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**Amir receives message from Rwanda president**

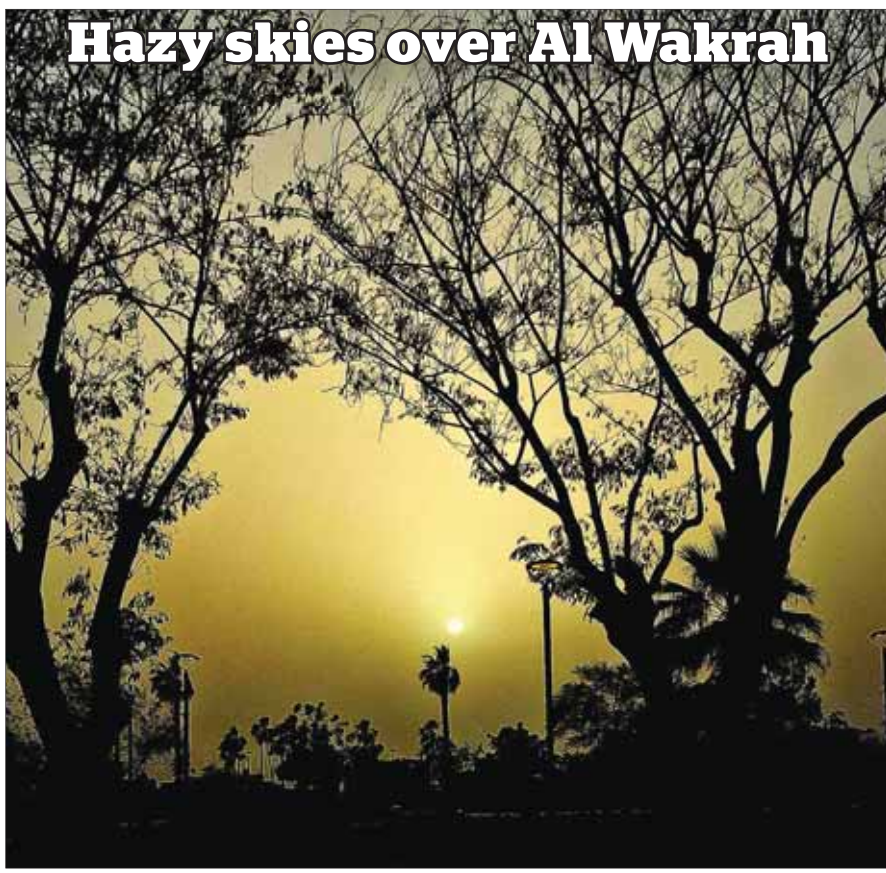
His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has received a written message from Rwandan President Paul Kagame, pertaining to the two countries' relations and ways to bolster them. The message was handed to HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad al-Thani during his meeting yesterday with Rwandan Minister of Interior Vincent Biruta, who is on a visit to Doha. Discussion during the meeting dealt with co-operation between Qatar and Rwanda in addition to a host of regional and international topics of mutual interest. (QNA) Page 2

**PM, Dutch FM call for supporting mediation**

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a phone call from Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Tom Berendsen yesterday. The two sides discussed aspects of bilateral co-operation and ways to enhance and develop it as well as regional developments, particularly those related to the ceasefire between the United States and Iran, and efforts aimed at de-escalation to enhance regional security and stability. The prime minister and the Dutch minister stressed the need for all parties to respond positively to ongoing mediation efforts, which would help address the root causes of the crisis through peaceful means and dialogue, ultimately leading to a sustainable agreement that prevents renewed escalation. (QNA)

**GCC vows diplomacy over conflict, eyes global role**

The Gulf Co-operation Council has reaffirmed its commitment to stability and prosperity as the bedrock of its regional and international outlook, firmly rejecting war and conflict as instruments of policy. Speaking at the Antalya Diplomacy Forum during a session on transcending zero-sum politics in the Middle East, GCC Secretary-General Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi said the bloc has consistently positioned itself as a partner in dialogue-driven solutions. Albudaiwi condemned Iranian attacks on GCC member states, describing them as unjustified and unlawful, and said that despite concerted Gulf efforts to avert conflict, the attacks and their destabilising consequences still came as a shock. On the Palestinian issue, he said the GCC has taken an active role in championing international efforts towards a two-state solution while also delivering humanitarian aid and political initiatives across the region – reflecting the bloc's view that stability is a collective, shared responsibility. He further argued that the role of regional organisations has shifted from optional to indispensable.



The sun cuts through a veil of dust at sunset in Al Wakrah Park, Doha, yesterday. PICTURE: Thajudheen

**14 Qatari companies in Time list of 'Arab Growth Leaders'**

GT Report  
Doha

Fourteen Qatari companies have earned a place in the inaugural "Growth Leaders in the Arab World 2026" ranking released by *Time Magazine*, highlighting the region's 250 fastest-growing publicly listed companies. The list was compiled in partnership with Statista, a leading global source of market and consumer data. The strong Qatari presence on the list underscores the country's expanding corporate landscape and the resilience of its publicly listed firms across multiple sectors. Leading the Qatari entries is Oman Qatar Insurance Company, which ranked 21st regionally, securing the top position among local companies. Vodafone Qatar followed as the second-highest Qatari firm, placing 51st across the Arab world. In third place locally was Qatar Cinema and Film Distribution Company, ranked 55th regionally, followed by Al Meera Holding Company in fourth place locally (67th regionally). Industries Qatar secured the fifth position among Qatari firms (96th regionally), while Qatar Fuel Company (Woqod) ranked sixth

locally (103rd regionally). Amal Company followed in seventh place (134th regionally). The eighth and ninth spots were claimed by Gulf International Services (135th regionally) and Mekdam Holding Group (159th regionally), respectively. Completing the list of Qatari firms were Gulf Takaful Insurance Company (166th regionally), Islamic Insurance Company (186th regionally), Qatar National Bank (QNB) (189th regionally), Ahli Bank QPSC (213th regionally), and Ezzdan Holding Group, which ranked 238th regionally. According to *Time*, the "Growth Leaders" ranking is based on a comprehensive analysis of listed companies across Gulf Co-operation Council countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The evaluation is built on three key pillars: revenue growth, financial stability, and stock performance, offering a data-driven snapshot of the companies driving economic momentum across the region. The inclusion of 14 Qatari firms reflects sustained growth, strategic expansion, and strong market performance, reinforcing Qatar's position as a key player in the Arab world's evolving business landscape.

**Municipality services go green with fleet rollout**

By Ayman Adly  
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Municipality has taken a significant stride towards cleaner, smarter urban services with the launch of a modern fleet of eco-friendly vehicles and equipment – a move that signals the country's deepening resolve to align its public infrastructure with global environmental benchmarks. The fleet was inaugurated by Abdullah Ahmed al-Karani, assistant undersecretary for Public Services Affairs, who described the initiative as a clear expression of the ministry's commitment to embedding best environmental practices into its day-to-day operations. He said the new vehicles would sharpen the efficiency of field operations while making a tangible contribution to improving air quality nationwide. Sherida Sultan al-Rumaihi, director of the Mechanical Equipment Department, called the rollout a qualitative leap in operational capability, noting that every vehicle in the fleet had been

selected against the most rigorous technical and environmental criteria, in step with the latest advances in global technology and in full alignment with sustainable development goals. At the heart of the fleet's green credentials are Euro 6 engines – among the most demanding emissions standards in the world – which significantly cut harmful exhaust emissions, boost fuel efficiency, and reduce noise pollution. Safety, too, has been woven into the fleet's design, with advanced warning lights and high-visibility reflective elements fitted across the vehicles. The fleet itself is as diverse as the municipal challenges it is built to meet. From hearse transport ambulances and refrigerated vans to street washing vehicles, waste collection trucks, and container carriers, the range covers a broad operational spectrum. Rounding out the lineup are a street sweeper, a beach cleaning tractor, and a dedicated waste collection vehicle – together equipping the ministry to serve Qatar's growing urban landscape with greater precision, sustainability, and care.



**Iran rebuffs fresh talks as US seizes cargo ship**

Reuters  
Washington/Islamabad

Iran yesterday rebuffed a fresh round of peace negotiations with the United States, declaring Washington's demands excessive and its conduct in breach of the ceasefire – even as US President Donald Trump threatened to destroy every power plant and bridge in the country unless Tehran accepted his terms. Trump said the US military had taken control of an Iranian-flagged cargo ship by blowing a hole in its engine room. "We have full custody of their ship, and are seeing what's on board!" he wrote on social media. Tehran's rejection, reported by state news agency IRNA, cited Washington's unrealistic expectations, constantly shifting positions, and the ongoing US naval blockade of Iranian ports as grounds for refusing to send a delegation to Islamabad for a second round of talks. Iran's semi-

official Tasnim news agency confirmed no decision had been taken to participate while the blockade remained in place. Trump had earlier announced on Truth Social that his envoys would arrive in Pakistan today evening – leaving barely a day for progress before the two-week ceasefire expires early on Wednesday. "We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL, and I hope they take it because, if they don't, the United States is going to knock out every single Power Plant, and every single Bridge, in Iran," he wrote. "NO MORE MR. NICE GUY!" The White House did not immediately respond to Iran's rejection. Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said yesterday that he spoke with Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian about the conflict in the Gulf. During the talk, Sharif shared insights with Pezeshkian regarding his recent conversations with the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Qa-

**Will Vance lead the US team?**

US Vice-President JD Vance will lead the US delegation for talks with Iran in Pakistan, a White House official said yesterday – shortly after President Donald Trump said he would not make the trip. Early in the day, Trump announced he was sending negotiators to Islamabad for meetings with Tehran about ending the conflict that has raged in the Middle East, with a ceasefire soon set to expire. The president however said Vance – who led the last round of talks with Tehran in Islamabad, but came away with no deal – would not make the trip, citing security concerns. "It's only because of security," Trump told ABC News. "JD's great." But the White House quickly flipped the script, when asked



about those comments. Vance, special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner will attend the talks, a White House official told AFP on condition of anonymity. The trio were on hand last time around on April 11-12. (AFP)

tar and Turkiye, he said in a post on X. "I appreciated Iran's engagement, including its high-level delegation to Islamabad for the historic talks, and recent discussions with Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir in Tehran," Sharif said. Sharif assured Pezeshkian that Pakistan remains committed to its role as a facilitator of peace and regional stability. Iran's chief negotiator, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, had acknowledged some progress from the first round but said the two sides remained far apart on nuclear issues and the Strait of Hormuz. Washington had proposed a 20-year suspension of all Iranian nuclear activity; Tehran countered with three to five years. The strait itself remained closed yesterday, a day after Iranian forces fired on two vessels attempting to cross. Iran had announced on Friday it would reopen the waterway – triggering the sharpest single-day oil

price drop in years and a global stock market rally – but reversed course on Saturday after Trump declined to lift the US port blockade. Marine traffic data showed shipping through the strait at a virtual standstill. Energy analyst Amrita Sen, founder of the Energy Aspects think tank, warned of fresh market volatility when trading resumed today, saying Iran's weekend actions had laid bare just how fragile the situation remained. Now in its eighth week, the conflict has delivered the most severe shock to global energy supplies in history. On the ground in Islamabad, two US C-17 cargo planes touched down at Nur Khan air base yesterday carrying security equipment ahead of the expected delegation's arrival. City authorities halted public transport, barbed wire was rolled out near the Serena Hotel – venue of last week's talks – and all guests were ordered to leave.

## Amir receives written message from Rwanda leader

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has received a written message from Rwanda's President Paul Kagame, pertaining to the two countries' relations and ways to bolster them. The message was handed to HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani during his meeting yesterday with Rwanda's Minister of Interior Dr Vincent Biruta, who is on a visit to Doha. - QNA



## Qatar, 15 Arab, Islamic nations slam Israel naming 'Somaliland' envoy

The foreign ministers of Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, Bangladesh, Algeria, Palestine, Turkiye, Indonesia, Pakistan, Mauritania, Jordan, and Oman have strongly condemned Israel's appointment of a diplomatic envoy to the so-called Somaliland, considering it a blatant violation of the sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Somalia. The ministers reiterated their categorical rejection of all unilateral actions that infringe upon the unity or sovereignty of states, emphasising their

unwavering support for the unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Somalia, and their support for the legitimate Somali state institutions as the sole representatives of the will of the Somali people. The ministers also stressed that such actions are a clear violation of the principles of international law, the United Nations Charter and the Constitutive Act of the African Union, and represent a dangerous precedent that could undermine stability in the Horn of Africa region, negatively impacting regional peace and security in general. - QNA

## Joint statement issued after meeting on implementation of Doha Framework

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) government, along with Alliance Fleuve Congo/March 23 Movement (AFC/M23), as well as Qatar, the US, Togo (as the African Union mediator), the African Union Commission, and Switzerland, have issued a joint statement on the meetings held on April 13-17 in Montreux, Switzerland, on the implementation of the Doha Framework for a Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The meetings were held to discuss the protocol

on Humanitarian Access and Judicial Protection, pursuant to the provisions of the Doha Framework for a Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the DR Congo government and AFC/M23, signed in Doha on November 15 last year. The DR Congo government and AFC/M23 expressed their gratitude to Qatar, the US, Switzerland, Togo, and the African Union Commission, as well as the UN, for their steadfast support in advancing peace and stability in eastern DR Congo and the broader Great Lakes region. - QNA

## Minister visits Qatar Academy Al Khor



HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid bin Mohammed al-Khater visited Qatar Foundation (QF)'s Qatar Academy Al Khor, where she was welcomed by director-general Dr Aisha al-Muqbali along with members of the administrative and teaching staff. The minister toured the campus, observed classroom learning, and interacted with students. The visit featured a student-led musical performance and a scout welcome, reflecting students' pride and sense of belonging. HE al-Khater was briefed on the academy's teaching approaches and academic programmes, which focus on fostering critical and creative thinking and encouraging active learning. Part of the QF's Pre-University Education (PUE), Qatar Academy Al Khor offers an international curriculum in Arabic and English, serving more than 1,200 students from kindergarten to Grade 12.

## QMC chief executive meets Jordan's ambassador



Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) chief executive HE Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Jordan's ambassador to Qatar Zaid Mufleh al-Lawzi. During the meeting, they discussed ways to enhance co-operation and exchange expertise in various media fields. - QNA

# MoEHE okays gradual return to extra curricular activities

By Ayman Adly  
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has announced a gradual return of school activities in government schools and kindergartens, alongside the easing of several precautionary measures, as part of the efforts to restore normal school life within a safe educational environment. The decision was issued by the Health and Safety Department in co-ordination with the relevant authorities across the country.

In a circular addressed to school and kindergarten principals, the department outlined a series of updates aimed at enhancing student engagement while maintaining necessary safety standards. According to the new directives, schools are now permitted to resume morning assemblies and hold daily prayers within internal school courtyards. Indoor and outdoor school activities have also been reinstated, enabling students to actively participate in a wider range of educational and extracurricular programmes. The circular further allows the use of indoor and outdoor playgrounds, as well as all open

spaces inside school buildings, supporting students' physical activity and recreational needs while improving the overall quality of the learning environment. The department stressed that adherence to precautionary measures remains essential. All teaching and administrative staff are required to carry mobile phones at all times to ensure rapid response in case of emergencies. The directive also calls for continued compliance with previously issued health and safety guidelines, stressing the importance of maintaining a secure school environment during this transitional phase.

## AG inaugurates refresher training course

HE the Attorney-General Dr Issa bin Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi inaugurated yesterday a refresher training course on practical criminal investigation, organised by the Public Prosecution in co-operation with the Public Prosecution of Egypt.

The four-day course is aimed at refining participants' skills and enhance performance in the field of criminal investigation through a practical, application-based methodology that involves reviewing and analysing real cases. In remarks marking the opening of the event, HE Dr al-Nuaimi emphasised the importance of training courses in raising the efficiency of Public Prosecution members and strengthening their capabilities in the field of criminal investigation. He also underscored the judicial co-operation between the Qatar's Public Prosecution and its Egyptian counterpart, noting both sides' commitment to exchanging expertise in legal and judicial fields. - QNA

## IPU General Assembly adopts emergency item resolution submitted by Qatar

On its closing day in Istanbul, the 152nd General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) unanimously adopted the resolution on the emergency item, submitted by Qatar along with a number of other countries, entitled "The urgent need for co-ordinated parliamentary efforts to uphold ceasefire agreements and support the achievement of peace in the Middle East and other regions".

The emergency item submitted by Qatar, represented by the Shura Council, received an overwhelming majority to be included on the agenda of the 152nd IPU's General Assembly, during the session dedicated to voting on requests to include emergency items on Friday. This is the first time that an emergency item submitted by an Arab state has received the necessary votes to be included on the agenda of the General Assembly.

Qatar's delegation during the session was led by HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim.

The Shura Council's participation was active in its general sessions and specialised meetings, and in the discussions that addressed current and multi-dimensional international issues under the theme *Promoting hope, preserving peace, and ensuring justice for future generations*.

During the Governing Council meeting, HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council, member of the IPU's Executive Committee, and vice-president of the Committee for the Arab Group, Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti, delivered a speech in which she addressed the council's contributions to interna-



tional efforts aimed at achieving sustainable development, through its organisation, in co-operation with the union, of a parliamentary forum on investment in individuals and institutions and the role of parliamentarians in social development, which was hosted by Doha on the sidelines of the Second World Summit for Social Development in November. She also participated in the Bureau of Women Parliamentarians, and delivered remarks that focused on the challenges related to digital violence and misinformation targeting women in political life.

