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# PM describes Israeli strikes on Iran as a blatant violation

●Urges world to take immediate action to stop Israeli violations

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, held phone calls yesterday with foreign ministers of Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Oman.

HE Sheikh Mohammed held phone talk with Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Abbas Araghchi. The two sides discussed the latest regional developments, particularly the Israeli attack on Iranian territory.

Reiterating Qatar's strong condemnation of the Israeli attack, HE Sheikh Mohammed described it as a blatant violation of Iran's sovereignty and security, and a clear breach of international law and its principles.

He also extended Qatar's condolences to the families of the victims, affirming that Qatar will work with its regional and international partners to urgently end the aggression against Iran and to spare the region the disastrous



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani

consequences such escalation could have on its security, safety, and stability.

He emphasised that constructive dialogue among all parties remains the only path to defusing crises and resolving outstanding issues, in order to build lasting

**HE Sheikh Mohammed emphasised that constructive dialogue among all parties remains the only path to defusing crises and resolving outstanding issues, in order to build lasting peace and security in the region and the world**

peace and security in the region and the world.

HE Sheikh Mohammed's phone calls with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Immigration and Expatriates Affairs Dr Badr Abdelatty, Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Dr Ayman Safadi and Oman's of Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood al-Busaidi dealt with discussing bilateral co-operation and exploring ways to support and strengthen them, and also the latest regional developments, particularly the Israeli attack on Iran.

In this context, HE the Prime

## Amir, US president discuss Israeli attack on Iran



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani discussed with US President Donald Trump the latest developments in the region, particularly the recent Israeli attack on Iranian territory. This came during a phone call His Highness the Amir received yesterday from the US president. During the call, the Amir emphasised the importance of working towards de-escalating tensions and pursuing diplomatic solutions.

For his part, the US president affirmed his country's readiness to engage in efforts aimed at resolving the crisis and promoting security and stability in the region. The conversation also touched on the strategic relations between Qatar and the US and explored ways to further enhance and strengthen bilateral co-operation, in addition to reviewing a host of regional and international developments. **(QNA)**

## Qatar slams Israeli attack, voices grave concern over dangerous escalation

Qatar has expressed its strong condemnation and deep denunciation of the Israeli attack targeting the territory of Iran. Qatar considered the assault a blatant violation of Iran's sovereignty and security, as well as a clear breach of international law and its established principles.

Qatar voiced its grave concern over this dangerous escalation, which forms part of a recurring pattern of aggressive policies that threaten regional peace and stability and hinder efforts aimed at de-escalation and diplomatic resolution.

The State underscored the urgent need for the international community to assume its legal and moral responsibilities and to act swiftly to halt these Israeli violations.

Qatar reaffirmed its firm position in rejecting all forms of violence, and reiterates its call for restraint and the avoidance of escalation that could widen the scope of conflict and undermine regional security and stability.

Saudi Arabia expressed its strong condemnation the Israeli aggressions against Iran, which undermine its sovereignty and security and constitute a clear violation of international laws and norms.

The kingdom affirmed that the international community and the Security Council bear a great responsibility to immediately halt this aggression.

Kuwait has expressed its strong condemnation of the Israeli aggression against Iran, describing it as a blatant violation of all international laws and conventions, a serious breach of Iranian sovereignty, and a threat to regional security and stability.

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kuwait reiterated its call on the international community and the UN Security Council to fulfil their responsibilities in putting an end

to such violations to safeguard the security and stability of the region.

The United Arab Emirates has strongly condemned Israel's military targeting of Iran, and expressed its deep concern over the continued escalation and its repercussions on regional security and stability.

In a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UAE emphasised the importance of exercising the utmost self-restraint and sound judgment to mitigate risks and prevent the further expansion of the conflict.

The ministry reaffirmed the UAE's stance that enhancing dialogue, adhering to international law, and respecting the sovereignty of states are fundamental to resolving the ongoing crises.

Oman has warned that the Israeli military aggression against Iranian territory risks derailing diplomatic efforts and undermining regional security and stability.

In an official statement issued yesterday, Oman strongly condemned what it described as a brutal military aggression by Israel targeting the sovereign territory of Iran. The attack, which struck key facilities and resulted in casualties, was characterised by Oman as a dangerous and reckless escalation and a flagrant violation of the UN Charter and international law.

The statement emphasised that such ongoing aggressive actions are unacceptable and threaten the foundations of stability in the region.

Oman held Israel fully responsible for the escalation and its potential repercussions, urging the international community to take a clear and decisive stance to halt this dangerous trajectory. It warned that continued aggression threatens to eliminate the prospects for diplomatic solutions and further fuels instability across the region. **To Page 2**

# Iran fires missiles at Israel in response to attacks

**QNA/Reuters**  
Tehran

The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) announced yesterday evening the beginning of its response to the Israeli aggression by targeting the occupied territories with hundreds of various missiles, in an attack dubbed "True Promise 3."

The IRGC said in a statement that it launched hundreds of various ballistic missiles at the occupied territories in response to the attack launched by the Israeli entity at dawn yesterday against multiple sites inside Iranian territory, confirming that it targeted dozens of targets, military centres, and air bases of the entity in the occupied territories.

In a related context, Israeli media outlets, citing officials, reported that the Iranian attack injured at least seven people and caused unprecedented destruction in the Greater Tel Aviv area.

Iran had previously vowed a strong and decisive response to the aggression launched by the Israeli entity yesterday against its territory, which resulted in the deaths of military leaders and civilians.

Reuters reports: Explosions were heard in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, the country's two biggest cities, following Israel's biggest-ever military strike against Iran.

Air raid sirens sounded across Israel as authorities urged the public to take shelter. Missiles were seen over Tel Aviv's skyline.

The US military has helped shoot down Iranian missiles that were headed toward Israel, two US officials said yesterday.

In the Tel Aviv area, Israel's ambulance service said five people were treated for shrapnel injuries. Live footage of Tel Aviv showed what appeared to be a missile hitting an urban area. A critically injured woman was admitted to



Israeli troops and first responders gather in an area hit by a missile fired from Iran, in Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv yesterday.

Damage to Iran N-sites 'appears limited': experts

The damage to Iran's nuclear facilities from Israel's initial wave of air strikes early yesterday appeared to be limited, experts who have reviewed commercially available satellite imagery said. Israel's attacks succeeded in killing Iranian military leaders and nuclear scientists and in striking military command and control facilities and air defences, but satellite

imagery did not yet show significant damage to nuclear infrastructure, several experts said. "The first day was aimed at things that you would get through surprise — killing leadership, going after nuclear scientists, air defence systems, the ability to retaliate," said nuclear expert David Albright at the Institute for Science and International Security. **(Reuters)**

Beilinson Hospital in nearby Petah Tikva, a hospital spokesperson said.

The unprecedented Israeli strikes on Iran and the subsequent Iranian retaliation raised concerns about a broader regional conflagration.

Iran's state news agency IRNA

said Tehran launched hundreds of ballistic missiles at Israel after Israel blasted Iran's huge Natanz underground nuclear site and killed its top military commanders.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei accused Israel of having initiated a war. A senior

Iranian official said nowhere in Israel would be safe and revenge would be painful.

Israel's operation "will continue for as many days as it takes to remove this threat," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a TV address.

Netanyahu said he authorised the air assault in an effort to prevent Iran from building nuclear weapons. Israel and its Western allies have said this is Tehran's objective but Iran has denied it.

Iran has long insisted its nuclear programme is for civilian purposes only. The UN nuclear watchdog concluded this week that it was in violation of its obligations under the global non-proliferation treaty.

US President Donald Trump said it was not too late for Tehran to halt the Israeli bombing campaign by reaching a deal on its nuclear programme.





## Al-Khulaifi attends panel discussion on mediation



HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi participated in a panel discussion organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland on mediation. The session was attended by Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Security Policy in Finland Outi Holopainen. In his remarks during the session, HE Dr al-Khulaifi emphasised Qatar's commitment to supporting international efforts aimed at promoting peace and stability, and to expanding avenues of co-operation with friendly countries in the areas of conflict resolution, dialogue, and strategic partnerships. The session addressed several topics of mutual interest, particularly in the fields of mediation and preventive diplomacy, in addition to the latest developments in regional and international affairs. **(QNA)**

## Al-Muraikhi meets Iranian ambassador



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with Iranian ambassador to Qatar, Ali Salehabadi. During the meeting, the two sides discussed aspects of bilateral co-operation and explored ways to enhance and develop them. They also addressed the latest developments in the region. HE al-Muraikhi reaffirmed Qatar's strong condemnation and deep denunciation of the Israeli attack on the Iranian territory, describing it as a blatant violation of Iran's sovereignty and security, and a clear breach of international law and established principles. **(QNA)**

# Qatar warns Israeli violations in Iran could lead to wider conflict

**QNA**  
Vienna

**Q**atar has reiterated its strong condemnation and deep denunciation of the Israeli attack that targeted the territory of Iran, describing it as a blatant violation of Iran's sovereignty and security at a time when countries around the world are striving to reach diplomatic solutions to restore peace to the Middle East.

This came in Qatar's statement delivered by HE Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN and international organisations in Vienna Jassim Yaqoub al-Hammadi before the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), during discussions on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Israeli nuclear file.

HE al-Hammadi called on the international community to uphold its legal and moral responsibilities to urgently stop Israeli violations before it is too late, warning of their grave consequences for the region, particularly the destruction of prospects for peace and the endangerment of the people of the region as well as regional and global security.

He further urged the international community and its organisations to pressure Israel, the occupying power, to immediately end its campaign of genocide against unarmed civilians in the Gaza Strip, its use of food as a weapon, and its ongoing military operations and settlement projects in the occupied West Bank.

He reaffirmed Qatar's firm and unwavering position in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among them the right to establish an independent state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.



HE Jassim Yaqoub al-Hammadi

**Al-Hammadi reaffirmed Qatar's firm and unwavering position in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among them the right to establish an independent state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital**

dependent state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

He also noted that Qatar continues its mediation efforts alongside Egypt and the US to reach a permanent ceasefire and create conditions conducive to launching serious negotiations toward achieving a two-state solution.

Regarding Israel's nuclear capabilities, HE al-Hammadi emphasised the need for the international community and its institutions to fulfil their commitments under UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as IAEA decisions and the 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference resolution, all of which call on Israel to subject its entire nuclear programme to the agency's comprehensive safeguards system and to join the NPT as a non-nuclear state.

ised the need for the international community and its institutions to fulfil their commitments under UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as IAEA decisions and the 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference resolution, all of which call on Israel to subject its entire nuclear programme to the agency's comprehensive safeguards system and to join the NPT as a non-nuclear state.

## Israeli attack condemned

**From Page 1**

Notably, Muscat has previously hosted multiple rounds of negotiations between Tehran and Washington. On Thursday, Oman announced it would host a new round of nuclear talks between the two sides.

GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi expressed the GCC's condemnation of the Israeli attacks and called on the international community and the Security Council to assume their responsibilities by immediately halting this aggression and avoiding escalation that could ignite a wider conflict that would have dire consequences for regional and international peace.

Meanwhile, the Arab League condemned the Israeli attacks, stressing that they were a severe violation of international law.

The League's General Secretariat called in a statement for the international community to intervene immediately to stop these attacks, stressing the importance of de-escalation to prevent matters from getting out of hand.

Egypt denounced the Israeli strikes, calling them a blatant and dangerous escalation. It described the attacks as a serious violation of international law and of the UN Charter, posing a direct threat to both regional and global peace. Egypt's Foreign Ministry stressed in a statement that it is deeply concerned about the rapid developments, and called the assault unjustified, warning that it would fuel the crisis further and risk dragging the region into a broader conflict with unprecedented consequences.

Lebanon also condemned the strikes, saying they not only targeted the Iranian people but also undermined international efforts to maintain Middle East stability and prevent escalation. Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said that such attacks are designed to sabotage diplomatic initiatives and mediation efforts that had made significant progress toward realistic solutions to avoid war in the region.

Iraq issued a strong condemnation and called on the UN Security Council to hold an emergency meeting.

Turkiye also condemned the Israeli attack, calling it a clear breach of international law and a provocative act that threatens regional stability. **(QNA)**

## Airlines halt many Mideast flights after Israeli strikes

Global airlines yesterday cancelled flights to Tel Aviv, Tehran and other Middle East destinations, or rerouted planes, as airspaces were shut off following Israeli strikes on Iran.

Israel, Iran, Iraq, Jordan and Syria closed their airspaces after Israel hit military and nuclear facilities in Iran. Israel said Tehran launched drones in retaliation.

Air India's New Delhi-Vienna and Mumbai-London flights were about to enter Iranian airspace when Israel launched its attack, forcing the planes to turn back to their origin, according to aircraft tracker Flight Aware. Its London-New Delhi flight had just entered Iranian airspace and was rerouted over Iraq before arriving in India one hour late, according to Flight Aware.

Air India diverted or called back a total of 16 flights between India and London and cities in Canada and the US "due to the emerging situation in Iran".

Emirates cancelled flights to and from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Iran after Israel launched the strikes. **(AFP)**

## Iran downs two Israeli warplanes, one pilot captured

Iranian Air Defence announced yesterday evening that it had downed two Israeli warplanes and captured the pilot of one of them. The Air Defence said in a statement that it had captured one of the two pilots, a woman, after her plane was shot down. It considered the operation a "success" in its capabilities to confront Israeli attacks and "a confirmation of the armed forces' readiness to confront any threat targeting the country's sovereignty." The Israeli entity launched air strikes on several sites and targets across Iran, particularly the capital, Tehran, during the day, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries. **(QNA)**

### Vehicle auction by Mol

#### Public Auction

**For the Sale of Deregistered Cars, Motorcycles and Machinery**

The Ministry of Interior announces a public auction for the sale of deregistered cars, motorcycles and machinery owned by the Ministry starting on 22 June 2025 from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM.

**Inspection Period:**  
17 - 18 - 19 June 2025  
4:00 PM to 6:00 PM

**Location:**  
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Department - Workshop Section, Industrial Area, Street No. (1)

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وزارة الداخلية  
Ministry of Interior  
الداخلية

The Ministry of Interior has announced a public auction for the sale of its deregistered cars, motorcycles and machinery from June 22, from 4-8pm, an X post said.

# Fanar aims to advance Arabic presence in digital space

**By Joseph Varghese**  
Staff Reporter

**F**anar, an Arabic AI language model developed by the Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI) and a national project involving several institutions in Qatar aims to enhance and protect Arabic language in the digital space.

QCRI, part of Hamad Bin Khalifa University has developed this special tool to bridge Arabic language and culture with the latest advancements in AI. Dr Mohamed Eltabakh, principal scientist at QCRI, at a recent conference in Doha highlighted that this project aims to revive and preserve the Arabic language in the digital age.

Dr Eltabakh said: "With the emergence of ChatGPT in 2022, it was clear that it would have a tremendous impact across

various fields, including medicine, education, health, the judiciary, and the media. This technology stood out from all its predecessors for its generative capabilities and interactive nature."

He noted that studies have shown that these language models, despite their sophistication, carry a significant risk of bias. "They tend to favour English over Arabic, thus reflecting Western cultures and excluding other cultures, particularly Arab and Islamic culture. Furthermore, the training methods for these models often do not align with the specific requirements and needs of Arab societies," explained, Dr Eltabakh.

