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Qatar, Egypt co-ordinate on de-escalation



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Co-operation and Egyptian Expatriates Badr Abdelatty. They discussed co-operation between the two countries, along with ways to support and strengthen it. Also discussed were mediation efforts between the US and Iran, in addition to the developments in Lebanon, the Gaza Strip, and the occupied Palestinian territories. The meeting also addressed co-ordinating efforts to support mediation aimed at reducing escalation, which contributes to strengthening security and stability in the region. The prime minister voiced the need for all parties to respond to the ongoing mediation efforts, which would open the way for addressing the root causes of the crisis through peaceful means and dialogue, and lead to reaching a sustainable agreement that prevents renewed escalation. (QNA)

New rules give Qatari families room to grow

Ministerial decision rings 20 changes for residential options

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter/QNA

Qatari families can now build higher, extend further and reshape their homes more freely under sweeping new rules approved by the Minister of Municipality.

HE Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah has issued a decision overhauling the 1989 regulations on architectural standards for buildings, introducing more than 20 changes to the rules governing residential villas and palaces. The aim, the minister's ministry said yesterday, is to give citizens more flexible options for designing and expanding their homes while protecting family privacy and the country's architectural character.

The ministry described the move as one of the most extensive reviews of villa and palace requirements in years, following a full study of what families need and the difficulties they face when building. The goal, it said, is greater family stability and better use of residential plots.

The headline changes affect how high homes can rise. Villas may now reach 16 metres, including the rooftop structure, while palaces can stand between 17 and 25 metres depending on plot size and design. For the first time, owners may add



HE Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attiyah.

a single internal mezzanine floor inside villas and palaces.

The rules also free up how homes can be laid out. A villa's ground floor can now be extended right up to the neighbouring boundary, subject to controls, and a first floor may be built above the external majlis, the guest reception hall, or over annexes. Families may also create a self-contained internal suite for a relative, and a separate service staircase for domestic staff and maintenance.

The external majlis itself can rise to between 7.5 and 10 metres, with the option of a mezzanine, and an external annex may gain a first floor of up to 7.5 metres.

To make fuller use of plots, several setback rules have been eased: a villa's first floor may now project up to two metres into the front setback, with side and rear setbacks reduced under planning controls. Decorative architectural projections are also allowed. (To Page 2)

Qatar in global Top 10 in everyday AI use

Qatar has ranked among the world's top ten nations for the practical use of artificial intelligence in everyday life, according to newly released Microsoft data for the first quarter of 2026.

The country's AI market reached around \$59mn in 2026, nearly doubling from about \$31mn in 2022, the Tasmu Digital Valley platform reported. Aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030, the country has pursued a systematic investment strategy across sectors including construction, energy and public administration. Its AI framework rests on six pillars: education, talent development, ethics, governance, scientific research

and data management – and productivity gains have already been identified in International Monetary Fund analyses. The impact has become increasingly visible through the Qatar Smart Program (Tasmu), which has improved mobility solutions and expanded digital services for citizens and residents alike. Several institutions have led the integration of AI into daily life, including Qatar Foundation, Hamad Bin Khalifa University and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. At this year's Web Summit, Qatar Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding with Scale AI to establish a regional centre for AI



development and nurture Qatari talent. The ministry has also forged partnerships with global

firms, including a co-operation agreement with PwC Middle East and OpenAI. (To Page 2)

Qatar denies closure of its airspace, flight suspension

Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) last night affirmed that the information being circulated on social media regarding the closure of Qatar's airspace or the suspension of flight operations is inaccurate. In a statement yesterday, QCAA further clarified that the current Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) is intended to identify alternative air routes to ensure continued provision of air navigation services at the highest levels of safety and efficiency, in light of the current circumstances and in accordance with internationally recognised standards and practices. QCAA urged everyone to obtain information only from official sources and to refrain from circulating rumours or sharing unverified information. (QNA)

Qatari museum in TIME's world list



Qatar Foundation's (QF) Lawh Wa Qalam: M F Husain Museum has been named one of TIME World's Greatest Places 2026, the magazine's annual list recognising 100 extraordinary destinations across the globe. The recognition marks a major milestone for the institution following its opening in November 2025, cementing its place as one of the world's standout cultural destinations and as a new addition to Qatar's arts and culture landscape.

Based in QF's Education City, Lawh Wa Qalam: M F Husain Museum is the world's first and largest institution dedicated to Maqbool Fida Husain, one of the most influential figures in the history of modern art. The museum traces Husain's artistic journey through over 150 works and objects, including paintings, sculpture, film, tapestry, photography, poetry, installations, and personal items that illuminate his perspectives and creative process. (To Page 2)

Trump to ask Israel to hold back after Iranian attack

Airspace closures, escalation follow as Israel violates truce to hit Beirut

Agencies
Washington/Tehran/Beirut

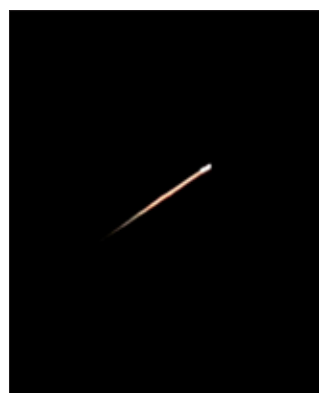
US President Donald Trump said yesterday he will call Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to urge him not to retaliate against Iranian missile strikes on Israel, news outlet Axios reported.

"I am going to call Bibi right now and tell him not to retaliate," Trump was quoted as saying by Axios journalist Barak Ravid in a phone interview, using the Israeli leader's nickname.

"Each of them had their fun. Israel had its strike and Iran had its strike. We don't need another one," Trump said, according to excerpts of which Ravid posted on X.

Israeli military chief Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir however vowed that the military would strike Iran "with force" upon receiving orders, after the Islamic republic fired missiles at Israel.

Yesterday's missile barrage was Iran's first against Israel since an April ceasefire took hold in the Middle East war, and Trump voiced concern it could set back negotiations.



A streak of light illuminates the sky during a missile attack from Iran towards Jerusalem yesterday. (Reuters)

"The Iranian strikes didn't hurt anybody. Hopefully Israel is not going to retaliate. If Bibi strikes them back it's just gonna keep going like the last 47 years, or the last 3,000 years," the US president said.

"We are very close to a final deal with Iran. It is going to be a good deal. I don't want it to blow up because of what is happening now," he added.

Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards called yesterday's attack a "warning" after Israel struck Beirut's southern suburbs earlier in the day, threatening wider strikes in the event of repeated aggression.

An April 8 ceasefire had halted

major hostilities between Iran, Israel and the United States.

But efforts to turn the truce into a settlement have repeatedly stalled, and yesterday's launches were sure to further dampen hopes for a lasting peace as the war reached its 100th day.

In a separate interview with Fox News, Trump said the Iranian strikes were not going to help negotiations, which were "very close" to reaching an agreement. "We're very close. I would say an agreement would be signed on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday of this coming week. And now this takes place."

He urged Iran to "get back to the table and make a deal."

Trump also criticised Israel's strikes on Beirut yesterday, saying he was "not happy about it."

The White House did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) says it launched ballistic missiles at Ramat David Air Base, about 20km from the city of Haifa in northern Israel.

It said the Israeli air base was the "source of aggressions" launched against southern Lebanon and the southern suburbs of Beirut.

Iran has closed the western part of the country's airspace until further notice, the semi-official news agency Tasnim has reported. (To Page 11)

Unveiled: Updated QR5, 10, 50 banknotes

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

The Qatar Central Bank (QCB) yesterday announced the issuance of updated versions of the QR5, QR10 and QR50 banknotes as part of a phased revision of the country's fifth series currency, while assuring the public that existing notes will remain legal tender and continue to circulate normally.

In a statement posted on its official X platform, QCB said the changes are being introduced in accordance with the laws in force in Qatar. The modifications include updates to the official state emblem of Qatar, the Arabic numerals appearing on the notes, and the issue date.

The central bank stressed that the previous editions of the QR5, QR10 and QR50 banknotes issued under the fifth series before these changes will remain in circulation without any impact on their validity or usability. Individuals and businesses will continue to be able to use both the existing and updated notes for all transactions. (To Page 12)

Minister of Environment meets UAE's ambassador



HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met yesterday with the United Arab Emirates' ambassador to Qatar Saeed Abdullah al-Qamzi. They reviewed aspects of co-operation between the two countries and ways to enhance collaboration in the fields of environment and climate change, and discussed prospects for further developing bilateral relations. - QNA

MoFA secretary-general meets UAE ambassador



HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi met yesterday with the United Arab Emirates' ambassador to Qatar Saeed Abdullah al-Qamzi. They reviewed co-operation, relations between the two countries, and ways to support and strengthen them. Additionally, they discussed topics of common interest. - QNA

PM congratulates Denmark's Frederiksen on re-election

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on the occasion of her re-election for a new term. - QNA

Prime minister congratulates newly appointed Senegal PM

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Senegal's Ahmadou Alhamineou Mohamed Lo on the occasion of his appointment as prime minister. - QNA

Al-Khulaifi holds phone call with Syrian minister

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi held a telephone conversation yesterday with Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Asaad al-Shaibani. They discussed

avenues for deepening and expanding bilateral co-operation, along with the evolving situation in Syria and the mediation efforts between the US and Iran. HE Dr al-Khulaifi reiterated Qatar's full support for Syria's sovereignty and unity. - QNA

Consultation with A-G on National Human Rights Action Plan continues

Consultative sessions on Qatar's National Human Rights Action Plan (2026-30) continued yesterday as part of the ongoing efforts led by the committee responsible for drafting the plan, with the participation of HE the Attorney-General Dr Issa bin Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi. The consultative session was hosted by the Public Prosecution and attended by the HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad.

During the session, participants reviewed a number of issues related to the mandate and responsibilities of the Public Prosecution, while also discussing proposals and policy directions aimed at supporting the development of the



National Human Rights Action Plan. Discussions focused on ensuring the plan's alignment with national legislation, public

policies, and international best practices in the field of human rights.

Participants emphasised the importance of maintaining co-ordination and consultation among relevant national institutions, reflecting Qatar's collaborative approach to the development and implementation of national strategies and reinforcing institutional cooperation in the promotion and protection of human rights.

The session also highlighted the value of integrating the perspectives and expertise of key stakeholders to ensure that the forthcoming action plan effectively addresses national priorities while strengthening the country's human rights framework. - QNA

Qatar joins ministerial session of Zero Waste Forum 2026

Qatar took part in the High-Level Ministerial Session convened within the Zero Waste Forum 2026 in Istanbul, Türkiye.

The session debated the subject of "Post-Harvest Loss Reduction: A Strategic Perspective on Food Supply Chain Efficiency", with the participation of several ministers, top-echelon officials, and experts from around the globe.

Qatar's delegation was led by HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Municipality Eng. Ali bin Mohammed al-Ali.

Delivering Qatar's remarks before the session, HE al-Ali affirmed that reducing post-harvest loss and strengthening the efficiency of food supply chains are a core pillar for achieving food security and environmental sustainability amid the increasing challenges associated with climate change, growing demand for food, as well as the mounting pressures on natural resources.

He said that Qatar gives overriding priority to the issue of food loss and food waste as part of its na-



tional priorities, affirming that as part of the National Food Security Strategy 2030, the nation works to prepare an integrated national programme to reduce this issue in sync with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The official clarified that Qatar is executing a national project to establish a baseline for the food loss and food waste indicators, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), along-

side a variety of national partners.

This project, he noted, intends to provide accurate data that helps advance policies and programmes, as well as gauge the progress made in this domain.

Qatar has taken practical steps to reinforce agricultural production efficiency and reduce food loss through different phases of food value chains, HE al-Ali said.

He added that these steps include developing sustainable agricultural practices, optimising post-harvest practices, and

enhancing logistical services, as well as cooling and storage chains, thereby helping improve the quality of agricultural products and ultimately reducing loss during transportation and distribution.

In addition, HE al-Ali reviewed the key national initiatives and projects in the areas of environmental sustainability and waste management which have contributed to fostering environmental service efficiency and supporting the pivot toward the circular economy, in alignment with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy.

He further stated that international co-operation, sharing expertise, and advancing innovative solutions serve as core pillars in building more efficient and sustainable food supply chains.

On the sidelines of the forum, HE al-Ali held a number of bilateral meetings to boost international relations and broaden mutual co-operation in the areas of shared interest. - QNA

New rules give Qatari families room to grow

From Page 1

On privacy, villa boundary walls may now reach 3.40m and palace walls, 5m.

Homeowners may also fit mail and delivery boxes to their outer walls under set specifications.

The ministry said the rules will apply uniformly across all municipalities and take effect once the decision is published in the Official Gazette.

A workshop will be held for consultants and engineering firms to explain how the changes will be put into practice, in line with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

The Qatar Society of Engineers (QSE) welcomed the decision, numbered (108) of 2026, calling it a significant step towards improving the residential environment and offering families more flexible so-

lutions in step with modern living.

In a statement yesterday, the QSE said that the higher villas, mezzanine floors, expanded annexes and reception areas, eased setbacks and regulated extensions would together help citizens make the best use of their land while balancing privacy, comfort and functionality.

The QSE said it supported all efforts to develop the construction and housing sector, and thanked the ministry for its work in keeping building regulations abreast of the country's urban growth.

Its board chairperson, Eng. Amna Mohammed al-Naama, said the changes reflected an advanced vision of urban planning attuned to the real needs of the Qatari family.

The greater design flexibility, she said, would promote quality of life and family stability and spare

residents complex or costly building solutions.

Allowing mezzanine floors, ancillary structures and reception areas, along with an independent internal suite for a family member and the new rules on heights and setbacks, would let engineers and consulting offices produce more creative and efficient designs, al-Naama added.

This, she said, would keep pace with the nation's urban development and raise both functional and investment value, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

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Qatari museum in TIME's world list

From Page 1

Its architecture reflects Husain's vision, having been designed by renowned architect Martand Khosla from a concept sketch by Husain himself.

The museum further strengthens the QF's role as a provider of opportunities for people from Qatar and around the world to engage with art, with over 100 public artworks on display throughout Education City, a place where art and culture intersect with learning, innovation, and exploration.

TIME described Lawh Wa Qalam: M F Husain Museum as an institution that extends far beyond static display, highlighting its role in bringing Husain's life and work into dialogue with South Asia, the Arab world, and the wider Global South.

The magazine also highlighted Seerof al ardh - Husain's final masterpiece, incorporated into the museum's architecture - alongside never-before-seen works from his Arab Civilisation series.

"To be recognised as one of the TIME World's Greatest Places of 2026 is a significant accolade for Lawh Wa Qalam: M F Husain Museum," said Kholoud M al-Ali, executive director of Community Engagement and Programming, QF.



"This museum honours the extraordinary legacy of M F Husain while opening up new conversations across cultures, histories, and geographies," she said. "We are proud to see the museum acknowledged as a place where art, learning, and cross-cultural dialogue come together, and where audiences from throughout the world can experience and interact with Husain's work in all its richness and continuing resonance."

Spanning over 3,000sqm, the museum is a living, inspirational institution where art, culture, and learning converge, bringing together original works, archival materials, multimedia installations, and spaces for reflection, discovery, and dialogue.

Qatar in global top 10 in everyday AI use

From Page 1

Commenting on the developments, Non-Resident Fellow at the Middle East Council on Global Affairs Nayef al-Nabit (pictured) told the Qatar News Agency (QNA) that success should not be measured by usage rates alone, but by the readiness of institutions and society to engage with technological change responsibly.

The greatest challenge, he said, was not the speed of adoption but the establishment of regulatory frameworks capable of ensuring artificial intelligence (AI) is used responsibly and sustainably.

He argued that investment in

digital infrastructure should be viewed as a long-term bet on Qatar's competitiveness and economic resilience.

Looking ahead, al-Nabit expected skills such as critical thinking, analytical reasoning and continuous learning to grow in value, stressing that investment in human capital would remain the decisive factor in realising AI's benefits.

Countries advance not merely by acquiring technology, he concluded, but by cultivating societies equipped to engage with change.

Qatar's digital transformation began in 2003 with the launch of its e-government portal, advanc-



ing through the Qatar Digital Government 2020 Strategy in 2014.

Today it continues to promote digital entrepreneurship through bodies such as the Digital Incubation Centre and Tasmu Accelerator. - QNA

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُسْلِمُونَ! نَحْمَدُ اللَّهَ الَّذِي بَارَأَ لَنَا مِنْكُمْ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ
صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ

We extend our heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies to

Mr. Khaled Ali Al Ansari

Chairman of the Board of Gasal,

and to all members of Al Ansari family

on the passing of his sister
by God's will.

