



Built for Qatar. Built for you.
A network as strong as the community we connect



What connects us, unites us

ORIXYS POLYDEX
Durable waterproofing-performance for roof protection
44601602/3

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

BUSINESS | Page 1

QIIB net profit surges 3.2% year-on-year to QR368mn in Q1

Family Offers!
Stay Updated on Offers!
Follow WhatsApp Channel

Ready to GUAC AND ROLL?
Only on talabat

PM in talks with Kuwait, Oman, Finland FMs on ceasefire

Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held telephone conversations with his counterparts from Kuwait, Oman, and Finland, with the fragile US-Iran ceasefire and regional de-escalation efforts dominating all three calls. The prime minister spoke with Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber al-Ahmad al-Sabah, Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi, and Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen. Bilateral relations featured in each exchange, with the three calls collectively spanning Gulf co-operation ties, broader diplomatic partnerships, and Qatar's engagement with international partners on the region's security outlook. The US-Iran ceasefire and the efforts being made to consolidate it formed the central theme running through all three conversations. HE Sheikh Mohammed used each call to press the same message: that all parties must engage constructively with ongoing mediation efforts as the only viable path to a durable resolution. He stressed that such engagement would open the way for addressing the root causes of the crisis through peaceful dialogue, ultimately yielding a sustainable agreement that forecloses the prospect of renewed escalation. With Kuwait and Oman — both Gulf neighbours with their own significant stakes in regional stability — discussions focused specifically on ways to support and develop bilateral relations alongside the shared imperative of de-escalation. The call with Finland broadened the diplomatic footprint, reflecting Qatar's effort to keep international partners aligned with the mediation track as the ceasefire remains in its early and delicate stages.

Event deferrals signal Gulf's quiet recovery confidence

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar and GCC countries are responding to the current geopolitical conflict with a strategy of deferral rather than abandonment, according to an analysis by Northbourne Advisory, a strategic communications and advisory firm. The finding, the firm argues, represents the clearest real-time signal of regional confidence in recovery. Titled 'Mapping Disruption' and published yesterday, the analysis covers the impact on events during the first seven weeks of the US-Iran conflict. It finds that disruption across the Gulf's events sector was driven not by physical constraints, but by the gap between what the region could do and what the rest of the world believed it could do. Justin Kerr-Stevens, CEO of Northbourne Advisory, told *Gulf Times* that Qatar's early response was decisive. "Within days, a blanket public-event suspension was in place, and the underlying infrastructure held. None of that is structural. It's all solvable. The autumn calendar is where you see Qatar's event capability at work: five events already confirmed, including MotoGP Qatar, the FIA WEC at Lusail and Design Doha Biennial. Where things go from here will depend on how the peace discussions play out," he said. **To Page 11**

Qatar moves to restore full air links

Go-ahead for phased reopening of HIA to foreign carriers

By Kamran Rehmat
Doha

Qatar has begun a phased reopening of Hamad International Airport (HIA) to foreign carriers, marking the most significant step yet in the country's effort to restore normal aviation operations following nearly two months of disruption triggered by the US-Iran conflict. The Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) confirmed the decision in a statement issued yesterday, saying it followed a comprehensive assessment conducted in co-ordination with all relevant national authorities. The authority stressed that all flights would operate in strict accordance with internationally recognised safety and security standards, with full precautionary measures in place to protect passengers and aviation personnel. Qatar closed its airspace on February 28, 2026 following the outbreak of the US-Israel-Iran conflict, grounding virtually all commercial flights. In early March, the QCAA authorised a partial resumption of air navigation with limited operational capacity, primarily to support passenger evacuation and repatriation flights, as well as cargo operations. From March 18, Qatar Airways resumed connecting itineraries through Doha, ending a two-week period during which no transit passengers had been accepted. Yesterday's announcement marks the first time foreign airlines have been formally cleared to

resume scheduled services since the suspension began — a distinction that signals a meaningful shift in the trajectory of recovery. Only select carriers will resume initially, and passengers are advised to check directly with their airlines as schedules may change and rebooking backlogs continue to be addressed. The scale of disruption to one of the world's busiest transit hubs has been considerable. In 2025, Hamad International Airport recorded 282,975 aircraft take-offs and landings, and passenger traffic reached 54.3mn travellers, with August alone exceeding 5mn — its busiest month on record. Restoring foreign airline access is widely seen as essential to rebuilding those volumes and re-establishing Doha's role as a major connecting point between Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Terminal services at HIA have partially resumed alongside the recovering flight schedule, with shopping, dining, and lounge facilities operational, though still at reduced capacity. Under normal conditions, more than 57 airlines operate from the airport. The recent US-Iran ceasefire has brought cautious optimism, contributing to a gradual increase in daily operations, though full reopening of unrestricted Qatari airspace has not yet been declared. International Business Times Aviation analysts expect a gradual return toward normal capacity over the coming weeks, with full restoration possibly not occurring until mid-to-late 2026, depending on regional stability.



Amir, Jordan crown prince stress de-escalation



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met yesterday at the Amiri Diwan with Jordanian Crown Prince Al-Hussein bin Abdullah II. At the outset of the meeting, His Highness the Amir welcomed the crown prince, affirming the depth of the fraternal relations between the two brotherly countries. The crown prince conveyed to His Highness the Amir the greetings of King Abdullah II ibn al-Hussein along with his wishes of continued good health and happiness to His Highness, and further progress and prosperity to the Qatari people. Prince Al-Hussein underscored the importance of intensifying diplomatic efforts to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable de-escalation that would restore stability in the region. He also expressed Jordan's full support for, and solidarity with Qatar and other countries in the region in safeguarding their security and sovereignty, reiterating his country's condemnation of the attacks targeting Qatar. In turn, His Highness the Amir entrusted the crown prince to convey his greetings to the Jordanian king, wishing him continued good

health and well-being, and the brotherly people of Jordan continued growth and prosperity. His Highness the Amir also expressed Qatar's appreciation for Jordan's supportive stance, emphasising the importance of continued co-ordination and consultation on regional developments in a manner that contributes to de-escalation and strengthens the foundations of security and stability in the region. During the meeting, both sides highlighted the strong fraternal ties between the two countries and discussed ways to further enhance and develop them. They also exchanged views on key regional and international developments. The crown prince departed Doha following a working visit to the country. He was seen off upon departure at Doha International Airport by HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and Jordanian ambassador Zaid Muffeh al-Lozi. Earlier upon his arrival the crown prince was welcomed by both the interior minister and the ambassador. **(QNA)**

Aman Centre maps out 5-year drive to shield women, children

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar's Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre (Aman) has unveiled a sweeping five-year strategy aimed at strengthening the country's social protection framework for women, children, and families at risk — a plan its leadership describes as a defining moment in the centre's evolution. The 2026-2030 strategy was launched at a ceremony attended by Social Development and Family Minister Buthaina bint Ali al-Jabri al-Nuaimi and Attorney-General Dr Issa bin Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi, alongside a broad gathering of senior officials, partners, and stakeholders. The high-profile turnout reflected the significance



attached to the plan across government and civil society. Speaking at the launch, Aman's Acting Executive Director Fadi bin Mohammed al-Kaabi described the strategy as a collective achievement developed entirely by the centre's internal teams — a point he said reflected confidence in national expertise and a thorough, ground-level understanding of beneficiaries' needs and the wider societal challenges they face. **To Page 11**

Pakistan confident of pulling Iran in for talks

Army Chief Asim Munir trying to persuade Trump to lift blockade

Reuters
Islamabad/Washington

Pakistan is confident it can get Iran to attend talks with the United States, a senior Pakistani government official said yesterday. "We have received a positive signal from Iran. Things are fluid but we are trying that they should be here when we start the talks tomorrow or a day after," the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity. The source added Pakistan is actively engaged with Tehran and

Washington as US President Donald Trump's ceasefire deadline looms. A senior Iranian official also said Iran is considering attending peace talks with the United States in Pakistan, following moves by Islamabad to end a US blockade of Iran's ports, a major hurdle for Tehran to rejoin peace efforts. However, the official stressed that no decision had been made. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said that "continued violations of the ceasefire" by the US are a major obstacle to continuing the diplomatic process. Araqchi told his Pakistani coun-



Hoardings are mounted on lamp posts as Pakistan prepared yesterday to host the US and Iran for a possible second phase of peace talks in Islamabad. **(Reuters)**

terpart Ishaq Dar in a telephone call that Iran, while taking all aspects of the matter into account, had yet to decide how to proceed further.

Adding to the uncertainty, a source told Reuters that Vice-President JD Vance was still in the US, denying reports that he was

already on his way to Pakistan's capital Islamabad for talks. With a two-week ceasefire set to expire this week, the senior Iranian official said Tehran was "positively reviewing" its participation but no final decision had been made. The comments conveyed a clear change of tone from earlier statements ruling out attendance and pledging to retaliate for US aggression. The Iranian official said mediator Pakistan was making positive efforts to end the US blockade and ensure Iran's participation. The ceasefire had appeared in jeopardy after the US said it had seized an Iranian cargo ship that tried to run its blockade and Tehran vowed to retaliate. **To Page 11**

Shura Council briefed on IPU meetings in Istanbul

The Shura Council held its weekly session yesterday at the Tamim bin Hamad Hall, under the chairmanship of HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim.

At the outset of the meeting, the Shura Council highlighted His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani's meeting with Oman's Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Thursday in Muscat, commending the outcomes that included an emphasis on the importance of regional de-escalation and prioritising diplomatic solutions, to enhance the region's security and stability.

The Council hailed the strong and deep-rooted fraternal relations between the two countries, as well as the two countries' keenness to develop frameworks for co-operation and co-ordination in various fields, and the continuous consultation between them regarding various issues of mutual interest.

The Shura Council also highlighted His Highness the Amir's meetings with Turki-

ye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, on Friday in Antalya, on the sidelines of the opening of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum 2026.

The Council commended the outcomes of the meeting, noting that they reflect Qatar's commitment to supporting all international initiatives and efforts aimed at reducing escalation and promoting diplomatic solutions.

HE the Shura Council Secretary-General Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud then read out the agenda after which the minutes of its previous meeting were approved.

During the session, the Shura Council reviewed a draft law amending some provisions of Law No. 22 of 2017 regulating the real estate brokerage activities, and decided to refer it to its Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee to study.

The Council approved a draft law amending some of the provisions of Law No. 4 of 2008 regarding real estate leases

and referred it to the government, after reviewing the Legal and Legislative Affairs Committee's report on it, and discussing the articles of the draft law.

The Shura Council also reviewed the report of the Social Affairs, Labour and Housing Committee, which includes its perspective on the government's statement regarding its proposal concerning the provisions of services and privileges to senior citizens.

The appropriate decision was taken in its regard.

The Council also reviewed the report of the Arab Parliament members' participation in the second session of the fourth legislative term of the Arab Parliament, held in January in Cairo, in addition to reviewing the report of the participation of Shura Council member Ali bin Ahmed al-Kaabi in the seminar on parliamentary leadership in addressing antimicrobial resistance, held virtually in February, which was organized by the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).



At the conclusion of the meeting, HE al-Ghanim briefed the Shura Council members on the participation of the Council's delegation in the 152nd General Assembly of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the 217th session of the IPU Governing Council, which was hosted by Istanbul on April 15-19, under the theme of *Nurturing hope, securing peace and ensuring justice for future generations*.

HE al-Ghanim also briefed the Shura Council members on the topics and issues discussed by the IPU Assembly regarding international peace and security, building a just and sustainable global economy, as well as the role of parliaments in managing the post-conflict phase, in addition to promoting social justice and inclusive de-

velopment, monitoring the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), promoting inclusive social development, and empowering persons with disabilities.

He highlighted the adoption of the emergency item submitted by Qatar, with broad support from a number of geopolitical groups, by an overwhelming majority, pointing out that this was 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 IPU General Assembly, reflecting the growing influence of Qatar's parliamentary diplomacy and strengthening its presence as an effective tool in supporting national, Arab and Islamic positions. - QNA

Justice minister honours staff completing leadership programme

HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi has honoured a cohort of ministry staff who successfully completed a leadership development programme.

Organised by the ministry in co-operation with the Qatar Leadership Centre (QLC), the initiative that was aimed at strengthening skills and enhancing government performance comes within the framework of the ministry's 2025-30 strategic plan and its programmes supporting the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030.

The programme prepares qualified national cadres and enhances leadership, management, and innovation skills among ministry employees, contributing to the development of institutional performance and keeping pace with



the requirements of modern government work.

Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice for Shared Services Affairs, Khamis Mohammed al-Buafra al-Kuwari, affirmed that the programme reflects the ministry's commitment

to investing in human capital and building a capable generation able to keep up with rapid developments, while reinforcing the foundations of excellence and efficiency in government performance.

The director of the ministry's



International Co-operation Department, Alaa Ismail al-Musleh, stated in a speech on behalf of the graduates that the programme, which benefited 30 employees from various administrative units, marked an important milestone in developing leadership and admin-

istrative skills by combining both theoretical and practical aspects in line with best practices.

The programme was prepared by the ministry through its Human Resources Department in co-operation with the QLC. - QNA

Communications Regulatory Authority
State of Qatar
هيئة تنظيم الاتصالات
دولة قطر

CRA committed to consumer protection and safe digital engagement

HE the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting consumers and promoting safe digital engagement across Qatar, while continuing its efforts to foster a digitally aware generation capable of making informed decisions in an increasingly connected world.

The CRA participated in Phase Two of the "Safe Surfing" Initiative under the "My Values Shape My Identity" project, implemented by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MOEHE), delivering 13 workshops to 879 middle and high school students across 12 private schools in Qatar.

Conducted both in-person and online under the title of "How to Stay Safe Online", the workshops aimed to enhance students' awareness of digital risks associated with everyday Internet use.

The sessions covered key topics, including cyberbullying, identity theft, phishing and online fraud, exposure to harmful content, privacy risks, dangerous online challenges, and emerging concerns related to artificial intelligence (AI).

CRA experts provided practical guidance on preventative measures, such as activating security settings, safeguarding personal information, and seeking support from parents or trusted adults when facing online threats.

"Our participation in the 'Safe Surfing' Initiative reflects the CRA's ongoing commitment to protecting young users and promoting a culture of safe and responsible digital engagement," said the director of the CRA's Consumer Affairs Department, Amel Salem al-Hanawi.



Minister holds meeting with Saudi counterpart

HE the Minister of Transport Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Thani met virtually yesterday with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Transport and Logistic Services Eng. Saleh bin Nasser al-Jasser.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed venues of bilateral co-operation in the transportation sector and ways to enhance and develop them towards broader horizons, especially in the field of logistic services that support this vital sector.

