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QFZ, Samsung sign deal for 5 projects

Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ) and Samsung C&T Corporation signed a landmark strategic agreement, reaffirming their long-term partnership on a series of high-impact, sustainability-driven, and innovation-led projects within Qatar's Free Zones and the region. Under the agreement, QFZ and Samsung C&T will collaborate on five transformative projects, which include: a Competency Center in Solar Technologies, a 285MW ground solar farm, an off-grid rooftop solar energy solutions, a low-carbon bioproducts plant and a cutting-edge digital infrastructure project. **Business Page 1**

6 World Cup stadiums to host Arab Cup 2025

FIFA Arab Cup Qatar 2025 will take place across the six World Cup stadiums of Al Bayt, Lusail, Khalifa International, Ahmad Bin Ali, 974, and Education City. The tournament's opening match is scheduled for December 1, 2025, at Al Bayt Stadium, while Lusail Stadium will host the final on December 18, 2025. **Sport Page 4**

Iran's Panahi wins Cannes' top prize



Revenge thriller *It Was Just An Accident* by Iranian director Jafar Panahi, who was last at the Cannes Film Festival in person more than 20 years ago, won the Palme d'Or top prize yesterday. Panahi, who has been arrested several times for his filmmaking and was under a travel ban until recently, last attended the festival in person in 2003, when "Crimson Gold" was screened in the Un Certain Regard category. With the Palme d'Or, Panahi now has the rare honour of winning the top prize at all three major European film festivals, after nabbing Berlin's Golden Bear for *Taxi* in 2015 and the Golden Lion at Venice for *The Circle* in 2000. **Page 8**

X hit by two-hour outage; Musk to focus on business

Social media platform X was hit by a two-hour outage yesterday, prompting owner Elon Musk to say he needs to spend more time focusing on his companies. Following the X outage, he suggested that he might have been away too long. "As evidenced by the X uptime issues this week, major operational improvements need to be made," he said. "Back to spending 24/7 at work and sleeping in conference/server/factory rooms," the South African-born businessman posted on X. "I must be super focused on X/xAI and Tesla (plus Starship launch next week), as we have critical technologies rolling out."

Russia strikes Kyiv; PoWs exchanged

A massive Russian drone and missile attack on Kyiv yesterday wounded at least 15 people, even as Russia and Ukraine continued the biggest prisoner swap since the start of Moscow's invasion. Ukraine's air force said Russia launched 14 ballistic missiles and 250 attack drones overnight, adding that it downed six missiles and 245 drones. Kyiv was "the main target of the enemy attack", the air force said. Kyiv city officials reported fires and fallen debris in several parts of the Ukrainian capital. **Page 8**

Amir crowns winners Al Gharafa





His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani attended the final of the 2025 HH The Amir Cup football match between Al Rayyan and Al Gharafa, which was held at the Khalifa International Stadium last evening.

His Highness the Personal Representative of the Amir Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa al-Thani, HE Sheikh Jassim bin Khalifa al-Thani, and HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem along with a number of Sheikhs, ministers and senior officials attended the match.

The match was also attended by President of the International Olympic Committee Thomas Bach, Minister of Youth and Sports of the Syrian Arab Republic Mohammed Sameh Hamedh, a number of heads of Arab and international sports federations, members of the press and media, and a crowd of football fans.

The match ended with Al Gharafa defeating Al Rayyan 2-1.

After that, His Highness the Amir handed the Al Gharafa players the Cup and gold medals, and handed the Al Rayyan players the silver medals.

This victory marks Al Gharafa's eighth HH The Amir Cup title in their 13th final appearance. Al Rayyan suffered their 13th defeat in 19 final appearances, leaving their trophy count at six. (**QNA**) **Sport Page 1**

MoEHE launches 'Future Leaders' programme

The Training and Development Center at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has launched the 'Future Leaders' programme in collaboration with the international firm FranklinCovey.

The move is part of the ministry's broader endeavour to prepare a generation of educational leaders capable of effectively steering the national education system in the future. The programme was introduced during an orientation session the centre convened in Doha.

The event brought together a host of educators and target trainees. The programme is a strategic initiative to qualify national talents and prepare the second tier of leadership, in addition to imbuing them with leadership and administrative skills, in alignment with the comprehensive development goals pursued by Qatar, MoEHE said in a statement.

The ministry highlighted that the programme has been structured as a pilot initiative that delivers a holistic training experience rooted in globally recognised leadership practices, while remaining attuned to Qatar's cultural and educational standards.

The programme is structured around a comprehensive training approach in terms of analysis, design, application, and evaluation, offering exceptional content that fosters the notions of transformative leadership, encourages a data-based decision-making process, and deepens the culture of constant innovation and optimisation in pedagogical work environments, the statement said.



A session in progress during the orientation.

FranklinCovey is one of the most prominent international firms specialising in advancing leadership and offering corporate solutions.

It possesses a global record that abounds with significant milestones in supporting educational institutions, from schools to universities, through programmes that generate concrete and enduring impacts in educational environments. (**QNA**)

Nine children of Gaza doctor couple killed in Israeli strike

AFP/QNA
Gaza City

Gaza's civil defence agency said yesterday that an Israeli strike in the southern city of Khan Younis killed nine children from the same family, with the Israeli army saying it was reviewing the reports.

Agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said civil defence crews retrieved "the bodies of nine child martyrs, some of them charred, from the home of Dr Hamdi al-Najjar and his wife, Dr Alaa al-Najjar, all of whom were their children".

He added that Hamdi al-Najjar and another son, Adam, were also seriously wounded in the strike on Friday.

A medical source at Nasser Hospital, where Alaa al-Najjar works, gave Adam's age as 10 years old.

Footage of the aftermath released by the civil defence agency showed rescuers recovering badly burned remains from the damaged home.

Asked about the incident, the Israeli military said "the Khan Yunis area is a dangerous warzone".



A Palestinian man carries items he salvaged from a house targeted in an Israeli strike at the Nuseirat camp in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

The children's funeral took place at Nasser Hospital, AFP footage showed.

Muneer Alboursh, director general of the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, said on X that the strike happened shortly after Hamdi al-Najjar drove his wife to work.

"Just minutes after returning home, a missile struck their house," he said, adding the father was "in intensive care".

"This is the reality our medical staff in Gaza endure. Words fall short in describing the pain," he said.

"In Gaza, it is not only healthcare workers who are targeted — Israel's aggression goes further, wiping out entire families."

Meanwhile, the death toll from the ongoing Israeli onslaught on the Gaza Strip since Oct 7, 2023, has hit 53,901 with 122,593 injured.

US issues orders easing Syria sanctions

Reuters
Washington

The Trump administration issued orders on Friday that it said would effectively lift sanctions on Syria, after President Donald Trump this month pledged to unwind the measures to help the country rebuild after a devastating civil war.

The Treasury Department issued a general license that authorises transactions involving the interim Syrian government led by President Ahmed al-Sharaa, as well as the central bank and state-owned enterprises.

The general licence, known as GL25, "authorizes transactions prohibited by the Syrian Sanctions Regulations, effectively lifting sanctions on Syria," the Treasury said in a statement.



US ambassador Thomas Barrack (L) shakes hands with Syria's President Ahmed al-Sharaa during a meeting in Istanbul.

"GL25 will enable new investment and private sector activity consistent with the President's America First strategy," the statement said.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio also issued a 180-day waiver under the Caesar Act to ensure that sanctions do not obstruct investment and to facilitate the provision of electricity, energy, water and sanitation and enable humanitarian efforts, he said in a statement.

"Today's actions represent the first step in delivering on the President's vision of a new relationship between Syria and the United States," Rubio said, adding that Trump had made clear his expectation that sanctions relief would be followed by action by the Syrian government.

The US ambassador to Turkiye, who has assumed the role of Syria envoy, said yesterday he had met the country's interim leader following Washington's lifting of sanctions on the war-torn country.

Tom Barrack, who met with interim leader Ahmed al-Sharaa in Istanbul, said in a statement: "I reiterated the United States' support for the Syrian people after so many years of conflict and violence." **Page 6**

QATAR

Qatari pilgrim camps almost ready: mission

The Qatari Haj Mission has revealed that about 85% of the preparations for the camps designated for pilgrims from Qatar at the holy sites in Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalifah have been completed.

This has been made in accordance with a pre-established operational plan developed to the highest standards and specifications to ensure quality and fulfil the needs of all pilgrims, in full co-ordination with the competent authorities in Saudi Arabia.

Head of the Pilgrimage Services Unit, Issa Nasser al-Humaidi, confirmed that preparations are under way based on a precise timeline to ensure the accomplishment of all work before the beginning of the month of Dhul-Hijjah, in pursuit of offering comfort and safety for pilgrims during their performance of the religious rites.

Following the past Haj season, the unit embarked on executing the work plan through field trips to the holy sites, where co-ordination meetings were convened with the Saudi Ministry of Haj and Umrah, al-Humaidi said.

He added that all camps have been equipped with essential necessities to ensure the comfort and safety of pilgrims, in terms of air-conditioned camps, toilets, ablution facilities, along with the ventilation and cooling systems, as well as the provision of catering services, electricity, and water supplies, while observing all aspects related to safety, security, and internal organisation.

The Pilgrimage Services Unit is closely monitoring the equipment preparations on-site around the clock through professional teams deployed to the sites to ensure all facilities conform to the technical specifications and operate in full efficiency, al-Humaidi underlined.

He stressed that the unit is honoured to serve the pilgrims, affirming that it is a responsibility, and it is pleased to ensure the provision of all services and utilities based on the highest approved specifications.

Co-ordination with the Ministry of Haj and Umrah and the relevant entities in Saudi Arabia has been extremely productive, which streamlined all procedures, al-Humaidi highlighted, lauding the keenness of the Saudi officials in providing the best services to pilgrims and ensuring their safety to perform the pilgrimage rites in a secure atmosphere.

Additionally, al-Humaidi pointed out that the Qatari Haj Mission is working to its full capacity and operating at peak co-ordination to ensure a comfortable and secure service environment for the nation's pilgrims.

He urged all pilgrims to adhere to the directives of their respective campaigns and to co-operate with both administrative and on-site teams to guarantee the seamless and tranquil performance of the rites. **(QNA)**



Qatar Charity receives GCC Housing Award

Qatar Charity (QC) has been honoured with the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Housing Award for the 2024–2025 cycle, during the 23rd GCC Housing Ministers Meeting held in Kuwait.

At a ceremony, attended by HE Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, Minister of Social Development and Family; Yousuf bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, chief executive officer of Qatar Charity; received from Abdul Latif Abdullah al-Mashari, Kuwait's Minister of State for Municipal and Housing Affairs.

Qatar Charity has implemented several initiatives to support low-income families, widows, and divorcees within Qatar by addressing their housing needs. These efforts include covering rental costs and implementing the "Renovation" project, which focuses on repairing old homes for low-income families and providing them with suitable furniture.

Al-Kuwari said: "Through initiatives that aim to foster community stability, enhance living standards, and provide healthy housing environments for low-income families and groups, we are committed to making a meaningful impact." He noted that this recognition will motivate Qatar Charity to pay more attention to such community initiatives."

The 6th edition of the GCC Housing Award 2024-2025 was held under the theme "Digital/ Smart Applications and Technologies in Housing Projects and Programmes". Cash prizes were awarded to the top three winners, and several organisations were honoured during the official ceremony.

Dhul-Hijjah to begin on May 28: QCH calculations

The Qatar Calendar House (QCH) has announced, based on precise astronomical calculations, that Wednesday, May 28, will be the astronomical beginning of the month of Dhul-Hijjah 1446 AH, while Tuesday, May 27, will mark the last day of Dhul-Qi'dah for this year.

According to Engineer Faisal al-Ansari, Executive Director of Qatar Calendar House, the crescent of Dhul-Hijjah 1446 AH will be born on Tuesday, May 27 (the observation day) at 6:03am Doha local time (3:03am UTC).

The crescent will set 39 minutes after sunset in Qatar, with visibility duration increasing further westward.

Astronomical principles dictate that the movement of the moon around Earth determines the start and end of Hijri (Islamic) months.

The movement of Earth around the sun governs the start and end of Gregorian months. **(QNA)**

QCDC wraps up Career Village 2025

Qatar Career Development Center (QCDC), founded by Qatar Foundation (QF), concluded the sixth edition of its flagship career exploration initiative, Career Village. Held in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Labour, the three-day event welcomed 2,058 students from 125 schools, connecting them with 200 career counsellors and 37 leading organisations across 13 vital sectors of Qatar's economy. Now recognised as one of the country's leading platforms for experiential career learning, Career Village 2025 provided students with hands-on exposure to career paths in fields including Security, Public Administration, Aviation and Aeronautics, Technology, Education, Finance Investment and Banking, Energy, Manufacturing and Retail, Transportation and Logistics, Medicine, Humanitarian and Social Work, Media and Public Relations, as well as Hospitality and Tourism.

The initiative is part of QCDC's wider efforts to bridge the gap between education and employment and to support Qatar's Third National Development Strategy (2024-2030) and Qatar National Vision 2030, which emphasise preparing youth for a diversified and knowledge-based economy.

The final day of the event featured a high-profile panel discussion titled "From Guidance to Employment: The Role of Academic Counseling in Supporting Students' Paths to the Private Sector". The session directly addressed the national priority of increasing Qatari participation in private-sector employment, following the recent enactment of Law No 12 of 2024 on Job Nationalisation in the Private Sector.

It brought together over 75 career and academic counsellors from schools across Qatar, with panellists from the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Commercial Bank of Qatar, and a young programme graduate now employed in the hospitality sector. Discussions explored how career guidance within schools can serve as a critical entry point for nationalisation efforts.

Throughout the three days, students engaged with sector professionals, explored training opportunities, and learned about workplace expectations and demands through simulations, workshops, and guidance sessions.

Since its launch in 2017, Career Village has impacted more than 12,000 students, steadily becoming a cornerstone of QCDC's strategy to cultivate a future-ready workforce. **(QNA)**

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Public Works Authority

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (EOI)
THE WEST BAY BEACHES AND AL SAFLIYA ISLAND DEVELOPMENT

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST (EOI)

Qatar Tourism (the "Contracting Authority") through the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) is planning a Design, Build, Finance, Operate, Maintain and Transfer ("DBFOMT") tender for the development of the West Bay Beaches and Al Safliya Island Development (the "Project") as a Public Private Partnership (PPP).

The Contracting Authority is looking for a suitable private sector developer / operator (the "Project Company") with international and/or regional experience to develop and operate five (5) beachfront plots in the West Bay Area along with Al Safliya Island (the "Project") which will feature a range of offerings including accommodation, Food & Beverage, and leisure activities:



Figure 1: Project Sites with associated plot No

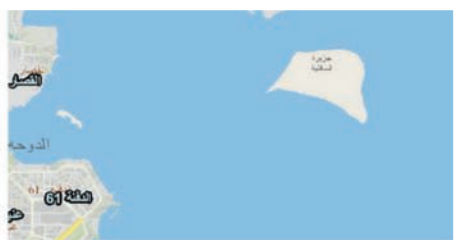


Figure 2: Al Safliya Island: Plot # TBD

The developer will be fully responsible for the Design, Build, Finance, Operation and Maintenance of the facilities over a period of 25 years, but subject to revision if required.

The plots allocated will be leased from the Government on a nominal rent basis.

The purpose of this Request for EOI is to invite competent Qatari, regional and international companies and consortia, capable of delivering the Project, to participate in the tender process and to indicate their interest in the Project by submitting an EOI.

