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### Plane carrying 20 crashes in Tennessee

A plane carrying 20 people crashed in the US state of Tennessee yesterday, with some on board taken to hospital for injuries, according to state and federal officials. The Tennessee Highway Patrol said on X that its troopers were assisting police "at the scene of a plane crash on Old Shelbyville Road" in the central Coffee County. "Some have been airlifted to nearby hospitals. This is an active scene," it said, adding that more updates would follow. Pictures on social media showed a small, white plane with its nose buried into the grass and its tail broken off behind it. The Federal Aviation Administration said the plane was a de Havilland Canada DHC-6 Twin Otter, and that it "crashed shortly after departing Tullahoma Regional Airport".

### Colombia candidate in 'grave' condition

A prominent Colombian presidential candidate was in "grave" condition and "fighting for his life" in hospital yesterday, after an alleged teen gunman shot him twice in the head at a Bogota campaign rally. Thirty-nine-year-old right-wing Senator Miguel Uribe underwent successful initial surgery to contain injuries from Saturday's attack, but doctors warned his life was still in serious peril. He remains in "the most grave condition and the prognosis is reserved", said medics at the capital's Santa Fe Clinic. **Page 8**

### Thailand, Cambodia to de-escalate

Thailand and Cambodia yesterday reached an agreement to reposition their troops in a disputed border area where a Cambodian soldier was killed last month in a military clash, both sides announced. A Cambodian soldier was killed in the most recent outbreak of clashes on May 28 in an area known as the Emerald Triangle, where the borders of Cambodia, Thailand and Laos meet. **Page 6**

### Italy begins referendum

Italians began two days of voting yesterday in a referendum on easing citizenship rules and strengthening labour laws, with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government opposed to both and urging people to abstain. The five proposals on the ballot were not expected to pass, in light of low turnout and the requirement that over 50% of voters participate to validate the referendum. **Page 9**

# 10 killed, dozens injured in fresh Isreali attacks

AFP  
Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli attacks yesterday killed at least 10 people including two girls in the Palestinian territory, as the Israeli war actions entered its 21st month. "Five martyrs and dozens of wounded were taken to Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis after the (Israeli) occupation forces opened fire on civilians at around 6am", agency spokesman Mahmud Bas-sal told AFP. The civilians had been heading to an aid distribution centre west of Rafah, near a site run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, a US-backed group that has come under criticism from the United Nations and humanitarian agencies. The United Nations refuses to work with the GHF, citing concerns over its practices and neutrality. Asked to comment on the latest killings, the Israeli military said it fired on people who "continued advancing in a way that endangered the soldiers" despite warnings. It said the area around the distribution point had been declared an "active combat zone" at night. "Around 4:30am, people started gathering in the Al-Alam area of Rafah. After about an hour and a half, hundreds moved toward the site and the army opened fire", eyewitness Abdallah Nour al-Din told AFP.

Family members react during the funeral of a Palestinian martyred in what the Gaza health ministry says was Israeli fire near a distribution centre in Rafah, at Nasser hospital in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday. (Reuters)

Outside the Nasser hospital, where the emergency workers brought the casualties, AFPTV footage showed mourners crying over blood-stained body-bags. "I can't see you like this," said Lin al-Daghma by her father's body, while a man lay over his brother's corpse. They gave the same account as

Din, and spoke of the struggle to access food aid after more than two months of a total Israeli blockade of Gaza, despite a recent easing. Dozens of people have been killed near distribution points since late May, according to the civil defence. Bassal said another five people, including two young girls, were

killed around at lam in a strike that hit a tent in the Al-Mawasi displaced persons camp in southern Gaza. **QNA adds:** The death toll from the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, which began on October 7, 2023, has risen to 54,880 martyrs and 126,227 wounded. **Page 3**

# Trump rushes troops in protest-hit Los Angeles

AFP  
Los Angeles

Hundreds of National Guard troops took up positions in Los Angeles yesterday on US President Donald Trump's orders, a rare deployment against the state governor's wishes after sometimes violent protests against immigration enforcement raids. The US military said 300 soldiers from the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team had been sent to three separate locations in the greater Los Angeles area,

and were "conducting safety and protection of federal property & personnel." Helmeted troops in camouflage gear and carrying automatic weapons could be seen in front of a federal complex — including a detention centre — with the phrase "Our City" spray-painted on it in downtown Los Angeles. The deployment overrode the protests of local officials, an extraordinary move not seen in decades and deemed "purposefully inflammatory" by California Governor Gavin Newsom. It came ahead of more planned protests in the city, which has a

large Latino population, including a call by organisers for a "mass mobilisation" at City Hall. "Trump is sending 2,000 National Guard troops into LA County — not to meet an unmet need, but to manufacture a crisis," Newsom posted on X yesterday. "He's hoping for chaos so he can justify more crackdowns, more fear, more control. Stay calm. Never use violence. Stay peaceful." Newsom's warning came after Los Angeles was rocked by two days of confrontations, during which federal agents fired flash-bang grenades and tear gas toward

Members of the California National Guard stand outside the Edward R Roybal federal building after their deployment by US President Donald Trump in Los Angeles, California, yesterday. (Reuters)

crowds angry at the arrests of dozens of migrants. Pepper spray could still be smelled from the clashes overnight, AFP reporters in downtown

Los Angeles said, while some scuffles between protesters and federal law enforcement could be seen early yesterday in the neighbourhood of Compton.

# BilAraby shows how Arabic language can thrive in digital age

Qatar Foundation's inaugural BilAraby Summit, showcased Arabic-language innovation focusing on how it can evolve in the era of Artificial Intelligence, digitisation, and entrepreneurship, while highlighting how, despite the advancements, it can continue to preserve its rich cultural essence. The summit amplified ideas and voices from across the Arabic-speaking world by bringing together more than 800 technology experts, entrepreneurs, and thought leaders who, through panel discussions, interactive workshops, and dialogue-driven sessions, explored the future of Arabic as a dynamic, modern language that continues to evolve.

"This summit focused on practical models demonstrating Arabic's value as a language of science and innovation," said Dr Anwar Dafa-Alla, translation consultant at the BilAraby Initiative. Dr Dafa-Alla participated in an exploratory session titled "Translating BilAraby Content: A Bridge to Global Communication", where he underlined the initiative's Open Translation Project which aims to translate Arabic content into multiple languages, extending its reach to a global audience. Dr Dafa-Alla said the project seeks to make BilAraby sessions accessible worldwide, freely disseminate knowledge, and support the digital growth of the Arabic language. It also aims to

Faisal Alagel

strengthen Arab identity globally, and foster social impact by sharing inspiring ideas with

non-Arabic speakers. In light of the success of the inaugural summit, BilAraby is preparing for its second edition alongside a number of regional events. Faisal Alagel, chief executive producer of Sard Group from Kuwait, said: "In recent years, we have seen a renewed focus on questions of identity and language within Arab society. This shift marks a new phase of re-examining the values that shape our lives, the language we use to think, to speak with one another and with our children, and to create arts and sciences. The BilAraby Summit offered a valuable platform for dialogue and the exchange of experiences and expertise among

content creators and professionals engaged in the Arab world." Alagel emphasised the importance of gatherings, which bring together key stakeholders from across the Arab world. Among these compelling voices who shared their story at the summit was Abdul Rahman Sayidi from Mauritania, a business administration researcher and academic adviser, who introduced a visionary model of working that harmonises with the rhythms of the universe and human nature. He explained that his model, which blends philosophy and science, depicts time as a facilitator of life, rather than a source of stress. He said: "We need systems that

align with our natural rhythms, making work part of our life rather than its entirety. Work should express who we are, not burden us. We need systems that balance productivity with human essence." The summit also spotlighted the journey of Arab innovators including Egyptian engineer Taimur al-Hadidi, who built a house entirely using recycled materials; Diana al-Sindi, the Iraqi engineer at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, who inspired by distant stars, taught Arab youth that space is an adventure for all; and Jordanian educator Salam Katanani, who transformed the world of science into a realm of exploration and excitement.





## Field visit to Al Ashat Island



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's Department of Natural Reserves has carried out a field visit to Al Ashat Island during the Eid al-Adha holidays, as part of its efforts to enhance environmental monitoring of the local islands. The visit aimed to ensure the integrity of the island's ecosystem, assess visitors' compliance with environmental laws and regulations, and verify that no violations that could negatively impact the island's biodiversity were occurring.



## Official

### Amir congratulates Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the success of the 1446 AH Haj season. His Highness wished the kingdom further progress and prosperity. **(QNA)**

### Amir sends cables of condolences to president of Zambia

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of condolences to President of Zambia Hakainde Hichilema on the death of Zambia's former president, Edgar Chagwa Lungu.

### Prominent Qatar-based physician passes away

Dr Nazar Moopan (69), medical director and ENT consultant at Aster DM Healthcare, Qatar, passed away yesterday in Dubai, a statement said.

"Dr Moopan has been serving with Aster DM Healthcare, Qatar, for a long time. He passed away peacefully surrounded by his family. He is survived by his wife Wahida, daughters Neda, Nimmi, and son Zain. The funeral took place yesterday in the UAE.

"Dr Nazar was a pillar of dedication, compassion, and excellence within the Aster family. His remarkable contributions to patient care and leadership in the field of ENT have left a lasting impact on thousands of lives across the region," the statement from Aster DM Healthcare, added.



Dr Nazar Moopan

# ‘Qatar makes strong presence in environmental sustainability’

Qatar has made its presence strongly in environmental sustainability by meeting 20% of its electricity needs through solar energy, a senior official has said.

"We now have 1,700MW of solar energy which is 20% of the country's electricity during peak hours. This is a significant and unique achievement of Qatar in the region," Dr Mohamed Saif al-Kuwari, environmental expert at the office of the Minister of Environment and Climate Change told local Arabic daily *Arrayah*.

"The inauguration of two solar power plants in Mesaieed and Ras Laffan by QatarEnergy, in addition to the opening of Al Kharsaah solar power plant are major achievements that drive Qatar's transition to renewable green energy," he said.

"Electric cars and green transportation have begun to expand in use in society. The plan is moving towards enhancing the use of



Dr Mohamed Saif al-Kuwari

green energy in public transportation," he explained. The private sector, according to the official, has a significant role to play in achieving environmental sustainability. "The private sector has now entered the field of environmental sustainability with a strong presence," he noted.

"The entire world is witnessing the entry of the academic, government and private sectors into

sustainable energy. The private sector is the key player in implementing what the academic sector is researching and the government sector is approving.

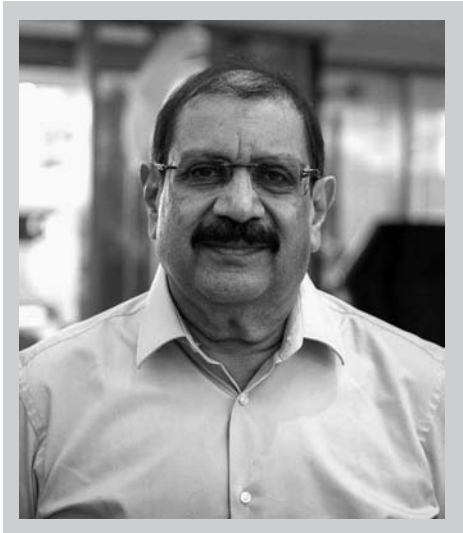
"The transition to green transportation and reliance on clean energy is beginning to attract the interest of many. It's heartening to see private sector companies disclosing their efforts in the field of environmental sustainability through reports and achievements," Dr al-Kuwari noted.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has been making significant efforts to rely on clean energy, by prioritising air quality and installing monitoring stations.

The figures, according to Dr al-Kuwari, shows that the air quality in Qatar is high and this is an achievement to be credited to MoECC for the measures and plans it has taken to improve air quality and reduce harmful gas emissions.

## Condolences

We offer our heartfelt condolences to the family of



**Dr. Nazar Moopan**

Medical Director and ENT Consultant at Aster DM Healthcare, Qatar  
17<sup>th</sup> Sept, 1956 – 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2025

on his sad demise

May Allah rest the departed soul in peace and give fortitude to the bereaved family to bear this great loss.

A.K. Usman, Dr. Fuad Usman, Dr. Najeeb K.P,  
Ziad Usman, Fazil Hameed & Families



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## 10-day Indian Mango Fest at Souq Waqif from June 12

The second edition of the Indian Mango Festival (Al Hamba Exhibition) will be held in Doha's Souq Waqif from June 12-21, it was announced yesterday. The 10-day festival will also sell various mango products from India.

To be organised by the Celebrations Committee of the Private Engineering Office (PEO), in co-operation with the embassy of India, the event will be held in the Eastern Square of Souq Waqif from 4-9pm except on public holidays when the closing is at 10pm.

"The second edition of the exhibition follows the great success of the first edition last year, which witnessed a large public turnout," a statement from the PEO said. "A large number of local and Indian companies are participating, offering a selection of the finest fresh Indian mangoes, flown in specially for the exhibition.

"They are also introducing new varieties that are being displayed in the local market for the first time, in addition to a variety of food products including sweets, pickles, juices and side dishes made from mango," it was explained.