The meeting also addressed the current regional situation and its impact on transportation and supply chains. - QNA

NHRC chairperson meets Tajikistan's ambassador, top ILO official in Doha

HE the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) Chairperson Maryam bint Abdullah al-Attiyah met separately yesterday with Tajikistan's ambassador to Qatar Nurmurod Mahmudali and the director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Office in Doha Francesco d'Ovidio.

During the meeting with Mahmudali, HE al-Attiyah discussed aspects of co-operation in the fields of human rights and ways to protect and promote them.

In the meeting with d'Ovidio, she discussed the government's efforts to protect and promote human rights and improve the work environment in Qatar. - QNA



MoECC's Radiation Protection Department: first line of defence against pollution

HE the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), represented by the Radiation Protection Department, plays a pivotal role in strengthening the environmental protection system and monitoring radiological hazards.

It can be considered the safety valve and first line of defence against radioactive pollution, as it oversees the Radiation Data Monitoring and Analysis Unit, the heart of the comprehensive environmental monitoring system.

The unit utilises advanced mechanisms and technologies that enable it to monitor radiation levels in various terrestrial, marine, and atmospheric environments and analyse data with high accuracy and in real time, contributing to facilitating appropriate decision-making and ensuring the highest standards of protection for both people and the environment.

The Radiation Protection Department has a number of vital responsibilities that form the regulatory and technical framework for the country's radiation safety system.

These responsibilities include preparing regulations, guidelines, instructions, and technical instructions related to radiation protection; formulating the nec-

essary standards and requirements to regulate all practices related to radioactive materials, sources, and radiation-emitting devices, including mechanisms for the safe disposal of radioactive waste in accordance with the highest international standards; developing standards for environmental radiation quality control; and determining national limits for radiation exposure and pollution levels in various environmental components, such as air, water, food, and soil, in co-ordination with relevant authorities.

The department also works on developing comprehensive nuclear and radiation safety plans, reviewing and approving emergency plans for facilities handling radioactive materials, establishing and operating an early warning network to monitor any potential radiation leaks, reviewing licensing applications for radiological facilities and practices, conducting the necessary inspections for issuing licences and monitoring their validity, carrying out periodic inspections to verify compliance with established requirements, and taking the necessary legal measures against violations.

It is working on establishing a comprehensive and up-to-date national database of radioactive materials, sources, and related



equipment, centrally monitoring and managing radioactive waste disposal processes to ensure environmental safety and protection, and developing the skills and capabilities of national personnel through specialised training programmes.

The assistant director of the Radiation Protection Department, Eng. Hamad Salah Ibrahim, said that the Early Warning and Analysis Unit for Radiation Monitoring is one of the most prominent

technical pillars supporting the national preparedness and response system through its continuous coordination with various relevant entities in the country.

He said that the unit is fully integrated with a network of radiation monitoring stations strategically located throughout the country, allowing for precise monitoring of radiation levels and assessment of the radiation situation both locally and regionally. Ibrahim noted that the unit

operates around the clock, seven days a week, to monitor any unusual changes or increases in radiation levels.

Data is analysed and evaluated immediately, he stressed, supporting decision-makers through advanced systems that include simulation and modeling programmes.

The official added that the team comprises nuclear engineers and radiation monitors who conduct monitoring, analysis, and evaluation to ensure the highest levels of preparedness in both emergency and routine situation.

He said that the unit regularly conducts studies and simulation programmes based on diverse data, including weather data, forecasts, and atmospheric dispersion models, which enhances the accuracy of assessments and responses.

Ibrahim added that the unit also handles international reports received from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), in addition to exchanging information with the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, contributing regional integration in the field of radiation monitoring and analysis.

The head of the MoECC's Radiation Measurements Laboratory, Eng. (Nuclear) Bader Nasser

al-Saadi, meanwhile said that radiation levels in Qatar are within normal and completely safe limits.

He said that the laboratory continues its pivotal role in monitoring and analysing various environmental samples according to the highest international standards.

Al-Saadi added that the department conducts a large number of radiation analyses annually on diverse samples, including water, soil, food, and materials imported through ports of entry, which contribute directly to the early detection of any potential radioactive contamination and support rapid decision-making in emergency situations.

He noted that the operational mechanism is based on three main pillars: monitoring radiation levels in various environmental components, supporting national emergency response plans, and providing data to support decision-makers.

The official said that these efforts enhance the country's preparedness through integration with national entities and the use of the latest technologies, and emphasised that all procedures followed are in line with the guidelines of the IAEA and internationally recognised best practices. - QNA

Deputy PM visits Qatari-Turkish Joint Force Command headquarters



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs HE Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani yesterday visited the headquarters of the Qatari-Turkish Joint Force Command at Khalid bin Al Walid Camp where he was received by Brigadier General Hadi Ghanem al-Khayareen, commander of the Qatari-Turkish Joint Force. During the visit, HE the Deputy PM was briefed on the operational proceedings as well as the facilities and services at the camp, which have been designed in line with the latest military standards.



Qatar reaffirms stance at Brussels meeting on rights of Palestinians

Qatar takes part in 9th Meeting of Global Coalition for Implementation of Two-State Solution

Qatar has participated in the ninth meeting of the Global Coalition for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, held in Brussels.

The meeting was attended by the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas and Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Maxime Prevost.

The acting charge d'affaires of Qatar's mission to the EU, Sarah bint Ahmed al-Mohannadi, represented Qatar at the meeting.

She voiced Qatar's gratitude to the EU for organising the meeting of the Global Coalition for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution, and to Belgium for hosting the meeting.

Al-Mohannadi also commended the ongoing efforts to keep the Palestinian issue atop the international agenda.

She underlined the importance regular meetings of this alliance, which contributes to strengthening international co-ordination and moving from political affirmations to practical steps leading to the implementation of the two-state solution based on international law.

This solution guarantees the establish-



ment of an independent Palestinian state within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees in accordance with UN Resolution 194.

Al-Mohannadi noted Qatar's involvement from the outset in mediation efforts related to the Gaza Strip and its active participation in various international frameworks, including the 20-point plan proposed in this context.

Qatar was also a signatory to the Sharm El-Sheikh Agreement and contributed to its full implementation.

Al-Mohannadi also expressed Qatar's welcome of the Peace Council and its executive and technical committees, and its allocation of \$1bn to support its efforts and endeavors aimed at reaching a just and comprehensive final solution.

She pointed to Qatar's support for UN Security Council Resolution 2803 and US President Donald Trump's peace plan, and emphasised that the swift and faithful implementation of the resolution and plan is a collective responsibility borne by all UN member states.

The diplomat expressed Qatar's deep concern regarding Israel's continued violations of the ceasefire agreement, its refusal to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, and its obstruction of humanitarian aid and relief efforts, which hinders the implementation of the second phase and undermines the prospects for peace.

Al-Mohannadi stressed the necessity of the full opening of Rafah crossing to ensure the flow of humanitarian aid and the movement of civilians, and categorically rejected the use of crossings as a pressure tactic or bargaining chip, warning of the serious humanitarian consequences of obstructing the evacuation of critical medical cases.

She reiterated Qatar's full support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), stating that

obstructing its work poses a direct threat to the international humanitarian system, and called on the international community to support the agency and enable it to carry out its duties without hindrance.

Al-Mohannadi highlighted Qatar's strong condemnation of illegal Israeli actions in the West Bank, including settlement expansion, annexation attempts, and the imposition of a new legal and administrative reality, including the designation of land as "state property".

The diplomat warned against attempts to exploit the international community's preoccupation with current crises to impose new realities, whether in the West Bank or at Al-Aqsa Mosque, which would undermine international agreements and threaten regional stability.

She added that Qatar supports the deployment of the International Stabilisation Force (ISF), provided it is implemented in phases and according to criteria linked to Israel's withdrawal.

Al-Mohannadi stressed that achieving a just and lasting peace will not be possible without addressing the root causes of the conflict, foremost among them ending the occupation and enabling the Palestinian people to exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to self-determination. - QNA



French pastry chef Marc Razurel

Ned Doha to open Millie's Cake Shop on April 26

The Ned Doha is set to launch a new luxury cake shop and patisserie to bring a refined expression of modern desserts to the city.

The shop will be officially opened on April 26.

Led by executive pastry chef Marc Razurel, the concept reflects a contemporary approach to pâtisserie, where precision, creativity, and storytelling come together in every creation.

For the French pastry chef, the story of Millie's Cake Shop begins long before the kitchen, shaped by childhood memories and a deep-rooted appreciation for food.

Growing up surrounded by family meals, Razurel developed an early connection to flavour, presentation, and the ritual of gathering around the table.

"My grandmother, mother, and grandfather all inspired me with their love for well-prepared, flavourful food," he shared. "I was always in the kitchen, helping prepare and plate dishes. I still remember my grandmother's apple tart, it remains the best I have ever tasted."

Rooted in French pastry heritage and reimagined through a modern lens, the menu is designed to balance flavour, texture, and visual elegance, where each cake is crafted as a complete sensory experience.

"Each creation at Millie's Cake Shop is designed as a balance between precision and emotion," Razurel said. "I wanted every cake to feel refined, yet effortless, something that is visually striking, but also deeply satisfying in flavour."

Designed to reflect the signature character of The Ned Doha, Millie's Cake Shop offers an elegant and inviting setting where guests can discover a refined patisserie in Doha in its most elevated form.

LuLu supports Qatar Charity with QR125,000 donation via 'Shop & Donate' campaign

LuLu Hypermarket has contributed QR125,000 to Qatar Charity (QC) as part of its ongoing efforts to support humanitarian initiatives and to demonstrate robust community support and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

The donation was made through LuLu's annual "Shop & Donate" campaign, held during Ramadan, in collaboration with Qatar Charity's "Charity Partner" (CP) Programme.

LuLu Hypermarket Qatar regional director Shanavas P M presented the cheque to QC deputy director of Donor Relations Amer Mohammed al-Besiri during a handover ceremony held at the LuLu Regional Office on D-Ring Road, in the presence of representatives from both organisations.

Al-Besiri expressed his appreciation to



Shanavas P M presenting the cheque to Amer Mohammed al-Besiri.

LuLu Hypermarket for its continued dedication to community welfare and social responsibility.

He noted that the CP Programme is one of the QC's key initiatives aimed at advancing CSR, providing private sector organisations with valuable opportunities to partner in supporting Qatar Charity's humanitarian efforts worldwide.

The official lauded LuLu Hypermarket's consistent support for the QC's projects and campaigns, noting that their efforts contribute significantly to advancing community service and humanitarian activities.

Al-Besiri also called on institutions and commercial entities in the country to sup-

port the relief campaigns, projects and programmes implemented by Qatar Charity around the world.

Shanavas expressed pride in collaborating with the QC, noting that initiatives like "Shop & Donate" allow LuLu customers to take part in meaningful humanitarian contributions.

He lauded Qatar Charity for its strong commitment to humanitarian and development work, recognising it as one of LuLu's key partners in charitable initiatives.

The official reaffirmed LuLu's ongoing support for the QC's programmes in the future.

Over the last eight years, LuLu Hypermarket Qatar and Qatar Charity have de-

veloped a strong and meaningful partnership through joint initiatives.

These efforts include giving customers the option to donate at checkout counters across LuLu stores, promoting Qatar Charity's "Khair Cards" to inspire a spirit of generosity, and working together on the "Shop & Donate" campaign to support humanitarian causes.

The collaboration has also been strengthened through a formal agreement under the CP Programme.

The ongoing partnership reflects LuLu Hypermarket's commitment to giving back to the community and supporting initiatives that provide hope, dignity, and essential assistance to those in need.

Aspire Zone Foundation honoured at National Cyber Drill 2025



By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Aspire Zone Foundation (AZF) has been recognised for its efforts in enhancing the security of digital assets and its commitment to implementing the highest cybersecurity standards and best practices at the National Cyber Drill 2025, organised by the National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) under the theme *Cross-Border Attacks*.

An event took place yesterday to honour participating entities in the National Cyber Drill.

The event witnessed the honouring of the AZF alongside a group of leading institutions and participating entities, in the presence of representatives from ministries and recognised organisations, in appreciation of their outstanding efforts and prominent role in strengthening Qatar's cybersecurity ecosystem.

This recognition reflects the AZF's continued commitment to excellence

and leadership in the field of cybersecurity, as well as its active role in supporting national efforts aimed at strengthening digital protection frameworks and keeping pace with global best practices in this field.

It also highlights the AZF's dedication to fostering a strong cybersecurity culture and enhancing institutional readiness to address rapidly evolving digital challenges, in line with Qatar's vision of building a secure and sustainable digital environment.

QIB hosts blood drive

Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB), in collaboration with Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), organised a blood donation drive at its head office.

Held as part of QIB's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the initiative witnessed strong participation from employees across the bank.

The campaign supports the HMC Blood Bank, helping to ensure the continued availability of critical blood supplies for patients in need across Qatar.

Through its ongoing collaboration with the HMC, QIB promotes awareness around the importance of blood donation and encourage a culture of giving within the community, with the initiative highlighting the essential role of donors in sustaining national blood reserves and supporting healthcare services.

"We are proud to see our colleagues come together in support of this important initiative," said QIB assistant general manager and head of Corporate Communica-



QIB's blood donation campaign supports Qatar's national health efforts.

tions & Quality Assurance Mashaal Abdulaziz al-Derham. "Blood donation is a simple act that can make a meaningful difference in people's lives, and the strong participation

reflects the values we hold at QIB." "We value our continued collaboration with the Hamad Medical Corporation and appreciate their efforts in facilitating this initiative,

which contributes to promoting health and well-being across the community," he said.

QIB is dedicated to CSR initiatives that foster positive transfor-

mations within the organisation and society.

The bank's efforts align with and support the four primary pillars outlined in Qatar National Vision 2030.



Iran pulling Hormuz 'lever' to maximum in US standoff

AFP
Paris

Iran is banking on the Strait of Hormuz as its main card in any peace negotiations with the United States, but using the waterway as leverage is not without risk for the Islamic republic.

Iran had for decades talked up the threat of blocking the strait, which is a critical chokepoint for global energy supplies.

With the US and Israel launching a surprise war on Iran on February 28 and killing supreme leader Ali Khamenei, Tehran finally made good on those threats and brought the vital waterway to a standstill.

Since then, the United States has imposed its own blockade, bringing a halt to shipments of Iranian oil that had been spared from the closure. The situation has caused economic turmoil worldwide.

European politicians fear spiking inflation, food shortages and flight cancellations as jet fuel runs out.

In much of Asia, home to the biggest buyers of Middle East oil and gas, energy prices have spiked while poorer nations have been outbid for scarce supplies leading to shortages. In Sri Lanka, energy prices have increased 40%.

