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# PSG grab Champions League title, again

An era of dominance beckons as French giants win the final

AFP Budapest

Paris Saint-Germain claimed back-to-back Champions League triumphs with a 4-3 shoot-out win over Arsenal following a 1-1 draw after extra time yesterday in Budapest, with Eberechi Eze and Gabriel missing from the spot.

Mikel Arteta's Premier League champions showed great resilience to take the game beyond 120 minutes, but fell to a second final defeat, 20 years after their first in Paris against Barcelona.

Luis Enrique's side became only the second besides Real Madrid to win the competition in consecutive years in the Champions League era.

PSG's first triumph was 55 years in the making, 14 of those under Qatari ownership, the second could start what they hope is an era of dominance and dynasty-building.



Paris Saint Germain's President Nasser al-Khelaifi lifts the trophy next to players after winning the UEFA Champions League final against Arsenal at the Puskas Arena in Budapest yesterday. (AFP)

Luis Enrique rebuilt the team swiftly and efficiently, removing the club's superstars and building a cohesive and committed attacking side, capable of shredding op-

position with terrifying pace. It was the Spaniard's third Champions League triumph, making him one of only five coaches to complete a hat-trick - the first

coming with Barcelona in 2015.

For a while it looked unlikely as Kai Havertz powered Arsenal ahead after six minutes but Ousmane Dembele's penalty midway

through the second half took a tight game to extra time and ultimately penalties.

Arsenal's Jurrien Timber was fit after a groin injury but his rust from over two months out led Arteta to deploy Cristhian Mosquera out of position at right-back.

The coach also opted for Havertz in attack over Viktor Gyokeres, and for an hour it seemed like his calls would pay off.

Luis Enrique selected 10 of the side which demolished Inter Milan 5-0 in last year's final as PSG finally lifted the trophy they so badly craved.

In Arsenal's only prior final German goalkeeper Jens Lehmann was sent off in the opening stages as they were defeated by Barcelona in Paris in 2006.

They got off to a far better start at the Puskas Arena, with Lehmann's compatriot Havertz firing the Gunners ahead after just six minutes.

Havertz, who scored the winning goal in Chelsea's 2021 Champions League final victory, could not believe his luck after Marquinhos's attempted clearance hit Leandro Trossard and bounced into his path. **Sport Page 1**

## US-Iran deal still elusive

AFP Washington

The United States warned yesterday it was "more than capable" of resuming its war with Iran after President Donald Trump said any peace deal must adhere to his red lines, including Tehran never being able to develop nuclear weapons.

The White House had signaled Trump was close to a decision on a potential deal, though Tehran denied there was a final agreement on ending the conflict.

US sources had told AFP the deal was waiting on Trump's sign-off, but he made no decision after a White House Situation Room meeting on Friday.

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth, while attending a defence summit in Singapore, said yesterday that Washington was "more than capable" of restarting the war if necessary, adding "our stockpiles are more than suited for that."

US Central Command (CENTCOM) posted on X that American forces "remain present and vigilant across the region." Despite a ceasefire that has largely held since April, there have been occasional flare-ups. Iran's IRNA state news agency said air defences shot down a drone "belonging to the US-Zionist aggressor enemy" yesterday, citing the army.

## Deputy PM leads Qatar at Shangri-La Dialogue



HE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani speaking at the third plenary session of the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026 in Singapore under the theme "Asia's Maritime Security Disorder." **Page 6**

## Watch out for Blue Moon!

By A Staff Reporter Doha

Residents of Qatar will have a chance to witness the rare "Blue Moon" phenomenon this evening when the Dhu al-Hijjah full Moon rises over the country's skies, according to the Qatar Calendar House (QCH).

The full Moon will occur at 11:45am Doha time today, while moonrise is expected at 6:39pm, allowing skywatchers to observe the celestial event with the naked eye after sunset until shortly before sunrise at 4:44am on Monday, QCH astronomy expert Bashir Marzouq said. Despite its name, a Blue Moon does not appear blue. The term refers to a calendrical phenomenon in which two full Moons occur within the same calendar month. The first full Moon of May illuminated Qatar's skies on May 1, while the second reaches its full phase on May 31, fulfilling the conditions for a Blue Moon. Astronomers explain that the phenomenon results from the



File photo

mismatch between the lunar cycle and the Gregorian calendar. A lunar month, or the period between successive full Moons, lasts about 29.5 days. Since most calendar months are 30 or 31 days long, an occasional month can accommodate two full Moons, with the second designated as a Blue Moon. Marzouq described the event as relatively uncommon, occurring roughly once every two to three years. The previous Blue Moon was recorded in August 2023, while the next is expected in December 2028.

## Haj ends successfully

The Haj season for the year 1447 AH was thoroughly devoid of any epidemic outbreaks or threats that affect public health, the Saudi Ministry of Health confirmed in a statement yesterday following a successful conclusion to the season.

The statement added that the general health conditions of pilgrims have been stable and assured throughout the whole season, despite the consecutive epidemics that engulfed the world, along with global health developments that precipitated leveraging the highest levels of surveillance and alertness.

It further noted that this move has reinforced the importance of early readiness, persistent epidemiological surveillance, coordination with national and international health authorities, and strengthening preparedness to respond to any potential public health risks. The health system has been operating 24/7 through leveraging preventive treatment, First Aid, and awareness services, alongside epidemiological investigations, rapid response measures, and an ongoing whole-of-government approach employed during Haj operations, enabling pilgrims to perform rites in a serene environment, the statement underlined. **(QNA)**



# HBKU expert says uncertainty drives digital dependence

By Joseph Varghese Staff Reporter

People tend to depend more on artificial intelligence-powered digital platforms for information, reassurance, and social connection during periods of unrest and uncertainty, noted an expert from Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) highlighting the significant psychological and social risks of such dependence.

Dr Raian Ali, professor at the College of Science and Engineering and the UNESCO Chair in Digital Technologies and Human Behaviour, at Qatar Foundation's HBKU told Gulf Times that people naturally rely



Dr Raian Ali.

more on digital tools during times of instability as they seek clarity, comfort, and a sense of control.

"In times of uncertainty, people turn more intensely to digital platforms for social interaction, reassurance, timely information, and a

sense of safety and control," Dr Ali explained.

He said that AI platforms are designed to predict and tailor content at individual and group levels. "This personalisation can enhance user experience but during period of uncertainty, it risks narrowing exposure to diverse perspectives. Such clustering can distort perceptions of reality, amplify emotionally charged content and strengthen existing beliefs."

He noted that while personalisation is often celebrated for its efficiency, in volatile contexts it can contribute to political polarisation and more intensive, potentially dependency-forming engagement and the risks of compulsive digital behaviours increase amid instability. **To Page 11**



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الطَّيِّبَةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ الرَّحِيمِ ضِعْفًا تَعْلَمِينَ مِنْ عِبَادَتِي وَالْإِيمَانِ بِحَبْلِي

صِدْقَةَ اللَّهِ الْعَظِيمَةِ

We extend our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to the sons of the deceased.

**Mr. Hamad bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**

**Dr. Saud bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**

**Mr. Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**

**Mr. Nasser bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**

**and to all members of the respected**

**Al-Attiyah family,**

on the passing of their father the late, by God's will,

**HE Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**

**Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry.**

May God have mercy upon the deceased and grant him a place in his spacious paradise, and grant his family and beloved ones patience and solace.

*"Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we shall return."*

Chairman of the Board, Vice Chairman, Chief Executive Officer, and all employees of



غازال  
**Gasal**

# CONDOLENCES

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On behalf of  
**Gulf Drilling International,**  
its Board of Directors, Executive Management  
and employees,

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the family of

**His Excellency Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**  
Former Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Energy and Industry

May Allah rest the departed soul in peace and  
give grace and fortitude to the bereaved family.





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ

We extend our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to the sons of the deceased.

**Mr. Hamad bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**

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إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

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## Defence minister meets Singapore's leadership

Left: HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali al-Thani with Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam.

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan bin Ali al-Thani has met separately with Singapore's President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Lawrence Wong, and Senior Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and former prime minister Lee Hsien Loong.

The meetings took place as part of HE Sheikh Saud's participation in the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026 in Singapore.

During the meetings, the latest developments and security updates in the region, as well as bilateral co-operation and co-ordination amid the current conditions, were discussed.

The meetings were attended by Qatar's ambassador to Singapore Abdulaziz bin Ahmed al-Malki al-Jehani, along with top officers and officials from both sides. - QNA



HE Sheikh Saud with Singapore's Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Lawrence Wong.

