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5 Qatar-based Indians die in Kenya accident

Five Qatar-based Indians were killed in a road accident in central Kenya on Monday evening when the bus they were travelling in overturned during a holiday trip. Several others were seriously injured. All the deceased came from various places in Kerala. **Page 12**

Israeli fire kills 17 near Gaza aid site

Israeli gunfire killed at least 17 Palestinians and wounded dozens as thousands of displaced people approached an aid distribution site run by a US-backed humanitarian group GHF in central Gaza yesterday. "Day after day, casualties & scores of injured are reported at distribution points manned by Israel & private security companies," Philippe Lazzarini, the chief of the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA), wrote on X. "This humiliating system continues to force thousands of hungry & desperate people to walk for tens of miles excluding the most vulnerable & those living too far," he said.

10 killed in Austrian school shooting

A former student killed 10 people when he opened fire at a high school in Graz in southeastern Austria yesterday before taking his own life. Seven of the victims were female and three male. The shooter's motive remained unknown. The perpetrator was an Austrian from the Graz region. **Page 11**

Qatar to be ‘best performing’ GCC economy in 2026, 2027: World Bank

By Pratap John
Business Editor

Qatar's economy will clock a real GDP growth of 2.4% this year, 5.4% in 2026 and 7.0% in 2027, the World Bank said in its forecast released yesterday.

Qatar will outperform the other five GCC countries in real GDP growth in 2026 and 2027, World Bank data reveal.

According to the World Bank forecast, Bahrain's economy will grow 3.5% this year, 3% in 2026 and 2.8% in 2027.

For Kuwait, the World Bank forecasts a real GDP growth of 2.2% this year, and 2.7% in both 2026 and 2027.

Oman, the World Bank forecast says, will grow at 3% this year, 3.7% in 2026 and 4% in 2027.

According to the World Bank forecast, Saudi Arabia's real GDP will grow at 2.8% this year, 4.5% in 2026 and 4.6% in 2027.

UAE, the World Bank forecast says, will grow at 4.6% this year and 4.9% in both 2026 and 2027.

The World Bank said growth in members of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) is forecast to increase to 3.2% in 2025, 4.5% in 2026, and 4.8% in 2027.

The phase-out of oil production cuts is expected to lead to rising oil production, despite projected lower oil prices amid weakening global demand, it said.

Growth is also envisaged to continue to be boosted by expanding non-oil activity. Among the non-GCC oil exporters, activity in several countries is projected to be constrained by lower oil prices and weaker external demand.

In oil importers, growth is projected to pick up to 3.6% in 2025, 3.9% in 2026, and 4.3% in 2027, mostly owing to strengthening private consumption as inflation softens, a recovery in agricultural output, and assumed moderation of geopolitical tensions.

Despite the rise in global trade tensions and heightened uncertainty, activity in the Middle East and North Africa (MNA) has strengthened, in part reflecting increasing oil production, the World Bank noted. **To Page 6**

PM, UAE president review relations

President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan met yesterday, at Al Bahr Palace in Abu Dhabi with HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani. At the outset of the meeting, HE Sheikh Mohammed conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the UAE President, wishing him good health and happiness, and the people of the UAE continued progress and prosperity. The UAE president entrusted HE Sheikh Mohammed to convey his greetings to His Highness the Amir, wishing him good health and happiness, and the Qatari people further progress and prosperity. Discussions during the meeting dealt with co-operation relations between the two brotherly countries and means to support



sions during the meeting dealt with co-operation relations between the two brotherly countries and means to support

and develop them. They also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues. **(QNA) Page 3**

Qatar slams fabricated Israeli reports

Qatar has slammed recent fabricated reports in the Israeli media, denouncing them as "a deliberate" attempt to sow division between the Gulf state and the US at a critical time of their joint mediation efforts in the Gaza Strip.

"Fabricated documents are once again circulating in the Israeli media in an attempt to sow tension and division between Qatar and the US at a crucial stage in our efforts to mediate a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas," Qatar's International Media Office (IMO) said in a statement yesterday. "The timing of their release is



no coincidence. It is a deliberate distraction, deployed by those who want to deflect attention from negative coverage of their own irresponsible actions in Gaza - including those reported in the news over the past week - at a moment when a breakthrough is within reach," IMO said. "This tactic has been used previously by those who want diplomacy to fail. They do not want Qatar's work with the Trump

administration - on the Gaza file and other regional files - to succeed in bringing peace to the region. "Similar methods have been used against those who have spoken out against the continuation of the war, or worked diplomatically to bring the hostages home including members of President Trump's administration, in an effort to discredit them and undermine the diplomatic process," the statement said. IMO stressed that their efforts will not succeed. "No fabricated documents will weaken the bond between Qatar and the US."

Alfardan Exchange announces partnership with Qatar Airways Privilege Club

- This collaboration enables Alfardan Exchange's clients to collect Avios when conducting their everyday financial transactions.
- Bashar Alwaqfi, "This partnership reflects our ongoing commitment to innovation, value, and putting our clients first."
- Christophe Guittard, "This collaboration introduces yet another way for our members to enjoy exclusive benefits in the services they already value and trust"



Alfardan Exchange, the leading company in the field of currency exchange, financial transfers, and precious metals in Qatar, has announced a new partnership with Qatar Airways Privilege Club. This collaboration enables Alfardan Exchange's clients to collect Avios when conducting their everyday financial transactions.

Through this partnership, members of Qatar Airways Privilege Club can now collect Avios when using eligible services from Alfardan Exchange. These services include Cross-Border Money Transactions, buying Foreign Currencies, purchasing Gold Bars and Coins, and loading or reloading Alfardan Exchange's Multi-Currency Travel Card. The benefits are accessible at any of Alfardan Exchange's branches across Qatar, as well as via its user-friendly Mobile Application available 24/7 on the Apple Store and Google Play Store. Members

can simply enter their Privilege Club number in the app or provide it upon making a purchase to link the transaction to their account and collect Avios.

Commenting on the partnership, Mr. Bashar Alwaqfi, CEO of Alfardan Exchange said: "We are delighted to collaborate with Qatar Airways Privilege Club to introduce this rewarding initiative to our esteemed clients. Alfardan Exchange clients can now enjoy the added benefit of collecting Avios on eligible services aligned with their everyday financial needs. This partnership reflects our ongoing commitment to innovation, value, and putting our clients first. This initiative is part of the company's strategy to develop its loyalty program and enrich the overall client experience. I would like to sincerely thank Qatar Central Bank for their support in elevating service quality and driving innovation within the exchange industry."

Qatar Airways Senior Vice President Business-to-Consumer, Christophe Guittard, said: "Driven by our commitment to creating meaningful experiences for Privilege Club members in Qatar, we are delighted to announce our latest partnership with Alfardan Exchange. This collaboration introduces yet another way for our members to enjoy exclusive benefits in the services they already value and trust, allowing them to collect Avios instantly when engaging with Alfardan Exchange's financial solutions. This reflects our continued efforts in providing relevant, everyday connections that align with our members' lifestyle - making loyalty more rewarding and generous one interaction at a time."

Alfardan Exchange has earned the distinction of being ranked first in Qatar and recognized among the top five exchange houses in the field of digital transformation in the GCC and classified among the top 20 exchange companies in the Middle East by Forbes Middle East, proudly representing the sole Qatari exchange house on these lists.

Additionally, the company was also recently awarded the 2024 Arab Banking Excellence and Achievement Award from the World Union of Arab Bankers, named the Most Reliable Company Specialized in Money Transfer in Qatar. In 2025, Alfardan Exchange was honored with the Arab Banks Awards & Commendation of Excellence, named the Strongest in Exchange and Remittance services in Qatar for the year 2025.

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Qatari Haj Mission returns home today

QNA
Makkah Al Mukkaramah

The Qatari Haj Mission will arrive in Doha today from Makkah after performing the Haj's rituals easily and comfortably. Deputy Head of the Qatari Haj Mission Ali bin Sultan al-Misifri confirmed that the current season has witnessed unprecedented success in terms of organisation, co-ordination, and services provided to the pilgrims of the State of Qatar.

He noted that the country's pilgrims returned home safely in the past two days, and their arrival will continue today, via several Qatar Airways and Saudi Airlines flights.

He added that the Qatari mission worked around the clock through its various support units, including co-ordination, follow-up, and airport services, the communications and support unit, the medical unit, the holy sites services unit, the monitoring and inspection unit, the Sharia unit, and others.

These units worked within an integrated system to ensure the best Haj experience for the country's pilgrims.

The deputy head of the Qatari Haj Mission indicated that the facilities and quality services Qatari

pilgrims experienced from their departure to their return after performing the rituals were due to a number of factors that combined to provide a distinguished Haj experience.

He explained that the Qatari mission played a pivotal role in managing pilgrims' affairs, through direct co-ordination with the specialised Makkah Hospital-ity Company, to fully equip the camps for all pilgrims in Mina, Arafat, and Muzdalifah, utilising the best capabilities and highest quality standards. This enabled Qatari campaigns to fully devote themselves to serving pilgrims in an atmosphere of spiritual comfort and reassurance.

Al-Misifri also pointed out that the mission ensured continuous co-ordination with the Ministry of Haj and Umrah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the relevant security authorities.

This contributed to facilitating the movement of pilgrims during the Day of Tarwiya and from Arafat to Muzdalifah, then return to Mina to stone the Jamarat. This reflects the depth of fraternal co-operation and joint support in serving the Guests of God.

The deputy head of the Mission praised the constructive co-operation of the 17 accredited Qatari campaigns, appreciating their significant efforts in co-ordinating



with the mission and their commitment to adhering to the movement of pilgrims' plans, security and safety requirements, and full integration to ensure an ideal Haj season, including providing the utmost comfort and support for the country's pilgrims.

He emphasised that the effective partnership between the mission and the campaigns reflected the success and represented a model to be emulated in serving pilgrims, commending the extensive efforts made by the advisory committee as well as all heads and

members of the mission's administrative, technical, and service units, working around the clock. These efforts have positively impacted the quality of the equipment, services, and facilities provided to Qatari pilgrims across all campaigns.

In this context, al-Misifri highlighted that upon its return to the homeland, the mission will begin preparing for the upcoming Haj season by studying challenges, leveraging feedback from pilgrims and campaigns, and developing operational and logisti-

cal plans to achieve the growing ambitions of providing the best services according to the highest standards.

The deputy head of the Qatari Haj Mission praised the tremendous efforts made by the government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to facilitate the performance of Haj rituals.

He commended the efforts of the Ministry of Haj and Umrah and all security and service bodies, whose positive co-operation had a profound impact on the success of the season.

Amir sends cables of congratulations to president of Portugal

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of the Portuguese Republic Dr Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa on the occasion of his country's National Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to Portuguese PM Luis Montenegro on the occasion.

Qatar strongly condemns Austria school shooting

Qatar strongly condemned the school shooting incident that took place in the city of Graz in Austria, which resulted in deaths and injuries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated, in a statement issued yesterday, the State of Qatar's firm stance against violence, terrorism, and criminal acts, regardless of their motives or reasons. The ministry expressed the State of Qatar's condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the government and people of Austria, and wished the injured a swift recovery. **(QNA)**

Qatar's UN representative in NY meetings

HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations, Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, met with Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. The meeting reviewed Qatar's ongoing preparations to host the Second World Summit for Social Development, scheduled to be held from November 4-6.



HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani met with Annalena Baerbock, president-elect of the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, at the headquarters of the Permanent Mission of Qatar in New York. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed joint priorities for the State of Qatar and the United Nations within the framework of the upcoming General Assembly session. They also discussed ways to enhance co-operation in addressing pressing global challenges. HE Sheikha Alya reaffirmed Qatar's continued commitment to actively supporting UN initiatives, with



the aim of contributing to the success of the 80th session of the General Assembly. For her part, Baerbock expressed appreciation for Qatar's prominent role in

supporting United Nations efforts, particularly in promoting international peace and security and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. **(QNA)**

Qatar Firm “Alok K. Saksena & Partners Accounting & Auditing (AKSAA)” Hosts Prestigious MENA Regional Accounting & Audit Gathering, Spotlighting Doha as a Hub for Professional Excellence and Collaboration



Alok K. Saksena & Partners Accounting & Auditing (AKSAA) successfully hosted the MGI MENA Regional Meeting 2025 on 29–30 May in Doha at Pullman Doha West Bay, bringing together leading audit and accounting professionals from across the Middle East and North Africa. The two-day event welcomed 35 delegates representing 22 firms from 16 countries, offering a vibrant platform for thought leadership, cross-border collaboration, and regional advancement.

As the host firm, AKSAA curated a dynamic agenda focused on emerging opportunities in audit and advisory, professional development, and innovation in practice management. The event underscored Qatar's growing profile as a destination for high-level professional forums and business connectivity.



Naresh Dasari

“Hosting this prestigious event has been a milestone for us,” said Naresh Dasari, Partner at AKSAA.

“It reflects the strength of the MGI network and reaffirms Qatar's position as a regional hub for professional excellence and growth. The energy and expertise shared over these two days will surely translate into long-term partnerships and new ideas.”

