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Five Palestinians die due to famine, malnutrition

Palestinian medical sources yesterday said five Palestinians, including two children, died due to famine and malnutrition.
Their deaths were recorded in hospitals across the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours.
The sources reported that the total number of victims from famine and malnutrition has risen to 322, including 123 children.
They noted that since the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) declared a famine in Gaza on August 22, 44 deaths have been recorded, including eight children.
The humanitarian crisis in Gaza continues to worsen amid the blockade and severe shortages of food and medical supplies.
The harsh famine overlaps with what has been described as a campaign of genocide launched by Israel since October 7, 2023.
Since March 2, 2025, Israeli authorities have closed all crossings with the Strip and blocked the entry of most food and medical aid, leading to the spread of famine throughout the region.
The World Health Organisation confirmed that malnutrition rates in Gaza have reached alarming levels.
It stated that the deliberate blockade and delays in aid delivery have caused significant loss of life, with nearly one in five children under the age of five in Gaza City suffering from acute malnutrition. **(QNA)**

23 Palestinians killed in Israeli shelling, raids

Twenty-three Palestinians were killed and dozens more injured yesterday as a result of several raids and shelling carried out by the Israeli occupation forces on several areas in the Gaza Strip.
Three brothers were killed in an Israeli shelling that targeted a residential house in Jabalia Al Nazla, northern Gaza. Four martyrs, including two children, were killed and others injured in several raids launched by the occupation forces on homes, tents, and a shelter in Gaza City, including the Al Zeitoun neighbourhood in the east of the city, the Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood in the north, and the Al-Shati refugee camp in the west of the city. Nine others were killed in Israeli shelling of aid seekers near Netzarim and Wadi Gaza in the central Gaza Strip. **(QNA)**

COMMUNITY
See Pages 4 & 5

Rwanda president meets QLC team



Rwanda President Paul Kagame received a delegation from the Qatar Leadership Centre (QLC). The delegation has been touring key Rwandan institutions this week as part of a study tour aimed at deepening bilateral ties and exchanging knowledge.

European nations voice shock and anger at Israeli aggression

The foreign ministers of Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Norway, Slovenia, and Spain have condemned the latest Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip and the Israeli entity's announcement of its intention to establish a permanent presence in Gaza City.

In a joint statement, the ministers stressed that "the escalation of military operations is causing the death of innocent Palestinian civilians, particularly women, children, and the elderly," and endangering hostages.

They condemned the forced displacement of Palestinians, considering it a flagrant violation of international law.

The ministers described the destruction of essential civilian infrastructure, including centres housing vulnerable displaced persons, as "unacceptable", calling on the Israeli occupation government to "cease its military operations immediately".

They said: "We are shocked by the confirmation of famine in the Gaza Strip, according to the International Crisis Group (IPC) Food Security Phase Classification, and by the risk of disease spreading to surrounding areas in the coming weeks."

They stressed the need for Israel to uphold its humanitarian obligations and allow UN agencies and international organisations to fully operate to mitigate the humanitarian catastrophe.

The ministers also expressed their deep concern about colonial expansion in the West Bank, which is illegal under international law.

They warned of the escalation of settler attacks carried out with impunity, stressing that these practices constitute a serious obstacle to the achievement of the two-state solution.

They affirmed that the international community "will not remain silent in the face of human rights violations," emphasising the need to reach a permanent ceasefire agreement that paves the way for peace.

The ministers reiterated their call for the immediate release of all prisoners and for the rapid, widespread, and unhindered entry of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip. **(QNA)**

US denies visas to Palestinian officials ahead of UN General Assembly meeting

The US is denying and revoking visas from members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation and the Palestinian Authority ahead of the United Nations General Assembly meeting in September, the US state department said in a statement yesterday.
The restrictions mean that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas would likely not be able to travel to New York to deliver an address to the annual gathering, as he typically does.
The move follows the imposition of US sanctions on Palestinian Authority officials and members of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in July, even as other Western powers moved toward recognition of Palestinian statehood.
In its statement, the state department said that the Palestinian Authority's mission to the UN would not be included in the restrictions. It did not elaborate.



Displaced Palestinians flee from one area to another within Gaza City.

Ankara to cut economic, trade ties with Israeli occupation: Turkish FM

QNA
Ankara

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan announced Turkiye has decided to completely sever economic and trade relations with the Israeli occupation and to close its airspace to Israeli aircraft, in response to its continued perpetration of mass massacres against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Speaking during an emergency session of the Turkish Parliament held yesterday, to discuss the genocide being committed by Israel against Palestinians in Gaza, Fidan warned that allowing the Israeli occupation to continue its reckless attacks in Palestine, especially in Gaza, would ignite the entire region.

He added that if the Israeli occupation is allowed to continue its reckless attacks in Palestine, especially in Gaza, the consequences will not be limited to Palestinians, it will set the whole region ablaze.

Fidan affirmed that Israel's plans to occupy all of Gaza are ongoing and that it seeks to eliminate the two-state solution with unlimited support from the US.

He added that the global system has failed to fulfil its responsibilities in stopping Israeli massacres, stressing that Israel is practising a brutal starvation policy against Palestinians in Gaza in an attempt to expel them.

The Turkish foreign minister stated that the goal of the Israeli occupation is clear, to make Gaza uninhabitable in order to force its people to leave, noting that Israel's refusal to allow aid into Gaza has led to the death of thousands of Palestinians under its starvation policy.

Fidan said recent developments confirm that the Israeli occupation aims to seize all Palestinian lands.

Extremist ministers and settlers are trying to escalate tensions through incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque, Fidan said.

He highlighted the ongoing Turkish efforts with Qatar and Egypt to find a fundamental solution to the crisis.

The aggressive policies of the Israeli occupation have extended beyond Gaza to Jerusalem, the West Bank, Syria, Iran, and Lebanon, affirming that Israel's efforts continue to plunge all regional countries into chaos, and its mindset disregards international law, he stressed.

Fidan stressed Turkiye will not allow any party to exploit Syria's rich and authentic components to pursue agendas that threaten the country's unity.

He added the Israeli occupation does not want a strong new Syrian state, but stressed Turkiye will not allow such policies to persist.

The ongoing tension between Israel and Iran poses a threat to regional security and stability, he said.

'The goal of the Israeli occupation is clear, to make Gaza uninhabitable in order to force its people to leave. Israel's refusal to allow aid into Gaza has led to the death of thousands of Palestinians under its starvation policy'

Turkish Parliament Speaker Numan Kurtulmus said every action taken by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories constitutes a violation of international law, a war crime, and genocide.

Kurtulmus explained that Israel's decision to expand its occupation in Gaza means it continues to commit crimes against humanity.

He emphasised that every act carried out by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories is a violation of international law, a war crime, and genocide.

He proposed taking concrete steps urgently, including suspending Israel's membership in international organisations, including the United Nations, until it abandons its genocidal policies.

Kurtulmus said the Palestinian cause is Turkiye's cause, and Ankara pledges to continue supporting the Palestinian struggle until the establishment of a free and sovereign Palestinian state.

The extraordinary emergency session of the Turkish Parliament was held yesterday, to discuss developments in the Gaza Strip. **(QNA)**

Telesurgery 'can revolutionise healthcare in Mideast'

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Telesurgery technology has the potential to revolutionise healthcare in the Middle East, according to an article in the latest edition of *Qatar Medical Journal*.

The effectiveness of telesurgery is pointed out by highlighting a recent groundbreaking experience establishing a real-time connection between Itqan Clinical Simulation and Innovation Centre in Doha and MedBot Mobile Showing & Training Centre in Shanghai, China.

The procedure involved a robotic-assisted remote simulated surgery, conducted in adherence to China's institutional animal care regulations. This initiative involved overcoming significant distance and connection challenges.

The direct round-trip distance was approximately 15,200km, with a relay server established in Hong Kong to facilitate communication between the two locations.

The surgeon console in Doha utilised a 4G network to connect to the relay server, experiencing a round-trip delay of approximately 140 milliseconds.

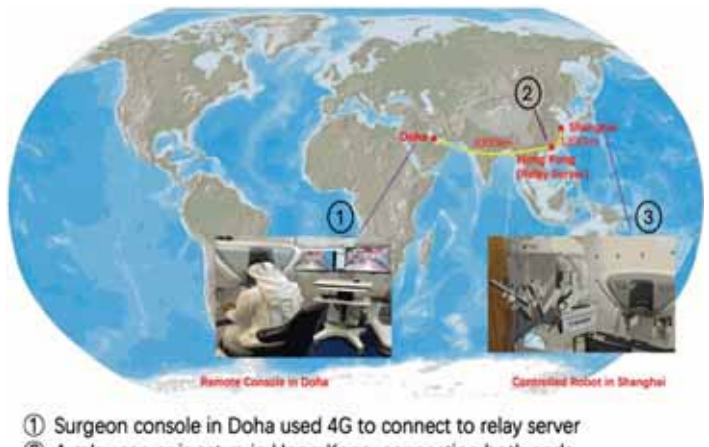
On the robot side in Shanghai, a broadband connection was used, with a round-trip delay of around 40 milliseconds.

Latency remained within an acceptable range, allowing the surgeon to operate smoothly and efficiently. During the live demonstration, attendees observed that the surgeon's movements in Doha were perfectly synchronised with the tissue manipulations performed by the robotic system in Shanghai. This setup successfully demonstrated the feasibility of conducting telesurgery over long distances, paving the way for future advancements in remote surgical procedures.

According to the article, telesurgery can expand access to advanced healthcare services, bridging gaps in system availability and providing coverage to underserved areas. Additionally, it can play a pivotal role in training the younger generation of surgeons, enabling them to adopt and master robotic surgical techniques, thereby fostering the growth and sustainability of robotic surgery in the region.

The availability of faster and more reliable connectivity through Wi-Fi, 5G, and fibre networks, coupled with more cost-effective and remote-compatible surgical robots, has made telesurgery increasingly feasible.

These innovations offer a promising solution to bridge the gap in healthcare access by delivering advanced medical services to underserved regions and enhancing patient accessibility to specialised care. **To Page 3**



① Surgeon console in Doha used 4G to connect to relay server
② A relay server is setup in Hong Kong, connecting both ends..
③ Controlled robot in Shanghai used broadband to connect to relay server.

QATAR

Egypt seeks to advance bilateral relations with Qatar in all fields: FM

QNA
Cairo

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates of the Arab Republic of Egypt Dr Badr Abdelatty emphasised the shared commitment of Egypt and Qatar to advance their bilateral relations across all fields, under the direct guidance of the leaders of both countries.

In his remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the sidelines of the 6th session of the Joint Higher Egyptian-Qatari Committee, Dr Abdelatty said that the convening of the committee at this time is a true reflection and embodiment of the distinguished level of the relations between the two countries and the two fraternal peoples in light of the directives of the leadership of the two countries. He added that they discussed several issues, especially how to advance trade relations between the two countries, particularly since they witnessed an increase of more than 54 percent in the last year compared to the previous year, and to benefit from the important investment opportunities


Dr Badr Abdelatty

available in the Egyptian economy, in light of the radical reforms undertaken by the Egyptian government to create a favourable environment for investment. Dr Abdelatty indicated that the two sides discussed the implementation of what was agreed upon between the two fraternal countries regarding pumping $7.5bn new Qatari investments in the sectors of agriculture, food security, real estate development, tourism, and new and renewable energy, as well as the files related to co-operation in the education and culture sectors, especially after Qatar recently hosted Egyptian cultural events during the "Year of Egypt in Qatar", and within the framework of continuing to further advance relations in implementation of the lofty directives of the leaderships of the two fraternal countries. He added that he had the opportunity to meet with HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, bilaterally, to discuss in detail several regional issues, particularly the Palestinian cause and the tireless Egyptian-Qatari efforts to halt the aggression and war of extermination waged by Israel against the innocent, defenceless Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

Concluding his remarks to QNA, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Emigration and Egyptian Expatriates of the Arab Republic of Egypt Dr Badr Abdelatty noted that the two sides also discussed ways to address the blatant Israeli violations in the West Bank, and discussed a number of issues related to the Palestinian cause, especially early recovery and reconstruction after reaching a ceasefire, as well as other regional issues such as Sudan, Libya, Syria and Lebanon.

He added that the two countries affirmed their full condemnation of the repeated Israeli aggression on Syria and Lebanon.

Ministry keen on modern education while enhancing national identity

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has 30 projects in the technological field within the Third National Development Strategy (2025–2030), including many linked to platforms that provide services to individuals, companies, and students, a senior official has told Qatar TV.

The technological platforms work to connect all the partners and beneficiaries of the ministry's services, undersecretary HE Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi explained, as reported by local Arabic daily *Arrayah*.


HE Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi speaking to Qatar TV. (*Screengrab*)

The MoEHE deals with students and public schools, alongside the private schools, higher education partners, and external partners that receive scholarship students. "Within its future vision, the ministry is working on employing artificial intelligence (AI) technologies to develop smart digital services that meet the needs of the public at the highest level, enhancing the quality of education and keeping pace with global transformations in the field of digital and technological education," he stated.

Through this integrated strategy, the MoEHE achieves its goals of preparing an outstanding Qatari generation capable of global competitiveness, while also qualifying teachers, developing curricula, and strengthening both digital and traditional educational environments in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

"Our goal is to prepare this generation in an outstanding way that qualifies them to compete at the highest levels. This is the ministry's role in equipping our male and female students to be the leaders of the future. The central pillar of the educational process is the teacher," HE Dr al-Nuaimi said.

"The teacher is the cornerstone of the educational process, and we are keen on developing their skills, supporting them, and providing opportunities for professional growth, because the ultimate goal is for students to benefit from their teachers' expertise to the greatest extent possible."

The MoEHE is currently implementing several important educational projects across different academic levels. "We have eight new school buildings in the primary, preparatory, and secondary stages, distributed across various parts of the country within the public-private partnership programme. These schools will offer modern, high-quality education through advanced infrastructure and facilities.

"There is also a qualitative addition at the kindergarten level, as four new kindergartens will open this year, including Al-Jiwan Kindergarten for Early Intervention, the first public kindergarten in Qatar dedicated to children who require special intervention or face challenges in their early developmental stages."

A technical school for girls will open in the northern region, representing a valuable addition to the educational stages in those areas. HE Dr al-Nuaimi pointed out that the ministry is working on the maintenance and renovation of several existing schools, as part of a continuous development strategy to meet population growth and the increasing number of students, while updating curricula and advancing toward more digital learning stages.

He affirmed that the ministry pays great attention to providing a comprehensive educational environment that supports the transition to digital education. The ministry's efforts are not limited to students alone but also include teachers, who are continuously trained and their skills developed, in addition to providing technical assistants in schools to support electronic projects and facilitate the learning process.

The official stressed that the ministry encourages students to participate in local, regional, and international competitions in the fields of robotics, innovation, and technology, as these play a motivating role in developing their skills and strengthening their passion for learning.

Dr al-Nuaimi stressed the importance of maintaining a balance between digital education and traditional core skills, saying: "We do not want our education to be purely electronic. We are working to ensure that reading, writing, and handwriting skills are developed alongside the acquisition of technological skills."