## Amir congratulates Saudi ruler on Haj season success

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani has sent cables of congratulations to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud on the successful completion of the Haj season 1447 AH.

His Highness the Amir praised the organisation of the pilgrimage and wished Saudi Arabia continued progress and prosperity.

His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent similar cables of congratulations to King Salman and Prince Mohammed.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent cables of congratulations to King Salman and Prince Mohammed on success of the Haj season 1447 AH. - QNA

## Amir congratulates Croatia's president on Statehood Day

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Croatia's President Zoran Milanovic on the occasion of the country's Statehood Day.

His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of congratulations to Milanovic on the occasion.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani meanwhile sent a cable of congratulations to Croatia's Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic on the occasion. - QNA

## Minister receives phone call from Philippines's Lazaro

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received a phone call yesterday from the Philippines's Secretary of Foreign Affairs Maria Theresa P. Lazaro. They discussed bilateral co-operation between the two countries and ways to strengthen and enhance those ties, in addition to issues of mutual interest. - QNA



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### ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDERS

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	QC/TC/M/111/26	Machining and Fabrication Services at Q-Chem, Q-Chem II, RLOC & RLP on Call-Off Basis for Five Years	QAR 864,500/-	15:00 hrs. on 5 <sup>th</sup> July 2026
Brief Scope: Contractor's Scope of Work includes all machining and fabrication services for mechanical and piping works to be performed at contractor's workshop and Company's site, including fabrication, installation, testing, inspection, and related support services on call-off basis for a period of five (5) years.				
2.	RLP/TC/P/113/26	Call-Off Supply Agreement for Dimethyl Sulfoxide (DMS) for RLP	QAR 318,500/-	15:00 hrs. on 5 <sup>th</sup> July 2026
Brief Scope: Bidders are invited to submit proposals for the supply of Dimethyl Sulfoxide (DMS) as per specifications to RLP plant in Ras Laffan Industrial Area, under a call-off purchase order agreement, for a duration from 1 <sup>st</sup> December 2026 to 31 <sup>st</sup> July 2028.				

Tender Documents for the above description can be obtained as follows:

**A. Pay to Bank and send the original receipt with authorization letter via email.**  
For each tender pay a **non-refundable document fee of QR 1,000/-** Payable to Q-Chem, Bank Account (Contract Services - Tender) - Account Number 001-242007-003 with HSBC Bank) and submit the original receipt with an Authorization letter on Tenderer Company Letterhead with ID copy of the Tenderer representative via email to [tadvertising@qchem.com.qa](mailto:tadvertising@qchem.com.qa) In the authorization letter Tenderer shall nominate a single focal point with contact mobile number, official email address, office number, fax number for the communications related to this tender for the transfer and receipt of the tender documents. **The Bank receipt must indicate the tender number and the tenderer name (company name).**

**B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email**  
Tender documents issuance from **31<sup>st</sup> May 2026 to 4<sup>th</sup> June 2026, 8am-12noon.**

**C. Proposal details**  
Proposals should be valid for 240 days from the tender closing date.

**D. Submission of Proposals**  
Guidelines for Electronic Bids Submission is attached in the Tender documents.



HE Sheikh Saud with Singapore's Senior Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and former prime minister Lee Hsien Loong.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّسِيرُ الْمُسْتَجِيرُ اجْعَلِي بَرِيَّةً مَرِيَّةً وَرَبِيَّةً حَسَنَةً وَأَجْنَابِيَّةً

We extend our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to the sons of the deceased,

**Mr. Hamad bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**  
**Dr. Saud bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**  
**Mr. Abdulaziz bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**  
**Mr. Nasser bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**  
**and to all members of the respected**  
**Al-Attiyah family,**

on the passing of their father the late, by God's will,

**HE Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah**

Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry, Former Chairman and Managing Director of Qatar Petroleum, and member of the Board of Directors of Al-Attiyah Foundation.

May God have mercy upon the deceased and grant him a place in his spacious paradise, and grant his family and beloved ones patience and solace.

"إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ"

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# CONDOLENCES

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## Qatar Steel

extends its heartfelt condolences to the family of

### His Excellency

## Abdullah bin Hamad Al-Attiyah

Former Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Energy and Industry

May Allah rest the departed soul in peace and  
give grace and fortitude to the bereaved family.





# MoPH drive to promote hand hygiene, infection prevention

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has launched a national awareness campaign highlighting the importance of hand hygiene and infection prevention and control practices in reducing healthcare-associated infections and enhancing the safety of both patients and healthcare workers.

The campaign featured a range of awareness activities, conducted both in person and virtually, across healthcare facilities in several languages.

Activities included field visits, distribution of educational materials on the importance of hand hygiene and infection prevention, as well as awareness messages displayed on digital screens, in patient and visitor waiting areas, and across social media platforms.

As part of the campaign, the MoPH also organised an interactive online educational webinar delivered by experts from the ministry and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

The webinar attracted the participation of more than 6,700 healthcare professionals from governmental, semi-governmental, and private healthcare facilities across the country.

Discussions focused on strengthening hand hygiene practices, increasing compliance with health protocols, and reinforcing their critical



roles in improving patient safety.

In parallel with regional efforts marking World Hand Hygiene Day, the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean organised a virtual regional webinar on "Hand Hygiene and Infection Prevention and Control During Crises and Conflicts in the Middle East: More Important Than Ever".

The event brought together leaders and experts from the WHO and representatives from several countries, including Qatar.

During the webinar, Qatar was highlighted as a leading regional model in infection prevention and control systems, with the country's experi-

ence showcased during a dedicated session.

The Healthcare Quality Management team at the MoPH emphasised that advancing surveillance systems contributes directly to improving the quality of healthcare and ensuring a safe environment for both patients and healthcare professionals.

At the same time, healthcare facilities across the country organised a series of educational and awareness activities, including training sessions, creative competitions, and public awareness booths, in support of World Hand Hygiene Day 2026 and the WHO's ongoing efforts in this field.

## Qatar's efforts to combat smoking are highlighted on 'World No Tobacco Day'

The world marks No Tobacco Day annually on May 31, an international observance launched by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to enhance awareness of the health, social, and economic menaces of tobacco and to encourage stronger policies aimed at curbing its spread among all members of society.

For the 2026 campaign, the WHO adopted the theme *Unmasking the Appeal - Countering Nicotine and Tobacco Addiction*, reflecting growing global concern over modern marketing techniques that target younger age groups.

The WHO estimates that tobacco kills more than 7mn people annually through preventable diseases, including cardiovascular disease, lung cancer, and chronic respiratory illnesses.

The impact extends beyond smokers themselves, as exposure to secondhand smoke also poses serious health risks to non-smokers.

While tobacco remains one of the world's most pressing public health challenges, it also imposes a substantial economic burden through healthcare expenditures and productivity losses resulting from illness and premature death.

Dr Anas Adel Qalifa, a specialist at the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC)'s Wellness Department, spoke to the Qatar News Agency (QNA) about Qatar-led efforts to combat smoking in its various forms.

He noted that Qatar has established clear regulations governing the sale and distribution of tobacco products, with measures that include prohibiting the advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products and banning their sale to individuals under the age of 18, as well as preventing their sale in the vicinity of schools and educational and training institutions, and prohibiting smoking in enclosed public places, with violators subject to legal sanctions.

Dr Qalifa indicated that the nation's strategy does not rely solely on public awareness campaigns; rather, it adopts a broader approach, combining regulatory policies, oversight, the protection of younger age groups, and direct treatment services for those seeking to quit smoking.

Through healing services and smoking-cessation clinics, he stressed that the PHCC projects itself as



a leading national platform that is closer to the community, translating these efforts into preventative and practical therapy.

These services, he underlined, include medical consultation, pharmacological treatment, and persistent follow-up under the supervision of trained and accredited physicians, supporting individuals throughout their smoking-cessation journey.

Dr Qalifa highlighted that modern smoking-cessation protocols are based on the principle that nicotine dependence is a treatable medical condition rather than merely a bad habit.

He noted that treatment extends beyond medication or general advice, beginning with a comprehensive assessment and incorporating behavioural counseling, pharmacological treatment when necessary, and regular follow-up.

The journey toward smoking cessation, Dr Qalifa stressed, begins with a clinic visit.

During that process, he said, healthcare professionals assess patterns of tobacco use, identify triggers and expected symptoms, and develop a practical plan tailored to the individual.

Dr Qalifa affirmed that the WHO has consistently maintained that behavioural counseling and pharmacological treatment can significantly increase the chances of successfully quitting smoking.

