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Amir condolences with Pakistan's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of condolences to the President of Pakistan, Asif Ali Zardari, on the victims of the floods that hit northwestern Pakistan, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of condolences to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. (QNA)

Amir sends greetings to Indonesian president

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

MoCI shuts down car firm for 30 days over violations

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) issued an administrative decision to close a car company for 30 days for violating Article 16 of Law No 8 of 2008 on Consumer Protection and its executive regulations. In a statement yesterday, the ministry said Administrative Decision No. 23/2025 ordered the closure of Elite Motors Corp (Chery) due to the company's failure to provide spare parts and delays in after-sales services, which constitute a clear violation of the law. The MoCI noted that the company committed 94 violations of the same kind, prompting the administrative closure to protect consumers' rights and ensure that service providers comply with standards of quality and transparency. It stressed that this measure comes within its ongoing efforts to monitor markets and guarantee compliance with laws and regulations, emphasizing that it will not tolerate any breaches that undermine consumer rights or harm the business environment in the country. The ministry also urged all citizens and residents to report any violations or illegal practices. (QNA)

European leaders to join Zelensky in Trump meeting

European leaders said yesterday they would join Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in talks with US President Donald Trump today, as they try to find a way to end Russia's offensive. Trump met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Friday but the talks failed to yield any breakthrough on a ceasefire - though White House envoy Steve Witkoff said both leaders had agreed to provide "robust security guarantees" to Ukraine. European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen hailed the news but Zelensky, speaking alongside her at a news conference in Brussels, rejected the idea of Russia offering his country security guarantees. (AFP) Page 11

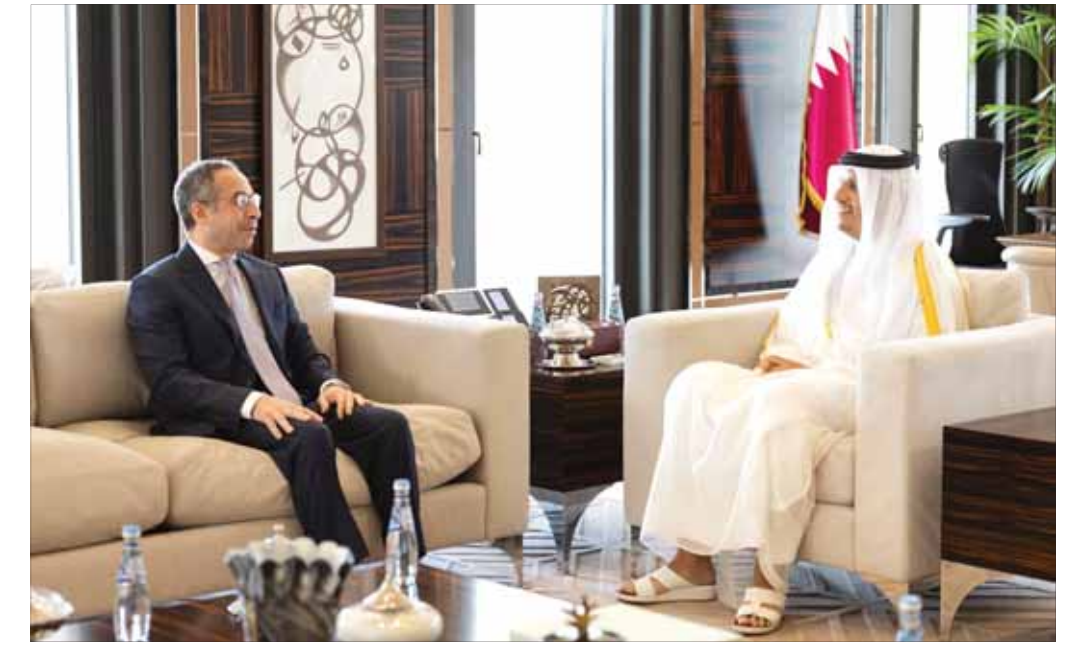
Israeli strikes and gunfire kill 18 Palestinians

AFP
Gaza City

Gaza's civil defence agency said Israeli strikes and gunfire killed at least 18 Palestinians yesterday, including seven people shot dead while waiting to collect food aid. Civil defence spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP that seven people were killed in an Israeli drone strike that hit a hospital courtyard in Gaza City, in the territory's north. Witnesses said the victims were members of a Hamas unit, which a source from the Palestinian group described as responsible for distributing aid and "fighting thieves". There was no comment from the Israeli military, which is preparing a broader offensive in Gaza City and has sent ground forces to the city's Zeitun neighbourhood in recent days. After more than 22 months of war, UN-backed experts have warned of widespread famine unfolding in Gaza, where Israel has drastically curtailed the amount of humanitarian aid it allows in and convoys have been repeatedly looted. Witnesses yesterday reported Israeli air strikes across the Gaza

Strip overnight and into the morning. Bassal said four people were killed in a strike that hit a tent sheltering displaced Palestinians in the southern area of Khan Yunis. The civil defence spokesman said Israel continues its intense bombardment of Gaza City's Zeitun, where troops have carried out a ground operation for the past week. He said there were many casualties, but civil defence crews were facing "enormous difficulties reaching those trapped under the rubble" due to the ongoing violence and lack of equipment. Israel on Saturday hinted at an approaching call to push civilians from Gaza City ahead of the new offensive demanded by the security cabinet. On the ground yesterday, Bassal said six people were killed by Israeli gunfire near an aid distribution point in the south. Another person was killed near an aid site in central Gaza, Bassal added, with a nearby hospital saying the body had been taken there. Israel's offensive has killed nearly 62,000 Palestinians, most of them civilians, according to figures from the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza which the UN considers reliable.

PM bids farewell to Egyptian envoy



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Egyptian ambassador Amr Kamal El Din El Sherbini, on the occasion of the end of his tenure in Qatar. During the meeting, HE Sheikh Mohammed wished the ambassador success in his future duties, and bilateral relations further progress and prosperity. (QNA)

Qatar welcomes US-Russia summit in Alaska

Qatar has embraced the summit held in Alaska between US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin, expressing its hope that current diplomatic efforts will lead to a comprehensive and sustainable resolution of the Russia-Ukraine crisis. A Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement yesterday reiterated Qatar's position in calling for a resolution to the crisis through peaceful means, stemming from its firm belief that dialogue remains the optimal way to address regional and international crises and conflicts. The ministry affirmed Qatar's full support for all efforts aimed at achieving peace and enhancing co-operation among nations in a way that ensures

global security and stability. The General Secretariat of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) also welcomed the Trump-Putin meeting. GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi praised the constructive atmosphere of the Alaska summit, saying it demonstrated that disputes and crises can be resolved through co-operation, dialogue, and peaceful solutions. He reaffirmed the GCC's consistent position in support of peaceful dialogue as the best path to addressing regional and international issues and promoting global peace and security, and reiterated support for international efforts to end the Russian-Ukrainian crisis. (QNA)

Colonists storm Al-Aqsa Mosque under Israeli police protection



Israeli colonists stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem yesterday under the protection of Israeli police. The Palestinian news agency (WAFA) quoted eyewitnesses as saying that dozens of colonists stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque in groups, conducted provocative tours of its courtyards, and performed Talmudic rituals. Since the beginning of the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank in October 2023, more than 68,000 colonists have stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque under the protection of occupation forces. (QNA)

Hamas rejects Israel's Gaza relocation plan

Reuters
Cairo

Hamas said yesterday that Israel's plan to relocate residents from Gaza City constitutes a "new wave of genocide and displacement" for hundreds of thousands of residents in the area. It said the planned deployment of tents and other shelter equipment by Israel into southern Gaza was a "blatant deception". The Israeli military has said it is preparing to provide tents and

other equipment ahead of its plan to relocate residents from combat zones to the south of the enclave. Hamas said in a statement that the deployment of tents under the guise of humanitarian purposes is a blatant deception intended to "cover up a brutal crime that the occupation forces prepare to execute". Israel said earlier this month that it intended to launch a new offensive to seize control of northern Gaza City, the enclave's largest urban centre. The plan has raised international alarm over the fate of the demolished strip, which is home to about 2.2mn people.

QF to introduce 'Islamic Civilisation' curriculum in its schools

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) announced that it will roll out a new 'Islamic Civilisation' curriculum across all its schools in the 2025-2026 academic year, as part of its efforts to strengthen students' identity and sense of belonging as well as their connection to their cultural roots. QF said in a statement that the curriculum is designated for grades six to nine across all its Pre-University Education (PUE) schools, noting that the innovative programme explores key milestones of Islamic civilisation across four pivotal eras, deepening students' understanding of their historical roots and cultural heritage through interactive, values-based learning. Commenting on the launch,

Director of Student Affairs and Community Engagement within QF's PUE, Sara al-Hajri, said: "This course aims to address a gap in international school curricula. While students study the history of Qatar, we recognise the importance of providing our students with a deep understanding of their nation's history, but we also believe it is essential to introduce them to the wider history of Islamic civilisation and its profound impact on humanity." She pointed out that, through this curriculum, students will discover how Islamic civilisation has helped shape the world around them and contributed to the values and knowledge they cherish today. "It is an educational journey that connects the past with the present, linking the broader

civilisational landscape with the personal, and shaping a balanced historical awareness that fosters self-appreciation and nurtures a sense of belonging," she added. Al-Hajri explained that what sets the Islamic Civilisation curriculum apart is that it does not simply recount historical events in chronological order; rather, it focuses on analysing the impact of this civilisation across various aspects of life and the contributions it has made to humanity. "This is an investment in their awareness and a learning experience that surrounds the students in a dynamic environment. Our aim is for this curriculum to become deeply embedded in their consciousness, unlocking their potential for the future and fostering a generation of learners equipped

with their heritage to lead," she added. For his part, Secretary-General of the International Union of Muslim Scholars Dr Ali al-Sallabi, who is also one of the reviewers of the Islamic Civilisation curriculum, emphasised that incorporating this course into the school programme is a highly significant step in light of the intellectual and cultural challenges facing today's younger generation. An author and Islamic scholar specialising in history, Islamic thought, and Qur'anic interpretation, Dr al-Sallabi noted that past decades have seen the dominance of certain cultural currents over the Arab and Islamic world, shaping its intellectual and civilisational dimensions. He added that the effects of this dominance remain evident despite the decline of its

military and political presence. "Islamic civilisation is distinguished by its material, moral, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions, aspects the new generation needs now more than ever. Teaching it helps guide young people out of confusion, providing them with the compass to direct them and the light to connect them to the Holy Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)," he added. He also pointed out that, during the content review, QF is keen to include prominent civilisational landmarks, inspiring stories, Qur'anic verses, and Prophetic hadiths, as well as to highlight influential figures in the history of the nation, adding that the material has been structured to reflect the richness and depth of Islamic civilisation. (QNA)

Qatar attends Geneva meetings on plastic pollution

QNA
Geneva

Qatar participated in the meetings of the second part of the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC 5.2) in Geneva.

The meetings discussed ways to develop an international legally binding instrument to address plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

During the high-level meeting of the INC, Assistant Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Yousef al-Hamar discussed Qatar's efforts in environmental conservation and its various initiatives to recycle plastics and mitigate their negative impacts, thus enhancing the balance between environmental protection and the requirements

of economic and social development. Al-Hamar emphasised the importance of converging positions among member states to reach a comprehensive and balanced agreement that takes into account the national interests of the various countries and achieves tangible benefits for all people.

He stressed Qatar's full readiness to participate effectively and constructively in the negotiations. He also affirmed Qatar's unwavering commitment to preserving the environment and conserving its natural resources, believing that protecting the environment is a collective responsibility that requires international co-operation and integrated efforts.

He pointed out that Qatar has embodied this commitment by joining numerous relevant international treaties and conventions, and by implementing its obligations in accordance with



the highest standards. He indicated that Qatar has made combating plastic pollution a priority in its national policies by strengthening programmes to

reduce plastic waste, encouraging recycling, and supporting innovative and environmentally friendly solutions, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and

the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For his part, Director of the Hazardous Chemicals and Waste Management Department at the

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Dr Mohammed al-Shammari emphasised that Qatar's participation in these international negotiations reflects its balanced position on the importance of reaching a practical agreement that takes into account the national circumstances of different countries and achieves the interests of current and future generations.

He noted Qatar's readiness to continue working with international partners in a spirit of co-operation and shared responsibility to preserve the planet for future generations.

The meetings were preceded by preparatory sessions for the regional groups (Asia and the Pacific, the Arab Group, and the Like-Minded Group of Countries), where they discussed ways to co-operate and co-ordinate positions on mechanisms to end plastic pollution.

Egyptian assistant foreign minister for Arab affairs meets foreign ministry official

Egyptian Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ihab Fahmy met with Director of the Arab Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Nayef bin Abdullah al-Emadi in Cairo yesterday. The meeting discussed bilateral relations and ways to support and enhance them, along with addressing several issues of mutual interest. (QNA)



Preparatory meeting for sixth session of Qatari-Egyptian panel held in Cairo



The preparatory meeting for the sixth session of the Qatari-Egyptian Joint Higher Committee convened in Cairo yesterday at the senior officials' level. Qatar's delegation was chaired by the Director of the Arab Affairs Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nayef bin Abdullah al-Emadi, while the Egyptian side was chaired by Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs, Ihab Fahmy. The meeting was attended by high-ranking officials from both sides. (QNA)



Qatar Society of Engineers and Scientific Club wrap up Summer STEM Programme

Qatar Society of Engineers, in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports and Youth's Qatar Scientific Club, concluded the 2025 Summer STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Programme.

The closing ceremony honoured the participating young Qatari men and women, as well as the training, organisational and volunteer teams.

The event was attended by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Sports and Youth Yasser bin Abdullah al-Jamal, along with several leaders from both institutions.

On this occasion, Chairperson of the Qatar Society of Engineers Engineer Amna Mohammed al-Naama hailed the programme as the first-of-its-kind in implementing innovative youth projects, offered by the Society in collaboration with the Qatar Scientific Club and supervised by the Ministry of Social Development and Family.

This programme is not merely a passing summer activity, but rather a journey of exploration and creativity that combines scientific knowledge with practical application, aimed at empowering a generation capable of thinking, innovating, and leading the future, in line with Qatar



National Vision 2030, al-Naama said. Meanwhile, Deputy Executive Director of the Qatar Scientific Club Engineer Abdulrahman Saleh Khamis emphasised that the programme targets pre-university students, making it an important guiding experience towards scientific and engineering disciplines.

Engineer Nadia al-Owainati, a member of the Qatar Society of Engineers and a member of the judging panel, described the programme as an exceptional and unique experience, and affirmed the Society's commitment to continuing such initiatives.

Meanwhile, Nada Abduljalil

al-Mahmeed, from the National Planning Council, stated that the strong participation from attendees reflects the commitment of the organising bodies to supporting the Third National Development Strategy and Qatar National Vision 2030.

Engineer Hamad Abdullah al-Ashraf, a member of the Qatar Society of Engineers, highlighted the importance of raising awareness about cybersecurity within youth education programmes.

The ceremony also included the announcement of the winning projects in various fields, which were evaluated by a specialised panel of judges. (QNA)

MoCI issues decision on shop closure for Friday prayers

Commercial, industrial, and similar public shops must close their doors and stop all activities during Friday prayers for a period of one and a half hours, starting from the first call to prayer, according to Article (2) of Decision No. (80) of 2025 issued by HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) regarding the regulation of working hours.

