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## PM, UAE envoy discuss co-operation



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with UAE ambassador to Qatar Saeed Abdullah al-Qamzi. The meeting addressed co-operation between the two countries and ways to support and strengthen it. It also discussed a number of topics of common interest. The prime minister wished the ambassador success in performing his duties, assuring him of all support for closer co-operation across various fields. (QNA)

## Qatar moves to protect workers from heat stress

By Ayman Adly  
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) launched yesterday a comprehensive awareness campaign to protect workers from heat stress during working hours, in co-operation with several partners from both the public and private sectors, in preparation for the implementation of Ministerial Decision No. (17) of 2021 concerning the regulation of working hours in open workplaces during the summer to protect workers from heat stress risks.

The decision enters into force annually from June 1 until September 15. The decision prohibits work in outdoor open areas and shaded areas that are not equipped with ventilation facilities from 10am until 3:30pm, with work resuming during the evening pe-

riod after the restricted hours have ended, thereby ensuring workers are protected from direct exposure to high temperatures.

In addition to the MoL, participating entities include the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Public Works Authority, Qatar Charity, Qatar Red Crescent, along with a number of private sector companies.

The MoL stressed that the decision requires employers, companies, and establishments operating outdoor worksites exposed to direct sunlight to establish a clear work schedule specifying daily working hours in accordance with the provisions of the decision. This schedule must be displayed prominently in a location easily accessible to all workers, thereby promoting transparency and ensuring compliance with the approved legislation. **To Page 5**

## Shura Council passes food safety law

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

The Shura Council approved a landmark food safety law and reviewed a proposal aimed at reinforcing family values among the country's youth at its regular weekly session yesterday, presided over by Speaker HE Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem. The new legislation on food, passed in its amended form after a review of the Health, General Services and Environment Committee's report and deliberations among members, has been referred to the government for further action. The Council also took up a Social Affairs, Labour and Housing Committee report on the government's response to its

earlier proposal concerning family upbringing and the strengthening of national and social values among younger generations, and resolved the matter accordingly. Several parliamentary engagement reports were also tabled. These covered the Council's delegation at the Second Women Parliamentary Forum of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean, held in Abu Dhabi in January; the participation of Sultan bin Hassan al-Dabit al-Dosari at a temporary diplomatic committee meeting of the Arab Inter-parliamentary Union in Cairo in February; and Khalifa bin Jassim al-Kuwari's attendance at a March videoconference seminar on counterterrorism frameworks and the protection of humanitarian action under international humanitarian law.

## PM, Iran, Swiss FM mull Pak mediation

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a phone call yesterday from Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi. Both sides discussed Pakistani mediation efforts between the US and Iran, as well as the latest developments in Lebanon.

The prime minister reaffirmed Qatar's full support for efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement to resolve the crisis, stressing the need for all parties to engage constructively to achieve lasting peace and regional stability.

He also emphasised that freedom of navigation is a fundamental principle that cannot be compromised, warning that closing or using the Strait of Hormuz as a pressure tool would only deepen the crisis and endanger the vital interests of states in the region. The prime minister also received a telephone call from Swiss Confederation's Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Ignazio Cassis.

The conversation addressed advancing bilateral co-operation between the two countries as well as Pakistani mediation efforts between the US and Iran. In addition, they spoke about co-ordinating efforts to back mediation aimed at de-escalation, thereby helping reinforce security and stability in the region.

The prime minister underscored the importance of all parties responding constructively to the ongoing mediation efforts to address the root causes of the crisis through diplomacy and lead to sustainable peace. (QNA)

## Qatar slams Iranian attacks on Kuwait

Qatar strongly condemned the repeated Iranian attacks on Kuwait, labelling them a flagrant violation of Kuwait's sovereignty and the international rules-based order. In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the necessity of shielding the region from the consequences of unprovoked attacks and de-escalating tensions to restore regional and global security and stability. (QNA)

## Iran talks ongoing at 'rapid pace'

Trump says Israel, Hezbollah agree to de-escalate

AFP  
Teheran

US President Donald Trump said Iran talks were moving at a "rapid pace" despite the negotiations to end the Mideast war appearing in deep trouble yesterday, with Iran's Revolutionary Guards warning of new fronts.

Iran's Tasnim news agency reported Tehran had suspended dialogue with mediators in protest at Israel's expanding offensive in Lebanon, with Israel saying it would once again target Beirut's southern suburbs.

"Talks are continuing, at a rapid pace, with the Islamic Republic of Iran," Trump said in a social media post made shortly after another post in which he said he had persuaded Israel and Hezbollah to de-escalate.

Weeks of indirect talks between the US and Iran marked by threats and several waves of air strikes have so far failed to bring about an end to the war or the re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz,



People make their way on scooters as they flee the southern suburbs of Beirut yesterday. (Reuters)

the key shipping channel for Gulf oil and gas.

The latest US-Iran exchange of fire overnight coincided with Israel expanding its ground offensive in Lebanon, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowing to push deeper into the

country and instructing his military to strike "terror targets" in Beirut's southern suburbs.

Israel's Arabic-language spokesman posted on X that residents of the suburbs, or Dahiyeh, should evacuate "to preserve their safety", and AFP images showed huge traffic jams as residents tried to flee.

Later yesterday, Trump said he had persuaded Hezbollah and Israel to de-escalate the conflict. Netanyahu said yesterday that he had told Trump that Israel would attack "terror" targets in Beirut if Hezbollah did not cease its attacks on Israeli cities.

"At the same time, the IDF will continue to operate as planned in southern Lebanon," Netanyahu said in a statement, referring to the Israeli military.

Iran again said yesterday it had not engaged in any nuclear negotiations and insisted that Israel must halt its offensive in Lebanon before any wider deal to end the war could be agreed.

Ahead of a UN Security Council emergency meeting on Lebanon, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's spokesman said: "We are deeply alarmed by the escalation in military activities across southern Lebanon and beyond."

## PHCC expands weekend care network

By A Staff Reporter  
Doha

Primary Health Care Corporation has widened access to weekend medical services, adding Al Waab Health Centre to its growing network of facilities open outside regular working hours.

The expansion, effective this Friday, brings to 22 the number of health centres across Qatar offering weekend services – spanning locations from Al Khor in the north to Al Wakra in the south, and stretching across major residential hubs including West Bay, Al Sadd, Madinat Khalifa and Gharrafat Al Rayyan.

The move is part of a broader PHCC push to bring care closer to communities and ease the strain on hospital emergency departments, which often absorb demand that could be handled at the primary care level. Alongside weekend coverage, the corporation operates a parallel urgent care network of 15 health centres providing round-the-clock services for adults – designed specifically for non-life-threatening cases that nonetheless require prompt attention.

## Qatar's online economy: small screens, big business

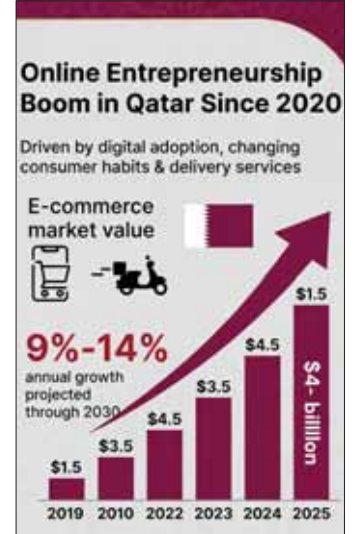
By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

Online entrepreneurship has expanded rapidly in Qatar since 2020, driven by changing consumer habits, wider digital adoption and the growth of delivery services.

While official figures do not separately track the number of online-only businesses, available data indicate significant growth in the sector over the past five years.

According to the US Department of Commerce's Qatar market guide, the country's e-commerce sector was valued at nearly \$1.5bn in 2019 and has continued to grow steadily since then. Market research firm Mordor Intelligence estimates the market will reach around \$4.5bn in 2025, with annual growth projected at 9%-14% through the end of the decade.

The growth of digital commerce is also reflected in government policy. The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has identified digital commerce as a key pillar of its 2024-2030 strategy to support economic diversification and the development of small and



medium-sized enterprises. Further supporting the trend, new regulations introduced in 2026 allow certain businesses to operate entirely through digital platforms without maintaining physical premises, lowering barriers to entry for online entrepreneurs and startups, according to legal consultancy GLA & Co. **To Page 5**

## Qatar slams storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli extremists

Qatar has condemned the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli extremists, along with the provocative actions carried out under the protection of the occupation forces, describing it as a flagrant violation of international law, an unacceptable provocation of the feelings of millions of Muslims around the world, and a dangerous attempt to impose a new reality in the occupied Jerusalem and its Islamic and Christian sanctities.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) stressed that Al-Aqsa Mosque is an exclusively Muslim place of worship and that all unilateral measures aimed at altering the historical and legal status quo in Jerusalem and its sanctities are null and void under international law.

The ministry warned that the continuation of such violations and repeated provocations could fuel further violence and escalation in the region, undermining prospects for de-escalation and stability. - QNA

## Minister holds meeting with Kyrgyzstan's ambassador



HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah met yesterday with Kyrgyzstan's ambassador to Qatar Aibek Toktobolotov. They explored ways to boost bilateral co-operation and relations across fields of mutual interest. - QNA

## Qatar takes part in 35th CCPCJ session in Vienna

Qatar took part in the 35th session of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ), convened in Vienna.

Qatar's delegation was headed by the Legal Adviser to the Minister of Interior Major-General Dr Abdullah Yousef al-Mal, who underscored the importance of boosting multilateral co-operation to curb transnational organised crime, cybercrime, and corruption.

Transnational organised crime is aggravating amid conflicts and international polarisation, Dr al-Mal said, stressing that international co-operation represents a core pillar in safeguarding global peace and security, as well as addressing common security challenges.

He spoke on the most salient efforts that Qatar has projected in this domain, including the hosting of the 11th session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (COSP11) in December last year.

This conference, Dr al-Mal said, witnessed the adoption of the "Doha Declaration" in support of enhancing international co-operation and capacity-building in the anti-corruption domain.

In addition, he affirmed that Qatar takes seriously its role in negotiating the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime.

Dr al-Mal called on nations to promptly sanction this convention to ensure its entry into force and strengthen global efforts to counter cybercrimes.

He called for increasing investment in the fields of crime prevention and criminal justice, as well as pursuing comprehensive strategies that remedy the socioeconomic causes of crime, with a particular emphasis on youth empowerment and investing in their capabilities. - QNA



# Ministry marks International Day for Biological Diversity

By Ayman Adly  
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Municipality recently marked the International Day for Biological Diversity 2026, bringing together researchers, specialists, and stakeholders involved in biodiversity conservation and agricultural sustainability.

The celebration, themed *Acting locally for global impact* and represented by the Biotechnology and Gene Bank Section of the ministry's Agricultural Research Department, was opened by director Hamad Sakit al-Shammari, who lauded the achievements of the Qatar Gene Bank since its establishment.

He said that Qatar's national efforts to conserve genetic resources perfectly embody this year's theme, demonstrating how local initiatives can generate meaningful global impact in biodiversity protection, environmental sustainability, and food security.

Al-Shammari noted that preserving genetic diversity has become increasingly important as countries face growing challenges related to climate change, desertification, land degradation, and the need to develop resilient agricultural systems to ensure sustainable food production for future generations.

The event featured two special-



ised scientific presentations.

The first was delivered by Aisha Dasmal al-Kuwari, head of the Biotechnology and Gene Bank Section, who highlighted Qatar's role in preserving plant genetic resources and the national strategies to protect native plant species and agricultural biodiversity.

Her presentation underscored the importance of maintaining genetic diversity as a foundation for scientific research, crop improvement programs, and ecological resilience.

The second presentation was delivered by Dr El Sayed El-Azzazy, an expert in genetic resources, who reviewed the Qatar Gene Bank's role in conserving biodiversity.

He explained the scientific methodologies used to collect, document, preserve, and manage genetic resources and emphasised

the institution's contributions to both national and international conservation initiatives.

Dr El-Azzazy also gave a presentation on Qatar Gene Bank's achievements since its establishment in 2012, noting that it has successfully preserved 11,366,834 seeds, representing around 75% of Qatar's wild plant varieties.

The bank has also documented 1,404 genetic accessions, creating a comprehensive database of plant genetic resources collected nationwide.

These accessions, Dr El-Azzazy emphasised, serve as an important scientific reference for researchers studying biodiversity, plant adaptation, and genetic improvement.

Fieldwork has played a critical role in these achievements.

Since its inception, the Gene Bank has conducted more than

1,200 field expeditions covering various regions of Qatar, including environmentally sensitive areas and protected reserves.

In addition, the bank has registered 894 Qatari genetic resource accessions in internationally recognised databases.

The Gene Bank's scientific collection further includes some 3,500 standard herbarium specimens.

Over the years, it has trained 100 local trainees through 20 international and regional training courses, delivering a total of 600 hours of specialised training.

In addition, Qatar has registered its genetic resources in the World Information and Early Warning System on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

## Latest Supreme Judiciary Council online auctions generate QR22mn

The Evictions and Judicial Auctions Department at the Supreme Judiciary Council (SJC) conducted a number of online auctions on May 31, generating a total of QR22,265,634, which was allocated to settle 867 related cases.

Throughout the process, participants placed 1,378 bids.

The real estate auction offered 48 units, and two were sold for QR20,940,634, which was used

to settle three related cases.

The vehicle auction offered 110 vehicles, with 88 sold for a total of QR1,029,250, which was used to settle 737 related cases.

The equipment auction offered 19 pieces of equipment, with 17 sold for a total of QR294,750 to settle 123 related cases, and the scrap auction offered 100 damaged vehicles, with two sold for QR1,000 to settle four related cases.

## Eid ATM withdrawals top QR161mn as QCB ends 'Eid Change' service

The Qatar Central Bank (QCB) has announced the suspension of the Eid ATM service known as "Eid change" ("Khordah Al Eid"), where new banknotes are cashed and used by many as Eid gifts for children and minors, while the total value of withdrawals exceeded QR161mn across all machines located in 10 different sites throughout the Eid period.



## Qatar advances coral reef protection and restoration project

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has highlighted progress on its national project for the protection and restoration of coral reefs in Qatari waters, marking World Coral Reef Day on June 1.

In a statement, the ministry said the initiative reflects Qatar's commitment to science-based solutions to safeguard marine ecosystems, stressing the ecological importance of coral reefs as vital habitats for marine life and key contributors to biodiversity and environmental balance.

Assistant Undersecretary for Protection and Natural Reserves Dr Ibrahim al-Maslamani said the project represents a national effort grounded in scientific monitoring and habitat restoration, aligned with Qatar's broader sustainability goals and its efforts to enhance ecosystem resilience against climate change and environmental pressures.

He noted that coral reefs play a critical role in supporting marine biodiversity, sustaining fish stocks, protecting coastlines, and contributing to eco-tourism, research, education, and environmental awareness.

According to the MoECC, marine research teams conducted field surveys between 2024 and 2026 across Qatari waters, monitoring reef health and distribu-

The surveys identified 49 species of hard and soft corals across 22 marine sites, underscoring the richness and resilience of Qatar's coral ecosystems.

The findings have helped identify ecologically high-performing marine sites to serve as reference areas for future conservation and restoration programmes, providing a scientific basis for reef management strategies.

The project includes active restoration efforts, such as coral transplantation from healthy sites to affected areas, rehabilitation of reef structures, and the use of modern marine engineering techniques to support coral growth and stability.

