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## Qatar's education sector on course for record growth

By Ayman Adly  
Staff Reporter

Qatar is fast emerging as one of the Gulf's most attractive destinations for education investment, with its K-12 private sector alone valued at \$3.24bn and the broader ecosystem – spanning higher education, vocational training, and edtech – poised to nearly double to \$13.22bn by 2034.

Such growth is supported mainly by the government's vision to invest across all education segments, alongside rising demand for educational services and a growing population – in particular the diverse expatriate communities that bring with them varied preferences for curricula and education systems.

Accordingly, the country has successfully transformed its education sector from a traditional public service into one of its most important drivers of economic diversification, innovation, and human capital development. Qatar has invested heavily in educational infrastructure, higher education, scientific research, digital learning, and international

academic partnerships over the past two decades, positioning itself as a leading regional centre for knowledge creation and advanced technology. The government has allocated QR21.8bn to the education sector in the 2026 state budget, a considerable annual increase from the QR19.4bn allocated in 2025.

Recent public spending heavily targets infrastructure and facilities expansion, managed through a \$1.1bn Public-Private Partnership (PPP) programme under which the government is set to complete 45 new public schools. Under the National School Facilities Development Programme, eight schools have already been made operational, with 14 more opening in the next immediate phase. The Ministry of Education and Higher Education alone has allocated QR2.3bn for contracting tenders for 2026 to modernise public school infrastructure and operational equipment. Such investments pursue the realisation of the ministry's 2024-2030 strategy that prioritises digital transformation, artificial intelligence, STEM education, innovation, and labour market readiness. **To Page 3**

 <b>Market value reaching \$13.22bn by 2034.</b> Broader education ecosystem poised to nearly double over next decade.	 <b>QR21.8bn allocated for 2026 state budget.</b> Significant annual increase to modernise infrastructure and operational equipment.	 <b>45 new schools via PPP programme.</b> Government expanding facilities through \$1.1bn Public-Private Partnership initiative.	 <b>AI and STEM driving future growth.</b> National strategy prioritises digital transformation, robotics, and labour market readiness.
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## PM, IAEA chief review Iran negotiations



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi. They discussed reinforcing bilateral co-operation between Qatar and the IAEA as well as the latest developments pertaining to the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme. In addition, the two sides addressed a wide range of topics of shared interest. **(QNA)**

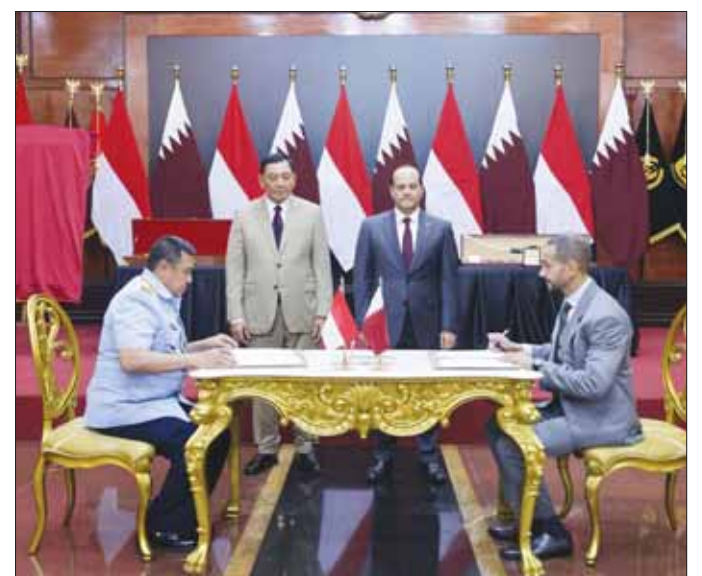
## Qatar, Indonesia discuss joint military co-operation

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs, Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani met yesterday with Indonesian Minister of Defence Sjafrie Sjamsoeddin.

An official reception ceremony was held on this occasion for the Deputy Prime Minister upon his arrival to the headquarters of the Indonesian Ministry of Defence.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed the latest security developments in the region as well as aspects of military co-operation and joint co-ordination under the current circumstances.

The meeting also witnessed the signing of a deal between Barzan Holdings and the Indonesian Ministry of Defence, and a partnership agreement between Barzan Holdings and Republikorp.



Qatari ambassador to Indonesia Sultan bin Mubarak al-Dosari, attended the meeting, alongside several senior officers and officials from both sides. **(QNA)**

## Talks ongoing continuously, says Trump as Iran studies US draft

Reuters  
Washington/ Tehran

Iran is reviewing a proposed agreement with the US to halt their war but has not communicated with Washington for a few days, Iranian media reported yesterday, though US President Donald Trump said negotiations had been going on continuously.

Iran has not yet responded to a proposed final text of a temporary deal, and was taking a "stern" approach given what it sees as a history of US non-compliance and longstanding mistrust, Mehr News Agency cited a source as saying. The semi-official Fars agency, also citing a source, added that messages on the possible deal, or memorandum of understanding, had stopped a few days ago, with the last one being Tehran's "clear message" over Lebanon, where Iran is seeking a halt to Israel's incursion against its ally Hezbollah. Trump said that suggestion

## Israel pounds south Lebanon again despite ceasefire

was "false and erroneous" and that the conversations between the two sides had continued without a pause. "The conversations between us have been going on continuously, including four days ago, three days ago, two days ago, one day ago, and today," he said in a social media post. He made similar com-

ments on Monday, before the Iranian report.

Yesterday, Israel kept up strikes on a string of towns in southern Lebanon, Lebanese security sources said, despite a US-mediated partial ceasefire announced on Monday.

Trump said on Monday there would be a deal with Iran over the next week to extend a ceasefire agreed in early April



A Lebanese soldier removes gas canisters from the rubble of a building hit by an Israeli air strike in the southern port city of Tyre yesterday. **(AFP)**

and reopen the strait. Since mid-March, he has repeatedly said he is close to a deal, which would postpone thorny issues including the future of Iran's nuclear programme. A ceasefire has largely held since early April, but Iran and the US have exchanged strikes several times over the past week.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told lawmakers yesterday that Iran had agreed to negotiate aspects of its nuclear programme that it previously refused to discuss, but added that was not a guarantee that negotiations would lead to a deal. Trump has said stopping Iran acquiring nuclear weapons was his top priority. Iran has always denied wanting to build a nuclear bomb, saying its atomic programme is for peaceful purposes only.

Rubio, who is also Trump's national security adviser, said in testimony to Congress that the US negotiating team had not offered Iran sanctions relief in exchange for reopening the strait, though he said that was the first condition it must meet.

## QF inks 3 new US university tie-ups

Academic collaborations, student mobility, and cross-cultural ties between Qatar and the US are to be strengthened through three new study-abroad agreements between Qatar Foundation (QF) and three American universities. At the NAFSA 2026 Annual Conference & Expo in Florida – one of the world's premier events for educators to connect, network, and share perspectives – a trio of partnerships were sealed to pave the way for students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the US to experience QF's globally unique ecosystem of learning, Education City. The agreements with Hampton University in Virginia, Xavier University of Louisiana, and Prairie View A&M University in Texas – supported by the Embassy of Qatar in Washington, DC are designed to deepen cross-cultural exchange and understanding between US and Qatar-based students. HCBUs are US universities established before the country's 1964 Civil Rights Act with the principal mission of educating African American students, with 107 of these institutions now educating students regardless of race. "These agreements reflect Qatar Foundation's commitment to building globally connected learning environments and advancing partnerships that promote inclusion, cultural exchange, and academic excellence," said Francisco Marmolejo, president of Higher Education and Education Adviser, QF, who, during NAFSA 2026, addressed delegates on the topic 'Beyond Borders: How US Policies are Shaping Global Student Mobility'. **(QNA) To Page 2**

## Shura Council Speaker meets ambassadors of France and Portugal



HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim met separately yesterday with ambassadors Arnaud Pescheux (France) and Ana Filomena da Costa Rocha (Portugal). During the meetings, co-operation and relations between Qatar and both France and Portugal were reviewed, particularly in the field of parliament, as well as regional and international issues. - QNA

## Amir sends cable of congratulations to Italy's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Italy's President Sergio Mattarella on the occasion of the Republic Day. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani also sent a cable of congratulations to Mattarella on the occasion, while HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. - QNA

## Labour minister meets counterparts at ILO conference



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Samikh al-Marri met with a number of ministers on the sidelines of the 114th International Labour Conference, organised by International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva. HE Dr al-Marri held separate meetings with Lebanon's Minister of Labour Dr Mohammad Haidar, Sudan's Minister of Human Resources and Social Welfare Mutasim Ahmed Saleh Adam, Syria's Minister of Social Affairs and Labour Hind Kabawat, Paraguay's Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security Monica Recalde de Giacomi, and Lesotho's Minister of Labour and Employment Tseliso Seth Levalo Mokhosi. The meetings discussed relations, mutual co-operation in the labour sector fields, and explored ways to strengthen and further develop them. - QNA



HE Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani

# Qatar affirms commitment to mediation, diplomacy

Qatar has affirmed continued commitment to its efforts in mediation, dialogue, and preventative diplomacy to bolster peaceful efforts aimed at de-escalation and the preservation of international peace and security.

This came in Qatar's statement delivered by HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani before the UN General Assembly meeting on "Strengthening the role of mediation in the peaceful settlement of disputes, conflict prevention and resolution", under agenda item 31(b), at the UN headquarters in New York.

Reiterating Qatar's position that mediation remains one of the most effective tools for settling disputes peacefully, preventing their outbreak, and building sustainable peace, she said that mediation constitutes a fundamental pillar of preventative diplomacy and conflict resolution.

HE Sheikha Alya stressed that the need to strengthen mediation is increasing, especially given the growing complexity of conflicts in light of modern technology, at a time when the world is witnessing the highest number of armed conflicts since the founding of the United Nations.

She affirmed that Qatar is proud of its longstanding role in mediation, noting that preventative diplomacy, mediation, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts are fundamental pillars of its foreign policy, based on the principles enshrined in its constitution and in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions.

HE Sheikha Alya highlighted the joint mediation efforts undertaken by Qatar, alongside Egypt, the US and Turkiye, in reaching the ceasefire agreement in the Gaza Strip, which was signed in October of last year, stressing Qatar's emphasis on the necessity for all parties to fulfill their commitments, fully implement the ceasefire agreement, and open the crossings to ensure the sustained and uninterrupted flow of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

She said that Qatar continues its efforts in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) through the Doha Framework for a Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed on November 15, 2025, while noting Qatar's mediation efforts in Afghanistan, which culminated in the signing of the peace agreement between the US and the Taliban in Doha in February 2020.

HE Sheikha Alya renewed Qatar's appreciation and support for Pakistan's mediation efforts between the US and Iran, affirming its full support for mediation efforts aimed at de-escalation, thereby contributing to enhanced security and stability in the region.



## Co-operation framework signed for 2026 search and rescue exercise

The Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) of the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have signed a co-operation framework to host the 2026 search and rescue exercise in Qatar in October. Signed in the presence of HE

the Deputy Commander of Lekhwiya Major-General Mohammed Mesfer al-Shahwani, the co-operation framework was signed by Assistant Commander of Lekhwiya for Administration and Supply Brigadier Mubarak Sherida al-Kaabi and by INSARAG Global Chair ambassador Dominik Stillhart. The co-operation framework



aims to enhance the readiness and response capabilities of international search and rescue teams and improve co-ordination and operational efficiency through joint planning and execution of the exercise in accordance with INSARAG's internationally recognised methodology. It includes the development of the exercise's objectives, scenarios, and evaluation mechanisms.

The selection of Qatar to host this global exercise comes as a confirmation of its leading role in humanitarian work, the efficiency of the internationally ranked Qatar International Search and Rescue Group, and its role as an active partner in the UN system to confront major challenges and crises. - QNA



## QF forms three new study-abroad partnerships with US universities

From Page 1

"Hosting students from US Historically Black Colleges and Universities for a semester at universities based in Education City will enrich the academic experience for all involved, energising classroom discussions and deepening global understanding, while fostering a dynamic and reciprocal learning environment that benefits both visiting and local students culturally, socially, and academically," Marmolejo said.

"We are grateful to the embassy of Qatar in Washington, DC for their invaluable support toward advancing this important initiative," the official added.

The partnerships are focused on "creating meaningful, student-

centred experiences beyond the classroom", said Dr Abdunassir al-Tamimi, the executive director for Student Services within the QF's Higher Education division, who delivered a presentation at the conference on "Inclusive by Design: Scaling Scholarship Programmes for Underserved Students", in collaboration with the Education Above All Foundation.

"By welcoming HBCU students and faculty to Qatar, we are offering them an opportunity to engage with our culture, traditions, institutions, and diverse community firsthand," he said. "At the same time, our students and the broader QF community benefit immensely from the perspectives, histories, and lived experiences that HBCU students bring."

Speaking about his university's partnership with the QF, Hampton University senior vice-president (Business Operations and Finance) Robert Pompey said that it "reflects a shared commitment to global education, cultural understanding and academic excellence".

"The agreement enriches and empowers Hampton University students through study abroad and other international opportunities while advancing Qatar Foundation's mission to expand and strengthen the educational experiences of HBCU students," he said.

Xavier University of Louisiana's provost and senior vice-president (Academic Affairs) Marguerite S Giguette said: "We are honoured

to work with Qatar Foundation's Higher Education division in advancing opportunities that broaden our students' academic and cultural horizons."

"Xavier welcomes collaborations that encourage cross-cultural understanding and intellectual exchange," she said. "We look forward to planning and eventually implementing meaningful learning experiences and lasting relationships this agreement will soon create for our students, faculty, and academic communities."

Prairie View A&M University assistant vice-provost (Global Engagement and Partnerships) Dr Godlove Fonjweng said that the partnership between the QF and the Texan institution will create "transformative global learning opportunities for our students".

"This collaboration reflects the university's longstanding commitment to academic excellence, cultural exchange, and preparing students to lead and thrive in an interconnected global society," he said.

## MoFA spokesperson meets German official in Berlin



HE the Adviser to the Prime Minister and Official Spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) Dr Majed bin Mohammed al-Ansari met in Berlin yesterday with Wolfgang Silbermann, the director-general of the Foreign Policy Department of the Office of the German Federal President. The two officials discussed bilateral relations and explored ways to strengthen co-operation between Qatar and Germany. They also exchanged views on recent developments in the region, with particular focus on Pakistani mediation efforts between the US and Iran. The meeting was attended by Qatar's ambassador to Germany Abdullah bin Ibrahim al-Hamar. - QNA

## New AI-Tanmiya Podcast spotlights Qatar's push for entrepreneurship, SME growth

By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

The latest episode of the National Planning Council (NPC)'s *AI-Tanmiya Podcast* shines a spotlight on Qatar's efforts to strengthen entrepreneurship, expand support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and accelerate private-sector growth.

Such a move forms part of the country's broader economic diversification agenda under the Third National Development Strategy (NDS3).

The episode featured Qatar Development Bank (QDB) chief executive Abdulrahman bin Hesham al-Sowaidi, who discussed the challenges and opportunities facing entrepreneurs, the role of SMEs in economic development and the measures being taken to build a more dynamic and innovation-driven private sector.

Released by the NPC, *AI-Tanmiya Podcast* is a series of candid conversations with senior officials and decision-makers on Qatar's development journey, covering progress, challenges and future priorities.

The programme is designed to foster structured dialogue between policymakers and the public, with community members invited to submit questions directly to guests before each episode is recorded.

During the discussion, al-Sowaidi highlighted the need to expand access to financing for SMEs, saying: "The latest figures show that financing for small and medium-sized enterprises accounts for



The latest *AI-Tanmiya Podcast* features QDB chief executive Abdulrahman bin Hesham al-Sowaidi (right).

less than 3% of total private-sector lending."

"Outstanding SME financing currently stands at around QR17bn," he said. "The Third National Development Strategy, together with the Financial Sector Strategy, has set a clear target of raising that share to 7% by 2030."

Al-Sowaidi also pointed to Qatar's improving global standing in entrepreneurship, saying that the country climbed from 11th place in 2024 to 6th in 2025 among more than 50 countries assessed on global entrepreneurship indicators.

The progress, he said, reflects co-ordinated government policies and continued support for innovation and private-sector development.

Al-Sowaidi described QDB as one of the key drivers of private-sector growth, operating through an integrated ecosystem that combines financing, investment, advisory services, export support and capacity-building initiatives.

The bank's programmes are aligned with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 and NDS3.

"What gives us pride is that we can ac-

company an entrepreneur from the initial idea all the way to exporting and expanding internationally," al-Sowaidi said.

He said that QDB's support extends beyond traditional lending, covering the entire business journey from idea development and business planning to financing, incubation, acceleration programmes and international expansion.

The approach, al-Sowaidi noted, positions the bank as a long-term development partner for entrepreneurs.

On export development, he underlined the role of the Qatar Export Development

Agency (Qatar Exports), which helps companies access international markets through market studies, trade missions, exhibitions and business-matching opportunities.

The agency also provides export financing, export credit insurance and buyer-financing programmes, while encouraging local-content participation in global supply chains.

The discussion also covered the Tamkeen platform, developed in partnership with the Qatar Central Bank and commercial banks.

The platform allows entrepreneurs to submit a single financing application and receive offers from multiple banks through one digital portal, simplifying access to funding.

Addressing innovation and startups, al-Sowaidi said that the Startup Qatar programme has attracted founders and innovative companies from within Qatar and abroad, securing investment commitments of approximately \$40mn that have benefited around 40 startups.

