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UNHRC adopts resolution on Iran's attacks on GCC, Jordan

The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) has unanimously ratified a resolution condemning the human rights implications of Iran's missile and drone attacks on Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, and Jordan. The resolution, adopted without a vote, was co-sponsored by more than 100 countries.



Dr Hind Abdulrahman al-Muftah

The decision followed an urgent debate convened by the council in Geneva yesterday, during which Qatar's Permanent Representative to the UN Office in Geneva, Dr Hind Abdulrahman al-Muftah, delivered a robust condemnation of the strikes on behalf of Doha.

Qatar described the attacks as a flagrant violation of its national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and a direct breach of the UN Charter's prohibition on the threat or use of force. Dr al-Muftah told the council the debate had been convened under "extremely perilous circumstances," warning that the ripple effects of Iran's offensive threatened not only regional stability but the full enjoyment of human rights across the affected nations.

She stressed that the strikes – targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure – were in clear violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Critical facilities struck included airports, ports, energy installations, and water desalination plants. Qatar itself sustained ballistic missile and drone strikes that caused civilian casualties, injuries, and widespread disruption to basic services including water and energy supplies – breaches, she said, of the rights to life, health, education, and safety.

Dr al-Muftah further warned that attacks on energy and desalination infrastructure carried grave environmental consequences, undermining the right to a clean and sustainable environment. She noted that the most vulnerable – women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities – were disproportionately affected, in contravention of international conventions designed to protect them. **To Page 2**

6 Arab states again condemn Iranian attacks

Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan have renewed their condemnation, in the strongest terms, of the blatant Iranian attacks, which constitute a flagrant violation of their sovereignty, territorial integrity, international law, international humanitarian law, and the Charter of the United Nations, whether carried out directly or through proxies and armed factions they support in the region. They stressed, in particular, the attacks carried out by armed factions loyal to Iran from Iraq against a number of countries in the region, as well as their facilities and infrastructure, describing these acts as a breach of international laws

and conventions and a blatant violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution No 2817 (2026), which explicitly demands that Iran immediately and unconditionally cease all attacks or threats against neighbouring states, including through the use of proxies. Whilst the countries joining this statement value their fraternal relations with Iraq, they called on the Iraqi government to take the necessary measures to immediately halt the attacks launched by factions, militias, and armed groups from Iraqi territory towards neighbouring countries, in order to preserve brotherly relations and avoid further escalation.

Amir restructures QIA board, appoints new ambassador to Peru

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani issued the Amiri Decision No 14 of 2026 restructuring the Board of Directors of Qatar Investment Authority (QIA). The decision stipulated that the Board of Directors of the Qatar Investment Authority would be restructured as follows: HE Sheikh Bandar bin Mohammed bin Saud al-Thani as Chairman, HE Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani as Vice-Chairman, HE Ali bin Ahmed al-Kuwari as a member, HE Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi as a member, HE Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani as a member, HE Nasser bin Ghanim al-Khelaifi as a member, and HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Thawadi as a member. The decision is effective starting from its date of issue and is to be published in the official gazette. The Amir also issued yesterday Amiri Decision No 15 of 2026, appointing Abdullah Jassim Mohammed al-Ziyara as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Peru. The decision is effective starting from its date of issue and is to be published in the official gazette. **(QNA)**

Amir condoles with Saudi king

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, on the passing of Princess Noura bint Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman al-Saud. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of condolences to King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. **(QNA)**

Premier, Malaysian leader seek de-escalation

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a phone call yesterday from Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim to discuss latest regional developments. The two sides took a stock of the ongoing military escalation in the region and its grave repercussions for regional and international stability as well as ways to resolve disputes through peaceful means. HE Sheikh Mohammed stressed the importance of strengthening co-ordination and intensifying joint efforts to achieve an immediate halt to any escalatory actions. He also emphasised the need to return to dialogue and to prioritise reason and wisdom in order to contain the crisis, ensuring global energy security, freedom of navigation, environmental safety, and the overall stability of the region. **(QNA)**

Social events can be held in open spaces now

In line with its commitment to public safety and based on the continuous assessment of the situation by relevant authorities, the Ministry of Interior announced that social events may be held in open spaces beginning yesterday. In a statement published on X, the ministry stressed the importance of adhering to approved regulations and procedures, and coordinating with relevant authorities to ensure the safety of attendees and the conduct of these events in a safe and organised environment. The ministry also emphasised the importance of complying with security and safety protocols, avoiding any practices that could pose risks to individuals or the community. The ministry expressed its appreciation for public co-operation, affirming that this reflects strong community awareness and contributes to enhancing public safety and maintaining security and stability. **(QNA)**

Amir, Pakistan, Iraq PMs, Indonesia president discuss developments

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received phone calls from Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto, during which regional developments and efforts to achieve de-escalation featured prominently. The Pakistani prime minister and the Indonesian president each extended their sincere condolences and heartfelt sympathy to the Amir over the martyrs of the Qatar Armed Forces helicopter crash in the country's territorial waters. The Amir and both the leaders also exchanged greetings on Eid al-Fitr. Sharif reiterated Pakistan's solidarity with Qatar, expressing his country's condemnation of the Iranian aggression against Qatar and several other countries in the region. President Subianto similarly condemned the military escalation, confirming Indonesia's readiness to contribute to ongoing de-escalation efforts in the region. The Amir expressed his thanks and appreciation to both leaders for their sincere sentiments and their countries' supportive stances. All sides underscored the importance of de-escalation and an immediate halt to military operations in the region, affirming the necessity of prioritising diplomatic solutions to end. The Amir also received a phone call yesterday from Iraqi Prime Minister



Mohammed Shia al-Sudani. Both leaders exchanged stressed the importance of de-escalation and prioritising diplomatic solutions to enhance security and stability in the region. In this context, the Amir reiterated Qatar's condemnation of the Iranian attacks targeting several countries in the region, stressing that they constitute a violation of state sovereignty and international law. His Highness Amir also stressed the necessity of immediately halting these attacks, refraining from using the territories of any country to threaten neighbouring countries, and the importance of taking the necessary measures to prevent any hostile acts originating from its territories to preserve the security of the region and prevent further escalation. **(QNA)**

Mol issues guidelines for safety of students

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

As Qatar's schools prepare to reopen, the Ministry of Interior (Mol) has issued comprehensive operational guidelines for school bus drivers and supervisors covering emergencies and exceptional situations, with student safety described as the overriding priority at all times. The guidelines cover every stage of the school journey, from pre-departure checks through to post-emergency procedures, aimed at ensuring swift and effective responses to potential risks. Before any trip, drivers and supervisors must thoroughly inspect the vehicle and all safety equipment, verify routes and emergency contact numbers, and identify safe, clearly visible stopping points. These steps, the ministry stressed, are critical in reducing risks before students board. During pick-up and drop-off, strict

discipline is required. Bus doors must remain closed until the vehicle has fully stopped, and the bus must not move until all students are properly seated. Crossing roads without supervision is strictly prohibited, and drivers must confirm students are at a safe distance from the vehicle before pulling away. While en route, students must remain seated and calm, with any tampering with doors or windows to be prevented immediately. For emergencies, the ministry outlined distinct protocols depending on the nature of the threat. If danger is external, drivers must stop in a safe location, activate hazard lights, and keep students inside the bus, instructing them to lower their heads and stay away from windows whilst awaiting official guidance. If the danger is internal – such as a fire – supervisors must evacuate students promptly but calmly, gathering them in a secure area away from traffic. **To Page 11**

Heavy rains forecast for today, tomorrow

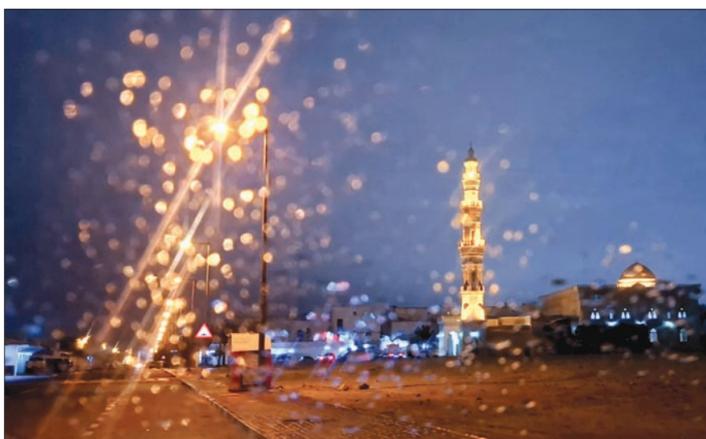
By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar is expected to experience heavy rains today and tomorrow, Qatar Meteorology Department has cautioned.

Meanwhile, there were heavy rains in the evening yesterday in Doha and the surrounding areas and Al Wukair received the highest amount of rain with 45.4mm on Tuesday.

In a social media post, the Met Department said that the country is affected by a state of instability due to a deepening surface of a low-pressure system.

"The weather will be partially cloudy to cloudy with chances of thunderstorms on Thursday and Friday. Rain intensity will remain moderate to heavy," the statement said. The department also said that caution is advised due to the possibility of strong downdrafts, reduced horizontal visibility, especially in open areas and the potential for hail. **To Page 11**



Heavy rains in Doha yesterday. PICTURE: Thajudheen

Iran reviews US proposal but rules out direct negotiations

Iran is reviewing a US proposal to end the Gulf war but has ruled out direct talks with Washington, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said yesterday – signalling cautious openness to a diplomatic resolution whilst stopping well short of a ceasefire commitment. Araghchi confirmed that US President Donald Trump's 15-point proposal, delivered via Pakistan, had been passed to senior Iranian authorities. However, he stressed that the exchange of messages through mediators "does not mean negotiations with the US". The American proposal reportedly demands the removal of Iran's highly enriched uranium stocks, a halt to enrichment, curbs on its ballistic missile programme, and an end to funding for regional allies. The White House struck a sharply

different tone, threatening further military escalation. Press secretary Karoline Leavitt warned that if Iran failed to recognise it had been "defeated militarily", President Trump would ensure it was "hit harder than ever before". The Pentagon is meanwhile reported to be deploying thousands of airborne troops to the Gulf, adding to two Marine contingents already en route. Global equity markets rose and oil prices fell on news of the proposal, with investors hoping for an end to a conflict that has disrupted energy supplies and stoked inflation fears. On the ground, fighting continued unabated. Israel described fresh strikes on Iranian naval shipyards, while Iran's Revolutionary Guards claimed new attacks against Israel and US bases in Kuwait, Jordan, and Bahrain. A residential area in Tehran was also reported struck. — Reuters

GCC, Arab Parliament welcome UN decision against Iranian attacks

QNA
Riyadh

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states have welcomed the adoption by the Human Rights Council of the resolution submitted on behalf of the GCC states and Jordan concerning the human rights implications arising from the unprovoked Iranian attacks on these countries, which received broad and exceptional support from more than 100 countries across various regional groups.

The adoption of this resolution underscores the unequivocal position of the international community, which totally rejects the blatant Iranian attacks on the territories of member states not involved in any conflict, and condemns the serious consequences of this aggression under international human rights law and its threat to international peace and security, said Jassem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi, the GCC Secretary-General, in a press release yesterday.

Al-Budaiwi praised the content of the adopted resolution, particularly its clear condemnation and strong denunciation of the consequences of the unprovoked and deliberate attacks waged by Iran against civilians and critical civilian infrastructure.

He further noted that these attacks resulted in civilian casualties and extensive damage within the GCC states and Jordan, in addition to the broader implications of these unlawful Iranian attacks on regional and international stability.

Al-Budaiwi also welcomed the resolution's emphasis on the need for Iran to adhere to its obligations regarding the protection of human rights and the principles of international law.

Meanwhile, Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Office and other international organisations in Geneva, Ambassador Naser Abdullah al-Hayyen, emphasised that the Gulf Group's welcome of the Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) adoption, yesterday, by consensus, of a draft resolution condemning the Iranian attacks.

This came in his speech deliv-

Al-Misnad says UN move 'an important step'

HE Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad welcomed the Human Rights Council's (HRC) adoption of the resolution submitted on behalf of the Gulf Co-operation Council states and Jordan, regarding the human rights implications resulting from the unjustified Iranian attacks on these countries, and considered the resolution an important step that embodies international consensus on rejecting the targeting of civilians and civilian objects. She explained, in a statement to Qatar News Agency (QNA), that this resolution comes as a continuation of the joint Gulf efforts that were crowned by the adoption of Security Council Resolution No. 2817 (2026), noting that the resolution received the consensus of the Council and was adopted by

consensus, while more than 105 countries participating in its adoption, which reflects wide international solidarity with the people of the GCC states and Jordan. She added that the resolution includes essential texts in its content, as it condemns in the strongest terms the Iranian military attacks that targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure and led to casualties among innocent people, and decides that these acts constitute grave violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Her Excellency pointed out that the resolution reaffirms strong support for the regional safety of the GCC states and Jordan and for their sovereignty and political independence, and also expresses solidarity with these countries and their people. (QNA)

ered on behalf of the Gulf Group before the UNHRC following the adoption of the resolution on the human rights implications of the attacks waged by Iran against a number of countries in the region.

Al-Hayyen asserted that this adoption underscores the spirit of co-operation that characterises this Council when dealing with issues that entail direct and serious implications for human rights. The consensus-based adoption suggests a shared awareness of the importance of addressing the consequences of these attacks, particularly those related to the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure, and ensuring respect for relevant international obligations, Al Hayyen underlined.

The Arab Parliament also welcomed the Human Rights Council's (HRC) resolution condemning Iranian attacks on Arab states, considering it an important step that reflects growing international awareness of the severity of these blatant aggressive practices, QNA reported from Cairo.

In a statement yesterday, the

Arab Parliament noted that this resolution comes as a continuation of the recent United Nations Security Council decision, which also condemned these aggressions, reflecting a new and clear international consensus rejecting Iran's blatant attacks on Arab states, including threats to international navigation through threats to close the vital Strait of Hormuz.

The Parliament described the HRC resolution on these attacks as a firm message to the international community on the need to adopt a unified stance against such aggressions, in light of the resolution's call for Iran to immediately cease all unjustified attacks, hold itself legally accountable including providing compensation, and affirming and supporting the right of Arab states to defend themselves in accordance with the United Nations Charter.

It also called on the international community to build on this global consensus to stop these aggressive practices and ensure respect for international law and principles of constructive dialogue.

UNHRC adopts resolution on Iran's unprovoked attacks on GCC

From Page 1

The Qatari representative also raised alarm over strikes targeting maritime shipping lanes, including the Strait of Hormuz, cautioning that disruption to one of the world's most critical waterways would have far-reaching consequences for global supply chains, energy security, and the socioeconomic rights of nations worldwide.

Al-Muftah underscored that Qatar had played no part in the underlying conflict and had not permitted its territory or airspace to be used in any combat operations, making Iran's targeting of Qatari soil a particularly egregious violation of international law. Qatar, she noted, had consistently pursued dialogue

and mediation as its preferred approach to regional disputes.

She welcomed UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026), which formally condemned Iran's attacks and determined they constituted a serious threat to international peace and security, and called for effective remedies and full reparations for victims and affected states.

Concluding her address, al-Muftah urged an immediate halt to the escalation and called on all parties to prioritise diplomatic solutions. She appealed to Council member states to back the resolution and reaffirm the international community's commitment to upholding human rights, halting violations, and ensuring such attacks are never repeated. (QNA)

Local farm yards to resume normal working hours

The yards for selling local agricultural products are set to resume normal working hours, the Ministry of Municipality's Agriculture Affairs department has announced.

