



**YOUR SAFETY AND COMFORT ARE OUR PRIORITY**

Stay Connected with GigaHome. Activate your new home internet online in just a few taps.



Scan to activate



**أوريكس بوليدكس**  
ORXYX POLYDEX  
Durable waterproofing-performance for roof protection  
NATIONAL PAINTS FACTORIES CO., Doha - Qatar  
44601602/3

**Running Hotel Business For Sale**  
Furnished Hotel With License & Prime Location.  
Serious Party Call Us:  
33598672/30200166/52038746

**BUSINESS | Page 1**

Commercial Bank awarded with 'Best In-class Straight Through Processing Rates' by JP Morgan

**Family deals**  
فاميلير عروض العائلة  
SUBSCRIBE TO OUR OFFER

**Ready to GUAC AND ROLL?**  
Only on talabat

# Amir honours first Rawda Award winners

**تميم بن حمد**  
@TamimBinHamad

We are proud of the launch of the first edition of the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work, as the first national award of its kind, celebrating the noble social achievements embodied by Sheikhha Rawda, may God have mercy on her. We congratulate the winners of the award for their distinguished initiatives and efforts in supporting the pillars of social development, in alignment with Qatar's National Vision.



The national platform is dedicated to recognising excellence in social work

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani patronised yesterday the ceremony of the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work, in its first edition, held at the Raffles Doha.

Social Development and Family, the Rawda Award is the first national platform dedicated to recognising excellence in social work in Qatar. With a total prize pool of QR2.7mn, the initiative seeks to promote a culture of volunteerism, civic engagement and innovation in addressing social challenges, while supporting vulnerable groups.

His Highness the Amir honoured 11 winners for their innovative social initiatives across the categories of individuals, families, non-profit organisations, and the private sector.

The award includes multiple categories reflecting the diversity of contributions across the social

sector, with emphasis on initiatives that demonstrate measurable impact, sustainability and

the potential for replication. The ceremony featured a presentation outlining the award's ob-

jectives and its role in promoting a culture of excellence and social responsibility. **To Page 12**

**MSDF minister hails national milestone - Page 12**

## HMC performs Qatar's first robotic Whipple surgery

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha



Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) has carried out Qatar's first robotic Whipple procedure, marking a landmark advance in the country's surgical capabilities and the management of complex pancreatic disease.

to restore normal function. Given the number of critical structures involved, the operation typically runs to around nine hours and demands an exceptionally high level of surgical skill.

The Whipple procedure ranks among the most demanding operations in abdominal surgery, used to remove tumours or diseased tissue from the head of the pancreas. It entails resecting the pancreatic head, duodenum, a section of the bile duct, the gallbladder and, where necessary, part of the stomach, before the digestive tract is reconstructed

HMC's inaugural robotic Whipple was performed on a 42-year-old woman presenting with a pancreatic head neoplasm. Using advanced robotic instruments and a high-definition 3D camera, the surgical team achieved complete excision of the lesion through small incisions, with the robotic platform delivering enhanced precision, control and visualisation throughout. **To Page 5**

## MoCI launches five new intellectual property e-services

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) announced the launch of five new e-services in the field of intellectual property, bringing the total number of e-services offered to seven. This initiative is part of the ministry's ongoing efforts in digital transformation, streamlining procedures, expediting transactions, and enhancing the quality of services provided to beneficiaries. In a post on X, the ministry indicated that the new services include, application for the registration of a copyright and neighbouring rights deposit certificate; application for a 'to whom it may concern' certificate; application for the issuance of a copyright and neighbouring rights certificate; application for amendment of copyright and neighbouring rights registration; and application for waiver of a copyright and neighbouring rights deposit certificate. The ministry noted that the beneficiaries of copyright include poets, researchers, authors of literary works and screenplays, composers and music arrangers, artists, designers and architects, and computer software and application developers. **(QNA)**

## Amir, Kuwaiti FM review situation



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday, in his office at Lusail Palace, with Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrar Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah and the accompanying delegation, as they visited the country. At the outset of the meeting, the Kuwaiti foreign minister conveyed to His Highness the Amir the greetings of the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Meshal al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, and his wishes of good health and

happiness to His Highness, and further development and prosperity to the Qatari people. The Amir entrusted the Kuwaiti foreign minister with his greetings and wishes of good health and wellness to the Amir of Kuwait, and continued progress and prosperity to the Kuwaiti people. The two sides discussed the robust fraternal relations between the two countries and ways to boost them. They also discussed the latest developments in the region and the

efforts being made in their regard, in addition to several topics of mutual interest. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani attended the meeting, alongside HE Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi and a number of senior officials. On the Kuwaiti side, a number of members of the accompanying delegation attended the meeting. **(QNA)**

## Drones, missiles intercepted

The Ministry of Defence announced that Qatar was subjected yesterday to an attack involving a number of drones and two cruise missiles launched from Iran. In a statement, the ministry said that Qatar Armed Forces successfully intercepted all drones and both cruise missiles. **(QNA)**

# Iran war and what the cascading regional fallout portends

## UNDP estimate of upto \$194bn losses in economic output may be conservative

By Kamran Rehmat  
Doha

The economic shock from the Iran war is no longer hypothetical. What the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) modelled as a four-week disruption has already been overtaken by events, with the conflict now stretching into a fifth week and signalling that the projected \$120bn to \$194bn loss in Arab economic output may prove conservative.

and push between 3.05mn and 3.96mn people into poverty. That scenario assumed temporary trade disruption, limited infrastructure damage and manageable energy shocks. None of those conditions now hold.

When UNDP released its assessment on 31 March, it warned that even a short, contained escalation would shrink regional GDP by 3.7 to 6.0%, erase up to 3.64mn jobs, raise unemployment by as much as four percentage points,

The conflict has since expanded geographically and operationally, with sustained exchanges involving Iran and spillovers across the Levant and Gulf. Strategic assets, including energy and petrochemical infrastructure, have come under repeated pressure, while rising tensions around the Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of global oil flows, have heightened market volatility. These developments align closely with UNDP's most severe scenario, which anticipated extreme trade dis-

The war is no longer a localized geopolitical event but a global economic disruptor reversing years of human development.

- \$194bn loss in Arab economic output.**  
This upper-bound estimate is now considered conservative as the conflict enters its second month.
- 3.64 million jobs at risk of erasure.**  
The surge in unemployment is expected to push nearly 4 million people into poverty across the region.
- 17% of Qatar's LNG export capacity lost.**  
Damage to the Ras Laffan terminal requires five years of repairs, threatening global energy stability.
- Urea prices surge by 50 per cent.**  
Disrupted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz has crippled fertiliser exports, threatening global food security.
- Worst synchronised downturn in 40 years.**  
Global GDP growth could fall significantly, potentially tipping the world into a recession.

GT GRAPHICS

ruption and hydrocarbon supply shocks.

That assessment is borne out by the data. Iran's strike on Qatar's Ras Laffan natural gas terminal wiped out 17% of the country's LNG export capacity, with repairs expected to take up to five years, according to state-owned QatarEnergy. The blow extends well beyond Qatar's balance sheet. Gita Gopinath, the former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund, has written that global economic growth, expected before the war to reach 3.3% this year, could fall by 0.3 to 0.4 percentage points if oil prices average \$85 a barrel through 2026.

Carmen Reinhart, a former World Bank chief economist now at Harvard Kennedy School, has warned that the conflict is "raising the risk of higher inflation and lower growth," reviving uncomfortable parallels with the stagflationary oil shocks of the 1970s.

Nowhere are the risks more concentrated than in the Gulf. UNDP had projected that the GCC economies, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, could see GDP contract by 5.2 to 8.5%, translating into losses of \$103bn to \$168bn.

Oxford Economics has since downgraded aggregate GCC real GDP growth for 2026 by 4.6 percentage points from its pre-war forecast to minus 0.2%, reflecting reduced oil production, exports, tourism and domestic demand. Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain and the UAE face the most severe downgrades, given their inability to re-route hydrocarbon exports, which means production will need to shut down once storage facilities reach capacity.

A Goldman Sachs economist forecast that if the war continues through the end of April it could shrink Gulf states' GDP substantially. **To Page 5**

## PM meets Kuwait's foreign minister



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who is visiting the country. They discussed developments in the military escalation in the region and its serious repercussions on regional and international security and stability, and ways to resolve all disputes through peaceful means. HE Sheikh Mohammed reiterated Qatar's condemnation of the Iranian attacks targeting vital installations in Kuwait, and its full solidarity with and support for all measures taken by Kuwait to preserve its sovereignty and security. He stressed the need to stop the unjustified attacks on Qatar and other countries in the region, and underlined the need to strengthen co-ordination and intensify joint efforts to contain the crisis. - QNA

## Labour minister chairs board meeting of Workers' Support and Insurance Fund



The Workers' Support and Insurance Fund board of directors held its regular meeting yesterday, attended by HE the Minister of Labour and board chairman Dr Ali bin Samikh al-Marri. Items on the agenda were discussed, alongside a review of cases submitted to the Fund and the mechanisms for addressing them. The meeting also saw the adoption of a series of decisions and recommendations aimed at enhancing the Fund's performance, efficiency, and effectiveness. - QNA

# QRDI Council fully ready to support national innovation



The Qatar Research, Development and Innovation (QRDI) Council has affirmed that it remains fully operational amid current regional developments. "The QRDI Council remains fully operational," the QRDI Council said in a press release yesterday. "Our programmes, funding mechanisms, partnerships, and innovation initiatives continue to move forward, sustaining momentum across the national innovation ecosystem." "Amid current regional developments, the QRDI Council remains actively engaged with partners across the wider innovation ecosystem to ensure that innovation and technology development continue to support national priorities where they

matter most," the Council's statement added. "Through our programmes, collaborations, and initiatives, we continue to advance practical solutions that contribute to resilience, preparedness, and continuity," it said. "At a time such as this, the QRDI Council's role extends beyond maintaining existing programmes," the statement continued. "We help bring together government, academia, industry, and innovators to address challenges through solution-oriented collaboration, innovation, and technology development." The Council stressed that it remains focused, engaged, and committed to supporting Qatar's continued progress by positioning innovation as a source of resilience, capability, and long-term strength. - QNA

## Qatar Charity chief hails Rawda Award win

Qatar Charity (QC) chief executive Yousef bin Ahmed al-Kuwari (pictured) has commended the QC's winning of the inaugural Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work for its "Generational Impact Maker Challenge" initiative. Speaking on the sidelines of the award ceremony, he said the accolade serves as a strong impetus to further develop community-driven initiatives that support Qatari

society and strengthen national partnerships, in alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030. Al-Kuwari said the initiative has successfully instilled the values of humanitarian work and social responsibility among students. He said the "Generational Impact Maker Challenge" is among the QC's flagship community-based volunteer initiatives aimed at embedding the values of humanitarian action and social re-

sponsibility among students. Implemented in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), the initiative saw the participation of 90 schools across Qatar. It resulted in a tangible humanitarian outcome, including funding the construction of a school at a cost of QR2.5mm. The foundation stone for the school was laid in December 2025 in the village of Tujan in Albania,



in the presence of students from the winning school, First Al Bayan Primary School and Kindergarten. - QNA

## PM congratulates Nepal's new premier Balendra Shah

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Nepal's new Prime Minister Balendra Shah, on the occasion of his swearing-in. - QNA

## Qatar slams attack on hospital in Sudan's White Nile State

Qatar has expressed its condemnation and denunciation of the attack committed by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on Jabalain City Hospital in Sudan's White Nile State, which resulted in the killing and injuring of civilians. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said in a statement yesterday that it considers the targeting of the hospital to be a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. The ministry extended Qatar's condolences to the families of the victims, and to the government and people of Sudan. - QNA



## Qatar joins Cote d'Ivoire minister's meeting with GCC ambassadors

Qatar's ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire Mubarak bin Hussein al-Marri participated in the meeting of Cote d'Ivoire's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation Niale Kaba with Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) ambassadors. The meeting, which was also attended by Saudi Arabia's Saad bin Bakhit al-Qathami and the United Arab Emirates's Ali bin Yousef al-Nuaimi, discussed the developments in the region, along with a number of topics of common interest. - QNA

# Amir honours Rafeeq with Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani honoured Rafeeq with Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work at a function held yesterday. Chief Executive Officer of Rafeeq Abdullah Thamer Alhemaiddi received the award in recognition of the company's humanitarian efforts through Rafeeq Al Khair.

This recognition marks an important milestone in Rafeeq's journey and reflects the company's continued commitment to community service, social responsibility, and initiatives that align with Qatar's values and national vision.

Rafeeq Al Khair is a humanitarian initiative supported by Rafeeq, reflecting the company's commitment to community solidarity, social responsibility, and giving back during the holy month of Ramadan.

Since its founding six years ago, Rafeeq has grown as a homegrown Qatari platform built on service, innovation, and community connection. This recognition also stands as a shared achievement with the company's partners, drivers, customers, and the wider community, whose trust and support have played a central role in Rafeeq's journey.

Alhemaiddi said: "Our ambition for Rafeeq Al Khair, and for Rafeeq as a whole, goes far beyond being merely an initiative. We aspire for Rafeeq to become a meaningful part of people's lives in giving, just as it is in serving them every day. We seek to expand our impact by supporting education for children in need and by advancing medical and healthcare initiatives, both within Qatar and beyond."

"I firmly believe that Rafeeq, as a Qatari company, will continue to stand as a true ambassador of the values and ethics of Qatari society. With every order we deliver, our customers are partners in this humanitarian impact. Rafeeq is not just a service; it is a helping hand extended from Qatar to the world."

Rafeeq extends its sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this achievement and reaffirms its commitment to continuing to serve the community through impactful initiatives and responsible innovation.

As the company looks ahead, Rafeeq remains focused on creating lasting value for the people it serves and strengthening its role as a Qatari platform rooted in community, purpose, and progress.



Our ambition for Rafeeq Al Khair, and for Rafeeq as a whole, goes far beyond being merely an initiative. We aspire for Rafeeq to become a meaningful part of people's lives in giving, just as it is in serving them every day. We seek to expand our impact by supporting education for children in need and by advancing medical and healthcare initiatives, both within Qatar and beyond. I firmly believe that Rafeeq, as a Qatari company, will continue to stand as a true ambassador of the values and ethics of Qatari society. With every order we deliver, our customers are partners in this humanitarian impact. Rafeeq is not just a service; it is a helping hand extended from Qatar to the world.

Abdullah Thamer Alhemaiddi - Chief Executive Officer - Rafeeq

# Qatar 'reaping benefits of economic diversification in food security'

Officials, economists, and businessmen have said that the country's food security rests on an integrated framework of plans that enable flexibility and efficiency in responding to shocks.

They noted that Qatar has successfully mitigated the impact of geopolitical tensions linked to the war on Iran and resulting disruptions in commodity and food markets.

In statements to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), they highlighted that food security has been a strategic priority through local production, diversified imports, and strengthened strategic reserves, ensuring availability of high-quality food at reasonable cost.

Qatar's economic diversification strategies have contributed to stable food security by supporting varied production and supply chains, enabling effective crisis management.

Hassad Food Company, the state's investment arm in agriculture and food, has implemented multi-route strategic supply operations to maintain market stability

and meet demand, in co-ordination with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) and under the supervision of the Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of Food Security Policies.

Continuous field monitoring identifies supply gaps, allowing rapid intervention to deliver essential food items through a developed multi-route logistics system.

Hassad Food chief executive Eng. Ali Hilar al-Kuwari said that Hassad's multi-route strategic supply measures, in co-operation with government agencies and local partners, translate their planning and strategic logistics partnerships into practice.

He added that their investment strategy focuses on diversifying supply sources, boosting local production, and building resilient supply chains.

Activating multiple routes, al-Kuwari added, executes a pre-approved strategy, providing full flexibility to adapt to any situation and ensure uninterrupted access to essential goods for consumers.

He added that continuous field moni-

toring of the local market detects gaps and enable swift response, alongside regular shipments through multiple countries of essential food items.

HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah, the chairman of the Committee for Monitoring the Implementation of Food Security Policies, told Qatar TV that Qatar's food security is stable and excellent, based on a clear pre-established vision that accounts for all scenarios, including the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

He noted that achievements reflect a proactive 2024-30 Food Security Strategy, built on three pillars: enhancing local production, managing strategic reserves with precise early-warning systems, and diversifying import sources while strengthening external investment in the food sector.

Qatar has achieved 100% self-sufficiency in vegetables during their seasons and around 99% in dairy products, with some surpluses exported.

The minister stressed that strategic re-

serves are being reinforced with additional shipments of essential commodities like wheat and rice, though they have not yet been needed.

Businessman and former deputy chairman of the Qatar Chamber, Abdulaziz al-Emadi, said that Qatar is now reaping the benefits of its previously implemented economic diversification plans.

He highlighted the country's strategies to localise production of key goods such as dairy products and vegetables through protected farms and planned industrial expansion, achieving self-sufficiency in many products.

Al-Emadi said that Qatar has shown that its approach to food security is more than just plain on paper; it delivers tangible results, reflected in product availability, variety, and price stability, especially during crises.

