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SPORT | Page 1

All-Qatari clash guarantees quarter-final spot in beach volleyball

Family / فاميلة
عروض الصيف
SUMMER DEALS
PROMOTION PERIOD: 22/04/2026 - 05/05/2026

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Sheikh Joaan, Thai PM mull sport ties

Thailand Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul met with the President of the Asian Olympic Council HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani in Bangkok yesterday. They discussed ways to enhance sports co-operation between the two sides to support the development of the Olympic movement in Asia, in addition to discussing a number of issues of mutual interest. HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani also held a meeting with National Olympic Committee of Thailand (NOCT) President Pimol Srivikorn during which they addressed sporting relations between the council and the committee and ways to advance joint co-operation. The meeting also followed up on preparations for upcoming continental sporting events and competitions. (QNA)



Resumption of foreign flights a boost for hospitality sector

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

Hamad International Airport (HIA) has begun a gradual resumption of foreign airline operations as the hospitality sector initiates a strategic recovery following the regional conflict. The move follows a comprehensive assessment by the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) to ensure the highest

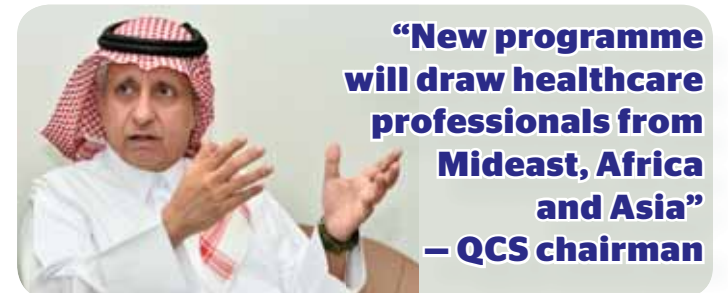
levels of readiness for the return of international travel. Qatar Tourism Chairman HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji reassured the Qatari Hotels Association (QHA) during a recently held high-level meeting that the government "places great importance" on supporting various economic sectors, particularly tourism. Al-Kharji noted that plans are in place to direct tourism events and government initiatives towards supporting the hotel sector.

He added that the hotel sector is a fundamental pillar of the national tourism economy, which reinforces the state's economic support in line with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030. During the meeting, QHA Chairman HE Sheikh Faisal bin Qassim al-Thani underscored the importance of strengthening cooperation between the public and private sectors to address the challenges facing the industry under current circumstances. To Page 2

Qatar 'all set to become regional hub for cancer training, certification'

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Qatar is set to become a regional hub for internationally accredited cancer training, with the Qatar Cancer Society (QCS) preparing to launch a certification programme aimed at healthcare professionals from across the Middle East, Africa and Asia, *Gulf Times* has learnt. In an exclusive interview, QCS Chairman Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabr al-Thani said the society is in advanced talks with leading international institutions to host specialist programmes in Doha – sparing physicians and specialists from developing countries the cost and disruption of travelling to the West for high-level qualifications. "We are launching a new programme to make cancer treatment training available here in Qatar for healthcare professionals from Qatar as well as those from the region and developing countries in Africa and Asia," Sheikh Dr Khalid said. "We are now targeting a higher level of training in collaboration with a lot of international institutions. We might host one or two institutions to do special programmes here in Qatar."



Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Jabr al-Thani. PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

"We are planning to set it up sometime very soon. But now I cannot say it for sure due to the prevailing geopolitical turbulences. Once the situation improves, we will be launching the programme for training and certification with participants from around the world," Sheikh Khalid revealed. He said this will help healthcare professionals in a big way from the region and developing countries. "Rather than requiring healthcare professionals to travel to many of the western countries, the society aims to bring internationally accredited programmes to Doha. This initiative will enable physicians and specialists from across the Middle East, Africa and other countries from Asia and beyond to receive high-quality training

"New programme will draw healthcare professionals from Mideast, Africa and Asia" – QCS chairman

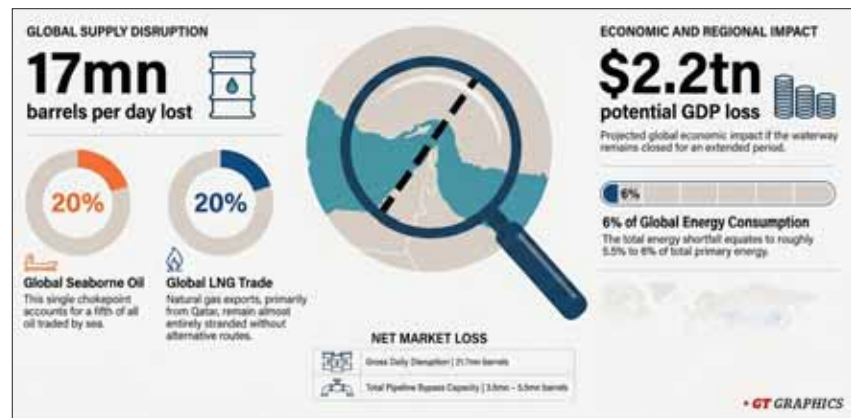
in Qatar, often delivered by global experts. Participants will gain certifications recognised by leading international institutions, enhancing both their skills and career prospects," he continued. The QCS chairman highlighted the impact of the initiative in various other aspects. He explained: "It also carries a humanitarian dimension. The society plans to extend opportunities to professionals from developing countries, particularly in regions where access to advanced medical training is limited. While some programmes may involve fees, efforts will be made to accommodate eligible participants with necessary assistance, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to global health equity." To Page 2

Hormuz closure leads to historic energy shock

By Kamran Rehmat
Doha

Nearly two months after the Strait of Hormuz was effectively sealed by regional conflict, the world is confronting the largest single disruption to energy supplies in modern history. Nearly one-fifth of the planet's seaborne oil and a fifth of its liquefied natural gas have been cut off from global markets, according to detailed assessments by the US Energy Information Administration (EIA) and the International Energy Agency (IEA). Before the closure in late February, roughly 20.9m barrels per day of crude oil, condensate and petroleum products flowed through the narrow waterway – about 20% of all oil traded by sea and 25% of global petroleum liquids consumption – the IEA reported for the first half of 2025. An additional 20% of the world's LNG trade, almost entirely

from Qatar, passed through the same chokepoint. The result has been a net daily loss to world markets of between 16.7m and 18.2m barrels of oil equivalent, even after accounting for limited pipeline bypasses, the agencies' data show. Only 3.5-5.5m barrels per day of oil can be rerouted via Saudi Arabia's Petrolina and the United Arab Emirates' Abu Dhabi Crude Oil Pipeline. LNG, which has no meaningful alternative export route in the short term, remains almost entirely stranded. Converting the lost natural gas volumes to oil-equivalent terms adds another 1.7m barrels of oil equivalent daily to the shortfall. Taken together, the gross daily disruption before any mitigation reached approximately 21.7m barrels of oil equivalent. In energy terms, the net loss equates to 37-40 exajoules per year – roughly 5.5% to 6% of total global primary energy consumption. HE the Minister of State for Energy Af-



fairs Saad bin Sherida al-Kaabi, also the president and CEO of QatarEnergy, delivered some of the starkest warnings in the early days of the crisis. In a *Financial Times* interview published in early March, he cautioned that the conflict could "bring

down the economies of the world." He predicted that if the situation persisted, "all exporters in the Gulf region will have to call force majeure," warning that prolonged fighting would hit global GDP growth, drive energy prices sharply

higher, and trigger shortages and factory shutdowns. On the ground, those warnings have materialised. Gulf oil production was shut in by 7.5m to 9.1m barrels per day in March and April, according to the IEA's monthly Oil Market Report. Global oil supply fell by 10.1m barrels per day in March alone, with cumulative losses now exceeding 360-440m barrels. Qatar declared force majeure on LNG cargoes after Iranian strikes damaged facilities responsible for about 17% of the country's LNG export capacity – equivalent to roughly 12.8m tonnes per year and potentially offline for 3-5 years. The disruption dwarfs every previous oil shock. Markets have responded with volatility. Strategic stockpiles in IEA member countries and coordinated releases have cushioned the immediate blow, but analysts warn that sustained losses of this magnitude will force deep demand destruction through higher prices. To Page 11

Trump pulls envoys as fate of talks in limbo

Pakistan vows to pursue mediation; Iran FM to return after Muscat visit

Reuters, AFP
Washington/Islamabad

US President Donald Trump yesterday cancelled a planned visit by two American envoys to Iran war mediator Pakistan, dealing a fresh setback to peace prospects after Iran's foreign minister flew out of Islamabad without any sign of a breakthrough. Trump said in a social media post that he had called off the planned trip by his special envoy Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner, citing what he de-

scribed as confusion within the Iranian leadership. "Too much time wasted on travelling, too much work! Besides which, there is tremendous infighting and confusion within their 'leadership'. Nobody knows who is in charge, including them. Also, we have all the cards, they have none! If they want to talk, all they have to do is call!!!" he wrote. Trump later told Fox News: "We have all the cards. They can call us anytime they want, but you're not going to be making any more 18-hour flights to sit around talking about nothing." Asked by Axios whether the cancellation meant a



Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi in Islamabad yesterday.

resumption of hostilities, Trump said: "No. It doesn't mean that. We haven't thought about it yet." Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas

Araghchi earlier left the Pakistani capital after meeting Pakistani military chief Asim Munir, a key figure in the mediation effort,

along with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. Araghchi described his visit to Pakistan as "very fruitful," adding in a social media post that he had "shared Iran's position concerning (a) workable framework to permanently end the war on Iran. Have yet to see if the US is truly serious about diplomacy." Sharif said he spoke by phone with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian yesterday after the talks were called off and reaffirmed Pakistan's readiness to help resolve the conflict. "Pakistan remains committed to serve as an honest and sincere facilitator – working tirelessly to advance durable peace and lasting stability in the region," Sharif wrote on X. To Page 11

Palestinians go to vote

Palestinians in the West Bank and central Gaza voted for municipal councils yesterday, the first elections since the Gaza war began in October 2023. Turnout in the West Bank reached 53.44%, marginally below the March 2022 ballot, while just 22.7% of 70,000 registered voters cast ballots in Gaza's Deir Al-Balah, the Central Elections Commission said. Most lists were aligned with Mahmud Abbas's Fatah or composed of independents; Hamas was absent. With no presidential or legislative polls since 2006, local elections have become one of the last democratic mechanisms under the Palestinian Authority. (AFP) Page 4

Qatar slams drone attack on Kuwait's border posts

Qatar has condemned, in the strongest terms, the targeting of two northern land border posts in Kuwait by drones launched from Iraq, describing it as a blatant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty and a serious threat to regional security and stability.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) stressed the need for Iraq to assume its responsibilities to prevent the recurrence of such attacks.

The ministry reaffirmed Qatar's full solidarity with Kuwait and its support for all measures taken to safeguard its sovereignty and security. - QNA

Qatar Women's Sports Committee organises refereeing workshop for women's football

The Qatar Women's Sports Committee organised a workshop for female football referees at its headquarters meeting hall, in co-operation with the Qatar Football Association (QFA)'s Refereeing Department.

The workshop is part of a series of preparatory programmes implemented by the committee ahead of the U-16 Girl's Open Football Championship, scheduled to take place from April 28 to May 6, with the participation of eight teams and academies representing a selection of leading sports and educational institutions.

These are Al Sadd Sports Club Academy, Paris Saint-Germain Academy Football Blue, Paris Saint-Germain Academy Football Red, Al Khor Sports Club Academy, Al Rayyan Sports Club Academy, Dream Madrid Academy, Al Shaqab Academy, and Al Wajba Preparatory School.

The workshop was delivered by international referee Saud Ahmed, representing the QFA's Refereeing Department, who provided a detailed explanation of the latest amendments to the Laws of the Game, with a focus on practical applications on the field.

He also clarified decision-making mechanisms in various match situations and reviewed the most contentious cases and how to handle them in accordance with the latest updates issued by FIFA.

Ahmed emphasised that true development in football begins with a correct understanding of the laws and their consistent application, which contributes to improving the quality of competitions, ensuring fairness on the pitch, and maintaining player safety. - QNA

QRCS launches 'Hand in Hand' mural initiative

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has launched the "Hand in Hand" mural initiative as part of the "Qatar Is Good" campaign, embodying the meaning of community solidarity through an innovative approach that brings humanitarian work closer to people and makes them active participants in it.

The QRCS said in a statement that the initiative, which kicked off yesterday at the Old Doha Port, comes within the framework of strengthening social cohesion and promoting a culture of giving.

It presents, the statement added, an interactive model of how feelings of empathy and support can be transformed into real action that leaves a tangible impact on the ground.

The mural, launched in the presence of QRCS board member and secretary-general Eng. Ibrahim bin Hashem al-Sada and resource development director Khalid Abdulrahman al-Ibrahim along with a number of guests and members of the public, will tour several locations across the country, including Katara Cultural Village and Gewan Island.

This will allow as many participants as possible to contribute their words in ink,



creating a mosaic filled with optimism and positivity. The QRCS is inviting members of the

public to write messages of hope that express gratitude and social solidarity, while emphasising the importance of national

unity and collective co-operation among both citizens and residents. Each message written is not merely

passing words, but a sincere expression of one shared heart beating with hope and responsibility.

The "Hand in Hand" initiative reflects the QRCS's vision of humanitarian innovation and its continuous efforts to strengthen the spirit of solidarity within society through modern and inspiring methods.

It goes beyond spreading positivity by directly transforming community interaction into financial support that contributes to funding humanitarian projects within Qatar, giving each participation real value and deeper meaning.

The initiative combines simplicity with profound impact.

With a single touch - through digital donations made by scanning the barcode displayed on the mural - a message of support is instantly transformed into an actual donation.

The initiative aims to instill a culture of giving and social responsibility.

The QRCS extended an open invitation to all members of the community to take part in this experience, affirming that every word of support has its place, will be read, and will leave a positive impact beyond the moment it is written. - QNA

Resumption of foreign flights boosts hospitality sector

From Page 1

Sheikh Faisal further stated that the government is keen to support the private sector and address the challenges it faces, reinforcing its role as a key partner in economic development.

Earlier, KPMG stated that Doha remains well-positioned to host regional normalisation talks and reconstruction conferences, creating strong demand across the hospitality and event management sectors.

According to KPMG, historical data show that the hospitality sector remains resilient, having staged a strong rebound following the 2017 economic blockade.

In a prospective assessment, Bank Audi stated that the official designation of Doha as the GCC Tourism Capital for 2026 "represents a crowning achievement for Qatar's tourism strategy" and is expected to serve as a central pillar for medium-term arrival forecasts.

In its *Qatar Economic Report*, Bank Audi noted that "the pace at which Qatar's tourism sector converges toward its medium-term targets will therefore depend primarily on... the speed at which traveller confidence in the country as a safe destination is rebuilt".

To support the industry's rebound, KPMG in Qatar has proposed a six-point strategy focused on capturing post-war opportunities in tourism and hospitality.

A primary recommendation includes the establishment of a state-backed insurance fund to provide a financial floor for high-impact bookings and ensure global partners can re-commit to future dates without capital risk.

The government is also encouraged to consider a temporary waiver of municipality fees and hospitality licensing fees for the first 100 days of the recovery period, according to KPMG.



QC delivers relief to families in Somalia

Qatar Charity (QC) has delivered food parcels to 2,840 of the hardest-hit families in northeastern Somalia, reaching more than 17,000 people.

"The assistance is intended to help save lives, meet essential needs, and reduce the risk of malnutrition among the most vulnerable groups," the QC said in a statement.

"Distributions covered communities severely affected by successive drought spells, including Las Anod district and four surrounding villages, as well as Taleh, Hudun, and Buuhoodle," the statement continued. "Priority was given to the most vulnerable families especially children, older people, and pregnant women."