Under the theme “Expanding Horizons: Innovation, Expertise & Opportunities in Audit and Advisory,” the sessions covered timely and forward-looking topics

— including the growing demand for forensic audits, private equity advisory roles, and IFRS 18 readiness. The agenda was further enriched by practical workshops on leadership development, as well as a comprehensive session on the HR Toolkit and career management for audit and accounting firms, conducted by Accura Partners (India) and led by Ms. Anupama Banwasi, a seasoned HR specialist.

“The MGI network enables firms to go beyond borders — to connect, learn, and grow together,” noted Mohamed Boumesmar, Chairman of MGI Worldwide MENA. “This meeting is a key driver of regional synergy and elevates the standards and vision of our member firms.”

In addition to impactful professional sessions, attendees experienced AKSAA's signature hospitality — including a networking dinner at Parisa Souq Waqif and a scenic night tour of Doha, reinforcing Qatar's reputation as a welcoming and world-class event destination.

The event also marked strong participation from the MGI Worldwide Executive Committee, including CEO Maxine Brock and Regional Director Audrey Danasamy, who praised the quality of discussion and regional engagement. Delegates left energized and already looking forward to the 2026 MGI MENA meeting in Amman, Jordan.



Mohammed Boumesmar



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UAE president meets PM at Al Bahr Palace in Abu Dhabi



President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan met yesterday at Al Bahr Palace in Abu Dhabi with HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs conveyed the greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to the President of the United Arab Emirates, wishing him good health and happiness, and the people of the UAE continued progress and prosperity. For his part, the UAE President entrusted the PM to convey his greetings to the Amir, wishing him good health and happiness, and the Qatari people further progress and prosperity. Discussions during the meeting dealt with co-operation between the two brotherly countries and means to support and develop it. They also exchanged views on a number of regional and international issues. (QNA)

Qatar supports international efforts to protect water bodies, ensure sustainability: minister

QNA
Paris

HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, has affirmed Qatar's commitment to supporting international efforts aimed at protecting water bodies and ensuring the sustainability of their resources. HE the minister highlighted the importance of international co-operation to address the growing challenges threatening the health of marine ecosystems.

During a speech he delivered at

the third edition of the United Nations Ocean Conference, hosted by the French city of Nice over five days, HE the minister explained that water bodies are the lifeblood of the planet and play a fundamental role in regulating the climate, providing food, and ensuring environmental and economic security. However, they face unprecedented pressures that require an urgent global response.

He noted that the State of Qatar strongly supports the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 14, which concerns the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, seas, and marine resources, em-

phasising that the health of these bodies of water represents a fundamental pillar in supporting countries' ability to achieve long-term economic and social development.

In his speech, HE the minister reviewed the most prominent environmental initiatives adopted by the State of Qatar, including treating and recycling 100 percent of wastewater to at least the third level, preventing the discharge of treated wastewater into the sea, and reusing it for irrigation of green spaces, cooling, and industrial purposes.

He also highlighted the launch of the Third National Development

Strategy (2024-2030), which aims to protect 30 percent of marine areas and restore 30 percent of degraded natural habitats by 2030.

He also highlighted the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change's 2024-2030 Strategy, announced last November, which includes ambitious goals, most notably protecting 30 percent of island and coastal areas, ensuring the restoration of degraded habitats, and protecting endemic and endangered species.

He also highlighted the implementation of more than 100 environmental projects that promote green development and the circular

economy, enhance the use of recycled resources, and consolidate environmental sustainability practices in the areas of infrastructure, energy, and land use. Concluding his speech, HE Minister of Environment and Climate Change affirmed that the State of Qatar continues to support innovation in combating climate change and is working to develop adaptation measures in co-operation with relevant authorities.

He emphasised that global environmental challenges require concerted international efforts to protect oceans and seas, considering them a shared resource and a collective responsibility.



QRCS Udhayah campaign benefits over 737,000 people across several nations

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has successfully concluded its 1446 AH Eid al-Adha Campaign under the theme 'Udhayah... Is Blessing'. Implemented on behalf of donors from Qatar, the campaign distributed approximately 24,000 sacrificial animals (Udhayah) in Qatar and 15 countries across Asia and Africa, benefiting nearly 737,000 people.

The project was launched to fulfil the religious duty of Udhayah during the designated days of Eid while also spreading joy and relief among underprivileged families, displaced individuals, and refugees in need.

This year's campaign was marked by efficient planning and swift execution, thanks to the efforts of QRCS' skilled field teams and reliable local partners. Despite logistical challenges in some areas, the sacrificial rituals were carried out in strict compliance with Islamic guidelines.

Faisal Mohammed al-Emadi, secretary-general of QRCS, said: "The Udhayah campaign achieved remarkable success in demonstrating the values of solidarity and compassion. We extend our sincere gratitude to all our donors and supporters. The success of this campaign is a result of our collective dedication and the professionalism of our field teams. We promised to deliver your Udhayah to those in need — and we fulfilled that promise."

In Qatar, QRCS distributed meat from 425 sacrificed sheep to 575 vulnerable families comprising around 3,000 individuals and registered under the Community Care Section. QRCS' campaign extended to 15 countries in Africa and Asia. In Syria 194 sheep were



slaughtered and distributed to 2,900 displaced families (around 14,500 people) in camps in northern Idlib, in cooperation with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. Yemen: 4,833 displaced and vulnerable families (24,165 beneficiaries) across Aden, Abyan, Hajjah, and Al-Bayda received meat from sacrificial animals. Jordan: 712 Syrian refugee and host community families (3,560 people) in Amman, Zarqa, and Mafraq were supported through 11 distribution points in coordination with the Jordan Red Crescent.

Niger: 515 families (34,502 individuals) benefited in Niamey and Tillaberi through local partnerships. Djibouti, Chad, and Tanzania: A total of 3,698 families (22,838 beneficiaries) received meat from cattle and goats in collaboration with national societies and the Chadian Medical Organisation.

Bangladesh: 4,500 families (22,500 people), including refugees, orphans, and vulnerable host community members, received meat in various provinces. Afghanistan: In co-operation with the Afghan Red Crescent, 1,120

impoverished families (7,840 beneficiaries) in the capital Nouakchott received meat through coordination with the Mauritanian Red Crescent. Tajikistan and Gambia: A total of 1,190 families received distributed meat in both countries.

In Gaza, a total of 12,810 Udhayah were allocated, benefitting around 525,000 individuals. The first phase of the operation was carried out in compliance with Islamic rituals: animals were selected, inspected, slaughtered, and then processed into partially cooked canned meat with broth. These food packages will be sent into Gaza as soon as border crossings reopen.

Qatar Charity distributes Udhayah offering through global outreach

QNA
Doha

Qatar Charity (QC) implemented the sacrificial meat distribution project as part of its seasonal campaign launched for the month of Dhul-Hijjah 1446 AH (2025) under the slogan 'The Greatest Days'; thanks to the generous support of donors in Qatar. In a statement, the QC revealed that the project benefited over 850,000 people across 38 countries, including Qatar.

Meat from around 45,300 sheep and cattle was distributed globally, with a focus on crisis-affected countries and regions such as Gaza, Syria, Sudan, Yemen, and Somalia. In Qatar, the sacrificial meat from 4,000 sheep were distributed to around 30,000 individuals. Outside of Qatar, the meat of nearly 41,300 sacrifices were distributed to approximately 826,000 people in 37 countries across Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Udhayah distribution took place in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kosovo, Nepal, Nigeria, Ghana, The Gambia, Palestine, Syria, Tanzania, Niger, Sri Lanka, Senegal, Ethiopia, Indonesia, India, Lebanon, South Africa, Malaysia, Yemen, Chad, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Turkiye, Tunisia, Kyrgyzstan, Mali, Cote d'Ivoire, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Kenya, Djibouti, Mauritania, Togo, Benin, and Burundi. The QC implements the sacrificial Udhayah project annually, given its importance in embodying the values of solidarity and compassion among Muslims in a practical way. It provides an opportunity for those who are able to share the joy of Eid al-Adha with the needy and deprived, providing them with a generous portion of their income and bringing them joy on this happy occasion. The QC reaffirmed its commitment to implementing projects and campaigns with professionalism and dignity, ensuring donations reach the most vulnerable efficiently and respectfully.



Pearl School, Al Dafna receives 'Diamond Category Award' from MoEHE

Pearl School, Al Dafna has received the 'Diamond Category Award' from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), in the 'My Values Define My Identity' initiative, a statement said. Ranked among the highest scorers with an evaluation score of 91-100%, Pearl School was selected from over 300 schools across Qatar. The recognition celebrates the school's creativity and comprehensive implementation of all five value-based activities mandated by the Tarbeya Centre under MoEHE. Dr Rania Mohamed, director of Private Schools, and Omar al-Naama, Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs, bestowed the award to Dr Maneesh Mangal, principal, in the presence of other school officials. Pearl School was also commended for the 100% completion of all required activities, further solidifying its leadership in promoting values-based education in the country.



Qatar joins ‘Reimagining Education’ forum in Chile

QNA
Santiago

In a bid to deepen international dialogue on the future of education, the State of Qatar participated in ‘Reimagining Education: New Paths for Educational Innovation’, a high-level forum hosted by Fundacion Reimagina in Santiago, Chile. The event, held as part of the Qatar-Chile 2025 Year of Culture, brought together educators, policymakers, and innovators to explore new models for educational reform and cross-sector collaboration.

The forum featured contributions from Aurelio Amaral, Director of Programs at the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), an initiative of Qatar Foundation, and Hazem Idriss, Deputy Director of Community Development at Qatar Museums. Their presence underscored Qatar’s growing role in fostering education and cultural diplomacy as tools for building bridges across continents.

“Innovation in education requires a systems-thinking approach – one that values grassroots



ideas and connects them with global frameworks,” said Amaral on the sidelines of the forum. “Events like this are essential for bringing diverse voices together to co-create inclusive, resilient learning ecosystems.”

Amaral also highlighted WISE’s global role in advancing education through research, policy dialogue, and cross-sector partnerships. Since its founding in 2009 by WISE has become a global platform for educational transformation.

For Idriss, the value of education extended beyond the classroom. He shared lessons from Qatar’s international volunteer initiatives,

which pair service-based learning with cultural exchange. Idriss’s participation in the forum coincided with a broader visit to Chile and Argentina, where he is conducting site assessments for Qatar Museums’ international volunteer programme, an initiative that became an integral part of annual Years of Culture programming during the Qatar-Indonesia 2023.

“Promoting collaboration between organisations, countries and sectors is a core value of Fundacion Reimagina. In order to fulfil our mission of ensuring education that responds to the challenges of 21st-century society, we require part-

nerships and exchanges that guarantee higher educational quality and the development of key skills, such as creativity, critical thinking and digital proficiency. This requires a profound and practical approach to innovation, which we aim to promote at this meeting with Years of Culture and WISE,” said Ana Maria Raad, Founder of Reimagina and AprendoLAB.

A recent example of this commitment is AprendoLab, a project by Fundacion Reimagina that was named one of the six 2024-25 WISE Prize for Education Finalists. The finalists have been working over the past year to develop solutions for fundamental challenges in education systems, such as accelerating foundational literacies, improving the teaching and learning of Arabic, and addressing emerging challenges of artificial intelligence in education.

Organisers hope that by linking local innovation in Chile with international examples, the forum can spur new partnerships and create momentum for scaling high-impact educational strategies, a powerful legacy of the Qatar-Chile 2025 Year of Culture.



QU continues to accept online admission applications for Fall


Qatar University (QU) announced that it will continue accepting online applications for new students for the Fall 2025 semester until July 9, noting that admission decisions will be announced on August 4.

In a statement, the university explained that the colleges available for admission according to the percentages and criteria for the Fall 2025 semester are 70% for the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Business and Economics, Law, Sharia and Islamic Studies, Education, Health Sciences, Nursing, and Sports Sciences. The required percentage is 85% for the Colleges of Medicine and Dentistry, and 80% for the College of Pharmacy.

The university emphasised

that admission to the university is based on the principle of competition among applicants, and that meeting the minimum requirements for high school education does not guarantee acceptance based on the student’s first preference. Rather, students are admitted based on the capacity of each college. It also noted that it will take the educational track in high school into consideration when applying to the university.

