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SPORT | Page 1

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PM, French FM discuss ties, Palestine issue

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, met with Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of the French Republic, Jean-Noel Barrot on the sidelines of the third Qatar-France Strategic Dialogue held in Paris. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and ways to enhance and deepen co-operation across various fields. The two sides also exchanged views on the latest developments in Gaza and occupied Palestinian territories, along with other issues of common interest. Both sides emphasised the importance of the upcoming high-level international conference on a peaceful settlement to the Palestinian cause and the implementation of the two-state solution, scheduled to be held this month in New York. They stressed that the conference represents a genuine opportunity for peace that must be seized to chart a course toward realising the two-state solution. **(QNA) Page 2**

Amir, PM offer condolences

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani expressed his condolences to India on the victims of a plane crash in Ahmedabad. HH the Amir, in a post on his official X account, expressed his sincere condolences to Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the victims of the plane crash in Ahmedabad. HH the Amir added that Qatar stands with the Republic of India, its friendly people, and the families of the victims in this painful time. HH the Amir also sent a cable of condolences to President Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on the victims of the plane crash in Ahmedabad. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a cable of condolences to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the victims of the air crash in Ahmedabad. **(QNA)**

Leaks delay mission to space station

Nasa indefinitely delayed a four-person crew's mission to the International Space Station yesterday over an escalating probe into air leaks aboard the orbiting laboratory's Russian segment. The US space agency said it was working with Roscosmos, Russia's space agency, to "understand a new pressure signature". **Page 8**

Late-stage trials of obesity drug next year

Novo Nordisk said yesterday it plans to start late-stage trials of its experimental weight-loss drug, amycratin, in injection and oral forms during the first quarter of 2026 for adults who are overweight or obese. Amycratin, the Danish drugmaker's next-generation obesity drug, has a dual-mode action.

COMMUNITY

See Page: 5

Ride-share pick-up services reinstated at HIA

Ride-share pick-up services have been reinstated at Hamad International Airport. In a release yesterday, HIA said app-rides services have now been reinstated at Hamad International Airport, offering passengers greater flexibility upon arrival. The designated pick-up area is located within the airport's parking facility. Currently, Uber is operational. Passengers are encouraged to check the service provider's website or Uber Application for availability and operational details. Additional app-rides options will be introduced soon, HIA said. Metro, bus, and taxi: Hamad International Airport offers passengers a wide variety of ground transport options that seamlessly connect the airport and the city. The bus pavilion and taxi pavilion are located on either side of the Arrivals Hall. Passengers are advised to use only authorised taxis and ride-share services from the designated locations at the terminal, as these authorised vehicles meet high service standards and are supported by a robust lost and found policy. The metro station is within a short indoor walking distance from the terminal, connecting the airport to major destinations across Doha. Passengers are encouraged to refer to Doha Metro's website for updated service timings. Drivers coming to pick up arriving passengers are advised to use the parking facility, which offers a convenient alternative to waiting at the curb side. It is imperative to avoid leaving vehicles unattended at the terminal curb side, as this can lead to congestion, raise

security concerns, and result in vehicle towing. Car rental, limousine, and valet services are available for passengers. Convenient valet services are available at both Departures and Arrivals for your ease of travel. E-gates: The airport advises passengers who are eligible to use the e-gates at the arrival immigration hall for expedited processing. Restrictions apply; minimum height is 130cm. Baggage: Passengers are reminded that oversized or irregularly in shaped bags (e.g. wheelchairs, baby strollers), will arrive separately on dedicated reclaim baggage belts A and B. It is recommended to securely pack fragile items in hard-shell luggage. Verify ownership of luggage before collecting it from the belt, and retain bag tags until you reach your residence. For assistance, passengers need to visit the Baggage Services Office in the arrival terminal.

UN nuclear watchdog says Iran in breach of obligations

Reuters
Vienna/Dubai

The UN nuclear watchdog's board of governors declared Iran in breach of its non-proliferation obligations yesterday and Tehran announced counter-measures, as an Iranian official said a "friendly country" had warned it of a potential Israeli attack. US and Iranian officials will hold a sixth round of talks on Tehran's escalating uranium enrichment programme in Oman on Sunday, according to US and Omani officials.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a meeting in Ilam, Iran, yesterday.

But security concerns have risen since US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday American personnel were being moved out of the region because "it could be a dangerous place" and that Tehran would not be allowed to develop a nuclear weapon. Washington is concerned that Israel could take military action against Iran in coming days, US officials said on condition of anonymity, despite Trump's recent warning to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu against such a strike while US diplomacy continues with Tehran. US intelligence indicates that Is-

rael has been making preparations to hit Iran's nuclear installations. But one US official said there was no sign that Israel had made a final decision. Some foreign diplomats suggested that the evacuation of personnel, and US officials anonymously raising the spectre of an Israel attack on Iran, could be a ploy to ratchet up pressure on Tehran for concessions at the negotiating table. Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said that even if the country's nuclear facilities were destroyed by bombs they would be rebuilt.

The International Atomic Energy Agency's Board of Governors declared Iran in breach of its non-proliferation obligations for the first time in almost 20 years, raising the prospect of reporting it to the UN Security Council. Iran says its nuclear energy programme is only for peaceful purposes. Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and Mossad head David Barnea will go to Oman to meet US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff before the US-Iran talks in another attempt to clarify Israel's position, Israeli media reported.

265 die in India plane crash

1 passenger survives

AFP
Ahmedabad, India

A London-bound passenger jet crashed in a residential area in the Indian city of Ahmedabad yesterday, killing at least 265 people on board and on the ground – but one passenger is believed to have survived. An AFP journalist saw bodies being recovered from the crash site, and the back of the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner – which had 242 passengers and crew on board – hanging over the edge of a building it hit around lunchtime. The government opened a formal investigation into the cause of the crash, and rescue teams worked into Friday morning scouring the charred wreckage with sniffer dogs. "The tragedy in Ahmedabad has stunned and saddened us," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after Air India's flight 171 crashed following takeoff. "It is

A view shows the rear of the plane that crashed in Ahmedabad, India, yesterday.

A view of the wreckage of the Air India aircraft, which crashed during take-off from Ahmedabad, yesterday.

heartbreaking beyond words". Deputy Commissioner of Police Kanan Desai told reporters said that "265 bodies have reached the hospital". That suggests that at least 24 people died when the jet ploughed into a medical staff hostel in a blazing fireball – and that the toll may rise further as more bodies are located. But while everyone aboard the flight was initially feared killed,

state health official Dhananjay Dwivedi said "one survivor is confirmed" and had been hospitalised. The survivor is believed to be 40-year-old Vishwash Kumar Ramesh, one of the British passengers. He was in seat 11A, next to an emergency exit, an official said, adding that there could be more survivors in hospital. "Thirty seconds after take-off, there was a loud noise and then

the plane crashed," 40-year-old Ramesh told the *Hindustan Times*, which showed a boarding pass for seat 11A in that name online. "One half of the plane crashed into the residential building where doctors lived with their families," said Krishna, a doctor who did not give his full name. "The nose and front wheel landed on the canteen building where students were having lunch," he said. **Page 7**

29 more killed; Gaza toll goes up to 55,207

QNA/AFP
Gaza

Twenty-nine Palestinians were killed, most of them at aid distribution points, and dozens were injured in the Israeli occupation forces' bombardment of several areas in the Gaza Strip since dawn yesterday. Medical sources said that two citizens were killed in an Israeli bombardment that targeted the Batn Al Sameen area, south of Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip. A woman and her child were also killed in a bombardment that targeted the town of Abasan Al Kabira, east of the city. Three others were killed in a bombardment that targeted the tents of displaced people in Mawasi Al Qarara, west of the city, and two others were killed by Israeli occupation forces' fire in the same area. The death toll from the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip since Oct. 7, 2023, has risen to 55,207 martyrs, in addition to 127,821 wounded. The US- and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) accused Palestinian resistance group Hamas of attacking a bus carrying its staff to a distribution site on Wednesday, saying at least eight people were killed.

Palestinian boy Adam al-Najjar from Gaza who survived an Israeli strike that killed his nine siblings and his father is carried on a stretcher towards an ambulance, after the aircraft carrying him landed at Milan's Linate Airport, Italy, Wednesday.

Israel deports 6 Gaza aid boat detainees

Israel's foreign ministry said six people detained aboard a boat while trying to breach Israel's blockade of war-ravaged Gaza were put on a plane for deportation yesterday. "Six more passengers... including Rima Hassan, are on their way out of Israel," the ministry wrote on X.



Russian National Day celebrated in Qatar



Russian ambassador Dmitry Dogadkin is joined by Qatar's Minister of Municipality HE Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah in cutting a ceremonial cake at the Russian National Day celebrations in Doha yesterday as other dignitaries look on. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

PM holds talks with French minister



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met with French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Noel Barrot on the sidelines of the third Qatar-France Strategic Dialogue held in Paris. The meeting discussed bilateral co-operation between the two countries and discussed ways to enhance and deepen it across various fields. The two sides also exchanged views on the latest developments in Gaza and occupied Palestinian territories, along with other issues of common interest. **(QNA)**

Amir receives written message from Spain PM, Azerbaijan president



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received a written message from Prime Minister of Spain Dr Pedro Sanchez pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received the message during his meeting with ambassador of Spain to Qatar Alvaro Renedo Zalba.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received a written message from President of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to support and develop them. HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received the message during his meeting yesterday with ambassador of Azerbaijan to Qatar Adish Mammadov. **(QNA)**

Official

Amir sends cables of condolences to Austria's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of condolences to Federal President of Austria Alexander Van der Bellen on the victims of a shooting incident at a school in Graz, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable to Federal Chancellor of Austria Dr Christian Stocker on the victims of a shooting incident at a school in Graz, wishing the injured a speedy recovery.

Amir sends cables of congratulations to president of Russia

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin 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 Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Mishustin on the occasion.

Amir sends cables of congratulations to president of the Philippines

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to President of the Republic of the Philippines Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. **(QNA)**

Justice minister chairs Lawyers Admission Committee meeting

QNA
Doha

The Lawyers Admission Committee held a meeting under the chairmanship of HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi to review several items on its agenda. During the meeting, three newly qualified lawyers took the legal oath before the Committee.

Following the completion of their training period at the Legal and Judicial Studies Center at the Ministry of Justice, and their practical training in several Qatari law firms, they were officially registered in the Roll of Practicing Lawyers.

The Committee also discussed applications from professionals with equivalent qualifications seeking registration in the Roll of Practicing Lawyers. Additionally, it approved several applications for the registration of trainee lawyers and reviewed requests to transfer lawyers to the Roll of Practicing Lawyers authorised to appear before courts of various levels.

The Committee further considered a range of procedural matters and regulatory frameworks related to the legal profession, including reports from its subcommittees, and made the appropriate decisions regarding them. At the conclusion of the meeting, HE Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi congratulated the newly admitted lawyers and reaffirmed the Committee's commitment to fostering a supportive professional environment that enables lawyers to perform their duties effectively. He emphasised that this effort contributes to strengthening the legal and judicial system in the State of Qatar and serving the community.



Earthna co-launches Mena coastal resilience initiative

QNA
Doha

Qatar Foundation's Earthna Center for a Sustainable Future has launched The Blue Economies for Coastal Resilience (BEFCR) programme in a partnership with Mena Oceans initiative by Goumbook.

This strategic initiative was unveiled at the Blue Economy and Finance Forum in Monaco on June 7, 2025, in the lead-up to the Third United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3), in France.

BEFCR is the first initiative of its kind in the region and aims to accelerate regenerative blue economies, strengthen climate resilience in coastal cities, protect marine biodiversity, and unlock investment in ocean infrastructure across the Middle East and North Africa (Mena).

The programme's first phase, running from June 2025 to Jan 2026, will deliver a strategic landscape assessment of key blue economy sectors in Mena. The outcome will be a regional roadmap that supports infrastructure resilience, ocean health, and eco-

nomical growth in coastal cities. The BEFCR programme reflects Earthna's broader commitment to sustainable development and environmental resilience.

"The launch of the BEFCR Program reflects our shared conviction at Earthna that climate resilience in Mena's coastal cities must be rooted in both science and innovation. By aligning economic growth with ecosystem regeneration, we are paving new pathways for sustainable prosperity across the region." Dr Gonzalo Castro de la Mata, CEO, Earthna, Qatar Foundation said.

BEFCR will focus on six key sectors – maritime transport, coastal tourism, offshore energy, fisheries, desalination, and coastal development.

The initiative seeks to foster cross-sectoral collaboration, identify investment gaps, enhance coastal protection, and promote nature-based and hybrid infrastructure solutions.

Earthna will co-lead Phase 1 of the programme, including the production of the Blue Economies for Coastal Resilience Outlook Report, to be released at the 3rd Mena Oceans Summit in late 2025.

Qatar partakes in Tbilisi Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Georgia

Qatar participated in the two-day Tbilisi Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD), held in the Georgian capital of Tbilisi under the theme 'The Role of Peace in Sustainable Socio-Economic Development,' with the attendance of government officials, representatives of international organisations, as well as several experts and those interested in the fields of peace and development.

Qatar was represented by Director-General of Doha Municipality Eng Mohammed Hassan al-Naimi.

The forum's sessions addressed the importance of peace as a key element for achieving sustainable development and enhancing social and economic stability.

Qatar's participation comes within the framework of strengthening its international presence in sustainable development forums, and building regional relations with actors in the South Caucasus countries, especially Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The country's participation also comes to explore opportunities for partnership and investment in development projects with a social and economic dimension, thus enhancing the municipality's role in supporting a more inclusive and sustainable urban future. **(QNA)**

Al Abdulghani Motors unveils first-ever hybrid Land Cruiser in Qatar

Al Abdulghani Motors, the authorised distributor of Toyota in Qatar, has announced the launch of the new Land Cruiser HEV, the first hybrid electric model in the iconic Land Cruiser series.

Setting a new benchmark for electrified off-road vehicles, the new Land Cruiser fuses seven decades of heritage with Toyota's cutting-edge hybrid technology, delivering enhanced performance while maintaining the unmatched reliability, durability, and all-terrain capability for which the Land Cruiser is renowned.