The minister of humanitarian affairs and disaster management in Somalia, Mohamed Deeri Fareh, praised the QC's efforts.

"We value the work carried out by Qatar Charity, and we extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the people of Qatar for their generous and continued support to their brothers and sisters in Somalia," he said. "These interventions help save lives and ease the suffering of communities under these difficult circumstances."

"This project is part of the emergency response plan Qatar Charity is implementing in Somalia," said the director of the QC office in Somalia, Abdul Fattah Adam Moalim. "We reaffirm our commitment to continue providing humanitarian assistance to people in need, in co-operation with our local and international partners." - QNA

Snoonu, Education Above All support students through everyday giving

Since launching its QR2 checkout donation initiative in collaboration with Education Above All (EAA) foundation at the end of 2024, Snoonu has transformed a simple, optional action into a growing source of support for students in need.

To date, the initiative has raised over QR1.3mn, directly contributing to the education of students who may not otherwise have access to university opportunities by covering their full university fees.

Through this effort, four students have already been supported, with four more set to begin their studies in the upcoming semester.

The concept is simple: during checkout, users can choose to contribute QR2, a small amount that, when multiplied across thousands of everyday transactions, creates a meaningful and lasting impact.

What makes this initiative powerful is not just the amount raised, but how it was built, through consistent, collective action.

Each contribution reflects a shared belief in the importance of education and the role it plays in shaping future generations.

For Snoonu, supporting



education is part of a broader commitment to empowering young people in Qatar and beyond.

As a company that began as a university project, Snoonu continues to invest in the next generation through initiatives such as student internships, startup

support, and partnerships that promote learning and innovation.

The collaboration with the EAA reinforces this commitment, aligning technology with purpose and enabling users to take part in something larger than a transaction.

NHRC conducts annual awareness campaign at three boys' schools



The National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) continued its annual awareness campaign targeting school students, delivering lectures on human rights principles at the Religious Preparatory and Secondary Institute for Boys, Omar bin Al Khattab Secondary School for Boys, and Al Yarmouk Preparatory School for Boys.

The director of the NHRC's Financial and Administrative Affairs Department, Hamad Majed al-Marzouqi, said that investment in human capital is a cornerstone of the agency's agenda.

He said the NHRC's annual campaign is based on promoting awareness of human rights principles across all segments of Qatari society, adding that it directly targets primary, preparatory, and secondary school levels.

The lectures were delivered by the head of the Studies and Research Section at the NHRC's Programmes and Awareness Department, Abdulrahman al-Hammadi, and research specialist Jaber Saleh Dalmouk. - QNA

Qatar 'all set to become regional hub for cancer training, certification'

From Page 1

Sheikh Khalid said that the QCS has grown into a diverse organisation from its humble beginning in 1997.

"Currently we have a team of more than 100 professionals representing various disciplines and backgrounds," he said. "The society has evolved into a diverse and multicultural organisation. This diversity strengthens its ability to address complex healthcare challenges and engage effectively with different communities."

He said that the QCS - with all its

achievements in several fields - maintains a grounded and realistic vision of reducing and trying to prevent the disease through awareness and diagnostic practices.

"We are emphasising on measurable and impactful objectives," Sheikh Khalid stated. "This includes reducing the incidence of cancer and promoting early detection. By focusing on prevention and timely diagnosis, the organisation seeks to improve survival rates and enhance the quality of life for patients."

He said that there should be a pragmatic approach in dealing with and fighting the

challenges that arise out of cancer.

"This reflects a deep understanding of the challenges ahead," Sheikh Khalid said. "Cancer remains a global health issue, but through innovation, collaboration, and sustained commitment, the Qatar Cancer Society is demonstrating how targeted efforts can make a meaningful difference."

Looking ahead, the QCS chairman said society is guided by a long-term strategic vision aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030.

"While a broader 10-year framework sets the direction, the organisation op-

erates through flexible five-year plans," Sheikh Khalid noted. "This allows for continuous evaluation and improvement."

"By analysing outcomes from previous years and adapting to emerging challenges, the society ensures that its initiatives remain relevant and effective," he added.

The QCS chairman said academic partnerships play a central role in its mission to fight the disease effectively.

"Collaborations with institutions like Qatar University and Hamad Bin Khalifa University, along with other universities under the Qatar Foundation umbrella, en-

sure that education and research remain integral to cancer awareness and prevention efforts," Sheikh Khalid said. "These partnerships enable continuous programme delivery and innovation, bridging the gap between academia and practical healthcare applications."

"As it continues to evolve, the QCS stands as a model for healthcare organisations and how they can adapt in a post-pandemic world - leveraging technology, strengthening partnerships, and placing people at the heart of every initiative," he added.

Baladna Algeria Launches Dairy Cattle Airlift from the United States as Part of Its Integrated Project Following \$635 Million Phase Two Signing



Algeria hosted the official signing of the second phase of the “Baladna Algeria” project. This includes a new set of contracts for the integrated farm project, alongside the launch of an airlift program to import dairy cows from the United States, starting in November 2026. The step reflects continued progress toward local powdered milk production, with total project investment estimated at around \$3.5 billion.

The contracts signed under this phase exceed \$635 million in value, marking a new stage of execution that moves the project closer to building its herd and establishing real production capacity on the ground.

This follows the first phase of contracts, which exceeded \$500 million and covered key foundational elements such as agricultural technology, production lines, irrigation systems, water well drilling, steel structures, as well as engineering, consultancy and project management services. These early agreements helped set up the project’s operational base and complete a number of initial works related to farms, factories, and irrigation networks.

This second phase takes the project a step further, covering civil works, the construction of additional facilities, irrigation systems, earthworks, a concrete plant, as well as residential and support infrastructure. It also includes the launch of the dairy cattle import program, which is a key milestone in the project’s development.

The program will be carried out through regular air shipments over a period of ten months, with the aim of importing 30,000 dairy cows in a gradual and structured

way. This will be achieved through 109 flights, with around 300 cows per shipment, equivalent to approximately 10 aircraft per month. The cattle will be sourced from nine different U.S. states (Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Colorado, Idaho, California, Kansas, Iowa and Indiana) supporting the planned timeline for herd development and enabling a smooth transition into the project’s operational phase.

This phase is also expected to generate a notable economic impact in the United States, with the total value of the procurement and logistics program estimated at between \$250 million and \$300 million. In addition, it is expected to support the creation of approximately 1,200 direct and indirect full-time jobs in the United States, reflecting the broader economic activity generated across supply chains and associated services.

The signing ceremony was attended by the Director General of the Algerian Agency for Investment Promotion (AAP), Mr. Omar Rekkache, the Algerian Minister of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries, Mr. Yacine El-Mahdi Oualid, Mr. Monder Bouden, Secretary General of the Parliament, as well as representatives from Algeria’s official and national institutions, banks, and companies. Diplomatic representatives included His Excellency the Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Algeria, Mr. Abdulaziz Ali Al Naama, the U.S. Chargé d’Affaires, Mr. Mark Schapiro. The ceremony was also attended by Mr. Salah Labani Representative of Fonds National d’Investissement and Board Member of Baladna, Mr. Marek Warzywoda, Group Chief

مراسم توقيع الحزمة الثانية من عقود المرحلة الأولى للمشروع



Executive Officer of Baladna Group. Representing Baladna Algeria were Chairman Mr. Ali Al-Ali, Managing Director and Board Member Mr. Saifullah Khan, along with representatives from partner companies.

Mr. Marek Warzywoda, GCEO of Baladna, oversaw the signing of contracts with representatives of the companies involved in this phase. The agreements included signings with Mr. Jos Jansen, Chief Executive Officer of HUNLAND, and Mr. Howard Scarff, President of SCARFF BROS., companies that will supply US Holstein Friesian dairy cattle and related services. Also present was Mr. Kalle Autto, Regional Vice President of VALMONT, a company specialized in irrigation systems and water management technologies.

Contracts were also signed with CRCEG for civil works. In addition, several leading Algerian companies were engaged, including GCB SPA for dairy farm construction, SAPCI for concrete works, and SARL ECMCO and SARL NAAS LARBI for earthworks. REDMED GROUP and IFRESS will support accommodation and ancillary service facilities, alongside a strategic partnership with URBACON TRADING & CONTRACTING (UCC), a globally recognized leader in the sector.

The Baladna Algeria project is one of the largest of its kind globally, and the first of its kind in Algeria. It spans approximately 117,000 hectares and aims to develop dairy farming and local powdered milk production, in line with Algeria’s efforts to strengthen food security and increase domestic production. Over the long term, the project aims to reach a herd of around 270,000 dairy cows, which could cover up to 50% of Algeria’s powdered milk demand.

The project is set to deliver a significant boost to Algeria’s economy and labor market, supported by strong local contractor participation. Notably, seven of the ten companies involved in this phase are Algerian, underscoring a clear commitment to support Algeria’s national value creation. This will stimulate key sectors—including construction, engineering, and support services—while strengthening supply chains and advancing skills development, technology transfer, and in-country capabilities. The execution phase is also expected to generate more than 15,000 jobs, reinforcing the project’s role in driving economic growth and long-term workforce development in Algeria.

Commenting on this milestone, Mr. Moutaz Al Khayyat, Chairman of Baladna, said that progress—aligned with the plan to reach 40% completion by the end of 2026—demonstrates that the project is moving steadily into advanced levels of execution. He highlighted its importance as a strategic investment that supports Algeria’s direction on food security and local production. He added that the project reflects an integrated development model that creates sustainable value for both the economy and society, through production, knowledge transfer, local employment, and the stimulation of agricultural and industrial growth. He also emphasized the importance of partnerships with specialized suppliers in supporting execution and ensuring operational readiness. Mr. Ramez Al Khayyat, President of Baladna, added that the use of air freight at this stage is particularly important, as it shortens transport time, helps maintain the health of the herd, and improves adaptability. It also allows for greater control over veterinary care, strengthening biosecurity and ensuring the herd is ready to be integrated into operations. Despite the higher cost, this approach was chosen for its long-term benefits in maintaining herd stability, health, and milk production efficiency. He noted that this reflects an approach Baladna has used at key moments in its journey, where air freight played a critical role in rapidly building production capacity and supporting food security in Qatar. The Algeria project builds on that experience, applying the same approach in a broader and more structured context to ensure a smooth and efficient transition into operations.



Palestinians vote in first elections since Gaza war

AFP/Reuters
Ramallah/Cairo

Palestinians in the West Bank and central Gaza voted yesterday in municipal elections, the first since the Gaza war erupted, marked by low turnout and a narrow slate of contenders.

Nearly 1.5mn people were registered to vote in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, as well as 70,000 people in Gaza's Deir el-Balah area, according to the Ramallah-based Central Elections Commission (CEC).

"We are very pleased to exercise democracy in spite of the many challenges we face, both locally and internationally," Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas told journalists after voting in Al-Bireh, Wafa news agency said.

He added that eventually elections will be held across the Gaza Strip.

"Gaza is an inseparable part of the state of Palestine. Therefore, we have worked by all means to ensure that elections take place in Deir el-Balah to affirm the unity of the two parts of the country together," Abbas said.

Early yesterday a steady trickle of voters headed to polling stations in the West Bank. By 5pm (1400 GMT), turnout in the West Bank reached 40.62%, the CEC said.

However, participation in Deir el-Balah was significantly lower, at just 21.2%, by the time polls closed there at 6pm.

In the previous municipal elections in March 2022, turnout was 53.7% in West Bank cities.

Voting in the West Bank ended at 7pm, with a notable late surge of women voters in Jericho, an AFP journalist said.

"We will elect someone who can improve the local community... things like water and repairing the streets," said Manar Salman, an English teacher in the city. "We don't receive much support from outside, and the occupation affects us in many ways... it limits what the municipality can do."

Some questioned the election's timing. "We didn't want elections at this time - not with war in Gaza and settler attacks ongoing in the West Bank," said Ziad Has-



Left: Electoral workers begin counting votes after the close of polling stations in the West Bank city of Al-Bireh. - AFP

san, a businessman from Dura Al-Qaraa village. "The decision was imposed on us, and so we are compelled to elect an administrative body for the village council."

Israeli settler attacks have surged in recent months, and become a major concern. "The main thing is security from settlers. That's why we need new faces, young people willing to fight for our rights," said Abed Jabaieh, 68, former mayor of Ramun village.

Most electoral lists were aligned with Abbas's secular-nationalist Fatah movement or composed of independents.

Hamas, Fatah's rival and the ruling power in Gaza, was absent from the race.

In many municipalities, Fatah-backed lists faced off against independents supported by smaller factions such as the Marxist/Leninist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Municipal councils oversee water, sanitation, and local infrastructure but do not enact legislation.

Still, with presidential or legislative elections frozen since 2006, councils have become one of the last remaining democratic mechanisms under the Palestinian Authority (PA).

European and Arab governments broadly support an eventual return of PA governance in Gaza, together with the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.



A woman casts her ballot at a polling station during municipal elections in Palestinian town of Birzeit, north of Ramallah in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. - AFP

It would comprise Gaza, East Jerusalem and the West Bank, where the Palestinian Authority exercises limited self-rule under Israeli occupation.

However, the PA faces widespread criticism over corruption, stagnation and declining legitimacy.

Western and regional donors have increasingly tied financial and diplomatic support for the PA to reform, particularly



Voters arrive to cast their ballots at a polling station during municipal elections in Deir el-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip. - AFP

Left: Electoral workers begin counting votes after the close of polling stations in the West Bank city of Al-Bireh. - AFP

Right: An elderly man fills out his ballot before casting his vote at a polling station in Hebron. - AFP



to allow for counting in daylight because of the lack of electricity in the war-devastated strip, the CEC told AFP.

Two years of war have left swathes of Gaza destroyed and more than 72,000 people dead, according to the territory's health ministry, whose figures are considered reliable by the UN.

Under Hamas control since 2007, Gaza experienced its first vote since the 2006 legislative elections that the Islamist movement won.

The PA is holding elections only in Deir el-Balah to test its "success or failure, since there are no post-war opinion polls", said Jamal al-Fadi, a political scientist at Cairo's Al-Azhar University.

It was chosen as one of the few areas where the population has not been massively displaced.

After voting there, Mohammed al-Hasayna, 24, said that although the elections were largely symbolic, they served as a sign of people's "will to live".

"We are an educated people with strong determination, and we deserve to have our own state," he told AFP. "We want the world to help us overcome the catastrophe of war. Enough wars - it is time to work towards rebuilding Gaza."

Iran haj pilgrims arrive in Saudi Arabia

Iranian haj pilgrims have arrived in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh-based broadcaster Al Arabiya reported Saturday, despite a deterioration in ties between the Gulf kingdom and the Islamic republic during the Middle East war.

Saudi Arabia's haj ministry informed Al Arabiya that the first Iranians had arrived this year by air for the annual holy Muslim pilgrimage, the channel reported in a post on X.

Iran bombarded its Gulf neighbours, including Saudi Arabia, with missiles and drones for over a month in response to US and Israeli attacks on the Islamic republic beginning on February 28.

Tehran's aerial campaign halted earlier this month when the US and Iran announced a fragile ceasefire.

The admission of Iranians for haj has been a barometer for relations between

Shia-dominated Iran and Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia after no Iranian pilgrims were allowed into Makkah for seven years from 2016 to 2023.

In 2016 Saudi Arabia severed relations with Iran when its embassy in Tehran and consulate in the northwestern city of Mashhad were attacked during protests.

The two countries resumed diplomatic ties in March 2023 under a surprise China-brokered deal.

On April 9, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan held a phone conversation with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi, in the first official contact between the countries since the start of the war.

On March 1, Riyadh's foreign ministry summoned Iran's ambassador to Saudi Arabia in protest over the attacks on the Gulf kingdom and its neighbours. - AFP

President calls on Iranians to save energy

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has called on his people to conserve electricity, warning that while there were no shortages at present, the US and Israel aimed to sow "dissatisfaction" among the Iranian people.

