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SCAN TO SHOP

Qatar draws record wave of foreign investors

Reforms, digital services draw global investors

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar's economy continues to reinforce its standing among the world's most competitive and investment-friendly markets, supported by strong economic fundamentals, ambitious reform programs, and a rapidly evolving business environment that is attracting growing levels of domestic and international investment.

Recent data indicate that the country's efforts to diversify its economy and encourage private-sector growth are yielding tangible results. During the first quarter of this year, approximately 3,295 new companies were established

with full foreign ownership across a wide range of economic sectors. The figure represents a remarkable 66% increase compared to the corresponding period last year, highlighting the growing confidence of international investors in Qatar's economic prospects and regulatory framework.

The sharp rise in fully foreign-owned businesses reflects the success of Qatar's long-term strategy to position itself as a regional and global destination for investment. The growth has been driven by a series of structural reforms and legislative measures introduced by the government to enhance competitiveness, simplify market entry, and create a more attractive business climate for investors.

Among the most significant reforms has been the modernization of investment regulations and the expansion of digital government services. Authorities have streamlined procedures for estab-

lishing businesses, obtaining licenses, and accessing government services through advanced digital platforms, significantly reducing administrative burdens and accelerating the process of launching new commercial ventures.

The development of the Single Window platform has also played a crucial role in improving the investment ecosystem. The integrated system provides investors with access to a comprehensive range of government services through a unified digital portal, enabling faster approvals, greater transparency, and more efficient interactions with regulatory authorities.

Qatar's appeal to investors is further strengthened by its world-class infrastructure and logistics network. Over the past decade, the country has invested heavily in transport, ports, airports, industrial zones, telecommunications, and smart infrastructure projects. **To Page 2**



66% RISE IN FOREIGN-OWNED FIRMS
3,295 new companies with full foreign ownership were established in the first quarter.



STREAMLINED 'SINGLE WINDOW' BUSINESS SETUP

Digital platforms have modernised licensing and reduced administrative burdens for international investors.



OVER \$600 BILLION IN ASSETS

The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) ranks among the world's largest sovereign wealth funds.



FUTURE-READY INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOGISTICS

Massive investments in transport and smart technology support the Qatar National Vision 2030.

GT GRAPHICS

Qatar slams Iranian attacks, Israeli use of force in Lebanon

Qatar has strongly condemned repeated Iranian attacks on Kuwait and Bahrain, considering them a blatant violation of the sovereignty of both countries and a flagrant breach of international law. In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the need to spare the region the repercussions of these unjustified attacks and to work towards de-escalation in order to restore regional and international security and stability. The ministry reiterated Qatar's full solidarity with Kuwait and Bahrain and its support for all measures they take to preserve their sovereignty and security. Qatar also slammed Israeli attack that targeted a Lebanese army patrol on the Khardali-Nabatieh road, resulting in the death of two officers and a soldier. It considered the attack a dangerous escalation and a blatant violation of the sovereignty of the sisterly Republic of Lebanon, as well as a clear breach of international law. In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs called on the international community to assume its responsibilities by compelling the Israeli occupation authorities to cease their repeated attacks on Lebanon, to respect international conventions and laws, and to fully implement UN Security Council Resolution 1701. The ministry reiterated Qatar's firm stance towards Lebanon, its unity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity, and its full support for all efforts that enhance its stability and prosperity. It also expressed its condolences to the families of the victims and to the government and people of Lebanon. **(QNA)**

US strikes Iranian sites after it targets Bahrain, Kuwait

Reuters
Dubai/Washington

US forces struck Iranian coastal radar sites yesterday after shooting down drones launched by Iran toward the Strait of Hormuz, the US military said, in the latest escalation complicating efforts to end the war between the two countries.

The US military believed the four Iranian drones were targeting regional maritime traffic, a US official told Reuters. US Central Command said on X that the US then struck Iran's surveillance sites in Goruk and Qeshm Island, both on the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran's foreign ministry said the US action broke an April 8 ceasefire, adding that such repeated violations showed Washington had no intention of reducing tensions. It warned that the United States would bear responsibility for the consequences of its "illegal actions".

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had attacked US bases in Kuwait and Bahrain in retaliation for US strikes and fired at four tankers trying to cross the strait without its permission.

Kuwait's army said yesterday it engaged seven ballistic missiles that passed over residential areas, resulting in material damage but no casualties. In Bahrain, sirens sounded and residents were urged to seek shelter.

Kuwait and Bahrain condemned the strikes. Iran later said it had hit US bases in both countries with ballistic missiles, but the U. military said six missiles were intercepted and a seventh did not reach its target.

Iranian state media reported that Mohsin Naqvi, the interior minister of Pakistan, which has been mediating an end to the conflict, arrived in Tehran yesterday for talks with Iranian officials including Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi.

A Pakistani source said Naqvi would carry a message from Pakistan to the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei.

US President Donald Trump is facing mounting domestic political pressure due to rising gas prices to bring the unpopular war to an end. He told NBC that while most of Iran's drone and missile manufacturing facilities had been destroyed, the Iranians still had access to about a fifth of their missiles.

"They have some missiles, they have some drones. I would say percentage wise, maybe 21%-22% of their missiles. It's a lot of missiles, but it's not what it was when we first attacked," Trump told NBC News' *Meet the Press* program, according to excerpts released by the network on Friday.

Lebanon under attack



Smoke billows from southern Lebanon following an Israeli strike as seen from Nabatieh, Lebanon, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

Mada Edge strategy to drive accessibility innovation

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

An ambitious three-year strategy by Mada - the Assistive Technology Centre aims to transform the lives of persons with disabilities and the elderly through innovation, research, education, employment and community engagement, *Gulf Times* has learnt.

The strategy, named 'Mada Edge', places a strong emphasis on developing innovative solutions, said Dr Achraf Othman, director of the Research, Development and Innovation Programme at Mada.

"Mada Edge is the research core unit at Mada Centre. It leads Arabic language processing research projects that support the innovation ecosystem of the Mada Innovation Programme," Othman said. "It is designed to address challenges faced by persons with disabilities and the elderly by fostering innovation and research that can improve accessibility and quality of life."

He said the strategy analyses and evaluates technology limitations to develop localised assistive technology and digital accessibility solutions in Arabic through a focused approach.

"Mada Edge drives the research, experimentation and partnerships programme, which is built to generate knowledge and data in Arabic. It locates gaps in the community's evidence base and shares that knowledge with the sector so



Dr Achraf Othman. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

we can be more effective," he explained.

Othman noted that a key component of the ecosystem is the third edition of the Mada Innovation Award, an international competition that offers grants to innovators developing assistive technologies and accessibility solutions. The award is open to participants worldwide.

Mada identifies real-world challenges for persons with disabilities through focus groups and turns them into practical use cases shared globally to spur innovation, he said.

While exact figures were unavailable, Othman estimated that a small share of Qatar's population consists of persons with disabilities, many of whom require assistive technologies. He noted that existing technologies do not yet meet all needs, underlining the importance of continued innovation. **To Page 2**

Qatar Reading and Culture Day proposal gains momentum

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

As Qatar continues its remarkable cultural and educational transformation, a new proposal is seeking to place reading and intellectual development at the heart of national life. In an exclusive interview with *Gulf Times*, author and consultant in therapeutic and community nutrition Moudhi al-Hajri unveiled an ambitious idea: the establishment of a National Day for Reading and Culture, modeled after Qatar's successful National Sports Day. The proposal comes alongside the launch of Al-Hajri's latest book, "National Proposals, a publication

The proposed national day would encourage reading across all age groups and platforms, from traditional books and newspapers to educational digital content

dedicated to encouraging civic engagement and constructive dialogue on issues of national importance. Speaking about the book's objectives, Al-Hajri explained that the publication aims to foster greater community participation and inspire practical solutions to societal challenges. "This publication aims to promote a culture of community participation and open a dialogue on several national issues through constructive proposals designed to support development and reform initiatives, in line with the state's

vision and the aspirations of society." She emphasised that the book is not merely a collection of theoretical ideas but an invitation to collective action and national responsibility. Reflecting on Qatar's growing achievements in education, culture and human development, Al-Hajri believes the time has come for a dedicated national celebration of knowledge and learning. "I propose designating a National Day for Reading and Culture as an official holiday, similar to the National Sports Day. This aims to consolidate a culture

of reading, research, and learning within society, and to encourage all members of the community to develop their minds and intellectual and cultural skills." According to Al-Hajri, Qatar's pioneering National Sports Day has become an internationally recognised model promoting physical well-being. She argues that intellectual well-being deserves similar recognition. "Qatar distinguished itself by launching its National Sports Day, which has become a global model reflecting the importance of sports and physical activity for human health. Today, we also need a day dedicated to 'mind sports,' because reading and culture are the foundation of thought, creativity, and progress. As the saying goes, 'a sound mind in a sound body.'" **To Page 3**





Qatar participates in GCC ministers of labour meeting in Geneva



Qatar took part yesterday in the 64th Co-ordination Meeting of the Ministers of Labour of the GCC Member States as part of consultation and coordination on matters laid out for the international meetings relevant to the labour sector. HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Samikh al-Marri represented of Qatar at the meeting. Convened on the sidelines of the 114th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva, the meeting went over the items on the agenda for the current session. The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) ministers debated aspects of mutual co-operation, as well as avenues for advancing this co-operation during the upcoming phase. - **QNA**

QRCS's Eid al-Adha campaign reaches 247,344 beneficiaries

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), through its Eid al-Adha Sacrifice Campaign 1447 AH, reached 247,344 beneficiaries in Qatar and 13 nations across Asia and Africa: Palestine/Gaza, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Niger, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Uganda, The Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau.

In a statement issued yesterday, the QRCS said that this year's campaign, launched under the slogan *Make Their Eid*, achieved its primary objective of enabling the religious observance to be performed within its prescribed time, while also bringing joy and happiness to needy, underprivileged, displaced, and refugee families during the blessed days of Eid al-Adha in those countries.

The QRCS said that the project was marked this year by efficient organisation and swift implementation through the co-ordination of qualified field teams with trusted local partners.

This helped ensure that the sacrificial animals reached the intended communities, with slaughtering conducted in accordance with the requisite Sharia regulations, the statement reads, affirming that transportation and distribution operations were carried out in line with the highest standards of quality and safety to ensure timely delivery to beneficiaries.

The distribution of sacrificial meat was marked by the joy of beneficiary families, who received their allocations either at their homes or through designated distribution points, the statement shared.



QRCS managing board member and secretary-general Eng. Ibrahim bin Hashem al-Sada highlighted that the contributions of benefactors had a profound impact on bringing joy and relief to beneficiary families while reinforcing the values of humanitarian solidarity and social cohesion.

He noted that the campaign was implemented based on a well-organised plan and clear mechanisms that ensured the sacrifices reached eligible beneficiaries in the targeted areas.

Al-Sada said that the campaign was not confined to providing meat to beneficiary families; rather, it relayed a noble humanitarian message that helped mitigate the suffering of thousands of families afflicted by crises, conflicts, and disasters, while giving them a sense of care, support, and solidarity during the blessed Eid days.

He added that such initiatives embody the

values of compassion and solidarity encouraged by the teachings of Islam and contribute to strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities and supporting their ability to cope with livelihood challenges.

The official said that the QRCS will continue its humanitarian efforts to serve the most vulnerable communities, and called for sustained support for charitable and humanitarian campaigns that help improve the lives of beneficiaries and reinforce the spirit of giving and compassion across society.

The statement further noted that the QRCS implemented the 2026 sacrifice project through a humanitarian partnership with Al Meera Consumer Goods Company.

A total of 493 sacrifices were distributed to 619 families registered under community care programmes, benefiting almost 3,714 individuals.

The project was carried out during the third and fourth days of Eid al-Adha, the statement said, which emphasised that the multiplicity of distribution sites helped ensure easy access for beneficiaries within their residential areas.

The QRCS further affirmed that this initiative reflects its local-action approach, which serves as the primary driver of humanitarian response and emanates directly from its humanitarian mission and strategic vision aimed at strengthening community care, supporting priority groups, promoting a culture of social solidarity within Qatari society, and advancing effective partnerships with community institutions.

Amir congratulates King Carl on Sweden's National Day

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf on the occasion of his country's National Day. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of congratulations to King Carl XVI Gustaf. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson on the occasion. - **QNA**

Justice accessibility is the foundation of genuine security: NHRC official

The secretary-general of the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), Sultan bin Hassan al-Jamali (pictured), has said that true security is built on trust between individuals and state institutions, as well as confidence that justice is accessible to everyone without discrimination.

Speaking via videoconference at the annual meeting of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the Rule of Law and Human Rights, al-Jamali said that experience has shown that the safest and most stable societies are those in which people feel that their rights are protected in accordance with the principles of the rule of law, justice, and accountability.

He noted that when trust between individuals and institutions declines, vulnerabilities widen and the risks of tension, conflict, and social fragmentation increase.

Al-Jamali said the meeting comes at a time of rapidly accelerating political and economic transformations worldwide, amid growing challenges stemming from conflicts, humanitarian crises, and increasing societal polarisation.

"In light of these challenges, it is essential to ask a direct question: How can people feel safe in a world where crises are escalating and areas of tension are expanding?" he posed, emphasising the close relationship between security and human rights.

Al-Jamali said that individuals feel secure when they know that the law protects them, their dignity is safeguarded, their voices are heard, and they will



not be left alone if they are subjected to injustice.

"Through our work at the National Human Rights Committee, we see that true security is the outcome of trust between people and state institutions, and confidence that justice is available to all without discrimination," he said.

The NHRC secretary-general pointed out that one of the greatest challenges facing the world today is preventing crises before they occur.

He stressed that achieving this requires investment in people, education, justice, participation, and accountability, describing them as the most effective preventative tools and the foundations of sustainable stability.

Al-Jamali further emphasised that the significance of the meeting lies in its role in reinforcing the global message that the rule of law and human rights are intrinsically linked to security and development. - **QNA**

Putting people first: Qatar's commitment to awareness, wellbeing, transparency

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

From public health campaigns and worker protection to sporting events and emergency alerts, Qatar continues to place people's wellbeing at the centre of policy through awareness, transparency and proactive support.

Development is often measured through infrastructure, technology and economic growth.

Yet in Qatar, an equally important focus has emerged: ensuring that people remain informed, protected and supported in their daily lives.

Across multiple sectors, authorities have increasingly prioritised public awareness and transparency, recognising that access to timely information is essential to wellbeing and community resilience.

Whether through health advisories, safety campaigns, emergency notifications or public service announcements, communication has become a key tool in helping residents make informed decisions.

The approach is particularly visible during the summer months.

As temperatures rise, government entities intensify awareness campaigns focused on hydration, heat stress prevention and workplace safety.

The annual midday outdoor work ban, implemented by the Ministry of Labour, reflects a broader commitment to safeguarding workers during periods of extreme heat while reinforcing public awareness about health risks associated with summer conditions.

Healthcare awareness has similarly become a year-round priority.

Residents regularly receive guidance on healthy lifestyles, disease prevention and seasonal health concerns, helping to ensure that information reaches communities before challenges arise rather than after problems occur.

The same people-centred philosophy extends to sport and public events.

During major football tournaments and national sporting occasions, organisers have introduced measures designed to enhance comfort and safety for spectators.

From climate-controlled stadiums to free water distribution points and on-site medical services, such initiatives help ensure that residents and visitors can enjoy events safely, even during warmer periods.

Qatar's commitment to transparency has also been evident during regional developments and emergency situations.

Through official alerts, public statements and continuous updates, authorities have sought to provide accurate information and reduce uncertainty, reinforcing public trust through clear and timely communication.

Beyond individual initiatives, these efforts reflect a wider philosophy that places people at the heart of development.