Since the model's inception in 1951, the Land Cruiser has supported the lives and livelihoods of people across the globe, becoming an indispensable tool across some of the world's harshest environments, a statement said. The introduction of the Land Cruiser HEV marks a bold step toward Toyota's vision for carbon neutrality under its multi-pathway approach, of-



fering customers greater choice while ensuring that no compromises are made on capability or reliability. Building upon 28 years of leadership in hybrid technology, Toyota has applied its extensive expertise to create an electric off-roader capable of delivering superior power, driving refine-

ment, and environmental benefits, all while staying true to the Land Cruiser spirit. Commenting on the special launch, Al Abdulghani Motors CEO Abdulghani Nasser al-Abdulghani, said: "The new model complements the Land Cruiser's renowned off-road capabilities with hybrid electric technology,



meeting the needs of Qatar's environment. Expanding our hybrid lineup not only aligns with Toyota's global vision for carbon neutrality but also reinforces our commitment to supporting Qatar's sustainability goals in line with the National Vision 2030."

The hybrid system introduces a

20% increase in torque and a 40% improvement in accelerator response compared to conventional powertrains, resulting in a driving experience that is more powerful, more linear, and more responsive across every terrain.

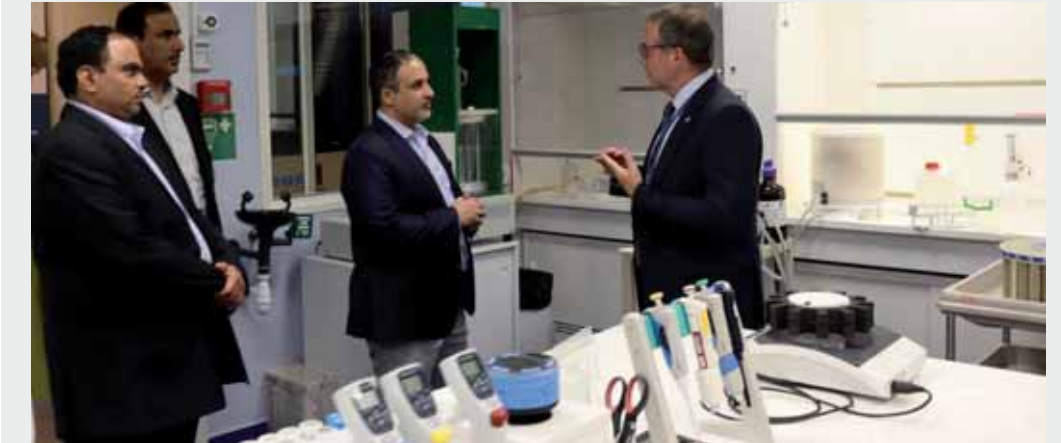
Extensive development and real-world testing was conducted on

global terrains, including deserts, mudflats, and mountainous landscapes. Lessons learned from Toyota's participation in off-road rallies such as the Dakar Rally were also incorporated into the development process to enhance the vehicle's endurance and performance in extreme conditions.

As a result, the Land Cruiser HEV's hybrid system has been designed with true off-road reliability in mind. Even in the unlikely event of hybrid unit failure, the vehicle can continue operating solely on the combustion engine, ensuring peace of mind in remote areas.

The hybrid battery area has been specially waterproofed to maintain the Land Cruiser's famed fording ability, allowing it to tackle rivers and water obstacles with confidence. Additionally, the vehicle also offers a third-row seat and cargo layout specifically optimised for the addition of the HEV system, ensuring no compromise in versatility or interior space.

Qatar, IAEA discuss co-operation in Marine Environmental Protection



HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met Director of the Marine Laboratories of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Florence Descroix-Comanducci, during an official visit to the laboratories' headquarters in the Principality of Monaco. The visit took place on the sidelines of his participation in the Third UN Ocean Conference in Nice, France. The meeting discussed areas of joint co-operation between the State of Qatar and the IAEA, as well as ways to strengthen the partnership in marine environmental protection and in enhancing national technical capacities for monitoring environmental



changes using advanced nuclear and radiological technologies. HE the Minister also took a field tour of the laboratories, where he was briefed on the advanced equipment and methods used for analysing marine pollutants, and how these technologies support international efforts to protect oceans and seas from

the impacts of climate change and human activity. This visit reflects Qatar's commitment to strengthening international co-operation in environmental protection and benefiting from global technical expertise to develop its environmental system in accordance with the highest scientific standards. (QNA)

talabat, Golalita pact for employee-focused loyalty programmes

talabat, the leading on-demand delivery platform in the Mena region, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Golalita, Qatar's leading rewards platform focused on employee engagement and loyalty. The signing marks a new milestone in talabat's ongoing efforts to make everyday experiences more rewarding and accessible, a statement said.

Golalita partners with several leading organisations in Qatar to deliver employee focused loyalty programmes and also offers its own branded solution through the Golalita Rewards Card. Through this partnership, employees enrolled in any of these programmes will gain access to exclusive offers on talabat, adding greater value to the benefits they receive from their organisation's loyalty programme.

Commenting on the partnership, Francisco Miguel De Sousa, managing director of talabat Qatar, stated: "At talabat, we are committed to supporting working professionals by delivering everyday value through convenience,



choice, and innovation. Partnering with Golalita allows us to extend exclusive benefits to employees across Qatar, and we are proud to work with a platform that shares our focus on community driven impact."

Ali al-Yafei, CEO, Golalita, added: "We're pleased to partner with talabat, a well-known brand in the region. This alliance highlights our

joint effort to provide meaningful, impactful solutions to communities that have earned acknowledgment and consistent encouragement."

The collaboration reflects talabat's commitment to customer focused innovation and supporting employee wellbeing through smart, tech-driven solutions, the statement added.

Final chance to view exhibitions highlighting war, identity and artistic legacy

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Art and culture enthusiasts have a final opportunity this month to explore a diverse slate of exhibitions presented by Qatar Museums (QM), including a display documenting the 'genocidal assault' on Gaza. With many of the displays set to close by June 20, QM noted that these exhibitions cover several venues across Doha and bring together artists from across the Arab world and beyond.

Among the most talked-about is 'Obliteration - Surviving the Inferno: Gaza's Battle for Existence', on display at Katara Cultural Village, which chronicles the devastating war launched on October 7.

Structured in five stages, QM said the exhibition walks visitors through escalating waves of destruction, presenting photography by Palestinians who have lived and suffered through the carnage.

With nearly 50,000 people killed - primarily women and children - and more than 15,000 still buried under rubble, the exhibit is both a tribute to those lost and a stark indictment of international silence. It features the work of nine Gaza-based photographers, including Abdulrahman Zaqout, Fatima Shbair, and Ali Jadallah, under the "Gaza Photography Grant" initiative, a Kuwait-based effort supporting humanitarian photojournalism.

At the Fire Station's Garage Gallery, As I Lay Between Two Seas exhibition offers a reflective contrast, exploring themes of identity, home, and belonging. Featuring 25 artists from the Arab world and its diasporas, the exhibition draws from theorist Stuart Hall's idea of identity as a work in progress. Borrowing its title from



Obliteration - Surviving the Inferno: Gaza's Battle for Existence, on display at Katara Cultural Village.

a photographic series by Ali al-Shehabi, the show navigates the fluidity of selfhood in a shifting geopolitical and cultural landscape. Artists like Manal AlDowayan and Farah al-Qasimi blur boundaries between memory and resistance, the personal and political.

At Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, 'Territories of the Instant' exhibition invites visitors into the world of Moroccan photographer Daoud Aoulad-Syad. Known for his cinematic eye and unfiltered gaze, he captures the soulful in-between spaces of Moroccan life - street performers in Marrakech, quiet rural landscapes, and ageing entertainers.

Al-Mihrab at Fire Station's Gallery 3 is an exhibition by Khalid al-Musallamany, head of Photography and Media Archiving at the Qatar Olympic Committee,



As I Lay Between Two Seas exhibition features 25 artists from the Arab world and its diasporas.

provides a photographic journey through mosques across Qatar. Shot in both colour and black and white, the exhibit reflects on the spiritual and architectural beauty of places of worship, offering viewers a visual dialogue between tradition and modernity in Islam-

Arabic calligraphy takes centre stage in the Al-Raqim exhibition, which runs until June 21

ic architecture.

At Msheireb Downtown Doha, 'Threads of Light: Stories' exhibition through the Tasweer Single Image Awards at Company House showcases 32 powerful photographs from across Western Asia and North Africa. From refugee camps and remote villages to bustling cities, the images illuminate everyday life, cultural traditions, and societal change.

Also at the Fire Station, After the Game exhibition revisits the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 through photography and short films from the Doha Film Insti-



Ali Zaraay, Crawling in the Dust, presented at Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar 2025.



Garangao exhibition. Photo by Muneera al-Obaidli

tute. Capturing moments from stadiums to street celebrations, this show reflects on the emotions and cultural significance of the tournament from a local perspective.

Garangao 2025, part of the Tasweer Photo Festival, brings together personal narratives on memory, tradition, and resilience through an open call. This outdoor exhibition, held at the Fire Station's Barahat courtyard, celebrates intergenerational connections and local storytelling.

At Katara's Buildings 45 and 46, Refractions: Tasweer Project

Awards exhibition presents works from 18 Arab photographers who examine how ideas of home and belonging are constantly reshaped by migration, conflict, and climate change. It explores the tension between ancient patterns of movement and modern geopolitical boundaries.

Arabic calligraphy takes centre stage in the Al-Raqim exhibition, which runs until June 21. Featuring global talents, it underscores Arabic script as both an art form and cultural symbol, highlighting Qatar's commitment to preserving Islamic artistic heritage.



Democracy Day in Nigeria



A person rides a tall bicycle during a demonstration on the street of Lagos to commemorate Nigeria's Democracy Day in Ojota, Lagos.



A person holds a sign representing the territory of Nigeria during a demonstration on the street of Lagos to commemorate Nigeria's Democracy Day.

In Nigeria, the juntas are history, but street names live forever

AFP
Abuja

As President Bola Tinubu praised his country's quarter century of democratic rule yesterday, many of the streets around the Nigerian capital carried a different, perhaps less-inspiring message.

To name a few: Sani Abacha Way takes commuters into downtown Abuja. Ibrahim Babangida Way meanwhile cuts through upscale Maitama. Murtala Muhammed Expressway passes next to the

presidency and the National Assembly, where Tinubu delivered his Democracy Day speech.

All three are named after the heads of military juntas.

As other countries in west Africa have gone on a renaming spree — mostly throwing out roads named for colonial figures — Nigeria's strongmen have survived this final, symbolic purge.

All eight of Nigeria's military leaders have at least one street named after them in the capital — a fact that's often met with a shrug, even as yesterday's holiday celebrates the transition to civilian

rule in 1999 after decades of coups and military rule.

"Some leaders, because of their stature, a road can be named after them," said Ibrahim Hassan, 45, an employee at a corner store. "It's not about whether you've done the best for Nigeria."

A woman ringing up her groceries, who gave her name only as Adekemi, chimed in with an indifferent laugh: "Right now I'm focusing on how to afford this."

Abuja — a planned city that became Nigeria's capital in 1991 under Babangida — "is the house that the military built, so naturally they

paid homage to themselves" said Ikemesit Effiong, a partner at SBM Intelligence, a Lagos-based consultancy. While data from pollster Afrobarometer has shown consistent public support for democracy in Nigeria, "the military is still a formidable, well-regarded institution, seen by many as comparatively disciplined and well run" after 26 years of often chaotic civilian rule.

Former military chiefs have also entered civilian politics, rehabilitating their image — including Olusegun Obasanjo and Muhammadu Buhari, both elected presi-

dent in the democratic era. In the United States and Europe, activists in recent years clamoured to have streets renamed to address colonial or racist legacies — though those moves weren't always without pushback.

In west Africa, including in Senegal and Ivory Coast, governments have ditched boulevards named after French leaders and renamed them after their own countrymen. "We have not fully grasped what democracy is about," lamented Edwin Ajibola, 42, who as an Uber driver, makes his living plying roads named after strongmen.

Tinubu too, while praising in his speech "how far we had come as a nation", acknowledged that "we still have so much, and a lot, for that to go." Earlier this week, he found himself directly facing his predecessors' infrastructural legacy when the minister of the Federal Capital Territory renamed Abuja's International Conference Centre after the president.

Amid the political squabbling in the aftermath, one former lawmaker suggested the move would unfairly obscure the head of state who oversaw its building: junta head Babangida.

Protests over police killing in Kenya as govt presents budget

AFP
Nairobi

Kenyan security forces yesterday fired tear gas against demonstrators protesting a death in police custody, clashes that threatened to overshadow government attempts to pass a budget without sparking unrest.

The government carefully prepared its new finance bill with the aim of avoiding the massive protests over tax hikes that engulfed Kenya a year ago. But the death of 31-year-old teacher Albert Ojwang while in police custody last weekend, following his arrest for criticising a senior officer online, has reawakened anger over police brutality in the east African country.

"You can't kill one of us in prison and then expect us to just lie down," said Tiffany, 22, a protester in Nairobi's business district who gave only her first name. Hundreds of protesters were spread in small groups across Nairobi's business district, some throwing rocks at police who fired back with tear gas, while at least two cars were set alight. AFP reporters saw at least three people wounded by rubber bullets, with one of them taken to hospital.

The unrest was limited com-



Clashes erupt between demonstrators and police in Nairobi.

pared to last year's protests which peaked when thousands stormed parliament on June 25, forcing President William Ruto to cancel a finance bill that would have raised taxes on many everyday items. At least 60 people were killed in the weeks of youth-led protests in June and July 2024, and rights groups say dozens more were illegally detained by security forces in the aftermath.

The east African nation is a regional economic powerhouse but tensions have simmered over a rising cost of living, a stagnant

job market and rights abuses. This year, the government played it safe with its finance bill, focusing on tax hikes on businesses rather than consumers. Finance Minister John Mbadi acknowledged last year's protests had highlighted "the importance of values and principles of governance." He called for a minute of silence in parliament for protesters who had lost their lives.

"To win public trust, we have strengthened public participation in all policy formulation, including the budget-making process," he said, referring to a new online

portal in which citizens could give their views. But there was anger last month when a software designer was arrested for creating her own website that criticised the budget and allowed people to e-mail the government with complaints.

Kenya faces a daunting task in boosting social services and investment when its heavy debts mean interest payments outweigh its spending on health and education. Analysts say the new budget is unlikely to provoke the public anger of last year.

It seeks to boost revenues by cutting government spending and closing tax loopholes, though critics say it still includes backdoor price increases and that will hurt small businesses.

"This year's finance bill is, in comparison to last year's, very much seeking to avoid controversy," said Patricia Rodrigues of global consultancy Control Risks. But increases in income taxes and social contributions will hit businesses, she said.

