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SCAN TO SHOP

US military hits Iran again

Monitoring Report
Doha

The US military struck multiple targets across Iran for a second straight night yesterday, in what it called a "direct response" to an Iranian drone attack earlier in the day on an oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz.

US Central Command said the last night strikes hit Iranian military surveillance infrastructure, communication systems, air defence sites, drone storage facilities and minelayer capabilities. The attack on the tanker — the Panama-flagged Kiku — was carried out by a one-way Iranian attack drone, it said. Iran had not confirmed launching the strike at the time of going to press. **Page 4**

Qatar condemns Iran attacks on Bahrain

Qatar has strongly condemned Iran's drone attacks on Bahrain, branding them a blatant violation of its sovereignty and a flagrant breach of international law, while voicing deep concern over escalating attacks on civilian facilities in Sudan.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed Qatar's full solidarity with Bahrain and its support for any measures Bahrain takes to preserve its sovereignty and security. The ministry urged that the region be spared the consequences of unjustified attacks. **(QNA)**

Qatar joins global rescue mission in Venezuela

Monitoring Report
Doha

Qatar has dispatched a search-and-rescue team and an air bridge of humanitarian aid to Venezuela, joining a sprawling international effort to pull survivors from the rubble of twin earthquakes that have killed hundreds and left tens of thousands missing.

The Qatari International Search and Rescue Group of the Internal Security Force (Le-khwiya) has arrived in the country to join international teams working in areas devastated by the two quakes that struck near the capital, Caracas. The earthquakes, measuring 7.2 and 7.5 in magnitude, hit north-central Venezuela on June 24 less than a minute apart, followed by more than 30 aftershocks — among the strongest to strike the country in over a century. Government officials put the death toll at 1,430, with 3,238 injured, and tens of thousands still unaccounted for as rescuers race against time.

The worst destruction is centred on La Guaira, the port city that serves as the main gateway



to the capital, where dozens of buildings collapsed.

The Qatari personnel include certified specialists in Urban Search and Rescue (USAR), backed by advanced technical equipment to handle collapsed buildings and locate the missing, alongside medical teams and equipped field hospitals to provide urgent care for the wounded.

In parallel, Qatari humanitarian aid and relief have arrived in Venezuela via an air bridge operated by Qatar. The consignment — provided by the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD) — in-

cluded food, medicines, medical essentials and advanced shelter materials, in support of the humanitarian response and to ease the suffering of those affected.

Qatar's deployment forms part of a wider international mobilisation. Several countries with earthquake-response experience, including Mexico, Chile and El Salvador, have sent emergency teams and medical supplies, while the United States pledged \$150mn in aid and dispatched urban search and rescue teams from Virginia and California.

PM holds talks with Saudi, Egyptian FM's on regional security

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held separate phone calls with his Saudi and Egyptian counterparts to discuss regional developments and diplomatic efforts to bolster security and stability in the wake of the memorandum of understanding signed between the United States and Iran.

In a call with Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, and a separate call received from Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Co-operation and Egyptians Abroad, Badr Abdelatty, the PM reviewed bilateral co-operation and ways to strengthen it, alongside an exchange of views on the latest regional developments. In both calls, the PM stressed the importance of sparing the region the consequences of unjustified attacks, ensuring freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, continuing on the path of dialogue and diplomacy, reducing tensions, and building on the



gains achieved under the memorandum of understanding to reinforce regional and international peace and security. He reaffirmed Qatar's full support for the ongoing negotiations between the United States and Iran to reach sustainable solutions to outstanding issues through dialogue and peaceful means — strengthening regional security, opening new horizons for co-operation, development and prosperity, and serving the common interests of the peoples of the region and the world. **(QNA)**

Expert: Cybersecurity key for Qatar's digital growth

By Peter Alagos
Business Editor

Qatar's investments in artificial intelligence (AI), smart infrastructure, and the digital economy have made cybersecurity both relevant and essential to the country's long-term growth, an official of an Indonesia-based tech firm has said.

"Qatar is particularly interesting because of its ambitious vision for technology, innovation, and digital transformation," Patrick Dannacher, president director and CEO of ITSEC Asia, told *Gulf Times* in an exclusive interview.

Dannacher said: "As the country continues to invest in AI, smart infrastructure, and the digital economy, cybersecurity becomes an essential enabler of trust and resilience."

He continued: "We believe there are tremendous opportunities ahead, and we are committed to supporting organisations across the region with world-class expertise, innovation and a long-term partnership approach."



Patrick Dannacher, president director and CEO of ITSEC Asia.

"Ultimately, our mission is very simple: to help businesses and governments innovate with confidence and provide something increasingly valuable in today's digital economy, which is peace of mind."

According to Dannacher, the company started in Indonesia 16 years ago with seven people. It has since grown to more than 400 cybersecurity professionals across offices in Southeast Asia, Australia, and the Middle East. It is the only listed cybersecurity company on the Indonesian Stock Exchange, he noted. **To Page 11**

WISH summit set for Nov with 'New Health Span' as theme

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Science is "churning out magic day after day" — yet most of it never reaches the patients who need it most. Closing that gap will anchor the 8th World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH), which convenes in Doha on November 29 and 30 under the theme "The New Health Span".

Qatar Foundation's flagship health-policy platform will train five tracks on the forces reshaping medicine: longevity and healthy ageing, the future of fertility, financing breakthrough therapies, artificial intelligence in human-centred health, and global health diplomacy, Dr Sunoor Verma, WISH director of partnerships and outreach, told *Gulf Times* in an exclusive interview.

Held at the Qatar National Convention Centre, the summit is among the leading global platforms for health policy, drawing policymakers, researchers and clinicians to confront the sector's sharpest emerging challenges and opportunities.



Dr Sunoor Verma. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

That mismatch — between what laboratories can do and what populations actually receive — is the problem WISH was built to solve. "A lot of innovation is happening around health globally, but not much of it actually gets implemented," Dr Verma said, pointing in particular to the divide between the Global North, where advances tend to emerge, and the Global South, where they are slow to arrive. **To Page 11**

'The goal is no longer simply a university degree'

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Qatar's journey towards a knowledge-based economy continues to be shaped by a strong alignment between higher education, the labour market, and national development goals. Through partnerships between universities, government institutions, and the private sector, the country is preparing a generation equipped with the skills, creativity, and ambition needed for the future.

"Qatar has made significant strides in recent years in linking education to the labour market. The goal is no longer simply

Public health expert on Qatar's shift from qualifications to future-ready capability

to obtain a university degree, but to graduate qualified individuals with the skills needed for the future," said Khawla Abdullah al-Bahr, a public health expert and sports nutritionist. "Today, we see partnerships between universities and the public and private sectors, and specialisations related to digital transformation, scientific research, sustainability, and health, which enhances employment opportunities and innovation."

Al-Bahr highlighted that education, family values, and personal development played a central role in shaping her own journey.

Growing up in a home that valued reading, learning, and a healthy lifestyle, she developed early habits that influenced both her academic and professional path.

"From childhood, we have always eaten healthy food. My father encouraged us to exercise and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Our house was a house of readers, and we read stories in Arabic and English from a young age, which strengthened our language skills."

Her professional focus combines physical health, sports, and community awareness, reflecting the importance of balancing men-

tal and physical well-being. "A well-balanced person who eats, studies, and sleeps in a structured way is also capable of working effectively. My goal is to help individuals enjoy health and well-being because society needs such people to serve the nation and contribute to its progress."

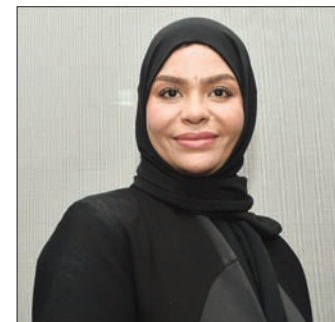
Her passion for public health became even stronger during her postgraduate studies, particularly after her son was diagnosed with diabetes. This experience inspired her to raise awareness among families about diabetes prevention and healthy lifestyles.

"We should encourage people to exercise with their children, eat foods low in sugar, and diversify their diet with fruits and vegeta-

bles. In this way, we protect society and prevent many children from falling into the trap of diabetes."

Al-Bahr also emphasised the importance of continuous learning and professional qualifications. "Qatar requires us to obtain degrees along with experience and application in the field of specialisation. When you have experience and a method of performance, it is very important to have a goal in order to raise and elevate society with continuity and sustainability."

Beyond education, attracting national talent to the private sector remains a key pillar of economic growth. Providing career development opportunities, training, and an environment that encourages creativity can help young Qataris



Khawla Abdullah al-Bahr

achieve their ambitions. "Attracting national talent to the private sector not only serves the individual's interests but also contributes to strengthening the national economy and raising competitiveness. Qatari youth possess competence and ambition, and when given the right opportunities, they can achieve great accomplishments in various sectors." **To Page 11**



Shura Council Speaker meets Egyptian, Iraqi counterparts in Cairo

HE the Shura Council Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim has met separately with Egypt's House of Representatives Speaker Hisham Badawy and Iraq's Council of Representatives Speaker Haibat al-Halbousi on the sidelines of his participation in the 8th Conference of the Arab Parliament and Speakers of Arab Councils and Parliaments, held yesterday in Cairo. During the two meetings, parliamentary cooperation, relations and ways to strengthen and develop them were discussed, along with issues of common interest. - QNA



Amir congratulates Djibouti's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of congratulations to Guelleh. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Djibouti's Prime Minister Abdoukader Kamil Mohamed on the occasion. - QNA

Speaker emphasises need to deepen national security, digital sovereignty

HE the Shura Council Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim has affirmed that Qatar - at the directive of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani - is moving full steam ahead to deepen its digital sovereignty and national security through enhancing legislation and launching the Digital Agenda 2030.

He was speaking at the 8th Conference of the Arab Parliament and Speakers of Arab Councils and Parliaments, which convened yesterday in Cairo.

The conference went over a raft of is-

issues, foremost of which is Arab digital sovereignty, boosting security and stability, and the centrality of the Palestinian cause.

HE al-Ghanim highlighted that the rapid digital transformations and the ensuing evolution in artificial intelligence (AI) compel Arab nations to keep up with these realignments through updating their legislation and ultimately protecting national privacy, personal data, as well as identity and Arab culture.

In this context, he weighed in on Qatar's experience in building an integrated digital system through the aforementioned agen-

da, which represents an executive part of Qatar National Vision 2030, with the United Nations incorporating it into best governance practices.

HE al-Ghanim called for pursuing a joint Arab parliamentary vision that culminates in crafting legislation and policies that augment the Arab digital structure, support data localisation, secure cloud infrastructure, invest in AI-powered technologies, and develop digital models that respect the privacy of Arab societies and preserve their identity.

Having touched on the regional secu-

arity issue, he asserted that the security of nations and respecting their sovereignty are an indispensable priority, stressing that Qatar has long held that it is essential to call for solidifying Arab solidarity and pushing back against intervention in the internal affairs of nations.

HE highlighted that Qatar's foreign policy, which is based on dialogue and diplomacy, has helped settle numerous regional and international conflicts.

HE the Shura Council Speaker further recalled the success of Qatari mediation with regional support in signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the US and Iran, culminating in launching negotiations between the two sides with Qatari-Pakistani mediation.

HE outlined that the recent developments in the region have revealed real challenges facing the regional and international security system, something that requires crystallising a unified Arab parliamentary stance that pushes toward peaceful solutions and precludes the region's slide into further crises and conflicts that jeopardise regional and global security, as well as energy supplies.

Regarding the Palestinian issue, HE al-Ghanim underscored that the Palestinian cause would be the primary Arab cause, and called on Arab parliaments to take a more powerful position in support



of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, demand cessation of aggression, open crossings for delivering life-saving humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, hold those responsible for violations to account, and end the Israeli occupation of all occupied Arab territories.

HE also addressed the ongoing assaults on Lebanon and Syria.

With respect to the Arab Parliament, HE al-Ghanim said that he looks forward to advancing its mechanisms of operation to augment its performance efficiency and consolidate governance, transparency, accountability, and anti-corruption principles.

HE underlined that the Arab Parliament is the epitome of Arab peoples' aspirations for more powerful joint parliamentary action and should remain a model of institutional work based on participation and respect for mandates, free from bureaucracy and unilateral decision-making, strengthening public confidence in Arab institutions and advancing joint Arab parliamentary work. - QNA

8th Arab Parliament Conference hails Qatar, Pakistan for US-Iran mediation

The 8th Conference of the Arab Parliament and Speakers of Arab Councils and Parliaments wrapped up in Cairo yesterday. The conference praised the role played by Qatar and Pakistan in the mediation between the US and Iran, which culminated in the signing of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) on hashing out outstanding issues between them, along with the role of Arab nations in this respect.

The conference's statement underscored the unity of the Arab parliamentary stance toward issues and challenges confronting the Arab nation.

As outlined in this statement, participants adopted four parliamentary decisions on supporting the Palestinian cause, rejecting plans to eliminate this cause, condemning the assaults on several Arab countries, and pushing back against interference in their affairs.

They likewise approved an Arab parliamentary vision that bolsters Arab digital sovereignty.

The one-day conference went over critical matters that included the significance of crystallising a unified Arab stance to protect the security and stability of Arab nations against any external attacks.

In addition, it debated the evolving situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, along with the subject of fostering Arab digital sovereignty and protecting national privacy in the digital transformation era.

In their capacities as parliamentarians, the participants proffered their visions pertaining to these matters and discussed the relevant challenges.

Qatar's delegation to the conference was led by HE the Shura Council Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim. - QNA

MoPH continues mental health programme for senior citizens

THE Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), in cooperation with the Centre for Empowerment and Care of the Elderly (Ehsan), continues to conduct initiatives under the Mental Health Promotion Programme for senior citizens, under the slogan *Quality of Life*.

Now in its fourth consecutive year, this programme aims to raise awareness of the role of senior citizens and highlight their contributions to the social, health, economic and cultural development of Qatar.

Between January and June 2026, the programme conducted around 80 awareness workshops and lectures across various regions of the country, benefiting around 180 senior citizens.

The activities are scheduled to continue throughout September.

The director of the MoPH's Non-Communicable Diseases Prevention Programmes Department, Sheikh Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al-Thani, emphasised that the initiative is designed to enhance the mental health and overall quality of life of the senior citizens.

HE highlighted the importance of fostering a culture that respects and values this demographic while also educating the community about their significant contributions to social development and progress.

Sheikh Dr Mohammed stressed that Qatar has enacted legislation, policies, and programmes to empower senior citizens, enhance their quality of life, and highlight their vital role in society as fundamental contributors to the Qatari family structure.

The programme covers various topics related to mental health and well-being through mentoring sessions, workshops, and community activities.

Key areas of discussion include mental health, emotional stability, and managing life stressors.

The programme's effectiveness is evaluated in collaboration with Ehsan.

This evaluation includes measuring participants' mental well-being, social adjustment, and quality of life, as well as monitoring satisfaction levels, community engagement, and mental resilience.

The assessment utilises scientific metrics and specialised questionnaires, which help ensure ongoing programme development and increase its positive impact on the target population. - QNA

Dicid chairman highlights role of dialogue in social cohesion

Qatar has underscored the importance of dialogue as a strategic choice for strengthening social cohesion and reducing division based on religion, identity and culture, a Qatari official has said.

Doha International Centre for Interfaith Dialogue (Dicid) chairman Dr Ibrahim al-Nuaimi made the remarks on Friday during a high-level conference on religious coexistence and diversity held in Nicosia.

HE said that building cohesive societies required more than legislation and public policy, stressing the need to promote a culture of dialogue, mutual trust, and



greater empowerment of educational, religious and community institutions.

Dr al-Nuaimi highlighted Qa-

tar's experience in promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue through the work of the Digid, including conferences, seminars,

research and international partnerships.

HE said these efforts contribute to strengthening shared citizen-

ship, promoting peaceful coexistence and fostering acceptance of diversity as a source of cultural enrichment and human development.

The official warned that challenges related to hate speech, extremism and social polarisation required close cooperation between governments, civil society organisations, religious leaders and educational and media institutions.

HE added that responsible dialogue, education and awareness-raising were essential tools for building societal resilience and reinforcing peace and stability. - QNA

WCM-Q provides research training to nationals and long-term residents

SEVEN aspiring biomedical scientists gained key research skills by completing the 2025 cycle of the Biomedical Research Training Programme (BTRTP) for Nationals at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q).

The interns who participated in this year's programme were AlMaha al-Janahi, Salma Ali, Osama Ali, Nour Nasrallah, Mariam Afifi, Laila Alabd, and Dania Nazeeh AlBess.

The BTRTP is designed to give Qatari nationals and long-term residents who have recently graduated from college a solid foundation in practical laboratory and research administration skills.

The programme also provides the participants with experience of conducting real clinical research projects and working alongside highly qualified scientists and faculty at the WCM-Q's laboratories.

To celebrate their successful completion of the 10-month programme, the interns were presented with certificates at a

special graduation ceremony.

This year marks the 14th annual cycle of the Biomedical Research Training Programme for Nationals, which was launched in 2011.

Including this year's intake, the programme has now helped a total of 69 local graduates take their first steps toward successful careers in research.

Dr Khaled Machaca, professor of systems and computational biomedicine/vice-dean for research, innovation and commercialisation, said: "It is fantastically encouraging to see a group of enthusiastic young scientists who are based in Qatar learning the skills required to contribute to the country's rapidly growing biomedical research sector."

"I offer them my warmest congratulations and look forward to seeing them build successful and exciting careers in biomedical research," he said.