According to the scientist, one of the most important goals of the project is to preserve the Arabic language and its various dialects. Built on a robust linguistic framework and powered by advanced al-



Dr Mohamed Eltabakh

gorithms, Fanar excels in Arabic-centric thinking, understanding nuanced meanings, and capturing subtle linguistic distinctions. These features make it an ideal tool for overcoming linguistic and cultural barriers, fostering effective communica-

tion, and promoting knowledge exchange. Its extensive capabilities include text and multimodal data generation, content creation, translation, and knowledge fact-checking.

One of Fanar's goals is to provide high-quality Arabic content that enhances the status of the Arabic language in the digital space.

"Achieving cultural compatibility is among the platform's most important objectives as the Arabic language is not merely a means of communication; it carries Arab identity, history, culture, and values, which are fundamentally different from Western culture," he continued.

Dr Eltabakh underlined that digital sovereignty in Arabic content is also of key importance for the platform. He noted: "Complete reliance on Western technology reduces us to mere consumers. The

Fanar project demonstrates that we can be creators of this technology and to own its tools. Ownership here is not just technical - it also encompasses sovereignty over knowledge, content, and communication."

Dr Eltabakh emphasised the importance of capacity building as most countries find themselves unable to build local capabilities in the field of artificial intelligence. However, the presence of Arab expertise that can develop these models, and directing them according to our needs, is of paramount importance.

"The Fanar project is not merely a linguistic initiative, but rather a comprehensive vision for an independent Arab digital future that reflects our culture, protects our language, and empowers us to contribute to shaping technology, rather than being victims of its biases," added the scientist.





# MES marks World Environment Day

MES Indian School marked World Environment Day with a series of activities aimed at promoting awareness and sustainable practices. The highlight of the celebration was the initiative under the slogan, 'Each One, Plant One'. Students brought saplings and indoor plants to school. In the Kindergarten, the celebration began with a warm-up session, followed by an action song 'Heal the World'.

A colourful ramp walk featured students dressed as various green objects and animals, each carrying a message about the importance of saving nature. Students also performed dances. Teachers led interactive discussions about key environmental habits like keeping surroundings clean, saving water, and reducing waste. A special



seed-sowing activity provided a hands-on experience for the young students, teaching them how small actions can lead to significant changes on Earth. The celebrations in the Boys' and Girls' sections included a cleanliness drive across Classes V to XII. A home garden video presentation contest saw students

of Classes VI to VIII showcasing their home gardens in a one-minute video. The initiative aimed to promote gardening as a hobby and to encourage students to connect with nature at home. The Guides unit organised a series of activities under the theme 'Our Land, Our Future.' The cel-

ebration began with a clean-up drive across the campus. An awareness video was played in the classrooms of the Junior section. Children expressed their thoughts and understanding of environmental conservation through an assembly. Head boy Jonah and Bulbul captain Ayra spoke. Campus Care Force (CCF)

captain Aditya Prashanth spoke about the importance of Environment Day. Commending the students for their active participation, principal Dr Hameeda Kadar emphasised the need for environmental action and urged them to continue adopting eco-friendly habits in daily life. The campaign was

led by members of the CCF and Scouts, and was co-ordinated by CCF in-charge Jency George, co-ordinators Radhika Rajan, Pradnya Pande, Scouts, Guides and Cubs & Bulbuls in-charge Rajesh K S, Asha V Nair, Fency, event managers Sreejith K N, Nazanin Salim Nadaf, Rassia Hamza as well as Anwar K and Semeer H.

## Green Day at MES KG



In conjunction with World Environment Day, the Kindergarten section of MES Indian School observed Green Day, bringing together students, parents, and staff in a joyful celebration.



## BPS clinches junior dance title



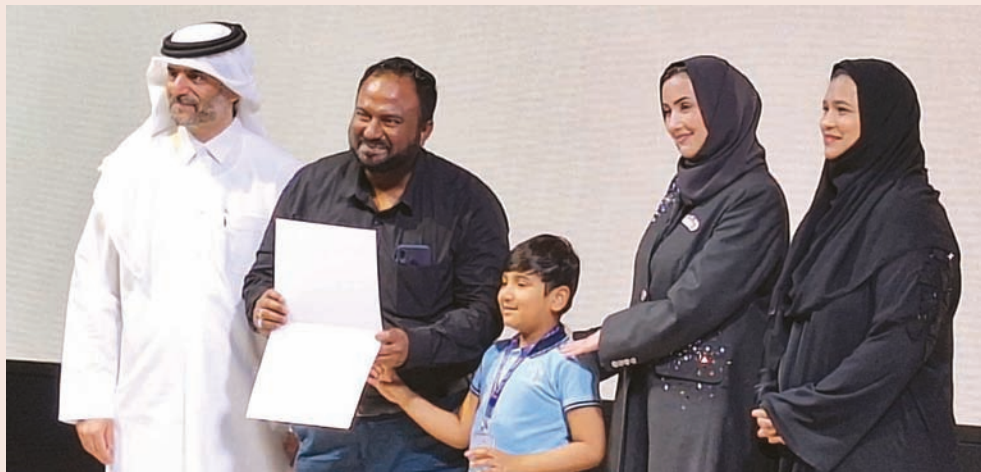
A team of girls from Birla Public School (BPS) bagged the junior category title at the Radio Suno Dance Carnival Season 2. The winning team comprising Arya Lakshmi, Nehara Nair, Nidhi Nair, Shreya Hemachandran, Jovaena Tijo, Sameeksha Sobhan, Varsha Sundaran, Upasana Sreenesh, and Sharon Ranjiv, from Classes VI to IX, portrayed the timeless tale of Anarkali and Prince Salim. The jury - acclaimed Indian film industry choreographers Santhi Master and Prasanna Master - commended the group's vibrant storytelling, intricate formations, and unique blend of traditional classical expressions with modern dance movements. The school's senior leadership and management congratulated the student performers and their teacher, Sreelakshmy Sujith, whose dedication and guidance were instrumental in the remarkable achievement.

## RPS leads green drive

Rajagiri Public School's (RPS) Nature Club marked World Environment Day with a series of activities aimed at fostering environmental consciousness and promoting greener spaces within the school premises. The day commenced with a special assembly, with the central theme 'Beat Plastic Pollution.' This was followed by planting 32 bougainvillea saplings across the campus. Principal Joshy Abraham presented badges to the Nature Club members. Venkata Sai Akshitha and Michelle Rahul, were honoured as Rajagiri SDG Student Ambassadors, acknowledging their role in promoting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals within the school community. The Nature Club, which maintains a flourishing mini Miyawaki forest on campus, is co-ordinated by Nisha Shahul Hameed.



## Top honours for PPS in national values contest



Podar Pearl School (PPS) celebrated its remarkable achievement in the national values-based educational initiative, 'My Values Draw My Identity,' organised by Qatar's Ministry of Education and Higher Education, for the academic year 2024-2025. Noora Rasheed (Class XI) was awarded first place in the National Project Competition. She received a certificate of appreciation signed by HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid AlKhater, along with a gift voucher of QR1,000. Principal Dr Maneesh Mangal and initiative in-charge Aneesa Nisamudheen were present at the ceremony, which brought together students, educators, and institutions from across Qatar to celebrate and emphasise the importance of national identity and value-based learning in shaping the future of the nation's youth. Ghazi Ali (Class II) received a special mention for his creative contribution that reflected the initiative's core principles and values.



## MES wins rope skipping medals



MES Indian School students won medals in the CBSE Cluster Rope Skipping Tournament 2025-26. Daniel bagged a bronze in the U-19 Speed Hop category while in the boys' team relay event in the same category, the MES team won a silver. Overall, the team achieved the second runner-up position in the U-19 category. Muhammed Shifil and Mariam Sameer were the trainers for the boys' and girls' teams, respectively. Principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, congratulated the winners.

## PHL achievers feted at Mesis



The Principal's Honouring List (PHL) Ceremony at MES Indian School, Abu Hamour branch (Mesis) celebrated the academic excellence of 300 outstanding students from Classes I to IX and XI. MES governing board's academics director Ashraf Sharafudeen was the chief guest. Principal Pramila Kannan also spoke.



# PMF organises first ‘Musabaqah’ during Eid al-Adha celebrations



The Philippine Muslim Federation (PMF) recently held its first ‘Musabaqah’ under the theme ‘With Faith We Compete, In Unity We Celebrate’.

The event also served as the PMF’s annual Eid al-Adha celebration, bringing together Filipino Muslim communities in Qatar: Al-Salam, DMOQ, OMMOW, and POMDA for a day of faith, fellowship, and friendly competition.

The celebration officially kicked

off with a bowling tournament, where the PMA emerged as the champion. The main event began with a banner presentation by each participating organisation, followed by a welcome address from Sheikh Nuroddin Abdulhamid, one of PMF’s founders. Hasan Gandaruzza, the sports committee chairman, formally opened the Musabaqah, while PMF president Yasir M Aragat hosted the day’s events.

Simultaneous sports competitions such as basketball, chess, and darts engaged the men, while women participated in Scrabble and prepared for the food exhibit contest.

A bazaar organised by PMF chair of Women’s Affairs Malak Alcala highlighted the event.

Children from all five organisations competed in the Azan, Muhadarah, and Qur’an memorisation contests, showcasing



their spiritual knowledge and eloquence. Simultaneously, the food exhibit contest challenged the creativity and skills of the women’s teams, judged by a distinguished panel.

Further enriching the event was a free medical mission conducted by volunteers from Academia International Institute, made possible through the support of its CEO, Annaliza Diet. At noon, participants observed Dhuhr prayer

together, followed by a community lunch.

The PMA took the championship trophy in the basketball games, while others competed in table tennis and billiards. Al Salam claimed the first place in the food exhibit. The overall winner of the ‘1st PMF Musabaqah’ was awarded to PMA, which bagged most of the awards in both sports and Islamic competitions.

PMF adviser Sheikh Homer

Pagayawan concluded the event with the closing remarks. Aragat thanked all the PMF officers, the leaders and members of the five participating organisations, and the event sponsors for their support.

He also announced plans for the launch of sustainable programmes that go beyond sports and religious activities, aiming to further strengthen the Filipino Muslim community in Qatar.

## PHRP-Q forges strategic partnership with Academia

The Philippine Human Resources Practitioners in Qatar (PHRP-Q) and the Academia International Institute and Centre signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on educa-

tional and training initiatives.

The MoU, seen as a significant move to strengthen the professional development of Filipinos in Qatar, was officially signed by PHRP-Q President Amie Andrada and Academia

International Institute and Centre CEO Annaliza Diet. This also marks a strategic alliance aimed at advancing HR practices and capacity building among professionals in the region.

The partnership will focus on



joint training programmes, certification courses, and knowledge-sharing events designed to elevate HR competencies and support career advancement, particularly within the

Filipino professional community in Qatar. Beyond enhancing HR capabilities, the partnership will also serve as a platform to support non-HR professionals who aspire to transition into human

resources. Through tailored programmes, certification courses, and career-bridging training, the initiative will empower individuals from diverse industries to pursue careers in HR.

## Niarc hosts ‘Togetherness Event’ to mark Eid al-Adha



Niarc hosted the ‘Togetherness Event’ in celebration of Eid al-Adha.

A highlight was the official unveiling of the poster for the ‘Nurture & Heal: Niarc Medical Camp for Children with Special Needs & Their Families,’ being held on June 20, in collaboration with

Reyada Medical, Uniq, and 98.6 FM Malayalam. The event was inaugurated by Niarc Global chairman Ashraf K P. The poster was unveiled by Indian Community Benevolent Forum’s (ICBF) former president Zias Usman and medical camp head Mini Siby.

Niarc Qatar chapter chairman

Shanahas Edodi welcomed the gathering and general secretary Jafar Munafar proposed a vote of thanks. The organising team comprised Hameed M T, Eenam Mustafa, K K V Muhammad Ali, Rasik K V, Mustafa T, Thaha Barghavi, Shameem, Rasheed, Saleem, Faisal Hassan and Siraj Abdul Khader.

## KSQ promotes green initiatives



Karnataka Sangha Qatar (KSQ) celebrated World Environment Day 2025 with a series of activities promoting awareness across age groups. Drawing, colouring, and elocution contests, quiz, a one-minute video campaign for children under 12, and planting of saplings at DPS-Modern Indian School and Pearling International School were among the activities.

## Club celebrates 350th meeting



ICC Eves Toastmasters Club recently celebrated its 350th meeting alongside the annual day. Jaggi Joseph, Tara Ashish, Sridevi Menon, Alar Mel Mangal, Iman Salameh, Nirmala Raghuraman, and Asha Shiju spoke. The interactive games session was led by Naheed Akhtar.

## World Masters Games medal for MES staffer



Mohamed Navas, from the Department of Physical Education at MES Indian School, has represented the Indian national handball team in the 35+ age category at the World Masters Games 2025, held in Taipei, Taiwan, from May 15-30. The World Masters Games, organised by the International Masters Games Association under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee, is recognised as the largest multi-sport event for mature athletes. This year’s edition saw participation from over 25,000 athletes worldwide, competing across 35 different sports disciplines. The Indian handball team won bronze. MES management, principal, and colleagues congratulated Navas.

## Award winners declared in SIQ’s Eid football event

As part of its Eid celebrations, Students India Qatar (SIQ) organised an inter-zone football tournament titled Eid-Kicks 25, featuring 14 teams from five zones.

Nadeemathna Wakra emerged as the champions, Meshafiya Wakra was first runner-up and MK Strikers Madinat Khalifa, second runner-up. Arman (Nadeemathna Wakra) was named player of the tourna-

ment, Ishan (Meshafiya Wakra) best goalkeeper, MK Strikers Madinat Khalifa team received the fair play award, and Fahad (Rayyan zone), the best team manager. The closing ceremony featured special guests including Munshir Thrissur (athletics head coach at Al Shamal Club), and Bilal Harippad (CIC general secretary).

The event was co-ordinated under the leadership of Ismail Vengas-



sery, Zakariya Kariyath, Ihjas Aslam, Abdushukoor, Ashraf Meeran, Midlaj

Rahman, and Babeena Basheer. Trophies were distributed by SIQ

president Ameen Sabak and CIC Central Committee members Naufal

Paleri, Shanavas Khalid, and Shajahan Kareem.





## Groups in Iraq demand US troops leave, warn of regional escalation

AFP  
Baghdad

Pro-Iran groups in Iraq called yesterday for the withdrawal of US troops, with one powerful faction warning of “additional wars in the region” after a wave of Israeli strikes on Iran.

During the Israel-Hamas war



People attend a protest against Israeli strikes on Iran, in Baghdad, Iraq, yesterday.

in Gaza since October 2023, Tehran-aligned armed factions have launched rocket and drone attacks at army bases hosting US troops, who are deployed in Iraq and in neighbouring Syria as part of an anti-militant coalition.

Accusing US President Donald Trump of having “authorised” the major Israeli attack on Iran yesterday, Iraqi group Kataeb Hezbollah said in a statement

that “the American forces in Iraq have enabled this aggression by opening the Iraqi airspace to Zionist aircraft”.

To stop Iraq from becoming “a battlefield”, Kataeb Hezbollah said that the government in Baghdad “must urgently remove these hostile foreign forces from the country in order to avoid additional wars in the region”.

Akram al-Kaabi, the leader of another group, Al-Nujaba, decried the alleged “co-ordination” between Israel and the “American occupier” and called for the “complete withdrawal” of US forces.

US forces stationed in Iraq at Baghdad’s invitation have supported the fight against the Islamic State group.

The foreign troops in Iraq and Syria were repeatedly targeted by militants following the outbreak of the Gaza war in October 2023, but responded with heavy strikes on foreign-linked targets, and the attacks largely subsided.