This was published in the Official Gazette in its issue released yesterday (Sunday). However, the obligation set forth in Article (2) does not apply to commercial, industrial, and similar public shops engaged in the following activities: Pharmacies; hotels and accommodation establishments; hospitals, health centres, and private medical clinics; fuel supply stations; commercial shops located at state outlets such as airports, land borders, and seaports; telecommunications companies (wired and wireless); operation of power and water generating machinery; bakeries; airline company offices located at airports and

seaports; businesses that operate continuously without interruption under a shift system; passenger and cargo transport by land, sea, or air; any other activities determined by the competent authority, in accordance with public interest requirements. Article (1) states that commercial, industrial, and similar public shops may conduct their activities according to the working hours they determine, and they are allowed to operate throughout the day.

As an exception to the previous paragraph, and for reasons of public interest, the competent department at the ministry, after approval by the minister, may require some commercial, industrial, and similar public shops to operate according to specific working hours. According to Article (3): All competent authorities, each within its jurisdiction, shall implement this decision, which shall come into effect on the day following its publication in the Official Gazette.

BACK TO SCHOOL With Doha Metro
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Exclusive 'Back to School' offers at Sport City Metro Station

Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail), in collaboration with a group of school supplies providers, is organising the second edition of the 'Back to School' event at Sport City Station in Doha Metro from August 19 to September 2, 2025.

The initiative is part of the 'Metro Events' series, which Qatar Rail organises for the public at metro stations throughout the year.

The event at the Sport City Station on the Gold Line, offers the public and customers an opportunity to explore exclusive offers from bookstores and

retailers specialising in school supplies as the new school academic year approaches.

Additionally, several retail spaces within Sport City Station have been allocated to bookstores to display their various promotional products amongst other retailers offering school supplies and related items, available daily from 10am to 10pm.

As part of the event, from 4pm to 8pm on weekdays and from 4pm to 9pm during weekends, a range of free activities will be offered for children and families.

These include an interactive gaming zone, painting, colouring, and art experiences, along

with various competitions and challenges, in collaboration with Qatar Rail partners, offering opportunities to win valuable prizes.

On the sidelines of the event, Qatar Rail will announce the new 365-day Metropass - an annual pass priced at QR990 that offers customers unlimited journeys across the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram networks.

An exclusive early bird promotion will be available to event visitors, allowing them to pre-book the pass during the event and enjoy a 20% discount.

Early bird vouchers can be collected exclusively at the event

between August 19 and 31, and redeemed at any Doha Metro Gold Club office or Lusail Tram ticketing office between September 1 and 30, with the original voucher required at the time of purchase.

The public can easily access the event through the metro's three lines by heading to Sport City Station on the Gold Line or directly through the station entrance adjacent to the parking facilities around Khalifa International Stadium.

All the latest updates from the event's daily schedule of activities can be followed through Qatar Rail's social media channels.

GU-Q students ready to shape Qatar's diplomatic future

Poised to shape Qatar's diplomatic future, students from Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) spent their summer stepping onto the world stage through prestigious United Nations programmes at the centre of global decision-making.

Fatima al-Khanji and Salman al-Emadi, Class of 2026, spent their summer in UN offices in New York as Youth Fellows, part of a competitive internship programme organised by the Qatar Leadership Centre and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

"Each of us was placed in different UN offices based on our CVs and interests," said al-Khanji, who worked at the UN Protocol and Liaison Service.

Class of 2025 graduates Waad al-Maadeed, Khalid al-Kuwari, and Mohammed al-Mesnid were also selected for the programme.

"From escorting dignitaries to managing logistics for credential ceremonies and major conferences, I was able to see the heart of international diplomacy in action," al-Khanji said.

Rising senior Noor al-Thani also spent her summer in diplomatic service as one of six national delegates for the Qatar United Nations Youth Delegates Programme, an initiative led by Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Sports and Youth.

She spent the summer gaining formal training from national institutions, international organisations, and expert trainers, preparing to represent Qatar on the global stage.

"I will represent Qatar at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2025, and participate in several other international



Noor al-Thani



Fatima al-Khanji

conferences, including sessions at the High-Level Political Forum, and possibly in the Social Development Summit, Financing for Development Forum, and the UN Ocean Conference," said Noor al-Thani, who was joined in the programme by Muneera al-Attayah, Class of 2028. "Our participation shows that youth are capable of engaging with diplomacy at the highest level not just as observers but as contributors."

The students emphasised the influence of the GU-Q in preparing them to contribute to discourse at the highest levels of diplomacy.

"Courses in culture and politics, media and representation, and regional studies equipped me with the tools to analyse and engage with global issues critically," Noor al-Thani added.

"Courses like international relations, foreign policy analysis, and cultural diplomacy helped me understand the institutions within which I worked," al-Khanji stated. "My French studies have also come in handy - I've used it regularly with some of the francophone colleagues in my office."

Her strengths in diplomatic communications were recognised with a special assignment at the General Assembly and Ecosoc Affairs Division, where she employed her Arabic skills to support a high-level meeting.

"Hearing Prince Faisal bin Farhan, the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia, read aloud what I prepared was a surreal and proud moment I'll never forget," al-Khanji said.

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Snoonu introduces 'On-Time Guarantee'

Leading homegrown super app Snoonu has introduced its new "On-Time Guarantee" programme, transforming its brand promise of fastest delivery and best customer experience into a clear commitment.

The initiative promises greater peace of mind for users by ensuring every order is delivered with punctuality and care.

In cases where a delivery is delayed beyond the committed time, Snoonu will take proactive steps to acknowledge customers' patience and maintain trust.

The programme comes as Qatar's digital economy experiences rapid growth, with rising expectations for seamless, dependable service.

By combining innovation with attentive customer care, Snoonu continues to highlight the values of quality and consistency that set the local market apart.

Acting Snoonu chief marketing officer Rahma Abid said: "Our mission is not just to deliver products, but to deliver trust and respect for our customers' time. The 'On-Time Guarantee' reflects our promise to stand by our word and uphold the highest standards."

Founded and grown in Qatar, Snoonu has become a trusted part of everyday life, offering services across restaurants, groceries, retail, and more.

The new programme underscores Snoonu's role as a national tech leader and a key contributor to the country's drive for service excellence.

Ooredoo sponsors 'InflataCity 2025'

Ooredoo is the Official Telecom Sponsor of "InflataCity 2025", taking place at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC) until August 28.

Organised by Events & Entertainment Enterprises (E3) and sponsored by Qatar Calendar, InflataCity 2025 has transformed a 30,000sq m of fully air-conditioned space into an indoor playground for all ages.

Senior Ooredoo marketing and communications director Sabah Rabiah al-Kuwari said: "This sponsorship demonstrates our commitment to supporting engaging experiences that enrich lives across Qatar, in line with our vision to connect people through world-class technology and memorable events."



Pakistan Independence Day marked at PISQ

Pakistan International School Qatar (PISQ) celebrated the 79th Independence Day of Pakistan on a grand scale with patriotic community participation and a special cricket match hosted in collaboration with the embassy of Pakistan.

The celebrations began in the morning at the school campus.

Principal Ch Muhammad Afzal, accompanied by the vice-principals and management team, cut a cake, symbolising unity and pride in Pakistan's national heritage.

The principal reminded everyone of the sacrifices made for the country's freedom and urged the PISQ community to remain committed to excellence, discipline, and progress.

The school grounds resonated with patriotic fervour, as students, staff, and management expressed their love for the homeland through a joyous celebration.

Later in the evening, the special cricket match saw staff members, alumni, and members of the Pakistani community come together in friendly competition, a statement added.



QM relaunches 'Qatar Smiles' heritage sites cleanup campaign

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Qatar Museums (QM) has announced the relaunch of its environmental and awareness programme "Qatar Smiles", which invites the public to participate in a series of volunteer activities to clean up archaeological and heritage sites across the country.

Registration will open on September 15.

The programme aims to integrate environmental and cultural aspects by engaging citizens, residents, and visitors, in practical initiatives that combine the joy of learning about Qatar's rich history with contributing to its protection by cleaning up heritage sites that are a fundamental component of national identity.

The programme places special emphasis on sustainability.

Waste is collected in recyclable bags, sorted and transported to recycling facilities by the Seaside Collective.

This makes "Qatar Smiles" a dual-impact initiative: environmental on the one hand, and educational and awareness-raising on the other.

The QM emphasises that the "Qatar Smiles" programme reflects its strategy of engaging the local community in heritage protection and promoting a sense of environmental responsibility.

It added that such initiatives are no less important than restoration and conservation efforts.

The programme is led by experts and gives people a direct sense of partnership in protecting national heritage.

The QM is expected to reveal a detailed schedule of activities and locations where the programme will be implemented in the coming period, with registration open for those interested through qm.org.qa/en/calendar/qatar-smiles-cleanups-on-archaeological-and-heritage-sites/

The "Qatar Smiles" initiative has become a bridge connecting the past and the present, giving participants the opportunity to explore the beauty of Qatari heritage on the one hand, and to contribute to shaping a cleaner and more sustainable environmental future on the other.

Qatar takes part in GCC meeting on implementing environmental directives

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), took part in the working group meeting on preparing a report on the implementation of environmental directions in Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, convened in Riyadh.

Wildlife Development Department director Khaled Jumaa al-Mahmadi represented the MoECC in the meeting.

As part of enhancing Gulf regional co-operation, the meeting



addressed the current environmental requirements, future implementation plans, and incorporating the comments of Qatar and Oman into the report.

As such, the MoECC underlined Qatar's unwavering commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within the Qatar National Vision 2030,

through executing practical policies and initiatives that contribute to protecting the environment, conserving natural resources, and bolstering balanced development for the benefit of current and future generations.

This participation underscores Qatar's commitment to backing the joint efforts of the GCC states

in protecting the environment and fostering sustainability, in alignment with the GCC countries' national development strategies and visions.

It also contributes to advancing integrated environmental initiatives capable of navigating current and future challenges. - QNA



International Tamil Engineers Forum holds Qatar roadshow

The International Tamil Engineers Forum (ITEF) Qatar Chapter hosted a roadshow in Doha recently, a statement said.

The event was a curtain-raiser for the Professional Development Conference and Exposition, being organised by the government of India's

Tamil Nadu on September 12-13 in Chennai.

Armoured Vehicles Nigam Limited general manager B Krishnamoorthy, Tamil Nadu Smart and Advanced Manufacturing Centre adviser Dr L Shahnawaz Khan, ITEF global managing director Selvam Chandrakasu, and Qatar Chapter

president Karthik Kadappa were present.

They were joined by the ITEF Qatar Chapter board of governors and executive committee and more than 200 participants, including engineers, entrepreneurs, industrialists, and community leaders.

Civil Service Bureau unveils interactive Chatbot

The Civil Service Bureau and Government Development announced the launch of the interactive WhatsApp service (Chatbot), a qualitative step aimed at enhancing communication channels with beneficiaries and facilitating their access to information and services faster and in a more flexible way.

The new service offers a range of advantages, most notably: easy access to information through a simple and direct interface via the WhatsApp application; immediate and automated responses to user inquiries, which contributes to saving time and effort. Continuous support around-the-clock (24/7) ensures uninterrupted service. The bureau has allocated the number (40505555) to communicate via this in-



teractive service, providing beneficiaries with a modern and advanced experience that reflects the bureau's orientation towards harnessing technology to serve citizens and residents.

The launch of this service comes within the framework of the digital transformation strategy adopted by the bureau, which aims to improve the efficiency of government services and develop innovative channels for communication and interaction in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

TAMUH concludes training programme for Qatari youth

Tamuh for Community Development (TAMUH) on Saturday concluded the "Impact Makers" training programme, dedicated to empowering Qatari youth and enhancing their leadership and social skills. Over 100 students of both genders participated in this month-long module, which featured a series of interactive activities delivered by well-informed trainers in education and development. The activities included workshops and lectures aimed at fostering initiative, social responsibility, communication,

decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

TAMUH CEO Mohammed al-Abadi told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the programme is part of TAMUH's national strategy to advance young talent. He emphasised TAMUH's commitment to investing in young national energies and providing a supportive and secure educational environment that imbue upwardly mobile youth with the expertise and skills necessary to progress in their educational and professional journeys. (QNA)

QRCS launches health project for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has announced a new humanitarian project to improve and scale up the quality of health services at the field hospital for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Funded by Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) and implemented in collaboration with Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), the project is part of the ongoing efforts to improve health conditions at the Rohingya refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, which host more than 1mn refugees amid harsh living and humanitarian conditions.

A QRCS statement said the core of the project is to operate the BDRCS field hospital for 24 months, ensuring the continuity of basic and specialised healthcare services for refugees and host communities.

The project targets more than 150,000 beneficiaries, providing emergency medical care, reproductive health, maternal and child healthcare, dental care, and psychosocial support, while enhancing the field hospital's infrastructure and capacity.

Also, the project will establish an epidemic emergency preparedness and response hub, to boost disease monitoring and rapid response to potential outbreaks, given the overpopulation at camps and on-going epidemic-related challenges.


The project represents an effective model of humanitarian partnership between national and international organisations, combining the field expertise of BDRCS with the technical and financial support provided by QFFD and QRCS, which helps strengthen the local health system and make it more crisis-proof. (QNA)



506 tonnes of plastic waste recycled



The Public Cleaning Department at the Ministry of Municipality has recycled large quantities of plastic materials, empty barrels, and containers through outsourcing the process to a private-sector company specialised in recycling. Since the company began operations on June 1, around 506 tonnes of such materials have been recycled, and the work is ongoing. The recycled materials will be utilised in other industries, reflecting Qatar's third-phase strategy, which aims to engage the private sector in national development projects. This initiative also supports the policy of safe waste disposal and contributes to achieving the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.



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The General, Limited Tenders Committees and Supply Chain Department announces the following Tenders:

Important Notice:
Suppliers and Contractors who are already registered with QatarEnergy via Mushtaryat Portal can "Buy Tender Online and download Tender Document" from QatarEnergy website (Mushtaryat Portal). Effective from 1st July 2023, bids submitted by a Local company (companies incorporated in Qatar) acting as Tenderer in accordance with this Invitation to Tender, will not be accepted by QatarEnergy without any further notification, if such companies are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal (<https://icv.qa/en-US>) by the specified Original Tender Closing Date or Original due date for submission of COMMERCIAL Package in case of two stage Tendering as per ITT. However, any Local company that has been established within last two (2) years is exempt from this mandatory ICV certification requirement.

Sl. No	Tender Number	Tender Sale Period Start Date	Tender Sale Period End Date	Tender Closing Date	Tender Bond	Bond Curr.	Tender Fee	Fee Curr.
1	GT25109200	18.08.2025	24.08.2025	05.10.2025	450,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR
Title of Tender: REFURBISHMENT OF BUNDS IN PIPELINES CORRIDOR AND MISCELLANEOUS CIVIL WORKS								
Mid-Tender Meeting Location: To be advised if required								
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time: To be advised if required								
2	LT25104800	12.08.2025	21.08.2025	08.09.2025	120,000.00	QAR	N/A	
Title of Tender: RADAR BASED SECURITY SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM FOR RAS LAFFAN								
Mid-Tender Meeting Location: To be advised if required								
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time: To be advised if required								
3	LT25104100	18.08.2025	24.08.2025	15.09.2025	200,000.00	QAR	200.00	QAR
Title of Tender: SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF HVAC CHILLERS AT QATARENERGY REFINERY, MESAIEED								
Mid-Tender Meeting Location: To be advised if required								
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time: To be advised if required								
4	GT25109500	19.08.2025	25.08.2025	05.10.2025	600,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR
Title of Tender: PROVISION OF MANPOWER SUPPORT SERVICES FOR QATARENERGY'S RECREATION CLUBS, OFFICES AND SCHOOLS AT ONSHORE AND OFFSHORE LOCATIONS								
Mid-Tender Meeting Location: To be advised if required								
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time: To be advised if required								

*Tender documents can be purchased and downloaded from QatarEnergy Website-> Supply Management -> Tenders page during the Tender Sale Period mentioned above against each Tender. Request for issuance of Tender after the specified Tender Sale Period will not be entertained.