Accordingly, Al Mazrouh Yard at Umm Salal Central Market will be open daily for customers from 7am to 3pm. However, Al Wakrah, Al Khor, Al Thakira, Al Sheehaniya and Al Shamal yards will be open on three days a week, on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 7am to 3pm.

These yards offer consumers fresh products of the participating Qatari farms at very competitive prices. During the peak of the local agricultural season, more than 100 Qatari farms take part in these yards, supplying a daily assortment of vegetables such as cucumbers, tomatoes, capsicum, zucchini, leafy vegetables, dates, honey, and other agricultural products. Such yards have also been responding to the growing consumer demand for local products while providing farmers with an adequate platform to display their products directly to consumers, minimising the marketing costs involved.

Al Mazrouh yard was the first to launch this during the 2012/2013 agriculture season, with only 24 participating farms and a limited number of products. After the considerable success of this yard, more yards at various locations across the country were launched, with more participating farms, as agricultural production in the country has increased dramatically over the past few years, driven by government support and generous incentives for local food production.

The Ministry of Municipality announces the resumption of

The Local Agricultural Product Market Yards

as follows:

Al Mazrouh Yard at Umm Salal Central Market

Daily
from 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Al Wakrah, Al Khor & Al Thakira, Al Sheehaniya, and Al Shamal yards

On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday
from 7:00 AM to 3:00 PM

To access the yards



The recent value of Qatar's agricultural sector is estimated at around \$1.25bn and is expected to reach around \$1.56bn by 2031. Besides, the total number of farms in Qatar is over 600, with some employing the latest, sophisticated technology and equipment in the field to maximise production and overcome natural challenges.

Amir sends condolences to Colombian president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of condolences to Colombian President Gustavo Petro on the victims of the military plane crash, wishing a speedy recovery to the injured. (QNA)

Al-Muraikhi meets Turkish ambassador



HE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with Turkiye ambassador to Qatar Dr Mehmet Mustafa Goksu. During the meeting, they discussed co-operation between the countries and ways to support and enhance them, as well as the latest developments in the region. (QNA)

Al-Muraikhi receives copy of credentials of Kyrgyzstan's envoy



HE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received yesterday a copy of the credentials of Kyrgyzstan ambassador to Qatar, Aibek Toktobolotov. HE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs wished the ambassador success in fulfilling his duties, affirming commitment to providing all the support to enhance bilateral relations for closer co-operation in various fields. (QNA)

Cote d'Ivoire National Assembly president meets Qatar's envoy

President of the National Assembly of Cote d'Ivoire, Patrick Achi, met with Qatar's ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire, Mubarak bin Hussein al-Marri. During the meeting, they reviewed co-operation between the countries. (QNA)



MECC issues safety alert for winter campers amid thunderstorm forecast

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MECC) has called on winter camp owners across the country to adhere to safety guidelines amid forecasts of unstable weather conditions, including thunderstorms and active winds in the coming period.

In a post published yesterday on the X platform, the ministry underscored the importance of following weather updates from official sources and taking necessary precautionary measures to safeguard lives and property. It stressed the need for the highest

levels of vigilance and caution, particularly in desert and coastal camps.

The ministry outlined key safety guidelines, including avoiding presence in coastal camps during high waves, securing tents firmly before winds intensify, and seeking shelter inside vehicles or cabins rather than remaining in tents during adverse weather conditions.

It further emphasised the importance of not parking vehicles in low-lying areas or flood channels, disconnecting electrical power during strong winds and

rainfall, and ensuring that cabin doors and windows are tightly closed.

The ministry also warned against lighting fires or using electrical devices during storms, and advised avoiding contact with exposed metal structures during thunderstorms. It urged the public to contact relevant authorities in emergency situations. This advisory comes as part of the ministry's commitment to enhancing public safety and mitigating potential risks associated with unstable weather conditions. (QNA)

Katara award hits record entries in 12th edition

The Katara Cultural Village Foundation has announced a record 2,610 entries for the 12th edition of its Katara Prize for Arabic Novel, the highest since the prize was launched in 2014.

This surpasses the previous record of 2,021 entries in 2021. Of the total, 1,488 were unpublished novels, 578 were published works from 2025, 303 entries were unpublished children's novels, 107 were unpublished studies on novels, 11 were published Qatari novels, and 123 were unpublished historical novels.

Egypt and Sudan led submissions with 963 entries, followed by the Levant and Iraq with 719, the

Maghreb with 666, and Gulf countries with 245 entries. Non-Arab countries contributed 17 submissions. Katara Director-General Dr Khalid al-Sulaiti said the increase reflects the prize's growing reputation as it enters its second decade. The award spans six categories and includes translations of winning novels into English and French, helping it gain recognition regionally and internationally. The prize pool totals \$375,000, with top awards of \$30,000 per winner across categories including published and unpublished novels, historical novels, children's novels, Qatari novels, and studies on novel criticism. (QNA)



Marli New York pop-up boutique opens at Place Vendome, Doha

Marli New York announced the opening of its exclusive pop-up boutique at Place Vendome Mall, from February 15 to April 19, 2026.

Located in one of Doha's leading luxury destinations, the pop-up invites guests to discover Marli's latest creations and signature collections – Cleo, LIFE, and Empire.

Architectural forms, pyramid motifs, rotating rings, and diamond-set details highlight the brand's modern design language, where New York inspiration meets contemporary elegance.

Through this experience, Marli New York brings its vision of modern fine jewelry to Doha, offering visitors a refined setting to experience the brand's craftsmanship and distinctive aesthetic.



PHCC serves 27,841 patients during Eid al-Fitr holiday

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) has received a total of 27,841 patients, both citizens and residents, across its 21 operational health centres during the Eid al-Fitr holiday from March 17 to March 23.

This comprised all patients seen at Family Medicine clinics, totalling 12,402, as well as 1,381 patients treated at General Dental clinics.

It also included all cases managed by "Urgent Care Units" across 14 health centres: Al Mashaf, Al Sadd, Abu Baker Al Siddiq, Al Ruwais, Al Sheehaniya, Al Kaaban, Gharrafat Al Rayyan, Rawdat Al Khail, Muaiter, Umm Slal, Leabaib, Al Karaana, Al Wajba, and Al Thumama. A total of 11,617 cases were handled based on their medical urgency at these



health centres. PHCC reported that several specialty services were provided during the Eid al-Fitr holiday to meet the needs of all patients, including Ophthalmology, ENT, Dermatology, and Premarital Screening, in addition to the Pharmacy, Radiology, and Laboratory services. The Ophthalmology clinic received 299 patients, the ENT clinic received 224 patients, and the Dermatology clinic received 234 patients at Leabaib, Rawdat Al Khail, and

Al Mashaf health centres. Furthermore, the Premarital Screening clinic served 51 patients at Al Rayyan, Leabaib, and Al Mashaf health centres.

Additionally, the PHCC Community Call Centre provided 1,728 virtual video and telephone medical consultations to patients who contacted the 16000 service line without a prior appointment. This type of consultation ensures that patients whose cases are triaged as urgent receive the necessary healthcare and are prescribed the medications by a specialist doctor in the shortest possible time.

PHCC highlighted that all operational health centres ensured that every patient was attended to without delay in addressing their needs, noting that meeting patient needs is a top priority and that it is keen to achieve this.

ICAI Doha Chapter hosts virtual session to mark Int'l Women's Day

ICAI Doha Chapter organised a Virtual CPE event titled "Give to Gain: When She Rises, We All Rise" on March 9, commemorating International Women's Day. The session witnessed enthusiastic participation from members and families.

The session began with a welcome address by Chapter Chairperson CA Arun Somanath, who extended warm International Women's Day wishes to all. In his remarks, he emphasised the importance of recognising and celebrating women's contributions across all spheres of life, highlighting that empowering women is essential to building stronger organisations and a more inclusive society.

The event was graced by Bindu N Nair, Second Secretary (Information, Culture and Education) at the Embassy of India, as the chief guest. In her address, she emphasised that women's empowerment is not solely a woman's responsibility, but a collective effort where men play a vital role in creating supportive environments that enable women to grow and succeed.

Asna Nafees, principal of DPS Modern Indian School (DPS-MIS), highlighted that a woman's voice is essential not only for her own empowerment but also for empowering those around her.

Dr Malvika Iyer, a renowned motivational speaker and a bomb blast survivor, captivated the audience with her deeply inspiring personal story of courage and determination.

Sophia Azizian, partner and Qatar Assurance leader at



EY, reflected on her professional journey and observed that organisations flourish in environments where women are empowered and supported to thrive. CA Saumya Krishna, director – M&A at Deloitte, spoke about risk-taking, resilience, and leadership among women, illustrating her points through real-life stories of women leaders who have shaped and transformed major businesses.

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Rashid Al-Mohanadi
Rashid Al-Mohanadi is a nonresident fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs. He has experience in the defense industry and geopolitical risk advisory



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Kenneth B. Medlock III, Ph.D., is the James A. Baker, III, and Susan G. Baker Fellow in Energy and Resource Economics at the Baker Institute and the senior director of the Center for Energy Studies



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People flee as smoke rises following an Israeli strike near a tent encampment sheltering people displaced by the Israel-Hamas war in Deir el-Balah in the central Gaza Strip, yesterday. (AFP)

Gaza civil defence says Israeli strike kills one

AFP
Deir el-Balah

A fireball erupted over Gaza yesterday as an Israeli strike tore through a tent camp housing displaced Palestinians, killing one person and injuring seven, the territory's civil defence agency said.

The bloodshed was the latest to rock the war-shattered Palestinian territory despite a ceasefire in place since October 10.

The strike hit the Al-Sitt camp in the Deir el-Balah area, said the civil defence agency, which operates as a rescue service under

Hamas. AFP photographs showed flames engulfing the tents, sending thick black smoke into the sky. Gaza's Al-Aqsa Martyrs hospital confirmed the toll.

The Israeli military said it was looking into the reports. Suhaila Khalil, who lives in a tent in the area, said she heard screams as the strike tore through the camp.

"The explosion happened several hundred metres from our tent, but smoke and shrapnel rained down on displaced people, leaving several injured," Khalil, 57, told AFP.

Hundreds of thousands of Gazans have been living in makeshift camps since the war erupted

after Hamas' storming of Israel on October 2023.

Violence has persisted in Gaza despite the ceasefire, with both Israel and Hamas regularly accusing each other of violations.

Gaza's health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority, says at least 689 Palestinians have been killed since the start of the truce.

The Israeli military says at least five of its soldiers have been killed in the same period.

Media restrictions and limited access in Gaza have prevented AFP from independently verifying casualty figures or freely covering the fighting.

In Lebanon, paramedics mourn their own killed in Israeli strike

Reuters
Nabatieh

Wearing identical uniforms, a dozen paramedics gathered around a pair of caskets in the southern Lebanese town of Nabatieh, crying so heavily their shoulders shook, as they prepared to bury two of their own killed in an Israeli strike.

Ali Jaber and Joud Sleiman were hit on Tuesday as they headed out on a motorcycle in southern Lebanon on a rescue mission, according to Lebanon's health ministry. Both were wearing paramedic uniforms and their motorcycle was clearly marked as an ambulance complete with flashing lights.

"A paramedic who doesn't even have a knife, going to save someone else — they strike him and kill him. This has happened in more than one strike, more than one place," said Hassan Jaber, Ali's father and a local official. Lebanon's health ministry says at least 42 paramedics have been killed by Israeli strikes on Lebanon since March 2, when Hezbollah group pulled Lebanon into the regional war by firing on Israel in support of its patron, Iran. Israel's strikes and sweeping orders for people to evacuate swathes of southern Lebanon have emptied once-thriving Nabatieh of most of its residents.

After the funeral, Nabatieh's grief-stricken paramedics gathered in the town square to distribute aid to the few remaining townspeople.

Then, they went straight back to work.

Among them was Joud's father, Mohammed Sleiman — Nabatieh's chief paramedic.

He accused Israel of deliberately killing his son, saying that Israel "insists on damaging, on killing, on oppressing, on terrorising — and we insist on staying."

International humanitarian law offers protections for civilians, including medics and journalists.

But Nabatieh's rescuers say they have seen little evidence that international norms are shielding them.

"Unfortunately, we see that in Lebanon, that's just ink on paper, it's not being applied at all," said Hassan Jaber, a 43-year-



A paramedic walks among the rubble at a site damaged in an Israeli strike, amid escalating hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, as the US-Israeli conflict with Iran continues, in Nabatieh, Lebanon, yesterday. (Reuters)

old paramedic who shares the same name as Ali's father.

Israel's strikes in Lebanon have wounded more than 3,000 people and killed nearly 1,100, including more than 120 children and 80 women. The World Health Organisation says there have been 64 attacks on health-care facilities across Lebanon since March 2 and that five hospitals are out of service.

Two Israeli troops in Lebanon and one woman in northern Israel have been killed by Hezbollah attacks.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the medics killed and health facilities damaged in its strikes.

Iran media casts doubt on US peace plan

AFP
Tehran

State media in Iran said yesterday that Tehran had rejected a US plan to end fighting, as the head of the United Nations warned that the Middle East war was spiralling out of control.

In a first public acknowledgement of US efforts to discuss peace, state television cited an unidentified official as saying the war would end on Tehran's terms, shortly after Iran said it had fired a volley of cruise missiles at a US aircraft carrier.

"Iran has responded negatively" to the American proposal, the official said, dismissing the reported overture from US President Donald Trump, according to the English-language broadcaster Press TV, in a report picked up by Iran's main news agencies.

"The end of the war will occur when Iran decides it should end, not when Trump envisions its conclusion," the Iranian official said.

Tehran had five conditions for ending the war, he added, including guarantees against future attacks and reparations for war damages.

The rebuttal came after two senior officials in Islamabad said that Pakistan had conveyed to Tehran a 15-point plan proposed by the US to stop the fighting that began on February 28 with a US-Israeli bombing campaign on Iran and sparked retaliatory strikes across the region.

As the human and economic cost of the fighting mounts, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the war was "out of control".

"The conflict has broken past the limits even leaders thought imaginable," he told reporters. "The world is staring down the barrel of a wider war, a rising tide of human suffering, and a deeper global economic shock. This has gone too far."

On the ground, there was no let-up in the hostilities, with targets in Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia all coming under fire.

Iran's military said its cruise missiles fired at the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier group had "forced it to change its position", warning of "powerful strikes" when the "hostile fleet" comes into range.



Iranian people exercise at Pardisan Park, amid the US-Israeli conflict with Iran, in Tehran, yesterday. (Reuters)

US ally Israel, meanwhile, said it had struck targets in Tehran as well as a submarine development facility in the central city of Isfahan.

From the Iranian capital, 40-year-old Shayan said: "There is gasoline, water and electricity. But there is a sense of helplessness in all of us. We don't know what to do and there's really nothing we can do."

Trump has in recent days repeatedly claimed progress in talks with Iran, even as Tehran denied any formal negotiations were taking place.

But there have been increased signs of tentative diplomatic efforts, with mediators in the region saying work was ongoing behind the scenes to relay messages.

"There is hope but it's too early to be optimistic," said a diplomatic source in the region, who requested anonymity to discuss sensitive issues. Both sides need to be able to climb down without losing face, the source noted.

According to the New York Times, citing anonymous officials, the American 15-point plan touches on Iran's contested nuclear and missile programmes, as well as "maritime routes".

Tehran has largely blocked the vital Strait of Hormuz oil route in retaliation for the US-Israeli attacks, pushing up global energy prices.