Individuals may not succeed on their first try, he continued, particularly if they use multiple tobacco products or live in environments where exposure to tobacco and nicotine is prevalent.

He emphasised the importance of following a practical treatment plan based on the proper use of cessation therapies, including drinking plenty of water, maintaining daily physical activity, regulating sleep, reducing exposure to triggers, avoiding hunger and fatigue, and adopting simple coping techniques such as deep breathing or delaying the decision to use tobacco for ten minutes until the craving subsides.

Regarding the role of technology and smart applications in supporting cessation programmes, Dr Qalifa said that technology should be treated as a supportive tool rather than a standalone treatment.

He outlined that an effective application is one that is linked to reliable health content, respects user privacy, and reinforces the treatment plan established by the physician. - QNA

## Iran preparing funeral for slain supreme leader

Iranian authorities are laying the groundwork for a "grand" funeral for slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, official media reported on Friday, following a lengthy postponement due to the ongoing war.

Though the timing was still

uncertain, "a special headquarters has been formed to prepare for the funeral ceremony, and various agencies are currently planning and making arrangements", state TV reported, citing Mohsen Mahmoudi, head of the Tehran Co-ordination Council

for Islamic Propaganda.

Khamenei was killed in the first wave of US-Israeli strikes that launched the war on February 28.

His son and successor Mojtaba Khamenei was also wounded in the attacks and has not been seen in public. - AFP



## Cyprus lauds Qatar's efforts at de-escalation, mediation

Cyprus President Dr Nikos Christodoulides has praised Qatar's important and pivotal role, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, in supporting efforts to promote calm and de-escalation, in addition to strengthening dialogue in the region.

He also renewed Cyprus's condemnation of the attacks that targeted Qatar as well as other Gulf and Arab states, stressing that such actions are unlawful and that the rules of international law must be respected.

This came during Christodoulides's attendance of a luncheon hosted by Qatar's ambassador to Cyprus, Yousef Sultan Laram, in the presence of Cypriot officials, ambassadors and heads of Arab diplomatic missions accredited in Cyprus.

The president affirmed that his country is continuing to exert the necessary efforts to contribute to de-escalation and promote stability in the region.

Regional developments have a direct impact on Cyprus, Christodoulides noted, due to its geographic location and its close ties to the Middle East.

The president expressed hope that the current crisis would be overcome as soon as possible in a manner that advances security, stability, and co-operation among the peoples of the region.

Christodoulides emphasised the importance of continuing co-operation between Qatar and Cyprus, as well as strengthening communication among relevant authorities and increasing high-level bilateral visits.

He added that enhancing relations among the European Union (EU) and the countries of the Middle East and the Arab world is one of the main priorities of Cyprus's presidency of the Council of the European Union.

Ambassador Laram expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the president for his country's supportive stances and solidarity with Qatar regarding the attacks that targeted its territory.

He also commended Christodoulides's efforts in strengthening ties between Qatar, Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) states, and Arab states on the one hand, and the EU on the other. - QNA



Destroyed buildings in the village of Kfarkila in southern Lebanon are seen from across the border in the Upper Galilee region of northern Israel. - AFP

## PM says Lebanon is facing dangerous Israeli escalation

AFP  
Beirut

This will bring "neither security nor stability" to Israel, he said.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam has denounced what he called a dangerous Israeli escalation in the south, urging an immediate ceasefire and insisting that a "scorched-earth policy" would not ensure Israel's security.

In a televised address, he defended his government's direct negotiations with Israel - which Iran-backed Hezbollah opposes - saying the talks were the "least costly path" for Lebanon.

"In light of the dangerous and unprecedented Israeli escalation over the past few days, it is necessary to step up political and diplomatic efforts to achieve a swift and real ceasefire," Salam said.

He accused Israel of "pursuing a scorched-earth policy and collective punishment" by "destroying towns and villages, and forcing their inhabitants into exile".

Salam's broadcast came after Israel's military issued new evacuation warnings for residents of more south Lebanon villages, and a day after military delegations from both countries held landmark security talks in Washington.

Those talks took place ahead of US-brokered negotiations early next week - the fourth round since the latest Israel-Hezbollah conflict erupted in March.

Salam said that the outcome of the direct negotiations with Israel was "not guaranteed," but that they "are the least costly path for our country and our people".

A US statement after Friday's talks made no mention of a ceasefire, and Israel has recently intensified its air and ground operations against Hezbollah.

A truce to halt the fighting officially took effect on April 17, but has never been observed.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

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holder of

PHILIPPINES Passport No. P8698728B  
QID No. 30760800396

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from

ALEIYAHCLAIRE ADONIS CARAMBAS

to

ALEIYAH CLAIRE CAASI CARAMBAS

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

### ANNOUNCEMENT

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PAKISTAN Passport No. DV8963014  
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Any objection, please contact  
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR  
NATIONALITY AFFAIRS  
within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

## Children of Syrians who went missing under Assad 'likely dead'

Syria's commission for missing persons said yesterday that the children of dentist Rania al-Abbasi, who disappeared with their parents more than a decade ago under former president Bashar al-Assad, were likely dead.

The fate of the children, unknown for years, became a symbol for the plight of other missing children of detainees and those forcibly disappeared during Assad's rule, which ended with his ouster in 2024.

Abbasi, who was also a Syrian chess champion, went missing along with her husband and their six children, aged 3-15, in March 2013 after government forces raided their home in Damascus, according to rights groups.

"We have reached reliable and corroborating results that allow us to conclude with a high degree of professional certainty that Dr Rania al-Abbasi's children are deceased," the National Commission for Missing Persons in Syria said in a statement.

The commission, set up by the country's new Islamist authorities in May 2025 to investigate missing and forcibly disappeared people, said its findings were "based on multiple verification and analysis procedures" conducted in coordination with national authorities.

"Efforts to find the remains... are still ongoing," it added.

Hassan al-Abbasi, Rania's brother, confirmed the children's deaths in a video posted on Facebook.

He said the family had been able to view video recordings linked to the main suspect in a 2013 massacre in a Damascus district, including one showing him accusing children in a dark room of being "major financiers of terrorism".

"They turned out to be our children," Hassan al-Abbasi said. "We finally saw them... but they were martyred."

The fate of Rania al-Abbasi and her husband, Abdul Rahman Yasin, remains officially unknown after all contact with them was lost following their arrest on accusations linked to opposition to the Assad government.

Rights groups and media reports suggest they may have died, though their bodies were never found.

The issue of missing people is one of the most pressing in Syria.

Tens of thousands of people were detained or disappeared during the war, which erupted in 2011 after a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests by Assad.

The commission has said the number of people who went missing over decades of Assad family rule may exceed 300,000. - AFP

## 11 children killed, injured every 24 hours in Lebanon

Eleven children have been killed or injured on average every 24 hours in Lebanon over the last week, the UN's children's agency Unicef said on Friday.

Heavy Israeli strikes hit towns and villages in southern Lebanon overnight on Wednesday and into Thursday, after Israel declared a new swathe of the area a combat zone.

It also struck a building in the southern suburbs of Beirut on Thursday.

A total of 77 children have been killed or injured in the last seven days, the Unicef said, citing figures provided by Lebanon's ministry of public health.

Since the ceasefire began on April 16, 55 children have been killed and 212 injured, the agency said.

Unicef spokesperson Ricardo Pires called for all parties to fully respect the ceasefire.

"Under international humanitarian law, children and civilian infrastructure must be protected," he said.

The ceasefire announced by Washington was meant to halt the fighting that has raged between Israeli troops and Iran-backed Hezbollah since March 2.

The ceasefire has never been strictly observed; both sides accuse each other of violating it and justify their attacks by the other camp's alleged breaches. - Reuters/AFP

## PHL ceremony held at MESIS

MES Indian School, Abu Hamour Branch (MESIS), hosted the prestigious Principal's Honor List (PHL) Ceremony 2026-27 at the school's Multipurpose Hall amidst an atmosphere of pride, enthusiasm, and celebration. The event was organised to honour students for their exceptional academic performance and sustained commitment to excellence. The ceremony was conducted in two sessions. The first session, held for Grades 4-9 and 11, was graced by Fasal P P, vice president of the MES Governing Board, who honoured the award recipients for their remarkable accomplishments.

The second session, dedicated to students of Grades 1 to 3. The principal and vice-principal, who applauded the young learners for their enthusiasm, discipline and consistent academic effort. The programme commenced with a solemn prayer, followed by an



inspiring address by principal Pramila Kannan.

