in digital space

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, through its Department of Mosques, is participating in the national campaign to raise families' awareness of digital technology use.

The campaign, spearheaded by the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF), is guided by the motto that protecting families is a core and shared responsibility.

It comprises a series of awareness-raising Friday sermons to be delivered at mosques across the

country through Dec 26, focusing on parental responsibility and digital safety to protect children from online risks and foster family and social stability.

This initiative broadly underscores the ironclad partnership between Awqaf and MSDF, alongside government institutions' commitment to aligning messaging and fostering joint efforts on family and childhood issues, with the objective of creating a safer digital environment for children and supporting family stability in Qatari society amid rapid technological evolution.

Director of the Department of Mosques at Awqaf, Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Abdulaziz al-Thani,



said leveraging Friday sermons to strengthen digital safety underscores the fact that mosques can serve as vital platforms for fulfilling their enduring mission of raising awareness of such issues, in addition to instilling values and addressing issues affecting families and society.

When it comes to digital safety, parental responsibility matters most, as ensuring safety primarily requires continuous educational

efforts to raise awareness and address the challenges posed by rapid technological transformation, Sheikh Abdulrahman underlined.

He clarified that the sermons would have a substantive impact on highlighting the roles of families in monitoring and guiding children and opening dialogue with them to ensure that technology is used safely and responsibly. Ultimately, families can remain tight-knit while navigating the digital landscape with awareness.

In addition, Awqaf stressed that these sermons convey messages emphasising that caring for children and guiding them along the right path are religious and familial responsibilities requiring the ac-

tive involvement of both parents to maintain a safe digital environment at home and establish powerful shields against cyberbullying, digital exploitation, and inappropriate content.

These messages would also explain how families can contact the appropriate authorities when support is needed, the ministry said, adding that this initiative exemplifies whole-of-government institutional co-ordination to address priority social issues. This broadly aligns with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 to build a tight-knit society capable of adapting to an evolving cultural and technological landscape with awareness and security.



GCC, World Customs Organisation sign addendum to strengthen co-operation

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and the World Customs Organisation (WCO) have signed an addendum to a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two organisations in Brussels. The addendum was signed by GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi and WCO Secretary-General Ian Saunders, with both sides expressing hope that the agreement would strengthen co-operation. Albudaiwi said that the addendum builds on the MoU signed on December 15, 2017 and follows the commencement of

the GCC Customs Union Authority's duties. Under Article One of the addendum, the GCC Customs Union Authority will serve as the designated body responsible for co-operation, representation, communication, co-ordination and other related matters concerning the implementation of the MoU. The agreement is intended to provide a clearer institutional framework for engagement between the GCC and the WCO and support closer co-ordination on customs-related matters. **- QNA**

Amir condoles with Saudi ruler

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of condolences yesterday to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia on the passing of HH Princess Al-Jawhara bint Fahad bin Mishari bin Saud bin Jalawi al-Saud. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent similar cables of condolences to King Salman. **- QNA**

Manama hosts GCC meeting, GCC-Russia dialogue today

Bahrain will host today the 168th GCC Ministerial Council meeting as well as the 9th Joint Ministerial Meeting of the Strategic Dialogue between the GCC and the Russian Federation, in the presence of the GCC foreign ministers. Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi said in a statement that the 168th Ministerial Council meeting will address topics and files related to bolstering joint Gulf action, in addition to reviewing the latest regional and international developments. He noted that the 9th Joint Ministerial Meeting of the Strategic Dialogue between the GCC and Russia is aimed at consolidating ties with various countries and regional blocs. **- QNA**

Ministry intensifies programmes and initiatives to promote mental health

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) is intensifying its programmes and initiatives aimed at promoting mental health and wellbeing across different segments of society through a series of awareness and specialist activities taking place throughout October, marking World Mental Health Day.

The director of the ministry's Non-Communicable Disease Prevention Programmes Department, Dr Mohamed bin Hamad al-Thani, affirmed that Qatar attaches growing importance to mental health as a key healthcare priority, recognising its impact on individuals, families and society.

He stressed the importance of continuing to develop programmes and initiatives in line with the current and future needs of the population.

Dr Mohamed noted that the past six months have witnessed the development and unification of standard operating procedures,

templates and key processes related to mental health services, alongside updates to patients' rights and responsibilities.

These efforts contribute to harmonising practices, safeguarding patients' dignity and rights, and enhancing the quality of services provided.

The official further emphasised that continued progress in the field of mental health requires stronger partnerships and collaboration between the MoPH, healthcare institutions, academic and research bodies, and the wider community.

Such collaboration, he added, will help initiatives, develop workforce capabilities, support research and innovation, and incorporate the experiences of community members into services and programmes.

Among the awareness and specialist activities organised was the "Silatha Journey for Women", held as part of the MoPH Mental Health Campaign 2026.

The activity focused on raising awareness of women's mental health and wellbeing through panel discussions on women's mental health in the workplace, an educational workshop, and introducing the "Silatha" application and the support services available through it.

The activities included a webinar held under the Mental Health Continuing Medical Education Programme, with the participation of a number of mental health specialists.

The webinar focused on risk assessment and management among patients with mental health and behavioural disorders, including the identification of risk factors and levels, appropriate management interventions, and the documentation and communication of risks within healthcare teams.

The ministry is also collaborating with its partners in the health sector and other rel-

evant stakeholders to organise events and programmes.

Throughout the year, the MoPH implements a range of programmes and initiatives aimed at promoting mental health and wellbeing across different segments of society.

Key initiatives include the Mental Health Promotion Programme for Student Well-being 2026, implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE); awareness programmes and workshops across a number of ministries, authorities and institutions; training-of-trainers programmes in youth centres and sports clubs to support young people's mental health and wellbeing; and a programme to promote mental health and quality of life among senior citizens, implemented in collaboration with the Centre for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan). **- QNA**

QMC holds seminar for Police Academy students

The Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) collaborated with the Police Academy to organise an awareness seminar emphasising adherence to values and commitment to ethical principles.

The event was part of joint efforts to foster the partnership between the two sides and instill enduring values and digital responsibility among the Academy's students.

In a statement issued yesterday, the corporation highlighted that the event focused on the Nahj initiative, its messages, and the importance of responsible communication in the digital space, as well as informative content creation and its role in

reinforcing positive societal values.

The gathering further addressed the foundations of producing responsible contents and the rules governing them, which ultimately foster the conscious use of social media platforms, the statement added.

The seminar forms part of Nahj's on-site activities organised by the QMC, featuring a series of awareness and media seminars, lectures, and programmes held in collaboration with several national entities and institutions in the country to communicate the initiative's messages to diverse segments of society. **- QNA**

Fraudsters 'weaponising' social media

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Experts warn that oversharing personal details can expose users and their contacts to financial scams and identity theft.

Fraudsters are increasingly turning publicly available social media information into a weapon, exploiting personal relationships and human trust to steal sensitive data, hijack accounts and orchestrate financial scams, cybersecurity experts have warned, in statements to reporters.

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has cautioned against social engineering, a form of fraud that manipulates people into disclosing confidential information or performing actions that compromise their security.

It has also urged the public to verify the identities of advertisers before engaging with sponsored advertisements on social media.

Experts said criminals often need neither sophisticated hacking tools nor advanced technical skills.

Instead, they gather information from social media profiles, online publications and professional platforms to impersonate trusted individuals and construct convincing fraudulent scenarios.

Khalid al-Ammari, a technology specialist, said that fraudsters exploit psychological vulnerabilities through impersonation, misleading claims, fabricated emergencies and deceptive communications designed to extract personal information.

Such schemes may involve e-mails posing as official correspondence, fictitious prize notifications or seemingly innocent conversations that gradually lead victims to reveal confidential details.

Criminals may also target employees to gain access to an organisation's data and systems.

Al-Ammari stressed that awareness remains the first line of defence, urging users never to share passwords or sensitive information with unverified individuals or entities.

Mohammed Saeed al-Saqatri, an information technology expert, said that criminals can build detailed profiles of their targets by examining social media posts, photographs, comments and interactions.

These details may reveal family relationships, friendships, professional connections and daily routines, enabling fraudsters to identify

potential victims and those most likely to trust them.

In one common scenario, a criminal impersonates someone whose account has been compromised and contacts their friends or relatives requesting urgent financial assistance.

Familiar details about the person's life can make the appeal appear genuine, increasing the likelihood that the recipient will transfer money without verifying the request.

Al-Saqatri warned against publicly disclosing travel plans and daily movements, emphasising the importance of using social media responsibly and limiting unnecessary personal information.

Dr Mohammed al-Jufairi, an information technology and artificial intelligence (AI) expert, said social engineering exploits the human element, allowing criminals to circumvent security measures without directly breaching technical systems.

Fraudsters may pose as employers, professional contacts or admirers of a person's work, gradually building trust before requesting credentials or directing the target to fraudulent websites.

Such schemes may seek passwords, e-mail credentials and one-time passwords (OTPs).

Abdullatif Zainal highlighted the risks posed by fake online platforms targeting professionals, including writers and journalists, with invitations to publish their work.

Victims may be asked to register using a username and password.

If they reuse credentials associated with their e-mail or professional accounts, criminals can exploit them to gain access to other services and confidential information.

Zainal stressed that passwords and information concerning investments, projects and employers must remain confidential and be shared only through authorised channels.

He added that cybersecurity is a collective responsibility involving everyone in an organisation, from support staff to senior management.

The experts urged users to verify unusual requests through independent channels, avoid suspicious links, use unique passwords for different accounts and exercise caution before sharing personal information.

Their warning is clear: "Information shared casually online can become a powerful tool in the hands of criminals, putting not only account holders but also their families, friends and colleagues at risk."



Khalid al-Ammari



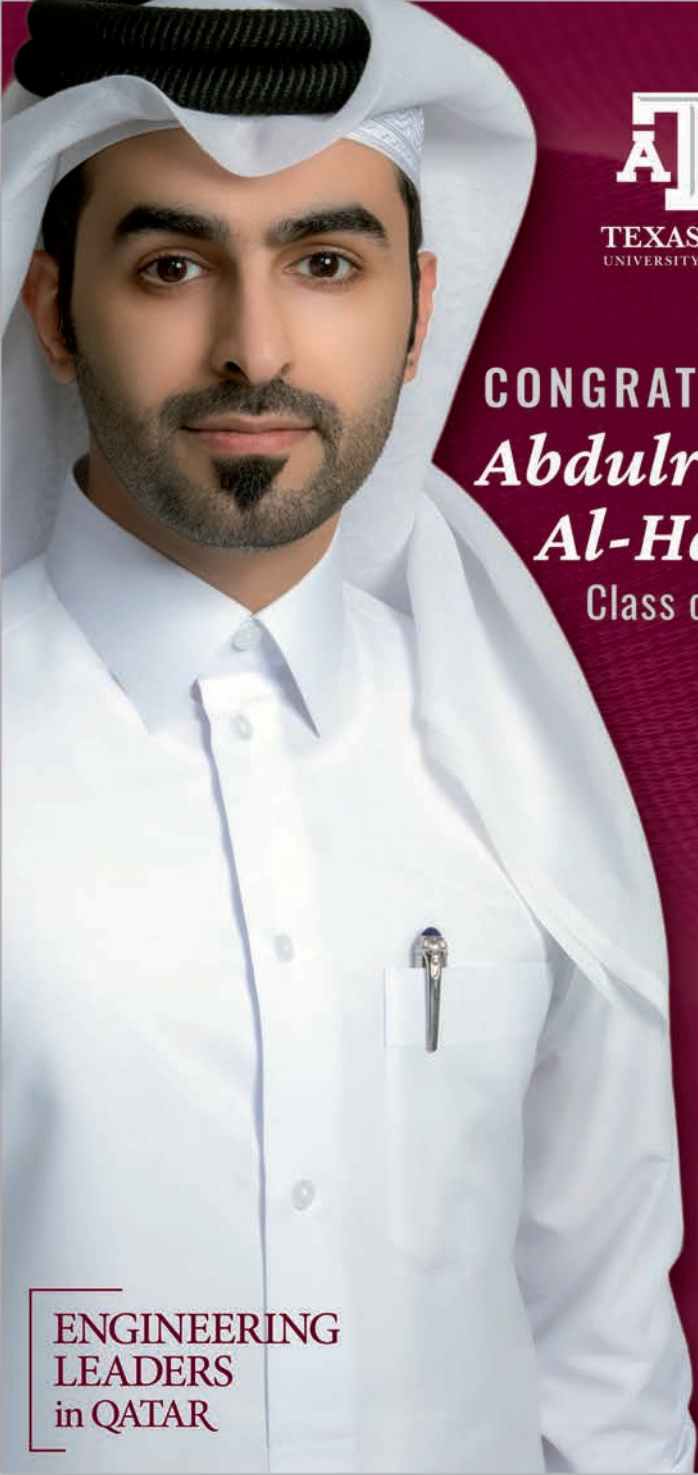
Mohammed Saeed al-Saqatri



Dr Mohammed al-Jufairi



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Al Koot Insurance and Reinsurance Reaffirm Partnership and Extends Direct Billing to All Services at The View Hospital



The View Hospital, (in affiliation with Cedars-Sinai), and Al Koot Insurance and Reinsurance have reaffirmed their insurance partnership, which began in 2023 when Al Koot became amongst the first insurance companies to sign with the hospital. The continued partnership gives Al Koot’s members direct billing access to all medical services and clinics at The View Hospital and reflects both organizations’ commitment to high-quality, patient-centred care.

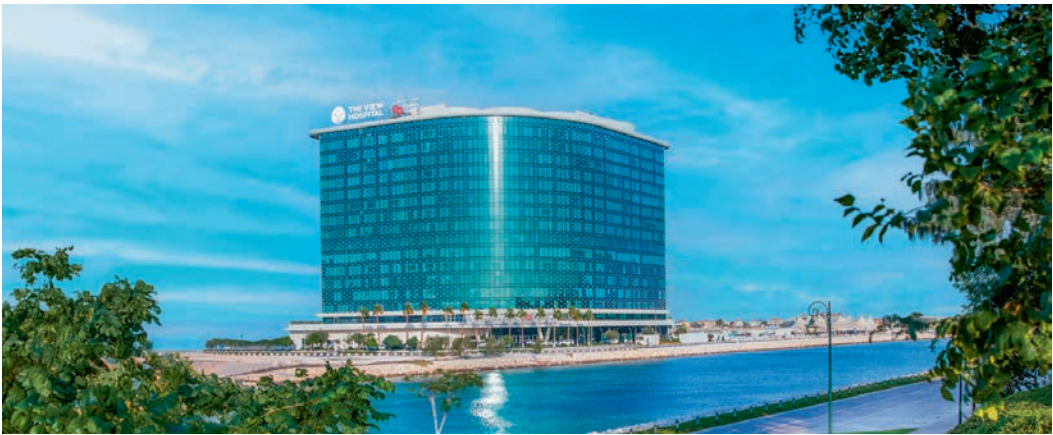
The renewed agreement was signed by Mr. Ahmed Rafee Al-Emadi, CEO of Al Koot Insurance and Reinsurance and Mr. Joe Hazel, Group CEO of Apex Health.