The Iranian official quoted by Press

TV said Tehran has put forward its own five conditions for hostilities to end.

These include ending "aggression and assassinations" against the country and its leaders, setting up a robust mechanism guaranteeing that neither Israel nor the US will resume the war, as well as compensation for the destruction caused. Iran's conditions also include a cessation of hostilities on all regional fronts and against all "resistance groups" — an implicit reference to the Lebanese group Hezbollah.

Tehran also wants international recognition and guarantees of Iran's rights to exercise its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz.

It remains unclear whether Israel is on board with America's diplomatic overture.

While striking targets in Iran yesterday, Israel kept up its campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon, where Israeli warplanes pounded the southern suburbs of Beirut.

An AFP correspondent saw a street covered in shattered cement and warped metal after the early morning strike, while an apartment building's upper floors appeared damaged.

Tehran, in a message circulated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), assured safe passage through the strait to "non-hostile vessels".

Official says Iran would target Red Sea shipping in event of US invasion

Iran would target shipping in the Red Sea, a crucial conduit for global oil and other goods leading to the Suez Canal, if the United States launches a ground invasion, an unnamed military official told local media yesterday.

"If the enemy attempts a ground operation on Iranian islands or anywhere else on our territory, or if it seeks to impose costs on Iran through naval manoeuvres in the Arabian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, we will open

other fronts as a 'surprise,' the official was quoted as saying by the Tasnim news agency.

"The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is among the most strategic straits in the world, and Iran has both the will and the capability to pose a fully credible threat against it," the official said.

The Bab el-Mandeb Strait, like the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Iran, is a chokepoint for global shipping that lies between Yemen and Djibouti at its narrowest point.

Iran has close links to and arms the Houthi rebel group in Yemen which greatly reduced Red Sea traffic in October 2023 when they began attacking vessels in retaliation for Israel's bombardment of Gaza. The group has been battered by air strikes since, but analysts say the rebels could move from their position on the sidelines of the current US-Iran war and take a more active role.

However, the Houthis are seen as less ideologically tethered to Iran.

UN adopts Ghana's slavery resolution, defying resistance

Reuters
London

A resolution proposed by Ghana at the United Nations yesterday to recognise transatlantic slavery as the "gravest crime against humanity" and calling for reparations has been adopted despite resistance from Europe and the United States.

Ghana said the resolution was needed because the consequences of slavery, which saw at least 12.5mn Africans taken and sold between the 15th and 19th centuries, persist today, including racial disparities. At a UN General Assembly (UNGA) vote, 123 countries supported the resolution,

which is not legally binding but carries political weight, while three opposed it, including the US and Israel, and 52 abstained, including the European Union.

Ghana's foreign minister, Samuel Ablakwa, said the resolution called for accountability. Justin Hansford, a law professor at Howard University, said the resolution was significant as it represented the furthest the UN has gone in recognising transatlantic slavery as a crime against humanity and in calling for reparations. "This marks the first vote on the floor of the UN," Hansford said. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres told the UNGA that "far bolder action" was required to confront historical injustices.

Militants kill 11 Nigerian soldiers in northwest ambush

Militants ambushed Nigerian soldiers on a highway in the northwest of the country, local government and health sources said, in the latest militant attack outside the insurgency's northeastern epicentre, AFP reported. Militant groups have been fighting the Nigerian government in the northeast since Boko Haram's 2009 uprising, but the Tuesday evening ambush in Kebbi state was attributed to Lakurawa, a militant group that operates in the northwest. Militants killed 11 soldiers, one civilian and one police officer, said Ibrahim Ngaski, secretary of the Red Cross Society of Nigeria's Kebbi chapter.

Qatar Foundation INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
CO-RFQ-454	Operation and Maintenance of District Cooling Plants and Infrastructures on call off basis for 5 years	1,000.00	100,000.00	23 rd April 2026, 02:00 PM
CO-RFQ-455	Provision of Maintenance and Supply Services for Landscape, Indoor Plants & Education City Stadium Turf to Qatar Foundation on Call-off basis for Five years	1,000.00	100,000.00	26 th April 2026, 02:00 PM

Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement Directorate is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders. To receive the tender documents, please follow the below steps:

1) **Supplier Registration** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.

Tender Fee: Interested bidders can sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferable tender fee online.

All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.

Tender Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Tender Fee online will be from 26th March until 2nd April 2026.

2) All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.

3) Technical and commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.

- The commercial bid must be valid for 180 days from Bid Closing Date.
- The commercial bid must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for 180 days from the bid closing date (where applicable as per the Tender documents).
- The successful tenderer will be required to submit a performance bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
- Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

Note: All work instructions for Supplier registration and Supplier portal can be found in below link: <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>

Trump's Beijing trip rescheduled for May

AFP
Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he will meet his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing in May after delaying an earlier summit because of the war against Iran.

Trump said he was looking forward to the "monumental" trip, which was originally due to take place at the end of March, and would host Xi and his wife in Washington later this year.

"My meeting with the Highly Respected President of China, President Xi Jinping, which was originally postponed due to our Military operation in Iran, has been rescheduled, and will take place in Beijing on May 14th and 15th," Trump said on his Truth Social network.

Trump said US and Chinese officials were "finalising preparations" for the "historic" Beijing and Washington visits.

"I look very much forward to spending time with President Xi in what will be, I am sure, a Mon-

umental Event," Trump added.

The White House had announced the new dates shortly before Trump's social media post.

Trump had been set to travel to Beijing between March 31 and April for the first time in his second term, for a summit aimed at resetting trade ties between the world's two largest economies.

The Chinese and US presidents met in South Korea in October on the sidelines of a regional summit, and agreed a truce in the trade war sparked by Trump's sweeping global tariffs.

But Trump said on March 16 that he had asked China to postpone the meeting while he deals with the war in the Middle East.

"Because of the war I want to be here, I have to be here, I feel. And so we've requested that we delay it a month or so," Trump told reporters at the time.

The White House remained coy as to whether the formal rescheduling of the visit meant Trump expected the war with Iran, one of China's closest geopolitical allies, to end by that time.

"We've always estimated approximately four to six weeks (for

the length of military operations against Iran), so you could do the math on that," Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt added.

"President Xi understood that it's very important for the president to be here throughout these combat operations right now. He understood obviously the request to postpone and accepted it."

But analysts have suggested China will be in a stronger position to extract concessions from Trump when he finally visits.

His decision last month to join Israel in strikes on Iran has plunged the Middle East into violence, pushed energy prices to years-long highs and seeded fears of global supply shortages due to Iran's effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

With Trump struggling to define how the intervention will end and traditional allies reluctant to back him, the US leader may come to China needing a diplomatic win.

Trump's weakened position could help Beijing argue for deeper tariff cuts and limit Washington's ability to push for change on other trade issues like access to critical minerals.

Trump names tech titans to science advisory council

AFP
Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday named some of the biggest names in US technology to his Council of Advisors on Science and Technology, assembling a roster that includes Meta founder Mark Zuckerberg and Google co-founder Sergey Brin.

The council, known as PCAST, will be co-chaired by Trump's AI and crypto adviser David Sacks and Michael Kratsios, a tech investor who previously served as the country's chief technology officer during the president's first term.

The list of appointees includes

Oracle chief Larry Ellison and Silicon Valley heavyweight Marc Andreessen, as well as Nvidia boss Jensen Huang and Lisa Su of chipmaker AMD.

"The US has the opportunity to lead the world in AI. I'm honoured to join the president's council and work with other industry leaders to help make this happen," Zuckerberg said in a statement sent to AFP.

The council, which has existed since president Franklin Roosevelt, is purely advisory: it produces reports and recommendations on topics the president directs it to study, but has no regulatory or enforcement powers.

Past councils have weighed in on everything from pandemic

preparedness to quantum computing to clean energy.

The appointments are the latest sign of the deep ties Trump has cultivated with Silicon Valley since returning to the White House, in a major change from his first four years in office.

The growing closeness between the White House and the tech industry has begun to generate some political backlash with recent polling showing Americans believe Big Tech has too much influence over Washington policy.

They are also wary of the rise of artificial intelligence — a potential liability for Trump as he heads into crucial midterm elections in November.

US environmental agency issues waiver for E15 fuel to address oil supply issues

AFP
Houston

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) yesterday issued a temporary emergency waiver to allow countrywide sales of higher-ethanol fuel in the summer, Administrator Lee Zeldin said, easing smog controls amid government concerns about adequate supply.

"Based on the information we possess, we foresee potential for a disruption to the American fuel supply," Zeldin said at the CERAWEEK energy conference in Houston, after global oil prices spiked following the launch of the US-Israel war on Iran. The EPA issued a "temporary emergency fuel

waiver" to allow the sale of E15 — gasoline blended with 15% ethanol — in the summer. Such sale is normally prohibited due to environmental and health concerns related to the fuel's volatility.

The EPA also removed "all federal impediments to selling E10," gasoline blended with 10% ethanol, Zeldin said.

Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA enforces limits on when ethanol-blended fuels can be sold due to concerns about their contributions to ground-level ozone, a primary component of smog.

The EPA's actions on E15 and E10 go into effect on May 1 — the agency's official start of the summer season — for 20 days, the maximum allowable under the Clean Air Act.

The US government has frequently issued similar waivers in recent years, often renewing them multiple times each time they expire. US consumers seeing a 33.6% increase at the pump for regular gasoline since then, as per data from the AAA motor club.

Affordability has been a key political concern for US President Donald Trump, who has claimed to have tackled inflation despite prices remaining persistently high.

"President Trump is unleashing American Energy Dominance, and today's action will directly lower prices at the pump and gives a clear demand signal to our domestic biofuels producers," said US Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins. Rollins also noted that the waiver would be a boost for US farmers.

US officials downplay controller 'distraction' in New York crash

AFP
New York

US officials on Tuesday played down speculation that distracted air traffic controllers might have contributed to a deadly collision between an Air Canada jet and a fire truck at New York's LaGuardia Airport.

Two pilots were killed in the runway crash late Sunday, which crushed the cockpit of the Bombardier plane and heavily damaged the emergency vehicle.

Media reports said investigators were probing whether airport traffic controllers were distracted by an odour issue on a United Airlines flight — the emergency to which the fire truck was responding.

"I would caution pointing fingers at controllers and saying distraction was involved," Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board, told reporters.

"We rarely, if ever, investigate a major accident where it was one failure," she said.

"Our aviation system is incredibly safe because there are multiple, multiple layers of defence built in to prevent an accident. So when something goes wrong, that means many, many things went wrong," she said.

Two air traffic controllers were working in LaGuardia's tower at the time, Homendy said.

In addition to airspace management, the two were doing



Officials investigate after an Air Canada Express plane collided with a fire truck on the tarmac at LaGuardia Airport in the Queens borough of New York City. (AFP)

departure clearances and ground traffic control, tasks typically handled by separate staff.

Homendy said the staffing level was "common practice across the national airspace" for a mid-night shift, noting however that her agency had previously raised concerns about fatigue.

"We have no indication that was a factor here, but it is a shift that we have been focused on in past investigations," she said.

Homendy added that the runway safety system ASDE-X, designed to track aircraft and ground vehicles, did not generate an alert before the crash because the fire truck was not equipped with a transponder.

The NTSB's lead investigator Doug Brazy said the board was analysing more than 25 hours of cockpit voice recordings and 80 hours of flight data.

He said the final three minutes captured in the cockpit included the co-pilot transferring control to the captain six seconds before the recording ended. The reason for this was unclear.

Brazy said that air traffic control had cleared the fire truck to cross the runway 20 seconds before the recording ended, before instructing it to stop 11 seconds later.

The collision was LaGuardia's first fatal accident since 1992.

Located in the borough of Queens, LaGuardia is the third-busiest airport serving New York, handling 32.8mn passengers in 2025, according to port authority figures.

Deadly air crashes in the US in recent years include a collision between a passenger jet and an army helicopter near Washington in January 2025 that killed 67 people.

US jury finds Meta, Google liable in social media addiction trial

Reuters
Los Angeles

A Los Angeles jury found Alphabet's Google and Meta liable for \$3mn in damages yesterday in a landmark social media addiction lawsuit that will influence thousands of similar cases against the tech companies.

Punitive damages for the companies will be decided next. The jury may consider whether Google or Meta's products caused the plaintiff physical harm or whether the companies disregarded the health of other users, Judge Carolyn Kuhl said in court. The case involves a 20-year-old woman who said she became addicted to Google's YouTube and Meta's Instagram at a young age because of their attention-grabbing design. The jury found Google and Meta were negligent in the design of both apps and failed to warn about their dangers.

"Today's verdict is a referendum — from a jury, to an entire industry — that accountability has arrived," the plaintiff's lead counsel said in a statement.

Shares of Meta were up 1% and Alphabet shares were up 0.2%, little changed after the verdict.

Meta disagrees with the verdict and its lawyers are "evaluating our legal options," a company spokesperson said. Google plans to appeal, said company spokesperson José Castañeda.

The plaintiffs in the Los Angeles proceeding focused on platform design rather than content, making it harder for the companies to avert liability. Snap and TikTok were also defendants in the trial. Both settled with the plaintiff before it began. Terms of the agreements were not disclosed.

Large technology companies in the US have faced mounting criticism in the last decade over child



Meta spokesperson Ashly Nikkole Davis speaks to the media outside the court in Los Angeles, California, yesterday. (Reuters)

and teen safety. The debate has now shifted to courts and state governments. The US Congress has declined to pass comprehensive legislation regulating social

"Today's verdict is a referendum — from a jury, to an entire industry — that accountability has arrived"

media. At least 20 states enacted laws last year on social media usage and children, according to the nonpartisan National Conference of State Legislatures, an organisation that tracks state laws.

The legislation includes bills

that regulate the use of cell-phones in schools and require users to verify their ages to open a social media account. NetChoice, a trade association backed by tech companies such as Meta and Google, is seeking to invalidate age verification requirements in court. A separate social media addiction case brought by several states and school districts against technology companies is expected to go to trial this summer in federal court in Oakland, California.

Another state trial is slated to begin in Los Angeles in July, said Matthew Bergman, one of the attorneys leading the cases for the plaintiffs. It will involve Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and Snapchat.



Invitation to participate in Barwa Tender

Barwa Real Estate Company wishes to invite capable and competent companies to participate in the tender described below :

Tender Reference	Tender Description	Tender Bond	Non- refundable Tender Fees	Closing Date
BRE-RFP-GAM-001-12879-2026	Acrylic Repair of Outdoor Sports Court in School in Barwa Project	QAR 10000	QAR 200	19 th April 2026 12.00 p.m.

To receive the tender documents, a copy of the tender fee deposit slip and valid commercial registration of the bidder must be forwarded to the following email address: Tender@barwa.com.qa . Bidders are required to clearly state the tender reference number in the subject line of the email.

To pay the tender fee, it should be deposited into the following account:

Beneficiary : Barwa Real Estate Company
Bank Name : Dukhan Bank, Main Branch, Doha
Qatar Account No.: 200000008022
IBAN Number: QA04BRWA00000000200000008022

No offers submitted beyond the closing date will be considered.

Tender bids to be submitted to:

Director - Corporate Procurement and Contracts
Barwa Real Estate Company
Barwa Al-Sadd Towers – Tower 1 – 12th Floor
P.O Box: 27777 Doha-Qatar



بني المستقبل
BUILDING THE FUTURE



Judge probes Trump administration on 'unwritten' deal for Mexico to accept Cubans

Reuters
Boston

US President Donald Trump's administration has informed a federal court that it deported about 6,000 Cubans to Mexico under an "unwritten" agreement by Mexico to accept them, prompting a judge to demand details and question whether the deal was secret. US District Judge William Young in Boston laid out his concerns in an order Wednesday in the case of

a Cuban man who was arrested by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement in February after more than three decades of living in the US. Lawyers for Jorge Juan Navarro have argued that ICE violated its procedures and his due process rights by detaining him while knowing authorities could not promptly deport him to Cuba, which has often refused to take back its citizens.