Awareness campaigns on road safety, digital literacy, environmental responsibility and public health continue to encourage informed decision-making across society.

As Qatar advances towards its long-term national goals, its investment in public wellbeing remains clear.

By combining transparency, prevention and proactive communication, the country continues to demonstrate that development is not only about building infrastructure, but also about empowering people with the knowledge, confidence and support needed to thrive.

Qatar draws record wave of foreign investors

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These investments have enhanced connectivity and operational efficiency while supporting the country's broader economic diversification agenda under the Qatar National Vision 2030.

In addition to its advanced infrastructure, Qatar continues to benefit from strong macroeconomic stability, prudent fiscal management, and a resilient financial sector.

The country's substantial natural gas revenues, coupled with ongoing expansion of liquefied natural gas (LNG) production capacity, have provided a solid foundation for sustainable economic growth and long-term investment confidence.

At the international level, the Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) continues to strengthen its role as one of the world's leading sovereign wealth funds and a key driver of global investment activity.

With assets exceeding \$600bn, the QIA ranks among the largest sovereign wealth funds globally and is widely recognised for its long-term investment strategy and diversified portfolio.

According to the international sovereign wealth fund rankings, the QIA remains among the world's top sovereign investors, leveraging its financial strength to pursue opportunities across multiple sectors and geographies.

The fund has expanded its presence in strategic industries including healthcare, technology, artificial intelligence, logistics, retail, infrastructure, renewable energy, and premium real estate.

The authority's portfolio spans major international markets across North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, reflecting Qatar's commitment to generating sustainable returns while supporting innovation and future-oriented industries.

Recent investments have increasingly focused on emerging technologies, digital transformation, clean energy solutions, and high-growth sectors that are expected to shape the global economy in the coming years.

The continued influx of foreign-owned companies and the expanding global footprint of the QIA are clear indicators of Qatar's growing influence in international business and finance.

These developments underscore the country's ability to combine strong domestic economic performance with an increasingly prominent role in global investment markets.

Mada Edge strategy to drive accessibility innovation

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"We are now trying to organise a focus group to transform the digital experiences of people with disabilities," he said. "We are looking at different cases to develop new ideas and innovations for them. These groups will look into real-time issues and explore what kind of support can be provided for each case."

Othman said that Mada provides two types of support.

"The first is directly to the end users, who are people with disabilities," he said. "We provide direct support through assessments, free assistive technologies and specialised training programmes. We enable them to use assistive technology and try to empower their lives through technology."

"The second is mainly for innovators to develop their ideas through different kinds of support," Othman continued. "Mada helps them turn feasible ideas and concepts into fruitful innovations."

Among Mada's major achievements, he highlighted Qatar's ranking as the world's leading country in digital accessibility in 2020, according to the Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies, a United Nations-supported initiative.

Othman said that Mada plans to launch the "Mada Accelerator" programme, which will support award recipients beyond the funding stage by helping them implement their innovations, collaborate with partners and measure their impact within the community.

He revealed that the centre is advancing re-

search projects under the new strategy.

"Under the research programme, we have four projects running currently," Othman said. "These include 'Jumla', focused on Qatari Sign Language processing, and the Flight Simulation Lab - the first flight simulator in Qatar for autistic children, preparing them for air travel before a real flight."

"We also have an artificial intelligence (AI)-enhanced upgrade of the Tawasil pictogram library to support non-verbal autistic individuals, and the development of AI-powered Unified Arabic Braille tools for people with visual impairments," he added. "These initiatives reflect Mada's commitment to ensuring that innovative technologies are accessible not only in Qatar but across the region and globally."



The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) will observe World Food Safety Day 2026 today (June 7).

The theme for this year is *From burden to solutions - safe food everywhere*.

The ministry's participation in this event reflects its ongoing commitment to advancing the food safety system in Qatar and to fostering collaboration with public and private sector stakeholders, as well as the broader community, to ensure food safety for all.

The MoPH has launched an awareness campaign focused on the fundamentals of food safety and hygiene, highlighting the importance of adhering to food safety standards.

The campaign aims to strengthen the national food safety system and to embed a culture of food safety.

The ministry is also organising a number of important awareness activities and events, most notably an event to discuss the key challenges associated with foodborne diseases, to shed light on the role of the food safety system in reducing them, and to enhance community awareness.

As part of the event, the MoPH will honour food establishments demonstrating outstanding performance under the Food Establishment Classification Programme.

This recognition acknowledged

es their voluntary commitment to food safety standards and aims to encourage other establishments to adopt best practices in food safety.

The ministry has also organised virtual training workshops for food handlers and a separate virtual workshop targeting healthcare sector workers.

These sessions emphasise the importance of their role in the effective response to, and investigation of, food poisoning cases.

To mark World Food Safety Day, the MoPH will illuminate its headquarters building in orange to signify its participation in this global occasion.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that approximately 600mn people globally experience illness each year due to the consumption of contaminated food.

In response, the MoPH's Food Safety Department maintains ongoing efforts in surveillance, monitoring, risk assessment, and management of food-related incidents.

These initiatives are designed to enhance the implementation of practical and sustainable food safety solutions within Qatar. - **QNA**



QC signs MoU with Bosnian ministry to assist returnees

Qatar Charity (QC) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation with Bosnia and Herzegovina's Ministry of Displaced Persons and Refugees to implement joint development projects aimed at supporting returnees and improving their living conditions.

The agreement was signed by Mohammed Washan, the director of the QC's Bosnia and Herzegovina branch, and Bosnia's Federal Minister of Displaced Persons and Refugees Nerin Dizdar, in the presence of Hassan Mohd al-Naemi, general supervisor of the QC's Bosnia and Herzegovina branch.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed Qatar Charity's ongoing activities in the country and discussed opportunities to strengthen cooperation.

This agreement reflects the QC's vision to expand its humanitarian and development work by meeting real needs, especially by supporting returnees and strengthening economic empowerment, helping achieve stability and sustainable return.

Al-Naemi highlighted the importance of the partnership in expanding Qatar Charity's hu-



manitarian and development work, reaffirming the organisation's commitment to ensuring effective implementation and maximising impact.

Washan emphasised that partnerships with government entities play a key role in improving the efficiency of project delivery and ensur-

ing assistance reaches those most in need.

Dizdar expressed appreciation for Qatar's continued support since 1994, noting that the MoU reflects a shared commitment to improving the conditions of returnees through projects in infrastructure, education, and economic empowerment.

Wifaq Centre launches 46th premarital counseling programme

The Wifaq Family Consulting Centre, a member of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, is launching the 46th edition of its premarital counseling programme in cooperation with the General Directorate of Endowments.

The programme will run from June 8-10 at the centre's headquarters in Lusail City.

The programme is part of the centre's efforts to empower young men and women to establish happy and stable married lives and enhance their family awareness through theoretical and practical premarital training.

The programme aims to equip participants with the knowledge, skills, and values to build a marital life based on understanding, affection, and compassion.

It also aims to strengthen their ability to deal with the various responsibilities and challenges they may face at the beginning of their married life, thus contributing to family stability and establishing a culture of positive partnership between spouses.

The new season includes three main themes covering the legal, psychological, and social aspects of married life.

These themes are presented

by Islamic scholars and experts in family and psychological relations.

The workshops address topics related to married life, most notably legal rights and obligations, understanding the differences between spouses, personality types, communication skills, and managing marital conflicts.

The premarital counseling programme is one of the centre's leading initiatives.

Over its previous seasons, it has had a positive impact on spreading a culture of family preparation and raising awareness of the importance of preparing for married life.

This culminated in the centre winning the Rawda Award for Excellence in Social Work in recognition of its contributions to supporting families and enhancing the quality of family life.

The centre called on young men and women who are about to get married and newly engaged to take the initiative to register via the electronic link available on the centre's official accounts on social media, to benefit from the programme, which is held under the message: "Because the beginning of a successful marriage starts with awareness and readiness." - **QNA**



WCM-Q students learn to interact with children

Students at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q) improved their physician-ship skills of observing, interacting and communicating with children through the annual Cornell Stars programme.

This year, the event was held virtually, offering students who entered the third year of the medical curriculum in Spring 2026 the chance to gain exposure to telemedicine and interact with infants, toddlers, and school-age children.

Held as part of the introduction to the clinical courses (Clerkships), the event is designed to orient students to their full-time clinical training in hospitals, where they complete clinical blocks and rotations in various specialties.

The aim is to equip medical students with tips on how to approach and examine paediatric patients during their clinical rotations.

Each year, healthy children of WCM-Q faculty and staff are invited to participate in the event.

Divided into groups, the students were supervised by paediatricians and family physicians from the WCM-Q, Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), and Sidra Medicine.

The physicians demonstrated how to engage children and their families, interact effectively with young patients, and keep them engaged throughout the encounter.

Altogether, 19 children participated in the event, along with 58 students and 10 physicians.

Attending paediatric consultants and family medicine physicians included Dr Manasik Hassan, Dr Shabina Khan, Dr Khalid Zahradin, D Suzan Nassar, and Dr Loai Elsaadany from the HMC, as well as Dr Saleha Abbasi from Sidra Medicine.

The paediatric fellow was Dr Doaa Mohamed and the paediatric residents were Dr Shaima'a al-Dabaibeh and Dr Soufiah Alshawagfeh, from Sidra Medicine.

WCM-Q faculty member Dr Stella Major, professor of family medicine teaching in medicine, also took part.

Dr Amal Khidir, associate professor of paediatrics at the WCM-Q and organiser of the Cornell Stars programme, said: "This event serves as an important orientation and exposure to children for students before they begin their full-time clinical training in hospitals."

Al Anaam Factory leads with 45% share of Eid sacrifice animals

Al Anaam Factory for Animal Production has reinforced its position as one of Qatar's leading strategic national facilities supporting the country's food security ecosystem, following its successful execution of nearly 6,500 sacrifice animals during Eid al-Adha this year.

According to official data released by the Ministry of Municipality, this accounted for a significant share of the 14,584 slaughtered animals inspected and processed under veterinary supervision across the country.

This achievement underscores Al Anaam Factory's leadership in the Qatar market, which comprises 14 licences issued by the ministry for

meat production projects nationwide.

With this record result, Al Anaam Factory accounted for approximately 45% of all slaughtered animals across Qatar's 12 abattoirs during the Eid season.

Shamlan Alavadhi, the executive manager of Wathnan Holding Group, the parent company of Al Anaam Factory, said that this achievement highlights the vital role of national investments in advancing self-sufficiency.

He noted that the factory is one of the private sector's flagship projects and operates without government subsidies, yet continues to fulfil its strategic role in supporting Qatar's

food security objectives with efficiency and responsibility.

Alavadhi added that this milestone builds on the factory's strong operational and commercial performance throughout April and May.

During this period, Al Anaam Factory successfully increased procurement and import volumes from regional and international markets, receiving a total of 35,240 head of livestock through land and sea logistics channels - 12,105 head in April and 23,135 head in May - ensuring sufficient supplies to meet seasonal demand for meat products during Eid al-Adha, including sheep, goats, cattle and camels.



Shamlan Alavadhi



Moudhi al-Hajri signing her book

Qatar Reading and Culture Day proposal gaining momentum

From Page 1

The proposed national day would encourage reading across all age groups and platforms, from traditional books and newspapers to educational digital content.

"The National Day for Reading and Culture aims to promote the habit of reading among children, youth, and adults, whether through reading books, newspapers, or magazines, or even by utilising purposeful digital and cultural platforms on social media," she said.

Al-Hajri envisions a nationwide effort involving both public and private institutions.

Activities could include book fairs, cultural festivals, educational workshops, and the establishment of physical and digital libraries.

Schools, businesses and families would all play a role in cultivating a lasting love of reading.

She also suggested introducing annual themes to inspire participation and reinforce the value of knowledge.

Among the proposed themes are *If you don't read a book, you will fall centuries behind* and *With*

knowledge we rise, and with reading we build the future.

Al-Hajri noted that Qatar has already established itself as a regional leader in education and research through its universities, research centers and academic achievements.

A National Day for Reading and Culture, she argues, would further strengthen the country's position as a hub for innovation, creativity and intellectual development.

"Reading not only opens doors to knowledge, but also equips individuals with new skills, teaches them different languages and cultures, and develops their thinking, analytical, and creative abilities, which positively impacts society as a whole and the future of generations to come," she said.

Al-Hajri expressed hope that Qatar will continue to lead by example in nurturing minds and advancing human development.

Her proposal reflects a broader vision of a society where intellectual growth is celebrated as enthusiastically as physical achievement, a vision that aligns closely with Qatar's long-term aspirations for a knowledge-based future.



Doha Festival City records rise in footfall in May, with strong performance during Eid al-Adha

Doha Festival City recorded a 15% year-on-year increase in footfall during May, with the three-day Eid al-Adha period achieving a further 15% year-on-year uplift.

The performance was supported by growth across the destination's offering, including recent openings such as YSL Beauty, Penhaligon's, Squat Wolf, Carter & White, and Blumint, alongside a robust pipeline of upcoming brands including Armani Perfumes, Tom Ford, Dan John, Peserico, and % Arabica.

The Eid programme also delivered strong family and community engagement, with more than 9,000 visitors taking part in

the Kids Activation Area between May 20 and June 2, enjoying activities such as Arabic calligraphy, storytelling, engaging live shows, henna art, face painting, colouring activities, and traditional games.

Doha Festival City further strengthened its community impact through initiatives including "Your Sacrifice, Their Eid" with the Qatar Red Crescent Society, which saw over 1,000 sheep soft toys sponsored within the first two days, and the return of the "Branches of Kindness" initiative in partnership with Qatar Charity.

Israeli strike kills three Lebanese soldiers

AFP/Reuters
Beirut

An Israeli air strike in southern Lebanon killed three soldiers, Beirut's military said yesterday as its chief travelled to Pakistan to meet with a key mediator in efforts to end the Middle East war.

Israel has launched an operation into Lebanon to root out the Tehran-backed group Hezbollah, which dragged Lebanon into the wider Middle East war by launching missiles on behalf of its sponsor.

The conflict has since killed thousands in Lebanon and displaced more than 1mn people.

A ceasefire meant to have gone into force in April was never observed, and a new conditional truce announced after Lebanese-Israeli talks in Washington this week was flatly rejected by Hezbollah hours later.

Lebanon has vowed that it will disarm Hezbollah over time, but has also denounced Israel's invasion, accusing it of employing scorched earth tactics to drive civilians out of southern towns and villages.



People inspect damage following Israeli bombardment on a building in the village of Saksakiyeh, southern Lebanon, yesterday. - AFP

In the latest incident, the Lebanese army said, two officers and a soldier were killed in a strike on a military vehicle on the road between Khardali and Nabatieh.

The Lebanese army has largely stayed out of hostilities between Hezbollah and

Israel and has not taken part in the fighting during the current conflict.

The Israeli military said the vehicle targeted was "moving suspiciously" in "an active combat zone" in an area it had ordered evacuated ahead of operations.

However, it insisted that it "operates against the Hezbollah (...) organisation, not against the Lebanese army", and added it was "reviewing the incident".

Hezbollah dubbed the attack a "heinous crime" and accused the Lebanese government of exposing its own country to bloodshed through its "complete surrender to the enemy's demands in Washington".

The truce deal announced this week would require Hezbollah to stop firing and withdraw from near the Israeli border, and would see Lebanon's army deploy to new "pilot zones" in the area where it will exercise exclusive control.

However, Hezbollah's chief rejected the agreement, demanding a full Israeli withdrawal.

The Lebanese army said yesterday that "the continuation of the deliberate and repeated brutal Israeli aggression... is aimed at thwarting all efforts to reach a solution".