While financing remains important, the QDB official emphasised that entrepreneurial success ultimately depends on a founder's ability to manage and grow a business.

Al-Sowaidi said that QDB has restructured its advisory and training services to support entrepreneurs at different stages of growth and is increasingly using artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics to connect clients with appropriate services.

Watch the full episode on YouTube at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPm2EK\\_LNPE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPm2EK_LNPE)

## WISE dialogue looks into AI, disinformation, and higher education

The World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE), an initiative of Qatar Foundation (QF), hosted a research policy dialogue on "Trust Me, I'm an Algorithm? AI, Disinformation, and Higher Education", organised in collaboration with Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), Northwestern University Qatar (NU-Q), and Siren Associates.

The dialogue was anchored in an original study, "Fortifying Education in the Age of Disinformation", conducted by WISE, HBKU, and NU-Q, whose research findings and recommendations form the foundation of the strategic framework.

WISE chief executive Dr Asyia Kazmi underscored the imperative of addressing artificial intelligence (AI) and disinformation in higher education.

"From the frontlines of teaching to the policy tables of higher education, AI and disinformation are reshaping the realities we face," he said. "Our research report highlights three priorities: understanding how students and faculty engage with AI, addressing language model blind spots in detecting harmful discourse, and committing to a decade-long effort to strengthen information literacy."

Moderated by Sopiko Beriashvili, research and policy lead at WISE, the discussion highlighted findings from WISE's research study about disinformation in higher education settings.

The central question driving the study and conversation is "How do we keep our institutions epistemically honest when AI can manufacture plausible falsehoods at scale?"

What makes the study distinctive is its Qatar-centred perspective and one of the first studies focusing on the Arab world.

Presenting findings from the WISE research report *Fortifying Education in the Age of Disinformation*, HBKU professor of digital humanities Dr Georgios Mikros emphasised: "Our research examines how AI and misinformation intersect across institutions, society, and national contexts."

"By engaging students and faculty directly, we identified both risks and opportunities and outlined practical steps to strengthen digital and critical literacy so higher education can respond ethically to the rapid spread of AI-driven disinformation," he said.

The report puts forward three interconnected recommendations. The first - Institutional Foundations - is grounded in an in-depth case study of AI adoption at the HBKU, examining how students and faculty perceive, use, and are governed in their interactions with AI.

The second - Healthy Digital Discourse - translates these insights into practical tools, including a curated Arabic toxicity dataset and a bilingual digital literacy platform, to help sustain respectful and informed academic communities online.

The third - National Resilience - proposes the Haqiqatar framework - a ten-year national strategy for building information resilience and media literacy in alignment with Qatar's long-term education and innovation goals.

The dialogue positioned higher education at the centre of a fast-moving challenge: how to responsibly integrate AI while strengthening society's defences against disinformation.

Serving as a bridge between research and policy, the event explored practical pathways to ensure that innovation is matched by resilience in an era of rapidly evolving information risks.

Attendees also took part in an immersive simulation led by the Siren Associates chief executive Jihad Bitar, experiencing the rapid escalation of AI-generated disinformation narratives across social media channels, which provided them with a deeper, firsthand understanding of the complexities involved in safeguarding the educational landscape.

Speaking on the immersive simulation "Navigating the Information Battlefield", NU-Q associate professor of media analytics Dr Marc Owen Jones highlighted the power of experiential learning.

"The simulation showed how AI can amplify disinformation in real time," he said. "Just as my students learn through gamified role play, participants saw how narratives are created, spread, and challenged, an essential step in building resilience."

## All preparations complete for end-of-term exams: MoEHE

The director of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE)'s Student Assessment Department, Ibrahim Abdullah Rashid al-Muhammadi, has confirmed that the ministry has completed all preparations for the final examinations of the second semester of the 2025-26 academic year, which will commence tomorrow.

Preparations included the development of examination questions according to approved procedures and standards, their review and approval, printing and distribution of exam papers, and the preparation of examination centres and committees to ensure full readiness to receive students.

Al-Muhammadi told the Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the number of Grade 12 students registered for the second-semester examinations this year is 16,487 across various educational tracks.

The examinations will be conducted at 87 centres: 43 centres for boys, 41 centres for girls, and three mixed centres.

These centres, the official added, comprise a total of 818 examination committees.

The examination process will be supervised by 4,406 staff members, including committee heads, invigilators, supervisors, and administrative personnel.

Al-Muhammadi said that the Student Assessment Department conducted a comprehensive survey of secondary school students before the examinations, with the aim of involving them in improving procedures and identifying the main challenges they face.

He added that the survey covered several areas, including the clarity of instructions, the usefulness of orientation sessions, the suitability of examination sched-

ules, revision resources, levels of exam-related anxiety, psychological needs, and the support required from parents.

It also gathered students' opinions regarding grading procedures and opportunities for improving their overall academic averages.

Al-Muhammadi revealed notable findings from the survey, with 1,112 students emphasising the importance of not spreading rumours during exams, while 1,286 stressed upon the need to avoid intimidat-

tem to ensure fairness in grading and accuracy in results.

Graders study the answer keys in detail before marking begins, he explained, adding that any additional correct answer identified during the grading process is communicated to all marking committees to ensure that every student receives the full marks they deserve.

He pointed out that the electronic scanning, manual review, monitoring, and auditing proc-

edures, along with the GPA improvement certificate and can use the better result when applying to universities.

According to the approved schedules, the first-cycle exams for students in grades 1, 2, and 3 will begin tomorrow (June 4) with Arabic, followed by mathematics on June 7, and then general knowledge and English the following day.

The written exams will conclude on June 11.

The exams for grades 4, 5, and 6 will also begin tomorrow and continue until June 14, with one exam per day from 8am to 9.30am.

In the preparatory stage, the exams for grades 7, 8, and 9 will begin tomorrow according to the schedules approved for each grade, and will continue until June 14.

The exam duration is set at one and a half hours for most subjects and two hours for the English exam.

For the secondary level, the exams for grades 10 and 11 will begin tomorrow.

Students in the humanities, science, and technology tracks will take their exams according to separate schedules that will continue until June 15, with time allotted between one and a half and two and a half hours for some science and specialised subjects.

For grade 12 students, the written exams will begin tomorrow with students in the literary track who are taking the history exam, students in the scientific track taking the biology exam, and students in the technological track taking the information technology exam.

The high school exams for all tracks will continue until June 21 and will be held during the morning period from 8am to 10.30am.

- QNA

### Tips for students taking exams

Student Assessment Department director Ibrahim Abdullah Rashid al-Muhammadi offered a set of tips and guidelines for students, urging them to plan well for the exam period by creating a realistic timetable for time management and study organisation. The official also stressed the importance of allocating sufficient time for rest, sleep, exercise, and a healthy diet, in addition to creating comprehensive mind maps of the course topics to facilitate information retention during the exam. He also called on parents to provide a suitable environment for studying and concentration, including helping the students implement study plans, as well as pay attention to dietary habits and regulate sleep hours, stressing that the mind needs rest just as the body does.



ing or alarming classmates.

A total of 1,741 students indicated that the diversity of correct answers during grading provides them with the greatest sense of security.

Additionally, 921 students considered thorough review and verification of grades to be a key factor in ensuring confidence in the results.

Al-Muhammadi affirmed that the MoEHE implements a precise sys-

esses go through several successive stages before the results are approved.

The official added that the GPA (grade point average) improvement system allows high school graduates to retake any number of subjects during the second-round exams to raise their cumulative GPA and improve their chances of university admission.

Al-Muhammadi clarified that students retain their original cer-

## Qatar's sewage network expanded by 207% from 2013 to 2025

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) revealed yesterday that the development and expansion projects of sewage networks in Qatar witnessed significant growth during the period from 2013 to 2025.

In a post on X (previously known as Twitter), the authority announced that the total assets of the sewer networks increased by 207%, from

2,836km in 2013 to 9,707km in 2025.

The data indicated that the sewer network assets include 3,326km of sewage network and 2,084km of treated water network, with 494km of rising main pipelines and 911km of house connections network.

The authority also said that the data indicated that the sewage network includes 79,348

drainage manholes and 165,924 surface water gullies.

In regard to stations and plants, Ashghal stated that the sewage infrastructure includes eight wastewater treatment plants, 120 foul sewer pumping stations, 13 TSE (treated sewage effluent) pumping stations and 71 ground and surface water pumping stations. - QNA

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## Qatar's education sector on course for record growth

Education City, spanning around 12 square kilometres and developed by Qatar Foundation (QF), is considered one of the largest educational infrastructure projects in the Middle East and serves as the cornerstone of Qatar's knowledge economy strategy.

The campus hosts eight internationally recognised universities, 13 schools and academies, research institutes, startup accelerators, innovation centres, and technology hubs, serving more than 10,000 students.

Research and innovation have become increasingly important components of Qatar's education investment strategy.

Through initiatives such as the Qatar National Research Fund, around \$1.4bn has been allocated to research activities

covering areas like artificial intelligence (AI), biotechnology, healthcare, cybersecurity, environmental sustainability, advanced engineering, and energy technologies.

Private operators continue to invest in modern campuses equipped with advanced laboratories, digital classrooms, sports facilities, and smart learning technologies, creating attractive opportunities for investors and educational service providers as demand for high-end educational services grows within both the local and expatriate communities.

Annual growth rates of the education sector are expected to remain between 6% and 7%, making it one of the country's fastest-growing non-hydrocarbon sectors.

The combination of sustained government expenditure, demographic growth, technological adoption, and private-sector participation is expected to support continued expansion across all educational segments.

In 2025, Invest Qatar launched a \$1bn incentive programme aimed at attracting investments in advanced industries such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals, automotive, and electronics, besides artificial intelligence, digital infrastructure, and knowledge-based sectors.

While not exclusively focused on education, the initiative is expected to accelerate the development of the broader innovation ecosystem and increase demand for highly skilled graduates and research capabilities.

AI is rapidly becoming one of the most significant growth drivers within the education sector.

Schools and universities across the country are expanding investments in smart classrooms, cloud-based learning platforms, learning management systems, digital assessment tools, and AI-enabled educational technologies.

The increasing adoption of these solutions is creating opportunities for educational technology providers, software developers, cybersecurity firms, and digital content creators seeking to establish a presence in the Qatar market.

Vocational education and professional training represent another fast-growing area, as the country's economic diversification drive generates demand for skilled

professionals across technology, healthcare, logistics, financial services, energy, and advanced manufacturing.

Several private training institutions offering certifications, executive education, technical skills development, and workforce upskilling programmes are well positioned to benefit from this trend, creating well-sustained business and investment opportunities at scale.

The growing integration between education, research, and industry is further enhancing investment opportunities across various fields.

Through the Qatar Science and Technology Park within Education City, universities, startups, multinational corporations, and researchers collaborate on projects involving AI, robotics, biotechnology, data analytics, cybersecurity, and clean energy.

# Applications for Amiri Scholarship Programme open on July 1: MoEHE

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has announced the opening of applications for the Amiri Scholarship Programme, starting on July 1.

Through the government scholarship platform, the ministry said that the first registration period for external scholarships and universities in Education City and private universities will be from July 1 to August 15, while the second registration period for internal scholarships for government universities will be from November 15 to December 30.

The external scholarship plan covers undergraduate and postgraduate studies at institutions on the approved Amiri universities list: 24 international universities (for overseas scholarships), and five private universities within Education City (for domestic scholarships).

The ministry has stated that acceptance into the Amiri Scholarship Programme requires obtaining a final, unconditional offer from one of the universities listed in the approved Amiri universities list, in addition to fulfilling all general requirements for government scholarships.

The government scholarship programme offers academic and financial benefits designed to provide a stable environment for scholarship recipients, enabling them to focus on their studies and academic excellence.

These benefits include a basic monthly stipend of QR8,000, in addition to a monthly travel allowance of QR12,000.

The programme also provides scholarship recipients with two annual business-class tickets, facilitating travel between Qatar and their host country.

A one-time pre-departure allowance of QR40,000 is also provided to assist with relocation and settling in at their place of study.

Another benefit of the programme is the inclusion of study years towards years of service, reflecting the state's commitment to supporting scholarship recipients, recognising their academic efforts, and encouraging them to acquire the experience and knowledge that will contribute to serving the nation after graduation.

The MoEHE affirmed that the programme is part of a national strategy to prepare a generation of qualified professionals across vital and strategic fields, aligned with labour market needs and future development plans.

This will help provide national institutions with specialised expertise and young leaders capable of sustaining the nation's achievements.

The ministry urged students wishing to benefit from this opportunity to prepare early and complete university admission requirements.

It emphasised that investing in the education and training of the nation's youth at the best academic institutions is a cornerstone of achieving sustainable development and building a more prosperous future for Qatar.



## Book looks into paths of Palestinian resistance

By Tawfik Lamari  
Staff Reporter

A Jazeera Centre for Studies has published a new collective work titled *Palestinian Resistance in the Context of Global Liberation Movements: A Comparative Study of Structures and Strategies*, edited by Ezzedin Abdel-Mawla, Al-Haj Muhammad al-Nassik, and Fatima al-Samadi.

The book offers an in-depth analytical reading of the Palestinian resistance within the broader framework of global liberation movements, using a comparative historical approach that connects the Palestinian experience to resistance movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

The book begins with the "Al-Aqsa Flood" as a pivotal moment that returned the Palestinian cause to the centre of global attention and influenced regional interactions and global geopolitical shifts, moving beyond reductionist readings that isolate the event from its deep historical roots.

It also seeks to reintegrate the Palestinian resistance within a global context linked to the history of liberation movements and resistance against settler colonialism and international hegemony.

The book employs comparative history as an analytical tool to understand resistance movements in diverse contexts, comparing social and political structures and strategies of struggle across different experiences.

Divided into ten chapters, the book examines various experiences of global liberation movements.

It traces the trajectories of Palestinian resistance from the era of Sheikh Izz ad-Din al-Qassam to the "Al-Aqsa Flood", discusses its strategies in the recent war, and explores the symbolic and media dimensions of the speeches of the military spokesman Abu Ubaidah.

The book also draws comparisons with experiences of resistance against European colonialism in the Americas, the Algerian revolution against French occupation, the Rif resistance led by Abd el-Krim al-Khattabi, the Vietnamese experience of guerrilla warfare, South Africa's struggle against apartheid, and the paths to independence in Latin America.



## Arab Book Award enters nomination review phase

The organisers of the Arab Book Award has announced the closing of the nomination period for its fourth cycle.

The award now enters a new phase, during which nominations will be reviewed by members of specialist committees, to ensure transparency and objectivity, focusing on the quality of the presentation, the depth of the analysis, the comprehensiveness of the documentation, and the novelty of the knowledge contribution achieved by participants.

The fourth cycle encompasses a diverse range of academic fields, including linguistic and critical studies, which this year are dedicated to grammar and morphology, including critical studies in narrative and theatre, as well as social and philosophical studies focusing on Arab-Islamic philosophy and psychology.

Historical studies on the Arab and Islamic world from the 12th century AH to the present day are also included.

## WCM-Q professor leads team awarded with \$9mn global Parkinson's research grant

Prof Hilal A Lashuel, a professor of neuroscience in neurology at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) – a Qatar Foundation (QF) partner university – has been awarded a \$9mn three-year research grant from Aligning Science Across Parkinson's (ASAP), in partnership with the Michael J Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research (MJFF).

Prof Lashuel serves as the lead and coordinating principal investigator of the award, leading an international team that includes three co-investigators from Stanford University: Prof Marius Wernig, Prof Monther Abu-Remaileh, and Prof Michael C Bassik.

The team will collaborate with US biotech firm Arvinas, Inc, to investigate approaches aimed at selectively targeting toxic protein aggregates associated with Parkinson's disease.

The team will join ASAP's Collaborative Research Network (CRN), a global community of multidisciplinary and multi-institutional teams collaborating to accelerate discoveries in Parkinson's disease research.

The grant highlights the progression of the WCM-Q and QF's research efforts in the biomedical sciences toward initiatives that support translational biomedical research with international collaboration.

ASAP is a global, collaborative research programme dedicated to accelerating discovery in Parkinson's disease.

Managed by the Coalition for Aligning Science and implemented through the MJFF, it is led by Nobel Laureate Dr Randy Schekman, a professor of molecular and cell biology at UC Berkeley, and managing director Sonya Dumanis.



Prof Hilal Lashuel

Prof Lashuel, who is also research development and innovation (RDI) adviser to the chairperson of the QF, RDI executive director within the QF chairperson's office, and professor emeritus at the Swiss Federal Technology Institute (EPFL), is one of the world's foremost authorities on protein misfolding and neurodegeneration.

"I am deeply honoured to receive this award, and even more proud of the decades of science behind it and the extraordinary team that made it possible," said Prof Lashuel.

"ASAP is unique in the way it combines

long-horizon funding with access to a global network of leaders in Parkinson's research and to technologies that no single laboratory could assemble alone," he said. "For our team, this is an exceptional opportunity to push the frontiers of what we understand about disease mechanisms and to generate insights that may inform future therapeutic approaches."

The new ASAP project takes this platform to its next level of complexity by assembling precisely the team the science demands.

Prof Wernig of Stanford University brings world-leading expertise in cellular reprogramming, while Prof Abu-Remaileh, also of Stanford, is one of the field's foremost specialists in lysosomal biology and metabolic regulation.

Prof Bassik, another Stanford-based expert, is a pioneer in functional genomics and CRISPR-based screening.

CRISPR (Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats) is a gene-editing technology adapted from natural bacterial defence systems.

