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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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## QatarEnergy ceases LNG production

Owing to military attacks on QatarEnergy's operating facilities in Ras Laffan Industrial City and Mesaieed Industrial City in Qatar, QatarEnergy has ceased production of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and associated products. QatarEnergy values its relationships with all of its stakeholders and will continue to communicate the latest available information, a press note said.

## Food and water supply secure

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has moved to reassure the public that the country's food and water supplies remain fully secure, following inspection visits by ministerial teams to a number of production facilities across the country. Inspectors found factories operating at full capacity, with strategic stockpiles described as abundant and supply chains running smoothly to commercial outlets and points of sale. On-the-ground monitoring confirmed that transportation and distribution networks are functioning normally, with no disruption to the flow of goods reaching consumers. The ministry said it would maintain ongoing surveillance tours in co-ordination with factories and suppliers to safeguard market stability and bolster consumer confidence, adding that all food commodities are readily available across markets.

## Govt extends remote work

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

The General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers has announced an extension of remote working arrangements for employees across all ministries, government departments, and public bodies and institutions, effective immediately. The decision, which builds on a directive issued the previous day, will remain in force until further notice. It does not apply to personnel in the military, security and health sectors, nor to employees whose roles require a physical presence at their workplace. The General Secretariat urged both citizens and residents to rely solely on official sources for information and to adhere to all safety and security guidelines issued by the relevant authorities.

# Qatar shoots down two Iranian jets, intercepts drones, ballistic missiles

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

The Ministry of Defence announced yesterday that its armed forces had shot down two Iranian Sukhoi Su-24 fighter jets and intercepted a sweeping wave of missiles and drones targeting the country, as Iran struck critical national infrastructure in an unprecedented assault on the Gulf state.

The Qatar Amiri Air Force downed both aircraft as they approached from Iranian airspace, while ground-based air defences intercepted seven ballistic missiles. Five additional drones were brought down by the Air Force and Amiri Naval Forces after they were launched against multiple locations across the country. The ministry said all projectiles were intercepted before reaching their intended



targets, in line with operational plans activated immediately after the threats were detected, underlining the readiness of Qatar's layered defence architecture.

However, two drones that formed part of the broader Iranian attack did succeed in reaching their targets. The first struck a water tank owned by the Mesaieed Power Plant, while the second hit a power generation facility in the Ras Laffan Industrial City – the heavily fortified hub of Qatar's liquefied natural gas industry and a cornerstone of the national economy that supplies energy markets across Europe and Asia. **To Page 2**

## Interior minister reviews current developments

HE THE Minister of Interior, Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), and Chairman of the Civil Defence Council Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani chaired the council meeting yesterday, as part of the ongoing monitoring of current developments. The council listened to a number of briefings presented by the competent authorities, which discussed the levels of readiness for the strategic stock of food security, energy, education, environment and climate change, cybersecurity, in addition to the vital related sectors, within the framework of strengthening the national preparedness and readiness system and raising the efficiency of joint co-ordination. This meeting comes within the framework of keenness to raise the levels of preparedness and enhance co-ordination and integration between the concerned parties to support the security and safety system and preserve the vital interests of the state. **(QNA)**

## Shura Council condemns Iranian attack



Shura Council yesterday unanimously condemned the Iranian ballistic missile and drone attack on Qatari territory as a flagrant violation of national sovereignty. **Page 3**

## Joint statement slams attacks, commits resolve

In a show of collective resolve, Qatar joined Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, the UAE and the United States yesterday in issuing a strongly-worded joint statement condemning Iran's sweeping missile and drone attacks against multiple sovereign states. The co-ordinated response underscored the breadth of the coalition that has rallied against what the signatories described as dangerous and unjustified aggression – and signalled a united front in the face of what they warned was a serious threat to regional stability. The full text of the joint statement reads:

Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, the UAE, and the United States strongly condemn Iran's indiscriminate and reckless missile and drone attacks against sovereign territories across the region, including Bahrain, Iraq – including the Iraqi Kurdistan Region – Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. These unjustified strikes targeted sovereign territory, endangered civilian populations, and damaged civilian infrastructure. Iran's actions represent a dangerous escalation that violates the sovereignty of multiple states and threatens regional stability. **(QNA)**

## World leaders rally behind Qatar in calls with Amir

**UN chief, Russia, Italy, Hungary, Switzerland, Venezuela, Kosovo, Ethiopia, Maldives express solidarity**



IN the wake of Iran's attacks on Qatar, an outpouring of international solidarity reached Doha as heads of state and government from across the globe reached out to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani to express their support, condemn the aggression and reaffirm their countries' commitment to Qatar's security and stability. The calls reflected the breadth of Qatar's diplomatic relationships and a shared conviction that dialogue, de-escalation and diplomacy must guide the path forward.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received a phone call yesterday from Secretary-General of the United Nations António Guterres. The UN chief condemned the recent attacks on Qatar, describing them as a violation of the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and affirming Qatar's status as a strong and valued partner of the UN.

HH the Amir expressed his appreciation for the UN Secretary-General's positions and the UN efforts in promoting international

peace and security, stressing the importance of continuing diplomatic efforts to contain the crisis and prevent further escalation in the region.

Both sides emphasised the necessity of prioritising political dialogue and the diplomatic track as the best way to contain the current situation and preserve regional security and stability.

In this context, they discussed developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, international efforts to achieve a ceasefire, and the importance of intensifying efforts to halt the escalation, provide protection for civilians, and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip in light of the current challenges. **To Page 2**

## MoI: Stay indoors, avoid unnecessary movement

**Adhere to official info, residents advised**

By Ayman Adly  
Staff Reporter



THE Ministry of Interior has issued a series of fresh advisories calling on citizens and residents to remain indoors, avoid unnecessary movement and strictly follow official guidance amid what it described as exceptional circumstances in the region.

The ministry underlined that broad public co-operation with its instructions is vital to safeguarding lives and property and to ensuring that security and emergency services can operate without obstruction. In statements posted on its of-

ficial X platform, the ministry said staying at home or in enclosed spaces is a key precaution to reduce exposure to potential risks and to enable security and emergency teams to carry out their duties efficiently. It advised people to use interior rooms away from windows and external facades, internal corridors, or basements where available, and to avoid open or exposed areas unless there is an urgent necessity to go out.

The public was also reminded to keep clear of glass facades and external walls, and to choose locations protected by solid walls whenever possible. **To Page 2**

# Qatar shifts online, once more

By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

As regional tensions prompt Qatar to reinstate remote work, the shift feels familiar and inevitable for many employees, echoing the Covid-19 pandemic's early days but strengthened by digital readiness, institutional experience, and a sharper focus on well-being and empathy.

For many residents, the announcement caused less panic and more a sense of familiarity. The mechanics of working from home, once improvised in the face of a global health crisis, are now embedded in organisational playbooks and personal routines.

Dr Eddy Borges-Rey, associate professor in residence at the Department of Journalism and Strategic Communication at Northwestern University in Qatar, said the news immediately transported him back to 2020.

"Yes, it immediately brought back



The mechanics of working from home, once improvised in the face of a global health crisis, are now embedded in organisational playbooks and personal routines.

memories of the pandemic. It does feel like going back to that period, but it also feels inevitable. In a situation like this, safety comes first, and staying home is the

most sensible option. It's a trade-off you accept under the current circumstances," he told *Gulf Times*.

Unlike the abrupt pivot during Covid-19, however, this return to remote work is unfolding in an environment that has already internalised digital flexibility. Borges-Rey noted that, globally, remote work has evolved from an emergency response to a normalised alternative.

"After Covid, remote work became a normal alternative globally, and many organisations now build it into their routines for flexibility," he said. "Personally, I don't mind working remotely, especially if it helps things run smoothly for my students."

That sense of preparedness appears widespread. In response to recent regional developments, Qatar's Council of Ministers and the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau activated remote work across ministries, government agencies and public bodies, extending it for additional days to ensure continuity of services while reducing on-site density. **To Page 2**

**RAMADAN THOUGHT**

O you who believe! Do your duty to Allah and fear Him. And seek the means of approach to Him, and strive hard in His Cause (as much as you can), so that you may be successful. **(Qur'an 5: 35)**

**Prayer times**  
Fajr...4:38; Zuhr...1:14; Asr...3:07; Maghrib...5:40; Isha...7:10

**Fasting times**  
Iftar today .....5:40pm  
Imsak tomorrow.....4:27am

From Page 1

Russian President Vladimir Putin was among the leaders who reached out, conveying his country's solidarity with Qatar and signalling Moscow's readiness to provide any form of support needed to overcome the fallout of the attacks and reinforce Qatar's security and stability.

His Highness the Amir expressed his thanks for the Russian president's sentiments and the strong bonds of bilateral friendship.

The two leaders discussed regional developments, agreeing on the primacy of dialogue and negotiations in reducing tensions, and also reviewed ways to further strengthen the strategic relationship between their two countries.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni offered Rome's unequivocal condemnation of the Iranian aggression and voiced Italy's solidarity with Qatar and its people during what she described as exceptional circumstances.

## World leaders rally behind Qatar in calls with Amir

His Highness the Amir thanked her for the gesture and the strong bilateral relationship it reflects.

The two leaders aligned on the need to pursue de-escalation and elevate political dialogue as the primary instrument for resolving the crisis.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban conveyed Budapest's firm support for Qatar, condemning the Iranian aggression and affirming Hungary's backing for any measures Doha takes to safeguard its sovereignty, security and stability.

His Highness the Amir expressed appreciation for Hungary's solidarity.

The two leaders discussed the broader regional security implications of the situation, stressing the importance of political solutions through intensified diplomatic engagement.

Swiss Confederation President Guy Parmelin called His Highness the Amir to

inquire about the situation in Qatar following the Iranian attacks, voicing Bern's condemnation of the aggression and its solidarity with Qatar.

Switzerland, he affirmed, stands ready to support all efforts that would bolster Qatar's security and stability.

His Highness the Amir expressed his gratitude for the president's sentiments and the spirit of friendship and co-operation that characterises relations between the two countries.

Venezuela's Acting President Delcy Rodríguez also reached out to His Highness the Amir, inquiring about situation in Qatar in the aftermath of the attacks and reiterating Caracas's solidarity with Doha.

She took the opportunity to express Venezuela's appreciation for Qatar's longstanding supportive positions toward the Venezuelan people – a gesture

His Highness the Amir warmly acknowledged, along with his appreciation for the acting president's solidarity.

The two sides exchanged views on the repercussions of the regional situation, converging on the need to halt escalation and uphold security and stability at both the regional and international levels.

Kosovo's President Vjosa Osmani Sadriu contacted His Highness the Amir to inquire about the situation following the Iranian aggression, offering Pristina's unequivocal condemnation of the attacks and affirming Kosovo's full solidarity with Qatar in whatever measures it deems necessary to protect its sovereignty, security and stability.

The president also took the occasion to express her country's gratitude for Qatar's continued support for Kosovo – a reflection of the mutual regard that underpins relations between the two states.

His Highness the Amir thanked President Osmani Sadriu for her sentiments and the close co-operative ties the two countries enjoy.

Ethiopia's Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed similarly contacted His Highness the Amir to inquire about the situation in Qatar, expressing confidence in Qatar's resilience and reiterating Addis Ababa's full support.

His Highness the Amir acknowledged the close ties between the two nations.

Both sides echoed a common refrain – that constructive dialogue and diplomatic action remain the surest path to containing the crisis and preserving regional stability.

President Dr Mohamed Muizzu of the Maldives rounded out the series of calls, condemning the attacks and affirming his country's full solidarity with Qatar.

His Highness the Amir expressed sincere gratitude and acknowledged the deep-rooted ties between the two nations.

# PM reiterates Qatar's stance against Iranian aggression



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received phone calls yesterday from Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Fuad Hussein and Bosnia and Herzegovina's Minister of Foreign Affairs Elmedin Konakov.

During the calls, they discussed the developments of the military escalation in the region.

HE Sheikh Mohammed affirmed during the calls that the Iranian aggression on the Qatari territories constitutes a blatant violation of its national sovereignty, and it is inconsistent with the principles of good neighbourliness, and it cannot be

accepted under any justification or pretext.

Hussein and Konakov expressed their country's condemnation of the Iranian attack on the Qatari territories, considering it a flagrant violation of Qatar's sovereignty and airspace as well as a breach of international law and the UN Charter. – QNA

## Al-Muraikhi receives calls from senior officials

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received a phone call yesterday from Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman.

On Sunday HE al-Muraikhi, received phone calls from Paraguay's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ruben Ramirez Lezcano and Azerbaijan's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yalchin Rafiyev.

The talks reviewed the military escalation and its repercussions for regional and international security.

HE al-Muraikhi stressed that the targeting of Qatari territory with missiles constitutes a blatant violation of Qatar's national sovereignty, contradicts principles of good neighbourliness, and cannot be justified under any circumstances.

Dr Rahman, Ramirez Lezcano and Rafiyev expressed their countries' condemnation of the Iranian missile attack on Qatari territory, describing it as a clear violation of Qatar's sovereignty and airspace, as well as of international law and the United Nations Charter. – QNA



## Interior Ministry: Stay indoors, avoid unnecessary movement

From Page 1

The ministry reiterated that members of the public should not approach, touch or tamper with any strange or unknown objects, and instead report them immediately by calling 999, stressing that such vigilance supports a swift and safe response by specialised units.

It noted that even seemingly harmless items should be treated with caution if they appear out of place or suspicious, and urged residents not to attempt to inspect or move such objects themselves under any circumstances.

At the same time, the ministry urged people to stay away from accident or incident sites and avoid gathering near locations where security patrols or emergency personnel are operating, noting that unnecessary presence can obstruct operations and put lives at risk.

Crowding around scenes of field activity, it warned, delays the work of first responders, complicates access routes, and may expose onlookers to danger.

Members of the public were also asked to refrain from filming or sharing videos and images from active scenes.

Alongside the movement and safety guidance, the Interior Ministry underscored the necessity of obtaining information solely from official and authorised sources.

It warned that circulating or publishing rumours, unverified news, or material from ongoing field developments constitutes a legal violation and undermines public security efforts.

The ministry stressed that misleading or false content spreads confusion, distracts attention from verified alerts and can impede the timely delivery of accurate instructions to the public.

The ministry called on the public to follow updates through its official channels and other state media, stressing that any new instructions or alert messages would be issued promptly when required.

It emphasised that compliance with these advisories – from remaining indoors and limiting movement, to reporting suspicious objects and refraining from spreading rumours – is a shared responsibility that helps protect lives and property and supports the overall readiness of the country's security apparatus.

## Qatar downs Iranian jets, intercepts drones and missiles

From Page 1

The Ministry of Defence confirmed that no human casualties were recorded in either strike, and said the authorities would conduct a comprehensive damage assessment and release official statements in due course.

The ministry stressed that Qatar's armed forces possess the full capabilities to safeguard the country's

sovereignty and territorial integrity, and are prepared to respond firmly to any further external threat.

Both the Defence Ministry and the Interior Ministry urged citizens, residents and visitors to remain calm and stay indoors where possible.

The public was warned to report any suspicious objects immediately by calling 999, to stay away from incident sites.

## Qatar shifts online, once more

From Page 1

The move followed established protocols, signalling that the country is ready to toggle between on-site and remote arrangements depending on the security context.

At the same time, critical sectors such as the military, security services, and healthcare, as well as roles requiring physical presence, continue to report on-site, reflecting a tiered strategy designed to balance safety with operational necessity.

Borges-Rey believes employers are far better equipped today to manage such transitions.

"Yes, most workplaces have become fluent in shifting to remote when needed," he said. "Qatar is also a very international work environment, so people are already used to cross-border meetings and digital workflows."

"For that reason, the transition itself doesn't feel like a major hurdle," he added.

Long before the current tensions, remote and hybrid work had already become part of Qatar's labour landscape.

By 2024, roughly one-third of private-sector workers were engaged in remote or hybrid arrangements, a shift driven in part by digital transformation goals under Qatar National Vision 2030 and policy frameworks that facilitate



Dr Eddy Borges-Rey

flexible work conditions.

Behind the scenes, sustained investment in secure connectivity, data centres, cloud services and cybersecurity co-ordination has strengthened the backbone of remote operations.

For Zoey Dela Cruz, a freelance writer with 16 years of experience in media, the return to working from home carried both professional urgency and personal familiarity.

"I was informed on the night when the missile strikes occurred," she said. "Yes, it did bring back memories of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, when we all had to work from home and do all the household chores at break time."

Professionally, she feels ready. "Similar to healthcare practitioners and government officials,

during such circumstances, the sense of responsibility and duty remains a priority," she added.

Dela Cruz believes many employers are better equipped today, particularly given the advancement of digital platforms and social media that allow tasks to be carried out remotely.

However, she noted inconsistencies in implementation.

"While I do not have specific data to support this, I believe many employers are better equipped," she said. "However, it is unfortunate to learn from friends that some employers still require staff to report to the office despite government recommendations to work from home."

"This can be disheartening, especially when the nature of the work can be performed effectively with a laptop and internet connection," Dela Cruz added.

