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Qatar plans to raise renewable energy share to 18% by 2030

QNA
Doha

Director of Production Planning and Business Development at Kahramaa engineer Abdul Rahman Ibrahim al-Baker said that the current production of renewable energy in Qatar is estimated at 5% of the total energy mix but it is forecast to rise to 18% by 2030.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Baker emphasised the crucial importance of renewable energy for Qatar to achieve the goals outlined in the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030. The Qatar National Renewable Energy Strategy aims to develop a sustainable and cost-effective energy system, leveraging the country's abundant natural gas reserves and renewable energy potential.

Al-Baker highlighted that the strategy aims to reach 4GW from centralised renewable energy projects and 200MW from distributed projects by 2030. The strategy focuses on three main goals: reducing carbon dioxide emissions through sustainable policies, increasing the share of renewable energy while maintaining grid reliability, and maximising the social and economic benefits of renewable energy programmes.

On the economic benefits, al-Baker noted the competitive costs of renewable technologies, making the adoption of renewable energy technologies in Qatar and the region more attractive due to the decreased levelised cost of electricity production. The cost of photovoltaic solar energy has dropped significantly from around

4 cents per kilowatt-hour in 2017 to about 1.5 cents in 2023, with expectations to decrease to around 1 cent per kilowatt-hour by 2030. Similarly, the cost of wind energy has decreased from about 5 cents per kilowatt-hour in 2017 to approximately 4.5 cents in 2023, projected to reach about 4 cents per kilowatt-hour by 2030.

The recommended energy mix is expected to reduce the average cost of electricity generation by 15% in 2030.

Al-Baker also mentioned that the strategy will enhance energy security by diversifying energy sources, ensuring the stability of the energy sector. The strategy adopts a balanced approach, combining centralised renewable energy facilities with high-efficiency gas-powered thermal generation.

Qatar's high potential for increasing renewable energy usage is due to the high quality of its solar energy resources, with a global horizontal irradiance among the highest in the world, averaging over 2,000 kilowatt-hours per square meter annually. The strategy focuses on photovoltaic solar technology due to the country's high solar irradiance levels, mature technology, and numerous specialised companies in this field.

The current renewable energy production is distributed between the Siraj 1 PV solar plant in Al Kharsaah with a capacity of 800MW and over 9MW from distributed solar projects. Overall, Qatar's energy mix currently relies on thermal generation, with the total thermal power capacity exceeding 12GW, accounting for over 90% of the country's total power generation capacity. **To Page 2**



A general view of the 800MW-peak solar plant in Al Kharsaah.

World's largest indoor 'inflatable event' opens at QNCC



Qatar Tourism launched InflataCity, the world's largest indoor inflatable event at Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) yesterday, providing great entertainment and excitement to all the participants. A large number of children and families were seen taking part in many of the activities at the InflataCity. Spanning 30,000sq m, the InflataCity is a fine spot of entertainment for kids and adults alike. It provides the perfect place to beat the summer heat, with the exciting opportunity to dive into the ultimate indoor adventure. InflataCity is open until July 13. The vibrant indoor venue also features a food court, engaging carnival games, and much more. According to Qatar Tourism, the InflataCity combines the best of inflatable playgrounds with the magic of a carnival and offers an unparalleled mix of entertainment and dining options. **Page 12**

Fighting uproots thousands for third day in north Gaza

AFP
Gaza Strip

Explosions, air strikes and gunfire rattled northern Gaza yesterday, the third day of an Israeli military operation that has uprooted tens of thousands of Palestinians and compounded what the UN called "unbearable" living conditions in the territory.

Explosions were reported from the Shujaiya area near Gaza City, and a resident saying bodies were seen on the streets.

The armed wings of both resistance movement Hamas and the Palestinian group Islamic Jihad said they were engaged in ongoing fighting with Israeli forces there.

The military reported two soldiers killed and two severely wounded in combat in northern Gaza.

Last Sunday Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the "intense phase" of the war was winding down after almost nine months, but experts see a potentially prolonged next phase.

The Gaza conflict has also led to soaring tensions on Israel's northern border with Lebanon, leading Iran to warn of an "obliterating" war if Israel attacked Lebanon.

Israel's offensive has killed at least 37,834 people, also mostly civilians, according to data from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza.



A woman carries salvaged items following an Israeli raid in Rafah on the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

The United Nations humanitarian agency OCHA estimated that "about 60,000-80,000 people were displaced" from the area this week.

Elsewhere, Gaza's civil defence agency said four bodies were pulled from an apartment after an Israeli strike in the central region.

Further south, in the Rafah area, witnesses reported dead and wounded after a new Israeli incursion.

The United Nations, in a report on Friday citing Gaza's health ministry, said "about 70% of health infrastructure has been destroyed".

Amir condoles with Moroccan king on his mother's death

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of condolences to King Mohamed VI of Morocco, on the death of his mother Princess Lalla Latifa, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow His mercy upon her and to grant her a place in Paradise, and inspire the honourable royal family with patience and solace. **(QNA)**

3rd meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan begins in Doha today

The third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan will convene today in Doha under the chairpersonship of Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs at the United Nations Rosemary DiCarlo, on behalf of the UN secretary-general. This meeting follows the discussions held in Doha in May 2023 and February 2024 and aims to enhance international engagement in Afghanistan in a more coherent, co-ordinated, and organised manner. **Page 4**

Greece battles wildfire season

A wildfire ignited yesterday afternoon in a forest area north of Athens, amid heightened fire risk across six Greek regions. At least forty wildfires have erupted since dawn across the country with wind speeds exceeding 100km per hour. "In general, the conditions that prevail are difficult and dangerous," an official said. Accustomed to scorching summers, Greece faces a tough wildfire season after its warmest winter and earliest heatwave on record, with temperatures hitting 44C (111F).

France goes to polls as far-right eyes win

Voting got underway in France's overseas territories yesterday in high-stakes snap parliamentary elections that could see the far-right party of Marine Le Pen take power in a historic first. Residents of the tiny French archipelago of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, were the first to cast their ballots in the first round of the election. France's islands in the Caribbean and the South American territory of French Guiana also voted. **Page 11**

NHRC raises workers' awareness about right to health

The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, the Primary Health Care Corp, the Red Crescent, the International Labour Organisation, and the World Health Organisation office in Qatar, organised two awareness events as part of the "Healthy Workers for Sustainable Development" campaign. The events are aimed at raising awareness among workers and employers about the right to health and its impact on sustainable development.

The first event featured a diverse program for 80 workers from a security services company. Additionally, the NHRC organised another event in the Small Industries Zone in the Industrial Area for the benefit of 200 workers.

Director of Administrative and

Financial Affairs at NHRC, Hamad Majid al-Marzouqi, affirmed the committee's continued activities within the "Healthy Workers for Sustainable Development" campaign. He explained that the right to health is connected to providing fair and satisfactory working conditions that ensure employees' safety and health.

He added that the campaign, in collaboration with partners, focused on the right to health in all its aspects, including state obligations and workers' duties to enjoy their health rights, and employers' duties to respect and protect workers' health rights. He pointed out that international and regional human rights charters have affirmed workers' health rights and the right to enjoy a healthy and safe working environment, which



contributes to achieving sustainable development goals. He emphasised that neglecting this could lead to severe health consequences that hinder achieving these goals.

Al-Marzouqi highlighted Qatari legislation in this context, stating that laws and decisions related to workers' rights, along with the enhancement of health programmes, ensure all workers' rights to fair and satisfactory working conditions that contribute to sustainable development goals. He noted that a safe and healthy work environment is a key determinant of productivity efficiency, and that workers' enjoyment of health care and services in the workplace enhances their desire to develop their work, improve production quality, and elevate their performance levels. **To Page 2**

Shura Council deputy Speaker underscores key role of parliamentary diplomacy to enhance Qatar's global status

HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti emphasised the Council's commitment to enhancing and utilising parliamentary diplomacy to expand Qatar's foreign relations, strengthen its international standing, and support its efforts in maintaining international peace and security.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the occasion of the International Day of Parliamentarism, celebrated on June 30 every year, HE Dr al-Sulaiti highlighted that this year's theme "Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding" underscored the vital role of parliaments in promoting popular participation, good governance, and development efforts.

She noted that celebrating this day is an acknowledgment of the importance of parliamentary institutions in shaping policies and laws that serve the interests of the people, enhancing public participation in decision-making, and educating the public on various international issues and challenges. She added that the celebration

also offered an opportunity to review the progress of parliamentary work in Qatar, showcasing the Shura Council's efforts in parliamentary diplomacy, building relationships, and strengthening co-operation with various parliamentary and international organisations.

The theme of this year's celebration highlights the critical role of parliamentary work in achieving peace, justice, and sustainable development.

HE Dr al-Sulaiti stressed that the theme sends a message to parliaments worldwide to build consensus, enhance international co-operation, and solidarity in facing global challenges such as terrorism, extremism, armed conflicts, climate challenges, and environmental preservation. It also emphasised the importance of involving all segments of society, including women and youth, in parliamentary work to ensure comprehensive and sustainable development.

She explained that the Shura Council translates these goals through its active participation in international parliamentary

events, supporting Arab and Islamic causes, and voicing the concerns and aspirations of Qatari citizens on the global stage. She highlighted the Council's efforts in promoting the roles of women and youth through dedicated meetings and providing everything necessary to strengthen their importance in society.

Regarding peace promotion, she noted that the Shura Council emphasises peace-related issues, dialogue, and understanding between people in bilateral and multilateral meetings, as well as strengthening relationships with parliaments and parliamentary unions.

The Council plays an active and vital role in the activities and programmes of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), regularly participating in international meetings and conferences, proposing initiatives to enhance international parliamentary work, and seeking to implement best parliamentary practices through experience exchange with other parliaments.

HE Dr al-Sulaiti recalled Qatar's hosting of the 140th IPU Assembly in 2019, which was considered

one of the most successful assemblies, receiving wide attendance and significant international attention. She noted that the Shura Council's role is highly appreciated by the IPU and friendly parliaments, with IPU President Dr Tulia Ackson and IPU Secretary-General Martin Chungong praising the Council's effective role and support for the union's activities.

She affirmed that the Shura Council's active presence in international parliamentary initiatives reflected Qatar's dynamic diplomacy, setting a global example. The Council supported Qatar's mediation efforts by providing parliamentary backing for government initiatives aimed at resolving disputes and building communication bridges with other parliaments to exchange experiences and best practices in mediation and peace.

She emphasised the international community's appreciation of Qatar's mediation efforts to resolve conflicts, as evident by positive remarks from national parliaments, regional and international parliamentary unions, and organisations.



HE Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti

HE Dr al-Sulaiti highlighted the need for parliaments to enhance international co-operation and solidarity through adopting joint policies to prevent and peacefully resolve conflicts, as well as strengthening their oversight role to ensure governments fulfil their international commitments in human rights and sustainable development.

She called on parliaments to press their governments to prevent human rights violations during wars and conflicts, comply with international norms and laws, and prioritise dialogue over war. She stressed the importance of effective communication with the UN to develop and reform the organisation to meet global aspirations. In this context, she stressed the importance of the role of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in confronting conflicts and wars, and called on it to develop working mechanisms to be more influential in this issue in light of the worsening challenges destabilising peace.

She called for strengthening co-operation and co-ordination between member parliaments and activating the role of specialised committees in peace and security issues.

HE Dr al-Sulaiti also pointed out the importance of strengthening the technical capabilities of the IPU by providing training programmes for parliamentarians in the fields of mediation and conflict resolution, in addition to enhancing its role in monitoring the implementation of international resolutions related to conflicts and wars, and submitting periodic reports that highlight the challenges and achievements in this field.

She underscored the crucial role of parliamentary work in achieving security, peace and sustainable development. She called for continued serious efforts to strengthen the role of parliaments in addressing global challenges, ensuring justice and equality for all, and urged all parliaments to intensify their efforts in promoting dialogue and understanding between people, working collectively to achieve a better future for all humanity. (QNA)

Shura Council stresses parliament's role in promoting peace and understanding

The Shura Council affirmed the critical role played by the legislative councils and parliaments in forging peace and upholding understanding and dialogue to resolve all disputes and conflict with the aim of bringing peoples together and promoting peace and harmony all over the world.

This came in a statement the Shura Council issued to mark the International Day of Parliamentarism that falls on June 30 each year, celebrated under the theme: "Parliamentary diplomacy: Building bridges for peace and understanding".

On the 7th anniversary of the International Day of Parliamentarism, the Shura Council availed itself of this opportunity to extend assurances of its highest consideration to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in recognition of his generous and unlimited support for the Council, stemming from its insightful vision and deep belief in the significance of the public participation in decision-making process.

The Council extended its congratulations to the members of the Shura Council, and all parliamentarians in various territories worldwide in appreciation of the vital role they play in achieving their people's aspirations and safeguarding their rights.

The statement highlighted that the global peace and security face massive deterioration due to the grave violations of human rights and heinous war crimes, pointing out that the genocidal war unleashed by Israel on the Gaza Strip and other occu-

piated territories violate all international norms and laws.

Additionally, the statement expressed the Council's strong disillusionment and denunciation of these violations, calling on the international community to act immediately to halt these crimes and lift the siege on the embattled Palestinian cities and to achieve justice and peace.

