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SPORT | Page 1

Haaland fires Norway into last 16 clash against Brazil

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Qatar, Turkiye join forces to push €295mn satellite

Qatar is putting €295mn (\$347mn) into its third and most ambitious satellite to date, a high-throughput spacecraft that will carry its communications reach deep into Asia, Africa and Europe by 2030. The Es'hail-3/Turksat-Biruni satellite, sealed under agreements signed in Doha yesterday, marks Es'hailSat's largest single investment and a sharp pivot from broadcasting towards connectivity.

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, attended the signing of a strategic

partnership between Es'hailSat and Turkiye's national operator, Turksat, alongside a separate manufacturing contract with France's Thales Alenia Space, which will design and build the satellite.

The Ka-band spacecraft will be positioned at 50 degrees East, with Turksat providing the orbital rights and frequencies. It is designed to allocate coverage, beams, frequencies and bandwidth dynamically in response to demand, extending service across the Middle East, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, Central Asia and surrounding maritime regions. Applica-

tions will span broadcasting, telecommunications, government communications, in-flight and maritime connectivity, enterprise VSAT networks and remote links.

Es'hailSat Chief Executive Ali Ahmed al-Kuwari said the project would take three to four years to design, manufacture and launch, with lift-off expected in 2030. Unlike the company's earlier satellites, which were built mainly for television, Es'hail-3 will focus on communications, including fixed and mobile connectivity, aviation and maritime services, and support for the oil, gas and energy sectors. **To Page 2**



Amir bestows Al Wajbah on outgoing envoys



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met at the Amiri Diwan yesterday with Kazakhstan ambassador Arman Issagaliyev and Russian ambassador Dmitry Nikolayevich Dogadkin, who called on His Highness the Amir to greet him at the end of their tenure in the country. His Highness the Amir awarded the Al Wajbah Decoration to the ambassadors in appreciation of their role in strengthening the co-operation between Qatar

and their friendly countries. His Highness the Amir wished them success in their future duties and the relations between Qatar and each of Kazakhstan and Russia continued progress and prosperity. For their part, the ambassadors expressed their gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir and the state officials for the co-operation accorded to them, which contributed to the success of their duties in the country. **(QNA) Page 2**

PM, US envoys discuss the ongoing talks

HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner. They discussed developments in the ongoing talks between the United States and Iran within the framework of the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two parties, along with the efforts aimed at promoting security and stability in the region through dialogue and diplomacy. They also addressed the latest regional developments, particularly the ceasefire in Lebanon, stressing the importance of consolidating it and building upon it in a way that preserves Lebanon's unity, sovereignty, and stability. The prime minister emphasised Qatar's continued mediation efforts and its support for all tracks of talks stemming from the MoU, leading to a comprehensive and sustainable solution that enhances the security of the region, protects the interests of its peoples, and supports international peace and security. The two US envoys voiced the United States' appreciation for Qatar's role, in partnership with Pakistan, in facilitating the course of talks, stressing the United States' commitment to continuing the negotiation process and supporting diplomatic efforts aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement. **(QNA)**

Qatar works to keep peace process alive

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

- ◆ **Witkoff, Kushner to meet mediators but not Iranians directly**
- ◆ **No high-level US-Iran meeting scheduled, says Dr al-Ansari**
- ◆ **Qatar maintains Strait of Hormuz must stay open and safe**

US President Donald Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner are in Doha for talks with mediators, but neither will meet Iranian officials directly and no high-level US-Iran meeting has been scheduled, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson and Adviser to the Prime Minister HE Dr Majed bin Mohamed al-Ansari said yesterday.

Speaking at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) weekly briefing, Dr al-Ansari said technical-level discussions between the Iranian and US teams are continuing – both directly and indirectly – with technical committees coordinating the agenda and subjects for any future high-level meetings. Such technical meetings have continued between rounds since the earlier talks in Lausanne, he said, but none is currently scheduled.

The envoys' visit, he added, is part of broader meetings with me-

diators in Doha covering a range of regional issues, including the Iran negotiations and the Lebanese file. The US delegation is also meeting Qatari officials but will hold no direct talks with the Iranian side, instead reviewing the progress of the negotiations with mediators.

Dr al-Ansari said the Strait of Hormuz is one of the central issues under discussion, alongside other topics set out in a memorandum of understanding (MoU) – among them Iran's nuclear programme and the wider regional situation. Escalation, he warned, only widens the gap between the parties.

Qatar's position on the Strait of Hormuz has not changed since the crisis began, he stressed, underlining the need to keep the strategic waterway open, safe and free of any threat to navigation in



HE Dr Majed bin Mohamed al-Ansari

line with international maritime law. That position is shared by other Gulf and regional states and the wider international community, he said, and Qatar would not accept any change to the strait's status, whether through unilat-

eral action or otherwise.

Qatar has maintained almost daily communication with the parties concerned – including its neighbour Oman – to manage developments in the strait, he said, stressing that close regional co-ordination is essential because the crisis directly affects the countries of the region, which must also be part of the solution.

Qatar's foremost priority is the safety of crews aboard ships transiting the strait, Dr al-Ansari said, describing human well-being as paramount. The first phase of the understandings focuses on mine-clearing and ensuring safe passage; while some vessels have crossed safely, others have come under attack, indicating that the situation remains unstable. He expressed Qatar's solidar-

ity with Oman against any violation of its sovereignty, whether through attacks or incursions into its territorial waters, and praised France's participation in mine-clearing operations. Clearing the strait is a complex process, he said, and Qatar welcomes any international technical contribution, while stressing that decisions on how such operations are carried out rest with the countries of the region.

Dr al-Ansari revealed that a dedicated direct channel for de-escalation in the Strait of Hormuz had been used to help contain recent confrontations, adding that communication channels had been established for this purpose and that the region's states were capable of resolving their differences through dialogue. **To Page 2**

Ashghal breaks ground on revamp of aviation academy

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Qatar is building the next generation of its pilots, air-traffic controllers and aircraft engineers from the ground up. The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) has launched the Qatar Aeronautical Academy Development Project in Ras Bu Abboud, a sweeping overhaul that will give the country a purpose-built training complex aligned with European aviation standards by the fourth quarter of 2027.

The project is designed to turn out highly qualified Qatari talent capable of leading the sector's fu-

ture, while cementing the country's standing as a regional hub for aviation, education and specialised training.

At its core are three new flagship facilities: a Flight Operations and Pilot Training Building, an Air Traffic Control and Airport Operations Simulation Building, and an Aircraft Support Services Hangar at Doha International Airport. Together they are meant to deliver a single, integrated training environment built to the highest international benchmarks.

Dana Sulaiman al-Hammadi said the academy had been designed around the latest global standards, with a particular focus on the pilot-qualification require-

ments of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). The aim, she said, was an environment that meets the most demanding international criteria for training aircrew.

The centrepiece ATC simulation building will span roughly 1,902 square metres across two storeys, kitted out with state-of-the-art simulation and training systems. A new 1,000-square-metre Student Activities Building will blend educational and recreational facilities under one roof, while some 2,200 square metres of student accommodation will be refurbished to raise both capacity and living standards.

At Doha International Air-



port, the new Aircraft Support Services Hangar will combine a 2,047-square-metre hangar with 647 square metres of office space. Built on a steel frame over

a reinforced-concrete foundation and rising at least eight metres, it will house aircraft storage bays, avionics and maintenance workshops, operations rooms, techni-

cal-records facilities, specialised stores, and dedicated training and meeting rooms, supported by advanced ventilation systems geared to aircraft maintenance.

The wider campus will be reshaped under a comprehensive master plan aimed at optimal use of space and seamless movement between buildings. Infrastructure and building systems will be upgraded to meet the Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS), with sharper energy and water efficiency, better indoor environmental quality, environmentally friendly materials and smart solutions designed to cut the academy's footprint and improve long-term operational efficiency.

Amir meets ambassador of Kazakhstan



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met at the Amiri Diwan yesterday with Kazakhstan's ambassador Arman Issagaliyev, who called on the Amir to greet him on the occasion of the end of his tenure in the country. His Highness the Amir awarded Al Wajbah Decoration upon the envoy in appreciation of his role in strengthening the cooperation between Qatar and his country. His Highness the Amir wished Issagaliyev success in his future duties and the relations between Qatar and Kazakhstan continued progress and prosperity. The envoy expressed his gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Amir and the State officials for the cooperation accorded to him, which contributed to the success of his duties in the country. - **QNA**

Al-Muraikhi meets Comoros minister



HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi met yesterday with the Comoros' Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mbae Mohamed, who is visiting Qatar. They discussed bilateral cooperation, relations and ways to enhance and develop them, along with a host of topics of mutual interest. - **QNA**

Qatar elected to ACAO council, committees

Qatar, represented by the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA), participated in the 74th Executive Council Meeting and the 29th General Assembly of the Arab Civil Aviation Organization (ACAO), held on June 29-30 in Rabat.

Qatar's delegation was headed by the QCAA's Mohamed bin Faleh al-Hajri. During the General Assembly, Qatar was elected to the Executive Council of the ACAO.

It also secured membership on the following technical committees: the Air Transport Committee, the Environment Committee, the Media and Corporate Communication Committee, and the Financial and Administrative Oversight Committee.

This achievement reflects the confidence enjoyed by Qatar among the member states and its active role in supporting joint Arab cooperation and advancing the Arab civil aviation sector.

The General Assembly also approved the appointment of Qatar, represented by al-Hajri, as Chair of the ACAO's Financial and Human Resources Committee.

This appointment reflects Qatar's distinguished standing and the member states' recognition of its capabilities and expertise in supporting the organisation's work and contributing to the enhancement of its institutional performance.

During the meeting, al-Hajri commended the efforts made over the past period in managing the Executive Council's work and the achievements that have contributed to advancing the Organization's mission and strengthening its role in the development of the Arab civil aviation sector.

He emphasised that the meeting represents an important opportunity to enhance joint Arab cooperation and coordination in light of the challenges facing the sector, while continuing to develop operational, technical, and legislative frameworks to ensure the highest standards of safety, security, and efficiency in civil aviation.



He also reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to supporting the ACAO's efforts and all initiatives aimed at achieving its objectives and strengthening cooperation and the exchange of expertise among member states.

The Executive Council Meeting and General Assembly also discussed topics related to aviation safety and security, infrastructure development, environmental issues, innovation and digital transformation, as well as mechanisms for strengthening cooperation among Arab states and reviewing ways to implement the organisation's strategic objectives, thereby contributing to the advancement of joint Arab action and the continued development of the Arab air transport sector. - **QNA**

Amir congratulates DR Congo president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) President Felix Tshisekedi 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 the Congolese president on the occasion. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani meanwhile sent a cable of congratulations to DR Congo Prime Minister Judith Suminwa Tuluka. - **QNA**

Education ministry to announce General Secondary Certificate results tomorrow

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) will announce the results of the General Secondary Education Certificate for the 2025-26 academic year electronically tomorrow.

In a post posted on X platform yesterday, the ministry announced that the results will be available on the ministry's website after 12 noon tomorrow. - **QNA**

Agreement



Snapshots from the signing ceremony.

runi by Thales Alenia Space



Qatar, Turkiye join forces to push €295m satellite

From Page 1

Al-Kuwari called the agreement a "historic turning point" for the company, saying that the Turksat partnership reflected a shared vision for innovation in space, while the Thales contract would let Es'hailSat expand into new markets and strengthen the resilience and independence of Qatar's communications infrastructure.

Under the partnership, the two operators will pool their satellite assets, ground infrastructure, distribution networks and customer relationships to serve complementary markets across

the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

The arrangement allows them to share the cost of building out infrastructure, optimise capacity and tap the satellite's commercial potential from launch, the companies said, meeting rising demand for broadband, mobile connectivity and government and enterprise services.

Turksat chief executive Ahmet Hamdi Atalay said the project was more than cooperation between two allied countries, describing it as a response to a fast-changing market.

By combining infrastructure

and expertise, he said, the two sides would deliver next-generation connectivity opening up opportunities for the public and private sectors alike.

Thales Alenia Space chief executive Herve Derrey said the contract recognised his company's ability to build a fully digital, software-defined satellite that can be reprogrammed in orbit and carry hosted payloads for both commercial and government customers.

Es'hailSat said the deals laid the foundation for its next phase of growth across Europe, the Middle East and Africa, while reinforcing all three partners' long-term commitment to advanced, secure satellite communications and giving Qatar sovereign control over critical communications infrastructure. - **QNA**



QFZ chief, BYD explore cooperation opportunities

Qatar Free Zones Authority (QFZ) chief executive Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Faisal al-Thani met yesterday with BYD executive vice-president and chief executive Stella Li to explore opportunities for future cooperation in advanced manufacturing and innovation within Qatar's free zones. The meeting highlighted the QFZ's integrated industrial ecosystem, world-class infrastructure, and competitive value proposition, reinforcing Qatar's position as a strategic hub for global manufacturing, technology, and innovation. - **QNA**

Qatar works to keep peace process alive

From Page 1

On Iran's frozen assets and the proposed transfer of \$6bn through Qatari banks, al-Ansari said the issue - linked to a 2023 agreement to set up a humanitarian channel in Qatar - has remained under discussion since then.

Qatar does not own the funds but acts as the financial intermediary managing the accounts, he said; whether the money is transferred depends on the agreement of both parties, and no transfer has yet been made by the US.

On compensation for Iran or any other affected party, al-Ansari said it was too early to discuss such matters, adding that "there are no winners in wars; everyone suffers losses".

Qatar's immediate priorities, he stressed, are ending the conflict, restoring normal navigation through the strait, and protecting

the region's peoples from further escalation.

He said Qatar had itself been subjected to attacks that violated its sovereignty but had repelled them through the wisdom of its leadership and the capability of its armed forces, leaving the door open for negotiation and dialogue.

Referring to the recent death of a Qatari citizen at sea, he said the martyrdom could be attributed to shrapnel from military operations in neighbouring areas.

Restoring the region to its pre-war state requires serious consideration, al-Ansari said, noting that the conflict had affected regional relations, maritime security and the broader security architecture of the Middle East.

For Qatar, he added, there is no alternative to dialogue and to regional solutions that take account of the reservations and security concerns of all parties - the ultimate aim being greater regional

integration, both economically and in terms of security.

On guarantees, he said all wartime guarantees were ultimately subject to realities on the ground - the current reality being a ceasefire, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) and an ongoing negotiation track supported by Qatar as mediator.

The most important guarantee, he said, lay in reaching a peaceful settlement and ending the war.

Al-Ansari said there was no information indicating that a high-level Iranian delegation would visit Doha for direct or indirect negotiations, with the immediate focus remaining on the safety and security of regional and international navigation through the strait.

On Qatar's humanitarian efforts during the Russia-Ukraine war, he said more than 100 children from both sides had been reunited with their families, and the process was continuing.

The Shura Council has affirmed that human rights are a firmly established priority in its legislative and oversight work, stemming from the Council's constitutional responsibilities and in line with Qatar's commitment to protecting and promoting human rights, under the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. In its statement issued on the occasion of the International Day of Parliamentarism, observed annually on June 30, the Council said that protecting and promoting human rights constitute a fundamental pillar of parliamentary work through the enactment of legislation, the exercise of oversight powers, and the monitoring of public policies. These efforts, it added, contribute to strengthening the rule of law, promoting public participation, safeguarding rights and freedoms, and supporting sustainable development.

Shura Council says human rights is a priority

The Council said that Qatar's commitment to human rights is a well-established approach reflected across its legislation and national policies.

The Council further noted that it continues to fulfill its constitutional responsibilities by placing human rights at the core of its legislative and oversight roles.

This includes considering and approving legislation related to the protection of rights and freedoms, discussing public policies, and monitoring the performance of government agencies.

These efforts, the Council added, contribute to developing the national legislative framework, improving the quality of public services, enhancing institutional efficiency, and strengthening the principles of transparency and accountability.

The Shura Council also reaffirmed its active participation in regional and international parliamentary forums, underscoring its belief in the importance of parliamentary diplomacy for exchanging expertise, fostering dialogue and cooperation, and supporting international efforts to promote human rights, all while respecting the sovereignty of states and their national and cultural particularities. In a related context, HE the Shura Council Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim emphasised the vital role played by parliaments in general, and the Shura Council in particular, in protecting and promoting human rights and safeguarding Qatar's achievements in this regard.

He also highlighted the Council's legislative and oversight contributions toward these objectives.

Speaking during a panel discussion organised by the General Secretariat of the Shura Council to mark the International Day of Parliamentarism, HE al-Ghanim stressed Qatar's leading role in protecting human rights and enacting legislation that reinforce them.

The panel featured presentations by Shura Council members Dr Muna bint Abdulrahman al-Muslemani and Essa bin Ahmad al-Nasser.

The panel addressed four main themes: the role of legislative and oversight powers in promoting human rights, Parliamentary diplomacy and its role in supporting human rights, the Shura Council's contribution to protecting the rights of women and the youth, and supporting the right to healthcare and enhancing the quality of healthcare services.

The session included interventions and discussions by attendees on a range of topics related to the panel's themes, enriching the dialogue and facilitating an exchange of views on ways to strengthen parliamentary work in the protection of human rights.