## Palestinian, Iran solidarity rally in Yemen



Yemenis carry portraits of slain Iranian generals and scientists during a rally in solidarity with Palestinians and the Gaza Strip and to condemn the Israeli strikes on Iran, in Sanaa, yesterday. Since the Gaza war began in 2023, Israel has targeted leaders of Palestinian movement Hamas and Lebanon’s Hezbollah and destroyed much of the groups’ arsenals, while carrying out strikes on allies of Tehran in Syria and Yemen.

# Iranians outraged after Israeli strikes



People attend an anti-Israeli protest following the Israeli strikes on Iran, in Tehran, yesterday.

AFP  
Tehran

Iranians called for revenge yesterday demanding a swift response to a dizzying wave of strikes by Israel, as some took to the streets in protest, while others sheltered inside, unsure what would happen next.

The aerial onslaught killed several of the military’s top brass, targeted an array of leading scientists and struck military and nuclear sites across Iran in an unprecedented attack that left many seething with anger.

“How much longer are we going to live in fear?” asked Ahmad Moaddi, a 62-year-old retiree. “As an Iranian, I believe there must be an overwhelming response, a scathing response.”

The raids appeared to push the

rivals into full-blown conflict following years of fighting a shadow war mostly conducted through proxies.

Iran regularly arrests individuals it accuses of spying for Israel amid a flurry of targeted assassinations and acts of sabotage targeting its nuclear programme in recent years.

At least six scientists involved in Iran’s nuclear programme were killed in yesterday’s strikes.

“They’ve killed so many university professors and researchers, and now they want to negotiate?” Moaddi exclaimed, referring to calls for Iran to go ahead with nuclear talks with Israel’s US ally planned for this weekend.

As Iran continued to assess the damage, some residents rallied in the streets of Tehran chanting: “Death to Israel, death to America,” while waving Iranian flags and

portraits of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

State television said similar demonstrations were held in cities across the country.

The Israeli strikes followed repeated threats from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who appeared to finally cap a years-long quest to strike Iran’s nuclear programme.

“We can’t let this person continue, or we’ll end up like Gaza,” Abbas Ahmadi, a 52-year-old Tehran resident, told AFP from behind the wheel of his car.

“Iran must destroy him, it must do something.”

Yesterday’s attacks came after more than a year of soaring tensions as Israel took on Iran’s regional allies Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen.

Amid the tensions, Israel and



Rescuers work at the site of a damaged building, in the aftermath of Israeli strikes, in Tehran, yesterday.

Iran exchanged aerial barrages on two separate occasions last year, while stopping short of a full-scale war.

But following yesterday’s attack, all bets were off over what would come next, with Khamenei warning Israel faced a “bitter and painful” fate, while the Iranian military said there would be “no limits” to its response.

Apart from scattered protests, Tehran’s streets were largely deserted, except for queues at petrol stations, a familiar sight in times of crisis.

Air traffic was halted at Tehran’s Imam Khomeini International Airport amid disruption across the region.

In the upscale district of Nobonyad in north Tehran, rescuers continued to comb through the rubble of two apartment blocks targeted in Israeli strikes.



A building stands damaged in the aftermath of Israeli strikes, in Tehran, Iran, yesterday.

Families with tear-streaked faces gathered nearby.

“They want to deprive us of our nuclear capability – that’s unacceptable,” said Ahmad Razaghi, 56, calmly echoing the official line.

For Farnoush Rezaei, a 45-year-old nurse wearing a colourful hi-

jab, yesterday’s attacks represented a final act by Israel – a country “on its last breath”.

Iranian leaders have for decades insisted that Israel will “soon” disappear. “If God wills it, at least a bit of peace will come from this,” said Rezaei.

## Macron urges renewed nuclear dialogue after Israel’s Iran strikes

AFP  
Paris

France’s President Emmanuel Macron yesterday urged the US and Iran to resume nuclear talks following a wave of Israeli strikes against Iran.

“Iran bears a heavy responsibility in the destabilisation of the whole region,” he said after Western nations in recent days accused Tehran of deliberately escalating its nuclear programme, despite several rounds of US-Iran talks.

“We call for the resumption of dialogue and the reaching of a deal.” US President Donald Trump’s Middle East pointman Steve Witkoff had been set to hold a sixth round of talks with Iran tomorrow in Oman.

After Israel’s deadly strikes early yesterday, Trump afterwards urged Iran to “make a deal, before there is nothing left”, warning of “even more brutal” attacks to come.

Macron, who earlier yesterday defended Israel’s right to protect itself, said France could help in the case of an Iranian retaliation against Israel.

“If Israel were to be attacked in retaliation by Iran, France, if in a position to do so, would take part in protection and defence operations,” he said.

Macron earlier in the day spoke by phone to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the Elysee said, following a spike in diplomatic tensions.

The French presidency said the phone conversation took place but did not provide details.

Relations between Macron and Netanyahu have been strained in recent months over Israel’s blockade of Gaza and France’s plans to recognise a Palestinian state.

France and Saudi Arabia have been planning to co-chair a UN conference on a two-state solution for Israel and the Palestinians next week in New York.



French President Emmanuel Macron holds a press conference, at the Elysee Palace, in Paris, yesterday.

But Macron said yesterday evening that meeting had been postponed.

“While we have to postpone this conference for logistical and security reasons, it will take place as soon as possible,” Macron said at a press conference.

Israel pounded Iran in a series of air raids, striking 100 targets including nuclear and military sites, as well as killing the armed forces’ chief of staff.

In the aftermath of the strikes, Macron also spoke with leaders including Trump and the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia.

## Putin condemns Israeli strikes on Iran, says ready to mediate

AFP  
Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin condemned Israel’s wave of strikes on Iran, the Kremlin said yesterday, following separate phone calls with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Russia and Iran have deepened their military ties amid Moscow’s offensive on Ukraine, threatening its efforts to maintain warm relations with all major players in the Middle East.

“Vladimir Putin stressed that Russia condemns Israel’s actions, which violate the UN Charter and international law,” the Kremlin said in a statement yesterday.

He also told Netanyahu of his “readiness to provide mediation services in order to prevent further escalation of tensions”.

The Kremlin added that Russia was committed to “resolving the current situation, which is fraught with the most disastrous consequences for the entire region”.

Earlier yesterday, Russia had condemned Israeli strikes on Moscow’s ally Iran.

“Unprovoked military strikes against a sovereign UN member state, its citizens, peaceful cities and nuclear energy infrastructure are categorically unacceptable,” said a Russian foreign ministry statement, calling the strikes “atrocities”.

Putin and other top Russian officials have also condemned Israel’s actions in Gaza, though has so far managed to maintain working relations with Israel.

## Hezbollah warns Israel strikes ‘threaten to ignite the region’

AFP  
Beirut

Lebanese group Hezbollah condemned Israel’s wave of strikes on its backer Iran yesterday, warning that they threaten to “ignite the region”.

“This enemy adheres to no logic or laws

and knows only the language of killing, fire, and destruction,” Hezbollah said in a statement that condemned the strikes as a “brutal” aggression.

Long seen as the Iran-led axis’s most powerful group, Hezbollah was severely weakened after its latest war with Israel, which ended in a ceasefire agreement in November.





# Boat sinks on DR Congo lake, killing at least 40: officials

AFP  
Mbandaka

A passenger boat carrying mourners to a funeral sank on a lake in northwestern Democratic Republic of Congo, killing at least 40 people and leaving more missing, officials said yesterday.

The accident, which happened on Wednesday on Lake Tumba in

Equateur province, involved three large canoes that had been attached together, said provincial interior minister Crispin Mputu Molia.

“We’ve found 40 bodies so far and dozens of survivors. There’s also a still-undetermined number of people missing,” he told AFP.

A local resident, Dieu-Merci Akula, gave the death toll as 54. “Yesterday, we had 52 bodies, and two more were found this morn-

ing,” he said. The boat was carrying the body of a deceased woman and more than 200 people to a funeral in the village of Ikoko-Bonginda, the sources said. Mputu said witnesses had told officials the boat ran into large waves.

“The drivers were unable to cope,” he said. An investigation has been opened to determine the exact cause of the accident, he added. Mputu said the boat did not have a passenger list, making

it “difficult to say if it was overloaded”. A civil society group for Equateur province alleged the boat had been overcrowded, citing witnesses. “The boat was so overloaded (operators) were turning away passengers, but emotional and family pressure (from mourners) prevailed over calls for caution,” the group said in a statement. It called for an investigation to establish the role that “overloading, a lack of safety checks, notorious

carelessness (and) failure of the transportation system” played in the accident.

The DRC, an African giant rich in natural resources but racked by decades of conflict, is a frequent scene of deadly accidents on lakes and rivers, which serve as highways in many areas because of a lack of roads.

The absence of passenger lists often complicates search and rescue operations and makes it im-

possible to establish an exact death toll. In April, dozens of people died in a fire on a passenger boat on the Congo river in Equateur province. And in 2021, more than 100 died in a boat accident on the same river in neighbouring Mongala province.

After taking office in 2019, President Felix Tshisekedi tried to impose safety measures such as mandatory life vests for passenger vessels, but the regulations have largely been ignored.



Nevinina Onyango, the widow of Kenyan blogger Albert Ojwang who died in police custody, stands with his parents, Meshack Ojwang and Eucabeth Adhiambo, after giving a statement to the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), in Nairobi, yesterday.

# Kenya police officer in court over death in custody probe

AFP  
Nairobi

A Kenyan police officer appeared in court yesterday in connection with the death of a teacher in custody, a case that has ignited public outrage and renewed scrutiny of police brutality in the country. Albert Ojwang, 31, died in police custody last weekend after he was arrested over social media posts criticising a senior officer.

Police initially said Ojwang had fatally injured himself by banging his head against a wall, but a government pathologist later found the wounds were “unlikely to be self-inflicted”. Constable James Mukhwana, who was attached to the Nairobi Central Police Station, was arraigned in court by officers from the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA).

The watchdog requested three weeks to complete its investigation, telling the court Mukhwana was present on the night Ojwang was booked by Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) officers.

Police spokesman Michael Muchiri confirmed to AFP that a constable had been arrested over the incident, but referred further questions to IPOA, which did not



Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) CEO Elema Halake speaks during a press conference on the death of Kenyan blogger Albert Ojwang while in police custody at the Central Police Station, in Nairobi.

respond to a request for comment.

Earlier in the week, Muchiri said five officers had been removed from active duty, to “allow for transparent investigations”.

President William Ruto has called for a swift investigation, and promised on Friday that the government would “protect citizens from rogue police officers”. IPOA recently reported 18 people have died in police custody in the past four months. Ojwang’s death has become a catalyst for simmering anger over a spate of

abductions that followed mass anti-government protests last year, reviving long-standing allegations of police brutality in the east African nation. Protesters have called for the resignation of Deputy Inspector-General Eliud Kipkoech Lagat, whom Ojwang had criticised online.

Rights groups say dozens of people were illegally detained in the aftermath of last year’s rallies, with many still missing, and others have been arrested for criticism of Ruto and the government.

# Ethiopian editor of online journal freed after detention: publisher

AFP  
Addis Ababa

Ethiopian authorities have released the founder of an independent news outlet, his publisher said yesterday, after his detention last weekend drew condemnation from international press freedom watchdogs.

Tesfalem Waldyes, founder of online publication Ethiopia Insider, was detained by plainclothes police on June 8 at a hotel in the capital, Addis Ababa, on charges of “spreading false information”, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said earlier this week.

RSF and the Committee to

Protect Journalists had urged his release, and Amnesty International had condemned the “arbitrary arrest”. Ethiopia is regularly criticised by rights groups for the repression of dissenting voices, and has seen a surge in detentions of journalists in recent months. The east African giant of around 130mn people ranks 145th out of 180 countries in RSF’s 2025 press freedom index, which cites “widespread self-censorship”.

Ethiopia Insider announced its founder’s release in a post online, saying it was “delighted” and thanking friends and colleagues for their support during “his challenging detention”. Tesfalem has faced prison before.

He spent roughly 440 days in detention on charges of terrorism and incitement to violence after being arrested in 2014, with the charges only dropped weeks before former US president Barack Obama visited the country.

Three reporters from Ethiopian newspaper the *Addis Standard*, an English-language daily, were detained in April, and seven others from a broadcaster were arrested the previous month.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who came to power in 2018, was initially hailed for his openness. But rights groups have increasingly criticised a crack-down on freedom of speech in the country.



South African President Cyril Ramaphosa (centre) walks towards a bridge where a school transport bus was swept away after a flood near Mthatha.

# S Africa president blames climate change for ‘catastrophic’ flooding

AFP  
Mthatha

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa met yesterday with survivors of devastating floods that killed at least 78 people in the impoverished Eastern Cape province, blaming the “catastrophic disaster” on climate change.

Ramaphosa toured the disaster zone and met with survivors in the region, where thousands of houses, roads, schools and health facilities were left caked in mud after being completely submerged in floodwaters, leaving many people with nothing in one of the poorest parts of the country.

Rescuers were going door to door searching for bodies or possible survivors, as people got stuck inside their homes when the water rushed in during the night. Some managed to escape to their roofs, where they waited long hours for help.

Ramaphosa visited the site where a school bus was swept away, killing at least six children and three adults. Four of the children were still missing. He also spoke with a woman who lost her mother and at least two of her young nephews. The woman was sobbing as the president listened to her story.

“This is a catastrophic disaster which is caused by climate change,” said Ramaphosa, who estimated the flood waters had reached more than 4m (13ft) high.

“During winter, we expect cold as well as snow here in the Eastern Cape. Now that we are confronting floods, this goes to show the severity of the issue of climate change.”

Snow and heavy rainfall are common during winter in South Africa, but coastal parts of the country were hit by “unprecedented” weather conditions, Ramaphosa said on Thursday. According to the Green Climate



Residents of an informal settlement gather in a yard around their belongings after a flood near Mthatha.

**Earlier yesterday, bodies were still being retrieved from a nearby river. The area worst hit by the floods and subsequent landslides was the city of Mthatha, about 800km south of Johannesburg**

Fund, the country is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate variability and change, which increases the frequency and severity of extreme weather.

The death toll from the floods, which officials said stood at 78 on Thursday, could still rise. Earlier yesterday, bodies were still being retrieved from a nearby river. The area worst hit by the floods and subsequent landslides was the city of Mthatha, about 800km south of Johannesburg. The city is near the village of Qunu, birthplace of Nelson Mandela, the late anti-apartheid hero and former president.

The South African Red Cross Society, which sent aid to the Mthatha area, told AFP at least 3,500 households had been affected, with many people sheltering in community halls. AFP journalists on Thursday saw a

rescue team pull four bodies, some of them children, from a one-roomed house in the late afternoon. The surrounding area was strewn with debris and locals sobbed as they watched the recovery.

“When we came out of the house, the water was above the knee, all the furniture inside was floating,” Sopeseka, a survivor, told AFP.

Ali Sablay, a spokesperson for disaster response charity the Gift of the Givers Foundation, said the number of people requiring assistance could increase “dramatically”. “The homes are fragile, they can collapse anytime. Food is contaminated, so people need to be evacuated,” said Sablay.

At least 20 health facilities and 58 schools were damaged in Eastern Cape province, according to local authorities.

## Setting fire to arms



A police officer pours fuel on an assortment of 7,000 illicit firearms and small weapons recovered during various security operations before burning to destroy them, at the Regional Centre on Small Arms in the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa and Bordering States (RECSA), 20th anniversary celebrations, at the National Police Leadership Academy in the Bulbul area of Ngong district near Nairobi, Kenya.



