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BUSINESS | Page 1

QIA joins consortium in \$7bn buyout of realty leader ESR Group

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**Artist Boujassoum passes away**

Qatari artist Mohammed Boujassoum passed away yesterday at the age of 77, following a prolific career. The late artist was a pioneering figure in Qatar's theatre movement, contributing significantly to its early development. He began his career as a member of the Al Adhwaa musical and theatrical groups in 1965 and 1966, joined the Qatar Theatre Troupe in 1970, and until his passing, was part of the Qatar Theatre Group. Early in his career, he acted in numerous plays and participated in radio and television shows. In addition to acting, Boujassoum worked as a theatre and radio director.

**Page 2**

**DRC, Rwanda to sign peace deal on June 27**

Representatives of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda have initialled a peace agreement aimed at ending the conflict in eastern DRC – a document to be formally signed on June 27, a joint statement said Wednesday.

The text, which builds on a declaration of principles signed in April, “includes provisions on respect for territorial integrity and a prohibition of hostilities” in eastern DRC, according to the statement released by the two nations.

Qatar and the United States acted as mediators.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will witness the signing in Washington later this month, the statement added. **(AFP)**

**Germany dismisses Putin's warnings**

A German general yesterday dismissed as “nonsense” repeated warnings by Russian President Vladimir Putin that delivering Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine might make it party to the war. “It is obviously nonsense and not correct that military aid – and this discussion has been going on for three years now – would constitute direct participation in the war,” Major-General Christian Freuding, who is in charge of co-ordinating German military aid to Kyiv, told public broadcaster ZDF.

**COMMUNITY**  
**See Page: 5**

# Trump to make Iran war choice within 2 weeks

## ● Israel and Iran continue to exchange fire

Reuters/AFP  
Washington

The White House said yesterday that President Donald Trump will make a decision on whether the US will get involved in the Israel-Iran conflict in the next two weeks.

Citing a message from Trump, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters: “Based on the fact that there’s a substantial chance of negotiations that may or may not take place with Iran in the near future, I will make my decision whether or not to go within the next two weeks.”

Leavitt told a regular briefing that Trump was interested in pursuing a diplomatic solution with Iran, but his top priority was ensuring that Iran could not obtain a nuclear weapon.

She said any deal would have to prohibit enrichment of uranium by Tehran and eliminate Iran’s ability to achieve a nuclear weapon.

“The president is always interested in a diplomatic solution...he is a peacemaker in chief. He is the peace through strength president. And so if there’s a chance for diplomacy, the president’s always going to grab it,” Leavitt said. “But

A satellite image shows the damaged Arak heavy water reactor facilities, following Israeli air strikes, in Iran, yesterday.

he’s not afraid to use strength as well I will add.”

Leavitt declined to say if Trump would seek congressional authorisation for any strikes on Iran. She said Washington remained convinced that Iran had never been closer to obtaining a nuclear weapon.

“Iran has all that it needs to achieve a nuclear weapon. All they need is a decision from the supreme leader to do that, and it would take a couple of weeks to complete the production of that weapon,” she said.

Israel bombed nuclear targets in Iran yesterday and Iran fired missiles and drones at Israel after hitting an Israeli hospital overnight, as a week-old air war escalated and neither side showed any sign of an exit strategy.

The Soroka Medical Center, in Beersheba, Israel, damaged following a missile strike from Iran yesterday.

# Amir, Merz discuss relations, Iran war

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani discussed with Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany Friedrich Merz a number of regional and international developments of common concern, particularly those related to the Israeli attack on the Islamic Republic of Iran. This came during a phone call His Highness the Amir received yesterday from the German chancellor. They also discussed the importance of de-escalation in the region and resolving disputes through diplomatic means. In addition, they discussed bilateral relations between the two countries. **(QNA)**

# Renovated Dahl Al Hamam Park opens

The Ministry of Municipality yesterday inaugurated Dahl Al Hamam Park, one of the public parks under the jurisdiction of Doha Municipality, following the completion of its full renovation and redevelopment in co-ordination with the Public Works Authority (Ashghal). **Page 12**

# Israeli fire kills 72, including 21 near aid distribution centre

Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli forces killed at least 72 people yesterday, including 21 who had gathered near aid distribution sites as famine looms after more than 20 months of war.

Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal said that six people were killed while waiting for aid in the southern Gaza Strip and 15 others in a central area known as the Netzarim corridor, where thousands of Palestinians have gathered daily in the hope of receiving food rations.

A woman cries as victims are taken from Al-Shifa Hospital yesterday.

In northern Gaza, Bassal said that nine separate Israeli strikes killed another 51 people, updating earlier tolls provided by his agency.

At least 300 Palestinians have been killed in recent weeks while trying to reach aid distribution points in Gaza, which is suffering from famine-like conditions.

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has condemned the ongoing and utterly unacceptable violence against starving Palestinians attempting to access humanitarian aid in the besieged Gaza Strip. – **AFP**

# First regional aircraft painting facility to come up in Qatar

Qatar Airways has signed a strategic agreement with Barzan Holdings, and Satys Aerospace, a global specialist in aircraft painting and surface treatment solutions, to establish a pioneering widebody aircraft painting facility at Dukhan Air Base.

This milestone collaboration forms part of a long-term partnership between Qatar Airways, Barzan Holdings, and Satys, aimed at enhancing Qatar's aviation ecosystem through country capability building, technology transfer, and innovation.

The new Qatar facility will be the first widebody Satys paint facility in the region to feature next-generation digital technology.

Designed to accommodate commercial, VIP, and military aircraft, the project will include two wide-body paint facilities, including

a multipurpose hangar for light maintenance activities.

The new facility will serve as a regional hub for airline operators across the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, offering access to specialised painting services that reduce aircraft ground time by eliminating the need to ferry aircraft overseas for livery changes or repainting.

The cutting-edge digital technology with future plans for automatic robotic painting leverages environmentally friendly paint systems, including energy-efficient booths and waste management controls.

The facility will also enable dual-use operations, supporting both civil and defence aviation needs by meeting respective technical and safety specifications – in full alignment with Qatar's strat-

Qatar Airways has signed a strategic agreement with Barzan Holdings, and Satys Aerospace, to establish a pioneering widebody aircraft painting facility at Dukhan Air Base.

egy to localise high-value services, championing local aerospace expertise.

This initiative reflects the

shared commitment of Qatar Airways and Barzan Holdings to support Qatar National Vision 2030 by building high-value in-

dustrial capabilities, creating skilled jobs and promoting Qatar as a global leader in aviation technology and services.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer Badr Mohammed al-Meer said: “This partnership delivers strategic aviation infrastructure that serves both our national and regional ambitions. Together with Barzan Holdings and Satys, we are introducing breakthrough technologies by building local capabilities that will define the future of Qatar's aerospace sector. This facility reflects our commitment to excellence, innovation, and empowering Qatari talent.”

Barzan Holdings Group Chief Executive Officer Mohammed Bader al-Sadah, said: “This strategic agreement reflects our commitment to advancing Qatar's de-

fence and aerospace capabilities through meaningful, future-focused partnerships. The development of a one-of-its-kind aircraft painting facility in collaboration with Qatar Airways and Satys will position Qatar as a regional centre of excellence while serving both military and civil aviation needs. It also reinforces our dedication to enabling local industry, building specialised skills, and supporting the broader goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.”

Satys Aerospace Chief Executive Officer Christophe Cadot said: “We are proud of our partnership initiated in 2021 and remain dedicated to delivering our best to the Barzan Holdings and Qatar Airways. Together, we will continue to strive for excellence in quality, innovation and turnaround time.”





## PM receives phone call from Slovenia deputy PM

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a phone call from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia Tanja Fajon. Discussion during the call dealt with bilateral relations and ways to bolster them in addition to the latest regional developments, primarily the Israeli attack on the sisterly Islamic Republic of Iran. In this context, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar's strong condemnation of the continued Israeli violations and attacks, which undermine peace efforts and risk igniting a broader regional war. Furthermore, HE the Prime Minister underscored the grave implications of Israel's targeting of economic facilities in Iran, warning of the potentially disastrous regional and international repercussions, particularly concerning the stability of global energy supplies. He further emphasised the importance of protecting civilians from the consequences of war and stressed the need for both parties to refrain from targeting civilian infrastructure. HE Sheikh Mohammed highlighted the urgent need for co-ordinated regional and international efforts to de-escalate tensions and resolve disputes through diplomatic channels; affirming that Qatar is actively working, in close co-operation with its partners, to revive dialogue among all parties in order to address outstanding issues and to promote regional as well as international security and peace. **(QNA)**

## Qatari artist Boujassoum passes away

Qatari artist Mohammed Boujassoum passed away yesterday at the age of 77, following a prolific career. The late artist was a pioneering figure in Qatar's theatre movement, contributing significantly to its early development.

He began his career as a member of the Al Adhwa musical and theatrical groups in 1965 and 1966, joined the Qatar Theatre Troupe in 1970, and until his passing, was part of the Qatar Theatre Group.

Early in his career, he acted in numerous plays and participated in radio and television shows.

In addition to acting, Boujassoum worked as a theatre and radio director. He studied at the Higher Institute of Theatrical Arts (HITA) in Kuwait and at the HITA at the Academy of Arts (AOA) in Egypt, from which he graduated in 1976, making him the first Qatari and Khaleeji to



earn a bachelor's degree in acting in the region.

Following graduation, he joined the theatre department at the department of culture and arts and was later appointed General Manager of the Qatar National Theatre in November 1981. Mohammed Boujassoum

received numerous awards and honours throughout his career, the most recent of which was at the Doha Theatrical Festival in 2023 and contributed to the journalism scene in Qatar through various newspapers, compiling his writings in a book completed before his passing.

## Qatar's permanent representative meets president of International Peace Institute



HE Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani met with Prince Zeid bin Ra'ad al-Husseini, President of International Peace Institute, at the headquarters of the Permanent Mission of Qatar in New York. During the meeting, they discussed a number of regional and international issues of common interest, particularly developments in the Middle East. They also exchanged views on ways to advance international efforts to promote peace and stability in the region. **(QNA)**

## Justice Ministry calls for registering POAs issued before 2011

The Ministry of Justice has called on citizens and residents with powers of attorney (POAs) issued before 2011 to visit the Ministry's Documentation Department to register these powers of attorney in the designated register. This is in accordance with the provisions of Law No. 1 of 2023 on documentation and HE Justice Minister's Decision No 156 of 2024 regarding the organisation and maintenance of records, registers, and documentation indexes. Director of the Documentation Department at the Ministry, Areej

Mohsin al-Shammari, explained that this announcement comes as part of the implementation of the ministerial decision issued in accordance with the aforementioned law. She noted that the registration process requires completing and submitting the designated application form, attaching either the original POA or a certified copy, providing proof of identity for the concerned parties, and, if applicable, submitting any previously issued related POAs. Al-Shammari further clarified

that applications should be submitted at the Government Services Center - Al Hilal branch, specifically at the data update office. She emphasised that this measure is among the new services introduced by the Ministry pursuant to Article (33) of the Documentation Law, which mandates the creation of an electronic register for all POAs. The law also requires concerned parties to register POAs issued before 2011 within one year from the date the law's provisions come into effect. **(QNA)**

# Dimdex partners with Joaan Bin Jassim Academy to host Middle East Naval Commanders Conference

QNA

Doha

The Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (Dimdex) has announced a partnership agreement with the Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies to jointly host the Middle East Naval Commanders Conference (MENC).

The MENC is a key feature of the ninth edition of Dimdex which will take place from January 19 to 22, 2026, at the Qatar National Convention Centre.

Dimdex 2026 is held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, and is hosted and organised by the Qatar Armed Forces. The agreement was signed at Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies by Chairman of the Dimdex Organising Committee, Staff Brigadier (Sea) Abdulbaqi Saleh al-Ansari and President of the Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence

Studies, Staff Brigadier (Dr) Rajih Mohammed bin Aqeel al-Nabet.

The partnership with the Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies is part of the ongoing co-operation among various sections of the Qatari Armed Forces, aimed at leveraging their combined expertise and capabilities to contribute to the success of one of the largest events in the maritime defence and security sector.

The Middle East Naval Commanders Conference will centre on the theme of 'Defence Diplomacy and Maritime Security Challenges'. As a leading forum, it will bring together international thought leaders to discuss the latest developments in maritime defence and security within the context of this critical theme. The event will welcome senior government officials, ministers, ambassadors, Chiefs of Staff, naval commanders, experts, maritime professionals, and academics.

Staff Brigadier (Sea) Abdulbaqi Saleh al-Ansari said: "We are honoured to partner with the Joaan Bin



Jassim Academy for Defence Studies, a leading institution specialising in military sciences, to host the Middle East Naval Commanders Conference at Dimdex 2026. Through our combined expertise, we aim to provide a premier platform for addressing critical issues facing the defence and security sectors, and for developing strategic insights to tackle emerging

challenges on the global stage".

For his part, President of the Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies, Staff Brigadier (Dr) Rajih Mohammed bin Aqeel al-Nabet, said: "The Academy remains firmly committed to enhancing joint co-operation and advancing academic military programmes at the national level. We place significant emphasis on organising spe-

cialised training workshops and co-ordinating efforts in support of national events. Our work also reflects a strong commitment to our societal role, particularly in raising awareness of the importance of integration between civil and military institutions, thereby promoting strategic balance and reinforcing the strength of the home front. These efforts are guided by the Academy's vision of leadership and excellence."

He went on saying: "Through such initiatives, the academy aspires to consolidate its standing as a leading institution in postgraduate defence studies, both regionally and internationally. Our goal is to develop distinguished military and civilian leaders equipped with the skills to analyse security threats, assess risks, and formulate strategic policies and plans that enhance the nation's security and stability".

The Joaan Bin Jassim Academy for Defence Studies is a specialist academy dedicated to developing exceptional military and civilian

leaders. The academy equips them with the skills to identify, understand, and analyse security threats, assess associated risks, and formulate effective policies, strategies, and plans to safeguard national security.

The academy also plays a vital role in fostering strategic thinking, planning capabilities, and national policy development, enabling students to acquire advanced military and academic knowledge at the strategic level.

Held under the theme 'A Global Hub for Defence Innovations: Invest in Possibilities to Shape a Secure Tomorrow', Dimdex 2026 is set to be the most impactful edition yet, bringing together key decision-makers, industry leaders, and government representatives from across the globe.

The four-day event will serve as a key driver in fostering innovation, encouraging strategic investments in future-ready maritime technologies, and driving business opportunities for participating companies.



## Qatar attends meeting of Europe, North Atlantic Civil Aviation Director-Generals

Qatar, represented by the Civil Aviation Authority participated in the EUR/NAT-DGCA/2025 meeting of Directors General of Civil Aviation for the Europe and North Atlantic Region, held in the French capital, Paris. The Qatari delegation was headed by acting President of the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority Mohammed Faleh al-Hajri.

The meeting addressed a number of topics related to regional co-operation and ways to support the implementation of programmes and initiatives overseen by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in the areas of safety, air navigation, training, and aviation workforce planning.

In his speech at the meeting, al-Hajri emphasised Qatar's commitment to strengthening international co-operation and the exchange of expertise in the field of civil aviation. He highlighted the importance of joint efforts to enhance safety systems and improve the efficiency of the human resources working in the sector.