The International Day of Parliamentarism is a global observance held annually on June 30 to commemorate the founding of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 1889.

It was officially recognised by the United Nations in 2018 to highlight the role of parliaments in areas including representing the people, ensuring accountability, enacting legislation, overseeing government performance, encouraging the participation and representation of women and youth in legislative bodies, and supporting parliaments in adapting to modern technologies. - **QNA**

PM meets EU special representative for Gulf region

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with European Union Special Representative for the Gulf region Luigi Di Maio, who is visiting Qatar. During the meeting, they discussed cooperation relations between the State of Qatar and the EU and ways to support and strengthen them. They also explored the latest regional developments, particularly the diplomatic efforts to enhance security and stability in the region following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran, in addition to a number of topics of common concern. (QNA)



QCF announces Hayat Plaza Open Rapid Chess Championship

The Qatar Chess Federation (QCF) has announced the organisation of the Hayat Plaza Open Rapid Chess Championship, to be held from today (July 1- 4) in the open hall at Hayat Plaza Mall, with around 80 male and female players participating.

The QCF is keen to organise this type of tournament as part of its efforts to expand the game horizontally and promote its culture within society. Over the past years, the Federation has organised numerous tournaments in cooperation with various entities and institutions in the country.

The competitions kick off today (July 1) at 5pm with an exhibition match featuring Grandmaster Viktor Bologan against 20 participants, including chess enthusiasts and mall visitors.

The Under-16 Rapid Chess Championship will begin at 4pm tomorrow (July 2) and will be played over 7 rounds.

On Friday, the Rapid Chess Championship for Qatari players



Mohammed al-Mudahka

will be held and will consist of 7 rounds.

The tournament will conclude on Saturday with the Open Rapid Chess Championship, played under the Swiss system over 9 rounds, with 80 male and female players participating.

Mohammed al-Mudahka, president of the QCF, confirmed that the competitions are witnessing strong participation in the open championship, the U-16 category, and the championship designated for Qatari players. He lauded the cooperation with Hayat Plaza Mall, which comes within the framework of efforts

to broaden the spread of chess culture in the community.

He added: "The Federation seeks to implement its strategy by organising a large number of tournaments, in addition to its commitment to advancing the game in all areas of Doha and its efforts to spread it across different geographical regions. Organising the tournament in a shopping mall also enhances chess culture, whether through public participation or spectatorship. There will be ongoing cooperation with several commercial malls to repeat this experience in the future."

Firoz Mohiuddin, CEO of Hayat Plaza Mall, affirmed the mall's full readiness to host these competitions, expressing his great pleasure at the continued cooperation with the QCF.

He said: "The tournament competitions in each edition witness great interaction from participants, as well as from the public who attend to watch the matches."

Al-Mannai participates in GCC Chiefs of Staff supreme committee meeting

HE Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces Lieutenant General (Pilot) Jassim bin Mohammed al-Mannai participated in the Supreme Military Committee Meeting of Chiefs of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, held in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The meeting discussed ways to strengthen existing cooperation among GCC member states, addressed the latest regional security developments, and explored means of enhancing defence cooperation and joint coordination in light of current circumstances. The meeting was also attended by a number of senior commanders from the Qatar Armed Forces. (QNA)

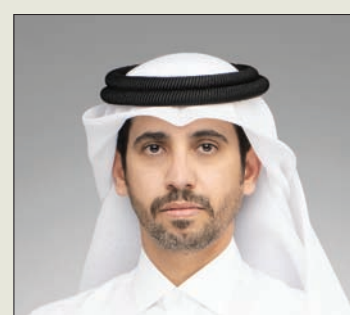


Meeza successfully delivers strategic 4MW data centre expansion ahead of schedule

Meeza, Qatar's leading Managed IT Services and Data Centres provider, announced yesterday the successful completion and delivery of its 4MW data centre expansion project.

The facility was officially handed over to a leading global hyperscaler on June 21, following the signing of the Ready for Service (RFS) certificate, marking the successful completion of one of Meeza's most strategic digital infrastructure projects.

The project was completed and delivered nine months ahead of the contractual deadline, demonstrating Meeza's exceptional execution capabilities, engineering excellence, and commitment to delivering world-class digital infrastructure that meets the highest international standards. The 4MW expansion, originally announced in early 2025, was subsequently secured under a long-term agreement with a global hyper-scaler valued at more than QR350mn over a period exceeding 10 years. The successful early delivery enables the customer to accelerate the deployment of its cloud and digital services while further strengthening Qatar's position as a regional hub for advanced digital infrastructure. The project also achieved an outstanding safety milestone, recording more than 871,000 working hours without a single Lost Time Incident (LTI), Medical Treatment Case (MTC), or environmental incident. This achievement reflects Meeza's unwavering commitment to delivering complex projects with the highest standards of quality, safety,



Meeza CEO Mohamed Ali al-Ghathani.

and operational excellence. Mohamed Ali al-Ghathani, CEO of Meeza, said: "The successful delivery of this expansion ahead of schedule reflects Meeza's ability to execute complex, large-scale infrastructure projects with agility, quality, precision and highest standards of safety. Completing the project nine months early demonstrates the dedication of our teams and reinforces the confidence that global technology leaders place in Meeza as their trusted digital infrastructure partner."

He added: "As demand for Cloud Services, Artificial Intelligence, and high-performance computing continues to accelerate, Meeza remains committed to investing in world-class digital infrastructure that supports Qatar's Digital Agenda 2030 and positions the country as a preferred destination for hyperscale cloud investments."

The new capacity has been integrated into Meeza's state-of-the-art data centre ecosystem, designed to provide high availability, resilience, scalability, and energy-efficient operations. The facility is engineered to support mission-critical cloud workloads, artificial intelligence platforms, high-performance computing, and digital services for regional and global customers.

This achievement further strengthens Meeza's position as Qatar's leading digital infrastructure provider and highlights its continued role in enabling the country's digital transformation while supporting the growth of the regional cloud ecosystem.

QNL launches summer Membership Campaign

Qatar National Library (QNL) has launched its annual Membership Campaign, inviting community members across Qatar to benefit from the library's offerings this summer.

Library membership provides free access to more than one million physical books, a growing collection of digital resources and e-books, and thousands of children's e-resources and interactive learning tools, according to QNL's press release.

State-of-the-art Innovation Stations, including music studios and green-screen rooms, open the door to creative exploration, while the Children's Library offers hands-on programs and engaging activities, the Library added.

"Summer is when the Library truly comes alive. Families come through our doors looking for enrichment, students want to stay ahead, and curious minds of all ages are ready to explore. The #Library4You slogan is our invitation to everyone in Qatar to make this summer count," said Head of the Stacks Maintenance

Unit in the Public Engagement Department at QNL Fatima al-Sahli.

For families and individuals heading away during the break, the Library travels with them: its mobile app and digital offerings keep engaging, knowledge-rich experiences within reach, and reading enthusiasts can still enjoy their favourite titles wherever they are.

Providing the community with full access to a wealth of knowledge, resources, programs, and experiences, the Library is a welcoming and free-to-join space where children discover stories, students deepen their knowledge, researchers pursue their work, and families connect, all under one roof.

The campaign is aligned with the #Library4You slogan, which positions the Library as a personal partner in every member's learning journey and reflects its commitment to serving each member of the community as an individual, meeting them where they are,

and growing with them across every stage of life.

The summer program adds even more. Children can join the Summer Camp and Summer Reading Challenge, building reading habits that last a lifetime. Young adults and students have access to academic guidance, tools to develop their digital skills, and the opportunity to tap into the Murshidi mentorship community.

Families can explore interactive exhibitions, attend cultural events, or simply settle into the Library's quiet spaces with a good book. Together, these offerings provide enriching experiences for community members of all ages throughout the summer months.

Membership is free for everyone living in Qatar, and signing up takes minutes. Register by downloading the Qatar National Library app on Google Play or the App Store, by visiting www.qnl.qa, or by stopping by the User Services Desk at the Library. (QNA)

ICAI Doha Chapter celebrates International Yoga Day



The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), Doha Chapter organised International Yoga Day celebration titled "Flex • Flow • Flourish", bringing together members and their families for a rejuvenating morning dedicated to health, mindfulness, and well-being. The session was led by CA Qurica Agarwal, a Ministry of Ayush-certified advanced yoga instructor, who guided participants through a series of yoga postures, breathing exercises, and relaxation techniques aimed at promoting physical fitness, mental clarity, and inner balance.

The event also engaged participants with interactive yoga-based games and fun activities, where participants practised and identified yoga poses in a lively and enjoyable environment. These activities encouraged family participation, teamwork, laughter, and learning, making the session both educational and entertaining for attendees of all age groups.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chapter chairperson, CA Arun Somanath emphasised that professional success is best complemented by physical and mental well-being, and initiatives such as these reinforce the Chapter's commitment to holistic development of its members and their families. The ICAI Doha Chapter extends its sincere gratitude to the session instructor, participants, sponsors, and volunteers for their support in making the event a success.

Qatar participates in inaugural session of HSC 2026

The State of Qatar took part in the inaugural session of the Hamburg Sustainability Conference (HSC) 2026, in Hamburg, Germany, yesterday. Over 2,000 representatives of governments, international organisations, and the private sector have participated in this conference.



HE Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Engineer Abdulaziz bin Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud, represented the State of Qatar at the conference, accompanied by a delegation from the Ministry. The conference discusses avenues for accelerating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reinforcing international cooperation in the domains of climate, energy, food security, and development funding. It likewise takes stock of creative initiatives and solutions to address environmental and development challenges on the world stage.

This participation is part of the State of Qatar's commitment to deepening its presence in sustainability-relevant international forums, sharing expertise and best practices, as well as backing combined efforts to achieve sustainable development and confront environmental and climate challenges. (QNA)

Minister of State for Interior Affairs meets ambassador of Indonesia



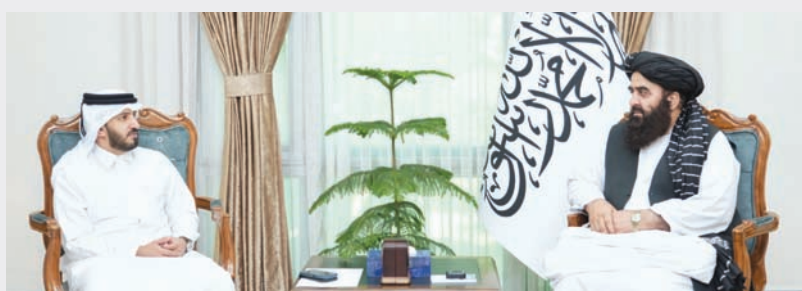
HE the Minister of State for Interior Affairs Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal bin Mohammed al-Thani met yesterday with ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to the State of Qatar Syahda Guruh Langkah Samudera. The meeting discussed cooperation relations, particularly in security-related fields and explored avenues to strengthen and further develop these ties, in addition to several matters of mutual interest. (QNA)

Minister of Municipality meets Eritrean envoy



HE the Minister of Municipality Abdullah bin Hamad bin Abdullah al-Attayah met yesterday with ambassador of the State of Eritrea to Qatar Ali Ibrahim Ahmed. The meeting discussed ways to enhance bilateral cooperation relations in areas of mutual interest. (QNA)

Foreign minister in Afghan caretaker government meets Qatari ambassador



Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Caretaker Government of Afghanistan Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi met yesterday with ambassador of the State of Qatar to Afghanistan Dr Mirdef bin Ali al-Qashouti. The meeting discussed the latest developments in Afghanistan and ways to support the Afghan people. (QNA)

Tasweer Photo Festival imagery joins Journeys to Greatness exhibition

A selection of photographs originally presented in After the Game, one of the flagship exhibitions of the third edition of Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar, has been chosen for inclusion in Journeys to Greatness: Qatar 2022 Legacy, an exhibition presented by the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum in partnership with Mexico's Ministry of Culture, through the Centro de Cultura Digital (CCD).

The exhibition connects the legacy of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 with the tournament's next chapter in Canada and Mexico in 2026, representing a key programme of the Qatar Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture. Through photography, objects and multimedia storytelling, the exhibition reflects on football as a shared cultural experience, bringing together athletes, fans and communities from around the world.

The selected Tasweer works expand the exhibition's exploration of Qatar 2022's lasting impact, offering intimate perspectives on the people, places and moments that defined the tournament beyond the pitch. The photographs are integrated throughout several sections of the Journeys to Greatness exhibition, including Look of the Game, Matches and Players, and Unity in Diversity, highlighting photography's power to document the human stories that continue to shape the tournament's legacy.

3-2-1 QOSM director Abdulla al-Mulla said: "The legacy of Qatar 2022 belongs not only to the players and



the matches, but also to the fans who brought the tournament to life. Their journeys, emotions, colours and celebrations were essential to the experience of the FIFA World Cup in Qatar.

"Through this exhibition, and as part of the Qatar Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture, we are proud to show how those memories continue to connect people across borders. I was particularly struck by the cultural engagement, and specifically by how these visitors embraced the customs and traditions of the Qatari people in particular, and the Gulf people in general."

Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar director Khalifa al-Obaidli said: "Photography has a unique ability to preserve emotion. The works first shown in After the Game capture the experiences, encounters and shared humanity that made Qatar 2022 such a transformative milestone. We are proud to see these images

continue their tour as part of Journeys to Greatness, where they help tell the story of a tournament whose impact continues through culture, memory and human connection."

Originally developed for Tasweer's third edition in 2025, After the Game explored the enduring legacy of Qatar 2022 through the lens of photographers who documented moments of celebration, reflection and connection across the country.

Curated by Sheikha Najla al-Thani, Journeys to Greatness is an interactive, multimedia exhibition that explores the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 as a defining moment for Qatar and the wider region. Its presentation in Mexico forms part of a broader cultural programme marking a symbolic passing of the torch from Qatar 2022 to Mexico 2026. The exhibition is on view at Centro de Cultura Digital in Mexico City through August 9.

Mandatory self-health declaration for nationals, international travellers to India

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

All passengers, including Indian nationals, travelling to India must submit a mandatory self-health declaration digitally before their travel, the Indian embassy in Qatar has advised, citing an official communication from India's Ministry of Civil Aviation.

The Embassy, in a social media post, said: "The Ministry of Civil Aviation, in collaboration with Delhi International Airport Limited, has launched the Air Suvidha 2.0 platform, an enhanced electronic gateway for contactless self-health declaration for passengers to strengthen public health surveillance amid the Ebola outbreak."

With the holiday season already underway, hundreds of Indians are travelling every day from Qatar to various destinations in India, and all of them must submit the electronic form at least 24 hours before travel.

Air Suvidha is an online system for international passengers to submit the mandatory Self-Declaration Form to declare their current health status and travel history for the past 21 days.

This form is mandatory and should be filled out before boarding. A similar portal was launched in India during the Covid-19 outbreak, aiming to contain the epidemic and prevent the spread of the disease as much as possible.

Government sources said that the digital self-health declaration is mandatory for

all passengers entering India to strengthen public health surveillance amid the Ebola outbreak in some countries. The form can be submitted up to 24 hours before arrival and aims to expedite and facilitate contactless health and passport screening procedures.

The self-declaration mainly focuses on collecting information about passengers who have travelled to Ebola-affected countries. Travellers are requested to provide accurate information regarding their travel history over the past 21 days, any potential exposure to the disease and any relevant symptoms if present.

Upon submission, the mandatory self-declaration application is automatically forwarded to the Airport Health Organisation under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, India.

Passengers will receive an updated application document in their e-mail inbox. This document must be presented at the immigration counter upon arrival in India.

One of the travel agents in Doha said that just like during the Covid-19 times, people have to fill in the form well in advance of their travel for a smooth procedure at the airport.

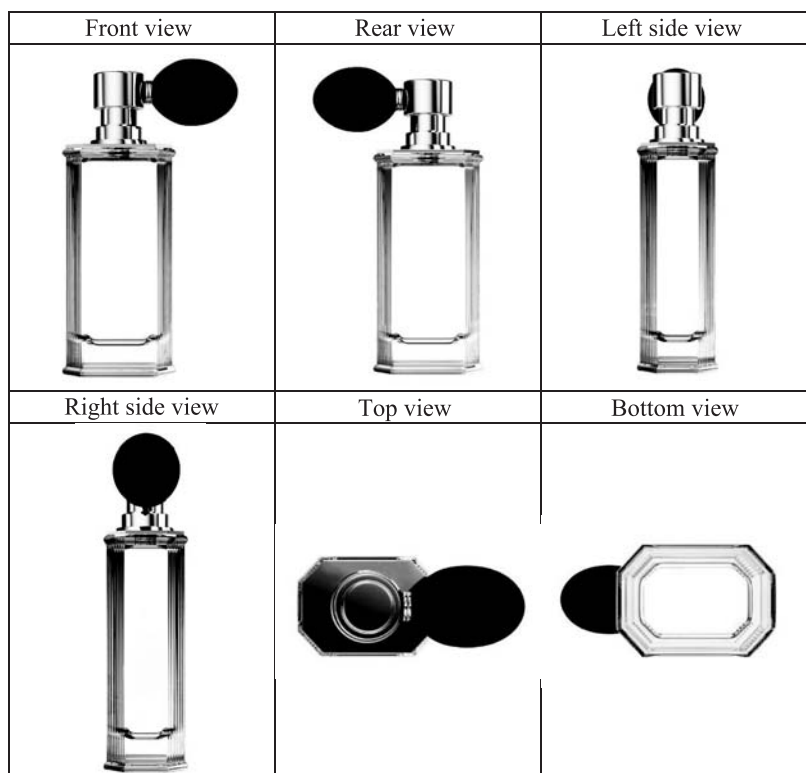
"The form is mandatory for everyone and it should be filled in before the passengers start their journey. It can be done while any time before starting the travel or while web-check is done. This will help in avoiding any confusion while checking in at the airport."