The team is further strengthened by its collaboration with Arvinas chief scientific officer Dr Angela Cacace, who is leader in the field of targeted protein degradation.

"It is hugely pleasing for the WCM-Q to be awarded a grant for a project of such significance and promise," said WCM-Q Prof Javaid Sheikh. "We give thanks to everyone at Qatar Foundation, ASAP, MJFF, Arvinas, Stanford, and to those in our own WCM-Q Research Division, particularly in Prof Lashuel's lab, for their important work to establish this excellent initiative, which holds great potential to address a truly debilitating disease."

## Sidra Medicine, Zulal Resort ink pact for wellness programmes

Sidra Medicine and Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som, members of Qatar Foundation (QF), have officially signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on the development of integrated wellness and preventative health programmes.

The signing ceremony was attended by Mohammed Khalid al-Mana, acting chief executive and a member of the Board of Governors at Sidra Medicine, and Ammar Samad, general manager of Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som.

The collaboration aims to combine Sidra Medicine's clinical expertise with Zulal Wellness Resort's holistic wellness approach to create medically supported wellness and holistic wellbeing programmes for Sidra Medicine's patients.

Through this partnership, both organisations will explore opportunities to introduce wellness-focused programmes supported by clinical oversight; lifestyle and nutrition initiatives; diagnostic and preventive health services; as well as professional education and training programmes.

As the first wellness resort dedicated to traditional Arabic and Islamic Medicine (TAIM), the partnership with Zulal Wellness Resort will also seek to create a personalised range of wellness, therapeutic, and lifestyle-enhancement treatments, incorporating TAIM's healing wisdom with Sidra Medicine's state-of-the-art health services and therapies.

"Our partnership with Zulal Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som represents an important step in integrating clinical excellence



Samad and al-Mana at the signing ceremony.

with wellness innovation," al-Mana said. "By working together, we can further enhance patient and family wellbeing through comprehensive and personalised care experiences."

The first phase of the programme, part of an expansion of Sidra Medicine's Women's Services, will include postpartum recovery experiences, mental and preventive health services, wellness education, referral pathways, and in-hospital wellness offerings.

"This collaboration reflects our shared vision of elevating wellness and preventive healthcare through a holistic and evidence-based approach, aligned with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030," Samad said. "Together with Sidra Medicine, we aim to create meaningful wellness experiences that support long-term wellbeing for our guests and the wider community."

## MoECC launches school research contest on Minamata Convention on mercury

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and with support from the United Nations Environment Programme, has launched a scientific research competition for school students on the Minamata Convention on mercury.

The initiative involves 57 schools from across the country and aims to strength-

en environmental awareness and promote a culture of scientific research among students.

As part of the competition launch, an introductory workshop was organised for participating students to explain the participation procedures, research requirements, and evaluation criteria, with an emphasis on theoretical research and on maintaining scientific quality.

A specialised committee will assess

submissions according to strict scientific standards in order to select the best projects and honour the winning students.

The initiative forms part of broader efforts by MoECC to develop students' research, analytical, and innovation skills while raising awareness of environmental challenges, particularly the risks posed by mercury and its impact on human health and ecosystems.

**Tender - Waseef**

Waseef Asset Management (Waseef) would like to invite competent Service Providers for the below Open Tenders:

Tender Number	Subject	Bid Bond (QAR)	Non-refundable Tender Fee (QAR)	Bid Submission Closing Date
GTC/WSF/ELEV/13/2026	TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF THREE (3) YEARS ELEVATORS/ ESCALATORS MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOR VARIOUS PROJECTS MANAGED BY WASEEF	180,000	2,500	July 2, 2026
GTC/WSF/ACC/14/2026	TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF ANNUAL MAINTENANCE SERVICES FOR AIR-COOLED CHILLER UNITS, INCLUDING CHILLED WATER AND OIL ANALYSES AT VARIOUS WASEEF PROJECTS	20,000	500	July 2, 2026

The Tender Document will be available from June 3, 2026 onwards upon submission of the below documentation to [tender@waseef.qa](mailto:tender@waseef.qa).

**To collect please provide the following:**

- Authorization Letter on Company letterhead, copy of Commercial Registration and valid Identification of the representative.
- Bank deposit slip carrying tender number and subject details. Tender fee shall be deposited to Account Name – Waseef Asset Management Co., Account Number 0002-105222-200 with Al Rayan Bank.

Minimum requirements to be eligible for obtaining the Tender Documents:

**GTC/WSF/ELEV/13/2026**

- The company shall have a valid Commercial Registration in Qatar with at least one of the following activities:
  - Maintenance and Repair of Elevator/Escalator; Elevator/Escalator OEM; Distributor; Agent
- The bidder shall have a minimum of 10 years of experience in the maintenance of elevators and escalators.

**GTC/WSF/ACC/14/2026**

- The company shall have a valid Commercial Registration in Qatar
- Minimum 10 years' experience in operation and maintenance of HVAC systems specifically large capacity chillers. Proven track record in preventive and corrective maintenance of similar systems.
- Fully equipped service team with 24x7 call center facility, warehouse facility with spare part availability and well established supply chain management.

**Please note the following:**

- Bidders should submit a bid bond issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar, valid for 120 days from the tender closing date, corresponding to an expiry date of **30 October 2026**.
- Technical and Commercial offers must be submitted in separate sealed envelopes and delivered to the below-mentioned address: GTC Secretary, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Waseef Head Office, New Waseef Tower (formerly Alaqaria Tower), Museum Park Street, Doha, Qatar

LET US MANAGE YOUR WORLD

## HBKU introduces research guide to advance STEM learning in Qatar

By Joseph Varghese  
Staff Reporter

Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU) has introduced a research guide to promote Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) for K-12 students across Qatar.

The College of Science and Engineering (CSE) at HBKU, through a Qatar Foundation-sponsored initiative, is partnering with the Smithsonian Science Education Centre (SSEC) to expand STEM learning in the country. This partnership aims to implement inter-

disciplinary, climate-focused STEM guides into the national curriculum.

The collaboration has now introduced 'Innovation: How can we create new solutions for the changing climate?', a research guide designed to encourage young learners to apply STEM knowledge in tackling environmental and societal challenges.

Prepared by the SSEC alongside the InterAcademy Partnership, the guide introduces students to innovation as an approach to addressing climate-related problems. It invites students to explore creative possibilities, test

ideas, and explore solutions that positively impact their communities.

The project aligns with HBKU's commitment to strengthening STEM education and expanding its K-12 outreach activities, while building a sustainable pipeline of young researchers in Qatar. The programme was first piloted at Qatar Academy in September 2025, where students and educators engaged with the guide through classroom-based activities and discussions on climate challenges and innovation.

Building on this, the CSE hosted a webinar for schools across Qatar

Foundation and the wider education community. Students, educators, and administrators learned about the research guide and how schools can participate in and benefit from the initiative. The session also highlighted the role of interdisciplinary STEM education in developing capabilities from an early age.

By integrating the Smithsonian guide into school curricula, students will benefit from supplementary learning experiences exposing them to STEM pathways and applied research. The programme further reflects HBKU's role as a platform for knowledge

exchange, capacity building, and connecting global expertise with local education priorities.

HBKU has already launched a facility named STEM Hub, which focuses on hands-on learning and innovative thinking. The STEM Hub provides a unique space where students and teachers can access tools, scientific instruments, 3D printers, engineering equipment, and raw materials.

The STEM Hub's resources are supplemented by central laboratories and workshops at HBKU, which have an impressive array of advanced scientific equipment for research in chemistry, phys-

ics and engineering. This laboratory features a fun, hands-on environment equipped with 3D printers and robotics, actively encouraging schoolchildren and teachers to learn through iterative design.

STEM learning, a national priority for Qatar, is rapidly growing as an educational sector with the aim of supporting Qatar's National Vision 2030 by building a knowledge-based economy. The country's curriculum integrates applied research, digital literacy, and hands-on scientific investigation from early childhood education through to university levels.

## UAE N-plant attackers 'knew what they were doing': IAEA chief

AFP  
Abu Dhabi

The UAE's nuclear plant was "carefully targeted" last month by attackers who aimed to cause a major incident, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency said yesterday. The drone attack on May 17 hit an electricity facility at the plant, risking potentially shutting it down - a "serious situation indeed", Rafael Grossi said.

"From what we saw this was a very carefully targeted operation," Grossi told journalists in Abu Dhabi after visiting the Barakah plant. The United Arab Emirates blamed militants in Iraq for the incident, which followed weeks of attacks by Iranian drones and missiles during the Middle East war.

"In spite of the fact that the Emirati professionals acted very quickly and could address the situation, (it could have taken) out the reactor because of the loss of external power," Grossi said. "This



Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Mariano Grossi speaks during a press conference in Abu Dhabi, yesterday. (Reuters)

means that whoever was behind this knew exactly what they were doing. This is of extreme gravity."

Grossi said he was also visiting the UAE's Gulf neighbours, who could be affected by any accident

at the Arab world's only nuclear plant. "I think this is pretty serious and this is why we have been very vocal," he told AFP in separate remarks. "I've been to Kuwait..., now here, and I'm heading to Ri-

yadh because several countries in the region have serious concerns," he added.

Grossi said he would hold a special session of the IAEA's board of governors and that the body is providing technical expertise and support for the UAE. The "worst-case scenario" would be a direct hit on Barakah or Iran's Bushehr plant - which has also been targeted in the war - with the potential for a leak of radioactive material, he told AFP.

Cutting the power "has the practical effect of... necessitating emergency generation to keep the safety functions of the plant running", he said.

"To get to a meltdown would take much, much more. We would be talking of a situation where you would completely run out of external power."

Hamad al-Kaabi, deputy chairman of the Board of Management of the Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation, said Grossi's visit "reflects the international community view that an attack on such

## IAEA offering technical, moral support to UAE

The International Atomic Energy Agency is offering the United Arab Emirates technical as well as moral support, IAEA chief Rafael Grossi said yesterday after a visit to the site of a nuclear power plant that came under a drone attack last month.

Grossi said Emirati authorities had reacted very quickly to the attack at the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant by shutting down a reactor because of the loss of external power. The plant, the Arab world's first commercial nuclear power station, came under a drone attack last month that the Gulf country said was launched from Iraq.

The drone that penetrated the UAE's defences hit an electric generator outside the inner perimeter of the plant, according to Emirati officials. It was one of three drones that were targeting the plant and only two were intercepted, according to the UAE's defence ministry. The

IAEA chief said a number of activities would take place to complete repairs at the plant. He told Reuters that it could be a "matter of weeks" for the repairs to be completed. Grossi said there was a need for physical repair and also maintenance to an external power line. "The repairs are under way already," he said.

After that drone strike, the UAE's Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation said the plant remained safe and that no radioactive material had been released due to the attack. While hostilities have mostly calmed since a ceasefire came into effect in April, drones have been launched from Iraq towards Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

Iraq is home to powerful militia groups that have claimed attacks against "enemy bases in Iraq and the region" during the US-Israeli war on Iran. (Reuters)

a plant is not acceptable."

He said Barakah, which has been fully operational since 2024, remains a "cornerstone" of energy infrastructure in the oil-rich country. "Whether we expand

(nuclear power) in the future is yet to be decided, but I think Barakah makes a compelling case," he told AFP. "If anything, it's proved that these plants can be maintained safely and securely."

## Congo airport reopens in Ebola-hit locality as suspected cases decline

AFP  
Bunia, DR Congo

The sole airport providing humanitarian organisations access to the epicentre of an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) reopened yesterday, when the reported number of suspected cases declined. The country of 100m people declared on May 15 that it was battling a major epidemic of the highly contagious haemorrhagic fever, prompting the World Health Organisation (WHO) to issue an international health alert.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus travelled to the epicentre of the outbreak on Saturday, and spoke to Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi on Monday. Out of 321 confirmed cases of infection, 48 deaths have been recorded, according to Congolese health authorities and the WHO.

Fifteen cases, including one death, have also been reported in neighbouring Uganda, according to the Ugandan Ministry of Health. Yesterday, the WHO reported that the number of suspected cases had declined to 116 from 906 late last week, based on information provided by the Congolese authorities.

A report released on Friday by the African Union's health agency, Africa CDC, had cited 1,139 suspected cases, including 246 deaths probably caused by the disease. Many patients "have been cleared out" from the data after having been shown to have other diseases with similar early symptoms or an unlinked fever, WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier said in Geneva.

Few laboratory tests have been carried out, mainly due to a lack of re-



Staff members wash boots and protective equipment used by doctors working at the Ebola Treatment Center (ETC) in Munigi. (AFP)



Healthcare workers put on personal protective equipment (PPE) in the dressing area under the supervision of specialists before going to examine patients in the isolation ward in Munigi. (AFP)

sources in the DRC, which is one of the world's poorest countries and has suffered decades of violent conflict in its restive east.

The Congolese government, which recently announced the recovery of

several patients, has in recent days launched a major communication campaign to assure the public that "the situation is under control". In Kenya, violent protests broke out on Monday over an Ebola quarantine facility reserved for US

patients arriving from the DRC.

Demonstrators voiced anger at the United States using Kenyan soil and bringing Ebola patients into the country. They were met with tear gas from police. Rights group VOCAL Africa said yesterday a 27-year-old man had been "shot and killed" during the protests, dying "on the spot". The group later said a second person had also died.

Police told AFP they could not confirm the deaths. Kenyan President William Ruto defended the facility, saying it was "part of a broader national preparedness system" and adding that it "will be there to serve the people of Kenya and to serve our friends, including the Americans".

The outbreak was declared in the province of Ituri, in northeastern DRC.

No vaccine or approved treatment is available for the strain of Ebola behind the current outbreak, known as the Bundibugyo virus, and efforts to contain its spread rely mainly on preventative measures. Most large Ebola outbreaks known in the past have been caused by the Zaire virus, the only one for which a vaccine is licenced.

Ebola, which is passed on through close contact and bodily fluids, has killed more than 15,000 people in Africa over the past 50 years. The deadliest outbreak in the DRC claimed nearly 2,300 lives out of 3,500 cases between 2018 and 2020. Africa CDC says it hopes a Bundibugyo vaccine will be ready by the end of the year.

The health risk is "high" for countries neighbouring the DRC, but remains "low" at the global level, according to the WHO. On May 23, the authorities suspended all commercial flights to and from the airport in Bunia, the capital of Ituri, allowing only medical and humanitarian planes in.

## US sanctions Congo rebel commanders

The US yesterday imposed sanctions on commanders of armed groups it accused of driving the conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where fighting has continued despite mediation efforts by Washington.

Clashes have continued in eastern Congo, where M23 rebels, which the UN says are backed by Rwanda, and the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a Hutu militia rooted in the 1994 genocide, are fighting on opposite sides. Rwanda denies backing M23.

The US Treasury Department in a statement said it imposed sanctions on M23 commander and chief of intelligence John Imani Nzenze, as well as Gustave Kubwayo, an FDLR commander and leader of an intelligence and special operations unit.

"President Trump has been clear that there is an urgent need to resolve the horrific conflict in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the US is committed to peace and prosperity in the region," Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said in the statement.

"Persistent violence by armed groups is exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis and presents a threat to US interests in the region. Today's sanctions support a peaceful resolution and end to the bloodshed."

Nzenze, a spokesperson for the Rwandan government and the Democratic Republic of Congo did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Rwanda and Congo signed a peace deal in Washington in December as part of US President Donald Trump's push to broker peace and attract billions of dollars in Western investment.

Days after that ceremony, however, M23 rebels entered the eastern Congo city of Uvira, near the Burundian border, in the war's biggest escalation in months. They later pulled out under US pressure. (Reuters)

## US sanctions Iran's crypto exchange over IRGC links

By Gavin Finch  
Reuters

The United States announced sanctions on Iran's biggest cryptocurrency exchange yesterday, accusing it of enabling the Iranian government and blacklisted state institutions to circumvent Western sanctions. The new sanctions follow a Reuters investigation published on May 1 which showed how Nobitex had become a central node in a parallel financial system used to process hundreds of millions of dollars for Iran's central bank

and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The report also revealed how Nobitex continued operating even after the government-imposed Internet shutdown, processing millions of dollars of transactions. The Reuters investigation showed how Nobitex is controlled by two brothers from one of Iran's most powerful families. The two are members of the Kharrazi family, one of the most influential dynasties in the Islamic Republic. Corporate records show that when the exchange started, the brothers were listed under a surname rarely used by members of the family.

The US Treasury announced yesterday that the two brothers, Seyed Mohammad Ali Aghamir Mohammad Ali and Seyed Mohammad Aghamir Mohammad Ali, had also been individually sanctioned, along with the exchange's chief executive officer, Amir Hossein Rad.

Nobitex had provided "significant support" to the Iranian government and facilitated a "significant number" of digital transactions linked to the IRGC and Iran's central bank, the US Treasury said in the statement. "Following the commencement of US combat operations in Iran, Nobitex played a role in pro-

tecting and moving assets and funds out of Iran to shield regime wealth despite Internet blackouts."

Nobitex could not be reached for comment on the sanctions, which were announced after normal business hours in Iran. In an e-mailed statement to Reuters in April, Nobitex said it had no direct government connections and denied assisting the state. It said that any illicit funds moving through Nobitex did so without management approval or awareness. The company also said that the two brothers had never used an alternative identity or changed their identity.

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# War in Middle East hammering aid supply chains: UN

AFP  
Geneva

Even if the Middle East war stopped immediately, disrupted global humanitarian supply lines would not recover before 2027, the UN said yesterday.