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun also denounced the latest attack, calling it a "flagrant violation of Lebanese sovereignty... despite Lebanon's efforts in the Washington negotiations to put an end to the continued Israeli aggression that goes unchecked".

Prime Minister Nawaf Salam called it "a heinous crime and an attack on Lebanon and all Lebanese people".

On Friday both Aoun and Salam accused Iran of using Lebanon as a "bargaining chip" in talks to end the wider war, with Aoun telling Tehran to stop interfering in his country.

Iran insists Lebanon be included in any agreement with the United States to end the Middle East conflict.

On Saturday, Israel renewed evacuation orders for five villages in Lebanon's south and east, telling residents to move north of the Zaharani River.

Its military conducted several strikes across south Lebanon, according to Lebanese state media.

Hezbollah meanwhile said it had targeted Israeli troops in southern Lebanon, and an artillery position near Israel's side of the border.

Israel's extensive campaign of airstrikes and a ground invasion that have killed nearly 3,600 people, according to Lebanon's health ministry.

In his remarks to CNN aired on Friday, Aoun called Iran's treatment of Lebanon "unacceptable", adding: "The majority of the Lebanese people are fed up with war."

Nearly 500 confirmed cases in central Africa Ebola outbreak

AFP
Geneva

Nearly 500 Ebola cases have now been confirmed in the deadly outbreak raging in central Africa, a World Health Organisation (WHO) overview showed yesterday, amid mounting concern over the swelling scale of the epidemic.

In its daily update on the situation, the WHO tallied 452 confirmed cases, including 82 deaths, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), where the outbreak was declared three weeks ago.

In neighbouring Uganda, meanwhile, it counted 19 confirmed cases, including two deaths.

The total of 471 cases and 84 deaths, based on numbers reported by the DR Congo and Ugandan governments, marked a hike of 100 cases and 20 deaths from a day earlier.

The increase came amid warnings that the outbreak, which the WHO has declared an international public health emergency, could eventually swell to become the largest on record.

A top official at the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said on Friday that models indicated that without strong public health interventions, the current outbreak risked rivalling the scale of

the 2014 West Africa epidemic, which saw over 28,000 cases and more than 11,000 deaths.

"That scale is possible," said Jason Asher, director of CDC's Centre for Forecasting and Outbreak Analytics, during a press briefing.

Ebola, which is spread through close contact and bodily fluids, has killed more than 15,000 people in Africa over the past 50 years.

The current outbreak was declared on May 15 in northeastern DR Congo, but the virus is believed to have spread under the radar for some time beforehand.

There are no approved vaccines or treatments for the rare Bundibugyo species of Ebola behind the outbreak.

The WHO and the African CDC on Friday launched a \$518mn plan to battle the outbreak over the next six months, focusing among other things on boosting surveillance, laboratory testing and infection prevention.

"The outbreak is moving fast, and we are still playing catch-up," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters.

"We need to stop the outbreak where it is, support countries that are responding today, and ensure that neighbouring countries are ready to detect and act quickly if cases appear," he said. "This is a serious outbreak and its one we know how to stop but we need to move fast and together."



Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam (centre left) arrives to attend a ceremony at the Rene Mouawad Airport. - AFP

Lebanon launches rehabilitation of its second airport

Lebanon launched the rehabilitation of its second airport yesterday, in preparation for an opening within months, at a time when the country faces constant fighting between Hezbollah and Israel.

Lebanon currently has one international airport, in Beirut next to the capital's southern suburbs, a Hezbollah stronghold that has been subjected to heavy Israeli bombardment during successive wars.

The new airport, in the town of Qlayaat in Lebanon's northernmost province of Akkar, near the border with Syria, has been used as a military base by the Lebanese army for decades.

Lebanese Minister of Transport and Public Works Fayez Rasamny inaugurated the airport yesterday "after more than fifty years of promises, delays and waiting".



Men dressed in traditional attire pose next to an airplane at the Rene Mouawad Airport in the town of Qlayaat, in Lebanon's northernmost province of Akkar. - AFP

"Today we are moving from promise to execution," Rasamny said, adding that the goal is for the airport to be "operational in a few weeks" to serve travellers to Mersin, Istanbul and Dubai, adding there are plans to expand the destinations to Saudi Arabia, Cairo and Athens at a later stage.

Lebanon is also in contact with low-cost airlines, such as Ryanair and Pegasus, he said.

Rehabilitation is due to begin next week and will take at least three months, going through a pilot phase before the airport is put into full service in November 2026, according to local media.

The work is being carried out by the Lebanese company Sky Lounge, which posted yesterday on its Instagram page a video of a test flight between Beirut airport and Qlayaat airport.

In a speech during the opening ceremony, the company's chairman, Ziad Munla, said, the passenger terminal will be completed "within 90 days after completing the required approvals and licences".

The airport will be able to handle about 114,000 passengers in its first year, rising to more than 600,000 by its



A general view of the Rene Mouawad Airport in Qlayaat. - AFP

fourth year, the official said.

The opening of the airport aims to create jobs in Akkar, one of Lebanon's poorest governorates with a high unemployment rate.

Rene Mouawad Airport, named after a former Lebanese president who was elected in the 1980s, was built by the French army as an airstrip in the 1930s.

It was used for civilian purposes in the 1960s and was bombed by Israel during an earlier war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006.

Beirut airport has continued to operate despite the ongoing Israel-Hezbollah war that began on March 2, and during earlier wars in 2023 and 2024.

Lebanon has been forced to repeatedly pursue international guarantees that Israel will not target Beirut airport, which it has previously accused Hezbollah of using to transport money and weapons.

Lebanese authorities have repeatedly denied the Israeli allegations.

Nigeria orders anti-cholera measures

Police in Nigeria said they were enforcing sanitation measures in the state of Borno yesterday, where a cholera outbreak has killed dozens.

Some 39 people have died from the waterborne disease across Borno in recent weeks, with at least 4,204 infected, according to the latest figures from authorities.

The outbreak is concentrated in Borno capital Maiduguri and the surrounding Jere district, health authorities reported.

The state police commissioner "has directed the full enforcement of the monthly environmental sanitation exercise", the Borno State Police Command said in a statement late on Friday evening. - AFP

Dozens die of thirst in Sahara

Nearly 50 people died of thirst after a truck carrying them from Mali to Niger broke down in the Sahara desert, local authorities said.

The Nigerien nationals were returning home to their families when the truck carrying them got lost and later broke down in a remote area near the borders of Mali and Algeria, according to a statement published on Thursday by the governor of Niger's Agadez region.

"Stranded without water and unable to repair the vehicle... the travellers found themselves trapped in the middle of a hostile environment where extreme temperatures and the lack of supply points make survival extremely difficult," the statement said.

Two men walked dozens of kilometres to reach the nearest town and alert authorities about the incident.

The bodies of 49 people were found under the truck and in the surrounding area by responders who buried victims in mass graves on site.

The responders also provided assistance to another truck stranded for three days with more than 60 people on board after their car battery failed.

Young Nigeriens travel to Mali for work at artisanal mining sites despite risks from militant groups. - Reuters



QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY

INVITATION TO TENDER

QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-6000005522	On Site Inspection and Replacement of Journal Bearings for Electric MV/HV motors	500/- (Non-refundable)	Not Applicable	07.06.2026 08.06.2026 09.06.2026 10.06.2026	07.07.2026

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
 - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
 - IBAN : **QA51QNBAA000000000013025828058**
 - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to melarab@qafco.com.qa and purchase@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the submission of Tender Fee receipt, you may contact at 'purchase@qafco.com.qa' or on 44227797.
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- The Tender shall be strictly submitted using the QAFCO's Supply Chain Portal - SAP Ariba, on or before the "Tender Closing Date". Tenderers who fail to adhere to this requirement will result in the disqualification of their Tender.



Qatar Chemical Company Limited

Al Dafna - Anwal Tower - First Floor
P.O. 24646 Doha / Qatar - Tel. 44847111 - Fax 44847695
Website: www.qchem.com.qa

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDERS

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1.	QC/TC/MP/115/26	Inspection, Cleaning, Re-habilitation / Repair of Seawater Underground Piping System at Q-Chem	QAR 819,500/-	15:00 hrs. on 16 th August 2026
	Brief Scope: Contractor shall carry out Inspection, Cleaning, Re-habilitation / Repair of Seawater Underground Piping System at Q-Chem. The required work to be performed in 21 Days (24/7 basis) in February-March 2028.			
2.	QC/TC/FM/114/26	Office Cleaning Services for Q-Chem, Q-Chem II, RLOC and RLP	QAR 1,501,500/-	15:00 hrs. on 28 th July 2026
	Brief Scope: Bidders are invited to submit proposals for Daily Cleaning of Company's Office Premises at Q-Chem and Q-Chem II Plant in Mesaieed Industrial City, RLOC and RLP Plant in Ras Laffan Industrial City and Headquarter Office in Doha for (a) duration of three years + two years and (b) duration of five years.			

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

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

B. Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email
 Tender documents issuance from **7th June 2026 to 11th June 2026, 8am-12noon, 8am-12noon.**

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

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

Guinea leader's coalition wins majority in legislative poll

Political parties backing Guinea's coup-leader-turned-President Mamady Doumbouya have won a majority in the bauxite-rich West African country's legislative elections, the electoral authority said on Friday, tightening his grip on power.

The final distribution of Guinea's 147 legislative seats was still being determined, but the pro-Doumbouya Generation for Modernity and Development (GMD) coalition was strongly outperforming rivals, according to provisional data.

GMD and its allies had won at least 100 seats, the election results showed.

The outcome is set to further consolidate the position of Doumbouya, a former special forces commander who seized power in 2021 and won a seven-year term as president in December in a result contested by his opponents.

Nationwide voter turnout was 52.87% for the legislative contests and 58.51% for communal elections, a vote for local government bodies, which were held simultaneously last Sunday.

Aminata Toure, the country's top election official, said on Thursday that political parties had eight days to challenge individual results and that the relevant judicial bodies would adjudicate any disputes.

Final results will be announced after those disputes are resolved.

No major opposition parties were allowed to participate in last Sunday's vote.

The parties of former president Alpha Conde and opposition leaders Cellou Dalein Diallo and Sidiya Toure have been dissolved.

Diallo, who is in exile, in March called for "direct resistance" to Doumbouya after the government consolidated its position by dissolving those parties and 37 others.

A government decree at the time said the parties had failed to meet legal obligations such as filing financial statements. - Reuters

At least seven killed in Gaza attacks

Reuters/AFP
Cairo/Gaza City

An Israeli strike killed at least seven Palestinians, including two women, in Gaza yesterday, health officials said, as mediators restarted negotiations in Cairo with Hamas and other factions over safeguarding a strained ceasefire agreement.

Medics said seven people were killed and 15 others, including children, were wounded when an Israeli airstrike targeted a large tent encampment in the heart of Gaza City.

An Israeli military spokesperson told Reuters the military had carried out a strike targeting "terrorists", but provided no further details.

Muhannad Othman Farwana, 25, was killed in the morning in a strike on a tent, the civil defence said.

Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis said the man's body was brought in along with several wounded.

The Israeli strike had hit his tent on the roof of his house, just before he was due to get married later in the day, his cousin Mohammed Farwana said.

"The whole family was ready to celebrate his wedding. Now, we're attending his funeral instead of his marriage," he told AFP.

A ceasefire brokered by US President



A boy inspects the aftermath yesterday of Israeli bombardment in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. - AFP

Donald Trump has failed to halt Israeli attacks and left Israel in control of more than half the enclave after the war began with the events of October 7, 2023.

Indirect talks on a second phase of the deal - including Hamas disarmament and Israeli troop withdrawals - have stalled.

Israel and Hamas accuse each other of near-daily violations of the truce.

Yesterday Egypt began hosting a new round of truce talks with leaders from Hamas and other Palestinian factions expected to last for a few days, Hamas and other sources close to the negotiation said.

Seven-month-old shooting victim buried

A seven-month-old Palestinian was laid to rest in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday, a day after he was shot dead and his parents were injured by the Israeli military near Hebron, according to family members who witnessed the shooting and the Palestinian health ministry.

Sam Fahd Abu Haikal, wrapped in a white shroud and a Palestinian flag, was buried in Hebron after funeral prayers were held at a nearby mosque.

The infant was killed on Friday while traveling with his family by car near the city of Hebron.

"What happened to us is not a matter of an apology. What happened is not that shots were fired by mistake and led to this tragedy," the child's father, Fahd, said

yesterday. "To say it happened by mistake, that 'I didn't know you were coming here', or that the bullet passed through by accident - no. There is no such thing as 'by mistake' in this case."

The Israeli military has said a single shot was fired after soldiers "perceived a vehicle accelerating toward them".

It has acknowledged that "uninvolved civilians" were injured and said that the incident was under review.

According to the child's grandmother, Firyal, the family had stopped their car after seeing Israeli soldiers in the Tel Rumeida area, south of Hebron.

Shots were fired, the grandmother said, with one bullet piercing the car, killing Abu Haikal and wounding his parents.

"Immediately after the presence of the occupation forces, a soldier holding his weapon opened fire on us. The bullets struck the car," Fahd said. "The soldier that shot at us was 10m away. The bullet penetrated the front windshield, went through my arm, and then struck my son in the head and my wife in the face."

The military has not identified the soldiers involved nor said if those soldiers were still carrying out their duties while the review into the shooting was underway.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967, and violence has sharply escalated in the Palestinian territory since the Gaza war began in 2023.

Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 1,080 Palestinians



Fahd Abu Haikal comforts his elder son Kinan after burying his seven-month-old baby Sam, in Hebron, in the occupied West Bank, yesterday. - AFP

- many of them militants, but also scores of civilians - in the West Bank since October 7, 2023, according to an AFP tally based on figures from the Palestinian health ministry.

In the same period, at least 44 Israelis, including soldiers and civilians, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or Israeli military operations, Israeli official figures show. - Reuters/AFP

Migrants flee to the mountains amid S Africa's xenophobic violence

By Esa Alexander
Reuters

Last Sunday Mozambican immigrant Lado Amido answered a knock at his door in the South African town of Kleinmond.

Outside, an angry crowd told him foreigners such as him had to leave.

They went door-to-door delivering the same message.

Amido fled and spent two nights in the mountains.

Now he is sheltering in a local town hall, like other immigrants from Malawi and Mozambique across South Africa's Western Cape province, forced to hide from anti-immigrant mobs in several coastal towns.

South Africa has seen a wave of anti-immigrant protests, which have sometimes

turned violent, in recent weeks.

Mozambique said five of its citizens were killed in xenophobic attacks in the town of Mossel Bay over the weekend.

Amido lives in Kleinmond, about 300km (186 miles) away.

"On the 31st, people came to my house, knocked on the door, and then took all my belongings," said the 49-year-old, who had been in South Africa since February looking for work.

In Kleinmond town hall he is with about 100 other immigrants, some of whom are hoping to join voluntary repatriation programmes set up by their governments.

Xenophobic attacks are a recurring problem in South Africa, where immigrants are often blamed for economic woes such as high unemployment and crime.

Despite the absence of any evidence for this claim, politicians from nearly all parties

have tended to lend it credence in an effort to score populist votes ahead of elections, such as the local polls coming up at year end.

"As we work to build a safer... and more prosperous society, we need to address the challenge of migration," President Cyril Ramaphosa told parliament on Tuesday, while also condemning recent xenophobic violence.

Grant Cohen, a ward councillor for Kleinmond, said that immigration authorities had visited the town in recent weeks to check restaurants and other businesses for undocumented workers.

However, many of the immigrants sheltering at the town hall are in the country legally, he told Reuters.

"We've got kids here at the moment who should be in school, who have been in school in Kleinmond... (but) now want to flee the country out of fear and intimidation," said

Cohen. "I don't believe that residents should take things into their own hands."

