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SPORT | Page 1

Di Giannantonio sets Lusail lap record at Qatar practice







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Qatar Museums Chairperson HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Minister of Social Development and Family HE Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, and designers from FROMM at the opening day of Design Doha Biennial 2026 at Fereej Al Asmakh over the weekend. **PICTURE:** Qatar Museums

Qatar condemns deadly attacks in Jordan, Egypt

Qatar has strongly condemned a terrorist attack in the Jordanian capital, Amman, that killed a public security officer and left another injured. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) reaffirmed Doha's firm repudiation of violence, terrorism and criminal acts, regardless of their motives or causes. The ministry also extended Qatar's sincere condolences and sympathy to the family of the victim, as well as to the government and people of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, wishing the injured officer a speedy recovery.

Qatar has also condemned an armed attack in the southern part of Egypt that claimed the lives of two Egyptian border guard officers. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed its strong denunciation of the attack, reaffirming the country's firm opposition to violence, terrorism and criminal acts, regardless of their motives or causes. The ministry also extended Qatar's condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the government and people of the Arab Republic of Egypt. (**QNA**)

Deputy PM holds phone call with US secretary of war

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani held a phone call yesterday with Secretary of War of the United States of America Pete Hegseth. During the call, they discussed topics of mutual interest to both sides as well as ways to strengthen and develop them. (**QNA**)

Amir, Trump discuss regional situation, peace efforts in call



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received a telephone call from US President Donald Trump yesterday. Both sides reviewed the strategic relations between the two countries and ways to support and strengthen them. They also discussed the latest regional developments, particularly the ongoing diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions in the region. In this context, HH the Amir and the US President discussed the latest international efforts, notably the initiatives led by the State of Qatar, to bridge the gaps between the concerned parties and support the negotiation process, to pave the road for reaching a comprehensive agreement that resolves the crisis and ensures security and stability in the region. In this regard, His Highness emphasised the importance of continuing dialogue and embracing diplomacy as a means of resolving disputes; preventing further escalation in the region; and safeguarding freedom of maritime navigation and the security of energy supplies. (**QNA**)

Tankers on fire in Gulf, sailor killed

Greek-owned vessel was hit by an apparent projectile attack on its way to Bahrain port

AFP
Tehran

A seafarer on a Greek-owned oil tanker was killed in an apparent missile attack in the Gulf, its owner said yesterday, after Tehran said ships were on fire after hitting mines in the Strait of Hormuz. The Marshall Islands-flagged tanker Velos Sapphire was sailing to Bahrain empty of cargo when the attack happened on Thursday, Velos Tankers said in a statement carried by the Greek news agency ANA.

The Athens-based company said the explosion was likely caused by an unidentified projectile that struck the vessel's port quarter, sparking a fire. On Thursday, Iranian media reported that five oil tankers and a tugboat caught fire after hitting mines in the Strait of Hormuz.

And in a statement carried by state media yesterday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards said two more oil tankers were on fire in the strategic gateway to the energy-rich Gulf. British maritime agency UKMTO said yesterday that the master of a tanker transiting the strait the previous day had reported an explosion "at the waterline, port side" off Oman. "The crew are safe... The tanker is still under its own power and is continuing on its voyage," it added.

Since the outbreak of the Middle East war on February 28, Tehran has sought to limit traffic through the waterway, which normally carries about one-fifth of global oil consumption.

The United States has in response imposed a blockade on Iranian ports and escorted tankers through the strait.

US Central Command said last month that it had helped Gulf countries export 1.5bn barrels of oil via Hormuz since the summer and recently said all mines had been cleared from the waterway. "Two violating oil tankers — one east of the Strait of Hormuz and the other within the Strait itself — that attempted to transit via an unauthorised route struck mines," the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the ideological arm of Iran's military, said in a statement carried by state TV.

Drone downed

Iranian media, citing the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, said yesterday that Iranian air defences destroyed a US MQ-1 drone over Qeshm Island in the Strait of Hormuz. There was no immediate confirmation from the United States. Meanwhile, The United States issued new Iran-related sanctions yesterday, a notice on the US Treasury Department's website showed. (**Reuters**)

A view from the hills



Doha's outdoor season is underway, with cooler temperatures creating more opportunities for residents and visitors to explore Qatar's parks, green spaces, cultural attractions, and scenic destinations. The pleasant weather is encouraging more outdoor activities, from leisurely walks to weekend outings, with Katara Hills among the places offering visitors a refreshing escape and picturesque views of the city skyline. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

Put down the screens, take children to nature, Earthna chief urges

By Marivie Alabanza
Doha

With children increasingly spending time on digital devices, Earthna executive director Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata is urging families to embrace outdoor experiences and introduce younger generations to Qatar's natural environment, particularly its mangrove forests, as Qatar Sustainability Week concludes its 11th edition today.

Led by Earthna Centre for a Sustainable Future, a member of Qatar Foundation, the week-long initiative brings together organisations, institutions and communities through educational programmes, workshops, exhibitions and discussions to highlight sustainability challenges and promote environmental responsibility.

Speaking to *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of the Middle East's first public screening of the documentary *Becoming Nature Positive* at Bin Jelmood House in Msheireb recently, the Earthna chief said Qatar's mangroves offer families an excellent opportunity to connect with nature, especially as the weather cools and outdoor activities become more enjoyable.

"I think there are lots of opportunities for families and children in Qatar to interact with nature, and the mangroves are a wonderful opportunity," said Dr Castro de la Mata. "Earthna is working with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change on a national programme to restore mangroves, with community participation and public education forming important parts of the initiative."

The programme encourages families to visit these natural habitats, learn about their ecological importance and interact with people who can explain how mangroves support the environment. "We have a very strong component of community participation and public education, so children and families can go and visit the mangroves and interact with them," he said. "We have people there who can explain what mangroves are and why they are so important."

Dr Castro de la Mata particularly hopes parents will use QSW as an opportunity to introduce children to the natural environment, rather than letting them spend most of their free time on electronic devices. "There is nothing worse than a child growing up just looking at the screen or the phone or the TV when there are so many amazing things to explore in the nature that Qatar has to offer," he told *Gulf Times*.

"Especially during cooler months, I would love parents and families to use this opportunity to really bring their children to interact with nature," he added.

Among the country's accessible natural attractions are Al Thakhira Mangroves and Purple Island. With the cooler season approaching, these destinations offer opportunities for kayaking, stand-up paddleboarding, walking, and bird-watching, allowing visitors to experience Qatar's coastal ecosystems firsthand.



Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata

Families are encouraged to visit Al Thakhira Mangroves and Purple Island to discover the ecological importance of these coastal habitats

"Mangroves play an important role in protecting the environment. Their extensive root systems provide shelter and breeding grounds for fish and other marine life, help filter sediments and pollutants, and protect coastlines from erosion. They also absorb and store carbon," Dr Castro de la Mata said.

Led by Earthna, Qatar's National Flagship Initiative for Mangrove Restoration is a five-year programme running from 2023 to 2028. It aims to restore and expand the country's mangrove ecosystems, strengthen coastal resilience and develop restoration approaches suited to the region's hot, arid conditions. One of its key targets is to restore 40 hectares of mangroves across selected coastal sites.

Dr Castro de la Mata noted that mangrove loss has been a global concern, but growing recognition of their environmental importance has encouraged countries to invest in restoration. "Anywhere in the world, mangroves have been destroyed and disappeared, but now there is a consensus globally about the importance of mangroves," he said, adding that Qatar is working towards recovering its mangrove ecosystems.

For families heading out to enjoy Qatar's natural surroundings, explore and leave these habitats protected for the next generation. A visit to the mangroves can be more than a weekend escape; it can be a child's first step towards becoming a more nature-conscious individual.

As part of QSW, visitors to Gewan Island, Plot 4, can also learn about the country's mangrove restoration efforts through information sessions, videos, interactive resources, bilingual educational materials and games developed in collaboration with Earthna.

Families can find more information about the initiative and related activities through Earthna's website and the QSW website.

QATAR

Culture minister honours two Qataris for outstanding cultural contributions



HE the Minister of Culture Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad al-Thani has honoured two Qatari cultural figures in recognition of their contributions to enriching the country's cultural landscape.

HE Sheikh Abdulrahman honoured Saleh al-Obaidli and Ali al-Jaber on the sidelines of the 30th meeting of GCC Ministers of Culture, held in the Bahraini capital, Manama, on Thursday.

The recognition was part of a wider initiative recognising two creative figures from each GCC member state.

Officials said the honouring highlights Qatar's commitment to celebrating national talent, acknowledging cultural contributions and promoting the role of Qatari creatives in enriching the country's cultural scene. **(QNA)**

How Vodafone Qatar is advancing sustainability through solar energy

Vodafone Qatar has emphasised that sustainability remains a key priority for Qatar as the country continues to advance its National Vision 2030, with environmental development forming an important part of its long-term ambitions.

As industries continue to expand and adopt new technologies, businesses are increasingly focusing on improving energy efficiency and reducing their environmental impact, Vodafone noted.

For the telecommunications sector, maintaining reliable connectivity requires extensive network infrastructure and a continuous supply of energy. With growing demand for digital services, telecommunications providers are exploring more energy-efficient solutions to support network operations and reduce reliance on conventional power sources, it further stated.

Vodafone Qatar noted that sustainability and digital transformation remain among its key priorities, with the company continuing to identify opportunities to improve operational efficiency and reduce its environmental impact. This includes the integration of renewable energy into its network infrastructure to support more efficient and environmentally responsible operations.

Vodafone stated that it continues to utilise innovation in sustainable telecommunications infrastructure by adopting a pioneering portable solar solution. This innovative solution enables the delivery of reliable, green telecom coverage anywhere across the country, including remote and challenging environments such as desert areas, while reinforcing Vodafone's commitment to climate protection and reducing its environmental footprint.

Furthermore, Vodafone is advancing the integration of AI-powered solar energy management systems into its telecom infrastructure. By leveraging artificial intelligence to study Qatar's climate patterns and environmental conditions, the solution intelligently optimises solar energy storage and discharge based on the specific requirements of each individual site, it noted.

According to Vodafone, this adaptive, site-specific approach maximises solar energy utilisation, enhances storage efficiency, and optimises energy availability, enabling more sustainable, resilient, and energy-efficient telecom operations across Qatar.

Vodafone Qatar currently has 104 solar-powered telecom sites across the country, with a combined solar generation capacity of 1.2MW. Solar energy accounts for approximately 85% of the power demand at these sites, representing 3% of Vodafone Qatar's total network power demand.

The integration of solar energy has reduced the need for diesel-powered electricity generation. At the deployed sites, average diesel generator runtime has decreased from 24 hours to 2.16 hours per day, helping to reduce fuel consumption and associated emissions, it stated.

Since its launch in May 2024, the project has helped prevent approximately 840.8 tonnes of CO_2 emissions through solar energy generation, while also contributing to lower noise pollution and a reduced risk of fuel spills.

As Qatar marks Sustainability Week, Vodafone Qatar noted that it continues to support the country's sustainability ambitions through the adoption of renewable energy and more efficient network infrastructure. These efforts reflect the company's commitment to reducing its environmental impact and contributing to the long-term objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030, it added.



Ministry graduates 102 trainees from legal training programmes

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has celebrated the graduation of 102 participants from its mandatory and professional legal training programs for 2026, organised by the Center for Legal and Judicial Studies.

The graduation ceremony was held under the patronage and in the presence of HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali bin Issa al-Hassan al-Mohannadi.

The graduates completed four programmes designed to strengthen legal expertise and prepare participants for professional careers across the public and private sectors.

The programmes included the 16th mandatory training programme for trainee lawyers, with 14 participants; the 23rd professional development programme for legal professionals, with 54 participants; the third specialised training programme for State Cases Department employees, with 13 participants; and the Legal Pathway to the Labour Market initiative, which enrolled 21 participants.

The latter initiative was implemented in co-operation with the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau and the Ministry of Labour.

The programmes aim to address the needs of Qatar's legal professions by combining theoretical knowledge with practical training, while developing participants' analytical abilities, professional judgment and workplace skills.

Speaking at the ceremony, Director of the Center for Legal and Judicial Studies Dr Abdullah al-Khaldi said excellence in legal practice required solid knowledge, informed professional practice and continuous training.

He highlighted the centre's efforts to modernise its programmes and align them with workplace requirements and emerging challenges to ensure graduates could carry out their responsibilities effectively.

Al-Khaldi also announced that the centre had introduced a new programme this year to qualify employees holding general legal positions. It includes specialised training tracks in legislative drafting, in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers; case management,



involving specialised trainers from the State Cases Sector and other experts; and disciplinary investigations.

For his part, Director of Rehabilitation and Skills Development Department at the Ministry of Labour Mohammed al-Khulaifi said the ministry's participation in the Legal Pathway to the Labour Market initiative reflected its commitment to developing national talent and equipping jobseekers with specialised legal knowledge and skills.

He said the initiative would help prepare qualified legal professionals with a thorough understanding of the legislation and regulations governing the labour market, supporting compliance and institutional development across the public and private sectors.

Speaking on behalf of graduates of the professional legal training programme, Abdullah al-Mohannadi said the programme had combined academic foundations with practical experience, strengthening participants' understanding of legal practice and the implications of legislation.

Meanwhile, graduate representative Laila Mahawesh, speaking on behalf of trainee lawyers, said the programme had helped participants understand the connection between legal provisions and people's rights and everyday realities

The graduation comes within the framework of Qatar's Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030, particularly its objectives of building a future-ready workforce and achieving excellence in government institutions.

The development of legal expertise and the alignment of professional training with labour market needs are expected to contribute to improved workforce readiness and institutional performance, while strengthening pathways into both public and private sector employment. **(QNA)**



Youth delegates call for greater say in climate negotiations

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter



From right: Fahad al-Attiya, Shane Flanagan, Hamad Nasser al-Thani, and Areej Alsayed during the panel discussion.

Young climate delegates have urged governments to involve young people in shaping national negotiating positions well before global summits, warning that representation at COP alone does not guarantee meaningful influence.

The call emerged during a panel discussion on diplomacy, youth and climate action at the Youth Climate Summit Qatar 2026, where diplomats and young advocates explored how youth participation could translate into genuine influence on international climate policy.

Moderated by Neeshad Shafi of the Arab Youth Climate Movement Qatar, the discussion brought together HE Fahad al-Attiyah, founder of Caravane Earth and Heenat Salma Farm; Australian ambassador to Qatar Shane Flanagan; Qatari youth advocate Hamed Nasser al-Thani; and Areej Alsayed, German Youth Delegate for COP30.

Drawing on her experience within Germany's COP delegation, Alsayed highlighted the importance of involving young representatives throughout the policymaking process rather than bringing them in only when international negotiations begin.

However, she said meaningful participation depended on access to information and opportunities to influence national positions before countries arrived at COP.

"The negotiations don't start really with the COP. They are not just two weeks every year," she said, emphasising that young representatives needed to be included throughout the process between climate conferences.

Flanagan said the appointment of Australia's COP31 Presidency Youth Climate Champion, Sally Higgins, was intended to connect young people's experiences with international decision-makers.

He described Higgins' role as a bridge between communities and negotiating teams, particularly those experiencing the effects of climate change, including unpredictable rainfall and severe storms.

"It is an advisory role, and I think that is probably something, an area that can be built on into the future," Flanagan said, pointing to opportunities to strengthen youth engagement in future COP processes.

He also highlighted the partnership between Turkiye, which will host COP31 in Antalya, and Australia, which will lead the negotiations, describing it as an example of compromise and international cooperation.

"What we do have which unites us is a shared commitment to making this COP very effective at galvanising international action," he said.

Al-Attiyah stressed that climate awareness and participation must also begin at the community level, including in homes, schools and neighbourhoods. He encouraged greater engagement between young people, experts and policymakers to build understanding of environmental challenges and the impact of everyday consumption choices.

Hamed, one of the young Qatari voices on the panel, said young people needed to be heard and given opportunities to participate in spaces where decisions were being made.

The discussion highlighted a central challenge ahead of COP31: moving youth participation beyond representation towards meaningful involvement in the decisions that will shape their environmental future.

LIC highlights sustainability initiatives during QSW

Lusail International Circuit (LIC) has showcased its environmental initiatives and sustainability progress as part of the 11th Qatar Sustainability Week (QSW) ending on Nov 7. Led by Earthna Centre for a Sustainable Future in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the national campaign brings together sustainability initiatives from across Qatar.

LIC is highlighting three key areas of its sustainability efforts: clean energy, electronic waste management and biodiversity conservation, with initiatives integrated into major sporting events, including the MotoGP Qatar Airways Grand Prix of Qatar 2026 and the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2026.

