



Minister meets senior US official

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi has met the presidential envoy and senior adviser for Africa at the US Department of State, Massad Boulos, who is currently visiting the country.

During their meeting, the two sides reviewed the close strategic relations between Qatar and the United States and discussed ways to support and enhance them.

They also discussed joint efforts to address the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, along with a number of issues of mutual interest. – **QNA**



Amir congratulates Suriname leader

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent yesterday a cable of congratulations to Suriname President Jennifer Geerlings-Simons on her election and inauguration, wishing her success, and for the relations between the two countries further progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent similar cables of congratulations to Geerlings-Simons. – **QNA**

Minister, Lebanon's Jumblatt in phone call

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi held a phone call yesterday with Walid Jumblatt, the former president of Lebanon's Progressive Socialist Party.

The call dealt with discussing developments in Lebanon and the region, as well as the latest developments in the city of As-Suwayda in Syria. – **QNA**

GCC Council expresses solidarity with Iraq over victims of Kut fire

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) has expressed its solidarity with Iraq following the tragic fire that broke out overnight yesterday in a commercial centre, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries (**see report on Page 4**).

In a statement, GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi extended his deepest condolences and sincere sympathy to the government and people of Iraq over the victims of the fire.

He affirmed the GCC's solidarity with Iraq during this painful time, praying for mercy upon the deceased, a speedy recovery for the injured, and safety and protection for the people of Iraq. – **QNA**

Awqaf Ministry takes part in GCC meeting

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs participated in the 38th meeting of the Permanent Committee of Specialists in Islamic Affairs and Endowments in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries.

HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs (Awqaf) Dr Sheikh Khalid bin Mohammed bin Ghanem al-Thani headed the ministry's delegation, which included Department of Islamic Affairs director Mohammed Jabr al-Mannai and General Department of Endowments assistant director-general engineer Abdullah al-Meer.

The meeting discussed topics, working papers, and proposals submitted by member states, including the exchange of scientific research and experiences in the field of endowments.

It also covered topics on the organisation of interactive seminars, the presentation of experiences in the field of Islamic affairs, the Gulf Endowment Week, the standards and guidelines for imams to succeed in their social role as well as the Intellectual Security Charter for Mosque Imams and Monitoring Indicators.

A working paper was also presented on the philosophy of energy attraction, the importance of employing artificial intelligence in the field of Islamic affairs, technical guidelines for building and developing mosques, and other related topics. – **QNA**

MoECC holds field visit to hawksbill turtles nesting site at Fuwairit

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), represented by the Wildlife Development Department, has organised a field visit to watch hawksbill turtles' nesting at Fuwairit beach.

According to an official statement from MoECC, approximately 130 visitors from Qatar Museums (QM) along with a number of employees and families from Qatalum participated in the visit to monitor the release of the hatchlings into their natural habitat.

A total of 219 hawksbill turtles are monitored in the beaches and islands of Qatar during the current season.

The nesting sites are at Fuwairit, Ras Lafan, Al Ghariya, Ras Rukn, Umm Tais, Al Maroona, Sharaoua and Halul beaches.

The MoECC explained that hawksbill turtles are among the most endangered marine species globally, and noted that Qatar's beaches are among the most important nesting beaches for this species in the Arabian Gulf region.

The visit included an explanation of the initiative and its objectives, which focus on providing a safe environment for turtle nesting and breeding on the country's northern coasts in addition to an introduction to the measures taken to preserve marine biodiversity.



Qatari mediation reunites more Ukraine, Russia children with families



Qatar announced the success of its mediation efforts to reunite children with their families who were separated as a result of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, with 14 children reunited in the latest stage: 11 children with their relatives in Ukraine, and three children with their relatives in Russia. This brings the number of children reunited with their families since the commencement of Qatar's mediation efforts to 100.



Kenya's National Assembly Speaker meets Qatar's ambassador

The Speaker of Kenya's National Assembly, Moses Wetang'ula, met Qatar's ambassador in Nairobi Mohammed Mutair al-Shamlani al-Anzi. The meeting discussed co-operation between the countries. – **QNA**

Ministry holds awareness campaign on heat stress prevention

By **Tawfik Lamari**
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Labour, represented by the Occupational Safety and Health Department, in co-operation with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and Al Sarea Security Services Company, organised an awareness campaign targeting security guard company workers.

The campaign aims to raise their awareness of the dangers of heat stress and ways to prevent it during the summer months.

The campaign aims provide workers with sound behavioural methods and safety requirements in the workplace, and to train them to adhere to preventative guidelines to avoid health risks associated with exposure to high temperatures while performing their duties in open-air workplaces.

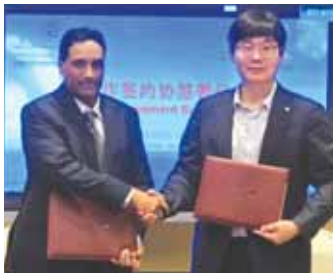
During the campaign, officials from the Occupational Safety and Health Department and the MoPH provided a detailed explanation of the symptoms of heat stress, which include extreme fatigue, dizziness, excessive sweating, headaches, muscle cramps, and a rapid heartbeat.

They highlighted preventative measures to be followed in exposed workplaces, most notably taking regular breaks, drinking sufficient amounts of water, wearing light, sun-protective clothing, and using protective hats.

The awareness campaign included educating participants on comprehensive guidelines related to occupational health and safety, including the importance of early reporting of any health symptoms and training workers on how to deal with emergency situations related to heat stress.

The campaign also aims to encourage employers to provide safe and secure work environments that comply with best practices and standards adopted locally and internationally.





Ministry of Municipality takes part in conference in China

The Ministry of Municipality is taking part in the ongoing international conference on Innovation and Fisheries Science, held in China on July 17-18.

The Qatar delegation is headed by Fish Resources Department director Abdulaziz al-Duhaimi.

The conference discusses the importance of promoting scientific and industrial innovation and reliance on technology in the fields of aquaculture and fisheries, which contributes to developing the sector in sustainable and environmentally friendly ways.

Participants also review progress made in the fisheries and aquaculture sector, in addition to discussing the importance of international trade and global co-operation to reduce overfishing and promote fisheries research.

The conference highlights the need to improve scientific innovation, value chains and marine environment protection to address future challenges and build global partnerships to ensure a sustainable future free from hunger and poverty.

On the sidelines of the conference, a co-operation agreement was signed in the field of fisheries and aquaculture technology research between Qatar and the Chinese Academy of Fisheries Sciences.

The agreement was signed al-Duhaimi.



Visit Qatar, Discover Qatar and Qatar Airways lead roadshow in Nigeria

Visit Qatar, in collaboration with Discover Qatar and Qatar Airways, hosted a strategic roadshow in Nigeria aimed at promoting leisure travel and stopover packages to Doha.

The initiative brought together 120 key trade partners and travel professionals through a large-scale trade engagement in Lagos, attended by more than 100 guests,

followed by an exclusive business networking luncheon in Abuja, which hosted 20 stakeholders.

According to Visit Qatar, the events were designed to spotlight Qatar's unique tourism offerings, support business-to-business engagement, and strengthen the country's positioning as a preferred leisure destination in the region.

Through these activations, Visit Qatar and its partners seek to identify collaborations with tour operators and leisure travel partners while promoting awareness of Qatar's key attractions, hospitality infrastructure, and stopover products.

The programme also aims to connect Nigerian travel agents with destination management companies, hotels, and other

suppliers in Qatar to facilitate future collaboration.

By showcasing the country's world-class experiences and accessibility through Qatar Airways' extensive network, the roadshow underscores Qatar's commitment to unlocking the travel potential of the Nigerian market and strengthening trade relationships across West Africa.



1,486 MoECC inspections and 12,493 shipments checked so far this year

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has announced that the total number of inspection and field visits it carried out in the second half (H2) of 2025 reached 1,486.

These visits were carried out by the ministry's Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Departments (783 visits), Radiation Control Department (97 visits), Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Department (239 visits), and Environmental Assessment and Permits Department (367 visits).

The MoECC said in a report on key achievements of the environmental sector during the second quarter of 2025, which covered the overall monitoring, inspection, and service activities carried

out by the sector's various departments, that it received 138 environmental reports during the same period.

These reports were 29 by the Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department, three by the Radiation Control Department, and 106 by the Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Department.

The ministry report recorded the implementation of 22 warnings and corrections: seven by the Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department, 13 by the Radiation Control Department, and two by the Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Department.

In addition, 19 environmental violations were detected, all by

the Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department.

In the area of environmental permits and licences, the ministry issued 8,674 licences and permits during the second quarter: 102 licences from the Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department, 544 licences from the Radiation Control Department, 7,114 licences from the Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Department, and 914 licences from the Environmental Assessment and Permits Department.

The number of shipments subjected to customs inspection reached 12,493, of which 7,057 were from the Radiation Control Department, all of which were released, and 5,436 were from the Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Department,

of which 5,066 were released.

As for laboratory work, 4,627 samples were tested: 4,171 samples from the Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department, 441 samples from the Radiation Control Department, and 15 samples from the Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Department.

The MoECC organised 117 workshops: 63 workshops for the Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department, 31 for the Radiation Control Department, 21 for the Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Department, and two workshops for the Environmental Assessment and Permits Department.

During the same period, the ministry issued 1,190 en-

vironmental reports: 569 reports from the Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department, 49 reports from the Radiation Control Department, and 572 reports from the Environmental Assessment and Permits Department.

In the field of environmental awareness and events, the number of awareness and educational activities and events carried out by the MoECC reached 50: 19 events by the Monitoring and Inspection Department, 10 events by the Environmental Radiation Control Department, 20 events by the Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Department, and one event by the Environmental Assessment and Permits Department. - QNA

Team Qatar takes part in opening ceremony of 2025 FISU World University Games



Team Qatar joined global universities as the Rhine-Ruhr region in Germany hosted the grand opening of the 2025 FISU World University Games.

The ceremony brought together student-athletes from around the world, alongside leading sports, Olympic, and academic figures, in a vibrant celebration of youth and university spirit.

Rashid Saeed Adiba, the secretary-general of the Qatar Collegiate Sports Federation and deputy head of Team Qatar, attended the event, reaffirming Qatar's commitment to global student sports.

Also present were FISU president Leonz Eder, secretary-general Matthias Remund, executive committee members, heads of regional and national university federations as well as a large number of students.

The ceremony opened with a colourful parade of delegations, broadcast live to millions worldwide.

Team Qatar proudly took part, with table tennis player Abdullah Abdulwahab carrying the national flag.

The delegation included Abdullah Khalifa and Khalid Hussein (fencing), Yousef Magdy and Maryam Ali (table tennis), Maryam al-Fatnasi (taekwondo), and Mubarka al-Naimi (tennis), along with technical and administrative staff.

Rhine-Ruhr 2025 is one of the largest editions in the event's history, featuring more than 8,500 athletes from 150 countries competing in 234 medal events across 18 sports.

The competitions span 12 days and are held at 23 venues in cities including Berlin, Duisburg, and Bochum.

Beyond the competitions, the Games offer a rich cultural and educational programme, enhanced by the partnership with the Ruhr Games, adding a festive atmosphere to the event.

The event is also hosting the FISU World Conference under the theme of *Competing for Change: Towards Sustainability and (Mental) Health Through Sport*, from July 17-19.

The conference highlights key youth issues, particularly sustainability and mental health, aligning with Rhine-Ruhr 2025's vision of a lasting social and sporting legacy.



Learning and creativity for all ages this summer

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Qatar residents and visitors can look forward to a vibrant summer in the city, as leading cultural venues unveil a packed schedule of engaging events, it is learnt.

From educational tours and hands-on art workshops to storytelling sessions for children and summer camps, the season promises a wealth of learning and creativity for all.

The **National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ)** kicks off the educational offerings on July 19, with "The Effect of Water Shortage in Qatar" tour.

Aimed at ages 16 and above, this guided tour will explore Qatar's pioneering efforts to tackle water scarcity through innovative technologies such as seawater desalination, historical groundwater use, and public awareness campaigns.

The initiative underscores Qatar's significant commitment to environmental sustainability and water security.

Creativity takes centre stage at the **Museum of Islamic Art (MIA)**, where adults can explore the intricate art of linocut printmaking in a four-day workshop running from July 20-23.

Led by Noor Qussini, participants will learn to transfer their compositions onto linoleum blocks, drawing inspiration from the MIA's extensive collections.

Later in the month, on July 28, the **MIA Education Centre** will host a free Arabic Calligraphy workshop where attendees can create their own fine art pieces inspired by the museum's magnificent calligraphic displays.

For younger audiences, the **3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum (QOSM)** invites children aged 7-11 to a memorable storytelling session on July 26.

Set to take place at the QOSM Library, this session will feature *Maya and The Beast* by Maya Gabeira, an inspiring tale of courage and resilience based on the true story of the world-record surfer.



From educational tours and hands-on art workshops to storytelling sessions for children and summer camps at various locations in Qatar, the season promises a wealth of learning and creativity for all. **PICTURES:** Visit Qatar



No prior registration is required, making it an accessible family outing.

Further expanding the summer camp options, **Dadu: Children's Museum of Qatar** presents the Dadu Investigator Camp from July 27-31.

Designed for the 8-11 age group, this camp transforms children into real-life detectives, immersing them in the world of forensic science.

Campers will develop critical thinking and observation skills by examining mock crime scenes and analysing evidence to crack mysteries.

Intellectual engagement awaits at the **MIA Library** on July 28 with the Majlis Book Club, featuring a discussion and signing of *Gazing at Mecca and Medina: Premodern Representations*

of the *Haramayn* by Dr Mounia Chekhab-Abudaya.

This month's gathering offers a comprehensive look at historical depictions of the holy cities.

Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art also offers distinct artistic experiences: The "Realms of Rhythm Workshop" on August 2 and September 6 invites participants to an immersive journey where movement, art, and sound converge.

Additionally, the "Colourful Creation Workshop" provides an inspiring outdoor art experience for ages 8-12, with multiple sessions scheduled throughout July, August, and October, allowing children to explore their creative potential on Mathaf's scenic grounds.



Winners of the Katara Short Story Contest 2025.

Yemeni, Iraqi and Libyan writers win Katara Short Story Competition

Yemeni writer Ahmed al-Saadi won the first prize in Katara Cultural Village's Short Story Competition for his work *Tears of Salt*, it was announced.

The second prize went to Iraqi writer Ali Taha Hijara for *Silence*, while Libyan writer Moataz bin Humaid bagged the third prize for *The Glow of the Pearl*.

Katara launched the Short Story Competition during the holy month of Ramadan, selecting "Brotherhood" as the main theme around which all entries were centred.

This initiative is part of Katara's ongoing tradition of organising the annual short story competition during the blessed month.