"We have asked our dear people, who are now ready and present on the ground, a simple request. And that is to reduce their own electricity and energy consumption," the president said on state TV.

"We do not need people to sacrifice for the time being, but we do need to control consumption," he added. "Instead of 10 lights, two lights should be turned on in the house - what is wrong with that?"

Despite the US-Israeli bombing campaign against Iran, there have been no reported power cuts in Tehran in recent days.

Pezeshkian accused Iran's enemies of hitting infrastructure and imposing a blockade "so that the current satisfaction turns into dissatisfaction".

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened to wipe out Iran's power infrastructure, but has so far not followed through.

Even before the current war with the United States and Israel, however, Iran suffered frequent power outages during the winter and summer peaks in demand.

According to the International Energy Agency, Iran generates nearly four-fifths of its electricity from burning natural gas, a resource in which it is self-sufficient thanks to vast gas fields.

It supplements this with low-quality heavy fuel oil, known as mazout, used at older power stations.

Nevertheless, ageing infrastructure, a lack of investment and the impact of fierce international sanctions that cut off access to technology and investment have left the electricity grid unable to cope with demand.

Pezeshkian has previously launched several public awareness campaigns to reduce energy use. - AFP

At least six die in Israeli strikes on south Lebanon: health ministry

Lebanon's health ministry said yesterday that Israeli strikes in the country's south killed six people, despite a ceasefire that was extended this week in the war between Israel and Hezbollah.

"Two Israeli enemy strikes, on a truck and a motorbike, in the town of Yohmor al-Shaqef in the Nabatieh district killed four people," a ministry statement said.

It later reported that an "Israeli enemy airstrike on the town of Safad al-Battikh, in the Bint Jbeil district, resulted in two fatalities and 17 injuries".

Israel's military said it "eliminated" three Hezbollah operatives yesterday who were driving "a vehicle loaded with weapons", as well as another one riding a motor-

cycle, and two more armed members of the group elsewhere.

It also said it identified two projectiles launched from Lebanon, decrying "a blatant violation of the ceasefire understandings" by Hezbollah, and later intercepted another "suspicious aerial target".

Hezbollah, meanwhile, said it targeted an Israeli army vehicle in south Lebanon.

US President Donald Trump had announced on Thursday that a 10-day ceasefire in Lebanon that began on April 17 had been extended for three weeks.

A Hezbollah lawmaker said on Friday that a US-mediated ceasefire in the war with Israel was meaningless, a day after it was extended. - Reuters/AFP

TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

GP - SASOL joint venture
أوريكس لتحويل الغاز إلى سوائل المحوودة
ORYX GTL Limited

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

S. No.	Tender Ref.	Tender Title:	Tender Bond QAR	Bid Closing Date & Tender Bond Validity Period
1	STC-MT-034-26-PD	Supply of Carbon Steel Drums	N/A	20 May 2026 at 12.00 noon & 180 days
2	STC-MT-037-26-PD	Supply of IBC Storage Tanks	45,500/-	20 May 2026 at 12.00 noon & 180 days

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

Tender Registration Fee	QAR 500/- (Non-refundable) per Tender
Payable to	ORYX GTL Limited
IBAN (29 Digits)	QA23QNBAA000000000013010705001
Bank	Qatar National Bank - HQ or any branch (cash only)
Registration Dates	From 26 Apr 2026 to 30 Apr 2026
Registration Process and Requirements:	Write an e-mail to oryxgtltenders@oryxgtl.qa with the following attachments: 1. Copy of Commercial Registration (CR) 2. Copy of bank deposit slip of the Tender Registration Fee. 3. Copy of ICV Certificate

COMPANIES WHO HAVE PAID THE NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE BUT FAILED TO FORMALLY REGISTER AT THE DATE AND TIME STATED ABOVE WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED AS ACCEPTABLE TENDERER.

TENDER BOND SHALL BE ISSUED BY A BANK REGISTERED IN THE STATE OF QATAR.

Effective from 1st July 2023, bids from Local Suppliers and Contractors (companies established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) who are not in possession of an ICV score in the ICV portal by Tender Closing Date (or commercial bid submission date if separately mentioned/notified) will not be accepted. Local Company that has been established for less than 2 years are exempted from this requirement. For further details please visit ICV Digital Portal:- <https://icv.qa>

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

QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY

INVITATION TO TENDER

QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ - 6000005257	IT Consultancy for Strategy Managed Services	500/- (Non-refundable)	35,000	26-April-2026 27-April-2026 28-April-2026 29-April-2026 30-April-2026 03-May-2026 04-May-2026	01-June-2026

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
 - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
 - IBAN : **QA51QNBAA000000000013025828058**
 - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to purchase@qafco.com.qa and ssheikh@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the submission Tender Fee receipt, you may contact at 'purchase@qafco.com.qa' and 'ssheikh@qafco.com.qa' or on 44227715.
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- The Tender shall be strictly submitted using the QAFCO's Supply Chain Portal - SAP / Ariba, on or before the "Tender Closing Date". Tenderers who fail to adhere to this requirement will result in the disqualification of their Tender.

Military bases across Mali come under attack

AFP/Reuters
Bamako

The army in junta-ruled Mali battled yesterday what it called “terrorist groups” that launched surprise attacks around the capital Bamako and other parts of the west African nation.

A UN security note reported “simultaneous complex attacks” in Kati and near the airport in the capital Bamako, as well as in cities and towns further north in the West African, gold-producing country, including Mopti, Gao and Kidal.

“There’s gunfire everywhere,” a witness in the central town of Sevare said as the US embassy urged its citizens to shelter in place and Britons were advised against travel to Mali.

South of Bamako, people attempting to access the airport found themselves almost inside the combat zone, with heavy gunfire nearby and helicopters overhead, one passenger said.

Two explosions and sustained gunfire were heard shortly before 6am (0600 GMT) near the main military base Kati, north of Bamako, and shots were still ringing out there more than four hours later, a Reuters witness and two residents said.

Helicopters buzzed over Bamako and around the international airport and fighting was reported at a nearby military base in what is one of the most complex attacks the military has faced since seizing power.

Witnesses reported intense fighting in a town near the capital where junta leader

General Assimi Goita lives and other key cities in the nation, which has been stricken by more than a decade of religious militant conflict.

Tuareg rebels in the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA) coalition said they had seized the northern city of Kidal.

The Malian junta, which seized power in coups in 2020 and 2021, has labelled the FLA a “terrorist” group.

A Malian army statement said that “terrorist groups, not yet identified, early this morning targeted certain points and barracks in the capital and the interior” of the country.

“We call on the population to be vigilant. Our defence and security forces are engaged in annihilating the attackers,” the statement added.

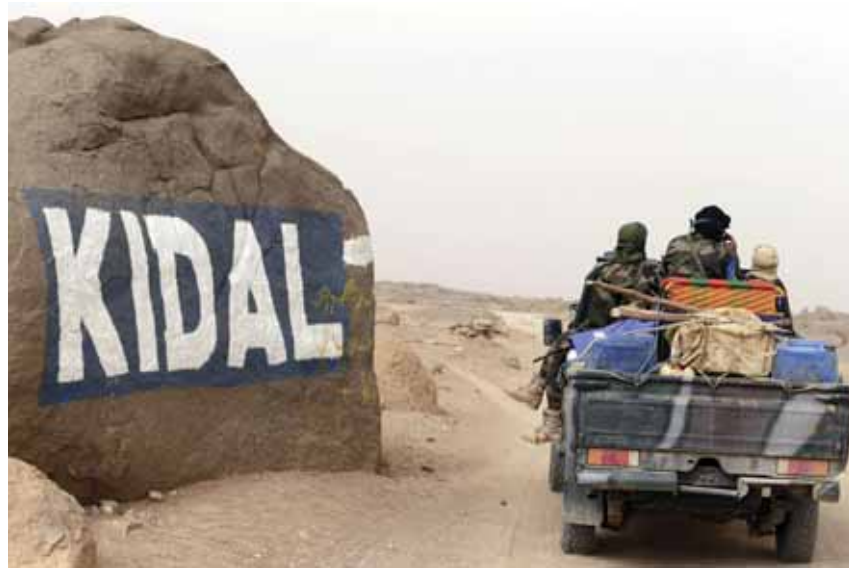
The fighting, which started at dawn, was still going yesterday afternoon on the outskirts of Bamako and in several other cities, particularly Kidal.

African Union (AU) chair Mahmoud Ali Youssouf denounced the violence, which risks “exposing civilian populations to significant harm”.

Fighting was reported around Bamako, at Gao and Kidal in the north, as well as in the central city of Sevare.

Heavy gunfire could be heard in the Bamako suburb of Kati, where Goita has his residence.

As shooting and helicopters flew over Bamako, an army statement said that “the situation is under control”, adding that “several terrorists have been neutralised and equipment destroyed”.



One resident said religious militants had taken a military camp in the Samakebougou neighbourhood of Kati and that there was “heavy” fighting.

The junta chief’s whereabouts were unknown.

There was also intense speculation over Defence Minister General Sadio Camara after residents said a powerful blast had destroyed most of his home in Kati.

Camara’s entourage insisted that he was not present at the time and was “safe”.

The streets of the capital were deserted amid sporadic firing, an AFP correspondent reported.

The Tuareg FLA said in a Facebook statement: “The city of Kidal has come under the control of our armed forces”.

An FLA spokesman, Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadane, told AFP: “Our FLA troops control Kidal, most of Kidal.”

“The governor of Kidal has taken refuge with his men in the former camp of

This picture taken in 2013 shows Malian soldiers arriving in Kidal in northern Mali. Malian Tuareg rebels said yesterday that they had taken the key city from the army and Russian forces. - AFP

Right: This video grab taken from UGC images verified by AFP show armed militants moving through the streets of Kati, the hometown of military ruler General Assimi Goita, as gunfire echoes across several cities of Mali. - AFP



The government, like its military counterparts in neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso, has severed ties with former colonial ruler France and several Western countries, moving closer politically and militarily to Russia.

The junta had pledged to hand over power to civilians by March 2024, but in July 2025 granted Goita a five-year presidential term, renewable “as many times as necessary” and without an election.

Thousands of people have died in attacks in Mali since the religious militant turmoil erupted.

Tens of thousands of Malians have sought refuge in neighbouring countries in recent years.

Yesterday’s attacks signal a potential escalation in the insurgency.

“This looks like the biggest co-ordinated attack for years,” said Ulf Laessing, head of the Sahel programme at Germany’s Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Heni Nsaibia, senior West Africa analyst at Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, highlighted the significance of yesterday’s targets, including Kati and Bamako which lie “at the heart of the regime” and Kidal, the site of a symbolic military victory in 2023 that has been central to the government’s “narrative of regaining territorial control”.



Left: Armed members of an unidentified group are seen gathering yesterday in Kidal in this screen grab obtained from social media. - Reuters

Below: A soldier gets in position during an attack on Mali’s main military base Kati, outside the capital Bamako. - Reuters



Nobel Peace Prize-winning rights group suspended

The Tunisian League for Human Rights (LTDH), the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize winner along with three other groups, has had its operations suspended for a month, its president said yesterday.

The LTDH said in a statement overnight it had been “informed” of the suspension, calling the measure “dangerous and arbitrary”, but said the ban was pending official confirmation.

LTDH head Bassem Trifi told AFP that the order had been “issued by the Tunis court of first instance”, and that the group will appeal.

“We oppose this decision and we will lodge an appeal. We will continue our struggle for rights and freedoms,” Trifi said.

No comment was immediately available on the matter from the government.

The LTDH was told the ban was imposed because of “administrative irregularities”, he said, adding that similar accusations were used to target other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in 2025 with temporary suspensions.

By autumn last year, at least 17 NGOs had received month-long suspension orders.

The LTDH was part of the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet that was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their role in the North African country’s democratic transition.

Tunisia emerged from the Arab Spring as a democracy, but elected President Kais Saied staged a sweeping power grab in 2021 and rights groups have since criticised a major rollback of freedoms.

They included two of the country’s best-known organisations, the Tunisian Forum for Social and Economic Rights (FTDES) and the Association of Democratic Women (ATFD).

The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)’s office in Tunisia was also suspended, as were independent media outlets Inkyfada and Nawaat.

The LTDH, an outspoken critic of Saied, has repeatedly warned that Tunisia has been sliding toward authoritarian rule since the president suspended parliament in 2021 and later began ruling by decree.

Saied has said he will not be a dictator and that freedoms are guaranteed in Tunisia, but that no one is above the law, regardless of their name or position.

Since Tunisia’s 2011 revolution, the issue of NGO funding has been a recurring topic of debate.

Saied has accused NGOs of receiving suspicious funds, “huge sums” from abroad, which he has called “blatant interference” in Tunisian affairs.

Founded in 1976, the LTDH’s is widely seen as a cornerstone of human rights advocacy in Tunisia and is one of the oldest such groups in the Arab world and Africa. - AFP/Reuters

Oil tanker hijacked off Somalia, says UKMTO

An oil tanker has been hijacked off the coast of Somalia and taken into its territorial waters, the British maritime security agency UKMTO said yesterday.

The development added to risks for navigating in the Red Sea, which has become a more important supply route given the Iranian stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz at the entrance to the Gulf, on the other side of the Arabian Peninsula.

The tanker was seized northeast of the Somali city of Mareeyo on Tuesday, the UKMTO said.

“Military authorities have reported unauthorised persons taking control of the tanker and manoeuvring the vessel 77NM (nautical miles) south within Somali territorial waters,” it said.

Somali authorities did not immediately respond to AFP queries about the hijacking.

Somalia is an unstable Horn of Africa country in which the central government contends with a fractured federation of semi-autonomous states, as well as frequent attacks by the Al Qaeda-linked militant group Al-Shabaab.

It also opposes separatist status for Somaliland, a state whose claim of independence has been recognised only by Israel.

Somalia was the launching point for many pirate attacks in the past, with a peak in 2011.

They have receded since, as the European Union, India and other powers have deployed navy missions to the area. - AFP

Syria starts trials of Assad-era figures today

Trials of prominent figures from the rule of ousted Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad are set to begin this weekend, a justice ministry official told AFP yesterday, starting with a former security official.

“The first trial sessions for symbolic former Syrian regime figures will begin on Sunday” with Atif Najib, who was arrested in January of last year, the official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Najib is the former head of political security in south Syria’s Daraa province, the cradle of the country’s 2011 uprising, and is accused of orchestrating a crackdown there. He is also a cousin of the ousted leader.

The ministry official said trials would follow for Wassim al-Assad – another of the former president’s cousins – and Amjad Youssef, the main suspect in a 2013 massacre who was arrested this week, as well as “pilots who

took part in bombing Syrian cities and towns”.

Syria’s civil war began with a brutal crackdown on pro-democracy protests and spiralled into a 13-year conflict that killed more than half a million people.

Assad’s forces pounded rebel-held areas, including with air strikes and crude barrel bomb attacks, while tens of thousands of people “disappeared”.

Since seizing power in December 2024, Syria’s new authorities have repeatedly announced the arrests of former officials, vowing to provide justice and accountability for Assad-era atrocities.

Assad fled to Russia with only a handful of confidants, abandoning senior officials and security officers, some of whom reportedly went abroad or took refuge in the coastal heartland of Assad’s Alawite minority.

Syrian Justice Minister Mazhar al-Wais has said that the Damascus criminal court was ready “for

the moment that victims have long waited for: the start of public trials”, calling them “part of the transitional justice process”.

Rights groups, activists and the international community have repeatedly emphasised the importance of transitional justice in the war-ravaged country.

The protest movement against Assad began in Daraa on March 15, 2011, after 15 students were arrested for allegedly writing anti-government slogans on the city’s walls.