He noted that the curricula represent a fundamental issue for the ministry. The Curricula are prepared in co-operation with local, Arab, and international organisations and institutions to guarantee comprehensive educational content.

The ministry is working on developing new curricula that align with national identity and global scientific progress, through the introduction of modern technologies and the adoption of electronic and digital curricula. He confirmed that the new national curricula will be the product of broad co-operation with various stakeholders to ensure their quality and comprehensiveness.


Sheikh Dr Ali al-Qaradaghi presenting an aid package to a beneficiary.

Qatar Charity projects benefit over 8,500 people in Tanzania

Qatar Charity (QC) has carried out a series of economic empowerment and food security projects in Tanzania, reaching more than 8,500 vulnerable individuals, a statement said yesterday. The mission was led by a high-level delegation that included Sheikh Dr Ali al-Qaradaghi, President of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, and Abdulaziz Jassim Hejji, director of Development Operations at QC.

The initiative involved the distribution of food packages, vocational tools, and production equipment, aiming to address both urgent needs and long-term livelihoods.

These efforts are part of QC's broader humanitarian and development strategy across Africa. By combining immediate relief with sustainable development, Qatar seeks to create self-reliant communities resilient to economic shocks.

Commenting during the event, Sheikh Dr al-Qaradaghi stated: "Islamic values call upon us to stand with those in need during times of hardship. This support is not limited to emergency aid but extends to empowering families with the tools and opportunities to become active contributors in their communities."

These efforts are part of QC's broader humanitarian and development strategy across Africa

During his visit, Hejji met with Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar, to explore avenues of co-operation. The two parties agreed to strengthen co-ordination in implementing development projects across various sectors in Zanzibar. President Mwinyi expressed his full support and warm welcome for QC's initiatives aimed at improving community well-being across the archipelago.

One of the key outcomes of the discussions was the proposal for an urban centre project that would include residential units and service facilities to uplift marginalised populations. QC's Tanzania office is currently preparing a project proposal. This collaboration follows an earlier visit by President Mwinyi to QC's headquarters in Doha, reinforcing a shared commitment to long-term partnership.

Sheikh Dr al-Qaradaghi held a meeting with Dr Abubakar Zubeir bin Ali, the Grand Mufti and Chairman of the Supreme Council of Islamic Affairs in Tanzania, where they discussed collaboration in community development and the integration of Islamic values in humanitarian work.

He also met with Fahad Rashid al-Marekhi, Qatar's ambassador to Tanzania. The meeting focused on the current humanitarian needs in the country and explored ways to expand relief and development programs to reach more vulnerable groups.

QC's delegation participated directly in aid distribution activities and conducted a field visit to the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Dabbagh Orphan Centre. They also held discussions with religious and diplomatic leaders to strengthen the link between humanitarian relief and sustainable development. These engagements provided an opportunity to interact with beneficiaries, assess the social impact of the projects, and listen to their aspirations, the statement added.


Qatar Charity's Abdulaziz Jassim Hejji with Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar.


The Qatar Charity delegation during a field visit to the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Dabbagh Orphan Centre.


Beneficiaries receiving aid.

QYH promotes digital culture among youth

As part of its efforts to promote digital culture and information security among youth, Qatar Youth Hostels (QYH) organised a cybersecurity workshop titled 'Stay Safe Online', presented by specialised trainer Dima Mashhadi. The workshop, which attracted a number of Qatari youth of various ages, was part of the "Ma'rifa" (Arabic for knowledge) programme.

During the workshop, Mashhadi reviewed the most prominent challenges and threats that users may face when using the Internet, offering practical strategies for preventing them and enhancing youth awareness of the importance of digital privacy and personal account security.

She also focused on smart and safe behaviours when browsing social networks and various digital applications. Participants praised the workshop, considering it a valuable opportunity to enhance their digital skills. They noted that the information and practical advice provided would help them protect themselves and their personal information, and reduce the risk of exposure to malware and hacking.


Dima Mashhadi speaking at the workshop.

Sidra Medicine to host disease modelling, therapeutics conference

Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, will host its first Disease Modelling and Therapeutics (DMT) conference from September 29-30. To be held at the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC), the DMT conference will explore the innovative use of stem cells, organoids, and animal models in advancing the understanding of diseases and developing novel therapeutic strategies.

Dr Essam Abdelalim, co-conference chair and principal investigator at Sidra Medicine's Laboratory of Pluripotent Stem Cell Disease Modelling commented: "The conference will highlight the latest advancements and innovations in disease modelling approaches that are driving the development of new personalised therapies. The conference and workshops also aim to foster strategic collaborations and build capacity through catalysing collaborations and partnerships with leading international scientists and centres at the forefront of translational medicine and drug discovery."

The DMT conference will feature presentations at QNCC focused on stem cells, organoids, and animal models in translational medicine, followed by two innovative workshops on Animal Disease Models and iPSC Technology at Sidra Medicine.

The objective of both the sessions and workshops is to highlight the potential of these models in accelerating the identification of disease pathogenesis, drug discovery and optimising personalised therapies that will drive progress in translational medicine.

Dr Luis Saraiva, co-conference chair and principal investigator at Sidra Medicine's Laboratory of Disease Modelling and Therapeutics said: "Cellular and animal models research is a catalyst for modern biomedical innovation.



"At the DMT conference, we aim to demonstrate how these advances are actively shaping the future of medicine, from modelling complex diseases to developing personalised treatments that improve patient outcomes."

Key global speakers at the DMT conference include Dr Matthias Hebrok, Technical University Munich (TUM) in Germany; Dr James Shapiro, University of Alberta in Canada; Dr Camillo Ricordi, University of Miami in the US; Dr Hao Yin, Shanghai Changzheng Hospital in China; Dr Sonja Schrepfer, Cedars-Sinai Medical Centre in the US; Dr Shuibing Chen, Weill Cornell Medicine in the US; and Dr Erwan Bezard, University of Bordeaux in France.

"The conference hosted by Sidra Medicine is timely and aligns with national collaborative efforts to build integrated pipelines from discovery to translation. By leveraging Qatar's unique strengths in genetics and disease modelling, these efforts aim to unlock new biology, unravel complex disease mechanisms, and develop novel therapies tailored to the needs of the region," added Dr Hilal Lashuel, executive director of Research, Development and Innovation at Qatar Foundation, who is also speaking at the conference.

Official

Amir sends cable of condolences to Amir of Kuwait

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 condolences to Amir of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Mishal al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah on the death of Sheikh Ali Abdullah al-Khalifa al-Sabah. **(QNA)**

Targeting journalists in Gaza systematic policy to suppress truth and free speech

QNA
Doha

Since Oct 7, 2023, the Israeli war machine has been targeting civilians in the Gaza Strip, but Palestinian journalists have always been caught in the crossfire, demonstrating a systematic policy to silence free speech and obscure the truth. The massacre at Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis, which resulted in the deaths of five journalists last Monday, adds to a record that has so far claimed the lives of 247 journalists, according to data from the government office in Gaza.

The crime, which occurred in front of cameras and on live television, sparked a wave of global outrage. Palestinian journalists considered it a clear declaration that the occupation is not content with killing individuals, but is targeting the truth itself and those who report it.

Last Monday, the media community in the Gaza Strip lost two professional journalists working for international media outlets in that incident at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis. Among them were photographers Moaz Abu Taha and Mohammed Salama from Al Jazeera, Hossam al-Masry, a photographer for Reuters, journalist Mariam Abu Daqqa, who works for the Associated Press, and Ahmed Abu Aziz, a journalist for the Middle East Eye website. This horrific crime revealed the extent of the deliberate targeting of the media and journalists in Gaza.

On Aug 10, six journalists were killed in an Israeli airstrike near Al Shifa Hospital. Five of the journalists worked for Al Jazeera. The key figure of those was reporter Anas al-Sharif, who was accompanied by his colleague Mohammed Qreiqea, and cameramen Ibrahim Daher, Moamen Aliwa, and Mohammed Nofal. The journalists' tent was directly targeted. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the incident, calling for an independent and impartial investigation.

Qatar condemned the Israeli occupation's bombing of the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis, describing it as a new chapter in the ongoing series of heinous crimes committed by the occupation against the fraternal Palestinian people and a flagrant violation of international law.

In a statement, Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed that the occupation's approach of targeting journalists and relief and medical workers requires urgent and decisive international action to provide the necessary protection for civilians and ensure that the perpetrators of these atrocities do not escape punishment.

The ministry also reiterated the urgent need for global solidarity to end the brutal genocidal war on the Gaza Strip, address the catastrophic humanitarian conditions in the Strip, and move forward toward achieving a just and sustainable peace in the region, which guarantees the establishment of an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

In this context, the Israeli army's continued targeting of journalistic crews in Gaza has sparked global outrage. Several parties have condemned the operation and called for Israel to be held accountable for its crimes targeting the press, which reports on the violations committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted that the death of journalists in the Gaza Strip should shock the world and prompt it to take action to demand



accountability and justice, not silence. For his part, Spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Thameen al-Kheetan noted that documented attacks on journalists indicate a rapid and alarming increase in the targeting of journalists since the beginning of the conflict. He said that these journalists are the eyes and ears of the entire world and must be protected.

In the same vein, the Muslim World League expressed its strongest condemnation of the Israeli occupation forces' bombing of the Nasser Medical Complex and the targeting of civilian personnel. The Arab States Broadcasting Union also condemned the Israeli occupation's targeting of medical, relief, and media personnel at the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Yunis. In a statement, the union urged the international community to take action to stop the occupation's targeting of media personnel.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA) regarding the turning point in the Palestinian cause and the targeting of journalists in Gaza, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Qatar Press Center Saad al-Rumaihi stated that the Israeli assaults on the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, represent a historic shift in the course of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as the people of Gaza stood alone in the face of this brutal aggression that did not distinguish between people and stone.

He added that the Palestinian people have recorded a heroic epic that will be immortalised in history. Now, as the second year nears its end, the struggle and resistance of Gaza's people continue, despite the imbalance of power between the two sides. Regarding the objective of the Israeli entity in continuing its aggression on the devastated Strip, al-Rumaihi stressed that people cannot learn the facts and what is happening on the ground and the course of battles except through journalists and media professionals who deliver information to the public, as known in wars and major events.

He added that they are the unknown soldiers who stand bravely so that the world can see, hear, and read the news of these events and understand the reality and what is happening. Therefore, he accentuated, the Israeli occupation has deliberately silenced these voices as long as they convey to the world

QPC chief Saad al-Rumaihi has said that Israel continues its arrogance without any deterrent punishment from international bodies and organisations concerned with humanitarian and journalistic affairs

the true image and the tragedies faced by the people of Gaza.

He highlighted that the occupation can only achieve this through the most heinous and extreme violations, unfortunately, through the physical elimination of these great journalists. He underscored that the Israeli assaults on Palestinian journalists clearly reveal Israel's insistence on imposing its unilateral media narrative, which contradicts the reality on the ground.

In light of the world's failure and inability to enact binding laws to protect journalists and media professionals and defend them against Israeli arrogance, the Chairman of the Qatar Press Center affirmed in his statements to QNA, the situation requires urgent action to protect journalists, so that the matter does not remain a mere dream difficult to achieve.

Al-Rumaihi said that Israel continues its arrogance without any deterrent punishment from international bodies and organisations concerned with humanitarian and journalistic affairs. He reiterated the need to capitalise on the wave of international outrage and the storm of criticism directed at Israeli policy due to its continuous and deliberate targeting of civilians in the Gaza Strip, including journalists, emphasising the importance of harnessing the growing global humanitarian sentiment toward the Palestinian cause and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

He pointed out that the demonstrations and sit-ins that have swept many countries around the world now reflect this solidarity, even in the United States of America, where university campuses have turned into platforms for defending Gaza and its people. He explained that the Qatar Press Center has sought and continues to support the steadfastness of the people of Gaza through numerous media initiatives, seminars, exhibitions, news coverage, and other means, which it considers a duty as it lives through these events and follows their developments.

The Chairman of the Qatar Press Center concluded by emphasising the necessity of standing by the Palestinian people, moving beyond mere condemnation and denunciation, which is all we currently possess. He added that specialised global organisations must exert more pressure on Israel to stop its aggression against the Palestinian people, enabling them to obtain their most basic rights to live in safety and dignity.

With every Israeli assault on media workers in Gaza and the Palestinian territories, renewed calls emerge from all press unions, media, human rights, and legal organisations around the world for explicit condemnation of these repeated crimes, with the urgent need to put an end to them, so that Israel does not succeed in its attempts to silence voices and images and prevent the transmission of the truth about the crimes it commits against the Palestinian people.



Fanar launches new radio programme *Noor and Basriya*

The Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center (Fanar) at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs announced the launch of a new radio programme titled *Noor and Basriya* (Arabic for light and vision), in co-operation with Urdu Radio at Qatar Radio. This comes as part of the centre's efforts to serve non-Arabic-speaking Muslim communities and provide them with sound religious knowledge.

The programme airs every Friday evening from 4pm-5pm, with a full hour dedicated to receiving listeners' questions and answering them by a select group of preachers at the centre, tailored to the listeners' circumstances and various needs, while taking into account the societal norms of these communities. The average number of questions posed in each episode is approximately twelve. These questions are characterised by their comprehensiveness and diversity, covering various aspects of religious, educational, and social life. This co-operation between the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Sheikh Abdullah bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center, and the Qatar Media Corporation, represented by Qatar Radio - Urdu Programme Department, embodies the state institutions' commitment to integration in carrying out their awareness-raising mission. The *Noor and Basriya* programme is an initiative targeting Urdu-speaking communities, one of the most widely spoken languages among Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, as it represents a common language. Through this programme, the centre seeks to meet the needs of this important segment of communities residing in the country by providing legal advice and sound religious guidance. According to a moderate approach, it is a correct approach that consolidates the tolerant values of Islam and corrects misconceptions that need to be corrected.

Telesurgery 'can revolutionise healthcare in ME'

From Page 1

Robotic surgery and technology have gained significant interest and adoption in the Middle East, with multiple robotic surgical platforms now available and a notable increase in robotic surgery cases over the past few years.

However, several challenges remain, one of such is the limited availability of robotic systems, still unavailable in many parts of the region.

Additionally, there is a shortage of trained surgeons who are capable of performing robotic procedures, further hindering the widespread implementation of this advanced surgical approach.

While telesurgery applications offer groundbreaking potential, significant limitations remain, including high infrastructure costs, the need for safe and reliable connections, and complex regulatory and ethical considerations.

Additionally, the purchase and maintenance of such robotic systems require substantial funding. Furthermore, technical expertise is still required at the patient's location to ensure a safe and smooth process.

The article stresses that despite these limitations, the continued development and refinement of this technology can effectively bridge the gap between patients and advanced medical care, making complex surgical procedures and critical interventions more accessible to those who need them most, regardless of their location.

Justice ministry implements capacity building in digital transformation

QNA
Doha

Represented by the Information Systems Department in co-operation with the Planning, Quality and Innovation Department, the Ministry of Justice implemented a capacity-building and digital culture programme in the field of digital transformation.