It further incorporates specialised training programmes for divers and volunteers to strengthen national capacity in marine conservation, monitoring, and restoration practices.

The MoECC said these efforts align with Qatar's international environmental commitments, particularly United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14 on life below water, and support global ocean science initiatives for sustainable development.

Officials emphasised that continued scientific monitoring and data collection are essential for informed environmental decision-making and the long-term protection of marine ecosystems in Qatar. - QNA

## Qatar takes part in three-day WADA meeting in Beijing

Qatar participated in the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)'s Asia and Oceania Intergovernmental Ministerial Meeting on Anti-Doping in Sport, taking place in Beijing.

The three-day meeting, which ends tomorrow, brings together officials and representatives of governments, national sport bod-

ies, and relevant organisations.

The Adviser to the Minister of Sports and Youth Abdulrahman bin Muslim al-Dosari led Qatar's delegation at the meeting.

This participation reflects Qatar's commitment to strengthening its active presence in international sporting forums and in supporting global efforts aimed at

protecting the integrity of sports and promoting fairness and transparency in athletic competitions.

During his participation in the meeting, al-Dosari reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to supporting international initiatives and programmes aimed at combating doping, stemming from Qatar's conviction in the importance of

preserving sporting values.

Qatar, he stressed, attaches great importance to anti-doping, by developing relevant legislative frameworks and national policies, in addition to enhancing awareness and educational programmes directed at athletes and technical and administrative personnel. - QNA

## Meryal Waterpark Beach launches 'Summer Splash'

By Shaima Sherif  
Staff Reporter

Meryal Waterpark Beach has launched "Summer Splash", under Visit Qatar's "Hala Summer" campaign, offering free nightly family entertainment, character experiences, and beachside activities from June 1-30 across Qetaifan Island North.

Running daily from 6pm-11pm, the immersive beachfront experience features Nickelodeon-inspired entertainment, including Paw Patrol meet-and-greets, SpongeBob SquarePants live shows, interactive zones, beach games, water-based activities and daily performances designed to attract families during the summer season.

The activation is free for the public and aims to reinforce Qatar's position as a year-round leisure and tourism hub, offering accessible entertainment even during the warmer months.



Stefano Cappacetti

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Stefano Cappacetti, the managing director of Meryal Waterpark Beach and Rixos, said the initiative is closely aligned with the destination's family-focused vision.

"Summer Splash" aligns perfectly with Meryal Waterpark's vision of delivering joyful, safe, and memorable family experiences year-round, especially during the hot summer months," he said.

Cappacetti added that the location at Meryal Beach has long been a key family attraction in Qatar.

"Located at Meryal Beach on Qetaifan Island North, which has always been an integral family destination in Qatar and the region, the event creates a magical evening playground of live shows, character meet-and-greets, beach games, and interactive activities," he said.

Cappacetti added that the collaboration with Visit Qatar is also intended to strengthen domestic and regional tourism flows during the summer period.

He highlighted the wider impact of the activation on visitor numbers and destination visibility.

"We are grateful for this valuable collaboration with Visit Qatar, which aims to boost summer tourism by showcasing Qatar as a vibrant family destination even during the warmer months," Cappacetti said. "The free evening event at Meryal Beach attracts both residents and regional visitors, increases foot-



fall in Qetaifan Island North and Lusail City, and encourages families to extend their stay."

At the heart of the programme is a focus on creating memorable experiences for children and families, combining entertainment with comfort and accessibility.

"We want every family to leave Meryal Beach with big smiles, unforgettable photos, and cherished memories," Cappacetti stated.

"Children enjoy three daily live shows, meet their favourite characters such as SpongeBob and Paw Patrol, play beach games, and explore the cool air-conditioned activity hub, while parents relax with food kiosks and easy evening entertainment," he added.

Cappacetti said that initiatives such as "Summer Splash" contribute to Qatar's broader ambition to become a leading family destination year-round.

"Summer Splash" and Meryal Waterpark demonstrate Qatar's commitment to high-quality family leisure options that work in every season," he said. "By activating Meryal Beach on Qetaifan Island North with free character-driven entertainment during the summer, we help position Qatar as a true year-round family hub for both residents and visitors."

The "Summer Splash" activation adds to Qatar's expanding summer events calendar and strengthening its appeal as a regional family tourism destination.

# Survey shows confidence in Qatar's govt and economy

By Joseph Varghese  
Staff Reporter

Confidence in Qatar's economy and government remains high despite the ongoing regional tensions, a recent survey by a leading agency has highlighted.

The survey on Qatar, one of the first of its kind following the recent regional tensions, was conducted by strategy firm Consulum and analytics group HarrisX.

It was part of a regional survey that included 3,808 nationals and residents across the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC).

One of the key findings from the survey about Qatar was that 89% of respondents believe Qatar is on the "right track", while 91% said the economy was moving in the right direction.

Confidence in the country's economic outlook also remained strong, with a majority saying that they are confident about the economy over the coming period.

Across the GCC, the survey points to acknowledgement of the potential impact of regional tensions on economies, trade and energy markets.

Commenting on the findings, Consulum chief executive James Davies said: "What stands out in the findings is that respondents appear to distinguish between short-term regional volatility and confidence in Qatar's long-term economic trajectory."

"Respondents continue to view Qatar as stable, resilient and well-positioned to navigate external pressures," he said.

Another major finding is that trust in government institutions was very high, with 88% saying they trusted authorities to manage regional conflicts and 91% expressing confidence in the government's ability to protect Qatar from the consequences of instability.

The survey also showed continued backing for Qatar's long-term development agenda despite regional uncertainty.

According to most respondents, major national programmes should continue, while nearly two-thirds said they had become even more important in the current environment.

Most respondents viewed the current disruption as a temporary phase.

Meanwhile, 59% of respondents said they expected the economy to return to normal within six months, while only 10% believed the disruption would last longer than a year.

Foreign investment was viewed as the area most vulnerable to prolonged disruption.

Oil and gas was identified as the sector most needing support to recover from the conflict, followed by tourism and small businesses.

While respondents viewed tourism as vulnerable to regional instability, most still expected the sector to recover within months.

"The findings suggest respondents continue to place high trust in Qatar's institutions and the country's economic resilience," said head of Consulum Intelligence Ranulph Murray. "There is also clear support for maintaining momentum behind the country's long-term development agenda."

The sample size for Qatar was 826 respondents, and fieldwork was conducted online among nationals and residents.

Consulum is a strategy and communications firm in the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region and powered by the Stagwell global network.

HarrisX is an award-winning research and analytics firm specialising in public opinion, consumer, and corporate research, serving leading brands, governments, and institutions worldwide.



## beIN Media Group wins accolades at Asia-Pacific Broadcasting+ Awards 2026

The global sports and entertainment television network beIN has won two prestigious broadcast industry accolades at the annual Asia-Pacific Broadcasting+ Awards in Singapore.

Taking home the top prize in the "Digital Transformation - Qatar" and "IP Broadcast Solutions - Qatar" categories, the awards recognised the beIN Media Group (beIN)'s innovative on-screen graphics system and digital integration solutions.

First held in 2023, the annual Asia-Pacific Broadcasting+ Awards recognise excellence and innovation across the broadcasting industry.

Organised by Asia-Pacific Broadcasting+, a leading industry platform covering broadcasting and multimedia since 1983, this year's ceremony brought together industry leaders at Singapore's Marina Bay Sands.

The "Digital Transformation - Qatar" category recognised beIN's L-Shape system, which provides automated on-air graphics and is used to display real-time sports information powered by OPTA data feeds.

Developed in-house by beIN's Brand Directorate, the system supports the promotion of content across beIN channels, including



sports and non-sports content, ensuring dynamic, accurate, and consistent on-screen communications.

Meanwhile, the "IP Broadcast Solutions - Qatar" award celebrated beIN's fully automated content generation system for social media. Previously, designers relied on traditional design platforms such as Adobe software to manually create images and enter data.

With Digital Automated Tools, the entire process - design, data integration, and content generation - is automated, with OPTA data feeding directly into the system to produce multiple post adaptations without requiring any human interaction.

Mohammed al-Bader, the managing director of beIN Channels - MENA, said: "This recognition is a powerful affirmation of beIN's commitment to engineering-led innovation and broadcast excellence."

"Our team works tirelessly to break down traditional silos between our linear and digital

offerings to enable a better, more informative storytelling experience for our viewers," he said.

"These two awards reflect the dedication and ingenuity of our teams, who continue to push the boundaries of what modern broadcasting can achieve," al-Bader continued. "Now more than ever, beIN remains focused on building future-ready systems that deliver premium content to our audiences, ensuring they can access our unprecedented portfolio of sports and entertainment content anytime, anywhere, and on any screen."

This recognition comes at a time when momentum is building around beIN's coverage of this summer's FIFA World Cup 2026 on its flagship beIN Sports channels and OTT platforms, beIN Connect and TOD by beIN.

The network will broadcast all 104 matches live and exclusive across the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region during the five-week tournament, between June 11 and July 19.

## QU students earn globally recognised CDMP certification

Qatar University (QU)'s College of Business and Economics celebrated the achievement of four students from its Master of Science in Business Analytics (MSBA) programme who earned the globally recognised Certified Data Management Professional (CDMP) certification from DAMA International.

The students who earned the CDMP certification are Salma Ahmed A Mohamed, Nedal Fakhry Eldoss, Omer Elshiekh Abdalrahman, and Mahmoud Elmi Ibrahim.

In addition to achieving the Associate level, the students earned scores that qualify them to sit for the Practitioner level of the certification, reflecting a high standard of performance.

The students earned the certification through the Special Topics in Business Analytics course,



which equips them with advanced knowledge and practical competencies in data management and analytics and supports their readiness for professional certification.

This achievement reflects the students' commitment and the MSBA programme's focus on integrating industry-recognised cre-

dentials into the learning experience.

"We are proud of our students for earning the internationally recognised CDMP certification, which reflects both their dedication and the quality of education provided by the College of Business and Economics," said college

dean Prof Rana Sobh.

"This achievement exemplifies our commitment to preparing graduates with the advanced analytical, technical, and professional skills required in today's data-driven economy," said Dr Mazen El-Masri, the course instructor and student mentor.

As organisations increasingly rely on data as a strategic asset, professional certifications such as the CDMP provide students with a competitive advantage in the job market and validate their expertise against international standards.

By embedding certification preparation and applied learning opportunities into the curriculum, the MSBA programme ensures that graduates are well-positioned to meet the growing demand for highly skilled analytics and data management professionals.

## QU hosts lecture on health sector's role in supporting human rights

Qatar University (QU) hosted a lecture on the role of health operators and professionals in supporting and protecting human rights.

The lecture - held in collaboration with the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC) - was delivered by NHRC deputy chairman Dr Muhammad Saif al-Kuwari, as part of the Dean lecture series, held this year under the theme of *From Medicine to Serving Society*.

Speaking to the chamber, the dean of the QU's College of Medicine, Prof Abdulkarim Said al-Makadma, noted the instrumental role undertaken by the NHRC in propagating human rights culture and buttressing the society's awareness of their tenets.

It is imperative, he stated, to reinforce co-operation among the academic and national institutions to mobilise medical professionals in terms of occupational excellence and human awareness, as well as societal responsibility.

Addressing the lecture, Dr al-Kuwari stressed that the right to health is one of the fundamental rights enshrined in international human rights charters and standards.

He pointed out that numerous international instruments rendered by the United Nations - foremost of which are the Uni-



versal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights - emphasised the human right to enjoy the highest possible level of physical and mental health.

Dr al-Kuwari said that health practitioners, namely physicians, nurses, public health practitioners and those operating in the supportive health professions enjoyed a pivotal position that enabled them to promote these rights through professional practice, advocacy, and engagement in the design and development of health systems.

He noted that the runaway pace of technological change in the world had made

the role of health professionals go beyond the provision of healthcare to include shielding human dignity, promoting justice and equality, and deepening human rights tenets.

Dr al-Kuwari further suggested that the right to health is two-fold, the first of which is freedom, which encompasses individual autonomy, informed consent, and physical integrity.

The second one, he noted, is entitlement, which encompasses access to quality and equitable health services that are available to all without discrimination.

Dr al-Kuwari indicated that human

rights-based approach is centred on substantive foundations that include nondiscrimination and equality, alongside ensuring effective engagement of individuals in decisions that influence their life.

These foundations, he said, included the principles of transparency and accountability, emphasising that operationalising these tenets helped build fairer and more inclusive and enduring health systems.

Dr al-Kuwari also highlighted the technological and ethical challenges associated with digital transformation and the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in the health sector, warning against the increasing reliance

on cloud services without mature governance frameworks that ensure the protection of health data and patient privacy.

He delved into the challenges related to obtaining truly informed consent in the context of the use of AI-powered technologies that rely on vast amounts of data through complex and constantly evolving mechanisms.

Technological advancements in the health sector, Dr al-Kuwari continued, underscore the necessity of fostering digital culture and professional ethics among healthcare workers, ensuring the responsible leveraging of cutting-edge technology in a way that delivers benefit while safeguarding fundamental human rights and freedoms.

He added that health professionals project themselves as core elements in changing human rights tenets from legal documents into pragmatic practices that have truly materialised in the life of individuals and societies.

Dr al-Kuwari went on to emphasise that building human rights-based health systems that are fair and comprehensive requires investing in capacity-building, supporting health workforces and deepening institutional climate that backs healthcare practices based on human justice and dignity. - QNA

## QT unveils June calendar of events as 'Hala Summer' campaign begins

Qatar Tourism (QT) has announced that its June calendar of events will feature a wide range of activities and entertainment programmes as the country enters the summer season, including international sporting events, major exhibitions, and family-oriented attractions.



Qatar Tourism said in a statement yesterday that the June edition of the Qatar Calendar offers residents and visitors a variety of experiences under the umbrella of the "Hala Summer" campaign.

The programme includes events designed to cater to different interests, transforming Doha into an interactive hub that combines world-class sports competitions, leading trade exhibitions, and cultural and entertainment performances

suitable for all age groups.

According to the statement, visitors can look forward to major highlights such as the Diamond League athletics meeting, as well as exhibitions like Project Qatar, alongside a selection of concerts and theatrical performances.

Qatar Tourism said the packed schedule reflects its ongoing efforts to position the country as a year-round destination, offering a mix of sporting, cultural, and entertainment experiences that appeal to both residents and international visitors.

The June calendar underscores Qatar's strategy to strengthen its tourism sector by expanding seasonal offerings and enhancing its global profile as a dynamic destination for events and leisure. - QNA

## Ashghal adopts advanced technologies to boost infrastructure project efficiency

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has announced the adoption of advanced technologies and modern equipment to improve the efficiency of curb construction and paving works across infrastructure projects.

Ashghal said in a statement yesterday that it has deployed advanced Wirtgen SP 25 machinery for curb and paving works.

The equipment features a modular design that provides greater flexibility to adapt to varying site requirements through both internal and external paving systems, while its smart transport concept enables quick and efficient movement between work locations.

According to the authority, the



technology has reduced reliance on conventional labor-intensive methods and improved resource utilisation.

It also allows for the full-section concrete pour to be completed in a single pass at high operating speeds, eliminating the need for multiple traditional construc-

tion stages and helping to improve output quality while shortening project timelines.

Ashghal added that the machinery incorporates advanced control systems equipped with three-dimensional technology for precise management of levels and cross slopes.