Residents said the students were tortured, leading to a protest to demand their release that ended in bloodshed.

Najib, blamed for the crackdown, was dismissed soon after.

Wassim al-Assad was arrested last June.

The US Treasury sanctioned him in 2023, saying that he had led a paramilitary unit and was “a key figure in the regional drug trafficking network”. - AFP

US offers \$10mn reward for leader of Iraqi armed group

The US State Department is offering up to \$10mn for information on the leader of the Tehran-backed Iraqi armed group Kataeb Sayyid al-Shuhada (KSS), which Washington designates as a terrorist organisation.


US officials said in a social media post on Thursday that they are seeking information on KSS leader Hashim Fhinyan Rahim al-Saraji, also known as Abu Alaa al-Walayi.

The group has “killed Iraqi civilians and attacked US diplomatic facilities in Iraq, as well as attacking US mili-

tary bases and personnel in Iraq and Syria”, the US said. The post notes “you could be eligible for relocation and a reward” for information on al-Saraji’s whereabouts.

Al-Saraji has a seat within the Co-ordination Framework, the ruling Shia alliance that holds the parliamentary majority.

Iran-backed groups have targeted the US embassy in Iraq’s capital, its diplomatic and logistics facility at Baghdad’s airport, and oil fields operated by foreign companies. - AFP




الأوليا
AL-AWALIA

Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/09	Call-Off Agreement for the Supply of SIEMENS Motor for Qatar Primary Materials Company (“Supplies”)	500 QAR	13,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	3 May 2026 01:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tenderdocs@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID, Copy of commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to: Tenders and Auction Committee, Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenders shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 1038, St. No. 303, Burj Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
- Tender Fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Materials Company, Bank A/C, (4050-65111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar, IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 0000 4050 651111 006). Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the query(ies) in the Form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITI Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the Tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the Items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Material Company’s tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa
- Location of the new building



For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to tender@qpmc.qa or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ www.qpmc.qa

شركة قطر للمواد الأولية (ش.م.ع.ق) مقرها الرئيسي: الجوحة - قطر، منطقة لوسيل، برج مارينا، رقم 1038 | سجل تجاري: 33204 | ص.ب: 22095 | هاتف: 4447 9411 | فاكس: 4447 9411 | قطر
Qatar Primary Materials Company (Q.P.S.C.) | Head Office: Doha-Qatar, Lusail, Marina Tower No.: 1038 | CR No.: 33204 | P.O. Box: 22095 | Tel.: +974 4447 9411
Capital 200,000,000 QAR | Paid Up Capital 200,000,000 QAR | info@qpmc.qa www.qpmc.qa | رقم الحساب المصرفي: 200,000,000 | رأس المال المصرح به: 200,000,000 QAR

Republicans' midterm strategy moves focus away from Trump

Reuters
Washington

With US gas prices up, President Donald Trump's approval ratings down and the Iran war dragging on, Republicans are recalibrating their blueprint ahead of November's midterm elections. The strategy? Seek to tap Trump's turnout power without making the races a referendum on an increasingly unpopular president.

In a closed-door meeting this week with top conservative campaign officials, Trump's political advisers, including White House chief of staff Susie Wiles, political chief James Blair and longtime pollster Tony Fabrizio, outlined a plan for candidates to promote Republicans' tax cuts and inflation-fighting policies, according to four people familiar with the gathering.

But Republicans want to avoid making Trump himself the focus of the campaign, as strategists worry that his sagging political fortunes could hurt candidates in competitive congressional races. Trump's party faces an uphill battle to keep its House of Representatives majority, and a growing risk of losing control of the Senate.

Among some Republican operatives, concern is increasing that Trump's presidency — and political clout — are running out of gas, according to three of the people, plus another seasoned Republican campaign source, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss private meetings and offer candid assessments.

Trump appears mired in a deadlock with Iran, with both military and diplomatic efforts falling far short of denuclearising the Islamic Republic and reopening the Strait of Hormuz after two months of war. Rising gas prices — the national average is near \$4 per gallon — threaten to neutralise new tax policies from Republi-



Donald Trump disembarks Air Force One at Palm Beach International Airport in West Palm Beach, Florida. (Reuters)

cans' "One Big Beautiful Bill Act," the signature legislative achievement of Trump's second term. Only 36% of Americans approve of Trump's job performance, the lowest of his current term, a Reuters/Ipsos poll found. And many Americans, including some Republicans, have some concerns about the 79-year-old president's temperament and mental sharpness following a series of explosive outbursts.

"Are going to try to nationalise the election and say we're a rubber stamp for Trump," a Trump-world political strategist told Reuters. "We have to break out of that and show race by race why we're the better choice."

Inside the president's political operation, enthusiasm remains strong that Trump is an effective messenger. Kiersten Pels, national press secretary for the Republican National Committee, said that Trump would remain "the most powerful driver" of conservative

voter turnout in the midterms, and that Republican candidates are eagerly seeking his endorsement. White House spokeswoman Olivia Wales said Trump was the "unequivocal leader of the Republican party and he is committed to maintaining Republicans' majority in Congress."

Over coffee and pastries in the meeting on Monday held at what was once Trump's luxury Washington hotel, now the Waldorf Astoria, Trump's team asked guests to sign non-disclosure agreements, then predicted Republicans would win a redistricting election the next day in Virginia. The mood was optimistic, the people familiar with the gathering said.

Details of the meeting leaked immediately. A day later, Virginia voters approved the new congressional map Democrats drew to favor their party in November. "If the people framing this approach are confident about Virginia and

they get beat in Virginia, you have to question, are they overconfident about the whole package?" one of the people familiar with the meeting said.

Some Republican insiders are quick to point out that the midterm elections are months away, and that much can change before voters go to the polls. If armed hostilities with Iran slow, gas prices could fall and inflation could cool more broadly.

"The panic is people looking at things right now, but I think the key is to project where it could be over the summer, and it's still very fluid," said David McIntosh, president of the Trump-aligned Club for Growth.

Headed into the election cycle, Republicans planned to promote Trump as the party's standard-bearer, and as the figure who, in his oft-repeated phrase, turned the US into "the hottest country anywhere in the world."

Wiles in December said Repub-

licans would upend the traditional midterm playbook by putting Trump "on the ballot," rather than keeping the sitting president at a distance. Now, the people said, that plan is less attractive. Republicans will look to emphasise local issues rather than allegiance to the president, they added.

"The politics have changed," said another of the people familiar with the meeting. "In January, nationalising the race around him made some sense. "Voters don't feel the president is doing enough to make their lives cheaper, but they still believe Republicans want to do that," the person said.

The Trumpworld strategist added that the Democratic Party's low popularity gives Republicans an effective foil with which to contrast policy ideas.

Trump's faltering support could give Democrats fertile ground to attach Republican candidates to the president's shortcomings, making some conservative campaign operatives skeptical of the White House's political approach.

After campaigning in 2024 as a critic of "stupid wars" and styling himself as a "peace president," Trump is now overseeing the largest US military operation since the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

Critics say Trump's administration showed little consideration of how Iran would respond to the joint US-Israeli attack or the vast economic fallout, including an unprecedented global energy supply shock and the threat of a worldwide financial downturn.

Trump's decision on Tuesday to indefinitely extend what was originally a two-week ceasefire was widely viewed as a retreat, with Tehran maintaining its grip on the Strait of Hormuz and commitment to a nuclear program.

Aaron David Miller, a former Middle East negotiator for both Democratic and Republican administrations, said Iran believes it holds leverage with Hormuz and can also endure economic pain.

In brief

California to decide on voter ID this fall

California voters will decide this fall on whether residents will have to present legal identification in order to vote, the state's chief election official said Friday. The voter ID measure surpassed the threshold of 874,000 signatures required to qualify for a referendum, according to California Secretary of State Shirley Weber.

The issue, boosted by the state's Republican Party, will be put to a vote during California's midterm elections, to be held on November 3. The most populous US state is one of 15 states that do not require voters to present ID when they cast their ballots. Voters must give identification when registering to vote, however.

On the national level, US President Donald Trump has been pushing Republicans in Congress to pass a sweeping overhaul of voting rules — including requiring voter ID — before the midterm elections, called the Safeguard American Voter Eligibility (SAVE) Act.

The bill, which has already passed the House of Representatives, faces steep obstacles in the Senate, where Republicans lack the votes to overcome Democratic opposition. Trump has long claimed widespread voter fraud despite never providing evidence. (AFP)

US confirms its neutrality on Falkland Islands

The United States reiterated its neutrality Friday over the contested sovereignty of the Falkland Islands between Argentina and the United Kingdom, according to a US State Department spokesman.

"Our position on The Islands remains one of neutrality. We acknowledge that there are conflicting claims of sovereignty between Argentina and the UK," the spokesman said, adding that the US recognizes "de facto United Kingdom administration" of the archipelago without taking sides on sovereignty claims. (AFP)

US says two killed in boat strike as toll climbs over 180

The US military said it killed two people in a strike on an alleged drug-trafficking vessel Friday, as the death toll of Washington's campaign against "narco-terrorists" in Latin America climbed to at least 182. The Trump administration allegedly has provided no definitive evidence that the vessels it targets are involved in drug trafficking. International legal experts and rights groups say the strikes likely amount to extrajudicial killings as they have apparently targeted civilians who do not pose an immediate threat to the United States. (AFP)

Cuba to release three Panamanians

Cuba will release three of 10 Panama citizens who were arrested in February for allegedly making "subversive" anti-government signs, Panama officials said.

The decision is "a gesture of humanity and friendship," the statement added. Upon arrest, officials in Havana had said the suspects "had been instructed to enter Cuba for the purpose of making signs with subversive content" and had admitted responsibility. The communist island is on high alert for attack following an economic pressure campaign and repeated threats by US President Donald Trump. (AFP)

All eyes on White House press gala

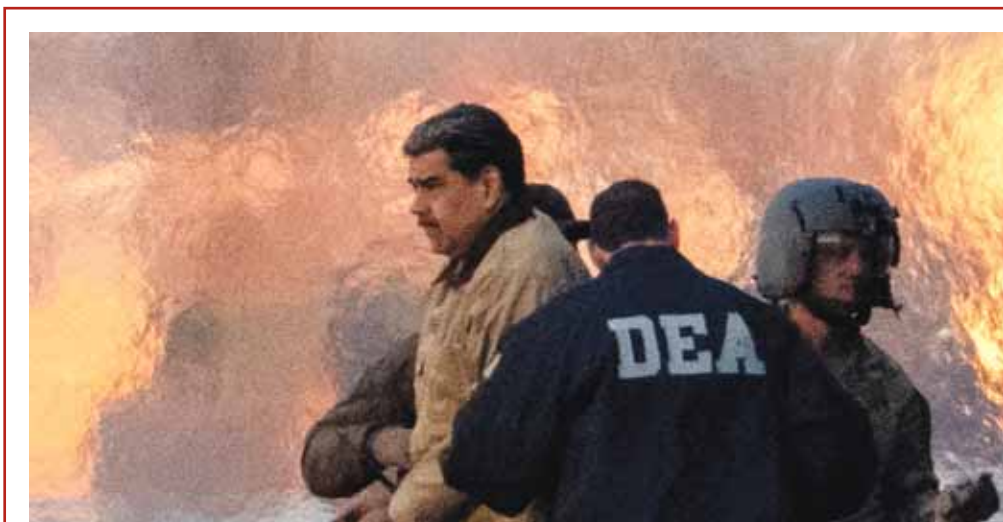
Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump, famous for his clashes with reporters and denunciations of the "fake news" media, was set to attend the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner — his first time as president. Every year since its inception, the WHCA has invited the sitting president to its annual celebration of press freedom. Except for Trump, all have attended at some point during their presidencies. After Trump boycotted the black-tie event in his first term and in 2025, his participation this year has become both the subject of surprise and high anticipation in Washington, particularly given the president's combative, complicated relationship with the press.

He has filed lawsuits against media outlets, dismissed coverage as "fake news" and personally attacked journalists. His administration banned the Associated Press from the White House press pool and restricted reporters' access at the Pentagon, among other moves. Yet, he also provides reporters with far more access than his recent predecessors, regularly speaking to journalists on his cell phone and answering their questions during frequent press appearances. Some within Washington's press corps object to Trump's presence at the Washington Hilton on Saturday. "Trump's entire presidency is, of course, an affront to a free press," HuffPost Editor-in-Chief Whitney Snyder wrote in a column explaining the outlet's decision to skip the dinner.

Over 350 individual former and current journalists, including former network news anchor Dan Rather, as well as groups including the Society of Professional Journalists, signed a letter calling for the WHCA to use the dinner as an opportunity to "forcefully demonstrate opposition to President Trump's efforts to trample freedom of the press."

The letter noted that some journalists plan to wear pocket handkerchiefs or lapel pins featuring the words of the US Constitution's First Amendment, which protects freedom of speech. The WHCA says the dinner reinforces the importance of press freedom.



Captured Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. (Reuters/File Photo)

US allows Venezuela to pay for Maduro legal team

The United States will allow Venezuela to pay for Nicolas Maduro's legal defence, a court filing showed, lifting a roadblock on the ousted leader's trial on drug and other charges in New York. US Treasury sanctions on Venezuela had previously blocked Venezuela — now ruled by Maduro's deputy — from sending funds to pay for attorneys to represent the leftist strongman and his wife.

Both were snatched by US forces in an overnight raid in early January and flown to New York

to face federal criminal charges. The Maduros' defence had sought to have their cases dismissed on grounds that blocking the funding violated the US Constitution's right to counsel of one's choice.

A court filing on Friday by the US prosecutor in New York said the Treasury's "Office of Foreign Assets Control has issued amended licences to counsel for defendants" that authorises them to "receive payments from the Government of Venezuela." The funds must have been made available after March 5, 2026, and

cannot come from Venezuela's US-regulated oil sales.

According to the Friday filing, the defence acknowledges the sanctions waiver and is lifting its motion to dismiss the charges, for now. Maduro has declared himself a "prisoner of war" and pleaded not guilty to the four counts he faces: "narco-terrorism" conspiracy, cocaine importation conspiracy, possession of machine guns and destructive devices and conspiracy to possess machine guns and destructive devices. (AFP)

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, CHAMELI MAYA GOLE

holder of

**NEPAL Passport No. 09850296
QID No. 29152439179**

hereby change my name

from

CHAMELI MAYA GOLE

to

CHAMELI MAYA MUKTAN

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, ADIL ASGAR AKHTHAR HUSAIN

holder of

**INDIA Passport No. N9329933
QID No. 27535641743**

hereby change my name

from

ADIL ASGAR AKHTHAR HUSAIN

to

ADIL ASGAR

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within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, NAGALAKSHMI LAJISH

holder of

**Indian Passport No. C0555205
QID No. 31935601746**

hereby change my name

from

NAGALAKSHMI LAJISH

to

AYRA LINDA LAJISH

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within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

New York sues US govt for funding cancelation

New York sued the Trump administration for withholding more than \$73.5mn in highway funding over the state's decision not to revoke some commercial driver licences. New York Attorney General Letitia James and Governor Kathy Hochul said the legal challenge last Friday sought to reverse the decision by the US Transportation Department last week to cancel the funding after the state refused the federal government's demands to revoke certain driver's licences.

New York says the loss of funding puts New Yorkers at risk, while USDOT said in December an audit found New York had been routinely issuing commercial driver licences to foreign drivers illegally. USDOT did not immediately comment.

"Once again, New York is facing devastating federal cuts for nothing more than political payback," Hochul said. "Ripping away money that goes towards critical safety upgrades on our roads is reckless and it is illegal."