Members of the Shura Council, as part of the council's delegation for this session, participated in the work of the standing committees that discussed the topics on their agenda.

Dr Sultan bin Hassan al-Dhabit al-Dosari participated in the meeting of the Standing Committee on Democracy and Human Rights, while Ahmed bin Ibrahim al-Maliki participated in the meeting of the Standing Committee on United Nations Affairs, and Yousef bin Ali al-Khater participated in the meeting of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development. - QNA

## Ministry of Culture marks World Heritage Day 2026

The Ministry of Culture marked World Heritage Day 2026 with a series of cultural events and activities aimed at showcasing Qatari folklore and highlighting national efforts to preserve and sustain cultural heritage.

The event was held in the presence of HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture Dr Ghanem bin Mubarak al-Ali, along with a number of officials, intellectuals, and heritage specialists.

Through the celebration, the ministry seeks to strengthen national identity among younger generations, highlight heritage as a cornerstone of Qatari collective memory, explore modern methods for documenting and preserving heritage, and reinforce culture's role as a bridge for civilisational dialogue.

The director of the ministry's Heritage and Identity Department, Sheikha Najla bint Faisal al-Thani, said that heritage is not limited to handicrafts or historical buildings, but represents a comprehensive way of life reflecting the values and spirit of Qatari society.

She stressed that the occasion underscores the importance of preserving cultural heritage as a reflection of national identity and collective memory across generations.

Sheikha Najla also highlighted Qatar's ongoing efforts to promote its heritage internationally through co-operation with regional and global organisations, particularly Unesco and ALECSO.

This year's celebration expanded beyond traditional venues, with activities held in shopping malls to engage wider audiences and promote national identity in public spaces.

An accompanying exhibition organised by the Heritage and Identity Department at the ministry's headquarters showcased various aspects of Qatari identity, including documentary photographs highlighting efforts to preserve heritage for future generations.

Mohammed Saeed al-Balushi, an expert at the Heritage and Identity Department, presented a paper reviewing Qatar's efforts over the past 60 years to collect and preserve heritage.

He traced the evolution from individual initiatives in Al Zubarah to the establishment of institutions such as Qatar National Library, Qatar Radio, and the Department of Culture and Arts, founded in 1977 under the Ministry of Information.

Al-Balushi highlighted key milestones, including the Arab Gulf States Folklore Centre, established in 1982 based on a Qatari proposal and later closed in 1995.

He also referred to historical manuscripts, noting the existence of four copies of the *Zubarah Qur'an* preserved in Qatar Museums, Qatar National Library, Saudi Aramco, and Bahrain.

He also outlined the institutional evolution from the Heritage Committee to the Heritage House, culminating in the establishment of the Heritage and Identity Department in 2021.

During the session, al-Balushi stressed that heritage is not static, noting that major events and crises contribute to shaping new narratives within collective memory.

He also highlighted the limited presence of Qatari folk tales in media and drama, calling for their adaptation into formats such as animation and theatre to strengthen national identity among youth.

During a symposium titled "Qatar's Efforts in Preserving Heritage", moderated by media personality and researcher Saleh Gharib al-Obaidli, discussions addressed the documentation of historical photographs.

Al-Balushi noted that rights to Qatari photographs dating from 1951-58 are held by the Geographic Information Systems Centre, stressing the need to establish a centralised archive to support researchers and the public. - QNA



## MoPH's public health sector football event ends

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has concluded the third public health sector football tournament. The Food Safety Department team at the MoPH won the tournament title after defeating the Primary Health Care Corporation team 3-1 in the final match. The Aisha Bint Hamad Al At-tiyah Hospital team secured third place with a 4-1 victory over the Naufar Centre in the playoff match. The tournament brought to-

gether 40 teams representing various healthcare institutions and featured a range of accompanying activities, including virtual health workshops, awareness booths, and educational stations for participants and the public. The tournament was organised under the supervision of the ministry's Human Resources Department, in collaboration with the healthcare sector, as part of the "Employee Wellbeing and Wellness Programme". This programme is a national-level joint initiative across the

healthcare sector in Qatar and represents a leading model for unifying institutional efforts to promote the physical, mental, and social well-being of healthcare professionals. Ghanim Ibrahim al-Mohannadi, the director of the MoPH's Human Resources Department and chairperson of the Public Health Sector HR Leadership Committee, commended the tournament's success at multiple levels, highlighting both the high standard of organisation and the strong level of participation

## Ministry initiative to insource Qatari trainers in educational services centres

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has launched an initiative to insource Qatari trainers in educational and training service centres.

The initiative was introduced by the Educational Services Centres Department under the Private Education Affairs sector, with the aim of supporting national talent and strengthening its presence in the training and continuing education sector.

The launch event was attended by HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education Lolwah bint Rashid bin Mohammed al-Khater, HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi, and Assistant Undersecretary for Private Education Affairs at the MoEHE Omar Abdulaziz al-Naama. Speaking at a press conference

held on the occasion, the director of the Educational Services Centres Department, Iman Ali al-Nuaimi, affirmed that the initiative comes in response to the rapid growth witnessed by private educational and training service centres, and reflects a commitment to empowering Qatari trainers and developing their professional capabilities. She noted that the initiative aims to enhance the quality of training outcomes and strengthen the country's sustainable learning ecosystem, in alignment with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Al-Nuaimi revealed a remarkable response from national talent, with 121 Qatari trainers registered under the initiative. Women accounted for 80.2% of participants. She also highlighted the diversity of professional experience among

participants, noting that more than 9% have over 20 years of experience, while the remainder possess between 5-20 years of experience across various specialised fields.

Al-Nuaimi said that the training areas covered by the initiative include entrepreneurship, human development, creative thinking and problem-solving, time and stress management, leadership, and effective communication skills, vital specialisations directly linked to the needs of Qatar's labour market. She stated that registered trainers will undergo interviews to obtain accredited licences and permits to work in educational and training centres.

A list of licensed trainers will then be circulated to these centres, with follow-up measures to ensure their engagement in delivering training programmes. - QNA

# Hormuz shuttered: Uncertainty looms over Iran-US negotiations

AFP  
Tehran, Washington, Dubai, Jerusalem and Beirut

The strategic Strait of Hormuz was again closed on Sunday in the stand-off between Iran and the United States, with Iran's powerful parliament speaker signalling a final peace deal remained "far" off despite seeming momentum gaining in Washington pertaining to the expected negotiations.

As mediation efforts have persisted following high-level talks in Pakistan that failed to reach a deal on both sides, however, Iran said it will not allow the crucial maritime trade chokepoint to re-open until the United States ends a blockade of Iranian ports.

Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, speaker of the Iranian parliament, in a televised address on Saturday night proclaimed that there had been "progress" with Washington "but there are many gaps and some fundamental points remain".

"We are still far from the final discussion," said Ghalibaf, one of Tehran's negotiators in the talks aimed at ending the war launched by Israel and the United States against the Islamic republic.

A two-week ceasefire is set to end on Wednesday unless it is renewed. US President Donald Trump said "very good conversations" were going on with Iran but warned Tehran against trying to "blackmail" the United States.

On Friday, Tehran had declared the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas usually transits, open after a temporary ceasefire was agreed to halt Israel's war with Iran's ally Hezbollah in Lebanon.

That prompted elation in global markets and sent oil prices plunging, but Tehran reversed course after Trump insisted the



A giant billboard referring to the 'Strait of Hormuz' and IRGC navy along a busy street in the Iranian capital on Sunday. (AFP)

US blockade of Iranian ports would continue until a final deal was struck.

"If America does not lift the blockade, traffic in the Strait of Hormuz will definitely be limited," Ghalibaf said.

Iran's supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei, who has yet to be seen since taking power after his father was killed in the war's opening strikes, said in a written message that Iran's navy "stands ready" to defeat the United States.

Trump accused Iran of getting "a little cute" with its recent moves and warned Tehran not to try to "blackmail" Washington by flip-flopping on the strait.

"We have very good conversations going on," the president told reporters at the White House, adding that the United States was "taking a tough stand".

Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned that any attempt to pass through the strait without permission "will be considered co-operation with the enemy, and the offending vessel will be targeted".

## Tehran has not decided whether to join new talks with US: IRNA state news agency

Iran has yet to decide whether it will take part in a new round of talks with the United States, local media reported Sunday, with the IRNA state news agency saying "there is no clear prospect of fruitful negotiations". The Fars and Tasnim news agencies, quoting anonymous sources, said Tehran had yet to decide whether it would participate and that "the overall atmosphere cannot be assessed as very positive", with Fars citing one source as saying the lifting

of a US blockade on Iranian ports was a precondition for talks.

IRNA, meanwhile, pointed to Washington's "maximalism and unreasonable and unrealistic demands, frequent changes of positions, constant contradictions and the continuation of the so-called naval blockade". The news agency added that "in these circumstances, there is no clear prospect of fruitful negotiations". AFP

A handful of oil and gas tankers crossed the strait early on Saturday during the brief reopening, tracking data showed, but others retreated and hardly any vessels were crossing the waterway by the late afternoon.

A UK maritime security agency said the Revolutionary

guards fired at one tanker, while security intelligence firm Vanguard Tech reported the force had threatened to "destroy" an empty cruise ship that was fleeing the Gulf.

In a third incident, the UK agency said it received a report of a vessel "being hit by an unknown

projectile, which caused damage" to shipping containers but no fire.

The Indian foreign ministry said it had summoned the Iranian ambassador to lodge a protest over a "shooting incident" involving two Indian-flagged ships in the strait.

On the diplomatic front, Egypt, which has been involved in mediation efforts with Pakistan, appeared optimistic on Saturday with Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty saying Cairo and Islamabad hoped to secure a final agreement "in the coming days".

A major sticking point has been Iran's stockpile of near-weapons-grade enriched uranium. Trump said Friday that Iran had agreed to hand over its roughly 440 kilograms of enriched uranium. "We're going to get it by going in with Iran, with lots of excavators," he said.

Iran's foreign ministry has said the stockpile, thought to be buried deep under rubble from US bombing in last June's 12-day war, was "not going to be transferred anywhere" and surrendering it "to the US has never been raised in negotiations".

The Middle East war began on February 28 with a massive wave of US-Israeli attacks on Iran, despite Washington and Tehran being engaged in negotiations at the time. The conflict rapidly spread across the region, with Iran targeting neighbouring Gulf countries that are home to US military bases, and Iran-backed Hezbollah dragging Lebanon into the war by launching rockets at Israel in support of Iran.

A French soldier was killed and three others wounded in an ambush on Saturday on UN peacekeepers in Lebanon that France's president blamed on Hezbollah, an accusation the group denied.

Israel's military reported that two of its soldiers had also been killed in combat in southern Lebanon since the start of a 10-day truce on Friday between Israel and Lebanon.

## Egypt, Kuwait FMs hold political consultations on regional developments and bilateral relations

Egypt's Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held political consultations yesterday with his Kuwaiti counterpart Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, currently visiting Cairo. The consultations addressed efforts to de-escalate tensions and end the war in the region, along with the latest developments in US-Iran negotiations.

Abdelatty briefed his Kuwaiti counterpart on the outcomes of his recent visit to Washington and the quadrilateral meeting held on Saturday in Antalya, Türkiye, involving the foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Türkiye. He stressed Egypt's position on the need of taking into account the security concerns of Gulf states in any future regional arrangements, affirming that Kuwait's security is an integral part of Egypt's national security. Kuwait's Foreign Minister expressed his deep appreciation for Egypt's role in strengthening Arab solidarity. (QNA)

## Jerusalem Governorate warns of mass Israeli incursions into Al-Aqsa mosque

The Jerusalem Governorate in a statement warned of calls by Israeli "Temple groups" to mobilise large numbers of settlers to carry out mass incursions into Al-Aqsa Mosque next Wednesday.

The governorate said the calls aim to intensify the raising of Israeli occupation flags inside the courtyards of Al-Aqsa Mosque, describing the move as a provocative act that violates the sanctity of the site. It also warned of serious repercussions of the act, holding Israeli occupation authorities fully responsible for any potential escalation. Earlier, dozens of settlers stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque under heavy Israeli police protection. The mosque has been subjected to increasing incursions by settlers. (QNA)

# Dark waters: Iraqi fish farmers mourn losses

AFP  
Az Zubaydiyah

On the banks of Iraq's Tigris River, Haidar Kazem mourned 300 tonnes of the fish he had carefully raised in ponds wiped out by a flood of polluted water.

Water supplies in Iraq, the eastern half of what is known as the region's fertile crescent and which the United Nations ranks among the countries most affected by climate change, are in a dire state.

"In just two hours, my entire project was gone — fish I had spent a year-and-a-half raising. I am back to zero," the 43-year-old fish farmer told AFP.

Earlier this month, after yet another very dry season, a brief spate of rain led authorities to open the gates of the Hamrin Dam, sending water into the Diyala, a tributary that is choked with untreated sewage. The flood then swept the contaminated water into the larger Tigris, and the pollution was so severe that it was visible in satellite images.

"No one told us that polluted water was headed our way," Kazem said, adding that the contaminated stream reached his ponds on April 5, killed all his fish and caused losses exceeding a million dollars.

Kazem buried his stock — carp for Iraq's beloved grilled dish masguf — and now spends his days cleaning their floating cages on the banks of the Tigris, haunted by the question: how will he save his livelihood? "I don't know any other trade, and I don't have the money to restart," he said.

Arkan al-Shimari, the head of the agriculture department in Kazem's province Wasit, said that the sewage stream has killed more than 1,000 tonnes of fish.

According to authorities, several water treatment plants discharge untreated sewage into the Diyala River, which years of drought in Iraq have left low and notorious for its foul odour. Environmental open-source investigator Wim Zwijnenburg said that the Diyala consistently appears darker than the Tigris due to wastewater discharge, its low depth and weaker currents.



Iraqi fish farmers clean tanks of dead fish at a farm in the town of al-Numaniyah, near the city of Kut in southern Iraq. (AFP)

Normally, it would gradually mix into the Tigris, but this time heavy rain created a stronger current in Diyala, sending a less-diluted polluted water into the Tigris, and "thus affecting downstream fisheries and potentially also water treatment plants".

As the situation worsened, authorities restricted water supply — normally treated water from the Tigris — in several areas of Wasit, reporting 20 documented cases of poisoning and rash.

Declining rain over recent years, coupled with rising temperatures, has brought water levels in the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to staggering lows, for which Baghdad also accuses upstream dams built by neighbouring Turkey and Iran.

Following the recent fish die-

off, authorities vowed they would take the necessary measures to treat wastewater before discharge. However, Iraq's infrastructure remain in a pitiful state and its water management systems in disrepair.

In the town of al-Numaniyah, fish farmer Mazen Mansour, 51, gazed over the still water in his empty floating cages, which until recently held 38,000 fish he had been counting on selling next month. Mansour said only realised the gravity of the situation when he saw his fish dying. He tried to save them by providing oxygen to his basins, but it was too late.

"The water was black and filled with sewage," he said. "All our work was gone in one night," added the father of four. Now, he waits and hopes for compensation from the government.

## FREE VEHICLE RECALL



وزارة التجارة والصناعة  
Ministry of Commerce and Industry  
مجلس التجارة والصناعة  
State of Qatar



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Year of Production:

2026

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وزارة التجارة والصناعة  
Ministry of Commerce and Industry  
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State of Qatar



Pope Leo XIV waves to the crowd as he arrives to lead a Holy Rosary Prayer on the esplanade in front of the "Mama Muxima" Shrine in Muxima yesterday. (AFP)

## Pope urges Angola to overcome divisions after decades of war

Reuters  
Kilamba

Pope Leo XIV urged Angolans on Sunday to overcome divisions after decades of war, first at a Mass in a field outside Luanda and then in a prayer at a site that was once a hub for transatlantic slavery, events that jointly drew roughly 130,000 people.

The first US-born pope, who has become outspoken on war and inequality and angered President Donald Trump, celebrated Mass outside in Kilamba, a sprawling housing development, before travelling by helicopter to the Catholic shrine in Muxima.

During the Mass, he called Angola, which experienced a 27-year civil conflict from 1975 to 2002, a "beautiful yet wounded country".

He urged Angolans to "build together a country where old divisions are overcome once and for all, where hatred and violence disappear."

At the shrine, about 130 km (81 miles) southeast of the capital on the edge of the Kwanza River, throngs of people danced and sang in hot, humid weather as the pope was driven through the crowd in a white golf cart.

The shrine, now a popular religious site, was built as part of a 16th-century Portuguese fortress at the heart of the trade that historians estimate captured some six million people from what is now Angola to enslave and send to the Americas.

Leo did not refer to the site's history in his remarks but called on Angolans to build a peaceful, more just world.

"It is love that must triumph, not war!" he said.

At the end of the Mass in Kilamba, the pope decried a recent ramp-up in the Ukraine war, calling "for the weapons to fall silent and for the path of dialogue to be followed".

He also praised the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, to end fighting between Israeli forces and Iran-backed Hezbollah, as a "reason for hope".

Believers began arriving before dawn at Kilamba to hear Leo speak.

Among those welcoming him was Sister Christina Matende, who arrived around 6:00 a.m. (0500 GMT) for the Mass.

"The pope coming here is a joy," she said. "We are living in a moment of a lot of difficulties."