In a difficult global environment, the World Bank has reduced its growth projections for Kenya



A Kenyan police officer pushes some protesters during violent demonstration in Nairobi.



Bystanders take cover behind a shopfront grille as clashes erupt between demonstrators and police during a protest over the death of Kenyan blogger Albert Ojwang, who died in police custody, as the government presents the 2025-2026 budget statement in downtown Nairobi.

from 5.0 to 4.5% in 2025. Rights abuses have become a volatile issue.

Ojwang, the teacher who died in police custody, was arrested for criticising deputy inspector-general Eliud Kipkoech Lagat in online posts. "What we are demanding

is for the deputy inspector general to resign, and then he should be arrested," said protester Anami Daudi Toure, 27, on Thursday. A police watchdog, the Independent Policing Oversight Authority, said Thursday that 20 people had died in custody in the past four months.

Death toll in South Africa floods rises to 67, more bodies recovered by rescue teams

AFP
Mthatha

South Africa rescue teams recovered more bodies yesterday, days after heavy rains and strong winds battered the Eastern Cape province, as the death toll rose to at least 67. The bitterly cold winter storm struck the largely rural and underdeveloped province on Monday, causing a river to burst its banks and submerge homes, with several makeshift dwellings toppled.

The worst-hit area was around

the city of Mthatha, about 800km south of Johannesburg, where residents picked through the mud three days later to salvage what they could from their destroyed homes. AFP journalists saw a rescue team pull four bodies, some of them children, from a one-roomed house in the late afternoon as locals watched.

"As the water subsides, more bodies are being discovered," said Caroline Gallant, Eastern Cape manager at the South African Red Cross Society, which has sent assistance to the disaster zone.

More than 3,000 houses have

been affected, she told AFP, adding it was "the worst ever disaster" recorded in the area. "The figure now has gone to 67 in terms of deceased," Velenkosini Hlabisa, minister of cooperative governance and traditional affairs, told reporters.

It includes six school students who were among 10 in a school van that was swept away in the flooding, he said. Four of the children are still missing, officials said. "We learnt of an additional two learners today... who have been confirmed as having died on the walk to school," Basic Education Minister

Siviwe Gwarube said.

"We are reeling," she told public broadcaster SABC News. The storm damaged power and water supplies and hundreds of people were forced to relocate. President Cyril Ramaphosa called the floods "unprecedented" and said he would visit the disaster-hit region Friday.

One rescuer, who spoke to AFP yesterday on the condition of anonymity as he was not allowed to speak to the media, said his team was expecting to find more bodies and possibly survivors.

"We are going door to door to

see, because yesterday we did find people locked inside houses who couldn't get out and were deceased," he said. At least 600 people have been displaced, the provincial government said, with many sheltering in community halls.

Infrastructure has also been damaged and at least 20 health facilities affected, the local authority said. "The numbers will increase dramatically," said Ali Sablay, a spokesperson for the Gift of the Givers Foundation, a disaster response charity that deployed teams to the area.

"In the last 24 hours the number of people requiring assistance has jumped from 5,000 to 10,000," he told AFP. "The homes are fragile, they can collapse any time; food is contaminated so people need to be evacuated," he added. The government urged South Africans to be vigilant over the next few days as more "extreme weather" was expected across the country.

The province — where Nelson Mandela was born — is among the poorest in the country, with 72% of people living below the poverty line, according to the Southern African Regional Poverty Network.

‘Swara Lahari’ wows audience

Billawas Qatar hosted Swara Lahari, a musical evening featuring noted Indian artists Aniruddha Sastry, Ankita Kundu, Divya Ramachandra, Supreeth Sapaliga, Amoghavarsha and his team.

Indian embassy first secretary Vaibhav A Tandale was the chief guest. Indian Cultural Centre president A P Manikantan, Billawas Qatar founder and past president Divakar Poojary and M Pallonji official Chidananda Naik were the guests of honour.

Indian Community Benevolent Forum president Shanavas Bava, Indian Sports Centre president E P Abdu-rahman and community leaders including Sandeep Sriramareddy, Nandini Abbagouni, Deepak

Shetty, Subramanya Hebbagelu, Dr M Ravi Shetty, Sandesh Anand, Navin Shetty, Aloysius D'Souza, Naveen D'Souza, Saquib Raza Khan and Suhaib Ahmed were present.

Vasudha Kotian formally opened and conducted the ceremonial function. Billawas Qatar president Aparna Sharath spoke.

The programme also featured dance acts by Vish Dance Studio, Junior Rockstars and Desi Swag teams of Billawas Qatar and Thillana by Shyama Hamsa. The evening was hosted by Niranjana Deshpande.

Billawas Qatar cultural secretary Pooja Jiten welcomed the gathering and vice-president Jayarama Suvarna proposed a vote of thanks.



Environment Day event at ICC



Indian Cultural Centre, under the aegis of the embassy of India, presented Environment Day Special 'ICC Wednesday Fiesta', showcasing performances of various affiliated organisations and arts centres in Qatar. ICC's former general secretary Divakar Poojary, Karnataka Sangha Qatar president Ravi Shetty and North Indian Association president Lalit Pandey were felicitated on the occasion in recognition of their services to the community. ICC president A P Manikantan presided.



IIS celebrates World Environment Day



Ideal Indian School marked World Environment Day with the theme, 'Beat Plastic Pollution'.

Conservation awareness programmes were conducted across all sections during both the morning and evening sessions.

In the KG section, students came dressed as Earth, trees, wild animals, sea creatures, flowers, and more.

Activity sheets based on the theme 'Save Our Planet' were distributed for colouring, introducing the importance of environmental protection in a fun and engaging way.

In the junior section, a special assembly saw students presenting skits, poems, and speeches on environmental topics.

Each class also took part in practical eco-friendly activities: Class I planted seeds in paper cups, Class II made paper bags, Class III grew microgreens in recycled containers, and Class IV created mini dustbins – promoting values of sustainability, recycling, and cleanliness.



The Boys' and Girls' Sections saw students engaging in a variety of activities including an eco-friendly products showcase, paper bag-making, poster-making, leaf collage, quiz competitions, fancy dress, and a photography competition on the theme 'The Nature Around Me'.

A highlight at the Girls' Section was the Trashion Fashion Show, where students showcased their creativity by modelling outfits made entirely from recycled materials.

Expat forum holds Eid celebration



The Center for Indian Community Qatar (CIC), Rayyan Zone, organised a gathering titled 'Rayyaneed' in celebration of Eid al-Adha. A Mappila song competition was conducted in sub-junior and junior categories for Malarvadi children's group. The winners were Zeba Serin, Fathima Zahra, Minha, Inaya, Hira Hashir, Ayaan, and Ala Zainab. Prizes were distributed by CIC Rayyan Zone office-bearers Subul Abdul Aziz, Ashkar Ali, and Muhammad Rafeeq Thangal. Later, members Shajeer, Ummer, Abid, Shafah, Nisar, Mustafa Saifudheen, Ashraf, and Razak performed a series of songs. The programme was led by zonal secretary Abdul Jaleel M M, organisation secretary Basith, and Siddique Vengara.



MES duo wins wrestling medals

MES Indian School student Junaid Muhamed Abdul Aziz (XII-H) won the gold medal in the secondary category of the recently concluded School Olympic Programme (SOP) wrestling event, while Mohamed Zainudeen (10-F) secured a silver in the preparatory category. MES has won medals in 17 different sports at the SOP this year. Earlier, the school garnered medals in table tennis, athletics, road race, football, basketball, volleyball, taekwondo, gymnastics, rifle shooting, fencing, para table tennis, para athletics, swimming, triathlon, and cricket.



Investiture ceremony at Podar Pearl School



Podar Pearl School held the investiture ceremony for the newly-elected student council of classes IX to XII for the academic session 2025-26. The principal urged the student leaders, including the head boy, head girl, house captains, vice-captains and prefects to lead with integrity, commitment, and a strong sense of responsibility. President C Muhamed Nizar emphasised the importance of student leadership in shaping a progressive school culture.

Australia ‘confident’ in US nuclear sub deal despite review

AFP
Sydney

Australia yesterday said it is “very confident” in the future of a US agreement to equip its navy with a fleet of nuclear-powered submarines, after the Trump administration put

the pact under review. The 2021 AUKUS deal joins Australia, the UK and the US in a multi-decade effort to balance China’s growing military might. It aims to arm Australia with a fleet of cutting-edge, nuclear-powered submarines from the US and provides for co-operation in developing an array of warfare

technologies. US President Donald Trump’s administration has advised Australia and the UK that it is reviewing AUKUS, a spokesperson for the Australian department of defence confirmed yesterday. Defence Minister Richard Marles said he was “very confident” Australia would still get the

American submarines. “I think the review that’s been announced is not a surprise,” he told public broadcaster ABC. “We’ve been aware of this for some time. We welcome it. It’s something which is perfectly natural for an incoming administration to do.” Australia plans to acquire at

least three Virginia Class submarines from the US within 15 years, eventually manufacturing its own subs. The US Navy has 24 Virginia-class vessels, which can carry cruise missiles, but American shipyards are struggling to meet production targets set at two new boats each year. Critics question why the US

would sell nuclear-powered submarines to Australia without stocking its own military first. Marles said boosting the US production of US Virginia Class submarines was a challenge. “That’s why we are working very closely with the US on seeing that happen. But that is improving,” he said.

Philippines Independence Day



Military personnel march during a parade to mark the 127th Independence Day celebration at Quirino Grandstand in Manila, Philippines, yesterday.

Australia to boost aerial surveillance of Pacific

Reuters
Sydney

Australia plans to significantly boost surveillance of Pacific Islands territorial waters, spending A\$477mn (\$310.72mn) on aerial patrols for illegal fishing fleets, tender documents show, as China takes steps towards sending its coast guard to the region. Australia’s Prime Minister Anthony Albanese will visit Fiji today, the *Fiji Times* newspaper reported, after the government of Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka last week

approved a maritime security agreement that will see Australia fund a patrol boat for Fiji. Australia will operate commercial aerial patrols to support Pacific Island countries monitoring exclusive economic zones which span millions of kilometres of ocean. Efforts to tackle illegal fishing also led to a new monitoring centre being opened in Fiji in April. Australia’s defence department declined to comment on the aerial tender, and Pacific Minister Pat Conroy did not respond to a request for comment. The media reported last week that China’s coast guard is tak-

ing further steps towards high seas boarding of fishing boats in the Pacific for the first time, risking tensions with Taiwanese fleets that also ply the region. The Chinese Coast Guard demonstrated the capabilities of one of its largest ships, used to enforce maritime law in the Taiwan Strait, to 10 Pacific Island ministers, including Fiji’s, in China a fortnight ago. China has registered 26 coast guard vessels for Pacific Ocean patrols with the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, although it is yet to conduct an inspection, WCPFC officials said. China declined to comment.

Japan, China trade barbs over fighter jet manoeuvres

Reuters
Tokyo/Beijing

Chinese fighter jets flew unusually close to Japanese military patrol planes over the Pacific last weekend, Tokyo said, after it spotted two Chinese aircraft carriers simultaneously deployed in the waters for the first time. While Beijing said its military activities were “fully in line with international law” and asked Japan to stop its “dangerous” reconnaissance, Japanese and US officials have seen the jets’ actions as another sign of the Chinese military’s growing assertiveness beyond its borders. Tokyo has “expressed serious concern ... and solemnly requested prevention of recurrence” to Beijing, chief cabinet secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said yesterday, referring to the June 7-8 incidents in which Japan said Chinese jets flew as close as 148 feet to Japanese planes. On Saturday, a Chinese J-15 jet from the aircraft carrier Shandong chased a Japanese P-3C patrol aircraft for about 40 minutes, Japan’s defence ministry said. On Sunday, a J-15 chased a P-3C for 80 minutes, crossing in front of the Japanese aircraft at a distance of only 900 metres, it added. A spokesperson at the ministry’s joint staff office declined to disclose whether the same planes were involved in the incidents on

both days. The P-3C aircraft, belonging to a Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force fleet based in the island of Okinawa, were conducting surveillance over international waters in the Pacific, according to the ministry. **“As evident in the South China Sea, the Chinese military has unilaterally changed the status quo through force wherever their military influence extends ... we will maintain a deterrent posture not to allow these actions normalised”** “Such abnormal approaches by Chinese military aircraft could potentially cause accidental collisions,” the ministry said in a statement, attaching close-up images of the missile-armed J-15 jet it took on Sunday. There was no damage to the Japanese planes and crew, it added. In response, China’s foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a regular press conference that “the close-in reconnaissance by Japanese ships and planes of China’s normal military activities is the root cause of the risk to maritime and air security. “The Chinese side urges the Japanese side to stop such dangerous behaviour” Earlier this week, Tokyo said the Shandong and another Chinese carrier, the Liaoning, were conducting simultaneous operations in the Pacific for the first time. Beijing has said the operations were a “routine

training” exercise that did not target specific countries. The Chinese presence in the sea and airspace in the southeast of the Japanese island chain has put Tokyo and its ally Washington on heightened alert, as Japan pursues its biggest military buildup since World War II in the wake of the intensifying security environment in East Asia, including over Taiwan. “Our sense of urgency is growing,” General Yoshihide Yoshida, chief of staff of Japan’s joint staff, told a briefing. “As evident in the South China Sea, the Chinese military has unilaterally changed the status quo through force wherever their military influence extends ... we will maintain a deterrent posture not to allow these actions normalised,” added Yoshida, Japan’s highest-ranking uniformed officer. “The recent dangerous manoeuvre by a Chinese fighter jet that put Japanese crewmembers’ lives in peril must be another of Beijing’s ‘good neighbour’ efforts,” US ambassador to Japan George Glass said in an X post. “Whether it’s harassing Philippine ships, attacking Vietnamese fishermen, or firing flares at Australian aircraft, Beijing knows only reckless aggression,” Glass added, citing recent incidents in the South China Sea. In 2014, Tokyo said it spotted Chinese military aircraft flying as close as 30 metres to its military aircraft over the East China Sea and protested to Beijing.