Nearly 100 days on from the February 28 US-Israeli attacks on Iran that triggered the conflict, the fall-out extends far beyond the Middle East region, said Jean-Cedric Meeus, chief of global transport and logistics for the UN chil-

dren's agency Unicef.

"The disruption to the global humanitarian supply chain is impacting children across all the globe, with continued congestion in global supply chain routes and higher costs," he told a press conference in Geneva, speaking from Mogadishu in Somalia.

Weeks of indirect US-Iran talks, threats and airstrikes have failed to end the war or reopen the Strait of Hormuz, the key shipping channel for Gulf oil and gas. "What begins like a disruption from lanes into the Middle East, the Hormuz

Strait, spirals directly into humanitarian crisis," said Meeus.

"For Unicef, persistent delays and high operational costs, when they come into the context of global funding crisis, are already causing impossible choices.

"Behind this cascading disruption is a simple but brutal equation," he said, with every extra dollar spent on transport meaning less money spent on aid for children.

The logistics chief said air freight capacity had tightened across the Middle East, some airlines had stopped serving certain

African destinations and port congestion was spreading across Africa.

He said air freight costs for vaccines from India to Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo had increased by 50 to 70%.

"There are so many ripple effects," he said.

Even "if we come to an agreement and the Strait of Hormuz is reopened, the situation will not improve before the end of the year" for Unicef's supply lines, said Meeus.

UNCTAD, the UN trade and de-

velopment agency, said oil price shocks from the war were having a heavy impact on developing countries forced to choose between financing essential imports and other priorities.

"A geopolitical shock is becoming a development shock for countries with the least capacity to absorb it," said UNCTAD spokesman Marcelo Risi.

"Whenever a ceasefire or even a peace agreement is reached, these impacts linger over time: they don't fade away, and some might become even structural."

Meanwhile the World Health Organisation reported continued deterioration in fuel availability and health system resilience.

The most severe impacts are concentrated in Cuba, Gaza, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan and Yemen, said WHO spokesman Christian Lindmeier.

"Refined fuel shortages, particularly diesel, remain the principal operational threat to health systems because of dependence on generators, cold chains, ambulances, water systems and humanitarian logistics," he said.

## Lebanon hospital resilient after Israeli onslaught

AFP  
Tyre, Lebanon

In a south Lebanon hospital heavily damaged by deadly Israeli strikes nearby, Dr Nasser al-Masri held a new-born baby, calling him "a message of life and hope" despite the war.

Israeli strikes near the Jabal Amel hospital in Tyre on Monday killed four people and wounded 127, including four doctors, 27 nurses, and eight administrative employees, Lebanon's health ministry said.

They also caused "severe and extensive damage" to the facility, it added.

"Despite everything that happened yesterday, there was a scheduled delivery today... (and) the mother insisted on delivering at the hospital," Dr Masri said.

"This baby was born today, he's just a few minutes old... He brought us a message of life and a message of hope for the future."

Glass was scattered across some hospital rooms yesterday a day after the strike, while dust and debris covered beds and tables.

Medication was strewn on corridor floors, and staff tried to work as others cleaned up around them.

"We're taking in any patient that comes to us," Dr Masri said, adding that "even two hours after the raids, we were able to work normally, and the administration is determined to stay and work."

Around the hospital, the devastation was stark: a nearby building had been levelled, others were severely damaged and debris was scattered round near parked am-



A doctor assesses the damage in his office inside a hospital near the site where an Israeli airstrike hit a building the previous day in the city of Tyre, Lebanon on Monday. (AFP)

bulances. The roof of the hospital's parking collapsed, crushing several vehicles. Bulldozers worked to clear away the rubble.

Inspecting the damage, Mohammad Derbaj, head of the hospital's maintenance department, charged that "the civilian buildings were not the intended target, but rather Jabal Amel was targeted in order to put it out of service, but we are steadfast."

"What happened has increased our determination and strength," he added, as the hospital administration "made a decision yesterday that the hospital will return... We will work day and night to restore the hospital to what it was."

Israeli strikes have not spared Lebanese hospitals since the start of the latest Israel-Hezbollah war on March 2. The health ministry

says 17 hospitals have been damaged, with three forced to close, and 128 rescuers and medical personnel have been killed.

The Lebanese Italian hospital in Tyre was also damaged by an Israeli attack in April.

A strike last month near the city's Hiram hospital wounded 13 staff and damaged it, according to the ministry.

At Jabal Amel hospital yesterday, Hussein Qassir, head of the intensive care unit, told AFP they transferred patients from one ICU ward after it sustained significant damage in the airstrikes.

"We were expecting a strike near or adjacent to the hospital... but I didn't expect that the intensive care unit would be this damaged (but) the situation could have been so much worse."

"Despite this, we continue... it is our duty."

Abdinasir Abubakar, World Health Organisation Representative to Lebanon, said yesterday that "two out of three hospitals" in the Tyre district, Jabal Amel and Hiram, "are damaged although continuing to function, and the third hospital is overwhelmed as it deals with an influx of injured patients".

The historic city in southern Lebanon, which still hosts thousands of displaced people from nearby areas, has been subject to repeated Israeli strikes that have continued despite an April 17 ceasefire agreement that has not been respected by either Israel or Hezbollah.

Israel's military has repeatedly warned residents of Tyre and its surroundings to evacuate in preparation for what it said are operations against Hezbollah.

Staffer Khalil Mustapha, displaced from the border town of Aitaroun, took shelter in the hospital after losing his home.

"I no longer have a home. Israel destroyed it and I came to the hospital. I never expected their level of criminality would reach this point," he said.

Zainab Fakih, who works in the laboratory, was sitting with her colleagues when the attack came.

"We were terrified... We opened the doors and rubble rained down on us, but luckily no one was hurt," she said. "We didn't think they would bomb the area around the hospital. But we come here because this is our job, even though our families object", fearing for their safety.



Palestinians gather to receive food from a charity kitchen, in Gaza City yesterday. (Reuters)

## Israeli fire kills three people in Gaza: Medics

Reuters  
Cairo

Israeli fire killed at least three Palestinians in separate incidents across the Gaza Strip yesterday, Gaza health officials told Reuters.

Medics said at least one person was killed and four were wounded when an Israeli airstrike hit a vehicle east of Deir al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip. The blast left the vehicle a mangled skeleton.

Another strike earlier in the day killed one person and wounded another in the nearby Zawayda town, they added, while Israeli gunfire killed one man in northwest Khan Younis, south of the enclave.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on either of the incidents. An October ceasefire, brokered by US President Donald Trump, has failed to

halt Israeli attacks in Gaza.

The ceasefire left Israel in control of more than half of Gaza, with Hamas controlling a sliver of coastal territory.

Israel and Hamas are deadlocked in indirect talks over implementing the second phase

**The ceasefire left Israel in control of more than half of Gaza, with Hamas controlling a sliver of coastal territory.**

of the deal, which includes the group's disarmament and Israeli army withdrawals.

Some 930 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli strikes since the truce came into effect, according to figures from Gaza health officials that do not distinguish between combatants and civilians.

Four Israeli soldiers have been killed during the same period, Israeli military has said.

### Iran fires projectiles at ship leaving port in Iraq

Two projectiles hit a container vessel in the Gulf as it was leaving port in Iraq, a Swiss-based company said Tuesday, after Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had targeted the ship. Both the company MSC, based in Geneva, and the British maritime security agency UKMTO reported no injuries to crew members in Monday's incident.

In Iran, a spokesman for the Revolutionary Guards said Monday they had targeted the Panama-flagged MSC Sariska V "belonging to the American-Zionist enemy" with a cruise missile. The spokesman said the container ship was targeted in retaliation for a US attack on the Iranian vessel Lion Star in the Sea of Oman.

The UKMTO said the vessel was 40 nautical miles off the Iraqi port of Umm Qasr when the initial explosion occurred on Monday.

MSC said that the first projectile hit the vessel as it was leaving port with the pilot still on board, and the second impacted the crew area soon afterwards. In a statement, MSC said it "is a neutral commercial carrier with no affiliation to the US or Israel". It said all crew members were safe and unharmed. (AFP)



Nada Hamadeh (C), Lebanese Ambassador to the US, attends a meeting between Israeli and Lebanese delegations in Washington, DC. (AFP)

### New round of Israel-Lebanon dialogue begins in Washington

The ambassadors of Israel and Lebanon began a new round of direct talks in Washington yesterday after US President Donald Trump said he had received commitments to de-escalation from both sides.

The fourth meeting between representatives of the two countries, which do not have diplomatic relations, took place at the State Department and will continue today.

Meanwhile, Israel and Hezbollah clashed overnight despite Trump's announcement that both sides had agreed to halt

fighting ahead of US-hosted talks. Hezbollah announced it will not accept a "partial ceasefire" with Israel, a senior official from the Iran-backed group said yesterday, refusing to halt attacks against northern Israel in exchange for Israel sparing Beirut's southern suburbs.

"We will not accept a partial ceasefire," Mahmud Qomati told AFP in a written statement, adding that "the Zionist enemy should know that any aggression against the suburbs could lead to a deeper and stronger response" from the group. (AFP)



Yechiel Leiter (far L), Israeli Ambassador to the US, and Nada Hamadeh (far R), Lebanese Ambassador to the US, attend a meeting hosted by the United States at the State Department in Washington, DC yesterday. (AFP)

## Netanyahu faces criticism for halting Israeli strikes on Beirut

Reuters  
Tel Aviv

Benjamin Netanyahu is under criticism at home after US President Donald Trump declared Israel would halt plans to attack Iran ally Hezbollah in Beirut, highlighting pressure the Israeli leader faces ahead of an election polls show him losing.

Trump said on Monday that Israel and Hezbollah had agreed to halt attacks on one another, hours after Netanyahu ordered new strikes on Beirut's southern suburbs, prompting a warning from Iran that Israel was jeopardising Tehran's talks with the US. Lebanon's government later announced a new ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, under which Israel would halt strikes on southern Beirut and Hezbollah would stop attacks on Israel.

Netanyahu's challengers in elections due by October accused the prime minister of having acquiesced to Trump on issues of national security.

"The location is different, the story is the same," said Naftali Bennett, a right-wing security hawk and former premier who also criticises Netanyahu over Hamas' resurgence in Gaza. "A government that has lost control of Israeli sovereignty," Bennett said in an X post.

Bennett and his coalition partner in the upcoming election, centrist Yair Lapid, have pressed for strikes against Hezbollah.

"A full protectorate," Lapid said in an X post, in effect accusing Netanyahu of allowing the US to dictate Israeli military policy as if Israel was an American client state.

Israel and Hezbollah have continued to trade fire despite an April 16 US-brokered ceasefire. The latest conflict began on March 2 with Hezbollah firing into Israel in support of Iran.

Israel has since deepened its invasion of southern Lebanon, displacing over a million people and killing more than 3,400 as it bombards areas with attacks it says are aimed at rooting out Hezbollah. Hezbollah has not released figures on its war dead.

Hezbollah has fired rockets and explosive drones at Israeli troops and northern Israeli towns. Israel says 26 soldiers and four civilians have been killed since March 2.

Netanyahu disputes criticism of Israel's military operations in Lebanon, arguing that air strikes under his watch have dealt Hezbollah blows. After Trump's announcement on Monday of a new Israel-Hezbollah agreement, Netanyahu said Israel's stance in the conflict "remains unchanged."

"[If] Hezbollah does not cease attacking our cities and citizens - Israel will attack terror targets in Beirut," Netanyahu said in a statement following Trump's announcement.

Israel's military has continued to carry out attacks on southern Lebanon since Trump's declaration on Monday. Yesterday, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said that Israel had refrained from carrying out strikes on Beirut at the request of the US. But he warned that any new Hezbollah attacks on northern Israel would trigger strikes on southern Beirut suburbs, considered a stronghold of the group.

Gadi Eisenkot, a former chief of staff of the Israeli military who is also running for prime minister, said on Monday that Trump's push for Israel to halt attacks was unreasonable.

"There has never been an Israeli prime minister who accepted such a humiliating demand," Eisenkot wrote on X.

The criticism underscores growing tensions within Israel's political system over the extent to which military decisions should be co-ordinated with its closest ally, the US.

Netanyahu's coalition partner Itamar Ben Gvir, the national security minister, said that Israel should tell Trump: "no".

English-language Israeli newspaper The Jerusalem Post wrote that Israel had "found itself in the humiliating position of having to seek American approval to defend its own citizens."

"The US is now actively restraining Israel from taking decisive military action," it said in an editorial.

### ANNOUNCEMENT

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BANGLADESH Passport No. A00426922  
QID No. 30205004667

hereby change my name

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MD ABDULLAH AL KASHEM

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ABDULLA AL KASHEM

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

# No sanctions relief to Iran for reopening Hormuz: US

Reuters  
Washington

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday that President Donald Trump's negotiating team has not offered Iran sanctions relief in exchange for reopening the Strait of Hormuz and insisted that any sanctions relief was tied to Tehran giving up its nuclear program.

"Right now, everything that's been discussed with them (Iran) is that ... any sanctions relief is condition-based, which means it has to be in return for the reason why those sanctions were put in place in the first place, which is their nuclear program," Rubio told a Senate hearing.

Testifying in Congress publicly for the first time since the Iran war began, Rubio said there will be sanctions relief for Iran if they agree to give up their nuclear activities.

"Iran is being sanctioned because they've highly enriched uranium. Iran is being sanctioned because of their nuclear activities. If they agree to give up those things, there will be sanctions relief associated with their commitment and compliance with those agreements," he said.

Rubio testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday morning as the Trump administration seeks congressional approval for its proposed 30% cut to the foreign affairs budget and a 50% increase in military spending.

He was to appear at three other hearings later on Tuesday and on Wednesday, as his fellow Republicans have been showing signs of concern about the Iran war.

Rubio, who also serves as Trump's national security adviser, was a senator from Florida until January 2025, and lawmakers said they hoped their former colleague would spell out a strategy for ending the Iran conflict, which started with strikes by the US and Israel on February 28.

Rubio has joined other top administration officials in speaking



Marco Rubio testifies during a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing in the Dirksen Senate Office Building yesterday. (AFP)

## Rubio says latest arms sale to Taiwan under review

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Tuesday that a massive arms sale to Taiwan, opposed by Beijing, remains under review, adding that Washington's policy on the self-ruled island was unchanged.

"There was a second pending sale... the \$14 bn one, and that remains under review," Rubio said during a hearing at the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

US President Donald Trump has not committed to moving ahead with the arms package requested

by Taipei, calling it "a very good negotiating chip" in dealings with China. Rubio told the Senate panel that Washington had already approved a \$11.1 bn arms sale to Taiwan in December.

Asked about the \$14 bn deal under discussion, Rubio answered: "We want to see the status quo preserved as it is at this moment."

He continued: "It's a very... delicate relationship to balance, but our policy on Taiwan is not changing." (AFP)

to members of Congress about the Iran war behind closed doors, but has not testified publicly on the conflict. Senator Jeanne Shaheen, the top Democrat on the foreign relations panel, blasted Rubio for failing to provide information to Congress about the administration's plans.

"When I talk to my constituents, they asked for economic relief at home, not regime change in Havana or Caracas or Tehran," she said. "Instead, you sent Congress a war powers notification saying we are not in active hostilities with Iran, while the US was con-

ducting strikes against Iran, and Iran was bombing US embassies and bases throughout the Middle East. That was not consultation, it was an attempt to avoid answering to this committee and this Congress about this war."

Americans have voiced mounting frustration over rising prices, and Trump's fellow Republicans hope he can get the Strait of Hormuz reopened and lower US gasoline prices before November elections that will decide whether the party retains its slim majorities in Congress.

Trump must also contend with

Iran hawks in his party who oppose any concessions to Tehran.

Trump and his supporters insist the war will have been worthwhile if it keeps Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Trump also insists that gasoline prices will come down and has insisted for weeks that he will reach a good deal to end the conflict. Iran wants an interim agreement with sanctions relief that would allow it access to billions of dollars in oil revenue, but Washington has continued to add sanctions against Iranian actors while talks have taken place.

Rubio did not specify when there might be such a deal. He said Iran had intended to build up its conventional weapons capabilities as a "shield" for its nuclear program. "What they tried to do is they were going to try to build a conventional shield and hide behind that conventional shield," he said, spelling out why Trump felt it was imperative to launch the war.

Lawmakers, including some of Trump's fellow Republicans, have been increasingly questioning the fighting, as the Iran conflict enters its fourth month. Last month, the Senate voted to advance a war powers resolution that would end the Iran conflict unless Trump obtains Congress' authorisation. Days later, House leaders abruptly postponed a vote on a similar resolution when it looked likely to pass.

Senators also asked about US forces firing on boats off Venezuela since September, in a campaign the administration says is intended to stop "narco-traffickers" that has killed more than 200 people.

Some criticised the administration for sharp cuts to US foreign aid, citing reports saying hundreds of thousands of children have died since the US abruptly ended foreign aid programs last year, and the severity of an Ebola outbreak in Africa.

Rubio said the US would re-engage with the global vaccine alliance Gavi. He said the decision had been made a few weeks ago to re-engage, after the Trump administration pulled funding from Gavi last year.



A woman buys vegetables from a street vendor on a street in Havana. (AFP)

## US threats against Cuba 'echo colonial-era practices': UN experts

AFP  
Geneva

UN rights experts said yesterday that escalating US "threats and coercion" against Cuba smacked of "colonial-era practices", which they warned undermined international peace and security.

The US has heaped pressure on Cuba since the month of January, with President Donald Trump musing about overthrowing the country's leadership, as US forces did in Venezuela that month.