The Trump administration since January has been enforcing a de facto oil blockade in a bid to starve Cuba of fuel and pressure its gov-

Judge said in the interim the administration should supply him with evidence of an agreement it says it has with Mexico to accept deported Cubans

ernment for change, which potentially could lead to measures that allowing Cubans living in the US to return to their home country Young put the case on hold pending the outcome of the administration's appeal of another judge's ruling declaring unlawful its policy of rapidly deporting migrants to countries other than where they came from.

But the judge said in the interim the administration should supply him with evidence of an agreement it says it has with Mexico to accept deported Cubans, saying a government lawyer offered in a hearing to provide him a copy but later told him it was a "standing (unwritten) agreement."

"What?" Young wrote in yes-

terday's order. "Can this be true? There's some unwritten deal between the sovereign nations whereby 6,000 Cuban nationals have already been shipped to Mexico? Is this deal secret?"

The US Department of Homeland Security, which oversees ICE, did not respond to a request for comment.

Young said the administration at times pointed to an agreement Mexico reached in 2023 to accept expulsions of non-citizens from four nations including Cuba contingent on President Joe Bi-

den's administration establishing a humanitarian parole process for those migrants. But Young, who was appointed by Republican President Ronald Reagan, noted the Trump administration terminated that parole program. He said it was essentially arguing, "We're already doing this on a grand scale so it must be okay."

"At some point, judicial restraint and deference to the executive's statutory duties become abdication of my duty to exercise the judicial function," Young wrote.

Mexico says will uphold Cuban doctor agreement

Reuters
Mexico City

President Claudia Sheinbaum said yesterday Mexico will maintain its agreement with Havana to have Cuban doctors working in the country, after a handful of nearby nations pulled out of such arrangements amid pressure from the United States.

"We have a very good agreement that's also been a great help to us. It's a bilateral agreement that's been very beneficial for Mexico," Sheinbaum said during her daily morning press conference.

Mexico has become a major host for Cuban medical personnel, with thousands of doctors and specialists deployed to the country since 2022 to work in under-served, rural areas.

The medical mission program is one of the largest single sources of foreign income for the Cuban government, which has accused countries that decided to do away with the programs of caving in to pressure from Washington.

The US has imposed a trade embargo on Cuba since 1960, and this year the Trump administration escalated by threatening tariffs on countries that ship oil to Cuba, where fuel shortages have

caused worsening blackouts and battered key services.

Mexico, which halted its own oil shipments to the Caribbean's largest island, is among several countries that have sent humanitarian aid to Cuba. The Bahamas, Honduras, Guatemala, Jamaica and Guyana have announced plans to end agreements with Cuba under the programme which the US says is exploitative and amounts to forced labour.

Host countries, where rural communities rely on services provided by Cuban doctors and nurses, reject this claim. Officials say the medics' salaries and labour standards comply with local and international law.

Though countries in the region have long opposed the US embargo on Cuba, a wave of right-wing-aligned governments has shifted allegiances.

Last year, Argentina and Paraguay joined a handful of nations worldwide that opposed the end of the US embargo. Costa Rica broke relations with Cuba earlier this month and Ecuador has expelled diplomatic staff in its capital.

After Trump said last week he could do "anything I want" with Cuba, Cuban officials said they were prepared for the unlikely possibility of a military engagement.

Argentina to seek looser foreign ownership rules for rural land

Argentina's government will send a bill to Congress that seeks to change the limits on foreign ownership of rural land, Cabinet Chief Manuel Adorni said at a news conference yesterday, the latest step by the Milei administration to boost foreign investment in the country.

Adorni said investments in oil, mining and agriculture require large terrain.

President Javier Milei's administration has pursued a sweeping pro-market reform agenda aimed at attracting foreign capital, rolling back interventionist policies and deregulating key sectors.

"Today, the most important businessmen of the world look at Argentina as a historic investment opportunity," Adorni said.

Adorni also referred to a federal judicial investigation that has been opened into a trip he made last February to Punta del Este, Uruguay, on a private airplane. The investigations looking into whether the trip was made as part of government business, according to local newspaper La Nacion. Adorni, who has characterised the trip as a vacation for which he used private funds, said he had "nothing to hide." (Reuters)

'Chile fuel tax threatens mining sector'

A temporary tax adjustment on diesel driven by the Chilean government to mitigate rising fuel prices will hit the mining sector's competitiveness, the top mining body in the world's largest copper producer warned.

The government measure reduces the recovery of a specific diesel tax for certain companies to finance mitigation measures without increasing fiscal spending. Chile's Mining Council, whose members include state-owned Codelco and international miners BHP, Glencore, Freeport-McMurray and Anglo American, said the industry will pay about \$100mn in just six months linked to the modification. The association added that the mining sector will bear 74% of the measure's total cost, based on the government's estimated total revenue of \$135mn. (Reuters)



Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (4th left) poses with members of the Air Force in front of a supersonic aircraft during its unveiling ceremony in Gavião Peixoto, Sao Paulo state, Brazil, yesterday. (AFP)

Brazil's first locally made supersonic fighter jet unveiled

AFP
Gavião Peixoto, Brazil

Brazil yesterday unveiled the first supersonic fighter jet to be produced locally, placing it among a small group of countries able to build such advanced aircraft.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva christened the F-39E Gripen fighter jet from the Swedish group Saab with champagne during a high-profile ceremony in Gavião Peixoto in the state of Sao Paulo.

The Brazilian presidency said the building of the supersonic jet was "unprecedented in Latin America."

"This project allows us to consolidate our deterrent power by enhancing our capacity to ensure national sovereignty and re-

gional security," Brazil's Defense Minister Jose Mucio said during the ceremony.

Brazil has ordered 36 supersonic fighter jets from Saab, 15 of which will be manufactured at the facilities of the Brazilian aerospace manufacturer Embraer in Gavião Peixoto. Brasilia opted for the Swedish aircraft over the Rafale from France's Dassault Aviation and the F/A-18 Super Hornet from US company Boeing.

The deal - awarded in 2014 - was plagued with corruption allegations. Lula was accused of receiving around 1mn dollars to help Saab win the tender during his first term in office.

However investigations in Brazil and Sweden were closed with no evidence of wrongdoing found by Saab, while the case against

Lula was dismissed.

Brazil has highlighted the importance of boosting defence capabilities in a turbulent geopolitical landscape.

Lula has criticised the war against Iran waged by the US and Israel.

He has also denounced Washington's actions in Latin America, saying the US attack on Venezuela to oust president Nicolas Maduro crossed "an unacceptable line".

During an official visit by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa earlier this month, Lula warned both nations were at risk of foreign invasion.

"I don't know if comrade Ramaphosa realizes that if we don't prepare ourselves in terms of defence, one day someone will invade us," said Lula.

Bolsonaro to be discharged from hospital tomorrow

AFP
Brasilia

Brazil's former president Jair Bolsonaro is due to be discharged from hospital into house arrest tomorrow (Friday), two weeks after he was rushed to intensive care with bronchopneumonia, his doctor said.

Bolsonaro fell ill in prison where he is serving a 27-year sentence for attempting a botched coup after his 2022 election loss to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

After more than a week in the ICU, the 71-year-old was moved to a regular in-patient room on Monday and is considered "clinically stable," his cardiologist Brasil Caiado told reporters yesterday.

"We are planning for discharge on Friday," he said, adding that a chest X-ray had shown significant improvement, with only a residual lesion in the left lung.

Supreme Court justice Alexandre de Moraes on Tuesday granted a request by Bolsonaro's lawyers to allow him to temporarily serve his sentence at home

for a period of 90 days once he is discharged.

After this period the court will re-evaluate whether to extend the house arrest or if the former far-right leader should go back to jail.

The clinic said Bolsonaro's lung infection was the latest illness linked to his 2018 stabbing in the abdomen while campaigning to become president. The attack has led to numerous operations and other health problems, including persistent hiccups and vomiting.

The doctor said that recovery from bronchopneumonia, could take six weeks to six months.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, APRIL CALINDOG CONDEZ

holder of

PHILIPPINES Passport No. P3299463B
QID No. 28960811946

hereby change my name

from

APRIL CALINDOG CONDEZ

to

APRIL CONDEZ FULE

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, BIJAYA GIRI DIPA GIRI

holder of

NEPAL Passport No. PA0342541
QID No. 29452402674

hereby change my name

from

BIJAYA GIRI DIPA GIRI

to

BIJAYA GIRI

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

13 Mexicans dead in US ICE raids or custody: Mexico

AFP
Mexico City

Thirteen Mexicans have died in raids by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), in its custody or in events linked to the agency in the past year, Mexico's government said yesterday.

The report, given by the Mexican foreign ministry in a news conference, comes after ICE dramatically stepped up enforcement operations as part of President Donald Trump's anti-immigration crackdown.

"We do not agree with these forms of detention," said Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum. "We ask that human rights be respected."

"We do not agree with these forms of detention. We ask that human rights be respected"

Six of the Mexican nationals' deaths were linked to "medical complications," and four were classified as suicides, said Roberto Velasco, the foreign ministry's undersecretary for North American affairs.

Two others died in immigration raids, and one in a shootout at an ICE facility, Velasco said.

Mexico said it had sent 14 diplomatic communiques in connection with the deaths and received 12 replies.

Washington's response "is

that there will be an investigation," said Sheinbaum, who called on the US to ensure the causes of death were determined with certainty.

The most recent case was that of 19-year-old Royer Perez Jimenez, who was found dead in a Florida detention centre.

Both ICE and the Mexican government gave the presumed cause of death as suicide.

The US Department of Homeland Security estimates that 11mn unauthorised immigrants were living in the US as of 2022, with 44% of them from neighbouring Mexico.

Last year, at least 30 people died in US migrant detention centres - the largest number since 2004, the year after ICE was created.

China demands Japan punish military officer who breached embassy in Tokyo

Reuters
Beijing/Tokyo

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday demanded that Japan conduct an investigation into and severely punish an officer from the Self-Defense Forces who was arrested on suspicion of breaking into the Chinese embassy in Tokyo.

The suspect, identified by Tokyo's Metropolitan Police Department as 23-year-old Kodai

Murata, allegedly scaled the embassy wall carrying an 18cm (7-inch) knife.

Minoru Kihara, Japan's top government spokesperson, called the incident "regrettable" and said the government would take measures to prevent it from happening again.

"I understand that the police are continuing their investigation to clarify the incident and have already taken necessary security measures, such as increasing the number of police officers assigned

Japan says Chinese embassy break-in 'regrettable'

Japan said yesterday it was "regrettable" that a member of its military broke into the Chinese embassy in Tokyo, while Beijing called for the perpetrator to be punished. Japan's top government spokesman, Minoru Kihara, confirmed that the suspect was a member of the military.

"It is truly regrettable that a Self-Defense Forces member,

who is expected to comply with the law, has been arrested on suspicion" of entering the embassy premises, Kihara told reporters. "Police are already conducting an investigation to clarify what happened and have implemented necessary measures to strengthen security" of the embassy, he added. (AFP)

to guard the Chinese embassy in Tokyo," Kihara said.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian, speaking at a regu-

lar press briefing in Beijing, said the incident had "seriously threatened the safety of embassy personnel and damaged its dignity."

He blamed far-right ideologies and neo-militarism within Japan for the intrusion, which he said exposed "deep-rooted harmful

effects of the Japanese government's erroneous policies on major core issues concerning China-Japan relations."

"We once again urge the Japanese side to conduct a thorough investigation into the incident immediately, severely punish the perpetrator and provide the Chinese side with a responsible explanation," Lin said.

The incident came after months of heightened tensions between Beijing and Tokyo since November.

Kim Jong-un vows North Korea's 'unshakable' support for Russia

North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un said his country will always support Russia, state media reported yesterday, in a thank-you letter to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin.

Ties between the two have grown closer since Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, with Pyongyang dispatching ground troops and weapons systems to aid Russia's war effort.

Analysts say the assistance has been provided in exchange for Russia's provision of food and weapons technologies.

"I express my sincere thanks to you for sending warm and sincere congratulations first on my reassignment of the heavy duty as President of the State Affairs," Kim said in the message on Tuesday, the official Korean Central News Agency said. "Today the DPRK and Russia are closely cooperating to defend the sovereignty of the two countries," Kim said, using the initials of the North's official name.

"Pyongyang will always be with Moscow. This is our choice and unshakable will," he added. Putin and Kim struck a military deal during Putin's visit to Pyongyang in June 2024, obligating both states to provide military assistance "without delay" in the event of an attack on the other. (AFP)

S Korea to invest in cutting-edge aircraft technologies for defence

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung said yesterday his country will invest in cutting-edge aircraft technologies for national defence, at an event celebrating the first delivery of homegrown fighter jet KF-21.

South Korea will swiftly begin developing engines, components and raw materials for its high-tech aircraft industry, Lee said.

The jet will be delivered to South Korea's Air Force and deployed for operations in September, the presidential office said in a statement.

Earlier this month, state-run Korea Aerospace Industries said it was in talks with Indonesia on potential fighter jet sales, but so far no decisions have been made.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto is scheduled to make a state visit to South Korea from March 31-April 2.

President Lee told Prabowo in November that he hoped the two countries would continue to co-operate on military security, including the development of fighter jets. (Reuters)

North Korea's Kim welcomes Belarus leader Lukashenko

By Mark Trevelyan
Reuters

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un met Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko in Pyongyang yesterday with a white-horse cavalry and 21-gun salute, cementing ties between two close allies of Russia's Vladimir Putin. Kim has provided Moscow with millions of rounds of ammunition for its war in Ukraine and sent troops to help Russia expel Ukrainian forces who invaded its western Kursk region. Lukashenko allowed Belarus to be used as a launchpad for Russia's invasion in February 2022, and subsequently agreed to host Russian tactical nuclear missiles on its territory, which borders three Nato alliance countries.

Kim greeted Lukashenko with an embrace and laid on a lavish welcome ceremony with ranks of soldiers, cavalry and the gun salute after flag-waving children had cheered his arrival at the airport.

Lukashenko's foreign minister, Maxim Ryzhenkov, told Belarusian state media that the two sides



Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un attend a welcome ceremony at Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang, North Korea, yesterday. (Reuters)

would sign a friendship and cooperation treaty during the two-day visit. Current trade was "modest" but there was potential to boost it in sectors including food and pharmaceuticals, he said.

Valery Tsepkelo, a prominent exiled opponent of Lukashenko, said there was no substance to the summit beyond a display of solidarity. "There will be no benefit to Belarus from this visit. The same for North Korea. They are just demonstrating that they're

not isolated and they can have a meeting. They don't have any normal trade," he told Reuters.

North Korea and Belarus have withstood years of external economic pressure: the former is under UN sanctions because of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and the latter is subject to Western sanctions over its human rights record and backing for Putin in Ukraine.

"The current situation is simply pushing us into each other's

arms. We're looking for friends. Friends may be far away, but they are very loyal, reliable, and respectful," Belarusian minister Ryzhenkov was quoted as saying.

Despite the isolation of both countries, US President Donald Trump has engaged with their leaders. Trump met Kim three times in 2018 and 2019, during his first term in the White House, but their encounters failed to yield substantive results. Trump said last year he would "love another meeting", which Kim said could happen if the US dropped its "absurd obsession" with getting North Korea to give up nuclear weapons.