It also features Wirtgen's AutoPilot smart operating system, which enables construction work to be carried out without traditional stringline guidance by creating virtual paths based on digital models.

The authority said the adoption of these technologies enhances construction accuracy, particularly on complex alignments, curves and roundabouts. - QNA

The Qatar Olympic Academy (QOA) has successfully delivered the first-ever "Generative AI for Sports Leaders" course in Qatar, marking a significant milestone in the nation's sports sector's digital transformation.

The pioneering programme was delivered in collaboration with Google, bringing world-class expertise in artificial intelligence to sports professionals, executives, and decision-makers.

The course reflects the academy's commitment to equipping sports leaders with the knowledge and skills required to navigate the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Participants explored the transformative potential of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) across a wide range of sports applications, including strategic

## Qatar Olympic Academy delivers the first 'Generative AI for Sports Leaders' course



planning, fan engagement, marketing and communications, event management, athlete support, data-driven decision-making, and organisational innovation.

Through interactive sessions, practical demonstrations, and real-world case studies, participants gained hands-on experience with cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) tools and learned how these technologies can enhance efficiency, creativity, and performance within sports organisations.

"The launch of the 'Generative AI for Sports Leaders' course represents a ma-

major step forward in our mission to prepare sports professionals for the future," said QOA managing director Khaleel al-Jabir. "Artificial Intelligence is reshaping every industry, and sport is no exception,"

he said. "Through our partnership with Google, we are proud to be the first institution in Qatar to offer a specialised programme that empowers sports leaders to understand, adopt, and leverage Generative AI responsibly and effectively."

The programme forms part of the QOA's broader strategy to promote innovation, digital transformation, and lifelong learning within the sports ecosystem, reinforcing the academy role as a leading regional hub for sports education and professional development.

Google's contribution to the course

provided participants with insights into the latest developments in AI technologies and their practical applications, ensuring that learners were exposed to global best practices and future trends shaping the sports industry.

The successful delivery of the course further strengthens the QOA's position as a pioneer in sports education and innovation, while supporting Qatar's broader ambitions to become a knowledge-based economy and a global leader in sport.

"As AI continues to transform the way sports organisations operate, engage audiences, and create value, initiatives such as the 'Generative AI for Sports Leaders' course will play a crucial role in developing the next generation of digitally empowered sports leaders," said the QOA's Prof Dalia Farrag.

## Traffic flow smooth nationwide despite post-Eid holiday rush

As thousands of employees returned to work after the Eid holidays, major roads and intersections across the country experienced remarkably smooth traffic flow, stressing the effectiveness of Qatar's transportation infrastructure and intelligent traffic management systems.

Arabic daily *Arrayah* reported that the smooth movement of traffic across Doha and other parts of the country reflected years of investment in modern road networks, multi-lane highways, and integrated transport solutions designed to accommodate increasing vehicle volumes while minimising congestion.

The availability of alternative routes enabled motorists to spread

their journeys across different routes, reducing pressure on traditionally busy roads and ensuring efficient mobility during peak commuting hours.

Further, *Arrayah* reported, key highways and urban corridors maintained steady traffic throughout the morning rush period, with only limited, temporary congestion reported at selected intersections and exits.

A major contributor to the successful management of traffic was the General Directorate of Traffic's Operations Room, which monitored road conditions and was ready to respond rapidly to any emerging traffic density or incidents.

Advanced monitoring technolo-

gies, real-time traffic surveillance systems, and co-ordinated field operations helped maintain the smooth flow of vehicles across the national road network.

The growing reliance on smart navigation applications also played a role.

Drivers increasingly utilised digital navigation platforms that provided real-time traffic updates, enabling them to select less congested routes.

This integration of technology into daily commuting patterns has become an important element of Qatar's intelligent transportation ecosystem.

One of the most notable examples was observed on 22 February Street, one of Doha's primary arte-



rial roads and a key corridor connecting commercial and residential districts.

Traffic remained largely uninterrupted throughout the day, supported by the availability of alternative routes, particularly the Sabah Al Ahmad Corridor, which has emerged as a transformative addition to Qatar's transportation network.

The Sabah Al Ahmad Corridor has significantly improved mobil-

ity across the capital by serving as an alternative to both the Doha Expressway and 22 February Street.

The corridor has substantially reduced travel times for commuters, particularly those travelling from southern areas toward northern Doha.

Transport data indicate that motorists can now travel from Hamad International Airport to the Umm Lekhba Interchange in less than 18 minutes, compared

to around 50 minutes using older routes through Doha Expressway and 22 February Street.

Elsewhere in Doha, the Corniche Road experienced uninterrupted movement in both directions, including traffic travelling toward and from the West Bay district.

The positive traffic conditions extended to a number of major intersections across the city, including Television Intersection and Al Markhiya Intersection.

## MoPH organises series of events to mark International Coaching Week

The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) recently organised events for the International Coaching Week, in collaboration with the International Coaching Federation (ICF), under the theme of *Adapt - Evolve - Thrive: Coaching for Resilience in a Changing World*, at the ministry headquarters.

The week featured a series of discussions and sessions highlighting the latest international practices in professional and leadership coaching and exploring its role in enhancing organisational performance and productivity, strengthening psychological resilience and workplace wellbeing, supporting institutional transformation, and fostering more innovative and sustainable work environments.

Ghanim Ibrahim al-Mohannadi, the director of the MoPH's Human Resources Department, stated that this year's theme reflects an institutional vision aimed at building more resilient organisations and developing more aware and capable lead-



ers who can adapt to rapidly evolving changes and drive sustainable growth

He noted that the ministry continues to strengthen a culture of institutional coaching as a strategic enabler for leadership development and institutional excellence by empowering leaders and national talent, while fostering positive work environments that support innovation and promote mental and professional wellbeing.

Al-Mohannadi said that the MoPH's coaching journey began in 2018-19, guided by a vision that genuine investment begins with people and that establishing a sustainable professional culture serves as the foundation of institutional excellence.

Mai Abuzenah, lead of the MoPH's Institutional Coaching and Career Guidance Programme, said that the ministry's coaching programme currently includes 28 internal coaching specialists from diverse

fields, including public health, human resources, leadership and institutional development, mental health, and professional development.

The specialists provide both individual and group coaching sessions across a range of areas, including executive leadership, employee empowerment, team building, and institutional performance development.

Abuzenah said that the ministry's strategic partnership with the ICF Doha Chapter over the past four years has contributed to the launch of high-quality initiatives that have strengthened the culture of coaching and professional development within the ministry and across Qatar.

She noted that participants attending the in-person activities received a total of 16 accredited Continuing Coach Education hours provided by the International Coaching Federation, with eight hours awarded per day.

In addition, Pro Bono Coaching Ses-

sions continued to be organised from May 18-25 in both Arabic and English, providing employees with the opportunity to benefit from professional coaching sessions designed to support personal and professional growth and development.

ICF Doha Chapter president Dr Maryam Mohammed al-Emadi stated that the celebration of International Coaching Week goes beyond organising professional activities; it serves as a global message highlighting the importance of investing in people, strengthening their capabilities, and empowering them to grow and excel at personal, professional, and community levels.

International Coaching Week is a global initiative held simultaneously by all ICF branches worldwide to highlight the role of coaching in enhancing self-awareness, strengthening individuals' thinking and analytical skills, and empowering them to develop effective and sustainable solutions to the challenges they face.

### Entries open for National Sport Day Award 2026

The National Sport Day Committee said it is continuing to receive and assess sports activities organised by ministries, government entities and private-sector institutions for the second edition of the National Sport Day Award 2026, with winners to be announced on February 1 next year.

The committee urged public and private institutions to take part in the initiative.

It added that the award recognises institutions that support community sports and help embed sports culture in daily life and the workplace.

It noted that participation requires registering event details through the Ministry of Sports and Youth's website, with submissions evaluated within seven days from the beginning of the month following the event.

The committee also underscored the importance of promoting sports activities on social media using the hashtags #IChoseSports and #SportIsLife, while tagging the National Sport Day account (QASportsForAll).

Participating entities are required to document events through photographs and videos, publish them on their official platforms, and complete the event registration form, including participant statistics and activity details.

- QNA

### Auction Announcement

Auction Subject		Shop for Rent in Banana Island		
Launching Date	Closing Date	Auction Bond QR.	Auctions Documents Price QR.	Auction Method
02/06/2026	30/06/2026	10,000 (Qatari Riyals Ten Thousand) (refundable subject to conditions)	200 (Qatari Riyals Two Hundred only)	One Closed Envelope

#### Auction description:

Auction purpose is for the following:

#### Shop for Rent in Banana Island

The awarding will be made to the highest bid among the applicants.

#### General Conditions:

- Auction Documents / Conditions shall be obtained from Procurement Department, ARPM Co., located on the 9th Floor, Al Rayyan Building, Old Salata, Zone 18, Al Muthaf Street, Next to Al Bustan Hotel during working hours 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Fri. & Sat. Closed).
- Auction Documents Fee (QR 200 - Qatari Riyals Two Hundred only) - non-refundable, will be paid in cash in ARPM Co. Headquarter.
- Site visit for the rental shop and its Location shall be according to the Auction Conditions and the attendance of the visit shall be limited to those who obtain the Auction documents and pay the prescribed fees as per Item 2 above.
- To obtain Auction documents, the following documents are required:  
Authorization letter from the bidding company in English & Arabic signed by the officially authorized manager and stamped with the company's seal - Copy of the establishment card - ID of the authorized person to receive the documents - Copy of the valid company's commercial registration - Company's classification certificate (if any).
- The Bid must be submitted according to the Conditions stated in the bidding documents. The Bid shall be enclosed with an Auction Bond in the name of Al Rayyan Project Management Company (to be placed in separate envelope inside the Bid envelope) in the form of a payable cheque certified by one of the banks operating in the State of Qatar of only 10,000 (Qatari Riyals Ten Thousand), and it will be returned back within 120 days from the closing date subject to the Terms & Conditions, noting that no bid shall be accepted unless it has been enclosed with Auction Bond document.
- The bid (Price of the Shop for Rent in Banana Island) shall be submitted in local currency (Qatari Riyal) and shall be valid for 120 days from the closing date of the bid and cannot be revoked within that period.
- Deadline for accepting bids is 12:00 pm of the closing date (Tuesday 30/06/2026).
- All forms attached to the Auction documents including the form of undertaking, shall be filled, completed and authorized as stated therein and returned with the other documents.
- All necessary data for the company (contacts & follow-up) must be attached: Mobile - Phone - Fax - E-mail - company address of where the correspondence to be sent, clarifying the tasks of each individual (when purchasing Auction documents) and within the company bid.
- For any queries related to documents and bidding, contact Al Rayyan Project Management Co. - Tel: 40341865 - 40341804, - email: m.aseef@arpm.com.qa; j.castillo@arpm.com.qa
- Deadline for accepting inquiries and requests 23/06/2026.

Tenders and Auctions Committee  
ARPM



### Dolphin Energy Limited

#### Invitation to Tender

Tender Number	Description	Tender Bond	Deadline for Tender Submission, 12 Noon (Qatar Time) on
RFP120000200	Supply of Caustic Soda at 50% on a Call-Off Basis for One (1) Year, with an Optional One (1) Year Extension	QAR 30,000	29 <sup>th</sup> June 2026
ITT-QC-OPU-1930	Call-Off Agreement for the Supply of FortiNDR and FortiGuard Attack Surface Services	-	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2026
ITT-QC-OPU-1934	Agreement for Transformer Oil Filtration Services	-	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2026
ITT-QC-OPU-1928	Call-Off Service Agreement for Removal and Handling of Sludge and Emulsion	QAR 35,000	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2026
ITT-QC-OPU-1929	Call-Off Agreement for Testing & Certification of WS Equipment	-	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2026
ITT-QC-HRU-1933	Travel Management and Associated Services	-	2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2026

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

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

**How to Tender**  
Expression of Interest (EOI) Form and Scope of Services/Works can be downloaded from the company's website:  
<https://www.dolphinenergy.com/en-US/Supplier/>  
Interested companies must complete the EOI Form and submit to company's email address within two (2) working days from the publication date of this advertisement.  
Following receipt of completed EOI Form, interested companies will receive a Request for Proposal (RFP) through Dolphin Energy's SAP Arriba to tender.

# Summer ban highlights advances in workers' safety

By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

The return of Qatar's annual midday outdoor work ban this summer shines a spotlight on the evolution of worker heat-safety measures in the country.

Five years after Snoonu launched its "No Riders Under the Sun" campaign to protect delivery riders from extreme temperatures, the initiative is being viewed as an early example of the growing emphasis on worker welfare during the summer months.

Introduced in 2021, the campaign voluntarily halted motorcycle deliveries during the hottest hours of the day, ahead of broader efforts to enhance protections for outdoor workers and delivery personnel exposed to Qatar's harsh summer conditions.

As the Ministry of Labour re-introduces this year's midday work ban, restricting outdoor work between 10am and 3.30pm from June through mid-September, the discussion around heat-related workplace safety once again takes centre stage.



According to Snoonu, the initiative was driven by a simple principle: protecting employees should take precedence over operational convenience.

The campaign's origins can be traced to the personal experience of Snoonu founder and chief executive Hamad Mubarak al-Hajri, who spent part of his early career working offshore in intense heat.

Reflecting on those experiences, he said he understood firsthand the physical toll of working outdoors during the Gulf summer and wanted to ensure that delivery riders would not face similar hardships.

According to al-Hajri, the initiative was driven by concerns about rider safety, as delivery personnel often work in temperatures exceeding 50°C while wearing helmets and heavy protective clothing under direct sun exposure.

He pointed out that the initiative came with financial and operational costs. However, he said the company viewed rider welfare as a priority and considered the trust it gained from employees and customers equally important.

The company has continued implementing the initiative every summer since its launch. During the restriction period, motorcycle

deliveries are suspended between 10am and 3.30pm, and orders are fulfilled through air-conditioned vehicles to ensure riders can work in a safer environment.

Al-Hajri reiterated that the campaign was never intended to attract praise or recognition. "Our goal then and now has always been to protect our riders from the extreme summer heat," he said, adding that progress should never come at the expense of compassion.

He noted that Qatar introduced wider heat-protection regulations in 2022, a year after Snoonu launched its initiative, describing it as evidence of the country's commitment to safeguarding workers' rights and well-being.

While the company does not claim sole influence over subsequent regulatory developments, the initiative has become part of a broader conversation about worker welfare and the responsibilities of employers operating in challenging climatic conditions.

The issue continues to resonate across the Gulf region, where countries are strengthening measures to protect outdoor workers as temperatures rise and concerns about heat stress grow.



## Qatar's online economy: small screens, big business

From Page 1

Although comprehensive data on online businesses remain unavailable, broader business activity has surged. Official MoCI figures show that Qatar issued nearly 28,000 commercial registrations in 2025, representing a 57% increase from the previous year. New commercial registrations in the third quarter of 2025 also rose 81.5% year-on-year, according to GCC Business Watch.

These developments have coincided with a growing number of residents exploring home-based and digitally operated business models, particularly after the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online shopping and digital services.

Somaya of QatArt, a community-led handmade market at Katara Cultural Village that showcases local artisans,

home-based entrepreneurs and hobbyists, told *Gulf Times* that many vendors launched their businesses during the pandemic.

"Several of the people we interviewed and collaborated with through different craft fairs and markets since 2020 mentioned that they started their home businesses during that time," she said.