# Judge blocks Trump administration from overhauling federal elections

Reuters  
Boston

A federal judge has blocked President Donald Trump's administration from implementing parts of his sweeping executive order overhauling federal elections, including by requiring proof of US citizenship to register to vote and barring states from counting mail-in ballots received after Election Day.

US District Judge Denise Casper in Boston issued a preliminary injunction at the behest of 19 Democratic-led states who had argued that the Republican president lacked the authority to mandate changes

to elections and the states' voting procedures.

The lawsuit is one of several across the nation challenging Trump's March 25 executive order, which he signed after years of raising doubts about the integrity of the US electoral system and falsely claiming that his 2020 loss to Democratic former president Joe Biden resulted from widespread voter fraud.

While parts of Trump's order had already been blocked in April by a judge in Washington, Casper's ruling went further as she concluded the states had established key pieces of the president's order were likely unlawful and unconstitutional.

"The Constitution does not grant the president any specific powers over elections," Casper, an appointee of Democratic president Barack Obama, wrote.

She said that "the text of the Election Day statutes require only that all votes are cast by Election Day, not that they are received by that date".

As a result, nothing bars 13 of the suing states that accept mail-in ballots postmarked by Election Day from counting them, the judge wrote, as she blocked the US Department of Justice from pursuing civil or criminal enforcement actions against any states that do not comply with Trump's order.

Casper also faulted provisions of

Trump's order tasking the US Election Assistance Commission with updating the federal voter registration form to require people to submit documentary proof they are US citizens.

She said that no one disputes that US citizenship is required to vote in federal elections, but "the authority for election requirements is in the hands of Congress", which has never required documentary proof of citizenship.

White House spokesperson Harrison Fields in a statement said that Trump "will keep fighting for election integrity, despite Democrat objections that reveal their disdain for commonsense safeguards like verifying citizenship".

"Free and fair elections are the bedrock of our constitutional republic, and we're confident in securing an ultimate victory in the courtroom," Fields said.

In announcing the executive order, Trump said it was needed to "straighten out our elections".

He and his Republican allies have made baseless claims about widespread voting by non-citizens, which rarely occurs.

California Attorney-General Rob Bonta, who co-led the litigation, said in a statement that Casper's ruling barred Trump's "unconstitutional attempt to interfere with states' fundamental responsibilities to manage and administer our elections".

## At least 2,680 killed in Haiti unrest so far this year: UN

AFP  
Geneva

At least 2,680 people were killed in Haiti in the first five months of the year, the United Nations said yesterday, voicing alarm at widening gang violence.

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western hemisphere with swathes of the country under the control of rival armed gangs who carry out murders, rapes and kidnappings.

UN human rights chief Volker Turk said the crisis had plummeted to a new low, with gangs extending their reach beyond the coastal capital Port-au-Prince into central regions.

The UN Human Rights Office said at least 2,680 people had been killed between January 1 and May 30, including 54 children.

Those figures were from information it has been able to verify, but it said the true toll would likely be far higher.

At least 957 others had been wounded and 316 kidnapped for ransom, it added.

Sexual violence by gangs and their recruitment of children was also still rising.

"Alarming as they are, numbers cannot express the horrors Haitians are being forced to endure on a daily basis," Turk said in a statement. "I am horrified by the ever-increasing spread of gang attacks and other human rights abuses beyond the capital, and deeply concerned by their destabilising impact on other countries in the region."

With law enforcement struggling to restore security, mobs and self-defence groups were taking matters into their own hands, leading to even more human rights abuses, he added.

Turk cited deadly clashes between gangs and so-called self-defence groups, including one in which at least 25 were killed with machetes.

While the country is nominally run by a transitional government, there has been a fresh surge of violence since February, with gangs pressing into previously safe areas.

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

A record number of people – almost 1.3mn – have been forced to flee their homes in Haiti due to violence, the UN's migration agency said on Wednesday.

Turk said that the coming months would test the international community's ability to take stronger action to stabilise Haiti and the wider region.

# US Marines deploy in Los Angeles

AFP/Reuters  
Los Angeles

The first US Marines ordered by Donald Trump to Los Angeles deployed yesterday, raising the stakes in a standoff that pits the president against protesters claiming growing authoritarianism.

The approximately 200 Marines are part of a group of 700 set to join 4,000 National Guard soldiers, while local police conduct a crackdown on unrest over Trump's sweeps for undocumented migrants.

The Marines – normally used as crack troops in foreign conflicts – were equipped with riot gear to guard a federal building, Major-General Scott Sherman told reporters.

Neither the Marines nor the National Guard troops in the city had temporarily detained anyone, he added.

"I would like to emphasise that the soldiers will not participate in law enforcement activities," Sherman said.

It is uncommon for active duty troops to be used domestically during civil disturbances.

The last time the military was used for direct police action under the Insurrection Act was in 1992, when the California governor at the time asked then-president George HW Bush to help respond to Los Angeles riots over the acquittal of police



A protester takes a break to apply makeup as demonstrations continue after a series of immigration raids that began last week in Los Angeles. -AFP



Right: US Marines guard the Wilshire Federal Building in Los Angeles. -AFP

officers who beat black motorist Rodney King.

An intense legal battle is underway over Trump's authority to deploy troops on US soil, as the country braces for widespread protests today, when the Republican will be overseeing a rare large-scale military parade in Washington.

The parade celebrates the 250th anniversary of the US Army but also coincides with Trump's 79th birthday and will be the

first time tanks and other heavy weaponry has rolled through the capital city in three decades.

A "No Kings" movement has sprung up promising to stage protests in more than 2,000 places across the country in response.

Trump dispatched about the California National Guard to Los Angeles last weekend following mostly peaceful, but occasionally violent protests against a surge in immigration raids in the second-largest US city.

In a show of political force, Trump overrode the objections of Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom who usually would control the Guard.

The president repeatedly exaggerated the scale of violence, claiming that without troops, Los Angeles would be "burning to the ground right now".

Late on Thursday District Judge Charles Breyer ruled that Trump's actions were "illegal" and ordered that he return control of the Guard to Newsom.

Breyer said the LA unrest fell "far short" of the "rebellion" that Trump had described.

However, a higher court quickly paused the order pending an appeal hearing with the Trump administration next Tuesday.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) slammed Breyer's ruling as "an extraordinary intrusion on the President's constitutional authority as Commander in Chief".

The dispute mirrors multiple other tussles over Trump's attempts to expand the limits of presidential power, but is the first to involve troops.

The use of Marines is especially controversial, although those deploying Friday will be at a building nowhere near the site of last week's protests.

Many in Los Angeles are angry about immigration raids carried out as part of Trump's ambition to deport vast numbers of undocumented migrants around the country.

Outrage at Trump's raids and the use of masked, armed immigration agents backed by uniformed soldiers has already sparked protests in other cities, including San Francisco, New York, Chicago and San Antonio, Texas.

"What brings me out here? The people that were taken, people who don't have voices. We are the voice for the people," Jasmine, a protester in Los Angeles, told AFP on Thursday.

Tensions hiked further when California Senator Alex Padilla, a Democrat, was handcuffed and forcibly removed from a news conference by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem.

The incident on Thursday "reeks of totalitarianism", Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said, calling for an investigation.

The White House hit back, claiming despite video evidence to the contrary, that Padilla "lunged toward Secretary Noem".

### Mexican citizen dies in US immigration detention centre

A Mexican citizen died in a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) detention centre from undetermined circumstances, Mexico's foreign ministry has said.

The death comes amid ongoing demonstrations in several US states, most prominently in California, against immigration enforcement raids launched by US President Donald Trump's administration.

The man died on June 7 at an ICE facility in the southern state of Georgia, where he was being held after he was transferred from a state prison, the foreign ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

US authorities notified the Mexican consulate in Georgia's capital Atlanta of the death.

"Consular staff has established communication with local and ICE authorities, as well as with the individual's family members, to clarify the facts, confirm the official cause of death, and provide legal advice and support to the family," the ministry said.

Mexico's foreign ministry said consular staff had not been notified to interview the detainee while he was in custody, despite regular visits to the facility to assist Mexican nationals.

"The consulate has requested an explanation from the (detention) centre's authorities," the ministry said.

It also said it was examining legal options and maintaining communication with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the state's independent investigative body. -AFP

## Americans split on Trump's use of military in immigration protests: poll

Americans are divided over President Donald Trump's decision to activate the military to respond to protests against his crackdown on migrants, with about half supportive of the move, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll that closed on Thursday.

Some 48% of respondents in the two-day poll agreed with a statement that the president should "deploy the military to bring order to the streets" when protests turn violent, while 41% disagreed.

Views on the matter split sharply along partisan lines, with members of Trump's Republican Party overwhelmingly backing the idea of calling in troops while Democrats were firmly opposed.

At the same time, just 35% of respondents said they approved of Trump's response to the protests in Los Angeles, which has included sending National Guard troops and US Marines to the city and also threatening to arrest Democratic officials, including the governor of California.

Some 50% of people in the survey said that they disapproved of the US president's response.

Trump has argued the military deployment in Los Angeles was needed due to protests there following a series of immigration raids in the city.

Some of the demonstrations in Los Angeles have turned violent – leaving burned out cars on city streets – and 46% of respondents in the Reuters/Ipsos poll said protesters opposing Trump's immigration policies had gone too far, compared to 38% who disagreed with that view.

The protests have spread to other US cities including New York, Chicago, Washington and San Antonio, Texas – all of which have large immigrant populations and tend to vote for Democrats rather than Republicans.

Trump campaigned and won last year's election on a promise to increase deportations of undocumented immigrants and Reuters/Ipsos polls have shown that his support on immigration policy has been consistently higher than on other matters, such as his stewardship of the US economy.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll, which surveyed 1,136 Americans

nationwide and has a margin of error of about three percentage points, showed wide support for increased deportations.

Some 52% of respondents – including one in five Democrats and nine in 10 Republicans – backed ramping up deportations of people in the country illegally.

Still, 49% of people in the poll said Trump had gone too far with his arrests of immigrants, compared to 40% who said he had not done so.

The most heated protests have taken place in Los Angeles County, where one in three residents is an immigrant and about half of people born abroad are naturalised US citizens, according to US Census estimates.

Nationwide, Americans took a generally dim view of Trump's threats to arrest Democratic officials like California Governor Gavin Newsom, a Democrat.

Just 35% of respondents said Trump should order arrests of state and local officials who try to stop federal immigration enforcement. - Reuters

## No. 2 US diplomat questions need for Nato in deleted social media post

The number two US diplomat questioned the need for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) in a post on X – which he later deleted – as the alliance prepares for an annual summit expected to be dominated by a US demand for higher defence spending and Russia's war on Ukraine.

Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau was replying to a social media thread by Matthew Whitaker, the US ambassador to Nato.

Whitaker in his post said that what happened in the Indo-Pacific mattered for transatlantic security.

"He obviously didn't get the memo our of our Deputies Committee meeting on this very issue," Landau wrote at 6.56pm on Wednesday, referring to Whitaker. "Nato is still a solution in search of a problem."

It was not clear if Landau meant for his message to be public or if he intended to send Whitaker's post to a third person.

"This was a casual, lighthearted remark intended for a brief, private exchange," a State Department spokesperson said in e-mailed comments.

"The Deputy Secretary's comment was in the context of his desire to improve Nato and ensure it remains focused on its mission," the spokesperson said.

Landau's post was later deleted.

The Deputies Committee is subordinate to the National Security Council and composed of deputy secretaries of State, Defence and other agencies, according to the White House website.

The administration of former president Joe Biden had pushed the European allies to pay more attention to the threats in the Indo-Pacific, particularly from China, but the Trump administration has encouraged those allies to focus on their own security.

Landau's post contrasts with views of most of Nato's European members, who see Russia and its war on Ukraine as an existential threat, and the US-led alliance as their main means of defence.

His post came as Nato leaders prepare for a two-day summit in the Hague beginning on June 24, where they will consider US President Donald Trump's demand that they boost defence spending to 5% of GDP.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky is expected to attend the meeting.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, he regularly has attended Nato summits, and alliance members have pledged billions in weapons and condemned Russia for an illegal war of conquest.

Trump has shifted US policy, partially accepting Moscow's justifications for its full-scale invasion in February 2022 and disparaging Zelensky.

European allies have expressed concern about Trump's commitment to the 32-member alliance and its support for Ukraine's battle against Russia's occupation forces. - Reuters

## Google sues LATAM Airlines in US over Brazilian YouTube video dispute

Reuters  
San Jose

Alphabet's Google sued Chile-based LATAM Airlines in US federal court in San Jose, California on Thursday, seeking a declaration that Brazilian courts cannot force the tech giant to take down a YouTube video in the United States that accused a LATAM employee of abusing a child.

Google in the lawsuit said that LATAM was attempting to "make an end-run" around protections for free speech under the US Constitution by suing in Brazil to force the video's removal worldwide.

Spokespeople for LATAM did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Google's allegations.

Google spokesperson Jose Castaneda said in a statement

that the company has "long supported the legal principle that courts in a country have jurisdiction over content available in that country, but not over what content should be available in other countries".

Right-wing social media companies Trump Media and Rumble filed a similar lawsuit in Florida in February against a Brazilian judge who had ordered them to remove the US-based accounts of a leading supporter of former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro.

A federal judge decided in the case that the companies were not required to comply with the order in the United States.

According to Google's lawsuit, US citizen and Florida resident Raymond Moreira posted two YouTube videos in 2018 of his six-year-old son outlining allegations of sexual abuse that the child said he experienced from a LATAM employee while

travelling as an unaccompanied minor.

Moreira sued LATAM in Florida in 2020 over the alleged abuse, which led to a confidential settlement.

LATAM sued Google in Brazil in 2018 seeking an order to remove the video from YouTube, which Google owns.

A Brazilian appeals court is set to consider next week whether it has the authority to order Google to take down the video worldwide.

Google asked the court in California on Thursday to declare that LATAM cannot force the tech giant to remove the video in the United States.

Canada's Supreme Court upheld an order for Google to remove some search results worldwide in a separate case in 2018.

A California judge halted that order's US enforcement in 2017.





COMMENT

China blaming Japan for jet incidents ‘unacceptable’: Tokyo

Tokyo's defence minister said it was “unacceptable” for China to blame Japan for close encounters between their military planes over the Pacific high seas last weekend. Japan says recent Chinese military activities in the Pacific – where Beijing's two operating aircraft carriers were sighted simultaneously for the first time – reveal its intent to improve operational capacity in remote areas. Chinese officials have hit back, calling the carrier outings routine training. Japanese forces must “through warning and surveillance show Japan's will and capability to deter any attempt of changing the status quo by force unilaterally”, the defence minister Gen Nakatani told reporters.

OPINION

Taiwan politicising cable damage issue: China

China's government yesterday said Taiwan was deliberately politicising the damage of undersea communication cables as part of a smear campaign, expressing anger after the island jailed a Chinese ship captain for an incident earlier this year. A Taiwanese court on Thursday sentenced the captain of the Togo-flagged ship to three years in jail after finding him guilty of intentionally damaging undersea cables off the island in February, in an incident that alarmed Taiwan officials. In a statement, China's Taiwan Affairs Office said that damage to maritime cables were “common accidents”, saying Taiwan was hyping up the issue for political purposes.

