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SPORT | Page 1

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SCAN TO SHOP

PM reaffirms support for Libya, Syria



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held separate talks yesterday with visiting Libyan and Syrian officials, reaffirming Qatar's support for the unity and sovereignty of both countries. He met Prime Minister of Libya's Government of National Unity Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh, who is visiting Qatar. They reviewed co-operation between the two countries and ways to support

and develop it, and discussed the latest regional developments. The prime minister reaffirmed Qatar's firm support for Libya's unity and for the Libyan people's aspirations for stability and development, along with its full backing for the Libyan political process, relevant Security Council resolutions and all peaceful solutions that preserve Libya's sovereignty. He also met Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Syria Asaad al-Shaibani, who is visit-

ing the country. They reviewed bilateral co-operation and ways to enhance it, as well as the latest developments in Syria and issues of mutual concern. The prime minister reaffirmed Qatar's support for the unity, sovereignty and independence of Syria, and for the Syrian people's aspirations to live in dignity and build a state based on institutions and the rule of law. He also reaffirmed Qatar's support for efforts to rebuild, reconstruct and stabilise Syria. (QNA) Page 2

Cabinet's second quarter agenda anchored in sustained growth



By A Staff Reporter
Doha

THE decisions adopted by the Cabinet during the second quarter of this year demonstrate the government's unwavering commitment to accelerating sustainable development, strengthening economic resilience and improving the quality of life of citizens and residents alike, according to a review of the quarter's decisions broadcast by Qatar TV.

The package of decisions reflects a comprehensive policy approach aligned with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy (2024-2030), placing equal emphasis on economic growth, financial sustainability, environmental protection and social cohesion.

Throughout the quarter, the Cabinet focused on policies designed to build a diversified, competitive and knowledge-based economy while ensuring that development remains socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable. The decisions also underline the government's determination to prepare Qatar for future economic opportunities by creating a flexible regulatory environment capable of adapting to regional and global change.

Among the most significant measures adopted during the period were four major decisions dedicated to sustainable economic development. These initiatives support the implementation of the Third National Development Strategy, which seeks to increase the contribution of non-hydro-

carbon sectors to national output, enhance productivity and foster innovation across industries.

The quarter's weekly sessions bore this out. In June, the Cabinet approved the General Policy and Strategy for National Local Content, prepared by the Ministry of Finance in co-ordination with the National Planning Council, establishing an integrated framework for promoting local content in government procurement, generating sustainable local value and opening new investment opportunities for local entrepreneurs. The same session noted the Shura Council's approval of a draft metrology law designed to modernise the regulatory framework, protect consumers and ensure fair competition.

Strengthening governance and raising the efficiency of government institutions was a key priority. The decisions emphasise improving institutional performance, enhancing transparency and accountability, and developing high-quality public services – reforms expected to simplify government procedures, expand digital services and make regulatory processes faster and more accessible for businesses and investors. In this vein, the Cabinet reviewed amendments to the State Audit Bureau law and a draft law reorganising public and private state properties within a unified legislative framework linked to the modern real estate registration system, enhancing the efficiency and transparency of government asset management.

These measures reinforce Qatar's position as one of the region's most attractive investment destinations.

Cultural integration key to identity, growth: Architect

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

DOHA has transformed from a modest Gulf town into one of the region's most recognisable modern cities – but for the man widely regarded as Qatar's first professional architect, its real achievement lies in doing so without losing its identity. “Doha today is a state-of-the-art city with world-class infrastructure, yet it has a unique identity. It is not just another metropolitan city. The cultural integration has been one of the highlights of the city, and in a contemporary way,” said Ibrahim Mohammed Jaidah, founder of one of the country's oldest and largest home-grown architectural firms.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Jaidah, group chief executive officer of Arab Engineering Bureau, which is celebrating its 60th



Ibrahim Mohammed Jaidah. PICTURE: Thajudheen

anniversary this year, reflected on his career, the evolution of Doha's skyline and the role architecture has played in shaping the nation's identity. Amid the city's rapid modernisation, he said, preserving cultural identity had been paramount.

“Msheireb Downtown Doha is a prime example of how modern architecture can draw inspiration from traditional urban design, incorporating features such as shaded streets, compact building layouts and climate-responsive design principles,” he said. “While

early development brought an influx of glass-clad skyscrapers, Qatar gradually embraced architecture that reflects its heritage in contemporary ways.”

Throughout his career, Jaidah has been involved in some of Qatar's most recognisable landmarks. His portfolio includes Al Thumama Stadium for the FIFA World Cup 2022, major government buildings, museum and tower projects in West Bay and Lusail, and large retail developments such as Doha Festival City, Place Vendôme and Gulf Mall.

After moving to the United States in 1979, where he completed high school, studied art and later architecture, he returned to Qatar in the 1980s and began his professional journey. He went on to acquire a small architectural firm with just six employees. Over the decades, it grew into the largest wholly Qatari-owned architectural practice in the country's history, employing up to 700 people. To Page 3

New dive site boosts Qatar's underwater tourism potential



Shipwrecks, natural reefs offer distinctive diving experiences

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

THE discovery of a new dive site about 3km south of GMC Reef adds momentum to Qatar's efforts to unlock the tourism potential of its underwater world, where shipwrecks, natural reefs, and diverse marine life could position the country as one of the Arabian Gulf's leading diving destinations, according to a diving expert. Speaking to *Gulf Times*, underwater filmmaker, PADI Master Instructor and diving ambassador Khaled Zaki said that initial exploration suggests that the new dive site could become another valuable destination for recreational diving, underwater photography, marine research, and environmental studies. He pointed out that the site could further enrich Qatar's portfolio of dive destinations. According to Zaki, Qatar's growing network of wreck sites, healthy reef ecosystems, and iconic marine species also provide a strong foundation for expanding adventure tourism while supporting marine conservation.



Underwater filmmaker, PADI Master Instructor and diving ambassador Khaled Zaki

Although Qatar is internationally recognised for its modern skyline, luxury hotels, world-class shopping malls, outstanding hospitality, and national carrier Qatar Airways, Zaki stressed that another attraction lies beneath the calm waters of the Arabian Gulf.

“Diving is far more than a recreational sport. It is an adventure, an educational experience, and a gateway to understanding and protecting the marine environment,” he said.

Scuba diving appeals to people of all ages and nationalities, making it an ideal activity for both residents and international visitors, Zaki said. As Qatar continues to diversify its tourism sector, he believes the sport can generate wider economic benefits by supporting hotels, restaurants, transport providers, shopping centres, marine services, and other tourism-related businesses.

One of Qatar's greatest strengths, Zaki said, is the diversity of its underwater environments. Shipwrecks and natural reefs offer distinctive diving experiences, with the former having the potential to become among the country's signature attractions. He noted that among the country's established dive sites are GMC Reef, the recently developed Club Reef at a depth of about 13 metres, the Barj Wreck at around 20 metres, the Inland Sea dive site at approximately 18 metres, and the QAF30 Reef Balls at about 15 metres. To Page 3

Prime Minister meets Syrian FM



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic Asaad al-Shaibani, who is visiting the country. The meeting dealt with bilateral cooperation relations and ways to enhance them, as well as the latest developments in Syria, along with issues of mutual concern. During the meeting, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed the State of Qatar's support for the unity, sovereignty, and independence of Syria, as well as for fulfilling the aspirations of the Syrian people to live in dignity and to build a state based on institutions and the rule of law. His Excellency also reaffirmed the State of Qatar's support for efforts aimed at the reconstruction, rebuilding, and stabilisation of Syria. **(QNA)**

Minister: Environmental awareness among youth key to preserving natural resources

HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie stressed that investing in young people's environmental awareness and equipping them with environmental knowledge is fundamental to building a generation capable of preserving the country's natural resources and supporting its environmental sustainability efforts.

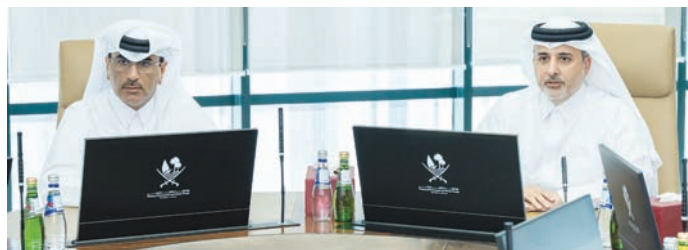
HE al-Subaie made the remarks while honouring students and participating entities in the third edition of the 2026 Summer Environmental Club, organised by the ministry under the theme "Guardians of the Environment". The two-week program brought together 26 students aged 11-17 and was attended by ministry officials and representatives of participating organisations.

He said the Summer Environmental Club reflects the ministry's commitment to offering educational programs that combine theoretical learning with practical experience, enabling participants to gain firsthand insight into environmental work and the State's efforts to protect the environment and conserve biodiversity.

He emphasised that environmental protection begins with knowledge and awareness before becoming a daily practice and a shared responsibility. The enthusiasm and engagement demonstrated by the students during workshops and field visits, he added, reflect growing environmental awareness among younger generations and their readiness to contribute to national initiatives.

HE al-Subaie affirmed the ministry's commitment to engaging young people through awareness and training programs that introduce them to environmental challenges and the solutions used to address them, while encouraging them to develop ideas and initiatives that support environmental protection.

HE the Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie also expressed appreciation to the participating entities and ministry departments for their contribution to the program, noting that their cooperation in organising activities and field visits enriched the club's content and enhanced the students' learning experience.



The two-week program featured a series of workshops and field visits covering environmental photography, recycling, environmental monitoring and inspection, marine biodiversity, the safe use of radiation, marine environmental

protection, houbara bustard breeding, and hazardous waste tracking. The activities were designed to enhance participants' environmental awareness and provide them with practical experience in environmental conservation. **(QNA)**



Daam Behavioral Healthcare Center earns CARF International accreditation for second time

Daam Behavioral Healthcare Center announced that it has received CARF International's behavioural health accreditation for the second consecutive time.

Daam is one of the centres under the umbrella of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work. Commenting on this development, Daam Executive Director Jawaher Abu Alfain said that the renewal of the CARF International accreditation for the second cycle (2025-2028) is a direct reflection of Daam's efforts to build a comprehensive institutional system based on quality, sustainability, and continuous improvement. This achievement demonstrates Daam's institutional maturity in terms of delivering behavioural health services in accordance with internationally recognised standards, Abu Alfain added. The centre places beneficiaries at the heart of its priorities and is committed to continuously developing its services and programs in line with the latest professional best practices, she said.

The Daam Executive Director emphasised that maintaining this international accreditation requires integrated teamwork and sustained efforts to enhance service quality and institutional performance, thereby creating a positive and lasting impact on individuals and the wider community. In turn, quality and planning specialist and project manager



for the CARF International accreditation at Daam, Dhofar al-Soufi, said that receiving the CARF International accreditation for the second consecutive time marks a significant milestone that reflects the Center's steadfast commitment to applying the highest quality standards and service safety. The accreditation's renewal is the result of teamwork and ongoing efforts to develop Daam's services and administrative and organisational practices in accordance with international best practices, she said. It ensures the delivery of comprehensive care centred on beneficiaries' needs and enhances recovery outcomes. This accreditation is not merely a certificate of recognition; it is a renewed responsibility that motivates the Center to continue improving and promoting a culture of quality and excellence across all aspects of its institutional work, al-Soufi said. **(QNA)**

QC launches paediatric catheterisation and open-heart surgeries in Sudan

Qatar Charity has launched a specialised medical initiative in Sudan to provide paediatric catheterisation and open-heart surgeries, as part of Qatar's continued humanitarian and health support amid the ongoing conflict.

The project was inaugurated at the Wad Madani Centre for Cardiac Surgery and Diseases in Gezira State, with the participation of Sudan's Minister of Health, Dr Haitham Mohamed Ibrahim; the governor of Gezira State, al-Tahir Ibrahim al-Khair; and the acting chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of Qatar, Abdullah Rashid al-Khater.

Dr Ibrahim praised Qatar Charity's support for Sudan's health sector, noting that its medical camps in ophthalmology, paediatric catheterisation, and open-heart surgery reflect the gradual restoration of normal life in Gezira State and the recovery of the local health system. He said Qatar's support has contributed to rehabilitating hospitals and strengthening Gezira's role as a national medical hub.

The Governor of Gezira State emphasised that the project would provide vital medical services to children and ease the financial and emotional burden on their families.



Al-Khater said the paediatric heart surgeries are part of the diverse humanitarian and medical programmes Qatar Charity has continued to implement in Sudan since the beginning of the war.

He noted that the launch coincided with an eye surgery programme to remove cataracts in four Sudanese states, benefiting more than 600 people. He also thanked the doctors, nurses, and hospital teams whose efforts are helping relieve children's suffering.

Prof Salah al-Basha, director general of the National Heart Centre and senior consultant cardiologist at the Ministry of Health, said the camp is the first of its kind since the war. He highlighted the urgent need for such interventions, particu-

larly after years of conflict led to a growing backlog of children awaiting treatment.

Khalid Abdullah al-Yafei, assistant to the chief executive officer said 50 specialised operations will be carried out under the initiative, including cardiac catheterisations and open-heart surgeries.

Al-Yafei added that the initiative forms part of Qatar Charity's integrated health programme in Sudan. The programme includes a blindness prevention campaign in Wad Madani, which is expected to benefit more than 2,000 patients through medical examinations and more than 200 cataract surgeries. A cochlear implant programme for children is also scheduled to begin next week at Doha Hospital in Khartoum.

Amir sends congratulations to US president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to the President of the United States of America Donald Trump on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. **(QNA)**

Al-Khulaifi holds phone call with Benin FM

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi held a telephone conversation yesterday with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Benin, Corinne Amori Brunet. During the call, the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs extended his congratulations on the occasion of the appointment of Corinne Amori Brunet as Minister of Foreign Affairs of Benin, wishing her success and the further development and growth of bilateral relations between the two friendly nations. The conversation discussed deepening and expanding bilateral cooperation between the two countries, the latest developments on the African continent, and a range of matters of shared interest. **(QNA)**

Mexican FM meets Qatar's ambassador

Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the United Mexican States, Roberto Velasco, met with ambassador of the State of Qatar to Mexico, Mohammed bin Sultan al-Kuwari. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral cooperation between the two countries. **(QNA)**



NPC, MoEHE undersecretary discuss education's role in building human capital

The National Planning Council (NPC) hosted HE Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), in the third episode of Podcast AlTanmiya (Development), to explore the role of Qatar's education system and higher education sector in advancing the nation's comprehensive development agenda.

The episode explores the ministry's role as the national authority responsible for preparing future-ready learners who can contribute to sustainable development, and its contribution to advancing human development in line with the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy.

It also highlights the ministry's efforts to align scholarship programmes with national and private sector needs; expand the localisation of the teaching profession and increase the proportion of Qatari educators; expand science, technology, and technical and vocational education; and strengthen inclusive education. These efforts collectively aim to prepare a generation capable of leading a knowledge-based economy and actively contributing to national development.

The episode covers key issues across all stages of education – from early childhood to higher education. It addresses topics such as graduates' readiness for the labour market, private school fees, and the language of instruction, alongside the broader question of how to instil a strong work ethic and a sense of national belonging from an early age. It also explores priorities such as aligning education outcomes with labour market needs, directing



HE Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi

national talent toward the private sector, increasing enrolment in technical and vocational pathways, and strengthening the Arabic language and national identity within a multilingual learning environment.

The episode also highlights the education system's preparedness to respond to emergencies, demonstrating how distance learning developments ensured the continuity of education.

Abdulaziz Ahmed al-Fehani, assistant secretary-general for Council Affairs at the National Planning Council, said: "No economic or social objective within the Third National Development Strategy can be realised without skilled human capital. This episode therefore focuses on a dialogue with HE Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, given the ministry's central role as the starting point for developing national human capital. The Council's role is to connect these efforts to the broader national vision and to bring the strategy closer to society."

The third episode is available on the National Planning Council's social media platforms.

48th Unesco World Heritage Committee from July 19-29

South Korea's Busan will host the 48th session of the World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco) from July 19-29, in which representatives from States Parties to the World Heritage Convention, along with experts and international organisations specialising in the protection of cultural and natural heritage, will participate.

The nomination of new sites to the World Heritage List tops the agenda of this session. The Committee will examine, among other things, nominations for the inscription of 30 new sites on the World Heritage List, as well as proposals concerning three sites already on the List.