The loss of vital fertiliser supplies, of which the Gulf is a major producer, is also expected to send food prices soaring in the developing world.

'Not going to leave'
While causing global economic pain gives Iran negotiating leverage, it can't escape the blowback entirely, with the US blockade halting



Ships and boats in the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Musandam, Oman yesterday. (Reuters)

oil exports worth tens of millions of dollars each day.

With the two-week ceasefire in the war due to run out this week, renewed conflict over the strait would also rattle a leadership trying to find its feet under new supreme leader, Khamenei's son Mojtaba, who has yet to appear in public.

"The Strait is under the control of the Islamic republic," said Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, the veteran of the Revolutionary Guards now serving as Iranian parliament

speaker and seen as the chief negotiator in talks with the US.

"When they wanted to send minesweepers to clear mines, we stood our ground, we confronted them. We said these are ceasefire violations," he said in remarks broadcast by Iranian television.

"We are here (in the Strait of Hormuz), we are not going to leave," he added.

'Who will blink first'
The blockade of Hormuz represented a switch in strategy for the

Islamic republic, which had long brandished the threat without following through.

After decades seeking to prevent Iran obtaining a nuclear weapon — an ambition the Islamic republic insists it does not have — as well as battling pro-Tehran proxies, the West now faces a new and potentially long-lasting problem.

"As long as Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was in power, the Islamic Republic at times sent mixed signals about its nuclear program

and threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz, but stopped short of both," said Ali Alfoneh, senior fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute and author of "Political Succession in the Islamic Republic of Iran".

"With Khamenei gone and the regime in an existential struggle, that restraint no longer holds," he said, adding that "Iran's nuclear doctrine may also be under revision". But he warned that the US counter-blockade on Iranian shipping in Gulf ports can also hurt the Islamic republic by cutting off its oil revenue at a time of intense economic vulnerability.

"The conflict is now a contest of endurance... Who will blink first?"

In his first major written statement since taking office, Mojtaba Khamenei on March 12 called for the use of "the lever of blocking the Strait of Hormuz".

With possible new talks between Iran and the US in the coming days, Iran's First Vice President Mohammad Reza Aref said on Monday that "security of the Strait of Hormuz is not free".

"The choice is clear: either a free oil market for all, or the risk of significant costs for everyone."

Analysts at the International Crisis Group think tank said Iran's strategy for Hormuz was to signal it was open to diplomacy "but only on terms that show it has not suffered strategic defeat".

But with the US naval blockade seeking to "override Iranian control instead of negotiating over it" the strait has turned from a "bargaining chip into a flashpoint for potential military escalation".

UAE dismantled Iran-linked terrorist group

The UAE State Security Department yesterday announced it dismantled a terrorist organisation accused for its involvement in clandestine activities aimed at undermining national unity. According to the agency, the cell was planning systematic acts of terrorism and sabotage across the country. In a statement, the department said that investigations revealed the group's members had direct links with Iran. The group also engaged in illicit collection and transfer of funds to questionable foreign parties. (QNA)

'Harsh action against vandalising soldier'

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed "harsh action" yesterday against a soldier caught on camera vandalising a statue of Jesus Christ in southern Lebanon. The photo, which the military determined was authentic after it spread online, shows an Israeli soldier using a sledgehammer to strike the head of a statue of a crucified Jesus that had fallen off a cross. The sculpture was located in the Christian village of Debl in south Lebanon, near the border with Israel. (AFP)

Russia urges Iran to keep ceasefire

Yesterday Moscow called for the US-Iran ceasefire to be maintained and for diplomatic efforts to continue, after Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov spoke with his Iranian counterpart, Abbas Araghchi. "The Russian side again emphasised the need to preserve the truce, which must be observed within the parameters initially agreed upon and announced by the Pakistani mediators," the foreign ministry said after the call, adding: "The importance was noted of continuing diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing the situation from spinning out of control." (AFP)

We will break Israel's 'yellow line': Hezbollah MP

AFP
Beirut

Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah said Monday that his group would work to break the "Yellow Line" that Israel established in southern Lebanon, adding that no one could disarm the Iran-backed group.

Still, he also maintained that his group wanted to see the current ceasefire last, even as he slammed Lebanese efforts to engage Israel in direct talks on ending hostilities and its occupation of the south.

The Israeli military first mentioned the so-called Yellow Line in Lebanon on Saturday after the start of the 10-day truce, using the term it gave to the demarcation in Gaza that separates areas held by its forces from those controlled by militant group Hamas.

In an interview with AFP from



This picture shows the destruction from Israeli strikes in the southern Lebanese city of Nabatieh. (AFP)

Lebanon's parliament, Fadlallah said "we will bring down this Yellow Line through the resistance (Hezbollah), with our insistence on our legitimate right to defend ourselves and our country". "The steps the Israeli side

has taken are stupid steps," he added. Tehran had insisted that a truce in Lebanon was part of the conditions for its own ceasefire with Washington in the broader war. Hezbollah and Israel have since accused each

Second round of talks in Washington expected

Israel and Lebanon will hold talks in Washington on Thursday, a US State Department spokesperson and an Israeli source speaking on the condition of anonymity told Reuters yesterday. The US will host the second round of ambassador-level talks between the two countries at the Department of State, the State Department spokesperson said. The upcoming talks will mark the first talks between the two countries since a 10-day ceasefire took effect last Thursday.

other of violating the truce. Fadlallah said his group briefed Tehran "on all Israeli violations" with the aim of conveying this information to "the

Pakistani side so that it, in turn, can also exert pressure". Islamabad is the principal mediator between Iran and the US.

"We want the ceasefire to continue and to be accompanied by a tireless effort for the occupying army to withdraw from our land and for all displaced people to return to their villages... as well as the release of prisoners and then a reconstruction program," Fadlallah said. He stated, however, that his group would not accept any agreement that brings the situation back to what it was after its 2024 war with Israel. Israel never stopped bombing Lebanon despite the 2024 truce, accusing Hezbollah of rearming. "There will not be a one-sided ceasefire," Fadlallah said.

"When the Israeli side commits violations and attacks, the resistance will certainly not stand idly by." Over the past year, Beirut has

taken several unprecedented steps against Hezbollah, committing to disarming it in 2025 and outlawing its military activities last month.

"No one in Lebanon or abroad will be able to disarm the resistance," according to Fadlallah, who called the planned direct talks "a political path to offer free concessions".

"It is in the interest of Lebanon, the president of the republic and the government to move away from the path of direct negotiation and return to a national understanding about the best option for Lebanon," Fadlallah told AFP. "We will reject and confront any attempt to impose political costs on Lebanon through concessions made to this Israeli enemy." Hezbollah repeatedly points to Iran's role in the current ceasefire and pins hopes on the negotiation process between Tehran and Washington in Islamabad, despite uncertainty over where it stands.

Over \$71 bn needed to rebuild Gaza: UN, EU

More than \$71 billion will be needed over the next decade for recovery and reconstruction in war-ravaged Gaza, according to an EU-UN assessment published Monday. In their final Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA), the United Nations and the European Union said that more than two years of war in the Palestinian territory "has led to unprecedented loss of life and a catastrophic humanitarian crisis".

"Recovery and reconstruction needs are estimated at around \$71.4 billion," said the assessment, developed in coordination

Two killed in Gaza

Israeli strikes killed at least two Palestinians in separate incidents in the Gaza Strip on Monday, health officials said. Reportedly, one man was killed in an Israeli airstrike in the Bureij camp in the central area of the enclave, while another strike killed one person and wounded others in Gaza City. (Reuters)

with the World Bank. The final assessment determined that \$26.3 billion would be required in the first 18 months to restore essential services, rebuild critical infrastructure and support economic recovery.

"Physical infrastructure damages are estimated at \$35.2 billion, with economic and social losses amounting to \$22.7 billion," a joint statement said. "The scale and extent of deprivation across living conditions, livelihoods/income, food security, gender equality, and social inclusion, have pushed back human development in the Gaza Strip by 77 years," the assessment said. (AFP)

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MOHAMMAD MONIRUL ISLAM MD RAHAMAN

holder of

Bangladesh Passport No. EK0378350
QID No. 28805012498

hereby change my name

from

MOHAMMAD MONIRUL ISLAM MD RAHAMAN

to

MD MONERUL ISLAM BADAL

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

Iran executes two opposition members spying for Israel

Iran on Monday executed two members of opposition group the People's Mujahedin (MEK) who were convicted of spying for Israel, with the judiciary chief warning of "no leniency". Mohammad Masoom Shahi, 38 and also known as Nima, and Hamed Validi, 45, were put to death at dawn in Karaj prison outside Tehran, the MEK's political wing the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) said in a statement.

They were both members of the MEK, which is banned in Iran, it added. The hangings were the latest of detainees regarded as political prisoners by rights groups during the war between the Islamic republic and the US and Israel. Since executions resumed in March during the war that erupted on February 28, Iran has executed eight members of the MEK and seven men convicted

over protests in January. "With today's executions, at least 15 political prisoners have been executed since 19 March," said Mahmood Amiry Moghaddam, director of Norway-based rights group Iran Human Rights. He warned of "further executions of political prisoners and protesters in the coming days and weeks."

"The two members of the MEK join a growing number of heroic members executed this month under the rule of religious dictatorship," the group's leader Maryam Rajavi wrote on X. "Their only 'crime' was their commitment to freedom and the liberation of their people," she added. The judiciary's Mizan Online website said the two men were "members of a spy network linked to Mossad", Israel's intelligence service. (AFP)

Qatar Foundation INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
QNL-RFQ-53	Supply, Installation and Revamp of AV equipment's at Qatar National Library	1,000.00	100,000.00	18-May-2026 2:00 PM
QNL-RFQ-55	Cloud-Based EDR/XDR Deployment to Enhance Endpoint Security for QNL - 3 Years	500.00	N/a	17-May-2026 2:00 PM

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

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

Tender Fee: Interested bidders can Sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferable tender fee online. All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.

Tender Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Tender Fee online will be from 21st April 2026 to 28th April 2026.

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

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

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

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

Singer D4vd charged with murder over teen's body found in Tesla

AFP
Los Angeles

Singer D4vd was charged yesterday with the murder and dismemberment of a teenage girl whose decomposing body was found in an abandoned Tesla in the Hollywood Hills.

The 21-year-old, whose real name is David Anthony Burke, was expected to appear in court to face multiple charges over the horrifying death of Celeste Rivas Hernandez, whose body was

found in September, within days of what would have been her 15th birthday.

"These charges include the most serious charges that a DA's office can bring: that is first degree murder with special circumstances," Los Angeles District Attorney Nathan Hochman told reporters. "The special circumstances being lying in wait, committing this crime for financial gain or murdering a witness in an investigation."

Hochman was vague, but media reporting suggested Burke stood

to lose financially from the exposure of that illegal relationship. If convicted, Hochman said, Burke could face a death sentence or life in prison without the possibility of parole.

Burke, who shot to internet fame in 2022 when his song "Romantic Homicide" became a breakout hit on TikTok, also faces charges over the alleged sexual relationship with Celeste, and that he cut up her body.

The teenager's corpse was discovered in separate bags in the front trunk of a Tesla at a Holly-

wood tow yard, where neighbours had complained of a terrible smell. The vehicle, which was registered to Burke in Texas, had been parked on the street in the tony Hollywood Hills for around a month before it was towed.

An autopsy revealed Celeste had been dead for a considerable time before her badly decomposed body was discovered. "The condition of her remains delayed the medical examiner's ability to be able to determine cause of death," Los Angeles police chief Jim McDonnell told the press conference.

"The substantial amount of time that passed between her death and the discovery meant that crucial evidence had degraded or disappeared."

D4vd's lawyers last week denied their client had killed the youngster.

"Let us be clear, the actual evidence in this case will show that David Burke did not murder Celeste Rivas Hernandez, and he was not the cause of her death," a statement from lawyers Blair Berk, Marilyn Bednarski, and Regina Peter said.

"We will vigorously defend David's innocence."

Celeste, who lived in Lake Elsinore, east of Los Angeles, had been reported missing by her mother in 2024, at the age of 13.

Her mother told reporters that her daughter had a boyfriend named David. Videos show Burke has a tattoo on one of his fingers matching the one reading "Shhh" that the Los Angeles County medical examiner previously revealed was on Celeste's index finger.

The pair were also seen on streaming websites together.

Argentine film and theater great Luis Brandoni dead

Argentine cinema, theatre and television legend Luis Brandoni has died at the age of 86, his friend and producer Carlos Rottemberg announced yesterday on X. "Luis Brandoni has died."

In *Beto* we are losing the last leading actor of an unforgettable generation, a driving force for national theater," Rottemberg wrote, calling it a "very sad day for our culture."

Brandoni's body will be taken to the Buenos Aires legislature to lie in state on Monday afternoon.

He was admitted to hospital on April 11 after a fall at home that caused a brain-bleed. He starred in dozens of films over the course of a prolific career, including *Waiting for the Hearse* (1985) and *The Weasel's Tale* (2019).

He also lit up the stage with hugely successful plays such as *Conversations with My Mother* and *Parque Lezama*.

A familiar face for decades on Argentine television, Brandoni starred alongside Robert de Niro in the 2023 Disney+ miniseries *Nada*. In the series, he played a

curmudgeonly Buenos Aires food critic whose life falls apart after his housekeeper dies, while De Niro played his friend. Brandoni was active from a young age in the center-left Radical Civic Union (UCR), one of Argentina's oldest political parties. During Argentina's 1976-1983 dictatorship, when the party was banned, he briefly went into exile in Mexico.

He served two terms as an MP with the UCR in the 1990s and also served as cultural advisor to former UCR president Raul Alfonsín. (AFP)

FBI chief Kash Patel sues *Atlantic* claiming false reporting, malice

By Jana Winter
Reuters

FBI Director Kash Patel filed a defamation lawsuit against the *Atlantic* and its reporter Sarah Fitzpatrick following the publication of an article last Friday alleging the director had a drinking problem that could pose a threat to national security.

The magazine's story, initially titled 'Kash Patel's Erratic Behavior Could Cost Him His Job,' cited more than two dozen anonymous sources expressing concern about Patel's "conspicuous inebriation and unexplained absences" that "alarmed officials at the FBI and the Department of Justice."

The article, which the *Atlantic* subsequently titled 'The FBI Director Is MIA' in its online version, reported that during Patel's tenure, the FBI had to reschedule early meetings "as a result of his alcohol-fueled nights" and that Patel "is often away or unreachable, delaying time-sensitive decisions needed to advance investigations."

In the *Atlantic's* story, the White House, the Department of Justice and Patel denied the allegations. The article included a statement from the FBI attributed to Patel, "Print it, all false, I'll see you in court-bring your checkbook."