This approach, he added, relies on a clear vision to enhance strategic reserves and promote sustainable consumption.

Al-Emadi also noted that Qatar's eco-

nomical measures have driven growth in local manufacturing, with new factories and companies boosting domestic product availability, supported by ongoing regulatory updates and continuous support for enterprises, enabling the country to adapt to fluctuations and crises comfortably.

Similarly, the MoCI confirmed that Qatar's markets remain stable.

HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani told Qatar TV that the ministry oversees field inspection plans through more than 300 inspectors, ensuring compliance, market stability, and availability of goods, conducting approximately 3,000 inspections daily since the start of the crisis.

He highlighted that Qatar is ranked 30th globally on the Global Food Security Index, reflecting the success of government policies in building a resilient food system.

The country now hosts over 138 national food factories, with more than 2,000 local products in 2025, a 9% increase from 2024. - QNA

# GCC defence forces displaying great success in thwarting Iranian attacks

By Ayman Adilly  
Staff Reporter

The success of the armed forces of Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states in intercepting Iranian missile and drone attacks indicates a remarkable progress in operational readiness, co-ordination, and deterrence capabilities, a number of Shura Council members have said.

They stressed that the GCC militaries have demonstrated the ability to respond effectively to growing threats in the region.

The Shura Council members added that the current situation requires a shift from co-ordination to deeper strategic and operational integration, particularly as the regional security environment becomes more complex and multidimensional.

In the meantime, they stressed the need to strengthen joint defence frameworks through initiatives such as a unified early warning and strategic assessment centre, enhanced air and missile defence systems, and a co-ordinated cybersecurity command.

They added that the protection of critical infrastructure, including energy assets, ports, and supply chains, are also considered as a strategic priority, alongside expanding joint exercises to address complex and non-conventional threats.

Yousef bin Ali al-Khater, chair of the Shura Council's Internal and External Affairs Committee, praised the efficiency of the GCC armed forces, attributing their



success to the continued joint co-operation, military exercises, and the development of the Unified Military Command of the GCC.

He noted that while key milestones, such as unified command structures, have strengthened collective defence, further evaluation and modernisation of the joint security system are necessary to meet emerging threats and achieve full integration.

Shura Council member Ahmed bin Ibrahim al-Malki noted the strategic importance of the GCC as a flexible and evolving framework.

However, he said that recent escalations reinforce the need for a more structured collective defence model.

Al-Malki proposed the development of

a Gulf military alliance comparable to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato), aimed at strengthening deterrence and ensuring rapid, unified responses to regional threats.

Shura Council member Abdullah bin Ali al-Sulaiti stressed that Gulf security is built on interconnected political, military, and economic pillars, calling for clearer strategic planning to boost readiness and identify gaps.

He further emphasised the importance of maintaining harmonised policies and improving co-ordination mechanisms to keep pace with the evolving regional and global dynamics.

Shura Council member Talib bin Mohamed al-Nabit described the current moment as a critical test for Gulf security,

noting that threats now extend beyond conventional warfare to include cyberattacks, proxy conflicts, and risks to the energy and maritime security.

He called for advanced strategic tools, such as scenario analysis, early warning systems, and integrated data platforms, to enable proactive and informed decision-making across sectors.

Shura Council member Essa bin Ahmed al-Nasr stressed the importance of reinforcing institutional co-operation and expanding co-ordination across defence, economic, and technological domains.

He noted that recent developments highlight the urgency of enhancing collective preparedness and adapting to the rapidly changing threat dynamics.

Shura Council member Saud bin Jassim al-Buainain called for a comprehensive security framework that integrates military, economic, and technological dimensions.

While supporting the idea of a unified Gulf military force in principle, he acknowledged the political and strategic involved challenges, stressing the need for gradual, balanced progress.

Shura Council member Mubarak bin Saeed al-Khayareen reaffirmed that military co-operation has long been central to GCC collaboration, supported by joint command systems and co-ordinated defence initiatives.

He also noted the strategic restraint shown by the Gulf States, focusing on defensive measures and stability rather than getting involved into a conflict that does not serve any of their interests.

## Arab League slams continued targeting of civilian facilities

The Arab League has strongly condemned the continued Iranian attacks targeting vital civilian facilities in Kuwait, including two power generation and water desalination plants, which caused significant material damage.

The attacks also hit the ministries complex, the oil sector complex in Shuwaikh, and facilities operated by the Kuwait National Petroleum Company and Petrochemical Industries Company.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said in a statement yesterday that Iran's ongoing targeting of critical civilian infrastructure and essential services, such as desalination plants, energy and electricity facilities, petrochemicals, civilian airports, transport hubs, and residential areas, along with the intimidation of civilians for over a month despite repeated international condemnations, reflects a reckless and escalatory Iranian approach toward Gulf states that cannot be justified.

He described these actions as a fully constituted crime under international humanitarian law, for which the Iranian regime bears full responsibility.

About Gheit reaffirmed the Arab League's full solidarity with Kuwait and its support for any immediate or subsequent measures taken to halt the ongoing attacks on the country and its resources. - QNA



The QU's Dr Al-Yafei and Huawei Qatar's Xiong at the launch of the Smart Classrooms.

## QU president tours new smart classrooms

Qatar University (QU) president Dr Omar al-Ansari visited the recently launched Smart Classrooms, alongside a number of senior QU officials.

The classrooms represent a strategic step toward developing a digital learning environment built on cutting-edge communication technologies, artificial intelligence (AI), and cloud computing.

The initiative reflects the university's commitment to adopting the latest technological solutions to support its academic and research mission.

The Smart Classrooms include advanced interactive display screens, inte-

grated systems for lecture streaming and recording, multi-screen collaboration tools, and platforms for learning management and educational data analytics.

The ecosystem enables faculty members to deliver more interactive and innovative content, strengthens student participation, and supports data-driven academic decision-making.

Huawei is participating as the technology partner in implementing the Smart Classroom solutions at the QU by providing an integrated ecosystem of intelligent learning technologies.

Dr Nayef al-Yafei, the director of QU Information Technology Services, said:

"The Smart Classrooms initiative marks a significant milestone in Qatar University's digital transformation journey."

"By leveraging advanced connectivity, AI-driven capabilities, and integrated learning technologies, we aim to create a more intelligent, engaging, and future-ready learning environment," he said.

"Innovation meets education at the new Smart Classroom at Qatar University," said Huawei Qatar chief executive Lyn Xiong. "By integrating innovative learning technologies, we aim to empower the next generation of digital talent with the tools to lead Qatar's tech-driven future."

## Ministry opens 14 new Qur'an study circles

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, represented by the Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance, has launched 14 new study circles for teaching Qur'an recitation at learning centres across the country, as part of its ongoing efforts to promote the teaching of the Holy Qur'an and spread a culture of care for it.

In a statement, the ministry said that the new circles are distributed across many Qur'an learning centres located in mosques in various areas: Ibn Atiyah Centre in Abal Heeran, Al Sibtain Centre and Usaid bin Hudair Centre in Rawdat Al Hamama, Abu Jaafar Centre in Al Thumama, Imam Khallad Centre in South Al Duhail, Saad bin Zaid Centre, Ubadah bin Al-Samit Centre, and Mohammed Nasser Al Jafali Al Nuaimi

Centre in Leabaib, Sufyan Al Thawri Centre in Al Ghanim Al Jadeed, Shaheen bin Ghanem Al Ghanem Centre in Al Wajba, Suhaib Al Rumi Centre and Abdullah bin Khabbab Centre in Al Wakra, Amr bin Al Aas Centre in Al Thamaid, and Maryam bint Abdullah Al Attiyah Centre in Rawdat Al Jahhanniya.

The Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance stated that the circles are conducted four days a week, from Sunday to Wednesday, between Maghrib and Isha prayers, providing flexibility for enrolment and encouraging consistent participation.

The department said that registration is available directly at the centres during session times, inviting interested individuals to enroll or contact 16577 for more information. - QNA

## Al Jazeera denies link to man held by Israeli police

Al Jazeera Network has firmly denied any association with Miqdad al-Natour, who has been detained by Israeli police.

Israeli police announced on April 3 the arrest of an individual named Miqdad al-Natour, whom they alleged was affil-

iated with Al Jazeera Media Network. The network firmly denied any association with the detainee and rejected the use of its name in any context intended to mislead or defame.

The network said that it will monitor developments in the case and take ap-


propriate legal action if necessary.

Al Jazeera added that it regards this claim as part of a continued pattern of false and fabricated allegations made by Israel in an attempt to justify arbitrary measures against the network and to obscure the reality on the ground.




## Senior Turkish official meets Qatar's envoy

The chief adviser on national security and foreign policy to the Turkish president, Akif Gagatay Kilic, met yesterday with Qatar's ambassador to Türkiye Faisal bin Abdullah al-Hanzab. During the meeting, they reviewed co-operation relations between the two countries. - QNA



## قطر للوقود Qatar Fuel



### Fake E-mail Alert

**Beware of fake mails resembling WOQOD**

It has been brought to WOQOD's notice that an e-mail scam campaign is active whereby Contractors & Suppliers in Qatar are invited for an illegitimate Tender purporting to originate from Qatar Fuel (WOQOD) with huge value projects and asking Contractors & Suppliers to pay Security Fees. WOQOD would like to caution Contractors & Suppliers in Qatar to undertake due diligence before engaging in such fraudulent e-mail that purports to be from Qatar Fuel (WOQOD)

For instance, the scam e-mail [eprocurement@woqodqa.com](mailto:eprocurement@woqodqa.com) & [eprocurement@woqodqatar.com](mailto:eprocurement@woqodqatar.com), resembling WOQOD's generic mailer "[eprocurement@woqod.com.qa](mailto:eprocurement@woqod.com.qa)", in an effort to blackmail audience, but for the change in domain from "woqod.com.qa" to "woqodqa.com" & "woqodqatar.com".

Any tender Invitations from domains other than "[woqod.com.qa](http://woqod.com.qa)" shall be considered as scamming and will be at entire responsibility of individual/s or companies and WOQOD shall not be responsible for any direct or indirect, expressed or implied, consequential, punitive damages or any financial losses whatsoever in any manner.

WOQOD also publishes Tender on its Website <https://www.woqod.com/EN/Business/Tenders/Pages/default.aspx>.

WOQOD is committed toward providing all customers with reliable, professional & innovative solutions through friendly, excellent & convenient services and to demonstrate accountability for all WOQOD activities.

# Creative education now gaining ground in Qatar



Rajesh Jadhav: Qatar is already at the forefront... better than most countries when it comes to not just academic education but also creative education.

By Shaima Sheriff  
Staff Reporter

With rising academic pressure, work-place demands, and growing exposure to social media, an artist has noted that creative education is increasingly being recognised in Qatar not as a luxury, but as a necessity for emotional well-being and personal development.

"People need a way to release stress... arts play a very important role," said Rajesh Jadhav, founder and director of IAID Performing Arts, reflecting on the growing demand for creative outlets in today's fast-paced environment.

## Arts have emerged as key tool for coping with stress

Stress, he said, is no longer limited to one group.

"It can be work stress, for kids it can be school-related stress... there's a lot of uncertainty," Jadhav noted, highlighting how both children and adults are seeking ways to cope beyond conventional methods.

Creative disciplines offer different forms of relief.

Music, he explained, promotes calmness and focus through structured practice, while dance provides a physical release of tension and instils discipline.

The visual arts, meanwhile,

serve as a powerful channel for emotional expression.

"A child may not express in words... but their paintings are very expressive," Jadhav said, emphasising how art allows individuals, particularly younger students, to communicate feelings that may otherwise remain unspoken.

Beyond emotional release, creative education is also shaping confidence and identity.

Jadhav noted that many students initially arrive with low confidence and hesitation.

"We see a massive change... confidence levels go up over time," he said, describing how structured training gradually transforms students from shy individuals into confident performers.

Jadhav added that these environments also foster social connection.

"It is a social place... you are between people who are like-minded," he said, pointing to the importance of community in supporting personal growth.

The shift in perception is also being reflected at a national level.

Qatar has increasingly invested in both academic and creative education, recognising their complementary role in student development.

"I think Qatar is already at the forefront... better than most countries when it comes to not just academic education but also creative education," Jadhav said, noting the country's ongoing support for arts and cultural initiatives.

Importantly, he stressed that creative education is no longer viewed as an optional extracurricular activity.

"Art education is becoming more and more important... it's a way of communication now," Jadhav said, underscoring its growing relevance in both education systems and everyday life.

As awareness grows, more parents are recognising the value of integrating creative learning into their children's development, not only for academic advantage, but for emotional resilience and self-expression.

In a rapidly changing world, the message from educators is clear: creative expression is no longer just about talent or performance, it is about well-being, identity, and the ability to navigate modern pressures with confidence.

## Fishermen arrested for capturing nearly 100 seagulls

Personnel from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)'s Marine Protection Department have apprehended a group of fishermen, who captured 95 seagulls at a marine site.

The ministry said it has taken the legal procedures regarding this violation, in accordance with the environmental laws and regulations in force in the country, affirming that its monitoring plans will go on to protect wildlife.

In the meantime, the MoECC called on everyone to comply with environmental legislation and avoid harming living organisms.

It urged the public to cooperate and report any violations that could harm wildlife to help preserve natural resources and ensure their sustainability for the future generations.



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

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

Sl. No	Tender Number	Tender Sale Period Start Date	Tender Sale Period End Date	Tender Closing Date	Tender Bond	Bond Curr.	Tender Fee	Fee Curr.
1	LT26100900	06.04.2026	12.04.2026	04.05.2026	140,000.00	QAR	200.00	QAR
Title of Tender: UPGRADE OF PLC SYSTEMS AT HFO PLANT IN RLIC								
Mid-Tender Meeting Location: To be advised if required								
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time: To be advised if required								
2	GT26101800	06.04.2026	13.04.2026	24.05.2026	1,200,000.00	QAR	500.00	QAR
Title of Tender: COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL OF WASTES AND RELATED SERVICES AT DCA, RLIC, MIC, TD AND OCM								
Mid-Tender Meeting Location: To be advised if required								
Mid-Tender Meeting Date & Time: To be advised if required								

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**MANATEQ**  
Economic Zones Company, Qatar

**مناقصة Tender**  
تدعو شركة المناطق الاقتصادية (مناطق) الشركات المحلية والعالمية المتخصصة للاشتراك بالمناقصة الآتية:  
MANATEQ (Economic Zones Company) would like to invite competent local and/or international specialized companies for the following Open Tender:

رقم المناقصة Tender No.	موضوع المناقصة Tender Subject	قيمة التأمين الإبتدائي Tender Bond	رسوم مستردة Tender Fee / Non-refundable	موعد الإغلاق Closing Date
TC-19-2025	تأهيل محطة ضخ مياه الشرب في منطقة الوكرة اللوجستية وتسليمها إلى كهرماء Rehabilitation of Al Wakrah Logistics Park Potable Water Pump Station for Handover to Kahramaa	200,000.00 QR	2000.00 QR	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2026

**Collection Date and Location:**  
Starting 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2026 (09:00 am to 02:00 pm).  
MANATEQ Headquarters - Small and Medium Industries Zone (Operations Division).

موعد ومكان استلام وثائق المناقصة  
بدءاً من 2 أبريل 2026 (9 صباحاً حتى الـ 2 ظهراً).  
المقر الرئيسي لشركة مناطق المنطقة الصناعية الصغيرة والمتوسطة (إدارة العمليات).

Email: opstendering@manateq.qa | البريد الإلكتروني: opstendering@manateq.qa

The "Tender Brief" booklet includes further information and details, and can be downloaded free of charge using the QR Code or the below link  
<https://manateq.qa/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/TC-19-2025-Tender-Brief.pdf>

يحتوي كتيب «نقذة عن المناقصة» على مزيد من المعلومات والتفاصيل، ويمكن الحصول عليه مجاناً من خلال هذا الكود أو الرابط أدناه

يتم دفع رسوم المناقصة من خلال شيك قابل للدفع بإسناد شركة المناطق الاقتصادية (مناطق) أو عن طريق تحويل بنكي للحساب الآتي:

Account Name : Economic Zones Company - Manateq  
Bank : Qatar National Bank Account No. : 0013-026499-001  
IBAN No. : QA19QNBA00000000013026499001 SWIFT CODE : QNBAQAQA

**Collect the tender documents must comply with the following:**

- 1 - Delegation for receiving tender documents.
- 2 - Copy of representative ID.
- 3 - Tender fees bank account depositing slip

**موقع التسليم**  
أمين سر لجنة المناقصات، شركة المناطق الاقتصادية، في العنوان الموضح أعلاه.  
صندوق بريد: 29000 - الدوحة - قطر.