Michael Markson, a 31-year-old from Malawi, said that he spent one night sleeping in the mountains after fleeing from the informal settlement where he had lived for about a year.

"My landlord came telling me that I should evacuate because if they find us, they're going to kill us," he said.

The next day, one of his friends called his boss, who brought them food as they hid in the woods.

Markson said he was close enough to see a large crowd of protesters in town, some carrying knives and sticks.

Now he is waiting for assistance to travel home, which he can't afford.

"In our country there's no-good economy... (but) it's better than living in a community where your life is under threat."



A migrant child plays with her toy while sheltering in a hall with her family, following an escalation in anti-immigrant protests which heightened fears among foreign communities, in Kleinmond, South Africa. - Reuters

Palestinian fighters recount the battle for Beaufort Castle

By Imad Freij
AFP

When former Palestinian fighter Moin Taher heard the Israeli flag was once again flying over Lebanon's Beaufort castle, he cast his mind back more than 40 years, recalling its historic walls "blazing" under heavy shelling as his comrades fought to defend it.

Taher and Mohammed Qarout were both fighters for the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in south Lebanon when the last battle for the castle unfolded in June 1982, which ended with Israel taking over the strategic vantage point and killing all the defending fighters.

"It was on June 6. That day, the castle was subjected to uninterrupted Israeli artillery and air bombardment," Taher, 74, who now lives in Amman, told AFP. "I saw the castle, which had come under heavy fire, blazing under the intensity of the shelling."

Following the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, Israel displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians to Lebanon, where some organised into armed factions that launched operations against Israel from Lebanese territory.

In 1978, Israel invaded Lebanon for the first time in response to the attacks, and in 1982 it carried out a second invasion that eventually reached Beirut.

Taher commanded joint Lebanese-Palestinian forces during the 1978 war along Lebanon's border with Israel, and at Beaufort Castle in 1982.

He said he was in Beirut where his wife had just given birth to their daughter when the battle started, and reached the area by noon that day.



Destroyed buildings are pictured in the village of KfarKila in southern Lebanon, as seen from across the border in the Upper Galilee region of northern Israel, with the Crusader-period Beaufort Castle of Lebanon in the background. - AFP

"That morning, the fighters had managed to shoot down an Israeli warplane and capture its pilot."

He said he later attempted to reach the castle with another fighter to check on the men there, but their vehicle came under Israeli fire and he was wounded by shrapnel.

Inside the castle were about 30 fighters with the "Jarmaq Battalion", whose members hailed from the Palestinian Territories, Lebanon and Yemen, and fought under Fatah, the faction of historic Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat.

Taher said that Israeli airstrikes had largely destroyed the castle by 1981.

The fighters subsequently fortified it by digging trenches, bunkers, and a 150m tunnel within the fortress.

He said the castle became famous

because of the constant Israeli bombardment.

"Every day, a communique would announce that the enemy had shelled Beaufort Castle."

Qarout, 69, also fought in the PLO's ranks in southern Lebanon.

He later held positions within the Palestinian Authority in Jericho, where he now lives, and focuses on collecting documents and information about the history of Fatah, including the battle of Beaufort Castle.

Leafing through printed documents and photographs from that era, Qarout showed AFP images of the castle and its fighters.

One photograph features a long ladder which he explained he personally installed so fighters could access the

fortress after its entrance had been destroyed in 1981.

Another photograph shows a group of fighters in military uniforms atop the castle, waving their hands.

"The fighters held out in the castle for more than 60 hours until they were all martyred," Qarout recalled.

Both Qarout and Taher pointed to Beaufort's historic significance, having passed through the hands of many armies since its construction by the Crusaders, from Saladin to the Ottomans.

Its strategic importance lies in the fact that it overlooks northern Israel as well as the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, they said.

The goal of Israel's 1982 invasion was to force the PLO out of Lebanon.

The operation ultimately succeeded in expelling the organisation's leadership, headed by Arafat, from Lebanon after Israeli forces laid siege to the capital Beirut.

On May 31 Israeli forces recaptured Beaufort castle 26 years after they withdrew from it in 2000, bringing to an end their two-decade occupation of south Lebanon, during which time they used the fortress as a base.

Comparing Hezbollah's ongoing fight against Israel with that of the Palestinians in 1982, Taher said that although the Shia party is tied to regional issues, it nevertheless "represents a major sectarian component in Lebanon, fights on its own territory, and enjoys popular support that the Palestinian resistance lacked at certain stages".

He also believes Israel may seek to exploit internal divisions in Lebanon, since not all Lebanese support the war being fought by Hezbollah. In his view, the group now "faces a difficult test".

Militants stage raids since IS leader's death

Religious militants killed eight soldiers in two separate attacks on military bases in northeast Nigeria, the military and security sources said on Friday.

The raids on Wednesday and Friday were the first since the killing of a senior commander of the Islamic State (IS) group in the region on May 16.

Northeast Nigeria has been gripped by an Islamist insurgency since 2009, started by Boko Haram and joined by its rival offshoot Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP).

US and Nigerian forces on May 16 killed Abu-Bilal al-Minuki, an IS second-in-command described as the "most active terrorist" in the world.

Five troops were killed in a raid on a base in Mandaragairau around 3am on Friday, some 212km from the post attacked on Wednesday.

Two days earlier, fighters from ISWAP stormed a base in the town of Gajiganna, 50km from the Borno state capital Maiduguri, killing three soldiers. - AFP

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Ahead of midterm poll, Trump faces new Republican resistance

Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump is facing widening opposition within his own party as Republican lawmakers in Congress, long reluctant to defy him, are showing a greater willingness to break ranks with the US president. Just over the past week, multiple factions of Republicans in the Senate and House of Representatives have stepped forward to rebuke his war against Iran, reject \$1bn in funding tied to his White House ballroom, force a retreat on his \$1.8bn "anti-weaponisation" fund and block his legislation on domestic spying.

The House also defied Trump by passing a bill on Thursday to provide aid to Ukraine and impose new sanctions on Russia, a measure that seems destined for a veto by the president. Republicans and Democrats are skeptical that Trump faces an actual revolt. But a growing coalition of Republicans is showing a willingness to break with him, including those Trump has personally helped to drum out of office, and could pose a threat to his most ambitious initiatives between now and Election Day.

"I think what you're seeing as you get closer to the election is that people are going to vote the way they think their constituents want them to," said Republican Senator Thom Tillis, who announced his retirement from the Senate last year after opposing the president's so-called One Big Beautiful Bill.

Democrats largely dismissed the idea, saying there has been no evidence that the party at large is willing to defy him on major issues. "The people that are breaking with him are ones that were put out by Trump," said Senator John Fetterman, a Democrat who sometimes supports Trump-backed initiatives.

"That actually demonstrates his absolute control over the party," One White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, chalked Republican dissent up to "election-year politics."

"Not every single member will absorb the political cost on every single issue," the person said. "While the media and Democrats



US President Donald Trump steps off of Air Force One after landing at Morristown Airport in New Jersey. (AFP)

attempt to sow nonexistent divisions, we look forward to continuing this close relationship to continue fulfilling President Trump's agenda," White House spokeswoman Abigail Jackson said.

For years, Republican lawmakers have shown public fealty to Trump by backing controversial cabinet picks, showing little or no resistance to his executive orders and supporting his signature legislation despite misgivings about the ballooning deficit and cuts to the Medicaid healthcare program for low-income Americans.

Lawmakers and aides say frustration and resentment have grown since Trump opposed the re-election bids of Republican Senators Bill Cassidy and John Cornyn and endangered the Republican agenda in Congress with a series of badly timed announcements.

The inflection point came just before the US Memorial Day holiday, when Trump's decision to oppose the re-election of Cornyn and the announcement of his "anti-weaponisation" fund forced Senate Republicans to abandon a \$70bn immigration enforcement funding bill and leave town in a

mood of anger and frustration. "That was kind of like a perfect storm of events," a Senate Republican aide said.

The Senate ultimately passed the immigration enforcement funding bill on Friday, and Republicans voted against a Democratic amendment to block the fund, even as some worry it could be used to pay January 6 Capitol rioters and other Trump political allies.

Trump seems determined to push to nominate loyalist Bill Pulte to replace Tulsi Gabbard as a temporary Director of National Intelligence, even though key Republicans have misgivings.

Senator Mitch McConnell made it clear he would not back Pulte as a permanent DNI, saying the law required nominees with extensive experience.

"No nominee who falls short of this requirement will earn my vote," he said in a statement.

Republican opposition on the floors of the House and Senate have been mostly symbolic to date.

Three electorally vulnerable Senate Republicans — Susan Collins, Jon Husted and Dan Sullivan — joined an attempt by Democrats

to ban Trump's "anti-weaponisation" fund on Thursday in a measure that didn't pass, along with two other Republican attempts to end the fund.

"This whole exercise is to pass President Trump's top agenda item to secure the border, fund ICE. What's happening on the floor right now shows the solidarity that we have with the president," Republican Senator Jim Banks, a Trump ally, said as lawmakers voted this week.

Trump's next big challenge is likely to be his expected nomination of his former attorney Todd Blance as permanent US attorney general, a move that could face an uphill battle in the Senate.

The first stop would be the Senate Judiciary Committee, a panel that includes Trump retribution casualty Cornyn, who said his support would depend on how Blance answers certain questions.

"The attorney general is not the president's private lawyer," Cornyn told reporters.

"I want to make sure he understands the difference and is committed to making sure that the law is enforced."

US authorises sale of \$2bn in anti-drone weapons to Kuwait

AFP
Washington

The US announced late on Friday its approval of a \$1.98bn arms sale to Kuwait, one of the Gulf countries hit by Iranian strikes during the Middle East war.

In a statement, the US State Department said it would allow purchases of counter-drone technology from defense company Anduril, which was founded by a supporter of President Donald Trump.

"This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the US by improving the security

of a major non-Nato ally that has been an important force for political stability and economic progress in the Middle East," the statement said.

Earlier this week, Kuwait officials "condemned Iranian aggression" when a drone strike on its international airport killed one person and injured 63 others. Tehran denied involvement in the attack, saying it was "an error in the American Patriot systems," referring to a US anti-missile battery.

The attacks came despite the April 8 ceasefire that paused the war sparked by the February 28 US-Israeli bombing of Iran, and has largely held despite sporadic exchanges of fire.

Trump pardons former US congressman accused of securities fraud

Reuters
Washington

President Donald Trump has pardoned former US Representative Stephen Buyer, an Indiana Republican, who was convicted of securities fraud for engaging in insider trading in 2018 as a T-Mobile US consultant ahead of a \$23bn merger with Sprint.

The proclamation, issued on Thursday and announced by the White House on Friday, gave no specific rationale for the pardon other than to assert that Buyer's service as a US Army judge advocate general and member of Congress "was distinguished and highly productive."

It also said that Trump, in granting Buyer a "full, complete and unconditional pardon," was acting on the "advice and recommendation" of 52 current and former members of the US Senate and House of Representatives listed in the proclamation.

Buyer served in the House as a Republican from Indiana between 1993 and 2011 before working as a corporate con-

sultant. He was found guilty in March of 2023 on four counts of securities fraud, and was sentenced in September of that year to 22 months in prison.

Prosecutors said at trial that Buyer bought Sprint stock after learning from a T-Mobile executive that the telecommunications companies were in merger talks in 2018 and made illegal trades again the following year.

According to prosecutors, Buyer made more than \$100,000 from the Sprint trades and more than \$200,000 from buying stock in Navigant Consulting Inc before it was acquired by Guidehouse in 2019.

Buyer had previously served as one of the House managers in the 1999 impeachment trial of then-President Bill Clinton.

He took the stand at his own trial and denied trading on inside information.

Prosecutors sought three years in prison for Buyer in court filings, saying that he had abused his clients' trust and lied on the stand. The US Supreme Court refused in May of this year to hear Buyer's appeal of his conviction.

US reports second case of dangerous livestock pest

AFP
Washington

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) said it had detected a second case of a dangerous livestock pest in Texas, while Canada introduced a temporary ban on livestock from the state.

The new incidence of the New World screwworm (NWS), whose flesh-eating larvae can kill cattle, was detected in a calf in south Texas about 5.5 miles (nine kilometers) from the first one, which was reported Thursday, the department said on X.

Texas Governor Greg Abbott issued a "statewide disaster declaration" later Friday, as authorities scrambled to keep the pest from spreading.

Texas has established a 12-mile quarantine zone, meaning all warm-blooded animals including pets must be inspected before leaving the area.

Canada temporarily banned any livestock that had been in Texas in the past 21 days from entering the country, its Food Inspection Agency said in a news release. The NWS fly was thought to be eradicated in the

US in 1966. But Florida experienced an outbreak in 2016 that primarily impacted deer and was eliminated the following year, according to the department.

The fly has remained present in South America, and in recent years has moved northward.

The first of these new cases, detected near the border with Mexico, has triggered alarm among ranchers, in particular those who raise cattle.

The flies lay their eggs in open wounds or mucous membranes of warm-blooded animals, where they hatch into larvae and feed on flesh. Left untreated, the infestation can be deadly, and the parasites can quickly spread.

The pest can also affect wild animals, pets and even people.

The fly had been eradicated in the US thanks in large part by dropping millions of sterile flies to mate with wild females.

US officials said some four mn sterile flies are now being released weekly from the sky, and that some four mn more in the pupal stage were being deployed in ground release chambers.

A USDA study last year estimated a screwworm resurgence in Texas could cost the state's economy \$1.8bn.

Iranian, African journalists denied visas for World Cup

Many Iranian and African journalists have been denied the necessary visas to cover the World Cup in the United States, according to the International Sports Press Association.

The association sent a letter on Friday to Bryan Swanson, FIFA's director of media relations, and Jochen Steinhoff, the soccer governing body's head of media operations and services.

"We find ourselves facing a long-standing and unacceptable problem for us journalists: the denial of entry visas to regularly accredited colleagues," association president Gianni Merlo wrote, per *The Athletic*.

"There are many cases: Iranian colleagues, African colleagues, some of whom have been given single entries, so if their team goes to play in Canada or Mexico and they follow it, they can no longer return to the States. The cases are countless and, I repeat, unacceptable. Politicians always say that sport unites and builds



A general view inside the stadium at Soldier Field, Chicago. (Reuters)

bridges between young people in countries in conflict, but in this case, we are going in the opposite direction.

"We believe it is important to allow colleagues to attend the event and work, because

their presence will be crucial to the image of sport and what it represents, especially in a country like the United States of America, where freedom of the press is a must.

"I hope FIFA can do everything

possible to secure visas. We're already significantly behind schedule, and many colleagues have already lost the opportunity to use plane tickets booked on time, and they'll also face significant additional expenses."

The 48-team FIFA World Cup begins Thursday and runs through July 19 with matches in the U.S., Mexico and Canada.

Iran is competing in the tournament despite an ongoing armed conflict with the US.

African teams in the field include Algeria, Cape Verde, DR Congo, Egypt, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia.

Several teams, including Ivory Coast and Tunisia, require multi-entry visas because they have games scheduled in the United States as well as in Canada or Mexico.

As of yesterday's morning, the US State Department had not responded to a request for comment from *The Athletic*.

(Reuters)

Canada PM unveils AI strategy, warns of foreign dominance

AFP
Montreal, Canada

Prime Minister Mark Carney launched his AI strategy, warning Canada's slow adoption of the frontier technology had created risks and that domestic capacity needed a boost to avoid it being "weaponised against us."

Reducing Canada's reliance on the US is a central part of Carney's agenda, and his AI strategy nodded to concern about the influence of US tech giants.

"We are highly dependent on foreign suppliers for the infrastructure that powers AI," he said.