Angola is one of the leading oil-producing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, but its population of 36.6 million people is still confronting extreme poverty, with more than 30% living on less than \$2.15 per day, according to the World Bank.

More than half of the country identifies as Catholic.

Leo is visiting Angola on the third leg of a four-nation Africa tour. In a speech to the country's political leaders on Saturday, he decried the exploitation of natural resources on the continent.

The pope criticised "despots and tyrants" who he said guarantee wealth but do not deliver on their promises, leading to suffering and deaths.

He also urged political leaders to focus on helping all their people, not just corporate interests.

"History will then vindicate you, even if in the near term some may oppose you," he said.

Anielka Calia, 25, who was in the crowd waiting for the pope in Kilamba on Sunday, said she was grateful for the way the pope has debuted a forceful speaking style on his Africa tour.

"Our country needs a lot of this message and I think the pope will help us to think and reflect about that, knowing that all of us need to work together and do our best to have peace," she said, as she stood with her fiancé and parents.

## Israel vows to level homes in Lebanon, counter threats with 'full force'

AFP  
Beirut

Israel said its military had been instructed to use "full force" against imminent threats in Lebanon despite a truce there and vowed to level homes allegedly used by Hezbollah, with state media reporting demolitions were underway on Sunday.

While some displaced south Lebanon residents have rushed back to their homes, many are hesitant to return, uncertain about the durability of the 10-day truce, which came into effect last Friday and halted weeks of fighting between Israel and Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah.

In the village of Dibbine, an AFP correspondent saw a man inspecting damage to his home and people walking near the rubble of destroyed buildings.

In Srifa, another correspondent saw people unloading belongings including mattresses and a washing machine as they returned to the southern village.

Elsewhere, an AFP correspondent saw people travelling away from the south after retrieving belongings from their homes.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said he and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had instructed the army "to act with full force, both on the ground and from the air, including during the ceasefire, in order to protect our soldiers in Lebanon from any threat".

He said the military had also been ordered to demolish any structure or road that was "booby-trapped", and "to remove the houses in the contact villages near the border that served in every respect as Hezbollah terror outposts".

**Fait accompli**  
Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) said that "the Israeli enemy is still destroying what remains of houses" in Bint Jbeil on Sunday after report-



A bulldozer clears the rubble from the site of an Israeli airstrike as people return to Beirut's southern suburbs yesterday. (AFP) /

ing demolitions in the town a day earlier.

Located around five kilometres (three miles) from the Israeli border, Bint Jbeil saw heavy fighting between Israeli forces and Hezbollah before the ceasefire.

The NNA also said the Israeli army was "blowing up houses in Mais al-Jabal" and "carrying out a sweep operation and detonations" in Deir Seryan, both also near the border, while the town of Kumin "was subjected to enemy artillery shelling".

On Saturday, Israel's military said it had established a "Yellow Line" in south Lebanon, similar to the one in Gaza that separates areas held by Israeli forces from those controlled by militant group Hamas.

On Sunday, the military published a map showing its "forward defence line" and an area in red stretching along the length of the Lebanese border where it said forces were operating "to

dismantle Hezbollah terror infrastructure sites and to prevent direct threats to communities in northern Israel".

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Sunday denounced what he called "Israeli expansionism" in Lebanon, accusing it of seeking to create a "fait accompli" despite the ceasefire.

The truce took effect days after the first high-level meeting between Lebanon and Israel in decades, pausing a war that has killed nearly 2,300 people in Lebanon and displaced more than a million since it broke out on March 2.

**France visit**  
On Tuesday, French President Emmanuel Macron will meet Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam in Paris. The visit aims to demonstrate Macron's commitment to the ceasefire and France's support for Lebanon's "territorial integrity", the president's office said.

Macron is also expected to urge

Lebanese authorities to prosecute those responsible for an attack on UN peacekeepers in south Lebanon on Saturday that killed one French soldier and wounded three others.

France and the force have blamed Hezbollah, which denied involvement.

Salam's office said the premier would first travel to Luxembourg on Tuesday "to meet EU foreign ministers" ahead of the Paris visit.

Earlier on Sunday, Lebanon's military announced it had reopened a road linking the city of Nabatiyeh with the Khardali area, and had "partially reopened the Burj Rahal-Tyre bridge" in the country's south.

Israeli strikes on bridges across Lebanon's Litani River, which flows around 30 kilometres north of the Israeli border, have largely cut off the area from the rest of Lebanon, according to the army.

## DR Congo, M23 armed group agree to ease aid, free prisoners

The DR Congo (DRC) government and the M23 group agreed to ease humanitarian aid deliveries and release prisoners within 10 days, according to a joint statement Sunday following talks in Switzerland.

Since 2021, the M23, backed by Rwanda, has seized territory in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, a region ravaged by more than 30 years of conflict.

The two sides signed a US-brokered peace agreement in December but fighting has continued. Talks mediated by Qatar were held in the Swiss town of Montreux from April 13 to 17.

"The DRC and AFC/M23 (the parties)

agreed on the critical importance of ensuring life-saving humanitarian assistance for the people of eastern DRC," said a statement issued by both sides, mediators and other attendees.

"The parties agreed to facilitate rapid, unimpeded, safe, and sustained humanitarian access." The two sides "agreed to comply with all of their obligations under international humanitarian law, international human rights law, and international refugee law, as applicable." Both sides agreed to refrain from any action undermining the principled delivery of humanitarian assistance within the territories impacted by the conflict."

They said ensuring protection of civilians "remains paramount during the conduct of hostilities".

The DRC and the M23 agreed to refrain from any attack, destruction or removal of objects and infrastructure indispensable to the survival of the civilian population. They pledged to protect humanitarian workers, facilitate aid convoys and "do their utmost" to avoid aid being diverted or pillaged. The two sides "also agreed within 10 days to release prisoners... to continue building confidence." Additionally, they signed a memorandum of understanding on ceasefire verification mechanisms "to begin conducting surveillance,

monitoring, verification, and reporting on the implementation of the permanent ceasefire".

The M23 made advances in early 2025, capturing the major eastern cities of Goma and Bukavu. Days after the signing of the US-brokered peace deal, the armed group seized another major city, Uvira on the border with Burundi, provoking an angry response from the United States.

While denying offering the M23 military backing, Rwanda insists that it faces an existential threat from the presence in the eastern DRC of armed groups linked to the 1994 Rwandan genocide of the Tutsis. (AFP)

## Pro-Palestinian rally in Morocco over Israel's death penalty law

AFP  
Rabat

Thousands of Moroccans gathered in Rabat yesterday to voice their support for the Palestinian cause and protest a new Israeli law that would allow the execution of Palestinians convicted of deadly attacks.

The crowd of around 5,000 people marched down the capital's Mohammed V Avenue in the centre of town, with many carrying Palestinian and Moroccan flags, AFP journalists reported.

The protest was called by the National Action Group for Palestine, which brings together members from the Justice and Development party and left-wing activists.

Marchers chanted "no to the death penalty" and "no to occupation and Zionism", as well as slogans criticising Israel's conduct of the war in Gaza.

"We're sending our support to Palestinian prisoners who are threatened by this new law on the death penalty," said Aziz El Hannaoui, a member of the organising coalition.

The Israeli law makes the death penalty the default punishment for Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank found guilty of intentionally carrying out deadly attacks deemed "acts of terrorism" by an Israeli military court.

It also allows the death penalty to be applied in murder cases tried in Israeli criminal courts if the perpetrator intended to "put an end to the existence of the State of Israel".

Critics have said that by effectively creating a separate legal track for Palestinians, the law appears to be in conflict with Israel's Basic Laws, which prohibit arbitrary discrimination.

After its passage, the law was condemned by the Palestinian Authority, activists and several foreign governments, and immediately drew a court challenge.

While the death penalty exists for a small number of crimes in Israel, it has become a de facto abolitionist country — the Nazi Holocaust perpetrator Adolf Eichmann was the last person to be executed in 1962.

The protesters in Rabat on Sunday also renewed the continued criticism of Morocco's normalisation of ties with Israel in 2020.



Moroccan protesters wave flags during a rally in support of the Palestinian people and against Israel's approval of a death penalty bill, in Rabat yesterday. (AFP)

### QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (USD)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	SUP/C/ITD/7589/26 MANAGED FILE TRANSFER SAAS SOLUTION	19/04/2026 to 04/05/2026	0	0	11/05/2026

**Scope of Work:**

QatarEnergy LNG seeks to procure and implement a secure, governed, and scalable Managed File Transfer (MFT) to replace existing solution, with the intention of moving relevant services to the Cloud as a SaaS. Duration of the Contract: 5 Years & 9 Months. Tentative award date: 11-Nov-2026.

**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.

# Carney says Canada's US ties have become a weakness

Reuters  
Calgary

Canada's close ties to the US were once a strength but have become a weakness, Prime Minister Mark Carney said yesterday, in a video message to his country in which he also praised the heroism of military leaders who fought against US invasion more than two centuries ago.

Holding up a small toy soldier depiction of General Isaac Brock, the British military leader who died defending what is now Canada from a US invasion in the War of 1812, Carney said Canada can't control the disruption coming from its US neighbours, and can't bet its future on the hope that it will suddenly stop.

"The situation today feels unique, but we've faced down threats like this before," Carney said, referencing Brock and several other Canadian historical figures, including Chief Tecumseh who united Indigenous Nations across the Great Lakes to resist US expansion in 1812.



Prime Minister Mark Carney waiting for Finland's President Alexander Stubb in Ottawa, Ontario. (Reuters/File Photo)

Carney, who secured a parliamentary majority for his Liberal government last week, has said his electoral win will help him deal more effectively in the trade war started by US President Donald Trump.

US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick slammed Canada as a difficult trading partner last week.

Canada, which sends almost 70% of its exports to the US, is this year due to review the trilateral US-Mexico-Canada free trade treaty. US officials have suggested they want major changes to the pact.

As well as imposing tariffs on Canadian exports such as steel, aluminium and autos, Trump has repeatedly mused about annexing Canada and turning it into the 51st US state.

Carney's office did not immediately respond to questions about why he had released the video now and why he had praised figures who resisted US expansionism.

Carney said he plans to give regular addresses to Canadians in the weeks and months ahead to update them on what his government is doing to grow Canada's economy and defend its sovereignty.

"It's our country, it's our future, we are taking back control," he said.

## Eight children dead in US domestic violence shooting

AFP  
Washington

Eight children were killed in a shooting spree early yesterday in the southern US state of Louisiana, in what police said appears to have been an incident of domestic violence.

The incident, which took place just after 6:00am (1100 GMT) in the city of Shreveport, was the deadliest mass shooting in the US in more than two years, according to data from the Gun Violence Archive.

The gunman, who was not immediately identified but was reportedly an adult male, was fatally shot by police after a car chase, officials said.

Police Corporal Chris Bordelon told a press conference that the "rather extensive crime scene" spanned three residences, which were being combed for evidence by investigators.

The victims ranged in age from one to 14, Bordelon said. Two other people were struck by gunfire, but their conditions were not immediately known.

"Some of the children inside were his descendants," he added. The suspect carjacked a vehicle and led police on a chase before officers opened fire and the assailant was killed. No officers were injured, according to state police.

"We do believe him to be the only individual that fired gunshots at these locations," Bordelon said, calling the incident a "domestic disturbance."

Police said more details about the victims and the gunman would be released pending notification of next of kin.

ABC affiliate KTBS reported that the two people wounded were adult women who were shot in the head. The network also said a male child was injured when he jumped from a roof of one of the homes.

One of Louisiana's two US senators, Republican Bill Cassidy, called the incident an episode of "horrific violence" and wished the survivors a speedy recovery.

Louisiana Governor Jeff Landry said he was "heartbroken." The US, where firearms are readily available, is a frequent scene of gun violence, with thousands of people killed every year.

"It's a terrible morning in Shreveport and we all mourn with the victims," Mayor Tom Arceneaux said at the press conference.

## Hollywood, Silicon Valley turn out for the 'Oscars of Science'

AFP  
Los Angeles

Big names from the worlds of film, technology, music and sports gathered on Saturday in Santa Monica, California for the Breakthrough Prizes, popularly known as the "Oscars of Science."

The awards, co-founded by philanthropists and tech entrepreneurs, recognise the research achievements of leading scientists around the world in three broad categories: Life Sciences, Fundamental Physics and Mathematics.

"These are some of the most heroic and inspiring people we get in the world," actor Edward Norton told AFP.

According to the *American History* X star, it was important to turn out and "to highlight what this kind of work contributes to all of us."

"The US has the most anti-science administration in US history," the actor said. "It's always impor-



Robert Downey Jr attends the 12th Breakthrough Prize ceremony gala in Santa Monica, California. (Reuters)

tant, but if it was ever especially important, the moment is now."

In the last year, the Trump administration has slashed funding for science, halting projects and devastating workforces.

Rock climber Alex Honnold agreed with Norton, adding that he hoped the fluctuations "of the political climate... are short-term compared to the long-term effort required to make these kind of

gains in human knowledge."

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said the collaboration between his company's artificial intelligence technology and some of the award-winning scientists "is moving things faster and faster, and letting them discover new things and bring them to the world faster than they could before."

"Change this fast is really disorienting. So there will be a lot of

big questions that we'll have to sort through as a society," Altman told AFP.

The Breakthrough Foundation was started by Google co-founder Sergey Brin; Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan; science patrons Julia and Yuri Milner; and Anne Wojcicki, CEO of 23andMe.

Six prizes worth \$3mn each were presented at the 12th edition of the awards.

French mathematician Frank Merle was honoured for his work on nonlinear equations describing the behaviour of waves, fluids and other systems.

Merle told AFP the funding is "essential" for science.

"Science is one of the foundations of our civilisation," he said. Hollywood A-listers Ben Affleck, Lily Collins, Robert Downey Jr., Gigi Hadid, Anne Hathaway, Jessica Chastain, Naomi Watts and her husband, Billy Crudup, also attended the event, alongside public figures like Bill Gates and Paris Hilton.

## Three US university students hurt in shooting

Three students at the University of Iowa were wounded in a shooting off campus early yesterday, the school president said.

The shooting took place in an area of Iowa City not far from campus that is

popular for nightlife with numerous restaurants. Police said officers responded to a report of a "large fight" just before 2:00am (0700 GMT). The investigation was ongoing, but that no arrests have been made

so far. University president Barb Wilson confirmed that three students were wounded, and urged students to seek counselling if needed.

Shootings on or near college campuses occur frequently.

Two people were killed by gunfire at South Carolina State University in February. And two people were killed and nine others were wounded when a gunman opened fire inside a classroom at Brown University. (AFP)

## Harley-Davidson Doha Opens New State-of-the-Art Showroom at Barwa Commercial Avenue



Harley-Davidson Doha, a subsidiary of Nasser Bin Khaled Group, has officially inaugurated its new showroom at Barwa Commercial Avenue, marking a significant milestone in the brand's longstanding presence and growth in Qatar.

Designed to meet the evolving expectations of modern riders, the new facility reflects Harley-Davidson Doha's ongoing commitment to innovation, customer experience, and market leadership. The showroom introduces a contemporary retail environment that blends functionality with the bold identity of the iconic

Harley-Davidson brand.

The showroom was inaugurated by H.E. Sheikh Khaled bin Nawaf bin Nasser Al Thani, in the presence of Ayman Mohamad Ali, General Manager of Harley-Davidson Doha, alongside members of the Harley Owners Group (H.O.G.) Qatar Chapter, a large number of members of other motorcycle clubs across Qatar, media representatives, and distinguished guests.

Following the official ribbon-cutting ceremony, attendees were invited to tour the new space, which spans two floors and has been developed in line with



Harley-Davidson's international standards. The showroom delivers an immersive brand experience, offering visitors a deeper connection to the heritage, craftsmanship, and lifestyle that define Harley-Davidson.

The ground floor showcases the latest Harley-Davidson models, catering to a wide spectrum of riders—from seasoned enthusiasts to newcomers exploring the brand for the first time. The upper level is dedicated to a comprehensive selection of motor clothes, accessories, and branded merchandise, positioning the showroom as a fully integrated destination for Harley-Davidson customers.

This new opening forms part of Harley-Davidson Doha's broader strategy to stay ahead of global motorcycle trends while continuously enhancing its customer offering. By bringing together product, lifestyle, and community under one roof, the showroom aims to deliver a holistic and engaging experience that resonates with both loyal riders and a new generation of customers.

Customers are welcome to visit the new showroom at Barwa Commercial Avenue, Building 174, Unit 351, from Saturday to Thursday, between 10:30 AM and 7:00 PM.



# Blue Origin lands reused New Glenn rocket booster for first time

Reuters  
Washington

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin said yesterday that its New Glenn rocket booster had touched down after launch, marking its first landing of a reused booster and intensifying its rivalry with Elon Musk's SpaceX.

The rocket, which had a launch window of 6:45am to 12:19pm ET on Sunday, lifted off at around 7:25am ET (1125 GMT) from Cape Canaveral, Florida, and the booster-er touchdown happened about 10 minutes later.

New Glenn carried AST Space-Mobile's BlueBird 7 satellite to low-Earth orbit in a flight that marks a pivotal step for the company.

The mission was key to demonstrating that New Glenn, a 29-storey heavy-lift rocket, has a reliable booster reuse capability and can compete with the

SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. The rocket's booster, dubbed "Never Tell Me the Odds," previously flew on the NG-2 mission in November and was recovered, setting up this week's milestone attempt.

