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BUSINESS | Page 1

QNB Group net profit surges 2% to QR4.33bn in Q1

PM discusses truce with Saudi, Turkish and Spanish FMs

HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held a series of telephone conversations yesterday with the foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Spain, with the landmark ceasefire agreement between the United States and Iran dominating all three calls. In his conversation with Saudi Foreign Affairs Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, the prime minister discussed the latest regional developments in light of the ceasefire announcement and reiterated Qatar's firm welcome of the agreement. He stressed the urgent need to build upon it without delay to prevent any further escalation of tensions across the region. A similar exchange took place during his call with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, with both sides reviewing regional developments following the ceasefire and reaffirming the importance of consolidating the truce as a foundation for broader stability. Issues of mutual concern to both countries were also addressed. The PM subsequently received a call from Spain's Minister for Foreign Affairs, European Union and Co-operation Jose Manuel Albares, during which the two officials discussed the evolving regional situation and Qatar's position on the ceasefire. HE Sheikh Mohammed again emphasised the need to translate the announcement into durable, concrete progress on the ground. (**QNA**)

Qatar hails ceasefire, Pakistan's mediation

Qatar welcomed the announcement of a ceasefire agreement between the United States and Iran, considering it an initial step towards de-escalation, and stressing the need to build on it urgently to prevent the spread of tension in the region.

In a statement released yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Qatar's appreciation for Pakistan's efforts, particularly those of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Marshal Asim Munir, and all parties who undertook the mediation and good offices that contributed to reaching the ceasefire agreement.

The ministry stressed the importance of full commitment to the ceasefire agreement, which would ensure the consolidation of the truce and create conditions for dialogue. The ministry emphasised the need for Iran to immediately cease all hostile acts and practices that undermine regional stability, and to respect the sovereignty of states, in order to ensure that such violations are not repeated.

The ministry also stressed the importance of ensuring the security of maritime routes and the freedom of navigation and international trade in accordance with the rules of international law, which contributes to maintaining the stability of the region and global supply chains.

The ministry reiterated Qatar's unwavering support for all diplomatic efforts and peaceful endeavours, stressing that serious and responsible dialogue and adherence to the principles of international law and good neighbourliness are the fundamental pillars for resolving crises and avoiding serious repercussions on the region and the world. (**QNA**)

Cabinet endorses truce

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Cabinet, chaired by HE the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, yesterday endorsed the ceasefire agreement between the United States and Iran, praising Pakistan and other mediating nations for their role in bringing the truce about.
In a statement following the meeting, Minister of Justice and Cabinet Affairs Minister Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi said the Cabinet called for an immediate halt to all hostilities and urged full respect for state sovereignty to prevent further violations. It also stressed the importance of keeping maritime routes open and safeguarding freedom of navigation and international trade under international law — measures it said were essential to regional stability and global supply chains. **To Page 11**

Vance to lead US delegation

US President Donald Trump is dispatching his Iran negotiating team, led by Vice-President JD Vance, to Pakistan for talks, the White House said yesterday, adding that the first round of negotiations would take place on Saturday. With several of Iran's veteran political leaders killed in the war, Iran's delegation is expected to be led by parliament speaker and former IRGC commander Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, with Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi.

Amir, Erdogan, Macron push for lasting peace



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received a phone call from Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday.
The call discussed regional developments, particularly updates relating to the announcement of a ceasefire between the United States and Iran.
The president affirmed that reaching a ceasefire is an important opportunity to achieve lasting peace and stability in the region and renewed to His Highness the Amir his condemnation of the Iranian attacks that targeted Qatar, expressing Turkiye's appreciation for Qatar's wise approach in dealing with these related developments.
His Highness the Amir expressed his appreciation to the president for his sincere sentiments, affirming Qatar's commitment to supporting regional and international efforts aimed at de-escalation and enhancing security and stability in the region.
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani also received a phone call from French President Emmanuel Macron.
They discussed the latest regional and international developments, particularly the ceasefire agreement between the US and Iran, and international efforts to solidify the truce.
The call also addressed the political and economic implications of the truce, with both sides emphasising the importance of reaching a comprehensive agreement that guarantees a permanent ceasefire involving all parties, especially given its impact on the stability of global energy markets and international maritime traffic, and the importance of ensuring the security of maritime routes and freedom of navigation.
They also reviewed the developments in Lebanon, with both sides stressing the importance of de-escalation, containing tensions, and intensifying diplomatic efforts to maintain regional peace. (**QNA**)

7 ballistic missiles, drones neutralised

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

The Legacy of Amir Temur at the Islamic Civilization Center: The Intellectual Foundation of the Third Renaissance

Throughout history, great civilizations have been shaped by intellectual achievements, spiritual values, and cultural heritage. Central Asia has long been a center of science, art, and philosophy, forming civilizational foundations that have influenced the entire world.

Today, this potential is embodied in a large-scale project — the Islamic Civilization Center in Uzbekistan, which not only preserves historical artifacts but also serves as a living platform for science, education, and spiritual development.

Established on the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the Islamic Civilization Center demonstrates how spiritual and educational values can serve as a foundation for national revival and international cooperation, attracting researchers, tourists, and the wider public from around the world.

Amir Temur holds a distinguished place in world history as an outstanding statesman, military leader, and founder of the Guragani dynasty, which ruled one of the largest empires of its time. The late 14th and early 15th centuries were a period of profound political transformation, and in this context Amir Temur succeeded in uniting vast territories



from India to the Middle East, establishing a powerful and highly structured empire with an advanced system of governance.

Diplomacy played a central role in his governance. Amir Temur established contacts with European countries, including France, England, and Castile. The Spanish envoy Ruy González de Clavijo, who visited Samarkand in 1404, noted the high level of state organization, developed infrastructure, and the respect shown to foreign ambassadors.

Amir Temur also created a unique legal foundation for his empire. According to the "Code of Temur," the state relied on four pillars: council, deliberation, a well-considered plan, and determination. Nine-tenths of affairs were resolved through consultation and wise measures, and only one-tenth by the sword. This principle reflects the priority of diplomacy and legal solutions over military force, emphasizing the balance between justice and determination in governance.

After the death of Amir Temur, his successors — the Timurids of the Guragani dynasty — continued the development of the state, paying particular attention to science, culture, and education. This period is often referred to as the Second Eastern Renaissance, marked by a flourishing of intellectual and artistic life that contributed to the development of the European Renaissance.

A special place among the Timurids is occupied by Mirzo Ulughbek (1394–1449), grandson of Amir Temur. He was an outstanding scholar, astronomer, mathematician, and statesman of the Timurid era. Ulughbek ruled primarily from Samarkand, transforming it into one of the leading scientific centers of the medieval world.

One of Ulughbek's greatest achievements was the construction of the Ulughbek Observatory in the 1420s. This observatory was considered one of the most advanced in the world at that time. Together with scholars, he compiled the famous astronomical catalog "Gurgan Zij", which recorded the coordinates of more than 1,000 stars with remarkable accuracy.

Today, the legacy of the Guragani dynasty can be seen at the Islamic Civilization Center in Uzbekistan, where unique exhibits demonstrating the cultural and spiritual richness of the era are preserved. Among them is a fragment of the Quran copied by the calligrapher Umar Aqta for Amir Temur, known as the "Baysunghur Quran." This manuscript represents a triumph of calligraphy over ornamentation: harmonious, powerful letterforms and the precise flow of ink create a grand visual effect.

The Islamic Civilization Center preserves a single line of the Baysunghur Quran, allowing visitors to experience the greatness of Timurid



art and understand how the culture of writing shaped the spiritual image of the state.

A special place is also occupied by the Baburid talismanic robe — a protective garment created in court workshops to safeguard and bless its wearer. The dense cotton fabric is entirely covered with Quranic texts, as well as the shahada and the 99 names of Allah. On the back, there is a verse from Surah Yusuf (12:64): "Indeed, Allah is the best guardian, and He is the most merciful of the merciful."

The Islamic Civilization Center in Uzbekistan is not only a museum but also a living educational platform. The architectural concept of the complex harmoniously combines Timurid traditions with modern technologies, symbolizing the unity of past and present. Its 65-meter dome and majestic portals embody the connection between all regions of Uzbekistan, creating a sense of monumentality and historical continuity.

The Center's exposition is built on the principle of "Civilizations — Personalities — Discoveries" and covers key historical stages: the pre-Islamic period, the First and Second Renaissances, as well as the New Uzbekistan — the Foundation of the Third Renaissance. Visitors can not only observe unique artifacts but also interact with them through VR and AR technologies, holograms, and artificial intelligence, making history vivid and tangible.

The Center integrates diverse educational and cultural functions: interactive laboratories, the children's museum "1001 Foundations," a library with a collection of more than 2,500 manuscripts and lithographs, around 40,000 printed publications, and over 350,000 digital resources, a school of calligraphy and traditional arts by the King's Foundation, as well as representative offices of ICESCO, IRCICA, and OCIS. All of this creates a space where tradition and innovation coexist and complement each other, stimulating the development of science and culture.

Thanks to this approach, the Islamic Civilization Center becomes not just a repository of knowledge but a living bridge between historical renaissances and the Third Renaissance, ensuring continuity of traditions and inspiring new generations toward scientific, cultural, and spiritual achievements.

Today, at the initiative of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the 690th anniversary of the birth of Amir Temur — a great statesman, military leader, and patron of science and culture — is being widely celebrated. This anniversary is regarded not only as a tribute to history but also as an important factor in strengthening national identity, developing scientific potential, and promoting the country's cultural diplomacy.

As part of the anniversary events, the Islamic Civilization Center serves as a key platform for international dialogue. Thus, on April 9–11 of this year, a large-scale international scientific conference will be held here, bringing together more than 300 leading scholars, researchers, and experts from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, and North America. The conference aims to provide a comprehensive study of the role and significance of Amir Temur and the Guragani (Timurid) civilization in world history and culture, as well as to establish a sustainable platform for further international scientific and cultural cooperation.

The Islamic Civilization Center stands today as a driving intellectual and cultural force in the region, fostering dialogue, advancing knowledge, and contributing to global understanding. Guided by the opening verse of Surah Al-'Alaq "Read in the name of your Lord", it connects past achievements with future aspirations.

QATAR

Minister of Interior receives messages of solidarity from world counterparts

HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani received several messages and cables from Their Highnesses and Excellencies, ministers of Interior and security officials from fraternal and friendly countries, regarding the current situation in the region.

In their messages, they emphasized the importance of enhancing co-ordination between countries to overcome the security challenges facing the region.

The messages were received from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the United Arab Emirates Lt Gen Sheikh Saif bin Zayed al-Nahyan, Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Bahrain Gen Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah al-Khalifa, Minister of Interior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif al-Saud, Minister of Interior of the



Sultanate of Oman Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al-Busaidi, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior of the State of Kuwait Sheikh Fahad Yousef Saud al-Sabah, and Minister for Interior and Narcotics Control of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi.

HE Sheikh Khalifa also received messages and cables from Minister of Interior of the Republic of Turkiye Mustafa Ciftci, Minister of the Interior of the Kingdom of Spain Fernando Grande-Marlaska Gomez, Coordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Home Affairs of Republic of Singapore K Shanmugam, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs of Romania Marian-Catalin Predoiu, Commander of the Gendarmerie General Command of the Republic of Turkiye Gen Ali Cardakci, and Director General of the National Gendarmerie of the French Republic Gen. Hubert Bonneau.

For his part, HE Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani expressed his profound thanks and appreciation to Their Highnesses, Excellencies, and senior officials for their supportive stances, which reflect the depth of the relations that bind the State of Qatar with its fraternal and international partners.

He also commended their commitment to enhancing security and stability in the region.

Minister receives phone call from Pakistan's deputy PM

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi has received a phone call from Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Pakistan Mohammad Ishaq Dar to discuss the latest regional developments. The talks focused on the situation following a ceasefire announcement between the US and Iran. During the conversation, HE al-Khulaifi praised Pakistan's diplomatic role, noting that its efforts had contributed to the announcement of the ceasefire. **(QNA)**

Qatari citizens exempted from visa for Albania travel

An official source in the Department of Consular Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed that Qatari citizens are exempt from entry visa requirements to the Republic of Albania, during the period from April 15, 2026 to Dec 31, 2026. **(QNA)**

MoPH designates five healthcare facilities as 'Baby-Friendly Hospitals'

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has announced the designation of five healthcare facilities under the "Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative," launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), following their successful compliance with internationally recognized standards.

This achievement reflects Qatar's commitment to adopting global best practices in maternal and child health, in alignment with the National Health Strategy, and contributes to enhancing the quality of healthcare services provided.

The designated facilities include Al Wakra Hospital, Women's Wellness and Research Center, Al Maha Specialized Care Center for Children, Al Waab Health Center, and Al Mashaf Health Center, in recognition of their commitment to providing a supportive environment for breastfeeding and promoting maternal and child health.

The designation follows a comprehensive evaluation process to ensure full implementation of the standards and the steps under the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative.

The evaluation was conducted by a team of WHO-accredited assessors from the Ministry of Public Health. In this context, Director of the Health Promotion Department at the MoPH Dr Salah Abdullah al-Yafei said that this initiative is part of the MoPH's efforts to promote exclusive breastfeeding from birth up to six months, and to encourage its continuation alongside complementary feeding up to two years, contributing to improved maternal and child health outcomes.

He further emphasized the MoPH's commitment to supporting all healthcare facilities across both public and private sectors by enhancing the capabilities and skills of healthcare providers, ensuring the effective implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative standards.

Qatar adopts new excise mechanism on sweetened beverages

The General Tax Authority announced yesterday that Law No (2) of 2026, amending certain provisions of Law No. (25) of 2018 on Excise Tax, will come into effect on July 6, 2026, giving taxpayers and manufacturers time to adjust their operations.
The authority noted that the scope of application includes all products that can be converted into beverages and contain sugar or sweeteners, including concentrates, powders, extracts, or any other similar products.
In a statement, the authority emphasized the necessity for all those holding excise goods to submit tax declarations disclosing stock levels upon the law's implementation through the Dhareeba Portal. Law No (2) of 2026 mandates the implementation of a new excise tax mechanism for sweetened beverages, based on a tiered volume model, where the tax is calculated according to the amount of sugar or sweeteners in the drink or taxable product, as part of Qatar's efforts to develop tax policies and support public health. The schedule of excise goods subject to tax, attached to the law, has also been amended to include sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks and juices containing added sugar. This approach aligns with the State's efforts to reduce the consumption of high-sugar products and incentivize manufacturers to lower the sugar content in their products, thereby promoting public health. This mechanism is also in line with the State's strategic directions, keeping pace with global best practices and achieving a balance between economic and health objectives. **(QNA)**

Shura Speaker meets Canadian envoy

HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim met yesterday with ambassador of Canada to Qatar Karim Morcos. During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral relations between the two countries and ways to enhance them, particularly in the parliamentary field. The two sides also discussed the latest developments in the region. HE the Speaker stressed the gravity of Iran's attacks against Qatar and neighbouring countries, and the threat they pose to the region's security and stability. He emphasized the necessity of halting escalation and resorting to peaceful solutions and dialogue. In this context, al-Ghanim expressed his appreciation for Canada's supportive stance towards the State of Qatar and its condemnation of these attacks, which reflects a commitment to the principles of international law and support for international peace and security. For his part, the Canadian ambassador expressed his gratitude for the level of bilateral relations, affirming his country's keenness to develop them and enhance joint co-operation in various fields, including strategic dialogue and parliamentary coordination. At the same time, Morcos highlighted Canada's supportive stance towards Qatar, and its keenness to communicate and coordinate at high levels, reflecting the country's solidarity and commitment to supporting the security and stability of the region. **(QNA)**



QMC chief meets Saudi ambassador

HE CEO of Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Qatar Prince Saad bin Mansour bin Saad bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. The meeting discussed ways to boost bilateral media co-operation and exchanged views on a host of topics of mutual interest. **(QNA)**



QDB launches integrated advisory package to empower private sector

QNA
Doha

Qatar Development Bank (QDB) announced the launch of its 'Stabilize and Sustain Bundle' of specialized advisory services.

According to QDB's post on X, the bundle enables Qatar-based companies to improve their operational efficiency and enhance their readiness to face current regional developments.

This step is part of QDB's recently launched initiatives and programs to support companies through its Situation Room, within the framework of enhancing the private sector's resilience and ensuring the continuity and sustainability of businesses in priority sectors, the bank said.

Helping Qatar-based companies address operational challenges amidst current circumstances and strengthen business resilience, QDB noted that these services enable businesses to maintain continuity, manage financial challenges, and optimize efficiency in response to regional developments.

The bank added that bundle is designed for companies seeking to solidify stability and manage financial pressures during this period of uncertainty, offering four specialized services, these are: Virtual CFO: providing integrated solutions for liquidity management and working capital optimization, alongside comprehensive financial analytics to support informed decision-making and business growth. Business Turnaround: specialized advisory support to restructure companies and develop recovery strategies. Costing and Expense Reduction: precise analysis to improve operational efficiency and rationalize expenditure to safeguard sustainable returns.

GRC Advisory: specialized business continuity planning, proactive risk management, and recovery, supported by effective frameworks.

Qatar condemns Israeli air strikes on wide areas in Lebanon

Qatar condemned the series of heinous Israeli airstrikes that targeted wide areas in Lebanon and resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs deemed the strikes a serious escalation and a blatant violation of the sovereignty of the Republic of Lebanon, international humanitarian law, and United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701. The ministry called on the international community to assume its responsibilities by compelling the Israeli occupation authorities to halt their brutal massacres and repeated attacks on Lebanon, and to ensure their compliance with international laws and charters.
It also expressed Qatar's full solidarity with Lebanon in the measures it takes to preserve its security and stability, while reaffirming Qatar's firm position on Lebanon's unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. **(QNA)**

Qatar sends 13th letter to UNSC regarding latest Iranian attacks

QNA
New York

Qatar sent two identical letters (the 12th and 13th) to Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) Antonio Guterres, and Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of April Jamal Fares Alrowaiei, regarding the latest developments of the Iranian attack on its territories.

