



Qatar Insurance Financial Results (FY 2025)

Gross Written
Premiums (GWP)

9%
QAR 9.9B

Net Profit
Before the Impact of
Pillar Two Taxes

19%
QAR 874M

Net Profit
Profit attributable to
QIC shareholders

9%
QAR 791M

Earnings
Per Share:

10%
QAR 0.188

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GULF TIMES



MONDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13667

March 2, 2026
Ramadan 13, 1447 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

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MoI bans drone use until further notice

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has announced an immediate ban on the use, operation or launch of all unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) across the country until further notice.

In a press release issued in light of the current situation, the ministry said the prohibition applies to all types, sizes and technologies of drones, and covers citizens, residents and visitors, as well as government and semi-government entities, companies and institutions. The ministry warned that any use, attempted operation or facilitation of such aircraft would constitute a violation and result in legal accountability in accordance with applicable legislation. It also urged the public to remain indoors, limit movement to cases of absolute necessity, and strictly follow official instructions to safeguard public safety.

Remote working extended

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Qatar has extended remote working arrangements for government employees for an additional day, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers announced yesterday. The measure, which will remain in effect through today, covers staff across all ministries, government bodies, and public authorities and institutions. It builds on a previous directive issued by the Secretariat putting remote work measures in place, and follows what has been an evolving situation requiring continued precautionary steps. However, the arrangement does not apply universally. Employees in the military, security, and health sectors, as well as those whose roles require them to be physically present at their workplace, are exempt from the measure and are expected to report to work as usual.

Qatar Airways flights remain suspended

Qatar Airways announced that flights will remain temporarily suspended as Qatari airspace remains closed. In a statement posted on X, Qatar Airways said that flight operations will resume once the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority announces the safe reopening of Qatari airspace.

Security forces and emergency teams maintain full guard

- Ministry of Interior reports 8 new injuries
- Minor fire extinguished in Industrial Area
- Public urged to heed early warning alerts

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Interior said yesterday that security forces and emergency teams are operating at full readiness across the country, deploying consistently to various areas in accordance with pre-approved readiness plans as the situation on the ground continues to evolve and demand a sustained operational response.

In a series of updates issued throughout the day via official statements and posts on the X platform, the ministry confirmed that based on field reports and continuous on-the-ground assessments, eight additional injuries had been recorded since its last update, bringing the total number of casualties since the onset of the attack to 16.

The ministry noted that the attacks had also resulted in limited material damage across various areas of the country, though no further details were provided on the specific locations or the full extent of that damage.

In one confirmed incident, Civil Defence teams were dispatched



to the Industrial Area after falling shrapnel from an intercepted missile triggered a minor fire in the zone. Crews dealt with the blaze swiftly and effectively, and the ministry confirmed that the incident did not result in any injuries. The response was described as part of the broader, coordinated activation of approved emergency plans that security authorities and Civil Defence teams, working in close coordination with relevant government entities, set in motion to safeguard public safety, ensure the continuity of essential services, and maintain full operational readiness to address any further emergencies as they arise.

On the matter of early warning alerts, the ministry was emphatic, stressing that alert and early warning messages are activated solely when circumstances require additional urgent precautionary measures to protect public safety. **To Page 2**

Qatar Armed Forces intercept Iranian drones and missiles

The Ministry of Defence yesterday announced that, thanks to Allah the Almighty, fighter jets of the Qatar Armed Forces, alongside air defence systems, successfully countered aerial attacks involving drones and missiles launched by Iran toward the state's airspace. In a statement, the ministry explained that monitoring and early warning systems detected the targets immediately upon entering surveillance range. They were subsequently tracked and intercepted in accordance with approved rules of engagement, ensuring the protection of national sovereignty and the safety of the country's skies. The ministry confirmed that the interceptions were carried out through an integrated air defence system and the full combat readiness of the Armed Forces. No casualties were recorded, while specialised teams have begun completing assessment and precautionary monitoring procedures. The statement further emphasised that Qatar continues to take all necessary measures to protect its territory and airspace, while following developments through approved official channels. **(QNA)**

Leaders reach out to Amir with support

Notes of solidarity from Turkiye, South Sudan, Algeria, Libya, Iraq, Cyprus, Sudan, Kazakhstan, Mauritania, European Commission



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani received a flurry of phone calls from heads of state, government leaders, and senior international officials yesterday, all reaching out to express their countries' unwavering solidarity with Qatar following what world leaders have widely condemned as Iran's flagrant and unprovoked aggression against the country.

The wave of diplomatic outreach underscored the breadth of international support for Qatar and the deep concern among regional and global partners over the implications of the attacks for peace and stability.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Türkiye offered perhaps the most emphatic condemnation among the leaders who reached out. President Erdogan expressed his strong condemnation of the targeting of Qatari territories and those of other Arab nations, making clear Türkiye's flat-out rejection of anything that compromises the sovereignty of nations or the security of their peoples.

His Highness the Amir expressed his gratitude for President Erdogan's solidarity and backing, praising the rock solid ties between the two nations. The call

concluded with both sides stressing the criticality of de-escalation and the intensification of diplomatic efforts to safeguard the region's security and stability.

Among those who called was President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan, who conveyed his country's full solidarity with Qatar and its people. The Amir expressed his thanks and appreciation for the president's stance, praising the existing relations between the two countries.

President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of Algeria also reached out, inquiring about the situation in Qatar following the attacks and voicing Algeria's complete solidarity with its Qatari brothers. The Amir thanked President Tebboune for his sincere sentiments, which he said were a reflection of the deep-rooted ties between the two nations. **To Page 2**

Govt assures ample supplies

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry moved yesterday to reassure the public that shelves across the country's retail outlets remain well stocked and that consumer needs are being met fully and on a regular basis, as authorities sought to head off any potential rush on goods amid the current situation. In a post on its official X account, the ministry urged calm and urged residents and citizens alike to resist the impulse to stockpile, warning that panic buying not only creates artificial pressure on supply chains but also results in practical harm — goods purchased in excess of

actual need often go unused and end up damaged or wasted. The ministry was candid in its advice, calling on consumers to approach their shopping deliberately and responsibly. It recommended that people prepare a list of essential items in advance, based on their family's genuine needs for a reasonable period, and to stick to that list rather than making impulsive or random purchases driven by anxiety or rumour. Diversifying shopping outlets was also encouraged, with the ministry pointing out that spreading purchases across different stores and points of sale helps ease pressure on any single location and ensures that supplies remain accessible to all.

PM attends extraordinary GCC meeting



HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani participated in the 50th extraordinary meeting of the GCC Ministerial Council, held yesterday via video conference, in the presence of the GCC foreign ministers, to discuss developments in the Iranian aggression against the GCC countries. At the outset of the meeting, the Ministerial Council voiced its strongest condemnation of the Iranian missile attacks targeting the territories of Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, the Sultanate

of Oman and Jordan, in flagrant violation of their sovereignty. The Ministerial Council also affirmed the solidarity of all GCC countries in addressing Iranian attacks and defending their sovereignty, security, and national interests, while reserving their right to respond and defend themselves in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The council stressed that this heinous targeting is contrary to the provisions of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, and the principles of good neighbourliness. **(QNA)**

Trump expects Iran campaign to last 4 weeks

- US president claims 48 Iranian leaders killed; IRGC HQ destroyed; 9 warships sunk
- Pentagon admits to first US casualties

AFP/Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he expects the military campaign against Iran to last approximately four weeks, declaring the operation — which has already claimed the lives of 48 Iranian leaders including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei — to be running ahead of schedule and delivering results that he said the world could "barely believe."

"It's always been a four-week process. We figured it will take four weeks or so — as strong as it is, it's a big country, it'll take four weeks, or less," Trump told the *Daily Mail* in one of several media

interviews he gave throughout the day from Palm Beach.

Speaking separately to Fox News, he was ebullient about the early results: "Nobody can believe the success we're having — 48 leaders are gone in one shot. And it's moving along rapidly." Iran itself confirmed the death of Khamenei, the most significant casualty of strikes that were launched on Saturday with the stated goal of dismantling the regime and destroying its military capabilities from the ground up.

Trump continued to paint an overwhelmingly optimistic picture across his various appearances. "We're doing our job not just for us but for the world. And everything is ahead of schedule," he told CNBC, adding that "things

UAE shuts embassy in Iran, pulls staff

The United Arab Emirates has announced the closure of its embassy in Tehran and the withdrawal of its ambassador and all diplomatic staff, following the "blatant Iranian missile attacks" targeting its territory. The Emirates News Agency (WAM) quoted the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs as saying that "these hostile attacks against civilian sites, including residential areas, airports, ports, and service facilities, endangered innocent civilians in a serious and irresponsible escalation and constitute a flagrant violation of national sovereignty, as well as a clear breach of international law and the Charter of the United Nations". The ministry emphasised that the decision reflects the UAE's firm stance against any aggression threatening its security and sovereignty. **(QNA)**



US President Donald Trump (left) and the deceased Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. **(AFP)**

are evolving in a very positive way right now."

On the military front, the scale of the offensive expanded significantly through the course of the day. US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced the de-

struction of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) headquarters, stating bluntly: "America has the most powerful military on earth, and the IRGC no longer has a headquarters." **To Page 2**

RAMADAN THOUGHT



And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to As-Sabirun (the patient). Who, when afflicted with calamity, say: "Truly! To Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return." (Qur'an 2: 155-156)

Prayer times

Fajr...4.39; Zuhr...11.47; Asr...3.08; Maghrib...5.39; Isha...7.09

Fasting times

Iftar today 5.39pm
Imsak tomorrow..... 4.28am



International leaders voice support for Qatar in telephone calls to PM

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received separate phone calls yesterday from numerous world leaders, including Norway's Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store, Sudan's Prime Minister Dr Kamil al-Tayeb Idris, Italy's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Antonio Tajani, India's Minister of External Affairs Dr Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Anita Anand, and UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper.

HE Sheikh Mohammed also received separate phone calls from the Netherlands' Minister of Foreign Affairs David van Weel, Malta's

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism Ian Borg, Cyprus's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Constantinos Kombos, Croatia's Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Gordan Grlic Radman, and Uzbekistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Bakhtiyor Saidov.

The phone calls went over the developments in the region and its impacts on regional and global security and stability, as well as avenues for resolving all disputes through peaceful means.

HE Sheikh Mohammed underscored, during the phone calls, that the targeting of Qatari soil by Iranian ballistic missiles is a breach of its national sovereignty, is a poor reflection of the principles of neighbourliness, and cannot be accepted under any pretext.

He stressed that Qatar has always been committed to desisting itself from regional conflicts and sought to facilitate dialogue between the Iranian side and the international community.

HE Sheikh Mohammed stressed the importance of the immediate cessation of any escalatory acts, returning to the negotiating table, prioritising the language of judiciousness and reason, and working to contain the crisis in a way that protects the region's security.

The ministers expressed their countries' condemnation of the Iranian attack on Qatari soil, stressing that the assault represents a flagrant violation of Qatar's sovereignty, its airspace, as well as international law and the UN Charter. - QNA



GCC slams Iran's attack on Oman

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) has expressed its strongest condemnation and denunciation of the Iranian attacks targeting Oman's Duqm commercial port and an oil tanker off its coast.

GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi said in a statement yesterday that these assaults constitute a flagrant violation of Oman's sovereignty and a dangerous escalation that undermines regional security and stability, while threatening the safety of maritime navigation and global energy supplies.

He said that the military operations launched by Iran against GCC states reflect its intentions toward the GCC and the region at large.

He noted that the GCC states had previously conveyed assurances to the Iranian regime, through various meetings and occasions, that they would not permit the use of their territories or airspace for any military operations against Iran.

Iran's targeting of civilian facilities constitutes a major breach of international law, the United Nations Charter, and the principles of good neighbourliness, he added.

Albudaiwi underscored the GCC's full solidarity and unified stance alongside Oman in all measures it takes to protect its sovereignty and safeguard its security and stability.

He reiterated the GCC's rejection of all forms of aggression targeting the security of its member states. - QNA

Al-Muraikhi receives phone calls from ministers

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received telephone calls yesterday from various leaders, including Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi and Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Ishaq Dar.

HE al-Muraikhi also received phone calls from Hungary's Minister of Foreign Affairs and

Trade Peter Szijarto, Armenia's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Vahan Kostanyan, Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Asaad al-Shibani, Cyprus's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Constantinos Kombos, Bulgaria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Nadezhda Neynski, and North Macedonia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Timcho Mucunski.

The calls dealt with discussing developments

of the military escalation in the region and its serious repercussions on regional and international security and stability, as well as ways to resolve all disputes by peaceful means.

The leaders expressed their condemnation of the Iranian missile attack on Qatari territory, considering it a flagrant violation of Qatar's sovereignty, its airspace, international law, and the UN Charter. - QNA



Arab League condemns Iran's targeting of Oman's Duqm Port, oil tanker

The Arab League has strongly condemned Iran's targeting of Oman's Duqm Commercial Port as well as an oil tanker off the coast of Oman, with missiles.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said in a statement that Oman is a country that

has made and continues to make significant, serious, and widely recognised mediation efforts for a peaceful solution to be reached between Iran and the United States.

He also reiterated his condemnation of Iranian assaults and attacks targeting civilian facilities

in Arab Gulf countries, deeming them an unacceptable violation of sovereignty and a breach of international law and international humanitarian law, for targeting civilian objects and endangering civilian lives.

About Gheit warned of the re-

percussions of Iran's military decisions on the security of individuals and facilities, as well as on maritime navigation and energy supplies in the region.

He said that the launch of a large number of missiles and drones against civilian facilities in several

Arab countries is totally unacceptable, and cannot be justified under any pretext.

About Gheit also reaffirmed full solidarity with all concerned Arab states in any measures they take to safeguard their sovereignty, security, and stability. - QNA

Broad support for Qatar as leaders call up Amir

From Page 1

Both sides used the call to stress the need to prioritise dialogue and diplomacy as the primary means of resolving the current crisis, underlining the importance of sparing the region further escalation and preserving security and stability at both regional and international levels.

Mohamed al-Menni, chairman of Libya's Presidential Council, similarly called to express his country's full solidarity and support for Qatar, affirming Libya's backing of all measures taken to safeguard Qatar's sovereignty, security, and stability.

His Highness the Amir expressed his gratitude in turn, praising the deep fraternal relations binding the two countries.

In a separate call, Libyan Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibah reaffirmed Libya's solidarity and his personal reassurance regarding the situation in Qatar.

Iraq's President Abdul Latif Jamal Rashid expressed his country's solidarity with Qatar following the Iranian aggression, also seeking direct reassurance regarding the situation on the ground.

Cyprus's President Nikos Christodoulides offered his country's solidarity and issued a clear condemnation of what he called Iran's blatant aggression against

Qatar, affirming Nicosia's support for all measures taken by Doha to safeguard its sovereignty and stability.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen called to seek reassurance about the situation in Qatar, affirming the European Union's solidarity with Qatar and its condemnation of Iranian aggression.

She reiterated the EU's support for all efforts aimed at strengthening Qatar's security and sovereignty, while stressing the importance of restraint and de-escalation in preserving regional peace.

Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev conveyed his country's solidarity with Qatar.

Lieutenant-General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, chairman of Sudan's Transitional Sovereignty Council, expressed Sudan's full solidarity and support for Qatar in the aftermath of the attacks.

His Highness the Amir thanked al-Burhan and took the opportunity to emphasise the critical importance of Sudan's own security and stability to the broader regional equilibrium.