Commenting on the partnership, Mr. Ahmed Rafee Al-Emadi, CEO of Al Koot Insurance and Reinsurance, said: “Al Koot’s partnership with The View Hospital is a unique alliance that will contribute to the accelerated transformation of Qatar’s healthcare sector. Through partnerships like this, healthcare leaders gain access to strategic guidance and a collaborative approach to new challenges, with opportunities to co-innovate and co-create solutions. This partnership brings Al Koot’s insured members top-tier care within their reach through our direct billing arrangement.”

He added: “The View Hospital is a distinguished healthcare provider and one of the leaders in the Qatar market. The services available to Al Koot’s insured members will raise the standard of care delivered in our sector, and this partnership makes Al Koot the first and only flagship medical insurer in the State of Qatar to offer this feature.”



Commenting on the renewed partnership, Joe Hazel, Group CEO of Apex Health, said: “Al Koot was among the first to join us at The View Hospital, and we are proud to continue that partnership. Our shared belief is that patients deserve world-class clinical care delivered with transparency and compassion. Through The View Hospital, we are bringing advanced medical technology and international standards to Qatar, and this collaboration makes that care more accessible to Al Koot’s insured members.”



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JMJ Group Holding Opens the OQ Residences

Opening marks a significant milestone in the group’s expanding hospitality and residential real estate portfolio

JMJ Group Holding has officially opened The OQ Residences Waterfront, a luxury residential development in Lusail’s Waterfront District. The opening ceremony, held at The OQ Residences in the presence of H.E. Sheikh Jabor Bin Mansour Bin Jabor Al Thani, marks a significant milestone in the Qatari group’s expanding portfolio across hospitality and residential real estate. The opening represents an important step in MJM Group Holding’s vision of creating distinctive living experiences built on quality, design and an exceptional way of living. As a Qatari group contributing to Qatar’s real estate and hospitality landscape, MJM Group Holding continues to develop its portfolio with a focus on enduring value and modern living.

Extending the OQ Brand into Residential Living

The OQ Residences Waterfront extends the OQ brand from hospitality into residential living. First introduced through The OQ Hotel, the Qatari brand is built around a luxury way of living, expressed through comfort and modern design.

The OQ Residences Waterfront is officially GSAS-certified, reflecting the development’s commitment to sustainability and responsible building practices. This achievement reinforces MJM Group Holding’s focus on quality, forward-thinking development and creating lasting value within Qatar’s residential real estate sector.

H.E. Sheikh Jabor Bin Mansour Bin Jabor Al Thani stated: “The opening of The OQ Residences marks a new milestone in the journey of The OQ, a brand we are proud to be 100% Qatari. The brand originated in the hospitality sector with The OQ Hotel and is now expanding its presence into the residential sector.”

He further added: “This development comes amid Qatar’s advanced investment environment, supported by the leadership’s vision and the infrastructure, legislation, and business-friendly climate it has established. At MJM Group Holding, we look forward to continuing to invest and develop, creating Qatari projects and brands with the potential to grow and endure, in



line with the nation’s ambitions and future aspirations.

JMJ Group Holding’s Expanding Portfolio

The opening comes as MJM Group Holding continues to advance its portfolio of developments in Qatar. Upcoming projects include The OQ Residences Seef and upcoming collaboration with Michael Graves Architect from USA.

The group’s wider development pipeline also includes The Grove Residences, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects and located on Qetaifan Island North. The planned development reflects the scale and direction of MJM Group Holding’s continued expansion in Qatar.

A Long-Term Vision for Living in Qatar

With The OQ Residences Waterfront now open, MJM Group Holding continues to pursue its long-term ambition of creating enduring value and distinctive living experiences through its current and future developments. The opening marks a new chapter for the OQ brand as it grows from hospitality into residential living.

About MJM Group Holding

Founded in 2009 by Sheikh Jabor bin Mansour bin Jabor Al Thani, MJM Group Holding is a Qatari group contributing to Qatar’s real estate and hospitality landscape through its portfolio of current and upcoming developments. Its portfolio includes The OQ Hotel and The OQ Residences Waterfront, with upcoming developments including The OQ Residences Seef, The Grove Residences on Qetaifan Island North, designed by Zaha Hadid Architects, and upcoming collaboration with Michael Graves Architect from USA. MJM Group Holding remains committed to creating lasting value and shaping the future of Qatar through visionary development and strategic partnerships.

About The OQ

The OQ is a Qatari brand introduced through The OQ Hotel. Built around an exceptional way of living, the brand focuses on comfort, quality and contemporary design, extending its philosophy into residential living through The OQ Residences.



UDST selected for inaugural Innovation Sandbox of the Future Universities Alliance

The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) has been selected for the inaugural Innovation Sandbox of the Future Universities Alliance, a global learning network incubated by the US's Duke University.

The UDST is the only institution from Qatar, and the only one from the Gulf, selected for the inaugural cohort, which brings together 49 institutions from 23 countries across five continents.

Selection followed a competitive application process weighing strategic priority, leadership commitment, readiness to act, and fit with a diverse global cohort.

The Innovation Sandbox is the Alliance's 12-month global peer learning programme for institutions pursuing ambitious, institution-shaping change.

Participants bring active institutional challenges into facilitated pod sessions, milestone meetings, and the annual Global Summit.

"Higher education is not short of innovation, but it is short of the structures needed to connect that innovation, help it travel, and make it durable," said Noah Pickus, founder of the Future Universities Alliance and Head of Global Strategy and Partnerships at Duke University.



"The Innovation Sandbox is our answer to that gap," he said. "We are pleased to convene this inaugural cohort and grateful for the trust these institutions have placed in one another to work together in this Alliance."

"UDST was founded on the belief that an applied university must be agile and willing to rethink how it works," UDST

president Dr Salem al-Naemi said. "Joining the inaugural Innovation Sandbox puts that belief alongside some of the most ambitious institutions in the world, and lets us contribute a Gulf perspective to a global conversation about what the university of the future should be."

The Innovation Sandbox features three distinct pathways: "Startup Institutions",

supporting emerging universities and learning ventures building new institutions from the ground up; "New Initiatives in Existing Institutions", focusing on transforming existing academic structures and institutional models; and "Amplifying Signature Innovations", helping institutions expand the reach and impact of their established innovations beyond their campuses.

The UDST is participating in the "New Initiatives in Existing Institutions" pathway, bringing an artificial intelligence (AI) framework built in-house to the Sandbox.

In this system, multiple independent AI agents review exam questions.

They check that each question genuinely measures the learning outcomes a course promises, at the right level of thinking, and a question is accepted only when the agents agree.

The framework is already running in UDST courses.

Through the Sandbox, the university aims to develop it into a method that other universities can adopt.

The project speaks directly to the Alliance's first principle, to "innovate toward quality", which the Alliance defines by the depth, coherence and durability of learning.

Alongside Dr al-Naemi, the UDST team includes Dr Seifeddine Bouallegue, associate professor and head of Software Systems Department at the College of Computing and Information Technology (CCIT); Dr Brian McCommons, programme development and accreditation specialist; and Robert Ford, lecturer at CCIT.

QC continues efforts to strengthen food security worldwide

Qatar Charity (QC) continues to implement food assistance projects across various regions of the world, combining the distribution of food baskets and ready-to-eat meals with support for displaced families and emergency disaster response.

Its 2026 interventions in Sudan, Syria, and Nepal offer diverse examples of these efforts, which aim to alleviate the suffering of affected communities and meet their basic food needs.

These projects and interventions form part of the QC's humanitarian role in a world where hundreds of millions of people still face hunger and billions are unable to access sufficient food.

Every year on October 16, World Food Day renews the call to strengthen food security and safeguard everyone's right to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

This year's celebrations are being held under the theme *Innovating Today for Tomorrow's Food*.

In Sudan, where the war has displaced large numbers of people and deprived many families of their sources of income, Qatar Charity continues to provide food assistance to displaced people and the most vulnerable groups in response to growing needs in affected areas.

In its latest food assistance project in North Kordofan, the QC distributed 3,600 food baskets to approximately 21,000 displaced people who had arrived in El Obeid following an escalation of clashes in parts of the state.

The response included food baskets for families affected by flooding, heavy rainfall, and the storm that struck the Al-Ghabsha area in Um Rawaba locality, destroying homes and displacing hundreds of families.

Earlier, in April this year, food assistance was distributed to 15,708 beneficiaries across four Sudanese states: Red Sea, Kassala, River Nile, and Northern State.

The initiative targeted sponsored orphans' families, low-income households, and displaced families.

In Syria, in co-operation with the Molham Volunteering Team, Qatar Charity implemented a project to distribute food baskets to affected families in Deir ez-Zor Governorate, where the consequences of destruction and displacement continue to weigh heavily on people's living conditions.

The project distributed over 1,200 food baskets containing a total of approximately 84.6 tonnes of food and reached more than 6,000 beneficiaries.

As part of its food assistance interventions in Syria, Qatar Charity also launched a winter project in January 2026 to distribute 6,800 food baskets across several governorates.

Each basket weighed 64kg and contained essential food supplies sufficient to meet a family's needs for one month.

In Nepal, Qatar Charity responded to the needs of families affected by flash floods that swept through areas along the Trishuli River corridor, damaging homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods and hampering aid access to some areas.

The response provided 30 tonnes of essential food supplies to 1,240 families, equivalent to approximately 5,419 people.

The food parcels contained staple items and ready-to-eat products.

Qatar Amateur Radio Society joins JOTA-JOTI event

The Qatar Amateur Radio Society, in collaboration with the Qatar Scouts and Guides Association, participated yesterday in the JOTA-JOTI (Jamboree on the Air – Jamboree on the Internet) event.

The annual global gathering brings together scouts and guides from around the world, enabling them to connect, exchange knowledge and experiences, and develop skills in communication, technology, and teamwork.

The Society participated through a radio station established at its headquarters using the special event call sign "A71A-JOTA".

Speaking on the occasion, the Society's vice-president Dr Ahmed bin Hamad al-Mohannadi expressed the Society's pride in collaborating with the Qatar Scouts and Guides Association to organise the event.

He added that the Qatar Amateur Radio Society, established on June 17, 1991, continues to promote amateur radio, train young people, develop their scientific and technical capabilities,



and strengthen co-operation with amateur radio organisations worldwide.

He noted that Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) was launched in 1958, followed by the introduction of Jamboree on the Internet (JOTI) activities in 1996.

Together, they form a global platform that brings scouts and girl guides together to exchange knowledge and experiences while encouraging their interest in science and technology.

He also thanked the Qatar Scouts and Guides Association – its leaders, supervisors, and participants – as well as members of the Qatar Amateur Radio Society for their efforts in organising the

event and ensuring its success.

He wished the participants a rewarding experience that would broaden their horizons and help them connect with peers around the world.

JOTA is a global scouting event that enables Scouts to communicate through amateur radio stations and share ideas and scouting experiences.

Held concurrently, JOTI allows participants to connect using Internet-based technologies, promoting mutual understanding and cultural exchange among young people while reinforcing the values of co-operation and belonging to the global scouting movement. – QNA

QF partner Texas A&M at Qatar names Al-Hababi '14 Alumnus of the Year



Texas A&M University at Qatar, a Qatar Foundation partner university, has named Abdulrahman Al-Hababi, Class of 2014, Alumnus of the Year for 2026.

Al-Hababi is the 11th alumnus to be recognized with the award. He joins previous winners Muna Al-Mohannadi '10, Yousef Al-Jaber '07, Mariam Al-Meer '12, Dr. Nayef Alyafei '09, Mariam Al-Bishri '12, Bassam Ahmad '11, Abeer Abuhelaliqua '11, Azhar Khan '13, Ali Al Dashti '08 and Mohammed Al-Shareef '12.

"Texas A&M at Qatar is where my journey began," Al-Hababi said. "When I first walked onto this campus in 2009, I came with ambition and a desire to learn; I left with something far greater, as an education, a community and a set of values that have guided every chapter of my life since then. Being named the 2026 Alumnus of the Year by the university that gave me my foundation is deeply meaningful and grateful. I accept this recognition not simply as an honor, but as a responsibility to continue serving Qatar, advancing knowledge, giving back to the Aggie community and creating opportunities for the generations that follow on global stage."

Al-Hababi graduated from Texas A&M at Qatar with a degree in electrical engineering and joined the Ministry of Interior, where

he led the LTE core network supporting secure and reliable mission-critical voice and data communications for Qatar's public-safety agencies. His responsibilities were particularly important during major national and international events when resilient communications infrastructure was essential to public safety and operational continuity. His contributions in this area represent meaningful and sustained service to the State of Qatar and to the development of its critical telecommunications capabilities.

Al-Hababi is dedicated to furthering his education, having earned a master's degree in cybersecurity from Hamad Bin Khalifa University and pursued executive education through the Qatar Leadership Center. He is now pursuing a Ph.D. at Texas A&M's College Station campus where his studies in machine learning, 6G communications and more are addressing challenges of global importance and contributing to the rapidly evolving international field of next-generation communications.

Al-Hababi said, "Our greatest achievements are not the titles or awards we receive, but the people we inspire and the impact we leave behind. Texas A&M at Qatar helped shape my path, and I hope my journey reminds future Aggies that where you begin can

become the foundation for how far you go and how much you give back."

Dean César Octavio Malave said that Al-Hababi represents the kind of graduate Texas A&M University at Qatar seeks to develop: technically accomplished, service-oriented, intellectually ambitious, internationally engaged, and committed to giving back.