"Passengers are also advised to keep a digital or printed copy of the submitted self-health declaration form for verification if required," he added.

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Visit Qatar launches Hala Summer campaign

As part of the Hala Summer campaign, Visit Qatar is launching an immersive programme of family-friendly experiences across participating malls and hotels throughout Qatar from today (July 1) to September 30.

The activations will transform destinations across the country into vibrant entertainment hubs, offering residents and visitors complimentary themed experiences, live performances, engaging challenges, shopping rewards and prize opportunities.

Taking place at Mall of Qatar, Doha Festival City, Place Vendome, Villaggio Mall, City Center Doha, Landmark Mall, Doha Mall, Hyatt Plaza, Al Hazm, Gewan Island and West Walk, the programme will feature unique activations inspired by internationally recognised family characters and entertainment brands, with themed activities designed for children and families.

Entertainment zones will invite visitors to take part in a variety of engaging challenges, including capsule machines, puzzle challenges, balloon machines, hanging challenges, stop-the-timer competitions and other hands-on activities. Participants will have the opportunity to win shopping discount vouchers and other prizes through these complimentary experiences.

Throughout the summer, guests will also have the opportunity to meet some of Qatar Toy Festival's most popular character mascots during scheduled Meet & Greet appearances across participating malls, Gewan Island and West Walk.

Participating destinations will also host daily roaming performances and live family shows, while September will introduce the Science Street Bike, an interactive roaming parade bringing additional excitement to selected locations.

As part of the Hala Summer Shopping Festival taking place throughout August, shoppers spending a minimum of QR200 at participating destinations can visit dedicated redemption booths to submit their purchase receipts and receive an entry voucher for the campaign's grand raffle draw.



The raffle offers participants the opportunity to win a range of prizes, including a grand prize car, which will be showcased at selected participating destinations during the campaign period.

Complementing the programme, participating hotels across Qatar will offer exclusive themed family stays inspired by globally recognised children's entertainment brands. Families can enjoy immersive character experiences at participating properties, including Transformers at Rixos Gulf Hotel Doha, The Smurfs at Marsa Malaz Kempinski, CoComelon at InterContinental Doha The City, and Hello Kitty and Friends at

Sheraton Grand Doha Resort & Convention Hotel.

Featuring themed rooms, exclusive character encounters and immersive entertainment, these hotel activations offer memorable summer escapes inspired by some of the world's most beloved characters.

Together, the activations showcase Qatar as a vibrant summer destination for families, complemented by the Kids Go Free offer, which allows children under the age of 12 to enjoy complimentary benefits across selected accommodation, dining and attractions through participating offers.

QatarEnergy announces July 2026 fuel prices

QatarEnergy announced yesterday fuel prices in the State of Qatar for July 2026, with diesel and 95-octane gasoline (super) maintained at current levels, while 91-octane gasoline

(premium) was increased. QatarEnergy set prices of Diesel at QR2.05 per litre, Super Gasoline (95) at QR2.10 per litre, and Premium Gasoline (91) at QR2.05 per litre. (QNA)

Shura Council takes part in IPU executive committee session

QNA
Geneva

The Shura Council participated in the 300th Session of the Executive Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), convened in Geneva, Switzerland.

HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council, Member of the Executive Committee of the IPU, and Vice-President of the Committee representing the Arab Geopolitical Group, Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti, represented the Council at the session.

The session discussed a range of items on the agenda ahead of convening the 153rd Assembly of the IPU in Arusha, Tanzania, in October 2026.

It also approved the minutes of the previous session and re-



viewed emerging matters. The deliberations further addressed the situation of some parliaments, the suggested amendments to the statute, the IPU's rules, and the continuation of discussions on the election of the President of the IPU and the

Vice-President of the Executive Committee.

The agenda featured a dedicated segment to mark the International Day of Parliamentarism, which annually falls on June 30, as well as the human rights cam-

pan. HE the Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council, met with Anda Philipp, the elected Secretary-General of the IPU, on the sidelines of this session.

Both sides shared perspectives on a variety of issues of shared concern.

Gambian foreign minister meets Qatar's ambassador



Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad of the Republic of The Gambia Sering Modou Njie met yesterday with ambassador of the State of Qatar to The Gambia Mohammed bin Ali al-Kuwari. The meeting discussed cooperation relations between the two countries. (QNA)



Aman Centre launches initiative

The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre (Aman) of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work has launched the "We Learn with Aman" initiative as part of its awareness programmes.

To be achieved through the establishment of an in-house learning unit within Aman's internal care department, this unit offers a simplified yet comprehensive educational programme that addresses children's needs, provides them with a solid academic foundation within a safe and stimulating environment, and prepares them for future integration into the formal school system, the statement said.

It noted that the initiative is being implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), represented by the Department of Curriculum and Learning Resources, with this partnership contributing to aligning the educational programme with the national curriculum and providing the necessary educational support to ensure the quality of learning outcomes.

Aman said that coordination has been established with volunteer teachers to provide educational lessons for children during the

initiative's pilot phase, while working on the evaluation of the results and the possibility of continuing the collaboration and expanding volunteer participation to support the programme's sustainability and the achievement of its objectives.

Aman further said that the initiative targets children benefiting from the centre's services in the internal care unit who face learning challenges, with the programme focusing on developing reading, writing, and mathematics skills, as well as fostering personal skills and boosting self-confidence, thus preparing them for formal education and enabling them to continue their studies.

Aman acting executive director Fadhel al-Kaabi said that through this initiative, the centre seeks to bridge the educational gap for children benefiting from its services in the internal care unit and to provide a supportive learning environment that grants them equal opportunities for learning and growth. While commending the partnership with the MoEHE for its pivotal role in supporting the initiative, he lauded the efforts of the volunteer teachers who embody the values of social responsibility. (QNA)

MIA aims to promote objects relevant to communities

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The Museum of Islamic Art (MIA) aims to bring and promote objects relevant to various communities in the country, noted an official of the museum.

"We are a museum which is very traditional. It is a museum with a collection of objects that kick-started as a project well almost nearly 20 years ago in a very traditional way. While conserving the objects, we are also trying to propagate them to the relevant communities," Nicoletta Fazio, curator of Iranian Lands at MIA, told Gulf Times at a recent event at the Fire Station.

According to Fazio, since the museum reopened in 2022, there has been a rethinking aimed



Nicoletta Fazio.
PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

at bringing the museum's collections to life. MIA has been a trendsetter in Qatar and the region, as it is the first of its kind.

"Historically speaking, covering many of the centuries is ex-

tremely diverse. We want to bring something that is also relevant for the communities here. That is why we started showcasing artworks that are from Southeast Asia. It is a very specific direction that we are taking," she explained.

Fazio said that the Southeast Asian community is very large in Doha and is rarely represented in traditional Islamic art museums.

"So we really tried to think about that this is a museum of Islamic art and it is the first of its kind within the region. But we also wanted to say that it is coming and emerging in a completely different setting than any other such museums around the world," continued the official.

The curator also highlighted different viewpoints on the museum's function. "And I think there is always the consideration

on one side that we are a museum that is based on objects, so we shouldn't lose the focus of our existence, which is the preservation and the presentation of these objects and sharing of these objects with our public. But at the same time there is also the need of making them alive and meaningful and understandable as well for our public," she described.

Fazio said that, at some point, there is a need to start a conversation with other sister institutions and bodies within Qatar Museums in this regard.

"We try to reach out and it is always how you do it meaningfully. Because if you think about many museums now entering this space with new technologies, new media, new traditions, at times, it feels like something that is implanted and without a very full intentional action," she added.

Qatar Calendar presents diverse range of events throughout July

QNA
Doha

This July, Qatar Calendar presents an exciting line-up of events, inviting residents to enjoy a season packed with international sport, family entertainment, cultural exhibitions, and creative summer programmes.

Spanning a wide range of interests, the month's programme offers something for audiences of all ages across Doha and beyond.

A vibrant family atmosphere takes centre stage throughout the month, led by the Qatar Toy Festival at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center from July 1-31. Complementing this, Qatar Toy Festival's Summer Camp

runs from July 5-30 at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center, now in its second successful year, welcoming children aged 4 to 12 to a vibrant programme of creativity, exploration, and fun.

Families can also enjoy the Family Summer Shopping Exhibition 2026 at Katara Hall, Katara Cultural Village, from June 27 to July 3, combining shopping, entertainment, and family-friendly experiences in one destination.

Sports enthusiasts are in for an action-packed month, with the FIFA World Cup 2026 Activations at Mall of Qatar offering residents and visitors the chance to watch the tournament live on giant screens free of charge until July 19. Bringing international basketball to Lusail Sports Hall,




the FIBA World Cup 2027 Qualifiers - W3 runs from June 29 to July 7, while the Sports for All Summer Camp 2026 takes place at the same venue from 29 June to 9 July, encouraging active participation across all ages.

July also stands out as a rich month for culture and the arts. The Exhibition of Cultural Olympiad Competition, on display

at the Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum from June 22 to Aug. 31, celebrates the creativity of the 321 Cultural Olympiad 2026 winners in a vibrant showcase of global talent and innovation.

Qatar Museums continues to present a range of inspiring ongoing exhibitions, including Countryside: A Place to Live, Not to Leave at Qatar Preparatory School and the National Museum of Qatar which will continue until September 2026.

The Doha Summer Trade Fair concludes its run on July 4, and the 13th Edition of the Teeb Al-Hazm Oud and Perfumes Exhibition wraps up at AlHazm Galleria on July 4, bringing together the finest fragrances and luxury brands in one destination.



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC/C/MNT/7569/26 PREVENTIVE & CORRECTIVE MAINTENANCE OF OVERHEAD / GANTRY / JIB CRANES & ELECTRIC HOISTS ON CALL-OFF BASIS	01/07/2026 to 15/07/2026	0	500,000	22/07/2026

Scope of Work:
Company's Onshore facility requires services for Preventive & Corrective Maintenance of Overhead / Gantry / Jib Cranes & Electric Hoists on Call Off basis. Contractor shall perform the work by providing qualified resources with all tools and tackles; The duration of Contract shall be for five (05) years with a sole option for Company to extend it for further up to two (02) years.

Bid Validity: Bid Offer should be valid for 180 calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:
ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

Note: Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) are advised to refer to the tender documentation and In-Country Value (ICV) Digital Portal: - <https://icv.qa/en-US/> for details of ICV compliance that may be applicable.

Katara unveils summer camps 2026 from July 5


The Katara Cultural Village Foundation announced the launch of its 2026 Summer Camp programme, scheduled to run from July 5 to July 29. Activities will be held daily from 4:00pm to 6:30pm. The programme features 11 cultural, artistic, scientific and creative camps designed for children and adolescents.

These camps obviously vary to cater to participants and include heritage and traditional crafts for girls, the summer thuraya for boys and girls, and the young actor.

In addition, the literature camp showcases five specialised workshops, namely "Knights of the Arabic Language", "Future Broadcaster", "I Am a Poet", "Story Makers", and "Stage Stars".

It is broadly designed to advance participants' Arabic language, public speaking, creative writing, elocution, and literary content creation skills.

The village has devoted specialists on its floor to help participants gain opportunities for learning in wide-ranging fields, in pursuit of fostering their personalities and confidence. Such programmes are specifically dedicated to investing in their leisure time and ultimately reap benefits consistently with Katara's mantra of disseminating culture and unlocking the energies of the emerging generations. As such, Katara has urged parents to register their sons and daughters in the camps. (QNA)



INVITATION TO TENDER

Tender Reference	Description	Tender Fee (QAR)	Tender Bond Value (QAR)	Bid Closing Date
QF-RFQ-1366	Audio Guide for M.F. Hussain Museum	500.00	N/a	July 29, 2026, 2:00 PM

Qatar Foundation (QF) Procurement Directorate is inviting companies to participate in the above listed public tenders. To receive the tender documents, please follow the below steps:

- Supplier Registration** It is mandatory to be registered as a supplier with QF in order to participate in the above tender(s). Only QF registered suppliers will be allowed to pay the tender fees online. Therefore, please visit QF website at <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration> to complete the Supplier Registration process.

Tender Fee: Interested bidders can Sign in by visiting this link <https://suppliers.qf.org.qa/abstract> and pay the respective non-refundable and non-transferable tender fee online.

All Tender Fees are to be paid using credit cards only.

Tender Fee Payment Dates: Payment of Tender Fee online will be from 1st to 7th July 2026
- All bidders, who are registered and have paid the required tender fees online to QF, will then be granted access to download the Tender Document.
- Technical and commercial bids need to be submitted and attached online in QF Supplier Portal as per instructions provided in the "Supplier Portal" work instruction.
 - The commercial bid must be valid for **180 days** from Bid Closing Date.
 - The commercial bid must be accompanied by a bank guarantee (tender bond) issued by a local bank in Qatar and should be valid for **180 days** from the bid closing date (where applicable as per the Tender documents).
 - The successful tenderer will be required to submit a performance bond as prescribed in each of the above tender documents.
 - Qatar Foundation special qualifications, terms and conditions shall apply as stipulated in the tender document.

Note: All work instructions for Supplier registration and Supplier portal can be found in below link: <https://www.qf.org.qa/supplier-registration>



QRCS launches cardiac surgery programme in Syria

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has launched a specialist cardiac care project in northwestern Syria, establishing heart surgery and cardiac catheterisation services in Idlib province to improve access to treatment for patients with cardiovascular disease.

The QRCS said in statement yesterday that the project included the creation of cardiac surgery and cath-

eterisation departments at Al Hidayat Hospital, alongside intensive cardiac care units equipped to modern medical standards.

The project also involved renovating hospital facilities, supplying medical equipment needed for heart procedures and surgeries, and training doctors and healthcare staff to strengthen local expertise.

The QRCS said the initiative was

designed to address a shortage of specialised cardiac services in Idlib, where many patients have previously been forced to travel outside the province for treatment because of limited healthcare capacity.

The project would enhance the hospital's ability to diagnose and treat heart disease locally, reducing referrals outside the region while supporting the long-term develop-

ment of local health services.

Around 3,000 cardiac patients are expected to benefit from the programme each year through free specialised interventions and heart surgery, the QRCS said, describing the initiative as part of its broader humanitarian response in Syria and its efforts to strengthen sustainable healthcare services for vulnerable communities. - QNA



Israel military shuts West Bank charity: Palestinian officials

AFP
Nablus

The Israeli military shut down the headquarters of a Palestinian charitable organisation in the occupied West Bank city of Nablus yesterday, alleging that it supported terrorism, Palestinian officials said.

AFP journalists in Nablus reported that the entire building housing the headquarters of Al-Tadamon Charitable Society had

been sealed off, its metal front gate welded shut.

"This union has been declared an illegal entity and has been shut down due to its involvement in and support for terrorism," a sign in English and Arabic posted on the front gate read.

Nablus mayor Anan al-Atira said she was surprised by the raid.

"We were surprised after the raid to find that they had closed down a charitable organisation, the Al-Tadamon Charitable Society," Atira told AFP.

Israel's military told AFP it was looking into the details of the raid. The charity declined to comment on the closure.

A source close to the organisation, however, told AFP that the move was linked to accusations of coordination with the Gaza-based rights organisation Al-Dameer - allegations the source rejected.

Atira said Al-Tadamon provided services for orphans and ran at least three schools and a clinic.

She added that the charity "has been working in this country for

many years, providing relief services and services for orphans".

Nablus governor Ghassan Daghlal, speaking to reporters outside the charity's headquarters, said: "To target Al-Tadamon charity is to target all the poor among our people."

Ghassan Hamdan, the director of the Medical Relief Society, another charity in Nablus, described the closure as a new step in Israeli policy in the West Bank.

"This is part of Israel's escalation policy, which began with the siege

and blockade of Palestinian cities and various governorates, raids and settlement expansion," Hamdan said. "Now it has moved on to targeting charitable institutions."

Israel has carried out numerous raids against Palestinian organisations it accuses of working with or financing armed groups it considers a security threat.

Al-Tadamon's closure comes amid ongoing tensions in the West Bank, where Israeli military raids have intensified since the start of the war in Gaza in 2023.

Education City lines up several activities during summer



Whether developing leadership skills, exploring creative talents, staying active through sport, or discovering new passions, people across Qatar will find something to inspire them at Education City this summer.

From June to August, Qatar Foundation (QF) is offering a diverse range of camps, workshops, classes, and activities that provide unique opportunities for learning, connection, and personal growth.