The statement indicated that admission applications must be submitted by completing the electronic form on the university’s official website www.qu.edu.qa/apply, urging students wishing to enrol to quickly submit their applications and upload all required documents. **(QNA)**





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Tender Ref. No.	Tender Title	Tender Fee	Electronic Tender Fee Payment Dates	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
TC-036-HSSE-2025	Removal of Valuable and Non-Valuable Scrap on Call-off Basis	QAR 500	11 to 19 June 2025	QAR 20,000	21 July 2025
TC-039-EGS-2025	Provision of Design & Supervision Consultancy Services on Call-off Basis	QAR 800		QAR 22,000	22 July 2025
TC-038-LTS-2025	Supply of MPV 7-Seaters “Passenger Van”	QAR 1000		QAR 40,000	13 July 2025

CONDITIONS:

- Interested bidder shall pay the tender fee to Mowasalat Bank Account details as shown:
- Bidder must submit proof of tender fee payment (Bank Deposit Slip + a Signed & Stamped Expression of Interest (indicating Tender Ref. No. and Title / Company Name and details of nominated contact person i.e., Tel. No., Fax No., and Email address) + Copy of valid Commercial Registration to Mowasalat Secretary - Tender Committee at email: tenders@mowasalat.com
- Tender documents will be released via email on the next working day after the tender fee payment date to all bidders who have submitted the bank deposit slip and other documents requested (i.e. **22 June 2025**).
- Bonds: Tender Bond & Performance Bond:** Bids must be accompanied by Bonds issued by a local bank operating in the State of Qatar as per the Qatar Central Bank template. Further details of bonds can be found in the tender documents. *Bids without Tender Bond shall not be considered.*
- Tender validity:** Bid validity period shall be 180 days from the bid closing date.
- Tender documents submission:** Bids must be submitted in 3 separate sealed (**IN RED WAX**) envelopes addressed to **Secretary - Tender Committee** clearly highlighting the Tender Ref. No. & Tender Title:
 - Envelope 1#** must include the Technical Bid submission (1 Original + 1 non-Editable copy in a USB)
 - Envelope 2#** must include Commercial Bid submission (1 Original + 1 Editable MS Excel spreadsheet copied in a USB)
 - Envelope 3#** must include the Tender Bond (1 Original)
- Bid Closing Date:** Bid submission deadline is **12.00 noon Doha Local Time** as on the Bid closing date shown above. The 3 envelopes must be handed over to the Office of The Secretary - Tender Committee, located at Mowasalat Head Office, Industrial Area. Any tender submitted after the deadline will not be considered.



Supplier RegistrationMowasalat Location



KorwaDoha LimousineKarwa ServicesMowasalat Medical CenterKorwa AcademyKanua Technologies

Two held for practicing cosmetic medical services without licence

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has announced that, in cooperation with the relevant authorities, two foreign nationals have been apprehended for practicing cosmetic medical services without the required professional licenses.

In a press release, the ministry clarified that the violators were identified through the monitoring and surveillance of advertisements on social media platforms. Legal action has been taken against them, and they have been referred to the competent authorities, who have decided to ensure their deportation from the country and to place their names on the list of individuals prohibited from entering the country.

MoPH emphasised that these measures are part of its ongoing commitment to safeguarding the health and safety of the public, ensuring that health services provided are safe, accredited, and delivered by licensed healthcare practitioners in licensed healthcare facilities.

MoPH further clarified that the license status of any healthcare practitioner in the country can be verified through the “Find a Registered Healthcare Practitioner” service, adding that any unlicensed healthcare practices can be reported via e-mail.

Qatar Society of Engineers hails innovation support law

The Qatar Society of Engineers affirmed that the novel law supporting innovation and scientific research represents a qualitative leap and an important strategic platform for opening up broad horizons for innovators and researchers in various sectors, particularly engineering and technology, which represent the backbone of modern development in Qatar.

In a statement, the society expressed its appreciation and gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, for the issuance of Law No. (8) of 2025 regarding supporting of innovation and scientific research, and Amiri Decision No. (19) of 2025 establishing the Qatar Foundation for Supporting Innovation, Scientific Research. Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Qatar Society of Engineers Eng Amna Mohammed al-Naama, indicated that this initiative reflects the insightful vision of the Qatari leadership to build a sustainable national economy based on knowledge and innovation. She emphasised that the new foundation will be a key catalyst for unleashing latent potential and encouraging creative ideas, contributing to addressing local and global challenges and strengthening Qatar’s position as a leading regional centre for research and development. **(QNA)**



OPEN CALL

Tender Ref. No.	Description	Tender Bond	Tender Fees	Bid Closing Date
QC-TDR-2025-002	REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL - PRODUCTION COMPANY FOR HIGH LEVEL EVENTS FOR AWARDS CEREMONY GALA AND SHOWCASE EVENT PRODUCTION	N/A	N/A	25-JUN-2025

QC Enterprise invites qualified and experienced **event production companies** to submit proposals for the full-scale production of the High level events for **Awards Ceremony Gala and showcase event production**, scheduled for **November 2025**, with an expected guest count of approximately **500 attendees**.

Scope of Work Includes (but is not limited to):

- Event production, décor, and stage design
- Lighting, sound, video walls, and filming
- Red carpet experience, cocktail reception, and catering
- Floral design, staffing, and logistics
- Full technical and safety compliance with Qatari regulations
- Permits, clearances, and transportation arrangements

The awarded company will be fully responsible for delivering a turnkey solution aligned with the highest standards of event execution and safety.

Interested companies may obtain the full Scope of Work electronically by contacting QC Enterprise Procurement Department. Proposals must be submitted in two separate files - (1) Technical Proposal and (2) Commercial Proposal—and sent via email to qcplusetc@qm.org.qa and iabbassi@qm.org.qa. The deadline for submission is **25 June 2025**.

For more information, please contact us on Direct (+974) 3315 0770/4402 8358 or Email: imen.abbassi@qm.org.qa

Auction Announcement

ARPM Tender and Auction Committee announce the following Auction:

Auction Subject	Sale of Used Granite Materials at Tower 404 at Doha Corniche			
Launching Date	Closing Date	Auction Bond QR.	Auctions Documents Price QR.	Auction Method
11/06/2025	26/06/2025	10,000 (Qatari Riyals Ten Thousand) refundable subject to (conditions)	100 (Qatari Riyals One Hundred only)	One Closed Envelope


Auction description:
Auction purpose is for the following:
Sale of Used Granite Materials at Tower 404 at Doha Corniche
The awarding will be made to the highest bid among the applicants.

General Conditions:

- Auction Documents / Conditions shall be obtained from Purchasing Department, **ARPM Co.**, located on the 9th Floor, Al Rayyan Building, Old Salata, Zone 18, Al Muthaf Street, Next to Al Bustan Hotel during working hours 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Fri. & Sat. Closed).
- Auction Documents Fee (QR 100 – Qatari Riyals One Hundred only) - non-refundable, will be paid in cash in ARPM Co. Headquarter.
- Site visit for the Used Granite Materials and its Location shall be according to the Auction Conditions and the attendance of the visit shall be limited to those who obtain the Auction documents and pay the prescribed fees as per Item 2 above.
- To obtain Auction documents, the following documents are required:
Authorization letter from the bidding company in Arabic signed by the officially authorized manager and stamped with the company's seal - Copy of the establishment card - ID of the authorized person to receive the documents - Copy of the valid company's commercial registration - Company's classification certificate (if any).
- The Bid must be submitted according to the Conditions stated in the bidding documents. The Bid shall be enclosed with an Auction Bond in the name of Al Rayyan Project Management Company (to be placed in separate envelope inside the Bid envelope) in the form of a payable cheque certified by one of the banks operating in the State of Qatar of only QR10,000 (Ten Thousand Qatari Riyals only), and it will be returned back within 90 days from the closing date subject to the Terms & Conditions, noting that no bid shall be accepted unless it has been enclosed with Auction Bond document.
- The bid (Price of the Used Granite Materials) shall be submitted in local currency (Qatari Riyal) and shall be valid for 90 days from the closing date of the bid and cannot be revoked within that period.
- Deadline for accepting bids is 12:00 pm of the closing date (26/06/2025).
- All forms attached to the Auction documents including the form of undertaking, shall be filled, completed and authorized as stated therein and returned with the other documents.
- All necessary data for the company (contacts & follow-up) must be attached: Mobile - Phone - Fax - E-mail - company address of where the correspondence to be sent, clarifying the tasks of each individual (when purchasing Auction documents) and within the company bid.
- For any queries related to documents and bidding, contact Al Rayyan Project Management Co. - **Tel: 40341846 – 40341804- 40341865, Fax: 40341899 – email: L.cabrall@arpm.com.qa; m.aseef@arpm.com.qa; j.castillo@arpm.com.qa**
11. Deadline for accepting inquiries and requests 18/06/2025.
12. The extension of the closing date may be requested in case of necessity (with justifications), not less than (5) working days prior to the closing date for Tender and Auction committee desertion and decision.
13. In case the closing date is extended or any modifications are made during the announcement period, the company will be notified by fax or e-mail formally.

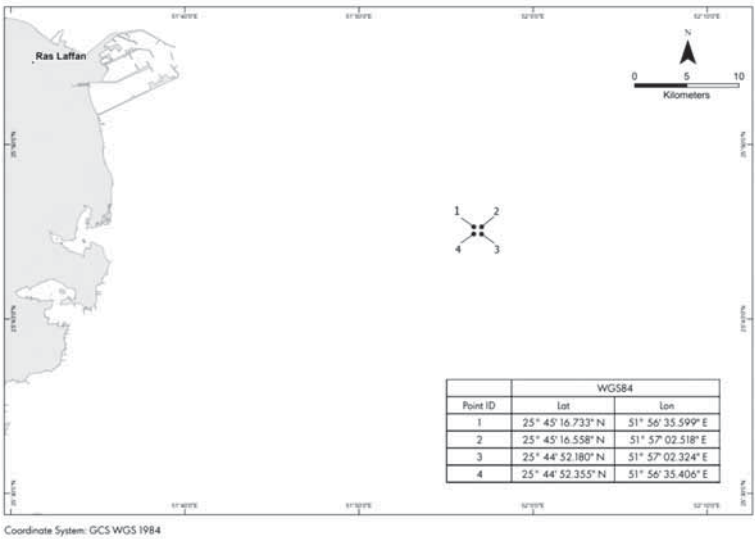
**Tenders and Auctions Committee
ARPM**

Qatar Shell Service Company W.L.L.



Public Announcement to Fishermen and Mariners Marine Debris Clearance Survey Offshore Qatar

In pursuant and under directives from the Ministry Of Transport, Seafarers and registration department, Doha, Qatar, this announcement is to inform that during period 10th June until 10th July, Qatar Shell Service Company W.L.L. will commence Marine Debris Survey Clearance operations within the marked area:



Qatar Shell Service Company W.L.L. requests that all vessels keep well clear of the site. Fishermen are requested to remove their equipment and keep away from the area.

Vessels ignoring this announcement will be responsible for all liabilities arising out of their actions (including any damage to equipment and delay time).

Qatar Shell Service Company assumes no responsibility for damage or loss of equipment following this advertisement.

**For more details contact
Tel: 44957777, Fax: 44957778**



Qatar holds consultative meeting for ‘Narratives for Peace’ working group



Qatar held a consultative meeting in co-operation with Canada and the United Mexican States, co-chairs of the Working Group on “Narratives for Peace”, which was established as part of the High-Level International Conference on the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Pal-

estine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution.

The meeting took place at the United Nations headquarters in New York. HE Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani represented Qatar at the meeting. Discussions focused

on the importance of promoting peace-supportive narratives to foster a positive environment conducive to advancing peace efforts and to strengthening prospects for a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question and the implementation of the two-state solution. (QNA)

Qatar partakes in meeting of Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS

Qatar participated in the meeting of the political directors of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, which was held in the Spanish capital.

HE Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs ambassador Faisal bin Abdullah al-Hanzab represented Qatar at the meeting.

During his speech, the special envoy reaffirmed Qatar’s firm commitment to the mission and objectives of the Global Coalition, as well as its support for all efforts to mobilise all necessary resources to defeat ISIS, especially in Syria and Iraq.

He stressed that Qatar welcomes the positive steps that have been taken in Syria towards national consensus and the consolidation of the rule of law and institutions, noting that lifting sanctions on Syria is an important step towards supporting stability and prosperity there.

The special envoy of the Min-



ister of Foreign Affairs called for respect for the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, pointing out that any military

action that detracts from this sovereignty is no less dangerous than combating terrorist groups. (QNA)

US, European powers submit Iran resolution at UN nuclear agency

AFP
Vienna

European powers and the United States submitted a resolution to the UN’s nuclear watchdog board yesterday condemning Iran’s “non-compliance” with its nuclear obligations, in a bid to up pressure on Tehran, diplomats said.

It is the latest move in a years-long effort to restrict Iran’s nuclear activities over fears that it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons, which it denies. The diplomatic manoeuvre comes as the United States and Tehran have held several rounds of talks mediated by Oman, aimed at securing an agreement on limiting Iran’s nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

“The text has been submitted,” three diplomatic sources said last night.

Paris, Berlin, London and Washington formally tabled the resolution at this week’s board meeting of the Vienna-based International Atomic

Energy Agency (IAEA), which is expected to come to a vote today evening at the earliest.

The draft resolution obtained by AFP calls on Iran “to urgently remedy its non-compliance” with its commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

It also “deeply regrets” that Tehran “despite repeated calls from the Board and many opportunities offered... has failed to co-operate fully with the Agency”.

The agency’s “inability... to provide assurance that Iran’s nuclear programme is exclusively peaceful gives rise to questions that are within the competence of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)”, which can draw up sanctions.

The resolution follows an IAEA report in late May that showed “a general lack of co-operation” by Tehran, diplomats said, including in providing “credible” answers to questions by the agency... as well as the theft of confidential documents and the cleaning up of undeclared sites.

HMC delivers top emergency services during Eid holidays

The Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) continued to serve the public during the Eid al-Adha holidays while handling emergency cases over the first three days.

The Emergency Department of Hamad General Hospital received a total of 2,020 cases during the three days. The first day witnessed 634 cases while the second and third days recorded 683 and 703 cases, respectively.