تحتفظ شركة المناطق الاقتصادية بكامل حقها في تعديل شروط المناقصة في أي وقت بدون إيداع أسباب و/ أو إلغاء المناقصة بدون إيداع أسباب وبدون أدنى مسئولية عليها في هذا الصدد أي كان نوعها أو مصدرها  
Economic Zones Company reserves its right in modifying terms of the tender at any time and/or cancelling the tender at any time without need of providing reasons and without any responsibility on its part whatever its kind

**ORYX GTL**  
QIP - SASOL joint venture  
أوريكس لتحويل الغاز إلى سوائل المحدودة  
ORYX GTL Limited

**INVITATION TO TENDER**

ORYX GTL Limited is pleased to announce the following tender(s):

S. No.	Tender Ref.	Tender Title:	Tender Bond (QAR)	Tender Reg. Fee	Bid Closing Date & Tender Bond Validity Period
1.	TC-CN-014-26-MC	Thermal Spray Coating for MOL Adsorbers & Separator	45,500/-	Applicable	22 April 2026 at 12.00 noon & 180 days
2.	STC-MT-029-26-MT	Supply of Heat Transfer Compound	45,500/-	Applicable	22 April 2026 at 12.00 noon & 180 days
3.	STC-CN-006-26-HS	Call-off Contract for Industrial Hygiene Monitoring and Reporting	45,300/-	Applicable	06 May 2026 at 12.00 noon & 180 days
4.	TC-CN-011-26-IT	Implementation of ICT Application Backup Infrastructure Refresh Project	378,000/-	Applicable	29 April 2026 at 12.00 noon & 180 days
5.	TC-CN-009-26-EN	Call-Off Contract for Engineering Consultancy and Support Services	408,000/-	N/A	29 April 2026 at 12.00 noon & 180 days

Companies wishing to register their interest and obtain Tender Document(s) for the above Tender(s) must pay a non-refundable registration fee and register with ORYX GTL as detailed below:

Tender Registration Fee	QAR 500/- (Non-refundable) per Tender
Payable to	ORYX GTL Limited
IBAN (29 Digits)	QA23QNBA00000000013010705001
Bank	Qatar National Bank – HQ or any branch (cash only)
Registration Dates	From 05 Apr 2026 to 09 Apr 2026
Registration Process and Requirements:	Write an e-mail to <a href="mailto:oryxgltenders@oryxglt.qa">oryxgltenders@oryxglt.qa</a> with the following attachments: 1. Copy of Commercial Registration (CR) 2. Copy of bank deposit slip of the Tender Registration Fee. 3. Copy of ICV Certificate

COMPANIES WHO HAVE PAID THE NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE BUT FAILED TO FORMALLY REGISTER AT THE DATE AND TIME STATED ABOVE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED AS ACCEPTABLE TENDERER. TENDER BOND SHALL BE ISSUED BY A BANK REGISTERED IN THE STATE OF QATAR. Effective from 1st July 2023, bids from Local Suppliers and Contractors (companies established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Tender Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that has been established for less than 2 years are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV Digital Portal- https://icv.qa

For more information about ORYX GTL and its tenders, please visit our website: <https://www.oryxglt.com.qa>

**مؤسسة قطر Qatar Foundation**

**INVITATION TO TENDER**

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
HBKU-RFQ-1893	Advanced AV Systems (Supply, Installation, and Integration) for HBKU	QAR 1,000	QAR 40,000	06-May-26
HBKU-RFQ-1893-2	Arab Global Scholars (AGS) platform	QAR 500	QAR 10,000	06-May-26

HBKU-University Procurement Service (UPS) is inviting companies to participate in the above-listed public tender. To receive the tender documents, please follow the following steps:

**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: <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 06-Apr-26 Until 21-Apr-26

- 1) 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.
- 2) Technical and Commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier portal as per the instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.

- The Commercial bid must be valid for 180 Days from the 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 the link <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>

## DICID moves international conference to end of 2026

The Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID) has announced the postponement of the 16th international conference, entitled "Religious Dialogue in the Digital Age: New Horizons for Peacebuilding", until the end of 2026.

DICID board chairman Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Naimi said that the conference scheduled to be held on April 21-23, which convenes as a scholarly and intellectual platform for exchanging of expertise and the formulation of innovative strategies that leverage digital capabilities to promote the values of dialogue, coexistence, and sustainable peace, will now take place at the end of 2026.

The conference will discuss five key themes: "The Impact of Digitalisation on Interfaith Dialogue", "Building New Knowledge Systems for Peace", "Interfaith Dialogue as a Pillar of Sustainable Peace", "Digital Media and Shaping Institutional Awareness", and "Youth and the Digital Age" - QNA

# Iran war and what the cascading regional fallout portends

From Page 1

With energy infrastructure increasingly exposed and shipping routes under strain, the UNDP's upper-bound figures are now edging into view, if not beyond. The bloc could also lose up to 3.11mn jobs, with human development setbacks equivalent to one to two years of progress.

In the Levant, where fragility was already entrenched, the impact is sharper still. GDP losses of up to 8.7% are now paired with a disproportionate surge in poverty, accounting for more than 75% of the region's projected increase in deprivation. The war's human toll, including displacement, disruption to education and healthcare, and damage to civilian systems, has compounded the economic shock, reinforcing UNDP's warning of a measurable decline in human development indicators.

Inside Iran itself, the erosion is equally stark. UNDP estimates the country's human development index could fall by 0.47 to 0.56 percentage points, effectively wiping out one to one-and-a-half years of progress. With low-income households spending nearly 45% of their income on food, inflation and supply disruptions are rapidly translating into real hardship,

particularly for informal workers and small businesses.

The World Trade Organisation has said that if oil and gas prices remain elevated for the rest of the year, forecasted 2026 global GDP growth could be reduced by 0.3%. Europe, as a heavy energy importer, could see growth fall by at least one percentage point below previous expectations.

Beyond the immediate theatre, the fallout is rippling outward with particular severity through agricultural markets. The Gulf accounts for roughly a third of global urea exports and a quarter of ammonia, with up to 40% of world nitrogen fertiliser exports passing through the Strait of Hormuz. With that passage now blocked, urea prices are up 50% since the war began and ammonia prices have risen 20%.

The downstream consequences for food security are acute. The countries of the Gulf region, home to more than 60mn people, are almost entirely import-dependent across staple food categories, meaning any sustained disruption to supply chains will rapidly translate into food shocks.

Oxford Economics has modelled a scenario in which prolonged disruption tips the world into outright contraction, with

world GDP falling in the middle of the year, calendar-year growth for 2026 slowing to 1.4% and global inflation reaching 7.7%, close to the 2022 peak. Unlike 2022, when the global economy continued to expand through the price shock, the severity of this disruption could tip the world into recession, which Oxford's analysts describe as the worst synchronised downturn in 40 years outside the pandemic and the global financial crisis.

Taken together, these developments point to a fundamental shift in the nature of the crisis. What began as a geopolitical confrontation is now manifesting as a multi-layered development shock, affecting growth, employment, poverty and long-term human welfare simultaneously. The longer the conflict persists, the more it entrenches structural damage across interconnected systems, from energy markets to food security.

UNDP's original warning was stark: even a brief war could reverse years of progress. Five weeks on, the trajectory suggests something deeper. The economic and human setback now under way is likely to exceed initial projections, with consequences that will endure well beyond the battlefield.

## HMC performs Qatar's first robotic Whipple surgery

From Page 1

The patient's recovery was straightforward. She was mobilised the day after surgery under an accelerated recovery protocol, and her progress underscored the tangible advantages that minimally invasive techniques can offer appropriate candidates.

Set against traditional open

surgery, the robotic approach offers suitable patients a number of benefits: smaller incisions and reduced scarring, lower intra-operative blood loss, diminished post-operative pain, faster recovery, a shorter hospital stay and an earlier return to normal daily activity.

The achievement represents a significant milestone for HMC

and Qatar's broader health sector, bringing advanced minimally invasive pancreatic surgery onshore and reducing the need for patients to seek specialist care abroad. It also positions HMC to deepen its expertise and expand capacity in complex robotic procedures, with the aim of improving both outcomes and patient experience in the years ahead.

## Qatar delivers new batch of relief aid to displaced people in Lebanon

Through its partners, Qatar Charity and the Qatar Red Crescent Society, the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) provided a new aid package to displaced people in the city of Sidon in southern Lebanon yesterday, as part of its efforts to deliver urgent humanitarian support to those affected and assist impacted communities, especially during times of crises and humanitarian emergencies. The aid package includes distributing 500 relief kits to displaced families in Sidon, within a broader program targeting a total of 40,500 families. This follows an earlier batch from which 750 families benefited in shelter centres in Beirut. Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs Haneen Sayed praised the Qatari assistance to Lebanon, noting that it falls within efforts to support displaced persons, particularly those outside shelter



centres, amid the ongoing Israeli aggression against Lebanon. She stressed the importance of this assistance at a time when the Lebanese government is working to expand support to displaced individuals outside official shelters. The Lebanese Minister of Social Affairs also commended the Qatari aid delivered to both Beirut and Sidon, affirming that the Lebanese government is continuing to make sustained efforts to assist displaced people through interministerial co-ordination and co-operation with the international community. For his part, manager of Qatar Charity's Lebanon office Mohammad Zahra told QNA that

this is the second batch of aid provided jointly by QFFD and Qatar Charity. He added that the first batch was distributed on Monday, benefiting 750 families across nine schools used as shelters in Beirut. The manager of Qatar Charity's Lebanon office noted that approximately 1,000 additional relief kits are scheduled to be distributed on Tuesday in coordination with the municipality of Sidon, targeting displaced families living outside shelter centres. Zahra pointed out that the assistance includes mattresses, blankets, hygiene kits, and food baskets. (QNA)

## QC's '27th Night Challenge' saves children's lives in Yemen

Qatar Charity (QC)'s "27th Night Challenge" held under the theme "Warding off Calamity", organised a specialised medical camp to treat children suffering from congenital heart defects in Taiz, Yemen, bringing renewed hope to dozens of vulnerable families.

Aimed at mobilising support for life saving medical initiatives worldwide, the campaign moved beyond fundraising into direct action, with a paediatric cardiac medical camp organised at the Cardiac and Vascular Center in Taiz, affiliated with Yemen's Ministry of Health, alongside similar camps in other countries.

During the camp, the medical team performed 33 paediatric heart procedures, including 30 cardiac catheterisation interventions to treat congenital defects and repair heart septal holes, as well as three open-heart surgeries for cases described as critical and life-threatening.

For years, children's families lived in fear, as the high cost of specialised heart surgery exceeded their means in a war affected country facing salary disruptions and worsening living conditions. With no specialised paediatric heart services available, the children's suffering continued daily—until the medical camp



brought relief and restored hope to 33 families.

Dr Abu Dhar al-Jundi, consultant cardiac and vascular surgeon and director of the Cardiovascular and Kidney Transplant Center in Taiz, said the heart medical camp implemented as part of the "Warding off Calamity" campaign was a vital lifeline for sick children and their families amid severe health challenges. He noted that several cases were critical and that delayed treatment could have been fatal, adding that the greatest reward was seeing children smile after surgery and the tears of joy in their parents' eyes.

Hussein's mother said she had watched her son suffer day after day, unable to afford his treat-

ment, adding that the successful catheterisation gave him a new chance at life.

Similarly, Jawaher's mother said the camp ended the family's constant anxiety, describing her daughter's safe recovery from surgery as a life saving moment they will never forget.

Qatar Charity organised the "27th Night Challenge" during Ramadan, marking the largest fundraising event held on YouTube to support life saving medical interventions, particularly for children in urgent need of surgery. With the support of generous donors, the initiative raised more than QR40mn to fund medical interventions in several countries, including Qatar.

# US rescues airman, sends strong warning to Iran

Reuters  
Washington

US special forces rescued an airman in a high-risk mission deep inside Iran while President Donald Trump threatened to rain "hell" on Tehran if it did not reopen the Strait of Hormuz by Tuesday for oil flows vital to the world economy.

Trump announced the rescue in the early hours of Sunday in a social media post that described the operation in a mountainous area as "one of the most daring" such missions in US history.

The airman, the weapons officer of an F-15 jet shot down on Friday, was wounded but "will be just fine", Trump said in a message on X. The jet's pilot was rescued later that day.

In another post laden with expletives, Trump told Iran to open the Hormuz waterway, the conduit for around a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas supply that has been largely shut down since the war began five weeks ago.

"Tuesday will be Power Plant Day, and Bridge Day, all wrapped up in one, in Iran," he said on his Truth Social platform, threatening to hit energy and transport infrastructure that critics say would violate international law.

Adding to the pressure, Washington's ally in the war, Israel — which attacked a major petrochemicals facility in Iran on Saturday — was preparing to attack energy facilities next week and was awaiting US approval, a senior Israeli defence official said.

However, in the kind of mixed messaging that has baffled supporters, foes and financial markets alike, Trump told Fox News



An image released yesterday shows wreckage of an American aircraft and a helicopter rotor in Isfahan, Iran, which forensic imagery analyst William Goodhind said is consistent with a US MC-130J or HC-130J. (Reuters)

on Sunday that Iran was negotiating, with a deal possible by Monday. Tehran is demanding an end to hostilities and its parliamentary speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf condemned Trump's threats, saying he was being misled by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Your reckless moves are dragging the US into a living HELL for every single family, and our whole region is going to burn because you insist on following Netanyahu's commands," he posted on X.

Showing it still had fight despite the US-Israeli pounding, Iran expanded attacks on Gulf energy infrastructure, launching drone and missile strikes on petrochemical facilities in Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

The Revolutionary Guards also said they hit an Israeli-linked vessel at Dubai's Jebel Ali

port. In Kuwait, drones sparked fires and caused "severe material damage" at petrochemical plants operated by affiliates of state oil firm Kuwait Petroleum Corp, the company said.

The strikes underscored Iran's ability to sustain cross-border attacks and disrupt infrastructure across multiple Gulf states, exposing vulnerabilities in energy and maritime hubs.

In Israel too, media showed search-and-rescue teams combing debris in the northern city of Haifa after an Iranian missile hit a residential building. Israeli paramedics said nine people were being treated.

With the impact from the strait's closure on the global economy deepening by the day, the rescue of the US airman removed the risk for Trump of a hostage crisis further souring the mood of an American public already sceptical of the war.

## Qatari Society of Al Gannas participates in 8th Ethnosport Forum in Turkiye

The Qatari Society of Al Gannas participated in the 8th Ethnosport Forum, held in Antalya, the Republic of Turkiye, from April 3-5, under the theme "Ethnosports 2027: Local to Globe".

The Society was represented by Ali bin Khatem al-Mahshadi, President of the Qatari Society of Al Gannas and member of the Board of Directors of the World Ethnosport Confederation (WEC), and Zayed al-Ali al-Maadeed, Secretary of the Society.

Speaking on the occasion, al-Mahshadi said the forum aims to shape the future of ethnosports and preserve cultural heritage, noting that it serves as a global platform for advancing the sustainability of traditional sports within a framework rooted in the values of tradition, respect, solidarity, and peace.

He added that the forum featured a series of discussion sessions bringing together academics, federation representatives, and researchers to explore prospects for international co-operation in ethnosports, as well as issues related to financial sustainability, media strategies, and expanding global engagement with traditional sports and competitions.

For his part, Secretary of the



Society Zayed al-Ali al-Maadeed said that a number of side meetings were held with academics and specialists in traditional games, during which views were exchanged and participants were introduced to the Society's experience and its role in preserving heritage and nurturing young talent.

He added that discussions also focused on the vision of "Ethnosports 2027" including its objectives, organisational frameworks, international participation strategies, sponsorship models, and media planning, with the aim

of developing a comprehensive roadmap in cooperation with relevant stakeholders.

The forum brought together representatives of 50 founding members from 29 countries affiliated with the World Ethnosport Confederation, alongside government officials, federation representatives, academics, and researchers.

The forum opened with remarks by President of the World Ethnosport Confederation Necmeddin Bilal Erdogan, along with several ministers from participating countries. (QNA)



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

Invites prospective suppliers to participate in the following tender

Tender Reference and Description	Submission of information & willingness for bidding	Tender fee (non-refundable)	Tender publication	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
Tender No. RFQ/GHC/SC/007/2026 Provision of Security Guards for a period of 3 years	Until 9 <sup>th</sup> April 2026	QAR 750/- Until 12 <sup>th</sup> April 2026 12:00 pm	14 <sup>th</sup> April 2026	QAR 40,000.00	10 <sup>th</sup> May 2026 12:00 pm

**Brief Scope:** GHC invites reputable and qualified suppliers to submit their bids for the Provision of Security Guards for a period of 3 years. The contract covers the provision of comprehensive security services for Gulf Helicopters Company (GHC) facilities. The scope includes performing all required security duties and responsibilities to ensure a safe, secure, and well-controlled operating environment. Services must be delivered without any interruption to aviation safety or operational continuity.

**i.** Interested bidders to communicate their willingness to bid and send contact details to GHC email ([procurement@qulhelicopters.com](mailto:procurement@qulhelicopters.com)) indicating company name, address, telephone, official email, authorized company representative, etc. latest by 9<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

GHC tender reference numbers and description must be mentioned in the email.

**ii.** Non-refundable tender fee of QAR 750/- is payable to GHC, only through QNB account # 0013-036531-001 IBAN # QA80QNBAA000000000013036531001 via online or at any QNB branch. Interested bidders shall attach the evidence of the tender fee payment and send it via bidder company official email to GHC email: [procurement@qulhelicopters.com](mailto:procurement@qulhelicopters.com), latest by 12<sup>th</sup> April 2026, 12:00 pm for GHC approval.