The circuit has installed rooftop solar photovoltaic panels with a capacity of approximately 1.24 megawatt-peak (MWp), supplementing its electricity supply and expected to generate around 120 megawatt-hours of energy over three weeks. The installation forms part of LIC's long-term efforts to reduce carbon emissions and strengthen its clean energy infrastructure.



Other energy-saving measures include building management systems that optimise cooling consumption, LED display walls that use 40% less energy than traditional installations, and solar-powered wayfinding signage. LIC is also introducing electric scissor lifts and solar lighting towers into its event operations this year.

As part of its circular economy efforts, LIC has upcycled banners from its 2024 and 2025 events into drawstring bags, with 700 bags set for distribution to volunteers during the two race weekends. Fan water bottles will also be made from 100% recycled PET, supported by a bottle-return campaign targeting a 90% recovery rate.

Waste management measures include recycling stations, segregated waste collection, BioBins for organic waste treatment and a surplus food donation programme. The circuit is also reducing single-use plastics, encouraging digital ticketing and reusing event infrastructure and signage.

In addition, LIC recently conducted an internal electronic waste collection drive in conjunction with International E-Waste Day, ensuring discarded electrical and electronic equipment is directed towards responsible treatment, with reuse prioritised where appropriate.

Beyond the circuit facilities, LIC is developing biodiversity initiatives across its green perimeter. Its landscaped areas cover 88,000sq m and include approximately 2,490 trees representing 22 recorded species, providing a foundation for future biodiversity enhancement.

LIC's broader environmental commitments support these efforts. The circuit achieved FIA Three Star Environmental Accreditation in 2025, joined the UNFCCC Sports for Climate Action framework in April 2026 and received recognition in the 2026 Sustainable Circuits Index.





The MotoGP Qatar Airways Grand Prix of Qatar 2026 runs from November 6-8, followed by the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2026 from November 27-29. Tickets are available at tickets.lcsc.qa

COMMUNITY

Scores of expatriates benefit from 20th Asian Medical Camp

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter


Dignitaries at the opening of the medical camp.


Some of the participants at the medical camp.

Providing a vital healthcare lifeline to thousands of blue-collar workers, domestic helpers, drivers, and expatriates from various Asian countries, the 20th Asian Medical Camp concluded at the Umm Al Seneem Health Centre in Doha.

The Indian ambassador to Qatar, Dr K Srikar Reddy, formally inaugurated the mega camp. The 20th Asian Medical Camp is an excellent example of social service and commitment to healthcare, and such initiatives help strengthen mutual understanding and friendship among diverse communities, the Indian ambassador said. Indian culture is rooted in the values of coexistence and inclusivity, the ambassador added.

Describing the medical camp as a significant milestone, he noted that it provides free medical check-ups and health awareness services to thousands of expatriates from the South Asian community. He emphasised that such selfless services, carried out without any profit motive, are invaluable. He also highlighted that the spirit of selfless service is deeply rooted in Indian traditions.

The ambassador urged expatriates not to postpone medical check-ups due to work commitments or financial difficulties. He emphasised that early detection and treatment can make a significant difference in ensuring better health outcomes. Dr Reddy also expressed his gratitude to the members of the Centre for Indian Community and the Indian Doctors Club, sponsors, and volunteers who had worked tirelessly for months to ensure the success of the medical camp.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by several distinguished personalities, including Sitara Khan Azard, ambassador of Sri Lanka, Dr Hayam al-Sada, regional director of the Primary Health Care Corporation, Ahmed al-Malki, assistant executive director of Public Relations, Hamad Medical Corporation, Dr Yousuf al-Rabeea, acting director of Umm Al Seneem Health Centre, Jitendra Giri, First Secretary at the Embassy of Nepal, Mashood Kabir, senior counsellor at the Embassy of Bangladesh, Dr Dinesh Kumar Kaul, Commercial Attache at the Embassy of India, Dr Hiba Adnan Abu Hawala, head of the Health Awareness Department at PHCC, Abdul Jaleel RS, President of the Centre for Indian Community and Dr Rini K Shoukath, President of the Indian Doctors Club.

Also present at the inauguration were Dr Mohan Thomas, Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awardee, Dr Abdul Rasheed, head of the Cardiac Anaesthesia and Intensive Care Department at Heart Hospital; Ashraf, general manager of Wellcare Pharmacies; A P Manikantan, president of the Indian Cultural Centre; Shanavas Bava, president of the Indian Community Benevolent Forum; Taha Mohammed, president of the Indian Business and Professionals Council, among others. CIC president RS Abdul Jaleel honoured the distinguished guests by presenting them with mementoes.

ICC honours head of BPS Malayalam Dept





The Indian Cultural Centre (ICC) felicitated Shiju P R, head of the Birla Public School's (BPS) Malayalam Department during its Kerala Piravi celebrations held at Ideal Indian School on November 1.

Shiju P R was among the distinguished Malayalam teachers from Indian schools across Qatar honoured for their dedicated service and valuable contributions to Malayalam language education. The recognition acknowledges the significant role played by educators in nurturing the Malayalam language and preserving its rich literary and cultural heritage among the younger generation.

Dr K Srikar Reddy, ambassador of India to Qatar, and G Venugopal, renowned singer and chairman of the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi, jointly presented the awards. The proceedings were led by ICC president A P Manikantan, vice-president Shantanu Deshpande and general secretary Abraham K Joseph, along with other distinguished dignitaries.

The celebration, commemorating the formation of the State of Kerala, highlighted the importance of Malayalam language education in helping students in Qatar remain connected to their roots.

For children growing up away from their homeland, learning Malayalam provides a meaningful connection to Kerala's literature, songs, stories and cultural traditions. This prestigious recognition marks a proud moment for Birla Public School and its Malayalam Department, reaffirming the institution's commitment to promoting linguistic diversity and preserving cultural heritage through education.

The Management, Principal, staff and students of Birla Public School, Doha, extended their heartfelt congratulations to Shiju P R on this well-deserved honour and commended his dedication to Malayalam language education.



Rajagiri Public School Doha wins overall championship at Kalanjali 2026 festival



Rajagiri Public School (RPS) Doha has been crowned overall champion at Kalanjali 2026, the Qatar School Youth Festival, after a standout showing across music, dance, art and literary events.

The five-day inter-school cultural festival, organised by Media Pen at The Ideal Indian School in Abu Hamour, drew participants from Indian schools across Qatar. RPS finished with 1,264 points and 148 prizes in individual and group categories.

The school also took three of the festival's top individual honours. Devapriya Patteri Thazha of Grade VI was named 'Kalathilakam' (Best Performer, Girl) in the junior category. Dakshin Dilu, also of Grade VI, won 'Kalaprathibha' (Best Performer, Boy) in the junior category, while Kiaan Panchal of Grade IX took the same title in the intermediate category.

A total of 535 RPS students took part in the festival. The school credited the result to its faculty, particularly the Departments of Music, Dance, Art, English, Malayalam, Hindi and Arabic, which trained the participants.

Principal Joshy Abraham congratulated the students, teachers and parents for their support. He and the school management also singled out Program Coordinator Davis Paul for his dedication and leadership in steering the school's participation, and thanked all stakeholders for their commitment from preparation through to the festival's close.

MES students champion global dialogue at Model United Nations







The Department of Social Science (MUN Club), MES Indian School, organised a stimulating Model United Nations (MUN) Conference at the school's Conference Hall on October 20, giving students an enriching platform to explore international affairs, deliberate on pressing global concerns, and experience the nuances of diplomatic engagement.

The conference brought together 45 student delegates representing 24 nations, creating a vibrant forum for cross-cultural perspectives and constructive deliberations. Through structured debates, negotiations, and diplomatic exchanges, participants examined global issues, articulated national positions, proposed resolutions, and negotiated amendments, reflecting the deliberative processes of the United Nations.

The conference showcased the students' critical thinking, eloquence, collaborative spirit and negotiation skills, while nurturing their awareness of international relations, peaceful conflict resolution and the significance of multilateral cooperation. The outstanding performances of the delegates were recognised through the following distinctions: Muhammed Nazan – Best Delegate; Heba Mansood – Best Negotiator; and Cris Kumar – Best Speaker.

Sunita Dahiya and Dr Hifza Shaima coordinated the event, with support from faculty members, under the guidance of Mujeeb Rahman, Coordinator, Department of Social Science. The conference served as a meaningful exercise in global citizenship, empowering students to appreciate diverse viewpoints, engage in reasoned dialogue and recognise the power of diplomacy in addressing shared international challenges.

COMMUNITY

ICC presents Keralam Piravi Celebrations '26

Indian Cultural Centre (ICC), under the aegis of the Embassy of India, Qatar, in association with ICC Malayali AOs, presented Keralam Piravi Celebrations 2026 on November 1, at Ideal Indian School Grounds, bringing together the Indian expatriate community to celebrate Kerala's rich cultural heritage and traditions.

The celebrations featured a vibrant array of cultural performances, including Chenda Melam and other traditional art forms, showcasing Kerala's artistic richness. A Kerala Food Festival offered authentic delicacies from different districts of the state. An exhibition featuring stalls selling Indian handicrafts, traditional garments, jewellery and various other products added to the festive atmosphere.

The programme began with a welcome address by ICC general-secretary Abraham K Joseph, followed by opening remarks from ICC head of Cultural Activities Nandini Abbagouni. The chief guest, Dr K Srikar Reddy, ambassador of India to Qatar, addressed the gathering and highlighted the importance of preserving India's rich cultural heritage and strengthening cultural bonds among the expatriate community.

Renowned Indian playback singer and Chairman of the Kerala Sangeetha Nataka Akademi, G Venugopal, graced the occasion as the guest of honour. In his address, he shared his thoughts on Kerala's rich cultural and artistic traditions.

ICC president A P Manikantan thanked the 52 Malayali associations affiliated with ICC for their wholehearted support and active participation, whose collective efforts contributed significantly to the success of the celebrations. ICC secretary Pradeep Pillai gave a brief introduction to the cultural programme.

On the occasion, ICC honoured Malayalam teachers from Indian schools across Qatar for their valuable contributions to promoting the Malayalam language and preserving Kerala's linguistic and cultural heritage among the younger generation.

The evening concluded with a vote of thanks by ICC vice-president Shantanu Deshpande. Several distinguished dignitaries graced the event: Prathima Reddy, spouse of the ambassador of India; Shanavas Bava, president, ICBF; and P N Babu Rajan, president, ICC Advisory Council, along with members of the ICC Managing Committee, presidents of associated organisations, and other senior community leaders.









Talking Matters Toastmasters hosts special Pink Day event

Talking Matters Toastmasters Club marked its 529th meeting with a special Pink Day celebration on October 28 at Estidama Training Centre, Excellence Tower, West Bay, highlighting breast cancer awareness, resilience and the power of positive thinking.

The highlight of the evening was an inspiring keynote address titled "Rise n Shine" by Leena Nair, DTM, a breast cancer survivor and accomplished Toastmasters leader.

Sharing her personal journey, Leena encouraged the audience to face life's challenges with courage, not fear. Her message resonated with everyone: "Fight your battles with courage, come out with flying colours, and let the colour be pink."

The meeting featured prepared speeches, impromptu speaking sessions and constructive evaluations, creating an atmosphere of learning, encouragement and solidarity.

Nisha Shivram, DTM, led the session as Toastmaster of the Day, with Jeejith Sreedharan serving as General Evaluator and Freeda Lobo as Table Topics Master.

Members and guests dressed in shades of pink to express their support for breast cancer awareness. The club also presented a special memento to Leena Nair in appreciation of her inspiring journey and powerful message.

The celebration concluded with a reminder that courage, compassion and community can make a meaningful difference in overcoming life's challenges.

Bunts Qatar hosts breast cancer awareness event

As part of global Breast Cancer Awareness Month initiatives, community organisation Bunts Qatar organised a comprehensive breast cancer awareness and felicitation programme on October 30 at Naseem Healthcare on C-Ring Road, Doha. The event combined health advocacy and education with recognition of women's valuable contributions to society.



The programme featured an informative medical awareness session led by guest speaker Dr Padma Shree Shetty, a past president of Bunts Qatar and senior dentist at Focus Medical Centre in Doha.

Dr Shetty emphasised that early detection saves lives, highlighting the importance of regular screenings, early diagnosis and timely medical intervention. She urged women to prioritise their health, stay vigilant for potential warning signs, and overcome any hesitation in seeking professional medical advice.

The programme also included a special felicitation ceremony honouring women for their dedication and contributions to society. Bunts Qatar recognised non-teaching female staff members from several educational institutions in Qatar, acknowledging their commitment and valuable service to the academic community. The recipients represented MES Indian School, Shantiniketan Indian School and Podar Pearl School.

The organisation also felicitated Mrs Saritha Shetty in recognition of her exceptional contributions to society and continued dedication through her service in the medical field.

Prominent community members and Bunts Qatar leadership figures, including founder president Ravi Shetty, past president Navneetha Shetty and advisory chairman Naveen Shetty Iruvail, attended the event.

General secretary Naveen Shetty delivered the opening remarks, while president Sukaram Shetty welcomed the guests and dignitaries. Cultural secretary Pooja Adarsh Shenava coordinated the proceedings, underscoring the significance of Pink October and the importance of raising awareness about breast cancer.

The programme concluded with a vote of thanks by Rajgopal Shetty, who expressed appreciation to the guest speaker, healthcare partners, dignitaries, award recipients and volunteers for their contributions to the event.

Through the initiative, Bunts Qatar highlighted its continued commitment to community welfare, social responsibility and promoting women's health awareness across Qatar.





MES fetes CBSE national medal winners at annual athletic meet

MES Indian School inaugurated its 52nd Annual Athletic Meet, 'Impulse 2026', on October 22 on the school grounds, amid an atmosphere of sporting enthusiasm and collective pride.

Tahsin Mohammed Jamshid, a Qatar national football player representing Al Duhail SC, graced the ceremony as chief guest.

Hamad Mohamed al-Hadwan, head of the Age Groups Sector, Abdul Rahman Abdullah Amodi, and Aberahim Youssoufi, marketing officers, attended as guests of honour, in the distinguished presence of members of the School Governing Board.

The occasion featured an impressive, synchronised marchpast by the Blue, Green, Red and Yellow Houses, followed by the national medal winners and the Scouts and Guides, reflecting discipline, unity and sporting pride.

Declaring the meet open, the chief guest, Tahsin Mohammed Jamshid, underscored sports' transformative power in nurturing discipline, dedication, teamwork, and perseverance. A highlight of the ceremony was the recognition of the school's CBSE national medal winners for their exceptional sporting achievements.

In her address, principal Dr Hameeda Kadar congratulated the champions, noting that MES Indian School had written an extraordinary chapter in its sporting legacy by breaking records and reaching unprecedented heights at the CBSE National Games. Upon hoisting the school sports flag, Badarudheen Gulam Mohiyudheen, director of Sports and Games, MES Governing Board, conveyed his heartfelt congratulations to the CBSE national winners, lauding their perseverance, commitment and outstanding accomplishments.







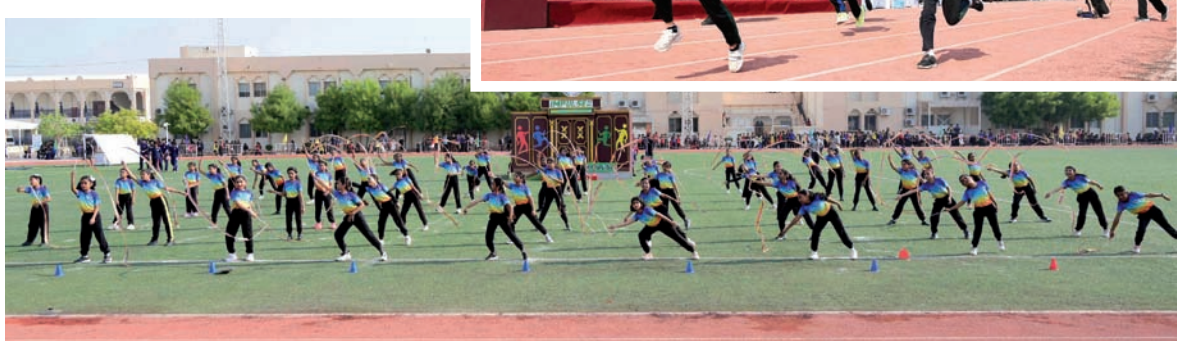


Athwif Abdullah, sports captain, led the oath-taking ceremony, followed by the ceremonial arrival of the Olympic Torch, carried by the school athletes. Adding vibrancy to the inaugural proceedings, special performances by students from the Boys', Girls', and Junior Sections captivated the audience with their creativity, energy, and artistic flair.