In her speech, she emphasised the significance of discipline, perseverance, and a growth mindset as essential pillars for academic and personal success. A major highlight of the event was the presentation of Gold and Silver Certificates to Grade 11 students for the academic year

2025-26, alongside the Academic Excellence Awards conferred upon outstanding students across all grades.

The ceremony concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks, reaffirming the institution's steadfast commitment to fostering academic brilliance and nurturing a culture of excellence among its students.



## MES excels at CBSE Qatar Cluster Athletics Meet 2026 with stellar championship victory

MES Indian School demonstrated its sporting excellence with an outstanding performance at the CBSE Qatar Cluster Athletics Meet 2026, held on May 19, 21, and 23. The prestigious event brought together talented student athletes from leading CBSE schools across Qatar, fostering a spirit of healthy competition and athletic achievement.

A dedicated contingent of 70 students from Classes VI to XII represented the school, actively participating in a wide range of individual and team events. The students exhibited exemplary enthusiasm and sportsmanship throughout the meet. The team delivered a remarkable performance, securing an impressive tally of 46 gold medals, 39 silver medals, and 13 bronze medals. The collective efforts of the athletes culminated in MES being crowned the overall champion for the Academic Year 2026-27, underscor-



ing the institution's continued dominance in athletics.

The principal, Dr Hameeda Kadar, lauded the students' commendable accomplishments and expressed her appreciation for their unwavering dedication and determination. She also acknowledged the invaluable contribution of the coaching staff, which

includes Steeson K Mathew, Gigi P Abraham, and Nazanin S Nadaf from the Physical Education Department, in guiding and mentoring the athletes towards excellence. This remarkable achievement brings immense pride to the institution and reinforces its commitment to nurturing talent and promoting excellence in sports.



## MES triumphs in CBSE Qatar Cluster Football Tournament

MES Indian School delivered a commendable performance at the CBSE Qatar Cluster Football Tournament 2026-27, emerging as champions in the boys Under-14 category and securing the second runner-up position in the Boys Under-19 category, thus

earning the prestigious title of Boys Overall Champions.

The competition was held for both Boys and Girls in the Under-14, Under-17, and Under-19 categories. The girls' teams won the first runner-up positions in the U-14 and U-17 categories of the tournament. The tournament,

which brought together leading CBSE schools from across Qatar, witnessed MES Indian School displaying exceptional skill, teamwork, and determination throughout. The Under-14 team, guided by coach Muhammed Shifil, delivered an outstanding unbeaten run to clinch the championship title. The



Under-17 and Under-19 teams were trained by the coach, Binoy K K, while the girls' teams were

trained by Shani G R. The principal, Dr Hameeda Kadar, lauded the players for their impressive

achievements and commended the coaches for their unwavering dedication and effective training.



## QTS honours 'young farmers'

Qatar Tamizhar Sangam (QTS) organised a grand prize distribution and felicitation ceremony for its "young farmers" competition on May 22 at Kanjani Hall, Integrated Indian Community Centre (IICC), Doha. The competition was conducted from November 2025 to April 2026 aimed at educating children and youth about the importance of agriculture and creating awareness on the need to preserve farming practices. The initiative was open to participants aged between 4 and 18 years.

As part of the competition, participants were encouraged to grow plants and submit weekly progress reports documenting their farming journey. Young participants proudly showcased a variety of plants cultivated in their home gardens, including vegetables, fruits, flowers.

The event was attended by distinguished guests Karthi Thangaiah of Teyseer Motors, Prasad of Black Tulip, Karthik of Oriono, and Vignesh of Somerset Hotels. The event was anchored by QTS Sub-Committee member Satish and commenced with the traditional Tamil Thai Vazhthu and national anthems of Qatar and India. Delivering the welcome address, QTS Vice-President Ramesh greeted the gathering and appreciated the enthusiastic participation of the young farmers and their families.

In his address, QTS president Muniyappan commended the efforts and guidance of vice-president Ramesh, along with judges Punitha and Prabha Ramesh, for their continuous mentoring and support for the participants throughout the competition. QTS Advisory Council chairman Manibarathi



highlighted the importance of agriculture and encouraged children to continue nurturing their interest in farming.

He also urged parents to cultivate veg-

etables in their home gardens and instil agricultural values among the younger generation. More than 40 young farmers were honoured with trophies in recogni-

tion of their dedication, hard work, and passion towards farming. The event concluded with a vote of thanks delivered by Sub-Committee member Yayadhi Raja.

Investors should be asking not whether the AI boom will end, but what will happen to markets when it does and where safety may be found. I have previously argued that the business models of OpenAI, Anthropic and other AI darlings look increasingly unsustainable and that hyperscalers such as Meta and Amazon face daunting maths to make their data centre investments pay off. Yet, for now, the investment surge continues to accelerate.

Annual investment in technology equipment and software reached \$1.5tn last year, about 70% more than during the inflation-adjusted peak of the late-1990s technology, media and telecommunications (TMT) bubble, better known as the dotcom boom. While I do not expect the AI boom to come to a crashing stop any time soon, growth will stall at some point. Every tech boom since the end of World War II has been followed by a drop-off in tech investment. After

## What if the AI boom goes into reverse?

the cybernetics boom ended in 1962 and the speculative US "Go-Go" stock market boom of the late 1960s faded in 1969, tech investment dropped 5%. Similarly, after the TMT bubble burst in 2000, it declined by 18.6% over two years, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

Given how enormous AI investment currently is, a pullback could have serious and broad implications for markets and economies globally. My models indicate that we don't need a repeat of the TMT crash to push the US, Britain and the euro zone dangerously close to recession. Just a 5% drop in US tech investment would significantly harm these three major economies, my analysis shows, with real GDP in each declining by up to one percentage point in the year after such a shock. The US economy would likely

recover relatively quickly, while the less dynamic euro zone would struggle for longer. But equity markets on both sides of the Atlantic would likely not take such a shock in stride. To gauge the market risk, I modelled three possible endings to the AI capex boom: a mild correction, a normal recessionary downturn and a full TMT-style bust.

In the first, the boom rids itself of short-term excess and drops 4.5% before recovering. I estimate that the US stock market would enter a correction, with a drawdown of around 15%. European markets, meanwhile, would likely drop more than 20% and enter a new bear market. Why would Europe fall further if the AI correction starts on Wall Street? In a slowdown or recession, US investors tend to repatriate foreign holdings and move

into safer assets. European investors may also pull money home, but the net effect is negative for the region, adding selling pressure to its equity markets.

In the second scenario — a typical tech-driven recession with a 6% investment drop — the US and Europe would both likely enter recession, compounding the selloff in stock markets. That could mean a drop of more than 20% in the US market and more than 30% in Europe. In the third scenario v a full TMT-style crash — drawdowns could exceed 50%. The best position to take in this case would likely be cash, but fund managers and other investors who want to stay in equities would instead need to find calmer waters. But where might those be?

A reversal would likely hit European equities harder on average — yet the best hiding places may also be on the continent.