The programme targeted three administrative levels within the ministry. The two-day programme, held under the patronage and attendance of HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi, and senior ministry officials, included a series of training workshops that presented detailed presentations on the stages of digital transformation, with a focus on mechanisms for adhering to the requirements and standards of digital transformation and data at the local and international levels.

The programme also highlighted ways to enhance digital culture within institutions, reviewed modern methodologies for digital transformation accelerators, and discussed ways to effectively employ emerging technologies in the government work environment, based on global best practices.

The workshops extensively addressed the importance of cybersecurity in supporting digital transformation processes, presenting local and international case studies and discussing practical examples of the challenges and opportunities associated with digital transformation projects. The programme embodies the Ministry of Justice's commitment to raising awareness and knowledge in the areas of digital transformation and data management, and enhancing participants' readiness to meet the requirements of the next digital era.





COMMUNITY

PISQ students shine in IGCSE exams

Pakistan International School, Qatar (PISQ) has once again demonstrated academic excellence as its students delivered remarkable results in the Cambridge IGCSE June 2025 examinations. With a total of 68 high achievers, the school community is celebrating the outstanding accomplishments of its learners, a statement said.

The Cambridge Wing (CW) of PISQ has shown consistent academic progress over the past five years. This year, the Wing has once again upheld its reputation and credibility by producing an exceptional 99.99% result in the IGCSE examinations.

The school management has congratulated the students and their parents. The students' achievements are a testament to their dedication and perseverance, while the unwavering trust and support of parents remain an invaluable strength for the school. PISQ Cambridge Wing, firmly believes that "the only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary", the statement added.


Aashir Niaz


Abdulhameed Olakunle


Abdulla Aftab Azad


Ahmed Aftab Azad


Ahmed Hesham Kolachi


Ali Sherjil Malik


Areej Saeed


Ashbah Faisal


Asma Noor


Azka Badar


Bareera Iqbal


Bhavana Kumari Tak


Duaa Muzammil


Duaa Tahseen Lone


Eshaal Shahid


Eshal Ali


Fatima Maryam


Haniya Arsalan


Hawwa Basit


Hiraal Kumari Tak


Hisham Hamza Mayet


Huda Masood Baloch


Ibrahim Tariq


Jasim Masaud


Javeria Faisal


Khadija Zareen


Lina Ahmed


Maha


Mahdi bin Sadar Baloch


Malika Zunaira Mahmood


Meesum Ali


Mohamed Emad Hamdy Mohamed


Mohammad Anas


Mohammad Mahdi Nazimonfared


Mohammad Saleh Siddiqui


Moiz Hassan Haider


Moyosoreoluwa Barakat Salami


Muhammad Haseeb


Muhammad Hazaq


Muhammad Mubashir Imran

Muhammad Saqib

Muhammad Shaheer Rehan

Muhammad Taha Rehan

Muhammad Talha Bilal

Muhammad Waleed Arsalan Bhatti

Muhammad Waleed Asif

Muhammad Zakria

Nida Abid

Nimra Umer

Noor Amr

Odai Ahmed Mohamed

Rahma Awais

Ritag Amr Mohamed

Safora Aqeel

Sana Shaukat Khan

Sardar Abu Bakr

Shaarif Imran

Umer Ayaz

Uniba Wajid

Waaniya Syed

Wania Khawar

Zainab Rehan Niazi

Zuryab Jaffar

Philippine embassy in Doha marks National Language Month

The Philippine embassy in Doha organised the 'Sinehan sa Embahada', a special film screening for Filipino youth, to mark the "Buwan ng Wikang Pambansa" (National Language Month) on August 20 at the chancery.

In a social media post, the embassy noted that more than 20 children aged between 8-12 participated in this inaugural activity.

Philippine ambassador Mardomel Celo D Melicor greeted the participants and shared the embassy's mission of celebrating the talent and creativity of Filipino artists and filmmakers while increasing appreciation of the national language. He said the embassy aims to utilise different forms of art to promote, conserve, and use the Filipino language to allow members of the diaspora community to connect to their roots.

Philippine ambassador Mardomel Celo D Melicor led the film screening for Filipino youth to mark the "Buwan ng Wikang Pambansa" (National Language Month) on August 20 at the chancery.

Thriving summer lilies



Tropical water lilies are among the few flowering plants that can withstand the extreme heat and humidity experienced in Qatar during the peak of summer. A scene from a Doha home garden the other day. PICTURE: *Gulf Times* news editor Bonnie James (Instagram: the.explorer7)

Youth connect with heritage crafts in summer programme

Heenat Salma Farm, in collaboration with the Ministry of Sports and Youth, has concluded Revive: A Summer of Crafts, that engaged young people across 10 youth centres in Qatar, a statement said.

The initiative provided youth with the opportunity to explore Qatar's cultural heritage through hands-on learning in traditional crafts, guided by skilled artisans. Participants not only developed technical skills in crafts such as sadu weaving, palm weaving, Arabic calligraphy, embroidery, and natural craft-making, but also gained a deeper appreciation for creativity, community, and cultural continuity.

As part of the programme, all youth centres hosted craft activations, while selected groups from Dana Girls Centre visited Heenat Salma Farm. During these visits, participants immersed themselves in the farm's unique atmosphere and engaged in workshops that embodied the farm's philosophy of connecting sustainable living with cultural heritage.

Rooted in Heenat Salma's vision, the programme emphasised the preservation of intangible cultural heritage by transforming it into a lived and shared experience. Youth were given the chance to directly interact with artisans, practice heritage skills, and understand their relevance in a modern context.

"Through this collaboration, we not only empowered youth but also nurtured cultural identity by reconnecting new generations with traditional crafts," said a spokesperson for the Ministry of Sports and Youth. "This programme demonstrates how heritage can be a living source of inspiration for innovation and community growth."

The collaboration reflected the Ministry of Sports and Youth's commitment to empowering young people through meaningful cultural initiatives, while supporting Qatar's National Development Strategy goals of fostering identity, cultural awareness, and social responsibility, the statement added.







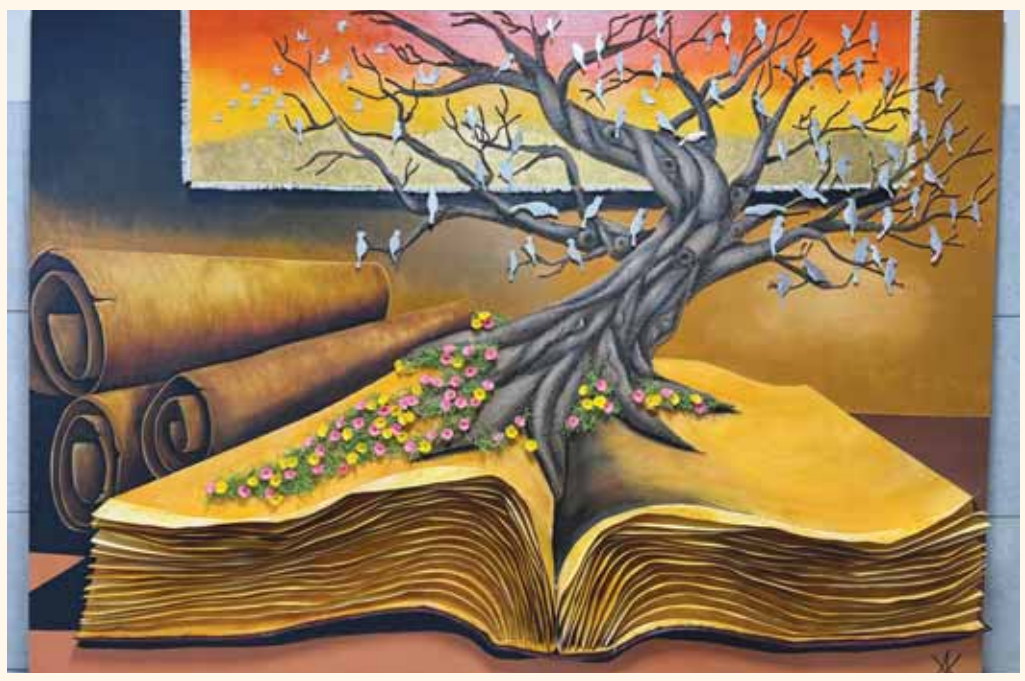








DPS-MIS teacher creates record with 3D bonsai art





DPS-Modern Indian School art teacher Ankush Khatri has set a record for creating the largest 3D artwork of a bonsai tree by an individual, as officially recognised by the India Book of Records and the Asia Book of Records. The piece, measuring 77 inches by 108 inches, was crafted using sustainable materials such as jute rope, coffee, handmade paper, and acrylic colours. The school has congratulated Khatri on his achievement.

MES holds teachers' orientation ahead of academic session



With an objective to prepare educators for the upcoming academic session, MES Indian School conducted a staff orientation programme.

In her opening address, principal Dr Hameeda Kadar, urged teachers to adopt a student-centric methodology so as to ensure a greater learning experience. Section-wise as well as department-wise meetings followed, led by the respective heads, discussing various key ideas for the success of the upcoming academic session.

Dr Aniket Srivastava, a resource person in the field of education, delivered a session on AI in Education, highlighting the potential of artificial intelligence to transform teaching and learning. The session was attended by teachers and principals of both MES and Mesis.

The resource persons of the orientation programme included faculty members Krishna Rajeev, Needhu D, Kanimozhi, Baby Shana, Rajendran S, Jency George, Farhana N and Tariq H, Samshabi Jarish and Afreena Mymoonath.

The programme concluded with department-wise specific meetings, where heads and subject co-ordinators provided detailed training based on the updated training plan matrix.

WORLD

Migrant boat capsizes off Mauritania, killing 69

AFP
Nouakchott

A boat carrying migrants capsized off the coast of Mauritania earlier this week, killing 69 people, officials said yesterday, the latest deadly sea crossing on the frequent migration path.

Thousands of would-be migrants have died in recent years seeking to make the sea trip from Africa to Spain and other European countries.

The accident occurred late on Tuesday night when the migrants on the boat saw the lights of a town off the coast of Mauritania some 80 kilometres north of the capital Nouakchott and "moved to one side, causing it to capsize", a senior coastguard official told AFP.

One of the coast guard's patrols had been able to rescue 17 people, the official said.

An earlier toll had put the number of dead at 49 but the senior coast guard official later revised it higher to 69.

According to a statement from the migrants, the boat had left The Gambia a week earlier with about 160 people on board, including Senegalese and Gambian nationals, the official added.

Drownings are frequent during the perilous crossing between Africa and Europe, with strong ocean currents and ramshackle vessels making the long crossing dangerous.

At least 10,457 migrants died, for example, while trying to reach Spain by sea in 2024, according to the NGO Caminando Fronteras.

The number amounts to an average of 30 deaths per day, up from around 18 in 2023.

Officials did not say where the migrants in Tuesday's accident were headed.

In late July, around 75 west African migrants were rescued off the coast of Mauritania after their boat suffered an engine failure.

Mauritania is a key staging post for undocumented migrants from across the African continent who take the dangerous sea route from west Africa to Europe.

Human Rights Watch said in a report earlier this week that Mauritania's security forces had committed "serious human rights violations" against migrants and asylum seekers ranging from torture to abuse over the past five years.

The report said the victims were largely West and Central Africans "seeking to leave or transit the country".

It added that the abuses were "exacerbated" by the European Union and Spain, which had continued to outsource immigration management to Mauritania.

However, Mauritania's government has taken recent steps that "may improve protection for migrants and their rights", HRW said.



A vendor grills Liboke in Kinshasa.

French dictionary gets bad rap over Congolese banana leaf dish

AFP
Kinshasa

Diners flock to the terrace of Mother Antho Aembe's restaurant in downtown Kinshasa to enjoy "liboke", blissfully unaware of the linguistic brouhaha surrounding the Democratic Republic of Congo's national dish.

Made by grilling fish from the mighty River Congo wrapped in a banana-leaf parcel with spices, tomatoes, peppers, onions, garlic and chillies, liboke enjoys cult status across the central African country.

But liboke's inclusion in one of France's top dictionaries has upset Congolese intellectuals, who say its compilers have failed to capture the full meaning of a word derived from the local Lingala language and closely associated with national identity.

The Petit Larousse dictionary — an encyclopaedic tome considered a foremost reference on the French language — announced in May it was including liboke in its 2026 edition.

Its definition: "a dish made from fish or meat, wrapped in banana leaves and cooked over charcoal."

Tucking into a plate on the terrace in the city centre, civil servant Patrick Bewa said it was a "source of pride" that liboke had made it into the leading French dictionary.

"We love it, it's really a typically African and Congolese meal," he said. "With the smoky flavour which takes on the aroma of the leaf, it's an inimitable taste. You have to taste it to believe it."

But some scholars argue that the definition was compiled in Paris by the Academie francaise (French Academy), the chief arbiter on matters pertaining to the French language, without doing justice to liboke's original meanings.

Referring only to liboke as food is "very reductive", argued Moise Edimo Lumbidi, a cultural promoter and teacher of Lingala, one of scores of languages spoken in the DRC where French remains the official language.

Under dictator Mobutu Sese Seko, whose rise to power was helped by former colonial master Belgium and whose kleptocratic rule was backed by the United States as a bulwark against Cold War communism, liboke was even part of the national slogan.

"Tolingi Zaire liboke moko, lisanga moko," was a rallying cry, meaning: "We want a united and undivided Zaire", the former name for the DRC during Mobutu's 32 years in power.

"I'm not happy about restricting this precious word, so essential to our culture... liboke moko, it's above all that communion, that national unity," writer and former international co-operation minister Pepin Guillaume Manjolo said.

"Limiting it to its culinary aspects may be all very well for the French, but for us it will not do."

The Petit Larousse should have drawn up the definition by consulting the literary academies of the DRC and its neighbour the Republic of Congo, as the region where the word originated, he said.

AFP contacted the publishers of the Petit Larousse dictionary for comment but did not receive an immediate response.

Edimo, the language teacher, explained that in Lingala, liboke means "a little group".

While liboke's inclusion in the dictionary is a good thing, Edimo said, Larousse's compilers should "deepen their research so as to give us the true etymology of the word".

That would be "a way for them to express their respect for our culture", he added.

At her restaurant in Kinshasa's upscale Gombe district, 41-year-old Mother Aembe was unaware of liboke's newfound literary status, but said she just hoped it would bring in more customers.

Protesters in Ghana demand cancellation of mounting Africa debt

AFP
Accra

Hundreds of workers yesterday poured onto the streets of Accra, Ghana's capital, calling for the cancellation of Africa's ballooning debt.

Ghana, Africa's leading gold producer and the world's second-largest cocoa exporter, is only now starting to recover from one of its worst economic crises in decades, which included a 2022 debt default and inflation that at one point exceeded 50%.

The protest, led by Ghana's Trades Union Congress (TUC) and backed by the International Trade Union Confederation-Africa (ITUC-Africa), called for a radical overhaul of the global debt system, which unions say is suffocating Africa's economic prospects.

The west African country's external debt stood in March at $28.5bn, or more than a quarter of its economic output.

In Accra, protesters wearing red and black tops danced to loud music blaring from speakers, chanting patriotic songs as they marched through the capital.

