

Al-Marri meets Sierra Leone’s minister of employment, labour and social security



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Smaikh al-Marri met yesterday with Sierra Leone's Minister of Employment, Labour and Social Security, Mohamed Rahman Swaray, during his visit to Freetown. The meeting discussed ways to deepen bilateral co-operation in the labour sector and to identify opportunities to further support and develop partnership between the countries. **(QNA)**

Acting CEO of QMC meets Syria’s information minister

HE Acting CEO of Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz bin Jassim al-Thani met with the visiting Syrian Minister of Information Hamza al-Mustafa. The meeting discussed ways to strengthen and develop co-operation between the countries in a way that achieves the aspirations of both sides and opens new horizons for joint media work. **(QNA)**



‘Qatar concerned over events in Syrian city’

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi affirmed that Qatar is following with deep concern the developments in the southern Syrian city of As-Suwayda, out of the firm belief that Syria's security is an integral part of the region's stability. In a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), HE Dr al-Khulaifi called for all necessary measures to ensure such crimes are not repeated, including holding accountable all parties responsible for the shedding of civilian blood and the terrorising of innocent, unarmed individuals, especially children, women, and the elder-

ly, and ensuring that those who committed these heinous crimes do not escape punishment. He further emphasised the importance of intensifying efforts to strengthen civil peace through dialogue and peaceful means. He expressed Qatar's condemnation of the Israeli attacks on the city of As-Suwayda, describing them as blatant violations of Syria's sovereignty, international law, and the UN Charter, and a serious threat to regional security. HE Dr al-Khulaifi also reaffirmed Qatar's full support for Syria's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, and the aspirations of its brotherly people for a dignified life. **(QNA)**



QPC hosts media dialogue with Syrian minister, Qatari editors

Qatar Press Center (QPC) hosted a high-level media dialogue featuring Syrian Minister of Information Hamza al-Mustafa, joined by editors-in-chief of Qatari newspapers. The session, held in Doha, aimed to strengthen Arab media co-operation and to discuss the future of journalism in the region. The Syrian delegation included Laila al-Rifai, media adviser at the Ministry of Information; Alaa Borsilo, director general of the Syrian Radio and Television Authority; and Mohammad Taffan, assistant minister for Digital Media. They were welcomed by Saad bin Mohammed al-Rumaihi, chairman of the Qatar Press Center, and Director General Sadiq Mohammed al-Omari. In his opening remarks, al-Rumaihi emphasised the importance of regional collaboration, stating that the centre seeks to be a platform for professional Arab dialogue and media integration amid fast-changing industry dynamics. Minister al-Mustafa expressed gratitude for the warm reception, noting that the relationship between Qatar and Syria transcends politics. “Qatar never treated us as outsiders and stood by the Syrian people during critical times,” he said. He acknowledged Syria's past media challenges, admitting that national media had become overly propagandistic and had lost professional credibility. However, he highlighted an ongoing restructuring process aimed at rebuilding Syrian media on professional, ethical, and balanced grounds. “We support press freedom but are trying to prevent it from descending into



Syrian Minister of Information Hamza al-Mustafa with Saad bin Mohammed al-Rumaihi, chairman of the Qatar Press Center.

chaos,” al-Mustafa said. He further revealed that Syria is reopening its print media sector, starting with *Al-Thawra* newspaper's return this September, and emphasised openness to distributing Qatari newspapers and other reputable publications within Syria. On the topic of drama production, the minister recognised the setbacks caused by limited national production in recent years. He welcomed potential partnerships with Qatar, especially in light of a memorandum signed to establish a media production city. He praised Qatari historical drama for successfully combining mass appeal with meaningful messaging. During the Q&A session, *Ar-Rayah* Editor-in-Chief Abdullah Taleb al-Marri asked how Syria plans to manage social media content and reform its press in this transitional phase. He also asked about prospects for Qatari-Syrian co-operation in drama. Al-Mustafa responded by stressing the importance of building ethical media content across all platforms and reiterated Syria's openness to collaboration. *Al-Sharq's* Jaber al-Harami stressed the need for national

unity, calling for responsible media that upholds Syria's territorial integrity. The minister echoed this sentiment, stating that internal files – like the complex situation in Sweida – are being handled through dialogue. He added that confronting regional threats, particularly from Israel, requires national, non-sectarian media. *Al-Watan's* Mohammed Haji raised concerns about freedom of expression and opposition voices. Al-Mustafa confirmed the government has received over 330 new media licence applications and recently launched a media city to support independent outlets. *Gulf Times* Editor-in-Chief Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudhaka highlighted the importance of foreign language media to reshape Syria's international image. The minister said Syria is developing its English-language media and now favours a strategy of “correction over censorship.” Closing the session, al-Rumaihi called for a culture of responsible freedom in the Arab press. Minister al-Mustafa agreed, affirming Syria's commitment to reducing sectarian rhetoric and rebuilding a media landscape that reflects the unity of Syrian society.

Qatar, Tajikistan hold political consultations



The fourth round of political consultations between the foreign ministries of Qatar and Tajikistan was held in Doha yesterday. The Qatari side was chaired by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi, while that of Tajikistan was headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Farrukh Sharifzoda. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and ways to support and strengthen them, in addition to a number of topics of common interest. **(QNA)**

Municipality ministry takes part in Esri conference in US

The Ministry of Municipality is participating in the 2025 Esri User Conference, organised by the Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri) in San Diego, California. The conference continues until July 18, with wide participation of international specialists and experts. The first day of the conference's accompanying exhibition saw a remarkable turnout at the Qatar Pavilion, which attracted about 1,500 visitors. They were introduced to the most prominent Qatari projects in the application of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technologies, most notably digital twin projects, smart application development, the adoption of artificial intelligence, aerial surveys, and 3D modelling. These advanced solutions were presented by the GIS Center, the Urban Planning Department, and the Survey Department at the Ministry of Municipality, in addition to the Public Works Authority, the Communications Regulatory



Authority, and Qatar Rail. They showcased the latest models and applications that support the development of smart cities and enhance the efficiency of services and infrastructure. Qatar's pavilion was also visited by CEO of Esri Jack Dangermond, along with a number of senior officials, experts, and those interested in GIS technologies from around the world. The Esri User Conference is the largest annual global event in this field, serving as a key platform for showcasing the latest developments in spatial data



technologies and smart solutions, which contribute to supporting decision-making processes and developing services and projects across various sectors.

MCIT participates in WSIS+20 Forum

Reaffirming Qatar's commitment to global digital co-operation and its active contribution to shaping the digital future, the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) participated in the High-Level Events of the World Summit on the Information Society +20 (WSIS+20) Forum 2025, held from July 7-12. The sessions addressed key themes including digital transformation, artificial



intelligence, and the advancement of digital government services. The participation included the attendance of minister's adviser, and Artificial Intelligence Committee Chairman, Hassan Jassim al-Sayed at the official opening of the WSIS+20 Forum. Al-Sayed delivered an intervention during the Ministerial Roundtable, in which he presented Qatar's national

vision for advancing its digital priorities. He highlighted Qatar's ongoing efforts to strengthen digital infrastructure, design inclusive and accessible government services, and advance key national AI initiatives, such as the development of the Arabic AI project Fanar, the issuance of Principles and Guidelines for Ethical Use and Development of Artificial Intelligence, and the integration of generative AI technologies in government operations in partnership with leading global tech firms. **(QNA)**

Qatar supports global efforts to protect endangered heritage sites

QNA
Paris

HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), Dr Nasser bin Hamad al-Hanzab, affirmed that through its membership in the World Heritage Committee, Qatar places great importance on the protection and rehabilitation of endangered heritage sites. This statement came during his participation in an event organised by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organisation (ICESCO) in co-operation with several partners, on ICESCO's strategy to support the removal of its member states' properties from the list of world heritage in danger, which was held on the sidelines of the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee held at Unesco headquarters in Paris from July 6-16. HE Dr al-Hanzab stressed that protecting endangered sites is a shared international responsibility requiring co-ordinated efforts, innovative tools, and strong partnerships. He noted that through such co-operation, it is possible to support the permanent removal of sites from the list of World Herit-



age in Danger, especially within ICESCO member states. He said that Qatar, through its relevant national institutions, is fully committed to this effort by investing in advanced database systems that enhance transparency, accountability, and protection of cultural properties, adding

that these systems enable precise documentation and monitoring, which help prevent illicit trafficking, a significant ongoing threat to endangered heritage sites. HE Dr al-Hanzab said that meaningful progress requires the involvement of all stakeholders: heritage institutions, customs,

law enforcement authorities, and international organisations. By empowering frontline workers with knowledge and technology, the detection and prevention of illicit transfer of cultural assets could be improved, he added. He affirmed Qatar's support for ICESCO's strategy, its efforts to encourage best practices, promote regional co-operation, and strengthen preventive frameworks to ensure that threatened sites not only survive but thrive, preserving this shared cultural heritage for future generations. During the event, Director of the Culture Sector at ICESCO Dr Mohamed Zine El Abidine

reviewed the organisation's recent achievements in assisting its member states in removing some of their sites from the list of world heritage in danger, reaffirming ICESCO's commitment to proactive work and collaboration in heritage preservation. The event's opening featured a recorded speech by ICESCO Director-General Dr Salim M Al-Malik, in which he announced the official launch of the ICESCO-Azerbaijan Natavan Heritage Excellence Award, which aims to honour outstanding contributions to the preservation, management, and promotion of cultural heritage in the Islamic world.

QIB and Mastercard launch summer spend campaign

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB) and Mastercard have launched a summer spend campaign, offering QIB credit and debit cardholders the chance to win a share of 10mn Absher rewards points when using their cards internationally.

During the three-month campaign, ending October 14, 2025, as many as 60 winners will receive 100,000 Absher reward points each, while four grand prize winners will receive 1mn Absher points each at the end of the campaign.

A total of 64 winners will be selected randomly in monthly draws, in the presence of official

representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and QIB.

To qualify for the monthly draws, cardholders must spend a total of QRI,000 internationally in a month during the campaign period using a QIB Mastercard credit or debit card, and doubling this amount doubles customers' chances to win.

For the grand prize draw, customers must spend a total of QR15,000 internationally during the campaign period to receive one entry, with an additional entry earned for each additional QR15,000 spent.



"The summer spend campaign reflects our continued focus on enhancing customer experience and reinforcing QIB's position as a leader in customer-centric banking," said D Anand, QIB's General Manager – Personal Banking Group.

QIB's Absher rewards programme allows customers to earn points across various banking activities, notably by using their debit and credit cards.

Customers can then redeem Absher points for flight tickets, hotel stays, online shopping, and e-vouchers at various partners including supermarkets, cinemas, gift shops as well as food

and transport apps.

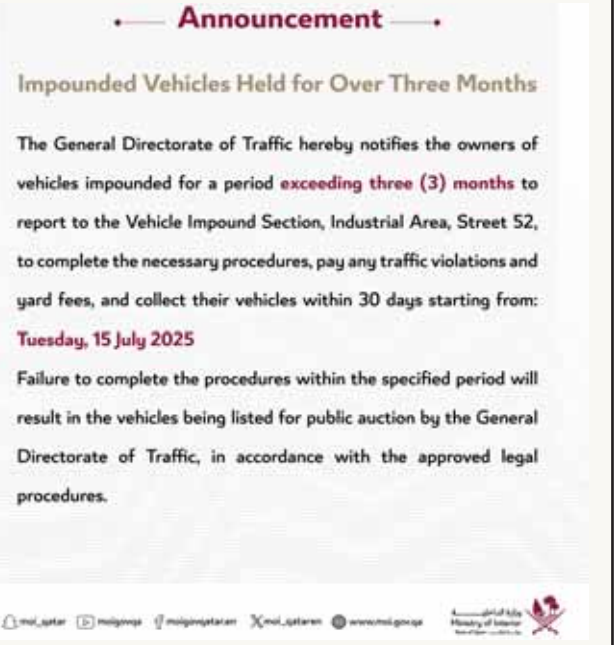
Absher points can also be used to settle bills with Ooredoo, Vodafone and Kahramaa, while they can also be converted to airline loyalty programmes including Qatar Airways Avios.

"Mastercard is delighted to continue our longstanding collaboration with QIB via this latest campaign. We are rewarding cardholders for their loyalty while empowering them with secure, seamless payment solutions on which they can rely as they travel over the summer," said Erdem Çakar, Country Manager, Qatar and Kuwait, Mastercard.

Reminder to owners of vehicles impounded for more than three months

The General Directorate of Traffic at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has urged owners of vehicles that have been impounded for more than three months to visit the Vehicle Impound Section in the Industrial Area - Street 52, to complete the necessary procedures and collect their vehicles within 30 days, starting from July 15.

The MoI said in an X post that failure to complete the procedures within the specified period will result in the vehicle being listed for the public auction by the General Directorate of Traffic in accordance with the approved legal procedures.



QRCS improves shelter conditions at refugee camps in Bangladesh

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), in collaboration with Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), has completed a project aimed at improving shelter conditions at refugee camps, with 1,920 direct beneficiaries.

The project involved comprehensive maintenance of 384 shelters at Camps #17 and 8W in Cox's Bazar, southeastern Bangladesh.

The maintenance works, which seeks to enhance safety and privacy, and improving the living environment inside the shelters, especially during the monsoon season, included broken roof replacement, wall reinforcement, and waterproof flooring.

This intervention is part of the ongoing humanitarian response to the protracted crisis of more than 700,000 refugees forcibly displaced from Myanmar to Bangladesh in 2017, mostly suffering from difficult living conditions at overpopulated and inadequate camps.

According to QRCS, the beneficiaries expressed their happiness with the newly renovated shelters, which would largely help protect their families, especially children, from the harsh weather. This project represents QRCS' unwavering commitment to supporting the refugee and host communities in Bangladesh, with significant humanitarian and development projects carried out together with local and international partners.



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PHCC wins Golden Award in national cybersecurity drill

For the second consecutive year, the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) has earned the Golden Award in the 2024 National Cybersecurity Drill, in which over 100 government entities participated.

The drill, held under the theme "Zero Hour", was organised and supervised by the National Cyber Security Agency.

The drill aimed to test the readiness of vital entities across the country and assess their ability to respond to cyber threats. It measured the three pillars of cybersecurity preparedness: people, process, and technology.

PHCC demonstrated excellence across all three areas, re-



flecting the strength of its digital infrastructure and the high calibre of its preventive strategies.

Dr Mariam Ali Abdul Malik, managing director of PHCC,

affirmed that this renewed achievement embodies PHCC's unwavering commitment to strengthening its cybersecurity framework, protecting its digital infrastructure, and ensuring business continuity amid escalating cyber challenges.