The first-place winner will receive a cash prize of QR15,000 while the second-place will receive QR12,000, and the third-place will be awarded QR10,000.

The 2025 edition of the Katara Short Story Competition saw around 1,500 entries from 32 countries: 19 Arab countries and 13 foreign nations.

The Katara Publishing House will publish the winning entries.



Iraq mall blaze kills more than 60

AFP
Kut, Iraq

A fire tore through a newly opened shopping mall in the eastern Iraqi city of Kut overnight, killing at least 61 people, authorities said yesterday as grief-stricken families buried their loved ones.

Officials said many people suffocated in bathrooms, while one person told AFP that his five relatives died in an elevator.

The blaze – the latest in a country where safety regulations are frequently neglected – broke out late on Wednesday and lasted into the early morning.

The cause was not immediately known, but one survivor told AFP an air conditioner had exploded on the second floor before rapidly engulfing the five-storey Corniche Hypermarket Mall in flames.

A civil defence spokesperson told state media that the fire erupted in the perfume and cosmetics section on the second floor.

Most victims were on the upper floors, while many on the ground floor managed to escape, he said.

Several people told AFP that they lost family members – and in some cases whole families – who had gone to shop and dine at the mall days after it opened in Kut, around 160km southeast of Baghdad.

Yasser al-Mulla, who went to the holy of Najaf to bury his relatives, told AFP that “in the midst of the horror and intensity, people began to flee upwards instead of down”.

“It is a tragedy.”

The interior ministry said in a statement that “the tragic fire claimed the lives of 61 innocent citizens, most of whom suffocated in bathrooms”.

Most of the victims were later buried in the holy city of Najaf, around 150km (95 miles) southwest of Kut, an AFP correspondent said.

Local health official Jabar al-Yassiri said later in a press conference that the remains of 18 people were yet to be identified.

An AFP correspondent reported seeing charred bodies at the province’s forensic department.

Ali Kadhim, 51, said he had been shuttling between the mall and the main hospital, where the victims were taken, looking for his cousin, his wife and their three children.

Back at the mall, he waited anxiously as rescuers searched for victims in the wreckage, with an ambulance on standby.

“We don’t know what happened to them,” he said.

Wasit provincial governor Mohammed al-Miyahi told INA that the victims included men, women and children.

Civil defence teams rescued



People gather next to the shopping centre in Kut. – Reuters

more than 45 people who were trapped inside the building, which includes a restaurant and a supermarket, the interior ministry said.

The ward of the main hospital was overwhelmed, while an AFP correspondent witnessed distraught relatives waiting at the forensic department for news, some collapsing in grief.

One man broke down, pounding his chest and screaming.

Nasir al-Quraishi, a doctor in his 50s, said he lost five family members in the fire.

“A disaster has befallen us,” he told AFP. “We went to the mall to have some food, eat dinner and

escape power cuts at home.

“An air conditioner exploded on the second floor and then the fire erupted – and we couldn’t escape” he added.

Moataz Karim, 45, rushed to the mall at midnight, only to be met with the news that three of his relatives were missing.

Hours later, he identified the charred bodies of two relatives, one of whom had begun working at the shopping centre three days ago.

“There is no fire extinguishing system,” he said angrily, as he waited for further news outside the forensic department.

Safety standards in Iraq’s construction sector are often disregarded, and the country, whose infrastructure is in disrepair after decades of conflict, often experiences fatal fires and accidents.

Fires increase during the blistering summer as temperatures approach 50° Celsius (122° Fahrenheit).

In September 2023, a fire killed at least 100 people when it ripped through a crowded Iraqi wedding hall, sparking a panicked stampede for the exits.

In July 2021, a fire in the coronavirus (Covid-19) unit of a hospital in southern Iraq killed more than 60 people.

Governor Miyahi said local authorities would file a lawsuit against the mall’s owner and the building contractor.

“The tragedy is a major shock... and requires a serious review of all safety measures,” he said.

The government has declared three days of mourning.

Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani ordered a “thorough probe” into the fire to identify “shortcomings”.

Several countries, including Egypt, Iran and France, offered condolences to Iraq and the victims’ families.

The US embassy in Baghdad likewise offered “its deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies to the families and loved ones of the victims”.

Turkiye warns of consequences of Israeli strikes on Syria targets

The Turkish ministry of defence stated yesterday that the Israeli air strikes on central Damascus – following attacks on southern Syria – constitute a clear provocation that undermines hopes for peace and stability in the Middle East.

The ministry warned of the potential repercussions of such actions on regional security and stability.

Speaking at a press conference, ministry spokesperson Navy Colonel Zeki Akturk said that Israel has dragged the region into a state of instability and chaos, stressing the urgent need for Israel to immediately end its aggressive manoeuvres, which could have irreparable consequences for the region.

Turkish security sources revealed yesterday that Ankara played a key role in brokering a ceasefire in Syria’s Suwayda province.

The sources affirmed that Türkiye has adopted a firm stance and stands in support of the Syrian government. – QNA



Qatar attends workshop on humanitarian law in Jordan

The National Committee for International Humanitarian Law of Qatar is participating in the joint workshop organised by Jordan’s National Committee for International Humanitarian Law on “The Status of International Humanitarian Law in Contemporary Armed Conflicts”, with the participation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Qatar’s delegation to the workshop is headed by Saeed bin Abdullah al-Suwaidi, the undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice and chairman of Qatar’s National Committee for International Humanitarian Law.

The workshop is taking place over three days, during which Qatar will present its experience in implementing International Humanitarian Law (IHL) at the national level and the role of its National Committee for IHL.

The workshop will also address papers on the origins of IHL, its foundations and principles, the categories of persons protected under IHL, and those granted special and specific protections under the law.

Various legal and judicial papers will be discussed, including topics on international criminal justice, challenges facing IHL in light of recent developments and technological advancements, and the implications of cyberspace in contemporary armed conflicts. – QNA

MoECC takes action against violators

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), represented by the Wildlife Protection Department, has taken legal action against violators as part of efforts to protect the environment and preserve vegetation in wilderness areas.

The action, according to an official MoECC statement, was taken during a campaign carried out to remove violations in the Umm Al Zubar West area.

Doha Forum, JIIA launch research initiative

The Doha Forum and the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) have launched a strategic research initiative focused on the future of global governance.

The announcement came during a high-level event jointly hosted by the Doha Forum and JIIA in Tokyo on Wednesday, titled “Prospects for International Order and Global Governance: A World Without Navigators”.

The event brought together more than 100 prominent diplomats, academics, policymakers, and private sector leaders to explore the shifting dynamics of multilateral co-operation in an increasingly fragmented global landscape.

Discussions addressed key challenges facing the multilateral system, including trade wars, unilateral sanctions, economic protectionism, and the waning influence of major powers, all of which have impacted the credibility of international institutions and global trust.

The role of middle powers and other actors in promoting stability, justice, and international co-operation was also examined.

A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Doha Forum and JIIA to formalise their research collaboration.

Doha Forum executive director Mubarak bin Ajlan al-Kuwari stated that at Doha Forum, they believe in the importance of long-term strategic partnerships that foster dialogue and contribute to policy development.

This collaboration with the JIIA, he said, reflects our shared commitment to principled engagement and research in addressing the complexities of the current global order.

He added that by leveraging the expertise of middle powers and regional voices, they aim to help shape more inclusive and adaptable frameworks for future global governance.

JIIA chief executive Tomoyuki Yoshida said that Japan, as a nation committed to the values of the rule of law and multilateralism, places dialogue over division, openness over isolation, and reform over retreat at the heart of its vision.

He said that they are pleased to launch this new research initiative in partnership with the Doha Forum, focusing on the role of middle powers in shaping the contours of the evolving global order.

The session was moderated by Professor Ken Endo of the University of Tokyo and featured speakers including Dr Naoko Eto of Jochi University, Dr Maiko Ichihara of Hitotsubashi University, Dr Satoshi Ikeuchi of Tokyo University, and Prof Abdullah Baabood, chair of the State of Qatar for Islamic Area Studies at Waseda University.

It was announced that the results of the initiative’s first phase will be presented at the Doha Forum 2025, scheduled to take place in Doha from December 6-7. – QNA

Las Damas de Rizal Doha Chapter celebrates chartering anniversary

The Las Damas de Rizal (LDR) Doha Chapter marked its 1st chartering anniversary on July 11 with grand induction and oath-taking ceremony of its new members at the Holiday Villa Hotel.

The event, hosted by Antoniette David, brought together members and distinguished guests for a night of elegance, solemn rites, and joyful celebration.

The programme commenced with a grand entrance as the ladies paid tribute to Philippine national hero Dr Jose Rizal, followed by an invocation led by auditor, Sheila Marie Cantos.

The Qatar and Philippine national anthems were performed via audio video presentations, and the LDR hymn resonated deeply with attendees, reinforcing the organisation’s mission.

LDR president Dr Anne Binondo underlined the chapter’s achievements, and an inspirational video message from Lina Brosas, founder and Lady Grand Matriarch, connected the Doha chapter to the global LDR community.

Featured was the Elevation of Founding Officers to Lady Officer of Rizal and Exaltation of Dr Binondo as Lady Premier of Rizal,



officiated by Dr Aileen Villanueva, Lady Premier Regional MEAR.

The induction of 16 new members followed a Grand Cotillion de Honour.

The solemn oath-taking, candle lighting, and pinning of insignia highlighted their commitment to Rizal’s legacy, which was facilitated by Dr Binondo and vice-president (Internal Affairs) Dr Richelle Arugay.

Victoria Bedon gave the Message of Commitment on behalf of the newly in-

ducted ladies, and the Las Damas Pledge was recited, led by secretary Maria Michelle Revillosa.

Vice-president (External Affairs) Grace Moran delivered closing remarks, expressing gratitude to all attendees.

The event concluded with a gala dinner. With its successful first anniversary, the chapter looks forward to a greater impact in promoting Rizal’s ideals through education, culture, and service.

Announcement of new technical school for girls receives praise

The recent announcement by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) of the opening of a new technical secondary school for girls next year in the northern region has received praise.

Arabic daily *Arrayah* reported that the school will provide quality education to female students in the northern regions, given the rising demand for technical education graduates in the labour market and the country’s need for qualified personnel in a number of technical fields, most notably information technology.

An educator has stated that the opening of the Qatar Technical Secondary School for Girls in the northern region is

a strategic step that reflects the MoEHE’s commitment to promoting educational equity and providing quality opportunities across the country.

While technical and vocational education is not new to Qatar, educational expert Ibrahim al-Rumaihi said, the opening of a technical secondary school in the north is good because it serves a large number of girls in the northern regions.

Al-Rumaihi noted that the future is leaning more toward technical education than other types of education because technical and vocational education is characterised by applied study, which qualifies students to easily enter the labour market.



Girls during a technical training session.

QSC holds archery course for 2025 Summer Camp

As part of the Qatar Sports Club (QSC) Youth Department’s activities for the 2025 season, department head Mohammed Abdul Rahim al-Haydos said that an archery course was organised for summer camp participants under the supervision of Youth Department programmes and events co-ordinator Ali al-Ghawas al-Marri.

Al-Haydos noted that practicing archery has health and psychological benefits, such as improving concentration, strengthening back and arm muscles, and boosting self-confidence.



‘Printed Nostalgia’ exhibition opens at Fire Station: Artist in Residence



Qatar Museums (QM) has inaugurated the “Printed Nostalgia” exhibition at Gallery 4 in the Fire Station: Artist in Residence.

This group show features printed artworks by 99 artists from Qatar and around the world.

Running until September 1, the exhibition showcases artistic explorations of memory, identity, and nostalgia.

The featured works span diverse media including digital illustration, photography, painting, collage, and written word, offering reflections on architecture, culture, migration, and everyday life.

Among the participating artists are Abdullah al-Obaidly, Agustina Mucci, Ahmed SharafAldeen, Alreem K Alemadi, Chafic Tony Najem, Federico Lepe, Jo-Anne Malan,



Layan Waleed, Mai Eraky, Mohamed Louanjli, Mubarak al-Thani, Omar al-Sarayra, and Sakna Hassan, each contributing unique cultural perspectives.

Selected from an open international call that received 322 submissions,

the exhibition was curated jointly by Saeeda al-Khelaifi and Fatima al-Zaini.

A dedicated reflection space invites visitors to engage with their own memories and personal experiences of nostalgia. – QNA

DISASTER

Four dead, 1,000 evacuated as S Korea lashed by heavy rain

Four people died and more than 1,000 have been evacuated in South Korea after the country was lashed by torrential rain yesterday, the safety ministry said. A driver was killed after a 33ft roadside wall collapsed on top of a moving vehicle on Wednesday in Osan, some 44kms south of Seoul, fire agency officials said. Another person was found with no heartbeat in a flooded car in Seosan, South Chungcheong province, and could not be revived. As of 5pm some parts of the South Chungcheong region further south of the capital had seen more than 15.7 inches of rain since Wednesday.

PEOPLE

S Korea retries ex-spy chief over presidential assassination

South Korea has kicked off a retrial for the country's former spy chief, Kim Jae-gyu, over the 1979 assassination of then-president Park Chung-hee, Kim's family said yesterday. Park had ruled the country with an iron fist for more than 15 years when he was shot and killed by his head of intelligence and trusted aide Kim at a dinner in 1979. Kim was subsequently sentenced to death by a military court for the killing. But his family appealed to South Korean courts to revisit the case in 2020, claiming that while Kim had killed the president, he did so seeking to end a dictatorship, not for personal gain.

CONFLICT

Myanmar junta claims recapture of town

Myanmar's junta yesterday claimed to have ousted armed rebels who captured a town near the military's main officer training academy after a year-long battle. A 2021 coup sparked a civil war in Myanmar, pitching the military against a myriad of pro-democracy guerrillas and ethnic armed groups which have long held sway in the nation's fringes. The northeastern town of Nawngkhio was seized by opposition fighters last summer, after some of the disparate groups organised a combined offensive which secured a string of victories against the military. Nawngkhio is only about 40kms from Pyin Oo Lwin, the town that hosts the country's main military officer school.

CRIME

Teacher, mother arrested for stealing exam papers

A teacher and a parent of a high school student in South Korea have been arrested for breaking into a school to steal exam papers, police said. The country is known for placing extreme emphasis on academic achievement - with its annual college entrance exam forcing aeroplanes to be grounded during English listening tests. The pair are accused of breaking into a high school in Andong, about 270kms south of the capital Seoul, at around 1am on July 4 to steal exam papers, triggering an alarm and leading to their arrest. The teacher was a private tutor for the student while working at the school.