The colourful presentations infused the occasion with youthful exuberance and enhanced the ceremony's celebratory spirit. Denica Machado, sports captain, delivered the welcome address, while Ishan Bin Thasneef, head boy, proposed a vote of thanks.

The members of the Physical Education Department, under the leadership of Salim J Nadaf, coordinated the Annual Athletic Meet 2026, which celebrated athletic prowess, fair play, and camaraderie among MES students.





2 Egyptian officers killed in gold-mining crackdown

Reuters
Cairo

Two Egyptian army officers, including a high-ranking border guard officer, were killed during a military crackdown on illegal gold mining along Egypt's southern border with Sudan, a military spokesperson said on Thursday.

The military launched the campaign to counter illegal gold mining in the Eastern Desert in June, with the first three phases complete. The military said the fourth phase was due to begin today, adding the campaign intended to strengthen state control over Egyptian territory and protect national resources.

It was not immediately clear when the two officers were killed, and the spokesperson did not specify the timing of their deaths.

The military spokesperson said authorities had detained 151 Egyptians and 540 foreigners during the campaign. The campaign has drawn attention after the rights monitor Emergency Lawyers said in October that at least 72 artisanal miners had been killed in an airstrike in northern Sudan, close to the Egyptian border.

The group blamed the Egyptian Air Force for the strike.

Egypt's military did not refer to the reported strike or the deaths at the time. In a statement then, it said a phase of its campaign against illegal gold mining in southern Egypt was under way after it dropped warning leaflets on what it described as "criminal elements." Artisanal gold mining has risen in northern Sudan since Sudan's civil war disrupted livelihoods. Gold has become a key revenue source during the conflict — much of it is smuggled into Egypt through a disputed border.

Syria aids Saudi Arabia with military advice, training amid Houthi attacks

Reuters
Riyadh

Syria is aiding Riyadh with military advice and training as Saudi Arabia comes under attack by Yemen's Houthis, and has sent a limited number of military personnel to the kingdom, two Syrian military sources and a senior US official said.

Saudi Arabia has been locked in worsening hostilities with the Iran-allied Houthis since July, when the Yemen war was reignited by the wider conflict in the Middle East, leading Riyadh to seek both defensive and offensive support from a range of allies.

The senior US official said advisers and training teams from Syria — where fighters became battle-hardened in years of war - were travelling to Saudi Arabia to help train Saudi and Yemeni units inside the kingdom to improve their combat effectiveness.

The two Syrian sources, who have direct knowledge of the matter, said scores of military personnel had gone from Syria to Saudi Arabia in recent weeks. They said advisory and training work was involved, but that their mandate could be broader.

In response to a request for comment, a senior Syrian diplomat said "any suggestion of military deployments at this stage is premature", and that Syria's focus remained on internal security, protecting its borders and reconstruction.

The diplomat said a Syrian-Saudi defence co-operation deal signed on Wednesday "specifically includes advisory support, training and exchange of expertise".

A senior Saudi official told Reuters that ongoing expertise sharing with Syria was "mainly to restructure the Syrian forces ... but that doesn't mean also our Syrian partners don't help us in their combat experience regarding fighting militias".


President Ahmed al-Sharaa with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in Riyadh. (**Reuters**)

Joint training exercises were under way and more were planned in both security and defence, the Saudi official added in response to a request for comment.

Saudi Arabia and Syria signed the defence pact on Wednesday during a visit to Riyadh by Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa, his second meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in less than a month.

No details were announced.

Washington has urged Damascus to move cautiously, the senior US official said, adding that any Syrian deployment to help in the Yemen war risked embroiling the country in the wider war in the region - something it has avoided.

The Saudi government did not respond to a request for comment, nor did the Syrian Defence Ministry, the US State Department, Yemen's Saudi-backed government or the Houthis.

Syria has emerged as a close ally of Saudi Arabia and the United States since rebels led by Sharaa toppled Bashar al-Assad, an ally of Iran, in 2024.

Syria's reconstituted military is made up of former rebels who fought for years against al-Assad and Iran-backed groups that went to help him against the insurgents.

Turkiye, a close ally of Damascus, on Thursday ratified a defence pact signed in Makkah in August between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye, clearing the way for Ankara to send military support to Riyadh.

The senior Syrian diplomat said the Saudi-Syrian "agreement may evolve to include broader defence co-operation in the future, such as" the Mecca pact.

The deal signed on Wednesday was a "broad framework for military co-operation", among a number of other deals and memorandums of understanding related to other sectors including finance and agriculture, the senior Syrian diplomat said.

The Saudi Fund for Development signed six agreements with Syria's Finance Ministry on Wednesday for the provision of concessional development loans worth over $403mn to support development and service sectors in Syria.

They provide a critical lifeline for a country that has struggled to revive its economy and faces a reconstruction bill in the hundreds of billions of dollars.

Since the Yemen war restarted, the Houthis have seized territory from Yemeni government control in some areas while the government has made small gains in others.

The Houthis have fired missiles at Saudi airports and oil facilities, while Saudi Arabia has launched airstrikes in support of its Yemeni allies.

Reuters reported in October that Syria was considering providing military assistance to Saudi Arabia and that options being considered included defensive aid to protect the kingdom from attacks, or deployment of forces in an offensive capacity to help Saudi-backed Yemeni troops fight the Houthis.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani, speaking at a recent conference in Bahrain, said discussions were under way to study Syria's entry into the Makkah pact.

"Syria considers the security of the Arab Gulf part of regional security ... Syria stands by the people and the governments of the Gulf in the face of challenges and militias operating across borders," he said.

Security officer stabbed to death in Amman in a 'terrorist attack'

AFP
Amman

Jordanian authorities said a security officer was stabbed to death in the country's capital Amman on Thursday, calling it a "terrorist attack".

"The Public Security Directorate mourned the martyrdom of Corporal Jawad Ali Khalaf al-Salaytah, who was killed in a cowardly terrorist attack," the directorate said in a statement.

Another officer was injured in the incident, it added.

Authorities said the attack took place in front of the Sri Lankan embassy, where the victim was stabbed with a "sharp object".

The officer was rushed to hospital but later died from his injuries, the directorate said.

A nearby police patrol responded immediately and arrested the attacker, it added.

The second officer wounded in the incident sustained injuries to their face as he tried to intervene and is in a stable condition.

Security agencies were investigating, the directorate said.



Prince Faisal bin Al Hussein of Jordan (C) visiting a security officer, lying in a hospital bed in Amman, after he was wounded as he tried to stop an assailant who stabbed another security officer to death. (**AFP**)

The attack comes days after gunmen killed nine people and wounded 25 others when they stormed a Greek Orthodox church in Karak governorate.

On Tuesday, three men were charged with terrorism-related offences over that attack.

Authorities described the suspects in the church attack as followers of a hardline religious ideology.

The violence shocked Jordan, where Christians make up around 3% of its Muslim-majority population.

Under Jordan's anti-terrorism law, a conviction on the most serious charge — carrying out terrorist acts resulting in death — is punishable by death.

'We have nothing': Displaced mothers in Yemen's Taiz collect plastic to survive

Reuters
Taiz

Two single mothers who fled their village three weeks ago are struggling to keep their children fed and warm in the besieged Yemeni city of Taiz, where they live in a damaged building and sell plastic bottles to get by.

Taiz hosts about half of the 300,000 people displaced across Yemen by the latest fighting, according to the UN. The city has been largely isolated since October 3, following an escalation in clashes between the Saudi-backed government and the Iran-aligned Houthis. The fighting has prevented humanitarian supplies from entering and civilians from leaving.

Fatima Abdullah Qassem said the families fled on foot in the middle of the night when fighting reached their village of al-Sayahi in the al-Dhabab area west of Taiz.

The family spent two days sleeping on the street because the damaged building they are currently living in was so dirty,


Smoke billows from a site that was targeted during one of the battles in west of the city of Taiz last month. (**AFP**)

she said. "The building is open, see, it's open with tarpaulins set up. We put up tarpaulins, and it's freezing. We have no blankets, we have nothing, I swear to God," she says, gesturing to their makeshift living space.

Qassem, a mother of eight who is separated from her husband, lost one of her sons in a landmine explosion in 2017. She and another mother, Intizar Ahmed Saeed, used to sell vegetables but have now turned to collecting and selling plastic bottles to support their children.

Saeed, a widow and mother of seven, said the money she can scratch from this is not enough to even feed her children.

"My life is a struggle every day, by God, a struggle. I tell you, I work for 1,500 (rials, or $0.96) and it is not enough. I go begging for potatoes, tomatoes, pepper... I have girls, all of them inside, where do I take them? There's no one to work hard to look after them. The man of the house (referring to her son) is 15 years old, and these days there's no work," Saeed said.

Eisenkot tipped to seek Israel government with backing of Arab party grouping

AFP
Jerusalem

Israeli President Isaac Herzog said he will announce on Sunday whom he will task with trying to form a new government, after the opposition's Gadi Eisenkot secured a commanding number of recommendations to replace Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Herzog held a second day of consultations with political parties on Thursday after the October 27 election, in which neither Netanyahu — a polarising right-winger who has led Israel through three years of war — nor Eisenkot — a former military chief promising to restore national unity — secured enough votes for a majority.

Herzog will make his choice, but traditionally the mandate is given to the person recommended by more parliament members.

Sixty-seven picked Eisenkot, 46 opted for Netanyahu, while seven abstained.

"The results of the consultations may appear clear, but the authority vested in me by law is to determine who has the ability to form a government, and that is not entirely clear, given the mutual vetoes between the blocs and within the blocs themselves," Herzog said on Thursday.

"I will try to determine this directly and quickly, in personal talks with some of the party leaders."

Eisenkot's Yashar party said on Thursday that "the citizens of Israel have chosen change and expressed a complete lack of confidence in outgoing Prime Minister Netanyahu and his government", and called for the "immediate establishment of a national emergency government that will begin working for all citizens of Israel".

Two Arab-majority lists won an unprecedented 19 seats in the election, making them potential kingmakers if Eisenkot's opposition chooses to work with them, which remains unclear.

Both Arab lists on Thursday said they were backing Eisenkot.

However, another party in Eisenkot's camp, right-wing Israel Beiteinu, has repeatedly indicated


Ahmad Tibi, head of the Arab Movement for Change (Ta'al) party (C), meets supporters in Jerusalem's Old City. (**AFP**)

it will not sit in a government that relies on support from Arab parties. Party leader Avigdor Liberman, a former Netanyahu ally turned critic, cited as a reason the refusal by Arab parties to explicitly define Hamas as a "terror group".

Meanwhile, United Torah Judaism, which backed Netanyahu after the previous five elections, in its meeting with Herzog declined to recommend Netanyahu again as premier, although it also did not side with Eisenkot.

The party informed Herzog "that it has decided not to recommend any member of Knesset to form a government", the president's office said in a statement, referring to the 120-member parliament in which United Torah Judaism won seven seats. Alongside Shas, another ultra-Orthodox party, they have pushed to maintain the exemption from military service for religious students.

Netanyahu has preserved the exemption but stopped short of enshrining it in law, in the face of major resentment from many other Israelis, as reservists serve multiple tours due to the wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

"In whatever government is next formed, our immediate item is sorting out the status of Torah students," United Torah Judaism lawmaker Isaac Pindrus said.

Eisenkot, who has tried to appeal to secular Israelis from left to right, has been adamant about ending exemptions for military service.

Some of his opposition allies have criticised the ultra-Orthodox — who make up about 14% of the population but have far higher birthrates than secular Israelis — as a drain on the state.

Observers say United Torah Judaism's tactic is likely aimed mostly at punishing Netanyahu and showing that their votes cannot be taken for granted, while they would still serve in a government if he were to form one.

Once Herzog gives his mandate to a lawmaker, the person will have 28 days to form a government, with a potential 14-day extension. If the lawmaker fails, Herzog will then task someone else.

Netanyahu's bloc, including United Torah Judaism, has 53 seats in the new parliament, compared to 48 for Eisenkot's bloc.

Arab-majority parties scored historic gains on the back of anger over Netanyahu's hard-right government and longstanding complaints about racism from some ministers and discriminatory treatment of Arab Israelis.

Netanyahu has relentlessly attacked the opposition for even the prospect of an alliance with Arab lawmakers.

In a video Wednesday, Netanyahu alleged there were "serious suspicions" that foreign powers put money into the election and questioned the loyalty of Arab citizens.

WORLD

S Africa's ANC heads to all-time election low with a third of vote

AFP
Johannesburg

South Africa's once-dominant African National Congress was headed for its worst-ever election performance yesterday, with near final results showing it had won only about a third of the vote in local government polls.

The municipal elections Wednesday were dominated by concerns over failing water and power supplies in one of Africa's wealthiest nations, which became a democracy in 1994 when the ANC took power.

With final results expected by Sunday, the election authority dashboard showed the ANC was still the largest party with just over 31% of votes after 90% had been declared.

This was its lowest score yet after the party that led the anti-apartheid struggle secured just over 40% at the 2024 national polls and 46% at the previous municipal elections in 2021.

The plummet in ANC support from nearly 70 % in 2004 national elections follows disillusionment over corruption, mismanagement and high unemployment, while splinter parties have also eaten away at its traditional support base. "This is the most severe result that the ANC would have feared," political analyst Daniel Silke told AFP. "It's the ANC's worst result in history."

"It will undermine its ability to exert authority across South Africa, not just at a local level, but frankly at a national level as well," he told AFP.

"And opposition parties will be smelling blood when it comes to the next election in 2029."

The result is seen as an indication of voter sentiment ahead of the next general election, including whether frustrations with local government failures are changing political loyalties.

"We do not believe that we must see ourselves as a party that will disappear in the struggles of our people," ANC representative Nomvula Mokonyane told reporters, when asked about the result.

"This gives us an opportunity to repackage and renew the ANC," she said.

The pro-business, centre-right Democratic Alliance (DA) was placing second with just over 24% of the votes, according to the 90% count.

The party was set to maintain control of the tourism magnet city of Cape Town and was also ahead in the battle for Johannesburg, the country's financial capital where it ran a spirited campaign spearheaded by its former leader Helen Zille. Former president Jacob Zuma's breakaway opposition uMkhonto weSizwe party (MKP) — contesting local government elections for the first time — was third, with just over 9%.

It was leading in the eastern metropolitan municipality of eThekwini, which includes the port city of Durban, the capital of KwaZulu-Natal province that is Zuma's Zulu homeland.

With outright majorities unlikely to be assured in several major cities, the results will usher in complex coalition negotiations, as parties start bargaining to assemble the alliances needed to govern.

"All of the cut and thrust that comes with the election is now over, and it is time now... to put together governments that can actually fix these towns and cities," DA leader Geordin Hill-Lewis told reporters. "We have already reached out to many parties over the last 24 hours and will continue to do so today," he said.

South Africa's political landscape has more than 500 parties registered at a national level.

"Key among the reasons why the ANC is losing votes is because of the emergence of the parties such as the MKP," said university lecturer and analyst Sanet Solomon.

FAA admin to testify on $12.5bn air traffic overhaul

The head of the Federal Aviation Administration will testify Tuesday before a US House of Representatives panel on the ongoing $12.5bn effort to modernise the aging US air traffic control system, congressional aides said.
FAA Administrator Bryan Bedford will update the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on progress and ongoing challenges. Congress approved $12.5bn over five years in June 2025 for air traffic control reforms but the Trump administration wants another $30bn for air traffic control towers, software and digital upgrades as well as improving airport facilities.. (**Reuters**)

Democrats planning AI bills after taking reins of Congress

Reuters
Washington

Democrats are planning to unleash a flood of new legislation targeting artificial intelligence systems and data-centre development when they take control of the US Congress in January, lawmakers, congressional aides and advocates said.

The plans would mark a sharp shift from the Republican-led Congress, where lawmakers largely focused on promoting AI development and declined to pass legislation restricting aspects of the technology at a time when voters turned against the rapid development of data centres and their extensive power needs.

Democrats plan on introducing bills aimed at shielding consumers from rising electricity costs tied to data centres, requiring independent testing of advanced AI systems and clarifying when AI companies can be held liable for harm caused by their products, they said.

Any legislation would face steep odds while President Donald Trump remains in the White House, as he has repeatedly dismissed calls to write mandatory rules for AI technology.

But Democratic lawmakers and outside advocates said control of congressional committees would give the party a platform to advance proposals, compel testimony from industry leaders and build support for action if AI systems cause real-world harm. Representative Greg Casar, a Texas Democrat and chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, already said this week that AI executives should be called to testify under oath.