"At Qatar Foundation, we believe learning and personal growth should continue far beyond the classroom and throughout the year," said Hamad S al-Shaiba, head of Sports Programming, QF. "The activities running throughout the summer reflect Education City's unique ability to bring together diverse opportunities that inspire curiosity, creativity, leadership, and wellbeing in young people."

"By offering accessible and inclusive experiences for learners of all ages and abilities, we aim to help every participant discover new interests, build future-ready skills, develop confidence and resilience, and form meaningful connections."

Football, badminton, swimming, gym, volleyball, squash and basketball facilities are available to book throughout the summer across the QF's indoor venues,

while specialised sports classes, including gymnastics and futsal, are also running, offering activities for all ages and abilities.

As part of its summer offerings, the QF's Pre-University Education (PUE) is hosting another edition of the Mukhayama Programme.

Organised by the PUE's Student Affairs and Community Engagement department, the camp offers courses in sports, coding, business, quantum computing, and leadership development, providing students with a vibrant, inclusive, and enriching learning experience.

Meanwhile, at QF partner university Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar, young people can explore 3D modelling, 3D printing, and creative-making processes that transform digital concepts into physical objects.

Another course, "Summer Art & Design Programme for High School Students", provides an overview of four of the undergraduate degree programmes offered at the university.

This summer, the QF's Creating Pathways Programme is opening its training to girls aged 7-12, who are invited to train like athletes in a dynamic two-week camp.

The Creating Pathways Summer Camp offers five elite sports - track and field, volleyball, basketball, tennis, and fencing - alongside swimming, stretching, and nutrition sessions.

At Al-Mujadilah: Centre & Mosque for Women, based in Education City, the two-week Khawla Summer Camp will invite girls aged 9-12 to explore the values of mercy and compassion through reflection, play, and teamwork.

The QF's Lawh Wa Qalam: M F Husain Museum will host a series of workshops over the coming months, including metal embossing, printmaking, embroidery, and painting.

Meanwhile, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art will present "Beat the Heat - Mathaf Summer Camp", transforming the museum into a vibrant space for creativity, learning, and community engagement.

Qatar Charity helps 500 students in Nepal with school supplies

As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting vulnerable communities and advancing human development, Qatar Charity (QC) has distributed school supplies to approximately 500 vulnerable students in Nepal.

The initiative targeted seven community schools in Sarlahi District and aimed to reduce barriers to education while fostering a more supportive learning environment for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Under the project, students received integrated educational kits that included school bags, notebooks, stationery items, water bottles, and stainless-steel lunch boxes.



The assistance helped ease the financial burden on low-income families, ensuring that children had access to essential materials required for effective learning and regular school attendance.

The initiative directly supports Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by improving access to learning resources, encouraging school attendance, and promoting inclusive education.

It also contributes indirectly to SDG1 (No Poverty) by reducing household expenditure on educational needs, thereby alleviating financial pressure on families.

This project reflects Qatar Charity's mission to empower vulnerable communities through sustainable humanitarian and development interventions that enhance quality of life and uphold human dignity.

Education remains a key driver in breaking the cycle of poverty and achieving long-term social impact, aligning with the organisation's strategic focus on human development and community empowerment.

HEC Paris, Doha celebrates first graduating cohort of EMBA-ELT



HEC Paris, Doha celebrated the graduation of the first cohort from its Executive MBA - Emerging Leaders Track (ELT), marking a significant milestone for the globally ranked business school as it broadens its leadership development offering for the next generation of executives in Qatar and the wider region.

HEC Paris, Doha, is proud to mark the graduation of the inaugural Executive MBA Emerging Leaders Track cohort at the Paris Commencement ceremony.

This milestone marks the successful completion of a transformative leadership journey for a group of ambitious professionals who are shaping the future of business in Qatar and the wider region.

The first graduating Class of 2026 represents a diverse group of participants

from a range of industries and backgrounds, united by a desire to sharpen their strategic thinking, strengthen their leadership capabilities and accelerate their long-term impact within their organisations.

The programme combines core business disciplines with leadership development, international exposure, specialisation opportunities, and a capstone project, enabling participants to translate classroom learning into tangible organisational value.

Delivered in a part-time, modular format, it has been designed to allow participants to continue progressing professionally while developing the proficiency, perspective and confidence needed to take on broader leadership responsibilities.

Iraq judiciary seizes more than \$14mn in anti-graft campaign

Iraq's judiciary has seized over \$14mn from an oil official who was arrested on Sunday, along with others, as part of a government-led anti-corruption campaign.

Iraq's Supreme Judicial Council said "initial investigations" into deputy oil minister for distribution affairs Ali al-Bahadli "resulted in the seizure of \$11mn and 4bn Iraqi dinars", equivalent to over \$3mn.

Several properties have been seized and the investigation continues, the council added.

The seizure marks the initial result of Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's anti-corruption campaign, which began early on Sunday when Iraqi security forces raided Baghdad's Green Zone and other neighbourhoods, detaining officials.

Iraq's news agency INA quoted senior officials on Sunday as saying that 47 suspects had been arrested, including members of parliament, as well as Bahadli.

However, government spokesman Haidar al-Aboudi said on Monday that only 21 officials were arrested.

Like all his predecessors, Zaidi has vowed to fight corruption and mismanagement that have plagued Iraq for decades.

Corruption is especially rampant across the country's public institutions, but convictions typically target mid-level officials or minor players and rarely those at the top of the power hierarchy.

Earlier this month, authorities seized more than \$85mn in a graft case against oil ministry official Adnan al-Jumaili, who was arrested last month. - AFP

Media City launches new insight papers

Media City Qatar has launched new media insight papers examining emerging trends in the media landscape of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), providing industry stakeholders with regional insights into a rapidly evolving market.

Developed in partnership with the technology research group Omdia, the series leverages first-of-its-kind market data and industry analysis to examine the trends shaping the future of the media landscape in the region.

Topics explored span Media City Qatar's key focus areas, including Gaming & Interactive, Screen, Broadcast & Music, Tech, Digital & Social, and Agencies & Support Services.

"The media landscape in the GCC and the wider Mena region is evolving at an unprecedented pace, and our role at Media City Qatar is to help make sense of that shift," said Media City Qatar chief executive Hamad Omar al-Mannai. "With these media insights papers, we are contributing insights that support the people building this industry, from investors and businesses to creators and policymakers, and in doing so, we are continuing to play a key role in strengthening the media ecosystem in Qatar and across the region."

The first two publications explore emerging trends in the creator economy and evolving content preferences across visual and audio media.

The first paper examines the rise of microdrama in the GCC, analysing the growing popularity of short-form serialised storytelling, audience demand, production models, and the opportunities created by mobile-first consumption habits.

Meanwhile, the second paper, to be published in the coming weeks, looks at the rapid growth of video podcasting, exploring audience engagement, platform dynamics, monetisation opportunities, and the role of artificial intelligence in content production.

Hopes fade for rescuers as they dig through rubble

Rescue teams in Venezuela were losing hope on yesterday of finding more survivors of twin earthquakes that struck the country last week, following hours of grueling work searching for victims beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings.

Rescue teams from Ecuador and the US halted operations early on Tuesday in Macuto, a town in La Guaira state — the area hardest hit by the June 24 earthquakes — after more than 40 hours of work, when they stopped receiving responses from a mother and her three chil-

dren trapped beneath a nine-story building.

“In the end, we believe the days have already passed and that what we will find now is death,” said Major Jorge Montanero, leader of the EQ11 team from Guayaquil, located on Ecuador’s Pacific coast.

“Unfortunately, things haven’t developed favourably,” he said as he stood amid rubble after cutting through four concrete slabs of the building in an effort to locate the four trapped victims.

Some 59,000 buildings were damaged or destroyed by the twin

earthquakes — which hit just seconds apart on June 24 — according to NASA estimates. The widespread devastation can be seen from space.

Not all collapsed buildings have had professional rescue teams on site, with relatives and neighbors working to remove debris to pull out survivors or bodies, according to survivors and residents from various areas.

“There is no doubt we are facing a figure higher than what has already been reported. I can offer an estimate: we are procuring —

and this has been agreed with local authorities — 10,000 body bags,” Gianluca Rampolla, the United Nations’ resident coordinator in Venezuela, said on Monday from his office in Venezuela’s capital, Caracas. The government of acting President Delcy Rodriguez says at least 1,750 people have died and thousands have been injured as a result of the earthquakes. About 16,000 people were left homeless.

A website promoted by the country’s political opposition puts the number of people still missing at around 43,000. (Reuters)

Lost in the rubble: Desperate search for Venezuela’s missing

AFP
Caracas

Soraida Torrealba’s family has spent days desperately searching for her among the rubble of their building.

Other relatives scour hospitals and morgues after the two earthquakes that struck Venezuela on June 24 left more than 1,700 dead and tens of thousands more still missing.

Soraida’s 44-year-old sister, Rosanna Luna, says not knowing what happened her sister is excruciating.

“I feel like my hands are tied because I can’t find her,” she laments.

Like Luna, thousands of people are searching for one or more family members with growing desperation six days after the disaster.

Social media is flooded with photos of children, the elderly, and couples, along with their names and descriptions, as well as a contact number for their families.

The initiative “venezuelatebusca.com,” a database launched to help find friends and relatives lost since the earthquakes, reports more than 46,000 missing. The name means “Venezuela is looking for you.”

The UN estimates that the number could be as high as 50,000 but Venezuela’s government has avoided putting a number on how many people are still unaccounted for.

On Sunday, Luna thought she



Earthquakes damaged or destroyed more than 58,000 buildings, according to satellite data published by US NASA. (Reuters)

recognised her sister among the photos of the dead at the main Caracas morgue.

One of the faces looked very similar, but when she looked more closely, the toenail polish didn’t match.

The next day, she returned and found another face that resembled Soraida’s in a new batch of photographs.

But the person’s features were so swollen that she couldn’t be sure it was her.

Other relatives have been searching for her among the ruins of the apartment where Soraida lived with her dog Princesa in La Guaira, on Venezuela’s Caribbean coast, the region worst hit by the earthquakes.

But on Monday, as they were

returning to the site, a strong aftershock forced them to abandon their search.

“It’s harder not knowing, because you ask yourself, ‘What do I do? Where do I look for her?’” Luna cried.

“I look for her here and she’s not there, I went to the hospital and she’s not there. Where is she?”

Her anguish is shared outside morgues as well as in hospitals, where photos of missing persons are plastered on walls and utility poles, written on handwritten pieces of paper.

Robert Campos, who lost contact with several family members, says that information gathered from websites isn’t always accurate.

His nephew was marked “de-

ceased” on one site on Friday, but when he arrived at the hospital to which the page directed him, there was no record of his relative.

He continues to tour hospitals and morgues, following possible leads sent to him from other family members, who continue to dig through rubble.

Nearly a week after the earthquake, the 54-year-old just wants closure.

“If they are alive, all the better, but what I want is to find them,” he said.

The pungent smell of death emanates from the Caracas morgue, an odour that thousands of liters of donated chlorine cannot mask.

An employee who asked to remain anonymous said that the institution has received “a great many” bodies since the day of the two earthquakes, magnitudes 7.2 and 7.5, and is overwhelmed.

Many have not been identified, partly due to the advanced state of decomposition of the bodies.

“Not knowing anything,” says Campos, is the hard part.

“Being told that the person died gives you the peace of mind that you don’t have to keep searching. You can help others, but you’ve already overcome that barrier that has been holding you back,” he said.

Rosanna Luna, who is looking for her sister, is still hoping for a miracle. “I’ve asked God that she turns up safe and sound,” she said. “But if that’s not the case, at least let us find her.”

WHO warns of disease outbreaks in Venezuela

The World Health Organization voiced concerns yesterday about potential disease outbreaks in Venezuela with local health services overwhelmed following deadly earthquakes.

“The health services are under extreme pressure now, with facilities operating beyond the capacity,” spokesman Christian Lindmeier told a press conference in Geneva, noting the surge in trauma cases.

The death toll from the devastating earthquakes has risen to 1,943, National Assembly president Jorge Rodriguez said yesterday. Around 5,000 are injured, with no governmental word on the number of missing. Other estimates place these in the tens of thousands.

The WHO also said there were problems with adequately registering casualties and tracking missing persons.

“There’s an increased risk now of outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases” such as measles and diphtheria, said Lindmeier, due to low pre-earthquake vaccination coverage, as well as yellow fever, and other vector- and water-borne diseases, including malaria, dengue, chikungunya and Zika.

He said Venezuela’s interim president Delcy Rodriguez had reported that 38 hospitals had been affected by the twin earthquakes. As of Saturday, the WHO has gathered data from 21 health facilities across Caracas La Guaira, Miranda and Falcon.

Of those, three are in critical condition; six have structural damage or are only partially functional, while the others remain operational but under “significant strain,” said Lindmeier.

“Preliminary findings reveal chaotic service delivery and patient flow, marked by overcrowding; growing surgical backlogs especially under mainly trauma, orthopedics, and neurosurgery; breakdown in biosafety measures; and severely stressed staff,” he said.

“Critical gaps include the collapse of forensic and morgue services, and inadequate casualty registration and tracking of missing persons.”

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, warned that community tensions were rising in quake-hit areas due to constrained aid access.

UNHCR said it needs an estimated \$14.85mn to scale up protection, and provide core relief items and temporary shelter support for 30,000 earthquake-affected people over the next six months. And Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said it was planning assistance for thousands of people left homeless.

“As the acute search-and-rescue phase comes to an end, both the number of people killed and the needs of survivors continue to rise.”

It said psychological support services were being scaled up, as the needs in this field were “extremely high” (AFP)

Colombia minister casts doubt on death of wanted guerrilla fighter

Colombia’s defense minister Pedro Sanchez has walked back an earlier announcement that the government killed in combat the deputy of the country’s most-wanted guerrilla fighter Ivan Mordisco. Mordisco is the leader of the Central General Staff (EMC) dissident group, one of the largest outlawed armed groups in the South American nation, which is grappling with its worst violence in a decade. The EMC broke away from the now-defunct Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) after it signed a 2016 peace deal. Colombian authorities said on June 20 that they had killed Mordisco’s second-in-command, a man with the alias Marlon, in a military operation. But Marlon allegedly reappeared in a dissident video circulating on social media. “As the body was not recovered, that neutralisation could not be considered fully confirmed,” Sanchez wrote on X on Monday. Marlon was accused of being behind an April attack that killed 21 people, according to the defense ministry, which added that he was wanted for “homicides, terrorist acts, forced recruitment of minors, and drug trafficking.” The fighters said in a message on their group’s press channel that Marlon “survived the June 20 attack.” Sanchez said authorities were investigating the video’s authenticity. (AFP)



Peru’s President-elect Keiko Fujimori. (AFP)

Peruvian political heir Fujimori wins presidency

AFP
Lima

Peru’s conservative president-elect Keiko Fujimori vowed to restore “order and hope” as final results showed she narrowly won the election in the latest victory for a resurgent Latin American right.

She inherits the task of running a country hit by powerful organised crime gangs and chronic political instability, as it burned through eight presidents in the past decade.

Her win also means the name Fujimori is back in the presidential palace more than two decades after the fall of her late iron-fisted father, Alberto. His record and legacy, which include jail time for human rights crimes, still divide the country.

Keiko Fujimori, 51, won the June 7 presidential runoff by the slimmest of margins, outpolling leftist Roberto Sanchez by fewer than 50,000 votes out of the more than 18mn ballots cast, the final results showed.

“Each time we draw closer to starting on the path of order and hope for all Peruvians,” she wrote on X after being proclaimed the winner, securing the top office on her fourth attempt.

The election was fought on rising crime and chronic political instability best exemplified by the revolving door presidency. With extortion gangs and contract killings on the rise, Fujimori vowed a strong hand, like that of her autocratic father.

“She will govern well because she has good proposals. She has good ideas for doing something for Peru,” said Jenny Martinez, a 40-year-old vendor in Lima.

Peru was in “urgent need” of “very short-term results,” said Ricardo Valdes, director of the Observatory on Crime and Violence.

“This is going to prove very complex because these measures take time,” he told AFP.

Alberto Fujimori, who ruled from 1990 to 2000, won praise for crushing Maoist rebels and taming hyperinflation but was later disgraced, exiled and jailed for corruption and crimes against humanity committed in the name of fighting what he considered terrorism.

Leftist candidate Sanchez has yet to react to the announcement of the results.

At one point, he took the lead in the vote count but Fujimori soon surpassed him.

Sanchez had warned he would not recognise a government headed by his rival, alleging administrative irregularities in the handling of the overseas portion of the vote.

Bolivia’s center-right leader Rodrigo Paz congratulated Fujimori “for the trust granted by the Peruvian people at the ballot boxes and for this new chapter that opens for the sister country,” he wrote on X.

Fujimori will take office on July 28 for a five-year term.

She is the latest in a string of Latin American leaders to ride a wave of right-wing sentiment.

US Supreme Court rejects Trump bid to restrict birthright citizenship

AFP
Washington

The US Supreme Court yesterday rejected President Donald Trump’s historic bid to restrict birthright citizenship.