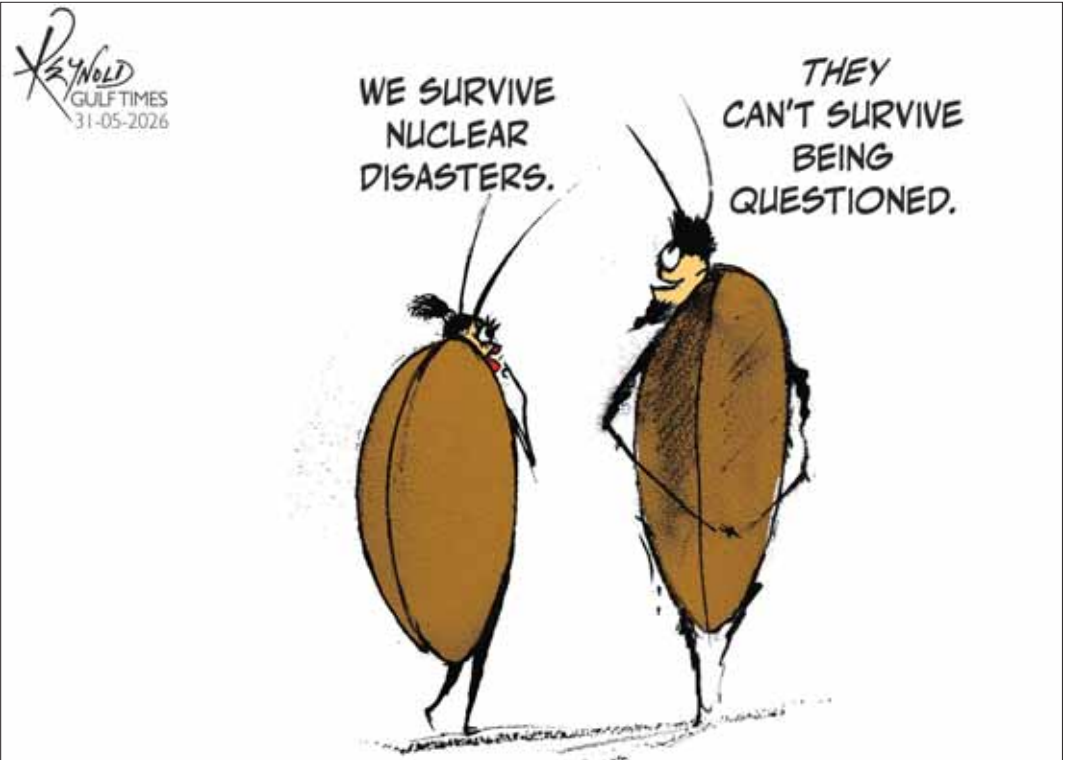
One sector that looks particularly attractive is European construction and infrastructure. Germany has committed some 12.5% of its GDP to infrastructure over the next decade, spending that should continue regardless of what happens in the AI space. In fact, if a recession did hit, such spending may even be accelerated to provide fiscal stimulus to an ailing economy. In addition, European pharmaceuticals and food — which have little exposure to AI and are typically fairly "recession proof" — could also outperform their US equivalents in such a scenario.

The reason, once again, comes down to investor flows. US investors, hardest hit by a tech crash, would presumably be forced to sell more of their other holdings to cover losses or margin calls, driving broader market declines and larger drawdowns even in defensive sectors. European defensives would likely face less of that forced selling pressure. — Reuters

### Asiatic greetings



Commander of United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, and United States Forces Korea Xavier Brunson greets a Thailand representative at the ISS Shangri-La Dialogue security summit in Singapore yesterday. (Reuters)



By Alexander Dziadosz, Nazih Osseiran and Catherine Cartier  
Reuters

# How Israel has emptied southern Lebanon far beyond the front lines

The ceasefire agreed in Lebanon last month has brought little respite for civilians, who are being driven from a steadily expanding swathe of the country by a relentless Israeli campaign of evacuations and air strikes. The US-brokered truce announced on April 16, after about six weeks of fighting, has failed to halt the violence between Israel and Hezbollah. Both are carrying out near-daily attacks while accusing the other of violating the pact.

That's left hundreds of thousands of civilians in southern Lebanon displaced from their homes. Shortly after the ceasefire declaration, Israel published a map marking out a buffer zone covering nearly 600sq km (230 sq miles) that it had occupied with ground forces, and listing 57 towns and villages where it had warned residents to evacuate.

Since then, though, the Israel military has carried out hundreds of air strikes on a far wider area outside that occupied zone and issued evacuation orders covering more than 100 additional Lebanese towns and villages, according to a Reuters review of Israeli statements.

Together with the occupied zone, these orders span about 2,000 sq km of Lebanon — about a fifth of the entire country — much of which has been rendered effectively off-limits to residents, according to the review and interviews with local officials, aid workers and displaced people. The reporting provides one of the most detailed pictures yet of the growing displacement crisis engulfing this small country on the eastern Mediterranean.

The fighting is part of a wider conflagration across the Middle East. Israel aims to drive back its sworn enemies — Iran and its proxy forces, including Hezbollah and Hamas — with a stated strategy to create "buffer zones" along its borders with Gaza, Syria and now Lebanon to safeguard its citizens.

The growing evacuation area, along with confusion about ongoing attacks and the eventual extent of the Israeli buffer zone, has made many residents fear

• **Truce has failed to halt the violence between Israel and Hezbollah**

• **Thousands of civilians in southern Lebanon displaced from their homes**

they may never return to their homes. "There is no way we are coming back now," said Iyad Watfi, a mukhtar — elected official — in Bazouriyeh, who said the town once home to 13,000 people had been hit by multiple air strikes and evacuation orders since the truce. "Last week, we had 20 buildings destroyed in the town in one night." Only a tiny portion of the population remained, with most others sheltering in tents to the north, he said, adding that few felt safe to return in the foreseeable future. The latest Lebanese conflict erupted on March 2 when Hezbollah fired rockets at northern Israel in solidarity with Iran, which was under Israeli and US attack. Israel responded with a ground invasion of Lebanon, leading to fighting that has so far killed more than 3,000 people and displaced hundreds of thousands, according to the Lebanese government.

Hezbollah's media office didn't respond to a request for comment. The group, a political and military movement, has itself carried out regular attacks including kamikaze drone strikes since the ceasefire. It has said that, despite the truce, it has the right to resist continued Israeli aggression and denies placing military assets in civilian areas.

Reuters reached mukhtars from 20 of the towns and villages subject to Israeli evacuation



Rescue workers and local residents inspect the damage to a building following an Israeli air strike in the Choueifat area, south of Beirut on the outskirts of the capital's southern suburbs. (AFP)



Hussein al-Amin, who was wounded in an Israeli strike, lies on a bed as his mother sits next to him, at a hospital in Tyre. (Reuters)

orders since the ceasefire, communities with pre-conflict populations ranging from hundreds to thousands of people. Most estimated the percentage of residents remaining in single digits, saying most had fled northwards or to the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon.

"People's nerves are shattered. They can't take it anymore so they left," said Ali Nazzal, a mukhtar in Srfia who said the village was virtually deserted. "The ceasefire is a lie." The

situation looks increasingly bleak for civilians in Lebanon. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged that Israel would escalate its strikes, prompting residents to flee southern suburbs of Beirut, further to the north. Israel has since issued a new slew of evacuation orders, encompassing more than a dozen new towns and villages and declaring a large section of the south a "combat zone". The ongoing conflict could have implications for the

broader US-Israeli war on Iran, with Tehran demanding a halt to Israeli attacks in Lebanon as a condition in peace talks.

On March 31, Netanyahu said his country's area of occupation in Lebanon would stretch to the Litani River, about 30km north of the border with Israel. He described it as "a vast buffer zone" to thwart anti-tank fire and the threat of invasion. By the April 16 ceasefire, Israeli forces had only occupied about half of that area. However, the subsequent barrage of air strikes and evacuation orders has driven people from areas even well beyond the river. Only about half the towns and villages subject to evacuation orders since the ceasefire are south of the Litani, with the rest to the north of the river, some more than 20km from the waterway, the review of Israeli statements found.

On May 12, the Israeli military said it had struck more than 1,100 targets since the ceasefire, including weapons warehouses, launchers and sites where Hezbollah was operating. Reuters identified the location of more than 300 of those strikes during the first month of the ceasefire by reviewing reports published by Lebanon's state news agency. An analysis of nighttime lights data captured by the satellite-based VIIRS sensor, which was carried out for Reuters by Professor Hadi Jaafar at the American University of Beirut, showed a significant reduction in light emissions across south Lebanon since the conflict began. The light levels have remained depressed in some areas during the ceasefire, strongly suggesting that many displaced residents have not returned, Jaafar said.

**'WE WANT TO RETURN, EVEN TO SLEEP ON GROUND'**

Israeli forces have used explosives and bulldozers in demolitions that effectively erase

many villages in the 600sq km zone its ground forces occupied before the ceasefire after the defence minister vowed on March 31 to destroy "all homes" near the border. In areas outside Israeli occupation, many residents tried to return during the ceasefire but were driven out again, often within days, by renewed evacuation orders and air strikes, according to local officials, displaced people and aid workers.

Hawraa Yousef Ghabbouni, 39, said she fled from the southern town of Qlaileh to the coastal city of Sidon after the latest conflict began on March 2, sleeping in a car with her husband and three children. After the ceasefire, they returned and found their home partially standing, with two rooms still intact, amid ruined houses and shops. Within a day, shelling and air strikes forced them to flee again, this time to the coastal city of Tyre, about 10km to the north. When Tyre, too, was bombed, they returned to Sidon, taking refuge in a school turned shelter. "We want to return, even if we have to sleep on the ground," Ghabbouni said. "What matters is going back. Life here is not sustainable."