Communication patterns have also matured since 2020.

According to Borges-Rey, platforms such as Slack and WhatsApp have become standard, making co-ordination more continuous and immediate. But that accessibility comes with trade-offs.

"It creates a sense that you're always 'on,'" he said, adding that awareness of time differences and the need to protect work-life balance has improved.

Dela Cruz similarly observed

## Al-Khulaifi discusses latest developments

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi received on Sunday phone calls from three senior officials from Panama, Norway and the UK, to discuss the recent escalation in the region and its impact on security and stability.

The calls were from Panama's Minister of Foreign Affairs Javier Martinez-Acha, Norway's State Secretary for Minister of Foreign Affairs Andreas Kravik, and Hamish Faulkner, the Minister for the Middle East and North Africa at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Yesterday HE al-Khulaifi received phone calls from Rwanda's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Olivier Nduhugirehe, Benin's Minister of Foreign Affairs Olushegun Adjadi Bakari, Switzerland's State Secretary of the Federal Department of For-

eign Affairs Alexandre Fasel, and Slovenia's State Secretary for Multilateral Affairs, Political Affairs and Development Co-operation at the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Dr Melita Gabric.

During the calls HE Dr al-Khulaifi emphasised that the targeting of Qatari territory with Iranian missiles constitutes a blatant violation of Qatar's national sovereignty, contradicts principles of good neighbourliness, and cannot be justified under any circumstances.

He noted that Qatar has consistently sought to distance itself from regional conflicts and to facilitate dialogue between Iran and the international community.

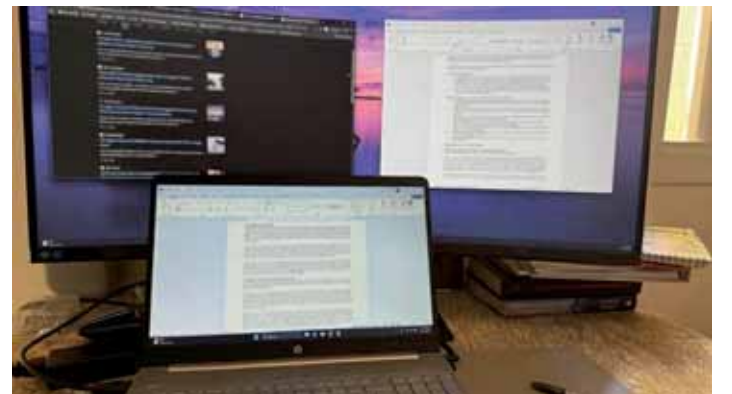
The ministers expressed their countries' solidarity with Qatar, describing the missile attacks as a clear violation of the country's sovereignty and airspace, as well as a breach of international law and the UN Charter. – QNA

## Qatar Airways extends suspension of flights

Qatar Airways (QA) announced yesterday that it will continue the temporary suspension of its flights due to the closure of Qatari airspace.

In a statement posted on X, Qatar Airways said it will resume operations once the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority announces the safe reopening of Qatari airspace.

An update will be provided on March 3 by 9am Doha time. It urged all passengers to follow the latest information regarding their flights via its website, www.qatarairways.com, or through the QA app. – QNA



The Covid-19 pandemic taught organisations to focus on outcomes rather than hours, streamlining processes and reducing unnecessary tasks.

that communication has become more structured and responsive.

During the initial stages of the recent incident, she immediately prepared an e-mail cancelling scheduled events, including a ghabga, and initiated her company's crisis communication plan.

"This highlighted the importance of preparedness," she said. "Every organisation should have a clear crisis communication framework in place."

For Mona A, a Filipino expatriate working in the airline industry, the shift felt almost routine.

"When the company told us to work from home, I wasn't surprised since I was ready for this kind of set-up, as we did during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020," she said. "It's already a norm to com-

municate through web calls and official chat hubs."

Across sectors, one lesson from the pandemic stands out: wellbeing must remain central.

"The biggest lesson is to prioritise wellbeing," Borges-Rey said. "The circumstances that force a return to remote work are stressful enough, and the lack of face-to-face interaction can add to anxiety."

"The key is to lead with care and empathy, because you never really know what others are dealing with in their personal situations," he added.

Dela Cruz echoed that sentiment, emphasising that flexibility, when paired with the right digital tools, can maintain or even boost productivity.

## HMC confirms full range of services across its hospital network

Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) continues to operate a full range of emergency and routine services across its hospital network, the HMC said in a press statement.

The HMC noted that all outpatient clinics are running as scheduled.

Patients who wish to reschedule an existing outpatient appointment can do so through the HMC's Lbaih mobile application www.hamad.qa/lbaih

In addition, the HMC provides a range of specialist helplines, enabling patients to access expert medical advice from their homes.

There is a telephone-based medical consultation service that enables patients to speak directly with a physician about urgent health concerns without visiting a hospital.

It can be accessed by calling 16000, selecting option 3 and then opting No 1 for urgent medical consultation.

This service is available from Sunday to Thursday, 8am to 3pm.

A dedicated Diabetes Hotline provides medical advice and support for people living with diabetes.

They can call 16099 and select option 4. This service is available from Sunday to Thursday, 7am to 3pm.

A free and confidential mental health helpline provides psychological support, guidance and information for individuals experiencing stress, anxiety, depression or other mental health concerns.

This can be accessed by calling 16000 and selecting option 4. It is currently operating from 8am to 8pm daily until further notice.

Raha, the National Alzheimer's and Memory Services Helpline, is a support line for individuals aged 60 and above living with Alzheimer's disease, memory loss or other forms of dementia, as well as their caregivers.

This can be accessed by calling 40262222 and available from Sunday to Thursday, 8am to 3pm.

The Paediatric Emergency Centre Hotline is a 24/7 hotline and can be reached at 4439 6066.

It provides parents and caregivers with professional guidance and medical advice regarding paediatric emergencies and urgent health concerns.

The Clinical Imaging Call Centre can be contacted for any booking inquiries or to reschedule clinical imaging appointments at the HMC.

People can call 16060 24/7 or text on WhatsApp at 44393377.

It is available from Sunday to Thursday from 8am to 6pm, and on Saturday from 8am to 2pm.

The Therapeutic Dietetics and Nutrition Service provides medical nutrition services

to registered patients. They can call 16060; select language, and then choose No 4 for Therapeutic Dietetics and Nutrition Services.

Following it, they can select No 1 to follow up on orders for dietary supplements and the service is available from 8am to 1pm, Sunday to Thursday.

A prescription refill and home delivery service available via the Lbaih mobile app.

Patients with existing prescriptions can reorder medication and have it delivered to their home for a small fee.

Patients can download the Lbaih mobile app (available on iOS and Android), log in using the credentials and select the medication reorder option and arrange home delivery.

Alternatively, they can call 16000, select option 3 and choose 2 for pharmacy.

This service is available from Sunday to Thursday, 8am to 1pm until further notice.

## Advices for mid-Ramadan

Fellow Muslims! You are now in the midst of a matchless month. It is a great and noble month with uncountable merits and virtues. It is a season rich with gains for those who partake in good deeds as it destroys those who transgress and commit sins in it.

It is a month that excels other months by a night that is better than a thousand months. Blessed be the one who sincerely fasts in that month, invokes Allah in the morning and evening and wake up during the nights of the months praying and devoting his life to Allah.

The first half of Ramadan is nearly over. Try then to make good use of the remaining half. Hasten to use the remaining

days in thanking Allah for His blessings and try harder to do righteous deeds and repent to Him for the hours of the month are hurriedly coming to an end. Do good deeds during the remaining days, you will be forgiven of the evils you did before; but if you persist in these devil deeds, you will be punished for the past sins and latter ones.

Whoever holds fast unto the Rope of Allah and makes good use of his time will be victorious and free from all evils; and the miser and unfortunate is the one who sins during these remaining blessed days for his lot will certainly be ignominy, distress and regret and woe accursed will be on a Day that the negligent people will shed bitter tears; a day that Allah will say, "O My slaves! These are only your deeds which I enumerate for you and upon which I will reward you. So whoever finds good reward there from, let him thank Allah and whoever finds otherwise, let him blame no one but himself."

Ramadan days are the cream of worldly days. He who is blessed in these days is indeed the fortunate one and he who is deprived of their blessings is indeed the unfortunate one. He who does not work for his final abode in these days has wronged himself and will be blameworthy. The Messenger of Allah, sallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam, one day ascended the pulpit and said, "Aameen, Aameen, Aameen." He was asked "O Messenger of Allah! You ascended the pulpit and said, 'Aameen, Aameen, Aameen?'" He answered, "It was Jibreel who came to me and said, 'Whoever lived to

witness Ramadan and yet was not forgiven his sins; and as a result entered Hell, may Allah keep him away (from His mercy). Say, 'Aameen!' And I said 'Aameen.'" (Ibn Khuzaymah).

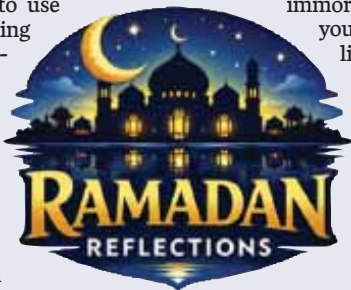
O you who are negligent in good deeds in this Ramadan, are you sure that you will live to witness the next Ramadan? Give this month therefore its due and fear Allah in public and private. Remember that you have two angels with you who record all your deeds and do not disgrace yourselves in front of Allah from Whom nothing of your secret is hidden.

Fellow Muslims! Days of Ramadan ought to be honoured. Do you guard yourselves from idle talks and immoral looks? Do you prevent your limbs from pastime and wild deeds? Have you prepared provisions that are suitable for your journey to the Hereafter or are you among those who engage in deeds which displease Allah and wander in this world as if they are created for nothing but the enjoyment of this life? Beware, lest the harmful things will be dearer to you. In this month, guard your eyes, tongues and the rest of your limbs from sins. Though it is incumbent on you to do that at all times, it becomes more biding during the month of Ramadan. The Messenger of Allah said: "Whoever does not refrain from false sayings and deeds, Allah has no need of his abstinence from food and drink." (Al-Bukhari).

Jaabir bin Abdillaaah al-Ansaaree said: "When you fast, let your ears and tongue also fast by keeping away from lying and forbidden things. Do not harm your neighbour. Let tranquility and peace be your habit and let there be difference between your fasting and non-fasting days."

Fellow Muslims! Ramadan is the month of liberation from Hell and misery. The Messenger of Allah said: "The Almighty Allah -- at every time of breaking the fast -- frees some of His slaves from Hell." Try therefore, as much as you can to free yourselves from Hell, for this is the time for repentance and sincere entreatment to Allah. This is a month in which Allah accepts the invocations of His slaves!

Allah says, "O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance." (At-Tahreem: 8).



# Shura condemns Iran's blatant attack on Qatar

QNA  
Doha

The Shura Council convened its weekly routine session in Tamim bin Hamad Hall at the council's headquarters yesterday. The session was chaired by HE Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim. As the session began, the council expressed its strong condemnation and denunciation of the Israeli assault that has been targeting the State of Qatar's territory with ballistic missiles and drones since last Saturday.

It considered this assault a blatant violation of national sovereignty and a menacing escalation that undermines the security and stability of the region, runs contrary to the principles of good neighbourliness, and contravenes the international rules-based order and the UN Charter. The council commended the efforts undertaken by the Ministries of Defence, Interior, and Foreign Affairs, as well as the nation's authoritative agencies in dealing with the consequences of this attack. It praised the efficiency and high level of



combat readiness of the Qatari Armed Forces, and the capability they demonstrated in intercepting a sheer number of repeated missile waves, reflecting a strong degree of professionalism and vigilance in safeguarding the country's security and territorial integrity.

Qatar has been undertaking a constructive and responsible role in facilitating dialogue between Iran and the international community and has always been committed to sparing the region from escalation risks, moved by its enduring belief in the settlement of

conflicts with peaceful means and strengthening regional stability, the council pointed out.

The council reiterated its call for the immediate cessation of hostilities and the return to the negotiation path to protect the region's security and the interests of its peoples, underlining that the renewed Iranian assault and its violation of the State of Qatar's sovereignty do not reflect good intentions and run contrary to the principles of good neighbourliness.

In addition, the council ex-

pressed its strong condemnation of the attacks on a number of regional neighbours, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the State of Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and the Republic of Lebanon.

The council confirmed its full solidarity with those nations, as well as its backing of everything that would reinforce their security and stability and safeguard their sovereignty and territorial integrity. The council urged the public to adhere to the security and safety measures; to comply with all instructions and guidelines issued by the relevant authorities; and to collect information from official sources, thereby helping promote societal awareness and support the national efforts aimed at protecting the nation's security and stability.

Thereupon, HE Secretary-General of the Shura Council, Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud, read out the session's agenda. The council then discussed the agenda items and took appropriate decisions thereon. It also adopted the minutes of the previous session.

## QMC slams Iranian strikes on Qatar, Gulf nations

The Qatari Media Center (QMC) has condemned in the strongest terms what it described as "brutal" Iranian military aggression targeting Qatar and fellow Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries with ballistic missiles, calling it a flagrant violation of sovereignty and a grave threat to regional stability.

In a statement, the Center said the attacks constitute a clear breach of international law and the principles of good-neighbourliness, and an act of hostility that cannot be justified under any pretext. It noted that targeting civilian and strategic facilities and terrorising populations undermines efforts to consolidate regional security and build bridges of trust and understanding among states.

The Center stressed that Qatar has consistently

adopted a policy of dialogue and prioritised peaceful solutions, working sincerely to spare the region the causes of tension and conflict. It added that the targeting of Qatari territory contradicts the fundamentals of good-neighbourly relations, erodes confidence and threatens the stability of the region as a whole. Underlining the role of responsible media, the statement said professional, ethical journalism represents the first line of defence in crises and a national shield for protecting the internal front and strengthening social cohesion. The Center urged media institutions to assume their national and historic responsibilities by strictly adhering to accuracy and objectivity, verifying information from official sources, and firmly confronting disinformation and rumour-mongering.

It also called on the public not to be swayed by rumours or circulate false news and misleading campaigns on social media that seek to create confusion and destabilise society, warning that promoting such content exposes those responsible to legal accountability.

The Center further called on the international community to shoulder its legal and moral responsibilities, adopt clear positions and take deterrent measures to halt these violations, respect state sovereignty and territorial integrity, and support efforts to de-escalate and reinforce security and stability in the region. Reaffirming that Gulf security is a "red line", it said Gulf unity and solidarity remain fundamental to safeguarding sovereignty and protecting peoples.

## Dr Bader al-Hajri elected president of Arab Federation for Artificial Intelligence

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

In a move to enhance the Arab presence globally, the Arab Federation for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Programming announced the appointment of Dr Bader bin Dalham al-Fahd al-Hajri as its president at an extraordinary meeting of its Board of Directors, with representatives from member states in attendance.

This appointment reflects the federation's commitment to strengthening Arab integration in modern technology and supporting efforts to build a unified regulatory framework for AI.

In a statement, Dr al-Hajri affirmed that the federation represents an institutional Arab framework that can help unify efforts among Arab countries in AI and programming. He indicated that the next phase will focus on developing a comprehensive strategic vision, including training and research initiatives, programmes to develop Arab talent, and preparations for launching joint projects with Arab universities and research centers.

He explained that the federation seeks to help establish integrated



Dr Bader al-Hajri

Arab regulatory and legislative frameworks that bridge the existing international gap in regulating AI technologies. This will ensure the responsible and ethical use of these technologies and preserve the cultural values and strategic interests of Arab countries.

He pointed out that among the union's priorities are promoting scientific research and innovation in vital sectors such as health, education, and energy, organising specialised conferences and workshops, and launching competitions and incentive initiatives to support technological entrepreneurship among Arab youth.

He emphasised that AI has become a fundamental pillar of the global economy, and that strengthening the Arab presence in shaping international policies and stand-

ards is no longer an option but a necessity. He stressed that the federation will work to build regional and international partnerships that contribute to consolidating the position of Arab countries as active partners in shaping the digital future.

This approach is in light of Qatar's strategic role in supporting innovation and digital transformation across the Arab region. Dr al-Hajri affirmed that the federation's vision aligns with the policies adopted by the State to attract high-calibre Arab talent. He explained that Qatar's advanced infrastructure and investments in technology and AI constitute a foundation upon which to build, supporting the federation's programmes and regional initiatives, thereby reducing the brain drain of Arab talent and enabling skilled individuals to work within an integrated Arab system.

The council unanimously approved granting Dr al-Hajri the full powers stipulated in the bylaws, in addition to approving the redistribution of some leadership positions, which will enhance the efficiency of institutional work during the next stage, and keep pace with the rapidly evolving challenges in the AI and programming sector.

## ANNHRI flays Iran's targeting of Arab territories

QNA  
Doha

The Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions (ANNHRI) strongly condemned expansion of military operations in the region following Iranian missile attacks that targeted several Arab states, including Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan, as well as explosions in civilian areas that resulted in deaths and injuries due to missile fragments.