"These debts, running into billions, have become a major obstacle to development across the continent," said Horde Ayigbe, head of research at ITUC-Africa, referring to Africa's broader debt crisis.

Africa's external debt has now surpassed $1.3tn, with Ghana among more than 20 countries restructuring its obligations.

In Ghana, the crisis led former president Nana Akufo-Addo to request a $3bn loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

A petition signed by ITUC-Africa's general secretary Joel Akhator Odigie and submitted to Ghana's government, called for the "total and unconditional cancellation of Africa's unsustainable external debts as an act of reparative justice". "More than half of African countries are already in or at high risk of debt distress, leaving governments unable to finance essential services," the petition said, adding that any freed-up resources should go towards job creation, wages, social protection, climate resilience and structural transformations.

"This is not just a financial challenge; it is a human development and democratic crisis," it added. Receiving the petition on behalf of President John Mahama, Finance Minister Cassiel Ato Forson echoed their concerns.

"There is a difference between not being able to pay and not being willing to pay," Forson said.

In 23 African countries, debt servicing is outpacing money spent on health and education. "In the case of these 23 African countries, their debt service cost has crowded out very important spending... they simply cannot pay," Forson added.

Kenya exhumes 32 bodies as outcry grows over starvation cult deaths

Thirty-two bodies have been exhumed in southeastern Kenya in the past week, in a tragedy that is sparking fresh criticism of authorities who had vowed to crack down on extremist sects after hundreds of members of a doomsday cult died two years ago, Reuters reported from Malindi. The Kenyan government and local residents have linked the bodies discovered in the village of Kwa Binzaro to the same sect blamed for the deaths of over 400 people in the nearby Shakahola Forest in 2023.

Seven more bodies were recovered on Thursday, bringing the total since exhumations began last week in the remote, forested area to 32, government pathologist Richard Njoroge told reporters.

Search operations continued on Friday, with workers in white hazmat suits and blue gloves combing through dense thickets with shovels and hoes. Kwa Binzaro lies around 30km from Shakahola, where prosecutors allege that cult leader Paul Mackenzie ordered his followers to starve themselves and their children so that they could go to heaven before the world ended. Mackenzie, who faces charges of murder and terrorism, has denied the accusations against him. Earlier this month, Interior Minister Kipchumba Murkomen linked the graves discovered in Kwa Binzaro to Mackenzie's cult, saying that survivors rescued from the village had said the self-styled pastor was praying for them from prison.

Two years after Bongo removal, Gabon tackling myriad challenges

AFP
Libreville

Gabon looks like a country under construction two years after a coup that abruptly ended 55 years of rule by the Bongo family.

But for all its new roads, markets and reforms, social and economic problems still loom large.

President Brice Oligui Nguema will use National Liberation Day on the anniversary of the August 30, 2023 coup to visit the big building projects he has initiated.

On toppling Ali Bongo, Oligui pledged to "straighten out" Gabon, ensuring a better life for the citizens of the central African nation whose natural riches traditionally have benefited only a few.

It will also be an opportunity for Oligui, who swept a presidential election in April with nearly 95% of the vote, to vaunt his record just weeks before local and parliamentary elections.

"Our political project is one of a clear break with decades of stagnation and predation," he told a national daily last week in an interview to mark his first 100 days as president.

Buoyed by securing a seven-year term on the back of a new constitution passed by popular vote last December, Oligui insists he can lift the country out of its "economic torpor." While Gabon is rich in oil, wood, manganese and other resources, a third of its population lives below the poverty threshold.

Oligui says he is "targeting a growth rate of 10%", but World Bank forecasts see only 2.4% between now and 2027.

Defending Gabon's "economic sovereignty", he announced in May the end of unrefined manganese exports by 2029 to create jobs by encouraging domestic processing, as well as the creation of purchasing centres to lower the cost of basic necessities. Those measures will require new infrastructure in a country where water and electricity remain difficult to access, sometimes even in downtown Libreville, the capital.

JOBLESS CHALLENGE

Youth employment was a touchstone issue in Oligui's presidential campaign with a third of people under-25 jobless, according to official figures.

"For me, nothing has changed! Whereas, after the presidential election, we were promised jobs," complains Zita Beboema, 37, a mother of three.

She survives on government aid supplemented by occasional work in the timber industry.

In its June economic outlook, the World Bank highlighted a "mismatch between the skills available and the skills required of the workforce", as well as training.

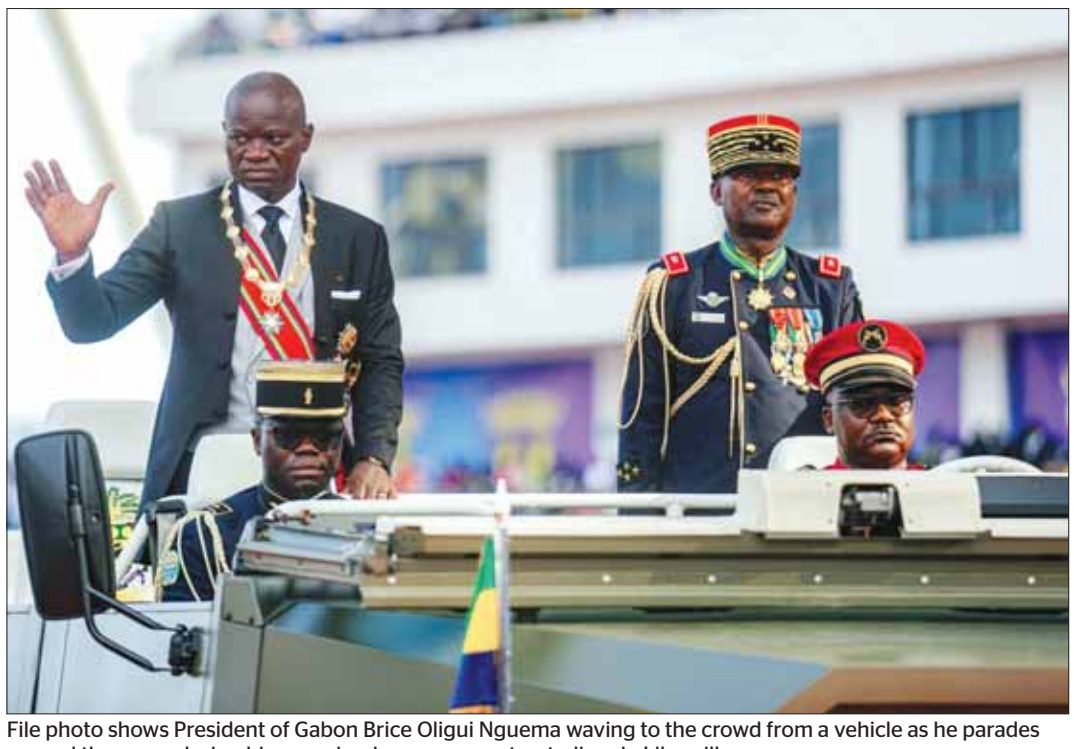
Despite the announcement of the creation of 163,000 jobs and measures to facilitate entrepreneurship, Oligui has alluded to a "lack of enthusiasm" among many unemployed compatriots.

But he says that he now "invites the youth to seize opportunities" which may materialise.

Not all are convinced.

Axel Jordy Mboumba, 23, a financial controller, regrets there remains "so much unemployment" around him. For Mboumba, "the same people who did not help the country (before the coup) are still present".

He said he will not be voting in the coming polls.



File photo shows President of Gabon Brice Oligui Nguema waving to the crowd from a vehicle as he parades around the arena during his swearing-in ceremony at a stadium in Libreville.

POLITICAL OUTLOOK

The political landscape has undergone only minor changes with the creation of the presidential party, the Democratic Union of Builders (UDB), coming three months after the election.

Largely composed of Bongo-era leaders, the party is favourite to win legislative and local elections, the first round of which is scheduled for September 27.

It will face a challenge from the Gabonese Democratic Party (PDG) created by late former president Omar Bongo Ondimba.

The movement rallied to the majority at least for the presidential election.

But the former dominant party has been plagued by internal division since Ali Bongo Ondimba, son of Omar Bongo who was president from his father's death in 2009 until 2023, claimed in a video broadcast over social networks in July that he was still at the helm of the party.

Ali Bongo, who spent 20 months as a recluse in his villa in Libreville, finally left the country in May for Angola and then Britain.

Gabon's political opposition is limited to a handful of independent figures and Alain-Claude Bilie-By-Nze — prime minister for a few months in 2023 — at the head of the Together for Gabon movement.

Court battle underway as Fed governor Cook contests firing by Trump

AFP/Reuters
Washington

A US court has begun hearing Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook's challenge of President Donald Trump's attempt to fire her, in a legal battle set to have major implications for the US central bank and its independence.

In the first hearing in the case, a judge in Washington considered Cook's request for a temporary order declaring Trump's attempt to oust her unlawful.

This would allow Cook – the first black woman to serve on the Fed's board – to continue in her role while she challenges her ouster.

The session closed without a ruling yesterday, with more arguments to be submitted on Tuesday.

Judge Jia Cobb heard arguments from lawyers representing Cook and Trump respectively, with discussions surrounding whether it mattered that the alleged transgressions had taken place before she became a Fed governor.

Critics accuse Trump of seeking to fire Cook in order to tip the Fed's board in favour of his stated goal of lowering interest rates.

The hearing also touched on whether Cook was given sufficient notice before Trump took action to remove her and whether the president's motivation in firing her was relevant to the case.

In a recent ruling, the Supreme Court suggested that Fed officials can only be removed for "cause", which could be interpreted to mean malfeasance or dereliction of duty.

No president has ever removed a Fed governor, and the law has never been tested in court.

On Monday evening, Trump published a letter on his Truth Social platform saying that he was immediately removing Cook over claims of mortgage fraud.

Among the allegations were that Cook had claimed two primary residences, one in Michigan and another in Georgia.

Trump pointed to a criminal referral dated August 15 from Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA) director Bill Pulte in announcing Cook's removal.

Cook has not been charged with a crime and the alleged incidents occurred before she was in her current position.

The president's lawyers argued in a filing yesterday that he had also given Cook ample notice, saying that he publicised the FHFA referral on August 20.

However, Cook's lawyer countered that allegations of fraud have become a "weapon of choice" to remove officials.

He noted that Trump had been calling Fed Chair Jerome Powell "too late" in lowering interest rates before directing his ire at Cook.

Late on Thursday Pulte wrote on social media that the FHFA had sent a second criminal referral to US authorities, claiming further misrepresentations about Cook's properties.

Cook's attorney Abbe Lowell pushed back in a separate statement that this was "an obvious smear campaign" by a "political operative" aimed at discrediting Cook.

"Nothing in these vague, unsubstantiated allegations has any relevance to Gov. Cook's role at the Federal Reserve, and they in no way justify her removal from the Board," Lowell said.

Should Cook win the case, the president's ability to force Fed officials out of the central bank will be limited, in a boost to the institution's independence.

However, her loss could allow the opposite to occur, in a blow to the organisation and with major implications for the world's biggest economy.

The case, which will likely end up before the US Supreme Court, has ramifications for the Fed's ability to set interest rate policy without regard to politicians' wishes, widely seen as critical to any central bank's ability to keep inflation under control.

The Fed has said it would abide by any court decision.

It has given no indication that Cook's status as a member of its Board of Governors has changed, and she remains listed on its website as an active member of several internal committees.

Trump targets foreign aid in funding fight with Congress

AFP/Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump has moved to cut $5bn of congressionally approved foreign aid, the White House said yesterday – raising the likelihood of a federal shutdown as Democrats oppose the policy.

In a letter posted online late on Thursday, Trump told House of Representatives Speaker Mike Johnson that he plans to withhold funding for 15 international programmes.

The US Constitution grants funding power to Congress, which every year has to pass legislation to fund government operations.

The White House must secure Congress' approval if it does not want to spend that money.

Congress did this in July when it cancelled $9bn in foreign aid and public media funding.

The latest move – known as a "pocket rescission" – bypasses Congress entirely.

Trump budget director Russell Vought has argued that Trump can withhold funds for 45 days, which would run out the clock until it expires at the end of the fiscal year on September 30.

The White House said the tactic was last used in 1977.

The cuts target programmes of the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The president "will always put AMERICA FIRST", the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said on social media, releasing a copy of the letter.

Trump has effectively dismantled USAID, the chief US foreign aid agency, since taking office.



Trump plans to withhold funding for 15 international programmes.

Founded in 1961 as John F Kennedy sought to leverage aid to win over the developing world in the Cold War, USAID has been incorporated into the State Department after Secretary of State Marco Rubio slashed 85% of its programming.

Rubio welcomed Trump's move as part of "rooting out fraud, waste, and abuse from the US government, saving American workers billions of dollars".

Chuck Schumer, who leads the Democratic minority in the US Senate, described Trump's little-known legislative tactic as illegal.

"It's clear neither Trump nor Congressional Republicans have any plan to avoid a painful and entirely unnecessary shutdown," he said.

"Republicans don't have to be a rubber stamp for this carnage," he said in a statement.

Some moderate Republican also expressed their opposition to Trump's effort to stop spending already approved by lawmakers.

Republican Senator Susan Collins of Maine, who oversees spending legislation as chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said the action is illegal.

"Instead of this attempt to undermine the law, the appropriate way is to identify ways to reduce excessive spending through the bipartisan, annual appropriations process," she said in a statement.

Trump, after taking office for the second time in January, launched a sweeping campaign to downsize or dismantle swaths of the US government.

Republicans control both chambers of Congress, but need Democrat support in the Senate to pass new spending laws.

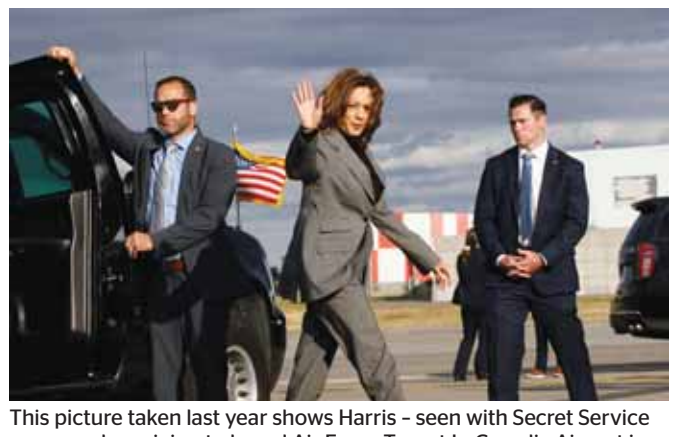
Trump, who is pushing to extend presidential powers, aims to claw back the spending late in the fiscal year so that Congress may not have time to vote before the funding expires next month.

Democrats have warned that any attempt to reverse funding already approved by Congress would doom negotiations to avoid budgetary paralysis, the so-called shutdown, after September 30.

The United States last averted shutdown, with hours to spare, in March.

Shutdowns are rare but disruptive and costly, as everyday functions like food inspections halt, and parks, monuments and federal buildings shut up shop.

Up to 900,000 federal employees can be furloughed, while another million deemed essential – from air traffic controllers to police – work but forego pay until normal service resumes.