A view of the US Capitol at sunrise in Washington, DC. (**AFP**)

Federal government restrictions on AI development could hurt the industry's profits if they slow the release of new models or prompt the companies to change how their AI tools perform to address concerns that their products are harming people.

Technology shares sold off dramatically on Thursday on growing concerns that a new Congress will slow AI development, but also on fears that the massive capital expense on building out AI will not yield sufficient returns.

Senator Chuck Schumer, a New York Democrat who is expected to become majority leader, said on Thursday at an event in Washington that protecting consumers from higher energy costs linked to the rapid expansion of data centres would be among his priorities next year.

Representative Lori Trahan of Massachusetts, one of the Democratic Party's leading voices on AI policy, plans to push legislation requiring independent experts to evaluate leading AI models against safety standards, said Francis Grubar, her deputy chief of staff. Trahan will also pursue legislation clarifying that companies can be held responsible when AI systems act in harmful ways, he said.

Representative Zoe Lofgren, a Democrat from California who is seeking to chair the House Science Committee, said Democrats would focus on developing "responsible regulations for AI while also fostering innovation."

Abdul El-Sayed, a Michigan Democrat who won a Senate seat on Tuesday, called during his campaign for an independent agency to oversee AI regulation with the power to police tech companies developing the technology.

Public concern about AI is already high. Most US voters think Trump's administration and Congress are not taking the risks of AI seriously enough and want the government to write new regulations for the technology, according to a Reuters poll published in October.

A crisis could build enough support to overcome presidential opposition to AI regulation, said Ed Mills, who manages policy research at Raymond James.

"The probability of legislation is much higher than people anticipate," he said.

Congress can override a presidential veto with the backing of two-thirds of lawmakers in both chambers. Democrats could also try to insert AI regulation into routine bills that must pass Congress each year, Mills said.

Democrats also plan to use their new authority to intensify scrutiny of the industry's most powerful companies, including OpenAI and Anthropic. Lofgren and other Democratic House committee leaders in October asked OpenAI, Anthropic, Meta, Alphabet's Google and SpaceX to detail their security practices and report instances of their AI tools taking actions that their designers did not intend.

90mn displaced people face severe climate risks

AFP
Geneva

Three-quarters of the world's displaced people live in countries facing severe exposure to climate-related hazards, the UN said yesterday, calling for urgent action to protect them.

Days before the COP31 climate conference in Turkiye, a UN refugee agency report said nearly 90mn refugees and other forcibly displaced people faced severe risks linked to a warming planet.

"Refugees face a double injustice," Anton Leis Garcia, UNHCR's assistant high commissioner for operations, said in a statement. "Forced to flee conflicts they did not cause, they are now on the frontlines of a climate crisis they have contributed least to."

They now find themselves in places grappling with severe droughts, deadly floods and extreme heat, the organisation pointed out. It said more than two-thirds of refugees who returned home during the first half of this year went back to countries highly vulnerable to climate hazards.

In Syria, where nearly 4mn displaced people have recently returned, declining groundwater and climate shocks were threatening recovery, the agency said. It mentioned flooding along the Euphrates River last May that damaged homes and displaced thousands.

Extreme heat was also a growing threat, it said, cautioning that by 2050, one in three refugee settlements across sub-Saharan Africa could face 100 or more days of dangerous heat each year.

Weather-related disasters are causing more than 255 mn internal displacements worldwide over the past decade, UNHCR said.

That amounts to 70,000 each day, it pointed out.

This year's exceptionally strong El Nino was expected to cause even more displacement.

Trump administration scraps meeting of high-profile White House tech panel

The Trump administration cancelled a meeting yesterday of a White House tech panel that includes Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang and Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, an Energy Department spokesperson said.
Technology shares sold off dramatically on Thursday on growing concerns that a new Congress controlled by Democrats will slow AI development, and fears that the massive capital expenditure on building out AI will not yield sufficient returns.
The market turmoil has heightened scrutiny of the sector among executives in Silicon Valley and policymakers in Washington. The meeting was scheduled to convene the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, an outside panel that advises President Donald Trump. The group also includes AMD CEO Lisa Su, Oracle Chief Technology Officer Larry Ellison and Marc Andreessen, the co-founder of Andreessen Horowitz. Its co-chairs are venture capitalist David Sacks and White House tech adviser Michael Kratsios. (**Reuters**)

Thousands have fled Nigeria due to instability, UN says

Tens of thousands have fled across the border from Nigeria to Niger and Benin to escape violence and insecurity this year, the UN has said. Northern Nigeria faces rising religious intolerance and violence by militants, as well as farmer-herder clashes.
The UN's refugee agency (UNHCR) said that more than 66,000 had fled across the borders by mid-October, three times the number in the same period last year.
The agency is struggling to help people in need and has appealed for $2mn to help those who have fled and also thousands still stuck in Nigeria. (**AFP**)

Mississippi vote count turns into final nail-biter of midterms

AFP
Washington

Election officials in Mississippi were racing yesterday to verify thousands of outstanding ballots in a razor-thin US Senate race, three days after Democrats swept to power in a historic defeat for President Donald Trump's Republicans.

Democrat Scott Colom held a narrow lead of fewer than 2,000 votes over Republican incumbent Cindy Hyde-Smith, with roughly 96% of ballots counted.

The unusually prolonged count reflects Mississippi's election procedures, which allow officials several days to process mail-in and provisional ballots — potentially enough to decide the contest.

Secretary of State Michael Watson said in his last update posted on X Thursday that around 3,300 absentee ballots remained outstanding.

And he separately estimated that between 12,000 and 20,000 provisional votes — known as affidavit ballots — remain uncounted, according to local NBC affiliate WDAM-7. These are cast by people whose eligibility cannot be confirmed at polling stations, sometimes because of missing identification or discrepancies in voter registration records.

Voters have until Tuesday to resolve certain problems with their ballots. Mail votes postmarked by Election Day can also arrive through Tuesday, while Mississippi's 82 counties have until November 13 to certify their results.

The close contest has prompted both parties to deploy lawyers, with Republicans demanding that officials preserve records relating to the outstanding ballots in anticipation of possible legal challenges.

Mississippi has no automatic recount procedure, although candidates can seek court intervention. A Colom victory would be extraordinary in a state Trump carried by more than 20 percentage points in 2024.

Mississippi has not elected a Democratic senator since 1982, and Colom would be its first Black senator since the Reconstruction era following the American Civil War.

The stakes have diminished nationally, however, after Democrats captured both chambers of Congress in Tuesday's midterm elections, securing their Senate majority without needing Mississippi.

The other outstanding Senate race is in Alaska, where Democrat Mary Peltola narrowly leads Republican incumbent Dan Sullivan.

Alaska's vast distances, remote communities and mail-ballot deadlines mean counting takes longer. Further updates are scheduled for November 10, 13 and 18, with ranked-choice tabulation due on the final date.

Tanzanian opposition leader cleared of treason, sentenced for incitement

Reuters
Nairobi

Tanzania's main opposition leader, Tundu Lissu, was cleared of treason but convicted of incitement and sentenced to four years in jail yesterday, in a case that rights groups and his supporters say is politically motivated.

Police surrounded the courtroom in the commercial capital Dar es Salaam and crowds gathered nearby as authorities brought Lissu to the hearing in a heavily guarded convoy.

The chairperson of Tanzania's biggest opposition party, CHADEMA, was arrested in April last year. Protests over his detention and other grievances escalated into the worst political unrest in the country's history during elections in October 2025.

The charge related to a speech Lissu gave that April when prosecutors say he told supporters that the opposition would "block the election" and "mobilise rebellion".

He pleaded not guilty, arguing during the trial that his speech did not violate any law and that the charges were politically motivated. The government has dismissed accusations of a crackdown on dissent and said protesters started the violence.

Video posted on CHADEMA's X account yesterday showed Lissu being escorted to the court by guards, some masked.

He was seen waving his fist in the air briefly and shouting "Do not fear!" in Swahili.

More clips from CHADEMA showed Lissu in the dock, sporting dreadlocks with a blue rosary around his left arm, waving to people inside the packed courtroom and shouting "We will arrive". They were seen responding "Yes" in Swahili.


Police officers escort Tanzanian opposition leader and CHADEMA chairman Tundu Lissu to the High Court in Dar es Salaam. (**Reuters**)

Lissu planned to appeal against the jail sentence, his party's spokesperson, Brenda Rupia, told Reuters. Rugemeleza Nshala, CHADEMA's chief legal counsel, told reporters that he would also apply for bail in the meantime.

Amnesty International said the guilty verdict was a travesty of justice and called for Lissu's release.

"Tundu Lissu should never have been arrested, let alone prosecuted and convicted," Tigere Chagutah, the group's regional director for East and Southern Africa, told Reuters.

Lissu's detention, along with CHADEMA's disqualification from the vote and allegations by rights groups that government critics were abducted, was a key driver of protests that broke out during last year's elections.

Hundreds died as police opened fire on protesters in multiple cities, undermining the country's long-standing reputation for stability.

A commission appointed by President Samia Suluhu Hassan said in April that at least 518 people were killed in the violence, which it blamed on protesters.

Her government denied allegations by human rights groups that the security services used excessive force. She was declared winner of the election with nearly 98% of the vote.

The US ambassador to Tanzania, William Trachman, wrote on X on Thursday that he was closely following the trial and its "broader implications for the rule of law".

The US government said last December it was reviewing its relationship with Tanzania due to violence against civilians and other concerns.



Finance Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne holds up the federal budget in the House of Commons in Ottawa. **(Reuters)**

Canada budget vows to reduce reliance on US

AFP
Ottawa

Canada unveiled a budget on Thursday that calls for "economic independence" and says that while reducing its reliance on the US will take time, "the shift is underway."

Prime Minister Mark Carney's second budget since taking office last year was presented to parliament just two days after President Donald Trump suffered a sweeping midterm election rebuke.

While Democrats, who will take control of the US House and Senate next year, have already voiced a desire to ease Trump's trade war with Canada, Carney's budget affirms that the Canadian economy cannot remain dependent on the US market. "Canada and the US will not return to our old relationship," the budget says, echoing Carney's message that pre-Trump tariff-free North American trade is not coming back.

The budget, titled "Masters of our Destiny," details plans for Canada's first-ever sovereign wealth fund. The CAN$25bn ($18.3bn) Canada Strong Fund will invest in major national projects, with Ottawa hoping that a government stake in such projects will help attract private capital.

The budget further marks Carney's decisive break with his predecessor, Justin Trudeau, another Liberal, whose economic stewardship faced criticism.

The budget presented by Finance Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne says Carney's government inherited an economy plagued by weak productivity growth in which "private sector investment lagged," while "Canada remained excessively dependent on the US." "Diversification will take time, given the scale and depth of Canada's economic relationship with the US. But the shift is underway," the budget says.

Speaking earlier Thursday, Carney told reporters that political developments in the US are "important" and that bilateral relations will "evolve," but his priority remained more "independence."

"We're focused here, we're focused on the same issues as we were at the start of the week," before the midterms, he said.

The budget also details a tax incentive Carney introduced at a major investment summit in September, where he gathered global financial heavyweights in Toronto to try to persuade them to invest in Canada.

The "Productivity Mega Deduction" allows businesses of all sizes to deduct the costs of new investments and, according to Ottawa, makes Canada an increasingly attractive investment destination compared to the US.

"Put simply, a company will pay approximately 60% less tax on the return from a new investment made in Canada than on the same investment made in the US," the budget says.

The budget also acknowledges the pain Trump's tariffs have inflicted across key sectors of the economy, notably automaking, steel, aluminum and lumber.

It says CAN$44bn has already been announced for businesses and workers impacted by tariffs.

Ten billion of that is allocated to workers, nearly CAN$13bn is to provide liquidity for larger businesses facing cash flow challenges due to tariff disruptions, and another CAN$20.6bn is to help businesses adapt in response to Trump's tariffs. "The rules that Canada relied on for decades can no longer be taken for granted," Champagne told reporters before his budget speech, insisting Canada was in a strong fiscal position with "room to maneuver."

Conservative Party head and opposition leader Pierre Poilievre accused the Liberals of presenting a "credit card budget."

Ordinary Canadians will ultimately have to pay for debts owned to "bankers and bond holders," he told parliament.

Hondurans head for US, lured by prospect of Trump poll setback

AFP
San Pedro Sula, Honduras

A caravan of Hondurans prepared to travel north to the US on Tuesday, buoyed by the prospect of midterm election results stalling President Donald Trump's battle against immigration.

The procession of dozens of people geared up to leave the northern city of San Pedro Sula as Americans went to the polls with control of Congress at stake, along with some say over Trump's last two years in power.

Polls predict Democrats will end Republican control of the House of Representatives, and perhaps even the Senate, giving them power to thwart Trump's legislative agenda.

Those odds are encouraging Hondurans to attempt a border crossing into the US after traversing Mexico.

Jimena Morazan is travelling with five family members in the belief that the election results will amount to a death knell for Trump's second-term policy agenda.

"That's why we're taking the risk," the 47-year-old told AFP, adding that in very poor and violent Honduras, "we don't have anything else."

This marks the third procession to undertake the grueling journey since September, with people in El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Mexico joining the previous caravans along the way.

"We found out on social media that a caravan was going to depart, and I decided to go with my family," said Jesus Carias, 30, in San Pedro Sula.

Accompanied by his wife and three young children, Carias is aware of the challenges ahead, having attempted to cross the border three times already. "We're placing ourselves in God's hands to see what decision they make over there," he said.

The Trump administration warned on Thursday that it will revoke the visas of the organisers, who advertised the initiative on TikTok and WhatsApp. The caravans "have no chance whatsoever of entering" the country, the US embassy in Tegucigalpa wrote on X.

Paraguay Senate rejects bid to delay Pena's impeachment

AFP
Asuncion, Paraguay

Paraguay's Senate yesterday rejected President Santiago Pena's bid to delay his impeachment trial over a banking scandal that has seen millions of people temporarily lose access to their deposits.

Senate President Basilio Nunez said Pena's bid for a three-day delay to prepare his defence "did not receive the necessary votes, so the extension is rejected."

He said Pena would be "notified and summoned" for the immediate impeachment proceedings.

The crisis erupted on Tuesday, when the Central Bank took control of Ueno Bank over fears for its solvency and froze the accounts of around three mn customers, nearly half the country's population.

Pena, who previously owned a stake in a group that controlled the bank, tendered his resignation on Thursday, but Congress put his resignation on hold while the impeachment process moved forward.

Writing on X, the 47-year-old president, an economist by training, said earlier yesterday he had asked for a 72-hour extension to prepare his defence.

He said that he had been served with a 15-page indictment with around 300 pages of appendices only the evening before.

"This is not due process," he added hours before the Senate was due to hold the impeachment hearing.

The Central Bank's intervention in Ueno on Tuesday came as a shock in the South American country, which has a reputation for being economically and politically stable.

The Central Bank said that Ueno had breached minimum solvency requirements. Pena, who came to power in 2023, owned shares in Grupo Vasquez, which has majority control of Ueno, until 2025 when he sold them. The opposition accuses him of conflict of interest, which he denies.

The Attorney General's Office said it is investigating Pena for "acts related to the supervision and resolution of Ueno Bank SA and the placement of public funds in said entity."



A woman walks past several newspapers featuring reports on President Santiago Peña's resignation in Asuncion. (**AFP**)



President Santiago Pena's lawyer Ricardo Preda speaks during an impeachment trial at Paraguay's National Congress. (**AFP**)

In an address to the nation on Thursday, the right-wing leader said: "I want to apologise to the people if at any point I failed."

"It was never my intention to betray the trust you placed in me," he added.

The opposition wants to impeach Pena, rather than let him resign. If he resigns, he will automatically become a senator for life and enjoy immunity from prosecution, constitutional experts and lawmakers explained AFP.

In dramatic scenes in Congress on Thursday, MPs from Pena's conservative Colorado Party joined ranks with the opposition in voting to launch impeachment proceedings.

Thousands of people took to the streets for a third consecutive night on Thursday in the capital Asuncion and other cities to demand the return of their money.

They also demanded Pena's removal from office and, for some, his imprisonment.

"Santiago Pena has hurt so many Paraguayans, so many families, business owners and small business people, including my own son, who had savings in Ueno Bank," Cynthia Farina told AFP at a protest in Asuncion.

Ueno began out as a small fintech company with a digital-first model that attracted many low-income customers. It rapidly grew into a major bank that handled state pensions and the accounts of several state entities.

Central Bank president Carlos Carvallo, who previously headed Ueno, resigned over the scandal and arrest warrants have been issued for eight Ueno executives.

The Central Bank has vowed to protect the bank's depositors and assured that the bank's woes do not "represent the broader state of the Paraguayan financial system."