The inability of the international community to deter the occupier and hold war criminals to account triggers the parliamentarians to exert possible efforts to lift the injustice on the Palestinian people and build global peace, the statement emphasised, urging the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and all its members from national parliaments, federations, and parliamentary organisations to exert utmost effort to stop the unjust aggression on Gaza and lift the siege on the beleaguered Palestinian cities.

The statement called on governments to apply the motto of the International Day of Parliamentarism through laying the foundations of justice and building the bridges of peace and understanding, by making the Occupied Palestinian Territories the launching pad from which these foundations reach out to all territories engulfed by wars and conflicts worldwide.

In conclusion, the Shura Council emphasised its resolve to continue to achieve the supreme interests of Qatar under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir. (QNA)

Qatar hosts first meeting of GCC Scouts and Guides Committee



Officials at the meeting.

The headquarters of the Qatar Scouts and Guides Association witnessed the first meeting of the Scouts and Guides Committee in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries last week.

In the presence of Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi, president of the Qatar Scouts and Guides Association; Maha al-Ruwaili, vice-president of Qatar Scouts and Guides Association; Jassim al-Hardan, commissioner-general of the Association and the participating delegations, the meeting began with a welcome speech from Dr al-Nuaimi.

"We are sure this meeting will witness the launch of new initiatives and development programmes that enhance our communication and co-operation to achieve our common goals. We also welcome your ideas and suggestions to strengthen the scouting and guiding movement's journey in the GCC,"

said al-Nuaimi. Abdullah al-Khalaf, legal adviser and member of the GCC General Secretariat, spoke about the importance of the meeting, which establishes the merger of bodies under one name based on the decision of the Ministers of Education in the GCC countries to unify the Scouts and Guides Committees into one committee.

Dr Nader Mohamed al-Jamali, director of the Physical Education Department at the Ministry of Education in Bahrain, said the meeting was unique, as the Scouts and Guides societies were merged. He stressed that the ultimate goal of integration is for students to obtain the best activities and events in all scout camps with the best quality and unified thought.

There is a five-year strategic plan in which member states submit their proposals and plans to the Secretariat. The plan will be implemented in 2025.

'AI in Education' camp for Gulf region gets underway in Doha

The Gulf 'Artificial Intelligence in Education' Camp for 2024 began in Doha yesterday.

The camp is organised by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) in collaboration with the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States for high school male and female students from member countries (remotely) via the Gulf AI Observatory platform.

Running for three consecutive weeks, the camp aims to enhance knowledge of artificial intelligence (AI) concepts and to prepare specialised personnel in this field by training 14 trainees from Qatar on concepts of algorithms and fundamental methodologies in programming and AI through the implementation of a series of practical projects.

The event includes an introduction to the Python programming language and AI and its fields, training in machine learning, natural language processing, deep learning, understanding generative intelligence, and prompt engineering.

The participants reviewed the MoEHE's efforts and the latest developments in AI, which is considered one of the main drivers of growth and innovation in all sectors, including the education sector.

The Qatari students said they are glad to participate in the camp through the cutting-edge methods utilised in AI technologies and its applications in education which will definitely help them internalise further expertise in technology and serve Qatar in the areas of AI and cybersecurity. Additionally, the event will help them understand the labour market needs, thus giving them the opportunity to forge acquaintance with a contingent of trainers from various member countries.

The training camp is an interactive educational platform for presenting and discussing scientific material. Based on what they have learned, participants complete exercises and practical projects. (QNA)

NHRC raises workers' awareness about right to health

From Page 1

Khaled Abdul Rahman al-Emadi, an occupational safety and health expert at the Ministry of Labour, explained that the ministry annually organises awareness activities about heat stress. He added that these events aim to raise awareness of the risks of heat stress and ways to prevent it, especially during peak hours from 10am to 3:30pm daily, from July to mid-September each year.

The paper presented by the Ministry of Labour detailed the state's efforts to protect workers from heat stress risks, including legislative amendments requiring companies to develop a joint plan with workers to assess heat stress risks, conduct annual medical examinations to diagnose and assess chronic diseases among workers that may contribute to heat stress risks, grant workers the right to self-regulate their work pace



by taking breaks when needed, impose a maximum temperature limit beyond which all work is prohibited, and provide a temperature measurement system.

Director of Health Programmes at the National Mental Health Programme, Ministry of Public Health,

Qusai al-Harashah said that mental health is the cornerstone of public health and productivity and is essential for both individuals and organisations.

He affirmed that investing in mental health initiatives not only improves employee wellbeing but also

Qatar plans to raise renewable energy share to 18% by 2030

From Page 1

The operation of Siraj 1 and future solar projects by QatarEnergy (with a production capacity of 875MW) reflect the state's commitment to effectively utilise centralised renewable energy projects.

Regarding the anticipated challenges, al-Baker highlighted the limited capabilities of the private sector in contributing effectively to large projects due to the small market size and the lack of expertise among companies. This poses a challenge in

achieving the strategy's goals, especially in distributed generation, along with the need for significant investments estimated at \$7.6bn by 2030.

To continue making progress, it's essential to enable renewable energy development companies to build skills and capabilities, assess the attractiveness of the renewable energy manufacturing sector in Qatar, and consider financial enablers if deemed necessary for the local manufacturing sector.

The strategy proposes launching a net billing mechanism to encour-

age investments in distributed solar projects, co-ordinating with financial institutions like Qatar Development Bank to offer attractive financing programmes for clean energy projects, and streamlining the application process for distributed renewable energy projects through effective co-ordination with the Ministry of Municipality.

The Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation (Kahramaa) announced in late April the launch of the Qatar National Renewable Energy Strategy aimed at diversifying and in-

creasing the use of renewable energy sources, particularly solar energy, and integrating them into the electricity mix due to the high quality of solar energy resources in the country.

Kahramaa said that the launch of the strategy reflects its belief in a more sustainable future for Qatar and aims to achieve Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030, building on its efforts to enhance renewable energy use and develop related policies and strategies in co-ordination with 22 key energy stakeholders in Qatar.



Officials at the launch of the campaign.

Rawabi Hypermarket, Al Rayyan Municipality launch food safety awareness campaign

Rawabi Hypermarket has partnered with Al Rayyan Municipality to launch a food safety awareness campaign. The campaign, held at the Conference Theatre in Al Rayyan Municipality, aims to raise awareness among the public on the importance of food safety and proper food handling practices.

The event was inaugurated by Jaber Hasan Aljaber, general manager of Rayyan Municipality; Ajmal Abdulla, executive director of Al Rawabi Group; Zinab Srteb H al-Shammari, head of Health Section at Rayyan Municipality; and Kannu Baker, group general manager, Al Rawabi Group. Additionally, Dr Tamer Hasan Etman, Dr Abdalkader Burhan Fyad, and the heads of departments at Rawabi Hypermarket were present at the event. The campaign focuses on educating Rawabi Group's staff and the wider community on the best practices for food safety, emphasising the proper handling, storage, and preparation of food to

prevent contamination and ensure public health. Key points discussed included the importance of maintaining clean and sanitary kitchen environments, proper cooking temperatures to kill harmful bacteria, and safe food storage techniques to prevent spoilage and cross-contamination. Dr Tamer Hasan Etman provided a detailed session on these critical aspects, enhancing the audience's understanding and awareness of food safety protocols. Aljaber stated, "We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of our community. This campaign is a critical step in educating the public about food safety, which is essential for preventing foodborne illnesses and promoting overall well-being."

Al Rawabi Group's Abdulla emphasised: "At Rawabi Group, we prioritise the health and safety of our customers. Partnering with Al Rayyan Municipality for this Food Safety Awareness Campaign allows us to reinforce our commitment to quality and safety in every aspect of our operations."

Qatar Charity co-sponsors UN event on innovations in humanitarian response



Officials at the UN event.

Qatar Charity co-sponsored, alongside the Permanent Mission of Norway to the United Nations, a side event during the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) 2024 Humanitarian Affairs Segment.

The event, titled "How OCHA's Pooled Funds Advance Meaningful Partnerships for Innovations in Humanitarian Response", took place recently in New York.

The event aimed to spotlight the critical role that OCHA's pooled funds play in fostering in-

novative solutions and effective partnerships within the humanitarian sector. Ahmed AlRumaihi, director of External Affairs at Qatar Charity, represented Qatar Charity at the panel discussion and reflected on the role of development actors in the Global South to pioneer innovative approaches in humanitarian aid and emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing global humanitarian challenges. The discussion was led by Lisa Dougherty, director, Financing and Partnerships Division at OCHA, and included experts from Norway, the Pacific Islands Association of

Non-Governmental Organisations and UNFPA.

AlRumaihi said: "With a world in state of permanent crisis, Qatar Charity envisions a future where humanitarian aid is not only responsive but also anticipatory and adaptive to emerging challenges. By actively engaging in forums like the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment, we seek to contribute to the global discourse on enhancing humanitarian action through innovation, partnership and most importantly, localisation." Dougherty noted: "Delighted to meet with Qatar Charity to discuss the importance of coordinated action through diplomacy and innovative partnerships. Such collaboration is necessary for effective humanitarian responses."

Over 26 years, the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment has been central in underscoring the critical role that coordination plays in strengthening the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance within the United Nations. The segment gathers key stakeholders ranging from member states, UN agencies, NGOs to the private sector to discuss and promote effective humanitarian policies and practices.



Opening of Home Centre branch at Tawar Mall.

Home Centre opens sprawling new store at Tawar Mall

Home Centre has opened a new store in Tawar Mall, their first store focused on home décor and accessories.

The new store spans 2400sq m, housing a breathtaking collection of over 6,000 products waiting to be discovered. With a wide range of choices, the store ignites customers' creativity, offering inspiration around every corner and empowering them to per-

sonalise their living spaces exactly how they want them.

The new store has a dedicated Design Studio, offering everything from product selection to professional interior design services. The store further elevates the space with an experiential zone that invites customers to curl up in a comfortable lounge setup and browse the Home Centre website, allowing everyone to delve into the vast furniture

collection as well. "We are very excited to open our new store in Tawar Mall to inspire and cater to the unique home furnishings and household needs of our customers," said Shumalan Naicker, territory head, Qatar, Home Centre. "Our thoughtful displays showcase inspiring solutions across both furniture and home décor, allowing customers to easily envision how these products can create their dream homes."

Audi has launched its second High Power charging station at the Pearl Island, strengthening Qatar's Electric infrastructure

- Audi inaugurates second high power charging station at the Pearl Island, Qatar in collaboration with United Development Company (UDC).
- The Pearl charging station features a total of six chargers, making Audi the first luxury automotive brand in Qatar to offer a 180-kW charging station to the public, with an upgradable capacity to 300 kW.
- The launch of the second high power charging station at the Pearl Island underscores Audi's dedication to expanding its charging network and enhancing customers' charging experience while promoting sustainable mobility.



"Audi has consistently been at the forefront of driving innovation and transformation in the automotive industry. Our unwavering commitment to progress and innovation establishes a standard that inspires other brands to strive for excellence."

Launching the second high power charging station in the Pearl Island marks a significant milestone as Audi is committed to expand its charging network rapidly in Qatar and worldwide. And it reaffirms Audi's vision to enhance customers' charging experience and lead toward a sustainable mobility.



Audi has launched its second high power charging station at the Pearl Island in Qatar, setting a new industry benchmark with six fast chargers. As Qatar's first luxury automotive brand to offer a 180-kW public charging station, Audi is driving a positive change and enhancing the charging

experience for e-tron and other EV owners in Qatar.

The brand with four rings, has inaugurated its second high power charging station at The Pearl Island, enhancing Qatar's electric vehicle infrastructure. The collaboration with the island's master developer, United Development Company

(UDC), underscores Audi's commitment to sustainable mobility and innovation.

Located in the Pearl Island's vibrant district, the newly launched charging station features six high-speed chargers, catering to e-tron and other electric vehicle (EV) owners. This move establishes Audi as Qatar's

first luxury automotive brand to offer a 180-kW charging station to the public, with the option to upgrade to 300-kW. This initiative reflects Audi's dedication to setting new benchmarks in the automotive industry.

Mr Ahmed Sharief, Managing Director of Q-Auto L.L.C., commented,



Chief of Staff in US meetings



HE the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces, Staff Lieutenant-General (Pilot) Salem bin Hamad bin Aqeel al-Nabit, met with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the US, General Charles Brown, during his visit to the US.

He also met with Chief of Staff of the US Army, General Randy George. HE the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces visited the MacDill Air Force Base in Florida, where he met with Commander of the US Central Command, General Michael Kurilla. HE Staff Lt Gen (Pilot) al-Nabit concluded the tour by visiting the Boeing Defence, Space and Security (BDS) company headquarters where he met with Vice-President of Business Development and Strategy at BDS, Bernd Peters.