Please be advised that a Bidder Day will be held at a later stage of the procurement process to provide further information and to answer questions from potential interested parties on the Project.

SCOPE OF SERVICES:
The scope of services for the Project will include but not be limited to:
- Design
- Construction
- Project Financing
- Operation and Maintenance (Hard & Soft Facilities Management)
- Transfer back to the Contracting Authority

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST DOCUMENT (EOI)

Interested parties are invited to download the Expression of Interest document which includes the Expression of Interest Acknowledgement Form and the Anti-Corruption and Confidentiality declaration as well as the Information Sheet required from interested parties with a track-record of extensive and relevant experience in the design, build, finance, operation and maintenance of similar projects. All documents, along with a valid Commercial Registration, are to be returned by Sunday 22nd June 2025 at 1:00 pm (local Doha time, GMT +3:00) in soft copy to: **eoi@ashghal.gov.qa**

Bidders will need SFTP Client application to download the Document. Please find below link to Download SFTP Client (WinSCP – Free to Use).
https://www.linode.com/docs/tools-reference/file-transfer/transfer-files-with-winscp-on-windows

After download, please install and use the same application to download the Documents, which can be downloaded using the given user name and password:

FTP Server IP: 213.130.100.91
User Name: eoi-wbalsi
Password: eoiwb123
Port: 22

During the Expression of Interest period, interested companies shall visit Ashghal's website and email frequently for updates, EOI circulars and/or addenda, if any.

SUBMISSION OF THE EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST
All submissions shall be addressed to:
Public Works Authorit y- Engineering Services Department Manager
ASHGHAL Tower 3 - Ground Floor
P.O. BOX: 22188
Doha, State of Qatar

All enquiries are to be directed to:
Engineering Services Department Manager | E-mail : eoi@ashghal.gov.qa



Video Home receives dual honours at LG conference

Video Home & Electronic Centre – Jumbo Electronics has earned dual recognition at the LG Middle East & Africa Service Conference 2025.

The event, which brought together leading service partners from over 15 countries, honoured Video Home with two accolades: the 2nd Best Performer Award and a Certificate of Co-operation for the year 2024.

The awards were presented by LG Electronics Middle East managing director Kwanyul Lee.

Throughout 2024, Video Home implemented strategic initiatives aimed at improving service quality and responsiveness.

These included the deployment of an advanced Service Call Management System, integration with LG's dynamic service platforms for better co-ordination, and improved planning for spare parts availability.

The company also undertook manpower optimisation, particularly during the peak summer months to support increased service demand – especially for air conditioning units.

Technician performance and productivity were further enhanced through targeted training programmes and a performance-based incentive system, which collectively helped reduce turnaround times and improve first-call resolution rates.

The Certificate of Co-operation acknowledges Video Home's dedication to transparent communication and effective collaboration with LG's regional and global teams.

It stands as a testament to the organisation's proactive approach in aligning with LG's vision for customer satisfaction, innovation, and service excellence.

Video Home & Electronic Centre director and chief executive C V Rappai said: "The fundamentals of great service never change. What evolves is how we embrace innovation and respond to customers' rising expectations. These recognitions from LG affirm our long-standing belief in putting customers at the centre of everything we do."

Qatar Foundation to honour 300 at graduation ceremony

Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Pre-University Education will host a unified graduation ceremony to honour the accomplishments of 300 students from across its schools on May 28.

The ceremony will recognise students from seven QF schools: Qatar Academy Doha, Qatar Academy Al Khor, Qatar Academy Sidra, Qatar Academy for Science and Technology, Qatar Leadership Academy, Qatar Academy Al Wakra, and Awsaj Academy.

As graduation approaches, each student carries a unique story, yet together, they represent more than the end of an academic journey.

For 17-year-old **Hana Ali al-Khater**, a graduate of Qatar Academy Doha, her educational journey has been a path of self-discovery and a way to shape a more mature vision for her future.

Ever since she delved into the world of science, new horizons began to open, fuelled by a constant passion for learning and exploration.

She found in her school more than just a platform for acquiring knowledge and skills, it was a space for personal growth, building confidence, and refining her abilities through challenges and meaningful experiences.

Nasser Khalid al-Khater, 18, and a graduate of Qatar Academy Al Wakra, looks back on his school years as a journey of discovery and growth.

For him, education went beyond classroom lessons, it was the real-life experiences that helped him uncover his passion and shape his identity.

Highlights of his journey include volunteering during the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 and taking part in charitable initiatives in Zanzibar.

For 18-year-old **Rashid Mohammed al-Fehaidi**, a graduate of Qatar Academy Sidra, graduation is a proud and joyful milestone, one that celebrates years of challenges met with determination and ambition.

He sees his school as a turning point, where a flexible, student-centred approach allowed him to explore his interests and grow with confidence.

For 17-year-old **Maryam Hussain al-Hail**, a graduate of Qatar Academy Al Khor, graduation is an emotional milestone, one filled with both joy and nostalgia.

After spending 12 years at the same school, al-Hail doesn't just see it as a place of learning, but as a second home, a place where her journey began and where she grew up.

For 17-year-old **Hamad Salih al-Bader**, a graduate of Qatar Leadership Academy, graduation is far more than the end of a school chapter, it's a long-awaited moment that reflects years of dedication, discipline, and growth.

It marks the culmination of an extraordinary journey at an institution he describes not just as a school, but as a school of life.

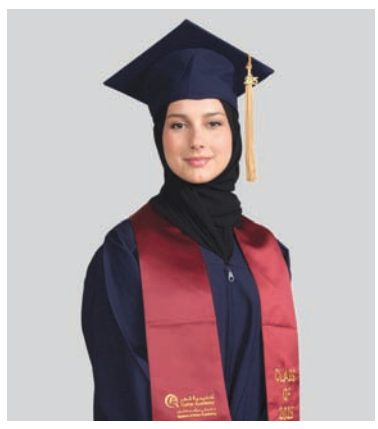
From the moment he joined, al-Bader stepped into a world that demanded something different, self-discipline, independence, and resilience.

Ali Khalid al-Tamimi, 18, and a graduate of Awsaj Academy, sees his graduation day as the beginning of a new chapter in his educational journey, one that he approaches with confidence and excitement as he prepares to enter university life after years of challenges and growth.

His academic journey began with some difficulties, but the supportive environment at Awsaj Academy played a crucial role in helping him overcome them.

For **Amina Yasser Ahmed**, 18, and a graduate of Qatar Academy for Science and Technology, her time at the QF was more than just an academic chapter, it was a transformative experience that shaped her identity, broadened her perspective, and helped her discover her true potential.

The diversity at the QF played a powerful role in her development, helping her grow into a more empathetic, open-minded, and collaborative learner.


Hana Ali al-Khater


Nasser Khalid al-Khater


Rashid Mohammed al-Fehaidi


Maryam Hussain al-Hail


Hamad Salih al-Bader



Ali Khalid al-Tamimi


Amina Yasser Ahmed

The Ninth Hour performed at Doha Theatre Festival

The play *The Ninth Hour* by the Qatar Theatre Troupe was performed on Friday at the 37th Doha Theatre Festival.

The play was performed as part of the competing shows at the 37th Doha Theatre Festival, organised by the Ministry of Culture, represented by the Theatre Affairs Centre, in collaboration with the Qatar Events Centre.

The play was performed at the U VENUE Theatre.

The play, written by Maryam Naseer, adapted by dramaturg Ghenam Ghenam and directed by Mohammed al-Mulla, features Riam al-Jazaery, Taleb al-Dous, Mohammed al-Mutawa, Maryam Fahad, and Sameh al-Hajri, along with the chorus, which included Ali Rabsha, Ali Khazami, Ali Kamal al-Din, Baraa Badawi, Ali Fatoum, Shiraz Lubia, Tima al-Ghafir, Alia al-Saadi, and Rowan al-Rahiya.

The play depicts a poignant social drama within a family torn between feelings, emotions, and thoughts, between hope, illusion, and nostalgia.

Following the theatrical performance, a practical seminar was held.



Director Jamal al-Saqr began by praising the success of the 37th edition of the festival, reflected in the large audience turnout, the simple, realistic, and profound text, and the director's ability to employ theatrical elements, including scenography, lighting, and music.

He praised the creative performances of the actors, who skilfully embodied the director's vision.

Al-Saqr also noted the effective use of the choir in the show, making it an essential and expressive element.

In his speech, Mahmoud al-Jarsha lauded the quality of the script, the distinguished performances of the actors, the outstanding directorial vision, and the audience's interaction with the play.

The Doha Theatre Festival, which featured the performance of *You Are Invited to a Party* by Tathkar Art Production Company yesterday, embodies the goals of the Ministry of Culture, which constantly seeks to activate and develop the cultural movement in Qatar by supporting distinguished theatrical performances with diverse artistic orientations and by encouraging Qatari theatre professionals to continue working in all fields of theatrical arts. – ***QNA***

Drowning conveys message on illegal immigration

The Centre for Theatre Affairs, which is part of the Ministry of Culture, organised the 37th Doha Theatre Festival in co-operation with the Qatar Events Centre, featured the play *Drowning* at the YouView Theatre.

The performance of the play *Drowning*, written by Taleb al-Dous and directed by Mohammed al-Balam, and produced by the Al-Watan Theatre Group, conveyed a message about illegal immigration.

The play opened with a scene of characters lost at sea, setting the stage for the audience to experience a state of psychological tension that gradually escalates with each scene.

The dialogue between the characters was laden with nostalgia and fear, but also with contemplation and doubt.

They are not two-dimensional figures – they are "real" people who differ in their motivations, attitudes, and perceptions of homeland, the future, and dignity.

This gave the play a distinct psychological depth, especially when the discussion among the passengers turns into an intellectual struggle over the meaning of survival: Is it physical survival? Preserving dignity? Or escaping the daily death in one's homeland?

Director al-Ballam demonstrated a remarkable ability to transform the stage into a volatile emotional space, where the lighting (with its cold and shifting shades) and sound effects played a significant role in creating visual and aural tension.


A scene from the play.

The stage appeared like a small boat on a stage, moving without actually moving, thanks only to the harmony of the performance, lighting, and sound.

The cast distinguished themselves with deep performances, based not only on emotion, but also on a clear internal structure for each character.

The psychological struggles of each immigrant were clearly revealed: with emotions shifting from regret to nostalgia, to fear, and to a sense of futility.

Starlink and Weblib announced strategic partnership to expand WiFi solutions in Qatar

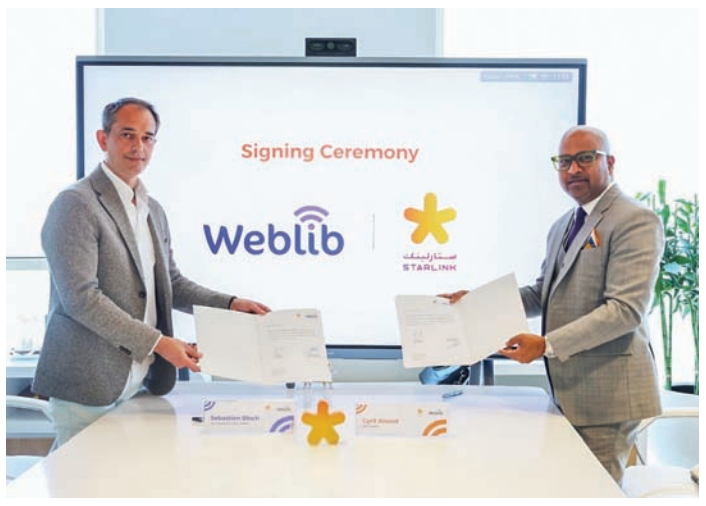
Starlink and Weblib officially entered into a strategic partnership to deliver advanced, secure, and scalable WiFi solutions across the Qatari market. The signing ceremony took place in Doha.

Weblib, with over 15 years of experience, brought its expertise in cloud-based and on-premise WiFi through brands such as Smart Wi-Fi, Ucopia, Tab in Store, and Smilein. The company has been recognized for its ability to secure and manage WiFi access in complex, multisite environments while maintaining a seamless user experience. It has deployed their solution in more than 15 stadiums in Europe and they equip major European airports.

The partnership aligned with Starlink's continued commitment to enhancing Qatar's digital infrastructure. Leveraging its strong regional presence and deep understanding of local market needs, Starlink assumed the role of exclusive distributor for Weblib's solutions in Qatar. The company began supporting deployment, integration, and customer enablement across sectors such as hospitality, education, retail, healthcare, and public spaces.

Cyril Anand, CEO of Starlink, remarked:

"At Starlink, we are focused on enabling the region's digital transformation by bringing world-class technologies to our customers. Our partnership with Weblib strengthened our offering in the wireless connectivity space and reflected our mission to deliver secure, seamless, and scalable solutions across Qatar's growing digital ecosystem."



Sébastien Bloch, VP Sales at Weblib, added:

"Our distribution partnership with Starlink in Qatar marked a key milestone in our international growth strategy. This collaboration enabled us to expand in the region and directly addressed WiFi connectivity challenges. Through this alliance, we delivered robust and efficient communication solutions tailored to the specific needs of the Qatari market."

The collaboration represented a strategic advancement in addressing the country's growing demand for reliable, high-performance wireless networks—blending Weblib's global solution portfolio with Starlink's local market leadership and technical expertise.



About Starlink:

Starlink, a subsidiary of the Ooredoo Group, has been serving Qatar since 2006, steadily evolving into a preeminent multi-vertical organization within the technology and telecommunications sector. With over 18 years of experience, Starlink operates diverse yet integrated business units, encompassing retail operations through both Starlink and Ooredoo stores, a robust e-commerce platform, and nationwide B2C and B2B distribution of Ooredoo services. In addition, we deliver ICT distribution and managed services, support corporate clients with dedicated B2B device provisioning, and offer specialized solutions in installation and maintenance, human resource outsourcing, and call center operations. Our capabilities further extend to managed print and imaging services, as well as dedicated technology distribution, including our strategic partnership as the official distributors of many prominent brands in Qatar. Supported by a team of 1,800 professionals and in collaborations with over 30 global technology leaders, we are proud to serve more than 1,023 clients. Through this diverse portfolio, Starlink continues to provide scalable, efficient, and future-ready solutions to individuals, enterprises, and institutions across the country.

QATAR

MoT urges public to participate in 'transport master plan' survey

The Ministry of Transport (MoT) has urged the public to participate in its survey to develop the Qatar Public Transport Master Plan (QPTMP). This is in order to provide solutions that meet society's transport needs. The surveys are conducted until August 2025 at metro, tram and bus stations, public markets and shopping malls to gather data on people's mobility preferences and opinions on public transportation modes.

MoT, in an earlier statement, said that it believes in the importance of society's participation and pays great attention to fulfilling their aspirations in the QPTMP. "The MoT is pleased to invite the public to co-operate with its survey teams and take a few minutes to answer the survey to ensure the accuracy of the data gathered and help reach a better understanding of people's needs in this respect," the statement said. All the data gathered will be treated with full privacy and confidentiality and used exclusively for the purposes of the survey

The QPTMP aims at improving accessibility and coverage, raising service reliability, and exploring innovative mobility solutions that



keep pace with the latest advancements.

Bypassing conventional frameworks, the QPTMP will strategically guide the evolution of the transit system to address challenges associated with escalating vehicular dependency, congestion and environmental impact. The QPTMP will study the status quo of traffic congestion of both private vehicles and public transportation and carbon emission along with its impact on Qatar's climate quality with a view to suggesting suitable solutions.