She also praised the efforts of PHCC's internal teams and their pivotal role in raising staff awareness, developing systems, and implementing best practices in information security.

She emphasised that cybersecurity remains a top priority for PHCC, given its critical role in safeguarding health data and ensuring the safety of services provided.

Fulbright scholar advances water sustainability research in Qatar

The US embassy in Qatar highlighted the successful completion of Dr Ali Alshami's Fulbright US Scholar Programme for the 2024-2025 academic year in collaboration with Qatar University (QU)'s College of Engineering.

During his Fulbright tenure, Dr Alshami contributed to joint research on innovative, sustainable water treatment technologies, including the development of renewable membrane materials and environmentally friendly antiscant solutions. He also taught courses, mentored students, and shared expertise through public talks and seminars.

During his time in Qatar, Dr Alshami presented his research at



Dr Ali Alshami

regional and international conferences, led a seminar on innovative water and energy solutions at QU's Center for Advanced Materials,

and met with students through EducationUSA sessions to encourage them to pursue studies in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields and research opportunities in the US.

Dr Alshami's Fulbright programme strengthened academic ties between the US and Qatar and supported capacity building in water research and sustainability.

The Fulbright Programme is the US government's flagship international academic exchange initiative, designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the US and other countries through educational and cultural exchange.

Future Engineer programme participants visit Ashghal's Quality and Safety Department

A group of participants of the fourth edition of the Future Engineer programme visited the Quality and Safety Department of the Public Works Authority (Ashghal).

According to an X post by Ashghal, the visit is part of a series of interactive field trips aimed at enhancing students' awareness of the practical and professional aspects of the infrastructure sector.

The programme was organised by Ashghal in collaboration with the Qatar Scientific Club (QSC) under the Ministry of Sports and Youth.

During the visit, the students were introduced to some of the key safety and security procedures followed in Ashghal projects. They also learned about the process of testing the quality of treated water starting from the initial treatment stages to ensuring compliance with approved environmental standards, as well as the technical procedures and technologies used to ensure the safety of re-used water.

The visit also included a detailed presentation on the laboratory tests conducted on construction materials such as cement, concrete, asphalt and steel to verify their compliance with technical specifications and ensure their efficiency in project



implementation.

The programme was launched on July 13 with the participation of 36 male and female students. To run until July 23, the programme aims to enhance the awareness of engineering disciplines and motivate them to explore this vital field.

Ashghal offers the participants outstanding and comprehensive training content that provides students with the opportunity to explore various aspects of engineering in a practical and interactive manner.

A closing ceremony will be held on July 23 featuring presentations of the final prototypes developed by the students before a special-



ised judging panel. The ceremony will also include honouring the participants and awarding certificates and trophies to the students and teams that excelled in the engineering challenge.

The participants receive wide-ranging information in engineering through specialised workshops and field visits to various departments in Ashghal as well as hands-on experiences in the laboratories at QSC. The programme aims to refine students' engineering skills and equip them with practical knowledge that supports their future career paths, all within an engaging and interactive learning environment.

AJMI concludes 'Future presenter course' in Algeria



Committed to its efforts to develop and promote skills of young media professionals in the Arab region, Al Jazeera Media Institute (AJMI), in co-operation with Sila Academy, organised a "Future presenter course" in Algeria.

The programme targeted 19 children under the supervision of Dr Rania El Jammal, who expressed her great admiration for the en-

thusiasm of participants, noting that they showed a strong interest to learn to the extent that they did not want to leave the hall even after the time was up.

"Despite differences in dialects, I succeeded in maintaining communication using simple Arabic language", said Dr El Jammal.

She added that the course was really a cultural and educational

exchange programme, and concluded: "Media is not exclusive to adults, but rather a set of skills that can start from early age if there is a stimulating environment."

The course focused on boosting self-confidence, training participants on proper pronunciation, presenting flyers and interviews, as well as understanding basics of news editing.

West Bank seeing largest displacement since 1967: UN

AFP
Geneva

The UN warned yesterday that mass displacement in the West Bank had hit levels not seen since the start of Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory nearly 60 years ago.

The United Nations said an Israeli military operation launched in the north of the occupied territory in January had displaced tens of thousands of people, raising concerns about possible "ethnic cleansing".

The military operation "has been the longest since... the second Intifada", in the early 2000s, said Juliette Touma, spokeswoman

an for the UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

"It is impacting several refugee camps in the area, and it is causing the largest population displacement of the Palestinians in the West Bank since 1967," she told reporters in Geneva via video from Jordan, referring to the six-day Arab-Israeli war that led to Israel's occupation of the West Bank.

The UN rights office meanwhile warned that mass forced displacement by an occupation force could amount to "ethnic cleansing".

Since Israel's military launched its operation "Iron Wall" in the north of the West Bank in January, rights office spokesman Thameen al-Kheetan said that "about 30,000 Palestinians remain forcibly



Palestinian men inspect burnt cars, after Israeli settlers set fire to cars in the town of Burqa, near Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

cily displaced". Israeli security forces had during the same period issued demolition orders for about 1,400 homes in the northern West Bank, he said, describing the figures as "alarming".

He pointed out that Israeli demolitions had displaced 2,907 Palestinians across the West Bank since October 2023.

Another 2,400 Palestinians – nearly half of them children – had been displaced as a result of Israeli settler actions, he added, lamenting that the combined result was the "emptying large parts of the West Bank of Palestinians".

"Permanently displacing the civilian population within occupied territory amounts to unlawful transfer," Kheetan said, stressing that depending on the circumstances this could be "tantamount to ethnic cleansing" and could "amount to a crime against humanity".

Kheetan said 757 attacks by Israeli settlers had been recorded in the West Bank during the first half of the year, a 13% increase on the same period in 2024.

The attacks injured 96 Palestinians in the occupied territory in June alone, he told reporters, stressing that this was the highest monthly injury toll of Palestinians from settler attacks, "in over two decades".

Violence in the West Bank has surged since the October 2023 storming of Israel by Palestinian Hamas group triggered war in the Gaza Strip.

Since then, at least 964 Palestinians have been killed in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, according to the UN.

875 Palestinians killed near Gaza aid sites: UN



File photo shows Palestinians collecting what remains of relief supplies from the distribution centre of the US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip.

Reuters
Geneva

The UN rights office said yesterday it had recorded at least 875 killings within the past six weeks at aid points in Gaza run by the US and Israeli-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation and convoys run by other relief groups, including the United Nations.

The majority of those killed were in the vicinity of Gaza Humanitarian Foundation sites, while the remaining 201 were killed on the routes of other aid convoys.

The GHF uses private US security and logistics companies to get supplies into Gaza, largely bypassing a UN-led system that Israel alleges has let Hamas-led fighters loot aid shipments intended for civilians. Hamas denies the allegation.

The GHF, which began distributing food packages in Gaza in late May after Israel lifted an 11-week aid blockade, previously told Reuters that such incidents have not

occurred on its sites and accused the UN of misinformation, which it denies.

The GHF did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the latest UN figures. "The data we have is based on our own information gathering through various reliable sources, including medical human rights and humanitarian organisations," Thameen al-Kheetan, a spokesperson for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, told reporters in Geneva.

The United Nations has called the GHF aid model "inherently unsafe" and a violation of humanitarian impartiality standards. The GHF said on Friday it had delivered more than 70mn meals to Gaza Palestinians in five weeks, and that other humanitarian groups had "nearly all of their aid looted" by Hamas or criminal gangs.

The Israeli army previously told Reuters in a statement that it was reviewing recent mass casualties and that it had sought to minimise friction between Palestinians and the Israel Defence Forces by installing fences and signs and opening additional routes.

One in 10 children screened in UNRWA clinics is malnourished

Reuters
Geneva

One in 10 children screened in clinics run by the United Nations refugee agency in Gaza since 2024 has been malnourished, the agency said yesterday.

"Our health teams are confirming that malnutrition rates are increasing in Gaza, especially since the siege was tightened more than four months ago on the second of March," UNRWA's Director of Communications, Juliette Touma, told reporters in Geneva via a video link from Amman, Jordan.

Since January 2024, UNRWA said it had screened more than 240,000 boys and girls under the age of five in its clinics, adding that before the war, acute malnutrition was rarely seen in the Gaza



Zainab Abu Haleeb, a five-month-old Palestinian girl diagnosed with malnutrition, according to medics, lies on a bed as she receives treatment at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Strip. "One nurse that we spoke to told us that in the past, he only saw these cases of malnutrition in textbooks and documentaries," Touma said.

"Medicine, nutrition supplies, hy-

giene material, fuel are all rapidly running out," Touma said.

On May 19, Israel lifted an 11-week aid blockade on Gaza, allowing limited UN deliveries to resume. However, UNRWA continues to be banned from bringing aid into the enclave. Israel and the United States have accused Palestinian Hamas group of stealing from UN-led aid operations - which Hamas denies. They have instead set up the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, using private US security and logistics firms to transport aid to distribution hubs, which the UN has refused to work with.

On Monday, Unicef said that last month more than 5,800 children were diagnosed with malnutrition in Gaza, including more than 1,000 children with severe, acute malnutrition.

It said it was an increase for the fourth month in a row.

Govt forces accused of 'executions' in Druze area as Israel launches strikes

AFP
Damascus

Syrian authorities were accused yesterday of carrying out summary executions of civilians in the predominantly Druze province of Sweida, where Israel said it had launched strikes against government forces in defence of the religious minority.

Damascus had deployed troops to the area after clashes between Druze fighters and tribes killed more than 100 people. Israel announced its strikes shortly after Syria's defence minister declared a ceasefire in Sweida city, which government forces entered in the morning.

Damascus slammed the Israeli strikes, warning it had a "legitimate right to defend its land and its people". The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said yesterday that Syrian government forces and their allies had executed 19 people in and around Sweida.

Forces from the "defence and interior ministries carried out field executions of 12 civilians after storming the Radwan family guest house in the city of Sweida", the Observatory said.

Armed groups affiliated with the government were also responsible for executing four Druze civilians at another guest house in Sweida province, as well as gunning down three siblings north of Sweida city in front of their mother, according to the monitor.


While most Druze religious leaders had said they supported the government's deployment, at least one senior

figure urged armed resistance, having previously called for "international protection".

Neighbouring Israel, which has its own Druze minority, has sought to portray itself as a defender of the community, while also warning the Syrian government against maintaining any military presence south of Damascus, which Israel considers a security threat.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz announced strikes yesterday on "regime forces and weaponry" that they said were intended for use against the Druze.

"We are acting to prevent the Syrian regime from harming them and to ensure the demilitarisation of the area adjacent to our border with Syria," the pair said in a joint statement.



INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee [QAR]	Tender Bond Value [QAR]	Bid Closing Date
CO-RFQ-346	Provision for Developing a Hydraulic Model for Chilled Water Network	500.00	N/A	August 14, 2025, 2:00 PM
QF-RFQ-917	Provision of Multimedia Services (International, Regional and Local) to QF HQ and QF entities on Call off Basis for a Period of 3 Years with the Option to Extend up to 1 More Year	1,000.00	100,000.00	August 14, 2025, 2:00 PM
CO-RFQ-348	Supply, Installation, Dismantling and Commissioning of Bollard Light Fixtures in various QF Sites including Civil and Landscape Works	500.00	N/A	August 13, 2025, 2:00 PM
QF-RFQ-922	Design and Supply of Luxury Gift Items	500.00	N/A	August 7, 2025, 2:00 PM

Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement Directorate is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders. To receive the tender documents, please follow the below steps:

1) Supplier Registration It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.

Tender Fee: Interested bidders can Sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferrable tender fee online.

All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.

Tender Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Tender Fee online will be from 16th to 23rd July 2025.

2) All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.

3) Technical and commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.

- The commercial bid must be valid for **180 days** from Bid Closing Date.
- The commercial bid must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **180 days** from the bid closing date [where applicable as per the Tender documents].
- The successful tenderer will be required to submit a performance bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
- Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

Note: All work instructions for Supplier registration and Supplier portal can be found in below link: <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>

CONFLICT Israeli strikes on east Lebanon kill 12: ministry

Lebanese authorities said Israeli strikes killed 12 people yesterday in the Bekaa Valley in the country's east, where the Israeli military claimed attacks on fighter group Hezbollah, AFP reported from Beirut. Israel's military said it struck targets belonging to Hezbollah's elite Radwan force, in its latest attack on Lebanon despite a ceasefire between Israel and the Iran-backed group. A military statement said Israeli fighter jets launched "numerous strikes" on "Hezbollah targets in the area of Bekaa". The Lebanese health ministry said that "Israeli airstrikes on the Bekaa and Baalbek-Hermel governorates today resulted in the deaths of 12 people and the wounding of 12 others".

TENSION Drone attack shuts US-run oil field in Iraqi Kurdistan

A drone strike yesterday forced a US company to suspend operations at an oil field in Iraq's Kurdistan, the latest in a string of attacks targeting the autonomous region's energy facilities, AFP reported from Arbil. The Iraqi government said it will investigate the attacks, which occurred months before legislative elections, at a time of simmering tension between Baghdad and the regional administration in Arbil mainly over oil exports.

Auction Announcement

ARPM Tender and Auction Committee announce the following Auction:

Auction Subject				
Sale of Wood Cut Pieces in AL Bidda Park				
Launching Date	Closing Date	Auction Bond QR.	Auctions Documents Price QR.	Auction Method
16/July/2025	10/August/2025	5,000 (Qatari Riyals Five Thousand) (refundable subject to conditions)	100 (Qatari Riyals One Hundred only)	One Closed Envelope

Auction description:
Auction purpose is for the following:
Sale of Wood Cut Pieces in AL Bidda Park
The awarding will be made to the highest bid among the applicants.