The booster's name is a nod to a Han Solo line in the film "Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back."

Following a series of delays earlier this month, the mission comes amid a surge of activity in the space sector, including the successful Nasa Artemis II lunar flyby that took humans further from Earth than any had travelled before.

Blue Origin had said in November that it would build a bigger, more powerful variant of its New Glenn rocket, called New Glenn 9x4.

New Glenn is designed for the higher end of the commercial launch market with a seven-metre (23-foot) nose cone allowing it to carry bulkier payloads, including

multiple satellites in a single mission.

"We foundationally developed New Glenn for what we think space is going to look like 50 to 100 years from now," said New Glenn Vice-President Jordan Charles.

AST SpaceMobile's BlueBird 7, carried into orbit on NG-3, is the second satellite in its next-generation Block 2 constellation. The satellite features what the company describes as the largest commercial communications array deployed in low-Earth orbit.

Designed to connect directly with smartphones, the satellite is part of an effort to build a space-based cellular broadband network, similar to Amazon's Leo or SpaceX's Starlink.

The successful booster landing signals that Blue Origin is narrowing a gap with SpaceX, which Reuters reported earlier this month confidentially filed for a US IPO targeting a valuation of about \$1.75tn.

SpaceX and Blue Origin, in the latest competition between the billionaire-run companies, have been racing to help return humans to the moon ahead of a planned crewed mission by China in 2030 by designing the lunar landers Nasa will use.

SpaceX is building a massive stainless-steel Starship-based Human Landing System, while Blue Origin is developing a more traditional Blue Moon lander and aims to achieve a pivotal uncrewed soft lunar landing (Mark 1) this summer.

Nasa's next Artemis mission planned for next year is expected to test both landers while in Earth orbit before the mission that would return astronauts to the moon for the first time since 1972.

"New Glenn is the vehicle that can take Nasa or anyone, anywhere in the solar system," Laura Maggini, New Glenn mission vice-president said.



A Blue Origin New Glenn rocket lifts off from the Cape Canaveral Space Force Station in Florida yesterday. (Reuters)

# Peru presidential vote results delayed until mid-May

AFP  
Lima

Results from the first round of Peru's presidential election won't be released until mid-May, an official said Saturday, after a chaotic vote leading to what appeared to be a tight race.

"We expect to have the presidential results, which is what we need to determine the runoff candidates, by around mid-May," said Yessica Clavijo, secretary-general of the National Jury of Elections (JNE) - Peru's highest electoral justice authority - on radio broadcaster RPP.

With 93.4% of ballots counted from last Sunday's election, right-wing candidate Keiko Fujimori was leading with 17%.

The top two candidates go to a runoff election, and a close race has emerged for a spot in the next round between leftist Roberto Sanchez, who received 12% of the vote, and ultra-conservative Rafael Lopez Aliaga, with 11.9%.



Prosecutors raiding a warehouse where the ONPE (National Organisation of Electoral Processes) stores electoral material in Lurin, south of Lima. (AFP)

The gap between the two increased slightly Saturday to 13,600 votes.

Clavijo attributed the slow vote count to the review of more than 15,000 challenged ballots, about 30% of which involve the presi-

dential vote and the remainder related to legislative elections.

Lopez Aliaga, the former mayor of capital Lima, has emerged as the harshest critic of the vote's delays. He has alleged fraud, without providing evidence, and

called for the vote to be annulled.

He called on supporters of his Popular Renewal Party to march on Sunday in protest.

Sanchez, for his part, also criticised the vote, telling a press conference Saturday: "These serious organisational issues must be investigated and there must be appropriate sanctions."

A record 35 candidates ran for president in the chronically unstable Andean nation, where four of the last eight presidents were impeached by Congress.

The election was marked by delays in the delivery of election materials that forced authorities to extend voting into Monday in parts of the capital Lima.

The European Union's election observer mission nonetheless gave the election a clean bill of health.

On Friday, prosecutors raided a warehouse of the National Office of Electoral Processes (ONPE), which organises the vote, and four officials have been reported to JNE for alleged crimes against the right to vote.

# Trump says US destroyer hit Iran cargo ship trying to evade blockade

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that a US destroyer ship fired on and seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship in the Gulf of Oman that tried to evade a US naval blockade.

Trump posted on Truth Social that after the Iranian vessel, Touka, ignored warnings to stop, the guided missile destroyer USS Spruance "stopped them right in their tracks by blowing a hole in the engine room."

"Right now, US Marines have custody of the vessel," the US president added, "and are seeing what's on board!" The incident comes with tensions high in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital conduit for the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, which has been virtually closed since the start of the US-Israeli war with Iran seven weeks ago. Iran briefly reopened the strait

on Friday in recognition of an Israel-Hezbollah ceasefire in Lebanon, but closed it again the following day in response to the US maintaining its blockade on ships travelling to and from Iranian ports.

Trump said the Touka is under US Treasury sanctions "because of prior history of illegal activity."

The Touka is listed on the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control website as an Iranian-flagged container under US sanctions. According to the latest data available from the Marine Traffic website, about six hours before Trump's announcement the Touka was about 45 kilometres (28 miles) off the southern coast of Iran, near the city of Chabahar. Another ship monitoring site, Tanker Tracker, said the Touka had sailed from Malaysia. (AFP)

# Chile's new right-wing govt vows to step up migrant deportations

AFP  
Santiago

Chile's new right-wing government on Thursday announced plans to step up migrant deportations, after expelling a group of 40 people from Colombia, Bolivia and Ecuador.

President Jose Antonio Kast took office in March as Chile's most right-wing leader since the end of General Augusto Pinochet's 1973-1990 dictatorship.

He was elected on a promise to crack down on illegal migration from poorer South American countries, particularly Venezuela, which many Chileans blame for a surge in violent crime.

In his first address to the nation as leader on Wednesday, Kast said Thursday's deportation fight would be the "first in a long series" aimed at creating a sustained outflow of "irregular migrants who should not stay in our country."

"We will intensify the (deportation) flights," deputy interior min-

ister Maximo Pavez told reporters on Thursday, adding that the government also planned to send migrants home by bus.

The left-wing administration of Kast's predecessor Gabriel Boric also expelled migrants - over 6,600 in five years.

During his campaign Kast, an ultraconservative father of nine, called on the around 330,000 migrants living illegally in Chile to self-deport or risk being thrown out after his election.

Days after his inauguration

Kast launched the construction of trenches along the borders with Peru and Bolivia - the main crossing points for migrants from Venezuela and other Latin American countries.

He also cancelled plans to give papers to around 180,000 foreigners.

He has expressed hopes that Venezuelans who fled their country's economic collapse under ousted socialist leader Nicolas Maduro will return home now that Maduro is sitting in a New York jail.

# Haiti, Dominican Republic to reopen direct air links

Direct air travel between Haiti and the Dominican Republic will resume in May, the two countries said Friday, more than two years after Santo Domingo closed its airspace to its neighbour due to escalating gang violence.

The resumption of direct flights will help "energise economic ties and reinforce relations," the Caribbean countries, which share the island of Hispaniola, said in a joint statement.

Haiti - the poorest country in the Americas - has faced a deep security crisis for years, with gangs who control the vast majority of the capital Port-au-Prince committing frequent murders, rapes and kidnappings.

In March 2024, the Dominican Republic closed its airspace to all passenger and cargo flights originating in Haiti, citing the ongoing instability.

Ties have been fraught, and Dominican authorities are building a 174-kilometre (108-mile) concrete wall along the 380-kilometre (236-mile) border. (AFP)

# Remains of 50 babies, six adults found at Trinidad and Tobago cemetery

The remains of at least 50 infants and six adults were discovered Saturday after they had apparently been discarded at a cemetery in Trinidad and Tobago, police said.

A preliminary investigation showed it "may be a case involving the unlawful disposal of unclaimed corpses," the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) said in a statement. The bodies were found at Cumuto Cemetery, about 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the capital Port of Spain in Trinidad.

Police said the six adult remains included four male and two female corpses, with all but one of the men found with identification tags.

Two of the bodies, one male and one female, had signs indicating autopsies had been performed on them.

"The TTPS stresses that this is an active and developing investigation, and further forensic analysis is underway to determine the origin of the remains and any associated breaches of law or procedure," the statement said. Police Commissioner Allister Guevarro called the discovery "deeply troubling," saying his agency was handling the case "with urgency, sensitivity and unwavering commitment to uncovering the truth."

Trinidad and Tobago, an English-speaking archipelago nation located about 10 kilometres (six miles) off the Venezuelan coast, has reckoned in recent years with rising violent crime, recording 623 murders in 2024 among the population of 1.5mn. A US State Department report said the murder rate of 37 per 100,000 people made Trinidad and Tobago the sixth most dangerous nation in the world in 2023. (AFP)



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6	LAKMAL WASANTHA KANDAUDA	90004032	40	SHAWAN EVINDRA G KERA	10000194	74	ABDUL RAHIM MOHD ASRAF	90011666	108	SHEKH SOHAB KAMRAN	10108674
7	RAVICHANDRAN M BALAJAH	50587573	41	PANKAR TRADING AND CONTACTING WLL	10001048	75	SHRI BHAGAWAN SINGH	30009914	109	AASMA SHAHEEN SYED ABBAS	20204035
8	YUBARAJ GARJA	14223618916	42	PRABATH MADURANGA M GEDARA	50001070	76	MOHAMMAD JUNAID RAJA	8351687400	110	MUHAMMAD IMTIAZ GHULAM RASOOL	20010167
9	CHINDADARIPET	10201737	43	MUHAMMADU AMEERUDEEN JALEEL	50001071	77	BKSHAPATHI CHUKKABOTLA YELLAIAH	90014796	111	ABDULLA ACHUMMADE THEKKEPURAM	2398540593
10	GLIZEA FLORITA BALUSTITA	7919547590	44	MOHAMMAD SHAHADZ HAMID	50002678	78	HARSHANA PETUM DISSANAYAKA M	50044200	112	ELI ERMAWATI MARYADI	30000475
11	VINOTHARAS AMBIPARATHY	4680491820	45	LOKI WADUGE SUMITH DA	78914527	79	JAY PRAKASH	50011011	113	SYED HAIDER RAZA	10041244
12	PETHANHANDI VRAN NICKRAMARATNE	90000040	46	LIZAR AMR MOVN	10004907	80	NAVARATHNA BANDA KANATIWELA M	10141255	114	SHELLA JEAN FERNANDEZ MULDRON	4834505977
13	ROLANDO OCCAMPO MANALASTAS	338149940	47	SUHEL HUSAIN MUKADAM	50501707	81	OHID MIA NURUL ISLAM	50504238	115	AHMAD SHAH MUHAMMAD ASLAM SHAH	10005028
14	MOHD FAROOQ	10000031	48	MOHAMED AZOUGH	4557265024	82	EKO SUWANDA	90001294	116	MUHAMMAD HABIB AKRAM M AKRAM	30000982
15	KASUN SAMEERA R MUDDYANSELAGE	50038294	49	JAY PRAKASH CHAUDHARY	10064621	83	NORAISA KEDTUGA PAGADATAN	4782168486	117	LAXMAN ERRAM	90000296
16	MARY OGEY OFANA	5842506891	50	MAQBAJ KHAN SHER ZAMAN	50547455	84	SYED MOHAMMAD HASNAN	3387423800	118	SHAFIQUL ISLAM	50516536
17	SOM LAL	9539600306	51	BOOTA MASH DASS MASIH	10044586	85	SYED MOHAMMAD HASNAN	8917252603	119	BASHARAT RABBANI	6013286993
18	SUKHA BAHADUR LIMBU	5290873593	52	WOSEEM AKRAM NOWFER	90000570	86	HALLAH HUSSAIN A ABOUHEZMAH	6136954155	120	NOOR MBH	5682644887
19	UMAIR AHMED SON OF SARWAR ALI	4053480997	53	PARYNDER SINGH KARNAL SINGH	4971682898	87	MOHAMMED HASNAN	20009388	121	MOHAMMAD ASHRAF	20304020
20	MOHD FAROOQ	10000040	54	BABU LAL REDAS HEERA	20245568	88	SANDUN NIRMAL N L DO	50595909	122	SYUJIA ANDRADE DAMASCENO	2500267630
21	MIRAN ALI KHAN	20001363	55	DANLO MALANA PEREZ	478161396	89	RADSON BLU	10001887	123	MUTHURANDI SELVAM SELVAM	7680151867
22	GRACE N SALVA	9802438691	56	PRASAD SANJEEWA MAHA	50042624	90	KUSHAL SINGH	1677559200	124	SOLOMON WATIHAKA CHEGE	108752040
23	KANDEPANI MARYAGANAM	90004033	57	MIR SHAUKAT ALI	10260272	91	THOTHOTI KHUMAN HEKJUM H KHUMAN	90017967	125	SOLOMON KHANI MUTHANDI	108804830
24	MELLINE B VICTORIA	539637144	58	MOHD IRSHAD KHAN	20007856	92	ALI ALBMEH	4475864917	126	MUHAMMAD AFZAL JAMAL UDDIN	10002495
25	GUL MAT KHAN SARKATIB KHAN	30025836	59	MUZAMMIL KHAN	20007670	93	SUMEDHA KHANTHA ATHUKORALE	50501009	127	ALEX GITHINI NGINA	10002484
26	KASUN SAMEERA R MUDDYANSELAGE	50039409	60	SYED MUHAMMAD HAMAD RAZA ZAIDI	90001198	94	LASANTHA G A ARACHACHIRALALGE	90010906	128	ZAHDA PARVEEN MUHAMMAD ALI	30000043
27	KAMAL RAJ ACHARYA	492197940	61	UTHAYAKUMAR NIVASAKAN	50004243	95	KASHIF ABDUL GHAFFAR	10007678	129	IFRAN LQAOT LQAOT ALI	10005059
28	ACHCHEHAL CHAUHAN MOHAR CHAUHAN	751490950	62	ERANGA RUKMAL N S MUDDYANSELAGE	50002416	96	ABDUL RAHMAN MOHAMED AL JINNAH	10001737	130	ABDEFRHAMANE BOURHAL	410758388
29	ABDUL RAHIM BUTT GHAZANFAR BUTT	1792654300	63	SIKANDER MEMON	10004947	97	RASHID MUTAR B S ALMANSOORI	4607568109	131	WOSEEM AKRAM NOWFER	90000646
30	SULKASAN KRISHNAPILLAI	20001613	64	RASAKUMAR SASARATNAM	10104249	98	AZAD KHAN	90001309	132	SAED MOHAMMED A A ALSAADI	2975938231
31	TAMUNOFRHI MATTWILLIAMS DIGBANI	4790302711	65	MOSES KWEEWA	4092443073	99	MUMTAZ KHAN SALEH MUHAMMAD	20000911	133	MUSA KABANGALA	431823939
32	BABAR ANWAR ANWAR ZABI	50549311	66	MOHAMED ABDUL NAZER	10201824	100	HEMANT NAYA	10005003	134	NASIR SHAKEEL	10005143
33	SARWAR HASSAN	10255374	67	JUNABDI ISHAK	90001168	101	OMRAN MOHAMED DA AZAM	50000702			
34	QASER ABBAS	10253579	68	MANISSERY KOPPASSERY V TAVINDRAN	30381833	102	GINA DWAYANTI	90001408			

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# Humanoid robots race past humans in Beijing half-marathon

● Smartphone maker Honor's humanoid robot beat human world record  
● Technical advances highlight China's dominance in humanoid robotics

Reuters  
Beijing

Dozens of Chinese-made humanoid robots showed off their fast-improving athleticism and autonomous navigation skills as they whizzed past human runners in a half-marathon race in Beijing on Sunday, highlighting the sector's rapid technical advances.

The race's inaugural edition last year was riddled with mishaps, and most robots were unable to finish. Last year's champion robot recorded a time of 2 hours 40 minutes, more than double the time of the human winner of the conventional race.

This year's contrast was stark. Not only had the number of participating teams increased from 20 to more than 100, but several robot frontrunners were noticeably faster than professional athletes, beating the human winners by more than 10 minutes.

Unlike last year, nearly half of the robot entrants navigated the tougher terrain autonomously in-

stead of being directed by remote control during the 21km (13-mile) race. The robots and 12,000 men and women ran in parallel tracks to avoid collisions.

The winning robot, developed by Chinese smartphone brand Honor, finished the race in 50 minutes and 26 seconds, several minutes faster than the half-marathon world record set by Ugandan runner Jacob Kiplimo in Lisbon last month.

Teams from Honor, a Huawei spin-off, took the three podium spots, all self-navigated and post-race world-record-beating times. Du Xiaodi, an Honor engineer on the winning team, said its robot was in development for a year, fitted with legs 90-95 cm (35-37 inches) long to mimic elite human runners and liquid cooling technology used in its smartphones.

Du said the sector remained in a nascent phase, but he was confident humanoids would eventually reshape many industries, including manufacturing.

"Running faster may not seem meaningful at first, but it enables technology transfer, for example, into structural reliability and cooling, and eventually industrial applications," Du said.

Spectators largely viewed the variety of humanoids of different sizes and gaits on display as evidence of China's improvements in robotics.

"The humanoid robots' running posture I saw was really quite impressive... considering that AI has only been developing for a short



Team members celebrate next to the winning Honor Lightning humanoid robot during a medal ceremony after the second Beijing E-Town Half Marathon and Humanoid Robot Half Marathon in Beijing yesterday. (Reuters)

time, I'm already very impressed that it can achieve this level of performance," said Chu Tianqi, a 23-year-old engineering student at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications.