*Always refer to QatarEnergy Website (www.qatarenergy.qa) -> Supply Management -> Tenders page for up to date information on QatarEnergy Tenders. Subscribe to Tender Alert to receive notification in your email on new Tenders

*Changes to Tender Sale Period and Bid Closing Date will be updated in QatarEnergy website/Mushtaryat Portal only.

*Brief Scopes of Work for the above tenders are posted on the QatarEnergy website/Mushtaryat Portal.

*Suppliers and Contractors who are in possession of a valid SAP ID issued by QatarEnergy are instructed to maintain their Company Registration and Communication details upto date and valid via QatarEnergy Mushtaryat Portal on urgent basis.

*No queries will be entertained, or bids received, from entities who have not purchased tender documents in compliance with the above provisions.

*QatarEnergy invites all prospective Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in QatarEnergy Tenders to register online and obtain a QatarEnergy SAP Vendor Code, a mandatory requirement for the issue of Tender Documents by QatarEnergy.

*Prospective Qatar based Suppliers and Contractors interested to participate in future QatarEnergy Tenders shall obtain an ICV score. Relevant information pertaining to ICV, ICV Scorecard, ICV Certification, and ICV Guidelines are available on the ICV Digital Portal - <https://icv.qa/en-US>



قطر للطاقة
QatarEnergy
LNG

QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/P/PRD/7289/25,B25 Supply of Employee Annual Gift - Smartwatch	17/08/2025 to 25/08/2025	0	150,000	09/09/2025

Scope of Work:
Supply of Employee Annual Gift – Smartwatch

Bid Validity: Bid Offer should be valid for 180 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:
ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

Note: Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) are advised to refer to the tender documentation and In-Country Value (ICV) Digital Portal: - <https://icv.qa/en-US/> for details of ICV compliance that may be applicable.

US Afcnt band concert tomorrow



The US embassy Doha is presenting an evening of art and American jazz featuring a live performance by the US Afcnt Band tomorrow at 7pm at ALHosh Gallery, Marina Way One, The Pearl. The event is free and open to the public. Parking is available on the street or P1 garage. The US Afcnt Band will showcase a performance that spans the history of jazz, from timeless classics to contemporary compositions, a statement from the embassy explained. Attendees will have the opportunity to experience the high-calibre musicians surrounded by more than 300 artworks by 120 local and international artists at the event organised in association with ALHosh Gallery. Born from a fusion of traditions, jazz is a testament to the power of creative expression and a cornerstone of America's cultural heritage. "As we lead-up to America 250, the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, this US-Qatar exchange initiative offers an early celebration. The event underscores the embassy's dedication to honouring cultural heritage and supporting dynamic creative economies," the statement added.

ARPM Tender Committee announces the following Tender

Tender No.	(Tender Title) Scope of work	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Opening Date	Closing Date
ARPM/224/2025/TEN/DOH	Provision of Staff Medical Insurance for One Year	1000	20,000	18-Aug-25	08-Sep-25

- Interested parties can collect copies of the tender documents from ARPM Purchasing Department, via email to m.aseef@arpm.com.qa and L.cabral@arpm.com.qa and j.castillo@arpm.com.qa during working hours 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Fri & Sat Closing)
- A payment of a non-refundable document's fees should be deposited in cash to:
 - Beneficiary Name: Al-Rayyan Projects Management (ARPM)
 - Account No. 0013-022375-004 (Qatar National Bank)
 - IBAN No. QA86QNB00000000013022375004

And the original deposit receipt should be submitted upon receiving of the terms and conditions.

- A tender bond (as stated above), issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar and valid for 180 days from the closing date should accompany tenders. **The executed tender bond should be included with the technical offer.**
- All tenderers MUST collect their original bonds from ARPM – Purchasing department upon expiry of the Tender Bond, unless alternative instructions are issued by ARPM.
- Proposal to be submitted in sealed envelopes as per the RFP requirements in both HARD COPY & SOFT COPY on CD or USB.
- Copies of valid **Company Commercial Registration, Computer Card & Authorization Letter** must be submitted in order to collect the tender documents.
- The successful tenderer is required to submit a performance bond issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar equivalent to 10% of the total contract sum and shall be valid for a period expiring 180 days after contract expiry.
- Offers should be valid for 180 days commencing from the closing date (as stated above).
- ARPM has the right to increase or decrease the scope of services by 20% with the same terms and conditions.
- ARPM is not bound to accept the lowest tender or any other tender and is under no obligation to show any reasons thereof.
- Bids should be submitted not later than 12:00 noon on the closing date and must be deposited into the Box, provided in the ARPM Purchasing office, located at the 9th Floor, ARPM, Head office and should be in sealed envelopes addressed to the Chairman - Tenders Committee, quoting the Tender Number and Subject.
- Offers arriving thereafter may not be considered.

CHAIRMAN – TENDER COMMITTEE
TEL: 40341804

Palestinians bury teen killed by Israeli army near Ramallah

AFP
Al Mughayyir

Dozens of residents of a village in the occupied West Bank yesterday laid to rest a teen killed by Israeli army fire the previous day, according to Palestinian authorities.

Mourners carried the body of Palestinian Hamdan Abu Aliya, his head wrapped in a traditional keffiyeh scarf, through the streets of Al-Mughayyir, northeast of Ramallah, and chanted nationalist slogans. "With our souls and our blood, we will redeem you, martyr," they said during the procession for the 18-year-old, waving Palestinian flags and banners of the Fatah and Hamas movements.

Late Saturday, the Palestinian health ministry announced the "martyrdom of Hamdan Musa Muhammad Abu Aliya... by (Israeli) occupation forces in the town of Al-Mughayyir".

In response to an inquiry by AFP, the Israeli army said "fighters" threw stones and Molotov cocktails at its troops during a security operation in the area, and soldiers "responded with fire".



Palestinian women mourn by the body of Hamdan Abu Aliya, 18, who was killed a day earlier in a reported Israeli raid in Al-Mughayyir village, during his funeral in Ramallah in the occupied West Bank, yesterday.

When the body of Abu Aliya arrived at the family home for a final farewell, his father Musa Abu Aliya said he had a message for the world: "Enough betrayal, enough humiliation, enough insult." "No matter how many they kill, time is on our side. It is impossible for us to give up our land," the father added.

Violence has escalated in the West Bank since the war broke out in the Gaza Strip following Hamas's unprecedented storming of southern Israel in October 2023.

Since then, at least 971 Palestinians, including fighters, have been killed by Israeli forces or settlers, according to figures from the Palestinian health ministry.

Palestinian official criticises Gaza displacement plan

QNA
Ramallah

President of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) Rawhi Fattouh condemned the Israeli occupation army's proposed plan to forcibly displace nearly 1mn Palestinians from Gaza City.

In a statement issued yesterday, Fattouh described pushing the population to flee towards the coast and southern areas as a systematic ethnic cleansing crime aimed at uprooting the population from their land.

The occupation's announce-

ment of bringing tents and shelter equipment into southern Gaza to accommodate the displaced from Gaza City is merely a cover for a larger massacre, forcing the people into less than 12% of the Gaza Strip's area, in blatant defiance of international law and a violation of all human rights conventions and values, he said.

Fattouh warned against the involvement of any international organisation in facilitating displacement under a misleading humanitarian guise, referring to so-called humanitarian zones on the coast or in Rafah, southern Gaza. On August 8, the Israeli security cabinet approved a

plan proposed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to gradually reoccupy the entire Gaza Strip, starting with Gaza City.

In a related context, Fattouh condemned the bombing of Al-Ahli (Baptist) Hospital, which resulted in the killing of many patients and civilians, describing it as a full-fledged war crime.

He called on the US administration to stop supporting the occupation and to intervene to halt this catastrophe, which has continued for 681 days, considering the silence of the international community to be complicity and a grave moral and humanitarian failure.



Displaced Palestinians make their way towards the site of a humanitarian aid airdrop at the Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday.

Iranians struggle with GPS disruption after Israel war

AFP
Tehran

The streets of Tehran have become a confusing maze for driver Farshad Fooladi amid widespread GPS disruption, still ongoing nearly two months after the end of Iran and Israel's unprecedented 12-day war.

"For weeks I have been unable to work," said Fooladi, who uses Iran's homegrown ride-hailing app Snapp to find customers. "Most of the time was wasted wandering around aimlessly," the 35-year-old Iranian driver added.

Unprecedented disruption has plagued users of GPS, which stands for Global Positioning System, in Iran since Israel's surprise attack in mid-June which triggered a deadly 12-day war.

Iran's communications ministry has said the disruptions were necessary for "security and military purposes", without giving further explanation.

Missiles, drones and rockets often use GPS or other similar technologies, which involve triangulating signals from multiple satellites, to find their targets.

Iran has long employed GPS jamming and spoofing around sensitive military sites but the recent disruptions have been the most sustained and widespread.

It remains unclear how long the measures will last or how much damage they have caused to Iranian businesses.

Ride-hailing apps, delivery platforms, and even basic mapping services like Google Maps and its Iranian equivalent Neshan have buckled under the interference.

In many areas, especially around Tehran, users often spot themselves on the maps hundreds of kilometres away from their actual locations.

"To get around, you either need a sharp memory for routes or already know the city well," Fooladi said.

But the driver, originally from the western Lorestan province and less familiar with the capital's winding backstreets, frequently finds himself running into dead ends.

"I only pick up passengers who know the directions," he said, adding the strategy had severely cut his income.

'COLLATERAL DAMAGE'

In early August, the chief executive of the Neshan mapping app, Javad Amel, said in a video interview that daily disruptions through GPS spoofing had been ongoing for years, especially in Tehran.

But he explained in recent weeks that Neshan's daily active users "had dropped by 15%, while navigation activity on the app fell by 20%". The continued disruption has heightened fears of a deepening economic crisis among Iranians.

The Islamic republic's economy is already struggling under the weight of decades of international sanctions and mismanagement, compounded by the revival of US President Donald Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign earlier this year.

Nuclear talks with Washington, which began in April, have also stalled since the US joined its ally Israel to strike Iranian nuclear sites in June. "This war has upended our lives and frozen our future plans," said Fooladi.

In a report last week, the Khabar Online news agency warned against the disruption of GPS, saying it caused "collateral damage" to the digital economy and public safety, including delays to emergency services.

Former communications minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi argued the disruption was costly and would likely have lim-

ited defensive results.

"Drone manufacturers and operators are not stupid either. If the GPS is disrupted and another positioning system replaces it, they will also use the new system," Jahromi said according to his Telegram channel.

'UNCLEAR FUTURE'

With the significant impact on civilian lives, deputy communications minister Ehsan Chitsaz suggested that Iran could consider alternatives to GPS.

"Disruptions are created by domestic systems on GPS, and this has pushed us toward alternative options such as BeiDou," he told Iranian daily Ham Mihaan in July.

The Chinese satellite system BeiDou, fully operational since 2020, is emerging as a global rival to the US-built and operated GPS.

Chitsaz said Iran was "drafting a program" so some of the country's location-based services for transport, agriculture could "gradually migrate from GPS to BeiDou".

He acknowledged disruptions in Iran, coupled with years-long Internet restrictions, have damaged businesses and created "social distrust and despair".

But experts say that replacing GPS would be complex.

"Doing so would require extensive and costly infrastructure changes," said Amir Rashidi of the US-based Miaan group, adding that Iran is currently "highly vulnerable in cyberspace".

Many in Iran believe that another confrontation with Israel is on the horizon as Israel and the US continue to threaten attacks if Iran restarts its nuclear programme, which has been on hold since the war. "Everything is uncertain, and we can't plan. The future is unclear," said Mohammad Hossein Ghanbari, a 32-year-old Snapp driver. "We don't know whether the war will break out again or what will happen next."



The General Tenders Committee invites proposals from all prospective vendors for the following tender:

TITLE OF TENDER:	LEASING OF OFFICE SPACES AT WEST BAY / THE PEARL / LUSAIL / MSHEIREB DOWNTOWN
TENDER NUMBER:	GT25107900
TENDER CLOSING DATE:	31 August 2025
TENDER FEE:	Not applicable
TENDER BOND AMOUNT:	Not applicable
OFFER VALIDITY:	120 days from the tender closing date

COLLECTION OF TENDER:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prospective vendors may send a letter duly signed by the authorized signatory via e-mail (using their respective company's e-mail and letterhead) to tenders31@qatarenergy.qa requesting for the issuance of the tender documents by e-mail. Upon receipt of the request letter, the tender documents will be issued to the interested vendors. Prospective vendors expressing an interest in conducting business with QatarEnergy will be required to complete the mandatory registration process via e-Procurement/Mushtaryat portal (https://mushtaryat.qatarenergy.qa).
MID-TENDER MEETING:	To be advised by QatarEnergy, if required.

BRIEF SCOPE OF SERVICES / DESCRIPTION:

The Scope of Services comprises of the lease of office space / tower for two (2) of QatarEnergy's subsidiaries with a total estimated net rentable area of 9,000 m² at any of the areas of West Bay, The Pearl, Lusail, and Msheireb Downtown.

The building / property / premises shall be fully fitted-out and ready for handover on or before 1 May 2026 and the lease period shall be five (5) years, excluding the estimated six (6) month fit-out period. The initial three (3) years of the lease period are committed by QatarEnergy. Please note the following:

- The building shall not be part of a residential development.
- The building may be shared by QatarEnergy with other tenants and not necessary for the full and exclusive use of QatarEnergy.

Further details are available in the tender documents.

SUBMISSION OF TENDERS:

Tenders must be delivered in a sealed envelope, clearly indicating on it the tender number, tender title and company's name on the tender closing date to the following address:

QatarEnergy
General Tenders Committee
QatarEnergy Headquarters
Tower 5, Level 6
Zone: 63, Street: 951, Doha, Qatar

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

The Management and Teachers of
PAK SHAMAA SCHOOL
express their heartfelt condolences on the sad demise of



Aliya Shahzad
(1970-2025)
on Friday, 15th August 2025.

A dedicated teacher at Pak Shamaa School, who contributed 33 years of her life to nurturing young minds with knowledge and values.

Her passing is a great loss to the Pak Shamaa School community, and she will always be remembered for her invaluable contributions to education.

May Allah grant her the highest ranks in Jannah and bless her family with patience and strength during this difficult time.



Militia attack kills at least nine in eastern DR Congo

AFP
Oicha

An attack by a group affiliated to the so-called Islamic State organisation has killed at least nine people in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, local sources said yesterday.

Overnight Saturday to yesterday, the Allied Democratic Forces carried out attacks against civilians in the town of Oicha, looting shops and setting fire to homes, according to accounts collected by AFP on the spot.