"Our graduates are the most visible example of the success of this university," Malavé said, "and Abdulrahman embodies all of the core values that Texas A&M graduates share: Respect, excellence, leadership, loyalty, integrity and selfless service. He has combined professional achievement with national service, advanced scholarship, continuing education, and loyalty to our university community."

Malavé continued, "The foundation he developed at TAMUQ has supported an impressive trajectory spanning national service, advanced professional leadership, graduate education, and cutting-edge research. His professional impact, academic accomplishments, service to the Aggie community, and continued commitment to TAMUQ exemplify the qualities this award recognizes, and he is a true engineering leader in Qatar."

Moldova's PM meets Qatar's ambassador



Moldova's Prime Minister Vasile Tofan met yesterday with Qatar's ambassador Dr Turki bin Abdullah Zaid al-Mahmoud. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation between the two countries. – QNA

Futsal competition for ministries, government agencies kicks off today

The first-round group-stage matches of the eighth Sports for All Futsal Championship for Ministries and Government Agencies 2026 will be staged today, with four matchups lined up at Lusail Sports Arena.

Organised by the Qatar Sports for All Federation (QSFA) under the umbrella of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the championship gives participating teams an opportunity to leverage the competition to make a strong start and secure their first points.

The Qatar News Agency (QNA) take on the Public Works Authority (Ashghal)'s Assets Affairs sector in the opening match.

The second fixture pits the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau against the Qatar Media Corporation, followed by a third showdown between Ashghal and the General Civil Aviation Authority.

The opening round wraps up with a clash between the Ministry of Transport and the State Audit Bureau.

The tournament features 20 teams representing ministries, government agencies and institutions across the country, divided into four groups of five.

Group play continues throughout this week before a break on October 25-29, coinciding with the mid-semester break.

QSFA executive director Abdullah al-Dosari expressed hope that the matches would showcase novel and impressive performances, marked by doggedness and strength and drawing on the expertise the squads have internalised through previous competitions.

He outlined the teams' determination to deliver their best performances and vie for the trophy, emphasising that the QSFA is working to ensure that all organisational and coaching tools are in place to deliver the high-caliber contests that the tournament and participating agencies have been anticipating.

Al-Dosari applauded the keenness of ministries, authorities and institutions to participate in and engage with the tournament, asserting that the participation of 20 teams manifests growing interest in sports within institutions.

These public institutions recognise the importance of sports in creating a positive environment for staffers and solidifying team spirit, the official noted, saying that this materialises one of the QSFA's foremost goals: expanding the base of societal engagement in sporting activities. – QNA



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SCAN TO START

QEFMP chief praises Qatar’s 2026 tent pegging World Cup finals qualification

QNA
Muscat/Doha

Qatar qualified for the Tent Pegging World Cup in Jordan after finishing first in the qualifying play-off tournament hosted by Oman over the period of three days.

The Qatari team secured the top spot with 414.50 points, finishing 1.50 points ahead of runners-up Iraq in a closely contested competition. Kuwait placed third.

Qatar’s riders delivered strong performances throughout the tournament, with Nasser al-Hajri winning gold in the individual event on the final day. His compatriot Ibrahim al-Hammadi claimed silver.

President of the Qatar Equestrian Federation and Modern Pentathlon (QEFMP) Badr bin Mohammed al-Darwish lauded Qatar’s team for advancing to the



2026 tent pegging World Cup finals, slated to take place in Jordan in November.

Al-Darwish said that this advancement was a historic achievement and a testament to the sustained growth of Qatari equestrian sports and their growing regional and international standing.

He said this outgrowth builds on

the QEFMP’s recent sporting feats, particularly at the latest Asian Games, and reflects the steadfast support of the country’s leadership and the continued backing of the Qatar Olympic Committee, headed by HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani.

Al-Darwish also commended the national riders’ incredible per-

formance and high morale in the qualifying playoff hosted by Oman, adding that their ability to overcome formidable opposition, navigate with ease through challenging conditions and securing top spot showcased their technical prowess and competitive capabilities.

Finishing atop the standings with 414.50 points underscored their upward trajectory and augured well for their World Cup campaign, he noted.

Al-Darwish further explained that the accomplishment underscores the QEFMP’s unflagging commitment to developing riders, honing their talents, and implementing rigorous training programmes.

Preparations are now intensifying ahead of next month’s World Cup, with the team determined to represent Qatar and project the tremendous image the nation has been striving to convey in international sport, he said.

For his part, HE Secretary-General of the QEFMP Sheikh Ahmed bin Noah al-Thani said the team’s direct qualification was no coincidence, but the result of sustained technical work and meticulous field planning that had paid off.

He noted that Qatar’s riders secured first place in the qualifying playoff in Oman, demonstrating tactical discipline and phenomenal mental focus against strong teams such as Iraq, Kuwait and others.

The satisfactory result also built on Qatar’s third-place finish in the preceding qualifying stage, which secured the team’s place in the playoff, Sheikh Ahmed highlighted.

Sheikh Ahmed said the riders’ strong performances in both individual and team events reflected the success of intensive training camps and high-level competitive exposure. He added that these results demonstrated the depth of the country’s talent pool and the

strength of its technical foundations, including a capable second tier of riders able to compete under demanding conditions.

He noted that the QEFMP’s work centers on translating its development strategy into concrete results by providing a comprehensive training environment, selecting suitably prepared horses, and ensuring high-level logistical coordination.

Looking ahead, Sheikh Ahmed said an intensive preparation program would be implemented over the coming weeks to maintain the physical and mental readiness of both riders and horses.

He added that Qatar’s ambitions in Jordan extend beyond ceremonial participation: the team aim to contend for the top places and deliver results that bring distinction to the country on the world stage.

The World Cup is scheduled to take place in Jordan from November 11 to 14.

Israeli settlers attack European diplomatic cars in West Bank

AFP
Ramallah, Palestinian Territories

Israeli settlers yesterday attacked a convoy of European diplomats and beat up a visiting French mayor, in an escalation of recent violence during the Palestinian olive harvest, witnesses and diplomats told AFP.

Bernard Baudoux, mayor of the northern French town of Aulnoye-Aymeries was attacked yesterday by Israeli settlers during a goodwill visit to the Palestinian town of Taybeh. He said that the incident showed a tolerance by Israel’s right-wing government for settler violence.

Cars from the French, Belgian and Polish missions had brought diplomats to visit Taybeh, a largely Christian village in the occupied West Bank, when settlers descended to stop Palestinians from gathering olives, witnesses said.

Masked settlers made aggressive statements towards the diplomats before kicking Baudoux, 78, according to witnesses and diplomats who confirmed his identity.

Video footage seen by AFP showed the elderly leftist French mayor, wearing a sash in the French tricolour, slumped on the ground against a car.

Two people who spoke to him said that he was hurt but did

not need to go to hospital.

The West Bank has seen an especially violent olive harvest season as Israeli settlers try to physically stop Palestinians from gathering their crops.

On Friday, settlers seriously injured an American photographer for *The Washington Post* as she covered the harvest, and last week settlers beat up an AFP photographer.

The violence comes during the final days of an election campaign in which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has championed settlers as he seeks their support in the upcoming poll.

Israel quickly condemned the attack on the diplomatic convoy, in contrast to Netanyahu’s response to the attack on the *Washington Post* photographer, in which he suggested that Palestinians or “far-left” activists should share the blame.

“I strongly condemn the severe acts of violence by Israeli rioters,” Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said.

However, Saar also criticised the consulates, saying they did not coordinate the trip with the military.

Israeli police said that they had launched an investigation.

“Efforts are underway to locate the victims, collect testimonies, and identify the suspects, with the aim of bringing them to justice,” a police statement said.



Vehicles at the site where Belgium’s foreign minister says masked settlers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank attacked diplomats and officials, in Taybeh yesterday. (AFP)



This screen grab shows a man wearing a blue, white and red sash, of the type used by French public officials, leaning against a vehicle as masked men intercept and surround a car carrying activists in the village of Taybeh, in the occupied West Bank. (AFP)

Families clueless after Nigerian plane crash

Reuters
Lagos

More than a week after a Nigerian Air Force plane crash killed all 25 people on board, families say they are still waiting for answers as military teams search for wreckage and human remains in swampy terrain.

President Bola Tinubu has ordered an investigation into the October 5 crash, but relatives say they have received little information about what caused it, whether remains have been identified or how recovery efforts are progressing.

The Nigerian Air Force (NAF) said the aircraft was on a routine mission from Benin City to Lagos when it crashed in a remote area of southwest Nigeria after losing radar contact. It has not disclosed the cause. The flight was carrying 19 military personnel and six civilians.

For London-based software developer Victor Anii, the uncertainty has compounded the grief of losing his older sister, Esther Anii, a sergeant in the Nigerian Air Force.

When he woke on October 5, he found a message from Esther asking him to send money for a bus journey from Benin City to Lagos. She told him the group had flown from Abuja but

stopped in Benin City because of a fault with the aircraft. Tired of waiting, she was considering continuing the journey by road.

Hours later, news broke that an NAF aircraft flying between the two cities had crashed.

“We didn’t know what was going on. We just knew we couldn’t reach her, and her husband couldn’t reach some of his friends on the flight,” he said.

It was not until the following day, when the Air Force published a list of those on board, that the family learned Esther had been among those killed.

Frustrated by what he saw as poor communication from the authorities, Anii posted a video online criticising the Air Force’s handling of families after the crash.

Two days later, he said, an NAF commander visited his parents’ home in Abuja carrying two envelopes. One contained a condolence letter. The family did not open the second because they suspected it contained cash. “Whatever that is in it is not enough to take away the pain of my family,” he said.

Asked about support for relatives and efforts to identify remains, NAF spokesperson Ehimen Ejodame referred Reuters to Air Force statements saying it had pledged support to families and intensified search and recovery operations.

DR Congo says ex-president Kabila planning ‘general attack’

AFP
Kinshasa

The DR Congo government yesterday accused former president Joseph Kabila of planning a “general attack” after he teamed up with Rwandan-backed armed group M23 to take on government forces.

Kabila “has decided to formalise his widespread attack against the Republic,” government spokesman Patrick Muyaya told AFP, adding that “the choice to take up arms means killing Congolese in order to try to conquer territories”.

“They want to launch a movement to give themselves a new face, but in reality the intentions, the macabre plans, the modus operandi are known,” Muyaya said in an interview.

“The players remain the same, the nature of the movement remains the same,” he added.

Kabila on Monday joined forces with the M23 to head a new outfit, taking a more direct role in the insurgency ravaging the Democratic Republic of Congo’s volatile east.

The new group — the Front for the Refoundation of the Nation (FRN) — was presented as a “politico-military” outfit that will “pool their strengths, resources and means” with the aim of “putting an end to tyranny by any means, including force”.

It will be headed by Kabila with M23 leaders serving as deputies.

Kabila was condemned to death in absentia a year ago for “complicity” with the M23.

The 55-year-old Kabila, who ruled from 2001 to 2019, is accused by Congolese authorities of being an initiator of the Congo River Alliance (AFC), the now dissolved political wing of the M23.

Kabila has denied the allegations.

After several years outside the country, Kabila reappeared in May 2025 in the major eastern city of Goma that is now controlled by the M23.

He has since made regular visits to rebel-held territory.

In early 2025, an offensive led by the M23 and the Rwandan army in the eastern DRC resulted in the capture of Goma and Bukavu.

Since then, the front line has stabilised, though fighting continues — at times intense, involving drone strikes and artillery barrages

— particularly in South Kivu province.

Kabila’s return to the political scene comes at a volatile time.

Opposition rallies in June and September protested against a proposed constitutional amendment that could pave the way for a third term for the current president, 63-year-old Felix Tshisekedi.

Tshisekedi, who succeeded Kabila, reaches the end of his second and constitutionally last five-year term in 2028.

The main opposition coalition has so far kept its distance from Kabila.

Kabila however has expressed support for the opposition. In a speech posted online Friday, he criticised the government for being “motivated solely by its own perpetuation in power”.

Two killed in Israeli airstrikes on Gaza

QNA
Gaza

The Israeli occupation army launched airstrikes yesterday, striking a group of Palestinians on Al-Baraka Street, south of Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza.

Palestinian medical sources said the strikes targeted central and southern Gaza, killing a child and wounding others, including a girl in critical condition.

Meanwhile, the General Directorate of Police in the Gaza Strip said Israeli warplanes struck a police post in the Al-Mawasi area of Rafah, killing at least one person and wounding several others.

Gaza hospital sources reported that five Palestinians had been killed and others wounded since early morning in Israeli gunfire and shelling across several parts of the enclave.

Palestinian medical sources said the death toll from Israel’s military offensive against the Gaza Strip had risen to 74,469.

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We back ‘political process’ to resolve Saudi-Houthi conflict, says Iranian FM

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said yesterday that Tehran supports a “political process” to resolve the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis.

The Houthis have repeatedly attacked Saudi targets including energy facilities and Riyadh’s international airport, where 13 people were killed in a major attack last week.

“We support an inclusive and comprehensive political process as the only practical and sustainable way to resolve the issue,” Araghchi said in a speech at the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation in Baghdad.

Araghchi repeated Iran’s offer to mediate between the two

sides. Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Khatibzadeh previously said Riyadh has not responded to Iran’s overture.

On Friday, Iran denied having anything to do with the Houthi attacks, after Saudi Arabia accused Tehran of encouraging the group’s escalation.

In his speech, Araghchi also said “either we build security together, or we will endure insecurity together,” adding that Tehran was willing “to co-operate with all its brothers and neighbours to achieve the first option”.

The Houthis and Hezbollah in Lebanon are part of Iran’s “Axis of Resistance” against Israel and the US, which also includes armed groups in Iraq. (AFP)

Another mass funeral in Gaza



Palestinian mourners gather during a mass funeral procession in al-Daraj neighbourhood in Gaza City yesterday, following the recovery of the remains of nearly 85 bodies from beneath the rubble of buildings that were destroyed by Israeli strikes in al-Daraj. (AFP)

Trump blames aides as midterm prospects dim

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump is blaming senior aides and political operatives for a faltering midterm strategy, questioning campaign spending, faulting redistricting and second-guessing candidate choices as Republicans fight to retain control of Congress, said three sources familiar with internal discussions.

Trump is not on the November 3 ballot but repeatedly tells supporters to pretend that he is, hoping to mobilise voters who might otherwise skip the election.