"Efforts to change the constitutional order of a sovereign state through threats and coercion echo colonial-era practices," three independent UN experts said in a statement.

They slammed Trump's declaration following the abduction of Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro in January 2026 of his so-called "Donroe Doctrine", asserting US predominance over the Western Hemisphere.

"Statements by the US president regarding the 'honour of taking Cuba' reflect a deeply concerning strategy of coercion against a sovereign state," said the experts, who are mandated by the UN Human Rights Council but who do not speak on behalf of the UN itself.

"This assertion is not mere rhetoric, but part of a broader strategy involving the longstanding embargo on Cuba, its listing as a state-sponsor of terrorism, the recent fuel blockade

and the imposition of coercive measures on third parties," they said.

The communist Caribbean country has been under a US trade embargo since 1962, which is often blamed for shortages of food and medicine.

In January, Cuba stopped receiving oil from its ally Venezuela, and the US has threatened sanctions on anyone selling oil to the country.

US officials also brought an indictment against Cuba's former president Raul Castro, in a case that dates back to 1996, fuelling speculation that Trump would try to topple the communist state.

Yesterday's statement warned that such "misuse of domestic judicial proceedings against sitting or former heads of state, as an instrument of coercive foreign policy, constitutes an abuse of process. The statement further said the practice violates the principles of sovereign equality and self-determination under the UN Charter".

The experts also branded the recent deployment of a US aircraft carrier and escorting warships in the Caribbean an "additional element of unlawful coercion".

They called on Washington to immediately halt all threats against Cuba's sovereignty, and urged the UN Security Council and General Assembly to urgently address the threats against Cuba "as a matter affecting international peace and security".

## 'Dictatorship of monsters': Richard Gere slams Trump

Hollywood legend Richard Gere criticised Donald Trump on Tuesday, calling the US president a "maniac" who has "dismantled almost everything that was good" about the US.

"We're living in the darkest moment that I've experienced on this planet," the 76-year-old "Pretty Woman" star told an awards ceremony in Oslo for the Vaclav Havel International Prize for Creative Dissent.

"Who ever thought America could turn like this? Who ever thought that a maniac like this would be president of the US?" Gere told the audience of hundreds.

"First day, this guy dismantled almost everything that was good about the US government and the US people."

The "American Gigolo" heart-throb has previous form with Trump, having already branded the Republican a "bully" in February 2025.

As he announced prizes on

Tuesday at the Oslo Freedom Forum for imprisoned Chinese artist Gao Zhen and Myanmar anti-junta dissident Sai, Gere admitted that he had done too little to campaign against Trump's return to the White House.

"How is this even possible? Because we went to sleep. We didn't care. We didn't vote. We didn't really listen," the veteran actor said.

Gere told the audience that he had recently visited the Nazi concentration camp in Dachau.

"We have to see the cues, this dictatorship of the monsters, how quickly it happens. We have to be vigilant."

A longtime supporter of Tibet and a convert to Buddhism, Gere has frequently met the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader accused by China of stoking separatism in the Himalayan region.

Since 2024, he has lived in Spain with his Spanish third wife, Alejandra Silva. (AFP)

## Trump names inexperienced ally as intelligence director

President Donald Trump appointed a loyalist with no national security experience as head of US intelligence on Tuesday — and said he would also retain his existing jobs overseeing federal housing and mortgage policies.

Federal Housing Finance Agency chief Bill Pulte — who is known for publicly attacking Trump's political enemies — was named as the acting director of national intelligence (DNI), replacing Tulsi Gabbard. Gabbard, herself a controversial pick for the job, resigned in late May, ending a tenure that saw her appear to be at odds with Trump over his war on Iran.

The DNI — who heads the US intelligence community and serves as the president's main advisor on intelligence issues — is legally required to have "extensive national security expertise," which Pulte lacks. Trump hailed Pulte in a post announcing the appointment, saying he "has deep experience managing the most sensitive matters in America, the safety and soundness



Bill Pulte (Reuters/File Photo)

of the Markets."

The president added that Pulte, who also leads mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, will continue to serve in his housing-related roles.

Pulte, 38, has been described by some US media as the president's "attack dog."

Pulte has accused Democratic Senator Adam Schiff and New York Attorney General Letitia James of falsifying documents on mortgage applications. The *Wall Street Jour-*

nal reported that, according to an internal complaint at Fannie Mae, Pulte had improperly accessed the mortgage records of James and other Democratic officials.

A federal grand jury indicted James in October, but the case was dismissed without prejudice — which leaves open the possibility of the charges being filed again — a month later by a federal judge.

Pulte has also championed a mortgage fraud case against US Federal Reserve Governor Lisa Cook, based on which Trump attempted to fire the monetary policy maker. That case is pending before the Supreme Court.

The heir to a home-building fortune, Pulte has polarized many, even within Trump's circle, with his aggressive and public political actions. US Democratic lawmakers quickly took aim at Pulte's lack of experience and history of targeting Trump's opponents.

Mark Warner, the vice chair of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, said Pulte appears

to have been chosen "because the White House believes he will provide the narrative it wants, not the intelligence we need."

"The president has chosen an official who has demonstrated not just willingness but eagerness to use the authorities of government to pursue political retribution," Warner said.

Elizabeth Warren, the ranking member of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, said Pulte has spent the past year "abusing his authority to attack the president's perceived political enemies."

Pulte has fired internal ethics watchdogs who were investigating his own allies, characterizing those moves as a way to end diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) policies — which Trump has sought to purge from the US government — at Fannie Mae. On housing finance, he has championed the introduction of a 50-year mortgage in the US, a proposal that has enraged many in the MAGA movement. (AFP)

## Trump administration proposes 25% tariff to punish Brazil over trade practices

Reuters  
Washington/Brasilia

The Trump administration has proposed a new punitive tariff of 25% on many imports from Brazil, after deciding its practices were unfair on a range of issues from digital trade to illegal deforestation, top trade official Jamieson Greer said late on Monday.

The measures, under the Section 301 trade statute, cover areas such as electronic payment services, preferential tariffs, intellectual property protection and ethanol market access as well, the Office of the United States Trade Representative said.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva reacted to the newly proposed tariff yesterday, accusing US Secretary of State Marco Rubio of being anti-Latin America.

The president also said that US and Brazilian trade negotiators have met three times in recent

weeks, with no deal reached so far. Lula added that while the Trump administration sought to tariff Brazil, China yesterday, declared the country free of foot-and-mouth disease.

The proposed new tariff, subject to public consultation ahead of a July 15 deadline, would exclude some items, such as beef, coffee, rare earths, other metals, energy and aircraft parts.

The USTR said its unfair trade practices investigation into Brazil, started last year under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974, had found practices that "are unreasonable and burden or restrict US commerce," opening the door for a punitive tariff.

Greer, speaking on CNBC, called the Brazil action "quite nuanced" because of the broad exemptions. He said that the trade agency will release the findings of several more Section 301 unfair trade practices investigations in coming weeks, adding that substantial tariffs were needed to correct a "giant"



A general view of the US Capitol in Washington, DC. (AFP)

US trade deficit. Two Brazilian officials familiar with the matter said the justifications for a new US tariff ignored many of the arguments presented by Brasilia in recent months, suggesting the motives were political rather than technical.

Despite a White House visit last month by Lula, bilateral relations have turned chilly.

Rubio designated Brazil's two

biggest criminal gangs as terrorist organisations over objections from Brasilia, opening the door for more aggressive interventions in the country.

Days earlier, Lula's main rival in the October election, Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, had argued in favour of the terrorist label during a tour of Washington that included meetings with Rubio, Vice President JD Vance and President

Donald Trump. "I expressly asked President Trump not to tariff our companies," Bolsonaro wrote on X on yesterday.

"Tariffs are not the solution." The USTR's proposed new tariff would partially replace a tariff of 50% on many Brazilian goods imposed last year by Trump, with 40% as a punishment for Brazil's prosecution of the Brazilian senator's father, former President Jair Bolsonaro.

The US Supreme Court struck down those duties in February.

In a statement, Greer said he launched the Section 301 investigation to tackle "longstanding and pervasive US concerns with certain of Brazil's trade policies and practices." Despite recent engagement with Lula and his cabinet, Greer said the US and Brazil "continue to have substantial differences in resolving issues identified in this investigation."

The trade agency invited comment on the proposed tariffs through July 1, with a public hear-

ing set for July 6. It faces a July 15 deadline for taking "responsive action" in the Section 301 investigation. Trump used the same statute to impose sweeping tariffs on Chinese goods during his first term.

The USTR has several other open Section 301 investigations that are expected to lead to new duties.

Among these are one covering excess industrial capacity in China and 15 other trading partners, as well as one into enforcement of forced labor bans in 60 countries.

The agency opened a new investigation on Friday into Vietnam's intellectual property practices.

Regarding its Brazil findings, the USTR said the proposed new 25% tariff would not apply to Brazilian imports subject to national security-related tariffs under Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962. These include 50% duties on steel, aluminum and copper and 25% duties on finished products made from those metals, as well as a 25% duty on motor vehicles and auto parts.



## China, Brazil pledge to jointly resist external challenges

Reuters  
Beijing

China and Brazil should “jointly fend off external challenges”, China’s foreign minister told his Brazilian counterpart in Beijing on Monday, according to a statement from China’s Foreign Ministry.

Both countries agreed to deepen co-operation, safeguard world peace and stability, and defend the rights and interests of developing countries.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi held what China called “strategic dialogue” with Brazilian counterpart Mauro Vieira.

As key members of the Brics group of developing nations, Beijing and Brasilia are pushing for a multipolar world order, seeking to

dilute US dominance in global financial and political institutions.

The meeting came after Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva condemned a US decision to designate two Brazilian drug gangs as terrorist organisations, calling the move undue interference in his country’s internal affairs. The US announcement followed lobbying efforts in Washington by the sons of far-right former president Jair Bolsonaro.

In a meeting with Trump last week in Washington, Brazilian Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, who is preparing a run for president with his father’s blessing, said he had asked the US to label the gangs as terrorists.

Wang said China “supports Brazil in safeguarding its national sovereignty, maintaining its independence and autonomy and

achieving greater development.” The foreign ministry statement did not directly address the US designation.

Wang and Vieira also “conducted comprehensive and in-depth strategic communication on international and regional issues of common concern, reaching broad consensus”, the statement said. They called for providing more certainty in what they termed a turbulent world.

While Brazil has faced growing pressure from Washington to limit its ties with Beijing, the two countries have actively collaborated on global security issues, including diplomatic efforts on the conflict in Ukraine.

China is Brazil’s largest trading partner, and Brazil is a major exporter of soy, beef, and iron ore to China.

## Chinese, US militaries had constructive meeting in Hawaii, Chinese Navy says

Reuters  
Beijing

China and the US held “candid and constructive” exchanges at a meeting in Hawaii on air and maritime safety last week, agreeing that improved communication could reduce miscalculations and enhance professionalism, the Chinese Navy said.

The May 28-29 meeting was attended by representatives from both sides’ militaries, it said in a statement late on Monday.

A separate statement from the US Indo-Pacific Command said that it hosted representatives from the People’s Liberation Army in Honolulu for discussions focused on reducing the risk of unsafe and unprofessional encounters.

The meeting follows a high-

profile summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump last month and could ease concerns about a lack of communication after the absence of top Chinese military officials at the Shangri-La Dialogue, a regional defence forum, in Singapore over the weekend.

At last month’s summit, Xi and Trump agreed to pursue a “constructive relationship of strategic stability”, which analysts say could set practical boundaries for how the two powers interact.

“This shared strategic framing shifts the bilateral dynamic beyond reactive crisis management toward more deliberate, forward-looking stability-building,” said Wang Dong, an international studies professor at Peking University.

At the Shangri-La Dialogue, US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth warned of China’s historic

military build-up and urged Asian countries to boost their defence spending and capabilities.

But he also said relations between the US and China are better than they’ve been in many years and unlike in his address at the forum last year, did not mention Taiwan, suggesting Washington was adopting a measured tone on the contentious issue.

China views democratically run Taiwan as its own territory, and has never renounced the use of force against the island. The US is bound by law to arm Taipei, which Beijing has long been opposed to.

In addition to stressing the importance of communication, the statement by the Chinese Navy also said that China “firmly opposes any action that undermines China’s sovereignty and security.”

## Cambodia takes maritime dispute with Thailand to UN

Reuters  
Bangkok

Cambodia said yesterday it had launched a compulsory conciliation process under international law aimed at resolving a long-running maritime boundary dispute with Thailand and had informed the UN and Bangkok. The move follows a Thai government decision last month to unilaterally terminate a 2001 agreement with Cambodia that provided a framework for negotiations over the disputed area in the Gulf of Thailand where the two countries’ maritime claims overlap.

“We have taken this step to protect Cambodia’s sovereignty and maritime rights in accordance with international law,” Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet said. Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who made the can-

cellation of the 2001 pact part of his February election campaign, said he was not aware that Cambodia had initiated the conciliation process.

“Thailand has not yet determined when it will proceed further,” he told reporters.

Cambodia’s move underlines the potential divergence between the neighbours in resolving long-standing border disputes though a fragile ceasefire that ended last year’s deadly land border conflict between them continues to hold.

Under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, or Unclos, a compulsory conciliation process allows a panel of independent experts to examine a dispute and make recommendations, although its findings are not legally binding on either party.

Thailand has previously said it would use Unclos as a reference framework while pursuing direct

negotiations with Cambodia on maritime boundary demarcation. Anutin again referenced Unclos yesterday.

The maritime dispute relates to approximately 26,000sq km of sea in the Gulf of Thailand, known as the Overlapping Claims Area (OCA), which is estimated to hold nearly 12tn cubic feet of natural gas and large quantities of oil, worth about \$300 billion. The oil shock from the Iran conflict has created renewed urgency to resolve the dispute and unlock the undersea energy resources, Cambodia’s energy minister told Reuters last week.

Cambodia has appointed Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn as its agent for the proceedings, alongside Danish diplomat Peter Taksøe-Jensen and French academic Jean-Marc Thouvenin as conciliators, the government said in a statement.

“Thailand now has 21 days to

appoint two of its own conciliators. The conciliators will then select a chair to finalise a conciliation commission, overseen by the UN Secretary-General,” the statement added.

The Thai foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Thailand has repeatedly rejected Cambodian efforts to resolve disputes through international mechanisms, including the International Court of Justice, insisting instead on bilateral negotiations. A ceasefire has been in place between the two countries since late December following two rounds of fighting along stretches of their 817-km (508-mile) land border last year, the first of which ended after an intervention by US President Donald Trump.

Both sides have accused the other of initiating the fighting, which killed nearly 150 people and displaced hundreds of thousands.

## Robotic food sorting in Tokyo



Fanuc’s LR-Mate robot sorts food at its demonstration at a food processing technology expo in Tokyo, yesterday. (Reuters)

## Indonesian president sacks head of free meal scheme

AFP  
Jakarta

Indonesia’s President Prabowo Subianto removed yesterday the head of the body responsible for his signature free school meals programme, which has been blighted by mass food poisonings and corruption claims.

The much-hyped billion-dollar scheme was the flagship policy of Prabowo’s 2024 election campaign.

The government says it has provided meals to more than 61mn

people by March, but tens of thousands of people have fallen ill since the programme was launched in January last year.

“The president has decided to make changes to the leadership of the National Nutrition Agency,” State Secretary Prasetyo Hadi told reporters in Jakarta, citing food quality among various concerns behind the move.

Critics have called for the programme to be suspended over hygiene concerns and accusations of corruption.

“The government will continue to ensure that throughout the on-

going evaluation process, all programmes of the National Nutrition Agency will continue to run as they should,” Prasetyo said.

Dadan Hindayana, an entomologist who led the agency since its inception, was replaced by his deputy, Nanik Sudaryati Deyang.

Last month, anti-graft watchdog Indonesia Corruption Watch filed a complaint against Dadan citing alleged budget irregularities.

Dadan told parliament last year the programme was responsible for at least 11,000 poisoning cases, with over 600 people hospitalised.

Prabowo has also acknowledged problems and vowed to discipline anyone found guilty of wrongdoing.

More than 20% of children in Indonesia are affected by stunting caused by severe malnutrition.

The government hoped the scheme would provide meals for at least 82.9mn children and pregnant and breastfeeding women — about one-third of the country’s population.

It was among the first budget items to be cut back as Jakarta moved to counter the economic impact of the Middle East war.

## Bear goes on rampage in Japan

A bear attack left four people injured in two factories and a residential area in northern Japan’s Fukushima yesterday, police and media reports said. A record 13 people were killed by bears in Japan last year, and there has been a jump in sightings as the animals emerge hungry from hibernation. “A bear-related human injury incident... occurred in Fukushima City, injuring four people,” the prefectural police said in a statement. The bear was first spotted in a car parts factory, prompting an emergency call

explaining that “employees had been bitten”, the Yomiuri Shimbun daily reported citing police and fire department officials. As the bear continued its rampage, two other people were injured, one in a residential area and the other on the premises of an electronic equipment manufacturer nearby, the Yomiuri said, adding that the animal was thought to have remained inside the factory. The report said one of those attacked was heavily injured, while the rest suffered only mild injuries. (AFP)



This combination of pictures shows (top) people passing by a decorative goods shop in Hanoi on January 13, 2025, and the same location (below) on May 25, 2026 of a man on a motorbike passing a decorative goods shop that has less products on the street outside. (AFP)

## Hanoi enforces strict crackdown on sidewalk vendors

AFP  
Hanoi

The pavements of Hanoi’s wide boulevards and narrow lanes have long been clogged with bustling food stalls, weaving scooters, and crowds of coffee drinkers sitting on low plastic stools.