This year's BTRTP interns are graduates of a variety of international universities:



Dr Machaca (front row, centre-left), WCM-Q staff, and interns who completed the 2026 cycle of the Biomedical Research Training Programme for Nationals.

AlMaha al-Janahi, University of Tsukuba, Japan; Laila Alabd, Qatar University; Nour Nasrallah and Mariam Afifi, Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar; Salma Ali, INTI International College, Malaysia; Osama Ali, University of Medical Sciences and Technology, Sudan; and Dania Nazeeh Ibrahim, Hamad Bin Khalifa University/University of South Carolina.

Tembela Eweje, associate director

(grants, contracts and research training), said: "This year's interns showed huge dedication to the programme and they have learned a great deal of foundational skills that will serve them well in their future careers in biomedical research."

"Through the BTRTP we are helping to provide a diverse and skilled workforce for Qatar, which is very pleasing and a great privilege for us," she said.

DFI sets stage for 2026 Series Workshops for Arab storytellers

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

THE Doha Film Institute (DFI) has officially closed applications for its highly anticipated 2026 Series Workshop, marking the start of preparations for a six-month training programme designed to nurture the next generation of drama creators and screenwriters from across the Arab world.

The first phase of the online workshop will run from July 20-25, launching a comprehen-

sive programme that continues through December 2026.

Throughout the six-month journey, selected participants will work closely with an accomplished network of mentors, story editors and television drama specialists to transform promising concepts into fully developed, production-ready series projects.

The workshop forms part of the DFI's ongoing commitment to strengthening the Arab audiovisual industry by investing in original storytelling and equipping emerging and established writers with the creative and pro-

fessional tools needed to succeed in an increasingly competitive global market.

Structured in three phases, the programme provides participants with a step-by-step development process that guides projects from their earliest concepts to polished series proposals.

During the opening phase, participants will enhance their ideas while exploring character development, thematic depth and dramatic structure, laying the creative foundations for compelling episodic narratives.

The second phase, scheduled

from September 28 to October 3, will focus on evaluating the progress of each project through detailed reviews of developed materials and early scene drafts.

Participants will also undertake visual research and strengthen their project proposals, ensuring that both the creative vision and production strategy evolve in parallel.

The workshop will conclude with its final phase from December 9-15, during which participants will further refine their projects under the guidance of industry experts, bringing

months of collaborative development to fruition.

Recognised as one of the DFI's flagship talent-development initiatives, the Series Workshop has become an important platform for discovering and cultivating distinctive Arab voices in television storytelling.

By combining intensive mentorship, collaborative learning and rigorous script development, the programme aims to equip participants with the skills and confidence to create original series capable of reaching regional and international audiences.

QC inaugurates integrated educational complex in Ghana

Qatar Charity (QC) has inaugurated a modern educational complex at Darul-Ulum Primary School in Kanvili Kpawmo, located within the Sagnarigu municipality of Ghana's northern region.

The project forms part of the QC's ongoing efforts to support the education sector and em-

power children to access quality education in a safe and stimulating learning environment.

It comprises a new educational facility featuring six fully equipped classrooms, a library, an administrative office, and modern sanitation facilities.

The complex has also been designed with accessible pathways

to facilitate movement for people with disabilities, reinforcing the principles of inclusive education for all.

Hassan Awda, director of Qatar Charity's office in Ghana, emphasised that the project aligns with the organisation's strategy of investing in education and developing human capital in underserved communities.

He stated that the new facility will provide children with the opportunity to receive quality education in a safe and dignified environment, noting that the QC remains committed to implementing sustainable development projects that improve the lives of local communities and create favourable conditions for raising generations capable of contributing to the development of their countries.

Awda added that supporting education remains one of Qatar

Charity's core priorities, based on its belief that education is a key driver of sustainable development, poverty reduction, and the creation of better futures for children and young people.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by local officials, including Alhassan Suhuyini, member of parliament for Tamale North and deputy minister for roads and highways, who commended the efforts of Qatar Charity and its donors in making the project possible.

He expressed his appreciation for the QC's humanitarian contributions in Ghana, affirming that such initiatives leave a lasting and sustainable impact on the lives of children and beneficiary families.

Suhuyini noted that the new facility will provide a conducive learning environment for both teachers and students, contributing to improved educational qual-



ity and enhanced academic performance in the area.

Salifu Abdul Razak, director of education for the Sagnarigu municipality, praised the project, saying that it will help address the shortage of educational infrastructure and improve teach-

ing and learning conditions at the school.

The project is expected to enhance access to education, improve sanitation services within the school, and provide a safer and more inclusive learning environment for students and staff.



Auto AC service business heats up as mercury rises

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Auto air-conditioning (AC) service centres and workshops across Qatar have been seeing a considerable increase in customer demand as summer temperatures climb.

Many local workshops and automotive maintenance outlets have seen increased traffic from motorists seeking preventative inspections and servicing before the peak summer season, with a significant requests for refrigerant refills, compressor inspections, and filter cleaning.

Specialised technicians say that American refrigerant gas remains the most widely used option in the local market due to its compatibility with a broad range of vehicle models, affordability, and ready availability.

The cost of refrigerant refills typically ranges between QR100 and QR150, making it a preferred choice for many vehicle owners seeking a balance between performance and value.

Demand is also growing for advanced systems equipped with air purification features and smart temperature controls, reflecting a broader trend toward integrating comfort-enhancing technologies into vehicles.

Motorists and industry experts alike stressed that regular maintenance extends beyond preserving mechanical efficiency.

Proper cleaning of filters and air-conditioning components helps prevent the buildup of dust, bacteria, and unpleasant odours inside the vehicle, contributing to improved air quality and a healthier environment for passengers.

Meanwhile, maintenance specialists further stress the long-term economic benefits of investing in high-quality cooling systems and adhering to routine servicing schedules.

Regular maintenance can help reduce the likelihood of unexpected breakdowns, improve fuel efficiency, lessen engine strain, and ultimately extend a vehicle's operational lifespan.

Farhan, an automotive technician, said that refrigerant refilling remains one of the

most requested services during the summer months.

He explained that the commonly used American refrigerant is suitable for most vehicle models and is typically priced between QR100 and QR150, with an additional inspection fee of around QR100 before repairs are carried out.

"The demand rises sharply at the start of summer as vehicle owners prepare their cars for the season's high temperatures," he said, adding that air-conditioning systems have become indispensable for daily driving, particularly during daytime hours.

Saeed, a specialist in vehicle air-conditioning systems, noted that the continued rise in temperatures has significantly increased demand for refrigerant charging services.

Meanwhile, Mohamed Ramallah, who works in an automotive maintenance centre, said that air-conditioning inspections become particularly important during the summer due to the increased likelihood of system failures under heavy usage.

He said that maintenance costs vary depending on the nature of the fault and



required spare parts, while inspection and diagnostic fees generally range from QR100 to QR150.

Vehicles with minor issues are often repaired and returned on the same day.

More complex cases involving refrigerant leaks or major component replacements may require two to three days, particularly if spare parts need to be sourced.

Hussein, another automotive technician, identified refrigerant leaks and reduced cooling efficiency as the most common air-conditioning issues encountered

during the summer season.

He said leak detection services start at approximately QR150, while refrigerant refills typically cost between QR150 and QR200, excluding labour charges, which vary according to the type of repair and workshop.

He added that repair timelines depend on the severity of the problem, the availability of replacement parts, and seasonal demand pressures, which can occasionally lead to delays in vehicle delivery during peak periods.

Qatar-led Parkinson's project aims to accelerate search for new treatments

A Qatar-led international research team has secured a \$9mn, three-year global grant to advance understanding of Parkinson's disease and accelerate the development of new treatments for the world's fastest-growing neurological disorder.

The project is led by Dr Hilal A Lashuel, professor of neuroscience in neurology at Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar (WCM-Q), in partnership with Stanford University and biotechnology company Arvinas.

The funding comes from Aligning Science Across Parkinson's (ASAP) in partnership with The Michael J Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

Dr Lashuel said that the research would focus on understanding how toxic protein aggregates form, spread and damage brain cells, with the aim of identifying new therapeutic targets and developing better laboratory models to speed up drug discovery.

"Ultimately, I want our models to become a launch pad for discovering treatments that slow, stop, or even prevent Parkinson's," the expert stated.

An estimated 10-12mn people worldwide currently live with Parkinson's disease, a figure expected to more than double to 25mn by 2050.

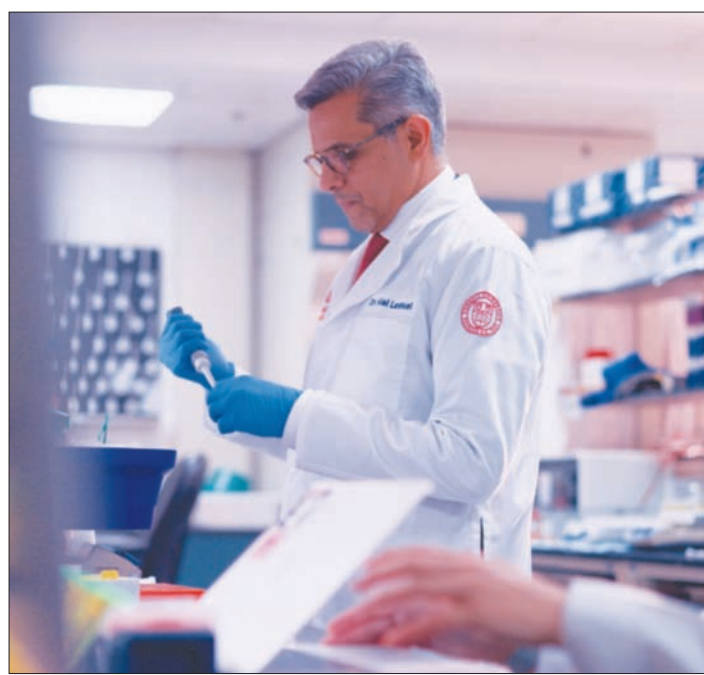
While scientific understanding has advanced significantly over the past three decades, researchers still do not know what triggers the disease in most patients, why symptoms vary so widely, or how to halt or reverse its progression.

"We have made significant progress but many key questions remain unanswered," Dr Lashuel said.

However, he added that advances in genetics, stem cell biology, imaging and cellular disease models now allow scientists to investigate Parkinson's with "unprecedented precision".

"For the first time, I feel the pace of scientific discovery is starting to keep up with the magnitude of the challenge posed by this disease," he said.

Although there is currently no proven way to prevent Parkinson's, Dr Lashuel said growing evidence suggests regular exercise, a healthy diet, quality sleep, social engagement and managing cardiovascular risk factors may help reduce the risk.



Dr Lashuel in his laboratory.

He expressed optimism that earlier diagnosis and improved understanding of disease mechanisms could eventually lead to prevention strategies, similar to progress made in cardiovascular disease.

The project builds on more than 20 years of Parkinson's research by Dr Lashuel's team, whose work has produced novel tools, technologies and cellular models that form the foundation of the international collaboration.

Researchers at Stanford University and Arvinas will contribute expertise in stem cell biology, functional genomics, lysosomal biology, genetic screening and targeted protein degradation.

Beyond its scientific goals, Dr Lashuel said the grant highlights Qatar's emergence as a global centre for biomedical research.

"This work, and the international funding we are receiving, is a true testament to the world-class science being done here," he said, adding that the award reflects Qatar's long-term investment in research infrastructure and innovation.

He described the project as evidence of Qatar's transition from building research capacity to producing globally competitive, translational biomedical research.

"We are no longer only building

capacity; we are leveraging it to produce discoveries that compete at the global frontier," he said.

The research programme also seeks to expand studies of Parkinson's in underrepresented populations, particularly in the Middle East, where data on the disease remain limited.

Dr Lashuel said greater diversity in research would be essential to developing treatments that benefit patients worldwide.

Looking ahead, he said that Qatar can play a unique role in global biomedical research by ensuring regional populations are represented in scientific studies, generating new discoveries and fostering collaboration across the Middle East through shared scientific infrastructure and researcher mobility.

Dr Lashuel also encouraged young scientists and students in Qatar to pursue careers in neuroscience and biomedical research, saying that the international grant demonstrates that world-class science can be led from Doha and that researchers based in the region can compete successfully with the world's leading institutions.

"You can lead from Doha," he added. "You can do frontier research that is on par with the best institutions in the world."

MoEHE opens applications for Accelerated Learning Programme for gifted students

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has opened applications for its "Accelerated Learning Programme", offering academically gifted students the opportunity to advance through the school system at a faster pace in recognition of their exceptional abilities.

The initiative, which targets Qatari nationals, children of Qatari mothers, and children of citizens of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, reflects the ministry's commitment to nurturing gifted learners through flexible educational pathways that support excellence and maximise students' academic potential.

Applications are being accepted electronically through the Ma'arif Public Services Portal until July 30, with the MoEHE urging parents to complete the registration process before the deadline.

To qualify, students must have achieved a minimum 90% in the final assessment of the last grade successfully completed in a government school.

Applicants must also have passed all first-semester examinations in the current academic year without failing or repeating any subject.



The ministry stated that the programme is available only for designated stages of schooling, enabling eligible students to progress from Grade 4 to Grade 6, Grade 7 to Grade 9, and Grade 10 to Grade 12, in accordance with established regulations.

Advancement to Grade 12, however, is subject to exceptional eligibility requirements and additional assessment procedures.

Officials stressed that initial acceptance does not guarantee final admission.

Applicants must successfully complete comprehensive examinations covering all subjects in the grade they intend to skip, ensuring they possess the knowledge and competencies required to transition directly to the next academic level.

Applications must be submitted through the Ma'arif portal using the National Authentication System (NAS).

Required documents include the student's latest academic certificate, as well as the national identification cards of both the student and guardian.

The MoEHE called on parents and guardians to carefully review the programme's eligibility criteria and application requirements before submitting their requests, emphasising that no applications will be accepted after the July 30 registration deadline.

RAG Delegation Meets Kerala Chief Minister and Public Works Minister in Thiruvananthapuram



RAG Managing Director Mohammed Aslam and CEO Rassal Ahmed met the Honourable Chief Minister of Kerala, Mr. V. D. Saheesan, and the Honourable Minister for Public Works, Mr. P. K. Basheer, in Thiruvananthapuram. The meeting featured discussions on Kerala's development, progress, and future opportunities, along with a cordial exchange of views and best wishes for the leaders' continued success in public service.



Tanker struck in Hormuz as ceasefire unravels

Reuters/AFP
Tehran

A tanker was hit by a projectile in the Strait of Hormuz yesterday, Britain's maritime security agency said, as the United States and Iran traded strikes in the sharpest escalation since they signed an interim peace deal two weeks ago.

The agency, UKMTO, said the vessel sustained damage to its bridge but that all crew were safe.

The Joint Maritime Information Centre, run by a coalition of navies protecting shipping, raised its threat level in response.

The attack followed a strike on a cargo ship on Thursday that triggered the latest flare-up – and laid bare Iran's renewed bid to assert control over the world's most vital energy route, through which around a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments pass in peacetime.

Each side accused the other of breaching the agreement, reached to end a conflict that began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February.

US Central Command said its over-



This aerial photograph shows boats anchored off Oman's northern Musandam Peninsula near the Strait of Hormuz yesterday. – AFP

night strikes hit Iranian missile and drone storage sites and coastal radar positions in response to "unwarranted aggression against commercial shipping" that violated the ceasefire.

Tehran branded the strikes a blatant violation of the deal, and its Revolutionary Guards said they had hit US sites in the Gulf, warning that "if the aggression is repeated, our response will be broader".

Iranian media reported an explosion at a pier in the southern port of Sirik late on Friday, which a military source attributed to a projectile impact.

Mehr news agency later said the port was operating normally.

Bahrain, which hosts the US Navy's regional headquarters, said it was targeted by several Iranian drones early yesterday and accused Tehran of sabotaging peace efforts.

Iran has warned vessels not to transit the strait without its permission, though ships have continued to move, some via a route Tehran has not authorised.

Iranian state television said the Guards had fired "warning shots" at vessels using unapproved channels, prompting others to seek Iranian permits.

Washington has been promoting a southern lane along the Omani coast, while Tehran – which ultimately aims to charge fees for use of the waterway – wants ships routed north through its waters.

US Vice-President JD Vance, President Donald Trump's chief negotiator, said Washington had honoured the memorandum of understanding (MoU) and blamed Iran for any renewed conflict.

"If they have disagreements about how

the MoU is being applied, they can pick up the phone. But violence will be met with violence," he wrote on X.

The escalation again unfolded over the weekend with markets closed, giving both sides two days to harden positions without immediate price impact.

Before the latest violence, oil had fallen about 3% on Friday, on course for a steep weekly drop, as hundreds of blockaded ships began leaving the Gulf and supply surged.

The economic strain on Iran is mounting: its statistics agency said annual inflation had reached 88.6%, up from 68% in February.

The fighting threatens to drag in Lebanon, where Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem rejected a US-backed deal signed Friday with Israel, calling it "humiliating, shameful and a surrender of sovereignty" and declaring it null and void.

Israel struck the south yesterday, and Defence Minister Israel Katz said troops had been told to prepare for an extended stay in the security zone they occupy.

HA Hellyer of the Royal United Services Institute said Iran was likely to keep up "calibrated, low-level coercive activity" around the strait to pressure shipping without triggering a wider war.

Hezbollah slams Israel-Lebanon security agreement as 'surrender'

AFP/Reuters
Beirut

Hezbollah leader Naim Qassem has declared Lebanon's agreement with Israel "void", while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called it "a blow to Iran and Hezbollah".