Mauritania's President Mohamed Ould Cheikh el-Ghazouani emphasised Mauritania's solidarity and full support for Qatar, stressing that Mauritania stands by Qatar in all the measures it may take to preserve its sovereignty, security, and stability. - QNA

Security forces, emergency teams maintain full guard

From Page 1

It called on everyone to adhere to these alerts the moment they are issued and to comply fully and immediately with any instructions they contain, describing such compliance as vital to protecting both lives and property.

The ministry also issued a clear and repeated call for members of the public to remain indoors and to limit movement strictly to cases of absolute necessity, warning against venturing out unnecessarily while operations are ongoing.

Residents and citizens were urged in the strongest terms to keep roads and access routes clear at all times, refraining from congregating at assembly points or travelling to incident scenes, so that ambulance vehicles, Civil Defence units, and security patrols can carry out their duties without delay or obstruction.

The public was also reminded to report any suspicious objects or unidentified debris immediately by calling 999, and to never approach such items under any circumstances.

The ministry additionally warned against the spread of ru-

mours and cautioned that circulating images or videos depicting the aftermath of incidents could expose individuals to legal liability.

Official sources, it stressed, remain the only reliable channel for accurate and verified information.

Specialised teams, the ministry concluded, remain fully deployed around the clock in co-ordination with all relevant authorities, committed to ensuring a rapid and effective response to any developments and to safeguarding the safety and wellbeing of the entire community.

Kuwait reports one fatality, 32 injuries

Kuwait's ministry of health reported yesterday that one fatality and 32 injuries (all foreign nationalities) were recorded at Al Adan Hospital in the wake of the Iranian attacks.

Ministry spokesperson Dr Abdullah al-Sanad said that 15 cases had been admitted to Jaber Hospital to complete specialised medical care, with follow-up on the remaining cases at Al Adan Hospital, where five cases had been admitted to the operations chamber for essential surgical interventions.

On Saturday, the health ministry announced that hospitals across the nation received 12 cases of injuries.

Earlier, Kuwait's defence ministry reported that 97 ballistic missiles and 283 drones have been engaged since the start of the Iranian aggression.

Ministry spokesperson Colonel Saud al-Atwan stated that the effective interception of the missiles and drones resulted in some debris falling on several facilities in various parts of the country, causing minor material damage. - QNA

Hotel in Manama damaged, no fatalities

The Iranian aggression targeted the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Manama, causing material damage without fatalities, Bahrain's interior ministry reported in a statement.

Earlier, the Bahraini National Communication Centre said the missile air defence systems intercepted a new flurry of Iranian

ballistic missiles and drones that targeted the nation, successfully taking them out and engaging them with high efficiency.

Meanwhile, a senior civil aviation official confirmed that Bahrain International Airport was targeted in a drone attack yesterday, causing minor material damage.

The Bahraini News Agency re-

ported, quoting the same source, that the relevant authorities had previously activated approved emergency plans and taken all necessary precautionary measures, including evacuating the passenger terminal before the attack, as a proactive step aimed at protecting passengers and staff and minimising any potential risks. - QNA

Trump expects Iran campaign to last four weeks

From Page 1

B-2 stealth bombers were deployed directly from the US to strike hardened underground Iranian missile facilities using 2,000-pound bombs, while Iran's naval infrastructure sustained devastating blows.

Trump announced on social media that nine Iranian warships had been destroyed and that the US military was actively hunting down the remainder of the fleet.

Iran's naval headquarters was also largely destroyed in the strikes.

"They will soon be floating at the bottom of the sea," Trump said of the remaining vessels, adding with characteristic sardonic wit: "Other than that, their Navy is doing very well."

CENTCOM also confirmed the sinking of an Iranian warship docked in the Gulf of Oman.

The offensive has not been without cost to the US.

The Pentagon announced yesterday the first American military casualties of the war - three service members killed, five seriously wounded, and several others sustaining lighter injuries.

QC distributes 3,000 Ramadan food baskets to refugees in Djibouti



In line with its "Good Starts with You" campaign and with the support of donors, Qatar Charity (QC) distributed 3,000 relief food baskets to Yemeni and Somali refugees in Djibouti on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan.

The initiative is in response to the difficult humanitarian conditions experienced by thousands of refugees in Djibouti due to conflicts and crises that forced them to flee their home countries.

Many of them rely on humanitarian aid to secure their daily sustenance, and the burden doubles during Ramadan due to rising living costs and the difficulty of obtaining food supplies.

The distributed baskets contained essential food items sufficient for a family throughout the

month, helping them observe the fast with dignity and providing a measure of food security during this important period.

The director of Qatar Charity's office in Djibouti, Ghada Ezzedine, affirmed that supporting refugees during Ramadan is a humanitarian and moral duty.

She stressed the importance of joint efforts by charitable organisations and donors to ensure the continuity of assistance, considering growing needs.

Ezzedine also lauded co-operation and co-ordination with the authorities concerned with refugee affairs in Djibouti.

These include the National Agency for Refugee Affairs, as well as the relevant government bodies and the ministry of interior, for their pivotal role in organising the



distribution process and ensuring the aid reaches those most in need with transparency and fairness.

Hussein Shardi, the deputy director of the Djibouti's National

Agency for Refugee Affairs, said that the Ramadan food basket represents highly significant support for refugees amid their difficult economic conditions.

Supplication of our pious predecessors

‘Ubaadah ibn As-Saamit, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that he heard the Messenger of Allah, sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, say: “Whenever a Muslim supplicates to Allah, He accepts his supplication, or averts any affliction from him, or saves its equivalent in reward for him until the Day of Account – as long as he does not supplicate for something that is sinful or something that may break the ties of kinship.” [At-Tirmithi]

Jaabir, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “Some of the residents of Koofah complained to (the Caliph) ‘Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, about (his governor of Iraq) Sa’d, may Allah be pleased with him, claiming that he did not know how to lead his people in prayer properly.

“In response to this, Sa’d, may Allah be pleased with him, said: ‘I pray in the exact manner I saw the Prophet, sallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, pray. I make the first two Rak’ahs longer than the last two in the ‘Isha’ prayer.’

“Upon hearing this, ‘Umar said: ‘This is what I thought your practice would be!’

“After that ‘Umar sent some people to Koofah to inquire about the situation.

“Whenever they entered a mosque and asked the congregation there, they would praise Sa’d.

“When they reached a mosque where the tribe of Banu ‘Abs lived, one man said:

‘As you have asked us about Sa’d, we will tell you the truth: he is unfair when judging between people and does not justly distribute (war booty) and never participates in battles!’

“Upon hearing this, Sa’d supplicated to Allah saying: ‘O Allah! If this man is lying, make him go blind, make him live to an old age and expose him to temptations.’

“Some Muslims later narrated that: ‘Indeed we saw this man running after young girls in the streets, harassing them. He would say: ‘Indeed the supplication of Sa’d against me has been realised!’”

Ibn al-Munkadir, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “Once, I was sitting in the mosque next to the pulpit supplicating in the middle of the night.

“There was a man standing next to one of the pillars of the mosque covering his face with a mask. I overheard him saying whilst supplicating: ‘O my Lord! Drought has severely affected Your slaves, and I adjure You to bring down rain upon us!’ It was not but a short while that a cloud came with rain.”

Ibn al-Munkadir was keen to know all the righteous people and thus decided to try to find out who this man was.

He said: “I said to myself: ‘There is a pious man in the city who I do not know’, so when he concluded his prayer, I followed him until he reached the house of Anas, and entered it.

“I went back, and after I prayed the Fajr prayer I went to his house and knocked his door.

“When he opened the door, I asked him: ‘I overheard you last night supplicating and I saw what resulted from your supplication. Would you allow me to provide your sustenance so that you can concentrate on your worship?’

“He replied: ‘No, but I have a favour to ask of you. Please do not mention what you saw to anyone until I die, and do not come back again, because people would notice and my matter would become publicly known!’

“I said to him: ‘But where can I meet you?’ He replied: ‘In the mosque.’”

Ibn al-Munkadir never mentioned what he saw to anyone until the man died.

Ibn Wahb, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “I was told that the man moved out of the house he was living in to another location which no one knew about, so the owners of the house from whom he was renting the house said: ‘May Allah forgive Ibn al-Munkadir who forced this righteous man to leave our house.’”

‘Abbaas Ad-Doori, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that ‘Ali ibn Abu Fazaarah, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “My mother was handicapped for 20 years. One day she said to me: ‘Go to Ahmad ibn Hanbal and request him to supplicate for me to be cured.’

“I went to him, may Allah have mercy upon him, and knocked on his door, so he asked me what my need was.

“I told him that my mother was requesting that he supplicates for her to be cured.

“He replied in an angry tone: ‘I am in greater need for someone to supplicate for me!’ As I was about to head back home, an old lady came out and said: ‘He started supplicating for your mother after you had left!’ When I reached home, my mother was at my reception (i.e., Allah had cured her).”

Sulaym ibn ‘Aamir, may Allah be pleased with him, stated: “I entered upon Al-Jarraah (before a battle) and he raised his hands up and started supplicating, and the leaders of the army did likewise, so I did the same.

“He supplicated for a long time, and then said to me: ‘Do you know what we were doing?’ I said: ‘No, but I saw you supplicating earnestly, so I raised my hands with you.’

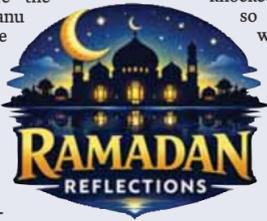
“He then said: ‘We were supplicating to Allah to grant us martyrdom.’”

Sulaym ibn ‘Aamir, may Allah be pleased with him, then said: “I swear by Allah that every single one of them was martyred during this battle.”

Bilal ibn Ka’b, may Allah be pleased with him, reported that some young men said to Abu Muslim al-Khawlaani, may Allah be pleased with him: “Supplicate to Allah to enable us to catch this antelope.”

He, may Allah be pleased with him, supplicated to Allah and they were able to catch it immediately.

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



NHRC documenting Iranian violations against Qatar

The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) has condemned the Iranian military attacks that targeted Qatar, stressing that these attacks constitute a clear violation of the United Nations Charter, a blatant challenge to the rules of public international law, and a breach of the principles of respect for state sovereignty.

In a press statement, the NHRC expressed its condemnation of Iranian aggression targeting the country’s territory and the resulting repercussions affecting civilians, causing fear and threatening their safety as well as the

safety of civilian facilities and infrastructure, due to the fall of missiles or shrapnel in residential areas.

It pointed out that these attacks represent a clear violation of international human rights law, foremost among them the right to life, the right to psychological and physical integrity, the right to freedom of movement, personal security, and other rights that were endangered as a result of the Iranian military attacks.

The NHRC commended the swift response and immediate measures taken by the Ministry of Interior and other competent authorities,

which contributed to safeguarding the lives of citizens, residents, and visitors and ensuring their safety.

It called on citizens, residents, and visitors to adhere to the instructions issued by the relevant authorities in order to strengthen measures protecting the right to life and the right to health.

The NHRC said that it will keep this matter under review, and will continue to monitor and document the effects and violations resulting from these attacks, in preparation for issuing a detailed and comprehensive report. – QNA

46 teams compete in WCM-Q’s global research contest

A total of 46 teams of high school students from Qatar, the US, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Jordan, and Bahrain took part in the latest instalment of Weill Cornell Medicine – Qatar (WCM-Q)’s annual High School Research Competition.

The event brought 165 high school students from 26 high schools in Qatar to the college to present research posters to an audience of their peers and a panel of WCM-Q judges.

A further 12 teams from the international schools presented their research posters to the judging panel via an Internet link.

The contest, organised by the WCM-Q’s Office of Student Outreach and Educational Development, is designed to give high school students opportunities to employ scientific research methods and enhance their presentation skills, while simultaneously inspiring them to explore careers in medicine and research.

The suggested themes of the research posters were based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and their application in Qatar, with topics including health and wellbeing, water and sanitation, sustainable cities and communities, and responsible consumption and production.

Each team comprised up to five students from grades 10-12, with each school represented by up to four teams.

Led by a science and math teacher from their school, the teams chose topics, conducted research, and created posters to present to the panel.

The competition is part of the WCM-Q’s Doctors of the Future Conference, a gathering of educa-



tion leaders and future medical professionals scheduled for April 10-11.

The top teams will have the opportunity to present their projects at the conference, and one of the top three finalist teams will receive the Doctors of the Future Conference award.

Dr Rachid Bendriss, the associate dean for foundation, student outreach and educational development programmes, said: “The High School Research Competition gives students excellent opportunities to engage with the scientific method while also discovering the many career paths that can be accessed by studying medicine at an elite medical college.”

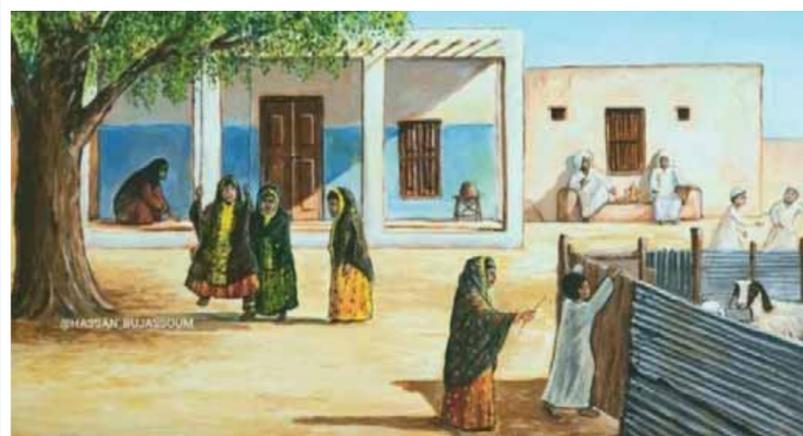
“We were very impressed by the quality of the posters, the confidence with which the students presented their work, and the level of interest in medicine, healthcare and research demonstrated by the students,” he said.



Noha Saleh, director of pre-medical administration, student outreach and educational development, said: “We are very pleased that so many students took part and showed such aptitude for conducting their own research projects.”

“We are confident that the event has provided great encouragement for students who wish to pursue studies and careers in the sciences, and we hope many of those who took part will one day apply to study medicine at the WCM-Q,” Saleh added.

Qatari Portrait: Neighbourhood memory



A painting by Hassan Boujassoum.

A painting by the artist Hassan Boujassoum appears as a window open to a time when houses faced each other, and hearts did too.

The work evokes a complete way of life, where the courtyard was a shared space, and the street a natural extension of the home.

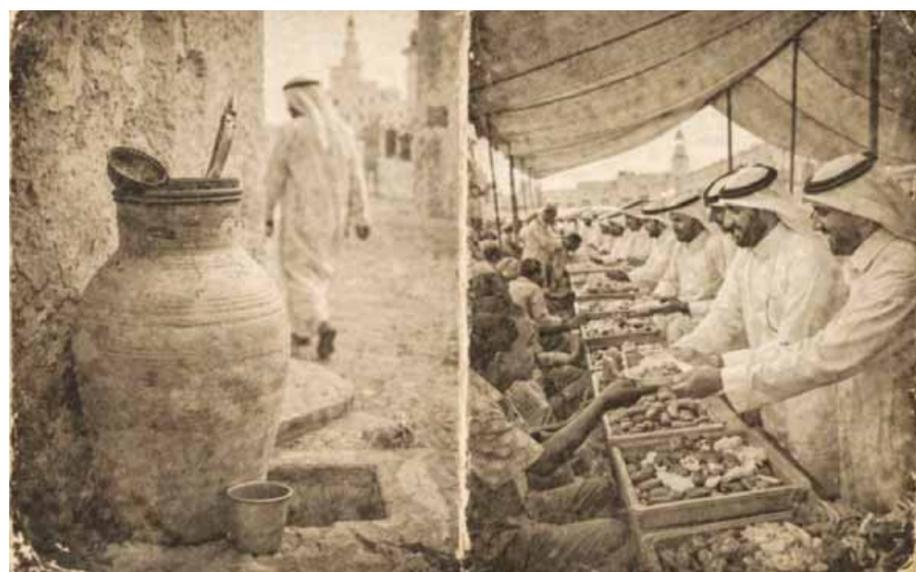
The work belongs to the genre of documentary realism, with an expressive touch in the simplification of forms and their definition with clear lines.