General Conditions:

- Auction Documents / Conditions shall be obtained from Purchasing Department, ARPM Co., located on the 9th Floor, Al Rayyan Building, Old Salata, Zone 18, Al Muthaf Street, Next to Al Bustan Hotel during working hours 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Fri. & Sat. Closed).
- Auction Documents Fee (QR 100 – Qatari Riyals One Hundred only) - non-refundable, will be paid in cash in ARPM Co. Headquarter.
- Site visit for the Used Granite Materials and its Location shall be according to the Auction Conditions and the attendance of the visit shall be limited to those who obtain the Auction documents and pay the prescribed fees as per Item 2 above.
- To obtain Auction documents, the following documents are required:
Authorization letter from the bidding company in Arabic signed by the officially authorized manager and stamped with the company's seal - Copy of the establishment card - ID of the authorized person to receive the documents - Copy of the valid company's commercial registration - Company's classification certificate (if any).
- The Bid must be submitted according to the Conditions stated in the bidding documents. The Bid shall be enclosed with an Auction Bond in the name of Al Rayyan Project Management Company (to be placed in separate envelope inside the Bid envelope) in the form of a payable cheque certified by one of the banks operating in the State of Qatar of only QR5,000 (Five Thousand Qatari Riyals only), and it will be returned back within 90 days from the closing date subject to the Terms & Conditions, noting that no bid shall be accepted unless it has been enclosed with Auction Bond document.
- The bid (Price of the Used Granite Materials) shall be submitted in local currency (Qatari Riyal) and shall be valid for 90 days from the closing date of the bid and cannot be revoked within that period.
- Deadline for accepting bids is 12:00 pm of the closing date (10/08/2025).
- All forms attached to the Auction documents including the form of undertaking, shall be filled, completed and authorized as stated therein and returned with the other documents.
- All necessary data for the company (contacts & follow-up) must be attached: Mobile - Phone - Fax - E-mail - company address of where the correspondence to be sent, clarifying the tasks of each individual (when purchasing Auction documents) and within the company bid.
- For any queries related to documents and bidding, contact Al Rayyan Project Management Co. - Tel: 40341846 – 40341804Fax: 40341899 – email: L.cabral@arpm.com.qa; m.aseef@arpm.com.qa
- Deadline for accepting inquiries and requests 10/08/2025.
- The extension of the closing date may be requested in case of necessity (with justifications), not less than (5) working days prior to the closing date for Tender and Auction committee desertion and decision.
- In case the closing date is extended or any modifications are made during the announcement period, the company will be notified by fax or e-mail formally.

Tenders and Auctions Committee

ARPM

Nigeria bids farewell to former president Buhari

AFP
Daura

Former Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari was buried at his home in north-western Katsina state yesterday, with the multiple heads of state in attendance guarded by a heavy security detail.

Thousands of Nigerians gathered for public prayers in the town of Daura before the former leader was laid to rest in private at his family compound, which had been bustling with mourners paying their respects since his death over the weekend.

Buhari, who died at the age of 82 in a London clinic on Sunday, ruled Nigeria first as a military strongman in the 1980s and then later as a self-described “converted democrat”, serving two terms as president from 2015 to 2023.

Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, Africa’s wealthiest billionaire Aliko Dangote, the president of Guinea-Bissau and prime minister of Niger, as well as former Niger president Mahamadou Issoufou were all in attendance, local media reported.

The presence of Niger’s Prime Minister Ali Lamine Zeine came after his country and Nigeria saw diplomatic relations deteriorate since a 2023 coup overthrew Niamey’s civilian leaders.

As Buhari’s body made its way from England to Daura, less than 20 kilometres from the Niger bor-



Mourners wait to gain access to former president Muhammadu Buhari’s residence, ahead of his burial, in Daura, Katsina State, yesterday.

der, a massive security presence of police, soldiers and plainclothes officers was deployed in the usually sleepy town.

Nigeria, particularly in the north, has for years suffered attacks from insurgent militants and armed criminal gangs. Although he was elected on a mandate for change, Buhari’s time in office failed to put an end to the violence.

He made history in 2015 as the first opposition candidate to defeat an incumbent leader at the ballot box. But Buhari was accused of squandering both political opportunity and popular goodwill

in his time at the helm. Economic woes further dogged the oil giant during his tenure, while poverty, corruption and inequality remain entrenched. Images broadcast from inside the family compound showed a military band playing a final send-off for Buhari, whose remains were draped in the green-and-white Nigerian flag, as soldiers saluted and mourners dressed in colourful kaftans bowed their heads.

Young men climbed trees overlooking the courtyard to catch a glimpse of the final rites.

The flag was removed and his

body, draped in white, was buried.

Security ahead of the interment was so tight that Buhari’s family members found themselves locked out of the family compound yesterday afternoon, including Fatima Isah, who said she was the ex-president’s 78-year-old niece.

“Buhari was my provider, but he is no more. To add to my torment, they have refused me entry,” said Isah, in between sobs.

The day before the funeral, children were turned away from schools as government institutions closed for a public holiday and period of mourning.

Gunmen kill 27 in restive central Nigeria

AFP
Jos, Nigeria

Gunmen killed 27 people in north-central Nigeria’s Plateau state, in the latest bout of violence in the restive region, local sources said yesterday.

Plateau state, like other parts of Nigeria’s Middle Belt region, has long suffered deadly farmer-herder clashes over land and natural resources, as well as violence meted out by gangs of armed criminals known as “bandits”.

Resident Haggai Gankis told AFP that the attackers went into the settlement of Jebu-Rahoss, in the Riyom local government area, on Monday evening, armed with guns and machetes.

He blamed the attack on herdsmen. Another resident, Chuwang David, blamed bandits.

“We were asleep overnight, we heard gunshots, the attackers shot many many people and they also used machetes,” David said. Da Chomo Moses, another resident, gave the same toll and said he lost three family members “for no reason”.

“Twenty-seven innocent people were shot dead,” said Gankis, adding that most of the victims were women.

Local government council chairman Sati Bature Shuwa confirmed the attack to AFP, but did not give a toll.

Residents said an unknown number of people were sent to the hospital. For years, heav-

ily armed bandit gangs have intensified their assaults in rural areas in northwest and central Nigeria.

At the same time, Plateau state has been riven by conflicts between herders and farmers over dwindling land and grazing space, exacerbated by population growth and climate change.

In the ethnically and religiously mixed state, farmers and herders are from different communities, giving the clashes a sectarian dimension.

Land grabs, political and economic tensions between locals and those considered outsiders have heightened divisions in recent decades, as has an influx of hardline preachers.

A spate of particularly deadly attacks on farmers this year has residents warning the assaults are becoming increasingly frequent, better planned and more organised.

Attacks across Plateau and neighbouring Benue state left more than 150 people dead in April alone.

While high-profile killings blamed on herders have shocked the country, herders across the region say they are also the victims of deadly attacks, land grabs and cattle poisonings by farmers. Much of the violence in Plateau occurs in areas with little police or government presence, giving criminals a sense of impunity as killings almost always go unsolved, researchers say.

Reprisals are often disproportionate and fall across communal lines.

MSF says three aid workers were ‘intentionally’ killed in Tigray war

AFP
Nairobi

Doctors Without Borders yesterday said three of its staff were “intentionally” killed in 2021 during fierce fighting in Ethiopia’s Tigray region, accusing the government of failing to “fulfil its moral obligations” to conclude investigations.

The northern region of Tigray erupted in a brutal civil war against the federal government from 2020 and 2022 that cost some 600,000 lives.

The conflict prompted a humanitarian disaster, leaving one mn displaced, and a fragile peace deal has caused simmering resentment.

Maria Hernandez, a 35-year-old Spanish national, was one of MSF’s emergency co-ordinators in Tigray. Ethiopians Yohannes Halefom Reda and Tedros Gebremariam Gebremichael, both 31, were a co-ordination assistant and driver for the NGO.

All three employees of MSF-Spain were shot dead on June 24, 2021, in southern Tigray.

The NGO said they and their vehicle were all clearly identified.

E Guinea asks UN court to stop sale of mansion linked to leader’s son

Reuters
The Hague

Representatives of Equatorial Guinea yesterday asked the United Nations’ highest court to issue an emergency halt on the sale of a luxury Paris mansion seized from the son of the African country’s ruler while judges rule on the long-running dispute.

The building was seized after a French court convicted Teodoro Obiang Mangué, known as Teodorin, for embezzlement. He is the 57-year-old son of octogenarian President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. Equatorial Guinea argues that France must give back the mansion and other assets, telling the International Court of Justice yesterday that France would be violating a United Nations anti-cor-

ruption treaty by not returning the property. It argues that the seized assets are part of the public funds that were embezzled from Equatorial Guinea and should be returned to the state under the treaty. It has not said who embezzled the funds.

“It has become clear that France is determined to sell the building,” Equatorial Guinea’s representative at the court, Carmelo Nvono-Nca, told judges.

Sierra Leone islanders despair as rising ocean threatens survival

AFP
Nyangai Island

Wading through water up to his knees, Hassan Kargbo points to the vast ocean before him, which is eroding the land and imperilling residents’ survival on his island off Sierra Leone.

“Where we are now, it used to be my house, and we used to have a big football field,” Kargbo said, but “the water destroyed everything”.

Over the past five years the 35-year-old fisherman has seen the losses pile up as the rising Atlantic waters, which threaten millions across his west African nation, have claimed enormous portions of his island.

The inhabitants of Nyangai, located in the Turtle Islands off southern Sierra Leone, have made virtually no contribution to global warming, driven by humanity’s burning of fossil fuels.

Yet they are widely considered the country’s first people displaced by climate change, as the ever-hotter temperatures melt more of the Earth’s ice caps, swelling the seas around the archipelago.

The majority of Nyangai’s exhausted residents have lost their belongings and homes several times over, as they crowd further into the island’s interior.

An AFP team was able to visit several of the Turtle Islands, travelling seven hours by canoe in rough seas from the capital, Freetown.

On arrival in Nyangai, pelican colonies, white sand beaches and palm trees make the island appear almost like a paradise.

Then the devastation comes into focus: palm trees uprooted by wind and wave, beaches littered with branches and debris, sandbags serving as insufficient ramparts, abandoned furniture

scattered by people who have long moved on.

In less than 10 years, the island has lost two-thirds of its surface area, and now measures only about 200 metres long and 100 metres wide (approximately 650 by 330 feet).

Seen from above, all that remains is a small islet ringed by fishing canoes, with thatched-roof shacks clustered tightly in the centre.

WATER ‘ALWAYS COMING’

Ten years ago, Nyangai still had a thousand inhabitants. Although there is no official census, community leaders estimate that fewer than 300 residents remain.

Goats and chickens roam between houses made of white tarpaulins stretched around wooden frames. Fishermen mend their nets, women smoke and dry fish on the sand, and children scamper on the beach.

Due to the shrinking space, the island is incredibly overcrowded. Drinkable water is lacking due to the soil’s saltiness and there are no toilets, electricity or health clinics. Residents use the beach as an open-air washroom.

Impoverished Sierra Leone is one of the nations most threatened by global warming.

More than 2mn people along Sierra Leone’s coast are threatened by rising sea levels, according to a June 2024 study by the country’s National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA) and the NGO Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).

The country is “highly vulnerable to the increased frequency and severity of coastal erosion and sea level rise linked to the effects of climate change and human activities”, the study said.

Fisherman and community chief Amidou Bureh stood on the beach looking far out into the ocean where the land used to be.

“We had many trees here, man-



File photo shows a resident walk past a section damaged by the effects of rising sea levels in Plantain Island.

goes, coconut and other trees, but over the years water has destroyed all of them,” the 60-year-old said.

Letting out a sudden cry of despair, he said: “The water is always coming, coming, coming and destroying us and our properties. All the people need is help, and we are asking for more help.” Officials and international organisations have not provided any concrete assistance beyond recommending relocation, he added.

Kargbo said that his family has already lost its belongings and rebuilt their house in Nyangai twice. But the sea is at their door once again.

“I have no confidence that Nyangai will continue to exist,” he said, explaining that he has made the difficult decision to prepare to move to Sei island, where the terrain is less flat.

“It costs me a lot of money to buy sticks, to buy zinc, anytime I want to construct a new house after moving from the other one,” he said, lamenting his poor wages as a fisherman.

“To live in this island is really stressful,” he said. “I don’t want to continue that.” Sierra Leone’s

environment and climate change minister, Jiwoh Abdulai, told AFP that what is happening on the islands is now beyond an emergency.

“It is really heart-wrenching to see how devastating the impact is on people’s lives,” he said.

On AFP’s first morning in Nyangai, parts of the island had been washed out by an overnight storm.

Mohamed Kamara, a 19-year-old father, surveyed the damage sustained by his property following the violent winds and rain.

Other shacks nearby were gutted, with tarps and planks covering holes caused by the tempest.

In his small family courtyard several women were busy sorting through items swept onto the soggy sand floor: plastic basins, drenched clothes, pieces of fishing nets.

Kamara said his family had been suffering from similar weather since 2018, including in February when an uprooted tree badly damaged their home.

Feeling sapped and defeated, they plan to leave the island for the capital or another major city



A girl carries a basket on her head full of goods after unloading them from a pirogue bringing supplies to Nyangai Island.

this year. Several hours away from Nyangai by canoe on Plantain island, some 355 school children attend class in a building located precariously on a ravaged bank.

In July 2023, tragedy was avoided when the waters swept away an empty part of the building, where children had been studying just the day before.

Ousmane Kamara, the school’s director and the island’s imam, told AFP there was no other place for the children to study. In the ocean in front of him, the minaret of a now-submerged mosque poked out. Beyond it lies an islet that used to be part of Plantain but is now a separate body of land. In the surrounding waters, there had been hundreds of homes, according to community members.

The island’s new mosque has been fitted with stones and wood in an attempt to keep water from reaching the interior.

That endeavour has only been somewhat successful.

“We have a fear that maybe one day while we are in the mosque, the waves will come and will trash everything,” Kamara said.

Plantain, whose population once numbered in the thousands, has been losing land and residents for decades due to rising water.

The island has traditionally been a crossroads for trade, agriculture, fishing and maritime transport in addition to a tourist spot, particularly for its ruins dating back to the slave trade.

But its structures have gradually been submerged.

Those who were unable to leave

due to a lack of financial resources were forced to move further inland, where they are once again under threat.

Joseph Rahall, a Sierra Leone environmental expert, gives the Turtle Islands 10 to 15 years before they disappear.

“The entire archipelago will go, it’s just a question of time,” he said.

‘OUR HOME’

The crisis also threatens the islanders’ social and cultural traditions.

“When the sea takes over, everything goes, a culture of fishing disappears,” Rahall said.

Climate change erases an entire way of life, he said, including “traditions, culture, the way of doing business” For Abdulai, the environment minister, the residents “need interventions now”.

“We need to get them out of there, we are just trying to get the resources to be able to do so,” he said.

But the cost is an issue.

“What we keep telling the world is that climate change is having a devastating impact not just on our people but on our budget,” he said.

Many Nyangai and Plantain residents told AFP they feel abandoned by the authorities as their homes disappear.

As the muezzin’s call for late afternoon prayers carried across the small island of Nyangai, Bureh contemplated the ocean engulfing his life. “Our worry is the water, that the water will destroy us,” he said. But he added: “For me I don’t plan to go anywhere because this is our home”.