S Korea's top court clears Samsung chairman Lee in merger fraud case

Reuters
Seoul

South Korea's top court cleared Samsung Electronics chairman Jay Y Lee of accounting fraud and stock manipulation yesterday, permanently removing a long-running legal risk for the head of the country's biggest company. The Supreme Court upheld an appeals court's ruling dismissing all charges in the case involving an \$8bn merger in 2015, freeing Lee to focus on Samsung's push to catch up in a global race to develop cutting-edge AI chips. A lower court last year had also cleared Lee of the charges relating to a deal between two Samsung affiliates, Samsung C&T and Cheil Industries, which prosecutors said was designed to cement Lee's control of the tech giant. "The Supreme Court ruling clears a layer of legal uncertainty, which could be a long-term positive for Samsung," said Ryu Young-ho, a senior analyst at NH Investment & Securities. "It remains to be seen how directly and proactively he will engage going forward, but if the owner takes a more active role, it could allow management to focus more on long-term initiatives rather than short-term results," Ryu added.

Samsung Electronics shares closed up 3.1%, outperforming a near-flat benchmark Kospi. Analysts attributed the rise to the removal of legal uncertainty surrounding Samsung, as well as investors switching to the company after Goldman Sachs downgraded local rival SK Hynix, sending its shares down as much as 9.5%. The Supreme Court verdict was widely expected, but comes at a critical moment for Lee, who has faced mounting questions about his ability to lead Samsung Electronics - the world's top memory chip and No.2 smartphone maker. Samsung's lawyers said they were "sincerely grateful" to the court for its decision and added in a statement that the ruling confirmed that the merger was legal. For nearly a decade, Lee has faced legal challenges, including those from the merger that paved the way for his succession after his father, Lee Kun-hee, had a heart attack in 2014 that left him in a coma. Business lobby groups welcomed the court's decision, framing it as a stabilising development for the South Korean economy. The Korea Enterprises Federation said the ruling removes a major legal burden for Samsung and comes at a time of intensifying global competition in high-tech industries like AI and semiconductors as well as

economic pressure from US trade tariffs. "Samsung's role as a leading South Korean company is more critical than ever," the group said in a statement. The group said it hoped Samsung, under Lee's leadership, would step up investment and innovation, helping to create jobs and bolster South Korea's economic rebound. Lee, 57, spent 18 months in jail for bribery in a separate case related to former president Park Geun-hye, but was pardoned by then-president Yoon Suk-yeol, with the justice ministry citing a need for the billionaire businessman to help overcome a national economic crisis. The family-run conglomerates - or chaebols - have long been revered for helping transform South Korea into a global economic powerhouse, but also criticised for opaque dealings and for stifling small businesses and start-ups. Earlier this month, Samsung projected a worse-than-expected 56% plunge in second-quarter operating profit due to weak AI chip sales, deepening investor concerns over the tech giant's ability to revive its struggling semiconductor business. Park Ju-gun, head of corporate analysis firm Leaders Index, said Lee now faces dual challenges of tightening his grip on the conglomerate while steering Samsung back to leadership in key sectors.



Ash rises from the Taal volcano during an eruption yesterday.

Volcanic eruption delays search for cockfighters' bodies

AFF
Laurel, Philippines

Divers searching for dozens of murdered cockfighters in a lake south of Manila were forced to exit the water yesterday when the volcanic island in its centre erupted unexpectedly. The low-level eruption, which sent a plume of steam billowing 7,900 feet skyward from Lake Taal volcano, came a week into the search for the remains of people allegedly killed by rogue police for their involvement in fixing cockfights. "The (dives) were temporarily terminated," an official involved in the search who spoke on condition of anonymity said, adding a number of divers had been in the water at the time of the eruption.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said the volcano had experienced "minor phreatomagmatic eruptive events" just after 3pm (0700GMT). The agency's Mara Antonia Bornas said the volcano had been at a low alert level since 2021 and that no major eruptions were predicted. The divers would not be affected, and only the volcano island in the middle of the lake was "under precaution", she said. Since beginning the search on July 10, the Philippine Coast Guard has found five bags at the bottom of the lake, some of which may have contained human bones. Police are conducting forensic testing to determine if the bones are human and if they match the DNA of the missing cockfighters. Fifteen police officers are under

investigation over the spate of mysterious 2022 disappearances in the country's huge cockfighting industry. The case erupted back into the public consciousness last month with the televised appearance of a witness claiming to know where bodies had been submerged in Lake Taal. Located about two hours south of Manila, the lake spans more than 230 square kilometres and reaches depths of 172 metres in some places. Filipinos from all walks of life wager millions of dollars on matches every week between roosters who fight to the death with razor-sharp metal spurs tied to their legs. Cockfighting, banned in many other countries, survived coronavirus pandemic restrictions by going online.

Sri Lanka returns orphaned elephants to the jungle

Sri Lankan authorities yesterday returned six orphaned and injured elephants to the wild after nursing them back to health under a long-running conservation project, officials said. Two females and four males, aged between five and seven, were released into the Mau Ara forest within the Udawalawe Wildlife Sanctuary, Environment Minister Damika Patabendi said. He said it was the 26th such release of rehabilitated elephants since the Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home began its programme in 1998. "We hope, in the interest of conserving elephants, we will be able to improve facilities at this transit home in the near future," Patabendi said. The calves were transported in trucks and then allowed to walk free because they were deemed strong enough to fend for themselves or join wild herds. Baby elephants have minimal contact with humans at the transit home to ease their integration into wild herds.



Baby elephants are released by Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home into the Mau Ara forest area within the Udawalawe Wildlife Sanctuary in the country's southern region.

US to build boat repair facilities in Philippines

AFF
Manila

The US Navy plans to build two repair facilities for smaller vessels operating in the western Philippines, the US embassy said, with one about 240kms east of a fiercely contested reef in the South China Sea. Located in the Spratly archipelago, the Second Thomas Shoal hosts a small detachment of Philippine forces aboard a grounded navy vessel and has been the site of clashes with Chinese ships. Beijing claims almost the entirety of the crucial waterway despite an international ruling its assertion has no merit. The US government's contracting website, Sam.gov, locates one of the proposed repair

facilities in Palawan province's Quezon municipality. The facilities "will provide repair and maintenance capabilities for a variety of (Philippine) vessels including 24-foot watercraft as well as other smaller conventional watercraft," the bid notice for the Quezon project reads. The Philippines owns several vessels that size, including rigid-hull inflatable boats (RHIBs) that have been involved in clashes with larger Chinese ships. While there are not believed to be existing permanent military facilities in Quezon, the area has hosted parts of joint US-Philippine military exercises for the past two years. The US embassy in Manila confirmed the tender for both the Quezon project and a similar one to be constructed at the Philippines' existing Oyster Bay naval facility about 130kms north.

'Japanese First' party shakes up election with alarm over foreigners

Reuters
Tokyo

An upstart party is gaining support ahead of elections in Japan by railing against a 'silent invasion' of immigrants, pushing the government to tackle fears about foreigners as it drags into the mainstream rhetoric once confined to the political fringe. Birthed on YouTube during the Covid-19 pandemic spreading conspiracy theories about vaccinations and a cabal of global elites, the party, Sanseito, is widening its appeal with a 'Japanese First' campaign ahead of Sunday's upper house vote. And

while polls show it may only secure 10 to 15 of the 125 seats up for grabs, it is further eroding the support of Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba's shaky minority government increasingly beholden to opposition parties as it clings to power. "In the past, anyone who brought up immigration would be attacked by the left. We are getting bashed too, but are also gaining support," Sohei Kamiya, the party's 47-year-old charismatic leader, said. "The LDP and Komeito can't stay silent if they want to keep their support," Kamiya added, referring to Ishiba's Liberal Democratic Party, which has ruled Japan for most of the past seven decades, and its junior

coalition partner. Kamiya's message has grabbed voters frustrated with a weak economy and currency that has lured tourists in record numbers in recent years, further driving up prices that Japanese can ill-afford, political analysts say. The fast-ageing society has also seen foreign-born residents hit a record of about 3.8mn last year, although that is still just 3% of the total population, a tiny fraction compared to numbers in the US and Europe. Kamiya, a former supermarket manager and English teacher, says he has drawn inspiration from US President Donald Trump's "bold political style".

It remains to be seen whether he can follow the path of other far-right parties with which he has drawn comparisons, such as Germany's AfD and Reform UK. Yet the ingredients are there, said Jeffrey Hall, a lecturer at Tokyo's Kanda university who has studied Japan's right-wing politics, pointing to their online following, appeal among young men and warnings about immigration eroding indigenous cultures. "Anti-foreign sentiment that was considered maybe taboo to talk about so openly is now out of the box," he added. With immigration emerging as a top election issue, Ishiba this week unveiled a new gov-

ernment taskforce to fight "crimes and disorderly conduct" by foreign nationals and his party has promised to pursue "zero illegal foreigners". Polls show Ishiba's ruling coalition is likely to lose its majority in the upper house vote, in a repeat of elections last year in the more powerful lower house. While he is expected to limp on, his government may have to broaden its coalition or strike deals with other parties on policy matters, analysts say. Kamiya, who won the party's first seat in 2022 has tried to tone down some controversial ideas formerly embraced by the party. His election manifesto, for example, includes plans to cut taxes and increase

child benefits, policies promoted by a raft of opposition parties that led investors to fret about Japan's fiscal health and massive debt pile. While Sanseito is the latest in a string of small far-right parties that have struggled for a foothold in Japan's staid politics, its online support suggests it may have staying power. Its YouTube channel has 400,000 followers, more than any other party on the platform and three times that of the LDP, according to social-counts.org. There are still hurdles. Like right-wing parties in the US and Europe, Sanseito support skews heavily toward men in their twenties and thirties.

Satellite imagery shows new pier at N Korea rocket launch site

Reuters
Seoul

Satellite imagery indicates that a new maritime pier has been completed at North Korea's key rocket station, where the latest spy satellite launches and other rocket tests have been conducted,

satellite operator ICEYE said. The pier at the Sohae Satellite Launching Station seen via the imagery "enables transport of larger rocket components than previously possible via rail", ICEYE said in findings provided to Reuters. Larger components would allow the site to host rockets that can travel longer distances.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un in 2022 inspected the Sohae facility and ordered it to be modernised and expanded to ensure that various rockets, including those capable of carrying military spy satellites, could be launched, state media said. The facility has been used to put a satellite in orbit and also to test various missile compo-

nents including rocket engines and space launch vehicles that South Korean and US officials say require similar technology to that used in intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM). An image from July 9 also shows the pier with a newly constructed jetty and vessels indicating potential operational status, according

to ICEYE, a sign that could help enhance Sohae's logistical capabilities. ICEYE added that it took about 28 months from initial reports to develop and complete the pier. Work to expand the road and rail infrastructure throughout the facility continues, according to 38 North, a Washington-based North Korea monitoring programme.

Satellite images, taken from December to July by the commercial satellite firm Planet Labs, also show what appears to be a pier under construction on the shore. Pyongyang's latest attempt to launch a military spy satellite at the Sohae site failed in May 2024 but Kim has vowed to never give up the space reconnaissance project.

Hong Kong activists' appeal ends, judgement due in nine months

Reuters
Hong Kong

A hearing for 12 pro-democracy activists appealing their conviction and sentencing for subversion in Chinese-ruled Hong Kong ended yesterday with a judgement due within nine months.

The case stems from the "47 democrats", dubbed by Hong Kong media for the number of activists arrested and charged with conspiracy to commit subversion in 2021.

Forty-five of the defendants were jailed last year for holding an unofficial primary election in 2020, soon after Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law in response to pro-democracy protests.

Eleven are appealing their conviction and sentences, while one who pleaded guilty is challenging her sentence.

Government prosecutor Andy Lo told the hearing yesterday that the case involved "an unprecedented conspiracy", while defence lawyers said on Wednesday their clients had been denied a fair trial.

Judge Jeremy Poon said a decision would be made within nine months. After that, it would still be possible to seek an appeal to Hong Kong's highest court.

The 45 received prison terms of between four and 10 years after prosecutors said they sought to paralyse government and force the city's leader to resign by securing a legislative majority to indiscriminately veto budget proposals.

During this week's appeal hearing, defence lawyers argued on Wednesday that the three judges who presided over the original trial had frequently interrupted defendants during cross-examination.

"The trial court was interventionist from very early on," said Robert Pang, a lawyer for unionist Winnie Yu. He said the court repeatedly disallowed questions on grounds of irrelevance.

Lawyer Steven Kwan said his client, activist Owen Chow, did not receive a fair trial as "his evidence was disbelieved very early on" and judges posed 45% of all the questions to him.

But prosecutor Derek Lau said judges had that right, noting it was not a jury trial.

"There is no unfairness that can be observed that is to the prejudice of the defender in these questions," he said.

Lawyer Trevor Beel, representing activist Gwyneth Ho, said on Wednesday that legislators had a duty to use whatever legitimate means to negotiate with the government and that Hong Kong's mini-constitution or Basic Law allows for a budget not to be passed.

Under Article 52 of the Basic Law, the chief executive must step down if the legislature twice rejects the government's budget.

Hong Kong was handed back to China by Britain in 1997 with a promise of freedom and autonomy under the "one country, two systems" framework and an eventual democratic vote for the chief executive and the legislature.



Barricades and brickbats lie scattered on the road in Gopalganj yesterday a day after the clashes broke out between supporters of the Awami League party and police during a rally by the National Citizens Party.

Bangladesh police arrest 20 after clashes in Hasina's hometown

AFP
Gopalganj, Bangladesh

Bangladesh police yesterday said they had arrested 20 people, a day after clashes between supporters of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina and security personnel killed at least four people.

The clashes erupted in Hasina's hometown of Gopalganj on Wednesday after members of her Awami League party tried to foil a rally by the National Citizens Party (NCP), made up of many students who spearheaded the uprising that toppled her government last year.

Bricks, stones and shattered windows littered the area where the clashes occurred. More than 1,500 police, as well as soldiers and border guards, have been deployed in the district to enforce a curfew.

"The law and order situation in Gopalganj is currently under control and remains peaceful,"

the police said in a statement yesterday. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding president of Bangladesh, hailed from Gopalganj and Hasina, his daughter, also contested elections from the district.

Jibitesh Biswas, director of the Gopalganj District Hospital, said yesterday four people "were brought in dead" after the clashes.

Biswas said shots were also fired in front of the hospital and that at least 18 wounded people were also brought in.

"Three of them are in critical condition with wounds to the chest, back of the head, and leg," he said.

Ramjan Sheikh, an 18-year-old mason, died of bullet wounds, his family said, blaming the military for his death.

"They trampled on his chest... We rushed to the hospital only to find his lifeless body soaked in blood," Mohammed Kalim Munshi, Ramjan's uncle, said.