The court, in an eagerly awaited decision on the final day of its term, ruled 6-3 to maintain the right to American citizenship for nearly everyone born on US soil.

Trump signed an executive order last year on the first day of his second term in the White House decreeing that children born to parents in the US illegally or on temporary visas would not automatically become US citizens.

Lower courts blocked the move, ruling that under the Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment nearly everyone born on US soil is an American citizen.

The Supreme Court agreed in a majority opinion penned by Chief Justice John Roberts. “Children born in the US to parents unlawfully or temporarily present are ‘subject to the jurisdiction’ of the US and are citizens at birth under the Fourteenth Amendment’s Citizenship Clause,” Roberts wrote.

In an unprecedented move for a sitting US president, Trump per-



A view of the US Supreme Court in Washington, DC. (AFP)

sonally attended oral arguments on birthright citizenship at the Supreme Court in April.

Trump stayed for the presentation by his solicitor general, John Sauer, but did not remain for the arguments of American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) attorney Cecillia Wang, who defended birthright citizenship.

Trump’s bid to end birthright citizenship was part of his wider campaign to restrict immigration, which includes the expulsion of millions of undocumented migrants. During oral arguments before the Supreme Court, Sauer argued that unrestricted birthright citizenship encourages illegal immigration and “birth tourism,” in which foreigners come to the US solely to give birth.

The 14th Amendment states that “All persons born or natural-

ised in the US, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the US.” It does not apply to those not subject to US jurisdiction — the children of foreign diplomats, for example.

The Trump administration argued that the 14th Amendment, passed in the wake of the 1861-1865 Civil War, addresses citizenship rights of former slaves and not the children of undocumented migrants or visitors.

Trump’s executive order banning birthright citizenship was premised on the notion that anyone in the US illegally, or on a visa, is not “subject to the jurisdiction” of the country and therefore excluded from automatic citizenship. The Supreme Court rejected such a narrow definition in a landmark 1898 case involving a man named Wong Kim Ark, who was

Trump slams ‘bad’ birthright citizenship ruling

US President Donald Trump yesterday condemned a Supreme Court ruling rejecting his bid to restrict birthright citizenship, calling on the Republican-controlled Congress to help enact one of his signature anti-immigration plans. “The Supreme Court upheld Birthright Citizenship, which is too bad for our Country, but we can easily make it up in Congress through Legislation,” Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. (AFP)

born in San Francisco in 1873 of visiting Chinese parents. After a visit to China, Wong Kim Ark was denied reentry into the US in 1895 under the Chinese Exclusion Acts. The Supreme Court ruled he was a US citizen by virtue of being born in the US.

The Supreme Court’s rejection of Trump’s bid to end birthright citizenship is the third major loss for him. It struck down his tariffs in February and barred him recently from firing Fed’s Lisa Cook.

Cuba FM says ‘no progress’ in negotiations with US

Cuba’s government said Tuesday that months of negotiations with the US, which is applying maximum pressure to the island to try to bring about a change in governance, had shown “no progress.”

“The discussions between the Cuban and US governments are showing no progress,” Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez told a press conference, adding that “despite all that” Havana “will remain open to dialogue.”

Washington has cranked up

pressure on the communist island in recent months, imposing an energy blockade and several rounds of sanctions that have deepened an already dire economic crisis.

President Donald Trump has made clear he would like to see a change of leadership, pointing to Washington’s overthrow of Venezuela’s socialist president Nicolas Maduro and installation of a Washington-friendly successor as a possible blueprint for what he would like to achieve in Cuba.

Cuba’s government earlier this

month pushed through a batch of major free-market reforms but has repeatedly said its political model is not up for discussion and vowed to resist any invasion militarily.

Rodriguez said he had “no illusions” about Washington’s aims and had requested a UN General Assembly debate on July 7 to discuss Washington’s sanctions.

“It’s urgent because the multi-faceted aggression of the US government against Cuba is already ongoing and intensifying,” he warned.

As part of its pressure tactics, the US recently indicted former president Raul Castro, brother of revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, over the downing of two civilian planes three decades ago.

But the standoff is hurting ordinary Cubans most, with the fuel shortages exacerbating recurring power cuts of up to 40 hours at a stretch and bringing transport across the island to a near standstill.

Food, drinking water and medicine are also in short supply. (AFP)



North Korea's sanctioned coal trade rebounds as UN monitoring lapses: rights group

Reuters
Seoul

North Korea's sanctioned coal and mineral exports have rebounded amid an absence of United Nations oversight, sustained by forced labour and a shipping network that runs through China and Russia, a Seoul-based human rights group said yesterday.

The Citizens' Alliance for North Korean Human Rights

(NKHR), in a report with British research group Data Desk, alleges the trade has accelerated since March 2024, when Russia vetoed the renewal of the independent UN panel that monitored Pyongyang's sanctions compliance.

Drawing on satellite imagery, the group counted large ships visible at five major North Korean ports and found their number rose nearly fivefold to 3,756 in 2025 from 783 in 2019. The count covers all cargo ships that have

the capacity to carry other goods like iron and weapons, not just coal.

At Nampo, the busiest port and main coal gateway, sightings of vessels climbed to more than 3,000 last year from 554 in 2019, the most in the group's records.

The report also analysed ship-tracking data and found sanctioned vessels docking at foreign ports, more often after the UN oversight collapsed, up to 25 visits last year from four in 2019.

It said the coal trade is run al-

most entirely by companies tied to the North Korean Ministry of National Defense, which directs the earnings to the military and security agencies, which operate the country's mines and prison camps.

"Everything is interlinked – the forced labour, the goods it produces, and the international security threats," said Ji-yoon Lee, a co-author of the report. "They are all together in one group and it's very difficult to track."

The report says that mines are worked by political prisoners, unpaid soldiers and the descendants of South Korean prisoners of war who never returned home after the 1950 to 1953 conflict, an estimated 50,000-80,000 people confined to mine labour by a hereditary caste system.

The findings also drew on 22 interviews with former prisoners, escaped North Koreans and former officials. North Korea's diplomatic mission in Beijing did not respond to a request for comment.

The UN banned North Korean coal exports in 2017, but South Korea's National Intelligence Service estimates the country still shipped about 1.5m tonnes last year, with its origin suspected to be forged as Russian to expand sales to China and other buyers, according to data from People's Party lawmaker Yoo Yong-won.

NKHR called that figure a "bare minimum," noting that a bulk carrier holds about 39,000 tons and 1.5m tons is fewer than 40 shipments a year.

Thai opposition leader faces trial over royal insult reform

AFP
Bangkok

Thailand's main opposition leader and nine other MPs were among dozens on trial yesterday, accused of ethics breaches over attempts to reform the kingdom's strict royal insult law.

The 44 defendants, whose trial opened at the Supreme Court, include Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, whose progressive People's Party came second in February's general election.

An earlier iteration of the party had in 2021 proposed draft legislation to amend Thailand's lese-majeste law, which shields the king and his family from criticism and carries a maximum sentence of up to 15 years per offence.

The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) filed a civil complaint in April to the Supreme Court against 44 current and former politicians, alleging a breach of ethics.

If found guilty, they could face lifetime bans on holding political office and be stripped of their right to vote for 10 years.

None of the MPs on trial were in court, according to an AFP reporter.

The next two hearings were set in September and October.

The accused were previously members of the Move Forward party, which had proposed to amend the lese-majeste law.



Natthaphong Ruengpanyawut, member of parliament and leader of Thailand's opposition People's Party. (AFP/File photo)

Thailand's constitutional court dissolved Move Forward in 2024, ruling that its royal reform pledge amounted to an attempt to overthrow the constitutional monarchy.

Most of its members formed a new party, the People's Party, under which the 10 MPs currently on trial were re-elected in February.

Natthaphong told a news conference in April after the Supreme Court accepted the case that the reform effort was "never intended to undermine the democratic system under the monarchy."

"Our objective goes beyond political careers – it is about ensuring equality for the people," he said.

"We will contest this case in the Supreme Court to defend the rights of MPs within a democratic parliamentary system and to ensure that Thailand's democracy genuinely serves its people."

Korea, Ukraine hold 'constructive' talks about North Korean POWs

AFP
Seoul

Republic of Korea and Ukraine held "constructive" talks on Tuesday about the fate of two North Korean soldiers captured while fighting in Russia, Seoul said yesterday.

Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun and Ukrainian counterpart Andriy Sybigha discussed the matter during talks in Seoul.

The soldiers were captured by Ukrainian forces in January last year while fighting for Russia in the Kursk region.

North Korea and Russia have demanded the repatriation of the pair, but rights groups and experts have warned they could face severe punishment if returned to Pyongyang.

The soldiers have asked to be sent to Korea, which would in effect amount to defection.

Seoul is seeking their transfer on the grounds that they are citizens of a single Republic of Korea envisaged in its constitution.

North Korea and Republic of Korea remain technically at war after their 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.



Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybigha (left) shakes hands with Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun before their meeting at the Foreign Ministry in Seoul yesterday. (AFP)

The nations are separated by a demilitarised zone, but Seoul considers the entire Korean peninsula as one country.

The ministers "engaged in constructive discussions" on the soldiers' future yesterday, a Korean foreign ministry spokesman told reporters.

They agreed to be guided by "international law and humanitarian principles".

"The government will continue to make diplomatic efforts to advance and resolve the issue of the

North Korean prisoners of war," the spokesman said.

Writing on X, Sybigha said he and Cho discussed the matter "in detail".

It has been reported that North Korean authorities instructed troops to commit suicide rather than allow themselves to be captured while fighting for Russia.

One of the two held by Ukraine told Korean broadcaster MBC earlier this year: "If I am not brought to Korea, I will end up dying."

North Korean leader Kim Jong-

un praised North Korean troops killed in Ukraine in April for taking part in "death-defying hand-to-hand fights and heroic suicidal explosions... without hesitation", according to the Korean Central News Agency.

Kyiv had assured Seoul the two soldiers would not be repatriated to North Korea against their will, Cho said in March.

Analysts say North Korea has received financial assistance, military technology, food and energy from Russia in exchange for missiles, munitions and thousands of troops for Moscow's war in Ukraine.

The two countries had signed a mutual defence treaty in 2024, obliging each to provide military assistance "without delay" if either comes under attack.

More than 7,000 North Korean troops were killed or wounded while fighting alongside Russian forces in the Kursk region during the 2024-2025 campaign, the Kyiv Independent quoted Ukraine's military intelligence agency as saying this week.

Sybigha said he and Cho also discussed "shared challenges stemming from the deepening cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang".

Myanmar denies Asean request for Suu Kyi meeting

AFP
Naypyidaw

Myanmar's authorities have denied a request for Asean's special envoy to meet its deposed and detained democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, an administration spokeswoman said yesterday.

The military plunged Myanmar into civil war in 2021 when it staged a coup ousting the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and ending a decade-long experiment with democracy.

After five years of military rule, coup leader Min Aung Hlaing this year surrendered his post as president after tightly restricted elections excluding Suu Kyi's party.

In late April he announced Suu Kyi, now 81, would be moved to house arrest – although analysts dismissed the apparent act of mercy as lip service intended to rebrand his unrelenting rule.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) bloc has frozen Myanmar out since the coup but chair nation the Philippines welcomed Suu Kyi's transfer, requesting "brief access" for its Myanmar special envoy.

"Aung San Suu Kyi has been prosecuted under the law and is serving sentences," Myanmar presidential office spokeswoman Khaing Khaing Soe told reporters in Naypyidaw.

"Therefore she is not allowed to meet with international representatives."

Suu Kyi has vanished from the

public eye and is serving a lengthy but unspecified sentence on a host of charges rights groups dismiss as fabricated.

"Only after her sentence, she might get permission," Khaing Khaing Soe said, at the president's first press conference since the elections.

The Philippines foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Asean has blocked Myanmar from its high-level summits since the coup, but made little progress with its five-point peace plan to end the war through national dialogue with all sides.

Consensus among nations in the bloc is now fraying, analysts say, between those open to seizing on small concessions to bring Myanmar back into the fold and

those holding fast on their hard-line stance.

Asean foreign ministers are due to meet in Manila late next month.

"If they invite us, we will attend," said presidential office spokeswoman Khaing Khaing Soe. Min Aung Hlaing presented elections ending in January as a reborn of democracy and a chance for reconciliation in the civil war.

However the polls sidelined Suu Kyi and her hugely popular party, punished dissent with prison time, were blocked by rebels in areas they control and resulted in a walkover win for pro-military parties.

Despite protests from democracy watchdogs over the integrity of the election, Min Aung Hlaing has already enjoyed warm welcomes on presidential trips this month to India and China.

Japan's lower house passes bill banning national flag desecration

AFP
Tokyo

Japan's lower house passed a bill yesterday that criminalises the act of damaging the national flag, as Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi pushes forward with her conservative agenda.

The bill states that anyone who publicly damages, removes or defaces the national flag in a manner that causes significant discomfort or revulsion to others will face up to two years in prison or a fine of up to 200,000 yen (\$1,200).

The bill cleared the lower house, where the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) holds a majority.

However, it is unclear whether it will go through the upper house, where the ruling bloc is in a minority, given significant pushback among opposition parties who say it violates a constitutional right to freedom of expression.

Opposition party members, including the Democratic Party for the People and Sanseito that co-sponsored the bill, did not participate in the lower house vote due to a dispute with the ruling bloc over a separate piece

The bill states that anyone who publicly damages, removes or defaces the national flag in a manner that causes significant discomfort or revulsion to others will face up to two years in prison or a fine of up to 200,000 yen

of legislation, according to Jiji Press.

The Centrist Reform Alliance, an opposition party that holds 48 seats in the lower house, has questioned the legal rationale behind the criminalisation of damaging the flag and has urged more careful discussions.

LDP veteran Takeshi Iwaya, who has served as foreign and defence minister, also decided not to vote, public broadcaster NHK reported.

"Respect for the national flag should be fostered naturally, rather than enforced through criminal penalties," Iwaya told reporters, according to NHK. "As a member of the (LDP), I will not oppose it, but I cannot actively support it either," he said.

The bill has also sparked debate online, with award-winning author Mieko Kawakami criticising the legislation.

China says not 'root cause' of EU woes following talks

China's foreign ministry said yesterday that the country is not the "root cause" of issues facing the European Union (EU)'s economy, following talks in Brussels aimed at avoiding a damaging trade war. China's large – and growing – trade surplus with the 27-nation bloc has increasingly raised concerns across Europe, putting pressure on Brussels to protect local industries. After talks on Monday with visiting Chinese Commerce Minister Wang Wentao, EU trade commissioner Maros Sefcovic issued a stark message that "the status quo is not an option". Asked about the discussions on Tuesday, a spokesman for Beijing's foreign ministry said that "China and the European Union are partners, not rivals". "The root causes of the issues facing the European Union do not lie with China," Guo Jiakun told a regular news conference. "The key to resolving economic and trade issues between the two sides

lies in deepening cooperations and achieving common development," he said. He added that China was ready to "strengthen communication and consultation with the EU side (and) properly handle trade differences in a constructive manner". Sefcovic and Wang plan to meet again in October in China.

Brussels fears it will lose certain industries entirely if it does not act against a glut of inexpensive goods made in China threatening manufacturers in Europe. Europe insists on the need for a level playing field, pointing out that Chinese firms have an unfair advantage because of massive state subsidies.

Apart from the trade imbalance, other issues include Beijing's stringent export controls on rare earth elements essential to the modern economy, introduced last year. (AFP)

Indonesia sentences tech founder to 10 years in prison in controversial graft case

Reuters
Jakarta

An Indonesian court yesterday ruled that Nadiem Makarim, co-founder of tech firm Gojek and a former education minister, was guilty in a corruption case and sentenced him to 10 years in prison.

The case has been controversial with Makarim, 41, fiercely protesting his innocence – a position that has found support from academics both in Indonesia and internationally, some of whom say the case against him appears to be politically motivated.

The verdict also has the potential to further undermine investor confidence in Indonesia. The rupiah and stocks have slumped

this year after cuts to outlooks from credit ratings agencies on unpredictable policymaking and governance concerns, while index provider MSCI is weighing whether to downgrade Southeast Asia's biggest economy due to market transparency concerns.

Makarim, who served as education minister from 2019-2024 under the previous administration of Joko Widodo, was accused of profiting from the government's decision to purchase Google Chromebook laptops for schools, leading to \$125m in state losses.

Chief Judge Purwanto Abdullah, presiding over the ruling at Indonesia's Corruption Court in Jakarta, said a panel of judges had found Makarim guilty of abuse of authority and of causing state losses. He was found not guilty of



Nadiem Makarim, Indonesia's former education minister and co-founder of ride-hailing firm Gojek, speaks to the media after his verdict in a corruption case yesterday. (Reuters)

directly seeking to enrich himself.

Makarim, once one of the biggest stars of Indonesia's tech

startup scene, was also fined 1 bn rupiah and ordered to return over 800bn rupiah (\$45m) that the

judges said was an amount he personally gained from the deal. Failing to return the money would add five years to his prison sentence, the judges said.

Flanked by family and friends, Makarim tearfully vowed to appeal.