"The *Atlantic's* story is a lie," Patel said in an interview with Reuters. "They were given the truth before they published, and they chose to print falsehoods anyway."

"We stand by our reporting on Kash Patel, and we will vigorously defend the *Atlantic* and our journalists against this meritless lawsuit," the *Atlantic* said in a statement. Reuters could not independently establish the accuracy of the article or why the publication changed the title.

Patel's complaint says that while the *Atlantic* is free to criticize the leadership of the FBI, "they crossed the legal line" by publishing an article "replete with false and obviously fabricated allegations designed to destroy Director Patel's reputation and drive him from office."

The lawsuit, filed in US District Court for the District of Columbia, seeks \$250mn in damages. The lawsuit alleges the *Atlantic* ignored the FBI's denials and did



FBI Director Kash Patel in a file photo: Reuters

■ **Patel seeks \$250mn in damages, denies allegations in the *Atlantic* article**
 ■ **Lawsuit claims actual malice, referencing ignored denials and rushed publication timeline**

not respond to a Friday letter from Patel's lawyer Jesse Binnall to senior editors and the *Atlantic's* legal department asking for more time to refute the 19 allegations the reporter told the FBI's press office she would be publishing.

The letter, which Reuters has seen, was sent shortly before 4pm on Friday and the *Atlantic* published the story at 6:20pm, according to the complaint. Reuters could not establish how or if the *Atlantic* responded to Binnall's request.

The lawsuit alleges the publication acted with "actual malice," a legal standard that requires public figures such as Patel to show the publisher knowingly printed false information or recklessly ignored doubts about its accuracy.

"Defendants' conscious decision to ignore the detailed, specific, and substantive refutations in the Pre-Publication Letter, and their refusal to give a reasonable amount of time for the FBI and Director Patel to respond, is among the strongest possible evidence of actual malice," the lawsuit says.

The Supreme Court has set a high bar for defamation claims that requires a public figure like Patel to prove that the *Atlantic*, or its reporter, knew its reporting was false and published it anyway. "It's a heavy hill to climb to prove actual malice," said Deanne Schullman, a media lawyer with Shullman Fu-

gate PLLC in Florida, adding that she believes the suit has a little chance of succeeding. "A failure to obtain comment from the other side alone is not sufficient to establish actual malice."

Binnall is a prominent Republican attorney who has represented US President Donald Trump in numerous civil cases including one brought by US Capitol Police officers over his role in the January 6 riots.

He represented Trump's eldest son, Donald Trump Jr., former national security adviser Mike Flynn, and ran Trump's challenge to Nevada's 2020 election results.

The lawsuit is the latest instance of a Trump administration figure suing a media outlet. A judge dismissed Trump's lawsuit against CNN for describing election denialism as "the big lie." Judges also dismissed Trump's lawsuits against the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. Trump has refilled his lawsuit against the *New York Times* and may refile against the *Wall Street Journal*.

He has also secured some settlements. ABC News agreed to settle a case for \$15mn plus \$1mn in legal fees.

Paramount Global agreed to pay \$16mn to settle a dispute over what the Trump administration called "deceptive editing" of a CBS News interview with his opponent in the 2024 election, Kamala Harris.

Trump says energy chief 'wrong' about fuel prices

US President Donald Trump yesterday dismissed his top energy official's view that gas prices will not drop until 2027, saying Americans can expect lower costs as soon as the Iran war ends.

On Sunday, US Energy Secretary Chris Wright told CNN that while petrol below \$3 a gallon "could happen later this year, that might not happen until next year."

"I think he's wrong on that. Totally wrong," Trump told a reporter from 'The Hill', adding that prices are expected to come down "as soon as this ends." While Wright, also on CNN, agreed that "with the resolution of this conflict, you'll see prices go down," no clear end is in sight. A fragile ceasefire is set to expire shortly and the chances another round of peace talks succeeding are unclear.

Trump and his fellow Republicans are under pressure ahead of November's midterm elections after pledging to lower costs. With months left to go, US petrol prices remain high, inflation is rising and Trump's approval ratings are down. The average price for a gallon of regular gas on Monday was \$4.04, according to an estimate by AAA, compared to \$3.15 a year ago. — Reuters

Medal in her kitty



Chelsea Clinton poses with her parents former US president Bill Clinton and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton after completing the 130th running of the Boston Marathon. **PICTURE:** Eric Canha-Imagn Images/Reuters

US tariff refund system launches, companies rush to file claims

The refund system set up to allow companies to recover illegally collected tariffs from the US government went live yesterday as thousands of companies rushed to file claims. "So far, so good" — though the system is a little glitchy, said Jay Foreman, CEO of toymaker Basic Fun, which had a team in its "war room" at its headquarters in Boca Raton, Florida, ready to start

filing when the system went live at 8am US Eastern time. Foreman said the system didn't crash as some had feared it might under the onslaught of attempted submissions — but rather would sometimes not allow an upload and force them to retry. The company has over 500 files it needs to upload to the system, although the system permits these to be

uploaded in batches. "However, if you load too many or the system is too busy it will kick them back," Foreman said in an email about how the process was working in the early moments. "We've got over 50% of our invoices loaded so far. We are hoping in the next few hours to have them all loaded. I'm very happy we got this process started early." — Reuters

FREE VEHICLE RECALL



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



JEEP: Grand Wagoneer

Year of Production:

2022- 2023

DEFECT

It is possible that the small rear side window frame may not be properly secured during the assembly process, which could cause the frame to detach from the vehicle and put other vehicles at risk.

PROCESS

Contact the dealer for the free required repair

CONTACT

UNITED CARS ALMANA
 Telephone: 8007552
 crmautomotive.aa@almanagroup.com

16001 | +974 66111400 | www.moc.gov.qa



المشروع للسيارات - المانع ذهم
United Cars - AlmanA W.L.L. **Jeep**

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





THE ALL-NEW MG ZS



TICKS ALL YOUR **DRIVES** ✓

أوتو كلاس للسيارات
AUTO CLASS CARS

CALL or WhatsApp Us on
☎️ 4040 1444

6 YEAR 200,000 KM
REGION'S BEST MANUFACTURER'S WARRANTY



NEW TERRITORY WITHOUT LIMIT



أوتو كلاس للسيارات
AUTO CLASS CARS





Reyada
MEDICAL CENTRE



JCI Joint Commission International



JOINT COMMISSION INTERNATIONAL
QUALITY APPROVAL

GLOBAL SYMBOL OF EXCELLENCE IN HEALTHCARE

REYADA MEDICAL CENTRE IS PROUD TO BE JCI ACCREDITED

مركز الريادة الطبي
Reyada Medical Centre

reyadamedicalcentre.com | info@reyadamedicalcentre.com

C-Ring Road, Doha
44 45 7777

Locate Us



**Reach More.
Achieve More.
Every Tuesday.**









No matter your business automotive, services, healthcare, restaurants, tech, or beauty salons — this is where your brand gets noticed. Advertise on our **TUESDAY SPECIAL ADVERTISING PAGE**

Contact us on
gtadv@gulf-times.com or 444 666 21



100% THAI COCONUT, NATURALLY REFRESHING











Exclusive Distributor:
Al Maya International W.L.L., Doha-Qatar
T: 4441 6441 / 4441 0890
E-mail: almaya-qatar@almaya.com





Ford Territory
Let's Go!






Striking Exterior and Cutting-Edge Features




Elegant Rear Design With 3D LED Taillights

Leather Seats



Panoramic Moonroof



12" Digital Instrument Cluster With 12" Digital Touchscreen







2026 MODEL YEAR

Almana Motors Company W.L.L.


شركة المانع للسيارات ذ.م.م.

OPENING HOURS DOHA BRANCH
SAT. - THU. 8:30 AM - 9:00 PM | FRIDAY 4:00 PM - 9:00 PM

OPENING HOURS AL KHOR BRANCH
SAT. - THU. 8:00 AM - 7:00 PM | FRIDAY CLOSED

 Ford Qatar
  ford.qatar
  ford_qa
  fordqatar
  ford.qa
  fordqtr

BOOK A TEST DRIVE



HOTLINE 800 7551



Hong Kong fire victims scour scorched homes for keepsakes

Reuters
Hong Kong

Victims of Hong Kong's deadliest fire in decades began government-supervised visits to their ravaged former homes yesterday for the first time since the November blaze, looking to retrieve personal items that might have survived.

The flames that engulfed seven residential towers, each of 31 floors in the northern district of Tai Po, killing 168 people, took nearly two days to douse, and eclipsed London's Grenfell Tower inferno of 2017.

"I have taken away most of the stuff I wanted, those items of value," said Steven Chung, 50, adding that he did not know how to describe his emotions after sifting through his old apartment but now worries more about finding affordable housing.

Chung was among around 270 former residents returning to the complex yesterday, many carrying objects such as paintings, computers, and bicycles as they left the government-subsidised housing.

A former resident surnamed Leung said he was able to find his wedding ring easily as it glittered



Residents walk towards a building at Wang Fuk Court to retrieve personal belongings on their first return visit after a deadly fire last year, in Hong Kong, yesterday. (Reuters)

through the ashes of his room where he had kept it. "True gold fears no fire," he said.

Photos of his scorched apartment he shared with Reuters showed charcoal-grey debris with only a few household objects including a plate intact. Walls and window grates were completely charred.

A 67-year-old woman surnamed Tsang said she was happy she found her burnt jewellery box under her bed.

"I found the jewel box under the bed among the ashes. That's the

only thing I can retrieve," she said.

Until May 4, former residents of the complex, Wang Fuk Court, can spend three hours in their flats on each visit, while wearing face-masks, helmets and gloves for protection.

Firemen are among the 1,000 staff tasked to assist the estimated total of 6,000 visitors, who will be escorted by officials to ensure items are kept safe.

"I hope everyone will abide by the three-hour rule," Warner Cheuk, Hong Kong's deputy chief

secretary, told reporters outside the complex, patrolled by officers and cordoned off with orange tape and crowd-control barriers.

Up to four people can register to enter each home, but for severely damaged flats the number is limited to one.

Many affected residents are elderly, with more than a third older than 65, Midland Realty's analysis of government data showed.

Months after the fire, people in the Asian financial hub are still grasping for answers to how it started and demanding accountability.

An independent committee began hearings in March to decide the causes and the scale of bid-rigging by construction firms in building projects.

The panel's lead lawyer blamed human factors for the failure of most of the fire safety systems.

Authorities have threatened severe punishment for anyone who tries to "politicise" the disaster.

In April, the Housing Bureau ruled out redevelopment of the site, on grounds of the long time required and surrounding uncertainties. In February the government said it aimed to spend about HK\$4bn (\$512mn) to buy out the owners.

Indonesia says 15 killed during military operation in Papua

Reuters
Jakarta

Indonesia said yesterday that a total of 15 people were killed in Central Papua province earlier this month during a military operation against separatist rebels that drew condemnation from the country's human rights watchdog.

Natalius Pigai, Indonesia's Minister of Human Rights, told reporters yesterday that another seven were also injured during the fighting.

He did not disclose how many of the casualties were civilian, but said anyone responsible for attacks against civilians "should face the legal process as soon as possible."

The military said it had no information about the deaths, but the state-run National Human Rights Commission said over the weekend that 12 civilians, including women and children, were shot dead during an operation against separatists in central Papua on April 14. Dozens of others sustained serious injuries, it added.

It was not immediately clear whether they were killed by Indonesian or rebel fire, or both. The commission said it was investigating the deaths.

"We condemn the enforcement operation against Papuan

rebels that resulted in civilian casualties," commission chief Anis Hidayah said in a statement.

"All forms of attacks against civilians, whether in situations of war or otherwise, carried out by state or non-state actors, constitute violations of human rights and International Humanitarian Law," she added.

The commission also urged Indonesia's military to reveal operations against Papuan rebels, she said.

Pigai said the human rights ministry would also send a team alongside the human rights body to investigate the deaths.

Resource-rich Papua, home to the world's second-largest gold and copper mine, has been beset by a simmering separatist movement since it was brought under Indonesian control after a 1969 vote overseen by the UN.

A military spokesperson for Papua told Reuters he had not received any information regarding civilian fatalities in Papua last week. A Papuan rebel group said 12 civilians were killed by military operations.

The military's Habema taskforce carried out an operation on April 14 in Puncak region after receiving reports from civilians about the presence of rebels in their village, taskforce spokesperson Wirya Arthadiguna told Reuters.

US begins 'biggest ever' Philippines war games in thick of Mideast war

AFP
Manila

Thousands of American and Philippine troops, joined for the first time by a significant contingent of Japanese forces, began annual military exercises yesterday set against the backdrop of the Middle East war.

The war games will feature live-fire exercises in the north of the country facing the Taiwan Strait, as well as a province off the disputed South China Sea, where the Philippines and China have engaged in repeated confrontations.

In one drill, the Japanese military, which is contributing about 1,400 personnel, will use a Type 88 cruise missile to sink a World War II-era minesweeper off the coast of northern Luzon island.

More than 17,000 soldiers, airmen and sailors are taking part in the 19-day Balikatan, or "Shoulder to Shoulder," exercises — about the same number as last year's edition, including contingents from Australia, New Zealand, France and



I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) Commanding General and US Marine Corps Lt Gen Christian Wortman attaches the Balikatan patch to Philippine Exercise Director Francisco Lorenzo, during the opening ceremony of the "Balikatan" joint military exercises at Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City yesterday. (Reuters)

Canada. Balikatan comes as Iran and the US, along with Israel, edge towards the end of the two-week ceasefire that halted the Middle East war, ignited by surprise US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

"Regardless of the challenges

elsewhere in the world, the United States' focus on the Indo-Pacific and our ironclad commitment to the Philippines remains unwavering," US Lieutenant General Christian Wortman said at yesterday's opening ceremony.

Without providing precise numbers, Wortman, commander of the Marine Expeditionary Force, later told reporters that approximately 10,000 US personnel would take part in the exercises.

Philippine military chief General Romeo Brawner added that US Indo-Pacific Command chief Admiral Samuel Paparo had assured him at the war's outbreak that this year's Balikatan would be "the biggest ever".

"Through integrated air and missile defence, maritime security operations, live fire exercises, and joint multinational readiness training, the nations are building systems that think, move, and respond as one," Brawner said.

Among the high-end weapons expected to be involved during the annual exercise is a US Typhon missile system that has been in the archipelago since it was left by visiting US forces in 2024, provoking outrage from Beijing.

"We anticipate that it will be incorporated at some level during the course of the exercise," Wortman confirmed.