The agreement, which was signed in Washington on Friday after five rounds of talks and aims to pave the way to peace between the neighbours, includes plans to disarm Hezbollah.

Qassem called the agreement "humiliating, shameful, and a surrender of sovereignty" and warned that it could lead to the Israeli annexation of southern Lebanon.

"This agreement is null and void, and the provisions of the Iranian-American memorandum of understanding must be implemented," he said, referring to the deal between the two powers to

end the broader Middle East war, which includes a ceasefire in Lebanon.

In a statement, Qassem criticised the memorandum of understanding (MoU)'s provisions linking Israel's withdrawal to Hezbollah's disarmament, saying that they effectively legitimised Israel's military presence and crossed "all red lines".

The group would continue its armed resistance, he added: "We did not leave the battlefield in the most difficult circumstances, and we will not leave it."

While Qassem attacked the deal, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz insisted that the country's troops would be able to stay in Lebanon so long as Hezbollah remained armed.

Katz said he had instructed Israeli troops "to prepare for an extended stay" in southern Lebanon and that "there will be no redeployment by Israel in southern Lebanon, no withdrawal, as long as the (...) organisation Hezbollah

is not disarmed throughout Lebanon".

Netanyahu, reiterated that point in a televised briefing, saying that both the US and Lebanon "have recognised Israel's right to maintain a security zone inside Lebanon for as long as it remains necessary to safeguard our security".

The agreement has drawn criticism from within Israel, with far-right Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir denouncing it yesterday and saying that only Israeli forces were capable of disarming Hezbollah.

Lebanon was drawn into the regional war on March 2 when Tehran-backed Hezbollah fired rockets at Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes.

Israel responded with heavy airstrikes and an invasion of southern Lebanon, where its troops occupy swathes of territory and have been carrying out extensive demolitions of homes and other buildings.

Iran insists that any deal to end the broader war must include Leb-



This picture taken overnight yesterday shows Hezbollah supporters blocking the old airport road in the southern suburbs of Beirut to protest the trilateral agreement between the US, Israel and Lebanon. – AFP

anon, while the Lebanese government has repeatedly tried to separate the negotiating tracks.

Yesterday Katz said Israel would use "great force" against Iran if it "tries to attack Israel to prevent the implementation of the agreement" with Lebanon.

Hezbollah supporters took to the streets of Beirut on Friday night to protest the framework.

Hezbollah has opposed the direct negotiations between Lebanon and Israel, which have been ongoing since April.

An April 17 ceasefire failed to stop the fighting, but the violence has decreased since the US and Iran reached their memorandum of understanding last week.

The Israeli military said yesterday that it had targeted "suspected terrorists" who posed a threat to its soldiers in southern Lebanon, and Lebanese state media reported strikes in the south.

The health ministry later reported at least one person killed and two wounded.

According to the text of the deal shared by the US State Department, Lebanon and Israel, officially at war for decades, expressed their intent to "conclusively end the conflict, address its underlying causes, and to therewith formally conclude any state of war between them".

The agreement sets up a process during which Lebanon's military is

due to "restore effective sovereign authority over all Lebanese territory, pending the verified disarmament of non-state armed groups".

More than 1mn Lebanese have been driven from their homes by a conflict that has run in parallel with the wider Iran war.

With hundreds of thousands of Lebanese, mainly Shia Muslims, still unable to return to homes in Israeli-occupied areas, anger over the agreement spread beyond Hezbollah to Shia more widely.

The Amal movement of Lebanon's highest-ranking Shia politician, parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri, denounced the agreement as unbalanced, and said it would entrench conditions favouring Israel.

Palestinians decry Israeli bid to take control of ancient West Bank sites

By Ali Sawafta
Reuters

An Israeli bill that would extend civil control over ancient sites in the West Bank has drawn criticism from Palestinians and Israeli rights groups who say it is tantamount to annexation of occupied land and would expand Jewish settlements.

The "Heritage Authority in Judea and Samaria" bill passed one of three votes by Israel's parliament in May, but it is unclear whether the final vote will be held before parliament disperses ahead of an election expected by October 27.

The bill would bring management of Roman, Byzantine and Crusader-era sites under Israeli ministry of heritage management and allow related "expropriation and purchase of real estate" in the West Bank, which Israel calls by its Hebrew name.

That in effect would strip away oversight of some ancient sites from the Western-backed Palestinian Authority (PA), which under the 1990s Oslo peace accords has exercised limited self-rule in parts of the West Bank, territory Israel captured in a 1967 war.

The PA's tourism minister, Hani al-Hayek, said "control over these antiquities is intended to expand control and expand settlements in these areas, deep inside Palestinian territories".

Israel says the bill's purpose is to protect ancient sites.

Peace Now, an Israeli settlements watchdog, said the bill "constitutes an annexationist measure in every respect" and would lead to broad-scale confiscation of Palestinian land.

Using archaeology to expand settlements is not a new practice, but the scope of the Israeli government's measures has been unprecedented, Peace Now pointed out.

One example is the Palestinian village of Sebastia in the northern West Bank where residents, many of whom trace their roots to the



A boy rides a scooter through archaeological remains in the ancient village of Sebastia, near Nablus in the West Bank. – Reuters

land back centuries, rely heavily on tourism to a nearby archaeological site.

The ancient site in Sebastia has ruins from the 9th-century BCE Israelite kingdom as well as Roman, Byzantine, Crusader and Ottoman remnants, archaeologists say.

It is on a tentative list for inclusion as a Unesco World Heritage Site.

In late 2025, Israel announced a plan to seize about 1,800 dunams (445 acres) at the site, which it said was meant to develop the area, affecting around 5,000 olive trees growing in the village groves, village officials said.

"They are incorporating areas containing water resources, roads and antiquities, leaving us as residents without any resources. It is part of settlement expansion," said Sebastia deputy mayor Nizar Kayed.

Business had already been suffering since late 2023 with tourism dropping because of war in the region, said Nahed Sakha, whose Sebastia restaurant is on land slated for confiscation.

"It seems that the Israeli plan (is) to isolate the archaeological site from the people," Sakha said.

Israeli parliament member Zvi Sukkot, who has been key in advancing the new bill, says extending Israeli control over the sites is meant to safeguard ancient remnants dating back to biblical times.

"There's nothing here that changes the legal status of Judea

and Samaria," he told Reuters.

"There are many people who are bothered by our desire to prove the ties between the people of Israel and this land," he said. "All the stories of the Bible, all our history, the people (of Israel) were born in Judea and Samaria."

Sukkot is a member of the pro-settler Religious Zionism party.

Like many in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition, he opposes the creation of a Palestinian state and advocates annexation of the West Bank.

UN bodies and most countries view Israel's settlements as illegal under international law, violating the Fourth Geneva Convention provision barring the transfer of civilian population into occupied territory.

Israel rejects this view, saying that the West Bank, which it captured in the 1967 war, is disputed territory.

It cites security needs and biblical and historical ties to the land.

However, the new bill has also caused concern among legal officials in Israel's defence establishment and Israeli scientists.

In an open letter to Netanyahu and Sukkot, the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities called for it to be scrapped.

"This will undoubtedly lead to an immediate deterioration in Israel's international relations in the field of archaeology, and it will also have an impact on other areas of science and research," the academy said.

Iran agency says year-on-year inflation hits 88.6%

Inflation in Iran rose sharply in June, driven by the Middle East war, reaching a peak of 88.6% year-on-year, according to official figures released yesterday. According to Iran's Statistical Centre, during the Persian month of Khordad (May 22-June 21), food prices more than doubled year-on-year, in a country already plagued by hyperinflation due to sanctions. Bread and grain prices rose by 138.8%, milk, cheese and eggs by 151.9%, while the prices of red meat and poultry skyrocketed by 178.2%. By comparison, year-on-year inflation stood at 68% in February, prior to the outbreak of the war launched by the US and Israel against the Islamic republic. In December 2025, when protests against the high cost of living erupted – later expanding to include political demands – inflation had risen by 52.6% year-on-year. Iranian statistics are reported monthly based on the Persian calendar, with each year beginning in March. For years, the Iranian economy has been hampered by chronic hyperinflation and a sharp depreciation of the national currency, the rial, largely as a result of international sanctions imposed on the country. – AFP

Qatar for Sudan de-escalation

Qatar expressed deep concern over the escalation and repeated attacks targeting civilian and vital facilities in El Obeid, Sudan, calling on all parties to de-escalate tensions, exercise restraint and avoid further fighting, warning that continued hostilities would have catastrophic consequences for civilians.

In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the importance of resorting to dialogue among all Sudanese parties to bring the armed conflict to a permanent end and address the humanitarian situation, in addition to launching broad negotiations that would ultimately lead to a comprehensive agreement and lasting peace.

The Ministry reiterated Qatar's unwavering support for the unity, independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Sudan, its rejection of any form of interference in its internal affairs, and its full respect for the choices of the brotherly Sudanese people in pursuit of freedom, peace, justice, and prosperity. (QNA)

New Sudanese notes circulate in RSF areas

Newly issued Sudanese pounds have begun circulating in territory controlled by a paramilitary group fighting the national army, raising questions about the source of the notes and potentially deepening the country's de facto division.

The Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – which cooperated with Sudan's armed forces before the two fell out and began fighting a war in April 2023 – now controls large swathes of the country, including the vast western Darfur region.

Last year, the RSF set up a parallel cabinet, known as the "Tasis" government, in areas under its control and has gradually sought to assume functions such as paying civil servant salaries.

Control over Sudan's currency has been a point of contention since 2024, when the army-led government declared old Sudanese pounds invalid and began issuing new 500 and 1,000-pound notes.

The RSF declared the new notes invalid, and cash gradually became scarce in territory under its control, according to four residents who spoke to Reuters.

That scarcity appeared to ease in late May, when civil servants and RSF fighters were paid in Sudanese pounds – an unusual development in RSF-held areas.

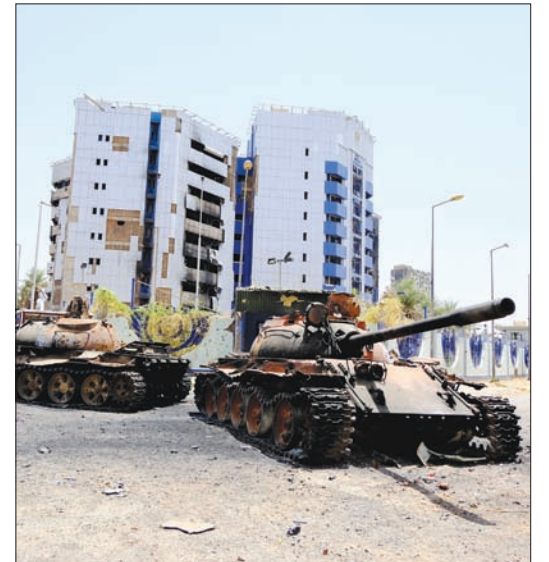
The notes, described by residents as new and unused, were dated May 2022, according to a photograph shared with Reuters.

Reuters could not determine the source of the notes, which look almost identical to pre-war banknotes.

However, a banker in Nyala, the Darfur city that serves as the Tasis authority's base, said they were newly printed.

Adding to the uncertainty, the notes bear the signature of Hussein Yahia Jangol, Sudan's pre-war central bank governor, who was appointed head of a new Tasis-run central bank on May 21, shortly before the notes surfaced.

Tasis premier Mohamed Hasan al-Taishi said authorities continued to recognise pounds issued before June 2024.



This picture taken last year shows damaged tanks in front of the Central Bank of Sudan building in Khartoum, after the Sudanese army deepened its control over Khartoum from the RSF. – Reuters

He declined to comment on the origin of the new notes, but said "any arrangements related to cash management or liquidity provision" were based on "well-thought-out technical plans aimed at maintaining economic stability and meeting the needs of citizens and markets".

Al-Taishi accused the army-led government of harming civilians "by changing the currency, drying up the markets, and exploiting the currency as a tool of war".

The army-aligned central bank did not respond to requests for comment. – Reuters

Tanzania's ban on all political rallies sparks backlash

AFP
Nairobi

Tanzanian activists and opposition leaders have condemned the country's ban on political rallies, citing what they describe as growing repression just days before planned protests over last year's contested election. The ban comes three years after Tanzanian President Samia Suluhu Hassan, once seen as a reformist, lifted restrictions on opposition rallies imposed by her predecessor, John Magufuli.

"The regime's answer to growing public demand for freedom

is fear, intimidation, and repression," John Kitoka the head of foreign affairs for the Chadema opposition party wrote on X yesterday, adding that the ban was "unconstitutional".

Activist Maria Sarungi, who has been sharing posters about the July 7 protests on X, said: "The constitution has been suspended by the illegitimate government of Samia Suluhu."

Tanzanian Home Affairs Minister Patrobas Katambi told parliament on Friday that the suspension was due to "security concerns" and applies to all political parties.

"We have arrested some peo-

ple with weapons and others with petrol containers... We don't want to go back to what happened (last October)," Katambi said, referring to last year's deadly elections.

At least 518 people were killed in last year's election violence, according to a government-appointed commission, though opposition and religious groups say security forces killed thousands, while Western diplomats estimate the death toll at between 1,000 and 2,000. The planned protests on July 7 coincide with the government-organised Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair (DITF).

"We must ensure that Tanza-

nians, business people and investors can continue their activities peacefully and without disruption," Katambi said.

Katambi directed police not to issue permits for political rallies but did not say how long the directive would remain in force.

Western diplomats and rights groups have also accused Hassan's government of conducting a spate of abductions and murders of critics in the run-up to the vote. The United States announced it was reviewing relations with Tanzania in the wake of the violence, and last month sanctioned a senior police officer over the torture of two well-known activists.



The al-Rahmaniyah camp for displaced people, near the city of El-Obeid in the southern Kordofan region. (AFP)

NGOs demand action to avert 'atrocities' in Sudan

AFP
Geneva

Dozens of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, called on Friday for international action to avert looming "atrocities" in the Sudanese city of El-Obeid.

In an open letter addressed to member and observer states to the United Nations Human Rights Council, the 38 NGOs urged the Geneva-based body to "urgently address the situation in and around El Obeid."

It also urged the organisation to "take bold steps towards atrocity prevention and accountability".

A strategic hub in the southern Kordofan region, the city has been encircled for months by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), the paramilitary group that has been fighting Sudan's army since April 2023.

The UN has voiced fears that there could be a repeat of atrocities committed during the RSF's October 2025 assault on the Sudanese city of El-Fasher, which it said bore "hallmarks of genocide".

"After 18 months of siege-like conditions" the situation around El-Obeid "appears at risk of an imminent ground offensive by the... RSF and their allied forces", Friday's letter said.

In light of this and "credible re-

The UN has voiced fears that there could be a repeat of atrocities committed during the RSF's October 2025 assault on the Sudanese city of El-Fasher, which it said bore "hallmarks of genocide"

ports of risks of atrocity crimes, and risks of further violations throughout Sudan", the NGOs urged the rights council to "convene an urgent debate" during its ongoing session, which is due to conclude on July 7, or a special session on the crisis "at the earliest opportunity" after that.

The council, they said, should then ask an independent UN fact-finding mission to "conduct an urgent inquiry into the situation".

"To prevent further atrocities," the NGOs also called on countries at the council to "unequivocally condemn external actors supporting the warring parties".

Other external actors backing the RSF, Sudan's army or other warring parties in the country "should also be condemned and held to account for the violations they have either committed or enabled, some of which amount to crimes under international law", the NGO letter said.

5 dead, dozens wounded in Ukraine, Russia airstrikes

AFP
Kyiv, Ukraine

Russian strikes killed two people and wounded more than 20 in Ukraine, Kyiv said yesterday, while Ukrainian retaliatory strikes on Russian-occupied territory and inside Russia killed three and wounded dozens, local officials said.

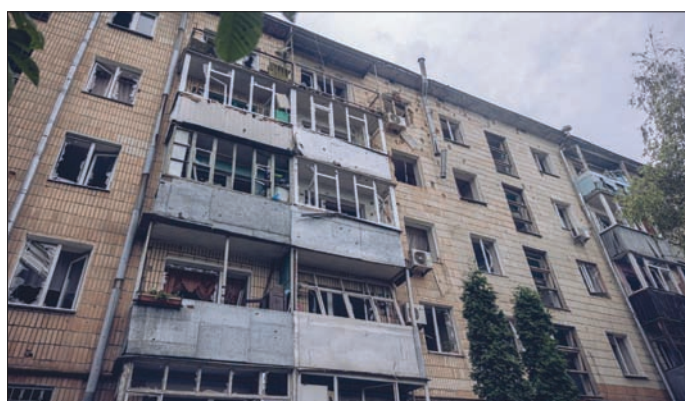
One person was killed and two injured in the central eastern Dnipropetrovsk region, regional military administration head Oleksandr Ganzha said on Telegram.

"The enemy attacked two districts of the region more than 30 times with drones and aerial bombs," said Ganzha.

In Sumy district in the north, a 66-year-old man was killed in a Russian drone attack on a house, regional military governor Oleg Grygorov said.

In another attack on the region, 13 people were wounded, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said.

It also said that strikes on southeastern Zaporizhzhia in-



A building hit by a Russian drone strike in Sumy, Ukraine. (Reuters)

jured nine, including two children.

"The enemy attack caused extensive destruction to the city's civilian infrastructure," the service said.

"Specifically, a residential high-rise building was partially destroyed. Emergency workers rescued two people from under the rubble."

Photos on Telegram showed the destroyed roof of a block of flats with shattered windows, a devas-

tated stairwell and a ravaged flat.