USDOT has also threatened to annually withhold an additional \$147mn in future years. New York said revoking these licences "would disrupt key industries that rely on commercial drivers and could lead to bus driver shortages affecting schools and families." (Reuters)

Deportation plea: Trump says judges have no role

Reuters
New York

Among President Donald Trump's main arguments at the US Supreme Court defending his moves to rescind humanitarian protections that shield hundreds of thousands of immigrants from deportation, one stands out: Courts cannot review his administration's decisions in this area.

Federal judges in New York and Washington, DC, barred Trump's administration from stripping from more than 350,000 Haitians and 6,000 Syrians a legal status provided by the US government that protects them from deportation. Citing widespread violence, crime, terrorism and kidnapping, the administration currently warns against traveling to either of these countries for any reason.

The justices are due to hear arguments on Wednesday in the administration's appeals of those rulings as it defends former Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem's actions to terminate Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for people from Haiti and Syria.

Revoking TPS and other humanitarian protections is part of Trump's broader crackdown on legal and illegal immigration since he returned to office in January 2025. When it took up the matter, the Supreme Court did not act on the administration's request to immediately end TPS protections for Haitians and Syrians while the case plays out.

WARS AND DISASTERS

Under a US law called the Immigration Act of 1990, TPS is a designation that allows migrants from countries stricken by war,

natural disaster or other catastrophes to live and work in the United States while it is unsafe for them to return to their home countries.

The legal dispute could have wide implications, affecting 1.3mn immigrants from all 17 TPS-designated countries, according to the plaintiffs. Trump's administration has sought to rescind the protections for 13 of those countries so far.

Lower courts have ruled against the administration's TPS terminations, finding that officials failed to follow protocols required under the Immigration Act to assess conditions in a country before revoking its designation.

Trump's Justice Department disputes those points and makes a broader argument that could doom challenges going forward, asserting that courts cannot second-guess its TPS decisions in the first place. "The TPS statute unambiguously bars judicial review of claims that attack the secretary's TPS determinations, including the procedures and analysis underlying those determinations," the department said in a Supreme Court filing.

In this and other matters, Trump has asserted an expansive view of presidential powers and a limited view of judicial purview.

Ahilan Arulanantham, a lawyer for the Syrian TPS recipients who challenged the administration's actions, said "a huge amount is at stake" in the legal fight. "If the government is correct, then they can terminate TPS without conducting any country conditions review at all — they can do it for reasons that are completely arbitrary," Arulanantham said.

The administration's actions overall do not reflect a federal agency's reasoned decision-making

The legal dispute could have wide implications, affecting 1.3mn immigrants from all 17 TPS-designated countries, according to the plaintiffs

ing but rather a concerted effort to end TPS entirely, Arulanantham, co-director of the UCLA School of Law's Center for Immigration Law and Policy, told reporters during a conference call.

"This really is about a war on this congressional statute," Arulanantham added. The Supreme Court, which has a 6-3 conservative majority, has granted the Republican president's requests to immediately implement various hardline immigration policies while legal challenges continue to play out in courts. For instance, it let Trump deport immigrants to countries where they have no ties and let federal agents target people for deportation based in part on their race or language.

FALSE CLAIMS

Trump, who sought but failed to rescind TPS protections during his first term as president, made clear while running for reelection he would try again. For instance, Trump vowed to revoke TPS for Haitian immigrants after making false and derogatory claims that they were eating household pets in Ohio.

Noem, a Trump appointee, moved quickly to act on TPS designations for countries, including on February 1, 2025, to end the protection for hundreds of thou-

sands of Venezuelans. TPS recipients, some of whom have been in the United States for years and could face separation from jobs and families, have said it is cruel to consider sending them back to countries where they risk danger and even death.

"Temporary Protected Status is, by definition, temporary. It was never intended to be a pathway to permanent status or legal residency, no matter how badly left-wing organizations want it to be," White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson said in a statement to Reuters.

During Democrat Barack Obama's presidency, Haitians were first given TPS in 2010 after a devastating earthquake, and Syrians in 2012 after the country plunged into a civil war. The US government repeatedly extended the statuses amid continuing crises in those countries.

Noem moved to revoke TPS for Syria last September and for Haiti last November, stating the designations were contrary to US national interest in part due to difficulties screening and vetting migrants from those countries. Noem's TPS decisions were not at issue when Trump fired her in March. Groups of Syrian and Haitian TPS holders filed class action lawsuits alleging the termination notices were mere pretext for the administration's plan to end existing designations. The lawsuit said Noem did not comply with the TPS law's procedural mandate to consult other federal agencies concerning conditions inside a country before revoking its protective status. The plaintiffs said the consultation consisted of a State Department official replying to a Homeland Security Department official's email to say there



US Supreme Court building in Washington, DC. (Reuters/File Photo)

were "no foreign policy concerns" with ending the designations.

JUDICIAL REVIEW

Trump's Justice Department has said rulings backing the plaintiffs in the cases are "an invitation for courts to referee interagency discussions, demand agency verbosity and gauge how much consultation is enough."

But that defence would be unnecessary if the court accepts the Justice Department's bolder argument that, in any event, the administration's actions are shielded from scrutiny. Leaning on a section of the 1990 statute that states there is no judicial review "of any determination" with respect to giving, extending or ending TPS, it said that includes not only final outcomes but also the decisions behind them. In a written filing, it warned against "installing district courts as the ultimate foreign-policy superintendents of temporary status." The argument that courts have no role in reviewing the legality of certain actions by a presidential administration is a familiar one for Trump. His administration has made it in numerous challenges to his policies, part of a broader push against the power of judges, according to a Reuters analysis.

The plaintiffs said the administration's position would insult even unlawful actions. They contend the statute lets courts scrutinise the compliance of fed-

eral officials with statutory procedural requirements. They also cite a 2019 Supreme Court ruling that blocked Trump from adding a citizenship question to the national census, a move opponents called a Republican effort to deter immigrants from taking part in the decadal population count. The court decided that the stated reasons by administration officials for adding the question were pretextual and contrived.

'HOSTILITY TO NON-WHITES'

In the Haiti case, US District Judge Ana Reyes decided the administration's action likely was motivated in part by "racial animus," violating the US Constitution's Fifth Amendment promise of equal protection under the law.

Reyes referenced statements by Trump and Noem, including the former homeland security secretary's social media post labeling immigrants killers and leeches.

"Plaintiffs charge that Secretary Noem preordained her termination decision and did so because of hostility to nonwhite immigrants. This seems substantially likely," Reyes wrote. The Justice Department disputes any racial discrimination, saying no statement by Trump or Noem mentions race. It said the Supreme Court should apply its precedents offering deference to the administration on immigration, foreign policy and national security matters.

Mexico claims slain US agents operated illegally

AFP
Mexico City

The Mexican government said Saturday that two US agents — reportedly CIA personnel — who died last week in connection with a drug raid had not been authorised to operate in the country.

The April 19 incident in the northern state of Chihuahua, which also left two Mexican officials dead, has created fresh diplomatic friction between the United States and Mexico, and heaped political pressure on President Claudia Sheinbaum.

Immigration records showed one of the two agents entered the country as a "visitor" while the other used a "diplomatic passport," Mexico's security ministry said in a statement. "Neither had formal accreditation to participate in operational activities within national territory," the statement said.

Several US media outlets have reported that the two Americans, who have not been identified, worked for the Central Intelligence Agency. The US ambassador in Mexico has said they were US

embassy employees. The security ministry's statement noted that Mexican law forbids foreign agents from participating in operations on Mexico's soil. Discussions about the incident are being conducted with relevant local authorities and the US Embassy, it said. Earlier this week, the Chihuahua state prosecutor said the Americans had been returning from a raid of clandestine drug labs when their car, part of five-vehicle convoy, skidded off the road and into a ravine.

The convoy was also carrying soldiers and members of the Chihuahua State Investigation Agency. The US agents killed were "instructor officers" who "were carrying out training tasks" as part of anti-drug cooperation, according to prosecutor Cesar Jauregui.

On-the-ground cooperation between American law enforcement and Mexican security forces is historically rare and a politically sensitive topic in the country.

The Mexican government is committed to maintaining a "close, serious and respectful relationship" with the US government for the benefit of the security of both countries, the security ministry said.

Riding the internet



A horse is seen carrying a Starlink antenna to provide internet during a march along the banks of the Rio Indio to protest the Rio Indio project in Limon de Chagres, Colon province, Panama, yesterday. The Rio Indio reservoir project in Panama is a strategic priority for the Panama Canal Authority (ACP) to secure the supply of drinking water to more than 2mn people and to ensure the Canal's operations over the next 50 years. However, it is estimated that the construction will result in displacement of around 2,000 residents of Limon de Chagres. (AFP)

Truckers in Argentina end protest at Quequen port

Reuters
Buenos Aires

Argentine truckers ended a protest that had paralyzed the Quequen grain port after reaching an agreement with farmers for a 16% freight rate increase, the port authority said on Friday.

Activity at the terminal began to normalize following the end of the costly protest, a port source told Reuters.

As part of the deal, truckers were successful in their demand to cap administrative fees charged by grain collectors and cargo providers at 2%.

Trucker association ATCADE also confirmed the deal to Reuters.

The drivers, who had been seeking higher rates to offset costs, had blocked access roads to the hub, which handles about 20% of Argentina's soybean exports.

The Argentine Chamber of Private Commercial Ports said earlier this week that the protests, which also affected the port of Bahia Blanca, had stalled exports worth approximately \$450 million.

Argentina is the world's third-largest exporter of soybeans and the top global supplier of processed soy meal and oil.

US State Dept orders global warning on AI thefts in IP row

Reuters
Washington

The US State Department has ordered a global push to bring attention to what it says are widespread efforts by Chinese companies, including AI startup DeepSeek, to steal Intellectual Property (IP) from US artificial intelligence labs, according to a diplomatic cable seen by Reuters.

The cable said its purpose was to "warn of the risks of utilising AI models distilled from US proprietary AI models, and lay the groundwork for potential follow-up and outreach by the US government." Distillation is the process of training smaller AI models using output from larger, more expensive ones as part of an effort to lower the costs of training a powerful new AI tool.

DeepSeek, the Chinese startup whose low-cost AI model stunned



The DeepSeek logo is seen in this illustration taken on January 29, 2025. (Reuters)

the world last year, on Friday launched a preview of a highly anticipated new model adapted for Huawei chip technology, underlining China's growing autonomy

in the sector. The State Department, DeepSeek and the Chinese Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The cable also mentioned Chinese AI firms Moonshot AI and MiniMax. Neither company immediately responded to a request for comment.

This week, the White House made similar accusations, which the Chinese Embassy in Washington called "baseless allegations," adding that Beijing "attaches great importance to the protection of intellectual property rights."

The cable, dated Friday and sent to diplomatic and consular posts around the world, instructs diplomatic staff to speak to their foreign counterparts about "concerns over adversaries' extraction and distillation of USAI models."

"A separate demarche request and message has been sent to Beijing for raising with China," the document states. The cable, which has not been previously reported, signals the Trump administration is taking seriously the growing concerns about Chinese distillation of US AI models.

"AI models developed from surreptitious, unauthorized distillation campaigns enable foreign actors to release products that ap-

pear to perform comparably on select benchmarks at a fraction of the cost but do not replicate the full performance of the original system," the cable said, adding that the campaigns also "deliberately strip security protocols from the resulting models and undo mechanisms that ensure those AI models are ideologically neutral and truth-seeking."

OpenAI warned US lawmakers that Chinese artificial intelligence startup DeepSeek was targeting the ChatGPT maker and the nation's leading AI companies to replicate models and use them for its own training, Reuters reported in February.

The memo and follow-up cable, released just weeks before US President Donald Trump is set to visit Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing, promise to raise tensions in a long-running tech war between the rival superpowers, which had been lowered by a détente brokered last October.



Malaysia appoints former judge as new anti-graft chief

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia appointed yesterday a former High Court judge as the country's new anti-graft czar to replace its outgoing chief who was dogged by allegations of abuse of power and illegal shareholding.

The appointment of Abdul Halim Aman comes as Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's government faces increased scrutiny on promises made to tackle corruption in the Southeast Asian nation.

"The government is confident that with his extensive experience and high integrity, (Abdul) will be able to strengthen governance, enhance public confidence and intensify anti-corruption efforts in the interest of the nation," Chief Secretary to the Government, Shamsul Azri Abu Bakar said yesterday.

Abdul is set to replace Azam Baki who has been at the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's (MACC) helm since 2020.

Azam has faced several allegations during his tenure, including

that he improperly held shares in a public listed company.

The government ordered a probe into the allegations but has made no public findings.

The MACC — a federal agency set up in 2009 to probe and prosecute graft in the public and private sectors — has powers to summon individuals, search and seize property and arrest suspects.

Azam and the MACC have denied all allegations of misconduct.

Malaysia is still battling the shadow of the massive IMDB corruption scandal that saw top officials loot billions from state funds to splurge on luxury assets over a decade ago.

The scandal shook Malaysian politics, contributing to the 2018 downfall of the ruling coalition that had governed since independence in 1957.

Anwar was elected in 2022 on a strong anti-graft platform, calling the IMDB scandal "state-level kleptocracy".

But a perceived soft stance on Azam has led to unease and growing tension within Anwar's own party and with other major partners in the country's ruling coalition.

Two giant pandas from China headed to Zoo Atlanta in US

AFP
Beijing

Two giant pandas from China are headed to Atlanta on a new 10-year conservation deal.

Pandas Ping Ping, a male, and Fu Shuang, a female, will live at Zoo Atlanta, China Wildlife Conservation Association said in a statement Friday.

The organisation signed the research agreement with the United States zoo last year, it said, noting the deal continues "the 'panda bond' shared by the people of both nations for more than 20 years".

The panda pair come from the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in southwestern Sichuan province, according to the statement.

"Zoo Atlanta is delighted and honoured to yet again be trusted as stewards of this treasured species," the zoo's president Raymond B. King said in a statement.

"We can't wait to meet Ping Ping and Fu Shuang." The zoo welcomed its first

The panda news comes as US President Donald Trump is expected to meet his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing next month

giant pandas Yang Yang and Lun Lun when they arrived in 1999.

That pair produced seven cubs over a 25-year agreement before returning to China with their two youngest in 2024, when that deal expired.

The US side has prepared for Ping Ping and Fu Shuang's arrival by renovating their habitat to make it "more comfortable and more safe", the Chinese association said.

The panda news comes as

US President Donald Trump is

expected to meet his Chinese

counterpart Xi Jinping in Bei-

jing next month.

A Chinese foreign ministry

spokesman said on Friday the

new deal "will contribute to

the well-being of giant pan-

das... and the friendship be-

tween the people of China and

the US".

'South Korea secures 74.62mn barrels of crude oil for May'

Reuters
Seoul

South Korea has secured 74.62mn barrels of crude oil for May, equivalent to about 87% of its average monthly imports last year, the presidential Blue House said on Friday, as Seoul seeks to stabilise energy supplies amid conflict in the Middle East.

The country has also reduced its reliance on crude imports from the Middle East to 56% from 69% by increasing shipments from the US and Africa, presidential chief of staff Kang Hoon-sik said.

Kang said the government viewed stronger-than-expected first quarter economic growth as evidence of Seoul's resilience despite geopolitical risks from the Middle East conflict, citing robust gains in semiconductor production and exports as well as swift government efforts to cushion energy supply disruptions.

South Korea's economy expanded 1.7% quarter-on-quarter and 3.6% year-on-year in

the first quarter, its fastest pace since the third quarter of 2020.

On energy supplies, Kang said the government was not overly concerned about crude oil availability in May, but warned that industry was still experiencing supply concerns for naphtha and downstream products, including plastics and plastic bags.

"The government is closely monitoring supply conditions for key materials on a daily basis and is preparing measures in advance by forecasting conditions one month and three months ahead," he said.