This picture taken last year shows Harris – seen with Secret Service personnel – arriving to board Air Force Two at LaGuardia Airport in Queens, New York. ***– AFP***

Harris loses Secret Service protection

AFP
Washington

US President Donald Trump has cancelled former vice-president Kamala Harris's Secret Service protection, officials said yesterday, in the Republican's most high-profile move of its kind against his political rivals.

The Secret Service customarily protects ex-VPs for six months after they leave office, a period that ended on July 21 for Harris, the defeated Democratic presidential candidate last year.

However, then-president Joe Biden approved a year-long extension for Harris in a previously undisclosed order that Trump has now terminated, a senior White House official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Harris's office also confirmed the move.

"The vice-president is grateful to the United States Secret Service for their professionalism, dedication, and unwavering commitment to safety," Kirsten Harris, a senior adviser to Harris, told AFP.

While Harris has kept a low profile since losing the election, the 60-year-old is scheduled to go on tour this fall to promote a book she has written on her failed presidential bid.

The travel will force her to appear often in public.

Harris's inside look at her short presidential run against Trump is titled *107 Days*.

The memoir, published by Simon & Schuster, will be released on September 23 in the United States.

The first woman to serve as vice-president of the United States, Harris became the Democratic nominee after Biden, now 82, withdrew from the race amid concerns about his cognitive health.

Harris said she wrote the book with "candor and reflection" and promised a "behind-the-scenes account" of the campaign.

The move to withdraw her protection comes even though the Trump administration has repeatedly spoken of the need for security for current officials following the assassination attempt that the Republican survived in July 2024 in Butler, Pennsylvania.

Trump sent a signed memo ordering Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem to "discontinue any security-related procedures previously authorised by Executive Memorandum, beyond those required by law" for Harris from September 1, said CNN, which first reported the move.

The Secret Service did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Since taking office in January, Trump, 79, has taken similar measures against a long list of his perceived enemies and political opponents.

He has stripped other officials and former officials of their security clearances to receive sensitive information – including Joe Biden himself – targeted law firms involved in past cases against him and pulled federal funding from universities.

Biden and his wife Jill get protection for life under federal law as a former president and his spouse, but Trump in March withdrew government bodyguards from Biden's son Hunter and daughter Ashley.

Trump at the time said it was "ridiculous" that Hunter Biden had a security detail of up to 18 people.

Trump has also withdrawn protection for former national security adviser John Bolton, former secretary of state Mike Pompeo and Anthony Fauci, who led the country's fight against the coronavirus (Covid-19).

Last week, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents raided the home and office of Bolton, one of Trump's fiercest critics, in an investigation officials said was linked to classified documents.

The White House has justified its decisions on removing security protection and clearances by saying that people are not entitled to them for life and that many are "quite wealthy" and can afford their own bodyguards.

After his first term in office from 2017-21, billionaire Trump issued an order giving a six-month extension of Secret Service protection to all four of his adult children and three senior administration officials.

Bison herds 'reawaken' Yellowstone's prairies

By Issam Ahmed
AFP

There are few symbols of the American West more iconic than the bison – shaggy giants that once roamed in the tens of millions before being nearly annihilated by European settlers.

A new study published on Thursday in *Science* finds that bringing North America's largest land mammals back to their ancient stomping grounds is breathing new life into grassland ecosystems, with benefits cascading across the food web.

Scientists have long suspected bison act as "keystone species", shaping prairie landscapes through grazing, wallowing and seed dispersal.

Previous research has even suggested their vast herds help lock carbon in the soil.

However, the latest findings, from Yellowstone National Park, reveal just how dramatic their influence can be for ecosystem health when they are allowed to roam freely through the wilderness.

By munching through grasses, bison speed up the nitrogen cycle, supercharging plants with nutrients.

The result: forage that is more than 150% richer in protein – a gift to every creature that feeds on the prairie, from elk and deer to pronghorn and bighorn sheep.

"It truly is a reawakening of what had been there in the past," said Bill Hamilton, a co-lead author of the paper and professor at Washington and Lee University.

Bison herds were once so vast in the western United States that their hoofbeats rumbled like distant thunder.

Early 19th-century estimates put their numbers between 30mn-60mn.

Then came the railroads. The building of the first Transcontinental line was accompanied by a ruthless extermination campaign – hunters shooting from trains, carcasses left to rot – aimed not only at supplying hides but at starving Native Americans, for whom bison were a cultural and economic lifeline.

By the early 20th century, the species was teetering on the brink.

Revival efforts eventually pushed their numbers back to roughly 400,000, but nearly all survive in small, tightly managed herds on private ranches or reserves.

Only in Yellowstone National Park, home to about 5,000 animals, do bison still roam with something like their old freedom, covering nearly 1,000 miles a year on a 50-mile back-and-forth migration.

For scientists, that makes the park a rare, living laboratory.

Between 2015 and 2021, a study led by National Park Service biologist Chris Geremia tracked the animals' movements and grazing patterns across their main habitats, measuring plant growth, nutrient cycling, soil chemistry and more.



A male bison roams through Elk Island National Park near Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. A new study published on Thursday in *Science* finds that bringing North America's largest land mammals back to their ancient stomping grounds is breathing new life into grassland ecosystems, with benefits cascading across the food web. ***– AFP***

They compared grazed and ungrazed patches, pairing field experiments with satellite imagery and GPS collar data to capture bison impacts across their migratory range.

Results show roaming bison keep grasses and wildflowers short, dense and protein-rich – and plant communities surprisingly diverse.

"Grasses exude carbon into the soil after being grazed, and that actually stimulates microbial populations for up to 48 hours," explained Hamilton.

That microbial burst translated to more ammonium and nitrates for new growth – a feedback loop that boosted both plants and animals.

Bison dung and urine added another jolt of nitrogen, compounding the fertilisation effect.

"We took that 150% increase and we calculated it across the whole migration (area), and it provides over 3mn kg more crude protein if you have bison," said co-author Jerod Merkle of the University of Wyoming.

Even areas that looked "mowed flat" by bison remained ecologically vibrant, with productivity and diversity intact.

The findings come at a fraught time for conservation, as President Donald Trump's administration tilts heavily toward agricultural interests over wildlife.

Ranchers argue that bison allowed to roam would smash fences, mix with cattle and spread disease.

However, Merkle countered that the ecological payoff was undeniable.

"My vision when I see the data from our paper is, let's just pull out of the classic livestock thinking with bison, and think about them as a species that creates heterogeneity, that needs big space to move around – and it's okay to have big groups of them sometimes," he said.

Two firemen helping with blaze in Washington held by border agents

Two firefighters battling a wildfire in the United States have been arrested by border patrol agents, immigration officials said on Thursday, as President Donald Trump's migration crackdown gathers pace.

Federal agents held crews from private fire contractors for several hours on Wednesday as they readied to help tackle the 9,000-acre (3,600-hectare) Bear Gulch Fire in Washington state, reports said.

Agents lined the 44 people up and ordered them to produce identification, firefighters told the *Seattle Times*, with crew members told they were not allowed to film the encounter.

Those two people were arrested, the CBP said, while the remaining 42 were removed from federal lands. – ***AFP***

Air Force to offer military funeral honours to slain Capitol rioter

The US Air Force said yesterday that it is offering military funeral honours to Ashli Babbitt, a supporter of President Donald Trump who was shot and killed by a police officer during the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol.

Babbitt, 35, a US Air Force veteran who lived in California, was fatally shot in the shoulder while she attempted to enter a room through a broken window near the House of Representatives during the riot.

The funeral honours would mark the latest gesture of support from Trump's administration toward those who stormed the Capitol in a failed bid to block Congress from certifying the Republican president's 2020 election loss. – ***Reuters***

Abbott signs law redrawing Texas congressional maps

Texas Governor Greg Abbott has signed into law a bill to redraw the state's congressional maps at the behest of President Donald Trump in an effort to flip five US House seats held by Democrats to Republicans.

The ratification came after the state's legislature passed the measure last week amid a nationwide redistricting battle.

"Texas is now more red in the United States Congress," Abbott said in a video post on social media, after signing the bill with a marker.

Republicans have acknowledged that they believe winning more congressional seats in Texas will help the party maintain its slim majority in the US House of Representatives in next year's midterm elections.

More states controlled by Republicans are considering similar action.

California and other states where Democrats hold power vow to counter such moves.

The California legislature approved a redistricting plan last week aimed at giving Democrats five more congressional seats. – ***Reuters***

WORLD

UK court lifts ban on housing asylum-seekers in hotel

AFP
London

A UK appeals court yesterday overturned a lower court decision temporarily blocking the use of a protest-hit hotel to house asylum-seekers, in a victory for Britain's government.

A three-judge panel ruled the high court judge who previously imposed a September 12 deadline to remove migrants from the hotel in Epping, northeast of London had "made a number of errors".

The case came after a resident at the hotel was charged with sexually assaulting a local girl, sparking weeks of protests that have at times turned violent and prompted a national debate on immigration policy.

In overturning the high court decision from earlier this month, the Court of Appeal judges said it was "seriously flawed in principle", and risked "acting as an impetus or incentive for further protests".

They warned it had ignored the "obvious consequence that the closure of one site means capacity needs to be identified elsewhere in the system".

The ruling means the government will no longer be forced to relocate 138 asylum seekers from the Bell Hotel by September 12, and could scupper local plans to challenge the use of other hotels for such purposes.

The ruling will be welcomed by the government, which was facing a logistical headache to find alternative accommodation.

Under a 1999 law, it is legally required to house "all destitute asylum seekers whilst their asylum claims are being decided".

The case will now go to a full hearing at the Court of Appeal in October. Both the interior ministry and the hotel's owner, Somani Hotels, are seeking to stop the bid by the local authority in Epping to stop it being used as accommodation for asylum seekers.

Epping Forest district council launched the legal action, arguing the hotel had become a risk to public safety and its current use breached planning laws.

Police killing sparks unrest in Indonesia

Reuters
Jakarta

Hundreds of Indonesians protested at sites across Jakarta yesterday over the death of a civilian hit by a police vehicle, triggering calls for police reform in the first major test for President Prabowo Subianto's nearly year-old government.

The civilian, a motorcycle ride-sharing driver, was hit at the site of violent clashes on Thursday near parliament as police sought to disperse demonstrators protesting about issues including lawmakers' pay and education funding.

The protests yesterday afternoon prompted a number of schools in the capital to allow students to leave early and banks and businesses to ask employees to work from home.

The military has been deployed in some areas, visuals broadcast by local media showed.

Drivers, students in colourful jackets and Indonesians from other walks of life descended on the country's parliament and police headquarters in Jakarta to stage protests yesterday, throwing rocks at the gates and chanting "Killer! Killer!"

Wearing their signature green jackets, drivers also staged protests in other cities, including Bandung and Surabaya on Java island and Gorontalo on Sulawesi.

After darkness fell, heavy rain in Jakarta dispersed some students and drivers from the police headquarters, though a few remained keeping alight a fire built from tyres and bamboo while singing patriotic songs.

Police fired tear gas at protesters trying to enter the headquarters.

Protesters torched a house belonging to Indonesia's People's Consultative Assembly legislative wing in Bandung, a city about 150km southeast of the capital, state news agency Antara reported. Local media also reported a police post was set on fire in Makassar city, on Sulawesi.

Motorcycle driver Pendi Nasir, 43, who was among the protesters in Jakarta, called for a transparent investigation from the police over the death of the driver, Affan Kurniawan.

"We don't want our colleagues here to become victims of this riot again," he said, calling for action against those at fault.

Stand-up comedian Aci Resti attended a protest at the parliament against a generous housing allowance for lawmakers.

"I'm here to voice the opinions of my friends, who are fed up with everything, with the members of the House of Representatives, with everything, with the government," she said.

Protesters were undeterred by earlier remarks by Prabowo calling for calm, expressing condolences for Affan Kurniawan's death and ordering a thorough probe of the incident.

"I am shocked and disappointed by the excessive actions of the officers," Prabowo, whose presidency nears its one-year anniversary in October, said in a video message. "I have ordered a thorough and transparent investigation... and officers involved must be held accountable."



Thailand's Paetongtarn Shinawatra waves as she leaves the Government House, after the Constitutional Court ruled to remove her from office in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday.

Thai PM removed by court, triggering power scramble

Reuters
Bangkok

Thailand's Constitutional Court dismissed Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra yesterday for an ethics violation, in another crushing blow to the Shinawatra political dynasty that triggered a flurry of deal-making aimed at filling the void.

Paetongtarn, who was Thailand's youngest prime minister, becomes the sixth premier from or backed by the billionaire Shinawatra family to be removed by the military or judiciary in a tumultuous two-decade battle for power between the country's warring elites.

The ruling paves the way for the election by parliament of a new prime minister, a process that could be drawn out, with Paetongtarn's ruling Pheu Thai party losing bargaining power and facing a challenge to shore up a fragile alliance with a razor-thin majority.

The court said Paetongtarn violated ethics in a leaked June telephone call, during which she appeared to kowtow to Cambodia's powerful former leader Hun Sen - until recently a close Shinawatra family ally - when both countries were on the brink of an armed conflict. Fighting erupted weeks later, lasting five days.

Hours after the decision, the Bhumjaithai Party that had quit Paetongtarn's coalition over the call emerged as the early frontrunner in forming a new government, with leader Anutin Charnvirakul shuttling across Bangkok to rally support from parties, with pledges that included dissolving parliament within four months.

The ruling brings a premature end to the premiership of the daughter and protégé of divisive tycoon Thaksin Shinawatra and will be a major test of his outsized political clout. Paetongtarn, 39, was a political neophyte when she was abruptly thrust into power after the surprise dismissal of Srettha Thavisin by the same court.

In a 6-3 decision, the court said Paetongtarn had put her private interests before those of the nation and had damaged Thailand's reputation.

"Due to a personal relationship that appeared aligned with Cambodia, the respondent was consistently willing to comply with or act in accordance with the wishes of the Cambodian side," it said.

Reacting to the decision, Paetongtarn called for all parties to work together to bring political stability to Thailand.

Bangladesh detains group for alleged plot against govt

An 87-year-old former minister was among 16 people ordered by a Bangladesh court yesterday to be detained in custody on charges of plotting against the government, police said.

The country has been in turmoil since a mass uprising toppled Sheikh Hasina's autocratic government in 2024, with political parties vying for power ahead of elections scheduled for February.

The 16 were arrested on Thursday after attending a meeting at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU), a journalists' association, where they accused political parties of conspiring to undermine the constitution.

Witnesses said a mob stormed the venue, heckled the participants, and later handed them over to police.

"They were arrested under the anti-terrorism act," said Khalid Mansur, officer-in-charge of Dhaka's central police station.

Fugitive Lanka ex-minister surrenders



Security officers escort Sri Lanka's former fisheries minister, Rajitha Senaratne (centre), outside a court in Colombo yesterday. Senaratne surrendered himself to a court yesterday after two months on the run, the latest high profile detention in a sweeping anti-corruption crackdown. Senaratne, who served in the cabinet of then-president Mahinda Rajapaksa, is accused of illegally awarding a 2012 contract to a foreign firm, allegedly causing a loss to the state of $83,000.