"The judges couldn't even look me in the eye," he said, adding he could not pay the amount ordered under the ruling.

Prosecutors alleged that Google's investment in Gojek's parent company influenced the procurement decision and that Makarim created tender specifications that only fit the Chrome system to "make Google the sole controller of the education ecosystem in Indonesia".

Goole was not indicted. Makarim rejected the allegations, saying there was no per-

sonal enrichment and that Google's investment in Gojek's parent company was not connected to the procurement.

He said in an interview with Reuters after the verdict that he was shocked by the "aggressiveness" of the prosecution.

"There seems to be a vengeance against me to make sure I do not go free," he said.

"It is so absurd and ridiculous that there was no flow of funds," he added. "It's as if the facts of the case were completely ignored."

Makarim has previously said the case was likely motivated by sweeping reforms he carried out during his time as education minister that cut into long-established corruption opportunities, while acknowledging that his leadership style at the time had ruffled feathers.

Starmmer unveils plan for \$20bn boost in defence investment

Reuters
London

Prime Minister Keir Starmer pledged yesterday to spend an extra £15bn (\$20bn) to modernise Britain's depleted armed forces in a long-delayed investment plan that is designed to prepare for the wars of the future and mark his legacy.

In what is most likely his last major policy announcement, Starmer said the increased spending over the next four years went further than a previous draft that prompted his ally, John Healey, to resign as defence minister this month. Healey had accused Starmer of failing to secure enough money to keep Britain safe.

Starmer's Defence Investment Plan falls short of the £28bn wanted by defence chiefs and represents a 5% increase in annual defence spending, which will reach £79bn a year by 2029. He will take it to Ankara for a Nato meeting on July 7 to 8, where he will want to signal that Britain is on the path to meet its commitment to reach defence spending of 3.5% of GDP by 2035.

But with his expected successor, Andy Burnham, due to take power as soon as July 20, he acknowledged that new governments could "build" on his blueprint.

Some critics said the plan, delayed for more than nine months, was too little, too late.

"When the world is arming and aggression is rising, the best way



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer and Chancellor of The Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, visit Malloy Aeronautics, following the publication of the long-delayed defence investment plan, in Berkshire, yesterday. (Reuters)

to avoid war is to prepare for it, the best way to defend is to deter — to have the strength to make your adversaries to think again before they act," Starmer told an audience at a defence company in southern England.

Starmer said his blueprint would offer funding of £5bn for investment in drones and autonomous weapons, create a hybrid navy and make the army more lethal, as part of a plan to make Britain war-ready, especially when military officials have warned that Russia could attack a Nato country as soon as 2030.

It would also strengthen Britain's nuclear deterrent and bolster a programme to build a next-generation stealth fighter jet for the Royal Air Force, Starmer said, adding that would create jobs and boost growth.

Nato Secretary-General Mark

Rutte also welcomed Britain's plan, saying it was a "good step towards reaching the 3.5% of GDP on defence agreed in The Hague last year".

Britain's biggest defence company, BAE Systems, which has UK sales of more than £8bn annually, said the plan provided clarity to the industry.

"The government's commitment to increased defence spending is vital to sustaining the specialist skills across our industrial base critical to national security," BAE CEO Charles Woodburn said.

With European nations under pressure from the United States to do more to defend themselves, Nato allies agreed to spend 5% of gross domestic product on defence by 2035, with 3.5% on core defence requirements and 1.5% on broader national security.

The new plan, Starmer said, would take Britain to 4.2% under that commitment.

While Britain is hoping to spend 3% of GDP on core defence by the next parliament expected in 2029, Germany plans to spend 3.7% of its GDP on defence by 2030 and France is aiming for 2.5%.

"By any measure this is a huge historic shift for our nation and a legacy in which I take pride," he said. Asked if it was sufficient to deter a possible Russian attack, Starmer said: "Yes... I am confident in that."

Defence chiefs have said there is a £28bn funding gap over the next four years and, with the £15bn uplift falling short of the total, critics say some equipment would not be bought or would be delayed, and there could be cuts to training, infrastructure maintenance and logistics.

"This is cost-cutting by another name, it's not an investment plan, it's sticking plasters," said Tom Sharpe, a retired Royal Navy commander, adding that the plan for a hybrid navy was "chronically underfunded".

Starmer defended the plan's costings, and said much of the additional spending would come from reallocating spending from different departments.

"Some capital projects, for example, on roads and energy, which are important but not immediately vital, will no longer go ahead as planned," he said.

"This plan represents our best judgment for what the country needs to meet this moment, and it is a platform on which I know my successor will build."

Treasurer calls Albanese's bank data breach 'incredibly concerning'

Reuters
Sydney

Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers said yesterday a report that two Ernst & Young employees on temporary assignment at Commonwealth Bank of Australia allegedly accessed Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's personal banking details was "incredibly concerning."

The *Australian Financial Review* (AFR) newspaper reported yesterday that EY had sacked two employees who were facing criminal charges after they allegedly accessed Albanese's bank details and those of at least one EY partner.

EY declined to comment on the report, and Albanese's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

A CBA spokesperson said "it is not appropriate for us to comment on individual contractor matters."

Chalmers told reporters he would not comment on legal processes under way.

"But I think on the face of it any developments of that kind are incredibly concerning, not just in relation to the PM's details but any Australians' details," Chalmers said.

The media report comes as EY's peer KPMG faces an audit leak scandal, adding pressure

on Big Four accounting firms after their new-business revenue from the Australian federal government fell by almost half last year.

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) said it had charged two Sydney men on May 6 with allegedly accessing restricted personal banking data belonging to a federal parliamentarian.

A 21-year-old man was charged with unauthorised access to restricted data and publishing or distributing personal data, and a 25-year-old man was charged with unauthorised access to restricted data, intending to cause the access and knowing it was unauthorised.

The AFP did not name the lawmaker but said both men were granted police bail to appear in a Sydney court yesterday.

"As the matter is before the court, no further comment will be made," an AFP spokesperson said by e-mail.

The AFP report, citing unidentified sources, said the two men deployed to CBA would have received a system warning requiring them to confirm they were permitted to access a customer's confidential information.

Once they agreed they were authorised, the system granted access to personal bank details, the report added.

William's homeless charity helps thousands

Reuters
London

Britain's Prince William said the charity he set up to show homelessness can be prevented had helped thousands of people avoid a housing crisis as he marked the project's three-year anniversary.

William, 44, has for decades worked for causes supporting homeless people, inspired by a visit with his mother, the late Princess Diana, to a shelter for people living on the streets when he was 11. She died in a car crash four years later.

He set up Homewards in 2023 and believes homelessness is an area where, as a future king, he can make a difference.

"Homelessness is not an individual failure. It is a systemic failure. And if systems help create the problem, systems can help prevent it," William said, in a speech in central London yesterday.

There are an estimated 300,000 people homeless on any given night in Britain, according to the charity Crisis.

The project aims to create a blueprint over five years to show how support, funding and mentoring can help prevent homelessness.



Prince William signs a board as he attends a special event at the Tate Modern in London yesterday. (AFP)

"Across our six locations, we are seeing measurable signs of change," William said, adding that he was keen to see the Homewards approach rolled out in other parts of the country.

At a time of greater scrutiny of the royal family's finances, William announced in May he would sell off parts of his vast inherited estate, partly to benefit people living there by investing in affordable homes.

Homewards has built affordable homes at some sites, and is working with banks like Lloyds Banking

Group to help those at risk secure funding for accommodation, and employers like Ikea to help people find jobs.

Chelsie Robinson, 28, an opera singer from Newport in Wales, told media her life had unravelled following the death of her mother. She said Homewards, and William's interest in her story, was key to getting it back on track.

"It's helped me a lot, and then I finally have my own house, my own flat now, and my job... it's just amazing," she said.

Takaichi seeks deeper India ties on trade

Reuters
New Delhi

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi will visit India today for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi focused on boosting trade, investment and strategic cooperation between the two Asian partners, the foreign ministry in Tokyo said.

The visit follows Modi's trip to Tokyo last year, when Japan pledged to more than double its investment in India to more than \$61bn over the next decade, highlighting deepening economic ties.

The two leaders will hold the 16th India-Japan Annual Sum-

mit, a mechanism under which the prime ministers of the two countries meet alternately. The summit will review progress across trade, technology, infrastructure, defence and people-to-people ties, while also addressing regional and global issues, according to a statement from Japan's foreign ministry.

An Indian source said Modi and Takaichi will also attend business events with executives from both countries. About 1,400 Japanese companies operate in India, nearly half of them in manufacturing.

Bilateral trade reached \$27.5bn in fiscal year 2025/26, while Japanese investment in India totalled \$3.2bn between April and

December 2025, according to Indian government data.

The leaders are also expected to discuss security cooperation and efforts to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific.

India and Japan are members of the Quad grouping alongside the US and Australia, and have steadily expanded defence and strategic collaboration in recent years.

Japan is among India's largest investors, backing major infrastructure projects including a high-speed rail corridor between the cities of Mumbai and Ahmedabad. Japanese firms have also increased investments in Indian companies, including a recent \$1.6bn deal for a 20% stake in Yes Bank.

Several hurt in petrochemicals plant blaze in eastern India

Reuters
New Delhi

A fire at India's Haldia Petrochemicals plant has injured several people, the company said in a statement yesterday. The company said operations are not affected so far by the fire, which happened at a place where naphtha — a volatile, highly flammable liquid hydrocarbon mixture produced during refining — has been stolen from in the past.

Earlier, local media had reported a massive fire in the refinery, located in India's eastern state of West Bengal in the early hours yesterday, with visuals showing smoke and fire billowing out of the area.

"Preliminary information suggests that the incident may have occurred in the vicinity of a naphtha theft point," Haldia Petrochemicals said in a statement.

"We are aware of an incident that occurred at our Haldia facility, in which a few people have reportedly sustained injuries," the statement said.

HPL said the exact cause of the incident is under investigation and said it had cautioned local communities against unauthorised access to petroleum products.



Firefighters work to bring the blaze under control after a fire broke out at Haldia Petrochemicals' plant in port town of Haldia, East Midnapore district, West Bengal, yesterday. (Reuters)

Several of the injured had been moved to hospitals, local media said.

The company operates a 700,000 tonne-per-year ethylene cracker in the eastern state of West Bengal. The company is majority owned by US-based private equity firm The Chatterjee Group (TCG).

India's much-delayed bullet train project picks up speed

AFP
New Delhi

India is finally on track to open a section of its long-delayed first high-speed bullet train line in 2027, railway ministry officials say, almost a decade after work began.

New Delhi hopes what it calls "a major milestone in India's railway modernisation efforts" will serve as a springboard for a wider national electrified high-speed rail network.

"The knowledge, skills and capabilities developed through the project are expected to support future high-speed rail corridors across the country," the government's plan reads.

The first 508-kilometre (315-mile) line is being built along its west coast, the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Corridor.

"A considerable amount of work on the entire corridor has already been completed," Dharmendra Tewari, Indian Railways additional director general, told AFP.

"The first section of the bullet train will be operational in 2027, between the cities of Surat and Vapi," he added.

The project has been a long time coming, mired in cost overruns and delays.



This aerial photograph shows the site of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail project in Maharashtra's Boisar. (AFP)

nology, was launched in 2017 by then-Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe — and was originally planned to be completed by 2023.

The government says the project will cost \$17bn, funded by an 81% loan from Tokyo, via the Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA).

But some Indian media reports say the sizeable delays, as well as higher land acquisition costs, could push that price tag up considerably.

India's railways have come a long way since the first passenger steam train puffed out in 1853 from what is today Mumbai.

New Delhi has pumped billions of dollars into overhauling creaking colonial-era infrastructure — rolling out higher-speed trains, mod-

ernising stations, and tackling its once-woeful safety record.

It has one of the world's longest rail networks — carrying 7.41bn passengers last year, and 1.67bn tonnes of freight — with around 85,000 kilometres now capable of speeds of 110 kilometres per hour and above, around 80% of its total lines.

Its domestically designed Vande Bharat — or "Salute to India" trains — can reach 180kph, and carried nearly 40mn passengers last year.

But its bullet train — with a design speed of 350kph and an operational speed of 320kph — is its flagship.

The journey is expected to take just under two hours, compared with the current six hours by existing rail routes, or the four to five hours by air, including airport procedures.

Sri Lanka cuts fuel prices, inflation rises

AFP
Colombo

Sri Lanka cut petrol and diesel prices by up to six % yesterday, its first reduction since the Middle East war triggered a surge in energy prices in the import-dependent nation.

The price cut was announced on the same day that data showed inflation had accelerated to its highest level in three years.

The state-run Petroleum Corp said it reduced diesel prices by 25 rupees per litre to 382 rupees (\$1.15), while petrol was cut by 20 rupees to 414 rupees (\$1.25).

The reductions follow a sharp fall in global energy prices after the US and Iran agreed to hold talks to bring an end to their conflict.

Also yesterday, official data showed consumer inflation rose to 6.8% in June from 5.5% in May, driven largely by higher food prices linked to increased energy costs.

Sri Lanka had recorded deflation of 0.6% in June 2025.

The Department of Census and Statistics said the latest inflation figure was the highest since June 2023, when prices were rising at an annual rate of 12%.

Sri Lanka raised petrol and diesel prices by nearly 50% after the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 28, triggering a surge in energy prices.

Electricity tariffs were also increased by a third as authorities sought to pass on higher import costs to consumers.

Sri Lanka, which imports all

of its oil and also relies on imported coal for power generation, has warned that any prolonged conflict in the Middle East could threaten its fragile economic recovery.

The government told the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which approved a \$2.9-billion bailout programme for Colombo in March 2023, that sustained high energy prices could undermine efforts to recover from the country's worst economic crisis.

Under the IMF-backed reforms, Sri Lanka is required to ensure cost recovery in fuel and electricity pricing while limiting subsidies that strain public finances.

Sri Lanka defaulted on its \$46bn foreign debt in 2022 after running out of foreign exchange.



Republic of Korea's \$1.2tn AI bet rides on unparalleled global boom

The unstoppable run of artificial intelligence – especially since OpenAI's launch of its hugely successful chatbot, ChatGPT in November 2022 – is bringing about upheavals in the tech world and markets, while becoming a driving force across the global economy.

Riding high on the unparalleled global AI boom, Republic of Korea plans to invest nearly \$1.2tn – equivalent to more than two-thirds of its GDP – in a new chip-building hub and AI data centres over several years. The enormous cash injection comes as Asia's fourth-largest economy bets heavily on the technology with Korean memory chipmakers emerging as a crucial cog in the fast-moving industry. "Speed is the only path to survival. We must secure the core elements of artificial intelligence faster than any other nation," President Lee Jae Myung said in Seoul. Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix will make a

record investment of 800tn won (around \$520bn) in a new semiconductor fabrication hub in the country's southwest, the government said.

Both companies have seen profits and share prices skyrocket in recent months, as frenzied demand for AI infrastructure squeezes the global supply of memory chips.

The government also announced a separate investment of a quadrillion won (around \$650bn) in AI data centres over the next 10 years.

Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix are also making one of the biggest bets yet on the AI boom with investments worth hundreds of billions of dollars, but the planned capacity buildout is stoking fears of a painful reckoning if AI spending cools.

Together, the world's two biggest memory chipmakers have pledged 3,200tn won (\$2.07tn) of investment, encompassing a new 800tn won chip cluster in the country's southwest as well as

previously announced projects. Shares of SK Hynix and Samsung Electronics have gone up 307% and 179%, respectively, so far this year.

The announcement comes as customers ranging from AI hyperscalers to electronics makers such as Apple press for more memory chips amid a global shortage. But analysts note that chip plants take years to build and ramp up, meaning much of the new capacity will not arrive until well into the next decade.

The memory chip boom also remains reliant on whether AI hyperscalers would keep expanding at the current rate. The soaring profitability of Samsung and SK Hynix's memory businesses is a relatively recent phenomenon, driven by the global AI boom. Past downturns in chip prices have badly hit the companies, causing SK Hynix to flirt with bankruptcy in 2001 and driving both firms to post big losses in 2023.

Still analysts believe the companies would learn from past cycles.

"A downturn in the memory industry is clearly a risk to the plan," CLSA senior analyst Sanjeev Rana said. But "memory producers retain the flexibility to adjust their investment pace if signs of excess capacity emerge."

Global AI adoption continued to rise in the second half of 2025, increasing by 1.2 percentage points compared to the first half of the year, with roughly one in six people worldwide using generative AI tools, according to a Microsoft report.