Leveraging advanced and efficient public transportation solutions, and sustainable and eco-friendly infrastructure is among QPTMP's top priorities through providing advanced electric transportation systems to help lower carbon footprint and, consequently, improve Qatar's climate quality in step with the QNV 2030's pillar of environmental development, in addition to serving a diverse audience, including policymakers, government officials, developers, investors, consultants, engineers, and planners by equipping those stakeholders with actionable frame-works and guidelines for effective planning, design, implementation, and operation of public transit services.

The QPTMP will also encompass prescriptive policies, laws and regulations, accompanied by a robust monitoring programme for integrated and comprehensive solutions through harnessing innovation to meet the growing needs for a coherent, advanced and sustainable national public transportation system.

The QPTMP's ripple effects will have far-reaching societal and environmental benefits, supporting healthier lifestyles, fostering economic vitality, and mitigating the ecological footprint of urban expansion through reducing carbon emissions utilising smarter transit solutions and rubber-stamping Qatar's commitment to sustainability.

Amir congratulates Singaporean prime minister, Eritrean president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Lawrence Wong on his swearing-in as Prime Minister of Singapore, wishing him success in carrying out his duties and for relations between the two friendly countries further progress and prosperity. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent similar cables of congratulations to Lawrence Wong.

●His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Deputy Amir and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs sent cables of congratulations to Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki on his country's Independence Day. **(QNA)**

Survey to ensure well-being of coral reefs



The marine scientific team at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change recently conducted a comprehensive environmental survey of the marine sites during the ebb and follow within the local islands, as part of the ministry's efforts to study the marine habitats and assess their suitability for future coral reef restoration.

The survey results revealed that the sites is characterised by rich biodiversity, including extensive areas of seagrass and a variety of reef fish species such as snappers, angelfish, parrotfish, goatfish, Safi (rabbitfish), Hamour, and other ecologically significant species.

This study is part of the Coral Reef Restoration Project launched by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, aiming to enhance coral reef growth and support the biodiversity of marine life that inhabits coral reefs.



MoECC drive to protect natural resources

As part of its ongoing efforts to protect the environment and conserve natural resources, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), represented by the Wildlife Development Department, has conducted extensive field inspection checks across the country to monitor and catch environmental violations related to the exploitation of natural resources.

The checks resulted in the detection of several violations related to individuals and private entities transferring landfill from unlicensed sites without obtaining the necessary environmental permits. This constitutes an illegal exploitation of the country's natural resources.

The teams from the ministry referred the violators to the



relevant authorities to take the necessary legal action against them, in accordance with the environmental laws and regulations in force in Qatar.

The ministry has affirmed that this campaign is part of a series of intensive efforts to monitor environmental activities and ensure that individuals and entities comply with environmental law.

MoPH initiative to enhance health services in private schools

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has announced the launch of the first phase of the audit and oversight project targeting the performance of healthcare personnel working in private schools and kindergartens.

This initiative is being carried out in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Primary Health Care Corporation, with the commencement of initial field visits.

The project forms part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to enhance the quality of healthcare and ensure the safety and well-being of students in educational



institutions across Qatar. It aims to raise professional commitment among healthcare practitioners, evaluate the quality of healthcare services provided in private schools and kindergartens, and support and guide healthcare staff towards best practice.

The project reflects the MoPH's commitment to strengthening institutional partnerships and empowering experts to contribute to the development of professional performance, thereby improving the quality of health services provided within educational establishments at various levels. This is to ensure the safety and health of students by verifying that the health units within educational institutions comply with health and preventive standards.

Work on preparing the project began in the middle of last year, in collaboration with partners, and implementation mechanisms were developed according to a carefully designed four-year timeline. **(QNA)**

قطر للطاقة
QatarEnergy
LNG

QatarEnergy LNG
Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/MNT/7071/25 REFRACTORY SERVICES ON CALL-OFF BASIS	25/05/2025 to 10/06/2025	0	500,000	18/06/2025

Scope of Work:
Company's facilities at Ras Laffan Industrial City requires a specialized, competent, reliable and safe Contractor/s to carry out Refractory Services on call-off basis covering all Company assets in Onshore locations. The duration of Contract shall be five (05) years with a sole option for Company to extend it for further up to two (02) years.

Bid Validity: Bid Offer 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: Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) are advised to refer to the tender documentation and In-Country Value (ICV) Digital Portal: - https://icv.qa/en-US/ for details of ICV compliance that may be applicable.

Cleanup campaign at Abu Fass area





The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's Department of Wildlife Protection has carried out a cleanup campaign in the northern part of the country at Abu Fass area, as part of a project aimed at cleaning up desert areas and winter camping sites. The ministry has urged all the visitors of the wild Qatari meadows to maintain the cleanliness of the natural environment and to dispose of waste only in the designated places to ensure a clean and safe environment for everyone.

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/M/28/25	Call-off Services for Bolt Torquing, Tensioning, Cold Cutting and In-situ Machining at Q-Chem, Q-Chem II, RLOC and RLP	QR 318,500/-	12:00 hrs. on 20th July 2025

Brief Scope:
Company requires the services of qualified and experienced Contractor to carry out bolt torquing, tensioning, cold cutting and in-situ machining services at facilities in Mesaieed and Ras Laffan. Contractor shall deploy dedicated, specific, and sufficient crews or workforce on-site to carry out activities in compliance with Company site-specific requirements. Contractor shall also provide all necessary equipment and tools as required to satisfactorily carry out the required services.

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 **tadvertisement@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 **25th May 2025** to **29th May 2025, 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.

Media City Qatar, QDB partner to boost media entrepreneurship, creative talent

QNA
Doha

Media City Qatar and Qatar Development Bank (QDB) have signed a co-operation agreement to strengthen Qatar's creative and cultural industries ecosystem by advancing innovation, nurturing global talent, and expanding opportunities for media startups.

Signed during Day 3 of the 2025 'Qatar Economic Forum, Powered by Bloomberg', the agreement marks a joint effort to support media entrepreneurship in Qatar. The agreement outlines a comprehensive framework to support Qatar's media and creative economy through six strategic areas. These include joint efforts to identify and support large-scale media productions aligned with the nation's cultural and export priorities, as well as the launch of a co-branded acceleration program in partnership with QDB's Creative and Cultural Industries Hub (SCALE7). This programme will provide hands-on support to startups through workshops, masterclasses, hackathons, and pitching events, aiming to spotlight high-potential ventures and connect them with top investors and industry leaders.

The agreement names Media City Qatar as an official partner in QDB's Talent Community Program, supporting startups and helping attract creative talent. Together, they will share opportunities, explore



co-investments, and help startups grow across the region and beyond. Media City Qatar and QDB will also promote the Startup Qatar Investment Program, invite each other to events, and work with key partners to strengthen these efforts.

CEO of Media City Qatar Eng Jassim Mohamed al-Khori said: "Our commitment to startups is no coincidence: over 60% of our 200+ licensed companies are startups. That is why partnering with Qatar Development Bank is a natural next step in our mission to build a vibrant culture of media entrepreneurship in Qatar". He added: "This co-operation agreement is designed to accelerate the growth of both our current and future licensed companies. By combining our strategic platforms with QDB's startup expertise and investment channels, we are creating real pathways for media entrepreneurs to scale and innovate. This will enable them to produce content that contributes meaningfully to the country's creative GDP."

CEO of Qatar Development Bank Abdulrahman Hesham al-Sowaidi commented: "This partnership reflects a shared vision for building the next generation of media entrepreneurs who contribute to shaping Qatar's creative economy." He stressed: "By bringing Media City Qatar on board as an official partner in our Talent Community Program, we are enriching the national startup ecosystem with creative talent ready to scale, directly contributing towards building the knowledge-based economy and Qatar's 2030 objectives. The agreement also sets the stage for establishing the first media sector accelerator under our Creative and Cultural Industries hub, Scale7, designed to empower innovation across the national media landscape".

He added: "Beyond talent development, this collaboration expands our capacity to back ambitious media ventures and accelerate their path to regional and global relevance. This partnership also enables us to promote the Startup Qatar Investment Program further and provide an investment platform for Media-sector startups." Media City Qatar, as the official partner of the Forum, continues to forge high-impact partnerships that unlock new value for Qatar's media sector and contribute to the national knowledge-based economy goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Labour ministry holds awareness workshop to prevent heat-stress risks



The Ministry of Labour (MoL) yesterday held an awareness workshop for community leaders to outline occupational safety and health guidelines at worksites and accommodation during the summer months, aiming to prevent heat-stress risks. Representatives from the MoL's Occupational Safety and Health Department, together with a delegate from the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers, provided community leaders with a comprehensive set of advice and guidance. Topics included recognising the symptoms of heat stress, measures to prevent heatstroke, and the importance of supplying adequate protective measures. Through this series of workshops and seminars held year-round, MoL seeks to reinforce a culture of safety and health among workers, employees and employers, promote healthy behaviours, and sustain a safe, healthy working environment for all. **(QNA)**

QGS takes part in 7th Ethnosport Culture Festival in Istanbul

QNA
Istanbul

The Al Gannas Qatari Society (QGS) is participating in the 7th Ethnosport Culture Festival, currently taking place in Istanbul, Turkiye. Having been organised by the World Ethnosport Confederation, the event showcases a wide array of traditional sports and cultural practices from around the world.

Chairman of the QGS' Board of Directors and member of the Board of Directors of the World Ethnosport Confederation, Ali bin Khatem al-Mahshadi, is heading the Qatari delegation at the festival.

QGS is participating with a booth showcasing a traditional Bedouin tent, 'Bayt Al Sha'ar', which drew a record turnout from high-ranking officials, dignitaries, and visitors who got familiarised with the falconry heritage shared with numerous nations, alongside an exhibition featuring photos that document the QGS's events and festivals, al-Mahshadi highlighted. Al-Mahshadi added that the QGS' delegation held numerous meetings with a range of delegations of the participating countries and highlighted the society's experience, especially its advanced statutes applied in the tournaments it organises, such as the Qatar International Falcons and Hunting Festival (Marmi), alongside its partnerships with friendly entities.



He indicated that the Society highlighted its cultural efforts in preserving the falconry legacy at home and abroad, as well as its interests in young categories through organising Promising Falconer Championships and Marmi. For his part, Vice-President of QGS, Mohammed bin Abdul Latif al-Misnad, affirmed that the participation in this festival was intended to promote people-to-people ties among nations, particularly the Qatari and Turkish peoples and countries from Central Asia.

The QGS' experience garnered the participants' approbation, who highly heaped praise on its scientific and cultural projects, such as embracing the Falcon Medicine and Veterinary Conference, the Qatar Falcon Genome Project, and the Qatar Falconers' Campaign to Return Falcons to Nature, in addition to reinvigorating falconers' role in this field, al-Misnad highlighted. The opening ceremony was attended by President of the World Ethnosport Confederation, Bilal Erdogan, along with senior Turkish officials, with the participation of delegations from 35 countries.

The first day of this festival featured events to commemorate the children of Gaza who lost their lives due to the Israeli war of annihilation, with a space allocated to the solidarity tent highlighting the anguish of the Palestinian people and the Gaza children's tragedy.

Change of Company Name

SENER Ingenieriay Sistemas, S.A.,

a branch of

SENER Mobility,

registered as an International Engineering Consultancy Office with No. 56 at the Engineers and Engineering Offices Accrediting and Classifying Committee, and trade license number ***127323,*** hereby announces that it intends to change its name to

SENER Mobility

This change of name does not affect the legal status, ongoing projects, contractual obligations, or registration details of the company.

For further information, please contact **info@sener.qa**

BARWA

Invitation for Prequalification
To Participate in Tenders Issued by Barwa Real Estate Company

Barwa Real Estate Company (Barwa) is seeking to establish a list of prequalified companies with proven expertise and qualifications in infrastructure works, to participate in future Barwa tenders related to the development and design of infrastructure for upcoming Barwa projects.

Accordingly, Barwa invites interested parties to submit prequalification documents demonstrating their capabilities in terms of core experience, financial capacity, available resources, and commitment to executing projects in compliance with the required specifications, standards, regulations, and applicable laws.

Interested companies may contact Barwa at the following email address:
development.tender@barwa.com.qa

Prequalification documents may also be obtained from the official website:
https://www.barwa.com.qa

The deadline for submitting prequalification applications must be submitted no later than Sunday, June 15, 2025, by 11:00 AM.
Applicants must submit two hard copies and one soft copy of the prequalification application, addressed to the Group Head of Real Estate Development on the following address:

Real Estate Development Department
Barwa Real Estate Company
15th Floor, Barwa Real Estate Headquarters, Barwa Al Sadd Towers – Tower No. 1
Doha – Qatar
Telephone: 44088888

Prequalification Invitation for Participation in Barwa Real Estate Tenders (Design & Build Contractors – Infrastructure Works)

1. Contractor Classification: Must be classified with the Ministry of Finance at a grade no less than (B).
2. Annual Work Volume: Must not be less than QAR 500 million over the past five years.
3. Executed Infrastructure Projects: Each project must exceed a value of QAR 300 million.

نبني المستقبل
Building The Future

Es'hailSat سهيل سات
Qatar Satellite Company الشركة القطرية للأقمار الصناعية

TENDER NOTICE

The Tender Committee of the Qatar Satellite Company – Es'hailSat, Area No. 31 – Umm Lakhba – Al Markhiya Street, PO Box 10653, Doha, State of Qatar invites sealed bids for **eligible bidders with a minimum of Fifteen (15) years operational experience in Qatar** for the following tenders which details are as under:

SN	NAME/DESCRIPTION OF WORK	TENDER NO.	TENDER FEES	TENDER BOND	TENDER VALIDITY	CLOSING DATE
A.	Outsourcing of General Cleaning Services for QSC Head Office and QSC Al Ghuwayriyah Teleport Site (2-Year + 1-Year Optional Contract)	QSC/010/2025	QAR 500/-	5% of the tendered/offered value valid for 90 days	120 days from Closing Date	22 June 2025, 16:00Hrs

1. **Tender Fees are non-refundable** and can be remitted/deposited to the following company' bank account:

Company Name	Qatar Satellite Company
Bank Name	Qatar National Bank
Account No	0786-777665052
Account Type	Revenue Account
IBAN No	QA09QNBA000000000786777665052
Swift Code	QNBAQAQA
Currency	Qatari Riyals

Tender Number and Company Name must be written on the deposit slip.

2. Deposit Slip of the Tender Fees to be emailed with the letter of intention to participate with the following listed documents on or before **01 June 2025** to TenderCommittee@eshailsat.qa:
   1. Deposit slip for the Tender Fees
   2. Copy of Commercial Registration
   3. Copy of Company Establishment Card
   4. Valid ID Card
3. Any deposit slip received after 01 June 2025 will not be considered and item no. 1 above is applicable.
4. An email will be sent to all prospective bidders with the link for vendor registration if not yet registered with Es'hailSat as vendor/supplier enabling to access the i-Supplier Portal and receive the Tender/RPF Package/document, **registration must be done on or before 04 June 2025**.
5. Distribution of Tender/RPF Package will be thru Es'hailSat's i-Supplier Portal by **11 June 2025**.
6. The offer must be submitted with a Tender/Bid Bond issued by Qatari Bank or a bank operating in Qatar.

Proposals must be submitted thru Es'hailSat's i-Supplier Portal as per the Instruction to Bidders (ITB) on the RFP Package.

Proposals must be uploaded in two separate files 1. Technical Proposal and 2. Financial Proposal (preferably in PDF formats) by **4:00PM on the Closing Date, Sunday, 22 June 2025**.