He also reviewed Qatar's contributions to supporting ICAO's efforts, noting the ongoing constructive co-operation between the QCAA and the ICAO Regional Office in Paris, as well as other ICAO offices, in a manner that contributes to the organisation's goals and strategic plans. On the sidelines of the meeting, al-Hajri held a series of bilateral meetings with heads of civil aviation authorities from countries in the Europe and North Atlantic region. These discussions focused on strengthening technical and operational co-operation and exploring mechanisms for joint co-ordination between Qatar and member states ahead of the upcoming ICAO General Assembly. **(QNA)**

## QF creates pathways to purposeful careers

Qatar Foundation's (QF) Mehnaty and Al Meydan internship programmes are helping bridge the gap between classroom learning and the workplace, a statement said yesterday. Through Mehnaty and Al Meydan, university students are gaining practical, hands-on experience that complements their academic journeys – and prepares them for an ever-evolving job market.

Available to QF university students, Mehnaty is a work-study programme offering part-time, paid opportunities for students to contribute to QF centres and departments, while Al Meydan places students in hands-on roles related to their fields of study, giving them professional experience.

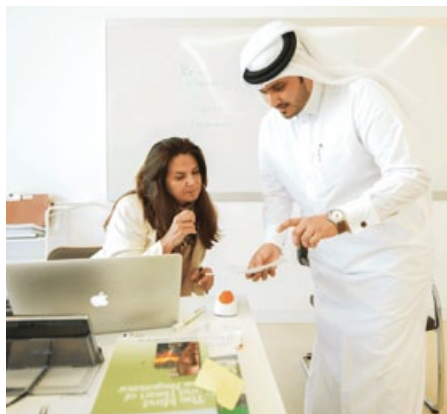
Ahmad Kareem, head of Student Support and Outreach, Higher Education Division, QF, said: "What makes these programmes so powerful is Qatar Foundation's unique ecosystem, which consists of a shared campus bringing together several world-class universities, leading research institutes, startup incubators, and corporate entities. This close proximity has created an environment students can seamlessly connect with a diverse range of internship and work-study opportunities, without ever leaving campus.

"Through this setting, both programmes aim to equip students with practical experience and professional readiness, foster initiative and a strong work ethic, and develop local talent across a wide range of sectors."

Roles available through Mehnaty and Al Meydan span a wide range of fields, including administrative support, research assistance, communications, event coordination, IT and digital innovation, creative design, library services, and sustainability-focused projects.

Maryam Mostafawi, a student at QF partner Northwestern University in Qatar, spent three months working in the Multimedia Department within QF's communications team through Al Meydan.

"It was like the first time I'd ever worked in a formal setting, so it really helped me build the



confidence I needed. Now, I'm more comfortable sharing my opinions and speaking in public," said Mostafawi.

"I also learned how a department operates and how a creative team functions. Beyond that, I gained real, practical skills – like conducting in-depth research, using Excel, and carrying out interviews."

Mostafawi explained that the internship also played a pivotal role in shaping her future path, reaffirming her desire to pursue a career in a creative field with the goal of eventually teaching – inspired by the influence of her advisor.

Abdullah Alok, a student at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, participated in the Mehnaty programme, working in the Outreach and Initiatives Department within QF's communications team.

"The experience enhanced my ability to work effectively under pressure and thrive in team-based environments, while the communication-focused nature of the role strengthened my interpersonal skills," Alok said.

According to Kareem, Mehnaty and Al Meydan play a key role in QF's vision of producing graduates who are capable, confident, and ready to contribute meaningfully to Qatar's development and the wider world.

"In essence, the QF ecosystem is not just a place of learning – it's a dynamic launchpad where students become professionals, innovators, and leaders," he added.





# Partnership with Art Basel to take Qatar's creativity on to global stage

On sidelines of Art Basel, Qatar Museums Chairperson highlights the country's strong cultural infrastructure

QNA  
Basel

Chairperson of Qatar Museums HE Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani has said that Qatar possesses a strong cultural infrastructure that offers a platform for showcasing art, acquiring works, and discovering regional talent. She emphasised that the country's partnership with Art Basel aligns with the broader cultural and sports ecosystem established under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani as a pillar of national economic, social, and human development.

Speaking during a panel discussion held on the sidelines of Qatar Museums' participation in Art Basel in the Swiss city of Basel, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa explained that Qatar believes the time is right to reinforce the cultural foundations it has invested in by expanding platforms for art display and acquisition while also allowing galleries to discover talent across the region.

She went on to explain that Qatar's 25-year strategy has been divided into three phases. The first focused on expressing a local and authentic voice, marked by the opening of the Museum of Islamic Art, the Arab Museum of Modern Art, and the National Museum of Qatar. The second phase, which

includes the recently launched 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum, centres around social development, with the goal of transforming cultural institutions into hubs of learning rather than just entertainment.

She noted that the sports museum was launched in time for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, and that the country is now working on the Dadu Children's Museum, located in Al Bidda Park, the largest public park in Qatar. She also mentioned the Fire Station-Artist in Residence, has been converted into a vibrant studio space for artists and creatives from the region.

During the panel, HE Sheikha Al Mayassa said that Qatar's involvement in Art Basel is aimed at launching projects that foster global dialogue. One such initiative was the Lusail Museum, which explores themes of post-colonialism and identity crisis in the region. She described it as a space where art and culture are used as tools for healing and connection. Another is the Qatar Auto Museum, which recently collaborated with the National Automobile Museum in Turin. She also highlighted the Art Mill Museum, a transformation of Qatar's last standing flour mill from the 1980s into a centre for modern and contemporary art.

Speaking about the Lusail Museum, she described it as a comprehensive island project built around a collection focused on



Orientalism and Western artistic interpretations of the East, pointing out that many Western painters drew inspiration from the region. HE Sheikha Al Mayassa outlined Qatar's creative ecosystem, which includes the Fire Station: Artist in Residence, the Doha Film Institute, M7 (a hub for fashion, design, and tech), and Liwan Studios for design. She also revealed ongoing work to establish a vocational school aimed at nurturing artists and developing talent.

She concluded by stating that Qatar's national vision has guided the country to use arts and culture as a real investment in human development. Unlike many nations that approached culture from an economic lens, Qatar began with human capital, aiming to trans-

form its hydrocarbon-dependent economy into a knowledge-based society.

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa pointed out that Lusail is a city of the future, home to the iconic Lusail Stadium designed by architect Norman Foster, and hosts the offices of the financial sector. She noted that Lusail is a highly innovative city thanks to its free zone and is one of the few places where foreigners can own and relocate their business premises.

She said that the Lusail Museum includes a centre for intellectual exchange, established in partnership with various cultural institutions such as the Musee d'Orsay in Paris, and with universities including Brown University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Georgetown Uni-

versity in Qatar, the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, and Qatar University.

She emphasised the importance of empowering artists and engineers, understanding their needs, and supporting them to make the best use of available resources. She also warned about the risks of technology becoming dominant, especially for children, and how this may lead to a diminished ability to feel emotions.

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa recounted that when she first saw the Lamp Bear sculpture by Urs Fischer, now at Hamad International Airport, during a Christie's auction in New York, her father, His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, envisioned bringing art into the

under-construction airport as a gesture of welcome aligned with Qatar's transformation into a cultural hub for human development.

She added that bringing the Lamp Bear sculpture into the airport building was logistically challenging due to its weight, but once the airport opened to passengers, it became a landmark where people would stop and take photos.

She went on to say that they developed merchandise inspired by the sculpture, highlighting the value of having a clear vision and strategy, and being open to how the public responds.

She expressed her pride that Qatar Airways is a partner of Art Basel, along with Qatar Sports Investments, noting that the integration of sports, aviation, and art within one vision is a source of joy and pride. She remarked that Switzerland has long been seen as a benchmark for high-quality education and a refined lifestyle, aligning with Qatar National Vision 2030, which places strong emphasis on human development and quality of life that encourages social inclusion. She noted that many joint cultural events are expected in the future, expressing her thanks to the Art Basel team and their highly enthusiastic partners for the upcoming event in February, as well as the Qatari partners: Qatar Sports Investments and QC Plus.

HE Sheikha Al Mayassa concluded her remarks by affirming the collective excitement around hosting Art Basel in Doha, aiming to take Qatar's creativity to the global stage through this kind of partnership.

## MIA going places with Hong Kong's Palace Museum exhibition

QNA  
Doha

Director of the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) Shaikha Nasser al-Nassr emphasised the importance of co-operation with the Palace Museum in Hong Kong, China, as one of the most prominent cultural institutions in Asia. She noted that the exhibition 'Wonders of Imperial Carpets: Masterpieces from the Museum of Islamic Art, Doha', represents the first fruits of this constructive collaboration.

In exclusive statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), al-Nassr said that the exhibition showcases a rare collection of historic carpets from the holdings of the Museum of Islamic Art being displayed for the first time outside Qatar.

This co-operation between the Museum of Islamic Art and the Palace Museum represents a strategic step toward strengthening the international presence of the Museum of Islamic Art and expanding its audience. It also opens wide prospects for future collaboration in various fields, including organising exhibitions, conduct-

ing joint scientific research, and implementing educational and training programmes that will deepen mutual understanding and enhance cultural ties between the two sides, she added.

Art, by its very cross-border nature, serves as an effective means of cultural rapprochement and civilisational exchange, she said, adding that through the 'Wonders of Imperial Carpets' exhibition, the Museum of Islamic Art is not only presenting exceptional artistic masterpieces, but also telling a rich story of historical interaction between the Islamic and Chinese civilisations, ties that date back centuries and are reflected in trade exchanges, diplomatic missions, and mutual influences in craftsmanship and decorative arts.

The Director of the Museum of Islamic Art stressed that continued co-operation with the Palace Museum represents a genuine opportunity to launch new projects that shed light on historical relations and enhance the role of art as an effective tool for building bridges of understanding and friendship between peoples.

Regarding the signing of a

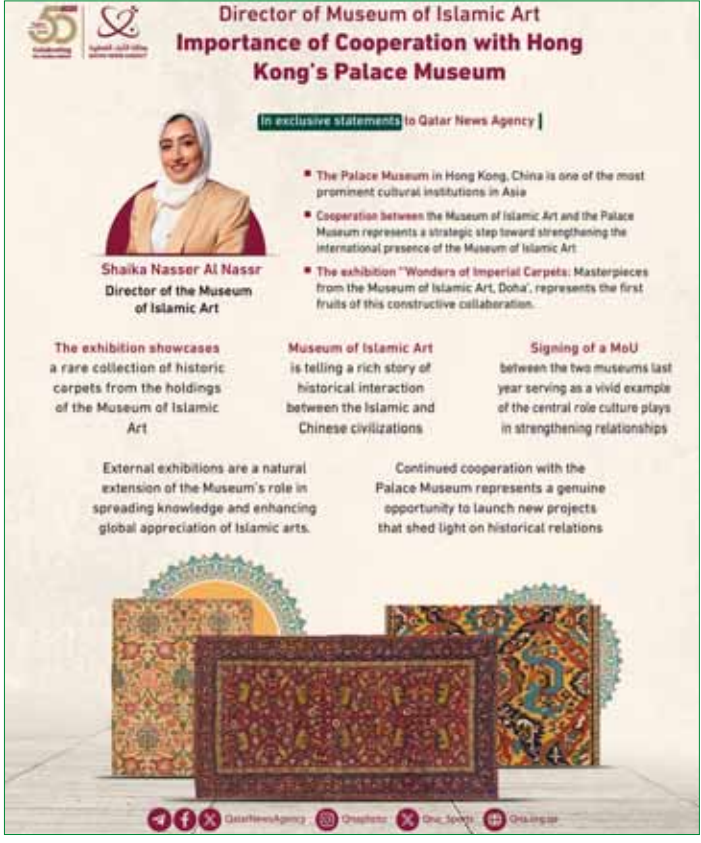
memorandum of understanding between the two museums during the first Hong Kong International Cultural Summit, organised last year by the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority as part of the Years of Culture initiative, Shaikha al-Nassr said that the Years of Culture initiative is one of the key pillars of Qatar Museums' strategy to promote cultural exchange between the State of Qatar and countries around the world.

The initiative has proven successful in building bridges of effective collaboration, with the International Cultural Summit hosted by Hong Kong last year, and the subsequent signing of the memorandum of understanding between Qatar Museums and the Palace Museum, serving as a vivid example of the central role culture plays in strengthening relations, she added.

The Museum of Islamic Art believes such initiatives contribute to fostering the values of mutual respect and enhancing a deeper understanding of cultural diversity through joint projects, exchange exhibitions, and intellectual and educational activities, she noted.

On the importance of external exhibitions for the Museum of Islamic Art, Shaikha al-Nassr emphasised in her concluding remarks to QNA that external exhibitions are a natural extension of the museum's role in spreading knowledge and enhancing global appreciation of Islamic arts. She said that these exhibitions enable them to reach a diverse international audience and present a rich portrayal of Islamic heritage with a contemporary perspective.

Many of the pieces displayed outside Qatar are among the museum's rarest holdings, and exhibiting them offers a unique opportunity for new audiences to experience them in different cultural and geographical contexts. Al-Nassr affirmed that external participation has had a tangible impact in enhancing the Museum of Islamic Art's reputation as a prestigious global institution. Additionally, it has contributed to supporting cultural dialogue and exchanging expertise with other museum institutions, which positively reflects on the development of museum work and expands the cultural influence of the State of Qatar.



### Public urged to report summer outdoor working hours violation

**Help Enforce the Midday Work Ban**

Report any breaches by calling **40488248**



The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has urged the public to report any violations of the summer outdoor work ban in place from 10am to 3.30pm. Violations can be reported via 40488248. "Worker safety is everyone's responsibility," MoL said in an X post. The restriction on outdoor work will remain in effect until September 15 in order to protect workers from the risks of heat stress.

## Culinary journeys, yoga, theatre this summer in Qatar

By Joey Aguilar  
Staff Reporter

Qatar is poised for a summer featuring a diverse array of cultural, educational, and entertainment experiences for all ages, according to Visit Qatar. From culinary experiences and yoga sessions to theatrical productions and tech camps, the schedule is packed.

Kicking off the festivities tomorrow (June 21), the Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) will host 'Family Day: Islamic Culinary Traditions' at its Atrium. Inspired by 'A Seat at the Table: Food & Feasting in the Islamic World' exhibition, the programme presents an educational journey into a fascinating collection that traces the origins of herbs and fruits in Islamic culture, exploring culinary traditions from Islam's emergence to the present day.

Also on June 21, the Embassy of India in Qatar will mark the 11th International Day of Yoga in Doha. Organisers said the community yoga session, promoting the theme of 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health', stresses physical well-being, mental peace, and social harmony. This event is open to all, welcoming yoga enthusiasts, members of the Indian community, and friends of India to experience the holistic benefits



of yoga. Families looking for last-minute fun should note that The Lego Shows Qatar, concludes its run on June 22 at the Qatar National

Convention Centre (QNCC). The event offers endless creativity, interactive builds, a giant inflatable playground, daily live shows, a cozy

cinema zone screening Lego movies, and a Food Arena. Apart from Candlelight concerts, a series of theatrical plays are scheduled this summer for enthusiasts, including the 'Al-Jabala Theatre Show', set for June 26 and 27 at U Venue. According to I Am Qatar, this unique theatrical experience combines lively comedy, thrilling horror, and deep human lessons, promising an artistic journey that reflects reality with humour and emotion.

The Katara Opera House will host 'Kaifan Block 1 Theatrical Play' from July 2-5. The social comedy offers insights into contemporary social themes while keeping the mood light and fun.