POLITICS

Japan PM pledges cash handout for all citizens ahead of election

Japan's prime minister yesterday announced a cash handout of 20,000 yen (\$139) for every citizen – doubling it for children – to help households combat inflation ahead of the key July elections. The policy, whose budget is roughly estimated at more than 3trn yen, will be included in one of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's campaign pledges for the high-stakes Upper House elections, Shigeru Ishiba said. The race is crucial to Ishiba after public support for his government tumbled to its lowest level since he took office in October, which local media say was partly caused by a surge in inflation and soaring rice costs.

LAW AND ORDER

First hearing for Shinzo Abe murder suspect set for Oct

The first hearing for the man accused of killing Japan's former prime minister Shinzo Abe has been scheduled for October 28, local media reported yesterday. Tetsuya Yamagami, now in pre-trial detention, is accused of Abe's broad-daylight shooting that shocked the world in 2022. His trial was cancelled in 2023 when a suspicious item later found not to be dangerous was delivered to a court in western Japan's Nara region. Yamagami, 44, is believed to have targeted Abe over his ties to the Unification Church, which he held a grudge against over large donations his mother made that bankrupted his family.

# China-backed militia secures control of rare earth mines in Myanmar

Reuters  
Bangkok

Chinese-backed militia is protecting new rare earth mines in eastern Myanmar, according to four people familiar with the matter, as Beijing moves to secure control of the minerals it is wielding as a bargaining chip in its trade war with Washington.

China has a near-monopoly over the processing of heavy rare earths into magnets that power critical goods like wind turbines, medical devices and electric vehicles. But Beijing is heavily reliant on Myanmar for the rare earth metals and oxides needed to produce them: the war-torn country was the source of nearly half those imports in the first four months of this year, Chinese customs data show.

Beijing's access to fresh stockpiles of minerals like dysprosium and terbium has been throttled recently after a major mining belt in Myanmar's north was taken over by an armed group battling the Southeast Asian country's junta, which Beijing supports.

Now, in the hillsides of Shan state in eastern Myanmar, Chinese miners are opening new deposits for extraction, according to two of the sources, both of whom work at one of the mines. At least 100 people are working day-to-night shifts excavating hillsides and extracting minerals using chemicals, the sources said. Two other residents of the area said they had witnessed trucks carrying material from the mines, between the towns of Mong Hsat and Mong Yun, to-

ward the Chinese border some 200km away.

Reuters identified some of the sites using imagery from commercial satellite providers Planet Labs and Maxar Technologies.

Business records across Myanmar are poorly maintained and challenging to access, and Reuters could not independently identify the ownership of the mines.

The mines operate under the protection of the United Wa State Army, according to four sources, two of whom were able to identify the uniforms of the militia members.

The UWSA, which is among the biggest armed groups in Shan state, also controls one of the world's largest tin mines. It has long-standing commercial and military links with China, according to the US Institute of Peace, a conflict resolution non-profit.

University of Manchester lecturer Patrick Meehan, who has closely studied Myanmar's rare earth industry and reviewed satellite imagery of the Shan mines, said the “mid-large size” sites appeared to be the first significant facilities in the country outside the Kachin region in the north.

“There is a whole belt of rare earths that goes down through Kachin, through Shan, parts of Laos,” he said. China's foreign ministry said in response to questions that Chinese firms operating abroad are required to “abide by local laws and regulations and actively fulfil their social responsibilities.”

The UWSA and the junta did not respond to requests for comment.

Access to rare earths is increasingly important to Beijing, which tightened restrictions on its exports of metals and magnets after US President Donald Trump resumed his trade war with China this year. While China appears to have recently approved more exports and Trump has signalled progress in resolving the dispute, the move has upended global supply chains central to automakers, aerospace manufacturers and semiconductor companies.

The price of terbium oxide has jumped by over 27% across the last six months, Shanghai Metals Market data show. Dysprosium oxide prices have fluctuated sharply, rising around 1% during the same period.

A prominent circular clearing first appeared in the forested hills of Shan state, some 30km away from the Thai border, in April 2023, according to the satellite images.

By February 2025 – shortly after the Kachin mines suspended work – the site housed over a dozen leaching pools, which are ponds typically used to extract heavy rare earths, the images showed.

Around 6km away, across the Kok river, another forest clearing was captured in satellite imagery from May 2024. Within a year, it had transformed into a facility with 20 leaching pools.

Minerals analyst David Meriman, who reviewed two of the Maxar images, said the infrastructure at the Shan mines, as well as observable erosion levels to the topography, indicated that the facilities “have been producing for a little bit already.”

## Philippines schools set to reopen June 16



Parents and teachers clean a classroom at an elementary school in Manila, Philippines, yesterday ahead of the opening of classes on June 16.

# Duterte petitions ICC seeking interim release

Reuters  
Manila

Former Philippine president Rodrigo Duterte has petitioned the International Criminal Court to allow his interim release to another country, his lawyer said in a filing, citing his advanced age and a vow not to flee or commit any crimes.

Duterte was arrested and taken to The Hague in March on murder charges linked to his “war on drugs”, where thousands of alleged narcotics peddlers and users were

killed. He has maintained his arrest was unlawful and tantamount to kidnapping.

Duterte's counsel Nicholas Kaufman told the ICC's pre-trial chamber a third country had expressed its “advance and principled agreement to receive Duterte onto its territory”, according to the request released. The name of the country was redacted in the text released to the public.

Duterte is not a flight risk and will not commit crimes if released, his counsel said.

“Duterte is no longer the president of the Philippines, and does

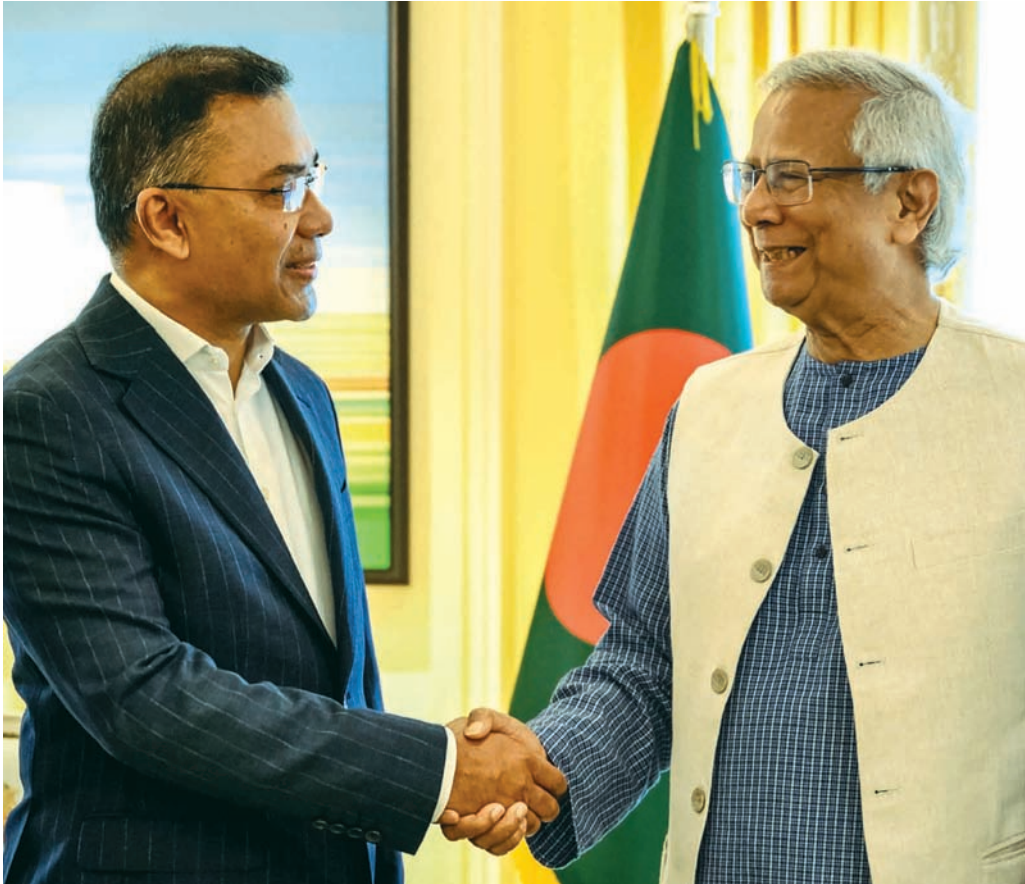
not command the same influence or power he is said to have abused during the period of the alleged crimes,” the request stated.

Duterte was swept to power in 2016 on a signature campaign to tackle crime and eradicate illegal drugs in the Philippines. During his six years in office, 6,200 suspects were killed during anti-drug operations, according to government data, but rights groups say the actual toll was far greater.

Duterte cited humanitarian reasons in his request, saying that he is already 80 years old.

## 22 police hurt in violent clashes in Northern Ireland

A fourth night of anti-immigrant unrest in Northern Ireland left another 22 officers injured, police said yesterday, as violent protests spread to a second town. Firing plastic bullets, police sought to drive back several hundred people who had gathered in the town of Portadown – some 80kms southeast of Ballymena, where an alleged sexual assault that sparked the violence took place. “Police in Portadown came under sustained attack from rioters throwing masonry and other missiles,” said Ryan Henderson, assistant chief constable with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). “Twenty-two officers were injured and I am so grateful to them for their bravery and selfless dedication in protecting the community of Portadown from this criminality,” he added. Three nights of unrest had already hit Ballymena, some 48kms northwest of Belfast, leaving a trail of damage, with 63 police officers now injured and 15 people arrested.



Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus (right) meets acting Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairman Tarique Rahman in London yesterday.

## Bangladesh's Yunus meets key party leader in London

AFP  
Dhaka

Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus yesterday met in London with Tarique Rahman, 59, the son of former prime minister Khaleda Zia.

Rahman is the acting chairman of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which is widely seen as likely to sweep elections that Yunus said will be held in April.

The exact date of the elections remains a sticking point but they will be the first in the nation of around 170mn people since a student-led revolt ousted former premier Sheikh Hasina in August 2024, ending her iron-fisted 15-year rule.

Yunus and Rahman were shown smiling and shaking hands in the meeting in London, according to photographs released by the government press team, although relations between the caretaker government and the BNP have

been rocky. Yunus's government warned last month that political power struggles risked jeopardising gains that have been made, saying that holding elections by mid-2026 would give them time to overhaul democratic institutions.

Hasina's rule saw widespread human rights abuses and her government was accused of politicising courts and the civil service, as well as staging lopsided elections.

Under pressure from political parties, including the BNP, Yunus said this month that polls will be held in April.

However, the BNP has continued to push for an earlier date.

The BNP said yesterday it wanted to hold the elections before Ramadan, which begins around February 17.

Khalilur Rahman, a senior member of Yunus' cabinet, said it was possible that the “election will be held earlier provided significant progresses in reforms and trials are made”.

# Cambodia orders troops on ‘alert’ in Thai border spat

AFP  
Phnom Penh

Cambodia ordered troops to stay on “full alert” and banned Thai dramas on television yesterday in an ongoing border spat between the Southeast Asian neighbours.

Phnom Penh also shut off Internet connections routed through Thailand on the eve of a meeting between the two sides aimed at defusing tensions following deadly clashes last month.

Violence flared on May 28 in an area known as the Emerald Triangle, where the borders of Cambodia, Thailand and Laos meet, with one Cambodian soldier killed.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet posted on Facebook late Thursday that the country was disconnecting all Internet bandwidth from Thailand, leaving some users complaining of slow speeds.

The ministries of information and cultures also ordered television stations and cinemas

to stop airing Thai TV series. Influential former leader Hun Sen – Hun Manet's father – urged the government yesterday to halt “imports of Thai goods into the Cambodian market” if Thailand refused to lift restrictions imposed on border checkpoints in recent days.

He told troops to be on alert, writing on Facebook: “All armed forces must remain on full alert 24 hours a day, ready to respond and defend in the event of aggression.”

Hun Sen also urged authori-

ties in provinces near the border be prepared to evacuate residents to safer areas. Cambodian authorities also announced that the popular Daung-Ban Laem border crossing with Thailand was closed indefinitely from yesterday. The Cambodian immigration department said the measure was to keep “security and safety for people”.

In another Facebook post, Hun Sen encouraged Thai farmers to protest against their military.

He said Cambodia would reopen the border crossing when all

border restrictions imposed by the Thai military were lifted.

Cambodian and Thai officials will meet in Phnom Penh today to discuss the border dispute.

The row dates back to the drawing of the 800km frontier, largely done during the French occupation of Indochina.

The region has seen sporadic violence since 2008, resulting in at least 28 deaths.

Hun Manet announced earlier this month that Cambodia would file a complaint with the International Court of Justice (ICJ)

over four disputed border areas, including the site of the latest clash.

The ICJ ruled in 2013 that a disputed area next to Preah Vihear temple belonged to Cambodia, but Thailand says it does not accept the ICJ's jurisdiction.

On Sunday, armies from both countries agreed to reposition their soldiers in the site of the latest clash to avoid confrontations. Thailand has closed some border crossings and tightened border controls with Cambodia in recent days.





Rafiq Memon shows the picture of his family members, Javed Ali Syed, along with his wife Mariam Javed Ali Syed and two kids Zayn Ali Syed with Amani Ali Syed who died in the crash, at a hospital in Ahmedabad.

## Anxious families await dental identification of victims

Reuters  
Ahmedabad, India

Dozens of anxious family members sat outside a hospital yesterday waiting to collect bodies of loved ones killed in the Air India plane crash, as doctors worked to gather dental samples from the deceased and run identification checks.

In the world's worst aviation disaster in a decade, an Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner with 242 people on board bound for London took off from Ahmedabad on Thursday but crashed within about 30 seconds, erupting into a massive fireball. Outside the B J Medical College in

Ahmedabad, an elderly woman said four of her relatives including two children were onboard the flight, but declined to speak further to the media until the bodies were handed over.

"Can you give us the dead bodies? If not then we will not give interviews. We are so tired now," she said in frustration.

Other relatives sat patiently at the hospital where many have in recent hours given blood samples for DNA profiling at a dedicated centre for collection.

At the hospital, Jaishankar Pillai, a forensic dentist, told reporters the doctors were in the autopsy room until 4.30am yesterday collecting dental samples, as "teeth can withstand the heat", and they hoped they could use

them for identification. We have recorded the dental records of 135 charred victims ... it's a very pathetic situation," said Pillai, adding he did not have data for how many bodies had been identified so far.

Officials outside the autopsy room said at least seven bodies had been handed over to their relatives after identification checks. The state administration said in a statement 219 relatives of crash victims had come forward for DNA testing and blood samples, while many others were being contacted.

Scenes of distress played out beside the autopsy room. Daksha Patni was mourning the loss of her nephew, 14-year-old Akash Patni, and wailing as she waited for his body. Akash had been

near his family-run tea stall and was killed on the ground by the impact of the plane hitting a building.

"Hospital people aren't giving any good response. They are just saying 'come after 72 hours! We are poor - that's why we are not allowed inside,'" Daksha said.

A family member of another victim, 81-year-old Abdur Razzaq Chitthi Wala, said he was not being allowed to verify the body.

"I received a video showing his body, it's burnt, but the face is clearly visible. All I'm asking is to let me verify the body," said the relative, who did not share his name during the interview.

"They are saying give your blood sample, and you will get a call!"

# Air India crash probe focuses on engine, flaps; govt orders checks on 787 fleet

Reuters  
Ahmedabad, India

The investigation into the Air India plane crash that killed more than 240 people is focusing on the engine, flaps and landing gear, a source said yesterday, as the aviation regulator ordered safety checks on the airline's entire Boeing-787 fleet.

The Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner with 242 people on board bound for Gatwick Airport south of London began losing height moments after take-off over a residential area of the western city of Ahmedabad and erupted in a huge fireball as it hit buildings below, CCTV footage showed.

Only one passenger survived and local media reported that as many as 24 people on the ground were also killed as the plane crashed onto a medical college hostel during the lunch hour.

It was the world's worst aviation disaster in a decade.

A source with direct knowledge of the matter yesterday said Air India and the Indian government were looking at several aspects of the crash including issues linked to its engine thrust, flaps, and why the landing gear remained open as the plane took off and then came down within moments.

The probe is also looking at whether Air India was at fault, including on maintenance issues, the source said.

A possible bird-hit is not among the key areas of focus, the source said, adding that teams of anti-terrorism experts were part of the investigation process.

The government is considering whether it should ground the Boeing-787 fleet in the country during the probe, the source said. There was no immediate response to requests for comment on that from Air India, Boeing

## Bomb threat on Air India flight

An Air India flight from Phuket bound for New Delhi received an onboard bomb threat yesterday and made an emergency landing back on the Thai island, airport authorities said. All 156 passengers on flight AI 379 were escorted safely from the plane. No suspicious devices were found and there was no disruption to airport operations, authorities said. The incident occurred after a message with a bomb threat was found in one of the plane's lavatories after takeoff. Phuket airport general manager Monchai Tanode told a press conference, "Police took suspects for questioning but could not clearly say who wrote the note," he said.

and the aviation ministry.

Air India has more than 30 Dreamliners that include the Boeing 787-8 and 787-9 versions. A source in Air India said there had been no communication so far from the government on the possible grounding.

Separately, India's aviation regulator ordered Air India to conduct additional maintenance actions on its Boeing 787-8/9 aircraft equipped with GENx engines, including "one-time check" of the take-off parameters before the departure of every flight from midnight of June 15.

The airline has also been instructed to introduce 'flight control inspection' - checks to ensure control systems are working properly - in transit inspection, and to conduct power assurance checks, meant to verify the engine's ability to produce the required power, within two weeks.

The aviation ministry said that investigators and rescue workers had recovered the digital flight data recorder - one of the two black boxes on the plane - from the rooftop of the building on which the jet crashed.

There was no information on the cockpit voice recorder, the other black box, which is also crucial to the crash probe.

Indian conglomerate Tata Group took control of the for-

merly state-owned Air India in 2022, and merged it with Vistara - a joint venture between the group and Singapore Airlines - last year.

Investigators from India, the UK and the US have arrived to probe the crash and Tata will be fully transparent about the findings, Tata chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran said in an internal memo.

Chandrasekaran said Tata wants to understand what happened, adding, "We don't know right now."

Aircraft engine maker GE Aerospace said it supports the action being taken by India's aviation regulator for enhanced safety inspections of Air India's 787 fleet.

"Safety is our top priority," a GE Aerospace spokesperson said. "We are committed to providing all technical support necessary to understand the cause of this accident."

Earlier yesterday, rescue workers had finished combing the crash site and were searching for missing people and bodies in the buildings as well as for aircraft parts that could help explain why the plane crashed soon after taking off.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was briefed by officials on the progress of rescue operations when he visited the crash site in his home state of Gujarat yesterday. Modi also met some of the injured being treated in hospital.

"The scene of devastation is saddening," he said in a post on X.

Thursday's crash was the first for the Dreamliner since the wide-body jet began flying commercially in 2011, according to the Aviation Safety Network database.

The plane that crashed on Thursday flew for the first time in 2013 and was delivered to Air India in January 2014, Flightradar24 said. The passengers included 169 Indian nationals, 53 Britons, seven Portuguese and one Canadian.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits the crash site in Ahmedabad yesterday.

## Joy and grief for lone survivor's family

AFP  
Leicester, UK

The UK-based family of the lone survivor of the Air India crash were torn yesterday between joy at his miraculous escape and grief at the loss of his brother.

"We are happy Vishwash has been saved, but on the other hand we are just heartbroken about Ajay," his cousin said outside the family home in central Leicester.

Vishwash Kumar Ramesh, 40, is believed to be the only person to have survived the crash when Air India flight 171 plummeted from the sky shortly after taking off from the northern Indian city of Ahmedabad.

His brother, Ajay Kumar Ramesh, was on the same flight, but is believed to have perished in the disaster. There were 242 passengers and crew on the plane, including 53 British citizens.

At least 24 people were killed on the ground, officials said, after the plane landed on a canteen building where students were having lunch.

Since yesterday's tragedy, the small Leicester street where Ramesh's parents and younger brother lived has been flooded with visitors.

Ramesh lives not far away with his wife and son, his cousin Hiren Kantilal, 19, said.

Ajay also lived in the town, one of the oldest in England, and the two brothers ran a confectionary business together.

"They are wonderful people. They are greatest men I have ever seen in my life, both of them," said Kantilal. The brothers were returning to the UK after spending a few weeks on holiday in India, and the family had been waiting to go and pick them up at Gatwick airport.

Shortly after the crash, they were shocked when Ramesh, who had reportedly been in seat 11A, called his father to say he was alive. Ajay was seated at the other end of the row.

"Our plane crashed," Ramesh told his dad, according to his cousin. "He was bleeding all over and he said: 'I am just waiting for my brother and I don't know how I get out of the plane!'"

"He said: 'do not worry about me, try to find about Ajay Kumar' and he said: 'I am totally fine'" Kantilal said his cousin had waited for about 10 to 15 minutes seeking his brother, and then was whisked away to hospital by the rescue services.

Images which went viral on social media apparently showed Ramesh walking away from the wreckage of the plane, and have been splashed across the front pages of British media along with a photo of him in his hospital bed.

## Son searches for missing mother and daughter

Lunch break at a doctors' hostel in Ahmedabad turned fatal for many in the dining area when parts of an Air India aircraft crashed through its roof as the plane hurtled to the ground moments after takeoff, killing more than 240 people.

A day later, Thakur Ravi, who worked in the kitchen at the B J Medical College hostel, is still searching for his mother - a cook there - and his two-year-old daughter, who he left under her care. The last time he saw them was before he set off to deliver lunch boxes to senior doctors at the hospital, about half an hour before the crash.

"All the other women who cook food at the hostel managed to escape, but my mother and daughter got left inside ... I have searched everywhere but have not found them," he said yesterday. At least four undergraduate students and five relatives of students were killed in the crash, a resident doctor, who is part of the junior doctors' association at the college, said. Loud wails could be heard at the home of Akash, a resident of Ahmedabad who was charred to death as he rushed to save his mother who ran a tea stall near the hostel and was caught in the blaze of the crash but managed to escape. "Her son ran in to save her but got blinded by the smoke and... was completely burnt. He died in front of our eyes," Akash's aunt, Jasi, said adding that his mother sustained burn injuries and was undergoing treatment.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a visit to Ramesh yesterday at the hospital where he is being treated for burns and other injuries, footage on his YouTube channel showed.

"Everything happened in front of me, and even I couldn't believe how I managed to come out alive from that," Ramesh said from his hospital bed, speaking in Hindi to national broadcaster DD News.

His parents had also been desperately trying to contact his brother Ajay on Thursday. "The call was going through, but no-one was answering the call," Kantilal said.

At the family home, relatives were frantically scanning their phones to try to book a flight ticket to Ahmedabad.

Downing Street said that the foreign ministry had been in touch with Ramesh to offer him consular assistance.



A fire officer stands next to the crashed Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner aircraft, in Ahmedabad, India.

# India 'moves to conserve its rare earths, seeks halt to Japan exports'

Reuters  
New Delhi

India has asked state-run miner IREL to suspend a 13-year-old agreement on rare earth exports to Japan and to safeguard supplies for domestic needs, two sources familiar with the matter said, aiming to reduce India's dependence on China.

IREL also wants to develop India's capacity for rare earth processing, which is dominated globally by China and has become a weapon in escalating trade wars.

China has curbed its rare earth materials exports since April, pressuring automakers and high-tech manufacturers worldwide. In a recent meeting with auto and other industry executives, Indian Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal asked IREL to stop its exports of rare earths, mainly

neodymium, a key material used in magnets for electric vehicle motors, one of the sources said.

The commerce ministry, IREL and the department of atomic energy, which oversees IREL, did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

The sources declined to be identified because of the sensitivity of the matter.

Under a 2012 government agreement, IREL supplies rare earths to Toyotsu Rare Earths India, a unit of Japanese trading house Toyota Tsusho, which processes them for export to Japan where they are used to make magnets.

In 2024, Toyotsu shipped more than 1,000 metric tonnes of rare earth materials to Japan, commercially available customs data showed. That is one-third of the 2,900 tonnes mined by IREL, although Japan relies mainly on China for its rare earths supply.

Toyota Tsusho and Toyotsu did not

immediately respond to requests for comment.

IREL has been exporting rare earths due to a lack of domestic processing capacity, but following the recent disruptions to supplies of Chinese material it wants to keep its rare earths at home and expand domestic mining and processing, a second source said, adding that IREL is awaiting statutory clearances at four mines.

However, India may not immediately be able to stop supplies to Japan because they fall under a bilateral government agreement, the person said.

IREL wants this to be "amicably decided and negotiated because Japan is a friendly nation", the person added.

Japan's trade ministry said in a statement: "We would like to refrain from answering questions about bilateral exchanges in general, not just about this matter."

China's recent export controls on rare earth materials have rocked the global auto industry, which has warned of supply chain disruptions and production halts.

China also weaponised its supplies in 2010, when it briefly stopped shipments to Japan. That prompted the Japanese to turn to India for rare earths.

India has the world's fifth-largest rare earth reserves, at 6.9mn metric tonnes, but there is no domestic magnet production. India relies on imported magnets, mainly from China.

In the fiscal year to March 2025, India imported 53,748 metric tonnes of rare earth magnets, government data showed. These are used in automobiles, wind turbines, medical devices and other manufactured goods.

Rare earth mining is restricted to IREL, which supplies India's atomic energy department with materials for nuclear pow-

er projects and defence-related applications. India lacks wide-scale technology and infrastructure to mine rare earths, and the development of any commercially viable domestic supply chain is years away, analysts said.

IREL has a rare earths extraction plant in the eastern Indian state of Odisha and a refining unit in Kerala, in southern India. The miner, founded in 1950, plans to produce 450 metric tonnes of extracted neodymium in the fiscal year to March 2026 with a plan to double that by 2030, the second person said.

It is also looking for a corporate partner for the production of rare earth magnets for the auto and pharmaceutical industries, the person said.

India is firming up plans for incentives to companies to set up rare earth processing and magnet production facilities to meet local demand, people familiar with the matter said earlier this month.



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GULF TIMES

War, trade and air crash cast cloud over Paris Air Show

War, tariffs and the Air India crash will cast a shadow over the Paris Air Show as the aerospace industry's biggest annual gathering opens on Monday.

More than 2,400 companies from 48 countries are showing off their hardware at the week-long event at Le Bourget airfield on the outskirts of Paris.

The sales rivalry between Airbus and Boeing usually drives the headlines as the world's top civilian planemakers announce many of their biggest orders at the air show.

But this year's event "is much more complex", said Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury, who also chairs the board of the Gifas association of French aerospace firms that organises the biennial event.

The list of challenges is growing.

Russia's war in Ukraine is stretching into its fourth year and there are fears of a wider conflict in the Middle East after Israel launched strikes on Iran yesterday, disrupting commercial flights across the region.

The world economy is expected to slow sharply after US President Donald Trump launched his tariff blitz in April.

And Boeing is facing a new crisis after Thursday's crash of a 787 Dreamliner operated by Air India in the city of Ahmedabad, which killed at least 265 people on board and on the ground.

Boeing chief executive Kelly Ortberg cancelled plans to attend the Paris Air Show to focus on the investigation into the crash.

Prior to the tragedy, Boeing had been making progress under a new leadership as the US company sought to restore trust after a series of safety and quality lapses.

The Paris Air Show is also about showing off the latest military hardware, at a time of conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East

Boeing and its European rival, Airbus, have also been dealing with delays in delivering aircraft due to supply chain issues.

Trump's tariff onslaught has added to the issues facing the industry, which relies on a global supply chain.

Trump imposed 10% tariffs on US imports of goods from nearly every country in April, and steeper levies on dozens of countries could kick in next month.

The Trump administration is also mulling whether to impose sector-specific tariffs of between 10 and 20% on civil aircraft and parts.

The heads of Airbus and Boeing have both called for tariffs to return to zero as had been the case since a 1979 agreement.

"The entire Western aerospace industry considers that would be the best that could happen," said Faury.

In a recent interview with trade journal Aviation Week, Ortberg warned that that tariffs are an added cost for Boeing, which has been financially weakened in recent years by production problems.

We're "not in a position to pass those (costs) along to our customers," he told Aviation Week. "I'm hopeful that, as each of these country-by-country negotiations resolve, those tariffs will go away in the long run." The tariff problems come as the industry has yet to fully recover from effects of the Covid pandemic on its supply chain.

Airbus is having trouble getting enough fuel-efficient engines for its top-selling A320 family of single-aisle jets, holding back the delivery of around 40 aircraft.

The main bottleneck is a lack of toilets for widebody aircraft, said Christian Scherer, the head of Airbus's commercial aircraft division. The Paris Air Show is also about showing off the latest military hardware, at a time of conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East. European countries are boosting defence budgets in the face of the Ukraine war and fears about Trump's commitment to the Nato alliance.

"The geostrategic environment has led us to bolster this aspect which was in the background in previous years," said Gifas head Frederic Parisot. Some 75 companies related to weapons production will be participating at the show, with military jets, helicopters and drones to be displayed.

Lockheed Martin's F-35 fifth-generation stealth multirole fighter will be featured, along with the Rafale produced by France's Dassault Aviation. — AFP

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Lessons from the Trump-Musk feud

By Carla Norrlöf  
Washington, DC

Earlier this month, after completing his stint as a "special government employee," Elon Musk wasted no time criticising US President Donald Trump and congressional Republicans' One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The deficit-heavy spending and tax-cut package will bankrupt America, Musk warned, before calling on senators and congressmen to "kill the bill."

Musk's comments triggered an escalating exchange of threats and recriminations between him and Trump (each relying on his own social media platform). But as of this week, Musk has had enough. Having deleted several incendiary posts and issued an apology, he appears to have learned the hard way what happens when a private empire picks a fight with a sovereign.

The asymmetry is razor sharp: A country issuing its own currency cannot go bankrupt like a corporation, yet it can wield fiscal, regulatory, and legal powers capable of bankrupting private enterprises. Investors took notice and showed how quickly political risk can rattle markets. During Musk and Trump's contretemps, Tesla shares plunged 14% in a single day, erasing \$150bn in market value with no other news.

But this is not just about a tech mogul walking back a few impulsive tweets. Musk's first big mistake was to treat the Treasury as if it were a corporate finance department. His claim that adding roughly \$2-2.5tn to the deficit would bankrupt America applied balance-sheet logic to a currency-issuing sovereign – a category mistake. In business, too much debt can indeed force bankruptcy. But the US government cannot run out of dollars. It can always create the money it owes, which is not true for companies, households, or even the world's richest person.

The salient risk, then, is not government insolvency, but inflation. If deficit spending outpaces the economy's productive capacity, it can drive up prices, erode household purchasing power, and lead to higher interest rates that raise borrowing costs. Inflation typically produces investor unease,



Elon Musk's money aided Donald Trump's election campaign last year, but now Trump's political power threatens Musk's empire.

causes sovereign-bond yields to rise, and places downward pressure on the currency. These are all serious economic costs, but they do not rise to the level of insolvency. The US cannot be forced into default on its dollar-denominated debt.