Most famous Indian mango varieties including Rajapuri, Malgova, Neelam, Alphonso, Kesar, Badami, Mallika, Imam Pasand, Kalapadi, Totapuri and Sindooram are expected to be featured in the expo.

Khalid Saif al-Suwaidi, general supervisor of Al Hamba Exhibi-



Khalid Saif al-Suwaidi, general supervisor of Al Hamba Exhibition.

tion, said the venue has been air-conditioned to ensure the quality of the mangoes supplied daily from India.

"We expect a large turnout this year, as was the case with the previous edition, which received widespread interaction. This year's exhibition will feature extensive participation from local and Indian companies specialising in the trade of mango and its products. We hope it will contribute to stimulating economic activity by enhancing trade exchange and creating a competitive environment among merchants, which will positively impact local consumers," he noted.

The PEO official invited the public to visit the exhibition and enjoy a unique tasting experience of a variety of mangoes from various states in India. He urged the public

**"We expect a large turnout this year, as was the case with the previous edition, which received widespread interaction. This year's exhibition will feature extensive participation from local and Indian companies specialising in the trade of mango and its products"**

to visit the exhibition early noting that the expected turnout is large and this may lead to some distinctive varieties running out quickly.

"We recommend visitors arrive early to ensure they obtain the finest mangoes on display, especially those shipped daily from India and reserved exclusively for this exhibition.

"The great turnout witnessed in the first edition confirms the extent of interest and we look forward to an even more distinctive experience this year for everyone," al-Suwaidi added.



Fireworks at Al Wakrah Old Souq conclude today



The Eid al-Adha 2025 fireworks show at Al Wakrah Old Souq will conclude today with the final episode at 8.30pm. The four-day spectacle has been attracting big crowds to the popular destination. Pictured here are moments from yesterday's fireworks.

PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam



Fuel shortage to render remaining Gaza hospitals non-operational: Dr Alboursh

QNA  
Gaza

Director-General of the Ministry of Health in Gaza Dr Muneer Alboursh warned of an imminent catastrophe in the Gaza Strip's hospitals, as the remaining few are at risk of shutting down completely due to direct Israeli targeting and their being in areas subject to forced evacuation by the Israeli occupation forces in northern and southern Gaza.

The director-general of the Ministry of Health in Gaza stated that the remaining functioning hospitals in the Strip will completely cease operations within two days if they do not receive their designated fuel. He also announced a state of emergency in hospitals due to this dire situation.

Dr Alboursh told Qatar News Agency (QNA) yesterday that the fuel available in Gaza's hospitals is only sufficient for two more days and called for the Israeli occupation to be pressured to open border crossings to allow the entry of medical supplies and fuel to save Gaza's hospitals and patients from certain death, stressing that Gaza's hospitals will become mass graves within 48 hours if fuel runs out.

He emphasised that preventing the entry of fuel amounts to cutting hospitals' lifeline, especially after Israeli forces had destroyed generators and oxygen stations. He said that the occupation is preventing international organisations and United Nations bodies from accessing fuel storage locations designated for hospitals, claiming these areas are red zones.

He warned that blocking fuel supplies threatens to halt hospital operations, particularly since these hospitals rely entirely on generators to power critical departments.

Dr Alboursh noted that escalating Israeli threats targeting residential areas near hospitals are part of a systematic plan by the occupation to dismantle the healthcare system in Gaza. He said that Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis is now the only hospital still operating in the city, after the European Hospital in the east ceased functioning and access to Al Amal Hospital became extremely difficult due to its loca-



Dr Muneer Alboursh

tion in evacuation zones.

He added that if Nasser Medical Complex, which serves around 650,000 people in Khan Younis goes out of service, a major humanitarian disaster will take place, warning of a complete collapse of medical care in the southern Gaza Strip.

He explained that medical teams at Nasser are continuing their work despite not having food to eat, just like the rest of the starving population, and that on Saturday they had to perform surgeries without electricity or basic medical supplies, in an indescribably tragic situation.

Dr Alboursh said that Al Amal Hospital, operated by the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Khan Younis, has become unreachable after the occupation declared the surrounding area a dangerous combat zone and forced residents to evacuate, adding that the hospital still houses patients and medical staff, who now face serious risks amid the siege and highly complex security conditions.

He reported a severe shortage of medicines and medical supplies in all hospitals, with staff lacking essential tools even for basic procedures such as eye surgeries.

The director-general said that the dialysis unit at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in central Gaza has shut down due to Israeli attacks, noting that direct shelling damaged the unit's property and equipment, leading to a temporary halt in its life-saving services for kidney failure patients. Dr Alboursh said that Israeli shelling caused the failure of the main dialysis filtration machine and that ten sterile water tanks essential

for dialysis machines were directly targeted, with seven tanks completely destroyed while three others are still undergoing repairs.

He said that this has had a direct and severe impact on hundreds of kidney failure patients who rely on regular dialysis sessions, increasing their daily suffering and putting their lives at great risk.

He noted that ministry specialists will continue emergency repairs in the coming days to restore the unit's operations and save patients' lives.

Dr Alboursh renewed his urgent appeal to international and humanitarian organisations for immediate intervention to protect healthcare institutions and ensure the delivery of medical supplies necessary to continue providing emergency care to the sick and wounded.

He called on all relevant parties to urgently act to protect hospitals and health facilities, ensure the opening of a safe corridor for patients to reach hospitals, and supply them with essential medical resources.

Gaza's healthcare sector is experiencing a severe crisis, with ongoing bans on the entry of medicines and supplies, continued targeting of medical staff through killings or arrests, and systematic destruction of major hospitals, amid the escalating Israeli aggression on the besieged Strip.

Since May 13, the Israeli occupation has launched at least 36 direct attacks on the Strip's 36 hospitals, causing many of them to go out of service, including four major hospitals.


Camel carcass removed from Al Ghariyah beach

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's Department of Wildlife Protection has removed a camel carcass, that had been washed ashore, into Al Ghariyah Beach. The carcass was found during the ministry's large-scale cleanup campaign carried out over the Eid al-Adha holidays in the northern part of the country, as part of its efforts to preserve the environment and its natural components.



اِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَاِنَّا اِلَيْهِ رٰجِعُونَ  
Inna Lillahi wa inna ilayhi raji'un

We are deeply saddened by the passing of



**Dr. Nazar Moopan**  
Medical Director and ENT Consultant at Aster DM Healthcare, Qatar  
17<sup>th</sup> Sept, 1956 – 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2025


Dr. Nazar passed away peacefully in Dubai, surrounded by his family and loved ones.

He was the son of Late. Dr. Zainudheen Moopan and Late Mrs. Zulekha, Mandayapurath family from Kannur.

He is survived by his beloved wife Wahida (from Chennai); children Neda (in Dubai), Nimmi (in Dubai), and Zain (in Australia); sons-in-law Hanie and Darwish, and daughter-in-law Naheeda.

May the Almighty Allah grant him the highest place in Jannah and bless his family and loved ones with strength and patience during this difficult time.

**Aster**  
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## Beach relief for Gazans



Palestinians gather at the beach in Gaza City to escape the heat and displacement tents amid the ongoing Israeli war actions yesterday.



# Iran reveals no sanctions relief in US nuclear proposal

AFP  
Tehran

Iran's parliament Speaker said yesterday that the latest US proposal for a nuclear deal does not include the lifting of sanctions, state media reported as negotiations appear to have hit a roadblock.

The two nations have held five rounds of Omani-mediated talks since April, seeking to replace a landmark agreement between Tehran and world powers that set restrictions on Iran's nuclear activities in return for sanctions relief, before US President Donald Trump abandoned the accord during his first term in 2018.

In a video aired on Iranian state TV, parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said that "the US plan does not even mention the lifting of sanctions".

He called it a sign of dishonesty, accusing the Americans of seeking to impose a "unilateral"

agreement that Tehran would not accept.

"The delusional US president should know better and change his approach if he is really looking for a deal," Ghalibaf said.

On May 31, after the fifth round of talks, Iran said it had received "elements" of a US proposal, with officials later taking issue with "ambiguities" in the draft text.

The US and its Western allies have long accused the nation of seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, a charge Iran has consistently denied, insisting that its atomic programme was solely for peaceful purposes.

Key issues in the negotiations have been the removal of biting economic sanctions and uranium enrichment.

Tehran says it has the right to enrich uranium under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, while the Trump administration has called any Iranian enrichment a "red line".

Trump, who has revived his "maximum pressure" campaign of sanction on Iran since taking office in January, has repeatedly said it will not be allowed any uranium enrichment under a potential deal.

On Tuesday, Iran's top negotiator, Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, said the country "will not ask anyone for permission to continue enriching uranium".

According to the UN nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Iran is the only non-nuclear-weapon state in the world that enriches uranium up to 60% - still short of the 90% threshold needed for a nuclear warhead.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Wednesday rejected the latest US proposal and said enrichment was "key" to Iran's nuclear programme.

The IAEA Board of Governors is scheduled to meet in Vienna later this month and discuss Iran's nuclear activities.

## Syria monitor says one killed in Israeli strike near buffer zone

AFP  
Beirut

Israel struck southern Syria yesterday, with a war monitor reporting one killed and the Israeli military saying it had targeted a member of Palestinian fighter group Hamas.

In the wake of long-time ruler Bashar al-Assad's overthrow in December, Israel has carried out hundreds of strikes and moved forces into the buffer zone that has separated Israeli and Syrian forces on the strategic Golan Heights since 1974.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor, said that one person was killed and two others wounded when Israel struck a vehicle in Mazraat Beit Jinn, a town near the UN-patrolled

buffer zone. The Israeli military said it "struck a Hamas fighter in the area of Mazraat Beit Jinn".

Israel captured most of the Golan Heights in 1967 and later annexed it in a move not recognised by the United Nations.

Israel has said that the strikes on its northern neighbour since Assad's fall aimed to stop advanced weapons from reaching Syria's new authorities.

It has also occasionally targeted Palestinian fighters in Syria. The latest attack follows Israeli strikes earlier this week in retaliation for rocket fire claimed by two little-known groups, one of them named after a Hamas leader killed by Israel in the Gaza Strip. Syrian authorities had condemned the previous strikes while rejecting any involvement in the launches and vowing to "never be a threat" to anyone in the region.

## Iran expands dog walking ban

AFP  
Tehran

Iranian authorities have expanded a ban on walking dogs in public to multiple cities nationwide, citing public health, social order and safety concerns, domestic media reported yesterday.

The ban - which echoes a 2019 police directive that barred walking dogs in Tehran - was expanded to Ilam city in the west yesterday, according to reports.

At least 17 other cities introduced similar bans in recent days, including Isfahan in the centre and Kerman in the south. Owning and walking dogs has been a contentious topic since the 1979 revolution in Iran, though there is no law outrightly banning dog ownership. Local authorities have periodically introduced bans on walking dogs in public spaces or carrying them in vehicles as part of a wider campaign to discourage their ownership. Enforcing the restrictions has been largely inconsistent, as many owners continue to walk their dogs in Tehran and elsewhere across Iran.

## Tanzania crash kills at least 28

AFP  
Dar es Salaam

A lorry driver lost control of its brakes and slammed into two other vehicles in Tanzania, killing at least 28 people in one of the worst recent road accidents in the country, officials said yesterday.

One of the vehicles struck in the accident late Saturday, a minibus, was hurled into a river in the country's southwest, near

the border with Zambia, local police chief Benjamin Kuzaga said in a statement.

Those killed included 10 women and four children, Kuzaga said, blaming the truck driver's "negligence".

"The cause of the accident has been attributed to the negligence of the lorry driver, who failed to control the vehicle on the steep Iwambi hill," he said.

Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan said on X, formerly Twitter, that she learnt

of the deadly accident "with deep sorrow". Road accidents are common in Tanzania, with a 2018 report by the World Health Organisation citing 3,256 deaths in 2016 according to official figures - but estimating that the actual number of deaths was between 13,000 and 19,000.

In 2024, at least 25 people including an American, a South Africa and a Kenyan, were killed in the country's north when a truck collided with three other vehicles.

### Wagner replaced by Russia's Africa Corps in Mali

The Russian paramilitary group Wagner has left Mali and its units there have been taken over by the Moscow-run Africa Corps, diplomatic and security sources said yesterday, AFP reported from Dakar. "Officially, Wagner is no longer present in Mali. But the Africa Corps is stepping up," one diplomatic source in the Sahel region said. A Telegram account affiliated with Wagner said: "Mission accomplished. PMC Wagner is going home."

## Rwanda pulls out of regional bloc amid row

AFP  
Kigali

Rwanda has pulled out of Central Africa's main economic bloc, accusing the organisation of siding with the Democratic Republic of Congo amid ongoing fighting in eastern DRC.

The move came after leaders of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) extended Equatorial Guinea's presidency of the organisation for another year on Saturday, bypassing Rwanda, which had been next in line for the rotating post.

M23 rebels, who UN and US ex-

perts say are backed by Rwanda, have seized key towns and swathes of territory in eastern DRC since January in fighting that has killed thousands.