**iii.** Tender package will be sent via email to the confirmed participants from [tender@qulhelicopters.com](mailto:tender@qulhelicopters.com) by 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026. GHC shall provide the necessary instructions and guidelines for the bid submission.

**iv.** Original of the Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee) must be submitted by hand to the following address:  
Gulf Helicopters Company,  
P O Box: 811, Al Areeesh Street,  
Ras Abu Abboud, Doha, Qatar  
Tel: +974 44 333 888  
Attention: Supply Chain Manager

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

**v.** For any clarifications on the above, please send your queries with tender reference and description addressed to Supply Chain Mail to email [procurement@qulhelicopters.com](mailto:procurement@qulhelicopters.com)

**vi.** For the submissions of technical and commercial proposals shall be submitted to [tender@qulhelicopters.com](mailto:tender@qulhelicopters.com)

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



## Gaza civil defence, hospital say Israeli strike kills four

AFP  
Gaza City

Gaza's civil defence agency and a hospital reported that an Israeli strike in the Palestinian territory yesterday killed four people, while the military said it had struck a "fighter cell".

The attack took place before dawn in an eastern neighbourhood of Gaza City, the territory's largest urban area, said the civil defence agency which operates as a rescue force under Hamas.

"An Israeli airstrike before dawn killed four and wounded several," it reported.

Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital confirmed the toll, saying the strike was carried out by an Israeli drone.

"Four martyrs and five wounded arrived at the hospital this morning after an Israeli drone fired two missiles at a group of civilians," the hospital said in a statement.

Israel's military said it had "identified a fighter cell that oper-

ated adjacent to the troops, posing an immediate threat to them".

"Following the identification, the IDF precisely struck and eliminated the fighter cell in order to remove the threat," the military said, without specifying how many people were killed.

Despite a ceasefire being in effect, Israel has continued to launch strikes across Gaza, killing at least 715 people since the truce took hold on October 10, according to a toll from the territory's health ministry, which also operates under Hamas authority.

The UN considers the ministry's figures to be reliable. Israel says five of its soldiers have been killed since the start of the truce.

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

Israel and Hamas continue to accuse each other of violating the ceasefire that largely halted two years of war in the territory.



This photograph shows the damage at the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted Shiyah neighbourhood in Beirut's southern suburbs, yesterday. (AFP)



A man walks at the site of an Israeli strike, amid escalating hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, in Kfar Hatta in southern Lebanon, yesterday. (Reuters)

## Israel renews Lebanon strikes

AFP  
Beirut

Israeli strikes on south Beirut and its suburbs killed at least four people yesterday, a day after Israel threatened to hit Lebanon's main border crossing with Syria, forcing it to close.

The Israeli military also carried out deadly attacks on Lebanon's south, one of which killed seven people including a family of six.

Israel has launched airstrikes across Lebanon as well as a ground invasion in the south since March 2, when armed group Hezbollah entered the war in the Middle East on the side of Iran.

Hezbollah yesterday claimed to have fired a cruise missile at an Israeli warship off the coast, but the Israeli military told AFP it was "not aware" of such an incident.

One of Israel's strikes in Beirut yesterday killed at least four people and wounded 39 in the Jnah neighbourhood, the Lebanese health ministry said.

It landed about 100 metres away from the Rafik Hariri University Hospital, the largest public medical facility in Lebanon, a medical source said.

Another attack struck a building elsewhere in the area that

the Israeli military had warned it would target.

After the first attack, 53-year-old Jnah resident Nancy Hassan thought she was safe at home.

"Shortly after, the planes were flying overhead, and we heard a huge bang, then stones rained down on us," she said.

Hassan lost her daughter in an Israeli strike on the same area during the 2024 war between Hezbollah and Israel.

"My daughter was killed, she was 23 years old. Today, her friends were killed. Every time, they bomb us in the neighbourhood without warning," she added.

Zakaria Tawbeh, deputy head of the Rafik Hariri hospital, said they received "four killed, three Sudanese and a 15-year old girl, and 31 wounded".

"Lots of glass was broken, and some of our patients had panic attacks."

Israel also launched several strikes on the nearby southern suburbs, an area now largely evacuated but where Hezbollah holds sway.

In a statement, the military warned it had "begun striking Hezbollah infrastructure sites".

On Saturday, Israel had said it would target the Masnaa border crossing between Lebanon and Syria, the main gateway between

the two countries.

"Due to Hezbollah's use of the Masnaa crossing for military purposes and smuggling of combat equipment, the (Israeli army) intends to carry out strikes on the crossing in the near future," said the military's Arabic-language spokesman Avichay Adraee, urging people to leave the area.

The border post was quickly evacuated on the Lebanese side.

In Syria, borders and customs public relations director Mazen Aloush insisted the crossing was exclusively used by civilians, and said it would temporarily close due to the threats.

Masnaa is a vital trade route for both countries and a key gateway to the rest of the region for Lebanese people.

Military expert Hassan Jouni told AFP that Israel's threat to strike the crossing "is not based on sound security considerations, but rather aims to pressure the Lebanese government... to disarm Hezbollah".

At another border crossing further north known as Qaa, an AFP correspondent yesterday saw a long line of cars and vans waiting to enter Syria as people sought an alternative route.

Israeli attacks on Lebanon since the start of the war have killed more than 1,400 people, including 126 children, and dis-

placed over a mn, according to Lebanese authorities.

In the southern Lebanese town of Kfar Hatta, far from the border with Israel, an Israeli strike killed seven people including a four-year-old girl, the health ministry said yesterday.

The Lebanese army mourned an off-duty soldier killed in the attack.

The Israeli army had issued an evacuation warning for the town on Saturday evening.

A source from Lebanon's civil defence told AFP that a family of six who had been displaced from a town further south were waiting for a relative to pick them up in a vehicle when they were killed. The relative also perished in the strike.

An AFP photographer saw at least eight homes destroyed by attacks in Kfar Hatta.

As Israeli troops push into border areas in southern Lebanon, destroying villages, Lebanese President Joseph Aoun reiterated his call for talks with Israel, saying he wanted to spare his country's south from destruction on the scale seen in the Palestinian territory of Gaza.

"Why don't we negotiate... until we can at least save the homes that have not yet been destroyed?" he said in a televised address.

## Eight Israelis held after assault on Palestinian village



A Palestinian youth stands near teargas fired by Israeli forces during a military raid in the neighbourhood of Kafr Aqab, some 16km south of the city of Ramallah, in the occupied West Bank, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP  
Jerusalem

Israeli police said last eight suspects were arrested after an overnight attack by Israeli civilians on a Palestinian village in the occupied West Bank.

"Last night, forces... were called to the village of Qusra in Samaria following a report of an assault and arson of property by Israeli civilians," a police statement said, using a different term for the northern West Bank.

"During searches, eight suspects were arrested by the forces on suspicion of being in a closed military zone and of involvement in the incident, and were taken in for questioning."

The suspects were aged between 18 and 48, and during their searches the police also found an M-16 assault rifle issued by the army.

The Palestinian official news agency Wafa, citing local sources, reported that the assault had been carried out by Israeli settlers.

Wafa said they had operated "under the protection of Israeli forces" and "set fire to two poultry farming structures".

A 32-year old Palestinian man

was assaulted, and rescuers said he had "sustained a deep head wound".

The news agency said the settlers had tried earlier on Saturday evening to attack homes in the village, but residents confronted them.

Qusra, located between Nablus and Ramallah, on March 14 witnessed a deadly attack by settlers who gunned down a local resident and wounded two more, Palestinian officials said.

Violence in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, has risen sharply since the October 2023 Hamas storming of Israel triggered the Gaza war.

There has also been a spike in deadly attacks by Israeli settlers in the West Bank since the start of the Iran war, Palestinian authorities and the UN have said, with at least six Palestinians killed since March 1.

Settler assaults on Palestinians have persisted for years, often to the indifference of mainstream Israeli society.

But the recent surge has prompted criticism from influential religious leaders, settler leaders, and even Israel's military chief Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir, who called the attacks "morally and ethically unacceptable".

## Zelensky in Syria to discuss security co-operation with Sharaa

Reuters  
Damascus

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky pledged to work for enhanced security in talks yesterday with his Syrian counterpart Ahmed al-Sharaa, as Kyiv seeks to promote its military expertise across the region following the outbreak of the Iran war.

Zelensky, continuing his tour of Middle East countries, also said Ukraine wants to contribute to food security in the region.

In recent weeks, Zelensky has visited several countries across the Middle East, offering Ukrainian expertise in countering drone and missile attacks, developed during its four-year war with Russia.

"We agreed to work together to provide more security and opportunities for development for our societies," Zelensky wrote on Telegram. "There is a great interest in exchanging military and security experience."

Zelensky told the Syrian leader that Ukraine, as a major grain producer, was a reliable supplier of food and said the two leaders "discussed joint opportunities to strengthen food security across the region."

In Turkey on Saturday, Zelensky said he had agreed on "new steps" in security co-operation with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, and discussed opportunities in joint gas infrastructure projects and gas field development.

"Today in Damascus we continue our active Ukrainian diplomacy aimed at real security and economic co-operation," Zelensky said on X after his arrival.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (left) and Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa during their meeting in Damascus yesterday. (AFP)

It was the Ukrainian leader's first trip to Syria since diplomatic relations were re-established at the end of last year following the fall of Syria's long-time strongman Bashar al-Assad.

Zelensky's talks with Sharaa were linked to defence in light of the US-Israeli war in Iran, said one Syrian source, a government adviser. Syria is not known to have any air defences capable of dealing with Iranian drones or missiles.

During Zelensky's visits to Gulf states last weekend, Ukraine signed long-term military co-operation deals with Saudi Arabia and another Gulf state, and he said that a similar agreement was close to completion with UAE.

Syria is home to two major Russian military bases, used by its navy and air force. Sharaa said on Tuesday at an event in Chatham House in London that work was under way to transform these into "centres to train the Syrian army."

## Nigerian army rescues 31 after church attack

Reuters  
Lagos

Nigeria's army said yesterday that it had rescued 31 civilians who were taken hostage during an attack on a church in north-west Kaduna state, while five people were found dead at the scene.

The army said the attack had taken place during an Easter church service in Ariko village in the Kachia local government Area. Troops were in pursuit of the attackers, it added.

The chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria for Kaduna state, Caleb Maaji, said that two churches were attacked in Ariko village yesterday. He said that seven people were killed and an unknown number taken hostage.

"Findings are still ongoing," Maaji told Reuters.

Northwest Nigeria has struggled for years with violence, including mass kidnappings for ransom and village raids, with armed groups operating from vast forest hide-outs across the region.

## Angola floods kill 15, displace thousands

Torrential rains have swept across Angola, killing 15 people and flooding over 4,000 homes, emergency services said yesterday.

The hours-long storm triggered flash floods that inundated streets and damaged infrastructure in the capital Luanda and the southern city of Benguela on the country's Atlantic coast.

Benguela bore the brunt of the devastation, with 12 deaths reported there and three in Luanda, the fire service said, citing a preliminary report.

"I've lost almost everything and I don't know where to go," said Natalia, a resident of Luanda's poor Kilamba neighbourhood, describing how her home was turned into a "swimming pool" by the floods. Her family had moved their children and grandchildren to stay with relatives, she said.

"We really are at a loss for words. May God help us." Heavy downpours are not unusual in the southwest African country during the rainy season, but scientists say human-caused climate change is increasing the probability, length and severity of such extreme weather events.

In neighbouring Namibia, the Zambezi River has risen sharply, forcing thousands of people living along its banks to flee their homes.

Officials said water levels had reached about 6.8 metres, well above the usual four metres. (AFP)

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MAHAMUDUL HASAN FARDIN

holder of

Bangladesh Passport No. A17781321  
QID No. 30305007747

hereby change my name

from

MAHAMUDUL HASAN FARDIN

to

MAHAMUDUL HASSAN FARDEEN

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MOHAMMED BORHAN UDDIN MOHAMMED SAFI

holder of

Bangladesh Passport No. A21329587  
QID No. 29005027252

hereby change my name

from

MOHAMMED BORHAN UDDIN MOHAMMED SAFI

to

MD BORHAN UDDIN

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

I, NIKKA ROSE MALABAD SALUDARES

holder of

Philippines Passport No. P1278558D  
QID No. 28560833661

hereby change my name

from

NIKKA ROSE MALABAD SALUDARES

to

NIKKA ROSE MALABAD JENKINS

Any objection, please contact

THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS

within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

## US says it arrested relatives of slain Iran general Soleimani

AFP  
Washington

Two family members of slain Iranian general Qassem Soleimani have been arrested in the US after their residency permits were rescinded, the US State Department said Saturday.

"Last night, the niece and grand niece of deceased Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Major General Qassem Soleimani were arrested by federal agents following Secretary of State Marco Rubio's termination of their lawful permanent resident (LPR) status," a department statement said.

It identified the niece as Hamideh Soleimani Afshar. Her daughter was not named.

Both "are now in the custody of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)," the statement said, without specifying their whereabouts.

But Iranian media quoted two daughters of Soleimani as saying the pair are not relatives.

"The US State Department's claim is a lie: the people arrested in the US have no connection to the family," Zeinab Soleimani told the Fars news agency.

Another daughter, Narjes Soleimani, who is a member of Tehran's Islamic City Council, told Iranian state TV: "To this day, no member of the family nor any relative of Martyr Soleimani has resided in the US."

The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for clarification from AFP.

Qassem Soleimani, who led the IRGC's foreign operations arm, was killed in a US drone strike while he was in the Iraqi capital Baghdad in January 2020 — the final year of President Donald Trump's first term in the White House.

"As identified by both press reporting and her own social media commentary, Soleimani Afshar is an outspoken supporter of the totalitarian, terrorist regime in Iran," the State Department said.

It also said she had "praised the new Iranian Supreme Leader" Ali Khamenei and "denounced America as the 'Great Satan'."

Soleimani Afshar's husband has also been barred from entering the US, the statement said.

The daughter and son-in-law of another slain Iranian official, security chief Ali Larjani, have also had their legal status terminated.

Both "are no longer in the US and are barred from future entry," the statement said.

Larjani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, was killed on March 17 in an Israeli strike.

"The Trump Administration will not allow our country to become a home for foreign nationals who support anti-American terrorist regimes," Rubio said in a post on X.

## US commandos went deep into Iran to rescue downed airman: media

AFP  
Washington

American commandos deployed deep into Iranian territory to rescue a downed airman, US news outlets reported yesterday, hours after President Donald Trump announced that the crew member had been recovered "safe and sound."

Tehran said this week it had shot down an F-15 warplane, the first US fighter jet to go down inside Iran since the start of the war. Washington has not confirmed the details of how the fighter went down.

Trump said early yesterday that the US military had "pulled off one of the most daring Search and Rescue Operations in US History, for one of our incredible Crew Member Officers, who also happens to be a highly respected Colonel, and who I am thrilled to let you know is now SAFE and SOUND!"

In a subsequent post, Trump described the rescue mission — as well as another operation to pick up the pilot — as "an AMAZING show of bravery and talent by all!"

"I will be having a News Conference, with the Military, at the Oval Office, on Monday, at 1:00pm (1700 GMT)," he added.

Navy SEAL Team 6 commandos were tasked with extracting the airman, while US attack aircraft dropped bombs and opened



US President Donald Trump arrives at the White House following a visit to Trump National Golf Club in Washington, DC, yesterday. (Reuters)

fire on Iranian convoys to keep them away, The New York Times reported, citing an unidentified official.

Though wounded, the airman, a weapon systems officer, could still walk, evading capture in the mountains for more than a day, according to news outlet Axios, which cited a US official.

The unidentified airman was equipped with a pistol, a beacon and a secure communications device to co-ordinate with rescuers, The New York Times reported.

American commandos converging on the officer fired their

weapons to keep Iranian forces away from the rescue site, the Times said.

Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform that he had directed the US military to send "dozens of aircraft, armed with the most lethal weapons in the World, to retrieve" him.

"He sustained injuries, but he will be just fine," Trump wrote.

His second post however said the airman had been "seriously wounded," without elaborating.

Two of the planes meant to transport the airman and his rescuers to safety were stuck in a

remote base in Iran and had to be destroyed to prevent them from falling into Iranian hands, The New York Times and CBS reported.

US forces then used three other transport planes to carry the airman and his rescuers out of Iran.

The Iranian military said yesterday the US operation to rescue the airman had used an abandoned airport in southern Isfahan province.

Ebrahim Zolfaghari, spokesman for the Iranian military's central command, also said two US "C-130 military transport planes and two Black Hawk helicopters were destroyed."

The CIA reportedly launched a deception campaign to spread word inside Iran that US forces were moving the airman out of the country on the ground.

In his initial post, Trump confirmed the "successful rescue of another brave Pilot, yesterday," adding it was not disclosed to avoid jeopardising the second rescue mission.

"This is the first time in military memory that two US Pilots have been rescued, separately, deep in Enemy Territory," he wrote, adding that both operations were concluded "without a SINGLE American killed, or even wounded."