"The future will definitely be an AI era. If people don't know how to use AI now, especially if some are still resistant to it, they will definitely become obsolete," he said.

Another spectator, 11-year-old schoolboy Guo Yukun, said after watching the race, he was inspired to pursue a university degree in robotics in the future.

Guo said he takes regular classes in robotics theory and programming at his elite Beijing school,

and is part of his school's team for the International Olympiad in Informatics, a global programming competition for high schoolers.

While economically viable applications of humanoid robots mostly remain in a trial phase, the half-marathon's showcasing of these machines' physical prowess highlights their potential to reshape everything from dangerous jobs to battlefield combat.

However, Chinese robotics firms are still struggling to develop the AI software that would enable humanoids to match the efficiency of human factory workers.

Experts said the skills on display during the half-marathon, while



A robot runs in the second Beijing E-Town Half Marathon and Humanoid Half Marathon in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

entertaining, do not translate to the widespread commercialisation of humanoid robots in industrial settings, where manual dexterity, real-world perception and capabilities beyond small-scale, repetitive tasks are crucial.

China is seeking to become a global powerhouse in this frontier industry, and it has enacted a wide range of policies from subsidies to infrastructure projects to cultivate local firms.

The country's most-watched TV show, the annual CCTV Spring Festival gala, in February showcased China's push to dominate humanoid robots and the future of manufacturing.

That included a lengthy martial arts demonstration where over a dozen Unitree humanoids performed sophisticated fight sequences waving swords, poles and nunchucks in close proximity to human children performers.



Staff members pick up a humanoid robot that fell close to the finish line at the half-marathon in Beijing yesterday. (Reuters)



A robot cheers for the robots taking part in the half-marathon in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

## Indonesia rights body probing civilian killings in Papua

Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights said yesterday it was investigating the killings of 12 civilians, including women and children, in a military operation in the restive easternmost Papua region.

The commission said at least 12 civilians died of gunshot wounds when the armed forces carried out "an enforcement operation" on Tuesday against a rebel group in the central Papuan village of Kembru.

Several other people were wounded. Commission chairwoman Anis Hidayah told AFP there was a "strong suspicion" that Indonesian

soldiers may be responsible for the civilian deaths.

Military spokesman Aulia Dwi Nasrullah said in a statement that four rebel fighters had been "neutralised" in Kembru, without mentioning the civilian deaths. The statement added that the armed forces were looking into reports of a child killed by gunshot wounds in another village, saying "there was no involvement" of Indonesian troops in that incident.

The rights commission, an official but independent body, said that any operation that results in civilian casualties "cannot be justified on any grounds".

"Any form of attack against civilians... constitutes a violation of human rights and international humanitarian law," the commission said in a statement on Saturday. It urged restraint from all sides and called on the military to re-evaluate its operations against Papuan rebels.

Papua, which shares its main island with Papua New Guinea, is a former Dutch colony that declared independence in 1961.

Indonesia, however, took control two years later, followed by a 1969 referendum in which 1,000 Papuans out of a population of some 800,000 voted to integrate into the country.

Papuan independence activists regularly criticise the vote and call for fresh polls, which Jakarta has rejected, citing UN acceptance of its sovereignty over the region. (AFP)

## North Korea test-fires multiple ballistic missiles into sea: Seoul

AFP  
Seoul

North Korea test-fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles yesterday, South Korea's military said, the latest in a recent flurry of launches by the nuclear-armed state.

The Sunday launches add to a series of weapons tests Pyongyang has carried out in recent weeks, including ballistic missiles, anti-warship cruise missiles and cluster munitions.

"Our military detected several short-range ballistic missiles fired into the East Sea from the Sinpo area of North Korea at around 6:10am (2110 GMT)," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, referring to a body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

"The missiles flew approximately 140km (87 miles), and South Korean and US intelligence authorities are conducting a detailed analysis of their exact specifications," it added.

Seoul was maintaining a "firm combined defence posture" with its security ally the United States, which stations about 28,000 troops in the South to help it defend against military threats from the North, and will "respond overwhelmingly to any provocation", it said.

South Korea's presidential office said it held an emergency security meeting over the launches.

Analysts said the tests signalled Pyongyang's latest rejection of attempts by Seoul to repair strained ties.

Among them was an expression of regret from Seoul over civilian drone incursions into the North



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

in January, a gesture initially described as "very fortunate and wise behaviour" by Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of the North Korean leader.

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

North Korea is subject to multiple United Nations sanctions banning its nuclear weapons development and use of ballistic missile technology, restrictions it has repeatedly flouted.

"Pyongyang must immediately halt its successive missile provocations that are heightening tensions," Seoul's defence ministry said in a statement.

The North should "actively engage in the South Korean government's efforts to establish peace", it added.

Earlier in April, Kim Jong-un oversaw tests of strategic cruise missiles launched from a naval warship, with official photos

showing him watching the firings flanked by military officials.

Those tests were carried out from the Choe Hyon, one of two 5,000-tonne destroyers in the North's arsenal, both launched last year as Kim Jong-un seeks to ramp up the country's naval capabilities.

The North is also building two more 5,000-tonne class destroyers to add to its fleet.

A South Korean lawmaker said this month that North Korea appeared to be speeding up construction of a destroyer at the western port city of Nampo.

Citing satellite imagery from a US-based intelligence firm, Yoo Yong-won of the opposition People Power Party said North Korea was "accelerating the naval forces' modernisation on the back of military assistance from Russia".

North Korea has sent ground troops and artillery shells to support Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and observers say Pyongyang is receiving military technology assistance from Moscow in return.

## Fire in Malaysia's Sabah displaces thousands

Around 1,000 homes destroyed

Reuters  
Kuala Lumpur

Thousands of people have been displaced after a fire destroyed around 1,000 homes in a coastal village in Malaysia's Sabah state on Borneo island yesterday, the fire department said.

Authorities were notified of the fire in Sandakan district at around 1.32am (1732 GMT), the district's fire and rescue chief Jimmy Lagung said in a statement.

"Strong winds and the close proximity of the houses caused the fire to spread rapidly, while low tide conditions also made it difficult to obtain an open water source," Lagung said.

The fire broke out in one of Sabah's water villages, which feature wooden houses built on stilts

and are home to some of the country's poorest communities, including many stateless and indigenous groups. Over 9,000 residents have been affected by the fire though no deaths have been reported, Sandakan police said, according to state news agency Bernama.

Malaysia's Prime Minister An-

war Ibrahim said the federal government was coordinating with Sabah authorities to provide basic assistance and temporary relocation for those affected.

"The priority now is the safety of the victims and immediate assistance on the ground," he said in a Facebook post.



Ruins of houses following a fire that destroyed around 1,000 homes in a coastal village in Sandakan, Malaysia, yesterday. (Reuters)

## S Korea's chainsaw artist carves a name for herself at 91

AFP  
Paju, South Korea

South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin wields a chainsaw with a quiet focus, refining a craft the 91-year-old has honed over decades spent far from home.

Long overlooked in her home country, Kim has more recently gained recognition as a pioneering artist, featuring in a sweeping retrospective at South Korea's esteemed Hoam Museum of Art.

The solo exhibition, titled "Two Be One", is the institution's first since its founding in 1982 to spotlight a woman artist, and includes some of her signature abstract sculptures hewn from hardwood with her tool of choice.

"The saw is my body," Kim told AFP in her studio in Paju, a city northwest of the capital Seoul.

"When I lift it and cut (the wood), it has to move exactly like me — the saw has to become me, and I have to become the saw."

Hoam is exhibiting about 170 of

Kim's sculptures and paintings, reflecting her reverence for nature and blending spirituality with meditations on existence, material and form.

Born in 1935 in Wonsan, now in North Korea, she grew up playing alone in the countryside, talking to trees and rice paddies, and making eyeglasses out of sorghum stalks.

At the time, Korea was under Japanese colonial rule. Kim saw her older brother disappear after joining the independence movement, and pine trees in her town cut down for fuel.

"Those trees were my friends," she said, recalling the pain of seeing them uprooted — and her drive to salvage and transform them into works of sculpture.

"I think I wanted them to endure — to keep living on within that (art) form. Maybe that's why I've loved working with wood so much."

Kim's family fled south during the horrors of the Korean War, and she later studied in France before returning to become an art professor in Seoul.

South Korea was then under a brutal military dictatorship. Authorities held artists in suspicion: a friend of Kim's was interrogated simply for using red, a colour associated with North Korean communism.

"Women, in particular, were virtually invisible," she told AFP, noting that her superiors would comment on the length of her skirt and tell her to refrain from smoking on college campuses.

At 48, drawn by the abundant trees in Argentina, she made the unusual choice to move to the South American nation, then just restoring democracy after a dictatorship of its own.

She ended up staying for 40 years, taking up chainsaw carving.

Kim focused on dense, durable wood such as palo santo and "algarrobo", and also worked with quarries in Mexico and Brazil, experimenting with stone sculpture using materials such as onyx and sodalite.

She managed to forge her "own artistic world, nourished by the country's culture and nature";



South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin in her retrospective exhibition, titled "Two Be One", at Hoam Museum of Art in Yongin. (AFP)

Tae Hyun-sun, senior curator at Hoam, told AFP.

Like many women artists of her generation, Kim has only recently gained global recognition, said Rachel Lehmann, the co-founder of Lehmann Maupin which represents Kim internationally and has shown her work in London and New York.

"Her perseverance and lifelong dedication have helped pave the way for subsequent generations of women artists," she told AFP.

Kim returned to South Korea after a major 2023 solo show in Seoul



South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin using a chainsaw to create a work at her studio in Paju. (AFP)

that propelled her to the Venice Biennale the following year.

Among her former mentees in Buenos Aires is Korean-Argentine filmmaker Cecilia Kang, 40, an award-winning director who is now making a film about her.

As the daughter of Korean immigrants, she felt pressure to follow a conventional path, but Kim — whom Kang first met when she was 13 — showed her "that pursu-

ing a life doing what one loves is possible".

At 15, Kim, who was a war refugee, changed her name to Yun Shin — "truth and faith" — on the advice of a monk who urged her to spend her life discovering her "true colour".

Those words have always "stayed vivid with me", she said. "Sometimes I feel they are what have carried me through this life."



# As Iran war strains ties with Trump's US, UK looks to Europe

AFP  
London

Britain's government is set to announce legislation next month to move the country closer to the European Union, as the Iran war sours the UK's so-called special relationship with the US.

President Donald Trump's unpredictability and stream of insults towards America's historic ally is adding impetus to Prime Minister Keir Starmer's bid to deepen ties with the 27-nation bloc, a decade after Britons narrowly voted to leave the EU.

"We have a government that is already eager to move closer towards the EU, and the events in Iran provide an opportunity to speed up that process," Ernie Aspinall, director of the British Foreign Policy Group think-tank, told AFP.

Starmer's administration is preparing an EU "reset" bill that will give ministers powers to align UK standards with EU single market rules as they evolve — something called "dynamic alignment".

King Charles III will announce the legislation on May 13 when he reads out Starmer's legislative plans for the coming months, a government official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Starmer has repeatedly called for a deeper economic and security relationship with Europe since his Labour party won the 2024 general election, ousting the Conservatives, who had implemented the 2016 Brexit referendum.

He has upped those calls in recent days, telling Dutch leader Rob Jetten on Tuesday that "he believed the partnership between the UK and the bloc needed to be fit for the challenges we were facing today".

The EU is Britain's biggest trading partner, while the International Monetary Fund warned this week that the UK will be the advanced economy hardest hit by the Iran conflict.

"Certainly Iran has made it (the reset) more prescient," said the UK official.

"We need to build economic resilience across the continent," they added.

Starmer refused to involve Britain in the US and Israel's initial strikes on February 28, angering Trump, although he has since allowed American forces to use UK bases for a "limited defensive purpose".

Under pressure at home for his disastrous decision to appoint former Jeffrey Epstein associate Peter Mandelson as ambassador to Washington, Starmer has received plaudits for standing up to Trump in the face of repeated

taunts from the US president.

Days ago, Trump threatened in a phone interview with Sky News to scrap a US-UK trade deal that limited the impact on Britain of his tariffs blitz.

"There's no doubt that there is now momentum in the UK-EU relationship partly as a result of Trump's unreliable behaviour," David Henig, an expert on UK's post-Brexit trade policy, told AFP.

"Independent UK trade policy looks much harder, the prospects of working with the EU much brighter."

Starmer's administration hopes to table the EU legislation in the next few months, meaning it could come around the time of the 10th anniversary of the Brexit referendum, held in June 2016.

MPs will get to approve whether to provide the government with a mechanism to adopt EU rules —

sometimes without a full parliamentary vote — in areas where it has already signed deals with the bloc.

They include a trade agreement designed to ease red tape on food and plant exports and plans for an electricity deal that would integrate the UK into the EU's internal electricity market.

Britain and the EU are also aiming to finalise negotiations on a youth mobility scheme in time for a joint summit in Brussels expected in late June or early July.

Starmer has ruled out rejoining the single market or returning to free movement.

The Liberal Democrats, Britain's traditional third party, wants him to cross one of his other red lines by negotiating a customs union with the EU.

"We need to be doubling down on relations with reliable partners who share our interests and val-

ues," the Liberal Democrats foreign affairs spokesman Calum Miller told AFP.

But Brexit remains a toxic issue and the hard-right Reform UK party, leading opinion polls and headed by Eurosceptic firebrand Nigel Farage, have branded the legislation "a betrayal" of the referendum's narrow result.

Surveys regularly now show, however, that most Britons regret the vote to leave the EU, something Starmer hopes to capitalise on.

Rising cost-of-living pressures on family households, which UK finance minister Rachel Reeves has blamed on Trump for starting the war "without a clear exit plan", could also influence minds.

"When the relationship with the US is fracturing, it means there's reduced opposition to a closer relationship with the EU among the public," said Aspinall.

## PM Starmer to face grilling from MPs over Mandelson scandal

AFP  
London

Embattled UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer will face lawmakers in parliament today as he tries to quell anger over an unrelenting scandal involving long-time Jeffrey Epstein associate Peter Mandelson.

Starmer, already widely unpopular amongst the British public and many Labour MPs, is struggling to put a lid on the controversy, which has dogged his premiership for months.

It flared again on Thursday when it was revealed that Mandelson was named as Britain's ambassador to the US in late 2024 despite failing to pass security checks, sparking fresh calls for Starmer to quit.

The beleaguered leader insisted Friday that he and other ministers were not told Mandelson had failed the vetting process, calling the omission "unforgivable".

He is to give further details in a statement to the House of Commons today, before being quizzed by MPs.

Starmer has blamed foreign office officials for allowing the appointment against the advice of security officials. He sacked the department's top civil servant Olly Robins on Thursday.

Ex-civil servants have accused Starmer of scapegoating Robins, who is to give his own account to a parliamentary committee to-



British Prime Minister Keir Starmer observes a Vanguard-class submarine, in Helensburgh, Scotland. (Reuters)

morrow, in what could be a crunch week for Starmer's almost two-year-old premiership.

Opposition leaders have called for Starmer to step down, with accusations ranging from incompetence to wilful misleading of parliamentarians and the public.

Starmer told parliament in February that "full due process" was followed when Mandelson was vetted and cleared for the key role.

Downing Street insists that remains true because government rules meant the foreign office had the power to overrule vetting concerns, unbeknownst to Starmer and his top team.

On Friday, Starmer's office took

the unusual step of releasing a memo which insisted that he only found out about the vetting failure on Tuesday last week.

Ministers have rallied around him over the weekend, with Technology Secretary Liz Kendall and deputy prime minister David Lammy insisting Starmer would not have appointed Mandelson had he known that he had not received the appropriate clearance.

"I think he is an honest man and a man of integrity who says it was a mistake to appoint him (Mandelson)," Kendall told Sky News.

Kendall said Starmer should remain in his job because he had "made the right call" on big issues, such as building closer relations

with the European Union and limiting Britain's involvement in the Iran war.

Polls suggest Starmer is one of Britain's most unpopular prime ministers ever, in part because of several policy mis-steps.

He has endured repeated questions about his judgement for selecting Mandelson whose friendship with Epstein was well known, and faced down calls from Labour's leader in Scotland to resign over the issue earlier this year.

Starmer sacked Mandelson in September 2025 after new details emerged about the depth of the envoy's ties to Epstein, who died in prison in 2019.

UK police are investigating allegations of misconduct in office by Mandelson when he was a Labour minister more than 15 years ago. He was arrested and released in February.

Mandelson, 72, has not been charged and denies criminal wrongdoing.

Starmer and his Labour party are bracing for a chastening set of local elections next month, including in the devolved Scottish and Welsh parliaments.

The results are likely to renew questions about Starmer's future, although there appears to be little appetite within Labour to a launch leadership challenge right now, with no obvious successor available and war raging in the Middle East.

## British PM vows to find arsonists of London sites

AFP  
London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer vowed yesterday to bring perpetrators of recent arson attacks on Jewish sites in London to justice as Britain's chief rabbi said "a sustained campaign of violence and intimidation" against Jews was accelerating.

The British capital's Metropolitan Police said it was investigating whether the spate of incidents in northwest London, the latest of which came on Saturday night, had been carried out by Iranian proxies.