The visit and meetings were attended by a number of senior officers from both sides. **(QNA)**



Qatar support for Somalia



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi met yesterday with the visiting Somali State Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Ali Mohamed Omar. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and ways to enhance them, in addition to the latest developments in Somalia and a range of topics of mutual interest. HE Dr al-Khulaifi reiterated Qatar's support for the efforts aimed at strengthening security and stability in Somalia and achieving development and prosperity for the fraternal people of Somalia. **(QNA)**

Amir gets Congolese message



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received a written message from the President of Congo (Brazzaville), Denis Sassou Nguesso, pertaining to bilateral relations and means of supporting and developing them. The message was handed to HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohamed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi during his meeting yesterday with Rodrigue Ghislain Guessan, Special Envoy of the President. **(QNA)**

Third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan convenes in Doha today

The third meeting of special envoys on Afghanistan will convene today in Doha under the chairpersonship of Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs at the UN Rosemary DiCarlo, on behalf of the UN secretary-general. The meeting follows the discussions held in Doha in May 2023 and February 2024 and aims to enhance international engagement in Afghanistan in a more coherent, co-ordinated, and

organised manner. The meeting will feature direct discussions among special envoys on Afghanistan from countries in the region and around the world, in addition to the de facto Afghan authorities. About 30 countries and international institutions have been invited to participate. DiCarlo emphasised that the Doha discussions are part of an ongoing process, not a one-day event. The ultimate goal of this process is for Afghanistan to live in peace with itself and its neighbours, to


fully integrate into the international community, and to fulfil its international obligations. She added that the meeting will address the multiple challenges facing the Afghan people, Afghanistan's neighbours, the region, and the broader international community. Special Representative of the UN secretary-general and Head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Roza Otunbayeva, will also participate in the discussions. **(QNA)**

Qatar slams Israeli move to expand settlements in West Bank

Qatar has strongly condemned Israeli occupation's decision to expand settlements in the West Bank, considering it a new chapter in the ongoing violations of international legitimacy resolutions, particularly UN Security Council Resolution 2,334. In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that the occupation policy, based on expanding settlements and forcibly displacing the Palestinian people, along with its ongoing brutal war on the Gaza Strip, constitutes an obstacle to efforts aimed at preventing the expansion of the cycle of violence in the region and achieving comprehensive and just peace, stressing in the need for the international community to stand together to compel the Israeli occupation to halt its unilateral actions and comply with international legitimacy resolutions, especially during this critical period. The ministry reiterated Qatar's steadfast and unwavering stance in supporting the Palestinian cause and the resilience of the fraternal Palestinian people, based on international legitimacy resolutions and the two-state solution, ensuring the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. **(QNA)**

Endowment Provisions in Islamic Sharia book issued

The Centre for Endowment Studies of the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has issued the third book of *Endowment Provisions in Islamic Sharia*. In a statement yesterday, the centre affirmed that the book is the debut university publication that fathoms out endowment provisions. It granted its writer Dr Mohamed Ubaid Abdullah al-Kubaisi the PhD degree in Comparative Jurisprudence, with first-class honours, in 1977 in his dissertation. Dr al-Kubaisi presented a superb scientific work in terms of comprehensive collection, inclusion of different jurisprudential opinions, clarification of their evidence, and detailing the most reliable sources and references. The Director General of the General Directorate of Endowments Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Mohamed bin Ghanem al-Thani said the book comes as part of the General Directorate of Endowments' keenness to entrench the provisions of endowments in Islamic Shariah, promote the institution of endowments and underline its importance among individuals from all segments of society. He added that the book is one of the most important contemporary sources on endowments and their provisions, and it is among the most comprehensive books detailing its intricacies and specifics. It has been embraced by outstanding scholars and researchers who have greatly benefited from it, affirming unwavering commitment to achieving excellence in endowment studies and research, especially in overall Islamic finance. **(QNA)**



Doha Golf Club
Qatar

INVITATION TO TENDER

Doha Golf Club ("DGC") is pleased to announce the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Bond (QAR)	Tender Fee (QAR)	Last Date to Issue RFP	Tender Closing Date	Email Address
DGC/TC/24/006	Supply of deep cycle Batteries & Tyres for Golf Carts to DGC	5% of commercial proposal value	QAR 1000	10 July 2024	17 July 2024	zaib@dohagolfclub.com

DGC is keen to invite reputable companies to supply **Batteries for Golf Carts**.

Who should respond to this invitation?
Local companies that have experience and expertise in the same area.

Tender Process:

- Applicant/s should register and submit their Expression of Interest letter, along with accompanying copy of valid Commercial Registration and Computer Card by email to the relevant email address listed in the table above.
- Upon receipt, the applicant/s will receive an email with attached Confidentiality Agreement (CA).
- The Applicant/s should then pay the non-refundable tender fee to below DGC Bank Account.

DOHA GOLF CLUB
Bank: Commercial Bank of Qatar
Account No.: 4580-583247-004
IBAN: QA24CBQA000000004580583247004

- Applicants will return a completed CA and Tender fee payment slip with bank stamp to DGC by email to the relevant email address, and submit a hard copy of the CA and Tender fee payment slip to the address below:

DOHA GOLF CLUB
West Bay Lagoon
P.O. Box 13530, Doha, Qatar

- Upon Receipt of a conformant CA and proof of payment of the tender fee, the applicant will be issued a copy of the Request for Proposal (RFP) through the appointed aforementioned address.
- Requests for RFP documents after **10 July 2024** will be rejected.
- The decision to issue RFP documents to an applicant rests solely with DGC.
- Technical and Commercial Offers should be submitted by hand in separate sealed envelopes to Doha Golf Club as per the above mail address.
- Tender Bond must be in separate envelope with the offer.
- Any queries in relation to this tender should be addressed in writing to the email address above.



Doha Golf Club
Qatar

INVITATION TO TENDER

Doha Golf Club ("DGC") is pleased to announce the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Bond (QAR)	Tender Fee (QAR)	Last Date to Issue RFP	Tender Closing Date	Email Address
DGC/TC/24/005	Supply of Carting Cart & Golf Cart to DGC	5% of commercial proposal value	QAR 500	10 July 2024	17 July 2024	zaib@dohagolfclub.com

DGC is keen to invite reputable companies to supply **Battery Operated Vehicles / Carts**.

Who should respond to this invitation?
Local companies that have experience and expertise in the same area.

Tender Process:


- Applicant/s should register and submit their Expression of Interest letter, along with accompanying copy of valid Commercial Registration and Computer Card by email to the relevant email address listed in the table above.
- Upon receipt, the applicant/s will receive an email with attached Confidentiality Agreement (CA).
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- Tender Bond must be in separate envelope with the offer.
- Any queries in relation to this tender should be addressed in writing to the email address above.



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation


No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	SUP/C/OFS/6640/24 CLEANING & THIRD-PARTY INSPECTION SERVICES OF PORTABLE CHEMICAL TANKS ON CALL-OFF BASIS	26/06/2024 to 04/07/2024	0	84,000	05/08/2024

Scope of Work:
Contractor shall clean, inspect, test & certify portable tanks (Helifuel-Jet Fuel / TEG- Try Ethylene Glycol / Batch Chemical / MEG- Mono Ethylene Glycol) on call-off basis. The Contract duration shall be for a period of five (05) years tentatively from Q1 2025 with an option for company to extend it for two (02) years.

Bid Validity: Bid should be valid for 180 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:
ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

Note: Effective from 1st July 2023, bids received from Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Bid Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that has been established for less than 2 years and insurance companies are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV Digital Portal:- <https://icv.qa/US>



The Transport Company MOWASALAT (KARWA)


Mowasalat (Karwa) announces the following tender:

Tender Ref. No.	Tender Title	Tender Fee	Electronic Tender Fee Payment Dates	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
TC-023-MTS-2024	Supply of Vehicles for Karwa Academy	QAR 1,000	30 June to 6 July 2024	QAR 50,000	5 August 2024


CONDITIONS:

- Interested bidder shall pay the tender fee to Mowasalat Bank Account details as shown:
- Bidder must submit proof of tender fee payment (Bank Deposit Slip + a Signed & Stamped Expression of Interest (indicating Tender Ref. No. and Title / Company Name and details of nominated contact person i.e., Tel. No., Fax No., and Email address) + Copy of valid Commercial Registration to Mowasalat Secretary - Tender Committee at email: tenders@mowasalat.com
- Tender documents will be released via email on the next working day after the tender fee payment date to all bidders who have submitted the bank deposit slip and other documents requested (i.e., **7 July 2024**)
- Bonds: Tender Bond & Performance Bond:** Bids must be accompanied by Bonds issued by a local bank operating in the State of Qatar as per the Qatar Central Bank template. Further details of bonds can be found in the tender documents. **Bids without Tender Bond shall not be considered.**
- Tender validity:** Bid validity period shall be 180 days from the bid closing date.
- Tender documents submission:** Bids must be submitted in 3 separate sealed (**IN RED WAX**) envelopes addressed to **Secretary - Tender Committee** clearly highlighting the Tender Ref. No. & Tender Title:
 - Envelope 1#** must include the Technical Bid submission (1 Original + 1 non-Editable copy in a USB)
 - Envelope 2#** must include Commercial Bid submission (1 Original + 1 Editable MS Excel spreadsheet copied in a USB)
 - Envelope 3#** must include the Tender Bond (1 Original)
- Bid Closing Date:** Bid submission deadline is **12.00 noon Doha Local Time** as on the Bid closing date shown above. The 3 envelopes must be handed over to the Office of The Secretary - Tender Committee, located at Mowasalat Head Office, Industrial Area. Any tender submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

Tel: 4458 8724 Fax: 4458 8850



Supplier Registration Mowasalat Location



QCDC enhances children's interest in professional culture

Qatar Career Development Centre (QCDC) organised the first activities of the fourth edition of the "Little Employee" programme at Multiqa Building (Education City Student Centre).

A large number of children participated in the event, and enjoyed accompanying their parents and closely experiencing the work atmosphere with them to explore their various specialisations. The event, which QCDC has been organising for years, aims to inspire the younger generations and enhance their early interest in professional culture.

The event featured group activities, including an interactive presentation given by QCDC experts to introduce the initiative and the best practices that ensure maximum benefit for participants.

The day's activities concluded with the distribution of certificates of participation to the children, showing the number of working hours and the institutions they volunteered to work in, to encourage them to participate in professional development activities such as internships and voluntary work. (QNA)



Amir greets Seychelles president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Seychelles President Wavel Ramkalawan on his country's independence anniversary. (QNA)

Awqaf ministry launches Arabic calligraphy contest on Tuesday

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs will launch its Arabic calligraphy competition on Tuesday at the Sheikh Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre in the presence and sponsorship of HE the Minister of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs Ghanem bin Shaheen al-Ghanem.

The contest is the largest international competition organised by the centre in collaboration with the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA), the ministry said in a statement yesterday. The ministry added that the competition epitomises the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030 in entrenching its cultural role in the Middle East and the entire world, in addition to promoting the cultural exchange among Arab nations. It comes to undergird a wide diversity of relevant cultural initiatives undertaken by various ministries and authorities to serve the Holy Qur'an and promote the significance



of the Arabic language. The statement highlighted that such initiatives pave the way for unlocking further human creative capabilities in calligraphy and paying tribute to the Arabic calligraphy as an art and inveterate craft with promising prospects and bright future for cultural and civilisational exchange, in addition to discovering talented calligraphers worldwide and encouraging the Qatari and Arab youth to hone their skills and competitive abilities in this art. The Sheikh Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre plays a vital role in highlighting the Islamic culture by focusing on the cultural meanings of Islam, along with its human values and international precepts for a wide diversity of non-Muslim societies hailing from multiple races and cultures. Also, the centre offers opportunities to teach the Arabic language to non-native speakers and introduce Qatari culture and the deep-rooted Arab heritage of Qatar. Additionally, MIA is the most important stellar architectural innovation icon with its superb design. It is an information centre and gateway to an inveterate civilisation, as well as a beacon of dialogue and cultural exchange. (QNA)

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Sunday to Thursday.

For inspection, please contact:

5534 8604

Your offer can be submitted by email to: -
businessqatar2024@gmail.com

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Qatar Chemical Company Limited
Al Dafna - Amwal Tower - First Floor
P.O. 24646 Doha / Qatar - Tel. 44847111 - Fax 44847695
Website: www.qchem.com.qa

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDERS

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	QC/TC/P/63/24	Tawteen Opportunity: New Manufacturing Facility Setup for the Supply of FFS Bags & Stretch Hood to RLP with Five Years Commitment.	Not Required	12:00 hrs on 29th August 2024

Brief Scope:
Supplier is expected to establish a new manufacturing facility in Qatar for production of FFS bags & Stretch Hood required for RLP as part of QatarEnergy Tawteen Initiative.

Tender Documents for the above description can be obtained as follows:

A. Pay to Bank and send the original receipt with authorization letter via email.

For each tender pay a **non-refundable document fee of QR 1,000/-** Payable to Q-Chem, Bank Account (Contract Services - Tender) - Account Number 001-242007-003 with HSBC Bank) and submit the original receipt with an Authorization letter on Tenderer Company Letterhead with ID copy of the Tenderer representative via email to **tadvertising@qchem.com.qa** In the authorization letter Tenderer shall nominate a single focal point with contact mobile number, **official email address**, office number, fax number for the communications related to this tender for the transfer and receipt of the tender documents. **The Bank receipt must indicate the tender number and the tenderer name (company name).**

B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email

Tender documents issuance from 30th June 2024 to 4th July 2024, 8am-12noon.

C. Proposal details

Proposals should be valid for 240 days from the tender closing date.

D. Submission of Proposals

Guidelines for Electronic Bids Submission is attached in the Tender documents.