AFP has contacted the White House for further comment. The Pentagon directed AFP to Trump's social media post announcing the rescue.

## Artemis astronauts begin fifth day on historic Moon mission

AFP  
Houston

The four astronauts on NASA's Artemis 2 mission began their fifth day journeying to the Moon yesterday, after already taking in sights of the lunar surface never before seen by human eyes.

As they awoke for day five of the 10-day mission, their Orion spaceship was nearly 215,000 miles (346,000 kilometres) from Earth and 65,000 miles from the Moon, according to NASA's online dashboard.

Former astronaut Charlie Duke, who walked on the Moon in 1972 as part of the Apollo 16 mission, gave the ceremonial wakeup call to the crew.

"Below you on the Moon is a photo of my family. I pray it reminds you that we in America and all of the world are cheering you on. Thanks to you and the whole team on the ground for building on our Apollo legacy with Artemis," said the 90-year-old.

Earlier, in the wee hours of yesterday, the US space agency published an image taken by the Artemis crew, showing a distant Moon with the Orientale basin visible.

"This mission marks the first time the entire basin has been seen with human eyes," NASA said. The massive crater, which resembles a bulls-eye, had been photographed before by orbiting cameras.

Astronaut Christina Koch, speaking to Canadian children live from space, said the crew was most excited to see the basin — sometimes known as the Moon's "Grand Canyon."

"It's very distinctive and no human eyes previously had seen this crater until today, really, when we were privileged enough to see it," Koch said during the question-and-answer session hosted by the Canadian Space Agency.

The next major milestone is expected overnight Sunday into Monday, at which point the astronauts will enter the "lunar sphere



Artemis II mission astronauts (L-R) NASA's pilot Victor Glover, NASA commander Reid Wiseman, Canadian Space Agency's mission specialist Jeremy Hansen and NASA's mission specialist Christina Koch as they attend a "VIP call" with Canadian children from inside the Orion spacecraft while on way to the Moon. (AFP)

of influence," where the Moon's gravity will have stronger pull on the spacecraft than Earth's.

If all proceeds smoothly, as the Orion spacecraft whips around the Moon the astronauts — Americans Koch, Reid Wiseman and Victor Glover along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen — could set a record by venturing farther from Earth than any human before.

NASA said the Artemis crew has completed a manual piloting demonstration and reviewed their lunar flyby plan, including reviewing the surface features they must analyse and photograph during their time circling the Moon.

"We're focusing very much on the ecosystem, the life support system of the spacecraft," NASA chief Jared Isaacman said yesterday in a televised interview with CNN.

"This is the first time astronauts have ever flown on this spacecraft before. That's what we're most interested in getting data from," he added.

On the schedule for day five, ac-

ording to NASA, is testing of the astronauts' "survival" suits.

The bright orange suits are worn during takeoff and re-entry, but also emergency situations, such as cabin depressurisation.

The crew "will conduct a full sequence of suit operations, including putting on and pressurising their suits, performing leak checks, simulating seat entry, and assessing mobility and their ability to eat and drink," NASA said.

While the four astronauts will not touch down on the lunar surface, they are expected to break the record for the farthest distance from Earth during their pass around the Moon.

Over the next day, "they will be on the far side of the Moon, they will eclipse that record, and we're going to learn an awful lot about the spacecraft," said Isaacman.

The information will be "pretty paramount to set up for subsequent missions like Artemis 3 in 2027 and, of course, the lunar landing itself on Artemis 4 in 2028."

## Man charged with impaired driving after car slams into Louisiana crowd

Reuters  
New Iberia

Louisiana police have charged a man with impaired driving after his car slammed into a crowd during a community parade on Saturday, injuring several people, some critically.

Louisiana State Police said they arrested Todd Landry, 57, and charged him with driving while impaired, 18 counts of first-degree negligent injuring and careless operation following the incident in New Iberia, Louisiana.

He is also accused of having an open container with an alcoholic

beverage in the vehicle.

The incident occurred during a Lao New Year celebration, the Louisiana State Police said in a statement.

"Multiple pedestrians" were struck by the vehicle as Landry drove it, police said.

Earlier, the Iberia Parish Sheriff's Office said at least 15 people had been injured.

Landry showed signs of impairment, and a breath sample showed he had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of 0.137%, police said. The legal BAC limit for drivers in most US states is 0.08%.

Reuters could not determine if Landry had a lawyer.

Acadian Ambulance posted on

social media that it transported 13 people to the hospital. Two of them were airlifted, the ambulance service wrote on X.

Organisers of the Louisiana Lao New Year Festival said on Facebook they were cancelling Saturday evening's music concerts, as well as alcohol sales.

"We are profoundly saddened by the news of the incident near the festival grounds," the organisers said on Facebook. "We are praying for the victims and for their families during this difficult time."

The three-day festival held every Easter weekend includes live music, parades and other activities celebrating the Lao New Year.

## Keiko Fujimori leads Peru's presidential polls a week before election

Right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori holds first place in the polls one week before Peru's presidential election, according to three polls released yesterday. Since none of a record 35 presidential candidates are expected to win more than 50% of the vote, a runoff election is expected to take place on June 7. Some 16.8% of voters remain undecided, down from 23.9% previously, according to a Datum International poll. Keiko Fujimori, 50, the daughter of late president Alberto Fujimori who is on her fourth run for the job, leads with 14.5% according to Datum, up from a prior 13%.

Carlos Alvarez, a former comedian, moved up to second place with 10.9% from a prior 6.9%, it added. Far-right former Lima mayor Rafael Lopez Aliaga dropped to third place with 9.9%, down from a prior 11.7%, Datum said.

Two other polls, Ipsos Peru and the Peruvian Market Research Company, also showed Fujimori in the lead but disagreed over whether Alvarez or Lopez Aliaga ranked in second place.

While Alvarez has seen the fastest growth in support, Lopez Aliaga's close proximity keeps him in the running, according to Datum CEO Urpi Torrado.

"The battle is no longer for the undecided voters; it is between the candidates themselves. To gain ground, they have to take voters away from each other," Torrado said.

Other candidates polling in the higher single digits include centrist sociologist Jorge Nieto; Ricardo Belmont, another former Lima mayor; leftist lawmaker Roberto Sanchez; and progressive former central bank director Alfonso Lopez Chau. (Reuters)

Two other polls, Ipsos Peru and the Peruvian Market Research Company, also showed Fujimori in the lead but disagreed over whether Alvarez or Lopez Aliaga ranked in second place.

While Alvarez has seen the fastest growth in support, Lopez Aliaga's close proximity keeps him in the running, according to Datum CEO Urpi Torrado.

"The battle is no longer for the undecided voters; it is between the candidates themselves. To gain ground, they have to take voters away from each other," Torrado said.

Other candidates polling in the higher single digits include centrist sociologist Jorge Nieto; Ricardo Belmont, another former Lima mayor; leftist lawmaker Roberto Sanchez; and progressive former central bank director Alfonso Lopez Chau. (Reuters)

## Family buries Mexican who died in US migrant detention

AFP  
San Juan Chamula

Hundreds of people gathered Saturday for the burial of a young Mexican man who died in US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) custody, with family members denouncing the "fabricated" charges that led to his detention and death.

Royer Perez Jimenez, a 19-year-

old from the municipality of San Juan Chamula in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, died on March 16 at a detention centre in Florida.

After the family received his body on Thursday, his uncle Manuel Perez said Royer was a "hard worker" who immigrated at 15 to "triumph and help his family."

He was arrested in January on suspicion of resisting arrest and giving a false identity to law enforcement, but

Perez insists he was confused because he was not fluent in English.

"He was unjustly accused as a criminal... they fabricated a crime," Perez told AFP, while also expressing the family's doubts about the circumstances of his death.

ICE officials said Royer died of an apparent suicide but the official cause of death remained under investigation.

"What we want is a thorough investigation because unfortunately we

do not believe suicide was the cause of his death, rather we suspect it was probably a homicide," Perez said.

At least 14 migrants of various nationalities have died in ICE custody in 2026, according to officials, amid President Donald Trump's ongoing immigration crackdown.

There have been 14 Mexican nationals who have died after contact with US immigration authorities since Trump began his second term in January 2025.



Relatives and friends cry watching the coffin of Royer Perez Jimenez, during his funeral in the Tzotzil indigenous community of San Juan Chamula, Chiapas state, Mexico. (AFP)

## China executes French citizen convicted of drug trafficking

Reuters, AFP  
Beijing

China confirmed yesterday the execution of a French national sentenced to death in 2010 for drug trafficking, saying it did not discriminate against defendants on the basis of nationality, a day after Paris criticised the court handling of the case.

The Chinese embassy in France made the remarks in a brief statement on the execution of 62-year-old Chan Thao Phoumy after a 20-year stint in jail.

Chan Thao Phoumy, Frenchman born in Laos, was executed, "despite the efforts of the French authorities, including efforts to obtain a pardon on humanitarian grounds for our compatriot," said a ministry statement.

On Saturday, the French foreign ministry said it "particularly regretted" that Chan's defence was not allowed to attend the court's final hearing in violation of his rights.

The ministry reaffirmed France's opposition to

the death penalty "everywhere and in all circumstances" and called for "its universal abolition".

China's foreign ministry did not comment on the specifics of the case when asked on Sunday about the execution.

"Cracking down on drug-related crime is a shared responsibility of all countries," a statement provided to AFP said.

China, one of the world's toughest enforcers of laws against drug trafficking, has occasionally executed foreign nationals convicted of smuggling large amounts across its borders, but does not release statistics on executions.

Chan, born in the southern city of Guangzhou but later a naturalised French citizen, was one of 89 suspects arrested in 2005 for drug trafficking before being jailed for life in 2007.

He was handed the death penalty in 2010 by a court in his hometown for his role in a 100mn-yuan (\$15mn) drug operation that made, transported and dealt large amounts of crystal methamphetamine in China. Trafficking in much larger amounts of drug is generally what leads to execution.

## China willing to work with Russia to 'de-escalate' war

China's top diplomat told his Russian counterpart yesterday that he is willing to work together to "de-escalate" the war in the Middle East, Beijing's state media reported. Wang Yi told Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in a phone call that "China and Russia should uphold fairness on major issues of principle", state news agency Xinhua said, noting that the call came at Lavrov's request. Wang said that "the situation in the Middle East is still deteriorating and fighting is escalating", Xinhua

reported. He also reiterated China's call for an "immediate ceasefire" to the fighting triggered by US-Israeli strikes against Iran that began on February 28.

"China is willing to continue cooperating with Russia in the UN Security Council, communicating promptly on major issues and making efforts to de-escalate the situation and maintain regional peace and stability and global security," Xinhua quoted Wang as saying. (AFP)

## S Korea meets Gulf nations to shore up energy security

Reuters  
Seoul

South Korean Finance Minister Koo Yun-cheol met with envoys from Gulf countries to shore up energy security and the safety of Korean vessels near the Strait of Hormuz, the ministry said yesterday, as the escalating Iran war disrupts shipping.

In the meeting on Friday, Koo asked the Gulf Co-operation

Council ambassadors to ensure a steady supply of oil, liquefied natural gas, naphtha, urea and other critical resources, and to ensure the safety of Korean vessels and crew near the vital strait, the ministry said in a statement.

The envoys said South Korea is a "top priority" nation and pledged to communicate closely with Seoul to ensure stable supply, the statement said.

Like other Asian economies,

South Korea relies heavily on energy imports, including through the Strait of Hormuz, which was a conduit for 20% of the world's oil before the U.S. and Israel launched the war on February 28. Iran has since effectively shut down the waterway, driving up energy prices and stoking fears of a global recession.

The six GCC member states are Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain.

## Academy entrance ceremony

New students attend the National Defence Academy entrance ceremony in Yokosuka, Kanagawa Prefecture in Japan, yesterday. (AFP)



## Blood clots, burning eyes: pollution chokes north Thailand

AFP  
Pai, Thailand

After hours spent in the thick pollution-choking parts of northern Thailand, Pon Doikam gets home and blows her burning nose to find blood clots spattered across the tissue.

"It's suffocating," the 36-year-old coconut seller told AFP in Chiang Mai, a tourist destination among the areas affected by dangerous pollution levels this week.

"It feels like you're trapped in the smoke constantly." Seasonal agricultural burning, forest fires and weather patterns produce an annual pollution season across much of Southeast Asia.

But parts of northern Thailand are seeing haze that even hardened locals say is exceptional.

"I've lived in Chiang Mai since I was a kid, and this is the worst it has ever been," said Pon, who works outdoors all day.

"I don't have a choice," she added. "I have to come out, making a living day to day."

This week Thailand's second city, Chiang Mai, regularly topped

the IQAir monitor website's most polluted big cities list.

The situation is even worse to the west in Pai, a backpacker destination known for its greenery and mountains.

Some monitors there recorded levels of PM2.5 — particles small enough to enter the bloodstream and linked to diseases like cancer — of over 900 micrograms per cubic metre.

That is 60 times higher than the World Health Organization's recommended 24-hour average exposure. The area's mountainous geography makes it doubly vulnerable. Smoke is easily trapped, and the forested hillsides are hard to access when fires start.

### 'Very disappointed'

AFP saw multiple blazes burning on hillsides and along roads between Pai and Chiang Mai, lighting up patches of otherwise pitch-black countryside.

Volunteer firefighters like Maitree Nuanja do their best to bolster limited local capacity, relying heavily on donations such as drinking water and face masks.

"The fire control centre gave us 20 litres of fuel and lent us leaf

blowers. Once the season ends, we have to return them," he told AFP, standing before a blackened, ash-strewn stretch of land.

"Everyone can see how serious it is now. It's so dark and hazy you can't see a thing, and it's gone on for far too long."

He worries about his home next to a forest, and his health.

"We now live with this smoke, breathing it in every day."

On Wednesday, a volunteer firefighter was found dead from suspected exhaustion linked to heat and underlying health conditions, officials told AFP.

Pollution is particularly dangerous to those with existing health problems, the elderly and children.

In Chiang Mai, the government has installed hundreds of "dust-free rooms" — equipped with air purifiers and positive pressure systems that keep out the polluted air — including at the retirement facility that Watwilai Chaiwan now calls home.

The retired nurse, 82, said the pollution made her afraid to go out and aggravated her dizziness and migraines.

"It's a real problem for the eld-

## Agritourism in China



People view rapeseed flowers in a scenic area in Xinghua, in China's eastern Jiangsu province. (AFP)

## Indonesia lays to rest peacekeepers killed in Lebanon



Military pallbearers carry the coffin of fallen compatriot and UN peacekeeper Farizal Rhomadhon during his funeral at the Giripeni Heroes' Cemetery in Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta, yesterday. (AFP)

AFP  
Bandung, Indonesia

Three Indonesian peacekeepers killed in two separate explosions in southern Lebanon last week were laid to rest in their hometowns yesterday.

Peacekeeper Farizal Rhomadhon, 28, died when a projectile exploded on March 29 in southern Lebanon, where Israel and Hezbollah have been fighting since Lebanon was drawn into the Middle East war.

Two other blue helmets, Zulmi Aditya Iskandar, 33, and Muhammad Nur Ichwan, 26, died a day later when an explosion struck a logistics convoy of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil), also in southern Lebanon.

The deadly incidents sparked calls from Indonesian authorities for an investigation and security guarantees for peacekeeping forces.

The soldiers were buried on Sunday in coffins draped in the Indonesian flag during military

funerals with gun salutes.

Weeping family members scattered flower petals on their graves.

Zulmi was buried in a military cemetery in his hometown in Bandung, West Java, while Ichwan and Farizal were laid to rest in their respective hometowns in Central Java and Yogyakarta.

"I'm letting him go proudly. I accept it sincerely, even though it is not what I had hoped as a parent," Zulmi's father Iskandarudin told reporters after the funeral.

"I am certain that he's waiting for me in heaven."

Agus Subiyanto, the commander of the Indonesian National Armed Forces, told reporters that every fallen soldier will receive compensation in recognition of their service.

"We have prepared all the rights and entitlements that must be given to the fallen soldiers. Among these is compensation from the United Nations," Agus said after attending Zulmi's funeral.

The bodies of the three peacekeepers arrived in Jakarta on Sat-

urday, received with honours in a ceremony attended by President Prabowo Subianto.

Prabowo said on Instagram that Indonesians "strongly condemn every heinous act that undermines peace and causes the deaths of our nation's soldiers".

Less than a week after the explosions that killed the three peacekeepers, another blast took place at a UN facility near El Adesse on Friday, injuring three more Indonesian blue helmets.

Indonesia's Foreign Ministry called the attacks "unacceptable" and urged the UN Security Council "to immediately convene a meeting of troop-contributing countries to Unifil to conduct a review and take measures to enhance the protection of personnel serving with Unifil".

Foreign Minister Sugiono, who like many Indonesians only has one name, told reporters on Saturday that Indonesia wanted a thorough UN investigation, and demanded better security guarantees for peacekeeping soldiers.



A man wears a face mask on a heavily polluted day in Chiang Mai last week. (AFP)

"It affects everyone because these toxins and heavy metals enter the body directly," he told AFP, describing "burning eyes, phlegm, and nasal inflammation."