In a statement issued yesterday, the network said the escalation constitutes a direct threat to civilians and a clear violation of international humanitarian law, particularly the principles protecting civilian populations and prohibiting indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks. It stressed that targeting populated areas or civilian facilities, or the falling of missile debris in residential neighbourhoods, represents a breach of states' obligations during armed conflicts.

The network expressed solidarity with affected Arab states, affirming their right to take legitimate measures to protect their populations in accordance with international human rights standards, while prioritizing civilian safety. It called on the United Nations, the United Nations Human Rights Council and the Special Rapporteurs to monitor developments, investigate potential violations and take the necessary steps to ensure accountability and prevent further expansion of the conflict. It also emphasized the need to halt escalation and return to diplomatic channels to safeguard civilian security and regional stability. ANNHRI stressed that the protection of human dignity must remain central to any international action, and that regional security begins with safeguarding the rights of its peoples.

## Recall of Ford Escort models

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry, in co-operation with Almana Motors Company, Qatar's Ford dealership, has announced the recall of Ford Escort 2019-2020 models. The recall is due to the possibility of some of the affected vehicles experiencing a crack on the fuel filler pipe rubber hose, which may result in a fuel leak. The ministry said the recall campaign comes within the framework of its ongoing efforts to protect consumers and ensure that car dealers follow up on vehicle defects and repairs.

The ministry said that it will coordinate with the dealer to follow up on the maintenance and repair works and will communicate with customers to ensure that the necessary repairs are carried out. The ministry urges all customers to report any violations to its Consumer Protection and Anti-Commercial Fraud Department, which processes complaints, inquiries and suggestions through the following channels: Call Centre: 16001, e-mail: info@moci.gov.qa, ministry's accounts on social media: @mociqatar, ministry's Mobile App: MOCIQATAR (available on iOS and Android devices)

## HBKU workshop focuses on resilient low-carbon materials

By Joseph Varghese  
Staff Reporter

A workshop organised recently by the Qatar Environment and Energy Institute (QEERI) at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) has called for more research on sustainability and resilient materials. The First International Workshop on Biomimicry by QEERI focused on lessons from nature for sustainable materials design and explored how principles observed in natural systems can inform sustainable materials design and manufacturing. It also focused on bridging biology and engineering to create sustainable, low-carbon resilient materials.

Opening the workshop, Dr Adnan Abu-Dayya, associate vice president of research at HBKU, said that the workshop aims to forge new partnerships and projects with various entities in Qatar and beyond to work together toward sustainable outcomes for Qatar and the wider region. "This workshop has some key objectives. The first one

is to introduce biomimicry to our students and researchers in a structured way. The second aim is to begin mapping biomimicry kinds of projects, research projects in Qatar and the region to understand where we are and to have a dialogue and a discussion about the issues and technologies related to biomimicry and figure out how we can create and foster new projects around them," he explained.

The official said that the workshop is to learn more about creativity and the methodology to take the projects forward. He continued: "Biomimicry is not simply about coding nature; it is really about understanding biological principles deeply and translating them through disciplined research into innovations and solutions. This is the gap we aim to address. The challenge is learning how to observe it carefully and understand it deeply."

"As we design new materials and systems, we must ensure they are technically strong, environmentally responsible, and socially beneficial. Innovation must be disciplined, impactful, and more importantly, ethically



Dr Adnan Abu-Dayya

grounded," added Dr Abu-Dayya.

The workshop was also attended by several international experts in biomimicry, who highlighted many principles to learn from nature and apply them in local and international

contexts. The speakers included Jess Berliner, co-founder and director of Learn Biomimicry, who spoke on Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature; Sabri Alamri, head of technology at Fusion Bionic, who discussed Advanced Product Surfaces Through Laser Surface Functionalisation, among others.

Meanwhile, El Tayeb Bentría, a scientist at QEERI, said that historically, biomimicry was focused on or relied on observation and experimentation. He noted: "Today, AI allows us to model biological structures, simulate performance, and optimise materials much more efficiently than what was ever possible before. This reflects how we are combining technology, biology, material science, and advanced computation to accelerate innovation."

The workshop heard from leading researchers and innovators to explore the principles of biomimicry and the latest advances in the field, offering participants a unique opportunity to learn from international experts at the forefront of this transformative discipline.



## Arab nations at UN slam Iran's retaliatory strikes

AFP  
Geneva

Arab countries yesterday slammed Iran's wave of retaliatory strikes across the Middle East, decrying at the United Nations that Tehran had upended their attempts to avoid a regional escalation.

After the United States and Israel began striking Iran on Saturday, Tehran launched a wave of reprisal attacks at targets across the Middle East.

The Group of Arab States told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva that Iran's attacks were an "extremely grave" violation of international law that threatened regional stability.

"The Arab countries were seeking to bolster dialogue and openness. The is an unjustifiable escalation that destabilises all peace and stability efforts," Saudi ambassador Abdulmohsen Binkhothaila said, speaking for the group.

The six Gulf Co-operation Council countries — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — plus Jordan — all hit by Tehran's retaliation — also jointly condemned the "Iranian aggressions", which came "despite our efforts to avoid escalation in the region".

On Thursday, Oman had mediated talks in Geneva between US and Iranian negotiators. Washington and Israel launched their attack two days later.

"We call for the immediate cessation of military actions... and return to dialogue because it's the only way to solve disagreements," said the sultanate's deputy permanent representative Mohamed al-Balushi.

Kuwait's ambassador Naser Abdullah H M Alhayan added: "Terrorising the civilians in countries seeking peace is an abhorrent crime."

"Iran should resort to self-

restraint and... wisdom and refrain from further military escalation," he said.

Iran's ambassador Ali Bahreini said his country was "under indiscriminate and invasive military attacks by the United States and the regime of Israel".

He said Iran's schools had been bombed, hospitals indiscriminately attacked, its leaders assassinated and "more than 160 innocent schoolgirls were massacred in Minab".

"The deliberate killing of civilians" openly violates the UN Charter, he said, and the "ongoing, unlawful military aggression against Iran exemplifies the dominance of raw power over the principles of human rights".

The European Union urged maximum restraint, while the African group said the situation was eroding trust among nations.

Iran's neighbour Turkiye warned: "There is no ambiguity about the gravity of the moment. We stand at a precipice."

"The danger of further escalation is real and immediate," said ambassador Burak Akcapar, urging countries to prevent a "widening spiral of instability that could extend well beyond Iran and our region".

Some countries voiced support for Iran at the UN's top rights body.

China said the US-Israeli attack "brutally violates Iranian people's human rights" and the killing of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "seriously violates Iran's sovereignty".

Cuba said Washington was proclaiming the "exceptional right to conquer and to use force as a legitimate form of behaviour".

Venezuela — citing the US capture of president Nicolas Maduro — said immunity for heads of state must be respected, otherwise others could be targeted with "unlawful bombing, abduction or assassination".

# US-Israel war on Iran widens to Lebanon

■ Hezbollah joins conflict, Israel hits back  
■ Kuwait mistakenly shoots down three US jets  
■ Senior security official says Iran will fight on

Reuters

Dubai/Washington

The US and Israeli air war against Iran widened yesterday, with no end in sight as Israel attacked Lebanon in response to strikes by Hezbollah and Tehran kept up its missile and drone attacks on Gulf states.

President Donald Trump said a "big wave" of further attacks was imminent, without giving details, and said it was unclear who was in charge in Iran, following the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei at the weekend.

The attack on Iran has pitched the Gulf into war, thrown global air transport into chaos and shut down shipping traffic through the vital Strait of Hormuz, sending oil prices surging.

Underlining the risks, Kuwait mistakenly shot down three American F-15E fighter jets during an Iranian attack, US Central Command said. All six crew members ejected and were safely recovered. Video, filmed at a location verified by Reuters, showed one of the planes spiralling out of the sky, an engine on fire.

For Trump, facing growing discontent at home over bread-and-butter economic issues, the weekend strikes against a foe that had tormented the US and its allies for generations amount to the biggest US foreign policy gamble in decades.

Trump urged Americans to grieve the four US service personnel killed so far. The campaign could pose a major political risk for Trump's Republican Party in this year's midterm elections, with only one in four Americans supporting the operation, according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll at the weekend.

"We haven't even started", Trump says.

Trump said he had ordered the attack to thwart Tehran's nuclear programme and a ballistic missile programme that he said was growing rapidly. He said the war could go on past a four-to-five-week projection he made earlier.

"We haven't even started hitting them hard," he told CNN in an interview. "The big wave hasn't even happened. The big one is coming soon."

In the first formal Pentagon briefing since the campaign began, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Dan Caine, described a campaign that included hitting more than 1,000 targets in the first 24 hours. He said more



People gather at the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the offices of Al-Qard al-Hassan, a Hezbollah-linked financial institution, in the southern coastal Lebanese city of Tyre, yesterday. (AFP)



A person sits amid debris following an Israeli and US strike on a police station, amid the conflict with Iran, in Tehran, yesterday. (Reuters)

forces were still on their way to the region.

"This is not a single overnight operation. The military objectives that Centcom and the Joint Force have been tasked with will take some time to achieve, and in some cases will be difficult and gritty work," Caine said.

Iran denies seeking a nuclear weapon and says it was offering to curb its nuclear programme at talks when the United States launched an unprovoked assault.

Trump repeated his call to Iranians to rise up and overthrow their leaders.

Within Iran, where residents have jammed highways to flee the bombing, there was uncertainty about the future and emotion ranging from euphoria to apprehension and rage.

Many have openly celebrated the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 86, who had ruled since 1989 and directed security forces that killed thousands of anti-government protesters at the start of this year.

But the conservative leaders

have shown no sign of yielding power. Military experts say US and Israeli air power, with no armed force on the ground, may not be enough to drive them out. Meanwhile, scores of Iranians have been reported killed in strikes, including several that hit apparent civilian targets.

"They are killing children, they are attacking hospitals. Is this the kind of democracy Trump wants to bring us?" Morteza Sedighi, a 52-year-old teacher, said by phone from Tabriz in northwestern Iran. "Innocent people were first killed by the regime and now by Israel and the United States."

**WAR SPREADS TO LEBANON**

In a sign that Iran's rulers are still reaching out to the outside world, a senior Iranian security official contacted Reuters to say Iran was defending itself against aggressors and would continue to do so.

A new front in the war opened yesterday when the Lebanese armed movement Hezbollah, one of Tehran's principal allies in the Middle East, launched missiles

and drones towards Israel.

Israel responded with sweeping airstrikes, which it said targeted the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut and struck senior fighters. The Lebanese state news agency NNA said an initial tally showed 31 people had been killed and 149 injured.

An Iranian Shahed missile that Cypriot officials said was most likely fired by Hezbollah from Lebanon also hit the British air force base at Akrotiri in Cyprus, the first strike to reach US allies in Europe.

Israel declared Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem a "target for elimination".

Officials said they were not for now considering a ground invasion of Lebanon, whose government yesterday banned military activities by Hezbollah.

As Washington's allies in the Gulf came under renewed attack from Iranian missiles and drones, black smoke rose above the area around the US embassy in Kuwait. There were loud blasts in Dubai and Samba in the United Arab Emirates. Qatar, one of the world's biggest exporters of liquefied natural gas, halted production.

Saudi Arabia shut its biggest refinery after drone strikes caused a fire there, one of a number of energy installations that became targets.

European allies, which distanced themselves from Trump's initial decision to go to war, have since said they could help support Iran's ability to retaliate.

In an X post yesterday, Ali Larjani, a powerful adviser to Khamenei, said Iran would not negotiate with Trump, who had "delusional ambitions" and was now worried about US casualties.



Workers evacuate area around Saudi Aramco's Ras Tanura oil refinery as smoke rises following a reported Iranian drone strike, in Ras Tanura, Saudi Arabia, in this still image obtained from social media video released yesterday. (Reuters)



### QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/SOH/7466/25 INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE LABORATORY ANALYSIS ON CALL-OFF BASIS	03/03/2026 to 16/03/2026	0	182,050	16/03/2026

#### Scope of Work:

CONTRACTOR shall conduct Occupational Health exposure assessment activities, to perform required Industrial Hygiene (IH) related laboratory analysis with provision of necessary sampling media and accessories to COMPANY on Call-Off basis. Based on analysis request made by COMPANY, CONTRACTOR shall provide necessary sampling media and accessories and deliver it to COMPANY facility. Once sample is ready for collection as confirmed by COMPANY, CONTRACTOR to collect sample and deliver to laboratory for analysis. On completion of laboratory analysis, CONTRACTOR to communicate the results and provide report to COMPANY.

**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.

## UAE set to begin exceptional flight operations

QNA  
Abu Dhabi

The General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has announced the commencement of exceptional flight operations at UAE airports, enabling stranded passengers affected by recent regional developments to depart.

**Passengers whose flights have been impacted urged not to proceed to airports until notified of their flight timings**

In its statement yesterday, the GCAA said that this will take place in line with the schedules to be announced by airlines to affected passengers and the relevant destinations. The Authority urged passengers whose flights have been impacted not to proceed to airports until they have been contacted and notified of their flight timings and details by their respective airlines, in order to avoid congestion and ensure smooth processing.

The GCAA expressed its appreciation for passengers' co-operation, emphasising that adherence to the issued instructions plays a central role in facilitating procedures and maintaining orderly operations.



### Invitation for Pre-qualification

Qatar Petrochemical Company (QAPCO) Q.P.J.S.C. invites competent companies to submit pre-qualification documents for the provision of disposal of Alkyl & Pre-cursor wastes on a long-term contract basis. Interested companies are required to submit the following information as a minimum:

- Commercial Registration Certificate
- Company brochure showing the business profile and company operations.
- Copy of CTO Certificate from Ministry of Environment & Climate Change (Consent to Operate industrial hazardous waste incineration facility).
- Details of incineration plant including physical address, photos and process illustration.
- Details of fleet licensed for industrial hazardous waste transportation.
- Experience in handling industrial hazardous waste disposal showing the client, main waste streams and volumes handled
- Confirmation of willingness to invest in any necessary plant modification required to handle the subject wastes, if any.

**Participant should have a licensed incinerator for industrial hazardous waste disposal operating in Qatar as a pre-requisite for consideration.**

Interested Companies shall compile the above documents in one folder and send the same to the e-mail address [procurement@qapco.com.qa](mailto:procurement@qapco.com.qa) latest by **11-Mar-2026, 12:00pm**.

**Please clearly state the subject in the submission e-mail: "Pre-qualification for provision of disposal of Alkyl & Precursor wastes".**

# Putin offers to use links to Iran to help restore Mideast calm

Reuters  
Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone to leaders of four Arab Gulf states yesterday, offering to use Moscow's ties to Iran to try to help restore calm to the Middle East following US and Israeli strikes, which he condemned.

In a series of calls with the leaders of the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Putin criticised the US-Israeli strikes on Iran, which the Kremlin described as "unprovoked aggression".

Earlier, the Kremlin said that Moscow remained in constant contact with the Iranian leadership. Moscow sees its strategic partnership with Iran as central to maintaining its remaining clout in the Middle East, where its influence took a hit when their mutual ally Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was toppled 15 months ago. Although Russia stands to benefit from higher oil prices and may welcome Washington's focus shifting away from Ukraine, the US-Israeli air war also runs counter to Moscow's desire for a multilateral

● **Kremlin calls US-Israeli strikes on Tehran 'unprovoked'**  
● **Relationship helps underpin Russia's Mideast influence**

world order in which the US is not dominant.

Arab states in the Gulf, all close US allies, have come under Iranian drone and missile attacks since the United States and Israel launched their air strikes on Iran on Saturday.

According to the Kremlin readout of Putin's call with UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, the Russian leader offered to act as a conduit by conveying the UAE's complaints about being attacked to Tehran.

During the call, "both sides emphasised the need for an immediate ceasefire and a return to the political and diplomatic process," the Kremlin added.

Putin told Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa that Russia was ready to do all it could to stabilise the situation in the region. In a final call, the Kremlin said Saudi Arabia's Crown

Prince Mohammed bin Salman had told Putin that Russia could play a stabilising role given its friendly ties with both Iran and Gulf countries. Separately, Russia's foreign minister also spoke to his Saudi counterpart.

Putin on Sunday condemned the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as a "cynical" murder. The Russian Foreign Ministry has accused the US and Israel of plunging the Middle East "into an abyss of uncontrolled escalation". But Moscow is also keen not to alienate the administration of President Donald Trump as Washington brokers peace talks on Ukraine. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow wanted those talks to continue.

"We have our own interests that we must protect, and it is in our interests to continue these negotiations (on Ukraine)," Peskov said.



Smoke rises from an area surrounding US Embassy following a strike, amid the US-Israel conflict with Iran, in Bayan, Kuwait, yesterday. (Reuters)

## Memories surface of Iraqi invasion as Kuwait hit by Iran

AFP  
Kuwait City

Workers stayed home and Ramadan prayers were cancelled in Kuwait yesterday as the tiny Gulf emirate was left on edge following Iranian attacks that marked its biggest upheaval in decades.