US Senate due to vote on Trump funding cuts

Reuters
Washington

The US Senate is due to begin voting on President Donald Trump's request to slash \$9.4bn in spending on foreign aid and public broadcasting previously approved by Congress, the latest test of Trump's control over his fellow Republicans.

Senator John Thune of South Dakota, the chamber's Republican majority leader, said he expected the first procedural voting today, but he did not know whether he had enough votes for the measure to pass without amendments.

"I'm fine with it as is, but I think we have colleagues who would like to see some perhaps modest changes made, and so we're trying to find out if there's a path forward that gets us 51 and stays consistent with what the White House proposed in terms of the rescissions

package," Thune told reporters.

The Senate has until Friday to act on the rescissions package, a request to claw back \$8.3bn in foreign aid funding and \$1.1bn for public broadcasting.

Otherwise, the request will expire and the White House will be required to adhere to spending plans passed by Congress.

The amounts at stake are extremely small in the context of the sprawling federal budget, which totalled \$6.8tn in the fiscal year ended September 30.

Yet the proposed cuts have raised the hackles of Democrats and a handful of Republicans who see an attempt to erode Congress's authority over spending.

Democrats say the foreign aid initiatives in Trump's crosshairs include lifesaving support for women and children's health and the fight against HIV/Aids that have long had strong bipartisan support.

The package also cuts funds supporting public broadcasting, which can be the main source of news and emergency

information in rural parts of the US.

"What is going on here? Does anyone stand up to these horrible, horrible cuts that hurt the American people?" Senator Charles Schumer of New York, the chamber's Democratic leader, said on Monday.

Trump has threatened to withhold his endorsement from any member of Congress who does not vote for the measure without changes.

Standalone presidential rescissions packages have not passed in years, with lawmakers reluctant to cede their constitutionally mandated control of government spending.

During Trump's first term in 2018, Congress members rejected Trump's request to revoke \$15bn in spending.

Trump's Republicans hold narrow majorities in the Senate and House.

So far, they have shown little appetite for opposing his policies.

On Monday, House of Representatives

Speaker Mike Johnson of Louisiana said that he hoped the Senate would grant Trump's full request. "I think you've got to respect the White House's request. That's what we did, so I hope that's what we get back."

The rescissions legislation passed the House by 214-212 last month. Four Republicans joined 208 Democrats in voting against it.

Some Republican senators have expressed concern about some of Trump's requests,

Senator Susan Collins of Maine, who chairs the Appropriations Committee, said she opposed Trump's request for cuts to PEPFAR, a global program to fight Aids.

Trump wants to cut nearly \$9mn from PEPFAR and \$300mn overall from global programmes to fight HIV/Aids.

Democrats have warned that the foreign aid and broadcasting cuts, which overturn spending agreements between

Republicans and Democrats, could make it more difficult to negotiate the package of spending bills that must pass by September 30 to fund the government next year and avoid a shutdown.

"How are we supposed to negotiate a bipartisan deal if Republicans will turn around and put it through the shredder in a partisan vote?" asked Senator Patty Murray from Washington, the top Democrat on the appropriations committee.

Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska has said she is concerned about public media cuts to rural parts of her state.

"I don't like the whole exercise of rescissions, particularly at a time when we are actually trying to advance appropriations," she said last week.

Appropriations bills require 60 votes to move ahead in the Senate, but the rescissions package needs just 51, meaning Republicans can pass it without Democratic support.

Two found dead in New Jersey as US northeast braces for more rain

AFP
New York

Two people were killed in New Jersey following flash flooding in the northeastern United States that caused travel chaos, authorities said yesterday, as the region braced for more heavy rain.

A flood warning remained in effect for parts of New Jersey, while the slow-moving summer storm was expected to continue showering the Mid-Atlantic region into the middle of the week, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

"A moisture-rich Summer-time airmass over much of the eastern/central US will continue to lead to areas of scattered to widespread thunderstorms capable of heavy downpours and flash flooding," the government forecaster wrote.

Torrential rain inundated parts of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland on Monday night.

Two people died when their vehicle was swept into a river in Plainfield, a city in New Jersey, and emergency responders at the scene were unable to save them, local officials said.

It follows another storm that struck the city on July 3 that claimed two lives.

"We New Jersey, we America, we the globe, are getting dragged by climate," state Governor Phil Murphy said.

In New York City, emergency officials told people living in low-lying areas or ubiquitous base-

ment apartments to head to higher ground.

Torrents of filthy rain water cascaded down Manhattan's major avenues around the time of the evening rush hour, and commuters sought cover under building canopies and bus stops.

Several major stations in the city's subway system were flooded, with passengers sharing images on social media showing waves of water gushing past ticket barriers and onto the electrified tracks.

In downtown Manhattan, dozens of passengers were reportedly trapped on a train as water poured into the 28th street station.

JFK, LaGuardia and Newark airports temporarily suspended departures Monday night, forcing the cancellation of dozens of flights.

FOX Forecast Centre meteorologist Christopher Tate said the Big Apple overnight endured its "second wettest single hour ever recorded".

More than 2" of rain fell in a single hour.

The city is no stranger to extreme weather.

Hurricane Sandy in 2012 killed more than 40 New Yorkers and destroyed approximately 300 homes.

Hurricane Ida in 2021 left more than a dozen dead in New York City, and damage to the subway took years to repair.

New Jersey's governor declared a state of emergency, urging people to stay indoors.

Authorities across the region, including as far south as North Carolina, warned of hazardous driving conditions as cleanup op-



A car is partially submerged on the street as a result of heavy flooding in the Elmsford area of Westchester, New York. - Reuters

Right: A man is seen riding on the subway as a New York station is flooded, in this screengrab obtained from a social media video. - Reuters



according to the New York borough's emergency notification system.

Zohran Mamdani, the Democrat running for mayor of New York, wrote on social media that the rapid flooding emphasised the need for climate-proofing the city.

"We must upgrade our infrastructure for this new climate reality," he wrote.

The latest bad weather follows historic Fourth of July flooding that devastated parts of central Texas, killing at least 131 people and leaving more than 100 others missing (*see accompanying report below*).

And in North Carolina, at least five people were killed when Tropical Storm Chantal slammed the coastal state last week, Governor Josh Stein said.

Texas flood death toll rises to 131

Reuters
Houston

The official tally of storm-related deaths across Texas rose to 131 as authorities warned of yet another round of heavy rains 10 days after a Hill Country flash flood that transformed the Guadalupe River into a killer torrent.

A National Weather Service

(NWS) flood watch forecasting heavy downpours of up to half a foot of rain was posted for a wide swath of central Texas extending from the Rio Grande east to San Antonio and Austin.

The advisory included Kerr County and other parts of Texas Hill Country along the Guadalupe still recovering from the July 4 flood disaster, which ravaged the county seat of Kerrville and a riverside Christian summer camp for girls in the nearby town of Hunt.

Riverfront residents as well as search teams still combing the banks of the waterway were advised to seek higher ground until the latest danger had passed.

The search for additional victims along the Guadalupe was likewise suspended due to flood concerns on Sunday.

On Monday Texas Governor Greg Abbott said that storms had claimed at least 131 lives in Texas since July 4, the bulk of those deaths in and around Kerrville, up from 120 reported on Friday.

He said that 97 people were still listed as missing in the great-

er Kerrville area, down from the 160-plus who authorities said were unaccounted for last week.

About a third of the Kerr County fatalities are children, most of whom perished at Camp Mystic when floodwaters raged through the girls-only summer retreat before dawn on July 4.

Authorities have not rescued anyone alive since the day of the floods, when more than a foot of rain fell in less than an hour in the heart of a region known as "flash flood alley", sending a deadly wall of water down the Guadalupe River basin.

Abbott said that state lawmakers would investigate the circumstances of the flooding, disaster preparedness and emergency response to the flooding at a special legislative session set to convene later this month.

The high casualty toll, ranking as one of the deadliest US flood events in decades, has raised questions about the lack of flash-flood warning sirens in Kerr County and vacancies left at NWS offices amid staffing cuts under the Trump administration.



A kitten rests in a cage at the Kerrville Pets Alive rescue centre in Kerrville, Texas. The KPA (Kerrville Pets Alive) continues operations in reuniting and restoring displaced pets to owners and various adoption centres throughout the area. - AFP

Right: A staff member is seen after making a phone call at the Kerrville Pets Alive rescue centre in Kerrville, Texas. - AFP



US Senate confirms Trump's first second-term judicial nominee

President Donald Trump has secured approval of his first judicial nominee of his second term, as the US Senate confirmed a former law clerk to three members of the US Supreme Court's conservative majority to a seat on a federal appeals court.

The Republican-led Senate voted 46-42 along party lines in favour of Whitney Hermandorfer, a lawyer serving under Tennessee's attorney-general, to be appointed as a life-tenured judge on the Cincinnati-based

6th US Circuit Court of Appeals.

She is the first of 15 judicial nominees the president has announced to date to secure Senate approval, as Trump and his Republican allies in the Senate look to add to the 234 judicial appointments he made in his first term.

With Hermandorfer's confirmation, Trump tied former president Joe Biden's total of 235 judicial appointments.

Such appointments could help Trump fur-

ther shift the ideological balance of the judiciary to the right at a moment when White House officials have accused judges who have blocked parts of his immigration and cost-cutting agenda they have found to be unlawful of being part of a "judicial coup".

Republican Senate Majority Leader John Thune, ahead of a procedural vote on Hermandorfer's nomination tomorrow, said that the goal was to fill around 50 judicial vacancies on the bench with judges who

"understand the proper role of a judge".

He said judges should "understand that their job is to interpret the law, not usurp the job of the people's elected representatives by legislating from the bench".

In a statement after the vote, Republican Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley praised Hermandorfer's qualifications and said that Republicans will push forward with nominations despite "obstruction" by Democrats. - Reuters

Democrats' generational divide tested in special US House primary in Arizona

Reuters
Washington

Arizona Democrats are choosing their nominee to run for a vacant US House seat in September, as the party grapples with demands for generational change and divisions over just how progressive it can be in the era of President Donald Trump.

With Democrats' losses in last year's presidential and congressional elections weighing heavily on the party nationwide, it has struggled over how best to appeal to young progressives while luring back working-class voters who shifted toward the Republican Party.

The winner of this week's primary is expected to prevail in the September 23 general election in the heavily Democratic district that stretches along the US-Mexico border and includes parts of Tucson.

The front-runner is seen as Adelita Grijalva, who is seeking a seat formerly held by her father, Representative Raul Grijalva, who died in March. She leads a pack of five Democrats.

A 54-year-old former county board supervisor, Grijalva has racked up notable backers spanning the party divide.

They include environmental groups, labour unions and lawmakers who range from progressive luminaries such as Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of New York to the moderate Representative Marcy Kaptur of Ohio.

However, Deja Foxx, half Grijalva's age and emphasising her youth, has been gaining attention in what some party activists say could be a shock victory for progressives, much like Zohran Mamdani's in the New York City Democratic mayoral primary last month.

Foxx, 25, won the endorsement of David Hogg, a survivor of a 2018 Florida school shooting who held a high position within the Democratic National Committee until he ruffled establishment feathers by threatening to help finance challengers to Democratic incumbents he deemed insufficiently progressive.

A more moderate former Arizona state representative, Daniel Hernandez Jr, is also in the mix.

He was an intern in 2011 when his boss, then-Representative Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona, was gravely wounded in an assassination attempt.

Giffords, however, has endorsed Grijalva.

Raul Grijalva won re-election in November, easily beating his Republican opponent by about 27 percentage points.

Next year's midterm elections give Democrats the opportunity to capture a majority in the House, which currently is narrowly controlled by Republicans 220-212.

Republicans also will hold a primary election for Grijalva's seat this week.

Among the candidates are a construction worker and a man who is on probation following a felony fraud conviction, according to Arizona media reports.

Trump sued by US states over withholding \$6.8bn for schools

Reuters
Washington

A coalition of mostly Democratic-led states filed a lawsuit on Monday challenging a move by US President Donald Trump's administration to withhold about \$6.8bn in congressionally approved federal funding for K-12 schools.

Attorneys-general or governors from 24 states and the District of Columbia sued in federal court in Providence, Rhode Island, arguing that the US Department of Education and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) threw schools nationwide into chaos by unconstitutionally freezing funding for six programmes approved by Congress.

The freeze extended to funding used to support the education of migrant farm workers and their children; recruitment and training of teachers; English proficiency learning; academic enrichment; and after-school and summer programmes.

The administration also froze funding used to support adult literacy and job-readiness skills.

The government was legally required to release the money to the states by July 1, the lawsuit said.

Instead, the Education Department notified states on June 30 that it would not be issuing grant awards under those programmes by that deadline.

It cited the change in administration as its reason.

An OMB spokesperson at the time cited an "ongoing programmatic review" of education funding and said initial findings showed what he termed as a misuse of grant funds to "subsidise a radical left-wing agenda".

The OMB also raised objections to the use of the grant money to support scholarships for immigrant students and lessons that involved minority gender and lifestyle themes.

The Democratic-led states said the sweeping funding freeze has disrupted school systems, resulting in summer school and after-school programmes being cancelled or put at risk and the halting of other initiatives with little time for school districts to fill in the holes left in their budgets.

The states say the administration violated the US Constitution by disregarding Congress' sole authority over spending and ran afoul of federal administrative law by freezing the funds without any reasoned explanation.

The states also say the administration failed to abide by procedures of the Impoundment Control Act, which bars the executive branch from unilaterally refusing to spend funds appropriated by Congress unless certain steps are followed.

The lawsuit follows a series of other cases Democratic-led states and others have filed challenging the administration's sweeping efforts to freeze or terminate federal funding for programmes out of line with Trump's agenda.

US launches new attempt to keep migrants detained, memo shows

The Trump administration is launching a new effort to keep immigrants who entered the US illegally detained by denying them bond hearings, an internal memo showed, a change that could further swell the numbers of those held.

The guidance by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a portion of which Reuters reviewed, could be applied to millions of people who crossed the border illegally and are contesting their deportation.

President Donald Trump has vowed mass deportations, which he says are needed after high levels of illegal immigration under his predecessor, Democrat Joe Biden.

Congress passed a spending law this month that provides funding to detain at least 100,000 people, a steep increase over the record 58,000 in custody by late June.

The *Washington Post* first re-

ported the new ICE policy limiting bond hearing eligibility, citing a July 8 memo by its acting director, Todd Lyons.

The guidance shared with Reuters called for ICE to interpret several immigration law provisions as "prohibitions on release" after an arrest, adding the shift in policy was "likely to be litigated".

It encouraged ICE prosecutors "to make alternative arguments in support of continued detention" during immigration court hearings.