It will also examine the state of conservation of 147 sites already inscribed on the List, assessing their conservation condition and reviewing the challenges they face, including the effects of climate change, armed conflict, urbanisation, and tourism and environmental pressures. The issue of sites inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger receives special attention, with the Committee reviewing the conservation status reports for these sites and making appropriate decisions regarding their continued inscription, removal from the List, or the adoption of additional measures for their protection. **(QNA)**

QIIB launches innovative digital rewards marketplace

QIIB has unveiled 'QIIB Online Shop', an innovative digital rewards marketplace integrated into its mobile and Internet banking platforms. The new service offers customers a wide range of flexible redemption options, enabling them to instantly redeem their QIIB rewards points for products, digital gift cards, and e-vouchers from thousands of leading local and international brands. The launch marks another strategic step in QIIB's ongoing commitment to strengthening its digital capabilities and delivering innovative, secure and user-friendly banking solutions. It also reflects QIIB's focus on enhancing its loyalty and rewards programme to meet customers' evolving expectations for smart payment and shopping solutions, while providing a seamless

banking experience that gives them access to their preferred choices anytime, anywhere. QIIB Online Shop is designed to deliver a seamless and intuitive user experience, allowing customers to browse the marketplace, select their preferred products or digital e-vouchers, and instantly redeem their QIIB rewards points in just a few simple steps. With no waiting periods or complex procedures, the platform makes rewards redemption faster, easier and more convenient, delivering a digital experience aligned with the leading global e-commerce platforms. Abdullah Hamad al-Mesaifri, Retail Branches manager at QIIB, said: "We are pleased to launch QIIB Online Shop, a significant addition to the way we reward

our customers and recognise their loyalty. "This advanced digital solution goes beyond points' redemption, giving customers seamless access to a wide range of products and digital rewards through a fully integrated experience within QIIB's mobile and internet banking platforms." Al-Mesaifri noted: "Our approach to product development at QIIB is driven by continuous innovation with the customer experience at its core. That is why we have designed QIIB Online Shop to offer an extensive range of lifestyle choices that cater to both individual and family preferences. "With instant rewards redemption, customers have the flexibility and control to redeem their points whenever and however they choose, through a seamless

and secure digital experience." He added: "The launch forms part of our ongoing digital transformation strategy and commitment to delivering meaningful value to our customers while further strengthening QIIB's position in the local and regional banking markets. "We will continue to closely monitor evolving market needs and develop innovative products and solutions that meet our customers' expectations and address their changing requirements." QIIB customers can start benefiting from the new service immediately by logging in to the QIIB Mobile Banking App and accessing the QIIB Online Shop section, where they can explore thousands of rewards options and instantly redeem their QIIB rewards points through the platform's dedicated online marketplace.



Abdullah Hamad al-Mesaifri, Retail Branches manager at QIIB.

New dive site boosts Qatar's underwater tourism potential

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Each offers a unique diving experience while showcasing the country's rich marine biodiversity.

Qatar's waters, he added, are home to several iconic and endangered marine species that enhance the country's ecological significance. Seasonal aggregations of whale sharks – among the largest in the world – along with dugongs, green and hawksbill sea turtles, dolphins, and thriving reef ecosystems make Qatar an attractive destination for marine wildlife enthusiasts and underwater photographers.

Zaki also lauded the efforts of government authorities, environmental organisations, researchers, and the diving community to protect Qatar's marine environment.



He said marine conservation projects, scientific research, habitat restoration, beach and underwater clean-up campaigns, and public awareness initiatives are already delivering positive results by safeguarding marine biodiversity while strengthening Qatar's reputation as a destination committed to sustainable tourism and environmental responsibility.

Despite the opportunities, Zaki said one major challenge remains: the limited number of shore-entry dive sites.

Most diving locations require boat access, leaving residents with relatively few convenient and affordable options for shore diving. Expanding the number of shore-accessible sites, he said, would encourage greater participation in the sport, improve diver training opportunities, and make diving



ing more accessible to tourists, schools, universities, and the wider community.

With continued investment in diving infrastructure, careful planning, and sustained environmental protection, Zaki believes Qatar has all the ingredients to establish itself as one of the Arabian Gulf's premier diving destinations.

"The treasures beneath Qatar's waters are waiting to be explored. By embracing scuba diving as both a sport and a tourism asset, Qatar can diversify its visitor experiences, strengthen its economy, promote marine conservation, and showcase a hidden natural world that few have yet discovered," he said.

Cultural integration key to identity, growth: Architect

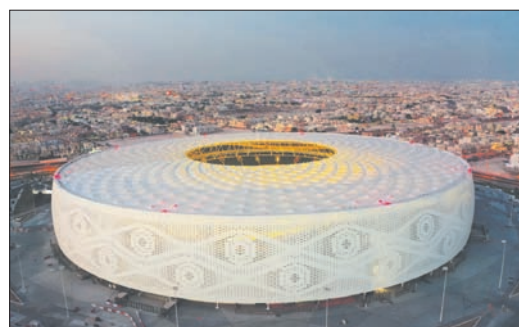
From Page 1

"I grew up with the development of Qatar. Our success coincided with the nation's rapid development during the economic boom of the 1990s and 2000s," he said. Jaidah also praised the development of West Bay and the Corniche skyline. "The area's curved waterfront master plan is one of the factors that gives Doha its distinctive character. The skyline has become a symbol of Qatar's economic confidence and modernisation," he pointed out.

According to Jaidah, the FIFA World Cup marked a turning point in Qatar's global image, showcasing not only its infrastructure but also its architectural achievements to billions of viewers worldwide.

He said Qatar's urban growth was set to continue in a carefully planned and sustainable manner. "Lusail City and the emerging Simaisma developments are examples of future expansion. Unlike the unplanned growth seen in some cities, Qatar's development strategy emphasises sustainability, infrastructure integration and long-term planning," he noted.

On environmental challenges, Jaidah stressed the importance of designing buildings suited to Qatar's climate. "Lessons from traditional Gulf architecture remain relevant today, including smaller openings, shaded spaces and careful orientation to reduce heat gain and energy consumption," he said. "Sustainability is no longer just a marketing term. It has become part



Al Thumama Stadium. (Supplied picture)

of Qatar's regulations and development strategy." While he appreciates both skyscrapers and low-rise developments, Jaidah believes each has a role to play. High-rise districts symbolise economic strength and global ambition, he said, while horizontal developments often offer greater harmony with the local environment.

Asked to name a favourite project, Jaidah said it was difficult to single out one achievement, though Al Thumama Stadium held special significance for allowing him to contribute to one of the most important moments in Qatar's modern history. "All my projects are like my children," he said. "But Al Thumama Stadium will always be a milestone because it was part of the success story of my country."

Mannai Home unveils TCL's 2026 SQD-Mini LED TV lineup in Qatar

Mannai Home, in partnership with TCL, has officially launched the 2026 TCL SQD-Mini LED TV lineup in Qatar, introducing the premium C7L, C8L, and flagship X11L models. The launch event showcased TCL's latest display innovations, bringing exceptional brightness, cinematic colour precision, advanced halo control, and immersive Audio by Bang & Olufsen to consumers across the country.

The launch event was attended by senior leaders from Mannai Corporation and TCL Middle East, along with technology enthusiasts, business partners, and guests. Leading the occasion were Khalid Mannai, vice chairman – Executive Committee, Santhosh Krishnamoorthy, chief financial officer, and Emad Zaid, senior general manager – HR & Administration. They were joined by Vic Shen, general manager of TCL Middle East & Team, as the two organisations officially unveiled TCL's 2026 premium SQD-Mini LED TV lineup in Qatar. Guests experienced the latest display innovations firsthand and saw how Mannai Home and TCL are delivering next-generation home entertainment solutions to consumers across Qatar.



Vic Shen, said TCL continues to strengthen its global leadership as the world's No 1 Mini LED and Ultra Large Screen TV Brand. He noted that the introduction of the 2026 SQD-Mini LED TV lineup in Qatar reflects TCL's commitment to delivering exceptional brightness, cinematic colour precision, advanced halo control, and premium viewing experiences across every segment. He added that the company's partnership with Mannai Home ensures customers in Qatar receive outstanding product availability and after-sales support.

Sathik Batcha Samsudeen, general manager of Mannai Home, said the company is proud to introduce TCL's most advanced display technologies to the Qatari market. He stated that the 2026 lineup has been

carefully selected to meet the expectations of Qatar's growing community of premium consumers, combining TCL's breakthrough display innovations with immersive Bang & Olufsen audio to create a truly cinematic home entertainment experience.

The launch comes at a time when demand for large-screen premium televisions is growing rapidly across Qatar. Consumers are increasingly looking for bigger displays capable of delivering immersive sports viewing, high-performance gaming, and seamless smart home connectivity. Featuring advanced SQD Mini LED technology, record-breaking brightness, precise light control, and exceptional colour performance, the new TCL lineup is designed to meet these evolving lifestyle demands.

 **Damaan Islamic Insurance Company – Beema (Q.P.S.C.)**
Doha – Qatar

Damaan Islamic Insurance Company – Beema (Q.P.S.C.) was established on 18 October 2009 under Commercial Registration No. 43652, with a paid-up capital of QAR 200,000,000.

Invitation to Attend the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting

Damaan Islamic Insurance Company – Beema (Q.P.S.C.) is pleased to invite its esteemed shareholders to attend the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting, which will be held, on **Monday, 27 July 2026, at 4:00 p.m., at the Company's Head Office in Lusail**. Shareholders may also attend the meeting electronically via Microsoft Teams. Should the required quorum not be achieved, a second meeting will be held on **Monday, 3 August 2026, at 4:00 p.m., at the same venue** and through the same electronic platform, to consider the following agenda:

Agenda of the Extraordinary General Assembly Meeting:

(All agenda items are subject to the approval of the Qatar Central Bank)

1. To approve the amendment of the Company's Articles of Association to align them with the Corporate Governance Code issued by the Qatar Financial Markets Authority pursuant to Resolution No. (5) of 2025.
2. To authorize the Chairman of the Board of Directors, or the Vice Chairman (each acting individually), to sign all documents and instruments necessary to complete the foregoing amendment.

Notes:

- * The right to attend or participate in the meeting is limited to shareholders whose shares are registered in the Company's shareholder register maintained by the Qatar Central Securities Depository, as of the close of trading on the date of the meeting.
- * Shareholders are requested to present valid identification together with any proxy forms or authorization letters (for corporate representatives).
- * If a shareholder is unable to attend in person, he or she may appoint another shareholder as a proxy to attend and participate in the meeting by completing the proxy form or authorization letter available at the Company's Head Office in Lusail and on the Company's website: www.beema.com.qa.
- * Where the shareholder is a legal entity (company, authority, or institution), a duly signed and stamped letter of authorization must be submitted together with a copy of the establishment registration card or commercial registration.
- * This invitation, the accompanying documents, and the proxy/authorization form have been published on the Company's website (www.beema.com.qa) and on the Qatar Stock Exchange website.
- * The proposed amendments to the Company's Articles of Association have also been published on the Company's website and are available for inspection at the Company's Head Office in Lusail.
- * This invitation has been issued in accordance with the provisions of the Commercial Companies Law, the Offering and Listing of Securities Rules, and the Qatar Central Bank Law and the Regulation of Financial Institutions.
- * For further information, please contact: Mr. Saad Khalid Al-Khalidi, Telephone: +974 4405 0507, Email: Investorrelations@beema.com.qa.
- * All resolutions remain subject to the approval of the Qatar Central Bank and the other relevant regulatory authorities.

Sheikh. Jassim Bin Hamad Bin Jassim J. Al Thani
Chairman



Generational suffering: Palestinians live at Israeli settlers' behest in West Bank

Reuters
Jalud, West Bank

Palestinian Mohammad Salameh was building a home for his family in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where his recently engaged son was meant to start married life. Instead, before construction was complete, a group of Israeli settlers seized the property.

Video filmed earlier in the week and verified by Reuters showed at least six settlers moving around on the roof of the two-storey house, which sits below a nearby hill.

Salameh said appeals to the Israeli military and police brought no help. Now he fears his home, which

like many others in the Palestinian territory is surrounded by Israeli settlements and smaller outposts, is lost forever.

Other houses in the area could suffer the same fate, he said.

"Only God knows, if there is law and order then they will leave," Salameh said. "If they succeeded with taking one, then the rest will follow." Reuters was unable to reach the settlers for comment. One of them could be seen walking on the house's roof on Thursday.

The Israeli military said it was checking Reuters' request for comment but had not responded by Friday. The Israeli police did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The seizure of Palestinian land



Palestinians douse the flames of a fire allegedly started by Israeli settlers in a wheat field in the village of Salem, in the occupied West Bank. (AFP)

by settlers is a longstanding feature of life in the West Bank, where about 500,000 Israelis live among roughly 3mn Palestinians. Pal-

estinians have for years reported damage to farmland, vandalism and attacks linked to settlement expansion. A UN inquiry reported last month that Israeli settler attacks on Palestinian villages and agricultural land had surged since 2023, rising by 130%.

Residents of Jalud, Salameh's village, say this week's incident marks another troubling escalation because the settlers seized a house that was still under construction. "They have now moved down to within no more than 100 meters from the last house in Jalud, which is also a house under construction belonging to a resident," said Raed al-Haj Mohammad, head of the village council.

Jalud has faced five major set-

tlers attacks, he said, including the burning of homes, damage to vehicles and the uprooting of trees. Most countries and the UN regard Israeli settlements in the West Bank as illegal under international law, citing the Fourth Geneva Convention's prohibition on transferring a civilian population into occupied territory.

For Salameh, the dispute is painfully personal. Construction on the house stalled after the Gaza war erupted in 2023, when his son could not find work and the family's finances came under strain.

"The neighbour close by has built a two-story house, which they will probably take too, if we lose this house (his) they will lose theirs," he said.

Aoun seeks US support as Israeli strikes persist

AFP
Beirut

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun yesterday urged the US to stand by his country after a recent US-backed framework deal with Israel aiming to permanently end hostilities after the latest Israel-Hezbollah war.

The deal reached in Washington calls for the disarmament of Iran-backed group Hezbollah, a gradual Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the deployment of the Lebanese army there, starting with two "pilot" areas.

Hezbollah has rejected the deal, which does not set a timetable for an Israeli withdrawal. In a congratulatory message to President Donald Trump marking the United States' 250th anniversary of independence, Aoun urged Washington to "keep always standing beside Lebanon's right and just causes, its institutions, army and people."

Aoun expressed hope that Lebanon could "turn the page on wars... and open a new page of hope, peace and stability".

In a message also marking the independence anniversary, the US embassy in Lebanon said on X that "it is with great pride that we stand with the people of Lebanon as they forge a brighter future — one of peace, prosperity, and promise long overdue".

Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 with rocket fire at Israel to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader in US-Israeli strikes days earlier.

Israel responded with heavy airstrikes and a ground invasion of southern Lebanon, where its troops still occupy swathes of territory near the border.

An agreement signed by Tehran and Washington on ending the regional war last month also established a ceasefire in Lebanon,



President Joseph Aoun. (AFP)

which took effect on June 21.

Days later, Lebanon and Israel agreed to the US-backed framework aiming to pave the way for a permanent end to hostilities.

The UN International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said this week that more than 640,000 displaced people have returned home since June 22.

Lebanese authorities have said the war has killed some 4,300 people and displaced more than one mn others.

But many residents are unable to return to towns and villages near the southern border where Israeli troops are still present and many of which have suffered massive destruction.

On a visit to the south yesterday including the heavily damaged city of Nabatieh, Social Affairs Minister Haneen Sayed said authorities were working on a plan including for "prefabricated houses and rent assistance payments" to help people return home, or to areas nearby.

Israeli has kept up intermittent strikes on south Lebanon despite the ceasefire.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency (NNA) said an Israeli strike yesterday on the village of Mansouri wounded one person, also reporting Israeli artillery shelling elsewhere.

Fate of Gaza Strip eclipsed by Middle East conflict

AFP
Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

The Gaza war was the spark that touched off years of Middle East conflict culminating in the US-Israeli war with Iran, but as Washington and Tehran wrangle over terms for peace, the devastated territory's fate seems largely out of mind.

"Ever since the US went to war with Iran, the whole world has forgotten Gaza and its tragedy. We no longer have anyone standing by us," Palestinian Ahmed Jamali, 53, told AFP from the displacement camp in Gaza where he lives.

"We are weak and oppressed, and Israel is doing whatever it wants: killing, destroying and occupying Gaza, while no one in the world lifts a finger."

The apparent inattention paid to the Palestinian territory is all the more striking because it sits at the heart of the chain of events that plunged the region into its most dangerous confrontation in decades.

Hamas' storming of Israel triggered a devastating military response in Gaza, drawing in Tehran-backed allies like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Yemen's Houthis rebels — and eventually Iran itself.

What began as a local war between Israel and Hamas evolved into a regional conflict and, in turn, a direct confrontation between arch-foes Tehran and Washington.

More than two-and-a-half years later, Gaza remains mired in a severe humanitarian crisis, and despite a fragile ceasefire reached between Israel and Hamas in October 2025, efforts to bring the war to a definitive end have



A Palestinian boy makes his way across rubble near a displacement camp in Nuseirat, in the central Gaza Strip. (AFP)

stalled for months.

Although Iranian officials initially spoke of an agreement to end the Middle East war that would encompass the entire region, the preliminary text endorsed by Tehran and Washington last month contains no mention of Gaza.

For analysts, that shows a shift in regional priorities.

"It reflects Hamas's declining strategic value in Iran's eyes," Hugh Lovatt of the European Council on Foreign Relations, told AFP. Iran has long armed and financed Hamas as part of its "axis of resistance" — an array of regional forces opposed to Israel and the US — but Hamas' storming of Israel appears to have fundamentally altered that relationship.

"Iranians do not really care about Gaza. Hamas was an ally, not an Iranian tool," said Israeli military expert Eado Hecht.

"It betrayed them. They did not want war in autumn 2023, it was too early for them."

Michael Milshtein, another Israeli military analyst, argued that

an alternative Palestinian governing authority will replace it.

Neither an international stabilisation force nor a credible transitional mechanism has emerged in the months since the ceasefire took effect, both of which were called for in the US-brokered framework that halted the fighting. Behind the scenes, negotiations over Gaza's future continue in Cairo. The talks bring together Palestinian factions, including Hamas, alongside the Board of Peace set up by US President Donald Trump and regional players including Qatar and Türkiye.

"Trump may want to give this process a chance," said a source close to the negotiations.

"Whether it succeeds remains to be seen."

Although few details have emerged publicly, diplomatic and security sources told AFP that negotiators are working on a roadmap combining the gradual disarmament of Hamas with the creation of transitional governing authorities for Gaza.