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

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

The Board Members, Chief Executive Officer,
and all employees of





A panel discussion during the forum.



Dignitaries at the forum. PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

QF rolls out Rasekh framework for international schools

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

In a major initiative to promote cultural identity as well as Arabic language and connect it with global academic standards, Qatar Foundation (QF) has launched the accreditation framework for its innovative programme, Rasekh.

At a forum held at Multaqa yesterday at Education City, Sheikha Noof Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani, vice-president (Strategic Educational Initiatives) at the QF's Pre-University Education (PUE),

announced the details of the initiative.

The QF also introduced the first cohort of participating institutions from Qatar and the wider region, which will serve as a foundation for Rasekh's future expansion.

The event 'Rasekh Strategic Forum' was attended by QF chief executive Yousif al-Naama, PUE president Abeer al-Khalifa, private international school leaders, and local and global education partners.

Rasekh works to align international curricula with the local context, integrate core values into daily school life and channel in-

novation toward community needs and local challenges while supporting schools in promoting Arabic as a language of learning and knowledge development.

Speaking at the event, Sheikha Noof said: "Rasekh represents a practical step forward in the development of international education in Qatar."

"It looks at educational quality from a broader perspective, encompassing not only what students learn, but how they perceive themselves within that learning, and their connection to their language, environment, and values," she said.

The official said that the QF has established a framework that supports international schools in implementing global standards in the local context, and brings the educational experience closer to the student's life.

"We want the international education experience to provide students with a strong foundation of belonging and confidence, empowering them to contribute to their communities and interact with the world consciously and capably," she explained.

The new phase also saw the launch of the awareness campaign "Roots", designed to bring the message of Rasekh closer to the community through a symbolic image that reflects how the initiative promotes language, instills values, and consolidates identity.

The campaign has three main messages: "Roots that Empower the Arabic Language", "Roots that Instill Values", and "Roots that

Nurture Identity", with an official slogan, *Toward an Education That Deepens Roots and Creates Impact*.

Featuring contemporary Arabic visual identity, Roots's digital materials are intended to make Rasekh's message resonate with parents, students, and the wider community.

The forum brought together school leaders and international educational institutions to discuss how Rasekh accreditation provides schools with a practical, measurable roadmap for aligning the education they offer with their local context without compromising global academic standards.

Maryam al-Hajri, executive director of Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships at the PUE, gave a presentation on the initiative as a whole.

The forum also featured a panel discussion with Farida Aboudan, head of Education Sector at

Unesco Regional Office for the Gulf States and Yemen; Mary Tadros, IB Development & Recognition senior manager for Africa, Europe and the Middle East; Fatima Hassan Fadlallah, Qatar country manager, Partnership for Education, at Cambridge University Press and Assessment' and Samia Bishara, managing director of Tarsheed.

Rasekh's first cohort of schools include: QF schools; Al Maha Academy for Boys, Al Maha Academy for Girls, Al Jazeera Academy, Arab International Academy in Doha, Arab International Academy in Lusail, Amman Baccalaureate School in Jordan, and Housam Eddine Hariri High School in Lebanon.

This inaugural cohort will help to build applied models demonstrating how international schools can adopt the framework to elevate educational quality, strengthen school character, and improve student outcomes.

Qatar sponsors 49th Telders International Law Moot Court Competition at The Hague

Qatar took part in sponsoring the 49th Telders International Law Moot Court Competition, held at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, in partnership with Leiden University in the Netherlands.



Qatar's ambassador to the Netherlands Dr Mutlaq bin Majid al-Qahitani presented the awards to the top moot court participants in the presence of prominent legal and diplomatic figures, as well as a group of judges from the ICJ.

The competition is recognised as the largest Europe-wide moot court in general international law.

The competition challenges law students to argue a fictitious dispute before the ICJ, thereby developing their legal skills and deepening their understanding of international law. - QNA



Qatar Charity's new Board of Directors.



Qatar Charity elects new Board of Directors

Qatar Charity (QC) has convened its Ordinary General Assembly meeting for the 2026 term.

During the session, a new Board of Directors was elected to serve a three-year term.

The election process resulted in the appointment of eight board members: HE Sheikh Ha-

mad bin Nasser Jassim al-Thani, Mohammed bin Abdul Wahed Ali al-Hammadi, Saad bin Mohammed Saad al-Jabara al-Rumalhi, Mohammed bin Nasser Mohammed al-Fuhayd al-Hajri, Youssef bin Rashid Yousef al-Khater, Rabiah bin Mohammed Ali Khamis al-Kaabi, Abdulrahman bin Abduljalil Abdelghani Nasser

al-Abdulghani, and Youssef bin Ahmed Rashid al-Kuwari.

Following this, the newly elected Board of Directors convened, where HE Sheikh Hamad was elected as chairman of Qatar Charity's Board of Directors, and al-Hammadi was elected as vice-chairman.

QU showcases one year of progress in responsible AI for humanitarian action

Qatar University (QU)'s Department of Public Health at the College of Health Sciences (CHS) hosted a high-level panel discussion highlighting the achievements of the "Strengthening AI Capacity for Humanitarian Organisations in Qatar" initiative, marking one year since its launch and outlining its next phase.

The event brought together people from Qatar and around the world to share the initiative's results in clear, easy-to-understand language, focusing on responsible artificial intelligence (AI), cross-sector teamwork, and real-world applications in humanitarian work.

The event commenced with welcoming remarks by Dr Karam Adawi, head of the CHS's Department of Public Health, who welcomed attendees and introduced the key themes of the discussions.

Since its launch, the initiative led by Dr Diana Maddah has established Qatar's first co-ordinated technical working group on AI in humanitarian action, bringing together representatives from government entities,

humanitarian organisations, academia, and international partners, including the UK's embassy in Qatar, represented at the event by First Secretary Dr Kwalombota Kwalombota.

The group aims to support the responsible adoption of AI in humanitarian contexts by promoting collaboration, ethical guidance, and shared learning across institutions.

The initiative has also contributed to developing the first national evidence base on Qatar's humanitarian sector's readiness to adopt AI within, supported by a peer-reviewed scoping review that connects national priorities with global research and practice in the field.

One of the initiative's outcomes was the development of the first nationally endorsed ethical guidance for the use of AI in humanitarian action in Qatar and the region.

This milestone reinforces Qatar's position in responsible technology governance and supports sustainable development ef-



orts aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030, particularly in the areas of human and social development.

During the session, participants were also introduced to a prototype of the Humanitarian AI Observatory, designed as a practical platform for knowledge-sharing and evidence-based decision-making among relevant institutions.

The session also provided a platform for exchanging expertise and institutional perspectives, while highlighting the growing level of coordination among entities working in the field of humanitarian AI.

This reflects the QU's continued commitment to its national role in advancing scientific research, innovation, and community engagement.

"By bringing together national and international partners, we are contributing to shaping ethical, culturally grounded

approaches to artificial intelligence in humanitarian contexts, with a clear focus on real-world impact," said DHS dean Prof Hanan Abdul Rahim.

"Through this initiative, the Department of Public Health at the QU is helping to build the capacity needed to ensure that AI is used responsibly and effectively to address humanitarian challenges," Dr Adawi said.

As the initiative moves into its next stage, the project will concentrate on putting ideas into action through mentorship programmes, creating new ways to use AI, and working more closely with international partners, including those in the UK.

These efforts will help improve Qatar's innovation and research environment while strengthening the QU's role in creating knowledge-based solutions that tackle national issues and promote sustainable human, social, and economic growth.

Lekhwiya hosts joint exercise in urban search and rescue

Lekhwiya is hosting a trilateral joint urban search and rescue exercise, under the patronage of HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

Specialised teams from Qatar, France and Syria are taking part in the exercise, which will run from June 7-12.

These are the Qatar International Search and Rescue Group, the France2 search and rescue teams, and the Syria Civil Defence.

The exercise featured real-life scenario simulation, enabling the teams to test their capabilities in handling complex situations.

This aims to facilitate the exchange of expertise and strengthen joint co-ordination in carrying out international missions. - QNA

Women leaders and mothers share real-life journeys at 'She Speaks: Tell All'



'She Speaks: Tell All' brought together more than 30 mothers and women from diverse backgrounds.

More than 30 mothers and women from diverse backgrounds gathered for "She Speaks: Tell All", a Mother's Month celebration presented by Doha Women Forum and Golden CMC Events & Management, on May 30 at the Living Room, Park Hyatt Doha.

Created as a community-driven initiative dedicated to empowering and supporting women, the event provided a welcoming platform for honest conversations about motherhood, identity, leadership, family life, and personal growth.

The afternoon featured talks and interactive discussions led by inspiring women, each sharing personal stories and reflections on the realities of balancing motherhood with their professional and personal aspirations.

Opening the first session were Rhana Kurdi, founder and chief executive of Skydrops Sustainable Water Technologies; and Susanna Ingalls, co-founder and Chief Brand Officer of Urban Point.

Moderated by Renata Gabay, the discussion explored the challenges and rewards of leading successful businesses while raising a family.

The conversation highlighted an important message that resonated with many attendees: behind every leadership title and successful career is also a woman carrying one of life's most meaningful responsibilities - being a mother.

The second session featured Joelle Zakhour, influencer and autism advocate, and Dr Afraa al-Noaimi, cultural strategist and entrepreneur.

Moderated by Azqa Haroon, the discussion focused on advocacy, influence, purpose, and the different ways women create meaningful impact in their communities.

The speakers reflected on balancing public roles with family responsibilities and shared their perspectives on what success truly means.

"Beyond professional achievements, the discussion emphasised the importance of nurturing relationships,

uplifting others, and passing meaningful values to future generations," said Conchita Ponce, founder of Doha Women Forum.

The final speaker session featured Mariam Ammar, style coach and makeover expert, who encouraged women to embrace confidence, self-expression, and personal identity throughout every stage of motherhood.

Her presentation was followed by a fun and engaging colour analysis activity that invited audience participation.

One memorable moment of the afternoon was a special performance by young singer Lucia de Vera, who serenaded guests with the song *Thanks To You*.

As roses and gifts were distributed to attendees during the performance, many mothers were visibly moved, creating a touching conclusion to the programme.

Following the event, guests continued networking and building new connections over light refreshments.

QPC offers exclusive benefits, discounts for members

The Qatar Press Centre (QPC) has expanded its membership programme to provide journalists and media professionals with a wide range of professional and lifestyle benefits, reinforcing its role as a hub for both media development and community support.

Designed as a comprehensive support system, the programme combines professional privileges with practical services that benefit members and their families. In addition to discounted access to training workshops and media development courses, members can enjoy exclusive offers across hospitality, dining, healthcare, automotive services, entertainment, shopping, personal care, and fitness sectors.

QPC partnered with 44 hotels and resorts across Qatar, offering preferential rates on accommodation, dining, spa services, and leisure facilities. Participating properties include leading hospitality brands such as Souq Al Wakra Hotel by Tivoli, Marsa Malaz Kempinski, Mondrian Doha, The Torch Doha, Banana Island Resort Doha by Anantara, Sheraton Grand Doha Resort & Convention Hotel, Hilton



The QPC programme combines professional privileges with practical services that benefit members and their families.

Doha The Pearl, St. Regis Doha, and Andaz Doha.

Members also benefit from discounts at 47 restaurants and cafes representing a variety of international cuisines. Participating venues include L'wazaar Seafood Market, Sukar Pasha, Wild & The Moon, Musafir Doha, Twiga Doha, Pizza Hut, Bennigan's, Fuddrucker's, Ponderosa Steakhouse, and Shawarma Reem. Discounts generally range from 10% to 20%.

Recognising the importance of health and well-being, the Centre has partnered with 15 hospitals and medical centres, offering discounts of 10% to 30% on a broad range of services. These include consultations, health screenings, dental care, physiotherapy, specialised treatments, inpatient and outpatient services, wellness packages, and selected complementary consultations. Partner institutions include Al Ahli Hospital, Doha Clinic

Hospital, Aman Hospital, Abeer Medical Centre Qatar, Naseem Al Rabeeh Medical Centre, Atlas Medical Centre, and American Hospital Clinics.

Membership benefits also extend to everyday services through partnerships with 18 organisations across the automotive, travel, maintenance, and home services sectors.

Partners include Jetour Qatar, Dallah Driving Academy, Avis Car Rental, Auto Spa, Al Muftah Group and its affiliated companies, Ali Bin Ali Travel & Tourism, and King Travel & Tourism. Members can access discounted vehicle purchases, driving courses, car rentals, maintenance services, thermal insulation, paint protection, laundry and cleaning services, and travel bookings.

For family entertainment, members receive special offers at Doha Quest and Meryal Waterpark. Doha Quest provides a 20% discount on admission tickets, while Meryal Waterpark offers reduced ticket prices for members and accompanying guests.

QPC has also partnered with 10 businesses in the retail and personal care sectors, including Al Jaber Watches, Blue Diamond Group,



Arabian Oud, Yateem Optician & Occhiali, Banyan Tree Doha Spa, and Solidere salons. Benefits include discounts on watches, jewellery, perfumes, eyewear, cosmetics, and spa and grooming services, with some offers reaching up to 60%.

To promote healthy lifestyles, the Centre has partnered with Dallah Gym, Dallah Gym Champion Factory, BMI Fitness, and Strive. Members can enjoy discounted

memberships, access to fitness and wellness facilities, personal training sessions, recovery areas, and other health-focused services.

Through this extensive network of partnerships, the QPC aims to provide tangible value to journalists and media professionals, enhancing their quality of life while strengthening the Centre's role as a leading professional and service-oriented platform for Qatar's media community.

CMU-Q hosts 'Meeting of the Minds' research symposium

Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar (CMU-Q), a Qatar Foundation partner university, recently hosted its flagship undergraduate research symposium, Meeting of the Minds 2026.

This year's event brought together 65 research projects across two presentation streams – in-person and online – to showcase academic ingenuity during a challenging semester. The event included an online stream for students who, because of the regional conflict, completed the final weeks of the semester remotely.

In the in-person presentation stream, Khalid al-Abdulla, a Biological Sciences graduate from the Class of 2026, earned first place in the Extensive Research category for his honours thesis, "Two isoforms, two functions? Investigating hnRNPA2B1 roles in triple-negative breast cancer." Mentored by Prof Ihab Younis and Mariam Elesnawi, al-Abdulla's oncology research investigated overexpressed biological mechanisms to reduce aggressive tumour cell progression.

In the online stream, first place in the Extensive Research category went to Information Systems sophomores, Iroda Ibrohimova and Madina Mirzatayeva, mentored by Prof Gianni Di Caro, for their innovative computational work titled, "Generating synthetic datasets to



One of the winners with officials.

train deep models for counting in large-scale animal groups."

Michael Trick, dean of CMU-Q, said: "At Carnegie Mellon, we aim to have a transformative impact on society through learning and inquiry," he said. "I am very proud of these students who prioritised knowledge during weeks of uncertainty. As an educator, I am deeply touched when I see students clear-eyed and focused in challenging times."

The symposium also recognised foundational work for projects in the early stages. For the in-person stream, the top Early Research award went to Mohamed Wael Shikfa, mentored by Prof Ryan Ri-

ley, for his project, "Magnobots: Scalable 3." In the online stream, Ragad Sadaqa claimed the top spot for the biomedical study, "Effects of ECM proteins on PSM88 expression in metastatic breast cancer," under the guidance of mentors Prof Mohamed Bouaouina and Humera Inayat.

Two specialty awards were also presented. Julia Nicole Castillo won the Social and Environment Impact Award for the in-person stream for "Building a sustainable foundation: Replicating sustainability research in marketing," mentored by Prof Varun Sharma.

Jawaher Alsayed won for her

project in the online stream, "Investigating the solubility of flavonoids in proline and glycerol deep eutectic solvents for antibacterial therapy," mentored by Professor Simon Faulkner.

The Best Poster Design Award went to Ghani Raissov in the in-person stream for "EMG-based motor intent decoding for assistive robotic hand control, mentored by Professor Jennifer Bruder. In the online stream, the award went to Peidi Dong for the artificial intelligence inquiry, "TartanMaroon: When is multi-agent AI actually worth it?" mentored by Prof Houada Bouamor, Yunze Xiao, and Devi Kurup.



QNA trains QU media students

The Qatar News Agency (QNA), represented by its Training Centre, launched yesterday a specialised two-month training programme for a number of Qatar University (QU) media students. The programme aims to provide them with practical experience in various fields of news and media work.

This two-month programme comes within the framework of ongoing co-operation between QNA and Qatar University to support and develop promising national media professionals.

QNA Training Centre has prepared a comprehensive training programme for the participating students, designed to introduce them to the media work environment at the Qatar News Agency and equip them with the essential knowledge and skills related to journalistic and news work.