Japan’s ‘Insta-gran’ dies aged 97

A Japanese great-grandmother with 400,000 Instagram followers who shot to fame for her goofy self-portraits after taking up photography aged 72 has died, her son said yesterday. Kimiko Nishimoto, who died this week at the age of 97, said in a 2018 interview that “you can take photos no matter how old you get”. “Wherever it is, in your house, outside, or in your bed, you can do it. That is the nice thing about a camera,” she said. Dubbed the “selfie queen” by Japanese media, Nishimoto’s posts showed her in various candid poses. “Our mother always created her work with a smile,” a post from her son Kazutami Nishimoto said on her Instagram account. “We are deeply grateful to everyone who visited her photography exhibitions held across the country, to those who shared warm words of encouragement through Instagram... and to all who supported her warmly throughout her journey.”

Yunus receives ‘Harmony Award 2025’



Britain’s King Charles III talks to chief adviser of Bangladesh’s interim government Muhammad Yunus during the King’s Foundation Awards ceremony, on the 35th anniversary of The King’s Foundation, at St James’s Palace, in London, yesterday. King Charles III yesterday conferred the ‘Harmony Award 2025’ on Yunus, recognising his lifelong efforts to promote peace, sustainability, and harmony between people and the environment.

Disasters loom over S Asia with forecast of hotter, wetter monsoon

AFP
Kathmandu

Communities across Asia’s Himalayan Hindu Kush region face heightened disaster risks this monsoon season with temperatures and rainfall expected to exceed normal levels, experts warned yesterday. Temperatures are expected to be up to two degrees Celsius hotter than average across the region, with forecasts for above-average rains, according to a monsoon outlook released by Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). “Rising temperatures and more extreme rain raise the risk of water-induced disasters such as floods, landslides, and debris flows, and have longer-term impacts on glaciers, snow reserves,

and permafrost,” Arun Bhakta Shrestha, a senior adviser at ICIMOD, said in a statement. The summer monsoon, which brings South Asia 70%-80% of its annual rainfall, is vital for agriculture and therefore for the livelihoods of millions of farmers and for food security in a region that is home to around 2bn people. However, it also brings destruction through landslides and floods every year. Melting glaciers add to the volume of water, while unregulated construction in flood-prone areas exacerbates the damage. “What we have seen over the years are also cascading disasters where, for example, heavy rainfall can lead to landslides, and landslides can actually block rivers. We need to be aware about such possibilities,” Saswata Sanyal, manager of ICIMOD’s Disaster Risk Reduction work, said.

Noise detente on Korean peninsula as eerie broadcasts end

AFP
Seoul

North Korea appears to have stopped broadcasting strange and unsettling noises along the border, Seoul’s military said yesterday, a day after South Korea ceased blaring its own loudspeaker propaganda northwards. The North has been broadcasting a horror movie-esque soundtrack into border areas since last year, as part of an escalating propaganda war between the arch foes. But South Korea’s new President Lee Jae-myung, who took office

last week after his predecessor was impeached over an abortive martial law declaration, ordered the military to stop blasting K-pop and news reports into the North in a bid to “restore trust”. “Today, there was no region where North Korea’s noise broadcasts to the South were heard,” Seoul’s military said in a statement yesterday. “The military is closely monitoring related trends in North Korea.” Relations between the two Koreas have been at one of their lowest points in years, with Seoul taking a hard line towards Pyongyang, which has drawn ever closer to Moscow in the wake of Russia’s in-

vasion of Ukraine. But South Korea’s new president has vowed to improve relations with the North and reduce tensions on the peninsula, halting the loudspeaker broadcasts Seoul had begun last year in response to a barrage of trash-filled balloons flown southward by Pyongyang. The North claimed the balloons – which contained toilet paper and other garbage – were retaliation for similar missives floated northwards by activists in the South, carrying anti-Kim Jong-un propaganda. North Korea resumed its own propaganda broadcasts soon after, sending strange and eerie noises – such as chilling music and what

sounds like bombs exploding – into the South, prompting complaints from border residents. On Ganghwa island, which is close to the North, the strange noises were last heard Wednesday at around 6pm (0900GMT), its county councillor Park Heung-yeol said. “And from 8pm to 9pm yesterday, the North broadcast its propaganda music, instead of the strange noise,” he added. “I slept so well last night. I had not been able to do that for so long,” another Ganghwa resident An Mi-hee said. South Korea’s unification ministry, which oversees contact with the

North, said Pyongyang’s apparent move to end the noise broadcasts “helped relieve the suffering of residents in (South Korea’s) border areas”. It “has become a meaningful opportunity to ease inter-Korean military tensions and restore mutual trust,” a ministry official told reporters on condition of anonymity. Lim Eul-chul, a professor at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies in Seoul, said the moves were “an encouraging development.” “North Korea’s halt of its noise broadcasts sends a positive signal to the South,” he said. “Given the current approach of

the new government, a fragile but meaningful peace is likely to hold – at least for now. There is reason to hope for an improvement in inter-Korean relations,” Lim added. South Korea’s Lee has promised a more dovish approach towards Pyongyang, compared with his predecessor Yoon Suk-yeol. On the campaign trail, Lee accused Yoon of deliberately provoking the North to justify his martial law bid in December – prompting backlash from conservatives. The nuclear-armed North has recently bolstered military ties with Russia, sending at least 14,000 troops to support Moscow’s war in Ukraine.

265 killed in Air India plane crash



Reuters
Ahmedabad, India

Bodies of 265 people were counted when an Air India plane bound for London crashed minutes after taking off from the western city of Ahmedabad yesterday, authorities said, in the world's worst aviation disaster in a decade.

The dead included people on the ground as the aircraft – headed for Gatwick Airport, south of the British capital – crashed on to a medical college hostel during lunch hour.

At least one passenger is known to have survived, police said, and the man told Indian media how he had heard a loud noise shortly after take-off.



People gather near the damaged building at the site of the airplane crash in Ahmedabad yesterday. (AFP)



"The dead include some students as the plane crashed on the building where they were staying," Vidhi Chaudhary, a top state police officer, said.

Ahmedabad police chief G S Malik said the bodies recovered could include both passengers and people killed on the ground. The dead included Vijay Rupani, the former chief minister of Gujarat state, of which Ahmedabad is the main city.

Relatives had been asked to give DNA samples to identify the dead, state health secretary Dhananjay Dwivedi told reporters.

Parts of the plane's body were scattered around the smouldering building into which it crashed. The tail of the plane was stuck on top of the building.

The passengers included 217 adults, 11 children and two infants, a source said. Air India said 169 were Indian nationals, 53 were Britons, seven Portuguese, and one Canadian.

Yesterday's crash occurred just after the plane took off. TV channels showed the plane taking off over a residential area and then disappearing from the screen before a huge fireball could be

seen rising into the sky from beyond the houses.

"My sister-in-law was going to London. Within an hour, I got news that the plane had crashed," Poonam Patel, a relative of one of the passengers, told news agency ANI at the government hospital in Ahmedabad.

Ramila, the mother of a student at the medical college, told ANI her son had gone to the hostel for his lunch break when the plane crashed. "My son is safe, and I have spoken to him. He jumped from the second floor, so he suffered some injuries," she said.

According to air traffic control at Ahmedabad Airport, the aircraft departed at 1.39pm (0809GMT). It gave a Mayday call, signalling an emergency, but thereafter there was no response from the aircraft.

US aerospace safety consultant Anthony Brickhouse said one problematic sign from videos of the aircraft was that the landing gear was down at a phase of flight when it would typically be up.

"If you didn't know what was happening, you would think that plane was on approach to a runway," Brickhouse said.

Aircraft engine-maker GE Aerospace said that it would put a team together to go to India and analyse cockpit data, India's CNBC TV18 reported.

WORLD LEADERS REACT TO CRASH



Indian Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**, on X: "The tragedy in Ahmedabad has stunned and saddened us. It is heartbreaking beyond words.

"In this sad hour, my thoughts are with everyone affected by it. Have been in touch with ministers and authorities who are working to assist those affected."

British Prime Minister **Keir Starmer**, on X: "The scenes emerging of a London-bound plane carrying many British nationals crashing in the Indian city of Ahmedabad are devastating. I am being kept updated as the situation develops, and my thoughts are with the passengers and their families at this deeply distressing time."

Britain's **King Charles**, in a statement on X: "My wife and I have been desperately shocked by the terrible events in Ahmedabad this morning. Our special prayers and deepest possible sympathy are with the families and friends of all those affected by this appallingly tragic incident across so many nations, as they await news of their loved ones."

US Secretary of State **Marco Rubio**, on X: "Heartbroken to hear the news of a tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad, India. My prayers are with all who lost their loved ones in this horrible incident."

Russian President **Vladimir Putin** to Modi, in an official telegram published on Kremlin website: "Please accept my deep condolences on the tragic consequences of the airliner crash at Ahmedabad airport. "Please convey words of sincere sympathy and support to the families and friends of the victims, as well as wishes of a swift recovery to all those injured in this catastrophe."

Pakistan Prime Minister **Shehbaz Sharif**, on X: "Saddened by the tragic crash of Air India flight near Ahmedabad today. We extend our condolences to the families of the victims grieving this immense loss.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with all those affected by this heartbreaking tragedy."

Bangladesh chief adviser **Muhammad Yunus** in a message to Modi: "We extend our deepest condolences to all the families who lost their dear ones at this tragic incident. "We stand in solidarity with the people and government of India, and offer our full support in any form."

Prime Minister of Canada, **Mark Carney**, on X: "Canada is deeply saddened by the crash of a London-bound Air India plane in Ahmedabad with 242 people on board, including one Canadian. "Canadian officials remain in close contact with counterparts in the wake of this tragedy. Our thoughts are with all those affected."

European Commission President **Ursula von der Leyen**, on X: "My deepest condolences to the families and loved ones grieving this terrible loss.

"Dear @narendramod, Europe stands in solidarity with you and the people of India in this moment of sorrow."

Italian Prime Minister **Giorgia Meloni**, on X: "On behalf of the Italian Government and myself, I express my sincere condolences to the families of the victims and our full solidarity with the Indian people in this moment of great sorrow."

Philippine President **Ferdinand Marcos Jr.**, on X: "On behalf of the Filipino people, I extend our most heartfelt condolences to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the government of India, and especially to the families and loved ones of all those who lost their lives."

French President **Emmanuel Macron** on X: "We have learned with deep emotion of the tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad, India. In this time of sorrow, I extend our heartfelt thoughts to the victims' loved ones and to Prime Minister @NarendraModi."

Australian Prime Minister **Anthony Albanese** on X: "The news of a passenger plane crash in Ahmedabad is absolutely devastating. In this time of tragedy, Australia's thoughts are with everyone affected. Our government is receiving regular updates and we will continue to monitor the situation closely."

Crash survivor jumped out of emergency exit: police

Ramesh Viswashkumar, the only known survivor in the plane crash, had been sitting near an emergency exit and managed to jump out, police said. Speaking from his hospital bed, the 40-year-old told Indian media that he was a British national and was travelling to Britain with his brother after visiting family in India.

"When I got up, there were bodies all around me. I was scared. I stood up and ran. There were pieces of the plane all around me. Someone grabbed hold of me and put me in an ambulance and brought me to the hospital," Viswashkumar told the *Hindustan Times*. Social media footage shown on Indian news channels showed a man in a bloodstained white T-shirt and dark pants limping on a street and being helped by a medic. The man had bruises on his face

and a goatee beard, resembling photographs of Viswashkumar in hospital after the crash that were published by local media. Reuters could not immediately verify the video, in which people gathered around the man and asked him where were the other passengers, to which he replied "they're all inside". A photo of Viswashkumar's boarding pass shown online by the *Hindustan Times* showed that he was seated in seat 11A of the plane bound for Gatwick Airport. He told the paper his brother Ajay had been seated in a different row on the plane and asked for help to find him. Ajay Valgi, a cousin of Viswashkumar who lives in Leicester, central England, told the BBC that Viswashkumar spoke by phone to confirm he was



all right. "He only said that he was fine, nothing else," Valgi said. Valgi said the family had not heard anything about his brother. "We're not doing well. We're all upset," he said. Viswashkumar is married with one child, a boy, he added.

More arrests after third night of unrest in N Ireland town

AFP
Ballymena, UK

Riot police were pelted with petrol bombs, masonry and fireworks and nine officers were wounded in the third night of unrest in Northern Ireland, police said yesterday amid simmering anti-immigrant anger.

The three days of clashes in Ballymena erupted on Monday night after two teenagers were arrested for an alleged attempted rape of a young girl at the weekend.

Police have not confirmed the ethnicity of the teenagers, who remain in custody and had asked for a Romanian interpreter in court.

The crowds eventually dispersed late Wednesday without a repeat of the chaotic scenes seen on Monday and Tuesday when houses and businesses were torched and 32 police officers were injured.

But in Larne, around 32kms away, local media reported that masked men on Wednesday torched a leisure centre that was temporarily sheltering people from Ballymena who had been evacuated from their homes.

Police condemned Wednesday night's violence, which included a hatchet being thrown at officers, calling it "completely unacceptable disorder". Six more people were arrested, the Police Service of Northern Ireland said.

"As a result of a significant policing operation calm was restored to all areas at around 1am (0000GMT) yesterday morning," the force added.

Three teenage boys aged 15, 17 and 18 appeared in court yesterday having been charged with rioting.

A total of 41 officers have now been hurt in the three nights of unrest, the PSNI said, though most of the injuries were not severe.

Ministers from every party in the province's power-sharing executive strongly condemned "the racially motivated violence witnessed in recent days", while UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer denounced the "mindless violence".

The UK's Northern Ireland minister Hilary Benn, who visited Ballymena yesterday, said he "utterly condemned the terrible scenes of civil disorder".

Police called the violence "racist thuggery", deployed riot officers with dogs and asked forces in England and Wales for help quelling the unrest.

Assistant chief constable Ryan Henderson said yesterday that "this criminal behaviour has no place on the streets of Northern Ireland and is completely unacceptable".

On the fire in Larne, police said: "Shockingly, people were inside the building at the time of this fire – thankfully no injuries were reported."

Ballymena residents have described "terrifying" scenes in which attackers had targeted "foreigners" over the previous days.

Some people fixed signs to their houses indicating they were Filipino residents, or hung up British flags.

Political commentator Alex Kane, a former Ulster Unionist Party communications chief, said "most of those involved in the rioting... were from the working-class loyalist community" who support Northern Ireland remaining part of the UK.

"This is a demographic which feels left behind" by various political and social forces, he added.

Lennon's love letter bemoaning Paul's snoring goes on sale

A 1962 love letter from John Lennon to his future wife Cynthia, in which he complains about Paul McCartney's snoring, will be sold at Christie's next month, the London auction house said. The 21-year old Lennon wrote the letter over five nights in April 1962, during the Beatles' residency at the Star-Club in Hamburg.