Israeli media has reported that the government would reject such a framework.

"For now, this diplomatic process exists only around the negotiating table," Lovatt said.

"There has been progress, but reconstruction remains a distant prospect, and nothing is changing for the people on the ground."

With diplomacy stalled, concerns are mounting that the fighting could yet resume.

Israeli media have reported military preparations for a possible summer 2026 offensive against Hamas should political negotiations fail.

But military expert Hecht cautioned against assuming that contingency planning meant another war was inevitable.

Israel must not scupper US-Iran deal: Erdogan

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday that Middle East peace efforts could not succeed without regional backing and that Israel must not be allowed to "dynamite" the US-Iran peace deal. Speaking alongside Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Istanbul, Erdogan said: "No solution that does not take strength from the will and contributions of regional countries can be lasting." Turkey, a Nato member and Iran's neighbour, has repeatedly accused Israel of trying to undermine the US-Iran deal mediated by Pakistan, and has condemned Israeli operations in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. "We are closely following the Israeli administration's attempts to dynamite the (US-Iran) deal... The current war-addicted Israeli government must not be allowed to drown our geography in the smell of gunpowder and blood again," Erdogan said. Erdogan also said Türkiye aimed to deepen co-operation with Pakistan in energy, transport, critical minerals, information technology and defence, while pursuing a bilateral trade target of \$5bn. Earlier yesterday, officials from both countries attended a business forum in Istanbul. Turkish Energy Minister Alparslan Bayraktar said Turkish firms wanted to contribute to projects in Pakistan and share Turkey's energy-sector expertise as Pakistan undergoes a transformation of its electricity sector. (Reuters)

ARPM Tender Committee announces the following Tender

Tender No.	(Tender Title) Scope of work	Tender Fee	Tender Bond	Opening Date	Closing Date
ARPM/261/2026/TEN/DOH	Supply, Installation, and Migration Services for Application Delivery Controller (ADC)	500	5,000	05-Jul-26	02-Aug-26
ARPM/262/2026/TEN/DOH	Supply of Engine Oil and Coolant for Generators at Banana Island Resort Doha on Call off Basis - 2 Year Term	500	5,000	05-Jul-26	02-Aug-26
ARPM/263/2026/TEN/DOH	Provision of Female CCTV Operators Services at Wedding Halls in AL Rufaa, AL Wakrah and AL Dhayeen - 2 Year Term	1000	10,000	05-Jul-26	02-Aug-26

- Interested parties can collect copies of the tender documents from ARPM Purchasing Department, via email to m.aseef@arpm.com.qa and j.castillo@arpm.com.qa during working hours 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (Fri & Sat Closed)
- A payment of a non-refundable document's fees should be deposited in cash to:
 - Beneficiary Name: Al-Rayyan Projects Management (ARPM)
 - Account No. 0013-022375-004 (Qatar National Bank)
 - IBAN No. QA86QNBAA00000000013022375004

And the original deposit receipt should be submitted upon receiving of the terms and conditions.

- A tender bond (as stated above), issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar and valid for 180 days from the closing date should accompany tenders. **The executed tender bond should be included with the technical offer.**
- All tenderers MUST collect their original bonds from ARPM – Purchasing department upon expiry of the Tender Bond, unless alternative instructions are issued by ARPM.
- Proposal to be submitted in sealed envelopes as per the RFP requirements in both HARD COPY & SOFT COPY on CD or USB.
- Copies of valid **Company Commercial Registration, Computer Card & Authorization Letter** must be submitted in order to collect the tender documents.
- The successful tenderer is required to submit a performance bond issued by a bank operating in the State of Qatar equivalent to 10% of the total contract sum and shall be valid for a period expiring 180 days after contract expiry.
- Offers should be valid for 180 days commencing from the closing date (as stated above).
- ARPM has the right to increase or decrease the scope of services by 20% with the same terms and conditions.
- ARPM is not bound to accept the lowest tender or any other tender and is under no obligation to show any reasons thereof.
- Bids should be submitted not later than 12:00 noon on the closing date and must be deposited into the Box, provided in the ARPM Purchasing office, located at the 9th Floor, ARPM, Head office and should be in sealed envelopes addressed to the Chairman - Tender Committee, quoting the Tender Number and Subject.
- Deadline for accepting requests and inquiries, 7 days prior to closing date.
- Offers arriving thereafter may not be considered.

CHAIRMAN – TENDER COMMITTEE
TEL: 40341804



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

ANNOUNCEMENT FOR TENDERS

No.	Document No.	Description	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
1	QC/TC/SAF/122/26	Five Years Call-Off Supply Agreement of PPE's & Safety Consumables for Q-Chem, Q-Chem II, RLOC & RLP	QAR 619,250/-	15:00 hrs. on 28 th July 2026
2	QC/TC/SAF/123/26	Five Years Call-Off Supply Agreement of Safety Signboard, Stickers and Cards for Q-Chem, Q-Chem II, RLOC & RLP	QAR 81,900/-	15:00 hrs. on 28 th July 2026
3	QC/TC/M/120/26	Catalyst and Desiccant Replacement Services at Q-Chem, Q-Chem II, RLOC and RLP on Call-Off Basis for Five Years	QAR 591,500/-	15:00 hrs. on 13 th August 2026
4	QC/TC/MAT/116/26	Materials and Laboratory Samples Local Delivery Services for Q-Chem, Q-Chem II, RLOC and RLP on Call-Off Basis for Five Years	QAR 1,228,500/-	15:00 hrs. on 19 th August 2026

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

- Pay to Bank and send the original receipt with authorization letter via email. For each tender pay a non-refundable document fee of QR 1,000/- Payable to Q-Chem, Bank Account (Contract Services - Tender) - Account Number 001-242007-003 with HSBC Bank) and submit the original receipt with an Authorization letter on Tenderer Company Letterhead with ID copy of the Tenderer representative via email to tdadvertisment@qchem.com.qa In the authorization letter Tenderer shall nominate a single focal point with contact mobile number, official email address, office number, fax number for the communications related to this tender for the transfer and receipt of the tender documents. **The Bank receipt must indicate the tender number and the tenderer name (company name).**
- Date and Time of Tender documents Issuance via email. Tender documents issuance from 5th July 2026 to 9th July 2026, 8am-12noon.
- Proposal details. Proposals should be valid for 240 days from the tender closing date.
- Submission of Proposals. Guidelines for Electronic Bids Submission is attached in the tender documents.



Mourners hold portraits of Iran's slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at the start of his funeral ceremonies at the Grand Mosalla in Tehran yesterday. (AFP)

Mourners gather at the Grand Mosalla to pay their final respects to Iran's slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei at the start of his funeral ceremonies in Tehran yesterday. (AFP)

Huge crowds throng Tehran for Khamenei funeral ceremonies

Authorities believe the ceremonies will mobilise more than 10mn people in the capital alone

AFP
Tehran

Vast crowds of Iranians loyal to the Islamic republic massed in Tehran yesterday for the start of marathon funeral ceremonies for supreme leader Ali Khamenei, with authorities seeking to send a message of defiance after the war with the US and Israel.

Khamenei, who had ruled Iran since 1989 and pursued a course of confrontation with the West while crushing dissent at home, was killed aged 86 along with several members of his family and top officials in an Israeli strike on the first day of the war on February 28.

Mourners thronged the Grand Mosalla religious complex in the Iranian capital where his body is lying in state, AFP correspondents said.

There was still no sign, however, of his son and successor Mojtaba Khamenei, who has not been seen in public since being named supreme leader.

Other top Iranian officials who survived the war welcomed foreign dignitaries who paid their respects at the coffin on Friday before the complex opened to the public.

Sprayed with mists of water to keep cool in temperatures that may nudge 40C in Tehran over the next few days, thousands of women and men — strictly segregated by gender — filled the vast complex.

They beat their chests in a sign of grief, overlooked by a giant portrait of the former leader.

The coffins of Khamenei, with his black turban on top, and four other family members were placed

at the front on a raised dais, AFP photographs showed.

Chants of "death to America" and "revenge, revenge" echoed around the venue.

"The leader was a father to us all. With his passing, we have all been left orphaned... He was truly unique and peerless," said Mohammad Mirsalehi, 38, a cleric.

Hamidreza Shabani, a student, 18, added: "We must rise up and, God willing, avenge the blood of our leader."

Authorities believe the ceremonies will mobilise more than 10mn people in the capital alone.

But before they began, Tehran was quieter than usual, with many normally busy streets free of the capital's notorious traffic and some residents telling AFP in Paris that they had decided to leave the city for the duration of the ceremonies.

After five weeks of intense hostilities, the Middle East war is on hold after a ceasefire and an initial accord with the US. But both Washington and Tehran have

warned they are ready to resume fighting at any time.

The killing of Khamenei after more than three-and-a-half decades in power created a new era in the Islamic republic shadowed by uncertainty.

His funeral is being viewed outside Iran as a test of support for the government, with authorities already shaken by mass protests in January that rights groups say were quelled by a crackdown that left thousands dead.

The funeral ceremonies will see the coffin remain three days in Tehran, before moving Tuesday to the clerical city of Qom, then Wednesday to neighbouring Iraq, before burial on Thursday in Khamenei's northeastern home city of Mashhad.

He will be buried with his infant granddaughter, son-in-law, daughter and Mojtaba Khamenei's wife Zahra Haddad Adel, who were all killed in the February 28 strikes.

Delegations from Hamas and Hezbollah groups met with



Volunteers hand out water as they stand in front of a portrait of Iran's slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei while mourners gather at the Grand Mosalla to pay their final respects at the start of his funeral ceremonies in Tehran yesterday. (AFP)

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi yesterday while in town for the funeral ceremonies, state media reported.

The Hezbollah delegation was led by senior official and former minister Mohammed Fneish and included families of killed and wounded members, the group told Lebanese media, while Hamas said it was represented by the head of its political bureau, Mohammed Darwish, among others.

The coming days will be closely watched for signs of Mojtaba Khamenei, who has communicated only by written statements and is

said to have been wounded in the same strikes, though the extent of his injuries was never made clear.

Significant security measures have been imposed, with roads blocked and people forced sometimes to walk several kilometres to attend the largest-scale public event in Iran since the burial of Khamenei's predecessor Ruhollah Khomeini in 1989.

Authorities will also want the event to go smoothly, deeply aware of the risk of crowd crushes that have marred similar events in the past, with TV broadcasting guidelines on how to stay safe.

Two award-winning Female Culinary Voices Shape Rosewood Doha's First Anniversary Celebration

Rosewood Doha marks its first year with a month-long culinary programme in partnership with Chef Noof Al Marri and Chef Janice Wong, bringing together Qatari breakfast traditions and contemporary pastry artistry throughout July.

As part of its first anniversary celebrations, Rosewood Doha introduces a month-long culinary programme in collaboration with two award-winning female chefs, each bringing her own distinctive expression of flavour, craft and storytelling to the occasion. Taking place throughout July, the programme brings together Chef Noof Al Marri and Chef Janice Wong in two thoughtfully curated collaborations across Mila and Butterfly Patisserie. Together, their work reflects the many ways food can carry memory, creativity and a sense of place, from the warmth of Qatari breakfast traditions to the artistry of contemporary pastry.

Raseef Regag x Mila

From 1 to 31 July, Mila will welcome Chef Noof Al Marri for a special breakfast collaboration celebrating one of Qatar's most nostalgic culinary rituals: regag. A respected chef and restaurateur with over two decades of experience, Chef Noof is widely regarded as one of the leading voices in Qatari cuisine. In partnership with QC+, she is helping champion Qatar's culinary heritage and share it with new audiences, while remaining deeply connected to the traditions that continue to shape the nation's table.

For Rosewood Doha's anniversary month, Chef Noof will bring her very own Raseef Regag to Mila through a dedicated breakfast corner designed to feel generous, familiar and full of character. Guests will be invited to discover a selection of regag flavours ranging from the classic to the contemporary, including cheese, egg, zaatar, labneh zaatar with pomegranate, feta muhammara, turkey and cheese, hardal dates, Nutella and mehyawaa.

Alongside the regag, Chef Noof will also present her much-loved shakshuka, complemented by karak and local refreshments that pair naturally with the experience. The collaboration brings together the energy of Qatari street food culture with the comfort of a morning gathering, adding a deeply local and personal expression to Mila's breakfast ritual.

As the founder of Desert Rose Café at the National Museum of Qatar and Raseef Regag, and through her ongoing relationship with QC+, Chef Noof has become a trusted ambassador for Qatari cuisine, known for honouring traditional recipes while presenting them with a contemporary spirit. Her presence at Mila marks a meaningful first chapter in Rosewood Doha's anniversary programming, beginning the month-long celebration with a story of heritage, memory and the women shaping Qatar's culinary voice today.

Janice Wong x Butterfly Patisserie

Carrying the anniversary celebration from the warmth of breakfast to the artistry of pastry, Butterfly Patisserie will present a limited-edition cake created in collaboration with Chef Janice Wong, the Singapore-based award-winning chef, artist and chocolatier known for pushing the boundaries of dessert, chocolate and edible art.

Named Asia's Best Pastry Chef in 2013 and 2014, and recipient of the La Liste Pastry Innovation Award in 2024, Chef Janice brings two decades of fine dining, confectionery and edible art experience to Rosewood Doha's first anniversary. Her work moves between flavour, design and imagination, transforming pastry into a medium for storytelling.

Created especially for the occasion, Doha Sunrise interprets Qatar's beloved karak chai through six distinct textures. The cake brings together a pistachio feuilletine base for crunch, karak chai ganache and sponge for the tea's spiced amber depth, ruby pomegranate loom compote for brightness and acidity, vanilla mousse for silk, and karak chai mousse in a deep tan finish.

Completed with saffron threads, fresh pomegranate seeds and slivered pistachio, the cake reveals a cross-section of beige, amber and cream, punctuated by the jewel-like red of pomegranate. Designed for the understated setting of Butterfly Patisserie, Doha Sunrise is warming, patient and refined, created to be enjoyed alongside an afternoon karak or the first coffee of the day throughout Rosewood Doha's anniversary month.

Available throughout July at Butterfly Patisserie, it offers guests a sweet and memorable way to take part in Rosewood Doha's first anniversary celebration.



Available from 1 to 31 July, Rosewood Doha's anniversary culinary programme invites guests to experience the hotel's first year through flavour, memory and imagination. From Chef Noof Al Marri's Raseef Regag breakfast experience at Mila to Chef Janice Wong's limited-edition anniversary cake at Butterfly Patisserie, the month-long celebration honours two women shaping culinary stories with craft, character and a distinct connection to place.

US to invest \$1.3bn in Tanzania health sector

The US has signed a memorandum of understanding with Tanzania to invest more than \$1.3bn in its health sector over the next five years, the latest in a series of deals that have caused controversy in some African countries.

The agreement, signed late on Wednesday, is similar to those struck with countries including Rwanda, Kenya, and Uganda under US President Donald Trump's "America First Global Health Strategy", designed to make poorer nations more self-reliant as the US has dismantled foreign aid programmes.

The pact says that in return for more than \$1.3bn in investment, Tanzania has committed to investing \$1.8bn in the health sector over the same period, according to a statement from the US embassy in Tanzania.

"This joint investment reflects both countries' commitment to preventing the spread of infectious diseases, and strengthening Tanzania's capacity to finance, manage, and self-sustain essential health services," the statement said.

In some countries the pacts have run into resistance over concerns about conditions like allowing access to minerals and sharing personal health data and bio materials.

Zambia has rejected demands that such a deal be tied to US access to Zambian minerals while in Kenya a court in December suspended part of its deal until it hears a data privacy case filed by a consumer protection group.

Tanzanian Health Minister Mohamed

Mchengerwa said the agreement did not include the sharing of laboratory samples with the US.

"We did not enter into a specimen-sharing agreement," Mchengerwa said during the signing ceremony, according to a video on the health ministry's Instagram account. (Reuters)

WANTED – EXECUTIVE MANPOWER SUPPLY COMPANY FOR ACQUISITION

A leading Qatar-based investment group is looking to acquire an established Executive Manpower Supply Company with active operations in Qatar.

Preference will be given to companies supplying Nurses, IT Professionals, Engineers, Healthcare Staff, Administrative Personnel, and other skilled professionals to Government and Private Sector clients.

Existing contracts, valid licenses, and operational business are preferred. All inquiries and negotiations will be treated with complete confidentiality.