S Korea, US negotiators struggle to finalise deal

Reuters
Seoul

Negotiations ranging from tariffs to defence between South Korea and the US were bogged down, overshadowing a handshake agreement and a promising presidential summit, officials in Seoul said.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung met US President Donald Trump for the first time on Monday, and emerged declaring success after displaying personal chemistry and avoiding any public split between the two long-time allies. Behind the scenes, however, the two sides were unable to agree on a joint statement or even a fact sheet, and a month after announcing a deal on tariffs, the agreement still has not been finalised on paper.

Lee's national security adviser, Wi Sung-lac, said yesterday the two countries did not produce documents covering security, economy, trade or investments because progress remained slow in some areas while large strides had been made in other areas.

More discussions and reviews were needed to hash out their details, he added, without providing specific details.

South Korean presidential chief of staff Kang Hoon-sik told reporters on Thursday that it was a "very difficult negotiation" because issues ranging from investments to security are closely intertwined. "If the negotiations for one minister doesn't go well, they put a break on another negotiation that is going well," he said.

"We've overcome a significant obstacle, but there is still a long way to go."

S Korea's former first lady indicted for bribery

Reuters
Seoul

Kim Keon-hee, the wife of South Korea's ousted former president Yoon Suk-yeol, has been indicted for bribery and other charges, a special prosecution team said yesterday, amid a widening probe into the country's martial law crisis and scandals involving the once powerful couple.

Both Yoon and Kim have been arrested and are in jail, with Yoon already undergoing trial following his ouster in April over a botched bid to impose martial law in December.

The couple face separate investigations by special prosecutors appointed after Yoon's removal from office and since liberal President Lee Jae Myung took office in early June.

Following the indictment, Kim apologised for causing concerns and said she would make "no excuses" and face trial.

"Just as moonlight shines brightly in the darkest night, I too will endure this time, looking to my truth and heart," Kim said in a statement relayed by her lawyers, which did not address specific charges against her.

The charges against Kim, which are punishable by years in prison if she is found guilty, range from stock fraud to suspected bribery that has implicated business owners, religious figures and a powerful political broker.

The former first lady has been the subject of numerous high-profile scandals, some dating back more than 15 years, which overshadowed Yoon's turbulent presidency and inflicted political damage on him and his conservative party.

Among the charges, she is accused of manipulating stocks between 2010 and 2012 that earned her 810mn won ($583,510) in unfair profits, according to the prosecution.

Kim is also accused of receiving bribes worth 80mn won that include two Chanel bags and a diamond necklace from an official at the Unification Church in return for using her influence to help its business interests.

Kim's lawyers have denied the allegations against her, including over her receiving gifts.

The Unification Church, formally called the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, has said it was "deeply regrettable" that the church failed to prevent the misconduct of a former senior official, but denied any involvement in the case.

Yoon's shock martial law order in December and its political fallout has coincided with a dramatic fall from grace for Kim, a wealthy businesswoman who was seen as an important driving force behind her husband's rise to top office.

Special prosecutors investigating the country's martial law crisis yesterday also indicted former prime minister Han Duck-soo who was appointed by Yoon on charges of abetting revolt and committing perjury, a prosecution spokesperson said.

"The defendant was the highest constitutional institution that could have stopped the president's unconstitutional, illegitimate martial law," Park Ji-young, the spokesperson, said.

In recent weeks, prosecutors had been questioning Han, but he has not responded to questions from reporters.

The experienced technocrat, who served in senior posts under five presidents, became acting president after Yoon was impeached.

Soon after, Han himself was impeached after being accused of aiding Yoon in the martial law declaration. He denied this but accepted some responsibility for the ensuing crisis by failing to dissuade Yoon from making the surprise move.

Russian President Putin to visit India in December

AFP
Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin will pay an official visit to India in December, the Kremlin said yesterday, as ties between the countries grow closer and after the US imposed tariffs on New Dehli over its purchases of Russian oil.

Putin will also meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a regional summit in China on Monday, Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told reporters, saying the pair would discuss "preparation for the December visit". US President Donald Trump has imposed tariffs on Indian goods as punishment for New Delhi's massive purchases of Russian oil, part of a campaign to pressure Moscow into ending its offensive in Ukraine.

Energy incomes are a key source of revenue for Moscow's state budget. Russia is also one of India's top arms suppliers, and the warm ties between the two countries date back to the Soviet era.

Ukraine's Western allies have sought to cut Russia's export earnings since Moscow launched its military assault in February 2022.

But Russia has been able to redirect energy sales away from Europe to countries including India and China, ensuring the multi-billion-dollar flow of funds has continued.

India has argued it imported oil "from Russia because traditional supplies were diverted to Europe after the outbreak of the conflict".

Putin has significantly curtailed his foreign travel amid the offensive on Ukraine, for which he was slapped with an International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant. India is not a party to the ICC and therefore not obligated to detain Putin.

India growth beats forecasts despite US tariff threats

Reuters
New Delhi

India's economy unexpectedly gathered steam in the April-June quarter, defying expectations of slower growth even as a sharp rise in US tariffs on Indian imports threatens to weigh on business activity in the coming quarters.

The US doubled tariffs on Indian goods to as high as 50% on Wednesday over India's continuing imports of Russian oil. That ushered in the most punishing rate among US trading partners alongside Brazil and economists say the move could hurt exports including textiles, leather goods and chemicals.

Gross domestic product expanded 7.8% in the latest quarter in Asia's third-largest economy, the fastest in five quarters, from 7.4% in the previous three-month period, government data showed yesterday.

This was well above the 6.7% expansion economists had forecast in a Reuters poll.

Gross value added (GVA), seen as a more accurate measure of underlying economic activity, grew 7.6% in the three months to June, from 6.8% in the previous quarter.

GVA excludes indirect taxes and government subsidy payouts, which tend to be volatile.

At this pace, India remains one of the fastest-growing major economies, despite an increasingly cloudy export outlook after US President Donald Trump's tariff hike. The "surprise acceleration" in GDP growth in the April-June quarter means that "the economy is still on course to expand by a world-beating 7% this year, despite the upcoming hit from punitive US tariffs", Capital Economics said in a note.

"Despite the reciprocal penal tariff, we are maintaining our growth range (of 6.3-6.8%) for full year," India's chief economic adviser V Anantha Nageswaran said at a press conference after the data release.

Private consumer spending, which makes up about 57% of GDP, rose 7% year-on-year in April-June, compared with 6% in the previous quarter, as rural spending increased, and demand for durables and farm equipment such as tractors remained firm.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has pledged support for sectors hit by US tariffs and has said it would propose tax cuts to spur domestic demand. It had earlier cut income taxes starting April this year.

"Private consumption is supported by tax relief, rate cuts, crops sowing, though households may defer discretionary purchases until proposed consumption tax cuts take effect in the festive season," said Aditi Nayar, chief economist at ICRA ratings agency.

Government spending rose 7.4% in the three months through June compared to a fall of 1.8% in the previous quarter, the data showed.

Capital expenditure increased 7.8% in the quarter, though some private firms were seen holding investments amid global uncertainty following Washington's tariff hikes since April.

Manufacturing output rose 7.7% year-on-year in April-June, the first quarter of India's fiscal year, against 4.8% in the previous quarter, while construction expanded 7.6%, easing from 10.8%.

The agriculture sector expanded 3.7%, compared to 5.4% in the previous three quarters.

Economists warned growth could slow sharply when the effects of the higher US import duties kick in. Indian government sources have said New Delhi hoped the US would review the extra 25% tariff imposed this week, which took to 50% the rate charged on a range of Indian imports. But as yet there are no indications of renewed talks between the two sides.

The 50% US tariff could hit exports and have a "domino effect on employment, wages and private consumption," further dampening private investment and growth, said Madhavi Arora, chief economist at Mumbai-headquartered Emkay Financial Services.

Exporter groups estimate the tariffs could affect nearly 55% of India's $87bn in merchandise exports to the US, while benefiting competitors such as Vietnam, Bangladesh and China.

Some economists warn that prolonged US tariffs could shave 0.6 to 0.8 percentage point off India's growth over a year, as weaker exports dent its appeal as an alternative manufacturing hub to China.



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japan's Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba attend a joint press conference in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday.

Japan pledges $68bn investment in India

AFP
Tokyo

Japan yesterday pledged to invest $68bn in India during a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Tokyo, as the two countries agreed to deepen security ties.

"India's massive market is so full of potential that incorporating its vibrancy will help drive the growth of Japan's economy," Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba told reporters. Bilateral trade is currently worth over $20bn annually, heavily favouring Japan. Speaking during Modi's two-day stopover before he visits China, Ishiba said Japan would boost investment in India to 10tn yen ($68bn) and would establish a co-operation initiative focusing on semiconductors and AI.

The two sides also pledged to bolster security cooperation, with Kyodo news agency reporting that the two had agreed to expand drills between Japan's Self-Defence Forces and the Indian Armed Forces.

The nations also expressed "serious concern" over the situation in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, in a separate joint statement, according to Kyodo. "As the international situation grows more and more uncertain, Japan and India must join hands for the sake of peace and stability of the region," Ishiba told reporters. Modi said that "India and Japan are fully committed to a free, open, peaceful, prosperous and rules-based Indo-Pacific".

Both countries have been hit by tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump, with levies of 50% on many Indian imports into the United States taking effect this week. Japan's vital auto sector still faces 25% tariffs as a July trade deal cutting them - as well as additional "reciprocal" levies - is yet to come into force. India and Japan will "shape the Asian Century", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said yesterday.

"India and Japan's partnership is strategic and smart. Powered by economic logic, we have turned shared interests into shared prosperity," Modi told a business forum in Tokyo. "India is the springboard for Japanese businesses to the Global South. We will shape the Asian Century for stability, growth, and prosperity," Modi said. Modi and Ishiba are expected to announce that the number of Indians with specialised skills working or studying in Japan - which is beset by labour shortages - will double to 50,000 over the next five years, reports said.

Modi and Ishiba are set to tour a chip facility today. They will also visit a factory making "shinkansen" bullet trains with a view to Japan assisting in a planned 7,000km high-speed rail network by the centenary of Indian independence in 2047.

Canada, India name new envoys as ties improve

Canada and India announced new high commissioners to each other's countries, in the latest sign of improving ties frayed by former prime minister Justin Trudeau's allegation that India was linked to the killing of a Sikh separatist leader on Canadian soil.
India's previous high commissioner left Canada in October. Ottawa said he was among six diplomats who were expelled after they were linked to the murder of separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, while India said it had withdrawn the envoy.
India also said that same day that it had ordered the expulsion of six high-ranking Canadian diplomats, including the then-acting high commissioner.
Trudeau's successor, Mark Carney, and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to reinstate senior diplomats when they held their first bilateral meeting in Canada in June.

River Ravi water levels rise



A man along with children wades through floodwaters after a rise in water level of the Ravi river following heavy rains at a village near Ajnala, about 28km from Amritsar, India, yesterday.

Steelmakers urge rise in met coke import quota

Reuters
New Delhi

Indian steel producers have called on the government to sharply raise import quotas for low-ash metallurgical coke, seeking a near sevenfold increase to address what they say is a critical supply crunch, according to sources and a government document.

India, the world's second-largest crude steel producer, in June extended import curbs on low-ash metallurgical coke, a steelmaking raw material, for six months starting in July.

New Delhi also set country-specific import quotas and capped purchases at 1.4mn metric tonnes from July 1-December 31.

Steelmakers have urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration to raise the import quota to 9.3mn metric tonnes, with the largest share of additional shipments sought from Indonesia, followed by Japan and Poland, said the sources aware of the matter. The steelmakers' requests were recorded in a government document prepared by senior officials.

Steel firms have requested 2.6mn metric tonnes of imports from Indonesia, far exceeding the government's current allocation of 66,364 metric tonnes, according to the document.

Rapid capacity expansion by steel companies has strained met coke availability, and the abrupt policy curbs have dealt a blow to major producers, one of the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity as deliberations were not public.

Many steel company executives have told the government that domestic met coke output is insufficient to meet demand, said the sources.

India's push for ethanol-mixed fuel sparks driver backlash

Reuters
New Delhi/Lucknow

The Indian government is facing a backlash from motorists after the nationwide rollout of fuel blended with 20% ethanol, amid fears - stoked by a lack of clarity from some automakers - that it may affect the performance of particularly older vehicles.

India, the world's third largest car market, set a 2025 target years ago for 20% ethanol blending in fuel, called E20, as part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's focus on clean energy. But in recent weeks it has become the only choice at nearly all of the country's 90,000 fuel stations. Older blends, like E5 and E10, typically seen as more compatible with old cars, have mostly been removed, leaving drivers with just one choice.

The government says E20 lowers carbon emissions, but has conceded in press statements addressing consumer worries that there could be a "marginal" hit on fuel efficiency of old cars.

Automakers, already battling slower sales and shortages of rare-earth magnets, have provided mixed guidance, adding to consumer anger over the lack of choice. Public interest litigation against the move will be heard in the Supreme Court on Monday.

Two fuel station managers in the northern city of Lucknow said drivers were getting so angry that some stations had stopped providing information about the change.

"People hurl abuse at us. We then decided to not tell people about it," said one manager, Ramesh Pandey.

The ministries of petroleum and road transport did not respond to requests for comment.

"India's ethanol journey is unstoppable," Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on August 8, adding that "some lobbies with vested interests are actively attempting to create confusion."

Days later, Puri's ministry said "in case of certain older vehicles, some rubber parts and gaskets may require replacement" calling it a "simple process".

Automakers are racing to assuage concerns, but there is little clarity on the future of old cars in particular. Skoda has issued an FAQ on its website saying that components of its cars sold in India before April 2020 "are not evaluated" for E20.

In a statement yesterday, it said vehicles sold after that date were "fully material-compatible", without explaining what happens to older cars.

Toyota said in a statement that "a modest variation" in fuel economy in its cars was likely with E20.

On Monday, Renault told tech consultant Ankur Thakur, 28, via email that his 2022 Renault Triber had "not been tested" for E20 and it was "not advisable" to use the fuel.

He posted the screenshot of the email on X, which went viral and attracted more than 700,000 views. Renault then told Thakur - and Reuters in a statement yesterday - that based on government tests E20 poses "no serious challenges" for old cars.

Thakur, unconvinced, is now using a pricey no-ethanol fuel still available at select pumps. "Just give me the right fuel my car was originally made for," he said.

A Reuters review of a fuel tank flap and user manual of an Audi Q3 purchased last year in India showed it recommended only E5 and E10 fuel.

The fuel tank of a 2024 Mahindra Scorpio was pasted with a warning sticker: "Caution. Petrol/E10 fuel only".

Mahindra and Audi did not respond to queries.

COMMENT

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GULF TIMES

How to use AI without losing our minds

The recent launches of Gemini Deep Think and GPT-5 have highlighted the rapid evolution of large language models. Close to 67% of organisations worldwide now use Large Language Models, LLMs.

While AI-powered tools can dazzle with their speed and fluency, relying on them too heavily can stupefy us, making us slower, duller, and less able to think for ourselves.