Cambodian king has 'successful' surgery after cancer diagnosis

AFP
Phnom Penh

Cambodia's King Norodom Sihamoni underwent "successful" surgery in Beijing yesterday, former Cambodian leader Hun Sen said, after the royal announced he had prostate cancer.

Sihamoni, 72, shared his diagnosis earlier this month, saying he would stay in China for prolonged treatment.

The monarch had surgery at a Beijing hospital yesterday morning, the Royal Palace in Phnom Penh said in a statement.

Chinese doctors were requiring Sihamoni to stay in hospital for health monitoring, it added.

The king said earlier that doctors had prescribed hospitalisation of up to two months for treatment.

In a social media post, influential former leader Hun

Sen, who visited Sihamoni in Beijing along with his eldest son, Prime Minister Hun Manet, thanked the "excellent doctors who performed the successful and safe surgery for the king".

"The health of the king is the health of the whole nation," Hun Sen added, saying he would return to Cambodia if the king's health improved.

Hun Sen ruled Cambodia for nearly four decades and handed power to Hun Manet in 2023.

The king departed for Beijing for health checks over a month ago. A lifelong bachelor who speaks Khmer, French, Czech and English, Sihamoni spent most of his adult life abroad pursuing a career in the arts before taking the throne in 2004.

He took over the role after his father, King Norodom Sihanouk, abdicated following his own cancer treatment in Beijing.

China's Xi, in call with Saudi crown prince, calls for Strait of Hormuz to remain open

Reuters
Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping called for normal passage of ships through the Strait of Hormuz to be maintained, in a phone call yesterday with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman held as Beijing steps up efforts to help end the Iran war.

China is concerned over renewed instability around the strategic waterway, as a US-Iran ceasefire came under fresh strain after the US seized an Iranian cargo ship and Tehran signalled it would not join new peace talks for now.

China is the main buyer of Iran

nian crude. Iran has largely closed the strait to ships other than its own since the US and Israel launched the war in February, while Washington has imposed a blockade of Iranian ships since last week.

China advocates an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire, and insists on resolving conflicts in the Middle East through political and diplomatic channels, state news agency Xinhua cited Xi as saying.

"The Strait of Hormuz should remain open to normal passage, as this serves the common interests of regional countries and the international community," he told the Saudi leader.

Worries have mounted over the survival of the ceasefire between Washington and Tehran after the US

seizure of the Iranian vessel. Trump had credited Beijing with helping to get Iran to the previous negotiations with the US in Pakistan.

The Chinese foreign ministry yesterday expressed concerns over the "forced interception" by the US of the Iranian ship, while urging relevant sides to abide by the ceasefire agreement.

Xi's call with the Saudi crown prince followed a meeting in Beijing last week with the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, when Xi urged adherence to international law.

Xi also told the Saudi crown prince that China supports countries in the Middle East in "taking their future and destiny into their own hands, and promoting long-term regional stability and peace".

Outrage in China after streaming site debuts AI actor 'database'

AFP
Beijing

China's equivalent of Netflix, iQIYI, faced backlash yesterday over a new initiative that facilitates the use of actors' likenesses in artificially generated dramas and films.

More than 100 celebrities have joined a platform to connect with makers of AI-generated content interested in using their image, a senior executive told a conference in Beijing.

China's entertainment industry has rapidly embraced the use of artificial intelligence, with AI-generated films and shows a common feature on video platforms.

A slate of Chinese actors took to social media to declare they had not or would not sign up to the "artist database", with fans decrying iQIYI's apparent move to reduce work for human actors.

The streaming site called the backlash a "misunderstanding" and insisted actors would retain control over how their image was used in AI-generated content.

"We are not currently licensing the likeness of actors," iQIYI Senior Vice-President Liu Wenfeng told AFP. "Rather, we are enabling AI creators and actors to more quickly establish connections through Nadou Pro," he said, referring to the company's new AI tool targeted at filmmakers.

Users can input prompts into Nadou Pro to generate short films and use it for editing, according to a live demonstration yesterday.

"There's a misunderstanding here," Liu said. "What kind of drama, which shot — everything needs to be confirmed by the actor?"

Fans were also angered by comments made by iQIYI chief executive Gong Yu suggesting fully human-made work could become "intangible cultural heritage" — a phrase used in Chinese to describe a relic of the past worth preserving.

The phrase "iQIYI went nuts" was the most-discussed topic on social media platform Weibo by midday.

"If actors all turn into AI, what warmth will these works of literature and art have?" read one post.

Experts warn there are risks involved in allowing AI to use a person's image.

Japan eases back tsunami warning after magnitude 7.7 quake

Reuters
Tokyo

A magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck off the northeastern coast of Japan yesterday, prompting authorities to urge residents to stay away from coastal areas where tsunami waves of up to 3 metres (10ft) were expected. Two hours after the tremor, which struck at 4:53pm (0753 GMT), tsunami waves as high as 80cm had been detected. A tsunami warning was later downgraded to a tsunami advisory.

There were no immediate reports of casualties or major damage, Japan's top government spokesperson Minoru Kihara told

a news conference as night fell in the capital Tokyo.

Several port towns including Otsuchi and Kamaishi — both hard-hit by a massive earthquake and tsunami in 2011 — earlier issued evacuation orders for thousands of residents, according to public broadcaster NHK. Bullet train services were halted and some motorways were closed due to the tremors.

Following the quake, the government issued a warning of a heightened risk of a megaquake.

Normally, the probability of an earthquake of magnitude 8 or stronger striking along the Japan Trench and Kuril Trench in the Pacific off northern Japan in a week is about 0.1%, but during



The coastline of Tomakomai, Hokkaido Prefecture, after a tsunami advisory was issued following an earthquake, yesterday. (Reuters)

the week that follows yesterday's quake, it will be higher at around 1%, a government official told a press conference.

"Please take anti-disaster steps, while embracing the idea that one must protect one's own life," the official said.

The quake measured an 'upper 5' on Japan's seismic intensity scale — strong enough to make it difficult for people to move around and cause un-reinforced concrete-block wallsto collapse. The tremor had an epicentre in the Pacific Ocean and was 20km deep, the Japan Meteorological Agency said.

A 3-metre tsunami could cause damage to low-lying areas by flooding buildings and carrying off anybody exposed in its

currents, according to JMA.

Located in the "Ring of Fire" of volcanoes and oceanic trenches partly encircling the Pacific Basin, Japan is one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries, with a tremor occurring at least every five minutes.

It accounts for about 20% of the world's earthquakes of magnitude 6.0 or more, such as the 2011 disaster that caused nuclear meltdowns at a Fukushima power plant.

There are no nuclear power plants currently in operation in the affected areas and Hokkaido Electric Power Co and Tohoku Electric Power Co said there were no abnormalities reported at their idled facilities there.

India seizes suspected fake Mounjaro pens, says raw materials sourced from Alibaba

Reuters
New Delhi

Indian drug regulators seized more than 260 suspected counterfeit pens of Eli Lilly's obesity and diabetes drug Mounjaro and said the main accused had ordered raw materials from vendors on Chinese e-commerce platform Alibaba.

Officials from the northern state of Haryana on Saturday recovered the suspected fake pens from a vehicle on the outskirts of New Delhi and arrested two people accused of making and selling the drugs, the Haryana Food and Drug Control Administration said in a statement.

India's booming obesity market, flush with branded products such as Mounjaro and Danish drug-maker Novo Nordisk's weight-loss drugs, as well as several cheaper generic alternatives, is expected to be valued at 80bn rupees (\$859.38mn) by 2030.

Mounjaro-approved for diabetes and weight loss in India - was launched in 2025 and has become the country's top-selling drug by value.

The primary accused did not have a pharmaceutical licence and



Vials of Eli Lilly's Mounjaro, a tirzepatide injection drug used for treating type 2 diabetes and weight loss, are placed on a table for a photograph in a health clinic in Hyderabad, India. (Reuters/File Photo)

made the products at a private property, Drug Control Officer Amandeep Chauhan told Reuters. The two arrested individuals sold the pens on online marketplace IndiaMART at a 27% discount to the genuine drug's price, he said.

The peptides used in the drugs were sourced from vendors on Alibaba, Chauhan said, adding that officials had recovered large quantities of raw materials, including locally made Mounjaro packaging labels, from the property yesterday.

The recovered materials were valued at around 7mn rupees, he said.

Alibaba and IndiaMART did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comment. Reuters could

not independently verify the claims.

The pens were not stored under proper temperature conditions and showed differences in font sizes and other label details compared with the original product, which Chauhan said raised suspicion that they were counterfeit.

Samples have been sent to government-run laboratories for confirmation, he added, saying the accused were in judicial remand for further investigation.

"Lilly takes patient safety extremely seriously and welcomes regulatory authority's action against illicit medicines," the firm told Reuters in a statement yesterday, adding that it is supporting the investigation.

India arrests official at aviation regulator, Reliance executive in drone bribery probe

Reuters
New Delhi

India's federal crime fighting agency said it has arrested an official from the country's aviation regulator and a Reliance Industries executive on allegations of bribery related to securing regulatory approvals to import drones.

In a statement late on Sunday, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said it had acted following a tip-off that the Reliance executive and the government official had settled on an amount of 1.5mn rupees (\$16,000) to process three applications related to drone imports by Asteria Aerospace.

The CBI named the two men as Mudavath Devula, a deputy director general at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), and Bharat Mathur, a senior vice-president from Reliance.

Asteria is a subsidiary of Reliance Industries' technology arm Jio Platforms, which is led by billionaire Mukesh Ambani.

"Mathur was engaged as a consultant. We are not aware

of any transaction involving him of the nature being referred to, nor have we approved any such unauthorised transaction," a Reliance Industries spokesperson said in a statement.

The DGCA and Asteria did not respond to Reuters requests for comment. Devula and Mathur could not be immediately reached as they were in police custody.

"We are not aware of any transaction involving him of the nature being referred to, nor have we approved any such unauthorised transaction"

The CBI initiated the investigation on an "allegation that the accused public servant of DGCA demanded undue advantage from the private persons in lieu of issuing approvals and permissions of applications pending with DGCA," the statement said.

Asteria's website says it is a drone technology company providing intelligence from aerial data, and develops customised drone solutions. It

has more than 400 drones deployed so far.

Ambani's Jio Platforms is also gearing up to file papers seeking regulatory approvals for a Mumbai listing, in what is likely to be India's biggest-ever stock offering.

The arrest is also a setback for India's aviation watchdog, the DGCA, which is already grappling with severe staffing shortages while overseeing a sector where airlines are frequently found to have breached safety norms.

The police arrested the two men in New Delhi and seized 250,000 Indian rupees in cash. Further searches at premises of the DGCA official and other "private persons" led to the seizure of 3.7mn Indian rupees (\$40,000), and gold and silver coins, the CBI said.

The CBI's list of the two's suspected offences, detailed in a publicly released case document, included criminal conspiracy and "bribing a public servant by a commercial organisation".

India ranked 91 on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index last year from 76 a decade ago.

UK PM admits should never have named Mandelson as US envoy

AFP
London

Embattled Prime Minister Keir Starmer said yesterday he had been wrong to appoint Labour politician Peter Mandelson as UK envoy to Washington, seeking to quell anger over a scandal surrounding Jeffrey Epstein's long-time associate.

Starmer, already widely unpopular with the public and many Labour MPs, is struggling to manage a controversy that has threatened to bring down his leadership.

Addressing parliament about the deepening political row, Starmer said: "At the heart of this, there is also a judgment I made that was wrong. I should not have appointed Peter Mandelson."

He faced fresh calls to quit last week after it was revealed that Mandelson had become Britain's envoy to Washington last year despite failing security checks.

Starmer has insisted that he and other ministers were not told until last week that Mandelson had failed the independent vetting process.

"It beggars belief that throughout the whole timeline of events, officials in the Foreign Office saw fit to withhold this information from the most senior ministers in our system, in government," he told MPs.

"If I had known before he took up his post that (the) recommendation was that developed vet-



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer makes a statement on the vetting procedure undertaken for the former UK ambassador to the United States, Peter Mandelson yesterday. (AFP)

ting clearance should be denied, I would not have gone ahead with the appointment."

Last Thursday, Starmer sacked the Foreign Office's top civil servant, Olly Robbins, telling MPs that he had set in motion a review of the security vetting process.

But ex-civil servants have accused Starmer of scapegoating Robbins, who will give his own account to a parliamentary watchdog committee today.

Opposition leaders have called for the centre-left Labour leader 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.

His Downing Street office has insisted that remains true because

government rules meant the Foreign Office had the power to overrule vetting concerns, without the knowledge of Starmer and his top team.

On Friday, Downing Street took the unusual step of releasing a memo that insisted he had only found out about the vetting failure last Tuesday.

Senior ministers have so far rallied around Starmer.

"A judgement was made that the Trump administration was an unconventional administration and an unconventional ambassador could do a job for the United Kingdom," Scotland Secretary Douglas Alexander said yesterday.

"That judgement was wrong and the prime minister accepts that."

Other ministers have argued that Starmer should remain in power amid the global tumult sparked by the Middle East war and other is-

ssues, including forging closer relations with the European Union.

But polls suggest Starmer is one of Britain's most unpopular prime ministers ever.

If Starmer had known about the failed vetting "then he has to go, he has to resign", retired dentist Andrews Connell, 59, told AFP.

"If he knew that's really bad. If he didn't know, he should have known."

Pensioner Lyndia Shaw, 73, agreed saying Starmer is "absolutely hopeless, hopeless, and I feel that yes Mandelson should face the full force of the law without doubt".

But retiree Duncan Moss, 67, said he would be "very worried if Starmer was to leave and to not run the country. I think he's doing a very good job. I think he's a very mature, experienced leader".

Starmer sacked Mandelson in September 2025, seven months after he took up the post, after new details emerged about the depth of the ex-envoy's ties to Epstein.

UK police are investigating allegations of misconduct in office by Mandelson, 72, when he was a Labour minister more than 15 years ago. He was arrested and released in February.

Mandelson has not been charged and denies criminal wrongdoing.

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

British foreign minister Cooper cuts short tour

Reuters
Tokyo/London

British foreign minister Yvette Cooper will cut short an intensive diplomatic tour designed to build consensus around making a ceasefire in the Iran war permanent and on the next steps to reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

Cooper's department is at the centre of a new crisis over Peter Mandelson's appointment as Britain's ambassador to the United States, after the government last week said foreign office officials had overruled a recommendation that he should not be given the role.

That revelation led to new calls from political opponents for Prime Minister Keir Starmer to resign. Starmer says he was not told of the initial vetting recommendation.

Against that backdrop, Cooper will return to London early from the Japan leg of her trip after meetings yesterday, cancelling a

scheduled speech in Tokyo today and skipping a planned return to the Gulf.