Second senior Justice Dept official resigns after midterms

Reuters
Washingnton

Jason Reding Quiñones, who oversaw probes into past criminal investigations of US President Donald Trump as the top federal prosecutor in Miami, has resigned, Attorney General Todd Blanche said yesterday.

As US attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Quiñones was at the centre of Trump's attempts to leverage the Justice Department to exact revenge on his political adversaries. His office was tasked with investigating the criminal probes of Trump's handling of classified documents after he left office in 2021 and his campaign's contacts with Russia in the 2016 election, among other issues. Those efforts have not borne fruit so far.

His resignation marks the departure of the second senior Justice Department official since Tuesday's midterm elections, when Trump's Republicans lost control of Congress. The DOJ now is without leaders for two of its signature initiatives — relitigating past investigations and targeting higher education. Harmeet Dhillon, who headed the DOJ's civil-rights unit, resigned on Thursday.

It was not immediately clear why Quiñones resigned. In a statement on X, Quiñones said his resignation was effective yesterday and called it an honour to serve in the role.

His office had also brought criminal charges against former Cuban President Raul Castro in a major escalation of the Trump administration's pressure campaign against the communist country.

Pope Leo kick-starts South America tour

Pope Leo left yesterday for an ambitious 12-day trip across South America expected to attract millions-strong crowds, as the first US-born pope returns to a Catholic stronghold where he lived for decades as a missionary.

Leo, who is 71 and underwent lung cancer surgery last month, will visit Uruguay, Argentina and Peru through November 17 on one of the most demanding overseas tours taken by a Catholic leader in decades.

The Vatican said this week that the pope had completely healed from his operation and no special precautions were being taken for the tour, on which Leo will travel some 31,000 km across 10 cities and give 36 speeches. The pope, who was born in Chicago but spent decades in Peru and became a Peruvian citizen, considers the tour a "homecoming to places where he spent a long time and to which he feels closely connected," said Vatican spokesperson Matteo Bruni.

Leo told pilgrims at his weekly audience in St Peter's Square on Wednesday that during the trip he was hoping to "strengthen the faith, renew hope, (and) rekindle the fire of charity".

The pope, who departed from Rome's Fiumicino airport early yesterday morning, was due to arrive in Uruguay at 4:30pm. He will stay in the country until Sunday, visiting three cities before continuing on for three days in Argentina and six days in Peru.

Leo, who has forcefully decried the direction of global leadership in recent months, will address the governments in each country in closely watched speeches. He will also lead outdoor Masses at major local sites, visit a prison in Argentina and head to remote Andean communities in Peru by helicopter.

On Sunday, Leo will give an address to Argentine President Javier Milei, a right-wing libertarian seen as a close ally to US President Donald Trump, who lambasted Leo earlier this year after the pope criticised the Iran war. "The pope brings a message of communion and unity, an invitation to recognise one another... as members of one same family," Bruni said.

The late Pope Francis, who was Leo's predecessor and from Argentina, visited Peru in 2018 but never returned home. **(Reuters)**

Catching colours of sunset



People watch the sunset over the Uruguay River while fishing, in Colon, Entre Rios, Argentina. **(Reuters)**

White House confident Trump arch will overcome legal block

AFP
Washington

The White House yesterday dismissed a legal ruling that blocked President Donald Trump's massive triumphal arch project in Washington, criticising an "activist" judge for temporarily halting construction.

The arch is one of several building projects launched by Trump in a bid to put his personal stamp on the US capital, despite fierce local opposition and multiple legal challenges.

"We are confident we will be fully vindicated as this litigation proceeds and look forward to seeing the completion of this magnificent Arch," the White House said.

District Judge Tanya Chutkan, who is overseeing the case, ruled that the Trump administration cannot start construction for two weeks while the court considers challenges to its legality.



President Donald Trump holds up a model for a proposed "Independence Arch" at White House in Washington, DC. (**AFP**)

The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) — which is stacked with Trump supporters — on Thursday voted 8-4 to approve the project after hearing hours of testimony from dozens of furious opponents.

Chief among the complaints was the location of the 250-foot (76-meter) tall structure adjacent to the hallowed Arlington National Cemetery, the final resting place for hundreds of thousands of American service members.

The giant arch would be much taller than the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, its inspiration. It would also tower over the Lincoln Memorial, directly across the Potomac River.

Four dissenting commissioners had called for the decision to be delayed, noting there were legal concerns and a lack of congressional appropriation to fund the project.

They also questioned the administration's claims that the arch would be needed for military purposes.

Trump has referred to plans for snipers and drones being based on the arch, although he has not explained what they'd be used for.

As expected, given the panel's make-up, it voted against a delay and the Trump administration said it aimed to start work right away.

However, Chutkan's ruling sided with military veterans and the attorneys general of Washington and Virginia, who had sued seeking to halt construction.

Trump's other projects in Washington include a White House ballroom, for which he demolished an entire wing of the presidential mansion.

Another is the botched renovation of the Reflecting Pool, a rectangular water basin on the National Mall.

Trump has also pushed to revamp the East Potomac Golf Links, a historic waterfront Washington golf course, cutting down hundreds of trees before a judge halted the project.

Trump wants to place the arch on what is currently a traffic circle covered in grass.

WORLD

Myanmar plans by-election, including in conflict areas

AFP, Reuters
Yangon


A resident votes in Yangon in December election .(**AFP/File photo**)

Myanmar will hold by-elections next April, the polling commission said yesterday, encompassing areas where the pro-military parliament could not previously hold voting due to the country's devastating civil war.

The contest for vacant seats in 55 constituencies will be held on April 4, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported.

The move indicates the military's increasing confidence in its ability to control territory in the southeast Asian nation after it claimed advances following a string of offensives.

Myanmar has been embroiled in civil war since the military ousted the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in 2021.

The vote follows a general election held in December and January that was won overwhelmingly by the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party in the absence of any viable opposition.

The junta staged phased elections, which it touted as a return to democracy following the coup.

The election was criticised as a sham by the United Nations and many Western countries and led to junta chief Min Aung Hlaing becoming president.

But the highly restrictive poll was blocked in areas where rebels seized control in opposition to military rule, rejecting the elections as a charade.

The Union Election Commission said by-elections will take place on April 4, 2027 in 39 constituencies of the lower and upper houses of parliament, according to a statement published by state media.

According to an AFP tally, one-third of those constituencies are places where voting in the previous elections was called off for security reasons.

The scheduled votes are in areas where fighting is still raging though, including the northern region of Sagaing, central Mandalay region and the western state of Chin.

The remaining two-thirds of constituencies will replace lawmakers who have been compelled by the constitution to vacate their seats after being promoted to senior government roles.

Myanmar's parliament is dominated by lawmakers from the pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), while Suu Kyi's party was dissolved and she remains detained.

The USDP currently controls 84% of the bicameral parliament.

Several seats in the by-election will encompass townships in the Sagaing Region plus Chin and Shan states, where anti-military resistance forces have a strong presence.

Not included is restive Rakhine state, bordering Bangladesh, where the military is locked in fierce fighting with the rebel Arakan Army.

Voting in the general election was held in 692 constituencies, with 121 excluded as they were out of the military's control.

Min Aung Hlaing, who led the 2021 coup that ousted Suu Kyi, was swiftly voted in as civilian president. Analysts and activists describe the new government as a fig leaf for military rule.

The civil war sparked by the military takeover is now in its sixth year, and estimated to have claimed over 100,000 lives according to conflict monitor ACLED.

Indonesia names fourth senior police officer as wiretapping suspect

Reuters
Jakarta

Indonesian police have named a fourth senior officer as a suspect in the alleged wiretapping of President Prabowo Subianto, as authorities continue to investigate the motives behind a scandal that has exposed a deepening rift between the president and his predecessor, Joko Widodo.

The case has piled more pressure on Prabowo, with public discontent growing over his costly populist policies and weakening investor confidence in Indonesia's $1.5tn economy.

At a press conference late on Thursday, police named a senior law enforcement official with the initials SU as the new suspect, and said he served as monitoring chief at Indonesia's Criminal Investigation Agency between 2010 and 2019. Local media later identified him as Slamet Uliandi.

Investigators alleged that SU, who was the head of the investigation agency's information and technology unit from 2021-2026, gave the go-ahead for the wiretapping, said cyber crime unit director Suhermanto at the press conference.

"When the other two suspects were about to wiretap, they got approval from SU. They also asked his approval before deleting interception records," Suhermanto said, adding that SU had not yet been detained due to a health condition.

Three senior police officers had already been arrested on Tuesday, including the former national police chief and Prabowo's chief of staff, Listyo Sigit Prabowo, who is widely known as a Widodo loyalist.

Police are still investigating the motives behind the attempts to intercept Prabowo's communications, and have so far questioned 13 police officers and five criminal and IT experts.

The national police chief has also formed a special team to investigate the case, spokesperson Trunoyudo Wisnu Andiko said.

Jakarta remained calm on Thursday and Friday despite the deployment of thousands of troops in the wake of the wiretapping revelations. Military tents and buses were seen in the capital, as well as a small number of soldiers.

China passes cross-border corruption law, expanding anti-graft drive

Reuters
Beijing

China has adopted a new law to combat cross-border corruption, state news agency Xinhua said yesterday, adding that it was aimed at deepening international cooperation on the issue and safeguarding the country's sovereignty and security.

Tackling corruption has been one of the signature themes of President Xi Jinping's leadership.

In an article run by the Communist Party's People's Daily on Thursday, top anti-corruption official Li Xi wrote that "legislation should be enacted to combat cross-border corruption, to strengthen efforts to track down fugitives, prevent flight and recover illicit assets, along with greater enforcement in cross-border corruption cases."

The legislation, a draft of which was reviewed in August 2025, was revised this month to broaden its scope, including a provision supporting the development of a fairer global anti-corruption governance system, according to Xinhua.

The revisions also tighten confidentiality requirements, requiring investigators to protect state secrets, commercial secrets and personal data obtained during probes.

They also increase corporate compliance obligations, requiring Chinese companies engaged in cross-border business to establish anti-corruption compliance functions proportionate to their size, business activities and risk exposure, Xinhua said.

Malaysia halts ex-PM Najib's house arrest transfer

Reuters
Kuala Lumpu



A supporter of jailed former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak shows stickers featuring his portrait outside Najib's residence after a court issued an order allowing his transfer to house arrest, in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Malaysia's attorney-general yesterday postponed jailed former premier Najib Razak's transfer to house arrest to review his royal pardon, in a last-minute intervention after a court cleared him to leave prison four years into his sentence.

Najib, prime minister from 2009-2018, was jailed in relation to a multi-billion-dollar scandal at state investment fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad and was granted approval in a September royal pardon to serve the remaining two years of his sentence at home.

Najib was given the green light from a court earlier on Friday to start his house arrest and left prison briefly to undergo a scheduled dental check, according to Transport Minister Anthony Loke.

Police and throngs of media had gathered for most of the day outside the former premier's cordoned-off Kuala Lumpur home in anticipation of his arrival.

But the Attorney-General's Chambers late on Friday said questions had arisen over the legal interpretation of King Sultan Ibrahim's pardon and the court order allowing him to leave jail.

"In this regard, the implementation of house arrest... should be temporarily suspended until further investigation and clarification," it said in a three-page statement.

Najib's lawyers did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the attorney-general's move.

One of Malaysia's most influential and divisive politicians, Najib has repeatedly denied wrongdoing in the 1MDB case and insists he was made the scapegoat for the complex, globe-spanning scheme that siphoned away as much as $4.5bn, according to US investigators.

More than $1bn allegedly made its way into accounts linked to Najib, 1MDB's co-founder, prosecutors have said.

He was also convicted in a separate 1MDB-related case in December last year, for which he was sentenced to 15 years in prison and fined $2.8bn for abuse of power and money laundering. He has lodged an appeal in that case.

Najib was given a boost earlier on Friday when his party, the United Malays National Organisation, paid a 50mn ringgit ($12.32mn) fine on his behalf, raised through crowdfunding, to fulfil the conditions of his pardon.

Najib's lawyer, Farhan Shafee, had earlier said the transfer was expected to take place yesterday "if the process goes according to plan".

Najib was for years a towering figure in Malaysian politics and still commands influence in UMNO, which is part of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's multi-party government.

Anwar's Pakatan Harapan alliance has strongly opposed leniency towards Najib, putting it at odds with the once dominant UMNO, and his transfer to house arrest could create more tension in the coalition government.

It is also likely to fuel criticism over the government's handling of corruption cases and further erode support for Anwar after setbacks in two state elections this year, which went the way of Najib's UMNO

Though the next general election is not due to take place until early 2028, Anwar has said he could call a snap poll if rifts deepen.

Transport Minister Loke, who is also leader of the Democratic Action Party (DAP), the largest member of Anwar's ruling bloc, on Friday said he would resign from the cabinet as soon as Najib begins house arrest.

Tony Pua a former DAP lawmaker who played a key role in uncovering the 1MDB scandal, said Najib was "Malaysia's biggest crook" and chided UMNO for fundraising to get him out of prison.

"Instead of using such a large sum of money to help ordinary Malaysians, they chose to 'free' Malaysia's most corrupt," he said on Facebook.

Japan minister blames X for diplomatic near-miss

A Japanese minister blamed Elon Musk's X social media platform yesterday for almost plunging him into diplomatic hot water, after its automatic translation feature implied he did not know the names of world leaders he was meeting.
Trade minister Ryosei Akazawa assured reporters that he knew the identity of the current Prime Minister of Bangladesh after a post with photos of the two included the name of an ousted Bangladeshi premier in its translated version.
"This is actually a serious matter. It is possible that...the Bangladeshi public might be left with the impression that, Japan's Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry does not even know who our (Bangladeshi) prime minister is," Akazawa told journalists.
His original Japanese-language post on X on October 28, accompanied by photos, stated that he met with visiting Bangladeshi Prime Minister Tarique Rahman.
But the platform's machine-translation tool incorrectly changed the English version to make Akazawa seem to declare that he met with Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh's former premier who has lived in exile in India since a mass uprising in 2024.
Making matters worse, it was not the first time Akazawa had fallen foul of a translation snafu on the platform. He said a similar mistake occurred after he posted about his Thursday online meeting with Kuwait's oil minister Tareq al-Roumi — with the automatic translation feature saying he held talks with Qatar's energy minister.
Akazawa added that his translated post on a meeting with US commerce secretary Howard Lutnick had also stated an incorrect name. "I experienced this three times," he said, appealing to X to fix the translation tool.
X did not immediately respond to a request for comment from AFP.

Overgrown Tokyo station hires weed-munching goats

Two white goats deployed by rail staff in central Tokyo to munch overgrown grass have become social media stars in Japan, with commuters and residents flocking to the busy business district to see the cute creatures.
One-year-old male "Nagi" and two-year-old female "Pokke" arrived at their temporary new home — an empty lot near JR Yotsuya Station in the commercial hub of Shinjuku — last month.
East Japan Railway (JR East) said on X that the move was "an eco-friendly way to remove weeds".
The animals have become a major attraction for local schoolchildren and professionals — who come to snap photos during lunch breaks — as well as a hit on social media.
Tamae Noguchi, 60, an employee at a nearby company, told AFP she was "really happy to be able to see goats right here in the middle of the city".
"They're eating their feed so energetically that just watching them makes me feel energised too," she said. "Just looking at living creatures really lifts your spirits."
Edward Asis, a 38-year-old university student from the Philippines, told AFP the goats were "very cute". "It's a great way, natural way of trying to get rid of all this grass," he said.
The trial in the 900sq m vacant lot started on October 9 and will last until around December, "but will end once the grass within the premises has been completely eaten," JR East said in a statement to AFP. Compared to use of grass cutters and herbicides, "using goat grazing not only enables continuous weed control but also makes it possible to reduce the environmental impact," it added.
The company has implemented similar trials using goats elsewhere, but it is their first inside the circular Yamanote line, the central core of Tokyo.
In 2016, around 10 sheep were installed close to Paris' major ring road to clear grass, despite complaints from the public and animal welfare groups over concerns they were breathing polluted air. (**AFP**)

Korean audit reveals friction in US alliance as Washington's priorities shift

Reuters
Seoul

Republic of Korea's President Lee Jae Myung has come under fire from the opposition over his management of the US alliance following revelations of strains in ties during a month-long parliamentary audit that ended last week.

The alliance came under intense scrutiny during the parliamentary audit, where strains over issues ranging from intelligence sharing to White House access and US visa denials came to the surface.

The revelations, coming just ahead of heavy losses for US President Donald Trump's Republican Party in the midterm elections, raise questions over the future course of the alliance as trade and investment tensions persist and Washington changes its military priorities in Asia to increasingly focus on China.