This attack constitutes a blatant violation of its national sovereignty, a direct threat to its security and territorial integrity, and an unacceptable escalation that threatens the security and stability of the region.

The letters were sent by HE Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani.

The 12th letter referred to Qatar's Ministry of Defence's announcement that the country was subjected to attacks by a number of drones from Iran on Thursday, April 2, 2026, which were successfully intercepted by Qatar's Armed Forces. The letter added that Ministry of Defence also announced that Qatar was attacked

The letters emphasized that the targets of attacks by Iran are purely civilian in nature, and that targeting them constitutes a blatant violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949

by a number of drones from Iran on Friday, April 3, 2026, and that the armed forces successfully intercepted all the drones.

The Ministry of Defence also announced that Qatar was attacked by a number of drones and two cruise missiles from Iran on Sunday, April 5, 2026, and that the armed forces successfully intercepted all the drones and the two cruise missiles.

The Ministry of Defence further announced that Qatar was subjected to attacks by a number of drones from Iran on Monday, April 6, 2026, and that the armed forces successfully intercepted all the drones.

The 13th letter referred to the Ministry of Defence's announcement on Tuesday that the State of Qatar's Armed Forces intercepted a missile attack targeting the country.

The letter also referred to the Ministry of Interior's affirmation that the security authorities responded to an incident resulting from the interception of Iranian missiles by Qatari air defences, which led to debris falling on a citizen's dwelling in a residential area. The accident resulted in four moderate injuries, including to a Qatari child.

The cases were dealt with immediately by the specialized teams, and the injured were transferred to receive the necessary medical care, while limited material damage was recorded at the accident site.

The letters also warned that these attacks by Iran continued even after the Security Council adopted Resolution 2817 (2026), which strongly condemned in the strongest terms the heinous attacks carried out by Iran against Qatar and neighbouring countries, and demanded an immediate end to all such attacks.

The letters also reiterated Qatar's affirmation that these attacks constitute a violation of Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026), and its call for the Security Council to assume its responsibilities in maintaining international peace and security and to take the necessary measures to stop these serious violations and deter their perpetrators.

The two letters emphasized that the targets of attacks by Iran are purely civilian in nature, and that targeting them constitutes a blatant violation by Iran of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, their Additional Protocols, and of the principles of international humanitarian law, specifically the principle of distinction, the prohibition of targeting civilians and civilian objects in armed conflicts, the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks, the principle of proportionality, and the obligation to take due precautions to avoid civilian targets.

The letters stressed that these illegal acts by Iran entail international responsibility, making it obligated, as the case may be, to provide compensation for all damages incurred by Qatar as a result of these acts, adding that all the damages and losses resulting from the attacks will be assessed by the competent authorities, and that Qatar will keep the UN and the Security Council informed of developments.

The letters also affirmed that Qatar reserves its right to respond, in accordance with Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, and the right to self-defense guaranteed by international law, stressing that Qatar will not hesitate to take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty, security, and the safety of its citizens and residents of its territory.

Qatar also requested that the letters be circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

Qatar reports successful winter camping season

QNA
Doha

The 2025-2026 winter camping season has been described as "largely successful," with high turnout of citizens and residents supported by well-organized camps and comprehensive services.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency, Chair of the Winter Camping Committee at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Hamad Salem al-Nuaimi, highlighted the key achievements of this year's season, including stronger adherence to environmental regulations, improved organizational infrastructure for campsites, and heightened awareness among campers about protecting the natural environment.

He also outlined the main challenges, such as the rising number of campers placing pressure on sites and services, and some non-compliant practices at the start of the season. These were addressed through intensified inspection campaigns and the use of modern monitoring technologies to ensure compliance. Al-Nuaimi noted that the Winter Camping Committee implemented a range of measures to safeguard both the environment and camper safety. These included precise campsite allocations, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, provision and regular collection of waste containers, and strict regulations on vehicle use in desert and natural areas.

He pointed out a marked improvement in compliance compared with previous seasons, attributing it to successful awareness campaigns. At the same time, he emphasized that some areas still require further organization and monitoring, with solutions under study for future seasons.

Al-Nuaimi said key lessons from this season include early planning, greater reliance on digital permit systems, and strengthened partnerships with relevant authorities. The ministry is continuing to enhance oversight mechanisms and awareness programs to ensure the sustainability of Qatar's natural environment. He concluded by stressing that these combined efforts help foster a culture of environmental responsibility, urging all campers to follow regulations and contribute to the protection of Qatar's terrestrial environment as a shared responsibility.

48 students honoured for memorising Holy Qu'ran



The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs honoured 48 students who memorised the Holy Qur'an during the first quarter of 2026.

These students were enrolled in Qur'anic learning centres under the Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance.

The ceremony, part of the "Quran Memorisation Completion Sessions" programme, was held under the patronage of HE Minister of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs Ghanem bin Shaheen al-Ghanem, at the Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani Mosque in The Pearl-Qatar.

In a statement released yesterday, the ministry noted that this inaugural ceremony for the students, reflects its commitment to celebrating the achievements of Quranic learning centres, encouraging students who have memorised the Holy Qur'an to continue reviewing and consolidating their memorisation, and fostering a culture of Qur'an memorisation among children and youth.

The ministry affirmed its commitment to making the Qur'an Memorisation Sessions a regular Qur'anic programme, organising sessions to celebrate the completion of the Holy Qur'an and honour students enrolled in Qur'anic learning centres.

The programme will be held every four months, totalling three sessions annually, fostering a spirit of healthy competition among students and highlighting the efforts of Qur'anic centres in producing memorisers of the Holy Book.

Fahd Ahmed al-Mohammed, head of the Qur'an and its Sciences Department at the Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance, emphasised that the Qur'an Memorisation Sessions programme is a new and innovative initiative that the ministry is keen to implement due to its significant educational and motivational impact.

He added that holding these sessions regularly contributes to strengthening the connection of young people with the Holy Qur'an and instills the values of achievement and diligence.

He expressed his appreciation for the support of the Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs and his continuous commitment to sponsoring and developing Quranic education programs to serve all segments of society.

Al-Mohammed emphasised that organising this ceremony is part of a comprehensive system of programmes and activities implemented by the Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance. These programmes aim to promote the memorisation and teaching of the Holy Qur'an, motivate students, and enhance the role of Qur'anic learning centres in building a conscious generation grounded in the Qur'an, imbued with its ethics, and capable of conveying its message to society.

The ceremony honoured students of varying ages who had completed memorising the Holy Quran over the past three months, along with their parents and teachers who had dedicated significant efforts throughout their years of memorisation in Qur'anic study circles.

This event reflected the fruitful educational and pedagogical efforts undertaken by Qur'anic learning centres. The ceremony featured several Qur'anic and spiritual segments, beginning with a beautiful recitation by one of the graduating students. This was followed by a collective recitation of the Qur'an by the students in a circle, with each student reciting a verse from the end of Surah Al Baqarah. **(QNA)**



Awqaf ministry organises third 'Ummah Seminar'

The Department of Islamic Research and Studies at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs organised the third seminar in its fourth season of the "Umma Seminar" cultural project, held this season under the theme "Knowledge of Revelation," at the Imam Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab Mosque.

The seminar was attended by HE Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs Ghanem bin Shaheen al-Ghanem, along with a number of researchers, preachers, and specialists, featuring participation of a select group of academics and researchers from the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies at Qatar University.

The seminar, titled "Knowledge of Revelation: The Certain Source of the Laws of Human Society," explored the horizons and dimensions of understanding revelation as the definitive reference for comprehending the divine laws governing human and societal behaviour, and the resulting civilisational awareness and future vision.

In his opening remarks, Sheikh Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Ghanem al-Thani, director of the Department of Islamic Research and Studies, stated that understanding the laws governing human society is a crucial step towards the advancement of the Muslim community.

He emphasised that divine revelation is the definitive source for the principles of these laws, while reason serves as the tool for comprehension and deduction.

He explained that the seminar aims to explore the horizons and the human psyche to understand the future of the Muslim community through the lens of these laws.

He further noted that the "Ummah Seminar" is a significant cultural activity undertaken within the framework of the ministry's commitment to promoting and disseminating knowledge rooted in and derived from divine revelation.

He noted that the seminar is essentially a quarterly intellectual and scholarly cultural project organised by the department, bringing together leading thinkers and experts to discuss intellectual issues and cultural challenges, explore appropriate solutions to social problems, and address the most pressing negative phenomena affecting individuals, communities, and the Muslim world.

The seminar featured presentations by Dr Ramadan Khamis Zaki Abdel-Tawab, professor of Tafsir and Quranic Sciences at the Faculty of Sharia and Islamic Studies; Dr. Mahmoud Nimr al-Naffar, assistant professor at the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies; and Dr Aziz al-Batwi, head of the Research and Studies Unit at the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies.

In the first session, Dr Ramadan Khamis Zaki Abdel-Tawab presented a scholarly paper titled "Knowlege of Revelation: Certainty of Source and Principles of Divine Laws." He addressed three main issues: the laws governing the human soul, the universe, and the features of human society; the laws governing the understanding of revelation and the lessons learned from historical experience; and Quranic stories as lessons and examples of the laws of decline and resurgence.

In the second session, Dr Mahmoud Nimr al-Naffar discussed "The Mind as a Tool for Understanding, Comprehension, and Effective Application of Divine Laws."

He presented a broad intellectual framework addressing the cycle of divine laws, from their formation to their application, as an integrated epistemological process that explains the movement of humanity and society in light of divine laws.

The seminar concluded with a presentation by Dr Aziz al-Batwi on a rational approach to uncovering the laws governing human society and their impact on deepening our understanding of divine revelation.

He gave a profound scholarly analysis of these laws as a methodological framework for understanding human and societal dynamics, and as a key to deepening our understanding of divine revelation and anticipating the future.

At the seminar's conclusion, the speakers emphasised the necessity of reviving the study of divine laws as an intellectual and institutional project that contributes to guiding awareness, understanding reality, and restoring the nation's civilisational role.

The seminar, "Knowledge of Divine Revelation as the Certain Source of the Laws of Human Society," is one of the initiatives of the 'Ummah Seminar Series', organised and supervised by the Department of Islamic Research and Studies.

This series reflects the department's commitment to fostering intellectual and cultural discourse and promoting a culture of scholarly and intellectual seminars, recognising their significant contribution to enriching Qatar's cultural landscape. **(QNA)**

Ministry details assessment plan for midterm exams

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), represented by the Evaluation Affairs department, announced the activation of alternative assessment procedures for the second semester midterm exams for students from Grade 1-11 (daytime) for the 2025/2026 academic year.

The decision, providing flexible assessment alternatives, comes amid ongoing monitoring of current conditions to ensure continuity of education in a safe and stable learning environment.

In a statement issued yesterday, the ministry said the circular outlining the updated procedures has been sent to government schools and private schools following national standards, a follow-up to Circular No. 6 issued on March 12, 2026, which amended the schedule for the second semester midterm exams.

The ministry clarified that the alternative procedure varies by grade level. For students in grades 1 and 2, continuous assessment scores will replace the midterm exams, using evaluation tools approved within the ongoing assessment system for each subject.

For students in grades 3 through 11, an alternative assessment method will be implemented involving the assignment of one online assessment per subject worth 30 marks. Oral or practical assessments, if applicable, will be included in the total marks.

The ministry indicated that government schools will administer the online assessments through the Qatar Education System between April 14-16, 2026. Private schools that adhere to national standards will administer the assessments through their approved online learning platforms during the same period. Students must complete the online assessments for all subjects by April 21, 2026.

The ministry clarified that students will be provided with clear instructions on how to complete the online assessments. Teachers will be responsible for grading those and recording the scores in the National Student Information System (NSIS), taking into account the inclusion of oral or practical assessments, depending on the subject. **(QNA)**

MoEHE adopted 'flexible assessment to ensure educational continuity'

Director of the Student Assessment Department at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) Ibrahim Abdullah Rashid al-Muhannadi emphasised that activating alternative assessment procedures for the mid-term exams of the second semester of the academic year 2025-2026 comes within the framework of the MoEHE's continuous concern for the interest of students, through providing flexible assessment alternatives that ensure the continuity of the educational process.



Al-Muhannadi told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that this decision came in light of the continuous monitoring of the current situation, and in a way that achieves the public interest and ensures the stability of the educational process in a safe and stable educational environment for students. He stressed the MoEHE's keenness to design flexible assessment alternatives that take into account the differences between educational stages, in order to achieve fairness and reliability in measuring learning outcomes, and to ensure that the assessment does not constitute any additional burden on students from grades one to eleven, especially in light of the current situation.

He pointed out that adopting continuous assessment for first and second grade students as an alternative to mid-term exams for the second semester reflects an educational approach that focuses on developing students' skills cumulatively, while electronic assessments for students from the third grade to the eleventh grade allow for an accurate measurement of the level of academic achievement using modern and diverse tools, which serves the interests of students and enhances the efficiency and stability of the educational process in various schools in the country.

He added that assigning electronic applications through approved electronic educational systems contributes to enhancing the efficiency of assessment and speed of its completion. He stressed the readiness of schools and teachers to implement these procedures according to the highest standards, by providing clear instructions to students, and ensuring the accuracy of correction and recording of grades in the National Student Information System (NSIS), which contributes to achieving the best desired educational results, and overcoming the challenges that students went through during the past period, whether during in-person education or remote learning.

Concluding his remarks to QNA, al-Muhannadi stressed the significance of integration between schools and parents at this stage, ensuring clarity in the assessment mechanism for students and motivating them to commit to completing the requirements of electronic applications within the specified deadlines. **(QNA)**

Construction waste removed

The Wildlife Protection Department at the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change has carried out a clean-up campaign at a wild site in Rawdat Rashid, following a citizen's report of construction waste and discarded materials in the area. In response, ministry teams removed the waste and restored the site to its natural condition, as part of ongoing efforts to protect and enhance the country's vegetation cover, which typically thrives during the rainy season. The ministry also reiterated that dumping waste in undesignated areas carries a fine of QR10,000, and urged the public to report similar violations through its official channels or by calling 16066.





QU, ministry collaborate on food waste research

Qatar University (QU), through its Social and Economic Survey Research Institute, is conducting a nationwide study titled 'Baseline Study to Estimate Food Loss and Waste in Qatar 2025' in collaboration with the Ministry of Municipality.

The study supports national efforts to improve food system efficiency while strengthening sustainability and food security nationwide.

The study aims to measure the scale of food loss and waste across the various stages of the food supply chain in the country, beginning with production and processing and extending through distribution and consumption. The project will provide accurate scientific data by strengthening institutional collaboration among key national stakeholders, particularly QU and the Ministry of Municipality.

This collaboration supports unified efforts, enhances co-ordination among institutions, and assists policymakers in developing strategies and programmes to reduce food loss and waste while improving resource efficiency. Work on the project began on November 17, 2024 and is expected to continue until September 2026.

The study is being implemented through a comprehensive research methodology



that relies on collecting and analysing data from multiple sources to develop a reliable knowledge base to support strategic planning for food security and sustainability in Qatar.

In this context, Dr Noora al-Mannai, director of the SESRI, emphasised the importance of the study, stating, "This study represents one of the key national research initiatives aligned with QU's research priorities, particularly in the areas of sustainability, environmental protection, and food security." It also reflects the importance of collaboration among national institutions in generating knowledge and exchanging research expertise to support evidence-based policymaking. The project gains additional value through partnerships with relevant international organisations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme, which enhance the quality of the research outputs and connect them to global efforts aimed at reducing food loss and waste and advancing sustainable development." Dr Elmogiera Elawad, section head of Field Operations at SESRI, noted that the study adopts a comprehensive field-based methodology covering the entire food supply chain. This includes food production at farms, marketing and retail stages, food services in restaurants, hotels, and hospitals, and ultimately household consumption. This comprehensive coverage aims to provide an accurate assessment of food loss and waste at different stages through quantitative measurement, while also examining individuals' attitudes, behaviours, and practices related to food waste and agricultural loss.

The study will contribute to building a reliable scientific database that supports the development of effective interventions and policies to address this issue.

QATAR/REGION/ARAB WORLD

SJC online auctions generate more than QR127.5mn

The Evictions and Judicial (SJC) Auctions Department at the Supreme Judicial Council conducted several auctions on April 5, with proceeds totalling QR127,516,821, which were allocated to settle 1,247 related cases.
The online auctions received a total of 3,395 bids. The auctions included a real estate auction, where 28 units were offered for bidding, and only 12 were sold at a total of QR124,707,221 for the benefit of six related cases. The vehicle auction offered 47 vehicles for bidding with 33 of them sold out at a total price of QR721,900 and used to settle 416 related cases, while the equipment auction offered 46 pieces of equipment for bidding, with 44 of them sold out at a total price of QR1,974,950 and used to settle 787 related cases. The classical cars auction offered 10 vehicles and only five of them were sold out for the benefit of 38 at a total price of QR115,750 related cases. All such auctions are conducted through the Court Mzadat application (available on iOS and Android), which allows remote bidding and real-time tracking, with transparency ensured by a tightly secured transactional process. Bidders are required to submit a refundable deposit, with the amount determined by the item being auctioned. The process is part of the SJC to enhance judicial transaction procedures and help settle related cases more swiftly.