AFP could not independently verify the claim.

The Bangladeshi army said its soldiers intervened, along with the police, to control an "unruly crowd".

"In response, the crowd grew more aggressive, threw molotov (cocktails) and brickbats compelling the army to use force in self-defence," it said in a statement.

A 24-year-old Gopalganj resident, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the NCP should have understood that the town would not "accept any disrespect" towards Rahman.

"But their leaders continued rants against Mujibur (Rahman)," the resident said.

Human rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra said "the application of excessive force on people in Gopalganj and shooting at them blatantly violates human rights standards and the constitution".

Bangladesh's interim leader Muhammad Yunus said on Wednesday the attempt to foil the NCP rally was "a shameful violation of their fundamental rights".

China 'threatens to block more than 40 ports sale deal'

China is threatening to block the sale of more than 40 ports, owned by Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison, to BlackRock and Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) if Chinese shipping company Cosco does not get a stake, the *Wall Street Journal* reported yesterday, citing unnamed sources. Reuters could not immediately verify the *WSJ* report. CK Hutchison, MSC, BlackRock and Cosco did respond to requests for a comment, while the Chinese government could not be immediately reached outside office hours. Chinese officials have told BlackRock, MSC and Hutchison that if Cosco is left out of the deal, Beijing would take steps to block Hutchison's proposed sale of the ports, the newspaper said. Tycoon Li Ka-shing's CK Hutchison in March announced it would sell its 80% holding in the ports business, which encompasses 43 ports in 23 countries.



Chinese farmer Zhang Shengwu piloting his homemade submarine in a river in Hanshan county, in China's eastern Anhui province.

Farmer makes splash with homemade sub

AFP
Beijing

A 60-year-old farmer in China has built his own 'Big Black Fish' - a homemade submarine that can accommodate two people, dive eight metres and stay underwater for 30 minutes at a time.

Zhang Shengwu, a villager in China's eastern Anhui province, recently launched his five-tonne sub into the river near his rural home, state broadcaster CCTV reported yesterday.

Footage from CCTV showed Zhang piloting the 23-foot steel craft from its hatch while surfaced and diving down with the hatch closed.

After seeing footage of submarine construction on TV in 2014, Zhang, a former carpenter who also worked in shipping, decided to

start building his own.

"I've been around the water for many years and seen iron boats and wooden boats, but I had never seen a boat that can dive into the water," Zhang said. "I thought, if others can do it, I can do it too."

Despite his wife's opposition to the "expensive, risky, useless" idea, Zhang began pursuing his submarine dream, first by spending 5,000 yuan (\$700) on steel plates, engines and other materials.

The inventor launched his "first generation" sub in 2016, but it leaked.

"It was like a dream. I was both afraid of it leaking and hoped to go deeper," Zhang said.

Years later, after spending another 40,000 yuan on a new hulking steel structure, pouring two tonnes of concrete into the bottom of the submarine, and adding two ballast tanks, Zhang's Big Black Fish was ready for sea trials.

Taipei holds air raid drill to prepare for Chinese attack

AFP
Taipei

Taipei came to a brief standstill yesterday when air raid sirens forced people off the streets and into underground shelters in a rehearsal for a Chinese attack.

The annual civilian drill is being held in cities across Taiwan this week, alongside military training, to prepare the self-governed island for a potential Chinese invasion.

Communist China has never ruled Taiwan but Beijing insists the island is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to

bring it under its control. Sirens sounded across Taipei at 1.30pm (0530GMT), bringing the capital city of 2.5mn people to a halt for half an hour.

Police waving batons stopped motorbikes, cars and public buses on the streets and people were directed into shelters, including basements and subway stations.

Some people retreated into office buildings for the duration of the exercise.

Tracy Herr, 50, was on her way to a temple when she heard the air raid siren. She went to a nearby subway station where others were sheltering.

Pointing at a group of young

women sitting on the floor and chatting, Herr said Taiwanese people had "lived comfortably for too long" and some didn't take the air raid drill seriously.

The drills also involved simulating wartime aid distribution and a mass-casualty event.

Dozens of people lined up at three distribution points to receive bags of rice, cooking oil and salt.

Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te has sought to raise public awareness of the threat posed by China since taking office last year.

"Each drill allows our country to further enhance its ability to defend itself," Lai said yesterday.

While the exercises were "not

intended to provoke", Lai said the constant threats to Taiwan meant "we have no choice but to stay fully prepared".

Taiwan is keen to show the world, especially its key security backer Washington, that it is serious about boosting its defence capability.

Taiwanese regular troops were joined by the largest mobilisation of reservists for the 10-day "Han Kuang" military drills, which ends today.

Rather than only repelling a Chinese attack on its shores, Taiwanese troops this year have also practised fighting invading forces in city streets.

"It is as much training as acclim-

ating the Taiwanese population to the reality of modern warfare," said Kitsch Liao of the Atlantic Council, a US think tank.

Heavily armed troops carrying US-provided anti-aircraft Stinger missiles stormed Taipei's metro system in a night-time exercise.

High-tech mobile missile launchers from the US have also been positioned around the capital and elsewhere, in full view of the public.

Shoppers in a Taipei supermarket also recently became participants in a drill simulating a Chinese missile strike on the city.

"I didn't know there was going to be a drill," Yang Shu-ting, 70, said.

"My heart was beating very fast and I was inevitably nervous. I think the point is to let you know where you should hide if something happens."

Troops have also simulated various scenarios, including "grey zone harassment" - tactics that fall short of an act of war - and "long-range precision strikes", defence officials have said.

Several minor collisions involving military vehicles during the exercises highlighted the challenge of manoeuvring through Taiwan's narrow streets.

Defence expert Chieh Chung said such mishaps were "difficult to avoid" in urban areas.

UK to lower voting age to 16 in general elections

AFP
London

The British government yesterday said it would allow 16-year-olds to vote in general elections, a landmark change giving the UK one of the lowest voting ages worldwide. The ruling Labour

Party pledged to lower the age from 18 ahead of winning power last year. It is among several planned changes to the democratic system. Some argue Britain's democracy is "in crisis" in particular due to low turnout. The voting age change is contentious, however, with critics previously arguing it is self-serv-

ing as newly-enfranchised teenagers are seen as more likely to support centre-left Labour. "I think it's really important that 16- and 17-year-olds have the vote, because they are old enough to go out to work, they are old enough to pay taxes, so (they) pay in," Prime Minister Keir Starmer said. "And I think if you pay in, you

should have the opportunity to say what you want your money spent on, which way the government should go," Starmer added. The government will have to bring legislation before parliament, where it has a comfortable majority, to make the changes. Only a small number of countries allow 16-year-olds to vote

in national elections, according to online databases. They include Austria – the first EU country to lower the voting age to 16 in 2007 – as well as Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador and Cuba. Labour ministers insist the change is intended to "modernise our democracy", while aligning general elections with the exist-

ing voting age for elections for the devolved regional parliaments in Scotland and Wales. Other planned changes include introducing automated voter registration – which is already used in Australia and Canada – and making UK-issued bank cards an accepted form of ID at polling stations.

Too early for conclusions on Air India crash cause: officials

Reuters
New Delhi

India's aircraft accident investigation body yesterday said it was too early to reach any "definite conclusions" on what led to the deadly Air India Boeing plane crash last month that killed 260 people. The investigation is still not complete, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau said in a statement.

Earlier yesterday, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that a cockpit recording of dialogue between the two pilots of the flight indicated that the captain cut the flow of fuel to the plane's engines. The newspaper cited people familiar with US officials' early assessment of evidence uncovered in the investigation into the June 12 crash.

A preliminary report into the crash released by India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) on Saturday said one pilot was then heard on the cockpit voice recorder asking the other why he cut off the fuel and "the other pilot responded that he did not do so."

Investigators did not identify which remarks were made by Captain Sumet Sabharwal and which by First Officer Clive Kunder, who had total flying experience of 15,638 hours and 3,403 hours, respectively. Kunder, who was flying the plane, asked Sabharwal why he moved the fuel switches to the "cutoff" position

seconds after lifting off the runway, the *Wall Street Journal* reported. The *Journal* did not say if there was any evidence that Sabharwal did move the switches, beyond the verbal exchange it cited. But it quoted US pilots who have read the Indian authorities' report as saying that Kunder, the pilot actively flying, likely would have had his hands full pulling back on the Dreamliner's controls at that stage of the flight. The AAIB's preliminary report said the fuel switches had switched from run to cutoff a second apart just after takeoff, but it did not say how they were flipped. Almost immediately after the plane lifted off the ground, closed-circuit TV footage showed a backup energy source called a ram air turbine had deployed, indicating a loss of power from the engines. The London-bound plane began to lose thrust, and after reaching a height of 650 feet, the jet started to sink. The fuel switches for both engines were turned back to run, and the airplane automatically tried restarting the engines, the report said. But the plane was too low and too slow to be able to recover, aviation safety expert John Nance said. In an internal memo on Monday, Air India CEO Campbell Wilson said the preliminary report found no mechanical or maintenance faults and that all required maintenance had been carried out.

World's largest crane lifts reactor dome into place



Media crews gather to witness the world's largest land crane 'Big Carl' lifting a 245-tonne domed roof onto Hinkley Point C's second reactor building at the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station near Bridgwater in southwest England, yesterday.

India 'can secure oil even if Russia imports sanctioned'

Reuters
New Delhi

India is confident of meeting its oil needs from alternative sources if Russian supplies are hit by secondary sanctions, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said yesterday. Earlier this week, US President Donald Trump warned that countries purchasing Russian exports could face sanctions if Moscow fails to reach a peace agreement with Ukraine within 50 days. Separately, Nato secretary-general Mark Rutte warned on Wednesday that some countries, including India, could be hit very hard by the sanctions if they continued to do business

with Russia. India should be able to deal with any problems with Russian imports by seeking supplies from other countries, Puri said. He noted there are many new suppliers coming onto the market such as Guyana and supply from existing producers such as Brazil and Canada. Additionally, India is increasing exploration and production activities. "I'm not worried at all. If something happens, we'll deal with it," Puri said at an industry event in New Delhi. "India has diversified the sources of supply and we have gone, I think, from about 27 countries that we used to buy from to about 40 countries now," he said. India also has the scope to cut fuel prices if

crude oil prices stay at current levels for the next two to three months, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri added. Responding to Rutte's comments, India's foreign ministry spokesperson said that securing energy needs was an "overriding priority" for the country, in which it was guided by what was on offer in markets and the "prevailing global circumstances". "We would particularly caution against any double standards on the matter," spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal told a regular media briefing. India's oil imports from Russia rose marginally in the first half of this year, with private refiners Reliance Industries and Nayara Energy making about half of the overall purchases from Moscow.

Rare Gandhi portrait sells for nearly £153,000

A rare painting of Mahatma Gandhi, believed to be the only oil portrait that the Indian independence leader ever sat for, has sold at auction in the UK for £152,800 (\$205,000). The 1931 painting by British-American artist Clare Leighton fetched more than twice the estimated price when the auction closed on Tuesday in London, Bonhams auction house has revealed. "Thought to be the only oil painting of Mahatma Gandhi which he sat for, this was a very special work, which had never before been offered at auction," said Rhyannon Demery, Bonhams' head of sale. She added the painting "was a testament to Gandhi's power to connect with people far and wide, and presented a lasting document of an important moment in history". Gandhi, one of the most influential figures in India's history, led a non-violent movement against British rule and inspired similar resistance campaigns across the world.



Men search for coins and other valuable items in the waters of river Yamuna in New Delhi, India.

India's river divers risk health in search of treasures

Reuters
New Delhi

At the crack of dawn, Ramu Gupta slings a blue bag onto his shoulder and heads to the Yamuna River in the Indian capital in search of his fortune. The 67-year-old is one of hundreds of gotakhors, or divers, who go to the river to hunt for coins, trinkets, discarded bottles and shards of metal and wood that can be sold in Delhi's booming scrap market. "I earn approximately Rs5,000 (\$58) in a month from this," said Gupta, who spends his days working as a toilet cleaner near the shack where he lives. He saves the extra income for his two grandchildren, hoping to split it between them when they grow up. Gupta and his fellow divers swim beneath the river waters, often

risking their health in their search for riches. He is at the river in the morning and evening seven days a week, and goes to his regular work during the day – a routine that he has followed for 35 years. Arvind Kumar, 29, has been working on the river full time for nearly 12 years. "There is no fixed income from this kind of work," said Kumar, who earns up to Rs600 per day on average, below the government's minimum daily wage of Rs710 for an unskilled worker. Mostly, the divers collect coins, bottles and plastics. Occasionally they might discover some slivers of gold. More rarely, gold rings and necklaces. Sometimes, they also find bodies, and then the police might call on them to help retrieve them. If they see people carried away by the currents, they might try to rescue them.

UK, Germany hail wide-ranging treaty, deepening ties

Reuters
Stevenage, England

Prime Minister Keir Starmer and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz yesterday hailed a major treaty to deepen ties in areas ranging from defence to immigration, the latest step in Britain's push to reset UK relations with the European Union. On his first trip to London as chancellor, Merz described the Kensington treaty as historic, the first major bilateral agreement between Britain and Germany to deepen defence co-operation and to try to boost economic growth in both

nations. Merz's day trip follows a three-day state visit to Britain by French President Emmanuel Macron, signalling greater co-operation between Europe's top three powers at a time of threats to the continent and uncertainty about their US ally. "We see the scale of the challenges our continent faces today, and we intend to meet them head on," Starmer told a press conference after the two leaders signed the treaty in the Victoria and Albert Museum, co-founded by Britain's Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert, of German origin. "The Kensington treaty ... is an expression of our shared aims and

values. But more than that, it's a practical work plan setting out 17 major projects where we will come together to deliver real results which will improve people's lives." Standing next to Starmer at an Airbus plant, Merz again lamented Britain's departure from the EU, but said the agreement would cement ties between the two nations and complement an agreement London struck with France. "We are jointly determined to shape this new era with new leadership opportunities – the United Kingdom and Germany side by side," Merz said. Europe has been confronted with new US tariffs since President Don-

ald Trump returned to the White House as well as questions about the US commitment to defend its European allies, including Ukraine against Russia's invasion. The two leaders said they had discussed in detail plans to send more weaponry to Ukraine after Trump signalled he would sell weapons to Nato countries, including Patriot air defence missiles Kyiv has urgently sought. Merz said the two had discussed Ukraine's need for long-range strike systems, which he called "long range fire". "And Ukraine will soon receive substantial additional support in this area," he told the press conference. The treaty includes a clause on

mutual assistance which, "in light of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine, is highly significant", a German official said this week. It builds on a defence deal agreed last year that included the joint development of long-range strike weapons, and comes after France and Britain agreed last week to reinforce cooperation over their respective nuclear arsenals. As part of yesterday's announcement, Britain and Germany also pledged to "pursue joint export campaigns" to drum up orders from other countries for equipment they make jointly, such as the Typhoon Eurofighter jet and the Boxer armoured vehicle. Beyond defence,

the treaty also includes an agreement to develop a new direct rail link between the two countries, to allow frequent travellers access to e-gates at German airports and to support youth mobility between the two nations. In a win for Starmer, they also pledged to jointly combat irregular migration. Germany pledged to outlaw the facilitation of illegal migration to Britain, with a law change by the end of the year. That would give law enforcement the tools to investigate warehouses and storage facilities used by migrant smugglers to conceal dangerous small boats intended for illegal crossings to Britain.