Digital distraction is reducing our ability to focus and concentrate. Over the last two decades, smartphones and other devices have increasingly undermined our ability to sustain attention, make decisions, and complete tasks, distracting us with constant notifications and luring us into endless scrolling. The urge to check our phones, reinforced by the small reward the brain registers with every message or update, is as addictive as it is debilitating. Studies show these interruptions, combined with the instant gratification of scrolling, make it harder to focus on demanding, long-term tasks.

Ever easier-to-access information causes memory erosion, which means less capacity to retain and organise information when making decisions. Researchers began looking at the "Google Effect", some time ago, highlighting the adverse impact on memory of growing reliance on smartphones. By contrast, earlier generations had to memorise telephone numbers, poetry, and even the periodic table.

Digital distraction is reducing our ability to focus and concentrate. Smartphones and other devices have undermined our ability to sustain attention, make decisions

Declining ability to reason well and construct a good argument is the most recent effect of AI as more people delegate their thinking to ChatGPT, Gemini, or DeepSeek. Studies show that this "cognitive offloading", impedes our ability to think clearly, recognise logical connections, and spot flawed arguments. It is the mental equivalent of outsourcing your exercise routine – you may conserve energy in the short term, but over time, your own strength diminishes.

In the pre-LLM era, researchers had to search the internet – or, earlier, the library – and carefully evaluate each new source. Was it useful? How did it compare to other sources? Could ideas be combined or tested against one another? The research process trained the mind to remember, apply, analyse, and synthesise. Without that work, those abilities inevitably weaken.

No longer scrutinising, debating, and challenging ideas leads to duller minds. "Cognitive friction" is vital for sharpening brainpower. The sycophancy of LLMs, which are trained to be pleasing and rely on user approval, dulls our thinking. There is also a dark side to sycophancy such as when AI models agree with incorrect self-diagnoses or make harmful suggestions.

Alarmingly, a recent study shows that the more users insist on falsehoods, the more mainstream models echo them. OpenAI is now working to curb sycophancy by (in the words of ChatGPT itself) "encouraging honesty, constructive disagreement, and independent thinking instead of automatic praise or deference". The problem is that friction makes users uncomfortable, even though that tension is precisely what drives personal growth. Tech companies, workplaces, educational institutions, and individuals must take up the challenge of ensuring that AI strengthens human capacity.

In 2023, one-third of US college students reported using ChatGPT for coursework; by 2024, another survey found that 86% of students across 16 countries relied on AI in their studies.

With an AI-powered device always within reach, the question we must have a convincing answer to is: why struggle to remember things, reason, or piece together an argument when a LLM will do it for you? The answer is that if you do not train your brain to remember, to reason, and to welcome "cognitive friction", the result will be an eroding of the capacity for learning, reasoning, creativity, metacognition, and critical thinking. Some solutions have a long history. Perhaps it's time to bring back memorisation as a form of brain training.

The ancient Greeks recognised that real learning came not from entertaining, impressing, or catering to students, but from challenging them to question their beliefs. The Socratic method – asking "What do you mean by that? What evidence supports that? Have you considered another perspective?" – forced students to test their assumptions and sharpen their arguments.

Reducing distraction can include creating spaces, classes, and time without constant recourse to devices. In the United Kingdom, roughly 90% of schools have banned smartphones during lessons. Universities and workplaces could create more device-free environments for reading, reflection, and debate. By embracing problem-based learning and simulations, they can help students and colleagues tackle complex, open-ended problems using (and honing) judgment and creativity.

The choice we face is whether to surrender our minds to AI or to treat LLMs as sparring partners that enable us to sharpen our cognitive abilities. The data revolution has entered a new phase, and only by training our minds can we keep up. - Project Syndicate

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Asia's pledge to boost US farm imports may redraw trade flows

By Naveen Thukral
Singapore


An influx of US crops could push down prices for rivals and drive up costs for them to ship grains at greater distances, traders and analysts said.

Southeast Asian nations are set to reshape global grains and oilseed trade flows through US trade deals that include raising agriculture purchases, with increased American shipments displacing Australian, Canadian and Russian supply.

While Indonesia and Bangladesh have already agreed to increased buying as part of agreements that set lowered tariffs on their exports to the US, regional grains traders say Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand may boost feed grain purchases under their deals.

"US farm exports are clearly set to gain ground in Asia," said Ole Houe, director of advisory services at IKON Commodities in Sydney. "On one hand, trade deals are creating pressure, but just as important are the lower prices of US wheat, corn and soymeal, which are cheaper than supplies from rival exporters."

Asia, a net food importer, is a vital market for global suppliers, as the region's consumption is rising with growing population and incomes. Asia accounts for about 30% of world wheat, corn and soymeal imports, according to US department of agriculture data.

An influx of US crops could push down prices for rivals and drive up costs for them to ship grains at greater distances, traders and analysts said.

Over the past decade, suppliers from the Black Sea and South America have gained ground in Asia, eating into US market share.

The US share of Indonesian wheat shipments has fallen by almost 50% in the past five years, replaced by imports from Ukraine, Russia and Argentina, according to data from the Indonesian Wheat Flour Producers Association.

But Indonesian flour millers have bought about 250,000 metric tonnes of US wheat since July, according to two Singapore-based grain traders. The association signed a memorandum of understanding then to buy 1mn tonnes of US wheat annually as part of trade negotiations to gain lower tariffs.

In 2024, the US sold 693,000 tonnes to Indonesia.

"Prices are key as these will be private deals by millers but getting 1mn tonnes of US. wheat will not be a problem for us," said an association official, declining to be named as they were not authorised to speak to media.

Australia supplies about a quarter of Indonesia's wheat and could lose several hundred thousand tonnes in sales, said three Australian-based grains traders, though exporters further away may be impacted more. It exported 3mn tonnes there in 2024, the country's statistics bureau reported.

"If there are fewer sales of Australian wheat to Indonesia or Bangladesh that wheat is probably going to end up in places further away," said Tobin Gorey, founder of commodities consultancy Cornucopia in Australia.

Bangladesh has approved imports of about 220,000 tonnes of US wheat, a food ministry official in Dhaka said on July 30. Bangladesh committed on July 20 to import 700,000 tonnes of American wheat annually to strengthen trade ties, up from virtually no purchases in 2024.

Vietnam, one of the fastest-growing animal feed markets, is likely to import US wheat, corn and soymeal, the Singapore-based traders said.

In June, Vietnam's agriculture ministry said firms will sign memorandums of understanding to buy $2bn of US farm produce, including five agreements to buy $800mn of products from Iowa, including corn, wheat, dried distillers grains and soybean meal.

It is not clear that the agreements were formally signed.

Argentina is currently Vietnam's leading grains supplier, accounting for more than 50% of its corn and 65% of its soymeal imports over the past five years.

Vietnam has increased its US corn purchases for the 2024-25 marketing year that ends on August 31, taking 1.1mn tonnes, with another 19,051 tonnes set for delivery by the end of the month, according to USDA data.

For the 2025-26 marketing year, Vietnamese importers have booked 134,000 tonnes as opposed to only 2,000 tonnes booked at this time last year for the 2024-25 period.

Thailand and the Philippines could also emerge as key importers of US corn, the two Singapore-based traders said.

One of the traders said purchases tied to trade deals could lead to Thailand buying more than 1mn tonnes of US feed corn, based on what would be needed to replace their current purchases of feed wheat from the Black Sea and feed corn from Asia.

Philippine corn purchases could be higher as its needs to replace 3.3mn tonnes of feed wheat, though its buying will depend on lowering its corn tariffs, the trader said.

In July, after the two sides announced a trade agreement, a senior economic and trade adviser to Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said tariffs on imports from the US of corn, rice, sugar, fish and chicken have not been removed.

After announcing a US trade agreement on August 1, the Thai finance minister said the country will import up to 2mn tonnes of US soybeans. There have been no further details on the Thai soybean purchases though.

"There have been productive trade discussions which present an opportunity for the US to strengthen its access to markets in our region," said Timothy Loh, the US Soybean Export Council's regional director for Southeast Asia & Oceania.

"We are anticipating higher demand for US products such as soymeal and other US agricultural exports into Southeast Asia."

Some US agriculture products are price competitive with other regions. US soft white wheat this week was offered at about $280 per tonne on a cost and freight (C&F) basis, the same as similar quality Black Sea wheat.

US corn is about $10-15 a tonne less than South American products while US soymeal is at a $5 discount to rival suppliers, according to one of the Singapore-based grain traders. — Reuters

Modi's billionaires in Trump's crosshairs

By Jayati Ghosh
New Delhi


US President Donald Trump with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the White House in Washington, DC. (**Reuters/File Photo**)

The world's largest corporations now rival most governments – not only in terms of revenue and assets, but also in their ability to shape political outcomes. Their power is reinforced by the immense personal fortunes of billionaires, which enable them to wield disproportionate influence over public policies, laws, and regulations.

Crucially, extreme concentrations of wealth and power could not have developed without the active support of policymakers, whether tacit or explicit. And because governments themselves create the legal, regulatory, and political environments in which these fortunes are built, they retain the authority to restrain, regulate, or even expropriate private wealth. The fact that they rarely do so does not reflect a lack of capacity, but a deliberate political choice.

Consequently, being an oligarch is inherently precarious. Crony capitalism may grant enormous advantages, but it also carries built-in risks. Chief among them is political change: new leadership, whether elected or imposed, may not extend the same protections or privileges to elites favoured by the previous government.

Falling out of favour can happen for many reasons: insufficient displays of loyalty, inadequate payoffs, becoming entangled in court intrigues, being perceived as a potential rival, or personal animosity. The on-again, off-again bromance between US President Donald Trump and Elon Musk is an obvious example.

As geopolitical tensions escalate, however, oligarchs are no longer contending solely with domestic challenges. Increasingly caught in global power struggles, they have become convenient targets for hostile foreign powers seeking to pressure or undermine the leaders they support.

The sanctions imposed by the US and the European Union on oligarchs linked to Russian President Vladimir Putin following the 2022 invasion of Ukraine are a case in point. While these measures have done little to change the course of the war, they have profoundly disrupted the lives and businesses of those affected.

Indian billionaires Gautam Adani and Mukesh Ambani have also found themselves in America's crosshairs. Both have profited enormously from their ties to Prime Minister Narendra Modi – a fellow Gujarati – with their fortunes growing in tandem with his political ascent. This has made them useful bargaining chips in the ongoing trade negotiations between the US and India.

To be sure, Ambani's Reliance Group had already mastered the art of leveraging political influence to advance its business interests well before Modi rose to power. But Ambani's alliance with Modi has pushed Reliance's dominance to new heights. Adani's rise, by contrast, is inextricably tied to Modi, dating back to the latter's tenure as chief minister of Gujarat.

Both oligarchs, particularly Adani, have relied on their proximity to Modi to expand their business empires, benefiting from regulatory reforms tailored to their interests and acquiring state assets through lucrative privatisation deals, often without a public tender. They have also moved into new sectors by purchasing successful firms targeted by Modi's administration, effectively neutralising potential competitors.

Moreover, Ambani and Adani have enjoyed privileged access to publicly owned banks, receiving favourable loan terms that allowed them to restructure their debts with minimal scrutiny. Their political connections, evidenced by frequent appearances alongside Modi during his international trips, have helped them secure major contracts abroad.

These political alliances have translated into lenient regulatory treatment. In Adani's case, allegations that he has engaged in stock manipulation through opaque shell companies in offshore tax havens – exposed by US-based short-seller Hindenburg Research – were met with a muted response. Regulatory bodies like the Securities and Exchange Board of India declined to pursue a serious investigation.

All of this makes the Trump administration's decision to go after Ambani and Adani particularly striking. Officially, Ambani has come under scrutiny for profiting from the resale of Russian oil, effectively circumventing US sanctions, while Adani is being investigated for alleged bribery. But Trump's actions appear to be a calculated attempt to pressure Modi through his inner circle. Adding insult to injury, they come from a US president whom Modi has long described as a "true friend".

That said, the recent collapse of the US-India trade talks can be attributed to several factors, many of which remain undisclosed. Modi has claimed that his sole concern is protecting Indian farmers – a statement that would surely come as a surprise to the farmer protest movement, which his government has long vilified and suppressed.

Trump, for his part, insists that his priority is securing a better deal for American producers and workers. In reality, many of his key demands are aimed at advancing the interests of US-based multinationals and those of his own companies.

But given Trump's track record, it's hard to imagine that personal grievances did not play a role. Relations between the two leaders have noticeably cooled since Modi refused to endorse Trump's dubious claim that he helped broker the recent India-Pakistan cease-fire – a narrative Trump had hoped would strengthen his bid for a Nobel Peace Prize. Modi's refusal to play along effectively derailed that effort.

Trump and Modi are both shrewd and self-interested enough to recognise each other's true priorities. By attacking Modi's tycoons, Trump may have found the most effective pressure point to extract significant concessions from the Indian government. If Modi yields, it won't just be a costly political blunder but also a tragedy with far-reaching consequences for India and the world economy. - Project Syndicate

• *Jayati Ghosh, Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, is a member of the Club of Rome's Transformational Economics Commission and Co-Chair of the Independent Commission for the Reform of International Corporate Taxation.*

Venezuela revives heroes with AI to spur reservists on US 'threat'

Venezuela has breathed new life into independence hero Simon Bolivar and other long-dead historical figures, using their artificial intelligence (AI) avatars to drum up military reservists in view of a feared US invasion.

Along with Bolivar, independence-era military hero Francisco de Miranda, 20th century novelist Romulo Gallegos and poet Andres Eloy Blanco address Venezuelans on social media or on state TV as part of the "I enlist" campaign.

"A people who love freedom will be free. Today, freedom is defended with your voice and your presence. I enlist," states an AI-generated Bolivar – the father of post-colonial Venezuela – as soldiers battle behind him.

President Nicolas Maduro has urged civilians to join the Venezuelan militia – a civilian backup to the standing army – as he warns of a "threat" from the United States.

Washington has dispatched five warships and thousands of Marines toward the Caribbean country for what was labelled an anti-drug operation, though Caracas fears there is more to the deployment.

Venezuela has deployed warships and drones to patrol its coastline and Maduro said he would activate 4.5mn militia members – a number questioned by observers – to confront "any threat".

The United States does not recognise Maduro's 2024 re-election to a third term in what which was rejected by the opposition and much of the rest of the world as a stolen vote.

Maduro accuses Washington of seeking regime change. – ***AFP***

Number of missing people up nearly 70%, says ICRC

AFP/Reuters
Geneva

More than a quarter of a million people are registered as missing by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), a figure up nearly 70% over five years, the organisation said yesterday.

The increase is being driven by growing numbers of conflicts, mass migration and fading respect for the rules of war, the ICRC said in a statement.

"From Sudan to Ukraine, from Syria to Colombia, the trend is clear: the surging number of missing persons provides a stark reminder that conflict parties and those who support them are failing to protect people during war," said ICRC director-general Pierre Krahenbuhl.

The ICRC, together with Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies around the world, works to search for missing persons and reconnect families through the Family Links Network.

Some 284,400 people were registered as missing by the network at the end of 2024 – an increase of 68% since 2019, according to numbers released yesterday.

The real number is thought to be many times higher.

The Geneva Conventions – a series of international treaties agreed in 1949 after World War II – should help prevent separations but respect for such rules was fading, the ICRC statement said.