According to Somaya, many residents had more time on their hands as businesses shifted to remote work arrangements or reduced staffing levels. At the same time, consumers increasingly relied on online platforms for groceries, shopping and other services, encouraging aspiring entrepreneurs to establish an online presence.

She noted that the number of online sellers has grown considerably since then, particularly among handmade businesses, home bakers, food producers and artists.

A major factor behind this growth, she said, has been the rapid expansion of delivery services in Qatar, which has made it easier for small businesses to operate without physical premises.

"Many sellers now have catalogues, apps and regular delivery arrangements. There is no need for a physical shop or even a salesperson to be present," she said.

Somaya added that consumer confidence in online shopping has strengthened significantly since the pandemic, with many customers comparing prices online before making purchases and favouring the convenience of digital transactions. "People are more comfortable shopping online because it saves time and effort, especially during harsher weather," she said.

For customised products, customers increasingly prefer to communicate via Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook

rather than visiting stores or making phone calls. Many purchases are now completed entirely through apps or chat-based services.

Shopping habits have continued to evolve even after the pandemic, particularly among tech-savvy consumers who expect businesses to be accessible around the clock, she added.

"They may still visit fairs and shops, but they want to be able to shop 24/7 instead of waiting for a business to open," she said.

At the same time, the growing number of online sellers has intensified competition across the sector.

"Five years ago, these businesses were relatively new. Today, there are many more operating on similar business models, making the competition extremely high," Somaya said. "At the same time, there are also many more opportunities than before."

### Golden Business Opportunity INDUSTRIAL COMPANY FOR SALE

A company specializing in the production of prefabricated houses, strategically located in the small and medium industries zone on an area of 7448 m<sup>2</sup>.

The land is leased from Manateq Company under a new 3-year contract and has valid commercial registrations and all municipal, industrial, and environmental licenses.

For viewing and inquiries: Please call: 50009702

## Qatar moves to protect workers from heat stress

From Page 1

In this regard, Assistant Director of the Occupational Safety and Health Department at the MoL Saad Rashid al-Nabit said that the 2026 Heat Stress Prevention Campaign forms part of the MoL's ongoing efforts to raise awareness of the risks associated with working in hot conditions and to promote a culture of prevention in workplaces.

He added that the campaign focuses on educating employers and workers on the necessary preventive measures, thereby helping to reduce heat stress-related injuries and promote safe and healthy working environments in line with the highest occupational safety and health standards.

The MoL will implement an integrated inspection plan to moni-

tor establishments' compliance with the provisions of the ministerial decision concerning the prohibition of work in open workplaces during peak summer hours, through intensified field inspection campaigns and the immediate handling of reports and violations.

These efforts aim to ensure the protection of workers and enhance compliance with labor market legislation, thereby reinforcing safe and sustainable working environments across various sectors.

In parallel, the Occupational Safety and Health Department intensified its field efforts through the implementation of a proactive awareness campaign prior to the commencement of the decision's enforcement across various worksites in the country, in co-operation with partners. These efforts will continue throughout

the implementation period from June 1 until Sept 15 and will include distributing guidance materials in multiple languages and organising awareness and training seminars for workers and employers, with the aim of raising awareness of heat stress risks and methods of prevention.

The MoL urged employers to comply with the provisions of the decision in order to safeguard workers' health and safety, stressing that legal action will be taken against non-compliant companies, which may extend to suspending work at sites found to be in violation. This reflects the MoL's commitment to applying the highest occupational safety and health standards in support of the National Strategy for an Effective and Highly Productive Workforce 2024-2030.

## Clyde Wilcox appointed acting dean at GU-Q

Professor of Government Clyde Wilcox has been appointed acting dean of Georgetown University in Qatar (GU-Q), effective June 1, bringing experienced leadership to the university as the campus enters the second year of its renewed 10-year agreement with Qatar Foundation (QF).

Wilcox previously served as interim dean from 2021-2022, and has been part of the Georgetown University community for nearly four decades. A political scientist, he has played a sustained role in the university's academic life and development.

"I joined Georgetown because of its academic and research excellence, and I came to help build the Qatar campus because of the opportunity to engage with a diversity of students in a rich multiversity atmosphere," said Dr Wilcox, who has spent all or part of each academic year at the Doha campus since 2014.

He succeeds Safwan Masri, who, during the upcoming 2026-2027 academic year, will be on leave to focus on his research and



Clyde Wilcox

writing. Over the course of his tenure as dean, Masri expanded GU-Q's academic offerings, grew its faculty, and deepened Georgetown's relationships with QF and other academic institutions in Education City. "On behalf of all of us at Georgetown, we thank Dr Masri for his energetic and imaginative leadership as dean of GU-Q," said Wilcox.

GU-Q is in a strong position as Wilcox moves into the dean's office. GU-Q faculty engage in cutting-edge and socially-meaningful scholarship and are equally dedicated to teaching. In this time of regional and world conflict,

GU-Q faculty routinely provide expert commentary on local and international radio and TV newscasts and podcasts, and are interviewed and write guest commentary pieces about the most salient issues of the day - from Palestine, to the Iran war, regional conflicts in Sudan and Yemen, Ukraine, US politics, and the recent elections in Hungary - for Qatar's and the world's leading English- and Arabic-language newspapers.

"Our staff are talented and work tirelessly to help us achieve our mission. And our students are smart and curious, and learn from not only the faculty but from each other. It has been a joy to teach them, and it will be my task to help ensure that GU-Q continues to help them develop critical thinking and understanding of diverse faiths and beliefs, while nurturing their spiritual growth and commitment to service," said Wilcox.

"When societies face division, uncertainty, and anxiety, the knowledge, values, and skills that Georgetown instills in our students are vitally important," he added.

### Public Announcement

**To all Ships, Fisherman, and Mariners**  
**Subsea Survey Works Offshore in "North Field"**  
**By the Vessel "Pacific Grouse"**

**Subsea Survey Works Offshore Qatar from**  
**05<sup>th</sup> June 2026 to 19<sup>th</sup> Aug 2026**

In pursuant and under directives from the Seafarers Affairs and Registration Department, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariners, and Fisherman that "QatarEnergy LNG" formerly known as Qatar Gas Operating Company Limited intends to undertake Geotechnical survey by the vessel "Pacific Grouse" in North Field locations, bound by the coordinates and location map shown below.

All Vessels, Mariners, and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the survey locations during the operations.

**QatarEnergy LNG takes no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operation following the publication of this notice.**

Corner Coordinates Covering Survey Area											
ID	NAD83, UTM Projection, Zone 39 CM 51° E			WGS84, UTM Projection, Zone 39 CM 51° E							
	Easting [m]	Northing [m]	Latitude [°N]	Easting [m]	Northing [m]	Latitude [°N]					
1	540 873	2 873 028	25° 58 637' N	51° 29 894' E	540 971	2 873 461	25° 58 744' N	51° 29 934' E			
2	550 487	2 915 001	26° 21 249' N	51° 55 614' E	550 585	2 915 434	26° 21 355' N	51° 55 679' E			
3	555 794	2 932 090	26° 18 900' N	51° 57 589' E	555 892	2 932 523	26° 19 006' N	51° 57 651' E			
4	593 281	2 872 403	25° 58 169' N	51° 55 907' E	593 379	2 872 836	25° 58 276' N	51° 55 969' E			
5	578 905	2 870 358	25° 57 114' N	51° 45 861' E	578 984	2 870 790	25° 57 221' N	51° 45 923' E			
6	559 220	2 876 351	26° 00 416' N	51° 35 505' E	559 318	2 876 784	26° 00 523' N	51° 35 566' E			
7	557 147	2 868 953	25° 56 417' N	51° 34 265' E	557 245	2 869 385	25° 56 520' N	51° 34 315' E			

**For more details contact 30672614**

# The Road Back Home

*After two years away from his family, one Keeta delivery rider's emotional Eid reunion touched hearts across Qatar*

As Eid Al Adha approached and families across Qatar began planning holidays, gatherings and long-awaited reunions, Allah Wasaya was doing what he had done for the better part of the last two years; working.

Having arrived in Qatar in search of better opportunities for his family back in Pakistan, Wasaya spent the last year working as a freelancer before recently joining Keeta Qatar as a delivery rider. Since then, he has quickly distinguished himself, completing more than 500 deliveries in a single month, spending his days navigating Doha's roads and his evenings speaking to his family through a mobile phone screen.

Away from work, however, there was something he had been carrying with him for a very long time. He had not seen his loved ones in Pakistan for almost two years.

These days, everyone seems to be talking about him.

Over the past few days, a video chronicling his journey from Doha to Pakistan and the emotional reunion with his family has garnered widespread attention on social media, prompting thousands of viewers to reflect on the sacrifices many expatriate workers quietly make every day. The story follows Wasaya from the moment he is surprised with the news that he will be travelling home for Eid until the moment he walks through the front door and into the arms of his loved ones.

For Wasaya, becoming the face of a story that resonated with so many people was never something he anticipated. Soft-spoken and visibly emotional while speaking about his family, he comes across as a man who has spent most of his life putting others before himself. As the only son supporting his family, much of what he earns goes back home, helping support his parents, wife and two children.

"Whatever I earn, I earn for my family, and I just want a chance to see them," says Allah Wasaya.

That chance arrived unexpectedly.

Ahead of Eid Al Adha, Keeta Qatar surprised the rider with a return ticket from Doha to Lahore, a cash gift and support for shopping expenses, allowing him to return home with gifts for every member of his family. The journey was documented from start to finish, creating what would eventually become one of the company's most talked-about social media stories.

Watching Allah Wasaya prepare for the trip is perhaps one of the most touching aspects of the film. There is a visible excitement about him as he moves through shopping centres selecting gifts, carefully choosing perfumes for his parents, an abaya for his wife and clothes and toys for his children, pausing occasionally to imagine their reactions when they finally receive them.

"After getting the ticket, I was counting every minute. Hoping time passes quickly so I can go to the kids,"



he says with a smile as he arrives at Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore.

The anticipation becomes even more evident as the journey progresses. Whether boarding his flight from Doha or travelling through Pakistan on his way home, there is a sense that he is trying to make up for two years of absence in a matter of days. What follows next is the emotional centre of the story.

As he arrives home, his family rushes to greet him. His children, now seven and six years old, cling to him almost immediately. There are tears, embraces and long moments where words seem unnecessary. It is one of those rare occasions where a camera simply happens to be present during a deeply personal family moment.

The film later follows Wasaya as he settles back into life at home, distributing gifts, spending time

with friends and preparing for Eid celebrations. One particularly memorable sequence shows him visiting a local livestock market to purchase an animal for sacrifice, a tradition he had long hoped to celebrate with his family again.

Throughout the conversation, however, he finds himself returning to the same subjects repeatedly. Whether discussing work, life in Qatar or the reunion itself, his thoughts often drift

towards his parents. "I love my parents very much," he says. "I want my father to live a long life. I hope he receives the rest of my years too. I've always thought of sending him to Umrah."

The story quickly attracted attention online, with many viewers praising the initiative and sharing their own experiences of living away from family. Several comments described being moved to tears by the reunion, while others noted that the film served as a reminder of the human stories behind an industry many people interact with daily.

For Jane Liu, General Manager of Keeta Qatar, it was these reactions that revealed the true impact of the project.

"I was following the comments and came across people saying the video brought tears to their eyes," says Liu. "That's when I fully felt how powerful this story was beyond just an Eid gesture. It was a reminder that behind every delivery, there is a person, a family and a much bigger human story. That we all got to see."

In a city where convenience often arrives with a few taps on a mobile application, it can be easy to overlook the people who make that convenience possible. Yet stories like Wasaya offer a glimpse into the realities that exist beyond the delivery itself, realities shaped by sacrifice, perseverance and an unwavering commitment to family.

As the film comes to an end, Allah Wasaya is surrounded by the people he spent two years missing. For a brief moment, the distance disappears, the waiting ends and the sacrifices feel worthwhile. It is perhaps this simple truth that resonated most strongly with audiences across Qatar. While the story may belong to one rider, the emotions behind it are universal.



# Netanyahu threatens attacks on Beirut's southern suburbs

Reuters  
Beirut/Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered attacks on the Hezbollah-controlled southern suburbs of Beirut yesterday. Iranian state TV later announced a ceasefire agreed between Iran and the US was very likely to end if Israeli attacks persisted in Lebanon.

People began fleeing Beirut's southern suburbs, known as Dahiyeh, in response to news of Netanyahu's order — the latest wave of displacement in a conflict that has uprooted more than 1mn people in Lebanon. Having pounded Beirut's southern suburbs in the early weeks of the war, Israel has carried out only two strikes on the area since US President Donald Trump announced a Lebanon ceasefire on April 16, even as hostilities have raged in southern Lebanon.

"There will be no situation in which Hezbollah attacks our cities and our citizens, and its headquarters in Beirut, in Dahiyeh, will remain out of bounds," Netanyahu said in a video statement.

Netanyahu said Israel was continuing to deepen its ground activity in Lebanon, where Israeli troops have carved out a self-declared security zone in the south, saying they aim to shield northern Israel from Hezbollah attacks.

The Israeli military later said it



Traffic on a road as people make their way while fleeing the southern suburbs of Beirut. (Reuters)

would strike targets in the southern suburbs if Hezbollah continued to launch rockets at Israeli towns and cities, and warned residents to leave the area.

Hezbollah had fired a missile salvo targeting Israeli military infrastructure in the Israeli city of Tiberias in early hours yesterday. On Sunday, Hezbollah said that it had fired rockets at Israeli military infrastructure in Nahariya.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said there would be no "calm" in Beirut if there was no "calm" in northern Israel.

"This is the third time since the ceasefire that we're going from place to place," said Naji Musulmani, 61, driving a pick-up truck full

of mattresses through clogged Beirut streets away from the southern suburbs. Having fled the south in recent days, Musulmani said he would head to the city of Tripoli in northern Lebanon.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesperson said that Israeli attacks in Lebanon were among factors delaying the diplomatic process to end the US-Iran war, and reiterated that a Lebanon ceasefire was an integral part of any deal.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, writing on X after Netanyahu ordered the attacks on Dahiyeh, said a ceasefire in place between Iran and the US since April was "unequivocally a ceasefire on all fronts, including in Lebanon".

"Violation on one front is a violation of the ceasefire on all fronts. The US and Israel are responsible for the consequences of any violation," he wrote.

Hostilities have continued in Lebanon despite a series of rare meetings between the Lebanese and Israeli governments, overseen by Washington.

A US official said on Sunday that Secretary of State Marco Rubio spoke with both Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and Netanyahu on the diplomatic negotiations between Israel and Lebanon and proposed a plan to allow for "gradual de-escalation". As a first step, Hezbollah would stop all attacks on Israel and in return Israel would refrain from escalation in Beirut, the US official said.

The official added that Aoun tried to advance the proposal and secure an agreement, however, Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, who claimed to "guarantee" Hezbollah's commitment to a ceasefire, placed the burden on Israel to stop "shooting first".

A senior Lebanese source told Reuters that the US proposal had involved a halt to Hezbollah's attacks on northern Israel in exchange for sparing Beirut and its suburbs further strikes, as a step towards a full ceasefire.

The source said Berri, however, wanted a full and comprehensive ceasefire instead of a piecemeal approach.