The new policy appeared to reverse legal standards governing detention for decades, said Tom Jawetz, a former homeland security official in the Biden administration, calling it "a radical departure that could explode the detention population".

The US Department of Homeland Security and ICE did not immediately respond to requests for comment. - **Reuters**

US agencies shrink layoff plans

The Trump administration will reduce planned federal worker layoffs, a personnel official said on Monday, after tens of thousands of employees accepted buyouts or retired early to avoid dismissal.

"Several agencies are now not planning to proceed" with staff cuts, Office of Personnel Management senior adviser Noah Peters said in a statement filed in federal court.

He said the financial incentives that departments offered employees to quit in the first few months of the administration, along with "natural attrition" were the reasons agencies were rethinking layoffs.

Peters did not specify which departments were reducing their planned layoffs. - **Reuters**

US opens probe into University of Michigan

The US Department of Education has opened a foreign funding investigation into the University of Michigan, saying that it found "inaccurate and incomplete disclosures" in a review of the university's foreign reports.

As part of the investigation, the department has asked the university to share, within 30 days, tax records related to foreign funding, a list of foreign gifts, grants, and contracts with any foreign source, and other documents. - **Reuters**

Major US ice cream makers to scoop out synthetic dyes

AFP/Reuters
Washington

Major US ice cream makers have announced plans to phase out their use of artificial dyes following pressure from Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr to eliminate unnecessary additives from the American diet.

The International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA), which includes over 40 top ice cream brands, said its members would stop using petroleum-derived synthetic colourings by the end of 2027.

The IDFA represents more than 90% of ice cream sold in the US.

These chemicals have been linked in studies to conditions including attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), cancer, diabetes, gastrointestinal issues, and genomic disruption, yet serve no nutritional or functional purpose beyond cosmetic colouring, health advocates have long argued.

The IDFA announced the plan at an event at the US Department of Agriculture headquarters on Monday with Kennedy, FDA Commissioner Marty Makary and Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins.

"I'm particularly happy to be here today because this is relevant to my favourite food, which is ice cream," Kennedy said, lauding the dairy industry for its actions.

"We know that our current health outcomes, especially for our children, are unsustainable and that American agriculture is at the heart of the solution to Make America Healthy Again," Rollins said, referencing Kennedy's MAHA slogan that is a play on President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again", or MAGA.

"This is a great day for dairy and it's a great day for Make America Healthy Again," added the IDFA president and chief executive Michael Dykes.

Andy Jacobs, chief executive of Turkey Hill, said many commercial ice cream manufacturers had already phased out artificial colours or were in the process of doing so.

"By taking this step now, ice cream manu-



US Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins (left) speaks during a news conference in Washington, DC. - **AFP**

facturers are ensuring that ice cream remains a special part of our lives as consumer preferences change and the nation's regulatory priorities evolve," he said.

Industry data shows Americans consume roughly 19 pounds (8.6kg) of ice cream a year.

The frozen treat contributes an estimated \$12bn to the economy and supports more than 27,000 dairy industry jobs.

In April, Kennedy announced plans to revoke authorisation for two synthetic dyes and to "work with industry" to eliminate six more - an approach critics dismissed as too soft and overly reliant on voluntary action.

By contrast, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in one of its final acts under president Joe Biden finalised a rule to actually ban Red Dye No 3, one of the most widely used and controversial colourings.

Yet there are signs that Kennedy's peer pres-

sure strategy is yielding some results.

Major food manufacturers including Nestle, Kraft Heinz, General Mills, and PepsiCo have already signed on to ditch artificial dyes.

Kennedy said on Monday that between "35-40%" of the food industry has now pledged to make the shift, but it was notable the ice cream makers' pledge pushes past the health secretary's original target of end-2026, giving companies an extra year to adjust their supply chains.

And key holdouts remain - for example Mars, the maker of M&M's and Skittles, and Kellogg's Froot Loops still use Red 40, Yellow 5, Blue 1, and Yellow 6 in the US, even though the same cereal is artificial dye-free in places like Canada.

At the same time, Trump's FDA has fast-tracking natural-dye based alternatives, adding gardenia (genipin) blue to the list on Monday, the fourth such approval in two months.



This picture released this week shows firefighters and emergency vehicles positioned in front of the Dragon Bravo Fire in Grand Canyon, Arizona.

- **Reuters**

Nine dead in nursing home fire

A nighttime fire at a nursing home has left nine people dead in the northeastern US state of Massachusetts after a desperate rescue operation, local authorities said on Monday.

The fire that broke out on Sunday at an assisted living facility in the city of Fall River was "an unspeakable tragedy", Fall River Fire Chief Jeffrey Bacon told reporters.

"Nine people lost their lives in this building last night," he said. "My thoughts and prayers are with the victims."

Local media aired footage of residents being taken away from the scene on stretchers.

One person remains in critical condition, more than 30 were taken to hospitals and at least a dozen were saved in a rescue requiring ladders, Bacon added.

Five firefighters who were injured in the blaze have already been released from the hospital.

Firefighters who responded to the call shortly before 10pm local time saw heavy smoke and flames at the front of the building with occupants trapped inside, the fire department said.

Around 70 people resided at the Gabriel House, and some 50 firefighters were mobilised to fight the blaze.

The origin and cause of the fire are being investigated. - **AFP**

Historic lodge lost as Grand Canyon fire continues to spread

AFP
Los Angeles

A growing wildfire at the Grand Canyon's North Rim has now charred at least 50 structures, including a historic lodge inside the popular US tourist site and natural wonder, authorities said.

Hundreds of firefighters working from the air and ground in Arizona are battling the so-called Dragon Bravo blaze.

More than 500 tourists and park staffers have been evacuated since the fire broke out on July 4, apparently from a lightning strike.

On Saturday night the flames intensified quickly due to sustained winds gusting at up to 40mph (64kph), the National Park Service said.

According to early assessments, the fire has burned down between 50-80 structures, including administrative buildings, a water treatment facility, and a historic building called Grand Canyon Lodge.

It is the only place on the North Rim inside the park where visitors can spend the night.

It was rebuilt in the 1930s after being destroyed in a fire and declared a national historic monument in 1987.

Burning for over a week, the fire was initially managed by federal authorities in a confine-and-contain strategy - rather than being tackled aggressively to try to put it out.

Arizona Governor Katie Hobbs

has criticised the approach and called for an independent probe.

"An incident of this magnitude demands intense oversight and scrutiny into the federal government's emergency response," she wrote on X.

"They must first take aggressive action to end the wildfire and prevent further damage. But Arizonans deserve answers for how this fire was allowed to decimate the Grand Canyon National Park," the Democratic governor wrote.

Authorities announced the North Rim is now closed for the remainder of the tourism season running through mid-October.

Firefighters are also battling a second blaze around 35 miles (56km) north of the Dragon Bravo fire in Kaibab National Forest.

Roads have been closed down too but the more popular South Rim of the canyon remains open.

Dozens of fires are burning in the western United States as the country goes into a dry and dangerous season for wildfires.

The region faces additional challenges because the Trump administration has cut funding and staff at federal agencies that work to prevent and grapple with fires and other natural disasters.

One of the greatest wonders of the natural world, the Grand Canyon is the result of the Colorado River eating away at layers of red sandstone and other rock for millions of years, leaving a chasm up to 18 miles wide and more than a mile deep.

Last year almost 5mn people visited the world-famous site.

Prosecutor asks Brazil's top court to find Bolsonaro guilty of coup



Jair Bolsonaro

AFP
Brasilia

A prosecutor asked Brazil's Supreme Court to find ex-president Jair Bolsonaro guilty of plotting a coup, in closing arguments after a trial that saw US President Donald Trump try to intervene on behalf of his right-wing ally.

Bolsonaro is accused of seeking to overturn the 2022 election won by his left-wing opponent, current President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

The prosecution told the court that former army officer Bolsonaro and seven others were guilty of participating in "armed criminal association" and had sought to "violently overthrow the democratic order".

The case now goes to Justice Alexandre de Moraes.

If found guilty, Bolsonaro and his co-defendants could face up to 40 years in prison.

Bolsonaro, who served as president from 2019-2023 before Lula replaced him, says he is the victim of a political persecution.

Prosecutors say that Bolsonaro tried to overturn his 2022 loss in a plot that only failed because the military did not side with him.

Violent supporters then rioted, rampaging through government buildings in the capital Brasilia in scenes that echoed the assault on the US Capitol by Trump's supporters after the Republican lost to Democrat Joe Biden in 2020.

The trial has attracted attention from Trump, who returned to power in the 2024 election and continues to claim - despite this being rejected repeatedly by the courts - that he won in 2020.

Trump has repeatedly called on social media

for Bolsonaro's trial to be stopped, accusing the authorities in Brazil of mounting a "witch hunt" and a "disgrace".

On July 9, he took his campaign to extraordinary new levels by announcing plans to tariff Brazilian imports to the United States at 50%.

Unlike the tariffs Trump is slapping on countries around much of the world, including top US allies, the measures against Brazil - which are set to take effect August 1 - were announced in openly political terms.

Trump cited "Brazil's insidious attacks on Free Elections" among other issues, warning of further escalation if the country retaliated - something Lula indicated would happen.

On Friday, Trump reiterated his claim that Bolsonaro was being unfairly treated.

Lula has hit back at Trump's "interference", insisting that "no one is above the law".

Soldiers drown while training

Three Colombian soldiers drowned in a river yesterday during a survival training exercise, authorities said.

The soldiers were participating in anti-guerrilla exercises in central Colombia, including a task in which they had to cross the Magdalena River with rafts they built themselves, army officer Jorge Hernandez told Blu Radio.

One raft, with 11 soldiers on board, was swept away by a current and forced underneath a ferry docked on the shore.

Eight managed to escape, but three were sucked under the water.

Deaths during military exercises are not unheard of in Colombia, and analysts blame military equipment in poor condition. - **AFP**



China military activities could ‘seriously impact’ security: Japan

AFP
Tokyo

Japan yesterday said China’s intensifying military activities could “seriously impact” its security, citing the first confirmed incursion by a Chinese military aircraft into its airspace in

an annual threat assessment. The defence ministry said in its white paper that China was ramping up its activities in the entire region surrounding Japan.
A Chinese military aircraft entered Japan’s airspace in August last year, it said. Then in September, a Chinese aircraft carrier and two other naval ships sailed be-

tween two Japanese islands near Taiwan.
Beijing’s military “created a situation that could seriously impact Japan’s security”, the paper said.
It repeated its comment from last year’s paper that China’s military ambitions pose “an unprecedented and (the) greatest strategic challenge” to Japan and the world.

Beijing responded by saying the paper “hypes up the so-called China threat”.
“China expresses strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to this and has lodged solemn representations with Japan,” China’s foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said.
Tokyo said last week that Chi-

nese fighter jets flew within 100 feet of a Japanese military patrol aircraft over the East China Sea.
Last year, Chinese vessels sailed near the Japanese-administered Senkaku islands - known as the Diaoyu in China - a record 355 times, according to Tokyo.
And last month Japan said that two Chinese aircraft carriers

sailed in the Pacific simultaneously for the first time, including in Japan’s economic waters.
China called it “routine training”.
Beijing has also conducted joint drills with Russia which are “clearly intended as a demonstration of force against Japan”, the paper said.

China, Australia talk free trade, more dialogue as leaders meet in Beijing

Reuters
Beijing/Sydney

China and Australia will keep open dialogue and look for areas of co-operation despite strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific region, Australia’s Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday after meeting China’s President Xi Jinping in Beijing.

Australia, which regards the US as its major security ally, has pursued a China policy of “co-operate where we can, disagree where we must” under Albanese, mending ties that had been strained near to breaking point under a previous government.

Albanese’s six-day, three-city visit is a major test case for Beijing’s attempts to capitalise on US President Donald Trump’s sweeping trade tariffs by presenting itself as a stable and reliable partner.

Xi called on both countries to safeguard free trade in a readout of his meeting with Albanese published by state media that did not mention Trump but referred to a “complex and turbulent” international system.

While Albanese repeatedly voiced his support for free trade and more dialogue with China, a day of senior meetings that also included Premier Li Qiang and business executives from both countries ended without any new

major investment or trade deals.
“Dialogue is how we advance our interests, how we manage our differences and we guard against misunderstanding,” Albanese said at a press conference.
Australia would treat its trade relationship with China separately to its handling of US tariffs, Albanese told reporters, speaking after a private lunch with Xi at the Great Hall of the People.
Albanese also said a decade-old free trade agreement with China, Australia’s largest trade partner, would be reviewed.

The two countries agreed to a new Policy Dialogue on Steel Decarbonisation that will give Australia insight into Chinese government planning, according to an Australian government statement.
They also signed agreements on tourism, customs inspections, and agriculture, the statement said.

In the run-up to the visit, China signalled repeatedly it was open to deeper cooperation. The state-owned China Daily newspaper yesterday published a glowing opinion piece about the visit and said it showed countries with different political systems could still co-operate. However, any co-operation is likely to be constrained by long-standing Australian concerns around China’s military build-up.

Albanese said he had raised the case of jailed Australian writer Yang Hengjun with Xi. Albanese

said he raised Australia’s concerns over the Chinese navy’s conduct of short-notice live-fire exercises in the Tasman Sea between Australia and New Zealand in February.

Xi responded that China “engages in exercises just as Australia engages in exercises”, Albanese told reporters.

“We have strategic competition in the region but we continue to engage in order to support peace and security in the region and stability,” he said.

Beijing has also previously criticised Canberra’s increased screening of foreign investment in critical minerals and Albanese’s pledge to return a Chinese-leased port to Australian ownership.

Australia’s exports to China span agriculture and energy but are dominated by iron ore, and Albanese has travelled with executives from mining giants Rio Tinto, BHP and Fortescue, who met Chinese steel industry officials yesterday, at the start of the visit.

A separate CEO roundtable yesterday issued recommendations for both governments including modernising the 10-year-old free trade agreement and finding ways to collaborate on green metal research and development.

Some two dozen Chinese and Australian companies, including China’s electric vehicle giant BYD, steelmaker Baowu and food group COFCO, attended the meeting alongside Li and Albanese.

Heavy rains lash Dhaka



A girl gets on a rickshaw on a street flooded due to heavy rain, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, yesterday.

Indigenous Australians lose landmark climate court case

AFP
Sydney

Indigenous Australians living on a string of climate-threatened islands yesterday lost a landmark court bid to hold the government responsible for lacklustre emissions targets.

Scattered through the warm waters off Australia’s northernmost tip, the sparsely populated Torres Strait Islands are threatened by seas rising much faster than the global average.