An ECCAS commissioner, speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity, said "it was tense between the Rwandan and DRC ministers", adding that the Congolese side warned they would not be able to travel to Rwanda for "community events" if Kigali assumed the presidency. Rwanda said in a statement on Saturday that it deplored an "instrumentalisation" of the bloc by the DRC with the support of "certain member states". "Consequently, Rwanda sees no justification for remain-

ing in an organisation whose current functioning runs counter to its founding principles and intended purpose," said the a statement from Rwanda's ministry of foreign affairs Rwanda's Foreign Minister Olivier Nduhungirehe said on X that it was "unbelievable and unacceptable" that despite ongoing diplomatic talks between Kigali and Kinshasa, the DRC "is still whining around in all regional and international organisations accusing Rwanda for its own turpitudes, not to mention crying out for sanctions".

The presidents of Rwanda and the DRC, Paul Kagame and Felix Tshisekedi, met in mid-March to discuss a possible ceasefire.

## Sensitive Israeli documents obtained by Iran to be unveiled soon: minister

Reuters  
Dubai

Sensitive Israeli documents obtained by Tehran should be unveiled soon, Minister of Intelligence Esmail Khatib told state TV yesterday, describing them as a "treasure trove" which will strengthen Iran's offensive capabilities.

Iranian state media reported on Saturday that Iranian intelligence agencies had obtained a large trove of sensitive Israeli documents. Khatib said these were related to Israel's nuclear facilities and its relations with the United States, Europe and other countries, and to its defensive capabilities.

There was no immediate official comment from Israel.

It was not clear whether the information breach was linked to a reported hacking of an Israeli nuclear research centre last year which Tehran is only disclosing now amid heightened tensions over its nuclear programme.

"The transfer of this treasure trove was time-consuming and required security measures. Naturally, the transfer methods will remain confidential but the documents should be unveiled soon," Khatib said, adding that in terms of volume, "talking of thousands of documents would be an understatement." In 2018, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that Israeli agents had seized a huge "archive" of Iranian documents that showed Tehran had done more nuclear work than previously known.

US President Donald Trump has threatened to bomb Iran if Tehran did not come to an agreement with Washington over its nuclear programme. But Trump in April reportedly blocked a planned Israeli strike on Iranian nuclear sites in favour of negotiating a deal with Tehran.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that abandoning uranium enrichment was "100%" against Iran's interests, rejecting a central US demand in talks to resolve a decades-long dispute over Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

Western powers say Iran is refining uranium to a high degree of fissile purity close to the level suitable for atomic bomb fuel. Iran has long denied seeking nuclear weapons.

## Festive elegance



Women attend the Ojude Oba Festival which celebrates horse display and elegantly dressed attendees in traditional outfits in Ijebu, Ogun State, Nigeria, yesterday.



# Refugee camp schools at risk in Bangladesh in aid crisis

AFP  
Dhaka

Global aid cuts have forced the UN children's agency to sack more than 1,000 teachers in Bangladesh camps for Rohingya refugees, with more jobs at risk without funding.

Around a million members of the persecuted and mostly Muslim Rohingya live in squalid relief camps in Bangladesh, most of them after fleeing a 2017 military crackdown in neighbouring Myanmar. The teacher firings come in the wake of dramatic US funding cuts. "Due to the global aid funding crisis, Unicef has had to make difficult

decisions impacting early education services for Rohingya refugee children," the agency said in a statement. Unicef said that the contracts of 1,179 people - working on kindergarten and primary schools - were terminated. Before the cuts, there were an estimated 4,000 teachers in the camps, according to Bangladeshi

senior government aid official, Md Shamsud Douza. Schools have closed for the Eid holidays, but if fresh funding is not secured by the time term resumes at the end of June, more teachers could lose their jobs. "The return of the rest of the workers... depends on new funding being secured," Unicef added.

"We remain committed and hopeful that increased support will restore what every child deserves: a future." Humanitarian organisations worldwide have been reeling since US President Donald Trump returned to office in January, freezing most foreign aid funding. The US has traditionally been by far the top donor to a number

of agencies, which have been left scrambling to fill sudden budget gaps. "We are deeply aware of the urgent needs faced by Rohingya refugee children, many of whom have already endured significant trauma and disruptions to their education, health, nutrition and protection," Unicef added.

# Court rejects \$92bn damages verdict against Fukushima operator ex-bosses

AFP  
Tokyo

A Japanese court overturned a \$92bn damages verdict against ex-bosses of the operator of Japan's stricken Fukushima nuclear plant, thought to be the largest such award ever in the country for a civil suit. Four former executives had in 2022 been ordered to collectively pay 13.3tn yen in a suit brought by shareholders over the nuclear disaster triggered by a massive tsunami in 2011. But the verdict was thrown out by the Tokyo High Court, a spokeswoman for the institution said. Shareholders had argued the catastrophe could have been prevented if Tokyo Electric Power Company (Tepco) bosses had listened to research and implemented preventative measures like placing an emergency power source on higher ground. But the defendants countered that the risks were unpredictable, and the studies cited were not credible. "The defendants... cannot be found to have had this foreseeability at a point in time before the earthquake in question," the court ruling said. The 13.3tn yen damages award was believed to be the largest amount ever ordered in a civil suit in Japan. It was meant to cover Tepco's costs for dismantling reactors,

compensating affected residents, and cleaning up contamination. In 2015, British oil giant BP was ordered to pay \$20.8bn for the Gulf of Mexico oil spill in what was described at the time as the highest fine ever imposed on a company in the US. The court spokeswoman said an appeal by the shareholders for an even higher damages order of 22tn yen had been denied. "Take responsibility for the Fukushima nuclear accident!" said a pink-and-white banner displayed by the plaintiffs after the ruling. Hiroyuki Kawai, head of their legal team, also issued a stark warning at a press conference. "If I were to summarise the ruling in one phrase: it is a ruling that will lead to future serious nuclear accidents," he said. Tepco declined to comment on the high court verdict. Three of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant's six reactors were operating when a massive undersea quake triggered a massive tsunami on March 11, 2011. They went into meltdown after their cooling systems failed when waves flooded backup generators, leading to the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl. Overall the tsunami along Japan's northeast coast left around 18,500 people dead or missing. In March this year, Japan's top court said it had finalised the acquittal of two former Tepco executives charged with professional negligence over the Fukushima meltdown.

## Japan holds live fire exercise



Japan Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF) battle tanks take part in a live fire exercise at the Higashifuji training area in Gotemba, Shizuoka Prefecture, yesterday.

# Japan allows longer nuclear plant lifespans

AFP  
Tokyo

A law allowing nuclear reactors to operate beyond 60 years has taken effect in Japan, as the government turns back to atomic energy 14 years after the Fukushima catastrophe. The world's fourth-largest economy is targeting carbon neutrality by 2050 but remains heavily reliant on fossil fuels - partly because many nuclear reactors were taken offline after the 2011 Fukushima meltdown.

The government now plans to increase its reliance on nuclear power, in part to help meet growing energy demand from artificial intelligence and microchip factories. The 60-year limit was brought in after the 2011 disaster, which was triggered by a devastating earthquake and tsunami in northeast Japan. Under the amended law, nuclear plants' operating period may be extended beyond 60 years - in a system similar to extra time in football games - to compensate for stoppages caused by "unforeseeable circumstances", the government says. This means, for example, that one reactor in central Japan's Fukui re-

gion, suspended for 12 years after the Fukushima crisis, will now be able to operate up until 2047 - 72 years after its debut, the Asahi Shimbun daily reported. But operators require approval from Japan's nuclear safety watchdog for the exemption. The law also includes measures intended to strengthen safety checks at ageing reactors. The legal revision is also aimed at helping Japan better cope with power crunches, after Russia's invasion of Ukraine sparked energy market turmoil. Japan's Strategic Energy Plan had previously vowed to "reduce reliance on nuclear power as much as possible".

## UK regulator leads crackdown on 'finfluencers'

Market regulators from six countries are cracking down on the illegal promotion of financial products by influencers on social media, UK officials said. Britain's Financial Conduct Authority said the action has resulted in three arrests in the UK and the authorisation of criminal proceedings against three individuals. The crackdown is being conducted jointly with regulators from Italy, Canada, Hong Kong, Australia, and the UAE. Some 50 "warning letters" have been issued, which will result in more than 650 requests to remove content from social media platforms and more than 50 websites "operated by unauthorised influencers", the FCA said. It has also sent seven "cease and desist" letters. So-called finfluencers, or financial influencers, use their social media audiences to promote investment products, share advice, or offer their opinions on investments.

## S Korea president marks Memorial Day



South Korean President Lee Jae-myung and his wife Kim Hye-kyung walk during a ceremony to mark the 70th Memorial Day at the Seoul National Cemetery in Seoul, South Korea.

## Nepal ex-PM faces graft charge over land deal

Reuters  
Kathmandu

Authorities in Nepal have charged former Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal with corruption and demanded a million-dollar fine over the purchase of land by a firm owned by Indian yoga guru Baba Ramdev, a court official said. Nepal, prime minister between 2009 and 2011, faces charges of allowing Patanjali Yogpeeth Nepal company to purchase more land than it was legally allowed to own for herb production, processing and a hospital in the nation 15 years ago. Both Nepal and Patanjali Yogpeeth deny any wrongdoing. The 72-year-old Nepal heads a small opposition group in parliament and his United Socialist Party says the prosecution

is an act of "political vendetta" against him. "I have not done anything illegal nor indulged in any corruption concerning Patanjali land deal causing any loss to the state," Nepal told the Kantipur daily newspaper. The Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA), a corruption watchdog, alleged that some of the land, in Kavre district, was later allowed to be swapped with other land, or sold at a higher price, causing a loss to the state. The allegations were set out in a charge sheet filed by the commission at the Special Court in Kathmandu. The commission demanded Nepal be ordered to pay a fine of 185.85mn Nepali rupees (\$1.35mn). If found guilty he could also be sentenced to up to 17 years in jail.

# Coral frozen in time throws lifeline for Great Barrier Reef

AFP  
Sydney

Rows of tanks filled with liquid nitrogen sit in temperature-controlled chambers at Sydney's Taronga zoo, cradling parts of the Great Barrier Reef's diverse and magnificent corals frozen in time. The world's largest store of cryogenically frozen coral is an ecosystem that scientists warn could be the first to disappear if climate change is not combated fast enough. Trillions of cells from dozens of key coral species on the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) - collected each year during mass spawning - offer the

chance to regenerate damaged and diminished corals now and into the future. "Essentially, a pause button has been pressed on their biological clocks," said Justine O'Brien, manager of conservation science at Taronga Conservation Society Australia. "I hope our collective efforts can help to retain the reef's beautiful diversity," she said. Since the coral programme began in 2011, Taronga's CryoDiversity Bank has been intruding annually on the GBR's spawning, when corals send eggs and sperm into the waters for breeding. Scientists collect the sperm and

mix it with cryoprotectants, which remove water as the samples freeze and protect internal cell structures. Eggs contain too much water and fat to be frozen without damage using current techniques, so for now cannot be similarly banked, but other cells are also harvested and frozen for research. The samples are placed into liquid nitrogen and stored at -196 degrees Celsius (-320 Fahrenheit). Strict measures ensure the temperature never changes. "We can keep them alive indefinitely," O'Brien said. "You could thaw them out a few years from now, a few decades from now or hundreds of years from now

and they will have retained the same fertilising potential that existed when they were initially collected and frozen." So far the bank has 34 species of the approximately 400 kinds of hard corals on the GBR, prioritising those most essential to reef structure and function, with plans to expand. In addition to reproduction, the samples can be used for research and record-keeping, helping track the effects of warming seas, overfishing and pollution that threaten coral reefs globally. Scientists forecast that at 1.5C of warming, some 70-90% of the world's coral reefs could disappear

- a disastrous prospect for people and the planet. Coral reefs support not just marine life but hundreds of millions of people living in coastal communities by providing food, protection from storms and livelihoods through fishing and tourism. Warming oceans cause coral to expel the algae that provides not just their characteristic colour but also their food. Once bleached, they are exposed to disease and death by starvation. A global coral bleaching event has been unfolding since 2023, spreading to 84% of the world's reefs, across the Pacific, Indian and Atlantic oceans.

Live coral cover has halved since the 1950s due to climate change and environmental damage, the International Coral Reef Initiative, a global conservation partnership, said this year. This week, nations will meet in France for a UN oceans summit where they will be under pressure to deliver action and much-needed funds to better protect the world's overexploited and polluted seas. But the third UN Ocean Conference may struggle to find global consensus and raise money given ongoing disagreements over deep-sea mining, plastic trash and overfishing.





## Taiwan in army drills to better face China threat

Taiwan's coast guard held drills with the military yesterday to better practice joint operations in the face of what the government in Taipei says is a growing "grey zone" threat from China, which claims the island as its own territory. Taiwan has repeatedly complained about activities such as undersea cable cutting and sand dredging by China around the island, designed to pressure it without direct confrontation. It is often Taiwan's coast guard that scrambles first to respond. The drills in the southern port city of Kaohsiung, overseen by President Lai Ching-te, simulated the seizing of a ferry by "international terrorists". The coast guard worked

with an interior ministry rescue helicopter and army medevac helicopter to board and take back control of the boat and evacuate casualties. A navy anti-submarine helicopter flew over the scene as the drill ended, along with the medevac and rescue helicopters, the first time they have flown together in such a scenario, the coast guard said. "Taiwan has been facing constant grey intrusion from China, but our coast guard colleagues have always been on the front line to enforce the law and protect the lives and safety of the people of Taiwan," Lai told the audience for the drills, which included the top US diplomat in Kaohsiung, Neil Gibson.