Based since the mid-1990s in the northeastern DRC, near the Ugandan border, the ADF is a group of mainly Ugandan fighters who have killed thousands of civilians in the region. During "this

incursion, the ADF enemy killed eight civilians and a police officer," said Isaac Kavalami, president of a local civil group. An AFP correspondent yesterday saw nine bodies at the morgue of Oicha General Hospital, some with stab wounds.

Lieutenant Marc Elongo, spokesman for the Congolese army in the region, also blamed "ADF terrorists" for the attack.

The ADF were taking revenge on local civilians in retaliation for ongoing military operations in the area, he said in a statement.

Kavalami said civil society representatives had alerted security forces about the threat of attacks but no steps had been taken. The ADF pledged allegiance to Islamic State in 2019, and has killed thousands of civilians despite the deployment of the Ugandan and Congolese armies.

Israel targets Houthi energy site in Yemen

AFP
Jerusalem

Israel said yesterday it targeted an energy infrastructure site in Yemen's capital Sanaa, linked to the Houthi fighters behind repeated attacks on Israel during the Gaza war.

A military statement said Israeli forces "struck... deep inside Yemen, targeting an energy infrastructure site that served the Houthi fighter regime" in the area of the fighters-held capital, without naming the site.

The Houthis' Al-Masirah TV, citing a civil defence source, reported "an aggression targeting the Haziz power station" south of the city.

There were no immediate reports of casualties.

A photographer working with AFP reported significant damage at the site.

An employee of the power station told AFP that "two aggressive strikes by the Israeli enemy" hit the site in the early morning, but there were no casualties.

Since the October 2023 start of the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip, the Houthis have repeatedly fired missiles and drones at Israel, claiming to be acting in solidarity with the Palestinians.

Most Houthi attacks have been intercepted, but have prompted Israeli air strikes on fighter tar-



A man walks as another looks on at the site of an Israeli air strike that targeted the Haziz power station south of the Houthi-run Yemeni capital Sanaa, yesterday.

gets in Yemen. The military said its latest "strikes were conducted in response to repeated attacks" by the Houthis.

Yesterday afternoon, the Israeli military said it intercepted another missile fired from Yemen, after sirens went off in several regions. Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree later claimed the attack for the group, saying they had targeted Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport with a ballistic missile.

Defence Minister Israel Katz said in a post on X that the Houthis would "pay with compound interest for every attempt to fire at Israel" and that Israel was "imposing an air and sea blockade" on the group.

In June, Katz threatened a blockade, without any notable follow-up.

Beyond attacks on Israel, the Houthis have also targeted ships they say are Israeli-linked in

the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden off Yemen.

The group broadened its campaign to target ships tied to the United States and Britain after the two countries began military strikes aimed at securing the waterway in January 2024.

In May, the fighters cemented a ceasefire with the United States that ended weeks of intense US strikes, but vowed to continue targeting Israeli ships.

Nigeria arrests leaders of high-profile terror group

AFP
Lagos

Nigerian officials have said they had arrested the alleged leaders of a militant group accused of several high-profile attacks including a 2022 brazen jailbreak in the capital Abuja that temporarily freed hundreds of inmates.

Nigeria's National Security Adviser, Nuhu Ribadu, told journalists that Mahmud Muhammad Usman and Mahmud al-Nigeri had been captured during a "targeted operation" between May and July. He said they were the leaders of a group commonly known as Ansaru.

President Bola Tinubu's spokesman Bayo Onanuga described the capture in a social media post as a "significant breakthrough in the war against terrorism".

The group was also accused of blowing up rail tracks and raiding a train travelling from the capital Abuja to the northwestern city of Kaduna also in 2022. Eight people were killed and dozens more kidnapped and held for months.

They "have been on Nigeria's most-wanted list for years" and

were also on international wanted lists, said Ribadu. "They jointly spearheaded multiple attacks on civilians, security forces, and critical infrastructure," he added.

In July 2022, militants used guns and explosives to blast their way into a prison on the outskirts of Abuja, freeing dozens of inmates. Ansaru subsequently claimed responsibility.

The arrests mark a breakthrough in the West African nation's decade-and-a-half-long battle against militants in the northeast — and, more recently, against criminal gangs behind kidnappings for ransom in central and northwestern regions.

Ribadu said the two had been involved in several high-profile kidnappings in the regions.

The Boko Haram splinter group was formed in 2012, later aligning itself with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The United States in 2013 designated the group alongside Boko Haram as "Foreign Terrorist Organisations".

Ribadu said the capture of the group's leader and deputy commander, "marks one of the most significant achievements to date in our ongoing effort to rid Nigeria of the threat of terrorism".

Iraq starts work on IS mass grave thought to contain thousands

AFP
Baghdad

Iraqi authorities have begun excavating the site of a mass grave believed to contain thousands of victims of the Islamic State (IS) group near Mosul city, the project's director said yesterday.

The first phase, which was launched on August 10, includes surface-level excavation at the Khasfa site, director Ahmed al-Assadi said.

An AFP correspondent visiting the site in northern Iraq yesterday said the team unearthed human skulls buried in the sand.

Khasfa is located near Mosul, where IS had established the capital of their self-declared "caliphate" before being defeated in Iraq in late 2017.

Assadi said that there were no precise figures for the numbers of victims buried there — one of dozens of mass graves IS left behind in Iraq — but a UN report from 2018 said Khasfa was likely the country's largest.

Official estimates put the number of bodies buried at the site at at least 4,000, with the possibility of thousands more.

The project director said the victims buried there include "soldiers executed by IS", members of the Yazidi minority and residents of Mosul.

Exhuming the bodies from Khasfa is particularly difficult,



This aerial view shows the Khasfa site near the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, where authorities have begun excavating a mass grave believed to contain thousands of victims of the Islamic State (IS), yesterday. **Below:** Members of the Iraqi authorities gather near a sinkhole at the Khasfa site near the northern city of Mosul.



Assadi said, as underground sulphur water makes the earth very porous.

The water may have also eroded the human remains, complicating DNA identification of victims, he added.

Assadi said further studies will be required before his team can dig deeper and exhume

bodies at the site — a sinkhole about 150-metre deep and 110-metre wide.

Iraqi authorities said it was the site of "one of the worst massacres" committed by IS militants, executing 280 in a single day in 2016, many of them interior ministry employees.

OPINION

Syria's Sharaa hopes for Kurdish deal to prevent conflict

Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa has expressed hope that his country would avoid military conflict with US-backed Kurdish forces if efforts to integrate their autonomous administration in northeast Syria into the state structure collapse, Reuters reported from Amman. In remarks late on Saturday to senior figures from Idlib, where he has mustered loyalist forces, Sharaa said Kurdish leaders had signalled readiness to move forward with a landmark deal in March to bring their Kurdish-run areas under state authority.

But their actions on the ground suggested otherwise, he told the publicised forum.

"At times on the ground there are signals opposite to what they say in the negotiations," Sharaa said.

Turkiye and Washington, the main powers backing the deal to integrate Syria's oil-rich northeast into the state, wanted to resolve the issue peacefully, Sharaa said.

"These parties are pushing for a solution peacefully. I hope we don't enter into a dispute. I am hopeful in a few months we will resolve it," he said.

The collapse of follow-up talks since the March deal has escalated tensions in the region, triggering fresh clashes this month between government troops and the Kurdish-led, US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The SDF, which controls parts of northeast Syria where Arabs form a majority, has recently fortified extensive tunnel networks along the frontlines. Many others accuse the SDF of discriminatory policies — claims Kurdish officials deny.

Kuwait arrests 67 over illegal liquor production

Reuters
Kuwait City

Kuwaiti authorities have arrested 67 people accused of producing and distributing locally made alcoholic drinks that have killed 23 people in recent days, the Interior Ministry said.

Kuwait bans the import or domestic production of alcoholic beverages, but some are manufactured illegally in secret locations that lack oversight or safety standards.

The ministry said in a statement

on X late on Saturday that it had seized six factories and another four that were not yet operational in residential and industrial areas.

The health ministry said on Thursday that cases of methanol poisoning linked to the tainted drinks had risen to 160, with 23 deaths, mostly among Asian nationals, up from 13 fatalities reported earlier.

The head of the "criminal network", a Bangladeshi national, was arrested, while one of the suspects, a Nepali, explained how methanol was prepared and sold, the Interior Ministry said.

Abidjan landfill transformed into city parkland

AFP
Abidjan

Beneath the fresh grass and brand-new infrastructure of Abidjan's Akouedo Park lie millions of tonnes of waste that for decades plagued locals' lives and health.

Transforming landfill into recreational spaces — turning trash into landscaped treasure — has become something of a trend in recent years from New York to New Zealand.

Abidjan, Ivory Coast's bustling economic hub, has now enthusiastically got in on the act.

For residents of this eastern neighbourhood, covering over a landfill area, opened in 1965 and closed in 2018, is a blessing.

The new park spans some 100 hectares, affording the rapidly urbanising city of some 6mn people an all too rare green space.

After five years of construction,

the urban park is ready to open, though an official date has yet to be confirmed.

The radical change of scenery is a boon as the previous dumping of hazardous toxic waste had been a source of health, environmental and safety problems.

"We suffered a lot," Celestine Maile, who has lived in Akouedo for more than 30 years, told AFP.

Today, "it feels good to breathe," she said, beaming, taking a look around the transformed surroundings.

"There were mountains of garbage, and underneath, water used to flow everywhere," she recalled, of how things once were.

Along with the exposure to odours and pests, the landfill constituted "a major public health problem", according to a 2019 study, which Ivorian scientists conducted on the toxicological risks to people living nearby.

Its authors recommended the urgent "closure and rehabilita-



Pedestrians walk at the former Akouedo landfill that has now been turned into a park in Abidjan.

tion" of the site, saying people living in the vicinity were "clearly exposed to poisoning from pollutants", including lead, mercury and carcinogenic chromium.

Exposure to such pollution also helped give rise to conditions such as malaria, gastroenteritis and respiratory problems, the researchers said.

"The garbage caused illnesses," stressed Maile, who said she suffers from eye problems linked to decades of living near the dump.

Akouedo had also become a haven for drug dealing where assaults were common, she added.

"That dump really felt like a cemetery," said Severin Alogo, who heads the office of the tradi-

tional chief of the Akouedo district.

For Alogo, the creation of Akouedo Park has brought "repair" to the neighbourhood.

"The name Akouedo will no longer be associated with a landfill, but with a beautiful urban park," declared Ivorian Minister of Hydraulics, Sanitation and Health Bouake Fofana. "What was lost has been largely regained," he added.

The minister said that 750 direct and indirect jobs had been created as a result of the project, which also includes a market, a middle school and the renovation of two kilometres of neighbourhood roads.

Financed by the Ivorian government to the tune of 124bn CFA francs (\$211mn), the overhaul also has an environmental component.

The waste stored under the park will now be used for energy resources thanks to a drainage

and capture system. Biogas and liquids resulting from the fermentation of the 53mn tonnes of accumulated waste are transported to a plant to be converted into electricity to power the park and part of the national grid.

The park has an "Environmental House" too, which Fofana said would host events on contemporary environmental issues.

Visitors will be able to play sports in the park, which includes a tennis court and two football pitches. There is also a large footbridge that winds through an embryonic tropical forest and shared vegetable gardens. Like many rapidly urbanising African cities grappling with the challenge of managing waste, Abidjan has found a new, bigger substitute for the Akouedo landfill.

Long the city's only waste storage site, it has been replaced by one with four times as much storage capacity in the Abidjan suburb of Kossihouen.

Bolivian right eyes return in polls marked by inflation

Reuters/AFP
La Paz

Voters in Bolivia began taking to the polls yesterday in a general election that has been overshadowed by inflation at a four-decade high and the absence of former leftist president Evo Morales, who is barred from running.

Leading the race are opposition conservative contenders Samuel Doria Medina, a business magnate, and Jorge "Tuto" Quiroga, a former president, but neither commands more than 30% support, opinion polls show, with around a quarter of Bolivians undecided.

The August race marks the first time in almost two decades that polling indicates Bolivia's incumbent Movement for Socialism, or MAS, could face defeat.

Support for MAS-affiliated and other left-leaning candidates trails the opposition, totalling around 10%, according to the latest August Ipsos CEISMORI survey.

If no presidential candidate wins more than 40% support with a 10 percentage point lead, the election will head to a runoff on October 19. Morales, who co-founded MAS and governed the country from 2006-2019 under its banner, has been barred from running for another term as president.

Early yesterday Morales took part in the electoral process, casting his vote in the central Cochabamba department, but later criticised the elections for excluding his political movement.

Ballot stations opened at 8am local time (1200 GMT) and closed at 4pm, with initial results expected after 9pm.

Full official results are due within seven days. Voters will also elect all 26 senators and 130 deputies,



Bolivian presidential candidate Andronico Rodriguez of the Popular Alliance (Alianza Popular) party is evacuated by a member of the Bolivian Armed Forces after voting in the general election, following an incident in which people threw rocks at him, in Entre Rios, Cochabamba, Bolivia. - Reuters

and officials assume office on November 8.

Officials said yesterday morning that the election day was proceeding normally following several minor incidents reported at polling stations.

Minister of Government Roberto Rios said that security measures had been effective and warned of misinformation about the vote.

With a crowded field and no dominant MAS party candidate, the election marks a "crossroads moment" for Bolivia, said Southern Andes analyst Gelaids Gonzalez Calanche of the International Crisis Group.

Bolivia's fragile economy is top-of-mind for voters.

Price rises have surged past other Latin American countries this year, and fuel and dollars have run scarce.

Annual inflation doubled to 23% in June, up from 12% in January, with some Bolivians turning to

cryptocurrencies as a hedge.

Many Bolivians, especially those who work in the informal economy, were now struggling to make ends meet, said economist Roger Lopez.

"Prices of the basic food basket are going up fast," said Lopez. "Suddenly the math doesn't add up anymore."

They may choose to punish MAS in the polls, creating a window of opportunity for centrists, the right, or a leftist faction led by Senate President Andronico Rodriguez.

"Every year the situation has got worse under this government," said Silvia Morales, 30, from La Paz, who works in retail.

A former MAS voter, she said this time she would cast her vote for the centre-right.

Carlos Blanco Casas, 60, a teacher in La Paz, said he intended to vote for change.

"This election feels hopeful. We

need a change of direction," he said.

"We're experiencing a tremendous crisis, so we need a change," Alicia Vacaflor, a 62-year-old importer of industrial machines, told AFP after voting in the biting cold at a school in central La Paz.

Karla Coronel, a 46-year-old market analyst, agreed on the need for a new direction.

"Socialism has brought us nothing good," she declared.

Agustin Quispe, a 51-year-old miner, accused both the left and right of failing to advance "new ideas".

Branding Doria Medina and Quiroga, both of whom are on their fourth run for president, "dinosaurs", he said he supported centre-right candidate Rodrigo Paz.

Quiroga has promised "radical change" to reverse what he calls "20 lost years" under MAS rule.

He supports deep public spending cuts and a shift away from alliances with Venezuela, Cuba and Nicaragua.

Quiroga was president for a year in 2001-02 after the then-leader resigned.

Doria Medina, meanwhile, offers a more moderate approach, pledging to stabilise the economy within 100 days.

On the left, the vote is split between the official MAS party candidate Eduardo del Castillo, who is backed by outgoing President Luis Arce, and Rodriguez, who has distanced himself from the party and is running on his own ticket.