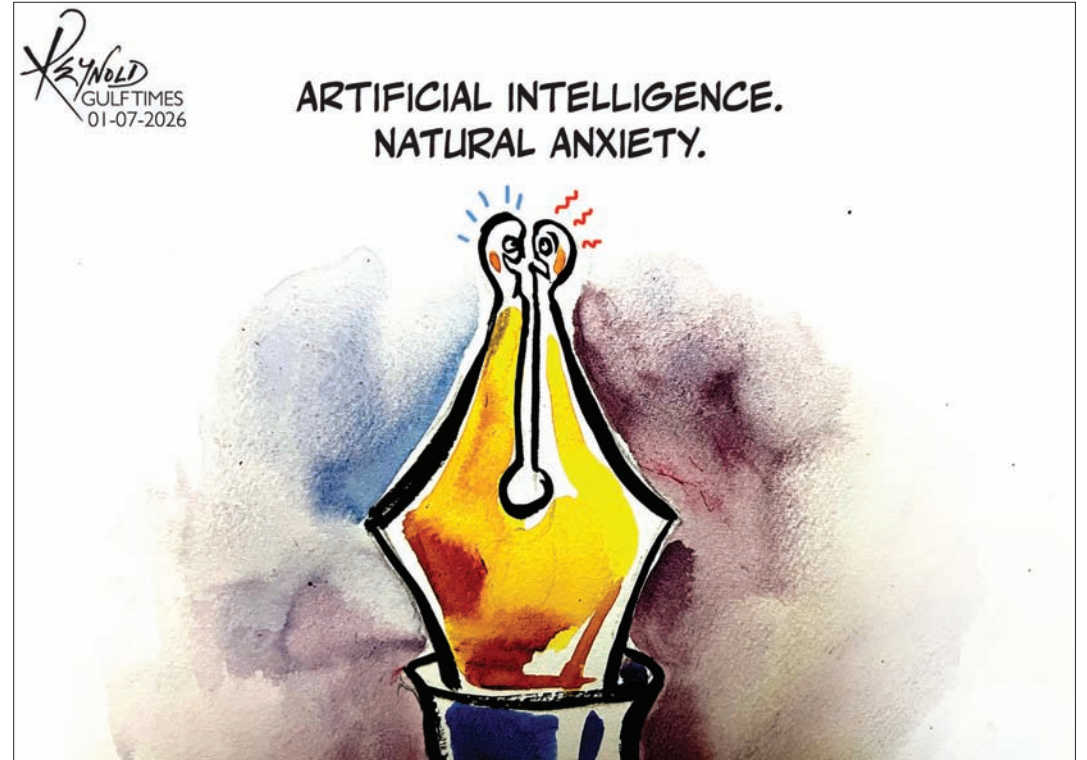
As AI advances, global governance, international collaboration and knowledge-sharing are becoming essential for effective and responsible adoption.

Looking forward, these efforts will be critical in addressing the gaps in technology governance, as more countries formalise AI strategies and strengthen their capacity to adopt the technology effectively.

A pitch against death penalty



French President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech during the 9th World Congress Against the Death Penalty in Paris yesterday. (AFP)



Global Alliance for Human Rights: Notable shift in advancing rights



The recent launch of the UN Global Alliance for Human Rights marks a significant step in strengthening international efforts to protect human rights by bringing together stakeholders across regions and sectors to address growing global challenges. The new alliance aims to bring tangible change in human rights through four strategic tracks: promoting human rights at home and at work; cultivating a human rights culture; advancing human rights through innovation and technology; and engaging young people in addressing global challenges.

In remarks to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Director of the International Cooperation Department at the National Human Rights Committee (NHRC), Amira al-Hadafah, described the Global Alliance for Human Rights as a significant addition and an important strategic step toward strengthening and protecting human rights internationally.

She said the NHRC views the alliance as a unique opportunity to enhance cooperation and coordination among national human rights institutions, non-governmental organizations, experts and other stakeholders through a shared vision aimed at bridging gaps between international human rights standards and policies and their implementation in practice, while reinforcing human dignity and promoting justice and equality worldwide.

Al-Hadafah said the alliance offers a platform for sharing expertise, best practices, and successful experiences in the field of human rights, while coordinating efforts to address global challenges that hinder the effective realisation of human rights.

Regarding the alliance's

The United Nations has established the Alliance as an effective mechanism to address the escalating challenges facing the international human rights system

Exclusive statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA)

- The Alliance provides an opportunity to strengthen cooperation between national human rights institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- The new Alliance enables the exchange of expertise and the sharing of successful experiences in the field of human rights.
- The Alliance will contribute to documenting human rights violations in many conflict-affected regions around the world.
- It will help build global public opinion to hold those responsible for serious crimes and human rights violations accountable.
- Protecting human rights defenders and providing them with legal support are among the Alliance's key objectives.
- Transparency and multi-stakeholder governance are among the main safeguards for ensuring the Alliance's independence and integrity.

Amira Al Hadafah
Director of the International Cooperation Department at National Human Rights Committee (NHRC)

Global Alliance for Human Rights

potential contribution at a time of widespread human rights violations in conflict zones and areas affected by crises, she said it could make a meaningful difference by documenting violations, facilitating rapid humanitarian responses, and providing victims and their families with a platform to make their voices heard. Such efforts would help transform human rights solidarity from rhetoric into evidence-based institutional action, while drawing greater international attention to serious and widespread violations committed during conflicts, particularly those targeting women and children, she highlighted.

Regarding the alliance's implementation mechanisms and operational tools for translating its principles into tangible results, particularly amid persistent impunity for perpetrators of atrocities and human rights violations, al-Hadafah said impunity remains one of the greatest challenges facing the international human rights system because it contributes to the recurrence of grave violations, especially in armed conflicts, while denying victims, their families and

communities effective remedies. She expressed confidence that the alliance could contribute to strengthening accountability and combating impunity through systematic monitoring and documentation, sustained engagement with victims and affected communities, and providing them with a platform to present their experiences and demands for justice before the international community. She added that these efforts could help build global public support for holding perpetrators of serious crimes accountable, establish international advocacy networks, and strengthen cooperation with international mechanisms and courts by providing evidence related to such crimes.

Al-Hadafah stressed that the alliance has the potential to generate wide international support for activating international jurisdiction to address the gravest crimes and human rights violations, stemming from the cost of double standards and continued impunity on international peace and security.

On the challenges faced by human rights defenders,

including harassment and intimidation, she said protecting human rights defenders is among the alliance's core priorities. She noted that creating a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders is essential to upholding the rule of law and strengthening respect for human rights within societies.

She emphasised that this alliance will strengthen safeguards for human rights defenders through monitoring, establishing an early warning system, providing legal support and protection, and maintaining ongoing coordination with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, treaty bodies, and other relevant human rights mechanisms. It will also work to mobilise international support for the effective implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, with the aim of creating a safe environment for human rights defenders worldwide.

Addressing the alliance's ability to maintain independence from political pressures and secure sustainable funding, Al-Hadafah said, in her concluding remarks, that transparent, multi-stakeholder governance would be a key safeguard for its independence and integrity. She said such governance would enable the alliance to pursue its vision of building a world in which the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments are respected, protected and fulfilled, while fostering a strong global civil society capable of monitoring compliance with international human rights obligations and contributing to the advancement of justice.

In this context, she added that the alliance is expected to develop a comprehensive strategic plan outlining priorities, strategic partnerships and funding sources, expressing confidence that it is committed to preserving its independence, credibility and freedom from any influence that could compromise its vision, objectives or human rights values. (QNA)

Trump tariffs aren't saving jobs at Whirlpool's Iowa refrigerator plant

By Timothy Aepfel
Amana (Iowa)

If any company stood to gain from President Donald Trump's trade war, it was Whirlpool and the workers assembling its iconic appliances in Iowa.

But at its "Big Blue" refrigerator plant, so named because of its robin's-egg-coloured siding, the company has cut more than half its nearly 2,000-strong workforce in the last year, despite tariffs championed by Trump to support US manufacturing. "Jobs and factories will come roaring back into our country," he said in April 2025 while announcing the tariffs on his self-proclaimed "Liberation Day." Whirlpool was among those expected to benefit from the tariffs, which have since been reshaped by legal challenges. The company makes about 80% of what it sells in the US from its 10 – soon to be 11 – domestic factories, leaving it less exposed to import duties than rivals and in theory better positioned to gain as foreign-made appliances grow more expensive.

Yet only one assembly line now runs at the plant, down from five that once turned out nearly a million units a year. Another 288 workers are set to lose their jobs in July. CEO Marc Bitzer last year praised Trump's trade actions, saying in an investor call that the Michigan-based company was a "net winner" from the policy. But tariffs have not halted the job losses in Iowa or the decline in Whirlpool's stock, now at its lowest since the 2007-2009 financial crisis. Tariffs have raised Whirlpool's costs for steel and imported components while demand tied to a weak housing market has softened. Meanwhile, Whirlpool has said tariffs have supported investment in other parts of its US operations. The company has increased sourcing from plants in Mexico and China and moved some speciality models to an updated plant in Ohio.

The changes underscore the still-evolving effects of Trump's tariffs. While some companies say the measures support investment at home, others face higher input costs and shifting supply chains, with uneven consequences for jobs.

The layoffs also carry political implications for the Republican Trump administration and may weigh on voters in a close congressional race in the Iowa district where the plant sits in November's midterm elections. The battle in Iowa's 1st US Congressional District is one of only 18 races across the country deemed a "toss-up" by the Cook Political Report. The Republican incumbent, Mariannette Miller-Meeks, defeated Democrat Christina Bohannon by fewer than 1,000 votes in the last elections in 2024. Manufacturing has emerged as a hot-button issue as several large producers, not just Whirlpool, have cut jobs and in some cases shifted work abroad. Tractor maker CNH in May closed its factory in Burlington, Iowa, while John Deere has reduced its workforce at several of its factories across the state. Miller-Meeks and fellow Iowa Republican, US Representative Ashley Hinson, sent Bitzer a letter after a layoff announcement in March. "These layoffs would hollow out a community and undermine the very domestic manufacturing base that American workers have spent decades building," they wrote. Bohannon also dispatched a letter to Bitzer. The two candidates clash over who's tougher on Whirlpool. "She didn't say anything about it until after I put out my statement," Bohannon told Reuters. Bohannon said many supported Trump in 2024 because he talked about bringing back jobs. "But reckless, chaotic tariffs are not the way to do it." Miller-Meeks issued a statement saying, "I remain deeply disappointed by Whirlpool's decision. From the moment we learned of the layoffs, I engaged directly with Whirlpool leadership and followed immediately with a formal letter." – Reuters

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Taps run dry in Hungarian village as heatwave bites

In a hilly village northwest of Budapest, siblings Andras and Blanka Arki have brought a bag of plastic containers and bottles to fill up at a roadside water cart in scorching 41C heat.

They are hoping to bring home clean water for the rest of their family. "It's mainly to quench our thirst, and we have to give our animals water too," Andras, a student, told AFP.

"We have a dog, a cat, and about

10 chickens," the 23-year-old said, adding that they have to make this trip three times a day.

Like most inhabitants of the village of Szada, 25 kms northwest of Budapest, their home has been without tap water for almost two days. Rising demand has overwhelmed Hungary's ageing water network as a record-breaking heatwave batters Europe.

Hungary yesterday hit a new temperature record, reaching 42C

in Szecseny in northern Hungary, according to the national weather service, beating a previous record of 41.9C from 2007.

Around three-quarters of the Szada's 6,600 residents have faced water outages since Monday morning. Services may only return today, Endre Marton Laszlo, a local MP from the ruling Tisza party, told AFP, urging people "to use water sparingly" and to resist from "stockpiling water".

Another local, 25-year-old office worker Edina Fabian, said she and her partner are trying to conserve what they can gather from water carts.

"We use as little as possible," she said, standing at the locker room of a local sports field, which was turned into a temporary showering facility.

She is looking forward for a refreshing shower after sweating for over a day. (AFP)



Village officials prepare bags of drinking water and a mobile water tank for distribution in Szada. (AFP)

Roof collapse at tutoring centre in Pakistan kills 14

AFP
Lahore

A roof collapse at a tutoring centre in the eastern Pakistani city of Lahore killed at least 14 children and injured five yesterday, officials said.

Workers had been repairing tiles on the decrepit building when the roof gave way and crushed the youngsters, a witness told AFP.

Grieving relatives wept as they gathered around the bodies of the young victims, shrouded in white sheets, AFP observed.

"A roof collapse in Basti Eid Gah, Kahna Nau, has claimed the lives of 14 children, while five others were injured," an Edhi ambulance spokesperson said, referring to an area to the south of Pakistan's second-largest city, in Punjab province.

The city's top civilian official, Commissioner Marrayam Khan, confirmed the death toll and said a teacher had also been injured.

Broadcaster Geo News aired images of uniformed rescuers and civilians using shovels and their hands to dig through dirt and rubble in the partially collapsed building.

A 45-year-old man named Zaher told AFP his niece was among the victims. "The roof was in poor shape," he said, adding that repair work was being carried out on tiles while the children studied.

"Suddenly the roof collapsed on top of quite a few children," he said, adding: "They put a lot of weight on the roof and that's

why this has happened."

Authorities promised an investigation and provincial police said on X that two people had been taken into custody over the disaster.

Medical sources said the children killed in the collapse were aged between four and 12.

Police said they were collecting evidence at the scene and posted video of officers speaking with rescuers wearing hardhats at the building, which was in a tightly packed residential area.

Khan, Lahore's commissioner, said in a statement that "those responsible for the incident will be found through a transparent, unbiased and immediate investigation".

According to a statement from the Punjab education minister, the tutoring centre was in a private house that belonged to a teacher educating children from a disadvantaged neighbourhood.

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief and said he "prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured and directed the authorities to provide them with every possible medical assistance" according to a statement released by his office.

Roof and building collapses are common across Pakistan, mainly because of poor safety standards and shoddy construction materials in the South Asian country of more than 240mn people.

Last July, 27 people were killed and 10 injured when a five-storey building collapsed in the impoverished area of Lyari in the southern city of Karachi.

Over 1mn migrants apply for Spain's mass regularisation

AFP
Madrid

More than one million undocumented migrants in Spain have sought legal status under a scheme that has defied a European crackdown on irregular immigration, the government said yesterday, the final day for submissions.

The vast scheme was predicted to benefit around 500,000 people, most from Latin America, when the left-wing government launched it in April.

"The more than one million applications submitted... show how necessary this recognition of rights and responsibilities was," Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez told an event in Madrid. Sanchez has become a standard bearer of more open immigration policies as his European neighbours - including some Socialist peers - toughen measures in response to pressure from ascendant far-right parties.

He has long argued that immigrants are needed to sustain the economy, the welfare state and pensions as Spain's population ages and people leave rural regions. "When we condemn a person to invisibility, I think we make our country a worse country. We all lose," Sanchez said.

"We want the world to view Spain as a country that respects, protects and upholds human rights."

The number of applications submitted does not necessarily indicate how many migrants will secure their legal status.

Applicants must prove they



Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez presents the citizenship and integration plan. (Reuters)

have a clean criminal record and spent at least five consecutive months in Spain before January 1.

The authorities have three months to process their paperwork and decide whether to issue a work and residence permit only valid in Spain.

Juana Hernandez, a 59-year-old Cuban who has lived in Spain for two and a half years and whose application was recently approved, told AFP the process "is a huge opportunity".

Although she was "a little worried" at the start, the English degree holder now aims to work at Madrid airport.

A land of emigrants for centuries, Spain, alongside Greece and Italy, is a key entry point into the European Union for tens of thousands of undocumented migrants fleeing violence, poverty and persecution.

Many come via a long and perilous Atlantic route from West Africa to the Canary Islands, al-

though numbers dropped last year after peaking in 2024.

Although fears arose of a saturation of the services handling the scheme, Mohamed, a Moroccan who lives in the northern region of Cantabria, felt the administrative journey was "relatively easy".

The 23-year-old jobseeker, who declined to give his surname, has been in Spain irregularly for about four years and hopes "to be able to work legally, to pay contributions".

Gaining legal status will also spare him from unscrupulous employers who "take advantage" of irregular migrants "by paying low salaries, without any rights or... don't pay at all," he told AFP.

Sanchez, who has presided over one of the world's fastest-growing developed economies in the last few years, has touted the benefits of immigration for sectors such as construction that need to boost their workforce.



A migrant rests inside a squatted house while waiting to obtain the documentation needed to regularise his immigration status, in Girona. (Reuters)

Spanish business leaders have welcomed the regularisation, but the conservative and far-right opposition are furious about a policy they say will encourage more irregular immigration.

While accepting "tensions" and "challenges" linked to immigration and integration, Sanchez yesterday accused the right of "fueling fear (and) stirring up xenophobic discourse that does not solve any problem". He announced €505mn (\$575mn) of investment to facilitate integration and ordered migration, including programmes for professional training and language learning.

Some regions governed by the right have filed appeals seeking precautionary measures that would suspend the process.

The Supreme Court yesterday said the parties had five days to set out their arguments about certain aspects of the decree that may justify seeking an opinion from the EU courts.

EU greenlights chemical recycling for plastic bottles

The EU adopted yesterday new rules allowing a greater role for a controversial chemical recycling process in the production of plastic bottles, overcoming environmentalists' reservations about the energy-intensive technology. The 27-country EU requires single-use plastic bottles to contain at least 25% of recycled plastic - with the share set to increase to 30% by 2030. The European Commission yesterday extended the same benefit to chemically recycled plastics. "Europe's plastic recycling sector faces mounting pressures. The new rules on chemical recycling are part of the answer to that challenge," said the EU's environment chief, Jessika Roswall. (AFP)

Shot down over 400 Ukrainian drones, baby killed outside Moscow: Russia

AFP
Moscow

Russia yesterday said it shot down 419 Ukrainian drones over the country overnight, including in the Moscow region, where authorities said a six-month-old baby was killed.