Senegal's Chief of General Staff, General Mbaye Cisse (right), and France's General Pascal Ianni, who commands France's troops in Africa, walk towards a flag pole where the Senegalese flag was raised during the handover ceremony. (AFP)



Soldiers from the Senegalese Navy and French officers attend a ceremony during which the last major French military facility was handed over to the Senegalese authorities at the French military camp of Geille in Ouakam, a district of Dakar, Senegal, yesterday. (Reuters)

Zuckerberg settles lawsuit over Analytica scandal

AFP
Washington

Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg and other company board members settled a shareholder lawsuit yesterday concerning decisions made in the wake of the Cambridge Analytica privacy scandal.

A trial over the long-running case had just begun on Wednesday, with defendants accused of overpaying the US government in 2019 when they engineered a \$5bn settlement for alleged privacy violations in the scandal.

Sources familiar with the matter confirmed the settlement to AFP, without providing details.

A spokesman for Meta, the parent company of Facebook, declined to comment. Lawyers for the defendants and shareholders didn't immediately return requests for comment.

The settlement comes the same day that Marc Andreessen, one of Silicon Valley's most influential venture capitalists and a Meta board member, was scheduled to take the stand.

Zuckerberg himself was expected in the Wilmington, Delaware courtroom on Monday.

Silicon Valley investor Peter Thiel and former Meta top executive Sheryl Sandberg — both former board members — were also expected to face questioning in the court.

Cambridge Analytica was a political consulting firm that was found to have improperly accessed personal data from millions of Facebook users for targeted political advertising, particularly during the 2016 US election and Brexit referendum.

The scandal thrust Facebook and Zuckerberg in particular into a political firestorm, leading to major regulatory changes and public scrutiny of tech companies' data practices.

The shareholders in the law-

suit alleged that the board members conspired to pay more to the US government in exchange for ensuring that Zuckerberg would not be named personally for wrongdoing in the settlement.

Longtime observers of the company were hoping that the trial would expose inside details of how Zuckerberg and the Facebook executives handled the scandal.

"This settlement may bring relief to the parties involved, but it's a missed opportunity for public accountability," said Jason Kint, the head of Digital Content Next, a trade group for content providers.

He worried that Meta "has successfully remade the 'Cambridge Analytica' scandal about a few bad actors rather than an unravelling of its entire business model of surveillance capitalism and the reciprocal, unbridled sharing of personal data."

Zuckerberg was under huge pressure at the time from US and European lawmakers amid widespread allegations that Russia and other bad actors were weaponising Facebook to sow chaos around major elections in the West.

The multi-faceted case also alleged insider trading at the time of the events, with board members to be questioned about the timing of their share sales before the scandal erupted.

The high-profile case was expected to bring further attention to Delaware, the state that many US companies choose for incorporation due to its highly specialised courts.

The trial was presided over and to be decided by Kathaleen McCormick, the same judge who last year rejected Elon Musk's multi-billion pay package at Tesla.

Tesla has since chosen to re-incorporate in Texas and reports said that Meta was also considering a different state to register its business empire



Defence attorney William Savitt (centre) leaves Leonard L. Williams Justice Center yesterday in Wilmington, Delaware. (AFP)

French army leaves Senegal, ends military presence in West Africa

AFP
Dakar

France yesterday formally handed back its last two military bases in Senegal, leaving Paris with no permanent army camps in either west or central Africa.

Ending the French army's 65 years in independent Senegal, the pull-out comes after similar withdrawals across the continent, with former colonies increasingly turning their backs on their former ruler.

The move comes as the Sahel region faces a growing jihadist conflict across Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger that is threatening the wider west African region.

A recent string of attacks this month in Mali included an assault on a town on the border with Senegal.

France returned Camp Geille, its largest base in the west African country, and its airfield at Dakar airport, in a ceremony attended by top French and Senegalese officials.

They included Senegalese chief of staff General Mbaye Cisse and General Pascal Ianni, the head of the French forces in Africa.

Cisse said the handover marked

"an important turning point in the rich and long military journey of our two countries".

He said the "new objectives" were aimed at "giving new content to the security partnership".

Senegalese troops were working "to consolidate the numerous skills gained in its quest for strategic autonomy", he added.

The general ended his speech with a quote from Antoine de Saint-Exupery, the French author of *The Little Prince*, who spent several months in Dakar: "For each ending there is always a new departure."

Ianni said Paris was "reinventing partnerships in a dynamic Africa".

"We have to do things differently, and we don't need permanent bases to do so," he said.

The French general however insisted that the pull-out "takes nothing away from the sacrifices made yesterday by our brothers-in-arms in Africa for our respective interests".

Around 350 French soldiers, primarily tasked with conducting joint operations with the Senegalese army, are now leaving, marking the end of a three-month departure process that began in March.

After storming to victory in

2024 elections promising radical change, Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye demanded France withdraw troops from the country by 2025.

Unlike the leaders of other former colonies such as junta-run Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, however, Faye has insisted that Senegal will keep working with Paris.

Senegal was one of France's first colonies in Africa.

After gaining independence in 1960, Senegal became one of France's staunchest African allies, playing host to French troops throughout its modern history.

Faye's predecessor, Macky Sall, continued that tradition.

However Faye, who ran on a ticket promising a clean break with the Sall era, has said that Senegal will treat France like any other foreign partner.

Pledging to make his country more self-sufficient, the president gave a deadline of the end of 2025 for all foreign armies to withdraw.

"Senegal is an independent country, it is a sovereign country, and sovereignty does not accept the presence of military bases in a sovereign country," Faye said at the end of 2024.

He maintained nonetheless that France remained "an important

partner for Senegal".

Faye has also urged Paris to apologise for colonial atrocities, including the massacre on December 1, 1944, of dozens of African soldiers who had fought for France in World War II.

A lawmaker from the president's ruling Pastef party, Guy Marius Sagna, hailed yesterday's "end to the presence of the French occupying army". "Bravo to President Diomaye Faye!... Bravo to the patriots! Decolonisation continues," he told the press.

With governments across Africa increasingly questioning the presence of French soldiers, Paris has closed or reduced numbers at bases across its former empire.

In February, Paris handed back its sole remaining base in Ivory Coast, ending decades of French presence at the site.

The month before, France turned over the Kossel base in Chad, its last military foothold in the unrest-hit Sahel region.

Coups in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali between 2020 and 2023 have swept military strongmen to power.

All have cut ties with France and turned to Russia instead for help in fighting the Sahel's decade-long jihadist insurgency.



A man on a motorbike wades through a flooded street during heavy monsoon rains in Rawalpindi. (AFP)

Pakistan monsoon death toll 180 after 63 die in one day

Reuters/AFP
Lahore, Rawalpindi

Heavy monsoon rains across Pakistan's Punjab province killed at least 63 people and injured nearly 300 in the past 24 hours, provincial officials said yesterday, bringing the nationwide death toll from the rains to nearly 180 since late June.

It was one of the deadliest days of this year's rainy season so far. The downpours caused flooding and building collapses, with most of the deaths caused by the roofs of weaker homes failing. Lahore, the eastern provincial capital, reported 15 deaths, Faisalabad nine, and the farming towns of Okara, Sahiwal and Pakpattan several more.

Since late June, the monsoon rains have killed 103 people and injured 393 in Punjab alone, according to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA). More than 120 homes were damaged in the province and six livestock killed.

The National Disaster Man-

agement Authority (NDMA) said more than 1,000 homes had been damaged overall.

A high flood alert was issued for the River Jhelum at the northern town of Mangla, where water inflows were expected to surge to high levels, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department. Authorities warned that adjoining streams could also overflow in the next 24 hours, putting nearby communities at risk.

Torrential rain has poured almost without pause across parts of Punjab province since Wednesday morning, causing urban flooding and houses to collapse.

Rescue teams used boats to evacuate families from villages along the river further south in the morning, but the water had begun to recede by the afternoon.

"Children were screaming for help, and women stood on rooftops, waving their shawls and begging to be rescued," said Tariq Mehbood Bhatti, a 51-year-old

farmer in Ladian village.

Residents living in low-lying areas near the Nullah Lai river that runs through Rawalpindi city, neighbouring the capital Islamabad, were ordered to evacuate after a sharp rise in the water level.

"Rescue teams are on standby for more evacuations," a spokeswoman for the disaster agency said.

"Residents of vulnerable areas should prepare emergency kits with food, water, and essential medicines for three to five days in case of an emergency," the NDMA added in an alert.

The Rawalpindi government declared a public holiday yesterday to keep people at home, with the national meteorological department warning that heavy rain would continue until today.

Around 180 people have been killed, including 70 children, and about 500 injured since the start of the monsoon on June 26, according to the disaster agency.

Trump evaluated for swelling in legs, bruising on hands, says White House

US President Donald Trump was evaluated for swelling in his lower legs and bruising on his hands, White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said yesterday. Citing a letter from Trump's physician, Leavitt told reporters that Trump underwent examinations and an ultrasound on his legs that "revealed chronic venous insufficiency ... a common condition, particularly in individuals over the age of 70." "Additionally, recent photos of the president have shown minor bruising on the back of his hand," Leavitt said. "This is consistent with minor soft tissue irritation from frequent handshaking and the use of aspirin, which is taken as part of a standard cardiovascular prevention regimen."



People queue to enter the DreamVille camping site of the Tomorrowland electronic music festival a day after its main stage was totally destroyed by fire, in Boom, near Antwerp, yesterday. (AFP)

Shock, sadness as Tomorrowland music festival opens after fire

Shocked, sad but determined to dance, tens of thousands of electronic music enthusiasts started to arrive at Tomorrowland in Belgium yesterday, a day after the festival's main stage went up in flames. Organisers said the event, which was expected to draw 400,000 people over two weekends, would go ahead after the massive blaze was put out. But the first DJs would not begin performing until 2pm today at the earliest, two hours later than originally planned, the organisers announced. The festival has 15 other stages spread over 34 hectares of land in Boom, northern Belgium, which were not affected by the fire. But its main stage, due to host dozens of DJs including the likes of David Guetta, Lost Frequencies and Steve Aoki, "is no more", organisers said. "It's impossible to put into words what we're feeling," they said in a statement. "We spent the night working on possible solutions." Images of the blaze circulated widely on social media, showing flames tearing apart the impressive set design depicting a frozen fairytale kingdom, with a giant ice-covered lion, castles and snow peaks. All that remained of the 160-metre wide, 45-metre high set up yesterday was the charred scaffolding.



Beware of the supplication of the oppressed

It was authentically reported on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them, that the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), sent Mu’adh, may Allah be pleased with him, to Yemen and said to him, “Beware of the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah.” [Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

When the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, sent Mu’adh to the people of Yemen to invite them to Islam, he guided him to some important rules to be applied while calling people to the truth that he had brought. Among other things, He, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, addressed Mu’adh, asking him to focus on laying the foundations of justice among the members of the society, and warning against the consequences of a supplication made by an oppressed person, because it will be undoubtedly answered by Allah; or according the statement of the Prophet “there is no barrier between it and Allah.” This means that the door of supplication is open and that there are no barriers or blockers to hamper its course.

Supplication of the oppressed

This great *Hadith* referred to a fundamental issue that has the greatest impact on the path of *Da’wah*, which is keenness to achieve the principle of justice and warning against engaging in injustice. In this regard, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Beware of the supplication of the oppressed,” i.e. guard against it by pursuing justice and avoiding injustice. Its grave consequence is highlighted in the Prophet’s saying, “for there is no barrier between it and Allah,” meaning that it is uninterrupted, even if there is something that impedes responding to the oppressed, such as his food and drink are unlawful and the like. The Prophet said: “There are three supplications that will undoubtedly be answered: the supplication of one who has been wronged...” [Narrated by Ibn Majah]

Moreover, it is not a condition that the oppressed be a believer, for the supplication of the wronged non-Muslim also ascends to Allah, the Almighty, since his disbelief harms nobody but himself, as stated in the narration of Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him: “Beware of the supplication of the oppressed, even if he is an unbeliever, for there is no barrier between it and Allah.” [Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad]

The *Hadith* gives a reference to the status of the supplication of the oppressed



with Allah, the Almighty, especially since He guaranteed to give him the upper hand, as stated in the *Hadith* “Beware of the supplication of the one who has been wronged, for it is raised above the clouds and Allah says, ‘I swear by My Might that I will certainly help you, though it is after some time.’” [Narrated by At-Tabarani]

History is full of accounts about nations that initially prevailed and then perished. Only the supplications of the oppressed and the tormented people could overthrow their thrones. Take Pharaoh as an example, who went too far in his tyranny, and was a despot ruler. The Children of Israel tasted all kinds of unthinkable torments at his hands, killing their children and leaving their women to live in humiliation. Musa (Moses), peace be upon him, did not do more than show his people the way to victory over the enemy, saying to them: {Seek help through Allah and be patient.} [Qur’an 7: 128]. Thus, he commanded them to resort to Allah, the Almighty, and followed his words with actions so that his people might follow his example. He raised his hands in submissiveness to Allah, the Almighty, and diligently invoked Allah against Pharaoh and his aides. Recounting this event, Allah, the Almighty, said, {And Moses said, ‘Our Lord, indeed You have given Pharaoh and his establishment splendour and wealth in the worldly life our Lord, that they may lead [men] astray from Your way. Our Lord, obliterate their wealth and harden

their hearts so that they will not believe until they see the painful punishment.’} [Qur’an 10: 88]

Eventually, Allah answered his prayer, and imagine what the recompense of Pharaoh was. Allah drowned him and his soldiers in the sea. Neither his kingdom nor his tyranny availed him in any way. This was his recompense in this world, but in the Hereafter, nothing is awaiting him but Hellfire. Allah, the Almighty, said, “The Fire, they are exposed to it morning and evening. And the Day the Hour appears [it will be said], ‘Make the people of Pharaoh enter the severest punishment.’”