He has embarked on a frenetic campaign schedule while largely avoiding acknowledging his own role in shaping the strategy and how his unpopularity is weighing on Republican candidates in competitive races.

Much of the friction has centered on James Blair, the longtime aide who runs Trump's super PAC MAGA Inc, and White House chief of staff Susie Wiles, who until now had largely escaped criticism.

Trump has faulted Blair's handling of campaign funds, while some White House officials and allies have questioned Wiles' oversight of the political operation.

As Trump questions why campaign spending has failed to improve Republican polling numbers, his advisers are also blaming one another. Wiles has pointed to Blair, while Blair has faulted the White House legislative affairs team, one of the people said. "What's really happening is a circular firing squad," the person said.

Opinion polls suggest Democrats will win the House of Representatives, while the Senate remains too close to call. Losing the House would hamper Trump's legislative agenda in the final two years of his term and give Democrats subpoena power to investigate his administration.

White House spokesman Davis Ingles rejected the sources' characterisation, saying they were "arm-chair experts peddling their baseless speculation."

Trump has long sought to distance himself from political set-



President Donald Trump at the White House. (AFP)

backs. He refused to accept his defeat in the 2020 election and said ahead of the 2022 midterm results that he deserved "all the credit" if Republicans won but "should not be blamed at all" if they lost.

More recently, he has reminded audiences that the president's party typically struggles in midterm elections. But Trump helped devise and drive some of the strategies he is now questioning, including the redistricting effort and candidate choices shaped by his personal loyalties or grievances. His approval rating is at the lowest point of his presidency, weighed down by voter concern over high prices and the Iran war.

Trump's frustrations with his political team spilled into public view after Blair and Chris LaCivita, who co-managed Trump's 2024 campaign, travelled in early October to Republika Srpska, a self-governing region of Bosnia. The New York Times reported the men received substantial payments to advise the regional government ahead of local elections.

Trump distanced himself from both men, describing them as "outside consultants" in an October 7 Truth Social post and warning that if he found a conflict of interest, he would "terminate them, immediately!"

Senior White House officials questioned why Blair was taking on lucrative work overseas when he was supposed to be overseeing

the final stretch of the Republican campaign, three people said.

One person said Wiles approved the trip without informing Trump, raising questions about how closely she was overseeing his political advisers. For Trump, the larger concern is that Blair's outside work has distracted him from his political responsibilities.

In a statement, Blair said: "All of this mudslinging is ridiculous, and counterproductive. President Trump and me are focused on helping Republicans win in November. Every other Republican should be doing the same."

In a statement, LaCivita said: "President Trump and his team are and always have been focused on the midterms. That's demonstrated through the money, message and motivation that the president is bringing on the road and all year. Sniping from unnamed cowards who've never been in a fight is not worth responding to."

With Trump asking why Republican polling in pivotal races has not improved despite MAGA Inc's campaign spending, which public records put at \$200 million so far, it remains unclear whether he will approve more spending before the election, one of the sources said.

Trump also has pressed political aides and advisers in the past week to explain why the redistricting effort he personally pushed has failed to deliver more clear-cut Republican gains, two sources said.

'No Kings' movement seeks early vote boost

AFP
Washington

As Americans get closer to casting their ballots in the midterm elections, the prominent "No Kings" anti-Trump movement organised thousands of rallies yesterday to get voters fired up.

"No Kings" had more than 3,000 events planned across the US for its fourth iteration since US President Donald Trump returned to office, this time with a special twist for the November 3 vote.

Dubbed "No Kings: Vote Early," the events yesterday aimed to get out the vote rather than protest the actions of Trump and his Republican administration.

"It's a day of nonpartisan voter participation: we are bringing our community together to make a plan to vote early and ensuring every eligible voter understands their options for how to vote and has the opportunity to make their voice heard," organisers said in a statement.

Yesterday's itinerary varied widely depending on the location, from a music festival in Los Angeles and a march to the Supreme Court in Washington, to family-friendly workshops in Chicago and election observer training in Atlanta.

"No Kings: Early Vote will be thousands of joyful celebrations of our right to vote across the country," said Deirdre Schifeling, the chief political and advocacy officer of the American Civil Liberties Union, one of the partner organisations behind yesterday's events.

Although Tuesday, November 3 is election day, most areas of the US allow voters to cast their ballots ahead of time, sometimes weeks in advance.

Alma Couverthie, who oversees grassroots organising efforts for democracy watchdog organisation Common Cause, said



Demonstrators gather during a "No Kings" protest at the South Carolina Statehouse yesterday in Columbia, South Carolina. (AFP)



People march in a "No Kings: Vote Early" demonstration in Washington, DC. (AFP)

the point of the upcoming "No Kings" rallies is "reclaiming voting for what it truly is: an act of power, an act of service, and an act of joy."

"This will be a celebration of our collective power," she urged participants.

Trump has openly criticised the practice of mail-in voting, and opponents have expressed concern that the administration will attempt to undermine the results — especially if Republicans

end up losing, as opinion polls show is quite likely.

By advocating for voting early, the "No Kings" organisers hope to cut off the potential for any malfeasance once election day rolls around. "The best way to prevent any funny business from this administration after election day is to make sure that our turnout is massive, so clear and so overwhelming that our victory for democracy is impossible to question," Couverthie said.

Deforestation in Amazon hits four-decade low

AFP
Brasília

Deforestation of the Brazilian Amazon has fallen to its lowest level in nearly 40 years, according to figures released Friday, in welcome news for leftist incumbent Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva days before a presidential runoff.

Between August 2025 and July 2026, 3,335 square kilometers of forest were cleared, a decline of nearly 42% over the previous year and the lowest level since records began in 1988, official statistics showed.

"It's an absolutely atmospheric drop...it's like a dream," Environment Minister Joao Paulo Capobianco told a press conference in the capital Brasilia.

The data was also hailed by Lula, whom polls show running neck-and-neck with conservative senator Flavio Bolsonaro ahead of the October 25 runoff.

"Our goal is to achieve zero illegal deforestation by 2030," he reiterated Friday on X, after the deforestation data was released.

Brazil is home to approximately 60% of the world's larg-

est rainforest, which plays a crucial role in absorbing greenhouse gases responsible for global warming.

The official deforestation rate is measured using the "Prodes" satellite system, operated by the National Institute for Space Research.

Deforestation has been steadily decreasing in the Amazon since 2022, with a cumulative drop of 71.2% over the four years since Lula was elected.

The figures, which have been attributed to greater monitoring and stiffer penalties for illegal logging, mark a dramatic about-turn since Jair Bolsonaro's presidency, from 2019 to 2022.

The Amazon lost around 11,600 square kilometers of forest under his watch — almost 60% more than in the previous four years, official figures show.

Flavio Bolsonaro has praised his father, who is serving a 27-year sentence for coup plotting, for having opposed what he calls a "radical environmental agenda." At the same time he has proposed treating the environment as a "strategic asset" and pledged to end "illegal deforestation" by 2029.

Mexican killers of Australian, American surfers get 158 years prison sentence

AFP
Ensenada, Mexico

A Mexican judge on Friday sentenced three men to more than 158 years' imprisonment for the murder of two Australian surfers and their American friend in 2024, in a case that drew global condemnation.

Brothers Jake and Callum Robinson, aged 30 and 33 respectively, and their friend Carter Rhoad, 30, were on a surfing trip to Mexico's Pacific coast when they were shot dead in Baja California state during an attempted robbery.

They were camping in a remote beachside area near the city of Ensenada when they were attacked on April 27, 2024.

Their bodies were found days later, dumped in a cliff-top well, with gunshot wounds to their heads. The callousness of their killings shocked Ensenada, a surfing Mecca that attracts people from around the world.

Judge Raul Hernandez ruled last week that the three Mexican defendants, identified only by their first names — Jesus Gerardo, Irineo Francisco and Angel Jesus — acted with premeditation.



A view of the facade of the civil court facilities in Ensenada. (AFP)

On Friday they were sentenced to 158 years and nine months each.

Prosecutors had requested damages of more than \$100,000, but the judge ruled against it and said any compensation would have to be pursued through civil proceedings. "There can never be justice for the loss of a son, but we are grateful that these men will never hurt anyone else," Rhoad's mother Page said after learning the verdict.

The Robinsons' parents had travelled to Mexico from Australia for the month-long trial and left after the verdict. They had spoken movingly in court about their loss.

"It's hard for a parent to lose a son, and we lost two sons," Martin Robinson said.

Debra Robinson said what hurt the most was that her sons "were

treated with such cruelty" in their final hours.

The families of the victims followed the sentencing hearing via video link. The former girlfriend of Jesus Gerardo, who is accused of leading the attack, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in November.

She admitted to goading her boyfriend into stealing the pickup's tires.

She said her ex-boyfriend had sneered at the surfers' pleas for their lives and bragged about items he robbed from them. A 9mm and a .45 caliber pistol were used in the attack. Rhoad's fiancée Natalie Weirtz and mother Page addressed the court by video link.

Weirtz called for the accused to "be punished so that no other family suffers the same pain."

Bolsonaro 'not' considering his father for a position in govt

Brazil's right-wing presidential candidate Flavio Bolsonaro said yesterday that he had not considered giving his father a government position in the event of victory, though he did not rule out the possibility. Former president Jair Bolsonaro, Flavio's father, is currently under house arrest for planning a coup after losing the 2022 presidential election to Lula. "He has never suggested that he would like to work in the government... he has never raised the subject with me, so it's not on the radar," Flavio said in an interview. The 45-year-old ruled out appointing his brother Eduardo Bolsonaro as foreign minister. Eduardo, 42, gave up his seat as a lawmaker when he moved to the US last year. He was sentenced in absentia in June to four years and two months in prison after urging US sanctions on his country during his father's coup trial. Flavio insisted that the "Lula era is about to end." (AFP)

Brazil's right embraces election betting odds amid growing polls scepticism

AFP
Rio de Janeiro

Polymarket, the world's largest prediction market, may be banned in Brazil, but right-wing figures have embraced its election odds as an accurate litmus test of voter intent, amid distrust of opinion polls.

Polymarket allows users to buy and sell shares tied to the probability of real-world events, from who will win the Oscars to the outcome of an election or potential ceasefire between Ukraine and Russia.

The hottest bet in Brazil in recent weeks has been the outcome of the election, which goes to a second round on October 25 and pits right-wing Senator Flavio Bolsonaro against incumbent Luiz

Inacio Lula da Silva.

"We are going to get rid of Lula forever," right-wing influencer Paulo Figueiredo said on X before the first round, sharing a Polymarket chart giving the son of former president Jair Bolsonaro a 63% overall probability of winning the presidency.

Before the first round, opinion polls showed Lula ahead in the first-round race.

Instead, he finished around two points behind his rival, renewing debate over whether pollsters are underestimating Brazil's right.

Recent polls have Flavio Bolsonaro in front of Lula ahead of the runoff by about two points, which is within the margin of error.

Bolsonaro's odds of winning currently stand at 77% on Polymarket.



Workers seal and configure electronic voting machines ahead of Brazil's presidential runoff election in Manaus, Brazil. (Reuters)

On social media, posts featuring charts and captions like "Flavio Bolsonaro has skyrocketed on Polymarket" or "Lula has lost" have gone viral in recent days.

Polymarket told AFP that bets placed on events via the platform constitute "neither polls nor official projections, nor expressions of support for any candidacy."

As multiple social media users claim Polymarket is the "best poll," experts warn it is misleading to use a prediction market as a barometer of electoral support.

Unlike opinion polls, which measure voting intentions at the moment voters are questioned, prediction platforms merely record financial transactions, political scientist Carolina Botelho told AFP.

Prediction markets also measure

expectations, and bettors can repeat the same bet multiple times, while polls attempt a snapshot of the entire population.

The US-based website is banned in dozens of other countries such as France, Germany, and Japan.

Users have traded about \$185mn in contracts on the outcome of Brazil's election.

Lula's administration banned Polymarket and other prediction platforms in the month of April. The government warned that such platforms could increase household debt in Brazil, although a VPN (virtual private network) can be used to bypass the ban.

Brazil's finance ministry has said it is monitoring the effectiveness of the ban on Polymarket and may take further measures to reinforce it.



Haze triggers highest-level alert in parts of Southeast Asia

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

Fires in Indonesia that have sent toxic smoke and disrupted daily life across Southeast Asia have triggered the highest-level alert by the regional bloc's meteorological monitor.

The months-long pollution spell has closed schools, fuelled a surge in respiratory conditions and restricted outdoor activities in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and East Timor.

"This thing needs to stop," Zul Hafiz, a 39-year-old teacher cycling from the Malaysian city of Shah Alam to the capital, told AFP yesterday, calling on the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to take action.

The 11-country organisation's Asean Specialised Meteorological Centre (ASMC) said in a notice on its website on Friday that it had activated "Alert Level 3 for the Southern Asean region" — the highest rung of a four-tiered alert system.

The alert level is triggered when there is a "high risk of severe trans-boundary haze in the region" and is reserved for widespread moderate to dense smoke haze, observed over two or more consecutive days.

The ASMC has already issued two Level 3 alerts this year, according to its website.

Singapore ranked second on IQAir's live ranking of the world's most polluted major cities behind Baghdad on Saturday, with Kuala Lumpur third. All readings showed "very hazardous" levels.

Indonesia said yesterday it had been using dry ice at one of South Sumatra province's main airports in an attempt to disperse the haze.

The country's national disaster mitigation agency said that 2.4 tonnes of dry ice were dispersed by plane.

"The smoke not only reduces visibility and disrupts aircraft operations, but also affects residents' health," the agency warned.

The haze has disrupted life across Southeast Asia, sparking fresh calls for action from those affected.



People are seen wearing masks in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. (AFP)

"It's a bit unfair on Malaysia because of the irresponsible behaviour of our neighbouring country," Khairul Azhar, a 33-year-old bank officer told AFP in Kuala Lumpur.

"This is affecting our weekend routine — not just for us but many Malaysians," he said.

In Indonesia's Palangkaraya — part of the epicentre of the fires where thick haze turned the skies into apocalyptic shades of yellow

and orange — residents said they were suffering from its effects yesterday.

"The haze has a big impact on us, especially on health and the economy, with our income decreasing," said Marzuki, a 38-year-old mechanic who like many in Indonesia, goes by only one name.