Dr Aisha al-Sada, emergency specialist at Hamad General Hospital, told local Arabic daily *Arrayah* that patients suffering from digestive system-related illnesses were treated during the period while traffic accidents were also dealt with at the Emergency Department.

The Paediatric Emergency Centre at Al Sadd and the emergency wings at other PHCCs and hospitals received a total of 5,549 cases during the three days. A total of 1,939 cases were received on the third day. The second and first days recorded 1,946 and 1,664 cases.

Dr Mohamed al-Amri, head of the Paediatric Department and director of Paediatric Emergency at HMC, said most of the cases were mild to moderate with



some patients being admitted to intensive care and put under observation. He added that most cases were of high temperatures, coughs and colds. These were caused by viral infections in addition to intestinal infections, all of which were mild and didn’t reach severe levels.

The Ambulance Service at HMC attended to a total of 2,195 cases during the first three days of Eid al-Adha. Ali Darwish, assistant executive director of the Ambulance Service, said these cases included traffic accidents and some were transported by air ambulance. The HMC official

explained that the service covered beaches of Dukhan, Al Khor, Sealine, Al Ghariya, Simaisma, Al Ruwais and Al Wakra while providing special coverage for Katara Cultural Village due to the high turnout it witnessed during the holidays.

He noted that the ambulance service has increased its presence on beaches with ambulances and four-wheel drive vehicles, in addition to distributing bicycles and golf carts in locations such as Katara and Aspire Park to facilitate access to patients in areas crowded with pedestrians.

Qatar to be ‘best performing’ GCC economy in 2026, 2027: World Bank

From Page 1

In oil exporters, oil activity is recovering with the announcement in early April of the phase-out of the voluntary oil production cuts, while growth in non-oil activity has been resilient.

Among oil importers, the growth of private sector activity resumed in 2024, partly owing to reduced political tensions and macroeconomic stabilisation in several economies, including Egypt.

Besides, industrial activity, particularly in construction, has

strengthened in Morocco.

In contrast, activity in West Bank and Gaza has been devastated, with significant destruction of physical capital and massive humanitarian costs in Gaza, as well as heightened tensions in West Bank.

Geopolitical tensions in the Middle East moderated somewhat following ceasefires in late 2024 and early 2025, but violence has resumed in Gaza and Lebanon, and the situation remains highly fragile and uncertain. Tensions have remained high in other countries in fragile and conflict-affected situ-

ations (FCS). Outlook: Growth in MNA is expected to pick up to 2.7% in 2025 and strengthen further to 3.7% in 2026 and 4.1% in 2027.

“This primarily reflects a gradual expansion of oil production that more than offsets the effects of lower oil prices, and despite the constraints on export activity from rising trade barriers.

“Growth forecasts are lower than projected in January, mainly due to the impact of increases in trade restrictions and uncertainty on investment and export activity,” the World Bank noted.

Two Palestinians killed as Israeli forces storm West Bank city

AFP
Nablus

At least two Palestinians were killed yesterday as Israel launched a large-scale military operation in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus, the Palestinian health ministry and the Israeli army said.

The military said troops opened fire and “eliminated” two Palestinians who had attempted to steal a soldier’s weapon as an “operation” was underway in the old city of Nablus.

The Palestinian health ministry said authori-

ties had been informed by Israel of the deaths of Nidal Amira, 40, and Khaled Amira, 35. It did not specify whether the two were related.

AFPTV footage showed Israeli soldiers standing in one of the old city’s narrow streets, next to two dead bodies.

An AFP journalist said dozens of military vehicles entered Nablus’ historic centre shortly after midnight (2100 GMT Monday). A curfew had been announced over loudspeakers the day before.

At a major square outside the old city, young men and boys gathered yesterday to burn tyres and throw stones at the Israeli armoured vehicles.

Gaza-bound activist convoy enters Libya from Tunisia

AFP
Ben Guerane

Hundreds of pro-Palestinian activists taking part in a convoy crossed the Tunisian border yesterday into Libya, aiming to keep heading eastwards until they break Israel’s blockade on the Palestinian territory, organisers said.

This comes after Israel intercepted an aid ship attempting to breach its blockade on Gaza, which was carrying 12 people, including campaigner Greta Thunberg and European parliament member Franco-Palestinian Rima Hassan.

The “Soumoud” convoy, meaning “steadfastness” in Arabic, set off from Tunis on Monday morning, spokesman Ghas-sen Henchiri told Tunisian radio station Mosaïque FM.

He said it includes 14 buses and around 100 other vehicles, carrying hundreds of people.

Convoy members were heard



Activists, heading towards Gaza by land to break the siege on the war-battered territory, wave the Palestinian and Tunisian flags as they arrive in Zawiyah, about 45 kilometres west of the Libyan capital Tripoli, yesterday.

chanting “Resistance, resistance” and “To Gaza we go by the millions” in a video posted on the organising group’s official Facebook page. Henchiri also told Jawhara FM radio channel the convoy plans to remain in Libya for “three or four days at most” before crossing into Egypt and continuing on to Rafah.

Organisers have said Egyptian

authorities have not yet provided passage to enter the country, but Henchiri said the convoy received “reassuring” information.

Organisers said the convoy was not bringing aid into Gaza, but rather aimed at carrying out a “symbolic act” by breaking the blockade on the territory described by the United Nations as “the hungriest place on Earth”.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MOHAMMED RAFAD

holder of

Indian Passport No. T8943822
QID No. 31035601383

hereby change my name

from

MOHAMMED RAFAD

to

MOHAMMED RAFAD NADUCHALIL

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, JOHANNE SAN GABRIEL CALMA

holder of

PHILIPPINES Passport No. P5880934B
QID No. 31160801364

hereby change my name

from

JOHANNE SAN GABRIEL CALMA

to

JOHANNE CHRISTIANSZEN SAN
GABRIEL CALMA

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Seven people killed as severe weather lashes South Africa

AFP
Johannesburg

Seven people died in flooding caused by severe winter weather lashing eastern areas of South Africa and school children are missing after a minibus was swept away, the government said yesterday.

Three children were rescued after spending hours in trees to escape rising waters near the Eastern Cape city of Mthatha, one of the areas hardest hit by the storm that struck on Monday, the provincial government said in a statement.

Six bodies were found in the city, which is about 800 kilometres south of Johannesburg, and a seventh body was found near a river in

the rural Tsolo area, the statement read. "The search is still ongoing regarding a minibus carrying school children that swept away earlier this morning," the provincial government said, without giving details on how many were onboard.

The province said it had deployed disaster management teams to assist people affected by the severe cold front, which also brought snowfalls to several areas.

Local media reports said residents of Mthatha had been trapped on rooftops in bitterly cold conditions early yesterday.

Around 200 people had taken shelter in a community hall in the town of Butterworth, about 110 kilometres away, after their homes in an informal settlement were flooded, reports said.

East Guinea leader pardons 37 a year after their arrest

AFP
Malabo

Equatorial Guinea's president has pardoned dozens of people accused of being separatists and arrested at an environmental protest a year ago on the tiny island of Annobon.

Authorities arrested 37 people in July last year who were protesting over damage caused by the use of dynamite in mining operations and infrastructure projects on the volcanic island of some 17 square kilometres off the coast of Gabon in the Gulf of Guinea.

They were accused of "protesting" and belonging to the separatist movement Ambo Legadu (Free Annobon), and transferred to the capital's Black Beach prison, which has been dubbed "infamous" by Amnesty International.

A court in the capital Malabo charged them with "insult and defamation, abusive exercise of fundamental rights and violation of the constitutional order".

Annobon, which has a population of about 5,000, became part of Equatorial Guinea when the small central African country gained independence from Spain in 1968.

The Ambo Legadu movement unilaterally declared Annobon independent from Equatorial Guinea in July 2022.

Its leader, Orlando Cartagena Lagar, denounced in an interview with AFP earlier this month Equatoguinean "dictatorship", "brutal pressure of the army" and a type of "slow genocide", citing a lack of electricity, water and food on the island accessible only by private plane or ferry twice a month.

70 SA white rhinos relocated to Rwanda

AFP
Kigali

Rwanda said yesterday that 70 white rhinos had been successfully relocated to the Great Lakes nation after a two-day journey of some 3,000 kilometres from South Africa.

It was the largest ever relocation of rhinos, which can weigh up to two tonnes, Rwandan officials said.

Once abundant across sub-Saharan Africa, rhino numbers have dramatically fallen due to hunting by European colonisers and large-scale poaching.

The animals were transported in two loads of 35 – first aboard a Boeing 747, then by road – from South Africa's Munywana Conservancy to Akagera National Park in Rwanda, or about 3,000 kilometres as the crow flies, according to the Rwanda Development Board

(RDB). A "dedicated veterinary team will closely monitor their health and behaviour for several weeks to ensure proper adaptation to their new environment and management of any stress associated with the move", it said in a statement.

The move was part of African Parks' Rhino Rewild Initiative, supported by The Howard G Buffett Foundation, and aims to support population growth and secure a new breeding stronghold in Rwanda.

According to the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), rhino poaching in Africa rose by 4% from 2022 to 2023, with at least 586 rhinos poached in 2023.

The southern white rhino, one of two subspecies, is now listed as "near threatened", with roughly 17,000 individuals remaining, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).



Protesters chant anti-government slogans as they march to the National Police Service headquarters demanding the resignation of senior officers following the death of Albert Ojwang in police custody, in Nairobi, yesterday.

Suicide 'unlikely in Kenya police custody death'

AFP
Nairobi

Kenyan medical examiners said yesterday that suicide was unlikely in the death of a man while in police custody – a case that has sparked protests and widespread anger.

Albert Ojwang, 31, was arrested over posts on social media accusing police deputy inspector-general Eliud Kipkoech Lagat of corruption.

Police initially said he died over the weekend in his cell after hitting his own head against the wall.

But government pathologist Bernard Midia, one of five to examine Ojwang's body, told reporters the injuries were "unlikely to be self-inflicted".

Ojwang was arrested in western Kenya but transferred more than 250 kilometres to Nairobi, "without proper orders from the court", the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) said on Monday.

Kenya was already on edge as it marks a year since massive protests over tax rises and corruption that triggered a police response in which at least 60 were killed.

"The cause of death is very clear; head injury, neck compression and we also have other injuries spread all over the body that are pointing towards assault," said Midia.

His colleague Geoffrey Mutuma said there were "a lot of injuries in the skin, in the back... inflicted with a lot of force".

Ojwang also had "what we call self-defence injuries", he added.

After the postmortem, protesters marched to the deputy inspector-general's office, demanding his immediate resignation.

"The results were coinciding well with our argument that Albert Ojwang was murdered in central police station," activist Geoffrey Mboya said.

The protesters have described the deputy inspector general as "the main suspect".

"We want Eliud Lagat to resign...so that investigations can be done properly," activist Shakira Wafula said.

Five officers have been removed from active duty to "allow for transparent investigations", police spokesman Michael Muchiri said yesterday.

He said the "suicide theory has been banished" after the

postmortem results. "This is a heavy burden for my family," said the victim's father, Meshack Ojwang.

Veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga wrote on X that Ojwang "joins the horrifying long list of young and defenceless Kenyans whose lives have been taken too soon, in brutal and senseless circumstances, at the hands of the police".

Rights groups say dozens were illegally detained in the aftermath of last year's protests, with many still missing, and others have been arrested for mild criticism of the government and President William Ruto.

Odinga, who forged an alliance with Ruto's government this year, said the deaths "seriously erode the authority and credibility of the police and the state".

Ivory Coast former minister Billon seeks to lead opposition in October vote

Reuters
Abidjan

Ivory Coast former trade minister Jean-Louis Billon said he is seeking to represent the opposition PDCI party in October's presidential election after former Credit Suisse chief Tidjane Thiam was excluded from the final list of candidates last week.

The question of who will carry the mantle of the main opposition party risks adding to tensions in the world's top cocoa producer, which has a history of election-related violence including a brief civil war after the 2010 presidential contest that killed about 3,000 people.

In an interview with Reuters in the commercial capital Abidjan, Billon, 60, blamed party officials for the handling of legal challenges to Thiam's candidacy and did not rule out the possibility of representing another party, though he said it was too early to make such a move.

"I am asking for the PDCI's support," he said.

"It's a shame that (PDCI) President Thiam was eliminated, but it was the result of the



Ivory Coast former trade minister Jean-Louis Billon speaks during an interview with Reuters in Abidjan.

lack of preparation of certain party officials that led to his elimination. That's why you always have to have several strings to your bow, especially when you're in politics." The electoral commission published its final list of candidates last week, excluding Thiam, who denounced the decision as a sign of the "abandonment of democracy".

Ivory Coast law states that candidates must be Ivorian citizens and cannot hold another nationality.

Thiam renounced his French citizenship in February in order to meet eligibility conditions for the election.

But a court in Ivory Coast ruled in April that Thiam should be removed from the electoral roll because he was a French national when he registered. Thiam told Reuters after that decision that he planned to fight on and run anyway.

The notion of Ivorian identity was at the heart of past violence in Ivory Coast, and some fear lingering questions over Thiam's nationality in the run-up to the vote risk pushing those tensions back to the surface.

Incumbent President Alassane Ouattara himself was barred from seeking the presidency over what opponents said were his foreign origins before he finally won election in 2010.

Ouattara, 83, has not said whether he will run again this year.