ARTIC
Al Rayyan Tourism Investment Co.
شركة الريان للاستثمار السياحي

TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

Tender No	Subject	Document Fee QAR.	Tender Bond QAR.	Closing Date
ARTIC/AMC/2024/003	AMC for Landscaping Maintenance and Irrigation for Artic Hotels	QAR 1,200.00	QAR 50,000.00	August 08, 2024

TERMS & CONDITIONS:

- Interested parties can obtain the tender documents from Al Rayyan Tourism Investment Co., Supply Chain department in the following manner.
- Payment of non-refundable document fee should be deposited to Al Rayyan Tourism Investment Co. Account No: IBAN: QA56ABQQ00000000001210556325 with Ahli Bank, Main Branch Qatar.
- Submit proof of payment - Bank receipt, valid Company Commercial Registration, Computer Card, and Authorization Letter to Katherine.Zoleta@artic.com.qa
- Tender Documents will be sent electronically within 24-48 hours during working days.
- Al Rayyan Tourism Investment Co. has the right to increase or decrease the scope of services / products by 20% with the same terms, conditions.
- Al Rayyan Tourism Investment Co is not bound to accept the lowest offer and or cancel the tender and is under no obligation to show reasons thereof.
- Tender response is to be submitted in sealed envelope (Original Printed copy) & (e-copy on USB).
- Tender response should be submitted not later than **11:00 AM of the Closing Date to ARTIC Supply Chain department located on the 22nd floor, Marriott Marquis Hotel-City Tower, West Bay Doha Qatar.**
- **LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.**

For further inquiries or information, please contact:
Telephone No: +974 4422 3888.

www.artic.com.qa



Pezeshkian to face Jalili in Iran presidency runoff

AFP
Teheran

The sole reformist in Iran's presidential election, Masoud Pezeshkian, will face the conservative Saeed Jalili in a runoff, authorities said yesterday, following a vote marred by historically low turnout.

Pezeshkian secured 42.4% of the vote, while Jalili, a former nuclear negotiator, came second with 38.6%, according to figures from Iran's elections authority.

Conservative parliament Speaker Mohamed Bagher Ghalibaf was next with 13.8%, while the only other candidate, cleric Mostafa Pourmohammadi, got less than 1%.

"None of the candidates could garner the absolute majority of the votes," electoral authority spokesman Mohsen Eslami said.

In his first post-election remarks, Pezeshkian thanked his supporters and urged them to vote again next Friday "to save the country from poverty, lies, discrimination and injustice".

"I hope your presence will be the basis of a new voice for change in attitude, behaviour, conversation and in the distribution and allocation of resources," he added in a video published on the website of the reformist newspaper Etemad.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei had called for a high turnout ahead of Friday's vote.

Only slightly more than 40% of the 61mn electorate took part — a record low turnout for the Islamic republic — and more than 1mn ballots were spoiled.

The poll had been scheduled to take place in 2025 but was brought forward by the death of president Ebrahim Raisi in a helicopter crash last month.

The Guardian Council, which vets candidates, had originally approved six contenders.

But a day ahead of the election, two of them — the ultraconservative mayor of Tehran Alireza Zakani and Raisi's vice president Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh-Hashemi — dropped out.

After the final results were released, they both asked their supporters to vote for Jalili in the July 5 runoff.

Ghalibaf followed suit, asking "all revolu-

tionary forces and supporters" to get behind Jalili's bid for the presidency.

In the 2021 election that brought Raisi to power, the Guardian Council disqualified many reformists and moderates, prompting many voters to shun the election.

The turnout then was just under 49%, which at the time was the lowest in any presidential election in Iran.

Friday's vote took place amid heightened regional tensions over the Gaza war, a dispute with the West over Iran's nuclear programme and domestic discontent over the state of Iran's sanctions-hit economy.

Opposition groups, especially in the diaspora, meanwhile called for a boycott, questioning the credibility of elections.

Pezeshkian, 69, is a heart surgeon who has represented the northwestern city of Tabriz in parliament since 2008.

He served as health minister under Iran's last reformist president Mohamed Khatami, who held office from 1997 to 2005 and has endorsed Pezeshkian's bid in the current elections. Pezeshkian criticised Raisi's government for a lack of transparency during nationwide protests triggered by the September 2022 death in police custody of Mahsa Amini.

Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd, had been arrested for allegedly violating the nation's strict dress code for women.

In recent campaigning, Pezeshkian called for "constructive relations" with Washington and European countries in order to "get Iran out of its isolation".

People, however, are not optimistic, with 32-year-old trader Sina saying, "there will not be much change" even if Pezeshkian is elected president.

"If he wins, he will have to work with a parliament whose head is Ghalibaf and the Supreme National Security Council whose head is Jalili," he added. Jalili is widely recognised for his uncompromising anti-West stance.

The 58-year-old has held several senior positions in the nation, including in Khamenei's office in the early 2000s.

He is currently one of Khamenei's representatives in the Supreme National Security Council, Iran's highest security body.

"I would like Mr. Jalili to become the president and lead Iran to progress with religious rationality based on resistance," said Shima, 43-year-old filmmaker in Tehran.

Palestinian solidarity gathering



Supporters and activists of Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba take part in a demonstration to express their solidarity with the Palestinians, in Karachi, Pakistan, yesterday, amid the ongoing war between Israel and the Hamas group.

Iran warns Israel of 'obliterating' war if Lebanon attacked

AFP
Teheran

Iran yesterday warned that "all Resistance Fronts", a grouping of Iran and its regional allies, would confront Israel if it attacks Lebanon.

The comment from Iran's mission to New York comes with fears of a wider regional war involving Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement. The two sides have engaged in near-daily exchanges of fire since the war in Gaza began.

Such exchanges have escalated this month, alongside bellicose rhetoric from both sides. Israel's military said plans for a Lebanon offensive had been "approved and validated", prompting Hezbollah to respond that none of Israel would be spared in a full-blown conflict.

In a post on social media platform X, the Iranian mission said it "deems as psychological warfare the Zionist regime's propaganda about intending to attack Lebanon".

But, it added: "Should it embark on full-scale military aggression, an obliterating war will ensue. All options, including the full involvement of all Resistance Fronts, are on the table."

The war in Gaza began in October when Hamas Palestinian fighters stormed southern Israel.

Iran, which backs Hamas, has praised



A motorbike drives past buildings destroyed during previous Israeli military fire on the southern Lebanese village of Aita Al-Shaab, near the border, yesterday, amid ongoing cross-border clashes between Israeli troops and Hezbollah fighters.

seven Revolutionary Guards, two of them generals.

Iran hit back with an unprecedented drone and missile attack on Israel on April 13-14.

Iran's state media later reported explosions in the central province of Isfahan as US media quoted American officials saying Israel had carried out retaliatory strikes.

Tehran downplayed the reported Israeli raid.

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A combination of file photos show Iranian presidential candidate and former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, waving to supporters during a campaign event in the capital Tehran, and Masoud Pezeshkian (right), another candidate in the presidential election, gesturing to supporters during a campaign rally at Afrafi Stadium in Tehran.

QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY INVITATION TO TENDER

QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-6000000932	Hire of third-party trainer to conduct Turnaround Safety Training	500/- (Non-refundable)	-	30.06.2024 01.07.2024 02.07.2024 03.07.2024 04.07.2024 07.07.2024 08.07.2024	25.07.2024

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)
 - Account Number : 0013-025828-058
 - IBAN : QA51QNBAA000000000013025828058
 - Bank Name : QATAR NATIONAL BANK
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to purchase@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the last date of Tender Fee Receipt Submission Date, you may contact at purchase@qafco.com.qa or on 44227797
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- Bids shall be submitted at QAFCO Tender Office, between 09:30 – 11 :00 hours during the Holy month of Ramadan and 09:30 – 11:30 hours and 12:30 – 14:00 hours, of any working day of the Company, on/before the "Tender Closing Date".

Five IS bombs found hidden in Iraq mosque: UN agency

AFP
Mosul

A United Nations agency said it has discovered five bombs in a wall of Mosul's iconic Al-Nuri mosque, planted years ago by Islamic State group militants, during restoration work in the northern Iraqi city.

Five "large-scale explosive devices, designed to trigger a massive destruction of the site," were found in the southern wall of the prayer hall on Tuesday by the Unesco team working at the site, a representative for the agency told AFP late Friday.

Mosul's Al-Nuri mosque and the adjacent leaning minaret nicknamed Al-Hadba or the "hunchback", which dates from the 12th century, were destroyed during the battle to retake the city from IS.

Iraq's army accused IS, which occupied Mosul for three years, of planting explosives at the site and blowing it up.

Unesco, the UN cultural agency, has been working to restore the mosque and other architectural heritage sites in the city, much of it reduced to rubble in the battle to retake it in 2017.

"The Iraqi armed forces immediately secured the area and the situation is now fully under control," Unesco added.

One bomb was removed, but four other 1.5-kilogram devices "remain connected to each other" and are expected to be cleared in the coming days, it said.

"These explosive devices were hidden inside a wall, which was specially re-



A general view of the Grand Al-Nuri Mosque after it was evacuated due to the discovery of explosive devices, in Mosul, Iraq, yesterday.

built around them: it explains why they could not be discovered when the site was cleared by Iraqi forces" in 2020, the agency said. Iraqi General Tahseen al-Khafaji, spokesperson for the Joint Operations Command of various Iraqi forces, confirmed the discovery of "several explosive devices from ISIS militants in Al-Nuri mosque."

He said provincial deminers requested help from the Defence Ministry in Baghdad to defuse the remaining munitions because of their "complex manufacturing". Construction work has been suspended at the site until the bombs are removed. It was from Al-Nuri mosque that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the then-leader of IS, proclaimed the establishment of the group's "caliphate" in July 2014. The militants took over large swathes of territory in Iraq and neighbouring Syria, which they ruled with brutality. Iraqi forces backed by a US-led coalition drove IS out of Mosul in 2017.

CONFLICT US military destroys seven drones and vehicle in Yemen

American forces destroyed seven drones and a control station vehicle in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen over the past 24 hours, the US military said yesterday, AFP reported from Washington.

The strikes were carried out because the drones and the vehicle "presented an imminent threat to US coalition forces, and merchant vessels in the region," the US Central Command said in a statement on social media platform X.

The Houthis have been targeting vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since November 2023 in attacks they say are in solidarity with Palestinians during the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. On Friday, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Saree claimed responsibility for attacks on four vessels, including a "direct hit" on the Delonix tanker in the Red Sea after an operation involving a number of ballistic missiles.

However, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said five missiles were fired on Friday in "close proximity" to this vessel, which it said reported no damage. The Delonix was located around 277 kilometres northwest of the Houthi-controlled port of Hodeidah when it was attacked, according to UKMTO, which is run by Britain's Royal Navy. The Houthis also claimed attacks on the Waler oil tanker and Johannes Maersk container ship in the Mediterranean Sea and the Ioannis bulk carrier in the Red Sea.

At least 30 killed in Kenya anti-government protests: HRW

AFP
Nairobi

At least 30 people died in protests in Kenya this week sparked by a government drive to substantially raise taxes in the East African country, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said yesterday.

"Kenyan security forces shot directly into crowds of protesters on (Tuesday) June 25, 2024, including protesters who were fleeing," the NGO said in a statement.

"Although there is no confirmation on the exact number of people killed in Nairobi and other towns, Human Rights Watch found that at least 30 people had been killed on that day based on witness accounts, publicly available information, hospital and mortuary records in Nairobi as well as witness accounts," the statement said.

"Shooting directly into crowds without justification, including as protesters try to flee, is completely unacceptable under Kenyan and international law," said Otsieno Namwaya, associate Africa director at Human Rights Watch.

"The Kenyan authorities need to make clear to their forces that

they should be protecting peaceful protesters and that impunity for police violence can no longer be tolerated," Namwaya added.

The largely peaceful rallies turned violent on Tuesday when lawmakers passed the deeply unpopular tax increases following pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

After the announcement of the vote, crowds stormed the parliament complex and a fire broke out in clashes unprecedented in the history of the country since its independence from Britain in 1963.

President William Ruto's administration ultimately withdrew the bill.

The state-funded Kenya National Commission on Human Rights said it had recorded 22 deaths and 300 injured victims, adding it would open an investigation.

"Eight military officers came out and just opened fire on people. They killed several people, including those who were not part of the protests," HRW quoted a rights activist in Nairobi as saying.

"Kenya's international partners should continue to actively monitor the situation...and further urge Kenyan authorities to speedily but credibly and transparently

investigate abuses by the security forces," the rights watchdog said.

Ruto had already rolled back some tax measures after the protests began, prompting the treasury to warn of a gaping budget shortfall of 200bn shillings (\$1.6bn).

The cash-strapped government had said previously that the increases were necessary to service Kenya's massive debt of some 10tn shillings (\$78bn), equal to roughly 70% of GDP.

The Washington-based IMF has urged the country to implement fiscal reforms in order to access crucial funding from the international lender.

"The bill was expected to raise an additional \$2.3bn in the next fiscal year, in part to meet IMF requirements to increase revenues," HRW said.

"Widespread outrage should be a wake-up call to the Kenyan government and the IMF that they cannot sacrifice rights in the name of economic recovery," Namwaya said.

"Economic sustainability can only be achieved by building a new social contract that raises revenues fairly, manages them responsibly, and funds services and programmes that protect everyone's rights."



Incumbent Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani speaks to reporters after having cast his vote at a polling station in Nouakchott, yesterday.

Mauritanians vote as President Ghazouani seeks re-election

Reuters
Nouakchott

Mauritanians voted yesterday in a presidential election that incumbent Mohamed Ould Ghazouani is widely expected to win with a pledge to boost investment in the West African country as it prepares to start producing natural gas.