The programme includes field visits and practical training in various editorial departments at the agency. This allows stu-

dents to observe the stages of news content production, editing, follow-up, fact-checking, and publishing processes, as well as learn about the professional roles played by different departments in supporting the agency's media mission.

The programme also provides participants with the opportunity for direct interaction with media and professional staff at QNA, and exposure to best practices in news reporting. This helps bridge the gap between academic theory and practical application, enhancing their readiness to enter the media job market in the future.

This programme reflects Qatar News Agency's commitment to strengthening partnerships with national academic institutions and contributing to the development of a generation of qualified media professionals capable of keeping pace with the rapid advancements in the media and communications sector. (QNA)

Barzan Youth Centre to launch its 2026 summer programmes

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Barzan Youth Centre is preparing to launch its summer programmes, which include a wide range of activities and events for empowering youth and harnessing their potential. The centre will also introduce a number of creative initiatives and ideas that contribute to a comprehensive summer season combining purposeful entertainment with the development of personal and leadership skills.

In this context, the centre has held a comprehensive preparatory meeting to review the features of the upcoming summer programme and discuss mechanisms for developing the activi-

ties and events. Ali Ayashi, the centre's supervisor, affirmed that Barzan Youth Centre continues its efforts to provide a supportive and stimulating environment for young people, enabling them to discover their abilities, refine their talents, and enhance their community engagement.

He pointed out that investing in youth is a fundamental pillar for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Qatar National Vision 2030. For his part, Activities Supervisor Ahmed al-Maliki explained that this year's summer programme will feature a diverse range of high-quality programmes that align with young people's interests and aspirations, focusing on developing practical and leadership skills and promoting the values of responsibility,

volunteerism, and innovation.

Participants in the meeting emphasised the importance of translating the directives of Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman al-Thani, the centre's president, into high-quality programmes and initiatives that are based on excellence and creativity, and contribute to preparing a generation of young people capable of actively serving their nation and community.

The meeting concluded by emphasising the importance of integrating the roles of the various work teams and supervisors to ensure the success of the 2026 summer activity and to provide outstanding programmes that leave a lasting positive impact on the participants and contribute to building conscious and creative youth leaders.

QNA launches training course on 'News Podcasting'

Qatar News Agency (QNA) yesterday held a training course on "news podcasting".

The three-day course is part of the training plan pursued by the agency's Training Centre for 2026.

Delivered by Fawzy Ghabara, a media specialist and researcher at QNA, the course is intended to familiarise participants with the art of news podcasts, their various types, as well as their tools and modern production techniques.

It likewise aims to develop participants' skills in preparing and presenting

news audio content and help them leverage podcast technologies effectively in media work, ultimately contributing to the generation of attractive and professional content.

The course is boiled down to a raft of training themes, foremost among which is identifying the concept of podcasts, their types and technical formats, as well as clarifying the disparities between podcasting, broadcasting, and vodcasting.

In addition, the course offers training on podcast writing in terms of language and style, alongside the content of news

stories and the mechanisms for conducting relevant interviews.

Overall, the course is laser-focused on the skills of administering conversations, conducting interviews, and showcasing the most salient Arabic and global podcast programmes and platforms.

This course is part of QNA's efforts, represented by its Training Centre, to advance the national media workforce and keep pace with the rapid advancements across various media domains, thereby enhancing media content and production. (QNA)

QAPCO
شركة قطر البتروكيماويات
QATAR PETROCHEMICAL COMPANY



QAPCO invites qualified buyers participate in the following Auction

Sl No.	Reference and Description	Submission of information & interest in Participation	Auction publication in Via E-mail	Auction fee (non-refundable)	Auction Bond	Auction Closing Date
1	PD-AUC-04-2026 Sale of 6 Used Forklifts	10 th June 2026	11 th June 2026	QAR 500	QAR 35,000	23 rd June 2026 12:00 Noon

i. Interested bidders to communicate their willingness to bid and contact details to QAPCO Procurement (procurement@qapco.com.qa) indicating company name, address, telephone, official e-mail...etc. latest by the deadline for Submission of Information & Interest for Bidding indicated above. Reference Number and Description of the Auction must be mentioned in the email.

Non-refundable Auction fee indicated above is payable to QAPCO through QNB account # 0013-001688-060 only at any QNB branch by 10th June 2026.

Auction Documents will be sent via email to the confirmed bidders' E-mail. Auction Document will be sent only after submitting the evidence of the tender fee payment by the bidder to QAPCO Procurement (procurement@qapco.com.qa).

ii. QAPCO shall reply with the auction documents along with the necessary instructions and guidelines for the bid submission.

iii. Auction Bond (Bank Guarantee): Original tender bond must be submitted by hand to the following address at the latest by the Auction closing date & time:

Qatar Petrochemical Company (QAPCO) Q.P.J.S.C.
QAPCO HEADQUARTERS, P.O. Box 756
Building: 12, Zone No. 92, Street No. 556
Mesaieed, Qatar
Tel: 4033 0000 / 4033 8000
Attention: Procurement Group Manager
Bidder to attach copy of Auction bond to the offer. Offer without Auction Bond will not be considered.

Clarifications: Communicate queries with auction reference and description to procurement@qapco.com.qa

For more information about QAPCO, please visit our website: www.qapco.com

QNB Group bats for employee well-being

QNB Group has launched a comprehensive and unified strategic framework to enhance employee wellness by integrating the key dimensions of holistic well-being, mental, physical, and financial, within the workplace, in support of sustainable performance and an enhanced quality of professional life.

The launch of the framework reflects the group's continued commitment to investing in human capital as one of the key pillars for corporate success, while strengthening QNB's position as an employer of choice by providing an integrated work environment that supports employee well-being, enhances their professional experience, and contributes to improving performance, productivity, and innovation.

The initiative aligns with QNB's broader strategy to strengthen long-term investment in employee wellbeing, enhancing employee engagement and job satisfaction, and further bolstering the workplace experience.

The programme also aims to empower employees to improve their lifestyles and foster a healthy, safe, and motivating work environment, positively contributing to institutional performance, operational efficiency, and the sustainability of the labour market, in line with the objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Heba al-Tamimi, senior executive vice president of Group Communications at QNB Group, said: "The employee well-being framework represents an important strategic step that reflects QNB's commitment to fostering a supportive and motivating work environment that empowers employees to achieve their highest levels of performance and innovation."

"The framework reinforces the Group's continued investment in human capital as a cornerstone of sustainable institutional success and reflects our commitment to adopting leading international practices that enhance employee



The programme also aims to empower employees to improve their lifestyles and foster a healthy, safe, and motivating work environment.

experience, engagement, and long-term organisational performance."

"Employee well-being is no longer limited to supportive initiatives; it has become a fundamental element in building more resilient, sustainable, and growth-oriented organisations. Through this framework, we reaffirm our commitment to providing a positive workplace culture that enables our employees to grow, succeed, and contribute to achieving the Group's future goals," Al-Tamimi added.

As part of the implementation of this strategic framework, the group is conducting programmes and initiatives focused on the mental and physical health and financial wellbeing of its employees, alongside the provision of integrated services and solutions that go beyond traditional benefits, in partnership with a number of institutions and relevant entities within Qatar and internationally.

The programmes include several employee-focused events and ini-

tiatives designed to foster a culture of appreciation and professional excellence in an exceptional work environment through the 'Employee of the Month' programme.

The group also provides employees and their families with special offers and discounts at leading healthcare facilities and tourist destinations in Qatar and abroad.

Furthermore, it organises training courses to raise awareness in various areas related to public health, financial well-being, and beauty and health. Within its commitment to employee well-being, the group has introduced a dedicated day off for staff on their birthdays, which does not count towards their annual leave allowance.

Separately, the group continues to engage its employees in a number of community initiatives, such as the 'World Blood Donor Day' campaign under the slogan 'Donate Blood...Share Life,' which was well attended by its employees.

Mark & Save opens its third outlet at Muaither in Qatar



Leading retail chain Mark & Save inaugurated its 24th outlet in the GCC and third outlet in Qatar at North Muaither Street, Muaither. The new store has been designed with modern facilities and a premium-themed interior, aiming to provide customers with a comfortable, convenient, and enjoyable shopping experience. The outlet features a wide range of departments, including fresh fruits and vegetables, fishery, butchery, delicatessen, grocery, roastery, health and beauty, and non-food sections, offering customers a

comprehensive shopping destination for their daily needs under one roof. With its spacious layout, attractive interior design, and well-organised product categories, the store ensures a peaceful and pleasant shopping environment for all visitors. The management also announced that exciting offers and special promotions will be introduced soon at the new outlet. Mark & Save warmly invite valued customers from Muaither and surrounding areas to visit the store and enjoy a premium shopping experience.

QSFA reveals details of Sports for All Summer Programme 2026



Qatar Sports For All Federation (QSFA) has unveiled the launch of the "Sports for All Summer Programme 2026" from June 28 to August 20, 2026.

Held under the banner of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, the programme comprises over 90 tournaments and events in the sports, societal, and awareness fields.

The programme intends to

strengthen physical activity and deepen sports participation among a variety of society's segments through conducting a cornucopia of activities at youth clubs and centers nationwide, as well as in public parks, said Executive Director of QSFA Abdullah al-Dosari.

Overall, the agenda spotlights 38 women's contests, 17 Muay Thai programmes, and 16 learn-

to-swim programmes for children, in addition to Sports for All camps, races, and community events, as well as dedicated programmes for older adults.

It likewise comprises activities for kids in the areas of sports, awareness, and physical fitness, along with women's sports events and societal programmes to entrench a healthy lifestyle throughout the year. (QNA)

Navigating maritime chokepoints needs clear global resolve, greater flexibility

The ongoing geopolitical conflicts and regional crises have effectively expanded the category of "landlocked" countries, as even nations with coastlines increasingly find themselves cut off from critical maritime routes due to wars, security threats, and the closure of strategic sea passages.

Worldwide, 44 countries are classified as landlocked, meaning they are entirely surrounded by land and have no direct access to the sea. While the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (Unclos), in force since 1994, provides a legal framework for the management and governance of maritime straits and shipping routes, regional conflicts have increasingly disrupted the operation and accessibility of these critical corridors.

Economic experts argue that crises affecting major maritime chokepoints have far-reaching consequences for both landlocked and coastal nations whose supply chains depend on uninterrupted maritime trade. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, for example, have been affected by restrictions on navigation and security concerns surrounding the Strait of Hormuz, highlighting the need for more flexible policies, stronger diplomatic engagement, and potentially new international mechanisms to manage such challenges.

Economist Dr Abdullah al-Khater explained that landlocked countries are geographically defined as states surrounded by other nations without direct access to the sea. Their inability to reach maritime routes limits their capacity to receive cargo vessels and benefit from global shipping networks, which remain one of the most critical components of international import and export supply chains. Dr al-Khater called for safeguarding global supply chains through the establishment of an international organisation, modeled on the UN, dedicated to protecting maritime commerce, import and export operations, clean energy supplies, and fertiliser shipments. Such an organisation, he said, would be responsible for managing crises related to strategic waterways.

He further proposed the participation of insurance companies, existing international institu-



tions, and regulatory committees responsible for balancing global supply and demand. Their involvement, he argued, would help stabilise markets, maintain adequate production levels, and encourage investment flows into the region. According to Dr al-Khater, the Strait of Hormuz crisis should serve as a catalyst for GCC countries to accelerate regional integration projects, including the implementation of a unified visa system, expansion of highway networks, development of a Gulf railway system, and enhanced co-ordination to strengthen supply chains and maritime shipping services.

He also emphasised that GCC states could further deepen co-operation with neighbouring countries through the expansion of oil and gas pipeline networks, alongside investments in road and rail infrastructure aimed at reinforcing regional economic connectivity and resilience.

For his part, Dr Rajab al-Ismail, Professor at the College of Business and Economics at Qatar University (QU), stressed the importance of flexibility, strategic planning, and diversification in preparing for potential disruptions linked to maritime chokepoints during periods of crisis or conflict. He noted that wars and regional crises can create significant logistical and economic challenges for GCC countries and that they should adopt different strategies to mitigate such risks.

Qatar, for example, previously relied on both maritime shipping and air freight to secure the flow of essential goods during periods of disruption. At present, he noted, supplies affected by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz can be partially compensated through Qatar's land connection with Saudi Arabia. He added that co-ordina-

tion and diplomacy remain indispensable tools for addressing supply chain challenges.


Dr al-Ismail underscored the importance of maintaining alternative solutions while carefully balancing costs and economic returns. Energy storage, he said, represents one of the viable options available, particularly through co-operation between energy-producing and energy-importing countries under frameworks designed to ensure uninterrupted supplies. He further observed that the aftermath of the Strait of Hormuz crisis is likely to prompt many countries to revise their strategic plans and increase energy reserves.

While some nations have historically maintained limited oil and gas inventories, others - like the US - have built substantial strategic reserves capable of covering domestic needs for several months. Dr al-Ismail expects some countries to establish larger stockpiles of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and crude oil as a precaution against future disruptions, particularly once the Strait of Hormuz crisis subsides and energy prices begin to stabilise or decline.

Many analyses of the global economy suggest that disruptions affecting maritime chokepoints extend far beyond the geographical boundaries of individual countries or regions. Their impact reverberates across international trade, global supply chains, inflation trends, and economic growth prospects, often reshaping policy priorities related to trade management and energy security.

As the world economy navigates these challenges, governments and international institutions continue to seek more effective frameworks for managing trade flows and securing the stability of global energy systems. (QNA)






الأولى
AL-AWALIA

Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/14	Call-Off Agreement for Provision of Office Boys and Cleaning Staff for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	1,000 QAR	84,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	15 June 2026 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/15	Consultancy Services for Establishment of Compliance Universe for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	500 QAR	12,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	15 June 2026 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/16	Call-off Agreement for Supply and delivery of Hardox Wear Plates for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Supplies")	1,000 QAR	57,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	15 June 2026 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/17	Maintenance Services of CCTV System for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	500 QAR	11,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	15 June 2026 01:00 PM
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/18	Maintenance, Calibration and Refurbishment Services of Truck and Belt Scales for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Services")	500 QAR	35,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	15 June 2026 01:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tenders@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.1.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter by the designated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID, Copy of commercial Registration (CR), Business License and Computer ID.
- Site visit to be submitted in two sealed envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tender and Auction Committee. Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Bidders shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Local Building No. 108, St. No. 303, Bay Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. To get the map of the new building please scan the QR code below.
- Tender Fees are non-refundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Materials Company Bank A/C (4035-45711-036) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. IBAN No. (QA 18 0304 0000 4050 457111 0000). Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee) Manager Check must be valid for 30 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Materials Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all bidders without revealing the identity of the originator of the enquiries in the form of Tender Bulletin. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective Tender Document at least 15 calendar days prior to the tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is 10% of the contract value and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the quarantine period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Materials Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding 20% of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Materials Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender visit www.qpmc.qa or contact tenders@qpmc.qa.
- Location of the new building.



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

شركة قطر للمواد الأولية (قبر) المحدودة - قطر، منطقة لوسين، برج مارينا، رقم 108 | 33204 | ص.ب. 22095 | هاتف: 4447 9411 | 4447 9411
Qatar Primary Materials Company (P.S.C.) | Head Office: Doha-Qatar, Lusail, Marina Tower No.: 108 | CR No.: 33204 | P.O. Box: 22095 | Tel.: +974 4447 9411
رأس المال المصرح به 200,000,000 ريال | رأس المال المدفوع 200,000,000 ريال | Capital 200,000,000 QAR | Paid Up Capital 200,000,000 QAR | Info@qpmc.qa | www.qpmc.qa



Israel kills nine in Gaza as Egypt hosts new ceasefire talks

Reuters/AFP
Cairo/Gaza City

Israeli strikes on a Hamas-run police station and a vehicle in the Gaza Strip killed at least nine people and wounded 20 others, health officials said, as mediators began new efforts to salvage a fragile US-brokered ceasefire deal.

Israel has stepped up attacks against police headquarters and personnel in the past several months, killing dozens of them, according to Hamas security officials.

An Israeli airstrike killed four people and wounded four others when it hit a vehicle driving through the middle of Gaza City, medics said.

Gaza City's Al-Shifa hospital confirmed receiving the four bodies.

A military spokesman told AFP that Israeli forces had struck "two Hamas terrorists" in western Gaza City.

Another Israeli airstrike targeting a police station in the Al-Noss area of Al-Mawasi district in western Khan Yunis killed five people and wounded another 17, the agency reported.

Khan Yunis's Nasser Hospital confirmed receiving five bodies and treating the wounded, some of them in "critical condition".