"With stronger measures to prevent separation, protect those in detention and properly manage the dead, countless families could be spared a lifetime of anguish," Krahenbuhl added.

Krahenbuhl stressed that that figure is "only the tip of the iceberg".

"Worldwide, millions of people have been separated from their loved ones – often for years or even decades," he said.

"The tragedy of the missing is not inevitable. With stronger measures to prevent separation, protect those in detention and properly manage the dead, countless families could be spared a lifetime of anguish.

"Behind every number is a mother, father, child or sibling whose absence leaves a wound that statistics cannot capture."

The ICRC stressed that states and parties to armed conflicts bear the primary responsibility to prevent disappearances, clarify the fate of missing people and provide support to families.

"How states respond to missing persons cases can shape societies long after violence ends, influencing peace-building, reconciliation and the ability of communities to heal," it said.

It emphasised that when parties respect international humanitarian law, "the risk of people going missing is reduced".

The rules of war include, for instance, a duty to avoid separating family members during the transfer or evacuation of civilians by an occupying power.

And they stipulate that parties must share information about detainees in a timely manner and enable them to maintain contact with relatives.

"The obligation to account for deceased enemy combatants likewise ensures that their fate is known to the families and they are not registered as missing," it said.

The ICRC considers someone as missing from the point that a family member registers the case, until it is closed by the ICRC or if families report they have found their relative.

The ICRC said that last year, more than 16,000 people were located, and more than 7,000 were reunited with their families.

Nearly 90,500 ICRC messages were delivered, and close to 2.3mn phone calls were facilitated.

"Everyone has the right to know the fate of their loved ones," the humanitarian organisation said.

PayPal resolves service glitch

PayPal said yesterday that it had resolved a glitch that may have blocked billions in payments in Europe this week.

An issue with PayPal's security system led several German banks this week to stop PayPal direct debits.

This resulted in retailers not receiving payments and some customers being advised that the balance of their PayPal wallets was in the red. – ***AFP***

Cholera outbreaks worsening, spreading to 31 countries

AFP
Geneva

The global cholera situation is worsening, with outbreaks across 31 countries and a surging fatality rate, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said yesterday.

"Given the scale, severity, and interconnected nature of these outbreaks, the risk of further spread within and between countries is considered very high," it said.

The UN health agency said the deteriorating outlook was "driven by conflict and poverty", with rural and flood-affected areas especially vulnerable to the disease – an acute intestinal infection that spreads through food and water contaminated with bacteria, often from faeces.

Between January 1 and August 17, the WHO tracked 409,222 cases and 4,738 deaths reported globally.

While cases were down 20% on the same period last year, deaths were up 46%.

Cholera is gaining ground in several countries that had not reported substantial case numbers in years, like the Republic of the Congo and Chad.

They are currently reporting the highest case fatality rates, at 7.7% and 6.8% respectively.

Cholera can kill within hours when not attended to, though it can be treated with simple oral rehydration, and antibiotics for more severe cases.

There has been a global increase in cholera cases, and their geographical spread, since 2021.

Unions call for nationwide strike over French govt spending plan

French trade unions have called for nationwide strikes on September 18, as a political crisis deepens ahead of a confidence vote that could topple the prime minister.

The move follows French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou's surprise gamble to hold the vote on September 8, following months of deadlock over the government's plans to slash France's mounting public debt.

The inter-union group called for a "major day of strikes and protests", citing frustration over the prime minister's proposed spending cuts.

"The horror show that is the draft budget must be abandoned," CFDT union chief Marylise Leon said after a meeting of trade unions yesterday.

"The various budgetary measures put forward are unprecedented in their brutality," she added.

For the CGT union's head, Sophie Binet, protests were needed to force the government to heed "social demands".

Meanwhile, an anti-government campaign dubbed "Bloquons tout" ("Let's block everything") and backed by the left has called for a separate nationwide shutdown on September 10.

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

Bayrou, 74, wants to save about €44bn ($51bn). – ***AFP/Reuters***

Pakistan says floods made worse by Indian action

Reuters/AFP
Islamabad

Flooding in Pakistan from water flowing downstream from India was made worse by New Delhi's suspension of a river-sharing treaty and the collapse of the gates on an Indian barrage, Pakistani officials said yesterday.

Torrential monsoon rains ravaged neighbouring adversaries India and Pakistan this week, with further heavy downpours forecast for this weekend.

Yesterday, in eastern Pakistan, flood waters hit the outskirts of the country's second biggest city, Lahore, and threatened to submerge the major town of Jhang, in the worst flooding in almost 40 years in that part of the country.

The nations share rivers that originate in India and flow into Pakistan, regulated for more than six decades under the Indus Waters Treaty.

That agreement was suspended by India this year, following the shooting of 26 people by militants that New Delhi said were backed by Islamabad, which Pakistan denies.

Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan's planning minister, told Reuters that data on water flows which used to be shared by India under the treaty had not passed to Pakistan quickly enough, or in sufficient detail.

"We could have managed better if we had better information," said Iqbal. "If the Indus Waters Treaty was in operation, we could have mitigated the impact."

The middle section of Madhopur barrage, which spans the Ravi River in India, was washed away by surging water, video broadcast by Indian media on Thursday showed.

Pakistani officials said that this damage unleashed an uncontrolled flow across the border, flooding some parts of Lahore yesterday.

An Indian government source denied that there had been any deliberate attempt to flood Pakistan, while confirming that two gates of Madhopur barrage had broken.

Indian authorities were trying to stem the flow on the Ravi River, despite the damage to the barrage, and the flow was being controlled by the Ranjit Sagar Dam upstream, said the source, who declined to be identified, citing government policy.

"India is doing whatever can be done and all the information is being passed on," said the source. "Incessant rain is causing this flood."

India's foreign and water resources ministries did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the record.

India sent four flood alerts to Islamabad since Sunday, according to Pakistani officials, including a warning yesterday.

New Delhi acknowledges passing on warnings, on humanitarian grounds, but has not provided details.

When India put the 1960 treaty into abeyance, it stopped the sharing of information between water officials.

Instead, warnings were sent this week through India's embassy in Islamabad.

Iqbal, whose own constituency of Narowal, near the Indian border, was badly flooded, said that climate change had made the annual monsoon less predictable, making it more vital to share data.

"Climate change is not a bilateral issue," said Iqbal. "It relates to humanity."

On the Chenab River, Pakistani authorities blew up part of the riverbank yesterday to siphon off some of the water into surrounding land, as it threatened to flood the nearby city of Jhang.

Pakistan evacuated more than 1mn people this week in the east of the country, away from the path of the three overflowing rivers that come from India.

This monsoon season so far, 820 people have died in Pakistan, according to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

The flooded east of the country is home to half of the 240mn population and serves as the country's breadbasket, with widespread damage to crops from the deluge.

Perched on her neighbour's rooftop, Ghulam Bano gazes down at the remains of her home, submerged in murky, foul-smelling floodwater that has engulfed much of Pakistan's Punjab region.

Bano moved to Shahdara town last year, on the outskirts of Lahore, to avoid the choking smog pollution of Pakistan's second-largest city, only to have her new beginning overturned by raging floods.

"My husband had started coughing blood and his condition just kept getting worse when the smog hit," Bano told AFP, walking through muddy streets.

Pakistan regularly ranks among the world's most polluted countries, with Lahore often the most polluted megacity between November and February.

"I thought the smog was bad enough – I never thought it could be worse with the floods," she said.

Her impoverished neighbourhood is home to thousands of low-lying homes crammed together on narrow streets.

The nearby overflowing Ravi river flooded many of them, forcing dozens of families to take refuge in an elementary school on higher ground, where doctors were treating people for skin infections linked to the flood water.

With her husband bedridden from tuberculosis, worsened by the relentless smog, Bano became the sole provider in a household struggling to breathe, survive, and endure the floods.

"I ate today after two days. There is no clean water to drink. I left my daughter at a relative's place and stayed back hoping the water recedes," she said.

"We just can't get a break," Amir Mehmood, a 32-year-old shopkeeper in the same neighbourhood as Bano, told AFP.

"Children fall ill in the smog because of the extreme cold. Some become sick due to the (everyday) unsanitary conditions," he said, referring to piles of waste that routinely line the streets. "And now there's a flood. Our homes have collapsed, the walls have fallen, and everything is damaged."

He moved his family to a relative's home on the other side of the town along with his 10 cows and two goats as the water crept closer.

"The women you see here, and me, we had to run for our lives... we did not even get the time to get clothes for our kids," 40-year-old widow Tabassum Suleman told AFP from the school camp.

"We do not know when we will be going back home," she said, looking up at the dark skies. "But the worst is yet to come."



A member of a rescue team notes details from a woman after she was evacuated from a flooded area on the outskirts of Lahore, Pakistan. – ***Reuters***

Below: Ghulam Bano stands near her submerged home, after floodwaters entered from the overflowing Ravi river in Shahdara, Lahore. – ***AFP***



German unemployment tops 3mn, highest for a decade

German unemployment topped 3mn this month for the first time in over a decade, official data showed yesterday, in another blow to Europe's struggling top economy.

The unemployment figure rose by 46,000 month-on-month to hit 3.025mn, the federal employment agency said, the highest level since February 2015.

The country's overall unemployment rate ticked up to 6.4% from 6.3% in July.

Andrea Nahles, head of the employment agency, said the data reflected weakness among Germany's manufacturers.

"That is an important motor for the Germany economy," she said, but added the sector was currently "weakening".

Battered by high energy costs and increasingly fierce Chinese competition, German manufacturers were struggling even before US President Donald Trump erected new tariff walls.

Over 110,000 jobs have been lost in German industry in the past year alone, a report released on Tuesday by consultancy EY said, with about 50,000 of them coming from the car industry.

The figures will pile pressure on Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who has made fixing the economy, which has shrunk for the past two years, a top priority.

"In Germany, 3mn is not just a number. In the context of the labour market, it represents a symbolic threshold – one that separates strength from weakness," said Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro at ING.

"These numbers need to be politicians' wake-up call," said Thilo Brodtman, head of the VDMA machine-makers' association. "Costs need to go down and rigid rules need to be loosened."

Pointing to plans to spend hundreds of billions on creaking infrastructure in the coming years, Labour Minister Baerbel Bas said the government "stood on the side of employees and industry". – ***AFP/Reuters***

Zelensky wants higher-level talks on security guarantees next week

Reuters
Kyiv

President Volodymyr Zelensky urged allies yesterday to swiftly elevate talks on security guarantees for Ukraine to the level of leaders, as European Union defence ministers pledged to train Kyiv's troops on Ukrainian soil in the event of a truce.

Kyiv is engaged in a diplomatic push to try and bring to an end Russia's war, now in its fourth year, and to secure critical commitments from its partners to fend off any future invasion.

The Ukrainian president said he expected to continue talks with European leaders next week on "Nato-like" commitments to protect Ukraine, adding that US President Donald Trump should also be involved.

"We need the architecture to be clear to everyone," he said, adding that he wanted to tell Trump "how we see it".

Zelensky spoke shortly before his chief of staff met US special envoy Steve Witkoff in New York to discuss the need to increase pressure on Moscow.

A senior US official said the Ukrainians invited Witkoff to visit Ukraine.

The official said the meeting gave Witkoff the opportunity to stress that Ukraine and Russia should meet in order to reach an end to the war.

Ukrainian officials say Russia, which has continued attacking cities with missiles and drones and is pressing a battlefield offensive, has no interest in seeking peace.

"Russia is failing to fulfil anything necessary to end the war and is clearly dragging out hostilities," Andriy Yermak, Zelensky's chief of staff, wrote on X.

Diplomatic efforts to end Russia's full-scale invasion have so far yielded little, even after Trump met separately with the Russian and Ukrainian leaders earlier this month.

Zelensky also raised Trump's self-imposed deadline for deciding on new measures against Russia if President Vladimir Putin fails to commit to a one-on-one meeting with the Ukrainian leader.

"Two weeks will be on Monday. And we will remind everybody," he said.

Russia has said there is no agenda for a potential summit between Putin and Zelensky.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko, also visiting New York, is expected to meet US business representatives to discuss investments in Ukraine, Zelensky added.

Officials in Kyiv see US funding, particularly as part of a critical minerals deal struck earlier this year, as central to securing a durable peace settlement.

QATAR

Hot, humid weather continues



Qatar continues to experience a hot and humid weather. The Met office has forecast today's minimum and maximum temperatures in the 30-33° Celsius and 37-43C range, respectively. Yesterday's minimum and maximum temperatures were in the 28-33C and 36-43C range, respectively. Pictured is Doha's West Bay skyline from the Old Doha Port area yesterday, shortly before sunset. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam







'Printed Nostalgia' showcases a diverse range of artistic perspectives, with contributing artists hailing from different countries, including Qatar. **PICTURES:** Joey Aguilar

'Printed Nostalgia' – A glimpse into shared memories









By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Qatar residents and visitors have a final opportunity to immerse themselves in a captivating exploration of personal and collective memories at the "Printed Nostalgia" exhibition on view at Fire Station: Artists in Residence until September 1.

The exhibition, curated by Saida Alkhulaifi and Fatima AlZaini, takes visitors on a journey through the evocative power of printed works at Gallery 4 of Fire Station.

"Printed Nostalgia" showcases a diverse range of artistic perspectives, with contributing artists hailing from Qatar, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkiye, Morocco, Sudan, the US, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Kenya, Yemen, Tunisia, Jordan, Iran, and Syria, among other countries.

Through their prints, Qatar Museums (QM) noted that these artists dig deeper into themes of architecture, culture, migration, and the fabric of everyday life, creating a poignant space where emotions, identities, and histories converge.

Each piece serves as a fragment of time, carefully preserved, shared, and reimagined for audiences to contemplate.

Among the featured artists contributing their unique visions are Mubarak al-Thani (Qatar), Syeda Hiba Zehra (Pakistan), Jaili Hajo (Sudan), Ali Gad (Egypt), Meara Albast (US), Nuwair al-Hajeri (UAE), Rasha Yousif (Bahrain), Aleesha Suleman (Kenya), and Asli Gokce Musekura (Turkiye), alongside a host of other international talents.

According to the QM, this show offers a distinct artistic experience for all who seek to understand the deep connections between art, memory, and the fundamental aspects of the human condition.

It artfully blends various mediums, including digital illustration, photography, painting, collage, and written word, successfully transforming digital expressions into tangible, physical forms.

The exhibition culminates in a specially designed cozy and reflective room, providing a quiet sanctuary for visitors to pause and reconnect with their own personal memories.

This thoughtfully curated space honours the enduring and tangible power of remembrance, echoing the historical role of printed materials in preserving people's stories.

The artwork on display were carefully selected through an international open call that garnered 322 submissions from across the globe.

From this extensive pool, 98 artists – whose works collectively represent a rich collection of voices and interpretations of nostalgia – were chosen.

The Fire Station plays a crucial role in nurturing artistic talent by supporting artists and curators at all career stages.

Through its comprehensive residency programmes, it provides vital working studio space, fosters creative exchange, and offers cultural enrichment both within Qatar and internationally through its Paris and New York residency programmes.