A foreign office official said Cooper had condensed her schedule and was returning to meet parliamentary commitments. She is expected to appear at her department's scheduled question and answer session in the House of Commons today.

In a post on X, Cooper said she had travelled through five countries and spoken to more than a dozen foreign ministers and counterparts "to maintain international pressure on opening the Strait of Hormuz".

The top official in her department, Olly Robbins, was sacked last week after Starmer and Cooper lost confidence in him over what Downing Street said was his decision to overturn the vetting recommendation that Mandelson should not be cleared.

Robbins is expected to appear before a parliamentary committee today. That comes after allies spoke out publicly to say he had been treated harshly by ministers.

UK pharmacist fights Indian extradition over murder case

Reuters
London

British-based pharmacist wanted in India for allegedly poisoning his ex-wife's family with arsenic, killing her mother, and trying to hire assassins to kill her father began his fight against extradition yesterday.

Ajith Kumar Mupparapu, 45, is accused of repeatedly targeting Sirisha Muttavarapu and her family in 2023, shortly after she filed for divorce.

Indian prosecutors allege Mupparapu arranged for arsenic-laced chilli powder and salt to be sent to Muttavarapu's family in Hyderabad, southern India, which her relatives consumed as they gathered to celebrate her brother's wedding in June 2023. Her mother Uma Maheshwari died the following month.

Mupparapu is also said to have tried to murder Muttavarapu's father Hanumantha Rao, by organising a staged road accident, attempting to hire contract killers and conspiring to have him injected with a fatal dose of a

muscle relaxant.

His lawyers, however, say there is insufficient evidence to establish that Mupparapu was responsible for any arsenic in Muttavarapu's family's home or was involved in any conspiracy to kill her father. They also say Mupparapu would likely be tortured by the Indian authorities if extradited, citing a ruling last February preventing a businessman being sent for trial in India.

Mupparapu appeared at London's Westminster Magistrates' Court yesterday, sitting in the dock in a grey prison-issue sweatshirt as the case against him was set out.

James Lewis, a lawyer representing Indian prosecutors, said the arsenic which was found when those who had eaten food at Muttavarapu's family home were tested was allegedly obtained by Mupparapu's sister. The arsenic levels found in their blood and urine were more than 20 times the normal value, he added.

The hearing to determine whether Mupparapu can be sent to India to stand trial is expected to conclude this week, with a ruling at a later date.

British royals to mark late queen's 100th birthday

Reuters
London

King Charles visited an exhibition dedicated to his late mother's fashion yesterday, the first in a number of events which the British royals will attend to mark what would have been the late Queen Elizabeth's 100th birthday today.

Elizabeth, Britain's longest-reigning and longest-lived monarch, was born on April 21, 1926, going on to spend 70 years on the throne before her death in September 2022 at the age of 96.

Such is her enduring impact that a YouGov survey last week found that 81% of those polled had a positive opinion of her, more than any living member of the royal family.

"I don't think I've ever seen anybody have a sense of duty like she had," Charles' wife, Queen Camilla, told a BBC documentary broadcast on Sunday.

"It must have been so difficult, being surrounded by much older men," Camilla said of Elizabeth's accession to the throne in 1952 aged 25. "There weren't women prime ministers or women presidents. She was the only one, so I think she carved her own role."

To mark the anniversary of her birth, Charles and Camilla will visit a new exhibition, "Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style", which is currently being held at Buckingham Palace.

More than 300 items, ranging from the late queen's wedding dress to the outfit she wore for her cameo appearance at the opening of the London 2012 Olympics, are on display in the largest-ever exhibition of her wardrobe.



Britain's King Charles and Queen Camilla during a visit to the Queen Elizabeth II: Her Life in Style exhibition at The King's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London, yesterday. (Reuters)

Famed for wearing bright colours and matching hats, she once quipped: "I have to be seen to be believed."

Today, the king and other royals will visit the British Museum to view the final designs for a national memorial to his mother, while Charles' sister, Princess Anne, will officially open the Queen Elizabeth II Garden in London's Regent's Park.

In the evening, Charles and Camilla will

host a reception featuring representatives from charities his mother supported as well as a number of people who will be celebrating their 100th birthday.

The royals' commemorations come after the government announced on Sunday that a new independent charity, the Queen Elizabeth Trust, was being launched to focus on restoring shared spaces in communities, backed by 40mn pounds (\$54mn) with the king as its patron.

Flood risk sparks evacuations in NZ capital

Residents in low-lying areas of New Zealand's capital city Wellington were urged to evacuate yesterday, as heavy rain continued to drench the city, which experienced flash flooding overnight.

Mayor Andrew Little told state-owned Radio New Zealand that Wellington had received 77mm (3 inches) of rain in less than an hour, its heaviest rainfall on record.

The deluge caused flash flooding, road closures and landslides in the city's central business district and southern suburbs. Media reported people had to escape flooded homes during the night and at least one landslide hit a home. A number of streets in the city were evacuated and the Fire and Emergency service said they responded to 150 calls for assistance overnight. A search was underway for a man living at a property that was flooded in the suburb of Karori, New Zealand police said in a statement. (Reuters)



CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

Deputy Managing Editor

Kamran Rehmat

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

GULF TIMES

China seeks to rein in risks from AI 'digital humans'

After her father died from cancer, Zhang Xinyu had an artificial intelligence avatar made that looks and sounds just like him, part of a growing "digital human" industry that China is moving to govern more tightly.

Videos featuring AI digital humans are ubiquitous on Chinese social media, with their uncanny features and smooth, dexterous motions often used to tout products. The nation's cyberspace regulator issued draft rules this month on how these avatars are developed and deployed — seeking to stop them harming children, threatening social stability or being created to resemble someone without their consent.

Zhang, 47, approached the company Super Brain two years ago, feeling depressed and lonely following her bereavement. She can now converse online with her father's avatar, something that made her feel "fully recharged in an instant and filled with motivation once again", she told AFP. Some friends worried Zhang would become too immersed in the virtual world and "never be able to move on", calling it a form of "false comfort", she added.

"But even if the comfort itself is simulated, the love behind it is real," said Zhang, who is based in Liaoning province.

State news agency Xinhua reported last year that the country's digital human industry was worth around 4.1bn yuan (\$600mn) in 2024, having grown a huge 85 percent year-on-year. Chinese governance of new digital technologies has always followed the logic of "develop first, then regulate, and perfect in the process", said Marina Zhang, from the University of Technology Sydney.

Xinhua reported last year that the country's digital human industry was worth around 4.1bn yuan (\$600mn) in 2024, having grown a huge 85% year-on-year

The regulations proposed by the Cyberspace Administration of China (CAC) require clear labelling on digital human content. They also prohibit using personal information to create deepfake clones of individuals without their consent. Super Brain's founder Zhang Zewei said he sees new laws and regulation on the sector as "inevitable". "I view this as a positive development, as it achieves a balance between standardised regulation and industry growth," he told AFP. The company specialises in creating AI avatars of the dead for grieving families.

A video clip of an elderly woman who unknowingly chatted with a hyper-realistic avatar of her dead son was widely shared on Chinese social media this month, with a related hashtag garnering over 90mn views on Weibo.

The avatar, created by Zhang's firm, mimicked her son's speech patterns and his movements so closely that she believed it was him on a video call.

It sparked heated online discussion on the ethics of generative AI, with some people calling for more regulation to prevent bad actors like scammers from misusing powerful new tools. The woman's family approached Super Brain after her son died in a car accident, Zhang told AFP. It was a "well-intentioned lie", he said, adding that Super Brain always obtains consent from family members of the deceased.

The CAC regulations — open for public comment until early May — mark China's latest attempt to balance its technology ambitions with preventing unfettered development that could prove risky. Violations will be punished in accordance with the law, with potential fines of 10,000 yuan (\$1,460) to 200,000 yuan (\$29,300), the CAC said.

Previously, the CAC has clamped down on the use of AI-generated deepfakes that impersonate public figures in e-commerce livestreams, which it said "severely damaged" the online ecosystem. One goal for China of imposing new tech regulations is to preserve its "sovereignty and political objectives", said Manoj Harjani, a research fellow at Singapore's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

Under the draft rules, digital humans are prohibited from generating or disseminating content that endangers national security or incites subversion of state power. And to protect children, the CAC regulations ban services offering minors virtual intimate relationships, or that encourage them to "develop extreme emotions, or cultivate harmful habits".

"Beijing wants to move quickly on AI adoption and deployment, but within a controlled framework," said Lizzi Lee from the Asia Society Policy Institute.

There is strong support for scaling new technologies — but once "risks become visible", Lee added, regulators step in quickly. — AFP

To Advertise

✉ gtadv@gulf-times.com

Display

☎ 44466621 📠 44418811

Classified

☎ 44466609 📠 44418811

✉ gtcad@gulf-times.com

Subscription

✉ circulation@gulf-times.com

© 2026 Gulf Times. All rights reserved



France's President Emmanuel Macron welcomes Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni ahead of a meeting of allies to consider sending a multinational force to ensure security and free-flowing trade in the Strait of Hormuz, at the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris last week.

European role in the Strait of Hormuz crisis remains limited: French experts

QNA
Paris

At a regional juncture fraught with shifting spheres of influence in the Middle East, the Strait of Hormuz has returned to the forefront of global tensions, not only as a vital energy chokepoint but also as a testing ground for the will of international powers.

Recent developments, most notably Iran's announcement of its intention to re-close the strait, coupled with the ongoing US naval blockade and US President Donald Trump's renewed threat to resort to military force, have shifted the crisis from a state of containment to the brink of open escalation.

The Franco-British summit in Paris, which brought together around 49 countries last week, aimed to accelerate the development of a multinational "peaceful and defensive" mission to secure international navigation in the Strait of Hormuz when conditions permit.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced that more than 12 countries are prepared to contribute military assets, with a planning meeting scheduled to take place in London. French President Emmanuel Macron emphasized the neutral nature of the initiative.

Growing tension

Nonetheless, these steps reveal a growing tension between the rhetoric of freedom of navigation, mutual deterrence, and Europe's ambitions for strategic autonomy, and the practical constraints imposed by the escalating US-Iran confrontation. Here, the initiative appears to be more than just a diplomatic maneuver. It is a test of Europe's ability to act in one of the world's most sensitive geopolitical chokepoints.

In this context, two French experts explained in statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the European role in the Strait of Hormuz crisis remains limited and marginal, especially in the absence of US support. They also emphasized that Europe's declining presence in international mediation efforts reveals a decrease in its global geopolitical weight, arguing that regaining the role of honest broker is no longer an option but a fundamental condition for Europe's repositioning within the international system.

In this context, Dr Thierry Coville, a political analyst specialising in Iranian affairs at the French Research Centre for International and Strategic Studies, explained that the European Union already possesses the military capabilities that allow it to intervene on the security level, but the main problem, in his estimation, is related to the absence of political will.

He pointed out that the current stage is pivotal, given the escalating tensions between Europe and the United States, which have made the issue of achieving European strategic independence more urgent than ever. He noted that any intervention of this kind could fall within this trend toward independence, which has become a pressing necessity, despite Europe's continued heavy reliance on the United States for military equipment.

Conversely, he noted that Europe is well aware that it cannot ignore the issue of strategic waterways, such as the Strait of Hormuz, but at the same time, it shows no desire to engage in a military confrontation with Iran, especially in a conflict that was not even reported to it by the United States and Israel when it erupted.

He indicated that there is a growing European tendency to demonstrate a degree of independence from Washington, without this implying a readiness to engage in a military confrontation with Tehran. This, according to his analysis, explains the argument that any potential security intervention will only come after a ceasefire is reached.

Regarding the overall context of relations, Kovel explained that tensions between Europe and Iran are not new, but recent European statements clearly reflect a strong tension with the United States as well.

He cited, in this context, Europe's refusal



British PM Keir Starmer reacts as he prepares to leave the Elysee Presidential Palace in Paris last week.

to participate in a US-led operation aimed at reopening the Strait of Hormuz, along with the various tensions witnessed in recent months, including Donald Trump's statements on Greenland, tariff issues, and other matters reflecting shifts in the nature of the transatlantic relationship.

Critical juncture

He argued that these factors confirm that Europe finds itself at a critical juncture, forcing it to seriously reconsider its strategic independence, especially given the declining role of the United States as a traditional ally on whom Europe has heavily relied.

As for the relationship with Iran, he pointed out that despite the existence of genuine tension, Europe, after the recent war that pitted Iran against the United States and Israel, understands that engaging in a military confrontation with Tehran does not serve its interests.

He explained that the Europeans' primary focus is preparing for the post-conflict phase by working to secure navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and perhaps seeking to rebuild better relations with Iran, thus enabling Europe to play a role in the geopolitical balance.

He also considered Pakistan's mediation between Iran and the United States, while Europe remained completely absent from the scene, to be one of the most significant lessons of this crisis. This, in his estimation, reveals a genuine European dilemma concerning the need to regain its role in the geopolitical environment of the Middle East, perhaps by improving its relations with Tehran.

In this context, he emphasized that the issue is not so much about assessing the Iranian regime as it is about Europe having gone too far in severing its relations with Iran, which has left it today in the position of a mere spectator on vital issues, including ceasefire negotiations.

He noted that the French and European discourse reflects an awareness of these threats and a desire to maintain strong relations with these countries.

However, he pointed out that the recent conflict erupted without Europe being informed, despite one of its fundamental roles being the defence of international law and working towards peace. He considered Europe largely absent in criticizing the American and Israeli attacks that disregard international law.

He added that Europe, in principle, remains in its natural position when it calls for diplomatic solutions, but reality shows that it is currently unable to play an effective role in peace negotiations or in organizing a ceasefire, due to the deterioration of its relations with both the United States and Iran. He stressed that Europe needs to regain its role as an honest broker.

He concluded by noting that the main challenge lies in finding a delicate balance between the need for Europe to assert its power, especially militarily, and to maintain its traditional role as an independent mediator seeking to achieve peace.

For his part, Emmanuel Dupuy, President of the Institute for European Perspective and Security Studies, told QNA that the European role in this matter appears extremely weak, almost marginal. He explained that France, as a permanent member of the Security Council, attempted to pass a resolution calling for the peaceful reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and

guaranteeing freedom of navigation. However, the use of the veto by both Russia and China demonstrated the limitations of this move.

He pointed out that despite the desire of the UK and its Prime Minister, as well as French President Emmanuel Macron, to form a naval force to guarantee freedom of navigation, the European "room for manoeuvre" remains limited, and often merely theoretical, especially given the lack of American support for this approach.