Home to a major US military presence, Kuwait has been sucked into Iran's war against the United States and Israel, with the US embassy apparently hit, three American warplanes mistakenly shot down by its military, and a power station struck.

The violence is the most dramatic escalation for the oil-rich country since the 2003 US invasion of neighbouring Iraq and Saddam Hussein's attempt to take over Kuwait in 1990.

Despite calm on the streets, Kuwaitis expressed anxiety to AFP yesterday as the sound of explosions intermittently rang out overhead and sirens sounded in some areas.

"It compels people to follow

the news around the clock," said Khaled Walid, who works in logistics, adding that the bombing was reminiscent of the Iraqi invasion in 1990. Black smoke could be seen rising from the US embassy, though the Americans did not confirm it had been hit. Iranian strikes have so far killed one person in Kuwait and injured more than 50.

Three American fighter jets were also mistakenly shot down by Kuwait's air defences on Sunday night, the US military said, but all six crew safely ejected.

The government told many state employees to stay home, saying the number on site would be reduced to 30% of the total workforce.

Some in Kuwait were making plans to leave, with a travel agency telling AFP it had been issuing a higher number of transit visas for Saudi Arabia to Jordanians and Egyptians, allowing them to cross into the kingdom through the land border as flights were cancelled.

Others had applied for visas to carry out the Umrah pilgrimage to Makkah as another way into

Saudi, said travel agency manager Yahya Hussein.

Nestled in the northwestern corner of the Gulf, Kuwait's strategic location and massive oil reserves have made it one of the world's richest countries per capita.

The emirate of just 5mn people drew world attention in 1990 when Iraqi forces invaded and attempted to annex the country.

Kuwaitis still bear the scars of that conflict, when the retreating invaders, pushed out by a US-led coalition, looted the country and set fire to most of its oil wells.

But since then, Kuwait has been an oasis of peace in the turbulent Middle East, backed up by the presence of US troops and defence agreements with several other countries, including Britain and France.

Dana Abbas, an engineer in Kuwait City, said she feared a further escalation in the fighting and had rushed to fill up her car with petrol and stock up on basic necessities.

"Developments are causing concern for many families," she said.

## Erdogan says attacks on Tehran are clear violation of international law

Reuters  
Ankara

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan yesterday criticised the US and Israeli attacks on Iran as a "clear violation" of international law, adding that Turkey shared the pain of the Iranian people amid the widening war.

**"Nobody can handle the burden of the economic and geopolitical uncertainties that such a period will cause"**

Turkiye, a Nato member and neighbour of Iran, had for weeks urged Washington and Tehran to reach an agreement during their rounds of negotiations, warning that the region could not handle more destabilisation.

In his strongest opposition yet to the attacks, Erdogan said they were a "clear violation of international law".

"As their neighbour and brother, we share the pain of the Iranian people," he said at a Ra-



File photo of Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan. (Reuters)

madan fast-breaking dinner in Ankara, and added that the US-Iran dispute had grown into war after provocations from Israel.

Turkiye historically has had complex ties with Iran, with the two countries backing opposing sides for years in the civil war in Syria, but managing cordial ties and strong trade in various areas despite political differences.

Erdogan has also forged close personal relations with US President Donald Trump.

He said yesterday that Turkey would intensify contacts "at every level" until a ceasefire is achieved and room is made for

diplomacy, adding that Turkey did not want "fighting, war, tensions, and massacres" right across its borders.

"Our entire stance regarding the illegal attacks targeting Iran are in that line," Erdogan added, while warning that if the "necessary intervention" is not made, there could be "serious repercussions" for regional and global security.

"Nobody can handle the burden of the economic and geopolitical uncertainties that such a period will cause. This is why this fire needs to be extinguished before it grows any more."

## Mideast escalation puts civilians in 'grave danger': Red Cross

AFP  
Geneva

The spiralling war in the Middle East is putting civilians in "grave danger", the head of the Red Cross warned yesterday, saying a large-scale conflict would outstrip any ability to help.

The war launched by the US and Israel against Iran has spread across the Mideast and beyond, with Lebanon's Hezbollah entering the fray and a British military base in European Union member Cyprus coming under attack.

"Widening hostilities across the Middle East are putting civilian lives in grave danger," said Mirjana Spoljaric, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

"The scale of major military operations flaring across the Middle East risks embroiling the region – and beyond – into another large-scale armed conflict that will overwhelm any humanitarian response."

The Geneva-based ICRC acts as the guardians of international humanitarian law, the set of rules which seeks to limit the effects of armed conflict. The rules protect people who are not or are no longer participating in hostilities and restricts the means and

methods of warfare. "All parties to armed conflict have an obligation to uphold the rules of war, which are unequivocal," said Spoljaric. "Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be spared from hostilities. Schools must remain sanctuaries for learning where children can feel safe and protected from attacks, and hospitals must remain sanctuaries for saving lives."

The ICRC chief said medical personnel and first responders, including Red Cross and Red Crescent national societies, had to be protected and allowed to carry out their work safely.

In a letter to Spoljaric, Iran's ambassador in Geneva, Ali Bahraini, said the US and Israeli attacks had seriously violated international humanitarian law.

"The deliberate and indiscriminate targeting of civilians and civilian objects – including hospitals, medical facilities and schools – constitutes a grave breach of the fundamental principles of distinction and proportionality," he said, as well as protections afforded under the Geneva Conventions, which form the core of international humanitarian law.

Bahraini urged the ICRC chief to condemn the strikes.

Iran "reaffirms its commitment to the international humanitarian law and expects full respect for the Geneva Conventions", he said.

## Stranded flyers in region wait out travel chaos

Reuters  
Dubai/Doha

In the lobby of a hotel near Doha airport, stranded travellers wear identical fake Adidas T-shirts bought from a nearby store and swap tips on where to buy inner wear.

"It's our uniform," said Erika Macikova. The 49-year-old Slovak winemaker was returning from an ayurvedic retreat in Sri Lanka when she became stranded in a Gulf state capital. Her luggage remains at the airport, but she was evacuated to a hotel alongside hundreds of other passengers.

With no spare clothes, Macikova tracked down open shops and began sharing their names with fellow globetrotters. Tens of thousands of travellers across the Middle East were entering a third day of limbo after escalating conflict between the US, Israel and Iran disrupted flights worldwide and forced the closure of major airports including Dubai, the world's busiest international hub.

Many of those stuck in the re-

gion, like Macikova, were simply changing planes. Dubai, which handles more than 1,000 flights a day, and nearby Doha and Abu Dhabi sit at the crossroads of east-west air travel, funnelling long-haul traffic between Europe and Asia through tightly scheduled connecting flights.

The upheaval is rippling far beyond the Middle East, with tens of thousands of passengers stranded in places including Bali, Kathmandu and Frankfurt.

The UAE's civil aviation authority said it assisted about 20,200 travellers on Saturday. Data shows at least 4,000 flights were cancelled in the space of three days.

In Dubai, James Gaskin spent yesterday morning washing his inner wear and a collection of novelty socks in his bathroom sink.

After a week in India for work, the 53-year-old procurement manager from northern England was already short of clean clothes when his connecting flight back to Britain was cancelled. He was taken to a local hotel with hundreds of other passengers.

Like many of them, Gaskin



James Gaskin brushes his teeth in the Vogo Grand Hotel in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, yesterday. (Reuters)

said he had little idea what was unfolding when he landed at Dubai airport.

"A lady came to the gate and just stood on a chair and made an

announcement that everyone's got to leave the airport. All very calm and orderly," he said.

"In a British way, I did six hours of queuing without any

real drama." But the baggage hall descended into chaos, he said, as passengers pulled bags off carousels, seeking their own.

"Even though it was pandemonium, I was pretty relaxed," he said.

But then "there were quite a few bangs, the airport got hit", he said.

"That brought it home." "The general feeling is, the longer it goes on, the more edgy people are getting."

**PASSENGERS WHATSAPP TO SHARE COPING TIPS**

Across hotels in the region, strangers trade information on where to find washing machines, how to navigate airline helplines or retrieve luggage, and whether it makes sense to pool resources and try to leave by car.

They gather in hotel lobbies to play games or watch sports, or head to shopping malls to buy snacks. WhatsApp groups have sprung up.

Many are trying not to dwell on their situation, even as loud bangs overhead remind them why they are stuck. Macikova was spending as much time as possible inside the hotel because

she felt most secure there.

She was immersed in a romantic novel, but Gaskin was bored. His wife had sent him logins to various streaming services but he had not felt like watching them.

British friends Julie Hardy and Francis McKay, who had been on a two-week tour of southern India, were staying at the same low-rise hotel near the airport.

On Sunday, they took a taxi to a nearby mall to buy medication, cheese and crackers, and to have lunch.

It was fun, they said. The nights are harder. On Saturday night, two alarms went off on Hardy's phone and she rushed to the hotel lobby in her nightie, which no one seemed to find surprising.

"I'm very reluctant to go to bed up here," she said. "I would rather be downstairs for as long as possible ... I can't relax, because I think something's going to happen in the night and I'm going to have to get up quickly and evacuate."

McKay was anxious too and, while it sounded dramatic, worried whether she would see her family again: "It's the unknown, and I've never been in a war zone."



Palestinian children displaced during the two-year Israeli offensive, are at their shelter at a tent camp in Gaza City.

## Gaza fuel running short after Israel closes borders amid Iran war

Reuters  
Cairo/Jerusalem

Gaza is rapidly running out of its limited fuel supply and stocks of food staples may become tight, officials say, after Israel blocked the entry of fuel and goods into the war-shattered territory, citing fighting with Iran.

Israel's military closed all Gaza border crossings on Saturday after announcing air strikes on Iran carried out jointly with the United States. Israeli authorities say the crossings cannot be operated safely during war and have not said how long they would be shut.

Gaza is wholly dependent on fuel brought in by trucks from Israel and Egypt and a lack of fresh supplies would put hospital operations at risk and threaten wa-

ter and sanitation services, local officials say. Most Palestinians in Gaza are internally displaced after Israel's two-year war with Hamas fighters.

"I expect we have maybe a couple of days' running time," said Karuna Herrmann, the Jerusalem director of United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), which manages fuel distribution in Gaza.

Amjad al-Shawa, a Palestinian aid leader in Gaza, who works with the UN and NGOs, estimated fuel supplies could last three or four days, while stocks of vegetables, flour, and other essentials could also soon run out if the crossings remain shut.

Reuters was unable to independently verify those estimates.

Israel's Cogat military agency, which controls access to Gaza,

said that enough food had been delivered to the territory since the start of an October truce to provide for the population.

"(The) existing stock is expected to suffice for an extended period," Cogat said, without elaborating. It declined to comment on potential fuel shortages.

The truce was part of broader US-backed plan to end the war that involves reopening the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, increasing the flow of aid into the enclave, and rebuilding it.

Hamada Abu Laila, a displaced Palestinian in Gaza, said the closures were stoking fear of a return of famine, which gripped parts of the enclave last year after Israel blocked aid deliveries for 11 weeks.

"Why is it our fault, in Gaza, with regional wars between Israel, Iran, and America? It is not our fault," Abu Laila said.

## At least 169 killed in South Sudan massacre

AFP  
Juba

At least 169 people have been killed and buried in a mass grave in northern South Sudan, two local officials said yesterday, as the country sees a dramatic increase in violence.

South Sudan, the world's youngest country, has been beset by civil war, poverty and massive corruption since it was formed in 2011.

The UN warns of a return to "all-out civil war" as a power-sharing deal between President Salva Kiir and his long-time rival, Riek Machar, has unravelled over the past year.

The desperately poor east African country also faces chronic ethnic violence and violent cattle-raiding.

The latest massacre happened early on Sunday in Abiemnom County near the Sudan border.

"A total of 169 bodies have been laid to rest in a mass grave," Elizabeth Achol, health minister in northern Ruweng administra-

tive area, told AFP by phone.

Local information minister James Monyluak gave the same toll, saying it included women, children and elderly people and could increase further as more bodies are found.

A diplomatic source, speaking to AFP anonymously, placed the death toll at 70 but said it could rise.

The government condemned "the barbaric attack" in a statement, confirming the killing of two senior local officials.

Minister of Information Ateny Wek Ateny said casualties include "both civilians and members of law enforcement" and that the incident would be investigated thoroughly.

Initial reports indicated the attack was carried out by an ethnic group, potentially in revenge for the killing of some traders, the diplomatic source added, though no group has claimed responsibility.

Many residents have fled to nearby villages, while others have sought protection at a local UN compound, Monyluak said.

"The security situation has since stabilised, with government security forces deployed and now in control of the area," he added.

UN peacekeepers were "temporarily sheltering some 1,000 civilians within our base in the area and providing emergency medical care to the injured", a spokesperson for the UN Mission in South Sudan said.

Clashes between government and opposition forces have focused on Jonglei state in the last two months, where some 280,000 have been displaced according to the UN.

Humanitarian workers have also been targeted.

Yesterday, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said 26 members of staff were missing following an air strike on one of its facilities.

The organisation has suspended medical services in Lankien and Pieri in Jonglei state.

UN rights chief Volker Turk voiced alarm Friday at the country's deteriorating situation, calling for swift action to avert a return to full-scale civil war.

## Zimbabwe frees nearly 4,000 inmates under presidential amnesty

AFP  
Harare

Zimbabwe yesterday began releasing nearly 4,000 inmates who were granted presidential amnesty in a bid to ease overcrowding in prisons.

The cabinet announced the amnesty in February on the same day it approved sweeping changes to the constitution as part of a plan to extend 83-year-old President Emmerson Mnangagwa's term till 2030.

"The nation should note that the release of the 3,978 beneficiaries begins today," Justice Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi said at a press conference in the capital Harare.

Zimbabwe's prisons held just over 24,000 inmates in the second quarter of 2025, according to recent available national data.

A total of 4,305 – including 223 women – will eventually be released, Ziyambi said, with the scheme "focusing on vulnerable groups and those who have demonstrated significant progress



Inmates at Harare Central Prison salute Zimbabwe Justice Minister Ziyambi Ziyambi as he bade them farewell moments before their release, yesterday.

in their rehabilitation". Among those freed was 23-year-old Tendai Chitsika, who had been serving a six-month sentence for theft and was only two months away from completing it.

"It was a learning curve for me. I'm a changed person and I promise to do good out there," he told AFP at Harare Central Prison, adding: "I want to thank the

president for this opportunity!" In the yard, hundreds of inmates sat divided into two groups.

On one side were those still in their orange prison uniforms, destined to remain behind. On the other, men who had already changed into civilian clothes waited to be processed for release and return home.

## US imposes sanctions on Rwanda military over east Congo fighting

Reuters  
Washington

The United States yesterday imposed sanctions on the Rwanda Defence Force and top military officials over their role in ongoing fighting in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and called for their immediate withdrawal from the mineral-rich region.

Rwanda has long rejected allegations from Congo, the United Nations and Western powers that it supports the AFC/M23 rebel group, which staged a lightning offensive last year and now holds more territory in eastern DRC than ever before.

But the US Treasury Department said yesterday that the rebels' gains would have been impossible without Rwandan backing. The State Department said separately that Rwanda's support had enabled "horrific human rights abuses." In an emailed statement to Reuters, Rwanda's government said the sanctions unjustly targeted only one party to the peace process and "misrepresent the reality and distort the facts of the conflict." The statement said Kigali was "fully committed to disengagement of its forces in tandem with the DRC implementing their obligations" under U.S.-

led mediation, but accused Congo of failing to keep promises such as ending support for militias.

A spokesperson for AFC/M23 did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The sanctioned Rwandan officials include army chief of staff Vincent Nyakarundi, as well as the chief of defense staff, the special operations force commander and the commander of the 5th Infantry Division, according to the Treasury Department.

Rwanda and Congo signed a peace deal in Washington in December as part of US President Donald Trump's push to broker peace in the region and attract billions of dollars in Western investment. Just days after that ceremony, however, AFC/M23 rebels entered the eastern Congo city of Uvira, near the Burundi border, in the war's biggest escalation for months.

They later pulled out under US pressure, though the Treasury Department said yesterday that the rebels' continued presence near Burundi's border "carries the risk of escalating the conflict into a broader regional war."

Fighting continues in eastern Congo on several fronts. Over the weekend Congolese officials accused AFC/M23 of launching a drone attack on the airport in the strategic city of Kisangani, hundreds of kilometres from any active front lines.

## Trump reveals intent for longer Iran war

AFP  
Washington

President Donald Trump signalled yesterday that US strikes on Iran could go much longer than originally predicted, as his administration sought to counter criticism about conflicting messages on the war's goals.

In his first public comments since launching the military operation, the president who long campaigned for "no new wars" laid out what he said were four key objectives for hitting Iran.

Trump also said that the timeframe he initially gave could drag out, raising fears among right-wing supporters in particular of a return the Middle Eastern entanglements he once opposed.

"From the beginning we projected four to five weeks, but we have capability to go far longer than that," Trump said at the start of a medal presentation event at the White House.