Ghazouani, 67, a former top soldier, has promised investor-friendly policies to spur a commodities boom in the country of 5 mn people, many of whom live in poverty despite its fossil fuel and minerals wealth.

"The last word belongs to the Mauritanian voters. I commit myself to respecting their choice," Ghazouani said after voting in the capital.

Polls opened at 0700 GMT. Voting is expected to end at 1900 GMT, and provisional results are expected from today.

Elected for a first term in 2019, Ghazouani is facing a field of six opponents, among them anti-slavery activist Biram Dah Abeid, who came second in 2019 with over 18% of the vote.

Other challengers include lawyer Id Mohameden M'Bareck, economist Mohamed Lemine El Mourtaji El Wafi, and Hamadi Sidi El Mokhtar of the Tewasoul party. Casting his ballot soon after polls opened in the capital Nouakchott, 39-year-old geographer Mohamed Cheikh Hadrami said he had voted for a candidate "who will be able to reconcile Mauritanians." He declined to say who he had voted



A voter casts his ballot at a voting station in Nouakchott, yesterday.

for. Some 2mn people were registered to vote, with major election issues including fighting corruption and creating jobs for the young. If re-elected, Ghazouani has promised a natural gas-fired power plant from the Greater Tortue Ahmeyin offshore gas project, which is on track to start production by the end of the year. He has also pledged to invest in renewable energy and expand gold, uranium, and iron-ore mining.

Ghazouani has presided over a period of relative stability since 2019, as Mauritania's Sahel neighbours, including Mali, struggle with insurgencies that have led to military coups.

Mauritania has not recorded a militant attack on its soil in recent years and Ghazouani, who currently chairs the African Union, has promised to manage militant threats.

Prominent activist Abeid is challenging Ghazouani on his human rights record and the marginalisation of Mauritania's Black African population, while El Mokhtar has a following

among conservative and religious voters. "President Ghazouani will likely win the vote in the first round," said Mucahid Durmaz, senior West Africa analyst at risk intelligence company Verisk Maplecroft.

"The president's re-election bid has been boosted by the ruling party's landslide victory in legislative elections last year," he added.

If no candidate receives more than 50% of the vote, the election will go to a second round.

One opposition supporter in Nouakchott, who spoke on condition of anonymity, thought Ghazouani might struggle to win outright "if the votes are conducted transparently".

In the last election, some opposition candidates questioned the credibility of the vote, sparking some small-scale protests.

"Everything indicates that people want change. I will have no problem recognising the results of a transparent election, but in case of fraud we'll not hesitate to call it a rigged election," El Mokhtar said after voting.

14 killed in Nigeria after truck driver lapse

Fourteen people were killed when a truck ploughed into Muslim worshippers outside the northern Nigerian city of Kano, Nigeria's road safety agency said, AFP reported from Kano. The goods-laden truck lost control and ran over worshippers leaving a mosque shortly after observing Friday prayers in Imawa village, 30km outside Kano, the Federal Road Safety Commission said in a statement late Friday. The truck "lost control and collided with pedestrians who had just concluded Friday prayers," the statement said. "This unfortunate collision resulted in the tragic loss of 14 lives and left several others injured," it added. Accidents are common on Nigeria's poorly maintained roads due largely to speeding and disregard for traffic rules.

Togo govt tightens Covid controls after pilgrimage deaths

AFP
Lome

Togo has become the second West African country to implement Covid screening tests and face masks for pilgrims returning from the annual Haj pilgrimage in Makkah. Senegal became the first country in the region to implement voluntary tests, suspecting that a number of the some 1,300 deaths – according to a Saudi tally – are down to a respiratory syndrome ailment such as Covid-19. A Togolese government statement on Friday said Haj pilgrims would have to undergo compulsory Covid tests and "limit contacts, wear masks, wash regularly and

avoid large gatherings" for 10 days after their return. Saudi Arabia's official SPA news agency reported 1,301 deaths at the annual pilgrimage, attended by some 1.8mn faithful from all over the world, where temperatures climbed as high as 51.8 degrees Celsius.

More than 80% of pilgrims attending mainly outdoor rituals were "unauthorised" and walked long distances in direct sunlight, according to SPA.

About 18% of Togo's 8mn population is Muslim. This year, some 2,500 Togolese went to Saudi Arabia for the Haj.

They left in June and are returning between June 29 and July 3 on special flights chartered by the government of this coastal nation adjoining Ghana.

M23 rebels seize key town in east DR Congo: official

AFP
Kanyabayonga

The Rwandan-backed M23 have seized a strategic town in the Democratic Republic of Congo's volatile east, an official said yesterday, as surrounding areas also fell into the hands of the rebels.

The town of Kanyabayonga lies on the northern front of the conflict in the North Kivu province, which has been rocked by violence since 2021 when the M23 (March 23 Movement) resumed its armed campaign in the region.

The town is home to more than 60,000 people and tens of thousands of people have fled there in recent months, driven from their homes by the advance of the rebels.

"Kanyabayonga has been in the hands of the M23 since Friday evening," the local administrative official said under condition of anonymity.

The town is considered a pathway to Butembo and Beni in the north, strongholds of the Nande tribe and major commercial centres.

The town is in the Lubero territory, the fourth territory in the North Kivu province that the group has entered after Rutshuru, Nyiragongo and Masisi.

The administrative official said that

the population in Kanyabayonga "no longer have anywhere to go, it is total desolation, the population is tired".

"We are seeing an influx of displaced people from Miriki, Kirumba and Luofu towards the North," military administrator of the Lubero territory Colonel Alain Kiwewa said. "It is a situation that worries us," he added. Other nearby towns have been seized by M23, according to officials and security sources.

The M23 have taken control of a town called Kayna some 17km north of Kanyabayonga, an administrative official said yesterday, adding that one man was killed when a shell fell on their house.

A journalist said that she had seen four dead bodies in the town, two soldiers and two civilians, although a youth leader in the town described the situation as calm "for the moment".

During a meeting yesterday the rebels told residents of Kayna that they had come to the town to keep them safe, one civil society leader said.

Kayna witnessed fighting overnight, with a youth leader saying that those who had fled to the town from Kanyabayonga "spent the night under the stars".

"All night bullets rang out," he said. "We no longer know which saint to turn to." The village of Luofu, which is situated some 18 kilometres from Kanya-

bayonga, has also come under control of the rebels. "Luofu since 9am has come under the control of the M23," a security source who wished to remain anonymous told AFP over the telephone, adding that there are more than 5,000 households there.

"We are seeing an influx of displaced people from Miriki, Kirumba and Luofu towards the North"

In Kirumba, some 25km from Kanyabayonga, the population is in a "state of panic", one civil society leader said on condition of anonymity.

"We can't move anymore, where will we go? We don't know where to go," he said.

DR Congo's mineral-rich east has been the scene of violence for 30 years by armed groups, both local and foreign-based, going back to regional wars of the 1990s.

Rwanda denies that it backs the M23. The UN Joint Human Rights Office said in its monthly report on Friday that fighting in the area was causing many civilians to be displaced.

"Humanitarian organisations providing support to the displaced have suspended their operations for security reasons," it said.

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- ✔ Warehouse for rent in Industrial area
- ✔ Warehouse 600 Sqm/1200 Sqm
- ✔ Municipality Approved
- ✔ Civil Defence Approved
- ✔ Secure Boundary Wall
- ✔ 24/7 Security

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Australian diplomat says adding Aukus partners 'complicated'

Reuters
Washington

Adding partners to the Aukus defence project would be "complicated", a senior Australian diplomat said on Friday, saying that he did not believe the US Congress is open to expanding the pact involving Australia, the US and Britain.

Aukus was formed in 2021 to counter-balance China's growing power.

A first "pillar" involves co-operation

between the three partners to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines, but they have raised the possibility of other countries joining a second pillar for the development of other high-tech weaponry.

Paul Myler, deputy head of mission at Australia's embassy in Washington, has pointed out that it was an "almost inconceivable" achievement that after four decades of effort to reform United States export control restrictions, the partners are now on the verge of creating an envi-

ronment for easier collaboration and co-development.

"Adding additional partners to that process is complicated," he told an event hosted by the Atlantic Council think tank in Washington.

Myler noted that the three Aukus partners had committed to talk to Japan about what might be possible in terms of collaboration, and Japan had shown the political will to field defence capabilities in a timely fashion.

"So...there's a fundamental alignment

there," he said. "But I think I need to be really clear: My shorthand for this is not Japan as being invited into Aukus. Aukus is reaching out to Japan, to find some collaboration that we can do out there."

"I don't think Congress would consider it (Aukus) open for expansion, but Aukus partners can certainly reach out and do collaboration out there," he said.

Aukus still has to overcome hurdles from strict US restrictions on sharing technology, and Canberra and London worry it could get bogged down if new

members are added too quickly.

There has been some hesitation about involving Japan, with officials and experts highlighting its cyber and information security vulnerabilities.

At the end of April, the US State Department unveiled a plan to reduce licensing requirements for transferring military gear and sensitive technology among Aukus partners.

It said on April 19 it expects to finalise trade exemptions for Aukus in the next 120 days.

Mongolia ruling party wins reduced majority in vote

AFP
Ulaanbaatar

Mongolia's ruling party has emerged from this week's polls with its parliamentary majority significantly diminished, local media said, after a campaign dominated by graft fears and the state of the economy.

Prime Minister Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene declared victory early yesterday morning in the previous day's polls, in which millions of Mongolians turned out to elect 126 members of the State Great Khural, the country's unicameral parliament.

Local media outlet Ikon, collating figures provided by the General Election Commission, reported that the ruling Mongolian People's Party (MPP) had won 68 seats, giving it a majority of four.

The main opposition Democratic Party won 42, Ikon reported, while the minor anti-corruption HUN party won eight.

Smaller parties won eight seats between them. The head of the Electoral Commission said yesterday afternoon that there remained some votes to be counted by hand to verify results collated by machines.

"Only six to seven polling stations are remaining, but the hand counting matches the machines 100%," he told a news conference in the capital Ulaanbaatar. "These polling stations will be finished very soon."

The results - the first under a new electoral system in which Mongolians vote for both proportional lists and individuals representing large districts - mean the MPP will govern with a greatly reduced majority.

The new parliament will see the MPP hold 54% of the seats, compared to around 80% in 2020. "This election result definitely represents a rebuke to MPP and the entirety of its leadership," Bayarlkhagva Munkhnaran, an analyst and former official with the National Security Council of Mongolia, told AFP.

Winning 68 seats is "barely a face-saver and any

subsequent government will be a weak but much more democratic one", he said. "The biggest winners are Mongolian people who resolutely hit the polling stations and confirmed their unequivocal support for a democratic path."

Analysts had expected the MPP to retain the majority it has enjoyed since 2016 and govern for another four years.

They say the party can credit much of its success to a boom in coal mining that fuelled double-digit growth and dramatically improved standards of living, as well as to a formidable party machine.

However, the campaign was dominated by deep public frustration over endemic corruption, as well as the high cost of living.

There is also a widespread belief that the proceeds of the coal-mining boom are being hoarded by a wealthy elite - a view that has sparked frequent protests.

On the streets of Ulaanbaatar, 25-year-old Myagmariin Dulguaun, a tattooed bartender, told AFP that he had taken part in those protests and was "not happy at all" with the election result.

"I didn't expect the MPP to win, everyone around me was against them," he said. "We need political reform. We need to do more protests."

Another key issue was the lack of opportunities for young people, who make up almost two-thirds of the population.

Many feel unrepresented by Mongolia's politicians, which has fuelled a rise in minor, liberal parties that directly target urban youth.

First-time voter Oyuntsetseg Khaliun, 19, told AFP she had supported the Civil Will-Green Party, which won four seats.

"The MPP was in power when I was a child, and still they are here," she said. "Life hasn't changed, look at the street."

She explained she often had to wait an hour for a bus in the winter, where temperatures in Mongolia's capital can plunge to as low as -30°C Celsius (-22°F Fahrenheit).

"We need to change the people in power to get rid of corruption."

Assessment finds Borneo elephant is endangered

The first assessment of the pint-sized Bornean elephant by a global conservation authority has concluded that the animal is endangered, with only an estimated 1,000 left in the wild.

The finding by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), known for its "Red List" of endangered wildlife, is the first time the elephant has been assessed as a distinct subspecies.

"The population has diminished over the past 75 years, initially due to extensive logging of Borneo's forests destroying the majority of the Bornean elephants' habitat," the IUCN said in an update to its Red List on Thursday.

"As the human population has rapidly expanded in (Malaysia's) Sabah, elephants are entering human-dominated landscapes more often in search of food, where they may cause damage to crops and face retribution killing," the group added.

It warned that ongoing habitat destruction, particularly linked to palm oil cultivation, as well as timber plantations and mining, further threatens the species.

And it singled out the planned Pan Borneo Highway as risking the future of the smallest Asian elephant species.

Standing between around eight and 10 feet tall, genetic evidence shows Borneo elephants diverged from their cousins in mainland Asia and Sumatra some 300,000 years ago, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) conservation group.

Sometimes called Borneo pygmy elephants, the species has developed proportionally larger ears, longer tails and straighter tusks than other Asian elephants.