Take another example of the People of Madyan (Midian), who were famous for cheating in measures and giving people less than their dues, although they would receive their full due if they were the other party of the transaction. Therefore, Prophet Shu’ayb, peace be upon him, warned them of this despicable conduct and said to them: {Give full measure and do not be of those who cause loss. And weigh with an even balance. And do not deprive people of their due and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption.} [Qur’an 26: 181-183]

However, their response was marked with mockery, despise, threat, and warning. Therefore, he sought Allah’s victory over them and prayed and said, {Our Lord, decide between us and our people in truth, and You are the best of those who give decisions.} [Qur’an 7: 89]. Then,

Allah answered his supplication and sent upon them a fierce heat that was neither mitigated by drinking nor lightened by shadows. Then He sent upon them a great cloud containing sparks and flames and a great glow. Later, they were overtaken by an awful cry from heaven and an earthquake, which led to their destruction. Their dominion and power profited them naught.

These two examples, as well as many others, show how greatly this issue is regarded by Allah.

The reality of injustice

Injustice is one of the despicable qualities and vile morals, and that is why Allah, Glory be to Him, exalted Himself from it and said: {Indeed, Allah does not wrong the people at all, but it is the people who are wronging themselves.} [Qur’an 10: 44]. He, the Almighty, has even forbidden it to Himself, as it is stated in the Qudsi (Sacred) *Hadith* “O My slaves, I have made oppression unlawful for Myself and I have made it unlawful among you, so do not oppress one another.” [Narrated by Muslim]

Injustice is one of the greatest calamities that have plagued humanity. It has a catastrophic effect on both individuals and societies. The Qur’an has established this fact and clarified that the cause of the destruction of towns and nations is the oppression that their peoples committed. Allah, the Almighty, said, {And We would not destroy the cities except while their people were wrongdoers.” [Qur’an 28: 59] “And your Lord would not have destroyed the cities unjustly while their people were reformers.” [Qur’an 11: 117]

As noted by Shaykh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, “Letting down an unjust state, even if it was Muslim, and giving victory to the just state, even if it was a non-Muslim, are one of the universal norms that Allah established in this world.” Justice and truth are the foundations upon which the heavens and the earth are built. Allah, the Almighty, said, {We did not create the heavens and earth and what is between them except in truth.} [Qur’an 46: 3]

A person who ponders over the Book of Allah, the Almighty, and the Sunnah of His Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, would find many texts that condemn injustice and its people and warn people against it. In the Qur’an, Allah mentioned injustice over 240 times, warning against it in different ways and through various derivatives. On one occasion, Allah would dissociate Himself from injustice

and say, {And your Lord is not ever unjust to [His] servants.} [Qur’an 41: 46]. In another context, He would command fair treatment with all people, even non-Muslims {Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives.} [Qur’an 16: 90] “and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just.” [Qur’an 5: 8].

Sometimes, injustice and its people are dispraised and associated with Allah’s hatred {And [all] faces will be humbled before the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of existence. And he will have failed who carries injustice.} [Qur’an 20: 111]. Allah, the Almighty, also described sins that are less evil than polytheism as wrongdoing {They said, ‘Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers.’} [Qur’an 7: 23]

As for the *Sunnah*, in addition to the *Hadith* in hand, many honourable *Hadiths* denounce this reprehensible characteristic. It was reported on the authority of Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said, “Beware of oppression, for oppression will turn into excessive darkness on the Day of Resurrection.” [Narrated by Muslim]

The Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, deeply rooted this truth in the souls of his honourable Companions, and made it clear to them that it is one of Allah’s universal norms that do not change or be altered; therefore, He forbade injustice and mentioned the stories of previous nations who were unjust, so they received the recompense for their injustice in this world before the Hereafter.

Injustice has dire consequences on individuals in particular and people in general. Life cannot experience stability without justice. Therefore, the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, was keen to inculcate this principle in Mu’adh, and guided him to avoid being the object of the supplication of an oppressed person, as mentioned in his supplication, “I seek refuge in You lest I should wrong others and be wronged by them.”

We ask Allah, the Almighty, to protect us from oppression and its people, and praise be to Allah first and foremost!

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



Having Haya’ (modesty) as due for Allah

Imam Ahmad and At-Tirmidhi narrated on the authority of Ibn Mas’ood, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* (may Allah exalt his mention), said: “Have Haya’ (modesty) for Allah as is due to Him...” [Narrated by Ahmad and At-Tirmidhi; Al-Albani graded it as a *Hasan* (good) *Hadith*]

Al-Haya’ (i.e. modesty/shyness/bashfulness) is the most important good manner since it is the basic ethic of Islam with which this religion is characterised as shown in the Prophetic *Hadith*, “Every religion has its character trait, and the character trait of Islam is *Haya’*.” [Narrated by Imam Malik in *Al-Muwatta’a* and in Sahih Ibn Majah]

As far as the meaning of the word *Al-Haya’* is concerned, it is linguistically derived from “*Hayah* (life)”. That is why *Al-Ghayth* (i.e. rain) is called *Haya* since the life of the earth, plants, and animals rely on it. On that, scholars say, “Just as water is the life to the earth, *Al-Haya’* is the life to hearts ... As such, a heart void of *Al-Haya’* is lifeless. The strength of *Al-Haya’* relies on the strength of the life of the heart. In truth, a low level of *Al-Haya’* is a sign on the death of the heart. So, the more the heart is characterised with *Al-Haya’*, the more it is alive.”

Technically, *Al-Haya’* is “a manner that makes its owner avoid what is reprehensible and that prevents people from violating the due rights of others”. [Fath Al-Bari: 1/68]. This meaning is yet clarified by the Prophetic *Hadith* reading, “One of the sayings of the early Prophets which the people have got is: If you don’t feel ashamed (from committing religious indiscretions), then do whatever you like.”

As such, *Al-Haya’* is one of the most prominent characteristics that keep the person away from vices and prevent him from useless matters. Besides, it is one of the strongest motivators that encourage people to attain high ranks and be characterised with virtuous ethics. On that, Abu Hatim said: “When the person adheres to *Al-Haya’*, the means of good would be met in him. Similarly, when the shameless person adheres to indecency, no good would be met in him. On the contrary, he would produce only evil. That is because *Al-Haya’* is the barrier that prevents the person from all prohibited matters. As such, the stronger *Al-Haya’* is, the less the person would commit wrong; and the weaker *Al-Haya’* is, the more he would do wrong”. [Rawdat Al-‘Uqala’]

Having Haya’ for Allah

Al-Haya’ should also be practised to-

wards Allah, angels, the self, and people, stressing meanwhile that “having *Haya’* for Allah, the Exalted” is the greatest and the most beneficial of these kinds all. That is why the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said: “Have *Haya’* (modesty) for Allah as is due to Him.” We (the Companions) said, “O Prophet of Allah, we have *Haya’* for Allah, and all praise be to Allah.” He said: “That is not what I mean; but having *Haya’* for Allah which is due to Him is to protect the head and what it retains and to protect the belly and what it contains, and to remember death and decay and whoever seeks the Hereafter, shall leave the adornments of this world. So whoever does that, then he has indeed fulfilled *Haya’* which is due to Allah.” [Narrated by At-Tirmidhi; Al-Albani graded it as a *Hasan Hadith*].

Also, it is narrated that a man once came to the Prophet seeking advice, whereupon he, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, said to him: “I advise you to be modest in front of Allah, the Exalted, as you would be modest in front of a righteous man among your people”. [Narrated by Ahmad in *Az-Zuhd*; Al-Albani graded it as a *Hasan Hadith*]

That is because whoever shows due modesty for Allah would not neglect any obligatory act of worship, nor would he insist on committing a sin as he fully knows that Allah, the Almighty, sees and watches him; that is to say that He, the Exalted, would question the person and hold him accountable for his deeds, and thus he should feel shy of Him, the Exalted, which reflects the true meaning of *Al-Haya’*. This is actually a fact recorded in the *Hadith* narrated on the authority of Mu’aawiyah ibn Haydah in which he states, “I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, from whom should we conceal our private parts and to whom can we show?’ He replied, ‘Conceal your private parts except from your wife and from whom your right hands possess (female slaves).’ I then asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah, (what should we do), if the people are assembled together?’ He replied, ‘If it is within your power that no one looks at it, then no one should look at it.’ I then asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah, what about when one of us is alone?’ He replied, ‘Allah is more entitled than people that bashfulness should be shown to Him.’” [Narrated by Ibn Majah; Al-Albani graded it as a *Hasan Hadith*]. In the same vein, Ka’ab said, “Be shy of Allah in your privacy as you are shy of people in public.”

There are many reasons that drive the person to have *Haya’* for Allah, the Exalted. In truth, whoever considers these reasons would have more *Haya’* for Allah and continually observe his

Lord and thus would be far away from His anger and wrath. The list of these reasons includes: -

First, full confession of Allah’s favours and blessings

In truth, all the favours in which people live are bestowed by Allah, the Almighty. He, the Exalted, said, “And whatever you have of favour - it is from Allah.” [The Qur’an, 16:53]. As such, whoever carefully thinks of Allah’s continuous benevolence and successive favours would feel shy of meeting these blessings with disobeying Him, the Exalted. That is because only the base are the ones who meet benevolence with wrong. Allah, the Exalted, said, “Is the reward for good [anything] but good?” [The Qur’an, 55:60]. Imam Al-Junayd says, “*Al-Haya’* is to be fully aware of Allah’s blessings and man’s negligence (in acts of worship), which leads to the emergence of a condition known as *Al-Haya’*” - a meaning that is clearly recorded in the following Prophetic *Hadith*, “... I admit to Your blessings upon me and I admit to my misdeeds.” [Sahih Al-Bukhari]

Second, viewing sins – even trivial – as major

If the person carefully thinks of Allah’s Omnipotence and All-Ability and takes into account that Allah is Most Capable and that he is not far away from His punishment in light of the many sins and acts of disobedience he did, he would feel the gravity of his wrong and would realise his negligence in the due rights of his Lord. As such, he would be motivated to show the due *Haya’* for Allah, the Almighty. Righteous people used to say, “Don’t say how trivial my sin is, but rather say how All-Great the One Whom I disobey is”

For this reasons, Prophets and Messengers would apologise for being unable to intercede on behalf of people on the Day of Resurrection - a point that is understood in light of feeling shy to do so in this really terrible situation. In the same vein, it is narrated that Al-Fudayl once attended the 9th day of Dhul Hijjah at ‘Arafah where he looked at the heaven, held his beard with his fist, and said while heavily weeping, “My sins are too many even if You would pardon me”. He is reported to have also said, “If I were asked to choose between being resurrected and admitting into the Paradise and not to be resurrected, I will choose not to be resurrected”.

Also, when Al-Aswad ibn Yazid was in his agony, he wept. People thus asked him, “What is that great fear?” whereupon he replied, “Why should not

I fear? Who deserves to be overtaken by this fear more than me? By Allah, if I were bestowed with the Mercy of Allah, the Exalted, I would feel shy of Him because of my sins. When there is a small problem between two persons and the wronged one pardons the one who wronged him, the latter would continually feel shy of the former.” It is furthermore narrated that Abu Hamid Al-Khulqani once asked Imam Ahmad about the Shariah ruling on singing (Islamic poems), whereupon Imam Ahmad asked him to offer an example. Abu Hamid thus said,

When my Lord says to me why didn't You feel shy when disobeying Me And concealing the sin from My creatures

While coming to Me with disobedience

Upon hearing these two verses of poetry, Imam Ahmad entered his room repeating them and heavily weeping.

Third, fearing standing before Allah

This is actually the position referred to in the saying of Allah, the Exalted, “But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge” [The Qur’an, 79:40-41] and His, the Exalted, Saying, “But for he who has feared the position of his Lord are two gardens.” [The Qur’an, 55:46].

Commenting on these verses Mujahid said: “This is the man who, when is about to commit an act of disobedience while alone, remembers standing before Allah (on the Day of Judgment), and thus does not do it out of fear of Him, the Exalted”. This meaning is also crystal clear in the *Hadith* of the Prophet, *sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, reading, “Every one of you will speak to his Lord without an interpreter between them. He will look to his right side and will see only the deeds he had previously done; he will look to his left and will see only the deeds he had previously done, and he will look in front of him and will see nothing but Fire (of Hell) before his face. So protect yourselves from Fire (of Hell), even by giving half a date-fruit (in charity)”. [Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim]. That is why Al-Hasan is reported to have said, “Hadh’n’t we wept except out of shyness in that position, we should have wept for long”.

Fourth, being fully aware that Allah is ever-watching the person

Allah, the Almighty, is the All-Knowing, the All-Acquainted, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the All-Watchful, the

All-Observing Witnessing, the All-Pre-server, the All-Encompassing, the All-Enumerating, the Reckoner ... “nothing is hidden from Him in the earth nor in the heaven;” [The Qur’an, 3:5]. “Not absent from Him is an atom’s weight within the heavens or within the earth;” [The Qur’an, 34:3]. “He is with you wherever you are.” [The Qur’an, 57:4]. He is fully aware of what is in the hearts and there is no secret for Him; “He knows that which deceives the eyes and what the breasts conceal.” [The Qur’an, 40:19].

Secrecy and overtiness are exactly alike for Him; “it is the same [to Him] concerning you whether one conceals [his] speech or one publicises it and whether one is hidden by night or conspicuous [among others] by day;” [The Qur’an, 13:10]. “Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private conversations? Yes, [We do], and Our messengers are with them recording.” [The Qur’an, 43:80]

As such, whoever is fully aware that his Lord is ever-watching him under all circumstances and aware of his acts of worship, his appearance would be characterised with humility and his inner would be decorated with sincerity and full attentiveness. That is because He, the Exalted, perfectly knows that which deceives the eyes and what the breasts conceal. On that, Bilal ibn Sa’ad said: “Don’t be a patron of Allah in public and an enemy to Him in secret”.

People of *Al-Haya’* watch Allah in their privacy, exactly as they do in public. In other words, they deal with Him in line with the rank of Ihsan (the act of performing one’s duties in the best possible way). Ibn Al-Mubarak once said: “Watch Allah, the Exalted” When he was asked about the explanation of this sentence, Ibn ‘Umar said: “The person would not realise true faith unless he fully knows that Allah, the Exalted, sees him, and thus would not commit in secret any wrong which will be unveiled on the Day of Resurrection”.

That is why when Al-Junayd was asked, “What can help me fulfil the act of lowering the gaze?” whereupon he replied, “By fully knowing that Allah sees you before you see what you are looking at”.