"Right now the economy is already very difficult, and the haze just makes it worse," he told AFP,



A family sits on the grass amid hazy conditions in Bukit Gombang, Tanah Datar, West Sumatera, yesterday. (AFP)

adding that this year's situation was worse than even previous major bouts of haze in 2015.

"Hopefully it rains soon, the fires go out, and the smoke disappears so that activities can return to normal and it's easier to earn a living again," he said.

Joko, 51, a construction worker, said he had no choice but to keep on working or he would lose out on income.

"The thick smoke, when inhaled, makes it hard to breathe and stings the eyes, but what else can you do? This is how we earn a living," Joko said, explaining he

had no fixed income and relied on daily wage jobs.

In East Timor, unhealthy air pollution persisted yesterday, including in the capital Dili, according to IQAir.

Singapore said Friday it would issue warnings to seven companies in Indonesia it identified as responsible for the fires.

Philippines foreign department spokesman for Asean issues, Dominic Xavier Imperial, said on Friday that the haze would be discussed at upcoming meetings ahead of a November Asean summit in Manila.

N Korea says it has tested AI-guided torpedo system

AFP
Seoul

North Korea has tested a "new-type" precision-guided torpedo system that uses artificial intelligence (AI) for target detection and guidance, state media reported yesterday, as the nuclear-armed country steps up weapons testing.

The announcement came days after Pyongyang said it had test-fired two types of cruise missiles from a submarine after weeks of friction with Seoul over a landmine explosion along their border.

Analysts say North Korea could be rapidly advancing its missile and weapons technology with support from Russia received in exchange for sending troops to support its war against Ukraine.

The underwater test-fire of the "super-speed" Zam-2.0 torpedo system took place on Thursday "to confirm the successful technical updating" of the weapon, the Korean Central News Agency said.

"AI technology was applied to the target detection and the guidance function of the new-type super-speed precisely guided torpedo," KCNA said.

The test proved "the core technology for raising the efficiency

of propulsion and the performance of rocket propulsion device," it said, adding it had completed "more than 180 rounds of different tests over the past five years".

Earlier this month, North Korea announced the AI-assisted launch of an intermediate-range hypersonic missile.

Pyongyang said at the time there was "no way to avoid" the hypersonic missile, which was "capable of changing its flight orbit at a low altitude".

Torpedoes are designed to strike enemy targets underwater at high speed, but the stated introduction of AI could also allow North Korea to carry out evasive manoeuvres and make autonomous decisions to confuse an adversary, analysts say.

"Republic of Korea and the US deploy decoy targets to divert torpedoes, but AI could potentially help distinguish real targets from decoys," Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University, told AFP.

"From torpedoes to submarine-launched weapons, Pyongyang is pouring resources into demonstrating that US strategic assets can be rendered ineffective."

In September, Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong-un emphasised the need to raise "the level of artificial intelligence" in the coun-



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. (Reuters/File photo)

try's weapons systems.

Yesterday's announcement came as the two Koreas appear to be intensifying an arms race over hypersonic missiles.

Hypersonic missiles travel at more than five times the speed of sound and can manoeuvre mid-flight, making them significantly harder to track and intercept.

Days after North Korea announced it had tested its AI-assisted intermediate-range hypersonic missile, Seoul test-fired its own weapon — a hypersonic glide vehicle it called a "key strategic asset capable of changing the course of the battlefield".

North Korea this week cast doubt on Seoul's test, saying it

China targets practical action from global governance forum next week

China is aiming to spur more effective and accessible global governance solutions at a forum next week, convened under its push for an alternative governance system for the world.

The Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs will host the Global Governance Forum, themed on rebuilding trust and confidence, on October 23-25 in the Xiongan New Area located within the northern province of Hebei.

The forum aims to further explore specific and effective approaches, as well as tangible and attainable solutions to help the international community solve problems, the president of the institute, Wu Ken, told reporters on Friday.

Around 180 foreign guests from the Global South, Europe, the US and elsewhere are expected at the forum, with 70% of attendees being experts, academics and prominent figures from fields including climate change, AI and trade. Chinese guests number more than 200.

Introduced last year by President Xi Jinping, the Global Governance Initiative is Beijing's diplomatic push for multilateralism and a reformed and more equitable global governance system.

China sees the current system as deficient, with the UN Charter not effectively observed and the Global South underrepresented. (Reuters)

Myanmar rebel fighter says military air strike killed 11

AFP
Yangon

A military air strike on a village in central Myanmar killed 11 people, a rebel fighter said yesterday.

Myanmar has been consumed by a civil war since a 2021 military coup ousted the elected government of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

The attack took place in territory controlled by the People's Defence Forces (PDF) rebel group in Yesagyo township, southwest of Mandalay city, at around 2:00pm on Friday, Bo Paw, a PDF member, said.

The attack killed 11 people, including six women and two children, among them a one-year-old who "could just walk a little bit", Bo Paw said.

The military could not be reached for comment.

A witness, who did not give his name for security reasons, described the aftermath of the attack.

"I saw three houses which were totally destroyed," he said. "These houses were at the roadside where the bomb hit."

"They all were killed on the spot, including an 11-year-old student who was riding a bicycle," he said.

More than 100,000 people have been killed in Myanmar since the start of the civil war, according to conflict monitor ACLED.

The PDF rose up around that time, alongside ethnic minority armies that have long resisted central rule.

However, after making significant gains against the military, the PDF forces find themselves on the back foot around Mandalay, Myanmar's second-largest city.

Rights groups decry IMF austerity demand

AFP
Bangkok

Coconut farmer Sombat Chuekrod travelled more than 200km to join hundreds on the streets of Bangkok on Friday demanding that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank change how they deal with the developing world.

Finance ministers, central bank governors and other top policymakers gathered this week in the Thai capital for the IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings, as decision-makers tackle an inflation crisis fuelled by the US war on Iran and other economic shocks.

The message from the IMF has been clear: after years of economic crises starting with the pandemic and continuing through the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, worldwide debt is too high and governments need to cut spending.

For the hundreds at the protest in Bangkok, as well as for rights groups and analysts interviewed by AFP, that message is the wrong one.

"We want the IMF and World Bank to rethink their role," said 51-year-old Sombat, as he walked alongside banners demanding reform of the institutions.

"Thai people are already poor. Please don't make them any poorer."

Protest organisers called on institutions like the IMF to focus on climate financing and tax reforms that aid poorer citizens rather than demand governments cut subsidies and social spending.

"Governments across the Global South are being forced to squeeze vital spending on public health, education, and social protection just to service illegitimate



Demonstrators march during a protest against the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Group in Bangkok on Friday. (AFP)

debts to wealthy nations and private creditors," Lidy Nacpil, one of the protest organisers, said in a statement.

Speaking to AFP on the sidelines of the meetings, Oxfam Executive Director Amitabh Behar said the world was facing an "inequality emergency", and that the IMF's calls for fiscal consolidation were code for cutting spending on essential social support during the war-fuelled inflation crisis.

"It will lead to (more) price rises. It might lead to hunger," he said. "You will see cuts further happening in terms of health, in terms of education, in terms of basic social security."

"So all that is going to suffer in a time when you actually need it more."

The IMF this week upgraded its world economic outlook, citing unexpected "resilience" in economic growth. But it warned that that prosperity was fragmented, with vulnerable countries falling even further behind.

It highlighted oil-importing

low-income countries not exposed to the boom in artificial intelligence investment as being the most vulnerable.

Yet the Fund's advice to all countries at a time of rising global debt levels has been to cut spending and rebuild fiscal buffers after years of spending on crises.

Asked what vulnerable countries should do, IMF deputy chief of research Petya Koeva Brooks told AFP that while their situation was indeed "more difficult", they had "no other choice" but to address their fiscal balances by either cutting spending or increasing revenues.

The IMF has proposed making energy and food subsidies offered in the wake of the Iran war more targeted, even as the UN Development Programme warned this week that if such subsidies were cut entirely, it could plunge 130mn people into poverty.

Protest organiser Nacpil questioned in an interview how one could draw a line between who deserves a subsidy and who does not.

"How poor do you have to be for them to think that you will need some support?" she asked.

Reza Baqir of Alvarez & Marsal's Sovereign Advisory Services said he has experience with the difficult trade-offs policymakers in low-income countries face in such crises.

"During my time as Pakistan's central bank governor, I saw firsthand how difficult it can be for countries to balance the needs of the countries' citizens with the needs of the IMF programme," he said.

"At the same time, it also reinforced the importance of addressing domestic governance challenges, so countries can build their own resources and fiscal buffers, reduce their reliance on the IMF and support their citizens in a targeted and prudent manner."

Christina Segal-Knowles of the Rockefeller Foundation said developing countries are "effectively being given two bad options" — either take on debt at currently sky-high interest rates, or make extraordinary spending cuts and potentially give up on development goals.

She proposed a "growth and investment reset" that ramps up funding to countries in need as part of a set of measures designed to provide sustained support at concessional rates.

On the streets of Bangkok on Friday, protesters prepared to spend the night under a flyover.

"We are raising our voices because we believe that the network of citizens present here are key stakeholders in the negotiations," said activist Supaporn Malailay.

"This is not merely a matter of borrowing money; it is about shaping the very structure and direction of the nation's development."



Commuters ride past inoperative traffic lights following a nationwide electricity blackout in Colombo yesterday. (AFP)

Lanka suffers 6-hour nationwide blackout

Sri Lanka suffered a six-hour nationwide electricity blackout yesterday after the national grid tripped, possibly because solar power generation exceeded consumption, officials said. The country was without grid power from around noon until dusk, when supplies were restored in stages across the island of 22mn people, the state electricity authority said. Energy Minister Anura Kumathilaka said the cause of the major breakdown was still under investigation, but engineers suspected an imbalance caused by high solar power generation while demand was muted on a weekend holiday. The system was restored after authorities made repeated appeals to rooftop solar system

owners to disconnect their systems to help stabilise the grid. The entire grid shut down in February 2025, when solar power generation exceeded consumption on a bright, sunny Sunday. It took more than six hours to restore supplies at the time. Sri Lanka has an installed solar power capacity of just over 3,000MW, while daytime demand ranges from 2,000-2,500MW. Tax concessions have encouraged consumers to switch to solar and sell their surplus electricity to the grid, creating imbalances that the utility provider is struggling to manage. The government aims to increase solar power generation capacity to nearly 4,400 megawatts within three years, a 388% increase from 2024. (AFP)

India's 'cockroach' movement founder released after detention

Reuters
New Delhi

India's "cockroach" youth movement leader was released by an Indian court yesterday, a day after he was detained for trying to lead another protest rally in New Delhi calling for the resignation of the country's election chief. Abhijeet Dipke, founder of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), rose to prominence this year when a weeks-long sit-in contributed to India's education minister resigning. CJP's legal affairs head Ratna Singh said Dipke was released after he agreed to certain conditions. Singh gave no details of the terms. Dipke's youth-led group, opposition parties and student organisations have held near-daily protests this month demanding Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar's resignation over a revision of voter lists that they say favours Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). More than 130mn voters were deleted during the revision. The Election Commission has de-



Security personnel detain a demonstrator during a protest seeking the resignation of India's Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, in New Delhi, yesterday. (Reuters)

nied favouring any party and said wrongly deleted voters can re-enrol. The BJP has accused rivals of trying to undermine democracy by wrongly questioning legitimate electoral processes. Student activist Neha Bora, a prominent face of the protests, who was also detained on Friday as she tried to reach central Delhi with dozens of supporters, was released on Saturday. "Please, spare the people of In-

dia. Impeach Gyanesh Kumar and halt SIR (special intensive revision), so that the ordinary citizens of this country can breathe a sigh of relief, feel at ease, and have their voting rights ensured," Bora told ANI news agency after she was released. Dipke was detained on Friday as he stepped out of a house in central Delhi, with police hauling him into a police car and driving away after a brief argument.



Cockroach Janta Party founder Abhijeet Dipke reacts as he leaves after the Special Executive Magistrate ordered him released in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

Dipke had called Friday's protest in support of two CJP leaders detained and sent to jail this week for five days for demonstrating at a protest site in violation of a ban. Earlier on Friday, police had met Dipke and warned him against going ahead with the protest. Student groups called for more protest action on Saturday. The movement, which was mobilised by the youth and joined by many opposition parties, has emerged as one of the biggest political challenges faced by Modi and the BJP in the prime minister's 12 years in power.

19 dead, 25 hurt in stampede at India religious gathering

AFP
Kolkata

At least 19 people were killed and two dozen more injured yesterday in eastern India after a stampede that occurred during sudden rainfall at a Hindu religious gathering, officials and Indian media said. West Bengal's Chief Minister Suvenhu Adhikari told reporters the fatalities included a seven-year-old girl, adding that 25 other people were injured outside a pavilion "in a stampede" at the Hindu festival of Durga Puja in the city of Kolkata. "Six bodies have so far been identified," Adhikari said. A senior police official at the scene told AFP an announcement caused "commotion" after it started raining at night and the "crowd waiting outside the pandal (pavilion) was pushing, pulling and rushing forward and fell on the ground, leading to the stampede." Afterwards medics were seen moving injured people on stretchers, including a police officer, into a local hospital. Several relatives of victims cried and held one another as they mourned the loss of loved ones. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the tragedy in a short statement on Facebook. "The stampede in Kolkata is



Medical workers move an injured police officer on a stretcher, following the stampede, in front of the emergency building of Calcutta Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata yesterday. (AFP)

saddening. Condolences to the bereaved families. Wishing the injured a speedy recovery," he wrote. "The West Bengal Government is providing all possible help to the affected families." Adhikari originally announced 17 fatalities. The Press Trust of India (PTI) reported the death toll rose by two to 19, quoting Adhikari in a later statement. Nine dead bodies have been released to their families, the PTI reported. It also said police have taken the closed circuit footage of the

festival and authorities would initiate action against those seen on CCTV who appeared to fail in their responsibility for crowd control. Videos shot before the stampede appeared to show large crowds of people waiting to enter the pavilion, in an area with narrow lanes that allow only a few people to walk in at a time, according to Indian Express. Deadly crowd incidents are a frequent occurrence at Indian mass events, such as religious festivals, due to poor management and safety lapses.

Last year, a stampede at India's Kumbh Mela religious fair killed 30 people and injured several others, and 11 fans were crushed to death in Bengaluru during celebrations for the local cricket team's first Indian Premier League title. The same year, 36 people were killed after a stampede broke out at a campaign rally of a popular actor-turned-politician in southern Tamil Nadu state. In 2024, 121 people were killed in northern Uttar Pradesh state during a Hindu religious gathering.