Eurozone countries are in a different position, because they don't control the currency they use. Since the euro is issued by the European Central Bank, countries like Greece, Italy, or Spain cannot create the currency with which to service their debts. If their revenues collapse or their borrowing costs surge, they cannot print euros to close the gap. Their ability to repay depends wholly on decisions made by a central authority that they don't control. Eurozone governments can suffer the same kind of solvency crisis that businesses can, whereas countries like the US and Japan cannot.

At the same time, governments can inflict devastating harm on private actors by withdrawing contracts, rescinding subsidies, tightening regulations, or launching investigations – all levers that no private rival can match. Musk's apology reflected this asymmetry. His enterprises – Tesla, SpaceX/Starlink, Neuralink – have been highly dependent on government contracts, subsidies, and regulatory approvals. By withholding these forms of support, Trump can inflict tens of billions of dollars of losses on Musk, who as a private magnate lacks any reciprocal mechanism to bankrupt the Treasury.

True, some government agencies have become dependent on Musk's companies. SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft is now Nasa's only operational transport for US crew; without it, Nasa would have to go back to relying on Russian Soyuz capsules to reach the International Space Station. Still, the US government could have withdrawn its backing for Musk's companies, tightened its oversight of them, or launched burdensome official inquiries.

Musk underestimated just how dependent his own businesses are on state support. Notably, his apology came after Trump threatened "very serious consequences" in response to Musk's threat to shift his financial support away from Republicans. Such a public retreat demonstrates that money may buy access, but it provides no shield against the unrivalled tools of state power.

Misapplying corporate logic to public finance does not just mislead the public. It also can invite political and regulatory blowback from an entity that is far more resilient than any private enterprise. In today's political climate, even industry titans like Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, the owner of the *Washington Post*, have adjusted their posture to avoid the Trump administration's ire. When business interests depend on federal goodwill, any act of dissent can be perilous.

Musk's money aided Trump's election campaign last year, but now Trump's political power threatens Musk's empire. If nothing else, by vividly demonstrating that the Treasury is not Tesla, their dispute has contributed to informed public debate about fiscal policy. When people mistake government debt for corporate debt, they demand the wrong policies, ultimately weakening public institutions and destabilising the private sector that depends on them. – Project Syndicate

• Carla Norrlöf, Professor of Political Science at the University of Toronto, is a non-resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council.

Political changes don't weaken the case for green business

By Jonathan Hall  
London

Since Donald Trump's return to the White House, the US has taken an everything-everywhere-all-at-once approach to disrupting the domestic and global status quo, and sustainability and climate commitments have been among its first targets. Trump immediately signed an executive order withdrawing the US from the Paris climate agreement, and his administration then cancelled funding for clean-energy projects under the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Against this backdrop, some companies are quietly downplaying or abandoning their previously announced environmental and climate commitments.

But no amount of shock-and-awe policy disruption in one country compares to the disruption caused by climate change. Already, the financial costs from disrupted global supply chains – owing to water stress, biodiversity loss, and land degradation – are projected to reach up to \$25tn by 2060.

Businesses that fail to manage these risks will face higher costs, increased regulatory scrutiny, and reputational damage. For example, automakers that are slow-playing the transition to electric vehicles may find themselves scrambling to catch up as more governments enact legislation to phase out internal combustion engines in the coming years. In time, legacy auto brands are likely to face the same kind of scrutiny and reputational fallout that oil and gas producers have.

By contrast, companies that proactively build greater resilience throughout their businesses and supply chains will benefit from greater investor confidence, and thus lower capital costs. For example, some business resort to techniques to manage the risk that climate change poses to their production.

But with the climate-finance industry focused mostly on the net-zero agenda (reducing emissions), physical risks and climate-adaptation needs have not received the attention they merit. As a result, banks, asset managers, and (especially) insurers are sitting on a time bomb of potential liabilities. Adapting to a world characterised by biodiversity loss, water stress, and other risks is now crucial to maintaining



corporate profitability over the long term.

Far-sighted countries and companies will recognise that this upheaval represents an opportunity. In separate studies, McKinsey Sustainability and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) estimated the economic opportunity represented by the sustainable transition at \$12tn per year by 2030.

Similarly, Kantar BrandZ assessments show that perceptions of sustainability enhance brand equity (value in the eyes of customers), drive sales, and allow brands to command a premium. Yet even as sustainability perceptions add as much as 10% to the value of the top 100 brands, these companies are still leaving an estimated \$600bn on the table. The next decade of business will be defined by companies that recognise sustainability as an economic imperative, rather than just a regulatory requirement.

Economic power is shifting fast with the impending generational transfer of wealth. In the US alone, the transfer of wealth from Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) to Millennials (1981-96) and Gen Z (1997-2012) could amount to \$84.4tn over the next 20 years.

As Millennial and Gen Z consumers become more dominant in the marketplace, they are seeking brands that reflect their values, and chief among these is a preference for mutualism over individualism: a sense of community and

shared responsibility for collective gain in the face of anticipated uncertainty and adversity. In this context, businesses like Airbnb, Vinted, and IKEA are stealing a march with brand communications that focus on co-operation, community, and a sense of belonging. Airbnb's stated purpose, for example, is to "create a world where anyone can belong anywhere."

Most of the business community understands what it at stake. In Kantar's work with the Climate Governance Initiative, 88% of board directors told us that climate change requires new thinking and new forms of leadership from top executives to the workforce, and 84% viewed climate-related challenges as opportunities for business innovation.

As global business leaders increasingly recognise the need for a new mindset, one finds more and more brands exploring circular business models – such as reuse, repair, and rental – that allow them to differentiate themselves, strengthen customer loyalty, and unlock new revenue streams. IKEA's CIRKULÄR initiative, for example, uses financial rewards, humour, and green imagery to encourage customers to buy and sell used IKEA items, decoupling growth from the production of new items.

As global markets increasingly focus on business resilience and respond to the rise of industrial policy and longer-term investment strategies, companies that adapt to generational change will be best positioned to lead the next industrial revolution. We are experiencing much more than the shock of US policy shifts. To remain credible in the eyes of consumers and investors, brands and businesses will have to get serious about building climate resilience into their operations – whether by addressing single points of failure in their supply chains or by implementing robust crisis and recovery plans.

For businesses, the need to adapt to climate change isn't going away, and neither is consumer demand for sustainable solutions. Globally, 85% of people surveyed still want to make "greener" choices in their purchases. Companies that shun, renounce, or postpone climate-attuned strategies do so at their own peril. – Project Syndicate

• Jonathan Hall, Managing Partner of the Sustainable Transformation Practice at Kantar, is a non-executive director at Water Unite and a member of the Executive Council for the Oxford Future of Marketing Initiative.



UN adopts convention on workplace biological hazards

The first convention on protecting workers from the devastating impact of uncontrolled biological hazards was adopted at the United Nations yesterday.

The Biological Hazards in the Working Environment Convention was adopted by the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The ILO's 187 member states are equally represented by governments, employers and trade unions. The text was adopted to applause at the annual International Labour Conference. There were 406 votes in favour, 12 against and 13 abstentions.

The adoption "marks a historic step forward in global labour standards, addressing a long-standing gap in international legislation", said conference president Edgar Moyo, Zimbabwe's labour minister.

"These instruments provide a comprehensive framework to prevent and manage biological risks across all sectors and occupations.

"They reaffirm the fundamental right to a safe and healthy working environment and reflect a shared global commitment to safeguarding workers from invisible and evolving threats."

The convention constitutes the first international instrument specifically addressing biological hazards in the working environment at the global level.

It provides a definition of hazards, prevention and protection measures, and establishes obligations for employers and rights and duties for workers.

The convention applies to all workers in all branches of economic activity, but requires countries to take specific measures in certain high-risk sectors and occupations.

It requires employers to establish procedures to deal with emergencies.

The coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic killed millions of people, shredded economies and crippled health systems, highlighting the potential of biological hazards.

Other diseases like bird flu, mpox and Ebola have also caused major international concern.

However, exposure to the viruses that cause contagious diseases is just one of many biological hazard situations that workers might face.

In workplaces like hospitals and laboratories, cattle farms, grain silos, sewage facilities and in waste collection, workers may be exposed to a range of biological hazards, says the ILO.

These include bacteria, viruses, parasites, fungi, DNA material, bodily fluids, and other microorganisms, allergens and toxins.

The convention lists biological hazards, and is accompanied by a second text, a "recommendation", which provides further details.

Hazards can be of plant, animal or human origin.

The text concerns all irritants, allergens and toxins of animal or plant origin, including venom but not pollen, that could bring about reactions or toxicity upon exposure.

The convention requires countries to have procedures for reporting workplace accidents, occupational diseases and dangerous occurrences caused by exposure to biological hazards in the workplace - and to investigate "serious cases" - **AFP**

Nations advance ocean protection

AFP  
Nice

A global oceans summit wrapped up yesterday with world leaders taking major steps toward marine protection and vowing a showdown when nations meet to negotiate rules for deep-sea mining next month.

However, as a cacophony of ship fog-horns sounded the close of the UN Ocean Conference in France, a lack of funding pledges and the total omission of fossil fuels disappointed some observers.

The summit was just the third - and largest yet - dedicated entirely to what the United Nations calls an "emergency" in the world's oceans.

More than 60 heads of state and government joined thousands of business leaders, scientists and environmental campaigners over five days in the southern city of Nice.

There was unanimous praise for efforts to ratify the high seas treaty designed to protect marine life in the 60% of oceans that lie beyond national waters.

Some 19 countries ratified the pact at Nice, taking the tally to 50 - but 60 nations are needed to bring the treaty into force.

France's oceans envoy, Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, said the numbers would be reached by September and the treaty should take effect by January, 2026.

Rebecca Hubbard, director of the High Seas Alliance, welcomed the "incredible progress" but urged "all remaining nations to ratify without delay".

The summit sought a collective lift for oceans even as countries brace for tough talks over deep-sea mining in July and a plastic pollution treaty in August.

More than 90 ministers called in Nice for the treaty to enshrine limits on plastic production - something fiercely opposed by oil-producing nations.

The summit also rallied behind a defence of science and rules-based oversight of common resources - most notably the unknown depths of the oceans - in a direct rebuke of US President Donald Trump.

Trump was not present in Nice and rarely mentioned by name, but his shadow loomed as leaders thundered against his unilateral push to mine the ocean floor for nickel and minerals.

France and like-minded countries vowed to block any effort to permit deep-sea exploration at negotiations over a mining code at the International Seabed Authority

next month, said Poivre d'Arvor.

"Nobody knows what is there in the deep sea... you cannot launch recklessly down this path," he said in a closing address.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged caution, warning against turning the deep sea into "the wild west".

Leaders "made it unmistakably clear: deep-sea mining is one of the biggest threats facing our ocean, and the world is saying no", said Sofia Tsenikli from the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition.

However, for all the rhetoric, a global alliance opposed to deep-sea mining only attracted four new members at Nice, rising to 37 nations.

Greece, Samoa and Colombia were among 14 nations who unveiled plans for vast new marine protected areas, taking the share of the world's oceans under conservation to more than 10%.

Some also announced restrictions on bottom trawling, a destructive fishing method captured in grisly detail in a new David Attenborough documentary.

Activists had pushed for a total ban on this kind of trawling, which uses heavy weighted nets dragged across the ocean floor.

Developing nations hoping their larger

and wealthier counterparts would open the chequebook in Nice were disappointed.

Small island nations in particular have long complained they lack the finances required to build seawalls against rising tides and protect their waters from illegal fishers.

While private donors pledged around €8.7bn (\$10bn) over the next five years, the UN says \$175bn a year is needed for sustainable ocean development.

Fossil fuels - the main driver of climate change, ocean warming and the acidification of the seas - were notably absent for a summit dedicated to marine protection.

"Ignoring the imperative of phasing out offshore oil and gas is not just an injustice: it is inadmissible," said Bruna Campos from the Center for International Environmental Law.

The summit closed with the unanimous adoption of a political statement, negotiated over many months, that contained no mention of coal, oil and gas.

"We must all reckon with the reality that you cannot protect the ocean without confronting the biggest root cause bringing it to the breaking point," former US special climate envoy John Kerry said in a statement.

Small revolution among women in Pakistan valley

By Nisar Ali  
AFP

In a sawdust-filled workshop nestled in the Karakoram Mountains, a team of women carpenters chisel away at cabinets - and forge an unlikely career for themselves in Pakistan.

Women make up just a fraction of Pakistan's formal workforce.

However, in a collection of villages sprinkled along the old Silk Road between China and Afghanistan, a group of women-led businesses is defying expectations.

"We have 22 employees and have trained around 100 women," said Bibi Amina, who launched her carpentry workshop in 2008 at the age of 30.

Hunza Valley's population of around 50,000, spread across mountains abounding with apricot, cherry, walnut and mulberry orchards, follow the Ismaili branch of Shia Islam.

Ismailis are led by the Aga Khan, a hereditary position held by a family with Pakistani roots now living in Europe.

The family opened a girls' school in Hunza in 1946, kickstarting an educational investment that pushed the valley's literacy rate to 97% for both men and women.

That rate far outstrips the country average of around 68% for men and 52.8% for women.

As a result, attitudes have shifted, and women like Amina are taking expanded roles.

"People thought women were there to wash dishes and do laundry," Amina said of the generation before her.

Trained by the Aga Khan Foundation to help renovate the ancient Altit Fort, Amina later used her skills to start her own business.

Her carpenters are currently at work on a commission from a luxury hotel.

Only 23% of the women in Pakistan were officially part of the labour force as of 2024, according to data from the World Bank.

In rural areas, women rarely take on formal employment but often toil in the fields to support the family's farming income.

In a Gallup poll published last year, a third of women respondents said their father or husband forbade them from taking a job, while 43.5% said they had given up work to devote themselves to domestic tasks.

Cafe owner Lal Shehzadi spearheaded women's restaurant entrepreneurship in Hunza.

She opened her cafe at the top of a winding high street to supplement her husband's small army pension.

Sixteen years later, her simple set-up



In this photograph taken on May 20, women carpenters work at a workshop in Karimabad, in the Hunza district of Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region. -AFP

overlooking the valley has become a popular night-time tourist attraction.

She serves visitors traditional cuisine, including yak meat, apricot oil and rich mountain cheese.

"At the start, I used to work alone," she said. "Now, 11 people work here and most of them are women. And my children are also working here."

Following in Shehzadi's footsteps, Safina quit her job to start her own restaurant around a decade ago.

"No one wanted to help me," she said.

Eventually, she convinced family members to sell two cows and a few goats for the money she needed to launch her business.

Now, she earns the equivalent of around \$170 a month, more than 15 times her previous income.

The socio-economic progress of women in Hunza compared to other rural areas of Pakistan has been driven by three factors, according to Sultan Madan, the head of the Karakoram Area Development Organisation and a local historian.

"The main reason is the very high literacy rate," he told AFP, largely crediting the Aga Khan Foundation for funding training programmes for women. "Secondly, agriculture was the backbone of the economy in the region, but in Hunza the landholding was meagre and that was why women had to work in other sectors."



In this photograph taken on May 22, Fahima Qayyum (left) practices at a football ground. -AFP

Women's increased economic participation has spilled into other areas of life, like sports fields.

"Every village in the valley has a women's soccer team: Gojal, Gulmit, Passu, Khyber, Shimsal," said Nadia Shams, 17.