In the town of Bedias, about a half-hour drive north of Qlaileh, Wael al-Amin, a 48-year-old medic, was sitting outside his brother's home on May 10, drinking coffee and watching his children play despite the steady buzz of a drone overhead. "I thought, 'Let them play,'" he said from a hospital in Tyre. "These are children. Who would target them?" Moments later, a blast tore through his brother's house, sending a cloud of debris into the air. Amin stumbled through the smoke until he found his eight-year-old son, wounded amid the rubble. "He told me, 'I'm here,'" he said. Amin pulled the boy to safety before discovering that his brother had been killed in the strike.

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CHAIRMAN

Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR

Kamran Rehmat

P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar

editor@gulf-times.com

4435 0478 (News)

4446 6404 (Sport)

44466636 (Home delivery)

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WAR TALKS

Russia's Rosatom says Ukraine struck nuclear plant

Russia's state nuclear energy company Rosatom said yesterday a Ukrainian drone had struck the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, Europe's largest, causing no damage to key equipment, but leaving a hole in the wall of a turbine hall. "This afternoon, a Ukrainian kamikaze combat drone struck the turbine hall building of Power Unit No. 6, resulting in a subsequent detonation," Rosatom's head Alexei Likhachev said in a statement. "The explosion caused no damage to the primary equipment; however, it tore a hole in the turbine hall wall." Likhachev called the incident "deliberate". (Reuters)

TRAFFIC CRASH

Truck accident kills 20 in Eastern Afghanistan

A truck overturned in eastern Afghanistan yesterday, killing 20 people on board including 12 children, a provincial official said. Deadly traffic crashes are common in Afghanistan, due in part to poor roads after decades of conflict, dangerous driving and a lack of regulation. The vehicle was carrying Afghan families returning from Pakistan, where they had been living, according to Abdul Malik Niazi, spokesperson for the governor of Laghman province. "Twenty people (have died) – five women, three men and 12 children," the spokesperson said, revising an earlier toll of 18 dead. The accident left 33 people injured. (AFP)

LATEST REPORT

UK risks 'lost generation' as youth unemployment rises

Britain risks creating a "lost generation" as the number of young people out of work, education and training rises one million and is set to keep rising, according to a government-commissioned review. Without action, the number of 16- to 24-year-olds not in employment, education or training, so-called "NEETs", could increase to 1.25 million, or one in six, by 2031, the report warned. The report said this was a result of a "sharp decline" in entry-level roles such as hospitality jobs, weekend jobs and apprenticeships. "We are at risk of a lost generation," Alan Milburn, a former Labour cabinet minister who led the review, said. (AFP)

DRONE STRIKE

Ukraine hits oil tanker and depot in southern Russia

Ukrainian drones hit a tanker and an oil depot in southern Russia on Saturday, causing fires but no casualties, Moscow said. Ukraine has stepped up its attacks on Russian oil infrastructure, causing significant damages. Kyiv has in recent weeks launched drones into Russia as far as the Urals, as Moscow's full-scale offensive against Ukraine drags on through its fifth year. Yuri Slyusar, governor of the southern Rostov region, said an oil tanker in the port of Taganrog was hit and that authorities had extinguished a fire. "No fuel oil leaks have been reported. There are no casualties," he said on Telegram. (AFP)

Dublin protest urges probe into 'George Floyd'-style death

AFP  
Dublin

Protesters in Dublin demanded "justice" yesterday for a Congolese man who died after he was restrained by security guards, in an incident likened to George Floyd's murder in the United States six years ago.

Around 100 people demonstrated in Ireland's capital to call for an independent and transparent probe into the death of 35-year-old Yves Sakila earlier this month.

Video footage widely shared on social media showed Sakila being held on the ground for almost five minutes by security workers outside a department store on a busy shopping street in central Dublin



Protesters walk down O'Connell Street in central Dublin. (AFP)

on May 15.

Sakila, who had been living in Ireland since 2004, then became unresponsive before later dying in hospital.

Irish police said in a statement they are investigating "all of the

circumstances" surrounding his restraint and death.

The probe has not yet reached any announced findings or charging decisions.

A post-mortem examination has been completed by a state pa-

thologist but the results have not yet been released.

"We need justice for Yves Sakila. We need a proper investigation into his death," one of the protesters, Eoghan O Ceannabhain, a musician, told AFP.

The case has sparked a strong reaction among Ireland's black and African communities, particularly those in the Congolese diaspora.

Campaigners say the case raises wider concerns about the treatment of black people in Ireland and the use of excessive force by private security staff.

"We are standing for the community to ask for justice," Ono Tambura, a 60-year-old Congolese woman who lives in Ireland, told AFP at the protest.

Protestors at demonstrations

have drawn parallels with the murder by a police officer of Floyd in Minneapolis in the United States in 2020, which triggered riots and inspired the global Black Lives Matter movement.

While urging peaceful demonstrations, protest organisers have called for full transparency from authorities and demanded that all available security camera and witness evidence be examined. Other demands include the prompt publication of forensic findings, and accountability for anyone found to have acted unlawfully.

Campaigners have also called on the government to address rising concerns in the country about racial profiling and discrimination raised by members of minority communities.

HBKU expert says uncertainty drives digital dependence

From Page 1

"Heightened uncertainty and emotional fatigue make AI's responsiveness and non-judgmental nature appealing," explained, Dr Ali. "People may turn to AI not only for routine tasks but also for reassurance and validation. Continuous exposure to distressing information and frequent checking behaviours can further reinforce reliance on AI as a filtering, summarising, and sense-making tool.

"This intensified reliance can mirror patterns observed in other forms of problematic digital engagement, such as excessive social media use or gaming, where short-term relief and perceived utility gradually give way to habitual and potentially compulsive use."

Highlighting the role of social media in amplifying distress, Dr Ali said that social media algorithms are designed to prioritise content that aligns with users' interests and maximises engagement. And while this serves a practical purpose in filtering out irrelevant material, it can also reinforce existing beliefs and limit exposure to diverse perspectives.

"During periods of regional upheaval, this effect becomes more pronounced, as users are more likely to engage with emotionally charged or anxiety-inducing content, which algorithms then continue to amplify," he said. "Many platforms also leverage behavioural mechanisms such as intermittent reward – features such as short-form videos and endlessly scrolling feeds combine personalisation with a reward structure, making it easier for compulsive patterns of use to emerge, particularly under conditions of uncertainty and heightened vigilance."

According to the professor, AI-driven mental health apps represent another dimension of this complex landscape. While they promise scalable support, Dr Ali sounds a note of caution, saying: "The software market remains largely unregulated in terms of scientific validation and clinical grounding. Not all apps are evidence-based, and features such as peer comparison or progress tracking can inadvertently create pressure or feelings of inadequacy.

"Many AI systems are optimised to be agreeable or supportive, which can unintentionally validate biased or incomplete views. Encouraging self-reflection and prompting AI for balanced perspectives can counter this tendency."

"Heightened stress, fear, and urgency can lead people to disclose more personal or sensitive information, making them particularly vulnerable to data exploitation. This is already evident in the rise of fraud and scams that specifically target individuals during such times of instability," he cautioned.

"Ultimately, AI should complement, not replace, human care and offline coping mechanisms, enhancing resilience, while preserving the social bonds vital for long-term wellbeing," he added.



Preparations underway for the first round of the presidential election to be held on May 31, in Santander de Quilichao. (Reuters)

Guerrilla violence rises as Colombia goes to polls

José Moran arrived at his town's community center this week to find its zinc roof destroyed by an explosives-laden drone, the result of guerrilla violence that has blighted the region of Southwestern Colombia. As the country prepares to vote today for a new president, Moran is pleading for peace, saying that the conflict is taking its toll on residents of the municipality of Suarez, particularly its children. "We live here in a state of great anxiety, with constant nervousness," the 73-year-old community leader told AFP.

"And the saddest part is that the children – well, they see a helicopter... or they hear any little sound, and immediately they cry out, 'The war is coming! The war is coming!' So the children are deeply traumatised."

Surrounded by cloud-shrouded Andean mountains and lush tropical vegetation, their community sits near a military base that is under constant assault by dissident factions – groups that broke away from a 2016 peace accord with the now-defunct FARC guerrilla organisation.

Inhabited predominantly by Afro-Colombian and Indigenous peasant communities, the town of Suarez is a key operational zone for the forces of Ivan Mordisco, the country's most-wanted guerrilla commander, who has waged relentless attacks against both security forces and civilians.

The rebels also clash with rival organisations over the spoils of illegal mining and drug trafficking within Colombia, the world's largest producer of cocaine. "They may have their own reasons for their conflicts, but the problem is that we are the ones caught in the middle," laments Moran.