In a separate incident, Israeli naval forces shot dead a fisherman in the early hours of yesterday, the Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir el-Balah said after receiving his body.

The military said it was looking into the shooting in Deir el-Balah.

Major fighting has been paused since October under a ceasefire after two years of war, but no agreement has been reached to implement a further US-backed plan for Israeli troops to withdraw, Hamas to disarm and Gaza to be rebuilt.

Israeli troops still control more than half of Gaza's territory, where they have ordered residents out and destroyed remaining buildings.

Nearly the entire population of 2mn now lives in a tiny strip of land along the coast, mainly in make-

shift tents or damaged buildings, under Hamas control.

Hamas's nearly 10,000 police officers have emerged as a sticking point in talks to advance US President Donald Trump's plan for Gaza.

Hamas wants them included in a new police force; Israel rejects a role for any Hamas-affiliated personnel.

Egypt began hosting a new round of truce talks with leaders from Hamas and other Palestinian factions, sources from Hamas and other sources close to the negotiations said.

The talks are expected to last for a few days. Israel and Hamas have repeatedly accused each other of violating the truce.

Israeli strikes in Gaza have killed more than 950 Palestinians since the start of the truce, while Palestinian attacks have killed four Israeli soldiers.

Last year's deal established a Board of Peace led by Trump to oversee a phased ceasefire and was ratified by the United Nations Security Council.

However, many of the toughest areas of dispute, including the disarmament of Hamas, Israeli withdrawal and make-up of a Gaza government, were postponed to later in the process.

The Board of Peace negotiators have been talking to both sides on the disarmament issue.

Hamas told envoys from the Board and mediators Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye that ending Israeli attacks in Gaza was essential for any progress, sources from the group and officials close to the talks said.

Hazem Qassem, a Hamas spokesperson in Gaza, said yesterday that the group was open to ideas that would lead to ending Israeli attacks in Gaza and reaching common ground over issues of the second phase of the Trump plan.

However, he said the Board of Peace should stop being "biased" towards Israel.

Nearly 73,000 people in Gaza have been killed since the war started, most of them civilians, according to Gaza health authorities.

Israel launched its assault after the events of October 7, 2023.



Children run along a street past new housing projects in Libya's eastern city of Derna. - AFP

Libya presses on rebuilding flood-ravaged Derna but the trauma lingers

AFP
Derna

Nearly three years after a catastrophic storm tore through eastern Libya's port city of Derna, killing almost 4,000 people, the city is getting back on its feet, but the trauma persists.

New roads and bridges, thousands of new homes, and a hospital have risen from the rubble since a storm swept the coastal city in 2023, leaving thousands missing and over 40,000 homeless.

Memories from that September disaster remain vivid: apartment blocks ripped open, bodies buried beneath debris, and cars swept into the sea.

However, reconstruction provides a glimmer of hope here, where some residents said it helps them cope with the tragedy they lived through.

Asmaa Alghziri, who lives abroad but comes back to her native city often, said that the losses went beyond the death of her aunt and nephews: "Derna is a very close-knit city where everyone is connected. Even your neighbours are family."

She said she was astonished by what has been built in less than three years: "new hospitals, schools, mosques and a stadium". AFP journalists saw multiple newly completed constructions.

However, the grief in Derna remains profound.

Like many, Alghziri has yet to fully mourn the loss of her relatives whose bodies were never found.

Authorities, she said, should focus "more on mental health" now.

"It's really important because



People pose for a group selfie outside the Sahaba Mosque in Derna. - AFP

Right: This picture taken on September 18, 2023 shows a tilted car above debris in Derna. - AFP



even if people are working and carrying on with daily life, I know everyone is still traumatised," said the 40-year-old woman.

Ashraf al-Targui, a 30-year-old construction supervisor, who lost his uncle's family in the floods, said he would have "preferred to lose my house rather than loved ones".

Still, he added, the disaster was "both a tragedy and a gift from God that gave us a new city".

The new parks and playgrounds now scattered across the city "are really important for people's mental health".

Adel Bokhsam, a reconstruction official with whom AFP visited construction sites, said a host of projects are currently underway, which he said were about 80% completed.

They included 3,500 apartments for displaced families, nine bridges - four crossing the riverbed, with some having been turned into a public promenade - new roads, a desalination plant, new schools, a university and a 600-bed hospital.

Egyptian Abdulhamid Shahata, who moved to Libya in 2014, said that reconstruction projects provided many workers with "incredible opportunities".

"There are jobs everywhere," said the 31-year-old father of four. "Only the lazy and the crazy can't find work."



This picture taken on September 18, 2023 shows a view of a destroyed building in Derna following deadly flash floods. - AFP

Drone strike on Sudan market kills 11

AFP
Khartoum

A drone strike hit a market in central Sudan on Saturday, killing 11 civilians and wounding dozens more, a rights group said, as escalating aerial attacks deepen the toll of one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

The attack targeted the main market in Abu Zaeima, a paramilitary-controlled town in North Kordofan state, according to the Emergency Lawyers, a rights group that has documented abuses since fighting erupted in April 2023 between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

The group said the casualty figures could rise, but did not specify who carried out the attack. Neither side has commented.

Emergency Lawyers said similar drone attacks had struck nearby villages and civilian vehicles less than a day earlier.

Two witnesses told AFP that another drone hit a fuel station later on Saturday in El-Obeid, the capital of North Kordofan, which has been partially encircled by RSF forces for months.

A medical source at a hospital there said the facility received four wounded civilians.

The attacks followed a deadly week in the broader Kordofan region.

Nearly 70 people were killed in two separate drone strikes in West and North Kordofan states, according to Emergency Lawyers and a local leader.

Drone warfare has become an increasingly prominent feature of Sudan's conflict. The UN says that between January and April, at least 880 civilians were killed in drone strikes nationwide.

Fighting has intensified in Kordofan and Blue Nile state near the Ethiopian border since the RSF captured El-Fasher last October, the military's last major stronghold in western Darfur.

Since then, more than 300,000 people have fled frontline areas, including El-Fasher and parts of Kordofan and Blue Nile, according to the UN.

Kordofan, rich in oil and arable land, is strategically significant, linking RSF strongholds in the neighbouring Darfur region to the country's army-controlled east.

The region remains largely contested between the army and the RSF.

Having entered its fourth year, the war has killed tens of thousands of people and forced more than 11mn from their homes, creating what the UN describes as the world's largest displacement and hunger crises.

Jordan sentences man to death for killing drug agents

A Jordanian court sentenced a citizen to death by hanging yesterday after he was convicted of killing three drug enforcement agents during a raid earlier this year.

The Jordanian state security court said, in a statement, that it "unanimously issued its final ruling on Sunday in the case concerning the martyrdom of three members of the anti-narcotics administration".

It said the accused was found guilty of charges including "physically assaulting officials charged with enforcing the narcotics law, resulting in death... and consequently sentenced him to the most severe punishment, which is the death penalty".

Jordan still sentences people to death, but there

has been an effective moratorium on capital punishment for years.

The last executions in the kingdom were in 2017, when 15 people were hanged, 10 of them over terror-related charges.

The case dates back to March 18, when three members of the anti-narcotics unit were killed and a fourth was wounded during a raid that resulted in the arrest of the suspect and the seizure of weapons and drugs, according to the Jordanian public security directorate.

Jordanian authorities regularly announce the seizure and destruction of drug shipments, with 85% of the drugs seized intended for smuggling out of the kingdom. - AFP

Man once dubbed Mubarak-era 'thug' arrested

AFP
Cairo

Egyptian authorities have arrested businessman Sabry Nakhnouch, a notorious figure from the Hosni Mubarak era who later re-emerged in public life after receiving a pardon under the current administration.

Nakhnouch is under investigation on suspicion of leading "an organised criminal group" accused of "imposing control, practising thuggery through force and threats and disrupting public order", the public prosecution said in a statement on Saturday.

Prosecutors said the group allegedly used a private security company as a front for its activities, relying on money and weapons to facilitate its operations.

Nakhnouch has long been a controversial figure in Egypt, accused by critics and activists of running a network linked to powerful individuals during

longtime leader Mubarak's rule and acting as a "baltagi" - meaning a thug or hired enforcer.

The latest investigation followed a complaint from the owner of a car dealership, who alleged that Nakhnouch and several others stormed the premises during a financial dispute.

The complaint said an employee was assaulted and that the group seized the site's surveillance recording device.

Prosecutors said the recording device was recovered during searches of properties linked to the businessman, as well as weapons and ammunition, five unlicensed communication devices and 10 antiquities.

They added that mobile phone checks suggested the suspects may have been involved in other crimes, including kidnapping, sexual assault and violent detention.

During the 2011 uprising that ousted Mubarak, Nakhnouch was widely accused of deploying groups of hired thugs to attack protesters and target

public buildings, prisons and police stations.

Critics said the aim was to sow fear and chaos, showing citizens that security would only return if Mubarak stayed in power.

In 2012, under the government of late Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, Nakhnouch was arrested and later sentenced to life in prison after he was convicted of possessing illegal weapons.

He later returned to the public sphere in 2018 after he was pardoned by President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who ousted Morsi in 2013 amid widespread protests.

After his release, Nakhnouch became chairman of the Falcon Group, one of Egypt's largest private security companies.

During Sisi's tenure Falcon has expanded its footprint across universities, public institutions and strategic sites, securing a series of prominent contracts.

Tunnel network uncovered under Beaufort castle

The Israeli military said yesterday that it uncovered a sprawling tunnel network beneath the Beaufort castle in southern Lebanon, adding that it was built to give Hezbollah a fortified strike hub just kilometres from Israeli territory.

Israeli soldiers recaptured the crusader-era castle recently, giving the military a strategic foothold it once occupied for nearly two decades.

"The tunnel network was constructed within a civilian area at a location that provides operational control over the Galilee Panhandle region, only 6km from Metula (in Israel), and served as a central Hezbollah terrorist organisation hub in the area," the military said.

It said the tunnel network was funded by Iran and engineered to shelter hundreds of fighters. - AFP

ANNOUNCEMENT

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US lawmakers warn Pulte appointment could thwart surveillance law's renewal

Reuters
Washington

Two US lawmakers with national security expertise warned yesterday that President Donald Trump's choice of Bill Pulte to be his chief intelligence adviser could stand in the way of renewing an expiring foreign surveillance law.

The Senate and House of Representatives face a Friday deadline for renewing Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, which allows US intelligence agencies to monitor e-mails and other communications of foreigners located outside the US without individual judicial warrants.

The US president named Pulte, who has no experience in the se-

curity field, to be acting director of national intelligence, replacing Tulsi Gabbard who resigned effective June 30.

Pulte would also retain his position as the head of the US Federal Housing Finance Agency.

His temporary appointment as director of national intelligence has outraged Democratic and Republican members of Congress because of his lack of experience.

Democrats also argue Pulte has demonstrated a willingness to use his housing finance position to attack Trump's perceived enemies.

The appointment was like throwing a "live hand grenade" into the congressional debate days before FISA is set to expire, Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, the senior Democrat on the Senate Intelligence Committee, told ABC's

"This Week" programme.

On Friday, the Senate blocked an attempt to begin debate on the FISA renewal, but Majority Leader John Thune, a South Dakota Republican, told reporters another attempt would be made this week.

Democrats' support would be essential to the bill clearing the Senate.

They have warned they will not back it unless the president reverses his temporary appointment of Pulte.

Trump on Thursday said he did not think he would nominate Pulte to be a "permanent" director of national intelligence.

However, he can serve as acting director for 210 days without Senate confirmation.

Representative Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House Intelli-

gence Committee, told CBS' "Face the Nation" programme the timing of Pulte's appointment puts FISA's renewal in doubt.

"You just could not have come up with worse timing," he said.

"If we had to pass another bill in the context of Bill Pulte, I don't think we could."

Representative Michael McCaul, a Texas Republican who also appeared on the ABC programme, said, "I don't believe he's statutorily qualified" given his lack of any experience.

However, McCaul, a former House Homeland Security Committee chairman and former chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said that it "would be the most grossly irresponsible thing I've seen Congress do in my 22 years in office" if lawmakers fail to

renew FISA just before the start of FIFA World Cup games in North America, and as weeks of celebrations begin to observe the 250th anniversary of the US.

Although Pulte is not qualified to be permanent director, Republican Senator Dave McCormick said, the president has other officials he can turn to for intelligence advice such as CIA Director John Ratcliffe and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who is also Trump's national security adviser.

"Bill Pulte is going to be a temporary fix until we get the right qualified person in there permanently," McCormick told Fox News' "Sunday Briefing" programme.

Before Trump's choice of Pulte, the Senate and House were on track to pass a compromise bill af-

ter protracted negotiations.

Now even Republicans believe the renewal could be held up.

"We write with regret to ask that you plan for a potential significant gap in foreign intelligence collection," reads a letter that Republican Senators Tom Cotton and Chuck Grassley sent on Friday to Rubio.

In their letter, which was first reported by Punchbowl, Cotton and Grassley blamed the situation on Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, the chamber's top Democrat.

However, Himes said that it is an admission that Pulte is the problem.

"I think at one level they're acknowledging reality, which is that the Pulte appointment has taken 702 reauthorisation off the table," Himes told CBS.

US lobbying to force Iran to give details on nuclear sites

Reuters
Paris/Vienna

The US is lobbying other countries on the UN nuclear watchdog's Board of Governors to back a draft resolution demanding that Iran tell the agency what happened to its bombed nuclear sites and the enriched uranium stored there.

The US-drafted text, seen by Reuters yesterday and circulated ahead of this week's quarterly meeting of the 35-nation board, risks complicating talks between Washington and Tehran. Iran has typically retaliated against resolutions against it at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), escalating its nuclear activities or scaling back co-operation.

Previous IAEA board resolutions on Iran, submitted by the US, Britain, France and Germany, have passed by wide margins. One adopted in November demanded that Iran inform the agency "without delay" about the status of its enriched uranium stock and damaged sites - something that has yet to happen.

The US draft says Iran must "provide the Agency with precise



Aerial view of the United States military headquarters, the Pentagon. (Reuters/File Photo)

The IAEA logo is displayed in front of the agency's headquarters in Vienna, Austria. (Reuters/File Photo)

The US draft says Iran must 'provide the Agency with precise information on nuclear material accountancy and safeguarded nuclear facilities in Iran' and grant 'all access it requires to verify this information'

information on nuclear material accountancy and safeguarded nuclear facilities in Iran" and grant "all access it requires to verify this information." Both steps are described as "essential and urgent"

and must be taken "without delay".

The text stops short of referring Iran to the UN Security Council, a move some diplomats had said was under consideration.

That would have followed up on a June 12, 2025 resolution declaring Iran in breach of its non-proliferation obligations. Israel began bombing Iran's nuclear sites a day later. While circulating a draft does not guarantee it will be formally submitted to the board, which would then vote on it, it signals an intention to do so.

Current US-Iran talks aim to

extend their ceasefire and pave the way for broader negotiations, including on Iran's nuclear programme. US President Donald Trump has said his goal is to ensure Iran cannot develop nuclear weapons, something Iran denies seeking.

While June's strikes destroyed or badly damaged uranium-enrichment facilities, much of Iran's enriched uranium is believed to have survived.

Trump has said he wants Iran's highly enriched uranium removed, particularly what remains of the 440.9 kg (972 lbs) enriched to up to 60% purity - a short step from roughly 90% weapons grade - that the IAEA estimates Iran had when Israel first attacked. That amount would be enough, if further enriched, for 10 nuclear weapons, according to an IAEA yardstick.

Russia's ambassador to the IAEA told reporters on Friday a resolution would only antagonise Iran.

"It was exactly the US who undermined this co-operation," he said, referring to the fact the IAEA had access to Iran's sites until the bombing started.

Russia and China have opposed all recent resolutions against Iran.

Pentagon raises threat of Israeli spying to 'critical'

AFP
Washington

The Pentagon has raised its counterintelligence threat level for Israel to its highest level, US media reported.

The Pentagon's Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) said Israel's "ability to conduct human espionage and technical collection is at a 'critical level'" NBC News said, citing US officials.

The move came after concerns that Israel had been attempting to spy on top US officials to get information on "the Trump administration's internal deliberations and decision-making on the conflicts in the Middle East," the American network said.

The *New York Times* cited reports of Israeli efforts to eavesdrop on senior officials, including President Donald Trump's top negotiator, Steve Witkoff, and the Pentagon's top policy official, Elbridge Colby.

The United States and Israel launched joint strikes on Iran on February 28, triggering the war.

Since then, Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's relationship appears to be under strain.