Turkiye 'firmly condemns' Israeli strikes on Lebanon

Turkiye "firmly condemns" ongoing Israeli strikes on Lebanon, which Israel and the US say are not covered by the US-Iranian ceasefire, the foreign ministry said in a statement yesterday evening, AFP reported from Ankara."We firmly condemn the Israeli attacks that have intensified against Lebanon, causing numerous casualties," said the statement from Turkey, a key regional player. "These attacks are worsening the humanitarian situation in the country," said the ministry. "The international community must act immediately to put an end to the Israeli occupation of Lebanon and protect civilians," the statement added. Earlier, Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan warned of the threat from "possible provocations and sabotage" to the ceasefire accord agreed by Iran and the US.
In a message on X welcoming the last-minute accord, Erdogan said: "We hope that the ceasefire will be fully implemented on the ground without giving any opportunity for possible provocations and sabotage."
During a telephone conversation with US counterpart Donald Trump, Erdogan urged "a lasting peace agreement" with Iran, according to a statement from the Turkish presidency.

DOLPHIN ENERGY دولفين للطاقة

Dolphin Energy Limited

Invitation to Tender

Tender Number	Description	Tender Bond	Deadline for Tender Submission, 12 Noon (Qatar Time) on
RFP-QC-TSU-303	EPC for Laboratory Infrastructure Upgrades	QAR 100,000	5th May 2026
RFP1200000200	Supply of Caustic Soda at 50% on a Call-Off Basis for One (1) Year, with an Optional One (1) Year Extension	QAR 60,000	27th April 2026

Dolphin Energy Limited (Qatar) is inviting companies to participate in the above Tenders.

Only companies registered in the State of Qatar with proven experience, technical knowledge, as well as a demonstrated track record in the supply of the services required should apply.

How to Tender

Expression of Interest (EOI) Form and Scope of Services/Works can be downloaded from the company's website:

https://www.dolphinenergy.com/en-US/Supplier/

Interested companies must complete the EOI Form and submit to company's email address within two (2) working days from the publication date of this advertisement.

Following receipt of completed EOI Form, interested companies will receive a Request for Proposal (RFP) through Dolphin Energy's SAP Ariba to tender.

QAFCO شركة قطر للأسمدة الكيماوية QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY

QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY

INVITATION TO TENDER

QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-6000005141	**Outsourced Procurement and Contracting Services – Frame Contract for 5 Years**	500/- (Non-refundable)	900,000.00	09.04.2026 12.04.2026 13.04.2026 14.04.2026 15.04.2026 16.04.2026	07.05.2026

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount (Cheque/Cash will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
  - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
  - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
  - IBAN : **QA51QNBA000000000013025828058**
  - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender **(Very Important)**, during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to purchase@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform (SAP Ariba) separately.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents at SAP Ariba Portal after the submission Tender Fee receipt, you may contact at 'purchase@qafco.com.qa' or on +974 44227763
- Bidders not registered on the SAP Portal who have paid the tender bond are requested to contact Vendor Management at vm@qafco.com.qa or +974 44225762 to complete their registration process.
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond on SAP Ariba Portal

Israel's heaviest strikes leave 250 dead in Lebanon

Reuters
Beirut/Tel Aviv

● Israel launches Lebanon strikes despite Iran ceasefire ● President Aoun and France's Macron urge Lebanon's inclusion in ceasefire



People stand at the site of an Israeli strike, in Al-Mazraa in Beirut, Lebanon, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

Israel carried out its heaviest strikes on Lebanon since the conflict with Hezbollah broke out last month, killing more than 250 people yesterday even as the group paused its attacks under a two-week US-Iran ceasefire.

The strikes raised questions about regional truce efforts, with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian saying a ceasefire in Lebanon was an essential condition of his country's agreement with the US.

Yesterday afternoon, at least five consecutive strikes rocked the capital Beirut, sending columns of smoke into the sky as Israel's military said it had launched the largest co-ordinated strike of the war. More than 100 Hezbollah command centres and military sites were targeted in Beirut, the Bekaa Valley and southern Lebanon within ten minutes, it said.

A total of 254 people were killed and over 1,100 wounded across Lebanon, the country's civil defence service said. The highest toll was in Beirut, where 91 people were killed. The health ministry gave a toll of 182 dead across the country and said it was not a final figure.

It was the deadliest day of the war that erupted on March 2, when Hezbollah fired into Israel in support of Tehran after the US-Israeli attack on Iran two days earlier. Israel launched a fully fledged air and ground campaign in response.

Reuters reporters saw civil defence workers guiding an older woman onto a crane to evacuate her from a building in a western part of Beirut. Half of the building had been sheared off in an Israeli strike, leaving residents on the upper floors trapped.

Earlier, Reuters reporters saw people on motorcycles picking up the wounded and transporting them to hospitals because there were not enough ambulances to get to them in time. One of Beirut's biggest medical facilities said it needed donations of all blood types.

"The scale of the killing and destruction in Lebanon today is nothing short of horrific," said UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk. "Such carnage, within hours of agreeing to a ceasefire with Iran, defies belief."

Late yesterday evening, a strike hit Beirut's southern suburbs, according to a Reuters live broadcast. In a televised address yesterday evening, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Lebanon was not part of the ceasefire with Iran and the Israeli military was continuing to strike Hezbollah with force.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt and Vice President JD Vance also said that Lebanon was not included in the truce.

"I think this comes from a legitimate misunderstanding. I think the Iranians thought that the ceasefire included Lebanon, and it just didn't," Vance told reporters in Budapest.

Earlier, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, a key intermediary in the US-Iran ceasefire talks, had said the truce would include Lebanon.

In a statement, Hezbollah condemned what it called Israel's "barbaric aggression" and said the attacks underscored its right to respond.

Hezbollah had stopped attacking Israeli targets early yesterday, three Lebanese sources close to the group told Reuters. The group's last public statement on its military activity was posted at 1 a.m. (2200 GMT Tuesday), saying it had targeted Israeli troops inside Lebanon on Tuesday evening.

"Hezbollah was informed that it is part of the ceasefire — so we abided by it, but Israel as usual has violated it and committed massacres all across Lebanon," senior Hezbollah lawmaker Ibrahim al-Moussawi told Reuters.

Another Hezbollah lawmaker, Hassan Fadlallah, told Reuters there would be "repercussions for the entire agreement" if Israel's attacks continued.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned the US and Israel it would deliver a "regret-inducing response" if attacks on Lebanon did not stop.

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun condemned yesterday's strikes and said French President Emmanuel Macron had told him he was ready to make a diplomatic push for Lebanon to be included in any ceasefire.

A senior Lebanese official had earlier told Reuters that Lebanon had not taken part in correspondence leading up to the ceasefire.Most of yesterday's strikes were in civilian-populated areas, Israel's military said.

Hours before the attacks, the military had issued warnings for some areas of southern Beirut and southern Lebanon. No such warning was given for central Beirut, which was also hit. Following the strikes, Israeli military spokesperson Avichay Adraee said on X that Hezbollah had moved out of its traditional stronghold in southern Beirut's Dahiyeh neighbourhood to religiously mixed areas elsewhere.

He said Israel's military would pursue Hezbollah wherever it was.

Tehran residents relieved but divided by war truce

AFP
Tehran

While some Iranians in the capital Tehran fear the ceasefire with the United States will lead to nothing, others declared victory and most breathed a sigh of relief after weeks of war.

"Everyone is at ease now, we are more relaxed," Sakineh Mohammadi, a 50-year-old housewife, said, saying she was "proud" of her country.

Just the day before, US President Donald Trump threatened to eradicate "a whole civilisation" in Iran if its leaders did not heed his ultimatum to accept Washington's war demands.

That was enough to cause a "nervous breakdown" for Simin, a 48-year-old English teacher, after more than a month of bombing.

"I couldn't feel my legs or arms anymore," she said.

"We were terrified to our very core... The shock and psychological pressure were so intense that even now, we don't know whether to feel relieved by the truce or not."

That same evening, panicked residents of Tehran tried to flee north to the shores of the Caspian Sea, where many had sought refuge during the very first days of the war.

For those who stayed, the night was long and anxious.

Their eyes were glued to the latest developments on television until Trump announced the two-week truce, which came in the middle of the night for Iranians.

Since the truce was declared, the bombs have fallen silent in Tehran, and the Iranian capital now has the air of a public holiday.

Many shops were closed and outdoor cafes were packed in upscale neighbourhoods, as Tehran's legendary traffic jams vanished yesterday.

So did the checkpoints manned by armed men which had spread throughout the city in recent weeks, with only barriers and signs remaining on the roadside where they once stood.

The smell of burning hangs from a closed airport and buildings that have been destroyed or gutted.

On the facade of one building, giant portraits of the Islamic republic's founder, R Khomeini, and his successor Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, killed on the first day of the war, overlook a field of ruins.

Despite thousands of people dead and widespread damage inflicted, Behrouz Ghahramani is "not afraid" of the American-Israeli enemy.

If the war resumes, "we will attack them again", he said.

"We were the ones who imposed this ceasefire on the United States by demonstrating our military power," the 67-year-old said, boasting of Iran's millennia-long history.



Iranians react after a ceasefire announcement at the Enqelab square, in Tehran, yesterday. **(AFP)**

قطر للطاقة QatarEnergy LNG

QatarEnergy LNG
Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/EAR/7647/26 RECYCLING OF SPENT MOLECULAR SIEVES AND OTHER WASTE STREAMS ON CALL OFF BASIS	09/04/2026 to 20/04/2026	0	260,000	27/04/2026

Scope of Work:
Company, requires services of reputed companies on a call-off basis to provide co-processing, recycling or energy recovery services to Company for a duration of five (5) years for various waste streams such as:
- Spent Molecular Sieves, Activated Alumina, Ceramic Balls, Spent Catalyst
- Spent Activated Carbon and Anthracite
- Bio-Sludge
- (Optional) Used garnet
- (Optional) Incinerator ash

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

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

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

Rescue efforts after Kenya building collapse



Kenya Red Cross members and volunteers search through a rubble where a building collapsed, killing three people and injuring several others, at the Nyayo high-rise, Soweto village in Kibera, Nairobi, yesterday. **(AFP)**

Israeli strikes in Gaza kill four, including Al Jazeera journalist

Reuters
Cairo



Flames rise after a strike on the vehicle of Palestinian journalist Muhammad Washah in southern Gaza City, yesterday. **(AFP)**

Israeli airstrikes in the Gaza Strip killed four people yesterday, including an Al Jazeera journalist, local health authorities said and the the television network reported.

The strike that killed Al Jazeera's Muhammad Washah targeted a vehicle he and one other Palestinian, who was also killed, were driving along the coastal road in Gaza City, health authorities said. In February 2024, at the height of Israel's war in Gaza, the military accused Washah of being a member of Hamas' military wing.

At the time, Hamas and Al Jazeera denied that Washah had any affiliation with the group. Israel's military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on his killing.

Al Jazeera, which also did not immediately respond to a request for comment, reported on its Arabic-language TV channel that he was killed in a drone strike.

The Hamas-run government media office in Gaza condemned Washah's killing.

TWO OTHERS KILLED IN GAZA

In a separate incident in Gaza, medics said an Israeli airstrike killed two people in the central Gaza Strip, without providing details. There was no immediate comment from Israel's military on the incident.

Israel and Hamas reached a US-brokered deal last October that was meant to halt violence in the Palestinian territory. Both sides accuse each other of breaching the agreement.

Israeli fire has killed at least 700 people since the deal was struck. Israel says four soldiers have been killed by fighters during the same period.

Israel has previously killed Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza and in the occupied West Bank.

In August 2025, Al Jazeera journalist Anas al-Sharif was killed along with four other colleagues in an Israeli airstrike.

In May 2022, Israeli troops shot dead Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, a US-Palestinian citizen, while she was covering a military operation in the West Bank city of Jenin. The military said an investigation into that incident concluded she was likely killed by unintentional fire by its forces.

The Committee to Protect Journalists has said it has documented 223 journalists and media workers killed in Gaza, Lebanon and Israel. Among those killed were journalists working for Reuters.

The CPJ says Israel has never held anyone accountable in the killings of journalists by its military.

An Israel Defence Forces spokesperson said the military has targeted only combatants and military sites, avoided civilians and journalists, and warned that staying in active combat zones carries inherent risks despite efforts to minimise harm.

The military has alleged at times, without providing verifiable evidence, that some journalists were killed because of their links to Hamas, which their news organisations denied.

Gunmen kill at least 60 in northwest Nigeria: locals, humanitarian groups

AFP
Kano

Gunmen have killed at least 60 people across several remote villages in northwest Nigeria this week, local clergy and humanitarian groups said yesterday, as the country battles a surge in insecurity in the north.

The attacks, spanning two neighbouring states of Kebbi and Niger, have hit at least 10 villages, according to clergymen and a humanitarian report seen by AFP.

According to a situation report citing three local humanitarian sources, including a health facility and a community organising group, 20 deaths were recorded in a Tuesday attack in Erena, in Shiroro local government area of Niger state.

A separate military security report said the attackers were "bandits" with "sophisticated arms" who "invaded (a) military camp".

Police confirmed the Shiroro attack, adding "two vigilante members and a driver from the joint security team" were killed.

Shiroro district has persistently been terrorised by local criminal groups known as "bandits" and by militants. The two are increasingly forging alliances, raiding and displacing communities.

In neighbouring Kebbi, a clergy member said he could confirm that 24 had been killed "but from the reports we are getting today there are more than 40 killed".

Another Christian leader also gave a toll of around 40.

"They killed everybody in sight, they killed different communities and traditional worshippers," said the first clergy, asking not to be named for security reasons.

"They killed indiscriminately," he said, adding they burnt churches, houses of others, sheep and cattle, as well as food barns.

He said the attackers had been rampaging through the area "for the last three days".

They comb the surrounding bushes where villagers would ordinarily hide during attacks "and hunt around for those who were hiding in the bush and shoot them down", the clergyman said.

"They were not leaving anything, they were not taking anything. They were to kill and destroy." At least 500 people have fled and are being sheltered in churches and schools in Yauri town in Kebbi state.

"People can't even go back to bury their dead," he said.

No group has immediately claimed responsibility, but police blamed a local militant group known as Mahmuda for the attacks in Kebbi. Mahmuda group, active in northwest Nigeria, is affiliated with Mahmud al-Nigeri, a senior official in the Ansaru militant group. Ansaru broke away from the Boko Haram militant group and has since allied itself with AQMI.

Kebbi state sits on Nigeria's border with Benin and Niger and since 2025 has been targeted by a rising number of militant attacks.

Conflict monitor ACLED says there has been a surge in violence in the area carried out by groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group.

Nearly 5,000 SA Afrikaners take up Trump refugee offer

AFP
Johannesburg

Nearly 5,000 white Afrikaners have entered the United States under a programme launched by President Donald Trump nearly a year ago based on unfounded claims that the South African minority faces persecution, a document seen by AFP yesterday showed.

The Trump administration has essentially ended refugee admissions as part of a crackdown on immigration but made an exception for South Africa's white Afrikaans community, descendants of the first European settlers.

All of 4,499 people listed as resettled across 48 US states between October 1 last year and March 31 this year were South Africans except for three Afghans, according to the document from the US Department of State's Bureau of Population.

Another 340 South Africans were admitted in the previous financial year, after Trump's return to the White House in January 2025.

February and March this year saw the most arrivals, with more than 1,300 people resettled each month.

Trump's administration in May last year made the offer of refugee status to the minority white Afrikaner community claiming they were victims of racial discrimination and even "genocide", which the South African government strongly denies.

The first group of around 50 travelled to the United States on a chartered flight on May 12, while later arrivals took commercial flights.

The US government in October announced it would slash refugee admissions to 7,500 in fiscal year 2026, down from more than 100,000 a year under Democratic President Joe Biden, and give priority to white South Africans.

Pretoria and Washington, already at odds over a range of policy issues, clashed in December after South Africa raided a centre set up to fast-track resettlement applications to the United States.

Washington has repeatedly claimed that Afrikaners are being persecuted since the end of white minority rule in 1994, citing attacks on their farms and requirements for black representation in business.

Pretoria firmly rejects the allegations, pointing out that black South Africans are the main victims of the country's high crime rate and that economic empowerment laws are intended to redress stark inequalities inherited from apartheid.

Ethiopian police arrest human trafficking ring behind 3,000 victims

AFP
Addis Ababa

Ethiopian police said they arrested a "dangerous international human trafficker" and nine accomplices accused of smuggling over 3,000 people to Libya, where they were held hostage and, in some cases, tortured, abused, or killed.

The human trafficking network has been under investigation since 2018, police said in a statement posted on Facebook on Tuesday, recruiting young people from Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Kenya, and Somalia who hoped to migrate to Europe through Libya. The ring operated five warehouses in Libya, holding victims hostage while forcing their families to pay huge ransoms. Those who could not pay were given only one meagre meal a day, beaten, whipped with rubber or electric cables, and had their hands and feet chained, police added.

Some victims were burned with plastic water bottles, women were abused, and many died during the torture.

"They engaged in illegally trafficking more than 3,000 people, killing over 100 people, and abusing more than 50 women," reads the police statement.

Veteran president set to win sixth term in strategic Djibouti

AFP
Djibouti City





Djibouti's incumbent president and presidential candidate Ismail Omar Guelleh (centre) waves to supporters at his final campaign rally at Gouled Stadium in Djibouti, yesterday, ahead of the 2026 Djiboutian presidential elections. **Right:** Supporters of Djibouti's incumbent president and presidential candidate Guelleh dance to traditional songs wearing outfits bearing the candidate's image at his final campaign rally. **(AFP)**

Djibouti's leader Ismail Omar Guelleh is expected to win a presidential election tomorrow, extending his 27-year rule of the tiny, highly strategic Horn of Africa nation.

Guelleh, 78, known as "IOG", is one of Africa's longest serving leaders and has ruled the nation of around 1mn people since 1999.

He has turned the arid former French colony into an international military and maritime hub for both the United States and China.

With the opposition divided and largely silenced, Guelleh faces a single, low-profile opponent.