"That creates real risks that foreign entities could access Canadian data, deploy AI products that shape Canadian lives without reflecting our values," he added.

Carney warned: "AI could be weaponised against us."



Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney announces a new federal AI agenda, next to Artificial Intelligence Minister Evan Solomon, in Toronto, Ontario. (Reuters)

Carney's office said Canada was one of the slowest G7 countries to adopt AI at scale, with the new plan aiming to improve AI literacy and ramp up adop-

tion among Canadian businesses.

The prime minister also referenced Canadian company Cohere's acquisition of German AI firm Aleph Alpha,

"That creates real risks that foreign entities could access Canadian data, deploy AI products that shape Canadian lives without reflecting our values. AI could be weaponised against us." — PM Mark Carney

which created a combined entity valued at around \$20 bn with dual headquarters in Toronto and Berlin.

The Aleph Alpha deal, backed by both the Canadian and German governments, was designed to position Cohere as a sovereign alternative to the dominant US AI companies.

"When we can't build alone in Canada, we will partner with like-minded allies," Carney said, mentioning Germany.

In response to Carney's announcement, Cohere CEO Aidan Gomez said it was crucial to "Canada has seen too many big ideas grow elsewhere."

"AI should be where that changes."

ANNOUNCEMENT

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holder of

Madagascar Passport No. A20X27391

QID No. 2824500001

hereby change my name

from

ZOELY MISA HENITSOA RAKOTONIRINA

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**THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR
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within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

Peru's leftist candidate seeks 'respectful' ties with Trump

AFP
Lima

Peru's leftist presidential contender told AFP Friday that he wants "respectful" relations with US President Donald Trump, extending an olive branch ahead of Sunday's tight runoff election.

Roberto Sanchez, locked in a neck-and-neck contest with conservative rival Keiko Fujimori, struck a deliberately cautious tone when asked about the often bruising US leader.

"Good neighborliness, respectful relations between nations, and strengthening our political, cultural and trade ties should always be a priority," Sanchez told AFP, adding that Peru-US relations "cannot be an exception."

Trump, who has intervened in several Latin American elections during his second term, has so far stayed silent on Peru.

On the eve of the election, Sanchez sought to reassure undecided voters and jittery markets, distancing himself from past calls for radical change.

"Whoever wants to govern has to be sensible," he told reporters earlier Friday, while underlining continuity in economic policy, citing respect for central bank independence and long-standing macroeconomic rules.

"Our international outlook is based on economic openness and macroeconomic stability," Sanchez said.

Sanchez also dangled the prospect of a massive port deal for American investors — one that would rival a Chinese port concession at Chancay north of Lima that has long irked the White House.

US officials have privately voiced



Peru's presidential candidate Roberto Sanchez of the Juntos por el Peru party gestures during a press conference for the Peruvian Association of Foreign Press (APEP) in Lima. (AFP)

concern about the strategic implications of the concession, which they believe could be used for military and commercial purposes.

Sanchez defended the Chinese project while stressing he would also welcome US investment.

Like sport, he said, "a goal is a goal."

"In its first year of operation, China has contributed 1.5% of GDP through the port-related commercial activity," he said.

"We are not going to block it, but we do have to demand, as always, sovereignty and standards, in tax terms and in development terms, so that it benefits the population."

China is Peru's main trading partner, but Sanchez said ties with Washington remain historically

A judge ruled last week that Sanchez will stand trial for allegedly making false statements regarding his party's funding between 2018 and 2020

important.

"In that sense, I am a driver and promoter of another very important port investment, which could include other sources of capital, including American capital," Sanchez said. "I am talking about the Corio port terminal, in Arequipa, which could be five times larger than Chancay."

Polls show Sanchez and Fujimori separated by only a few percentage points, with crime and insecurity dominating voter concerns.

Both Sanchez and Fujimori made a final campaign pitch to voters on Thursday night, with ardent flag-waving supporters arguing the other side would bring the country to ruin.

"We cannot let them win with communism and terrorism," said bandana-wearing 65-year-old Fujimori supporter Merida Delgado Perez, expressing fears that Sanchez could lead Peru down a leftist path seen in Venezuela and Cuba.

Fujimori, seeking the presidency in her fourth attempt, has campaigned on a hardline security platform, promising military deployments and tougher prisons to confront rising extortion and violent crime.

US terrorist label for Brazil gangs risks higher business costs

The US designation of Brazil's biggest criminal groups as Foreign Terrorist Organisations (FTOs) starting Friday is likely to increase the risks and costs of doing business in a country where gangs have had years to penetrate the formal economy.

The two biggest Brazilian crime syndicates, the Comando Vermelho (CV) and Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) began as prison gangs in the late 1970s and early 1990s, respectively. They have since grown to dominate the drug trade across South America, with money laundering operations sprawling into far corners of Brazil's mainstream economy. Investigators recently found both groups burrowing deep into sectors such as fuel distribution, real estate and finance, spawning fraud as they launder billions in drug profits. The terrorist designation for the gangs, announced in Washington last week and rejected by Brazil's government, opens the door for heavy US sanctions, criminal probes and civil liability even for firms that deal indirectly with the groups.

Asset freezes, banking restrictions and greater regulatory scrutiny are also on the table, Brazilian law firm Pinheiro Neto Advogados said in a note.

The US policy "internationalizes a risk that the Brazilian financial sector was already obligated to manage," said Rodrigo Caldas de Carvalho Borges, a partner at law firm CBA Advogados. "The most

immediate impact will be a deepening of due diligence processes and higher demands from international partners."

The risks — and costs of compliance — extend far beyond financial services. From logistics and infrastructure to mining, agribusiness, gambling and cash-heavy consumer franchises, few sectors of the Brazilian economy have escaped the gangs' money laundering schemes. For example, a major police operation in August revealed a scheme moving some 52 bn reais (\$10.3bn) through PCC-controlled gas stations and fuel distributors from 2020 to 2024.

Another phase of the investigations last week found some \$5bn of money laundering over four years via fintechs and investment funds headquartered along the prestigious Avenida Faria Lima in Sao Paulo. Lower barriers to entry and looser oversight for Brazil's fintech startups have made them a tempting channel to launder drug money in recent years.

In Mexico, where US terrorist designations for drug traffickers last year also brought scrutiny to money laundering operations, Washington shut down just two smaller commercial banks and a brokerage over their ties to cartels.

But the affected institutions' small market share and footprint, along with a swift regulatory response, have helped limit the risk of wider market disruption, Fitch Ratings then said about Mexico. (Reuters)



Anti-government demonstrators clash with police officers and civilians during an operation to clear a road blockade in San Julian, Santa Cruz department, Bolivia yesterday. (AFP)

Police, protesters clash in Bolivia at road blockade

AFP
Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Police and anti-government protesters clashed yesterday in the Santa Cruz area of eastern Bolivia, as authorities attempted to clear a road blocked by rural workers demanding President Rodrigo Paz's resignation.

A month of demonstrations calling for the center-right Paz to step down have paralysed the Andean nation, with around 100 protest blockades across different regions of the South American country causing severe food and medicine shortages in major cities. On Saturday, dozens of anti-riot police backed by military vehicles fired tear gas as they attempted to clear a road in the town of San Julian, an AFP correspondent witnessed.

The Santa Cruz region is an agricultural breadbasket for Bolivia, supplying food to the country's western areas.

Demonstrators threw stones and burned tires to try to halt the police's advance, according to the reporter and local television footage. The road was eventually partially cleared, but protesters moved to block it again. Local media reported that one officer had been wounded.

The incident came one day after police and soldiers cleared a key road linking La Paz to farming communities.

Bolivia has faced days of demonstrations and road blockades amid growing political tensions and shortages affecting different regions of the country

The US-backed, pro-business Paz took office in November promising to resolve the country's worst economic crisis in decades, but his unpopular economic reforms and failure to respond to social demands have roused public ire.

He has repeatedly called for dialogue with protesters but on Wednesday announced a bill to declare a state of emergency, which would authorise military deployment to crack down and clear the blockades.

Congress is debating the measure.

Supplies are running low in La Paz, El Alto, as well as the cities of Cochabamba, Oruro and Potosi. The government accuses former socialist president Evo Morales — in hiding from charges related to his relationship with a teen with whom he allegedly fathered a child — of fomenting the unrest.

On Friday, US President Donald Trump's new Shield of the Americas alliance — an anti-cartel coalition that includes pro-US administrations in Argentina, Bolivia and Chile among other countries — gave Paz its unequivocal backing.

Air Canada suspends Cuba operations 'indefinitely'

AFP
Montreal

Air Canada said Friday that it was suspending its service to Cuba indefinitely, citing "political and economic uncertainty" on the island facing intensifying pressure from US President Donald Trump.

Canada's national carrier, which in February announced a pause on Cuba flights until November, said it wanted to give customers more certainty regarding the prospect of future travel.

"Given the ongoing political and economic uncertainty with respect to Cuba, Air Canada is indefinitely suspending service to the island," the Montreal-based company said in a statement.

Canadians made up a key portion of Cuba's tourism sector,

Canadians made up a key portion of Cuba's tourism sector, but that revenue has dried up as Washington has cut off fuel supplies and threatened to invade the Caribbean island

but that revenue has dried up as Washington has cut off fuel supplies and threatened to invade the island.

Last week, Canada's Blue Diamond Resorts announced it was shutting down its 62 properties in Cuba.

The fuel embargo in place since January has left Cuba without diesel for generators used to bolster its crumbling power supply, resulting in power outages of up to 22 hours a day and shortages of tap water.

With transport virtually at a standstill, the island is also running short on food and medicine, making it reliant on aid shipments from Mexico and China.

Seven dead in blast at Colombia's coal mine

Seven workers were killed by a blast at an illegal coal mine in Colombia caused by a methane gas buildup, authorities said Friday.

The explosion took place in the central town of Sutatausa on Thursday.

The first victim was found shortly afterwards, and on Friday the bodies of five more miners were recovered, the National Mining Agency said earlier.

Regional governor Jorge Emilio Rey updated the death toll to sev-

en in an X post.

"The National Mining Agency will carry out the corresponding investigations to determine the causes of this accident, which Sutatausa is mourning today," he said.

Accidents in both legal and illegal coal mines are frequent in central Colombia, owing mainly to workers' non-compliance with safety protocols.

In May, two other explosions, one of them also in Sutatausa, left 13 miners dead. (AFP)

A symbol of torture



This view shows El Helicoide — a facility and prison owned by the Venezuelan government and used for both regular and political prisoners of the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service (SEBIN) — in Caracas. El Helicoide detention centre, a symbol of torture in Venezuela, was left virtually empty last week after the prisoners held there were transferred to various prisons across the country. (AFP)

Airline chiefs grapple with fuel shock, fare test at Rio summit

Reuters
Rio De Janeiro

Global airline chiefs open their annual summit in Rio de Janeiro on Saturday facing a sharper test of the industry's post-pandemic recovery, as the Iran war drives up fuel costs and disrupts airspace while carriers try to cushion the blow with higher fares and tighter capacity.

The June 6-8 annual meeting of the International Air Transport Association (Iata) comes as that fuel shock collides with another problem airlines cannot quickly fix: a shortage of new aircraft.

Boeing and Airbus delivery delays have forced many carriers to keep older, less fuel-efficient jets in service for longer, raising maintenance and fuel bills just as oil prices have climbed.

Iata, which represents more

than 370 airlines accounting for about 85% of global air traffic, had forecast a record \$41bn in net profit this year for the industry before the war. Industry executives and analysts expect that outlook to be lowered at the meeting.

A Deloitte survey of 21 global airline CEOs published this week found that fuel price volatility and inflation sit at the top of the industry's risk agenda, pushing carriers to focus more heavily on cost control and financial health.

"Together, they've turned what was supposed to be a record year into a fight for margin," the survey said.

Brazilian airline Azul is planning to trim more flights to meet demand due to higher jet fuel prices, CEO John Rodgers said. Nikhil Ravishankar, CEO of Air New Zealand, said airlines can only raise ticket prices so much to offset higher fuel costs. "The market



Brazilian airline Azul's CEO John Rodgers speaks during an interview, ahead of the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Annual General Meeting, in Rio de Janeiro. (Reuters)

will respond and demand will soften and then you fly less," he said in an interview. Airlines have two

primary costs: fuel and labor. Sudden increases in fuel are hard to absorb because many tickets are sold

The challenge is how much of the latest fuel hit can be passed on to travellers before higher fares start to weaken demand

weeks or months before travel. Longer routes also burn more fuel and make aircraft and crews less efficient.

The challenge is how much of the latest fuel hit can be passed on to travellers before higher fares start to weaken demand.

So far, travel demand has held up in several large markets, especially among premium and corporate travellers, giving carriers more room to raise fares.

In the US, domestic published fares as of May 25 showed robust demand and successful pass-through of higher fuel costs, with one-week-out fares up 35.8% year-on-year and four-week-out fares up 39.4%, according to Ray-

mond James.

"The willingness to pay over the past few years, crisis and no crisis, from the premium side has been really strong, and we see that strength continuing," Alexandre Lefevre, Air Canada's vice president of network planning and global sales, told Reuters.

Still, there are limits. Higher fares can help airlines recover part of their fuel bill, but they also risk pushing out travellers with tighter budgets. That risk is greater in regions where currencies are weak, consumer spending is under pressure or airlines lack the pricing power of large network carriers. Some carriers are still planning for growth.

Singapore Airlines is in talks for at least 50 large wide-body jets, while Qantas is weighing an order for about 20 Airbus or Boeing wide-body aircraft, Reuters reported this week.

Rescuers halt search for two last men lost in Laos cave

AFP
Vientiane

Rescuers called off their search yesterday for two men trapped in a semi-submerged cave in Laos for more than two weeks, as the site became unstable and survival hopes faded.

Seven villagers became trapped in the cave in central Xaysomboun province on May 20 when flash floods blocked their exit as they

hunted bats for food and searched for gold in old mining areas, state media said. Rescue teams located five of the men alive a week later, with one extracted by divers on May 29 and four guided out the following day after water was pumped from the flooded cavern.

The two others remained missing despite intensive searching by Laos and international rescue teams. Lee Kian Lie, a Malaysian cave diver who joined the operation on May 28, told AFP it was at

an "end" as the risks of continuing outweighed the slim chances of the men's rescue. "We were so close," Lee said. "The water in the cave was already manageable, but the cave entrance started to become unstable."

"To continue the operation is high risk," he added. "They will continue to manage the water by pumping and digging at possible resurgence points to let the water flow out faster. Perhaps a miracle will happen."

"Everyone tried. We tried. I am sorry for the family," Lee described the mission as the most dangerous rescue operation he had experienced, saying the team faced flooding, unstable cave structures, tight restrictions and poor air quality. Thai lead rescuer Kengkad Bongkawong said in a social media post on Saturday that "no one is allowed inside the cave" because "it is too risky for anyone to enter", but water pumping operations would persist outside.

"Even though we don't know the current condition of those two individuals, reducing the water level inside the cave is the best approach right now," he posted on Facebook. "There are still food rations and survival supplies that we have placed at various points inside the cave. If miracles exist, I believe their expertise will guide them out safely." Kengkad had earlier said rising rainwater flows had reduced the vertical space inside the cave to around 30cm (12 inches) -- half

what rescuers worked in during the operation's earlier phases. "From today onwards, the rain will become progressively heavier," he warned in his Saturday post.

By Friday, key cave specialists including Finnish diver Mikko Paasi and Japan's Yoshitaka Isaji had already left the site. The five survivors were discovered huddled in a narrow passage around 300m (984ft) from the cave's entrance, and said the two missing men had entered the site separately.

Kim stresses stronger naval nuclear deterrent

AFP, Reuters
Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un visited the naval destroyer Kang Kon to oversee a navigation test, state media said yesterday, stressing the need to enhance the navy's capability to deter a nuclear war.