Morales, 69, has called for a boycott of the election, but analysts said his influence is waning.

"There is widespread support for these elections," said Calanche. "Most Bolivians see them as key to leading the country towards economic recovery."

More than 7.9mn Bolivians are eligible to vote.

Air Canada union ignores order to lift strike action

Reuters/AFP
Montreal/Toronto

Air Canada flight attendants remained on strike yesterday past the deadline in a government-backed labour board's order to return to work, causing the country's biggest airline to delay restarting operations.

The Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) said in a statement that members would remain on strike and invited Air Canada back to the table to "negotiate a fair deal", calling the order to end its strike unconstitutional.

The airline said it would delay plans to restart operations to evening today.

On Saturday, Prime Minister Mark Carney's Liberal government moved to end the strike by more than 10,000 flight attendants by asking the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to order binding arbitration.

The CIRB issued the order, which Air Canada had sought, and unionised flight attendants opposed.

The Canada Labour Code gives the government the power to ask the CIRB to impose binding arbitration in the interest of protecting the economy.

The government's options to end the strike now include asking courts to enforce the order to return to work and seeking an expedited hearing.

The minority government could also try to pass legislation that would need the support of political rivals and approval in both houses of parliament, which is on break until September 15.

The government did not respond to requests for comment.

"The federal government has entrusted a board to administer these rules in the Canadian Labour Code, and if you defy them, you are transgressing and essentially violating the law," said Rafael Gomez, a professor of employment relations at the University of Toronto.

The government, under former prime minister Justin Trudeau, intervened last year to head off rail and dock strikes that threatened to cripple the economy, but it is unusual for a union to defy a CIRB order.

Air Canada flight attendants walked off the job on Saturday for the first time since 1985, after months of negotiations over a new contract.

Air Canada had said it planned

to resume flights yesterday evening, following the expected end of the strike that caused the suspension of around 700 daily flights on Saturday, stranding more than 100,000 passengers.

"Air Canada... has suspended its plan to resume limited flying by Air Canada and Air Canada Rouge", citing a decision by the union representing the workers to continue with striking, despite the government directive. "The airline will resume flights as of tomorrow evening."

The union called a decision by the CIRB chair Maryse Tremblay to not recuse herself from handling the case a "staggering conflict of interest", since she had worked as a senior counsel for Air Canada in the past.

According to Tremblay's LinkedIn profile, she served as Air Canada's counsel from 1998-2004.

The CIRB did not respond to a request for comment.

Other unions joined the flight attendants' picket line in solidarity in Toronto yesterday.

"They are in support here today because they are seeing our rights being eroded," said Natasha Stea, an Air Canada flight attendant and local union president.

Air Canada had started cancelling flights on Thursday in anticipation of the stoppage.

Travellers at Toronto Pearson International Airport said they were confused about whether their flights would resume or Air Canada would make alternative arrangements.

"We are kind of left to figure it out for ourselves and fend for ourselves with no recourse or options provided by Air Canada at this time," said Elizabeth Fournay of Vancouver.

The most contentious issue has been the union's demand for compensation for time spent on the ground between flights and when helping passengers board.

Attendants are largely paid only when their plane is moving. The CUPE had pushed for a negotiated solution, saying that binding arbitration would take pressure off the airline.

Air Canada said yesterday that the CIRB had ordered the terms of the collective agreement between the union and the airline that expired on March 31 be extended until a new agreement can be reached.

Canada's flag carrier counts around 130,000 daily passengers and flies directly to 180 cities worldwide.

Hurricane Erin lashes Caribbean with rain

AFP/Reuters
Washington

Offshore Hurricane Erin was downgraded to a Category 3 storm early yesterday as rain lashed Caribbean islands and weather officials warned of possible flash floods and landslides.

The first hurricane of what is expected to be a particularly intense Atlantic season, Erin briefly strengthened into a "catastrophic" Category 5 storm before its wind-speeds weakened.

It is expected to lash several Caribbean islands with heavy rain and strong winds but not make landfall.

Hurricane Erin was located about 140 miles (225km) north of San Juan, Puerto Rico, at 0600 GMT, when it was gauged as a Category 3 storm with maximum sustained winds of 125mph (205kph), according to the Miami-based National Hurricane Centre (NHC).

"The core of Erin is expected to pass to the east of the Turks and Caicos Islands and the south-eastern Bahamas tonight and on Monday," the NHC said in its latest report, noting that it anticipated additional fluctuations in the storm's intensity.

A tropical storm watch was in effect for Turks and Caicos Islands, while the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the southeast and central Bahamas were advised to monitor its progress.

Hurricane Erin had reached the highest level on the Saffir-Simpson scale just over 24 hours after becoming a Category 1 storm, a rapid intensification that scientists say has become more common due to global warming.

It could drench isolated areas with as much as 8" (20cm) of rain, the NHC said.

"Fluctuations in intensity are expected over the next day or two due to inner-core structural changes. Erin is becoming a larger system," the agency said.

It also warned of "locally considerable flash and urban flooding, along with landslides or mudslides".

In Luquillo, a coastal town of Puerto Rico, surfers rode the swells while beachgoers milled about

the shore before the storm approached, AFP images show.

Swells generated by Erin will affect portions of the northern Leeward Islands, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Hispaniola and the Turks and Caicos Islands during the next couple of days.

Those swells will spread to the Bahamas, Bermuda and the US East Coast early next week, creating "life-threatening surf and rip currents", the NHC said.

While meteorologists have expressed confidence that Erin will remain well off the US coastline, they said the storm could still cause dangerous waves and erosion in places such as North Carolina.

Erin has also raised concerns about wildfire risks if human-caused sparks ignite parched vegetation and strong dry winds fan the flames.

BMS Group Senior Meteorologist Andrew Siffert said these conditions could arise if Erin grows into a powerful offshore storm fuelled by colliding warm and cold air rather than tropical seas.

Insurance-linked securities manager Twelve Securis said on Friday that Erin was forecast to remain far enough offshore to spare the US East Coast from significant impacts.

The Atlantic hurricane season, which runs from June until late November, is expected to be more intense than normal, US meteorologists predict.

Several powerful storms wreaked havoc in the region last year, including Hurricane Helene, which killed more than 200 people in the southeastern United States.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration - which operates the NHC - has been subject to budget cuts and layoffs as part of US President Donald Trump's plans to greatly reduce the size of the federal bureaucracy, leading to fears of lapses in storm forecasting.

Human-driven climate change - namely, rising sea temperatures caused by the burning of fossil fuels - has increased both the possibility of the development of more intense storms and their more rapid intensification, scientists say.



A truck drives through a flooded road as Category 3 Hurricane Erin leaves the region in Naguabo, Puerto Rico. Offshore Hurricane Erin was downgraded to a Category 3 storm early yesterday, as rain lashed Caribbean islands and weather officials warned of possible flash floods and landslides. - AFP

At least 7 killed in Ecuador pool hall shooting: police

At least seven people were killed in Ecuador yesterday when gunmen opened fire on a bar, police said, as the South American nation struggles with soaring gang violence.

"Seven people died from gunshot wounds" at a pool hall in the nightlife district of Santo Domingo, about 150km (93 miles) west of the capital Quito, national police told a press briefing, as purported security camera footage of the massacre circulated online. - AFP

Three Republican-led states to deploy National Guard troops to US capital

The Republican governors of three states are deploying hundreds of National Guard troops to Washington, DC, at the request of the administration of President Donald Trump, who has portrayed the city as awash in crime.

The announcements on Saturday of troops from hundreds of miles away in West Virginia, South Carolina and Ohio came a day after DC officials and the Trump administration negotiated a deal to keep Mayor Muriel Bowser's appointed police chief, Pamela Smith, in charge of the police department after DC Attorney-General Brian Schwab filed a lawsuit to block the federal takeover of the department.

Trump, a Republican, said this week he was deploying hundreds of DC National Guard troops to Washington and temporarily taking over the Democratic-led city's police department to curb what he depicted as a crime and homelessness emergency.

Justice Department data, however, showed violent crime in 2024 hit a 30-year low in Wash-

ington, a self-governing federal district under the jurisdiction of Congress.

West Virginia Governor Patrick Morrisey's office said he was deploying 300-400 National Guard troops to DC in "a show of commitment to public safety and regional co-operation".

South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster responded to a Pentagon request by announcing that 200 of his state's National Guard troops would be sent.

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine said he would send 150 military police members in the coming days, adding none of them were "currently serving as law enforcement officers in the state".

After the announcements, Bowser posted on X: "American soldiers and airmen policing American citizens on American soil is #UnAmerican."

The National Guard serves as a militia that answers to the governors of the 50 states except when called into federal service.

The DC National Guard reports directly to the president. - Reuters

Over 300 protests held against Trump redistricting push

Reuters
Washington

Pro-democracy activists and labour groups held hundreds of rallies and other events across the United States on Saturday to protest the Trump administration's push for Texas to redraw its congressional map in favour of Republicans.

Former Congressman Beto O'Rourke was among those who spoke on Saturday in Texas, from which dozens of Democratic state lawmakers fled to deny Republicans

the quorum needed to vote on a redistricting plan that President Donald Trump had demanded.

"They do this because they are afraid," O'Rourke told an audience on Saturday, speaking of those attempting redistricting. "They fear this power they see here today."

Drucilla Tigner, executive director of pro-democracy coalition Texas For All, told Reuters that pro-democracy and labour groups held over 300 events attended by tens of thousands of people in 44 states and Washington, DC.

Many of the more than 50 Texas Democrats who fled the state have been staying in

Illinois, also the site of protests on Saturday.

The Texas lawmakers in Illinois are out of reach of civil arrest warrants that could be acted on within Texas.

The Texas Democrats kept the map from coming to a vote during a special session Governor Greg Abbott called that ended on Friday.

Abbott immediately called a second special session.

Abbott said that redistricting plans, legislation to increase flash flood safety in the wake of deadly July flooding, and other legislative work remains undone because Democrats are absent.



Protesters raise signs during the 'Fight the Trump Takeover', one of numerous held across the nation against Texas Republicans' efforts to redraw the state's 38 congressional districts, in Austin, Texas. - Reuters

Lula razzes Trump over tariff-hit grapes

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Saturday that he hopes Donald Trump can come and get to know the real Brazil, as the South American powerhouse reels from Washington's 50% tariffs.

In a video taken while he planted grapes - one of the tariff-hit goods - Brazil's leftist leader addressed Trump.

"I hope you can visit someday so we can talk and you can get to know the true Brazil, the Brazil of people who love samba, carnival, soccer, the United States, China, Russia, Uruguay, and Venezuela. We love everyone," Lula said.

The tariffs imposed on Brazil are among the steepest to hit a US trading partner.

And unlike with other countries, the measures against Brazil have been framed in openly political terms, with the Republican president justifying the move by alleging Brasilia is conducting a "witch hunt" against his ally, former president Jair Bolsonaro.

Bolsonaro is being tried for an alleged coup attempt against Lula in 2022, and the United States recently sanctioned the judge in the case, along with seven other Supreme Court magistrates.

In his message on X, Lula said he was giving an example of "planting food, and not planting violence, or planting hate".

"I hope that someday we can talk, President Trump, so you can learn about the quality of the Brazilian people," he adds. - AFP



Online cockfighting menace persists in Philippines despite ban and murders

AFP
Manila

Divers have spent more than a month searching a lake south of Manila for the bodies of men with links to the Philippines' bloody national obsession: cockfighting.

They were murdered by rogue police, a government witness says, allegedly for rigging matches at the height of the country's pandemic-era craze for wagering on live-streamed cockfights, or "e-sabong".

The disappearances led then president Rodrigo Duterte to announce a total ban, but three years later, the e-sabong industry is still thriving.

On a recent Saturday in the Manila suburb Bulacan, cockfighters, or "sabungeros", cracked grim jokes about their missing compatriots.

Inside the "tarian", a crowded room where blades are attached to each bird's leg, sabungero Marcelo Parang insisted the murders had nothing to do with the legal cockfighting world.

"We don't know if (the men killed) did something bad," said the 60-year-old.

"We're not scared... In here, we're peaceful. In here, the matches are held fairly," he said of the deadly contests. Outside, the crowd in the 800-seat arena roared as another bout ended with the losing rooster unceremoniously dumped in an empty paint bucket.

Cockpits like the one in Bulacan were once a second home for Ray Gibraltar, who grew up in a family of cockfight enthusiasts. One uncle was a breeder.

When the fights moved online during the Covid pandemic, the former director-turned-painter began wagering on them as well.

But the easy access, anonymity of the online world, and sheer volume of betting sites can lead to e-sabong addiction, and within a year, Gibraltar was winning and losing upwards of \$15,000 a day.

"I wasn't eating. I was just drinking coffee and smoking... I had no sleep," he said of a three-day session.

"In terms of money that I lost on e-sabong... I could have bought a house and car," he said, adding he

"borrowed money from everyone".

Before checking into rehab, he wagered the last 300 pesos in his e-wallet.

The story is a familiar one for Reagan Praferosa, founder of Recovering Gamblers of the Philippines, who says few clients show up before hitting rock bottom.

"They won't call us if they still have money," he said.

His first e-sabong addicts began arriving in 2020. Since then, about 30% of his caseload has revolved around the livestreamed fights.

"(At arenas) you had to go somewhere to cash out. Now... it's connected to an e-wallet," he explained, adding other forms of gambling were now taking their cues from e-sabong.

"Most of the sites have replicated their platforms."

Jay, a graphic artist, still logs onto an illegal website every time he gets his paycheck.

The 24-year-old, who asked to use a pseudonym as he fears his family's judgement, showed how wagers for as little as 10 pesos (about 18 cents) could be placed on two roosters shown on his phone.

Authorities estimate bettors like Jay are fuelling an industry that generates millions of dollars in revenue each week. "It's not the money I'm after, it's the thrill," he explained of an addiction he says he is trying to control. "It's easier to chase that in (e-sabong) because it's available on my cellphone."

While playing for relatively low stakes, Jay has found himself forced to make excuses after losing the money meant for his younger brother's school supplies.

Since the e-sabong ban was initiated, the country's telecoms commission has blocked more than 6,800 e-sabong websites, police brigadier general Bernard Yang said.

But the use of VPNs makes pinpointing the streams' true origins nearly impossible.

Asked for examples of IP traces that had led to raids, he pointed to a successful operation in the central Philippines' Cebu province - though it had taken place years earlier. While conceding that current penalties - with fines as low as 1,000 pesos (\$17) - provide little deterrent, Yang insisted the problem was simply "not so grave anymore".

'Unhappy Meal': McDonald's Japan sorry for Pokemon debacle

McDonald's Japan has apologised after a campaign giving away limited-edition Pokemon cards with "Happy Meals" triggered long queues and social media outrage about food waste. Cards with the "little monsters" are extremely popular among children but also adult superfans and collectors, with billions printed and some selling for millions of dollars. There have even been cases of shops that sell the cards - which represent monsters and their attributes - being broken into and physical

fights breaking out in low-crime Japan. The McDonald's stunt soon went awry with some people flocking to buy meals in bulk to resell the attached cards at a higher price on e-commerce sites. Social media was awash with complaints about long queues at McDonald's outlets, with unverified pictures of plastic bags full of uneaten burgers and fries. Some dubbed it the "Unhappy Meals" campaign. "I couldn't buy a Happy Meal for my daughter

because of these people", one user posted on X. "I'm sure there are adult Pokemon fans who genuinely want the cards, but these resellers are truly embarrassing," another wrote. "They go to great lengths to collect them and then throw away food ... for how much profit?" Similar problems have hit other McDonald's campaigns, including past collaborations with manga series such as "Chiikawa". Announcing the latest campaign, the firm stressed that each person could buy a maximum of five meals.