"I love love love you and I'm missing you like mad," wrote the songwriter. The letter is expected to fetch up to £40,000 (\$54,000) when it is sold on July 9.

In it, Lennon mentions close friend and original Beatles' bassist Stuart Sutcliffe, who had died days before, saying he had considered visiting his fiancée Astrid "but I would be so awkward".

He opposed Cynthia's plans to share a house with McCartney's then girlfriend Dot Rhone in Liverpool, saying "we would never be alone really ... imagine having her there all the time – and imagine Paul coming all the time".

He complained about his bandmate's bedtime habits, writing "Paul's leaping about on my head (he's in a bunk on top of me and he's snoring)".

Lennon signed off the letter: "I love you I love you please wait for me and don't be sad and work hard be a clever little Cyn Powell".

Cynthia Powell dated Lennon from 1958 and they married in August 1962, giving birth to their son Julian in April 1963.

They divorced in 1968, and a year later Lennon married Yoko Ono.

India Coast Guard attempts to tow burning cargo ship

Reuters
Kochi

The Indian Coast Guard is attempting to tow a cargo ship that caught fire off the coast of the southern state of Kerala containing hazardous cargo to prevent a potential ecological disaster, India's defence ministry said in a statement.

The Singaporean-container vessel MV Wan Hai 503 is carrying 120,000 metric tonnes of fuel and hundreds of containers, including hazardous cargo, the ministry said.

The vessel, which was bound for India's financial capital Mumbai, met with an accident about 144km off the coast of the southern Indian state of Kerala on Monday, leading to multiple explosions and fires erupting on the ship and causing 40 containers to fall into the Arabian Sea.

Firefighting efforts have significantly reduced visible flames, but the fire remains active in the inner decks and near fuel tanks, the defence ministry said.

"With the fire yet to be fully extinguished, efforts to establish a towline and pull the vessel away from the coast are underway to prevent a potential ecological disaster," the ministry of defence said in the statement.

Photographs released by the coast

guard soon after the blaze broke out showed heavy containers scattered about the vessel, as if hurled up by a powerful explosion. Since then, fire has engulfed the ship.

Eighteen crew members were rescued by the Indian coast guard and navy. Four crew – one from Indonesia, two from Taiwan and one from Myanmar – were listed as missing.

The coast guard said it had "winched five salvage team members" and a diver onto the burning ship.

"With the fire yet to be fully extinguished, efforts to establish a towline and pull the vessel away from the coast are underway to prevent a potential ecological disaster", it said.

"Intensive firefighting efforts... have significantly reduced visible flames", it added.

"However, the fire remains active in the inner decks and near fuel tanks."

Last month, a container vessel sank in another accident off the Kerala coast, releasing 100 cargo containers into the Arabian Sea, and leaving authorities in the state scrambling to contain an oil spill.

That vessel, owned by Cyprus-based MSC Ship management, was carrying 640 containers, including 13 with "hazardous cargo" and 12 with calcium carbide.



US Supreme Court ruling bolsters school disability protections

The US Supreme Court sided yesterday with a severely epileptic girl who is pursuing a disability discrimination lawsuit against a Minnesota public school district in a ruling that bolsters protections for students with disabilities in American schools.

The 9-0 ruling threw out a lower court's decision that the Osseo Area Schools district had not discriminated against student Ava Tharpe in violation of two federal disability rights laws.

Chief Justice John Roberts, who authored the ruling, wrote that the St Louis-based 8th US Circuit Court of Appeals

erred by requiring students to satisfy a heightened legal standard for disability discrimination claims against schools than is typically required in other contexts.

Federal appeals courts had been divided on whether disability discrimination claims arising in school settings require a heightened legal standard, meaning the stricter requirement had applied in some parts of the country but not others.

The Supreme Court ruling harmonises the standard nationally.

Claims brought under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that are "based

on educational services should be subject to the same standards that apply in other disability discrimination contexts", Roberts wrote.

He added that nothing in the relevant text of those laws suggests that "such claims should be subject to a distinct, more demanding analysis".

Roman Martinez, a lawyer for Tharpe, called the ruling "a great win for Ava, and for children with disabilities facing discrimination in schools across the country".

"We are grateful to the Supreme Court for its decision holding that these children should enjoy the same rights and protec-

tions as all other Americans with disabilities," he said, adding that the ruling would "protect the reasonable accommodations needed to ensure equal opportunity for all".

Tharpe suffers from severe epilepsy that prevents her from attending school before noon due to morning seizures but permits her to engage in school work after that until about 6pm.

At issue in the case was whether the legal standard applied by the 8th Circuit in rejecting Tharpe's discrimination claims was overly strict, and if a less stringent standard should have applied.

When Tharpe and her family lived in Kentucky, her public school district tailored an education plan to her disability that included supplemental evening instruction at home, providing her with the same amount of school time as her peers.

In 2015, her family moved to Minnesota, and Tharpe began attending the public schools in the Osseo Area Schools district in the suburbs of Minneapolis.

The district refused to accommodate a request by her parents that she receive evening instruction, leading Tharpe to receive fewer hours of education per day compared to her peers. - **Reuters**

Trump says troops making Los Angeles 'safe'

AFP/Reuters
Los Angeles

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that that Los Angeles is "safe and sound" after he ordered troops into the streets but critics accused him of an authoritarian power grab and a judge was set to review the deployments' legality.

Protests erupted last week in the second biggest US city over aggressive new immigration raids targeting migrants at workplaces, courthouses and gathering places for day labourers seeking work.

Anger at Trump's crackdown and the use of masked, armed immigration agents, backed by uniformed soldiers, is spreading to other cities.

Nationwide protests were planned for tomorrow.

Trump has repeatedly exaggerated the scale of the unrest, which has been largely peaceful, despite isolated clashes, vandalism and burning of cars.

The Republican credited the arrival of troops for ensuring a quiet night in Los Angeles, where the mayor had ordered a nighttime curfew.

Nearly 4,000 National Guard soldiers have been sent to Los Angeles, as well as 700 members of the US Marines - an elite force trained to fight in foreign wars and only very rarely deployed on US soil.

The US Marines will be on the streets of Los Angeles by today, the military said.

"Our great National Guard, with a little help from the Marines, put the LA Police in a position to effectively do their job," Trump said on Truth Social, adding that without the military, the city "would be a crime scene like we haven't seen in years".

A federal judge in San Francisco was set to hear arguments on whether use of the troops is constitutional, with California Governor Gavin Newsom alleging that the president "is creating fear and terror".

Newsom accused Trump of aiming a "wrecking ball" at US democracy and urged Americans "not to give in".

Trump said yesterday that Newsom - seen as a contender for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2028 - had "totally lost control of the situation" and should thank the president for "saving his ass".

Trump was elected last year in part on his promises to expel people who enter the country illegally, then commit serious crimes.

However, his immigration crackdown is far broader, targeting mostly Latin American migrants who may have entered illegally but form the backbone of farming, construction and other manual industries in many parts of the country.

Mexico's president, Claudia Sheinbaum, spoke up yesterday, saying that she had told a visiting US official that "we didn't

agree with the use of raids to detain people working honestly in the United States".

The raids will "not only hurt people but also the US economy", she said.

Trump indicated that he was under pressure, conceding he had heard complaints about labourers being rounded up.

"We're going to have an order on that pretty soon, I think. We can't do that to our farmers - and leisure too, hotels," he said.

In Spokane, in the northwest state of Washington, a nighttime curfew was declared after police arrested more than 30 protesters and fired pepper balls to disperse crowds, officials said.

In Seattle, the state's biggest city, police arrested eight people after a dumpster was set on fire and projectiles were thrown.

Three people were arrested in Tucson, Arizona, following clashes with police, the *Arizona Republic* reported.

Protests also took place in Las Vegas, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, Milwaukee, Chicago, Atlanta, and Boston, according to CNN.

A nationwide "No Kings" movement was expected tomorrow, when Trump will attend a highly unusual military parade in the US capital.

The Washington, DC parade, featuring warplanes and tanks, has been organised to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the US Army but also happens to be the day of Trump's 79th birthday.

Tomorrow Americans likely will see



Officers detain a protester near City Hall as demonstrations in Los Angeles continue after a series of immigration raids began last Friday. - **AFP**

split-screen images of US troops on the streets of two major cities: Los Angeles, where troops are guarding federal buildings, and Washington where soldiers, accompanied by tanks and other armoured vehicles, will rumble down Constitution Avenue.

Nearly 2,000 protests against the parade are planned around the country in one of the biggest demonstrations against Trump since he returned to power in January.

The Los Angeles protests began last Friday in response to a series of immigration raids in the city.

US senator removed from Trump official's press conference

Reuters/AFP
Washington

Democratic US Senator Alex Padilla was shoved out of a room, forced to the ground and handcuffed by security after attempting to ask a question at a press conference yesterday by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem.

"I am Senator Alex Padilla, I have questions for the secretary," he said during the press conference where Noem was discussing protests in Los Angeles over President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown.

"Hands off," Padilla said before he was ushered out of the room.

He is one of two Democratic senators representing California in the upper chamber of Congress.

Padilla said in a statement that he was forced to the ground and handcuffed by security.

A video posted online showed three agents pushing Padilla to the ground and handcuffing his hands behind his back.



Padilla is detained and removed from the venue after interrupting the press conference held by US Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem and others in Los Angeles. - **Reuters**

Reuters was not immediately able to confirm the authenticity of the video.

Lawmakers from both parties were quick to

criticise the move against Padilla.

"Senator Padilla is a big, tall guy, and to see how he was handled out of that room is wrong and sick," Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski told reporters at the Capitol.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer blasted the incident in a speech on the Senate floor.

"I just saw something that sickened my stomach - the manhandling of a United States senator," Schumer said. "We need immediate answers to what the hell went on."

California Governor Gavin Newsom said Padilla "is one of the most decent people I know".

"This is outrageous, dictatorial and shameful. Trump and his shock troops are out of control. This must end now," he wrote on social media.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass called the episode "absolutely abhorrent and outrageous".

"He is a sitting United States Senator. This administration's violent attacks on our city must end."



US Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem departs after holding a news conference at the Wilshire Federal Building in Los Angeles. - **AFP**

Health chief names new vaccine panel

AFP/Reuters
Washington

US Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr has appointed a new vaccine advisory group to replace the one he dismissed earlier in the week, including on the new panel a biochemist who warned against coronavirus (Covid-19) jabs.

Kennedy, President Donald Trump's point man on health who is an admitted vaccine sceptic, sacked all 17 experts of the advisory panel to the main US health agency on Monday, accusing them of having conflicts of interest with pharmaceutical companies.

The unprecedented move has been slammed by the Democratic opposition, not to mention health experts who warned of an attack on medical expertise.

Kennedy announced on Wednesday that he had appointed eight new members to the Advisory Committee on Immunisation Practices (ACIP).

"The slate includes highly credentialed scientists, leading public health experts, and some of America's most accomplished physicians," he said, posting brief biographies of the committee members.

"All of these individuals are committed to evidence-based medicine, gold-standard science, and common sense," he added, assuring they are "committed to demanding definitive safety and efficacy data before making any new vaccine recommendations".

Among the experts listed are a paediatric infectious disease specialist who previously served as an adviser to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and a biostatistician who publicly opposed lockdown measures promoted by public authorities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Also included is biochemist Robert Malone, popular among anti-vaccine advocates, whose research in the 1980s contributed to the development of messenger RNA vaccines.

However, he made a name for himself during the pandemic by relaying alarmist and unsubstantiated claims about the shots.

The new ACIP comes as Kennedy steps up his efforts to reshape the country's vaccination policies.

In recent years, Kennedy has spread numerous conspiracies about Covid vaccines and alleged links between vaccinations and autism, notably through the Children's Health Defence organisation he co-founded.

He has suggested that Covid is a virus that was "ethnically targeted" to spare Ashkenazi Jews and Chinese people.

Kennedy said on X that the new panel would attend the committee's June 25 meeting.

Advisers had been expected to deliberate and vote on who should receive a number of vaccines, including the flu shot and 2025-26 Covid-19 vaccine boosters, and the meeting had been slated for June 25-27.

No agenda has been published yet.

Trump blocks EV programme

US President Donald Trump signed yesterday resolutions blocking California's efforts to phase out gas-powered cars in favour of electric vehicles (EVs), a move the state immediately contested in court. California had planned to end the sale of gasoline-only vehicles by 2035.

International Space Station leaks trigger delay to private mission

Nasa has indefinitely delayed a four-person crew's mission to the International Space Station (ISS) over an escalating probe into air leaks aboard the orbiting laboratory's Russian segment.

The US space agency said it was working with Roscosmos, Russia's space agency, to "understand a new pressure signature" detected by cosmonauts in the Zvezda Service Module, a more than two-decade-old core compartment that for months has sprung small leaks.

"Cosmonauts aboard the space station recently performed inspections of the pressurised module's interior surfaces, sealed some additional areas of interest, and measured the current leak rate," the Na-

tional Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) said in a statement. "Following this effort, the segment now is holding pressure."

The agency did not immediately respond to questions on what the leak rate was.

Small cracks on the ISS in recent years, particularly on the ageing Russian segment, have contributed to the international partnership's decision to retire the ISS by 2030.

Leaks of air from the cracks have been minor and posed no immediate safety threats to the station's astronauts but are increasingly worrisome signs of ageing that Nasa and Roscosmos have been investigating, while having crew members patch the leaks with tape, glue and other solutions. - **Reuters**

Spanish premier says he knew ‘nothing’ about corruption case

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (pictured) said yesterday that he knew “absolutely nothing” about the corruption case that prompted a top official in his Socialist Party to resign, and rejected calls for his resignation over the affair.

The case adds to mounting legal and political pressure on Sanchez, one of Europe’s longest serving socialist leaders whose inner circle faces several ongoing investigations.

Santos Cerdan, the party’s organisation secretary and its third-highest ranked figure, is suspected of being an accomplice in the alleged improper awarding of public contracts, according to a newly published judicial report.

Cerdan, a member of parliament, stepped down from all his positions “to defend” the government and the party, adding in a statement that he “never committed any illegal act”.

Shortly afterwards, Sanchez told a news conference he knew “absolutely nothing” about the corruption accusations against his longtime associate, having learned about them in the press earlier in the day.

“We never should have trusted him,” the premier said, adding that he had demanded that Cerdan step down.