The colours are vibrant but not garish, dominated by the warmth of the sand and earth, contrasted with the coolness and the blue of the sky, creating a comfortable visual balance.

The light is diffused and relatively flat, without harsh shadows.

The composition allows the eye to wander among the details as if walking through the neighbourhood.

Chronicle of enduring goodness: A tale from a bygone era



A file photo showing a large water jar, and volunteers distributing meals.

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

In olden times in Qatar, the “water fountain” was one of the most visible manifestations of public charity.

A water jug is placed at the door of a house, near a mosque, or at the edge of the market.

There is no sign bearing the donor’s name, no photographs, no advertisements.

Just cool water in the summer heat, for passers-by, strangers, and residents of the neighbourhood to drink.

In a desert society, water was not a small detail; it was life itself.

Despite limited resources, charity was part of the daily rhythm.

Whoever slaughtered an animal would send a portion to their neighbour.

Whoever returned from a journey would share what they brought back.

And, during Ramadan, this spirit strengthens.

Exchanging dishes formed an unwritten network of solidarity; a house with limited food never went without.

Society has evolved, and cities have changed, but the idea has not disappeared.

Today, the “water fountain” is no longer just a jug at the door, but water coolers distributed along the

streets, and initiatives to provide water for workers at construction sites.

Aid is no longer confined to the neighbourhood; it now extends through charitable organisations and community groups, reaching thousands of families.

During Ramadan, this is particularly evident in the Iftar (Arabic for breaking the fast) meals prepared for the poor and travellers.

Tents are erected near mosques or in public squares, meals are distributed daily, and volunteers line up minutes before the call to Maghrib prayer.

The scene is modern in form but ancient in spirit. Remarkably, acts of kindness are no longer the sole domain of adults or the wealthy.

Students participate in organising the meals, families collect small donations to prepare them, and children learn from a young age that giving is part of the holy month’s identity.

The methods have changed, and the number of beneficiaries has expanded, but the motivation remains the same: a feeling that giving to charity is a collective responsibility.

The story here is about a single thread connecting an unplanned past with an organised present, from a hand filling a water jug at the door of a mud house to a hand placing a meal in a disposable dish under a large tent.

The forms change, but the humane value remains constant, making others feel they are not forgotten.

Mixed emotions grip Iranians after death of Khamenei

AFP
Paris

Iranians were experiencing a mix of shock, grief and joy after the death of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as Israeli and US strikes extended into a second day yesterday.

The attacks unleashed on Saturday killed Khamenei and top military leaders and prompted Iranian authorities to retaliate with strikes on Israel and across the Gulf.

At the first reports of Khamenei's death, many Iranians erupted into cheers from apartment buildings in the capital Tehran while others blared car horns and blasted music in the streets.

"We are on the road and celebrating the news," said a woman in her 40s who had left the capital and headed west as strikes continued to pound Tehran.

In a reflection of the continued sense of wariness from Iranians about speaking freely of their rulers, none of the people AFP interviewed were willing to give their full name.

"Last night... people in all neighbourhoods shouted for joy and took to the streets. This joy was while we were in the middle of a missile war," a Tehran resident in her 30s said.

She said Khamenei's hands were stained with blood, and recalled that Iranian security forces crushed mass protests in January.

"We all realised that there is no way, absolutely no way, to reform this regime except through foreign intervention," she said.

"They have taken the Iranian



People mourn the death of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in joint US and Israeli strikes, at a square in Tehran, yesterday.

people hostage." Others were stunned into silence.

"I am in shock. I cannot believe what happened," said a Tehran resident in his 30s.

Khamenei, who had final say on all state matters, had been Iran's supreme leader for nearly four decades. Around 5:00 am yesterday, Iranian state TV announced Khamenei's death, saying he had "fulfilled his lifelong dream" of martyrdom.

Within hours, Iranian mourners dressed in black took to the streets in Tehran's central Enghelab Square.

Some were angry while others wept.

The grieving crowds chanted "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" and demanded revenge as

they carried portraits of Khamenei, religious banners and the Iranian flag.

Similar gatherings took place in the southern city of Shiraz, Yazd and Isfahan in central Iran, Tabriz in the northwest and elsewhere, according to images broadcast on state TV.

Iran announced a 40-day mourning period and seven days of public holidays.

As dawn broke, large areas of the usually busy capital were deserted and shops remained shuttered.

There were security checkpoints and police patrolled the streets in numbers that appeared larger than during last year's 12-day war.

The street lights were switched

off on Tehran's main roads last night, and apartments appeared dark, suggesting many people had left the capital.

In northern Tehran, usually lively cafes and restaurants were closed.

An AFP journalist at the northern Islam Qala border crossing saw the Iranian flag completely lowered, and a black flag raised.

The journalist said the crossing was open and people and trucks were passing through normally.

An Iranian cargo driver said he could not see things turning out well and had been "really worried" since he heard of Khamenei's death.

"The situation right now in our country is not good," said the driver, who requested anonymity



People react as they gather at the Enghelab Square, after Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed on Saturday, in Tehran, yesterday.



Women react as people gather at the Enghelab Square, after Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in Tehran.

for security reasons. "I don't know what will happen in the future, but it's not a good future for us Iranians," he said.

"The Americans have destroyed everywhere they've gone in the world," he said, accusing them of wanting to take over Iran's energy and mineral resources.

US President Donald Trump threatened yesterday to unleash "force that has never been seen before" and urged Iran's people to rise up and seize power.

Iran's leadership has remained defiant.

President Masoud Pezeshkian described Khamenei's assassination as a "declaration of war" against Muslims.

Top security chief Ali Larijani announced transition plans and warned Iran would hit Israel and

the US with a force "they have never experienced". Umut, a director of a mining company, spoke to AFP after travelling overnight and passing through the Razi-Kapikoy border crossing into northeastern Turkey.

The 45-year-old Iranian had been in Tehran as news of Khamenei's death began filtering through.

Although video footage showed some residents of Tehran celebrating on their balconies and at their windows, Umut said "there were no protests on the streets", just a rush on fuel stations.

Umut said he was only planning to go home when the situation had died down, "if the streets are safe and there are no explosions at night".

He did not expect Khamenei's death to usher in a transformation.

Israel strikes Tehran again; leadership council takes over

Reuters
Jerusalem/Tel Aviv/Dubai

Israel launched a new wave of strikes on Tehran yesterday and Iran responded with more missile barrages, a day after the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei pitched the Middle East and the global economy into deepening uncertainty.

US and Israeli strikes — and Iranian retaliation — sent shockwaves through sectors from shipping to air travel to oil, amid warnings of rising energy costs and disruption to business in the Gulf, a strategic waterway and global trade hub.

US President Donald Trump has said the attack was intended to ensure Iran could not have a nuclear weapon, to contain its missile programme and to eliminate threats to the United States and its allies.

In an interview with the Atlantic magazine yesterday, Trump, who has encouraged the Iranian people to topple their government, said Iran's leadership wanted to talk to him and he had agreed.

But he has yet to lay out his longer-term aims in Iran, which faces a power vacuum that could leave it in chaos, with unforeseeable consequences for the region.

As the first US casualties were reported, and with the vital Strait of Hormuz closed and the glittering Gulf cities of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha under bombardment, the scale of the risk taken by Trump in launching the attack was becoming clearer.

Only around one in four Americans approve of the operation, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll yesterday, and if Hormuz, which is the passage for about 20% of world oil supplies, remains closed for more than a few days, squeezed US consumers will start to feel the pressure on prices at the pumps, months before vital midterm elections.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said yesterday they had hit three US and UK oil tankers in the Gulf, and shipping data showed hundreds of vessels including oil and gas tankers dropping anchor in nearby waters with traders expecting sharp jumps in crude oil prices today.

In Iran, facing its biggest existential challenge since the 1980-88 war with Iraq, President Masoud Pezeshkian said a leadership council composed of himself, the judiciary head and a member of the powerful Guardians Council had temporarily assumed the duties of Supreme Leader.

Oman's foreign ministry said Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi had indicated that Tehran was open to any serious efforts at de-escalation.

But it remained unclear what the longer-term prospects were for Iran to rebuild its leadership and replace the 86-year-old Khamenei, who had held power since the death of the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhol-



A smoke plume rises following a missile strike on a building in Tehran, yesterday.



People look at smoke rising from the port of Jebel Ali after a reported Iranian strike in Dubai, yesterday.

lah Khomeini in 1989. Russian President Vladimir Putin denounced Khamenei's death as a cynical murder and China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi described it as "blatant killing".

Israel, which has pressed successive US administrations to take action against Iran, claimed responsibility for killing Khamenei, in what it said was a "precise, large-scale operation" guided by intelligence, while he was in his central leadership compound in the heart of Tehran.

It said it aimed to dominate the skies over Tehran, giving no sign of planning an end to the biggest aerial operation in its history, involving hundreds of fighter jets.

"We have the capabilities and the targets to keep going on for as long as necessary," Israeli military spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani said.

Trump warned that the US would hit Iran "with a force that has never been seen before" if it struck back.

But as Iran fired renewed missile barrages across the region, Israel's ambulance service said nine people were killed in the town of Beit Shemesh, the United

Arab Emirates said Iranian attacks killed three people and Kuwait reported one dead.

Three US service personnel were also killed and five seriously wounded, the first American casualties of the operation, the US military said.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had hit three US and UK "violating" oil tankers with missiles in the Gulf and Strait of Hormuz and also attacked military bases in Kuwait and Bahrain and the region with drone and missiles.

Trump said on social media the US military had destroyed nine Iranian warships so far and was "going after the rest."

Khamenei, who built Iran into a powerful anti-US force and spread its sway across the Middle East during his 36-year rule, was working in his office at the time of Saturday's attack, state media said. The raid also killed his daughter, grandchild, daughter-in-law and son-in-law.

Two US sources and a US official familiar with the matter said Israel and the US timed their attack on Saturday to coincide with a meeting Khamenei was holding with top aides.

قطر للطاقة QatarEnergy

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

Important Notice: Suppliers and Contractors who are already registered with QatarEnergy via Mushartyat Portal can "Buy Tender Online and download Tender Document" from QatarEnergy website (Mushartyat Portal).

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

| Sl. No | Tender Number | Tender Sale Period | | Tender Closing Date | Tender Bond | Bond Curr. | Tender Fee | Fee Curr. |
|--------|---------------|--------------------|------------|---------------------|-------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| | | Start Date | End Date | | | | | |
| 1 | LT25106600 | 02.03.2026 | 08.03.2026 | 30.03.2026 | 205,000.00 | QAR | 200.00 | QAR |

Title of Tender: MAINTENANCE AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VESSEL TRAFFIC SYSTEM AT RAS LAFFAN PORT

Mid-Tender Meeting Location: **To be advised if required**

Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time: **To be advised if required**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

قطر للطاقة QatarEnergy LNG

QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

| No. | TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION | TENDER ISSUE PERIOD | TENDER FEE (QAR) | TENDER BOND (QAR) | TENDER CLOSING DATE |
|-----|--|--------------------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | LTC/C/MNT/7595/26 FIRE & GAS SYSTEMS MAINTENANCE SERVICES ON CALL-OFF BASIS | 25/02/2026 to 11/03/2026 | 0 | 300,000 | 17/03/2026 |

Scope of Work:
Company's Onshore facility requires Fire and Gas Systems Maintenance Services on Call Off basis. Contractor shall perform the work by providing qualified resources with all tools and tackles; The duration of Contract shall be for five (05) years with a sole option for Company to extend it for further up to two (02) years.

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

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

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

Thousands stranded as Iran conflict shuts Mideast hubs

AFP
Dubai

The biggest disruption to global air transport since the Covid pandemic snarled travel for a second day yesterday, with thousands of flights affected and busy Gulf hubs including Dubai and others shuttered as Iran lashed out after US-Israeli strikes.

as Iran launched retaliatory strikes on the glittering Gulf cities.

Tehran hit both the Dubai International Airport – the world's busiest for international traffic – and Kuwait's main airport during its retaliation one day earlier.

Iran, Iraq, Israel, Syria, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates had all announced at least partial closures of their skies.

"There haven't been any other crises of this magnitude since Covid," Didier Brechemier, an expert at business consultancy Roland Berger, told AFP.

Even Russia's invasion of

Ukraine did not affect the major air hubs of the Middle East through which travellers to destinations in much of Asia almost always transit, he said.

Aviation analytics firm Cirium said more than 1,500 flights to the Middle East were cancelled yesterday, more than 40% of scheduled traffic.

Flight tracking website Flight-Aware said more than 2,700 flights had been cancelled globally and more than 12,300 delayed as of 1720 GMT yesterday.

The costs are "already amounting to hundreds of mil-



Passengers are given advice at the closed Emirates check-in area at London Heathrow Airport in west London, yesterday, as flights are severely disrupted following the US and Israel's strikes on Iran.

lions of euros in losses for air transport," Didier Arino, CEO of the consulting firm Protourisme, said.

For some passengers, the flight disruptions went far beyond the annoyance of being stranded.

Italian rapper BigMama said she had been on a flight from Male in the Maldives which was re-routed to a spot in the desert near Dubai – one of the cities targeted by Iran in its wave of retaliatory strikes.

"We keep hearing missiles over our heads. I'm terrified," the artist posted in a tearful video on Instagram Saturday.

"We didn't sleep a wink all night," she wrote in a new message yesterday. "We still have no news. We just want to go home."

'Air bridges'

Others were in more philosophical spirits.

"I have got work tomorrow so, if my manager is watching: Johnny, I will be back later this week, hopefully," a traveller stuck at Johannesburg's main international airport told local SABC News after his Emirates flight to London

was cancelled. "I tried.. to book a ticket back with a different provider and the prices are going up every 10 minutes, 20 minutes," he said.

"I don't know where I am sleeping tonight," one passenger in Cape Town identified only as Farhad, who was trying to return to Germany after a holiday, told the Newzroom Afrika broadcaster.

"The whole world is connecting, and something that happened 10,000 kilometres away is also in Cape Town or Germany or wherever," he said. Countries including France and Thailand have said they are looking at evacuating citizens from the Middle East.

Patrice Caradec, president of the French Association of Tour Operators (SETO), told AFP that the goal now is to establish "air bridges" via alternative hubs like Istanbul.

Arino said Tehran's attacks and the impact on air travel dealt a blow to the "soft power" of the Gulf states.

"What they sell is the security of property and people," he told AFP.

"Dubai was often talked about a

bit like Switzerland, so this inevitably tarnishes that image."

Explosions rocked Dubai's Palm Jumeirah man-made island and drone debris caused a fire at the Burj Al Arab ultra-luxury hotel as waves of Iranian missiles targeted the UAE among others on Saturday.

Claudine Schwartz, a 49-year-old French tourist staying at the Royal Atlantis on The Palm, told AFP that she heard explosions and saw plumes of smoke Saturday.