He has campaigned across the country dressed in green, with a matching jersey and cap.

"There's not much at stake. It's just a token competition," said Sonia le Gouriellec, a Horn of Africa expert at Lille Catholic University.

In a volatile region, Guelleh casts himself as the guarantor of stability in a nation nestled between old foes Ethiopia and Eritrea.

To its south lies Somaliland, a self-proclaimed republic with a deep-water port and airfield whose unilateral independence from Somalia is recognised only by Israel.

Last year, Djibouti struck a partnership with the Saudi Arabia to run its port at Tadjourah.

The country's stability has drawn foreign military powers to establish bases there.

France's biggest military base in Africa, counting some 1,500 soldiers, is in Djibouti, while China, Japan and Italy have troops in the country too.

Djibouti is also home to the only permanent US military base in Africa, with some 4,000 troops supporting "anti-terrorist" operations on the continent, notably in Somalia.

Djibouti has a unique location between Africa and the Arabian Peninsula.

It is situated at the mouth of the key Bab al-Mandab strait, a narrow waterway between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden and one of the world's busiest shipping routes. Without agriculture to rely on, Djibouti depends on its ports for 70% of gross domestic product, with Ethiopia its main maritime outlet.

Now, with the Middle East engulfed in the war pitting the United States and Israel against Iran, shipping in the Bab al-Mandab strait is under threat, possibly from Iran's allies, the Houthi fighters in Yemen.

But the presence in Djibouti of military from China, another ally of Iran's, "protects the country from attacks by the Houthis" for now, said Le Gouriellec, the Horn of Africa expert.

Just over 256,000 people are eligible to choose in tomorrow's election between Guelleh and Mohamed Farah Samatar, a former member of the ruling party and head of the Unified Democratic Centre (CDU), which has no seats in parliament. Omar Ali Ewado, head of the Djibouti League of Human Rights (LDDH), has called the vote a "masquerade" and said it is a "foregone conclusion".

"The person who will challenge President Guelleh is a member of a small party subservient to those in power," he said.

Djibouti is accused by human rights organisations of repressing dissenting voices. It ranks 168th out of 180 in the 2025 press freedom index by Reporters Without Borders.

The head of state is also accused of favouring his ethnic group over the minorities, who complain of being marginalised.

Guelleh won re-election in 2021 with 97% of the vote, in a ballot largely boycotted by the opposition.

That was meant to be his final term but parliament voted to remove the 75-year age limit for presidential candidates.

Asked whether Guelleh, who has difficulty walking, will see out his sixth mandate, Le Gouriellec said it depended on his health.

"Those around him, especially his wife, his stepson and his daughter, are in the front row and are already influential," she said.

WORLD

Frustration fuels Peru's ultra-crowded presidential vote

AFP
Lima

Peruvians will choose from a bewildering array of 35 presidential candidates this Sunday, electing the next leader of an Andean nation beset by crime and a string of short-lived, scandal?tainted presidencies.

"Now any old person runs for office," said 51-year-old schoolteacher Jane Layza, pondering the plethora of presidential hopefuls, and how she will cast her ballot.

A few in the field are well known — a popular male comic, the daughter of a brutal autocrat, and a former Lima mayor.

But no candidate is polling above the teens, and it is unlikely any will break the 50% threshold needed to avoid a runoff. That is frustrating news for fed-up Peruvians.

Pocked with stifling jungles, brilliant snowcapped peaks, and bone-dry deserts, this crucible of the Inca Empire has in recent years struggled with chronic political instability and a surge in organised crime.

The country has had eight presidents in the last decade. So many have been removed from office and jailed that they have a specialised prison of their own.

Latinobarometro pollsters found more than 90% of Peruvians have "little" or "no confidence" in their government and parliament, the highest figures in Latin America.

"I'm not going to vote for anyone who is in government today, that much is very clear," said 56-year-old shopkeeper Nancy Chuqui.

In the last decade, the homicide rate has more than doubled.

Peruvian police once received 3,200 reports of extortion a year. Now they get at least 26,500 — and that is unlikely to be the full total.

It is not just that criminality has increased in volume, according to sociologist Patricia Zarate. "What has changed is the harshness, the intensity of crime: extortion, attacks, murders," she said.

A kaleidoscope of foreign criminal gangs from Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Mexico compete with homegrown rivals for control of lucrative trafficking routes and other illicit business.

According to Zarate, voters "believe that politics is not only associated with corruption, but also with organised crime," and they expect "more of the same" from any new leader.

Paradoxically, the Peruvian economy remains one of the most stable in the region, with the lowest inflation in Latin America and growing mining exports.

Polls suggest that Peruvians, like many in Latin America, are looking to right-wing candidates for answers. But experts say the election could throw up a surprise.

In 2021, leftist Pedro Castillo polled in seventh place a week before the first round, but eventually won.

This time around, candidates have tried to break through to voters with last-minute, headline-grabbing promises on crime.

Former Lima mayor Rafael Lopez Aliaga, vowed to send criminals to Amazon jails ringed with deadly snakes.

Frontrunner Keiko Fujimori, in her fourth attempt to win the presidency, has promised to copy her late father's widely denounced use of anonymous judges.



A man waits for a bus next to political propaganda in the Villa Maria del Triunfo neighborhood in Lima, yesterday. (**AFP**)

She leads with 15% in an Ipsos poll published last Sunday, the last one authorised before the election.

Voting is compulsory for about 27mn Peruvians, out of a total population of 34mn.

Incumbent Jose Maria Balcazar, interim president for less than two months, is barred from running.

According to Ipsos, a third of voters remain undecided, or plan to cast a blank or spoiled ballot.

Political scientist Eduardo Dargent said many Peruvians will vote with little or no information.

There are so many candidates that there's no way to get to know them all, he said.

Rio Olympic Park velodrome fire brought under control, no injuries reported

Reuters
Rio de Janeiro

A fire at the velodrome in Rio de Janeiro's Olympic Park was brought under control early yesterday, with no risk of it spreading to other parts of the complex and no injuries reported, fire officials said.

Fire crews were called to the scene at 4:17am (0717 GMT), and around 80 firefighters and 20 fire trucks tackled the blaze, the state's military fire department said in a statement, adding that no one was hurt.

The velodrome was built for the 2016 Rio Olympics and is administered by the city government. It houses the Olympic Museum, which features exhibits and historical artifacts from the Games, including the Olympic torch and medals.

Firefighters were battling the blaze both inside and outside the building and working to protect artifacts at the Olympic Museum that were at risk, Lieutenant Colonel Fabio Contreiras said in an interview with CNN Brasil. Forensic experts were assessing the extent of the damage after the blaze reached the canvas ceiling of the velodrome and spread, Rio de Janeiro Mayor Eduardo Cavaliere told journalists.


Flames and smoke rise from a fire at the Velodrome in the Olympic Park in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, yesterday, in this still image obtained from a video. (**Reuters**)

"The velodrome and the Olympic Museum were barely affected by the fire," he said.

The velodrome is Brazil's largest and most prominent track cycling center, and serves as a training base for the national weightlifting and cycling teams.

In 2017, its roof was struck by two fires, causing minor damage.

Venezuela's interim leader vows to 'monitor' amnesty law application

AFP
Caracas

Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodriguez vowed on Tuesday to "monitor" the application of an amnesty law aimed at freeing political prisoners jailed under former leader Nicolas Maduro.

The interim leader said she would keep an eye on the amnesty law in order to address the opposition's "extremism," which she said was inciting "conflict" in the country.

The law was passed in February by Rodriguez under pressure from Washington, after US forces captured Maduro and took him to New York to face drug trafficking charges that he denies.

One of the most significant reforms championed by Rodriguez, it aims to turn the page on nearly three decades of state repression, but has been criticised by human rights organisations as being selectively applied.


Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodriguez. (**Reuters/ File photo**)

"More than 8,000 people have benefited" from amnesty, Rodriguez said in a televised speech.

"Don't think that we don't know" that "people who have benefited and continue to benefit from this amnesty law... are currently fomenting conflict," Rodriguez said in her address at the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas.

"It is therefore important that we monitor the implementation of the amnesty law."

"I'm not excluding anyone. I am simply saying that we need to monitor the situation to ensure that the opportunity we're providing to address extremism and radicalism can truly, truly help resolve these issues and secure the future," she added.

Around 700 political prisoners have been freed under the law, but between 500 and 700 remain behind bars, according to humans right organisations. Some groups say the law is being unfairly applied by judges accused of supporting the government.

The law excludes those accused of involvement in alleged coups and assassination attempts.

Opposition figures such as activist Javier Tarazona, one of the country's most prominent dissidents, and Perkins Rocha, legal advisor to Nobel Peace Prize laureate and longtime opposition figure Maria Corina Machado, have been excluded from its scope.

Ecuador recalls ambassador to Colombia in latest diplomatic stir

Reuters
Quito

Ecuador's foreign minister recalled the country's ambassador to Colombia yesterday for consultations after comments earlier this week from Colombia's president that Ecuador said constituted interference in Ecuadorean affairs.

The ambassador's recall is the latest tit-for-tat in an ongoing diplomatic row between the neighbouring Andean countries.

Colombian President Gustavo Petro said on social media on Monday that former Ecuadorean Vice-President Jorge Glas, who is serving a sentence for corruption, was a political prisoner and asked Ecuador's President Daniel Noboa to release or hand him over to Colombia, citing Glas's Colombian nationality.

In response to Petro, Noboa wrote on social media that calling Glas a political prisoner constitutes an attack on sovereignty and a violation of the principle of non-intervention.

"There's a corrupt official in jail who must answer to Ecuador," he said.

Glas, who served as vice president under Rafael Correa from 2013-2017, was convicted for illicit association in the Odebrecht corruption case, bribery related to campaign financing between 2012 and 2016, and misuse of public funds after the country's 2016 earthquake.

"We are taking steps to express, to reiterate, Ecuador's strong protest to Colombia regarding the terms used by President Petro and the interference in decisions made by different branches of the Ecuadorean state," Foreign Minister Gabriela Sommerfeld told a local radio.

Ecuador, whose right-wing leader Noboa has aligned closely with Washington, has clashed frequently in recent months with Colombia, led by leftist and at times Trump foe Petro. Differences concerning border security and approaches to tackling to drug traffickers have, for example, provoked a trade spat, with both governments levying tariffs on imports from their neighbour.

US-Cuba talks on de-escalating tensions at 'very preliminary' stage

AFP
Havana

Talks between Cuba and the United States on de-escalating tensions are still at a "very preliminary" stage, Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister Josefina Vidal told AFP on Tuesday.

Cuba has been bracing for a possible US attack following threats from US President Donald Trump about "taking" the communist-run island after ousting Venezuela's leader and attacking Iran.

The former Cold War rivals have, at the same time, held exploratory talks.

"We are in a very preliminary, very initial phase, and there are still no structured negotiations between the two governments," Vidal told AFP during a demonstration in Havana to denounce the impact of US sanctions on the impoverished island.

Trump effectively shut down oil exports to Cuba in January after US forces ousted Havana's main regional ally and crude supplier, Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro.

Trump also threatened tariffs on other countries that ship oil to Cuba, deepening an energy crisis on the island marked by recurring blackouts.


Cuba's Vice-Foreign Minister Josefina Vidal, accompanies a women protest against the sanctions imposed by the United States, in Havana on Tuesday. (**AFP**)

Last week, however, Washington allowed through a Russian oil tanker.

Vidal, 65, was a key figure in the restoration of relations between Washington and the communist-run island during Barack Obama's presidency in 2015.

In February, the Miami Herald listed her as one of Secretary of State Marco Rubio's interlocutors, along with Raul Guillermo Rodriguez Castro, grandson of former president Raul Castro.

Cuba has taken apparent steps in recent weeks to ease tensions, notably releasing groups of prisoners in two batches, in what it called a "humanitarian gesture."

Last week it announced the pardon of more than 2,000 prisoners. However, none of these were political prisoners, according to human rights NGOs.

At least 20 political prisoners were released in mid-March.

Vidal contrasted the current talks with the negotiations between the Obama and Raul Castro administrations, which led to an historic rapprochement that Trump later walked back.

In 2015, "we worked to create a relationship that was not without differences, but that did not place those differences at the centre," Vidal stressed.

She insisted however that "Cuba has always believed in dialogue" and "not in confrontation."

Founder of CJNG cartel pleads guilty in US court

The co-founder and onetime leader of Mexico's powerful Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG) cartel, Erick Valencia-Salazar, pled guilty to narcotics charges in a US court, the Department of Justice (DOJ) said on Tuesday. Known as "El 85," 49-year-old Valencia-Salazar was first captured in Mexico in 2012, freed, and then captured again in 2022. He was extradited to the United States in February 2025. Defining cartels and gangs as threats to national security, the category means anyone who provides a designated FTO with "material support" can be subjected to financial sanctions and criminal prosecution. "Valencia-Salazar pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine for unlawful importation into the United States," the DOJ statement said. (**AFP**)

Indigenous groups demand greater land protection in Brazil protest

AFP
Brasília

Indigenous protesters from across Brazil marched to the capital Brasilia on Tuesday to demand the government expedite recognition of their ancestral lands.

The protest, featuring tribal members in colourful traditional feathers and body decorations, came six months before leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, popularly known as Lula, faces a re-election battle.

Indigenous Brazilian peoples broadly supported Lula in 2022 when he defeated his far-right predecessor, Jair Bolsonaro, whose government ceased to recognise native lands and fueled deforestation in the Amazon.

Lula made an important symbolic gesture by naming a respected figure from the Guajajara-Tenetehara ethnicity, Sonia Guajajara, as the head of the new Ministry of Indigenous Peoples.

Lula's government has overseen a drop in Amazon deforestation — promising to eradicate the felling of trees by 2030 — and the recognition of 20 territories for the exclusive use of Indigenous communities.

But for some, the new measures are not enough.

"Our principal demand continues to be the formal recognition of Indigenous territories," Toya Manchineri, from the Coordinator of Indigenous Organisations of the Amazon, told AFP.

Experts see the Indigenous reserves as a way to help fight climate change and preserve biodiversity.

As Latin America's largest country, Brazil has 1.7mn Indigenous people out of a population of 212mn.

The Indigenous groups will camp out in Brasilia until Friday, and plan to dance, play music, host artisan markets and debate.

Thousands marched to Congress on Tuesday, where the Association of Brazilian Indigenous People (APIB) accused lawmakers of being the "enemies of the people" for their alliance with the powerful agribusiness sector — one of the main drivers of deforestation.

The majority-conservative Congress approved a law in 2023 that limits Indigenous people's land rights. This was later struck down by the Supreme Court, but right-wing parties are working for new restrictions.

The legal limbo leaves Indigenous areas exposed to the penetration of agribusiness and mining interests, Manchineri said. "The impact is huge."

According to the APIB, a hundred Indigenous territories are awaiting the formal signoff of government recognition.

Despite slow progress, native groups will still "cast their votes for the re-election" of Lula, Manchineri predicts.

Although she demanded "justice and resources" for her community, Marilene Gervasio, from the Bare people, said she hoped the leftist will be re-elected.

Lula will face Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, the son of the far-right ex-president, in the October election. The most recent polls show a close second round between them.



Indigenous people march to the Congress building with a sign reading "Without indigenous peoples, there are no living rivers" during the annual Indigenous gathering Acampamento Terra Livre in Brasilia on Tuesday. (**AFP**)

Trump threatens 50% tariffs on countries supplying Iran with weapons

Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that imports from countries supplying Iran with military weapons will face immediate 50% tariffs with no exemptions, threatening the new duties just hours after agreeing to a two-week ceasefire with Tehran.

After more than five weeks of air strikes against Iran's missile launchers, military installations and weapons industry, Trump returned to a favourite foreign policy pressure tool — tariffs — effectively warning China and Russia in a social media post against restocking Tehran's military inventories.

But the US Supreme Court stripped the US president of his fastest and broadest tariff authority, the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, in February when it ruled that his broadest global tariffs imposed under the 1977 law were illegal. "A Country supplying Military Weapons to Iran will be immediately tariffed, on any and all goods sold to the US of America, 50%, effective immediately, There will be no exclusions or exemptions! President DJT," Trump wrote on the Truth Social site, without naming any countries.

China and Russia have helped Iran build military capacity to counter US and Israeli pressure, supplying missiles, air-defence systems and dual-use technologies intended to bolster deterrence. That support appeared capped during the U.S.-Israeli attacks on Iran. Both Beijing and Moscow have denied supplying any weapons recently, although allegations against Russia have persisted. Reuters reported in February, prior to the first U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran, that Tehran was considering a purchase of supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles from China. Reuters also reported in March that China's top semiconductor maker, SMIC , has sent chipmaking tools to Iran's military, according to two senior Trump administration officials. "This is a China-related threat, the way I read it. And China will read it that way," said Josh Lipsky, vice president and chair of international economics at the Atlantic Council.

Of Trump's still available trade tools, an active "Section 301" unfair trade practices action against Chinese goods from his first term would be the most likely vehicle for adding new tariffs quickly

Although drone and missile parts routinely flow from Chinese entities to Iran, evading US sanctions, Lipsky said Trump was unlikely to follow through with new tariffs in the near term because that would derail his planned trip to Beijing to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

On Tuesday, US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said Trump would seek to maintain the current stability in the US-China relationship, to preserve US access to Chinese-produced rare-earth minerals and magnets while maintaining prior tariff levels. Greer said Trump wanted to avoid a "massive confrontation" with Xi.

Of Trump's still available trade tools, an active "Section 301" unfair trade practices action against Chinese goods from his first term would be the most likely vehicle for adding new tariffs quickly, Lipsky said.

A more limited tool would be Section 232 of the Cold War-era Trade Expansion Act of 1962, aimed at protecting strategic domestic industries on national security grounds, but it would limit duties to specific sectors, lacking the broad economy-wide impact of the prior IEEPA-based tariffs.