Interested owners or authorized representatives may contact:
Email: business.01qatar@gmail.com
Mobile: 3073 5908

GULF HELICOPTERS COMPANY (GHC) Q.P.S.C. Invites prospective suppliers to participate in the following tender

Tender Reference and Description	Submission of information & willingness for bidding	Tender fee (non-refundable)	Tender publication	Tender Bond	Bid Closing Date
RFQ-GHC/SCO/022/2026 Provision of SAP Support Services (3 years)	Until 9 th July 2026	QAR 750/- Until 12 th July 2026 12:00 pm	14 th July 2026	QAR 40,000. 00	2 nd August 2026 12:00 pm

Brief Scope: GHC invites Certified SAP Platinum or Gold Partners to submit their bids for the Provision of SAP Support Services (3 years). The contract covers the provision of Application Management Services (AMS) Agreement, provide exhaustive support, including but not limited to troubleshooting, problem resolution, maintenance, enhancements, and support packages, enhancement packages and upgrade services for our existing implemented and future modules on SAP S/4Hana (On Premises) and SuccessFactors (Cloud). Services must be delivered based on mutually agreed SLA, without any interruption to aviation safety or operational continuity.

i. Interested bidders to communicate their willingness to bid and send contact details to GHC email (procurement@gulhelicopters.com) indicating company name, address, telephone, official email, authorized company representative, etc. latest by 9th July 2026.
GHC tender reference numbers and description must be mentioned in the email.

ii. Non-refundable tender fee of QAR 750/- is payable to GHC, only through QNB account # 0013-036531-001 IBAN # QA80QNBAD00000000013036531001 via online or at any QNB branch. Interested bidders shall attach the evidence of the tender fee payment and send it via bidder company official email to GHC email: procurement@gulhelicopters.com, latest by 12th July 2026, 12:00 pm for GHC approval.

iii. Tender package will be sent via email to the confirmed participants from tender@gulhelicopters.com by 14th July 2026. GHC shall provide the necessary instructions and guidelines for the bid submission.

iv. Original of the Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee) must be submitted by hand to the following address:
Gulf Helicopters Company,
P O Box: 811, Al Areesh Street,
Ras Abu Abboud, Doha, Qatar
Tel: +974 44 333 888
Attention: Supply Chain Manager

Attach a copy of tender bond to the technical offer. Offer without Tender Bond will not be considered.

v. For any clarifications on the above, please send your queries with tender reference and description addressed to Supply Chain Mail to email procurement@gulhelicopters.com

vi. For the submissions of technical and commercial proposals shall be submitted to tender@gulhelicopters.com

Note: Bidders who are not registered in GHC will be requested to complete the supplier registration process during the tendering period.

US sanctions hindered Brazil probe into alleged drug gang associate: Police head

A Brazilian federal police operation targeting suspects with alleged ties to the PCC drug gang was accelerated after the US sanctioned two suspects this week, helping one of them evade capture and hindering the investigation, Federal Police Director-General Andrei Rodrigues said last week on Friday.

“Had the designation not occurred, the outcome might have been different, and we would have located the individual,” Rodrigues told journalists on Friday. “So, in

my view, it caused a setback to the investigation.”

Federal police did not identify the suspects but said in a statement that the operation aimed to dismantle a criminal group accused of laundering proceeds from international drug trafficking.

Investigators said the suspects allegedly ran a sophisticated network that moved and laundered money through cryptocurrency transfers, cash transportation, high-value banking transactions and transfers between individuals and companies. A preliminary

analysis identified more than 10bn reais (\$1.92bn) in financial transactions linked to the scheme, federal police said.

Earlier this week, the US Office of Foreign Assets Control added two Brazilian nationals to the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List, alleging Victor Henrique de Oliveira Shimada had links to Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), one of Brazil’s biggest criminal organizations, and Stella Stefanie Nunes Henrique de Oliveira had links to Shimada.

Oliveira was arrested in the op-

eration, two sources close to the investigation told Reuters. Shimada remains at large, one of the sources said.

A third person familiar with the probe said planning for Friday’s raid began in March and was authorised to go forward last month. Police rushed to bring the operation forward when they got news of the sanctions, the same person added, but Wednesday’s US announcement likely alerted the suspect, allowing him to make efforts to evade it.

The same person said Brazilian

investigators had alerted their US counterparts before the sanctions were announced that the suspects were being investigated.

The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Shimada’s lawyers said in a statement they had not yet accessed the court records and would review the case and official information to determine the appropriate course of action. Reuters could not immediately reach Oliveira’s representatives.

The US designated PCC and ri-

val gang Comando Vermelho as Foreign Terrorist Organisations, effective last month.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva’s administration has sought to avoid such designations, fearing they could eventually open the door to US military action or sanctions on banks that unknowingly do business with gang members.

The US sanctions also targeted three little-known Brazilian companies, two of them in the financial sector, for their alleged links to one of the sanctioned individuals.

Trump’s shadow looms large over USA’s 250th anniversary

AFP
Washington

Millions of Americans celebrated the country’s 250th birthday yesterday – a landmark celebration that comes at a time of deep political division, with a president determined to put his stamp on the festivities.

Washington’s traditional fireworks display on the National Mall – lined with monuments celebrating the nation’s Founding Fathers – has been super-sized, and is being touted as the biggest ever.

President Donald Trump has added a programme of roaring military flyovers – and an unusual campaign-style political rally – for July Fourth, which marks the anniversary of the 1776 signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The national holiday comes in the middle of a brutal heat wave, with some 160mn Americans under extreme weather warnings, wreaking havoc with planned block parties and barbecues in towns and cities across much of the country.

With temperatures in the US capital expected to reach 39C – and the heat index soaring to 43C-46C, the Independence Day parade in Washington was canceled.

Trump, who turned 80 last month, remains undeterred by the sweltering temperatures.

“It’s going to be approximately 107 degrees out, and I’m going to go and I’m going to make a really long speech – just to show that I can do anything,” Trump said in the run-up to the revelry.

Patrick Thompson, a teacher in the Washington suburb of Alexandria, Virginia, said he would celebrate with a typical barbecue – but added he would not attend



British Virgin Islands’ STV Vela, Uruguay’s Capitan Miranda sail during the Sail 250 Parade of Ships in New York Harbor as part of 250th anniversary of US Independence yesterday. (Reuters)

the national fireworks show.

“We still want to celebrate the country and be patriotic and it’s exciting,” Thompson, a father of two teenagers, told AFP.

“But it’s so weird because it’s got this... strange mar over it because of Trump and just like the 250 thing that turns out to not be what anyone hoped.”

Pope Leo XIV – the Catholic Church’s first US pope, who has sparred with Trump over his administration’s immigration crackdown – used the occasion to say that his vision of the American dream includes an inclusive society.

“Defending human life also includes welcoming, protecting and assisting immigrants, whose hopes, sacrifices and contribution have formed part of the history of this country from its very begin-

ning,” the Chicago-born pontiff said.

In London, King Charles III said Britain and the country formed from its former colonies would “continue to defend our shared values.”

– Celebration and reflection – For Americans, the 250th anniversary festivities offer a moment for reflection as well as celebration.

After two and a half centuries of triumphs and tragedies, slavery and freedom, civil war and world wars, multiple surveys indicate a nation divided about where it is and where it’s going.

A Quinnipiac University Poll showed 61% of Americans thought the US was not living up to the ideals stated in the Declaration of Independence – though most Republicans think it does, and most

Democrats think it doesn’t.

Outside Washington, New York is hosting an international parade of tall ships, with Vice President JD Vance in attendance, flyovers and its own massive fireworks display.

In Philadelphia, lines formed early despite the heat to see the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was signed.

Concerts will be staged from Boston to Los Angeles.

For Karisa Tavassoli, an Iranian American educator in Atlanta, the basics of the American dream still ring true.

“I have safety, I have freedom of speech, I have freedom of religion, I can wear whatever I want as a woman,” she told AFP.

“There are many flaws here, but we have something very special that’s worthy of protecting.”



President Donald Trump disembarks the new Air Force One in Belle Fourche-Cheyenne Valleys, South Dakota. (Reuters)

American identity under ‘renewed attack’: Trump

US President Donald Trump lashed out Friday at what he called a fresh threat against the country’s identity, taking aim at domestic “radicals and extremists” on the eve of America’s 250th birthday.

In a speech dripping with patriotism, Trump lauded American exceptionalism and praised its past leaders, speaking at Mount Rushmore with its giant carved heads of four of his legendary predecessors.

But he added at the foot of the iconic monument: “As we approach this magnificent anniversary, we see our American identity under a renewed attack.”

He charged that there was “a resurgence of the communist menace in our land.”

It is a theme that Trump has repeatedly hammered home in recent weeks, as the anti-establishment left of the Democratic Party carried a surge of US primary victories.

The president has cast the rise of the left ahead of November’s midterm elections that “communists” are on the rampage, posing a major “threat” to the country. Trump said Friday: “In recent years there’s been an undeniable attempt to change this exceptional character, to beat the American spirit out of us, alienate us from our history.”

While his language fell short of the more violent anti-immigrant rhetoric he has regularly wielded in past speeches, the underlying

message was clear enough.

“You do not have to be born here, but you do have to love what we have built,” he said.

The location of Trump’s speech – a landmark upon which many suspect he would like to see his own face carved into rock – strikes a fitting image for a president who views himself as being one of the greats.

Trump’s supporters have even introduced legislation to have his likeness chiseled beside those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt.

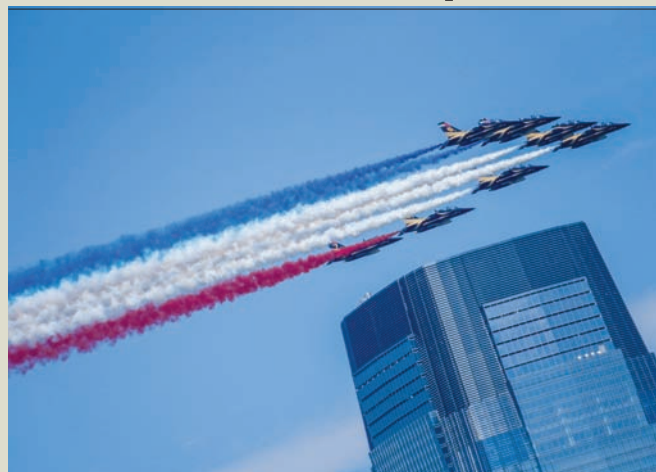
At every stage, the 80-year-old Republican has sought to turn the United States’ big anniversary into a celebration of himself. For Trump – the billionaire former reality TV star who became the consummate political showman – taking center stage is in his blood.

But America under Trump is deeply divided at what should be a time of national unity.

Trump’s approval ratings are near historic lows, fuelled largely by the war in Iran and the skyrocketing cost of living. His Democratic opponents have castigated him over his immigration policies, family’s growing wealth and attempts to expand presidential power.

Trump’s attempts to stamp his political brand on America’s 250th anniversary have, meanwhile, not always gone to plan. (AFP)

250th celebrations of Independence



Fursan Al Emarat, the aerobatic team of the United Arab Emirates Air Force and Air Defence, fly over Sail 4th 250 in New York. (AFP)

SC decides to keep Bolsonaro under house arrest

Brazil’s Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes has ruled that former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro can remain under house arrest due to health concerns, a court decision showed on Friday.

Bolsonaro, 71, has been serving a 27-year prison sentence since November for plotting a coup after losing the 2022 election to President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. The defense successfully sought to keep the former president under house arrest, arguing that Bolsonaro would receive better medical care at home given his health problems. The former



Jair Bolsonaro at his residence in Brasilia. (AFP/File Photo)

president, who was stabbed on the campaign trail in 2018, has faced major health issues in recent years.

At this time, the continuation of humanitarian house arrest ap-

pears reasonable, appropriate and proportionate,” Moraes said in the decision, noting Bolsonaro has shown health improvement serving the sentence at home.

In March, Moraes granted the

former president permission to serve 90 days under house arrest on medical grounds after he was hospitalised with an acute form of pneumonia.

The new ruling is a relief for Bolsonaro and follows an incident in which a firearm owned by the former president was seized from a member of his security detail during a police checkpoint last month.

Earlier this week, Prosecutor General Paulo Gonet, in an opinion requested by Moraes, recommended keeping the former president under house arrest despite the firearm incident. (Reuters)

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, PRIYA ELSA THOMAS THOMAS KURIAN
holder of
INDIA Passport No. S6908834
QID No. 29135641269
hereby change my name
from
PRIYA ELSA THOMAS THOMAS KURIAN
to
PRIYA ELSA THOMAS

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, ADNAN MIAR UDDIN
holder of
BANGLADESH Passport No. EE0948269
QID No. 28405028263
hereby change my name
from
ADNAN MIAR UDDIN
to
ADNAN ALAM

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, ALAA MARWAN ELJABI
holder of
Lebanon Passport No. LR4039497
QID No. 29642200337
hereby change my name
from
ALAA MARWAN ELJABI
to
ALAA ELJABI

Any objection, please contact
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within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

White House meeting with Netanyahu likely next week: Trump

US President Donald Trump said in an interview with Axios yesterday that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had asked him for a meeting at the White House, and that it could take place as early as next week after the Nato summit in Türkiye. The two leaders have seemingly held differing stances on the approach to the war with Iran – especially when the war spiralled into a regional conflict with Iran provoking the ire of US allies in the Middle East by attacking targets that it claimed were US bases and assets in the region. When Trump was put under pressure by Democrats to justify his war expenditure, he seemed dismayed at the Israeli prime minister’s insistence on aggression while he himself was showing restraint. Amid military escalation in Lebanon, Trump said: “You’re [Netanyahu] crazy. You’d be in prison if it weren’t for me” and was recently quoted as saying by Axios that he gets along with Netanyahu “very good” and that the latter knows “who is the boss”. (Reuters)

Catastrophe: Rumours feed illusions of life under Venezuela quake ruins

AFP
Caraballeda, Venezuela

The rumour began Thursday: A small child was trapped alive under the earthquake rubble of a building in Venezuela.

By Friday, the story spun into a dispute among residents of the Tahiti building, pitting those believing in a potential rescue against others desperate to dig for bodies of their loved ones.

The Tahiti Residence has highlighted how desperation is fraying nerves of survivors and relatives more than a week after two earthquakes left more than 2,600 dead and caused widespread destruction, with thousands still missing.

Several rescue teams visited the site of the Tahiti on Thursday, where the residential block lay in a pile of slabs. After scanning ruins, teams concluded on Friday there

were no more signs of life.

Words of mouth again fueled hopes of saving someone else and spurred more rescue efforts, even attracting influencers who posted videos on social media from the quake's epicenter in Caraballeda, in La Guaira state.

But an American rescuer told AFP they deployed dogs and listened with a high-intensity sound detector, without success.

Hours later, a Venezuelan volunteer claimed to have heard screams in the early morning and told AFP that the search dogs couldn't locate the boy because he was "too deep down."

Jose Francisco Liendo, who has been looking for the remains of his father and sister inside the Tahiti, said the search went viral on social media as unconfirmed reports of a survivor spread.

"They said supposedly there's a boy who's alive, that the boy is



A woman, searching for her son trapped under the rubble, react at the site of a collapsed building in Caraballeda, La Guaira. (Reuters)

breathing, then that the boy is urinating, then that he hit something" to signal, Liendo said. "They don't tell the whole truth. I mean, they're playing with the families' pain."

Katherine Lendoiro, who accompanied the family of the missing child, confirmed to AFP on Friday a Spanish rescue report showed results had been negative. Aloa Gonzalez has spent night

and day by the ruins of the Tahiti, hoping to recover the bodies of her sister and her aunt.

She already buried her parents. But dashed hopes about the recovery of a living child made the search even more unbearable.

"There were several versions regarding the survivors. First, they said they couldn't reach the people, that there was no way, no way to get through," she said.

Then, she said, some said that they didn't know if it was a boy or a girl, a man or a woman. Some said supposedly there had been a knock, a sound, that there was 70% certainty there was life. "70% certain? We're all going to do our best to get that life out," she said.

From the double earthquake that shook La Guaira and Caracas, 6,462 people have been rescued, the last one on Thursday, in what was considered a near-miraculous operation. Chances of survival di-

minish considerably after 72 hours.

That rescue of security guard Hernán Gil came after almost eight days under the rubble, but rescuers had made contact with him days earlier and supplied him with water and oxygen through tubes.

The government has said that the deceased will be identified, and interim president Delcy Rodríguez ruled out resorting to mass graves.

There is no official count of missing people so far, although the UN estimates that the number could reach 50,000.

La Guaira suffered complete destruction of more than 170 buildings. For Gonzalez, she would have been happy to see the rescue of a boy after the death of her parents, and while still trying to recover her sister's body.

"If they rescued the boy, I would be the happiest person in the world," she said.

"But then all the rescuers left."

Leap of faith sees rescuers persevere against all odds

AFP
La Guaira, Venezuela

Just when Pedro Cordido thought all was lost, he heard Erick Roa's voice.

Cordido's eyes can't help but radiate with gratitude when he speaks about the volunteer rescuers who pulled him from the ruins of Venezuela's double earthquake, which killed more than 2,600 people.

He spent nearly 30 hours trapped in the fetal position after his building collapsed.

In seconds, the earth swallowed the 12-story structure, and he watched as Hernando, his adopted son, and Hernando's wife were sucked into a kind of dust devil, powerless to do anything to save them.

The darkness was total; there was no air. He couldn't move in any direction, pinned with sharp fragments all around.

Then he heard Roa, who is one of a group of five volunteer rescuers who gathered in La Guaira, a popular beach resort 40 kms from Caracas, to search for survivors after the violent 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes that struck on June 24.

A woman alerted them that she had just heard screams.

It was Cordido. The rescuers formed a human chain in the pitch black, using only a small flashlight. Roa and his companions initially crawled and then cut a hole to reach the site.

"There wasn't a single ray of light coming through a crack in the rubble; despair threatened



People carrying belongings walk past a mural of Simon Bolivar in La Guaira, Venezuela. (Reuters)

to overwhelm me," Cordido told AFP from his daughter's house in Caracas.

Roa, a former military nurse, spoke to him for four and a half hours during the rescue. He tried to keep him awake, hoping he would stay alive. It worked.

Cordido suffered lacerations and is being cared for by a neighbor who is a nurse and visits him daily. Of course, Cordido has not been the only one found under the rubble.

"It's been exhausting, crazy," Roa says about the countless hours they've worked both to find survivors and to recover bodies and return them to their families.

Official figures indicate that nearly 6,500 people have been

rescued, many by volunteer teams.

On his index finger, Roa has a tattoo: "Faith in God."