The mask is his only protection, he said. "We can't control the rest. That's up to the government."

The pollution is also increasingly a deterrent for tourists, who form a key pillar of the region's economy.

"Usually, Chiang Mai is buzzing in March and April, but this year, it's just quiet," said tuk-tuk driver

Chakkrawat Wichitchaisilp.

At a viewpoint overlooking Chiang Mai, the city skyline was almost entirely obscured, with only faint outlines of hills visible through a dense grey haze and a dim orange sun hanging in the sky.

"I've taken photos from this very spot, and it's just a beautiful blue sky — and you can see as far as the horizon," said Martin Astill, 57, a Briton who previously lived in Thailand and was visiting with his family. "This is shocking. Never seen it as bad as this."

## Bangladesh says suspected measles outbreak kills nearly 100 children

AFP  
Dhaka

Bangladesh said it suspected measles killed at least 98 children in the past three weeks, official data showed yesterday, with Dhaka ramping up vaccination efforts in the worst-affected areas.

Last week, Prime Minister Tarique Rahman directed two senior ministers to travel across the South Asian nation of 170m people in an effort to assess the scale of the crisis to help co-ordinate a response.

Health ministry data released yesterday showed that children aged between six months and five years old with suspected measles symptoms soared to 6,476.

"Compared with past years, the number of affected children is

higher, and the death toll is higher too," Halimur Rashid, director at the Communicable Disease Control, told AFP referring to the number in suspected cases.

The largest number of suspected cases on record was in 2005 at 25,934, according to World Health Organisation (WHO) data, though that number had significantly declined until this year.

Rashid attributed the potential outbreak to "multifactorial causes, including a shortage of vaccines".

Confirmed numbers of measles cases among the demographic stand at 826, with only 16 deaths, with experts saying in many cases, testing is either not done or patients die before testing can be done.

Measles is one of the world's most contagious diseases, according to the WHO, and is transmitted when a person coughs or sneezes.

While the disease can affect a person of any age, it is most common among children and can cause complications, including brain swelling and severe breathing problems.

Bangladesh has made significant advancements in vaccinations to tackle infectious diseases, but a measles drive due in June 2024 was delayed by a deadly uprising that same year that toppled the autocratic government of Sheikh Hasina.

Most Bangladeshi children receive a vaccine at nine months, although many infected in the recent outbreak had been six months old, officials added.

Mahmudur Rahman, chief of the National Verification Committee of Measles and Rubella, said that "we committed to reducing the number to zero by December 2025 but failed to achieve the target due

to poor vaccination programmes".

Dhaka has identified 30 of the most affected areas in the region and has started a vaccination programme. Health Minister Sardar Shakhawat Hossain Bakul said the vaccination drive will cover the "worst affected areas" before being expanded to other regions.

Tajul Islam A Bari, a former official at the Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) and a public health expert, told AFP that although funds had been allocated for vaccine purchases, authorities had failed to procure them.

"Now we see the result — the situation is scary," Bari added.

The WHO estimates as many as 95,000 measles deaths globally every year, mostly among unvaccinated or under-vaccinated children under the age of five, according to its latest statistics.

## Nepal announces two-day weekends to fight energy crunch

AFP  
Kathmandu

Nepal said yesterday it was cutting the working week from six days to five for the civil service and educational institutions to cope with the energy crisis caused by the Middle East war.

Saturday had until now been the only day off each week for such workers in the Himalayan nation.

Government spokesperson Sasmit Pokharel told reporters the two-day weekend would come into effect this week.

"Given the present uncomfortable situation caused by fuel supply, the government and educational institutions remain closed for two days," Pokharel said.

Government offices will now

operate from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

Pokharel said the government was also exploring legal measures to convert petrol and diesel vehicles to electric power but gave no further details.

Nepal, a landlocked nation of 30 million people, relies almost entirely on India for its fossil fuel supplies, leaving it exposed to international price shocks.

It nearly doubled aviation fuel prices on Thursday, while the state-owned Nepal Oil Corporation said it had been incurring heavy losses on other petroleum products despite some price hikes.

Nepal began selling half-filled cooking gas cylinders last month to discourage hoarding and panic buying, with officials urging the public to cut back on fuel use.

## Tonga's debt to China hinders rebuild four years on from volcanic eruption

AFP  
Nuku'alofa

More than four years on from one of the most powerful volcanic eruptions in history, Tonga is struggling to improve its infrastructure as it pays off a massive Chinese loan.

When Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai erupted on January 15, 2022, the blast could be heard as far away as Alaska and sent a powerful tsunami crashing into Tonga's main island some 65 kilometres (40 miles) away, killing three people.

Hundreds of homes were destroyed, businesses flattened and roads washed out, while most water supplies were left undrinkable as six inches of ash fell on the Tongan islands.

Tongan Prime Minister Lord Fakafanua said last month that most government programmes to rebuild were complete, but conceded there were "some leftovers" his government needed to finish.

The damage caused by the tsunami remains obvious in parts of Tonga.

Debris from homes and businesses knocked down by the waves remains scattered near beaches on Tongatapu's west coast, and on the nearby 'Eua island, tourists are encouraged to bring cash with them from the capital, Nuku'alofa, as ATMs and banking services have not been restored.

But as much as Lord Fakafanua may want to address these issues, he told AFP his government has stopped taking loans.

Budget documents show a \$67.36 million loan owed to China's



A general view shows the site of the under construction Fanga'uta Lagoon Bridge during a visit by New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in Nuku'alofa. (AFP/File Photo)

Exim Bank, taken out to rebuild Nuku'alofa's central business district after the 2006 riots.

The initial loan, taken out in 2008, was for \$55 million, but with interest, the debt reached more than \$100 million by 2024.

Tonga's government has committed to paying down its debt by 2030, and in the year to June 2025, it paid China \$17.7 million as part of total debt repayments of \$29.4 million.

The repayments represent a large share of government spending in the small nation where the annual infrastructure budget was just \$10.1 million.

The health budget for the same year was \$24.9 million, boosted by one-off funding provided by donors, including New Zealand and Australia, to redevelop Nuku'alofa's hospital and nursing buildings.

The health budget is expected

to be significantly lower this year, despite the country's dire rates of obesity, diabetes and non-communicable diseases.

"We could use that money for other things," Lord Fakafanua told AFP when asked if the debt to China hurt Tonga's health and infrastructure needs.

"But Tonga committed to signing a loan agreement, and we intend to pay off what we signed to do."

While Tonga shows fiscal restraint, China wants to spread its influence in the Pacific by offering loans and building infrastructure.

During a November visit to Beijing by Tongan King Tupou VI, President Xi Jinping said China was ready to "provide assistance to Tonga's economic and social development" and said he wanted Tonga's "independence and sovereignty" to be safeguarded.

Lord Fakafanua said his country will not be accepting any more Chinese loans. "We're currently in a position where we're not taking any more loans, we're not taking any more debt," Lord Fakafanua told AFP.

"We're being a lot more clever with our fiscal management," he added.

According to Tonga's budget documents, the country faces significant risk from its loan to China, with "refinancing risk and exchange rate risk being the primary concerns".

The International Monetary Fund says Tonga is at high risk of debt distress.

Tonga has received several grants from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to build much-needed infrastructure.

That includes the \$97 million Fanga'uta Lagoon Bridge project currently under construction — the largest infrastructure project in Tonga's history.

The 720-metre-long bridge will connect Nuku'alofa, with the southern side of the main island, Tongatapu. More than 120 Tongans are working on the project, which will provide a new evacuation path for Nuku'alofa in the event of a tsunami or flooding caused by tropical cyclones.

New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon viewed the bridge site during his two-day visit to Tonga in March, speaking to the New Zealand firm McConnell Dowell, which is building the bridge.

Luxon said he supports Tonga's focus on fiscal restraint, and it "goes without saying" that New Zealand was ready to help when needed.

AFP  
Kathmandu

Nepal court extended the detention of former prime minister KP Sharma Oli and his ex-home minister for a further five days yesterday as investigators examine their alleged roles in a deadly crackdown on protests last year.

Police arrested Oli, 74, and former home minister Ramesh Lekhak on March 28, a day after Prime Minister Balendra Shah was sworn in following the first elections since the September uprising that toppled Oli's government.

Authorities are investigating their alleged involvement in the crackdown on demonstrations that killed at least 76 people.

Neither man has been formally charged and both deny responsibility for the violence.

"The court has granted five days' extension," Kathmandu District Court information officer Deepak Kumar Shrestha said.

It was the third extension of their detention and the court said more investigation was needed after statements were given by Oli and Lekhak.

"It seems reasonable to keep the defendants in custody for the purpose of the aforementioned investigation," it said.

Oli has been in hospital since soon after his arrest for what police described as a procedural medical check-up, adding

that he suffers from heart and kidney problems.

Nepal's Supreme Court is also reviewing a petition filed by Oli's wife claiming his detention was unlawful.

The arrests of Oli and Lekhak came after an inquiry commission recommended prosecuting the four-time ex-prime minister and other officials for failing to stop security forces from opening fire on demonstrators.

**"It seems reasonable to keep the defendants in custody for the purpose of the aforementioned investigation"**

The commission's report said statements given by the two men suggesting they did not know about the violence were part of a bid to shift responsibility and amounted to "criminal negligence".

Oli's CPN-UML party has described the arrests as "a vengeful act" and called for protests.

The unrest began in early over a brief social media ban but tapped into longstanding anger over economic hardship.

It spread nationwide the following day as parliament and government offices were set ablaze, resulting in the collapse of Oli's government.

Shah, a 35-year-old rapper-turned-politician, won a sweeping election victory on a platform of youth-driven political change and defeated Oli in his own constituency.

## PM Starmer slams London event for booking Kanye West, sponsor quits

AFP  
London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has expressed concern about planned concerts in London by US rapper Kanye West, who has a history of anti-semitic outbursts.

Campaigners against anti-semitism added their voices to the protests yesterday and Pepsi, sponsors of the festival concerned, pulled out of the event.

The disgraced 48-year-old hip-hop star — now known as Ye — is due to play three nights at the Wireless festival in London in July as part of a European comeback tour.

Starmer told *The Sun* newspaper on Saturday it was

"deeply concerning Kanye West has been booked to perform at Wireless despite his previous anti-semitic remarks and celebration of Nazism".

He added that "anti-semitism in any form is abhorrent and must be confronted firmly".

A spokesperson for event sponsor Pepsi told AFP yesterday that the brand "has decided to withdraw its sponsorship of Wireless Festival", without giving a reason.

The festival's operating company, Live Nation, has not so far responded to a request for comment from AFP.

The appearance of West was announced by festival organisers on social media last month, prompting criticism

from Jewish organisations and London Mayor Sadiq Khan.

Campaign Against Antisemitism, a British charity, yesterday urged Starmer not to be a "bystander" and to ban West from entering the country.

"Surely this is a clear case," the charity said on X, suggesting West could be banned as a non-citizen whose presence is not "conducive to the public good".

West's European tour has already provoked controversy. In France, the mayor of Marseille said he was "not welcome" for a concert there in June.

West has expressed regret over his anti-semitic rants, which he blamed on his bipolar disorder.

## ME war hits Britain's fish and chip shops

AFP  
London

Before war erupted in the Middle East, fisherman Peter Bruce spent about £5,000 (\$6,600) on diesel to trawl the North Sea for haddock and cod, the main species used in fish and chips.

"Now, the last trip we spent about £10,000," he told AFP, despite his crew reducing the speed of the boat to save fuel.

Bruce, whose boat, Budding Rose, is based in the Scottish port of Peterhead, estimates the extra costs over a year could exceed £100,000.

It was not yet clear whether the rise in energy prices would have an immediate effect on the price of fish, Bruce said. But he is worried that the hike in fuel prices will hit customer demand for the classic British meal that was already facing challenges on numerous fronts.

Bruce's catch is sold at auction in Peterhead before being transported around Britain and abroad. He fears that customers "will stop buying so much fish and chips and they'll stop going out for meals so much".

The classic recipe for fish and chips — white fish deep-fried in batter, chips, and mushy peas, often with tartare sauce on the side — dates back to the 1860s.

Fish and chip shops usually serve nothing else and most are take-away.

There were around 10,500 fish and chip shops in the UK in 2024 — roughly the same as a decade earlier — according to Seafish, a public body supporting the industry.

This was more than the total number of outlets of the nine main



A chef poses with a plate of fish and chips at Poppies fish and chip restaurant in east London. (AFP/File Photo)

fastfood dining brands — including KFC, McDonald's and Domino's Pizzeria, it boasted.

Easter is a particularly busy time for the sector since many Britons eat fish on the Good Friday holiday.

Andrew Crook, who owns a fish and chip shop in Lancashire, north-western England, told AFP the number of customers can more than double on Good Fridays. Nonetheless, "we're definitely under pressure," said Crook, president of the National Federation of Fish Fryers. He blamed several factors. "We've got extremely high fish prices, we've got energy prices; wages go up continually," he lamented.

The war in the Middle East, now in its second month, caused a record monthly rise in petrol and diesel prices in the United Kingdom in March was caused by the conflict, according

to data from the Royal Automobile Club (RAC), a British auto services company.

But there are other difficulties. Stricter fishing rules to conserve species, as well as the war in Ukraine — Russia previously supplied 30 to 40% of the country's fish — had weakened the sector in Britain already, says Crook, and forced it to raise prices.

Another concern is the soaring price of fertilisers and its impact on production of potatoes and oil seeds. Some 30% of the world's fertiliser normally passes through the Strait of Hormuz, which is now almost closed.

Back in 2022, small businesses were worried about a shortage of sunflower oil, since Ukraine was the world's leading exporter of the seeds; now, they are increasingly concerned about the energy cost of heating their cooking oils.

## Britain woos Anthropic expansion

Reuters  
London

Britain is trying to tempt Anthropic to expand its presence in the country, as it seeks to capitalise on a fight between the maker of artificial intelligence app Claude and the US Defense Department, the *Financial Times* said yesterday.

British government proposals for Anthropic range from an office expansion in London to a dual stock listing, the newspaper reported, citing people with knowledge of the plans.

Anthropic and Britain's Department of Sci-

ence, Innovation and Technology did not immediately respond to Reuters requests for comment.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office has supported the department's work, which will be put to Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei when he visits in late May, the *FT* said.

The US government blacklisted Anthropic, designating the company a national-security supply-chain risk after it refused to allow the military to use AI chatbot Claude for US surveillance or autonomous weapons.

A US judge temporarily blocked the blacklisting, and the AI startup has a second lawsuit pending over the supply-chain risk designation.



**CHAIRMAN**

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

**Deputy Managing Editor**

Kamran Rehmat

- ✉ P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar
- ✉ editor@gulf-times.com
- ☎ 44350478 (News),
- ☎ 44466404 (Sport),
- ☎ 44466636 (Home delivery)
- ☎ 44350474
- 📘 facebook.com/gulftimes
- 🐦 twitter.com/gulftimes\_Qatar
- 📷 instagram.com/gulftimes
- 📺 youtube.com/GulftimesVideos



## Fuel prices challenge Milei's free-market gamble amid oil shock

The global surge in fuel prices is exposing how unevenly South America is positioned to absorb the shock, with Argentina's radical free-market experiment under President Javier Milei facing particular pressure.

Among Argentina's neighbours, import-dependent Chile has been among the hardest hit by fallout from the US-Israeli conflict with Iran. Fuel prices there are set to jump as much as 30% for gasoline and 60% for diesel after the government was forced to unwind its price-stabilisation scheme, citing strained public finances. In Brazil, state-run energy firm Petrobras this week raised jet fuel prices by about 55%. Central bank officials have warned that the oil shock could weigh on inflation even as Brazil's status as a net oil exporter offers some cushion. Peru has also felt the strain, with inflation spiking in March amid higher fuel prices and domestic supply disruptions. Uruguay stands out as an exception, according to a Citi analysis, due to its providing fewer direct energy subsidies and having adequate international reserves. The price surge is hitting Argentines' transport, food and household costs, undermining Milei's argument that he is winning a fight with what had been runaway inflation through deep spending cuts and deregulation. "Prices are up and salaries stay very low," said Agustin Pecora, a construction worker on a railway project in Buenos Aires province.

In what has been posing a challenge to Milei's inflation-slayer narrative, monthly inflation has stalled near 3% for nine months, or about 33% annually, and private forecasters were already raising 2026 estimates before crude prices surged in February. "The Iran shock has arrived at the

### Milei's inflation fight faces test from oil shock, despite Vaca Muerta shale improving Argentina's energy balance

relaxed gasoline quality standards and postponed a tax hike on fuel, though Bazan said the impact will be limited.

An Argentine government source told Reuters that no further measures were being contemplated and energy subsidies must remain capped at 0.5% of GDP this year to meet fiscal targets.

At the centre of the dilemma is state energy firm YPF, which dominates Argentina's fuel market and has so far raised prices more cautiously than global benchmarks. "If oil is at \$120 or \$150 per barrel, then YPF's shareholders will pressure management to maximise returns," said financial advisor Paula Bujia. Despite repeated assurances that price pressures would be transitory, YPF late on Wednesday introduced a 45-day buffer on gasoline prices, aiming to shield households from volatility in global markets.