Indonesia Independence Day ceremony



Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto (centre) waves to people during a flag raising ceremony marking Indonesia's 80th Independence Day at Merdeka Palace in Jakarta, yesterday.

Flash flood in northern China leaves 10 dead

Reuters
Beijing

At least 10 people died in a flash flood in northern China, state media reported yesterday, with two others still missing, as the East Asian monsoon continues to unleash atmospheric chaos across the world's second-largest economy.

The banks of a river running through the grasslands of Inner Mongolia burst at around 10pm (1400GMT) on Saturday, the report said, washing away 13 people camping on the outskirts of the city of Bayannur, a major ag-

ricultural hub. A search and rescue operation involving more than 700 people is underway, according to state news agency Xinhua. One person has been rescued.

China has suffered weeks of extreme weather since July, battered by heavier-than-usual downpours with the monsoon stalling over its north and south. Weather experts link the shifting pattern to climate change, testing officials as flash floods displace thousands and threaten billions of dollars in economic losses.

Bayannur is an important national grain and oil production base, as well as a sheep breeding and processing centre.

At the other end of the country, a three-and-

a-half-month fishing suspension in the southern province of Hainan ended on Saturday, state media reported, after agricultural affairs officials ordered ships to shelter in port owing to persistent, heavy rain.

In the southwestern province of Sichuan, severe weather on Friday killed two people and injured three others at a festival in the city of Mianzhu, after a truss fell on them, according to a local police report on Saturday.

The deluge in Inner Mongolia follows a deadly downpour in Beijing - just under 1,000km away - late last month which killed at least 44 people and forced the evacuation of more than 70,000 residents.

Lanka names lawyer to replace impeached police chief

Sri Lanka's president appointed a lawyer from within the police force to replace its impeached inspector-general who was found guilty of running a private criminal network. Priyantha Weerasooriya, 56, who began his career as a constable and later qualified as an attorney-at-law while in service, was given leadership of the 85,000-member force. President Anura Kumara Dissanayake named Weerasooriya, the senior deputy inspector-general, as the new police chief after his elevation was approved by a bipartisan constitutional council. "He is the first inspector-general of police to have progressed through all three key ranks - police constable, sub-inspector and assistant superintendent of police - before assuming the top position," the president's office said in a statement. Weerasooriya joined the force in 1988 and 11 years later was promoted to assistant superintendent after qualifying as an attorney-at-law while serving in the police.

Robots compete in the 100m final



Unintree Robotics and Tiangong humanoid robots compete in the 100m final at the inaugural World Humanoid Robot Games, at the National Speed Skating Oval in Beijing, China, yesterday.

Scientists unearth 'cute' but fearsome ancient whale

AFP
Sydney

Australian scientists have discovered a razor-toothed whale that prowled the seas 26 million years ago, saying the species was "deceptively cute" but a fearsome predator.

Museums Victoria pieced together the species from an unusually well-preserved skull fossil found on Victoria's Surf Coast in 2019.

Scientists discovered a "fast, sharp-toothed predator" that would have been about the size of a dolphin. "It's essentially a little whale with big eyes and a mouth full of sharp, slicing teeth," said researcher Ruairidh Duncan.

"Imagine the shark-like version of a baleen whale - small and deceptively cute, but definitely not harmless."

The skull belonged to a group of prehistoric whales known as

the mammalodontids, distant smaller relatives of today's filter-feeding whales.

It is the fourth mammalodontid species ever discovered, Museums Victoria said.

"This fossil opens a window into how ancient whales grew and changed, and how evolution shaped their bodies as they adapted to life in the sea," said palaeontologist Erich Fitzgerald, who co-authored the study.

Victoria's Surf Coast lies on the Jan Juc Formation - a geological feature dating to the Oligocene epoch between 23 million and 30 million years ago.

A string of rare fossils have been unearthed along the scenic stretch of beach, a renowned site for the study of early whale evolution.

"This region was once a cradle for some of the most unusual whales in history, and we're only just beginning to uncover their stories," said Fitzgerald.

Indonesian roof tilers flex muscles to keep local industry alive

AFP
Majalengka, Indonesia

A young Indonesian man turns his back to a crowd, flexing his oiled-up muscles before picking up a stack of roof tiles, holding as many as he can in a pose reminiscent of Mr Olympia.

This is a bodybuilding battle of a different kind - one where competitors are roof tile factory workers who pump clay instead of iron to bring attention to their dwindling trade.

In Java's Jatiwangi city, an Indonesian hub for clay roof tile production nearly 200km from the capital, Jakarta, dozens of men have been lathering on oil to pose for crowds since 2015 to show they are not going anywhere.

The clay industry in Jatiwangi is more than a century old, when terracotta tiles drawing on local heritage were first made by hand to replace thatched house roofs.

They are now mostly used for housing, and in the 1930s inspired Indonesia's former Dutch colonial rulers to tile their own government buildings and em-

ployee homes. "But over time, it started to fade away," said Illa Syukrillah Syarief, a 48-year-old worker at the Jatiwangi Art Factory who helps to organise the competition.

"So we feel that we're not just here to tell stories about roof tiles, but also to be saviours, to preserve the culture of Jatiwangi roof tiles."

The workers use clay or local soil to make their tiles, but the younger generation is taking on fewer manual labour jobs and big industry is hitting the revenues of local trade.

It has caused fear that their in-

dustry could become a forgotten art in the future.

"We're pushing through in a situation that's not going so well," said Illa.

"We've lost workers, and the demand isn't what it used to be."

The shirtless men, young and old, posed for a crowd that included women and judges who pick the winners of cash prizes up to 1.5 million rupiah (\$92) for the number one spot.

Attendee Ika called the show "something unique" that displayed "bodybuilding with a distinctive style" rooted in Indone-

sian culture. The winnings are donated by rival factories whose workers battle it out against one another in the competition, with no sponsors yet stumping up cash for the event.

"It was incredible to see the competitors and their style, and all the many things they can do using their hands, using their mouth even, carrying tiles," said foreign judge Alessa Cargnell.

The red, earthy tiles have a curved shape that lock in together, making it easier to clasp a stack and pose from the front or the side.

One man displayed incredible power to hold a tile between each finger and one from his mouth while standing on one leg, as remixed traditional music typically heard in Indonesian TikTok videos blared in the background.

But the strength of the roof tile workforce is not only reserved for the weight room.

"We're still determined. The hope is that roof tiles, or processing the soil in Jatiwangi, won't just be a commodity," said Illa.

"But truly become an identity: as roof tile makers, as people who work with the earth."

US-India trade talks 'scheduled for August called off'

Reuters
New Delhi

A planned visit by US trade negotiators to New Delhi from August 25-29 has been called off, a source said, delaying talks on

a proposed trade agreement and dashing hopes of relief from additional US tariffs on Indian goods from August 27.

The current round of negotiations for the proposed bilateral trade agreement is now likely to be deferred to another date that has yet

to be decided, the source with direct knowledge of the matter said. The US embassy in New Delhi said it has no additional information on the trade and tariff talks, which are being handled by the United States Trade Representative (USTR).

India's trade ministry did not im-

mediately reply to a e-mail seeking comments. Earlier this month, US President Donald Trump imposed an additional 25% tariff on Indian goods, citing New Delhi's continued imports of Russian oil in a move that sharply escalated tensions between the two nations. The new import

tax, which will come into effect from August 27, will raise duties on some Indian exports to as high as 50% - among the highest levied on any US trading partner.

Trade talks between New Delhi and Washington collapsed after five rounds of negotiations over disa-

greement on opening India's vast farm and dairy sectors and stopping Russian oil purchases.

India's foreign ministry has said the country is being unfairly singled out for buying Russian oil while the US and European Union continue to purchase goods from Russia.

India set to allow private firms to mine, import uranium

Reuters
New Delhi

India aims to allow private firms to mine, import and process uranium as part of plans to end a decades-old state monopoly over the nuclear sector and bring in billions of dollars to boost the industry, two government sources said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government plans to expand nuclear power production capacity by 12 times by 2047 and it is also relaxing requirements to allow foreign players to take a minority stake in power plants, Reuters reported in April.

If it meets its expansion goal, nuclear will provide 5% of India's total power needs, according to government estimates.

Until now, the state has maintained control over the mining, import and processing of uranium fuel because of concerns over the possible misuse of nuclear material, radiation safety and strategic security.

It will retain its grip on reprocessing spent uranium fuel and managing plutonium waste, in line with global practice. But to help meet a surge in demand for nuclear fuel as it expands nuclear power production, the government plans to draw up a regulatory framework that would allow private Indian firms to mine, import and process uranium, the two government sources said.

They asked not to be named because the plans are not yet public.

The proposed policy, which the sources said was likely to be made public in the current fiscal year, will also permit private players to supply critical control system equipment for nuclear power plants, they said.

The finance ministry, department of atomic energy and prime minister's office did not respond to requests for comment.

Outside India, countries including Canada, South Africa and the US allow private firms to mine and process uranium.

India has an estimated 76,000 tonnes of uranium is enough to fuel 10,000 megawatts of nuclear power for 30 years, according to government data.

But the sources said domestic resources would only be able to meet about 25% of the projected increase. The rest would have to be imported and India would need to increase its processing capacity.

In announcing its budget on February 1, the government made public its plans to open up the sector without giving details. Some of India's big conglomerates subsequently began drawing up investment plans.

But analysts said amending the legislation could be complex. "It's a major and bold initiative by the Indian government which is critical for achieving the target," said Charudatta Palekar, independent power sector consultant.

"The challenge will be to define quickly the rules of engagement with private sector."

Heavy rains in Jalandhar



A motorcyclist retrieves his bike stuck in a waterlogged street following heavy monsoon rain showers in Jalandhar, India, yesterday.

Modi's tax overhaul to strain finances but boost image

Reuters
New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's deepest tax cuts in eight years will strain government revenues but are winning praise from businesses and political pundits who say they will bolster his image in an on-going trade fight with Washington.

In the biggest tax overhaul since 2017, Modi's government on Saturday announced sweeping changes to the complex goods and services tax (GST) regime which will make daily essentials and electronics cheaper from October, helping consumers and also companies like Nestle, Samsung and LG Electronics.

At the same time, in his Independence Day speech on Friday, Modi urged Indians to use more goods made domestically, echoing calls

from many of his supporters to boycott US products after Donald Trump hiked tariffs on imports from India to 50% as of August 27.

The tax cut plan comes with costs given GST is a major revenue generator. IDFC First Bank says the cuts will boost India's GDP by 0.6 percentage points over 12 months but will cost the state and federal government \$20bn annually.

But it will improve weak stock market sentiment and bring political dividends for Modi ahead of a critical state election in the eastern state of Bihar, said Rasheed Kidwai, a fellow at New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation.

"GST reduction will impact everyone, unlike cuts to income tax, which is paid by only 3%-4% of the population. Modi is doing this as he is under a lot of pressure due to US policies," said Kidwai.

"The move will also help the stock market, which is now politically important as it has a lot of retail investors."

India launched the major tax system in 2017 that subsumed local state taxes into the new, nationwide GST to unify its economy for the first time. But the biggest tax reform since India's independence faced criticism for its complex design that taxes products and services under four slabs - 5%, 12%, 18% and 28%.

Last year, India said caramel popcorn would be taxed at 18% but the salted category at 5%, triggering criticism about a glaring example of GST's complexities.

Under the new system, India will abolish the 28% slab - which includes cars and electronics - and move nearly all of the items under the 12% category to the lower 5% slab, benefiting many more consumer items and packaged foods.

UK councillor cleared of encouraging violent behaviour

A British councillor was acquitted of encouraging violent disorder for saying far-right activists should have their throats cut amid riots last year, drawing claims from right-wing politicians of a hypocritical "two-tier" justice system.

Ricky Jones made the comments at a counter-protest in London after three girls were murdered in the north English town of Southport and was suspended by the ruling Labour party.

Misinformation on social media said the teenager who committed the murders at a Taylor Swift-themed dance event was a migrant, fuelling days of violent riots.

Jones, 58, was cleared by a jury following a trial at Snaresbrook Crown Court. He had made the remarks to a crowd gathered near an immigration advice centre in London after reports that far-right supporters were planning a protest.

New policies fail to deter migrants to UK



An aerial photograph shows inflatable dinghies and outboard engines believed to have been used by migrants to cross the channel and stored in a port authority yard in Dover, south-east England, yesterday. Figures yesterday show more than 2,500 migrants have crossed the Channel in small boats in the 11 days since the new "one in, one out" agreement with France took effect.

British veteran actor Terence Stamp dies at 87

AFP
London

British actor Terence Stamp, who perfected the role of the brooding villain, has died aged 87, UK media cited his family announcing yesterday.

"He leaves behind an extraordinary body of work, both as an actor and as a writer that will continue to touch and inspire people for years to come," media quoted the family saying.

From Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Theorem* to George Lucas's *Star Wars*, the "swinging sixties" icon captivated audiences in both arthouse films and Hollywood with his magnetic presence, making more than 60 films during his genre-spanning career.

The London actor from a working-class background, born on July 22, 1938 had his first breakthrough in the role of a dashing young sailor hanged for killing one of his crewmates. Peter Ustinov's *Billy Budd* earning him an Oscar nomination and a Golden Globe for Best New Actor.

Carving out a niche for his alluring depictions of brooding villains, he won Best Actor at Cannes in 1965 for his role as a psychopathic character in *The Collector*, a twisted love story by William Wyler.

His 1967 encounter with Federico Fellini, who was searching for the "most decadent English actor" for his adaptation of "Extraordinary Stories", was transformative.



Courier firms' officials face probe in India antitrust case

Reuters
New Delhi

Top India executives of FedEx, UPS, Aramex and DHL are set to be cross-examined in coming weeks by a book publishers' group which accused them of price collusion, a new twist in an anti-trust probe that cleared the courier companies of wrongdoing last year, a document shows.

Allowing a complainant to interrogate companies is not common in Indian antitrust cases. It means the final findings of the antitrust investigation could change and create new challenges for the courier ma-

jors, and the case will be prolonged by several months, antitrust lawyers and government sources said.

Many foreign and domestic companies are bullish about the Indian courier and parcel delivery market, which is expected to grow 11% a year to \$14.3bn by 2030, bolstered by a boom in online shopping, research firm Mordor Intelligence says.

In December, media reported that the Competition Commission of India (CCI) found "no evidence" of courier firms sharing commercial information amongst themselves. The 2022 cartel case, whose details remain confidential in line with rules, was triggered when the Fed-

eration of Indian Publishers alleged collusion on prices and discounts by delivery firms.

The CCI has now found merit in a complaint by the publishers' group which argued it must be allowed to cross-examine the delivery company executives as investigators only relied on oral submissions to give the companies a clean chit.

The federation "has demonstrated sufficient cause establishing necessity and expediency of conducting such cross-examination," the CCI noted in a May 28 internal order.