Billon told Reuters that if elected he would endorse a law to lift restrictions on dual nationality.

"You have thousands of Ivorians who live abroad, who have made their lives abroad, and who end up having dual nationality," he said.

Nigeria's dog owners hit with surging pet food prices amid cost of living crisis

Reuters
Ibadan

Nigeria's two-year-old cost of living crisis, which has seen the price of grocery staples like rice rise over 100% since 2023, has reached the relatively affluent class of dog owners, who are struggling to feed their pets because of soaring food costs.

Keeping animals as pets is a recent trend in Nigerian society, where traditionally people were more likely to live with chicken or goats reared for food.

Over the past two decades, there was a rise in the number of households in urban areas keeping pet dogs, often for security in a country plagued by violent crime, but also for companionship. No precise data are available on dog ownership, but a 2023 survey by

research agency TGM Statbox indicated that around 42% of Nigerians own pets.

However, in a sign of economic hard times hitting across society, that is an increasingly expensive luxury.

One dog owner, Peter Anthony, a student who lives with his parents in the southwestern city of Ibadan, said feeding his German Shepherd, Flora, was never previously a concern for the family.

"Before the whole high cost of living saga, feeding her was so easy," he said, waiting for Flora at a pet hospital where she had been treated for an ear condition.

"But now, by the time you pick out that money from your pocket, you'd know that something has left you," he said.

The family now feeds Flora a smaller daily ration of noodles mixed with fish or eggs, Anthony



A person prepares to feed a German Shepherd dog at a dog hotel and spa, in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

said. Flora's owners are among the lucky ones who are still able to keep their dog healthy, even footing vets' bills.

In a crisis that began when gov-

ernment removed a fuel subsidy and devalued the naira currency in May 2023, inflation has been in double digit territory, hitting 34.80% last December, the highest in three decades, before easing to 23.71% in April.

Latest World Bank data shows that 31% of Nigeria's more than 200mn citizens live below the international extreme poverty line of \$2.15 per day.

While pet owners are not among the country's poorest, they are feeling the pinch. Some dog breeders say they are reducing their activity because so many pet owners are struggling.

Sarah Mokelu, who has a business importing dogs from Russia, has reduced the frequency of her trips there to about once every three months, from twice a month previously, because of surging prices and a drop in sales.

During her twice a month trips, she said she would bring between 15 and 20 dogs. Now, during her last trip in May, she brought in six dogs. "Feeding has really humbled a lot of people," said Mokelu, 63, at her home in the Ejigbo neighbourhood of Lagos. "There was a feed we bought about six months ago for 40,000 naira (\$25.70), now we're buying for 70,000 naira." This price, for a 15-kg bag, is the same as the country's minimum monthly wage of 70,000 naira.

Akindele Olunloyo, CEO of a dog importing company called Pet Lovers Nigeria, said all of his costs – animals, food, transport, permits, airport fees – had risen so much that he had changed his business model.

Olunloyo runs an online platform that helps Nigerians buy and sell pets. He said 90% of the people on the site were interested in

buying and selling dogs at a price range of 20,000 to 100,000 naira, well below the price he might charge for an imported dog, which could be in the 300,000-500,000 naira range.

"I now import only for clients who are interested in buying their own food, high net worth Nigerians who place specific orders," he said.

Several breeders said they had switched from imported dog foods to cheaper alternatives, like mixing rice or noodles with fish or eggs. As imported dog food has become unaffordable for many, business has improved for local pet food producers.

"People not being able to afford the foreign kibbles... made people to look in our direction," said Theresa Iwhewhe, who owns a pet hospital and pet food producing company in Ibadan.

DATA

UK jobless rate rises to highest since 2021

Pay growth in Britain slowed sharply and unemployment rose to its highest in nearly four years in the three months to April, official data showed yesterday. Wage growth slowed to 5.2%, its weakest since the three months to September and down more than expected from 5.5% in January to March this year. The jobless rate rose to 4.6% from 4.5%, its highest since the three months to May 2021, the Office for National Statistics said. The April data was the first since employers were hit by a £25bn (\$34bn) rise in social security contributions which came into force at the start of the month.

DECISION

Britain to invest £14.2bn in Sizewell C nuclear project

Britain will invest a further £14.2bn (\$19.25bn) to build the Sizewell C nuclear plant in southeast England, the government said yesterday, as part of its wider spending review which will define its priorities over the next four years. Britain is seeking to build new nuclear plants to replace its ageing fleet to boost its energy security, reach its climate targets and also create new jobs. The funding announced yesterday takes the total amount the government has committed to the project to £17.8bn, with £3.6bn invested prior to the spending review. The Sizewell C plant in Suffolk is expected to create around 10,000 jobs.

CLAIM

Chinese aircraft carriers seen in Pacific, says Japan

Two Chinese aircraft carriers were operating in the Pacific for the first time, according to Japan, whose defence minister said yesterday the move revealed the expansion of Beijing's military activities. Beijing said yesterday the Shandong and Liaoning carriers - its only two currently in operation, with a third undergoing sea trials - were carrying out "routine training". "We believe the Chinese military's purpose is to improve its operational capability and ability to conduct operations in distant areas," a Japanese defence ministry spokesman said. Defence Minister Gen Nakatani told reporters the sightings show that the Chinese military's "activity area is expanding".

PEOPLE

Lanka prison chief in custody after fraud convict freed

Sri Lanka's prison chief was remanded in custody yesterday in connection with the illegal release of a convicted financial fraudster under the guise of an amnesty. Commissioner-general of prisons Thushara Upuldeniya was arrested late Monday by the criminal investigations department, over the release of fraud convict Athula Thilakaratne. The government suspended Upuldeniya following reports the convict's name was smuggled into a list of nearly 400 minor offenders who were granted a presidential amnesty last month. A magistrate ordered Upuldeniya be held in custody until today, pending a criminal investigation.

Maruti Suzuki cuts near-term EV production amid rare earths crisis

Reuters
New Delhi

Maruti Suzuki has cut near-term production targets for its maiden electric vehicle e-Vitara by two-thirds because of rare earths shortages, a document showed, in the latest sign of disruption to the auto industry from China's export curbs. India's top carmaker, which said on Monday it had not seen any impact yet from the supply crisis, now plans to make about 8,200 e-Vitaras between April and September, versus an original goal of 26,500, according to a company document. It cited "supply constraints" in rare earth materials that are vital in making magnets and other components across a range of hi-tech industries. Maruti still plans to meet its output target of 67,000 EVs for the year ending March 2026 by ramping up production in subsequent months, the document said. China's curbs on some rare earth exports have rocked the global auto industry, with companies warning of severe supply chain disruptions. While some companies in the US, Europe and Japan are seeing supplies easing as they secure licences from Beijing, India is still waiting for China's approval amid fears of production stoppages. Launched amid much fanfare at India's car show in January, the e-Vitara is crucial to Maruti's EV push in the country, marking its entry in a segment that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government wants to grow to 30% of all

car sales by 2030 from about 2.5% last year. The setback could also hurt parent Suzuki Motor, for which India is the biggest market by revenue and a global production hub for EVs. The bulk of the made-in-India e-Vitaras are earmarked for export by Suzuki to its major markets like Europe and Japan around summer 2025. Maruti told reporters last week the rare earths issue had no "material impact" on the e-Vitara's launch timeline. Chair RC Bhargava said there was "no impact at the moment" on production, local media reported on Monday. Maruti is yet to open bookings for the e-Vitara with some analysts warning it is already late to launch EVs in the world's third-largest car market where Tesla is also expected to begin sales this year. Under its previous plan "A", Maruti was to produce 26,512 e-Vitaras between April and September - the first half of the fiscal year. Under the revised plan "B", it will manufacture 8,221, the document showed, indicating a two-thirds cut in its production schedule. However, in the second half of the financial year - between October and March 2026 - Maruti plans to ramp up production to 58,728 e-Vitaras, or about 440 per day at its peak, versus a previous target of 40,437 for those six months under plan A. Two supply chain sources confirmed Maruti's plan to scale back e-Vitara production because of rare earth magnet shortages but were not privy to the exact numbers.

Falling water levels at Woodhead reservoir spark concern



The bed of Woodhead reservoir is partially revealed by falling water levels, near Glossop, northern England. Low water levels at reservoirs like Woodhead are raising fears of drought conditions over the summer.

India, US ‘near interim trade deal after four-day talks’

Reuters
New Delhi

Indian and US negotiators made progress in their latest round of talks in New Delhi yesterday on a bilateral trade deal, having focused on market access for industrial and some agricultural goods, tariff cuts and non-tariff barriers, Indian government sources said. "The negotiations held with the US side were productive and helped in making progress towards crafting a mutually beneficial and balanced agreement including through achievement of early wins," one of the sources said. The US delegation, led by senior officials from the Office of the US Trade Representa-

tive, held closed-door negotiations with Indian trade ministry officials headed by chief negotiator Rajesh Agrawal. Both sides discussed increasing bilateral digital trade, by improving customs and trade facilitation measures, the sources said, adding that "negotiations will continue" for early conclusion of the initial tranche of the trade pact. US President Donald Trump and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had agreed in February to conclude a bilateral trade agreement by fall 2025 and to more than double bilateral trade to \$500bn by 2030. The two sides are expected to sign an interim agreement by the end of the month, before the expiry of Trump's 90-day pause on reciprocal tariffs on major trading partners, including a 26% tariff on India.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, currently in Switzerland for talks with European trade partners, said India is prepared to proceed with the deal by first addressing simpler issues. The next phase of negotiations could tackle more complex matters, with the goal of signing the first tranche of the bilateral trade pact by September or October, the officials added. India resisted US demands to open its markets to wheat, dairy and corn imports, while offering lower tariffs on high-value US products such as almonds, pistachios and walnuts, one of the sources said. India also asked the US to revoke its 10% baseline tariff. However, the US side opposed this, noting that even Britain was subject to this under its recent bilateral trade agreement. Additionally, India sought an exemption for its steel exports from a 50% tariff.

N Ireland town hit by 'racially motivated' riot

Northern Irish police yesterday said 15 officers were injured in clashes after "racially motivated" attacks sparked by the arrest of two teenagers for attempted rape of a young girl. The disorder in the town of Ballymena, some 48km northwest of Belfast, broke out on Monday night after a vigil in a neighbourhood where an alleged serious sexual assault happened on Saturday. "This violence was clearly racially motivated and targeted at our minority ethnic community and police," assistant chief constable Ryan Henderson said. Two teenage boys, charged by police with the attempted rape of a teenage girl, had appeared in court earlier Monday, where they asked for a Romanian interpreter, local media reports said. The trouble began when masked people "broke away from the vigil and began to build barricades, stockpiling missiles and attacking properties," the police said. Houses and businesses were attacked and three people had to be evacuated.



The Indian coastguard attempt to douse the blaze on MV Wan Hai 503 around 78 nautical miles off Bepore port in Kerala.

India coastguard battles blaze on container ship

AFP
New Delhi

India's coastguard yesterday said it was battling to stop a fierce blaze that has engulfed a Singapore-flagged container ship listing off the southern coast that broke out a day earlier. The 879-foot container vessel MV Wan Hai 503 carrying 22 crew members caught fire some 78 nautical miles off India's Bepore port on Monday. Eighteen crew members were rescued by the Indian coastguard and navy, with four still missing. Indian Coast Guard said yesterday that "fires and explosions persist" on the vessel, which was tilting at around "10-15 degrees". They issued photographs that showed flames leaping from the

stacked containers, with the ship surrounded by thick plumes of billowing black smoke. Initial images on Monday showed heavy containers that had seemingly been hurled up by a powerful explosion on board, with the coastguard saying that some were in the water. Singapore's Maritime and Port Authority had said there were "some injuries" among the crew. Coastguard vessels alongside the blackened and burning ship poured jets of water onto the flames, according to video footage released. The MV Wan Hai container ship is the second to run into trouble off India's southern coast within weeks. A Liberian-flagged container ship with hazardous cargo sank off the coast of Kerala on May 24. The Indian navy rescued all 24 crew members.