But the spontaneity that charmed tourists and supported street vendors in Vietnam’s capital has subsided in recent months as authorities clamp down on illegal use of footpaths.

Unauthorised peddling, parking and blocking foot traffic were long tolerated informally, but fines are now being enforced — and city authorities are considering doubling them.

“Without vendors, I don’t think Hanoi is Hanoi anymore,” said Nguyen Thi Hoan, 58, who used to sell flowers on the pavement outside a large downtown apartment complex.

“Of course, I support the efforts to make the pavements clearer,” she added.

Hoan worked from the same slab of concrete for a decade, eking out a modest living hawking colourful bouquets.

Now she has been banished along with fruit and vegetable sellers to a vacant lot with lower foot traffic, her turnover roughly halving as a result. “I don’t know what to do instead



This combination of pictures shows (top) a man waiting for customers at a bakery in Hanoi on January 12, 2026, and the same location (below) on May 25, 2026 where the bakery has less products on the street outside. (AFP)

to make ends meet,” she said. Street vending is “the tradition of people in Hanoi?”

Whether you need a meal or a mechanic, balloons or even a barber, Hanoi’s busy pave-

ments could always oblige. The capital has attracted record numbers of tourists in recent years, many eager to sit outside eating street food as the city surges past.

“Low plastic stool, cheap but delicious noodles, cold Hanoi beverage,” former US president Barack Obama reminisced about a meal he shared there with late chef Anthony Bourdain in 2016.

They ate their \$6 bun cha inside, but the Hanoi episode of Bourdain’s CNN travelogue is a love letter to the city’s pavements, chronicling everything from pavement Zumba classes to outdoor noodle vendors.

Hanoi’s vibrant kerb culture has always had downsides — traffic jams and noise complaints, safety and sanitary concerns.

Now the capital is changing fast, as is Vietnam, whose communist leaders have spurred rapid development but brook little dissent.

Authorities say their crackdown will bring cleanliness and order to the city of eight mn people.

Hanoi has launched previous campaigns to clear footpaths, but they were often short-lived.

This time authorities have intensified their efforts over several months, installing nearly 2,000 surveillance cameras to catch offenders.

Businesses that obstruct foot traffic face fines of up to 6mn Vietnamese dong (\$230), while illegal vendors can be penalised 250,000 dong.

## India, US close to signing first phase of trade deal: minister

AFP  
New Delhi

India and the United States are "about 99 percent" done with the first tranche of a trade deal, the commerce minister said, as a US delegation began talks in New Delhi yesterday.

The delegation, led by Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch, is holding three days of talks with Indian trade officials, as the two sides seek to close negotiations.

"About 99 percent of the issues have been settled," Indian commerce minister Piyush Goyal told reporters in Delhi late Monday.

The two countries reached an initial understanding for the trade deal in February, but negotiations slowed after President Donald Trump's sweeping tariff measures were struck down by the US Supreme Court.

After the court order, the Trump administration launched investigations into unfair trade practices

against several countries, including India, while imposing a blanket 10 percent tariff.

Goyal said negotiators were examining how recent legal changes in the United States should be reflected in the final text of the agreement.

"I am fully confident that we will conclude and sign the first tranche of the bilateral trade agreement with the United States," Goyal said, adding that discussions would then continue on a broader and more comprehensive pact.

"Discussions are continuing on minor details, essentially the commas and full stops."

Last week, US ambassador Sergio Gor said he expected the interim trade deal to be signed "in the next few weeks".

Washington and New Delhi have set a target of boosting bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030, holding multiple rounds of negotiations since March to resolve market access and tariff disputes.

India says the deal protects its sensitive dairy and agricultural products while opening a \$30 trillion market for exporters.

## Venezuela's Rodriguez to discuss energy ties during India visit

Reuters  
New Delhi

Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodriguez will visit India from June 3 to June 7, India's foreign ministry said yesterday, at a time when New Delhi is ramping up its crude imports from Caracas. India is the second-largest importer of Venezuelan oil in May with purchases of 427,000 barrels per day, second only to the US, Reuters reported. India's Reliance Industries has emerged as one of the three largest buyers of Venezuelan crude in recent months.

During her visit, Rodriguez will hold talks with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Ran-

dhir Jaiswal told a media briefing.

"The discussions will involve the full spectrum of India-Venezuela relations and involve and explore avenues for further co-operation in the areas of energy, trade, investment, pharmaceuticals, healthcare, transportation, and renewable energy," Jaiswal said. She is also expected to meet top Indian energy industry leaders in financial capital Mumbai, an Indian source said.

Rodriguez last visited India in February 2025 when she was Venezuela's oil minister, and led a delegation participating in the India Energy Week conference. Her visit comes as India, the world's third-largest oil importer and consumer, grapples with supply disruptions caused by the US-Israeli war with Iran, which

has virtually shut the Strait of Hormuz — a key conduit that carried more than 40% of the South Asian nation's crude oil imports. India had stopped buying Venezuelan oil last year, after US President Donald Trump authorised a 25% discretionary tariff on countries buying crude from the South American nation. It resumed purchases when sanctions were eased in February following a flagship oil supply pact between Washington and Caracas.

Under the agreement, reached after the US capture of President Nicolas Maduro in January, Washington controls proceeds from Venezuelan oil sales through bank accounts administered by the Treasury Department, with commercial terms also following its guidance.

## Nepal party chief calls for close India economic ties

AFP  
New Delhi

Nepal's ruling party chief called for closer economic and strategic co-operation with India yesterday, on the first high-level visit since deadly 2025 anti-corruption youth protests toppled the previous government.

But this trip to a key ally was not by Nepal's new prime minister — 36-year-old rapper-turned-politician Balendra Shah.

Shah has shunned meetings with several foreign envoys to Nepal and, according to his aides, has said he will not travel abroad for his first year in power to focus on the many domestic challenges, not least the ailing economy.

The first visit to key ally India instead was made by Rabi Lamichhane, a former deputy prime minister and interior minister, who is president of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP).

It won a landslide victory in March parliamentary elections, led by Shah.

Former television host Lamichhane retains a pivotal role in power, and the lawmaker is expected to meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, RSP spokesman Manish Jha told AFP.

Nepal, a landlocked Himalayan nation of 30mn people, must ensure a delicate diplomatic balance between its two giant neighbours, India and China.

India has long considered Hindu-majority Nepal as a traditional ally, with open borders along the plains.

Kathmandu's largest trading partner is India, accounting for 63% of imports, or \$8.6bn, followed by China at 13%, or \$1.8bn, according to World Bank figures.

"A stable and prosperous Nepal is a natural guardrail along India's northern border, whereas a politically fractured Nepal makes India nervous about instability in the neighbourhood," Lamichhane wrote in *The Hindustan Times* yesterday.

"Nepal's economic development is, therefore, a strategic necessity for India."

Shah has spoken little since

coming to power, and issued his victory message in a rap song, where he promised to "run like a leopard" to ensure his nation's success.

The visit takes place as a long-running border controversy resurfaced, over Nepali territorial claims to the Lipulekh Pass, where India, China and Nepal meet.

The icy 5,334 metres-high (17,500 feet) pass has been used by Indian pilgrims to visit Mount Kailash — sacred to Hindus and Tibetan Buddhists, but also connects India to China directly.

In 2020, protests erupted in Nepal after India inaugurated a new road leading to the pass.

On Sunday, Shah said in parliament that both India and Nepal had "encroached" on each other's territory, and said they should "resolve the issue as friends". The comments sparked uproar in Kathmandu's parliament.

Analysts say Lamichhane's visit could help renew ties.

"There has been a vacuum of political dialogue between Nepal and India for a while," Kathman-

du-based foreign affairs analyst Chandra Dev Bhatta said.

"So this visit is a positive step towards opening engagements and clearing any misunderstandings."

Lamichhane said that Nepal could offer energy-hungry India hydropower, from its many dams on rivers running off the Himalayas.

"Nepal's hydropower potential is no longer just a domestic asset; it is a clean, green engine capable of powering the industrial corridors of a rising India," he wrote.

He also noted that Nepal shared the same love of cricket as India, with fans watching the just completed India Premier League (IPL) T20 tournament.

"We have also been deeply contemplating how Nepali players and Nepali stadiums can be integrated into the IPL franchise," he said.

Nepal are cricketing minnows — but came within a nail-biting single ball of one of the biggest upsets in T20 World Cup history in February, when they lost to England by only four runs.



SpaceX logo and miniature satellite model are seen in this illustration taken. (Reuters/File Photo)

## UK adopts SpaceX's Starshield for military operations: sources

Reuters  
London

Britain has begun using SpaceX's militarised satellite network Starshield, according to two people familiar with the matter, making it among the first countries outside the United States to adopt Elon Musk's government-focused variant of Starlink.

Starshield, developed for the US government, is designed for military and intelligence missions with enhanced security features, while SpaceX's standard Starlink broadband service is aimed at consumer and commercial use.

Britain's defence ministry started transitioning operational military traffic to the more expensive Starshield service around the beginning of this year, the people said.

In a statement to Reuters, the ministry did not comment on Starshield. It said personnel still use Starlink for non-operational purposes, such as keeping in touch with family during deployment, and that it "is not used for military operations". It added the ministry uses a range of suppliers for its armed forces.

SpaceX did not respond to a request for comment.

Musk has sought to draw a clearer line between Starshield and Starlink, SpaceX's vast low-Earth-orbit broadband network and main source of revenue. SpaceX, which is due to go public at a valuation topping \$1.5tn on June 12, has said Starlink should not be used for weapons systems.

Last month, Reuters reported that SpaceX had raised the price charged to the Pentagon for Starlink services used to guide kamikaze drones in operations against Iran fivefold. Musk said the increase reflected the use of Starlink rather than Starshield, which he said should have been used.

Militaries have increasingly turned to Starlink since Ukraine's widespread use of the network after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022, including for communications and drone control. In 2023, SpaceX President Gwynne Shotwell said the company had curbed Ukraine's military use of Starlink for offensive purposes. SpaceX has also sought to stop what it said was unauthorised use of Starlink by Russian troops in Ukraine.

Ukraine's defence ministry did not respond to a request for comment on whether it uses Starshield.

The British military began using Starlink in July 2022 and had about 1,000 terminals as of spring last year, the UK government said in a May 2025 response to a Reuters freedom of information request.

It is unclear how widely Britain's military uses Starshield or how much it pays. One person said the cost is only slightly higher than Starlink and that the ministry uses third-party distributors rather than contracting directly with SpaceX.

The other person, an industry specialist with close ties to the ministry, said it had been told to move operational traffic to Starshield, without specifying by whom.

## British police face backlash after dying student was handcuffed

British police faced a national backlash yesterday over the inflammatory case of an 18-year-old student who was handcuffed as he lay dying from stab wounds after his killer falsely alleged a racist attack.

Henry Nowak died after the knife attack in the southern England city of Southampton in December last year.

His murderer Vickrum Digwa, a 23-year-old Sikh man, was sentenced to life in prison on Monday, having lied to police at the time that Nowak had assaulted him. In police bodycam footage, Nowak is seen lying on the street saying "I've been stabbed" and "I can't breathe" while an officer responds "I don't think you have mate".

Nigel Farage, whose anti-immigration Reform party leads opinion polls, said it was an example of the rights of ethnic minorities trumping those of white British people.

"The fear of being called racist was greater than dealing with Henry Nowak's murder," he said in a statement. "We should respond to this with pure cold rage."



Demonstrators hold placards and flags outside Southampton Central Police Station following the conviction of Vikrum Digwa for the murder of student Henry Nowak, in Southampton, yesterday. (Reuters)

Judge William Mousley acknowledged in court on Monday that the case had stirred racial tension across Britain. Digwa stabbed Nowak with a knife he said he was permitted to carry due to exemptions for Sikhs to have ceremonial daggers. When the police arrived, Digwa said his turban had been knocked off and he had an injury to his eye. Nick Thomas-Symonds, Cabinet Office minister, told BBC Radio that "the conduct of the police when you

look at it at the scene is shocking". Nowak's family called his treatment by police "inhumane and degrading" but in a statement outside court, his father said his death should not be "used to create further division, hatred or tension." That was echoed by Britain's interior minister, Shabana Mahmood, who told parliament yesterday that everyone was equal before the law and urged calm during an investigation. Mahmood acknowledged that the

footage released was "disturbing and tragic" but said the case had brought unacceptable threats against police officers and that inflammatory commentary was making a dreadful situation worse. "We must condemn those who seek personal political profit from tragedy," she said. Mahmood added that for public services, the only consideration they should weigh is the risk a person poses, not race or religion. Referencing previous efforts to tackle racism in policing she said, "Whatever changes are made, it is important that nobody over-corrects or course-corrects such that all of us as citizens are no longer equal before the law." Reform leader Farage sought to draw parallels with the 2020 killing of George Floyd in the US which sparked the Black Lives Matter movement. Floyd had said "I can't breathe" as a police officer knelt on his neck for several minutes. Nowak died shortly after being handcuffed by police. Once they realised he was injured, they uncuffed him and started CPR. The police force, Hampshire Police, has apologised.

## UN warns funding cuts could worsen Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh

Reuters  
Dhaka

The UN refugee agency warned yesterday that declining humanitarian funding could significantly worsen conditions for around 1.2mn Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, nearly nine years after they fled Myanmar, as aid groups struggle to sustain essential services.

As global crises multiply and donor budgets tighten, the United Nations and its partners are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain support for one of the world's largest refugee populations.

The pressure has grown with the arrival of about 150,000 more Rohingya Muslims since early 2024, fleeing renewed violence in Myanmar, UNHCR said. Meanwhile, the US and some European countries have cut funding for international aid in recent years.

Last month, the UN and the Bangladesh

government launched a \$710.5mn appeal to fund food, shelter, healthcare, education and protection services. However, the appeal — already 26% lower than last year's — remains only about 60% funded, underscoring mounting financial strain.

The funding push comes ahead of the ninth anniversary of the August 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State, which forced some 750,000 Rohingya to flee to Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

"For decades, Rohingya people have been driven from their homes in Myanmar's Rakhine State, with Bangladesh providing protection to successive movements of refugees since the late seventies," UNHCR spokesperson Babar Baloch said.

Life in the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh remains bleak. Overcrowded and fragile, the settlements face constant threats from extreme weather, disease and insecurity, with limited access to basic services compounding hardships.



Rohingya refugees stand in queue to receive ration from the World Food Program (WFP), at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. (Reuters/File Photo)

With limited access to education and jobs, refugees remain largely dependent on aid, with recent food ration cuts deepening hardship, while vulnerable groups — including women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities — face the greatest risks. As conflict in Myanmar persists, prospects for a safe return remain slim, while growing desperation is pushing some Rohingya to undertake perilous sea journeys to Malaysia or Indonesia — with nearly 900 reported missing or dead in 2025, the deadliest year on record.

"We just want the world not to forget that we are still living through this suffering, day after day, year after year. We see no clear future here and no way of returning home," said refugee Mohammed Jashim, 35, a father of three from the camps in Bangladesh.

UNHCR called on donors to continue supporting Rohingya refugees until returns can take place safely.

## Indo-Pacific security shift as US doubts grow amid China's rise

**C**onfrontation between China's rapid military rise and growing doubts about the US focus on a region it has long dominated, Indo-Pacific nations are racing to arm themselves, and each other. At Asia's premier defence forum earlier this week, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth pressed regional partners to shoulder more of the security burden. Yet, he faced persistent concerns that US priorities may be drifting, with conflict in Iran competing for attention.

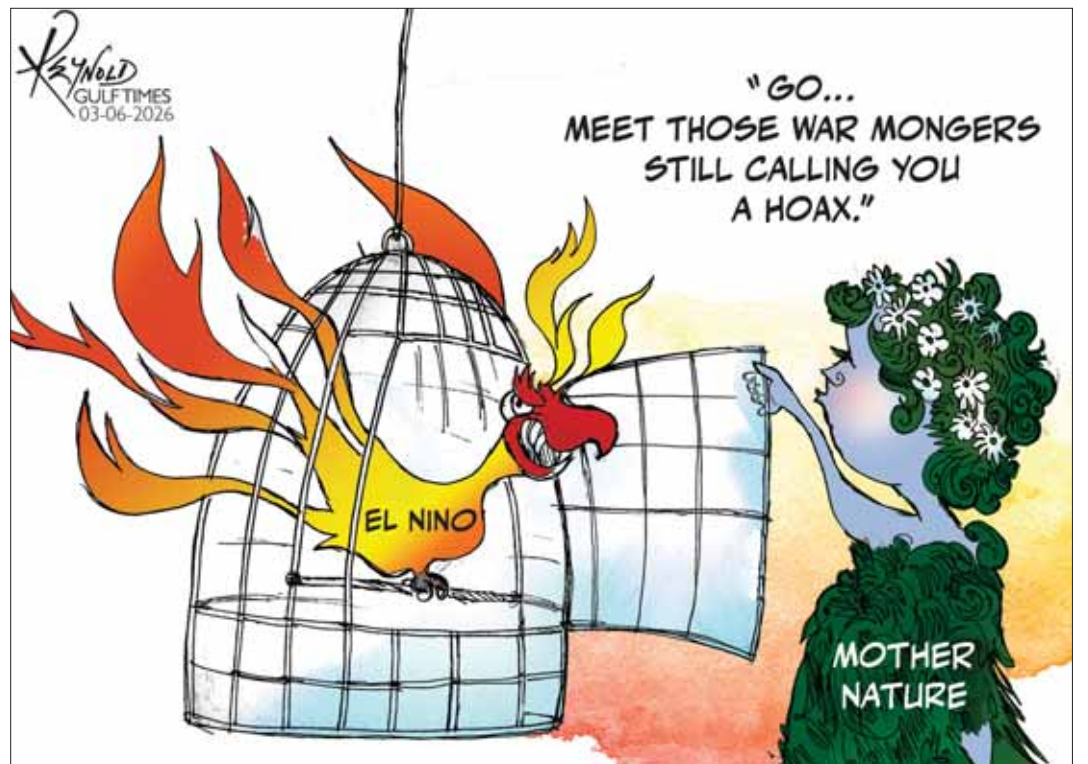
"We can do two things at one time," Hegseth told the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, a free-wheeling gathering of global defence chiefs, military and intelligence officials. His Japanese counterpart Shinjiro Koizumi said he believed the US commitment was "unwavering", while acknowledging that some countries may still underestimate its resolve.