US officials have said the 28,500 US troops stationed in Korea will remain focused on deterring North Korea, but have signalled greater "flexibility" to operate beyond the peninsula in response to regional threats, potentially including a conflict over Taiwan and China's growing military reach.

According to a Pew Research survey published in August, 55% of Koreans have an unfavourable view of the US, the highest in more than 20 years.

During the audit, spy chief Lee Jong-seok acknowledged that Washington has curtailed some sensitive intelligence sharing after accusing a South Korean minister of publicly disclosing the location of a previously unconfirmed North Korean nuclear site. Lee and the military declined to provide details.


US President Donald Trump meets with Korean President Lee Jae Myung at the Oval Office, at the White House. (**Reuters/File photo**)

South Korea's ambassador to the US voiced concern during the audit over limited access to key White House officials, while two prominent lawmakers protested when their visas were not issued in time for official US visits.

The opposition People Power Party has blamed Lee personally and his policies, especially on North Korea, for "breaking up" the alliance with the US.

"The cause of the breakup is not external; it's inside (the government)," PPP spokesperson Park Choong-kwon said last week.

Still, Korean government officials have sought to portray the alliance as fundamentally sound and strains as temporary.

Foreign Minister Cho Hyun told parliament last week, when asked about US ambassador Michelle Steel describing the alliance as in "turbulence": "When you're in a turbulence, fasten your seatbelt and it won't be a problem."

Cho Han-beom of the Institute for National Unification said the discord stems from Washington's growing focus on China, making Seoul's role in checking China more significant, but it also means less attention to the Korean Peninsula itself.

"That will be the case no matter who the president of the United States is," he said.

The US posture in the region is undergoing "a doctrinal change" in priorities, said J. James Kim of the US-based Stimson Center. The national security strategy released by the administration this year surprised Seoul by giving no attention to deterring North Korea.

"I think the best way to put it is that it's in transition," Kim said.

Public unease extends beyond the US troop presence. Koreans were shocked when hundreds of Korean workers were shackled during last year's immigration raid on a battery project in Georgia state, while Trump's push for South Korean investment has also unsettled the public.

There has also been suspicion among some lawmakers in Washington that Seoul has benefited from its access to the US market while being less welcoming to American companies.

UK sending Charles into political fray as its 'secret weapon': aide

Reuters
London

King Charles is "a secret weapon" being increasingly thrust by the British government into dealing with challenging political situations, a senior royal aide has said following a diplomatically challenging trip by the monarch to the Caribbean.

The trip, which also included a meeting of the Commonwealth of Nations, which Charles heads, was dominated by the issue of slavery, and specifically whether Britain and the king should apologise for the transatlantic slave trade and offer to pay reparations.

The king did neither in speeches he made, in line with British government policy, but his expression of personal sorrow about the horrors of slavery was broadly welcomed by leaders of the 56-nation Commonwealth as a positive step forward.

In unusually frank remarks, the senior aide described the tour as complex and challenging, but said



Britain's King Charles gives a speech as he attends an official dinner and reception during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, in Soldier's Bay near St John's, Antigua and Barbuda. (**Reuters/File Photo**)

the king "had demonstrated his statecraft both by word and deed".

"It's a great secret weapon to send the king," the aide told reporters on condition of anonymity, adding the monarch was "able to reach the parts that, dare I say, politicians probably couldn't quite have reached".

The monarch is Britain's symbolic head of state but is constitutionally required to stay out of politics.

In recent times, as Britain's influence over world affairs has diminished, the government has often turned to the monarch to lead its diplomatic strategies.

Amid tensions with US President Donald Trump, most recently over the Iran war, the government enlisted Charles — who became king in September 2022 on the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth — to help smooth relations. The king hosted Trump on a state visit and then paid a reciprocal state visit to the US.

"We're just in the fifth year of the reign and I think what we're seeing is a very clear pattern emerging of the government asking the king to head into quite politically charged situations, quite challenging situations," the senior aide said.

Dealing with the tough part of the job was what he relished, the aide said, adding that "refreshing and reinvigorating relationships with nations where there have been some complex political issues at play, that is what he lives and breathes for".

The tour marks a high point in what has been another difficult year for the monarchy with the release of a biography of Charles' first wife, Princess Diana, written by her brother, which featured criticisms of Charles' reaction to her death.

Charles' younger brother Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor continues to make negative headlines as he remains under police investigation — Andrew denies any wrongdoing — , while the return to Britain of the king's younger son Prince Harry has also brought complications.

While Charles remains head of the Commonwealth and is still the head of state of 15 nations, including Canada and Australia, the aide acknowledged that situation could also change, with Barbados the latest nation to ditch the monarchy in 2021.

The aide said it was for nations and the Commonwealth to decide what to do in future.

UK doctor with Ebola returns from Congo to London for treatment

Reuters
London

A British doctor who tested positive for Ebola while working on the epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo returned to Britain on Thursday, with health authorities saying the risk of the deadly disease spreading to the wider public remains low.

It is the first case involving a British national linked to the current outbreak, although several other people from elsewhere in Europe have been infected. Imported cases are rare, with a handful of confirmed cases recorded in Britain since 1976.

Authorities have said they do not expect the case to have a serious public health impact in Britain and anticipate no disruption to international travel or trade.

The patient, whose identity was not disclosed, is being treated in a high-level isolation unit at the Royal Free Hospital in London, staffed by specialist clinical teams and designed to prevent contact between the patient and the public, the government said.

Renu Bindra, deputy director for All Hazards Public Health Response at the UK Health Security Agency, said the agency and the National Health Service had established infection-prevention and control protocols to limit the risk of onward transmission.

"The risk to the wider public remains low," Bindra said.

Ebola is a severe viral disease spread through direct contact with an infected person's bodily fluids. The World Health Organisation says the disease is fatal in about half of cases on average, though mortality rates vary between outbreaks.

The current outbreak in Congo is the second-largest on record, with more than 10,000 confirmed cases and over 5,000 deaths reported.

UK mandates salary disclosure in job ads

Reuters
London

Britain will require employers to publish salaries in job advertisements, Prime Minister Andy Burnham said yesterday, as part of efforts to reduce the number of young people not in work, education or training.

The government said requiring companies to disclose pay in job ads would help young people applying for their first jobs, while boosting pay transparency and helping tackle disparities that can disadvantage women.

Just over two in five employers always publish salary ranges, while fewer than one in five always disclose specific salaries, Burnham's office said, citing estimates from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

"Whether you're a young person starting out or a parent trying to support your family, you should know what a job pays before spending your time and effort applying for it," Burnham said in a statement.

The government will soon introduce legislation to parliament making salary disclosures mandatory, Burnham's office said, although it did not provide a timeline.

Nearly one million, or 13%, of 16 to 24 year-olds in Britain are not in employment, education or training, one of the highest shares in Europe. A government review into youth inactivity is due to be published later in November.

The measure is part of a broader push to increase pay transparency.

New York became the largest US city to require most private employers to disclose salary ranges in 2022.

The European Union adopted pay transparency rules the following year, giving member states until June 2026 to implement them in national law.

Delhi schools to offer online classes as air quality worsens

Reuters
New Delhi

India ordered schools in and around Delhi to offer online classes, and encouraged people to work from home and postpone private gatherings, as air quality in the capital and surrounding areas deteriorated sharply yesterday.

The curbs come ahead of Diwali, the festival of lights, which will be celebrated tomorrow and is usually marked by the widespread use of firecrackers that further worsens the air quality.

Pollution is an annual problem in many parts of northern India from the onset of winter as cold, heavy air traps vehicle emissions, construction dust and smoke from crop waste burning.

The problem is exacerbated in big cities such as Delhi — home to 20mn people — due to a high number of vehicles and construc-



A general view shows India's presidential palace Rashtrapati Bhavan amid smoggy conditions in New Delhi. (**AFP**)

tion activity, leaving many residents battling respiratory problems.

Delhi is typically ranked the world's most polluted city several times each winter by Swiss group IQAir, which measures air quality levels based on the concentration of toxins.

Yesterday, the capital recorded an air quality index of 382, according to data from the Central Pollution Control Board, which considers an AQI of up to 50 to be 'good'.

The Commission for Air Quality Management imposed the restrictions yesterday under a graded action plan, which mandates stronger curbs as pollution levels spike.

Its order also urged local governments in Delhi and surrounding regions to consider allowing companies and government offices to let half of their workers work from home.

Air quality was made worse by unfavourable meteorological conditions, with forecasts indicating it could slip into the 'severe' category in the coming days, the commission said in its order.

"From tomorrow, the weather is going to become worse, winds will completely stop, which will worsen the AQI," Delhi Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa said in a statement.

Residents said the toxic air was impacting their health.

"The pollution makes it hard to breathe, and also makes me feel anxious... I also feel a pinching sensation in my eyes," said Sarvesh, a Delhi resident who gave only his first name.

Bomb threats force evacuations at several Irish media outlets

AFP
Dublin

Several Irish media outlets said they had to evacuate their staff after bomb threats were sent to newsrooms yesterday, as more European flights were hit by bomb threats.

Dozens of commercial flights in Europe have been targeted by false bomb threats this week, forcing the authorities to reroute some planes or escort civilian aircraft with fighter jets.

"We don't yet know whether it's an individual behind this effort, or some form of a co-ordinated effort," Irish deputy prime minister Simon Harris told Cork 96FM radio.

He said it was a "serious and evolving situation".

"I do want to assure the people of this country that this is an issue being taken very seriously by the gardai (police), by our security forces and our cyber experts", he said, adding that Irish authorities were liaising with European officials.

Police were deployed to Ireland's national broadcaster RTE's headquarters in Dublin, where armed officers were reported at the scene, following the hoaxes in Ireland.

"RTE buildings have been evacuated following a bomb threat," the broadcaster said on its website.

Staff were also evacuated from the offices of the *Irish Independent* newspaper, Newstalk and Today FM radio stations, and Virgin Media television, according to reports.

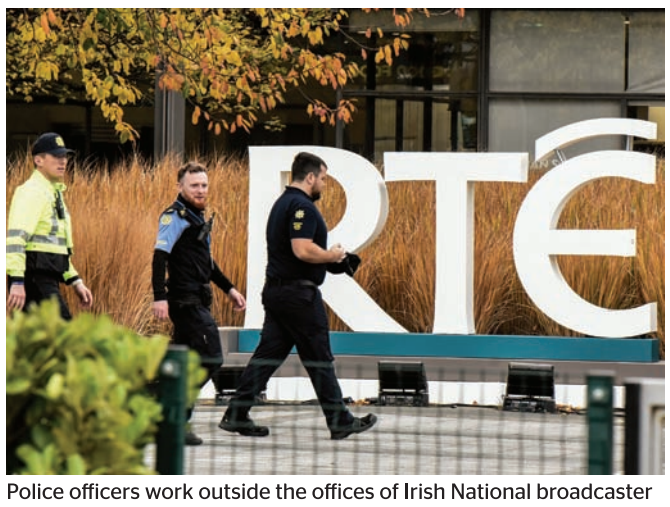
NewsTalk host Claire Byrne said after returning to air that staff at the outlet had been advised to leave their building following "a message that we received".

"We've been advised that we could return to the building and that that warning was a hoax," she added.

Yesterday at least eight flights to and from Prague as well as a flight due to depart from Lisbon were hit by bomb threats.

Nearly 30 passenger flights have been targeted across Europe this week, forcing some aircraft to make unscheduled landings and prompting fighter jets to be deployed.

No responsibility has been established for the threats, which come ahead of two days of high-profile European Union meetings in Dublin next week.



Police officers work outside the offices of Irish National broadcaster RTE after staff were evacuated from the site following a bomb threat, in Donnybrook, Dublin, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

New Zealand heads into election day with polls on knife edge

AFP
Wellington

New Zealand is poised for one of the closest elections in its history today, as the country votes following a campaign dominated by the cost of living and an economy hammered by the war in the Middle East.

Kiwis are struggling to make ends meet — the price of basic goods remains stubbornly high and unemployment at its highest in over a decade.

Polls suggest that neither the ruling conservative National Party nor the opposition centre-left Labour have offered a programme compelling enough to win the seats needed to govern by themselves.

Prime Minister Christopher Luxon has hoped promises of no new taxes can help his right-wing coalition cling to power after three fractious years in office, two failed bids by his own party to oust him as leader and an economy in the doldrums.

Speaking at a rally in Auckland, he urged voters to "stick to the plan that's working".

"Don't risk a Labour government."

Pushing to replace him is opposition leader and former premier Chris Hipkins, whose Labour party has proposed a sweeping package of measures to help relieve the economic pressure on New Zealanders.

With the polls so close, attention has turned to New Zealand's minor parties — in particular the



New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon poses for a selfie with supporters during a National Party campaign visit to Pokeno yesterday. (**AFP**)

upstart centrist Opportunity Party.

"It's one of the closest elections, certainly, and one of the hardest elections to predict in my professional life," David Capie, a professor at Victoria University of Wellington, told AFP.

"I really think it's really too close to call. There are just so many moving parts."

On the streets of Wellington, many New Zealanders told AFP they were struggling to get by and thinking twice about paying for things they had once taken for granted.

"The prices are really high," said Jay Ikaua, a cultural adviser.

"I have to make conscious decisions. Do I buy that? Do I not buy that?"

"And it's the things we need — public transport, food."

Rachel Shardlow, a 26-year-old public servant, said the cost of living was "shocking".

"All I'm doing is paying my rent and my bills, and I'm struggling to put money into savings and save for my future."

New Zealand has strict election day laws which come into force at midnight (1100 GMT Friday), governing media reporting and political campaigning to prevent voters being swayed.

Polls close at 7:00pm (0600 GMT) and results are expected to start being released shortly afterwards.

New Zealand's electoral commission says it expects results from 50% of voting places to be counted by 10:00pm with the rest are expected by 11:30pm.

New Zealanders have been able to cast their votes since October 26.

As of Thursday, almost 1.7mn people have already cast their ballots, according to the electoral commission — lower than during former prime minister Jacinda Ardern's landslide victory in 2020 but higher than the last poll.

A final opinion poll released yesterday put Labour at 30% of the vote, just ahead of the National Party.

Under New Zealand's mixed-member proportional representation (MMP) system, voters must tick two options — a general party list as well as an individual member to represent their electorate.

And the ruling party could still clinch more seats thanks to a so-called "overhang" — in which more lawmakers are returned to parliament than the usual 120.

Polls also put the Opportunity Party on over five % — the threshold needed to gain seats in parliament without an electorate candidate win. If the poll results translate into votes, it would be the first time since MMP was introduced that a minor party with no links to the two main factions would have done so.

The party is led by former KPMG consultant Qiulae Wong, who has said she could work with either of the two parties if elected.

"I think New Zealanders are really tired of politicians' name-calling, the bickering, the political point-scoring," she told AFP last week.

"They want something different, and they really want some hope and optimism for the future."

Bangladesh rescues Rohingya refugees in border gun battle

Bangladesh security forces rescued at least 57 people, including Rohingya refugees, during a gun battle with suspected human traffickers near the Myanmar border, the military said yesterday.
One soldier was killed in the clash on Thursday night, the military's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.
ISPR said that security forces launched an operation in the hills of Rongikhali in Teknaf, close to the border with Myanmar, after receiving a tip-off that an armed gang of 15 to 16 suspected traffickers had abducted around 120 Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshis.
"During the exchange of fire, an army soldier, Md Titash Sheikh, was shot. The bullet struck his left shoulder. He was bleeding profusely," the statement said.
Sheikh, 27, later died of his injuries.
Bangladesh hosts more than 1.2mn Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled a brutal military crackdown in neighbouring Myanmar in 2017.
Many live in sprawling camps around Cox's Bazar, near the border, where trafficking gangs prey on refugees seeking work or passage abroad.
The 2017 Myanmar crackdown, which saw Rohingya villages burned and civilians killed, is the subject of a genocide case at the UN's top court in The Hague.
The court will deliver its ruling on November 19. (**AFP**)

OPINION

Final day of polling in New Zealand

Today is the final day to vote in the New Zealand national election, with the incumbent National-led coalition hoping to return to office and left-leaning parties including Labour looking to make them the first one-term government in nearly 50 years.

Advance voting opened on October 26. It is popular in New Zealand, with 58% voting ahead of the last election in 2023. The polls close at 7pm on Saturday. Polls have shown that neither of the two largest parties will win a majority and results are sufficiently close that neither a left-leaning nor a right-leaning grouping is clearly ahead. Due to the need for negotiations it is likely to be weeks before New Zealand has a government.