When you are alone with your sin in darkness

And the soul incites you to disobedience

Be shy of Allah’s glance at you and say to her

“Indeed, the One Who created dark sees me”

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CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

K T Chacko

- P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- editor@gulf-times.com
- 44350478 (News),
- 44466404 (Sport),
- 44466636 (Home delivery)
- 44350474
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GULF TIMES

Europe faces trade shock as US tariff bites

The 30% tariff on European goods threatened by US President Donald Trump would, if implemented, be a game-changer for Europe, wiping out whole chunks of transatlantic commerce and forcing a rethink of its export-led economic model.

European ministers meeting in Brussels on Monday remained convinced they can bring Trump back from the brink before his August 1 deadline and reach a deal that would keep the \$1.7tn two-way trading relationship broadly intact. But the wild swings in Trump's mood towards the European Union – which he has sometimes labelled as friendly and at other times accused of being set up specifically to destroy the United States – keep the 30% threat very much alive for now.

"It will be almost impossible to continue the trading as we are used to in a transatlantic relationship," EU trade chief Maros Sefcovic said of the 30% rate before meeting ministers and officials of the 27 EU capitals to give them an update. "Practically it prohibits the trade."

EU officials had been hoping they could limit the damage by agreeing a baseline tariff around 10% – the one currently in place – with additional carve-outs for key sectors like autos.

Last year the United States accounted for a fifth of all EU exports – its largest partner. Trump's bugbear is the \$235bn US deficit generated by the goods component of that trade, even though the US earns a surplus on services.

The impact of making European exports – from pharmaceuticals to autos, machinery or wine – too expensive to be viable for American consumers would be instantly tangible.

Economists at Barclays estimate an average tariff rate on EU goods of 35% including both reciprocal and sectoral duties combined with a 10% retaliation from Brussels would shave 0.7 percentage points off euro zone output.

This would eat up most of the euro zone's already meagre growth and likely lead the European Central Bank to cut its 2% deposit rate further.

"Inflation would likely undershoot the 2% target more deeply, and for longer, prompting a more accommodative monetary policy stance – with the deposit rate potentially reaching 1% by (March 2026)," the Barclays economists said.

An earlier estimate by German economic institute IW found tariffs of 20% to 50% would cost Germany's 4.3tn euro economy more than €200bn between now and 2028.

While arguably small in percentage terms, that lost activity could still upend Chancellor Friedrich Merz's plans to push through tax cuts and spend more on renewing the country's long neglected infrastructure.

"We would have to postpone large parts of our economic policy efforts because it would interfere with everything and hit the German export industry to the core," Merz said at the weekend of a 30% rate.

Further down the line, it raises bigger questions over how Europe recoups the lost activity to generate the tax revenues and jobs needed to fund ambitions ranging from caring for ageing populations to military rearmament.

Under its existing policy of trade diversification, the EU has done well in striking preliminary deals with new partners but – as the continued delay over completion of the giant EU-Mercosur trade pact shows – it has struggled to get them fully signed and sealed.

"The EU does not have different markets to pull up to and sell into," Varg Folkman, policy analyst at the European Policy Centre think tank said of the long and complex timelines involved in classic free trade deals.

Some observers have argued the stand-off with Trump is what the EU needs to complete long-delayed reforms of its single market, boosting domestic demand and rebalancing its economy away from the exports which account for around half of output. The International Monetary Fund has estimated the EU's own internal barriers to the free flow of activity are the equivalent of tariffs of 44% for goods and 110% for services.

"It is easier said than done. There isn't an agreement to deepen. The barriers are imposed by the EU members themselves to benefit their own," Folkman said of the web of national regulations.

How all this plays into the EU's negotiating strategy in the less than three weeks ahead remains to be seen – but for now, the bloc has stuck to its line of being open to talks while readying retaliatory measures if they break down.

One thing that might persuade Trump to reach a deal, some European observers suggest, is that the lingering uncertainty may by itself push back the timing of the Federal Reserve interest rate cut the US president so desires.

"The latest developments on the trade war suggest that it will take more time to get a sense of the 'landing zone' on tariffs... which of course raises uncertainty for everyone, including the Fed," AXA chief economist Gilles Moeck said.

"With this new salvo... calls for cutting quickly get even harder to justify," – Reuters

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Life-threatening heat domes confounding forecasters

By Brian K Sullivan
Bloomberg

Record-breaking temperatures seared the eastern US last month, leading to power emergencies across the region. The cause: an enormous ridge of high pressure that settled on the region, known as a heat dome.

This phenomenon has also already struck Europe and China this summer, leading to the temporary closure of the Eiffel Tower and worries about wilting rice crops, respectively. But while heat domes are easy to identify once they strike, they remain difficult to forecast – a problematic prospect in a warming world.

"There is a world of difference between normal summer heat and record or near-record breaking extreme heat," said Scott Handel, lead forecaster at the US Climate Prediction Center. "While normal summer heat can be dangerous, extreme heat can be particularly life threatening."

Heat dome is used to describe extreme heat waves to the general public that captures their menace, said Zach Zobel, a scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center. They occur when a large high pressure system settles over a specific area, baking it under stagnant air and the sun's unrelenting energy. That locks in more heat and can intensify the area of high pressure, creating a self-reinforcing cycle.

Heat domes can occur at any time of year, but they're particularly dangerous during summer, with wide-ranging societal and economic impacts in the billions.

Wildfires and droughts are often the byproduct of extreme heat and have caused some of the

largest climate-related disasters in the US. From 1980 to 2024, 23 wildfires caused \$147.9bn in damage and killed 537 people while 32 droughts extracting a toll of \$367.6bn and killed 4,658, according to a database of billion-dollar disasters that was updated until this year by the US Centres for Environmental Information.

Between 1979 and 2022, more than 14,000 Americans died directly from heat-related causes according to death certificates, the US Environmental Protection Agency said. In the summer of 2022, an estimated 61,672 people died from heat related causes, according to a July 2023 paper published in the journal of Nature Medicine.

A prolonged heat dome can stress crops, particularly heavily traded corn and soybeans. Electricity prices and demand soar when temperatures rise and stay elevated for prolonged periods, said Anthony Chipriano, a forecaster at Vaisala. The dead, hot air under these massive systems can limit the tonnage carried by airliners, kink railroad tracks and crimp the output of wind turbines.

For these reasons, meteorologists are opening their toolboxes to try and figure out where and when heat domes will strike.

"I don't have the same ability to predict heat domes like cold air outbreaks, but there are some trends," said Judah Cohen, director of seasonal forecasting at Atmospheric and Environmental Research Inc.

Meteorologists know, for example, the jet stream – a river of fast-flowing air girdling the globe – naturally migrates northward in summer and they can measure how fast it moves.

That metric is known as the Global Atmospheric Angular

Momentum, and it's among the best predictors for heat domes, said Matt Rogers, president of the Commodity Weather Group. When the value is low, as it is two weeks ago, "it can be a leading indicator of widespread, middle latitude heat ridges," he said.

The latest indication from GLAAM is the return of relatively cooler weather, Rogers said. July is tracking warmer than the 30-year average but cooler than the mean of the last 10 years and the least hot since 2021, he said.

Some weather phenomenon like the polar vortex can be spotted several weeks in advance while others like El Nino can be predicted months ahead of time. But heat domes have a much shorter lead time.

The US National Weather Service studies probable outcomes of emerging weather patterns, said Handel of Climate Prediction Center, which is what allowed the agency to start issuing heat warnings ahead of the dome that gripped the East Coast even as the region experienced relatively cool weather.

The service issued a moderate risk of extreme heat on June 13, when the high temperature in New York's Central Park was still just 78F. Ten days later, the temperature reached 96F, and it hit 99F the day after, both daily records.

Federal forecasters also rely on statistical analysis of past patterns compared to what computer models are projecting as well as measures like soil moisture since drier land means higher temperatures to put their heat forecast together.

Climate change has warmed the planet, particularly the high latitudes. That influences heat domes in two ways. The first is their northward migration. That

phenomenon played out in 2023 as a large ridge of high pressure parked across western-to-central Canada and kicked off a record wildfire season.

The second is changes to the jet stream. The temperature gradient between the poles and the tropics helps keep the jet stream taut, allowing it to push weather patterns along after a few days, Zobel said. But as the Arctic warms faster than the rest of the planet, that gradient weakens and is akin to loosening the grip on a rope. The resulting slack can cause the jet stream to kink, bend and buckle. The river of air can also sometimes split, creating a "kind of a no-man's land" that holds heat domes in place, Cohen said.

Still, Arctic warming's exact impact on the jet stream is an area of active research, Simpson said. Some papers haven't been able to show the impacts that adherents of the weakening theory suggest, and others have come up with opposite results.

What is clear is that temperatures are rising everywhere, said Karen McKinnon, an associate professor at the Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at the University of California Los Angeles, and it doesn't take that much of an increase on the hottest days to "make summers feel substantially more extreme."

With more heat trapped in the system and weather patterns that can lock it in place over specific locations, that makes the need for more accurate forecasts with longer lead times all the more important.

"The weather event that kills more than anybody else on the planet is heat and that is certainly true in the United States," Zobel said. "It is silently a big human health impact."



A commuter uses a hand fan at the 14th Street-Union Square subway station during high temperatures in New York, US, in June. In addition to posing health risks, the blistering weather will boost electricity demand and strain ageing transportation infrastructure, including subways and commuter rail. (Bloomberg)

Two-thirds of the DOJ unit defending Trump policies in court have quit

By Andrew Goudsward
Washington

The US Justice Department unit charged with defending against legal challenges to signature Trump administration policies – such as restricting birthright citizenship and slashing funding to Harvard University – has lost nearly two-thirds of its staff, according to a list seen by Reuters.

Sixty-nine of the roughly 110 lawyers in the Federal Programs Branch have voluntarily left the unit since President Donald Trump's election in November or have announced plans to leave, according to the list compiled by former Justice Department lawyers and reviewed by Reuters.

The tally has not been previously reported. Using court records and LinkedIn accounts, Reuters was able to verify the departure of all but four names on the list. Reuters spoke to four former lawyers in the unit and three other people familiar with the departures who said some staffers had grown demoralised and exhausted defending an onslaught of lawsuits against Trump's administration. "Many of these people came to work at Federal Programs to defend aspects of our constitutional system," said one lawyer who left the unit during Trump's second term. "How could they participate in the project of tearing it down?"

Critics have accused the Trump administration of flouting the law in its aggressive use of executive power, including by retaliating against perceived enemies and dismantling agencies created by Congress.

The Trump administration has broadly defended its actions as within the legal bounds of presidential power and has won several early victories at the Supreme Court. A White House spokesperson told Reuters that Trump's actions were legal, and declined to comment on the departures.

"Any sanctimonious career bureaucrat expressing faux outrage over the President's policies while sitting idly by during the rank weaponisation by the previous administration has no grounds to stand on," White House spokesperson Harrison Fields said in a statement. The seven lawyers who spoke with

Reuters cited a punishing workload and the need to defend policies that some felt were not legally justifiable among the key reasons for the wave of departures.

Three of them said some career lawyers feared they would be pressured to misrepresent facts or legal issues in court, a violation of ethics rules that could lead to professional sanctions.

All spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss internal dynamics and avoid retaliation.

A Justice Department spokesperson said lawyers in the unit are fighting an "unprecedented number of lawsuits" against Trump's agenda.

"The Department has defeated many of these lawsuits all the way up to the Supreme Court and will continue to defend the President's agenda to keep Americans safe," the spokesperson said. The Justice Department did not comment on the departures of career lawyers or morale in the section.

Some turnover in the Federal Programs Branch is common between presidential administrations, but the seven sources described the number of people quitting as highly unusual.

Reuters was unable to find comparative figures for previous administrations. However, two former attorneys in the unit and two others familiar with its work said the scale of departures is far greater than during Trump's first term and Joe Biden's administration.

Heading for the exit

The exits include at least 10 of the section's 23 supervisors, experienced litigators who in many cases served across presidential administrations, according to two of the lawyers.

A spokesperson said the Justice Department is hiring to keep pace with staffing levels during the Biden Administration. They did not provide further details. In its broad overhaul of the Justice Department, the Trump administration has fired or sidelined dozens of lawyers who specialise in prosecuting national security and corruption cases and publicly encouraged departures from the Civil Rights Division.

But the Federal Programs Branch, which defends challenges to White House and federal agency policies in federal trial courts, remains critical to its agenda. The unit is fighting to sustain actions



An American flag waves outside the US Department of Justice Building in Washington.

of the cost-cutting Department of Government Efficiency formerly overseen by Elon Musk; Trump's order restricting birthright citizenship and his attempt to freeze \$2.5bn in funding to Harvard University.

"We've never had an administration pushing the legal envelope so quickly, so aggressively and across such a broad range of government policies and programmes," said Peter Keisler, who led the Justice Department's Civil Division under Republican President George W Bush.

"The demands are intensifying at the same time that the ranks of lawyers there to defend these cases are dramatically thinning."

The departures have left the Justice Department scrambling to fill vacancies. More than a dozen lawyers have been temporarily reassigned to the section from other parts of the DOJ and it has been exempted from the federal government hiring freeze, according to two former lawyers in the unit.

A Justice Department spokesperson did not comment on the personnel moves. Justice Department leadership has also brought in about 15 political appointees to help defend civil cases, an unusually high number.

The new attorneys, many of whom have a record defending conservative causes, have been more comfortable pressing

legal boundaries, according to two former lawyers in the unit.

"They have to be willing to advocate on behalf of their clients and not fear the political fallout," said Mike Davis, the head of the Article III Project, a pro-Trump legal advocacy group, referring to the role of DOJ lawyers in defending the administration's policies. People who have worked in the section expect the Federal Programs Branch to play an important role in the Trump administration's attempts to capitalise on a Supreme Court ruling limiting the ability of judges to block its policies nationwide. Its lawyers are expected to seek to narrow prior court rulings and also defend against an anticipated rise in class action lawsuits challenging government policies. Lawyers in the unit are opposing two attempts by advocacy organisations to establish a nationwide class of people to challenge Trump's order on birthright citizenship. A judge granted one request on Thursday.

Facing pressure

Four former Justice Department lawyers told Reuters some attorneys in the Federal Programs Branch left over policy differences with Trump, but many had served in the first Trump administration and viewed their role as defending the government regardless of the party in

power. The four lawyers who left said they feared Trump administration policies to dismantle certain federal agencies and claw back funding appeared to violate the US Constitution or were enacted without following processes that were more defensible in court. Government lawyers often walked into court with little information from the White House and federal agencies about the actions they were defending, the four lawyers said.

The White House and DOJ did not comment when asked about communications on cases. Attorney General Pam Bondi in February threatened disciplinary action against government lawyers who did not vigorously advocate for Trump's agenda. The memo to Justice Department employees warned career lawyers they could not "substitute personal political views or judgments for those that prevailed in the election."