For more details of the tenders, please send emails to TenderCommittee@eshailsat.qa.

REGION/ARAB WORLD/AFRICA

African Union urges permanent ceasefire in Libya after clashes

AFP
Addis Ababa

The African Union called for a permanent ceasefire in Libya yesterday after deadly clashes in the capital earlier this month and demonstrations demanding the prime minister's resignation.

The latest fighting in the conflict-torn North African country pitted an armed group aligned with the Tripoli-based government against factions it has sought to dismantle, resulting in at least eight dead, according to the United Nations.

Despite a lack of a formal ceasefire, the clashes mostly ended last week, with the Libya Defence Ministry saying this week that efforts towards a truce were "ongoing". Yesterday, the AU's Peace and Security Council condemned the recent violence, calling for an "unconditional and permanent ceasefire". In a statement on X, the council urged "inclusive, Libyan-led reconciliation", adding that it "appeals for no external interference". Libya is split between the UN-recognised government in Tripoli, led by Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah, and a rival administration in the east. The country has remained deeply divided since the 2011 Nato-backed revolt that toppled and killed long-time leader Moammar Gaddafi.

The clashes were sparked by the killing of an armed faction leader by a group aligned with Dbeibah's government — the 444 Brigade, which later fought a third group, the Radaa force that controls parts of eastern Tripoli and the city's airport.

It came after Dbeibah announced a string of executive orders seeking to dismantle Radaa and dissolve other Tripoli-based armed groups but excluding the 444 Brigade.

Egypt has flown 71 nationals home from the Libyan capital Tripoli after deadly clashes between rival militias rocked the city earlier this month, the foreign ministry said. Friday's special flight by flag carrier EgyptAir "enabled the repatriation of 71 Egyptian citizens who had expressed a desire to come home", the ministry said. From May 12-15, the Libyan capital was rocked by fighting between an armed group aligned with the Tripoli-based government and factions it has sought to dismantle. The clashes, which saw artillery exchanges in the city centre, killed at least eight people, according to the United Nations.

Although relative calm has since returned to the city, the situation remains highly volatile as calls grow for the resignation of Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibah. Turkiye evacuated 82 of its nationals from Tripoli on a similar repatriation flight last week. Libya is split between the UN-recognised government in Tripoli led by Dbeibah, and a rival administration in the east.



People gather for a pro-government rally in support of the Tripoli-based Government of National Unity, headed by Abdulhamid Dbeibah, at the Martyrs' Square in Libya's capital Tripoli yesterday.



A man holds two signs reading in Arabic "no to the militias, yes to the state" as he and others gather for a pro-government rally in support of the Tripoli-based Government of National Unit, headed by Abdulhamid Dbeibah.

Syria reboots interior ministry as Damascus seeks to reassure West

AFP
Damascus

Syrian authorities yesterday announced an interior ministry restructuring that includes fighting cross-border drug and people smuggling as they seek to improve ties with Western nations that have lifted sanctions. Keen to reboot and rebuild nearly 14 years after a devastating civil war broke out, the new authorities in Damascus have hailed Washington's lifting of US sanctions.

The move was formalised Friday after being announced by President Donald Trump on a Gulf tour this month during which he shook hands with Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa.

Spokesman Noureddine al-Baba said the interior ministry restructure included reforms and creating "a modern civil security institution that adopts transparency and respects international human rights standards". It includes setting up a citizens' complaints department and incorporating the police and General Security agency into an Internal Security command, he told a press conference.

A border security body for Syria's land and sea frontiers will be tasked with "combating illegal activities, particularly drug and human smuggling networks", Baba said. The restructure includes "strengthening the role of the anti-drug department and further developing its importance within Syria and abroad" after the country became a major exporter of illicit stimulant captagon, he added.

Another department will handle security for government facilities and foreign missions, as embassies reopen in Syria following Bashar al-Assad's ouster in December. A tourism police body will secure visitors and sites as the war-torn country - home to renowned Unesco World Heritage sites - seeks to relaunch tourism.

Syria's foreign ministry welcomed Washington's lifting of sanctions, calling the move "a positive step in the right direction to reduce humanitarian and economic struggles in the country". Turkish foreign ministry spokesperson Oncu Keceli said the recent US and European Union steps to lift sanctions were "of critical importance in efforts to bring stability and security to Syria".

The European Union announced the lifting of its economic sanctions on Syria earlier this month.

Sharaa met President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday on his third visit to Turkiye since taking power on a visit to discuss "common issues", Syria's presidency said. Ankara is a major backer of Syria's new authorities, who are negotiating with Kurdish forces that control swathes of the northeast and that Turkiye considers "terrorists".

A government delegation made a first visit Saturday to the notorious Al-Hol camp in the northeast that hosts families of suspected Islamic State (IS) group militants. Trump said he wanted to give Syria's new rulers "a chance at greatness" after their overthrow of Assad. While in Istanbul, al-Sharaa met with the US ambassador to Turkiye, who doubles as Washington's Syria envoy.

In a statement, Tom Barrack said: "President Trump's goal is to enable the new government to create the conditions for the Syrian people to not only survive but thrive." He added that it would aid Washington's "primary objective" of ensuring the "enduring defeat" of IS.

US sanctions were first imposed on Syria in 1979 under the rule of Bashar al-Assad's father Hafez.

They were sharply expanded after the bloody repression of anti-government protests in 2011 triggered Syria's civil war.

The new administration has been looking to build relations with the West and roll back sanctions, but some governments expressed reluctance, pointing to the past of leading figures. The sanctions relief extends to the new government on condition that Syria not provide safe haven for terrorist organisations and ensure security for religious and ethnic minorities, the US Treasury Department said.

Concurrently, the US State Department issued a 180-day waiver for the Caesar Act to make sure that sanctions do not obstruct foreign investment in Syria. The 2020 legislation severely sanctioned any entity or company cooperating with the now ousted government.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the waiver would "facilitate the provision of electricity, energy, water and sanitation, and enable a more effective humanitarian response across Syria".

However, Rubio cautioned that Trump "has made clear his expectation that relief will be followed by prompt action by the Syrian government on important policy priorities". He said lifting the sanctions aims to promote "recovery and reconstruction efforts".

Syria's 14-year civil war killed more than half a million people and ravaged its infrastructure. The interior ministry's spokesman said around a third of the population had been under suspicion by the Assad government's feared intelligence and security services. Analysts say a full lifting of sanctions may take time, as some US restrictions are acts that need to be reversed by Congress. Syrian authorities also need to ensure an attractive environment for foreign investment.


US ambassador to Turkiye Thomas Barrack (*left*) during a meeting with Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa and Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Asaad Hassan al-Shaibani.

Iraq seeks deal to swap kidnapped academic for jailed Iranian

AFP
Baghdad

Baghdad is working on a deal to free kidnapped Israeli-Russian academic Elizabeth Tsurkov in exchange for an Iranian jailed in Iraq for murdering a US civilian, security sources said yesterday. The deal depends on US approval, the senior Iraqi security officials told AFP, asking to remain anonymous because the matter is considered sensitive.

Tsurkov, a doctoral student at Princeton University, was kidnapped in Baghdad in March 2023. There was no claim of responsibility for her abduction, but Israel accused Iraq's powerful Kataeb Hezbollah of holding Tsurkov. The armed faction has implied it was not involved. Iraq has been working to solve the issue which "depends on the Americans' approval for the release of the Iranian accused of killing an American citizen", a senior security source said.

The three Iraqi sources said that Washington has not yet agreed to this. "The Americans have not yet agreed to one of the conditions, which is the release of the Iranian who is being held for killing an American citizen," one official said. The Iranian and another four Iraqis were sentenced to life in prison in Iraq for murdering American civilian Stephen Troell, who was shot dead in Baghdad in November 2022. In December last year, the US Justice Department announced that a "complaint was unsealed... charging" Iranian Mohammad Reza Nouri, "an officer" in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), with allegedly orchestrating the killing. Tsurkov, who is likely to have entered Iraq on her Russian passport, travelled as part of her doctoral studies.

US strike on Yemen kills Al Qaeda members: Yemeni security sources

AFP
Dubai

Five Al Qaeda members have been killed in a strike blamed on the United States in southern Yemen, two Yemeni security sources told AFP yesterday.

"Residents of the area informed us of the US strike... five Al Qaeda members were eliminated," said a security source in Abyan province, which borders the seat of Yemen's internationally-recognised government in Aden.

"The US strike on Friday evening north of Khabar Al-Maraqsha killed five," said a second source, referring to a mountainous area known to be used by Al Qaeda.

The second security source added that, though the names of those killed in the strike were not known, it was believed one of Al Qaeda's local leaders was among the dead.

Washington once regarded the group, known as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), as the militant network's most dangerous branch.

Born in 2009 from the merger of Al Qaeda's Yemeni and Saudi factions, AQAP grew and developed in the chaos of Yemen's war, which since 2015 has pitted the Houthi rebels against a Saudi-led coalition backing the government.

Earlier this month, the United States agreed a ceasefire with the Houthis, who have controlled large swathes of Yemen for more than a decade, ending weeks of intense American strikes on rebel-held areas of the country.

The Houthis began firing at shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden in November 2023, weeks after the start of the Israel-Hamas war, prompting military strikes by the US and Britain beginning in January 2024.

The conflict in Yemen has caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, although fighting decreased significantly after a UN-negotiated six-month truce in 2022.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, HOSSAN BACHUMIA

holder of

BANGLADESH Passport No. EF0593824
QID No. 28205005021

hereby change my name

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HOSSAN BACHUMIA

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HOSSAN MD BACHU MIA

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Sierra Leone reports more than 3,000 mpox cases, 14 deaths

The number of cases of mpox registered in Sierra Leone since the beginning of the year has hit 3,011, with 14 dead of the disease, according to new government data. All of the regions in the west African country have now registered cases, according to the latest health ministry figures released late Friday.
The new figures mark a nearly 50-percent rise in registered cases since the previous update 10 days ago, on May 13, when 2,045 cases and 11 fatalities were registered since the start of the year. Mpox is caused by a virus from the same family as smallpox, manifesting itself in a high fever and skin lesions. First identified in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1970, the disease had generally been confined to a dozen African countries before spreading more widely from 2022. The WHO declared its highest level of alert in 2024.
A police training centre in the capital Freetown has been refurbished into a 400-bed facility to deal with the increasing cases, authorities said.
A decade ago, Sierra Leone was one of the countries worst affected by an Ebola epidemic, which between 2014 and 2016 killed about 4,000 people, including nearly seven per cent of health professionals. Other African states have seen rising cases of mpox, with thousands of cases notably afflicting Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, Burundi and Kenya. **(AFP)**

Hands-on


Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) rangers load an endangered black rhino into a crate for translocation from the Ol Pejeta Conservancy to establish a new breeding population at the Segera Conservancy near Mount Kenya, in Laikipia County, Kenya.

El Chapo's ex-lawyer, ex-drug smuggler on the ballot to be judges in Mexico

By Cassandra Garrison
Reuters



Silvia Delgado, a former defence attorney for Sinaloa Cartel boss Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman and current candidate for judge, distributes campaign materials ahead of Mexico's first judicial elections, to be held on June 1, in Ciudad Juarez. **– *Reuters***

When residents in the state of Durango vote in Mexico's first judicial elections next weekend, Leopoldo Chavez will be on the ballot for federal judge – despite the nearly six years he served in a US prison.

Chavez was convicted on drug offences: for smuggling over 4kg of methamphetamines in 2015.

Durango is part of Mexico's Golden Triangle, a cartel-controlled region growing marijuana and opium poppies.

"I've never sold myself as the perfect candidate," Chavez said in a video he shared on Facebook.

He said he had nothing to hide and had served his time.

He declined to comment to Reuters.

In the nearby Pacific coast state of Jalisco, Francisco Hernandez is running to be a criminal magistrate even though the last time he served as a judge he was dismissed by the Federal Judiciary Council after an investigation into allegations of sexual abuse and corruption.

He told Reuters that the accusations were "slander and defamation".

"Let the people judge me," he said.

And in Nuevo Leon, Fernando Escamilla is hoping to become a federal criminal judge and says the legal work he did advising lawyers for members of the ultra-violent Los Zetas cartel should not be held against him.

His knowledge of extradition law, on which he advised the capos, made him an asset, he told Reuters in an interview.

"Does being an adviser on international or extradition law give you a bad public reputation? I don't think so, since that's the only thing that demonstrates that you have the ability and knowledge to handle these types of situations," Escamilla said.

Ahead of the elections on June 1, civil organisations, judge associations and some Mexican lawmakers are raising serious concerns about a vote that critics warn could jeopardise the country's rule of law.

The controversial judicial overhaul was proposed by leftist former president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador and supported by his protégé, President Claudia Sheinbaum.

Both said it would root out corruption in Mexico's flawed judiciary and allow the people to decide who should be a judge.

Around 5,000 candidates are vying for more than 840 federal positions, including all Supreme Court justices.

However, with the vote just over a week away, Mexican rights group Defensorxs says it has identified about 20 people vying for positions that have criminal indiscretions, corruption allegations against them or past links to cartels, including a defence lawyer who represented drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman.

An analysis by the Judicial Electoral Observatory (OEJ), made up of non-profit organisations, has also flagged more than 130 candidates with a high probability of winning in the absence of opposing candidates, and criticised problems in the design of complicated ballots that feature hundreds of names and may confuse voters.

The reform, passed in September 2024, was criticised by then US ambassador Ken Salazar, who served during the administration of president Joe Biden, as a threat to Mexican democracy.

Critics say the reform, one of the most broad-ranging to be attempted in recent years by any country in the Western Hemisphere, risks removing checks and balances on the ruling Morena party and allowing organised crime groups greater influence over the judicial system.

The reform reduces the number of Supreme Court judges to nine from 11, cuts the length of their terms to 12 years, abolishes a minimum age requirement of 35, and halves necessary legal practice to five years.

It also scraps some benefits for judicial workers and creates a five-person disciplinary tribunal, which critics argue is insufficient to oversee a 50,000-member judiciary.

Defensorxs president Miguel Meza said that the candidates his organisation had flagged revealed grave flaws in the government vetting system, which was meant to verify eligibility criteria including: Mexican citizenship by birth, a bachelor's degree in law, "good reputation", and a record clean of serious crime.

He said his organisation has been making its way through the list of candidates and had identified other problematic names that they had yet to publish.

Meza said aspiring judges were apparently not screened for foreign convictions or who they had legally represented.

He put much of the problem down to rushing the election.

"Everything we're seeing is the result of trying to fast-track this reform," Meza said.

Sheinbaum's office and Mexico's federal judiciary did not respond to a request for comment on the reform or the vetting.

Perhaps the candidate who has garnered the most headlines is Silvia Delgado, who represented the notorious El Chapo, former chief of the Sinaloa Cartel, in 2016.

She visited him weekly in prison to share updates before he was extradited to the United States and eventually sentenced to life in prison.

Now, she hopes to become a criminal court judge in Chihuahua.

On a recent afternoon in the border town of Ciudad Juarez, Delgado braved the sweltering heat to hand out flyers and chat to voters outside a local school.

A single mum, who raised four children and put herself through law school, Delgado strikes a charismatic figure, in a black skirt suit and chunky heels.

"I'm not corrupt," she said, "they can't burn you for having represented someone."

She said she considers her work representing El Chapo, which included filing a petition that he be provided a blanket in jail, to be in line with her professional duties.