## Scripting a protest against conscription



Demonstrators are sprayed with a water cannon during a protest held by ultra-Orthodox Jewish people against pressure to conscript the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community into Israel's military, at the entrance to Jerusalem, yesterday. (Reuters)

## Hamas to hold dialogue with mediators in Egypt

AFP  
Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

A Hamas delegation is due to meet with mediators in Egypt on Wednesday to discuss ways of advancing the fragile Gaza ceasefire.

A transition to the second phase of the ceasefire, which was supposed to involve Hamas's disarmament and a gradual withdrawal of the Israeli army, has been stalled for months.

"Egypt has invited Hamas and other factions to participate in talks with mediators on Wednesday... which will also include Qatari and Turkish officials," an official of Hamas said, declining to be identified as he was not authorised to speak publicly on the matter.

"The mediators have presented ideas for formulating a new, revised proposal acceptable to both Hamas and Israel."

The official said the Hamas delegation, headed by chief negotiator Khalil al-Hayya, as well as representatives from other Palestinian factions, was expected to arrive in Cairo starting today for the talks to be held in El-Alamein. "Hamas believes a breakthrough and progress are possible if Israel does not cre-

ate new obstacles and if there is a genuine Israeli will to reach a solution," the official added.

One of the key sticking points to advancing the ceasefire negotiations has been the issue of Hamas's disarmament. "The resistance factions will not accept disarmament under conditions imposed by the occupation," a second Hamas official told AFP.

Hamas has repeatedly said it is not opposed to handing over some of its arsenal, but only as part of a Palestinian political process.

Last week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had ordered the military to take control of 70% of the Gaza Strip, in defiance of the ceasefire's terms. Hamas at the time accused Netanyahu of a "blatant violation", condemning the "complete silence" of US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace and its high representative for Gaza, Nickolay Mladenov.

The second Hamas official yesterday said mediators were planning a meeting between the group and Mladenov in Egypt, where discussions would focus on reconstruction efforts and handing over administration of the Palestinian territory to the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza.

## Kuwait army says air defences intercepted missile, drone attacks

Kuwait's air defences intercepted missile and drone attacks yesterday, its military said, while the US military's Central Command meanwhile said it had downed two Iranian missiles targeting US forces in the country.

"The General Staff of the Army wishes to advise that any sounds of explosions heard are the result of air defence systems intercepting these hostile attacks," the Kuwaiti army said in a post on X.

The country's foreign ministry

later said in a statement that it was "holding Iran fully responsible for these heinous attacks".

"These missiles were immediately defeated and no American personnel were harmed", it said in a post on X.

KUNA, the Kuwaiti state news agency, reported that air raid sirens sounded across the Gulf nation, which is a US ally.

The attacks come despite a ceasefire in place between the United States and Iran. (AFP)



Security officers stand at Kuwait International Airport yesterday as the airport resumes operations following a phased reopening plan. (AFP)



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## China accuses Japan defence minister of 'baseless' claims

AFP  
Beijing

China accused Japan's defence minister yesterday of spreading "baseless" claims and sowing confusion, a day after he took a veiled swipe at Beijing.

Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi had pledged on Sunday to keep strengthening Japan's military and warned China was expanding its capabilities without sufficient transparency.

His comments follow a months-long diplomatic spat between the Asian rivals, which began when Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi suggested in November that Japan could intervene

militarily if China attempted to seize Taiwan, the self-ruled island claimed by Beijing.

China's foreign ministry said yesterday that Koizumi's comments were "entirely baseless".

"They appear pale and feeble in the face of a series of historical and legal facts and figures," ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a news briefing.

"This Japanese official deliberately... attempts to turn the tables and sow confusion," Lin said.

"Japan's so-called dialogue is nothing but hypocrisy — a performance put on for appearances, devoid of any genuine sincerity," he added.

Under Takaichi, Japan has quickened its pivot

towards a more proactive defence policy, further shaking off — with US encouragement — a pacifist outlook, which has been in place since the end of World War II.

Koizumi made his comments at the annual IISS Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, saying China's expanding military capabilities were "a matter of serious concern for Japan".

Tokyo would "steadily build up its defence capabilities and make continuous updates with a high degree of transparency", including in the fields of artificial intelligence, uncrewed systems as well as cyber and space defence, he said.

Beijing has frequently rebuked Tokyo for its pivot and said following a reckless policy of "new militarism" that could destabilise the region.



A police officer stands in front of heavily damaged production line for rocket propellant of Hanwha Aerospace's factory after an explosion, in Daejeon, yesterday. (Reuters)

## Taiwan opposition leader calls for deeper US trust

AFP  
Taipei

Taiwan's main opposition leader said yesterday she hopes to "gain deeper trust" from the US, before departing for the country where she is expected to be grilled over her party's stance on China and defence spending.

Kuomintang chairwoman Cheng Li-wun's trip comes two months after her "peace" visit to Beijing, where she met Chinese President Xi Jinping — the first such meeting in a decade — and weeks after US President Donald Trump's summit with Xi in the Chinese capital.

It also comes after the KMT recently thwarted the Taiwanese government's plan to spend nearly \$40bn on critical weapons, including US arms and domestically produced drones.

Speaking to reporters before leaving for the US — Taiwan's most important security backer — Cheng said she hopes her party can play a key role in regional peace efforts and "gain deeper trust from the US".

"Only the KMT is truly serious and responsible in taking on the most important role of maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," Cheng told a press conference.

Cheng has rocked Taiwanese politics since her unexpected rise to the top of the party last year and drawn criticism for being too pro-China.

The KMT has long advocated closer relations with China, which claims Taiwan is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to seize it.

But Cheng's cross-strait rhetoric has gone beyond the comfort zone of many people in her own party and caused unease among foreign partners, including Washington.



Kuomintang chairwoman Cheng Li-wun speaks during a press conference in Taipei yesterday. (AFP)

Over the next two weeks, Cheng will visit San Francisco, Boston, New York, Washington and Los Angeles. She plans to meet with US lawmakers, government officials, think tanks and supporters, according to her itinerary.

Cheng said she would be "very willing" to meet Trump, which is seen as unlikely. US protocol has previously limited Taiwanese opposition leaders to meeting lower level officials.

Analysts told AFP that US government officials and lawmakers are likely to interrogate Cheng on the KMT's position on China and its decision to slash the government's special defence budget.

While Taiwan has its own defence industry, it remains heavily reliant on the US for weapons to deter a potential attack by China.

But there are concerns in Taipei over Washington's commitment after Trump recently suggested arms sales to the island could be a bargaining chip with China.

Compared with her trip to China, Cheng can

expect "far less pomp and far sharper questions" in the US, said Ryan Hass, an expert on China and Taiwan at the Washington-based Brookings Institution.

"Her challenge will be to persuade Washington that the KMT's engagement with China can coexist with strong deterrence," Hass wrote in a recent opinion piece in the Taipei Times newspaper.

Jason Hsu, senior fellow at the Hudson Institute think tank and former KMT lawmaker, said Cheng will face "a lot of serious questioning from the administration and Congress for KMT's leaning toward Beijing".

The KMT and Taiwan People's Party, which together control parliament, recently passed a \$25bn defence spending bill limited to US weapons.

It excluded the procurement of drones made in Taiwan, which the government has said is critical for developing domestic production capacity to sustain its forces during a war.

## 5 dead, 2 hurt in blast at Hanwha Aerospace plant

Reuters  
Seoul

Five people have died and two others were injured yesterday after an explosion and fire on a Republic of Korea production line for rocket propellant at a factory operated by Hanwha Aerospace in the city of Daejeon, officials said.

The two survivors, including one who was badly burned, had escaped from the facility themselves, a fire official told a briefing.

"Authorities have yet to identify the victims because their bodies were severely damaged," a health official told the same briefing.

A fire official said that an explosion had triggered the blaze, though the cause of the blast was still being investigated.

Shares in Hanwha Aerospace fell 2.8% in afternoon trade, while the holding company Hanwha Corp saw its shares drop 3.4%.

The blast appeared to have

occurred while water was being used to clean explosive material from tools making rocket propellant, a Hanwha official told a company briefing.

"We bow our heads in apology to the victims and their bereaved families," said Chief Executive Officer Son Jae-il, pledging to co-operate fully with authorities to determine the cause of the accident.

The five dead included two temporary workers in their 20s and all were employed by Hanwha, the company said.

Hanwha is a defence and aerospace company. Its factory in Daejeon produces large propulsion engines and handles rocket propellants.

Authorities were unable to obtain the factory's layout since it is protected under national security laws, an official said at an earlier briefing.

Republic of Korea President Lee Jae-myung called for the mobilisation of all available resources to respond to the accident and for an investigation, his office said in a text message to reporters.

## Philippine senator arrested in flood control scandal

AFP  
Manila

Philippine police arrested a lawmaker yesterday over a multi-billion dollar graft scandal, making him the highest-ranking government official held in the case that caused mass protests in the country.

Senator Jose "Jinggy" Estrada's detention came nearly a year after revelations over massive corruption in flood control projects — a matter with serious consequences in a country pummeled every year by major typhoons.

Several construction firm owners, government officials and politicians have been accused of pocketing funds from the projects, but this is the first time a sitting lawmaker was arrested over the scandal.

Estrada rejected the charges against him as "nonsense" and a ploy to get him to switch sides in a bitterly divided Senate.



Philippine Senator Jose Jinggy Estrada (left) accompanied by colleague Senator Rodante Marcoleta arrive for a press conference after a warrant of arrest was served at the Senate building in Manila yesterday. (AFP)

A special anti-graft court ordered his arrest yesterday, days after Estrada, son of former Philippine president Joseph Estrada, was charged with plunder, defined in the Philippines as large-scale corruption.

Graft has long been a problem in the Philippines but the flood con-

rol case has stood out due to the sums involved.

A government prosecutor accused him of inserting flood control project allocations in the 2025 national budget that allowed him to amass a kickback of over 573mn pesos (\$9.2mn).

Plunder is punishable by life

imprisonment and defendants are not entitled to bail.

Estrada's co-defendants include former Department of Public Works and Highways secretary Manuel Bonoan, as well as local engineering officials.

In a brief statement to the press before surrendering to police at the senate premises, Estrada described the charges as part of an attempt to blackmail him.

"There were many offers to drop the charges against me, but I did not entertain them," he said. "What is at stake here is the independence of the senate," he said without elaborating.

Estrada is a member of a group of 13 senators who took control of the 24-member Senate in May, ahead of the trial of their ally, impeached Vice-President Sara Duterte, next month. One other member of that group,

Estrada was charged in 2014 with plundering millions of dollars meant for government development projects, but the court acquitted him a decade later.

## China opposes 'political suppression' of Xinhua reporter in US: Ministry

Reuters  
Beijing

China firmly opposes the "suppression" of a reporter for the official Xinhua news agency who is based in the United States, the foreign ministry said yesterday.

The United States is using the pretext of so-called reciprocity to "politically suppress" the Xinhua reporter, who is working there legally, ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a regular press conference, without giving details.

"The facts and circumstances surrounding media issues between China and the US are crystal-clear: the root cause lies in the US side's unilateral provocation and politicisation of media matters," said Lin.

The US embassy in Beijing

did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Xinhua, the state-run Chinese news agency, did not immediately reply to an e-mail seeking comment.

On Friday, the *New York Times* said one of its reporters, Vivian Wang, had been expelled from China this year after the newspaper's interview with Taiwan President Lai Ching-te.

The paper cited an explanation from Chinese officials that it was in response to its Deal-Book summit's December video interview with Lai, and said Wang did not take part.

Wang did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

China views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and Lai as a "separatist." He rejects Beijing's sovereignty claims and says only the island's people can decide their future.

## Philippines, Vietnam renew defence ties to boost maritime security

AFP  
Manila

The Philippines and Vietnam agreed to strengthen defence ties yesterday to help bolster maritime security in the region and maintain peace in the disputed South China Sea.

The Southeast Asian countries are among the nations in the region — including China — to lay claims to the Spratly chain, which sits near vital shipping lanes and is reputedly rich in minerals.

After a meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart To Lam in Manila, Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos said the partnership has become "increasingly important" as the region navigates uncertainty "marked by geopolitical fragmentation".

The nations renewed a 2010 defence agreement, establishing that both would maintain "delegation exchanges for security and defence



Philippine President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr and Vietnam President To Lam shake hands during a bilateral meeting at Malacanang presidential palace in Manila, yesterday. (Reuters)

matters", and step up "information exchange".

They also agreed to collaborate on law enforcement to prevent transnational crime, including cyber scams, illegal migration, human trafficking, illegal gambling, among other challenges.

Lam said after the meeting that any individual or organisation using the "territory of one country to commit sabotaging acts against the other" would also be prevented.

At a joint news conference following the meeting, Marcos said "as fellow claimant states" of the

South China Sea both it and Vietnam would also "reaffirm that maintaining peace, stability, and the freedom of navigation and overflight" in the region "remains non-negotiable".

"We stand resolute in our commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes grounded firmly in international law," he said.

It comes just days after China's military drove away a Dutch navy vessel it accused of "illegally intruding" into the area around the Parcel Islands in the South China Sea.

The Netherlands insisted that its frigate had been in international waters.

A day before the move, the US, India, Japan and Australia jointly voiced concern over the South and East China Seas, warning against any assertive moves.

Without referring to China by name, the nations' foreign ministers criticised "dangerous manoeuvres by military aircraft" and "ramming and blocking actions in the South China Sea".

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## Britain will not have to pay Rwanda millions over asylum deal, court rules

Reuters  
The Hague

Britain will not have to pay Rwanda tens of millions of pounds over the cancelled deal to deport asylum seekers to the East African nation, the Permanent Court of Arbitration said yesterday.

The Hague-based body said it had rejected all financial claims made by Rwanda, which had argued Britain still needed to honour the terms of the deal which Prime Minister Keir Starmer cancelled in 2024.

Starmer scrapped the prior Conservative government's asylum plan, under which Rwanda would have been paid to take in migrants who had illegally arrived in Britain. Kigali was asking for at least

£60mn (\$80mn), the court documents showed.

The three-judge panel found by a majority that in November 2024, Rwanda agreed in diplomatic notes "to forgo any additional payments by the United Kingdom in April 2025 and April 2026", the court said.

The details were released yesterday in excerpts of the ruling which the court said it made on May 15.

In the end, only four people went voluntarily to Rwanda under the asylum agreement, which ran into legal challenges before its cancellation.

The Rwandan government said it respected the court's decision but said the issues were complex and open to different legal conclusions.

"Rwanda will continue to work constructively with international partners, guided by international

norms and mutually beneficial co-operation," Rwandan government spokesperson Yolande Makolo said in a statement.

The British government said it had "robustly" defended its position.

"The previous government's policy wasted time and £700mn of taxpayer money to send four volunteers to Rwanda," a spokesperson said. Relations between Britain and Rwanda soured last year when London paused some aid over the Rwandan role in the war in Democratic Republic of Congo. Rwanda has faced global pressure over accusations that it supports the M23 rebel group in eastern Congo. Kigali denies backing M23 and has blamed Congolese and Burundian forces for fighting that has killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands in the past year.

## British government bans two US political commentators

AFP  
London

Britain's interior ministry yesterday said it had blocked two US-based political commentators from entering the country.

Left-wing Israel critics Cenk Uygur, 56, and his nephew Hasan Piker, 34, had been due to speak at the SXSW London festival this week.

"These individuals' Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) has been cancelled on the grounds that their presence in the UK may not be conducive to the public good," the ministry said in a statement.

The United Kingdom has seen tensions in recent months after a

string of attacks targeting the Jewish community.