## Dragon Boat race



Teams compete during the International Dragon Boat races at Tsim Sha Tsui East Promenade in Hong Kong.

# Thailand, Cambodia to reposition troops after border clash

Reuters  
Bangkok/Phnom Penh

Cambodia's defence ministry yesterday confirmed that Thailand and Cambodia had agreed to return their troops to previous border positions after a clash in which a Cambodian soldier was killed prompted both to reinforce their military presence. The Cambodian statement, which said both sides wished to ease tensions following the incident in an undemarcated area on May 28, came after Thai Defence Minister Phumtham Wechayachai said both countries were in talks to defuse the situation and

would revert to positions agreed in 2024. For days, the two governments have exchanged statements, saying they were committed to finding a peaceful resolution. Neither gave details about where or to what extent their military forces had been reinforced at the weekend. Thailand operates 17 official border crossings with Cambodia, spanning seven provinces along their shared 817km frontier, Thai government data shows. Both countries have for more than a century contested sovereignty at undemarcated points along their shared border, which was mapped by France in 1907 when Cambodia was its colony.

Thailand's Phumtham said both sides hoped the border issue could be fully resolved through bilateral talks, including a meeting of the Joint Boundary Committee on June 14. Cambodia's foreign ministry reiterated a request to bring the border disputes to the International Court of Justice in a letter to Thai officials on June 6. "Given the complexity, historical nature, and sensitivity of these disputes, it is increasingly evident that bilateral dialogue alone may no longer suffice to bring about a comprehensive and lasting solution," Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn said in the note shared with reporters yesterday.

## Destroyer in botched launch now upright, says North Korea

A North Korean naval destroyer damaged in a botched launch last month is now upright and moored at a pier, state media said. Pyongyang has said "a serious accident" happened in the May 21 attempt to launch the 5,000 tonne destroyer, with the mishap crushing sections of the bottom of the newly-built ship. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un called the incident a "criminal act caused by absolute carelessness" and state media reported the arrest of four officials in connection with the botched launch. South Korea's military said that Washington and Seoul's intelligence authorities believe North Korea's so-called "side-launch attempt" of the ship failed, and the vessel was left listing in the water. But the state news agency KCNA said that "after restoring the balance of the destroyer early in June, the team moored it at the pier".

## Shooting the rapids



Local tourists enjoy white water rafting across river Palayangan in the Pangalengan district of Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, yesterday.

## Chinese man defies demolition orders to build madcap rural home

AFP  
Xingyi, China

Surrounded by the rubble of demolished homes, Chen Tianming's ramshackle tower of faded plyboards and contorted beams juts into the sky in southwestern China, a teetering monument to one man's stubbornness. Authorities razed most of Chen's village in Guizhou province in 2018 to build a lucrative tourist resort in a region known for its spectacular rice paddies and otherworldly mountain landscapes. Chen, 42, refused to leave, and after the project faltered, defied a flurry of demolition notices to build his family's humble stone bungalow higher and higher. He now presides over a bewildering 10-storey, pyramid-shaped warren of rickety staircases, balconies and other add-ons, drawing comparisons in Chinese media to the fantastical creations of legendary Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki. "I started building out of practicality, trying to renovate and expand our home," Chen said as he climbed ladders and ducked wooden beams in his labyrinthine construction. "But then it became more of an interest and hobby that I enjoyed," he said. Chen's obsessive tinkering and lack of building permits continue to draw ire from the local government. The higher floors where he sleeps sway in the wind, and dozens of ropes and cables tether the house

to the ground as if the whole thing might one day float away. "When I'm up here... I get the sense of being a nomad," Chen said, gazing out at apartment blocks, an airport and distant mountains. "People often say it's unsafe and should be demolished... but I'll definitely never let anyone tear it down." Local authorities once had big plans to build an 800-acre tourist resort - including a theatre and artificial lake - on Chen's native soil. They promised to compensate villagers, but Chen's parents refused, and he vowed to help them protect the home his grandfather had built in the 1980s. Even as neighbours moved out and their houses were bulldozed, Chen stayed put, even sleeping alone in the house for two months "in case (developers) came to knock it down in the night". Six months later, like many ill-considered development projects in highly indebted Guizhou, the resort was cancelled. Virtually alone among the ruined village, Chen was now master of a "nail house" - a Chinese term for those whose owners dig in and refuse to relocate despite official compensation offers. A quirk of China's rampant development and partial private property laws, nail houses sometimes make headlines for delaying money-spinning construction projects or forcing developers to divert roads or build around shabby older homes. Even as Chen forged ahead, completing the fifth floor in 2019,

the sixth in 2022 and the seventh in 2023, he continued to receive threats of demolition. Last August, his home was designated an illegal construction, and he was ordered to destroy everything except the original bungalow within five days. He says he has spent tens of thousands of yuan fighting the notices in court, despite losing several preliminary hearings. But he continues to appeal, and the next hearing has been delayed. "I'm not worried. Now that there's no one developing the land, there's no need for them to knock the place down", he said. In recent years, ironically, Chen's house has begun to lure a steady trickle of tourists itself. On Chinese social media, users describe it as China's strangest nail house, likening it to the madcap buildings in Miyazaki's Studio Ghibli masterpieces "Howl's Moving Castle" and "Spirited Away". As dusk falls, Chen illuminates his home with decorative lanterns, and people gather on the nearby dirt road to admire the scene. "It's beautiful," local resident He Diezhen said as she snapped photos. "If there are no safety issues, it could become an (official) local landmark," she said. Chen said the house makes many visitors remember their whimsical childhood fantasies. "(People) dream of building a house for themselves with their own hands... but most can't make it happen," he said. "I not only thought of it, I made it a reality."



Chen Tianming stands in front of his house labelled China's strangest "nail house" — households that refuse to move in the face of development plans — in Xingyi, in southwest Guizhou province.

## US tariffs push Australia to seek new markets

AFP  
Sydney

Australia will push to expand free trade agreements with other countries to reduce its reliance on the US, Trade Minister Don Farrell said yesterday, slamming President Donald Trump's "unjustified" tariffs. Australia is a close US ally but has been sluggish with a blanket 10% tariff on goods exported to the US, rising to 50% on steel and aluminium, as part of Trump's sweeping global duties. "I'm hopeful that those countries around the world who do believe in free and fair trade can reach an agreement to extend free trade agreements across the globe, so that irrespective of what the Americans might

chose to do, we have a greater diversity of trading partners," Farrell told Sky News. He was speaking after talks last week in Paris with the World Trade Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and other countries which he said had focused on preventing "protectionism" and encouraging free and fair trade. Trade between Australia and the US is worth an estimated A\$100bn (US\$65bn) a year, with Australia buying more from the US than it is selling, Farrell said. He said he had protested the duties last week to his US counterpart Jamieson Greer. "The position I've put to Greer is that the tariffs that the US have imposed on Australia are unjustified," Farrell said. "We want all of the tariffs removed, not just some of them."

# Slain UK journalist's book on saving the Amazon published

AFP  
London

Three years after UK journalist Dom Phillips was murdered, his widow and colleagues have published the book he was working on to expose illegal destruction of the Amazon and seek solutions to save the rainforest. "I think of him every day," his widow, Alessandra Sampaio, said of her husband, who was shot dead in the Amazon on June 5, 2022 along with Indigenous-rights activist Bruno Pereira. She was in London for the global launch of *How to Save the Amazon*, which Phillips, a freelancer for

*The Guardian* and the *Washington Post*, was researching when he was killed. The double murders triggered an international outcry and drew attention to the lawlessness fuelling the destruction of the world's biggest rainforest. Brazilian federal police have concluded the men were killed because of Pereira's monitoring of poaching and other illegal activities in a remote reach of the Amazon. Three years to the day after the murders, a prosecutor from Amazonas state indicted the suspected mastermind, the state prosecutor's office said. So far, several suspects have been charged in the killings. Phillips, who had taken a break

from journalism to write his book, was seeking to raise the alarm about the environmental damage and illegal activities plaguing the region. "He died trying to show the world the importance of the Amazon," said Sampaio. Pereira was a former senior official with Brazil's Indigenous affairs agency, and disappeared along with Phillips as they travelled through a remote Indigenous reserve, close to the borders of Colombia and Peru. Their hacked-up bodies were found and identified days later, after an alleged accomplice confessed to burying them. Phillips, 57, was shot in the

chest, while Pereira, 41, sustained three gunshot wounds, one of them to the head. They were killed in the north-western Javari Valley, where drug traffickers, illegal fishermen and hunters, and gold miners operate. "It was his second-to-last trip. One more was left, and he would have finished the book," said Sampaio, adding Phillips had already written the first four chapters. After his death, his widow spent months collecting his extensive writings, journals and reams of notes. "He had two or three notebooks from each trip, with dates, places, explaining everything," she said. But she confessed that at times she

had to stop as she got "too emotional". Each new chapter has been written by a group of six journalists and writers: Britons Jonathan Watts and Tom Phillips; Americans Andrew Fishman, Stuart Grudgings, and Jon Lee Anderson; and Brazilian Eliane Brum. The book is "dedicated to everyone fighting to protect the rainforest". They all travelled to the region, and interviewed new people following Phillips's trail in a bid to faithfully complete his manuscript. The afterword has been written by Beto Marubo, a leader of the Indigenous Marubo people, with

Amazonian activist and writer Helena Palmquist. Sampaio, who lives in Brazil's northeastern Salvador da Bahia region, paid tribute to the "loyal friends" who helped complete the book, which she says is also a tribute to activist Pereira. "There's no way to separate Dom and Bruno. They're there together. It's a message for everyone to understand the importance of the Amazon and its people," she said. Watts, global environment writer with *The Guardian*, said: "It's more than a tribute to Dom, it is Dom's book." "In this process, I'm always imagining what would Dom think, but it's my imagination," he added.



DECISION

UK to announce plans to extend seabed trawling ban

The UK will announce an extension of its ban on “destructive” seabed trawling to more than half of protected English seas at an UN Ocean Conference today, its environment minister said. “At the UN Ocean Conference in France, I’ll announce the government’s plans to ban bottom trawling across 41 protected areas of English seas spanning 30,000 square kilometres,” Environment Minister Steve Reed wrote in the *Observer* newspaper. There are currently 181 Marine Protected Areas, covering 93,000sq km. Around 18,000sq km of those waters are currently protected, a number that would rise to 48,000sq km.

APPEAL

William calls for urgent action to protect oceans

Prince William yesterday called on world leaders and businesses to take urgent action to protect the planet’s oceans, saying it was a challenge “like none we have faced before”. William said rising sea temperatures, plastic pollution and overfishing were putting pressure on fragile ecosystems and the people who depend on them. “What once seemed an abundant resource is diminishing before our eyes,” William, heir to the British throne, told the Blue Economy and Finance Forum in Monaco. “Put simply: the ocean is under enormous threat, but it can revive itself. But, only if together, we act now,” he said.

OFFICIAL

UK minister Reeves to meet China’s vice-premier

British Finance Minister Rachel Reeves will hold a meeting with Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng during his visit to Britain this week for trade talks with the US, a British government source said yesterday. China’s foreign ministry said He would be in Britain between June 8 and June 13 when there will be talks in London with three of US President Donald Trump’s top aides to try to resolve a trade dispute between the world’s two largest economies that has kept global markets on edge. The British government source said Reeves would host He for a bilateral meeting during the trip.

PEOPLE

Rap star Snoop Dogg wants to open burger van at Celtic

Legendary rapper Snoop Dogg has revealed he wants to show his love for Celtic by opening a burger van outside the home of the Scottish champions. The American music icon has previously expressed interest in buying a stake in the Glasgow club after being inspired by the success of Hollywood celebrities Ryan Reynolds and Rob McElhenney at English second-tier side Wrexham. But the 53-year-old has now set his sights on a more modest connection with a team he has long admired. Snoop Dogg, who has published a recipe book called *From Crook to Cook*, once described Celtic supporters as “special”.

Walmart’s Flipkart gets nod for direct lending in India

Reuters  
New Delhi

Walmart’s Flipkart has secured a lending licence from the Indian central bank and banking regulator, enabling it to offer loans directly to customers and sellers on its platform, a spokesperson for the company confirmed after Reuters reported the development citing documents and a source.

This is the first time the Reserve Bank of India has granted a large e-commerce player in India a non-bank finance company (NBFC) licence, allowing it to lend but not take deposits.

Most e-commerce platforms currently offer loans in tie-ups with banks and NBFCs, but a lending licence will enable Flipkart - India’s largest e-commerce firm - to lend directly, a more lucrative model for the group.

The central bank issued its certificate of registration - a document that officially recognises a company as an NBFC - to Flipkart Finance Private Limited on March 13.