On a synthetic pitch, she trains with her teammates in jogging pants or shorts, forbidden elsewhere by Pakistan's dress code.

Here, one name is on everyone's lips: Malika-e-Noor, the former vice-captain of the national team who scored the winning penalty against the Maldives in the 2010 South Asian Women's Football Championship.

Fahima Qayyum was six years old when she witnessed the killer kick.

Today, after several international matches, she is recruiting the next generation.

"As a girl, I stress to others the importance of playing, as sport is very good for health," she told AFP. "If they play well, they can also get scholarships."

Deadly school shooting fuels debate on Austria's gun laws

By Blaise Gauquelin  
AFP

With Austria still reeling from this week's deadly school shooting that killed 10 people, a debate is now raging over the Alpine country's gun laws.

The unprecedented case of deadly gun violence stunned the country of almost 9.2mn people, which ranks among the 10 safest in the world, according to the Global Peace Index.

While politicians have called for tighter restrictions on private gun ownership in the wake of the shooting in Graz, interest in firearms and demand for weapons training courses has surged.

"You can't imagine how many people have signed up for shooting courses" since Tuesday's attack, Viennese gun dealer Markus Schwaiger, who also offers training courses at shooting ranges, told AFP.

"People are worried that gun laws are about to get tightened" in the coming months, he added.

Austria has a relatively high number of weapons in circulation,



Markus Schwaiger displays a handgun and a shotgun, similar to those used at the Graz high school shooting. -AFP

with more than 1.5mn registered to about 370,000 owners.

According to industry expert Aaron Karp, Austria has a "strong gun culture" centred around "hunting and sports shooting, especially in the countryside", which is rich with game.

The Alpine nation is also one of the European countries with the largest number of small arms in circulation per capita, said Karp, one of the authors of the Small Arms Survey, which compiles data on gun ownership.

Famous for the Glock pistol, invented by Austrian engineer

Gaston Glock, gun ownership is deeply rooted in the country - and has been on a steady rise in recent decades: only about 900,000 weapons were registered in Austria in 2015, according to official figures.

For Schwaiger, "rising populism" has also played its part, with right-wing politicians tapping into people's anxieties over crises, arguing that the world has become a more dangerous place.

"For twenty years, right-wing populism has been scaring people" and "every crisis causes sales to skyrocket," he told AFP.

The shooting at a secondary school in the southern city of Graz by a 21-year-old former pupil was the deadliest postwar mass shooting in Austria.

However, a study published online in 2020 in the European Psychiatry journal suggests that the number of violent deaths in Austria has been increasing in lockstep with the number of weapons.

In order to join the European Union in 1995, Austria had to regulate the sale of firearms, which temporarily led to a drop in violent deaths - until the financial crisis of 2008 hit.

According to the study, the positive effect of the reform has been "offset by the global economic slowdown", which increased anxiety among the public and thus the tendency to purchase weapons.

"After such an act of madness... there must be consequences and changes," Interior Minister Gerhard Karner said yesterday.

Under the current legislation, anyone without a criminal record and over the age of 21 can buy handguns after undergoing an assessment and registering their weapon.

"The standards for psychologi-

cal testing" to grant gun licences in Austria are "very good", said Karp, but proper implementation appears to be the bottleneck.

The gunman, who killed nine pupils and a teacher in Graz, was rejected from Austria's mandatory military service after failing the psychological tests and being deemed "unfit".

He was nonetheless able to receive a gun licence and purchase the shotgun and pistol that he used in the attack.

"He obviously found a gun dealer and a psychologist who didn't look too closely," Schwaiger lamented. "There is still too much leeway".

Such shortcomings have been dominating and fuelling the most recent debate on Austria's gun laws, with the opposition Green Party tabling a bill to tighten legislation in May.

Austrian authorities have said they plan to consult other European countries like France, Sweden and the Czech Republic, which have experienced mass shootings in the past.

"But there are cultural differences and each country must chart its own course," Karp said.

Nuclear states spent \$100bn on weapons in 2024: ICAN

AFP  
Geneva

Nuclear-armed states spent more than \$100bn on their atomic arsenals last year, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) said yesterday, lamenting the lack of democratic oversight of such spending.

The ICAN said that Britain, China, France, India, Israel, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia and the United States together spent nearly \$10bn more than in 2023.

The United States spent \$56.8bn in 2024, followed by China at \$12.5bn and Britain at \$10.4bn, the ICAN said in its flagship annual report.

Geneva-based ICAN won the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize for its key role in drafting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which took effect in 2021.

Some 69 countries have ratified it to date, four more have directly acceded to the treaty and another 25 have signed it, although none of the nuclear weapons states have come on board.

This year's report looked at the costs incurred by the countries that host other states' nuclear weapons.

It said such costs are largely unknown to citizens and legislators alike, thereby avoiding democratic scrutiny.

Although not officially confirmed, the report said that Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Türkiye were hosting US nuclear weapons, citing experts.

Meanwhile, Russia claims that it has nuclear weapons stationed in Belarus, but some experts are unsure, it added.

The report said there was "little public information" about the costs associated with hosting US nuclear weapons in North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) European countries, citing the cost of facility security, nuclear-capable aircraft and preparation to use such weapons.

"Each Nato nuclear-sharing arrangement is governed by secret agreements," the report said.

"It's an affront to democracy that citizens and lawmakers are not allowed to know that nuclear weapons from other countries are based on their soil or how much of their taxes is being spent on them," said the report's co-author Alicia Sanders-Zakre.

Eight countries openly possess nuclear weapons: the United States, Russia, Britain, France, China, India, Pakistan and North Korea.

Israel is widely assumed to have nuclear weapons, although it has never officially acknowledged this.

The ICAN said the level of nuclear weapons spending in 2024 by these nine nations could have paid the UN budget almost 28 times over.

The private sector earned at least \$42.5bn from their nuclear weapons contracts in 2024 alone, the report said.

There are at least \$463bn in on-going nuclear weapons contracts, some of which do not expire for decades, and last year, at least \$20bn in new nuclear weapon contracts were awarded, it added.

"Many of the companies that benefited from this largesse invested heavily in lobbying governments, spending \$128mn on those efforts in the US and France, the two countries for which data is available," the ICAN said.



Wildlife Development Department active in protecting local ecosystems



**By Ayman Adly**  
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)'s Wildlife Development Department marked various achievements throughout the first quarter of the current year, ensuring its commitment to maintain biodiversity and enhance environmental sustainability across the country.

During the first quarter of 2025, 1,642 new wild trees were planted, 40 mesquite (*prosopis juliflora*) trees were removed for their potential harmful effects on the local environment, 153 assessment studies conducted on the development projects and their impacts on local wildlife, 70 wild trees transplanted into wild meadows, 670 seedlings of wild trees and plants produced, 117 field inspection visits to the replanted fenced meadows and wild areas, and 43 permits issued to start work at areas of wild plants.

Further, the department issued 2,240 falcon passports, 680 CITES (Convention on International

Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) certificates for importing different wild birds, and animals, 185 CITES certificates for re-export, and received 71 applications for registering dangerous animals.

The department also received four applications for new quarries, issued 39 permit renewals for sifting landfill rubble, 23 permit renewals for transporting landfill materials, 57 permit renewals for mobile crushers, 149 field inspection visits conducted to various related sites, and issued six violations for crushers, quarries and others, among various related activities.

Further, the department succeeded in capturing 4,323 invasive myna birds as part of a programme to combat the harmful effects it causes on the local environment.

The department carried out several activities to enhance public awareness on the importance of maintaining biodiversity and enhance sustainability practices, which included workshops, distribution of awareness and information brochures and several other public participation and media activities.



Omar al-Jaber



Jassim Mahmoud

Qatar's Whale Shark Season returns with sold-out tours

**By Joey Aguilar**  
Staff Reporter

Visit Qatar and Discover Qatar launched the third edition of Whale Shark Season – a signature ecotourism initiative that continues to draw international attention for its scale, sustainability, and spectacle – at an event at Place Vendome yesterday.

With all tour slots for June and July this year already sold out, Visit Qatar noted that the demand for this unique marine experience highlights the growing appeal of Qatar as a destination for responsible nature-based tourism.

According to Visit Qatar, the Whale Shark Tours offer visitors the rare chance to observe one of the world's largest congregations of whale sharks – the gentle giants of the sea – in their natural habitat.



Inflatable whale sharks were flown at Place Vendome yesterday to mark the start of the 3rd Whale Shark Season.  
**PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam

Taking place in Al Shaheen Marine Zone, approximately 2.5 hours by boat from Ruwais Port, the tours combine wildlife observation with educational insight and environmental stewardship.

“Our preparations have been greatly strengthened by the valuable contribu-

tions of our government and semi-government partners,” said Omar al-Jaber, chief of the Tourism Development Sector at Qatar Tourism, in a press statement.

The season, which runs from June through September 2025, invites marine enthusiasts aboard a luxury catamaran

operated by Discover Qatar.

Expert guides lead the immersive experience, educating guests about whale shark behaviour, migratory patterns, and the ecological significance of these endangered species.

Speaking to *Gulf Times* on the sidelines of the launch, Visit Qatar's public relations and communications director Jassim Mahmoud underlined the importance of the initiative.

“Our unique seascape – surrounded by water on three sides – makes this a natural fit for marine exploration,” he said. “People are eager to discover the sea and see its beauty up close.”

Visit Qatar noted that the country's northern waters, particularly around Al Shaheen, are known for hosting one of the largest seasonal aggregations of whale sharks globally.

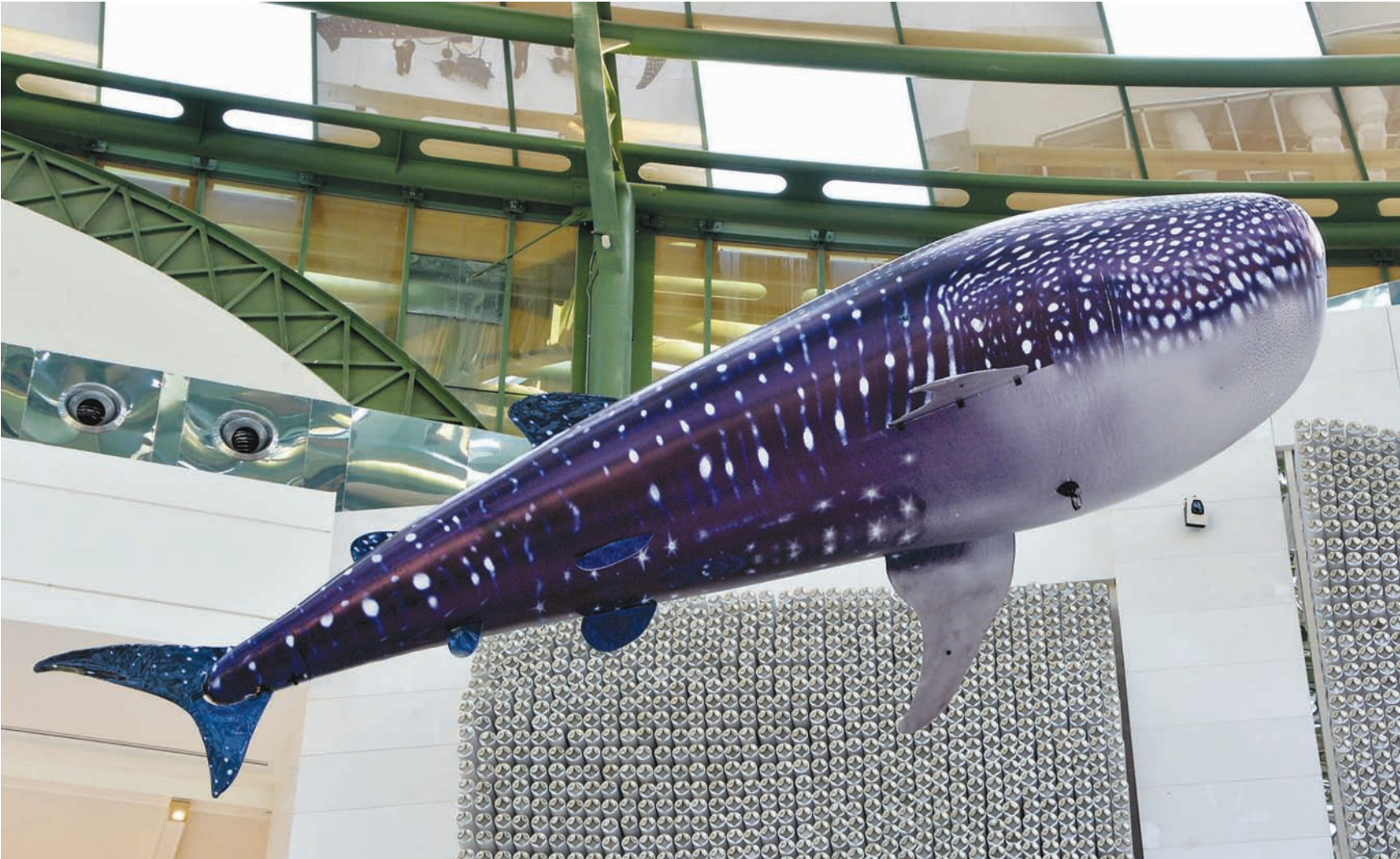
These filter-feeding animals, recognisable by their spotted skin and immense size (reaching up to 20' in length) are drawn to the area's warm, plankton-rich waters each summer.

Since its inception in 2022, Visit Qatar said the Whale Shark Season has attracted more than 1,200 guests and yielded sightings of over 600 whale sharks in a single trip, making it one of the most successful marine ecotourism initiatives in the region.

The tours are carefully designed to minimise human impact on the marine environment, aligning with Qatar's broader conservation goals.

With plans to potentially expand the number of trips and include additional tour operators – provided they meet stringent safety and sustainability requirements – Mahmoud said Visit Qatar is reinforcing its vision of positioning the country as a premier destination for responsible marine tourism.

He said that people who visit once often want to return, and that such experience leaves a lasting impression, not only of the whale sharks, but of what Qatar can offer as a destination that balances exploration with preservation.



QU College of Pharmacy holds annual preceptor development session

Qatar University (QU)'s College of Pharmacy, represented by the Professional Education Division of the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) Programme, organised the Annual Preceptor Development Session and appreciation ceremony for educational partners.

The event aimed to enhance the clinical training skills of preceptors and strengthen communication with the college's partners who play a vital role in preparing students for the labour market.

College of Pharmacy dean Prof Mohamed Izham expressed deep appreciation for the college's part-

ners and preceptors, recognising them as a cornerstone in the advancement of pharmaceutical education and professional practice.

He said pharmacy managers, frontline practitioners, and decision-makers all play a key role in shaping the future of the pharmacy profession in Qatar and beyond, due to their direct impact on patient care quality, pharmaceutical service development, and building qualified student competencies.

Prof Izham concluded his address by affirming that the professional partnerships enrich the curricula, enhance training programmes, and support the college's

mission to advance the pharmacy profession through education, research, and collaboration.

“Together, we are shaping the future of pharmacy,” he said. “And together, we will continue to elevate the standards of care, education, and service.”

Dr Hazem Elewa, associate professor and director of the PharmD Programme, said: “This event is an expression of appreciation and gratitude to our field training preceptors and educational partners for their pivotal role in enriching our students' experience by sharing their practical expertise with our pharmacy students.”



“This event comes as a gesture of appreciation and gratitude to the field training preceptors and our partners in the educational journey, for their active role in enriching our students' experience by sharing their practical expertise with the female students of the College of Pharmacy,” he added.