Trump's tariffs on Chinese goods over nearly eight years already have cut US imports from China sharply, from a peak of $538.5bn in 2018 to $308.4bn in 2025, with further declines recorded in January and February of 2026. Russia has been another source of arms technology for Iran, but US imports of Russian goods also have shrivelled since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022 and the wave of financial sanctions imposed on Moscow as a result of that move. US imports from Russia, one of the only countries not subject to Trump's now-cancelled "reciprocal" tariffs, jumped 26.1% to $3.8bn in 2025. These imports are dominated by palladium, which is used in automotive catalytic converters, fertilisers and their ingredients, and enriched uranium for nuclear reactors. The Commerce Department already is moving to impose punitive tariffs on Russian palladium after an anti-dumping investigation.

'Trump meeting with Rutte to decide on Nato withdrawal'

AFP
Washington

US President Donald Trump will discuss the possibility of leaving Nato when he meets with the alliance's chief Mark Rutte on Wednesday, the White House said, accusing Washington's partners of "turning their back" on the American people.

The meeting comes one day after the US and Iran agreed to a two-week ceasefire. Trump has expressed anger at Western partners' refusal to back his war on Iran, rocking the 77-year-old transatlantic alliance.

"It's quite sad that Nato turned their backs on the American people over the course of the last six weeks when it's the American people who have been funding their defence," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters.

When asked if Trump would discuss a possible withdrawal from Nato, Leavitt said: "It's something the president has discussed, and I think it's something the president will be discussing in a couple of hours with Secretary-General Rutte."

"Perhaps you'll hear directly from the president following that meeting," she added.

Trump has branded Nato partners "cowards" for limiting US forces' access to bases on their territories and for refusing to lead efforts to open the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

But Nato's secretary-general touts a record of pulling Trump back onside — and will be looking to do so again when he meets the president, as well as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth.


Nato Secrertary-General Mark Rutte (left) and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio speak with each other as they meet at the State Department in Washington, DC, yesterday. (**AFP**)

Ahead of the White House visit, Rutte met with Rubio to talk about Iran, Russia's war against Ukraine and Nato responsibilities.

"The two leaders discussed Operation Epic Fury, ongoing US-led efforts to bring a negotiated end to the Russia-Ukraine war, and increasing coordination and burden shifting with Nato Allies," said State Department Principal Deputy Spokesperson Tommy Pigott.

Nato has been thrust repeatedly into crisis since Trump returned to power last year — most acutely by his threat to seize the vast Arctic island of Greenland from alliance member Denmark. That followed him pulling the rug out from under Ukraine in its war against Russia, his threats not to protect allies unless they don't spend more on defence, and warnings that Washington could pull troops from Europe.

Dubbed a "Trump whisperer", Rutte, a former Dutch prime minister, has been central to allied efforts to mollify the US leader, often by means of flattery.

On Iran, he has sought to thread the needle by calling US efforts to degrade Tehran's military capability something to "applaud."

Trump has warmed to Rutte's praise, describing the secretary-general as "a wonderful guy" — even while claiming that fellow Nato countries had "gone out of their way not to help" in the Middle East.

Speaking as Rutte headed to Washington, a Nato official said he planned to "discuss current security dynamics including in the context of Iran as well as Russia's ongoing war against Ukraine" in his talks with Trump.

And he would "seek to build on the success" of last year's Nato summit in The Hague at which allies agreed to Trump's demand to ramp up their defence spending target, the official said. Trump has long railed against Nato, calling it "obsolete" in 2017 and mulling withdrawing.

Compounding the worries this time, however, Trump has been joined by traditional Nato supporters including Rubio, who warned last week the US was "going to have to reexamine" the relationship in light of the rift over Iran.

Acting AG defends probes of Trump foes

AFP
Washington

Acting US Attorney-General (AG) Todd Blanche on Tuesday defended investigations of individuals Donald Trump "has had issues with" and said only the president knows why his predecessor, Pam Bondi, was fired.

"We have thousands of ongoing investigations and prosecutions going on in this country right now," Blanche said at his first press appearance since being named interim head of the Justice Department last week.

"And it is true that some of them involve men, women and entities that the president, in the past, has had issues with and believes should be investigated," he said.

"That is his right, and indeed, it is his duty to do that."

Bondi was fired last week after reportedly drawing Trump's ire by falling short in efforts to prosecute perceived Trump political opponents such as former FBI director James Comey and New York Attorney-General Letitia James.

Blanche, Trump's former personal lawyer, said only the president knows why Bondi was dismissed.

"Nobody has any idea why the attorney general is no longer the attorney general and I'm the acting attorney general, except for President Trump," he said.

Blanche dismissed allegations the Justice Department was being "weaponised" against Trump's enemies and alleged there was "weaponisation" of the department by the Biden administration "the likes of which had never been seen in history."

"You had a president who was indicted four times by this department," he said in a reference to charges brought against Trump by Special Counsel Jack Smith.


Acting Attorney-General Todd Blanche takes questions during a news conference at the Robert F. Kennedy Department of Justice building on Tuesday in Washington, DC. (**AFP**)

Trump was accused by Smith of seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 election won by Democrat Joe Biden and mishandling classified documents. Both cases were dropped after Trump won the 2024 presidential election.

"What we've been doing for the past 14 months is changing this department," Blanche said. "People say the president wants to go after his political enemies. No, the president has said time and time again that he wants justice."

Blanche also defended the firing of scores of Justice Department prosecutors who had worked on the criminal cases against Trump.

"If you were a prosecutor and you were trying to prosecute your boss you have ethical duties as a lawyer that I think prevent you from continuing to work in that environment," he said. A number of career prosecutors fired since Trump took office have filed lawsuits claiming wrongful dismissal.

US serial killing suspect changes plea to guilty: US media

A man accused of murdering and dismembering seven women and scattering their remains around an elite US coastal community changed his plea to guilty yesterday, local media reported.
Rex Heuermann, 62, pleaded guilty in Suffolk County court to kidnapping, torturing and killing seven women across Long Island between 1993 and 2010 and now faces a life sentence if the judge approves his plea, PIX11 reported.
Architect Heuermann, who was first arrested in July 2023 outside his Manhattan office, had initially pleaded not guilty, raising the prospect of a lengthy trial for the families of his victims.
The remains of 11 murder victims — nine women, one man and a young girl — were found in 2010 and 2011 in the scrub along the parkway near Gilgo Beach, an Atlantic Ocean barrier beach on Long Island's south shore. The Gilgo Beach case had stumped investigators for years, with the bodies of the victims, found along the same isolated stretch of beach but no suspects identified. But in 2022, investigators narrowed their focus onto Heuermann. (**AFP**)

US Senate to vote on resolution to curb Trump's Iran war powers

US lawmakers will try again next week to pass a resolution to halt the Iran war and force President Donald Trump to obtain Congress' approval for any further attacks, Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer said yesterday, hours after Trump announced a two-week ceasefire.

"Congress must reassert its authority, especially at this dangerous moment," Schumer told a press conference at his office in New York.

Trump agreed to the ceasefire on Tuesday, less than two hours before his deadline for Tehran to reopen the blockaded Strait of Hormuz or face devastating attacks on its civilian infrastructure.

Trump's threat that "a whole civilisation will die tonight" prompted global concern and censure from Democrats, dozens of whom called for Trump's removal from office. The 1949 Geneva Conventions on humanitarian conduct in war prohibit attacks on sites considered essential for civilians.

Schumer called Trump's statements "unhinged" and criticised the war for failing to weaken Iran's government or rein in its nuclear programme, while global fuel prices have risen. Iran says its nuclear program is peaceful. The Trump administration has sought to portray the war as a decisive victory, although the top US general said US troops stood ready to resume fighting.

The White House says Trump's actions are legal and within his rights as commander-in-chief to protect the US by ordering limited military operations. Democrats in the Senate and House of Representatives have tried and repeatedly failed in recent months to pass war powers resolutions to force Trump to obtain lawmakers' authorisation before launching military operations.

Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress — who hold slim majorities in both the Senate and House — have almost unanimously backed his policies. Although the US Constitution says that Congress, not the president, can declare war, that restriction does not apply for short-term operations or if the country faces an immediate threat.

Separately, the Democratic leader in the House, New York Representative Hakeem Jeffries, said the House should also vote on a resolution to curb the war on Iran. "We need a permanent end to Donald Trump's reckless war of choice," Jeffries said on CNN. (**Rueters**)

'Pinprick of light': Artemis crew witnesses meteorite impacts on Moon

AFP
Washington

During their historic lunar flyby, astronauts on Nasa's Artemis II mission witnessed meteorites striking the rugged surface of the Moon, a sight that has piqued scientists' curiosity.

"That was definitely impact flashes on the moon. And Jeremy (Hansen) just saw another one," mission commander Reid Wiseman reported on Monday while flying around the Moon — the first such journey by humans in more than half a century.

"Amazed," replied Kelsey Young, the mission's lunar science lead, as she followed the spacecraft from more than 250,000 miles (400,000km) away on Earth.

"I don't know if I expected to have the crew see any on this mission, so you probably saw the surprise and shock on my face," she said, recounting the strikes at a press briefing the next day.

Among Nasa's team in Houston, there were "audible screams of delight" from scientists when the crew described flashes of light caused by meteorite impact, Young said.

The phenomenon is "something that we have not witnessed often," the mission's backup astronaut Jenni Gibbons told AFP.

"They were really high priority science for us, so the fact that they saw four or five was just outstanding."

As the astronauts hurtled towards home, Nasa asked them on Tuesday about the meteorite strikes they saw during their nearly seven-hour observation period.

"Were they prolonged? And did you notice any colour?" Young asked. "It's a pinprick of light," replied Canadian crew member Hansen. "I would suspect there were a lot more of them."


Artemis II crew members Mission Specialist Christina Koch (left), Mission Specialist Jeremy Hansen (top), Commander Reid Wiseman (right), and Pilot Victor Glover (bottom) posing for a group photo inside the Orion spacecraft on Tuesday. (**AFP**)

"I would say they were a millisecond, like the fastest a camera shutter can open and close," added Wiseman, who said the flashes were "white to bluish white."

"To me there was no doubt we were seeing it, and we were all seeing it," he added.

According to Nasa's tally, the team — which broke the record for the furthest distance from Earth during their flyby — reported a total of six meteorite impacts on the lunar surface.

Ground crews are now working to match these observations with data from a satellite orbiting the Moon, said Young, adding that the majority of the sightings took place during a solar eclipse, when the Moon passed in front of the Sun.

"I'm personally... surprised they would see that many, although they (had) been trained to look for them," said Bruce Betts, chief scientist at the Planetary Society.

According to Betts, the descriptions will allow scientists to "get some idea of the frequency of impact" as well as the size of the projectiles.

One question was what size an object needed to be to create a flash visible to the astronauts, Betts said.

"It's not a piece of dust, but it's not a meter-size boulder, either."

The observations raise questions and show that the "daily flux of meteors should be monitored more closely in the future before a lunar base is established," said Peter Schultz, Professor Emeritus of Geological Sciences at Brown University.

On Earth, smaller objects "burn up high in the... atmosphere due to friction" before they reach the ground, noted Betts, which is not the case on Earth's natural satellite.

"There is more of a challenge on the Moon," he said.

WORLD

Myanmar clients sue Telenor for giving data to junta

AFP
Oslo

Myanmar customers of the Norwegian telecoms group Telenor have sued the company for sharing their sensitive personal data with the junta, in a civil class action lawsuit filed in Norway yesterday.

The plaintiffs are seeking damages, arguing the military used the information to identify, arrest and prosecute pro-democracy activists suspected of opposing the 2021 coup in Myanmar, which constituted "serious human rights violations", they said in a statement.

The information included names, physical addresses, Facebook and bank accounts, location data and call logs, they said.

They allege that the data sharing led to, among other things, the 2022 execution of a prominent government opponent and lawmaker, Zewa Thaw, and the arrest and jailing of civil society activist Aung Thu, the statement said.

Telenor, in which the Norwegian state owns a 54 percent stake, denied responsibility.

"In Myanmar, refusing requests from the military authorities could, in the worst case, have led to imprisonment, torture or the death penalty," it said in a statement to AFP. "Telenor Myanmar had no real options. We could not play Russian roulette with the lives of our employees."

Acknowledging that it was "terrible" if Telenor data had been "misused by the authorities," it said it was "solely the military authorities in Myanmar who are responsible for how they treat their own population".

The plaintiffs said Justice and



Logo of Telenor. **(AFP/File photo)**

Accountability Initiative (JAI), a Swedish non-profit, and a Norwegian law firm had filed the lawsuit with the Asker og Baerum district court on their behalf.

If successful, the case would be "the first ever to hold a telecoms company to account for not sufficiently protecting user data from access by an authoritarian regime", according to Beini Ye, a lawyer for the Open Society Justice Initiative, which is supporting the suit.

Telenor Myanmar began operations in 2014 and had more than 18 million customers by 2021.

After a February 2021 coup, the junta launched a crackdown on the civilian resistance movement.

In July 2021, Telenor announced plans to sell its Myanmar subsidiary "despite warnings by civil society organisations", the plaintiffs said.

The company later cited junta demands that it install monitoring equipment on the network as a reason for leaving the country.

According to the plaintiffs, the transaction meant all customer data and surveillance technology that Telenor had installed were turned over to a military-linked company.

They said they were aware of "at least 1,253 phone numbers belonging to users whose data was shared".

Telenor exited Myanmar in March 2022.

Vietnam's top leader to visit China next week

AFP
Hanoi

Vietnam's top leader To Lam plans to visit China next week to meet with counterpart Xi Jinping, an official briefed on his travel plans told AFP yesterday, his first foreign trip since becoming president as well as Communist Party chief.

Lam was elected president — the number two position in Vietnamese politics — by the National Assembly on Tuesday, unifying leadership of the party and state as Xi did in China.

"Vietnam's General Secretary and President To Lam would visit China between April 15-17," the official told AFP, adding he will meet with Xi.

Other media reports have said the trip will begin on April 14.

Despite rival territorial claims in the South China Sea, the two socialist states have sought to deepen already close economic ties to guard against global trade upheaval instigated by US President Donald Trump's tariffs.

Both Vietnam and China get much of their oil imports via the Strait of Hormuz, where shipping has largely been halted due to the US-Israeli war with Iran.

Xi on Tuesday congratulated the Vietnamese leader on becoming president and expressed his willingness "to work with To Lam... to continuously strengthen our respective socialist causes", Chinese state media reported.

China's foreign minister to visit N Korea to bolster loosened ties

Rueters
Beijing

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi will visit North Korea this week, his ministry said yesterday, signalling efforts by the East Asian neighbours to revitalise ties that chilled after the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Wang's last publicly known visit to North Korea as China's foreign minister was in late 2019, following reciprocal visits by the two countries' top leaders earlier that year.

"China is willing to strengthen strategic communication with North Korea and enhance exchanges and cooperation," a Chinese ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning, said during a regular press conference.

She called Wang's upcoming visit-scheduled over April 9 to 10-"an important move to advance bilateral ties".

Beijing has worked to draw Pyongyang back into its orbit, after the Covid-19 pandemic froze exchanges and as North Korean leader Kim Jong-un shored up relations with Moscow, sending troops and weapons in support of Russia's war efforts in Ukraine.

Passenger train service between Beijing and Pyongyang resumed in March after being suspended for six years since the onset of the pandemic in 2020.

China's flag carrier Air China has also restarted flights between the two capitals. However, the reopened links have not benefited Chinese tourists so far, with bookings available only for some business travellers and exchange students.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi attends a press conference in Beijing. **(Reuters/File Photo)**

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un travelled to Beijing in September on board an armoured train to join Russian President Vladimir Putin and other leaders for a massive military parade in the Chinese capital, where Kim met with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

That meeting was followed by a visit to Pyongyang in October by China's No 2 official, Premier Li Qiang.

"Preserving, consolidating, and developing China-DPRK relations has always been an unwavering strategic policy of the party and government of China," Mao said yesterday.

Wang's Pyongyang visit also comes ahead of an expected summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump next month. Co-ordination between North Korea and China could take place before the China-US summit, South Korea's Yonhap news agency said yesterday.

Trump has repeatedly expressed interest in resuming direct talks with the North Korean leader in his second term.

N Korea fires two rounds of ballistic missiles: Seoul

AFP
Seoul

North Korea fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles in two rounds yesterday, South Korea's military said, after reporting an "unidentified projectile" was launched from the Pyongyang area the previous day.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung has sought to repair ties with the North since taking office last year.

On Monday Seoul expressed regret over civilian drone incursions into the North in January, with Lee calling it "irresponsible" and noting that government officials had been involved in the operation.

But analysts said the launches, North Korea's fourth and fifth known ballistic missile tests this year, signalled its latest rebuff of Seoul's peace overtures.

The South Korean military said early yesterday it had detected "an unidentified projectile" launched from the area of the North's capital a day earlier.

About an hour later, the military said it had also detected "multiple unidentified ballistic missiles" fired on Wednesday morning from North Korea's Wonsan area toward the East Sea, the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

In separate statements, the military said they were short-range ballistic missiles that were fired at around 8:50am (2350 GMT Tuesday) and flew around 240 kilometres (149 miles).


People watch a television screen showing a news broadcast with file footage of a North Korean missile test, at a train station in Seoul yesterday. **(AFP)**

Another — also short-range and ballistic — was launched at around 2:20 pm, flying over 700 kilometres, it said.

The Japan Coast Guard also said an "object suspected to be a ballistic missile has been launched from North Korea", urging ships to "remain vigilant".

Seoul's Office of National Security at the presidential Blue House held an emergency meeting, asking Pyongyang to immediately stop provocations.

After Lee's expression of regret over the drones on Monday, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un called it "wise behaviour".