Piker, 34, described by the festival's website as a streamer and creator, had been expected to speak at an event entitled "How The American Left Learned To Speak The Internet".

Turkish-American Cenk Uygur, 56, the founder and host of The Young Turks, a left-wing YouTube channel, meanwhile, had been scheduled to take part in a discussion called "Techno-Feudalism Is Here. Who Are The Lords?" tomorrow.

In a livestream in 2019, Piker sparked controversy when he reportedly said "America deserved 9/11", a comment he later called "inappropriate". Uygur condemned the govern-

ment's decision to refuse him entry.

"I've been banned for criticising Israel. Are we free anymore?" he wrote on X.

"This is oppression of western citizens by our own governments on behalf of a different country," he posted.

Piker added in his post: "the uk has revoked my visa as well. all at the behest of israel. the west is betraying 'liberal values' for a genocidal fascist foreign government. soon we will all become israel."

The six-day London event, which runs until Saturday, is an offshoot of the Austin SXSW (South by Southwest) festival, combining live music performances, film and TV screenings with talks and panel discussions.

# Myanmar president holds trade, security talks with Modi

AFP  
New Delhi

India gave a red-carpet welcome yesterday to Myanmar's junta leader-turned President Min Aung Hlaing — his first trip abroad since becoming civilian leader — with talks focusing on security and trade.

The former military chief met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday, where they shook hands outside New Delhi's sprawling Hyderabad House.

Modi told the Myanmar leader that "India remains Myanmar's trusted neighbour, a reliable partner and steadfast first responder in times of crisis", Indian foreign ministry spokesman Randeep Jaiswal said.

Min Aung Hlaing was sworn in as Myanmar's president in April, continuing his rule from a civilian post five years after snatching power in a military coup.

Modi also "reaffirmed India's readiness to support peace and dialogue in Myanmar", Jaiswal added.

New Delhi's top career diplomat, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, told reporters after the meeting that discussions included border security and the impact of the civil war in Myanmar, which borders India's northeastern states.



Myanmar's President Min Aung Hlaing shakes hands with India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi before their meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi, yesterday. (Reuters)

"Stability and peace in Myanmar is obviously a major interest for India," Misri said.

"Not just for the security of the northeast and the safety and security of people living along the 1,643-kilometre (1,020-mile) long border that we have with them, but also for our interests — such as connectivity to Southeast Asia," he said.

But he also stressed that any solution to the conflict in Myanmar would have to come from its citizens themselves.

"Eventually, the difficulties that face Myanmar will have to be sorted out by the people of Myanmar talking amongst themselves," he said.

"This will have to be a Myanmar-led solution and a Myanmar-owned solution."

India has long supported plans for infrastructure initiatives to link India's landlocked northeast to the Bay of Bengal through Myanmar, as well as a highway to Thailand — routes that cut through areas of conflict.

"Obviously, in these circumstances, it's a little difficult to meet preset targets and dates," he said.

Bilateral trade was more than \$2bn in 2025-2026, according to New Delhi.

India also discussed cybercrime, and Misri said that New Delhi had repatriated more than 2,400 Indians from cyberscam centres in Myanmar in the past year, with around 150 "still stuck" in the country.

"Our engagement with Myanmar is not intended to be a commentary on the internal political arrangements in that country," he said.

"We have always proceeded on the principle that sustained dialogue is what is important and what is an imperative for India as a neighbour," he added.

"Disengagement only produces a vacuum that others go on to fill, to our detriment — and those others have no interest in democracy, I can assure you about that," he said, without giving further details.

Min Aung Hlaing arrived in India on Saturday, first stopping in the eastern state of Bihar, with a visit to the Buddhist pilgrimage site of Bodhi Gaya — where believers say that the Buddha attained enlightenment.

He is expected to hold talks with business representatives during his five-day visit and will travel to the financial hub Mumbai.

## Witnesses tell of devastation from Myanmar explosion

Reuters  
Yangon

The unexplained detonation of explosives stored by one of Myanmar's rebel armies has killed dozens, the militia that controls the village and witnesses said yesterday, as the search for survivors continued amid widespread devastation at the site.

The explosion in Kaung Tat village happened around noon (0530 GMT) on Sunday, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) said. Yesterday, a spokesperson for the TNLA said a hospital tally put the death toll at 39, with 75 injured, in the first official toll the group has issued. That was lower than a reported death toll of at least 55 from local media and witness accounts.

"Everything was completely destroyed beyond recognition," resident Moe Z told Reuters. He was travelling with a group of friends on a road about 1-1/2 miles (2.4km) away when the explosion happened, saying a mushroom cloud of smoke billowed into the sky.

The TNLA, which controls the



This handout video grab released yesterday shows the aftermath of an explosion in northern Myanmar that killed dozens of people. (AFP)

village near the Chinese border and is in a ceasefire with the Myanmar military, said on Sunday it had been storing the explosives that detonated "for use in mining operations". "We deeply apologise for this accident, which has resulted in a tragic loss of lives and immense devastation," TNLA spokesperson Lway Yay Oo said yesterday, adding that more than 200 homes had been damaged. Myanmar's mineral resources, including rare earths, have become important sources of revenue for both the military-backed govern-

ment and the rebel armies in the country's civil war. The ongoing conflict began in 2021, when the military staged a coup that ousted the democratically elected civilian government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

Moe Z said that at first his group thought the explosion might have been an air strike, but the absence of follow-up blasts made them wonder if a large unexploded bomb had detonated. "Based on the explosive force and the sound we witnessed, this was no small explosion, it wasn't the scale of a

drone-drop bomb," he said, of a tactic that has been used in Myanmar's civil war.

Moe Z said his group got to the site about an hour after the explosion, and that amid the human carnage at the scene the focus of people was to find survivors. He said there were limbs and bodies scattered over the area, with a massive crater where the explosives had been stored.

"It's as if the entire village has just vanished," he said.

A local journalist told Reuters the blast was so intense some victims were buried under huge amounts of rubble and debris, and backhoes were being used in the search.

"Over half of the village's houses have been destroyed. The houses near the centre of the blast were blown completely to pieces, to the point where not even the house posts remain," the journalist said. Lway Yay Oo, the TNLA spokesperson, said the group would work to prevent a repeat of the tragedy and would hold those responsible accountable. "We will also dedicate our efforts toward ongoing rescue operations and rehabilitation for the affected areas," she said.

## India takes down giant Messi statue over safety concerns



Pedestrians watch as workers remove a statue of Argentine football player Lionel Messi for its re-installation to a safer place in Kolkata yesterday. (AFP)

AFP  
Kolkata

A giant statue of football superstar Lionel Messi was taken down in India yesterday after it was spotted swaying dangerously in the wind, authorities said.

Hydraulic cranes and ropes were used to dismantle the 21-metre (70-foot) sculpture in Kolkata, the capital of West Bengal state, before it was taken away on an open-top flatbed truck, AFP journalists saw.

The statue was removed on Monday afternoon after locals complained it was swaying in the wind," state lawmaker Sharadwat Mukherjee told AFP.

Mukherjee said the statue would be kept in a government warehouse while authorities decide on a new location.

The gold-coloured statue, depicting the 38-year-old Argentine and Inter Miami star lifting the World Cup trophy, was unveiled in December dur-

ing Messi's much-publicised GOAT tour of India.

Messi will captain Argentina at the upcoming World Cup, to be co-hosted by the US, Canada and Mexico.

The statue drew scrutiny as political power shifted in West Bengal, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party swept into office last month after defeating the opposition Trinamool Congress (TMC).

The statue was reportedly designed under the patronage of former chief minister and TMC leader Mamata Banerjee, and was criticised by the new BJP sports minister Nisith Pramanik as "unsightly".

India, a nation of 1.4bn people, is a cricket powerhouse but has long struggled on the international football stage, and is 142nd in the FIFA rankings.

Football, however, is the country's second-favourite sport, according to recent research by data company Nielsen.

## Malaysia bars under-16s from social media

Reuters  
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia has begun barring those aged under 16 from registering accounts on social media platforms, its communications regulator said yesterday, as it boosts efforts to protect minors from exposure to harmful content online. The Southeast Asian nation joins a growing number of countries introducing measures to regulate access to online platforms, amid mounting concerns over the impact of social media on children's health and safety.

From yesterday, social media platforms including Meta Platforms' Facebook and Instagram, TikTok, and Alphabet's YouTube, must conduct age verification against government-issued records, the Ma-

laysian Communications and Multimedia Commission said.

Fines up to 10mn ringgit (\$2.5mn) may be levied against social media platforms who fail to comply.

"The measure is not intended to prohibit child users from the internet or to deny them access to technology," it said, rather it aims to boost responsibility among social media platforms, parents and guardians in protecting minors online.

Age verification for existing users will be implemented by social media platforms over a six-month period.

Malaysia has stepped up scrutiny of social media companies after finding a sharp rise in harmful online content in recent years, and is cracking down on material that deliberately tries to stir racial or religious tensions, or criticises the monarchy.



Rescued men lie in a medical tent, after seven Lao nationals who had entered a cave to prospect for gold were trapped for more than a week when rising water blocked their exit, in Xaisomboun province. (Reuters)

## Rescuers seek new route to two missing in Laos cave

AFP  
Vientiane

Rescuers searching for two men missing in a partially flooded cave in Laos for about two weeks said they were scouring for a new entry point yesterday as heavy rain slowed divers' efforts inside.

Rescue divers found five other men alive around 300 metres (984 feet) from the mouth of the cave in Xaysomboun province last week after they had been stranded inside by flash floods for a week.

Foreign divers extracted one of the men on Friday, and four more found their own way out on Saturday. Rescue teams had delivered food and medicine for them and had pumped water from the cave for days, giving them an easier exit.

One of the five survivors, identified as Laen, said in a video released by state media yesterday the men had gone into the cave to hunt bats for food and then figured they could extract some gold from old mining areas. "But then rain came and the cave was flooded," Laen says in the video. "We went to look for food and

thought that if we could make money as well, then why not? That's the way we all live in the village."

Earlier state media reports said the seven men had entered the cave to search for gold.

The two missing men are believed to have gone deeper inside, leaving rescuers scrambling to find an alternative access route after recent rainfall made conditions in the cave more risky.

Malaysian diver Lee Kian Lie told AFP yesterday that one team was still searching inside the cave and clearing a path after rain inundated

the tunnels. A second team "will search possible entry from the other side into the cave chamber" where rescuers suspect the last two men are stuck, he said in a message.

Rain made some of the passages "too unstable", so the search priority "has shifted to some promising leads above the cave" that might link to a chamber where the two men took shelter, Finnish diver Mikko Paasi said on social media. "We as a dive team will assist the local climbers and stand by in case they find water and our expertise is needed again," added Paasi.

## Rare US core inflation 'wedge' a headache for Warsh's Fed

A gap is widening between two key measures of underlying US inflation. Unfortunately for newly confirmed Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh, the one rising faster is the central bank's preferred gauge, further squashing any hope for interest rate cuts. The Bureau of Economic Analysis last week released April's personal consumption expenditures (PCE) figures, one of two closely watched measures of price changes across a wide range of goods and services. The other is the consumer price index (CPI).

Annual headline PCE inflation rose to 3.8% from 3.5% in March, on the back of soaring energy prices.

Core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy costs, rose to 3.3% from 3.2%. These numbers were in line with expectations, but are still uncomfortable for Warsh. Annual measures of headline and core PCE and CPI inflation have been above 2% for more than five years, and President Donald Trump's tariffs and the Iran war now seem likely to extend that to six years and beyond.

Crucially, a wedge is developing between core PCE, which is now up to 3.3%, and CPI, which is running at 2.8%. It's a rare phenomenon which will trouble policymakers the longer it persists, and frustrate President Donald Trump, who has

made no secret of his desire to see rates cut.

In general terms, PCE is the broader of the two as it covers urban and rural communities, while the CPI only includes urban households. The PCE index also includes expenditures made on behalf of consumers, such as employers' health insurance payments. In the three decades through the Covid-19 pandemic, core PCE was always below 3% and rarely rose above core CPI.

But this relationship has flipped in recent months. One major factor may be the AI boom. Dean Maki, chief economist at hedge fund Point72, notes that computer

software and accessories have a much larger weighting in the core PCE index. This series is rising at an annual rate of around 14%, lifted by the AI capex splurge this year.

If the latest AI capex forecasts for some \$800bn in spending this year are accurate – a rise of 80% on the previous year, according to Morgan Stanley – then this source of pressure on prices is unlikely to ease any time soon. Another factor is the classification of food prices. Core CPI excludes all food purchases, while the core PCE index includes "food services, that is food purchased for off-premises consumption," as the Cleveland Fed describes it. This latter category of

food prices away from home rose 3.6% in April, Maki notes.

The Philadelphia Fed's closely watched quarterly survey of professional forecasters shows core PCE this quarter is expected to average an annualized 3.4%, up from a previous forecast of 2.7% – a higher inflation outcome and bigger upward revision than the equivalent core CPI forecasts. This may explain why Warsh has indicated an openness to looking beyond core PCE. He has indicated a preference for the Dallas and Cleveland Fed's "trimmed mean" inflation gauges that remove extreme price moves at the margins to give a clearer picture of how underlying prices change

from month to month.

For years, especially during the Alan Greenspan Fed era in the 2000s, it was widely assumed that the benchmark for the Fed's 2% inflation target was annual core PCE. But according to the Fed's website, the 2% target is now "measured by the annual change in the price index for personal consumption expenditures." That suggests policymakers are looking at headline PCE, although confusingly, both measures have become interchangeable among Fed officials, economists and market participants in recent years. –Reuters



Denmark's King Frederik and Queen Mary arrive at Odense harbour during the royal couple's summer tour to Odense Municipality, Denmark, yesterday. (Reuters)



## Ukraine drones strike a new chord in Russia war



By Kamran Rehmat

There is a particular irony embedded in the image of Vladimir Putin's Victory Day parade this May: scaled back, stripped of its usual martial theatre, condensed to 45 minutes, with fewer men and machines than in any year since the tradition began. A conflict that began with Russia's overwhelming presumption of conventional superiority has been quietly, systematically, and brilliantly subverted – not by Western armies or Nato engagement, but by Ukrainian ingenuity in a discipline that, four years ago, barely existed as a military category.

Ukraine has turned the drone into something no military strategist fully anticipated: a weapon of economic attrition, psychological disruption, and battlefield dominance all at once.

The numbers tell only part of the story, but they are staggering. Ukrainian drone production surged from an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 units in 2022 to over 2.2mn by 2024, and doubled again to 4.5mn in 2025.