India's food regulator proposes ban on added sugars in infant foods

India's food safety regulator yesterday proposed a ban on adding sucrose and fructose to food products for infants up to six months of age, tightening rules on added sugars in infant nutrition products. Under existing rules, lactose and glucose polymers are the preferred carbohydrate sources in infant nutrition products, while sucrose and fructose can be added when required, subject to prescribed limits, the regulator said. The move comes amid an intensified food safety crackdown in India, where regulators have forced local eateries and branded restaurants to suspend operations, while a push for front-of-pack warning labels has rattled the country's more than \$100bn packaged food industry. The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said the proposed measure aims to reduce infants' exposure to added sugars and address health risks linked to childhood obesity.

The existing regulations set nutritional composition, quality and safety standards for infant nutrition products intended for children from birth to 24 months of age, it said. Activists and officials have long raised concerns about rising obesity rates, particularly among children. India had 180mn overweight or obese adults in 2021, a figure projected to reach 450mn by 2050, according to a study published in the medical journal *The Lancet*. The FSSAI and some state regulators have intensified checks on food safety in recent months, releasing regular public updates including photos and videos of raids that have drawn widespread attention online. In August, the FSSAI proposed a red hexagonal stamp on labels of food products high in any two or more nutrients of concern, but tightened the proposal after a public outcry, saying a warning would now be required if even one nutrient exceeds the prescribed level. (Reuters)

At least 10 killed in fire at Bangladesh beach resort

At least 10 people were killed and several others injured in a fire yesterday at a resort near Inani Beach in Cox's Bazar, a popular tourist destination in southeastern Bangladesh, officials said. The fire broke out at a three-storey wooden resort. The resort was operating without a valid fire safety licence, fire service officials said. A five-member investigation committee has been formed to investigate the cause of the fire. Authorities also said they would examine possible regulatory failures. The incident has raised concerns about fire safety compliance at tourist resorts in the coastal district. (Reuters)

UK expels Romanian convicted of arson

Britain has deported a Romanian man jailed for two years in June for arson attacks on two properties linked to then British prime minister Keir Starmer, the interior ministry said yesterday. Ukraine-born Stanislav Carpiuc was found guilty of the attacks alongside Ukrainian citizen Roman Lavrynovych, who was jailed for seven years over the May 2025 attacks on two London houses and a vehicle. "This individual has now been deported from the UK," a Home Office spokesperson said, without indicating the country to which Carpiuc was being expelled. "This was an abhorrent attack and the conviction and imprisonment of these men should send a clear message to anyone blinded by the promise of money from strangers. You will be caught and face severe consequences," the spokesperson added.

Several British media have linked the attacks to Russian online sabotage. The judge in the case did not indicate a direct Russian link in his summing up, but the court found that Carpiuc and Lavrynovych had acted on the orders of a Russian-speaking contact on Telegram, identified as "EL" and saved in their phones under the name "El Money". The court found Carpiuc was tasked with attempting to collect money offered for carrying out the attacks. A BBC investigation named "EL" as a young Russian diplomat, Evgeny Lyukshin. The attacks organiser posted messages on Telegram groups aimed at Russian- and Ukrainian-speaking people seeking work in London, according to the Financial Times. (AFP)

Australia confirms first case of H5N1 bird flu on sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island

Reuters
Sydney

Australia yesterday confirmed its first case of H5N1 bird flu on the sub-Antarctic Macquarie Island, with the deadly virus found in the remote territory's vulnerable elephant seal population. Australia's Chief Veterinary Officer Beth Cookson said that official testing confirmed the highly pathogenic virus strain "in samples collected from an elephant seal and a kelp gull on Macquarie Island, marking the

first H5 event on this island". Australia in June became the last continent to report bird flu, although the virus was detected in late 2025 on another of its sub-Antarctic territories, Heard Island, where more than 13,000 baby seals were killed by the virus, according to local media. Like Heard Island, Macquarie Island, a UNESCO World Heritage-listed territory located in the Southern Ocean halfway between Australia's Tasmania state and Antarctica, is a key breeding ground for southern elephant seals. The mammals, which can weigh up to 3,600kg (7,936

pounds), are particularly susceptible to H5 bird flu, with pup mortality rates in some cases of more than 90%, according to the federal government. In August, Australia's environment department said it would withdraw personnel from a research station on Macquarie Island due to the "psycho-social risk to expeditioners of a potential H5 avian influenza outbreak". Expert assessments predicted the virus would likely cause a significant elephant seal mortality event during the upcoming breeding season, the environment department said.

Millions may be forced to move as climate change hits South Asia: UN

AFP
New Delhi

Climate change is threatening livelihoods and forcing people from their homes across South Asia, but technology and government action could help limit the damage, the UN migration chief told AFP on Friday. Rising seas, flooding and drought threaten homes and farmland, Amy Pope, Director General of the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), said during a visit to New Delhi. In the Himalayas, she pointed to Nepal's August 26 disaster, when a mountain and glacier collapse triggered deadly flooding, where IOM sent humanitarian aid to help. In a worst-case scenario, up to 40.5mn people in South Asia may be forced to move by 2050, according to IOM. "When they can't produce food, when they can't feed their livestock, it increases the likelihood of displacement," said Pope. "The first adaptation is often for people to move." Pope said climate change was also accelerating urbanisation in India. "As people seek shelter from heat, they're going into urban centres," she said. The risks are particularly acute in South Asia, where vast populations and limited resources leave many communities vulnerable.

"There's a lack of urgency globally about the risks that vulnerable communities are facing," Pope said, warning that funding to help residents prepare for climate change remained inadequate. "The cost of a humanitarian disaster is in the billions. The cost of investing in some of the resilience measures can be far less," she said. Better data and artificial intelligence (AI) could help governments identify communities at risk before disaster strikes, Pope said. "With the advancements in AI forecasting, you can now better anticipate those communities that are at high risk of displacement," Pope said. By combining weather forecasts with information about local livelihoods, authorities can identify which communities most need help. "If you know a community is at risk, we don't need to wait until they're displaced to respond," she said. Measures could include improving farming methods, training people for other jobs and, where necessary, relocating communities repeatedly hit by floods or drought. Finding the money for such programmes is a major obstacle, Pope said, with governments often struggling to navigate the systems available to fund climate adaptation. India's investments in early-warning systems, disaster

response and technology offer grounds for optimism, she said. But no government can meet the scale of the challenge alone. International migration can also help people earn a living while filling labour shortages abroad. South Asia already has established migration routes, offering opportunities to build on existing links. "Here we have government partners who recognise both the threats to their communities but they're also using migration as a tool for development," Pope said. She warned that growing demand for workers must be matched by safe, legal routes to employment. Otherwise, migrants risk exploitation by traffickers and smugglers, including through fraudulent overseas job offers. India's technological capacity could also help its workers compete internationally as artificial intelligence reshapes employment, Pope said. AI could threaten some jobs, particularly those involving routine analysis of documents and reports, but other sectors still rely heavily on human labour. "If we can marry that capacity with the labour mobility, so that the workers are being skilled for those jobs as they're emerging, they will be ahead," Pope said. "This is a place where I have more optimism than in places where we're dealing with the most acute crises," she said.



Why neocloud provider CoreWeave’s troubles are rattling the AI boom

CoreWeave’s mounting debt is raising fresh concerns about the AI boom, as investors question whether demand can justify the billions being borrowed to build data centres.

Shares and bonds of the Nvidia-backed company have tumbled despite its CEO’s assurances of a strong contract backlog, fueling a broader selloff in technology stocks.

Investors are worried what its troubles could mean for the industry.

CoreWeave rents out computing power from Nvidia processors to companies developing and running AI, including Microsoft and OpenAI. It is one of the leading “neocloud” providers, a group of newer cloud companies that are growing rapidly to meet demand for scarce and expensive AI chips.

These neocloud companies give customers access to computing power without requiring them to build their own data centres. However, supplying such capacity

requires heavy upfront investment in chips and infrastructure, often financed with debt. The company, which has never turned a profit, has about \$50bn in debt, according to data compiled by LSEG.

It raised its annual capital spending forecast by \$4bn in August to between \$35bn and \$39bn. Analysts expect revenue of nearly \$13bn this year and a loss of \$2.13bn.

The yields on its bonds due in 2031, which are rated junk, have spiked to about 16%, while the cost of insuring its debt against default has climbed to about 1,000 basis points, reflecting growing concern among creditors. CEO Mike Intrator told employees in an internal memo seen by Reuters that its deal backlog more than covers its debt obligations. The company had a \$104.2bn revenue backlog at the end of the second quarter, followed by more than \$25bn in new commitments early in the third quarter.

Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang has also downplayed the concerns, saying CoreWeave’s financial strength is

improving and he sees no need to backstop it. The chip giant has agreed to buy unsold CoreWeave capacity through April 2032. CoreWeave’s business depends on two things: demand for AI computing and lenders’ willingness to finance the infrastructure supplying it. But a selloff in its shares suggests a lack of confidence among investors in the latter, even as the company cites strong demand.

The concern is not that AI demand will collapse, but that higher borrowing costs could make the business harder to sustain if demand were to weaken sharply. “It looks more like investors questioning how the build-out is being funded than a sudden collapse in appetite for AI computing,” said Axel Rudolph, chief technical analyst at IG Group.

“CoreWeave is quickly becoming the AI trade’s canary in the coal mine,” said Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB. Investors are questioning whether AI revenue can grow fast enough to cover the cost of

building and financing the infrastructure.

CoreWeave has to spend heavily upfront before it can collect the revenue from its contracts. Higher interest rates could drive up financing costs and further squeeze returns. The hardware itself poses another risk. Chips lose value as newer generations arrive, pushing providers to spend even more to replace them. The concerns, however, go beyond CoreWeave. US technology giants are expected to spend more than \$700bn on AI infrastructure this year.

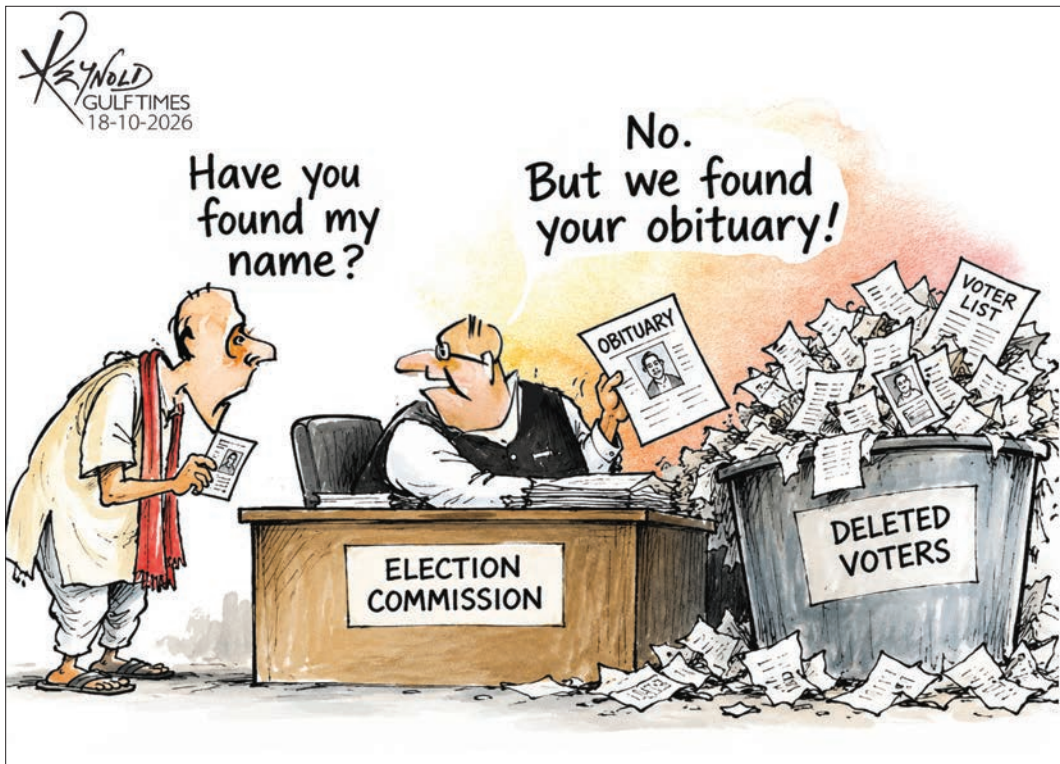
One potential consequence would be a broader financing squeeze, with lenders demanding higher returns or becoming less willing to fund other AI projects.

That could force providers to scale back expansion, curbing equipment purchases and affecting the computing capacity customers expect. A setback could also deepen doubts that the AI investment frenzy is outpacing returns, piling further pressure on technology stocks. — Reuters

Diplomacy in Baghdad



Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan (right) meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on the margins of the 52nd Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Baghdad. (AFP)



Gen Z pours out on India’s streets as dissent surges

By Tora Agarwala, Saurabh Sharma and Sunil Kataria
Reuters

Despite tens of thousands of security personnel deployed to stop them, youth protesters in India scaled barricades last week, chanted anti-government slogans and scuffled with police officers trying to drag them away.

“Long live the revolution,” shouted one young man before police bundled him into a bus.

Street protests in India this year are likely to be higher than at any time in the past decade, the independent Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project has said, as dissent mounts against Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government and Gen Z activists pour on to the streets.

Analysts say the youth protests, and growing support for the opposition, form the worst crisis for Modi since he came to power in 2014, with people under 30 making up nearly one quarter of the country’s 1bn voters. But his government remains stable and the next general election is not due until 2029.

“The nation has suddenly found its voice,” said Yogendra Yadav, an anti-government activist who has played a leading part in the demonstrations. “I would not say this is the beginning of the end of the Modi regime, but this definitely is the beginning of a downward spiral.”

The government and Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party declined comment for this story. The recent protests in the capital Delhi and elsewhere were focused on demands that Election Commission chief Gyanesh Kumar resign over a voter roll revision that activists and opposition parties say favours the BJP and has helped it win several recent state elections.

The ruling BJP, the government and the Election Commission deny the accusations. The BJP says the party’s wins have come from Modi’s popularity and strong economic growth.