"We were playing night golf and rushed back to the hotel. I saw a fireball coming towards us and at the same time an alert message on our phones telling us to take shelter. We were put on the lowest level of the hotel," she said.

Yesterday they were "confined inside," she said – but, as Tehran launched new strikes on the region, she said that from the gym, "I could see a large plume of black smoke coming from what I think was a port".

They were registered on a hotline for stranded passengers run by the French foreign ministry, she said, adding: "We're waiting."



Stranded passengers wait at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport after flights to Dubai and Bahrain were cancelled after Iranian strikes, following strikes on Iran launched by the US and Israel, in Dhaka, Bangladesh, yesterday.

UAE closes embassy in Iran after four killed in attacks across the Gulf

AFP
Dubai

The UAE said yesterday it was closing its embassy in Tehran and recalling the Emirates' ambassador after Iran's retaliatory missile and drone campaign in the Gulf killed four people and wounded dozens more.

The move marks the strongest condemnation yet by a Gulf state since Tehran began targeting the region with a barrage of strikes after the US and Israel launched a massive air campaign against Iran that killed its supreme leader and other top officials.

"These hostile attacks against civilian sites, including residential areas, airports, ports, and service facilities, endangered innocent civilians in a serious and irresponsible escalation," the UAE foreign ministry said in a statement.

The UAE fully reopened its embassy and sent a new ambassador to Tehran in 2022 during a thaw in relations between the Emirates and the nation. Saudi Arabia later followed suit.

Iran's continued and unprecedented Gulf bombardment has raised fears of a wider conflict and rattled a region long seen as a haven of peace and security in the turbulent Middle East.

For a second day, AFP correspondents heard repeated, powerful blasts in Dubai, Doha and Manama, with explosions also heard in Riyadh, as Iran launched counter-strikes following US and Israeli attacks that killed its supreme leader and other top officials.

Tehran also appeared to target on Sunday a building complex in the UAE capital Abu Dhabi housing several foreign missions, including the Israeli embassy.

Two people were injured by debris during the incident at Etihad Towers.

Three people – Pakistani, Nepalese and Bangladeshi nationals -- have been killed in the UAE since Saturday, according to Abu Dhabi's defence ministry.

Since Saturday the UAE detected 165 ballistic missiles, destroying 152, and intercepted two cruise missiles, the ministry said.

It added that 506 of 541 Iranian drones were shot down.

The Kuwaiti health ministry said one person had been killed and 32 others injured since Saturday.

In Oman, which helped mediate US-Iran talks and was the only Gulf state spared on the first day of the Iranian campaign, the port of Duqm was targeted by two drones, the Oman News Agency said.

Later yesterday, Oman's foreign minister Badr Albusaidi pushed for a ceasefire on a call with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi.

Albusaidi "affirmed the Sultanate of Oman's continued call for a ceasefire and a return to dialogue... in a manner that achieves the legitimate demands of all parties," his ministry said in a readout of the call.

HOTELS BECOME TARGETS
Earlier, Oman said an oil tanker was targeted off the coast. Its crew was evacuated and four of them were injured, the news agency reported.

The Gulf Co-operation Council was to convene via video-link later for a unified response to Iran's attacks.

Across the Gulf, civilian infrastructure has been hit: from airports and seaports to residential buildings and hotels.

Security analyst Anna Jacobs said: "The Gulf countries right now are really on the front lines of this brutal war." "Gulf countries, as always, want to support de-escalation and diplomacy... But this commitment and these principles are being put to the test right now," she added.

"If Iran continues to hit these countries and escalates even more, it will be very difficult for them to just sit and do nothing."

Early yesterday, drones struck the airport in Bahrain's capital Manama, causing minor damage, authorities said.

The US embassy in Manama urged citizens to steer clear of hotels in Manama, warning they could become potential targets after the Crowne Plaza was hit.

In the UAE, which has borne the brunt of the attacks, two people were injured when debris from intercepted drones fell on homes in Dubai, authorities said.

On Saturday, the Iranian attacks sparked fires at landmarks such as The Palm seafont development and Burj Al Arab hotel.

At the airport in Abu Dhabi, at least one person was killed and seven wounded during what authorities called an "incident" and another died earlier in the day from falling debris.

Dubai airport, the world's busiest for international traffic, and Kuwait's airport, were also hit.

In Saudi Arabia, Iranian missiles targeting Riyadh's international airport and the Prince Sultan Airbase, which houses US military personnel, were intercepted, a Gulf source briefed on the matter told AFP.

A witness near the airport said they "saw and heard the air defence intercept the missile in the sky".

Muslim World League criticises attack on Oman

QNA
Makkah Al Mukarramah

The Muslim World League has strongly condemned an Iranian attack on the Sultanate of Oman, denouncing it

as part of a pattern of aggression against Gulf and Arab states.

In a statement issued yesterday, the organisation expressed "strong denunciation and condemnation" of the assault on Oman. The League's General Secretariat described the incident as a "blatant

aggression" and said such actions violated religious values as well as international and humanitarian laws and norms.

It also stressed the importance of the international community taking a firm stance to confront what it termed "criminal recklessness".

Kenya helicopter crash kills six, including lawmaker

AFP
Nairobi

A helicopter crash in western Kenya has killed the six passengers aboard the vehicle, including a lawmaker, President William Ruto and the Kenyan press said yesterday.

The accident took place on Saturday in Mosop, some 300 kilometres northwest of the capital Nairobi, several Kenyan media outlets

"Ng'eno, was a progressive and devoted servant of the people who worked tirelessly on behalf of the residents of Emurua Dikirr, Narok County"

reported, citing police sources.

Ruto took to social media to voice his "profound shock and deep sadness" at the death of Mheshimiwa

Johana Ng'eno, a member of parliament aboard the helicopter at the time of the crash.

"Ng'eno, was a progressive and devoted servant of the people who worked tirelessly on behalf of the residents of Emurua Dikirr, Narok County," the president wrote on X.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with his family, his friends, the people of Emurua Dikirr, and all the victims and families affected by the helicopter crash in Mosop, Nandi County."



People cross a street as smoke rises from the site of a reported Iranian strike in Dubai, yesterday.



GULF HELICOPTERS COMPANY (GHC) Q.P.S.C.

Invites prospective suppliers to participate in the following tender

| Tender Reference and Description | Submission of information & willingness for bidding | Tender fee (non-refundable) | Tender Package Issuance | Tender Bond | Bid Closing Date |
|--|---|---|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| RFQ-GHC/SCO/002/2026 Call off Agreement for Supply of Office Stationery Items for Three (3) Years | Until 5 March 2026 | QAR 500/- Until 9 March 2026 10:00 am | 11 March 2026 | QAR 20,000/- | 2 April 2026 12:00 noon |

Brief Scope: GHC invites reputable and qualified suppliers to submit their bids for the supply and delivery of stationery office supplies for a period of three (3) years. The scope of work requires the regular supply and delivery of a variety of office supplies covering daily-use consumables, paper products, writing instruments, filing and organizational materials, desk accessories, and printer-related consumables. Suppliers are expected to maintain consistent quality, ensure timely delivery, and comply with all applicable health and safety regulations in the State of Qatar.

- Interested bidders to communicate their willingness to bid and send contact details to GHC email (procurement@gulhelicopters.com) indicating company name, address, telephone, official email, authorized company representative, etc. latest by 5 March 2026.
GHC tender reference numbers and description must be mentioned in the email.
- Non-refundable tender fee of QAR 500/- is payable to GHC, only through QNB account # 0013-036531-001 at any QNB branch. Interested bidders shall attach the evidence of the tender fee payment and send to GHC email: procurement@gulhelicopters.com, latest by 9 March 2026, 10:00 am for GHC approval.
- Tender package will be sent via email to the confirmed participants by 11 March 2026. GHC shall provide the necessary instructions and guidelines for the bid submission.
- Original of the Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee) must be submitted by hand to the following address:
Gulf Helicopters Company,
P O Box: 811, Al Areeah Street,
Ras Abu Aboud, Doha, Qatar
Tel: +974 44 333 888
Attention: Supply Chain Manager

Attach a copy of tender bond to the technical offer. Offer without Tender Bond will not be considered.

V. For any clarifications on the above, please send your queries with tender reference and description addressed to Supply Chain Mail to email procurement@gulhelicopters.com.

Note: Bidders who are not registered in GHC will be requested to complete the supplier registration process during the tendering period.



CIA intel guided strikes that killed Iran supreme leader: *NYT*

AFP
Washington

CIA intelligence indicating Ayatollah Ali Khamenei would attend a meeting of top Iranian officials helped guide strikes in a US and Israeli attack that killed Iran's supreme leader, the *New York Times* reported yesterday.

Khamenei was killed in the strikes on capital Tehran, Iranian state media confirmed yesterday, after the US and Israel vowed to seek regime change in the Islamic republic.

The American intelligence agency had been tracking Khamenei for months, the *Times* reported,

citing people familiar with the operation, and learned that a meeting of top Iranian officials was set for Saturday morning at a leadership compound in the heart of Tehran.

Washington and Tel Aviv originally planned to launch strikes on Iran at night, but officials adjusted the plan based on the CIA intelligence, according to the *Times*.

The US gave the information to Israel, who planned to carry out the attack on Iranian leadership, the newspaper reported.

The operation began about 6:00am in Israel (0400 GMT), and long-range missiles struck the compound about 9:40am, the *Times* said.

Senior Iranian national security

officials were in one building at the compound, and Khamenei was in a nearby building.

In addition to Khamenei, two top Iranian military leaders were killed in the bombing: the chief of the Revolutionary Guards, General Mohammad Pakpour, and another top security adviser, Ali Shamkhani, Iran's judiciary confirmed.

Iran has since retaliated, with reported strikes across the Gulf, including in the Emirati capital Abu Dhabi and near regional US military bases, as the threat of a larger regional conflict grows.

US President Donald Trump, meanwhile, has said the American military's bombing will continue "as long as necessary."

Three US military members killed in Iran operation, reveals Pentagon

AFP
Washington

The US military yesterday said three service members have been killed and five seriously wounded in the operation against Iran – the first casualties of any kind announced on the US side.

The US and Israel launched massive bombardments against Iran and killed its supreme leader Saturday, with attacks ongoing yesterday.

"Three US service members have been killed in action and five are seriously wounded as part of Operation Epic Fury. Several others sustained minor shrapnel in-

juries and concussions – and are in the process of being returned to duty," US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

"Major combat operations continue and our response effort is ongoing. The situation is fluid, so out of respect for the families, we will withhold additional information, including the identities of our fallen warriors, until 24 hours after next of kin have been notified."

There was no immediate reaction from President Donald Trump, although he gave multiple interviews to US media outlets about other aspects of the Iran operation that were published shortly before the casualties were made public.

The first, brief reaction of a senior US official came from Trump's ambassador to the UN, Mike Waltz. "Freedom is never free," he posted on social media site X.

Hakeem Jeffries, the leader of the Democrats in the House of Representatives, which is controlled by Trump's Republican Party, posted that he was "heartbroken" over the casualties.

US air and naval forces – together with Israel's military – are heavily bombarding Iran, and Trump has said the goal is to destroy the country's military capacity.

In response, Iran has fired missiles at targets in Israel and at US military facilities around the region.



Members of the FBI perform an investigation near Buford's restaurant yesterday, in Austin, Texas. Three people are dead and 14 others hospitalised following a mass shooting early yesterday morning.

Austin shooting that left three dead may be 'terrorism,' says FBI

AFP
Houston

Three people were killed and 14 wounded in a shooting overnight in downtown Austin, the capital of the US state of Texas, which the FBI said yesterday may have been an "act of terrorism."

The gunman, who was not identified, was among the dead, Austin police chief Lisa Davis said at a press conference.

FBI special agent Alex Doran said an exact motive was not known but "there were indicators on the subject and in his vehicle

that indicate a potential nexus to terrorism."

"In terms of specifically what type of terrorism, we're just at this point prepared to say that it was potentially an act of terrorism," Doran said.

The FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force was brought in to participate in the investigation alongside local authorities.

The shooting comes amid heightened security in many American cities following the launching of US and Israeli air strikes on Iran which killed the country's supreme leader Ali Khamenei and several other senior officials.

Davis said the assailant was shot by police who responded swiftly to the shooting, which took place around 2:00am in Austin's entertainment district.

The officers "were faced with the individual with a gun and three of our officers returned fire, killing the suspect," the police chief said.

Davis said the gunman first opened fire with a pistol from his car on patrons of Buford's Backyard Garden in downtown Austin.

He then parked his car and emerged with a rifle and began shooting at people who were walking by, Davis said.

Three of the wounded were in critical condition, officials said.

Canadian minister to meet with OpenAI's Altman to discuss safety measures

Canada's minister in charge of artificial intelligence said on Friday he will meet with OpenAI CEO Sam Altman next week to discuss how the ChatGPT maker plans to boost safety protocols after a recent school shooting in British Columbia.

The Canadian government has urged OpenAI to boost its safety protocols quickly and warned Ottawa could effect change through legislation after the company said it had not contacted police about an account belonging to the alleged shooter, Jesse Van Rootselaar, that it had banned. "While we note their willingness

to strengthen law enforcement referral protocols, establish direct points of contact with Canadian authorities, and enhance safeguards, we have not yet seen a detailed plan for how these commitments will be implemented in practice," Minister Evan Solomon said in a statement. Solomon was responding to a letter he received from OpenAI's vice-president of global policy on Thursday in which the firm said it will set up a direct point of contact with Canadian law enforcement and improve detection of repeat violators of its "violent activities" policy to boost safety protocols.

Solomon said he will meet with Altman "to seek further clarity and to ensure that the commitments made are translated into concrete action."

Van Rootselaar, 18, is suspected of killing eight people on February 10 before taking her own life in Tumbler Ridge. OpenAI said it banned her ChatGPT account last year for policy violations.

Solomon said he will also meet with other major platforms in Canada in the coming weeks.

"All options remain on the table as we assess what further steps may be necessary," he added. (Reuters)

Texas port humming as Trump ramps up Venezuela oil

AFP
Houston

A cargo ship teems with workers in hard hats at the Port of Houston, the latest US vessel headed to Venezuela after President Donald Trump lifted restrictions to boost oil production in the crisis-hit country.

US sanctions have crippled Venezuela for years, but Trump's administration has been working with interim president Delcy Rodriguez after toppling autocratic leader Nicolas Maduro.

Washington has used a carrot-and-stick approach with Rodriguez, praising her for welcoming US oil companies but at the same time threatening Venezuela with punishment if she does not co-operate.

At the Port of Houston this past week, a crane loaded trucks, generators and machinery onto the Roibeira as it prepared to set sail to Venezuela, the second vessel from the shipping company International Frontier Forwarders to head to the South American nation.

Greg Diaz, the company's Venezuelan-American owner, said there were more than 8,500 cubic metres of goods onboard, equivalent to around 120 containers.

"Before, it took us six to eight months to accumulate enough cargo to go to Venezuela," he told AFP.

"And now, in 20 days, we're able to complete the orders to fill our ship to max capacity and go to Venezuela and complete the

orders right away." That demand, he said, comes from private companies in Venezuela that are investing massively – something that was impossible under Maduro.

Venezuela was once a major crude supplier to the US, and has the world's largest proven reserves with more than 303bn barrels, according to global oil cartel Opec.

This amounts to about a fifth of the world's oil reserves.

But in 2024, Venezuela produced only about one % of global crude, its industry left haggard by years of underinvestment, mismanagement and US sanctions.

That all changed when US forces captured Venezuela's socialist leader Maduro in a deadly raid on the capital Caracas on January 3.