Senators send Duterte impeachment case back to House

AFP
Manila

The Philippine Senate yesterday voted to send the impeachment case against Vice-President Sara Duterte back to the House of Representatives, a decision one senator called a "functional dismissal". The House impeached Duterte in early February on charges of graft, corruption and an alleged assassination plot against one-time ally and former running mate president Ferdinand Marcos. A conviction, which requires the support of two-thirds of the senate's 24 members, would mean

her removal as vice president and a permanent ban from public office. Yesterday's 18-5 decision came just hours after senators had taken their oaths as jurors, and followed days of wrangling that had raised fears the trial process was headed for derailment. Duterte is widely expected to run for president in 2028 if she survives impeachment, a possibility with deep implications for the political futures of the senators tasked with deciding her fate. Senator Ronald dela Rosa, former national police chief and enforcer of ex-president Rodrigo Duterte's drug war, yesterday introduced a motion to dismiss the

impeachment case against the former leader's daughter. Dela Rosa argued that earlier complaints filed against Duterte in the House, which did not make it past the committee level, had constituted multiple impeachment proceedings within a year, something banned under the Philippine constitution. The motion was later amended in favour of sending the case back to the House, which must now certify that it did not violate the constitution and that it remains willing to prosecute the case when its new members take their seats on June 30. Senator Risa Hontiveros, who opposed the motion, warned that

returning the case to the lower body was an abrogation of responsibility that would see it ultimately disappear. "Remanding is a functional dismissal," she said, later adding the impeachment complaint was "being dismantled brick by brick". Senate president Francis Escudero, however, insisted there was no such motive behind the body's decision. "The intention is to give the prosecutors an opportunity to answer certain questions in a manner that does not waste the time of the court," he said. Following the vote, Escudero issued a summons for the vice-president, who will have 10 days

from its receipt to answer the impeachment charges. Yesterday's convening of the impeachment court had already been rescheduled once, with some lawmakers publicly expressing fears the senate might choose to shelve the trial entirely. Following the vote, the Akbayan party, which had endorsed the impeachment complaint, called the senators "cowards". "After dribbling for so long, now they're going to pass (the ball). They're not only cowards; they are traitors to their sworn duty," they said on their Facebook page. Michael Tiu, assistant professor at the University of the Philippines College of Law, said the

decision to remand had "no constitutional or legal basis". "The power of the senate is to try and decide. It cannot second guess a co-equal body's exercise of its exclusive power to initiate an impeachment proceeding," he said. A slate of candidates loyal to Duterte outperformed expectations in May's mid-term elections, winning five of the 12 open seats and upping her chances for acquittal. On Monday, Duterte's defence team said in a statement they were "ready to confront the charges and expose the baselessness of the accusations against the vice president".



This picture taken last month shows US President Donald Trump with US Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F Kennedy Jr during an event in the White House in Washington, DC. - **AFP**

RFK Jr sacks entire US vaccine panel

Reuters/AFP
Washington

Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr has fired all 17 members of a US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) panel of vaccine experts and is in the process of replacing them, his department said on Monday, drawing protest from many vaccine scientists.

The removal of all 17 experts of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) was revealed in a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed and an official press release.

The move is the most far-reaching in a series of actions by Kennedy, a long-time vaccine sceptic, to reshape US regulation of vaccines, food and medicine.

Scientists and experts said the changes to the vaccine panel, which recommends how vaccines are used and by whom, would undermine public confidence in health agencies.

Kennedy promised the move would raise public confidence.

"Today we are prioritising the restoration of public trust above any specific pro- or anti-vaccine agenda," Kennedy said in a statement from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

Kennedy has for years sown doubt about the safety and efficacy of vaccines, but he pledged to maintain the country's existing vaccine standards to secure his appointment in President Donald Trump's administration.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is overseen by Kennedy's department, has approved a number of vaccines during his tenure despite concerns over his stances.

Even so, at least one senior Republican member of Congress expressed doubts about the changes in the panel.

Kennedy said the ACIP is rife with conflicts and has never turned down a vaccine, even though the decision to approve vaccines rests with the US FDA.

The CDC panel provides guidance to the CDC on which groups of people would most benefit from an already-approved vaccine.

"That's a tragedy," said former FDA chief scientist Jesse Goodman. "This is a highly professional group of scientists and physicians and others... It's the kind of political meddling that will reduce confidence rather than increase confidence."

The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America called Kennedy's action concerning for public health.

"Upending the ACIP membership increases uncertainty and vaccine skepticism, undermining the health gains achieved through vaccination," the industry body said in a statement late on Monday.

Shares of vaccine makers Moderna and US-listed shares of BioNTech fell over 1%, while Pfizer was down marginally in extended trading on Monday.

Kennedy said most panel

members receive funding from drugmakers although members are required to declare any potential or perceived conflicts of interest that arise in the course of their tenure and any relevant business interests, positions of authority or other connections with organisations relevant to the committee's work.

Kennedy and the HHS provided no specific evidence of industry conflicts of interest among departing ACIP members.

The CDC's webpage for conflicts of interest, last updated in March, showed that one current member had recused herself from votes on a handful of vaccines because she had worked on clinical trials for their manufacturers.

All 17 ACIP members were appointed under former president Joe Biden's administration, including 13 in 2024, the HHS said.

Without their removal, Trump's administration would not have been able to choose a majority of the committee until 2028.

"This is not a political committee, it's never been partisan," said Dorit Reiss, a vaccine law expert at UC Law San Francisco. "It's an expert committee. Presidents have never been involved in ACIP membership."

The decision drew criticism from Democrats in Congress, and one key Republican expressed concern.

"RFK Jr and the Trump administration are taking a wrecking ball to the programmes that keep Americans safe and healthy," Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said in response.

"Of course, now the fear is that the ACIP will be filled up with people who know nothing about vaccines except suspicion," said Republican US Senator Bill Cassidy in a post on X. "I've just spoken with Secretary Kennedy, and I'll continue to talk with him to ensure this is not the case."

Cassidy, a doctor from Louisiana who had expressed wariness about Kennedy's anti-vaccine views before clearing the path for him to become the nation's top health official, said at the time he had received assurances Kennedy would protect existing vaccination programmes.

The CDC panel will convene its next meeting June 25-27 at CDC headquarters in Atlanta, the department said.

Once a celebrated environmental lawyer, Kennedy pivoted from the mid-2000s to public health - chairing a nonprofit that discouraged routine childhood immunisations and amplified false claims, including the long-debunked theory that the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine causes autism.

Since taking office, he has curtailed access to coronavirus (Covid-19) shots and continued to raise fears around the MMR vaccine - even as the United States faces its worst measles outbreak in years, with three reported deaths and more than 1,100 confirmed cases.

Trump deploys hundreds of Marines to Los Angeles

AFP/Reuters
Los Angeles/Washington

Hundreds of US Marines were expected in Los Angeles after President Donald Trump ordered their deployment in response to protests against immigration arrests and despite objections by state officials.

The 700 elite troops will join around 4,000 National Guard soldiers, amping up the militarisation of the tense situation in the sprawling city, which is home to millions of foreign-born and Latino residents.

The small-scale and largely peaceful demonstrations - marred by sporadic but violent clashes between police and protesters - were entering their fifth day.

In downtown LA's Little Tokyo neighbourhood on Monday night, scores of protesters faced off with security officials in riot gear, some shooting fireworks at officers who fired back volleys of tear gas.

The unrest was sparked by a sudden intensification last week of Trump's signature campaign to find and deport undocumented migrants, who he claims have mounted an "invasion" of the United States.

California officials have stressed the majority of protesters have been peaceful - and that they were capable of maintaining law and order themselves.

Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom wrote on X that US Marines "shouldn't be deployed on American soil facing their own countrymen to fulfil the deranged fantasy of a dictatorial President. This is un-American".

However, Trump has branded the LA protesters "professional agitators and insurrectionists".

"If I didn't 'SEND IN THE TROOPS' to Los Angeles the last three nights, that once beautiful and great City would be burning to the ground right now," he wrote on Truth Social yesterday.

Trump has called for Newsom's arrest, while the president's ultra-loyal speaker in the House of Representatives, Republican Mike Johnson, has declared the California governor "ought to be tarred and feathered".

Earlier, demonstrators marching with banners and handmade signs yelled "ICE out of LA"



A member of the Los Angeles police fires a sponge round during a protest against federal immigration sweeps in downtown Los Angeles. - **Reuters**

and "National Guard go away" - a reference to immigration agents and Guard soldiers.

One small business owner in the city, whose property was graffitied during the protests, was supportive of Trump's strong-arm tactics.

"I think it's needed to stop the vandalism," she told AFP, declining to give her name. Others were horrified.

"They're meant to be protecting us, but instead, they're like, being sent to attack us," Kelly Diemer, 47, told AFP. "This is not a democracy anymore."

LA police have detained dozens of protesters in recent days, while authorities in San Francisco and other US cities have also made arrests.

Trump's use of the military is an "incredibly rare" move for a US president, Rachel VanLandingham, a professor at Southwestern Law School in Los Angeles and a former lieutenant colonel in the US Air Force, told AFP.

The National Guard - a fully equipped reserve armed forces - is usually controlled by state governors and used typically on US soil in response to natural disasters.



Looters break into a gas station's market place during a protest in the Compton neighbourhood of Los Angeles. - **AFP**

Bolsonaro takes stand, rejects coup charges

Brazil's far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro has denied involvement in an alleged coup plot as he took the stand for the first time in his high-stakes trial.

The 70-year-old is answering questions from lawyers and judges on his alleged role in a "criminal organisation" that plotted to wrest power from leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who narrowly beat Bolsonaro at the ballot box in 2022.

The plot only failed, the charge sheet says, for a lack of military backing.

Bolsonaro, a former army captain who governed Brazil from 2019 to 2022, was the sixth of eight accused to take the stand for in-person questioning that started on Monday.

"That's not the case, Your Honour," he replied when asked by Judge Alexandre de Moraes - an arch political foe - about "the truthfulness" of the accusations against him.

Bolsonaro and his co-accused risk prison sentences of up to 40 years.

On Monday, his former right-hand man Mauro Cid - a co-defendant who has turned state's wit-

ness - told the court that Bolsonaro had "received and read" a draft decree for the declaration of a state of emergency.

He then "edited" the document, which would have paved the way for measures to "redo the election" and also envisaged the imprisonment of top personalities including Moraes, said Cid.

Cid also testified he had received cash from Bolsonaro's former running mate and defence minister Walter Braga Netto.

The money, say investigators, was to be used to finance an operation by special troops to kill Lula, his vice-president Geraldo Alckmin and Moraes.

Apart from Cid, the other co-defendants are four ex-ministers and the former heads of Brazil's navy and intelligence agency.

Most who have taken the stand so far have rejected the bulk of the accusations in the charge sheet.

Bolsonaro, who is still hoping to make a comeback in 2026 presidential elections despite being barred from running in a separate court ruling, denies all charges. - **AFP**

Eight shot dead in latest Ecuador drug violence

Ecuadoran police said eight people were killed yesterday in two armed attacks in the country's largest city Guayaquil, as criminal gangs battled for control of lucrative drug trafficking routes.

Eight individuals died of "gunshot wounds"m police said, in separate attacks in the city's northern neighbourhoods.

In the aftermath of the shootings, an AFP reporter witnessed roads and sidewalks marked with pools of blood, scores of heavily armed police combing the scene and distraught relatives looking for their loved ones.

A flood of cocaine from Colombia and Peru through Ecuadoran ports has drawn a who's who of mafias from Albania to Italy to Mexico to this once-safe Andean nation.

Guayaquil - a once-prosperous port city - has become the epicentre of the violence.

Recently re-elected President Daniel Noboa has vowed to tackle the drug gangs head on, with limited success.

Yesterday he extended a months-old state of emergency, saying an "extraordinary response" was still needed.

Between January and April, Ecuador recorded 3,084 homicides, according to official figures.

Experts believe this is the most violent start to the year that the country has experienced, with one murder per hour. - **AFP**

Mexico seizes 42 tonnes of meth in illegal drug labs

Mexico announced on Monday the seizure of nearly 42 metric tonnes of methamphetamine worth more than \$50mn during raids on illegal drug labs.

The discovery, one of the biggest yet, comes as the Latin American nation faces mounting pressure from US President Donald Trump to curb drug trafficking.

The seizures were conducted after personnel found five properties used as clandestine laboratories in the western state of Michoacan, a government statement said.

The seizure represented a loss of 1.06bn pesos (\$55.7mn) to the traffickers, it estimated.

Drums containing around 8,800 litres of chemical precursors were also seized along with other drug production materials, it said.

Mexico has showcased a series of major drug discoveries in an apparent attempt to highlight increased efforts to combat drug smuggling.

Trump has cited trafficking of illegal drugs - particularly the synthetic opioid fentanyl - as one of the reasons for the tariffs he has imposed on imports from Mexico.

In October, the Mexican navy announced that it had seized more than 8.3 tonnes of drugs found in vessels off the Pacific coast - a record for a single operation at sea. According to the US Drug Enforcement Administration, Mexican criminal groups are the main suppliers of methamphetamine to the United States, using chemicals that are mostly sourced from China. - **AFP**

Judge rejects class action for Google privacy lawsuit

People who accused Google of illegally collecting their personal information, after they chose not to synchronise their Google Chrome browsers with their Google accounts, cannot sue the Alphabet unit as a group in a class action, a US judge ruled.

In a decision on Monday, US District Judge Yvonne Gonzalez Rogers in Oakland, California agreed with Google that it was appropriate to address case-by-case whether millions of Chrome users understood and agreed to its data collection policies.

"Inquiries relating to Google's implied consent defence will overwhelm the damages claims for all causes of action," Rogers wrote.

She dismissed the proposed damages class action with prejudice, meaning it cannot be brought again.

The judge also said Chrome users cannot seek policy changes as a group.

David Straite, a lawyer for the plaintiffs, declined to comment yesterday.

Sandi Knight, vice-president of litigation at Google, said in a statement that the company appreciated the decision.

She added that Chrome Sync has "clear privacy controls".

Class actions let plaintiffs seek potentially greater recoveries at lower cost than they could in individual lawsuits.

The decision followed a ruling last August by the federal appeals court in San Francisco, which said Rogers should consider whether reasonable Chrome users consented to letting Google collect their data when they browsed online.