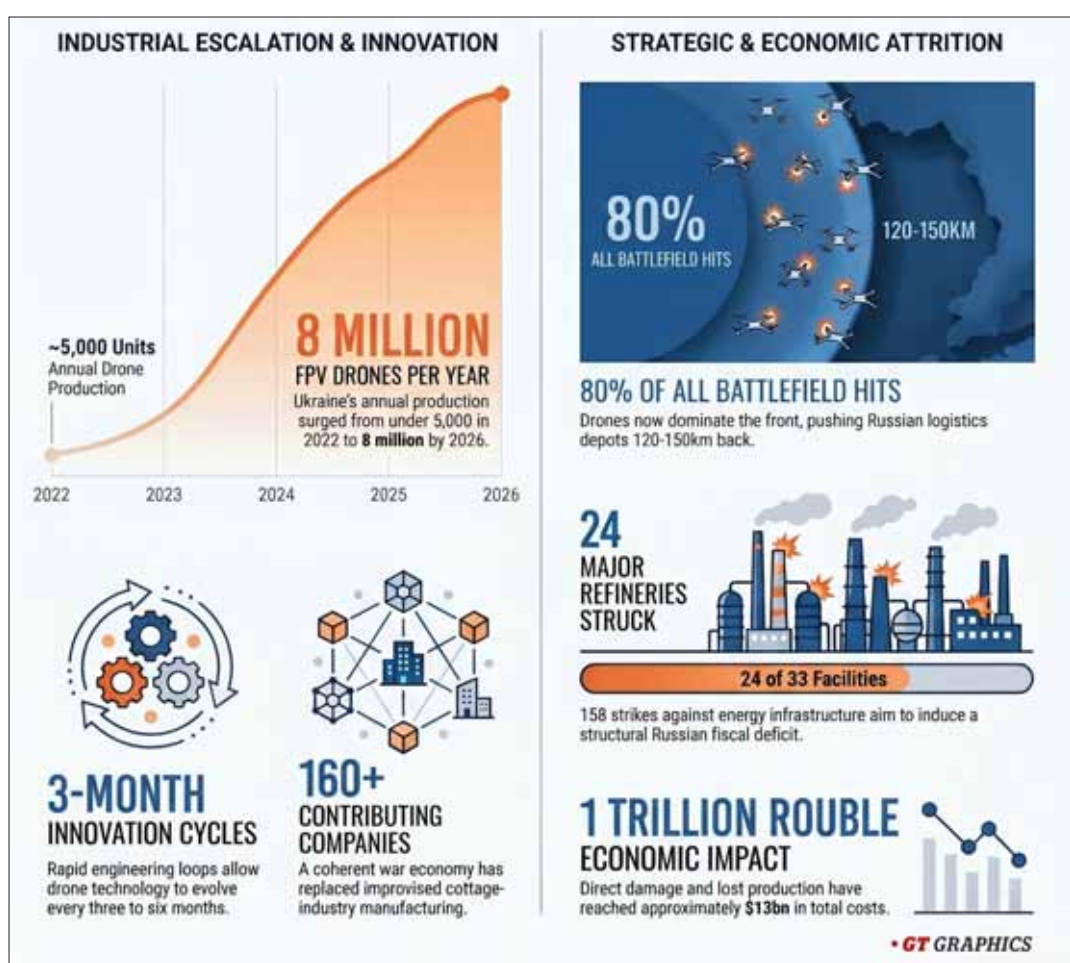
As of 2026, Ukraine's defence industry can produce more than 8mn FPV drones per year – an unprecedented figure for any country at war, with more than 160 companies contributing to that output. By any measure, this is not a cottage industry improvising through a crisis; it is a war economy that has pivoted with remarkable speed and coherence.

What makes the transformation genuinely consequential is not just volume but sophistication. Ukraine's engineers have collapsed development cycles that conventional defence procurement would stretch over years into mere weeks, allowing real-time battlefield feedback to loop directly into the next generation of systems. Drone technology in this conflict evolves every three to six months – a tempo that leaves adversaries perpetually catching up. Fibre-optic first-person-view drones, offering precision and near-total immunity to electronic jamming, went from novelty to standard battlefield instrument within a single campaign season.

The tactical implications have fundamentally altered the geometry of the front. By deploying swarms of FPV drones, Kyiv has established a kill zone roughly 20km deep along the line of contact – so lethal that Russian logistics have had to be restructured around it. Supply depots once sitting 80km from the front have been pushed back to 120-150km, and in some cases onto Russian territory itself. Drones now account for 80% of all target hits on the battlefield. The era of massed mechanised assault is, for practical purposes, over in this conflict.

Ukraine's long-range campaign has most dramatically shifted the strategic terrain. Since February 2022, Ukraine has conducted at least 158 strikes against Russian oil refineries, hitting 24 of its 33 major facilities, with the pace in 2026 already surpassing the entirety of 2024. In March 2026, for the first time since the invasion, Ukraine launched more drones than Russia – 7,347 to Russia's 6,462. The strategic objective is unambiguous: oil and gas revenues account for nearly 25% of Russia's state budget, and Ukraine's strikes aim to induce a structural fiscal deficit in Moscow.

The economic damage is already visible and accelerating. Direct damage to Russia's oil and gas infrastructure has exceeded 100bn roubles, with the total economic impact – including lost production and secondary disruptions – rising above 1tn



Ukraine's long-range campaign has most dramatically shifted the strategic terrain.

roubles, or approximately \$13bn. Moscow's defence spending is set to blow through its budget by at least \$28bn this year, economic growth has been revised down

to near-stagnant 0.4%, and the finance ministry has been forced to freeze hundreds of billions in non-military expenditure just to keep the war machine running.

The deeper strategic logic is Clausewitzian at its core: not simply to destroy Russian hardware, but to impose unbearable costs on Russian society and the ruling class's confidence that the war remains manageable. Ukrainian drone strikes now reach as far as the Ural Mountains. Some 70% of Russia's population lives within range. Fear of assassination by drone has reportedly driven Putin underground, curtailing public appearances and forcing him to abandon known residences. The May 9 parade shrank not because of military defeat but because Moscow's symbols of power had become targets.

The medium-range dimension adds yet another layer of pressure. A new generation of mid-strike drones can now reach targets

200km away that were previously inaccessible. The Russian FSB's regional headquarters has been struck; air defence installations near occupied Crimea have been hit; logistics nodes and fuel convoys in the south face mounting threat. Pro-Kremlin military bloggers have acknowledged that strikes on cargo carriers in Crimea are limiting petrol supplies to Russian forces – in a theatre where, by their own admission, "the situation is already precarious."

None of this means the war is won. Russia retains quantitative advantages in manpower, continues grinding forward in the Donbas – producing only 94sq km of territorial gain in April, one of the lowest totals in two years – and still strikes Ukrainian cities with brutal consistency. Ukraine's own casualties likely run into the hundreds of thousands. Mobilisation remains a grinding challenge.

And yet the picture in mid-2026 is categorically different from what most observers anticipated twelve months ago. The conventional wisdom – that Russia's mass and depth would eventually overwhelm a smaller, resource-constrained opponent – has been empirically tested and found wanting.

The chess term zugzwang – a position in which every available move worsens one's situation – has begun circulating among those who follow Russian policy closely. Moscow cannot advance fast enough to matter, cannot protect its rear, cannot absorb the attrition of an enemy that grows more lethal with every iteration cycle, and cannot finance a war whose costs rise faster than any energy windfall can offset.

Ukraine has not yet won. But it has done something more consequential: demonstrated that a smaller, poorer, outgunned state can use technology and industrial ingenuity to impose systemic costs on a nuclear power – redrawing the boundaries of what modern warfare makes possible. The drone is no longer just a weapon. It is Ukraine's argument.

• The writer is Deputy Managing Editor, Gulf Times.

# Armenia rejects Putin's pressure for EU referendum

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan yesterday rebuffed Moscow's call for his country to hold a referendum on joining the EU, saying ties with Russia were in a "transformation phase."

The Kremlin has upped pressure on Armenia over its rapprochement with Brussels ahead of weekend elections, banning fish imports from Monday in a move that came after Putin warned that the "Ukrainian scenario" began with Kyiv's EU ambitions.

The EU, meanwhile, accused Russia of trying to "hurt Arme-

nia's economy and influence the outcome of the parliamentary elections in Armenia."

An ex-Soviet republic, Armenia has been closely allied with Russia for decades. But frustrated that Moscow did not protect it in conflicts with neighbouring Azerbaijan, Yerevan has in recent years looked for other allies. This has triggered anger in the Kremlin.

"Our relations with Russia are in a transformation phase," Pashinyan said in a video on social media, adding that he hoped for "new relations" with Russia that he believed will be "successful because

our ties with Russia are open and sincere."

Pashinyan said there was no reason for Armenia to hold an EU referendum unless Yerevan "officially applied" for membership or "has come close" to getting candidate status.

Putin last week criticised Armenia's moves to become closer to the Western bloc, calling for a referendum as "soon as possible" and saying membership in both the EU and the Moscow-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) would be impossible.

The Kremlin and Yerevan said

Pashinyan and Putin spoke on the phone Monday, only saying they had discussed the "outcomes" of the EEU summit in Kazakhstan — where Putin had made the warnings. It said Putin had passed on birthday wishes to Pashinyan.

But on the same day, Russia's agricultural watchdog said it was banning fish goods from Armenia. Around 30% of Armenia's products from its fish farming industry are exported to Russia.

Over the weekend, Moscow recalled its ambassador to Armenia for "consultations" over Yerevan's growing EU ties, in a sign the

Kremlin was growing increasingly frustrated.

Still formally allied with Moscow, Armenia remains a member of the EEU. But relations deteriorated since Azerbaijan's 2023 offensive, with Yerevan angry over the inaction of Russian peacekeepers. Armenia hosted its first ever EU summit last month.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky attended the summit, which also saw Pashinyan playing the drums as French President Emmanuel Macron — considered as one of the most hostile leaders by Moscow — sang. (AFP)

## Zelensky's top aide says peace deal by winter is 'realistic'

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's chief of staff, Kyrylo Budanov, said yesterday he believed agreeing a deal to end the war against Russia by winter was a "realistic" outcome.

Zelensky said on Sunday that he wanted to press on with talks on securing peace with Russia, which have stalled in recent months, before the onset of winter to take account of Kyiv's improved strategic position.

Talks brokered by the United States on moving toward a peace accord have ground to a halt as Washington has focused on the conflict in Iran. Budanov said he expected a US delegation to visit Moscow and Kyiv in the near future, without giving details.

"This is the president's instruction: to try to end this war as soon as possible ... preferably before winter," he told reporters at a press conference. "In my opinion, this is absolutely correct, timely, and realistic." Zelensky and other Ukrainian officials have said the advance of Russian forces has slowed on the ground while Ukraine has intensified a campaign of long-range strikes inside Russia, targeting mainly the oil industry.

A senior Ukrainian commander said last week that Ukraine had a six-month window in which to seize the battlefield initiative and strengthen its hand for peace talks. (Reuters)

# Several plead not guilty to huge US trading scheme

Prosecutors allege scheme netted tens of millions, involved tips on nearly 30 mergers

Reuters  
Boston

Fifteen people, including a lawyer who worked at several major law firms, pleaded not guilty yesterday to US charges that they participated in a decade-long scheme in which attorneys fed an insider trading ring tips about nearly 30 underway mergers.



Lorenzo Nourafchan and Nicolò Nourafchan arrive yesterday at the federal courthouse in Boston, Massachusetts. (Reuters)

Nicolò Nourafchan, who had worked at the law firms Sidley Austin, Latham & Watkins and Goodwin Procter, was among the defendants who appeared in federal court in Boston to enter pleas to securities fraud and other charges.

Thirty people in total have been charged with participating in the decade-long scheme, which prosecutors say netted tens of millions of dollars and was orchestrated by Nourafchan and personal injury attorney Robert Yadgarov.

Yadgarov also entered a not guilty plea, along with Nourafchan's brother, Lorenzo, the founder of a fractional CFO and accounting firm. He is paying Nicolò Nourafchan's attorney fees under an arrangement a judge warned risked creating a potential conflict of interest.

"You may have different interests as this goes on," US Magistrate Judge Judith Dein said.

According to authorities, the

scheme began in 2014 not long after Nicolò Nourafchan graduated from Yale Law School and landed a job at Sidley Austin.

Prosecutors said Nourafchan, while working at Sidley and other law firms, tipped Yadgarov and others off to impending corporate transactions in exchange for kickbacks generated from any trading profits.

Nourafchan and Yadgarov also recruited other attorneys into the scheme to feed tips to them, including one who worked at Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz and another who was employed by Weil, Gotshal & Manges and Willkie Farr & Gallagher.

The latter, Gabriel Gershowitz, secretly pleaded guilty last year and is now a co-operating witness in the case. Guilty pleas for eight other people dating back to 2024

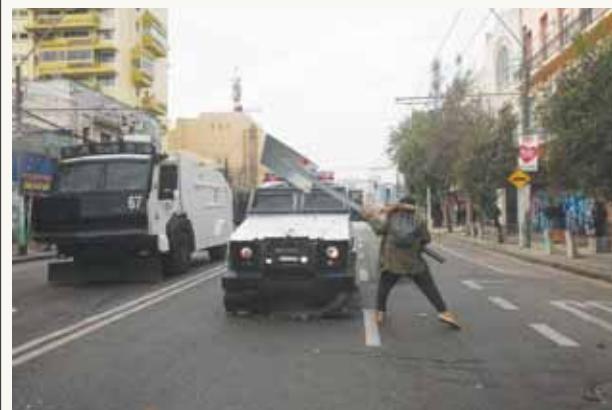
were unsealed the day prosecutors announced the case on May 6.

Many of the defendants are Jewish, and an indictment alleged that they spoke in coded messages related to their backgrounds while discussing merger tips, referring to one deal as a "flight to Israel" and another as a "rabbi."

Among the defendants is Joseph Suskind, a Florida resident in the insurance adjusting business charged with trading in 2022 on tips about SailPoint's agreement to be bought by Thoma Bravo and iRobot's later-abandoned deal to be acquired by Amazon.com Inc. Defense lawyer Michael Kendall called him innocent.

"Evidence is more important than press releases," Kendall told reporters after Suskind's arraignment. "We look forward to the trial."

## Rioting in Chile



A demonstrator hits a riot police vehicle with a sign during a protest, on the day Chile's President Jose Antonio Kast delivers his first State of the Nation address at the National Congress, in Valparaiso, Chile, yesterday. (Reuters)

# Zelensky says Ukrainian military can hit Russian logistics in occupied areas

President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that Ukraine's military was now capable of hitting Russian logistics throughout occupied areas of Ukraine and had created shortages of fuel in Crimea and other Russian-held regions.

"Our troops are now capable of reaching Russian military logistics across virtually the entire depth of the temporarily occupied territories," Zelensky said in his nightly video address.

"In practice, there are almost no safe roads left for the occupier in the south and east of our country." Ukraine in recent months has stepped up strikes on medium-range targets as well as others many hundreds of kilometers from Ukraine's borders, focusing on Russia's oil industry.

Zelensky said that from January to May, Ukrainian forces had struck 15 Russian oil refineries.



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (AFP)

Ukraine's actions, he said, provided "further proof that there will be no peaceful times for the occupier on our land."

"This is also reflected in shortages, above all fuel shortages in Crimea and in other areas that remain under occupation."

Drivers in Crimea, the Ukrainian peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014, were confronted with gasoline rationing yesterday after Ukrainian drone attacks constricted road supplies across south-eastern Ukraine. (Reuters)

# Magyar threatens legal action if president refuses to resign

Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar said yesterday his government would launch legal proceedings to dismiss President Tamas Sulyok, an appointee of the previous nationalist administration, if he sticks by his refusal to resign. Magyar's centre-right Tiszta party ousted Prime Minister Viktor Orban in an April election and pledged to remove several figures appointed by Orban to key public positions over the past 16 years, including the largely ceremonial head of state. Magyar has repeatedly called on Sulyok — elected in early 2024 by lawmakers from Orban's Fidesz party — to step down, accusing him of failing to represent national unity on major issues and of serving the interests of Orban and his government. Sulyok has consistently refused to resign. "I have told the president that if he maintains his stance and does not resign, I will inform... Tiszta's lawmakers about our legislative proposals to-



PM Peter Magyar (AFP)

day and we will immediately start the necessary procedures," Magyar said after meeting Sulyok. The legislative process would take about a month and would involve "removing all the puppets" who took part in "dismantling the rule of law and democracy" under Orban's rule, Magyar said.