Trump last year re-established direct contact with Lukashenko, who had been treated as a pariah by his predecessor Joe Biden. In recent months, the US has begun to ease sanctions on Belarus in return for releases of political prisoners. Lukashenko's trip to North Korea comes six days after he met Trump's envoy John Cole and announced the freeing of 250 more detainees. The US side has said Lukashenko may soon visit the White House.

Philippines says it is working with US to obtain oil from sanctioned countries

Reuters
Manila

The Philippines is working with Washington to secure waivers and exemptions that will allow it to obtain oil from US-sanctioned countries and guarantee supplies, its ambassador to the US said. The Philippines, which relies heavily on imported fuel, declared a state of national energy emergency on Tuesday to deal with the fallout from the Middle East war, including the disruptions to oil procurement.

"We are working with the State Department to get waivers or exemptions to purchase oil from US-sanctioned countries," Jose Manuel Romualdez told Reuters in an exchange of phone messages. Asked if imports of oil from Venezuela and Iran were part of the discussions, Romualdez said "all



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr speaks during a press conference at Malacanang Palace in Manila, Philippines, yesterday. (Reuters)

options are being considered."

Asked what has been the response from the State Department, the ambassador said: "Work in progress."

As of March 20, the government said the Philippines had around 45 days of fuel supply, and is procuring 1mn more barrels of oil to build its buffer stock.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr said in a televised address yesterday that the country's fuel supply would not run dry after 45 days as his government has been looking for other sources.

"We are exploring other sources not affected by the war," Marcos said. "Things are beginning to open up... we can be confident that after the 45 days we will have a flow of oil."

The Philippines imports almost all of its crude from the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia its biggest supplier, making it vulnerable to oil price shocks and supply disruptions. Marcos said the emergency declaration was a "precautionary tool" allowing the government to be ready "for whatever comes

next." The declaration, which will be in effect for one year, authorises the government to purchase fuel and petroleum products and pay a portion of the contract amount in advance to ensure timely and sufficient supply, among other special powers.

"We should not panic," Marcos said, while assuring the public that his government is doing everything it can to alleviate the situation.

Transport workers, commuters, and consumer groups are planning a two-day strike from Thursday to protest the increase in fuel prices and what they describe as the Marcos administration's failure to act. Manila has temporarily increased coal-fired generation due to energy supply pressures and allowed the temporary and limited use of cheaper but dirtier Euro II fuel to ensure supply.

Thai tanker safely transits Hormuz after Iran talks

Reuters
Bangkok

A Thai oil tanker has safely passed through the Strait of Hormuz following diplomatic coordination between Thailand and Iran, and was not required to pay to escape the blockade, a Thai official and the oil major that owns the vessel said yesterday.

The Bangchak Corporation-owned tanker crossed the strategic waterway on Monday after successful talks between Thai foreign minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow and Iran's ambassador to Thailand.

"I requested that if Thai ships need to pass through the strait, could they assist in ensuring safe passage?" Sihasak told reporters late on Tuesday.

"They responded that they would take care of it and asked us to provide the names of the vessels that would be transiting."

The safe transit for the Thai tanker comes two weeks after the Thailand-flagged bulk carrier Mayuree Naree was attacked by a

projectile in the strait, causing a fire onboard and forcing the crew to evacuate.

Iranian and Omani authorities have reached the vessel, but Thailand is still awaiting information on the status of three missing crew members, according to the Thai foreign ministry.

In a statement, Bangchak said its vessel, which had been anchored in the Persian Gulf since March 11, was currently on its way back to Thailand. It gave credit to the co-ordination between Thailand's foreign ministry and Iranian authorities.

To secure the Bangchak tanker's transit, the Thai embassy in Muscat also worked with Omani authorities, co-ordinating alongside Iran via its embassy in Bangkok, the Thai foreign ministry source said, asking not to be named because of the sensitivity of the issue.

In a post on X, Iran's embassy in Thailand said that passage of the Thai ship reflected the close ties between the two countries. "Friends have a special place," it said.

Australian dog who saved 100 koalas retires

AFP
Sydney

An Australian dog credited with saving over 100 koalas from bushfires is retiring after a decade of service.

Bear, an 11-year-old Australian Koolie, was one of the first dogs in the country to be trained on the scent of koala fur.

The International Fund for Animal Welfare called using dogs to detect koalas a "novel" approach. "No one knew if it could be done," IFAW head of programmes Josey Sharrad wrote in a statement about Bear on Monday.

As a pup, the four-legged hero's boundless energy made it tough to stay indoors, but he found his true potential in the bush.

"He literally went from chewing the walls of a Gold Coast apartment to roaming through the Aussie bush on a mission to save our most iconic species," Sharrad said.

Bear's skills saved over 100 koalas as the Black Summer bushfires raged across Australia's eastern seaboard from late 2019 to early 2020, razing millions of hectares, destroying thousands of homes and blan-

keting cities in noxious smoke.

The tail-wagging detective with a "joyful and goofy" personality retires with an extensive list of accolades - including an Animal of the Year award and Puppy Tales Photos Australian Dog of the Year award.

He also features in a "dogumentary" called "Bear: Koala Hero", and in a book, "Bear to the Rescue".

Bear will embark on a slower-paced chapter on the Sunshine



File photo: Bear, an Australian koolie, scanning the Two Thumbs Wildlife Trust Sanctuary for koalas in the Numeralla, Peak View and Nerriga areas of New South Wales. (IFAW/AFP)

Coast with one of his former handlers, getting belly rubs and playing his favourite game, fetch.

One of his former handlers, Romane Cristescu, said Bear had been a "tireless ambassador for koalas for a decade".

"He melted hearts all around the world, and opened many doors so we could have critical and difficult conversations about climate change and its impacts on the threatened koalas, as well as so many other species."

ABC staff strike for first time in 20 years

Reuters
Sydney

Hundreds of staff at the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) began a one-day strike yesterday, the first walkout in 20 years, over pay and working conditions, disrupting live news coverage at the public broadcaster.

Live programming was diverted to content from the UK broadcaster BBC when the strike began at 11:00am (0000 GMT).

Flagship programmes on TV and radio were also expected to be replaced by reruns during the 24-hour strike.

It comes after months of pay negotiations between staff and management. The majority of ABC staff this week rejected the latest offer of a 10% pay rise over three years and a A\$1,000 (\$700) bonus for ongoing and fixed-term staff.

One-third of the ABC's 4,500 staff are unionised. Around 1,000 people voted in favour of taking industrial action after talks failed.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance union said the offer was below inflation and failed to ensure secure work conditions.



Journalists and staff walk out of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation headquarters on strike demanding better pay and protections to stop artificial intelligence taking their jobs, in Melbourne, yesterday. (AFP)

The A\$1,000 bonus also excluded casual staff members, the union said.

"ABC staff are taking this step because they want fair pay that keeps up with the cost of living, genuine job security, and working conditions that allow them to continue serving the Australian public with integrity," Chief Executive Erin Madeley said.

ABC Managing Director Hugh Marks said the strike was "very unfortunate".

"It is not a great time for our teams to be out. There is a lot of things happening in the world," Marks told ABC Radio.

"We will be using BBC content where that's appropriate and where that's available to us. We will be maintaining services but they won't be of the standard that I would like to be on air."

He said the offer given to staff was "fair and reasonable" and above inflation when the bonus was counted.

India upgrades climate commitments for 2035

AFP
New Delhi

India announced a long-awaited upgrade to its climate commitments yesterday, pledging to increase the share of non-fossil fuels in its electricity capacity to 60% by 2035.

The world's most populous country and third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases has been facing pressure to curb pollution while meeting rising energy demand.

The announcement came after the cabinet approved India's so-called Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), a roadmap to achieve climate change goals under the Paris Agreement.

The country will "achieve 60% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2035", the statement from the federal government read.

It also pledged to reduce emissions intensity, a measurement of emissions generated relative to GDP, by 47% by 2035, compared with 2005 levels.

India had previously aimed to bring the share of non-fossil fuels to 50% of installed power capacity by 2030, but has already met that target.

It had also aimed to create a carbon sink of up to three bn tonnes by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.



Power-generating wind turbines at an Adani Green Energy wind park at Ahmedabad-Narayan Sarovar state highway near Nakhatrana village in the western state of Gujarat. (Reuters/File Photo)

The updated pledges expand that plan to between 3.5 and four bn tonnes by 2035.

Carbon sinks offset emissions that cannot be fully eliminated, especially from hard-to-decarbonise sectors like industry, transport and agriculture.

Some analysts hailed the updated commitments, with climate activist Harjeet Singh saying: "India is capitalising on the extraordinary momentum that saw it smash its previous renewable energy goals years ahead of schedule."

But the new commitments do not include a projected year when emissions will peak, and the emissions intensity target is less ambitious than the 50-55% range some experts had suggested was possible.

The emissions intensity target "represents a very modest increase compared with its potential," said Aman Srivastava, climate policy fellow at Sustainable Futures Collaborative.

That could "further erode trust in multilateral negotiations", he warned.

The pledge to increase renewables capacity is "more significant and welcome" but will only have an impact if the installations are actually used to generate electricity, he told AFP.

Like all signatories to the Paris accord, which aims to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, India is required to submit updated NDCs to the UN through 2035.

It has committed to reaching net-zero emissions by 2070, but remains heavily reliant on coal, which accounts for roughly 75% of its electricity generation.

Last year, only 13% of the electricity generated in India came from solar panels or wind turbines, with storage capacity lagging far behind generation power.

The country's electricity needs are expected to more than double by 2047, according to the New Delhi-based non-profit Center for Science and Environment.

New Delhi has recently faced criticism for being slow to publish its NDCs, notably from France, which had threatened to block European funds earmarked for the country's decarbonisation.

The country emitted an estimated 4.4bn tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2024, according to UN data, trailing only China and the US.

However, its per-capita emissions and historical contribution to global warming remain far lower than many developed nations.

Indonesian police seek two for murder of tourist

AFP
Denpasar

Indonesian police are hunting for two people wanted in the stabbing death of a Dutch tourist on the resort island of Bali, an official said Tuesday.

Rene Pouw, 49, was attacked late Monday near a villa where he stayed in the Badung district, local police chief I Ketut Agus Pasek Sudina said.

The victim's girlfriend, identified only by the initials PI, reported seeing two individuals attack Pouw with a knife, Ketut said.

He suffered cuts to his head, neck, shoulder and lower thigh, and died from blood loss, the official added.

No personal items were taken from Pouw, and police are investigating the motive for the attack.

Pouw's girlfriend said one of the perpetrators wore a type of black and green jacket commonly donned by Indonesian gig drivers, while the other had on an orange shirt, according to Ketut.

This month, a Bali court sentenced two Australians to 16 years in prison for killing a compatriot over a debt dispute, while a third man was jailed for 12 years for organising the hit.

A court on the neighbouring tourist island of Lombok also sentenced two Indonesians to 18 years in prison last month for murdering an elderly Spanish tourist.

UK to host talks on mission to reopen Hormuz: official

AFP
London

Britain and France will chair military talks this week involving about 30 nations to form a coalition to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a UK defence official told AFP yesterday.

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands said last week they were ready "to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz". A further 24 countries then endorsed this statement.

The "expectation is that there will be a further meeting, military-to-military, the chiefs of defence staff of the wider group that has now signed... later this week," the official told AFP.

The chief of the defence staff of Britain's armed forces, Richard Knighton (pictured), chaired a meeting of the initial six countries plus Canada on Sunday, *The Times* reported.

The British defence official told AFP other countries would also now be potentially invited.

"We recognise that we have a role to play in bringing together this coalition and helping to lead the rest of the world to develop a plan to ensure that we can reopen the Strait of Hormuz as quickly as possible," the official said.

Knighton was working "very closely with Fabien Mandon", the French armed forces chief of staff, the official added.

The Times said the UK has offered to host a later summit in the southern naval port of Portsmouth or London to hammer out details and build the coalition,



"We recognise that we have a role to play in bringing together this coalition and helping to lead the rest of the world to develop a plan to ensure that we can reopen the Strait of Hormuz as quickly as possible"

tion, to ensure the waterway could be reopened "as soon as the conditions are right".

Iran has virtually closed the vital strait since the US-Israeli strikes that started the war on February 28, causing global oil and gas prices to soar.

An international summit could seek to tackle the issue of how to get rid of mines which several countries have accused Tehran of laying in the strait.

A fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes through the strait in peacetime.

Iran has said "non-hostile vessels" can transit the Strait of Hormuz if they meet safety and security regulations, according to a statement released to the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

But the statement shared yesterday by the IMO stressed that "vessels, equipment and any assets belonging to the aggressor parties - namely the United States and the Israeli regime - as well as other participants in the aggression do not qualify for innocent or non-hostile passage".

Power crunch pushes Sri Lanka to four-day week

AFP
Colombo

Millions of Sri Lankans enjoyed a government-ordered extra day off yesterday as the island nation battles an energy crisis triggered by the Middle East war.

Rail and bus stations were largely deserted as most state institutions, schools and universities shifted to a four-day working week.

"I am really enjoying the mid-week break because it is a fully paid holiday," said housing ministry official Prarthana Perera, 40.

Her office, like many government departments in Battaramulla - the capital's main administrative hub - was closed.

Banks operated on shorter hours, while many private firms introduced work-from-home arrangements, industry bodies said, urging members to help curb energy use.

Sri Lanka has already raised fuel prices by a third since the US and Israel began bombing Iran, triggering retaliatory attacks that have disrupted global energy supplies.

About half of Sri Lanka's elec-



Commuters ride along a deserted street in Colombo yesterday after Sri Lanka introduced a four-day work week to conserve fuel reserves amid the Middle East war. (AFP)

tricity is generated by coal and diesel.

The cabinet has set a target of cutting electricity consumption by 25%, ordering street lamps switched off and asking civil servants to use table fans instead of power-hungry air conditioners.

Shipping executive Varuna Perera welcomed the day off but was uncertain of its impact.

"It will not be effective in the long term," Perera said. "But the government will have a breather for a cou-

ple of weeks, to save some energy."

Environmental lawyer Ravindranath Dabare was more sceptical, arguing the move would have limited impact as those needing government services would have to travel on other days.

"We can't close hospitals... the doctors and health officials can't work from home," Dabare said.

The influential Chamber of Commerce said it had urged members to follow government guidelines or adopt remote work where

possible, if "business continuity can be effectively maintained".

And Sri Lanka's leading technology firm WSO2 made working from home mandatory for its 500 employees on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

"This is our way of contributing to the national cause," WSO2 spokeswoman Zaihoon Bin-Ahamed told AFP.

Media Minister Nalinda Jayatissa said the government had yet to assess the impact of the energy-saving measures, but expected broad compliance.

Sri Lanka has been running coal and diesel power plants at full capacity to meet electricity demand.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake urged electric vehicle owners not to charge their cars overnight, as they would add a surge to an already strained grid.

He asked motorists instead to plug in during the day, when excess solar power is available.

Officials said the country's diesel stocks are sufficient to last until mid-May, while petrol could last a week longer.

The government is seeking oil supplies from Russia and hopes to tap Iran for crude oil, Jayatissa said.

Britain to cap overseas political donations and ban crypto funding for parties

Reuters
London

Britain will cap how much donors living overseas can give to political parties and ban cryptocurrency donations following an independent review into the influence of foreign finance, a move that could hurt Nigel Farage's Reform UK party. The government ordered the review into foreign financial interference in politics after a former politician in Reform UK was jailed last year for taking bribes to make pro-Russia speeches and statements.