A little-known group, Harakat Ashab al-Yamin al-Islamiya (HAYI), which has links to Iran, has claimed responsibility for many of the recent attacks, according to SITE Intelligence Group.

Starmer said in a post on X that he was "appalled" by the incidents.

"This is abhorrent and it will not be tolerated. Attacks on our Jewish community are attacks on Britain," the prime minister said in a post on X.

"We will not rest in the pursuit of perpetrators."

Counter-terror officers from London's Metropolitan Police are investigating multiple arson or attempted arson attacks against Jewish properties in Britain's capital in the past month.

Officers have stepped up patrols in areas with large Jewish

populations, amid an upsurge in antisemitic incidents.

In the latest incident, a fire caused minor smoke damage to a room at Kenton United Synagogue in Harrow on Saturday night, said the Community Security Trust (CST), which provides safety advice to Jewish groups. No injuries were reported.

In a statement yesterday, the Met said that officers on patrol noticed damage to the window of the Kenton synagogue on Saturday night.

"On further inspection they saw smoke inside a room and evidence that a bottle with some sort of accelerant had been thrown through the window."

A police statement added that, as with the other recent events, counter-terror officers were leading the investigation.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Vicki Evans said the force was considering whether Iran's "routine" use of criminal proxies was a factor.

"Individuals carrying out these crimes often have no allegiance to the cause and are taking quick cash for their crimes," she added.

Lance said that as the conflict in the Middle East "continues to evolve", police "remain alive to the threat of Iranian state aggression in the UK".

On Wednesday, police arrested two people over an arson attack on a synagogue in nearby Finchley.

HAYI group has also claimed similar attacks in Belgium and the Netherlands.

## India pushes for energy hub in Sri Lanka

AFP  
Colombo

Indian officials called for the swift implementation of a proposed regional energy hub in Sri Lanka, at the start of bilateral talks in Colombo yesterday.

The planned oil hub in the northeastern port of Trincomalee featured in a meeting with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, India's visiting Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told reporters.

The project, which also involves the United Arab Emirates, has been under discussions since 2023, he added.

"There is no further time to lose in making progress on stra-

tegic projects such as these," said Misri, who is visiting the Sri Lankan capital along with India's Vice-President CP Radhakrishnan.

Sri Lanka, India and the UAE signed an agreement a year ago, following two years of talks, to set up a multi-product oil pipeline connecting the two South Asian neighbours and to establish the Trincomalee oil storage complex.

Misri said that in yesterday's talks, both sides agreed on the need to get the project off the ground quickly.

Had the energy hub been completed, it could have been useful "especially at a time like this", he added.

Sri Lanka, which imports all

its oil requirements as well as coal needed for power generation, has raised fuel and electricity prices since the Middle East war began in late February, when the US and Israel began bombing Iran.

The conflict has disrupted energy supplies globally and sent prices soaring.

Sri Lanka's Trincomalee is already home to a 99-tank oil storage farm from the British colonial era, but only 14 containers are in use under a previous agreement with an Indian oil firm.

Last year, both India and Sri Lanka expressed hope of expanding the proposed hub to include a refinery. They also discussed a power line to share electricity between them.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a social media post, extended his "condolences to those who have lost their loved ones" in the "deeply distressing" incident. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin said the deaths were "tragic", expressing his "immense sorrow" in a post on X. (AFP)

## Fire at India firecracker factory kills 20

A blaze broke out at a firecracker factory in southern India yesterday, killing at least 20 people and injuring six others, police said. Local police chief N Shreenatha told AFP that "20 people are confirmed dead" after the incident at a licensed factory in Tamil Nadu state's

Virudhunagar district. Rescuers were still operating at the site, he said, adding that the cause of the the blaze was unknown. Industrial accidents are common in India, often due to poor adherence to safety regulations and weak enforcement.

## New Zealand's capital Wellington begins clean-up after floods

A clean-up began in New Zealand's capital Wellington after flash flooding, sparked by heavy rain, hit the nation's North Island, authorities said yesterday. "Severe weather has caused flood damage across the city," said Hutt City Council, a government authority within the Wellington region, which has a population of

520,971. "We know many people across Lower Hutt are dealing with flooding impacts and debris," the council said, adding that crews were in the field cleaning up "hardest hit areas" in the suburb of Stokes Valley. A state of emergency was declared in the Whanganui District 150km (95 miles) north, and 18 people were evacuated due to

flooding, public broadcaster Radio New Zealand reported. The nation's weather forecaster predicted more thunderstorms, accompanied by very heavy rain, for parts of the North Island including Wellington yesterday. "These severe thunderstorms are moving towards the southeast," it said. (Reuters)

## Historian chosen to write queen's biography

AFP  
London

Britain's royal family said yesterday that historian Anna Keay would write an official biography of queen Elizabeth II, who died in September 2022 after over 70 years on the throne.

King Charles III had wanted a woman to write the definitive account of his mother's life, according to British media.

Keay, best known for her work

chronicling Britain's Republican period between 1649 and 1660, said receiving the job was a "profound honour".

She will have access to Elizabeth's personal and official papers held in the Royal Archives, Buckingham Palace said in a statement.

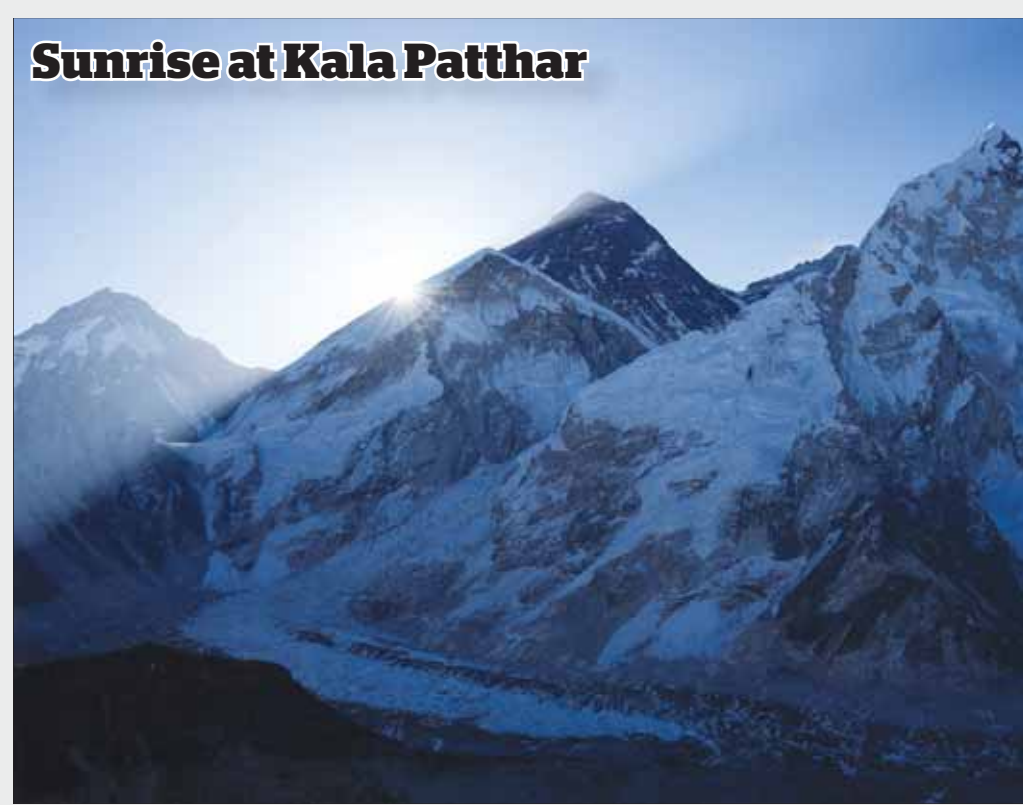
She will also be able to talk to members of the royal family and the queen's friends and household staff, the palace added.

Keay described Elizabeth as "an extraordinary woman, whose life spanned a century of great change".

"I am deeply grateful to His Majesty The King for entrusting me with this responsibility and for granting me access to her papers, and will do all I can to do justice to her life and work," she said.

Official royal biographies can sometimes reveal unexpected details about the subject's life.

William Shawcross's official biography of Elizabeth's mother, the wife of George VI, revealed how she suffered from bowel cancer in her 60s but was successfully treated.



Mount Everest and surrounding peaks at sunrise from Kala Patthar in Solukhumbu district, also known as the Everest region, Nepal, yesterday. (Reuters)

# Merz, Lula hail EU-Mercosur deal as antidote to unilateralism

AFP  
Hanover

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz hailed the EU's looming trade deal with South America's Mercosur bloc on Sunday as he opened a major trade fair in Hanover and welcomed Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva as a guest of honour.

Merz described Brazil — the largest of the Mercosur countries — as a valuable economic and strategic partner for the Eu-

ropean Union in a world riven by conflict.

Lula joined Merz in casting the deal as a response to tariffs and other trade protectionism, an indirect criticism of US President Donald Trump.

"Faced with unilateralism, Mercosur and the European Union have chosen cooperation," Lula said at the Hanover international trade fair's opening event.

The Brazilian president later added: "We cannot allow the world to bow to the behaviour of a president who thinks that by e-mail or by Twitter he can tax

products, punish countries and wage war."

The EU-Mercosur trade deal is set to take provisional effect on May 1, though the agreement still faces a legal challenge from European lawmakers.

Lula noted the deal will create "a market of almost 720mn people and a GDP of \$23 trillion".

Merz said the Hanover industrial trade fair — which attracts more than 3,000 companies — is an opportunity to demonstrate the "trust" that exists between Europe and South America, based on "cooperation with as few tar-

iffs as possible, and if possible, none at all".

The pact with Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay — which has been in the works for more than 25 years — has faced fierce opposition in Europe from farmers' groups backed by France and some others.

But Germany has long championed the deal, with hopes of finding new export markets to revive a struggling industrial economy.

Merz on Sunday contended that the deal would "make all the economies involved stronger, more independent and more resilient".



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (right) and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva meet for bilateral talks in Hanover, Germany, yesterday. (AFP)

## Controlled blast of WWII bomb carried out near Paris

AFP  
Colombes

Bomb disposal experts carried out a controlled underground detonation of a World War II explosive near Paris on Sunday, an AFP journalist reported, after authorities evacuated more than a thousand residents.

Nearly 800 police cordoned off the site in the northwest suburb of Colombes, where the device was first discovered on April 10.

An AFP journalist heard the explosion around 3:20pm (1320 GMT) as experts detonated the bomb in a two-metre-deep (6.5-foot) pit.

Officials also confirmed the operation had been carried out.

The controlled explosion was ordered after specialists had been unable in their first attempt to remove the detonator from the explosive, which measured more than one metre in length, exclud-

ing the tail section.

Footage of the operation showed rusted metal fragments at the bottom of a sand pit, reinforced with thick timber planks and concrete walls.

Residents within a 450-metre radius were told early Sunday to move to local reception centres. Authorities expect to allow them back into their homes later in the day. Some local roads were closed to traffic and public transport.

Local official Alexandre Brugere on Thursday had described the operation as "risky" and requiring a "high level of preparation".

Unexploded World War II ordnance is still found across Europe, particularly in Germany where bombs are regularly discovered on construction sites, 80 years after the conflict ended.

In 2025, the discovery of a 500kg wartime bomb halted traffic at the Paris Gare du Nord station, France's busiest railway terminus.

## Bulgaria's pro-Russian former president set for strong election win, exit polls show

Reuters  
Sofia

Pro-Russian former President Rumen Radev is set for a runaway victory in Bulgaria's election, exit polls showed yesterday, after promising to end a spiral of weak, short-lived governments, although he will need coalition partners to form a majority in parliament. Radev, a eurosceptic and former fighter pilot who opposes military support for Ukraine's war effort against Moscow, stepped down from the presidency in January to run in the parliamentary election, which comes after mass protests forced out the previous government in December.

He rode a wave of frustration with political instability in the Balkan country of 6.5mn people, which has seen eight elections in five years and where voters are sick of corruption and veteran parties that have dominated politics for decades.

The final exit poll conducted by Sofia-based Alpha Research showed Radev's Progressive Bulgaria with 38.1%, more than double the second-place GERB party, led by former Prime Minister Boyko Borissov, which got 15.9%. The exact percentages of other exit polls varied, but still showed a strong Radev win. If confirmed, the outcome would mark one of the strongest results by a single party in years.

"We will do everything possible not to allow us to go (to elections) again. It is ruinous for Bulgaria," Radev told reporters in brief comments after the exit polls were released.

He said that he would be willing to work with the pro-Euro-



Rumen Radev, former Bulgarian president and leader of Progressive Bulgaria coalition, speaks to the media after the first exit polls at the parliamentary election, in Sofia, Bulgaria. (Reuters)

pean reformist We Continue the Change-Democratic Bulgaria (PP-DB) coalition, which came third in the Alpha Research exit polls with 14.1%, on judicial reform, but said that a minority government was also an option in the 240-seat parliament.

"We are ready to consider different options so that Bulgaria can have a regular and stable government," he said.

Final election results are expected today.

In his campaign, Radev talked about improving relations with Moscow and resuming the free flow of Russian oil and gas into Europe.

It is not clear how much that will impact the foreign policy of Bulgaria, a Nato and the European Union member which joined the euro zone in January — a move Radev has criticised.

Either way, a polished social media campaign, deep coffers and a pledge of stability boosted support for Radev, and his participation increased voter interest. Al-

ph Research put turnout at 47% with one hour of voting to go, up from the 39% total in the last election in October 2024.

Borissov appeared to concede in a post on Facebook, but added a note of caution: "To win the elections is one thing; to govern is quite another. Elections decide who comes first, but negotiations

will decide who governs." Bulgaria has developed rapidly since the fall of communism in 1989 and joined the European Union in 2007. Life expectancy has risen sharply, unemployment is the lowest in the EU, and the economy has greater safeguards since joining the euro zone in January.

But it lags behind other EU countries in many metrics, and graft remains endemic, including in elections, where vote-buying is rife. The cost of living has become a particular issue since Bulgaria adopted the euro. The previous government fell amid protests against a new budget proposing tax increases and higher social security contributions.

Some voiced optimism after the vote. "There is now an opportunity for the things people have been hoping to see change to actually become visible," said Evelina Koleva, a manager at digital marketing company. "Now, in the near future, with this choice."



A voter casts his ballot at the polling station during Bulgaria's parliamentary elections in Sofia yesterday. (AFP)

## Meeting with Trump possible once 'big deal' is ready: Lukashenko

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said he would be ready to meet US President Donald Trump once a "big deal" between the two countries has been prepared.

"We are ready for a deal, but it needs to be prepared in a way that reflects the interests of both the US and Belarus," Lukashenko said in an interview with Russian TV network RT, excerpts of which were published yesterday.

In March, Trump's envoy John Coale said that the Belarusian president may soon visit the US, a trip that would signal a breakthrough for the veteran authoritarian leader after years of being treated as a pariah because of human rights abuses and his backing for Putin in the war. Lukashenko said in the RT interview that Minsk had adapted to Western sanctions and that any potential deal with Washington should go beyond sanction relief.

"We have far more issues to resolve, and that's the subject of a big deal," he said without specifying these issues. "Once we finalise this at a lower level, we're ready to meet with Donald and sign the agreement." (Reuters)

## Global leftists rally in Spain hoping to spark resurgence against far-right

Reuters  
Barcelona

From reforming the UN Security Council to taxing billionaires, thousands of leftists gathered in Barcelona over the weekend to brainstorm ways to halt the rise of authoritarianism and win back voters who have drifted rightwards.

The gathering, which drew more than 6,000 people from over 40 countries, comes as far-right and nationalist forces have gained ground globally, eclipsing the left with messaging that pins cost-of-living concerns on immigration, outdated institutions and out-of-touch political elites.

Spearheaded by Spain's Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, whose outspoken opposition to US President Trump's foreign policy has boosted his image, the summit was buoyed by hopes that the far-right surge may have peaked, with Trump's polling numbers falling, Hungary's Victor Orban ousted after 16 years in government and the French far-right underperforming in last month's municipal elections.

Leaders including South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and Brazil's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva rallied the crowd with calls to reform international organisations and cement new left-leaning alliances, as the shadow of Trump's attacks on multilateral institutions loomed large.

"To be progressive is to defend a reformed multilateralism, where the rules work for everyone," said Lula da Silva, addressing a packed closing plenary of supporters waving red flags, sporting 'Make Science Great Again' caps and periodically chanting Spanish antifascist anthems.

Left-wing parties hoping for a



Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez speaks at the Global Progressive Mobilisation in Barcelona, Spain, on Saturday. (Reuters)

resurgence need to address kitchen table issues such as the cost of living, said Marcus Roberts, CEO of political strategy consultancy Mandate Research.

Indeed, anger at rising fuel prices due to the war in the Middle East has seen Trump's approval ratings tank, polls show, in what Democrat strategists have described as a window of opportunity to make convincing arguments on the economy ahead of midterm elections in November.

"It's hard for people who can't afford eggs to be concerned about democracy," said Neera

Tanden, former adviser in Joe Biden, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama's administrations and director of the Center for American Progress think-tank.

Isabel Allende, former Senate president of Chile and daughter of Salvador Allende, Latin America's first Marxist leader, warned that the left had become disconnected from citizens' concerns.

"It's unimaginable to fight against the right if we can't get closer to ordinary people," she said.