He said the government would use its two-thirds parliamentary majority to amend the constitu-

tion to force Sulyok from office, though gave no further details.

Sulyok, a 70-year-old former lawyer, reiterated on Monday his refusal to step down.

"The constitutional crisis that will follow (the legal action promised by Magyar) is going to deepen the division in society and will harm the international reputation of Hungary's democracy," Sulyok wrote on his Facebook page.

Orban's Fidesz party accused Magyar, 45, of issuing an "unlawful ultimatum" and said Sulyok was fulfilling his lawful mandate, which runs until 2029, and could not be removed from office.

Sulyok previously served as head of Hungary's top court, a post to which he was also elected by Fidesz in 2016. The president in Hungary, though a largely figurehead role, can refer laws back to parliament for reconsideration or forward legislation to the Constitutional Court, potentially slowing or blocking Magyar's reform agenda.

# France seizes Russia-linked oil tanker with ties to Iranian shipping magnate

AFP  
Brest, France

France yesterday said it had detained a Russia-linked oil tanker in the Atlantic over the weekend, with the Kremlin comparing the latest seizure aimed at tackling Moscow's sanctions-busting shadow fleet to "piracy."

Since September, France has boarded three other ships believed to belong to the shadow fleet, used by Russia to circumvent Western sanctions on its fossil fuel exports imposed over Kremlin's invasion of Ukraine.

The Tagor was detained on Sunday morning in international waters with the help of Britain and other partners, after its Russian captain repeatedly refused to comply with orders, prosecutors said. "We consider these acts illegal. They border on international piracy," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "Russia is taking measures to ensure the safety of its cargo."

Suspected of carrying Russian or Iranian oil despite international sanctions, the Tagor is linked to petroleum shipping magnate Mohammad Hossein Shamkhani, according to open-source database Opensanctions.org.

According to French authorities, the Tagor was on its way from Murmansk in northwestern Russia when it was boarded.

The ship was falsely flying a Cameroonian flag and was heading toward Limbe, a seaside city in the west of the African country, said a spokesperson for France's Atlantic maritime prefecture.

"The examination of the documents confirmed doubts about the irregularity of the flag being flown," the prefecture said.

The ship, which had 23 crew



French President Emmanuel Macron (Reuters)

"It is unacceptable for ships to circumvent international sanctions, violate the law of the sea, and fund the war that Russia has been waging against Ukraine for more than 4 years," said French President Emmanuel Macron

vessel proved necessary?"

The prosecutor's office in the northwestern city of Brest said a criminal investigation had been opened over failure to prove a vessel's nationality, absence of a flag and refusal to comply.

"It is a vessel that was known and tracked," Guillaume Le Rasle, spokesman for the Atlantic maritime prefecture, told AFP, adding that the vessel was under EU and US sanctions.

"The decision to divert it was taken Sunday evening," he added. "The objective of the diversion is to verify the validity of its flag."

The shadow fleet vessels frequently change the flags they fly, a practice known as flag-hopping, or use invalid registrations in an attempt to escape tracking.

The three other ships France has detained since September on suspicion of belonging to the shadow fleet were allowed to sail after their owners paid fines.

In April, France announced a plan to double penalties for ships that fail to fly a flag or refuse to comply.

Several Western countries have imposed sanctions on hundreds of vessels in Russia's shadow fleet over its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Nearly 600 ships suspected of belonging to the fleet are subject to European Union sanctions.

# Colombia presidential race: Cepeda accuses right-wing rival of 'stealing' national jersey

Colombian left-wing presidential hopeful Ivan Cepeda yesterday accused his hard-right rival Abelardo de la Esparriella of "stealing" the national football jersey, which has become a symbol of support for the pro-Trump frontrunner.

Like former Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, who turned his country's iconic jersey into a partisan symbol, De la Esparriella has sought to cloak his campaign in Colombia's yellow colors — just weeks before the World Cup.

"Mr de la Esparriella is used to stealing things, now he's stealing the Colombian national team jersey," Cepeda said a day after the first round of voting, which was won by De la Esparriella.

The 47-year-old stormed from



Presidential candidate Ivan Cepeda. (Reuters)

behind in recent weeks on a tough-on-crime platform that has powered victories by the right across Latin America.

He garnered 43.7% of the vote, compared to 40.9% for Cepeda, who had been the favorite.

The two now head into a June 21 run-off dominated by concerns over worsening violence by cocaine-trafficking guerrillas.

At a victory rally Sunday night, De la Esparriella, his wife and their four children were all clad in the country's football jersey.

His rallies have also been awash in yellow, capitalizing on football fever in the run-up to the World Cup. Colombia will play its opening game on June 17 against Uzbekistan.

"When did the Colombian national team become the property of Mr de la Esparriella's campaign?" Cepeda, 63, asked at a press conference as he launched his second-round race. "The national team belongs to all of us."

David Quitian, an anthropologist specializing in sports, told AFP said De la Esparriella was seeking to unite "sporting passion with political passion." (AFP)



## How Qatar is building ecosystem for emerging local artistic talent

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

Within a national vision that invests in people and creativity, Qatar continues to solidify its position as a regional hub supporting creative and cultural industries through initiatives and programmes that empower young artistic talent and enhance their presence on the global stage.

In this context, the artwork "Loudest Green" by Yasmin Sheikhi, a graduate of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, stands out as a model that reflects the growing role of Qatar Media City in nurturing emerging artistic voices.

This is demonstrated through her participation in the "Art Destination" programme accompanying Art Basel Qatar.

The artwork is based on the idea of transforming rice waste into an illuminated sculpture that embodies the flow of information, digital waves, and media mechanisms of repetition and accumulation, in an artistic treatment that blends organic material with digital structure.

Sheikhi emphasised that the work stemmed from the question, "What are we overlooking?" She



Yasmin Sheikhi at work.

explained that rice is often perceived as a humble and ephemeral material, but she sought to give it "a voice and a lasting presence" by repurposing its waste and transforming it into a structural material that expresses digital waves and the subtle behaviours of media.

She noted that the "Art Destination" programme enabled her to expand the project's conceptual dimension and connect it to a broader creative and media context. She noted that the work faced technical and conceptual challenges, most notably ensuring the material's cohesion and its ability

**Sheikhi emphasised that the work stemmed from the question, "What are we overlooking?" She explained that rice is often perceived as a humble and ephemeral material, but she sought to give it "a voice and a lasting presence" by repurposing its waste and transforming it into a structural material that expresses digital waves and the subtle behaviours of media.**

to form a stable structure, as well as attempting to give a tangible

form to an invisible entity. She considered the experience a continuous journey of research and experimentation.

The work was showcased at Art Basel Qatar, attended by thousands of visitors, including international artists and art enthusiasts. Sheikhi considered this a pivotal moment in her artistic career, emphasising that the interest shown by prominent figures reinforced her conviction that even the simplest materials can spark meaningful global dialogues when presented within a suitable creative framework.

She affirmed that her selection as one of the winning artists in the "Art Destination" programme marks a significant turning point in her career, expressing her eagerness to continue collaborating with local creators and to foster dialogue about the sustainability of art and the materials used in creative production.

These experiences reflect the scale of the transformation taking place in Qatar's cultural and creative landscape, driven by ongoing investment in building a supportive ecosystem for emerging talent.

This contributes to strengthening the country's cultural presence and opening broader horizons for Qatari and resident artists to access the global art scene.

## QF offers seamless continuation of path of learning and ambition

For students graduating from Qatar Foundation's (QF) schools after years of learning and who have now been accepted into one of the organisation's universities, it is a moment that feels like much more than just the start of a new academic journey.

It is the continuation of a path through a unique ecosystem of learning that began in childhood, one that will keep being shaped by the same environment and places that have nurtured them over the years.

These students, and their classmates, are being celebrated this week at the QF Schools Commencement Ceremony. Among them is Lolwa al-Khater, whose years at Qatar Academy Al Wakra (QAW), one of the schools under QF's Pre-University Education, will always remain close to her heart.

Having studied there from Preschool 4 to Grade 12, she says: "We grew up with the same teachers and students over the years, and that made our relationships very strong."

Now accepted to Northwestern University in Qatar, a QF partner university, al-Khater says her interest in the university began with family and friends who spoke highly of their experiences and their lasting connection to the university even after graduation.

"That made me curious to learn more," she says. "After researching it, I felt it was the right fit for me academically, especially in terms of the major and subjects it offers."

From a shy child who hesitated to speak in class to a student preparing to begin her university journey at Georgetown University in Qatar, another QF partner university, Najlaa Hamad al-Saffar's long journey at QAW reflects years of growth within QF's educational ecosystem - from kindergarten through Grade 12, and now in university.

Al-Saffar says: "I was very shy about speaking at school, even though at home I spoke freely with my family about everything." As the years passed, however, the support of her teachers, friends, and the school environment played a major role in building her self-confidence: "I don't think I would be the person I am today without them."

Students from the Academic Bridge Programme, also part of QF's Pre-University Education, have also had the chance to pursue their dream of joining a QF partner university and take an important step towards the future they hope for.

Hamad Faisal al-Thani says his experience at ABP was a transformative period of learning and personal growth. "This programme opened new horizons for me and taught me how to set clear goals and work toward achieving them step by step," he says. "Through academic guidance and a supportive environment, I was able to, within a short period of time, gain admission to QF's Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) to study Mechanical Engineering."

"Today, I am beginning a new chapter in my journey, carrying with me everything I gained from a place that truly served as a bridge toward achieving my goals."

Similarly, Jungwoo Chang



Hamad Faisal al-Thani



Latifa Saad al-Derham



Najlaa Hamad al-Saffar



Lolwa al-Khater



Jungwoo Chang

says: "I came from South Korea to Qatar to join the Academic Bridge Programme in pursuit of my dream of being accepted into Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar, a QF partner university."

Thanks to the tremendous support from the programme's faculty and the quality of the curriculum, I was accepted into the Biological Sciences programme. My experience at the Academic Bridge Program was a pivotal step that led me to the university I had always dreamed of attending."

And Latifa Saad al-Derham says ABP prepared her not only for university life, but also for personal growth. "The programme helped me build my character, strengthen my self-confidence, and develop a resilient mindset," she says. "That became the key that led me to my dream university - HBKU."

## Qatar a leading tourist destination during Eid al-Adha

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

This year's Eid al-Adha holiday coincided with the "Hello Summer" season presented by Visit Qatar, where the country hosted a wide range of events, family experiences, and live performances that reinforce the country's position as a comprehensive year-round tourist and entertainment destination.

Various tourist, entertainment, and cultural destinations witnessed a surge in activity and increased demand from citizens, residents, and visitors during the Eid al-Adha holiday. This is reflected in high hotel occupancy rates and increased interest in beaches, resorts, and shopping malls, all within a programme packed with events and entertainment offerings targeting all age groups.

Tourism sector professionals confirmed that the promotional offers and diverse packages launched by hotels and resorts significantly contributed to boosting domestic tourism and supporting demand for short stays and family vacations within the country, especially as many families preferred to spend their holidays locally and take advantage of the diverse entertainment options available.

Hotels and resorts experienced a significant surge in bookings during the Eid holiday, driven by competitive offers that include beach stays and city breaks, as well as additional benefits at restaurants and recreational facilities.

This enhances the competitiveness of the hotel sector and increases the appeal of the local market during the season.

Entertainment destinations across the country are also recording high visitor numbers during the Eid holiday. Water parks, theme parks, and beaches offer



A child exhilarates watching a performance at the event organised during the festive season.

a variety of programmes and activities designed for families and children.

Desert Waterfalls Adventure Park stands out as one of the most prominent destinations attracting visitors during the Eid season, alongside Meryal Water Park, which offers integrated entertainment experiences that combine water rides, family shows, and interactive activities.

Public beaches are also witnessing a surge in visitors during the Eid holidays, most notably Katar Beach, West Bay Beach, 974 Beach, and Fuwairit Beach. These destinations offer modern facilities and a diverse range of marine and recreational activities, as well as restaurants, cafes, and services specifically designed for families.

Tourism sector experts believe that the variety of beach destinations and outdoor activities has become a major attraction for do-

**As part of the Eid season events, the "Sneaker Con Doha" exhibition, held at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre (DECC) from May 29 to 31, drew remarkable popularity. It is considered one of the world's leading events specialising in athletic footwear and youth culture, and managed to attract large numbers of visitors and enthusiasts of fashion and contemporary culture**

mestic tourism, especially with the growing desire among families to spend more time at open-air venues and enjoy festive atmospheres during holidays and special occasions.

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The active tourism during the Eid al-Adha holiday has a positive impact on many tourism-related economic sectors, most notably hospitality, restaurants, retail, transportation, and entertainment.

Experts have confirmed that holiday seasons are a significant contributor to the local economy, stimulating commercial activity through increased spending on entertainment and tourism. This strengthens the tourism sector's contribution to supporting economic growth and achieving economic diversification goals.

## Charting out twin sisters' journey through Qatar Foundation

Since early childhood, twin sisters, Taif Nasser and Nouf al-Malki have been part of the community at Qatar Academy Sidra, part of Qatar Foundation's (QF) Pre-University Education.

Growing up together within the same learning environment, the two sisters say their school experience not only supported their academic growth but also helped shape their personalities, nurture their passions, and prepare them for the future with confidence and ambition.

Today, as they prepare to graduate from Qatar Academy Sidra (QAS) and begin university life, the sisters describe the moment as a mix of pride, excitement and gratitude.

Nouf says: "I feel that graduation is a major milestone in my life because I have been at QAS since kindergarten, so the school truly felt like my second home. This is where I grew up, learned, and created some of my most beautiful

memories with my friends and teachers."

Meanwhile, her sister, Taif, describes graduation as the beginning of a new chapter filled with excitement and responsibility, saying: "I feel proud that we reached this stage after many years of hard work and experiences that shaped us. I feel ready now to begin a new and more independent journey at university."

Despite their close bond as twins, the sisters chose from an early age to pursue their academic journeys independently by studying in separate classes, a decision they say helped each of them better discover her own identity.

"Having my sister with me all the time was always comforting, but being independent helped me face challenges in my own way, learn how to rely on myself, and build my own personality," Taif says.

"At QAS, we learned not to stay within our comfort zones, but to



A childhood picture of Taif Nasser and Nouf al-Malki.

try new things and go through different experiences. The school always encouraged us to explore our interests and develop them," Nouf adds.

For Nouf, art became an important part of her journey after her teachers encouraged her to

participate in competitions and creative activities. She explains: "They always believed in my abilities, and that encouraged me to try new things and have confidence in myself."

Taif, meanwhile, says one of the most valuable aspects of her ex-



Taif Nasser



Nouf al-Malki

perience at Qatar Foundation (QF) was being exposed to different cultures and perspectives. She says: "I learned the importance of communication and teamwork, and how to listen to different perspectives and understand others, and these are among the most important things I will carry with me into the future."

Today, the twins are preparing to study Mechanical Engineering at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, a member of QF, after receiving multiple university offers and acceptances. This step reflects both their ambition and their desire to continue their educational journey within the QF ecosystem.