Last year, the populist Reform UK became the first British party to announce it would accept donations in the form of bitcoin and at least two-thirds of its money raised came from donors abroad. Led by Farage, a friend of US President Donald Trump, Reform is leading the governing Labour Party in opinion polls and raised more money than its rivals last year.

The government said it would cap donations by Britons living abroad at 100,000 pounds (\$133,880) per year, and introduce a moratorium on crypto donations until a system to regulate them effectively was established, imple-

menting the main conclusions of an independent review.

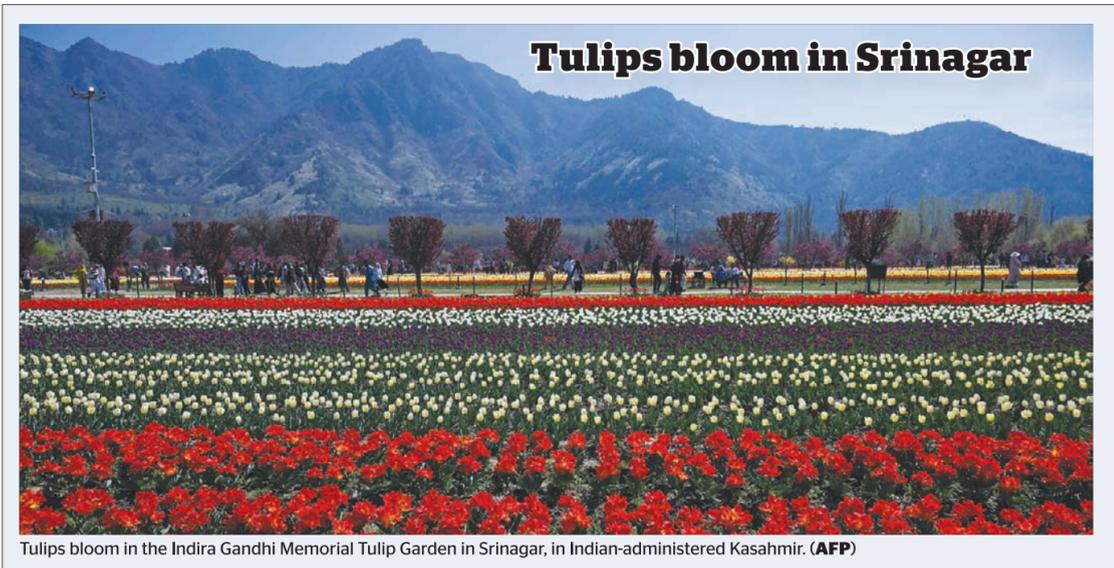
"We will stop hostile foreign states and others who want to weaken and exploit the UK by stoking division and hatred," housing minister Steve Reed said yesterday.

Reed said "a ban on cryptocurrency donations is vital" to shut off a "clear route" for channelling illicit funds into politics. He added the cap on donations and crypto ban would both apply from yesterday. In his review, a former senior government official Philip Rycroft said "the threat of foreign financial interference in our politics is real, persistent and sustained."

There had previously been no limits in Britain on donations to parties if they come from individuals on the UK electoral register or from UK-registered companies or organisations such as trade unions.

Rycroft's review said Britain faced a persistent problem of foreign countries, including Russia, China and Iran, trying to influence and undermine the country's democracy and possible new threats from foreign actors and private citizens, including from "allies like the United States".

Reform did not immediately respond to a request for comment.



Tulips bloom in the Indira Gandhi Memorial Tulip Garden in Srinagar, in Indian-administered Kashmir. (AFP)

Ex-Google executive Brittin named new BBC boss

Reuters
London

The BBC named former Google executive Matt Brittin (pictured) as its new director general yesterday, replacing Tim Davie who quit last year after a misleading edit of a speech by US President Donald Trump.

BBC Chair Samir Shah said it was "clear there is need for radical reform" at the publicly funded broadcaster, and he and the board believed Brittin to be the right person to steer the change.



"The stakes for the BBC, and the future of public service broadcasting, have never been higher," he added.

Aside from a \$10bn lawsuit from Trump, the BBC is facing a battle to stay relevant as viewers, particularly younger audiences, shift to streamers and other digital platforms.

Trump accuses it of defamation over how the BBC spliced together footage of parts of a speech he gave on January 6, 2021, before his supporters stormed the US Capitol. The broadcaster has argued the lawsuit should be dismissed, saying Trump's subsequent re-election showed the alleged

defamation did not harm his reputation.

Brittin, 57, joined Google in 2007 as head of UK and Ireland before rising through the ranks to become EMEA president in 2014. He announced in 2024 that he would step down the following year.

"This is a moment of real risk, yet also real opportunity. The BBC needs the pace and energy to be both where stories are, and where audiences are," Brittin, who will take on the new role from May 18, said in a statement.

"To build on the reach, trust and creative strengths today, confront challenges with courage, and thrive as a public service fit for the future. I can't wait to start this work," he added.

EU review of France nuclear funding expected to progress swiftly, official says

Reuters
Paris

European Union investment into France's state aid funding scheme for the construction of six nuclear reactors is expected to progress quickly and will not delay the projects, a French energy ministry official said yesterday. The new reactors are expected to cost tens of billions of euros and are central to France's plan to renew its ageing nuclear fleet. They would add about 10 gigawatts of capacity, with the first reactor due to be operating in 2038. The new plants would replace

old ones and secure future energy supplies to cover rising demand over the next decade, driven in part by the energy needs of data centres.

The first step in the investigation into France's state aid package is expected by the end of March with a European Commission declaration, the official said.

The process is expected to go quickly in part because it follows previously approved models like one used to finance the development of two nuclear reactors in the Czech Republic, the official said.

"We are confident that we are still on schedule," the official said. The next step for operator EDF

is to make a final investment decision, expected in the second half of the year. Brussels is concerned that the six new power plants would further entrench state-owned and dominant energy player EDF's market share. The company already holds more than 75% of France's net electricity production.

An in-depth EU investigation would also enable the Commission to build an ironclad case in the event that Austria's government – which opposes nuclear power – launches a legal challenge against its approval of the deal, which some EU officials deem likely, a source told Reuters on Tuesday.

Merz says Ukraine no longer needs German Taurus missiles

AFP
Berlin

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said yesterday there was no longer any need to send long-range Taurus missiles to help defend Ukraine against Russia's invasion, a move long debated in Berlin.

Kyiv has long wanted the missiles but Berlin has resisted openly committing to this for fear it would worsen tensions with nuclear-armed Russia.

When in opposition, Merz himself had committed to sending the missiles, but he has

backed away from this since taking office last May.

Answering questions from lawmakers yesterday, Merz said that his original remarks had been made "in a different context", at a time when he "assumed that the Bundeswehr had a sufficient number of operational Taurus cruise missiles in its stocks that we could supply to Ukraine".

Furthermore he said that Ukraine's progress in domestic weapons development had rendered the debate over Taurus missiles moot.

"Today, Ukraine itself has long-range weapons in its depots, which it has built itself –

partly with our help – and which are significantly more effective than the relatively small number of Taurus cruise missiles we could have delivered," Merz said.

"In terms of weapons technology, Ukraine has advanced far, far beyond what we were discussing back when this war began."

Merz said that while Ukraine was "better armed today than ever before", it had "considerable difficulties with financing".

"We need to mobilise money for Ukraine so that these weapons can continue to be produced".

Since the US under President Donald Trump scaled back most of its support for Ukraine last year,

Denmark faces tough coalition talks following election

Reuters
Copenhagen

Denmark's king asked Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and her Social Democrats yesterday to explore the formation of a new government with two left-wing parties, kicking off what could be weeks of talks to build a working parliamentary majority.

Frederiksen earlier handed in her centrist coalition government's resignation after a massive election defeat but she could still emerge as the leader of a new Danish government.

Analysts say Tuesday's election result marked a voter revolt over the outgoing government's broken economic promises and a sign that the electorate has grown tired of Frederiksen as a leader after seven years in power.

Her Social Democratic Party suffered its worst election result since 1903, winning just 38 seats in the 179-seat parliament – down from 50 – but it remains the largest party in parliament.

Voters' concerns over domestic issues such as the environment, the cost-of-living crisis and welfare outweighed any support Frederiksen garnered with her defiant stance towards US President Donald Trump's repeated ambitions to acquire Denmark's semi-autonomous territory of Greenland, analysts said.

"This loss was larger than you could explain just by the cost of ruling," said Rune Stubager, a political scientist at Aarhus University.

Stubager attributed the defeat to polarising economic decisions, such as the controversial scrapping of a public holiday, tax cuts



Mette Frederiksen, Denmark's prime minister and Social Democrats party leader, Martin Lidegaard, Social Liberal Party leader and Lars Lokke Rasmussen, Denmark's foreign minister and Moderates party leader, attend the party leaders' debate after parliamentary elections, in Copenhagen, yesterday. (Reuters)

for high earners, and a last-minute proposal to introduce a wealth tax, which failed to resonate with voters.

King Frederik X tasked Frederiksen with exploring a coalition of her Social Democrats with the Green Left, which won 20 seats, and the Social Liberal Party, which secured 10 seats.

But while other left-wing parties may support this constellation, Frederiksen would also need support from the centrist Moderates party or right-wing parties to form a working majority for her policies in parliament.

If she fails to build a new coalition, the king would have to invite another person to explore options for forming a new government.

The election reflected a broader trend of voters moving away from centrist parties. Right-wing nationalist parties increased their share of the vote to 17%, from 14.4% in 2022, while the Green

Left Party also gained ground.

The anti-immigration Danish People's Party also capitalised on concerns over inflation and living costs, promising to cut fuel taxes and staging campaign events offering discounted petrol to motorists, Stubager said.

While Frederiksen's tough immigration policies remained broadly in line with public sentiment, the domestic economic agenda carried more weight in this election, analysts said.

Despite their losses, the Social Democrats remain Denmark's biggest party with 21.9% support, meaning Frederiksen is widely seen as having a good shot at returning for a third term as prime minister.

"That is the paradox of the election, that the huge loser, Mette Frederiksen, the prime minister, she is the favourite to become the next prime minister as well," political analyst Noa Redington said.

In total, Frederiksen's left-wing bloc secured 84 seats in parliament, slightly ahead of the right-leaning bloc's 77 seats, leaving both sides short of the 90 seats required to form a majority government. The Moderates, led by Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen, emerged as a potential kingmaker with 14 seats.

Frederiksen acknowledged the fractured electoral landscape during a Wednesday debate, saying the result excluded the possibility of forming a traditional right- or left-wing government.

"So what is left is that we need to co-operate. That is the message here," she said.

Since 2022, Frederiksen has led a grand coalition of the Social Democrats, the right-of-centre Liberal Party and the Moderates. The leader of the Liberal Party, Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen, has said he is no longer interested in coalition rule with Frederiksen.

France's Lille to host new EU customs authority

AFP
Brussels

The northern French city of Lille will host the future European Union customs authority, officials said yesterday, as the bloc seeks to stem the flow of cheap Chinese parcel imports.

The new body is part of the EU's overhaul of its customs rules and Brussels has said the authority will centralise European efforts to tackle fierce pressure from a myriad of issues including the proliferation of e-commerce.

Lille mayor Arnaud Deslandes welcomed the news, calling it a "victory" reflecting the city's location "at the crossroads of Europe."

Nine cities had been in the running: Bucharest, Liege, Lille, Malaga, Porto, Rome, The Hague, Warsaw, and Zagreb.

Representatives of the Euro-

pean Parliament and member states picked the chosen city after several rounds of voting.

The authority is expected to start work in 2028.

A large focus of the EU's customs reforms has been the proliferation of small parcels ordered via Chinese platforms, which European governments and businesses say has led to unfair competition as well as health and safety risks for consumers. EU ministers in December agreed to impose a three-euro duty on low-value imports into the bloc from July 2026, a month after the bloc opted to scrap a duty exemption for parcels worth less than 150 euros imported directly to consumers.

The EU said 4.6bn small retail packages entered the bloc in 2024 – more than 145 per second – with 91% originating in China. Brussels expects that figure to keep rising.

Drone-makers, defence start-ups to get 'rapid' funding under EU plans

The EU put forward plans to fund start-ups developing drones and other defence innovations at "record speed" yesterday, as the bloc races to rearm and boost its military sector.

The European Commission said it will make available 115mn euros (\$133mn) to small and medium European defence companies under a new funding tool dubbed "Agile". The pilot aims to finance up to 30 projects from 2027, slashing grant-approval times to under four months to have new technologies ready for armed forces within three years, Brussels said.

"We want to create a culture of rapid doing," said Henna

Virkkunen, EU commissioner for tech and security. The war in Ukraine has shown the importance of developing and deploying new, cost-efficient weapons fast, the commission said. Kyiv's ability to field cheap but effective battlefield tech like electronic jammers and interceptor drones, to counter Russia's invasion has shaken up a sector long known for its lengthy development times. But defence start-ups in Europe – which have boosted military spending in the face of a hostile Russia and wavering US security commitment – have in the past lamented difficulties in securing investments.

Spain's Sanchez says global citizens shouldn't pay for fallout of Iran war

Reuters
Madrid

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said yesterday it was unjust for citizens worldwide to bear the cost of what he called illegal US and Israeli actions in Iran, warning the war was inflicting severe global economic damage, with Spanish firms alone losing 100bn euros (\$116bn) in under a month.

"Every bomb that falls in the Middle East hits the wallets of our families," he told lawmakers in a parliament session laying out

the reasons for his government's steadfast opposition to the war, a stance that has since been echoed by other European leaders.

The 100-billion-euro figure referred to the decline in the aggregate market capitalisation of Spain's blue-chip IBEX index since the conflict erupted on February 28.

Parliament is expected to vote today on measures proposed by the cabinet last week to help citizens weather the economic fallout, including lowering fuel and electricity taxes and granting fuel subsidies to sectors most exposed to energy price spikes.

Sanchez, one of the most vocal

supporters of Palestinians among Western leaders, also warned yesterday that Israel was seeking to inflict on Lebanon the same level of devastation it had brought to the Gaza Strip.

"An emboldened Israeli Prime Minister (Benjamin) Netanyahu aims to inflict on Lebanon the same destruction and suffering that was committed in Gaza," he said, speaking a day after Israeli ministers announced their intent to seize Lebanon's southern territory. "It's not fair that someone sets fire to the world and the rest of us have to swallow the ashes," he added.

Germany says 'misguided' Trump policies hitting economy

Germany said yesterday US President Donald Trump's "misguided policies" were hitting its economy as the fallout from the Middle East war adds to headwinds for the eurozone's industrial powerhouse. The turmoil unleashed by the conflict, especially the surge in energy prices, has dealt a fresh blow to the world's third-biggest economy as it is struggling to rebound from a long decline. "We are facing a serious threat from a geo-economic shock," said Lars Klingbeil (pictured) Germany's finance minister and vice-chancellor. "President Trump's misguided policies are having a direct impact on the wallets of people here in the country." Klingbeil, of the centre-left Social Democrats, also took aim at companies seeking to profit from

the crisis, labelling their actions "despicable". "It is unpatriotic what we are seeing from corporations," he said during a speech in Berlin. Officials have voiced suspicions that energy firms are unfairly hiking petrol prices to profit from the crisis, and have vowed to strengthen oversight of the sector.