Two years ago, he went through one of the hardest moments of his life; he attempted to take his own life, and an evangelical pastor intervened to stop him.

From then on, he says he understood that he had a purpose: to help others.

When the earthquake struck, Roa was resting at home in Caracas. A nephew texted him to say his ex-girlfriend was missing in La Guaira. He got on his motorcycle and set off to look for her.

She turned up safe and sound, but Roa decided to stay after seeing the magnitude of the tragedy.

He then met Emmanuel Andrade, Jose Luis Fonseca, Carlos Alexander Marval Balza and other rescuers working without sophisticated equipment — but convinced that all they needed were hands to pull lives from the rubble.

Roa says he was "desperate" to help save Cordido.

"I always talked to him, telling him, 'Stay still, you're coming out with me,'" he recalls telling Cordido as they struggled to reach the spot where he was trapped.

Cordido says the phrase that gave him a second chance is etched in his mind: "Is anyone there?" He shouted for help.

"With all his love, one of them told me, 'Pedro, I came from Caracas, and I came because I had to save you. God told me I had to save you. I love you,'" the survivor says, recalling Roa's words.

"How wonderful," Cordido recounts between sobs. "Without any specialised equipment to move the rocks, they used their bare hands to remove them until they could pull me out."

After leaving the hospital where he spent several days stabilising, Cordido shared a message of gratitude with the man he calls his angel.

"Brother, I truly love you. My God, your words when you found me, the way you acted... I truly have no words to thank you. There aren't any," he says in a WhatsApp voice message.

"I never thought I would be rescued, and you arrived like an angel, opened the door, and said, 'I'm here to help you... I love you, brother. I will love you forever.'"

President-elect Fujimori hails 'new chapter' for Peru

AFP
Lima

Peru's conservative president-elect Keiko Fujimori on Friday said a "new chapter" was beginning as the highest electoral authority confirmed her narrow victory.

The formal declaration of Fujimori's win brings one of Peru's tightest leadership contests of all time to a close and ushers in the Andean nation's ninth president in a decade.

"I proclaim Miss Keiko Sofia Fujimori Higuchi as President of the Republic, and Mister Luis Fernando Galarreta Velarde as First Vice President of the Republic," election chief Roberto Burneo stated at a ceremony in Lima.

"Peru needs to restore order in its streets, in its institutions, and in the State," Fujimori said from her party's headquarters in the capital.

"Beyond the joy over this result, we are not going to wait another minute, because we are here to solve the country's problems and start making decisions," she added. "We know that citizens expect results."

The daughter of the late, disgraced ex-leader Alberto Fujimori will succeed interim leader Jose Maria Balcazar on July 28 and govern until 2031.

The 51-year-old inherits the task of running a country hit by powerful organized crime gangs and chronic political instability.

"A new chapter begins," she wrote on X.

Having unsuccessfully run for president three times, she won with 50.135% of the vote over leftist rival Roberto Sanchez's 49.865% on her fourth try.

Her father Alberto, who ruled from 1990 to 2000, won praise for crushing Maoist rebels and taming hyperinflation.

But he was later disgraced, exiled and jailed for corruption and crimes against humanity committed in the name of fighting what he considered terrorism.

"He wiped out terrorism, that's why I call him Papa Fujimori. Thanks to him there are paved roads, schools in the countryside where nobody used to go," Marta Palomino Quispe, who was a teenager when Fujimori senior governed Peru, told reporters.

Sanchez has alleged irregularities in the count, but election authorities have already thrown out his request to annul the results.

The defeated candidate is now challenging them at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. Regional right-wing leaders have congratulated Fujimori on her victory, including Argentina's Javier Milei and Chile's Jose Antonio Kast.

Some positivity and optimism could be sensed in the words of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio when he said: "The Trump Administration looks forward to deepening collaboration with the Fujimori Administration to advance security co-operation and to strengthen bilateral co-operation on investment and trade in our region."

"It will be fantastic to be able to share this presidency with a woman of your qualities, your character, your patriotism, and your courage, Keiko," Colombian hard-right president-elect Abelerardo de la Esperella told Fujimori in a video call.

Brazil's leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva also congratulated Peru's new leader.

"Count on Brazil to build together a more prosperous, integrated, democratic and sovereign South America," Lula da Silva posted on social media last week on Friday.

Canada to announce 10 countries backing global defence bank at Nato summit

Canada is aiming to announce around 10 founding nations for a global defence bank at next week's Nato summit in Turkey, the lead Canadian negotiator told Reuters last week. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney is promoting the Defence, Security and Resilience Bank (DSRB) as part of his call this year for an alliance of "middle powers" to combat what he sees as the fracturing of the traditional US-led world order. "We gave ourselves the Nato summit as a deadline... What we are aiming to announce is the list of founding members," Isabelle Hudon, Canada's top negotiator in the launch of the multilateral initiative and CEO of the Business Development Bank of Canada, said in an interview. The bank's purpose is to bolster the defence of allied nations by raising up to £100bn (\$133bn) in cheap finance. Hudon said the initial roster of countries would likely all be European, besides Canada, but declined to name them. She cautioned the announcement was not guaranteed and depended on final negotiations with allies, including over their capital commitments, but said the project had momentum. "My prime minister said we should not aim for perfection before launching this initiative, that we should rally the countries that are ready to be called founding members, and then the membership will stay open," Hudon said. The project's fate remains uncertain without the backing of nations crucial to it securing a triple-A credit rating. The DSRB has had productive talks with South Korea and there was a 50-50 chance of it joining, potentially later, Hudon said, adding that no other G7 nations were close to signing up for now. South Korea's Finance Ministry has previously told Reuters it was reviewing the proposal. It could not be immediately reached outside normal office hours. "We're trying to hopefully tee something up for the Nato summit, but there are a lot of moving pieces," said John Fragos, press secretary for Canada's finance minister, adding that the merits of the bank were "widely understood." So far, Canada has been joined publicly only by Luxembourg, which will become the bank's European base. Carney said on Friday, "a critical mass" of countries intended to join, without naming them. "Ankara will be an important milestone to see whether there's critical enough momentum to make this idea work," said Linus Terhorst, an analyst at defence think tank Royal United Services Institute. It faces potential hurdles in Europe, as it competes with defence initiatives such as the European Union's SAFE programme. The DSRB is asking anchor nations to pay in proportion to their economies' size, Hudon said. "The capital is the most challenging part of the decision," she added. The proportional contributions could result in Canada contributing up to €1.5 bn (\$1.7bn), with smaller nations paying between €500mn and €750mn, a source familiar with the matter said. Britain has resisted joining the DSRB — preferring to pursue its own defence financing project known as MDM with the Netherlands and Finland — but has explored possibilities to align or merge it with the DSRB, two sources said. Carney said he looked forward to discussing the bank with the incoming British prime minister, Andy Burnham. (Reuters)

Desperate measures: Cuba's private sector makeover

AFP
Havana

From grocery stores to restaurants and fuel, Cuba's burgeoning private sector is filling the vacuum left by a collapsing communist-run state in recent times.

The days when Cubans used ration books to buy all their essentials in state-run "bodegas" are nearing an end, expedited by the worst economic crisis in recent memory and a crippling US fuel blockade.

Sitting on the porch of a state-run grocery store in the Vedado neighborhood of Havana, Joaquin Velazquez watches the comings and goings at the private mini-market next door.

The two stores tell a tale of two Cubas, one, fast disappearing, in which the state provides for all, and another, newer, in which people are increasingly forced to fend for themselves.

The shelves of the bodega are glaringly nearly empty, the state having run out of the hard currency it needs to import goods and resell them at heavily subsidized prices, as it has done for decades.

The adjacent "mipyme" — Cuba's acronym for small business which is used as shorthand for any private enterprise — is a picture of plenty, offering everything from rice, Cuba's staple starch, to rum and ketchup.

The abundance, which is set to increase under major free-market reforms adopted in June, comes at



A tricycle is decorated with US and Cuban flags in Havana. (AFP)

a price, however: \$3 for a liter of cooking oil, a stratospheric sum for people on minuscule state salaries paid in pesos.

The oil alone represents half of Velazquez's monthly pension.

"For me, it's as if 'mipymes' don't exist," the retired security guard said.

Across Havana, private enterprise is transforming the landscape, with new businesses offering cold beer, domestic appliances or car parts popping up at a bewildering rate.

With no commercial premises authorized in Cuba — one of multiple restrictions on business set to be removed under the reforms — these ventures are run out of homes, garages or, as in the case of the "mipyme" in the Havana's Vedado, in space leased from an ailing bodega.

It's a radical makeover for a Soviet-style state completely devoid of advertising, where for over half a century the state dominated nearly every sphere of activity,

from industry to agriculture to the restaurant trade.

The first major step towards a market economy came in 2021 when small businesses of up to 100 employees — the famous "mipymes" — were authorized.

Five years later, they account for over half of all retail sales, according to official figures, and are eyeing new opportunities, in property development, banking and agriculture, among other areas.

The rise of the "mipymero," as entrepreneurs are known, has deepened inequality in what was once a classless society.

The new rich zip past crumbling neoclassical townhouses on Havana's famous seaside Malecon boulevard in SUVs.

Meanwhile people without family abroad to send them dollars or order food for them online live an increasingly precarious existence, like Maritza Gomez, a 62-year-old chemist.

"At some point we have to find a

more viable solution for ordinary Cubans," she said.

Washington, which imposed a fuel blockade on Cuba in January and piled sanctions on the state — on top of a six-decade-old trade embargo — has made a show of supporting the private sector.

Imports from the US by private companies have jumped five-fold in five years.

But the fuel blockade is hurting business, strangled by power cuts of up to 30 hours at a time, and fuel prices of up to \$8 a liter.

Juan Carlos Blain, the 41-year-old manager of several private groceries and fast food outlets in western Havana, said his company was treading water.

While the reforms allow for the creation of larger companies, he said: "We're not thinking about expanding, only about surviving."

Camila Arrieta, the 32-year-old owner of a screen printing business in Havana that used to turn out 2,000 t-shirts and other items of merchandise a day, blamed the power cuts and wider collapse in purchasing power for a major decline in her business.

Arrieta said she was "inoculated" to the obstacles she kept encountering as a businesswoman but was nonetheless considering closing shop.

Carlos Enrique Gonzalez, an economist at Havana University, urged the government to quickly implement reforms to restore lost credibility.

"If people see that what was proposed is being done, and that there is a gradual recovery, then they will begin to trust again."



'Super typhoon' Bavi heads for US Pacific islands

AFP
Guam

People in Guam and the Northern Marianas readied themselves yesterday as the second "super typhoon" since April drew closer to the US territories, bringing the equivalent of category-5 hurricane winds.

Bavi was moving westward with sustained winds of 269 kilometres per hour (167 miles per hour) and gusts of 324kph (201mph), the Joint Typhoon Warning Center (JTWC) said in an update at 7:00pm local time (0900 GMT).

The eye of the storm was expected to pass tomorrow very close to the small island of Rota between Guam and Saipan, the main island of the Northern Marianas, with winds set to strengthen to 278kph, the JTWC forecast.

"My girls were saying to me it's scary. But it will be okay. My house is concrete so the worst that can happen is a window could blow in," local Arabella Paulino, 48, told AFP on a Guam beach as the sky darkened and rain fell intermittently.

"Typhoon Sinalu in April wasn't as bad as Mawar in 2023. That brought my whole house down," said her friend Derma Soaladaob, 51. "I stay up north, but I'm going to a hotel. I have a concrete house but with the noise and the wind, it's scary."



Restaurant workers board up a restaurant ahead of the arrival of the forecasted Super Typhoon Bavi in Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, yesterday. (AFP)

Guam was set to go into "Condition of Readiness 2" — meaning a typhoon was expected in 24 hours — from 10:00pm, with emergency shelters due to open today from 7:00am, the governor's office said.

Residents were told to bring to the shelters "enough food and water to last seven days for each family member" as well as medicines, bedding and personal hygiene products. Pets were not allowed.

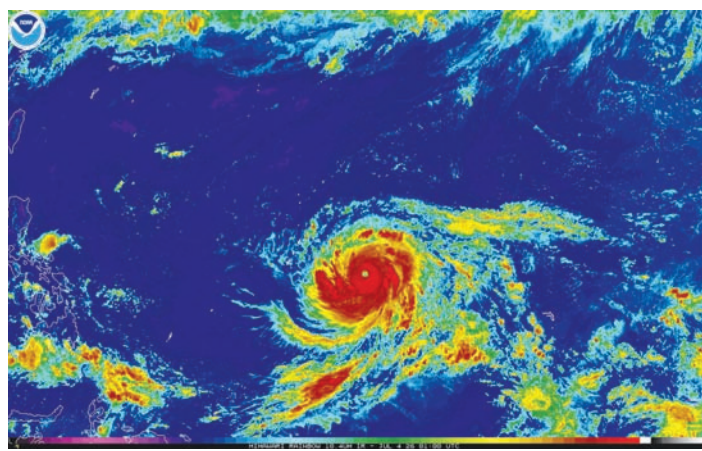
Any plans for celebrating the United States' 250th anniversary on Saturday — also Liberation Day for Saipan — have been quickly overtaken by storm preparations,

with both Guam and the Northern Marianas declaring a state of emergency.

Many of the islands' roughly 200,000 inhabitants have queued at petrol stations in recent days and thronged hardware stores to buy plywood to board up their windows while also stocking up on food, water and other essentials.

Jeff Garcia, 48, who lives in Kagman Village in the Northern Marianas, told AFP that safety was the top priority, adding that they had "weathered super typhoons before."

"We bought basic needs like wa-



This handout from the US' National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration taken and received yesterday shows HIMAWARI satellite imagery of the super typhoon Bavi as it develops and nears Guam and the Northern Mariana archipelago. (AFP)

ter, candles, batteries, and canned goods... As a community, our greatest defence is our unity, our preparation and our discipline," he said.

The Northern Marianas archipelago is home to around 40,000 people, and nearby Guam — a separate US territory — around 170,000. Major battles were fought in the area in World War II.

Super Typhoon Sinalu, which hit in mid-April, knocked out power for tens of thousands of people, uprooted trees, overturned cars and ripped metal roofs off buildings.

A cargo ship, the MV Mariana, suffered engine failure and overturned in the storm. The body of one crew member was recovered and five others were missing, presumed dead.

The American Red Cross warned that some locals were still in temporary shelters or under makeshift roofs, even as it deployed disaster teams and supplies ahead of Bavi's arrival.

Em Marilla, 42, who lives in As Lito village on Saipan, told AFP the thought of "going through it all again without electricity and water is really sad."

"Furthermore, the application process for assistance takes far too long, and having to keep spending out of pocket for our daily needs is truly draining," she said.

Lherie Galvan, 50, an accountant in San Antonio village, said: "I'm tired of preparing, planning and fixing our roof."

"It's another anxiety to recover from. We need more psychiatrists on the island and financial assistance."

"Children already have trauma but at a young age they know how to prepare — pack their things for emergencies."

The world's oceans experienced their hottest June on record and could set fresh highs in the months ahead, the European Union's Copernicus Marine Service said on Wednesday.

Warmer oceans help tropical storms to intensify and add more moisture, which can fall as heavy rain.

The World Meteorological Organisation warned on Friday that El Nino, which typically occurs every two to seven years and lasts nine to 12 months, has already begun in the tropical Pacific and is likely to be strong.

The natural climate phenomenon warms surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean, bringing worldwide changes in winds, pressure and rainfall patterns.

China launches coast guard patrol east of Taiwan

Reuters
Beijing/Taipei

China said yesterday it had launched a new coast guard patrol east of Taiwan, drawing a sharp response from Taipei after a task force last month off the island's coast caused alarm in some Western capitals.

China's military operates almost daily around Taiwan, which Beijing views as its own territory. But China has begun using its coast guard to enforce its territorial claims in what Taiwan calls "lawfare" to claim a legal basis for Chinese actions.

The fleet will conduct "law enforcement patrols" in the area, China's Coast Guard said in a statement, adding it would strengthen such patrols in what it called China's jurisdictional waters.

The coast guard will "firmly safeguard China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests", it added.

Taiwan's government condemned the new patrol, saying it was an "illegal expansion of power in violation

of international law and a disruption of regional stability".

"The Chinese communists have no sovereignty or related rights in the waters east of Taiwan, have no jurisdiction over these waters, and none of its official vessels have any law-enforcement authority there," the Mainland Affairs Council, which makes Taiwan's China policy, said in a statement.

Taiwan's Coast Guard said it was tracking two Chinese ships and had prepositioned two of its own to sail alongside and monitor them. As of mid-morning the two Chinese ships were 54 nautical miles east of Taiwan's Hualien, home to a major air base, but outside of restricted waters, it said in a statement.

Taiwan's Coast Guard will "continue to employ all necessary measures to forcefully expel Chinese vessels harassing our waters, steadfastly defend national sovereignty, and ensure the security of our maritime domains". This is the second time in roughly a month that China, which views democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory, has sent coast guard ships into the waters off Taiwan's east coast. It risks escalating a diplomatic dispute that has

drawn in the US, France, Germany and Britain.

China said the first operation in June was in response to an announcement by Japan and the Philippines that they would begin formal talks on their maritime boundaries, which Beijing viewed as involving Chinese waters off Taiwan. Taiwan said on Wednesday that Taiwanese ships off the east coast should ignore any boarding and inspection demands by China's Coast Guard and, if necessary, Taiwanese Coast Guard vessels would intervene to stop it from happening.