Shipments of about 2.1mn metric tonnes of naphtha, secured during his recent trip to Kazakhstan and the Middle East as a special envoy, will arrive in South Korea gradually starting in late April, which is expected to improve supply conditions from next month, he said.

Kang also said that concerns remained over asphalt supplies, which are refined from crude oil, prompting the government to review adjusting construction schedules to mitigate potential disruption.

Philippine president to make Japan state visit

AFP
Manila

Ferdinand Marcos will make the first state visit to Japan by a Philippine president in over a decade next month, the presidential palace said Friday, at a time of deepening security cooperation between the two countries.

Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako will receive Marcos and his wife Louise during the May 26-29 trip, with the Filipino leader also set to meet Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, the palace statement said.

Marcos and Takaichi "are expected to discuss the future trajectory of the Philippines-Japan Strengthened Strategic Partnership" as well as international developments, "especially with regard to energy and food security, and maritime security", it said.

The World War II foes have been strengthening military ties in recent years, with Tokyo supplying coast guard ships and radar systems and signing a reciprocal access deal that allowed Japanese troops to take part for the first time in annual US-Philippines military exercises.

About 1,400 Japanese personnel are currently in the Philippines for the sprawling, 19-day exercise known as Balikatan, or "Shoulder to Shoulder".

Tokyo has also been a key financier of Manila's efforts to modernise patrol craft and maritime surveillance systems used in



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. (Reuters/File photo)

the disputed South China Sea.

China claims nearly the entirety of the strategic waterway despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis.

In February, US, Japanese and Philippine aircraft patrolled over the Bashi Channel that separates the Philippines from Taiwan, which China considers part of its territory, to test what Manila called their "ability to operate seamlessly together in complex maritime environments".

Little more than 100 kilometres (60 miles) separates the Philippines and self-ruled Taiwan, which China has not ruled out taking by force.

Manila said Marcos will also meet with Japanese business groups and members of the Filipino community.

His state visit would be the first by an incumbent Filipino leader since Benigno Aquino's trip to Tokyo in 2015.

Firefighters in Japan struggle to contain blazes as over 3,000 people evacuated

Reuters
Otsuchi, Japan

More than 1,000 firefighters in northern Japan battled to contain two wildfires for a fourth straight day on Saturday, as the blazes pushed closer to residential areas and forced more than 3,000 residents to evacuate.

The combined area affected amounts to the third largest recorded in Japan, where forest fires have intensified in recent years.

The first fire broke out on Wednesday in a mountainous area and then a second nearby threatened residential districts in the town of Otsuchi in Iwate Prefecture.

Hilly terrain, dry weather and

winds are hampering containment efforts, a fire department official told reporters.

By Saturday, the fires had scorched about 730 hectares (1,800 acres), prompting evacuation orders covering 1,541 households and 3,233 people - about a third of Otsuchi's population.

The town is scarred by the memory of one of Japan's worst disasters, the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami when it lost nearly a tenth of its population.

"Even during the 2011 disaster, this area didn't burn. There was a tsunami but we had no fire here," said Taeko Kajiki, 76, a former nurse, who was among those who have been evacuated since Friday.

She said she had stayed up all night watching the red glow of



Firefighters work as wildfires continue in Otsuchi, Iwate Prefecture, Japan, yesterday. (Reuters)

the flames and had packed her bankbook and medical cards as well as the turtle she has kept as a pet since 2010.

The firefighters on the ground were supported by helicopters from several prefectures and Japan's Self Defense Forces, which carried out aerial water drops to try to halt the advance of the fires.

"With the land so dry, fires keep igniting. We put one out, then race to extinguish another, over and over again," said Masashi Kikuchi, a 37-year-old volunteer firefighter, who moved to a house on higher ground after losing his home to the 2011 tsunami.

Eight buildings, including one residential home, have been damaged or destroyed so far, though no injuries or fatalities have been reported, authorities said.

"I can't let people lose their homes again after losing them

once to the tsunami," Otsuchi Mayor Kozo Hirano told reporters. He said the town would seek help from other authorities and provide services, such as hot baths, to help ease stress among residents.

While Japan has experienced relatively few wildfires compared with other parts of the globe, climate change has increased their frequency, especially as the early spring months before the humid rainy season have been hot, dry and with winds that can whip up flames.

The Japan Meteorological Agency said no rain was forecast for the region over the coming week.

According to official figures, the amount of land on fire around Otsuchi is second only to the major forest fire in Ofunato in 2025, which consumed about 3,370 hectares, and the Kushiro fire in 1992, which burned 1,030 hectares.

Russian parliament Speaker in North Korea

The Speaker of Russia's parliament, a close ally of President Vladimir Putin, arrived in North Korea yesterday to attend an event to commemorate Pyongyang's deployment of troops to help Moscow in the Ukraine conflict, Tass news agency reported.

Vyacheslav Volodin, Speaker of Russia's Duma, was welcomed by Jo Yong-won, Russian news agency Tass said. Jo is North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's close political confidant and the head of the Supreme People's Assembly.

North Korea has sent an estimated 14,000 troops to fight with Russian forces against Ukraine. More than 6,000 of them have been killed, according to South Korean, Ukrainian and Western officials.

North Korea is expected to hold a ceremony to mark the "liberation of Kursk" a year after Moscow declared the region had been recaptured from Ukraine.

North Korea's Kim and Putin met in June 2024 and signed a comprehensive strategic treaty that includes a mutual defence pact. The two countries had rapidly developed diplomatic and military ties since 2023. (Reuters)

Myanmar imposes martial law in 60 townships

Myanmar's junta leader-turned-president Min Aung Hlaing has issued new emergency ordinances to impose military control in 60 townships, a move aimed at tightening security in regions still mired in conflict despite the transition to civilian rule.

The ordinances cover 60 townships across Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Shan and Rakhine States as well as Saging, Magway and Mandalay regions - areas where the military had imposed restrictions and curfews following the 2021 coup.

The official announcement cites the need to "end armed terrorism" and restore "the rule of law" as the main justifications for the 90-day emergency period, according to a notification published by state-owned media on Friday. All executive and judicial authority in these areas is transferred to Myanmar's new military chief Ye Win Oo for a period of 90 days, according to a second notification published in the Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper.

The ordinances mark the first major move by Min Aung Hlaing to solidify control over war-ravaged territories since becoming president in early April after a widely criticised election won by a military-backed party. (Reuters)

Under blackout threat, Wikimedia reaches compromise with Indonesia

AFP
Jakarta

The Wikimedia Foundation said yesterday it has found a compromise with the Indonesian government, which had threatened to block Wikipedia over domestic registration rules the foundation feared were overly invasive.

Under a 2020 regulation, all electronic system providers (PSEs) must register in Indonesia for what the government calls legal and user protection purposes before making their services available.

Critics have pointed to a provision that requires registered PSEs to take down content deemed as "causing public unrest and disturbing public order" as a free speech restriction.

The Wikimedia Foundation, which owns and operates Wikipedia, had previously said the provision "departs from international human rights norms".

In a statement sent to AFP yesterday, the foundation said it had a "very constructive meeting"

earlier in the week with the Communication and Digital Affairs ministry, during which it explained its "non-profit mission" and "emphasised its commitment to protecting user privacy and security".

It said the ministry informed it that the registration requirement was administrative in nature.

"With assurances that there would be no unlawful content takedown orders or data disclosure requirements that could put the Wikimedia community-led model at risk, the Foundation is working constructively towards the administrative next steps," the statement said.

The ministry did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

The government last week gave the foundation seven days to register or face its services, including Wikipedia Indonesia, being blocked in the country of around 284 million people.

Last October, Indonesia briefly suspended TikTok's local operating licence after the social media platform refused to share information sought by Jakarta about violent anti-government protests earlier in the year.

Mass cooking event in Indonesia



Participants pour coconut milk into bamboo tubes as they prepare to cook lemong, a traditional glutinous rice dish stuffed into bamboo tubes and filled with coconut milk which are then placed over an open fire, during a mass cooking event in Blang Pidie, Indonesia's Aceh province yesterday. (AFP)

ANZAC day commemoration in London



Standard bearers take part in a Service of Commemoration and Thanksgiving to commemorate ANZAC day, at Westminster Abbey in central London yesterday. Anzac Day commemorates Australian and New Zealand casualties and veterans of conflicts and marks the anniversary of the landings in the Dardanelles on April 25, 1915 that would signal the start of the Gallipoli Campaign during the First World War. (AFP)

Three killed in clashes in India's troubled northeast

AFP
New Delhi

Gun battles between rival ethnic groups in India's troubled northeastern Manipur state killed three men, police said, the latest unrest in the far-flung region.

Manipur has seen periodic clashes for nearly three years between the predominantly Hindu Meitei majority and the mainly Christian Kuki community in which more than 250 people have been killed.

"In a heavy exchange of fire... three individuals sustained fatal bullet injuries," Manipur police said in a statement late Friday.

The clashes took place at Mullan village in Ukhrul district, and police did not specify which community the men came from.

"Security measures have been enhanced in the area to prevent further escalation of violence," police said.

"Operations are still underway."

Longstanding enmity between the Meitei and Kuki communities revolves around competition for

land and public jobs.

Rights activists have accused local leaders of exacerbating ethnic divisions for political gain.

Unrest erupted in 2023, when around 60,000 people were forced to flee their homes, according to government figures.

Trouble eased, but earlier this month four people, including two children, were killed during an attack by a Kuki group, and a Meitei mob later stormed a paramilitary camp.

On Thursday, 249 Indians from the northeastern states of Manipur and Mizoram — from the Bnei Menashe community who claim descent from one of the "lost tribes" of Israel — arrived in Tel Aviv.

They were the first group to arrive since the Israeli government decided in November to fund the immigration of around 6,000 members of the community.

Their oral history tells of a centuries-long exodus through Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet and China, all the while adhering to certain Jewish religious practices, such as circumcision.

In India, they were converted to Christianity by 19th-century missionaries.

47 Maoists surrender: Indian police

Indian police said yesterday that 47 Maoist rebels have surrendered, nearly a month after the country was declared free of the decades-long insurgency.

India has pushed a campaign for the past two years against the last remnants of the Naxalite rebellion, named after a village in the Himalayan foothills where the Maoist-inspired insurgency began nearly six decades ago.

Police in the southern state of Telangana said that 47 Maoist members "chose to join the mainstream", adding that "almost all remaining underground key leaders... have now been neutralised".

India's Home Minister Amit Shah declared the country Naxal-free on March 30.

More than 12,000 rebels, soldiers and civilians died in the conflict since a handful of villagers rose up against their feudal lords in 1967.

At its peak in the mid-2000s, the rebellion operated in swathes of the country with an estimated 15,000-20,000 fighters, but it was drastically weakened in recent years.

Police have appealed to remaining members to also lay down their arms.

Authorities have said that surrendered rebels are being given new civilian identities through vocational training and rehabilitation programmes.

The 47 surrendered Maoists will be paid a total of \$159,000 as part of their rehabilitation, roughly \$3,400 each. But a daunting task remains of clearing hundreds of crude landmines planted by the rebels along forest tracks.

In the past, the Maoists would say they were fighting for the rights of marginalised Indigenous people in the mineral-rich forests of central India (AFP).

Malaysia offers rare earths alternative to China

AFP
Gebeng, Malaysia

Workers load tonnes of rare earth minerals into bags ready for shipping at a refinery in eastern Malaysia, fuelling the global pushback against China's grip on the critical sector.

Rare earths are a key ingredient in products ranging from smartphones to fighter jets, electric cars and wind turbines — and increasingly for hardware powering the artificial intelligence (AI) boom.

Global jitters about Beijing's dominance as a rare earths producer have kicked Australian mining giant Lynas into action, expanding its portfolio of rare earths refined in Malaysia as it hopes to boost its approximately 10% share of the market.

China makes up the other 90% of the world's market, stoking fears about Beijing's ability to choke global supplies.

"China has built its success on executing a clear industrial plan — it takes us to be serious about it,"

Lynas company's chief executive Amanda Lacaze told AFP.

Pushing against Chinese dominance will "take discipline, focus and clear planning", she said during a rare press visit to the company's sprawling chemical plant in Malaysia's Gebeng industrial hub, near the coastal city of Kuantan.

The Lynas facility in Gebeng is now the world's largest single rare earths processing plant.

Since 2012, the facility has been refining pure metals from raw materials mined in Western Australia, in an intensive and complicated separation procedure.

It currently handles 11 of the 17 rare earths — a number that is increasing — with plans to expand even further to include "heavies" such as yttrium and lutetium, used for lasers, medical imaging and cancer therapy.

From the plant, the bags are transported to Port Klang on the other side of Malaysia, and leave on a ship for Japan, where the metal powders are turned into high-performance magnets used in ad-

vanced industries such as electronics and aerospace.

Most bags contain NdPr, short for neodymium-praseodymium, a rare-earth mixture and key magnet material, which sells for around \$100,000 per bag.

Smaller quantities of other separated heavy rare earth oxides like dysprosium, terbium and samarium are sold in 25kg tins.

Rare earths are so vital for the global economy that they have become a flashpoint in the blistering trade war between the US and China.

Beijing leveraged its grip on the precious minerals in spectacular fashion last October, reaching a deal with Washington to pause the trade war after its curbs on exports rattled markets and snarled supply chains.

Supply of rare earths is expected to be a key discussion point at an upcoming summit between US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing set for mid-May.

But the challenge for Lynas is not

British fighters scramble after drone crashes in Romania

AFP
Bucharest

Two British fighter jets scrambled and Romanian authorities yesterday evacuated more than 200 people from a zone where a drone crashed after Russian strikes in neighbouring Ukraine, authorities said.

Romania, a Nato member, has repeatedly seen its airspace violated and drone fragments fall on its territory since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

But President Nicușor Dan said: "This is the first incident where Romanian property has actually been damaged, a threshold we take very seriously."

Foreign Minister Oana Toiu summoned the Russian ambassador, a statement said.

Romania's defence ministry

said in a statement the incident happened that after "Russian forces resumed drone attacks against civilian and infrastructure targets" in Ukraine.

"A drone crashed in a populated area," with a "possible explosive charge," emergency services said in a separate statement.

No casualties were reported, but an electricity pole and a house outbuilding were damaged, authorities said, adding that gas supplies had been cut as a precautionary measure.

Two British Royal Air Force Typhoon fighter jets based at Borcea in Romania as part of a Nato force scrambled after the incident, the defence ministry said.

Britain's defence ministry denied reports, however, that the planes shot down Russian drones.

In 2025, Romania adopted a law authorising it to shoot down drones that violate its airspace,



This video grab made from handout footage shows smoke billowing in to the air during the controlled explosion of the remains of a crashed drone in a populated area next to Lake Brates, on the outskirts of the eastern Romanian city of Galati, yesterday. (AFP)

but no such action has been taken so far.

Nepal demolishes squatter settlements in Kathmandu

AFP
Kathmandu

Nepali authorities began demolishing informal settlements yesterday home to thousands of people along river banks of the capital, despite criticism from rights groups.

Squatters have been living for decades on the banks of the Bagmati river and its tributaries which crisscross the Kathmandu valley. Many live in flimsy shelters of wood and sheet metal shacks.

Under a directive from newly elected Prime Minister Balendra Shah, bulldozers rolled in early Saturday with a heavy police presence to clear out the area.

"We are clearing out the settlements today in this area," Bhishnu Prasad Joshi, chief of Kathmandu Metropolitan city police told AFP.

Joshi said that authorities had told residents to evacuate by Friday evening ahead of the demolition.

"We are here to assist them if they do not have any place to go."

The eviction took place peacefully, with residents carrying bags and loading furniture and belongings into small trucks.

"I don't know if I should live or die, because I don't have a place to stay right now," said Puspa Kaasai, 65, who called the area her



Nepali authorities demolish squatter settlements along the banks of the river Bagmati in Kathmandu yesterday. (AFP)

home for three decades.