The order said the executives to be questioned were Subhasish Chakraborty, managing director of

India's DTDC Express; R.S. Subramanian, managing director of DHL Express India; Suvendu Choudhury, a vice-president of FedEx in India; Percy Avari, general manager of Aramex in India, and Abbas Panju, India managing director of UPS Express.

None of the executives responded to requests for comment.

DHL said in a statement it operates in full compliance with all laws and is "cooperating fully with the CCI", but could not comment on specifics.

The CCI, as well as other companies - DTDC, US-based FedEx and UPS, and Dubai's Aramex did not respond to Reuters queries.

The Federation of Indian Publishers also did not respond. It represents many Indian publishers like S Chand and Rupa Publications, as well as some foreign groups like Pan Macmillan.

Sending the case back to the CCI investigators could become an irritant for the logistics industry, which has faced scrutiny since 2015, when France levied a \$735mn fine on 20 companies, including FedEx and DHL, for secretly colluding to increase prices.

In India, cross-examination of companies by the complainant "is rare," said Gautam Shahi, a competition law partner at Indian law firm Dua Associates.

"Such cross-examination may reveal new facts and the conclusions of the earlier investigation report may come into question. It may change the direction of the case," he said.

The CCI investigations unit will now oversee the cross-examination proceedings in coming weeks and submit a report to top anti-trust officials for a review, four sources familiar with the matter said.

The Federation of Indian Publishers had alleged that courier companies acted together to determine charges, and also did not reduce the fuel surcharge they charged when jet fuel prices dropped.



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Walking more steps daily cuts risk of early death, US study finds

A latest US study - which shows that each additional thousand steps beyond 4,000 or 5,000 steps daily correlates with a 15% decrease in the risk of mortality - is highly relevant irrespective of geographical boundaries. The finding is by a team of researchers at the University of Washington who investigated the causal relationship between walkable environments and increased physical activity levels. Walking has increasingly been recognised as an essential component of a healthy lifestyle, with numerous studies highlighting the myriad benefits it offers for individuals of various age groups.

The relationship between physical activity, particularly walking, and improved overall health has prompted researchers to delve deeper into the factors that influence walking behaviour. The research meticulously utilised data from the Argus step-tracking app, encompassing over 2mn users. By analysing the daily step counts of 5,424 individuals who relocated to different cities in the US, the study established a clear correlation: as Walk Scores - an index ranging from 0-100 that rates a location's pedestrian-friendliness - rose significantly, so did the corresponding increase in daily step counts.

A University of Washington study shows each extra 1,000 steps beyond 4,000-5,000 daily cuts mortality risk by 15%



for individuals and society. Participants are encouraged to walk a minimum of 10,000 steps daily inside the participating malls, with every step counted through the QSEA mobile application, which offers virtual walking routes mapped within the mall premises.

The Ministry of Municipality in Qatar is also encouraging residents to utilise the country's air-conditioned parks for fitness and recreation during the summer months. In a recent X post, the ministry said that it provides shaded and cooled paths at Al Gharrafa, Umm Al Seneem and Rawdat Al Hamama parks to make exercise a way of life in a safe and comfortable environment year round.

Al Gharrafa Park has a 657m air-conditioned circular walking and running track, with temperatures maintained between 26-28C. The Islamic Mashrabiya-style structures allow cool air circulation in the tracks. Solar panels along the corridor generate electricity and provide a plant fence at a suitable height. The Umm Al Seneem Park in Doha's Ain Khalid area has the Guinness World Record 1.143km air-conditioned track. The Rawdat Al Hamam Park features the longest air-conditioned outdoor track in the world with a length of 1.197km.

Qatar has succeeded in harnessing technological progress to offer a real solution regarding the high temperatures in the summer, mitigating their impact by making many of its outdoor spaces and venues air-conditioned, a new dimension added to the list of tourism options in Qatar and promoted its competitive capabilities. Katara Cultural Village and some other key locations have air-conditioned open spaces which are becoming increasingly popular in summer while also helping residents to stay fit.

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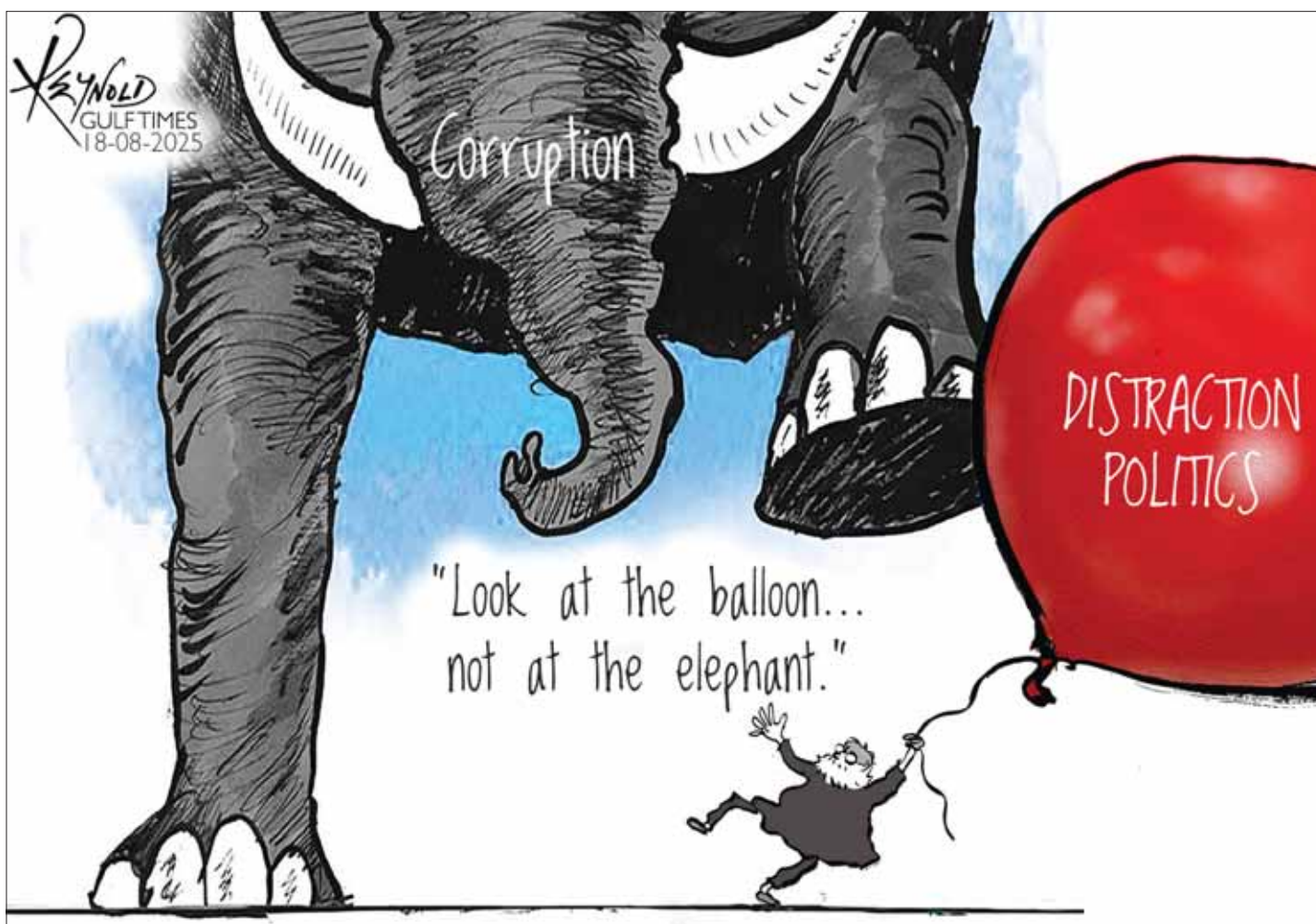
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Putin won Ukraine concessions in Alaska but not all he wanted

By Andrew Osborn
Moscow

In a few short hours in Alaska, Vladimir Putin managed to convince Donald Trump that a Ukraine ceasefire was not the way to go, stave off US sanctions, and spectacularly shatter years of Western attempts to isolate the Russian president.

Outside Russia, Putin was widely hailed as the victor of the Alaska summit while at home, Russian state media cast the US president as a prudent statesman, even as critics in the West accused him of being out of his depth.

Russian state media made much of the fact that Putin was afforded a military fly-over, that Trump waited for him on the red carpet, and then let the Russian president ride with him in the back of the "Big Beast", the US presidential limousine.

"Western media are in a state that could be described as derangement verging on complete insanity," said Maria Zakharova, Russia's foreign minister spokeswoman.

"For three years, they talked about Russia's isolation, and today they saw the red carpet rolled out to welcome the Russian president to the United States," she said.

But Putin's biggest summit wins related to the war in Ukraine, where he appears to have persuaded Trump, at least in part, to embrace Russia's vision of how a deal should be done.

Trump had gone into the meeting saying he wanted a quick ceasefire and had threatened Putin and Russia's biggest buyer of its crude oil - China - with sanctions.

Afterwards, Trump said he had agreed with Putin that negotiators should go straight to a peace settlement and not via a ceasefire as Ukraine and

its European allies had been demanding - previously with US support.

"The US president's position has changed after talks with Putin, and now the discussion will focus not on a truce, but on the end of the war. And a new world order. Just as Moscow wanted," Olga Skabeyeva, one of Russian state TV's most prominent talkshow hosts, said on Telegram.

Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, saying Kyiv's embrace of the West had become a threat to its security, something Ukraine has dismissed as a false pretext for what it calls a colonial-style land grab.

The war - the deadliest in Europe for 80 years - has killed or wounded well over a million people from both sides, including thousands of mostly Ukrainian civilians, according to analysts.

The fact that the summit even took place was a win for Putin before it even started, given how it brought him in from the diplomatic cold with such pomp.

Putin is wanted by the International Criminal Court, accused of the war crime of deporting hundreds of children from Ukraine. Russia denies any wrongdoing, saying it acted to remove unaccompanied children from a conflict zone. Neither Russia nor the United States are members of the court.

Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's former president and a close Putin ally, said the summit had achieved a major breakthrough when it came to restoring US-Russia relations, which Putin had lamented were at their lowest level since the Cold War.

"The mechanism for high-level meetings between Russia and the United States has been restored in its entirety," he said.

But Putin did not get everything he wanted and it's unclear how durable his gains will be.

For one, Trump did not hand

him the economic reset he wanted - something that would boost the Russian president at a time when his economy is showing signs of strain after more than three years of war and increasingly tough Western sanctions.

Yuri Ushakov, Putin's foreign policy aide, said before the summit that the talks would touch on trade and economic issues.

Putin had brought his finance minister and the head of Russia's sovereign wealth fund all the way to Alaska with a view to discussing potential deals on the Arctic, energy, space and the technology sector.

In the end, though, they didn't get a look in. Trump told reporters on Air Force One before the summit started there would be no business done until the war in Ukraine was settled.

It's also unclear how long the sanctions relieve that Putin won will last.

Trump said it would probably be two or three weeks before he would need to return to the question of thinking about imposing secondary sanctions on China, to hurt financing for Moscow's war machine.

Nor did Trump - judging by information that has so far been made public - do what some Ukrainian and European politicians had feared the most and sell Kyiv out by doing a deal over the head of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Trump made clear that it was up to Zelensky as to whether he would agree - or not - with ideas of land swaps and other elements for a peace settlement that the US president had discussed with Putin in Alaska.

Although as Trump's bruising Oval Office encounter with Zelensky showed earlier this year, if Trump thinks the Ukrainian leader is not engaging constructively, he can quickly turn on him.

Indeed, Trump was quick to start piling pressure on

Zelensky, who is expected in Washington today, saying after the summit that Ukraine had to a deal because, "Russia is a very big power, and they're not".

"The main point is that both sides have directly placed responsibility on Kyiv and Europe for achieving future results in the negotiations," said Medvedev, who added that the summit showed it was possible to negotiate and fight at the same time.

While deliberations continue, Russian forces are slowly but steadily advancing on the battlefield and threatening a series of Ukrainian towns and cities whose fall could speed up Moscow's quest to take complete control of the eastern region of Donetsk, one of four Ukrainian regions Russia claims as its own.

Donetsk, some 25% of which remains beyond Russia's control, and the Luhansk region together make up the industrial Donbas region, which Putin has made clear he wants in its entirety.

Putin told Trump he'd be ready to freeze the front lines in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, two of the other regions he claims, if Kyiv agreed to withdraw from both Donetsk and Luhansk, a person familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Zelensky rejected the demand, the source said.

According to the New York Times, Trump told European leaders that Ukrainian recognition of Donbas as Russian would help get a deal done. And the US is ready to be part of security guarantees for Ukraine, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said.

Some Kremlin critics said it would be a mistake to credit Putin with too much success at this stage.

"Russia has re-established its status and got dialogue with the US," said Michel Duclos, a French diplomat who formerly served in Moscow and who is an analyst at the Institut Montaigne think-tank. "But when you have a war on your hands and your economy is collapsing, these are limited gains."

Russian officials deny the economy, which has been put on a war footing and has proved more resilient than the West forecast despite heavy sanctions, is collapsing. But they have acknowledged signs of overheating and have said the economy could enter recession next year unless policies are adjusted.

"For Putin, economic problems are secondary to his goals, but he understands our vulnerability and the costs involved," said one source familiar with Kremlin thinking.

"Both sides will have to make concessions. The question is to what extent. The alternative, if we want to defeat them militarily, is to mobilise resources more deeply and use them more skilfully, but we are not going down that road for various reasons," the person said.

"It will be Trump's job to pressure Ukraine to recognise the agreements." - Reuters



US President Donald Trump walks towards Russian President Vladimir Putin during a press conference following their meeting to negotiate an end to the war in Ukraine, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, in Anchorage, Alaska, on Friday. (Reuters)

Pakistan floods: Hopes for survivors wane

AFP
Buner

Pakistani rescuers dug homes out from under massive boulders yesterday as they searched for survivors of flash floods that killed at least 344 people, with more than 150 still missing.

Torrential rains across the country since Thursday have caused flooding, rising waters and landslides that have swept away entire villages and left many residents trapped in the rubble.

Most of the deaths, 317, were reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, where monsoon rains that are only expected to intensify in the days ahead drove flooding and landslides that collapsed houses.

"We saw all the houses, buildings, and vehicles being swept away like pieces of wood. We managed to climb up the mountain, and when we looked down, our home was gone," said Suleman Khan, a schoolteacher in Buner district who lost 25 relatives.

More than 150 people are missing in Buner, where at least 208 people were killed and "10 to 12 entire villages" were partially buried, officials told AFP.

"They could be trapped under the rubble of their homes or swept away by floodwaters," said Asfandyar Khattak, head of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Provincial Disaster Management Authority.

"Separately, in Shangla district, dozens of people are also reported missing," Khattak added.

The spokesman for the prov-



An aerial view shows houses partially submerged in sludge along a riverbed in the aftermath of flash floods at the Buner district of mountainous Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province yesterday. Right: Volunteers carry food, medical and other supplies for flood victims as they cross a river laden with heavy rocks in the Buner district. (AFP)



ince's rescue agency told AFP that around 2,000 rescue workers were involved across nine districts, where rain was still hampering efforts.

"The operation to rescue people trapped under debris is ongoing," said Bilal Ahmad Faizi.

"The chances of those buried under the debris surviving are very slim," he added.

AFP journalists in Buner saw half-buried vehicles and belongings lying strewn in the sludge, with mud covering houses and shops.