China recognises no claims of sovereignty by Taiwan. Taiwan says China has no right to claim any sovereignty or jurisdiction over the island or its waters.

On Thursday, China's Ministry of Natural Resources published in English what it called a "legal opinion" on Japan-Philippines maritime boundary talks.

The two countries should have talks with China on the issue and not engage with Taiwan, the opinion said. "All other states shall refrain from providing assistance to Japan and the Philippines."

US envoy says Cook Islands minerals are a top priority

Reuters
Wellington

The new US ambassador to New Zealand and several Pacific island nations said on Friday that securing Cook Islands seabed minerals was a top priority, and that China's push for influence in the Pacific carried risks for small island states.

Jared Novelly (pictured), US ambassador to New Zealand, the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa, said in a press conference that critical minerals had moved rapidly up his agenda over the last year.

"When I was getting briefings in October, November last year, the critical minerals thing was kind of a lesser item," Novelly said. "Fast forward to February, March of this year, critical minerals, and particularly in the Cooks, is either 1A or 1B of my priorities." Washington has made securing critical minerals a strategic priority as it seeks to reduce its reliance on China-dominated supply chains and support defence and clean-energy industries. The Cook Islands' waters contain deposits of polymetallic nodules, sought for batteries and other technologies, and the government has allowed exploration, but not commercial extraction. In February, the Cook Islands and the US signed a non-binding framework on critical minerals research and supply-chain security, including deep-sea minerals in Cook Islands waters. It has also signed an exploration and research agreement with China.

Novelly, a Missouri businessman and sports team owner who is the inaugural US ambassador to the Cook Islands, said he planned to spend time in the country and would look to introduce US companies that could help with the minerals' extraction. The Cook Islands government did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

He said he also believed he needed to warn Pacific



countries to be cautious in dealings with Beijing.

"China has made no bones about they want a base in the Pacific, they want an expanded presence there," he said, adding that island nations needed to understand "what a debt trap is" and that "there can be strings attached".

Novelly said he was also exploring ways to support Pacific economies beyond aid, including by reducing the cost of remittances.

Novelly arrived in New Zealand earlier this week and presented his credentials to the governor general on Wednesday before hosting the embassy's annual July 4 party.

Novelly said Washington respected New Zealand's role in the South Pacific, including defence cooperation, but said partners needed to spend more on security. "It's important that you care as much about your defence as we care about your defence," he said, echoing US policy towards partners and allies around the globe. Novelly arrives as New Zealanders' views of the US have fallen. A June survey by the Asia New Zealand Foundation found that, for the first time in a decade, they viewed Washington as more of a threat than China.

How drug gangs use social media to recruit Thai air crew as couriers

Reuters
Bangkok

Early in the morning on June 18, a message from an unknown account slipped into the TikTok inbox of a flight attendant in Bangkok with a series of questions: "Are you flying to Australia? Do you do carry-for-hire? What is your rate?"

The 30-year-old, who flies for a regional budget carrier, ignored the message and forgot about it — until Tuesday, when a Thai Airways flight attendant was charged with importing more than one kilogram (2.2 pounds) of heroin into Australia hidden in several tote bags.

The rare detention of a national airline cabin staff has triggered alarm in Thailand, raising questions about security measures at airports and concern that international trafficking networks are targeting air crew in their attempts to get illicit drugs to lucrative markets beyond the Southeast Asian nation.

"According to reports, in the first half of this year, there have already been at least six cases of people travelling from Thailand who were charged with commercial drug trafficking," Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said at a meeting on Friday of the top national anti-drug committee. "This is considered a high number... and it damages the country's image," he said.

Thailand's main airport operator will improve baggage screening and inspections, including those of crew



Two suspects, a Thai man and his Laotian wife, suspected of sending drug parcels from a border province to Bangkok, are escorted by officials to the Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) in Bangkok. (Reuters)

members, and airlines will take serious disciplinary actions against staff carrying or accepting items on behalf of others, a government spokesman said.

The unknown account — named "Powder is Powder" in Thai — was linked to drug trafficking networks that create fake social media accounts to find people to move illicit substances across borders, said Areepak Ngernbamroong, a spokesperson for Thailand's Office of the Narcotics Control Board.

"The account has now been shut down," Areepak said. "The ONCB is investigating, and preliminary findings indicate that the account used many different names."

In a statement following the detention, Thai Airways said it had strict rules governing the conduct of all employees and would cooperate with the relevant authorities.

After procuring drugs from neighbouring countries with large

production facilities, trafficking networks move the substances through Thailand concealed in items such as clothing, coffee packets, and vases, according to Thai authorities.

In the case of the Thai Airways flight attendant arrested in Australia, she had initially posted in a social media group where people offer to carry items overseas for a fee, he said.

The flight attendant then began communicating with a Facebook user named "Rose Rose", according to Suriya. "They later agreed on a fee of 8,800 baht (\$265.46)," he told reporters.

The heroin concealed within the lining of the bags carried by the attendant had an estimated street value of A\$500,000 (\$347,150), according to the Australian Federal Police.

So far, Thai authorities have taken into custody two people, a Thai man and his Laotian wife, suspected of sending drug parcels from a border province to Bangkok.

Coffee with a view: tourists flock to Starbucks overlooking North Korea

AFP
Gimpo

The contrast cannot be starker: selfie-taking tourists sipping coffee at Starbucks — an icon of globalisation and capitalism — while looking out over exclusive, communist North Korea.

Welcome to Aegibong Starbucks in Gimpo — less than an hour's drive from Republic of Korea's capital Seoul but a world away from its closed-off northern neighbour less than two kilometres (1.2 miles) across the Han river.

Perched on a hilltop beneath the Aegibong Peace Ecopark observatory where telescopes peek into the secluded state, the shop has drawn tens of thousands from Republic of Korea and abroad since opening in November 2024.

Kim Jong-hyun, who lives in San Diego and was visiting Republic of Korea with his family, said it was the irony of the contrast that drew him to the hilltop.

"When I heard there was a Starbucks here, I naturally thought I had to come and see it for myself. It's quite unusual," he told AFP.

Customers need to book ahead to enter the park that houses the coffee house.

They then travel from a parking lot in a shuttle operated by park



Visitors stand next to a Starbucks store to watch the North Korean side from a Korean observation deck at Aegibong Peace Ecopark in Gimpo. (AFP)

authorities and cross a military checkpoint guarded by armed Korean marines.

The journey is part of the experience — walking the last stretch inside Republic of Korea while looking out on agricultural and mountain landscapes in a country whose outside image the government under Kim Jong-un seeks to manage entirely.

Very few foreign journalists or tourists — mainly from allies Russia and China — can enter North Korea, and then under tightly controlled conditions.

Republic of Korea and North Korea are technically at war because their 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

The nations are separated by an ironically-named Demilitarised Zone.

The South, an important US se-

curity ally, rose from the ruins of war to become an advanced economy home to Samsung Electronics and other tech giants.

But the North — ruled with an iron fist by a third-generation leader — is crippled by sanctions over its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

James Seymour, an Irish tourist, told AFP the scene from the lookout point was one of "polar opposites."

"We're from Belfast and we're kind of used to war... the Troubles and all that if you know what I mean," he said, referring to the sectarian conflict that gripped Northern Ireland in the late 20th century.

But standing near the border, sipping coffee from a global chain while looking at the North's nondescript low-rise buildings, was "on a different scale completely", he said.

Starmmer warns successor to stay on global stage

AFP
London

Britain's outgoing prime minister Keir Starmer (pictured) warned his probable successor Andy Burnham in an interview released yesterday that he cannot ignore international turmoil and just concentrate on the country's domestic problems.

In his first interview since announcing his resignation on June 22, Starmer said his successor as leader of the ruling Labour party could not spend less time on turbulent international affairs.

So far, former Manchester mayor Burnham is the only candidate to take over the centre-left party. He could be in office by mid-July.

"Whoever's my successor is going to face the same global conflict. We keep saying, and it's true, we're in a more dangerous and volatile world than we've been in for probably most of my lifetime. That's not just a phrase, that's reality," Starmer told the BBC.

Burnham's supporters have said he should put more focus on domestic issues, such as the cost of living, and Burnham said this week that decentralisation of government would be a priority.

But in a social media question-and-answer session Friday, he discussed international topics and said he would "100 percent" give



the same support to Ukraine as Starmer.

Asked by the BBC, Starmer said his successor would not be able to spend less time on diplomacy.

"There's often this discussion — what's the right balance between dealing with international affairs and dealing with domestic affairs? They're one and the same thing," Starmer said.

"If you're prime minister and you care what bills are going to be like in any household around the country, you have to care about finding a lasting solution to the situation in Ukraine, you have to care about what happens in the Strait of Hormuz."

Starmer said he had "never had any personal animosity" towards Burnham and that he would "do everything I possibly can to make

sure" that the next government succeeds.

Starmer, who led Labour to a spectacular win in the 2024 general election, has said he will remain in parliament at least until the next nationwide vote, but told the BBC he would be "keeping my mouth shut, rather than giving constant advice to my successor about what they should be doing."

Starmer had vowed to fight any challenge to his leadership, but gave in to intense pressure from his party. "In the end it became an intensely personal decision," he said, one taken with his wife and children at the British prime minister's country retreat.

"We went to Chequers and just spent two days together as a family. And that's when I came to my final decision," he said.

Prince Harry to visit London without wife, children: source

AFP
London

Prince Harry will not be accompanied by his wife Meghan and their two children when he visits London as part of a trip to the UK next week, a source close to him told AFP yesterday.

The prince had previously been expected to make his first family trip back to the UK in four years, but the source close to the Duke of Sussex said his wife, son Archie and daughter Lilibet would not accompany him on the London part of the trip.

Arrangements for the rest of the trip are still under consideration, the source said, leaving it unclear whether the whole family would visit but stay outside the capital.

Harry, 41, is visiting next week to mark the one-year countdown towards next year's Invictus Games, launched by the prince in 2014 for wounded veterans. The games will be held from July 10 to 17, 2027.

The prince was also expected to attend engagements with his other charities during the multi-day visit this month.

The Sun newspaper reported yesterday that Harry and his family were currently in Europe and were still hoping to make the trip to the UK "in some form".

The tabloid reported, citing a source, that Harry and Meghan had planned to visit a London



Prince Harry and Meghan, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, arrive at Rushcutters Bay following a sail on Sydney Harbour with veterans from the Invictus Australia community, in Sydney. (Reuters/File Photo)

hospital together in her first such engagement since leaving the UK, but he would now go alone "for security reasons".

A source close to the prince said last month that he and his family would stay at royal residences, and the BBC reported that they would be guests of King Charles III.

Last year Harry expressed concerns about his family's safety in the UK, after losing a court case to have full police protection restored during UK visits.

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

While the security arrangements for July's visit remained unclear, the BBC reported that Buckingham Palace had not of-

fered any extra security for the trip.

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

The king's younger son has said he would like to reconcile with his father, but it is unclear whether the two will meet during the visit.

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

Three acquitted of 2019 murder of N Irish journalist Lyra McKee

AFP
Belfast

Three men were on Friday found not guilty of murdering Northern Irish journalist Lyra McKee six years ago, in a high-profile killing that attracted global attention.

The trio were acquitted by a judge at Belfast Crown Court following a non-jury trial that did not sit continuously and lasted over two years due to its legal complexity.

McKee, 29, was shot in the head while covering a clash between dissident republicans and police in Northern Ireland's second city Londonderry in April 2019.

The city is known as Derry to republicans, who want union with the Irish republic instead of Northern Ireland being part of the United Kingdom.

Her death provoked widespread public grief and anger over the continued activity of paramilitary groups, which plagued the province during three decades of sectarian violence known as the Troubles.

The violence largely ended with the signing of peace accords in 1998.

The New IRA, a dissident republican splinter group, claimed responsibility for McKee's death, and apologised to her relatives, saying that she was hit unintentionally because she was along-side the police.

Peter Cavanagh, 37, Jordan Gareth Devine, 25, and Paul McIntyre, 58, faced a joint enterprise murder charge, which applies when prosecutors allege multiple people were involved in a fatal attack.

However, they did not accuse any of the defendants of firing the deadly shot.

When the not-guilty verdicts were read out, the trio made little or no reaction, according to BBC News.

Speaking outside court, McKee's sister Nichola Corner said the justice system had "completely failed" her family.

"Today has come as a complete and utter shock to us as a family," she said.

"People are afraid to speak out, they are afraid to tell the truth, they are afraid to share information that they have," she added, noting over 150 people potentially witnessed her sister's death in April 2019.

"That culture of silence needs to stop in Northern Ireland, it is unfair to victims."

McKee was standing near police vehicles, which were in the area due to searches being conducted at a nearby address, when four gunshots were fired in their direction.

INS Sudarshini joins Sail 250 parade in New York



India's INS Sudarshini vessel navigates near the Statue of Liberty during the Sail 250 parade of ships in New York Harbor as the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary on Independence Day in New York City. (Reuters)

India approves buying \$5.5bn in military equipment

AFP
New Delhi

India approved yesterday the purchase of a range of military equipment for its defence forces worth \$5.46bn, including missiles, electronic warfare systems and Kamikaze drones.

The acquisition was approved "in-principle" by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) comprising top military officers and headed by the defence minister, according to a government statement.

The statement said the estimated cost of the deal would be about 520bn rupees (\$5.46bn).

It did not specify the period over which the

acquisitions would be made or whether the systems approved for purchase will be imported or domestically produced.

New Delhi over the last decade has sought to reduce its dependence on Russia, its traditional main supplier of military equipment, turning to other countries like the US and France, as well as boosting domestic production.

The deal included the purchase of anti-drone and electronic warfare systems, medium range surface-to-air and portable anti-tank missiles and a "Jet Based Kamikaze Drone System" for the Indian army, the government said.

The DAC also approved the procurement of new naval mines, shipborne drones and a testing facility for strengthening maritime defence and boosting surveillance capabilities. India

also planned to purchase a high-altitude unmanned aircraft platform for the air force, to be used for intelligence gathering and remote sensing.

New Delhi's current defence budget is \$85bn. A four-day conflict with nuclear-armed rival Pakistan last year highlighted the need for Delhi to upgrade its defence capabilities.

India is also pushing to rapidly modernise its navy with an eye on Beijing's growing influence in the key Indian Ocean shipping lanes.

In December, New Delhi began ordering at least 75 ships and submarines, most of them built domestically.

Top officials earlier this year approved the purchase of \$39bn worth of defence equipment, including Rafale jets from France.

India takes down apps after stalled e-rickshaw rides

AFP
New Delhi

Indian officials said Friday they had taken down two smartphone apps following reports that some e-rickshaws could be remotely shut down, exploiting a security gap in the budget vehicles.

Many e-rickshaws, the battery-powered version of the popular mode of transportation in India, often use Chinese-made, Bluetooth-enabled battery management units which lack safety features.

Over the last few days, videos of people using Chinese battery management apps to remotely cut power to e-rickshaws mid-ride have gone viral in the country.

The videos show people approaching e-rickshaws on busy streets, connecting to a vehicle's battery system via Bluetooth and bringing it to a halt by cutting power to the motor through a discharge switch.

AFP could not independently verify whether the apps work in the manner the videos indicate.

Senior information and technology ministry official S Krishnan told reporters that a "couple of apps" had been brought to their attention. "Both of them have been

taken down from the app stores," he said.

While Krishnan offered no additional details, local media reports said the two apps were Chinese-developed and were called "BAT-BMS" and "Epoch Li-ion".

Only rickshaws with Bluetooth-enabled lithium battery packs using unsecured battery management systems were affected — not those that run on lead-acid batteries.

An e-rickshaw driver in capital New Delhi whose vehicle was stalled on Thursday told AFP he was losing wages "because of these apps".

"Yesterday my e-rickshaw stopped working. In Delhi's extreme heat, I had to push it alone for six or seven kilometres to the (service centre) to get the problem fixed," said Ghanshyam Kumar, 28.

The passengers refused to pay the fare, he added.

"Such incidents have increased significantly over the past week.

That's why there are long queues at the service centre, and we end up wasting a lot of time there as well," he said.

The Delhi government's transport minister Pankaj Singh told the Press Trust of India news agency that police would investigate the incidents.

Indian police arrest one over alleged Capgemini childcare abuse

Reuters
Bengaluru

Indian police have arrested one woman and are investigating four other suspects who worked at a childcare facility at the Indian unit of French IT services firm Capgemini following allegations of child abuse at the centre, police said on Friday.

The investigation was launched after police received information and videos that they said showed children being subjected to physical and mental abuse at the daycare centre in Bengaluru, according to a complaint registered with police on June 29 that was reviewed by Reuters.

The complaint was filed after information was received through



The Capgemini logo is seen during the Viva Technology conference dedicated to innovation and startups at Porte de Versailles exhibition centre in Paris. (Reuters/File Photo)

a children's helpline and videos of crying children were shared via WhatsApp.

The complaint alleges that staff at the daycare centre operating on Capgemini's campus physically abused and intimidated children in their care, including by threatening

crying children that they would be put in a washing machine.

Capgemini said the daycare facility was managed by an external service provider and it had been temporarily closed while authorities investigate the allegations. Bengaluru police said the daycare

facility was managed by a firm called Little Scholars. Reuters could not immediately reach the firm for comment.

India's National Human Rights Commission said on Friday it had issued notices to Karnataka state's most senior official and the police chief, seeking a detailed report within two weeks. Bengaluru is the capital of Karnataka state.

Bengaluru is one of the world's largest technology hubs and a growing number of employers provide childcare support, including on-campus daycare facilities, as part of employee welfare programmes.

Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemanth Kumar Singh told Reuters he had directed officials to review company daycare facilities across the city to ensure compliance with regulations.



Merz's reforms have potential - eventually - to boost German growth

A late-night deal agreed by Chancellor Friedrich Merz's ruling coalition on a long-awaited package of reforms has the potential to give Germany's anaemic economy a shot in the arm if implemented fully and quickly, economists and business leaders said. The measures to cut red tape, offer tax relief to working families, allow more flexible job contracts and boost investment in housing come on top of last week's proposals to add a capital element to the state pension and gradually push back the retirement age.

The latest moves come 15 months after a landmark agreement on a €500bn special fund for infrastructure and plans to largely remove defence investment from borrowing caps, paving the way for a spending surge that has nonetheless taken longer to materialise than many had expected.

"If implemented, Germany can become a better place to invest and create jobs again," said Holger

Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg of the new package combining both left-leaning and pro-business elements. He estimated the reforms could almost double Germany's trend growth rate from a dismal 0.4% to 0.7% per year, offering a much needed boost to an economy that has struggled to gain momentum. Deutsche Bank's CEO Christian Sewing called the package "a very successful opening move", adding: "This is exactly the momentum we need to make Germany fit for the future."

The individual measures agreed in the package are expected to be passed by parliament by the end of the year. "Admittedly... it is not a package that will morph a stagnating economy into a booming economy overnight," said Carsten Brzeski, global head of macro at ING. Failure to deliver on economic pledges could deepen public frustration and feed perceptions of government ineffectiveness, creating fertile ground for the far-right AfD party, which tops national polls.

"The reform package shows that both coalition partners were willing to compromise," said Marion Muehlberger from Deutsche Bank Research. "The German government agreed on one of its biggest reform packages in decades."

Once the engine of European growth, the continent's largest economy has stalled as competition from China and higher energy prices have challenged its export-driven foundations and the reform package aims at boosting competitiveness, economists said. The package includes €10 billion (\$11 billion) in annual tax relief for lower-income earners, more flexible labour laws, changes to the pension system and cutting red tape. Merz said an average family will get tax relief of €600. That will be funded mainly by raising the top tax rate to 47% from 45% for the highest earners, defined as those with annual income of €280,000 or more.

The package includes cuts to red tape, including faster approval procedures for infrastructure

projects and the abolition of some reporting and documentation requirements.

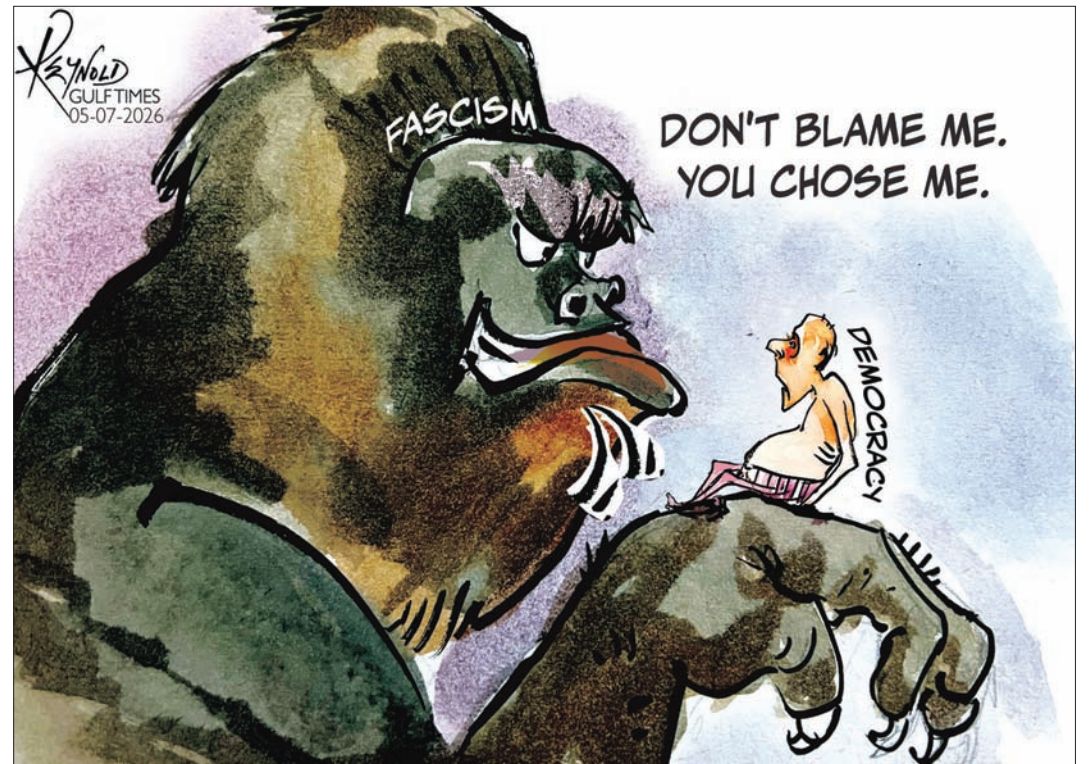
"The planned measures to reduce bureaucracy, in particular, show great promise because they could give German businesses more leeway," said Commerzbank's senior economist Ralph Solveen, who like others added the caveat that it all depended on effective implementation. The long list of measures also includes an action plan against benefit fraud, a target to cut staffing in federal ministries by 8% through digitisation and an end to workers' ability to obtain permission for sick leave by phone. The proposals were criticised by the services union Verdi, which said they exemplified a "culture of mistrust" against workers.

Germany's Association of General Practitioners also said the requirement for workers to obtain written confirmation of illness would be "absolutely disastrous" for already overburdened medical practices. — Reuters

Standing tall against the sea



Portugal's tall ship NRP Sagres participates in the Sail 250 parade of ships in New York Harbor as the United States celebrated its 250th anniversary on Independence Day in New York City yesterday. (Reuters)



Democrats' cost-of-living pitch runs into its own left

By Tim Reid and Helen Coster
Washington

Democrats head into November's midterm elections with potential advantages, including the unpopularity of President Donald Trump and voter anger with Republicans over high prices.

But a string of primary victories by left-wing Democrats could complicate party leaders' efforts to keep the campaign narrowly focused on the cost of living as some candidates advocate a broader reordering of government spending and policy priorities.

Republicans are seizing on those victories to portray Democrats as extreme, hoping to shift attention away from voter dissatisfaction with Trump's stewardship of the economy.

Four progressive candidates, including three democratic socialists, won competitive Democratic primaries in New York City last week and in Colorado on Tuesday, but the left-wing surge is not confined to liberal bastions.

Progressive candidates have also won contests in Kentucky, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Texas. Many of these candidates argue that tackling the high cost of living means taxing the rich, cutting military spending, opposing US funding for Israel, expanding government-funded programs including a push for universal healthcare, and abolishing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. They want ICE funds redirected into domestic welfare programs.

"It's about the choices we are making to offer solutions on affordability," said Adam Hamawy, a New Jersey Democrat who won his US House primary last month on a progressive platform.

"It's about where to spend on programs that are going to help our communities, not help the military industrial complex and drop bombs and cause misery overseas," Hamawy, a former US Army combat surgeon, told Reuters.

While those ideas have appeal among parts of the Democratic base, opinion polls show voters are most focused on kitchen table issues such as the cost of food, housing and healthcare. A June Reuters/Ipsos poll showed the cost of living is the top concern for nearly half of registered voters.

Republicans are now betting that the victories by the left-wing candidates could give them an opportunity to push Democrats onto less favorable terrain: socialism, immigration enforcement and Israel's war in Gaza. In a speech last week, Trump previewed what has now become a central Republican line of attack, falsely casting the successful left-wing candidates as communists and "the greatest threat to our country since its founding."

Socialism favors public control of major industries while allowing some private property and markets. Democratic socialism pursues socialist goals through democratic means. Communism is more radical: it seeks to abolish private property and create a classless society.

Mike Marinella, press secretary for the National Republican Congressional Committee, told Reuters that his group is "making

clear that the same socialist agenda taking hold in New York is spreading to battleground districts across the country." That strategy has begun. Denise Powell, the Democratic nominee in Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District, is more mainstream. But in a May digital ad, the NRCC portrayed her as "a political operative for the far-left dark money machine, trying to transplant her radical left policies here."

Powell's campaign manager, Ryan Longenecker, said in a statement, "Nebraskans won't be fooled - they know Denise is a working mom and bipartisan leader."

Aidan Johnson, a spokesperson for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, said Republicans were "resorting to ineffective boogeyman attacks" because they had failed to bring down prices.

Republicans have long shown an ability to tie Democrats to their most liberal slogans and proposals even when those are not widely embraced by the party. Republicans seized on the "defund the police" slogan in the 2020 and 2022 elections to put Democrats on the defensive even though many party leaders had rejected

that call. Justice Democrats, a progressive group, has endorsed 15 Democratic primary challengers, having backed none in the last midterm cycle. Eight have won their primaries this year in states across the country. More than 20 progressive challengers backed by Track AIPAC, a group critical of US funding of Israel, have won their primaries.

Those wins remain a fraction of Democratic contests nationwide. But they have been enough for Republicans to portray Democrats as a party being pulled further to the left.

Most of the progressive candidates are winning primaries in mostly urban, safe Democratic seats, but with a handful of important exceptions, including a Senate race in Maine and three competitive House seats in Maine, Colorado and California.

Exit polls in the recent races show the winning progressive candidates are drawing enthusiastic support from the party's core supporters, especially younger voters.

Michigan's Democratic US Senate primary on August 4 will test whether the party's left can broaden its appeal beyond Democratic strongholds into battlegrounds that will decide control of Congress.

Abdul El-Sayed, a public health advocate, has made opposition to US support for Israel a centerpiece of his campaign in the state, calling Israel's military campaign in Gaza a genocide, a conclusion also reached by a UN inquiry, several rights groups and a scholars' association. Israel rejects the allegation, saying its military targets Hamas and seeks to minimise civilian harm.

El-Sayed has a slight lead in opinion polls over his nearest primary competitor, US Representative Haley Stevens, a more moderate Democrat who has been endorsed by Chuck Schumer, the top Senate Democrat. Stevens supports Israel's right to defend itself and has not called for an end to US military aid. — Reuters

Argentina's plan for AI-run companies can't avoid humans

By Leila Miller and Kenrick Cai
Buenos Aires

Argentine President Javier Milei generated both excitement and fear last month when he announced a congressional bill to create "non-human corporations" run by AI, but the companies would actually require human involvement. Milei described in a "Financial Times op-ed piece a new type of company that could run without human employees, in which AI agents or robots would "exercise independent judgment in unpredictable environments." Argentina would become the first country to pass legislation creating a category for companies run by AI, several legal experts said.

"We are open for business," Milei declared, sparking criticism from Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari, who warned giving AI too much power may reduce corporate accountability. But the reality is less revolutionary, corporate attorneys said. The "automated company" introduced in the proposed reform, part of a comprehensive bill seeking to modernise and cut bureaucracy in corporate law, would be required to have a human administrator to oversee operations. The bill also allows a company's administration to use AI for decision-making without exempting the administrators from supervising the outcome.

It would be "too wild a first step to dispense with human agency entirely," said Lawrence Cunningham, director of the Weinberg Center for Corporate Governance at the University of Delaware. Still, Cunningham called Milei's proposal bold.

"We're not changing the world here so much as we're recognising that you might run a business without any HR," he said. "It's the beginning of something."

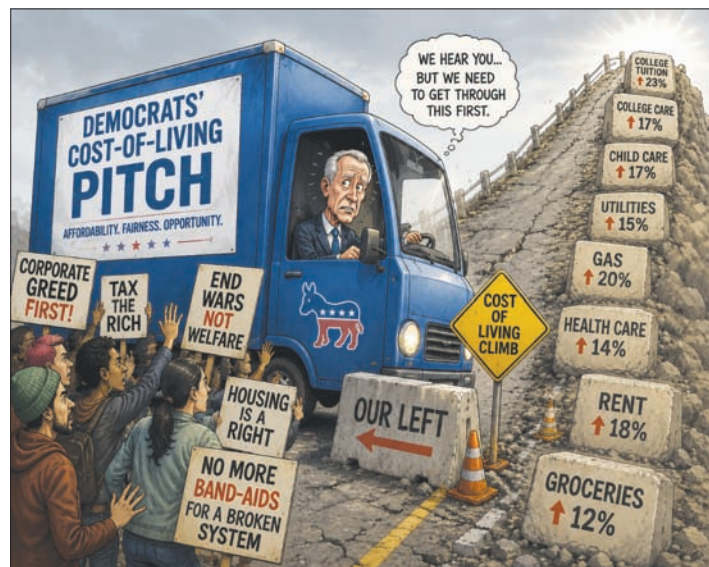
Diego Duprat, a law professor and co-author of the bill, said automated companies already exist in some forms, referring to AI-supported cashier-less supermarkets.

The company would be liable for damages caused by AI or algorithmic systems, the bill states. A representative for the office of the presidential spokesperson said that there are currently no companies or commitments of investment that are connected to the bill.

"What is happening is that we are proposing something innovative, aimed at making Argentina an attractive jurisdiction for the establishment of automated companies," the representative said in a statement. "This project is key to creating better conditions for attracting investment." Milei, who has brought inflation down sharply and sought to attract foreign investors with incentives, has repeatedly pitched Argentina as a future AI hub, highlighting Patagonia's cold weather and energy supply as ideal for data centers. OpenAI and Sur Energy announced plans in October for a data centre with an investment of up to \$25bn.

Merely having a law that refers to a company's central use of AI may attract investors, said Maria Gisele Cano, a corporate attorney in the province of Buenos Aires. She has received more than a dozen inquiries from entrepreneurs in Argentina and abroad about the proposal. "These companies will have a clearer and more predictable framework for conducting their operations in this environment," she said.

Yonathan Arbel, a professor who researches AI at the University of Alabama's law school, said Argentina could gain a "huge competitive advantage" if it creates a welcoming environment for AI business. He said the bill could benefit from specifying that AI agents should have a digital ID for interactions with people and companies. — Reuters



Drought parches Europe's rice fields

AFP
Torre Beretti, Italy

Summer came too early to Europe's most important rice growing region and weeds are taking over Sharon Angoli's parched paddies in Italy's Pavia province.

"That one is done for, no matter what happens," the 22-year-old said as she surveyed one desolate field that has been baked by what is among the most severe heatwaves to hit the continent in June. Even abundant rains for the rest of the summer would probably not save the crop, she said. Angoli and her father, Carlo, also fear for their other fields at Torre Beretti, about 60 kilometres (35 miles) south of Milan, that should be harvested in September.

"We need about 50 millimetres (two inches) of rain, but without hail," said Carlo Angoli. "Or a big hailstorm in September and then the insurance will reimburse us," he joked. Pavia is at the

heart of Italy's rice-making industry. The province regularly produces nearly five million tonnes of the grain each year. But this year there was not enough spring rain and its rice farmers are despondent.

From the Alps to the Adriatic Sea, several waterways in northern Italy are in a "critical situation" because of drought, the Po River Authority (ADB-PO) warned on Friday. Lakes are being drained to feed the Po and its tributaries, but at the current rate, the reserves will run out within weeks.

The province at the foot of the Apennine mountains is used to abundant rain. The rice fields are normally lush green this time of year.

But with temperatures now rising above 30C, Sharon Angoli has had to restrict irrigation and like other farmers fears a repeat of a devastating drought in 2022. One of the fields used to produce rice for sushi has not been flooded and the weeds are the biggest beneficiaries. Some rain has brought down tem-

peratures in recent days, but they are predicted to rise again for the next two weeks to levels that Carlo Angoli said were "ideal for going to the beach".

"In a normal season, there would be water everywhere," said Nicola Valdi, 55, a neighbour of the Angolis. She told how it protects the rice in what is a "critical phase" of its growth and must not absorb too much toxic cadmium.

"A healthy plant would have 70 to 80 grains. This one will produce 10," she said, pointing to one shrivelled shoot. The water shortage has left angry fallout.

Farmers in the Lombardy region, which includes Pavia, accuse those in neighbouring Piedmont of using too much water. Farmers in the Po delta accuse all their rivals up the Po valley of leaving them with too little.

The heatwave that swept across Europe in June would have been virtually impossible without climate change, according to climatologists from World Weather Attribution.

River Seine opens for public swimming



People swim in the River Seine at the Grenelle public bathing site, which is open to swimmers for the second year in the capital's historic waterway, with the Eiffel Tower in the background, in Paris. (Reuters)

Ukraine strikes Russian oil terminal, fiercely denies loss of key strategic town

AFP
Moscow

Russia said on Saturday Ukrainian drones hit an oil terminal in Saint Petersburg, struck a port near Finland and fell on the historical Peterhof complex without causing damage.

Kyiv's barrage on Russia's second city -- President Vladimir Putin's hometown -- came amid opposing statements from both sides over who was in control of a key town in eastern Ukraine.

Moscow vowed to respond, saying it downed almost 500 Ukrainian drones and 10 of Kyiv's Flamingo missiles overnight.

The Ukrainian attack came after a Russian strike on Kyiv this week killed 30 people.

They also hit hours after a Russian attack on the centre of the Ukrainian city of Sumy killed four people, including a child, according to Kyiv.

Moscow said it had seized the key town of Kostyantynivka in the east, but Zelensky called the claim a "lie", with Kyiv's army saying fighting was ongoing.

Zelensky also claimed Kyiv struck the Kronstadt naval base in Saint Petersburg. Ukraine has been increasing strikes on Russian territory -- hitting as far as the Urals far away from the front line -- in recent months, in retaliation for Moscow's dragging offensive.