Trump however said that the United States was "substantially

ahead of our time projections", citing the killing of Iran's top leadership in the initial wave of strikes on Saturday.

The US president for the first time clearly laid out four explicit goals for Operation Epic Fury, saying it was the "last, best chance" to hit Washington's decades-long arch-foe. "First, we're destroying Iran's missile capabilities... Second, we're annihilating their navy... Third, we're ensuring that the world's number-one sponsor of fighters can never obtain a nuclear weapon.

"Finally we are ensuring the Iranian regime can't continue to arm, fund and direct fighter armies outside of their borders."

Trump had previously made different and sometimes contradictory comments on the conflict in a series of telephone interviews since the strikes began on Saturday.

He refused to rule out sending US troops into Iran in an interview with the *New York Post* yesterday. That could risk far higher casualties than the four service members killed so far.

## Congo-Brazzaville president says won't be in power 'forever'

AFP  
Dolisie

Congo-Brazzaville's 82-year-old President Denis Sassou Nguesso, who is standing for re-election this month, has said he will "not remain in power forever" but refused to be drawn on his possible successor.

Sassou Nguesso, who has led the oil-rich central African nation with a tight grip for a total of more than four decades, faces six other candidates in the March 15 presidential vote, in which the fragmented and muzzled opposition stands little chance of winning. The rules of democracy are not the same in a country where "50 % or more" of the population "cannot read or write", Sassou Nguesso said in an interview at his residence in the southern city of Dolisie.

"I see that, in Africa, the countries that have made certain progress are those that have enjoyed real stability, and even long-serving presidents in power," he said.

Congo-Brazzaville, a former French colony which gained independence in 1960, is rich in oil but nearly half of its 6m people live below the poverty line.

The Sassou Nguesso family has faced sev-



Incumbent President of the Republic of Congo Denis Sassou Nguesso looks on during an interview in Dolisie. (AFP)

eral investigations over complaints of embezzlement of public funds, notably in France, which the Congo-Brazzaville authorities have claimed are attempts to destabilise the country.

Pointing to the construction of roads, ports and universities, along with efforts to expand agricultural production, the president dismissed accusations of squandering the country's resources.

"These resources have been used to bring the country to its current level, which it did not have at all when our country gained inde-

pendence," he said. "We want young people to understand that all the work we are doing is also to prepare the conditions for their arrival. Because we will not remain in power forever, and their turn will come," he said.

The career military officer first led Congo under a one-party system from 1979 to 1992 before losing the country's first multi-party elections to former prime minister Pascal Lissouba, whom Sassou Nguesso then overthrew in a civil war in 1997.

His political opponents have systematically contested all his election victories since 2002.

NGOs and civil society groups regularly condemn violations of civil liberties and threats against political opponents.

Two candidates who ran in the 2016 elections – General Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko and Andre Okombi Salissa – are still being held after convictions of "undermining national security" in 2018 and 2019.

Scoffing at the word "opponents" to describe the men, Sassou Nguesso insisted they were preparing an armed insurrection against him. "They are not going to die in prison. One day we will release them," he added.

If successful at the polls, it would be Sassou Nguesso's last five-year term allowed by the constitution. But he declined to speak of a successor.

# US 'not veering into a new, endless war'

Reuters/AFP  
Washington

The Pentagon has played down concerns that the US attack on Iran risked plunging the United States into a new, open-ended conflict in the Middle East, even as officials declined to offer a timeline and cautioned they expected more US casualties.

In the first Pentagon briefing since the conflict began, US General Dan Caine, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters that it would take time to achieve US military objectives in Iran.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth listed those objectives in primarily military terms, saying that the Pentagon sought to destroy Iran's navy and expansive missile capabilities that could shield any covert attempts by Tehran to later build a nuclear weapon.

Iran denies it wants nuclear weapons. "To the media outlets and political left screaming 'ENDLESS WARS' - stop. This is not Iraq. This is not endless," said Hegseth, a former Fox News host and Army veteran who served in Iraq from 2005 to 2006 and deployed to Afghanistan in 2012.

Still, Hegseth mocked a reporter who asked about the timeline for the campaign, saying that Trump would not be pinned down, even after the US president suggested on Sunday that strikes against Iran could go on for the next four weeks.

The US and Israeli attacks have triggered a massive Iranian retaliatory response but many of the most dangerous drones and missiles have been intercepted by US military forces and US allies in the region.

Still, some of the attacks succeeded in inflicting US losses.

The US military said a fourth US service member died on Monday as a result of injuries in the Iran operations.

Six US service members were



Hegseth speaks while General Caine listens during a news conference at the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. -AFP

also injured on Monday when Kuwaiti air defences shot down their three F-15 fighter jets by mistake.

"We expect to take additional losses," Caine told the briefing, adding the United States would work to minimise US losses but "this is major combat operations".

Democrats have accused Trump of risking American lives for a war of choice, and have taken aim at his arguments for abandoning peace talks that mediator Oman said still held promise.

Trump has argued, without presenting evidence, that Iran was on track to soon secure the ability to strike the United States with a ballistic missile.

His missile claim was not backed by US intelligence reports, and appeared to be exaggerated, sources familiar with the reports have told Reuters.

Trump administration officials acknowledged in closed-door briefings with congressional staff on Sunday that there was also no intelligence suggesting Iran planned to attack US forces first, two people familiar with the matter said.

That appeared to contradict remarks by senior administration officials on Saturday that Trump de-

cidated to launch the attacks in part because of indicators that Iranians might strike US forces in the Middle East "perhaps preemptively".

Trump, one of the officials said, was not going to "sit back and allow American forces in the region to absorb attacks".

Hegseth said there were no US troops on the ground. But he also declined to rule that possibility out.

"We are not going into the exercise of (saying) what we will or will not do," Hegseth said. "President Trump ensures that our enemies understand we'll go as far as we need to go to advance American interests."

"But we're not dumb about it," he stressed. "You don't have to roll 200,000 people in there and stay 20 years."

He sought to differentiate the Iran operation from past long-running US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, saying that the war is not an effort to build democracy in Iran.

"No stupid rules of engagement, no nation building quagmire, no democracy-building exercise. No politically correct wars. We fight to win and we don't waste time or lives," the Pentagon chief said.

# Bolsonaro's son rallies the right as thousands protest Brazil govt

AFP  
Sao Paulo

Flavio Bolsonaro, son of Brazil's jailed former leader, sought on Sunday to rally and unite conservatives ahead of October elections in which he hopes to follow in his father's footsteps.

Thousands of supporters of former president Jair Bolsonaro demonstrated in several Brazilian cities, calling for him to be freed from prison and slamming leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's government.

In Sao Paulo, protesters held up signs saying "Free Bolsonaro" or "Get out Lula".

Some wore hats declaring "Flavio Bolsonaro 2026".

Far-right former president Bolsonaro is serving a 27-year jail term for multiple charges linked to a failed coup plot following his 2022 re-election loss.

In December, he anointed Flavio - a Rio de Janeiro senator - as his political heir.

The move sparked mixed reactions within the Bolsonaro family as well as the country's powerful conservative movement, with two right-wing governors launching their own presidential bids.

While even Flavio at first appeared unsure about his candidacy, at one point saying that he might abandon his presidential aspirations for a "price", he has leaned into the role and slowly risen in opinion polls.

Lula, 80, is seeking a fourth term in the October 4 general election.

An AtlasIntel poll last week showed that if Lula and Flavio faced off in a second-round election they would be tied with 46.2% and 46.3%, respectively.

Flavio, 44, sought to present a united front at Sunday's rally, appearing alongside potential rival candidates and social-media savvy lawmaker Nikolas Ferreira, who has become the most visible figure of the right.

"Together, we're not competing for votes. We're here thinking about what's best" for the country,



Flavio Bolsonaro gestures to supporters of his father during a rally in Sao Paulo. -AFP

Flavio told a crowd which University of Sao Paulo researchers estimated at around 20,000.

He vowed to work to overturn Lula's veto of legislation passed by Congress that would drastically reduce Bolsonaro's prison sentence.

Flavio said he had promised his father that he would walk alongside him into the presidential palace when he takes office in 2027.

His brother, Eduardo Bolsonaro, addressed protesters by video from the United States, where he lives, highlighting "the importance of being side by side" ahead of an election which would be "perhaps the quickest way for us to truly achieve justice" in the form of amnesty for his father.

On Sunday, Jair Bolsonaro distributed a handwritten note from prison saying that he regrets "the criticism coming from the right itself, directed at some colleagues and at my wife", Michelle.

Earlier this month Eduardo Bolsonaro accused his stepmother and the lawmaker Nikolas Ferreira of showing tepid support for Flavio's candidacy on social media.

"Support must come through dialogue and persuasion, never through pressure or attacks among allies," said Jair Bolsonaro.

# Melania Trump to chair UN Security Council

US First Lady Melania Trump is slated to chair a UN Security Council meeting, an appearance that was announced last week before the United States launched its war against Iran.

Her office said the former model would "make history at the United Nations, taking the gavel as the United States assumes the Security Council Presidency to emphasise education's role in advancing tolerance and world peace".

Stephane Dujarric, spokesperson for the UN secretary-general, confirmed that Melania's event would mark the first time a first lady - or first gentleman - has presided over a Security Council meeting.

The United States will hold the Council's rotating presidency in March.

Political and financial tensions have mounted between the United States and the United Nations in recent years, with Washington chafing at its role as the main

contributor to the cash-strapped UN's budget.

The world body has recently launched a reform programme, and just a few days ago Washington paid \$160m into the organisation's regular budget - after paying nothing in 2025.

However, the United States is still \$4bn in arrears to the UN for its regular budget and its peace-keeping budget, with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warning of imminent financial collapse. -AFP

# Sinners wins top prize at SAG awards, Harrison Ford honoured

AFP  
Los Angeles

*Sinners* scooped the top prize at the Screen Actors Guild (SAG) gala in Los Angeles on Sunday, tightening the race to the Oscars with two weeks to go before Hollywood's awards season finale.

The honour at the newly rebranded Actor Awards recognises the ensemble cast of a film - a decision that sometimes, but not always, presages Academy Award best picture glory.

Ryan Coogler's vampire fable about America's difficult racial history, has stormed through awards season, garnering a record 16 Oscar nominations.

"We brought our hearts, we brought our souls, we brought our spirits to this endeavour," said Delroy Lindo, who plays blues musician player Delta Slim, as he accepted the award on behalf of the cast. "This project is anointed. And from that standpoint, we are all anointed to be a part of this incredible journey created by the genius Ryan Coogler."

It was the first time *Sinners* seized a top prize at a pre-Oscars gala, which have so far been largely swept by *One Battle After Another*, including at the

Producers Guild Awards on Saturday.

Paul Thomas Anderson's *One Battle* is a political thriller starring Leonardo DiCaprio as a former revolutionary forced back into the game when his teenage daughter goes missing.

*Sinners* may have had the upper hand with SAG-AFTRA, which represents more than 160,000 members - but that may not hold true in two weeks' time for the Academy Awards.

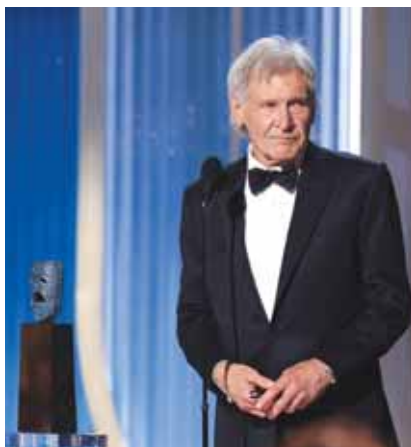
"I'm not as confident that it's going to win the best picture Oscar," Scott Feinberg, awards columnist for *The Hollywood Reporter*, told AFP ahead of the gala, after predicting the SAG award win. "Those two awards have gone to different films just about as often as they have gone to the same film."

Voting for the Academy Awards does not close until Thursday, meaning Sunday's results could be influential.

For best leading male actor, Michael B Jordan pulled off a surprise win in a category that Timothee Chalamet (*Marty Supreme*) has dominated all season.

"I'm so honoured and privileged to be nominated in categories with people and actors and humans that I love," he said. "This ride has been unbelievable."

For best leading female actor, there were



Harrison Ford accepting the Screen Actors Guild Life Achievement Award onstage during the 32nd Annual Actor Awards at the Shrine Auditorium and Expo Hall in Los Angeles. -AFP

no surprises when Jessie Buckley's name was announced.

The Irish actress, who plays the grief-stricken wife of William Shakespeare mourning their son in *Hamnet* has so far won nearly every prize on offer.

"I have been categorically changed by

so many people in this room and beyond," an emotional Buckley said. "To get to work with my heart in my hand and stand beside my brilliant, daring friends who show me their heart - I mean, what a way to spend a life."

The race for the Oscar for best supporting performers became even cloudier after Sunday's gala.

Amy Madigan took home the statuette for best supporting actress for her role as the sinister aunt in horror flick *Weapons*, following her success at the Critics Choice Awards.

"I wasn't expecting this, but it does really mean a lot to me from my peers," she said.

The major awards in this category this season have gone to different people - the Golden Globe to Teyana Taylor in *One Battle After Another*, and the BAFTA to Wunmi Mosaku for *Sinners*.

For the men, Sean Penn - who was not at the ceremony - won for his wild turn as Colonel Lockjaw in *One Battle After Another*, following on from his BAFTA win.

The Critics Choice Awards recognised Jacob Elordi for *Frankenstein*, and the Golden Globe went to Stellan Skarsgard in *Sentimental Value*, who did not even get a SAG nod.

The television side of the awards was dominated by Apple TV's Hollywood satire *The Studio* which won three statuettes, including a posthumous award for Catherine O'Hara, who died in January.

Series co-creator Seth Rogen, who accepted the award on her behalf, said he felt fortunate to have spent time with the actress - a Hollywood stalwart known for her work in *Home Alone* and *Schitt's Creek*.

"Something that I've just been marveling at over the last few weeks was really her ability to be generous and kind and gracious, while never ever minimizing her own talents," he said.

The evening also honoured veteran Harrison Ford with a life achievement award for memorable roles that have included Han Solo in the *Star Wars* franchise and Indiana Jones.

"I feel incredibly grateful for this kind attention. But to be clear, I also am quite humbled," said Ford, whose big break came in George Lucas's *American Graffiti* in 1973.

"I'm in a room of actors, many of whom are here because they've been nominated to receive a prize for their amazing work, while I'm here to receive a prize for being alive," the 83-year-old said to laughs.

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# Nepal rivals rally on final day of election campaign

AFP  
Jhapa, Nepal

Nepal's election campaign entered its final day yesterday, six months after deadly anti-corruption protests toppled the government, with rival leaders making a last push in a tightly contested race.

The Himalayan republic will elect a new parliament on Thursday, replacing the interim government that has led the country of 30m people since the September 2025 uprising in which at least 77 people were killed.

Sushila Karki, who is serving as prime minister until the vote, called for "peace and harmony" in a broadcast to the nation yesterday.

Karki, a former chief justice, also urged all to vote to "move the country forward on the path of political stability and prosperity". "It is only with your active participation that our democracy will survive," she added.

Two weeks of campaigning have showcased a wave of younger candidates promising to tackle Nepal's woeful economy, challenging veteran politicians who have dominated for two decades and argue that their experience guarantees stability and security.

Among the key figures is KP Sharma Oli, the 74-year-old Marxist leader ousted as prime minister last year.

"Other candidates are all new, they have no experience, nothing," Oli told reporters as he campaigned yesterday.

But he faces a high-profile challenge in his home constituency from former Kathmandu mayor Balendra Shah, a 35-year-old



Polling officials carry ballot boxes and other materials at Damak in Jhapa district yesterday ahead of parliamentary elections in Nepal.

rapper-turned-politician widely known as Balen.

Their constituency of Jhapa-5 — a mix of towns and farming settlements in Nepal's eastern plains, with the world's highest peaks on the horizon — has emerged as a crucial battleground.

A local defeat for either man would likely end his bid to become prime minister.

"We have had a difficult few years with old leadership, and we need new energy," 50-year-old bus driver Pawan Jha told AFP, as he attended Shah's rally in Jhapa. "The protests were important to bring about change."

Shah, dressed in a sharp-cut black suit and sunglasses, waving from a car he was driving himself through farmlands of Jhapa, ar-

rived at his rally to cheers, whistles and thumping music.

Oli, speaking to AFP, blamed "anarchic forces" for the violence that led to his removal and denied ordering security forces to kill protesters during the unrest.

Shah, from the centrist Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), has cast himself as a symbol of youth-driven political change.

"Gen Z's number one demand is good governance, because there is a high level of corruption in the country," Shah told AFP.

But he is not the only one wooing the youth vote.

Aspiring prime minister Gagan Thapa, 49, the new head of the country's oldest party, Nepali Congress, told AFP he wanted to end the "old age" club

of revolving veteran leaders.

Thapa, a former health minister who took charge in January, said he offers voters the "right mix of energy and experience".

The last day of campaigning coincides with Holi, the Hindu festival of colours, with some candidates combining celebrations with their rallies.