Torres Strait elders have spent the past four years fighting through the courts to prove the government failed to protect

them through meaningful climate action. Australia’s federal court found the government was not obliged to shield the Torres Strait Islands from climate change.

“I thought that the decision would be in our favour, and I’m in shock,” said Torres Strait Islander Paul Kabai, who helped to bring the case. “What do any of us say to our families now?”

Fellow plaintiff Pabai Pabai said: “My heart is broken for my family and my community.”

Federal court justice Michael Wigney criticised the government for setting emissions targets between 2015 and 2021 that failed to consider the “best

available science”. But these targets would have had little impact on global temperature rise, he found.

“Any additional greenhouse gases that might have been released by Australia as a result of low emissions targets would have caused no more than an almost immeasurable increase in global average temperatures,” Wigney said. Australia’s previous conservative government sought to cut emissions by around 26% before 2030.

The incumbent left-leaning government in 2022 adopted new plans to slash emissions by 40% before the end of the decade, and reach net zero by 2050.

All missing found after boat capsizes in Indonesia

All of the 11 people reported missing after a boat capsized off western Indonesia were rescued yesterday, authorities said, with some surviving by clinging to pieces of the boat.
The vessel carrying 18 people capsized around 11am Monday as it sailed around the Mentawai islands off the coast of western Sumatra, the Mentawai search and rescue agency said.
“We successfully evacuated all 18 victims,” Mentawai search rescue agency head Rudi said in a statement.
Some of those rescued were wearing life jackets and some had clung to pieces of the overturned boat, Rudi told reporters earlier yesterday.
Big waves hit the boat before it capsized, Rudi added, citing testimony from one of the boat operators.
“From what we heard from the operator, it (the boat) was struck from the side and then flipped over,” he said. One of those rescued was receiving treatment at a local clinic but was in good health, he said.

Delay in naming judges in Malaysia flayed



Malaysian Bar Council members hold placards during a rally to protest delay in appointing the country’s top judges near the Prime Minister’s Office in Putrajaya.

12 arrested in Indonesia baby trafficking probe

AFP
Bandung, Indonesia

Indonesian authorities have detained 12 suspects after uncovering an alleged baby trafficking ring that sent more than a dozen infants to Singapore, a police official said yesterday.

The case was discovered after a parent reported an alleged baby kidnapping to police, which led them to a suspect who admitted to trading 24 infants, said West Java police’s director of general criminal investigation, Surawan.

The perpetrators are accused of moving the babies to Pontianak city on Borneo island and then sending more than a dozen of them onwards to Singapore, said the official.

“Based on documents, 14 (babies) were sent to Singapore,” he said. “The age range is clearly under one year old, with some three months old, five months old, and six months old.”

Authorities managed to res-

cue five babies in Pontianak and one in Tangerang, a city near the Indonesian capital Jakarta. They also arrested a dozen suspects across Jakarta, Pontianak and the Javan city of Bandung.

“They are a syndicate, a baby trafficking syndicate. They each have their own roles,” said Surawan.

Some of the suspects were allegedly tasked with finding the babies, while others cared for them, sheltered them or prepared civil registration documents, such as family cards and passports.

The syndicate had been in operation since 2023, Surawan said, based on suspect statements.

Police said they sought out “parents or mothers who refuse to care for their children” in return for money.

Surawan said the parent who reported a kidnapping “actually had an agreement” with the smugglers before their child’s birth, but reported them when they did not receive payment afterwards.

Hong Kong government proposes first ride-hailing regulation

Reuters
Hong Kong

The Hong Kong government yesterday laid out proposals to regulate ride-hailing platforms, such as Uber, following years of talks and complaints from the city’s licensed taxi drivers that they face unfair competition.

Uber in 2014 became the first ride-hailing platform in Hong Kong and has operated without formal regulation.

Police raided its office in 2015 and have arrested Uber drivers for operating without licences.

The city’s taxi industry, which has been struggling with declining income, has said the lack of regulation gives ride-hailing services an unfair advantage.

In a paper submitted to the legislature, the Transport and Logistics Bureau said all platforms providing ride-hailing services must obtain a licence and comply with specific conditions.

Anyone who provides ride-

hailing platform services without a valid licence may be subject to imprisonment and fines. In a statement to Reuters, a spokesperson for Uber HK said the regulation was an “important milestone”.

“We are encouraged to see safety and service standards - such as mandatory insurance, driver examinations, and regular vehicle inspections - placed at the centre of the proposed regime,” the spokesperson said.

But the statement also said Uber was concerned about a proposed

cap on the number of ride-sharing vehicles. “Artificial limits risk increasing wait times, raising prices for riders, and restricting earning opportunities for drivers,” it said, adding Uber looked forward to continued talks with the government and other stakeholders.

According to a survey carried out by Uber of more than 4,800 Hong Kong drivers, nearly 80% fear that strict quotas and high licensing fees could threaten their livelihoods.

The city’s leader, John Lee, told a news conference yesterday there

was a consensus in society that ride-hailing services must be regulated to protect the safety of passengers.

“I agree that the issue is complex, but I think the issue should not be delayed any further and the government must come up with a solution,” Lee said.

He also said it was necessary to create an environment in which the ride-hailing services and traditional taxis can co-exist.

The Transport and Logistics Bureau said quota arrangements

would be proposed in the first half of 2026.

Prior to that, the proposals allow for the legal amendments to be submitted to Hong Kong’s Legislative Council for approval in the third quarter of this year.

Under the new law, anyone seeking a ride-hailing drivers’ licence must be at least 21 years old, have held a private car licence for at least one year, have no serious traffic convictions in the last five years, and pass mandatory assessments and training.

OFFICIAL

Indian foreign minister meets China president

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said he met Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday as part of the delegation of foreign ministers attending the meeting of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation. "Apprised President Xi of the recent development of our bilateral ties," Jaishankar said in a post on X, accompanied by a picture of him shaking hands with Xi. Earlier Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi yesterday said Beijing and New Delhi should work towards mutual trust and "win-win" co-operation, after talks with his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, state news agency Xinhua reported.

TRADE

India 'in talks with Chile, Peru to source critical minerals'

India is holding talks with Chile and Peru to source critical minerals under ongoing free trade pact negotiations, a trade ministry source said yesterday. Reliant on imports to meet demand, India already planned to include a chapter on copper in the trade talks with the two South American countries to secure a fixed quantity of copper concentrate, according to a government document earlier this month. India meets more than 90% of its copper concentrate needs through imports, and its dependency is expected to rise to 97% by 2047, the document said. India is also working with trading partners to reduce dependence on China for critical minerals.

DATA

India's unemployment rate remains steady at 5.6% in June

India's unemployment rate remained steady at 5.6% in June compared to the previous month, helped by a fall in joblessness in rural areas, the statistics ministry said yesterday. The unemployment rate in June among the 15 years and above age group in rural parts of the country fell to 4.9% from 5.1%, while it rose in urban areas to 7.1% from 6.9% in May, according to the data. This was the third monthly labour force data release covering both urban and rural areas. Previously, the government published employment data on a quarterly basis for urban regions and annually for both urban and rural areas.

ECONOMY

India's car sales to dealers hit 18-month low in June

Indian automakers' car sales to dealers slid to an 18-month low in June, data from an industry body showed yesterday. Urban Indians have tightened discretionary spending for a better part of this year, with wage hikes lagging the growth seen in previous years. Car makers delivered 312,849 units to dealers last month, the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers said in a statement, down 7.4% from 337,757 units a year before. For the June quarter, car sales to dealers slipped 1.4% to a two-year low. On a quarter-on-quarter basis, sales were down 13%, compared with a 9.6% drop in the same period last year.

Air India restores some international services after Ahmedabad crash

As part of the restoration, Air India will start a thrice-weekly service between Ahmedabad and London Heathrow from August 1 to September 30

Reuters
Bengaluru

Air India yesterday said it would partially restore its international flight schedule that was scaled back following the crash involving its flight last month that killed 260 people. As part of the restoration, Air India will start a thrice-weekly service between Ahmedabad and London Heathrow from August 1 to September 30, replacing the currently operating five-times-a-week flights between Ahmedabad and London Gatwick. A Boeing 787 Dreamliner bound for London from the Indian city of Ahmedabad began to lose thrust and crashed shortly after takeoff on June 12. All but one of the 242 people on board and 19 others on the ground were killed. Air India reduced some of its international flights following the crash as part of a "safety pause" that the carrier said allowed it to perform additional

precautionary checks on its Boeing 787 aircraft. The partial service resumption will see some flights being restored from August 1, with full restoration planned from October 1, 2025, Air India said. As part of the partial resumption, Air India has reduced flights to some destinations in Europe and North America. These include reductions in the frequency of Delhi-to-Paris flights to seven times a week from 12, effective August 1. Flights on the Delhi-Milan route have been reduced to three times a week from four earlier. The frequency of flights from Mumbai and Delhi to New York JFK has been cut to six times a week from seven earlier, the airline said. Earlier, India on Monday ordered its airlines to examine fuel switches on several Boeing aircraft models while South Korea ordered a similar measure yesterday, as scrutiny intensified of fuel switch locks at the centre of an investigation into a deadly crash. The precautionary moves by the two countries and airlines in several others came despite the planemaker and the US Federal Aviation Administration assuring airlines and regulators in recent days that the fuel switch

locks on Boeing jets are safe. A preliminary report into the Air India crash found the switches had almost simultaneously flipped from run position to cut-off shortly after takeoff. One pilot was heard on the cockpit voice recorder asking the other why he had cut off the fuel. "The other pilot responded that he did not do so," the report said. The report noted a 2018 advisory from the FAA, which recommended, but did not mandate, operators of several Boeing models, including the 787, to inspect the locking feature of fuel cutoff switches to ensure they could not be moved accidentally. India's directorate general of civil Aviation said it had issued an order to investigate locks on several Boeing models, including 787s and 737s, after several Indian and international airlines began making their own inspections of fuel switches. The regulator oversees the world's third-largest and fastest-growing aviation market. Boeing planes are used by three of the country's four largest airlines. Some airlines around the world told Reuters they had been checking relevant switches since 2018 in accordance with the FAA advisory, including Australia's Qantas Airways and Japan's ANA.



Media personnel take pictures and videos of the Tesla Model Y car at India's first Tesla showroom in Mumbai, India, yesterday.

Tesla enters India with \$70,000 Model Y

Reuters
Mumbai

Tesla yesterday launched its Model Y at about \$70,000 in India, a significant markup relative to its other major markets, reflecting the country's high tariffs on electric vehicle imports which CEO Elon Musk has long-criticised. With deliveries estimated to start from the third quarter, the US automaker is targeting a niche electric vehicle segment in India that accounts for just 4% of overall sales in the world's third-largest car market. It will compete mainly with German luxury giants such as BMW, Mercedes-Benz and South

Korea's Kia rather than domestic mass-market EV players such as Tata Motors and Mahindra. Tesla opened its first showroom in Mumbai yesterday and began taking Model Y orders on its website, marking its long-awaited entry into the market where Musk once had plans to open a factory. For now, Tesla will import cars into a country where tariffs and related duties can exceed 100%, driving up the price for consumers. Tesla's Model Y rear-wheel drive is priced at about Rs6mn (\$70,000), while its Model Y long-range rear-wheel drive costs Rs6.8mn, according to the website. The prices include the tariff and additional levies imposed by the state. There was no breakdown

of the price on the website and Reuters could not immediately ascertain the listing price. They compare with a starting price from \$44,990 in the US, 263,500 yuan (\$36,700) in China, and 45,970 euros (\$53,700) in Germany. At the media-only event at the showroom, Tesla displayed two Model Y cars made in China and its supercharger, which it will install at eight different locations in Mumbai and in and around New Delhi, where it is also expected to open its next showroom. "We are here to create the ecosystem, to invest in the necessary infrastructure including the charging infrastructure," Isabel Fan, a regional director at Tesla, said at the launch event.

Oldest marathon runner dies at 114 in hit-and-run

Fauja Singh, regarded as the oldest person and the first centenarian to complete a full marathon, has died at the age of 114 after he was struck by a vehicle near his village in Punjab, India, media reports said. Singh, who claimed to be born in 1911, completed the Toronto Waterfront Marathon in 2011, when he was 100. He had registered his best time in a full marathon at the same event in 2003, finishing the race in five hours and 40 minutes. "My 'Turbaned Tornado' is no more," Singh's biographer Khushwant Singh posted on X. "He was struck by an unidentified vehicle around 3.30pm in his village, Bias, while crossing the road. Rest in peace, my dear Fauja." Efforts were underway to identify the vehicle, which fled the scene. "He was an exceptional athlete with incredible determination. Pained by his passing away. My thoughts are with his family and countless admirers around the world," India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi posted on X yesterday.

Rainfall in Srinagar



A woman wearing a raincoat rides a scooter during rainfall in Srinagar, India, yesterday.

Duo jailed for chopping down iconic UK tree

AFP
London

Two men found guilty of the "mindless" and "de-liberate" felling of one of the UK's most iconic trees, which sparked national outrage, were yesterday jailed for more than four years. A jury at Newcastle Crown Court found former friends Daniel Graham, 39, and Adam Carruthers, 32, guilty in May of criminal damage for the 2023 felling of the tree at Sycamore Gap. It had stood for nearly 200 years next to Hadrian's Wall, a Unesco World Heritage site in northern England. The tree was so striking that it featured in the 1991 Hollywood film Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves. Sentencing the pair at the same court, judge Christina Lambert said their actions

had involved a "high degree of planning and preparation" and caused widespread "shock and bewilderment". For those who lived in the county the tree had become "a landmark, a symbol of the beauty of its untamed landscape", she said. Graham and Carruthers each received a sentence of four years and three months. Both men were convicted on two counts of criminal damage to the sycamore and to the Roman wall, which was damaged when the tree fell on it. "This iconic tree can never be replaced... it belonged to the people. It was totemic," said Andrew Poad, a manager with the National Trust conservation charity, in a victim impact statement read to the court. He said the felling was "beyond comprehension" and had caused "an overwhelming sense of loss and confusion".