Russia has bombarded Ukraine almost daily since the start of its full-scale invasion in February 2022, the bloodiest conflict Europe has seen since World War II.

Ukraine has also stepped up retaliatory strikes in recent months against Russia and the territories occupied by Moscow's forces.

In the southern Rostov region, drones hit a building of a military museum, governor Yuri Slyusar said, wounding 11 people.

One woman died meanwhile in a Ukrainian strike on Horlivka, a town in Ukraine's Russian-controlled Donetsk, according to a Telegram post by Russian-backed mayor Ivan Prikhodko of the region.

In Russia's Belgorod region bordering Ukraine, a civilian was killed when Kyiv's "drones struck a manufacturing facility", local authorities said on the state-backed platform Max.

One person was killed and 11 wounded in a Ukrainian strike on Russia's Volgograd region in the south west, regional authorities said on Telegram, adding industrial facilities were damaged.

"Last night, FP-5 Flamingo missiles successfully struck the Titan-Barrikady facility in Volgograd," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky posted on social media.

"It is a major industrial complex where the enemy produces artillery systems and specialised military equipment, including components for missile launch systems used in attacks against our people," Zelensky wrote.

Serbian president says he will resign within weeks after student protests

Reuters
Belgrade

Serbia's populist president Aleksandar Vucic, under pressure after months of anti-government protests, said yesterday he will resign within weeks and the country will hold early presidential and parliamentary elections.

The announcement by Vucic, in power for 13 years, came after a year-and-a-half of sometimes violent, anti-corruption protests, led by students, and triggered by the collapse of an awning at a railway station in the northern city of Novi Sad in November 2024 in which 16 people died.

Days ago in the city of Novi Sad, students commemorated victims of the disaster and demanded snap general elections. Another student rally is scheduled for today in the town of Kraljevo, in Serbia's south-east. "I will be president for only a couple of weeks, and then I will resign," Vucic told his supporters at a



Supporters of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic attend a pro-government rally in Belgrade yesterday. (AFP)

pro-government rally in the capital, Belgrade. Vucic's second and final mandate was due to expire in mid-2027.

Vucic said he would help his Serbian Progressive Party win the presidential election and the early parliamentary vote, also originally set for 2027. He did not specify

when he would resign nor when he would dissolve parliament, a precondition for early parliamentary elections.

Savo Manojlovic, head of the student opposition Move-Change Movement, said: "By resigning and with early presidential and parliamentary elections Vucic is try-

ing to preempt his inevitable fall, because of protests and because of the student movement which has more support than he does." Protesters, opposition and rights groups allege the railway station disaster was a sign of broader government mismanagement of construction projects and corruption.

They also accuse Vucic and his allies of violence against political opponents, rampant corruption, ties with organised crime, and stifling media freedoms. Vucic and his allies deny these allegations.

Activists from the student-led movement and the opposition parties have said they want to challenge Vucic and the SNS in the elections.

Serbia is a candidate to join the EU, but Belgrade is required to first improve its rule of law, including conditions for free and fair elections, and to root out corruption and organised crime. It also has to align its foreign policies with those of the bloc, including slapping sanctions on Russia over its invasion of Ukraine.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen arrives for the Eastern Flank Summit in Gdansk, Poland. (Reuters)

EU chief salutes peace deal between Israel, Lebanon

AFP
Brussels, Belgium

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen yesterday welcomed the US-Israel-Lebanon framework agreement as a "critical step" away from conflict in the Middle East.

"I welcome the agreement between Israel and Lebanon. This is a critical step away from escalation. Because there can be no peace in the Middle East with

Lebanon in flames," she said in a statement posted on X, thanking Washington for its mediation role. "Key next steps are the disarmament of non-state groups and preserving Lebanese sovereignty and territorial integrity," she stressed.

Von der Leyen added that "the EU stands ready to support this path to lasting regional stability, also with the continued delivery of much needed humanitarian aid with €100m mobilised for the displaced."

'Germany could revive conscription by mid-2027'

Germany is struggling to recruit soldiers and will have to decide by July 2027 at the latest whether to reintroduce compulsory military service, a senior parliamentarian has told AFP.

Faced with a growing threat from Russia and an unpredictable US, Berlin is looking to revamp its army and has committed to increase its troop strength to at least 260,000 soldiers - up from the current 185,000 - by 2035.

The government in November introduced a new voluntary military service model, along with compulsory registration for 18-year-old men. However, between January and May, the scheme resulted in only 530 new recruits - despite around 300,000 young people being contacted.

If Germany cannot reach its targets through the voluntary system,

"we will have to return to conscription", said conservative MP Thomas Roewekamp, chairman of the German parliament's defence committee.

"We must take that decision by July 31 of next year," he said.

"In the first half of next year... we will need to have a very fundamental discussion about whether we can achieve the very ambitious growth requirements for active forces and reverts on a voluntary basis," Roewekamp said.

"I still have serious doubts that we can."

Compulsory conscription would not apply to all men who turn 18 in any given year - estimated to be around 350,000. Instead, the army would recruit as many new soldiers as it needs to fulfil its annual targets. "My great concern is the growth in the number of career and

contracted soldiers - because they are the ones who fly the fighter jets, navigate the ships, operate the tanks and man the Patriot air defence systems," Roewekamp said.

Germany has seen several large demonstrations against compulsory military service in recent months. Roewekamp said he could "understand that there is uncertainty on this issue". Since compulsory military service was suspended in 2011, "we have not discussed questions of war and peace and the need for defence with the younger generation at all", he said.

"That is why I strongly advocate that we talk with this generation, not just about them," he added, repeating a warning often cited by Berlin that Russia could be ready to attack a Nato country by 2029.

According to Roewekamp, Russian President Vladimir Putin not

only has Ukraine in his sights but liberal Western democracy as a whole.

Europe urgently needs to rearm independently of the US, he said - partly because of Trump's plans to reduce troops in Europe, but also because Washington is not able to reliably supply European armies in a context of repeated international crises. Europe must therefore develop its own military capabilities, based on actual needs rather than on the interests of industrial players, he said - a nod to the doomed FCAS fighter jet project, which recently fell apart over rivalry between Dassault and Airbus.

"In the past - this I freely admit - joint armaments projects were often heavily shaped by national industrial interests, including in Germany," Roewekamp said. (AFP)

Central African Republic declares cholera outbreak after 24 deaths reported

AFP
Bangui, Central African Republic

The Central African Republic has declared a cholera outbreak after confirming 24 deaths and 197 cases near the capital Bangui, according to the health minister.

"The Ministry of Health... has today, June 26, 2026, confirmed a cholera outbreak in the health districts of Bimbo and Mbaiki", southwest of Bangui, said Pierre Somse late Friday.

Measures to limit the spread have already been put in place in affected areas, and more are being deployed in nearby towns, he added.

Cholera is a waterborne disease that spreads through con-

taminated food or drinking water and can cause severe diarrhoea and dehydration.

While it has been largely eliminated in wealthier countries, it remains a risk in poorer regions with limited access to clean water. Authorities are investigating the source of the outbreak, the fifth recorded in the country.

In the previous outbreak in 2016, more than 500 people were infected and 23 died.

"The government remains fully mobilised to contain this outbreak," the minister said, urging people to follow health advice and preventive measures.

The Central African Republic is also on alert over a deadly Ebola outbreak in neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.



Great American Fair kicks off US 250th anniversary celebrations

Reuters
Washington

With a 110-foot (33.5-meter) Ferris wheel, a rodeo demonstration and an eye-popping array of junk food, "The Great American State Fair" opened on Washington's National Mall on Thursday to start a 16-day celebration of the country's 250th anniversary.

While the first couple of days drew sparse crowds, it remains unclear what the July 4th holiday week will bring. US Interior Secretary Doug Burgum told Fox News yesterday the Trump administration was planning the "greatest and biggest celebration of fireworks ever."

Much of the 1.5-mile (2.5-km) promenade linking the U.S. Capitol with the towering Washington Monument has been fenced off for the event, which President Donald Trump kicked off on Wednesday night with a campaign-style rally organised after many of the performers who had been scheduled to appear dropped out, citing concerns about the event taking on a partisan tone.

"We are here to just celebrate America, a long journey that she has had," remarked Ashley, who said she was visiting from Ohio but declined to give her last name. "My kids have been wanting that



A horse runs in a paddock at the "Great American State Fair" on the National Mall in Washington, DC (AFP)

aerial view from the Ferris wheel. They are excited."

The event, a tribute to the state fairs across the US each summer that star homemade quilts, butter sculptures and pumpkins the size of small cars, is one of a series of events across the nation leading up to the July 4 Independence Day holiday, which commemorates the American colonists' Declaration of Independence from Britain

in 1776.

The pavilions set up along the Mall, between the museums of the Smithsonian Institution, are temporary, unlike some of the more permanent changes Trump is in the midst of making to Washington — including tearing down the East Wing of the White House to make way for a massive ballroom, a hasty renovation of the National Reflecting Pool facing the Lincoln

Memorial and a proposed 250-foot arch near Arlington National Cemetery.

Crowds have been dotted with supporters wearing the red hats of Trump's Make America Great Again movement — a common sight in Washington.

A Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted this month found that a majority of Americans, including three-quarters of Democrats and half of

Republicans, think that the events celebrating the country's 250th anniversary have grown too political.

Seven US states — all with Democratic governors — declined to send official delegations to the fair, though the event's Freedom 250 organisers said all 50 would be represented.

Freedom 250 is a public-private partnership created by the White House to coordinate celebrations of the US 250th anniversary alongside federal agencies.

Among the states boycotting was Oregon, where a spokesman for Democratic Governor Tina Kotek said: "The State of Oregon will not be participating in the Great American State Fair due to both the cost of participating in the Fair and growing concerns that the event in Washington, DC, is shaping up to be a more partisan affair than originally presented."

Trump has faced criticism for promoting what civil rights advocates say is a revisionist history that downplays critical parts of the country's past such as slavery, the abuse of Native Americans and the negative impacts of US foreign policy.

That was evident at the fair which hardly had any mention of those chapters of US history. Trump has said that before his presidency, there was excessive focus on those issues.

Trump threatens 100% tariff on EU over digital tax

US President Donald Trump on Friday threatened to slap a 100% tariff on European countries that impose a digital services tax, adding that existing trade deals would be scrapped.

"Any Country that imposes such a Tax will immediately be met with a 100% TARIFF on any and all Goods sent to the US of America," Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform.

He added that "this TARIFF will supersede Trade Deals made with the Country, whether implemented, signed, or not."

The move comes just a day after EU countries gave the green light to a trade agreement negotiated last year with the US, which caps taxes on European imports at 15%.

Reacting to Trump's fresh threats, the European Union on Friday vowed to "respond swiftly and decisively to defend its rights and regulatory autonomy," according to a European Commission spokesman.

Trump has repeatedly made it clear he wants to tackle so-called non-tariff barriers to trade — and strict European regulations on technology and environment are in his crosshairs. With most tech giants based in the US, Trump views digital taxes as a hindrance to US exports.

This month, Trump threatened to impose a 100% tariff on French wine and champagne unless Paris removed its digital services tax on technology firms. (AFP)

Trump unveils passport with picture of himself

President Donald Trump on Friday unveiled a rendering of a new limited-edition US passport to mark the country's 250th anniversary of independence — featuring his stern-faced likeness. "The USA's New Passport, which says, 'Welcome, but be good!'" Trump said in a post on his Truth Social platform featuring the passport mock-up.

The image features a glowering Trump leaning on his desk and his signature, with the text of the Declaration of Independence in the background. It appears to be based on a portrait taken by White House photographer Daniel Torok.

The opposite page shows a painting depicting the declaration's signing in 1776, with the words "US of America 250."

The White House posted the same passport rendering, with the words "PATRIOT PASSPORT"



President Donald Trump after presenting findings of his Religious Liberty Commission in the Oval Office of the White House. (AFP)

The State Department — which had previously announced that a commemorative passport with "custom artwork" would be available from July 6 — did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In April, a department official said the Trump-themed passports would only be available at in-per-

son appointments in Washington "for as long as there is availability."

Trump has aggressively put his personal stamp on government institutions, with banners of the president flying outside several government buildings, and the Treasury Department saying his signature will soon appear on the one-dollar bill. (AFP)

US allows limited access to Mythos AI model

Anthropic said Friday it had received authorisation from the US government to allow a small group of American cybersecurity firms to access its powerful AI model Mythos 5.

Access to Mythos 5 had been blocked by US authorities due to concerns about national security.

Anthropic will continue discussions with the Trump administration to "expand access to Mythos 5 and make Fable 5 available again" to the general public, a company spokesperson said.

The government abruptly forced Anthropic to cut off access to its two cutting-edge artificial intelligence models on June 12 after discovering vulnerabilities in the safeguards put in place to prevent misuse of the tool.

The strong action against Anthropic has drawn accusations of

government overreach.

Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick said in a letter to the company, cited by Politico and Reuters, that "Anthropic has worked with the US government to address risks associated with the Covered Models."

"These efforts have yielded significant progress," he said.

Spokesperson of Commerce department, Benno Kass said "we have worked diligently to ensure America remains the global leader in AI while safeguarding our security." Anthropic angered President Donald Trump's team in an earlier clash by refusing to allow its technology to be used for mass surveillance and autonomous weapons, leading the Pentagon to cancel its contracts with the company.

Anthropic's main rival OpenAI launched its new model earlier

Friday, GPT-5.6, with restricted access and validated on a client-by-client basis by the United States government.

OpenAI chief Sam Altman said in a post on X "this isn't quite the process that we think is optimal." "I believe the government shares most of our goals, and that they are overall doing a good job in a very difficult situation," he said.

Under pressure over the novelty of their capabilities, Trump earlier this month signed an executive order setting up a voluntary federal review of national security risks in advanced AI models before their release.

The White House has communicated little about how it will enforce its executive order — in which companies are understood to be participating voluntarily — and what models would fall under its review rules. (AFP)

Nato allies promised Trump they'd secure the Arctic; they've got work to do

Reuters
Evenes, Norway

During a frozen morning in Arctic Norway, a group of British and Norwegian soldiers padded softly through a snow-blanketed birch forest. They were on a simulated Nato reconnaissance mission, among some 30,000 troops who took part in a drill rehearsing a counter-attack against an invading "enemy to the east," a euphemism for Russia, Norway's Arctic neighbour.

Russia has raced far ahead in Arctic defence over the past decade, modernising the world's largest ice-breaking fleet as climate change creates new routes; and reopening of Soviet-era bases in a region that provides the shortest path to the United States for its nuclear intercontinental missiles.

The exercises in March were part of a stepped-up effort called Arctic Sentry that aims to show Washington that Europe and Canada can defend the alliance's northern flank. Secretary General Mark Rutte announced Arctic Sentry in February as he lobbied

US President Donald Trump to drop a push to acquire Greenland. Rutte was successful with Trump, but significantly strengthening the alliance's Arctic posture is more challenging, interviews with dozens of current and former Nato officials and Arctic experts show. It requires long-term investments in a wide range of assets — including ice-breakers, submarines, drones and satellites — testing allies' economic and military resources at a time when Trump has threatened to leave Nato altogether and Washington is withdrawing troops, planes, ships and weapons from Europe.

Through most of Nato's eight-decade history, the inhospitable High North was low priority. But melting ice, Russia's growing strength in a mineral-rich region larger than the US and increased interest from China have changed that calculus.

"No major power in the 21st century will be able to maintain its position on the global scene without, in one way or another, having a strong presence in the Arctic," Olafur Ragnar Grimsson, an ex-Icelandic president who chairs the Arctic Circle forum, the "Davos of the Arctic," told Reuters.

Reuters could not establish whether the US was contributing more or less to collective Arctic defence under Arctic Sentry, which is led by Joint Force Command Norfolk, Virginia, established in 2019 with an eye on Russia's advances in the north.

In response to questions from the news agency, a Nato official said the US remains a key contributor to Nato's Arctic defence, noting the commitment was reaffirmed in a joint statement between the Arctic allies in June. The Pentagon and White House did not respond to Reuters questions for this story, including whether US forces involved in the Arctic defence will be impacted by a US review of troops in Europe. Along with lingering worries about Trump's ambitions in Greenland, the security review is expected to cast a shadow over a Nato summit in Ankara in July.

The White House has previously said Trump has prompted allies "to recognise the need to meaningfully contribute to their own defense," calling the Arctic critical for US national security and the economy.

Russia's Ministry of Defence did not respond to a request for comment for this story. The Kremlin has in the past said the US is stoking tensions in the Arctic. A key challenge for European Nato allies is monitoring activity on Arctic Russia's Kola Peninsula, neighbouring Finland and Norway.

The peninsula accounts for around two-thirds of Russia's second-strike nuclear capabilities, including the Russian navy's Northern Fleet, which operates six of Russia's 12 nuclear-armed submarines.

From the peninsula, Russia could launch hypersonic missiles towards the US, making early warning



A Norwegian Coastal Corvette sails during the Nato Cold Response 2026 military exercise in the Ofotfjord in Arctic Norway. (Reuters/File Photo)

systems vital, or send the submarines towards the US East Coast via the Bear Gap in the Barents Sea and the GIUK Gap between Greenland, Iceland and Britain.

Norway and Nato allies currently monitor the fleet in the GIUK Gap and the Barents Sea, where critical undersea cables have suffered damage in incidents some attribute to Russia. The Norwegians spy on Kola Peninsula installations and share the intelligence with the Americans. But Nato must further improve its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capacities, said Mauro Gilli, a professor of military strategy at the Berlin-based Hertie School.