Nearly 19m registered voters will elect 275 members of the House of Representatives, the lower chamber of parliament — 165 directly, with a further 110 chosen via a party-list proportional representation.

Analysts say the vote is unlikely to deliver an outright majority for any single party.

The youth-led protests in September were triggered by a brief social media ban, but were fuelled by anger at economic stagnation and an ageing elite seen as out of touch.

The World Bank estimates 82% of Nepal's workforce is in informal employment, with GDP per capita at \$1,447 in 2024.

Millions are forced to seek work abroad — and their remittances make up the equivalent of around a third of Nepal's GDP.

"Unemployment is a big issue, that needs to be resolved," said shopkeeper Mamata Devi Goswami, 49, who said she would vote for change.

"The youth should work here and earn their living, rather than go out of the country."

Over two days in September, 77 people were killed, scores were injured, and hundreds of buildings were set on fire — including parliament, courts and a Hilton hotel.

It was the country's worst violence since a decade-long civil war ended in 2006.



South Korea's President Lee Jae-myung shakes hands with Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Singapore, yesterday.

## Lee holds summit with Singapore's Wong on AI, tech co-operation

Reuters  
Seoul

South Korean President Lee Jae-myung met Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong yesterday for a summit aimed at expanding co-operation in fields such as artificial intelligence and nuclear energy, during a state visit to the city-state.

At a joint press conference, Lee and Wong announced the start of negotiations to upgrade the countries' existing free trade agreement, which took effect in 2006.

The countries also signed five memoranda of understanding (MoUs) for co-operation in fields such as small modular reactors (SMRs) for nuclear power generation, AI and other scientific fields such as quantum and

space satellites, South Korea's Blue House said.

Other partnerships will include co-operation on investment between Singapore's sovereign wealth fund Temasek and its asset management unit Sevia Group with state-run Korea Development Bank, Lee told the press conference.

"Singapore is a meaningful place where the historic US-North Korea summit was held in 2018," Lee said. "I trust that you will continue to play a constructive role for peace on the Korean Peninsula and in the region."

Wong and Lee exchanged views on the impact of the situation in the Middle East, including on global security, energy, and supply chains, and agreed on their hope that stability and peace would be restored, Lee said.



Relatives gather around a bus carrying prisoners being released to mark Peasants' Day outside Insein prison in Yangon yesterday.

## Myanmar grants amnesty to over 7,000 prisoners

AFP  
Yangon

Myanmar's military junta granted amnesty yesterday to more than 7,000 prisoners convicted of financing, sheltering or propagandising for a "terrorist group", a designation it has used to outlaw pro-democracy factions opposing its rule.

Thousands of dissenting civilians have been swept into jails since Myanmar's military snatched power in a 2021 coup, ending a decade-long experiment with democracy and detaining elected figurehead Aung San Suu Kyi.

Pro-democracy activists backing Suu Kyi and armed groups chal-

lenging the military in a civil war have been labelled "terrorist" outfits, and far-reaching laws punish association with life prison terms and possible death sentences.

A government notice said junta chief Min Aung Hlaing ordered the releases of more than 7,300 prisoners convicted under counter-terrorism provisions.

They include laws forbidding "financing of terrorism", harbouring "any terrorist group" and the "exhortation, persuasion, propaganda, recruitment" of any person to join such groups.

Media monitors have criticised the junta for weaponising the legislation to muzzle journalists and social media users critical of their takeover. It was not immediately clear which groups the prisoners

had been convicted of association with.

In recent months, the junta has announced pardons for some political crimes in what analysts describe as a bid to soften its image amidst a handover to a nominally civilian government after elections concluded in January.

But with Suu Kyi still jailed, her party dissolved and the dominant pro-military party securing a walk-over win, critics have derided the transition as a publicity exercise to rebrand the junta's rule.

An AFP journalist outside Yangon's Insein Prison — Myanmar's most infamous lock-up, renowned for alleged rights abuses — saw around 300 prisoners being bussed out of the compound in a convoy yesterday morning.

## Malaysia bid to limit premier to two terms suffers setback

AFP  
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia's ruling coalition suffered a setback in its bid to pass legislation restricting the prime minister to a maximum of two terms, after it failed to get a two-thirds majority from lawmakers.

The Southeast Asian nation currently has no cap on how many terms a premier can serve.

Lower house speaker Johari Abdul said 146 MPs backed the highly anticipated bill, leaving it two votes shy of the two-thirds majority of 148 required to amend the constitution. A total of 44 MPs abstained, while another 32 were absent.

Lawmakers across the aisle backed term limits in the debate, but several flagged unresolved issues on calculating the cap and handling the transition once a prime minister reaches it.

Ahead of the vote, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said the suggested term limits "are not a denial of leadership opportunities, but rather an effort to ensure that this country continues to be guided by institutions that function and are not tied to any individual".

"In fact, this amendment strengthens the constitutional structure through a clear provision to strengthen the country's system of checks and balances," Anwar told lawmakers.

Former leader Mahathir Mohamad held office for 24 years across two stints — from 1981 to 2003 and again between 2018 and 2020.

Anwar in January announced a push for a two-term limit amid renewed calls for him to tackle corruption and improve governance.

In its election manifesto in 2022, Anwar's ruling Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition pledged a two-term

limit on the premiership.

But there has been criticism about the slow pace of reform, local media reports said, with the latest move seen as an attempt to win back urban voters in the run-up to general elections slated for next year.

Anwar last month said that if the law was implemented, it would apply to him first.

He added that a 10-year period was sufficient for those in office to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

If the government chooses to press ahead, the bill would now have to be revised and reintroduced at a future parliamentary sitting, constitutional lawyer Lim Wei Jiet told AFP.

"I'm not sure whether the government is going to reintroduce it soon... it must have been a bit embarrassing on their part that it was not able to be passed, they may not want to revisit this episode again," Lim said.

## North Korea's Kim inspects cement plant after new goals at key party congress

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un visited a cement factory on Sunday and called for continued production to meet new goals set during a recent key party congress, state media KCNA said yesterday.

North Korea held a week-long Ninth Congress of the ruling Workers' Party in late February,

during which Kim emphasised the importance of continuing construction projects such as Hwasong district in Pyongyang "for strengthening national power." Kim lauded the cement factory workers for increased production that had made construction projects possible, KCNA said.

Kim's publicly reported appearances went up from about 70 in 2021 to 153 in 2025, according to the think tank Asan Institute for Policy Studies, partly as Kim emphasised economic growth by inspecting the completion of new building projects such as hotels, residential blocks and factories. (Reuters)



This picture taken on Sunday and released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday shows North Korean leader Kim Jong-un (3rd right) inspecting the Sangwon Cement Complex in North Hwanghae province.

## Australia says 115,000 nationals stuck in Middle East

Australia said yesterday it has 115,000 nationals in the Middle East who are unable to fly out because of airspace closures during the conflict unleashed by US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

The government said it hoped commercial flights would resume to help Australians in the region to flee.

"We have about 115,000 Australians in the region. So that is a lot of people. The best way to get them home would be for commercial flights to return, because that is

at scale," Foreign Minister Penny Wong told reporters. "There's conflict in the region. We've seen loss of life across the region, and airspace is not open. So, whether or not it is an Australian flight or a commercial flight, the flights are not able to occur." Asked if Australia would repatriate people, she said the government wanted to see if commercial flights would resume and that it was "engaging" with airlines. The government set up an online crisis portal to register citizens and

permanent residents, as well as their immediate families, who were in Israel, Iran, Qatar or the United Arab Emirates, she said. The foreign minister said US-Israeli strikes that killed Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei were a matter for the US and Israel to explain. "No one mourns the death of the supreme leader," she added. "This is a man who was responsible for a regime that brutally murdered its own people in an attempt to retain authority." (AFP)

# Canada, India strike deals on rare earth, uranium

AFP  
New Delhi

India and Canada yesterday reached a string of agreements, including on critical mineral co-operation and a "landmark" uranium supply deal for nuclear power, the countries' leaders said in New Delhi.

The pacts, which also covered technology and promoting the use of renewable energy, were announced after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney hailed a fresh start in the relationship between their nations.

"Our ties have seen a new energy, mutual trust, and positivity," Modi said.

Ties effectively collapsed in 2023 after Ottawa accused New Delhi of orchestrating a deadly campaign against Sikh activists in Canada, accusations India rejected.

Carney's visit — his first to India since taking office last year — is not only aimed to reset strained ties, but also to push efforts to diversify trade beyond the US.

"There has been more engagement between the Canadian and Indian governments in the last



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney speaks during a joint press statement with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi after their meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

year than there has been in more than two decades combined," Carney said in New Delhi, in a speech alongside Modi.

"This is not merely the renewal of a relationship. It is the expansion of a valued partnership with new ambition, focus, and foresight, a partnership between two confident countries charting our own course for the future."

Energy-hungry India — the world's most populous country with 1.4bn people — has ambitious plans to expand nuclear

power capacity from its current eight to 100 gigawatts by 2047.

"In civil nuclear energy, we have struck a landmark deal for long-term uranium supply," Modi said, adding the countries would also work together on small modular reactors and advanced reactors.

Carney said they had agreed the launch of a "strategic energy partnership with significant potential" including CAN\$2.6bn (\$1.9bn) uranium supply agreement "supporting India's nuclear ambitions".

Carney added that Canada was "well positioned to contribute, as a reliable supplier" of liquefied natural gas (LNG), from its west coast.

"As India seeks access to critical minerals for its manufacturing, its clean-tech, and its nuclear plants, Canada's resource base and world-leading companies position it as a strategic partner," he said.

The two countries agreed last year to resume negotiations on a proposed free-trade deal, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

"Our target is to reach \$50bn in bilateral trade," Modi said. "This is why we have decided to finalise a comprehensive economic partnership soon," he added, saying it "will open new opportunities to invest and create jobs in both countries".

Carney said he wanted to reach a deal on the "ambitious agreement" by the end of the year to "reduce barriers and increase certainty", also said the nations were renewing security co-operation through a "new defence partnership".

Canadian pension and wealth funds have already invested \$73bn in India.

## Ramadan prayers at Jama Masjid



People pray after eating their Iftar meal during the holy month of Ramadan at Jama Masjid (Grand Mosque) in the old quarters of Delhi, India, yesterday.

## India to take steps to ensure local fuel supplies amid Mideast crisis

India will take all necessary steps to ensure the availability of major petroleum products at affordable rates, the federal oil ministry said in a post on social media platform X yesterday.

The government is monitoring the evolving situation triggered by geopolitical developments in the Middle East, it said, after a meeting with company officials to review the supply of crude oil, liquefied petroleum gas, and other refined products. (Reuters)

## Starmer defends Iran strikes stance after Trump criticism

AFP  
London

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer defended yesterday his decision to keep Britain out of the US and Israel's initial strikes against Iran following criticism from President Donald Trump.

Trump told Britain's *Daily Telegraph* he was "very disappointed" with Starmer's initial refusal to let Washington use British military bases in the US-Israeli war against Iran, launched on Saturday.

"President Trump has expressed his disagreement with our decision not to get involved in the initial strikes, but it is my duty to judge what is in Britain's national interest," Starmer told parliament.

"That is what I have done and I stand by it," he added.

After initially refusing to have any role in the strikes, Starmer on Sunday announced that he had agreed to a US request to use British military bases for a "specific and limited defensive purpose".

His Downing Street office said the prime minister took the decision after Iran fired missiles over the weekend that put British interests and people "at risk".

"We all remember the mistakes of Iraq, and we have learnt those lessons. Any UK actions must always have a lawful basis and a viable thought-through plan," he told lawmakers.

The prime minister also said that British military bases in Cyprus "are not being used by US

bombers" during the US-Israeli war with Iran.

Britain's Akrotiri air force base on Cyprus came under attack by an unmanned Iranian drone that hit the base's runway.

Starmer said the strike "was not in response to any decision that we have taken," adding that the British government believed the drone "was launched prior to our announcement".

Iran's approach is becoming "more reckless and more dangerous", Starmer said.

"They are working ruthlessly and deliberately through a plan to strike, not only military targets, but also economic targets in the region, with no regard for civilian casualties. That is the situation we face today and to which we must respond."

## UK working on plans to help its citizens leave Gulf countries

Reuters  
London

British foreign minister Yvette Cooper said yesterday that her team was looking at all options, including evacuation, to help hundreds of thousands of UK citizens leave Gulf countries which are now being targeted by Iran.

There are an estimated 300,000 British citizens — residents, families on holidays, and some in transit — in Gulf countries, and 102,000 people in the region have registered their presence with the UK government since the attacks started on Saturday.

When asked whether she was planning an evacuation from

those countries, Cooper said officials were setting up "support systems".

"We're working on every possible option," she told Sky News. "We have to recognise the scale of this as well, and also the fact that there are strikes still underway."

Some 240,000 British nationals live in Dubai alone, according to 2024 estimates by relocation firm John Mason International Movers.

For now, British nationals should follow local advice and shelter in place, Cooper said, adding that she wanted airspace to be reopened.

In the meantime, she said her department had sent rapid-deployment teams to the region to work with the travel industry.

Cooper also confirmed an unmanned Iranian-made drone had struck the runway of a British Royal Air Force base at Akrotiri in Cyprus, but provided no further details.

Global air travel was heavily disrupted over the weekend as major Middle Eastern airports, including Dubai and Abu Dhabi, stayed closed after US and Israeli strikes that killed Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, leaving tens of thousands of passengers stranded.

British Airways, Virgin Atlantic and Emirates, as well as other airlines, have all cancelled their flights from London to Dubai.

Aviation data firm Cirium estimates roughly 90,000 passengers a day transit through Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha.



An emergency vehicle passes by the entrance of RAF Akrotiri, a British sovereign base in Cyprus, which was hit by an unmanned drone overnight, causing limited damage, yesterday.

## Minister says UK 'not at war' after Iranian drone hits Cyprus base

AFP  
London

An Iranian drone hit the runway of a UK air force base in Cyprus yesterday hours after Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Britain would not join the US-Israeli conflict with Iran.

He said that mistakes of the Iraq war had been "learned".

Starmer announced late on Sunday that he had agreed to the United States' request to use British bases for "specific and limited defensive purpose".

Middle East Minister Hamish Falconer insisted yesterday that "the UK is not at war".

"Let me be really clear: the UK took a deliberate decision not to be part of the first wave of strikes conducted by the US and Israeli governments.

"But in the face of reckless attacks from Iran on a whole range of allies in the region... we took the decision, as the Prime Minister announced last night, to support

the US's request to use our bases in order to conduct defensive actions," he added.

Foreign Minister Yvette Cooper said the strike on the Royal Air Force base at Akrotiri had been "specifically on the airport runway" and that the government was "working on every possible option" to help its nationals in the region return home if needed.

"There's an estimated 300,000 British citizens in Gulf countries that have now been targeted by Iran, including countries where now airspace is closed," she told Sky News.

She urged nationals to register with UK authorities and follow local advice.

Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides said the strike took place just after midnight (2200 GMT) when "a Shahed unmanned aerial vehicle crashed into the military facilities of the British Bases in Akrotiri, causing minor material damage".

The RAF Akrotiri base is a British overseas territory near the

southern coastal city of Limassol. More than 100,000 UK nationals have so far registered their presence in the Middle East, according to Cooper.

Scottish teacher Felicity Flanagan, who lives in Dubai, said she had been sheltering at home since Saturday when she heard loud bangs while at the beach with friends.

"Moments later, we actually saw what we believed to be shrapnel from the missile then fall into the water in front of us," she told the BBC's Radio Scotland. She said she was now following British embassy advice not to venture out.

Starmer, speaking late on Sunday before news of the strike on RAF Akrotiri, said the decision not to be involved with the initial strikes was "deliberate".

"I want to be very clear: we all remember the mistakes of Iraq. And we have learned those lessons," he said in a video address posted on X. "We were not involved in the initial strikes on Iran and we will not join offensive action now," he added.

## Sri Lankan drivers queue to fill up in wake of Iran turmoil

Reuters  
Colombo

Long queues formed at fuel stations across Sri Lanka yesterday as the conflict in Iran fed fears of oil shortages in the island nation, which is still recovering from a deep financial crisis.

The nation of 22mn people is clawing its way back from a crisis brought about by a record short-fall of dollars in 2022, supported by a \$2.9bn loan programme from the International Monetary Fund.

At the height of its problems Sri Lanka faced a massive fuel shortage for months that sparked huge protests and the eventual ousting of former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa in July 2022.

Yesterday, people lined up at fuel stations across the island as US and Israeli strikes on Iran stoked fears of another fuel shortage.

Many people were panic buying despite assurances from the authorities that Sri Lanka had enough stocks of diesel and petrol to last 35 and 37 days, respectively — the full amount that the country usually stores.

"There is fuel. People are panicking because of the war and they are themselves creating these lines. So people are just flocking to the stations, but there is enough fuel in Sri Lanka," said Mohammed Aslem, a 36-year-old three-wheeler driver standing in a fuel queue in Colombo.