But the demonstrations are also reflecting something larger:

■ Youth-led protests pose unprecedented challenge for Modi government ■ Demonstrators defy huge security deployment in Delhi ■ Anger spans jobs, education, civil liberties, voter rolls ■ Analysts say fear of challenging Modi is fading



CJP leader Ajinkya Shinde addresses a press conference. (AFP)

growing anger at Modi for failing to deliver jobs to millions of unemployed youth in his 12 years in power despite the surge in headline economic growth.

Other issues have also fed into the anti-establishment mood, including leaks of question papers in key examinations for jobs and education, the high number of crimes against women and the rise of billionaire businessmen alleged to have close links to Modi.

Modi has a strongman image and his government has previously cracked down on pockets of dissent harshly, but that hasn’t fazed the youngsters on the streets. “The fear in us is gone,” said Ananya Raturi, a 21-year-old Delhi University



Police detain Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, during a protest organised by opposition parties demanding the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, in New Delhi. (Reuters)

student who was part of massive protests in the capital on Saturday.

Speaking after she clung to the windscreen wipers of a bus that police were using to detain protesters, Raturi said: “We don’t fear being detained or beaten up by the police. This generation enjoys it.” Police have denied allegations that they beat up people at the demonstrations, saying protesters were handled according to prescribed procedures.

THE RISE OF THE COCKROACHES

The protests have been energised by the emergence of the first nationally resonant youth-led movement of the Modi era, the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP),

followers also on the streets.

The unrest has drawn comparisons with neighbouring Bangladesh and Nepal, where youth-led protest movements brought down governments in recent years, although analysts caution that India’s political landscape and Modi’s popularity make such parallels imperfect.

Many of the youth protesters grew up during Modi’s rise to power, buoyed by promises of jobs, opportunity and cleaner governance. A decade later, many say those aspirations remain unfulfilled and they say the Hindu nationalist government appears more focused on religious issues and divisive politics against minorities, especially Muslims.

The government has previously said the economy generated 168.3mn new jobs in the six years through 2024. Modi has repeatedly rejected allegations of any bias, saying his government works for all Indians. 30-year-old Gauri Seth, a medical student based in Kolkata, became a voter in 2014, the same year the Modi government came to power.

Seth said the Modi government promised “a lot, but has failed to deliver.”

“Instead they focus on things like religious infrastructure. There are cases of violence against minorities. When anyone speaks against them, it is labelled as treason or sedition.”



Police personnel detain supporters of the Cockroach Janata Party. (AFP)

IT’S MOSTLY ABOUT JOBS

When Modi came to power, he promised the creation of millions of jobs each year. Yet, despite India’s strong economic growth since then, unemployment remains at slightly above 5%, according to government data.

A Reuters poll last year said that data masks the severity of joblessness, especially among the youth. Unemployment among the 367mn people in the country aged 15-29 stood at 9.9% in 2025, according to the data.

Research by Azim Premji University’s State of Working India 2026 report found unemployment among graduates aged 15-25 was nearly 40%, while about one in five graduates aged 25-29 remained jobless. In May, unrest erupted across the country when the government invalidated examinations for national medical colleges, a pathway to jobs for the poor and the middle class, after test papers were leaked.

Rubby Singh, a 30-year-old social activist in Delhi, said repeated examination paper leaks had deepened a sense among young Indians that the system was denying them opportunities even after years of study.

“This generation has been facing the brunt of not having proper education, which leads to not being able to get good opportunities,” she said.

While national elections are not due for almost three years, the country’s biggest state, Uttar Pradesh, goes to the polls early next year, which could provide a test of Modi’s popularity.

Analysts however remain cautious about the outcome. The BJP may not be as strong as it was a few months ago, said Rahul Verma, a fellow at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi. “But whether there are going to be electoral implications, it is too early to say.”

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Looting, blazes, clashes in France amid protests

AFP
Paris

Police and protesters clashed violently in Paris and other French cities yesterday on the sidelines of nationwide marches against soaring inflation, with one demonstrator's hand blown off, multiple blazes set and looters breaking into dozens of stores to strip them bare.

The widespread unrest follows weeks of student protests and deepens political uncertainty in France as it readies for elections in six months' time to replace President Emmanuel Macron.

Macron and his government were criticised by many of the demonstrators, who numbered 500,000 across the country, according to the CGT union. Authorities did not immediately give their estimate of numbers.

Police used tear gas and water cannon against masked protesters in Paris and other cities who were throwing projectiles and aiming fireworks. Several parked cars were torched in the capital, and more than 130 arrests made.

In the southern city of Saint-Etienne, a male protester had his hand blown off by a police crowd-control grenade, a police source



French Republican Security Corps police officers clash with protesters during a demonstration against the 'high cost of living', in Toulouse, southwestern France, yesterday. (AFP)

told AFP. His maiming came after a 15-year-old lost his hand October 5 to a police stun grenade during another protest in the city of Lens.

In Lyon, protesters set ablaze a tourist office in the city centre, and smashed their way into town halls in the cities of Marseille and Lille, where they vandalised the premises before leaving.

Dozens of shops were looted, including many in Marseille, among them a Hermes boutique, an Apple store in Lille, several shops in Nice and at least one mobile phone outlet in Paris, AFP journalists saw.

A crowd of more than 300 protesters tried to move up Paris's

Champs-Elysees, home to flagship luxury stores. As police firing tear gas blocked their way, they yelled "All cops are bastards".

The looting and confrontations with police were being carried out by masked youths on the sidelines of marches that were largely peaceful and which attracted people of all ages, including families with children.

Paris mayor Emmanuel Gregoire stressed that "the overwhelming majority of demonstrators" wanted to "march calmly", but "acts of vandalism" were tarnishing their protest.

In Paris, tens of thousands

marched across the east and north of the city in one major march, some shouting "Everyone hates the police" and "Macron, resign".

Demonstrators' hostility towards the police had sharpened over the course of the preceding student protests, when several teens were maimed and thousands were arrested.

France's Yellow Vest movement, which eight years ago staged street protests against Macron's government over planned fuel tax hikes, had called for the yesterday's "yellow and youth" demonstrations.

The principal grievance was the cost of living — pushed up in part by the war in the Middle East — that has helped send inflation soaring in Europe as elsewhere.

But there were other issues too. Opposition politicians vying to succeed Macron have seized upon the protests.

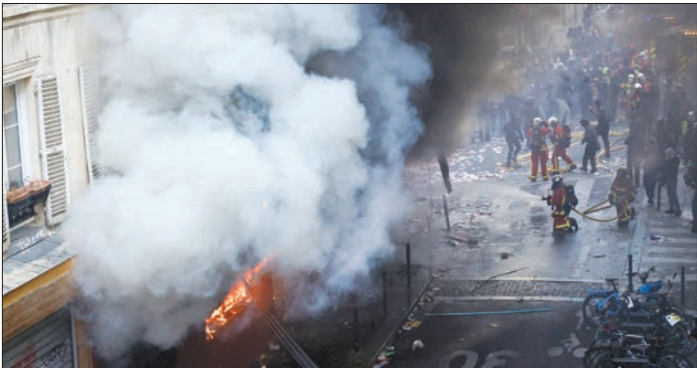
Far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen, who has sided with the police, said on X: "Looting, pillaging, attacking police — rioters have once again sullied the October 17 demonstrations over the cost of living."

She claimed that the protesters' demands had been "hijacked by the far-left".

Her far-left rival Jean-Luc Melenchon, insisted early Saturday



Graffiti reading 'It's for the high school students' is seen on a wall of a damaged Monoprix grocery store during a demonstration to protest against the 'high cost of living', in Paris yesterday. (AFP)



Firefighters work at the scene of a fire during a demonstration against the 'high cost of living', in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

that "everything is passing off peacefully", while accusing television news of "flooding us with images of violence in dozens of cities".

Several protesters sought to draw parallels with the French Revolution of 1789.

"It's the Revolution — we're taking the Bastille!" some shouted in Marseille during the forced entry of the mayor's offices.

In the western city of La Rochelle, marchers streamed behind

a placard reading: "Revolution or death."

And in the southern city of Montpellier, a giant blue sign reading "The people will win" was unfurled above a central square.

"The government is trembling and it's right to tremble because when the French people are angry, they never let up," Ryad Rani, the head of the LSU high school student representative body, told journalists in Paris.

Zelensky says Trump could lift more Russia sanctions

AFP
Kyiv

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that he feared the US would lift more sanctions on Russia and that President Donald Trump's action only "rewards" Kremlin leader Vladimir Putin.

Trump heightened a battle with Zelensky on Friday when he signed an executive order that waived sweeping US sanctions targeting Russia's energy revenues.

The decision came despite Russia increasing strikes on Ukraine in the fifth year of its war, which has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions.

Trump had already announced that he has agreed a deal with Putin to allow exports of Russian diesel in exchange for the easing of sanctions, and Zelensky said he feared more concessions.

"Unfortunately, the lifting of sanctions will continue. I believe the 'diesel deal' is just the first step," Zelensky told reporters.

He said he still "personally" hoped that Trump will do "everything in his power" to make Putin end the war but added: "You cannot achieve this by limiting Ukraine's responses to Russia for killing our people. And certainly not by lifting sanctions."

Ukraine said at least two people



Local residents react as they stand among rubbles of residential buildings damaged following a Russian missile attack in Zaporizhzhia, yesterday. (AFP)

were killed in Russian air strikes yesterday.

Zelensky said the US decision on Friday came the same day as Russia attacked 15 critical power generation facilities across Ukraine in "one of the largest" attacks on Ukraine's energy grid.

Officials said one person was killed in the southern city of Kherson in an attack that also wounded 22 people, including two children, and that another was killed in the northeastern city of Sumy.

The Lindsey Graham Act — named after the late US senator

who sponsored the bill — targeted Russia's energy and defence sectors, as well as Putin and the so-called "shadow fleet" of tankers used by Moscow to circumvent Western sanctions.

"It is important that everyone in America also sees what is really happening," Zelensky said on social media.

The Lindsey Graham Act, he said, was "supposed to impose truly effective pressure on Russia to bring this war to an end" adding that the act "could have helped enormously — and still can!"

"A US sanctions blackout, easing pressure on the aggressor, financial rewards for Putin — all of this only encourages him to keep attacking," he warned.

The Ukrainian leader said Russia wanted to cause a "blackout" in Ukraine ahead of winter: "Russia is trying to leave millions of our people without electricity and heating." He called on allies to pressure Moscow to "stop this."

Last winter saw hundreds of thousands in Ukraine consistently without heat and electricity in freezing temperatures.

Russia yesterday hailed US President Donald Trump's move to waive new sanctions on it as "historic", as Ukraine worries he is taking Moscow's side in Europe's worst conflict since World War II. Trump signed an executive order Friday that waived sweeping US sanctions targeting Russia's energy revenues amid a clash with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The decision came despite Russia increasing strikes on Ukraine — especially its capital, Kyiv — in the fifth year of its offensive, which has killed hundreds of thousands of people and displaced millions. "The Trump administration's suspension of the Graham Act is an important and truly historic moment," Kirill Dmitriev, envoy for Russian President Vladimir Putin, said on social media.

The Lindsey Graham Act — named after the deceased US senator who sponsored the bill — targeted Russia's energy and defence sectors, as well as Putin and the so-called "shadow fleet" of tankers used by Moscow to circumvent Western sanctions.

The Kremlin and Putin have not yet reacted to the move, which is a major diplomatic win for Moscow. Dmitriev said the act would have caused "serious damage first and foremost to the US economy and global markets".

Trump's waiver comes after he struck a deal with Putin to ease

existing sanctions on Russia in exchange for Moscow releasing large amounts of diesel onto global markets.

He announced the executive order Friday, shortly after Putin appeared in military uniform and said Moscow aims to capture the rest of east Ukraine.

US-led talks to end the war in Ukraine have not led to a breakthrough. Both Putin and Zelensky have frustrated Trump in the past with a lack of progress in halting the grinding war.

The move is bound to spook Ukraine's European allies, who worry the White House is taking the Kremlin's side.

Russia has increased strikes on Kyiv in recent weeks, squeezing the city as Ukrainians brace for another winter of war.

Ukraine has been struggling to shoot down Russian missiles and has been left scrambling to boost defences ahead of winter.

Russia controls large swathes of eastern and southern Ukraine and Putin has repeatedly said Moscow intends to seize the rest of east Ukraine by force.

"On the whole I see a positive trend in the operations of the troop groupings," Putin told army leaders Friday, dressed in military attire.

"Undoubtedly, one of the main objectives remains the liberation of the Donetsk People's Republic," he added, using the Kremlin's name for the eastern Donetsk region. (AFP)

Romania shoots down drones over Black Sea

AFP
Bucharest

Romania said yesterday it shot down two drones over the Black Sea in the latest in a spate of incidents believed to be spillover from Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ships have been attacked by drones in the Black Sea off the coast of Romania and Bulgaria.

"Two drones were engaged and shot down a few minutes ago by Romanian military pilots over the Black Sea, moments after they had illegally entered our country," Defence Minister Radu Miruta wrote on Facebook.

The drones were shot down by F-16 fighter jets some 20km (13 miles) southeast of the town of Sulina.

"The first drone entered national airspace at 17:59 (14:59 GMT) and was shot down within two minutes," Miruta said. The second was shot down at 18:05, five minutes after entering Romanian airspace.

Two Romanian Air Force F-16s engaged the drones, according to a defence ministry press release.

"The Black Sea will be safe again," Foreign Minister Oana Toiu tweeted on X, adding that Nato will discuss the issue on

Tuesday at a North Atlantic Council meeting.

"The Black Sea serves as a critical maritime artery for the global export of grain, energy resources, and industrial commodities, making its stability vital to international food and energy security," she wrote.

Several drone attacks on shipping in the Black Sea were reported in October off Romania and Bulgaria. The latest on Thursday left seven crew missing off Romania's coast.

"The Black Sea serves as a critical maritime artery for the global export of grain, energy resources, and industrial commodities, making its stability vital to international food and energy security"

President Nicusor Dan said on Thursday, after meeting with Nato chief Mark Rutte, that Romania needs "equipment to deal with a new kind of challenge".

Rutte said the military alliance would "continue to work closely with our allies in the Black Sea, adjusting our deterrence and defence posture as needed".

Nato forces have previously shot down four drones this year in Romanian airspace.