Rodriguez, who was vice-president under Maduro, was accepted by Trump as Maduro's replacement on condition she submit to Washington demands for access to Venezuelan oil.

The US Treasury has since eased a seven-year-old oil embargo on Venezuela and issued licenses allowing a handful of multinationals to operate in the country under certain conditions.

In his recent State of the Union address, Trump said the US had received more than 80mn barrels of oil from Venezuela, describing the nation as "our new friend and partner."

But despite American enthusiasm, major companies remain cautious.

"I think the politics of it is moving a little bit too fast," Jorge Pinon, a researcher at the Energy Institute at the University of Texas, told AFP.

"Everybody was willing to sign" at the White House meeting with oil company executives in January, "except for Exxon, which was the only one that had the courage to say 'we need assurances!'"

Pinon said there was no sense of urgency from the Americans to revive Venezuela's oil industry, though, as the US is the world's largest producer of crude oil with secure supplies.

For now, the industry is more interested in Guyana, Brazil, and even the Gulf of Mexico.

Oil companies first "have to see what's the state of the infrastructure" in Venezuela, Pinon added.

Political instability is another concern.

"What about if in two years, three years from now, Venezuela has free elections and a new government suddenly changes the rules?" he said.

Back at Houston's port, Greg Diaz remained optimistic.

"It's amazing because we're not only helping the American drilling companies, but also the Venezuelan private companies in the oil and gas sector to buy quality US-made drill rigs," he said.

"But also, we help the mid-size to small companies and entrepreneurs that now can buy, whether it's one piece of machinery or a large order, and make possible the Venezuelan dream."

Mexican authorities return body of cartel boss 'El Mencho' to relatives

Reuters
Mexico City

The body of Mexican cartel boss Nemesio Oseguera, the country's most wanted man until his death a week ago, was returned to his family, the attorney general's office said on Saturday.

Oseguera, known as "El Mencho", was killed in a military operation in Jalisco state last week. That sparked a wave of retaliatory violence by the cartel across much of Mexico, killing dozens and temporarily stranding foreign tourists in their hotels.

The attorney general's office said they had performed genetic tests to match the remains to the relatives. The office did not say where the handover took place.



A hearse leaves a funeral home, after the body of cartel leader Nemesio Oseguera, known as "El Mencho", who was killed last week in a military operation in Jalisco state, was handed over to his family, in Mexico City, Mexico, on Saturday.

Colombia minister to propose reciprocal tariff of 50% on some Ecuadorean goods

Reuters
Bogota/Quito

Colombia's commerce minister Diana Marcela Morales said on Friday she will propose the government raise tariffs on certain Ecuadorean goods from a current 30% to 50%, as a trade war between the neighbours escalates.

Ecuador said on Thursday it will increase tariffs on Colombian imports to 50% beginning March 1, citing a lack of co-operation in combating drug trafficking along their shared border, which Colombia denies.

"We are going to present the proposal not only to raise tariffs on the 73 tariff subheadings, but also to consider other products that could generate some degree of sensitivity due to the measures Ecuador has taken today," Morales told Blu Radio in an interview, saying the move must be approved by a government committee.

"It would be 50% for the 73 subheadings that currently have a 30% rate." Meanwhile, Ecuadorean President Daniel Noboa doubled down on his assertion that Colombia has failed to co-operate on security on the countries' border, a hub for trafficking of cocaine and other contraband.

"This surcharge is the result of an absolute lack of oversight at the border on Colombia's part; even the army has been withdrawn several hundred kilometres away, which doubles our cost of protecting our border, to nearly an additional \$400mn a year," he told Radio Centro de Quito, adding Ecuador has already raised \$13mn through the tariff, which first was announced in January, and that violence in the area had fallen.

Ecuador has a trade deficit of \$1.1bn with Colombia, he added.

Shortly after the first tariffs, Ecuador increased its fee on Colombian crude transported through its SOTE pipeline by 900% to \$30 per barrel, prompting Colombia to halt shipments.

Lula visits flood zone as death toll from landslides hits 70

AFP
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Saturday hugged weeping residents and promised free houses to those who had lost their homes in landslides triggered by torrential rains that killed 70 people in the country's southeast.

Thousands were left homeless after mud swept away their houses in the cities of Juiz de Fora and Uba this week, leaving desperate residents seeking loved ones under piles of sludge and debris.

Firefighters said Saturday that they were still searching for three missing people, while the police updated the death toll to 70, including 13 children.

Lula flew over the disaster area before landing and meeting grief-stricken residents and officials.

He promised that his government would give free houses to those whose homes had been destroyed, outside of the at-risk areas where they had been living.

"We are going to help these people recover by giving them houses," Lula said at a press conference.

"The only thing we cannot give back to the city are the lives that have been lost. We don't have the power to bring human lives back, but we will give people the right to live with decency and dignity."



This handout picture released by the Brazilian Presidency press office shows Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva embracing a victim of the floods and landslides caused by heavy rains in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais State, southeastern Brazil.

According to the latest update from the fire brigade, just over 3,800 people have been made homeless by the landslides.

The tragedy is the latest in a series of extreme weather disasters in Brazil, from floods to fires and drought, many of which scientists have linked to the effects of global warming.

In 2024, more than 200 people died and two mn were impacted by



View of a landslide after heavy rainfall in the Tres Moinhos neighbourhood in Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais state, Brazil.

unprecedented flooding in southern Brazil, one of the worst natural disasters in its history.

"Science indicates that there will be more and more extreme weather events like the one that happened here in Minas Gerais, as happened last year in Rio Grande do Sul," Jader Barbalho Filho, Minister of Cities, told the press conference.

"There is only one alternative: investments in prevention," he said. Brazil's meteorological agency

INMET told AFP that parts of the southeast were experiencing the rainiest February in years.

Rainfall in Juiz de Fora — a hilly city of half a mn people — has already exceeded 760mm (30 inches) in February, more than triple its usual monthly average.

Brazilian meteorologist Carlos Nobre attributed the unusually heavy downpours to a passing cold front system over the "very warm" Atlantic Ocean.

Iranian cultural centre in Ecuador attacked amid Middle East tensions

AFP
Quito

Several people attacked an Iranian cultural centre in Ecuador's capital Quito, police said Saturday, leaving one person injured and the facility damaged amid US and Israeli strikes against Iran.

Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in the strikes on Tehran, state media confirmed yesterday, and Washington and Tel Aviv have

vowed to seek regime change in the Islamic republic.

Iran has since retaliated, with reported Iranian strikes across the Gulf, including in the Emirati capital Abu Dhabi and near regional US military bases, as the threat of a larger regional conflict grows.

In Ecuador's capital, authorities said a group of people arrived at an Iranian cultural centre in a convoy of vehicles and used sticks, stones and tear gas to break the centre's windows and assault people inside.

One person was reportedly

injured in the attack. It was unclear whether anyone had been arrested.

"It is an act of aggression," police said in a statement to the media.

Videos shared on social media show people with Israeli, US and Iranian opposition flags near the facility. A woman can be heard shouting, "Get out, murderers, get out, terrorists. You have to leave this country!"

People at the centre were praying during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Havana rides a bicycle boom as US chokes off fuel to Cuba

Reuters
Havana

Havana residents are pulling old bicycles out of storage, patching up threadbare tyres, and, in some cases, learning to cycle as fuel becomes increasingly scarce in Cuba following the US takeover of Venezuela's oil exports.

Venezuela, a key ally to Cuba, had been the main supplier of crude oil and fuel to the communist-run island for more than a quarter century, until the US capture of Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro in January.

The drying-up of that supply has pushed Cubans into a deeper level of survival mode as they contend with ever-longer blackouts and soaring prices for food and transportation as well as for fuel itself — when it is even available. Fuel shipments to Cuba from Mexico also halted recently, after the US threatened tariffs on countries that supply oil to the island nation. Some in Havana are increasingly turning to electric vehicles and scrambling to install solar panels atop their homes and businesses.

For Gabriela Barbon, 23, the ballooning transportation costs (three times higher than before to get around by car) persuaded her to get on a bike for the first time.

"Riding a bike is no longer just a hobby or something I wanted to do at some point in my life; it's a necessity," she said during a training session hosted by local organisation Citykleta in a city park, alongside other adults finding their balance on two wheels for the first time.



People take a class to learn how to ride a bicycle, as Cuba grapples with fuel shortages after the US blocked oil shipments to the island, in Havana, Cuba.

"The Learn to Pedal campaign came at the perfect time, just when I needed it," she said.

Citykleta organiser Yasser Gonzalez expected 100 people to sign up, but the programme has attracted nearly four times as many people — many seeking alternative ways to get around the Cuban capital.

"We have an avalanche of people who want to learn," he said, as a fellow organiser helped a first-timer on a bright blue bicycle.

Yoandris Herrera is not new to cycling. But he has stored his bicycle disassembled under his bed for almost a year, opting to zip around on a motorcycle instead.

The China-made bicycle, which

he bought four years ago, now has a second chance on the streets as Herrera pedals to work and takes his kids to school.

"Since fuel is so expensive right now, it's more practical to get around by bicycle," he said.

The fuel crisis has also triggered more business for bicycle repairman Pedro Carrillo, who carefully aligned the spokes of a wheel at a makeshift workshop on a Havana sidewalk, with bicycle tyres hanging on the wall behind him.

"It's been like an explosion," he said. But the biking boom itself has led to a new type of scarcity, too, he said. "Sometimes I don't have parts to help people. There are things I can't get anywhere."

Trucks of soybeans back up at Brazil port



A drone view shows trucks loaded with soybeans waiting to unload at the port of Miritituba as heavy grain traffic in the region has led to long lines during Brazil's harvest shipping season, in Miritituba.

Death toll in Bolivia military plane crash rises to 22

AFP
El Alto

The death toll in the crash of a Bolivian military cargo plane carrying banknotes near the capital La Paz has risen to 22, officials said Saturday, warning it may take more than a year to figure out why it happened.

The aircraft, a C-130 Hercules transport plane — manufactured by Lockheed Martin — crashed after veering off the runway at El Alto International Airport on Friday, destroying multiple cars and damaging trucks.

Authorities have not yet revealed the number of people on board, nor have they said if anyone survived the incident, but they have announced that rescue efforts are over.

Fatalities were recorded

both at the airport and on the busy avenue where the plane crashed.

"We have 22 people dead," including four children, national police chief Mirko Sokol told reporters, adding: "Only nine of them have been identified... because we have bodies that were completely mutilated."

Defence Minister Raul Salinas has said that the plane — which departed from the eastern city of Santa Cruz — had eight crew members, one of whom was killed.

The health ministry put the number of people injured at 37.

The government of Bolivian President Rodrigo Paz said that the cause of the incident was not yet known, and that a probe had been opened. Witnesses have cited bad weather. The plane's black boxes — the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder

— were recovered on Saturday.

But the defence ministry said analysis of the data could take "from several weeks to more than a year."

Mangled parts of the aircraft were seen on the road where the plane came down and bystanders could be seen rushing to grab the scattered cash, prompting police to deploy tear gas to repel them.

Authorities were later seen setting the newly printed money alight in a bonfire at the scene of the crash.

The defence ministry said that "the money transported in the crashed aircraft has no official serial number... therefore it has no legal or purchasing power."

Bystanders attempted once again Saturday to access the site, but police fired more tear gas.



A drone view shows the site where a Bolivian Air Force Hercules aircraft crashed onto a busy avenue amid inclement weather in El Alto, Bolivia.

Iran solidarity protest in Kuala Lumpur



Demonstrators holding portraits of Iran's late supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei gather during a solidarity protest outside of the US embassy in Kuala Lumpur yesterday (AFP)



China 'strongly condemns' Khamenei killing

AFP
Beijing

China said yesterday it "strongly condemns" the US and Israel's killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, calling again for a halt to military actions.

The killing was "a serious violation of Iran's sovereignty and security, a trampling on the aims and principles of the UN Charter and the basic norms of international relations", Beijing's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"China firmly opposes and strongly condemns this," it added, calling for an "immediate halting of military operations".

The condemnation came just after Chinese state media reported a phone call between Beijing's top diplomat Wang Yi and Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov.

During the conversation, which state news agency Xinhua said was initiated by Lavrov, Wang said the "blatant killing of a sovereign leader and the incitement of regime change" by the US and Israel was "unacceptable".

China is "highly concerned" that the "situation in the Middle East could be pushed into a dangerous abyss", Wang told Lavrov, according to Xinhua.

"The international community must send a definite and clear message opposing the world's regression to the law of the jungle," Wang

said. Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday called the killing "a cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law". At least one Chinese citizen has been "injured" in the strikes and "some temporary travellers are stranded", Beijing's foreign ministry said late yesterday.

The statement did not provide details on the number, physical condition or location of affected Chinese nationals in the region.

Beijing has in recent days urged its citizens in Iran to evacuate from the country "as soon as possible".

Reiterating those calls yesterday, the foreign ministry said Chinese passport holders could leave Iran on visa-free land routes into Azerbaijan, Armenia and Türkiye.

Indonesia flag carrier suspends flights to and from Doha

Garuda Indonesia has temporarily suspended flights to and from Doha "until further notice", the company said in a statement, following US-Israel airstrikes and Iran's retaliation. "Garuda Indonesia continues to actively co-ordinate with aviation authorities

and relevant stakeholders to monitor the evolving situation," the company said in a statement yesterday. The airline's other international routes continue to operate normally, Garuda said, adding that it did not "traverse any airspace affected by the conflict". (AFP)

Qatar Airways customer service in Bali



Stranded passengers report to Qatar Airways customer service at I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport after flights to Doha, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi were cancelled in Kuta, Bali, Indonesia, yesterday. (Reuters)

N Korea condemns 'illegal' US-Israel attacks on Iran

AFP
Seoul

North Korea condemned yesterday the ongoing United States and Israeli attack on Iran as an "illegal act of aggression", claiming it had shown Washington's "rogue" nature.

The military campaigns against Iran by the two states constitute "an illegal act of aggression and the most despicable form of viola-

tion of sovereignty in their nature from A to Z", a spokesperson for the North's foreign ministry said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

"The DPRK condemns in the strongest tone the shameless rogue act of the US and Israel," the official said, using the initials for the North's official name.

Pyongyang said the United States and Israel chose to "abuse military muscle in order to realise their selfish and hegemonic ambition".

North Korea and the United States are longtime adversaries but Washington has mounted a push to revive high-level talks with Pyongyang in recent months, eyeing a potential summit between US President Donald Trump and the North's Kim Jong-un this year.

After largely ignoring those overtures for months, Kim said this week that the two nations could "get along" if Washington accepted Pyongyang's nuclear status.

South Korea calls for resuming dialogue with Pyongyang

AFP
Seoul

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung called yesterday for dialogue with North Korea to resume, after Pyongyang last week shunned the prospect of diplomacy with its neighbour.

Since taking office in June, a dovish Lee has sought to mend ties with the nuclear-armed North, which reaffirmed its anti-Seoul approach during a party meeting last week.

"As my administration has repeatedly made clear, we respect the North's system and will neither engage in any type of hostile acts, nor pursue any form of unification by absorption," Lee said in a speech marking the anniversary of a historical campaign against Japan's colonial rule.

"We will also continue our efforts to resume dialogue with the



South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung speaks during a ceremony marking the 107th anniversary of the March 1st Independence Movement Day in Seoul yesterday. (AFP)

North," he said. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un last week

dashed hopes of a diplomatic thaw with Seoul, describing its

overtures as "clumsy, deceptive farce and a poor work".