"During this period, YPF will not pass on the impact of new fluctuations in Brent prices to consumers," Chief Executive Horacio Marin told local media, adding that the measure was "not a price cap" and prices would remain constant. Argentina's position is structurally stronger than a decade ago. Development of the Vaca Muerta shale formation has turned a nearly \$7bn energy deficit in 2013 into a surplus. Still, the country remains reliant on natural gas imports during peak winter demand, which begins in June. The experience elsewhere in the region underscores the political risks Milei faces. Fuel hikes in Chile have already triggered protests, denting the popularity of freshly inaugurated President Jose Antonio Kast.

"A fuel price shock impacts an electorate lacking financial leeway, turning economic discomfort into a political grievance," Machado said - one that could "provide the glue" for Argentina's fragmented opposition ahead of the 2027 presidential race. (Reuters)

**To Advertise**

✉ gtadv@gulf-times.com

**Display**

☎ 44466621 ☎ 44418811

**Classified**

☎ 44466609 ☎ 44418811

✉ gtcad@gulf-times.com

**Subscription**

✉ circulation@gulf-times.com

© 2026 Gulf Times. All rights reserved

## Portside morning catch



This aerial image shows fishing boats moored to unload the morning's catch at a port in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, yesterday. (AFP)

# Why Qatar stands out as a market built for long term

- Qatar thrives amid regional change and uncertainty
- Long-term relationships and understanding are key to success
- Strategic vision drives Qatar's market appeal and stability



By Neil Wilson  
Doha

Having lived and worked in the Gulf for over 25 years, I can say with some confidence that this past year has witnessed the most significant period of change I have experienced in that time.

The pace, the complexity, and the broader geopolitical context have combined to create a moment of genuine inflection for the region. And yet, within that, Qatar stands out as a market that has been deliberately preparing for precisely this kind of environment.

In boardrooms across Europe, there is a familiar question: where next? Which markets offer not just growth, but a degree of certainty in an increasingly unpredictable world?

Qatar is often part of that conversation and rightly so. It combines financial strength, political stability, and a clear sense of direction. But it is also, in my experience, one of the more frequently misunderstood markets.

There is a tendency among some international firms to assume that Qatar is straightforward. That if you have succeeded elsewhere in the Gulf, you can replicate the model here with minimal adjustment. You cannot.

Qatar is not a difficult market in the conventional sense, but it is a deliberate one. Decisions are thoughtful, grounded in consensus and long-term vision. And relationships are not a box to tick along the way; they are central to how business is done.

For companies approaching the market with a short-term mindset, that can be frustrating. For those willing to take a longer view, it is precisely what makes Qatar attractive.

Part of that strength lies in fundamentals. Qatar was built on a combination of substantial natural resources, prudent fiscal management, and a state apparatus that has historically taken a measured, strategic and pragmatic approach to development. The result is a country with deep financial reserves, a strong sovereign balance sheet, and the ability to invest counter-cyclically when required.

But financial strength alone

does not explain resilience. Equally important is the regulatory and institutional environment that underpins it. Qatar has, over time, developed a legal and regulatory framework that is both increasingly sophisticated and aligned with international standards, particularly in areas such as financial services, dispute resolution, and foreign investment. Entities such as the Qatar Financial Centre and a growing ecosystem of specialised regulatory bodies have helped create a platform that balances openness with oversight.

In many respects, Qatar has become a reference point for how a small, resource-rich state can leverage its wealth with foresight. Its regulatory evolution, strategic investment in human capital, and steady diplomacy all demonstrate a model of governance that others in the region increasingly look toward.

For international businesses, this matters. In a region where regulatory approaches can vary significantly, Qatar offers a degree of clarity and consistency that is often underestimated. Processes are designed to ensure consistency and quality over speed - a reflection of Qatar's preference for deliberation over haste.

Requirements are clear. And once established, there is a level of institutional continuity that provides confidence over the long term.

Much of this comes back to the country's broader direction of travel. Qatar National Vision 2030 is often referenced, but not always fully appreciated. It is not simply a policy framework; it is actively shaping how institutions think, how projects are prioritised, and how partnerships are assessed.

Increasingly, the conversation has moved beyond capability. Of course, delivery still matters. But the more important question now is whether a business adds something meaningful. Whether it aligns with national priorities around diversification, the sustainability, and human capital. The companies that do well

here tend to understand that instinctively. They take the time to get to grips with the local context. They resist the temptation to apply a standard "Gulf strategy." And they invest in relationships in a way that is genuine rather than purely transactional.

This all sits against a more complex regional backdrop. The current escalation involving the United States, Israel, and Iran has introduced a level of geopolitical tension not seen in years, with direct military exchanges, pressure on key energy routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, and wider economic ripple effects already being felt.

For businesses, this reinforces an important point: stability in the Gulf cannot be taken for granted, but nor should it be misunderstood. Markets like Qatar have demonstrated a capacity for resilience, institutional continuity, and measured decision making, even in periods of regional uncertainty. If anything, the current environment places a greater premium on credibility, long-term thinking, and trusted partnerships.

The post-World Cup period has only sharpened this dynamic. The infrastructure phase, at least at the pace we saw previously, has largely given way to something more targeted. The focus now is on making assets work harder, developing specific sectors, and ensuring that growth is sustainable.

That creates opportunity, certainly, but it also raises expectations.

It is no longer enough to simply be present in the region. Businesses need to demonstrate how they are relevant to Qatar's next phase, whether that is through knowledge transfer, innovation, or supporting the development of local capability. This is particularly evident

in sectors such as education, healthcare, technology, and advanced services, where the emphasis is increasingly on quality, localisation, and long-

term value creation.

There is also a reputational dimension that should not be overlooked. Qatar has, over the past decade, built a distinct international profile across investment, diplomacy, media, and sport. For companies operating here, that visibility cuts both ways. Alignment matters and so does how you communicate your role within the market.

One of the more common mistakes I have seen is treating Qatar as interchangeable with its neighbours. There are similarities, of course, but the differences are significant, and they matter. Each Gulf market has its own rhythm, its own institutional culture, and its own priorities. Ignoring that in Qatar is a quick way to lose traction.

None of this is to suggest the market is closed off. Far from it. Qatar remains open, well capitalised, and actively interested in international expertise. The direction is outward looking, and the ambition is clear.

But the terms are evolving. Success here is less about how quickly you can enter, and more about how seriously you take the market once you are in.

For those prepared to invest the time and effort, the rewards are real. Qatar offers a stable platform, access to long-term opportunities, and the chance to be part of something more substantive than a simple commercial transaction.

Qatar's story today is one of deliberate strength - financial, institutional, and strategic. In a region that continues to evolve at pace, it offers a model of calm confidence and purpose. For global businesses seeking long-term partnership over short-term gain, Qatar is not just an attractive destination; it is becoming a benchmark for how emerging markets can combine ambition with stability.

• The writer is the Managing Director of Sovereign PPG Qatar, part of the Sovereign Group, a leading corporate service provider across the GCC.

**The Foundations of Resilience**



**Financial and Fiscal Strength**  
Backed by deep natural resource reserves and a strong sovereign balance sheet.



**Sophisticated Regulatory Framework**  
Aligned with international standards through entities like the Qatar Financial Centre.



**Institutional Continuity**  
Established processes ensure consistency and quality over mere speed of entry.

**Navigating the Market**



**National Vision 2030**  
A framework actively shaping project prioritisation, sustainability, and human capital development.



**Beyond Transactional Business**  
Success requires investing in genuine relationships rather than a "box-ticking" exercise.



**Local Value Creation**  
Businesses must demonstrate relevance through knowledge transfer and supporting local capability.

## Explosives found near pipeline in Serbia that carries Russian gas

Reuters  
Budapest/Belgrade

Powerful explosives were found near a pipeline in Serbia that carries Russian gas to Hungary, the leaders of the two countries said yesterday, prompting political scrutiny in Hungary at a sensitive time days before a national election.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic had informed him by phone about the discovery, which they said had taken place outside the town of Kanjiza, near Hungary's border with Serbia.

"Our units found an explosive of devastating power," Vucic, a close ally of Orban, said in a post on Instagram. "I told PM Orban that we would keep him updated on the investigation."

They did not give further details of the explosives or publish images of the discovery on a section of pipeline linked to the Turkstream system, which carries Russian gas to Turkey and then to Central Europe.

Officials in Budapest and Belgrade did not respond to requests

for comment about the incident and questions surrounding it, which comes a week before pivotal elections on April 12 in Hungary.

Nationalist Orban is fighting to hold onto his more than 16-year grip on power in the election, with his party trailing the opposition Tisza party in polls.

A former Hungarian intelligence official told Reuters there had been discussions in Hungarian security circles over the past days about a precise plan for a "false-flag" operation impacting the pipeline in Serbia as part of an effort to influence the Hungarian vote.

Tisza leader Peter Magyar also raised doubts about the leaders' statements, saying they appeared aimed at boosting Orban's electoral prospects.

"Several people have publicly indicated that something will 'accidentally' happen at the gas pipeline in Serbia at Easter, a week before the Hungarian elections. And so it happened," Magyar said in a statement.

Orban said in a Facebook post he had called a defence council meeting yesterday to discuss the incident on the pipeline, which transports Russian gas through the

Balkans to Central and Eastern Europe.

"According to information that we have...there was an act of sabotage prepared," Orban said after the meeting, adding that both countries have strengthened the protection of the pipeline.

Without directly blaming Ukraine for the incident in Serbia, Orban said "Ukraine has been for years trying to cut off Europe from Russian energy."

"The Russian section of Turkstream is also under continuous military attack. Ukraine's efforts pose a life-threatening danger to Hungary," he added.

Orban in February scaled up security around energy infrastructure in the country by dispatching troops after what he said were plans by Ukraine to disrupt the Hungarian energy system — charges Kyiv denied.

Ukraine's foreign ministry strongly rejected what it said were attempts to link Kyiv to the explosives.

"Ukraine has nothing to do with this," foreign ministry spokesman Heorhii Tykhyi said on X. "Most probably, a Russian false-flag operation as part of Moscow's heavy interference in

Hungarian elections."

Budapest has also been in a dispute with Ukraine over a halt in oil supplies via the Druzhba pipeline. Orban's Fidesz party has sought to associate opposition leader Peter Magyar with Brussels and Ukraine, suggesting that voting for his Tisza party means voting for tanks and war.

Hungary is an outlier in the European Union for maintaining ties with Moscow, which voiced support for Hungary over yesterday's incident and suggested that Ukraine was responsible.

"(Ukraine) wants to deprive Hungary of its sovereignty," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova told the TASS news agency, saying it was using energy to do that, "by trying to prevent Hungary from receiving high-quality and reasonably priced resources."

Moscow has repeatedly denied interfering in Hungary's election.

Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said in a post on Facebook that "in the past few days and weeks, the Ukrainians organised an oil blockade against us, and then tried to put us under a total energy blockade... And now we have to today's incident."

## Ships near Italy rescue 32 migrants, charities say



This photo taken on April 4, 2026 and handed out yesterday by German NGO Sea-Watch, shows migrants seated on a capsized boat off Libya. (AFP)

Reuters  
Rome

Two merchant vessels near the Italian coast recovered the bodies of two migrants and rescued 32 survivors from a boat trying to cross to Europe from Libya on Easter weekend, rescue charities said, citing the survivors as saying 71 others were lost at sea.

The victims were transferred to an Italian coast guard patrol boat and brought to the Italian island of Lampedusa, said the groups Mediterranean Saving Humans and Sea-Watch.

Italy's interior ministry said it had no comment on the report. The Italian Coast Guard did not immediately respond to a re-

quest for comment. Sunday is Easter, a major holiday in Italy.

Survivors said their ship had originally included 105 passengers, with 71 lost at sea, said the rescue charities.

Video released from Sea-Watch showed about a dozen people clinging to a capsized orange boat as it was approached by the merchant vessel.

Bad weather has roiled the Mediterranean this year, limiting the number of departures from North Africa and posing grave problems for those who have managed to put to sea.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) estimates that at least 683 have died in the central Mediterranean this year, one of the highest tolls since 2014.

## European drivers choke on rising diesel prices

AFP  
Paris

The price of diesel fuel has rocketed by more than 30% across Europe since the start of the Middle East war highlighting the continent's dependence on imported energy and the lingering prominence of diesel on the car market.

The Easter holiday weekend across Europe is expected to see a surge in demand with queues at petrol stations.

Diesel has been worse hit than other fuels, and was already under pressure before the war. Experts say its cost will rise further — with a knock-on effect on inflation — as long as trade through the Strait of Hormuz remains blocked.

The per-barrel price of diesel rose above \$200 in Europe on Thursday, the highest since March 2022 when Russia's invasion of Ukraine shook markets.

Diesel is ubiquitous in Europe. While electric cars are making inroads in new sales, diesel is still the most widely used fuel. Trucks, farm tractors, buses, building site machinery and even shipping depend on it.

Diesel accounted for 86% of transport fuel sales in Latvia in 2024, 73% in France and 66% in Germany, according to FuelsEurope, a trade body which repre-



Prices per litre for diesel fuel are displayed at a petrol station in Toulouse, southwestern France. (AFP)

sents the refining industry.

The international supply-and-demand balance for diesel "was much tighter than the gasoline balance going into the war and the subsequent market response has been one of strong gasoil (diesel) price escalation while gasoline's price response has been somewhat muted," Susan Bell, a commodity markets specialist at Rystad Energy, a consultancy, told AFP.

In Britain, France and other countries, the price of diesel has risen more than 30% since the first US-Israeli air strikes on Iran and resulting choking of the Strait of Hormuz.

In France, the price of regular petrol has gone up by just 17%, according to government statistics consulted by AFP.

The Netherlands has the most

expensive diesel in Europe at more than \$2.80 a litre, according to research by the RAC, a British motoring organisation. That is about 20% more than Italy, the cheapest country surveyed by the RAC.

Diesel was for a long time cheaper than petrol. At the end of the 20th century, governments and car firms encouraged drivers to buy diesel-engine cars. But not enough refineries were built to keep up with demand for the fuel and in recent years governments have imposed higher taxes on it.

The European Union is now a net exporter of petrol, mainly to the US and Africa, but an importer of diesel.

Russia was Europe's main source of diesel until Moscow's all-out invasion of Ukraine in 2022 set off international sanctions.

Now EU nations look to India, Turkey, the US and Saudi Arabia for supplies.

Middle East states provided more than half of Europe's diesel in 2025 (554,000 barrels a day out of 1.06mn), according to Rystad Energy. About one third of this passed through the Strait of Hormuz.

Europe is now struggling to find alternatives.

Slovakia last month ordered a 30-day restriction on diesel sales while foreigners have to pay more for the fuel there. Ireland and Spain have temporarily cut the taxes they charge on the fuel.

"Refineries are working at full capacity," said an expert at French energy giant TotalEnergies which has six refineries across Europe.

"Even with maximum adjustment to our settings, the room for manoeuvre remains minimal" for TotalEnergies, he added.

Bell said that if there is a shortage of regular petrol then Europe can cut its exports. But that doesn't work for diesel.

"The most efficient and economical solution for Europe would be to source its diesel from Russia," said Bell.

The EU will not be lifting its sanctions anytime soon however.

Postponing refinery maintenance, using strategic reserves, and reducing consumption appear to be the only other ways to partially address the imbalance, she said.

## German men must inform military of foreign stays

AFP  
Berlin

A new German military service law will require most young men to inform authorities when leaving the country for long periods, with a newspaper report on the little-noticed provision prompting widespread debate.

The defence ministry confirmed to AFP on Saturday that men from the age of 17 "are required to obtain prior approval" from the German armed forces for foreign stays lasting longer than three months.

Approval will be granted as long as "no specific service as a soldier is expected during the period in question," a ministry spokesman told AFP.

"The background and guiding principle of this regulation is to ensure a reliable and informative military service record in case of need," the spokesman added.

The ministry is drafting exemptions to the exit permit requirement and a system for approving requests, aiming to "avoid unnecessary bureaucracy," the spokesman said.

A *Frankfurter Rundschau* newspaper report on the regulation on Friday prompted widespread social media discussion, with many people questioning whether it was real and why there was no public debate when military service reforms were proposed last year.

The new service law, aiming to attract more young Germans to volunteer for military training, went into effect in January.

Military service remains voluntary under the law. Germany suspended conscription in 2011.

But all 18-year-old men are now required to fill out a questionnaire about their interest in military service and submit to medical checks if requested.

Germany has agreed to substantially increase the size of its full time and reserve army force as part of Nato defence plans.

European Nato allies have dramatically increased defence spending since Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

## Ukrainian drones attacked cargo vessel that sank

A cargo ship carrying wheat sank in the Sea of Azov after coming under attack from Ukrainian drones, a Russian-installed official said yesterday, leaving one person dead and two missing.

Vladimir Saldo, Moscow-installed leader of the Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine's Kherson region, said the attack occurred on Friday but crew members were unable to make known what had happened to them until yesterday.