Attendees returning from the Spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank said discussions in Barcelona reflected a similar urgency for reforming the balance of power in global institutions, though specifics on what would come next remained unclear.

While organisers were adamant the event, hosted by several left-wing political networks and Spain's Socialist Party, was not a mobilisation against Trump, they also said the left could not afford to sit tight and wait for a new US administration, with many echoing Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's call for "middle powers" to coalesce.



Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva attends the Global Progressive Mobilisation in Barcelona, Spain, on Saturday. (Reuters)

## Rat poison found in HiPP baby food jar in Austria, police say

Reuters  
Geneva

Rat poison was found inside a jar of HiPP baby food, Austrian police said late on Saturday after the product was recalled from 1,500 SPAR supermarkets in the country over safety fears.

A statement from police in Burgenland said that a sample from one of the 190-gram jars of carrot with potato baby food reported by a customer in the Eisenstadt-Umgebung district had tested positive for rat poison.

HiPP had said on Saturday that it could not be ruled out that a dangerous substance was introduced into the product and that its HiPP Vegetable Carrot with Potato jars may have been tampered with.

Consuming the contents could be life-threatening, HiPP said.

The police statement said the affected jars had a sticker with a red

circle on the bottom of the jar and a lid that had already been opened or damaged or missing a safety seal, or had an unusual smell.

They said initial lab tests on similar jars seized by police in the Czech Republic and Slovakia showed the presence of a toxic substance. The statement gave no further details.

HiPP confirmed to Reuters on Sunday that the jars did contain rat poison and that affected retail partners in both countries immediately removed all HiPP baby food jars from sale as a precautionary measure.

The police also said that authorities in Austria were warned about the risk after investigations in Germany. They provided no further details.

"Products and distribution channels in Germany or other European countries that are not part of the investigations are not affected," HiPP said.

HiPP said on Saturday: "Ac-

ording to our current knowledge, this critical situation involves an external criminal interference that affects the SPAR Austria distribution channel."

SPAR Austria said on Sunday that it had removed the HiPP products in all countries where it runs businesses, including Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, Croatia and Northern Italy.

SPAR stores in other countries are not part of SPAR Austria, it added.

SPAR and HiPP advised customers not to consume the contents of the jars bought from SPAR Austria. They said customers would receive a full refund on returned products.

Police advised customers to wash hands thoroughly if they came into contact with a jar. The Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety said that medical help must be sought immediately if babies consumed the contaminated baby food.

## Ukraine pushes for Europe to build ballistic weapons defence system

Europe must have its own defence system against ballistic weapons, and Ukraine is already holding talks with several countries on its creation, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday. Defence against ballistic missiles is one of Ukraine's biggest challenges in the war with Russia, since only certain types of missiles used by the American Patriot system are capable of intercepting Russian ballistic missiles. Russia uses ballistic missiles to attack Ukraine's energy

infrastructure, destroying thermal power generation and electricity transmission systems. "I believe, and my idea is that we should have a European anti-ballistic missile defence system. We are in talks with several countries and are working in this direction," Zelensky told the national TV channel, Marathon. "We need to build our own anti-ballistic missile defence system within a year," he added. Zelensky said the task is extremely difficult but realistic, and added that

he had already discussed it with key European countries, though he did not name them.

However, Fire Point, maker of Ukraine's Flamingo cruise missile, told Reuters this month that it was in talks with European companies to launch a new air defence system by next year, creating a low-cost alternative to the increasingly hard-to-get Patriot system.

Patriot missiles are in increasingly short supply amid extensive deployment in the Gulf against Iranian attacks. And Europe's only anti-ballistic system, the Italo-French SAMP/T, is produced in relatively small numbers. (Reuters)



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## A rushed US-Iran framework deal could backfire

European allies fear an inexperienced US negotiating team is pushing for a swift, headline-grabbing framework deal with Iran that could entrench rather than resolve deeper problems, diplomats with past experience dealing with Tehran said.

They worry that Washington, eager to claim a diplomatic win for President Donald Trump, could lock in a superficial agreement on Iran's nuclear programme and sanctions relief, then struggle through months or years of technically complex follow-on talks.

"The concern isn't that there won't be an agreement," said a senior European diplomat, who has previously worked on the nuclear file or continue to do so. "It's that there will be a bad initial agreement that creates endless downstream problems."

Diplomats from France, Britain and Germany – which began negotiating with Iran in 2003 – say that they have been sidelined.

From 2013 to 2015, the three worked with the US to secure a deal on curbing Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Trump withdrew from the accord – the signature foreign policy agreement of his predecessor Barack Obama – in 2018, during his first term, calling it "horribly one-sided".

After 40 days of airstrikes, US and Iranian negotiators opened talks in Islamabad earlier this month, again focused on the familiar trade-off of nuclear restrictions for economic relief.

There were some signs in the Pakistani capital yesterday of preparations for a resumption of face-to-face negotiations.

Diplomats say that deep mistrust and sharply different negotiating styles raise the risk of a fragile framework neither side can sustain politically.

### Talks are focusing on Iran's stockpile of uranium

nuclear package and an economic package.

"The Americans think you agree on three or four points in a five-page document and that's it, but on the nuclear file, every clause opens the door to a dozen more disputes," a second European diplomat said.

Talks are focusing on Iran's stockpile of roughly 440kg (970 pounds) of uranium enriched to 60%, material that could be used for several nuclear weapons if further enriched.

The favoured option is "downblending" inside Iran under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) supervision.

Another is a hybrid approach, with some material shipped abroad.

"Whatever happens now is only a starting point," said a diplomat previously involved in nuclear talks. "That's why the 2015 JCPOA ran to 160 pages."

Beyond stockpiles lies the deeper dispute over Iran's right to enrich uranium at all: Trump has publicly pushed for zero enrichment, while Iran insists it has the right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes and denies seeking a bomb.

One possible compromise would be a temporary moratorium followed by resumption at very low levels under strict conditions.

Europeans stressed that a central role for the IAEA, including intrusive verification and unrestricted access, was essential.

"A negotiation with Iran is meticulous and subtle: every word matters," said Gérard Araud, France's chief negotiator from 2006 to 2009. "That's not something you rush."

The economic track focuses on lifting sanctions and unfreezing Iranian assets.

In the short term, Iran wants access to frozen funds overseas. Broader sanctions relief would come later and require European buy-in, diplomats said.

Officials say Washington is again separating an agreement in principle from its painstaking follow-up, an approach they say risks misreading Iranian political culture.

"These talks aren't a real-estate deal settled with a handshake," said a senior regional diplomat briefed by Tehran, referring to the background of Trump's main negotiators Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. "They involve sequencing, sanctions relief and reciprocal nuclear steps."

"There's simply not enough expertise in this US team," said one European official, noting that roughly 200 diplomats, financial and nuclear experts were involved in the 2015 talks. "We've worked on this file for two decades." – Reuters

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## BILINGUAL DIPLOMACY

"LET'S SETTLE THIS PEACEFULLY"



"OR ELSE."

## Children aren't 'online' anymore



By Claire Scowen

The idea that children go "online" is already outdated.

For most young people today, there is no meaningful distinction between online and offline life. Their friendships unfold across group chats, their sense of identity is shaped in digital spaces, and their understanding of the world is filtered through algorithms that respond faster than any adult can track.

This shift has happened quietly, but its implications are profound.

Much of the conversation around children and technology still revolves around screen time – how many hours, how often, and how late. It is a reassuringly simple metric. It can also be the wrong one.

What matters is not only how long children are on their devices, but also what they encounter there, how they interpret it, and whether they have the knowledge to respond safely.

That is a more complex problem – and one that cannot be solved through restrictions alone.

Children today are navigating an environment defined by speed, scale and sophistication. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can generate convincing images, voices and narratives. Content is personalised and persistent. Misinformation sits alongside fact, often indistinguishable without context. The result is

a world in which children are constantly interpreting signals, many of which they are not developmentally equipped to fully understand.

In this environment, risk rarely appears as a single, obvious event. It accumulates. It begins with something ambiguous – a message that feels slightly off, a video that is difficult to process, a conversation that shifts in tone. These are the moments children often keep to themselves. Not because they lack trust, but because they fear losing access, independence or control.

This is where much of the current approach to digital safety can fall short.

A model built primarily on monitoring and restriction assumes that risk can be contained through oversight. Children's digital lives are too fluid, too private and too embedded in their social world for that to be consistently effective. When control becomes the dominant strategy, children become more adept at concealing their experiences rather than sharing them.

What protects children is something less visible, and far more difficult to measure: their willingness to speak.

Understanding the risks they face can help clarify what that protection needs to look like. These risks tend to fall into four broad, overlapping areas.

**Content** – what children encounter. This includes explicit material, misinformation, and content that normalises harmful behaviours or unrealistic standards. Exposure is often unintentional, driven by algorithms rather than choice. The challenge lies in helping children question what they see and recognise when something feels wrong.

**Contact** – who children interact with. Digital platforms allow strangers to present themselves as peers and to move conversations quickly into private spaces. Some interactions remain harmless. Others involve manipulation, coercion or exploitation. Children need the confidence to disengage and



the clarity to recognise when an interaction is unsafe.

**Conduct** – how children behave online. The distance created by screens can distort judgement. Messages escalate quickly. Images are shared without fully understanding their permanence or reach. These moments reflect a need for guidance around empathy, responsibility and consequence.

**Commerce** – how children engage as consumers. Online environments are designed to encourage spending and sharing. In-game purchases, targeted advertising, phishing and scams are part of that ecosystem. Children may not recognise when they are being influenced or exploited.

These risks do not operate in isolation. They intersect and reinforce one another, often in ways that are difficult to detect from the outside.

The response requires a shift in emphasis.

Practical tools – parental controls, privacy settings, screen-time limits – remain useful, particularly for younger children. They create structure. They signal boundaries. But they do not, on their own, prepare children for the complexity of the environments they inhabit.

Preparation comes from something else: conversation, modelling and trust.

Children watch how adults use technology. They absorb patterns of attention, behaviour and

response. A phone placed aside during a conversation carries more weight than a rule about screen use. A calm discussion about something unsettling online creates space for future disclosure.

Digital literacy has also taken on a new urgency. Children need to understand how content is created, why it appears to them, and how tools such as artificial intelligence can both inform and mislead. This does not require technical expertise from parents. It requires openness – a willingness to explore, question and learn alongside the children.

Safeguarding, in this context, becomes less about controlling exposure and more about building knowledge and capability.

Children will encounter risk. That is inevitable in a connected world. What matters is whether they can recognise it, respond to it and, critically, speak about it.

The most effective safeguard is not a filter or a setting.

It is a relationship in which a child knows they can say, "Something doesn't feel right," and be heard.

In a world that is always on, that may be the only protection that consistently holds.

• Claire Scowen is the Vice-President of Risk and the Global Lead of Safeguarding and Child Protection at GEMS Education.

## Beyond the Screen: A New Paradigm for Digital Safeguarding

### The Four Pillars of Digital Risk



### The Path to Protection



# Turkiye 'optimistic' Mideast ceasefire will be extended

AFP  
Antalya

Turkiye said yesterday it remained "optimistic" that a two-week ceasefire between Iran and the United States that expires on Wednesday, would be extended, allowing more time for talks between the sides.

Pakistan is leading preparations for more high-level US-Iran peace talks after a first round ended without agreement last weekend.

Turkiye, alongside Egypt, has expressed strong support for the Pakistan-led initiative on prolonging negotiations and preventing a return to hostilities.

"No one wants to see a new war break out when the ceasefire expires next week. We hope... the parties will extend the ceasefire," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said at the closing of a three-day diplomacy forum in the southern Antalya province.

"I hope there'll be an extension. I am optimistic," he said.

Fidan said he spoke with Pakistani officials on Sunday but would not give a date when new talks could be held.



Turkiye's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan delivers a speech as he attends the 5th edition of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum yesterday. (AFP)

"The continuation of negotiations is something the entire international community wants. There is significant pressure in this regard," he said.

"Under this level of pressure, I believe the parties should not see any obstacle to extending the ceasefire in order to continue peace negotiations," added the minister.

Fidan said unless the sides chose to pursue more confrontational measures, there was "a strong possibility that the ceasefire will be extended and negotiations will continue."

"Hopefully, a more positive scenario will emerge. With some

luck, by that time, the key issues in the negotiations may already have been resolved," he added.

Despite the optimism and movement in negotiations, Iran said on Sunday a final peace deal was "far" off.

"It is clear that the negotiations have reached a critical stage. Both sides are continuing the talks with a genuine sense of sincerity. They also have the will to keep the process going," Fidan said.

Turkiye's top diplomat also accused Israel of seeking to create a "fait accompli" in Lebanon, despite an agreed ceasefire, denouncing what he said "Israeli expansionism".

"The ongoing Iran-United States negotiations seem to be overshadowing this situation (in Lebanon). Israel appears to be trying to take advantage of this distraction to create a fait accompli," Fidan also said.

On Saturday, Fidan said Israel was attempting to occupy new territories using security concerns as a pretext.

"We are talking about a fundamentalist government. We are talking about a security problem that troubles the world," he said.

# Pakistan tightens security in Islamabad

AFP  
Islamabad

Security in Pakistan's capital Islamabad was stepped up visibly yesterday ahead of peace talks between the United States and Iran in the coming days.

President Donald Trump said US negotiators will be in Pakistan on Monday to resume talks on ending the war with Iran, little more than a week after face-to-face talks in Islamabad on April 11 ended without agreement.

"My Representatives are going to Islamabad, Pakistan - They will be there tomorrow evening, for Negotiations," he wrote on Truth Social.

Authorities earlier announced road closures and traffic restrictions across the city, as well as in neighbouring Rawalpindi.

AFP journalists saw armed guards and checkpoints near Islamabad's most secure hotels, including the Marriott and the



A police personnel stands guard at a closed road leading to the Serena Hotel in the Red Zone area of Islamabad yesterday. (AFP)

Serena, where the last round of talks between US and Iranian delegations took place.

Most streets leading to the Serena Hotel were closed on Sunday, with barbed wire, barricades,

heavy security and traffic diversions.

"Citizens are earnestly requested to cooperate with the security agencies," a city official posted on X.

# France, Greece to extend defence pact for 5 years

French President Emmanuel Macron will travel to Greece next week to renew a security pact between the two countries against the backdrop of the war in Iran, a Greek government official said yesterday. France and Greece, long-standing Nato allies, signed a security and defence agreement in 2021, which required them to come to each other's aid if attacked and included the purchase of three

French-made frigates and around 24 Dassault-made Rafale fighter jets by Athens. Macron's visit to Greece on April 24-25 will renew the agreement for a further five years, with an automatic renewal thereafter, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Macron and the Greek government will also discuss maritime security and the Strait of Hormuz, the official added. (Reuters)

# Zelensky condemns oil sanctions relief for Russia

AFP  
Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday condemned the easing of sanctions on Russian oil after the US extended a waiver meant to soften surging energy prices driven by the Middle East war.

"Every dollar paid for Russian oil is money for the war" and the billions of dollars involved are used for devastating strikes on Ukraine, Zelensky said in a post on X.

He did not mention the US, but President Donald Trump's administration on Friday issued a month-long sanctions waiver allowing the sale of Russian oil and petroleum products that are at sea.

The action was intended to bring down soaring energy prices. But the US Treasury Department extension came two days after Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said that Washington would not renew the waiver.

Zelensky said there were more than 110 tankers carrying Russian oil in breach of international sanctions currently at sea, carrying more than 12m tonnes of crude "which, due to the easing of sanctions, can once again be sold without consequences."

"That is \$10bn - a resource that is directly converted into new strikes against Ukraine," Zelensky said.

The Ukraine leader said that in the past week alone, Russia had launched more than 2,360 guided drones, more than 1,320 attack aerial bombs "and nearly 60 missiles of various types at our cities and communities".

A 16-year-old boy was killed and four people wounded in one overnight attack on the northern city of Chernihiv, the head of the local administration said Sunday.

Zelensky said: "It is important that Russian tankers are stopped, not allowed to deliver oil to ports.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky. (AFP/File photo)

The aggressor's oil exports must decrease, and Ukraine's long-range sanctions continue to work toward that goal."

Zelensky has a delicate relationship with Trump, who had a memorable blow-up with him in the Oval Office last year.

Ukraine needs US backing to fight off Russia, but has faced pressure from the Trump administration to sign off on a deal to end the more than four-year-old war triggered by Moscow's invasion.

The US sanctions waiver allows for the purchase of Russian oil and petroleum products that have been loaded onto any vessel as of Friday, through 12:01am (0401 GMT) on May 16.

It extends an earlier easing of sanctions that expired on April 11.

Trump is keen to contain surging petrol prices ahead of key midterm elections this year.

Several top Democrats slammed the new sanctions relief however.

"This decision is shameful and a 180-degree reversal from Secretary Bessent, just two days after he pledged not to extend sanctions relief for Russia," said Senators Jeanne Shaheen, Chuck Schumer and Elizabeth Warren in a statement.

"Make no mistake, Putin has been one of the biggest beneficiaries of President Trump's war against Iran, as Russia saw oil revenues nearly double in March."

# Eight people remain in Kyiv hospital after shooting: mayor

Reuters  
Kyiv

Eight people including a child remain hospitalised in Kyiv after being wounded in a shooting that killed six people, Mayor Vitali Klitschko said yesterday.

A Russian-born man opened fire on passers-by with an automatic rifle on Saturday before barricading himself in a supermarket with hostages, where he was shot dead by police.