There are 71 geographical constituency seats and then 49 seats are doled out to party-selected candidates, called "list members" in proportion to the overall public votes for each party. If a party wins more constituency seats than its share of the party vote, an overhang of extra seats is created. Under New Zealand's mixed-member proportional system it is very uncommon for a single party to form a government.

If there is no majority winner, the major parties will start negotiations after the election and can either form a coalition or confidence-and-supply agreements with minor parties.

The party with the largest number of votes does not necessarily win, and negotiations can take days or weeks. Official results will be released on November 27. These include votes cast overseas or by people who voted outside their electorate.

The cost of living is set to dominate New Zealand's November 7 election, with voters focused on inflation, petrol and food prices, housing costs and pressure on household budgets.

Healthcare and hospitals rank alongside the economy as leading concerns, while unemployment, weak wage growth and the pace of the recovery remain politically sensitive.

Housing affordability is still a major issue, even though house prices have broadly stabilised.

The fiscal outlook will also be closely watched. New Zealand faces a structural budget deficit and rising public debt, creating pressure on whichever government takes office to balance spending.

Relations between Maori and the government remain contentious, following sustained disputes over Treaty of Waitangi principles, co-governance and the government's wider reform agenda. Climate and environmental policy also divide the parties, particularly over farming emissions, renewable energy, oil and gas exploration, land use and fast-track development rules. — Reuters

Panda finds a new home



A little boy and his mom look on as giant panda Fu Shuang eats her bamboo in Atlanta, Georgia. Atlanta unveiled the pandas which only 3 zoos around the country have on loan from China. The previous pandas lived here for 25 years and bred 7 cubs, creating the most successful breeding pair in the history of the agreement. (**AFP**)

Qatar advances Global Islamic Charter for family mediation

QNA
Doha

Qatar is spearheading efforts to establish a global Islamic framework for family mediation, seeking to bridge Islamic jurisprudence, legal principles and professional and ethical standards in a unified approach to resolving family disputes, safeguarding rights and strengthening family and social stability.

At the heart of the initiative is the proposed Islamic Charter for Family Mediation, which will take centre stage at an international conference hosted by Qatar University on Nov 23. The event is being organised jointly by the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies and the College of Law, in partnership with the Supreme Judiciary Council and the Ministry of Social Development and Family.

The initiative reflects growing recognition of family mediation as a means of resolving disputes amicably, preserving family relationships and mitigating the social and psychological toll of prolonged conflicts, particularly on children. It also signals a push to move family mediation beyond practices largely dependent on individual expertise and professional discretion towards a more structured and consistent framework.

The proposed charter aims to establish clear principles, legal safeguards and professional standards for mediators, define their responsibilities and strengthen public confidence in mediation services, while respecting the cultural and social values of Muslim communities.

The collaboration between Qatar University, the Supreme Judiciary Council and the Ministry of Social Development and Family underscores the importance of an integrated approach that brings together academic research, judicial expertise and social support.

Academic institutions contribute scholarly and Islamic jurisprudential foundations, research and professional training, while judicial bodies provide practical experience in dispute resolution and social development institutions support family counseling, public awareness and reconciliation efforts.

International dialogue

Beyond its national significance, the conference seeks to foster international dialogue among scholars, researchers and practitioners from diverse legal and social backgrounds, facilitating the exchange of expertise and best practices in family mediation and reconciliation. The discussions are expected to help inform approaches that combine professional rigour with sensitivity to the cultural traditions and social values of Muslim communities.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the significance of the proposed Islamic charter for family mediation, Dr Ibrahim bin Abdullah al-Ansari, Dean of the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies at Qatar University, said mounting pressures on families, particularly Muslim families, coupled with rising divorce rates and family breakdown, have made it increasingly urgent to strengthen mediation and reconciliation as institutional mechanisms for resolving disputes and safeguarding family stability within a comprehensive Sharia-based, ethical and professional framework.

He explained that the proposed charter seeks to address the absence of a unified Islamic framework governing family mediation as a professional practice, as well as disparities among Muslim countries in the legal and institutional recognition and regulation of such services. These gaps are compounded by inadequate academic and professional training for practitioners and a lack of institutional structures to support their work.

The charter is intended to provide a common frame of reference, setting out professional standards, ethical principles and the social responsibilities of those engaged in family mediation and reconciliation.

Al-Ansari stressed that the charter must be rooted in the overarching principles of Islamic Sharia, particularly justice, fairness, the prevention of harm and the protection of all parties' rights. He emphasised that family reconciliation should not be pursued solely to preserve the marital relationship, but must prioritise dignity, mutual respect and family stability, whether through preserving the marriage or facilitating an amicable separation.

On the professional and ethical standards underpinning the proposed framework, al-Ansari identified objectivity, due diligence and impartiality as fundamental requirements. Mediators, he said, must establish the facts, give both parties a fair hearing and avoid preconceived judgments, while maintaining integrity and independence and ensuring that neither party's rights are compromised.

He also highlighted the importance of providing clear guidance, explaining that mediators should ensure both parties understand their rights, obligations and available options so they can make informed decisions. The process must also safeguard their dignity and autonomy, giving each an equal opportunity to express their views freely and make decisions without pressure or coercion.

Confidentiality and privacy are equally essential, he added, with mediators required to protect information disclosed during sessions while clearly defining exceptions where disclosure is necessary to prevent serious harm, particularly physical harm. Such safeguards, he said, are fundamental to preserving the integrity of mediation, building public confidence and achieving the broader objectives of family reconciliation.

Turning to Qatar's experience, al-Ansari highlighted the integration of family mediation into the judicial system and the country's investment in specialised professional training as two key pillars of its approach. He explained that judges refer divorce cases to the Family Reconciliation Office at the court to facilitate settlement efforts. The office subsequently submits a report to the judge, enabling the court to take the outcome of the reconciliation process into account before proceeding with the case.

The system also provides for the appointment of two family representatives, who assist the judge in examining the causes of marital disputes and determining responsibility for the discord.

A further pillar is professional qualification. Al-Ansari noted that the Supreme Judiciary Council, in co-operation with Qatar University, has introduced a specialised professional diploma in family mediation to equip practitioners with the academic grounding and practical skills needed to enhance their competence and strengthen professional standards.

Dr Mahmoud Abdulaziz Abu al-Maati, Professor of Family Law at Lusail University's College of Law, told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the proposed Islamic Charter for Family Mediation represents an important step towards advancing family justice, provided it translates the principles of family reconciliation from broad social and ethical aspirations into a clearly defined institutional and professional framework integrating Islamic jurisprudence, legal safeguards and professional standards.

He said the charter's significance lies in its recognition that family disputes extend well beyond legal disagreements between spouses, affecting family stability, children's psychological well-being and relationships across the wider family. Their repercussions, he noted, can persist long after judicial proceedings have ended.

Abu al-Maati said family mediation is rooted in the fundamental objectives of Islamic Sharia, particularly reconciliation, the prevention of harm, justice and the protection of rights. On the role of mediation in containing escalating disputes and easing pressure on the courts, he said it can make a tangible contribution when conducted under clear legal and professional standards. Early intervention can prevent disagreements from developing into protracted disputes with far-reaching psychological, social and financial consequences.

Mediation can also ease the burden on the courts by resolving disputes amenable to amicable settlement, allowing judicial resources to be focused on cases requiring investigation, binding rulings or urgent protective measures. Its effectiveness, however, depends on the quality of the process, compliance with settlement agreements and the competence of the institutions overseeing it.

Turning to the legal safeguards needed to ensure fair and effective mediation, Abu al-Maati identified free and informed consent as a fundamental requirement. Neither party should enter the process under coercion or threat, and both must fully understand their rights and the legal implications of any agreement.

Other essential safeguards include mediator neutrality and independence, professional accreditation, and measures to prevent conflicts of interest or favouritism. He also highlighted the need to protect parties from imbalances in bargaining power, particularly where one spouse has greater financial, psychological or social influence over the other.

Legal provisions

Confidentiality must likewise be governed by clear legal provisions that protect family privacy while allowing for statutory exceptions, particularly where disclosure is required by law or necessary to protect individuals from violence or danger.

He also underscored the importance of reviewing settlement agreements to ensure they are lawful, clear and consistent with applicable legislation, and do not involve the relinquishment of rights that cannot legally be waived. Proper documentation, enforcement and follow-up mechanisms are equally important to ensure that settlements are more than verbal commitments and can be upheld if either party fails to comply.

Children's rights, he stressed, require particular attention in family mediation, especially in disputes involving maintenance, custody and visitation.

Such cases extend beyond the personal interests of the parents, as they involve rights that may belong to individuals who are not parties to the mediation process, foremost among them the children themselves.

Abu al-Maati emphasised the need to distinguish between agreeing on how rights are exercised and regulated and relinquishing those rights in ways that could harm their holders or violate the law.

In custody and visitation disputes, mediation can help parents establish practical arrangements for visitation schedules, the handover of children and communication on matters relating to education, healthcare and their daily needs.

Looking ahead, Abu al-Maati said a global Islamic charter for family mediation must go beyond setting out general principles to establish a comprehensive framework for implementation, professional training, oversight and evaluation.

Its success, he noted, will depend not only on the soundness of its provisions but also on its ability to bring about tangible improvements in institutional practices and in the lives of families using mediation services.

This requires, first, a clear legislative framework defining the legal status of family mediation, its relationship with judicial proceedings, the circumstances in which cases may be referred to mediation and the legal effect of resulting agreements.

It also requires effective co-ordination among courts, social agencies, family reconciliation centres, universities and family protection institutions, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Equally important is building a qualified pool of mediators with the academic knowledge and practical skills needed to navigate Islamic and civil law, family psychology, communication and negotiation, conflict management, children's needs and sensitive cases.

The International Conference on the Islamic Charter for Family Mediation therefore marks an important step towards strengthening the scholarly and professional foundations of mediation and advancing dispute-resolution mechanisms that protect rights while preserving family ties.

Qatar's hosting of the conference also reflects the value of co-operation among national institutions in addressing social challenges and drawing on Islamic jurisprudence, legal expertise and judicial experience to develop a more effective family reconciliation framework that supports family stability, protects children and strengthens social cohesion.



The proposed Islamic Charter for Family Mediation will take centre stage at an international conference hosted by Qatar University on Nov 23.

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Bus carrying schoolchildren crashes in France, killing two

AFP
Lent

A minor and an 18-year-old were killed and 16 others injured when a bus carrying schoolchildren veered off the road and crashed into a tree in eastern France yesterday, officials said.

The accident occurred early yesterday morning near the village of Lent.

Transport Minister Philippe Tabarot was en route to the scene.

Three people were in critical condition, prosecutors said.

Dozens of law enforcement officers, two helicopters, and several drones had been deployed to the site of the accident.

Education Minister Edouard Geffray said his thoughts were with the students and their families.

"It is always an ordeal for us when our students, when our children, are victims of accidents of this kind," he said.

Firefighters have urged motorists to give priority to emergency vehicles.

The bus, which was travelling between the city of Lyon and the town of Bourg-en-Bresse, was carrying 43 passengers, including 15 minors on their way to school, prosecutors said.

The vehicle "left the road and struck a tree in a ditch", said Yves Cristin, the mayor of Lent.

The driver, who was hospitalised, had not yet been questioned, prosecutors said, adding that an investigation into homicide by vehicle had been opened.

Accidents involving public transport are relatively rare in France.

In 2017, a collision between a school bus and a train killed six students in southern France.

In 2025, a high-school student was killed and 20 others injured when a school bus whose driver had taken drugs crashed near Chateaudun in central France.

The deadliest road disaster in France took place in August 1982 when a motorway pile-up caused several vehicles to catch fire, including a coach carrying children on their way to a summer camp.

The tragedy claimed a total of 53 lives, including 46 children.

Zelensky, Kyiv mayor trade blame over power blackouts

Reuters
Kyiv

President Volodymyr Zelensky and Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko traded fresh accusations yesterday of failing to prepare the Ukrainian capital for new Russian strikes that have plunged the city into unprecedented power and water outages.

The city of more than 3mn is entering another winter of attacks on energy facilities that are sparking long periods of emergency power cuts, as Ukraine struggles amid a shortage of air-defence weapons to down fast-moving missiles and drones.

The rumble of generators has returned to torch-lit streets, with temperatures nearing freezing and residents still waiting for centralised heating to return. City-wide water outages last hours, and are more frequent than in previous years.

Kyiv's bridges across the sweeping Dnipro River have also come under attack for the first time in Russia's nearly five-year war, snarling traffic. Outages have also frequently halted metro services.


Residents fill bottles with water at a public water station during a partial power outage following Russian attacks in Kyiv. (**AFP**)

Zelensky, in his latest criticism of Kyiv's management, called the challenges "extremely serious". He said the city faced the worst energy situation in the country and suggested Klitschko's administration was partly responsible.

"In fact, these are the consequences of the failure to implement decisions at the city level on preparations for the heating season, as well as of this Russian operation against Ukraine's energy infrastructure," he wrote on X.

In two separate statements yesterday, Klitschko accused the government of "cynically" dragging its feet in approving a resilience plan for the city, and described Zelensky's criticism of Kyiv as "constant manipulations".

"Because in its attempts to get rid of Klitschko in any way possible, in creating constant obstacles and not helping the capital, the central government is effectively destroying Kyiv," he said.

The barbs are the latest in a long-running feud between Zelensky, a former TV comedian elected in 2019, and Klitschko, an ex-champion boxer who has served as mayor since 2014.

Wartime elections are prohibited in Ukraine, meaning both men have remained in office beyond their terms.

Earlier in the war, which was triggered by Russia's 2022 invasion, Zelensky had criticised city officials for the state of Kyiv's bomb shelters after three people were killed running to a locked shelter.

Klitschko has accused Zelensky of attempting to score political points by attacking him. Both men have rarely mentioned one another by name.

In an interview with Ukrainian public broadcaster Suspilne released on Thursday, Klitschko said his calls for a meeting with Zelensky to address Kyiv's problems had gone unanswered.

Newsroom bomb threats follow European flight hoaxes

Reuters
Budapest/Dublin/Prague

Newsrooms in Ireland and Bulgaria received e-mailed bomb threats yesterday from a purported "Mikhail Andropov", claiming responsibility for a widening wave of hoax threats disrupting passenger flights across Europe.

The messages, sent to Bulgaria's Nova TV and the Irish public broadcaster RTE, which evacuated its offices and suspended programming, were headlined "Message to the West" and portrayed the threats as the prelude to a series of attacks on means of transport across Europe. The British broadcaster Sky also said it had received a security threat.

Reuters was not able to establish the identity of the sender, the origin of the e-mails, or whether they had in fact come from the same source as the threats to any or all of the dozens of flights affected since Tuesday.

But they added to concern among European officials that the hoaxes are part of a campaign of "hybrid" disruptions, which many have blamed on Russia, aimed at countries that have helped Ukraine. Moscow has denied involvement.

Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said Europe appeared to be facing "hybrid aggression and a form of psychological warfare".


An airplane of the KLM airline landing at the Vaclav Havel Airport in Prague, Czech Republic, yesterday. (**AFP**)

No explosive devices were found and all planes, including those threatened yesterday, landed safely.

Security experts said on Thursday that the threats might be intended to punish European nations that have armed or financed Ukraine as it resists the full-scale invasion Russia launched in 2022. It was also possible, however, that individuals were laying false trails, issuing copycat threats or acting on personal grievances.

Around half a dozen flights were disrupted in some way on Tuesday and more than two dozen on Thursday, some of them making unplanned landings or being escorted to their destinations by fighter jets.

Yesterday, an Italian airport authority source said a Wizz Air flight from Prague to Rome had been diverted to Venice but, despite more than a dozen hoax threats, overall there was far less direct disruption to air travel.

Hungarian jets did, however, escort airliners flying from Brussels to Sofia and from Prague to Bucharest and Cyprus through Hungarian airspace. Defence Minister Romulusz Ruszin-Szendi said Nato had ordered some air patrols in the area, the first report that the Western defence alliance had become involved.

While no country attributed blame for the threats, they follow a wave of sabotage attacks and attempts on targets across Europe ranging from German electricity substations to defence-related facilities in the Baltic region, and supermarket refrigerators in France and elsewhere. Germany blamed Russia directly for a drone attack on Leipzig airport.

Many European officials have accused Russia of a campaign of "hybrid" or "grey zone" disruptions that are essentially cheap to execute, easy to deny and not expected to trigger an armed response.

European technology commissioner Henna Virkkunen told Reuters on Thursday that since 2022 Europe had faced a range of hybrid operations including sabotage of critical infrastructure, drone incursions, cyber breaches and election interference.