In interviews with Reuters on the sidelines of the annual gathering, regional defence chiefs and military officers made clear the push was on to do more with each other beyond the traditional US umbrella. "All the defence secretaries here present are unanimous in the need to make agile and

speedy upscaling of their own individual defence capabilities," Philippines' Defence Secretary Gilberto Teodoro told Reuters.

He described it as "buttressing" the US's traditional role, with Manila deepening defence ties with partners such as Japan, Australia, Canada and New Zealand. "The commitment of the United States becomes more solid when more actors, at least in the deterrence phase, come in, because there is a common threat."

Japan is positioning itself as a hub for that broader network. Koizumi said Tokyo aims to act as a "connecting point" for closer regional co-operation beyond China. In April, Japan unveiled its biggest overhaul of defence export rules in decades, scrapping restrictions on overseas arms sales and opening the way for exports of warships, missiles and other weapons. Singapore Defence Minister Chan Chun Sing said in the current environment "we should ... develop flexible partnerships with like-minded countries forming coalitions of the able and willing." This, he said, would help "bridge gaps, test ideas, find paths in new and uncharted territories." — Reuters



## Role of Qatar and other small states in shaping the pandemic agreement



By Dr Esmat Zaidan and Dr Diana Alsayed Hassan

**T**he Covid-19 pandemic provided the ultimate challenge for modern health systems around the world, exposing deep gaps in equity, co-ordination, and resource distribution. In response, the World Health Organisation (WHO), adopted the Pandemic Agreement in 2025, an international treaty designed to be legally binding upon states' ratification.

While the framework was formally adopted, key operational systems, specifically the Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) system, remain under active finalisation. The framework aims to strengthen global prevention, preparedness, and response to future pandemics and health emergencies through mechanisms such as pathogen sharing and equitable vaccine access, marking a historic moment in global public health.

Although the discourse of emergency preparedness and treaty negotiations are mainly dominated by large states with large populations and extensive resources, Qatar, despite its modest geographic size, emerged as a key actor in global health. By implementing a comprehensive domestic strategy to contain the coronavirus outbreak, while simultaneously providing significant support to other countries and international agencies, Doha demonstrated that smaller states can influence emergency preparedness and response.

In 2020, Qatar's government pledged \$10mn to the WHO to improve testing capacity, refining treatment protocols and techniques, developing and advancing vaccine research while also contributing \$20mn to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to ensure swift distribution of diagnostic tools and vaccines. At a time when global supply chain systems were severely disrupted, these donations enabled healthcare systems worldwide to have proper access to the needed interventions. These contributions stemmed from the fact that officials in Qatar considered the Covid-19 pandemic as "a measure of our shared humanity" and emphasized international co-operation.

Qatar's efforts extended beyond addressing the immediate crises; engagement continued by institutionalising funding mechanisms. For instance, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), in 2021, signed a Core Contribution Agreement with the WHO providing multilateral and unearmarked funds for both routine operations and rapid deployment in emergencies for a period of two years. As a result, Qatar was one of the top 10 core contributors to the WHO within this timeframe.

Doha also played an essential role in strengthening surveillance systems, increasing frontline workforce capacity, expanding essential stockpiles, and developing digital monitoring infrastructures and platforms, all of which are

central to the objectives of the pandemic accord. Such provision of consistent and strategic financial assistance from Qatar represents an example of moving from a reactive approach and project-based aid to systemic support that aligns with the priorities of the Pandemic Agreement.

As a result, Qatar's efforts were highlighted by the WHO leadership, emphasising that regular financial contributions support the organisation's ability to mobilise resources promptly in response to new health-related threats.

Qatar is not alone in this effort. It stands alongside a broader group of small and medium-sized countries that advocated, contributed financially, and utilised their technical expertise to push for a more equitable treaty. For example, the Small Countries Initiative, a network of European states with populations below 2mn, emphasised the need for treaty provisions that address their unique needs, including enhancing the health workforce, access to medicine, and emergency preparedness in resource-limited settings.

Similarly, in the Pacific and Caribbean regions, island nations highlighted their vulnerabilities stemming from geographic locations, inadequate health care infrastructure and limited supply chains. This perspective added practical insights during the drafting of the treaty, so that ultimately, the document incorporates the different realities facing health situations around the world. The persistent efforts of such states have made it possible to reach a pandemic agreement that will build resilient health systems for everyone, not just the economically powerful countries.

Multilateral negotiations related to the development of the pandemic agreement took place via consultative processes that gave all members the chance to voice their demands and problems. The negotiations were spearheaded by the co-chairs from South Africa and France, aided by the vice chairs from Thailand, Egypt, Brazil, and Australia.

The geographical diversity of the leaders helped incorporate views from small countries into the treaty, such as equitable vaccine distribution and shared surveillance, among other issues. Small states thus ensured that, in addition to rapid responses, the framework would also address other upstream structural determinants of vulnerability to diseases.

With the Pandemic Agreement moving towards the finalisation of its annexes and eventual ratification, small and mid-sized nations are well-placed to play leading roles within implementation committees, oversight mechanisms, and technical working groups. With their collective financial, technical, moral, and grassroots inputs, particularly regarding data-led early warning systems, such states will be invaluable in turning pledges into tangible and improved global health outcomes.

• Dr Esmat Zaidan is Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at Hamad Bin Khalifa University's College of Public Policy.  
• Dr Diana Alsayed Hassan is Assistant Professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University's College of Public Policy.)

This piece has been submitted by HKBK's Communications Directorate on behalf of its authors. The thoughts and views expressed are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect an official University stance.

## Is AI stealing our souls? The ethical questions behind Gulf's AI boom



By Marc Owen Jones

**I**n Abu Dhabi, crews are pouring concrete for a five-gigawatt AI campus, the largest outside the United States. Saudi Arabia's national champion, HUMAIN, is racing to build gigawatts of compute and has launched an initiative (SAMAI) to train a million citizens in AI use; the kingdom now ranks first in the world for government AI ambition on the Tortoise Global AI Index.

QIA-backed QAI and Brookfield have launched a \$20bn AI infrastructure venture, while the UAE's MGX investment platform is investing across the AI stack, from semiconductors to applications.

By 2025, 84% of organisations across the GCC reported using AI in at least one business function, up from 64 percent two years earlier. National strategies project substantial gains in non-oil economic output from AI over the coming decade.

The Gulf is not alone, investment in AI is almost ubiquitous, as countries fear being left behind in the AI revolution. Fears that tools like Claude, ChatGPT, Midjourney will lead to job losses have failed to materialise to the extent feared. However, the much vaunted productivity gains have also failed to materialise.

Yet other, perhaps more important concerns remain, such as the impact of AI on humanity, and crucially, our brains, and the essence of what makes us human — the soul. By "soul" I mean the spiritual breath of life placed within humans. For some that may be the divine or immortal entity that exists beyond the material world. For most it will be the entity that possesses consciousness, free will, and a moral capacity.

At a recent event held in Education City by WISE, entitled Trust Me, I'm an Algorithm?, we discussed the impact of AI on higher ed. Specifically, we talked about the need to harness AI and avoid the type of cognitive offloading that AI is allowing. (Cognitive offloading is where we 'offload' our thinking to machines, theoretically sacrificing a

learning opportunity).

Yet the longer I spend in higher education the more despondent I become. I worry what dependence on AI is doing to our ability to think independently and critically. When I teach students I use a useful metaphor about the jewel wasp put forward by Matt Simons in *Plight of the Living Dead: What Real-Life Zombies Reveal about Our World — and Ourselves*.

The jewel wasp hunts cockroaches several times its size, but it does not kill them. It stings twice, once to paralyse the front legs, then precisely into the brain, depositing venom in two spots that govern the roach's drive to move and flee. The active ingredient includes dopamine. Dopamine is the same neurotransmitter the human brain releases at a social media notification. It's often referred to as the feel good chemical.

The roach is not injured; it can walk, right itself, and run if it chooses. What it loses is the impulse to use those intact abilities on its own behalf. It is, by every sign, content, grooming itself calmly as if nothing is wrong. But it has effectively become a zombie. When the wasp tugs the stump of an antenna, the roach follows it into a burrow where the wasp's larva will eat it alive, and never resists. The roach becomes a living host, placated through dopamine, directed by an external entity that uses its body as a host.

The fairly obvious comparison is that social media, and now AI, are the things that are slowly supplanting our ability to think independently and critically, in many cases feeding us dopamine as we celebrate the technologies that may be responsible for the decline of our ability to act independently. We may be alive, but we are slowly dying, succumbing to the power of external technologies.

The empirical work describes the negative impacts of AI. In a 2026 study by researchers at Carnegie Mellon, MIT, Oxford, and UCLA, participants solved ordinary problems, fractions, reading comprehension, some with an AI assistant that could solve them outright. When it was removed, those participants were far more likely to give up or answer wrong, an effect that appeared after about ten minutes. As co-author Michiel Bakker of MIT frames it, persistence, the willingness to stay with a hard problem, is what lets a person learn at all. It is the first faculty to atrophy, and the one the others depend on.

A skill that goes unused inevitably decays. A separate study from MIT's Media Lab

recorded the brain activity of people writing essays: those who let a language model write showed lower engagement and weaker memory signatures, and afterwards could not reliably explain what they had submitted. They produced competent work and retained nothing from producing it. What are we as humans if we cannot remember the work we produce? Writing is thinking, and thinking is a key element of what defines our humanity.

The common argument is that we should ban the tools. The issue is how to frame the choice as one between AI that replaces human reasoning and intelligence amplification (IA) that enhances it, between a tool that returns the answer and one that questions, and sometimes withholds it so the user has to think. The first is cheaper, easier, and requires us to use less of our brain. The second is the only one that leaves the user more capable. The thing is, it is easier to say this than realise it in practise, but these are key questions that we need to grapple with.

The Gulf's AI race is usually framed in terms of economic diversification, geopolitical influence, and technological leadership. But beneath the language of infrastructure and productivity lies a deeper question about what these systems are doing to us as human beings.

The danger is not that AI becomes human, but that humans become less so; less thoughtful, less reflective, less capable of independent thought. Such elements are central to creativity, morality, and learning itself. They are central to our identity too, whether as humans, or what makes us uniquely Khaliiji.

This does not mean rejecting AI. It means recognising that convenience is not always progress, and that intelligence amplification must take precedence over intellectual substitution. Training people in AI also means drawing attention to the deeper questions about the human condition and AI. The question for the Gulf is therefore not simply whether it can be a leader in the AI revolution, but what steps it is taking to prevent eroding the very human capacities it hopes to cultivate.

• The writer is an Associate Professor of Media Analytics at Northwestern University in Qatar, a Unesco Fellow, and author of several books including Digital Authoritarianism in the Middle East.

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Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Faisal Abdulhameed al-Mudahka

DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR

Kamran Rehmat

P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar

editor@gulf-times.com

4435 0478 (News)

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# France follows England in measuring hottest spring on record

AFP  
Paris

France experienced its hottest spring on record, the country's weather service said yesterday, after an exceptional early heatwave that also broke highs for the season in England and Wales.

Meteo-France said the average nationwide temperature over March to May was 13.8C – around 1.7C above the norm, and surpassing records set in 2011 and 2020.

"The warmest spring since records began in 1900," it said in a bulletin.

All three months were warmer than average but the onset of an "unprecedented heatwave" in late

May pushed the mercury to highs typically seen at the height of the summer.

"Our country had never before reached such high temperatures at this time of year; numerous monthly records were broken," the weather service said. France's soils – which were very wet at the beginning of spring – had become "very dry" by the end of the season due to the heatwave and a lack of rainfall, the weather service said.

France, Britain and Portugal all reported their hottest-ever May days as a "heat dome" of warm air from northern Africa pushed temperatures well above normal levels across western Europe.

It was also the hottest ever spring for England and Wales but just the third overall for the United



A person protects from the sun under an umbrella in front of the Louvre museum in Paris as a record-breaking early heatwave scorches a swathe of western Europe. (AFP/ File Photo)

Kingdom, the country's Met Office said on Monday.

In some locations, temperature records were exceeded by 2C as the heatwave helped drive "an exceptional end to the season", the UK weather service said. Further north, in Norway, the country's Meteorological Institute also announced yesterday the country's hottest spring since record keeping began in 1901.

The Scandinavian nation escaped the late May heatwave but average temperatures were still 2.1C above the seasonal norm, the institute said, with particular warmth in the country's north.

Europe is the fastest-warming continent on Earth, in part because it is connected to the Arctic, where bright snow and ice is melting and revealing darker, heat-absorbing

surfaces such as land and ocean.

Scientists agree that heatwaves are becoming more frequent and intense as the planet warms due to human-caused climate change from burning fossil fuels.

The World Meteorological Organisation said yesterday there was an 80-percent change of a warming El Nino weather pattern forming between June and August.

WMO chief Celeste Saulo said the world needed to get ready for an El Nino which could "exacerbate drought and heavy rainfall and increase the risk of heatwaves both on land and in the ocean". El Nino is one half of a naturally occurring climate cycle that can temporarily drive up global temperatures and prime conditions for more extreme weather around the globe.

# 'Nightmare': Russian attacks kill 23 people across Ukraine

AFP  
Kyiv

Russia pummelled Ukraine with hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles yesterday, killing at least 23 people and reducing buildings to rubble, officials and AFP reporters said.

Authorities in the Ukrainian capital had warned that Russia was preparing the latest in a string of massive deadly strikes that have escalated the four-year-old war and dimmed slim hopes for peace.

The Ukrainian air force said Russia launched 73 missiles and 656 drones through the night into yesterday morning, adding that 54 drones and 33 missiles had penetrated its multi-layered air defence system.

Sixteen of those killed were in the southeastern city of Dnipro, where a four-storey apartment building collapsed, officials announced. Two children were among the dead, and 42 people were wounded.

Seven people were killed in Kyiv, where around 50 people were also wounded, according to the capital's mayor, Vitali Klitschko.

AFP journalists in the capital heard air raid sirens well before a series of loud explosions that lasted through the night into early yesterday sent residents with bags and blankets rushing to shelter in crowded metro stations.

Anastasia, whose residential building was damaged in the attack, said she spent a "loud" and "terrifying" night huddled in her bathroom.

"All the windows were blown out completely; there are no windows at all. It wasn't just one explosion here all night. The night here was just a nightmare," she told AFP.

"It was a brutal strike," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his address yesterday, warning that Russia may follow up that



Employees walk into a building of a private medical clinic damaged during Russian missile and drone strikes in Kyiv yesterday. (Reuters)

same night with another assault from the skies.

"Unfortunately, the current level of supplies for our air defence does not allow us to shoot down a significant share of the missiles," he said, giving a toll of 130 wounded overall in yesterday's blitz.

"We are preparing additional measures for our counteraction," Zelensky said.

The Ukrainian leader used the attack to make a new appeal for military support from the United States and from Europe.

"All partners together, everyone in Europe, must continue working so that there are (we obtain) missiles for our air defence," he said.

The French foreign ministry denounced Moscow's "utter contempt" for peace efforts while the United Nations said Moscow's "inflammatory rhetoric and escalation of attacks should stop".

Moscow has bombarded Ukraine almost daily since launching its invasion in February 2022, a war that

It denies that its forces target civilians. Kyiv's metro service said more than 40,000 residents had sheltered in various underground stations throughout the assault – the highest number in years.

A maternity hospital with newborns and women in labour was struck in the southern port city of Odesa, authorities said, adding there were no casualties.

AFP journalists saw explosions and huge plumes of smoke billowing across Kyiv's skyline at dawn yesterday, while rescue workers cleared debris beneath residential buildings gutted in the attack.

Fifteen people, including a child, were wounded in the eastern city of Kharkiv that lies near the Russian border, according to the mayor, Igor Terekhov.

The intense strikes have dulled already distant peace prospects, particularly with the White House distracted by fighting with Iran.

But Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko told reporters in the Estonian capital of Tallinn that Kyiv was still hoping for a long-awaited visit from US envoys to her country to restart negotiations.

Ukraine also struck targets in Russia. One person was killed in the Kursk region, near the Ukrainian border, regional governor Alexander Khinshtein said.

And a drone sparked a fire at an oil refinery in the southwestern city of Krasnodar, its authorities said on Telegram.

An earlier warning by Moscow to foreigners, including diplomats, to leave Kyiv had sparked an outcry including at the United Nations.

Despite the uptick in Russian long-range strikes, Moscow's forces have been struggling to make meaningful gains across the front line. Last month, Ukraine recaptured more territory than it lost to Russian forces for the second straight month, according to an AFP analysis of data from the Institute for the Study of War.