For younger audiences, 'Hide and Seek,' an adventure-themed theatrical play produced by the ALJ Sisters, will be held on July 18 at the QNCC. Performances are at 3pm and 6pm. Hamad Bin Khalifa University is offering fully-sponsored Mhukayamna camps.

The 'Mhukayamna Quantum Computing Camp', in partnership with the Qatar Centre for Quantum Computing, will be held for free on July 6-7 in Education City. HB-KU's 'Mhukayamna Cybersecurity Camp', also free but with limited seats, also offers an opportunity to empower the next generation of cyber defenders.





## Qatar envoy to Botswana presents credentials

Botswana's Acting Minister of International Relations Moeti Mohwasa received a copy of the credentials of Mubarak bin Nasser al-Khalifa as Qatar's ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary (non-resident) to Botswana. **(QNA)**



## Qatar-UAE meeting on disaster management

HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Abdullah bin Khalaf bin Hattab al-Kaabi has met with Director-General of the UAE's National Emergency, Crisis and Disaster Management Authority Ali Rashid al-Neyadi. Discussions during the meeting dealt with co-operation between the two sides and prospects for enhancing joint action in the fields of emergency, crisis, and disaster management. This will contribute to supporting GCC efforts aimed at developing security and safety systems and enhancing preparedness and effective response to various challenges. **(QNA)**



# Qatar reiterates call for providing, protecting equal education to all

**QNA**  
Geneva

Qatar reaffirmed its belief that the right to education is a fundamental human right, enshrined in international and regional human rights instruments and reinforced by national laws.

Therefore, this right must be ensured, protected, and promoted to guarantee equal access for all. This was mentioned in the address, delivered by First Secretary of the State of Qatar's Permanent Mission in Geneva Sara Abdulaziz

al-Khater, during her participation in the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, under Item 3 of the 59th session of the Human Rights Council. Al-Khater emphasised that the right to education includes the right to a safe and secure learning environment, free from violence, harassment, bullying, coercion, and discrimination.

She stressed that this principle is essential to the effective realisation of the right to education. She also noted that this right encompasses respect for the freedom of parents to educate their children

in line with their religious, moral, or philosophical convictions, as affirmed in all relevant human rights treaties.

She said that Qatar has prioritised the creation of safe and inclusive educational environments and has worked to enhance access to educational and training opportunities by ensuring quality education for all on an equal footing.

She also highlighted Qatar's efforts in providing quality education to millions of children deprived of it due to armed conflicts and disasters, through the leadership and implementation of international

initiatives such as the Educate A Child initiative, which has successfully delivered quality education to over 19mn children in 60 countries, and the Women in Conflict Zones initiative, aimed at supporting women and girls in conflict and crisis situations by addressing their needs, particularly their access to quality education.

Al-Khater concluded by recalling that Qatar has led several international initiatives, including the United Nations General Assembly resolution establishing September 9 as the International Day to Protect Education from Attack.



## Qatar says disastrous humanitarian conditions of Palestinians stain on humanity's conscience

**QNA**  
Geneva

Qatar has said that the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe faced by the Palestinian people, especially in Gaza, due to Israeli aggression, acts of genocide, racist policies, blockade, starvation, forced displacement of civilians, and the deliberate targeting of aid distribution points designated by Israel (the occupying power), represents a stain on the conscience of humanity.

This statement was delivered by HE Qatar's Permanent Representative in Geneva Dr Hind Abdulrahman al-Muftah, during the 2025 Humanitarian Affairs Segment of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) general debate.

HE Dr al-Muftah urged the international community to step beyond mere condemnation and take up its responsibility by pressuring Israel to immediately end its aggression, comply with international laws and resolutions, allow adequate and sustained humanitarian aid, and pursue a two-state



solution based on the pre-June 4, 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of an independent, viable Palestinian state.

She emphasised that there is a growing disregard for international humanitarian law and an increasing culture of impunity, noting that those responsible for crimes against civilians are rarely held accountable, which contradicts the commitments made by

the global community 76 years ago in the Geneva Conventions.

HE Dr al-Muftah also highlighted Qatar's determination to maintain a leading role in global humanitarian work, highlighting that Qatar has strengthened its strategic partnerships with many humanitarian actors, and that the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) has provided more than \$1.9bn in humanitarian and devel-

opment aid since its establishment in 2002, across various sectors and regions.

She noted that education remains a top priority in Qatar's relief and humanitarian efforts. She pointed out that Education Above All Foundation has provided learning opportunities to over 19mn out-of-school children in more than 60 countries. She also praised the work of the Silatech Foundation, which plays a key role in creating sustainable livelihoods for young men and women, particularly in vulnerable communities. She mentioned that in 2022, the Qatar Fund for Development launched the Women in Conflict Zones initiative, which supports women and girls in crisis areas by providing them with the resources they need to drive positive change and participate in peacebuilding efforts.

She showcased Qatar's success in mediation and good offices, explaining that the country has played a decisive role in ending several armed conflicts and achieving peace, all in accordance with the principles of justice and international law.

## Qatar delivers joint statement on right to health at Geneva interactive dialogue

**QNA**  
Geneva

HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar in Geneva Dr Hind Abdulrahman al-Muftah has delivered a joint statement on behalf of 70 countries, representing different geographical regions, during her participation in an interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the right to health, within the framework of the 59th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

HE al-Muftah said that attacks on healthcare should be considered serious violations of international law, requiring the prosecution of perpetrators. She emphasised in this context that accurate and timely reporting of such attacks is crucial to ensuring effective accountability, ending impunity, and preventing the recurrence of such violations.

She stressed that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is a fundamental right of every human being, without discrimination, and is guaranteed in times of peace and war alike. HE the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar in Geneva said

that the principle of distinction during armed conflict requires parties to a conflict not to attack civilian objects, including hospitals, health facilities, and civilian health and care workers.

She noted in this regard that the past three years have witnessed an alarming increase in the frequency, scale, and impact of attacks on health care in conflict zones, reaching the highest level ever recorded in 2024. She added that these attacks may constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law and may constitute war crimes.

They also constitute serious violations of the human rights of health workers, the sick, and the wounded, and negatively impact the rights to life, health, and liberty. HE al-Muftah emphasised that protecting the right to health during armed conflict is a critical humanitarian and legal issue, calling on all armed conflict parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law, including refraining from targeting health facilities and personnel during armed conflicts, and ensuring that health workers have full, safe, and unrestricted access to those in need to provide health care in a safe and protected environment without interruption.

## Arab statement affirms categorical rejection of Palestinian displacement

**QNA**  
Cairo

Representatives of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on Migration and Asylum reiterated yesterday their categorical rejection of any form of displacement of the Palestinian people from or within their land, and condemned the Israeli decisions to halt the entry of humanitarian aid and close the crossings used for relief work.

This came in a statement issued by the representatives of the Arab Regional Consultative Process on the occasion of World Refugee Day, which falls on June 20 of each year.

They noted that this occasion comes a month after the commemoration of the 77th anniversary of the 1948 Nakba, and in light of the ongoing crimes of Israeli aggression, genocide, and gross violations of international law and international humanitarian law, the adoption of starvation and scorched earth policies as means of warfare, the suspension of humanitarian aid to the Gaza

Strip, and the declaration of Gaza as a famine zone. The statement emphasised that the Palestinian refugee issue is the core of the Palestinian cause, noting the resolutions of the Council of the League of Arab States at the summit and ministerial levels on the Palestinian issue, including the statement issued by the Extraordinary Arab Summit (the "Palestine Summit") held in Cairo on March 4, 2025, and the resolutions of the regular session (163) of the League Council at the ministerial level held on April 23, 2025.

The statement emphasised the vital and irreplaceable role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), and the need to support it financially, politically, and legally to carry out its mandate, as established by UN General Assembly Resolution 302 of 1949, in its five areas of operation.

It also rejected any attempts or measures to reduce, abolish, replace, or alter its role, as part of systematic plans to liquidate the Palestinian refugee issue.

The statement called on the international community to con-

tinue providing the necessary and sustained support to UNRWA, enabling it to continue fulfilling its full responsibilities towards Palestinian refugees and preventing the collapse of its services.

This will help end the refugees' suffering and enable them to exercise their individual and collective rights, particularly their right to return to their homes from which they were displaced and to receive reparations.

The statement expressed deep concern over the severe funding shortfall for humanitarian organisations and UN agencies working to support refugees, which has negatively impacted their ability to provide basic services to refugees and displaced persons.

It emphasised that the continued shortage endangers the lives of refugees and displaced persons, threatens humanitarian response efforts in crisis areas, and portends serious repercussions for the future of refugees and displaced persons and their host countries and communities.

The statement stressed the need for the international community to come together to find practical

and applicable solutions to address the root causes that have led to the increase in refugee and displaced person flows, particularly in the Arab region, which has been experiencing a steady increase in these flows for more than fourteen years. It called for redoubling international efforts aimed at preventing and resolving conflicts and maintaining international peace and security.

The statement stressed the importance of striving to formulate a stronger and more equitable response to mass refugee influxes and protracted asylum situations, providing greater support to refugees, displaced persons, and the countries and communities hosting them, and activating the principle of shared responsibility and burden-sharing, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees and the Charter for the Future.

It noted the need to work to link humanitarian and development efforts to ensure the sustainability of support for refugees, displaced persons, and their host communities and to ensure that no one is left behind, in line with the sustainable development plan 2030.

## Iranian police arrest 24 agents for Israeli occupation in Western Tehran province

Iranian police announced yesterday the arrest of 24 spies working for the Israeli entity in the western part of Tehran province. According to Tasnim News Agency, the commander of the security forces in western Tehran Province stated that, thanks to ongoing intelligence monitoring and round-the-clock operations by the police, 24 individuals spying for the Israeli entity in both the physical and virtual spheres were arrested. The report added that, in recent days, 16 small drones belonging to the Israeli entity were targeted and destroyed by direct gunfire. The Israeli entity had launched an aerial assault on Iran early last Friday, targeting nuclear facilities and missile bases, assassinating military commanders and nuclear scientists, and killing or injuring hundreds of civilians. In response, Tehran launched a counterattack using ballistic missiles and drones.





# Academic excellence honoured



Islamic quiz winners being honoured.

KMCC Qatar, in collaboration with its student wing Green Teens, hosted the Educea 2K25 – Educational Excellence Awards Ceremony at Birla Public School (BPS), recognising and celebrating outstanding academic achievements by students in the Indian community.

The event honoured top scorers of the 2025 CBSE Class X and XII exams in Qatar, high-achieving students from KMCC families, and university toppers from various institutions across the country. Winners of the Green Teens Ramadan Quiz Competition were also felicitated during the ceremony.

KMCC Qatar state president Dr Abdussamad presided over the event, which was officially inaugurated by BPS vice-chairman Dr Mohan Thomas.

Dr Thomas, a distinguished fig-



Dr Abdussamad honouring a topper.

ure in Qatar's educational and socio-cultural circles, was presented with a special memento by KMCC advisory board chairman M P Shafi Haji as a token of appreciation.

KMCC Qatar state general secretary Salim Nalakhath delivered congratulatory remarks.

A highlight of the event was the honouring of Safreena Latheef, the first Malayali woman to scale Mount Everest, by the KMCC Qatar Women's Wing.

Additionally, a commemorative gift was presented to Al Ih-san, KMCC Qatar Mayyith Paripalana Committee in recognition of their service.

Prominent community leaders and organisational heads graced the occasion, including P S M Hussain (KMCC Qatar treasurer), S A M Basheer (Global KMCC vice-president), C V Khalid P V Muhammad Maulavi (advisory board vice-chairmen), Manikantan A P (president, Indian Cultural Centre), A P Abdulrahman (president, Indian Sports Centre) Haid-er Chungathara (president, Incas Qatar), Jafar Thayyil (ICBF), Afzal Vadakara (ICC), Kareem Master



Safreena Latheef, the first Malayali woman to scale Mount Everest, being honoured by the KMCC Qatar Women's Wing.



M P Shafi Haji presents a token of appreciation to Dr Mohan Thomas.

Memunda (Britain KMCC), and several other representatives from KMCC State sub-committees, advisory board, and district/constituency committees.

A cultural segment, including a musical programme led by Anwar Vadakara and Hiba Shamna, was among the highlights. The event was co-ordinated by KMCC Qatar state office bearers including

Anwar Babu Vadakara, P K Abdul Raheem, Siddique Vazhakad, Salman Ilayidam, Abubacker Puthukkudi, V T M Sadiq; Green Teens leaders Basheer Kariyad, Althaf Maniyoor, Latheef Pathirappatta, Rafi Ponnani, Sageer Iriya, Rayees M R, Shahiya A K, Ubaidulla Kuyyana, Haris Koyilandy, Muhammed Irfan, Ishal Saina, Muhammed Hashir,

Fathima Tabassum; and Women's Wing leaders Sameera Abdunnasir, Saleena Koolath, and Sameera Kannur.

Earlier, the programme commenced with a Holy Qur'an recitation by Salwa Salman.

Green Teens chairman P T Firos welcomed the audience and general convener Sahad Karthikappally proposed a vote of thanks.

## PISQ shines at MoEHE ceremony

Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) was recognised at the recent Ministry of Education and Higher Education event titled 'My Values, Draw My Identity'.

Abdullah Ashraf (Grade 11-A) who introduced Al Fitrah Initiative, earned praise from ministry officials for his insight, confidence, and clarity. Abdullah's performance stood as a testament to PISQ's commitment to nurturing thoughtful, articulate, and value-driven young leaders.

Omer Saleem, father of Ahmad Omer (Grade 3-1), was presented with a commendation certificate in recognition of his contribution and engagement as a parent – highlighting the strong home-school partnership that PISQ continues to cultivate.

These honours reflect the dedication of the school's leadership team under principal Ch Muhammad Afzal and vice-principals, a statement added.



## ICC Wednesday Fiesta



Indian Cultural Centre, under the aegis of the embassy of India, presented 'ICC Wednesday Fiesta', a weekly cultural event celebrating Indian arts and culture. The event showcased performances presented by various associated organisations and art centres in Qatar. The occasion also saw ICC honouring Saji Sreekumaran, Shyam Sivaji and Navas Muhammad, who won bronze medals in the Men's 35+ Handball Category at the World Masters Games in Taipei, Taiwan.

## New committee for IIS Gavel Club

The Ideal Indian School Gavel Club held its installation ceremony for the new executive committee. The event commenced with a welcome from club president Venika Anil, followed by the official handover to the new officers.

The other members of the new committee are: vice-presidents – Ih-san Mohammed (education), Aseel

Elfateh (membership), Mohammed Areeb (public relations), Afrin Salma (secretary), Leonel Mathew (treasurer), Ayman Muhammed (sergeant at arms).

Gavel Club co-ordinator for Division E, Richa Sachdeva, delivered a keynote address on the significance of leadership and communication. Area 17 director Nirmala adminis-

tered the oath of office. Ideal Indian School principal Shaik Shamim Saheb congratulated the new committee, stressing the importance of mastering public speaking.

The ceremony was also attended by club counsellor Sajid Shamim, Junior Section headmaster, and teacher In-charges Lipsy Sabu, Saba Ali, Bindu Babu, and Rehana.