He noted that the policies of Trump, particularly the imposition of a blockade on the Strait of Hormuz, have contributed to weakening the Europeans' ability to act in the same direction, especially since European countries such as France, Britain, Spain, and Italy refused to participate in this blockade or the proposed naval force.

He explained that European capabilities in this context remain largely hypothetical, primarily limited to France's position within the Security Council. He added that European Nato members are hesitant due to fears of US sanctions, given the Trump administration's view that these countries have not provided sufficient support for the US-Israeli operation. He did not rule out the possibility of countries like France, Spain, and possibly Britain facing sanctions, especially after their refusal to allow the use of their airspace for the operations, while other European countries are adopting positions leaning towards neutrality or reducing their level of involvement.

Regarding the nature of the European move, Dupuy clarified that it falls within a purely defensive framework. He pointed out that the initiative, led by France and the UK, with the participation of some 22 countries, aims primarily to ensure respect for international law, particularly freedom of navigation in straits, especially the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al-Mandeb Strait.

He emphasized that this initiative is in no way linked to direct or indirect support for the US or Israeli operation, as none of the participating countries have contributed to strikes against Iran.

He added that approximately 5,000 French troops are deployed in the region, including in Lebanon, the Gulf, and the Red Sea, and their mission is to protect forces and interests without engaging in strikes, even preemptively, against Iran. Regarding the balance in the European position, he indicated that it primarily aims to maintain credibility and the ability to participate in negotiations. He explained that possessing military capabilities does not imply their offensive use, but rather serves to strengthen the diplomatic position, with a focus on defence.

Clear principles

He pointed out that the European position is based on clear principles, including multilateralism, respect for international law, and working within alliances with countries through security agreements. He noted that this approach is not limited to the European Union, but also includes what he described as Greater Europe, including Britain, within a kind of coalition of the willing.

He added that several European countries are participating militarily in the region, including the Netherlands with frigates in the Red Sea, Italy with its forces in Lebanon, and France with military deployments in Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. He also noted that France deployed the frigate Languedoc and the aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle to protect its interests, including protecting Cyprus.

He pointed out that this move has an implicit purpose, not only to address Iranian threats defensively, but also to maintain stability in the Eastern Mediterranean, prevent missiles from reaching European countries like Cyprus, and prevent the situation in Lebanon from deteriorating further.

He concluded by emphasizing that the ability of France and Europe to influence the positions of the United States or Israel remains limited, even marginal, noting that this is evident in France's exclusion from certain negotiating tracks, such as the Washington conference, where it was not included as a party at the negotiating table.

Pakistan confident of pulling Iran in for talks

From Page 1

A Pakistani security source said Pakistan's key mediator, Field Marshal Asim Munir, had told US President Donald Trump the blockade was an obstacle to talks, and that Trump had promised to consider ending it.

The US was hoping to start negotiations in Pakistan shortly before the ceasefire expires, with sweeping security preparations under way in Islamabad.

However, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said that "unconstructive & contradictory signals from American officials carry a bitter message; they seek Iran's surrender."

"Iranians do not submit to force," he added on X.

Trump announced the two-week ceasefire with Iran on April 7, and has not specified when precisely it ends. A Pakistani source involved in the talks said it would expire at 8pm ET tomorrow, which would be midnight GMT or 3:30am Thursday in Iran.

The US has maintained its

blockade of Iranian ports, while Iran lifted and then reimposed its own blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, which typically handles roughly one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied gas supply. Oil prices rose around 5% as traders remained fearful that the ceasefire would collapse. Traffic through the Strait of Hormuz was at a virtual standstill with just three crossings in the space of 12 hours, according to shipping data.

The US military said it had fired on an Iranian-flagged cargo ship headed towards Iran's Bandar Abbas port on Sunday after a six-hour standoff, disabling its engines. U.S. Central Command released video showing

Marines descending ropes from helicopters onto the vessel.

The vessel is likely to have been carrying what Washington deems dual-use items that could be used by the military, maritime security sources said on Monday.

Iran's military said the ship had been travelling from China and accused the US of "armed piracy", according to state media. They

said they were ready to confront US forces over the "blatant aggression", but were constrained by the presence of crew members' families on board.

China, the main buyer of Iranian crude, expressed concern over the "forced interception", and Chinese President Xi Jinping called for ships to resume passage through the strait as normal and for the conflict to be resolved through political and diplomatic channels, state news agency Xinhua reported.

Trump warned on Sunday that the US would destroy every bridge and power plant in Iran if it reject his terms, continuing a recent pattern of such threats.

Iran has said that if the United States were to attack its civilian infrastructure, it would strike power stations and desalination plants in its Gulf Arab neighbours.

Pakistan geared up to host the talks despite uncertainty over whether they would go ahead. Nearly 20,000 security personnel have been deployed across the capital Islamabad, a government official and a security official said.

Aman Centre maps out 5-year drive to shield women, children

From Page 1

The strategy is organised around several interlocking priorities. Chief among them is a concerted push to combat domestic violence through targeted awareness programmes, community partnerships, and a preventive approach designed to reinforce family cohesion and constructive dialogue. Alongside this, the plan introduces unified intake procedures and early intervention protocols to ensure that those seeking help receive timely, consistent support from the outset.

Rehabilitation sits at the heart of the strategy. Aman intends

to deliver comprehensive programmes aimed at rebuilding trust, restoring psychological and social well-being, and fostering genuine independence among women and children affected by violence and family breakdown.

To measure the effectiveness of these efforts, the centre will develop standardised tools to track outcomes across psychological, behavioural, and social dimensions.

The strategy also places significant emphasis on institutional reform. Strengthening financial sustainability, improving transparency, and raising professional standards

across the organisation are all identified as essential to ensuring the centre can deliver high-quality services consistently over the five-year period and beyond.

Underpinning the entire plan is a guiding vision of a safe family environment in which women and children can lead stable, dignified lives. Al-Kaabi framed this not merely as an organisational ambition but as Aman's contribution to Qatar's broader social protection architecture — one built, he stressed, on the values of empowerment, accountability, community partnership, and quality.

Event deferrals signal Gulf's quiet recovery confidence

From Page 1

The analysis offers a comprehensive picture of what is happening across the region's events landscape. It tracked more than 275 events across Qatar, the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, revealing a clear pattern: postponement, not cancellation.

Kerr-Stevens said: "The decision to postpone rather than cancel reflects underlying confidence in the region's long-term trajectory and demonstrates how confidence has shifted through the system. But it also creates a new challenge — an unprecedented concentration of activity into a single period, where competition for attention, participation and visibility will be significantly higher."

The report found that events

reliant on international delegates were among the first to be cancelled, while regionally driven events proved more resilient, highlighting the role of perception as much as reality.

"What we have seen over the first seven weeks of the conflict is a reconfiguration of the Gulf's events economy in real time. Events are one of the earliest and most visible indicators of confidence, and what they showed was that events didn't stop because they couldn't happen. They stopped because insurers wouldn't underwrite them, organisers didn't have a shared operating picture, and international participants no longer had the confidence to attend," Kerr-Stevens explained.

A key finding shows a significant reshaping of the Gulf events calendar, with 99 events postponed and a growing con-

centration of activity in the October-to-December period. Key data covering the period from February 28 to April 17 found that 99 events were postponed or rescheduled; 45 were cancelled; 29 were left in limbo; and 20 were rescheduled to October-December.

"This conflict has caused more event disruption in a shorter timeframe than any previous Gulf crisis except Covid-19, but unlike the pandemic, the underlying demand has not disappeared — it has been deferred. The question is whether recovery follows the rapid rebound pattern of 2019 or the extended trajectory of 2020 to 2022. The answer will depend in large part on signals sent from the insurance markets, airspace normalisation, and the quality of joined-up recovery communications," Kerr-Stevens added.

EU to gauge member states' willingness to punish Israel

The EU's top diplomat said yesterday the bloc will gauge the willingness of member states to take measures against Israel, after Spain re-upped demands to suspend a co-operation deal. Foreign ministers from the 27-nation bloc are expected to discuss the matter at a meeting in Luxembourg today after a call from Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. Attitudes towards Israel among key EU member states, hardened over its conduct in the war in Gaza, stiffened further after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and a new law on the death penalty for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. Facing alarm at the civilian toll exacted in the Gaza war, the EU last year already put on the table a raft of potential measures to punish Israel including cutting trade ties or

sanctioning government ministers. But so far none of the steps laid out by Brussels has garnered enough support from member states to be put into action.

Suspending the entirety of the EU's co-operation agreement — as Spain is pushing for — requires unanimity among the bloc's 27 countries and would almost certainly be blocked by allies of Israel.

More feasible could be suspending the part of the deal facilitating closer trade ties, a move that only requires support from a weighted majority of EU countries.

That would require a shift in position from EU heavyweights such as Germany or Italy. Rome has already signalled a tougher line on Israel by suspending a defence agreement.

"We already have the measures on

the table; some of them that require a qualified (weighted) majority," EU foreign policy Kaja Kallas said.

"First, I think it should be assessed whether it's possible to move with those, if the member states have the wish to do so, to put pressure on Israel."

The recent ouster of staunch Israel backer Viktor Orban in elections in Hungary has also added to the likelihood of movement on measures.

A separate proposal for sanctions on "extremist" Israeli settlers in the West Bank had been vetoed by Budapest for months.

Diplomats and EU officials say they hope to get the greenlight for those measures soon but that it could take until Hungary's new government comes to power in May. (AFP)

France, Poland discuss boosted defence ties as US wavers on Europe

AFP
Gdansk

France and Poland planned increased defence co-operation in a meeting of their leaders yesterday held against a background of Russia's expansionist threat and a waning US commitment to Europe.

French President Emmanuel Macron and Polish premier Donald Tusk told a news conference in Gdansk, northern Poland, that the scope of the boosted ties between the two Nato members could cover elements of nuclear deterrence, military satellites, joint drills, defence industry and shared intelligence.

"Our co-operation, whether in the nuclear domain or in joint exercises... is a co-operation that knows no bounds," Tusk said.

Macron said work would be done in the next few months allowing "concrete progress", notably when it came to nuclear deterrence.

"There may be deployments" to Poland of French warplanes carrying nuclear warheads, he said.

While France has specified it would retain full control over the decision to use force, Polish forces could contribute in areas such as early warning and air defence, both sides say.

The public display of closer relations between the countries reflected adaptation by European Union nations of a changed threat environment, and to US President Donald Trump publicly disparag-



French President Emmanuel Macron and Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk shake hands at the end of a joint press conference at the Main Town Hall in Gdansk, Poland, yesterday during the French President's one-day visit to Poland. (AFP)

ing Nato and toying with the idea of pulling his country out of the alliance.

Trump has called Nato allies "cowards" and the alliance itself a "paper tiger" in frustration that its members did not join the US-Israeli war in the Middle East.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine — which shares a border with Poland — and growing concern, particularly among Baltic states, that Moscow may use its military and wartime economy to threaten Nato's eastern rim are also spurring greater focus on defence.

Macron's trip to Gdansk to see Tusk followed their two countries signing a treaty of friendship and enhanced co-operation

in May last year.

During yesterday's visit, European industry giant Airbus, France's Thales and Poland's Radmor group announced an agreement on developing military communications satellites. The accord on the geostationary orbiters, which would serve Poland's armed forces, was signed in the presence of the French and Polish defence ministers.

On the eve of Macron's arrival, Tusk said Warsaw and Paris "have very similar views on how to build Europe's strength".

One theme Macron has repeatedly come back to is a "European preference" for military procurement to ensure greater independence and

self-reliance on the continent.

That has led to some tension with eastern European countries, including Poland, which are strongly attached to their relationship with the US and whose forces rely on US-made weapon systems.

Poland, though, has in recent years massively invested in modernising its armed forces. Its military spending is among the highest in Nato, and is expected to exceed 4.8% of GDP in 2026.

But the country has placed "colossal orders for American F-35s, Apache attack helicopters, Patriot missiles, and Abrams tanks", a European diplomat close to the matter told AFP.

Poland participates in a new EU programme called SAFE (Security Action For Europe) that came into effect last year and under which countries can get EU loans to buy weapons and expand defence manufacturing.

But Tusk faces friction over that from his country's nationalist president, Karol Nawrocki, who has called SAFE as a threat to Poland's "independence".

Poland is now led once again by a pro-European government following Tusk's electoral victory in 2023, but it remains fundamentally attached to its relationship with the US.

"Washington's strategy has indeed changed" toward Europeans, Tusk told a press conference. But "Polish-American and Euro-American relations" remain "very important," he said.



Pedestrians walk past election posters of the Progressive Bulgaria coalition's leader Rumen Radev in Sofia yesterday. (AFP)

Bulgaria's ex-president wins parliamentary majority

AFP
Sofia

Bulgaria's ex-president Rumen Radev, an EU critic who wants renewed dialogue with Russia, won parliamentary elections held on the weekend, according to near-complete vote results yesterday.

The 45% of ballots his populist Progressive Bulgaria (PB) coalition scored in Sunday's polls — according to 98% of the vote counted — puts it on track to take some 130 seats in the 240-seat legislature in the European Union's poorest nation.

Russia applauded the result, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov saying it looked "favourably" on Radev's push for thawed ties with Moscow.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen, meanwhile, said "I look forward to working together" with Radev.

Radev told reporters that PB, which ran on anti-graft promises, "won unequivocally"; and said Bulgaria would "make every effort to continue on its European path".

But the 62-year-old former air force major general, who resigned as president earlier this year, also argued the bloc needed to change.

"A strong Bulgaria and a strong Europe need critical thinking and pragmatism," he said.

The vote was the eighth general election in five years. It delivered the first outright parliamentary majority for a single formation in Bulgaria since 1997, when a centre-right, pro-

European grouping won.

Anti-corruption rallies in 2021 brought down the conservative administration of long-time pro-European leader Boyko Borissov.

Radev supported similar anti-graft demonstrations last year that ended the latest conservative-backed government.

Some Bulgarians reacted with a wait-and-see attitude to what a Radev administration would do.

"It's very interesting, because one party will be in power, the others will be in opposition, and in reality it will hold all the power, but also all the responsibility," a 30-year-old youth programme manager, Gergana Yakimova, told AFP in Sofia.

"Another question is whether Radev's party has people who can govern, since it was only recently established," she said. "I want to see what happens."

Iliya Dukadinov, a 67-year-old engineer, said: "I don't think this is the best possible outcome, but it's what the majority of people decided. I don't think this cabinet will last very long."

Trayanka Ilieva, a 48-year-old landscaper said she hoped Radev would get rid of the euro and bring back Bulgaria's national currency, the lev.

"No matter how much we earn, it's never enough," she said. "I'm glad that Rumen Radev won. We hope he'll make our country better."