Reuters has reviewed a copy of both the certificate of registration and the approval letter also dated March 13. The approval has not been previously reported.

Flipkart, in which US retail behemoth Walmart holds a more than 80% stake, applied for the licence in 2022, according to the central bank’s approval letter.

The Reserve Bank of India did not immediately respond to request for comments.

The e-commerce giant may commence its lending operation “in a few months”, according to a

source aware of the matter who declined to be identified as the talks are private.

A final decision on the launch will be subject to the completion of various internal processes such as the appointment of key management personnel and board members and the finalisation of business plans, the source said.

**This is the first time the Reserve Bank of India has granted a large e-commerce player in India a non-bank finance company licence, allowing it to lend but not take deposits**

Flipkart plans to lend directly to its customers on its popular e-commerce platform and through its fintech app super.money, the source said. It may also offer financing to sellers on the platform, they added.

At present, the e-commerce giant offers personal loans to customers through tie-ups with lenders such as Axis Bank, IDFC Bank and Credit Saison.

Flipkart, last valued at \$37bn in 2024 when it raised \$1bn in a funding round led by Walmart, is shifting its holding company from Singapore to India. Walmart also aims to take the 17-year-old company public.

Walmart bought a controlling stake in Flipkart in 2018, which also gave it ownership of PhonePe, a fintech firm also preparing for an IPO.

Earlier this year Flipkart’s rival Amazon acquired Bengaluru-based non-bank lender Axio, but the deal is yet to be cleared by the central bank.



A bus burned by protesters is parked in a street, after the arrest of an Arambai Tenggol leader by the Central Bureau of Investigation, in Imphal, Manipur, yesterday.

Restive Indian state orders curfew after fresh violence

AFP  
Imphal, India

An Indian state riven by ethnic tensions imposed an Internet shutdown and curfew after protesters clashed with security forces over the arrest of some members of a radical group, police said yesterday.

Manipur in India’s northeast has been rocked by periodic clashes for more than two years between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki community that have killed more than 250 people.

The latest violence was triggered on Saturday after reports of the arrest of five members, including a commander, of Arambai Tenggol, a radical Meitei group.

No official reason has been given for the arrest. Without mentioning any name, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said it arrested an Tenggol member at the Imphal airport yesterday. “He was involved in various criminal activities related to Manipur violence in 2023. The information related to his arrest has been given to his family members,” the federal agency said in a statement

Incensed mobs demanding their release stormed a police post, set fire to a bus and blocked roads in parts of the state capital Imphal. Security forces fired several rounds to disperse the crowds. During one of the incidents, at least three people, including two journalists, sustained injuries.

Manipur police announced a curfew in five districts, including Imphal West and Bishnupur,

due to the “developing law and order situation”

“Prohibitory orders have been issued by district magistrates. Citizens are requested to co-operate with the orders,” the police said in a statement.

Arambai Tenggol, which is alleged to have orchestrated the violence against the Kuki community, has also announced a 10-day shutdown in the valley districts.

The state’s home ministry has ordered all internet and mobile data services in volatile districts to be shut off for five days in order to bring the latest unrest under control.

Internet services were shut down for months in Manipur during the initial outbreak of violence in 2023, which displaced around 60,000 people from their homes according to government figures.

UK announces £86bn for science, tech and defence

The UK government yesterday announced £86bn (\$116bn) of investment in science and technology and defence by 2030, days before it unveils its spending plan for the coming years. Labour Finance Minister Rachel Reeves has announced drastic cuts to public budgets in recent months amid tight fiscal conditions and has also authorised more borrowing for investment, unlocking a total of £113bn by the end of the decade. Within this framework, £86bn will be invested “to turbo-charge our fastest growing sectors, from tech and life sciences, to advanced manufacturing and defence,” the government said in a statement. Reeves is also set to announce a funding boost of up to £30bn for the under-pressure National Health Service on Wednesday, when she presents the government’s broader review of UK public spending over the coming years, according to *The Times* newspaper.

Parched passengers



Volunteers distribute drinking water to passengers aboard a train at Cantonment Railway Station in Jalandhar, India, yesterday.

Amazon agrees to tackle fake reviews in UK

AFP  
London

Amazon has agreed to clamp down on fake online reviews of products advertised on its UK site, Britain’s competition regulator said. Google agreed a similar UK commitment in January after the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) launched an investigation into the matter five years ago.

Amazon “has signed undertakings committing to enhance its existing systems for tackling fake reviews and catalogue abuse”, the CMA said in a statement.

“Catalogue abuse involves sellers hijacking the reviews of well-performing products and adding them to an entirely separate and different product to

falsely boost its star rating”, the regulator noted.

The CMA said “Amazon has committed to tough sanctions for businesses that boost their star ratings,” which could see them banned from its UK site.

An Amazon spokesperson said the company already invests “significant resources to proactively stop fake reviews ever appearing... including on expert human investigators and machine learning models that analyse thousands of data points to detect risk”.

They added that last year, Amazon “blocked more than 275mn fake reviews (worldwide), with more than 99% of all products... containing only authentic reviews”.

The UK regulator said that around 90% of UK consumers use online reviews when deciding on a purchase.

India housing outlook steady ‘but demand slowdown looms’

Reuters  
Bengaluru

The outlook for India’s housing market has barely budged in over a year, according to a Reuters poll of property experts who cited cooling demand from wealthy buyers with many expecting unsold luxury inventory to either rise or remain elevated.

Average home prices, which have more than doubled in 11 years, are forecast to rise 6% this year and 5% next year, after climbing about 4% in 2024, according to median estimates from a May 16–June 6

survey of 15 property market analysts.

The poll was taken before the Reserve Bank of India surprised markets late last week with a 50-basis-point cut in the repo rate to 5.50% to support economic growth. But the 50-bps easing before the latest move has done little to lower bank lending rates, raising doubts over monetary policy’s ability to revive housing demand.

While the Indian economy grew 7.4% last quarter, outpacing major peers thanks partly to a rebound in rural demand, urban household consumption remained weak. High youth unemployment and stagnant wages in cities, where most

jobs are located, continue to weigh on overall domestic demand.

That strain is now starting to show in the housing market as well, where sales have tumbled after years of being driven by cash-rich buyers snapping up prime properties across major cities.

“The demand from the ultra-rich has definitely peaked. You can see that in the sales numbers. That’s not to say demand is dead, there will always be some wealthy folks wanting to park their money in property. But that crazy rush post-Covid is over,” said Pankaj Kapoor, managing director at real estate research firm Liases Foras.

“Demand is clearly slowing and

the GDP data backs that. We’ve got to stop making a fairytale out of the headlines - you dig a bit and the cracks are all there,” he said.

“I think it’s time investors wake up, smell the coffee, and realise this slowdown is real and it’s going to spill over into the wider housing market too.”

When asked about affordability for first-time home buyers over the coming year, 12 experts said it would improve, while Colliers International’s Ajay Sharma, Magicbricks’ Prasun Kumar and Savills’ Arvind Nandan said it would worsen.

CBRE’s Anshuman Magazine said recent rate cuts and lower

taxes announced in the last government budget “are expected to improve discretionary income... and enhance affordability for first-time buyers in the country.”

Most analysts said there were signs of weakening demand in luxury housing.

Asked what would happen to unsold homes for the wealthy over the next two years, six of 15 respondents said it would rise, five said stay the same and four said decline.

“Supply in the luxury housing segment has grown..., however, demand has increased marginally. This gap suggests unsold inventory in the premium segment is likely

to remain high,” said Magicbricks’ Kumar.

Meanwhile, the outlook for affordable housing in India is no brighter. Seven respondents said the supply of new affordable homes would decline, four said stay the same and four said rise.

There is a scarcity of new projects, squeezed by thin developer margins and weak policy support, deepening a divide where homeownership remains out of reach for many millions.

That mismatch between strong demand and limited supply has pushed home prices to levels where tens of millions have no choice but to rent.





# Trump rewarding loyalists with pardon spree

AFP  
Washington

Reality TV stars. Former law-makers. A sheriff. A nursing home executive. A drug kingpin.

What do they have in common? They are among the Americans convicted of crimes who have received pardons from President Donald Trump since he took office in January.

And while US presidents have doled out questionable pardons in the past, Trump is doing so “in a bigger, more aggressive way with sort of no sense of shame,” said Kermit Roosevelt, a law professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

“The pardon power has always been a little bit problematic be-

cause it's this completely unconstrained power that the president has,” Roosevelt said.

“Most presidents have issued at least some pardons where people look at them and they say: ‘This seems to be self-serving’ or ‘This seems to be corrupt in some way?’

But Trump is doling out pardons “that look like they’re almost quid pro quo for financial donations,” Roosevelt said.

Among those receiving a pardon was Paul Walczak, a nursing home executive convicted of tax crimes and whose mother attended a \$1mn-per-plate fund-raising dinner at Trump’s Mar-a-Lago home in April.

Other beneficiaries of Trump pardons include reality TV stars Todd and Julie Chrisley, who were serving lengthy prison sentences



Trump: doling out pardons

for bank fraud and tax evasion.

Their daughter, Savannah, is a prominent Trump supporter and gave a speech at last year’s Republican National Convention.

More than half a dozen former Republican lawmakers convicted of various crimes have also received pardons along with a Virginia sheriff sentenced to 10 years in prison for taking \$75,000 in

bribes. On his first day in office, Trump pardoned more than 1,500 supporters who stormed the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 as they sought to prevent congressional certification of Democrat Joe Biden’s 2020 election victory.

The next day, Trump pardoned Ross Ulbricht, who had been serving a life sentence for running the “Silk Road” online marketplace that facilitated millions of dollars of drug sales.

## ‘JUST ANOTHER DEAL’

Barbara McQuade, a former prosecutor who now teaches law at the University of Michigan, said Trump is not the first president to be accused of “allowing improper factors to influence their pardon decisions.”

Gerald Ford’s pardon of Richard Nixon, Bill Clinton’s pardon of a

commodities trader whose wife was a major Democratic donor and Biden’s pardon of his son, Hunter, and other family members all drew some criticism. “(But) Trump is in a class by himself in both scope and shamelessness,” McQuade said in a Bloomberg opinion column. “To him, pardons are just another deal.

“As long as a defendant can provide something of value in return, no crime seems too serious,” she said.

Democratic lawmaker Jamie Raskin, in a letter to Ed Martin, Trump’s pardon attorney at the Justice Department, asked what criteria are being used to recommend pardons.

“It at least appears that you are using the Office of the Pardon Attorney to dole out pardons

as favours to the President’s loyal political followers and most generous donors,” Raskin wrote.

Martin for his part has made no secret of the partisan nature of the pardons recommended by his office. “No MAGA left behind,” Martin said on X after the pardon of the bribe-taking Virginia sheriff, a reference to Trump’s “Make America Great Again” slogan.

Lee Kovarsky, a University of Texas law professor, said Trump’s “pardon spree” opens up a “menacing new frontier of presidential power” that he calls “patronage pardoning.”

By reducing the penalty for misconduct, Trump is making a “public commitment to protect and reward loyalism, however criminal,” Kovarsky said in a *New York Times* opinion piece.

# Colombian presidential candidate’s condition ‘grave’ after assassination attempt

AFP  
Bogota

A prominent Colombian presidential candidate was in “grave” condition and “fighting for his life” in hospital yesterday, after an alleged teen gunman shot him twice in the head at a Bogota campaign rally.

Thirty-nine-year-old right-wing Senator Miguel Uribe underwent successful initial surgery to contain injuries from Saturday’s attack, but doctors warned his life was still in serious peril.

He remains in “the most grave condition and the prognosis is reserved” said medics at the capital’s Santa Fe Clinic.

Uribe’s shooting has utterly shocked a nation that had believed decades of bloody political and narco violence were largely in the past.

Hundreds took to the streets in major cities yesterday to light candles, pray and voice their anger at the attack.

“Our hearts are broken, Colombia hurts,” Carolina Gomez, a 41-year-old businesswoman, said as she lit candles and prayed outside the hospital where Uribe was being treated.

The crowd joined together in cries of “strength to you Miguel” and “the people are with you.”

Uribe’s wife Maria Claudia Tarazona thanked Colombians for their support and asked that they collectively pray for his survival.

“He is fighting hard for his life,” she said. The senator received two gunshot wounds to the head and was also shot once in the leg.

Although a security guard at the scene captured the alleged gunman, the motive for the shooting is still not publicly known.

Uribe had been a fierce critic of Colombia’s leftist government, of guerrilla groups that still control chunks of the country and of ultra-powerful drug cartels.

The government has vowed to use every police, military and intelligence resource to uncover the motive and find those who hired the alleged would-be assassin.

Police said there had been no specific threats against Uribe’s life, but like other public figures he had close personal protection.

The young Senator’s family history traces the tragedies of modern Colombia, making the attack all the more poignant for many.

He is the grandson of a former president Julio Cesar Turbay whose 1978-1982 term was marked by guerrilla insurgencies and the emergence of the Medellin and Cali drug cartels. But Uribe is best known as the son of Diana Turbay, a famed Colombian journalist who was killed after being kidnapped by Pablo Escobar and whose death rocked the nation.