"It became known that the reason for the sinking of the Volgo-Balt in the Sea of Azov was a terrorist attack by the Kyiv regime," Saldo wrote on Telegram.

He said the crew abandoned ship and was only able to reach shore yesterday near the village of Strikove in Kherson region. He said an aide to the captain had died and two people were unaccounted for, adding that an investigation into the incident was under way. The captain was recovering in a hospital. "This is, unfortunately, not the first instance of Ukraine attacking a merchant ship in neutral waters. There will be a response to this crime," Saldo said.

In an earlier post, he said nine crew members had been found alive on the shore — all Russian nationals. (Reuters)

## Thousands rally against racism in Paris suburb

AFP  
Paris

Several thousand people marched through the streets of Paris' largest suburb on Saturday to denounce racism after the town's newly elected black mayor was subject to disparaging comments on social media and national television shows.

Bally Bagayoko, 52, of the hard-left France Unbowed (LFI) party, was elected mayor of Saint-Denis in the first round of municipal elections on March 15.

The Frenchman born to Malian parents and brought up in the neighbourhood was almost immediately targeted by racist disinformation and remarks, some aired on one of the country's most watched news channels.

Demonstrators gathered on the steps of Saint-Denis's town hall, a town of 150,000 is



Protesters take part in a rally against racism convened by Saint-Denis Mayor Bally Bagayoko in the centre of Saint-Denis, on the outskirts of Paris. (AFP)

one of France's most diverse, with a large immigrant population. Music bands, trades unions and associations joined the demonstration.

"We come to state firmly and definitively our visceral attachment to the values of the Republic embodied by those who are heirs of immigration," said Bagayoko.

He attacked what he said were "failing, sometimes even complicit institutions".

Also present was LFI leader Jean-Luc Melenchon. He denounced "a sickening wave of racism coming from the political and media elites who, without reservation, without restraint, have displayed their contempt for a part of our people."

Aurore Berge, the government's minister against discrimination did not attend the event.

"If there is one minister who should have been there, it is her," said Bagayoko when he was asked about her absence — but he did thank her for having reached out by telephone to express her solidarity.

## Spain rethinks how to turn tide against beach erosion

AFP  
Calafell

Every winter, storms wipe out swathes of the picturesque Spanish coast, undoing summer reconstruction work and threatening the foundations of the country's vital tourism industry.

Faced with a futile cycle of damage followed by reparations of artificial material, some beach holiday destinations are now turning to natural solutions in a bid to save their landscapes and livelihoods.

In the northeastern region of Catalonia, Montgat beach has all

but disappeared — rocks that had long remained buried by extensive stretches of sand have been laid bare by the elements.

Bruno Cambre enjoys fishing with friends on the tiny patch of surviving sand, planting his rods, a table and a refrigerator next to small homes of former fishermen.

"Four or five years ago, you would go to these beaches and the sand would stretch far, for 500 or 700 metres. Now there are no more than 20 (metres) left," the 37-year-old told AFP. As waves devour more of the coast, whipped up by storms made fiercer by climate change, he also fears the fishermen's houses "will eventu-

ally disappear". The problem is serious in Catalonia, dotted with idyllic coastal villages and resorts that bathe in Mediterranean sunshine and draw droves of tourists.

A historic railway from Barcelona to the town of Mataro, which runs parallel to the coast, inches ever closer to the sea every winter.

South of Barcelona, part of the problem is the overdevelopment of beachfronts with promenades and apartments, which box in the sand against ferocious waves. The severity of winter erosion has reached an intensity at which "we will start to lose beaches in the next 10 years," Greenpeace Spain

warned in a 2024 report.

An hour's drive south of Barcelona, the town of Calafell has tried to harness natural processes to halt its receding beaches. For Carla Garcia Lozano, a professor of physical geography at the University of Girona, the usual technique of dumping tonnes of sand doomed to be washed away by the next succession of winter storms, or replacing paving stones on promenades, is not a long-term solution.

"Artificial regeneration is no longer possible, partly because it is very expensive economically, but its maintenance is also very expensive and very ineffective," she told AFP.



A section of sand that remains is seen at Montgat beach north of Barcelona. (AFP)



## 'Rawda Award marks national milestone in social work'

HE the Minister of Social Development and Family Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi emphasised that the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work represents a qualitative national milestone for consolidating the culture of institutional social work in the State of Qatar, and enhancing the status of community initiatives as an active partner in the path of national development.

At the award ceremony honouring the winners yesterday, HE al-Nuaimi said that the Amiri Decision No 16 of 2025 establishing the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work is evidence of the special attention the state pays to supporting pioneering initiatives that enhance the quality of life, and enshrine the values of cooperation and solidarity, and is a certificate of appreciation for everyone who has made community service a constant approach in his journey.

HE al-Nuaimi said that this award is not just a platform for honouring, but a national platform that monitors initiatives, celebrates achievements, and creates positive competition to achieve a real and sustainable impact on human life.

Her Excellency added that the award celebrates those who give back, who, through their initiatives, programmes, and humani-



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani patronised yesterday the ceremony of the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work, in its 1st edition, held at the Raffles Doha Hotel. (QNA)

tarian and charitable campaigns, strive to uplift their community, make a positive difference in the lives of those around them, and dedicate their resources and capabilities to the common good.

For his part, CEO of the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work Abdulaziz Ibrahim al-Ishaq said that the ceremony represents the culmination of a comprehensive national process built on appreciation, encouragement, and motivation, within a rigorous evaluation and judg-

ing system that ensures transparency and credibility.

He added that the award not only aims to honour the winners but also seeks to celebrate the winning initiatives as outstanding models in social work, reflecting the award's objectives of cultivating a culture of social work, strengthening community values, and encouraging various groups to take the lead in community service in the State of Qatar.

The ceremony witnessed the



honouring of the winners in its main categories, where in the individuals category the "War and Disability: Sports and Peace" initiative of the late Sheikh Hessa bint Khalifa bin Ahmed al-Thani won the "Rawda Award"; while the "sponsorship and empowerment of value initiatives with community impact" initiative of Dr Buthaina Abdullah Abdulghani al-Abdulghani won the "Shield of Excellence".

In the non-profit category, the "Wayakom" initiative presented by the Qatar Cancer Society won the "Rawda Award", along with the "Together" project through the Education Above All Foundation Assalam Schools, while

the "Generational Impact Maker Challenge" initiative presented by Qatar Charity won the "Shield of Excellence", and the "premarital rehabilitation programme" initiative presented by the Family Consulting Center (Wifaq) won a "Certificate of Appreciation".

To reflect the scale of the institutional work that preceded the announcement of the results, the first session witnessed the monitoring of (258) nominations for social initiatives, through specialised experts, and the monitoring team of the award settled on (174) nominations after the initial sorting, with a survival rate of 67 percent. (QNA)

### Amir honours first Rawda Award winners

From Page 1

A documentary film about the award was also screened, highlighting its future role in fostering a culture of excellence and social responsibility, and emphasising its developmental and social impact in achieving the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030. HE Minister of Social Development and Family Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi delivered a speech on the occasion, underlining the importance of institutionalising social work and recognising impactful community initiatives. The ceremony also included a short film showcasing the winning initiatives and highlighting this year's award recipients across various categories. The award, which aligns with Qatar's broader human and social development priorities, aims to strengthen social cohesion by encouraging both grassroots and institutional contributions, while setting benchmarks for excellence in community-driven initiatives. The event was attended by HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim, along with a number of Their Excellencies, sheikhs, ministers, guests, and senior officials. (QNA)

## QU marks World Autism Awareness Day by highlighting technological innovation

In celebration of World Autism Awareness Day, observed annually on April 2 under the theme "Autism and Humanity - Every Life Matters", Qatar University (QU) marked the occasion by highlighting its academic and research efforts aimed at supporting individuals with autism spectrum disorder and promoting their integration within society.

As part of this initiative, QU showcased an innovative research project developed by a team of university researchers: "SafeSignals", a technology-based system that uses wearable sensors and environmental sensors to monitor challenging behaviours among individuals with autism spectrum disorder and send real-time alerts to caregivers. The system supports early intervention while enhancing the safety and well-being of individuals on the autism spectrum.

The system relies on artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies to analyse physiological and environmental indicators associated with stress and challenging behaviours. This approach helps caregivers better understand behavioural patterns and respond more effectively. The development of SafeSignals is part of collaborative research efforts by QU researchers to harness technology and innovation in advancing assistive technologies and strengthening healthcare-related fields.

Commenting on the initiative, Prof John-John Cabibihan, professor of mechanical engineering and principal investigator of the SafeSignals system, said: "On the occasion of World Autism Awareness Day, we are pleased to highlight the SafeSignals system we developed to monitor and analyse physiological signals among

children on the autism spectrum, such as heart rate and perspiration levels. This innovation aims to empower parents, teachers, and caregivers by providing early alerts about a child's stress levels, enabling timely intervention when the child experiences sensory overload."

QU also highlighted the specialised services provided by the Inclusion and Special Needs Support Center, which supports students with disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum. These services reaffirm the university's commitment to fostering an inclusive and accessible learning environment for all students.

Haya Ahmad al-Kuwari, director of the Inclusion and Special Needs Support Center at QU, emphasised that celebrating World Autism Awareness Day represents an important opportunity to en-

hance community awareness of issues related to individuals with autism spectrum disorder and to highlight ongoing efforts to support and empower them.

She said: "At the centre, we believe that true inclusion begins with recognising students' abilities and potential—not merely focusing on challenges. We collaborate with colleges across Qatar University to organise awareness workshops for faculty members and administrative staff to increase understanding of students' needs and challenges, including those of students on the autism spectrum."

To mark the occasion, QU also illuminated several buildings across its campus in blue, the internationally recognised colour for autism awareness.

This gesture reflects the university's solidarity with individuals with autism and their families.

## Residents hail Metrolink connectivity to Ain Khalid, Industrial Area

By Joseph Varghese  
Staff Reporter

Residents in Ain Khalid and Industrial Area have hailed the move by Doha Metro to connect the areas through a new Metrolink.

Doha Metro had announced last week that the Metrolink, route, M305 from Al Waab QLM Station (Exit No 1) will be connecting several areas in Ain Khalid, some parts of Industrial Area, Umm Al Seneem and many other important locations in the area, starting from Sunday (Yesterday). This is the first time these places are connected by Doha Metro.

The Metrolink runs every 20 minutes servicing areas near West Walk, Qatar Turkish School, Al Salam Medical Center and O1 Mall. The service is free for those who have valid Metro/Karwa travel card.

Some residents of the area spoke to Gulf Times and expressed their happiness on the newly launched route that will give them better connectivity as this new service aims to improve last-mile connectivity for residents in the Ain Khalid area, particularly around O1 Mall Mega Mart and the Umm Al Seneem Park.

Jeevan Nath, an expatriate from Nepal and a resident of the area said that he was always waiting for better connectivity through the Metro Rail and now it has been realised. "I can now travel in the Metro by spending less money and reach all the places far more easily. Since the

Metro offers affordability, I would be travelling frequently especially in the evenings after my work schedule," he said.

Another resident, Yousef Hosain who is working in a small shop at Ain Khalid area said that it was more convenient for him as the Metrolink reaches near his shop. He noted: "Earlier, we used to hire taxis or travel by Karwa Bus. However, it was not very convenient all the time and we had to spend more money on taxis. With the newly launched Metrolink, we can reach the place far easier and convenient. This gives us a lot of convenience and connectivity to other parts of the city."

Similar sentiments were echoed by some other residents of the area. Meanwhile another expatriate, Harish Kumar said that it is now easier for people to visit Umm Al Seneem Park. "This gives better connectivity to the Umm Al Seneem Park which is a beautiful place to spend the time with family and friends. Now people who want to visit the park can reach the place through the Metrolink. Those who want to go to the park can make use of the Metrolink from the station and get down at the park. After spending enough time at the park, they can use the same Metro link to get back to the station," he added.

As the residents appreciate and applaud the move by Doha Metro, they believe that it will help them better connect with the city especially the downtown areas and to spend their time more productively and fruitfully.



New Metrolink to provide better connectivity.

## PHCC observes World Autism Awareness Day showcasing various services at health centres

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) marked World Autism Awareness Day observed annually on April 2 by organising events and activities in collaboration with national sectors, with medical teams participating through health centres and public venues to ensure wide community engagement.

Commemorating World Autism Awareness Day aims to increase awareness of autism spectrum disorder and promote understanding and support for individuals with autism and their families. The key objectives of observing this day include raising awareness about autism spectrum disorder, its symptoms and challenges, as well as recognising the abilities of individuals with autism.

Dr Sadriya al-Kohji, senior consultant, Community Medicine and Assistant Medical Director for Child and Adolescent Services at PHCC, explained that PHCC pro-



Dr Sadriya al-Kohji

vides the EarlyBird programme for parents of preschool children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. The programme aims to support parents in understanding their children's condition, improving communication, and managing behaviour in their natural environment. To date, 2,000 parents have been trained through

this programme, which continues to receive highly positive evaluations from participating families.

She added that autism spectrum disorder screening is available within the Well-Baby Clinic services at PHCC, where children are screened at 18 and 30 months of age. In 2025, a total of 24,734 screenings were conducted to detect the disorder.

Dr al-Kohji noted that sensory rooms are available in several PHCC health centres, including Al Daayen, Umm Slal, Al Thumama, Leabaib, Rawdat Al Khail, Qatar University, Al Waab, Muaiter, Al Wajbah, and Al Mashaf. These rooms aim to provide a calming environment tailored to children's sensory needs, making their visits to health centres smoother and more comfortable.

Dr al-Kohji stated that educational staff across government and private schools in Qatar, including primary, preparatory, and secondary levels, have received autism awareness training. The

training covered teachers, psychologists, social workers and nurses, and focused on enhancing understanding of autism spectrum disorder, recognising its symptoms, and adapting learning environments to meet students' needs.

She also highlighted that a fast-track service is available in all PHCC health centres to facilitate immediate access to care, including for children with autism spectrum disorder.

World Autism Awareness Day focuses on providing accurate information to reduce stereotypes and misconceptions, supporting families by offering resources to help them manage challenges, encouraging inclusion in education, employment, and social activities, advocating for improved policies and services, and promoting research efforts to better understand autism spectrum disorder and develop strategies to enhance health and quality of life for this group.

## Understanding autistic children's nature key to provide assuring surroundings

It is very important to understand the sensory and emotional responses of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder, particularly during stressful situations, as these persons need special treatment that take into consideration their particular needs, pointed Dr Aboud Babiker Eltoum, a developmental paediatric consultant at Sidra Medicine.

On the occasion of World Autism Awareness Day, Dr Eltoum explained that children with autism are especially vulnerable to stress due to their reliance on predictability and structured environments, and sudden disruptions to routine or unclear circumstances can intensify their feelings of instability and anxiety.

He noted that many children

on the spectrum experience differences in sensory processing, where normal everyday stimuli, such as noise, lighting, or crowded spaces, may be perceived with greater intensity. Further in stressful contexts, this intensified sensitivity can overwhelm the nervous system, making it harder for the child to regulate emotions or communicate effectively. He noted that these reactions are not random behaviours but physiological responses driven by sensory and emotional overload.

Dr Eltoum stressed that caregivers should try to reduce sensory input and help the child regain a sense of safety, as a key initial step. This may involve moving the child to a quieter space, minimising noise, and simplifying the surrounding



Dr Aboud Babiker Eltoum

environment. He also stressed the importance of using clear, simple language instead of multiple instructions, noting that the priority in such moments should be emotional regulation rather than behavioural correction.

He further noted the role of "co-regulation," where children rely on a trusted adult to help restore emotional balance. Calm and steady parental presence, characterised by a gentle tone, slower interactions, and avoiding excessive questioning, can significantly de-escalate stressful situations.

He said that recognising individual differences is also essential. While some children may seek physical closeness and reassurance, others may prefer space, which requires flexible and responsive caregiving approaches.

Dr Eltoum described sensory-based strategies as a critical component in managing stress. Tools such as noise-cancelling headphones, light weighted items that provide calming pressure and re-

petitive or rhythmic movements can support self-regulation. These methods are typically integrated into personalised therapeutic plans tailored to each child's needs.

Maintaining daily routines, even during challenging periods, is another key factor. Consistency helps foster a sense of control and predictability, reducing anxiety. Parents are encouraged to prepare children in advance for any anticipated changes, using visual aids and simple explanations to ease transitions. Even when routines are disrupted, preserving familiar elements can support emotional stability.

Dr Eltoum advised that recurring distress, persistent emotional regulation difficulties, or disruptions to daily functioning often require specialist intervention. A

multidisciplinary approach, combining developmental paediatrics, psychology, and therapeutic services, provides a comprehensive understanding of the child's needs and ensures evidence-based support for long-term development.

He further stressed that effective support begins with understanding. Recognising that a child's response to stress is often rooted in sensory and emotional overload, rather than intentional behaviour, allows caregivers to respond with empathy and confidence. Consistent, thoughtful strategies, alongside appropriate professional support, can make a meaningful difference in helping children with autism feel secure and prepare them to go through everyday challenges.