Sri Lanka spent \$3.83bn on fuel imports last year, according to government data, with most

shipments arriving from India and Singapore.

"Sri Lanka does not have enough storage facilities to store fuel beyond the next few weeks, but there are sufficient confirmed shipments till the end of this month," said S. Rajakaruna, chairman of the state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corp told reporters.

The CPC also stepped up distribution, releasing more than 5mn litres of fuel despite yesterday being a public holiday, Rajakaruna added.

Police have ordered stations to stop dispensing fuel into cans and have warned of legal action against hoarders.

Lanka IOC PLC, a unit of Indian Oil Corp, and China's Sinopec who also operate fuel stations reassured the public of adequate supply.



Vehicles queue at a fuel station as concerns grow over fuel supply following US-Israel conflict with Iran, in Ratnapura, Sri Lanka, yesterday.



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**GULF TIMES**

# Investors brace for a bigger backlash from ME conflict

From being just a fringe risk, conflict in the Middle East has become a top worry for investors unsettled by the prospect of a power struggle in Iran and a protracted regional war, with ramifications for everything from global trade to inflation. US-Israel strikes killed Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, sowing chaos as Iran struck back at Gulf cities, airlines halted flights and tankers carrying oil and other products suspended transit through the key Strait of Hormuz.

The first risk for markets is the uncertainty over what happens next in Iran, given the complexities of the Islamic Republic's ruling system, the ideological nature of its support base, and the power of its Revolutionary Guards.

That then complicates the outlook for oil prices which have been rising for weeks, but are now hostage to what oil-producing countries do and how passage of tankers through the Middle East is affected, with big implications for inflation worldwide and even the safety of bonds hitherto deemed havens.

## The first risk for markets is the uncertainty over what happens next in Iran, given the complexities of the Islamic Republic's ruling system

"Middle East tail risks have increased. Markets will reprice from geopolitical shock to regime risk shock, prolonged conflict, not just retaliation, unless Iran says it wants to negotiate," said Rong Ren Goh, a portfolio manager in the fixed income team at Eastspring Investments in Singapore. A bigger risk, analysts said, is complacency in markets that have assumed the fallout would be limited, like it was during last June's "12-Day War" in Iran or during Russia's numerous attacks on Ukraine, and dismissive of any comparisons to Iran's 1979 regime change.

Brent crude jumped around 8% on Monday for a gain of nearly 30% so far this year, and investors have already purchased US Treasuries and gold as hedges for a variety of

risks, including Middle East tensions and President Donald Trump's erratic policies. Gold had a record run last year and is up 24% so far in 2026. The main US stock index is up just 0.5%. "History argues strongly in favour of selling geopolitical risk premium when hostilities start," Barclays analysts said in a note on Saturday. "What worries us is that investors have now learned this pattern and might be underpricing a scenario where containment fails."

Barclays analysts point to other factors that could exacerbate a selloff should the conflict escalate, such as existing concerns around the artificial intelligence boom and private credit markets. "We would recommend not buying any immediate dip - risk-reward doesn't seem compelling. If equities pull back enough, say over 10% in the S&P 500, there is likely to come a time to buy. But not yet," they wrote.

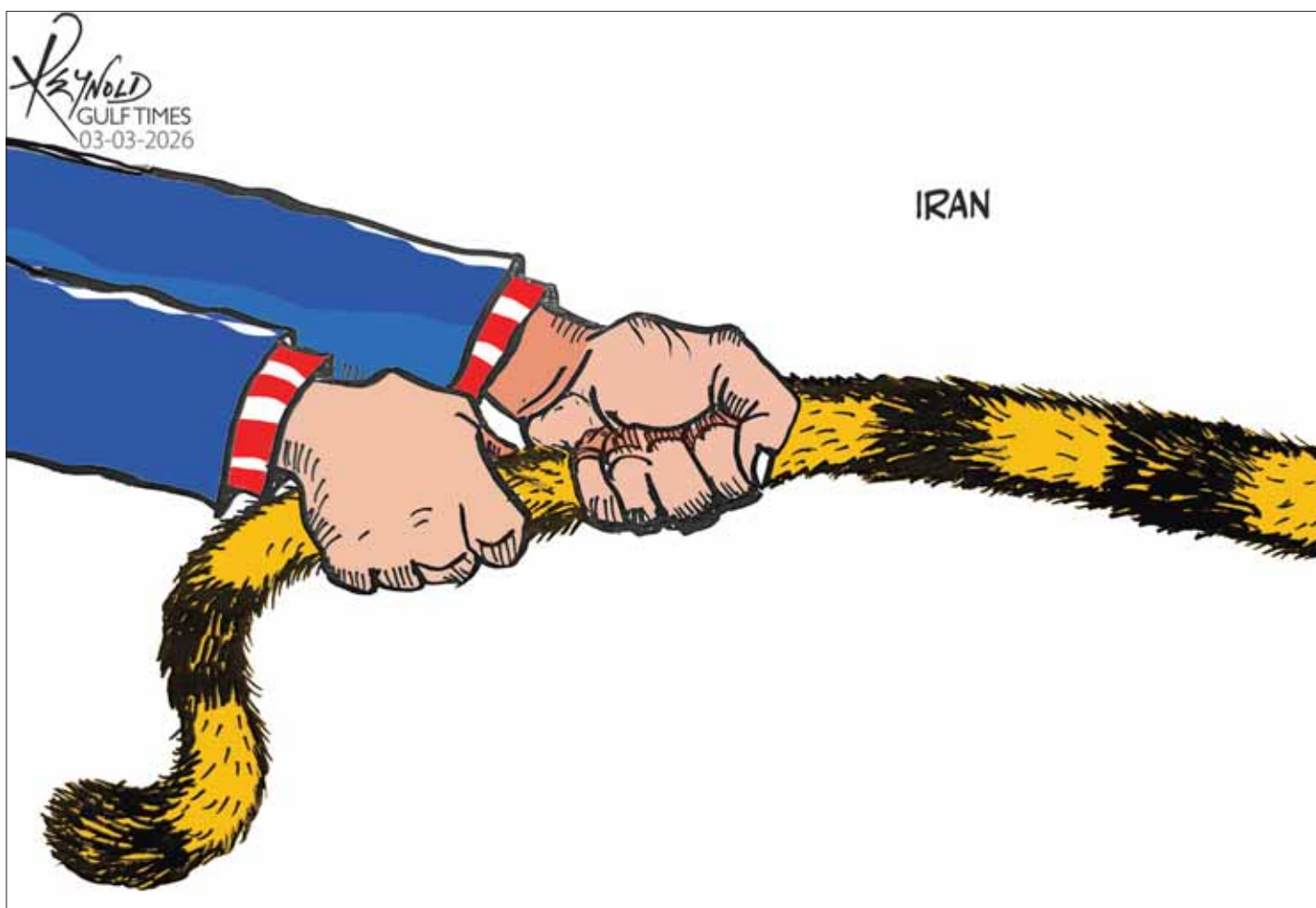
Early on Monday, as oil gained, safe assets rose - with the dollar broadly higher, gold up about 1.6% and a bid for Treasuries. Benchmark Brent crude futures were up about 8.5% at \$79.05 a barrel and S&P 500 futures fell 1%. "The markets are prepared for a limited surgical strike. What is not priced in is a major strike to decapitate the regime," said Charles Myers, chairman and founder of Signum Global Advisors, a geopolitical investment consulting firm. He was speaking before the weekend US-Israel strikes.

William Jackson, chief emerging markets economist at Capital Economics, expects a prolonged conflict affecting supply could cause oil prices to jump to around \$100, potentially adding 0.6-0.7 percentage points to global inflation. "In my view, the market has already been overestimating inflationary forces, so I don't think this will change much. There will be more impact on Europe than US given the closer proximity of Hormuz oil and gas post-Russia," said Tariq Dennison, a wealth adviser at Zurich-based GFM Asset Management. "Maybe a slight short term uptick on gold, but gold has already priced in maximum geopolitical uncertainty."

Eastspring's Goh pointed to the steady drop in US yields, which has brought 10-year yields to below 4%.

"I'm not sure if buying US Treasuries here is a good trade, especially if oil prices spike and induce inflation, if this thing drags," he said.

On the other hand, some analysts expect Iran will not be able to disrupt trade in the Gulf region and the impact on oil prices will be contained. - Reuters



# Why the attack on Qatar could disturb world peace and stability

By Ayman Adly  
Doha

With a diverse population from around 180 nationalities living in peace and harmony together, Qatar has always maintained an excellent and well-deserved reputation as safe, secure, stable, and a global peace maker, actively engaged in de-escalating tensions and restoring reconciliation.

The country has won such a reputation through constant and diligent work to maintain regional and international stability out of a steadfast belief that people should resolve their differences through talks and negotiations, and avoid conflicts and clashes, as peace and stability build a better life for people who should work together for the good of humanity.

Accordingly, the recent missile and drone attacks by Iran are considered a flagrant and completely unjustifiable assault on a peace-making nations that hosts people from around the world and help them build their dreams, opening for them and their families in their own home countries, excellent work opportunities that help improve their lives.

The estimates for personal remittance of the expatriates living in Qatar received by other world countries from Qatar amounted to over \$1.44bn in 2024, and the figures keep constantly increasing as it keeps expanding its excellent and robust economy. The attack on Qatar, even though the country is well-prepared and highly-equipped to fend it off with the minimum losses, has caused concern to many people around the world, who have their support and source of income living in Qatar.

According to some strategic and political experts and analysts, such attacks on Qatar and other geopolitical in the



The ongoing humanitarian efforts to reunite Ukrainian and Russian children separated by war with their families have seen many recorded successes.

region would only weaken the Iranian regime and deplete its military capabilities, as these are considered reckless and would only worsen the already collapsing Iranian military for no use. Qatar has stressed that there is no way out but immediate return to dialogue and diplomatic issues to resolve the pending issues.

Qatar has always called for de-escalating tensions in the region and has worked to facilitate talks between Iran and the West, maintaining a neutral stance while exerting intensive efforts to promote peace, stability, and keep talks and negotiations going.

Qatar has mediated between the USA and Iran over the past years, with proven positive outcomes, including prisoner swap deals and the release of frozen Iranian assets in 2023. Over the past years, Qatar has

established its global position as a trusted and active mediator to end wars and conflicts, facilitate the exchange of prisoners of war and freeing hostages, and bridge the gap between adversaries, while hosting peace talks of conflicting parties in Doha and being a generous donor for humanitarian relief efforts and development funds in the areas torn by conflicts and disasters.

Among the few recent examples of peacemaking efforts of the country: Gaza ceasefire and humanitarian agreements, Chad Peace Agreement in 2022, Libya tribal conflicts reconciliation agreement in 2015, Darfur peace process in 2011, the ongoing efforts to resolve the M23 crisis between Rwanda and Congo, the ongoing humanitarian efforts to reunite Ukrainian and Russian children separated by war with their families with many recorded

successes, key role in helping resolve Kenya-Somalia dispute and restoration of diplomatic relations between them in 2021.

The peacemaking efforts of Qatar's diplomacy have extended from the Middle East to Africa, Europe, Latin America, and other regions around the world. Besides, Qatar's economic power is key to the world and regional stability as the country is considered the world's largest exporter of LNG, securing a steady supply of energy to many major world economies, with world's largest LNG shipping fleet that include more than 70 vessels and more are being added at steady rate to enhance global delivery systems. Further, Qatar is considered the second-largest fertiliser exporter internationally and is well-positioned to be the largest urea exporter globally by 2030.



The peacemaking efforts of Qatar's diplomacy have extended from the Middle East to Africa, Europe, Latin America, and other regions around the world.

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# Military called to Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan following deadly protests

Reuters/AFP  
Peshawar/Karachi

Pakistan sent the military into Hima-layan Gilgit-Baltistan region yesterday and banned large gatherings nationwide after deadly protests against US and Israeli strikes on Iran spread, with 26 dead so far.

The demonstrations against the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei erupted in several

major Pakistani cities including Karachi, where hundreds of protesters attempted to storm American diplomatic buildings and clashed with police, an AFP journalist saw.

In the northern city of Skardu, normally a tourist hotspot, protesters set fire to a UN office on Sunday with 14 people, including a soldier, killed in the ensuing clashes, local officials said.

Two others died in Islamabad.

Ten people were killed on Sunday in Karachi, where protesters stormed the US

consulate and breached the compound's outer wall.

Thousands of people also protested in the northern cities of Parachinar, Dera Ismail Khan and Peshawar but no clashes were reported.

Funeral processions have been announced for those killed in Gilgit-Baltistan, Karachi and Islamabad.

Ghulam Abbas, the Gilgit-Baltistan information minister, said authorities were calling in the military for three days and

imposing "a three-day curfew in Gilgit and Skardu to maintain law and order".

Roads leading to the US consulate in Karachi were blocked off with a heavy police presence in the area.

Similar measures were in place around US missions in Lahore and Islamabad.

Community leaders have called for more protests in the central city of Lahore and in Karachi despite the nationwide government ban on congregations and public gatherings.

Israel and the United States launched their military operations against Iran on Saturday, quickly killing the long-ruling Khamenei and prompting outrage in neighbouring Pakistan.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who has close ties with both the US and Iran, said on Sunday that the killing was a "violation" of international law.

"It is an age old convention that the Heads of State/Government should not be targeted," Sharif wrote on X.

# France, Germany move on joint nuclear deterrence

AFP/Reuters  
Paris

France and Germany have announced plans to deepen co-operation on nuclear deterrence, marking a significant shift in European defence policy as the continent faces rising threats from Russia and instability linked to the Iran conflict.

The countries will set up a high-level steering group to align strategy, according to a joint statement.

Germany will join French nuclear exercises and inspections of strategic sites, while both aim to strengthen conventional and missile defence capabilities with other European partners.

"In response to the evolving threat landscape," the statement read, France and Germany have agreed to pursue "closer co-operation in the field of deterrence."

President Emmanuel Macron said he said in a speech at France's Ile Longue nuclear submarine base yesterday that France could deploy nuclear-armed aircraft to allied countries for the first time as he invited eight European countries to take part in exercises with French deterrent forces.

"We must strengthen our nuclear deterrent in the face of multiple threats, and we must consider our deterrence strategy deep within the European continent," he said.

He spoke as Russia's war against Ukraine grinds into its fifth year, with European nations worried about Washington's wavering commitment to their security at the same time as the attacks launched by the United States and Israel on Iran threaten to destabilise the Middle East.

The Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Sweden and Denmark could also all take part.

Ruling out French atomic bombs on Danish soil, Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said it was "unfortunately" necessary for Europe to discuss deterrence be-

cause of a threat from Moscow.

"It is about being at the table and so having better access to information and to strategic decisions," she said at a press conference.

This co-operation must respect current Danish nuclear policy.

In the joint statement with France, Germany said it would participate in French nuclear exercises - but it added that the United States should keep its nuclear forces on the continent.

"France and Germany have agreed to take first concrete steps beginning this year, including German conventional participation in French nuclear exercises and joint visits to strategic sites," the statement said.

"This Franco-German co-operation is based on the shared understanding that the nuclear dimension of deterrence remains a cornerstone of European security, relying on US extended deterrence," it added.

The Paris-Berlin partnership poses challenges for Germany, which is barred from developing nuclear weapons under the Two Plus Four Treaty and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Public opinion remains divided on nuclear issues, complicating policy choices.

Asked about reports of the plans, Greek government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis refused to give details but said work was underway.

"I don't wish to say any more at this stage, but the direction described regarding a common European policy on this very important issue is indeed the one mentioned," he said. "More information will be available in the coming days and weeks."

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk welcomed the plans and said they would make his country safer.

"Poland is in talks with France and a group of closest European allies on the programme of advanced nuclear deterrence," Tusk wrote in a post on X. "We are arming up



French President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech in front of the submarine *Le Temeraire* (*The Temerarious*) at the nuclear submarine base Ile Longue in Crozon, France. - Reuters

together with our friends so that our enemies will never dare to attack us."

Poland's nationalist President Karol Nawrocki recently expressed support for a homegrown deterrent without going into details on any proposed scheme.

Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said his country

viewed Macron's suggestion "positively".

"Naturally, we would most like to see a world completely free of nuclear weapons," he said. "But as long as Russia has these weapons and threatens its neighbours, democracies must be able to deter attacks and safeguard our own security and freedom."

# Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict enters fifth day

Reuters/AFP  
Kabul/Islamabad

Afghanistan and Pakistan said yesterday that their militaries had targeted each other's posts across the border as their fighting entered a fifth day, fuelling instability in a region rocked by US-Israeli strikes on Iran and Tehran's retaliation.

The intensity of the clashes, however, appeared to be lower than when it began although there were no signs that the allies-turned-foes were seeking to step back and make peace.

Meanwhile, a blast was heard yesterday from the direction of a military base in Afghanistan's key city Kandahar, an AFP journalist said, as Afghan and Pakistani forces clashed at the border.

A jet flew over the southern city, which is home to Afghanistan's supreme leader, before the explosion and subsequent gunfire.