Speaking at the party congress in Pyongyang, Kim said North Korea has "absolutely no business dealing with South Korea, its most hostile entity, and will permanently exclude South Korea from the category of compatriots".

But he also said the North could "get along well" with the US if Washington acknowledges its nuclear status.

Speculation has mounted over whether US President Donald Trump will seek a meeting with Kim during planned travels to China.

Last year, Trump said he was "100 percent" open to a meeting.

Previous Trump-Kim summits during the US president's first term fell apart after the pair failed to agree over sanctions relief — and what nuclear concessions North Korea might make in return.

Iran welcomes Indonesia's mediation offer with US

Iran's embassy in Jakarta said yesterday it welcomed Indonesia's offer to mediate between Washington and Tehran, following US and Israeli strikes against Iran.

Indonesia's foreign ministry said on Saturday that President Prabowo Subianto was willing to travel to Tehran to carry out mediation if agreed by both parties.

The Iranian embassy welcomes "the readiness of the President of the Republic of Indonesia to mediate in this conflict", the mission said in a statement.

The embassy also "emphasised the importance of taking a firm stance by Indonesian officials in condemning the aggression and crimes of the US and the Zionist regime of Israel".

Iranian state television confirmed the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday, hours after US President Donald Trump said he had been killed.

The confirmation came after the US and Israel launched waves of air strikes on Saturday against targets in Iran, prompting retaliation by the Islamic republic.

Trump said yesterday that Washington would hit Iran with "force that has never been seen before" if it retaliated against US and Israeli strikes.

'Unofficial' talks on plastic pollution treaty begin in Japan

AFP
Tokyo

Delegates from around 20 countries are holding three days of "informal" talks in Japan from Sunday aimed at salvaging efforts towards a landmark global treaty on plastic pollution.

Supposedly final talks in South Korea in 2024 towards an agreement failed, and a renewed effort in Geneva last August likewise collapsed in overtime.

A Japanese environment ministry official said that the "informal" closed-door meeting among "working-level officials" through Tuesday was not expected to result in any official announcement.

"Japan is in a position of pushing for progress on the issue, and so is hosting the meeting," the official told AFP without wishing to be named.

She added that "little progress" has been made since August, other than the election in early February of Chile's chief climate negotiator Julio Cordano as chairman.

"Plastic pollution is a planetary

problem that affects everyone: every country, every community and every individual," Cordano warned after being elected.

"If we don't take concerted action, it will get much worse in the coming decades. A treaty is urgently needed," he said.

More than 400mn tonnes of plastic are produced globally each year, with half for single-use items.

A large bloc of states wants bold action such as curbing plastic production, while a smaller clutch of oil-producing states wants to focus more narrowly on waste management.

Countries expected to be present in Tokyo include big oil producers like Saudi Arabia, Russia and the United States as well as islands states Antigua and Barbuda and Palau, plus China, India and the European Union.

The UN's environment chief told AFP in an interview in October that a global treaty remains "totally doable".

"No-one has walked away and said, 'this is just too hopeless, we're giving up,'" United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) executive director Inger Andersen said.

Protest over US-Israel strikes on Iran in Seoul



Activists chant slogans during a rally to condemn the joint US-Israel strikes on Iran, in front of US embassy in Seoul, South Korea, yesterday. (Reuters)

Thousands protest in Indian Kashmir at death of Khamenei

AFP
Srinagar

Several thousand protesters joined street demonstrations in Indian-administered Kashmir yesterday to protest against the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei after strikes by the US and Israel.

Protesters holding red, black, and yellow flags converged on the main square in the heart of Srinagar, the main city of Indian Kashmir.

Many of them chanted anti-Israel and anti-US slogans during the emotionally charged but largely peaceful gathering.

"This day we are all very heavy hearted. We are mourning our beloved leader who was martyred," Syed Towfeeq, 40, told AFP.

"We all have a message for the (US President Donald) Trump... We will always stand against your oppression.

"If you think that you have martyred our beloved leader, you are in an illusion... You cannot oppress while we, the sons of Khamenei, are alive."

Another protester, Ishfaq Wani, 43, urged Muslim countries to unite "under one flag".



Protesters gather during an anti-US and Israel protest in Srinagar yesterday. (AFP)

Similar protests were held in other places across Kashmir and other parts of India.

Omar Abdullah, chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir state, said he was "deeply concerned" about the developments in Iran.

He also urged protesters to remain calm and "avoid any ac-

tions that could lead to tension or unrest". "We must also ensure that those who are mourning in Jammu and Kashmir are allowed to grieve peacefully," he said on X.

Iranian state television reported Khamenei's death in the early hours of Sunday, broadcasting archive images with a black banner.

Blast at India explosives factory kills 17

AFP
New Delhi

A blast at an explosives factory killed at least 17 people and injured 18 others yesterday, officials in the western Indian state of Maharashtra said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the accident was "deeply distressing" and wished a speedy re-

covery to the survivors.

Maharashtra state chief minister Devendra Fadnis called the incident "extremely unfortunate and tragic" in a post on X.

The accident happened in Nagpur, about 800km (500 miles) from state capital Mumbai.

"Rescue operations have been accelerated, and so far, 17 people have lost their lives," Fadnis said, adding 18 others were injured.

An investigation has been ordered into the incident.

On Saturday, 21 people were killed in an explosion at a firecracker factory in the southeastern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh.

Industrial accidents are common in India, often due to disregard for safety requirements and lax enforcement. Last year, a firework factory explosion in western India killed 21 people.

India opens first semiconductor assembly and test facility

AFP
New Delhi

India inaugurated its first semiconductor assembly and test facility on Saturday, a milestone in the government's push to reduce dependence on foreign chipmakers and stake a claim in a sector dominated by China.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi opened US firm Micron Technology's Semiconductor Assembly, Test and Packaging unit in his home state of Gujarat, hailing the "dawn of a new era" for India's technology ambitions.

"When young Indians look back in the future, they will see this decade as the turning point in our tech future," Modi told the

event, which was broadcast on his official YouTube channel.

The plant will convert advanced semiconductor wafers from Micron's global network into finished memory and storage products.

India's semiconductor market has expanded from \$38bn in 2023 to an estimated \$45-50 bn in 2024-25, with government targets of up to \$110 bn by 2030.

New Delhi is currently developing 10 chip projects worth more than \$18 bn, including two cutting-edge 3-nanometre design facilities in the cities of Noida and Bengaluru.

Modi said at least three other semiconductor projects would begin production soon.

"India, which is known for

software, is now also building its identity in hardware," he said.

The prime minister linked the launch to deepening technological cooperation with Washington, noting India's entry into the US-led Pax Silica alliance focused on artificial intelligence, critical minerals and supply-chain security — areas where China holds considerable sway.

"The entire world wants to secure these supply chains which are key for humanity's future," Modi said.

The US ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, said the opening marked "India's entry into the global semiconductor supply chain as a manufacturer nation".

"This is just the beginning," Gor said.

India likely to see above-average temperatures in March

India is likely to experience above-average temperatures across most regions in March following a warmer-than-usual February, the weather office said on Saturday. Both maximum and minimum

temperatures are expected to remain above average in most areas during March, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, director-general of the India Meteorological Department, said. (Reuters)

UK says US must set out legal basis for Iran strikes

Missiles fired in 'direction of Cyprus': UK

Reuters, AFP
London

Britain's Defence Secretary John Healey yesterday declined to explicitly back strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran, saying it was for the US to "set out the legal basis of the action it took".

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in the air strikes on Saturday, Iran's state media has confirmed.

Healey told the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg that Britain played no part in the strikes, but it did share the aim of the United States and other allies in the region that Iran should never have a nuclear weapon.

Asked if he believed the strikes were within international law, Healey said: "It is for the US to set out the legal basis of the action that it took".

Healey said Iran was retaliating in an increasingly indiscriminate way, targeting civilian airports and hotels as well as military bases.

"We have strengthened the UK defences in the region, we are active in regional defence operations," he told Sky News.

He said UK aircraft were operating from bases in Qatar and Cyprus and were intercepting drone attacks on bases and allies.



Britain's Defence Secretary John Healey appears on the BBC's programme, Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg in London, yesterday. (Reuters)

It was a "serious and deteriorating situation", he said, and there was a rising risk of "indiscriminate retaliatory attacks".

He cited two missiles fired in the direction of Cyprus, although he added: "We don't believe they were targeted at Cyprus".

He said yesterday that "Iranian indiscriminate retaliatory attacks" to US-Israeli strikes included "two ballistic missiles fired in the direction of Cyprus", but which were likely not "targeted" at the Mediterranean island.

"We had two ballistic missiles fired in the direction of Cyprus," John Healey told the BBC, noting UK warplanes were involved in "defensive" actions in the region, operating from the UK's air base on the island and from a base in Qatar.

"Now we are pretty sure they weren't targeted at Cyprus, but nevertheless it demonstrates how our bases, our personnel, military and civilians at the moment are at risk," he said, without providing further details about the missiles and any interception of them.

Healey revealed the previously undisclosed missile incidents as pointing to "a really serious and deteriorating situation" in the Middle East and the "rising risks of increasing Iranian indiscriminate retaliatory attacks".

"It's an example of how there is a very real and rising threat from a regime that is lashing out widely across the region, and that requires us to act. It requires us to act defensively," he told Sky News in a separate interview yesterday.

"Alongside the Americans, we've stepped up our defensive forces in the Middle East. We're flying those sorties. We're taking down the drones that are menacing either our bases, our people or our allies," Healey said.

Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides said British Prime Minister Keir Starmer had called him to discuss regional developments.

"(Starmer) confirmed clearly and unequivocally that Cyprus was not a target," Christodoulides said on X.

"We are maintaining direct communication. All relevant authorities are fully engaged and monitoring developments closely."

UK urges citizens in Middle East 'shelter in place'

The UK Foreign Office yesterday urged British citizens in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates to "shelter in place" amid the escalating conflict in the Middle East. The Foreign Office "now advises against all but

essential travel to Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE", it said on X in its latest update. "If you are a British national in those countries, you should shelter in place and register your presence," the ministry added. (AFP)

Anti-US and Israel protest in Dhaka



Activists hold posters of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during an anti-US and Israel protest in Dhaka yesterday. (AFP)

UK father fights for tech justice after daughter's death

AFP
London

The father of British teenager Molly Russell, who took her own life after viewing pro-suicide content online, hopes a documentary about her death will inspire change.

The film — *Molly vs the Machines* — about his 14-year-old daughter will "bring back some of the grief", Ian Russell acknowledged.

But in an interview with AFP he said it will highlight how the tragedy was not isolated, and "there's a real hope that it will become part of a conversation that might help bring about change".

The documentary, which premieres in British cinemas from March 1 and airs on the UK's Channel 4 on March 5, recounts his quest to hold "digital systems designed for profit" accountable for his loss, according to Russell.

Perhaps surprisingly, he opposes an outright social media ban for children, arguing "getting the platforms to change is actually much more effective".

The bereaved father is also seeking an end to impunity for big tech, which he says purposefully targets vulnerable people with addictive algorithms feeding them harmful content for monetary gain.

'Baffling'

Molly took her own life in 2017, with a coroner concluding five years later that she had died from an act of self-harm while suffering from the "negative effects of on-line content".

The inquest into her death heard that, of the 16,300 posts Molly saved, shared or liked on Instagram in the six-month period before her death, 2,100 related to depression, self-harm or suicide.

Her engagement with pro-suicide content increased towards

the end of her life, until "this intelligent, caring, beautiful person had been persuaded she was worthless", her father said.

"How Molly of all people could ever have been convinced of that, for those of us lucky enough to have known her, is just baffling," he added.

Research published in October by the Molly Rose Foundation, a suicide prevention charity founded and chaired by Russell, showed 37% of children aged 13-17 had seen at least one type of high-risk content relating to suicide, self-harm, depression or eating disorders during the week they were surveyed.

According to the data, which was collected before child safety obligations of the UK's landmark Online Safety Act became law, 27% of those children said they had viewed such content at least 10 times that week.

Tougher laws

The foundation has welcomed



File photo of Ian Russell. (AFP)

legislation put forward by UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government.

It called a decision to ban AI chatbots from generating illegal or harmful content — a loophole exposed by sexualised deepfakes created by X's AI chatbot Grok — a "welcome downpayment".

But it said the Online Safety Act, which legally obliges tech

companies to better safeguard children and adults online, could go further.

The law should require greater transparency from platforms and use separate age limits for different tools — such as AI chatbots.

The foundation argues that would push companies to offer fewer high-risk services and make platforms safer.

It is also calling for "fundamentally repurposed" algorithms that promote healthy content from trusted sources instead of "harmful and toxic material".

And it advocates for better digital education at schools to enable young people to "critically reflect" on online content.

Russell favours this two-pronged approach over a social media ban for children, pointing out that Australia's under-16s block only covers 10 platforms and might push minors to more dangerous fringe sites.

Youngsters might find ways to

bypass the rules, he added, while those turning 16 will enter an "unregulated" space.

'Stand up'

Concerns are only deepened by the impression that "tech barons" like Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg and X owner Elon Musk are above the law, according to Russell.

He sees glimmers of hope, however. Zuckerberg recently addressed the safety of his platforms before a jury and under oath in an unprecedented California social media addiction trial.

And in January, Britain's media regulator Ofcom opened a probe into X for failing to meet its safety obligations. It is also investigating X and xAI — which developed Grok — over whether they complied with personal data law over sexualised deepfakes.

"If leaders are brave enough to stand up and lock antlers with the barons of big tech, then change will happen," Russell said.



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GULF TIMES

Restaurant hiring in US surges as spending rises

On paper, American consumers spent last year tightening their belts, and even retail heavyweights stumbled.

But sit-down restaurants and some drive-through chains buzzed with patrons seeking a special treat or cheap comfort food. Their upbeat sales made the US restaurant industry a rare bright spot for jobs, with restaurant payrolls ticking up 1% last year, adding about 108,000 jobs, according to the Bureau of Labour Statistics.

In contrast, the overall US economy added 181,000 non-farm jobs in 2025, marking the weakest annual payroll growth in 20 years outside a recession year.

Success among restaurants was not evenly spread, though. Corporate filings show that eateries such as Brinker's Chili's, Yum Brands' Taco Bell and fast-growing coffee chain Dutch Bros lured customers by aggressively marketing bundled deals, leaning into digital innovation and limited-time offers, and focusing on high-margin, Instagrammable food.

But previous darlings like Chipotle and Cava were hurt by what analysts call the "slop-bowl fatigue" — growing weariness among younger consumers with high-priced, customisable grain or salad bowls.

Tempe, Arizona-based Dutch Bros and its franchisees added roughly 8,000 employees in the last two years, a 33% increase, the company said.

"We have a healthy pipeline of growth," CEO Christine Barone told Reuters after the company's earnings in February. The brand, which serves customisable beverages, is a hit with younger consumers, Barone said.

A similar story is playing out at another chain that, like Dutch Bros, sells more treats than meals.

Ice cream chain Whit's Frozen Custard has grown its payroll by up to 40% a year for the past two years, said owner Bill Aseere, to keep up with rapid growth. It now has stores in 93 locations across 10 states and some 15 to 20 employees per store. Amanda Wang, co-founder of fast-growing Chinese beverage chain Ningji Lemon Tea — part of a tidal wave of Chinese tea brands coming to the US — said her chain's new restaurants in the US were buoyed by demand among price-weary consumers for affordable indulgences.