**Zelensky says US air defence 'absolutely necessary'**

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday called on Europe to develop its own air defence systems and urged more support from Washington after Russia's latest deadly drone and missile barrage.

"Europe needs its own anti-ballistic defence so that this war can finally be brought to an end. And assistance from the US in supplying missiles for Patriot systems is absolutely necessary," Zelensky wrote on social media. (AFP)

# Danish PM unveils plans for welfare push

Reuters  
Copenhagen

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's new centre-left government will resist US pressure over the future of Greenland, tackle domestic inflation and expand the welfare state, according to a policy document published yesterday.

After more than two months of negotiations, Frederiksen, 48, on Monday announced an agreement to form her third consecutive government, which could make her Denmark's longest-serving prime minister since World War Two.

The immediate to-do list includes ongoing diplomatic talks over Greenland, which US President Donald Trump has threatened to annex, and a rapid build-up of Denmark's military as security in Europe deteriorates amid Russia's war in Ukraine.

"The government will stand firm on the kingdom's sovereignty, territorial integrity and right to self-determination," the policy document said.

The future of the Kingdom of Denmark, consisting of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and mainland Denmark, is up to the three nations to decide for themselves, the government said, adding that it remained unwavering in its support for Ukraine.

Frederiksen, ahead of the policy



Leader of the Social Democrats and acting Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen speaks during a press conference at Marienborg in Kongens Lyngby, Denmark yesterday. (Reuters)

presentation, also met with the two Greenlandic members of parliament who said they backed the government.

In addition to Frederiksen's Social Democrats, the new government will consist of the Social Liberals, the Left Greens and the centrist Moderates, relying primarily on the far-left Red-Green Alliance for a parliamentary majority, though it can also seek backing from other parties on individual votes.

To secure support, the incoming government agreed to free dental care for Danes within 10 years, free public transport for everyone under the age of 22 and zero value-

added tax (VAT) on fruit and vegetables, according to the Red-Green Alliance.

The plan addresses a cost-of-living crisis which has haunted Frederiksen throughout the election campaign, where the Social Democrats suffered their worst result in over a century.

The proposals did not include a wealth tax, which Frederiksen had proposed during the election.

"It's pretty crazy to do a hat-trick as prime minister... There must be some left-wing heads of government in Europe looking at this and thinking, maybe we should listen to her about how to negotiate and do par-

liamentary work," said Andreas Thyrring, partner at Ulveman & Borsting, a public affairs advisory firm.

Frederiksen told a press conference later yesterday that her new government would press on with her previous cabinet's work towards allowing the deportation of more foreign national offenders, and would continue working to establish deportation centres outside Europe.

Denmark's approach to immigration – one of the toughest in Europe – has been criticised by some rights groups but is also closely watched by other governments in the region.

## Future presence of US troops in Lithuania is 'under review': Minister

Reuters  
Vilnius

The future presence of US troops in Lithuania is "under review", the Baltic country's defence minister said yesterday, adding that although Washington had assured him new rotations would arrive, he did not know when and at what strength. The US is withdrawing thousands of troops based in Germany and Poland as the rift between the administration of President Donald Trump and its Nato allies and partners in Europe over the Iran war widens.

In Lithuania, US troops presently stationed in the country are now leaving as expected, but the next scheduled group is not arriving, Defence Minister Robertas Kaunas said.

"(The next) rotation is currently under review... because the number of (US troops) in Europe is changing, this naturally leads to a review of regional stance," Kaunas told reporters in Vilnius. The move would leave Lithuania without an armored US battalion of about 1,000 troops on its soil for the first time since 2020.

The minister said he had dis-

cussed the situation with US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth at the Shangri-La Dialogue conference in Singapore last week.

"We have assurance that (the next rotation in Lithuania) will arrive, but when exactly, and with which capabilities, and at what size – this is due to be announced," said Kaunas.

"We were reassured that the Baltic region is of critical importance to Nato and the US, they see our investment, and our defence spending is shown as an example to other allies", Kaunas added.

Lithuania, which borders Russia, has tripled its defence spending since 2022, and is due to spend 5.4% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on defence this year.

The current US rotation, which arrived in October 2025, consists of two battalions of Texas-based 1st Cavalry Division, with Abrams tanks, Bradley armored vehicles and Paladin tracked self-propelled howitzers, the Lithuanian defence ministry said.

The troops were the first to be based at the new permanent facilities which Lithuania built for them at Pabrade military base, close to the Belarus border.

## FT reports US in talks to expand nuclear weapons deployments in Europe

The US is discussing whether to deploy nuclear weapons in additional European Nato states, the Financial Times reported yesterday. US officials have signaled openness to additional deployments beyond the existing six countries hosting nuclear-capable bombers, the FT said, citing three people briefed on the discussions.

The move would involve more countries to host so-called US dual-capable aircraft (DCA), which are able to deliver nuclear strikes, the newspaper said, while cautioning that an agreement to expand US nuclear hosting was not imminent.

Countries on Nato's eastern flank including Poland and some

Baltic states were interested in potentially hosting DCA bases, the report said, adding that discussions were ongoing in Nato channels.

The White House, Department of Defence and Nato did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Pentagon policy chief Elbridge Colby has previously said publicly that the US will continue to use its nuclear weapons to protect Nato members, even as European allies take the lead on conventional forces.

US President Donald Trump and many of his aides have criticised European allies for not spending enough on their militaries and relying on the US for defence. (Reuters)

## German arms maker Rheinmetall signs €5.7bn deal with Romania

German defence giant Rheinmetall said Tuesday it has signed a €5.7bn (\$6.6bn) deal to supply the Romanian armed forces, in the company's biggest international contract in recent times.

Air defence systems, almost 300 combat vehicles, naval vessels and ammunition are to be sold to the Nato member on the alliance's eastern flank, Rheinmetall said in a statement.

The news came days after a drone smashed into an apartment building in Romania, which borders war-torn Ukraine, triggering furious condemnation from Nato allies.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said there was no evidence to blame his country. Rheinmetall CEO Armin Papperger hailed yesterday's deal as a "significant success".

"Together with our Romanian partners, we will establish a far-reaching defence ecosystem here," he said.

"This also confirms our ambition to further expand our role as one of the industrial pillars of European security."

Deliveries of the new systems are set to begin in 2028 and be completed by 2030, Rheinmetall said.

**The deal falls under the European Union's SAFE (Security Action for Europe) lending initiative created to provide EU countries with loans at lower rates to help them rearm.**

A significant proportion of the armaments will be produced in Romania, and thousands of jobs are set to be created, the Duesseldorf-based group said.

The deal falls under the European Union's SAFE (Security Action for Europe) lending initiative created to provide EU countries with loans at lower rates to help them rearm.

European countries have been racing to bolster their militaries since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and Rheinmetall has been a major beneficiary of the rearmament. (AFP)



## Paediatric expert issues summer warning on child water safety risks

By Joey Aguilar  
Doha

A leading paediatric expert has called on parents and caregivers to remain vigilant around water as children spend more time at beaches, swimming pools and water parks during the summer holidays.

Prof Mohamed A Hendaus, head of Paediatrics and Neonatology at The View Hospital and Professor of Clinical Paediatrics at Qatar University, told 'Gulf Times' that while water activities offer children opportunities for recreation and exercise, they also present risks if proper safety measures are not observed.

"Water-related accidents can happen quickly, often silently and

in surprisingly shallow water. The key to prevention is not relying on a single safety measure but adopting multiple layers of protection," he said.

According to Prof Hendaus, children face a range of risks when swimming or playing near water, including drowning, near-drowning incidents that can lead to serious brain injuries, slips and falls, diving-related injuries, dehydration, heat exhaustion, sunburn and water-borne infections. Beach environments can also expose children to strong currents, waves, sudden changes in depth and reduced visibility.

To help reduce these risks, he advises parents to maintain constant supervision whenever children are near water. Young children should remain within arm's reach of a re-

sponsible adult at all times.

Prof Hendaus also recommends enrolling children in age-appropriate swimming lessons to help develop water confidence and safety awareness. However, he stressed that swimming ability alone does not eliminate the risk of drowning.

"Many parents assume that if a child can swim, they are safe. This is a dangerous misconception," he said. "Even experienced swimmers can become tired, panic or encounter unexpected conditions in the water."

For families with home swimming pools, Prof Hendaus highlighted the importance of installing four-sided fencing with self-closing and self-latching gates. When boating or spending time in open water, children should wear prop-

erly fitted, approved life jackets.

Inflatable toys and floatation devices should never be considered substitutes for life jackets or adult supervision.

In addition to water safety, Prof Hendaus encouraged families to protect children from the effects of extreme summer temperatures. He advised scheduling outdoor and water-based activities during cooler periods of the day, ensuring children drink water regularly, wearing lightweight clothing and sun protection, and taking frequent breaks in shaded or air-conditioned areas.

Parents should also remain alert to signs of heat-related illness, including dizziness, fatigue, headaches, nausea and irritability. Apart from physical safety, Prof Hendaus noted that a support-

ive and reassuring approach helps children enjoy water activities more confidently.

"Children benefit when parents remain calm, attentive and encouraging. Avoid forcing children into the water before they feel comfortable. Teach safety rules in a positive way and create enjoyable, supervised experiences that build confidence," he said. He recommended designating a dedicated "water watcher" whenever children are swimming or playing near water. This adult should focus solely on supervising the children without distractions from mobile phones, conversations or other activities.

"Many drowning incidents occur because adults mistakenly assume someone else is watching. Direct, uninterrupted supervision



Prof Mohamed A Hendaus

remains the most effective way to protect children around water," Prof Hendaus added.

## Qatari designs hit the ramp in North America

Three emerging Qatari and Qatar-based designers made their North American runway debut at Fashion Art Toronto last week, presenting original collections to international audiences as part of the Qatar-Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture.

Representing Doha's innovation and entrepreneurship hub M7, the designers unveiled their collections during one of Canada's leading platforms for independent fashion and contemporary art. The showcase formed part of a wider programme of buyer meetings, networking events and market visits designed to connect Qatar's growing creative sector with North American industry leaders.

The initiative reflects the growing role of creative industries in strengthening cultural and economic ties between Qatar and Canada. Founded in 2005, Fashion Art Toronto has built a reputation for championing emerging talent, artistic innovation and inclusive design, making it an ideal platform for introducing a new generation of Gulf-based designers to international audiences.

"For Qatar, Canada is a particularly important partner because it understands something essential about modern identity," said Qatari ambassador to Canada Tariq Ali Faraj al-Ansari. "As multicultural societies shaped by global communities, both Canada and Qatar understand that identity is strengthened through exchange. Both countries also recognise the growing role that culture and creative industries play in economic development, innovation and international engagement. That is the spirit of the Years of Culture partnership between our two countries."

At the centre of the delegation was M7, Qatar Museums' creative hub dedicated to supporting entrepreneurs, designers and innovators working across fashion, design and technology. Through mentorship,

### Qatar's emerging talent makes runway debut at Fashion Art Toronto

business development programmes and international opportunities, M7 has become a key platform for nurturing creative talent and expanding access to global markets.

"M7 exists to help creative talent move from local promise to international opportunity," said Stefano Merenda, who led the delegation alongside Moza Jassim al-Sharim. "For many of the designers participating in this showcase, M7 has played a role in helping them refine their creative vision, strengthen their businesses and build the confidence to present their work on a global stage. Their participation in Toronto demonstrates both the strength of Qatar's emerging fashion ecosystem and the growing international appetite for new perspectives from the region."

The participating designers presented collections reflecting diverse cultural influences, contemporary craftsmanship and distinctive creative identities.

Noof al-Mulla, founder of LIN, presented Her Aura, a collection defined by fluid silhouettes, natural fabrics and understated elegance. Crafted in linen and silk, the collection explored movement, lightness and quiet confidence through refined minimalist design.

Designer Samah Sulyman unveiled Jeu Due Denim: In Play, a sustainability-focused collection that reimagines denim through reconstruction and experimentation. Featuring hand-cut layers, raw edges and sculptural forms, the collection transforms a familiar material into bold contemporary statements.

Rayan Alami, founder of Authentic Roz, debuted Third Space, a collection inspired by his Moroccan and Brazilian heritage and his experience growing up in Qatar. Blend-



ing cultural references, textures and colour palettes with contemporary tailoring, the collection explores identity through the lens of multiple worlds and influences.

Beyond the runway, the delegation participated in industry meetings and retail visits to deepen their understanding of

consumer trends, market opportunities, and Canada's broader fashion ecosystem. Representatives from M7-incubated accessories brand Tash & Ley also joined the programme. Known for their silk accessories inspired by regional symbolism, personal narratives and Middle Eastern visual

culture, the brand showcased a contemporary design approach rooted in storytelling, craftsmanship and artistic expression.

The Toronto showcase forms part of a broader programme of cultural and creative exchanges taking place throughout the Qatar-Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture, which seeks to strengthen connections between communities, institutions and creative industries while creating new opportunities for collaboration, innovation and mutual understanding.

## Visitors laud Qatar's family-friendly appeal

By Shaima Sherif  
Staff Reporter

While summer temperatures continue to rise across the region, visitors and residents say Qatar's growing range of family-friendly attractions, safe environment and welcoming atmosphere are making it an increasingly attractive destination during the warmer months.

Interviews conducted at Meryal Waterpark on Qetaifa Island North revealed that families from abroad and expatriates living in Qatar are finding plenty of reasons to enjoy the season, from water-based attractions and cultural experiences to the country's renowned hospitality.

Turkish visitor Ercan Sahin, who has been in Qatar for five days with his family, admitted that he initially had concerns about travelling during the summer.

"We thought that it's going to be hot. Yeah, it's still hot, but there are lots of fantastic options for the kids and families," he said.

Sahin described his stay as a "fantastic five days" highlighting not only the attractions but also the warmth shown by local residents. "We have made a good friendship with Qataris," he said. "Some of them bought a toy for my kid. They heard we were coming from Istanbul and just wanted to buy a small toy for our girls. That was an interesting experience for us."

Among the places he visited were Souq Waqif and West Bay,



Murat and Mehmet

but Meryal Waterpark stood out as his family's favourite attraction. "We have kids, so that's our first choice," he added. Fellow visitor Murat, also from Istanbul, echoed similar sentiments after spend-

ing nearly a week in Qatar with his family.

Although he acknowledged that the weather was challenging for young children, he said the country offered an environment that suited



Dechen Wangmo

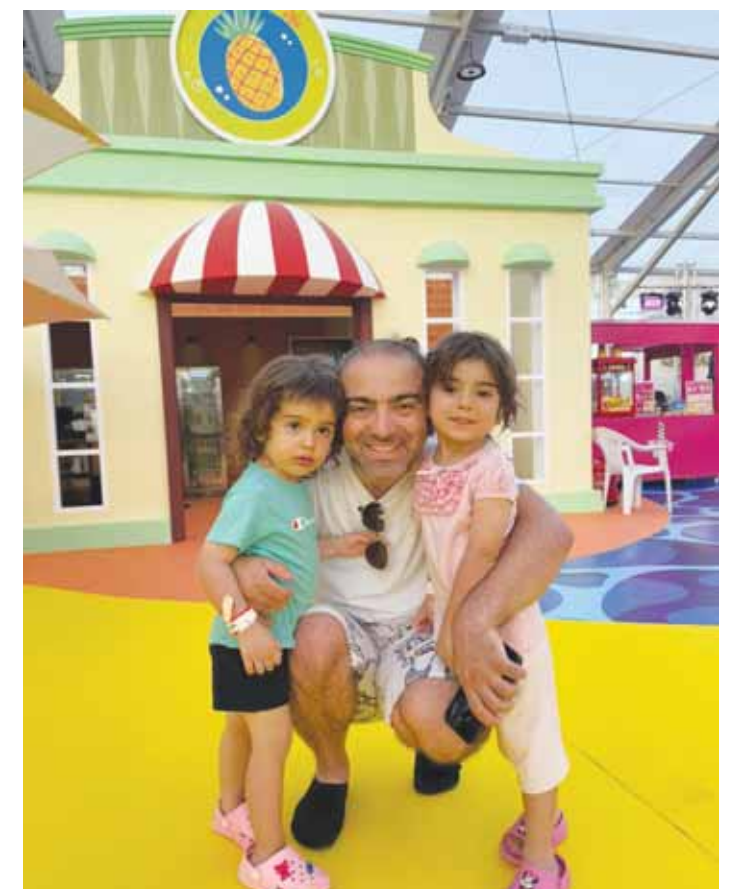
**"The summer here can be quite hot and humid But we have a water park near Lusail, so it's very nice in this weather"**

his family's lifestyle and values.

"We enjoyed Qatar and we like spending holidays in a Muslim country," he said, adding that the country's cultural familiarity also enhanced the experience.

"We visited the old bazaar and liked it because the culture is very similar to Turkey," he said.

His travelling companion, Mehmet, summed up his impressions, saying: "Qatar is better than I expected. I will come to visit again in the future."



Ercan Sahin and his daughters.

Long-term residents also point to Qatar's quality of life during the summer months. Dechen, an expatriate from Bhutan who has lived in Doha for more than two years, said residents have adapted to the season by embracing indoor and evening activities.

"The summer here can be quite hot and humid," she said. "But we have a water park near Lusail, so it's very nice in this weather." She also highlighted one of Qatar's

strongest attributes. "Qatar, I feel like it's the safest country," Dechen said. "I feel safe here."

As Qatar continues to expand its summer entertainment calendar with attractions such as Meryal Waterpark and family-focused activities, visitor and resident experiences suggest that the country is successfully positioning itself as a destination where families can continue to enjoy memorable experiences year-round.