Chrome users pointed to Chrome's privacy notice, which said they "don't need to provide any personal information to use Chrome" and Google would not collect such information unless they turned on the "sync" function.

Rogers had dismissed the case in December 2022.

She said she oversees two other privacy cases against Mountain View, California-based Google, but the claims in those cases differed "significantly".

The appeals court ruling followed Google's 2023 agreement to destroy billions of records to settle a lawsuit claiming it tracked people who thought they were browsing privately. - **Reuters**

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GULF TIMES

Umbrella concept of ESG seen falling apart amid backlash

Environmental, social, and governance (ESG) investing accounts for concerns from gender equality to worker rights to new ways to provide funding to charities working in poor countries. ESG envisages an investing principle that prioritises environmental and social issues, and corporate governance.

While institutional asset owners such as pension funds and insurers say they remain committed to sustainable investing, they're less wedded to ESG as an "umbrella concept".

They now widely treat ESG as three separate parts as opposed to a single strategy, according to a survey by Morningstar of 25 asset owners across North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific region.

Organised efforts at responsible investing can be traced back decades. These approaches, which focused on screening out companies seen as doing specific kinds of harm, later came under the term "socially responsible investing", or SRI.

Over time, more companies adopted "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) policies amid increasing scrutiny of their business practices.

Some investors also advocated what became known as impact investing as they sought to make a positive effect on the world, rather than just avoid the bad stuff.

The biggest change under ESG was that SRI, CSR and impact investing were coming under a single umbrella just as ESG had been embraced by policymakers, regulators, and an ever-bigger number of investors.

The environmental part of ESG is now emerging as the primary focus for investors ahead of social and governance-related issues, with the majority viewing "climate as a material investment factor"

But the environmental part of ESG is now emerging as the primary focus for investors ahead of social and governance-related issues, with the majority viewing "climate as a material investment factor."

"Mainly, the asset owners seem less concerned about what ESG is called versus how it is implemented across their global portfolios," according to the Morningstar report.

Asset owners also are increasingly concerned these days about rising geopolitical tensions caused by the Trump administration-led trade war, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and US-China relations.

The result is many investors are "waiting for more clarity before making short-term portfolio moves," according to Morningstar.

Investors lack financial incentives to chase sustainable targets, leaving them more exposed to losses once sentiment shifts, according to a study by academics at the University of Cambridge in May.

Despite years devoted to trying to make ESG investing financially appealing, there still aren't enough structures to encourage banks and asset managers to allocate capital in ways that will ultimately protect the planet and its inhabitants, scholars at the Centre for Sustainable Finance at the University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership (CISL) wrote in the study.

The upshot is markets have failed to provide adequate pricing signals for the real risks that lie ahead.

ESG, which enjoyed a brief boom during the pandemic, has struggled to right itself as higher interest rates and supply-chain bottlenecks have hampered the progress of capital-intensive green infrastructure. As a result, the theme has rapidly lost investors, with Morningstar noting in April that ESG funds suffered their worst outflows on record in the first quarter.

Corporate America's pivot away from diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives accelerated during the first 100 days of President Donald Trump's second White House term.

An area of corporate exchange that has seen a quieting under Trump is shareholder proposals at annual meetings.

Proposals related to ESG topics dropped 34% from the number seen in 2024 as progressive activists dealt with an uncertain voting environment, according to a report released in early April by shareholder advocacy group As You Sow and Proxy Impact.

Global sustainable investments are estimated to range between \$35tn and \$40tn. Amid mounting concern that only a fraction of such assets are bona fide environmental, social, and governance investing, there are calls for tougher regulations to stamp out the false claims by fund managers.

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Musk vowed to chainsaw spending but it was a trim

By Brad Heath, Jason Lange, Andy Sullivan, Grant Smith
Washington

Elon Musk once famously wielded a chainsaw on stage in a theatrical demonstration of his effort to drastically cut US federal spending under President Donald Trump. As he leaves government amid bitter acrimony, official data shows he achieved something closer to a trim with scissors.

In the four months since Musk's Department of Government Efficiency began slashing federal spending and staffing, a handful of the agencies he has targeted trimmed their combined spending by about \$19bn compared with the same period last year, according to US Treasury Department summaries reviewed by Reuters.

That is far below Musk's initial goal of \$2tn in savings and amounts to about a half of 1% of total spending by the federal government. Musk said last late last month he is leaving the administration but that its cost-cutting work will "only strengthen over time." It remains to be seen, however, how enthusiastically Trump's cabinet secretaries will continue to downsize their departments. DOGE says it pulled the plug on more than 26,000 federal grants and contracts that are worth about \$73bn, while more than 260,000 government workers have been bought out, taken early retirement or been fired. But the DOGE tallies have been riddled with errors, according to reviews by numerous budget experts and media outlets, including Reuters.

That has made them difficult to verify, and some of the announced cuts are not saving the government any money because judges have reversed or stalled them.

That leaves the Treasury Department's daily reports on how much the government is spending as the clearest window into the scope of the

administration's cost-cutting.

The view they offer so far is modest: The government has spent about \$250bn more during the first months of Trump's administration than it did during the same period of time last year, a 10% increase. And even some parts of the government Trump has cut the most deeply are, for now at least, spending more money than they did last year.

One big factor driving costs is largely outside Trump's immediate control: interest payments on the United States' growing pile of debt, which amount to about \$1 in every \$7 the federal government spends. Debt interest payments are up about 22% from a year ago.

Spending on Social Security, the safety-net programme for the elderly and disabled, totalled about \$500bn since Trump's inauguration, up 10% from a year earlier.

To be sure, the view offered by the Treasury Department's daily reports is incomplete.

Many of the cuts DOGE has made to the federal workforce, grants and contracting will reduce what the government will spend in the future but do not show up in its checkbook today.

For example, while thousands of workers have taken buyouts, the government will continue to pay their wages until October. So far, the Labour Department has estimated there were only about 26,000 fewer people on federal payrolls in April than were on the books in January, after adjusting the figures for typical seasonal swings.

Tallying savings from future cuts, however, is seldom straightforward.

"It could be that in the future we never replace these workers and we save billions of dollars, or it could be that they come back and it's even more expensive than before," said Martha Gimbel, executive director of the Budget Lab at Yale, a nonpartisan budget analysis organisation at Yale University.

The White House declined to offer an explanation for DOGE's figures. Spokesman Harrison Fields said in a statement that "DOGE is working at record speed to cut waste, fraud, and abuse, producing historic savings for the American people."

Reuters estimated the administration's impact by tallying outlays at agencies that had been targeted for cuts and whose spending had dropped from the same time last year.

Among the agencies hardest hit are the Department of Education, State Department, US Agency for International Development, National Institutes of Health, the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and other independent agencies.

Rachel Snyderman, an expert on fiscal policy at the Bipartisan Policy Center, said the spending declines at agencies could be reversed if the Trump administration doesn't get congressional approval to cancel outlays from this year's federal budget, as required by law.

The most obvious sign that the Trump administration is making a dent in federal spending is in the Education Department, which Trump has ordered shut down.

The administration cut the department's staff by about half in March. DOGE's website lists 311 Education Department grants and contracts it says it has eliminated for a savings of about \$1.6bn, though it is not clear how it arrived at those figures. Some cuts have not stuck. A federal judge in March ordered the administration to restore some of the grants it had cut, and another judge this month ordered it to rehire 1,400 workers.

Still, the Education Department under Trump has spent close to \$11bn less than it did over the same period last year, the Treasury reports show, far more than what DOGE says it has cut. One reason could be that layoffs have made it harder for the government to process

payments for special education and low-income schools. School districts that have sued over the cuts alleged that states were already experiencing slowdowns in receiving money.

Another factor for the reduced outlays: The department has stopped handing out the \$4.4bn that remains to be distributed from the hundreds of billions of dollars approved in previous years to help schools weather the Covid-19 crisis.

The Education Department did not respond to a request for comment.

Other agencies targeted in Trump's overhaul are also starting to show declines in their spending compared with the same time last year.

Spending is down about \$350mn at the CDC and about \$1bn at the National Institutes of Health.

The Trump administration has moved to slash spending across those agencies, cancelling grants and ending leases for office space.

The Department of Health and Human Services has reported terminating close to 2,000 grants that planned to disperse more than \$20bn.

Many of the grants were to boost labs that fight new infectious diseases, or to fund state mental health programmes. Some \$14bn of the grant money had already been spent prior to the termination, with roughly \$7bn effectively frozen, according to a Reuters analysis of the government's tallies.

The administration has effectively dismantled USAID, which handled most US foreign assistance, firing nearly all of the agency's employees and cancelling most of its humanitarian aid and health programmes, though federal courts have forced the government to continue making some payments.

USAID spending is down about 40%, to about \$4.6bn, from last year. Spending at the State Department — where DOGE says it has cut nearly \$1bn in grants and contracts — is also down about 20% from 2024.

Measuring the impact of the administration's actions is difficult because many cuts will not yield savings for months or years even as spending elsewhere increases. Spending on federal employee salaries, for example, is up by more than \$3bn under Trump.

Some of the grants and contracts DOGE cut were due to be paid out over several years, and many remain the subject of lawsuits that will determine whether they can be cut at all.

DOGE says it has saved taxpayers \$175bn, but the details it has posted on its website, where it gives the only public accounting of those changes, add up to less than half of that figure. It says the figure includes workforce cuts, interest savings and other measures it has not itemised.

It is also hard to know exactly how much the government would have spent if the administration had not started cutting. — Reuters



Elon Musk speaks during a news conference with US President Donald Trump (unseen) in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, last month before a spectacular fallout between the two. (AFP)

Ex-student kills 10 in Austria high school shooting

AFP
Graz

A former student killed 10 people when he opened fire at a high school in south-eastern Austria yesterday before taking his own life, authorities said, in an unprecedented case of deadly gun violence that stunned the Alpine country.

Heavily armed police, a helicopter and paramedics descended on the Dreierschuetzengasse high school in Graz after the 21-year-old lone shooter struck, police said.

Nine victims were immediately confirmed but a woman died from her wounds in hospital later, an official said.

Seven of the victims were female and three male, authorities said without specifying their ages.

Twelve people suffered severe injuries and police said support was being provided to witnesses and those affected.

The suspect acted alone and took his own life in the school toilet, police said, adding his motive remained unknown.

Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker declared three days of na-

tional mourning to remember the victims, saying the country had witnessed “an act of unimaginable violence”.

According to police, the alleged perpetrator was an Austrian from the Graz region, who used two legally-owned weapons.

He was a former student at the high school, but had not finished his studies, Interior Minister Gerhard Karner told reporters.

Flower bouquets and candles were placed in front of the school, which has around 400 students aged between 14 and 18.

A supermarket and a bank in the vicinity closed for the day.

A resident, who hails from the United States, told AFP that she was “shocked” and “it’s a lot to take in” after learning what had occurred nearby, an elementary school and kindergarten her two children attend.

“In my home country it happens more often as we know but that it happens here is unheard of,” she said, declining to give her name.

“Graz is a safe city,” said Roman Klug, 55, who said he lived close to the school that he said was “known for its openness and diversity”.



Family members reunite following the deadly school shooting in Graz yesterday. (Reuters)

After arriving in Graz, Stocker described the shooting as “a national tragedy”, adding that it was “a dark day” for Austria.

Condolences poured in from across Europe.

French President Emmanuel Macron said that “France extends

its deepest sympathy to the victims’ families, the Austrian people and Chancellor Stocker during this difficult time”.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said “our thoughts are with our Austrian friends and neighbours” following the “horrific

school shooting. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban offered his “deepest condolences”.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said “the news from Graz touches my heart” while Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni expressed

her sympathies to the families of the victims following the “tragic news”.

Attacks in public are rare in Austria, which is home to almost 9.2mn people and ranks among the 10 safest countries in the world, according to the Global Peace Index.

While still less common than in the United States, Europe in recent years has been shaken by attacks at schools and universities that were not connected to terrorism.

In France yesterday, a teaching assistant was killed in a knife attack at a school in the eastern town of Nogent.

In January, an 18-year-old man fatally stabbed a high school student and a teacher at a school in northeastern Slovakia.

And in December, a 19-year-old man stabbed a seven-year-old student to death and injured several others at a primary school in Zagreb, Croatia.

In December 2023, an attack by a student at a university in central Prague left 14 people dead and 25 injured.

A few months earlier, a 13-year-old gunned down nine fellow classmates and a security guard at an elementary school in Belgrade.

Russia strikes Kyiv in one of war’s largest air attacks

Reuters
Kyiv

Russia launched one of its largest air strikes on Kyiv in over three years of war and struck a maternity ward in the southern city of Odesa in attacks that killed at least three people, officials said yesterday.

The overnight strikes followed Russia’s biggest drone assault of the war on Ukraine on Monday and were part of intensified bombardments in what Moscow says is retaliation for attacks by Ukrainian forces on Russia.

The Russian attack also damaged Saint Sophia Cathedral, a Unesco world heritage site located in the historic centre of Kyiv, Ukrainian Culture Minister Mykola Tochytskyi said.

“The enemy struck at the very heart of our identity again,” Tochytskyi wrote on Facebook about the site he called “the soul of all Ukraine”.