## ‘DAY OF PAIN’

A team of about 100 investigators are now working to determine the motive for the attack, Defence Minister Pedro Sanchez said yesterday. Earlier he had offered a roughly US\$725,000 reward for information about



Maria Claudia Tarazona, wife of Colombian Senator Miguel Uribe Turbay of the opposition Democratic Center party, speaks to the media after her husband was shot during a campaign event, in Bogota, yesterday.



A man holds a sign with propaganda for presidential candidate Miguel Uribe during a protest against violence and in favour of peace in Medellin, Colombia, yesterday, the day after the attack on Uribe.

who was behind the shooting. The suspect is believed to be about 15 years old was injured in the affray and was receiving treatment, said police director Carlos Fernando Triana.

Two others — a man and a woman — were also wounded, and a Glock-style firearm was seized. The attack has been condemned by politicians across the political spectrum.

Leftist President Gustavo Petro condemned the violence as “an attack not only against his person, but also against democ-

racy, freedom of thought, and the legitimate exercise of politics in Colombia.” The shooting was similarly condemned from overseas, with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio calling it “a direct threat to democracy.” But Rubio also pointed blame at Petro, claiming the attack was the “result of the violent leftist rhetoric coming from the highest levels of the Colombian government.”

“President Petro needs to dial back the inflammatory rhetoric and protect Colombian officials,” the top US diplomat said.

# Trump’s travel ban on 12 countries goes into effect early today

Reuters  
Washington

US President Donald Trump’s order banning citizens of 12 countries from entering the United States goes into effect at 12:01am ET (0401 GMT) today, a move the president promulgated to protect the country from “foreign troublemakers”.

The countries affected by the latest travel ban are Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen.

The entry of people from seven other countries — Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan and Venezuela — will be partially restricted.

Trump, a Republican, said the countries subject to the most severe restrictions were determined to harbour a “large-scale presence of troublemakers”, fail to co-operate on visa security, have an inability to verify travellers’ identities, as well as inadequate record-keeping of criminal histories and high rates of visa overstays in the United States.

He cited last Sunday’s incident in Boulder, Colorado, in which an Egyptian national tossed a gasoline bomb into a crowd of pro-Is-

rael demonstrators as an example of why the new curbs are needed. But Egypt is not part of the travel ban.

The travel ban forms part of Trump’s policy to restrict immigration into the United States and is reminiscent of a similar move in his first term when he barred travellers from seven Muslim-majority nations.

Officials and residents in countries whose citizens will soon be banned expressed dismay and disbelief.

Chad President Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno said he had instructed his government to stop granting visas to US citizens in response to Trump’s action.

“Chad has neither planes to offer nor billions of dollars to give, but Chad has its dignity and its pride,” he said in a Facebook post.

Afghans who worked for the US or US-funded projects and were hoping to resettle in the US expressed fear that the travel ban would force them to return to their country, where they could face reprisal from the Taliban.

Democratic US lawmakers also voiced concern about the policies.

“Trump’s travel ban on citizens from over 12 countries is draconian and unconstitutional,” said US Representative Ro Khanna on social media late on Thursday. “People have a right to seek asylum.”

# Ecuador national assembly passes gang-fighting reforms

Reuters  
Quito

Ecuador’s National Assembly has approved a reform backed by President Daniel Noboa to arm the government with new legal powers to confront armed groups and dismantle the drug-trafficking networks that fuel their criminal enterprises.

The bill was backed by 84 of the 141 lawmakers who were present in the legislature. Forty-six lawmakers voted against it, 10 abstained and one turned in a blank vote. Noboa, 37, who began a full four-year term last month, declared an “internal armed conflict” in January 2024 against criminal gangs, just a couple of months after he was first inaugurated as president.

Since declaring the campaign against gangs, Noboa has issued

emergency decrees to put military boots on the ground alongside police, significantly ramping up security forces.

He has also overseen an increase in prison sentences for drug-related crimes and is pursuing closer collaboration with the US and other nations for intelligence sharing and resources.

The new legal framework gives Noboa more freedom to redirect resources toward crime-fighting measures. He will also have the power to pardon police and military personnel for their conduct in security operations.

Officers under criminal investigation will also avoid pre-trial detention but will be subject to evaluations every six months, according to the approved text.

The reforms as well introduce penalties of up to 30 years for fuel theft.

# Powerful 6.3-magnitude quake shakes Bogota

AFP  
Bogota

A major 6.3-magnitude earthquake lasting several seconds shook the Colombian capital of Bogota early yesterday, according to AFP reporters on the ground and the United States Geological Survey.

The shallow quake struck near the city of Paratebueno in central Colombia, some 170 kilometres east of Bogota, the USGS said.

No casualties were immedi-

ately reported in the tremor, also felt in cities including Medellin, Cali and Manizales.

The quake, which the Colombian national geological survey registered at magnitude 6.5, was one of the strongest and longest felt in the capital in recent years.

In Bogota buildings shook, sirens blared and people rushed out into the streets.

Scores of residents gathered in parks and outside buildings in their pajamas, with parents trying to calm frightened children and others looking for pets that had run away.

Many were afraid to go back inside. “It was a big scare,” said 54-year-old Carlos Alberto Ruiz, who left his apartment with his wife, son and dog.

“It’s been a while since we felt it this strong here in Bogota,” said Francisco Gonzalez, a lawyer who also fled his home.

“This was very strong” said one elderly lady trying to make her way down several flights of steps.

Bogota’s security department said on X that emergency workers were conducting a sweep of the city to look for damage and

provide assistance. Bogota’s mayor, Carlos Fernando Galan, said all disaster agencies had been activated.

Central Colombia is in a zone of high seismic activity. A 6.2-magnitude quake there in 1999, not far from Ansermanuevo, claimed nearly 1,200 lives.

The country is on the Pacific “Ring of Fire”, an arc of intense seismic activity where tectonic plates collide that stretches from Japan through Southeast Asia and across the Pacific basin to South America.



People remain on the street after an earthquake in Bogota, yesterday.



# Russia claims key Ukraine advance as peace talks stall

AFP/Reuters  
Kyiv/Moscow

Russia said yesterday that it was advancing into Ukraine's eastern Dnipropetrovsk region for the first time in its three-year invasion, a significant territorial escalation amid stalled peace talks.

Ukraine's top political and military leaders did not immediately respond to the claim of the advance, which would be a symbolic and strategic blow after months of battlefield setbacks.

Moscow, which has the initiative across much of the front, has repeatedly refused calls by Ukraine, Europe and US President Donald Trump for an unconditional ceasefire even as it holds talks with Kyiv on a possible settlement to the war.

On Wednesday Russian President Vladimir Putin said that he did not think Ukraine's leaders wanted peace, after accusing them of ordering a bombing in Bryansk, western Russia, that killed seven people and injured 115 a day before talks in Türkiye.

Ukraine, which has not commented on the attack on a Bryansk bridge, has similarly accused Moscow of not seriously seeking peace, citing as evidence Russian resistance to an immediate ceasefire.

Russia's defence ministry said forces from a tank unit had "reached the western border of the Donetsk People's Republic and are continuing to develop an offensive in the Dnipropetrovsk region".

Although there was no response from leaders in Kyiv to the claims, Ukraine's southern army command said that Russia "does not give up its intentions to enter the Dnipropetrovsk region, but our fighters are bravely and professionally holding their section of the front line".

Dnipropetrovsk is not one of the five Ukrainian regions - Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Crimea - that Moscow has publicly claimed as Russian territory.

In a set of peace demands issued to Ukraine during negotiations in Istanbul on June 2, Moscow demanded formal recognition that these regions were part of Russia, something Kyiv has repeatedly ruled out.

At a first round of talks last month, Ukraine said Russia

threatened to accelerate and expand its offensive if Kyiv did not capitulate.

Tens of thousands of people have been killed in Russia's three-year war, with millions forced to flee their homes and cities and villages across eastern Ukraine devastated by relentless air attacks and ground combat.

Former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev, now deputy chairman of the national security council, said the latest advance is a warning to Kyiv.

"Those who do not want to recognise the realities of the war at negotiations, will receive new realities on the ground," he said on social media.

"They could say all of Ukraine belongs to them," he said. "Saying it is one thing. But I don't think it will radically change the situation. Our resistance will remain unchanged."

Dnipropetrovsk had an estimated population of 3mn before Russia launched its offensive.

Around 1mn people lived in the regional capital, Dnipro.

It is an important mining and industrial hub for Ukraine.

Ukrainian military personnel previously told AFP that Russia could advance relatively quickly in the largely flat region, given there were fewer natural obstacles or villages that could be used as defensive positions by Kyiv's forces.

The region, and in particular the city of Dnipro, has been under persistent Russian strikes since Moscow invaded in February 2022.

Ukraine also said yesterday that a prisoner exchange - the only agreement reached at the Istanbul talks - would start "next week" after both sides accused each other of trying to thwart and delay the swap.

Moscow said Ukraine was refusing to agree to take back the bodies of killed soldiers, while Kyiv said Russia had not sent the names of more than 1,000 captured soldiers to be released.

Both sides had said days earlier that the exchange could take place this weekend.

"The Russian side, as usual, is trying to play a dirty, political, information game," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his evening address.

If Russia fails to comply with the agreement, it "will cast great doubt" on diplomatic efforts to end the three-year war, he said.

# World leaders urged to step up for over-exploited oceans

AFP  
Nice

World leaders arrived in the French Riviera yesterday ahead of a high-level summit on ocean conservation, as nations face pressure to adopt tougher stances on overfishing, pollution and marine protection.

The United Nations has sounded the alarm over an oceans "emergency" and leaders gathering in Nice will be called to commit money and stronger protections for the seas.

The UN Ocean Conference, starting today, seeks to turn a corner as nations feud over deep-sea mining, plastic litter and exploitative fishing, against a backdrop of wider geopolitical tensions.

"We have a duty to mobilise, because the science is clear and the facts are there," said French President Emmanuel Macron in Monaco yesterday, where he attended a pre-conference event with Britain's Prince William, among other high-level dignitaries.

Some 60 heads of state and government are expected in Nice, including Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his Argentine counterpart Javier Milei.

"The planet can no longer tolerate broken promises," said Lula yesterday. "Either we act, or the planet is in danger."

Macron travelled yesterday by boat from Monaco to Nice and toured a conference pavilion made to look like the cavernous belly of a whale.



An activist of the 'Wings of the Ocean' association shows passers-by samples of water pollution during a gathering to mark Oceans Day in Bordeaux, southwestern France. - AFP

In the evening, he hosted leaders for a dinner of Mediterranean fish.

France has deployed 5,000 police to Nice for the five-day summit where scientists, business leaders and environmental activists were also to attend in big numbers.

A strong turnout was expected from Pacific Island nations, whose delegations will urge financial aid to combat the rising seas, marine trash and plunder of fish stocks.

The United States under President Donald Trump - whose recent push to fast-track seabed mining in international waters sparked global outrage - was not expected to send a delegation.

Conservationists have warned that the summit - which will not produce a legally binding agreement - risks being a mere talking

shop unless leaders come up with concrete proposals to restore marine health.

The UK announced yesterday that it intended to impose a partial ban on bottom trawling, a destructive fishing method that involves dragging huge nets across the ocean floor.

In a statement, Greenpeace welcomed the decision but said it was "long overdue".

On Saturday, Macron said France would restrict bottom trawling in some of its marine protected areas but was criticised for not going far enough.

Nations will also face calls to cough up the missing funds to protect 30% of the world's oceans by 2030, a target agreed by nearly 200 countries in 2022.

# Thousands attend protest against Spain government

AFP  
Madrid

Tens of thousands of people rallied yesterday in an opposition-organised demonstration in Madrid accusing the government of Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez of corruption.

Protesters, many waving red and yellow Spanish flags, massed in the Plaza de Espana, a large square in the centre of the Spanish capital, and chanted "Pedro Sanchez, resign!"

"The expiry date on this government passed a long time ago. It's getting tiring," Blanca Requejo, a 46-year-old store manager who wore a Spanish flag draped over her back, told AFP at the demonstration.

The Popular Party (PP) called the rally after leaked audio recordings allegedly documented a member of the Socialist party, Leire Diez, waging a smear campaign against a police unit that investigated graft allegations against Sanchez's wife, brother and his former right-hand man.

Diez has denied the allegations, telling reporters on Wednesday that she was conducting research for a book and was not working on behalf of the party or Sanchez.

She also resigned from Sanchez's Socialist party.

PP leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo has accused the government of "mafia practices" over the affair, and said Sanchez is "at the centre" of multiple corruption scandals.

"This government has stained everything - politics, state institutions, the separation of powers," he told the rally, going on to urge Sanchez to call early elections.

The PP estimated that more than 100,000 people attended the rally, held under the slogan "Mafia or Democracy".

The central government's representative in Madrid put the turnout between 45,000 and 50,000.

The government's spokeswoman, Pilar Alegria, mocked the turnout, writing on X that veteran Spanish rock duo Estopa drew a larger crowd to their recent concert at Madrid's Wanda Metropolitano stadium than "the apocalyptic Feijoo at the Plaza de Espana".