## Indian artistes feted

Indian Cultural Centre, under the aegis of the embassy of India, organised a community reception in honour of visiting Indian playback singers Madhu Balakrishnan, Sumi Aravind, Sudeep Kumar, Chitra Arun, K K Nishad, Ravisankar, Vrinda Menon, and cine artist Jayaraj Warrier. During the reception ICC also honoured Chandrakala Arts chairman Chandramohan Pillai.



## Blood donation drive



In recognition of World Blood Donor Day, Billawas Qatar organised a campaign at the Qatar National Blood Donation Center. Khalid Fakhroo, petroleum engineer at Qatar Energy LNG and former head of Major Donors Relationship at Qatar Charity, was the chief guest. In his address, he highlighted the importance of voluntary blood donation and commended Billawas Qatar. The keynote address was delivered by Dr Vishwanath Puttanna, medical director at Abeer Medical Group, Doha. Billawas Qatar president Aparna Sharath thanked the donors. Cultural secretary Pooja Vyas welcomed the gathering and general secretary Umesh Poojary proposed a vote of thanks.



# New Zealand halts Cook Islands funding over China row

Reuters  
Wellington

New Zealand has suspended millions of dollars in budget funding to the Cook Islands, it said yesterday, as the relationship between the two constitutionally-linked countries continues to de-

teriorate amid the island group's deepening ties with China. A spokesperson for Foreign Minister Winston Peters said in a statement that New Zealand had decided in early June to suspend payment of NZ\$18.2mn (\$11.0mn) in core sector support funding for 2025-26 as this "relies on a high trust bilateral relationship".

New Zealand and Australia have both become increasingly cautious about China's growing presence in the Pacific region and the potential threat it poses to their national security. In January, New Zealand also halted new development funding to the Republic of Kiribati, an island in Micronesia. We "will also not consider sig-

nificant new funding until the Cook Islands Government takes concrete steps to repair the relationship and restore trust," the spokesperson said. "New Zealand hopes that steps will be taken swiftly to address New Zealand's concerns so that this support can be resumed as soon as possible." The Cook Islands minis-

try of foreign affairs and immigration (MFAI) said in a statement the country is committed to restoring its high-trust relationship with New Zealand and appreciated the funding support received from Wellington. News of the freeze comes as New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon is in China and ahead of a meeting with Chinese President Xi

Jinping and Premier Li Qiang today. Luxon is expected to raise New Zealand's concerns about Beijing's behaviour in the Pacific region during the meeting. "It's an issue between the Cook Islands and New Zealand," Luxon told media at a press conference in Shanghai yesterday, when asked whether Beijing could be unhappy with the decision.

# Malaysia verifying report of Chinese firm bypassing US tech curbs

AFP  
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's government is verifying media reports that a Chinese company may be circumventing US export curbs on high-end AI chips by using servers housing Nvidia chips based in the Southeast Asian country. The Wall Street Journal reported that Chinese engineers had flown to Malaysia in March carrying hard drives containing data to build artificial intelligence models in Malaysian data centres using advanced Nvidia chips.

The engineers planned to bring the AI models back to China, the report said. The US has cracked down on exports of advanced semiconductors to China, including those made by US tech giant Nvidia, as it seeks to retain a competitive edge over the technology.

A Malaysian trade ministry statement said it was "verifying the matter with relevant agencies if any domestic law or regulation has been breached".

The ministry said that while servers using Nvidia and AI chips are not classified as controlled goods under Malaysian law, the country "will co-operate with any government that requires assistance in monitoring trade in sensitive goods under the export control of their respective countries".

Data centres in Malaysia "are free to make their own commercial decisions", the statement said, but added

that it was illegal for any person or firm to circumvent export controls. The trade ministry said it "will always act firmly against any company operating in Malaysia, including those involved in semiconductor and AI industries, that violates Malaysian and international trading regulations". Asked about the reports, Beijing insisted it required Chinese firms to operate according to local laws and regulations. "At the same time, it opposes any act of coercing other countries to restrict their co-operation with China," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a regular press briefing. "China is willing to work with countries in the region, including Malaysia, to jointly maintain a free and open international trade order," he added.

Singapore in March charged three men with fraud in cases reportedly linked to the transfer of AI-powered Nvidia chips to China. The Singaporean government said servers potentially containing AI-powering Nvidia chips shipped from the US to Singapore had ended up in Malaysia, but that their final destination was unknown. Local media linked their cases to the alleged movement of Nvidia chips from Singapore for use by Chinese AI firm DeepSeek. In January, DeepSeek released its R1 chatbot, shaking the global tech market and claiming its tool can match the capacity of top US AI products for a fraction of their costs.



Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra (centre) gestures at a press conference next to Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Phumtham Wechayachai (left), Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa (second right), Armed Forces Commander Pana Klaewplodthuk (third right), chief of the defence forces Songwit Noonpackdee (right), and commissioner-general of the Royal Thai Police Kitrat Phanphet (centre left) at Government House in Bangkok yesterday.

# Thai PM clings on as crisis threatens to topple govt

AFP  
Bangkok

Thai Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra yesterday apologised for a leaked phone call with former Cambodian leader Hun Sen that provoked widespread anger and threatened to topple her government. Her main coalition partner quit and she faced calls to resign or hold an election, throwing the kingdom into a fresh round of political instability as it seeks to boost its spluttering economy and avoid US President Donald Trump's swingeing trade tariffs. The conservative Bhumjaithai party pulled out on Wednesday, saying Paetongtarn's conduct in the leaked call had wounded the country and the army's dignity. As pressure grew yesterday, Paetongtarn apologised at a news conference alongside military chiefs and senior figures from her Pheu Thai

party. "I would like to apologise for the leaked audio of my conversation with a Cambodian leader which has caused public resentment," Paetongtarn told reporters. The Thai stock market fell 2.4% yesterday as the crisis raged, but by the evening Paetongtarn, daughter of billionaire ex-PM Thaksin Shinawatra, appeared to have won a reprieve as another coalition party said it would not withdraw - for now at least. Leaders of the Charthai Pattana, United Thai Nation and Democrat parties held urgent talks on the crisis yesterday afternoon. Afterwards Charthai Pattana leader Varawut Silpa-archa told reporters his party would remain in government and meet Paetongtarn to decide what to do. Losing another coalition partner would likely mean the end of her government and either an election or a bid by other parties to stitch together a new coalition. In the leaked call, Paetongtarn is heard discussing an ongoing border dispute with Hun

Sen, who still holds significant power in Cambodia despite leaving office in 2023. She addresses the veteran leader as "uncle" and refers to the Thai army commander in the country's northeast as her opponent, a remark that sparked fierce criticism on social media. The Thai foreign ministry summoned the Cambodian ambassador yesterday to deliver a letter complaining about the leaking of the call. The loss of Bhumjaithai's 69 MPs left Paetongtarn with barely enough votes to scrape a majority in parliament and a snap election could be on the cards - barely two years after the last one in May 2023. Thailand's military said in a statement that army chief general Pana Klaewplodtook "affirms commitment to democratic principles and national sovereignty protection". "The chief of army emphasised that the paramount imperative is for 'Thai people to stand united' in collectively defending national sovereignty," it said.

**Malaysia sues Telegram over alleged malicious content**  
Malaysia yesterday said it had filed a civil suit against social network Telegram for allegedly disseminating content that could erode trust in public institutions and threaten social order. This is the first such legal action taken against a social media platform in the country, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), which filed the suit, said in a statement. Two local Telegram channels, "Edisi Siasat" and "Edisi Khas", were "found to have published content that violated provisions under the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998", MCMC said. It accused Telegram of a "serious failure to address content that has repeatedly been reported to them, despite various negotiation efforts by MCMC". The commission did not give details about the civil suit or the allegedly malicious content. But it said the high court had issued an injunction to stop the spread of the alleged offensive material and prevent similar content from being published.

## Anti-Israel protest in Jakarta



Activists carry placards and Palestinian flags during a protest against Israel and in support of Palestinians in Gaza, outside the US embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday.

# New Zealand coroner raises alarm over collision sport

AFP  
Wellington

A New Zealand coroner yesterday condemned a "perilous" rugby-inspired sport in which competitors sprint and crash into each other without protective gear. "Runit" competitors line up 65 feet apart and run directly at each other, with the winner being the person who "dominates the collision". Coroner Bruce Hesketh issued the warning as a separate comment in his report into a club player who died after being tackled in a traditional rugby league game. The Australian-based Runit Championship League set up a base in New Zealand this year. It offers a NZ\$20,000 (US\$12,000) prize to winners of regional competitions and NZ\$200,000

to the overall winner of the tournament. Fuelled by social media, unsanctioned splinter events have been held in both Australia and New Zealand. In May, 19-year-old Ryan Satterthwaite died in New Zealand after suffering a serious head injury during one such event. Hesketh, who is not looking into the teenager's death, said he was concerned about the Runit events. "The competition has all the hallmarks of perilous activity that makes no attempt to mitigate head injury," he said. "There appears to be no governing body, the activity is not regulated and has no written publicly accessible rules of participation. "Neither is there any information to players around the signs and dangers of concussion or concussion management."

# Aung San Suu Kyi marks 80th birthday in junta jail

AFP  
Yangon

Myanmar's deposed democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi marked her 80th birthday in junta detention yesterday, serving a raft of sentences set to last the rest of her life. Suu Kyi was the figurehead of Myanmar's decade-long democratic thaw, becoming de facto leader as it opened up from military rule. But as the generals snatched back power in a 2021 coup, she was locked up on charges ranging from corruption to breaching Covid-19 pandemic restrictions and is serv-

ing a 27-year sentence. "It will be hard to be celebrating at the moment," said her 47-year-old son Kim Aris from the UK. "We've learned to endure when it's been going on so long." He has run 80kms over the eight days leading up to her birthday, and collected over 80,000 well-wishing video messages for his mother. But Suu Kyi will not see them, sequestered in Myanmar's sprawling capital Naypyidaw from where the military directs a civil war against guerilla fighters. Aris said he has heard from his mother only once via letter two years ago since she was imprisoned. "We have no idea what condi-

tion she's in," he said, adding that he fears she is suffering from untreated medical problems with her heart, bones and gums. No formal celebrations took place in junta-held parts of Myanmar, but a gaggle of followers in military-controlled Mandalay city staged a spontaneous protest ahead of her birthday, local media said. A few masked protestors showered a street with pamphlets reading "freedom from fear" and "happy birthday" as one member held up a portrait of Suu Kyi in shaky camera footage shared on social media. "Do you still remember this great person?" asked one of the protestors in the video, which AFP has not

been able to independently verify. Other small protests were also reported, including in a rebel-contested area of northern Sagaing region where women marched holding roses in tribute to the former leader, who famously wore garlands of flowers in her hair. While Suu Kyi remains hugely popular in the majority Buddhist country, her status as a democracy icon abroad collapsed before the military takeover after she defended the generals in their crackdown against the Rohingya Muslim minority. Hundreds of thousands were sent fleeing to neighbouring Bangladesh under her rule, though some ar-

gued she was powerless against the lingering influence of Myanmar's military. Nonetheless institutions and figures that once showered Suu Kyi with awards rapidly distanced themselves, and her second round of imprisonment has received far less international attention. Suu Kyi, the daughter of Myanmar independence hero Aung San, became a champion of democracy almost by accident. After spending much of her youth abroad, she returned in 1988 to nurse her sick mother but began leading anti-military protests crushed by a crackdown. She was locked up for 15 years, most of it in her family's Yangon

lakeside mansion where she still drew crowds for speeches over the boundary wall. The military offered freedom if she went into exile but her poised refusal thrust her into the spotlight and won her the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. Suu Kyi was released in 2010 and led her National League for Democracy (NLD) party to electoral victory in 2015, never formally in charge as army-drafted rules kept her from the presidency. The NLD said in a statement yesterday she "must be recognised as an essential figure in any credible and inclusive solution to Myanmar's ongoing crisis".



# India ‘to tighten remittance rules, bar offshore time deposits’

Reuters  
Mumbai

India’s central bank plans to tighten rules for overseas remittances by resident Indians, barring them from holding foreign currency deposits with lock-in periods, two government sources said.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will amend regulations to prevent overseas transfers from being used to park money in time deposits or other interest-bearing accounts abroad, one of the sources said. “This is akin to passive wealth shifting, which is a red flag for the RBI in a still-controlled capital regime,” the first source familiar with

the thinking of the central bank said. The proposed changes reflect India’s cautious stance on a rise in outward remittances and full convertibility of the rupee, as authorities strive to safeguard foreign exchange reserves and manage currency volatility, the sources said. Overseas investments by individuals fall under the central bank’s

Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) – which allows resident Indians to remit up to \$250,000 in a single year – for purposes ranging from foreign education, travel, equity and debt investments to medical treatments. While discussions with the government are ongoing, the RBI aims to ensure such deposits cannot be made even under

alternate names, the second source said. Both sources declined to be identified due to the confidentiality of the talks. The move is part of a comprehensive review of the legal framework governing the scheme to simplify the regulations, a priority highlighted by the central bank in its annual report. RBI data showed that deposits under outward remit-

tances by resident individuals rose sharply to \$173.2mn in March from \$51.62mn in February. Outward remittances typically spike in March as it allows residents to maximise their annual limits and optimise taxes, making it the busiest month under LRS but the RBI is concerned that a portion of this may be getting passively parked.

# Air India warned for flying planes with unchecked escape slides

Reuters  
New Delhi

India’s aviation regulator has warned Air India for breaching safety rules after three of its Airbus planes flew despite being overdue checks on emergency equipment, and for being slow to address the issue, government documents show. The warning notices and an investigation report were not in any way related to last week’s crash of an Air India Boeing 787-8 plane that killed all but one of the 242 people onboard, and were sent days before that incident.

In the report, the directorate general of civil aviation said spot checks in May on three Air India Airbus planes found that they were operated despite mandatory inspections being overdue on the “critical emergency equipment” of escape slides.

In one case, the watchdog found that the inspection of an Airbus A320 jet was delayed by more than a month before being carried out on May 15.

AirNav Radar data shows that during the delay the plane flew to international destinations such as Dubai, Riyadh and Jeddah. Another case, involving an

Airbus A319 used on domestic routes, showed checks were over three months late, while a third showed an inspection was two days late.

“The above cases indicate that aircraft were operated with expired or unverified emergency equipment, which is a violation of standard airworthiness and safety requirements,” the DGCA report said.

Air India “failed to submit timely compliance responses” to deficiencies raised by the DGCA, “further evidencing weak procedural control and oversight,” it added.

Air India, which was taken over by the Tata Group in 2022 from the government, said in statement that it was “accelerating” verification of all maintenance records, including dates of the escape slides, and would complete the process in the coming days.

In one of the cases, Air India said, the issue came to light when an engineer from AI Engineering Services “inadvertently deployed an escape slide during maintenance”.

The DGCA and Airbus did not respond to queries.

Checks on escape slides are “a very serious issue. In case of accident, if they don’t open, it can lead to serious injuries,” said Vibhuti

Singh, a former legal expert at the government’s Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau.

The DGCA said in its report that the certificates of airworthiness for aircraft that miss mandatory checks were “deemed suspended”.

The warning notices and the report were sent by Animesh Garg, a deputy director of airworthiness in the Indian government, to Air India CEO Campbell Wilson as well as the airline’s continuing airworthiness manager, quality manager and head of planning, the documents showed.

An Indian aviation lawyer said such breaches typically attract monetary and civil penalties on both individual executives and the airline.

Wilson said last year that global parts shortages were affecting most airlines, but the problem was “more acute” for Air India as its “product is obviously a lot more dated”, with many planes not refreshed since they were delivered in 2010-2011.