Demand for cheap indulgences boosted growth at beverage chains, sit-down restaurants

Tea "offers that little bit of happiness," she said. As a whole, the restaurant industry grew payrolls even as it weathers depressed traffic and rising labour costs, analysts say, thanks in part to menu price increases. Menu prices at restaurants grew 4.1% in 2025 compared to grocery inflation of 2.3%, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis. A deeper look at 2025 payroll data shows the difference in fortunes between types of restaurants: staff headcount at snack and non-alcoholic beverage restaurants grew 3.6% in 2025 and those at sit-down restaurants rose 1%. But fast-food payrolls grew only 0.4%, while cafeterias and buffet payrolls shrank 3.9%. "At the end of the day, people want go out to eat and celebrate those big occasions," said Chad Moutray, an economist at the National Restaurant Association, referring to resilient spending at sit-down restaurants.

"Consumers might be pulling back from vacations, but they still prioritise eating out." The payroll data and Moutray's comments underscore what the industry calls the "lipstick effect" — consumers tightened their budgets, cancelling expensive trips and postponing big-ticket purchases, but treated themselves to an indulgent meal, coffee or dessert.

Brinker's reported 23% growth in its hourly restaurant staff between fiscal years 2024 and 2025, according to SEC filings, though it indicated that a growing share of its employees were part-time. Darden, the parent company of sit-down restaurants like Olive Garden and LongHorn Steakhouse, increased staff for fiscal 2025 by about 3.8%. Most national restaurant chains are franchised and do not report total employment figures among franchisees, but Chipotle and Starbucks, which operate the majority of their own stores, reported slight declines in total headcount for fiscal year 2025. While cascades of tariff announcements have forced other industries to raise prices and reroute sourcing, restaurant owners have only faced the tariffs impacting narrow categories like cup packaging and Chinese Sichuan peppers. — Reuters

REYNOLD
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02-03-2026



What AI windfall? Debt will still weigh on big economies

By Yoruk Bahceli
Reuters

An AI productivity boom, if it materialises, may help buy major economies more time to clean up their strained public finances, economists say, although it won't do the heavy lifting.

The stakes couldn't be higher. Debt is above 100% of output across most rich economies and set to rise given ageing population costs, interest bills and pressure to spend more on defence and climate change.

US policymakers are already optimistic on AI-driven growth and economists say the technology has the potential to shake the world out of a post-2008 productivity slump by boosting workers' efficiency and freeing them to focus on more productive tasks.

Higher economic growth would make government spending and debt loads potentially more manageable and help fend off scrutiny from bond vigilantes.

To sketch the impact on public finances if AI does boost labour productivity over the long term, the OECD and three high-profile economists shared early estimates with Reuters.

Filiz Unsal, the OECD's deputy director of economic policy and research, said an AI productivity surge, were it to increase employment, would lower debt across OECD countries, from the US to Germany and Japan, by 10 percentage points from the roughly 150% of output the organisation expects in 2036.

That would still be a sharp rise from 110% currently.

Much will depend on whether job creation eventually outweighs any job losses from automation, as well as whether firms pass on higher profits by raising wages

- AI productivity boom would slow developed economy debt growth - OECD, economists project
- Demographics remain the biggest challenge
- Tax and spend implications uncertain
- S&P not forecasting major impact on public finances yet

and how governments manage their overall spending.

In the United States, two of the other economists projected debt rising more slowly to roughly 120% over the next decade from around 100% of output now in their best-case scenarios. One saw little change.

"Productivity is like magic... It helps the fiscal dynamics dramatically," said Idanna Appio, one of the economists, who was previously at the New York Federal Reserve and is now a fund manager at First Eagle Investment Management.

"But our fiscal problems are well beyond what productivity can fix," Appio said.

DEMOGRAPHICS TO LIMIT AI IMPACT

For now, ratings agency S&P assumes no major public finance impact by the end of the decade.

"The one (path) that the (US) administration is hoping for would be you get saved by the bell," said Mark Patrick, head of macro and country risk at Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America, but added: that isn't "something we can set our clocks by."

The economists did not provide estimates for other countries. However, AI could boost productivity in Britain in line with the US, but by half as much in Italy and Japan due to lower adoption rates and smaller sectors that could benefit from AI, OECD research has found.

Ultimately, fiscal dynamics will determine how much AI-driven

productivity can counterbalance rising debt. Demographics is the biggest challenge.

"The root of the debt issue is with ageing demographics and the entitlements that are tied to that," said Kevin Khang, who heads global economic research at Vanguard, the world's second-largest asset manager.

Addressing it "requires getting the fiscal house in order and (AI is) just buying us the time," he said.

Khang sees a scenario where AI boosts US growth to average 3% through 2040 as most likely. The Fed sees potential growth around 2%.

He estimates higher growth and tax revenues would slow US debt growth to around 120% of output by the late 2030s. That's much lower than the 180% he foresees — higher than others — if AI disappoints, growth slows and market pressure raises borrowing costs.

Bond investors have been quick to punish governments for fiscal largesse ever since bond yields rose sharply after the pandemic across rich economies.

Appio said declining US immigration added to the demographic challenge.

"The labour shock offsets any (AI) productivity growth," she said, but added she would be much more worried without AI.

UNCERTAINTY AROUND TAX, SPENDING

Economy-wide productivity gains should raise revenues. But if AI reduces employment

or competition, and profits and capital — often taxed less than labour — see modest benefit, revenues could disappoint.

On the spending side, public sector efficiency gains could help costs, but the risk is spending rising alongside growth.

That's why Kent Smetters, director of the University of Pennsylvania's Penn Wharton Budget Model analysis group, expects a tiny impact on US debt in a decade.

Even if growth is higher than he currently expects, that would still have little impact on curbing social security, which makes up a fifth of federal spending, because claims are indexed to average wages, Smetters said. Other labour costs the government covers would also rise if productivity raises private sector wages, he added.

"It's very important to see whether wages are going to increase," the OECD's Unsal said, adding that wage growth was more likely if AI doesn't increase employment.

There are of course debt costs, which will depend on whether productivity raises real interest rates, a debate already emerging at the Fed, and how long growth outpaces any rise, economists said.

Clearly, they don't have crystal balls. A shock could quickly upend this debate. A recession could mean "the AI boom may not come quick enough before the market gets nervous about the fiscal trajectory," said Barclays' global head of economics research Christian Keller.



Artificial Intelligence (AI) letters and robot hand are placed on a computer motherboard in this illustration. (Reuters)

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Explosions heard in Kabul as conflict with Pakistan intensifies

Explosions were heard in the Afghan capital Kabul yesterday, AFP journalists said, with the Taliban government saying that they were responding to aerial Pakistan attacks.

A spokesman for Afghanistan's defence ministry said that "air defence strikes were carried out against Pakistani aircraft in Kabul".

Months of cross-border clashes have flared again since Thursday, when Afghanistan launched an offensive along the frontier, with Pakistani forces hitting back on the border and from the skies.

The renewed violence came after Afghan residents and officials said troops from both countries had been battling along the border, with the fighting coming alongside multiple strikes including the former US air base at Bagram.

Earlier, residents in multiple areas bordering Pakistan told AFP of fighting, while the Afghan government said three people were killed overnight in drone strikes and shelling.

North of the capital Kabul, air strikes "hit Bagram air base", according to a resident who AFP is not naming for security reasons.

A second resident said "it was very strong, which shook the area. There was smoke and fire coming out north of the airport", describing the dawn raid as "very terrifying".

The provincial spokesman, Fazl ul-Rahim Maskin Yar, said Pakistani jets "attempted to bomb" the base, but there were no casualties or damage.

Pakistan acknowledged bombing key cities on Friday, including Kabul and Kandahar, which is home to Afghanistan's supreme leader, but has not commented on yesterday's strikes.

The presence of security forces was boosted in central Kabul yesterday evening, with increased checks on cars, an AFP journalist said.

Before dawn, AFP journalists in the capital had heard an explosion followed by successive gunfire, with Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid saying anti-aircraft fire was being shot at Pakistani planes.

Drones were also heard by an AFP journalist in the border province of Khost, while in Jalalabad city - between Kabul and the border - an AFP photographer saw a jet.

The Afghan government's deputy spokesman, Hamdullah Fitrat, said that Pakistani fire had killed 36 civilians across multiple provinces since Thursday, which Islamabad has not commented on.

At Torkham border crossing - a key gateway for Afghans returning from Pakistan - overnight fighting was reported by the Nangarhar province information department.

The spokesman for a military unit reported heavy fighting overnight in Paktia province.

Afghan officials said Thursday's border offensive was a response to earlier air strikes that killed civilians, which Pakistan said targeted militants.

Islamabad accuses Afghanistan of failing to act against militant groups that carry out attacks in Pakistan, which the Taliban government rejects. - AFP

23 protestors killed in Pakistan as emotions run high after Iran attack

Reuters/AFP
Karachi

Demonstrations against the US-Israeli bombing campaign in Iran turned violent in Pakistan yesterday with at least 23 protesters killed, including 10 in the port of Karachi where security guards at the US consulate fired on demonstrators who breached the outer wall.

Earlier, a Karachi hospital toll seen by AFP listed nine people as having died from gunshot wounds.

Eleven were killed in the northern city of Skardu where the crowd torched a UN office, and two died in Islamabad.

Protesters in Karachi chanted "Death to

America! Death to Israel!" at the consulate, where Reuters reporters heard gunfire and saw tear gas fired in surrounding streets.

"We don't need anything in Pakistan that is linked with the US," a protester, Sabir Hussain, told AFP.

Consulate security staff opened fire at a crowd who were pushed back after breaching the outer security layer, said Sukhdev Assardas Hemnani, a local government spokesman.

The demonstrators also set a vehicle ablaze outside the main gate and clashed with police, he said.

"We are in constant touch with consulate officials. They are all safe," Hemnani added. The US embassy in Islamabad said in a post on X that it was monitoring reports of demonstrations and advised US citizens to

observe good personal security practices.

The consulate in Karachi and embassy in Islamabad did not respond to Reuters requests for further comment.

Thirty-four people were injured, police said.

Karachi's Civil Hospital said all those killed and injured were hit with gunshots.

The provincial government of Sindh ordered an inquiry.

Skardu, where the UN building was set ablaze, is in Gilgit Baltistan in the north.

"A large number of protesters have gathered outside the UN office and burned down the building," local government spokesperson Shabbir Mir told Reuters.

The figure of 11 killed was provided by a government official and an intelligence official, both on condition of anonymity.

Protesters also took to the streets in other parts of Pakistan.

In the central city of Lahore, police said hundreds gathered outside the US consulate. There were some small-scale clashes with police, who fired tear gas.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi urged protesters to remain peaceful.

"We stand with you," he said, adding that every Pakistani was as grief-stricken as the people of Iran.

In the capital Islamabad, all roads leading to the Red Zone, which houses diplomatic missions were blocked to traffic, police said.

Police fired tear gas and live bullets when thousands of protesters tried to march toward the diplomatic enclave, killing two and injuring nearly 10, two officials said on condition of anonymity.

Belgium intercepts, seizes Russian 'shadow fleet' tanker

AFP/Reuters
Brussels

Belgium said yesterday that its special forces had boarded and seized an oil tanker from the "shadow fleet" Russia uses to circumvent Western sanctions over the war in Ukraine, in an overnight operation.

The Belgian government said the vessel was intercepted in the North Sea, with aerial support

from French military helicopters.

Defence Minister Theo Francken said the tanker was escorted to the port of Zeebrugge after being intercepted in Belgium's exclusive economic zone.

Prosecutors identified the ship, which was said to be on its way back to Russia, as the "Ethera".

A spokeswoman for the Belgian federal prosecutor's office said the ship captain, a Russian national, was being questioned by investigators.

The tanker flew the flag of Guinea, but an on-board inspection confirmed suspicions that it was sailing under a false flag, the office said, adding that authorities have opened a criminal investigation.

"If a ship sails under a false flag, this means that it does not comply with several international regulations," the statement added.

French President Emmanuel Macron confirmed on X that his country's naval forces assisted in the operation, calling it a "ma-

jeur blow" to Russia's so-called "shadow fleet".

The Belgian defence ministry said the seized tanker was on the European Union's sanctions list.

The EU has blacklisted hundreds of vessels in a bid to sap Moscow's war chest.

"Sanctions only matter if they are enforced. Today, we enforced them," Foreign Minister Maxime Prevoz, who is also Belgium's deputy prime minister, said on X.

The operation was carried out

alongside Belgium's G7, Nordic and Baltic partners and in co-ordination with France, he added.

Russia's embassy in Belgium said it had not been officially notified of the tanker's detention, nor informed about the nationality of its crew.

"The embassy is currently taking the necessary steps to determine whether there are Russian citizens on board and to ensure their legal rights if confirmed," it said in a Telegram post.

Activists pressure Milan Fashion Week over fur

AFP
Milan

Animal activists have been turning up the heat on Milan Fashion Week to adopt a fully fur-free policy, with dozens of protesters demonstrating outside the Giorgio Armani show yesterday.

Although the Armani Group went fur-free a decade ago, activists hope the powerful luxury company can pressure the National Chamber of Italian Fashion (CNMI), which organises fashion week, to disallow brands which use fur from participating.

Yesterday's demonstration was one of several protests carried out this week in Milan by international anti-fur activists organised under the Coalition to Abolish the Fur Trade (CAFT).

Behind a barricade and large banner saying "Milan Fashion Week Go Fur-Free", activists with a megaphone yelled "Shame on you for what you do!" as Armani guests left the show.

Use of fur in the global fashion industry has dramatically fallen in recent years due to concerns about animal cruelty, changing trends and new synthetic alternatives.

However, there remain notable holdouts, such as Fendi, owned by French conglomerate LVMH, a storied Italian luxury brand whose roots are in fur.

Pierre-Emmanuel Angeloglou, the chief executive of Fendi, sits on the board of directors of the CNMI along with



Protesters hold signs reading 'Ban fur' ahead of the Giorgio Armani Women's Ready-to-Wear Fall/Winter 2026-27 collection fashion show as part of the Milan Fashion Week, in Milan yesterday. - AFP

Right: A model presents a creation for Giorgio Armani for the Women's Ready-to-Wear Fall/Winter 2026-27 collection fashion show in Milan. - AFP

brands like Dolce & Gabbana, Prada and Ermenegildo Zegna, which have already rejected fur.

Campaigners hope the anti-fur designers can convince Milan Fashion Week to ban fur, as London and New York have done.

Smaller fashion weeks, including in Berlin, Copenhagen and Amsterdam, have also gone fur-free.

"It won't be Fendi that helps us reach our goal, because they have no interest in pushing this issue forward, but other brands might be able to contribute," Alberto Bianchi, 25, one of the protest's organisers, told AFP.

The CNMI did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

The activists had demonstrated on Wednesday outside Fendi's

Milan headquarters where its runway show took place.

Inside, newly seated designer Maria Grazia Chiuri showed a collection that included "re-modelled" furs, or old furs reworked.

Bianchi said that focus on recycling could possibly be seen as "a step forward" but cautioned that LVMH is still actively investing in the use of fur.

"I see it as a one-off move maybe to do a bit of greenwashing," he said. "As long as we still have fur farms in Europe and we still have the possibility of importing it, it's a gesture that doesn't change the underlying idea."

The coalition won a victory in late January when pressure cam-



paigned led to shipping giant DHL and cosmetics company Wella withdrawing as sponsors of Milan Fashion Week.

Later this month, the European Commission is expected to rule on a 2023 citizens' initiative that called on the EU to ban fur farms and the killing of animals such as mink, foxes, raccoon dogs or chinchillas solely for their pelts.