Four of the lawyers Reuters spoke with said there was a widespread concern that attorneys would be forced to make arguments that could violate attorney ethics rules, or refuse assignments and risk being fired. Those fears grew when Justice Department leadership fired a former supervisor in the Office of Immigration Litigation, a separate Civil Division unit, accusing him of failing to forcefully defend the administration's position in the case of Kilmar Abrego, the man wrongly deported to El Salvador. The supervisor, Erez Reuveni, filed a whistleblower complaint, made public last month, alleging he faced pressure from administration officials to make unsupported legal arguments and adopt strained interpretations of rulings in three immigration cases. Justice Department officials have publicly disputed the claims, casting him as disgruntled. A senior official, Emil Bove, told a Senate panel that he never advised defying courts. Career lawyers were also uncomfortable defending Trump's executive orders targeting law firms, according to two former Justice Department lawyers and a third person familiar with the matter. A longtime ally of Bondi who defended all four law firm cases argued they were a lawful exercise of presidential power. Judges ultimately struck down all four orders as violating the Constitution. The Trump administration has indicated it will appeal at least one case. — Reuters

Trump administration leaves Congress in the dark on spending decisions

By Bo Erickson
Washington

Around 300 students in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, may face changes to after-school tutoring and English-language proficiency instruction unless the district's \$860,000 federal grant is freed up by President Donald Trump's administration in time for the new school year.

This funding is a part of more than \$6bn in school funds held up on July 1 for school programmes nationwide, leaving superintendents including Cleveland Heights' Elizabeth Kirby in a budget bind. "We have not received any information about whether or not this money is coming," she said.

The lack of clarity follows a broader pattern in which the Trump administration has provided less detail on how it plans to spend taxpayer dollars, drawing criticism from some Republicans in Congress.

"Delayed budgets, missing details, and omitted spend plans make the federal budget less transparent and less accountable to the people and their elected representatives," Republican Senator Susan Collins of Maine, who chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee told Russell Vought, director of the US Office of Management and Budget, at a June 25 hearing.

The OMB and the White House did not respond to a request for comment. In previous statements, the OMB said the held-up education funds are a part of an "ongoing programmatic review" due to initial findings of grant programmes being "grossly misused to subsidise a radical left-wing agenda."

Budget experts say this unwillingness to share a broad range of spending details skirts funding law, complicates the budget process going forward, and breaks from precedent aimed at increasing spending transparency.

"At this point in the year, there has never been less reliable information available to either the public or Congress about actual agency spending than at any time since the modern budget process was established in 1974," said David Taylor, a former leader of President George HW Bush's White House budget office and chief budget aide to Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, who now runs the research firm Federal Budget IQ.

The US Constitution gave Congress the power of the federal purse to decide how to allocate taxpayer money for the executive branch to disburse throughout its agencies.

But since lawmakers passed a full-year stopgap funding bill in March – signed by Trump – they have been left with questions about where the money is going because a wide swath of federal agencies across the government either failed to share spending plans required by the stopgap bill, or sent incomplete data, according to US lawmakers.

"This administration has – more than any other in my time in office – refused to share basic information with this committee," said Democratic Senator Patty Murray, a 32-year veteran of the chamber and her party's top appropriator.

This standoff on federal funding powers will be tested again this week as the Senate considers the administration's \$9bn request to cancel foreign aid and public media, which could undo the funding passed on a bipartisan basis in March with a simple Republican majority.

The Republican-controlled Congress early this month narrowly passed Trump's sweeping tax-cut and spending bill, overriding some Republicans' objections about the heavy toll it was expected to take on the nation's \$36.2tn in debt.

'Need more information'

The administration's reluctance to share detailed spending plans has placed Cabinet secretaries in the hot seat on Capitol Hill for the last several weeks, as the funding law required these details by the end of April.



A bird flies in front of the US Capitol building in Washington. (Reuters)

"We need more information than we have gotten," Republican House of Representatives Appropriations Chair Tom Cole of Oklahoma told Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth in June, more than a month after his department's spending plan was required.

"I'm doing the best I can," FBI Director Kash Patel said at his May hearing, pointing the finger at other parts of the administration when hounded about the lack of spending details.

"We have a lot of irons in the fire ... as we try to build up staff," explained Interior Secretary Doug Burgum when pressed by Democratic Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon about the lack of clarity on conservation projects.

Even the agency plans that were submitted had notable gaps. There were 530 asterisks in the Health and Human Services Department's plan where specific funding amounts for programmes should have been listed, according to Murray and Representative Rosa DeLauro, the top House appropriations Democrat.

"The fact that appropriators are discussing these issues in open hearings means that multiple attempts to get this information behind the scenes has failed," said Joe Carlile, a former Democratic budget official.

Transparency divide

Trump's focus on slashing the federal government also has made his administration less concerned about congressional queries, said Cerin Lindgrensavage, counsel at Protect Democracy, a group which is suing the administration over removal of online spending details.

"Usually, administration officials would be wary of angering the appropriations committee for the same reason it's a bad idea to bite the hand that feeds you, but now, Congress is negotiating against an executive branch that seems happy to cut more spending," Lindgrensavage said.

Veterans Affairs Secretary Doug Collins cited White House budget office guidance and a 1983 Supreme Court ruling over congressional restraints on emergency powers to defend how his department notified Congress to "reprogramme" money away from initiatives the administration deemed wasteful.

Congressional leaders tasked with overseeing VA funding demanded the department request approval to redirect money.

"The way this secretary, and this administration, has interacted with Congress on moving hundreds of millions of dollars from one account to the next is unprecedented," said Democratic Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida.

The panel's Republican leader, Representative John Carter of Texas, backed Schultz up: "I've been on this committee for 20 years ... and we are not going to change it now."

Spaniards struggle to enjoy their own beaches in tourist deluge

By Corina Pons
Madrid

International holidaymakers are keeping Spaniards off their own sun-kissed beaches due to ever-rising hotel and rental prices during an unprecedented tourism boom.

Spain's top 25 Mediterranean and Atlantic coast destinations saw local tourism drop by 800,000 people last year whereas foreign visitors rose 1.94mn, according to previously unreported official data reviewed by analysis firm inAtlas.

The trend looks sure to continue as the world's second-most visited country – after France – anticipates a record 100mn foreign visitors this year. "Prices have risen outrageously. The whole Spanish coast is very expensive," said Wendy Davila, 26. She cancelled an "exorbitant" trip with her boyfriend in Cadiz on the south coast for a cheaper visit to the inland city of Burgos, famed for its Gothic cathedral and the tomb of 11th century commander El Cid.

"Now you don't go on holiday wherever you want, but wherever you can," added Davila, who is nostalgic for childhood beach holidays in Alicante on the Mediterranean.

With a population of 48mn – half the number of foreign visitors each year – Spain relies heavily on tourism, which contributes more than 13% of GDP. But protests are growing over housing shortages exacerbated by mass tourism – and could be exacerbated by the indignity for Spaniards being priced out of their favourite holidays.

Hotel prices have risen 23% in the past three years to an average of €136 (\$159) a night, according to data company Mabrian.

Beachfront rentals have also climbed 20.3% since mid-2023, according to price monitoring firm Tecnitasa, with most of them booked out for the summer by the first quarter.

"It is becoming increasingly difficult for Spanish holidaymakers to afford beachfront tourism rentals," said Tecnitasa Group President Jose Maria Basanez.

Foreign tourists stayed an average of eight nights at top Spanish beaches last year, with locals only affording half that time and spending a quarter of the

money, inAtlas said.

In fact resort hotels are modifying down their forecasts for this summer, even despite the foreign boom, partly because places where residents tend to take their holidays expect slower sales.

Spaniards also made near 400,000 fewer trips to the country's major cities in 2024 compared to the previous year, while foreign tourist visits there increased by almost 3mn.

Aware of the brewing discontent and disparities, Spain's socialist government is encouraging international tourists to explore inland attractions to address overcrowding and diversify.

"If we want to continue to be leaders in international tourism, we have to decentralise our destinations," Tourism Minister Jordi Hereu said at the launch of a first campaign to highlight Spain's lesser-known charms in June.

"We want Europeans and those from other continents to rethink their idea of the Spain they love and visit so much."

Spaniards have a strong tradition of escaping for family holidays in the hot summer months, but they are turning more to Airbnb rentals than hotels, and swapping Catalonia or the Balearic Islands for lesser-known destinations in Andalusia or Castille and Leon where prices are lower and mass tourism is yet to hit.

Last year, 1.7mn more Spaniards holidayed in generally more affordable inland areas, according to inAtlas.

In the mountain town of El Bosque for example, 100km from the beaches of Cadiz on the Atlantic, the number of Spanish tourists increased by 22% last year.

"There may be a certain displacement effect," said Juan Pedro Aznar, professor and researcher at the Madrid-based Esade business school, noting Spaniards' lower purchasing power compared to British and German tourists.

For some Spaniards, it is best to avoid the summer crowds altogether. Nurse Maria de la Jara will stay in Madrid this summer, only going south to visit family in Cadiz once the busy season is over.

"I used to go to my family's house, but there are more and more foreign tourists in Cadiz and when a cruise ship arrives, the population doubles," said the 51-year-old.

"It's overwhelming" — Reuters

Interior minister attends graduation ceremony of 1st Batch of Master’s Program in Security Leadership and Command



HE the Minister of Interior, Commander of the Internal Security Force “Lekhwiya,” and Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Police Academy Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani attended yesterday the graduation ceremony of the first batch of the Master’s Program in Security Leadership and Command at the College of Graduate Studies of the Police Academy.

The ceremony was attended by several heads and commanders of military and security agencies in the country.

During the ceremony, which featured a visual presentation that reviewed the programme’s objectives and the educational and training stages undertaken by the first batch, the minister presented certificates to the graduates. Director of the Operations Department at the General Directorate of the Coasts and Borders Security Staff Major (Navy) Hassan Ahmed al-Sulaiti won first place in the overall score and first place in joint security operations planning.

In his speech marking the occasion, Director of the College of Graduate Studies of the Po-

lice Academy Colonel Dr Abdul-lah Thamer al-Enezi emphasised that the programme represented a pivotal step in building and qualifying senior security leaders. Its curricula were carefully designed to enhance officers’ ability to analyse complex situations, exercise command and control during crises, and manage joint security operations. This was achieved through specialised academic courses, field experiments, and internal and external visits to identify the best international practices in operational decision-making. He indicated that the College of Graduate Studies will work on the continuous development of this programme by updating its curricula and expanding its partnerships to keep pace with cognitive and technical developments.

For his part, Director of the Criminal Investigation Department Colonel Nawaf Mohammed al-Otaibi delivered a speech on behalf of the graduates, highlighting that the programme was a milestone in the participants’ professional careers, providing them with advanced scientific content and practical field experiences. He emphasised that

graduation represents the beginning of a new phase of dedication to serving the nation and enhancing its security and stability.

The Master’s Program in Security Leadership and Command is a unique academic programme that aims to prepare security and military leaders with strategic competence and high operational readiness, keeping pace with the changing concept of comprehensive security in the country. The first batch included a select group of highly qualified individuals from various military and security agencies, who underwent an advanced educational experience that blends deep strategic knowledge with practical experience, within the framework of an advanced executive educational environment.

The programme falls within the Ministry of Interior’s strategic framework for developing leadership structures, enhancing officers’ capabilities in analysing and assessing security situations and managing crises effectively, activating concepts of joint security work, and developing coordination mechanisms between various stakeholders. It includes courses in public administration,



scientific research methodology, security leadership, the legal framework for security work, national and international security, crisis management, managing major events and activities, and joint security operations. It also includes meetings, lectures, and field visits, both internally and externally, to numerous security, military, and strategic institutions and bodies.

At the conclusion of the programme, participants presented their master’s research theses, which were discussed and evaluated by a group of academics and experts in the security and strategic fields, reflecting the scientific and practical maturity attained by the participants. (QNA)



QF youth camps are shaping tomorrow’s change-makers

Qatar Foundation (QF) is highlighting the importance of hands-on learning and real-world experience in shaping future-ready youth as it marked the World Youth Skills Day.

Through its Mukhayamna Summer Camp, running throughout July and August, QF is creating spaces where young people can explore their passions, build new skills, and grow into confident, capable change-makers as well as lifelong learners, by offering programmes in areas such as Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing, cybersecurity, leadership, business, and sports.

With this year’s World Youth Skills Day theme being “Youth empowerment through AI and digital skills”, the Mukhayamna camp – organised by QF’s Pre-University Education (PUE) – hosted a five-day course on quantum computing for young people across Qatar. Course leader Dr Saif al-Kuwari, an associate professor at QF’s Hamad Bin Khalifa University, explained the importance of equipping young people with the skills needed to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

By engaging with a technology that’s set to disrupt nearly every aspect of our lives, students will be better prepared to adapt to it and contribute to its development

“This camp introduced students to an emerging field of computing that is expected to play a major role in the coming years,” he said. “It gave them a glimpse into the future of technology and helped them start thinking about how to align their career paths accordingly.

“By engaging with a technology that’s set to disrupt nearly every aspect of our lives, students will be better prepared to adapt to it and contribute to its development.”

Each day was divided into two main parts – in the morning, students were introduced to the theoretical foundations of the topic, while the afternoon was dedicated to hands-on laboratory activities where they developed their own quantum programmes, before the activities concluded with an interactive competition.

Although quantum computing was the focus of the programme, Dr al-Kuwari explained that a gen-

eral sense of curiosity is key for students to thrive in today’s world, alongside learning valuable soft skills such as collaboration and leadership that were taught during the programme.

“One of the most amazing moments in this edition of the camp was when some students, having completed the tasks in their assigned labs, began helping their peers with theirs,” he said.

Among the participants was 16-year-old Al Maha Academy for Girls student Maryam Alhammadi, who said: “My computing skills improved, and now I have more information about the topic. The course leader presented the information well, especially for beginners.

Meanwhile, Mukhayamna’s Leadership Camp for Boys saw boys take part in a series of activities, from sports like swimming, dodgeball, and football to communication



and social skills workshops.

Abdulrahman Hassen al-Muhammadi, a 15-year-old participant from Qatar Academy Al Khor, part of QF’s PUE, spoke about his experience at the camp, saying: “I’ve gained so many skills through this camp and made a lot of friends. We even had a lesson on public speaking, which I know will help with my diploma and improve my social skills – something I’ll need in the future.”

“Social skills and critical thinking are so important today; they’re the base of many other skills. They also gave us the opportunity to volunteer to teach a lesson and lead prayers.”

The Mukhayamna Summer Camp continues throughout July and August.