The island territory of Borneo is shared between Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia, though the elephant is thought to roam primarily in Sabah and sometimes Indonesia's East Kalimantan. - AFP



This handout photo taken and released by the Sabah Wildlife Department on January 29, 2013 shows a baby elephant staying close to a dead Borneo pygmy elephant in the Gunung Rara Forest Reserve, some 130km from Tawau in Malaysia's Sabah state. - AFP

China urges Taiwanese to visit 'without worry'

AFP/Reuters
Beijing

China has urged Taiwanese to visit the mainland "without the slightest worry", condemning the island authorities' decision to raise their travel alert level after Beijing threats targeting independence advocates.

Last week, Beijing published judicial guidelines on criminal punishments for supporters of Taiwanese independence, including the death penalty for "particularly serious" cases involving "diehard" advocates.

In response, Taiwan on Thursday urged the public to avoid "unnecessary travel" to mainland China and Hong Kong.

It also raised its travel warning for China to the second-highest "orange" level.

However, Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for a Chinese body in charge of Taiwan affairs, said in a statement late on Friday that the new judicial directives "are aimed solely at the very small number of supporters of 'Taiwan independence', who are engaged in malicious acts and utterances".



This picture taken on Friday shows Taiwan's President Lai (third right) listening to a military official during an inspection of new conscripts at a military base in Taichung. - AFP

Taiwan has ignored the facts and is trying to intimidate its own people for political means, which China is strongly opposed to, the statement said.

"The vast majority of Taiwan compatriots involved in cross-strait exchanges and co-operation do not need to have the slightest worry when they come to or leave mainland China," she said.

"They can arrive in high spirits and leave fully satisfied with their stay," she added.

Mainland China and Taiwan split following the Chinese civil



Tenggerese are seen ahead of the Yadnya Kasada festival at the Sea of Sands in Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia. - Reuters

Indonesia's Tenggerese pray for rain as climate change threatens crops

By Willy Kurniawan and Prasto Wardoyo
Reuters

The ancient thanksgiving rituals of the Kasada have been part of the lives of Indonesia's Tenggerese people for centuries.

Today, the increasingly unpredictable weather has made seeking divine blessings even more vital for this farming Hindu community.

The Tenggerese live in scores of villages in a national park on Mount Bromo, one of several active volcanoes in Indonesia.

The park, popular with tourists, is located near the East Java city of Probolinggo, some 800km (500 miles) south of Jakarta.

The community have held the Kasada festival since the 13th century Majapahit Empire to express their devotion and gratitude to their ancestors and gods.

Carrying items that include vegetables, fruits as well as goats and other livestock, thousands of Tenggerese trek to the top of

2,329m (7641') Mount Bromo, ending their ritual by throwing these offerings into the volcano's crater.

This year, the festival took place on June 21-22 and many devotees said they hoped it would help improve their livelihood.

"We pray for bountiful land for the year ahead, for the plants to grow healthy," said Asih, a 64-year-old farmer in Ngadirejo village near Mount Bromo, who like many Indonesians goes by only one name.

Asih said she used to be able to harvest her cabbage farm three times a year, but due to the scarce rains, she can now only manage one harvest.

"When there are no more rains, we cannot grow another cycle of crop," Asih said.

"Now they are parched like this," she said, pointing to the withered vegetables. "Once they are dried out, the roots will not grow anymore."

Last year, about two-thirds of Indonesia - including all of Java - experienced the most severe dry

season since 2019 due to the El Nino weather phenomenon lasting longer than usual and causing drought that hurt crops and worsened forest fires.

This year, meteorologists expect more rain, but many farmers are still struggling.

Farmers in Mount Bromo rely on rain and rain-fed lakes for irrigation, but the drier weather has forced Irawan Karyoto, 56, to plant less lucrative spring onions instead of potatoes in his two-hectare (five-acre) plot.

Both Asih and Irawan were part of the procession of Tenggerese that offered prayers at the temple at the base of the volcano.

Asih also brought her five-year-old granddaughter.

Clutching their offerings, the worshippers walked across sand dunes to climb to the volcano's crater.

"To respond to what the Almighty has conveyed through nature, the people must adapt and they should not forget to pray," said Suyitno, a Tenggerese spiritual leader.

A second volcano in Indonesia erupts twice in a day

Mount Lewotobi Laki-Laki in eastern Indonesia erupted twice yesterday, volcanology authorities said, sending thick, dark clouds into the air.

The first eruption took place at 11.04am local time (0304 GMT) and lasted nearly 11 minutes, according to a statement from the Indonesian volcanology agency.

The second was at 2.41pm and lasted a little over 10 minutes, spewing volcanic material 900m above the crater.

"Residents and visitors around Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki are prohibited from conducting any activity within the three-kilometre radius from the centre of eruption," the agency said.

The mountain, located on the popular tourist destination of Flores island, had several major eruptions in January, prompting authorities at the time to raise the alert status to the highest level and evacuate at least 2,000 residents.

The volcano is currently at the second-highest alert level.

On Friday Mount Ibu, located on the island of Halmahera in North Maluku province, also erupted twice, sending a hot cloud of ash as high as 7km (4.3 miles) into the sky. No damage or casualties were immediately reported. - AFP

fabricated excuses to deceive the people on the island" and "incite confrontation and opposition", Zhu said in her statement.

Many Taiwanese travel to mainland China to work, study or do business.

China has vowed to pursue people it views as Taiwan separatists wherever they may be, though Chinese courts have no jurisdiction in Taiwan and it is not clear how China could seek to enforce any legal judgments outside its borders.

China has not hidden its dislike of Taiwan President Lai, staging two days of war games after he took office last month and regularly sending fighter jets and warships to operate around Taiwan.

Lai has repeatedly offered talks with China but been rebuffed. He rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims and says only Taiwan's people can decide their future.

China says any move by Taiwan to declare formal independence would be grounds to attack the island.

The government in Taipei says Taiwan is already an independent country, the Republic of China, and that it does not plan to change that.

"The DPP authorities have



King Charles poses for a picture while wearing his Field Marshal No 1 Full Ceremonial Frock Coat with medals, sword and decorations, in this undated handout picture issued yesterday. - Reuters

Portrait of King Charles unveiled for Britain's Armed Forces Day

A new photographic portrait of King Charles wearing military uniform was released yesterday to mark Britain's Armed Forces Day.

The photograph shows the king wearing his Field Marshal No 1 Full Ceremonial Frock Coat with medals, sword and decorations.

The king, who is commander-in-chief of the armed services, returned to public-facing engagements early last month after being diagnosed with cancer in February.

The release of the photograph coincided with a video message to members of the armed services from Queen Camilla.

She called them "a source of inspiration, reassurance and pride". - Reuters

Nepal landslides kill at least nine

At least nine people, including three children, were killed after heavy monsoon rains in west Nepal triggered landslides, an official said yesterday.

Five members of a family were sleeping when their house was washed away by a landslide in Malika village in Gulmi district, about 250km (156 miles) west of Kathmandu, according to Dizan Bhattarai, a spokesman for the National Disaster Rescue and Reduction Management Authority.

"Bodies of all five have been recovered," Bhattarai told Reuters, adding that the family included two children.

In neighbouring Syangja district, one woman and her three year old daughter died in a landslide that swept away their house, while in Baglung district, which borders Gulmi, two people were killed in another landslide.

At least 35 people across Nepal have died in landslides, floods and lightning strikes since mid-June when annual monsoon rains started. Rains normally continue until mid-September. - Reuters

Opposition asks Modi to look into Foxconn hiring practices

Reuters
New Delhi

India's opposition Congress has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to question Foxconn about its hiring practices after Reuters reported that the Apple supplier rejects married women from iPhone assembly jobs in the country.

The government has sought a detailed report from the state of Tamil Nadu, site of a major iPhone factory where Reuters uncovered Foxconn's hiring practices.

The story has sparked debates on TV channels, newspaper editorials and calls from women groups, including within Modi's party, to investigate the matter.

Congress lawmaker Karti P Chidambaram wrote in a letter to Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya that Foxconn receives "substantial incentives" from the federal government and the company should be asked to explain its practices to ensure it complies with "Indian laws and values".

"While foreign investment is crucial, it should not come at the cost of disregarding our cultural values," Chidambaram wrote in the letter, posted on X.

Apple, Taiwan-based Foxconn and the ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the Congress letter.

The Reuters investigation found Foxconn has systematically excluded married women from jobs at its main India iPhone plant on the grounds they have more family responsibilities than their unmarried counterparts.

Foxconn hiring agents and HR sources cited family duties, pregnancy and higher absenteeism as reasons for not hiring married women.

Responding to the investigation, published on Tuesday, Apple and Foxconn acknowledged to Reuters lapses in hiring practices in 2022 and said they had worked to address the issues.

All the discriminatory practices documented by Reuters at the Sriperumbudur plant, however, took place in 2023 and 2024.

Foxconn said it "vigorously refutes allegations of employment discrimination based on marital status, gender, religion or any other form".



This file picture taken last year shows two unidentified women wearing backpacks stand outside a security office at the main entrance to Foxconn's factory in Sriperumbudur, near Chennai, where workers assemble iPhones for Apple. - Reuters

Apple said all its suppliers, including Foxconn, hire married women and "when concerns about hiring practices were first raised in 2022 we immediately took action and worked with our supplier to conduct monthly audits to identify issues and ensure that our high standards are upheld".

The Foxconn positions in India offer food and accommodation and a monthly paycheck of about \$200.

In China, six online job ads reviewed by Reuters showed workers engaged in iPhone assembly at Foxconn's Zhengzhou plant can earn \$400-800 a month.

The ads did not mention marital status or gender requirements. "While they don't discriminate in China, can they do whatever in India?" Vasuki Umanath of the Communist Party Of India (Marxist), another Modi opponent, told Reuters on Thursday. "Labour unions, women's welfare organisations and democratic forces should raise their voice against this discrimination."

The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation par-

ty said this week that action must be taken against what it said were "exploitative and discriminatory (hiring) practice".

On Friday the women's wing of Modi's ruling party urged the National Commission for Women to launch an investigation.

"It is imperative to conduct a thorough investigation into these claims and ensure that the rights of women employees at Foxconn Hon Hai are protected," Vanathi Srinivasan, national president of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s women's wing wrote in a letter to the Commission, posted on X.

In response to the letter, chairperson of the National Commission for Women, Rekha Sharma, wrote on X: "We are doing the needful."

She did not elaborate. The National Commission for Women has the authority to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for women under the Constitution and other legislation, its website says.

It also has powers of a civil court to summon any person.

In the letter, Srinivasan referred

to the reported hiring practices of Foxconn as a "grave issue".

"It has come to our notice through various media sources that Foxconn has adopted discriminatory practices against married women," Srinivasan wrote.

The letter also stated that it had come to the knowledge of the BJP's women's wing that women employees at Foxconn are not even allowed to use the washroom during working hours, and those who stay in hostels are not permitted to take leave.

Srinivasan's letter did not elaborate on these points. Earlier this week, Modi's labour ministry said it has requested a report from the Labour Department of Tamil Nadu on the matter.

The hiring curbs at the iPhone plant show the challenge for both Apple and Foxconn in upholding their stated global standards of inclusion while expanding their supply chains in this fast-growing but largely conservative country.

Modi has previously called for removal of societal impediments that prevent many Indian women from getting jobs.

UK's Reform party drops three election candidates

AFP
London

Britain's hard-right Reform UK party, led by Brexit minister Nigel Farage, has withdrawn support from three candidates for next week's general election over allegations they made offensive comments, local media reported yesterday.

Farage's anti-immigration group - tipped to take support away from Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives in Thursday's vote - has been embroiled in a racism scandal as the election campaign enters its final days.

Reform no longer endorses Edward Oakenfull, Robert Lomas, and Leslie Lilley, but they will still appear on the ballot paper as Reform candidates since it is too late

for them to be removed, said BBC and Sky News.

Oakenfull, standing in Derbyshire in the East Midlands area of England, is accused of having posted derogatory comments about the IQ of sub-Saharan Africans on social media last year.

Lomas, a candidate in Barnsley in north England, reportedly made offensive comments about black people.

Lilley, seeking to become an MP in Southend in southeast England, allegedly described irregular migrants arriving in Britain on small boats as "scum", adding: "I hope your family get robbed, beaten or attacked."

Appearing on BBC Television on Friday night, Farage disowned the trio, saying: "I want nothing to do with them."

The development came after

Sunak, Britain's first leader of colour, denounced a racist slur used against him by a campaigner for Reform.

An undercover investigation by Channel 4 filmed campaigners making racist, homophobic and offensive comments in Clacton-on-Sea, eastern England, where Farage is hoping to be elected as an MP.

The supporter also made remarks about Muslims and mosques.

Farage suggested that the comments were a "complete and total set-up", claiming without evidence that the man may have been paid to act in the video, possibly by opponents threatened by the party's popularity.

He has complained to Britain's elections watchdog.

Channel 4 denied Farage's

claims of fabrication.

In its report, another campaigner suggested members of the gender minority community are paedophiles.

Reform has come under growing scrutiny in recent weeks as it climbs up the polls.

According to the anti-racism organisation Hope Not Hate, Reform has withdrawn at least 166 candidates since the beginning of the year, many of whom have made racist or offensive remarks.

Farage, seeking to become an MP at the eighth attempt, has tried to blame a vetting company for not properly scrutinising would-be candidates.

The Tories and the main opposition Labour party, which is expected to win the election, accuse Farage of failing to tackle racism in his party.



Farage has suggested that the comments were a 'complete and total set-up'.