Such abilities do not come cheap in Arctic conditions where standard equipment often fails. Northern Norway can, for instance, see temperatures drop to -45°Celsius (-49°Fahrenheit) in winter ex-wind chill factor. The Arctic is mostly ocean across Greenland, Iceland, northern Norway and the Barents Sea, so any security presence must be primarily naval, which is costly, said Grimsson. The US has only two operational icebreakers. Russia, with by far the biggest Arctic territory, has 42, some nuclear-powered.

Satellite communications that work at high latitudes are crucial to allow real-time detection, Gilli told Reuters, along with long-endurance drones that work in extreme cold, expanded underwater surveillance, and different types of ground-based radars. He estimated investments could run into hundreds of billions of dollars.

Climate change is making submarine tracking harder, calling for investment in new generations of submarine sensors that can counter changing salinity

levels and currents from warming oceans, such as the North Atlantic, which is warming rapidly, according to Nato Defence College research from 2025.

The changes affect how sound travels through water, shrinking the range at which submarines can be detected, the research found. At the moment "we can listen to and track submarines in the Barents Sea and follow them. If we are not doing that and we lose control of the submarines, then we have a problem," Norwegian Defence Minister Tore Sandvik told reporters in January.

A Russian intelligence ship was observed monitoring Nato exercises in the North Atlantic and tracked between Iceland and Greenland in June, the Icelandic government said in a statement, underlining Moscow's own surveillance of the region's strategic waterways.

There are signs Nato is trying to face up to the challenge. Nordic countries are among the biggest defence spenders in the alliance and on track to meet Nato's target of 5% of GDP by 2035. The US and Finland are teaming up to build up to six icebreakers, the first due next year. Norway is buying frigates and submarines. The Nordics pooled air forces to create a fleet as large as Britain's.

Shaken by Trump's threats to make it a US state and keen to wean itself off a decades-long dependence on US defence support, Canada unveiled a major C\$35 bn (\$25.7 bn) Arctic defence plan in March for infrastructure including military airfields in the region. It is co-ordinating more closely with Nordic countries and, with Denmark, investing in ice-capable vessels.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, ANN MATHEW

holder of

INDIAN Passport No. Y9166016
QID No. 30835601967

hereby change my name

from

ANN MATHEW

to

ANN MATHEW JILSON

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

Shaken to grief: Venezuela's death toll rising as rescue efforts ramp up

AFP
La Guaira, Venezuela

The death toll in Venezuela's twin earthquake disaster approached 1,000 yesterday and millions more were feared to have been left without sanitation and other basic needs as first US aid flights trickled into Caracas.

Facing public outrage at the response by local officials, US-backed interim Venezuelan leader Delcy Rodriguez said the country was "not alone."

The US said one runway at Simon Bolivar International Airport was now functioning and that C-17 US military planes were landing there, while a naval ship had arrived off the coast.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said search-and-rescue teams from at least 17 countries were being mobilized to help find survivors.

But the search for survivors saw desperate attempts by local residents to claw away rubble from apartment buildings that collapsed in Wednesday's double-quakes. Experts say the first 72 hours after natural disasters are the key, narrow window for finding the living.

There was joy in the hardest-hit coastal area of La Guaira, north of Caracas, when locals pulled an infant alive out of the wreckage on Friday, some 32 hours after the magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 tremors.

In one social media video, a man welled up in tears up as he held the baby in his arms.

The death toll from the quakes, that struck within a minute of each other, had reached 920, with the United Nations' aid chief Tom Fletcher warning AFP the figure could rocket.

The UN migration agency said it had examined available population and damage data and had determined that "up to 6.76 mn people could be affected," and would "require emergency shelter, safe water, sanitation and hygiene services, healthcare, protection



Aerial views show partially collapsed residential buildings in Catia La Mar, La Guaira state, following earthquakes that struck the region. (AFP)



Newborn baby rescued from rubble of Venezuela quake

A newborn baby has been rescued from a fallen building 32 hours after the twin earthquakes that devastated a Venezuelan coastal city. Video shared on social media Friday shows rescuers working under a floodlight atop collapsed masonry and bringing the infant out to applause late Friday in the hardest-hit city of La Guaira, north of the capital Caracas. They carefully pass the baby, wrapped in a quilt, from person to person before cleaning the child gently with tissues, the video shows. According to the user, Andreina Quintero, who published the video on social media, the baby

was just 18 days old and was uninjured after being trapped for 32 hours. The child's mother, was rescued an hour after the child. In a follow-up video later on Friday, Quintero showed the mother in a hospital bed, with a medical worker telling her that the baby did not appear to have injuries. The medic then suggests that the mother saved the baby by covering the child with her body or another object. At least 920 people were killed by back-to-back earthquakes on Wednesday of magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5 and thousands more were injured or remain missing. (AFP)

Cost equivalent to 6% of GDP: UN

The United Nations yesterday estimated that the twin earthquakes that struck Venezuela caused \$6.7bn in physical damage, equivalent to 6% of GDP. The preliminary assessment is based on seismic modelling, satellite imagery and population data. It accounts for losses to assets including housing but does not cover wider economic disruption from the disaster, the UN Development Programme said. (AFP)

support and essential relief items."

Venezuelans — already battered by years of a failing economy and the turbulence of the US intervention to topple leader Nicolas Maduro in January — were furious at the government.

Jessica Mendoza was forced to transport her own daughter to a morgue in Caracas after 25-year-old Yesimar Rodriguez and her husband Jhomel Anaya, 26, did not survive the tumbling debris of their home in La Guaira on Wednesday.

"We were the ones who pulled them out ourselves. No help ever came," the bereaved mother, 43, told AFP, adding that the couple would be cremated without a wake due to the rapidly advancing

decomposition of their bodies.

Some Caracas residents jeered Rodriguez as she visited a destroyed neighborhood on Friday.

"The government isn't doing anything for the people," residents yelled from behind cordons next to a pulverised building.

The government on Friday restricted access to La Guaira state, and the UN's Fletcher told AFP more than 50,000 people were missing in total.

"It's a very, very complex emergency response," he said.

Rodriguez said she had spoken with US President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who "reaffirmed their commitment to supporting the rescue efforts."

The US said earlier it was sending a disaster response team of more than 250 personnel, including three special search-and-rescue units with dogs trained to locate people trapped beneath the rubble.

Venezuela's worst earthquake in more than a century has come after the oil-rich country endured more than a decade of economic collapse.

The crisis has hollowed out hospitals and public services, driving millions to leave the country.

And the country is still in a fragile political transition six months after the US ouster of Maduro.

Even before the earthquakes, millions of people across Venezuela were facing food insecurity,

collapsing health services, protection risks, and limited access to basic services," the UN and other aid agencies said in a statement Friday.

Those killed in Venezuela included 28 Portuguese nationals, five Spaniards, two Brazilians, seven Chinese nationals, one Chilean and one Italian-Venezuelan.

Venezuela's northern coast sits on a boundary between the Caribbean and South American tectonic plates, but had not experienced a major quake since 1997.

Minutes of silence preceded Friday's World Cup 2026 matches to honour the victims of the tragedy.

US officials frustrated by Machado bid to return to Venezuela after quakes

Reuters
Washington

Renewed push by Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado for US help to return home following devastating earthquakes in the South American country is frustrating senior officials in Washington, a White House official said yesterday.

Machado has reached out in recent days to several US administration officials, including at the White House, the State Department, and several members of Congress, asking for help facilitating her return to Venezuela, the official told Reuters on condition of anonymity. Twin earthquakes struck Venezuela this week, killing more than 900 people. Machado left Venezuela in December, defying a decade-long travel ban to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, after mainly



Venezuelan leader Maria Corina Machado. (Reuters/File Photo)

living in hiding for more than a year following disputed elections in 2024.

"We support her returning to Venezuela, but does it have to be 24 hours after a massive humanitarian catastrophe where the death toll continues to climb?" the White House official said.

A spokesperson for Machado did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The US captured former President Nicolas Maduro in January, raising hopes among some of his opponents that Machado, 58, would play a central role in running the country.

However, US President Donald Trump instead backed Delcy Rodriguez, Maduro's former deputy, saying Machado did not have the support needed to run the country in the short term. Machado has been calling for free and fair elections and, before the earthquakes this week, said she expects to return to her homeland by the end of this year. Since leaving Venezuela, Machado has mainly been based in the US.

The US has mounted a recovery effort for Venezuela in the wake of the earthquakes.

A State Department spokesperson said the US has mobilised search and rescue teams, is coordinating deliveries of medical supplies, and unlocked \$150mn in humanitarian aid.

UN estimates nearly 6.8mn people may be affected by Venezuela quakes

Close to seven mn people may have been impacted by the twin earthquakes in Venezuela, which have killed nearly 1,000 people and left tens of thousands missing, the UN estimated on Saturday.

The UN migration agency said it had examined available population and damage data and had determined that "up to 6.76mn people could be affected by the devastating earthquakes that struck Venezuela on 24th June."

The projections, which include up to two mn people in Caracas alone, "highlight the potentially vast humanitarian impact of the disaster", the International Organization for Migration (IOM) warned in a statement.

Entire buildings have crumbled in La Guaira, located to the north of Caracas, following devastating twin earthquakes that wreaked havoc on the nation Wednesday.

The national death toll stands at 920, while people remain trapped

under the rubble in the coastal city and elsewhere.

And UN aid chief Tom Fletcher told AFP Friday that more than 50,000 people were missing.

IOM said it had worked with Microsoft AI for Good Lab on initial satellite mapping analysis, which showed that 31.5% of buildings in the town of Catia La Mar had been damaged.

Such assessments, it said, were helping humanitarian responders identify the communities most affected and to prioritise where to deliver life-saving aid, even as ground assessments continue.

"The first hours and days after a disaster are decisive. They shape everything that follows," IOM chief Amy Pope said in the statement.

"IOM is scaling up rapidly: prepositioned relief items are already being deployed, and we are working with the Government and partners to deliver emergency shelter, essential supplies, and

Colombia's next interior minister is a victim of drug-related violence

Colombian hard-right president-elect Abelardo de la Esparriella on Friday named a former lawmaker whose father was killed by infamous drug baron Pablo Escobar as his future interior minister. De la Esparriella narrowly won last week's runoff by less than a percentage point and has pledged to use a heavy hand on crime when he takes office in August.

In his first cabinet announcement, the millionaire lawyer named Rodrigo Lara as his interior minister.

"He who NEVER, despite having been a victim of violence, stopped working for his homeland," De la Esparriella said in an X post accompanied by an AI-generated video.

The incoming minister's father, Rodrigo Lara Bonilla, was serving as justice minister in 1984 when he was gunned down in Bogota on Escobar's orders. The notorious drug baron's forces were engaged in open confrontation with the state at the time, in an effort to prevent cartel members' extradition to the US.

Lara, who was eight years old when his father was killed, subsequently went into exile in Europe with the rest of his family, and spent several years away before returning to Colombia.

"We will forge a major agreement on the fundamental things that unite us," the lawyer and former senator wrote on X. Lara previously served as former headline president Alvaro Uribe's anti-corruption czar. As a lawmaker, he promoted policies related to the historic peace accord with the now-defunct rebel army FARC — an agreement De la Esparriella now virulently criticizes.

The president-elect told AFP during the campaign he wants to bomb the country's myriad armed groups and construct "mega-prisons." (AFP)

Venezuela welcomes 1,600 foreign rescuers in urgent search for quake survivors

Reuters
Caracas

Venezuela's government said yesterday 1,600 members of foreign rescue teams had arrived to help search for survivors of the devastating twin earthquakes which killed more than 900 people this week as it tightened access to the worst-affected state. Residents and volunteers in La Guaira, a popular destination for beachgoers where at least 100 buildings, many of them residential high-rises, were destroyed or damaged, have for days decried shortages of heavy equipment and a limited official presence as they have worked to pull the living and the dead from the rubble.

Venezuela's interim President Delcy Rodriguez said in an overnight address on state television that 10 more countries were still to join rescue efforts and 14,000 military and police members were in

La Guaira to patrol and take sanitary measures.

"In recent hours, Venezuela has received 17 flights carrying more than 1,600 members of rescue teams, and over the next 24 hours, the arrival of 25 additional flights is expected," said foreign ministry official Oliver Blanco.

"We thank the international community for its support and solidarity during these moments of uncertainty for Venezuelans," Blanco added on X on Saturday. Rescuers have been making their way to sites around La Guaira state and Venezuela's capital Caracas, although on Friday some areas were still largely without an official presence as families and neighbours struggled to find missing loved ones in the rubble, sometimes digging with their hands.

Officials closed the road between La Guaira and nearby Caracas on Friday evening, saying heavy traffic was preventing quick passage of emergency vehicles and



Rescue personnel from Argentina's armed forces wait to board plane heading to Venezuela at El Palomar Air Base, Buenos Aires. (AFP)

official rescuers. The government had promised accredited journalists would be able to reach the area, but only by government bus, because of the risk of disease. As of noon on Saturday, no buses had yet transported journalists. Reporters

from state media were allowed to enter and told state television rescues were proceeding.

Civilians who are not part of official rescue teams will need a credential to pass the roadblock and Reuters witnesses were prevented

from using the main road on Saturday morning by police, while an older secondary road was choked with traffic.

The government had previously thanked civilians who brought aid, often by motorcycle, to desperate residents. Venezuelan state television showed images of thousands of pairs of shoes, clothing and other aid being collected by the government. While the power remained out near the quakes' epicenter in Moron on Friday, as well as fully down in La Guaira, it was being restored in other places, with Rodriguez saying that 60% of electricity had now been restored. Venezuela's power grid, crippled by years of underinvestment and economic sanctions, regularly experiences problems, leading to daily, hours-long blackouts in some regions.

Although the government has said hundreds are missing or trapped, more than 54,000 people are listed as unaccounted for on

a website promoted by the country's opposition. The US Geological Survey estimated more than 10,000 deaths were possible from the magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 quakes, which would place them among Latin America's deadliest of the last century.

The disaster could have political consequences for Rodriguez, who has tried to portray herself as an agent of change even though she served as vice president to Nicolas Maduro, who was ousted and arrested by the US in January.

Rodriguez spoke by phone with President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Friday after meeting with the US military's Northern Command and disaster experts. A senior US administration official said yesterday that a nine-figure funding package is expected to be announced within the next day or so, in addition to \$150mn that has already been committed by the Trump administration.

Seoul says Chinese, Russian military aircraft enter its air defence zone

AFP
Seoul

Republic of Korea said it had sent up fighter jets as a precaution after more than 10 Chinese and Russian military aircraft entered its air defence zone yesterday.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff in Seoul said the Chinese and Russian aircraft had entered and then left the Korea Air Defence Identification Zone (KADIZ) over the East Sea and the South Sea. "South Korea's military de-

tected the Chinese and Russian aircraft before they entered the zone and deployed Air Force fighter jets to prepare for any contingency," it said in a statement, without giving more details.

The Chinese and Russian aircraft did not violate Korean airspace, it said.

An air defence identification zone is not sovereign airspace but a buffer area where countries identify approaching aircraft for security purposes.

Military aircraft are generally expected to notify the relevant

country before entering its air defence zone, although such notification is not legally required.

Beijing's defence ministry said in a statement that the Chinese and Russian air forces conducted a "strategic air patrol" over the Sea of Japan, the East China Sea and the western Pacific Ocean, "demonstrating their determination and capability to jointly uphold regional peace and stability".

The brief statement did not specifically mention South Korea or its air defence zone.

Russia did not immediately comment on the incident.

North Korean leader Kim oversees weapons tests

Reuters
Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un oversaw tests of key weapons on Thursday as part of the country's goal to modernise its missile programme and bolster firepower along the southern border with South Korea, state media KCNA reported on Friday.

The tests, conducted on the anniversary of the outbreak of the 1950-53 Korean War, involved an upgraded version of a 240-mm, 24-tube multiple rocket launcher system, tactical ballistic missiles, and a 155-mm self-propelled howitzer, KCNA said.

The upgraded rocket launcher is equipped with an autonomous precision guidance system, with its firing range extended to 90 kilometres (56 miles), the media report said.

Kim, expressing satisfaction with the test results, said Pyongyang was pursuing automation, long-range capability and "ultra-precision" in its weapons programmes, according to KCNA.

The goal is for its defence along its southern border, Kim said, effectively referring to the one with South Korea.

In May, North Korea said it had tested a mix of tactical ballistic missiles, artillery rockets and AI-guided precision cruise missiles designed for modern warfare.

Pyongyang has been steadily upgrading its tactical and conventional arsenal, vowing to deploy weapons near the border with South Korea.

Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies, said the moves point to accelerating efforts to fortify the southern border and integrate nuclear and conventional forces as North Korea cements what it calls a relationship of two hostile states.

"The intent is ultimately to fully establish tactical nuclear and precision strike capabilities in forward units, placing all of South Korea within range," Lim said.

South Korea's Unification Ministry said the tests appeared to be part of North Korea's five-year defence development plan.



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un (C) inspecting weapons at North Korea's National Defense Science Research Institute. (AFP)

Thailand arrests Australian after teen's body found in suitcase

AFP
Bangkok

Thai police have arrested an Australian man after the body of a 17-year-old girl was discovered in a suitcase, authorities said yesterday.

The suspect, who denies involvement in the teenager's alleged abduction and murder, was taken into custody after an interrogation, a police official in the resort city of Pattaya told AFP.

Investigators were awaiting the results of a post-mortem examination and "other evidence" in

the case before filing charges, the official said.

The charges could include child abduction, murder, hiding a corpse and "abduction of a minor for sexual purposes", added the official, who was speaking on condition of anonymity.