Outgoing leftist President Gustavo Petro attempted unsuccessfully to negotiate peace with the various armed groups, and Sunday's presidential election will pit opposing visions on how to end Colombia's half-century of conflict.

The frontrunner in the polls, leftist Senator Ivan Cepeda, advocates continuing Petro's "Total Peace" policy.

His closest rival, right-wing lawyer Abelardo de la Espriella, pledges instead to confront guerrilla groups with an iron fist.

He plans to dismantle the tribunal established under the peace accord with the FARC.

Regardless of who wins the election, "may they search their conscience... and be able to bring a little peace," said Flor Valencia, who runs a local school "When those sounds start – the explosions – you just want to weep out of sheer desperation," she said, recounting how the children become "terrified".

Mayor Cesar Ceron informed last year Suarez saw 77 attacks involving explosives and drones.

The violence is "out of control," he said. (AFP)

US seeks 'stable equilibrium' with China in Asia: Hegseth

AFP  
Singapore

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth struck a measured tone towards China at a major defence forum yesterday, noting "rightful alarm" over Beijing's military build-up but saying Washington sought a "stable equilibrium" in Asia.

Hegseth's headline speech at Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue, which brings together top defence officials and experts from about 45 countries, contrasted with his strongly confrontational remarks on China at last year's gathering.

It came as Donald Trump struggles to resolve the Middle East war – which has caused oil prices to soar, hurting major Asian economies – and after the US president met his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping against the perennial background of tensions over Taiwan.

"When we look across the region today, there is rightful alarm regarding China's historic military build-up and the expansion of its military activities in the region and beyond," Hegseth said.

Washington does not seek "needless confrontation" but rather "a genuinely stable equilibrium (in Asia) that works for Americans as well as our allies", he said.

That means "a favourable but durable balance of power in which no state, including China, can impose its hegemony and hold the security or prosperity of our nation and our allies in question", according to Hegseth.

Unlike Beijing, which has sent a panel of military experts and scholars instead of Defence Minister Dong Jun for the second year running, Hegseth is leading a bumper US delegation to the event that provides chances for both open debate and closed-door diplomacy.

The Pentagon chief said the US sought "respectful" and "good-faith" engagement with Beijing, adding: "I wish my counterpart



US Secretary of Defence Pete Hegseth at the 23rd Shangri-La Dialogue summit yesterday. (AFP)

was here at this conference, but I look forward to other options when we can cross paths."

Major General Meng Xiangqing, the head of the Chinese delegation, said following the speech that "stable US-China relations are not only good for both peoples, but also good for regional stability and global peace".

Trump visited China this month, talking up "fantastic" trade deals but giving few details and later suggesting Washington could use its arms sales to self-rulered Taiwan as a bargaining chip with Beijing.

There had been "no change" in Washington's stance towards Taiwan, but "any decision about future Taiwan arms sales... will rest with" Trump, Hegseth said.

His remarks about the regional state of affairs contrasted sharply with last year's event, when Hegseth painted China as a potentially "imminent" threat to security and outlined a swaggering vision of muscular American deterrence.

Chinese delegate Da Wei, director of the Center for International Security and Strategy at Beijing's Tsinghua University, told AFP this year's address was "much more moderate".

However, he said Hegseth's depiction of a hegemonic China was "ironic... given what the US is doing in Iran and has

done in Venezuela."

US delegate Tammy Duckworth, a Democratic senator and Trump critic, said Hegseth's remarks were overly conciliatory towards China.

"I worry that this administration is being distracted into wars that they've started in other parts of the world at the expense of our commitment here in the Indo-Pacific," she told reporters.

Instead of Dong, China has sent experts and scholars from its army's academic institutions, led by Meng of the National Defense University.

Analysts have said Dong's no-show reflects Beijing's confidence as an established power with little inclination to answer publicly for its assertive moves in the region.

Some argue, however, that China is also running the risk of having no senior policymaker present if two major security issues come up: reopening the Strait of Hormuz, and Beijing's claim to Taiwan.

Hegseth praised nations including South Korea, Japan, Australia and the Philippines for boosting their defence spending, while threatening consequences for nations that "free-ride".

"Those days are over. Allies who refuse to step up and carry their own weight for our collective defence will face a clear shift in how we do business."

Hungary to reform public media after long pro-Orban bias

Fired in 2011 from Hungarian state media for protesting government meddling in news programmes, Aranka Szavuly is eager to return to work as a journalist, but says significant reforms are needed after 16 years of nationalist Viktor Orban's rule.

Before losing last month's election, Orban's camp held tight control over public media coverage, according to whistleblowers.

"After all these years, a simple change in management may no longer be enough. We need to re-think the entire operation," said Szavuly, 46. She worked at state television for more than a decade until her contract was ended after

she staged a hunger strike.

Earlier this month, new Prime Minister Peter Magyar, whose party beat Orban's by a landslide in April, ordered a complete audit of the operation and financing of state media, which he has branded a "lie factory".

Leaked documents, recordings and testimonies from former employees showed that editors pushed for one-sided coverage, praising the policies of Orban's government while demonising his rivals and foreign critics, including the EU.

Since the election, the public broadcaster has already changed its tone, while top private broad-

caster TV2 – owned by Orban-allied businessmen – saw its main news anchors replaced and news director pushed out.

In the week following the election, almost all news reports aired on public TV took on a neutral tone, according to an analysis from the liberal-leaning think tank Republikon Institute.

It noted a sharp break from the pro-Orban bias observed in the past. "Everyone has gone from harlots to taking their first sacraments," a senior reporter told AFP on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak publicly.

He said many journalists "dis-

approved" of past coverage, but "could not ignore" instructions from higher-ups – until they ceased in recent weeks.

Staff at the MTI news agency moved quickly after Orban's election defeat, demanding the restoration of "editorial autonomy" in an internal petition.

Although management dismissed their concerns, political censorship has ceased, according to three current employees, who spoke on condition of anonymity, as they were not authorised to talk to the press.

"MTI has been liberated and works freely... Topics and organisations previously banned have

returned to our coverage. Propaganda has been pushed out," said an editor.

During the campaign Magyar – who came to power on promises of "regime change" – vowed to restore the independence of state media, which has an annual budget of over 430 million euros.

Magyar has stressed that he respects press freedom, although critics say he can be combative with independent journalists.

Under Orban, public broadcasting was turned into a propaganda machine, according to media watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF), which ranks Hungary among the EU's lowest performers

in its annual press freedom index.

Hungary's state-owned TV channels, radio stations and news agency were merged into a single institution called MTVA. This happened a year after Orban's return to power in 2010.

His tight grip on the media also extended to private outlets owned – or later acquired – by business associates close to him.

Journalists at the public broadcaster complained that political control further worsened over recent years.

Censorship also crept into news agency MTI, which lost its already limited autonomy in a 2015 reorganisation. (AFP)



# Staycations offer simpler escape as more families rediscover Doha

By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

Many residents in Doha are increasingly turning to staycations as a practical and enjoyable alternative to overseas travel amid rising travel costs, fluctuating airfare prices, and regional uncertainties.

Hotels, beaches, cultural destinations, and family attractions across the city have seen growing interest on weekends, public holidays, and festive occasions such as Eid al-Adha, as residents opt for shorter, more flexible breaks closer to home.

"Travelling abroad excites everyone, but with a staycation, we still get the feeling of taking a break without spending so much on flights and travel arrangements," said Geraldine, who often spent festive periods abroad but decided to book a stay at a local beachfront hotel this Eid.

She pointed out that she chose a quick getaway to relax and spend the holidays with friends, rather than spending days planning complicated itineraries.

"Instead of arriving at airports hours before departure, carrying heavy luggage and waiting in long queues, we can simply drive to a nearby hotel or destination and begin our holiday almost immediately," Geraldine said.

She added that ongoing regional tensions had also influenced her decision to spend the Eid holiday in Qatar.

Apart from financial considerations, some residents said concerns about possible travel disruptions had also influenced their decision to remain in the country.

For parents with young children, the ease and flexibility of local travel have become especially appealing.

Filipino expatriate Nards D said that travelling abroad with children can be stressful due to long journeys, airport procedures, and tight schedules, making staycations a simpler and more convenient



Residents are choosing staycations to unwind in Doha.

alternative that still offers the feeling of a genuine holiday.

"It actually allows us to fit leisure activities and other commitments, minus the stress. With a staycation, nearly everything is hassle-free," he said.