After days without power, the electricity supply was restored last afternoon.

A grave digger, Qaiser Ali Shah, told AFP he dug 29 burial places in the last two days.

"I have also dug six graves for children. With each grave, it felt as though I was digging it for my own child," he said.

"For the first time, my body simply refused to carry me through. That's why today I apologise and said I cannot do this work anymore."

Flooded roads hampered the movement of rescue vehicles, as a few villagers worked to cut fallen trees to clear the way after the water receded.

"Our belongings are scattered, ruined and are in bad shape," shopkeeper Noor Muhammad told AFP as he used a shovel to remove mud.

"The shops have been destroyed along with everything else. Even the little money people had has

been washed away," he added.

The provincial government has declared the severely affected mountainous districts of Buner, Bajaur, Swat, Shangla, Mansehra and Battagram as disaster-hit areas.

"Every house in our area has been destroyed," said Buner resident Bakht Rawan.

"Our loved ones are still buried under the mud, stones, and collapsed houses," he told AFP.

"We appeal to the government to please send machinery to us."

On Saturday, hundreds gathered for mass funerals, where bodies wrapped in blood-stained white shawls were laid out on the village ground.

Fallen trees and straw debris were scattered across nearby

fields, while residents shovelled mud out of their homes.

Pakistan's meteorological department has forecast "torrential rains" with monsoon activity "likely to intensify" from yesterday onwards.

Iran said it stood ready to provide "any cooperation and assistance aimed at alleviating the suffering" in neighbouring Pakistan, while Pope Leo XIV addressed the flooding with prayers "for all those who suffer because of this calamity".

The monsoon season brings South Asia about three-quarters of its annual rainfall, vital for agriculture and food security, but also brings destruction.

"The intensity of this year's monsoon is around 50 to 60%

more than last year," said Lieutenant General Inam Haider, chairman of the national disaster agency.

"Two to three more monsoon spells are expected until the first weeks of September," he told journalists in Islamabad.

Landslides and flash floods are common during the season, which usually begins in June and eases by the end of September.

The torrential rains that have pounded Pakistan since the start of the summer monsoon have killed more than 650 people, with more than 920 injured.

Pakistan is one of the world's most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change and is contending with extreme weather events with increasing frequency.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (right) and European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen leave at the end of a joint press conference in Brussels yesterday. (AFP)

Europe leaders to join Zelensky-Trump meet

AFP, Reuters
Brussels

European leaders said yesterday they would join Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in talks with US President Donald Trump today, as they try to find a way to end Russia's offensive.

Trump met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Friday but the talks failed to yield any breakthrough on a ceasefire — though White House envoy Steve Witkoff said both leaders had agreed to provide "robust security guarantees" to Ukraine.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen hailed the news but Zelensky, speaking alongside her at a news conference in Brussels, rejected the idea of Russia offering his country security guarantees.

"What President Trump said about security guarantees is much more important to me than Putin's thoughts, because Putin will not give any security guarantees," he said.

Zelensky later said on social media that the US offer regarding security guarantees was "historic".

French President Emmanuel Macron, who will take part in the Washington meeting along with Von der Leyen and others, said European leaders would ask Washington "to what extent" they were ready to contribute to the security guarantees offered to Ukraine in any peace agreement.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, the French president and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hosted a meeting of allies yesterday to bolster Zelensky's hand, hoping in particular to lock down robust security guarantees for Ukraine that would include a US role.

The Europeans are keen to help Zelensky avoid a repeat of his last Oval Office meeting in Febru-

ary. That went disastrously, with Trump and Vice-President J D Vance giving the Ukrainian leader a public dressing-down, accusing him of being ungrateful and disrespectful.

Trump, who pivoted after the Alaska meeting to say he was now seeking a peace deal rather than a ceasefire, yesterday posted "BIG PROGRESS ON RUSSIA. STAY TUNED!" on his Truth Social platform, without elaborating.

Trump's pivot to a peace deal aligns with the stance long taken by Putin, one which Ukraine and its European allies have criticised as Putin's way to buy time while trying to make battlefield gains.

Zelensky also said he saw "no sign" the Kremlin leader was prepared to meet him and Trump for a three-way summit, as had been floated by the US president.

The leaders heading to Washington today to appear alongside Zelensky call themselves the "coalition of the willing".

As well as von der Leyen and Macron, they include British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte.

Also heading to Washington will be Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and Finnish President Alexander Stubb, who get on well with Trump.

Yesterday they all held a video meeting to prepare their joint position.

A joint communique released by Britain, France and Germany after the meeting said their leaders were ready "to deploy a reassurance force once hostilities have ceased, and to help secure Ukraine's skies and seas and regenerate Ukraine's armed forces."

Speaking to US broadcaster CNN, Witkoff said: "I'm hopeful that we have a productive meeting today, we get to real consensus, we're able to come back to the

Russians and push this peace deal forward and get it done."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, speaking to NBC yesterday, warned of "consequences" — including the potential imposition of new sanctions on Russia — if no peace deal was reached on Ukraine.

European leaders have expressed unease from the outset over Trump's outreach to Putin, who has demanded Ukraine abandon its ambitions to join the EU or Nato. They were excluded from Trump's summit with Putin.

Witkoff, in his CNN interview, said the process of offering "game-changing" security guarantees would involve territorial "concessions".

According to an official briefed on a call Trump held with Zelensky and European leaders as he flew back from Alaska, the US leader supported a Putin proposal that Russia take full control of two eastern Ukrainian regions in exchange for freezing the frontline in two others.

Putin "de facto demands that Ukraine leave Donbas", an area consisting of the Donetsk and Lugansk regions in eastern Ukraine, which Russia currently only partly controls, the source said.

In exchange, Russian forces would halt their offensive in the Black Sea port region of Kherston and Zaporizhzhia in southern Ukraine, where the main cities are still under Ukrainian control.

Several months into its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia in September 2022 claimed to have annexed all four Ukrainian regions even though its troops still do not fully control any of them.

"The Ukrainian president refused to leave Donbas," the source said.

Meanwhile, the conflict in Ukraine rages on, with both Kyiv and Moscow launching attack drones at each other yesterday.

Russia won't give security guarantees, says Zelensky

AFP, Reuters
Brussels

Ukraine leader Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday rejected the idea of Russia offering his country security guarantees, after US and EU officials promoted the possibility.

White House envoy Steve Witkoff earlier said US President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin agreed to "robust security guarantees" for Ukraine during a meeting in Alaska on Friday.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen yesterday hailed the proposal as an offer of Nato-style security guarantees from the United States.

"We welcome President

Trump's willingness to contribute to (Nato) Article 5-like security guarantees for Ukraine, and the coalition of the willing, including the European Union, is ready to do its share," Von der Leyen said.

Zelensky also welcomed the idea of US security guarantees — but was less positive about Russia's intentions.

"What President Trump said about security guarantees is much more important to me than Putin's thoughts, because Putin will not give any security guarantees," he told a press conference in Brussels alongside von der Leyen.

"Security means a strong army, which only Ukraine can provide. I believe that only Europe can finance this army."

Von der Leyen and Zelensky also shared their thoughts on a

possible meeting between Trump, Putin and the Ukrainian leader.

"So far, Russia gives no sign that the trilateral will happen and if Russia refuses, then new sanctions must follow," Zelensky said.

Von der Leyen had said she wanted to see the three-way meeting happen "as soon as possible".

Zelensky will meet Trump in Washington today, accompanied by Von der Leyen and other European leaders.

The European Commission president felt the term "ceasefire" was less important than the need to stop the killing.

"It matters what's the effect. And the effect must be to stop the killing," Von der Leyen said.

"So it's not the term itself, it's the content that matters."

Serbia's president vows 'strong response' to unrest

Serbia's president yesterday vowed a "strong" response to anti-government protests, after nearly a week of violent clashes involving his supporters, police and demonstrators across the country. Clashes have erupted in the capital, Belgrade and other cities for five nights in a row, with fireworks, stones, stun grenades and tear gas used. More than 130 police officers have been injured so far, the right-wing president, Aleksandar Vucic, said at a press conference in Belgrade, with dozens of citizens also reporting injuries and seeking medical assistance. On Saturday, violence flared in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Valjevo, where a small group of masked men attacked and set fire to the empty offices of Vucic's ruling

Serbian Progressive Party. "You will see the full determination of the Serbian state. We will use everything at our disposal to restore law, peace and order," Vucic said. He added that the government needed a few days to prepare "the legal and formal framework" for the response. "It will be very different from what you have seen so far," he added, without disclosing details, but said that declaring a state of emergency was not being considered. Vucic compared anti-government protesters with "terrorists", a term he has frequently repeated since mass demonstrations began late last year. Almost daily protests have gripped Serbia since November, following the

collapse of a railway station roof that killed 16 people. The tragedy became a symbol of deep-rooted corruption in the Balkan nation, with demands for a transparent investigation growing into calls for early elections. At their peak, the protests drew hundreds of thousands onto the streets. The mostly peaceful demonstrations deteriorated earlier this week when large groups of pro-government supporters — many masked and some armed with batons and fireworks — attacked protesters. That sparked violent clashes, further fuelled by videos shared online showing police striking unarmed demonstrators with batons.



A demonstrator stands in front of riot police officers during an anti-government rally in Valjevo. (AFP)

Qatar Tourism wraps up first edition of Junior Tour Guide 2025

Qatar Tourism (QT), through its Service Excellence Academy, and in collaboration with Qatar Museums (QM), has concluded the first edition of the Junior Tour Guide 2025.

The initiative was designed to inspire young Qataris by engaging them in interactive tourism activities across Qatar's museums.

The camp, according to a QT statement, welcomed two groups of children of different ages.

The first batch of junior tour guides was awarded during the closing ceremony at the National Museum of Qatar (NMQ), attended by parents and partners.

Commenting on the programme, Omar Abdulrahman al-Jaber, chief of the Tourism Development Sector at the QT, said that Qatar Tourism is committed to delivering impactful programmes and initiatives that serve our local community through the Service Excellence Academy.

"This camp provided children with valuable skills such as storytelling, teamwork, and a deeper understanding of Qatar's rich heritage," he said. "Beyond tour guiding, these skills contribute to building self-confidence and effective communication



in our youth, the next generation of tourism ambassadors."

"To encourage our youth, we remind them that among you may be a future tour

guide or tourism expert who will carry Qatar's message to the world," al-Jaber noted.

The closing ceremony was hosted at the NMQ, which also provided learning

spaces and educational guided tours for participants.

The 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum supported the first two days of

the programme with an interactive activity zone while the Museum of Islamic Art's education team collaborated with the QT to deliver a creative learning experience through an "Escape Room".

In addition, the QM provided logistical support, ensuring seamless co-ordination of venues, galleries and scheduling.

Katara Cultural Village further enriched the programme by granting access to its cultural and educational facilities, including the Al Thuraya Planetarium, Opera House, and Drama Theatre.

On the third day, Doha Bus contributed to the experiential learning by offering a sightseeing tour, giving children the opportunity to practise tour guiding while discovering Doha's most iconic landmarks.

"This initiative is part of the QT's continuous efforts to engage the local community, particularly children and families, by offering opportunities to engage with the tourism sector through an innovative educational and entertaining lens," the QT statement said. "In response to the strong interest and participation from the community, QT remains committed to developing and expanding similar initiatives in the future."

QF welcomes newest students

The value and benefit of serving society were illustrated to more than 800 new university students who are now part of Qatar Foundation (QF)'s unique ecosystem of education, as an annual gathering marking the start of the new academic year encouraged them to embrace the spirit of giving back.

The traditional Marhaba event - held at Multaqa - saw students who are embarking on studies within the eight universities at the QF learn about the opportunities that await them over the coming years, and what it means to be a QF student.

Speaking to the students, QF chief executive Yousif al-Naama said: "You're taking your first steps on an incredible journey, in a place of learning, discovery, and connection that is unlike anything else anywhere in the world."

"And you're taking those steps in the year that marks the 30th anniversary of the QF - three decades of nurturing fu-



ture leaders and change-makers like you, equipping them to excel in their fields and nurturing them to lead fulfilling lives," he said.

Emphasising the sense of belonging and shared identity that comes from entering the QF ecosystem, al-Naama said: "Wherever you are from, whatever university you are studying at, wherever you hope your path will lead, you are united by the fact you are students of the QF."

"You are part of our community; and you are part of our story - a story that we've been writing for 30 years, and that you will now help us write the next chapters of," he stated.

Francisco Marmolejo, president of Higher Education and education adviser at the QF, told the new students: "Among the QF's values are 'integrity' and 'community'."

"In everything we do, we contribute to the progress of society - in Qatar, across our region, and around the world," he said. "And that includes the educational experience that we offer."

"We encourage, enable, and provide opportunities for every one of you to be of service to society - either by volunteerism, advocacy, supporting, and even creating community-focus initiatives, or through any pathway that allows you



to give something to others," Marmolejo added.

The day-long event included student

showcases, where representatives from QF universities spoke about community service and student engagement, along with a fair that introduced new students to the opportunities available across Education City.

Keynote speaker Amjad Alnour - a filmmaker, journalist, and TV presenter - recounted his own college experience, encouraging students to recognise the value of helping others.

"Why don't you try advocacy?" he posed to the students. "Find yourself a cause that's worth fighting for, give it your all, and see how that makes you feel."

"Not only will it help you shift the focus from your own personal problems by being of service to others, but it will also give you a sense of fulfilment and self-worth - a sense that you matter to those people that seek help," Alnour said. "With the explosion of artificial intelligence (AI), social media, and technology, you have the tools to be loud and to speak up."



Qatar takes part in 31st Abu Dhabi International Chess Festival

The Qatar national chess team has begun its participation in the 31st Abu Dhabi International Chess Festival, which features more than 3,000 players from 82 countries.

The festival, which runs until August 24, includes 27 diverse events, such as the International Masters Tournament, Open Tournament A, Open Tournament B, youth competitions from ages 8-16, the open blitz chess for all, blitz chess for juniors,

family team competitions, community team competitions, the academies championship, the institutions championship, the People of Determination championship, and the schools championship for both genders from ages 9-17.

The Qatar Chess Association is participating with 12 players in different tournaments, including the Masters, Open A, Open B, Under-16 juniors, and Blitz Chess competitions.

The festival continues the third round of the Masters Tournament, alongside the start of the Veterans category (50+) and the Family Chess competition.

The second round of the Masters Tournament, the main event of the festival, has taken place, featuring 206 players rated 2300 and above, including some of the world's and Asia's top stars.

The second round of Open Tournament A was also held, with 212 players rated 2299

and below, as well as Open Tournament B, which saw strong competition among 320 players rated 1999 and below.

Qatar's delegation comprises Grandmaster Hussein Aziz, Ghada al-Khelaifi, Khalid al-Jomaat, Hamad al-Kuwari, Turki al-Kuwari, Fahad al-Mansouri, Ibrahim al-Janahi, Saif Ahmed, Mohamed al-Qassabi, Lian al-Qassabi, Roudha al-Qassabi, and Abdulaziz al-Mohasnah.

Hamad al-Tamimi, executive director of

the Qatar Chess Association and head of the delegation, stressed in a statement that Qatar's participation in the Abu Dhabi International Festival is of great importance, as it comes within the association's plan to prepare the national team for upcoming continental and international events.

He added that there are high hopes for achieving good results for Qatari chess across the different competitions of the Abu Dhabi Festival.