Trump unleashed a profanity-laced tirade over the phone at Netanyahu over Israel's threats to bomb the Lebanese capital Beirut, fearing it would undermine talks with Tehran, the Axios news outlet and ABC News reported last week.

EU sends humanitarian aid to Ebola-hit DR Congo



A member of EU delegation sanitise his feet in Rwampara. (Reuters)

The EU said yesterday it has flown in 100 tonnes of humanitarian aid - including medicine, tents and protective gear - to a hard-to-reach area in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo struggling with an Ebola outbreak.

The epidemic's epicentre is in the DRC province of Ituri, which is difficult to access on poorly maintained roads and because of the threat of armed groups that

have made the region insecure.

The European Commission said in a statement that a "humanitarian air bridge" to Bunia, it has established with Unicef flew in the 100 tonnes of aid.

The EU commissioner for crisis management, Hadja Lahbib, on Sunday arrived at Bunia airport and called for humanitarian and health workers in the region to be allowed guaranteed access to people in need. (AFP)

US warns Ebola outbreak on scale of largest 'is possible'

AFP
Washington

The US CDC urged strong public health interventions against the current Ebola outbreak, citing their models that show it could otherwise rival the scale of the 2014 West Africa outbreak. That eruption of the virus resulted in more than 28,000 cases and more than 11,000 deaths.

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

The US projections from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were part of Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report documents published Friday.

The worst outcomes could be avoided if "a larger proportion of patients were identified, isolated, and treated," the agency said in its reports. But "the public health response to control this outbreak will



A Congolese Red Cross team prepares the coffin of a woman suspected of having died from Ebola virus disease in Bunia yesterday. (AFP)

likely need to be of similar magnitude to the response for the 2014-2016 West Africa Ebola outbreak."

Asher emphasised the models were "not a forecast" but "a planning tool." "They're designed to support action, not to generate alarm." They are based on four possible intervention scenarios ranging from poor (20%) to extremely high (95%) levels of isolation and treatment.

If isolation levels are what the CDC would consider poor, with no other interventions there is a 65 percent chance cases will top 20,000 within three months, according to the agency.

Satish Pillai, the CDC manager for the Ebola response, said "the total individuals that are infected and requiring isolation remains unclear" But he said the situation on the ground would indicate lev-

els of isolation are currently on the lower end.

Also last week the World Health Organisation and the African Union's public health agency said \$518 million was needed across the next six months to combat the deadly Ebola outbreak in the DR Congo and its neighbors. The outbreak was declared on May 15 in north-eastern DR Congo, but the rare Bundibugyo species of the Ebola virus is believed to have spread for some time beforehand.

According to the WHO's latest figures, there are 381 confirmed cases in the DRC, including 64 deaths. The outbreak has hit three provinces, with the epicenter in Ituri, which the Africa CDC says accounts for 90% of confirmed cases and 76% of confirmed deaths. Across the northeastern border in Uganda, there have been 16 confirmed cases, including one death. Seven Ebola patients in the DRC and two in Uganda have recovered.

Central African Republic ready to accept third-country deportees from the US

Reuters
Bangui

Central African Republic has agreed to take in migrants from other countries deported by the US, two sources with knowledge of the matter said, the latest example of the Trump administration striking deals with African states to accelerate removals of migrants.

Washington has sent so-called third-country deportees to African countries including Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Equatorial Guinea, under opaque deals that Senate Democrats say have cost tens of millions of dollars.

In many cases, deportees had secured legal protections from immigration courts in the US against their repatriation. But rights

groups say the third-country deals allow the US to circumvent those protections.

Washington has defended the deportations as lawful.

The deal with Central African Republic was discussed during a May 18 meeting in Bangui with a US delegation led by Christian Jové Ehrhardt, the State Department's deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, a Central African government official told Reuters.

"Central African Republic will indeed take in, within the framework of agreements with the US, immigrants deported by American authorities," said the official, who requested anonymity.

A diplomat based in the region, also speaking on condition of anonymity, also said a deal had been reached.

Central African Republic has

endured repeated cycles of unrest since independence from France in 1960, leaving most of its 5.5 mn people in poverty.

President Faustin-Archange Touadera, who won a third term in an election held last December, has turned to Russia for security support, though he has also signaled a renewed interest in Western partnerships for critical minerals.

Neither the Central African government source nor the diplomat based in the region had details on how many migrants would be sent to the country, their nationalities or when the flights might start, though one recent court judgment shows attempts have already started.

US District Judge Lee Rosenthal on May 22 issued a temporary restraining order blocking the deportation of a Turkish national, noting that US officials had planned to re-

move the person to Central African Republic on May 26.

An official at the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) confirmed to Reuters that the agency would be involved in assisting deportees once they arrive in Central African Republic.

The IOM has already provided assistance to third-country deportees elsewhere in Africa, including Congo.

The US this year awarded \$85 mn to the IOM for operations in Central African Republic. An IOM spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Central African presidency and the State Department did not respond to requests for comment.

The Department of Homeland Security said all deportees were receiving full due process. It referred "questions on agreement specifics" to the State Department.

Somalia says one killed, 55 hurt in political violence

One person was killed and 55 injured in political violence that erupted in Somalia's capital this week, according to a government statement yesterday.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has sparked a fresh political crisis by announcing a one-year extension of his term, which had been due to expire on May 15.

The opposition and regional leaders planned to protest in Mogadishu on Thursday, but violence broke out before they could be held, with AFP reporting heavy gunfire through the previous day and night.

The Ministry of Health said there was one confirmed fatality and 55 injuries based on information "collected and verified through hospitals and health facilities".

AFP was not able to independently verify the numbers.

The clashes involved government forces and militias allied to opposition leaders, including former president Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and former prime minister Hassan Ali Khairre who had relocated into the centre of the city to take part in the protest.

Lawmakers loyal to the current president changed the constitution in March with a view to moving Somalia towards its first direct national elections, replacing a system based around clan elders.

With the country deeply divided between rival clans, and much of it under the control of insurgent group Al-Shabaab, there has been little progress on organising elections beyond a few localised pockets.

Opposition and regional leaders have strongly opposed Mohamud's plan, seeing it as an attempt to centralise power. (AFP)



Iran's World Cup team blast US visa row on arrival in Mexico

AFP
Tijuana

Iran's World Cup squad landed in Mexico yesterday under the shadow of a bitter diplomatic row, after the US – in open military conflict with Tehran – refused to issue visas for some team support staff.

Iran coach Amir Ghalenoei complained on arrival at Tijuana airport that “we should have here last week because a 12-hour time difference needs two weeks of adjusting.”

He added: “Usually in these tournaments, before technical matters, ethical and human considerations must be respected – which I think for us it was not the

case.” The dispute erupted just days before Thursday's kickoff of the 2026 World Cup, which is being jointly hosted by the US, Mexico and Canada.

After departing from their training camp in Turkey a day earlier, the Iran team landed yesterday in the Mexican border city of Tijuana.

The squad and their coaching staff left their plane amid tight security which included a contingent of Mexican national guard troops. Just a handful of fans waving Iranian flags were present at the airport to welcome them from a distance.

The Iranian team will be based in Tijuana throughout the tournament, despite playing their entire group stage in the US – two games in Los Angeles and another in Seattle as they tackle New Zea-



Team Iran arrives at Tijuana for World Cup, Mexico yesterday. (Reuters)

land, Belgium and Egypt in Group G on June 15, 21 and 26.

When they do play in the US, it will be the first World Cup to see

a host nation receive the team of a country it is at war with.

Ghalenoei thanked FIFA for its efforts to help secure entry, but

said “we are upset about this behaviour. It has certainly never happened before.” Team captain Ehsan Hajsafi said he wanted to convey his grievance to FIFA about the delay in getting US visas. “Why so late?” he demanded. Hajsafi stressed the difficult backdrop for the team's participation, as “in the last year, we experienced two imposed wars in our country.”

Iran's team spent nearly three weeks at the training camp in Turkey, using their time there to apply for visas to travel to Mexico, Canada and the US. On the eve of their departure for Mexico, the players finally received their US visas, Washington's envoy to Turkey Tom Barrack said on X late Friday.

But Iran's embassy to Turkey said support staff had been de-

nied visas – 15 administrative and management staff are concerned, an Iranian diplomat and state TV said. The embassy slammed what it called “deliberate and discriminatory treatment against Iran's national football team” and called for FIFA “to hold the US accountable for violations of its rules.”

Adding to the tensions, Iran's ambassador to Mexico said Saturday the squad had been notified that, under their visa conditions, the team must enter and leave US soil on the same day as their matches. “We can enter in the morning and we must leave the same day,” Iran's envoy Abolfazl Pasandideh told reporters.

That appeared to contradict what the team's spokesman Amir Mahdi Alavi told state TV earlier.

Polls open in tight Peru elections runoff

Peruvians are voting to choose their ninth president in 10 years in a battle between conservative Keiko Fujimori and leftist Roberto Sanchez

AFP
Lima

Polls opened in Peru's presidential runoff yesterday, with crime and political instability dominating a race to choose the country's ninth leader in a decade.

Pre-election surveys showed a tight race between conservative four-time presidential hopeful Keiko Fujimori and leftist ex-minister Roberto Sanchez.

Sanchez, a psychologist, surged late in the race to reach the runoff, thanks to strong support, especially in rural areas.

From the Andes to the Amazon, around 27 mn Peruvians can cast ballots to choose a president for a five-year term.

The first round was marred by logistical problems and a vote count that took weeks to complete, deepening distrust in Peru's creaking institutions.

“I hope the entire process is carried out transparently, that the people's vote is respected” early voter Evelyn Pazos, 43, told AFP.

On the eve of the election, a judge said Sanchez must stand trial over the allegations of past financial irregularities in his party, raising claims of interference.

If he wins, he would have presidential immunity, though remain vulnerable to the country's right-leaning legislature – which has ousted several recent presidents.

Fujimori, 51, appeals to the mixed legacy of her late father, who stabilized the economy and defeated a Maoist insurgency, but was convicted of corruption and crimes against humanity.

She is hoping to ride a surge of support for right-wing US-backed politicians across Latin America who have won the recent elections



Voters show their identity cards at a polling station during the presidential election runoff in Ollantaytambo, Cusco department yesterday. (AFP)

in Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and elsewhere in the region.

She has promised to militarise prisons and expel some migrants with the “same force” used by her father against insurgents in the 1990s.

“There is a lot of disorder and corruption, and we're going to vote, as always, for the ‘lesser evil’” Hugo Vasquez, a 67-year-old crafts seller in Lima, told AFP.

Sanchez, a 57-year-old congressman draws on the rural background of his mentor, former president Pedro Castillo, a school-teacher jailed after a failed attempt to dissolve Congress in 2022.

He has moderated early calls for “radical change” and distanced himself from ultranationalists.

He told AFP he wants a “respectful” relationship with US President Donald Trump.

Sanchez, who always wears the broad-brimmed palm straw hat gifted to him by Castillo – whom he plans to pardon – accuses his rival of being part of a “dictatorship” led by the powerful Congress that counts several former presidents among its members.

Neither Sanchez nor Fujimori has a legislative majority. Whoever wins must build alliances to com-

plete their term, according to analyst Jeffrey Radzinsky.

“Whoever wins will face questions of legitimacy if the result is close. That means more instability” said analyst David Sulmont.

The winner will replace interim president Jose Maria Balcasar from July 28. Despite political disillusionment, Peruvians' main concern is security, as criminal gangs spread and extortion complaints spiked ninefold in five years.

“They kill, dismember, demand protection money. Enough!” said 58-year-old taxi driver Roberto Lovaton.

Sanchez proposes tackling corruption in the police and judiciary, which he says are complicit with criminal networks. The winner will inherit a stable economy, with GDP growth of over 3% and low inflation. However, seven out of 10 workers are in the informal economy.

Fujimori supports neoliberal policies, property rights and attracting US investment.

Sanchez has promised wage increases and sought to reassure investors by pledging to maintain an open economy and central bank independence – measures seen as key to economic stability.

Bolivian Congress approves use of troops to thwart wave of protests

AFP
La Paz

Bolivia's legislature gave the green light yesterday for President Rodrigo Paz to use the military to clear roadblocks that have crippled key cities for weeks.

A month of heated demonstrations calling for the center-right Paz to step down have paralysed the Andean nation, with blockades causing severe food and medicine shortages.

Endless lines at the pump have also led many to sleep in the vehicles to not lose their place.

A bill relaxing the country's strict rules surrounding states of emergency passed the lower chamber following 15 hours of overnight debate, the body's president, Roberto Castro, announced.

Having already passed the Senate, it heads to Paz's desk for signature.

The new law comes a day after dozens of riot police backed by military vehicles fired tear gas as they attempted to clear a road in the town of San Julian.

The town is in the Santa Cruz region – an agricultural breadbasket supplying food to the country's western areas.

Protesters threw stones and burned tires to try to halt the police's advance, according to an AFP reporter at the scene.

Paz yesterday wrote on X that the capital La Paz and second city El Alto are “still facing difficulties, but concrete progress is also beginning to be made,” including on fuel distribution.

The US-backed, pro-business Paz took office in November promising to resolve the coun-



A man wearing a Bolivian flag walks towards police officers during a protest against President Rodrigo Paz in San Julian. (Reuters)

try'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 the protesters but on Wednesday announced the legislation seeking to amend the country's state of emergency laws. The new rules would allow troops to use force against protesters, and grants them a “presumption of legality” in situations of conflict.

The issue of legal liability for the military was one of the most heated debates.

The new protections are “not only necessary, but also useful – very useful – so that there are police and military personnel who, in the face of violence that is destroying our rights... are

willing to protect us,” said ruling party lawmaker Carlos Alarcon.

The military thus far has had limited involvement in clearing roadblocks, playing a supporting role to the riot police.

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.

“We stand with Paz's democratic government as it fights back against attempts to drag Bolivia backwards through cynical efforts to prevent the delivery of food, medicine and other vital supplies to the Bolivian people through fake road blockades,” the alliance members said in a statement.

Shipment of aid arrives in Cuba

A new shipment of humanitarian aid from Mexico arrived in Cuba yesterday, as the communist-led island faces a mounting crisis amid the US blockade on oil imports.

The shipment – the sixth from Mexico since February – arrived in Havana's harbor Sunday morning, AFP journalists witnessed.

The US launched its de facto fuel blockade in late January, deepening the island's energy crisis and pummeling its already struggling economy.

Only one Russian oil tanker has been authorised to dock since then, with fuel shortages leading to power outages of up to 22 hours a day.

The UN representative on the island warned Thursday that the humanitarian emergency, coupled with the onset of the Caribbean hurricane season, made for an “explosive cocktail.”

While the US has had an embargo on Cuba for decades, US President Donald Trump has drastically ramped up pressure on the country and openly muses about taking it over. (AFP)

Mexico arrests suspected MS-13 gang leader

AFP
Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Mexico

Mexican authorities arrested a suspected leader of the powerful Central American gang Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) on Saturday in the southern border state of Chiapas, the public prosecutor's office announced yesterday.

Orlando Ramirez, or “El Misterio,” was arrested in the city of Tapachula, near the border with Guatemala, state security sources told AFP.

He attempted to flee after realizing he was being pursued by local police but was eventually captured, the prosecutor's office said in a statement.

The Salvadoran national has been handed over to Mexican immigration authorities to determine his legal status.

Ramirez is already convicted of “aggravated murder, rape of a minor or incapacitated person, membership of an illegal organisation and unlawful restriction of freedom of movement,” according to El Salvador's Transnational Anti-Gang Center.

Ramirez is already convicted of “aggravated murder, rape of a minor or incapacitated person, membership of an illegal organisation and unlawful restriction of freedom of movement,” according to El Salvador's Transnational Anti-Gang Centre

He is also accused of illegally carrying military weapons and attempted extortion, it added.

Nearly 490 alleged MS-13 members are currently on trial in El Salvador, accused of 47,000 crimes committed between 2012 and 2022, including 29,000 homicides. US President Donald Trump, upon returning to office in 2025, declared the gang and several other Latin American cartels as terrorist groups.

In 2022, Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele declared a “war” on gangs and imposed a state of emergency, which has since been used to arrest more than 90,000 suspected gang members.

‘So many of us!’ Mexicans attempt world's biggest human wave

AFP
Mexico City

Just days before Mexico hosts the World Cup's opening match, thousands of people packed the capital's main thoroughfare Saturday in a bid to set a new record for the largest-ever human wave.

The tradition of the wave was popularised in Mexico's soccer stadiums during the 1986 World Cup to cheer on the home squad, and it has grown into a global phenomenon.

Locals rallied to the cause early Saturday, donning national football jerseys and waving flags as they danced to loud music and stretched their arms and legs.