Major drug cartel figure killed in clash with army

A leader of a notorious Mexican drug cartel who had a bounty on his head in the United States has died in a clash with army troops, authorities said yesterday.

Sinaloa state, where the powerful cartel of the same name is based, is enduring a war between two rival factions that has left some 1,200 people dead since September.

Jorge Humberto Figueroa was shot and killed on Friday in a raid carried out to arrest him, public safety secretary Omar Garcia Harfuch wrote on the social media platform X.

The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) had been offering up to $1mn for information leading to his arrest on suspicion of fentanyl trafficking and money laundering.

Figueroa was one of the masterminds of an infamous clash with the authorities in 2019 in the city of Culiacan, Harfuch said.

In that case, cartel members fought security forces who had arrested Ovidio Guzman, a son of Sinaloa cartel co-founder Joaquin "Chapo" Guzman.

Mexican authorities controversially released Ovidio Guzman at the time, saying that they wanted to avoid further bloodshed.

However, he ultimately was re-arrested in 2023 and extradited to the United States, where he remains in custody.

Mexican press reports said Figueroa belonged to a Sinaloa cartel faction run by the sons of the older Guzman, who is serving a life sentence in the United States.

This group has been fighting another faction led by heirs of cartel co-founder Ismael Zambada, who was lured to the United States in a sting operation in 2024 and arrested.

The newspaper *Reforma* said Figueroa was head of security for the faction led by Guzman's sons. **– *AFP***

Trump attacks past US policy in speech at West Point event

AFP/Reuters
West Point



Trump at the ceremony at West Point Military Academy in West Point, New York. **– *Reuters***

President Donald Trump lambasted previous US leaders and policies in a campaign-style speech yesterday to graduating Army officers, underscoring his determination to remould the apolitical military to his right-wing ideology.

The address to newly minted junior officers at the famed West Point academy in New York featured the annual event's traditional shout-outs to top students, jokes, and praise for the cadets' sporting achievements.

However, the 78-year-old Republican, who has used the first four months of his second term to attack critics and concentrate power in the White House, quickly turned to edgier topics.

The blistering rhetoric got only muted applause from the rows of grey-uniformed cadets.

Justifying his isolationist policies and mistrust of historic US alliances, Trump said that for at least two decades, US leaders have "dragged our military into missions ... wasting our time, money and souls".

Troops were "led by leaders who didn't have a clue in distant lands".

Trump also focused on his decision to rid the military of so-called DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) policies, which are meant to encourage participation by racial and sexual minorities in the ranks, including women.

The drive to rid the armed forces of what Trump derides as "woke" initiatives has also seen the removal from military academy bookshelves of scores of books that cover the painful US history of racism.

Trump told graduating cadets that his predecessors had been "abusing our soldiers with absurd ideological experiments".

"They subjected the armed forces to all manner of social projects and political causes while leaving our borders undefended," he said.

"All of that's ended. You know that," Trump said. "They're not even allowed to think about it anymore."

"The job of the US armed forces is not to host drag shows," he said. "The military's job is to dominate any foe, to annihilate any threat to America, anywhere."

Trump has successfully channelled disillusionment among Americans after the long wars in Afghanistan and Iraq triggered by the September 11, 2001, attacks.

He vowed at West Point that the US will not attempt to "spread democracy... at the point of a gun".

However, his post-9/11-era reset also includes unprecedented scorn for US allies in Europe and Asia, which he again said yesterday had been cheating the United States.

Trump took credit for rebuilding the Army and referenced his tariff-fuelled trade war while repeating his longstanding criticism of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) allies for not spending more on defence.

"We've been ripped off by every nation in the world on trade. We've been ripped off at the Nato level," Trump said. "We've been ripped off like no country has ever been ripped off, but they don't rip us off anymore."

Adding to the partisan tone of the speech, Trump wore one of his red election campaign hats throughout and talked up his November victory as a "great mandate" which "gives us the right to do what we want to do".

Army officers are not allowed to engage in politics and even when Trump paused for applause, the clapping from the cadets was often sporadic.

Those invited to speak briefly at Trump's podium kept their messages strictly personal – not so much as referring to the president.

However, the refashioning of the Pentagon, led by Trump's ultra-loyal defence secretary, Pete Hegseth, has caused open unease in some quarters.

Graham Parsons, a professor of philosophy at West Point, resigned this month, saying that the academy had "abandoned its core principles" to comply with White House ideological demands and that he was "ashamed".

New teaching guidelines on shunning discussion of racism or sexism, while insisting on promoting the idea of America as a constant force for good, "were brazen demands to indoctrinate, not educate", Parsons wrote in the *New York Times*.

Trump will preside over the Army's celebration of its 250th anniversary on June 14 with a parade on one of Washington's main thoroughfares.

The anniversary coincides with Trump's own birthday.

ICE detains dozens of migrants at courthouses

Federal immigration officials arrested dozens of immigrants following their immigration court hearings in multiple US cities this week, in operations that advocates said appeared to target people who had been in the country for less than two years.

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers detained migrants at courthouses in New York City, Phoenix, Los Angeles and Seattle, according to family members, attorneys and news reports.

In at least some of the arrests, immigration judges had just dropped active cases against migrants, family members and advocates said.

The move could potentially allow US authorities to put them in a fast-track deportation process known as expedited removal.

President Donald Trump, a Republican, aims to deport record numbers of immigrants in the US illegally but has complained that US courts and existing laws have slowed the effort.

ICE guidance issued earlier this year directed officers to consider all immigrants previously released for expedited removal if they had not affirmatively applied for asylum.

The operation showcases a new strategy to speed up deportations and bypass lengthier immigration processes.

A senior US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) official said that the effort aimed to deport immigrants allowed to enter the US under former president Joe Biden, a Democrat.

" ICE is now following the law and placing these illegal aliens in expedited removal, as they always should have been," the official said in a statement. – ***Reuters***

Ecuador's Noboa sworn in as full-term president

Business heir Daniel Noboa was sworn in for a full term as Ecuador's president yesterday, promising to press the South American country's fight against drug gangs and boost sluggish economic growth.

Noboa, elected in 2023 to finish out his predecessor's term, won an April vote by an unexpectedly wide margin, despite claims of fraud by his leftist rival.

In a ceremony at the National Assembly yesterday, he was sworn in by the body's president, Niels Olsen Peet.

Olsen placed a presidential sash over Noboa's shoulders and they raised their joined hands in a moment of celebration.

"The progressive reduction of homicides will be a non-negotiable goal. We will maintain our fight against drug trafficking, seize illegal weapons, ammunition, and explosives, and exercise greater control at the country's ports," Noboa told the assembly about his new term.

During his 18 months in office, Noboa declared war on criminal groups, using decrees to deploy the military on the streets, beefing up security at ports and lengthening sentences for drug crimes and terrorism.

He also inked a $4bn deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), sought to reduce a $4.6bn fiscal deficit and met with Chinese banks to discuss possible loans.

"We are creating a safe, stable, and competitive environment that fosters growth, protects investments, and guarantees real opportunities," Noboa said.

The 37-year-old has said cooperation with the United States, Israel and El Salvador will help the country fight drug trafficking and attract foreign investment.

Though Noboa has touted a 15% reduction in violent deaths during 2024, the first four months of 2025 saw a 58% spike in the figure, to 3,094, compared to the same period last year, according to government figures.

He has said the economy is set to grow 4% this year.

Trump administration puts new limits on reporters at Pentagon

Reuters
Washington

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth has issued orders that require journalists to have official escorts within much of the Pentagon building, the latest in a series of Trump administration restrictions placed on the press.

The measures, which take effect immediately, bar credentialed reporters from most of the Department of Defence (DoD) headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, unless they have an official approval and escort.

"While the Department remains committed to transparency, the Department is equally obligated to protect CSNI (classified intelligence) and sensitive information – the unauthorised disclosure of which could put the lives of US Service members in danger," Hegseth said in a memorandum.

He called the protection of classified national intelligence information and operational security "an unwavering imperative for the Department".

The Pentagon Press Association, a membership organisation representing the interests of the press corps covering the US military, said the new rules appeared to be a "direct attack on the freedom of the press".

"The decision is purportedly based on concerns about operational security. But the Pentagon Press Corps has had access to non-secured, unclassified spaces in the Pentagon for decades, under Republican and Democratic administrations, including in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks, without any concern about OP-SEC from DoD leadership," the statement said.

In response to a request for comment, Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell said: "These updated measures are a necessary step to protect sensitive information and to keep our US service members protected from preventable risks."

Since President Donald Trump returned to office in January, the Pentagon has investigated leaks that resulted in three officials being placed on administrative leave.

It has also required legacy media organisations, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, CNN and NBC News, to vacate their Pentagon office spaces in a new rotation system that brought in others, including outlets generally friendly to the Trump administration such as the *New York Post*, Breitbart, the Daily Caller and One America News Network.

The Trump administration says the move is intended to allow other media outlets the opportunity to report as resident members of the press corps.

More broadly, the Trump administration has deployed lie detector tests to investigate unclassified leaks, with some Department of Homeland Security officials being told they could be fired for refusing polygraphs, Reuters reported on Friday.

The White House says Trump will not tolerate leaks to the media and that federal employees who do so should be held accountable.

Hegseth's order on Friday also requires members of the Pentagon press corps to acknowledge a responsibility to protect national intelligence and sensitive information, and says they will be issued with new credentials that more prominently identify them as members of the press.

"We also anticipate a forthcoming announcement of additional security measures and enhanced scrutiny on the issuance of (credentials)," the memo said.

White House National Security Council cuts staff

Dozens of staffers were fired from the White House National Security Council (NSC) on Friday, as President Donald Trump moved to slash the size and scope of the once-powerful body, five sources briefed on the matter said.

Staff dealing with most major geopolitical issues, from Ukraine to Kashmir, were terminated in the afternoon, said the sources, who requested anonymity as they were not permitted to speak to the media.

The move came just weeks after Secretary of State Marco Rubio took over from Mike Waltz as national security adviser.

The NSC restructuring is expected to further reduce the agency's influence, transforming it from a powerful policymaking body into a small organisation focused more on implementing the president's agenda than on shaping it, the sources said.

In practice, the move is expected to grant more authority to the State Department, the Defence Department and other departments and agencies involved in diplomacy, national security and intelligence matters, the sources said.

The administration's aim is to reduce the size of the NSC to just a few dozen people.

Four sources with knowledge of the plans said they expect the final headcount at the NSC to come out to around 50 people.

The NSC is traditionally the main body used by presidents to coordinate national security strategy.

Its staff often make key decisions regarding America's approach to the world's most volatile conflicts and play a key role in keeping America safe.

The staffers who are cut from the agency will be moved to other positions in government, two of the sources said. **– *Reuters***

WORLD

Tears, laughter as Ukrainian PoWs return

AFP
Chernigiv Region

Waxy and emaciated, Konstantin Steblev spoke to his mother for the first time in three years after being released as part of the biggest ever prisoner swap between Russia and Ukraine.

"Hello mum, how are you?," the 31-year-old soldier said, moments after stepping back onto Ukrainian soil on Friday.

"I love you. Don't be sad. It wasn't my fault. I promised I would come back safe and sound," he said, smiling but with watery eyes.

Steblev, who was captured at the start of Russia's invasion, was one of 390 military and civilian prisoners released in exchange for 390 sent back to Russia.

More swaps took place yesterday and are expected today as well to bring the total to 1,000 for 1,000 as agreed in talks between Russia and Ukraine in Istanbul last week.

Steblev arrived with the other former captives by coach at a local hospital where hundreds of relatives were waiting, shouting, crying and singing "Congratulations!"

During the journey back to Ukraine, Steblev told AFP he experienced "indescribable" emotions.

"It's simply crazy. Crazy feelings," he said.

During his years of captivity, Steblev said he managed to keep going thanks to his wife.

"She knows I am strong and that I am not going to give up just like that," he said, adding that now he just wants to be with his family.

"It's my absolute priority," he said.

After that, he said it would be up to his wife to decide on the next steps.

"She will tell me and will show me how to act in future," he said.

Thin, tired and looking slightly lost, the freshly released prisoners filed into a local hospital for medical checks.

But Olena and Oleksandr stayed outside, locked in a tight embrace despite the cameras pointed at them.

They said they had not seen each other in 22 months since Oleksandr was captured by Russia.

"I am in seventh heaven," the 45-year-old said in his wife's arms.

He said his dream now was to "eat... eat and spend time with my family".

As the buses arrived at the hospital, relatives of soldiers who are still in prison ran towards the freed men to show them images of their loved ones and ask if they had seen them during their captivity.

Some women walked away crying when they failed to get any news.

Some know that their relatives are jailed but others have no news at all and desperately hope for any scrap of information.

Moments after being reunited with her husband Andriy after three years apart, Elia, 33, embraced the tearful mother of a soldier who had no news about her son.

When she saw her husband, Elia said her "heart was beating out of my chest" and she cried with joy.

"I have been waiting so long for this," she said.

Several former prisoners of war interviewed by AFP in the past have spoken of harsh conditions and torture in Russian prisons.

Elia is now thinking about the future and about having a child with her husband.

But she said she knew that the path to rehabilitation would be a long one for him.

"He has an empty stare but I know they did not break him. The guys with him told me he was very strong," she said.



Women embrace Ukrainian prisoners of war as they return after a swap in an undisclosed location in Ukraine yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Russia, Ukraine swap 307 soldiers on 2nd day

Reuters
Moscow/Chernihiv

Russia and Ukraine each exchanged 307 of their service personnel yesterday on the second day of an extended prisoner swap set to be the largest in the three-year war.

US President Donald Trump has suggested the swap could herald a new phase in stop-start efforts to negotiate a peace deal between Moscow and Kyiv. There should be 1,000 prisoners released on each side over three days.

Yesterday's swap was announced by Russia's defence ministry, and separately by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in a post on social media platform Telegram.

"Tomorrow we expect more," Zelensky wrote. "Our goal is to return each and every one of us from Russian captivity."

Reuters Television footage showed freed Ukrainian servicemen at a rendezvous point inside Ukraine coming off buses draped in blue and yellow national flags as waiting family members chanted "Welcome!"

Serviceman Dmytro Havrylenko held his son, and his mother, in a very long embrace. "I am shocked to be honest," he said. "These were 17 difficult months, very difficult. But everything is fine."

Women held up photos of missing servicemen and gathered around returnees to ask about their whereabouts.

One woman, identifying herself as Yana, said no-one had any news of her husband, missing since Ukrainian forces launched an incursion into Russia's Kursk region last year.

"Maybe the boys will recognise his photo and share some information," she said. "We're here for the second day. Maybe today."

Footage released by Zelensky's office showed one released serviceman in tears and being consoled by a woman in military uniform. People assigned to greet the soldiers handed them cellphones, so they could call relatives. "I can't believe I'm home," one man said.

A short video released by the Russian defence ministry showed Russian service personnel disembarking from buses and posing with the Russian flag, as well as the flags of the Soviet Union and the Russian Empire.

The first part of the exchange took place on Friday when Russia and Ukraine each released 390 prisoners, including 120 civilians, and said they would free more in the coming days.

On Friday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia would be ready to hand Ukraine a draft document outlining conditions for a long-term peace agreement once the current prisoner exchange was completed.

Yesterday's release took place a few hours after the Ukrainian capital was rocked by an overnight Russian bombardment using long-range drones and ballistic missiles, in which 15 people were injured.

The prisoner exchange was agreed at short-lived talks in Istanbul on May 16 between Russian and Ukrainian delegations, who had come together at the urging of Trump.