Pakistan has acknowledged bombing Kandahar and the capital Kabul since Afghan forces launched a border offensive on Thursday, but did not immediately comment on the latest blast.

Anti-aircraft guns and small arms fire were also heard by AFP journalists in Kabul before dawn yesterday.

City police reported the situation "remains normal".

The direct fighting between the South Asian neighbours who share a 2,600km (1,615-mile)

border is the heaviest in years.

It began when Afghanistan's Taliban rulers launched what they called retaliatory strikes on Pakistani installations in response to Pakistan's targeting of militants in Afghanistan.

Dozens of people were killed on both sides as Pakistan used jets to launch air-to-ground missiles at Taliban military sites and even directly targeted Afghanistan's government for the first time over allegations that it harbours militants seeking to overthrow the Islamabad government.

Since the fighting began, both sides have claimed to have inflicted heavy damage on the other - figures which Reuters has been unable to verify.

The Afghan-Pakistan enmity is centred around Pakistani allegations that Afghanistan harbours Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan militants, which it says are waging an insurgency inside Pakistan.

Afghanistan has denied the accusation, saying it does not allow Afghan territory to be used against other countries and that Pakistan's security challenges are an internal matter.

"Pakistan has had only one ask, and that's that Afghan soil shouldn't be used against Pakistan," Pakistani Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar told diplomats at a briefing in Islamabad yesterday, in comments aired by state broadcaster PTV. "This is the only issue we have, as long as it is settled, we have no other issue with Afghanistan."

# Russian army advance in Ukraine slows to two-year low: analysis

Russia's army recorded its slowest advance on the front line in Ukraine in nearly two years in February, AFP analysis of data from the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) showed, as Kyiv's troops scored several localised breakthroughs.

The slowdown came as Moscow's forces at the front struggled after Elon Musk cut the Russians' access to Starlink Internet terminals.

Russia advanced by a total of 123sq kilometres (48 sq miles) - the lowest since April 2024 - during the month, according to data from the ISW.

The ISW worked with the Critical Threats Project (part of the American Enterprise Institute, or AEI), another US think-tank specialising in conflict.

Russia's gains on the frontline have come at huge cost, with hundreds of thousands of its soldiers killed since they invaded.

The four-year war has spiralled into Europe's deadliest conflict since World War II, with several rounds of talks between the two sides having failed to break the deadlock over a potential ceasefire.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last month insisted his country was not losing the war.

His troops managed several localised advances during February, the data showed, including a 61sq kilometre gain on February 15, and gains of more than 50sq kilometres on each of February 21 and February 23.

Kyiv's forces saw most success along the southern front line, pushing Russia's army back in the Dnipropetrovsk region.

Moscow, meanwhile, has been grinding forward in the east, moving closer towards the key hubs of Kramatorsk and Sloviansk in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region.

Russia occupies just over 19% of Ukraine. It controlled around 7% before the February 2022 invasion - Crimea, annexed in 2014, and territory held by Moscow-backed separatists. - AFP

# Russia bans anti-war group

Moscow has banned the "terrorist" Russian Antiwar Committee (RAC), a prominent exiled rights group opposed to the Ukraine war, in the latest crackdown on critics of the offensive.

Launched shortly after Moscow sent troops to Ukraine in 2022, the group gathers humanitarian aid for Ukraine and helps emigre Russians, serving as an umbrella organisation for over two dozen Russian democratic movements around the world.

It is led by prominent Kremlin opponents such as Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a former oil tycoon, and Garry Kasparov, a chess grandmaster, both have long lived in exile as they face persecution at home.

Russia's Supreme Court said in a statement it had "designated the RAC as a terrorist organisation and prohibited its activities and the activities of its structur-

al subdivisions on the territory of the Russian Federation".

The Kremlin often uses allegations and charges of "terrorism" or "extremism" to suppress dissent and prosecute critics, a practise that has ramped up amid the Ukraine offensive.

In a statement on the war's fourth anniversary last week, the anti-war group said the "terrorist" label was "political retaliation aimed at intimidating society, silencing independent voices, and concealing the truth about the war".

Moscow has also accused the anti-war committee of funding pro-Ukraine Russian volunteer groups fighting for Kyiv, something the group denies.

Russia banned criticism of the army shortly after launching its full-scale military offensive against Ukraine in February 2022, and has detained thousands. - AFP

# Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum discovers new Rembrandt

AFP  
Amsterdam

The Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam said yesterday that it had uncovered a new painting by Rembrandt, using advanced scanning technology and stylistic analysis to confirm it was crafted by the Dutch master.

The 1633 work, entitled *Vision of Zacharias in the Temple*, disappeared from public view for 65 years, but was recently handed over to the museum for testing.

"Materials analysis, stylistic and thematic similarities, alterations made by Rembrandt, and the overall quality of the painting all support the conclusion that this painting is a genuine work by Rembrandt van Rijn," the museum said.

"We always hope to find a new Rembrandt, but this happens rarely," Rijksmuseum director Taco Dibbits told AFP.

The painting disappeared from public view after a private individual purchased it in 1961.

Its current owner contacted the Rijksmuseum, enabling experts to study the work with modern analytical tools.

"It was amazing that this painting - that we didn't know of - came to us via somebody who sent an email to say 'could this be a Dutch painting?', who really didn't know what he had," Dibbits said.

The two-year research showed that the paints used are also found in other Rembrandt works of the period.

The painting technique and build-up of paint layers are also comparable.

Scans revealed "compositional changes that support the authenticity of the work," the museum said.

Finally, the signature has been deemed original and analysis of the wooden panel confirms the date of 1633 on the painting is also correct.

"The way the painting was constructed, the different layers, was typical for Rembrandt," Rijksmuseum curator Jonathan Bikker told AFP.

"And it's a dark painting, and the light is very important. Rembrandt, of course, is all about light and dark contrast," added Bikker.

The biblical topic is also typical of the work of the then 27-year-old artist, said Petria Noble, a specialist researcher on Rembrandt.



The painting *Vision of Zacharias in the Temple*, identified by researchers as an original work by Rembrandt, is pictured at Rijksmuseum Atelier, Amsterdam. - Reuters

"1633 is really Rembrandt's early Amsterdam career and he's really interested in Bible stories and in history books."

"So everything fitted in terms of the material aspects, the stylistic

aspects... It was a wonderful experience," added Noble.

The work is now on long-term loan to the museum and will be on display to the public from Wednesday.

# French prisoner population at record high last month

France's prisoner population broke new records last month, with the jail occupancy rate reaching an all-time high of almost 137%, justice ministry data viewed yesterday by AFP showed.

Jails on February 1 counted more than 86,000 inmates despite only having capacity for around 63,000, bringing the occupancy rate to 136.9%, compared to 130.8% a year earlier.

Since then, French prisons have taken in 5,046 more inmates while only increasing the number of places available to 1,643.

Overcrowding forced 6,596 detained people

to sleep on mattresses on the floor, compared to 4,490 on February 1, 2025.

France has some of the worst prison overcrowding in Europe, ranking third worst after Slovenia and Cyprus, according to a Council of Europe report published in July.

The council, which is Europe's watchdog for democracy and human rights, said in January that French prisons risked becoming "human warehouses" due to overcrowding, poor conditions and growing violence.

The warning followed a 2024 visit to four French detention centres, where the council's

anti-torture committee reported filthy cells, a lack of clean bedding and, at one prison, infestations of rats, cockroaches and bedbugs.

Committee head Alan Mitchell warned the situation could "turn a prison into a human warehouse, seriously compromising human dignity".

In early January, Justice Minister Gerald Darmanin said he wanted to resolve overcrowding by building more prisons.

His ministry plans to open 3,000 additional places in modular prisons within a year and a half, but Darmanin ruled out regulating the number of inmates in the system. - AFP

## A life centered around the sea: How seafaring shaped life in the past

Qatar's maritime life in the past was built on an integrated system of professions closely tied to the sea and its conditions, with traditional pearl-diving at the heart of local social and economic activities.

Veteran captain Hassan Ali al-Sumaiti recalls the details of that past marine life in Qatar and talked to local Arabic daily *Ar-rayah* about the nature of maritime work, the responsibilities of the captain, and the roles of the tawwash (traditional pearl trader) and the diver, as well as sharing his personal experiences from his seafaring career that records an important chapter in Qatar's maritime history.

The captain was responsible for leading the vessel, charting its course, and overseeing the voyage, while divers descended into the depths to gather oysters. Meanwhile, the tawwash played a central role in the purchase, trade, and marketing of pearls. These professions required extensive

**In the pearl-diving journey, the captain was responsible for leading the vessel, charting its course, and overseeing the voyage, while divers descended into the depths to gather oysters**

experience, precise knowledge of navigation principles, and the ability to handle the sea's unpredictable conditions and challenges, employing the limited resources available at the time.

These roles represented a complete way of life intertwined with the daily livelihoods of the local communities. For many years, they provided the primary source of income for families and formed a fundamental pillar of the economy before the discovery of oil and gas.

Al-Sumaiti explained that the tawwash was among the most prominent professions associated with the sea and the pearl trade. As a specialised merchant, he was responsible for purchasing,

evaluating, and marketing pearls, serving as the vital link between the sea and the marketplace.

The tawwash would travel between the pearl-diving vessels at the hiraat (pearl diving stations) to buy pearls directly from the captain, or wait for the fleet's return to shore at the end of the season, which is a moment eagerly awaited by all after several months of hard labour at sea. Al-Sumaiti recalled: "The tawwash would wait for the ships at the waterfront.

As soon as they arrived, he would begin inspecting the pearls collected by the divers and determine their price based on size, quality, and luster."

He noted that the tawwash used to have deep expertise in assess-

ing pearls, enabling him to distinguish between different types, identify rare specimens, and accurately determine their value according to refined standards developed over years of experience.

He added that selling pearls was not obligatory. Some divers or captains would sell immediately due to financial need to meet daily expenses or repay debts, while others preferred to hold onto their harvest in anticipation of better prices. "There were usually negotiations between the tawwash and the captain until both parties agreed on a suitable price," he said.

Al-Sumaiti further noted that the tawwash's role extended beyond purchasing pearls. He often acted on behalf of major merchants who entrusted him with funds to purchase pearls from the vessels, relying on his market knowledge and expertise. The tawwash would buy the pearls and then sell them in the local or international markets, returning the profits to the merchants.



Veteran Captain Hassan Ali al-Sumaiti

## Expert shares advice to parents on talking to children about regional conflict

By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

As global headlines increasingly feature distressing imagery and reports of conflict especially with the ongoing regional tensions, many parents find themselves grappling with how to explain these complex events to their children.

Dr Mohamed A Hendaus, MD, FAAP, Professor of Clinical Paediatrics at Qatar University and head of Paediatrics and Neonatology at The View Hospital, shares practical advice for families seeking to provide comfort and clarity during these unsettling times.

"Children often form their own interpretations of challenging situations, and these interpretations can sometimes be more daunting than the reality itself. By first asking questions, you can gain insight into their thoughts and feelings, creating a clearer picture of their understanding. Engaging in active and reflective listening is crucial in this process," Dr Hendaus told Gulf Times.

Before providing explanations, Dr Hendaus suggests identifying what a child already perceives. He advises holding these talks in a comfortable setting, such as during a family meal, rather than before sleep when anxieties naturally peak.

"Instead of rushing to correct or dismiss their views, take the time to acknowledge and reflect on what they share. This approach not only validates their feelings but also fosters a more open and supportive dialogue. If they ask a seemingly extreme question, such as, 'Are we all going to die?', reassure them calmly that this is not the case."

While honesty is important, he said, the delivery must match the child's developmental stage. He noted that adults serve as emotional barometers: "It's completely



Dr Mohamed A Hendaus

normal for you to feel sadness or worry about current events. However, be mindful that children often look to adults for emotional guidance, so it's best to share only what is appropriate and avoid overwhelming them with your own fears. Maintain a calm tone and be aware of your body language, including your expressions."

Citing that conflict often brings a risk of prejudice, Dr Hendaus emphasises using these moments to build character and compassion: "Conflicts can sometimes breed prejudice and discrimination towards specific groups or nations. When you discuss these topics with your children, focus on compassion rather than labelling others as 'bad' or 'evil.' This is an excellent opportunity to nurture empathy, especially for families who have been forced from their homes."

"Even conflicts occurring far away can influence attitudes closer to home. Check in with your children to ensure they are not involved in or facing bullying. If they have experienced bullying at school, encourage open communication with you or another trusted adult," he added.

To counter the weight of negative news, Dr Hendaus recommends showing stories of courage: "It's important for children to see

**Medic provides practical tips for families seeking to provide comfort and clarity during these unsettling times**

the positive actions people are taking to support each other through kindness and courage. Share uplifting stories, such as first responders helping those in need or young activists advocating for peace."

He also advises to limit news exposure, saying: "be mindful of how much news your children are exposed to, especially during times filled with distressing headlines and images.

Consider turning off the news around younger children. For older ones, use this as an opportunity to discuss their media consumption habits and the reliability of news sources. Additionally, be aware of how you discuss the conflict with other adults when children are present."

Dr Hendaus advises parents to watch for physical signs of stress, such as headaches or changes in sleep patterns. He said: "Your well-being is crucial for effectively supporting your children. They are likely to pick up on your emotional responses, so demonstrating calmness and control can benefit them."

"If you feel anxious or overwhelmed, take time for self-care and connect with trusted friends or family members. Be intentional about your news consumption; designate specific times to check updates rather than staying connected continuously. Prioritise activities that help you relax and recharge, as this will enable you to be a source of strength for your children."

## Tale from a bygone era: Holding Ramadan gatherings, memory of dialogue, community spirit

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

In early days in Qatar, Ramadan gatherings were more than just spaces for hospitality or places to exchange pleasantries. For decades, they were a firmly established social institution, reviving the spirit of community each Ramadan and reinforcing the values of dialogue, solidarity, and communication among the residents of the same neighbourhood.

After Taraweeh prayers, men would head to the (Majlis) gatherings, where Arabic coffee and dates were served, and attendees would sit in facing circles. There, news of the sea and land was shared, trade and work were discussed, and some disputes were resolved in a friendly spirit characterized by the serenity of the holy month. Daily issues were

raised, and diverse opinions were heard in an atmosphere of respect, especially for the elders.

The Majlis also served as an unwritten school for the rising generations; the young men sitting on the periphery of these gatherings learned the etiquette of conversation, the art of listening, and respect for elders. They also gained insight into life experiences through the stories and recounting of past events shared by the adults.

Thus, these gatherings became indirect educational spaces, contributing to the formation of social awareness and character development.

During Ramadan specifically, these gatherings were more frequent and organised, as the month's rhythm allowed for longer periods of time to meet, and late-night gatherings became an integral part of daily life.

With urban development and

the expansion of cities, these gatherings did not disappear. Instead, they moved to modern homes and larger Majlis halls, and are a cherished tradition to be held in cultural and heritage spaces such as the old Souq Waqif, Souq Al Wakrah and Katar Cultural Village, sometimes tackling cultural or intellectual debates, addressing issues of society, identity, and heritage.

These Ramadan gatherings contributed to strengthening the bond between Qataris and their environment, reinforcing the concept of community consultation, and solidifying the value of gathering based on kind words.

Though its forms may have changed, it still carries at its core that profound meaning: that Ramadan is not only a season of worship, but also a season of gathering and dialogue, a time when bonds are renewed and collective memory is preserved.



File photo of an old Majlis gathering

## QRCS distributes food parcels to displaced families in Gaza

As part of its ongoing humanitarian interventions in Gaza, Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has distributed a total of 6,080 food parcels to displaced Palestinian families, in co-operation with Rahma Worldwide.

Regarding the project's mechanism, Dr Akram Nassar, head of QRCS's representation office in Gaza, explained that the distribution process began at three main distribution points covering the Gaza, Deir Al-Balah, and Khan Younis governorates, in addition to several camps of internally displaced people (IDPs), to reach out to the most vulnerable displaced families. "The humanitarian situation is critical, due to the rising prices of many food items in the markets, the stagnant economic activity in Gaza, and the loss of jobs and stable sources of income for the vast majority of the population, as a result of the harsh consequences of the two-year war," he said.

Dr Nassar added: "Currently, QRCS is working on a package of relief projects to alleviate the suffering of the population and help meet the urgent food needs of more than 2mn people in the blockade, whether at shelters or IDP camps." The project, worth \$400,000, comes within the framework of QRCS's commitment to providing humanitarian support and ensuring that the residents and IDPs have continued access to essential life-saving services.



### Brush with heritage: A Ramadan-themed painting



A distinctive artwork by Haifa al-Sada, through which she expresses Qatari heritage and folklore in a realistic way. She portrays the face of a girl filled with innocence. Although the artist relies on meticulous attention to detail in the face and traditional elements such as clothing to draw the eye, she also focuses on the details of the face itself. This is particularly true since the human face, with its diverse colours and emotions, as one of al-Sada favourite subjects to express. She meticulously examines facial expressions, and in doing so, she adopts a new style and modern colours that suit her painting technique, showcasing Qatari heritage in an attractive way. Her works convey emotion, not just the visual representation of the scene.