"We've created this sort of myth that governments don't have money for ocean conservation," Brian O'Donnell, director of Campaign for Nature, told reporters. "There is money. There is not political will."

So far, only around 8% of oceans are designated marine conservation zones and even less are considered truly protected.

Greenpeace says at this rate, it could take another 82 years to reach the 30% goal.

France's environment minister, Agnes Pannier-Runacher, told reporters yesterday that she expected "important announcements" in Nice that would bring a greater share of the world's oceans under conservation protection.

Earlier this week, Samoa declared 30% of its national waters under protection with the creation of nine new marine parks.

Conservationists hope others at the summit follow suit.

"All eyes should be on the many Pacific leaders attending... their ambition and dedication to ocean protection can serve as inspiration to all countries," said Kevin Chand from the nonprofit group Pristine Seas.

Another summit priority will be inching towards the numbers required to ratify a global treaty on harmful fishing subsidies, and another on protecting the high seas beyond national control.

France is also spearheading a push in Nice to build support for a moratorium on deep-sea mining ahead of a closely-watched meeting of the International Seabed Authority in July.

# 54 migrants rescued from Mediterranean oil platform

More than 50 migrants were headed to the Italian island of Lampedusa yesterday after a charity ship rescued them from an abandoned oil platform in the Mediterranean, where one woman gave birth.

The vessel Astral, operated by the Spain-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) Open Arms, rescued the 54 people overnight, the group said in a statement.

The migrants had been trapped on the oil

platform for three days after their rubber boat shipwrecked following their departure from Libya on Tuesday, Open Arms said.

On Friday, one of the migrants gave birth to a boy, while another woman had given birth days before.

Two other young children were among the group, Open Arms said.

Later in the day, the charity said that, following the rescue of those on the oil platform,

the Astral came upon another 109 people, including four people in the water.

That group, which included 10 children, had also departed from Libya, it said.

Open Arms said they provided life jackets to the migrants before they were rescued by another charity ship, the Louise Michel, which is sponsored by street artist Banksy.

The Louise Michel was transporting the migrants to Sicily, Open Arms said. - AFP

# Italy holds referendum on citizenship, workers' rights

AFP  
Rome

Italians began two days of voting yesterday in a referendum on easing citizenship rules and strengthening labour laws, with Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's government opposed to both and urging people to abstain.

The five proposals on the ballot were not expected to pass, in light of low turnout and the requirement that over 50% of voters participate to validate the referendum.

Currently, a non-EU adult resident without marriage or blood ties to Italy must live in the country for 10 years before they can apply for citizenship - a process which can then take years more.

The referendum proposal, triggered by a grassroots campaign led by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), would cut this to five years, putting Italy in line with Germany and France.

Campaigners say that around 2.5mn people could benefit from the reform, which is being backed by the centre-left Democratic Party.

Meloni, whose far-right Brothers of Italy party has prioritised cutting irregular immigration even as her government has increased the number of migrant work visas, is strongly against it.

She said on Thursday that the current system "is an excellent law, among the most open, in the sense that we have for years been among the European nations that



A person votes during a referendum on employment and Italian citizenship at a polling station in Rome. - Reuters

grant the highest number of citizenships each year."

More than 213,500 people acquired Italian citizenship in 2023, double the number from 2020 and accounting for one-fifth of the total number of naturalisations in EU countries, according to the bloc's statistics.

More than 90% were from outside the bloc, mostly from Albania and Morocco, as well as Argentina and Brazil - two countries with large Italian immigrant communities.

Ministers agreed in March to restrict the rights to citizenship of those claiming blood ties to Italy from four to two generations.

Meloni and her coalition partners encouraged voters to boycott the referendum, which would invalidate it if it fails to clear the 50%-of-eligible-voters turnout.

As of 7pm (1700 GMT, 8pm Qatari time) yesterday, national par-

ticipation was at 15.8%, according to the interior ministry.

Voting was to continue through to afternoon today.

Casting a ballot for the first time in his life at a Rome polling station was Giovanni Puccini, 18, who called Meloni's instruction to abstain "disrespectful" of past sacrifices by Italians.

"You have to vote because in the past so many people fought, even died, for this right," he said.

His friend Pierre Donadio, 21, said less stringent citizenship laws were needed in the country, to boost diversity and prevent it "being too closed up in itself".

Even if it passed, the reform would not affect a migration law many consider unfair: that children born in Italy to foreign parents cannot request nationality until they reach 18.

Prominent rapper Ghali, who was born in Milan to Tunisian

parents, has been outspoken in advocating a change to the law for children.

He urged fans to back the vote as a step in the right direction.

"With a 'Yes' we ask that five years of life here are enough, not 10, to be part of this country," he wrote on Instagram.

The ballot includes one question on citizenship. The four others are on increasing protections for workers who are dismissed, in precarious situations or involved in workplace accidents.

Those changes were being pushed by the left-wing CGIL trade union.

"We want to reverse a culture that has prioritised the interests of business over those of workers," CGIL general secretary Maurizio Landini told AFP.

The centre-left Democratic Party is also backing the proposals - even though it introduced some of the laws while in office in the past.

The proposals took aim at measures in a so-called Jobs Act, passed a decade ago by the government of the Democratic Party prime minister, Matteo Renzi, in order to liberalise the labour market.

Supporters say that the legislation boosted employment but detractors say it made work more precarious.

Under new leadership, the Democratic Party - which is polling behind Meloni's far-right Brothers of Italy - is seeking to woo working-class voters by backing the referendum reform.



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Eating for longevity: Lessons from flavonoid-rich diets

Healthier ageing has been the focus of major research in medical science for decades. A long-term study, the results of which were released recently, sheds more light in this direction. The key finding is that flavonoid-rich foods such as black tea, berries, citrus fruits, and apples could lower the risk of developing serious health conditions and improve the potential to live longer. The research reveals that increasing the diversity of flavonoids within diet could help prevent the development of health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD), cancer and neurological disease.

The research, conducted by scientists from Edith Cowan University (ECU), Queen's University Belfast, and the Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health, highlighted that flavonoids (natural compounds found in many colourful fruits and vegetables), could play a key role in helping us stay strong, active, and mentally sharp as we age. Published in Nature Food, the study tracked more than 120,000 participants ageing from 40-70 years for more than a decade. It is the first study of its kind to suggest that there is a benefit to consuming a wide range of flavonoids beyond that of simply consuming a high quantity.

"The goal of medical research is not just to help people live longer but to ensure they stay healthy for as long as possible," ECU adjunct lecturer Dr Nicola Bondonno said. "We know from previous research that people who have a higher flavonoid intake tend to live longer, and they are also less likely to get any of the major chronic diseases such as dementia, diabetes, or heart disease"

A diverse intake of flavonoid-rich foods can significantly reduce the risk of chronic diseases and frailty, enhancing both lifespan and quality of life in ageing adults

The study, which analysed data from 62,743 women and 23,687 men over 24 years, found that women with the highest flavonoid intakes had a 15% lower risk of frailty, a 12% lower risk of impaired physical function, and a 12% lower risk of poor mental health compared to those with the lowest intakes. While fewer associations were observed in men, higher flavonoid intake was still linked to a lower risk of poor mental health.

ECU Research Fellow, first author and co-lead of the study, Dr Benjamin Parmenter made the initial

discovery that a flavonoid-diverse diet is good for health. He said: "Flavonoid intakes of around 500mg a day was associated with a 16% lower risk of all-cause mortality, as well as a ~10% lower risk of CVD, type 2 diabetes, and respiratory disease. That's roughly the amount of flavonoids that you would consume in two cups of tea. However, those who consumed the widest diversity of flavonoids, had an even lower risk of these diseases, even when consuming the same total amount. So for example, instead of just drinking tea, it's better to eat a range of flavonoid-rich foods to make up your intake, because different flavonoids come from different foods."

Senior author Prof Aedin Cassidy from Queens University Belfast stressed that flavonoids are well known for reducing oxidative stress and inflammation, supporting blood vessel health, and even helping to maintain skeletal muscle mass – all of which are important for preventing frailty and maintaining physical function and mental health as we age.

According to Prof Eric Rimm from Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health, the study participants who increased their intake of flavonoid-rich food by three servings a day, had a 6-11% lower risk across all three of the ageing outcomes in females, and a 15% lower risk of poor mental health in males. "Overall, these findings underscore the potential for simple dietary modifications to impact overall quality of life and contribute to the optimisation of healthy ageing," he added.

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Keeping an eye in protest aftermath



Members of the California National Guard stand outside the Edward R Roybal federal building after their deployment by US President Donald Trump, in response to protests against immigration sweeps, in Los Angeles, California, US, yesterday. (Reuters)

New world, new rules: Forces reshaping global economy

By Dambisa Moyo  
London

As the world becomes more volatile and confusing, policymakers, business leaders, and investors will need to rethink the mental models they use to analyse the global economy. Specifically, they should pay attention to three structural dynamics that are altering the global landscape: capital flows, demographic shifts, and political ideology, which are ushering in a more fragmented and siloed world.

Changes to capital flows are driven largely by regulatory requirements (such as the US ban on investments in China) and investors' pursuit of new opportunities for higher returns across sectors and regions. The United States currently represents nearly 70% of stock-market capitalisation worldwide, attracting more than 70% of flows into the \$13 trillion global market for private investments, which include equity and credit. This is true despite the recent sell-off. The US stock market is where investors can generate the most attractive returns, because the US is a global innovation leader with broad, liquid, and deep capital markets.

But global debt has reached 237% of world GDP, raising concerns about who owns outstanding liabilities and the extent to which there is hidden leverage in the global financial system. The US government alone owes \$36tn (or 124% of GDP) – a large proportion of which is held by China, with which relations are strained.

Moreover, hidden leverage and the shadow banking sector's debts could become a problem. According to S&P Global, shadow banks held \$63tn in financial

assets at the end of 2022 – representing 78% of global GDP. And further analysis has also shown that in 2024, shadow banking accounted for 70% of US mortgage origination and leveraged lending. Investors and business leaders will need to ask themselves who holds what debt, and where debt obligations and major pools of financial leverage may lie.

The second big worry concerns demographics. The global population continues to grow at a rapid clip, with the United Nations forecasting that there will 11.2bn people by 2100, up from 8.1bn now. Already, almost 90% of the world's population lives in poorer emerging markets, and economically poorer regions – such as Africa, India, and the Middle East – are projected to experience population growth at or above the replacement rate of 2.1 children per woman. Thus, these regions will continue to skew younger. Across Africa, 50-60% of the population is below the age of 25, compared to only 20% across the OECD.

Meanwhile, other countries are ageing rapidly and registering lower birth rates, with forecasts for Europe and China pointing to marked population declines. According to Eurostat, the European Union's population is projected to peak at 453.3mn in 2026, before gradually decreasing to 419.5mn by 2100. And UN data suggest that China's population will fall below 800mn by 2100, from 1.4bn now.

Such trends have far-reaching implications for global demand and production across a wide array of commodities such as foodstuffs and energy. For example, India, with its large, poorer population, is still heavily dependent on coal and fossil fuels, as compared to renewables.

Demographic changes will also alter financial portfolios as

ageing populations switch from being capitalists (willing to take on risk) to rentiers (desiring stable, predictable fixed incomes). But markets will also have to calibrate for unprecedented intergenerational wealth transfers from baby boomers to millennials. Cerulli Associates estimates that this could amount to \$84tn by 2045.

Finally, the ideological splits across countries and regions must be factored in. The breakdown of multilateralism and the fragmentation of trade, capital flows, migration, and ideas are all being priced in, and policymakers and business leaders will have to keep these trends in mind. America's largest multinationals still generate more than half of their revenues outside the US. But they now need to consider what strained US alliances and traditional trading relationships will mean for their businesses.

For business more broadly, deglobalisation has forced a shift toward more centralised procurement, hiring, and trade in goods and services. It is also jeopardising carry trades (borrowing cheaply in New York and London to invest in higher-yielding regions) and making it harder to repatriate profits.

In the near term, the Trump administration's tariffs and deportations could affect salaries and fuel higher inflation in consumer goods, wages, and prices across sectors. Higher inflation, moreover, will likely drive up the cost of capital, which could suppress business investment. And over the long term, deglobalisation and technological advances – such as AI and quantum computing – will further entrench today's ideological splits.

Geopolitical fissures have already raised big political questions. There is a tug of war

between state capitalism and market capitalism, and over the reconfiguration of alliances and country groupings. New blocs such as the Brics+ are vying for global influence and looking to circumvent traditional multilateral institutions. The Brics+ countries already represent 45% of the world's population and 35% of its GDP, and they are playing a growing role in the pricing and trade of many internationally traded goods and commodities. Such developments are making it harder for countries to achieve global alignment; even previously celebrated efforts like the United Nations Climate Change Conferences have been hobbled.

As global growth slows, trade, finance, religion, energy, AI, and immigration are all being weaponised, leading to much greater complexity that will make it harder to anticipate policy outcomes. As a practical matter, added complexity and reduced visibility will likely shorten the time horizons for crucial decisions about allocating capital and human resources.