The Indian regulator, like many abroad, often fines airlines for compliance lapses. India’s junior aviation minister in February told parliament that authorities had warned or fined airlines in 23 instances for safety violations last year.



Friends and family members mourn near the coffin of co-pilot Clive Kunder, who died in the Air India crash, in Mumbai yesterday.

# Canteen worker’s hopes dashed, no second miracle in air crash

Reuters  
Ahmedabad, India

Ravi Thakor had been hoping his mother and two-year old daughter had escaped just before an Air India jet crashed into the building they were in.

A week after one of the world’s worst aviation disasters killed more than 270 people in the western Indian city of Ahmedabad, Thakor’s hopes were dashed when doctors matched his DNA with the remains of his mother Sarla and daughter Aadhya.

A canteen worker in a college hostel, Thakor and other family members had left the hostel around 30 minutes before Air India’s Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft crashed into the building.

Sarla had stayed back, cooking and looking after Aadhya, who was

**Crashed jet was ‘well-maintained’**  
Air India’s Boeing plane was “well-maintained” before it crashed a week ago, killing all but one of 242 people on board, the airline said yesterday. Indian authorities are yet to detail what caused the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner to hurtle to the ground in Ahmedabad, where at least 38 people were also left dead. As investigators attempt to retrieve data from the plane’s black boxes – the cockpit voice recorder and the flight data recorder – the airline said that no problems were detected with the jet before the disaster. “The plane was well-maintained, with its last major check in June 2023,” Air India said in a statement. “Its right engine was overhauled in March 2025, and the left engine was inspected in April 2025. Both the aircraft and engines were regularly monitored, showing no issues before the flight,” the airline said.

asleep. Thakor and his wife Lalita searched for them in hospitals and the morgue after the crash. After not finding them for days, they said they were hoping for a “second miracle”, referring to the lone passenger aboard the plane who survived the disaster. Yesterday, the dead bodies

were handed over to Thakor’s family for the final rites.

“We are going to cremate my mother and daughter. It is very difficult for me to say anything right now, but at least we know what happened to them,” Thakor said, struggling to speak.

## Amazon to invest \$233mn in India

Amazon will invest more than Rs20bn (\$233mn) in India in 2025 to expand and update its operations infrastructure, develop new technology for its fulfilment network and improve delivery safety, it said yesterday. The investment builds on top of Amazon’s prior investments for the creation of an operations network to deliver to all serviceable pin-codes in the country, it added. In June 2023, the e-commerce major – which competes with Walmart’s Flipkart and billionaire Mukesh Ambani’s Reliance Retail in India – had said it will take its investments in the country to \$26bn by 2030, without providing a breakdown. The new investment will be used to launch new sites and upgrade existing facilities across its fulfilment and delivery network, improving speed and processing capacity, it said.

## Heavy rains in Ahmedabad



Commuters ride motorbikes through flooded streets following torrential rains, in Ahmedabad, India, yesterday.

# UK farm swaps milk for cow cuddles

Reuters  
Arram, England

Years of floods and low food prices have driven a dairy farm in England’s north-east to stop milking its cows and instead charge visitors to cuddle them.

Dumble Farm started as a dairy farm in the 1970s, but in recent years flooding washed out crops and killed off the type of grass the cows like to eat, while milk prices below cost of production proved an insurmountable challenge.

“The amount of flooding and the pressures on our land were just making it unsustainable for us to carry on,” said Fiona Wilson, co-owner of the farm.

Agriculture is one of the sectors worst-affected by climate change, with farmers in Europe and elsewhere suffering under in-

creasing heat, drought and flooding. In 2022, Dumble Farm sold all but a few of its dairy cows and, in a scramble to reinvent itself, began offering “cow cuddling” experiences to fund a wildlife conservation scheme. For £95 (\$127.80), visitors can cuddle, brush and stroke the cows as they lie down on a straw-covered enclosure inside a barn. The experience includes a safari to see Highland cattle. “It’s been so worth it, just to get so close to the cows, and they are so loving and gentle,” guest Emma Hutton, 25, said after she spent some time cuddling one of the cows.

It took over a year to train the cows to feel comfortable with cuddling, but now the animals have fully adjusted, farmer James McCune said. “They like being pampered. They are like big dogs... It’s more of a spa day for the cows,” McCune said.

# London museum opens vast ‘on-demand’ storehouse to public

AFP  
London

Imagine being able to visit a museum and examine up close thousand-year-old pottery, revel alone in jewellery from centuries past or peer inside a Versace bag.

Now London’s V&A has launched a revolutionary new exhibition space, where visitors can choose from some 250,000 objects, order something they want to spend time looking at, and have it delivered to a room for a private viewing.

Most museums have thousands of precious and historic items hidden away in their stores, which the pub-

lic never gets to see or enjoy.

But the V&A Storehouse, which opened on May 31 in a specially converted warehouse, has come up with a radical new concept. And it is totally free.

“Museums should be and are for everybody ... the V&A’s collection is for everybody. It belongs to everybody, and everyone should be able to have free, equitable, and meaningful access to it,” said senior curator Georgia Haseldine.

“So this is a world first, never has anyone been able to be invited freely, without having to book into the same space as a national collection, on this scale.”

One fifth of the museum’s to-

tal collection is now available to be viewed and enjoyed in the four-storey building on the former site of the 2012 London Olympic Games.

“It’s fantastic, it’s so much better than an ordinary museum,” enthused retired physics teacher Jane Bailey as she toured the floors.

“I’m just really, really impressed by it. We’ve only just heard about it, but it’s phenomenal.”

She was transfixed by the sight of the black and red drum kit which belonged to Keith Moon, from the band The Who, saying it would be great to be able to resuscitate the legendary drummer who died in 1978, to play a set for them.

Jostling for space, side-by-side

on shelves in a massive hanger which resembles a DIY warehouse and stretches for more than 30 basketball courts, are everything from ceramics and tapestries, to paintings and toys from the Tudor period.

There is even a whole 15th-century gilded wooden ceiling from the now-lost Torrijos Palace in Spain, and the Kaufmann Office, a panelled room which is the only complete Frank Lloyd Wright interior outside of the US.

Also on display is a stunning 40-foot stage cloth made for a 1924 Ballets Russes show, “Le Train Bleu”. The copy of a Pablo Picasso painting is so huge it has been rarely seen

since its stage debut. There is no protective glass.

One of the first visitors to the Storehouse was Princess Catherine, a patron of the V&A and keen art lover, who took a tour on Tuesday.

She described the collection as “eclectic” as she used the “order an object” system to look at a samples book from renowned 19th century English textiles designer William Morris as well as rolls of ornate textiles and a musical instrument.

All the works are available to the public seven days a week, and can be reserved via an online booking system for a private viewing at a date and time of your choice.

Members of staff are on hand pay-

ing close attention as visitors don purple gloves and satisfy their curiosity, spending time with the object of their choice.

It’s a huge departure from the usual admonishment of “Don’t touch!” found in most museums seeking to protect their objects from damage.

Curator Haseldine acknowledged “we have certainly met with some levels of scepticism and worry”.

But she said once the idea was explained properly, including “how meaningful it is to... start to open up and give collections back to a community... people just start to think creatively about how we can do this.”





# Trump extends deadline for TikTok sale by three months

Reuters/AFP  
Washington

US President Donald Trump has extended to September 17 a deadline for China-based ByteDance to divest the US assets of short-video app TikTok despite a law that mandated a sale or shutdown without significant progress.

Trump signed an executive order pushing back yesterday's deadline for 90 more days, a step that he had previously signalled.

The Republican president had already twice granted a reprieve from federal enforcement of a law that mandated the sale or shutdown of TikTok that was supposed to take effect in January, absent significant progress toward a sale.

Trump has said he wants to keep the app, which helped him woo young voters in the 2024 presidential election, active in the US.

He has also expressed optimism that Chinese President Xi Jinping would approve a deal that preserves the app, though it's not clear how significantly the topic has featured in the two countries' ongoing trade talks to resolve a tariff dispute.

"We are grateful for President Trump's leadership and support in ensuring that TikTok continues to be available," TikTok said in a statement posted on its website.

The company said it is continuing to work with US Vice-President JD Vance's office on the matter.

"President Trump will sign an additional executive order this week to keep TikTok up and running," White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said on Tuesday.

"President Trump does not want TikTok to go dark," she added, saying that the administration will spend the next three months making sure the sale closes so that Americans can keep using TikTok with the assurance that their data is safe and secure.

Trump had said on Tuesday that he would "probably, yeah" extend the deadline.

"Probably have to get China approval but I think we'll get it," he told reporters aboard Air Force One. "I think President Xi will ultimately approve it."

"I have a little warm spot in my heart for TikTok," Trump said in an NBC News interview in early May. "If it needs an extension, I would be willing to give it an extension."

A 2024 law required TikTok to stop operating

by January 19 unless TikTok's Chinese parent ByteDance had completed divesting the app's US assets or demonstrated significant progress toward a sale.

Trump began his second term as president on January 20 and opted not to enforce the law. He first extended the deadline to early April, and then again last month to June 19.

In March, Trump said he would be willing to reduce tariffs on China to get a deal done with ByteDance to sell the short-video app used by 170mn Americans.

A deal had been in the works this spring that would spin off TikTok's US operations into a new US-based firm, majority-owned and operated by US investors, but it was put on hold after China indicated it would not approve it following Trump's announcements of steep tariffs on Chinese goods.

Some Democratic lawmakers argue that Trump has no legal authority to extend the deadline and suggest that the deal under consideration would not meet legal requirements.

Trump had long supported a ban or divestment, but reversed his position and vowed to defend the platform after coming to believe it helped him win young voters' support in the November election.

# DHS puts new limits on Congress visits to immigration centres

Reuters  
Washington

The US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has put new restrictions on visits by members of Congress to immigration enforcement field offices after several episodes where Democratic lawmakers have been refused access or even arrested.

The new guidelines, dated this month, also say that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a DHS agency, has sole discretion over whether to deny or cancel a tour of an ICE detention centre by a member of Congress.

Senators and representatives in Congress have oversight of agencies in the executive branch of government and control their funding.

Under federal law, the DHS is forbidden from preventing members of Congress from entering any facility "used to detain or otherwise house aliens" and lawmakers do not have to give the DHS prior notice of a visit.

The DHS may require lawmakers' staff to give 24 hours' notice before those staffers can enter.

The new guidelines say that law does not apply to ICE field offices, although immigrants are often detained at ICE field offices before a transfer to an ICE jail.

The ICE is now asking members of Congress to give at least 72 hours' notice before a visit.

US President Donald Trump, a Republican, returned to the White House in January partly on a pledge to voters to deport millions of immigrants, including those in the US without authorisation and those seeking asylum.

He also has sought to deport international students legally studying in the US who have pro-Palestinian views.

The guidelines note that members of Congress do not have to give notice before a visit to an ICE detention centre, but now assert that the ICE has "the sole and unreviewable discretion to deny a request or otherwise cancel, reschedule or terminate a tour or visit" for any reason.

The ICE will make "every effort to comply with the law and accommodate" lawmakers from Congress, the guidelines say.

Some Democratic politicians, who oppose Trump's crack-down on immigrants, have found themselves in heated standoffs with ICE agents outside immigrant detention centres in several states.

This month, the Trump administration said it is prosecuting US Representative LaMonica McIver, a Democrat from New Jersey, over a scuffle at the gate of an immigration detention centre on May 9 as lawmakers sought to conduct an oversight visit.

ICE agents have also arrested local Democratic politicians, including Mayor Ras Baraka of Newark, New Jersey, and New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, at ICE facilities in recent weeks.

# SpaceX Starship rocket explodes in setback to Musk's Mars mission

AFP  
Houston

One of Elon Musk's SpaceX Starships exploded during a routine test in Texas late on Wednesday, law enforcement officials said, in the latest setback to the billionaire's dream of turning humanity into an interplanetary species.

The Starship 36 suffered "catastrophic failure and exploded" at the Starbase launch facility shortly after 11pm (0400 GMT yesterday), a Facebook post by Cameron County authorities said.

A video shared with the post showed the megarocket attached to the launch arm and then a flash and a towering, fiery explosion.

Musk's Space X said the rocket was preparing for the tenth flight test when it "experienced a major anomaly while on a test stand at Starbase", without elaborating on the nature of the complication.

"A safety clear area around the site was maintained throughout the operation and all personnel are safe and accounted for," Space X said on social media. "There are no hazards to residents in surrounding communities, and we ask that individuals do not attempt to approach the area."

The Starship was not scheduled for launch on Wednesday evening when the explosion occurred during a "routine static fire test", according to the Cameron County authorities.

During a static fire, part of the procedures preceding a launch, the Starship's Super Heavy booster would be anchored to the ground to prevent it from lifting off during the test-firing.

Starbase, on the south Texas coast near the border with Mexico, is the headquarters for Musk's space project.

Musk appeared to downplay the incident early yesterday.

"Just a scratch," he posted on his social media platform X, although without context it was unclear if he was referring to the fiery explosion of the rocket.

Standing 403' (123m) tall, Starship is the world's largest and most powerful rocket and is central to Musk's long-term vision of colonising Mars.

The Starship is billed as a fully reusable rocket with a payload capacity of up to 150 metric tonnes.

The latest setback follows the explosion of a prototype Starship over the Indian Ocean in late May.

The biggest and most powerful launch vehicle ever built had lifted off from the Starbase facility on May 27, but the first-stage Super Heavy booster blew up instead of executing its planned splashdown in the Gulf of Mexico.

The previous two outings also ended poorly, with the upper stage disintegrating over the Caribbean.

However, the failures will likely do little to dent Musk's spacefaring ambitions.

SpaceX has been betting that its "fail fast, learn fast" ethos, which has helped it dominate commercial spaceflight, will eventually pay off.

The company has caught the Super Heavy booster in the launch tower's giant robotic arms three times - a daring engineering feat it sees as key to rapid reusability and slashing costs.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) is also increasingly reliant on SpaceX, whose Dragon spacecraft is vital for ferrying astronauts to and from the International Space Station.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved an increase in annual Starship rocket launches from five to 25 in early May, stating that the increased frequency would not adversely



Flames rise as a SpaceX rocket explodes in Brownsville, Texas in this screengrab obtained from a social media video. - Reuters

affect the environment.

The decision overruled objections from conservation groups

that had warned the expansion could endanger sea turtles and shorebirds.

# El Chapo's former lawyer elected as Mexican judge

Reuters/AFP  
Mexico City

Silvia Delgado, a former lawyer for drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, has won a criminal judge position in Mexico's controversial judicial elections, results showed this week.

Delgado's candidacy drew scrutiny from opponents to the judicial overhaul, one of the most radical to be enacted by any country in the Western Hemisphere in recent years, stoking concerns that the vote could threaten Mexico's rule of law.

Civil rights group Defensorxs highlighted Delgado, a Chihuahua state-based attorney who represented the notorious former chief of the Sinaloa Cartel in 2016, as a "high risk candidate" for her past ties to El Chapo, a characterisation she vehemently rejected.

Critics saw Delgado's bid to become a criminal court judge in the border town Ciudad Juarez

as emblematic of broader fears about the vote's threat to Mexican democracy, and the possible removal of checks and balances on the ruling Morena party and the increasing influence of organised crime groups over the judiciary.