Media reports said the 46-year-old suspect was apprehended on Friday at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport, where he was trying to purchase an airline ticket to Perth in Australia.

CCTV footage showed the suspect entering a condo in the seaside resort of Pattaya in the early hours of Thursday along with the

17-year-old Thai girl, according to the reports.

He emerged from the building several hours later, the reports said, carrying a large black suitcase which he then transported on the back of a motorbike.

Police found the suitcase on Friday near a railway track, discovering the victim's body inside of it bearing signs of violence, local website Pattaya News reported.

Thailand drastically cut the length of visa-free stays for tourists last month following a series of high-profile arrests of foreigners over drug offences and operating unlicensed businesses.

Myanmar horse-show



People prepare horses before a show jumping during the Olympic Day Movement 2026 competition at the Yangon Equestrian and Country Club (YECC) in Yangon yesterday. (AFP)

China strips generals, ex-financial regulator, politburo member of lawmaker posts

Reuters
Beijing

China on Friday stripped six military lawmakers, former financial regulator head Li Yunze and recently probed Politburo member Ma Xingrui of their posts in the National People's Congress, the country's top legislative body, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The report cited a notice from the National People's Congress Standing Committee, which provided no reason for the dismissals. There was no immediate com-

ment or response to a request sent to the defence ministry.

The removal marks the latest escalation in a years-long anti-corruption campaign initiated by President Xi Jinping that has seen scores of senior officials and top generals investigated, removed and purged.

Among the removed military lawmakers in the notice was General Xu Xueqiang, who has been the head of the Equipment Development Department of the Central Military Commission, a top military body tasked with overseeing the development, acquisition and testing of equipment

for the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Xu has also been commander-in-chief of China's Manned Space Programme since 2022.

Also removed were General Li Fengbiao, who had served as political commissar of the PLA Western Theatre Command, and General Guo Puxiao, who had been the political commissar of the PLA Air Force, as well as the Eastern Theatre Command's Wang Kangping, Cyberspace Force's Zhang Minghua, and the Army's Yin Hongxing.

The officials could not be reached for comment.

Beijing investigating rare light aircraft crash into CITIC Tower

- Pilot killed in crash with Beijing's tallest building
- 13 others, who were not on board, being treated for injuries

Reuters
Beijing

A light aircraft crash into Beijing's tallest building on Friday killed the pilot and injured 13 people who were not on board, the local government said following the unusual accident for the Chinese capital, where airspace is heavily restricted.

Those injured are receiving medical treatment and authorities are investigating the incident, Chaoyang district government said in a statement yesterday.

"A single-engine, two-seat light sport aircraft collided with a high-rise building while flying near the East third ring road in Chaoyang, at 5:55pm on June 26," said the statement, which was posted on social media.

"There was only one person on board, the pilot, who died," the statement added, without giving any further details of the possible cause of the crash.

Damage to the exterior of the skyscraper appeared to be limited to a hole caused by the loss



People gather near the CITIC Tower in Beijing on Friday, after an eyewitness reported plane debris at the base of Beijing's tallest building. (AFP)

of two large glass panels. The gap had been temporarily boarded up as of yesterday.

The 528m-high building, known as CITIC Tower or China Zun, is in Beijing's Central Business District, about 6 km (3.7 miles) from the Forbidden City, which is visited by thousands of tourists each day.

It is also near Zhongnanhai, a compound that houses the offices of China's top political leadership. The last aircraft crash in Beijing was in 2022, when a tourist helicopter crashed during a flight between the Changping and Fangshan districts, killing the two pilots on board.

Pictures posted on social media in China in the aftermath of Friday's crash showed debris from the plane and the identifier B-12PP. Reuters could not immediately verify the images.

Data from global flight tracking service provider Flightradar24 reviewed by Reuters showed an aircraft with registration number B-12PP was in the air at around 5:30pm on Friday in Beijing's northeastern suburbs.

It flew in a wide circle before heading in the direction of downtown Beijing, about 50km away, the Flightradar24 data showed. Tracking then stopped at 0955 GMT, with coordinates show-

Indonesian police arrest dozens in anti-government protest

AFP
Surabaya

Indonesian police have arrested dozens of protesters following a rally against President Prabowo Subianto's policies in the country's second-largest city, a rights group said yesterday.

Around 100 people gathered near a government building in Surabaya on Friday, AFP journalists estimated, to protest a fuel price hike and Prabowo's flagship free meals scheme.

Some demonstrators hurled rocks towards police and set fire to rubbish in the middle of the road, prompting officers to arrest them, the reporters saw.

Twenty-four protesters were arrested, Fatkul Khoir, a coordinator at rights group KontraS Surabaya, told AFP yesterday.

Police questioned them until 3:30am yesterday but did not charge them, he said.

Surabaya police chief Luthfie Sulistiawan told reporters late Friday that officers had taken "firm actions" to push back protesters after some threw projectiles.

He said there had been "dozens" of arrests but did not specify the number.

Protests erupted in several Indonesian cities this month after



Indonesian police arrest a student following clashes during protest against a rise in non-subsidised fuel prices, inefficient government spending and military involvement in civilian affairs and the government's free school meals programme in Surabaya on Friday. (AFP)

Prabowo's administration raised prices of non-subsidised gasoline by around 30%, seeking to ease budgetary pressures as the Middle East war weighs on global oil supplies.

Thousands of students took to the streets in the capital Jakarta to oppose both the fuel price hikes and to demand a halt to the multi-billion-dollar free meals scheme.

The initiative has been a cornerstone of Prabowo's political agenda but has received widespread criticism for being wasteful and linked to mass food poisonings. It has since been partly

suspended. Indonesia's biggest unrest since Prabowo took office in 2024 came in August and September, when nationwide protests took place initially over lavish perks for lawmakers.

However, they spiralled into an outbreak of anger against security forces after a police vehicle ran over a delivery driver and killed him.

Rights groups said those protests resulted in 10 deaths and thousands of arrests, though most people have since been released.

China's Xi pledges partnership with Cambodia

China is willing to establish a security partnership with Cambodia, President Xi Jinping said on Friday as he met with Hun Sen, president of Cambodia's Senate, in Beijing. Xi said the international and regional situation was undergoing "complex and profound changes" and that China and Cambodia should work together to inject more stability into regional peace and development. China's state news agency Xinhua reported.

Here are more details of their meeting:

China has always regarded Cambodia as a priority in its neighbourhood diplomacy and Beijing firmly supports Cambodia in safeguarding national

sovereignty and security, Xi said.

He called on the two sides to raise the foundation of strategic mutual trust "to a new height".

Xi also praised Cambodia's efforts in cracking down on telecoms and online fraud, and pledged to work with Cambodia to eradicate what he called the "tumour" of such fraud.

Hun Sen is in China from June 25-27 for an official "goodwill" visit, Beijing said previously.

China and Cambodia held the first meeting under a "2+2" Strategic Dialogue Mechanism in April, bringing together their foreign and defence ministers to discuss political and security ties. (Reuters)

Prince Harry and family to stay at royal residences on UK visit

AFP
London

Prince Harry, his wife Meghan and two children will stay at royal residences during their first family trip back to the UK in four years in July, a source familiar with the matter said yesterday.

The estranged prince and his family, including seven-year-old Archie and five-year-old Lilibet, will stay in a mixture of royal residences and private accommodation during the visit, the source confirmed to AFP.

The BBC reported the Duke and Duchess of Sussex will be guests of King Charles III at an unspecified royal estate during the visit.

During previous visits, Harry has declined accommodation on royal estates, according to media reports.

The couple left Britain for North America in 2020 and stepped back from royal duties amid a bitter feud with the family, which worsened in the following years as Harry published his tell-all memoir "Spare" and was embroiled in legal battles in the UK.

Harry, 41, is visiting to mark the one-year countdown towards next year's Invictus Games, launched by the prince in 2014 for wounded veterans.

The king's younger son has



Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex and Meghan, Duchess of Sussex. (AFP/File photo)

said he would like to reconcile with his father, but it is unclear whether the two will meet during the visit.

He is also believed to have briefly met with his 77-year-old father, who is being treated for an undisclosed cancer, at the king's Clarence House residence in London in September 2025.

But after losing a court case to have full police protection restored during UK visits last year, the prince expressed concerns

about his family's safety in the country.

"It's impossible for me to take my family back to the UK safely," he told the BBC then.

While the security arrangements for July's visit remain unclear, the BBC reported that Buckingham Palace had not offered any extra security for the trip.

Harry was also expected to attend engagements with his other charities during the multi-day visit.

UK to expand refugee sponsorship schemes

AFP
London

The UK interior ministry has announced it will create new legal routes for asylum seekers, including allowing community organisations to sponsor refugees based on a similar system in Canada.

The system will come into place later this year, Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said late Friday, with organisations and some "trusted" universities able to sponsor refugees and first arrivals expected in autumn 2027.

A route for employers to sponsor refugees is also expected to open next year, the Home Office said in a press release.

Immigration and asylum are thorny issues in the UK, where the hard-right Reform UK party has rapidly grown in popularity, riding a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment.

Keir Starmer, who stepped down as prime minister this week but will remain in power until his successor is chosen, has tried to appear tough on immigration since coming into power two years ago.

His government will next week introduce legislation in parliament tightening asylum rules, including making it easier to deport failed asylum seekers and restricting family reunion for refugees to im-

mediate family members.

The immigration policies of his likely successor Andy Burnham — who could replace Starmer as early as July — remain unclear, though he has acknowledged migration concerns in his recent campaign to become an MP.

It is also uncertain whether Mahmood, the straight-talking face of Starmer's immigration crackdown, will remain in her post under the next prime minister.

"I will open new legal routes for genuine refugees, while closing loopholes that have been too often abused," Mahmood said in a statement.

The new sponsorship scheme will "operate at a much higher capacity" than the UK Resettlement Scheme, which brought around 800 people in the year ending September 2025.

The Home Office did not detail how many refugees could benefit from the scheme, but said it would be "capped".

Previous sponsorship schemes have been targeted at countries including resettlement for refugees from Syria or Afghanistan.

Earlier this year, Mahmood faced criticism from charities and within her own party over tough regulations, including making refugee status temporary and banning education visas for some countries including Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sudan.

US judge rules Adani prosecutors must justify dropping criminal case

Reuters
New York

A US judge ordered the Justice Department on Friday to justify its decision to drop criminal charges against Indian billionaire Gautam Adani, declining to rule immediately on Adani's lawyers' request to dismiss the case. Brooklyn-based US District Judge Nicholas Garaufis said federal prosecutors' May 18 announcement that they would no longer pursue the case, which charged Adani with securities fraud and wire fraud stemming from an alleged bribery scheme, did not sufficiently explain their decision. "The Government's terse, bland and conclusory statement affords the court neither a sufficient basis to reach any conclusion, nor the opportunity to conduct any analysis of the Government's request for dismissal," wrote Garaufis, who gave the Justice Department until July 13 to submit more information. The Adani case was brought in 2024 at the end of Democratic President Joe Biden's term. The decision to drop the charges marked the latest instance in which the Justice Department has sought to end a high-profile white collar criminal prosecution during Republican President Donald Trump's second term in the White House. Legal experts say US judges have little discretion to compel prosecutors to continue with



Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani. (Reuters/File photo)

criminal cases they no longer wish to pursue, but the charges remain officially pending until Garaufis orders them dismissed. A spokesperson for the Brooklyn US Attorney's office, which brought the charges, declined to comment. Adani Group, Adani's company, has consistently denied wrongdoing. Adani himself has not appeared in US court to respond to the charges. Robert Giuffra, a lawyer for Adani, referred to the letter he wrote to Garaufis on Wednesday, arguing the case should be dismissed because it was beyond the reach of US law and prosecutors would be unable to prove the alleged bribery in India.

Adani was charged in 2024 with agreeing to bribe Indian government officials so a subsidiary of his Adani Group could win approval to develop a solar energy plant, then misleading US investors by provid-

ing reassuring information about his company's anti-corruption practices.

The US Securities and Exchange Commission also brought civil charges. The SEC has reached a settlement in which Adani would pay \$6mm and his nephew, Sagar Adani, would pay \$12mm.

Adani Enterprises Limited has separately agreed to pay \$275mm to the US Treasury Department to settle alleged violations of Iran sanctions. In his June 24 letter to Garaufis, Giuffra said lawyers for Adani and his co-defendants had several meetings with Justice Department officials and submitted nearly 500 pages of materials to convince them the case was flawed. "The DOJ's decision reflects its careful consideration of the indictment's legal and factual weaknesses," Giuffra wrote.

In their brief letter to Garaufis last month, senior officials said the Justice Department "decided, in its prosecutorial discretion, not to devote further resources to these criminal charges against individual defendants." The rank-and-file prosecutors who brought the case did not sign the letter. Justice Department officials in Washington last year dropped corruption charges brought under Biden against then-New York Mayor Eric Adams over the objections of the career prosecutors who brought the case, several of whom resigned.

'Trump likely to visit India early next year'

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US is seeking to arrange a visit to India by President Donald Trump early next year as the countries work on a bilateral trade deal, Indian media outlet IANS reported yesterday.

Rubio is likely to travel to India this year to prepare for the president's visit, he told IANS in an interview. "We're working towards sometime early next year to have the president come," Rubio said, according to IANS.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Trump last week on the sidelines of a summit of the Group of Seven industrial powers in France. Trump said that they had a "very good" conversation.

India has been pressing the US for months for a

Trump visit, potentially as part of a meeting including Japan and Australia.

India-US ties have been rocky over the past year since Washington imposed high tariffs on Indian goods, punishing New Delhi for purchasing Russian oil, and engaging closely with India's arch-rival Pakistan.

Rubio visited India last month seeking to repair ties, but the killing of three Indian sailors in attacks on commercial ships by the US Navy in the Gulf has roiled relations again.

In the IANS interview, Rubio said the US hoped to conclude a trade deal with India. "We're on the last inches of getting it done and it's very positive." (Reuters)

\$1.1bn emergency financing for Bangladesh from World Bank

Reuters
Dhaka

The World Bank approved \$1.1bn in emergency financing for Bangladesh to help secure food supplies, support vulnerable households and businesses due to the rising prices of fertiliser, fuel and food from the Middle East conflict.

Bangladesh is also seeking additional external financing from development partners, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to shore up foreign exchange reserves and ease pressure on public finances following a surge in energy import costs and broader economic challenges.

The World Bank package com-

prises two projects aimed at helping the country manage external shocks and maintain economic stability.

Of the total, \$300mn will be provided under the Emergency Support for Food Security Project to finance imports of 600,000 metric tonnes of fertiliser for the upcoming rice seasons. Bangladesh imports more than 85% of its fertiliser requirements, making it vulnerable to disruptions in global supply chains.

"Rising food, fertiliser and fuel prices stemming from the Middle East conflict, coupled with tighter fiscal space, have deeply affected Bangladesh's economy, particularly smallholder farmers and poor and vulnerable households," Jean Pesme, the World Bank's

division director for Bangladesh and Bhutan, said in a statement.

The project will support rice cultivation across 1.4mn hectares (3.46mn acres) of farmland.

The remaining \$713mn, approved under the Contingent Emergency Response Project, will finance emergency expenditures, including cash transfers and livelihood support for affected households and small businesses.

It will also help fund fuel and energy imports needed to sustain essential services, including healthcare, food distribution, electricity and water supplies.

The World Bank said the financing would help Bangladesh respond rapidly to economic shocks while protecting jobs, livelihoods and critical services.

Australia to double fine for flouting teen social media ban

AFP
Sydney

Australia will double the financial penalty on platform flouting its world-leading social media ban for under-16s to stem widespread evasion of the restrictions, the government said on Saturday.

New legislation will lift the maximum fine to Aus\$99mn (\$68mn) for systemic breaches of the regulation and arm the eSafety online watchdog with greater powers to curb the platforms, it said.

The independent regulator was "actively investigating" potential non-compliance by Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube, the government said in a statement.

"It's clear big tech are not doing enough to comply with the law — there are still too many children on social media," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said.

"These changes reflect the seriousness with which we take any failure by social media companies to comply."

Underage users have been

dodging the restrictions by using accounts registered to older people, setting up fake accounts, or by logging into private browsers.

The success of the Australian restriction is of intense interest to a growing number of nations that have introduced or are mulling similar bans — including Britain, Indonesia, the United Arab Emirates and New Zealand.

One of the first peer-reviewed evaluations of the Australian measure, published this month in the British Medical Journal, found "insufficient evidence" that it had much impact on social media use by youngsters.

The researchers surveyed more than 400 young people immediately before the restrictions came into effect, and again three months after, finding "substantial circumvention" of the rules.

There was little change for users aged 12-13, a slight decrease for the 14-15 age group, and an increase in use for those aged 16 and older.

The government says it is clear the regulator needs more powers even though more than 5mn accounts held by under-16s have been blocked since the ban came

"It's clear big tech are not doing enough to comply with the law — there are still too many children on social media"

into force on December 10.

Under the new laws, the eSafety Commissioner will be able to compel social media companies to provide evidence of what they have done to prevent under-16s from getting an account.

It will be empowered to demand information and documents from the social media companies and also from third parties such as age assurance or app store providers to help it check the platforms' claims.

Communications Minister Anika Wells said she was not satisfied the platforms were doing enough.

"Based on the regular updates I receive from the eSafety Commissioner, it is clear to me that social media platforms are adopting tricks straight out of the big tech playbook and doing the bare minimum to get by," Wells said.

"Social media platforms are some of the richest and most powerful companies in the world, and we're serious about holding them to account," she said.

"These tough new penalties and powers show we will not back down. Instead, we are doubling down on our efforts to hold big tech to account."