The Saturday report came as Beijing and Pyongyang announced Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit North Korea from June 8 to 9, after Xi hosted back-to-back summits with US President Donald Trump and Russia's Vladimir Putin last month.

Kim has in recent years vowed to strengthen North Korea's naval capabilities, and in May last year oversaw the botched launch of the destroyer Kang Kon, which was later repaired and relaunched a month later.

During the trip on Thursday, Kim stressed the importance of rapidly developing the naval force into a force "capable of reliably taking charge of a part of the nuclear war deterrent", Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

Building a navy capable of delivering a "deadly blow" to enemies above and below the water is a core goal of the ruling party's current five-year defence development plan, Kim said.

The North Korean leader visited the vessel with top officials and his daughter, Ju Ae, images re-

leased by Pyongyang's state media showed.

Since North Korean leader Kim Jong-un's 2019 summit with Trump collapsed over the scope of denuclearisation and sanctions relief, Pyongyang has repeatedly declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear state.

Kim has since been emboldened by the war in Ukraine, securing critical support from Moscow after sending thousands of troops to fight alongside Russian forces. Last year, Kim appeared alongside China's Xi and Russia's Putin at an elaborate military parade in Beijing -- a striking display of his new, elevated status in global politics.

North Korea plans to build a 10,000-tonne destroyer and develop secret underwater weapons. The *Rodong Sinmun* newspaper, reporting on a naval test supervised by leader Kim Jong-un, said he ordered the navy to deploy the destroyer Kang Kon and another 5,000-tonne warship, the Choe Hyon, as soon as possible.

The newspaper did not give further details. It is the first time North Korea has mentioned a plan to build a 10,000-tonne destroyer, said Hong Min, a senior analyst at South Korea's Institute for National Unification.

Kim may be seeking to showcase the country's military capabilities ahead of Xi's visit, Hong said. Xi is making his first visit to North Korea in nearly seven years as Beijing looks to reassert ties



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, and his daughter Kim Ju Ae observing the sea trials of the Kang Kon. (AFP)



with Pyongyang, its only formal treaty ally.

Before the visit was announced,

Kim on Thursday called for an "exponential" expansion of North Korea's atomic arsenal during a



The Kang Kon, a destroyer of North Korean Navy. (AFP)

visit to a newly operational nuclear material production factory.

North Korea said in May 2025 that a 5,000-tonne destroyer had partially capsized during a launching ceremony in Chongjin port.

Kim, who was overseeing the

ceremony, condemned the accident and called it a "criminal act" that could not be tolerated.

After the ship was repaired at Rajin port, a second launching ceremony was held the next month, when the vessel was named the Kang Kon.

Taiwan needs to 'spend smarter' on its defence, says US diplomat

Reuters
Taipei

Taiwan needs to "spend smarter" on its defences and learn lessons from the Ukraine and Middle East wars on using drones to ensure the military balance with China, the de facto US ambassador to Taipei said on Saturday.

While Taiwan's government has prioritised drones and other asymmetric systems for its military modernisation programme, the opposition-dominated parliament last month passed only two-thirds of the \$40bn in extra defence spending President Lai Ching-te had asked for.

The government is now trying to get the cut funds, which were for domestically made systems like drones and missiles, approved, to better deter China which views the democratically governed island as its own territory. The US has strongly backed Lai's defence spending plans.

Speaking at a forum in Taipei,

■ US has supported Taiwan's plans to spend more on defence
■ Taiwan trying to get previously cut defence funds approved

Raymond Greene, director of the American Institute in Taiwan, said the US looks forward to further investments.

"It is critical that Taiwan not only spend more on its own defence but also spend smarter. And there is no smarter way Taiwan can deliver deterrence right away than by investing in unmanned systems," he said.

"The conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East have demonstrated that drones are changing the character of warfare, offering enormous opportunities for Taiwan to re-establish the cross-strait military balance."

The US has traditionally been Taiwan's most important international backer and arms supplier despite the lack of formal diplomatic ties. But US President Donald Trump has rattled Taiwan after his meeting with China's Xi Jinping in Beijing last month, saying that he is still considering whether to go ahead with a new arms sales package for Taipei worth some \$14bn.

The US, which is bound by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself, has said its policy towards the island has not changed, something Greene underscored.

"Maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is absolutely critical for the economic well-being of the United States, Taiwan, and the entire world," he said. "The United States has made clear that we oppose any forced, compelled, or coercive change to the status of Taiwan."

Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's sovereignty claim, saying only the island's people can decide their future.

Korean protesters keep calling for re-run of poll after ballot shortage

Reuters
Seoul

Protesters outside a ballot-counting site in Korea yesterday rallied for a second day, demanding a re-run of local elections held earlier this week.

Around 10,000 citizens were estimated to have gathered at the SK Olympic Handball Stadium as of 5:30pm, where votes were counted from Wednesday's elections to pick mayors and local government officials and assembly members, Yonhap News Agency reported, citing an unofficial police estimate.

Representatives at Seoul Metropolitan

Police Agency were not immediately reached by Reuters to confirm the estimates. The protests follow a ballot shortage that prevented some eligible voters from casting their ballots across the country, prompting the resignation of the head of the National Election Commission.

Fifty of 14,300 polling stations ran out of ballots and voting was temporarily suspended at 22 polling stations due to delays in receiving supplies, according to the election commission.

Seoul Mayor Oh Se-hoon said in a televised speech that the ballot shortage was intolerable and a violation of the right to vote.

He demanded disbanding the

election commission and an investigation by special prosecutors. Many protesters, including conservative YouTubers, chanted slogans for an "election re-run," sang the national anthem, and waved Korean flags, live footage from local broadcaster YTN and Yonhap News showed.

Some of them sat in front of the stadium's gates, to block officials of the National Election Commission from leaving.

The officials, who had been stuck in the stadium since Friday morning, eventually left the site on Saturday, Yonhap said. The election commission did not immediately respond to a request on their departure.

Chinese coast guard, research ships 'near key South China Sea islands'

Reuters
Taipei

Taiwan said yesterday that a Chinese coast guard ship and a survey ship had carried out the first coordinated operation to "provoke" Taiwan, in waters around strategically located islands in the South China Sea.

The Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands, a national park toward the northern end of the South China Sea and lightly defended by the coast guard,

have emerged as a new pressure point in China's ongoing military and quasi-military operations around Taiwan in an effort to assert Beijing's sovereignty claims.

The islands between southern Taiwan and Hong Kong are seen by some security experts as vulnerable to Chinese attack due to their distance -- more than 400km -- from Taiwan island.

Taiwan's coast guard said in a statement that along with a Chinese coast guard ship that had approached the Pratas on

Friday, a Chinese oceanographic survey vessel approached the islands on Saturday. "This is the first observed instance of Chinese coast guard and survey vessels acting in coordination to provoke Taiwan," it said.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China considers Taiwan and the Pratas, an atoll with no civilian population, as its territory.

Taiwan's government rejects Beijing's claims, saying only the island's people can decide their future.

Memorial Day in Korea



Korean President Lee Jae Myung and his wife Kim Hea Kyung pay their tribute during a ceremony marking the country's 71st Memorial Day to commemorate veterans and independent activists, at the National Cemetery in Seoul, Korea, yesterday. (Reuters)

British royals gather for wedding of Princess Anne's son



King Charles and senior British royals gathered at a village in south-west England yesterday to celebrate the wedding of Princess Anne's businessman son, Peter Phillips, to nurse Harriet Sperling. Anne was joined by her husband, Timothy Laurence, at the private ceremony at All Saints Church in Kemble, near Cirencester, by her brother Charles and Queen Camilla, as well as other senior royals including Charles' son and heir, Prince William, and his wife Kate. Princesses Eugenie and Beatrice, the daughters of Charles' disgraced younger brother Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, were also in attendance. Phillips, the late Queen Elizabeth II's eldest grandson, is 19th in the line of succession to the British throne. He works as a sports management executive and does not undertake official royal duties. Sperling is a paediatric nurse. Phillips' first marriage - to Autumn Kelly - ended in divorce in 2021. **Reuters**



UK slams attempts to 'interfere' after Vance comments

AFP
London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's office yesterday denounced "people trying to interfere in our democracy" after US Vice-President JD Vance condemned Britain's handling of the murder of a white student, Henry Nowak, by a Sikh man.

The Downing Street statement followed comments by Vance on X linking the young student's murder to what he said was civilisational decline caused by mass migration.

"In recent days we have seen people trying to interfere in our democracy and seeking to stir up division on our streets," a spokesperson for Starmer's Downing Street office said in a statement.

"The Nowak family are grieving after Henry's horrific murder. They have said they do not want his death to be used to create further division, hatred or tension. We should be respecting their wishes. "Our politics should bring people together even in the most terrible of circumstances. That is who we are as a country," it added.

Starmer on Thursday accused South African tech tycoon Elon



JD Vance



Keir Starmer. **PICTURES:** Reuters

Musk of "trying to whip up division" over the case, which has sparked public outrage. Eighteen-year-old Nowak, a first year finance and accounting university student, was put in handcuffs by police as he lay mortally wounded after being stabbed by Vickrum Digwa, 23, in the southern city of Southampton in December.

Digwa lied and told police he was the victim as Nowak had racially insulted him.

Far-right figures have claimed the murder is evidence that police forces in Britain treat white people and ethnic minorities differently -- an allegation Starmer's Labour

government and police chiefs vehemently deny.

Black people in England and Wales are more than twice as likely to be arrested as white people, according to government statistics. Musk, the billionaire owner of X, has posted numerous times on the platform about the police response to the stabbing. In one, he asked whether people knew that "official police policy requires them to be racist against Whites?"

Musk has offered to fund a private prosecution against the police over its handling of the murder and insulted the Hampshire Police force.

'Cockroach' party founder leads first street protest after arrival in India

By Saurabh Sharma and Aftab Ahmed
Reuters

The founder of India's viral Cockroach Janta Party led a street protest in New Delhi yesterday demanding the resignation of the federal education minister, taking the online youth movement from social media to the streets for the first time in a show of dissent against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

Abhijeet Dipke, 30, who has lived in the United States for the past two years and had not previously travelled to India since forming the movement, carried a copy of India's constitution as he left New Delhi's international airport for the protest site, greeted by hundreds of supporters chanting his name.

The group, which has amassed over 22mn Instagram followers since launching in mid-May, is the largest online expression of dissent against the Hindu nationalist Modi's 12-year rule, fuelled by persistently high youth unemployment. A few hundred protesters gathered near Jantar Mantar in central New Delhi as police barricaded some of the surrounding roads. The protesters shouted slogans demanding the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over recurring leaks of examination papers and errors in marking that have threatened to derail the



Abhijeet Dipke, head of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), leaves after attending a sit-in protest. **Reuters**

careers of millions of students.

Hundreds of thousands of students have joined the movement in just a few days, Dipke said at the protest site. "Cockroach Janta Party is not a planned party. This is a voice of those students that are angry with the government," he said. Modi's government has blocked the movement's X account in the country, a move the group has challenged in a Delhi court. Senior cabinet minister Kiren Rijiju has accused the group of seeking followers from arch-enemy Pakistan and the "anti-India gang"; a slur used by the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party against those it sees as unpatriotic.

Dipke has publicly shared data showing about 95% of followers of the movement's Instagram account are based in India, followed by countries such as the United

States, home to large groups of overseas Indians.

Political analysts say the group's popularity has begun to dent Modi's image despite his party's recent victories in key state elections. Frustration among many Indians has deepened as rising fuel prices and gas shortages brought by the Iran war squeeze household budgets.

India has nearly 400mn people aged 15 to 29, and generating non-farm jobs for them remains one of its biggest challenges, despite rapid growth. The urban youth jobless rate was nearly 14% in April. Many educated young people are also stuck in low-paid or insecure jobs that do not match their skills, economists say.

"This movement will go nationwide," Dipke said on Saturday.

'I thought I would perish': Everest survivor recounts ordeal

AFP
Kathmandu

Nepali mountaineer who survived nearly a week on Mount Everest said he "chewed ice" to stay alive, as he recovered in a hospital after a miraculous rescue that stunned the climbing community. Dawa Sherpa, 57, disappeared in brutal conditions on the upper slopes of the world's tallest mountain on May 30 during one of the final climbs of the spring season.

With few climbers still on the peak and his oxygen exhausted, relatives had given up hope and begun ritual mourning prayers, believing he had died on the mountain. "I didn't think I would be alive," he told BBC Nepali on Friday from his hospital bed. "I thought I would perish this way. I didn't get lost. As the oxygen ran out, I fell behind. After the oxygen finished, I couldn't walk."

Left stranded in freezing temperatures near Everest's "death zone", where oxygen levels are critically low, Dawa Sherpa said he survived for days with almost no food

or water. "I didn't eat anything for the first two days. Then I began chewing ice. It hurt my teeth. I chewed the ice hard," he said.

He survived on a few chocolates and snacks he found in his pockets. "I soaked them in water and had them," he said.

Dawa Sherpa, also known as "Hillary" after legendary climber Edmund Hillary, had told others after his rescue that at one point he fell into a crevasse before managing to climb out.

"Stepping on the snow, I stood up and looked above... It felt I could get out from there," he said.

"I then looked for ropes and found one. Then I held on to it and walked... eventually I came down."

He said he walked day and night towards base camp until finally encountering people almost a week later. He was found crawling towards the base camp on the morning of June 4 by the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee (SPCC), a Nepali team that helps set routes on Everest and clean up waste left behind.

"Boys from SPCC were going up to col-



Mountaineer Dawa Sherpa is being carried by medics and rescuers upon his arrival at the HAMS Hospital in Kathmandu. **AFP**

lect the waste. I met them. They carried me down."

He was flown to Kathmandu for treat-

ment for frostbite, severe dehydration and a fractured thigh bone, doctors said. "He is doing well. We had a chat," his

daughter Mendo Lhamu Sherpa told AFP.

His survival has sparked celebration among fellow climbers, but also anger from family members who accused rescue teams of failing to locate him sooner.

Nepal Mountaineering Association president Fur Gelfe Sherpa called the survival extraordinary but said the incident highlighted serious concerns over climber safety.

"It is irresponsible and inhumane to leave a person behind," he said. "I believe that an investigation committee must be formed to hold the responsible people accountable for this."

Everest guide Rinji Sherpa, who comes from the same village as Dawa Sherpa, said the climber was highly experienced and familiar with the dangers of high-altitude mountaineering. "He is very lucky, he has had several close calls before but he has survived," he said. At least five climbers -- two Indians and three Nepalis -- died during this year's Everest season.

More than 1,000 climbers reached Everest's summit this season, according to preliminary Nepali government figures, making it the busiest season on record.



Brokerages bet on sector winners as World Cup set to kick off

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will inject billions of dollars into host economies, driven by a massive consumption surge that will benefit sectors as varied as tourism to retail and athletic wear, according to analysts. The iconic tournament, scheduled for June 11 to July 19 and set to be the largest soccer event ever, could power consumer spending at a time when broader demand remains fragile.

The first three-nation World Cup (WC) - spanning the United States, Canada and Mexico - is expected to boost global GDP by roughly \$41bn, according to FIFA's socioeconomic impact analysis, conducted with the World Trade Organization (WTO). Here is a look at stocks and sectors that brokerages expect to benefit from the

once-in-four-years event: B. Riley estimates a total of 13.1mn visitors to the World Cup, including ticketed and non-ticketed attendees, generating 21.3mn room nights booked in hotels across online travel platforms.

Analysts said US hotel operators Marriott, Hilton and Hyatt as well as online travel platforms Airbnb, Booking Holdings and Expedia are poised to benefit from the event. Marriott sees the World Cup-driven momentum to continue in the third quarter. Airbnb expects hosts in the New York-New Jersey area, Boston and Los Angeles to earn the most during the tournament.