The June 1 vote, which stemmed from a sweeping constitutional reform in September 2024, was the first-of-its-kind with Mexico's electorate voting for more than 840 federal judge and magistrate positions, including Supreme Court justices, and thousands more local positions.

Analysts say the newly elected Supreme Court leans heavily towards Morena.

An online vote tally by Chihuahua state electoral body IEE, with 100% of ballots accounted for, showed Delgado netted the second-highest number of votes, securing her a judge position.

As an attorney on El Chapo's legal team, Delgado visited him weekly in prison to share updates before he was extradited to the United States and eventually sentenced to life in prison.

Defensorxs President Miguel Meza called on Delgado's competitors to file a lawsuit to block

her victory on the basis that she does not meet a Constitutional requirement that candidates be of "good reputation".

Delgado has argued that her defence of Guzman did not make her a criminal.

"Every person has the right to counsel," she said, talking up her experience to voters.

Defensorxs also flagged a number of other candidates it said should not have been allowed to run, and Meza said the organisation had filed complaints for about 20 winning candidates to Mexico's federal electoral authority INE.

Meza said the authority had so far not disqualified anyone.

"What INE is doing is basically eliminating the good reputation requirement which is in the Constitution," Meza said in an interview with Reuters.

A media representative for INE declined to comment.

The authority has said it would investigate complaints and invalidate any winning candidates deemed unfit for office.

# Nigerian Navy cracks down on oil theft, detains 76 vessels

The Nigerian Navy has arrested 76 vessels and at least 242 suspects in anti-oil theft operations, and destroyed more than 800 illegal refining sites during a two-year crackdown, it said yesterday.

Oil theft from pipelines and wells

has crippled Nigeria's oil industry in recent years, damaging government finances and stifling exports.

Since June 2023, naval authorities have seized around 171,000 barrels of crude and millions of litres of illegally refined fuels from criminal networks, Chief of Na-

val Staff Vice-Admiral Emmanuel Ogalla said at a briefing in the capital Abuja.

The navy also began verifying oil cargoes loaded at Nigeria's five major export terminals in January to combat oil theft at its source, Ogalla said.

The navy has acquired patrol boats, three new ships and three AW 139 Trekker helicopters.

It is also building two additional seaward defence boats and will take delivery of two 76m offshore patrol vessels from Dearsan Shipyard in Turkiye. - Reuters

# Kenyans sentenced to prison for 30 years over 2019 hotel attack

Reuters/AFP  
Nairobi

A Kenyan court has sentenced two men to 30 years in prison for aiding a 2019 attack by militant members of Al Shebaab group on a hotel and office complex in Nairobi that killed 21 people.

The attack on the DusitD2 hotel and office complex in central Nairobi left 21 people dead, with police rescuing some 700 civilians as events unfolded over the 20-hour siege.

Hussein Mohammed Abdile and Mohamed Abdi Ali were convicted in May on charges of facilitation and conspiracy to commit an act of terrorism for helping the Al Qaeda-linked group.

Both men had pleaded not guilty.

Prosecutors said Abdile and Ali helped two of the attackers obtain forged identity cards that

allowed them to escape from a refugee camp and provided financial support.

Abdile and Ali have 14 days to appeal their sentences.

Delivering her ruling yesterday, Judge Diana Mochache said that without their involvement, the attack may not have happened.

"Without financiers, facilitators and sympathisers, terrorists cannot actualise their activities," Mochache said.

Al Shebaab regularly carries out attacks in Kenya to try to pressure the government to withdraw peacekeeping troops from Somalia, where Al Shebaab is waging an insurgency to try to seize power.

An assault on the high-end Westgate mall in Nairobi in 2013 left 67 dead in a siege that stretched out over four days.

Two years later, 148 people died when the terror group attacked Garissa University near the border with Somalia.



# Pakistan draws five potential buyers for national airline

In its efforts to sell its struggling national airline, Pakistan has received expressions of interest from five parties, including business groups and a military-backed firm, the privatisation ministry said yesterday.

The bids were submitted ahead of a June 19 deadline to acquire up to 100% of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), which has accumulated over \$2.5bn in losses in roughly a decade.

Still, following a major restructuring, it posted its first operating profit in 21 years in the year through June 2024.

The sale is seen as a test of Pakistan's ability to shed loss-making state firms and

meet conditions of a \$7bn International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout.

It would be the country's first major privatisation in nearly two decades.

Eight parties submitted their expression of interests, but only five of them provided documents of qualification, the ministry said in a statement.

Among the five groups is a consortium of major industrial firms: Lucky Cement Ltd, Hub Power Holdings Ltd, Kohat Cement Co Ltd and Metro Ventures.

Another is led by investment firm Arif Habib Corp Ltd, and includes fertiliser producer Fatima Fertiliser Co Ltd, private education operator The City School, and

real estate firm Lake City Holdings.

Fauji Fertiliser Company Ltd, a military-backed conglomerate, Pakistani airline Airblue Ltd and a consortium that includes Bahria Foundation, domestic carrier Serene Air and US-based Equitas Capital LLC also submitted documents.

"The government will review the documents and give qualified parties access to data for due diligence," the statement read.

Once a leading global airline, the PIA resumed European flights in January after a four-year EU ban linked to safety concerns, and is seeking UK clearances, seen as key to its turnaround.

Industry insiders say the winning bidder

is expected to partner with a foreign airline to run operations.

A previous attempt to sell the airline failed as a \$36mn bid from real estate firm Blue World City fell short of the \$305mn floor price, with concerns over debt, staffing, and limited control.

This time, the government is offering full divestment, has scrapped the sales tax on leased aircraft, and is providing limited protection from legal and tax claims.

Around 80% of the airline's debt has been transferred to the state.

"We're targeting 86bn rupees in privatisation proceeds this year," Privatisation Minister Muhammad Ali said. "For the PIA,

in the last round of bidding, 15% of the proceeds were going to the government, with the rest staying within the company."

He said bidders would be pre-qualified in early July, with due diligence lasting 2-2.5 months, and final bidding and negotiations expected in the fourth quarter of 2025.

Officials hope the sale will revive the stalled privatisation drive.

Other planned deals include the Roosevelt Hotel and several power firms, by mid-2026.

"From the Roosevelt Hotel, we're expecting over \$100mn as first payment during this year," said Ali. - **Reuters**

## Russia and Ukraine say new PoW exchange completed

Russia and Ukraine said yesterday that they had completed another exchange of captured soldiers, part of a deal reached earlier in June at peace talks in Istanbul.

During the talks, the first direct negotiations between the sides in three years, both countries agreed to free more than 1,000 prisoners of war (PoWs) from each side - all wounded, ill or under 25 years old.

However, neither side said how many soldiers had been freed in yesterday's exchange, the latest in several swaps since the June 2 talks.

"Our people are returning home from Russian captivity," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media.

The Ukrainian government agency overseeing the exchanges said it involved "seriously ill and wounded" soldiers.

Most of the Ukrainians had been captured in the first months of Russia's 2022 invasion and had developed "serious medical conditions and illnesses" including dystrophy, ulcers, vision problems, musculoskeletal disorders and cardiovascular diseases, Ukraine said.

Russia's defence ministry confirmed the exchange, posting pictures of soldiers draped in Russian flags cheering and waving.

Zelensky posted similar photos of freed Ukrainian soldiers, crying, smiling and calling loved ones after being swapped.

In Istanbul, Moscow and Kyiv also reached a deal to repatriate more than 6,000 dead Ukrainian soldiers, with several stages of the handover carried out in recent weeks.

Ukraine has accused Russia of deliberately complicating identification of the corpses.

Ukrainian Interior Minister Igor Klimentenko repeated the accusation yesterday and said on social media that Moscow had mixed "the bodies of Russian soldiers with those of Ukrainians". - **AFP**

## France migrant camp shootings kill three

A man wounded by gunfire at a migrant camp in northern France has died, bringing the death toll from a series of shootings at the weekend to three, officials said yesterday.

Northern France has seen an eruption of makeshift camps in recent years set up by migrants hoping to reach Britain by making the perilous crossing across the Channel.

The man had been badly wounded in a shooting on Sunday in a migrant camp at Loon-Plage, outside the city of Dunkirk, which also killed another person.

Dunkirk prosecutor Charlotte Huet reported the second death, without giving details on the victim's identity.

A police source said he had been shot in the temple, adding another victim wounded in the legs had fled.

Sunday's shooting came a day after a similar incident near another migrant camp in the area in which a 24-year-old Sudanese man was killed and five people were wounded. - **AFP**

## Nurse gets life sentence for murder of babies

A nurse was sentenced to life in prison for killing five babies and attempting to murder eight others at a hospital in Argentina, according to local media.

Brenda Cecilia Agüero injected potassium and insulin into newborns between March and June 2022, taking doses from emergency medical carts without inventory control, prosecutors said.

Under Argentine law, Agüero will not be eligible for parole before serving 35 years.

The court clerk read out the sentencing in footage broadcast on local media on Wednesday.

The babies, all born healthy, died under initially unexplained circumstances at the neonatal ward of the maternal and child hospital in Córdoba province, 370 miles (600km) northwest of Buenos Aires.

Eight others survived due to swift medical intervention.

The trial also brought charges against 10 other defendants including former provincial officials and health professionals for cover-up and dereliction of duty.

Those charged included a former health minister and secretary of health of Córdoba province, as well as the former hospital director.

Agüero, who was arrested in 2022, denied the charges, earlier telling the court that "they have no evidence" and accusing media of portraying her as a "serial killer".

Of the other defendants, five were found guilty but received lesser sentences while five others were acquitted, including the former provincial officials, according to local outlet Infobae. - **AFP**

# Nato's 5% defence spending target is 'unreasonable' for Spain: PM

AFP/Reuters  
Madrid

Any Nato target to ramp up defence spending to 5% of annual economic output would be "unreasonable" for Spain, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said yesterday ahead of a crucial alliance summit.

The June 24-25 gathering in The Hague comes as US President Donald Trump demands other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) members shoulder a greater burden and Russia's grinding war in Ukraine forces Europe to bolster its own security capabilities.

Germany and Poland are among the countries supporting the goal of 5% of gross domestic product, up from a 2% goal set in 2014, but Spain has resisted its allies' calls to go further.

"For Spain, committing to a 5% target would not only be unreasonable, but also counterproductive," Sanchez told Nato chief Mark Rutte in a letter written in English.

Nato Secretary-General Rutte had proposed that member states agree to boost defence spending to 3.5% of GDP and commit a further 1.5% to broader security-related spending.

Leaders across Nato say its current spending goal is no longer sufficient, with Russia posing a greater threat since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Asked for comment on Spain's request, a Nato official said: "Discussions among Allies on a new defence investment plan are ongoing."

Sanchez said in his letter that each Nato member needed to invest different sums to meet their military capability targets, with

the military estimating that 2.1% would suffice for Spain.

Spain does not want to limit other Nato allies' spending ambitions but seeks "a more flexible formula" at the summit, Sanchez said.

This declaration could recognise each Nato ally's different path to its capability target, making the 5% spending target optional, or exclude Spain from the new goal, Sanchez suggested.

In 2024, Spain was the Nato member that dedicated the smallest proportion of its annual economic output to defence and found itself in the firing line of Trump's ire.

Sanchez has announced more than €10bn (\$11.5bn) of fresh defence investment to hit the two-percent target this year.

However, he faces a balancing act of aligning with Nato allies and cajoling his junior coalition partner, the far-left alliance Sumar, which is hostile to increasing military spending.

Sanchez argued accelerating spending would rush Spain into defence purchases that could "exacerbate equipment interoperability challenges" and prevent European suppliers "from developing their own industrial base".

A spending spree risked weighing down economic growth through higher debt and inflation and diverting investment from areas such as health and education, he warned.

"If we truly want to increase real spending in a sustained way, our main goal should be to ensure that our economies grow significantly"

Currently, a corruption scandal engulfing the prime minister's Socialist party has generated fury among coalition partners and allies, even raising the spectre of an early election.



Sanchez: For Spain, committing to a 5% target would not only be unreasonable, but also counterproductive.

"If the government needs parliamentary support to approve spending, it will have a very difficult time in the current situation," Jose Miguel Calvillo, a professor of international relations at the Complutense University of Madrid.

Some other Nato members have also questioned the timeline, saying that it is too rapid, but are generally willing to sign up, diplomatic sources say.

Italy, for example, wants the deadline moved to 2035 from 2032 and the removal of a requirement to increase spending by 0.2% per year, a source with knowledge of the matter said.

"It doesn't look good, indeed, but we are not over yet," said one senior European official in relation to Sanchez's letter. "We will have in-depth discussions tomorrow, and perhaps we find a way out. Spain has demonstrated to be a steadfast ally so far."

## Finnish parliament votes to exit landmines treaty

Finnish lawmakers have voted to leave a treaty banning anti-personnel mines, which four other countries in the region also plan to withdraw from, citing security threats posed by neighbouring Russia.

The decision was approved by a wide majority with 157 voting in favour and 18 voting against.

In early April, Helsinki announced it would begin preparing to withdraw from the anti-landmine Ottawa Convention, which the country acceded to in 2012, citing a fundamentally changed security environment with neighbouring Russia posing a long-term threat to Europe.

The Nordic country shares a 1,340km- (830-mile) border with Russia.

Defence Minister Antti Hakkanen said in a statement that the quick process to

exit the treaty "sends a strong signal that Finland is acting swiftly and coherently in defence-related matters".

This spring, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia, as well as Poland, have also announced plans to exit the treaty.

Signatories are prohibited from using, stockpiling, producing and transferring anti-personnel mines, while also required to destroy remaining stockpiles.

Designed to be buried or hidden on the ground, the mines often mutilate victims, who are not immediately killed, with aid groups decrying their long-term impact on civilians.

Finland's president is expected to approve the decision in the near future, which will come into effect six months after Finland formally notifies the United Nations.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres

said in a statement on Monday that he was "gravely concerned by recent announcements and steps taken by several member states to withdraw from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention" urging states to "immediately halt any steps towards their withdrawal".

"These announcements are particularly troubling, as it risks weakening civilian protection and undermining two decades of a normative framework that has saved countless lives," he stated.

Guterres added that he plans to launch a global campaign "to uphold the norms of humanitarian disarmament, accelerate mine action as an enabler of human rights and sustainable development, and drive forward the vision of a mine-free world".

President Alexander Stubb, who leads Finland's foreign and security policy, has

## Clean-up begins as Hurricane Erick moves on from Mexican coast



People assess damage on the beach after hurricane Erick made landfall on the Pacific coast, in Mexico's Puerto Escondido, Mexico. - **Reuters**

Reuters/AFP  
Mexico City

Hurricane Erick weakened after slamming into Mexico's southern Pacific coast as a major hurricane yesterday, leaving a trail of damaged businesses, wrecked boats and flooded streets in the state of Oaxaca as authorities warned of risks from heavy rain.

Erick made landfall near the resort town Puerto Escondido around 5.30am local time (1130 GMT) as a Category 3 hurricane.

It was later downgraded to Category 1 as it moved inland, with sustained winds slowing to 85mph (137kph).

In coastal towns, residents began clearing debris.

"There are many boats sunk here," said fisherman Eduardo Gonzalez in Puerto Escondido. "We're here to help our colleagues."

Much of the tourist town of about 30,000 people was left without electricity or cellphone coverage.

The water "had never hit with this magnitude" in Puerto Escondido, 44-year-old merchant Luis Alberto Gil, whose shop was among those flooded, told AFP.