A growing body of research suggests too much time online is taking a toll on teen well-being, and Australia's ban has been hailed as a godsend for parents sick of seeing children glued to their phones.

Although platforms have pledged to abide by the laws, they have warned the measures could instead push teenagers into dark, unregulated corners of the internet.

Social media companies bear sole responsibility for checking that Australia-based users are 16 or older, and must prove they have taken "reasonable steps" to weed out young teenagers.

Some platforms are using AI tools to estimate ages based on photos, while users can also choose to prove their age by uploading a government ID.

Japan 'snow monkey' park to cap visitors after overcrowding

AFP
Tokyo

A Japanese park famous for "snow monkeys" soaking in hot springs will cap daily numbers after a surge in visitors and cases of bad behaviour including bathing with the animals, an official said on Friday.

Nestled in a valley with an altitude of 850m (nearly 2,800 feet) in the central Nagano region, Jigokudani Yaen-Koen is inhabited by wild Japanese macaques that regularly bathe in its hot volcanic spring waters.

On frigid, snowy winter days, "many monkeys are seen soaking in the hot spring, some for hours on end," its website says.

Touted as a "monkey paradise", the park is the "world's only place" to offer such a sight, its website claims.

Recent years have seen the number of tourists — the vast majority of them non-Japanese — rise sharply, sometimes totalling 3,000-4,000 a day, a park official told AFP, declining to be named.

"We have been seeing incredibly long queues of visitors waiting outside the ticket booth. To ease that, we will have them buy



Tourists taking photographs of Japanese macaques, commonly referred to as "snow monkeys", taking an open-air hot spring bath, or "onsen" at the Jigokudani (Hell's Valley) Monkey Park in the town of Yamanouchi, Nagano prefecture. (AFP/File photo)

tickets in advance" online, the official said.

The shift toward an online booking system will start in August, with a possible cap of 2,000 people a day.

As the number of tourists snowballed, so did instances of bad behaviour, such as trying to feed or touch the monkeys.

Some have even "tried to bathe" together with the animals, the official said.

About 42.7mn tourists flocked to Japan in 2025, an all-time high, as the weak yen boosted the appeal of the "bucket list" destination.

Complaints of overcrowding have grown in hotspots like Kyoto, with some disrespectful tourists accused of harassing kimono-clad geisha performers in their frenzy for photos.

In February a cherry blossom festival in Fujiyoshida, boasting a highly Instagrammable view of Mount Fuji, was cancelled after residents complained that their "quiet lives" were under threat.

The city in central Japan complained of chronic traffic jams, cigarette butts tossed, trespassing and even people defecating in private gardens.



Earthquake shifts political ground for Venezuelan leader Delcy Rodriguez

Venezuela's strongest earthquake in over a century is the biggest challenge to Delcy Rodriguez's early leadership but could also allow the interim president to stamp her authority on a fractured government and begin rebuilding a broken country. After two earthquakes of magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5 struck Venezuela on Wednesday evening, it could take weeks for the full extent of the damage to become clear. US government data models suggested the death toll could ultimately exceed 10,000.

Even so, some things were already clear. Rescuing those trapped, treating the injured and rebuilding homes and infrastructure will require a vast effort. That project has the potential to define Rodriguez's political future. A close ally of US President Donald Trump, she has

sought to portray herself as an agent of political change even though she served as vice president to her predecessor, socialist Nicolas Maduro, whom Washington ousted in January.

"The narrative of a new Venezuela is based on reconstruction," said Tony Frangie Mawad, a Caracas-based political scientist. "It ends up being somewhat ironic that the country now has to face, with great difficulty, a very literal reconstruction of its infrastructure." Frangie said the rescue and rebuilding will face immense challenges given the country's extended economic crisis and weakened public services. It could well end in failure.

"However, if the government manages a recovery strategy well - especially with the international aid that is arriving - and handles the narrative effectively, it

could use this moment to build a sense of national unity, a kind of 'rally around the flag' in the face of a natural disaster," he added.

Rodriguez is already attempting to do exactly that. "In unity, we will overcome this situation," she said in the initial aftermath of the disaster. Major US support could tip the outcome. In 1999, late leader Hugo Chavez rejected US help after deadly landslides killed at least 10,000 people, an early signal of the anti-US posture that later deepened Venezuela's isolation. "It'll be big. It'll be fast, and it'll be effective," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Thursday of the US response.

Trump administration aid could increase both the US role in the country and the government's reliance on Washington, according to analysts. "It's

a situation that is going to be very well exploited to increase the presence of the United States and its control over Venezuela. And also, for Rodriguez to lean on the United States as her primary ally," said Ricardo Rios, head of Caracas-based consultancy Poder & Estrategia. Earthquakes have decided political futures in Latin America before.

In 1972, a quake destroyed much of Managua, killing 5,000 to 10,000 people. The corruption-ridden response marked the start of the downfall of President Anastasio Somoza, who would be overthrown by the Sandinista revolution in 1979. In 1985, Mexico City was devastated by a massive earthquake that killed at least 5,000 people and left some 100,000 people homeless. The failures of the rescue effort were widely regarded as a turning point that led to

the end of the PRI's seven decades of one-party rule.

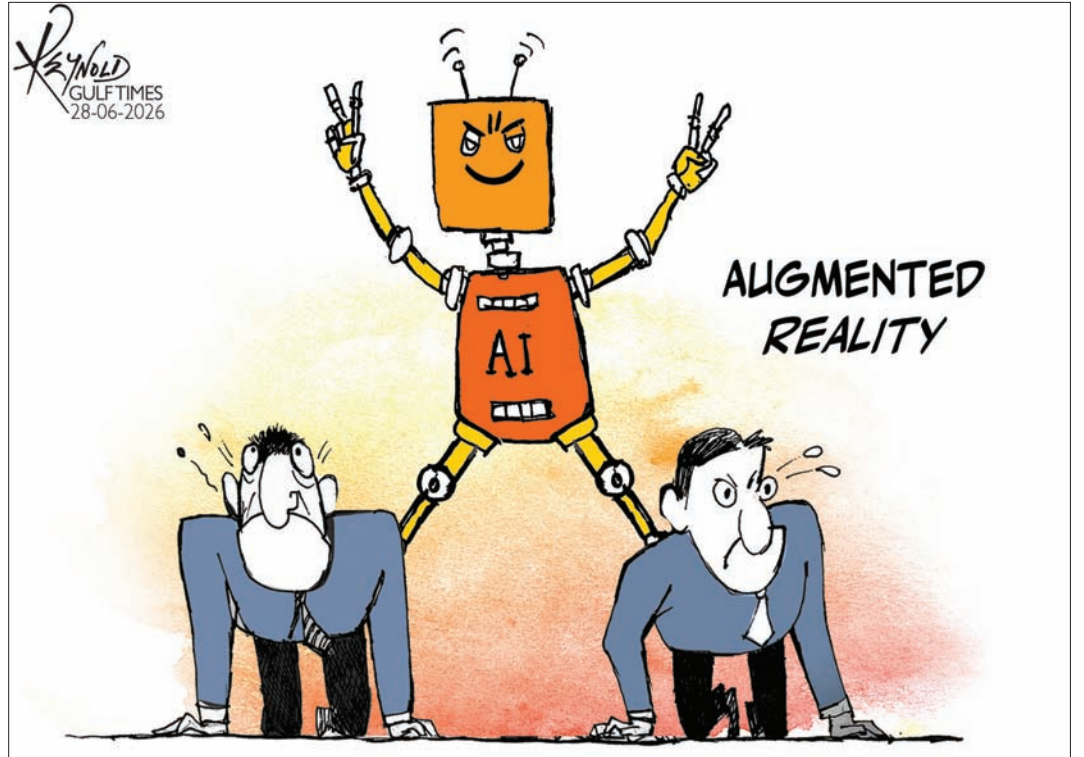
In Venezuela, Rodriguez is likely to be the face of any missteps or mismanagement in the recovery, risking backlash that could shape her political future. "Venezuela's capacity to handle emergency response has been hollowed out over 10 to 15 years of economic turmoil and displacement of 8mn people beyond Venezuelan borders," said Paul Angelo, a Latin America expert at the Washington-based consultancy McLarty Associates who was in Caracas during the quake.

"Without major international assistance, and without a consolidated plan and lots of money infused into a country that is purportedly \$240bn in debt, this will be a long road to recovery," -Reuters

New session in Scottish Parliament



Britain's King Charles III speaking during the Opening Ceremony to mark the 7th Session of the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood, Edinburgh. (AFP)



By Casey Hall, Samuel Shen and Kane Wu
Reuters

Chinese 'future industries' push triggers flood of venture capital, bubble concerns

- Beijing supports listings by firms in "future industries" such as quantum technology, nuclear fusion
- Surging tech start-up valuations fan bubble fears
- Chinese VC investment and fundraising revived after years in the doldrums

Just two days after SpaceX made its historic market debut, a Chinese space startup held an investor roadshow for its maiden fundraising round by touting a mission to help China catch up with the US in the race to the heavens. The mission for Tectronic Maritime Space Systems, a Shanghai-based company that focuses on launching rockets from the sea, is to "build the Maersk of global commercial space flight," finance manager Gu Mei told roughly 50 venture capital investors.

To achieve that goal, Tectronic, established just three months ago, needs to raise 150mn yuan (\$22mn) at a valuation of 1.5bn yuan, according to its investor presentation. It plans three additional funding rounds totaling 3bn yuan over five years before targeting a 2032 listing at a valuation of about 50bn yuan - more than 30 times its current level, the presentation showed.

"Demand is inelastic, supply is limited and the clock is ticking," Gu said at the event on June 14. "Investors participating in this round of financing are expected to get returns of 26.7 times."

The aggressive fundraising pitch highlights a scramble among what Beijing refers to as China's "strategic emerging and future industries," which include startups focusing on space, quantum technology, nuclear fusion and brain-machine interfacing.

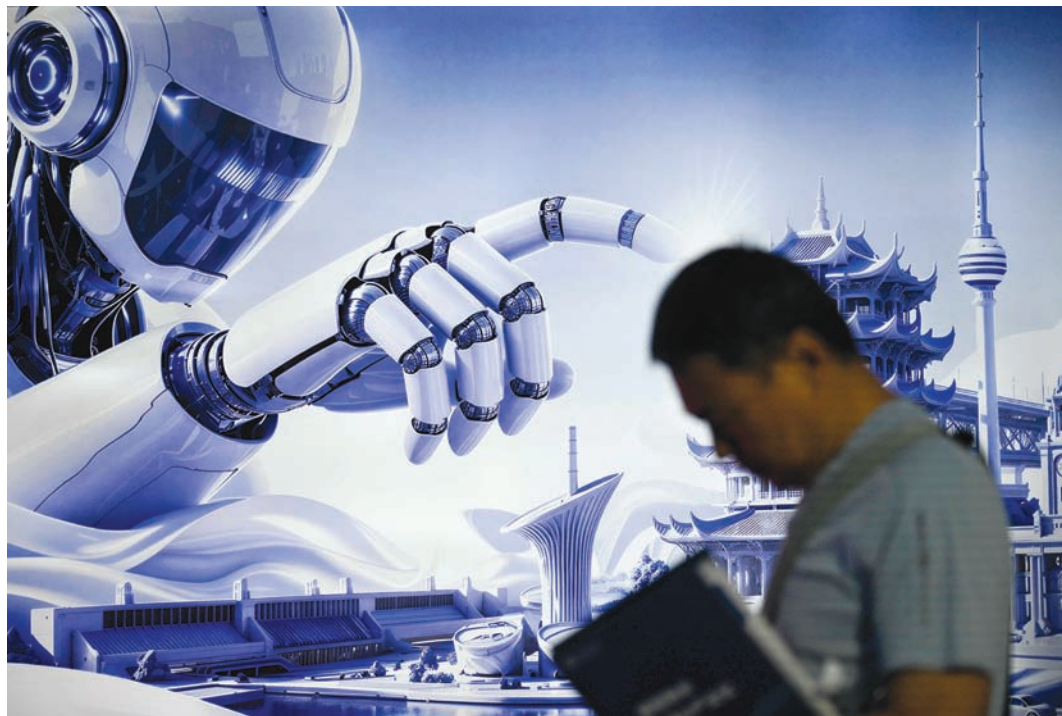
While the rush to raise funds by companies like Tectronic is creating potentially lucrative opportunities for local venture firms - struggling to recover from a years-long downturn - the fever is also inflating startup valuations and stirring fears of a forming bubble. In China, venture capital and private equity investments in the first five months of this year totaled 620bn yuan (\$91.6bn), jumping nearly 60% from a year earlier, according to ChinaVenture Investment Consulting.

Newly registered venture capital funds in the world's second-largest economy totaled

154bn yuan during the first five months of 2026, already in excess of last year's total, according to China's fund industry association. "The level of frenzy (in China) is something I have never seen in my entire career," said Yan Kai, a veteran venture capitalist and partner at Ivy Capital in Shanghai. A startup with no revenue can raise billions in a first funding round and before that deal is completed, investors line up for the second while talks have already started for the third, said Yan, whose firm makes tech-focused investments.

'PULLING THE TRIGGERS'

A pickup in venture capital



A man stands next to a poster of a humanoid robot during the China International Supply Chain Expo (CISCE) in Beijing. (AFP)

investments comes as Beijing has highlighted the need to bolster its "future industries," a grouping that also includes biomanufacturing and hydrogen energy, in its next five-year plan, published in March. The development blueprint also identified sectors like robotics and aerospace as strategic emerging industries earmarked for priority development.

China also published rules this month to support domestic stock market listings of "future industry" startups, typically firms working on frontier technologies that have no profit or revenue.

"Our strategy is to move with

the trend - follow guidance of national strategy, while selecting investment targets using a market approach," said Huang Yan, co-founder of Shanghai-based Lantern Capital. Huang, who expects a return of nearly 100 times from his decade-old investment in LandSpace - China's closest answer to SpaceX - said "the key is to marry what that state wants with what the market needs."

Raymond Feng, a partner at Atom Ventures, said competition among venture funds to invest is fierce in the areas of nuclear fusion, quantum tech and embodied AI, as "everyone is throwing money at future



industries." Ni Zhengdong, chairman of Beijing-based venture capital consultancy ZeroIPO Holdings, said there is a strong sense of FOMO - a fear of missing out - among early-stage investors in China, with some funds "pulling the triggers more often."

NARROWING TECH GAP WITH US

While most venture capital deals involve local, yuan-denominated funds amid the intensifying Sino-American tech rivalry, five China-focused dollar-denominated funds raised a combined \$4bn as of June 12, Preqin data showed. That already exceeds the annual total for each of the past two years. Venture funds including ZhenFund, Qiming Ventures and Capital Today are back in the market raising new funds, people familiar with their plans said, riding the surge of recovering global investor interest in China tech. The sources were not authorized to speak to the media. The three firms did not reply to

Reuters requests for comment. Some industry participants, however, say the industry's present trajectory is too fast and furious.

"A photonic chip project was worth 1bn yuan last year, and is now worth 10bn," said Yu Tiecheng, head of Guanghui M&A, a think tank. "A rocket satellite project was valued at 5bn at the start of the year and is now worth 20bn." If a hoped-for listing at an even higher valuation fails to materialise, "such investments would look extremely dicey," he said.

But for now, the representatives of the so-called "emerging and future industries," like Tectronic, are capitalising on the Chinese government's push to narrow the country's gap with the US in areas including AI and space. There is heated competition for orbital space globally, "so there's strong government support for private capital to participate" in companies like Tectronic, said Chief Financial Officer Wu Qunhui.

GULF TIMES

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Three Pakistani rangers killed in Karachi attack: Dawn newspaper

Reuters
Karachi

At least three of Pakistan's Sindh Rangers personnel were killed in an attack on the paramilitary forces building in Karachi, the Dawn newspaper reported yesterday. Witnesses said they heard a loud blast followed by gunfire along a major road in Karachi's Gulistan-i-Jauhar neighbourhood near several universities and Pakistan's meteorological department. Three militants were also killed in the attack on the local Sindh Rangers headquarters, Sindh Inspector General Javed Alam Odho told Dawn. Mohammad Bakhsh said he

was praying at a nearby mosque when he heard the blast. "The ground felt like it does when there is an earthquake," the 40-year-old who runs a restaurant in the area said. "When we came out there was smoke everywhere... then the gunfire started," he said, adding the firing went on for around 15 minutes. A Reuters reporter at the scene said firing had ended and the situation was calm. This is the most notable attack in Karachi since an explosion targeting a Chinese convoy in October 2024 which killed two Chinese nationals.

Attacks in Pakistan's major cities have become increasingly rare in recent years but a surge in militancy in regions bordering Afghanistan has raised concerns that violence could return to the urban centres.

Strong earthquake hits Afghanistan, Pakistan

- No reports of casualties or damage in Afghanistan
- Quake reported in Pakistan earlier; more than 20 people injured

A strong earthquake struck Afghanistan's Hindu Kush region yesterday, the European Mediterranean Seismological Centre said, sending out tremors that could be felt from the capital Kabul across the border into neighbouring Pakistan. There were no immediate official reports of casualties or damage from the earthquake, but checks were ongoing, the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority said in a statement. The magnitude 6 quake occurred at a depth of 100km (62 miles), EMSC said. A magnitude 5.4 earthquake struck Pakistan earlier yesterday, according to EMSC. More than 20 people were injured and dozens of houses were damaged in

different areas of Musakhail district in Pakistan, the district's deputy commissioner Abdul Razzaq Khajak told Reuters. The disaster management authority in Pakistan's Balochistan province said around 125 houses were damaged, adding that relief teams were sent to the affected area along with tents and food, solar panels, blankets and other items.