There are fears that pricier energy and other issues, such as supply chain snarls, could push up inflation more broadly. Klingbeil reiterated several proposals he had made in recent days aimed at easing the impact on households. These include a windfall tax on extra profits earned by energy firms during the crisis, and bigger tax breaks for commuters, he said. Germany's economy had only



just been getting back on its feet following the energy shock unleashed by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. That crisis pushed the economy into two straight years of recession, in 2023 and 2024. It had eked out meagre growth last year and there were hopes of a stronger rebound this year, although that is now in doubt. (AFP)



Algeria's President Abdelmajid Tebboune receiving Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Algiers yesterday. (AFP)

Italy's Meloni plans closer co-operation with Algeria to boost gas deliveries

AFP
Algiers

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said during a visit to Algeria yesterday that the two countries would work together towards "increasing deliveries of Algerian gas" to the EU member state. "We have decided to reinforce our already very solid co-operation through our national champions," Meloni said, referring to Italian

energy major ENI and Algeria's Sonatrach. The two would work together on projects including shale gas extraction and offshore exploration, she said at a press conference alongside Algerian President Abdelmajid Tebboune. Algeria provides around 30% of Italy's natural gas, mainly via the TransMed subsea pipeline. That pipeline is already at full capacity, experts told AFP, although Algeria also sends shipments of liquefied natural gas.

Italy, which generates more than 40% of its electricity from natural gas according to the International Energy Agency, has been negotiating with various countries to replace lost LNG supplies from Qatar. Qatar, which shut down production after Iran repeatedly attacked its major LNG site, usually provides around 10% of Italy's gas imports. Experts told AFP that Algeria had some capacity to increase its LNG shipments, but nothing on a scale

that could replace Qatar. The North African country, a key supplier to several EU members including Spain, produces only half as much LNG as the tiny Gulf state. Building new extraction and export capacity, especially offshore projects, can take many years. On the war in the Middle East, Meloni said that "if it were to drag on, it could have significant economic and social consequences for vulnerable countries in Africa".



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Genetic study identifies earliest-known canines

Dogs have been loyal companions to people since we made them our first domesticated animals, descending long ago from gray wolves -- though precisely when, where and why have remained unanswered. New genetic research now is offering valuable insight, including identifying the earliest-known dog, dating to 15,800 years ago.

This dog, known from bones found at the Pinarbasi rock shelter site in Turkey used by ancient human hunter-gatherers, is about 5,000 years older than the previous earliest-known, genetically confirmed canine, the researchers said.

The date of the Pinarbasi dog and several others almost as old identified at other sites in Europe shows that dogs already were widely distributed and an integral part of human culture millennia before the advent of agriculture, they said. The new findings were presented in two scientific papers published on Wednesday in the journal 'Nature'.

William Marsh, a postdoctoral researcher in the Ancient Genomics Laboratory at the Francis Crick Institute in London who was co-lead author of one of the studies, said the DNA evidence suggests dogs were present in various locales in western Eurasia by 18,000 years ago and already were quite different genetically from wolves.

"We putatively predict that dog and wolf populations diverged a lot earlier, likely before the last glacial maximum (of the Ice Age), so before 24,000 years ago. Although saying that, there is still a great degree of uncertainty," Marsh said. The dog, descended from an ancient wolf population separate from modern wolves, was the first animal domesticated by people, with animals such as goats, sheep, cattle and cats coming later.

"Dogs have been by our side as humans underwent major lifestyle transitions and complex societies emerged," said geneticist Anders Bergström of the University of East Anglia in England, lead author of the other study. "I think it's also interesting that, unlike most other domesticated animals, dogs do not always have very clearly defined roles or purposes for humans. Perhaps their primary role is often just to provide companionship," Bergström said.

The date of the Pinarbasi dog and several others almost as old identified at other sites in Europe shows that dogs already were widely distributed and an integral part of human culture

by Bergstrom's team was one dating to 14,200 years ago from Switzerland's Kesslerloch Cave site. The oldest of the European dogs identified in this study were found to have shared an origin with dogs in Asia and the rest of the world, showing that these various canine populations did not arise from separate domestication events.

The Pinarbasi dog, identified in the study Marsh worked on, showed how much dogs were valued by the hunter-gatherers who kept them. "At Pinarbasi, we have both human and dog burials, with dogs buried alongside humans," Marsh said.

There also was evidence that the people at Pinarbasi fed their dogs fish. This study identified five dogs dating to between 15,800 and 14,300 years ago, including canine remains from Gough's Cave near Cheddar in England. The Pinarbasi and Gough's Cave dogs were found to be more closely related to the ancestors of present-day European and Middle Eastern breeds such as boxers and salukis than to Arctic breeds like Siberian huskies. Beyond companionship, the ancient dogs may have helped people hunt or perhaps served as watchdogs, sort of Ice Age alarm systems, according to the researchers. Unlike the many exotic dog breeds around today, these early dogs still likely closely resembled the wolves from which they descended, they said.

"The questions of when, where and why people domesticated dogs still remain largely unanswered," Bergström said. "We think it probably happened somewhere in Asia, but more precisely remains to be determined." — Reuters

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"NO BOOTS ON THE GROUND..."



Qatar's education response in current situation shows value of preparedness



By Dr Vahid Suljic
Doha

At a time when the region is witnessing rapidly evolving developments requiring precautionary measures across several sectors, the State of Qatar has once again demonstrated the strength of its institutions and the clarity of its national vision through a carefully coordinated approach to safeguarding the continuity of education. Recent decisions by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to temporarily shift to distance learning, followed by the announcement of a phased and well-structured return to in-person classes, reflect a governance model built on preparedness, adaptability, and a consistent focus on the well-being of students and society.

Across the education sector, the speed and organization with which the measures were introduced have been widely noted. Official announcements delivered through national media and government platforms provided clear guidance for students, parents, and educators, ensuring that the learning process continued without disruption. The gradual resumption of in-person classes, preceded by the return of administrative and teaching staff to ensure readiness, highlighted a disciplined and methodical approach aligned with internationally recognised best practices in education management and crisis response.

Education specialists observe that the effectiveness of the current response is closely linked to the experience Qatar gained during previous global challenges, most notably the Covid-19 pandemic. During that period, the country moved swiftly to advanced digital learning environments, maintaining academic standards while ensuring strong communication between institutions and families. The lessons learned during those years helped establish a resilient framework that continues to guide decision-making today, allowing the education system to adapt quickly while preserving stability and quality.

The latest developments have also underscored the high level of coordination across national institutions. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education worked in close cooperation with universities, schools, and training centres, while the Ministry of Interior continued to provide public guidance through awareness campaigns, official

messages, and media briefings that emphasised preparedness, safety, and shared responsibility. The consistency of communication across official channels reinforced public confidence and reflected a governance culture in which institutions operate in harmony to protect society while ensuring that essential sectors remain fully functional.

Universities across the country, including institutions within Education City as well as public and private providers, responded with notable efficiency by activating digital learning platforms, adjusting academic schedules, and maintaining full student support services. Academic advising, tutoring, counselling, and virtual engagement initiatives remained available throughout the precautionary period, ensuring that students continued to receive both academic guidance and personal support. This level of readiness reflects years of sustained investment in education, research, and innovation that have positioned Qatar among the region's leading knowledge-based societies.

Alongside academic continuity, strong emphasis has been placed on student well-being. Educational authorities and institutions provided tutorials, recorded lessons, digital resources, and technical guidance to support students during temporary changes in learning formats.

Schools and universities also shared structured learning materials, online tools, and continuous updates for students and parents, ensuring that the transition remained organised and productive. The availability of counselling services, academic support sessions, and direct communication channels further reflected a holistic approach that places the student at the centre of the education system.

These practices form part of a broader national vision in which education is viewed as a pillar of stability, development, and long-term prosperity. Over the past two decades, Qatar has built one of the most comprehensive education ecosystems in the region, combining strong public education, internationally recognised universities, advanced digital infrastructure, and close cooperation between government ministries and academic institutions. This long-term investment has created a system capable of responding to uncertainty with confidence, balancing precaution with progress while maintaining high standards of quality.

From the perspective of the academic community, the adaptability demonstrated in recent weeks reflects a deeply rooted culture of planning and preparedness. Precautionary measures were introduced early,

learning continued through well-organised digital platforms, and the return to in-person education was carried out gradually and responsibly. Such an approach reflects internationally recognised best practices, where flexibility, clear communication, and institutional coordination are essential to maintaining stability during challenging circumstances.

As founder of Campus & Student Life in Qatar (@students_qatar), the country's largest student platform with more than 145,000 members, Dr Vahid Suljic said the recent developments once again confirm Qatar's position as a regional and international reference in managing education during periods of uncertainty. He noted that the consistency of policy, the professionalism of national institutions, and the close cooperation between ministries, universities, and security authorities demonstrate a system that places the safety, well-being, and future of students at the centre of national priorities.

Dr Suljic expressed appreciation for the leadership of the State of Qatar and for the continued efforts of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Interior, Qatar Foundation, and all educational institutions whose coordinated work ensures stability even in complex circumstances. He emphasised that the ability to respond with calm, confidence, and adaptability reflects a leadership approach that values knowledge, invests in people, and recognises education as a foundation of national resilience.

He added that Qatar's experience continues to stand as a model for the region, demonstrating how strong institutions, forward-looking policies, and a human-centred vision can transform challenges into opportunities for further development. The confidence expressed by students, parents, and educators today reflects years of consistent planning, responsible governance, and sustained commitment to maintaining high standards in education under all circumstances.

In this context, the measures taken in March 2026 reaffirm Qatar's standing as a country capable of maintaining stability while continuing to advance. Through adaptability, adherence to best practices, and close coordination among its institutions, Qatar continues to demonstrate that safeguarding education is inseparable from safeguarding the future. The country's leadership, policies, and institutions provide a compelling example of how thoughtful governance and long-term investment in knowledge can ensure resilience, confidence, and progress even in times of regional uncertainty.

(Dr Vahid Suljic is Founder of Campus & Student Life in Qatar (@students_qatar))



Universities across the country, including institutions within Education City as well as public and private providers, responded with notable efficiency by activating digital learning platforms, adjusting academic schedules, and maintaining full student support services.

Heavy rains forecast for today, tomorrow

From Page 1

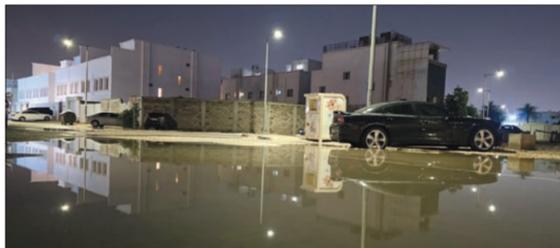
In case of hailstorms, the department has advised the public to stay indoors and keep away from windows. It also stressed that children should be kept away from balconies and rooftops. If it hails while driving, people are asked to stop the car in a safe place and stay in the car as it provides better protection.

During the heavy rains that lashed across the country on Tuesday, Al Wukair received the most rain, with 45.4mm, followed

by Mekaines with 42.1mm. Al Karanah got 40.8mm, and Al Wakrah had 37.5mm of rain.

Doha and other parts of the country received heavy rain in the evening hours on Wednesday, drenching the city and its suburbs. The weather department also cautioned about thundery rain in the northern areas of Doha. The sky was overcast at times during the day, with partly cloudy to cloudy conditions, and winds blowing mainly northwesterly to southeasterly, fresh to strong in speed.

Furthermore, the Ministry of



Interior (MoI) has advised extra vigilance while driving during the rains. "We remind motorists to

slow down, avoid overtaking and to be cautious of water puddles. Please ensure a safe following dis-



Rain covers a busy road at night, as traffic lights and car headlights shine across the wet surface, creating colourful reflections through a rain-speckled windshield. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen

tance to prevent rear-end collisions," MoI said in a statement on X platform.

The weather department has

once again emphasised the importance of obtaining weather information from official sources to ensure public safety and accuracy.



Embassy officials and staff, led by Philippine ambassador Mardomel Celso D Melicor, wore purple, symbolising women, justice, and dignity, in support of the #PurpleWednesdays campaign.

Philippines embassy marks Women's Month, highlights girls' rights

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

The Philippine embassy in Doha marked National Women's Month by joining the Purple Wednesdays campaign yesterday (March 25), highlighting its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, while also observing Girl Child Week to promote the rights and welfare of young Filipino girls.

In a statement posted on its Facebook page, the embassy said the celebration forms part of its efforts this March to recognise women and their contributions to society. Embassy officials and staff wore purple, symbolising women, justice, and dignity, in support of the #PurpleWednesdays campaign, a key feature of the Philippine National Women's Month observance.

By participating in the initiative every Wednesday of March, the embassy underlined its commitment to building an inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to "rise and thrive." The chancery was also illuminated in purple to further raise awareness and demonstrate solidarity with the global push for gender equality.

Alongside the month-long cel-



The Philippine chancery in Qatar was also illuminated in purple to further raise awareness and demonstrate solidarity with the global push for gender equality.

bration, the embassy joined the Philippines in observing the Protection and Gender-Fair Treatment of the Girl Child Week, or "Girl Child Week," from March 22 to 28. The annual observance, held every fourth week of March under Proclamation No. 759, s. 1996, complements National Women's Month by highlighting the importance of safeguarding the rights and welfare of girls.

This year's theme, "Katawan Ko, Karapatan Ko: Edukasyon Tungo sa Malaya at Ligtas na Pagpapasya" (My Body, My Rights: Education Towards Safe and In-

formed Choices), emphasises the role of education and access to information in empowering young girls to make informed decisions about their health and future.

The embassy reiterated its commitment to raising awareness and ensuring that Filipino girls are equipped with the knowledge and support needed to make safe, empowered choices. It also called on the Filipino community in Qatar to take part in the observance by fostering open dialogue, advocating gender equality, and helping create a safe and nurturing environment for every girl child.

MoI issues guidelines for safety of students

From Page 1

Following any emergency, all students must be accounted for and the bus must not be moved until authorities give the clearance.

The ministry summarised the core decision framework simply: external threat — keep students on board; internal threat — evacuate immediately; unclear situation — stop and call authorities without delay.

The MoI emphasised that calm, prepared responses can significantly reduce risk, reiterating that safeguarding students is a shared responsibility rooted in vigilance and readiness.

Cabinet affirms right to respond

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

The Cabinet has renewed its strong condemnation of the recent Iranian attacks on Qatar and neighbouring countries, demanding an immediate end to such actions out of respect for international law, the UN Charter and the principles of good neighbourliness.

The Cabinet's regular weekly session, held yesterday at the Amiri Diwan, was chaired by HE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani.

Following the meeting, HE Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohammadi said the Cabinet reaffirmed that

Qatar retains its full right to respond to the attacks and "will not hesitate" to take all necessary measures to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and the safety of its citizens and residents.

The Cabinet stressed that Qatar continues to work actively, in close coordination with regional and international partners, to support diplomatic solutions aimed at halting the escalation. These efforts, it underlined, seek to ensure respect for state sovereignty, preserve the security and stability of the region, and spare its peoples further risks and repercussions.

Turning to its agenda, the Cabinet reviewed several legislative and policy items. It was briefed on the Shura Council's approval of a draft law on international treaties and agreements. Prepared by the Ministry of Justice pursuant to Article 68

of the Constitution, the draft law is designed to set out a general framework governing the procedures for concluding and acceding to international agreements and treaties.

The proposed legislation aims to clarify the roles and jurisdictions of the competent authorities, strengthen transparency and legal oversight, and ensure that national legislation is harmonised with Qatar's international obligations. It also seeks to reinforce the state's position and credibility in its foreign relations by systematising how treaties are negotiated, approved and implemented.