A new poll published by Labour-supporting *Mirror* newspaper on Friday put Sunak's Conservatives on 18%, with Reform on

21%, both behind Labour on 38%. Support for Reform could split the right-wing vote, handing Labour a landslide, analysts say.

Dua Lipa electrifies Glastonbury in glittery Pyramid stage debut



A festivalgoer is seen next to the West Holts Stage on the fourth day of the Glastonbury festival at Worthy Farm in the village of Pilton in Somerset, southwest England. The festival takes place from June 26-30. - AFP

Reuters/AFP
Glastonbury, England

Pop star Dua Lipa lit up a chilly Glastonbury evening on Friday, transforming its famous Pyramid stage venue into an open-air nightclub where thousands grooved to hits such as *Levitating* and *Houdini*.

Headlining the iconic music festival in southern England for the first time, Lipa delivered a glittery, energetic performance featuring firework displays, five different outfits and an ensemble of break dancers and musicians.

The 28-year-old British-Albanian singer told the crowd how it had been a dream for her to sing on Glastonbury's Pyramid stage, where artists such as Paul McCartney, Beyoncé and David Bowie have performed over the festival's more than 50-year history.

"Little me would just be so beside herself right now," she said. "Honestly I couldn't believe it. I feel so grateful."

Born in London to Kosovo Albanian parents, Lipa began covering songs by other pop artists as a teenager and uploading them to YouTube, which led to a

record deal in 2014 when she was 18.

In 2019, she won two Grammy Awards including Best New Artist.

The sea of humanity at Glastonbury erupted into dance during hits including *New Rules* and *Love Again*.

"We're obsessed. Dua was on another level," said Sophie Page, 30, a fan from London who was in the crowd. "I knew she was going to be good but the energy she brought...her emotion really came through."

Lipa also brought Tame Impala's Kevin Parker - a collaborator on her latest album - on stage and the duo performed *The Less I Know the Better* together.

She joined Coldplay, R&B singer SZA and country music singer Shania Twain as headliners - a grouping with much more female talent after criticism over last year's male-dominated line-up.

Earlier on Friday, Seventeen made history as the first K-Pop group to appear at Glastonbury.

Grammy and Brit winner SZA, whose real name is Solana Imani Rowe, headlines tonight.

It will be the first time that the R&B singer, who is known for the songs *Snooze* and *Ghost In The Machine*, will

perform at the festival.

Coldplay appeared yesterday, becoming the first act to headline Glastonbury five times.

Alongside around 3,000 performances set to take place across some 80 stages, the festival also features night-long parties, art installations and lively parades.

The standard ticket for the event this year was priced at £355 (\$448).

Dressed in a multicoloured outfit, 38-year-old Will Hall said the festival "gives an energy and you take that energy and then give that energy back".

"I walk around here with confetti cannons and bubble guns and all these wonderful things just to create smiles and positive energy," said Hall, who works for Britain's health service.

Clarissa Hall, 29, said she felt "super lucky" to be at the festival, which is also where she chose to announce her pregnancy.

"This was such a perfect opportunity to announce it," she added.

Less than a week before Britain's general election, the festival, which has become known for political activism, is urging attendees to vote.

Screens at the Pyramid stage showing Dua Lipa were interspersed with reminders to "VOTE VOTE VOTE", with another banner reading "vote out to help out" - echoing Conservative Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's "eat out to help out" slogan to boost hospitality business during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

One act was openly political on Thursday, closing by saying "let's vote those Tories out!"

Dozens of Palestinian flags were hung across the sprawling festival site with one banner calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Glasto, as the festival is popularly known, was inspired by Britain's 1960s counter culture and hippie movements, with its first iteration as the Pilton Festival in 1970.

Glam rockers T.Rex were the first headliners.

For the first time, the festival this year has a dedicated South Asian stage called "Arrivals".

Artists gracing the stage include Manara, Anish Kumar and DJ Ritu, famed for her involvement in the UK's underground South Asian music scene in the 1990s.



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GULF TIMES

Global growth stabilising albeit at weaker pace

Global growth is projected to stabilise at 2.6% this year, holding steady for the first time in three years despite flaring geopolitical tensions and high interest rates.

It is then expected to edge up to 2.7% in 2025-26 amid modest growth in trade and investment.

On the other hand, global inflation is projected to moderate – but at a slower clip than previously assumed, averaging 3.5% this year, according to the World Bank.

Given continued inflationary pressures, central banks in both advanced economies and emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) will likely remain cautious in easing monetary policy.

Average benchmark policy interest rates over the next few years are expected to remain about double the 2000-19 average, the World Bank said in a recent report.

Despite an improvement in near-term growth prospects, the outlook remains subdued by historical standards in advanced economies and EMDEs alike. Global growth over the forecast horizon is expected to be nearly half a percentage point below its 2010-19 average pace. In 2024-25, growth is set to underperform its 2010s average in nearly 60% of economies, representing more than 80% of global population and world output.

MDE growth is forecast to moderate from 4.2% in 2023 to 4% in both 2024 and 2025. Prospects remain especially lacklustre in many vulnerable economies – over half of economies facing fragile- and conflict-affected situations will still be poorer by the end of this year than on the eve of the pandemic.

In 2024-25, growth is set to underperform its 2010s average in nearly 60% of economies, representing more than 80% of global population and world output

Escalating geopolitical tensions could lead to volatile commodity prices, while further trade fragmentation risks additional disruptions to trade networks.

Already, trade policy uncertainty has reached exceptionally high levels compared to other years that have featured major elections around the world since 2000.

The persistence of inflation could lead to delays in monetary easing. A higher-for-longer path for interest rates would dampen global activity. Some major economies could grow more slowly than currently anticipated due to a range of domestic challenges.

Additional natural disasters related to climate change could also hinder activity, the World Bank says. On the upside, global inflation could moderate more quickly than assumed in the baseline, enabling faster monetary policy easing.

In addition, growth in the United States could be stronger than expected.

Against this backdrop, decisive global and national policy efforts are needed to meet pressing challenges.

At the global level, priorities include safeguarding trade, supporting green and digital transitions, delivering debt relief, and improving food security.

At the national level, persistent inflation risks underscore the need for EMDE monetary policies to remain focused on price stability. High debt and elevated debt-servicing costs will require policy makers to seek ways to sustainably boost investment while ensuring fiscal sustainability.

To meet development goals and bolster long-term growth, structural policies are needed to raise productivity growth, improve the efficiency of public investment, build human capital, and close gender gaps in the labour market.

Global cooperation is needed to safeguard trade, support green and digital transitions, deliver debt relief, and improve food security.

Comprehensive fiscal reforms are essential to address ongoing fiscal challenges, particularly in small states, including those arising from heightened exposure to external shocks.

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The art of Parliamentarism Mastering the blame game



International Day of Parliamentarism

How South Korea broke the development mould

By Keun Lee
Seoul

South Korea is one of just a few countries ever to transform itself from a low- to high-income economy, and the only country to go from a recipient of aid from the OECD's Development Assistance Committee to a DAC donor. It achieved this not by blindly following a pre-designed development path, but by taking the right detours.

There is no shortage of narratives purporting to explain South Korea's development success, but most have serious flaws. For example, some scholars assert that, from the start, South Korea enjoyed important advantages, especially physical infrastructure and human capital that had been built up under Japanese colonial rule.

But most of South Korea's infrastructure was destroyed during the Korean War. Moreover, the Japanese colonial government offered Koreans only a primary education, and just 47% of Korea's children were actually enrolled. It was not until after the end of colonial rule in 1945 that primary-school enrolment surged, reaching 82% in 1949, with primary education becoming compulsory in 1950.

As many African countries can attest, beginning one's development journey after decades of colonial rule and years of civil war is hardly advantageous. South Korea did not even have any commodities to export after the war, as all the minerals on the Korean Peninsula were located in the North. And it faced severe food shortages, which left it dependent on food aid from the US throughout the 1950s and the 1960s.

When Park Chung-hee's military government seized power in 1961, it had to prioritise feeding the population over advancing industrialisation. To that end, the government instituted a dual-

price policy for grain, purchasing it from farmers at high prices and selling it to consumers for low prices.

This represented a sharp reversal of the government's approach during the 1950s, when it set food prices low in order to keep it accessible and limit inflation – an approach that reduced weakened farmers' incentive to improve productivity. The government also developed a new high-yielding rice variety, which it launched in 1972.

South Korea's military government intervened in the economy in other ways, too. In fact, though some scholars view South Korea's economic miracle as a kind of vindication of the so-called Washington Consensus, the truth is that the government took a measured approach to financial and trade liberalisation. Notably, one of Park's first acts after taking power was to nationalise commercial banks, in order to cope with the extreme scarcity of capital that resulted from low domestic savings.

The benefits of rapid financial and trade liberalization, as the Washington Consensus prescribes, have tended to be short-lived or to follow stop-and-go cycles in developing economies, because the private sector lacks the capabilities it needs to keep up. For example, in some African countries, such as Uganda, commercial and foreign banks charge very high interest rates that undermine critical investment in domestic manufacturing capabilities and encourage capital flight.

But in South Korea, banks were privatised only after the government had spent nearly two decades keeping interest rates low, thereby stimulating investment, and making sure that savings were being channelled toward boosting the manufacturing sector's capacity. This contributed to such strong income growth that, despite suppressed interest rates, the

domestic savings rate soared from 9% of GDP in the early 1960s to approximately 30% in the mid-1980s.

South Korea took a similarly judicious approach to trade liberalisation. When a country liberalises trade, local firms must be able to compete with foreign companies. If they cannot, foreign firms could establish monopolies or destroy the local industrial base unless the government implements protective measures.

In South Korea, that protection came in the form of very high tariffs on consumer goods, aimed at allowing the export industries of the future to flourish before they were subjected to excessive foreign competition. Protected domestic firms used their monopoly rents to fund investments, because government protections were conditioned on export performance, and firms were still exposed to the discipline of world export markets. Meanwhile, capital goods, which Korea had to import, were subject to very low tariffs.

Another prominent development narrative focuses on the role of institutions. Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson, and James A. Robinson argue that developing economies with extractive institutions – typical in state-capitalist systems – fail to progress, whereas those with inclusive (or democratic) institutions, like South Korea, tend to succeed.

But South Korea's development success occurred under an authoritarian state-capitalist system. Furthermore, Edward L. Glaeser and his colleagues have found that human capital has a more robust link to economic growth than the institutional variable. So, the real story seems to be that South Korean investment in human capital under the authoritarian regime spurred growth, thereby giving rise to a middle class that demanded democracy.

Finally, some scholars highlight the contrast between

Asian countries' embrace of export-led growth strategies and the inward-looking import-substitution policies that many Latin American countries maintained. But here, too, South Korea went its own way, simultaneously implementing an export-oriented growth strategy and pursuing import substitution.

The problem was that, to produce goods for export, domestic firms had to import capital and intermediate goods from abroad – an expensive proposition that contributed to South Korea's persistent trade deficits through the late 1980s. So, the government sought to replace those goods with domestically produced alternatives. South Korea's backward participation in global value chains – reflected in the ratio of foreign value-added content in exports to gross total exports – decreased between the mid-1980s and late 1990s.

Over the past several decades, South Korea has transformed itself from an authoritarian regime with a half-closed, state-led economy into a robust democracy with a very open market economy. (Today, South Korea is the only country with free-trade agreements with the US, the European Union, China, and India.) But it did not run directly toward this outcome. Instead, it went slow where it needed to and took calculated detours, which turned out to be the most efficient development path. – Project Syndicate

• Keun Lee, a former vice chair of the National Economic Advisory Council for the President of South Korea, is Distinguished Professor of Economics at Seoul National University, a fellow at CIFAR, an editor at Research Policy, and the author of Innovation-Development Detours for Latecomers: Managing Global-Local Interfaces in the De-Globalisation Era (Cambridge University Press, 2024).



IN A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN: Today, South Korea is the only country with free-trade agreements with the US, the European Union, China, and India.

French go to polls as far-right eyes historic win

AFP
Paris

Voting got underway in France's overseas territories yesterday in high-stakes snap parliamentary elections that could see the far-right party of Marine Le Pen take power in a historic first.

Residents of the tiny French archipelago of Saint Pierre and Miquelon, located off the coast of Canada, were the first to cast their ballots in the first round of the election.

France's islands in the Caribbean and the South American territory of French Guiana also voted yesterday.

Voters in the Pacific territory of New Caledonia, hit by deadly riots last month, were due to go to polling stations from 10pm Paris time before voting starts in mainland France today.

Russia's war against Ukraine is in its third year and energy and food prices

are higher as a result. Support for the anti-immigration and eurosceptic National Rally (RN) party has surged despite President Emmanuel Macron's pledges to prevent its ascent.

Most polls put the National Rally on course to win the largest number of seats in the 577-member National Assembly, parliament's lower house. But it remains unclear if the party will secure an outright majority.

A high turnout is predicted and the final opinion polls have given the RN between 35% and 37% of the vote, against 27.5-29% for the left-wing New Popular Front alliance and 20-21% for Macron's centrist camp.

If the RN obtains an absolute majority, party chief Jordan Bardella, Le Pen's 28-year-old protégé with no governing experience, could become prime minister in a tense "cohabitation" with Macron.

The shape of the new parliament will become clear after the second round of voting on July 7.

Wielding mops and buckets, several activists of the Femen feminist collective dressed as cleaners yesterday demonstrated at the Trocadero in Paris, chanting slogans against the extreme right.