Thousands of Afghans secretly moved to Britain after data leak

Reuters
London

Britain set up a secret scheme to relocate thousands of Afghans to the UK after people's personal details were disclosed in a data leak, court documents showed yesterday. Concerns that individuals named could be targeted led the previous Conservative government to set up the relocation scheme, involving thousands of people and estimated to cost the

government £2bn (\$2.7bn). British Defence Minister John Healey apologised for the data leak, which included details about members of parliament and senior military officers who supported applications to help soldiers who worked with the British military and their families relocate to the UK from Afghanistan. "This serious data incident should never have happened," Healey told lawmakers in the House of Commons. "It may have occurred three years ago under the previous government, but to

all whose data was compromised I offer a sincere apology." Healey said that around 4,500 affected people "are in Britain or in transit ... at a cost of around £400mn". But he added that no-one else from Afghanistan will be offered asylum because of the data leak. News of the leak comes as Britain's public finances are tight and the right-wing, anti-immigration Reform UK political party leads in the opinion polls. British forces were first deployed to Afghanistan in 2001 following the September 11 at-

tacks on the US, and they played a major role in combat operations there until 2014. The government is facing lawsuits from those affected by the breach, further adding to the ultimate cost of the incident. A ministry of defence-commissioned review of the data breach, a summary of which was also published yesterday, said more than 16,000 people affected by it had been relocated to the UK as of May this year. The details emerged yesterday after a legal ruling known as a superinjunction was lifted. The

injunction had been granted in 2023 after the MoD argued that a public disclosure of the breach could put people at risk of extrajudicial killing or serious violence. The dataset contained personal information of nearly 19,000 Afghans who had applied to be relocated to Britain and their families. A high court said in a summary of its ruling to lift the injunction that the data "contained personal information about more than 33,000 applicants". It was released in error in early 2022, before the MoD spotted the

breach in August 2023, when part of the dataset was published on Facebook. The former Conservative government obtained the injunction the following month. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's centre-left government, which was elected last July, launched a review into the injunction, the breach and the relocation scheme, which found that although Afghanistan remains dangerous, there was little evidence of intent by the Taliban to conduct a campaign of retribution.

CHAIRMAN

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GULF TIMES

America Party:
The long road
ahead for Musk

US President Donald Trump has hit out at former close ally Elon Musk over the multi-billionaire's launch of a new political party. Musk, the single biggest Republican donor in the 2024 elections, says he wants to create a new political party to lower the US national debt, which currently stands at \$37tn.

The America Party was announced by Musk on July 5. After spending more than \$290mn in 2024 to help elect Trump and secure a Republican majority in Congress, Musk very publicly broke with Trump and his party over their "One Big Beautiful Bill," which the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget warns could boost the debt by as much as \$5tn over a decade.

After his departure in May from the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, which aimed to cut government spending, Musk became increasingly vocal in his criticisms of Trump and Republicans for not slashing more.

Musk already has a super political action committee: In 2024, Musk gave his America PAC about \$250mn to run get-out-the-vote operations for Trump and 17 House Republicans.

But creating a political party is a much more complex process than starting a super PAC.

To be recognised by the Federal Election Commission as a "national committee" — a necessary step to be competitive in federal elections — requires an onerous application process, without which a party cannot receive significant donations or co-ordinate campaign resources.

At the
presidential
level, third-party
candidates are
often accused of
being spoilers

To earn the FEC recognition, Musk would need to create party organisations in multiple states — which have their own, varied laws governing whether a party can appear on ballots — plus a national committee responsible for its day-to-day operations.

The party would have to demonstrate it has its own governing rules and

platform and a physical office for the national branch.

At the presidential level, third-party candidates are often accused of being spoilers.

Ralph Nader's 2000 presidential campaign for the Green Party received 97,488 votes in Florida, significantly exceeding the 537-vote margin by which Republican George W Bush defeated Democrat Al Gore.

Another Green Party presidential candidate, Jill Stein, was widely perceived to have siphoned enough votes from Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election to have cost the Democrat the election.

Those claims aren't always substantiated by academic analyses. Winning a federal election is a very expensive venture, too.

Startup political parties have historically had trouble raising money, and public matching funds — taxpayer-provided support for campaign financing — are available only to presidential candidates. Eligibility for these funds is determined in part by parties' vote totals from the previous election.

The Republican and Democratic parties also work to limit competition.

However, the majority of Americans like the idea of a third party that can compete with the major two. In October 2024, 58% of voters told Gallup that one was needed in the US.

Three-quarters of those who responded to an April poll by the conservative-leaning Hoover Institution said that the national debt is a concern.

However, it's not clear whether the issue is important enough to voters to serve as the organising principle of a competitive political party. If Musk issues a more comprehensive platform, it may be easier to predict the popularity of the America Party.

Make no mistake, it takes more than a declaration on social media, even by the world's richest man, to create a political party in the US.

But the number of registered independents and third-party members is also growing as voters break from the two-party system at increasing rates, according to an NBC News analysis.

That said, even if Musk isn't able to meme a new party into an immediate electoral force, it could still have political significance.

America Party may not significantly impact two-party dominance, but could disrupt the system by highlighting key issues and pressuring the main two parties to act.

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Political chaos leaves France sidelined
as investors warm to Europe

- Policy paralysis likely until 2027 presidential election
- Markets underperform peers in Germany, Italy
- Spending cuts contrast with German spending surge

By Yoruk Bahceli and Leigh Thomas

London/Aix-en-Provence

France is missing out on the investor optimism that has defined Europe's markets this year, hamstrung by its strained public finances and political volatility that threatens to paralyse policy until at least 2027.

Global investors and French executives cite the risk that budget negotiations could trigger another government collapse in the autumn, while pessimism among French households is dragging on consumer spending and economic growth.

Centrist Prime Minister Francois Bayrou has faced eight no-confidence motions in parliament since taking office in December and his minority government is now struggling to find €40bn (\$47bn) in spending cuts for the 2026 budget.

The contrast with neighbouring Germany, whose new government is preparing to loosen historically tight purse strings and pump billions into the economy through defence and infrastructure spending, could hardly be starker.

"While all the other highly indebted European countries — Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy — have taken advantage of years of inflation to reduce their public debt ratio, France — whose deficit is now the highest in the eurozone — is increasingly diverging," said Pierre Moscovici, head of the Cour des Comptes public audit office and a former finance minister.

To narrow the budget gap, Bayrou will have to convince opposition parties to stomach spending cuts only slightly smaller than those proposed in the 2025 budget that brought down his predecessor.

Out of favour



Centrist Prime Minister Francois Bayrou has faced eight no-confidence motions in parliament since taking office in December. (Reuters file photo)

Germany's historic embrace of looser fiscal policy and the impact of President Donald Trump's sometimes erratic policymaking on confidence in US assets have given a boost to European financial markets and other investments this year.

A key beneficiary has been Italy, which has seen the risk premium paid on its 10-year debt compared to that of safe-haven Germany drop towards where it traded in 2010, before the eurozone debt crisis escalated.

But the 10-year risk premium paid by French debt over German is still at 70 basis points, well above levels of around 50 bps seen before French President Emmanuel Macron called a shock snap election last summer.

The French-Italian yield gap is meanwhile near all-time lows, even though Italy has a bigger debt pile.

Candriam's chief investment officer Nicolas Forest said he favoured German, Italian and Spanish bonds and was underweight France, a situation he called "completely unusual".

French stocks are missing out, too.

The blue-chip CAC 40 index trades below where it was before

the election was called and is lagging Europe's STOXX 600 aggregate. The Paris index has returned just 5% this year, four times less than Germany's DAX.

Simon Blundell, co-head of fundamental European fixed income at BlackRock, the world's biggest investor, said he had no big positions in French debt and favoured Italian bonds, encouraged by political stability in Rome and declining volatility.

Even if France's government survives the autumn, investors expect the budget squeeze to underwhelm as a fix for fiscal strains and so fail to increase the appeal of French assets.

"Any compromise political parties find will be really temporary in terms of measures, and not great for debt reduction and deficit improvement," said Candriam's Forest.

And even presidential and parliamentary elections in 2027 may not fully dispel the political uncertainty, if no party emerges dominant.

Real economy blues

To prod opposition parties to back Bayrou's budget, Public Finances

Minister Amélie de Montchalin has suggested France could turn to an IMF bailout if it does not decisively grip its finances.

Carrefour CEO Alexandre Bompard said such doomy talk only caused the French to save more, jeopardising a consumer spending recovery that he said was more fragile than in the supermarket giant's other European markets.

"If we have 5 percentage points more savings than other European countries, it's because we have an extraordinarily high level of political and fiscal uncertainty," Bompard told an economics conference in Aix-en-Provence on Friday.

With consumers hesitant to spend, French business activity has consistently lagged European peers this year, even though the private sector is less exposed to US trade tensions than Germany or Italy's more export-focused economies.

"The economy is genuinely struggling, and you can see this in PMIs month after month where France is getting singled out for how weak it is," said Barclays' head of euro rates strategy Rohan Khanna, referring to the PMI surveys of company activity.

Since January, economists polled by Reuters have downgraded France's 2026 growth forecast to 1%, while Germany's has been upgraded twice, to 1.3%.

Brushing aside any prospect of IMF intervention to prop up France's public finances, the Fund's French chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas insisted Paris could no longer put off getting its fiscal house in order.

"France is not exempt from the laws of gravity, so we're going to have to adapt," Gourinchas said in Aix-en-Provence. "We can't fly, we're going to have to plan our landing and make spending cuts." — Reuters

What you need to know about Yoon probe

Since South Korea's Constitutional Court ousted president Yoon Suk-yeol in April, he has lost presidential immunity and is vulnerable to additional charges on top of an ongoing criminal trial concerning his martial law declaration on December 3.

Yoon is on trial over insurrection charges, along with a former cabinet minister, several military commanders and police officials.

Here is what we know about the criminal investigations and trial so far:

Who is facing charges?

Yoon is on a criminal trial in which prosecutors accuse him of lacking the legal grounds to declare martial law and ordering troops to arrest lawmakers.

Yoon, who has been charged with masterminding an insurrection, has denied all the charges and argued that his martial law declaration, which lasted about six hours, did not amount to insurrection.

As a defendant in a criminal trial, Yoon is required to attend arguments heard at the Seoul Central District Court.

His former defence minister, Kim Yong-hyun, has been arrested and indicted over alleged insurrection and abuse of power. Chiefs of the

Capital Defence Command and the Defence Counterintelligence Command have also been indicted. Others involved in the case include army chief Park An-su, who was named martial law commander and has been indicted. The army's Special Warfare Command as well as several other military generals and senior police officials, including the national and Seoul police chiefs, are also accused of playing a role in the martial law plan.

Yoon, Kim, Lee, the police chiefs and more than 10 military commanders have been banned from leaving the country.

Yoon became the first sitting president to be arrested on January 15 after a dramatic showdown with law enforcement officials.

He was released from jail on March 8 after a court cancelled his arrest warrant, citing the timing of the indictment and questions about the legality of the investigation.

But the former leader returned to jail on July 10, after the court granted a detention warrant requested by a special prosecution team investigating additional charges.

What charges are sought?

In what had been the first-ever criminal prosecution of an incumbent leader, Yoon was

indicted in January on charges of leading an insurrection.

Other officials also face charges of insurrection, abuse of authority and obstructing other people from exercising their rights.

South Korean investigating authorities pursued the charge against Yoon because insurrection is one of the few criminal charges from which a sitting South Korean president does not have immunity.

However, with Yoon having lost immunity, he is now open to other potential charges prosecutors may bring against him.

If convicted, leading an insurrection is punishable with life imprisonment with or without labour, or death.

For those who engaged in activities key to the insurrection, punishment could range from death to life imprisonment to imprisonment without labour for at least five years.

South Korea last handed down a death sentence in 2016, but has not executed anyone since 1997.

People who joined in the plot or violence face imprisonment, with or without labour, for less than five years. The special counsel team that kicked off after new leader Lee Jae Myung took office in June is investigating other allegations, including whether Yoon hurt South Korea's interests by intentionally inflaming tensions with North Korea. — Reuters

‘Trump emboldening Ukraine, delaying peace’

AFP
Moscow

The Kremlin warned yesterday that US President Donald Trump's pledge of more weapons for Kyiv and threat of sanctions targeting Russian trading partners could embolden Ukraine and further delay already stalled peace efforts.

Trump a day earlier gave Russia 50 days to strike a peace deal with Ukraine, voicing fresh frustration with Moscow as he laid out an arrangement with Nato to supply Kyiv with new military aid sponsored by the alliance's members.

The Republican forced Moscow and Kyiv to open peace talks to end the conflict, now in its fourth year, but Russia has rejected calls for a ceasefire and launched a record number of drones and missiles at Ukraine in recent months.

Moscow said it needed more time to respond fully to Trump's statement, but hinted it did not appear conducive to successful negotiations.

"It seems that such a decision made in Washington and in Nato countries and directly in Brussels will be perceived by Kyiv not as a signal for peace but for the continuation of the war," Kremlin spokes-

Russia says needs more time to fully respond to his statement

man Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "President Trump's statement is very serious. We certainly need time to analyse what was said in Washington," he told reporters in Moscow's first reaction to the comments.

Trump warned that if no deal was concluded, he would slap severe tariffs on Russia's remaining trade partners in a bid to impede Moscow's ability to finance its military offensive.

Pumped up by huge state spending on soldiers and weapons, as well as by redirecting vital energy exports to the likes of China and India, Russia's economy has so far defied Western hopes sanctions would push it into a deep recession.

Two rounds of talks between Russia and Ukraine, held in Turkiye in recent months, have made no progress towards ending the fighting and yielded only large-scale prisoner exchanges.

Tens of thousands have been killed since Russia launched its offensive, with millions forced to flee their homes in eastern and southern Ukraine, which has been decimated by aerial attacks and ground assaults.

Putin has repeatedly rejected

Zelensky should not target Moscow, says Trump

US President Donald Trump said yesterday Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky should not target Moscow and that Russian President Vladimir Putin should agree to a ceasefire deal by a 50-day deadline or sanctions will kick in.

His comments came after *The Financial Times*, citing people briefed on discussions, reported yesterday that Trump had privately encouraged Ukraine to step up deep strikes on Russia. The newspaper added that Trump asked Zelensky whether he could strike Moscow if the US provided long-range weapons. "No, he shouldn't target Moscow," Trump told reporters on the South Lawn of the White House when asked if Zelensky should attack the Russian capital.

Trump on Monday announced a toughened stance against Russia for its three-year-old war in Ukraine, promising a fresh wave of missiles and other weaponry for Ukraine. He gave Moscow 50 days to reach a ceasefire or face sanctions. Asked if he was now on the side of Ukraine, Trump said, "I am on nobody's side," and then declared he was on "humanity's side" because "I want to stop the killing."

Trump defended the deadline he set for Russia to agree to a deal and head off tariffs and sanctions on countries that buy oil from Russia.

"I don't think 50 days is very long and it could be sooner than that," he said.

He did not say whether any talks were planned to try to work out a deal with Russia.

"At the end of the 50 days if we don't have a deal, it's going to be too bad," he said.

engage Putin have spooked Europe and Kyiv.