Kyiv has stepped up its long-range drone strike campaign against Russia in recent months, as Moscow's full-scale offensive against Ukraine drags on for almost four-and-a-half years.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said his forces struck a satellite communications site in the Moscow region for the second time in a week.

Air defence systems "intercepted and destroyed 419 Ukrainian fixed-wing unmanned aerial vehicles" around the country, Moscow's defence ministry posted on

"This is a special satellite communications facility used, in particular, for reconnaissance and for coordinating the activity of Russia's occupation contingent in Ukraine," - President Volodymyr Zelensky

the state-run Max platform.

The governor of the Moscow region, Andrei Vorobyov, later said that drones had hit the village of Yevgoryevsk, south-west of Moscow, hitting a "private house".

"Unfortunately, a six-month old baby died on the way to hospital," he said on Telegram.

Two adults and another child were hospitalised, he added.

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin said earlier that air defence had shot down 61 "enemy drones" on

the capital since Monday evening.

Zelensky said Kyiv struck the "Dubna space communications centre in the Moscow region", which Ukraine also said it hit last week. "This is a special satellite communications facility used, in particular, for reconnaissance and for coordinating the activity of Russia's occupation contingent in Ukraine," Zelensky said.

The Ukrainian leader calls the attacks deep inside Russia "long-range sanctions" and fair retaliation for Moscow's daily barrages against Ukraine.

Kyiv has hit targets in Russia as far as the Urals in recent months.

The swarm came days after Russia shot down 660 Ukrainian drones between Thursday and Friday, one of the highest figures since the start of the conflict.

A Ukrainian attack also caused a fire last week at a refinery in the southeast of Moscow.

Poland refuses to exchange MiG-29s with Ukraine

Warsaw and Kyiv have failed to reach an agreement on a swap of Polish MiG-29 fighter aircraft for Ukrainian drone technologies, Polish defence minister Wladyslaw Kosiniak-Kamysz said. Poland, which already supplied Ukraine with a large share of its MiG-29s immediately after the start of the Russian invasion in 2022, still has around a dozen such Soviet-era aircraft, according to media reports.

Amid a backdrop of weeks of diplomatic tensions over WWII-era massacres between the two neighbour allies, Kosiniak-Kamysz attributed the failure to reach an agreement to Ukraine. Warsaw had initially indicated in December that it was ready for such an exchange.

"I had proposed a very clear approach, and I believe also a very partnership-based one: MiGs in exchange for drones," Kosiniak-Kamysz said Monday evening on the Polish television channel Polsat News.

"At first, the Ukrainians accepted it, but they did not implement it, so there will be no MiGs for Ukraine, since there are no drones or drone-related capabilities for Poland," he added. Relations between Warsaw and Kyiv cooled at the end of May, when Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky named a military unit after the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) - a nationalist organisation founded in 1942 and held responsible in Poland for the death of over 100,000 Poles during World War II.

In response, nationalist president Karol Nawrocki announced last week that he was withdrawing the country's highest national distinction from his Ukrainian counterpart.

Poland continues to serve as a hub for the bulk of military and humanitarian aid deliveries to Kyiv, and Prime Minister Donald Tusk's pro-European government has called for a de-escalation of the row. (AFP)

More cash, not enough weapons: Nato presses to produce more

AFP
Brussels

A year on from their historic pledge to ramp up defence spending, Nato leaders gathering in Ankara next week will reckon with another challenge: getting industry to produce enough weapons.

As money flows into defence budgets - up \$90bn in Europe and Canada last year alone - the 32-nation alliance is struggling to transform the funds into firepower. "Cash is crucial, but you can't stop a missile or a tank with a dollar or a euro," Nato chief Mark Rutte said.

"We need to turn the cash into combat-ready capabilities, and fast. This is our shared priority."

In Ankara, the issue will be in the spotlight as leaders are expected to ink deals worth billions of dollars

at a special industry forum on the sidelines of the summit.

The struggle getting industry to churn out enough weapons fast enough does not come as a surprise. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has long highlighted Europe's limitations to produce enough - wait times are long and crucial capabilities are lacking.

Meanwhile President Donald Trump's war on Iran has sapped US stockpiles and shown off the strains for firms to refill them.

For Europe, the need to step up is of fundamental importance as it looks to become less reliant on Washington in the face of growing doubts about US reliability and warnings Russia could attack in the coming years.

"We've learned how to raise additional funds. We still need to learn how to spend them in an effective way in order to outproduce, out-innovate, outgun Russia," said



Military vehicles stand parked ahead of a Nato command and control handover ceremony, in Valga, Estonia. (Reuters)

EU defence commissioner Andrius Kubilius.

Industry insists that a change is already underway after several decades of underinvestment across the board in defence.

"Many manufacturers are investing in significantly greater production capacity," Camille

Grand, secretary general of the European defence industry association ASD, told AFP. "But does that mean we're exactly where we should be? Probably not."

Analysts warn that if war broke out now Europe would quickly run out of key weaponry such as air defence missiles.

"In some critical areas, Europe's current production capacity would be overwhelmed within days," analysts from the European Council of Foreign Relations wrote.

"Ammunition production has grown from 300,000 shells annually in 2022 to a target of two mn, but this is still not enough for a protracted conflict."

Some of the issues facing Europe are deeply entrenched.

The EU has launched a raft of efforts to reform its defence market - but the sector remains deeply fragmented as countries such as France are fiercely protective of their own companies.

"In the European Union we have 27 defence markets, 27 sets of rules - and so the defence industry still has many obstacles," Kubilius, who oversees EU efforts to bolster production, complained in a recent speech. But the push for a single defence market on the continent -

and getting countries to work more together - faces major hurdles.

Large companies in the sector have no incentive to invest as they expect preferential treatment by their governments, Guntram Wolff, a defence economics expert at the Bruegel Institute in Brussels, told AFP. "The German purchases going to domestic firms have increased from something like 30% in 2020-2021, to now 60% in 2025-2026," he said.

Europe does not have to look far if it wants an example of a nimble defence industry able to take on Russia. Despite being four years into war, Ukraine has built itself into a technological powerhouse churning out millions of drones.

"European defence industry produces 'haute couture' defence products. Products that are technologically advanced, but difficult to make, expensive and hard to scale up," Kubilius said.



Sheikh Joaan meets ambassadors of Kuwait and Australia

HE Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad al-Thani, president of the Qatar Olympic Committee, met separately yesterday with Kuwait's ambassador Ahmad Abdulrahman Naser al-Shuraim and Shane Flanagan, Australia's ambassador to Qatar. The meetings reviewed areas of cooperation between Qatar and both Kuwait and Australia, and explored ways to strengthen partnership in the fields of sport and the Olympic Movement, in addition to discussing topics of mutual interest. - QNA



Dignitaries lead the cake-cutting ceremony marking the 105th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China yesterday in Doha. PICTURES: Thajjudheen



Qatar-China relations show great progress for good of the people

Bilateral trade between the nations has more than doubled, from \$10.6bn in 2014 to \$23.8bn in 2025, representing an increase of nearly 125%

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar-China relations have grown considerably to high levels across all fields, which has reflected positively on both friendly countries and their people, Chinese ambassador to Qatar Cao Xiaolin has said.

Speaking on the occasion of the 105th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC), marked by the Chinese embassy in Doha yesterday (June 30) evening, the envoy stressed that "as China continues to pursue high-quality development, it is creating new opportunities not only for its own people, but

also for the world, including Qatar".

The ceremony was attended by HE the Minister of State Eng. Essa bin Hilal al-Kuwari and HE Ibrahim Yousif Abdullah Fakhro, the director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)'s Department of Protocol, in addition to a number of ambassadors, heads of diplomatic missions and dignitaries, among others.

Cao noted that "Under the strategic guidance of President Xi Jinping and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the China-Qatar Strategic Partnership has achieved remarkable progress in recent years".

In addition, practical cooperation between the two countries has deepened continuously and delivered fruitful results.

People-to-people exchanges have become increasingly vibrant, while China has remained Qatar's largest trading partner and largest export destination over the past six years.

"Bilateral trade has more than doubled, from \$10.6bn in 2014 to \$23.8bn in 2025, representing an increase of nearly 125%," the envoy said.

He said that "the Chinese enterprises have made important contributions to Qatar's economic and social development".

"Lusail Stadium, built by CRCC, a Chinese company, successfully hosted the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Final and other major matches," Cao said. "Its image now appears on Qatar's new QR10 banknote, marking the first time that a land-

mark constructed by a Chinese company has been featured on the national currency of Qatar".

Further, the 800MW Al Kharsaah Solar Power Plant, constructed by Power China, is Qatar's first non-fossil-fuel power station and one of the largest photovoltaic power plants in the Middle East.

It supplies clean electricity to approximately 300,000 households each year and represents a milestone in Qatar's transition toward green development.

Cao noted that "Gezhouba, another Chinese company, has also participated in the construction of Qatar's strategic mega water reservoir project, which has significantly enhanced the country's emergency water security".

Chinese financial institutions, he continued, "including ICBC and Bank of China, now rank among the leading foreign banks in the Qatar Financial Centre, while

annual RMB clearing volumes have exceeded 1tn yuan over the past three years".

The ambassador said that "technology companies such as Huawei and ZTE have provided strong support for Qatar's digital infrastructure and 5G development".

"Meanwhile, Chinese automobile brands, including Chery, Jetour, Geely and BYD - have become increasingly popular among consumers in Qatar for their advanced technology, excellent quality and outstanding value, and are now a familiar sight on the streets of Doha," he said.

In 2025, the number of Chinese visitors to Qatar reached 132,000, an increase of 28% over the previous year.

Direct passenger flights between the nations have expanded to 67 flights per week.

"We also warmly welcome more Qatari friends to visit China and experience firsthand a country that is vibrant, open, inclusive and full of opportunities," he said.

Accordingly, Cao stressed that "China's development cannot be achieved in isolation from the rest of the world, and global prosperity also needs China".

"This is a fundamental conclusion the CPC has drawn from more than a century of leading the Chinese people through revolution, development and reform," the envoy said.

From fencing piste to camera, Almaha al-Thani tells the stories behind sport

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Qatari filmmaker and former fencer Almaha al-Thani is turning athletic discipline into documentary storytelling, using film to capture resilience, identity and women's unseen journeys in sport across Qatar today.

For Almaha, sport does not begin with the scoreboard, and it does not end with a medal.

The real story, she believes, lives in the hours no one sees, the early training sessions, the quiet pressure, the setbacks, the doubts and the decision to keep going.

A former fencer turned documentary filmmaker, Almaha draws on her experience as an athlete to tell more personal, honest stories about sport.

Her work explores resilience, identity and the human side of competition, with a focus on amplifying women's voices and encouraging the next generation to see themselves in spaces they may once have thought were out of reach.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, she said fencing continues to shape the way she looks at people, pressure and achievement.

"One lesson that has stayed with me is learning that success and failure often come down to what happens before anyone is watching," she said. "Fencing taught me discipline, patience, and resilience."

That understanding has become central to her filmmaking. Instead of focusing only on victory, she is drawn to the journey that leads to it.

"There are countless hours of training behind every few minutes of competition," she said. "As a filmmaker, I look for those unseen moments because they tell the real story of a person. I'm less interested in the result and more interested in the journey that led there."

For Almaha, the move from fencing to film was not a departure from sport, but a continuation of it in another form.

While studying film, she began to recognise that the emotions she had known as an athlete, pressure, determination, setbacks and growth, could be explored through the camera.

Film, she added, allowed her to slow down the sporting experience and look beyond performance.

"Film became another way to explore the human side of sport and give people a deeper understanding of what athletes experience beyond competition," she said.

Her approach also reflects a wider moment in Qatar, where sport, culture and creative industries are increasingly becoming spaces for women



Almaha al-Thani

to lead, participate and shape public narratives.

As a Qatari woman, she said authenticity is at the heart of the stories she wants to tell.

"It's something I care deeply about," she said. "Qatar is changing quickly, and women are contributing to that change across many fields, including sport and filmmaking."

For her, the responsibility is not only to tell women's stories but to tell them without reducing them to stereotypes or expected narratives.

"I want my work to reflect who we are honestly, without trying to fit into stereotypes," she said. "The more authentic our stories are, the more people

inside and outside Qatar understand the diversity of experiences here."

Almaha said audiences often see athletes through a narrow frame: the win, the loss, the trophy, the result.

What is often missing, she noted, is the person behind the performance.

"People often forget that every athlete is also a person with doubts, sacrifices, responsibilities, and dreams outside the sport," she said. "Medals tell you who won, but they don't tell you what someone had to overcome to get there."

Those hidden experiences, she believes, are what make sport relatable: they create a connection, not only admiration.

Women's experiences in sport, in particular, remain an area Almaha hopes to see explored with more honesty and depth.

She said stories about female athletes do not always have to be framed around breaking barriers or winning championships, important as those achievements are.

Almaha said there is power in showing the ordinary discipline behind extraordinary commitment, balancing family, education or work, recovering from injuries, and continuing to train without public recognition.

"Those experiences are relatable, and they show young girls what dedication truly looks like."

For young girls in Qatar who may watch her films, whether they are interested in sport, cinema or both, Almaha hopes the message is simple: there is no single path to success.

More than anything, she wants her work to encourage girls to take the first step, enter new spaces and trust that their stories belong there.

"I want them to feel confident telling their own stories, taking opportunities, and believing they belong in spaces where they might not have seen themselves before," she said. "If one of my films encourages someone to start, then I feel I've done something meaningful."

Katara announces list of 90 total works in record-breaking Arabic Novel Prize edition

Katara Cultural Village has announced the list of 18 works in each category of the 12th Katara Prize for Arabic Novel, marking a significant milestone in an edition that attracted the highest number of submissions since the award was launched in 2014.

Published in alphabetical order and available on the prize's official website, the shortlist spans five categories: published novels, unpublished novels, young adult novels, historical novels, and critical studies.

The finalists reflect the richness and diversity of contemporary Arabic literary production, bringing together writers and critics from across the Arab world and beyond.

The unpublished novels category features authors from ten countries, led by Egypt with four shortlisted works.

Syria and Palestine each secured

three places, followed by Algeria with two, while Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Jordan, Sudan, Morocco, and Tunisia are represented by one novel each.

In the published novels category, Egypt dominates with eight shortlisted titles.

Algeria and Lebanon each have two entries, while Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, and Jordan each contribute one work.

Morocco leads the critical studies category with eight shortlisted entries, followed by Egypt with three.

Additional shortlisted studies come from Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Jordan, Palestine, Yemen, Mauritania, and Guinea, highlighting the prize's growing intellectual and geographical outreach.

The young adult novels category includes writers from six Arab countries, with Algeria topping the

list with six shortlisted works.

Egypt and Morocco each have four entries, Jordan has two, while Yemen and Tunisia are represented by one novel each.

In the historical novels category, Egypt again leads with seven shortlisted works, followed by Algeria with four and Morocco with two. Oman, Yemen, Sudan, Palestine, and Tunisia each have one entry.

The nine finalists in each category are expected to be announced in August, while winners, including the recipient of the Qatari Novel Award, will be revealed during the 12th Katara Prize ceremony.

This year's competition received a record 2,610 submissions, surpassing the previous high of 2,321 entries recorded in 2021, underscoring the prize's growing stature as one of the Arab world's leading literary awards.

Qatar World Cup Photography Exhibition opens in Mexico City

A selection of photographs from the "After the Game" exhibition, first shown at the Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar, has been included in a new exhibition in Mexico City exploring the legacy of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

The works form part of "Journeys to Greatness: Qatar 2022 Legacy", presented by the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum in partnership with Mexico's Ministry of Culture through the Centro de Cultura Digital (CCD).

The exhibition links the legacy of Qatar 2022 with the next World Cup in Canada and Mexico in 2026 and is part of the Qatar Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture programme.

It uses photography, objects and multimedia storytelling to present football as a shared cultural experience, bringing together players, fans and communities from around the world.

The selected images, originally shown in the third edition of the



Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar, are integrated across sections of the exhibition including "Look of the Game", "Matches and Players", and "Unity in Diversity", highlighting human stories behind the tournament.

3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum director Abdulla al-Mulla said the legacy of Qatar 2022 extended beyond players and matches to include fans whose experiences helped define the tournament.

He said the exhibition demonstrated how those memories continued to connect people across borders, adding that visitors had engaged with Qatari and Gulf customs and traditions.

Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar director Khalifa al-Obaidli said photography has a unique ability

to preserve emotion, noting that the works captured shared human experiences that made Qatar 2022 a transformative milestone.

The original "After the Game" exhibition was created for the 2025 edition of Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar and explored the tournament's legacy through photographers documenting moments of celebration, reflection and connection.

The "Journeys to Greatness" exhibition is an interactive multimedia presentation of the World Cup as a defining moment for Qatar and the wider region.

It runs at the Centro de Cultura Digital in Mexico City until August 9 as part of a wider cultural programme symbolically linking Qatar 2022 with Mexico 2026. - QNA