"Our government appreciated it as very fortunate and wise behaviour for its own sake," Kim Yo Jong said.

But on Tuesday, a senior North Korean official described the South as "the enemy state most hostile" to Pyongyang, reviving a label previously used by Kim Jong-un.

Jang Kum-chol, first vice-minister of Pyongyang's foreign ministry, said South Korean media reports that described Kim Yo-jong's comments as an "exceptional friendly response" were "nonsense".

Such an interpretation was nothing more than "hope-filled dream reading" by "world-star-tling fools", he said in a statement carried by Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency.

The launches were Pyongyang's message to Seoul that its anti-South stance remains firm despite Seoul's repeated overtures, said Lim Eul-chul, an expert on North Korea at Kyungnam University.

Later yesterday, Pyongyang's state media said China's top diplomat Wang Yi would visit the North on a two-day trip starting Thursday.

His visit comes ahead of an expected summit between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping next month.

Speculation is mounting over a potential meeting between Trump and Pyongyang's leader Kim at around the same time.

Trump, who has repeatedly criticised Seoul's level of support for his war in Iran, has recently boasted of his ties with Kim.

"South Korea didn't help us" during the Middle East war, Trump said earlier this week.

"We've got 45,000 soldiers in South Korea to protect (them) from Kim Jong-un, who I get along with very well. He said very nice things about me."

The US actually has around 28,500 troops in South Korea.

Trump met Kim three times in his first term, but his comment in October that he was "100 percent" open to meeting Kim again have gone unanswered.

S Korea to push for release of ships in Strait of Hormuz

South Korea's presidential Blue House said yesterday that the government would do its best to ensure the country's ships can pass through the Strait of Hormuz as soon as possible based on conditions created under a two-week ceasefire agreed between the US and Iran, local media reported. South Korea would consult with shipping companies and accelerate communication with related countries to ensure the passage of the ships, the reports said. South Korea's maritime ministry said in a statement yesterday that authorities discussed with local shippers ways to help their vessels pass through the strait. While authorities maintained an advisory to avoid sailing near the strait due to lingering risks in the region, they will provide full support for the 26 South Korean-flagged vessels stranded there, the ministry said. South Korea aims to move the vessels out during the two-week ceasefire, a Seoul official told Reuters.

HK activist Koo Sze-yiu dies

Hong Kong activist Koo Sze-yiu, who is known for decades-long pro-democracy advocacy and street protests, died of cancer yesterday aged 80, a local advocacy group said. A lifelong activist, Koo was among the handful of outspoken government critics remaining in the Chinese city after Beijing crushed Hong Kong's huge and sometimes violent democracy protests in 2019. **(AFP)**

Taiwan opposition leader says China visit to sow 'seeds of peace'

AFP
Nanjing, China

Taiwan's opposition leader, a proponent of closer ties with Beijing, said yesterday she hoped to sow the "seeds of peace" during a rare visit to China.

Kuomintang (KMT) chairwoman Cheng Li-wun is the party's first leader to visit China in a decade but her trip — during which she hopes to meet Chinese leader Xi Jinping — has sparked debate in Taiwan.

Critics, including those within her own party which traditionally supports relations with China, have accused her of being too pro-Beijing.

China claims self-ruled Taiwan is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to seize it.

"I hope that today we plant the seeds of peace not only for Chinese people on both sides of the Strait, but for all humankind," Cheng said on Wednesday, in comments broadcast by Taiwanese media.

She spoke during a symbolic visit to the eastern city of Nanjing, where she visited the mausoleum of revolutionary leader Sun Yat-sen, one of the few Chinese historical figures revered in both Beijing and Taipei.


Kuomintang Chairperson Cheng Li-wen speaking to the press after a visit at the Sun Yat-Sen Mausoleum in Nanjing, in China's eastern Jiangsu province, yesterday. **(AFP)**

Beefed-up security at the mausoleum prevented foreigners from entering, AFP journalists saw.

China severed high-level contact with Taiwan in 2016 after Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party won the presidency and rejected Beijing's claims to the island.

Cross-strait relations have worsened since then, with China ramping up military pressure with near daily deployments of fighter jets and warships near Taiwan and regular large-scale military drills.

However, Cheng said in a speech after her arrival on Tuesday evening that "the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are not doomed to war, as the international community has feared".

"Taiwan should not be reduced to a geopolitical pawn," she said in a Facebook post, in an apparent reference to tensions between China and the US, Taiwan's main arms supplier.

Her visit, she added, would mark a "historic journey of peace".

In a park surrounding the mausoleum, 74-year-old Nanjing resident surnamed Fen told AFP on Wednesday that he had come to the area after hearing of Cheng's visit.

"I hope she will contribute to the reunification of the motherland," he said.

Japan aims to boost women troops as it struggles to enlist

AFP
Tokyo

Japan wants to significantly boost the number of women in the military by the mid 2030s, the defence ministry has said, as it struggles to convince young people to enlist.

Under a new target set this year, women should account for 13% of troops in Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) by March 2036, up from 9% currently, the ministry said.

The recruitment drive comes as the ministry pledged to improve conditions for female personnel.

The ministry plans "to promote the active engagement of female personnel" it said in a statement to AFP, emphasising the need for "work-life balance".

As opportunities for female troops continue to expand, the ministry is "improving facilities... including the development of women's restrooms, baths, and dedicated areas at each garrison and base, as well as women's quarters on vessels," it added.

Tokyo is upping defence spending and trying to lure more talent to its armed forces, as anxiety grows over China's territorial ambitions in the region.

But dangerous duties, low pay and a young retirement age of around 56 are off-putting for young Japanese, officials and experts say.

Japan's low birth rate, shrinking population and tight labour market are also complicating recruitment, leaving 10% of the force's approximately 250,000 positions unfilled.

Although the SDF has sophisticated defence capabilities, it has until recently refrained from having counter-attack capability, reflecting the US-imposed pacifist constitution that bans use of force as means of settling conflicts.

None of the current forces' members have died in conflict or killed anyone. Most of some 2,000 personnel who have died in the line of duty since 1950, when the SDF's predecessor organisation was established, was during military drills.

Among Nato member countries and their partner states, there are, on average, more women troops, and they accounted for more than 12% of armed forces personnel as of 2022, according to a report by the European Parliamentary Research Service. That was up from just over 10% in 2014.

In the US, women made up around 18% of recruits as of 2023, according to the Department of Defence.

Increasing the number of female SDF personnel "will help bring a wider variety of perspectives to our missions, such as disaster relief operations and other activities involving direct interaction with the public," Japan's defence ministry said.

Women rarely hold positions in the upper echelons of Japanese politics, business, government and military.

Former soldier Rina Gonoi, who was sexually assaulted while serving in the military, reached a settlement with the government and her former colleague in January this year after a years-long legal battle.

Three ship crew died in Gulf attack, confirms Thailand

AFP
Bangkok

Thailand's foreign minister confirmed yesterday the deaths of three Thai crew members of a cargo ship struck by Iran while transiting the Strait of Hormuz a month ago.

US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February prompted Tehran to respond by effectively closing the strait, a crucial artery for global oil supplies, and launching attacks on vessels.

The Thai-flagged Mayuree Naree was struck on March 11 while travelling through the Gulf waterway, after departing a port in the United Arab Emirates.

Twenty Thai crew members returned home in mid-March, while three others had been reported missing and presumed trapped in the damaged engine room of the vessel.

"Unfortunately, the three remaining crew members we found eventually, they lost their lives in the incident," Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow told reporters yesterday.

Sihasak thanked Omani authorities for their help in rescuing the 20 returned crew.

The United States and Iran agreed overnight from Tuesday to Wednesday to a two-week ceasefire, during which passage through the Strait of Hormuz "will be possible via co-ordination with Iran's Armed Forces", Tehran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said.

Two ships have passed through the strait since Iran agreed to reopen the waterway, maritime monitor Marine Traffic said yesterday.

India mulls reptile river guards on Bangladesh border

AFP
Kolkata

India is considering releasing snakes and crocodiles along its frontier with Bangladesh, the Border Security Force said yesterday, as New Delhi seeks to stave off unauthorised crossings.

Bangladesh is almost entirely encircled by India and the border stretches for more than 4,000 kilometres (2,485 miles), large parts of which are unfenced across delta regions where Himalayan rivers wind toward the sea.

Senior Border Security Force officer Manoj Barnwal told AFP that "the use of reptiles" was discussed in a February meeting with the Home Ministry.

"We have been asked to explore the feasibility of deploying reptiles such as snakes or crocodiles in vulnerable riverine gaps," said Barnwal, deputy inspector general of the paramilitary force based in Kolkata, near the border with Bangladesh.

"The plan revolves around leveraging natural deterrents like crocodiles and snakes in flood-prone zones, along the unfenced area where traditional fencings are either ineffective or not possible," he added.

The border between India and Bangladesh cuts through the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest.

"It's an innovative move, but there are several challenges and it raises safety concerns," Barnawl said. "How do we procure the reptiles? What impact might it have on the people in the villages sitting along the riverine border?"

"We have asked our field units to study the feasibility of the approach and send the report as soon as possible," he added.

Relations between New Delhi and Dhaka soured after a 2024 revolution in Dhaka ended the autocratic rule of the then-prime minister Sheikh Hasina, who fled to India.

Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman is in New Delhi yesterday — the most senior envoy from Dhaka to visit since the 2024 uprising — in a bid to rebuild frosty diplomatic relations.

India has constructed border fencing stretching hundreds of kilometres (miles), and arrested scores of Bangladeshis attempting to cross the frontier in the wake of Hasina's overthrow.

The Hindu nationalist government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has long taken a hardline stance on immigration, particularly from neighbouring Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

Top Indian officials have referred to migrants as "termites" and "infiltrators".

Rights groups have accused India of also pushing hundreds of Bengali-speaking Muslims into Bangladesh without due process.

Bangladesh FM in India, most senior visit since 2024 uprising

AFP
New Delhi

Bangladesh's foreign minister met his Indian counterpart in New Delhi yesterday, the most senior visit by a Dhaka envoy since the 2024 revolution toppled India's old ally Sheikh Hasina.

Khalilur Rahman, who is on a "goodwill visit", raised the issues of extradition, energy and fertiliser supplies, and visas, Dhaka's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"Both sides emphasised the importance of advancing bilateral relations between the two countries in various dimensions," it said.

Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited Dhaka in December to attend the funeral of former leader Khaleda Zia, the mother of the prime minister elected in February, Tarique Rahman.

Jaishankar said he had been "pleased to host" Khalilur Rahman, saying in a statement that they had discussed "strengthening our bilateral relationship", without giving further details.

"The two sides agreed to explore proposals for deepening the partnership through the relevant bilateral mechanisms," India's foreign ministry said in a readout.

Relations have improved since Tarique Rahman, leader of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party, won a landslide election victory, taking over from the interim administration that had led the country of 170mn people since Hasina was ousted. Hasina fled to India, where she has remained in hiding, straining relations between Dhaka and New Delhi.

Bangladesh has repeatedly requested Hasina's extradition. She was sentenced to death in absentia in November for orchestrating a deadly crackdown on the uprising. Yesterday, Rahman again requested the extradition of the former premier and a close aide, according to Dhaka.



Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar (right) shaking hands with his Bangladeshi counterpart Khalilur Rahman during a meeting in New Delhi yesterday. (**AFP**)

Protests over high fuel costs clog Dublin, other Irish cities

Reuters
Dublin

Protesters calling for further government help to lower the cost of fuel clogged up busy thoroughfares and motorways with parked lorries and tractors across Ireland yesterday, disrupting commuters and public transport for a second successive day.

Convoys of vehicles began converging on Dublin's city centre and other towns and cities on Tuesday, with protesters, including hauliers and farmers, complaining that a 250mn euro package to temporarily cut taxes on petrol and diesel did not go far enough to cushion the knock-on cost of the Middle East conflict.

"With the price we're paying for fuel, I'm probably two months away from my business folding," said Christopher Duffy, 46, an agricultural contractor who was part of a group blocking Dublin's main thoroughfare of O'Connell Street that is calling for the price of diesel to be capped at a lower rate.

"It's not a lot to ask for really... We're just backed into a corner."

Ministers said they would not agree to the protesters' demands to meet with them as they did not belong to representative groups with whom the government has been engaging on supports. Organisers pledged a third day of disruption today.

"We respect people's right to protest but what is not acceptable is people declaring that we will turn O'Connell Street into a car park," Prime Minister Micheal Martin told a news conference.

The lining of tractors and trucks down O'Connell Street led to severe delays to bus services and the part suspension of one of the two tram lines that cross the city. Significant traffic delays were also reported at motorways leading into other major cities.

Protests at two fuel depots blocking deliveries into the cities of Galway and Limerick had led to at least one forecourt running out of fuel, the head of the representative body for forecourt operators told national broadcaster RTE.

Ireland's government welcomed a two-week ceasefire in the Iran conflict and expected it to lead to a fall in fuel prices soon.

"If they give us that phone call or that meeting, the streets of Dublin will be cleared. If they don't, we'll stay as long as it'll take," said 61-year-old farmer and agricultural contractor John Dallon.



Tractors block Dublin's O'Connell Street, as part of a protest over the high cost of fuel that clogged up busy thoroughfares and motorways across Ireland for a second successive day, in Dublin, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Australian soldier charged with war crimes to stay in jail

AFP
Sydney

One of Australia's most-decorated soldiers will remain in prison after his lawyers did not apply for bail yesterday, a day after he was charged with war crimes.

Former Special Air Services officer Ben Roberts-Smith was charged Tuesday with murdering unarmed prisoners captured in Afghanistan, following a sweeping war crimes probe.

The 47-year-old spent the night in a Sydney jail and his lawyer told an online bail court yesterday he would not seek an application for release, instead requesting an appearance at the city's major courthouse. The case was adjourned to June.

Roberts-Smith, a distinguished soldier awarded Australia's highest military honour for his efforts fighting insurgents, is facing five counts of "war crime-murder".

They included one "actual offence", one "joint commission to an offence", and three counts of aiding or abetting a murder.

The towering soldier became a household name across Australia when he was awarded the Victoria Cross in 2011, a medal reserved for only the most courageous wartime exploits.

But the war hero's reputation was called into question in 2018 when a series of news reports linked him to the alleged murder of unarmed Afghan prisoners by Australian troops.

Police allege he was complicit in a string of unlawful killings between 2009 and 2012.

Should Roberts-Smith be found guilty, he faces a maximum sentence of life in prison.

Australia deployed 39,000 troops to Afghanistan over two decades as part of US- and Nato-led operations against the Taliban and other militant groups.

India approves over $4bn for two hydro-electric projects

India has approved investment of over $4bn for the construction of two hydro-electric projects along the Brahmaputra river in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh as demand for power rises, the government said yesterday.
The proposed 1,720MW Kamala project, worth 260.7bn Indian rupees ($2.83bn), is a joint venture between NHPC Ltd and the Arunachal Pradesh government.
The 1,200MW Kalai-II project, with a total cost of 141.06bn rupees, is a joint venture between THDC India Ltd and the local government.
New Delhi expects the projects to be completed within six to eight years.
The Brahmaputra River, which rises in Tibet and flows through India and Bangladesh, holds significant hydro potential along its Indian stretch, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh on the Chinese border.
The basin's transboundary nature and proximity to China make water management and infrastructure planning a strategic concern, with India fearing that an upriver Chinese dam on the Yarlung Zangbo could cut dry-season flows on the Indian side by up to 85%.
India last year announced a $77bn transmission plan to move more than 76GW of hydroelectric capacity from the Brahmaputra basin by 2047.
India aims to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels by having 500GW of non-fossil power generation capacity by 2030 and becoming net zero by 2070.
(**Reuters**)

India withdraws bid to host annual UN climate talks in 2028

India has withdrawn its offer to host the United Nations annual climate Conference Of the Parties (COP33) in 2028, two government officials familiar with the matter told Reuters.
India communicated its decision to not host the conference this month, the officials said, but it was not immediately clear why the government had pulled out. The officials declined to be named as they are not authorised to speak to the media. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed hosting the summit in 2023. The federal ministry for environment and climate change did not immediately respond to a request for comment.
Climate Home News, which first reported the news, said India withdrew after a "review of its commitments" in 2028, citing a letter written by an Indian official to the chair of the Asia-Pacific Group.
The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat did not immediately respond to a request seeking comment.
(**Reuters**)

Eco-commute in Bogor



Civil servants ride bicycles as the Bogor regency government rolls out a policy of bicycles, motorcycles, walking, and mass transportation to work every Wednesday for civil servants, in an effort to reduce energy consumption, in Bogor regency, West Java Province, Indonesia, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Rohingya campaigner in Indonesia case urges Muslim world to oppose Myanmar junta

AFP
Jakarta

A Rohingya rights campaigner spearheading a genocide complaint filed in Indonesia against Myanmar's next president urged the Muslim world yesterday to oppose the junta accused of the abuses.

Yasmin Ullah is one of 11 plaintiffs who lodged the complaint with Indonesia's attorney general on Monday, accusing Myanmar's president-elect Min Aung Hlaing of rights abuses against the mostly Muslim Rohingya minority in the country.

Indonesian law gives courts "universal jurisdiction", meaning they can prosecute individuals for heinous crimes committed anywhere. Rohingya activists have previously taken a case before a court in Argentina, which has the same principle.

Ullah, 34, left Myanmar at three years old and eventually settled in Canada, where she founded and runs the Rohingya Maiyafuinor Collaborative Network, a campaign group.

She told AFP yesterday that the plaintiffs chose Indonesia "because we have more Muslims here than any other country in the world, and Islam is built on a core principle of accountability".

"I'm really imploring the leadership of this country and the leadership of Asean (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) to actually think... about the future we want," she said.

"If we are thinking about economic prosperity and Asean people... perhaps we need to think a little bit more about ending the root cause of instability in this region, which is the Myanmar military."