Standing in the front row of a crowd stretching two kilometers (1.2 miles) down the iconic Paseo de la Reforma, a wide avenue that runs through the heart of Mexico City, Sally Aviles expressed confidence in a new record.

“I say we're going to break it. There are already so many of us, and we can do it!” said the 31-year-old content creator.

“We'll make it happen because we've always done it – at every game, in every stadium.”

Joining the crowd were women dressed in lavish gowns and wearing skeleton masks in the style of “catrinas,” iconic figures tied to the country's Day of the Dead holiday.

Members of the La Sonora Santanera orchestra pumped out tropical rhythms while a master of ceremonies guided the mass movement.

“Attention! We drop to our knees, bend and spring up as fast as we can. Hands way up!” she shouted.



Fans holds a replica of the World Cup trophy while taking part in a Guinness World Record attempt for the world's largest Mexican Wave in Mexico City on Saturday. (AFP)

On cue, the front row stood with arms raised and then knelt, while those behind repeated the motion in succession until the entire crowd swayed like swells on an ocean.

“I couldn't miss out on being part of this wonderful event, on showing the world what Mexico is really like – the atmosphere, the love, the unity, the peace,” said Gloria Fragoso, 55, wearing a traditional headdress.

Fragoso said Mexico is “more than ready” to welcome fans arriving for the World Cup, which

is being co-hosted by Canada and the US.

Gang violence has scarred Mexico for years, and authorities have vowed to boost security as the country hosts tournament matches in Mexico City, Monterrey and Guadalajara.

Cultural authorities reported on social media later Saturday that the record for the largest human wave had been broken, without providing details.

The Guinness World Records is to assess whether or not the record has been broken.

With Xi in N Korea, Kim to project confidence, defiance

Reuters
Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un welcomes Chinese President Xi Jinping to Pyongyang today, feeling in a position of strength with a firm ally in Russia, a nuclear arsenal and little apparent appetite to engage with Washington.

For Xi, leader of the world's second-biggest economy, the two-day visit to China's neighbour, his first in seven years, is part of an effort to draw Pyongyang back into its orbit.

Xi hosted Kim, among other leaders, at a massive military parade in Beijing last year, and the two countries have since resumed some passenger rail and air services.

This week's summit is likely to present a contrast to Xi's first visit to the isolated state in 2019 – months after a meeting between Kim and US President Donald Trump fell apart over denuclearising North Korea and sanctions relief.

Since then, Kim has forged closer military and trade ties with Moscow, bolstered by his dispatch of troops to fight for Russia in the Ukraine war, continued to build up his nuclear capabilities in defiance



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un attending the 80th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Korean Children's Union at Kim Il-sung Stadium in Pyongyang. (AFP)

of UN sanctions and locked down the North Korean border to stop the flow of escapees.

North Korea has sought to flex its strength on the eve of Xi's arrival, announcing plans on Saturday for a 10,000-tonne naval destroyer and reaffirming its status as a nuclear-armed state yesterday.

"Having Xi visit Pyongyang is a big deal and the culmination of a good couple of 'comeback' years for Kim," said Andrew Gilholm, an analyst at consultancy Control Risks.

In 2019 Kim gave Xi a lavish reception that included thousands of people holding up placards that formed a picture of Xi's face and the Chinese flag, and a performance of the song "I Love Thee, China".

But relations between the two have been strained at times, particularly over North Korea's nuclear programme. Beijing has publicly opposed Pyongyang's nuclear tests and called for it to give up its nuclear weapons.

North Korea has been cautious

about becoming over-reliant on China, with which it shares an 1,400-km (880-mile) border. Support from Russia is likely providing some balance.

"North Korea is certainly gaining economically from what they're able to provide militarily to Russia," said John Delury, a senior fellow of the Asia Society. "That actually puts North Korea in a position where they may feel more confident to increase the volume of trade and investment with China."

Any substantive outcome of the meeting is likely to be about economic cooperation, a regional diplomat said, as North Korea starts a five-year development plan that includes expanding tourism into a solid industry and building more housing.

North Korea shut its borders to foreign tourists in early 2020 as it imposed some of the world's strictest Covid-19 controls, cutting off a modest but important source of hard currency.

Before the pandemic, Chinese tourists were the backbone of North Korea's tourism industry, accounting for 90% of foreign tourists by some estimates. The first known leisure tourists allowed back after Covid were about 100 from Russia's Far East in February 2024, according to Russian provincial authorities



and a Western tour guide.

North Korea has managed to make economic progress, Singapore's foreign minister said after visit last month. He said Pyongyang appeared to have little interest in engaging with the US or Republic of Korea.

North Korea has rejected reunification with Republic of Korea, which had long been a goal of both nations, divided since the 1950-1953 Korean War. Korean President Lee Jae-myung, however, remains keen on dialogue and has asked Xi to assist his efforts.

"Improving inter-Korean relations through the mediation of President Xi Jinping, we are hoping that President Xi would play that kind of role," said Moon Chung-in, a professor at Yonsei University in Seoul who was national security adviser to a previous Korean president.

Kim has drawn some red lines,

including on his nuclear programme. In addition to yesterday's announcement, he called on Thursday for an "exponential" expansion of the country's atomic arsenal.

Yang Moo-jin, president of the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul, said Kim was likely to continue expanding fissile-material production, increase and deploy nuclear weapons and emphasise the legitimacy of strengthening Pyongyang's nuclear deterrent.

"Kim is emboldened," said Christopher Green, a Korea specialist at Leiden University in the Netherlands.

"He feels able to publicly pursue a marked expansion of North Korea's nuclear arsenal with a confidence that comes from knowing that as long as he doesn't foment outright instability in the region, Beijing will not try to stop him."

Kim Jong-un's sister says North Korea's nuclear programme 'line of no retreat'

AFP
Seoul

North Korea's nuclear weapons programme is "the line of no retreat", the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong-un said in a statement carried by state media yesterday ahead of a visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Pyongyang has long insisted on its right to nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes, although they are forbidden under the terms of UN Security Council sanctions. It enshrined its nuclear status in its constitution in 2023.

"The DPRK's status as a nuclear weapons state is the line of no retreat," Kim's sister Kim Yo-jong said in the English version of a statement published by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), using the North's official name.

"We will never tolerate any threat or compromise related to our sovereignty and security," she said.

She also cited reported US weapons sales to Republic of Korea, describing them as the "ceaseless arms buildup of the hostile countries", in justifying Pyongyang's efforts to strengthen its arsenal.

Kim Yo-jong is a key player in the North's communications and foreign policy and her statement came on the eve of Xi's visit, which, according to state media, is scheduled to take place on today and tomorrow.

Beijing is a vital source of political and economic support to North Korea, one of the most diplomatically isolated countries in the world and which is under heavy international sanctions.

Xi's visit to Pyongyang will be his first in seven years, and comes after he hosted back-to-back summits with US President Donald Trump and Russia's Vladimir



Kim Yo-jong, sister of North Korea's leader Kim Jong-un, in the far eastern Amur region, Russia. (Reuters/File Photo)

Putin last month.

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

North Korea's leader has since been emboldened by the war in Ukraine, securing critical support from Moscow after sending thousands of troops to fight alongside Russian forces.

He inspected a major munitions factory at the weekend and called for it to boost production capacity, according to a separate KCNA report yesterday.

This was "in order to supply enough quantity of missiles", it quoted him as saying.

Kim Yo-jong also criticised Washington over its comments that the goal of denuclearising North Korea had been reaffirmed during the summit between Trump and Xi in Beijing last month.

The White House posted a fact sheet following the summit stating that "President Trump and President Xi confirmed their shared goal to denuclearize North Korea", but Kim Yo-jong said it was false.

"Still, some officials in the US

have failed to wake from their escapist and anachronistic dreams," she said.

"This is nothing but an old practise of the US for spreading false information."

Kim Yo-jong also rejected Washington's attempts to deny or challenge the North's status as a nuclear power, saying it "has no legally binding force".

"The line of steadily beefing up the nuclear war deterrent for self-defence, clarified by the head of state, is an irreversible final conclusion to be carried out unconditionally," she said.

The statement underscores Pyongyang's "sensitivity" to any suggestion of a US-China agreement on North Korean denuclearisation, Hong Min, an analyst at the Korea Institute for National Unification, told AFP.

"Kim's core message was a categorical rejection of reports of US-China discussions on North Korea denuclearisation as 'false information'," he said.

It is possible that Pyongyang had "confirmed with Beijing" during the coordination process for the summit that such discussion had not taken place, Hong said.

Korean president orders probe into local election ballot shortages

Reuters
Seoul

Republic of Korea President Lee Jae-myung called yesterday for a thorough investigation into a ballot shortage that disrupted recent local elections, saying prosecutors and police would be involved.

"As one citizen and as the president responsible for the government, I express deep regret," Lee said in an X post.

Last week's local elections were hit by a ballot shortage that prevented some eligible voters from casting ballots. The head of the National Election Commission (NEC), the independent body that oversaw the vote, resigned after the incident.

Thousands have since protested outside a ballot-counting site in Seoul, demanding a re-run.

Lee said the incident was "difficult to comprehend" and that the NEC's response and explanations were insufficient. He said he had asked parliament to conduct a fact-finding probe, establish measures to prevent a repeat



Korean protesters demanding a rerun of the local elections due to a shortage of ballot papers stage a sit-in protest outside a ballot counting station in Seoul yesterday. (AFP)

and discuss reform plans for the commission.

Jang Dong-hyeok, leader of the opposition conservative People Power Party, told a press conference yesterday that he had visited the protests and called for a joint audit with Lee's Democratic Party.

He said ballot shortages were especially severe in areas that lean conservative, but stopped short of calling for a re-run, saying he would "obey whatever the people's commands say".

The Democratic Party swept

major local races, but the opposition retained Seoul's mayoralty, with incumbent Oh Se-hoon winning another term.

The NEC said 50 of 14,300 polling stations ran out of ballots, while voting was temporarily suspended at 22 due to delays in supplies. In Seoul, delays were reported at 12 locations in Songpa district, a conservative stronghold.

At one Songpa polling station, an angry crowd blocked officials from moving ballot boxes to be counted after voting ended.

Russian drug suspects arrested in Bali

AFP
Indonesia

Indonesian authorities arrested two Russian nationals suspected of smuggling drugs into Bali after a high-speed car chase on the popular resort island, an official said yesterday.

The woman, 52, and the 40-year-old man were arrested after trying to smuggle close to eight kilograms (18 pounds) of hashish in a suitcase from Thailand, the National Narcotics

Agency (BNN) said in a statement.

"We have seized the evidence, 7.8 kilograms of hashish," BNN chief Suyudi Ario Seto said.

The woman, identified by her initials "KK", arrived in Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta airport before driving to Bali in a rental vehicle to meet the man at a seaport on Friday.

The agency said the man, identified by his initials "SK", picked up the woman and dropped her, along with the case, at an unidentified location before attempting to flee.

Officials pursued the man and said he had been driving recklessly and hit several pedestrians before being stopped by authorities.

Both were taken into custody on Friday, the agency said without providing further details.

An investigation to determine whether the pair are part of a larger syndicate is underway, BNN said.

Indonesia has some of the world's toughest anti-drug laws, including the death penalty for traffickers, but has maintained a moratorium on executions for several years.

Starmer will be 'part of' any leadership race: deputy PM

AFP
London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will stand if a leadership contest is triggered, a senior minister said yesterday, after media reported Starmer had contacted key backers insisting he would run in any race.

This came after popular northern mayor Any Burnham, who is standing in a key by-election this month, said last week he would participate in any leadership race, although none has yet been triggered.

Starmer "has been absolutely clear – were there to be a con-

test – you need 81 signatures (of MPs) to launch a contest – he will be part of that contest," Deputy Prime Minister David Lammy told Sky News on Sunday. The prime minister would automatically be included in any leadership ballot if he wanted to participate. The BBC and *The Sun* newspaper reported yesterday, citing unnamed MPs, that Starmer has been calling key supporters this weekend to say that if there is a contest he would "fight it".

The Sun reported: "Sir Keir has hardened his position and is hell-bent on running against Mr Burnham."

Labour veteran Burnham is standing to become an MP again

in a June 18 vote in Makerfield in northwestern England. If elected, he would be able to take part in a leadership contest.

Burnham said on a BBC talkshow Thursday that he would seek to challenge Starmer if he won the by-election and if a race is triggered.

He said former health minister Wes Streeting, who resigned last month with an open letter expressing no confidence in Starmer, "seems to have launched a leadership contest. So if that is running, I would seek to join it."

The prime minister has repeatedly rejected calls to resign and insisted he wants to stay on as leader of the Labour party after winning a general election in 2024.

Missing Malaysian hiker's rescue hailed a 'miracle'

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

The rescue of a Malaysian hiker found alive after two weeks missing in the wilderness was hailed as "a miracle" by a friend yesterday, as authorities ended a massive search that gripped the nation.

Indigenous Malaysians found a battered Jasinda Saludin late Saturday in a forested area near the small town of Tapah, in central Malaysia's Perak state, some way from where she was first reported missing, local papers said.

Jasinda, 49, described as an experienced hiker, was last seen two weeks ago while undertaking the Trans Spencer Chapman trek, an arduous 34-kilometre (21-mile) slog along the treacherous Titiwangsa mountain range.

She departed alone from a rest camp for an ascent of Gunung



Rescuers assisting Jasinda Saludin (second left) after she was found in a forested area in central Malaysia's Perak state. (AFP)

Batu Puteh, also known as White Rock Mountain, before being reported missing.

Her disappearance made front-page news in the Southeast Asian country and triggered a major search involving helicopters, local indigenous Malaysian communities, and a crack team from Malaysia's Fire and Rescue Department.

She was discovered on Saturday

afternoon by local fishermen, saying she survived by drinking from rivers and eating berries and other forest plants.

"When we heard that she had been found safe, it felt like our prayers had been answered. It is truly a miracle," said her friend, Hishammuddin Ahmad.

After her rescue, Jasinda was taken to hospital.



Zelensky's letter to Putin was intended for other ears

President Volodymyr Zelensky's open letter offering face-to-face peace talks to end the war in Ukraine was addressed to Russian President Vladimir Putin but meant to echo through the corridors of this week's St Petersburg investment forum, and beyond.

Zelensky published the letter on Thursday evening as Putin briefed foreign news editors at Russia's premier business event.

The previous day, Ukrainian drones had hit an oil terminal in St Petersburg, sending clouds of smoke billowing into the sky near the venue.

Ukraine believes sections of Russia's elite – "officials, businessmen, and Russia's partners" – want to see an end to a conflict that has left its \$3tn economy stagnant, according to one Ukrainian official.

The glitzy gathering has highlighted rival visions within Russia.

While some participants have said Russia should fight on and gird for long-term confrontation with the West, others have emphasised the economic advantages of ending a war

coming closer by the week.