Goldman Sachs believes the WC could be a 'net positive' for US airlines. "June is typically a seasonally lower inbound

leisure and corporate travel period, with a meaningful amount of peak July/August outbound travel season occurring after the WC is over," Goldman said.

A sharp rise in jet fuel prices due to the war with Iran, however, has forced US airline operators to hike fares that are pushing budget-conscious Americans to delay or cancel summer trips. Goldman estimates a surge in merchandise demand from fans to push up sales at Dick's Sporting Goods and Academy Sports.

Sportswear brands such as Adidas, Puma and Nike can benefit through increased brand visibility and marketing exposure during the World Cup, analysts said. Goldman noted that Adidas, the official sponsor of the match ball, has kit sponsorship deals with several teams,

positioning it to benefit from a global exposure during the event.

Citi said traditional grocers such as Albertsons and Kroger, along with bigger retailers including Walmart and Target, are likely to benefit from higher household spending during the WC.

Restaurant demand is also expected to rise, supported by tourism and group-viewings. This could lift McDonald's, Domino's Pizza, Wingstop and Chipotle, along with food distributors such as Performance Food Group, US Foods and Sysco. "We expect the 2026 men's World Cup to generate the highest US advertising revenue in the event's history," Deutsche Bank analysts said.

Morgan Stanley said the tournament could generate about \$300-\$400mn in

advertising revenue for Fox, which holds the English-language broadcast rights. Deutsche Bank pointed to Comcast-owned Telemundo, which has the Spanish-language rights, as another beneficiary.

Internet companies such as Alphabet's YouTube and Meta Platforms' Instagram could get a lift from increased user activity, Citi said. Deutsche Bank expects online sports-betting firms Flutter Entertainment and DraftKings to relatively outperform, as World Cup-driven betting is likely to boost overall wagering volumes.

Macquarie forecast global wagers exceeding \$50bn - nearly \$0.5bn per match - for the tournament, compared to over \$35bn for the previous edition in 2022. -Reuters

Riding on Espriella



A supporter of Colombian presidential candidate Abelardo De La Espriella of the political movement Defenders of the Homeland, rides in a vehicle while showing support for the candidate during a campaign gathering ahead of the runoff election in Bogota, Colombia, yesterday. (Reuters)



By David Jeans
Reuters

Drone crashes and severed fingers at \$13bn Silicon Valley military startup

A year ago, Ryan Tseng, the head of US defence tech startup Shield AI, announced his company had turned a new page. After a gory incident that partially severed a US Navy official's fingers during a test of its V-BAT drone, Shield AI had addressed safety concerns with new landing gear and warning stickers near the propeller. "(The) aircraft is, tip to tail, just a radically better airplane," Tseng told Forbes last year.

Now it's happened again. A Romanian Navy official's hand was caught in a V-BAT propeller on May 12 during a Shield AI training exercise on a boat off the Texas coast - severing two of her fingers and fracturing a third, a spokesperson for Romania's Ministry of National Defence told Reuters.

The incident, which has not previously been reported, comes as Shield AI struggles to overcome years of technical hitches and safety concerns with its V-BAT, according to interviews with 21 former employees, industry executives and investors, and a Reuters review of a whistleblower complaint, a lawsuit related to hostile work environments and company presentations.

Reuters found that the V-BAT has crashed more than 50 times over the past 18 months, that several staff who raised safety concerns were dismissed and that a Cessna plane with a Shield AI employee and his child aboard had to take evasive action to avoid a mid-air collision with a V-BAT.

Shield AI also allegedly obscured technical flaws with its V-BAT, which costs about \$1mn, to help land military sales, according to a previously unreported whistleblower complaint filed in May to the Department of Labor's Office of Administrative Law Judges and reviewed by Reuters.

Shield AI acquired the V-BAT, a vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) unmanned aircraft designed for military uses, when it bought Martin UAV in 2021. The company didn't make Tseng, or Gary Steele, who replaced Tseng as CEO last year, available for

an interview. In a statement to Reuters, Shield AI said it had a strong safety record and defended the performance of its drones, saying "operational mishaps are common" for a drone like V-BAT.

"V-BAT remains one of the most operationally proven VTOL aircraft in service today," the company said, adding that the drone had accumulated 18,000 flight hours since 2019. Shield AI said the May 12 incident was caused by "a violation of established safety procedures, not from a product defect", without disclosing the specific violation.

Romania's defence ministry said it was investigating the incident and that it would be premature to draw conclusions regarding fault or whether the incident could have been prevented.

The Romanian official, whose identity hasn't been disclosed, had operations to reattach her fingers on May 12 and May 16 at the University Medical Center New Orleans. Her condition deteriorated and she was sent to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Maryland, where she remained as of May 25, the ministry said in a statement, without providing further medical details.

Romania's Naval Forces, which signed a \$30mn agreement with Shield AI last year for the V-BAT, said the contract remained in effect.

SHIELD AI VALUED AT \$12.7 BILLION

Shield AI, which was valued at \$12.7bn in a March funding round co-led by JPMorgan, has emerged as one of Silicon Valley's largest defence tech bets, positioning itself as a key provider of drones and autonomous software to rearm the Pentagon as wars rage in Ukraine and the Middle East, and as tensions grow with China over Taiwan.

In February, US Vice President JD Vance was touring Armenia



A Shield AI MQ-35 V-BAT vertical take-off and landing unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) is displayed at the 55th International Paris Airshow at Le Bourget Airport near Paris, France. (Reuters/File Photo)

when he was shown the latest V-BAT model, which had just been sold under Washington's first arms sales to the country. "H####. Look at this thing!" Vance said in a video posted on LinkedIn, circling the drone in a gilded hall. "It's going to do great things for you guys."

Other drone startups have faced setbacks as they race to deliver nascent technology to the battlefield. Reuters has previously reported that other drone companies have suffered after crashes, and a series of US Navy autonomous vessel tests went awry when unmanned boats smashed into one another.

But Shield AI had a "Silicon Valley mindset, that 'fake it 'til you make it'" said Jacob Miller, a former product manager who filed the whistleblower complaint in which he alleged he was fired after

entrepreneur who sold a phone-charging company to Qualcomm - and his brother Brandon, a former Navy SEAL. The firm was among the first venture-backed startups seeking to loosen the grip on major Pentagon contracts long held by so-called prime contractors such as Lockheed Martin and RTX.

But alongside its meteoric growth, including V-BAT sales to more than half a dozen foreign militaries, Shield AI's drone has struggled with persistent behind-the-scenes failures.

In the past 18 months, more than 50 of about 200 upgraded V-BATs managed by Shield AI as part of its internal fleet have been destroyed in crashes during testing or training, a high failure rate, according to two people with knowledge of the matter.

During a Nato-led event in Portugal in September showcasing unmanned military systems, a V-BAT crash-landed on a runway, according to a person familiar with the event and two videos seen by Reuters.

In February, Shield AI announced it was pausing flights for several weeks to determine the causes of a particularly bad spate of crashes - including one that ignited a grass fire in Texas that burned more than 40 acres before it was extinguished, according to fire records, interviews with emergency crews and two people familiar with the matter.

Shield AI did not comment on Reuters reporting on the crashes involving its internal fleet but said that its customers had experienced only 10 "operational mishaps" since early 2025, when it upgraded the V-BAT. The company did not elaborate on the incidents.

WHISTLEBLOWER: SHIELD AI HID MISHAPS FROM CUSTOMERS

When technical shortfalls emerged, the company took steps to obscure them from military

customers, according to Miller's whistleblower complaint. During one test, Shield AI told the Greek military that a V-BAT was flying autonomously when in fact it was being piloted manually, the complaint alleged.

In addition, Miller said Shield AI falsified or scrubbed data in mishap reports, which are generated and reviewed internally after each crash, to "create a falsely favorable narrative" about V-BAT performance, according to his complaint.

He alleged the revised data was used to help secure contracts with Naval Air Systems Command as well as Greece, Japan, Norway, Taiwan and Ukraine. Ukraine declined to comment. The other militaries and NAVAIR did not respond to inquiries.

At times, some Shield AI employees were concerned by the company's approach to safety. In July, Shield AI employees were testing a new capability allowing V-BAT drones to detect and avoid other aircraft.

Two employees flew near the drone in a Cessna as part of the test - but had to steer the propeller plane out of the way to avoid a potential crash after realizing the drone had failed to detect the small aircraft, according to two people with knowledge of the incident. The young son of one of the employees was also in the Cessna at the time, the people said.

At least three employees who raised safety concerns in the past 18 months were fired, or have left the company, according to people with knowledge of the matter. Last year, law firm Littler Mendelson was hired by Shield AI to investigate claims of a hostile work environment and concerns raised about air safety, according to a person with knowledge of the matter and Miller. Reuters could not determine the findings of the investigation. Littler Mendelson did not respond to a comment request.

DRONE CRASHES MOUNT UP

Shield AI was founded in 2015 by Ryan Tseng - a tech

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Ukraine fires wave of drones at Russia on last day of forum

AFP
Saint Petersburg

Ukraine fired hundreds of drones at Russia yesterday, leaving one person dead and setting an oil depot ablaze on the final day of the country's flagship economic forum — St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) — in Saint Petersburg, officials said.

Many of the drones targeted Saint Petersburg itself, the second Ukrainian attack on the city in less than a week, with Ukraine's SBU security services saying it had hit a naval base.

Moscow and Kyiv have intensified drone strikes on each other in recent months as US-led diplomatic efforts to end the war, now in its fifth year, remain stalled and sidetracked by the conflict in the Middle East.

The strikes come a day after Russian President Vladimir Putin rejected Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky's proposal for a meeting, drawing criticism from Zelensky, who accused him of "choosing war again".

Russian air defences intercepted a total of 376 drones over the regions of "Belgorod, Bryansk, Kaluga, Kursk, Leningrad, Novgorod, Oryol, Pskov, Rostov, Ryazan, Smolensk, Tver, and Tula, the Moscow region, Crimea Republic, Abkhazia Republic, and over the waters of the Azov and Black Seas,"



Heavy smoke billows in the background of the banner of the SPIEF after Ukrainian drones hit infrastructure in St Petersburg last week. (Reuters)

the Russian defence ministry said.

Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, while Abkhazia is a region of Georgia that Russia military occupies.

Over 140 drones were shot down over the Leningrad region, which surrounds Saint Petersburg, governor Aleksandr Drozdenko said.

The city's governor, Alexander Beglov, issued a rare call for residents to stay indoors during the attack. "Russian air defences prevented any damage. The condition of the three injured is assessed as minor and they have been discharged," he said.

Ukraine's SBU security services said they had targeted the city's Kronstadt naval base, as well as "the Russian Navy's 15th Arsenal

in the Leningrad region".

The attacks also sparked a fire at an oil depot in the southern town of Ust-Labinsk, while drone debris killed a man in the western Tver region, according to local officials.

Zelensky described the strikes as a "just response" to Russian aggression against Ukraine.

"It is time to end this war. But Russia's ruler wants to keep fighting. That is why Ukrainian sanctions against this aggression are working," he said on X.

"Any manifestation of injustice against Ukraine will receive a just response." The attacks come a day after Putin rejected a meeting with Zelensky.

Speaking at the SPIEF — an event dubbed "Russia's Davos"

— Putin said he saw "no point" in meeting the Ukrainian leader until a possible peace deal had been agreed.

Zelensky hit back, saying the Russian leader was "weak" and "choosing war again".

Yesterday, Ukraine's foreign minister Andriy Sybiga heaped further criticism on the Russian leader.

"Putin lost his chance to get out of his failed war," he said.

"Russia will still have to accept a diplomatic solution but the terms will be far worse."

Hundreds of thousands have been killed since Putin launched his full-scale offensive — which he calls a "special military operation" — in February 2022.

Swathes of eastern and southern Ukraine have been destroyed and millions forced from their homes in the four-year campaign Moscow hoped would have toppled Kyiv within a matter of days.

Russia renewed its strikes on Ukraine early Saturday.

A Russian drone killed a 64-year-old man in the southern Mykolaiv region, while a strike on the nearby Zaporizhzhia region wounded a 10-year-old boy and his father, regional authorities said.

Russian drone and artillery attacks in Ukraine's central Dnipropetrovsk region killed one person and left three others wounded, regional governor Oleksandr Ganzha wrote on Telegram.

France, allies to pressure Israel over West Bank

The move comes amid escalating violence by settlers in West Bank

Reuters
Paris

France is working with several countries to step up pressure on Israel by pressing ahead with co-ordinated national sanctions targeting individuals linked to violence in the West Bank, three European diplomats said yesterday.

The measures, which would include asset freezes and travel bans, have yet to be finalised and countries may adopt different lists of individuals, the diplomats said. The move comes amid escalating violence by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank and underscores anger in many Western countries toward Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, which has expanded settlements. Diplomats say that expansion is aimed at undermining prospects for a Palestinian state.

The diplomats said that with efforts blocked at the European Union to advance tougher measures against Israel, several countries had concluded that co-ordinated national sanctions were the best option for now.

"There is no unanimity at the EU level, so we have moved to discussions at the national level," one diplomat said. Two of the diplomats said the announcement would be in the coming days.

Another diplomat said Britain and Norway were among the countries that France was coordinating with in this regard, although it remained unclear who else could join.

Most countries avoid publicly discussing national sanctions for fear that potential targets could shift assets in advance.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said after some new EU sanctions on May 11 that the bloc had "chosen, in an arbitrary and political manner, to impose sanctions on Israeli citizens and entities because of their political views and without any basis."

Seven Western nations, including France, Britain, Australia and Canada, accused the Israeli government on May 22 of aggravating tensions in the West Bank.

A key concern is Israel's plan to build a settlement east of Jerusalem, known as the E1 project, which would bisect the West Bank and cut it off from East Jerusalem, fragmenting territory Palestinians seek for an independent state.

"In the face of settlement expansion and violence in the West Bank, we have already taken measures. More could follow," a French diplomatic source said, declining to elaborate.

Britain's Foreign Office and the Norwegian foreign ministry declined to comment.

The push to increase pressure on Israel at the national level comes just days before France is preparing to host a meeting on June 12 in Paris, which is expected to bring together Israeli and Palestinian civil society groups and about a dozen foreign ministers.

The meeting will mark one year since the adoption of the New York Declaration, a non-binding UN resolution endorsed by the General Assembly that set out a roadmap towards a Palestinian state and led to about a dozen countries, including France, recognising a Palestinian state in September.

French officials have said they want to keep the issue on the international agenda as wars in Iran and Lebanon draw attention away from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, while talks over Gaza's future remain deadlocked despite a fragile ceasefire.

Albanians protest at Trump-linked property project

AFP
Zverec

Several hundred people gathered yesterday in a protected nature reserve on the Albanian coast to protest at plans for a luxury beach resort by a company linked to the Trump family.

Answering a call from environmental organisations, activists from across the country as well as local residents flocked midday to the Vjosa-Narta lagoon, some 150 kilometres (90 miles) southwest of the capital Tirana.

"The whole of this marine area is a protected zone. To destroy it would be fatal for this region's biodiversity," Emiljona Puna, a finance worker, told AFP.

Protesters gathered on a sandy beach facing azure waters, some waving red Albanian flags, others carrying inflatable flamingos — the movement's symbol — while chanting "cancel the project!".

There had been unrest at the location during an initial protest in late May against preparatory



Tourists walk on a bridge to Saint Mary monastery in Zverec. (AFP)

onsite work during installation of barbed wire to cordon off the area. The barbed wire has since been removed.

People rushed there after seeing videos on social media showing construction work and bulldozers on the beach. Those machines were not there yesterday either.