Yasmin Ullah, who founded and runs the Rohingya Maiyafuinor Collaborative Network from Vancouver, Canada, poses during an interview with AFP in Jakarta yesterday. (**AFP**)

Myanmar's junta grabbed power in a 2021 coup and has been accused of rights abuses for decades, mostly targeting ethnic minorities like the Rohingya.

Last week, the country's pro-military lawmakers elected Min Aung Hlaing as president, meaning the ex-armed forces commander will retain his rule in civilian guise.

"I really hope that one day we will be able to face Min Aung Hlaing in court and actually get him to face the victims. Some of those victims are here on Indonesian soil," said Ullah.

Myanmar's leaders have not commented on the Indonesia case, but they have previously insisted the Rohingya are ethnic descendants of immigrants from Bangladesh, and that their 2017 crackdown targeted a militant uprising.

Min Aung Hlaing became military chief in 2011, leading the armed forces in the crackdown that has seen more than one mn Rohingya flee to Bangladesh.

Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, has also been receiving Rohingya refugees for years, many risking their lives on long and dangerous sea journeys.

Some 7,000 are in Indonesia today, according to Ullah — mostly in western Aceh province where life in refugee shelters is tough, especially since cuts to US foreign aid.

Ullah, who describes herself as a survivor of genocide, also works with refugees in Aceh.

"What I'm hoping for... is a test of the moral line. We have seen... complacency from this region for far too long," she said.

"The trade continues, business as usual. That is not where they draw the line."

Most of Ullah's family still live in Myanmar, and she worries about them every day.

After she and her mother fled Myanmar — an arduous journey through jungles and over mountains — she spent 16 years in Thailand hiding from the authorities before eventually making it to Canada.

She travelled to Jakarta to present the genocide complaint in person. A spokesman for the attorney general's office said it would be forwarded to a division specialising in serious crimes.

COMMENT

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GULF TIMES

Peru polls: The leading contenders in the race

Peruvians will go to the polls on April 12 to elect a new president and members of Congress, following years of political upheaval, impeachments and corruption scandals that have seen eight presidents since 2018. A record number of candidates will compete in the first round. If no candidate clears the 50% threshold needed to win outright, the two most-voted candidates would advance to a second round, scheduled for June 7. Opinion polls indicate a runoff is likely, with at least five of the 35 presidential hopefuls in with a chance of claiming one of the two spots. Here's a summary of the top contenders:

Conservative Keiko Fujimori, 50, is making her fourth bid for the presidency, having reached the runoff in all three of her previous campaigns - a record that underscores both her resilience and her polarizing grip on Peruvian politics. A former congresswoman, she leads the conservative People's Force party and is the eldest daughter of late former President Alberto Fujimori, who ruled from 1990 to 2000 before being jailed for human rights abuses.

Fujimori's party plays a pivotal role in Congress, anchoring a right-wing bloc and giving her an advantage in a fragmented field. Opinion polls consistently place her among the leading contenders. She had previously faced accusations of illegal campaign financing, but Peru's constitutional court dismissed the case last year on procedural grounds.

Educated in the United States, Fujimori has positioned herself as pro-US, pitching foreign investment under clearer institutional rules and casting herself as a more reliable partner for Washington than rivals she describes as closer to Beijing. Her campaign leans heavily on a law-and-order message, echoing the militarized security policies associated with her father's presidency in the 1990s.

Rafael Lopez Aliaga, 65, an ultraconservative businessman from the Popular Renewal party and a former mayor of Lima, is one of the most recognizable figures in the race, though recent opinion polls show his support slipping. A former Citibank corporate banker, he built his fortune in hotels and railways and has spent years cultivating a hardline political brand. A former member of the Catholic group Opus Dei, he is unmarried and has previously said he has practiced celibacy since the age of 19.

Opinion polls indicate a runoff is likely, with at least five of the 35 presidential hopefuls in with a chance of claiming one of the two spots

Lopez Aliaga has business ties to Peru's mining sector and his railway investments have benefited from minerals like copper transported from the Las Bambas copper mine, operated by a Chinese firm.

Carlos Alvarez, 62, is a well-known figure in Peru, a popular comedian who has railed against the political class and is seeking to tap voter frustration with the establishment. Running for the centre-right Country for All party on a populist, anti-crime platform, he has likened himself to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, pointing to his own transition from entertainment to politics. Surveys show a recent uptick in voter support.

His platform includes support for capital punishment for certain crimes and greater use of the armed forces to confront rising insecurity. On foreign policy, Alvarez has welcomed US President Donald Trump's renewed focus on Latin America, while acknowledging the economic importance of Chinese investment in Peru. Critics have questioned the depth of his policy agenda and strength of his technical team should he make it into government.

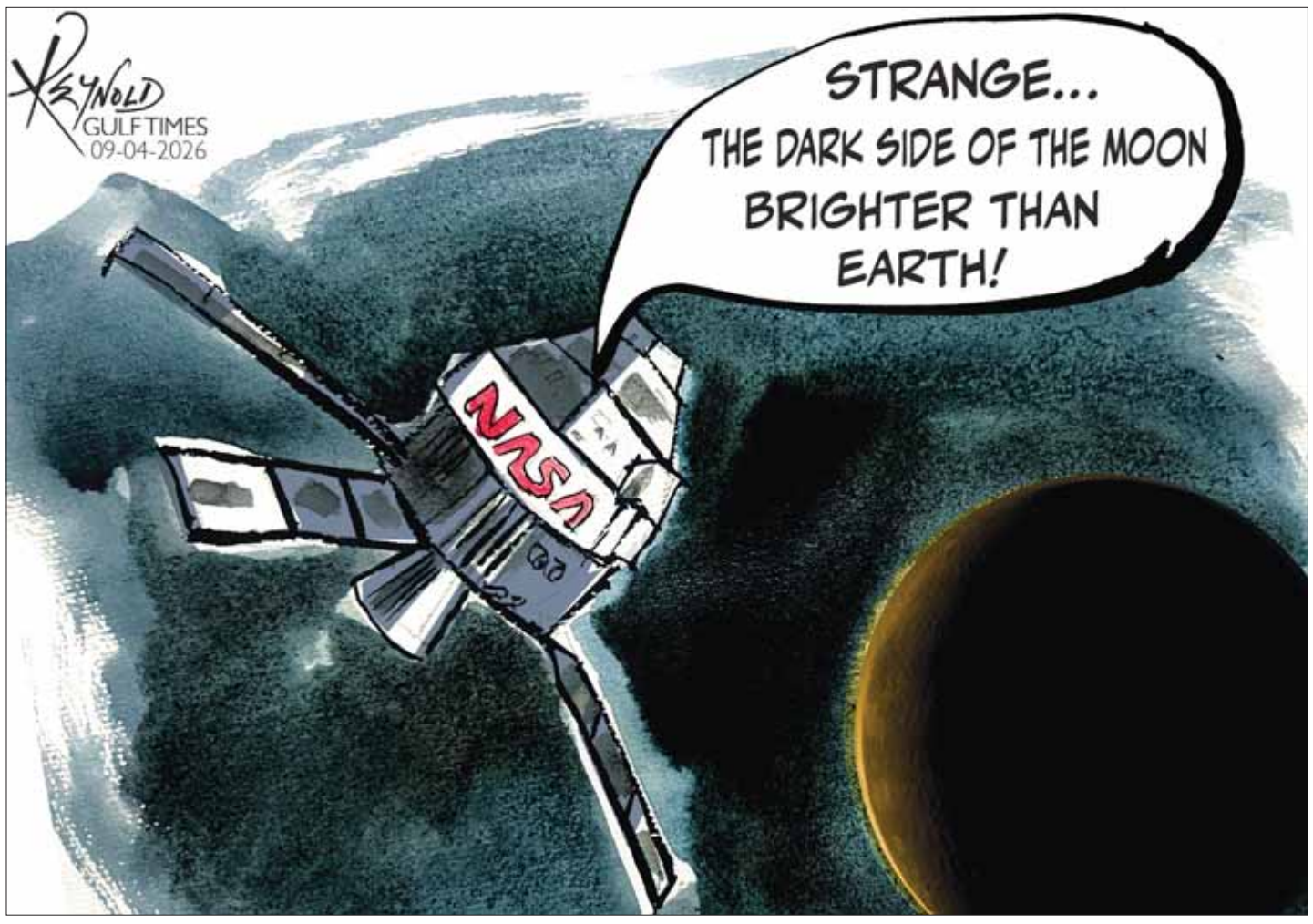
Alfonso Lopez Chau, 75, is an economist and academic from the left-of-centre Now Nation party. A former central bank board member, he has allied with a Marxist running mate who has called for reforms to Peru's market-oriented economic model.

A former defence and culture minister under ex-president Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, Jorge Nieto, 74, is a low-polling centrist who has pitched himself as a unifying figure with institutional experience. He resigned in protest when Kuczynski pardoned Alberto Fujimori. He has said little about foreign policy.

A congressman running for the left-leaning Together for Peru party, Roberto Sanchez has been drawing attention as a potential wild-card in the fractured race. He is calling for a new constitution to establish a "plurinational" state that would give a greater voice to Indigenous communities, tapping long-standing grievances in regions that have felt excluded from national decision-making. — Reuters

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Amid fragility of process, all eyes riveted on Islamabad

An accord would be a fitting tribute to Pakistan's role in bringing the world back from the brink



By Kamran Rehmat
Doha

There is a moment in the theatre of great power politics when the stage clears of the giants and a nimbler actor steps into the silence — and changes everything. That moment arrived late Tuesday night when Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif posted a brief but seismic announcement: the United States and Iran had agreed to an immediate ceasefire.

With those few words, Islamabad achieved what the United Nations, Nato, the European Union and every major world power had been unable to do — persuade two adversaries locked in the fury of open war to stop, breathe, and prepare to sit across a table from each other.

It was a diplomatic coup of the first order, with the pregnant hope that it will restore order to a world cataclysmically shaken since February 28.

When US President Donald Trump threatened "to unleash hell" on Iran failing a Tuesday night deadline, he did so in the language of annihilation — threatening to "wipe out a civilisation" — and leaving the world teetering on the edge of catastrophe. His rhetoric lit up every chancellery from Brussels to Beijing with alarm.

Yet rhetoric, as history repeatedly demonstrates, is a trap as much as a weapon. Trump's approval ratings have been sliding under the weight of a war proving far costlier in political and moral terms than his administration had calculated. He had locked himself into a corner with no elegant exit in sight.

Pakistan quietly built that exit for him.

Shehbaz Sharif's appeal to Trump, posted on social media during the most charged hours of the crisis, was a model of calibrated statesmanship. He asked the American president to extend his deadline by two weeks, urged Iran to open the Strait of Hormuz as a goodwill gesture for a matching period, and called on all warring parties to observe a general ceasefire. The language was deferential without being supplicant; firm without being confrontational. It gave Trump precisely the political architecture he needed: a pathway to pause without the optics of retreat.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi confirmed the agreement and specifically thanked Pakistan's leadership for its "tireless efforts" — a phrase that, in the careful grammar of diplomacy, carries enormous weight.

What made Pakistan's intervention possible was not improvisation but architecture — decades of painstaking relationship-building on multiple fronts simultaneously. Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir had been in direct touch with Trump about Iran for nearly a year, including at a White House lunch last June after which Trump remarked, pointedly, that Pakistani officials "know Iran very well, better than most." That observation turned out to be the strategic seed of what bloomed into Tuesday night's ceasefire.

Pakistan's knowledge of Iran is not merely diplomatic — it is geographical, historical, and civilisational. A 565-mile shared border, decades of proximity, and deep religious and cultural ties between communities on both sides give Islamabad a granular understanding of Iranian politics and psychology that no Western capital can replicate. Pakistan has effectively served as the representative of Iranian diplomatic interests in Washington for decades — the Islamic world's equivalent of what Switzerland has long been for the United States in Tehran. This is not a role assumed overnight. It is earned through years of quiet, unglamorous, often thankless diplomatic labour.

On the American side, Pakistan's cultivation of the Trump administration since his re-election has been methodical and, to some observers, audacious — deals on crypto and critical minerals, a seat on Trump's Board of Peace, a Nobel Peace Prize nomination, and the deep personal rapport between Trump and Field Marshal Munir, whom the president has called his "favourite field marshal," having met at least three times over the past year.

Michael Kugelman, senior fellow for South Asia at the Atlantic Council, captured it with characteristic precision: "Pakistan has been willing to engage in unconventional diplomatic tactics that score points in Washington." Whatever the optics, the relationship was real when it mattered most. For Pakistan, said Kugelman, "it really is a large feather in the cap."

Top Indian defence analyst Pravin Sawhney, widely respected for the depth of his strategic insight, went further still, declaring that "Pakistan has emerged as more than a credible player — a geopolitical asset in the New World Order." In his recent commentary, Sawhney argued with conviction that all three great powers — the United States, China and Russia — now actively seek strong ties with Islamabad. That is a geopolitical elevation of profound consequence.

And yet Tuesday's ceasefire carried within it the seeds of its own fragility — a framework, not yet a foundation. Pakistan knows this better than anyone. The complexity of its balancing act cannot be overstated. Saudi Arabia, with which Pakistan holds a formal Mutual Strategic Defence Agreement, carries profound and longstanding anxieties about Iranian power. At the same time, Pakistan could no more ignore Iran than it could ignore gravity. The 565-mile shared border, the intertwined Shia communities straddling both nations, and the deep civilisational bonds between Persian and South Asian Islamic culture create compulsions that go well beyond the cold calculations of realpolitik.

It is in navigating precisely this impossible triangle that Pakistan's diplomatic achievement becomes truly remarkable. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar worked the phones across dozens of capitals. Field Marshal Munir concentrated on Washington. Sharif secured the backing of China — where Dar travelled last week to meet his counterpart Wang Yi — while acknowledging the essential roles of Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, Egypt and Qatar in sustaining the Islamabad process. This was multilateral peacemaking in the most literal and demanding sense: holding together a coalition of competing interests, sustaining momentum against constant headwinds of doubt, and never letting the enormity of the task become an excuse for inaction.

The Strait of Hormuz, through which flows a critical share of the world's oil and gas, cannot remain closed indefinitely. The mathematics of global energy supply will guarantee that. But there is an enormous difference between the Strait reopening under the cold pressure of military exhaustion and sanctions, and it reopening as the fruit of a peace agreement negotiated at a table in Islamabad. The latter would be more than a geopolitical milestone.

Pakistan has earned this moment. The world should hope Islamabad is ready for what comes next.

• *The writer is Deputy Managing Editor, Gulf Times.*



From L-R: US Vice-President JD Vance, President Donald Trump, Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the White House last September.

QC wins Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work

Qatar Charity (QC) won the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work in its first edition, receiving the Shield of Perfection in the Non Profit Organisations Category for its initiative "Generational Impact Makers Challenge." The award recognises the initiative's role in strengthening humanitarian values and social responsibility among school students in Qatar through innovative, interactive activities that translate awareness into practical action.

The shield was presented to Yousuf bin Ahmed al-Kuwari, CEO of Qatar Charity, by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani during the official ceremony held under His Highness's patronage. The event was attended by HE Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabr al-Nuaimi, Minister of Social Development and Family.

Established pursuant to Amiri Decree No. (16) of 2025, the Rawda Award is the first national initiative of its kind in Qatar's social sector. Operating under the Ministry of Social Development and Family (MSDF) in strategic partnership with the Social and Sport Contribution Fund (DAAM), the award honours high-impact, sustainable initiatives across five categories: Individuals, Families, Non-Profit Organisations, Private Sector, and Media.



HE al-Nuaimi addressed those who won the award, saying that this honour is not the end of the road, but rather a doubled responsibility. She said that their winning is a testament to their excellence, but it is also a national commitment to continue the journey with the same determination and sincerity.

The society that trusted them today expects from them tomorrow innovations and initiatives that are deeper in impact and wider in scope. True giving is that which knows no limits, and excellence is that which is born from the continuity of benefit. On the sidelines of the ceremony, the Qatar Charity CEO expressed the organisation's pride in winning the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work, in its first edition, for the "Generational Impact Makers Challenge." He said the recognition represents a national acknowledgement of Qatar Charity's journey in social work and reflects its sustained efforts to promote sustainable giving and innovation.

He added that the award provides a strong incentive for Qatar Charity to continue developing community initiatives that serve the local community and strengthen national partnerships, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

Al-Kuwari noted that the initiative succeeded in instilling humanitarian values and social responsibility among school students and translating them into practical action. He stated that the broad participation of schools demonstrates how charitable work can become a collective educational experience that builds a generation of aware individuals capable of making a positive impact in the community.

The "Generational Impact Makers Challenge" is a community-based volunteer initiative launched by Qatar Charity to instil the values of humanitarian work and social responsibility among school students, and to translate these values into practical action through innovative, interactive activities. The initiative targeted primary, preparatory, and secondary students, as well as teachers and parents.

The initiative was implemented in co-operation with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and involved 90 schools from across the country. It achieved a tangible humanitarian impact by funding the construction of a school worth QR2.5mn, with the foundation stone laid in December 2025 in Albania, in the presence of students from the winning school, First Al Bayan Primary School and Kindergarten.





Qatar's ambassador to Sri Lanka joins president's meeting with Arab envoys



Ambassador of the State of Qatar to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka Hamad bin Mohammed al-Dosari participated in a meeting held by President of Sri Lanka Anura Kumara Dissanayake with Their Excellencies the ambassadors of Arab States accredited to Colombo. Discussions focused on the latest developments in the region. (**QNA**)

Qatar diplomat meets top UN official

QNA
New York



President of the 80th Session of the United Nations General Assembly Annalena Baerbock met with HE the Chairman of the Council of Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly Nassir bin Abdulaziz al-Nasser. The meeting reviewed the current international situation and challenges, with particular focus on developments in the Gulf region and the Middle East, and the dangerous escalation against the backdrop of the US-Israeli war with Iran, and the resulting negative repercussions for international peace and security.