Pakistan to offer US firms concessions on mining investment in talks over tariffs

Reuters
Islamabad

Pakistan plans to offer concessions to US companies to invest in its mining sector as part of negotiations with Washington over tariffs, its commerce minister told Reuters, as Islamabad seeks to capitalise on the Trump administration's interest in boosting trade with South Asia.

Pakistan faces a potential 29% tariff on exports to the United States due to a $3bn trade surplus with the world's biggest economy, under tariffs announced by Washington last month on countries around the world. Tariffs were subsequently suspended for 90 days so negotiations could take place.

Pakistan's Commerce Minister Jam Kamal said that Islamabad will offer US businesses opportunities to invest in mining projects primarily in Pakistan's Balochistan province through joint ventures with local companies, providing concessions like lease grants.

The minister said that would be in addition to efforts to increase imports from the United States, particularly cotton and edible oils, which are currently in short supply in Pakistan.

Pakistan would put its offer of concessions for mining investment to US officials during talks over tariffs in the coming weeks.

Kamal did not give further information on the bidding process of these mines or other details.

"There is untapped potential for US companies in Pakistan, from mining machinery to hydrocarbon ventures," he said in an interview with Reuters conducted on Thursday. Pakistan's Reko Diq copper and gold mining project in Balochistan seeks up to $2bn in financing, including $500mn to $1bn from the US Export-Import Bank, with term sheets expected by early in the third quarter of this year, its project director told Reuters last month.

The mine could generate $70bn in free cash flow and $90bn in operating cash flow over its lifespan.

US President Donald Trump has said that he's working on "big deals" with both Pakistan and India, following Washington's key role in brokering a ceasefire between Pakistan and India earlier this month following the worst fighting in decades between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

"The previous US administration focused more on India, but Pakistan is now being recognised as a serious trade partner," Kamal said.

Pakistan will gradually lower tariffs in its upcoming federal budget, Kamal said.

He said that the United States has not specified trade barriers or priority sectors. The US embassy in Islamabad did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

French premier to re-examine proposed reform

French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou said yesterday he would re-examine a proposed reform after taxi drivers threatened to step up protest actions, including paralysing access to Paris airports and the Roland Garros tennis tournament.

French taxi drivers have over the last week blocked roads at points across the country in an increasingly acrimonious standoff with the government about payments for transporting patients, which for many cab drivers form a major part of their businesses. "We'll be working on the details of the decisions, measures and directions that need to be taken over the coming weeks," Bayrou told journalists after meeting with taxi federations.

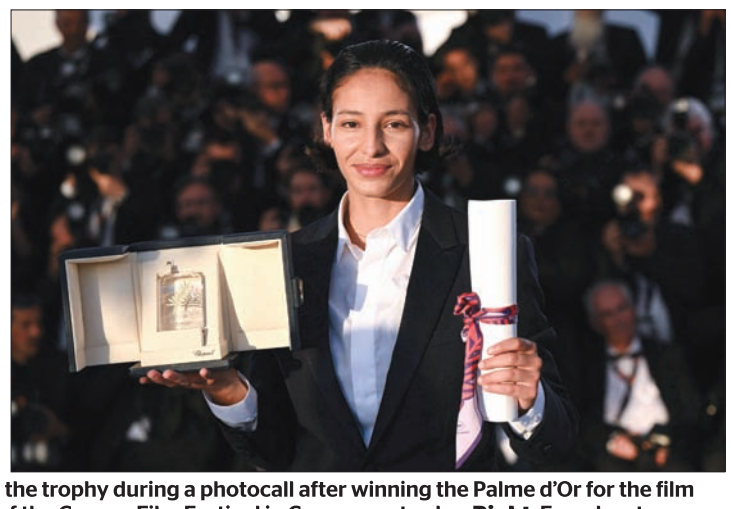
"They have ideas for making savings," he added.

Earlier yesterday, cab drivers had threatened further blockades, notably of Paris airports and of today's first round of Roland Garros.

Iranian filmmaker Panahi wins top prize at Cannes

Brazil's Wagner Moura is best actor; France's Nadia Melliti best actress





Iranian director and screenwriter and producer Jafar Panahi poses with the trophy during a photocall after winning the Palme d'Or for the film *It Was Just an Accident* during the closing ceremony at the 78th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes yesterday. Right: French actress Nadia Melliti poses during a photocall with her trophy after she won the Best Actress Prize for her part in the film *The Little Sister*. The best actor winner was absent. (AFP)

It Was Just an Accident by dissident Iranian director Jafar Panahi won the Palme d'Or for best film at the Cannes Festival yesterday.

The highly political but wry film tells the tale of five ordinary Iranians confronted with a man they believed tortured them in jail.

Panahi, who has been imprisoned twice in his home country and banned from making films, used his acceptance speech to urge Iranians to work towards freedom.

"Let's set aside all problems, all differences. What matters most right now is our country and the freedom of our country."

Brazil's Wagner Moura won the best actor award for his performance in police thriller *The Secret Agent*, while France's Nadia Melliti clinched the gong for best actress.

Melliti, appearing in her first film, plays a struggling 17-year-old Muslim girl in Paris in Hafsia Herzi's widely acclaimed *The Little Sister*.

Sentimental Value by Norway's Joachim Trier, a moving family drama given a 19-minute standing ovation on Thursday, picked up the second prize Grand Prix.

The victory for Panahi is a huge endorsement for the director whose films are routinely banned, but he has vowed to return to Tehran after the festival despite the risks of prosecution.

Yesterday's closing ceremony was the final act of a drama-filled day in Cannes that saw the glitzy seaside resort suffer a more than five-hour power cut.

The outage knocked out traffic lights and had visitors and locals scrambling for paper money because cash machines were out-of-order and restaurants were left unable to process card payments.

Local officials said a suspected arson attack on the substation about 12km northwest of central Cannes had caused a major fire at around 2am.

Along the coast in the opposite direction, a pylon which carries a high-voltage line was discovered with three of its four legs damaged, the local prosecutor's office announced.

German director Mascha Schilinski joked that she had "had difficulty writing her speech" because of the black-out as she accepted the jury prize for widely hailed *Sound of Falling*.

Beyond the official competition, the French Riviera has been buzzing with A-listers this year including Tom Cruise, pop sensation Charli XCX and model Bella Hadid.

Beyond the beach parties, the wars in Ukraine and Gaza as well as US President Donald Trump have been major talking-points.

The Gaza war has been on the minds of some of the festival's guests, with more than 900 cinema figures signing an open letter denouncing "genocide" in the Palestinian territory, according to organisers.

Cannes jury head Juliette Binoche, *Schindler's List* star Ralph Fiennes, US indie director Jim Jarmusch and WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange — in town to present a documentary he stars in — were among the signatories. But UN special rapporteur for the occupied Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, said the festival felt like a "bubble of indifference" when she visited it Friday.

Other secondary awards were announced before yesterday's closing ceremony.

The first Chechen film to screen at the Cannes Festival — *Imago* — won best documentary, while the film about the life of Assange — *The Six Billion Dollar Man* — picked up a special jury prize on Friday.

In the secondary Un Certain Regard section, Chilean filmmaker Diego Cespedes won the top prize for *The Mysterious Gaze of the Flamingo*, which follows a group of trans women living in a desert mining town in the 1980s.

On a lighter note, a sheepdog which features in Icelandic family drama *The Love That Remains* won the Palm Dog prize for canine performers in festival films.

Icelandic director Hlynur Palmason cast his own pet, Panda, in his poignant story about a couple navigating a separation.

THE WINNERS

The 78th Cannes film festival ended yesterday on the French Riviera with the award of its top prize, the Palme d'Or.

Here is a list of the winners in the festival's main competition:

- **Palme d'Or**: Jafar Panahi for *It Was Just an Accident* (Iran)
- **Grand Prix**: Joachim Trier for *Sentimental Value* (Norway)
- **Jury prize**: Oliver Laxe for *Sirat* (Spain-France) and Mascha Schilinski for *Sound of Falling* (Germany)
- **Best director**: Kleber Mendonca Filho for *The Secret Agent* (Brazil)
- **Best actress**: Nadia Melliti for *The Little Sister* (France)
- **Best actor**: Wagner Moura for *The Secret Agent* (Brazil)
- **Special prize**: Bi Gan for *Resurrection* (China)
- **Best screenplay**: Jean-Pierre and Luc Dardenne for *Young Mothers* (Belgium)
- **Camera d'Or for best first film**: Hasan Hadi for *The President's Cake* (Iraq). Special mention for *My Father's Shadow* by Akinola Davies (Nigeria-Britain)
- **Best short film**: Tawfeek Barhom for *I Am Glad You're Dead Now* (Palestine-Greece-France)

Yunus calls for multiparty support as pressure grows

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh's interim leader, who took over after a mass uprising last year, was to meet powerful parties pressuring his government later yesterday, days after he reportedly threatened to quit.

Muhammad Yunus, the 84-year-old Nobel Peace Prize winner who leads the caretaker government as its chief adviser until elections are held, has called for rival political parties jostling for power to give him their full support. His press secretary Shafiqul Alam confirmed Yunus would meet leaders of the powerful Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), as well as leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami, the Muslim-majority nation's largest Islamist party. "He is meeting BNP and Jamaat leaders this evening," Alam told AFP.

No agenda for the talks has been released.

But the BNP, seen as the frontrunners in elections, are pushing heavily for polls to be held by December. They would be the first elections since a student-led revolt forced then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina to flee in August 2024. Microfinance pioneer Yunus, who has led the country after returning from exile at the behest of protesters, says he has a duty to implement democratic reforms before elections.

Yunus has said polls could be held as early as December, but that holding them later — with a deadline of June — would give more time for those changes. The South Asian nation of around 170mn people has been in political turmoil since Hasina fled, but this week has seen an escalation with rival parties protesting on the streets of the capital Dhaka with a string of competing demands. "Our senior members will be there for the talks," said BNP media official Shairul Kabir Khan.

Jamaat-e-Islami's media spokesperson Ataur Rahman Sarkar also confirmed that they were invited. On Thursday, a political ally and sources in his office said Yunus had threatened to resign if Bangladesh's parties and factions did not back him.

That came a day after BNP supporters held large-scale protests against the interim government for the first time demanding an election date. "If he is unable to announce a specific election date by December, we will reconsider our support for his administration," senior BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed said in an interview on a private TV channel broadcast on Friday.

According to local media and military sources, army chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman this week also said that elections should be held by December — aligning with BNP demands.

Bangladesh has a long history of military coups, and the army retains a powerful role in the country. Jamaat-e-Islami loyalists have also protested against the government, demanding the abolition of a women's commission seeking equality. Nahid Islam, leader of the National Citizen Party — made up of many of the students who spearheaded the uprising against Hasina — said his party meanwhile wanted later elections to give time for change.

The students wanted "fundamental reforms" to Bangladesh's system of governance, Islam, an ally of Yunus, told reporters on Friday, according to the *Prothom Alo* newspaper. But he said rival parties considered the overthrow of Hasina to be "regime change and are trying to assume power" under the existing constitution. "There are efforts to create an unstable situation in the country," Islam added. "We must remain united and not fall into the trap."

Hasina, 77, remains in self-imposed exile in India. She has defied an arrest warrant to face trial for crimes against humanity related to last year's police crackdown on protesters during which at least 1,400 were killed.

Vyshyvanka Day in London



People hold Ukrainian flags during the 12th Annual Vyshyvanka March in London. Ukrainians in London have marked Vyshyvanka Day, which is dedicated to the embroidered shirt – part of the Ukrainian national costume.

Hong Kong to open universities to more foreign students after US ban

AFP
Hong Kong

Hong Kong has said it will open its universities to more international students, highlighting those affected by the US government's move this week to block Harvard from enrolling foreign nationals. The sharp escalation in US President Donald Trump's longstanding feud with the prestigious university came as tensions simmer between Washington and Beijing over trade and other issues.

The Trump administration's decision on Thursday - which was temporarily halted by a US judge after Harvard sued - has thrown the future of thousands of foreign students and the lucrative income stream they provide into doubt.

On Friday, Hong Kong Education Secretary Christine Choi called on universities in the Chinese city to welcome "outstanding students from all over the world". "For international students affected by the United States' student admission policy, the Education Bureau (EDB) has appealed to all universities in Hong Kong to provide facilitation measures for eligible students," Choi said in a statement, noting the ban on Harvard's admission of international students.

She said local universities were making use of government measures, including relaxing the maximum limits on foreign students to attract more to Hong Kong. Hong Kong University of Science and Technology on Friday invited international students enrolled at Harvard, as well as anyone with offers to attend the elite school, to continue their studies at HKUST.

"HKUST is extending this opportunity to ensure talented students can pursue their educational goals without disruption," it said in a statement. The university "will provide unconditional offers, streamlined admission procedures, and academic support to facilitate a seamless transition for interested students", it added.

Harvard is ranked number one in US News and World Report's most recent list of the world's top universities, while HKUST is 105 out of more than 2,000 ranked.

President Trump is furious at Harvard for rejecting his administration's push for oversight on admissions and hiring amid his claims the school is a hotbed of anti-Semitism and "woke" liberal ideology. A US judge on Friday halted the administration's move to prevent Harvard from admitting foreign students after the university sued, calling the government's action unlawful.

US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said Thursday that the administration's decision would hold Harvard "accountable for fostering violence, anti-Semitism, and coordinating with the Chinese Communist Party on its campus".

Beijing condemned the "politicisation of educational cooperation", adding that the move by Washington would "only harm the image and international standing of the United States". Around 1,300 Chinese students are enrolled at Harvard, around a fifth of its international student body, according to university data. Hundreds of thousands more attend other US colleges and universities, long viewed by many in China as beacons of academic freedom and rigour.



China's Premier Li Qiang (centre left) walks with Indonesia's Minister of Investment and Downstream Policy Rosan Roeslani upon his arrival at the Halim Perdanakusuma International Airport in Jakarta yesterday.

China, Indonesia will promote 'true multilateralism': Premier Li Qiang

Reuters
Shanghai

China's Premier Li Qiang said yesterday that China and Indonesia will promote "true multilateralism", the official Xinhua news agency reported, as he landed in Jakarta on a two-day visit to southeast Asia's largest economy.

China has intensified engagement with countries in the region since US President Donald Trump announced hefty import tariffs on its global trading partners earlier this year. Some levies have since been delayed, while China and the US agreed this month to pause some of their tariffs. Jakarta, whose biggest trading partner is China, has offered the US a number of concessions in a bid to soften tariffs against Indonesia.

At a business leaders' event later on Saturday, at which Li was present, Indonesia President Prabowo Subianto said relations between Beijing and Jakarta were key for regional stability, adding that Indonesia views China as an important partner in developing industry and technology.

He also praised China's role in defending the interests of developing countries and its stand against "imperialism" and "colonialism." Prabowo and Li will hold a meeting on Sunday to discuss how to strengthen Indonesia-China relations, Indonesian investment minister Rosan Roeslani said in a statement. Following the visit to Jakarta, Li will travel to Malaysia to attend the Asean-GCC-China Summit, Xinhua reported.

Indonesia plans to announce economic stimulus measures on June 5 to revive activity and boost consumer purchasing power, hoping to push economic growth to around 5% this quarter, the Coordinating Ministry of Economic Affairs said on Saturday.

"These programmes are prepared to encourage growth by increasing consumption," chief economic minister Airlangga Hartarto said in a statement, adding that launching the measures before a school holiday starting in late June would provide momentum to boost purchasing power.