While Radev opposes Bulgaria sending arms to Ukraine — breaking with most other Nato countries — he has said he would not use his country's veto to block EU decisions.



Firefighters and rescue personnel stand next to a trolleybus that crashed into a supermarket yesterday in Salzburg. (AFP)

One dead as Austrian trolleybus crashes into supermarket

AFP
Vienna

One person died and six were injured yesterday after a trolleybus veered off the road and crashed into a supermarket in Salzburg, Austria's Red Cross said. "One person died despite attempts to resuscitate," a Red Cross spokeswoman told AFP.

Police said in a statement the dead person was a local passer-by aged 55. One of the six injured was the bus driver, who they

said they were hoping to question, they added. According to the statement the bus left the road "for reasons as yet unclear, crossed the pavement and smashed into the window of a food store."

The injured were taken to hospital, two in serious condition, the Red Cross spokeswoman added, as a large team of emergency responders were dispatched to the scene. Authorities did not immediately provide any details regarding the circumstances of the accident at an intersection in a northern Salzburg district nor about the person who died.

QU's nano-satellite project moving to advanced phase

Qatar University's CubeSat programme, after the launch of its first nano-satellite QUBEsat1 in January, is transitioning into a more advanced phase centred on scientific research and satellite capability development.

Dr Tamer Khattab, professor of Electrical Engineering and Project Lead, said that: "The project is moving toward a new phase that combines practical education with advanced scientific research," adding that "future satellites will be more complex, with defined scientific objectives including hyperspectral imaging and experiments on plant growth in microgravity."

He further stressed that "The upcoming satellites will be larger, up to six units, with advanced sensors to enable precise scientific experiments, including monitoring space debris using machine learning," signaling a clear shift from a purely educational model to a research-driven satellite programme.

The initial satellite served primarily as a training platform, but



the project is now expanding into targeted scientific applications. He noted: "The first CubeSat launch was purely educational, but upcoming satellites will have specific scientific missions such as environmental monitoring and plant experiments in space."

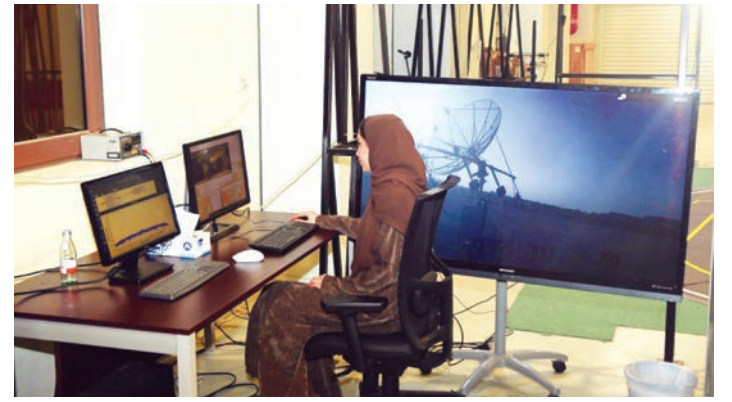
Dr Khalid Abualsaud, Lecturer of Computer Engineering at Qatar

University, explained: "We developed an integrated system to monitor and analyse waste through image capture and data transmission to the ground station," adding that "this system will be integrated into the second satellite with advanced sensors to enhance environmental applications."

These developments underline

the project's growing emphasis on data-driven research and environmental monitoring from space.

Noura Hossam Saqr, Electrical Engineering Graduate from QU, highlighted operational parameters: "The satellite can communicate with the ground station four times daily for 8 to 10 minutes each pass," noting that "the sta-



tion receives images and data that are processed and analysed using advanced systems."

Mohamed Elsayed, teaching assistant in Electrical Engineering, said: "The project started as a simple idea to transfer knowledge in satellite design and launch," adding that "students participated in designing and installing the ground station, gaining integrated practical experience." This integration of satellite and ground systems ensures continuous data flow and strengthens the project's applied research dimension.

From a broader project perspective, the initiative is designed to build long-term scientific and technical capacity. Dr Abdelmagid Hammuda, professor of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, Project Team Member, said that: "The project is not just a launch, but an integrated effort to build a solid scientific culture in space engineering," stressing that

"the real success lies in building a qualified team capable of developing new satellites in shorter timeframes." The technical backbone of the satellites is also evolving.

Dr Ahmed Massoud, associate dean for Research and Graduate Studies, noted: "Solar energy systems are critical to ensure continuous satellite operation and data transmission in space conditions," highlighting the importance of reliable power systems for sustained mission performance.

Dr Nizar Zorba, professor of Electrical Engineering, pointed out that: "The launch is not the end of the project, but the beginning of a new phase requiring continuous evaluation to improve performance and maximise scientific and economic value," adding that "the next phase will focus on developing new technologies and building an advanced communication system integrating space and ground components."



GU-Q scholars become key voices analysing US-Israel war on Iran

Afternoon classes were underway on September 9, 2025, when the building at Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q) began to shake. Horror-stricken students in a Gulf politics class watched as their professor, Dr Mehran Kamrava, paused before saying, "That is a bomb. Class is over." Within minutes, the campus shifted into emergency mode.

Afterwards, the students saw their professor on Al Jazeera explaining why Israel had bombed Qatar. "He gave insight on what the bombing means for those living in this region," said Daphne Soriano, a student in her second year. "It made me feel safer to know that our professors have long been tracking events in the Middle East and understand the stakes." It was not the first strike tied to the widening conflict. Months earlier, Iran had targeted a US airbase in response to President Donald Trump's initial attack in June 2025.

No one at GU-Q was harmed. But the experience sharpened something that would define the coming months: the university's faculty uncovering the events shaping the region on television.

Dr Kamrava, who has written extensively on Gulf and Iranian politics, including a book on Iran titled *Righteous Politics: Power and Resiliency in Iran*, quickly

became one of the most sought-after voices as the conflict deepened. "At first it was every other day, then every day, and now I get calls two to three times a day," he said. He approaches each appearance with a clear purpose: to slow down a fast-moving story, correct misconceptions, and place events within a longer historical arc. At the same time, he keeps his focus on what often gets lost in moments of escalation – the human stakes, the urgency of a ceasefire, and the possibility of restoring some form of regional order.

"That Iran is still standing proves my hypothesis," he said. "Here's a political system where its military commanders are gone, its supreme leader is gone. It's the only country in the world that has been attacked twice by two nuclear powers. We're approaching 40 days and it's still standing." By late February, the war entered a new phase. US and Israeli strikes on Iran expanded, and Iran responded with attacks on US targets across the region.

For faculty at GU-Q, the pace intensified. Dr Paul Musgrave, a US politics expert, became a regular presence on BBC, Sky News, and Al Jazeera English, explaining Washington's strategy and the shifting dynamics of the Gulf while adjusting to his first year living abroad with a young family. "I will never forget driving

into the Al Jazeera complex on the first night of the war, listening to QBS Radio as it broadcast the maghrib adhan, and hearing the retort of an interception just overhead," he said.

For Dr Noha Aboueldahab, a professor of international law, the war collapsed any remaining distance between theory and reality. Even while on leave, she continued speaking with international media and participating in academic forums, all while managing her children's schooling from home after closures during the bombing.

The conflict also reached into domains often overlooked in coverage of war. As US and Israeli strikes hit a desalination plant in Iran, and then Iran targeted desalination facilities in the Gulf, concerns about water security moved to the forefront.

Dr Raha Hakimidivar, a hydrologist and science policy expert, fielded requests from outlets around the world – France 24, Sky News, Brazil's TV Globo, the Christian Science Monitor and Al Jazeera – all seeking to understand what the strikes could mean for access to water in an already vulnerable region.

"What amazed me was just how global the interest was," she said. "People from very different parts of the world wanted to understand what this meant for resource security, especially water."

Responsible living: Sustainability at the heart of fashion, beauty, lifestyle

Doha Festival City in collaboration with Harper's Bazaar Qatar, concluded 'Sustainable Futures' held on April 15–16 at Centre Court, the two-day immersive programme shone a spotlight on sustainability across fashion, beauty and lifestyle, and welcomed leading talents from M7, Scale7 and Intajat.

Bringing together leading global brands, home-grown creatives and industry voices, the showcase delivered a dynamic and well-attended programme, attracting 800 visitors across the event, reflecting strong community engagement and reinforcing Doha Festival City's commitment to advancing conscious retail while supporting the next generation of local talent.

At the heart of the programme was the return of the Emerging Voices platform, spotlighting creative talent from Qatar and featuring designers including Stephanie Bourland of Gigeez, Gills Manjulakshmi of Aadima, Sonali Raman of SR by Sonali Raman, Tagreed Omer of Tagreed Omer Couture, Reem Al-Sulaiti of Zero Waste Design, Dana al-Saifi of Vandella, Husnaa Malik of SewnThreads, Fatima Almohannadi of ninth, Sara al-Muhannadi of Hindami, Noor al-Jaber of LUMI, and Mashaal Alnaimi of Mhefhef.

Hayssam Hajjar, executive director – Malls, Al-Futtaim Real Estate, said: "Sustainable Futures demonstrated the strong appetite within our community for experiences that combine creativity with purpose. The level of engagement, particularly around Emerging Voices, reinforces the importance of creating spaces where local talent can be seen, supported and celebrated. At Doha Festival City, we remain committed to delivering initiatives that support our community and contribute to the growth of Qatar's creative ecosystem, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and its sustainability ambitions."

The Sustainability Exhibition presented a curated showcase of eco-conscious fashion, beauty and lifestyle brands, alongside local designers from Scale7 and M7, with artworks from Intajat. A pre-loved pop-



up concept, courtesy of PrePorter Qatar, and editorial imagery curated by Harper's Bazaar Qatar, further highlighted evolving approaches to responsible design and consumption, echoing wider findings from Doha Festival City's Festival Edits report, which highlights a growing expectation among consumers for brands to act responsibly.

The programme also featured a series of well-attended activations, including the panel discussion Sustainable Futures: A New Era, moderated by Bianca Brigitte Bonomi, Director of Harper's Bazaar Qatar. The session brought together Maha al-Sulaiti, Director of M7; Shaikha al-Sulaiti, Advisory Board Member, Doha Design District; Senior Concept Manager, Msheireb Properties and interior designer; and Federica Cellini, award-winning director and documentary filmmaker, each offering distinct perspectives on the evolving role of sustainability in design and culture.

Maha al-Sulaiti noted, "The shift is moving away from sustainability as a buzzword. It's about process, circularity and how we produce responsibly." Shaikha al-Sulaiti added, "Sustainability today is about returning to our roots, designing with local materials, for climate, and reinterpreting that through a modern lens."

HMC wins first place Golden Award at 12th National Cyber Drill ceremony

Hamad Medical Corp (HMC) has been awarded the Golden Award by Qatar's National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) at the 12th National Cyber Drill Ceremony (2025), recognising HMC's outstanding performance across the entire healthcare sector. The National Cyber Drill, conducted annually by the NCSA, is one of the most significant national cyber resilience initiatives in the Arab region. This year's exercise was held under the theme "Cross Border Attacks" with the participation of 21 countries. The drill brought together 198 participating organisations, engaging more than 1,800 participants across 13 national sectors.

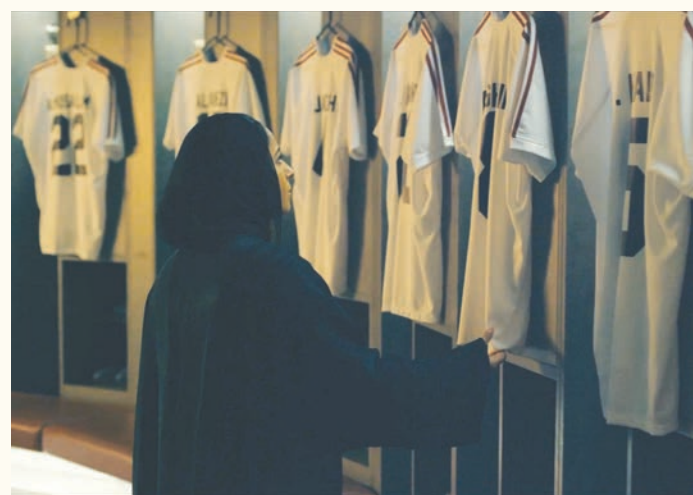
The drill consisted of both technical and management simulation tracks, designed to replicate highly complex, real world cross border cyberattack scenarios. Participants were

required to respond to real time scenario injects under strict time constraints, closely mirroring operational pressures faced during actual cyber incidents.

HMC has a strong culture of security awareness across its workforce, with comprehensive programmes in place to ensure that all employees and contractors understand their role in protecting information and systems. Through regular training, simulated exercises and continuous awareness campaigns, HMC promotes vigilance, accountability and best practice in cyber security at every level, strengthening resilience and ensuring that high standards are consistently upheld across the organisation.

During the award ceremony, Dr Amal Gomaa Abdulla, chief information officer at HMC accepted the award on behalf of Hamad Medical Corp.

Qatar's Theatre of Dreams shortlisted for Tribeca Film Festival 2026



A screenshot from the film.

Theatre of Dreams by Qatari filmmaker Fatma al-Ghanim, has been selected for the 25th edition of the Tribeca Film Festival 2026, taking place from June 3 to 14 in New York City. The selection marks a significant milestone for Qatar's film industry and for projects supported by the Doha Film Institute.

Set against the backdrop of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the docufiction short film 'Theatre of Dreams' sheds light on the untold story of Qatar's first women's national football team. Through an intimate and personal lens, the film explores themes of courage, cultural resistance, and sacrifice, following the team's captain as she reflects—12 years later—on



The poster of the film.

the emotional cost of breaking barriers in pursuit of the right to

play. The film is supported by the Qatari Film Fund, one of the Doha Film Institute's key funding initiatives dedicated to nurturing local talent. The selection of the film underscores the growing international presence of Qatari cinema and highlights the continued development of homegrown creative voices. Al-Ghanim, who is an athlete-turned-filmmaker and former captain of Qatar's first women's national football team, said: "Having lived this story both as the athlete at its centre and now as the filmmaker who brought it to life, *Theatre of Dreams* carries a deeply personal sense of authenticity and truth. It reflects the cost of defying

expectations and the resilience required to pursue what you feel you were meant to do. As global attention turns to the FIFA World Cup 2026 in the United States, it feels especially meaningful to premiere the film at the Tribeca Film Festival, a platform that champions bold, human stories." Al-Ghanim is also the recipient of the 2025 Women's Excellence Award by World Triathlon for her outstanding contribution to advancing women's participation in sport, a global honour presented annually to one woman. A trailblazer in women's sport, Al-Ghanim has since transitioned into storytelling, with *Theatre of Dreams* marking her directorial debut.