Hotels and hospitality venues across Doha have adapted to this growing demand by offering packages designed for local residents. Family-oriented activities, pool access, spa experiences, fitness

programmes and entertainment events have become key attractions for guests seeking relaxation without extensive travel.

Apart from swimming pools and beachfront activities, hotel gyms and fitness centres have also appeared as popular spots for staycation guests, particularly among younger residents looking to maintain active lifestyles even during holidays.

Another 'staycationist', Tony,



said: "After months of stressful office hours, I had the chance to 'sweat it out' in the gym this time while at the hotel, and it feels great. Staycations, I would say, encourage a slower, more relaxed pace than tightly packed overseas travel.

"I no longer need to rush between tourist attractions. I think many people are choosing to focus on wellness, family bonding and simple recreational activities."

Residents are also taking advantage of local attractions that they previously overlooked while focusing mainly on international travel. Museums, public beaches, desert destinations, waterfront promenades, and cultural districts are now attracting holiday-goers eager to rediscover what Qatar has to offer.

Menon, an Indian expatriate who also booked a two-night stay at a hotel in Doha, said he loves to travel abroad but preferred a staycation this time.

"I was thankful to have been granted a break this Eid and to have the chance to take some time out at a hotel here and later visit places in Qatar I haven't seen and explored. Sometimes when you live somewhere for a long time, you forget to enjoy it like a visitor would," he pointed out.



## Al Jazeera documentary to premiere Ali bin Towar's cycling journey

Al Jazeera Documentary will premiere a new documentary on Qatari adventurer, presenter, and cyclist, Ali bin Towar al-Kuwari today at 8 pm on his cycling journey across Morocco, created in partnership with the Years of Culture initiative as part of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture.

Managing director, Ahmed Mahfouz from Al Jazeera Documentary Channel, said: "At Al Jazeera Documentary, we believe storytelling has the power to build understanding between cultures and communities. Our partnership with the Years of Culture initiative on this documentary reflects a shared commitment to authentic human stories that celebrate dialogue, exploration, and cultural exchange across the Arab world and beyond."

The documentary captures a deeply personal and immersive exploration of Morocco's layered cultural identity, as Ali bin Towar travels through historic cities, mountain landscapes, coastal communities, and centuries-old medinas by bicycle. Along the route, the film highlights several encounters with local historians, artisans, cultural figures, academics, and residents, offering viewers an intimate portrait of Morocco through human connection and shared experience.

"This journey was about discovering Morocco through the people we met along the way. Travelling by bicycle changes your relationship with a place. You move slowly, you listen

more, and you become part of the environment around you. What we found was an incredible generosity of spirit, deep cultural pride, and so many human connections that reminded us how close our societies truly are," Al-Kuwari said.

From Tangier and Chefchaouen to Fez, Rabat, and Marrakesh, the documentary explores the diversity that defines Morocco, a country shaped by Amazigh, Arab, Andalusian, African, Mediterranean, and Islamic influences, while preserving traditions passed down through generations. Through architecture, music, craftsmanship, food, storytelling, and everyday life, the journey reveals how Morocco has cultivated a distinctive cultural identity rooted in openness, heritage, and continuity.

Developed in partnership with the Years of Culture initiative, the documentary reflects the spirit of the Qatar-Morocco 2024 Year of Culture by celebrating the longstanding cultural connections, shared heritage, and people-to-people exchanges that continue to strengthen ties between the two countries.

Known for his documentaries exploring civilisations, traditions, and cultural narratives around the world, Ali bin Towar uses cycling as a way to move beyond conventional travel formats and engage with people and places at a human pace, fostering deeper cultural exchange and reflection throughout the journey.



## Prism Academy reshapes arts education in Qatar

By Shaima Sherif  
Staff Reporter

In a city where cultural and creative industries are rapidly expanding, Prism Academy is positioning itself as more than an arts institute, offering young people in Qatar a space to build confidence, discipline and identity through music, dance and visual arts, its managing director has said.

"At Prism Academy, art should never feel distant or intimidating to children," managing director, Sharaf told the *Gulf Times*. "We wanted to create a place where students could walk in for music lessons, discover dance, try painting, join a band, and slowly find confidence in themselves through creativity."

The academy, which brings together Prism Music, Fine Arts and Dance under one platform, currently serves more than 500 students with over 30 skilled mentors. Its vision, according to Sharaf, is rooted in developing not just performers but "confident, socially conscious artists" who can contribute meaningfully to society.

Sharaf said the focus from the outset was to create an environment where students feel valued regardless of skill level. "The goal was not only to train performers, but to build an environment where students feel seen, encouraged, and proud of their individuality," he said.

A key part of Prism's approach is inclusivity, particularly in engaging children of different learning needs. "We are continuously trying to find better ways to involve children with special needs in creative activities and performances, because art has the ability to communicate beyond barriers that traditional learning sometimes cannot," he added.

The academy also sees arts education as increasingly vital in



a fast-paced digital world. Sharaf noted that students today are surrounded by content but often lack opportunities to create. "Arts education has become even more important today because young people are growing up in a world that moves very quickly," he said. "The arts teach creativity, patience, observation, focus and emotional expression."

He added that creative learning often translates into wider academic and personal development. "As every art course triggers creativity, students become better at multitasking, which eventually helps them excel academically too," he said.

Prism Academy's recent student recital, The Grand Prism Night, highlighted months of preparation

behind every performance. Sharaf said the event was designed to celebrate growth rather than perfection. "What people see on stage for a few minutes is often the result of months of practice, mistakes, discipline and persistence," he said. "This recital is not about perfection. It is about growth."

He added that such performances often mark a turning point for students. "A large stage changes a student. It teaches them how to handle pressure, how to recover from mistakes, and how to trust their preparation," he said.

Looking ahead, Prism aims to expand its creative offerings beyond traditional training, including music production, song production, and upcoming cinematography and direction courses. "We already have several students in our music production programme working on live projects," Sharaf said.

He added that the academy's long-term ambition is to evolve into a wider creative hub. "We want Prism to become more than just a training institute," he said. "A space that brings people together through performances, workshops, collaborations and community events."

## Comic play *Sugar Daddy* pulls crowd to Abdulaziz Nasser Theatre at Souq Waqif

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The comedy play *Sugar Daddy* continues its run at the Abdulaziz Nasser Theatre in Souq Waqif until June 6, attracting a large audience and enthusiastic participation from fans of Gulf Comedy Theatre. This comes amidst a flurry of artistic and entertainment events taking place in Doha during the festivities of Eid Al-Adha.

The play stars acclaimed players like Hassan al-Balam, along with Ahmed al-Awnan, Zahra Arafat, and Fawz al-Shatti. Written and directed by Abdullah al-Badr, a prominent Kuwaiti theatre director and actor, and serves as the head of the Youth Theatre Department at the Public Authority for Youth in Kuwait. He is considered one of the most prominent directors in the Gulf region, and his name is associated with many successful popular works with "Al-Balam Group," as well as in comedy and horror theatre.

The play unfolds within a social



A scene from the comedy.

comedy framework, exploring the nature of contemporary relationships, which are often based on self-interest and materialistic expectations. Through a series of satirical situations and unexpected twists, the play reveals the transformations that have occurred in some human relationships in the modern era. The story revolves around the intertwining of personal interests and emotions, as the characters find themselves in complex and humorous situa-

tions resulting from the pursuit of material gain or self-centred relationships. The play maintains a lighthearted comedy style that appeals to a wide range of age groups.

The Kuwaiti play *Sugar Daddy* is part of a group of artistic and theatrical events are taking place in several parts of the city during the festive season. Such events are revitalising the cultural scene while providing diverse options to the public and families during the Eid break.

## Al Jasra Club celebrates Eid Al-Adha with a cultural fest



Al Jasra Cultural and Social Club affiliated to the Ministry of Culture, celebrated Eid Al-Adha with a public festival that embraced joy and cultural significance. Mohammed Saeed Ibrahim, the event's general supervisor and a member of the club's board of directors, stated that the festival witnessed a large turnout of families, children, and club members. The activities included a variety of entertainment shows, cultural and heritage competitions, interactive segments, and dedicated areas for children and family games. The festival featured cultural and heritage competitions with prizes and gifts for participants. Members of the Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of People with Special Needs attended the event, reflecting the festival's humanitarian and social dimensions and its commitment to expanding community participation and promoting the values of inclusion and human interaction during public events. Al Jasra Club expressed its gratitude to Dr Tariq al-Issawi, the society's adviser, for his efforts in this regard.