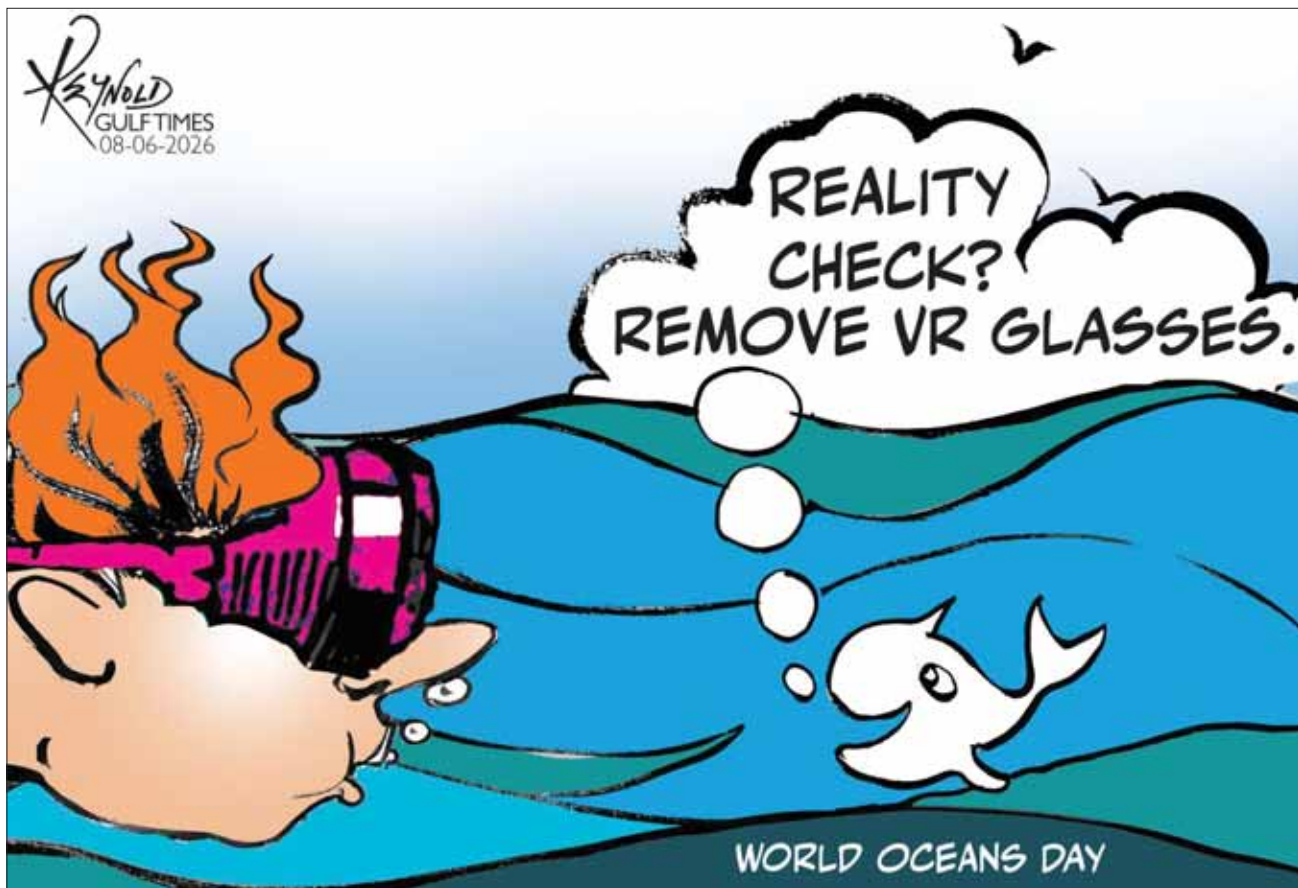
Zelensky has for months been repeating his call for a ceasefire and offer to meet Putin, only for Putin to dismiss them, as he did again on Friday.

The Ukrainian official insisted that Zelensky was serious about reviving negotiations.

However, Dmytro Iarovy, associate professor at the Kyiv School of Economics specialising in political psychology, said the drone strike and "performative" letter had been a concerted attempt to shape the conference's narrative.

He said the letter was intended to tell Russian society and Western governments – particularly US President Donald Trump – that recent territorial gains and painful long-range strikes on Russia had put Kyiv in a stronger position in any negotiations.

"Trump always says 'Ukraine doesn't have any cards'," said Kurt Volker, a former US ambassador to the Nato, and Ukraine envoy during Trump's first administration. "Well, Ukraine is now showing that it's in a stronger position." – Reuters



The ghost that haunts the Caribbean

By Jassim al-Azzawi

The sea does not forget. Sixty-four years ago, Soviet missiles pointed at the heart of an American empire from a sliver of a Caribbean island, and the world held its breath at the edge of annihilation.

The crisis passed. The missiles were removed.

However, the punishment never ended. What Washington called an embargo, what Havana has always called by its true name, a blockade, began on February 3, 1962, and has never stopped.

It is the longest sustained campaign of economic strangulation in modern history, outlasting the Cold War, outlasting the Soviet Union, outlasting every justification ever offered for it, and now, in the spring of 2026, it has metastasized into something that should terrify anyone still capable of being terrified.

In what appears to be a carefully calibrated show of force, the United States has deployed the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and its strike group into Caribbean waters, a move that coincided with the unsealing of murder charges against former Cuban leader Raúl Castro for a 1996 incident in which Cuban forces shot down planes operated by the Miami exile group Brothers to the Rescue.

US Southern Command framed the move as a demonstration of operational readiness, citing the carrier's prior combat operations from the Taiwan Strait to the Persian Gulf to underscore its capabilities and reach.

"Welcome to the Caribbean, Nimitz Carrier Strike Group!" the command posted on social media, with the casual menace of a man pressing a boot to a throat.

This is the Imperial Theatre. It is the language of domination dressed in legal costume.

The empire always needs a pretext. In 1962, it was Soviet missiles. In 1996, it was a civilian aircraft.

Today, for the Trump administration, which has declared Cuba "an unusual and extraordinary threat" to national security, the pretext is a 94-year-old man.

Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío described the indictment as "fraudulent", lacking any legal, political, or moral foundation, and warned that the US has a "well-known, dark practice" of using accusations like this to take military action against sovereign states.

He is not wrong. The playbook is familiar. First the dossier, then the carrier group, then the ruble.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel accused Washington of using the island's economic weakness as an "outrageous pretext" to seize it, promising that "any external aggressor will clash with an impregnable resistance".

These are not empty words from a government that has survived sixty years of siege, the Bay of Pigs, the assassination plots, the sabotage campaigns, the tourist boycotts, and now a fuel blockade that has plunged



10mn people into recurring darkness.

The Trump administration's attempts, in the words of Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova, to "tighten the sanctions noose around Cuba, combined with a decades-long trade, economic, financial, humanitarian and now energy blockade, directly reflect Washington's intolerance for dissent".

"It is," she said, "a cynical embodiment of a revived Monroe Doctrine."

The Monroe Doctrine. That 19th-century declaration of hemispheric ownership, that proclamation that Latin America belongs to Washington as a private estate.

It never died. It merely slept. And now it walks again.

Enter Marco Rubio, the US Secretary of State, son of Cuban exiles, the man who has waited his whole political life for this moment.

Rubio has been unsparing: Cuba

needs "new people in charge", he said.

"Their economy doesn't work... they're in a lot of trouble, and the people in charge don't know how to fix it, so they have to get new people in charge."

It is the logic of the conqueror, packaged as the counsel of a friend.

And Cuba's Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez did not hesitate to label Rubio a "spokesperson for corrupt and vengeful interests".

However, here is what distinguishes 2026 from every previous chapter of this long war: Cuba is no longer alone in ways that matter.

Russia has pledged the "most active support" to Cuba, with foreign ministry spokesperson Zakharova declaring full solidarity and vowing to "strongly condemn any attempts at gross interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign state, intimidation and the use of unilateral restrictive measures, threats and blackmail".

In March, Russia sent an oil tanker to the island, which Moscow called "humanitarian assistance", a direct and deliberate defiance of the American blockade.

China added its voice separately, demanding that the US stop wielding the "big sticks" of judicial proceedings and sanctions and cease its threats of force against Cuba.

This is the architecture of the new world.

The United States is simultaneously running pressure campaigns against Iran, backed by China, and Cuba, backed by Russia.

The targets are no longer isolated.

They are networked. They are backed.

And as the empire extends itself across three simultaneous confrontations, from the Taiwan Strait to the Persian Gulf to the Caribbean, the question is no longer whether American power is formidable. It is whether it is wise.

Cuba's deputy foreign minister reminded the world that those charged in the 1996 incident "were fulfilling a duty, the duty to protect the airspace, the homeland, and the peace of the Cuban people" and concluded with a warning that must be heard: "Any attempt to use this excuse for action against these comrades within Cuba will be met with fierce resistance from the Cuban people."

The USS Nimitz, the oldest carrier in the American fleet, commissioned in 1975, is now prowling waters it has not patrolled with such intent since the height of the Cold War.

History does not repeat. But it returns. It rises from the water.

And the ghost that haunts the Caribbean in May 2026 is the same ghost that haunted it in October 1962: the arrogance of a superpower that cannot conceive of a world in which it does not own every shore it surveys.

The Cuban people know what that ghost wants. They have always known.

And for 64 years, they have answered it with the only word that the empire never learns to accept.

No.

• The writer is a prominent news anchor, programme presenter and media instructor.

As OPEC+ meets, Iran war hobbles its power to shape market

By Pol-Malo Le Bris
AFP

OPEC+ ministers met this weekend to weigh higher production quotas in a bid to cap oil prices that have surged since the Iran war effectively choked off Gulf crude shipments.

However, even if the group members vow to ramp up output by thousands of barrels per day, analysts say that geopolitical realities mean they probably won't move the needle on prices.

With the crucial Strait of Hormuz shut since US and Israeli attacks on Iran in late February, oil prices have nearly doubled, igniting inflation pressures worldwide.

Ministers from the 21 member states of OPEC+, the main oil producing nations and their allies, are holding their quarterly meeting online.

The group is likely to beef up its production quotas by "188,000 barrels a day", said Jorge Leon, analyst at Rystad Energy, similar to recent increases.

However, in reality, only seven members – Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria and Oman – have the capacity to do so.

Tehran's threats of retaliatory attacks to US and Israeli strikes have virtually blocked the vital Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly a fifth of global oil and gas supplies normally pass.

That is equivalent to about 20mn barrels a day. With key Gulf producers shut out of the global market, pledges to raise output in a bid to ease spiralling prices are unlikely to sway traders.

"Any announced production increases or changes to output targets will have limited practical value," said Ole Hansen, a commodities analyst at Saxo Bank. "There is very little OPEC can do."

OPEC+ itself says daily production has plummeted to just 33mn barrels a day as tankers remain stuck, compared to nearly 43mn before the conflict.

A US blockade on Iranian ports means "it will be even less than that" in reality, said Homayoun Falakshahi, head of crude oil analysis at data firm Kpler.

The United Arab Emirates's recent decision to quit OPEC further saps away at the cartel's influence, given its huge excess production capacity.

And Abu Dhabi has made clear it wants to boost output.

"They don't want to be dictated to, they want to maximise their revenues," said Lawrence Haar, a lecturer in finance at the University of Brighton in England.

And the group risks seeing other countries follow the UAE's example.

"If Iraq were to leave, it could mark the end of OPEC+", Falakshahi said.

Saudi Arabia, by far the cartel's most influential member, "is going to do what it takes to stop anyone else from leaving", Falakshahi predicted.

That could translate into more flexible output quotas or decreased penalties for any excess production.

However, "for now, the compensation framework has effectively become irrelevant due to widespread production shut-ins", Hansen said.

As a result, the Iran war has largely neutralised the group's stated mission "to secure an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consumers, and a steady income to producers".

For Falakshahi, the only factor limiting further oil price spikes at the moment is China, "which is buying less oil than normal" by tapping into its vast strategic reserves.



People are seen through a window beneath framed portraits of (from left) Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel, former president Raul Castro, and late leader Fidel Castro, in Havana. – AFP

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Zelensky meets allies in UK after strike hits Ukraine N-site

AFP
London

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky arrived in Britain yesterday for defence talks with leaders of the UK, France and Germany after new Russian strikes killed five people and hit a nuclear site in Ukraine.

Zelensky said in an online post he was in London and would meet British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. Kyiv is asking its Western allies for more ammunition deliveries for its anti-air defences as Ukraine endures daily Russian strikes. Zelensky is also seeking ways for the allies to further pressure Russia to end the fighting.

Yesterday, Russia fired waves of drones and other munitions at Ukraine, with one of the attacks



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky is welcomed by Britain's PM Keir Starmer at 10 Downing Street ahead of a meeting that includes the leaders of France and Germany in central London yesterday. (AFP)

damaging a nuclear storage facility in the Chernobyl exclusion zone, Ukrainian officials said.

Radiation levels at the facility remained within normal limits following the attack, although its fuel reception building was "partially destroyed", according to Ukraine's

nuclear energy operator, Energoatom.

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. Russian leader Vladimir Putin has rejected direct peace talks proposed by his Ukrainian counterpart.

Zelensky, in an earlier online post, said Russia had used an Iranian-designed Shahed drone to "hit one of the buildings of the Centralised Spent Fuel Storage Facility" in the Chernobyl exclusion zone.

"As of now, there are no readings exceeding normal background radiation levels. But there is certainly an increase in Russia's brazenness, which long ago went off the charts," he said.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said it was dispatching a team to inspect the damage, calling the incident "deeply concerning".

The facility is located in a remote area of forest around a dozen kilometres (seven miles) from the site of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, and is designed to house spent fuel from Ukraine's three



A handout image from Ukraine's Energoatom shows damage to a spent nuclear fuel storage facility, following what the company said was a drone strike, near Chernobyl, yesterday. (Reuters)

active nuclear plants.

Both sides accused each other of renewed attacks on civilians yesterday. A Russian bombardment of a public transport stop in Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region left at least two people dead, while a near-by drone strike killed a 56-year-old minibus driver, authorities said.

Separate Russian attacks on the central Dnipropetrovsk region killed two men, governor Oleksandr Ganza posted on Telegram.

In Russia, a Ukrainian drone strike on a car in the Belgorod border re-

gion killed a woman and injured her husband, local authorities said.

Hundreds of thousands have been killed and millions forced to flee their homes since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia now occupies around a fifth of its neighbour: the Crimean peninsula, which it annexed in 2014, most of the eastern regions of Donetsk and Lugansk — collectively referred to as the Donbas — and large parts of the southern Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.

Armenians vote with peace efforts, Russia in focus

AFP
Yerevan

Armenia voted yesterday in a parliamentary election set to test Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's tilt to the West, as the country faces threats and allegations of interference from former imperial ruler Russia.

Armenia and Russia are technically allies, but Moscow has compared the former Soviet republic's EU ambitions to the same path it claims triggered its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

The election comes after years of upheaval since Pashinyan was propelled to power in a 2018 street revolution.

The small Caucasus country is still reeling from long-time foe Azerbaijan's military takeover of the Karabakh region.

The conflict came to an end in 2023, when Azerbaijan's army seized control of the enclave, and most of the Armenian population fled.

Pashinyan has framed the vote as a choice between a lasting peace with Azerbaijan, or a return to war.

The 51-year-old has also sought to loosen Armenia's dependence on Moscow, after it failed to help during the Karabakh conflict.

He has frozen participation in a Russia-led security bloc while deepening ties with the European Union and US, and set Armenia on a path toward possible EU membership.

While US President Donald Trump offered his "TOTAL Endorsement for Re-Election" to "great friend and Leader" Pashinyan, Moscow has bristled at the possible loss of yet another ally in its backyard.



Armenian Prime Minister and leader of the Civil Contract party Nikol Pashinyan casts a ballot at a polling station during a parliamentary election in Yerevan, yesterday. (Reuters)

Turnout was 33.84% at 1000 GMT, six hours after polls opened, the Central Election Commission said.

"We will accept any choice made by the people," Pashinyan told journalists at a polling station in Yerevan after casting his ballot.

He pledged Armenia would pursue a balanced foreign policy after the vote, insisting "there is no question of choosing" between Russia and the West.

In a pointed remark, Russian President Vladimir Putin said in May: "We all see what is happening with Ukraine now... How did it all begin? With Ukraine's attempt to join the EU?"

The Kremlin has been accused of seeking to sway the vote.

Analysts have noted misinformation on the web, hacker activity and Kremlin-friendly narratives portraying Western cooperation as dangerous.

In the weeks before the vote, Russia banned the import of several products from Armenia — seen

as a move to heap economic pressure on the country.

And Armenian officials have warned "enemies of freedom" are funding propaganda efforts.

Pashinyan has insisted he does not want a rupture with Moscow.

But the campaign was a battle over Armenia's geopolitical future.

Pashinyan and his chief opponents have all accused each other of risking a fresh conflict.

Pashinyan told voters Armenia could face a "catastrophic war" with Azerbaijan within months if his Civil Contract party — leading in opinion polls — fails to secure a strong majority.

His opponents say that rhetoric is fear mongering.

Ex-president Robert Kocharyan's opposition Armenia alliance accused law enforcement agencies of "obstructing the electoral process" and detaining members of its campaign team.

Prosecutors said 165 criminal cases had been opened into "instances of alleged obstruction

of the election process".

Samvel Karapetyan, a billionaire Russian-Armenian businessman whose Strong Armenia party is polling second, has rejected claims he would drag Armenia back into Russia's orbit, but warned against Pashinyan's "reckless rush" to the West.

Karapetyan has been under house arrest since last year on charges of plotting a coup — allegations he rejects as politically motivated.

Western Europe has made little secret of who it wants to win.

In a high-profile visit in May, French President Emmanuel Macron threw his support behind Pashinyan, embracing the Armenian leader as a dear friend.

It remains unclear whether Pashinyan's party can secure the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed to pass constitutional amendments, demanded by Azerbaijan as a condition for a final peace treaty.

Pashinyan's democratic record is also on the ballot paper.

Eight years after he swept to power on a promise to dismantle Armenia's oligarchic system, he faces increasing accusations of democratic backsliding.

Still for many Armenians, the opposition remains associated with Russian influence and oligarchs.

"I voted for peace. Only Pashinyan can bring peace," one voter, 63-year-old craftsman Hakob Hakobyan, told AFP.