Activists cite the cruelty inherent in fur farming, in which the animals are crammed into tiny wire battery cages before being gassed or electrocuted.

Milan Fashion Week ends today, with focus now turning to Paris Fashion Week - which similarly does not have an anti-fur policy.

Overnight missile attacks on Ukraine hit 3-year high in February, AFP analysis shows

AFP
Kyiv

Russia fired more missiles at Ukraine in February than in any other month since at least the beginning of 2023 in overnight strikes, targeting Ukrainian energy infrastructure in particular, an AFP analysis showed yesterday.

Russian forces launched 288 missiles at Ukraine in February, an increase of around 113% compared to the 135 missiles launched in January, according to an AFP analysis of daily figures provided by the Ukrainian air force.

This is the highest number of missiles launched at night in a single month against Ukraine since Kyiv's air force started routinely publishing statistics at the beginning of 2023.

The previous record was set in October 2025, when, according to Kyiv, the Russian military launched 270 missiles at the country.

As the harshest winter in years gripped Ukraine, heating and power outages triggered by Russian strikes have plunged hundreds of thousands into cold and darkness, sparking the most dire energy crisis since the beginning of the invasion launched in February 2022.

Moscow has targeted the Ukrainian energy grid for the fourth consecutive winter, as part of a strategy aimed at weakening the Ukrainian civilian population, Kyiv and its allies said.

"Despite everything, Ukrainians made it through this difficult winter," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media as the country marked its traditional first day of spring on March 1.

"Over the three months of winter, Russians launched more than 14,670 guided aerial bombs, 738 missiles, and nearly 19,000 attack drones - most of them Russian-Iranian 'shaheds' - against our people," Zelensky said.

Across the country, rolling power cuts have remained in place to mitigate electricity shortages.

In 2024, the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague issued arrest warrants for top Russian army officials for the "war crime of causing excessive" harm to civilians by striking Ukrainian energy sites.

In February, Russia launched 5,059 long-range drones during its nighttime pummeling of Ukrainian cities and towns - an increase of around 13% compared to January.

In retaliation, Kyiv regularly sends its own drones to strike Russian oil depots and refineries in an attempt to cut off the key fossil fuel revenues that finance the Kremlin's war effort.

Cardinal 'found with phone' during secret conclave to elect Pope Leo

By Joshua McElwee
Reuters

The secret conclave that elected Pope Leo head of the Catholic Church last May was interrupted when one of the 133 cardinals involved was found carrying a cellphone, a massive security breach, a book released yesterday revealed.

As the clerics were preparing to take their first vote inside the Vatican's Sistine Chapel, which was fitted with jamming equipment to prevent outside communications, security officials picked up the signal of an active mobile connection.

The cardinals stared at each other incredulously, then one of the older clerics discovered he had a phone in his pocket and handed it over, according to *The Election of Pope Leo XIV*, a new book by two long-time Vatican correspondents.

The book does not name the cardinal or suggest he had any motive for keeping his phone, saying that the moment left him "disoriented and distressed".



Pope Leo XIV signs a soccer ball during a visit to a parish in Rome yesterday. - Reuters

The scene was "unimaginable even for a film and never before seen in the history of modern conclaves", wrote the authors, Gerard O'Connell and Elisabetta Pique.

One such film, the 2024 hit *Conclave*, imagined a tangled web of intrigues during the fictional selection of a pontiff.

Last year's unprecedented discovery of a phone was in its own

way more startling than anything portrayed in that movie, O'Connell told Reuters.

"Reality (was) better than fiction," he said.

Clerics taking part in a conclave take a vow not to communicate with the outside world and surrender their phones and all other communication devices for the duration of the proceedings, which can last for days.

The Vatican press office did not respond to a request for comment about the new book, which offers behind-the-scenes details of one of the world's most secretive elections.

The cardinals met in a two-day conclave from May 7-8 under an intense global spotlight to elect a successor to Pope Francis, who died in April after 12 years leading the 1.4bn-member church.

Much of the speculation at the time focused on the possibility that the cardinals would elect a new pontiff from Asia or Africa, given that the conclave was the most geographically diverse in history, with clerics from 70 countries taking part.

However, no candidate from those regions garnered much support, according to the book, which discloses details of the cardinals' votes for the first time based on information from interviews with participating clerics.

While it is strictly forbidden for cardinals to reveal details of the secret balloting at a conclave without permission from the future pope, it is common for journalists to slowly tease out infor-

mation from clerics in the years afterward.

Two candidates immediately emerged as frontrunners inside the conclave, the book said.

One was Italian Cardinal Pietro Parolin, a long-time Vatican official identified by many outlets as a leading favourite.

The other was US Cardinal Robert Prevost, a figure who was mostly unknown outside church circles but would emerge as Pope Leo, the first pontiff from the US.

On the first vote in the conclave, held in the evening of May 7, Prevost already received between 20-30 votes, an unusually large number, according to the book.

Philippine Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, who was also seen as a favourite going into the election, only ever received fewer than 10 votes in the conclave.

On the fourth ballot in the afternoon of May 8, Prevost won with 108 votes.

Tagle was sitting next to Prevost as the final vote was being tallied and offered the future pope a cough drop to soothe his throat, the book said.

QRCS boosts medical services in Sudan's River Nile State

The representation office of the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) in Sudan has completed comprehensive maintenance and rehabilitation works at the Jabalab Health Centre in River Nile State, with a view to supporting healthcare services and ensuring the continuity of essential medical care in Jabalab and neighbouring villages.

The three-phase project involved maintenance of premises and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) rehabilitation.

Some essential medical equipment was also procured, including a complete blood count (CBC) analyser, a renal function analysis meter, and a glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) analyser.

As part of the project, the centre was fully furnished with office furniture, chairs, cabinets, and hospital beds, which would improve operational efficiency and enable health care providers to better serve patients.

Dr Salah al-Din Daak, head of the QRCS's representation office in Sudan, visited the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS), held a meeting with its president Abdulrahman Belaid, and congratulated the new secretary-general, Ahmed al-Tayeb Solaiman, on his position.

The meeting discussed the bilateral technical agreement and the ongoing and planned projects.

They emphasised the importance of continued humanitarian co-ordination.

Regarding relocation to Khartoum, Dr Daak revealed plans to return to the capital in April.



QRCS secretary-general (Relief and International Development) Mohamed Bader al-Sada stressed that international health projects are important.

"Health is our true wealth in life," he stated. "Everyone must see a doctor for diagnosis and medical care. When illness strikes, it weakens the body, diminishes strength, and prevents one from going to work and practising one's normal life."

"That is why the QRCS allocates much of its humanitarian activities every year for supporting the health systems in the less fortunate countries, with a view to build-

ing the capacity of their health facilities, improving the quality of medical services, and expanding the outreach to remotely located and underserved communities," he added.

According to the 'Paths of Benevolence' guide issued by the QRCS as part of its "Keep Your Balance of Good Deeds Alive Ramadan Campaign 1447 AH", a total of 57 health projects will be implemented during 2026.

At a total cost of QR85,618,656, these projects will serve 2,008,713 beneficiaries in 11 countries: Palestine (Gaza and the

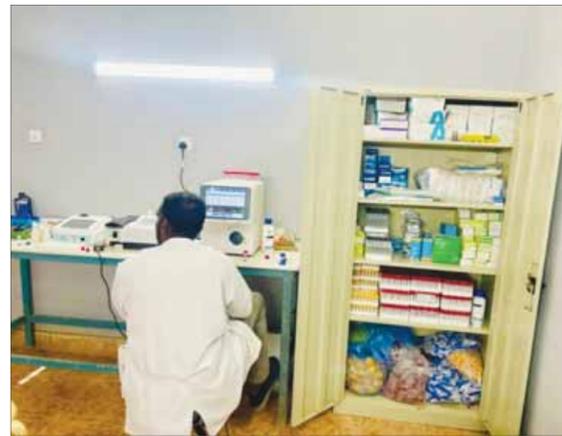
West Bank), Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Niger, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Jordan, and Mauritania.

In 2025, the QRCS implemented 76 health projects, totalling QR53,946,918, benefiting 2,010,460 people in 12 countries: Bangladesh, Palestine (Gaza and the West Bank), Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Mauritania, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Niger.

To make these projects a reality that helps improve public health and treat diseases in vulnerable communities, the QRCS welcomes donations from

charity payers via its website (<https://qrqs.qa/cc>), mobile app (<https://qrqs.qa/apps>), donor service (66666364), home donation collection (33998898), or bank transfer as follows: QNB (IBAN: QA21QNBA00000000850020196062), QIIB (IBAN: QA66QI-IB00000001111126666003), Al Rayan Bank (IBAN: QA18MA-FR00000000011199980003), Dukhan Bank (IBAN: QA-37BRWA000000000200000094340), or QIB (IBAN: QA-51QISB000000000110575190014).

● QRCS renovates Jabalab Health Centre to boost rural care
● Project enhances medical services for Sudan's remote communities



Qatar's retail sector shows resilience amid regional tensions, says LuLu top exec

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

Qatar's retail industry "continues to operate smoothly" despite regional tensions following Iran's coordinated missile attacks on Gulf countries, stated a top executive of LuLu, who ensured that food supplies and essential goods here "remain fully available."

Dr Mohamed Althaf, LuLu Group Global director, underscored Qatar's resilience, describing it as a "very resourceful country." However, he cautioned that "the only real threats are panic and misinformation, which can undermine any national strategy."

Dr Althaf acknowledged the seriousness of the situation, but at the same time, lauded Qatar's preparedness: "I would not say that everything is normal."

"However, historically, Qatar has demonstrated strong preparedness and effective defence capabilities. Over the last couple of days, we have witnessed this without any major casualties."

He also emphasised that this resilience has prevented disruptions in daily life and commercial activity. "Normally, in such situations, the movement of goods and personnel becomes difficult. But if you visit any commercial establishment now, you will see that operations remain normal and undisturbed."

"At present, I believe retail operations are continuing smoothly. Our supply chains are functioning, and anyone visiting a shop will find full access to essentials. Supplies have been fully maintained so far," reassured Dr Althaf



Dr Mohamed Althaf

during an interview with Gulf Times yesterday.

Highlighting logistics as the primary risk in times of geopolitical tension, Dr Althaf explained: "In any geopolitical tension, especially of this nature, the primary risk lies in logistics – shipping routes, freight, and transit timelines. These are areas we are closely monitoring, and we are preparing contingency plans wherever possible."

"It is well known that some of the countries involved are critical sources for Qatar. But our strategy and infrastructure are already in place. By infrastructure, I mean robust storage capacity and related facilities, which help mitigate risks."

While disruptions cannot be ruled out, Dr Althaf underscored the resilience of food supply chains, citing the Covid-19 pandemic, the Suez Canal crisis, or past tensions in the

Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea.

"These situations have shown that food supply chains are resilient. They recalibrate quickly. Unlike major shipments where security concerns can halt movement, food continues to flow. So, I am confident that, at least for now, we do not foresee any uncontrollable circumstances," Dr Althaf pointed out.

Dr Althaf shared with this paper excerpts from a letter that he communicated to his office yesterday, where he called for calmness and vigilance, and reassured the group's preparedness in addressing food supply and essential needs.

"At LuLu, we would like to reassure the community that our stores remain fully stocked, supply chains are operating normally, and we continue to operate 24 hours to ensure uninterrupted access to food and essential goods."

"We encourage everyone to remain calm and rely only on official sources of information. Qatar may be a small nation, but it has a big heart – and will take every measure to ensure that all residents and citizens are protected and cared for," it stated.

Reflecting on past experience, Dr Althaf explained to Gulf Times that the challenge during the Covid-19 pandemic in Qatar was "last-mile delivery and staffing – a problem that does not exist now."

He added: "Stores are full. Everyone here – residents and citizens alike – will be treated well without discrimination. We have historical examples to draw from. In Covid-19, everyone was cared for, and I am confident Qatar is capable of protecting all its people again."

PHCC gets GSAS recertification for all its health centres

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) continues to demonstrate national leadership in environmental sustainability and operational excellence through measurable improvements in facility management, operational performance, embedded-systems efficiency, and energy conservation.

A key milestone in this journey is the successful renewal and acquisition of the Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) certification for PHCC health centres under the second certification cycle, which is conducted every four years. The recertification framework evaluates performance across critical areas, including energy consumption, water efficiency, indoor environmental quality, and overall operational sustainability.

PHCC also holds a national record as the first organisation in Qatar to have all eligible buildings certified for GSAS compliance in 2021 by the Gulf Organisation for Research and Development (Gord). This achievement reflects a consistent, organisation-wide approach that embeds the sustainability principles across all PHCC facilities.

PHCC leadership reiterates that sustainability is a continuous social responsibility guided by accountability, transparency, and integrity and is closely aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030. By optimising system performance and reducing energy consumption, PHCC directly supports National priorities for responsible resource management and broader sustainability objectives.

PHCC reaffirms its commitment to advancing its facilities in line with leading international standards, strengthening healthcare service quality, and sustaining public trust.



QFA postpones all sports events until further notice

Qatar Football Association (QFA) revealed that all sports competitions, championships, and matches will be postponed starting today until further notice. In a statement on its official website, the QFA explained that it will announce the resumption of the championships on a later date through its official platforms. (QNA)

PHCC physician provides tips for children's health during Garangao

A family physician from Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), Dr Rand Salwan Abood, has highlighted that as families celebrate Garangao, it is essential to prioritise children's health, particularly regarding the high intake of sweets and nuts.

Garangao is a cherished traditional event in Qatar and the Gulf region, celebrated on the 15th night of Ramadan. It is a beautiful occasion where children, dressed in traditional attire, visit neighbours to collect sweets and nuts. This celebration honours children who have fasted the first half of the month and encourages them to complete the remaining days.

While the origins of the name are debated – ranging from being derived from the Arabic phrase "Qur-rat Al-Ayn" (delight of the eye) to representing the sound of children knocking on doors – the spirit of the event remains rooted in joy.

"In my practice as a family physician, I have observed an increase in cases of digestive upset, allergic reactions, and food poisoning during and immediately after Ga-



Dr Rand Salwan Abood

rangao," said Dr Abood. She suggests various tips such as moderation to limit the quantity of sweets consumed to prevent digestive issues such as diarrhoea, vomiting, or potential food poisoning.

According to the physician, sugar intake should be managed as excessive sugar consumption



contributes to dental cavities, hyperactivity, and long-term health risks like obesity. She advises not to offer nuts to children with known allergies as nuts can exacerbate skin allergies or asthma.

According to the physician,

people must avoid giving whole nuts to children under three years old to prevent choking. If offered, they should be finely ground and consumed under direct parental supervision, provided the child can chew and swallow safely.

She also said that good oral hygiene is crucial. Children should brush their teeth thoroughly after consuming sweets to prevent tooth decay. She suggested to replace highly processed sweets with homemade treats like

Maamoul or light cookies made with less sugar and choose fresh and dried fruits as they are excellent, nutrient-dense alternatives to sugary snacks.

Dr Abood advised to avoid colourful, highly processed candies containing artificial dyes, as they can negatively impact a child's health and behaviour and make sure to purchase nuts and sweets from reliable sources.

Prompt medical attention is necessary in situations such as choking by calling 999 immediately and providing first aid. She recommends that all parents complete a certified first-aid course provided by health institutions in Qatar.

"The 'golden rule' is balance. By practising moderation and making conscious, healthy choices, we can allow our children to enjoy the festivities safely. Garangao is more than just an event for collecting candy; it is a wonderful opportunity to foster family bonds, cultivate the spirit of generosity, and teach our children the importance of moderation and healthy habits," added Dr Abood.