Loud explosions shook Kyiv and blasts and fires lit up the sky in the early hours of yesterday morning, leaving palls of heavy smoke over the city, Reuters witnesses said. Authorities deployed two firefighting helicopters to douse flames.

One person died in the attack on Kyiv, city authorities said.

At least four people were treated in hospital after seven of the capital’s 10 districts were hit, city officials said.

“Today was one of the largest attacks on Kyiv,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said. “Russian missile and Shahed (drone) strikes drown out the efforts of the United States and others around the world to force Russia into peace.”

In Kyiv, Kateryna Zaitseva, 38, and her 14-year-old son looked at the rubble in their apartment, which received a direct hit by a drone. The explosion destroyed one room, damaged another and blew in the door of the bathroom in which they were hiding.

“We started moving blindly to the entrance door. I heard the

voice of the emergency worker ... I shouted that there were two of us, that we were unhurt and he helped us,” said Zaitseva, a laboratory technician.

In the southern port of Odesa, an overnight drone attack hit an emergency medical building, a maternity ward and residential buildings, regional governor Oleh Kiper said on Telegram.

Two men were killed in that attack but patients and staff were safely evacuated from the maternity hospital, he said.

Iryna Britkaru, 23, who gave birth to a girl on June 6, said projectiles had started hitting the building in Odesa as soon as she and other patients had been whisked to the basement by hospital staff.

“The third (impact) was already very loud, and shrapnel flew... (it) rained down in the corridor,” she told Reuters.

Natalia Kovalenko, 34, who five days ago also gave birth to a girl, said she was hoping for an end to the war.

“If we don’t have hope, then no one will be giving birth,” she said.

A State Department spokesperson said Washington was monitoring the situation closely, adding that it was time for an end to the war.

“Russia’s strikes against Ukraine’s cities need to stop immediately,” the spokesperson said.

“We condemn these strikes and extend our deepest condolences to the victims and to the families of all those affected.”

Both sides deny targeting civilians but thousands of civilians have been killed in Europe’s worst conflict since World War Two, the vast majority of them Ukrainian.

Russia’s defence ministry confirmed that its forces had attacked military targets in Kyiv with high-precision weapons and drones overnight, Russia’s TASS state news agency reported.

Air raid alerts in Kyiv and most Ukrainian regions lasted five hours until around 5am, according to information released by the military.



People look at a damaged building following Russian drone strikes on Ukraine’s capital Kyiv yesterday. (AFP)

Pakistan boosts defence budget by whopping 20%

Reuters/AFP
Islamabad

Pakistan will raise defence spending by a steep 20% after a military clash with India last month, but will slash overall federal expenditure for fiscal 2025-26 by a hefty 7% to Rs17.57tn (\$62bn).

The budget presented yesterday by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s government allocated Rs2.55tn (\$9bn) to defence in July-June 2025-26, up from Rs2.12tn.

It projected a deficit of 3.9% of GDP against the 5.9% targeted for 2024-25. Inflation was projected at 7.5% and growth at 4.2%.

It comes after Pakistan’s government announced Friday on social media that it was in discussions to acquire 40 new Chinese fighter jets and new air defence systems.

The South Asian nation wants to kickstart growth while boosting its defences after the worst fighting with its neighbour in nearly three decades — which it has cast as a victory — and meeting the strictures of an International Monetary Fund finance programme.

“After defeating India in a conventional war, now we have to surpass it in the economic field,” Sharif said in a statement.

Pakistan must also contend with the uncertainty of new import tariffs being imposed by the United States, its biggest export market. The clash with India was sparked in April when 26 men were killed in an attack on Hindu tourists in Indian Kashmir.

Islamabad denied New Delhi’s allegation that the militants were backed by Pakistan.

Four days of fighting featured jets, missiles, drones and artillery.

For the coming year, Pakistan’s

Overall spending reduced by 7%

Growth forecast at 4.2% next year



Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb presenting the 2025-26 fiscal budget at the Parliament House in Islamabad yesterday. (AFP)

government allocated Rs742bn (\$2.63bn) to military pensions, taking the entire defence budget to Rs3.292tn (\$11.67bn). That included Rs704bn (\$2.5bn) in spending on equipment and other physical assets.

India’s defence spending in its 2025-26 (April-March) fiscal year was set at \$78.7bn, up 9.5%, including pensions and \$21bn earmarked for equipment. It has indicated that it too will boost defence spending further.

Sharif’s government has projected 4.2% economic growth in 2025-26, saying it has steadied the economy, which looked at risk of defaulting on its debts as re-

cently as 2023. Growth this fiscal year is likely to be 2.7%, against the budgeted target of 3.6%.

Pakistan’s growth lags far behind the region. In 2024, South Asian countries grew by an average of 5.8% and the Asian Development Bank expects 6.0% in 2025.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said the government intended to complete the privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines, a request of the IMF.

Growth should be aided by a sharp drop in the cost of borrowing, the government says, after a succession of interest rate cuts. But economists warn that mon-

etary policy alone may not be enough, with fiscal constraints and IMF-mandated reforms still weighing on investment.

Aurangzeb said that the budget was the start of a strategy to boost exports, increase foreign currency reserves to avoid the balance of payments crises of the past, and create a more competitive economy.

“In short, our budget strategy is to change the economy’s DNA by bringing basic changes,” he said.

Pakistan came to the brink of default in 2023, as a political crisis compounded an economic downturn and drove the nation’s debt burden to terminal levels, before it was saved by a \$7bn bailout from the International Monetary Fund.

It has since then enjoyed a degree of recovery, with inflation easing and foreign exchange reserves increasing.

“We have moved in the right direction,” Aurangzeb said at a briefing ahead of the budget announcement in parliament.

“Any transformation takes two to three years and we have done a good job in terms of where we wanted to take things.”

The budget will be voted on by parliament later this month, but the government’s safe majority means only minor changes are expected. The budget set aside Rs8tn (\$28.4bn) to service its huge amount of debt.

It is the government’s second budget since coming to power last year, in an election which saw the wildly popular leader Imran Khan jailed for charges he says were politically motivated.

European Union’s new Russia sanctions to target energy sector and banks

Reuters
Brussels

The European Commission yesterday proposed an 18th package of sanctions against Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, aimed at Moscow’s energy revenues, its banks and its military industry.

The new package proposes banning transactions with Russia’s Nord Stream gas pipelines, as well as banks that engage in sanctions circumvention.

“Russia’s goal is not peace, it is to impose the rule of might ... strength is the only language that Russia will understand,” Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told a press conference.

The Commission proposes adding 22 more Russian banks to its list and broadening restrictions on them beyond a removal from SWIFT, a global financial messaging system, to a full transaction ban. It also proposes expanding the scope to banks from third countries, and lists the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) as



European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen (right) and EU High Representative and Vice-President for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas during the press conference in Brussels yesterday. (AFP)

well as its subsidiaries and wider network.

Kirill Dmitriev, head of the RDIF, said von der Leyen’s statements reflected “the EU’s desire to prolong the conflict in Ukraine and its strong dissatisfaction with RDIF’s efforts to restore relations between Russia and the United States”.

He said in a statement that the RDIF was also actively supporting European companies that have a presence in Russia.

The Commission has also proposed lowering the Group of Seven nations (G7) price cap on Russian crude oil to \$45 a barrel, from \$60 a barrel, in a bid to cut Russia’s energy revenues.

Von der Leyen said that the oil price cap will be discussed at a G7 leaders meeting in Canada next week.

“My assumption is that we do that together as the G7. We started that as G7, it was successful as a measure from the G7, and I want to continue this measure as G7,” she said.

The proposal also lists more vessels that make up Russia’s shadow fleet, taking the total to more than 400 ships, and oil trading companies. The Commission has also proposed a ban on imports of refined products produced from Russian oil.

“In this way, we want to prevent that some of the Russian crude oil reaches the EU market through the back door,” von der Leyen said.

EU countries will start debating the proposal this week.

HMC hosts student delegation from Qatar University



As part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen collaboration with national academic institutions and promote the concept of direct, practical learning, Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) hosted a delegation of students from the Executive Master's Programme in Leadership at Qatar University (QU)'s College of Business and Economics.

The visit aimed to familiarise the students with the HMC's administrative and healthcare environment and to link theoretical knowledge with its practical application within one of the region's leading healthcare systems.

The Training and Development Section at the HMC's Human Resources Department organised a series of meetings and discussion sessions with a select group of executive HMC leaders for the 29 students.

The sessions included an overview of

key administrative topics, the exchange of expertise and experiences with the students, and discussions on strategic subjects such as the organisational structure, governance, leadership strategies, and development programmes aimed at enhancing the quality of healthcare.

The sessions also addressed the challenges facing the healthcare sector and explored ways to effectively manage them.

Mona al-Homaiddi, acting chief of business services and acting chief human resources officer at the HMC, emphasised the importance of integrated efforts between academic and professional institutions, given their vital role in knowledge and expertise exchange and in strengthening leadership capabilities.

Sabiha Qasimi, executive director of talent development at the HMC, delivered a comprehensive presentation on the HMC's vision, mission, and strategic goals.

She highlighted the HMC's most significant achievements in recent years, which have strengthened its position both locally and internationally, as a leading healthcare model in the Middle East and a cornerstone in supporting Qatar's healthcare system.

During the sessions, the HMC's efforts to develop services were addressed, including the implementation of international best practices in quality and patient safety, which resulted in receiving accreditation from the Joint Commission International for many facilities as a recognition of continuous commitment to quality and clinical excellence.

The sessions also highlighted the HMC's local and international partnerships that support the implementation of development projects within the corporation, particularly collaborations with academic and research institutions.

Five Qatar-based Indians killed in Kenya bus crash

Five Qatar-based Indians were killed in a road accident in central Kenya on Monday evening when the bus they were travelling in overturned during a holiday trip.

Several others were seriously injured and under treatment at various hospitals in Kenya, sources said.

The deceased have been identified as Geetha Shoji Isaac (58), Riya Ann (41), and her daughter Tyra Rodrigues (8), Jasna Kuttikkattuchalil (30) and Roohie Mehrin (18 months old) - all natives of various places in Kerala.

Isaac hailed from Thiruvalla in Kerala and was a long time senior teacher at HOPE Qatar Centre for Persons with Disabilities.

The Indian embassy in Qatar confirmed on social media that a group of 28 Indians from Qatar were involved in the accident.

The embassy also stated that they are in touch with Indian Cultural Centre and Indian Community Benevolent Forum and other community organisations to co-ordinate the efforts to provide necessary assistance for those affected.

- Witnesses say the driver lost control of the bus that the tourists were travelling in
- There were 28 Indians from Qatar on the bus, according to the Indian embassy

The embassy can be contacted on 55097295.

Sources said that some of the injured are in critical condition and have been receiving treatment at some of the hospitals in the local town while some of them have already been moved to hospitals in Nairobi.

Gulf Times reached out to the tour operator from Qatar who had arranged the trip to Kenya.

They declined to comment.

According to various news agencies, the accident took place in central Kenya as the bus was ferrying the tourists from Nakuru County to Nyahururu Thomson Falls in Laikipia County.

According to local eye witnesses, the driver lost control of the bus which veered off the road and rolled and landed in a ditch

in the Gichaka area, some 41km south of Nyahururu Town.

The Indian embassy in Qatar said that the consular team of the High Commission is on the ground and is in touch with the local authorities.

The team in Kenya can be reached at +254 734916532.

Community leaders said that all the necessary assistance and arrangements are being co-ordinated with authorities here in Doha as well as in Nairobi.

Since the incident took place at remote area, it has been difficult to get information on time.

However, the Indian High Commission in Nairobi is extending all the possible support in the efforts to assist the affected and their families.



Geetha Shoji Isaac



Right: Riya Ann and her daughter Tyra Rodrigues.



Roohie Mehrin



Right: Jasna Kuttikkattuchalil.



The inspections are part of the MoECC's broader mission to safeguard marine ecosystems and biodiversity across Qatar.

MoECC staff conduct marine environment inspection tours

Personnel from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)'s Marine Protection Department conducted field inspection tours during the Eid al-Adha holidays across the northern, southern, and western areas of the country's local waters.

The main objective was to monitor marine activities, detect violations, and ensure adherence to established environmental regulations.

Such efforts are part of the MoECC's broader mission to safeguard marine ecosystems and biodiversity across Qatar.

The MoECC urged all sea-goers to follow environmental guidelines, avoid littering, and refrain from using illegal fishing gear, stressing that protecting marine life and maintaining a clean, sustainable marine environment is a shared responsibility.




What to Do If You Get Stuck in an Elevator

 Use the emergency button or communication system to contact rescue personnel.

 Press the "Open" or "Close" button for 5 seconds the doors may respond.

 Remain calm and avoid unnecessary movement. Do not attempt to force the doors open.

 Stay calm and wait patiently for help once rescue teams have been alerted.

 Review the safety instructions posted inside the elevator, and make a call if mobile coverage is available.

Emergency Phone: 999



Ensuring you do not approach offshore oil platforms (both primary and secondary) helps you avoid legal liability.

Law No. 8 of 2004 on the Protection of Maritime Petroleum and Gas Installations

Article 3
No unauthorized person shall approach maritime facilities within a distance of less than 500 metres.

Article 4
Fishing or leaving fishing gear at a distance of less than 500 metres from maritime facilities is prohibited.