Despite having weakened, officials cautioned that Erick's in-

tense rains remained dangerous.

"Life-threatening flooding and mudslides are expected, especially in areas of steep terrain," the US National Hurricane Centre (NHC) said, forecasting up to 16" (41cm) of rain for Oaxaca and neighbouring Guerrero state.

Mexico's environment ministry also warned of waves of up to 10m (33').

No deaths were immediately reported, Laura Velazquez, the head of Mexico's civil protection agency, said at a press conference.

Two hospitals had suffered damage and power supply was compromised, she added.

State-owned utility CFE reported that more than 120,000 users had lost power in Oaxaca, with service restored to 26% by late morning.

Oaxaca Governor Salomon Jara said roads and highways were significantly damaged.

An alert remained in place for life-threatening flooding and mudslides in the southern states of Oaxaca and Guerrero, with wind gusts continuing for several hours, and a "dangerous, life-threatening storm surge" expected to produce coastal flooding and large, destructive waves, the NHC said.

Oaxaca and Guerrero shuttered schools, air terminals and ports - including at Acapulco, and sus-

pending non-essential activities.

Rains also affected the states of Michoacan, Colima and Jalisco.

Erick is the earliest major hurricane to make landfall in the eastern Pacific, meteorologists from AccuWeather said.

"Rapid intensification near coastal cities is a major concern this hurricane season... as water temperatures continue to increase," said Alex DaSilva, AccuWeather lead hurricane expert.

Areas around Acapulco are especially vulnerable, AccuWeather said, as the beach town is still recovering from the impact of Hurricane Otis which hit in 2023.

Hurricane John, another Category 3 storm that hit Acapulco in September last year, caused about 15 deaths.

President Claudia Sheinbaum had urged people to avoid going out and advised those living in low-lying areas or near rivers to move to shelters - some 2,000 of which had been set up in Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca in anticipation.

"Since (Erick) just made landfall, we are in contact with the Defence (department) and the Navy, who are in the area, and we will be able to inform in a few hours what the effects are on these populations," she said at her daily press conference yesterday.



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GULF TIMES

Killings at European schools fan concern ‘US problem’ surging

A spate of school killings in Western Europe has raised pressure on authorities to tackle a problem long seen as a largely US phenomenon, increasing momentum for tougher gun and security laws and more policing of social media.

While mass shootings remain far more common in the United States, four of the worst school shootings in Western Europe this century have occurred since 2023 and two — a massacre of 11 people in Austria and another in Sweden — were this year. This week’s killings in the Austrian city of Graz sparked calls for tighter gun laws by political leaders, mirroring the response of the Swedish government after the 11 deaths at the Campus Risbergsska school in Orebro in February.

“Mass shootings, of which school shootings are a part, were overwhelmingly a US problem in the past, but the balance is shifting,” said Adam Lankford, a criminologist at the University of Alabama. “The number in Europe and elsewhere is increasing.”

Part of the rise stems from copycat attacks in Europe often inspired by notorious US rampages such as the 1999 Columbine High School massacre, according to shooters’ own comments or their Internet search histories, Lankford said.

“It’s like an export from America. These attackers see other people do it and it has a snowball effect.”

According to research by Lankford and Jason Silva, shootings carried out by people eager for notoriety were twice as numerous in the United States as in the rest of the world between 2005 and 2010. By 2017–2022, the rest of the world had caught up.

Their data also shows that Europe accounts for a bigger share of mass shootings than it used to.

President Macron this month pressed for EU regulation to ban social media for children under 15

It should be easier for European politicians to act against mass shootings than the United States, due to the central role of guns in American culture and identity, Lankford said.

The European Union has left gun laws and regulation of social media up to member states. Recent killings have seen a drive by several countries to apply tougher rules. In Sweden, the government agreed to tighten the vetting process for people applying for gun licences and to clamp down on some semi-automatic weapons following the Orebro killings.

Incidents of violence and threatening behaviour in junior high and high schools rose over 150% between 2003 and 2023, according to a report by Sweden’s Work Environment Authority.

In Finland, where a 12-year-old shot dead a fellow pupil and badly wounded two others in 2024, schools practice barricading doors and hiding from shooters. The government has also proposed stricter punishments for carrying guns in public. Following a deadly December knife attack at a Zagreb primary school, Croatia’s government tightened access to schools and mandated they must have security guards.

Germany has gradually imposed tighter controls on gun ownership since school massacres in 2002 and 2009, and last year introduced a ban on switchblades and on carrying knives at public events following a series of knife attacks. Tightening gun ownership was the only way politicians could show they were taking the issue seriously, said Dirk Baier, a criminologist at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences.

“There will certainly be resistance to this, from hunters, sport shooters, or other lobby groups,” he said. “However, I think the arguments for tightening the laws will outweigh the arguments against.”

Gun laws have also been a hot political topic in the Czech Republic since a student shot dead 14 people at the Charles University in Prague in December 2023. The country made it obligatory for gun sellers to report suspicious purchases and requires doctors to check whether people diagnosed with psychological problems hold gun permits.

Britain is holding a public inquiry into an attack in Southport where three young girls were stabbed to death last year. UK drama *Adolescence*, a story about a schoolboy accused of murder, explores concerns about toxic online culture. Meanwhile in France, President Emmanuel Macron this month pressed for EU regulation to ban social media for children under 15 following a fatal school stabbing.

What motivated the Austrian school gunman is still under investigation. Police said he was socially withdrawn and passionate about online shooting games. Most such shootings are carried out by young men, and criminologist Lankford said there was a global phenomenon of perpetrators seeking notoriety that eluded them in real life, driven in part by social media.

“Even if the shooters expect to die, some are excited about leaving behind a legacy.”

Austria has relatively liberal gun laws, and President Alexander Van der Bellen said after the attack the legislation deserved closer scrutiny.

Broad support in Austria for tightening gun ownership laws looked probable, although a general ban on private weapons seems unlikely, said political scientist Peter Filzmaier. — Reuters

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Tariffs on canola supercharging farmers’ shift to spring wheat

By Ed White  
Winnipeg

In the US Great Plains, where spring wheat once dominated fields, farmers are turning away from the crop. But across the border in Canada, the pinch and prospect of Chinese and US tariffs on canola have prompted farmers to pick up the slack on wheat.

Farmers are still putting their crops in the ground, so it is not yet possible to know the extent of the acreage shift into wheat. However, early signs, based on interviews with more than 20 Canadian and US farmers, agricultural analysts, traders and industry organisations, show that the grain primarily used to bake bread is proving to be a big winner in this year’s global trade war. China’s 100% tariffs on Canadian canola meal and oil and its threat to impose duties on canola seed, amid President Donald Trump’s broader global trade war, have rattled Canadian farmers, who since 1990 had nearly quadrupled their canola acres before paring back in recent years because of growing problems with drought, high production costs and crop diseases.

Now, tariffs are expected to accelerate the likelihood that thousands of farmers could further cut back, adding up to hundreds of thousands or even millions of acres less canola, and more wheat, farmers and analysts estimated.

“There is going to be a massive switch,” said Jerry Klassen, a Manitoba farmer and market analyst with Resilient Capital. He has switched hundreds of acres on his own farm from canola to



Farmer Scott Huso of Aneta, North Dakota, sits in his tractor in early May, preparing to plant spring wheat once his fields are dry. (Reuters)

spring wheat this year and thinks like-minded farmers will do the same. Reuters’ reporting on fallout from tariffs in grain markets illustrates how global trade turmoil is causing the neighbouring countries to diverge on spring wheat production. Canada’s rebounding supply of wheat has kept prices down for millers who fuel global bread demand as well as consumers. The shift to Canadian fields has also offset some worry about the long-term decline in US production area. Politicians in Canada are funding and supporting the shift toward greater wheat production as a way to shield the thinly-populated agricultural export powerhouse of Western Canada from foreign pressure. And farmers have their own motivation: improved wheat varieties have boosted the grain’s profitability. Adam Dyck of UK breadmaker Warburtons in Winnipeg said some Canadian farmers had tripled their

production to 90 to 100 bushels per acre since the 1990s. The shift toward wheat reflects canola’s vulnerability to tariffs. Most of the C\$14.5bn (\$10.59bn) 2024 Canadian canola exports go to the US and China, with the US biofuels market consuming most of Canada’s canola oil while China buys most of Canada’s seed exports to crush for edible oil and animal feed, while wheat is sold to dozens of countries around the world. Some Canadian farmers are expecting that in a prolonged trade war, globally-diverse wheat is a safer bet than US and China-dependent canola. In 2024 Canada shipped two-thirds of its total canola seed exports to China, and 95% of total canola oil exports of 3.5mn tonnes to the US. But Canada’s wheat exports were “highly diversified,” the US Department of Agriculture noted. The world’s wheat and canola markets will be guessing for weeks about Canadian farmers’ final

decisions on what to seed. Statistics Canada’s next report is scheduled for June 27, and the numbers for that report are being collected before farmers have finished planting.

Scott Huso, a farmer in Aneta, North Dakota, said that across the northern Great Plains, stretching from Minnesota to the Montana Rockies, farmers have been planting less wheat in favour of crops like corn and soybeans, which are generally more profitable. University of Minnesota data found that last year, farmers in central Minnesota earned hundreds of dollars in operating profit per acre with corn and soybeans, but lost money on spring wheat in 2024.

“Wheat, you’re not making money on it,” Huso said. US total hard red spring wheat production hasn’t changed much since the mid-1990s because of substantial improvements in the amount grown per acre. However, total acres are in long-term decline, dropping from 15-20mn acres in the mid-1990s to 13-15mn in the mid-2000s to 10-13mn in the mid-2010s. The US Department of Agriculture said on March 31 that it expects hard red spring wheat acreage in 2025 to drop to 9.4mn acres — the lowest since 1970. Yet spring wheat is in great demand from the world’s millers and bakers. Its high protein content allows it to be used as the base for top-quality bread flour, or as something to blend with lower-quality, cheaper wheats. The US and Canadian plains are the most reliable major source of the world’s high-quality spring wheat. Yet that doesn’t always lead to the kind of premium prices US farmers might need to justify growing the crop, with steady Canadian supplies and those from overseas competitors like Russia keeping millers comfortable enough to avoid bidding wars, a frustration for many US farmers like Huso.

“You just can’t convince guys to love wheat these days,” said Huso, a member of the North Dakota Wheat Commission. Committed wheat growers like him and organisations like the commission and export-focused US Wheat Associates are trying to convince buyers to pay higher prices and breeders to produce better wheat crop varieties to help wheat compete for US farmers’ fields.

It’s been an uphill struggle.

In Canada, the mood is different. Rather than getting knocked out of the crop roster, more farmers are warming to wheat.

In May, farmer Korey Peters finished seeding 1,700 acres of spring wheat on his farm near Winnipeg. With new varieties providing more crop per acre, and canola costly and hard to grow profitably in his area, he said he’s been putting more and more of his land into wheat and corn.

“I know some people call it ‘poverty grass,’ but it works for us,” Peters said. — Reuters



Manitoba farmer Korey Peters shows a group of Indonesian visitors the soil and seed placement of his spring wheat crop, in Randolph, Manitoba, Canada. (Reuters)



# Imam Maalik, the great scholar of Madinah

Khutbah by Abdul Baarie Ath-Thubaitie

All praise is due to Allah. May peace and blessings be upon the noble Prophet, his household and companions.

Fellow Muslims! Speaking about great scholars is not an easy task, for however you try to grasp the life of any of them you will not be able to do so. Even you may miss the most important and the most impressive aspect of his life.

The way of life of the earliest great *Ulamaa* (scholars) is the exemplar par excellence and showing that is an encouragement to our youths in order to discourage them from imitating evil people who have either no positive role to play in this life nor any value in human history.

Our talk about the scholars does not in any way mean being partisan to any one of them, for everybody can have his word accepted or rejected except the impeccable Prophet Muhammad, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him).

The great Imam Maalik Ibn Anas grew up in the Prophet’s city of Madinah, whose mention is elevated and whose knowledge has filled the earth. He taught people in the corners of the Prophet’s mosque and became so popular that people called him “The scholar of Madinah” or “the Imam of the city of Hijrah”.

Maalik Ibn Anas was born in Madinah and grew up there as a lover and seeker of knowledge in spite of his poverty. His mother gave him good upbringing by telling him: “Go to Rabee’ah and learn from him manners before you learn knowledge”. This woman knew her role in life and her mission of educating and grooming the youth. She knew that manners are good companions of knowledge and that knowledge is valueless without manners. This woman moulded a man and as such moulded a nation.

Mother’s role is not restricted to nurturing body and guarding it against physical diseases. Rather, she has greater mission to accomplish. Her mission includes strengthening the faith, building a strong personality, developing intellectual capability and encouraging children to aim high. All these cannot be achieved except by first giving preference to meritorious act of upbringing over concerns for this world.

This was what actually happened in the life of Maalik and that was what made him a school in manners from whom students learn and the whole *Ummah* benefits.

Maalik once told a Quraishee youth: “O my nephew, learn manners before you learn knowledge”.

Yahya ibn Yahya At-Tameemee said: “I stayed with Maalik after the completion of my learning knowledge from him for a year in order to learn manners and good qualities from him. And the qualities are the same as those of the companions of the Prophet and those who followed them.”

Modern educational methods sometimes appear like mere texts that are devoid of any moral content thereby making knowledge losing its splendour and impact. If knowledge were to be separated from manners – however much the knowledge may be – you will see a huge defect in its influence on people’s conduct and purity of their deeds. Therefore, there is no good in a knowledge that does not earn one good moral.

Creating a gap between knowledge and manners breeds ill behaviours like attacking the *Ulamaa*, being rude to them, bad conduct, maltreatment of parents, blind imitation of unbelievers in matters of dressing and being hostile to teachers and educators either physically and verbally.

The city of the Prophet had a significant impact on Maalik’s personality, for it has been flourishing with scholars. The first school in Islamic history was the Prophet’s mosque and there have always been classes there conducted by competent scholars and these classes provided the Muslim children with good education that guaranteed for them religious and moral qualities that make man good-mannered.

It goes without saying that bad environment only destroys and does not build...If not, what is the benefit of teaching a child Islamic values in the morning and in the evening he goes to bad companies who destroy what his parents has put in order? Or what is the benefit of teaching a child manners for years and



The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs opens a new mosque in Al Khor.

then to be taken to corruption ridden environment by his very father?!

Imam Maalik sat to give *fatwa* (formal legal opinion) and did not do so until 70 scholars had attested to his worthiness of that. What a difference between the one who praises and forward himself and the one who is praised and forwarded by the knowledgeable and distinguished people! Maalik said: “It is not everyone who would like to sit in the mosque and teach the *Hadith* and give *fatwa* are worthy of that. Let the one who wants to sit for *fatwa* first seek for the advice of pious and distinguished people; if they see that he is fit for that, let him do that; for I did not sit to teach *Hadith* and give *fatwa* until 70 scholars attested to his worthiness of that.”

Imam Maalik said: “I am only human, I make mistakes and I do give correct opinions. As for my opinions, examine them, if they are in accordance with *Sumnah* take them.” With this valuable statement, Maalik established a moderate line between those who follow their leaders blindly and those who reject authentic evidences outright and reject the sayings of scholars and say, “They are men and we are also men.”

What a difference between those men and these men! What a difference between dead men whom Allah immortalises their names for centuries and valueless men who though are living are counted among the dead! Mere mention of the formers’ names activates the hearts while keeping the company of the latter deadens the hearts. Those scholars of eminence did not only possess knowledge but were also leaders in morals, piety, self-abstinence and fear of Allah.