Police stormed the supermarket after unsuccessfully trying to negotiate with the suspect for 40 minutes, although officers were initially filmed running away from the incident, prompting the resignation of a police chief.

Klitschko said the wounded child, whose parents were killed in the shooting, was in moderate condition, while one of the adults was critical. "They are all receiving all necessary medical care," the mayor said on Telegram.

President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Saturday that the shooting, which happened in the capital's leafy Holosiivskyi district, injured 14 people.

The supermarket has been cordoned off and remains closed. Bullet holes are visible in windows of the supermarket, and



Abandoned toys on the playground at the site of yesterday's shooting incident, in Kyiv, yesterday. (Reuters)

bloodstains can be seen nearby.

Flowers were left near a residential building a couple of hundred metres from the supermarket, where the shooter shot his first victims.

"I saw how people grabbed children from the playground and ran away. They screamed: 'run away, hide!'" Daryna, a 31-year-old local resident, told Reuters. "People didn't understand what was going on. They said that there was a man there, a man was shooting with a machine gun."

Shootings of this nature are extremely rare in Ukraine and the

country's security service said the incident was being investigated as a terrorist act. Police have not yet identified a motive for the crime.

Yevhen Zhukov, the head of Ukraine's Patrol Police - a division of the national police service whose duty is to patrol the streets - resigned yesterday after social media circulated a video showing patrol officers running away after hearing gunfire, leaving civilians without protection.

Reuters could not independently verify the video.

"The police officers acted unprofessionally and disgracefully.

As police officers, they should have been helping and rescuing our citizens. But they failed to assess the situation properly and left civilians in danger," online media outlet RBC Ukraine quoted Zhukov as saying.

"As a combat officer, I have decided to submit my resignation from the position I currently hold," Zhukov added.

Earlier on Sunday, minister Klymenko said the officers' behaviour was "a disgrace to the entire system". An investigation has been launched and decisions will be made regarding their superiors.

The shooting of civilians not far from central Kyiv has raised questions both about the public's right to self-defence and about how the gunman was able to obtain a firearms permit, Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said.

"The attacker's mental state was clearly unstable. How he obtained the medical certificates required to renew his gun permit must be thoroughly investigated," Klymenko said.

He said the ministry intends to prepare the final version of a bill on civilian firearms as he was certain that "people should have the right to armed self-defence."

At present, Ukrainians can own only hunting weapons.

# Two officers suspended over claims they fled Kyiv shooting

Ukraine's interior minister said yesterday two police officers had been suspended after a video circulated online showed them fleeing the scene of the shooting in Kyiv in which six people were killed.

In a video posted by Ukrainian media, two police officers wearing uniforms and yellow vests are seen standing next to a person on the ground before fleeing the scene as gunshots ring out. "Shameful, unworthy behaviour. This is a disgrace for the entire system. They have been suspended,

and an investigation into this is underway," Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said on Telegram. Klymenko also urged not to "generalise about the entire police force based solely on the actions of two employees".

Police have yet to ascertain the motive behind the shooting - but Klymenko said the attacker's "mental state was clearly unstable". "How he obtained the necessary medical certificates to extend his gun permit must be examined," Klymenko added.

He said however that there would be no sweeping checks of gun owners that are legally bound to declare their weapons. He vowed to hold "expert discussions with the participation of members of parliament, the public, journalists, and the veteran community" on gun control laws.

Ukraine, which has been fending off Russia's full-scale invasion since 2022, has seen sporadic shooting incidents but has a relatively low crime rate. (AFP)

# BPS records 100% Class X pass rate

Birla Public School (BPS) has posted a 100% pass rate in the CBSE Class X examinations for 2025-26, with all 557 students of its 19th batch clearing the Secondary School Examination.

According to a press release, the school's top performer was Shamita Adiga, who secured a perfect 100%. Second place was shared by five students - Harreni Shunmuga Sundara Rajan, Garv Gupta, Ishaan Anees Moidu, Mridula Arun Prakash and Mariam Nasim - each with 99.2%. The third position was jointly secured by 10 students, each scoring 99%: Maher Vidya Negi, Prithvi Rajesh, Amina Hana, Daniel John Abraham, Gopika Preejith, Ananya Anand, Jiya Japan Gandhi, Sarah Ahsan, Arush Sharma and Shanmugapriya Sivakumar.

The results reflected strong overall academic performance across the cohort, with 335 students scoring above 90%, while 532 students secured distinction by obtaining more than 75%. BPS students collectively recorded

101 centums across subjects. Artificial Intelligence accounted for the highest number of perfect scores with 36 centums, followed by Data Science with 33 and Mathematics Standard with 14. Arabic produced 10 centums, while English and Tamil recorded two each. Science, Social Science, Hindi, and Marketing and Sales recorded one centum each.

Among those who secured centums in Tamil were Mithraa Vijayakumar and Ayswarya Siva Ananth. In Arabic, full marks were secured by Mohammed Yaqzan Rafeeqe, Khadija Mohammed Noorul Hasan, Mohammed Nayif Noushad Parappura, Numbly Abdullah, Mohammed Naheem Noushad Parappur, Nidha Fathima, Numan Mohammed Naveed Shaikh, Syeda Haziqa Hassan, Zisel Nousher and Duaa Kalam. In Mathematics Standard, the students who scored centums were Harreni Shunmuga Sundara Rajan, Simon Moses Walter Moses, Ishaan Anees Moidu, Shamita Adiga, Ananya Anand, Madiha

Kadri, Edlin Jacob Jibu, Gavin Aneesh Chako, Heena Jagannathan, Aryan Bijukumar Nair, Neil Jacob Mathew, Ayswarya Siva Ananth, Shenil Salgin Cherian and Lakshmi Sukrutha Yejju. Shamita Adiga also secured perfect scores in Hindi, Science and Social Science. In English Literature, Shiza Manal Parambil and Garv Gupta achieved centums, while Riya Kaviarasu secured full marks in Marketing and Sales. Artificial Intelligence accounted for the largest number of centums. Students who secured full marks in the subject included Amina Hana, Mirthun Raaj Sridharan, Mehreen Jeelani Munawar, Hariniha Kannan, Filza Mehri Sulfikkarali, Rohan Jacob, Gopika Preejith, Aryan Haridas, Aavaaneesh Ankush Pathare, Akshat Chaudhary, Shamita Adiga, Siddhi Harish Pillai, Angel Mariam Benoy, Aron Binoy Daniel, Paul Renju Moolayil, Ananya Anand, Kritika Pradeep, Ayesha Zahra Muttathushalil Rish, Abel Aby George, Edlin Jacob Jibu, Niya Najeeb,



Olivia Joseph, Sarah Ahsan, Tanushree Balakrishnan, Gowri Anupama Sabin, Pranathi Vivekanandh, Mridula Arun Prakash, Vega Azhar, Akshaya John, Nawfal Abdul Khaleel Qibran, Mariam Nasim, Aryaman Mishra, Adnan, Dhruv Amit Gaur, Shanmugapriya Sivakumar and Tanvi Raviraj Pate. In Data Science, centums were achieved by Faizaan Ahammed, Adithya Midhun Kalathil, Arun Deepak Pereira, Elasha Anna Aji, Maher Vidya Negi, Anvi Sharma, Arshal Kanichai Remin, Jomei Samuel Victor John Victor, Vibha Vinod Jadhav, Shahd Shihab, Aryan Vandana Prasad, Madiha Kadri, Navya Arun Nair, Gowshik Kulandaivel, Rhea Grace Sujith, Prarthana Kurian, Daniel

John Abraham, Anushka Shenoy, Jiya Japan Gandhi, Soha Altaf Sheikh, Mohammed Qais Shanil Mookkathayi, Vaishnavi Suresh Pillai, Nabeel Syed, Ken Abraham Thomas, Joanna Meriam Viju, Ammaar Ahmed Syed, Mahanthikaa Suresh, Mohammed Sanie Esa Valappintakat, Zisel Nousher, Drishti Jain, Mohammed Zayan Zafar Khan, Shenil Salgin Cherian and Jay Shrestha. BPS chairperson Maria Pakalomattom, vice-chairman Dr Mohan Thomas, members of the board, principal Dr Anand R Nair, staff and parents congratulated the students and teachers for the strong performance, attributing the results to the school's continued focus on quality education and coordinated teaching efforts.

## Lekhwiya welcomes the second cohort of Police Academy's security command, staff programme



The Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) hosted the second cohort of the Police Academy's Security Command and Staff Programme, in a visit aimed at familiarising them with the Force's tasks and duties. HE the Deputy Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Major-General Mohammed Mesfer al-Shahwani delivered a lecture outlining Lekhwiya's role in maintaining the country's internal security. During a tour of Al Duhail Camp, the visiting officers were also shown the equipment and vehicles used in various security operations. - QNA

## Prevention and awareness seen as vital for protection against mosquito bites

Amid a noticeable increase in mosquitos in some areas over the recent days, some medical professionals have given practical advice on prevention and proper management of bites, stressing for more awareness efforts.

They stressed that while most cases remain mild, well-informed awareness and consistent preventive practices are essential to reduce potential risks and protect public health.

They also underline the critical role of community awareness in addressing the issue.

Encouraging healthy behaviours, such as maintaining clean surroundings and eliminating stagnant water, can significantly limit mosquito breeding and reduce exposure, particularly during peak seasons.

Some physicians recommend practical steps including the use of safe insect repellents, wearing long and light-coloured clothing, and avoiding outdoor exposure during peak mosquito activity, especially around sunset.

Keeping windows closed in the evening or installing protective mesh screens is also advised to minimise indoor exposure.

Dr Ahmed Saeed, an emergency physician at Doha Clinic Hospital, stressed the importance of proactive prevention.

"Prevention remains the most effective defence against mosquito bites," he said. "Simple measures such as wearing protective clothing, using safe repellents, and maintaining a clean environment can significantly reduce exposure."

He stressed that eliminating stagnant water in home gardens and containers is crucial in limiting mosquito breeding.

Some doctors caution against scratching mosquito bites, as it may lead to skin irritation or secondary infections.

Instead, they recommend cold compresses and soothing topical treatments to ease itching and redness.

Dr Adel Kamal, consultant dermatologist at Al Ahli Hospital, highlighted the risks of improper handling of such bites.

"Mosquito bites are usually mild, but incorrect dealing with them, especially excessive scratching, can lead to skin irritation and even bacterial infections," he said. "Proper care helps prevent complications and speeds recovery."

Dr Kamal also advised avoiding the areas where mosquitos thrive such as farms and wet agriculture areas, particularly after rainfall when breeding conditions are ideal.

While the majority of mosquito bites cause only minor discomfort, certain groups may face higher risks.

Dr Mahmoud Hammal, consultant in Internal Medicine at The View Hospital, said that "most mosquito bites are simple and cause only localized itching and redness".

However, vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems should take extra precautions to avoid complications," he said.

Dr Hammal recommended practical solutions such as installing window screens and limiting exposure during peak hours.

Medical professionals also warn that in some cases, mosquito bites may be linked to more serious conditions, particularly in the regions where insect-borne diseases are present.

Dr Rand Silwan About, consultant of Family Medicine at the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC)'s Omar Bin Al Khatib Health Centre, advised caution.

"If flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, body aches, or rash appear within days of a mosquito bite, medical consultation is essential to rule out potential infections," she said.

She recommended that immediate care by washing the bite area with soap and water, applying cold compresses, and using calming treatments such as calamine lotion or antihistamines when needed.

With this seasonal rise, consistent preventative measures and early response to symptoms remain the most effective tools.

By combining personal protection, environmental cleanliness, and timely medical care, communities can significantly reduce the impact of mosquito-related health concerns and ensure a safer environment for all.

# QBRI expert highlights hidden cost of misconceptions about autism

By Joseph Varghese  
Staff Reporter

With April being observed as Autism Awareness Month, a researcher from the Qatar Biomedical Research Institute (QBRI) at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) has highlighted some of the long-standing misconceptions about autism and the need to diagnose it at the earliest.

"Viewed for decades as primarily a childhood condition and something to be addressed in the early years, it was widely thought autism might eventually be outgrown," Dr Maha al-Thani, a research fellow at the QBRI, noted in an article published by the HBKU. "This misconception created a 'lost generation' of autistic adults who have navigated life without understanding themselves, without access to appropriate support, and often carrying the weight of wondering why everything feels harder for them than for others."

She cited a review from King's College London highlighted some statistics noting that an estimated 89-97% of autistic adults aged 40 and older in the United Kingdom remain undiagnosed.

"These individuals grew up at a time when autism was primarily associated



with young boys who had obvious support needs," Dr Maha said. "The broader, subtler presentations we now recognise, particularly in women and girls and those who learned to mask their differences, were almost entirely missed."

She highlights that this under-diagnosis represents decades of people navigating education, employment, and healthcare without a framework for understanding their own minds.

The consequences ripple through every aspect of life, from mental health to physical well-being.

She has also quoted a study in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*

which found that the age at which an autistic person receives their diagnosis plays a more critical role in quality of life than their chronological age.

Those diagnosed later report poorer social lives, not because they are "more autistic", but because they spent decades without understanding or accommodating their own needs.

The writer underlined that subtler presentations, especially in women, girls, and those who learned to "mask" their traits, were often overlooked and it has left many individuals without a framework to understand themselves, leading to widespread impacts on mental and physical health.

## Primary Health Care Corporation launches phase two of audiology screening services

The Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) has announced the official launch of phase two in the expansion of its Audiology Screening Service within Well-Baby clinics.

This phase extends the service to seven additional health centres: Qatar University, Umm Slal, Me-

saimeer, Muaither, Al Daayen, Al

Khor, and Umm Ghuwailina. The service will be available on selected days and times, based on the operational needs of each health centre.

With this expansion, the total number of PHCC health centres offering newborn hearing screenings has risen to 20.

Preparations for phase three

are scheduled to commence from April 26. This upcoming phase will include health centres in Madinat Khalifa, Al Ruwais, Umm Al Seneem, Al Waab, Al Sheehaniya, and Al Mashaf.

A key component of phase three encompasses on-site training sessions designed to refine the clinical skills of PHCC's nursing staff.

## UDST signs technology support contract with student-founded startup

The University of Doha for Science and Technology (UDST) has announced the signing of a technology support contract with "Be My Sense", a startup founded by UDST students and launched through the university's incubation centre, UHUB.

The agreement marks a significant step in supporting student-led innovation and advancing entrepreneurial initiatives emerging from the university.

"Be My Sense" was developed by students Mohamed Ali and Ahmed El Abed, under the mentorship of Dr Wagdi Alrawagfeh, the assistant dean for IT Student Affairs at the College of Computing and Information Technology.

The startup builds on an award-winning project that earned international recognition at the Huawei ICT Competition 2024-25 Global Final in China, where the team se-



cured second place in the Innovation Track while representing Qatar among leading teams from around the world.

The solution is an inclusive, artificial in-

telligence (AI)-powered platform designed to empower deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals through real-time translation, smart wearables, and digital assistance.

By addressing communication barriers in educational, professional, and public environments, "Be My Sense" reflects a strong commitment to accessibility and social impact.

The contract establishes a framework for collaboration between the UDST and the startup, focusing on supporting its continued development, scalability, and market readiness.

"The signing of this contract reflects our strong commitment to empowering our students and supporting their entrepreneurial journeys," said UDST president Dr Salem al-Naemi. "At the UDST, we believe that innovation thrives when students are given the opportunity to ap-

ply their knowledge in meaningful ways."

"Be My Sense" is a testament to the impact of applied learning, where ideas developed in the classroom evolve into solutions that serve society and address real challenges," he said. "We take great pride in seeing our students grow into innovators and entrepreneurs who contribute to shaping a more inclusive and technologically advanced future."

"The signing of this contract is a major milestone for us as a startup," said "Be My Sense" co-founder and chief technology officer Mohamed Ali. "What began as a university project has evolved into a solution with real-world impact, thanks to the continuous support and guidance we received at the UDST. The hands-on learning experience played a crucial role in helping us develop our idea and prepare it for the next stage."

## QU holds 'Comicsthon' to foster students' visual, narrative creativity

The Culture and Arts Section at Qatar University (QU)'s Student Activities Department, in collaboration with the Children's Literature Initiative at the Qatari Forum for Authors, organised "Comicsthon", a comic story race, under the theme *Create a Child's Story*, with wide participation from students across various disciplines.

The competition aimed to develop students' skills in visual storytelling and comic production, while providing an interactive platform that combines drawing and writing, enabling students to express their ideas through innovative creative approaches.

It also sought to enhance cultural and artistic engagement on campus and encourage teamwork

by forming integrated groups that collaborate on developing complete storytelling projects.

The initiative further contributes to producing distinguished artworks to be showcased in a dedicated art exhibition and documented through print and publication.

Participants also joined a series of foundational training workshops as part of the programme.

Abdullah al-Mulla, the director of QU's Student Activities Department, noted that Comicsthon represents a strong example of the high-quality initiatives that help identify and empower emerging talent, while strengthening students' presence in the cultural scene, in line with the university's vision of preparing innovative graduates capable of creativity



and meaningful competition.

Manal al-Kubaisi, the head of the Culture and Arts Section, said: "The Comicsthon competi-

tion marks an important step in fostering student creativity and enriching a vibrant, arts-focused campus environment. It offers

students a meaningful platform to express their ideas and talents within a structured, competitive setting."