Tomorrow, Macron plans to convene a government meeting to decide the next course of action, government sources told AFP.

France is heading for a year of political chaos and confusion with a hung Assembly, said Mujtaba Rahman, Europe head at Eurasia Group, a risk consultancy.

"There is no precedent in recent French politics for such an impasse," Rahman said.

Macron's decision to call snap elections after the RN's victory in European Parliament elections this month stunned friends and foes alike and sparked uncertainty in Europe's second-biggest economy.

The Paris stock exchange suffered its biggest monthly decline in two years in June, dropping by 6.4%, according to fig-

ures released on Friday.

In an editorial, French daily *Le Monde* said it was time to mobilise against the far right.

"Yielding any power to it means nothing less than taking the risk of seeing everything that has been built and conquered over more than two and a half centuries gradually being undone," it said.

Many observers have noted a spike in hate speech, intolerance and racism during the charged campaign. A video of two RN supporters verbally assaulting a black woman has gone viral in recent days.

Macron has deplored "racism or anti-Semitism".

The French president apparently hoped to catch political opponents off guard by presenting voters with a crucial choice about France's future, but observers say he might have lost his gamble.

Support for Macron's centrist camp appears to have collapsed, while left-wing parties put their bickering aside to form the New Popular Front, a nod to an

alliance founded in 1936 to combat fascism.

Analysts say Le Pen's years-long efforts to clean up the image of a party co-founded by a former Waffen SS member have paid off. The party has promised to bolster purchasing power, curb immigration and boost law and order.

"Victory is within our grasp, so let's seize this historic opportunity and get out and vote!" Le Pen wrote on X Friday.

Under Macron, France has been one of Ukraine's main Western backers since Russia invaded in 2022.

But Le Pen and Bardella have said they would scale down French support for Ukraine, by ruling out the deployment of ground troops and long-range missiles.

A defiant Macron has stood by his decision to call the elections, while warning voters that a win by the far right or hard left could spark a "civil war."

He has insisted he will serve out the remainder of his second term until 2027, no matter which party wins.

Clashes erupt as far-right AfD states aim to govern Germany

AFP
Essen

The far-right AfD declared its ambition to rise to power in Germany as its party congress kicked off yesterday with clashes between hooded demonstrators and police, just weeks after it scored record EU election results.

About 1,000 police were deployed in the western city of Essen, where demonstration organisers said 50,000 protesters marched towards the congress. The police have not yet provided figures.

"We want to govern, first in the east (of Germany), then in the west, then at federal level," Tino Chrupalla, co-president of the Alternative for Germany (AfD), told around 600 delegates of the two-day meeting which start half an hour late due to street blockades.

Police added that they had used pepper spray and batons, and eleven officers were injured.

"Several disruptive violent actions occurred in the Ruetenscheid quarter. Demonstrators, some of them hooded, attacked security forces. Several arrests were made," the police of North



Delegates are protected by riot police as they leave a hotel ahead of the party convention of the far-right Alternative for Germany in Essen, Germany, yesterday. (Reuters)

Westphalia, where Essen is located, said on X.

A top regional official had warned that "potentially violent far-left troublemakers" could be among the protesters.

In early June the Alternative for Germany (AfD) notched up its best European Union election result since its creation in 2013, winning 16% of the vote to take second place.

Chrupalla praised party progress at a local level and its strong European Union election result.

It was behind the main conservative CDU-CSU opposition bloc but ahead of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD), which is in power at the head of a troubled three-party coalition.

The AfD congress comes ahead of three key elections in September in states that once formed part of communist East Germany, and where the AfD has been topping opinion polls.

"We are here and we will stay," said party co-president Alice Weidel, opening the congress and drawing sustained applause.

Both Weidel and Chrupalla were re-elected to lead the party for another two years.

"We have the right like all political parties — to hold a congress," she added.

Adding to the security forces' headache is the Euro 2024 football tournament, with the last 16 clash between hosts Germany and Denmark taking place yesterday in Dortmund — not far from Essen.

Buoyed by a surge in immigration and a weak performance by Europe's top economy, the party hit as high as 22% in opinion polls in January.

However their support faltered amid a welter of scandals that mainly implicated their top EU election candidate, Maximilian Krah.

"I believe that the party has learnt a lot in recent months and will be very careful when we put forward leading candidates in the future," Weidel told the Politico news outlet Thursday.

Krah initially faced allegations of suspicious links to Russia and China.

He then sparked widespread anger by telling an Italian newspaper that not every member of the Nazis' notorious SS was "automatically a criminal".

The comments prompted the AfD's expulsion from its far-right group, Identity and Democracy (ID), in the European Parliament, in which France's National Rally (RN) and Italy's League had been its partners.

While the AfD has sought to shift the blame for all its recent woes onto Krah, there were signs of problems even before.

The RN had already distanced itself from the AfD after reports emerged in January that the German party had discussed the expulsion of immigrants and "non-assimilated" citizens at a meeting with extremists.

The reports caused shock in Germany and triggered weeks of mass protests.

Following the EU polls, the AfD ejected Krah from the delegation it sends to Brussels but the ID group does not seem ready to re-admit them, leaving the party searching for new partners.

Russian attacks kill 10 in Ukraine

Russian strikes on a southern Ukrainian town and villages in the embattled Donetsk region killed 10 people yesterday, Kyiv said. The attacks came after months of Ukrainian forces being on the back foot militarily, with Moscow launching several offensives in recent weeks.

The head of the southern Zaporizhzhia region, Ivan Fedorov, said an attack on the town of Vilniansk killed six civilians. "Russians attacked the town of Vilniansk in Zaporizhzhia district. Preliminarily, six civilians and eight residents were wounded," Fedorov said on social media.

"A critical infrastructure facility, a shop and residential buildings were damaged," he added. Vilniansk lies 29km north-east of the city of Zaporizhzhia, the main regional city which is under Ukrainian control.

Russia occupies large swathes of the region. Moscow says it has annexed the Zaporizhzhia region, despite not controlling it fully. Russia has attacked Zaporizhzhia and nearby towns throughout its offensive but in recent weeks has concentrated its efforts mostly on the east of the country rather than the south.

Ukrainian officials also said that earlier attacks on frontline villages in the eastern Donetsk region killed four people. "In (the village of) Zarichne, Russians killed three people," Vadym Filashkin, the head of the Donetsk region, said on social media.

Orban set to take EU presidency

AFP
Budapest

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's frequent attacks against Brussels and his warm relations with Russia have left the country increasingly isolated as it takes over the bloc's rotating presidency tomorrow.

The longest-serving leader in the European Union, Orban has recently ramped up his rhetoric against what he calls the "technocratic elite of Brussels", warning "we will rack our brains on how to hurt them".

"It's unbelievable. It's like the defendant in a trial has suddenly taken over the prosecution," said his biographer, veteran Hungarian journalist Paul Lendvai.

While he warned not to "overestimate the importance" of Hungary's six-month presidency, he predicted that Orban would continue to block key issues as he did with EU aid for Ukraine while "loosening restrictions" on rule of law issues on which he has been censured by Brussels in order to unlock blocked EU funds.

"Both sides play a game but this is not a decisive game," he told AFP.

Brussels has frozen billions of euros in funds for Hungary, citing concerns over corruption and the rule of law. Both sides are also at loggerheads on other issues from migrants to Ukraine.

In stark contrast to his Euro-



HOT SEAT: Viktor Orban

pean partners, Orban openly supports former US president Donald Trump, with Budapest vowing to "make Europe great again" during its presidency.

Close to both the Chinese President Xi Jinping as well as the Kremlin, the nationalist has refused to send weapons to Kyiv.

Yet the start of his political career in the last days of communism began very differently. The radical 26-year-old law student became a household name in 1989 with a fiery speech demanding democracy and that Soviet troops go home.

The then liberal Alliance of Young Democrats party (Fidesz) he had co-founded soon became the symbol of Hungary's aspirations to escape the clutches of totalitarianism and adopt Western values.

Nowadays his party is seen more as hard-right and Orban slams the "decadence of the

West" in the face of what he calls the gender "lobby" and the influx of migrants he deems potential "terrorists".

Orban became prime minister at 35 in 1998 but suffered a humiliating and unexpected defeat at the hands of the Socialists four years later.

When he returned to power in 2010, he began remaking the Hungarian state and its institutions, with a new constitution advancing his "illiberal" brand of democracy.

After changing election rules to favour Fidesz, he was re-elected in 2014, 2018 and 2022, every time with two-third majorities.

"Over the past 14 years, Orban has aligned with Vladimir Putin's ideology that the West is in disarray" as he similarly dismantled checks and balances, historian Stefano Bottoni of the University of Florence told AFP.

"This explains Orban's position" on Russia's war in Ukraine, he said. Orban has drawn fierce criticism from Western nations for his views, accusing Nato and the EU of provoking a "world war".

"He does not understand how toxic his position is," said Bottoni, because "for many countries, the war in Ukraine is the single most important issue in the redefinition of Europe".

Even with the far right surging across the EU, Orban has manoeuvred himself into "a strategic impasse", the expert said, after Fidesz quit the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) in 2021.

Crossbow attacker killed outside Israeli embassy in Belgrade

AFP
Belgrade

A Serbian police officer killed a man who shot him in the neck with a crossbow in front of the Israeli embassy in Belgrade yesterday, in what the prime minister called a "terrorist act".

Police identified the assailant as being a "convert" to Islam, who was born in 1999 in the town of Madenovac, some 50km from Belgrade.

The attack happened around 11am last morning in the Serbian capital, when the attacker shot the officer who was on duty outside the Israeli embassy.

The wounded policeman shot the attacker "who died as a result of his injuries," said Interior Minister Ivica Dacic.

Authorities said some arrests had been made and a number of people known to the security services were suspected of being linked to the attack.

Police also said they were carrying out searches in a number of locations.

"There are several more persons that we are looking for, certainly for one who is on the territory of Serbia," President Aleksandar Vucic told reporters after visiting the wounded officer.

The attacker and his associates had been tracked by authorities before yesterday's attack but there was not enough evidence to arrest them, he added.

The officer, who underwent surgery in hospital, was in his guard booth when the attack happened.

According to authorities, the assailant had moved to live in Novi Pazar, which is a historical and political centre of the Bosniak Muslim minority in Serbia, and a centre of Islam in the country.

He said several people had been arrested for "prevention reasons"



Forensic police prepare in the secured area around the Israeli embassy in Belgrade yesterday. (AFP)

7 killed in Kyrgyz mud slides

Five children and two adults have died in mudslides in Kyrgyzstan, a mountainous Central Asian country on the front line of climate change, the government said yesterday. "Seven people died in the Nookat district" of southern Kyrgyzstan, said the Ministry of Emergency Situations, adding that five of the dead were minors born between 2008 and 2016. At least 1,300 people on holiday in the area have been evacuated since Friday evening, it added. Yesterday's tragedy comes just days after the death of a five-year-old child in a similar disaster. Central Asia, a region particularly sensitive to climate change, regularly suffers floods, earthquakes, landslides, avalanches and fires. But rising temperatures are leading to more frequent and intense droughts, natural disasters and unpredictable seasonal weather condition in Kyrgyzstan, according to the United Nations. According to local media, the ministry announced in late June an 86% increase in mudslides between March and July 2024 compared with the same period last year.

World's largest indoor 'inflatable event' opens at QNCC



InflatoCity, the world's largest indoor inflatable event at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC), spans 30,000sq m and is the perfect place to beat the summer heat. Open until July 13, InflatoCity is an indoor venue that features a food court, engaging carnival games, and much more. According to Qatar Tourism, the InflatoCity combines the best of inflatable playgrounds with the magic of a carnival and offers a mix of entertainment and dining options. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen



As weather heats up, many turn to marine activities and water sports



Marine and water sports has seen considerable participation over the past few weeks, especially among young people and families.

Local Arabic daily *Arrayah* reported that as the temperature outdoors rises, many are turning to such marine activities for recreational purposes, including fishing, water skiing, swimming and boat trips.

Many young people and families stressed that they have been keen to take their children with them on such excursions to keep them away from their mobile devices.

Ibrahim al-Mannai said that he is very keen to practice his marine hobbies and sports during the summer holidays.

He said that being out in the sea helps mitigate the high weather temperature.

Al-Mannai stressed that strictly following safety procedures and wearing the necessary safety gear are of utmost importance when practising marine sports, especially jet skiing.

He added that going out to the sea during the summer holidays is good for children, as it encourages them to adopt a more active lifestyle instead of being "glued" to their smart devices.



Rashid al-Sulaiti said that while the country has many wonderful beaches, he prefers Katara's beach due to its proximity to his house.

He said that Katara's beach has ample parking area and easily accessible for jet skis.

Khalifa al-Anzi said that while going to

the sea on boats is a very exciting activity during the summer holidays, sea-goers should follow the instructions of the coast guard for their own safety.

They should check the weather conditions, he continued, before starting any trip to sea to determine whether conditions would be suitable for sailing.



Al-Anzi strongly recommended that young people avoid reckless activities at sea, and try to enjoy their time in a responsible way.

Abdulahman al-Kubaisi said that the suitable timing for practising water sports during the summer months is between 4pm-9pm.

He said that the Qatari islands are excellent places to go to during this weather, especially given that some of them boast of facilities catering to sea goers.

Al-Kubaisi advised young people to avoid stunt driving of their jet skis, especially if they do not have enough skill and experience doing so.