People ran out of their doors in panic in Swat district in northern Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, resident Daniyal Ahmad told Reuters. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

"It was very huge here in Swat and it lasted for quite a long time," he said.

"People came out of their houses and women and children were seen crying in panic," Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief over the damage caused and ordered an urgent response from the authorities to help those affected, his office said. (Reuters)

Temperature records shattered in Europe as heatwave moves east

Reuters
Berlin/Milan/Copenhagen

From Scandinavia to the Alps, Europeans endured sweltering conditions yesterday as a heatwave linked to dozens of deaths spread east, shattering records with temperatures in some areas soaring above 40C (104F).

Preliminary all-time temperature records were set yesterday in Germany, Denmark and the Czech Republic, and a new mark for the month of June in Switzerland. Similar records have been broken earlier this week in France and Britain.

Scientists said the stifling heatwave would have been virtually impossible without man-made climate change, which has made this week's night-time temperatures 100 times more likely than they would have been even two decades ago.

"This heat isn't pleasant summer weather. It's a health crisis," Katrin Goering-Eckardt, a German federal lawmaker and former leader of the Green Party, said on X.

Such was the heat in Berlin, where temperatures climbed to 39C yesterday, that police deployed two water cannons across

the city to spray mist onto people looking for relief.

Yesterday's new preliminary German record of 41.5C in Möckern-Drewitz in the eastern state of Saxony-Anhalt topped a record set just the day before of 41.3C near Saarbrücken on the French border, Germany's Meteorological Service said.

The Danish Meteorological Institute meanwhile reported a 37C reading north of the city of Aarhus yesterday, the highest on record since measurements began in 1874.

Preliminary readings in the Czech Republic also showed record temperatures yesterday afternoon, with 40.8C measured north of Prague, the Czech Hydrometeorological Institute said.

In the Slovak capital Bratislava, authorities recorded the hottest night on record on Friday.

German authorities issued extreme heat warnings for nearly the whole of the country yesterday. As the heatwave moved east, temperatures rose well over 30C across almost all of Poland.

In France, dozens of people, both young and old, have died during the heatwave. Temperatures above 40C have disrupted rail travel and power generation, sparked alcohol bans, suspended

classes and postponed outdoor events.

France's government said summer sales would be extended this year after a slow start due to the heatwave.

Italy's health ministry issued a red alert for the heatwave in 18 cities including Milan, Rome, Turin, Venice, Genoa, Florence and Bologna for yesterday and today.

The flow of the River Pothas dropped dramatically, with seawater advancing deep inland, posing threats to local farming and the ecosystem of Italy's most important waterway.

Even at night in the Alps there was little relief, with temperatures in Bolzano in Italy's South Tyrol never falling below 25.4C, the city's meteorologist Dieter Peterlin said, a June record. Ecologists fear for Europe's glaciers.

Struggling with the prospect of damage to infrastructure, including buckling roads and swelling train tracks, some rail providers have sought to reduce traffic.

German national rail operator Deutsche Bahn allowed customers to cancel long-distance travel into early next week. Another operator, National Express, said it would suspend some trains yesterday afternoon in North Rhine-West-



People enjoy the water sprayed by a police water cannon at the Brandenburg Gate during the ongoing heatwave in Berlin, Germany, yesterday. (Reuters)

phalia, Germany's most populous state, as a precaution.

Near Hamburg, the main traffic lane on one of Germany's busiest motorways was partially closed after heat split the asphalt.

In Switzerland, the Lausanne Pride march had extra water fountains and first responders, while Milan's Pride march was pushed back until 5pm to curb the heat's impact.

The Ironman European Championship long-distance triathlon taking place on Sunday in Frankfurt shortened the cycling and running courses due to the heat.

The most extreme heat is forecast to begin fading at the weekend, with heavy thunderstorms expected on Sunday. Paris said it would close its parks, gardens and the Canal Saint-Martin swimming area early yesterday due to storm forecasts.

Across Europe, cultural land-



People gather at a mist dispenser to cool off during a heatwave, at Castle Square in Warsaw, Poland, yesterday. (Reuters)

marks have had to close, farming has suffered, and some hospitals have struggled to cope.

The heatwave has pushed temperatures well above their seasonal average, according to the Reuters Climate Monitor, driven by a

phenomenon known as an Omega block because of a shape similar to the Greek letter.

This weather pattern traps a bulging ball of hot air over regions for extended periods, with cooler air on its fringes.

WISH summit set for November with 'New Health Span' as theme

From Page 1

Founded in 2012 under the vision of Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, WISH has spent 14 years trying to bridge that gap, commissioning roughly 70 policy reports and convening international organisations around evidence-based solutions. What sets the work apart, Verma said, is its deliberate focus on the overlooked: "issues and perspectives that are

either under the radar, underappreciated or underfunded globally yet have a very significant impact." The reports, he stressed, are designed to move policy, not merely to spark debate.

Each of the five tracks will be examined in detail by leading specialists. The fertility track will weigh declining birth rates against treatment options, ethical questions and the growing commercialisation of fertility care. The breakthrough-therapies track

tackles what Verma called one of modern medicine's greatest challenges: making cutting-edge treatment affordable rather than the preserve of those who can pay millions.

"Science is churning out magic day after day. We see this in the labs of Sidra Medicine, Hamad Medical Corporation, the universities in Education City," he said. "The challenge is ensuring they reach patients rather than remaining available only to those who can

afford millions of dollars in treatment."

Artificial intelligence, he argued, can no longer be filed under the future. "In many policy circles we continue to talk about AI as if it is coming, but it is already here," Verma said, citing AI-driven hospitals, robotic physiotherapy systems and diagnostic tools already in operation across several countries.

The unresolved questions, he said, are ones of ownership, bias

and accountability. Current systems are trained largely on data from wealthier Western populations, raising doubts about how well they translate to other patient groups. "Who owns the data and who governs it are fundamental questions," he said — and when a patient acts on AI-generated advice and comes to harm, it is far from settled who bears responsibility. Governments, he added, will need smart regulatory frameworks that pro-

tect patients without smothering innovation.

The summit's fifth track, global health diplomacy, turns to the fraying of international co-operation at a moment of complex health emergencies. With multilateral institutions under strain and states increasingly striking bilateral deals, Verma said the central question is what comes next: "what the new global health architecture will look like and what role emerging actors can play."

'The goal is no longer simply a university degree'

From Page 1

She noted that university graduates today must look beyond academic qualifications. "A degree is important, but it is no longer the only factor. Employers are also looking for soft skills, problem-solving abilities, continuous learning, and flexibility in dealing with changes."

Government and private initiatives also play a vital role in supporting innovation among young people. "When young people find support, training, funding, and guidance, they become more capable of innovation and turning their ambition into an achievement that serves society and the national economy."

Looking ahead, Al-Bahr believes Qatar's youth are positioned to contribute significantly to the country's future vision. "Don't be afraid to try new ideas, because every great achievement started with a small idea. Invest in your skills, take advantage of the available programs and initiatives, and trust in your ability to make a difference." She concluded.

Expert: Cybersecurity key for Qatar's digital growth

From Page 1

Dannacher said ITSEC Asia's entry into the Gulf came through a Dubai base, established in 2017, from which it serves organisations across the GCC with services spanning advisory, managed security, penetration testing, security assessments, and cyber resilience programmes.

He said the Middle East was a logical next step because it resembles what his teams saw in Southeast Asia years earlier.

Dannacher said the Middle East and Southeast Asian regions are undergoing rapid digital transformation, embracing AI at scale and generating rising demand for cyber resilience. In both markets, organisations are searching for partners who can help them grow without making themselves more vulnerable in the process, he also said.

What those organisations are navigating has changed sharply in recent years, Dannacher pointed out, adding that "the threat landscape has changed dramatically in recent years. Attacks are becoming more targeted, more persistent and increasingly AI-enabled."

He said, "What is different today is that many attacks are no longer being driven only by humans."

Dannacher cautioned that AI is helping attackers automate reconnaissance, develop phishing campaigns, generate deepfakes, and identify vulnerabilities much faster than before.

"A human needs a little bit of sleep. AI

does not. As long as it has enough computing power, it can keep working around the clock," he said.

For organisations in the Middle East, Dannacher emphasised that the company is seeing growing threats from AI-powered phishing and social engineering, ransomware targeting critical infrastructure, business email compromise, deepfake-enabled fraud, supply chain attacks, and increasingly sophisticated state-sponsored actors.

The tools fuelling these threats have also become cheaper and more accessible, Dannacher warned. "AI is lowering the barriers to entry for cybercriminals. Many of the tools available today are inexpensive or freely accessible, which means attackers no longer need the same level of expertise or resources as they once did," he stressed.

He said, "Despite all the advances in technology, the biggest vulnerability remains in people. In most organisations, attackers are still looking for human mistakes, whether that is clicking on a phishing email, sharing sensitive information or simply overlooking something important."

Cybersecurity is not only a technology challenge, he explained, adding that stopping at technology is a mistake.

"It is also about people, training, and visibility. Organisations need to understand where they are vulnerable, continuously monitor their environment, and make cybersecurity part of everyday business operations," Dannacher added.

Thousands ride through Rome as Vespa celebrates 80 years

An icon of the Italian way of life, the Vespa was celebrating its 80th birthday yesterday, as thousands of riders paraded through Rome on the legendary scooters.

A few donned biker jackets despite the scorching heat while others opted for t-shirts, the hum of their machines filling the capital with a colourful buzz. Organisers said some 25,000 Vespas took part in the parade.

Some rode solo, others in pairs, whizzing through the city centre — even along streets usually closed to private traffic.

"We brought our Vespa over from the US. We travelled through Germany, then via Vienna ... and I then rode my Vespa from Austria to Rome, a journey that took two weeks," Texas resident David Baamonde told AFP-TV yesterday.

"For me, the Vespa is a way of life, a sense of carefree living, enjoying the moment, discovering scenery — it's a lifestyle," said Italian Andrea Musco. Featuring in cinema classics like "Roman Holiday" and "La Dolce Vita", the Vespa has a long association with the Eternal City.

"The history of the Vespa, which accompanies the birth and rise of Italy after the Second World War, is in a way an iconic symbol of our history, of our culture," said Roberto Gualtieri, the Italian capital's mayor.

The Vespa, which means "wasp" in Italian — a reference to the sound of its engine — was born on 23 April 1946, when the first patent for its manufacture was filed in Italy by Piaggio. It is still produced at the Pontedera site in Tuscany. It was "the symbol of an Italy emerging



Vespa enthusiasts from around the world ride during the parade of the Vespa World Days in Rome yesterday. (AFP)

from the war and getting back on its feet," Gualtieri said, adding that he was "proud" that Piaggio had decided to organise the anniversary in the city. "Telling the story of 80 years of the Vespa is, in part, telling the story of how Rome has managed to capture the world's imagination", particularly through cinema, he said.

The celebrations began on Thursday with the inauguration of a "Vespa Village" at the Foro Italico, a sports complex in the north of the capital, and culminated on Saturday with the grand parade through the streets of Rome.

Thousands of "Vespisti" from all over the globe turned up in the scooters, which are instantly recognisable because of their rounded lines, their brightly coloured metal bodywork and their round headlight mounted on the handlebars.

Andrew Ward, 57, and his sister Julie Stover, 63, came from the US and rented a Vespa in Rome to take part in the parade. (AFP)

EAA Foundation, Place Vendome join forces to celebrate Olympic Day

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Hundreds of community members joined hands yesterday at Place Vendome to mark Olympic Day 2026 and support education at an event organised by Education Above All (EAA) Foundation.

EAA, in collaboration with Place Vendome, organised a community movement activation with the theme 'Let's Move for Education' in celebration of Olympic Day 2026 and in support of the International Olympic Committee's global Let's Move campaign.

The event brought community members for a 5-km walk and jogging as well as other related indoor activities at Place Vendome Mall.

Al-Jazi Darwish, director, Communications & Engagement at EAA Foundation noted that sport is a unifier and bring various communities under its banner. "Sport has the power to bring people together and inspire young people to recognise their potential. Through Let's Move for Education, we are proud to support a global movement that promotes active lifestyles, wellbeing, and community connection, while reinforcing our belief that education and sport can work together to empower young people and help them build the skills they need for life," explained Darwish.

Large number of youth, families, Team Qatar athletes, community members, partners, representatives of EAA Foundation and Place Vendome, and invited guests took part in the indoor community walk and jog in the indoor area of the



mall. Following a guided warm-up session, participants completed up to five laps around the mall, covering approximately five kilometres, in a shared celebration of physical activity, wellbeing, social connection, and youth engagement.

The activation created an in-

clusive space for people of different ages and abilities to take part at their own pace, reinforcing the message that every journey begins with a single step.

The event witnessed enthusiastic involvement from the participants as most of them completed



The event brought community members for a 5-km walk and jogging as well as other related indoor activities at Place Vendome Mall. **PICTURES:** Thajudheen



all the five laps of the activity. Sanjay Mehta, group director of marketing at United Developers, said: "We are pleased to collaborate with Education Above All Foundation in hosting Let's Move for Education at Place Vendome. This activation reflects our commitment to providing a welcoming community space where families, young people, and partners can come together to celebrate health, movement,

and positive social engagement."

Through its participation in the International Olympic Committee's Let's Move campaign, EAA Foundation highlighted the role of sport as more than physical activity. Sport can help young people build confidence, resilience, teamwork, leadership, and communication skills that support their growth inside and outside the classroom. The event

also reflected EAA's Foundation commitment to innovative partnerships that connect education, sport, and social development.

The event also built on EAA Foundation's collaboration with Qatar Foundation and the International Olympic Committee through the Circle In initiative, which harnesses the power of sport to create safe, inclusive spaces that support learning, healing, and personal growth.

By bringing together sport, education, and community participation, Let's Move for Education showcased Qatar's commitment to inclusive community initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles, youth development, and social wellbeing. Through multi-sectoral approach, unique financing models, focus on innovation as a tool for social good, and partnerships, EAA Foundation aims to transform lives through education and bring hope and real opportunities to the lives of impoverished and marginalised children.



Sidra opens microbiome service for women, kids

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

The human body is home to trillions of microbes – and Sidra Medicine wants to read them. The Qatar Foundation member has launched a specialised microbiome service that decodes these vast microbial communities to sharpen diagnosis, treatment and disease prevention for women, children and young people.

Pairing advanced sequencing

technology with multidisciplinary research expertise, the private, fee-based service is aimed at academic and industry investigators.

It analyses the complex populations of microorganisms that naturally inhabit the body to clarify their role in health and disease, helping clinicians and researchers refine diagnoses, design treatment strategies and prevent illness across a range of conditions.

The service was set up by Sidra's Laboratory of Microbiome and Biomarkers Discovery to support

researchers – particularly across the Mena region – who lack the expertise or the infrastructure to process their own samples.

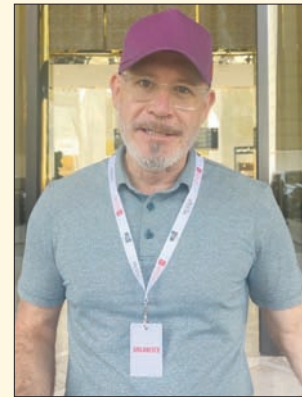
Building on that momentum, Sidra has announced it will host its second Mena Microbiome Conference on October 17 and 18, 2026.

The launch reflects Sidra's continued investment in precision medicine and translational research, while reinforcing Qatar's position as a regional hub for scientific innovation and personalised healthcare.

We aim to inspire people to get moving: youth advocate

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Residents, families and youth advocates marked Olympic Day with a 5km indoor walk and jog at Place Vendome, using movement to promote education, wellbeing and community connection. Organised in collaboration with Education Above All Foundation, the initiative highlighted how sport can be used as a simple but powerful tool to build confidence, encourage participation and raise awareness about education. Shane Eldstrom, CEO of United Developers, said the initiative brought several community values together in one space. "We're very proud to collaborate with Education Above All Foundation on Let's Move for Education, an initiative that brings together sport, well-being, education, and community engagement in one inclusive experience," he said. He added that places such as malls can play a wider role in society by becoming spaces where people meet, interact and take part in activities that



Shane Eldstrom



Kyra Sales.

benefit the community. "At Place Vendome, our role goes beyond retail. We aim to be a destination where people come together, connect, and take part in meaningful community experiences," Eldstrom said.

For Education Above All youth advocate Kyra Sales, the run was about encouraging people to take the first step towards a more active lifestyle. "We just ran 5km for the Let's Move campaign," she said. "This is a community event where we aim to inspire people to get moving, to be involved in physical activities."

Sales said the campaign carries a global ambition, adding: "By 2028, we aim to inspire 100mn people all over the world." Participants also described the event as a positive and memorable experience. Rosaa Loop, who joined the indoor run, said: "I am so happy because this is good for me, for my country. And I am running for the first time inside."

The morning began with registration at 8.30am at Gate 1, followed by the 9am kick-off, turning Olympic Day into a community celebration of movement, education and shared purpose.

Qatari personnel support FIFA World Cup 2026 organisation



Several Qatari personnel from the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy (SC) are participating in the organisation of the FIFA World Cup 2026, currently being staged in the United States, Canada and Mexico, which concludes on July 19. The participation is part of the cooperation between the SC and FIFA, aimed at transferring the organisational expertise gained from hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. FIFA has been keen to engage the SC because of its extensive expertise in tournament operations, venue operations, media operations, training sites, venue transport operations and team services. **(QNA)**