A judge said that a police report “reveals the existence of consistent evidence” suggesting that Cerdan acted in collusion with former transport minister Jose Luis Abalos and the latter’s former adviser, Koldo Garcia Izaguirre, in exchange for financial gain.

Cerdan’s position became untenable after excerpts of recordings were published yesterday in the press, reportedly capturing conversations with Abalos and Garcia.

In the recordings, the three men appear to discuss secret commission payments by companies in exchange for public contracts.

Cerdan has been invited to testify voluntarily before the Supreme Court on June 25.

Lawmakers from the main opposition Popular Party (PP) greet-



ed Cerdan in parliament with chants of “resignation”.

“If anyone had doubts that there was a mafia-like network behind the ruling party and the government, I suppose those doubts have now been dispelled,” PP leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo told reporters, while calling for Sanchez to resign.

“This is unacceptable in a European Union country. A European prime minister wouldn’t last 10 minutes after the revelations we’ve seen in recent weeks,” he added.

Feijoo branded Sanchez’s explanations as “insufficient” and “disappointing”, and called on the Socialist Party’s coalition partners, including the far-left Sumar, to force Sanchez into resigning.

“They need to decide if they want to continue being complicit,” he said in a press conference yesterday evening.

Sanchez has ruled out calling early elections, saying that the case “does not affect the government of Spain, only the party”.

“I have always worked for clean politics and a clean contest,” he said. “It causes me enormous indignation and huge sadness that an entire political project in which millions of people trust could be affected by the conduct of a few.”

Tens of thousands of people took part in a protest on Sunday in Madrid called by the PP against Sanchez’s government.

Abalos, who served as transport minister from 2018 to 2021 and was once a key figure in Sanchez’s administration, is accused of receiv-

ing illegal commissions through business contracts.

He faces charges of corruption, influence peddling and embezzlement.

Abalos was dismissed from Sanchez’s cabinet in 2021 and expelled from the Socialist Party earlier this year, but remains a member of parliament as an independent.

His parliamentary immunity was lifted in January.

During a court hearing in December, he denied receiving any kickbacks and maintained that there were no irregularities.

Sanchez’s wife, Begona Gomez, and his brother, David Sanchez, are also the targets of separate investigations for graft.

And Spain’s top prosecutor, Alvaro Garcia Ortiz, who was appointed by Sanchez’s government, is facing a possible trial over suspicions he leaked secret case files concerning the partner of Isabel Diaz Ayuso, the powerful conservative leader of the Madrid region.

The Spanish prime minister has dismissed the probes against members of his inner circle as part of a “smear campaign” carried out by the right wing to undermine his government.

Sanchez came to power in June 2018 after ousting his predecessor, Mariano Rajoy, in a no-confidence vote over corruption scandals involving the PP.

Most recent opinion polls show the PP holding a slim lead over the Socialists. – **AFP/Reuters**

European Space Agency looks to non-US partners

The European Space Agency (ESA) said yesterday that it is looking to bolster alliances with countries other than the United States as it adapts to looming cuts at key partner Nasa.

The ESA needs to grow “its resilience and autonomy, for its own good”, ESA chief Josef Aschbacher, told journalists.

That requires bolstering links with other partners, he said, citing Canada, India and Japan.

The announcement, made after a meeting of the ESA’s board, came as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) faces drastic budget cuts under US President Donald Trump’s administration.

The cost-cutting measures, which have to be approved by US lawmakers later this year, would hit Nasa projects involving the ESA.

Those include the development of an Orion moon capsule, building a Gateway space station orbiting the moon, and the return to Earth of Mars rock samples. – **AFP**

Ukraine, Russia exchange more wounded, ill prisoners of war

Reuters/AFP
Kyiv/Moscow

Ukraine and Russia exchanged another group of ill and severely wounded servicemen yesterday, officials from both countries said.

All of the Ukrainian troops need treatment, Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a message on the Telegram messaging app that did not go into details on the numbers involved.

“Today, warriors of our Armed Forces, National Guard, and Border Guard Service are back home,” Zelensky said.

“We continue working to bring everyone home from Russian captivity. We thank everyone who helps make these exchanges possible – so that each and every one of them can be home, in Ukraine,” he said.

He published pictures of the Ukrainian servicemen, all with freshly shaved heads – draped in national flags.

Norway cops soon able to go out with guns

Norwegian police officers, who up to now have generally been unarmed on daily duties, will in future be able to go out with firearms after a law change passed yesterday.

Lawmakers backed a proposal from the minority Labour government to allow the widespread arming of police.

It will be up to police chiefs to set the terms and extent of arming officers, depending on location, timing and assignment.

No exact date has been set for the law to come into effect but the country’s justice ministry, which is in charge of internal security, is targeting sometime next year.

“Everyone in Norway must feel safe. The police must be able to deal with constantly evolving crime,” Justice Minister Astrid Aas-Hansen said last month when the proposed law change was unveiled.



Family and friends hang photographs of their relatives on a wall during a prisoner of war exchange at an undisclosed location in Ukraine. – **AFP**

The oldest Ukrainian soldier freed on Thursday was 59, with the youngest 22, and they include some who were believed to be “missing in action”, Ukrainian ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets said.

Kyiv and Moscow agreed to a large exchange of prisoners of war (PoWs) and the remains of thousands of dead soldiers during talks in Istanbul earlier this month.

Since then, Russia and Ukraine have

More than 120mn forcibly displaced worldwide : UN

AFP
Geneva

The number of people forcibly displaced from their homes worldwide has dropped slightly from a record peak but remains “untenably high”, the United Nations said yesterday.

A record 123.2mn people worldwide were forcibly displaced from their homes at the end of 2024, said UNHCR, the UN refugee agency.

However, that figure dropped to 122.1mn by the end of April this year, as Syrians began returning home after years of turmoil.

More than 1.5mn Syrians have been able to return home from abroad or from displacement within the war-ravaged country.

However, the UNHCR warned that the course of major conflicts worldwide would determine whether the figure would rise again.

The agency said the number of people displaced by war, violence and persecution worldwide was “untenably high”, particularly in a period when humanitarian funding is evaporating.

“We are living in a time of intense volatility in international relations, with modern warfare creating a fragile, harrowing landscape marked by acute human suffering,” said Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. “We must redouble our efforts to search for peace and find long-lasting solutions for refugees and others forced to flee their homes.”

The main drivers of displacement remain sprawling conflicts like those in Sudan, Myanmar and Ukraine, the UNHCR said in its flagship annual *Global Trends Report*.

Syria’s brutal civil war erupted in 2011 but ruler Bashar al-Assad was finally overthrown in December 2024.

The report said rising numbers of Syrians have since been able to return to their homes.

As of mid-May, more than 500,000 Syrians are estimated to have crossed back into the country since the fall of Assad, while an estimated 1.2mn internally displaced people (IDPs) have returned to their areas of origin since the end of November.

The UNHCR estimates that up to 1.5mn Syrians from abroad and 2mn IDPs may return by the end of 2025.

Sudan is now the world’s largest forced displacement situation with 14.3mn refugees and IDPs, overtaking Syria (13.5mn), which is followed by Afghanistan (10.3mn) and Ukraine (8.8mn).

“During the remainder of 2025, much will depend on the dynamics in key situations,” the annual report said, including whether peace or ceasefires can be reached in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), Sudan and Ukraine.

It also depends on whether conditions for returns improve in Afghanistan and Syria.

Another factor was “how dire the impact of the current funding cuts will be”.

The United States was by far the UNHCR’s biggest donor but has dramatically scaled back its overseas aid, while other countries are tightening their budgets.

“The failure to protect civilians is astounding,” said Norwegian Refugee Council chief Jan Egeland. “Despite the immense suffering of displaced people, we are now seeing many countries turn inwards, making drastic cuts to humanitarian funding.”

The number of people forced to flee persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations and

Haiti risks ‘humanitarian collapse’, says Red Cross

Haiti risks a “humanitarian collapse” amid surging violence involving gangs and vigilante groups, the country’s senior official with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said yesterday.

Nearly all of the capital Port-au-Prince is “under the control of the armed groups”, said Marisela Silva Chau, the ICRC head of delegation in Haiti told reporters.

“If this escalates, then the population will not have really a space and any place to go,” she said, on the margins of a Red Cross meeting in the organisation’s home city, Geneva. “We are deeply concerned, because the situation is reaching a point where we may see... a humanitarian collapse.”

The poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, Haiti faces severe political instability, and swathes of the country are under the control of rival armed gangs who carry out murders, rapes and kidnappings.

The country is run by a transitional government but has experienced a fresh surge of violence since February, with gangs pressing into previously safe areas.

“We have 6mn people – half of the population – in need of urgent aid,” while only 40% of health facilities are functional, said Silva Chau.

The formation of self-defence groups could lead to the “free availability of weaponry amongst the population”, which would then see them actively engaged in armed confrontations.

If the space for humanitarian actors shrinks and the network collapses, then for people there may not be “any available means for them to survive”, she said.

Gangs control 85% of Port-au-Prince, according to the United Nations, and have stepped up attacks on areas not yet under their control.

A record number of people – almost 1.3mn – have been internally displaced in Haiti due to violence, the UN said on Wednesday.

The current violence has continued despite the deployment of an international security force led by Kenya that is supposed to help the overwhelmed and outgunned Haitian police. – **AFP**

events seriously disturbing public order has almost doubled in the last decade.

The figure of 123.2mn worldwide at the end of last year was up 7mn compared to the end of 2023.

“One in 67 people globally were forcibly displaced at the end of 2024,” the UNHCR said.

In total, 9.8mn forcibly displaced people returned home in 2024, including 1.6mn refugees – the most for more than two decades – and 8.2mn IDPs – the second highest ever.

“We have seen some rays of hope over the last six months,” said Grandi.

However, countries such as the DR Congo, Myanmar and South Sudan saw significant new forced displacements as well as returns.

Two-thirds of refugees stay in neighbouring countries.

Iran (3.5mn), Türkiye (2.9mn), Colombia (2.8mn), Germany (2.7mn) and Uganda (1.8mn) host the largest refugee populations.

swapped dozens of prisoners of war, focusing on under-25s and the severely wounded and sick.

There are hopes they could build into some of the biggest exchanges in the war that was triggered by Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Russia’s defence ministry said a group of Russian troops had returned from Ukraine and crossed into neighbouring Belarus, in accordance with the agreements made on June 2.

“They are being provided with the necessary psychological and medical assistance,” the ministry said on Telegram.

Russian state media showed Moscow’s troops in camouflage chanting “Russia, Russia” with national flags around their shoulders.

On Wednesday, Ukraine said it had brought home the bodies of 1,212 bodies of troops killed in the war with Russia.

Kremlin aide Vladimir Medinsky said Ukraine had returned the bodies of 27 Russian soldiers.

Passengers offloaded due to dirty train

German rail passengers are no strangers to late or cancelled trains, but this week people aboard one intercity service were stunned to hear a new reason for why their journey came to a sudden halt: the train was deemed too dirty.

About an hour into a trip from Munich bound for Hamburg, passengers were told over the loudspeaker that their train would have to terminate in the city of Nuremberg.

“We apologise, but we as train crew need to make a statement. This train is too dirty for us to travel any further,” said the announcement, which was first reported in the Munich newspaper *Muenchner Merkur*.

Recounting the cut-short trip on Tuesday on LinkedIn, passenger Tom Junkersdorf posted pictures of a seemingly clean train carriage and said one passenger had asked if the announcement was a practical joke.

Confirming the incident, a spokesman for Germany’s Deutsche Bahn, the state railway company, told AFP that it apologised to passengers affected and put on alternative travel within an hour of them being thrown off.

“The train was accidentally put into service without being cleaned. This is an isolated incident which we deeply regret,” the spokesman said.

“We are investigating internally to see what went wrong and prevent such mistakes in the future.”

Long derided in Germany, Deutsche Bahn made headlines abroad during last year’s European Football Championships after fans and even players arrived at destinations hours later than planned.

After the tournament, then-transport minister Volker Wissing said that Deutsche Bahn had “overstretched itself”. – **AFP**

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GULF TIMES

Shaken by crises, Switzerland fetters UBS global dream

Switzerland has announced reforms to make its biggest bank UBS safer and avoid another crisis, hampering the global ambitions of a lender whose financial weight eclipses the country's economy. UBS emerged as Switzerland's sole global bank more than two years ago after the government hastily arranged its rescue of scandal-hit Credit Suisse to prevent a disorderly collapse. The demise of Credit Suisse, one of the world's biggest banks, rattled global markets and blindsided officials and regulators, whose struggle to steer the lender as it lurched from one scandal to the next underscored their weakness. On Friday, speaking from the same podium where she had announced the Credit Suisse rescue in 2023 as finance minister, Switzerland's president Karin Keller-Sutter delivered a firm message. The country would not be wrongfooted again. "I don't believe that the competitiveness will be impaired, but it is true that growth abroad will become more expensive," Keller-Sutter said of UBS. "We've had two crises. 2008 and 2023," she said. "If you see something that is broken, you have to fix it." During the global financial crisis of 2008, UBS was hit by a losses in subprime debt, as a disastrous expansion into riskier investment banking forced it to write down tens of billions of dollars and ultimately turn to the state for help.