Smiling Pope returns to Vatican after cancer surgery

AFP
Vatican City

Pope Leo XIV left hospital to enthusiastic cheers and applause from well-wishers and returned home to the Vatican yesterday, four days after undergoing surgery for lung cancer.

The 71-year-old Pope was seen crossing the lobby of the Gemelli hospital on foot and exiting the building, smiling as he shook hands and waved.

He spoke briefly to the doctors who treated him and hospital officials before pausing to speak with a Ukrainian girl, a cancer survivor who wanted to wish him well in his recovery.

Soon after leaving the hospital, the Pope's black SUV was seen driving through a side entrance to the Vatican.

Leo's discharge capped five days of uncertainty that rattled the Vatican and the world's 1.4bn Catholics, less than two years into the Chicago-born Pope's papacy.

Leo was elected head of the Catholic Church on May 8, 2025.

Earlier yesterday, Leo's doctors said the Pope was "fit for discharge", according to the Vatican.

He had been at the Gemelli hospital north



Pope Leo XIV greets people as he leaves by car the Gemelli University Hospital, four days after a surgery in Rome, yesterday. (AFP)

of the Vatican since Tuesday when doctors removed part of his right lung to extract a cancerous tumour.

"Considering the blood tests, the chest X-ray done this morning, and evaluating the clinical picture, the Holy Father has been deemed fit for discharge," doctors Luigi Carbone and Stefano Margaritora wrote in a note published by the Vatican.

The Vatican said that Leo on Sunday planned to recite the Angelus prayer from the window of the Apostolic Palace overlooking St Peter's Square, as is customary.

Before his discharge, Leo celebrated mass at

noon, according to the Vatican, as he has in recent days, in a room on the 10th floor where he has been recovering.

The 13-year-old Ukrainian girl who spoke with the Pope outside the hospital had earlier yesterday told AFP that she was rooting for him.

The cancer survivor said she had met the Pope last year in Rome, "and he blessed me for a successful treatment."

"With his support, I've now overcome my illness, and I want to give him my positive energy so that he, too, can overcome his illness as quickly as possible," she said.

News that the otherwise active Pope had a cancerous tumour removed from his lung was met with trepidation among the world's Catholics and other supporters.

But his doctors have said Leo's recovery has been progressing normally as they await the results of tests that will determine the course of action to take.

Leo has resumed some work, making a call on Friday to Russian President Vladimir Putin to urge a ceasefire in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian city of Oleshky.

Up in the air, however, is a planned papal voyage to South America, scheduled for November 6-17 to visit Uruguay, Argentina and Peru.

Leo has cancelled all his audiences until October 20.

Tens of thousands march in Lisbon over housing and living costs

Tens of thousands of people marched through central Lisbon yesterday to protest against soaring living costs and a deepening housing crisis in Portugal, increasing pressure on the centre-right government. Portugal's biggest union, CGTP, which called the rally, said "many tens of thousands" packed one of

the capital's main avenues. Police gave no crowd estimate.

Protesters say low wages are failing to keep pace with housing costs and the rising cost of living, leaving many people struggling to make ends meet in the European Union and Nato member state. The demonstration followed days of growing unrest, including a tent

camp set up by housing activists in the northern city of Porto that police cleared in an operation on Monday. It coincides with protests in France against rising costs and declining public services, and smaller protests in Belgium. There are also mass protests in Albania, where protesters are demanding the prime minister's resignation.

Portugal's inflation hit 3.6% in September, driven by rising food and fuel prices, the latter up 15% year-on-year following an increase in tensions in the Middle East. House prices have more than doubled since 2017, while rents for new leases have nearly doubled, fuelling one of Europe's worst housing crises. (Reuters)



Malabar Gold & Diamonds expands retail presence

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the world's fourth largest jewellery retailer with an extensive global network of over 450 showrooms, has further strengthened its presence in Qatar with the launch of its 13th showroom at Safari Mall, Abu Hamour and the unveiling of its renovated showroom at Al Watan Centre.

The Safari Mall showroom was inaugurated by Sheikh Hamad Nasser A A al-Thani in the presence of Malabar Gold & Diamonds managing director (International Operations) Shamlal Ahamed, director (Finance & Administration) Ameer CMC, Kaappan Jabbar, regional head Santhosh TV, zonal head Naufal Thadathil, head of merchandising Sakkeer

P, and Zainul Abideen, deputy chairman and managing director of Safari Group of Companies.

The Al Watan centre showroom was inaugurated by Sheikh Abdulla in the presence of Malabar Gold & Diamonds officials Ahamed, Ameer Jabbar, Santhosh, Thadathil, Sakkeer, and branch head Raju T Johny.

The new showroom at Safari Mall offers customers an extensive range of crafted gold, diamond, and precious gemstone jewellery, featuring exclusive collections that cater to diverse tastes and occasions.

Designed to provide a world-class retail experience, the showroom combines elegant interiors, enhanced customer service, and a seamless shopping environment, re-



Officials and guests at the ribbon cutting ceremony at Safari Mall.

inforcing the brand's commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds reopened its

Al Watan Centre showroom following a comprehensive refurbishment.

Originally launched in 2011, the outlet has been upgraded with modern design elements and enhanced facilities to deliver a more comfortable, immersive, and rewarding shopping experience for customers.

"Qatar has been an integral part of Malabar Gold & Diamonds' growth story in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC)," said Ahamed.

"Our journey here began in 2011 and over the years, we have been humbled by the trust and support extended to us by customers across the country," he said.

"Today, as we open our 13th showroom

at Safari Mall and unveil the renovated Al Watan Centre showroom, we are reaffirming our long-term commitment to this dynamic market," Ahamed continued. "Qatar continues to present significant opportunities for growth, driven by its vibrant economy, diverse population, and appreciation for quality and craftsmanship."

To celebrate the launch, customers can avail a range of exciting inaugural offers, including free QR100 cash vouchers on every diamond and precious gemstone jewellery purchase worth QR3,000, special discounts on selected jewellery categories and several other festive benefits until November 8.



Officials and guests at the ribbon cutting ceremony at Al Watan Centre showroom.

Doha hosts inaugural Global Women in Business Conference

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

Doha has hosted the inaugural Global Women in Business Conference, bringing entrepreneurs, investors and industry leaders together to help women build stronger networks, access opportunities and scale businesses internationally faster.

The Global Women in Business Conference Qatar 2026, organised

by She Means Business (SMB), marked the first edition of the international gathering, with Doha selected as its launch city.

Speaking to *Gulf Times* during the conference, SMB co-founder Marycollette Kekong said Qatar was chosen for a combination of its location, safety and wider appeal to international participants.

"This is the first time we are having the Global Women in Business Conference, and we chose to do it in Doha," she said. "Because of the many benefits of Qatar,

where it is located, the safety, the ambience, the beauty, the culture, everything that comes with it."

The conference's programme encompassed discussions covering women in health, technology, leadership and business, as well as film and finance, as well as the official launch of the Women in Film & Finance initiative.

For Kekong, however, the event was principally about creating connections that could help women take their businesses beyond the markets.



Marycollette Kekong

She Means Business has a community of more than 50,000 members across around 20 countries and focuses on helping women structure their businesses, access funding and scale.

"The reason we chose to do this conference is basically for shared knowledge, networking, and also for other women to be more exposed," Kekong said.

She noted that many entrepreneurs build businesses successfully within their own regions but may have limited exposure to dif-



ferent markets and approaches.

"When you meet other women from different regions, different countries, you will be able to know how to structure better and also scale and expand," Kekong said.

That exchange, she added, was one of the main outcomes organisers hoped participants would take away from Doha.

"I want women to leave here with more knowledge, more connections, and then with a very strong spirit of scaling their businesses," Kekong said.

Her message to women facing difficulties in entrepreneurship was equally straightforward.

"Don't give up. Just keep pushing," Kekong said. "Sometimes it seems really hard."

"It seems as if you're on the wrong path, but just keep pushing and you'll get there."

She also encouraged younger entrepreneurs to make use of the experience already available to them rather than repeat the same setbacks: "Learn from the mistakes and scale faster."



QF student wins PUE award

For 10-year-old Jassim Mohammed al-Mosallam, a student at Qatar Academy Msheireb (QAM), part of Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre-University Education (PUE), it all started with a story he wrote titled *Bisht Al Taer*.

The story inspired him to become a real-life hero and make a difference in his community.

Rather than simply writing about kindness and helping others, Jassim decided to put these values into action through volunteer initiatives.

His efforts earned him the Outstanding Student Award at QF's PUE Awards, highlighting how students can turn their ideas into meaningful actions that benefit their communities.

Speaking about his achievement, Jassim said: "I feel very proud and happy to have won the Outstanding Student Award. It means a lot to me and encourages me to keep working hard."

"I'm thankful to my family for always supporting me and to my teachers for believing in me and encouraging me to do my best," he said.

"I've learned that being outstanding isn't just about doing well at school," Jassim continued. "It's also about working hard, being kind, and helping others. I hope this award is the start of more achievements, and I want to keep learning and improving so I can make my family, school, and Qatar proud."

Reflecting on how *Bisht Al Taer* inspired his initiatives, he said: "When I wrote *Bisht Al Taer*, I started thinking about how I could become a hero in real life and help others through simple acts of kindness."

"Together with my classmates, I took part in different initiatives," Jassim said. "What made me happiest was when my friends and family started asking when my next initiative would be and saying they wanted to join. That's when I realised my idea had inspired others to help."

Nailla Ahmed al-Mosallam, Jassim's mother, said: "I felt incredibly proud and happy, not just because of the award, but because it reflects Jassim's kindness and his ability to turn ideas into action."

"I hope it inspires him to continue making a positive difference in his community," she said.

"Jassim's grandfather was an important role model, teaching him kindness and responsibility from an early age," she added. "As a family, we encouraged him to explore his abilities and take initiative, with the support of his school."

"We are proud of our students' achievements, which reflect their ambition, determination, and ability to make a positive difference in their communities," said QAM director Lina Mouchantaf. "Every achievement is the result of hard work and perseverance, bringing them one step closer to reaching their goals."

"We believe a school's role goes beyond teaching. It is about discovering students' talents, nurturing their abilities, and helping them build confidence to become creative individuals, responsible citizens, and future leaders," she said.



The fresh graduates with officials.

AJMI graduates new generation of TV presenters

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Al Jazeera Media Institute (AJMI) has graduated 14 trainees from its Television Presenting Diploma programme, equipping them with the practical skills and professional knowledge needed to pursue careers in television journalism and broadcasting.

The diploma combined theoretical instruction with hands-on training, covering the fundamentals of television presentation, news anchoring and talk-show hosting.

Participants also received training in journalistic editing, vocal techniques and Arabic language proficiency, providing them with a comprehensive foundation for professional on-screen performance.

The programme was delivered by a team of experienced trainers from the Al Jazeera Media Network, including journalists Jalal Chahda, Elsie Abou Assi, Hassan Jamoul and Qatari journalist Mohammed al-Marri, alongside trainers Ammar Yahya and Abdel Fattah Bouakkaz, and Dr Ibrahim Mansour.

Addressing the graduates, Abdullah Falah al-Saeed, the director of the AJMI's Training Department, congratulated them on completing the professional diploma and expressed hope that their training would serve as a stepping stone towards successful and impactful careers in the media industry.

He stressed that television presenting extends far beyond appearing before the camera, requiring thorough preparation, strong language skills, self-confidence and the ability to respond professionally to different situations.

Al-Saeed noted that graduation marked not only the completion of a formal training programme but also the beginning of a continuous journey of learning and development.

Exceptional presenters, he said, are shaped by knowledge, credibility and an enduring sense of professional curiosity.

Speaking on behalf of the graduates, Omar Akbasha reflected on the diverse backgrounds and shared ambitions that had brought the participants together.

"When we first arrived at this Institute, each of us brought a different background, some came from behind the microphone, others from the football pitch, and many from the corridors of law schools (though without ever practising the profession)," he said. "Yet, we all arrived sharing a common dream, one we had not yet had the chance to pursue."

Texas A&M at Qatar names 'Alumnus of the Year' for 2026

Texas A&M University at Qatar (TAMUQ), a Qatar Foundation partner university, has named Abdulrahman al-Hababi, Class of 2014, Alumnus of the Year for 2026.

Al-Hababi is the 11th alumnus to be recognised with the award.

He joins previous winners Muna al-Mohannadi (Class of 2010), Yousef al-Jaber (2007), Mariam al-Meer (2012), Dr Nayef Alyafei (2009), Mariam al-Bishri (2012), Bassam Ahmad (2011), Abeer Abuhelaiga (2011), Azhar Khan (2013), Ali al-Dashti (2008), and Mohammed al-Shareef (2012).

"Texas A&M at Qatar is where my journey began," al-Hababi said.

"When I first walked onto this campus in 2009, I came with ambition and a desire to learn; I left with something far greater, as an education, a community and a set of values that have guided every chapter



Abdulrahman al-Hababi

of my life since then," he said.

"Being named the 2026 Alumnus of the Year by the university that gave me my foundation is deeply meaningful and grateful," al-Hababi continued. "I accept this recognition not simply as an honour, but as a responsibility to continue serving Qatar, advancing knowledge, giving back to the Aggie community and creating opportunities for the generations that follow on global stage."

He graduated from TAMUQ with

a degree in electrical engineering and joined the Ministry of Interior, where he led the LTE (long-term evolution) core network supporting secure and reliable mission-critical voice and data communications for Qatar's public-safety agencies.

Al-Hababi's responsibilities were particularly important during major national and international events when resilient communications infrastructure was essential to public safety and operational continuity.

His contributions in this area represent meaningful and sustained service to Qatar and to the development of its critical telecommunications capabilities.

Al-Hababi is dedicated to furthering his education, having earned a master's degree in cybersecurity from Hamad Bin Khalifa University and pursued executive

education through the Qatar Leadership Centre.

He is now pursuing a PhD at Texas A&M's College Station campus, where his studies in machine learning, 6G communications and more are addressing challenges of global importance and contributing to the rapidly evolving international field of next-generation communications.

"Our graduates are the most visible example of the success of this university and Abdulrahman embodies all of the core values that Texas A&M graduates share: Respect, excellence, leadership, loyalty, integrity and selfless service," TAMUQ dean Cesar Octavio Malave said. "He has combined professional achievement with national service, advanced scholarship, continuing education, and loyalty to our university community."