They also discussed the letter sent from the Council of Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly to the President of the General Assembly, which expressed grave concern about the accelerating escalation and its threat to international peace and security as well as the violations of the UN Charter and international law, the direct threat to civilians and vital infrastructure, including energy facilities and crucial maritime routes. Sent on March 25, 2026, the letter contained an explicit call for the United Nations to assume its role by taking urgent steps, including the General Assembly acting within its mandate to convene an emergency session, launch a high-level diplomatic initiative in accordance with the UN Charter, and work towards a comprehensive international conference on peace and security in the Gulf and the Middle East under the auspices of the United Nations.

Cabinet endorses truce, okays draft law on state property

From Page 1

The Cabinet also reviewed discussions held by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani with the President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Felix Tshisekedi, and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during their respective working visits to Doha, affirming that the talks had strengthened bilateral co-operation across multiple fields.

On the domestic front, the Cabinet commended His Highness the Amir for presenting awards to the inaugural winners of the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work, recognising outstanding contributions across individual, family, non-profit and private sector categories in support of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Among legislative decisions, the Cabinet approved a draft law on state property to replace a 1987 statute, bringing public and private asset management under a modernised legal framework aligned with the Third National Development Strategy 2024-2030. It also approved two Gulf Cooperation Council health manuals — one standardising border health procedures and another governing the management of strategic medicine and medical supply stockpiles across member states.

Additionally, the Cabinet greenlit a memorandum of understanding on political consultations between Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its counterpart in Antigua and Barbuda.

The session concluded with reviews of three reports: a progress update on the National Cybersecurity Strategy 2024-2030, outcomes from the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, and findings from Qatar's participation in the Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour held in Marrakesh in February.

Qatar partakes in extraordinary meeting of GCC agri and food security undersecretaries



Qatar participated in the extraordinary meeting of Their Excellencies the Undersecretaries of Agriculture and Food Security of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, held yesterday via video conference. The Qatari delegation was headed by Assistant Undersecretary for Agriculture and Food Security Affairs Engineer Fahad bin Mohammed al-Qahtani.
The meeting discussed a package of measures taken by the GCC countries in light of the current circumstances, aimed at strengthening strategic food reserves, ensuring the smooth flow of food supply chains among GCC countries, and facilitating trade with exporting and importing countries. The undersecretaries were also briefed on the outcomes of the 5th extraordinary meeting of the Executive Council of the Customs Union Authority and the decisions of the Committee of Ministers of Transport and Communications issued at its 28th extraordinary meeting, within the framework of supporting the food security system and enhancing integration and co-ordination of joint efforts among the GCC countries. (**QNA**)

'Talks were almost dead': Pakistan's last-ditch effort to secure Iran war truce

Reuters
Islamabad/Tel Aviv

Mediation efforts to halt the war in Iran were hours from collapse when Pakistan mounted an overnight diplomatic push to secure a temporary ceasefire and bring Washington and Tehran into direct negotiations, four Pakistani sources told Reuters.

The effort nearly unravelled after an Iranian strike on a Saudi petrochemical facility triggered fury in Riyadh and threatened to derail weeks of back-channel diplomacy, the sources — with direct knowledge of the talks — said.

With a deadline set by US President Donald Trump looming, Pakistani officials mounted a last-ditch attempt to pass messages between Tehran and Washington, after Trump warned that continued fighting that night could wipe out "a whole civilisation."

Pakistan's effort involved direct contact with top officials across all sides, including Trump, Vice-President JD Vance and US special envoy Steve Witkoff, as well as Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and senior Revolutionary Guards commander Ahmad Vahidi, one of the sources said.

After what a second source described as several "intense, breathless" hours during which "the talks were almost dead", Iran agreed to a temporary ceasefire without preconditions and to enter negotiations.

"In the evening, Iran was on thin ice after the attacks on KSA (Saudi Arabia) but they knew there would be no extension to the deadline," the first source said.

Pakistan's military and civilian leadership remained engaged through the night, speaking to senior US and Iranian, Saudi and other officials until Trump announced the breakthrough.

Minutes before Trump posted the announcement, he was on the phone with Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, the source said.

While Pakistan conveyed its "strongest ever anger" to Iran over the strike on Saudi Arabia, with whom Islamabad has a mutual defence pact that could drag it into the war, it simultaneously sought assurances from Washington that it would rein in Israeli strikes on Iran.

Iranian officials said they had launched the strike on the petrochemical complex in Jubail after an Israeli attack on an Iranian petrochemical facility, the second source said. Tehran could not enter negotiations if such strikes continued, they added.

Pakistan then told Washington that Israeli actions were jeopardising its peace efforts and that Islamabad might not be able to persuade Iran to come to the table, the source said.

Only after receiving an assurance that Israel would hold back, was Pakistan able to persuade Tehran to agree to a temporary ceasefire without preconditions.

Two Israeli sources said Israel had opposed a deal with Iran, believing more could be achieved militarily, although it ultimately decided to support any decision taken by Trump.

An Israeli official said Washington had co-ordinated with Israel and the truce did not include any commitment to permanently end the war, compensate Iran or lift sanctions.

The official added that in any negotiations with Tehran, the US would insist Iran hand over its nuclear material, halt uranium enrichment and remove the threat posed by its ballistic missile programme.

The Israeli prime minister's office did not respond to a request for comment.

Around midnight (1900 GMT), Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged all parties to observe a ceasefire to allow the peace process to begin.

The request was a co-ordinated move to lock in the ceasefire and came after both sides had already agreed in principle, the first source said.

"We wouldn't have made the request if the answer was going to be negative," the source said.

The late-night conversations included repeated exchanges over a 15-point US proposal and two core questions: what would the ceasefire look like and the parameters for the talks, a diplomat from the Middle East who has been in contact with both sides said.

Iran proposed recognition of its sovereignty over the international waterway at the centre of much of the conflict — the Strait of Hormuz — a demand likely to be unacceptable to Washington, the diplomat said.

Tehran was also asking for the right to pursue nuclear energy and strike bilateral defence deals with regional states, as mediators tried to steer talks away from issues that could cause immediate clashes, the diplomat added.

Talks will start on Saturday and the US delegation will be led by Vance, with Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner also part of the team, the White House said in an announcement that followed hours of speculation on what Trump would decide.

Iran has indicated it would turn over its stocks of enriched uranium, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters as she made the announcement about talks.

Two Pakistani sources said the Iranian delegation would be led by Araqchi and parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf.

A third Pakistani source said the hardest part of the process was convincing Iran to accept a truce without preconditions.

QATAR

‘Hour and Hour’ programme, QCS partner to spread health awareness

Dubbed “Window of Hope,” the Hour and Hour programme continues its collaboration with the Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) as part of a shared commitment to public health.

Through this partnership, the two institutions aim to raise awareness and promote a culture of prevention and early detection through targeted campaigns and educational activities for different segments of society.

The collaboration takes place under the patronage of Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabr al-Thani, chairman of the Board of Directors of QCS, who emphasises the importance of community partnerships in supporting health awareness efforts and consolidating the culture of early screening as a fundamental pillar of disease prevention, especially cancer.

Both parties are working to organise events and health education sessions that highlight the importance of adopting healthy lifestyles



Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabr al-Thani honours Tamani al-Yafei.

based on physical activity and balanced nutrition, and to disseminate simplified medical knowledge about the importance of early detection and its role in improving treatment and recovery outcomes.

Social activist Tamani al-Yafei, CEO of “Hour and Hour”, affirmed that the collaboration with QCS stems from the programme’s community mission to enhance health awareness and encourage community members to take care of their health and undergo regular checkups.

She pointed out that the programme continues to launch awareness initiatives under the slogan “Window of Hope,” having organised four editions featuring distinctive events. This includes an inspirational discussion session within the “Pink October” activities, titled “Inspiration Session” under the same slogan in October 2024. It focused on supporting patients and survivors and strengthening hope in the face of illness.

She stated that an awareness event was organised to mark World Cancer Day and Qatar National Sport Day in February 2025, titled “We Meet for Awareness” under the slogan “Window of Hope,” combining health education with promoting physical activity as one of the most important preventive elements.

She added that in May 2025, the programme continued its efforts through an awareness event marking Thyroid Cancer Awareness Month and the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, reaffirming the connection between physical health and sports activity in building a conscious and healthy society, under the same slogan.

She explained that October 2025 saw the organisation of the “Awareness and Technology” event under the slogan “Window of Hope,” which distinguished itself by integrating technological innovation into the dissemination of health messages.

Al-Yafei added that the launch of the initiative’s slogan, “Window of Hope,” was a contribution to supporting patients and survivors and spreading positive messages that reinforce a culture of hope and community solidarity in the face of illness, while also highlighting the importance of sports and healthy lifestyles in disease prevention.



The ongoing collaboration between the “Hour and Hour” programme and QCS reflects the importance of integrating efforts across health institutions and community programmes to spread health awareness and promote a culture of prevention, contributing to the building of a more health-aware society capable of facing health challenges.

Sheikh Dr Khalid recently honoured al-Yafei for her efforts to support community initiatives and enhance a culture of health awareness, as well as for her role in expanding the reach of educational messages to various segments of society.

The honouring took place during the QCS’ annual ceremony to recognise partners and supporters, appreciating their vital role in supporting the Society’s humanitarian mission, enhancing its efforts to spread awareness about cancer, empowering those living with it, and improving their quality of life.

Akhlaquna winner highlights commitment to support weaker sections of society

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

One of the winners of the Akhlaquna Award this year was ‘Feed a Friend’, a Qatar-based community initiative that aims to support the weaker section of society with social and emotional support.

‘Feed a Friend’ was the winner in the Akhlaquna Individual Contributions Award–Qatar category, and Jaffrin Alliyah Choudury, founder and CEO of the organisation, received the award on Tuesday evening from Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation.

Choudury said that Feed a Friend delivers food and other essential support to those in need, helping thousands of people regain stability while promoting compassion and social responsibility.

Launched in 2020, the initiative provided essential groceries and food support to those facing financial hardship, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. The initiative has since grown into a large volunteer-led team, supporting thousands through food boxes, community fridges, and other initiatives. The initiative has supported more than 46,000 individuals with food and other necessities.

“While the initiative has supported more than 46,000 individuals with food, its deeper impact lies in the over 2,500 volunteers involved, whose perspectives have shifted and sense of responsibility has grown, ultimately contributing to building a more cohesive community,” said Choudury while addressing the audience at the award ceremony.



Jaffrin Alliyah Choudury.



Feed a Friend supplies food packs to the needy.



Supply of free organic vegetables. **PICTURES:** Shaji Kayamkulam

In the early years, the organisation set a target of providing 30 hot meals over 30 days to individuals in need. However, the demand from the community surpassed the initial target and they later extended the provision to 60 meals. With the support of the partners, the team has been able to deliver hot meals directly to the doors of those in need across a wide area of the country, ensuring accessibility for those requiring assistance.

“Akhlaquna recognition marks an important milestone in the journey of the initiative, not only on a personal level, but also for the communities that have been part of it,” Choudury remarked. “It reflects a broader appreciation for the values of generosity and social responsibility that we believe in and strive to promote.”

In addition to providing meals to the needy, the programme currently has other initiatives, such as Newborn Care Boxes and Community Fridge Refills. Furthermore, the initiative also provides a supply of free organic vegetables; home learning packs for students, among others, as well as pre-owned clothes and footwear.

“Every individual can play a role in promoting ethical values by practising them consistently and using their platforms to inspire others, as even a simple act of kindness can create an impact far beyond what we can imagine,” added Choudury.

The organisation aims to ensure that no one goes hungry through its initiatives, often in collaboration with local community members and partners. It is also open to receiving any number of volunteers willing to contribute to its social and ethical commitments.

QF teacher shares experience of balancing online teaching and parenting

A teacher at a Qatar Foundation school has shared her experience of balancing online teaching and parenting her own children at home.

When teachers are parents themselves, they have the opportunity to observe how children learn and behave at home, both their own and their students, during online lessons. This dual perspective provides insights into learning styles, habits, and motivations, allowing teachers to tailor lessons, adjust strategies, and use technology more effectively.

Reflecting on this, Leena Ayoub, a mother of three daughters and a teacher at QF Qatar Academy Doha (QAD), the same school her children attend, says: “As a kindergarten teacher whose work relies on asynchronous teaching, I carefully structure my time when my children are engaged in their schoolwork.

“I adopt a flexible approach to managing my day by grouping similar tasks, taking short breaks, avoiding overloading my schedule, and maintaining a clearly defined and dedicated time for my family.”

When asked how she manages to give online classes while supporting her daughters with theirs, Ayoub shared that she has raised independent children.

“I taught them how to adapt to different circumstances, including situations when I’m not around.

“For my youngest daughter, who is six years old, I showed her how to join classes and use the computer mindfully. At the same time, since we are in the same house, I can keep an eye on her. I also communicate this with her teachers, who are my colleagues, and they are collaborative and supportive of my suggestions and requests.”



Leena Ayoub.

When Ayoub delivers online lessons, she is mindful of the need for flexibility, explaining that she offers flexible deadlines for parents to submit their children’s work. She also emphasises the importance of self-care and collaboration.

While artificial intelligence and technology are central to online learning and Ayoub’s own work, they can also distract students through constant notifications and competing digital content, making it hard for them to stay focused. As a result, creating engaging and interactive lessons is not optional – it is a necessity to sustain attention and drive meaningful learning.

Recognising this, Ayoub uses AI to design interactive lessons while prioritising her students’ emotional and psychological well-being, turning technology into a tool for more human-centred learning.

“I use communication platforms with parents to design interactive and engaging learning resources that incorporate the teacher’s voice and visuals, and at times include personalised stories using children’s photos,” she says.

“I also ensure these activities are diverse and inclusive, integrating physical and sports elements and connecting learning to everyday family routines. This approach reinforces the concept of learning through play, aligning closely with the characteristics and developmental needs of early childhood.”

Qatar marks World Health Day with renewed push for sustainable living

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Municipality has reaffirmed its commitment to promoting sustainable, healthy cities on the occasion of World Health Day, observed annually on April 7.

The ministry highlighted its ongoing efforts to encourage healthier lifestyles among residents through a range of services and regulatory initiatives. Over the past year, municipalities across the country have maintained integrated food control systems to ensure that products available in local markets meet the highest local and international safety and quality standards.

Qatar has also continued to enhance public well-being by expanding access to green and recreational spaces, including public parks, walkways, well-equipped beaches, playgrounds, and sports facilities distributed across residential areas nationwide.

As a result of these sustained efforts, all cities in Qatar have received the World Health Organisation’s “Healthy Cities” designation — making the country the first in the world to achieve this distinction nationwide.

Significant investments over the past two decades have contributed to improving quality of life. In 2010, Qatar had just 56 parks covering approximately 2.6 million square metres, many of which lacked essential amenities. By 2025, the number of public parks had grown to around 150, spanning more than 18 million sq m and offering advanced facilities for public comfort.

Many parks now feature air-conditioned walkways to accommodate outdoor activity during the summer months, along with sports equipment, children’s play areas, barbecue facilities, and dedicated tracks for walking, running, and cycling. While some parks are large and open to all, others are smaller, family-oriented spaces located within residential neighbourhoods. All parks are free to access, reflecting a notable increase in per capita green space, with further expansion planned.



Qatar’s 560-km coastline also features a network of approximately 28 public beaches, most of which are free to access and equipped with amenities such as sports courts, barbecue areas, walkways, restrooms, and shower facilities. The government continues to upgrade these sites while ensuring environmental protection and preserving local ecosystems.

Overall, Qatar’s quality of life and healthcare services rank among the highest in the region and are globally competitive, with the country consistently recognised as one of the safest and most secure in the world.

This year’s World Health Day is held under the theme “Together for health: Stand with science,” highlighting the importance of scientific collaboration in protecting human, animal, and environmental health.

UDST campus life returns to normal after remote learning period

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

After nearly a month of remote learning amid regional tensions, life at the University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) is steadily returning to normal, with students and faculty expressing confidence in safety measures and appreciation for in-person engagement.

Campus activity has resumed across classrooms, libraries, and events, signalling what many describe as a seamless transition back to pre-disruption routines.

“It feels good, feels really nice to be back,” said Shahad, a staff member at the UDST library. “The campus is definitely very lively. Everyone is back to normal, classes are back.”

She noted a visible increase in student presence, particularly in shared academic spaces. “We see students more often in the library. We’re open until 10pm, so it’s nice to see students there until late at night,” she said, highlighting the return of familiar campus rhythms.

Shahad emphasised that operations have resumed without major changes. “It does not feel different. We’re following the same process that we did even before… everything is going back to normal as how it was before, even with the library events,” she added.





Students echoed similar sentiments, underscoring both emotional and academic benefits of returning to campus. Ruqayah, a UDST student, described the experience as a meaningful shift after weeks online.

“Being back on campus has surely been great… seeing your classmates and your doctors face to face is way better than online,” she said. “It’s like a reminder that whatever you have in life, value it.”

She acknowledged that the temporary pause in events initially felt unusual. “Having events… after a month-long break was weird, with Qatar continuously having something to do,” she noted, adding that campus events remain an important part of student life.

Both Shahad and Ruqayah highlighted the role of clear communication and national preparedness in ensuring a smooth return. Shahad confirmed that staff received detailed guidance prior to reopening. “We received an e-mail letting us know the safety guidelines issued by the Ministry of Interior and the university, what to do, what not to do,” she said.

Ruqayah also lauded the broader response: “Qatar placing our safety and cautious guidelines is important. Life is pretty normal, thanks to our university balancing safety, mental health, and education,” she said, adding that “the government is doing everything in their strength to keep us safe.”