Another voter, Khachatur Movsisyan, a 59-year-old mechanical engineer, said he had backed an opposition party "because the country, and all of us, need change — in foreign policy, domestic policy and in negotiations with Azerbaijan".

Trump to ask Israel to hold back after Iranian attack

From Page 1

Iraq also has temporarily closed its airspace and suspended air navigation, civil aviation officials are saying. Iran also suspended flights at Imam Khomeini Airport until further notice.

The Syrian Civil Aviation Authority announced a temporary closure of the southern air corridors and the suspension of operations at Damascus International Airport for 12 hours as well.

The IRGC says it accepted a ceasefire with the US on condition that it was "a ceasefire on all fronts".

However, it said the US and Israel have failed to meet their commitment by launching attacks in Lebanon and "violating the ceasefire by repeatedly attacking Iranian shores and

vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean".

"Tonight's operation was a warning," the IRGC said in its statement, adding that, "if aggressions are repeated, the responses will be broader".

The Iranian foreign minister said he had spoken with officials from the UK, Türkiye and Pakistan "following Iran's response to the repeated violations of the ceasefire in Lebanon" by Israel.

Araghchi posted on Telegram that he spoke with British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper and Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan.

He also said he spoke with Pakistan's army chief, Field Marshal Asim Munir, who has played a key role in US-Iran mediation efforts.

Trump 'won't unfreeze assets before deal'

US President Donald Trump said in an interview broadcast yesterday that he will not unfreeze Iranian assets before reaching an agreement with Tehran.

Asked whether he would be willing, as part of a potential agreement, to unfreeze Iranian assets or lift certain sanctions against Iran, Trump replied: "No."

"(That) comes after. If they behave, if they do a good job, we start talking," he said in the interview with NBC.

Iran has demanded that billions in frozen assets be unblocked.

According to a source close to the matter, the US Treasury is considering the possibility that Iran's assets could be tapped to compensate Gulf states for damages caused by Iranian strikes.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said yesterday that regional governments were "not in a position to demand reparations", responding to reports the US could use Iranian assets to compensate regional allies for war-related damages.

Gharibabadi added in a post on X that Iran's assets were "neither war spoils for Washington nor a payment fund for its allies".

Kosovo returns to polls as voter frustration grows

AFP
Prishtina

Kosovo citizens returned to the polls in another snap election yesterday, their third in just over a year, as voter frustration mounts at a grinding political gridlock in Europe's youngest country.

The ballot comes after a polarised parliament failed to elect a president in April, deepening a political crisis that has gripped the country since inconclusive parliamentary elections in February 2025.

"Enough is enough," retired teacher Gezim Selimi told AFP after casting his vote in the capital Prishtina.

"I expect parties to finally come to their senses and work for Kosovo, instead of wasting time fighting for power through one snap election after another."

Despite topping the polls in February's vote, Prime Minister Albin Kurti's party fell short of the majority needed to form a government, triggering months of bitter division among MPs and eventually forcing a snap election in December.

Kurti's Vetevendosje party — which blends a leftist agenda with fervent nationalism — again topped the vote and joined with ethnic minority MPs to form a government.

But an opposition boycott of the



Kosovo's Prime Minister Albin Kurti casts his ballot at a polling station on the day of general elections in Prishtina yesterday. (AFP)

vote to replace the outgoing president eventually sank the parliament.

"I don't think I will vote. It's frustrating to see that the election will yield the same result," computer programmer Miranda Fazliu told AFP ahead of the election echoing the view of many voters.

Kurti yesterday called on citizens to turn out in large numbers.

"Higher turnout will turn into higher legitimacy and stability for institutions of our republic," he said after casting his ballot in Prishtina.

At 0900 GMT, or four hours after polling stations opened, turnout was less than 8.5%, official figures showed. It was almost the same like compared with the De-

ember vote at the same time. The total turnout was about 45% then.

Experts say lawmakers' inability to work across political divides means the latest vote is unlikely to solve anything.

Political and economic researcher Ardi Uka said that Kosovo had entered a cycle of elections, similar to other countries in the past.

"The crisis will continue," Uka said.

Safet Gerxhalii, a university lecturer, said the problem had become "systemic" and was now "continuously sending people back to the polls".

"It is definitely the biggest crisis in Kosovo since the declaration of independence," he said, referring

to the country's 2008 split from Serbia.

"The institutions are on the verge of collapse."

The rolling election cycles come amid a rise in living costs, which are felt acutely by voters in one of Europe's poorest countries.

"Life has become more expensive. You can see that for a single visit to the shop," painter Faton Kryeziu said, with a gallery full of work he is struggling to sell.

"Sales are at zero today. It has never been harder for me," he said.

Yesterday's vote will cost over 10mn euros (\$11.5mn), excluding campaign spending by political parties.

The total cost of elections has increased fivefold when two national and two local elections held in 2025 are added.

"Political parties have shown a lot of immaturity as we are not a wealthy enough country to hold two elections every year and the money spent on them would be better used for development," said retired judge Virgjina Dumnica.

Local doctor Nexhmedin Osmani agreed that the cost was particularly frustrating for a country that still sees many of its youth move abroad in hopes of finding a job.

"That worries me. We will be left with only old people."

Polling stations close at 1700 GMT with exit polls expected then. Preliminary official results are due later yesterday.

Street patrol



Commuters ride past security personnel as they patrol a street in Muzaffarabad, yesterday. (AFP)

More sanctions could be imposed on Israeli settlers in 'coming days': France

Israeli settlers could face further sanctions in coming days in protest at the escalation of illegal settlements in the West Bank and a surge in violence by settlers against Palestinians, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said yesterday.

The European Union imposed sanctions on Israeli settlers and organisations that support them late last month.

Speaking to Public Senat television and RTL radio, Barrot did not name the European countries he said could impose further measures. But in a reference to the previous EU sanctions, he said: "We could go further, and in the coming days, further sanctions could be imposed."

His remarks follow escalating violence by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank and underscore 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.

Reuters reported on Saturday, citing European diplomats, that 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.

"I am extremely concerned about the escalation of illegal settlement activity in the West Bank and the surge in violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians," Barrot said. "This is why I have pushed for sanctions to be imposed not only on those responsible for this violence, but also on the entities, companies and organisations in Israel that are providing these extremist settlers with the means to drive Palestinians from their land, burn their crops and destroy their public buildings," he said.

(Reuters)

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Al Kass Channels marks 20 years

The Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) celebrated the 20th anniversary of the launch of Al Kass Sports Channels, which began its media journey on June 6, 2006.

In two decades, it has become one of the most prominent sports platforms in the region, thanks to its coverage of local and international sporting events and its continuous adaptation to media and technological advancements.

QMC chief executive HE Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz al-Thani lauded the role played by Al Kass Channels throughout its history, emphasising that it has become one of the most successful sports media projects in the region.

In a post on his official X account, he said: "Twenty years of continuous dedication and media excellence mark the journey of Al Kass Sports Channels, part of the QMC."

"We commend them and the efforts of all the administrative and technical teams who, over the past two decades, have cre-

ated a pioneering sports media experience and contributed with high efficiency to documenting the most prominent sporting events in Qatar and the region," he said.

For 20 years, Al Kass Channels, part of the QMC, has successfully established itself as a professional sports platform that combines credibility, speed, and innovation.

It has contributed to conveying the image of sports in Qatar to Arab viewers through its coverage of local, continental, and international tournaments and competitions, as well as producing diverse sports programmes that have garnered a wide following both inside and outside Qatar.

Al Kass Sports Channels was launched under the name "Al Dawri wal Kass" (The League and the Cup), beginning its journey as a media platform specialising in the broadcasting and coverage of sports in Qatar.

Its primary focus was on following lo-



HE Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz al-Thani

cal tournaments and showcasing sporting stars and talents.

Within a few years, the channel successfully expanded its reach and audience, transforming from a channel specialising in local sports to one of the most prominent sports networks in the Arab region.

Since its inception, Al Kass has covered numerous major sporting events, starting

with the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, and continuing through the Gulf Cup and the AFC Asian Cup, in addition to its ongoing coverage of the Qatari League, the Emir Cup, and all local competitions, which have become an integral part of its media identity.

It has also played a vital role in conveying Qatar's sporting achievements to the Arab audience and has contributed to documenting many historical milestones in Qatari sports over the past two decades.

Today, the network comprises 11 sports channels, including free-to-air and pay-TV channels, offering live coverage, analytical studios, and specialised programmes that appeal to diverse segments of the sports audience.

It also holds the broadcasting rights for a number of local and continental championships and competitions, which strengthened its presence on the regional sports scene.

The 20th anniversary of the launch of

Al Kass Sports Channels garnered significant engagement on social media, with numerous media figures, athletes, and personalities in the Arab sports scene sending congratulatory messages on the occasion, recalling the channel's journey and its role in covering sporting events over the past two decades.

Since its launch, the channel has witnessed rapid development in its technical and artistic infrastructure, keeping pace with the latest technologies in television broadcasting and digital production.

It has contributed to providing comprehensive sports content that combines live broadcasts, analysis, on-site coverage, and talk shows, making it a primary destination for sports enthusiasts in the region.

As it enters its third decade, Al Kass Sports Channels continue to develop their media tools and keep pace with rapid digital transformations, in line with the QMC's vision of providing professional content that adheres to global best practices and enhances Qatari sports media's presence at both the regional and international levels.

Physical stores retain edge in fashion retail, says entrepreneur

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Despite the continued growth of e-commerce, physical stores remain essential for fashion and tailoring businesses, as customers still want to see fabrics, try on clothes and receive personalised advice before making a purchase, according to the founder of Stitch by Salma.

Umme Salma told *Gulf Times* that the fashion industry is increasingly embracing a hybrid retail model that combines the convenience of online shopping with the personalised service offered by physical stores.

"We have adopted a hybrid approach that allows customers to enjoy the ease of digital shopping while still benefiting from the personalised service that fashion retail and tailoring require," she said.

Customers can browse collections, make enquiries, place orders and communicate with the boutique through social media and messaging platforms, making the shopping experience more accessible and convenient.

At the same time, she said that Stitch by Salma continues to invest in its physical store, where customers receive styling advice, fabric guidance, measurements, fittings, alterations and after-sales support.

Salma said these services remain difficult to replicate online and are among the key reasons customers continue to visit stores despite the rise of digital retail. "Customers often want to see and feel fabrics, assess garment quality, compare colours and evaluate fit before making a purchase," she said.

For tailoring and custom-made garments, accurate measurements, fittings, alterations and design consultations remain essential.

Many shoppers also value expert advice on styles that suit their body type, personal preferences or specific occasions.

Salma said consumer behaviour has evolved significantly since the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic accelerated the shift towards digital shopping.

"Today, customers often research products online before making a purchase, even if they ultimately visit a physical store," she said. "They expect convenience, quick responses, flexible delivery options and seamless communication across online and offline channels."

However, Salma stressed that many consumers still prefer visiting stores for fashion purchases.

As a result, businesses that successfully integrate online and in-store experiences are best positioned to meet changing customer expectations, she added.

Salma also noted differences in shopping prefer-



Umme Salma

ences between younger and older consumers.

Younger shoppers are generally more comfortable discovering products online, engaging with brands through social media and making purchasing decisions based on digital content and convenience.

They also tend to conduct extensive research before visiting a store and expect quick responses from retailers.

Older consumers, meanwhile, place greater value on the traditional in-store experience, particularly when purchasing higher-value garments or clothing that requires tailoring.

They often prefer to inspect products in person and speak directly with knowledgeable staff before making a decision.

Despite these differences, Salma said the line between online and offline shopping is becoming increasingly blurred.

"We are increasingly seeing customers of all age groups combining both channels - researching online and completing purchases in-store, or vice versa," she said.

Salma expects online shopping to continue growing as technology advances and consumer expectations evolve.

However, she does not believe physical retail will disappear, especially in sectors such as fashion, tailoring and custom garments, where personal service and product experience remain important.

"The future is likely to be increasingly omnichannel, with customers moving seamlessly between online and offline touchpoints," she said.

To prepare for this shift, Stitch by Salma is strengthening its digital presence while continuing to invest in its store experience, tailoring services and customer relationships.

Salma also highlighted challenges facing established retailers, particularly the rise of unregistered online sellers operating without commercial licences, regulatory compliance or the same level of investment as registered businesses.

While acknowledging that online entrepreneurship creates opportunities, she stressed the importance of maintaining fair competition and consistent standards across the sector.

"Businesses that invest in compliance, quality, customer service and long-term growth should be able to compete on a level playing field," she said.

Ministry honours winners of Youth Innovation in Data Award

In conjunction with Gulf Youth Day, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in co-operation with the National Planning Council and the Gulf Statistical Centre, honoured the winners of the Youth Innovation in Data Award, in the presence of several dignitaries from Qatar and other GCC countries.

The winners were honoured by HE Dr Abdulaziz bin Nasser bin Mubarak al-Khalifa, secretary-general of the National Planning Council, and HE Eng. Yasser bin Abdullah al-Jamal, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The award recognised 12 young men and women from the Gulf countries who excelled with innovative projects in the fields of data, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital applications, affirming the role of Gulf youth in shaping the future of the digital economy and promoting innovation.



HE Dr Abdulaziz bin Nasser bin Mubarak al-Khalifa (right) with an award winner.

Qatar takes part in international conference on sports tourism

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Sports and Youth, participated in the international conference on "Sport Tourism as a Driver for Sustainable Development", hosted by Cyprus.

The Ministry of Sports and Youth delegation was headed by Assistant Undersecretary for Sports Affairs Eng. Abdulrahman Abdullah Hassan al-Malki.

During the conference, the delegation highlighted key experiences and best practices related to the development of the sports sector and the strengthening of its role in supporting sustainable development.

On the sidelines of the conference, Qatar's delegation held a



meeting with officials from the Cyprus Sports Organisation, during which the two sides discussed ways to enhance bilateral co-operation and activate existing agreements.

They also exchanged expertise and explored opportunities for knowledge transfer in various areas of mutual interest in the sports sector of both countries. - QNA

'Kanaf' Parenting Centre carries out series of awareness programmes

The "Kanaf" Parenting Centre, one of the centres under the umbrella of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, gave a series of specialised awareness programmes and workshops, as part of its efforts to support and empower parents.

Targeting people at different stages of parenting, the series of programmes and workshops sought to contribute to enhancing parental awareness and creating a supportive and stable family environment.

The series featured a programme for prospective parents, raising their awareness of the requirements of parenthood and fostering a deeper understanding of the psychological and social changes associated with this decision.

Another programme was dedicated to pregnant women, offering them psychological and educational support, raising their awareness of the physical and emotional changes experienced during pregnancy, and providing them with guidance to help them prepare for motherhood and create a safe environment for their newborns.

Also among Kanaf's programmes was one targeting expectant and new fathers, preparing them for their parental responsibilities, boosting their support for mothers during pregnancy and after childbirth, and helping them understand their children's

needs and maintaining family balance.

There was a programme for new parents, designed to prepare them for the parenting experience and boosting their confidence in their parenting skills, equipping them with all that is necessary to handle everyday challenges, thereby supporting family communication and creating a nurturing environment for children's development.

Kanaf executive director Dr Maryam al-Malki said that this series comes in the context of the centre's work in raising awareness and providing training that address parental needs at various stages.

At the Kanaf Parenting Centre, she said, conscious parenting is seen to begin with early preparation and parents' understanding of their roles and responsibilities in creating a safe and balanced family environment.

The centre is committed to offering specialised programmes that respond to parental needs, providing parents with the knowledge and practical skills that would enhance the quality of their parent-child relationships, Dr al-Malki added.

This series is part of the Kanaf Parenting Centre's annual plan, with the centre preparing to launch a new series of programmes and workshops in the coming months. - QNA



The hybrid shopping model is gaining ground in the fashion sector, says Stitch by Salma founder Umme Salma.



Unveiled: Updated QR5, 10, 50 banknotes

From Page 1

The move marks the latest stage in a broader programme to align Qatar's currency with the country's updated official visual identity and state emblem.

The QCB had launched the process in July 2025 with the issuance of a revised QR1 banknote incorporating similar changes.

At the time, the central bank indicated that the amendments would gradually be extended to other denominations.

While the overall designs, colours and security features of the notes remain largely unchanged, the most visible alteration is the updated state emblem of Qatar, which reflects the version currently used across official government institutions and documents.

The fifth series of Qatari banknotes was introduced in December 2020 and represented the most significant overhaul of the country's currency in decades. It included enhanced anti-counterfeiting technologies and the introduction of the QR200 denomination for the first time.

The QCB said the same set of amendments will be applied to the remaining denominations of the Fifth Series at a later stage, although no timeline has yet been announced.