The Cabinet also agreed to approve a draft memorandum of understanding on the conduct of political consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar and Estonia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mental preparedness key as students resume in-person classes next week

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Following the Ministry of Education and Higher Education's announcement of a phased return to in-person learning, with full attendance set to resume next Sunday, public school principals and education experts highlighted the importance of psychological readiness in ensuring a smooth and effective transition after the Eid al-Fitr break.

They stressed that returning to school goes beyond simply resuming lessons; it requires restoring students' mental balance and daily discipline, particularly amid current regional conditions. Psychological stability, they noted, is fundamental to academic success, as students who feel secure are better able to focus and engage. Schools are also adopting flexible learning approaches to accommodate individual differences and promote positive interaction.

This comes as schools prepare for the mid-second term examinations beginning April 12, a period that demands significant academic readiness and practice from students.

Abdullah Mohamed al-Nuaimi, principal of Muaz bin Jabal Primary School for Boys, underlined the need for additional support for younger students. "Distance



learning requires intensified efforts to prepare primary students psychologically, given their need for continuous support and interaction, even in a virtual environment," he said. He added that fostering a positive, encouraging atmosphere helps students feel safe and reduces anxiety associated with a temporary separation from the traditional classroom setting.

Al-Nuaimi noted that the school is gradually preparing students for their return, with teachers ready to provide the necessary support.

Educational expert Sultan al-Kuwari emphasised that mental preparation is as crucial as academic readiness. "Students who feel reassured and stable are better able to understand and engage, while anxiety can hinder performance," he said. He also highlighted the importance of gradually re-establishing routines, noting that organising sleep schedules and reducing

screen time can significantly improve readiness. Parents, he added, play a key role in helping children transition back to regular classroom routines.

Hassan Dibs al-Qahtani, principal of Al Wakrah Secondary School for Boys, stressed the importance of planning and responsibility among older students. "Secondary students must take their studies seriously and use this period to implement clear, comprehensive study plans," he said, adding that prioritising understanding over memorisation is essential for better performance in the upcoming exams.

Meanwhile, educators also pointed to the critical role of families, noting that the home environment has increasingly become an extension of the classroom. Parental support and a structured home setting, they said, are vital in maintaining both psychological well-being and academic progress.

'Students, faculty showed remarkable commitment to in-person classes'

QNA
Doha

Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) Dr Hareb Mohamed Aljabri said that attendance statistics for the period following the resumption of in-person classes showed an outstanding level of commitment among students and faculty members, who have resumed their academic and administrative duties, which reflects the strength of the educational system and the efficiency of national institutions, he noted.

Dr Aljabri told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that according to reports from Qatar's higher education institutions, only a very limited number of people were unable to attend in-person, these being faculty members who were abroad before the start of the current crisis and who still did not manage to come back, but who are continuing to perform their academic duties remotely to ensure continuity, as in-person learning resumes in full force.

He pointed out that these cases are mainly concentrated in a number of private universities that maintain strategic partnerships with universities abroad, pointing to the flexibility of these institutions and their high capacity in ensuring continuity in academic and research work, according to the highest international standards.

He added that there are positive indicators that show relative stability in the country's security situation.

The Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs stated that MoEHE is in constant contact with higher education institutions during this period.

Dr Aljabri praised the remarkable success of emergency plans and digital transformation strategies in maintaining the continuity of the educational process without interruption.

He emphasised the importance of building on what was accomplished during the emergency transition by integrating e-learning tools and technological solutions into the core of in-person education within a comprehensive

strategic framework.

The Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs stressed the need to maximise the use of advanced digital infrastructure and leverage qualified national human resources that have demonstrated competence and professionalism in crisis management, thus, ensuring enhanced quality and sustainability of education under all circumstances.

Dr Aljabri also commended the proactive measures taken by several educational institutions, which have become exemplary models in good planning and flexibly adapting to rapid changes.

He added that remote examination mechanisms will remain a strategic and available option when needed, depending on course requirements or any exceptional circumstances.

The Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs expressed full satisfaction with these institutions' outstanding performance and exceptional capability in carrying out their responsibilities, which reflect strong institutional foundations and strict adherence to the na-

tional higher education plan.

MoEHE will remain ready to provide these institutions with all forms of support to strengthen their resilience and sustain their excellence, affirmed Dr Aljabri, calling on everyone to respond effectively to official directives and handle them with the highest level of professionalism to achieve sustainable national development.

Regarding scholarship students, the Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs stated that MoEHE promptly established hotlines and communication channels to maintain direct contact with students via the scholarship department and cultural attaches' offices, noting that the number of scholarship students and their situations are being followed up daily in order to provide them with comprehensive financial and moral support and ensure their academic progress is not affected.

He urged all scholarship students inside and outside Qatar to immediately contact the Ministry or relevant cultural attaches if they ever face any challenges resulting from the current crisis.

Dr Aljabri pointed out that MoEHE is monitoring around 5,000 scholarship students both in Qatar and abroad, adding that direct support has been provided to more than 200 students studying abroad who were in Qatar during the spring break.

This support included daily phone calls and emails to co-ordinate and facilitate their remote studies during their stay, as well as assistance in arranging their return to their study destinations, he said, highlighting the intensive efforts put to manage this group and ensure their return, noting that the number of students currently in Qatar exceeds 200 from various countries.

Dr Aljabri underscored the higher education sector and the cultural attaches' ongoing co-ordination on reaching out directly to universities abroad in cases of delayed student return.

He pointed out that universities have responded positively to the requests of the cultural attaches and the scholarship department to prevent any academic loss, adding that more than 60 international universities have been contacted

to facilitate students' studies and to make it the case that those students have a legitimate excuse for being absent, allowing them to continue learning remotely during the crisis, while co-ordinating with international student affairs departments to complete necessary authorisation documents.

Dr Aljabri told QNA that immediately after the crisis had begun, cultural attaches were instructed to contact scholarship students and use dedicated follow-up forms and emergency contacts.

Follow-ups with students were conducted based on region, starting with directly affected countries such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, from which scholarship students were evacuated to Qatar in preparation for their relocation to other destinations, he said.

The Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs concluded by underscoring that those students' academic stability was ensured by means of remote lectures as a temporary solution, in addition to the detailed daily reports prepared to secure their academic status across all study locations.



Qatar's evolving industries open new opportunities, says long-term resident



Rachel Morris

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

Qatar's growing media and emerging industries are creating new opportunities for professionals, with a long-term expatriate highlighting strong career growth, a supportive environment and expanding pathways across multiple sectors. Rachel Morris, an Australian professional who has lived in Qatar for nearly two decades, said the country offers a unique environment for career development, particularly in the media and communications sector. "I moved to Qatar

in 2007, so that's nearly 19 years. I work in PR, communications and media here in Doha, and this is my home, this is where I've chosen to live," Morris said.

She noted that the country's development has enabled professionals to grow faster than they might in more traditional markets. "I've found nothing but acceptance and support. This is a place where I've truly been able to grow and nurture what I do. I don't think I would have had the same opportunity to grow as quickly in other parts of the world," Morris said.

She highlighted that Qatar's expanding industries, particularly in media and communications, are

creating new avenues for professionals, alongside established sectors such as energy and finance. "There are so many new and emerging industries here. There's strong support in the media and communications space, while also having well-established industries like energy and finance. It creates a wide range of opportunities," she added. Morris encouraged young professionals, particularly women, to consider Qatar as a destination for career growth. "My advice is simple, just do it. Find the right opportunity, come with an open mind and be ready to embrace everything the country has to offer."

She added that Qatar's environ-

ment has been particularly supportive for women in professional fields. "It's an incredibly supportive space. As a woman, I've found a nurturing environment that allows you to build your career and be part of something meaningful."

Beyond professional opportunities, Morris emphasised that the country's growth is supported by strong leadership and a forward-looking vision.

"I think the future of Qatar is extremely bright. The leadership is not only visionary, but also focused on supporting the people who are here contributing to the country," she pointed out.

She highlighted Qatar's resil-

ience and ability to adapt to changing circumstances, saying: "I think Qatar is very resilient, people are making the best of what we're going through, and the country continues to move forward."

For Morris, Qatar has become more than just a place to work, it is a place of belonging. "This is very much my home. It has given me so much, and I want to give something back in return."

She noted the strong sense of community that allows professionals to build networks from the ground up. "I came here knowing very few people," she said. "Now I've built a network that feels like family."

Archeological sites a testimony to the rich history of Qatar's human activities

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

While Qatar has been renowned globally for its modern achievements in sports, the economy, politics, and peacemaking, the country has a rich history of thriving human activity that is evident in various archaeological sites across different parts of the country. These sites, with most of them open for visitors free of charge, offer deep insights into the rich history of the country and human activities that flourished across its lands, especially the coastal areas, where the country fostered vigorous trade routes across the region and the inhabitants maintained an active exchange of culture and trade with other peoples.

The oldest archaeological sites in Qatar with human activity date back to possibly 3000 BC and are located on Al Khor Island, as evidence suggests the area was used as a seasonal industrial site for producing purple shellfish dye, as well as for fishing and pearling expeditions.

This site on Bin Ghanam Island is commonly known as the Purple Island today, a name that may be attributed to the dye industry at that time. It is considered one of the most attractive ecological sites in the country, with its immense mangroves that host a considerable number of migratory birds during the winter months.

Besides, Al Khor Historical Towers is a group of three defensive watchtowers dating back to the 19th century. These towers are cylindrical stone structures measuring around 4m in diameter with 60cm-thick walls, built as part of a defensive system, as the city was a key fishing and pearl-diving hub until the early 20th century.

Wadi Debayan (Wadi al-Dabay'an), located north-west of Qatar, south of the historic town of Al Zubara, is considered an archaeological site of occupation. The findings there suggest evidence of early human settlement, burial sites, and trade, mostly with Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq). Excavations there revealed flint tools, pottery, and evidence of a 6,500-year-old pearl bead.

According to specialists in the



Al Rakiyat Fort

field, the findings suggest a Late Stone Age (Neolithic) occupation of this site, dated to between 6000 and 3500 BC. However, this site was abandoned around 2500 BC due to several natural changes that made it unfit for human activities.

Al Zubara is considered the largest archaeological site in Qatar and a Unesco World Heritage site since 2013. The place was known to be a thriving pearl-diving and trading town during the 18th century AD. There, Al Zubara Fort, built in 1938 by Sheikh Abdullah bin Jassim al-Thani, used to serve as a coast guard station with its one-meter-thick walls to protect against invaders and keep the interior cool.

Besides, the site includes remains of mosques, residential palaces, courtyard houses, date presses, a market and a harbour. The place is a key witness to early urban and social development in Qatar in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Murwab Archaeological Site, located northwest of Qatar, is considered an early Islamic settlement of the 9th century. The sites feature the ruins around 250 stone-built houses, two mosques, and a graveyard.

In September 2025, the site was officially listed on the Arab Register of Architectural and Urban Heritage, as it provides a unique insight into rural life and trade, as well as architectural development during that period, before it was eventually abandoned.

Al Jassasiya Rock Carving Site, located around 60km north of Doha, hosts the largest number of rock carvings in the country made within the past 250 years according to some estimates, which mainly feature cup marks in abstract motifs in various



Al Jassasiya Rock Carving Site, located around 60km north of Doha, hosts the largest number of rock carvings in the country made within the past 250 years.

geometric shapes, including rows, rosettes, and stars, in addition to carvings of different figures, such as boats, animal figures, and mysterious symbols and signs.

Around 900 carvings were catalogued from this site in 1974. Some of these carvings may relate to marine activities such as navigation, folk practices, or social games. The site is considered a rare specimen of rock art in the Gulf region. However, the real age of these carvings is subject to debate, with estimates ranging from as early as 4000 BC to the 18th century.

Al Rakiyat Fort, located on the northwest coast of Qatar, around 115km from Doha, between Zubara and Al Ruwais, features a 28 x 22m rectangular fort built of mud and limestone.

It shows an example of traditional defence methods to protect the area's water resources, as some wells were discovered there. Archaeological findings and coins suggest a date of around 749-846 AD, but more accurate archaeological evidence suggests the mid-18th century.



Al Zubara. PICTURES: Qatar Museums



Al Khor Historical Towers is a group of three defensive watchtowers dating back to the 19th century.



Murwab Archaeological Site.

QAM launches digital educational initiatives

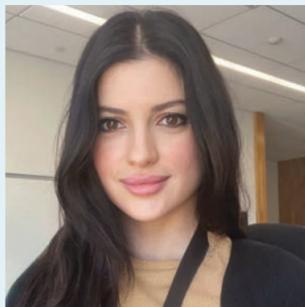
Qatar Academy Msheireb (QAM), part of Qatar Foundation's Pre-University Education, continues to strengthen its innovation-driven approach to education by launching digital initiatives that support learning beyond the classroom. These initiatives provide students with new opportunities to engage, explore, and develop their skills within flexible and integrated learning environments.

The school has introduced two digital initiatives: the virtual library, "Digital Reading World," and the "Virtual Innovation and Fabrication Lab." These platforms are designed to offer interactive learning spaces that enable students to continue learning from home, while engaging with educational content in innovative ways that align with the demands of the digital age and support both their academic and personal development. Manal Abdulaziz Ramadan, librarian at QAM, said: "The virtual library is a comprehensive online platform that allows students

to explore books and stories anytime, from anywhere. It enhances access to knowledge and encourages independent learning. This initiative was developed to ensure that reading remains a daily habit for students, even while learning from home.

"This initiative helps foster a strong reading culture among students by encouraging them to make reading part of their daily routine. It also provides access to a wide range of texts in both Arabic and English, supporting the development of their language skills and broadening their knowledge."

As part of its efforts to nurture innovation and creativity, the school also launched the "Virtual Innovation and Fabrication Lab," an interactive digital space that allows students to explore areas such as design, programming, and digital creativity through a variety of tools and educational platforms, enhancing their ability to learn independently and think critically. Lina Mohammed Othman, innovation

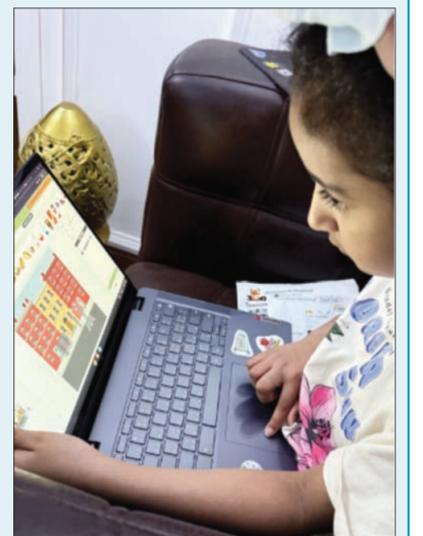


Lina Othman

and creativity teacher at QAM, said: "The virtual lab was designed to bring the experience of design and innovation into students' homes, enabling them to continue exploring and experimenting independently, while maintaining continuity of learning beyond the classroom and building confidence in

turning their ideas into tangible projects. "The lab offers a range of platforms and creative challenges that allow students to engage in activities such as programming, 3D design, and digital music production. These experiences help develop creative thinking and problem-solving skills, while strengthening their ability to innovate. "The lab also gives students access to global cultural resources and virtual experiences, in addition to hands-on activities using simple materials available at home. This transforms learning into an interactive, exploration-based experience."

Othman emphasised that these initiatives enhance learner independence and encourage students to pursue their interests and develop their ideas, in line with the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Programme, which focuses on inquiry-based learning, creative thinking, and research skills, preparing students to engage with a rapidly changing world.



The initiatives provide students with new opportunities to engage, explore, and develop their skills.