Shah defended the demolition, writing on social media on Friday that it was important to remove citizens from "unorganised and flood-prone" areas.

"This government will provide a permanent solution to this problem that has been going on for years," he said, adding that genuine squatters will be distributed land.

Shah also said the relocation

would help with Kathmandu's drainage system, improving the state of rivers that are choked with rubbish and polluted.

"It's OK for me, the government has done it. Staying here, you have to fear floods, so I think in some ways it's a good decision," another resident Dambar Bahadur Tamang, 38, said.

Amnesty International said that forced evictions reflect "a

dangerous erosion of lawful governance and signals an increasingly authoritarian approach."

"Evicting families without prior verification, meaningful consultation, or guaranteed alternative housing undermines that commitment and risks turning a governance challenge into a preventable human rights crisis," Nirajan Thapaliya, Director of Amnesty International Nepal, said on Friday.

Australia refuses repatriation help for citizens in Syria camp

AFP
Sydney

Australia refused to help repatriate citizens related to suspected Islamic State yesterday, following a report that some Australian families are trying to return home from a camp in Syria.

National broadcaster ABC said four Australian women and nine of their children and grandchildren had left the Roj camp in north-eastern Syria on Friday, citing the camp director.

Syrian forces were taking them to Damascus to help them fly back to Australia, it said.

"The Australian Government is not and will not repatriate people from Syria," a government spokesperson said in a statement to AFP.

"Our security agencies have been monitoring — and continue to monitor — the situation in Syria to ensure they are prepared for any Australians seeking to return to Australia," the spokesperson added.

"People in this cohort need to know that if they have committed

a crime and if they return to Australia they will be met with the full force of the law."

The government's "overriding priority" was the safety of Australians and the protection of Australia's national interests, the spokesperson said.

The group is among 34 Australians at the camp who failed in an attempt to return home in February, reportedly due to a co-ordination problem with the Syrian government.

At the time, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the govern-

ment would not provide them with any support.

The repatriation of the families of Islamic State members is controversial in Australia, with some politicians warning they pose a threat to national security.

The humanitarian organisation Save the Children Australia filed a lawsuit in 2023 on behalf of 11 women and 20 children at the Roj camp, seeking their repatriation.

But the Federal Court ruled against Save the Children, saying the Australian government did not control their detention in Syria.



Tonnes of packaged rare earth minerals ready for shipping from a Malaysian plant to loosen China's grip on supplies of the critical elements. (AFP)

of radioactive by-products. Under the latest agreement, the government said the company must now halt all activities that produce radioactive waste within five years of its renewed operating licence.

Lynas however, says its by-product from rare earth refining produces a non-toxic, non-radioactive magnesium-rich gypsum and an iron phosphate with a very low level of naturally occurring radioactive material.

Existing by-product is already stored in a permanent disposal facility "constructed and managed to

ensure the material does not impact on the surrounding environment," the company said.

Lynas also has ambitions to diversify further into producing rare earths as catalysts over the next decade.

Rare earths are particularly important as a low-cost catalyst in the hydrogen supply chain, for instance, in the recovery process when the gas is transported long-haul as ammonia.

"In 10 years from now, I expect this to be a substantial part of the business," Le Roux said.



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GULF TIMES

How DoJ went from probing Powell to dropping the case

The US Federal Reserve's years-long renovation of two historic buildings along the National Mall to be used as part of its headquarters in Washington exploded into political controversy about a year ago, with a 'New York Post' report on the project's "lavish" features and nearly \$2.5bn price tag.

The report came amid President Donald Trump's escalating attacks on the Fed and Fed Chair Jerome Powell for not slashing interest rates as Trump wanted. It prompted an immediate call from Elon Musk, then head of the Trump administration's Department of Government Efficiency, for an investigation, and accusations of wasteful spending by Republican lawmakers like Senate Banking Committee chair Tim Scott.

Scott and several other members of the Senate Banking Committee on June 24, 2025, sent Fed Chair Jerome Powell a letter asking him to justify the cost of the renovations, which they said included "rooftop garden terraces, ornate water features, new elevators that drop board members off directly in their VIP dining suite ... rooftop Italian beehives" among other amenities.

The next day Powell testifies before the Senate Banking Committee that reports of such luxury amenities are inaccurate. Documents show the Fed's current budget for the two buildings is about \$1.1bn more than it had originally allocated in 2020, with most of the increase attributable to rising costs for material and labour amid the post-pandemic surge in inflation.

Documents show the Fed's budget for the two buildings is about \$1.1bn more than it had originally allocated in 2020, with most of the increase attributable to rising costs for material and labour amid the post-pandemic surge in inflation

Office of Management and Budget director Russell Vought demanded Powell explain the building renovations and suggests the Fed did not follow proper approval procedures. Powell provides a detailed explanation of the renovations in a letter to Scott and the Senate Banking Committee's top Democrat Elizabeth Warren. The Fed also posts a series of FAQs on its website detailing the costs, and Powell asks the Fed's Inspector General to take a fresh look at the project.

Powell responds to Vought's letter with the same information provided to the senators. On July 24, 2025, Trump, accompanied by Pulte and Vought and senators Scott and Thom Tillis, visited the construction site and were given a tour by Powell. Trump takes the opportunity to again urge interest-rate cuts.

In November, US Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeanine Pirro opens a criminal investigation into Powell that focuses on alleged misstatements in his July Senate testimony, according to court documents that were unsealed four months later. Early this year, Powell disclosed the DoJ probe and subpoenas in an unusual Sunday evening video, calling it unprecedented intimidation, and a pretext for the president to gain influence over the Fed's monetary policy decisions.

The DoJ probe draws widespread condemnation as a threat to Fed independence. Senator Tillis says he'll block any Fed nominee as long as the investigation remains open. Other Republican lawmakers raise similar objections.

On January 30, 2026, Trump nominates Kevin Warsh to be the next Fed chair upon the expiration of Powell's leadership term on May 15. Tillis reiterates his position. A US judge blocks the DoJ's subpoenas, agreeing with Powell that the probe was an improper attempt to intimidate the central bank into cutting interest rates. Pirro vows to appeal the ruling.

"I have no intention of leaving the Board until the investigation is well and truly over, with transparency and finality," Powell says. Prosecutors from Pirro's office make a surprise visit to the Fed's renovation work site, and are turned away.

The Senate Banking Committee holds a confirmation hearing for Warsh. Tillis reiterates his position. Pirro says her investigation is going forward. Trump gave his public support, saying "we have to find out" how the building cost so much.

On April 24, 2026: Pirro says she'll close the investigation and has referred it to the Fed's Inspector General, which had begun its own investigation at Powell's request nine months earlier. "I will not hesitate to restart a criminal investigation should the facts warrant doing so," she adds. — Reuters

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View from the top



Commuters ride along a street after sunset in Islamabad yesterday.

Four propositions for resolving deadlock in the Middle East



By Cao Xiaolin
China's ambassador to Qatar

The Middle East now stands at a critical juncture between war and peace. Recently, Chinese President Xi Jinping put forward Four Propositions on safeguarding and promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, offering the Chinese approach for the region to move toward lasting stability and injecting much-needed certainty into a Middle East — and indeed a world — shaken by turmoil.

First, stay committed to the principle of peaceful co-existence. The Gulf states in the Middle East are close neighbours that cannot move away. It's important to support the Gulf states in improving their ties, work to build a common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security

architecture of the Middle East and the Gulf region, and consolidate the foundation for peaceful co-existence.

Second, stay committed to the principle of national sovereignty. Sovereignty serves as a foundation for all countries, especially developing countries, to survive and thrive, and it must not be violated. The sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the Gulf states should be earnestly respected, and the safety of their personnel, facilities and institutions vigorously safeguarded.

Third, stay committed to the principle of international rule of law. We should safeguard the authority of international rule of law, reject selective application, and prevent the world from returning to the law of the jungle. It is important to firmly uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order based on international law, and the basic norms governing international relations underpinned by purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Fourth, stay committed to a balanced approach to development and security. Security is a prerequisite for development, and development serves as a safeguard of security. All sides should work to create a sound environment for and bring positive energy to the development of the Gulf states. China stands ready to share with the Gulf countries the opportunities through Chinese modernization, and work with them to nurture a fertile ground for regional development and security.

As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and a responsible

major country, China has consistently acted to promote peace talks through concrete efforts. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi has met and made phone calls with his counterparts from relevant countries nearly 30 times. The Special Envoy of the Chinese Government on the Middle East Issue, Zhai Jun, conducted shuttle diplomacy across several countries to ease tensions in the region.

China has also maintained close coordination with all parties through the United Nations and other platforms, with the objective of advancing a ceasefire, ending hostilities, and promoting dialogue and negotiation. China's efforts, commitment, and sense of responsibility in pursuing peace have won broad recognition from regional parties and the wider international community.

A ceasefire does not equal peace. The spillover risks of the war remain, the regional security architecture is badly fractured, with a serious loss of trust between all parties. Any accidental escalation could once again push the situation toward the abyss.

As the Chinese saying goes, "When strength is pooled, nothing is unconquerable; when wisdom is combined, nothing is unattainable." Peace in the Middle East must ultimately be safeguarded by the people in the Middle East.

China stands ready to work with all peace-loving nations, guided by Chinese President Xi's Four Propositions, to jointly advance a common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security architecture for the Middle East, and to strive tirelessly for enduring peace and stability in the region.

How El Nino could impact world weather

Reuters

Global weather forecasters predict a strong El Nino weather phenomenon will build during the second half of 2026, threatening hotter and drier weather across much of Asia, while boosting rains in parts of North and South America.

Japan's weather bureau says there is a 70% chance for an El Nino to emerge during the northern hemisphere summer, while Indian weather authorities warn the South Asian nation's monsoon season could be below average for the first time in three years.

Weather officials in China expect El Nino conditions to run through the end of the year after emerging in May. US Climate Prediction Center sees a 61% chance of an El Nino during the period from May to July.

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology is predicting below long-term median rains in eastern cropping regions between May and August, the first half of the country's growing season.

Weather models indicate rains below, and temperatures above normal across Australia, Southeast Asia and India, said Chris Hyde, a meteorologist at weather intelligence firm Meteomatics with its headquarters in Switzerland. "Overall, I think it's going to be ideal growing conditions across the US Midwest this year," he added. "We will have to watch the timing of El Nino, there could be some impacts to excessive moisture towards harvest."

They are opposite phases of the same climate system in the tropical Pacific. El Nino is a natural pattern of unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific.

It builds when shifts in atmospheric pressure weaken, or even reverse, normally steady easterly trade winds, allowing eastward movement of warm waters piled up in the western Pacific, for a redistribution of heat, altering global weather patterns. A La Nina forms when trade winds strengthen,

"Weather models indicate rains below and temperatures above normal across Australia, Southeast Asia and India"



A view of cracked ground at a dam, as Zimbabwe is experiencing an El Nino-induced drought in Muzi, Zimbabwe, in 2024. (Reuters/File Photo)

pushing more warm water toward the western Pacific and allowing colder water to upwell in the east, driving sea surface temperatures below normal.

La Nina often brings above-average rainfall to Australia and parts of Southeast Asia, but its impact on the Indian monsoon is variable, rather than uniformly strengthening.

In the Americas, La Nina tends to lead to wetter conditions in parts of northern South America and drier conditions in the southern United States. Overall, the Americas broadly turn drier.

An El Nino occurs every three to five years on average and a La Nina once every three to seven years, says Australia's Bureau of Meteorology. El Nino events vary in severity

and impact.

A strong one in 2015 and 2016 caused severe drought across Australia and Southeast Asia, while weakening the Indian monsoon. It reduced output of grain, palm oil and sugar.

At the same time, excessive rain in parts of South America disrupted soybean and corn harvests.

A moderate El Nino in 2009 and 2010 brought dry weather that reduced yields of staples rice and wheat in India and Southeast Asia. The strongest El Nino on record was in 1997-1998. It caused drought in some parts of Asia slashed rice production, although India received average rainfall. Flooding in the Americas damaged crops.

Trump pulls envoys as fate of talks in limbo

From Page 1

Iranian media reported that Araghchi had flown to Muscat to meet senior Omani officials. He will however, head back to Pakistan after visiting Oman, state media reported yesterday.

The IRNA news agency, citing the foreign ministry, reported that Araghchi "is scheduled to visit Pakistan again after completing his trip to Oman and before travelling to Russia".

Part of his delegation had returned to Tehran, it added, "to consult and obtain the necessary instructions on issues related to ending the war, and is scheduled

to rejoin Araghchi in Islamabad tonight". He is also expected to travel to Russia to discuss efforts to end the war, which the United States and Israel began against Iran on February 28.

Tehran has ruled out a new round of direct talks with Washington. An Iranian diplomatic source in Islamabad told Reuters: "Principally, Iranian side will not accept maximalist demands."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt had earlier said the US had seen some progress from the Iranian side in recent days, while Vice President JD Vance was ready to travel to Pa-

kistan. Vance led a first, unsuccessful round of talks with Iran in Islamabad earlier this month.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said yesterday they had no intention of ending their blockade of the waterway. "Controlling the Strait of Hormuz and maintaining the shadow of its deterrent effects over America and the White House's supporters in the region is the definitive strategy of Islamic Iran," they said.

European Council President Antonio Costa said the strait "must immediately reopen without restrictions and without tolling. This is vital for the entire world."

Hormuz closure leads to historic energy shock

From Page 1

Independent economic modeling cited by the IEA projects global GDP losses ranging from \$330bn in a short conflict to as much as \$2.2tn if the strait remains closed for an extended period.

For now, the world is adapting through higher fuel costs, conservation measures and frantic searches for alternative supplies. Yet with 80% of

Hormuz-bound oil traditionally destined for Asia, the pain is being felt most acutely in import-dependent economies from Japan to India.

Energy experts, including al-Kaabi, caution that the full economic and geopolitical fallout is still unfolding. The closure has exposed the fragility of global energy trade in ways few imagined possible in the 21st century.

As one veteran oil-market

analyst put it: "We have just witnessed the largest forced reordering of world energy flows since the Suez Canal crisis of 1956 - except this time the stakes are measured in millions of barrels every single day."

The coming weeks will determine whether the world can absorb the shock or whether the energy crisis of 2026 becomes the defining economic event of the decade.

Iran FM leaves Pakistan after meeting PM, army chief

Iran's foreign minister wrapped up a diplomatic visit to Islamabad yesterday as Pakistani mediators pushed for new talks to end the Middle East war.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met Field Marshal Asim Munir, Pakistan's army chief and a key figure in the mediation effort, as well as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar.

Araghchi, according to an Iranian statement, thanked Pakistan for its efforts but "explained our country's principled positions regarding the latest developments related to the ceasefire and the complete end of the imposed war against Iran".

Pakistan's Dar posted on social media that the meeting with the Iranian delegation lasted around two hours and Pakistan emphasised "the importance of dialogue and diplomacy".

Iranian state media later reported that Araghchi had left Islamabad. (AFP)



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi meets Pakistan's Army Chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, in Islamabad, Pakistan, yesterday. (Reuters)

Turkiye may consider role in Hormuz demining: FM

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said that Turkiye could consider taking part in demining operations in the Strait of Hormuz following a possible peace agreement between Iran and the United States. Fidan said any demining work would be carried out by a technical team from various countries, formed after a possible Iran-US peace agreement. Turkiye would have "no problem" with participating in mine-clearing operations under those conditions.

Fidan cautioned that Turkiye would reassess its position if any future technical coalition of countries became a party to renewed conflict.

Fidan also said he believed issues related to Iran's nuclear programme could be resolved at the next round of talks in Pakistan.