Southeast Asia's largest economy grew 4.87% in the first quarter from the same period last year, its weakest in more than three years. The central bank trimmed its 2025 growth forecast to between 4.6% and 5.4% from a 4.7-5.5% range.

The ministry is still calculating the size of the stimulus package, which is meant to boost growth in the second and third quarters, a spokesperson said. The incentives include a 50% discount on electricity bills for around 79.3mn households and food handouts for 18.3mn lower-income households in June and July.

The government also plans to give cash transfer for low-income workers and a discount on work accident insurance for workers in labour-intensive industries. To boost tourism, the government said there will be discounts on airfare, train and sea transportation rates during the school holiday, which runs through mid-July, and discounts on highway tolls for 110mn users in June and July, the ministry said.

Rare wild cattle herded in Cambodia by helicopter

AFP
Phnom Penh

A helicopter successfully herded 16 critically endangered banteng onto a truck in Cambodia for the first time, conservationists said, marking a "significant achievement" in a country with high rates of deforestation. Banteng are a type of wild cattle native to Southeast Asia and listed as critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List of threatened species.

Their natural habitat is forests and grasslands, but only a few thousand remain in the wild and they are mostly threatened by hunting, logging and industry.

Cambodia has lost around 33 percent of its tree cover since 2000, according to Global Forest Watch, as the government allows firms to clear vast tracts of land - including in protected zones.

Conservation groups Rising Phoenix and Siem Pang said that 16 banteng found in the wild were herded over three days last week through a "mass-capture funnel trap" onto a truck before being relocated to a wildlife sanctuary. For the first time, a helicopter was used to guide them through the funnel.

The operation took place in Siem Pang in northeastern Cambodia. The conservation groups said that the method "opens the way for further such operations to relocate Banteng trapped in isolated forest patches elsewhere in the country". They added that the banteng will be monitored and protected at the Siem Pang Wildlife Sanctuary.



Conservation group Rising Phoenix shows a helicopter during an operation to herd banteng, a type of wild cattle native to Southeast Asia, in Siem Pang in northeastern Cambodia.



Banteng, a type of wild cattle native to Southeast Asia, in Siem Pang in northeastern Cambodia, during a herding operation.

India's monsoon rains arrive 8 days early, earliest in 16 years

Monsoon rains hit the coast of India's southernmost state of Kerala on Saturday, eight days earlier than usual, marking the earliest arrival in 16 years and providing the promise of a bumper harvest and relief from a gruelling heatwave.

The monsoon, the lifeblood of the country's $4tn economy, delivers nearly 70% of the rain that India needs to water farms and replenish aquifers and reservoirs. Nearly half of India's farmland, without any irrigation cover, depends on the annual June-September rains to grow a number of crops. Summer rains usually begin to lash Kerala around June 1 before spreading nationwide by mid-July, allowing farmers to plant crops such as rice, corn, cotton, soybeans and sugarcane. The onset of the southwest monsoon over Kerala on May 24 is its earliest onset since May 23, 2009, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said yesterday. The monsoon has covered Kerala and parts of neighbouring Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, as well as parts of the northeastern state of Mizoram, the IMD said. Conditions are favourable for the monsoon's further spread into Goa, parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, the northeastern states, West Bengal, and the remaining parts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over the next 2-3 days.

Surplus pre-monsoon rainfall and an early monsoon onset will help farmers, especially in the southern and central states, to sow summer crops earlier than usual, said Ashwini Bansod, vice president for commodities research at Phillip Capital India, a Mumbai-based brokerage. "Abundant soil moisture and early sowing could potentially boost crop yields," Bansod said. —**Reuters**

Indian troops shoot dead Pakistani crossing frontier

Indian border troops shot dead a Pakistani man who they said had crossed the international frontier and did not stop when challenged, the force said yesterday. The shooting comes two weeks after arch-rivals India and Pakistan agreed a ceasefire after a four-day conflict, in which more than 70 people were killed in missile, drone and artillery fire. India's Border Security Force (BSF) said its troops on Friday evening had spotted "one suspicious person advancing towards the border fence", which lies beyond the international frontier in Gujarat state's Banaskantha district.

"They challenged the intruder, but he continued to advance, prompting them to open fire", the BSF said in a statement. "The intruder was neutralised on the spot".

A photograph released by the force showed a dead man with greying hair.

The recent conflict between the nuclear-armed rivals was triggered by an attack on tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir on April 22, the deadliest on civilians in the contested Muslim-majority territory in decades. New Delhi blamed Islamabad for backing the militants it said carried out the attack, charges that Pakistan denied.

COMMENT

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GULF TIMES

US economic engine remains powerful despite fiscal and structural risks

International Monetary Fund (IMF) has cautioned that the US fiscal deficits are too large and the country needs to tackle its "ever-increasing" debt burden.

International Monetary Fund First Deputy Managing Director Gita Gopinath in a recent interview with the *Financial Times* noted that the United States was still impacted by "very elevated" trade policy uncertainty despite "positive developments" such as President Donald Trump's administration rolling back tariffs on China and striking a US-UK economic deal.

According to the US Treasury fiscal data website, the country has accumulated a $36.8tn national debt, and the federal debt to GDP ratio currently stands at 122%.

In April, the IMF slashed its United States' growth forecast along with most other countries over the impact of US tariffs, while warning that further trade tensions would slow growth further.

Moody's also downgraded the US sovereign credit rating last week due to concerns about the nation's growing, $36tn debt pile.

Recently, it cut the US credit rating by one notch, citing rising debt and interest payments that outpace those of similarly rated sovereigns.

The downgrade to 'Aa1' from 'Aaa' follows a change in the outlook on the sovereign in 2023 due to wider fiscal deficit and higher interest payments. The ratings agency cited the failure of successive US administrations and Congress to agree on measures to reverse the trend of large annual fiscal deficits and growing interest costs.

The country has accumulated a $36.8tn national debt and the federal debt to GDP ratio currently stands at 122%

However, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent dismissed Moody's downgrade of the US sovereign credit rating, saying President Trump's administration would ensure US economic growth outpaced its debt.

"I don't put much credence in the Moody's" downgrade, Bessent said on CNN's State of the Union programme.

Bessent also said the US tax-cut bill would spur economic growth that would outpace what the nation owed.

Economists say the spiralling US debt and fiscal deficit present several short, medium, and long-term risks, both domestically and globally. These risks impact financial markets, economic stability, monetary policy, and geopolitical influence.

As the government issues more debt to finance deficits, demand for capital will increase. This will probably lead to higher interest rates as investors demand greater compensation for risk and inflation. Higher rates negatively impacts mortgages, business loans, and credit, potentially slowing economic growth.

Another major roadblock due to spiralling debt and fiscal deficit will be in the form of debt servicing burden, economists point out. As debt grows, so does the cost of servicing it. The US is already spending hundreds of billions annually on interest alone.

Rising rates may exponentially increase this burden, diverting funds from infrastructure, education, or defence.

If deficits are monetised or financed by printing money, inflation will rise. Persistent inflation erodes purchasing power and can slow down the economy. Although recent inflation in many countries (including the US) was supply-driven, fiscal-driven inflation is a long-term risk if debt keeps growing unchecked.

Since the US economy is deeply integrated into the global financial system, a crisis in United States' debt markets could possibly trigger global financial instability, particularly in emerging markets that hold US treasuries or rely on dollar funding.

That said, many economists point out that the US economy remains fundamentally strong — driven by a unique combination of structural advantages, institutional resilience, and global influence.

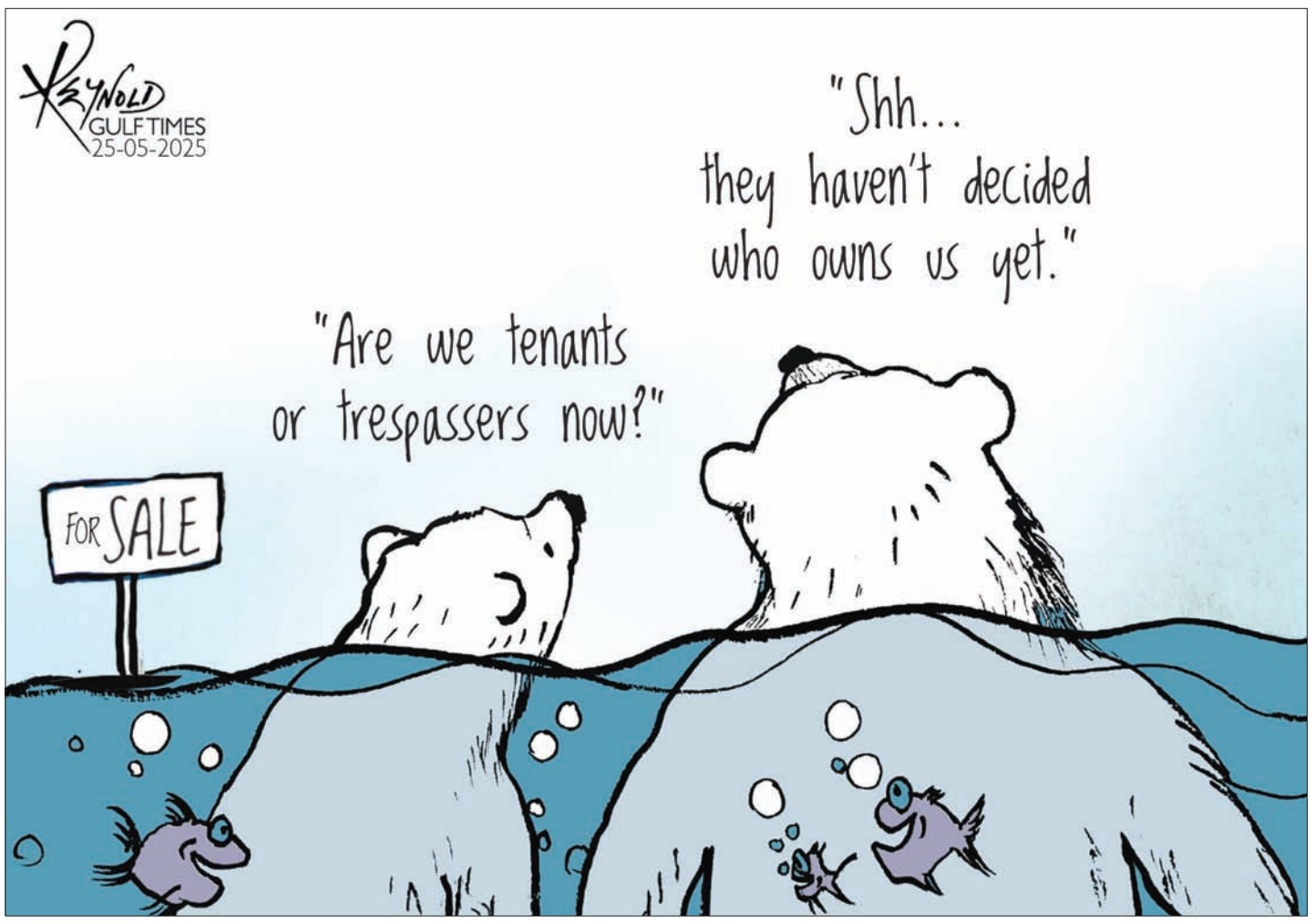
This is despite the current economic challenges faced by the US such as high public debt, fiscal deficits, and past inflationary pressures.

Deep capital markets, world-class financial institutions, and transparent regulatory frameworks support investment and entrepreneurship in the United States.

While the US faces genuine fiscal and structural risks, its underlying economic engine remains powerful. No other country combines innovation, capital depth, labour dynamism, and global influence as effectively as the United States now — making it both a key driver of global growth and a relative safe haven amid uncertainties.

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US rollback on climate justice opens pockets of resistance

- **Trump scraps Biden focus on environmental justice**
- **Pollution and extreme heat hit poor hardest**
- **Backers hope states, cities, philanthropists fill gap**

By Carey L Biron
Washington

Seen from a rumbling elevated train, the capital's Brentwood district resembles a patchwork quilt of vast, dusty lots, each choked with dump trucks, industrial trailers, maintenance sheds and more.

Now plans are afoot for yet another.

This one will house hundreds of school buses — and it is one lot way too many for 62-year-old Sharon Edwards, who monitors local air quality to alert her neighbours about the health risks.

"It lets them know this is what we're inhaling, and probably what's hurting your health and your children's health, and your unborn children," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation outside her two-storey brick home.

Edwards is part of a growing "environmental justice" movement, agitating for poor areas and communities of colour that tend to suffer disproportionately from pollution, be it living near dirty highways or in areas open to floods and extreme heat.

The movement was embraced under President Joe Biden, who mandated that 40% of federal clean-energy and climate-investment benefits go to marginalised communities.

That money helped boost energy efficiency in poor homes, replace harmful lead drinking water pipes or, as in Brentwood, address industrial pollution impacting community health.

But his successor Donald Trump has killed off these efforts, putting a brake on environmental justice policies as part of his broader White House drive to root out "diversity, equity and inclusion" initiatives.

The fallout will hit Brentwood.

Just 5 miles north of the White House, the community is part of an area that is home to half the city's industrial land, according to Empower DC, a nonprofit, along with some of the city's poorer neighbourhoods.

Local campaigns won tangible change during the Biden years, according to Empower DC community organiser Anthony David.

An abandoned school became a community centre, due to open this year, while the city began investigating a chemical facility that had drawn heavy local protests.

Now, Trump's volte face has left a question mark over such initiatives, in particular the future of the air monitoring it helped locals conduct these past two years.

"We were planning on doing another round, but we won't be able to — at least not in that specific way," David said.

"Of course we're still committed to that work, but we have to figure out how it fits into our other campaigns."

'We've been through this'

In April, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin cancelled more than $6bn in grants related to environmental justice — including air quality monitoring in dozens of cities — saying they had limited effect.

The EPA did not respond to a query on whether the affected grants would shift into other programs. Draft budget bills under debate in Congress likewise strip out funding for environmental justice, according to watchdog group Earthjustice.

While Trump's prohibition on this federal funding and its related data gathering remain the subject of lawsuits, advocates of environmental justice say their story is far from over.

"There are conversations going on right now among community organisers and community-based organisations on how we will navigate this," said South Carolina pastor Leo Woodberry, who has spearheaded environmental justice work for decades.

"Many African Americans, when we speak, we say we've been through this kind of situation before, and we've been able to do amazing work."

His group has had two federal grants frozen — hindering community plans for renewable energy and energy efficiency upgrades — and had to eliminate two rural outreach positions.

For now, Woodberry has few ways to offset the cuts beyond a commitment to "just work a lot more on a voluntary basis."

To the states

The fight for environmental justice stretches back decades, but the focus moved to the core of Biden's federal policymaking.

Ryan Hathaway, who was director for environmental justice at his White House Council on Environmental Quality, said federal investments over the past four years had surpassed their target, with upwards of 70% going to disadvantaged communities.

But he counters criticism about what impact the funding has thus far delivered, saying work has only just got going.

Local government, nonprofits, philanthropists and more are also in place now, he said, eager to keep up the good work.

"The momentum of this work has just changed locations," he said.

Many states have set up environmental justice infrastructure in recent years, said Sacoby Wilson, a public health professor at the University of Maryland.

He pointed to mapping tools in North Carolina tracking impacts in poor communities, as well as official environmental justice commissions or offices in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

In addition, laws covering "cumulative impacts" in California, New Jersey and elsewhere let regulators assess and tally the historical damage of environmental pollution in poor communities rather than just investigate individual pollutants.