Rather than looking five years ahead – typically assumed to be the length of an economic or business cycle – investors, business leaders, and policymakers may need to think more in terms of the next 18 months. Amid so much volatility, decision-makers will have to focus on adaptability. No one can afford to commit to long-term strategies based on regulatory, geopolitical, or economic conditions that might change overnight. – Project Syndicate

• Dambisa Moyo, an international economist, is the author of four New York Times best-selling books, including Edge of Chaos: Why Democracy Is Failing to Deliver Economic Growth – and How to Fix It.



As the global landscape becomes more fragmented and volatile, three deep structural forces – capital flows, demographic divergence, and ideological realignment – are reshaping economic logic, forcing leaders to abandon outdated models and adopt shorter, more adaptive planning horizons.



# S Korea’s new leader to seek more time for US trade talks

- **Seoul to take wait-and-see stance on trade talks: sources**
- **Open to extending deadline, unlikely to ask from the start**
- **Japan, China considered references for bargaining power**
- **S Korea better positioned than peers for favourable deal**

By **Jihoon Lee** and **Cynthia Kim**  
Seoul

The new South Korean administration will likely make efforts to buy time for US trade talks, as it studies the negotiations of bigger neighbours Japan and China for leverage, according to sources familiar with the ruling party’s thinking.

President Lee Jae-myung, who won the June 3 snap presidential election without a usual two-month transition period, said on the eve of the elections that “the most pressing matter is trade negotiations with the United States.”

The future of South Korea’s export-oriented economy will hinge on what kind of deal Lee can strike, with all of his country’s key sectors from chips to autos and shipbuilding heavily exposed to global trade.

The new president and his liberal Democratic Party government inherit an economy that is expected to grow this year by a grim 0.8%, the weakest since 2020, and will need to unify a country deeply polarised by ousted President Yoon Suk-yeol’s botched martial law attempt.

South Korea and other countries may face further pressure, as a draft letter seen by Reuters showed the Trump administration wanted countries to provide their best offer on trade negotiations by Wednesday. A trade ministry official declined to confirm if Seoul had received the letter.

But the transition of power after a six-month leadership vacuum provides Seoul with an excuse to slow down its negotiations and observe Washington’s tariff talks with other countries, lawmakers, officials and trade experts from the Democratic Party said.

“The new administration will need to take a fresh look at the overall framework of the negotiations and that will be a buffer to buy time, which the US cannot reject,” said a trade expert who took part in brainstorming for Lee’s trade strategies.

The sources added the administration may not be able to immediately ask Trump for an extension, and Lee’s top diplomacy adviser has said he sees such a request being considered only after reviewing the progress.



Lee Jae-myung gestures while standing next to his wife Kim Hye-kyung as he greets his supporters in front of the National Assembly in Seoul on Wednesday. (Reuters)

Still, prolonged negotiations by other countries may help to buy Seoul time.

“It will be strategically right to take a wait-and-see stance because the situation is changing within the United States and around negotiations of other countries,” one lawmaker said.

**Strategic silence**

South Korea, a major US ally and one of the first countries to engage with Washington after Japan, agreed in late April to craft a “July package” scrapping levies before the 90-day pause on Trump’s reciprocal tariffs is lifted, but progress was disrupted by continued upheavals in South Korea’s leadership.

Lee has since stressed there is no need to rush into clinching a deal and the deadline of July 8 set between Seoul and Washington should be reconsidered.

During his election campaign, Lee did not make specific comments about contentious issues around the trade talks. That “silence” was a strategic move, a party official said.

In a statement after his victory, the Korea International Trade Association called for Lee to “respond quickly to the rapidly changing foreign trade order” and use all of the government’s diplomatic and trade resources to pursue a practical negotiation strategy.

Trump’s across-the-board tariffs on trading partners, including 25% duties on South Korea, have been the subject of ongoing litigation, but remain in place.

“For different reasons, China and Japan will be references for us, with the former on the possibility of US policy changes and the latter on how to make moves under a similar circumstance,” another trade expert said.

Japan, another US ally slapped with 24% tariffs, no longer sees merit in striking a quick deal, unless it is granted an exemption from 25% product-specific duties on its key industry of automobiles, also a major sector for South Korea.

China agreed with the US to significantly unwind their tariffs on each



Supporters of Lee Jae-myung shout slogans with one wearing sunglasses adorned with the national flag in Seoul. (AFP)

other in a 90-day truce signed in mid-May, but Trump last week accused Beijing of violating the agreement and threatened to take tougher actions.

When it comes to joint responses to US tariffs, there is a higher possibility with Japan than China, two sources said, citing shared interest in energy purchases and auto tariffs.

Lee’s party expects there to be some “two-track” transitional period, with current officials continuing negotiations as the new administration formulates its strategies, according to the official.

**Better positioned**

Given its strength in key sectors of US interest, such as shipbuilding and technology, some analysts see South Korea as better positioned than others in the region, as Seoul prepares a separate package of industrial co-operation for bargaining power.

“Successful outcomes require offers that support the president’s domestic agenda, and this will be comparatively

easy for Korea given its importance in politically sensitive industries,” said Jay Truesdale, a former US diplomat and CEO of TD International, an advisory firm in Washington, D.C.

Kathleen Oh, Morgan Stanley’s chief Korea and Taiwan economist, said: “We believe there may be more channels and enough scope for Korea to work out a deal compared to, let’s say, its exporting peer Taiwan.”

South Korea has the scope to decrease its trade surplus with the US via more import purchases, while it can also offer to lower tariffs on agricultural products, particularly rice, quoted by Trump as a high tariff example, Oh said. But, for the Lee administration, that is more the reason it does not have to rush, the second trade expert said.

“In the worst-case scenario, if tariffs are adjusted after we sign an agreement, that might mean we made unnecessary concessions,” the source said, adding “it’s not like we don’t have any leverage” — Reuters

# Wegovy use up 50% among US teens

- **Wegovy prescriptions for teens remain a small fraction of the obese**
- **Insurance hurdles limit use among doctors treating adolescents**
- **Need for monitoring, lifestyle changes alongside GLP-1 medications**

By **Chad Terhune** and **Robin Respaut**  
Los Angeles

American teens are increasingly turning to the weight-loss drug Wegovy as more families and their doctors gain confidence in its use for young people with obesity, new data shared with Reuters shows. The average rate of teens beginning treatment with the highly effective Novo Nordisk drug grew 50% last year to 14.8 prescriptions per 100,000 adolescents, according to an analysis by health data firm Truveta.

That’s up from a rate of 9.9 prescriptions per 100,000 in 2023, the first full year that Wegovy was available to children aged 12 and older. The average rate climbed further during the first three months of this year, reaching 17.3 new prescriptions per 100,000.

That still represents a minute fraction of the estimated 23,000 out of every 100,000 teens in the country who are living with obesity, and is far slower than the uptake among US adults.

“It’s promising that more young people are using these medications, but it’s still a very small percentage of patients with severe obesity that are getting access to them,” said Dr Cate Varney, director of obesity medicine at the University of Virginia Health system. “When lifestyle changes alone are insufficient, we need these additional tools.” For its analysis, Truveta reviewed the electronic health records of 1.3mn patients ages 12 through 17. The data covers 30 US health systems with more than 900 hospitals and 20,000 clinics across the country.

The analysis did not include other GLP-1 drugs, including Novo’s Ozempic and Eli Lilly’s Zepbound, which are not approved to treat obesity in adolescents, or compounded versions of these therapies.

Wegovy became an option to treat adolescents in late 2022 after decades in which the conventional approaches



of diet, exercise and counseling largely failed.

About 8mn American teens, or 23% of people ages 12 to 19, have obesity, up from 5% in 1980, according to US government data. Young people with obesity run a much higher risk of developing chronic, costly, life-shortening conditions like type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular and liver diseases.

In January 2023, the American Academy of Pediatrics strongly recommended that doctors provide weight-loss drugs to children with obesity starting at age 12. Yet the medical community has not uniformly embraced GLP-1s for adolescents.

Some doctors are hesitant because the drugs’ long-term safety for children during a critical phase of development is

unknown, and the treatments may need to be used indefinitely. Overall, there are limited options for many teens and their parents because insurance plans often do not cover any treatment for obesity, including intensive behavioural counselling, visits with a dietician or the new GLP-1 medications.

An option for some

At Nemours Children’s Hospital in Wilmington, Delaware, the Healthy Weight and Wellness Clinic treated about 2,000 adolescent patients last year.

About 25% were prescribed Wegovy or another GLP-1 medication, said Dr Thao-Ly Phan, the clinic’s medical director. The number of adolescents with a GLP-1 prescription nearly doubled from 2023. On average, their patients taking a GLP-1

drug lost 15 pounds (6.8 kg) within 6 to 12 months, and nearly 30 pounds after more than a year.

For many of the other patients, the medications were not an option, either because of insurance hurdles or concern within families about potential risks. Other teens opted for lifestyle changes or older, cheaper weight-loss drugs, with some success.

“It is important for us to continue to monitor and better understand outcomes from the medications — both positive and negative — before widespread use,” Phan said.

US Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr has criticised the idea of prescribing Ozempic or Wegovy widely to children to treat obesity. In a federal health report he released last month,

GLP-1 drugs were cited as an example of the “overmedicalisation of our kids.” It noted a lack of “long-term safety data, raising the spectre of unforeseen problems that interrupt, damage, or impair metabolism and growth development.”

Novo in a statement said semaglutide, the active ingredient in Wegovy and Ozempic, “did not appear to affect growth or pubertal development” during its clinical trials involving teens.

For many adults, Novo said, obesity starts in childhood or adolescence, and “we are confident in the proven safety and efficacy of our GLP-1 medicines.”

Eli Lilly’s weight-loss drug Zepbound is in late-stage clinical trials for use by adolescents. Lilly told Reuters that “there has been no evidence to date suggesting impairment in growth or metabolism” from GLP-1 medications.

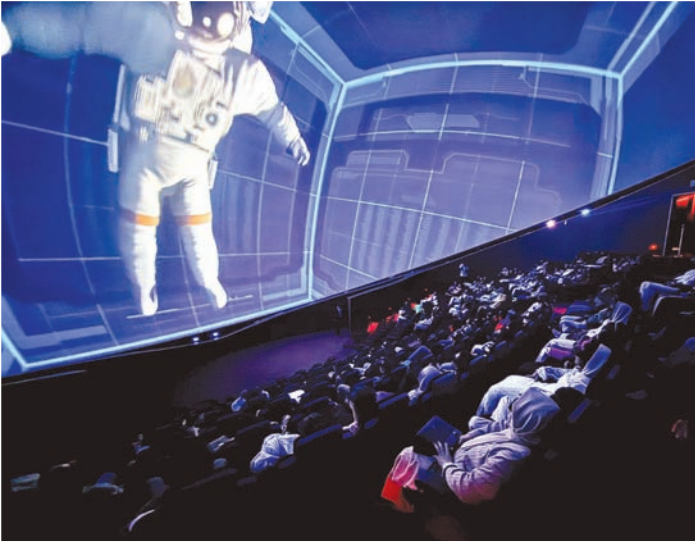
Dr Robert Siegel, a paediatrician and director of the Center for Better Health and Nutrition at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital, said about 15% of adolescents being treated there were prescribed Wegovy or a similar GLP-1 medication from July 2021-July 2023. They include patients being treated for type 2 diabetes for which the GLP-1 drugs were originally developed.

Siegel said he prefers to start teens on three to six months of intensive lifestyle management before even considering medication.

While obesity specialists can help navigate potential risks from the drugs, many primary-care providers need more training, he said. They may not have the equipment to monitor for the loss of muscle mass — a side effect of these medicines — or lack the resources to work with families over an extended period on healthier eating and exercise.

“These medications are likely to be needed for a very long time to maintain weight,” Siegel said, “and we only have a relatively short-term experience with them.” — Reuters





# Eid al-Adha festivities conclude at Katara

Katara Cultural Village concluded its three-day Eid al-Adha celebrations last night.

The celebrations drew large crowds on all days, reaffirming Katara's status as a leading cultural and tourist destination in Qatar and the region.

Katara public relations and communications director Salem Mabhout al-Marri said that the events organised for Eid al-Adha 2025 were a manifestation of Katara's vision to be an inclusive cultural and tourist destination, offering a unique festive experience that blends enjoyment with knowledge.

"We are extremely pleased with the strong engagement and the large turnout throughout the three days celebrations," he said. "We saw the joy and amazement on the faces of visitors from various nationalities, which reflects our success in delivering cultural and entertainment content that meets their expectations."

The activities offered something for everyone, with events tailored to different age groups and interests.

Katara Corniche featured a range of performances, including musical and traditional arts, as well as children's entertainment, musical evenings, and folk shows.

Visitors enjoyed shows at Al Thuraya Planetarium, the theatrical performance *The Haunted House*, fireworks displays, and the dancing fountain shows accompanied by lights, visual effects, and music.

Many visitors expressed admiration for the effective organisation, artistic richness, and cultural diversity of the events.

They praised the festive atmosphere at Katara, describing it as "exceptional" and "inspiring", and stressed that Katara has become their preferred destination for holidays and special occasions.