Pakistani, Turkish FMs discuss latest developments by phone

Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Ishaq Dar, held a phone call yesterday with his Turkish counterpart, Hakan Fidan, to discuss the latest regional developments. Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said the two sides also reviewed diplomatic efforts by Pakistan to help bridge differences between the United States and Iran. Both ministers affirmed that continued dialogue and diplomatic engagement remain the only effective means to promote peace and stability in the region and beyond. (QNA)

Ukraine signs pacts with Azerbaijan in drone push



Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky attend a press briefing following their meeting in Qabala, Azerbaijan, yesterday. (Reuters)

AFP
Kyiv

Ukraine and Azerbaijan signed six co-operation agreements yesterday, President Volodymyr Zelensky said, as he pushes to share Kyiv's drone expertise amid the Middle East war.

Zelensky has clinched several defence deals with Gulf countries that suffered Iranian drone attacks with Kyiv offering its experience and expertise after more than four years of relentless Russian strikes.

"We have signed six documents today," said Zelensky in the Azerbaijani capital Baku, without specifying which fields.

"Today, the number one area is security. This concerns the defence-industrial complex," he said. "We have shared our experience in countering the aggressor today".

Speaking alongside Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev, Zelensky said Ukrainian drone experts were already working in Azerbaijan, a former Soviet republic on

the Caspian Sea that borders southern Russia.

In early March, drones launched from Iran hit an Azerbaijani airport and exploded near a school, wounding four people and raising fears of a spillover of the conflict into the Caucasus.

Since then, already tepid relations between Baku and Tehran have declined further.

The Ukrainian president also said he was ready to hold trilateral talks on ending the war with Russia in Azerbaijan, if Moscow showed a willingness to do so.

"We shared with the president of Azerbaijan that we are ready for trilateral talks," said Zelensky.

Azerbaijan repeatedly expressed support for Ukraine's territorial integrity and sent humanitarian aid after the Russian invasion in 2022.

Ties between Moscow and Baku have cooled over the past year, after an Azerbaijani passenger plane was mistakenly hit by a Russian anti-aircraft missile in 2024, causing a crash that killed 38.

Russian attack on Ukraine kills seven, wounds dozens

Reuters
Dnipro/Kyiv

A major Russian overnight attack on Ukraine killed seven people and injured dozens more as Moscow launched over 660 drones and missiles in a barrage that targeted the city of Dnipro in southeastern Ukraine, and hit several other regions.

A large chunk of an apartment building in Dnipro collapsed after being hit during the attack. Four corpses were recovered from the rubble, regional governor Oleksandr Hanzha said.

The site was struck again in a daytime attack, authorities said, while rescuers were working there. The second attack killed one person and injured seven.

Moscow has been launching smaller barrages of dozens of drones every night at Ukraine, interspersing them with occasional large-scale attacks that use hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles.

Thick columns of black smoke could be seen streaming into the sky on Saturday morning, as local media warned residents in the city about worsening air quality.

A Reuters reporter saw a Russian drone being destroyed in the sky over the ruined apartment block as rescuers were working in the rubble.



Municipal workers remove debris at the site of a residential building hit during a midday Russian drone strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Dnipro, Ukraine, yesterday. (Reuters)

In total, over 30 people in the city were wounded, officials said.

"Russia is deliberately prolonging its terror against our people, continuing to target critical infrastructure and residential buildings," Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said.

At the destroyed apartment block in Dnipro, which had a pre-war population of nearly a million and has experienced many lethal bombardments over the last four years, residents were stricken with grief and rage.

"May their children sleep in their warm beds in Russia, and

may everything be all right for them. Let them watch as Russia 'liberates' us of our apartments and houses," said 37-year-old Aliona Katrushova, who lives in the building opposite.

She looked on in her dressing gown as survivors were hauled out from the rubble. Saturday is her husband Oleh's birthday.

"It's like being given a second life," he said after surviving the attack, although the couple's apartment was damaged.

In the northern region of Chernihiv, missile and drone attacks killed two people and

wounded seven others, the governor there said.

"Every strike like this must remind our partners that the situation needs immediate and firm action, rapid strengthening of our air defences," President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

Drone fragments damaged an electricity pole and household annex in Nato member Romania, which borders Ukraine, authorities there said, although there were no casualties.

Ukraine has recently stepped up its own drone attacks hitting Russian territory. Authorities in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg said yesterday a Ukrainian drone crashed into an apartment building there, causing minor injuries.

Since the US and Israel attacked Iran earlier this year, triggering a war in the Middle East, Kyiv has worked hard to build security co-operation with Middle Eastern nations concerned about Iranian drone and missile bombardment.

Russia's overnight attack yesterday used 619 drones and 47 missiles, Ukraine's air force said in a statement on Telegram, adding that it downed 580 drones and 30 missiles.

Russia's defence ministry said it had hit military-industrial and energy targets in Ukraine overnight. It did not comment on the strike on the apartment block in Dnipro.

EU joint defence clause as 'stronger' than Nato one

French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday he considered the EU's common defence clause "stronger" than the one binding Nato together.

The declaration, made during a visit to Greece, comes as US President Donald Trump is questioning the North Atlantic military alliance, repeatedly calling it a "paper tiger" for not helping out in his war against Iran.

The mutual defence clause enshrined in Article 42.7 of the Treaty of the European Union, which requires other EU countries to come to the defence of any member under attack, is "steadfast", Macron said.

It is unambiguous and, "in substance, stronger than Article 5" in NATO's founding treaty, he said in a news conference alongside Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis.

"It allows solidarity between member countries but leaves no option."

The United States' commitment to backing Europe's defence has



France's President Emmanuel Macron is welcomed by Greece's Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis upon arrival for talks at Maximos Mansion, in Athens, yesterday. (AFP)

been shaken under Trump. The US leader has sought closer ties with Russia and reduced military support for Ukraine, while questioning the validity of Nato's common defence mechanism. Macron has been co-leading international conferences on military cooperation alongside

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer outside of Nato. He has also been promoting the idea of France's armed forces taking a greater role helping its EU defence partners, including through deployments of nuclear warheads on French warplanes. (AFP)

Hungary's Orban will not sit in parliament after election loss

AFP
Budapest

Hungary's outgoing nationalist prime minister Viktor Orban said yesterday he would step back from parliament after his coalition suffered a crushing election defeat that ended his 16 years in power.

Orban lost on April 12 to political newcomer, conservative pro-EU Peter Magyar, whose party won a two-thirds parliamentary majority in a vote marked by record turnout in the central European country.

The 62-year-old Orban, who has been a continuous presence in Hungary's parliament, the National Assembly, since 1990, has called for a "complete renewal" of his party last week.

"Since the seat I won as the lead



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. (AFP/File photo)

candidate on the Fidesz-KDNP ticket is, in fact, a parliamentary seat for Fidesz, I have decided to give it back. Right now, I am not needed in Parliament, but in the reorganisation of the national camp," Orban said in a Facebook video after a meeting by Fidesz party's executive committee.

He said that he was ready to stay on as president of Fidesz if that's what the party decides during its congress in June.

Magyar, who won on a promise of "regime change", has accused Orban of cowardice.

"The 'brave' street fighter is still incapable of one thing: taking responsibility... With a mafia boss (in charge) there can be no democratic opposition," the incoming prime minister said on Facebook.

Hungary's National Assembly is scheduled to hold its inaugural session on May 9th, when the newly elected lawmakers will take their oath of office.

Magyar's Tisza party won 141 mandates, while Orban's Fidesz-KDNP got 52 seats, with far-right Our Homeland got 6 seats in the 199-member National Assembly.

From home to market: MIA Bazaar fuelling growth of small businesses

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

At MIA Park Bazaar, home-based entrepreneurs are turning passion into profit, as the popular weekend market offers visibility, community support and a vital platform for small business growth in Qatar.

Set against the scenic backdrop of the Museum of Islamic Art park, MIA Bazaar has become more than a weekend destination, it is a thriving platform where small businesses take shape and grow.

For many vendors, the bazaar represents a rare opportunity to step beyond home-based operations and connect directly with customers. Among them is long-time participant Prachi Vashni of Qatar Best Bags, who has been part of the bazaar for nearly 15 years.

"I am proud to say that I am one of the first vendors to participate in MIA Park Bazaar," she told the *Gulf Times*, reflecting on the market's growth over the years.

Having experienced similar markets abroad, Vashni highlighted the level of support available in the country. "I have been to many countries like Singapore and the UK, but the support we are getting in Qatar, we have never seen anywhere," she said. "Even if you write a single email, they reply back, that is a big support."

She pointed to the infrastructure and organisation as key factors enabling small businesses to operate more efficiently. "They are providing tents, chairs, security and CCTV," she explained. "We can leave our items overnight without worrying, that is a big advantage for us as small vendors."

Affordability, she added, is another crucial element. "In other exhibitions, the charges are very high," she said. "Here, for around QR300, we get two full days. That kind of support is very important for home-based businesses."

Beyond logistics, Vashni described the bazaar as a reflection of Qatar's community spirit. "You can feel the spirit of Qatar here," she said. "Families, children playing, people shopping, good food, it's a very lively and happy place."

She also noted the diversity and quality of products on display. "You will see high-quality items, handicrafts and products at reasonable prices," she said. "It's a place where vendors can showcase what their countries produce best."

For newer vendors, the bazaar serves as an entry point into the wider market. Zareen, a first-time participant running a dessert stall with her sister, described the experience as both exciting and rewarding. "This is all homemade," she said about her offerings such as Biscoff cheesecake, cinnamon rolls and trending strawberry chocolate treats.

Inspired by a family member who previously operated a stall at the bazaar, she decided to start her own venture last year. "Since yesterday, it has been amazing," she said. "We even had customers from cafés wanting to place orders. It's a good way to connect and make connections."

Similarly, a representative from YSA Kitchen said the bazaar has helped expand their customer base beyond online platforms. "We are a home-based business... mostly our customers were friends or from our community," he said, adding, "Now we are getting customers



Prachi Vashney



Jayson & Eloisa from YSA kitchen.



Zareen's stall at MIA Bazaar.



from different nationalities." He emphasised the importance of such initiatives for small businesses. "The starting point is the hardest," he noted. "Support like this helps us grow and reach more people."

As more entrepreneurs take part, MIA Bazaar continues to play a vital role in shaping Qatar's small business landscape, offering not just a marketplace, but a stepping stone for growth, visibility and community connection.

CMU-Q to enrol largest cohort in campus history

Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q) hosted the newly admitted students at Marhaba Tartans, an event where the students can learn more about the university as they make their decisions of where they will attend. CMU-Q is a partner university of the Qatar Foundation.

This was a record-breaking admission cycle, with a campus high of more than 3,000 students applying for admission. This year, the university has increased the seats available in the first-year class to 140, a 20% increase from the 2025 admission cycle.

Michael Trick, dean of CMU-Q, addressed the admitted students at the event: "Class of 2030, you are among a very select group, and I want to congratulate each and every one of you for earning admission to Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar. You have worked hard in high school, you have shown us that you are curious, driven



Michael Trick, dean of CMU-Q, at Marhaba Tartans, which is the university's annual welcome event for newly admitted students.

and creative. Congratulations!"

Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar offers five undergraduate degree programmes: artificial intelligence, biological sciences, business administration, computer science and information systems. Students at the

Qatar campus must meet the same admission requirements as those in Pittsburgh, and satisfy the identical degree requirements as their peers at the American campus. All degrees are conferred by Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, USA.

Environment ministry's push for sustenance and preservation of marine ecosystems

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) marked the GCC Regional Environment Day – observed annually on April 24 – reaffirming its commitment to protecting the marine environment and strengthening national efforts for preserving biodiversity and ensuring the sustainability of natural resources.

Accordingly, the ministry has stressed the importance of preserving the local natural resources, enhancing environmental awareness to ensure their sustainability for the future generations. The ministry stressed that "the environment we protect today is the life we guarantee tomorrow." This year's theme focuses on Marine

Desertification, stressing the need to maintain the marine environment and sustain the growth of the related ecosystems.

Among the related efforts is reducing marine desertification, which requires adopting sustainable policies and practices, while maintain effective cooperation among the relevant entities to help protect marine resources and enhance their growth, as this would reflect directly on fish stock, which concurrently reflect on food security. The ministry further stressed that effective and practical measures have been taken to address the related issues and it will continue to monitor closely the status of the related ecosystems.

Health Ministry participates in World Immunisation Week

The Ministry of Public Health is marking World Immunisation Week from April, 24 to 30, reaffirming the pivotal role of vaccination in protecting public health and preventing disease.

This year's World Immunisation Week theme, "For every generation, vaccines work," highlights the importance of ensuring access to vaccines and promoting their use to protect all age groups – children, adults, pregnant women, and the elderly – from vaccine preventable diseases, thereby contributing to healthier and safer communities.

On this occasion, MoPH is organising a number of specialised training activities to develop and enhance the capacity of health facilities to deliver and expand essential immunisation services, with a focus on improving accessibility for all members of society across age groups. National awareness campaigns will also be launched to raise community awareness of the importance of vaccination and its vital role in preventing serious communicable diseases.

Qatar's Expanded Programme on Immunisation is recognised as one of the leading national immunisation programmes in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. It provides a comprehensive range of vaccines for children and adults, protecting against more than 16 diseases. The programme has successfully achieved and sustained high national coverage rates above 90% for most essential vaccines, contributing effectively to the eradication of polio and the significant control of diseases such as measles and rubella, while continuing efforts to meet the World Health Organisation's goals for their complete elimination.

The programme has received official commendation from the World Health Organisation, which has designated Qatar as a regional model. This recognition highlights the strength of its epidemiological surveillance, the efficiency of its cold chain management, and the country's commitment to



the highest international standards for safe and high-quality immunisation services.

In line with WHO policies and guidance, MoPH's Department of Health Protection and Communicable Disease Control has developed a package of awareness activities emphasising the importance of vaccination across all age groups. These activities highlight the need for parents to ensure that children complete all scheduled doses on time, while also stressing the importance of adults receiving the recommended vaccines appropriate to each stage of life.

Achieving high vaccination coverage has contributed to improving the health of Qatar's population and eliminating many communicable diseases, thanks to the country's comprehensive healthcare system, which is based on a proactive preventive approach and strengthening immunity through vaccination.

The 73rd World Health Assembly in 2020 endorsed the Immunisation Agenda 2030. This vision, developed by the World Health Organisation and its immunisation partners, calls for expanding the benefits of vaccination across all stages of life and making it a strategic priority for the new decade.

Abandoned fishing nets removed at Al Wakra Area



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change has carried out an extensive field campaign at the Shuwaymisah reef at Al Wakra Area, as part of its ongoing efforts to safeguard marine ecosystems and preserve coral reefs across the country.

The Marine Protection Department carried out a field campaign that lasted several days, targeting the ecologically sensitive "fashit" (reef area), where teams worked to remove hazardous fishing debris threatening marine life. The campaign was executed by the Al Wakrah Marine Unit, which successfully cleared large quantities of abandoned fishing nets from the site.

Among the most concerning findings were prohibited trammel (three-layer gill) nets, a type of fishing gear banned due to its destructive impact, particularly when used over the reef formations. The concerned entities stressed that such nets can cause severe and long-lasting damage to coral

habitats and surrounding biodiversity. Accordingly, the Ministry noted that discarded or lost fishing nets continue to trap marine organisms indiscriminately. Fish, sea turtles, and other species are especially vulnerable, as these nets remain active in the water long after being abandoned. Beyond endangering wildlife, the nets also pose a direct threat to the fragile reef structures.

Meanwhile, the ministry called on fishermen and sea-goers to act responsibly by ensuring that fishing equipment is not left behind in the water, stressing that collective awareness is key to protecting Qatar's marine environment.

Further, the ministry reaffirmed its commitment to intensifying inspection campaigns and cracking down on illegal practices, underscoring that preserving marine resources is essential for environmental sustainability and for safeguarding these ecosystems for the future generations.