There are however some followers of these scholars who prefer only imitation and do not wish to exceed that in spite of their ability to differentiate between the truth and falsehood.

It is also a mistake to look down upon other people’s works or to feel that one’s good deed is better than others. This is because all these talents and capabilities are provisions from Allah and not from any human being. This is a great concept that Maalik wanted to show people that serving Islam is an obligation that should involve every Muslim

in all professions without anyone revolting against others.

Maalik wrote to one of the worshippers of his time, “Allah has portioned out deeds as He has portioned out provisions. Many are endowed with energy and the will to pray (as many supererogatory prayers as possible) but are not endowed with (much of voluntary) fasting; others are endowed with giving charity but are not endowed with fasting; others are endowed with Jihad and others with seeking for knowledge. Spreading knowledge is one of the best deeds and I am contented with Allah has endowed one with and I do not think that what I do is less meritorious than what you do but hope that both of us are doing good and righteous deeds.”

Therefore charitable people, worshippers, those who spend their times in the cause of Allah, the scholars, the propagators of Islam and those serving Islam in their various fields are all doing righteous deeds - if they are sincere in their intentions.

Whenever Maalik was asked a question, he would tell the questioner, “Go now and let me think over it.” When the questioner was gone, Maalik’s students would ask him the reason for what he said and he would answer. “I fear a Day with the Questioner (Allah) and what a (terrible) Day!”

A man was sent by the people of Maghrib to ask Imam Maalik about some issues. The man would ask Maalik a question and he would say, “I do not know, for we do not know of this issue in our land and we have not heard any of our scholars saying anything about it, but you can come back again!” On the following day, the man went back to Maalik and Maalik told him: “You asked me question but I do not know the answer!” the man said: “O Abu Abdullaah! I came from a people who think that there is none in the world who is more knowledgeable than you!” Maalik answered: “I am not perfect.”

He was also asked a question and he asked the questioner to give him time to make some research and the man said: “But the issue is very simple.” Maalik retorted, “There is nothing simple in knowledge! Don’t you hear the saying of Allah: “We shall send down to you a weighty word.” (Qur’an 73:4)

are not Allah’s *Awliya*’, then Allah has no Wali (singular of *Awliya*’).

Ash-Shaafi’i said: “If the jurists are not Allah’s *Awliya*’ in the Hereafter, then Allah has no Wali.”

‘Ikrimah, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “Beware of harming any of the scholars, for whoever harms a scholar, it is as if he has harmed the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*.”

Ubaydullah ibn Ja’far said: “The scholars are the beacons of the nations; the people are guided by their light.”

### Esteeming scholars and knowing their rights

It is an obligation for all Muslims to esteem, respect, honour the scholars, to know their rank/rights, and be polite with them. The Prophet said: “He is not one of my *Ummah* (Muslims community) who does not respect our elders, who does not have mercy on our young, and who does not know (respect) the right of our scholar.” [Imam Ahmad, and Sheikh Al-Albani classified it as *Hasan*]

Esteeming scholars is part of exalting Allah the Almighty, exalting His *Shari’ah*, and complying with His order. Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari said: “The Messenger of Allah said: ‘It is out of glorification of Allah, the Almighty, to honour the gray-haired (old) Muslim, and the bearer of the Qur’an who neither exaggerates concerning it nor neglects it, and to honor the just ruler.’” [Abu Dawood and Sheikh Al-Albani classified it as *Hasan*]

‘Aa’ishah, may Allah be pleased with her, said: “The Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, commanded us to treat people according to their ranks.” [Abu Dawood and Al-Bazzar]

For this reason, the approach of righteous

Maalik used to say, “The people of knowledge and understanding that I have met in our country, when one of them was asked a question on an issue, he would feel like the one about to die. But the people of our own time love giving *fatwaa* (without hesitation). Had they know what they are going to face tomorrow (on the Day of Judgment) they would not have done that. Umar, Alee and ‘Alqamah are some of the best companions of the Prophet, yet when anyone of them was asked a question, he would consult his fellow companions before giving an answer to it. But it is unfortunate that *fatwaa* has become the pride for the people of our time.”

These are the erudite and sagacious scholars who filled the world with their knowledge and good deeds and yet used to say, “I do not know”. You will however be surprised to see some people who know next to nothing about Islamic law and yet desecrating it by speaking about the allowed and forbidden things. Even, a topic on Islamic law may come forth in a meeting and the meeting will not end before all the attendants -irrespective of their different fields of knowledge - give their opinions saying for instance, ‘According to my view . . .’ ‘As far as I believe . . .’ etc.

*SubhaanAllah!* When did the matter of legalising and forbidding become a subject to ignorance and conjecture?! If an engineer were to practise medicine and prescribe drugs, what are you going to say about him and what is going to be his fate?! What then about the one who dares to desecrate the Islamic law and speak about the lawful and forbidden things without knowledge particularly on special events that are so complicated that if Umar were to witness such events, he would have gathered all the companions who took part in the Battle of Badr to help solve the problem. But unfortunately *fatwa* in our age has become a spacious ground in which all those who wish to become popular or are seeking people’s pleasure at the risk of Allah’s displeasure contest.

Issues pertaining to Islamic belief are static ones over which no one is allowed to give his independent judgment. Likewise are issues that have evidences in the Qur’an and *Sumnah* and issues on which scholars have consensus. It is incumbent on all Muslims to leave the say on matters of knowledge to whom they are due and not to enter into the issues of *Halaal* and *Harama* on which they have no knowledge. Maalik said, “Whoever wants to give answer to a question should first assume himself standing between Paradise and Hell and ponder about how he is going to be saved in the Hereafter before he answers.”

Some people may be thinking that these *Ulamaa* are only well-versed in controversial issues and discussion of scholastic opinions and that their classes are devoid of admonishing *Hadith* that address the hearts and remind of Paradise and Hell. In order to show that their classes are resplendent in various kinds of sciences, let us hear what Maalik said to a brother of his admonishing him:

“Remind yourself of the agonies of death, what you are going to experience and what is going to be your fate after death; your standing before Allah, your reckoning, then your perpetual abode of either Paradise or Hell. Provide for that moment what will make things easy for you then, for when you see those who have earned the wrath of Allah and the horror of their torment and you hear their cries in the Fire with their gloomy faces; unable to see and talk and exclaiming for destruction and greater than all this is Allah’s turning away from them and their despair of His answer to their pleas and He will say: ‘Remain you in it with ignominy! And speak you not with Me’ (*Al-Mu’minoona* 23:108). If you know all this, nothing in this world will be too great for you to sacrifice if you want salvation.”

Imam Maalik was sick for 22 days and died at the age of 87. Naafi’ (his famous student) said: “Maalik died at the age of 87 and lived in Al-Madinah as its Mufti for 60 years.”

May Allah have mercy on Maalik, for he used to say: “I met some people in Al-Madinah who had no faults but they speak of other people’s faults, then people created faults for them. I also met other another group of people in Al-Madinah, who had faults but kept away from speaking of other people’s faults and the people also keep off from speaking about their faults.”

# Dignifying scholars is part of exalting Allah

Scholars in our *Shari’ah* have a supreme, invulnerable and sublime rank. They are the successors of the Messenger in his nation. They are the heirs of the Prophet in his wisdom, and the revivers of what obsoleted from his *Sumnah*. Furthermore, they well maintained and served the Holy Qur’an. They invite those who have gone astray to guidance and tolerate the harm incurred to them while conveying their mission. With the Qur’an, they bring the dead hearts to life, enlighten those who do not want to hear the truth with the light of Allah. They saved many souls from the evil of Satan. What a beautiful impact they have left despite the intransigence of some people (Quoted from Imam Ahmad’s statement).

Scholars are the guardians of the religion from Bid’ah (innovation) and thereby protecting it from distortion and falsification. They are the honest people who convey this knowledge to every generation and defend the Holy Qur’an against distortion and misinterpretation. Allah the Almighty assigned them to preserve His Religion. Without them and their efforts, the *Shari’ah* would have been voided, and its rulings would have been invalidated. They are the essence in referring to them as influential people and people of authority in every era. They are the rulers who were meant by the saying of Allah the Almighty (What means): {O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you.} [Qur’an 4:59]

### Scholars in the Qur’an and Sumnah

Islam and the Qur’an have raised the rank of scholars, and our Lord praised them in His Book saying (what means): [Allah will raise those who have believed among

you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees.} [Qur’an 58:11] Allah the Almighty considered their witness to the most significant thing which Tawheed (Oneness of Allah) and sincerity to Him; Allah Says (what means): [Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge – [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.} [Qur’an 3:18]

Imam Al-Qurtubi said: “In this verse, there is evidence of the virtue of knowledge, and the honour/merit of scholars. Because if there were anyone more honourable than scholars, Allah would have associated them with His Name and the name of His Angels as He associated the names of scholars.”

Allah distinguished them and raised them above others. Allah the Almighty said (what means): {Say, “Are those who know equal to those who do not know?”} [Qur’an 39:9] Of course not. Because they are the people who fear Allah: {Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge.} [Qur’an 35:28]

As the Qur’an praised them, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, also commended them with the greatest praise in his *Sumnah* as mentioned in the *Hadith* narrated by Mu’awiya, may Allah be pleased with him: “When Allah wills good for anyone, He bestows upon him the *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) of the religion”; and the *Hadith* of Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him: “Whoever treads a path in search of knowledge, Allah makes the way to Paradise easy for him.” [Abu Dawood and Al-Tirmidhi]

Also, the *Hadith* of Abu Umamah, may Allah be pleased with him, that reads: “The superiority of the scholar over the

worshipper is like my superiority over the least of you.” Besides, Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Indeed Allah, His Angels, the inhabitants of the heavens and the earths, even the ant in its hole, even the fish, supplicate and ask forgiveness for the one who teaches good to the people.” [Al-Tirmidhi, and Sheikh Al-Albani classified it as *Saheeh* (authentic)]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets, for the Prophets did not leave behind a Dinar or Dirham; instead they left behind knowledge, so whoever takes it, he takes an outstanding share.”). [Abu Dawood and Al-Tirmidhi]

A poet said: None has the superiority except the people of knowledge, as they guide those who seek guidance.

The value of everyone depends on what he can do properly. However, the ignorant are enemies to the people of knowledge.

Thus, you should acquire knowledge that will make you live forever; people die, but the people of knowledge are alive (i.e. people keep mentioning their names and supplicate for their forgiveness after their death).

Imam Ibn al-Qayyim said in his book *I’laam Al-Muwaqqi’een ‘an Rabbil ‘Aalameen*: “Scholars on earth are like the stars in the sky; by them, the lost people are guided in the darkness. Besides, the people’s need for them is greater than their need for food and drink.”

### The scholars are the Awliya’ of Allah (Allies of Allah)

Due to all these merits and high rank of the scholars, they were the most deserving people to be the allies of Allah.

Imam Abu Haneefah said: “If the jurists

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## DFI's 'Geekend' champions local creative economy

The Doha Film Institute (DFI)'s Geekend has concluded three days of jam-packed activities and camaraderie, hosting an array of floor activations and a lively stage programme with a special Pokémon spotlight at the Geekdom Building on Lusail Boulevard.

This edition of Geekend was presented in partnership with community activation group "Nakama" to celebrate the intersection of anime and culture.

The community-led event bridged gaps and brought together Geekdom's wide-

-ranging fanbase like never before, allowing for stronger engagement and integration.

By uniting fans from across the nation and showcasing Qatar's vibrant creative economy, Geekend cemented its ongoing support for local artists and vendors in attendance.

In a press statement, DFI chief administrative officer and Geekdom founder Abdullah al-Mosallam recalled that Geekdom has been a pop culture staple in the region for twelve years, bringing together diverse fandoms under one roof.



Geekend cemented its ongoing support for local artists and vendors in attendance.



Abdulla al-Mosallam

The success of Geekend was made possible through the support of its sponsors, including LG, Jumbo Souq, Ultra Gear, S-City, Music Lab, Store974, and Gamers Station.

This year's main pop culture event, supported by the DFI, will take place from November 18-22, further amplifying the spirit of fandom exemplified by Geekend.

# Newly renovated Dahl Al Hamam Park is unveiled

The Ministry of Municipality has inaugurated Dahl Al Hamam Park, one of the public parks under the jurisdiction of Doha Municipality, following the completion of its full renovation and redevelopment in co-ordination with the Public Works Authority (Ashghal).

The reopening of the park follows a comprehensive redevelopment aimed at strengthening green infrastructure and enhancing service and recreational facilities.

This initiative is part of the ministry's 2024-2030 strategy and aligns with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030, which seeks to expand green spaces, improve quality of life, and provide a sustainable and healthy environment for citizens and residents.

Assistant Undersecretary for Public Services Affairs engineer Abdullah Ahmed al-Karani said that the reopening of Dahl Al Hamam Park reflects the ministry's commitment to developing public facilities and enhancing their appeal.

He noted that this aligns with the country's urban development needs and environmental sustainability principles, and that the project falls within a comprehensive plan aimed at improving public service facilities across the country and strengthening environmental infrastructure in Qatari cities by increasing green coverage.

Public Parks Department director Mohammed Ibrahim al-Sada said that Dahl Al Hamam Park represents a modern model of public parks, having been redeveloped to meet the needs of visitors from various segments of society.

He pointed out the use of native plants suited to Qatar's climate, along with the implementation of smart irrigation systems that help conserve water.

He added that the ministry continues to implement similar projects aimed at enhancing quality of life and achieving environmental balance in urban areas.

The park features a wide range of amenities, including four children's play areas, a tiered outdoor theatre that accommodates around 900 seats, a celebration area, and a multi-purpose hall for community events.

It includes a 390m running track, three fitness zones, a basketball court, three food and beverage kiosks, a full-service cafe, and 220 parking spaces.

Additional features are separate prayer areas for men and women, an administrative building for operations and maintenance supervision, facilities for people with disabilities to ensure ease of access and mobility, family seating areas, modern restrooms, a plant irrigation tank, an electricity station, and three solar-powered charging units, making it an ideal destination for recreation and leisure. - QNA



## Sales cross 74 tonnes at Indian Mango Festival

Sales at the second edition of the Indian Mango Festival (Al Hamba Exhibition) at Souq Waqif crossed 74,700kg over the first seven days, according to the figures released by Souq Waqif Management on X.

The festival received 71,600 visitors to record a good response from the citizens, residents and tourists.

Different varieties of Indian mangoes are available at the festival, which concludes tomorrow (June 21) at the Eastern Square of Souq Waqif.

The event, organised by the Private Engineering Office (PEO) in co-operation with the Indian embassy, is open from 4pm-10pm today and tomorrow.

"The exhibition has drawn a diverse audience of families, citizens, residents and

tourists from various nationalities, creating a vibrant and festive atmosphere," the PEO said in an earlier statement.

"Participating vendors confirmed that all mango varieties showcased at the exhibition were imported specifically for this event via direct air shipments from India on a daily basis ensuring the highest levels of freshness and quality to meet visitor expectations," it added.

The festival features 55 varieties along with cakes, sweets, ice creams and juices.

Most famous Indian mango varieties including Rajapuri, Malgova, Neelam, Alphonso, Kesar, Badami, Mallika, Imam Pasand, Kalapadi, Totapuri, Chakkarakutti and Sindoor are featured in the expo featuring 38 Indian companies.