AFP journalists observed concrete foundations for a fence on the ground that had also been removed.

Protests against a project whose

cost is estimated at some four billion euros (\$4.6 bn) and is linked to Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump and her husband Jared Kushner are gaining momentum in the Balkan country.

Thousands of protesters have been gathering every evening for nearly a week in Tirana to denounce what they view as the planned destruction of entire sections of the Vjosa-Narta Nature Reserve and its conversion into a luxury tourist destination.

According to the plan, developers also hope to transform the uninhabited island of Sazan — once a secret communist military base — into a glitzy tourist destination.

Another rally is scheduled for Saturday evening. The coastal lagoon on the southern Adriatic coast is home to many migratory birds, including flamingos. "This is a problem not only regarding the transparency of this whole process, but also everything has happened with a complete disregard of the environmental importance of this area," said Denisa Kasa, of the Albanian Association for the Protection of the Environment (PPNEA).

"This area is one of the most important biodiversity hotspots in the Mediterranean," added Kasa.

Prime Minister Edi Rama on Friday downplayed the protests, insisting there was "no reason to worry" and added the project had yet to be approved.

He insisted that "top" world experts were involved in the plan and that the aim was "to make something unique".

Lebanon army chief to hold talks in Pakistan: source

AFP
Beirut

Lebanese army chief Rodolphe Haykal left Lebanon for Pakistan yesterday where he will meet his counterpart Asim Munir, the Lebanese military said, with a source telling AFP the visit is linked to broader Iran-US talks.

In a statement, the army said that Haykal "left Lebanon for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, at the invitation of his Pakistani counterpart, Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir".

A source with knowledge of the matter told AFP Haykal's visit is "linked to the Pakistani mediation to resolve" issues between the US and Iran who are negotiating an end to the Middle East regional war.

"Lebanon is critical part of the negotiations," the source added, requesting anonymity.

Munir is Islamabad's key negotiator between the US and Iran to end the war launched by America and Israel, which quickly spread across the region.

Lebanon was drawn into the war when Hezbollah attacked Israel on March 2 to avenge the February 28 US-Israeli killing of Iran's supreme leader.

Israel responded with an ex-

tensive campaign of airstrikes and a ground invasion that have killed nearly 3,600 people, and exchanges of fire with Hezbollah have not stopped despite an ongoing truce.

Iran insists Lebanon be included in any agreement with the US to end the regional war.

But Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said, in an interview with CNN aired on Friday, that Iran must stop interfering in Lebanon, which has engaged in its own direct talks with Israel.

"It's not your country, it's our country," he said. "It's not your job to interfere into our country."

"They are using Lebanon as a bargaining chip in their negotiation with the US. It's unacceptable," he added.

Lebanon's military said earlier yesterday that three soldiers were killed in an Israeli strike on the country's south.

A new conditional truce was announced by Lebanon and Israeli envoys this week in Washington.

It would require Hezbollah to stop firing, withdraw from near the Israeli border and would see Lebanon's army deploy to new "pilot zones" in the area, where it will exercise exclusive control.

But Hezbollah has rejected the agreement, demanding a full Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon.

Nato bolsters defences around Sweden, Finland

AFP
Brussels

Nato ground forces yesterday started operations aimed at boosting defences around Sweden and Finland, two of its newest members, the alliance said.

Following Russia's all-out 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the two Nordic countries abandoned decades of military non-alignment to join Nato. Finland entered the alliance in 2023 and Sweden did

likewise the following year.

The region around the two countries, part of Nato's north-eastern flank, "is one of the most strategically significant and environmentally challenging areas in the world," the US general who is Nato's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, Alexus Grynke, said in a statement.

Sweden and Finland lie on the Baltic Sea, the waterway used by Russian warships heading to or from Saint Petersburg or the Russian exclave of Kaliningrad.

Finland, which shares a border

with Russia, also fought two wars against the Soviet Union during World War II.

Nato in 2024 decided to establish a new multinational military presence in Finland called the Forward Land Forces (FLF) Finland, designed to act as a rapid-reaction unit.

That force, which began operations on Saturday, includes a Swedish battle group.

Nato has other similar land units in Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

Hegseth urges Europe on D-Day to counter present-day 'invasion' on beaches

AFP
Langrune-sur-Mer, France

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth yesterday urged Europe to counter what he termed an "invasion" of its coastline by migration, as he marked the 82nd anniversary of the World War II D-Day landings in northern France.

Hegseth also called on European countries to do more to contribute to their defence, in a speech at the American military cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer in Normandy.

He was however conspicuously set to skip the main international ceremony marking the anniversary of the landings, which heralded an end to World War II, later in the afternoon.

"Sadly, today different European beaches are stormed by different dangerous ideologies," Hegseth said.

On "beaches in Spain and Italy and Greece and Bulgaria, boats and men arrive," he said.

"When will European capitals do something about that invasion? Or is it too late?"

His comments echoed the argument of the administration of US President Donald Trump that mass migration represents a danger to European civilisation.

US Vice President JD Vance on Friday blamed Britain's handling of the murder of a white student by a Sikh man on what he called civilisational decline caused by an "invasion" of migrants.

"May we learn from this past?" Hegseth said in reference to the

pivotal involvement of American troops in the Allied landings.

"The men buried here fought in a war-fighting alliance where every partner... brought its full measure of industry, courage and sacrifice," he said in front of the 9,387 white crosses of American soldiers killed in action during the Battle of Normandy.

"Not empty slogans, not lavish summits, not communiques. Real allies doing real things, taking real losses for a shared cause worth fighting and dying for."

He said that while America "will lead" its "capable allies must be right there with us, shoulder-to-shoulder in the breach when it matters".

The Trump administration has also accused Europe of not pulling its weight to ensure the continent's



French Minister of the Armed Forces and Veterans Catherine Vautrin welcomes US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth at the Normandy American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer yesterday. (AFP)

security and has even floated pulling out of Nato.

"Peace is secured only through strength," he told the audience in-

cluding French armed forces Minister Catherine Vautrin, without referring explicitly to the US-Israeli war against Iran.

"And it's strength on both sides of the Atlantic, fortified by readiness, shared military capabilities and an unwavering political will," he added.

The Normandy landings on June 6, 1944, were the largest amphibious operation in history.

An armada of 6,939 ships and 132,700 British, Canadian, American, Belgian, Norwegian, and Polish troops stormed 80 kilometres (50 miles) of Normandy beaches.

The operation contributed decisively to the victory over Nazi Germany, which was also being squeezed by USSR forces to the east.

QNL launches second cycle of 'Keys to Palestine' initiative

Qatar National Library (QNL) has launched the second cycle of 'Keys to Palestine', its community-driven digital initiative dedicated to preserving the experiences and collective memory of Palestinians.

The launch was marked by an event titled 'Keys to Palestine: Memory, Stories, and Documentation', which brought together community members, content creators, researchers, and media professionals. The event opened by celebrating the submissions received during the initiative's first cycle and introducing the theme of the second cycle.

Building on its inaugural phase, the second cycle takes a multidisciplinary approach to preserving Palestinian memory, spanning



photography, film, oral history, and written storytelling.

The programme featured short film screenings and a photo collection from Palestine, produced by students of the Arab American

University in Palestine. The works offered a vivid window into contemporary Palestinian narratives and creative expression, grounding the event in the depth and resilience of Palestin-

ian culture before giving way to a panel discussion.

The panel brought together four distinguished voices across media, academia, and humanitarian advocacy. Bashar Hamdan, documentary filmmaker and producer at Al Jazeera Media Network, was joined by Dr Khalid al-Hroub, professor of Middle Eastern Studies and Arab Media at Northwestern University and Khaoula Boussemel, senior producer, AJ+ Arabic - Al Jazeera Media Network.

Joining remotely from Palestine was Dr Hanadi Dweikat, dean of the Faculty of Modern Media at the Arab American University in Palestine and chairwoman of the Board of the Filastiniyat Foundation. Together, they explored how



storytelling, in all its forms, can serve as both a means of cultural preservation and an act of collective memory.

"Qatar National Library believes in the profound power of storytelling to document history and preserve cultural identity. By supporting and expanding community-driven initiatives like 'Keys to Palestine', we aim to provide a meaningful platform for personal narratives, family memories, and underrepresented voices, ensur-

ing that the diverse stories and rich heritage of the Palestinian people are documented, safeguarded, and shared with future generations," said Rana Ahmed Alani, senior librarian, QNL.

The 'Keys to Palestine' initiative invites participation from Palestinian families in Qatar, across the diaspora, and in Palestine itself, as well as members of the wider Arab community, students, researchers, content creators, and cultural institutions.

Finland awards Climate Honours diploma to Bader Omar al-Dafa

On World Environment Day 2026, Finland awarded HE Bader Omar al-Dafa, executive director of the Global Dryland Alliance (GDA), Climate Honours diploma in recognition of his commitment to promoting sustainability and food security in dryland regions.

Finnish missions around the world grant Climate Honours diplomas to organisations and individuals leading the way in combating climate change. Through this initiative, Finland aims to encourage discussion on climate issues and highlights international actors working towards a shared and sustainable future.

Finland believes in the importance of recognising efforts to address environmental challenges. The Climate Honours initiative expresses gratitude and encouragement while drawing attention to impactful climate action.

Former president of Finland Tarja Halonen, who has served as co-chair of the United Nations Millennium Summit and the UN High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability, currently serves as land ambassador for the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification appreciated the important role of Qatar and other member countries of the Global Dryland Alliance:

"I find sustainable land management and agriculture as central tools for achieving the UN sustainable development goals. On the 15th anniversary of the initial initiative, I would like to congratulate Qatar and other member countries for establishing the Global Dryland Alliance, an



international organisation aimed to make drylands food secure and contributing to stability and peace in the world. HE Bader al-Dafa, for his long service as executive director of the GDA, truly deserves this Climate Honour," said Halonen.

The Climate Honours initiative serves not only as a tribute to persistent efforts, but also as a message emphasising the importance of cooperation across borders. "Our responsibility is to ensure that future generations can also enjoy a healthy planet. Close international cooperation is essential to secure opportunities for a good life for both present and future generations," added Juha Mustonen, ambassador of Finland to of Qatar.

Get set for ColorVerse experience

Qatar Calendar has announced the launch of the ColorVerse Experience, a next generation immersive entertainment attraction. Taking place at Katara Cultural Village's South Parking from July 15 to September 15, the experience will add a new family-focused attraction to Qatar's summer events calendar.

The ColorVerse Experience invites visitors on an interactive storytelling journey through the world of Colorama, a once vibrant realm that has lost all colour and vitality. Throughout the experience, visitors become "Restorers", tasked with reactivating the core RGB colour system, overcoming the colour-consuming creatures known as the "Munchers", and ultimately restoring balance and life to the world.

At the heart of the experience is HUE, a friendly guide who accompanies visitors through seven interactive zones as they embark on a mission to restore colour to Colorama. The journey begins in a grey and colourless world, where visitors discover that the Munchers have drained Colorama of its vibrancy. Guided by HUE, visitors take on the role of "Restorers",



completing a series of interactive challenges and activities to reactivate the red, green, and blue colour systems and gradually bring colour back to the world.

As the adventure unfolds, visitors work together to overcome the Munchers before reaching Colorama City, where they help restore colour and life to the entire city. The experience extends beyond the central mission through immersive environments, interactive installations, live stage performances, and opportunities to meet some of the characters featured throughout the journey, creating

an engaging and memorable experience for families and visitors of all ages.

Designed as a fully immersive walkthrough attraction, the experience combines innovative lighting, sound design, projection effects, motion elements, and interactive gameplay to create a multi-sensory environment that engages visitors of all ages. Through its blend of storytelling, technology, and collaborative participation, the attraction offers a unique entertainment experience for families, young people, and visitors.

Sport For All Track event sees tough competition at Aspire

QNA
Doha

The opening round of the Sport For All Track Series 2026 concluded successfully at the Aspire Indoor Running Track, organized by the Qatar Sports For All Federation under the umbrella of the Ministry of Sports and Youth. The event attracted strong participation, with more than 300 male and female competitors from various age groups, including children, adults, and senior citizens.

The competition was structured across several timed categories to accommodate participants of different ages. Adult runners aged 17 and above competed in races lasting between 15 and 30 minutes, while juniors aged 7 to 17 took part in a 10-minute race. Children aged 3 to 6 participated in a five-minute event. The format was designed to maximize participation by allowing competitors to complete as many laps as possible within the allotted time, ensuring fair opportunities for all entrants.

The series consists of four races, all scheduled to take place during June at the Aspire Indoor Track. The events provide participants with a unique sporting experience in a climate-control-



led environment, offering ideal conditions for running during the summer season.

Executive Director of the Qatar Sports For All Federation, Abdullah al-Dosari said that the inaugural edition of the Sport For All Track Series has made a strong and promising start, characterised by excitement and competitive spirit. He highlighted the significant turnout of families, noting that it reflects growing public awareness of the importance of running and its role in promoting health and active lifestyles.

Al-Dosari emphasised that

the federation places particular importance on summer sporting events that bring families together and encourage regular participation in physical activity. He also noted that registration remains open for the remaining rounds of the series through the Sport For All mobile application.

The initiative offers participants access to suitable indoor venues and encourages year-round engagement in running events as part of the federation's ongoing efforts to promote sports culture and increase participation in physical and recreational activities.

The four-race Aspire Indoor Track Series forms part of the Qatar Sports For All Federation's annual calendar of events and championships. The federation organizes dozens of races and community-based sports initiatives throughout the year, aimed at engaging people of all ages.

In total, more than 850 sports and community events are scheduled for the current year, in line with the vision and strategic plans of the Ministry of Sports and Youth to strengthen the culture of physical activity and establish sport as a way of life for the widest possible segment of society.

Al Jazeera Media to conduct podcast training in Misrata

The Al Jazeera Media Institute is organising a specialised training course titled "Podcast Production and Preparation" in Misrata, Libya, from July 5 to 9 in partnership with Al Jaid Foundation.

The course covers the fundamentals of podcast production, from developing the idea and preparing the content, through recording and audio editing skills, to publishing episodes and managing audio content across various digital platforms.

This course comes as part of the

Institute's efforts to enhance specialised media skills and transfer professional expertise to various Arab countries through training partnerships that contribute to developing the capabilities of those interested in digital content creation and modern media.

Al-Jaid Foundation for Community Entrepreneurship is a non-profit development organisation in Misrata, concerned with training young people, developing their skills, and supporting education and innovation.



Al Markhiya Gallery exhibition to host works of three artists

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Al Markhiya Gallery at Katara Art Center is organising the exhibition 'Between Yesterday and Today', opening on Tuesday. Featuring the works of artists Lulu M, Mawsoud Rashid al-Balushi, and Mubarak al-Malik, the exhibition offers an artistic exploration of the three artists' careers, highlighting the transformations in their creative experiences, the ideas that have evolved over time, and the artistic identities that have been

shaped through years of research, experimentation, and growth.

Through their new works, the artists showcase different stages of their artistic journeys, with each piece reflecting a unique signature and experience, while maintaining the common thread that united them in their early beginnings. The exhibition also provides visitors with an opportunity to compare the transformations in their artistic styles and creative visions over the past ten years.

The exhibition serves as a space for dialogue between the past and the present, documenting the evolution of the artists'

individual experiences and highlighting how accumulated expertise and experiences have shaped their current works, whether in terms of techniques, themes, or visual approaches.

The organisers emphasise that 'Between Yesterday and Today' is not merely a showcase of new artworks, but rather a journey of reflection on the paths of three artists who began from a common point before each embarking on his or her own unique journey, only to reunite this time in an artistic experience that celebrates growth, development, and continuity within the visual arts landscape.