"We are under attack all the time," she said. "The reason behind these operations is to destabilise our societies and create mistrust among our citizens."

"It's not always Russia who is behind different hybrid operations," she said, adding: "Quite often it is Russia."

On Thursday, an airport source in Italy said bomb threats had been sent to several airlines and airport operators in Rome and Milan purporting to be from "fighters of the Male State", a far-right anti-feminist movement banned in Russia.

Reuters could not confirm who had sent the e-mail. Vladislav Pozdnyakov, a Russian blogger who set up Male State in 2016, said it no longer existed and was not involved in any way.

Bavaria's Aigner tipped to become Germany's first woman president

AFP
Berlin

Bavarian politician Ilse Aigner is expected to become Germany's next president in 2027, the first woman to serve as its head of state, conservative ruling party sources said yesterday.

Aigner, 61, now the speaker of the southern state's regional assembly, would replace outgoing President Frank-Walter Steinmeier, a Social Democrat, in the largely ceremonial post.

Steinmeier, who took office in 2017, will reach the limit of two five-year terms in March 2027.

Aigner belongs to the CSU, the Bavarian sister party of the centre-right CDU of Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who is supporting the choice of Aigner, the party sources told AFP.

If her nomination is confirmed at a CDU/CSU meeting on Monday, she would be all but certain to be formally elected on January 30 by both houses of parliament and civil society representatives.

Aigner's political appeal owes much to a trademark Bavarian warmth, and her appearances in a traditional dirndl dress at festivals have made her a familiar figure across the state.

Supporters see her consensual approach as an asset in an increasingly polarised country, where the far-right, anti-immigration and pro-Russian AfD party has reached record levels of popularity.

In a recent speech, Aigner called for a "reconciled society", which could provide a guiding theme for a presidential role.

Germany's president is meant to stand above day-to-day party politics and represent the country at home and abroad.

Aigner was born on December 7, 1964 near Rosenheim in Upper Bavaria.

In her youth, she suffered from cancer and had to have a tumour removed from her back.


Speaker of the Bavarian State Parliament Ilse Aigner arrives during the Christian Social Union (CSU) party congress in Munich. (**AFP/File Photo**)

She trained as a radio and television technician before qualifying as an electrical engineer. From 1990 to 1994, she worked on electrical systems for helicopters at Eurocopter.

Aigner entered politics in 1990, serving on municipal and district councils before joining the Bavarian state parliament in 1994.

In 1998, she moved to the national parliament in Berlin, staying for 15 years and serving as agriculture and consumer protection minister under then chancellor Angela Merkel.

She returned to Bavaria in 2013 at the request of then state premier Horst Seehofer, serving as his deputy premier and economy minister, before briefly taking charge of housing, construction and transport.

Since 2018, Aigner has presided over Bavaria's state parliament, where her handling of AfD lawmakers has been praised as firm but fair.

Aigner herself has steered clear of open power struggles.

"I'm not someone who cuts others down," she told news weekly *Die Zeit*. "I don't have the killer instinct."

Belgian king rejects PM's resignation, gives time for budget talks

Belgium's King Philippe yesterday refused Prime Minister Bart De Wever's offer to resign and gave the governing coalition more time to thrash out a new cost-cutting budget, the palace said.
"The king has decided to reject the prime minister's resignation and has asked him to resume budget negotiations immediately. The prime minister will report back to the king on Monday, November 16," a statement said.
De Wever, a Flemish conservative, offered his resignation on Monday after coalition partners failed to reach agreement on the 2027 budget.
King Philippe held off from accepting the resignation and spent the week consulting parties in the centre-right governing alliance in search of a compromise.
De Wever told parliament a day ahead of his Friday audience with the king that 2027 would begin under a stopgap budget based on the previous fiscal year.
He described the failure to adopt a full 2027 budget as a "serious setback" for the government.
De Wever is seeking budget savings of 10bn euros ($11.6bn) by 2029 to curb Belgium's deficit, which exceeds five percent of GDP. (**AFP**)

Europe rebuffs US push for new 'security architecture' in Russia deal

AFP
Brussels

Europe pushed back yesterday on any US efforts to rewrite the continent's "security architecture" as part of a potential agreement with Russia to end the war in Ukraine.

US President Donald Trump on Thursday predicted a "very big" deal with Moscow involving not only Ukraine but "all of Europe", in remarks likely to fuel fresh fears of a pivot towards the Kremlin.

At the same time, his envoy and son-in-law Jared Kushner said Washington was working on "a broader European security architecture" ahead of mediating talks next week between Ukraine and Russia in Abu Dhabi.

That suggestion has set alarm bells ringing for US allies in Europe who have long rejected Russian President Vladimir Putin's desire to overhaul the arrangements underpinning Europe's security.

"We already have a European security architecture in place," European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas told journalists in Warsaw.

"The problem remains that Russia keeps breaking the treaties that underpin it. Nato posed no threat to Russia in 2021, and it poses no threat to Russia at the moment. Putin does not have a veto over European security."

She added that "any agreement, in order to be implemented, will require the European Union to be part of it."


EU High Representative and Vice-President for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas speaks during a press conference following the informal meeting of the foreign ministers of the Council of the Baltic Sea States and Ukraine in Warsaw yesterday. (**AFP**)

Polish Foreign Minister Radoslaw Sikorski echoed her, saying "an arrangement about the future of Ukraine and of Europe above our heads would not just be unwise. It is actually impossible."

His Ukrainian counterpart Andriy Sybiga insisted that Moscow "cannot be the security guarantor for the European continent".

"We have to talk about protecting ourselves against Russia, not talking with Russians about spheres of influence in Europe," he said.

After its efforts largely stalled, the US has renewed its push to end the fighting in Ukraine in recent weeks.

Representatives from Washington met officials from Nato, the EU and major European powers in Brussels for two days of meetings this week ahead of the Abu Dhabi talks.

After participating by video link, Kushner wrote online that the US was working on "a broader European security architecture that can help establish the conditions for lasting peace".

He said Washington's "objective is to develop practical arrangements that address the security concerns of all sides".

Before launching the war in Ukraine in 2022, the Kremlin delivered an ultimatum to Nato on Europe's security arrangements which included a demand that the alliance's troops be withdrawn from eastern Europe.

That was rejected by the Western military alliance.

Speaking earlier, an EU spokeswoman said that despite Trump's comments "a lot of work" was still needed for peace in Ukraine and the bloc would decide on its own security matters.

A Nato spokeswoman said Ukraine's allies are working for a "just and sustainable" end to the war.

Europe has long been seeking to play a bigger role in the US-led push to end the fighting.

Kushner said Washington would "consult closely with our European partners on the sidelines" of the Abu Dhabi talks and "if progress is made, aim to move toward a broader multilateral format with their direct participation".

EU investigating fraud in Spain's deadly crash rail line

AFP
Madrid

The European Union is investigating the possible misuse of EU funds earmarked for the renovation of a Spanish railway line where a train crash killed 69 people, prosecutors said yesterday.

The October accident on the Madrid-Seville high-speed line was one of the worst railway disasters in Europe this century, overshadowing Spain's upcoming general election in November.

A similar investigation into the same stretch of track had already been opened in March in the wake of another accident that claimed 46 lives in the southern province of Andalusia, European prosecutors said.

"Today, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Madrid (Spain) is conducting investigative measures at the Administrator of Railway Infrastructure (ADIF), the State Railway Safety Agency (AESF) and the Court of Auditors in Spain," a statement from the EPPO said.

"This comes after the opening of an investigation into possible fraud affecting EU funds allocated to the renovation and upgrading of safety, signalling and communications systems on the Madrid-Seville high-speed railway line," the EPPO added.

"This exceptional confirmation comes following high public interest and no further details will be made public at this stage."

The Spanish police were supporting the investigation, the statement said.

The accident happened when a train operated by the state-owned Renfe ploughed into the back of a stationary train belonging to the private Spanish company Iryo outside the village of Urda, around 130 kilometres (80 miles) south of Madrid.

QATAR

Design Doha Biennial turns the spotlight on region's creative talent

QNA
Doha

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairperson of Qatar Museums, inaugurated the Design Doha Biennial 2026, bringing together designers, craftspeople and creative practitioners from the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and beyond.

Running until January 31, 2027, the second edition features 20 exhibitions, new design commissions, public installations and cultural programmes exploring how traditional knowledge and craftsmanship can shape the future of contemporary design.

The biennial examines how traditional practices continue to inspire contemporary design, materials and production methods. Events are taking place across Doha, with the historic district of Fereej Al Asmakh serving as the main hub, while Msheireb Downtown Doha hosts the flagship exhibition, 'Arab Design Now 2026'.

Design Doha Biennial Director Fahad al-Obaidly said the event celebrates the region's creative talent and rich knowledge, providing a platform for designers, craftspeople and communities to exchange ideas, develop new work and engage with the public.

Artistic Director Glenn Adamson said the biennial presents design as a form of knowledge that evolves across generations and cultures, highlighting the connection between traditional craftsmanship and contemporary creative practices.

The flagship exhibition, curated by Noura al-Sayeh, brings together 81 designers, craftspeople and makers, featuring 78 newly commissioned works and 17 specially commissioned films. It explores the relationship between traditional skills and contemporary design across five thematic sections.

The exhibition is accompanied by the launch of the second volume of "Arab Design Now".

A further 19 exhibitions across Fereej Al Asmakh and other locations in Doha have been organised in collaboration with regional and international institutions and creative partners.


HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani at The Muqarnas of Sadu installation, part of the Design Doha Biennial 2026.


Emii Alrai's Sprites of the Crest (2026), a mixed-media sculptural installation combining cast bronze, white marble jesmonite, sand, steel, clay, copper and other materials. On view at Design Doha 2026.


HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani viewing Floa, an installation featured in Arab Design Now 2026, the headline exhibition of Design Doha Biennial 2026. **PICTURES**: Qatar Museums


An installation view of Ancestral Crafts, Timeless Fashion by Mashael al-Naimi, presented at Design Doha 2026. The exhibition explores the relationship between traditional craftsmanship, cultural heritage and contemporary fashion.

Highlights include "The Planter" by Mexican designer Fernando Laposse, presented as part of the Qatar-Canada and Mexico Year of Culture 2026, exploring connections between the desert environments of Mexico and Qatar.

Other featured projects include "Aslan's Love Story" by the Turquoise Mountain Foundation, celebrating Palestinian craft traditions, and "Post Oil 2026", an initiative by Saudi Modern and executed by Bricklab, examining materials that have transformed the Gulf's built environment.

The programme also features an initial vision for the regeneration of Al Khor's historic centre developed following two years of consultations with the local community.

Displayed across three traditional houses in Fereej Al Asmakh, the project includes a full-scale canopy designed by Kere Architecture and invites visitors to contribute ideas to the next phase of the Al Khor Heritage Trail project.

The biennial aims to highlight the region's design heritage while encouraging creative exchange, innovation and new approaches to the future of design and cultural production.


An installation view of Silk Oasis by Tunisian artist Mohamed Amine Hamouda, featured at Design Doha 2026.

QU Souq supports student, alumni entrepreneurship

Qatar University (QU) organised QU Souq as part of its ongoing efforts to support entrepreneurship and develop the practical skills of its students and alumni. The souq provided an interactive commercial platform for students and alumni entrepreneurs to showcase and market their products while engaging directly with the public, thereby encouraging entrepreneurial initiatives and promoting a culture of self-employment and innovation within the university community.

QU president Dr Omar al-Ansari attended the event alongside several vice-presidents, university officials, and local entrepreneurs. The event was organised in collaboration with the Young Entrepreneurs Club, affiliated with the Ministry of Sports and Youth, as part of efforts to strengthen partnerships with entities that support entrepreneurship and empower student and alumni entrepreneurs to develop their emerging ventures.

QU Souq brought students and graduate entrepreneurs together with the public, offering them an opportunity to introduce their products and gain firsthand insight into visitors' interests and needs. The event also gave participants practical experience that strengthened their engagement with the business environment and created opportunities to exchange expertise and build new professional relationships.

By creating a space for student and graduate entrepreneurs to connect with representatives of companies and commercial entities, the event enabled them to share experiences and explore opportunities for collaboration and partnerships that support the growth and sustainability of their ventures.

Hamda al-Nuaimi, acting head of the Events and University Programmes Section in the Student Activities Department at QU, stated: "QU Souq reflects the University's commitment in supporting entrepreneurship among students and alumni by providing an enabling environment in which they can showcase their ventures and products and develop practical skills in marketing, sales, and business management. The event offers an opportunity to apply their knowledge in an interactive business setting and strengthen their ability to develop ideas into ventures with growth potential, preparing them to contribute effectively to the job market."

Several participants in QU Souq highlighted the initiative's importance in enabling them to apply their academic knowledge in a real-world business environment. They emphasised that their participation helped develop their skills in marketing, sales, and small business management, while strengthening their confidence in turning their ideas into ventures with the potential for growth and sustainability.

The event demonstrated QU's commitment to social responsibility by allocating the souq's proceeds to the Joud Student Support Fund, which supports QU students. This contribution aims to provide the financial resources needed to support students and expand their opportunities to continue their academic studies.




The souq provided an interactive commercial platform for students and alumni entrepreneurs to showcase and market their products.

National Planning Council hosts QU president on AlTanmiya podcast

The National Planning Council (NPC) hosted Qatar University president Dr Omar Mohamed al-Ansari in the sixth episode of Podcast AlTanmiya.

The episode discussed QU's role in preparing a future-ready workforce for the labour market, its efforts to update academic programmes to keep pace with rapid developments in artificial intelligence (AI), the introduction of new admission standards, and mechanisms to increase the Qatarisation rate of its academic staff.

The episode also explored the university's approach to aligning its research with national priorities and turning its outputs into practical applications, contributing to the achievement of the targets of the Third National Development Strategy (NDS3) and Qatar National Vision 2030.

Al-Ansari affirmed that QU, alongside the country's other higher education institutions, helps supply the labour market with qualified national talent, noting that employers are keen to recruit its graduates because their academic preparation aligns with labour market needs.

"The most distinctive and clearest thing about Qatar University is the word 'Qatar.' It is the country's first and largest national university, and for decades it was the cradle of higher education. Today, it's hard to find a home or family without a connection to QU; more than three generations now have ties to the university," he said.

On preparing a future-ready workforce, al-Ansari explained that the university aligns its programmes with labour market needs through committees that include members from the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau, the Ministry of Labour, and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. NPC also works to identify these needs. He stressed that the university's role extends beyond preparing national talent to safeguarding national identity and preserving the Arabic language.

On AI, al-Ansari said the university has revised the content of the AI course it offers its students about three times since it was introduced nearly two years ago, in addition to offering a dedicated Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence at the College of Engineering. He also stressed the importance of rethinking how students are assessed to keep pace with rapid technological change.



"Over time, I believe any student we graduate who doesn't know how to use AI in their field will fall short, and may even face difficulties finding a job," al-Ansari said. "Students are not prohibited from using AI; what matters is how they use it to raise the quality of their work."

Al-Ansari also outlined the university's efforts to enhance the skills and knowledge of its faculty, explaining that it is close to finalising a framework that defines the skills, knowledge and abilities required of any faculty member it recruits, so they add real value to the learning process and raise students' standards, alongside the continuous development of current faculty through a dedicated centre that offers workshops and training programmes.

"Faculty members are, first and foremost, teachers before they are specialists in any field, whether engineering, law or education," he said.

On the Qatarisation of academic staff, al-Ansari explained that Qatari faculty make up around 30% of the university's total faculty and said he aspires for this to reach 60 to 70% in the future. He praised non-Qatari faculty as partners.

He noted that attracting national academic talent faces competition from other employers, stressing that the university proactively recruits outstanding students early through a sponsorship programme that allows it to hire them once they complete 60 credit hours, then sponsor them to pursue postgraduate studies.

On research and innovation, al-Ansari affirmed that QU is the country's largest contributor to scientific research, with more than 4,000 research publications a year. He noted that the university directs its research grants towards the country's development priorities and provides researchers with an incubation environment that supports their ideas from incubation through to technology readiness and intellectual property protection.

He also highlighted an example of research that became a product: a device that helps people work with individuals with autism spectrum disorder, which a company has acquired.

Al-Ansari stressed the importance of directing research efforts towards issues that address the needs of society, saying: "All research is needed, but I support, and am ready to back, an agricultural researcher working on the date palm more than another researcher working on Amazon trees. The palm tree matters to me; it is part of my culture and heritage."

He added: "Business incubators exist; I provide them and others do too. But our most important role is shaping mindset: encouraging graduates to think about starting their own enterprise, creating jobs, offering a product that adds value to society and the market and improves people's lives."