During the global financial crisis of 2008, UBS was hit by losses in subprime debt

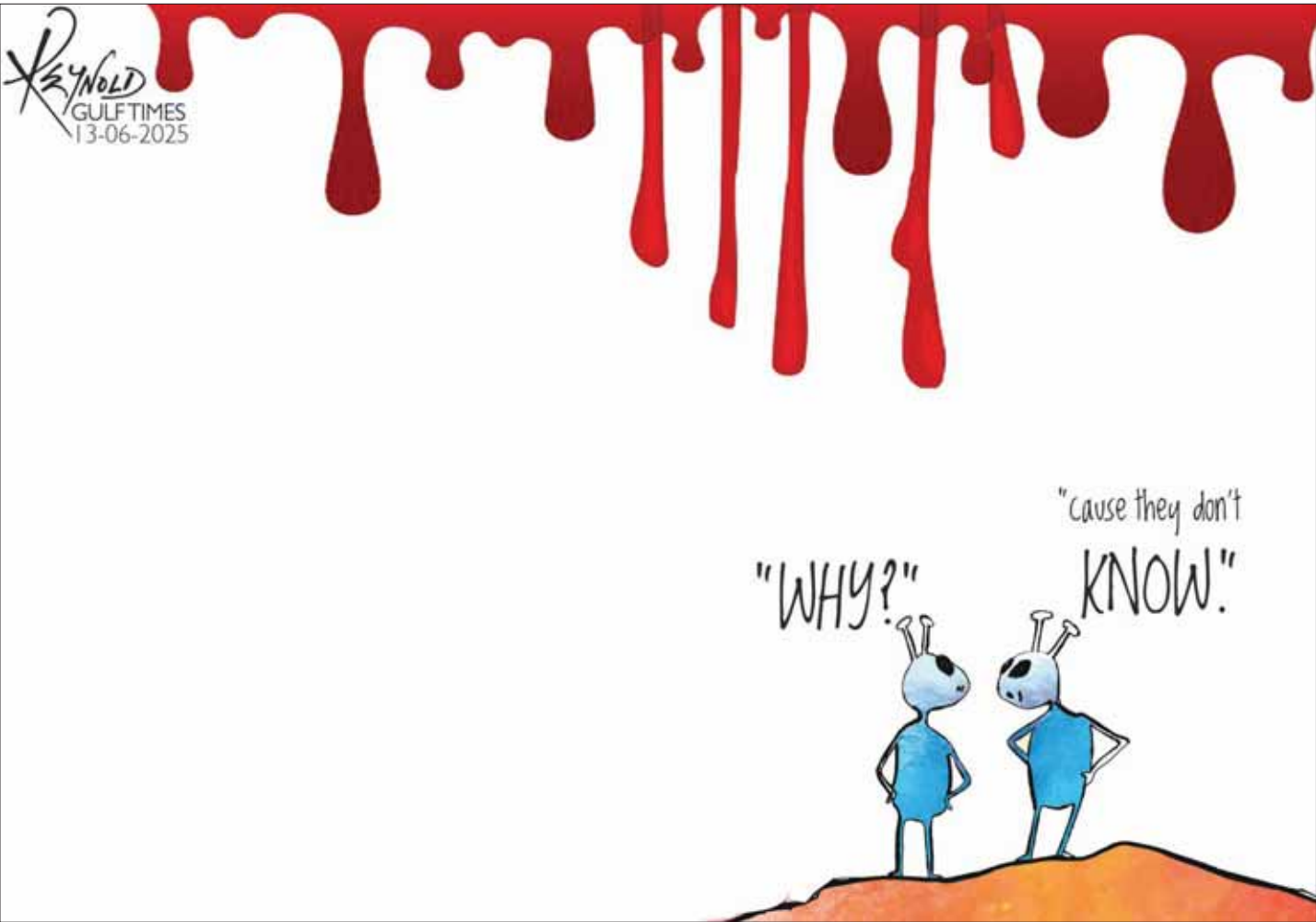
"The bank, its owners or the state?" The rules the government proposed demand that UBS in Switzerland holds more capital to cover risks in its foreign operations. That move, one of the most important steps taken by the Swiss in a series of otherwise piecemeal measures, will make UBS's businesses abroad more expensive to run for one of the globe's largest banks for millionaires and billionaires. Following publication of the reform plans, UBS Chairman Colm Kelleher and CEO Sergio Ermotti said in an internal memo that if fully implemented, they would undermine the bank's "global competitive footprint" and hurt the Swiss economy. The reform would require UBS to hold as much as \$26bn in extra capital. Some believe the demands may alter the bank's course. "It could be that UBS has to change its strategy of growth in the United States and Asia," said Andreas Venditti, an analyst at Vontobel. "It's not just growing. It makes the existing business more expensive. It is an incentive to get smaller and this will most likely happen." Credit Suisse's demise exploded the myth of invincibility of one of the wealthiest countries in the world, home to a global reserve currency, and proved as unworkable a central reform of the financial crisis to prevent state bailouts. For many in Switzerland, the government's reforms are long overdue. "The bank is bigger than the entire Swiss economy. It makes sense that it should not grow even bigger," said Andreas Missbach of Alliance Sud, a group that campaigns for transparency. "It is good that the government did not give in to lobbying by UBS. The question is whether it is enough. We have a banking crisis roughly every 12 years. So I'm not really put at ease." UBS CEO Ermotti had lobbied against the reforms, arguing that a heavy capital burden would put the bank on the back foot with rivals. The world's second-largest wealth manager after Morgan Stanley is dwarfed by its US peer. Morgan Stanley shares value the firm at twice its book value, compared with UBS's 20% premium to book. Last Friday, the bank reiterated this message, saying that it strongly disagreed with the "extreme" increase in capital. But others are sceptical that the government has done enough. Hans Gersbach, a professor at ETH Zurich, said there was still no proper plan to cope should UBS run into trouble. "The credibility of the too big to fail regime remains in question." — Reuters

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Trump's WHO withdrawal could cost the US dearly

By Gordon Brown
Edinburgh

While the Covid-19 pandemic is firmly in the past for many Americans, US households continue to bear the costs of infectious-disease outbreaks. A few months ago, the price of eggs in the United States soared to a record high, largely owing to the spread of H5N1 bird flu. Since March 2024, the virus has ravaged US chicken farms, leading to tens of millions of poultry deaths from infection or culling. More ominously, at least 70 human cases of bird flu have been identified in the US, with one death reported in Louisiana. In a recent report about enhancing the response to H5N1 in America and globally, the Global Virus Network, a consortium of the world's top virologists, warned of "the terrible consequences of underreacting to current threats." But while bird flu poses the most immediate risk to Americans, it is by no means the only one. Virulent infectious-disease outbreaks in other countries, such as mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ebola in Uganda, Marburg in Tanzania, and multi-country outbreaks of cholera, do not respect borders, and thus are a threat to people everywhere — including in the US. Without the efforts of the World Health Organisation to contain these outbreaks, the risks of wider transmission would be much greater. This underscores the need for a global agency like the WHO to supervise cross-border co-operation — and the shortsightedness of President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw the US from the organisation. Despite being the world's richest and most powerful country, America is not immune to another Covid-

style calamity, and abandoning multilateralism and neglecting pandemic preparedness (such as the stockpiling of treatments and vaccines) will make it all the more vulnerable. One might think that the deadly spread of Covid-19, prolonged by the emergence of new virus strains, would convince policymakers to strengthen the world's public-health architecture — especially as experts warn that future pandemics could be even worse. But with other leaders indicating that they may follow Trump's example and leave the WHO, the resources for pandemic prevention and control could dwindle to the point that global outbreaks become more frequent and difficult to overcome. If Trump follows through with the move, his administration will become increasingly isolated and impotent. American officials, including at US military installations abroad, will lose access to the WHO-led and -facilitated global networks that collect and share information about infectious-disease threats and respond to outbreaks. Moreover, the US government will have no say in developing new solutions (which will almost invariably be less effective) for controlling the spread of diseases across borders — including its own. Trump has suggested that he may change his mind, presumably if the grievances set out in his executive order to withdraw the US from the organisation are addressed. This implies that the WHO should apply pressure on China to identify the pandemic's origins. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, for his part, has refused to accept the Chinese government's prevarications. If Trump can propose a way to determine the cause of Covid-19, I am sure that the WHO's leadership would gladly hear it. Trump's second condition

is that the WHO undertake reforms and use its resources more effectively at the local level, with a greater focus on stopping the spread of infectious diseases. This is a demand that can and should be met. To that end, Tedros has already promised more targeted use of funds and implemented other measures to transform the organisation. In addition, under Tedros, the WHO has transformed the way it raises funds. Its member states have sharply increased their annual contributions, and it has diversified its donor base to share the funding load more widely. This is all part of the WHO's drive to be more sustainably financed, a plan launched as part of Tedros's effort to transform the organisation's operations after he took office in 2017. Back then, he and member states assessed that the departure of a major donor could leave the WHO's programmes and independence vulnerable to funding shocks. Who knew it would be the US. But, had those changes not been made, we can only imagine how much more challenging the WHO's current financial situation would be. The Trump administration should welcome these changes, not least because it benefits from having a seat at the table. If the US ultimately abandons the WHO, developing evidence-based guidance and regulations for chronic-disease prevention and management will be significantly harder, undermining the administration's goal of addressing America's chronic-disease epidemic. The US will also no longer be a part of the WHO's medicine prequalification process, a programme that opens a host of new markets for drug producers in a cost-effective manner. Instead, US pharmaceutical companies will be forced to sell their prequalified products to each country individually, putting

them at risk of losing access to highly profitable multibillion dollar markets. Twenty-first-century trends — including more mobility and international travel, greater urbanisation, and increasing human encroachment on nature — fuel the global spread of infectious diseases, to the detriment of everyone. US officials would be better positioned to protect their citizens if they joined — and perhaps even led — a discussion on how the WHO and other global health organisations, such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, can meet the world's needs. One such initiative, in which the US had been a strong partner until Trump took office, was to negotiate a WHO Pandemic Agreement, which WHO member states adopted by consensus at the World Health Assembly on May 20. This historic compact, based on the principles of equity, collaboration, and the reaffirmation of national sovereignty in public-health decision-making, will make the world safer from future pandemics. The US, bolstered by its world-class medical professionals and substantial public investment in medical research, has long exerted considerable influence on global health priorities. But withdrawing from the WHO places America on the outside, unable to shape the agency's policy agenda and reforms. When the next pandemic strikes, the US will be left watching from the sidelines, as the WHO and its remaining member countries manage the global response and pick up the pieces as they see fit. — Project Syndicate

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In a hyperconnected world, abandoning the WHO won't insulate the US from future pandemics — it will only leave America isolated and unprepared as the next global health crisis unfolds.



Contemplation and consideration: qualities of the virtuous

Deliberation most certainly leads to knowledge, which, in turn, results in action. Hence, if people ponder the magnificence of Allah The Almighty, they will surely refrain from His disobedience. Moreover, contemplation is a mirror that reflects one's good and evil deeds. It is one of the best acts of worship, for not only does it bring about wisdom, it endows the heart with life and instills the fear of Allah The Almighty in it.

That is why Abu Sulaymaan Ad-Daarani, may Allah have mercy upon him, would say, "When I go out and see anything, I notice the blessing of Allah in it and take a lesson from it." Similarly, when the wife of Abu Ad-Dardaa, may Allah be pleased with them, was asked about her husband's best act of worship, she replied, "Contemplation and consideration."

It was also reported that Muhammad ibn Ka'b al-Qarathi, may Allah have mercy upon him, said, "I would rather read [only] the chapters Az-Zalzalah (The Earthquake) and Al-Qaari'ah (The Sudden Calamity) all night long and ponder on their meaning, than recite the Qur'an quickly without reflection."

Taawoos, may Allah have mercy upon him, narrates, "The disciples said to 'Eesa (Jesus), may Allah exalt his mention, 'O soul of Allah! Is there anyone on earth like you today?' He replied, 'Yes; he whose utterances comprise the remembrance of Allah, silence is meditation and gazes are introspective, is like me.'" Therefore, one should contemplate the blessings of Allah The Almighty and all things, and must only avoid questioning His entity, for, as He Says (what means): {There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the Hearing, the Seeing.} [Qur'an 42:11]

There are many verses that refer to deliberation, reflection, meditation and consideration in the Noble Qur'an; Allah The Almighty Says (what means):

{Thus Allah makes clear to you the verses [of revelation] that you might give thought.} [Qur'an 2:219]

{Say, 'Is the blind equivalent to the seeing? Then will you not give thought?'" } [Qur'an 6:50]

{Do they not contemplate within themselves? Allah has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth and for a specified term. And indeed, many of the people, in [the matter of] the meeting with their Lord, are disbelievers.} [Qur'an 30:8]

It is related that 'Ataa', may Allah be pleased with him, said: "Once, I went with 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr to 'Aa'ishah, may Allah be pleased with them, who said to him: 'It is about time you visited us.' He, may Allah be pleased with him, replied, 'I repeat the wise saying that goes - visit people once in a while, so that they would love you more.' She said, 'Let go of this nonsense.' Ibn 'Umayr, may Allah be pleased with him, then asked, 'Please tell us about the most remarkable thing that you saw the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, do.' She paused for a moment, then responded, 'One night, the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said to me, 'O 'Aa'ishah! Let me worship my Lord tonight.' I told



him, "By Allah, I love being close to you and I love what pleases you." He, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, then performed ablution and started praying. He started weeping until his lap was soaked. Then, he started weeping until his beard became wet; and [he continued so] until the ground became damp. Bilaal, may Allah be pleased with him, then came to perform the Athaan (call to prayer) and found the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, weeping, so he asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, why are you in tears when Allah has forgiven what has preceded of your sins and what will follow?' He, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, answered, 'Should I not be a grateful slave? Indeed, a verse was revealed to me tonight; woe to the one who recites it and does not ponder its meaning. [The verse is:] {Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding.} [Qur'an 3:190]"

On another occasion, Huthayfah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrates: "Once, I prayed with the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam; he started reciting the chapter of Al-Baqarah (The Cow). I thought that he would bow after one hundred verses, but he went on. Then, I assumed he would recite the whole chapter in one standing, but he then read the chapter An-Nisaa' (The Women), finished it and continued reciting the chapter Aal-'Imraan (The Family of 'Imraan). Whenever he would come across a verse of Allah's praise, he used to glorify Him; and if he would happen upon a verse mentioning good things, he would pray to Allah for them. Also, if he would read a verse that mentions bad things [like Hell], he would seek refuge from them in Him. When he finally bowed and uttered, 'Subhaana Rabbi Al-'Atheem (Glory be to my Lord, The Great)' and his bowing was almost equivalent in length to his standing. After that, he said, 'Sami' Allahu liman hamidah (Allah hears the one who praises Him)'. Then, he stood for a lengthy period and prostrated for a similar amount

of time, saying: 'Subhaana Rabbi Al-'Ala (Glory be to my Lord, The Most High).'" [Muslim]

Likewise, 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'ood, may Allah be pleased with him, relates: "The Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said to me, 'Recite the Qur'an for me.' I replied, 'O Messenger of Allah, how could I read it to you when it was revealed to you?' He said, 'I like to listen to it being recited by others.' I read out the chapter An-Nisaa'; when I reached the verse [which means]: {So how [will it be] when We bring from every nation a witness and we bring you, [O Muhammad] against these [people] as a witness?} [Qur'an 4:41], I lifted my head, or a man beside me nudged me so I looked up, and saw the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, in tears." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim] Many other reports from the Sunnah confirm this quality and all of them prove the Prophet's, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, constant contemplation and consideration.

He, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, would also remind us that a person who reflects and "remembers Allah in seclusion and his eyes flood with tears" is among the seven types of people, whom Allah The Almighty will shelter in His shade on the Day of Judgment, when there will be no other shade. [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Others from our righteous predecessors would similarly advise us; Al-Hasan, may Allah have mercy upon him, said, "Deliberation for one hour is better than praying all night long." It is also told that the wise man Luqmaan, may Allah have mercy upon him, would habitually sit in solitude; his slave would ask him about that, telling him that it would be better for him to remain in the company of people. But he, may Allah have mercy upon him, used to tell him that staying alone for long periods of time is better for contemplation and that deep reflection leads to Paradise.

It was also narrated that 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz, may Allah have mercy upon him, once wept when he was

among his friends; when questioned about his behavior, he replied, "I thought of life and its pleasures and desires; I learnt from it that all its desires are eventually followed by what is bitter. Verily, these realities should be warnings for those who are heedful."

Moreover, the most beneficial thoughts are those that pertain to the Hereafter and the favors of Allah The Almighty, His blessings, ordinances, prohibitions and means of true knowledge of Him, His names and attributes. Indeed, such thoughts instill in an individual love of Allah The Almighty and knowledge of Him and His religion. That is because when one ponders the next life, its honor and perpetuity, and this life and its meanness and transience, he or she would aspire to the Hereafter and forsake this world. Moreover, when one contemplates this ephemeral existence and the impossibility of a longer lifespan, he or she would become more serious and endeavor to make the optimum use of his or her time.

On the other hand, thinking of only this world and other nonsense is the door to all kinds of evil. That would include concerning oneself with notions about what we have not been ordered to ruminate over, such as the essence of Allah The Almighty and matters that surpass human intellect. As for one who is mean in his or her thoughts, he or she will display the same narrow-mindedness in all affairs.

Therefore, Mugheeth Al-Aswad, may Allah have mercy upon him, would instruct: "Visit the graves every day so they would remind you [of death]. Imagine the situation with your hearts [and minds], looking at both groups when they are led either to Paradise or Hell. Let your souls and bodies not forget [the latter] and its maces of iron." Another factor that stimulates contemplation is fasting, which is why it was said: "When the stomach is full, thinking becomes dormant, wisdom shuts down and the organs stop performing acts of worship."

A person should think of his first priority and primary motive of a deed; if it is for Allah The Almighty, he or she should proceed, but if it is for someone or something else, he or she should stop. Indeed, deliberation is good in all matters, except what affects one's Hereafter. Ash-Shaafi'i, may Allah have mercy upon him, said, "Think before you decide and contemplate before you take a step forward." Ibn Mas'ood, may Allah be pleased with him, would also advise his friends: "In your time, the best among you is the one who hastens toward good deeds; however, there will be a time when the best among people will be those who reflect on and verify everything, because of the rampant false talk."

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>



Ponder our identity, creation and destiny

After knowing the value of contemplation and the verses, many Hadith and sayings regarding it, it is worthy of us to pause and ponder our identity, creation and destiny; and, whether we are to live forever or die, and if we are to pass away, then where would we go: Hell or Paradise? Verily, life without Allah The Almighty is like a mirage that appears as water to a thirsty person, who comes to it only to find it to be nothing; but then, he finds Allah The Almighty before Him, Who will pay him his due, in full, for indeed, He is swift in account.

Hence, think of death, graves and the Hereafter; and, as Imam Ahmad, may Allah have mercy upon him, used to say, if one is not deterred by that, "he or she will not be dissuaded if even two mountains smash into one another right in front of him or her."

Contemplate, for life is short and your breaths are numbered; your shrouds are being made and your burial place is waiting for you. Those who are alive will follow those who preceded them in death, for that is the end of all; indeed, there is nothing other than that, but false hope, for one's demise has already been destined. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {Every soul will taste death, and you will only be given your [full] compensation on the Day of Resurrection. So he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [his desire]. And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion} [Qur'an 3:185]

Once, 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz, may Allah have mercy upon him, sat pondering and said: "The graves have penetrated the burial cloths, ravaged the bodies, sucked the blood and devoured the flesh. I wonder what the worms have done with the corpses; they probably defaced them, broke the bones, bared the fragmented limbs and tore the organs. I wonder if [the dead] feel any difference between the day and night, for are they not in pitch-black darkness? How many of them whose faces were soft have rotten and their necks severed from their bodies? Their pupils dissolved and turned into pus that ran on their faces. Then shortly, their bones became disintegrated." Then, he said, "I wish I knew how I would bear the harshness of the earth and which one of my cheeks would decompose first."

Let us also reflect on the conditions of Muslims, for one who does not do so, is not one of them; and our only worry must be our Hereafter. It is really odd to find people preoccupied with football, cinema, Arabic or foreign songs, or fashion, at a time when Muslims are being subjected to massacres and annihilation everywhere.

Moreover, many among us do not even have a safe sidewalk to call their home; so, contemplate this, for you may find this to enable you to praise Allah The Almighty for the blessings that you have and to cease being ungrateful. You may feel ashamed when you consider your own negligence, for modesty and faith are linked; a lack in one denotes a failing in the other as well.

You may then save yourself before it is too late, because the enemies of the past are no different from those of today and they do not differentiate between one Muslim and the other, and, as Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {Hatred has already appeared from their mouths, and what their breasts conceal is greater.} [Qur'an 3:118] We have become an easy prey for the wicked, because of our love for life and our hatred of death. That is because one who makes life his major concern, Allah The Almighty will deprive him or her and he or she will have no share in life, except what is predestined. On the other hand, he who prioritises the Hereafter, Allah The Almighty will enrich him in his heart and the world will be at his service.

We must also think about how we can achieve Islamic unity and brotherhood in faith. This is our task, for we are all sentries at the fortified borders of Islam and we must be careful that we are not the weakest links. We should supplicate to Allah The Almighty at night to bring the hearts of Muslims together, unite their word and grant

them victory over their enemy. We cannot renounce our responsibility, for we will indeed be held accountable, as Allah The Almighty Says (what means):

{Then We will surely question those to whom [a message] was sent, and We will surely question the messengers.} [Qur'an 7:6]

{That He may question the truthful about their truth.} [Qur'an 33:8]

Furthermore, we should reflect on our own selves and the blessings bestowed on us by Allah The Almighty, Who Says (what means): {And in yourselves. Then will you not see?} [Qur'an 51:21] We must also know that Islam is the greatest favour of all, so have we expressed our gratitude towards Him for it?

Contemplating the realm of the heavens and the earth also guides those who feel at a loss, because everything is a sign that indicates the oneness of Allah The Almighty. Let us ponder how He has raised the heavens and proportioned it, gave the night its darkness and removed its brightness; then, He spread out the earth, extracted water from it and made pastures. Let us think of the omnipotence of Allah The Almighty in His creation and the accurate system of the universe that is in motion, as He Says (what means): {It is not allowable for the sun to reach the moon, nor does the night overtake the day, but each, in an orbit, is swimming.} [Qur'an 36:40]

Let us also consider the numerous miracles of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, related to astrology, medicine, wisdom and eloquence and, of course, the greatest miracle of all is the Noble Qur'an. There is much that proves the prophethood of Muhammad, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, in his morals, knowledge of the matters of the unseen, acceptance of his supplications and the fact that he was mentioned in the scriptures of the People of the Book. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {Then do they not give thought? There is in their companion [Muhammad] no madness. He is not but a clear warner.} [Qur'an 7:184]

If we contemplate all this, our faith and conviction in our religion will certainly increase, and we will find ourselves supplicating to Allah The Almighty, saying, "O Lord, make me die a Muslim and join me with the righteous." O Allah, let our silence be contemplation, our speech Your remembrance and our gaze a means of learning lessons.

We should also equip ourselves with beneficial knowledge and act on it, alongside performing righteous deeds. Let us be keen on strengthening the principles of creed inside ourselves, because our war with the enemies of Islam is ideological. Additionally, we must be aware that the only path toward the company of the victorious and the saved, is to adhere to the course of the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, and his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them. So, let us ask ourselves if we have truly adopted this methodology in our knowledge, acts and beliefs.

Also, if we consider the state of our righteous predecessors, all of us will, undoubtedly, find ourselves negligent. However, this should not discourage us from striving against our vain desires, for Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good.} [Qur'an 29:69]

It is said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. Our Lord reproaches us for being weak, so it is His help we must seek in abandoning vices, which must be done before looking to acquire virtues. We must beware of committing sins as that would be equivalent to one who makes a hole in a ship, making it sink. Further, as it is said, the disobedience of an army is more dangerous to itself than the swords of its enemy.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

Glimpses of Divine Mercy

Allah, The Almighty, is the Most Merciful, Most Compassionate, and He is the most Merciful of those who show mercy.

His Mercy encompasses all things. Allah, The Almighty, Says (what means): {...and My Mercy embraces all things.} [Qur'an 7:156]

Allah, The Almighty, extends His Mercy to all His creation, for He knows that man was created weak and is prone to fall into sin.

After promising His Mercy to humanity, Allah, The Almighty, informs them that as long as they call on Him and put their hope in Him, He will forgive them.

This statement alone can convince one to have hope and never despair.

When a person calls out to Allah, The Almighty, or supplicates to Him, he is displaying his need of and dependence on Allah, The Almighty.

He is demonstrating his weakness to the fact that he has no power to do anything by himself.

It is the essence of submission and servitude.

It is also a recognition of the At-tributes of Allah, The Almighty, associated with Mercy, such as kindness, generosity, forgiveness and His unlimited power and knowledge.

Human beings are always in need of Allah, The Almighty, at all times and in all circumstances.

A believer always turns to Allah to ask for guidance as well as to seek forgiveness for sins and shortcomings.

In fact, The Mercy of Allah, The Almighty, extends to all His creation, not just humanity.

Abu Hurayrah may Allah be pleased with him narrated that the Prophet sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention) said: "Allah has one hundred parts of Mercy, of which He sent down one between the jinn, mankind, the animals and the insects; by means of which they are compassionate and merciful to one another, and by means of which wild animals are kind to their offspring.

And Allah has kept back ninety-nine parts of mercy with which to be merciful to His slaves on the Day of Resurrection." [Muslim]

It was narrated that 'Umar ibn Al-Khattaab may Allah be pleased with them said: "Some prisoners were brought to the Messenger of

Allah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, and there was a woman among the prisoners who was searching [for her child]. When she found her child she embraced him and put him to her breast.

The Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said to us: 'Do you think that this woman would throw her child in the fire?' We said, 'No, by Allah, if she is not obliged to do so.' The Messenger of Allah, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: 'Allah is more merciful to His slaves than this woman is to her child.'" [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

One aspect of the Mercy of Allah to His slaves is that He sent them Messengers and revealed the Books and laws to organise their lives in a wise manner, far from hardship and difficulty.

Allah, The Almighty Says (what means): {And We have sent you (O Muhammad) not but as a mercy for the 'Aalameen (mankind, jinn and all that exists).} [Qur'an 21:107]

The Mercy of Allah, The Almighty, is the means through which His believing slaves will be admitted to Paradise on the Day of Resurrection.

No one will ever enter Paradise because of his deeds alone, as the Prophet, sallallaahu 'alaihi wa sallam, said: "No one will enter Paradise thanks to his deeds." They said, "Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?" He said, "No, not even me, unless Allah shower me with His Mercy. So try to be close to perfection. And no one should wish for death; if he is doing good deeds, he will do more of them, and if he is sinning, he may repent." [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Thus, the believer must remain in a state between hope and fear, hoping for the Mercy of Allah, The Almighty, and fearing His Punishment; Allah, The Almighty Says (what means):

{Declare (O Muhammad) unto My slaves, that truly, I am the Oft-Forgiving, the Most-Merciful.

And that My Torment is indeed the most painful torment.} [Qur'an 15:49-50]

{Say: O My servants who have transgressed against their own souls, despair not of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins.

Truly, He is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.} [Qur'an 39:53]

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The Indian Mango Festival (Al Hamba Exhibition) was inaugurated by PEO Technical Affairs Department director Abdulrahman Zayed al-Nuaimi and Indian ambassador Vipul in the presence of other officials and ambassadors of various countries. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam

Mango mania at Souq Waqif

By Shafeeq Alingal
Staff Reporter



Khalid Saif al-Suwaidi

fresh for the festival.

The quality of the mangoes is checked by the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) to ensure safety.

The turnout of visitors and the sales, according to al-Suwaidi, are expected to increase in the second edition of the festival.

“Last year, we had 44 varieties and the sales crossed 200 tonnes,” he said.

“Sales are likely to go up owing to various factors,” he continued. “Large quantities of mango are flown. We have planes arriving daily especially for the exhibition. We will achieve record numbers this year.”

Al-Suwaidi noted that the prices are moderate and competitive because of the presence of several companies.

One of the attractions of the festival is the costliest Miyazaki mangoes.

Called the “Egg of the Sun”, this ultra-rare mango is sold at QR666 per kg at the pavilion of LuLu Group.

Al-Suwaidi added that the Indian embassy played a role in organising the event by inviting and supervising the companies and the products.



Environmental awareness campaign at Sealine Beach

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), represented by the Department of Nature Reserves, carried out an awareness campaign at the Sealine Beach aimed at educating visitors on the importance of environmental preservation and cleanliness during Eid al-Adha holidays.

The initiative was part of a series of awareness initiatives implemented by the ministry throughout the year in the Sealine and Khor Al Adaid reserves, as part of its efforts to protect biodiversity in the region and conserve its components, including animals, plants, and marine life.

The campaign included providing visitors with advice and guidelines on proper environmental behaviour while at the beach, such as disposing of waste in designated areas and avoiding lighting fires directly on the sand.

During peak seasons and official holidays, when the number of visitors to beaches and nature reserves increases significantly, the ministry is keen to intensify cleaning and awareness campaigns in these areas to ensure they are protected from harmful practices.



Coral reef west of Halul Island cleaned



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has carried out a comprehensive clean-up campaign at a coral reef area located west of Halul Island through a team of divers from the Marine Protection Department.

The campaign in celebration of World Oceans Day was part of the ministry's ongoing efforts to protect the marine environment and preserve biodiversity.

It resulted in the removal of several illegal fishing tools found at a depth of 15m, including fishing nets and traps, which pose a threat to marine life and disrupt the ecological balance of the area.

The ministry reaffirmed its commitment to intensifying environmental monitoring efforts and taking all necessary measures to protect the marine environment and ensure the sustainability of its natural resources, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to the conservation of aquatic ecosystems and oceans.