In Moscow, residents dismissed Trump's statement as little more than politics. "It's a game of chess," Svetlana, an aviation engineer said.

"There will still be negotiations... (Trump) gave 50 days, and then there will be more... We are waiting for the next move of our president," the 47-year-old said.

Russia has pummelled Ukrainian cities with regular aerial attacks in recent weeks as its troops advance slowly across the battlefield in the east and south.

Ukrainian soldiers fighting in the east were hopeful but cautious following Trump's promise of air defences and weapons.

"I don't believe him. There have been too many promises that haven't been kept," said one soldier with the call-sign "Shah."

Others were worried it might be too little too late.

"Of course it's good, but at the same time, time has been lost. Those Patriots could have been sent sooner and could have helped a lot," another fighter called "Master" told AFP.

"If there is even the slightest chance to improve the situation for us and worsen it for them, then that's already positive," Ruslan, a 29-year-old soldier, said.



French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou speaks during a news conference to present a major public finance recovery plan, outlining his first budgetary orientations for 2026 in Paris yesterday. The slogan reads "The moment of truth". (Reuters)

French PM proposes cutting national holidays to cut debt

AFP
Paris

Prime Minister Francois Bayrou said yesterday he wanted to reduce the number of public holidays in France as part of a bid to tackle what he called the "curse" of his country's debt.

Presenting 2026 budget proposals, Bayrou said two out of France's 11 national holidays could go, suggesting Easter Monday and May 8, a day that commemorates the end of World War II in Europe.

Such a measure would bring France into line with Germany's nine national holidays – although federal states can add their own – and take it well below Italy's 12 days.

After years of overspending, France is on notice to control its public deficit and cut its sprawling debt, as required under EU rules.

Bayrou said France had to borrow each month to pay pensions and the salaries of civil servants, a state of affairs he called "a curse with no way out".

Losing two public holidays, meanwhile, would add "several billions of euros" to the state's coffers, Bayrou said.

But the proposed measure sparked an immediate protest

from Jordan Bardella, leader of the far-right National Rally.

He said abolishing two holidays, "especially ones as filled with meaning as Easter Monday and May 8 is a direct attack on our history, our roots and on labour in France".

The party's parliamentary leader, Marine Le Pen, warned that "if Francois Bayrou does not revise his plan, we will vote for a no-confidence motion".

Leftist firebrand Jean-Luc Melenchon of the France Unbowed party called for Bayrou's resignation, saying "these injustices cannot be tolerated any longer".

His party colleague Mathilde Panot accused Bayrou of starting "a social war".

Bayrou had said previously that France's budgetary position needed to be improved by €40bn (\$46.5bn) next year.

But this figure has risen after President Emmanuel Macron said at the weekend he wanted €3.5bn of extra military spending next year because of rising international tensions. France has a defence budget of €50.5bn for 2025.

Bayrou said the budget deficit would be cut to 4.6% next year, from an estimated 5.4% this year, and would fall below the 3% required by EU rules by 2029.

To achieve this, other measures would include a general freeze on spending increases – including on pensions and health – except for debt servicing and the defence sector, Bayrou said.

"We have become addicted to public spending," Bayrou said. "We are at a critical juncture in our history".

The prime minister even held up Greece as a cautionary tale, an EU member whose spiralling debt and deficits pushed it to the brink of dropping out of the eurozone after the 2008 financial crisis.

"We must never forget the story of Greece," he said.

France's debt stands at 114% of GDP – compared to 60% allowed under EU rules – the biggest debt mountain in the EU after Greece and Italy.

The government hopes to cut the number of civil servants by 3,000 next year, and close down "unproductive agencies working on behalf of the state", the premier said.

Bayrou said wealthy residents would be made to contribute to the financial effort.

"The nation's effort must be equitable," Bayrou said. "We will ask little of those who have little, and more of those who have more."

Brazil, China and India could be hit very hard by sanctions: Nato chief

Reuters
Washington

Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte warned yesterday that countries such as Brazil, China and India could be hit very hard by secondary sanctions if they continued to do business with Russia.

Rutte made the comment while meeting with senators in the US Congress the day after President Donald Trump announced new weapons for Ukraine and threatened "biting" secondary tariffs of 100% on the

buyers of Russian exports unless there is a peace deal in 50 days.

"My encouragement to these three countries, particularly is, if you live now in Beijing, or in Delhi, or you are the president of Brazil, you might want to take a look into this, because this might hit you very hard," Rutte told reporters, who met with Trump on Monday and agreed the new steps.

"So please make the phone call to Vladimir Putin and tell him that he has to get serious about peace talks, because otherwise this will slam back on Brazil, on India and on China in

a massive way," Rutte added.

Republican US Senator Thom Tillis praised Trump for announcing the steps, but said the 50-day delay "worries" him.

He said he was concerned that "Putin would try to use the 50 days to win the war, or to be better positioned to negotiate a peace agreement after having murdered and potentially collected more ground as a basis for negotiation.

"So we should look at the current state of Ukraine today and say, no matter what you do over the next 50 days, any of your gains are off the table," he added.

Rutte said Europe would find the money to ensure Ukraine was in the best possible position in peace talks.

He said that under the agreement with Trump, the US would now "massively" supply Ukraine with weapons "not just air defence, also missiles, also ammunition paid for by the Europeans."

Asked if long-range missiles for Ukraine were under discussion, Rutte said: "It is both defensive and offensive. So there's all kinds of weapons, but we have not discussed in detail yesterday with the president. This is really being worked through now by the Pentagon, by the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, together with the Ukrainians."



Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte answers questions during a brief press conference with Senator Thom Tillis (right) (R-NC) and Senator Jeanne Shaheen on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, yesterday. (AFP)

EU punishes individuals ‘destabilising’ Moldova

The European Union yesterday sanctioned seven individuals and a group with ties to Moscow accused of seeking to destabilise Moldova ahead of parliamentary elections in September. EU foreign ministers decided to impose the measures, including the freezing of assets and travel bans, during a meeting in Brussels, a statement said.

The bloc targeted seven individuals with links to fugitive pro-Russian oligarch and politician Ilan Shor, who is also under EU sanctions since April 2023.

They include leaders and members of successor entities to the outlawed SOR political party, the EU said.

It also sanctioned A7, a company with Russia ties that the EU said had been linked to efforts to influence Moldova's presidential elections and a referendum on EU accession in 2024.

"Moldova is now preparing for a very high stakes election, parliamentary elections coming in autumn, and these points will be a prime target of Moscow's hybrid war," EU top diplomat Kaja Kallas said.

The EU would also provide more support to counter hybrid threats, she said.

"This shows that European Union is determined to safeguard Moldova's democratic process against external interference."

The latest measures bring the total of those hit for destabilising the former Soviet republic to 23 individuals and five entities.

Russia has sought to meddle in Moldova since it took a pro-European turn following the 2020 election of President Maia Sandu.

Sandu cut ties with Moscow and applied for Moldova to join the EU following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

EU fails to win Slovakia's backing for new Russia sanctions

Reuters
Brussels/Prague

The European Union failed to approve a new package of sanctions against Russia yesterday, as Slovakia demanded more guarantees that it would not be harmed by a separate EU plan to phase out Russian gas.

The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, had said in a letter seen by Reuters and later released by Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico's office that it would work to address Slovakia's concerns, at-

tempting to unlock a deal on the EU sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.

Slovakia's representative at a meeting of EU foreign ministers yesterday was tasked with requesting a delay to a planned vote on the sanctions, Fico said in a statement.

"The government coalition rejects the imbecile proposal of the European Commission to stop the flow of Russian gas from 2028," Fico said.

"However, it is ready to negotiate guarantees that will provide Slovakia with a certain comfort in gas supplies after 2028."

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas, speaking after the foreign ministers' meeting, said she was "really sad" the sanctions did not get approved, adding that "the ball is in Slovakia's court". She added she was hopeful a deal on the sanctions could be reached today.

Slovakia has been blocking the latest sanctions package – which requires unanimous approval from EU member states – until its concerns are addressed over an EU proposal to phase out imports of Russian gas by January 1, 2028.

Slovakia, which continues to import Russian energy and often takes pro-Rus-

sian views on Ukraine, argues that quitting Russian gas could cause shortages, raise prices and transit fees, and lead to damage claims from Russian supplier Gazprom.

In his statement calling for a delay on the sanctions vote, Fico blamed Slovak opposition parties for labelling EU proposals as insufficient.

However, the largest Slovak opposition party has backed the EU approach to sanctions against Russia and criticised Fico's government yesterday for not diversifying energy supplies away from Russia already, as others in the EU have done.

Slovakia has warned of the potential legal costs of breaking its gas contract with Gazprom, and Fico added the best solution would be an exemption in the Russian energy phase-out for Slovakia to allow it to fulfil its contract running until 2034.

The Commission, in its letter, said it would stand ready to intervene if needed during potential litigation. But it did not offer an exemption.

According to the letter, the Commission will clarify how an "emergency break" can be triggered if gas prices spike because of scarce supply during the Russian gas phase-out.

Fanar organises health education programme for 340 workers

The Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Centre (Fanar) at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (Awqaf) has organised a health education programme.

The programme, according to an official statement from Awqaf, targeted 340 workers from Qatari Diar and Binaa Qatar.

The programme was held at Fanar's branch in the workers' city in co-operation with the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC).

The programme was attended by workers of various nationalities, during which comprehensive medical examinations were provided and some medicines were distributed free of charge.

These were in addition to educational lectures on general health aspects and raising awareness of the importance of prevention and self-care.

The meeting was also used to provide a brief introduction to



Islamic culture and Qatari values and to answer the inquiries of the participating workers.

The programme was organised in line with Fanar's vision to reach

the targeted groups of expatriate communities and workers in their locations while ensuring the provision of integrated services that meet their needs and contribute



to improving their quality of life, health-wise culturally and spiritually in line with Awqaf's mission to consolidate the values of compassion and community solidarity.

Fanar administration said the programme reflects the integration between government agencies in the country to serve the community, with the PHCC

providing the necessary medical support through a team of volunteer doctors and nurses, in addition to medicines and medical supplies.

Packed indoor programme of activities on offer in Qatar this summer

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Qatar's indoor spaces have become hubs for family-friendly activities, from gaming to creative workshops, educational experiences, and immersive festivals, designed to make the most of the season away from the summer heat.

Leading the charge in fun and nostalgia is the **Retro Electronic Games event at City Center Doha** mall, which opened on June 18 and runs until July 31.

This event provides enthusiasts with a blast from the past, featuring classic arcade games and vintage consoles that bring timeless fun to life.

Among the highlights are iconic arcade machines, vintage racing simulators, classic consoles, and joystick games, all set against a backdrop of neon vibes and throwback visuals, promising fun for seasoned gamers, as well as for

those who are new to the retro scene.

For younger audiences and families seeking hands-on creativity, the **City Kids Clubhouse at City Center Doha** (third floor, Arabian Court) is open daily.

This colourful activity zone offers a world of imagination with activities like colouring, painting, face painting, puzzle solving, brain games, and themed crafts, alongside rotating workshops. It is an ideal stop for families whether shopping, dining, or just creating memories.

Adding to the educational and creative offerings, the **Msheireb Museums Summer Programme** kicked off yesterday and will run until August 28.

Described as an "inclusive creative journey for the family," the programme features workshops that blend art, technology, artificial intelligence, and Qatari heritage.

These sessions are designed in collaboration with entities such as Doha Design District, Virginia Commonwealth Arts in Qatar, CamelCode, and Life Skills Hub.



Msheireb Museums Summer Programme.

Right: City Kids Clubhouse at City Center Doha.

A major highlight for all ages is the third edition of the **Qatar Toy Festival**, currently running daily until August 4 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre.

Spanning over 17,000sq m, this event, with Ooredoo as its official telecom sponsor, showcases more than 40 international brands and features five immersive zones tailored to different age groups and interests, including Fancy Island, Champions Land, and the action-packed Hyper Land, alongside centre-stage performances.

Those looking for educational fun can also visit the **Al Thuraya Planetarium** throughout July for special movie screenings.

The cinematic lineup includes captivating films such as *The Phantom of the Universe* on July 21, *The Universe* on July 23, *The Zula Patrol* on July 28, and *Perfect Little Planet* on July 30, among other movies.

For budding artists and those seeking a unique skill, the **Fire Station: Artists in Residence** is hosting a Youth Summer



Programme from August 3-7.

Participants will have the opportunity to create their own custom jewellery, learning traditional techniques like sawing, texturing, filing, and surface finishing using brass and copper.

Led by jewellery sculptor Farah Yamout, the workshop promises a supportive environment for exploring craftsmanship, with participants' creations to be showcased in a special exhibition at the programme's conclusion.



Retro Electronic Games event at City Center Doha.



Training conducted for border staff on prevention of chemical hazards

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)'s Department of Chemicals and Hazardous Waste has organised a training programme on "Prevention of Chemical Hazards", with the participation of 100 employees working

in the field of handling hazardous materials at the Abu Samra border crossing.

The programme aimed to enhance their awareness of the risks associated with these materials and the methods of prevention.

It has equipped the participating employees with the essential information on how to handle hazardous chemicals, ways to prevent their risks, and an introduction to preventative measures and necessary requirements to ensure a safe working environment.

ployees with the essential information on how to handle hazardous chemicals, ways to prevent their risks, and an introduction to preventative measures and necessary requirements to ensure a safe working environment.

Ban on camel grazing extended for two years

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie, issued ministerial decision No 15 of 2025, extending the ban on camel grazing in all regions of the country for an additional two years, starting Aug 24. This decision is part of efforts to preserve vegetation cover and biodiversity.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change explained that the decision also includes a two-year ban on sheep and goat grazing, from Dec 1, 2025 to March 15, 2027, to allow wild plants to grow and regenerate during the rainy seasons. The resolution also allows camel owners to remove their animals from ranches and farms to improve their health, subject to strict regulations and conditions. These regulations require that camels be equipped with identification chips approved

by the competent authorities, that their number not exceed 10, and that they wear face masks to prevent them from grazing and cutting down trees.

The statement added that the decision emphasises the requirement for camel owners or caretakers to accompany the camels during grazing. Roaming should be limited to daytime, with a distance of at least 200m from meadows, villages, cities, and main roads. Camels should not travel more than one kilometre from the farm site. The decision also prohibits the release of camels within nature reserves, with the exception of the unfenced portion of the Al Reem Reserve.

This decision is a continuation of the ministry's efforts to preserve the Qatari environment, protect the vegetation cover from deterioration, and enhance the sustainability of natural resources for future generations. (QNA)