"The fact that we've gone from boom to bust doesn't mean the movement will be a bust," Wilson said. "We can really still do those same things, but you have to move it to the state level."

Donors such as Nathan Cummings Foundation will keep funding environmental justice, while nonprofits such as the National Equity Atlas are starting to backfill some of the Trump hole on data collection.

In California and New Jersey, the state governments remain committed.

"We have long recognised that advancing environmental justice — and our policies and priorities overall — requires meaningful collaboration with communities," said Yana Garcia, California secretary for environmental protection, by email.

Historically, the federal EPA has "shared this sensibility", she said. "We're hopeful that they return." — Thomson Reuters Foundation



US President Donald Trump's volte face has left a question mark over initiatives, in particular the future of the air monitoring it helped locals conduct these past two years.

COMMENT

50 years on, QNA marks a Golden Jubilee of trusted media and national progress



HE Director-General of QNA Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi.

Qatar News Agency (QNA) will celebrate today its Golden Jubilee, marking 50 years of achievements since its founding on 25 May 1975, during which it has attained a prominent regional and international status. Since its establishment, QNA has served as an official platform for broadcasting the country's news, development, and accomplishments domestically and abroad, playing an active role in shaping a modern image of Qatar on regional and international stages.

Launched under Amiri Decree No 94 of 1975, QNA has embraced a clear mission: to deliver accurate and reliable news content that reflects the State's policies and its approach of transparency and openness to the world. Throughout its development, QNA has remained committed to strong foundations and enduring principles of accuracy, responsibility, credibility, and integrity in reporting and covering events both locally and globally. The agency has consistently worked to strengthen the role of national media as a key pillar of comprehensive development.

As it marks its Golden Jubilee, the state's official news agency proudly and confidently reflects on the media milestones it has achieved over the past decades. Since its launch 50 years ago, QNA has not remained confined to its founding framework but has embarked on a continuous journey of growth, modernisation, and development to keep pace with media and technological advancements, reinforcing its role as a leading news platform that provides timely and comprehensive coverage of both local and global events.

QNA was quick to recognise the challenges posed by the rise of digital media, with its widespread reach and accessibility, attracting vast audiences worldwide. In response to this reality, and as part of its ongoing development plans, the agency entered a significant partnership with global tech giant Microsoft last October, expanding its use of AI tools across its departments. This collaboration aims to align with global advancements in AI usage, particularly in media and journalism, empowering QNA to lead in efficiency, precision, and innovation in media production, and to support its ambition to remain at the forefront of digital transformation in the industry.

Further reinforcing its modernisation strategy, QNA launched a revamped website and mobile app in December 2024 to enhance its digital presence and deliver advanced media content utilising the latest technologies. The new website is user-friendly and technologically up to date, featuring an AI-powered chatbot to provide readers with quick and accurate information. New sections have been added for easier access to local and international news, including dedicated tabs for the activities of His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Deputy Amir, His Excellency the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and His Excellency the Shura Council Speaker.

In keeping with technological advancements in modern digital media, QNA has made it a priority to stay updated with the latest developments in the field. In this context, it has launched its official accounts on various social media platforms, including Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, Telegram, Snapchat, and WhatsApp.

QNA has also created its own YouTube channel, in addition to its news services available through its mobile application and website. These initiatives continue its pioneering role in providing specialised content of interest to readers, alongside its comprehensive coverage of regional and international events.

QNA has also launched its news bulletins in three new languages: French, German and Spanish. As a result, it now offers its news services in five major global languages: Arabic, English, French, German and Spanish. Additionally, it provides news content in 29 languages on its website.

QNA's local news unit covers political and social events and conferences related to areas such as health, education and labour. It also produces reports, interviews, and exclusive features with ministers, state officials, visiting dignitaries, foreign ambassadors in Qatar and Qatari ambassadors abroad.

Digital media platforms are a hallmark of QNA, serving as powerful tools for disseminating news and facilitating instant communication with audiences both locally and internationally. These platforms and digital media channels allow for diverse news formats, such as images, videos, and infographics, which help clarify events and trends.

The Digital Content Unit at QNA keeps pace with important news and events in Qatar and abroad by producing visually engaging designs that highlight key aspects of stories. For example, the unit creates short videos covering visits, tours, and official receptions of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

A dedicated sports account has been created on the platform X, featuring all sports events published in the agency's bulletin.

In June 2024, QNA received an award for innovation in the use of AI. It has also garnered numerous other awards and honours, particularly in recent years. These accolades reflect the recognition QNA enjoys both in the Arab world and internationally and affirm its excellence across all areas of media.

Domestically, QNA has been a reliable source for national news and has capably covered all political, economic, cultural, and sporting events at home. It has contributed to promoting societal awareness and national identity.

By fulfilling this national media mission, QNA has kept pace with the holistic progression of this beloved nation throughout the past years, along with a variety of consequential political and economic events the country has hosted, affirming Qatar's growing instrumental role at regional, Arab, and global forums.

Furthermore, QNA has been committed to upholding the banner of official media, positioning itself as the credible mirror of the nation's progress and its citizens, bearing witness to the country's achievements and covering the events, activities, and initiatives across all fields and sectors at home and abroad.

Strikingly, the agency has significantly contributed to delivering breaking and high-impact news, in addition to objectively and professionally covering critical issues as they unfold on the Arab and global stages. Additionally, QNA has strongly advocated for fair Arab, Islamic, and humanitarian causes, positioning itself as the State's powerful mouthpiece that espouses truth and justice on continental stages.

Since its inception, QNA has not merely functioned as a transmitter of events, but has stood as a witness, chronicler, and genuine partner in cultivating cultural awareness within Qatar. From the 1970s onward, QNA has closely followed the evolution of the nation's cultural and artistic landscape.

Numerous chapters laid the foundation for Qatar to evolve and radiate a vivid social and cultural life, bringing it to the forefront of global attention and rendering it an international cultural hub and one of the world's most prominent sporting capitals.

The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 was one of the most historic events covered by QNA, which went above and beyond to showcase all aspects of this global event, from the football field to the cultural, social and human dimensions.

In the field of heritage, cultural journalism has contributed to documenting popular traditions through close coverage of events such as the Marmi Festival for Falcons since its first edition. Similarly, the Qalayel Championship, now one of the region's most prominent traditional hunting competitions, has been covered by the QNA through reports and videos documenting various aspects of the championship.

The role of QNA stands out in highlighting authentic Qatari heritage, raising awareness of its depth, and reminding future generations by documenting it through diverse journalistic topics characterised by depth and professionalism, as is the agency's approach in all its journalistic production.

Through these efforts, QNA plays a vital role in preserving and promoting Qatari heritage as part of its media and cultural mission, across all elements of journalistic work, aiming to document the Qatari scene in all its cultural dimensions and contribute to reinforcing national memory and enhancing cultural belonging.

By undertaking this role, QNA has played a central part in covering heritage-themed activities, events, and occasions organised by relevant state institutions, reflecting the authenticity of Qatari heritage with balanced content that integrates event reporting, documents cultural and historical dimensions, and adheres to the professional standards that characterise reputable media outlets.

Today, on the 50th anniversary of its establishment, QNA stands with greater confidence in the success of its well-crafted strategy and its commitment to remain at the forefront of the media landscape in the country — with word, voice, and image — driven by sincere effort, dedicated staff, and outstanding competence.

There is no doubt that the prestigious and distinguished position of Qatar News Agency would not have been realised without the unlimited support it has received, along with other Qatari media institutions, from His Highness the Amir and the wise government, in addition to the environment of media freedom Qatar enjoys. (**QNA**)



Investors see worsening US deficit outlook as tax bill heads to Senate



By Suzanne McGee
Reuters

Investors are fearing that projections for the US debt mountain could increase further when a sweeping tax and spending bill goes through the Senate, with the risk that bond yields stay higher for longer. Markets have been sensitive to the deteriorating US debt profile, exacerbated by Moody's downgrade of the US sovereign credit rating on May 16. Long-dated bonds have been especially hurt by deficit concerns, with investors delivering a tepid response to a 20-year auction and sending the 30-year bond yield to its highest level since October 2023. Higher bond yields can translate into higher borrowing costs for consumers, businesses and governments.

"The concern is that as the bill winds its way through the Senate, spending cuts will get whittled down, stimulus will be added and the deficit will show even more growth," said Brian Nick, chief investment officer at NewEdge Wealth, who sees that translating into higher bond yields and a steeper yield curve. The House of Representatives' version of the tax bill is calculated to add about $3.8tn to the federal government's $36.2tn in debt over the next decade, according to the Congressional Budget Office. After passing a House vote on Thursday, the bill heads to the Senate, where members are expected to begin work on it after next week's Memorial Day recess. Some of the bill's provisions will be welcome to Republican voters, but senators are still expected to push for changes.

"The Senate will be less keen to include deep spending cuts and the longer the debate continues, the more likely the price tag goes up," said Christopher Hodge, chief US economist at Natixis. President Donald Trump has said he wants a final bill on his desk by July 4. However, if it takes longer, it increases the risk that softer economic data will make spending cuts still more unpopular among senators, Nick said.

To be sure, investors see an uplift to growth from the tax cuts as well as the tariff revenues, which they are balancing in their investment decisions. Trump and his team, including White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, have emphasised the $1.6tn in outright spending cuts when asked about the potential impact on the deficit of the fiscal bill. Top Republicans have argued that tax cuts will pay for themselves by stimulating higher economic growth and generating $2.5tn in new revenue over a decade.

"The American people voted for President Trump to restore fiscal sanity to our government - and by securing the largest deficit reduction in 30 years, the largest tax cut for middle and working-class Americans in history, and $1.6tn in savings, the One, Big, Beautiful Bill delivers," said Anna Kelly, a White House spokeswoman. "This President is restoring accountability to taxpayers, and everyone from Main Street to Wall Street will benefit."

Some specific winners are seen from the changes. A research note from Morgan Stanley said the tax bill is expected to benefit companies with elevated capital expenditure and revenue in the US and said specific sectors it sees as having uplift are industrials, communications services and energy.

Morgan Stanley also estimated that tariffs could generate $2tn of revenue over 10 years, although it emphasised that this could change as trade talks are ongoing.

Naomi Fink, chief global strategist at Nikko Asset Management, said that the tax cuts may be intended to stimulate demand, although she added, "if they don't do that faster than they drive up government debt funding costs, it won't work."

Some investors were disappointed about the version of the bill so far.

Mohit Mittal, chief investment officer for core strategies and a managing director at Pimco, said investors had expected more in the way of spending cuts.

"Over the next 10 years, the final bill is probably going to end up being... $50 (bn) to $75bn higher per year than what the market was anticipating," he said.

Steve Sosnick, chief strategist at Interactive Brokers, said in a note to clients on Thursday that the last thing global bond markets wanted to see was "legislation that risks creating larger budget deficits in the world's largest economy." Still, that does not mean that bond investors are shunning the rich yields offered by those longer bonds, although many now demand higher yields.

"As a long-term investor, that (steeper yield curve) slope is attractive," said Thanos Bardas, senior portfolio manager of investment grade fixed income at Neuberger Berman, who believes bond investors will rely on yields for their returns in the coming months.

Other investors also are eyeing longer-term bonds. Paul Karger, co-founder and managing partner of TwinFocus, said his team has increasingly been adding to their holdings in recent days and weeks.

But Mike Reynolds, chief investment strategist at Glenmede, believes yields still have not reached levels where it makes sense to become a buyer.

Investors will be closely monitoring the impact of both the House bill and the looming Senate debate on financial markets, which may in turn filter back to members of Congress and play a role in shaping the bill's final version.

"Lawmakers pay closer attention to voters and polls than they do the financial markets," Brian Gardner, chief Washington policy strategist at Stifel Financial, said in a note to clients on Thursday. He added, however, that lawmakers also notice when market movements create higher lending rates for consumers.

US senators, he said, "will be watching signals from Wall Street."

QATAR



QU holds annual exhibition and celebration for 2024-25 architecture programme







Snapshots from the exhibition and celebration.

The Department of Architecture and Urban Planning at Qatar University (QU)'s College of Engineering organised the Annual Exhibition and End-of-Year Celebration for the Architecture Programme in the presence of HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah and QU president Dr Omar al-Ansari, along with several dignitaries, officials, and representatives from academic and professional institutions.

Held in collaboration with the Arab Engineering Bureau and other relevant bodies in Qatar, the event aimed to showcase the projects and achievements of the department's female students for the 2024-25 academic year, while also highlighting the department's initiatives and its academic and community partnerships.

It reflected the department's commitment to strengthening the integration between education and practical application and to providing an interactive platform for creativity and professional networking.

In his speech during the event, College of Engineering dean Dr Khalid Kamal Naji stated: "Our students' projects this year reflect a wide range of ideas and innovations, made possible through valuable partnerships and the ongoing guidance of our faculty."

"The projects span diverse topics across different studios, addressing complex social, cultural, and environmental challenges with clarity and outstanding ambition," he said.

"These partnerships went beyond symbolic support and were embodied in practical initiatives, direct supervision, and real training opportunities, which added a distinctive professional dimension to the educational experience," Dr Naji continued. "At the College of Engineering, we value this continued support and aim to deepen and expand these strategic relationships to serve our shared goals in preparing a new generation of architects capable of contributing to a sustainable urban environment aligned with the aspirations of Qatar National Vision 2030."

Representatives of the institutions expressed their admiration for the quality of the architectural and planning work on display, emphasising the importance of such events in strengthening the partnership between academia and the labour market and encouraging students to innovate and be creative. – ***QNA***

Qatar participates in International Family Forum in Istanbul



Assistant Undersecretary for Family Affairs Sheikha Sheikha bint Jassim al-Thani led Qatar's delegation to the forum.



Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Social Development and Family, recently participated in the International Family Forum held in Istanbul, Turkiye.

Organised by the Turkish ministry of family and social services, the forum convened under the theme *Our Family Our Future*.

The assistant undersecretary for family affairs, Sheikha Sheikha bint Jassim al-Thani, led Qatar's delegation to the forum.

The forum focused on strengthening and protecting the institutions of family and marriage, as well as fostering the well-being of future generations and robust demographic structures.

The event aimed to enhance understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing families and communities, and to establish a common platform for discussions on how to better protect, empower, and support families in their vital roles.

The ministry also took part in a ministerial session on "Integrating Family-Oriented Policies: National and International Efforts".

During the session, the ministry emphasised Qatar's strong commitment to supporting and empowering families, noting that contemporary challenges require comprehensive policies rooted in scientific research.

This is particularly crucial given demographic shifts, domestic violence, and social changes brought about by technology and work.

Additionally, the ministry participated in the third dialogue session on "The Family in the Era of Digital Screens".

This session highlighted the challenges posed by digital technologies and social media on families, including their impact on family cohesion, upbringing, and mental health, stressing the importance of balanced technology use and the activation of awareness programmes to reinforce family values.

On the sidelines of the forum, Sheikha Sheikha held a meeting with Palestinian Minister of Social Development Dr Samah Abu al-Awn.

Their discussion centred on avenues of co-operation between the two ministries and methods of providing support to affected Palestinian families.

Sheikha Sheikha also held a meeting with Nigeria's Minister of Women Affairs Imaan Sulaiman Ibrahim.

They reviewed the mandates of the women affairs ministry and explored collaborative opportunities and support mechanisms between the two ministries.

Separately, Sheikha Sheikha held a meeting with Turkiye's Deputy Minister of Family and Social Services Leman Yenigun.

The discussion focused on bilateral co-operation and the exchange of expertise in child protection and technology. – ***QNA***