It is also a bid to bring Russia to the negotiating table, almost 4.5 years into its offensive that turned into Europe's worst war since WWII.

Leningrad region governor Alexander Drozdenko said the port of Vysotsk, near the border with NATO-member Finland, had been hit.

"Debris has been reported in the area of the port of Vysotsk," Drozdenko said on social media early on Saturday, while saying the "attack was still being repelled."



Russian President Vladimir Putin visits a command post of Russia's joint force grouping, in the course of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. (Reuters)

Saint Petersburg governor Alexander Beglov said drones hit "the area of an oil terminal in the Kirovsk district" of Saint Petersburg.

"Air defence forces shot down 72 drones, one of which crashed in Peterhof. There were no casualties or damage," he added.

The Peterhof palace is a giant estate of gardens and a palace built in the 18th century under Russian Tsar Peter I. Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanski said air defence had shot down 62 drones headed for the Russian capital.

Moscow said one person was killed in the border Bryansk region and another in Russian-annexed Crimea.

Authorities in the border Belgorod region said "infrastructure facilities" had been damaged by the attacks, leading to "disruptions to electricity and water supply."

Ukraine's increasing drone strikes on Russian cities have affected ordinary life in Russia more than at any other point during the conflict.

In Russia's Kaliningrad exclave, there were delays at the airport taking passengers to mainland Russia due to the strikes, according to an AFP reporter there.

Several Russian regions have also experienced fuel shortages, causing hours-long queues for petrol, due to Ukraine hitting oil and fuel depots.

On Friday, Putin, wearing a military uniform, had thanked troops for seizing Kostyantynivka, a town with a pre-war population of 78,000 that Moscow has been trying to take control over for months.

Kyiv's army spokesman, Andriy Kovalyov, said on Saturday that "Ukrainian defenders continue to hold their positions along the designated defensive lines."

He admitted the situation was "difficult" and that small groups of Russian troops have been infiltrating the town but insisted that fighting was ongoing.

Moscow's defence minis-

ter, however, said: "Russian troops are in all parts of the town -- from the southern to northern outskirts." Zelensky called the claim "just another Russian lie."

"If Kostyantynivka were under Russian control, then perhaps Putin would have no problem meeting me there to find a diplomatic way to finally end this war," the Ukrainian leader said on social media.

Putin has repeatedly turned down talks with Zelensky to end more than four years of war, saying Moscow intends to capture the rest of eastern Ukraine by force.

Zelensky, who said he briefed German Chancellor Friedrich Merz on the battle, declared that Putin had "chosen to lie to the world" about the front.

"He claims that Russian forces have supposedly captured Kostyantynivka in the Donbas. Of course, that is not true. It is just another Russian lie," Zelensky said on social media.

Thousands protest in Germany as AfD sets sights on power

Reuters
Erfurt, Germany

Thousands protested against Germany's far-right AfD and blocked roads to its annual conference in the eastern city of Erfurt on Saturday, where the party re-elected the two leaders who have overseen its rise as a national force.

Protesters from unions, civil society groups and left-wing parties gathered as large numbers of police, including reinforcements from across Germany, were deployed ahead of the AfD's two-day conference. AfD stands for Alternative for Germany.

Watched by police in riot gear, protesters sat in rows to block highways and roads leading to the convention centre where the meeting is being held.

Police estimated around 15,000 people joined demonstrations in and around the eastern city.

The AfD launched the event by re-electing party chiefs Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla, under whose leadership the AfD has surged to the top of national opinion polls ahead of Chancellor Friedrich Merz's conservatives.

The opening speeches mocked and lambasted the protesters as anti-democratic. They revelled in the AfD's rise that could see the party taking power in regional elections this year for the first time, while painting their mainstream rivals as tired, out of touch and leading Germany into decline.

"For this remains our last chance to

save our country," Weidel said. "More and more people in this country want to support us in the fight against Germany's decline, in the fight for our fatherland and for our identity."

Underscoring the party's hard line on immigration, a song called "Send them back" played on the AfD's social media stream minutes before the convention opened. Inside the convention centre, vintage-style cards were on sale with slogans such as "YOU will be deported". Bjoern Hoerck, seen as one of the party's most radical and controversial leaders, offered a mix of nostalgia and invective, even pointing to the state of Germany's motorway toilets as an example of national malaise.

"A great Germany is a Germany where one need not fear taking a walk through the city park in the evening. A great Germany is a country where apartment keys can be left hanging on the outside of the door," he said.

The conference comes ahead of elections in the eastern states of Saxony-Anhalt and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in September that the AfD hopes will help pave the way for success at national level.

"We will govern. First at a regional level, then at national level," Chrupalla told the conference in a speech that sought to stress party unity.

Both Chrupalla, a trained painter and varnisher from the eastern state of Saxony, and Weidel, a former Goldman Sachs analyst from western Germany, were re-elected with no opposition, but Chrupalla's score of 70% was well below the 81% he secured at the last vote two years ago.

Fire threatening Spain tourist hotspot partly controlled

AFP
Madrid

Spanish firefighters said on Saturday that a wildfire threatening the Costa Brava coast has devoured a huge area of trees and bush and forced the evacuation of 150 tourists from a camp.

The fire broke out on Friday outside the northeastern municipality of La Bisbal d'Emporda, near a picturesque coastline usually full of holidaymakers this time of year.

It has reduced around 2,200 hectares (8.5 square miles) of forest to ash, the regional fire service said in a statement. But they have controlled more than two thirds of the blaze.

Hundreds of firefighters worked through the night and "have stabilised around 70 percent of the right flank of the fire". "Now the objective is to consolidate before the winds change, which is forecast for midday," it added.

No injuries have been reported. Catalonia regional emergency services said around 150 people had been evacuated, including about 70 children, from a holiday camp.

Spain is on the front line of climate change, which scientists say increases the intensity, frequency and duration of the extreme heat that fuels wildfires.

Deadly wildfires devoured almost 400,000 hectares of land last year, the highest figure recorded for the country by the European Forest Fire Information System.

Pope Leo urges US to welcome and protect immigrants

Reuters
Lampedusa, Italy

Pope Leo marked the 250th anniversary of US independence on Saturday with an appeal to Americans to welcome and protect immigrants, in a letter sent to his home country as he visited Italy's migrant frontline island of Lampedusa.

Leo, who drew the ire of Donald Trump last year after calling the US president's headline anti-immigration policies inhumane, also urged the world to become "more human" and to help those fleeing war and poverty. During a day trip to Lampedusa, a gateway for migrants risking dangerous Mediterranean crossings into Europe from Africa, the pope urged European leaders to do more to assist arrivals, which have topped 7,000 this year.

"To receive (immigrants) with compassion and generosity is not only an act of charity, but also a recognition of the dignity that belongs to every human person," he told the United States.

Lampedusa, which lies between Tunisia, Malta and Sicily, sits on one of the world's deadliest migration routes. Many migrants arrive after crossing the Mediterranean in overcrowded boats and makeshift vessels.

The visit echoed that of Pope Francis, who made Lampedusa the destination of his first trip outside Rome after becoming pope in 2013. Among those gathered near Italy's southernmost port to see the pope were newly arrived migrants, Italian Coast Guard search-and-rescue officials and aid groups. Leo told them he had come to show that the pope "continues to accompany you, support you and encourage you".



Pope Leo stands next to the European Union and Italy's flags as he visits the island of Lampedusa, a key entry point for migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea. (AFP)

The pope also called on European leaders to tackle migration "in a comprehensive manner, integrating immediate relief efforts into a long-term strategic plan

capable of receiving, protecting, supporting and integrating migrants". He also called on them to help improve conditions in migrants'

home countries so that fewer people feel compelled to leave. "The pope's visit speaks to every one of us," Kande Abdourahman, a migrant who arrived in Lampedusa in 2015 after travelling across five African countries, the Sahara Desert and the Mediterranean, told Reuters. It is "a reminder that our stories are seen, that welcome is not just a word but an act of humanity," said Abdourahman, now a cultural mediator with the International Rescue Committee.

A total of 14,464 migrants have arrived in Italy by sea so far this year, according to UN Refugee Agency data provided to Reuters, with more than half landing in Lampedusa. The figure exceeds the island's resident population of about 6,000. More than 1,400 people have died or gone missing while attempting to cross the Mediterranean

this year, including 28 children, according to the UN's International Organisation for Migration. Since becoming pope in May 2025, Leo has made support for migrants a central theme of his papacy. Last month, he warned that history would judge harshly leaders who mistreat immigrants. In his first major address to the US on Friday, he praised the country's history of welcoming immigrants and urged Americans to uphold the ideals set out in the Declaration of Independence.

Arriving in Lampedusa on Saturday, Leo laid flowers at a local cemetery on the graves of migrants who died attempting the Mediterranean crossing. He also visited the "Door of Europe," an art installation on Italy's southernmost beach dedicated to migrants, walking through the structure towards the Mediterranean amid strong winds.



Mowasalat hosts sustainable development ambassadors at Lusail Bus Depot

Mowasalat (Karwa) welcomed 50 young sustainable development ambassadors from the Sustainable Development Ambassadors Centre to the Lusail Bus Depot, as part of their 'Sustainability Coffee' programme.

The visit provided an opportunity for the ambassadors to explore one of Qatar's key sustainable transportation landmarks and learn more about Mowasalat's contributions to the country's sustainability and mobility goals.

The visit introduced the ambassadors to Mowasalat's role in

supporting sustainable transportation and national development.

The participants gained valuable insights through direct engagement with the company leadership and experts, giving the ambassadors a deeper understanding of strategic planning, innovation, and sustainability in public transport.

The visit took place at the Lusail Bus Depot, a sustainability landmark and one of Qatar's major green transportation infrastructure achievements.

Recognised by the Guinness World Records as the world's largest electric bus depot, the

facility plays a key role in Mowasalat's development toward more ecological transport operations.

Mowasalat has already electrified more than 70% of its public network fleet, highlighting how clean energy, smart infrastructure, and innovation shape a future of sustainability.

The ambassadors experienced the electric buses firsthand during a guided tour, followed by a presentation and Q&A session on Mowasalat's relevant initiatives, and projects, and contributions to the future of public transportation in Qatar.

Where art speaks before words

Qatari artist Fatima Alsharshani says public art creates connections through shared experiences

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

For Qatari calligraphy and calligraphist artist Fatima Alsharshani, the true value of public art lies not only in what it depicts but in the conversations it inspires.

After unveiling an artwork at Montreal's Mural Festival recently, the artist said creativity can connect people across cultures and strengthen mutual understanding through initiatives such as the Qatar Canada and Mexico 2026 Year of Culture.

Alsharshani told Gulf Times that international cultural initiatives create valuable opportunities for artists to reach new audiences while fostering meaningful exchanges between communities.

"Cultural initiatives like the Year of Culture play an important role because they create meaningful opportunities for people to experience each other's cultures directly.

"They allow artists to move beyond simply presenting their work and instead create relationships, exchanges and conversations," she said.

Alsharshani added that such interactions encourage artistic growth by exposing artists to new perspectives and creative approaches.

"When artists from different backgrounds meet, they bring their own histories, techniques and ways of seeing the world, and that exchange often leads to new creative ideas," she said.

According to Alsharshani, public art is particularly powerful because it becomes part of everyday life rather than remaining within gallery walls.

"Creating art in a public space creates a different relationship between the artwork and the audience. A mural becomes part of people's everyday environment – they encounter it naturally, whether they are looking for it or not," she said.



Fatima Alsharshani (left) and Canada's ambassador to Qatar Karim Morcos (centre).

Unlike gallery visitors who intentionally seek out exhibitions, she noted that passersby encounter murals as part of the city's rhythm, creating unexpected moments of reflection and connection.

At the heart of her Montreal mural is a simple yet thought-provoking question: "When all that's left is the story, what do we want it to say?"

Asked how she hopes her own artistic journey will be remembered, the artist said she would like it to reflect curiosity, lifelong learning and a commitment to building bridges through art.

"I hope my work is remembered as an effort to create bridges, between tradition and contemporary expression, and between people and cultures," said Alsharshani.

She expressed optimism about future collaborations between artists in Qatar and Canada, saying the two creative communities have much to learn from one another.

"I believe collaborations between Qatar and Canada have great potential because both crea-

tive communities bring unique perspectives and experiences. Exchanges like this create opportunities for artists to learn from one another and discover new ways of approaching their work," she said.

She added that the most meaningful partnerships are built on genuine exchange, with ideas, stories and creative approaches flowing in both directions.

"I look forward to seeing more opportunities where artists can come together, experiment and create work that reflects shared human experiences while celebrating cultural differences," she said.

Alsharshani believes art has a unique ability to foster cross-cultural dialogue because it enables people to connect through emotion, curiosity and shared experiences before language becomes a barrier.

"My work brings elements of Qatari and Arabic culture into a contemporary artistic conversation, creating an opportunity for people to engage with it in a personal way," she said.

QPC celebrates pioneer of Qatari magazine publishing

Exclusive interview with the author

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

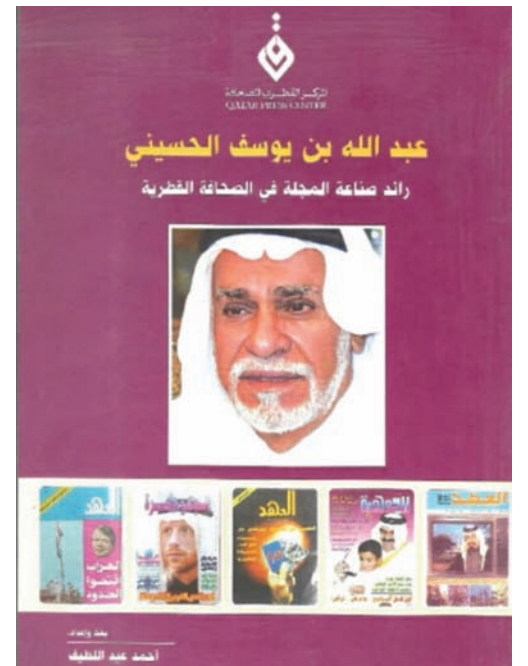
The Qatar Press Center (QPC) recently published the book *Abdullah bin Yousef Al-Husseini: A Pioneer of Magazine Publishing in Qatari Journalism* by journalist Ahmed Abdullatif.

In an exclusive interview with *Gulf Times*, author Abdullatif, speaking live from Cairo, said: "At the outset of my comments on this publication, I would like to express my gratitude to the QPC and to my friend, the media figure Sadiq Mohammed al-Ammari, the Center's Director-General. They played a very significant role in bringing my book to light.

My book, *Abdullah bin Yousef Al-Husseini: A Pioneer of Magazine Production in Qatari Journalism*, is the first in a series of forthcoming publications that will document and chronicle the origins and early stages of Qatari independent journalism. Abdullah bin Yousef al-Husseini founded *Al-Ahd* magazine and *Al-Jawhara* magazine. I have chronicled the journey of these publications, their editorial policies, their coverage of local and cultural affairs, and their treatment of Arab and international issues, with a detailed history that includes documents, photographs from investigations and interviews, and images appearing for the first time in Qatari journalism."

Abdullatif said: "I reviewed everything published and written about Qatari journalism, which consisted only of brief introductions and preliminary information. No one had previously discussed the content, direction, and cultural, political, and economic orientations of Qatari journalism. This book is the first in a series documenting a significant period in the history of Qatari journalism. This period, from 1970 to 1995, marked the birth of independent journalism in Qatar. I have documented these experiences, spanning a quarter of a century, and aim to chronicle the history and biographies of five pioneers who established seven leading initiatives in Qatari journalism," he said.

The book chronicles the career of Qatari writer and media figure Abdullah bin Yousef al-Husseini, who launched *Al-Ahd* magazine on July 9, 1974, with his son, the media figure Khalifa Abdullah al-Husseini, serving as its editor-in-chief. Three years later, he launched *Al-Jawhara* magazine, the first women's magazine in Qatar. The book includes a biography of Abdullah al-Husseini and the early stages of *Al-Ahd*



Cover page of the book *Abdullah bin Yousef Al-Husseini: A Pioneer of Magazine Publishing in Qatari Journalism*.

magazine's development. It also traces the magazine's evolution, its editorial policies, and how it addressed local, Arab, and international affairs, contributing to paving the way for and developing Qatari media professionals in journalism and writing.

The book also features examples of writings by Abdullah al-Husseini and his son, the media figure Khalifa al-Husseini. Finally, it presents testimonials from contemporary officials, intellectuals, writers, and literary figures regarding the *Al-Ahd* magazine experience. This book is part of a larger project undertaken by the QPC to chronicle and document the journey of pioneers in Qatari journalism and how their experiences enriched the journalistic landscape and the newspaper and magazine industry.

Abdullatif had worked at *Al-Raya* newspaper from 2003 to 2007, during which time he authored several books, including *Road Accidents in Qatar: Challenges and Confrontation* and *Cultural Cafes in the Arab World and Their Role in Shaping Awareness*.

Graduation season drives gold sales boom

Lower global prices boosting consumer demand

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The local gold market has been seeing a significant increase in consumer turnout over the recent periods as the graduation season has enhanced the demand for gold jewellery, with families increasingly choosing precious metal gifts to celebrate academic achievements of their children and relatives.

Such seasonal surge in demand has coincided with a notable drop in global gold prices, making purchases more attractive for both gift-giving and investment purposes.

Accordingly, some gold retailers across Doha noted that graduation gifts have become the primary driver of sales during the current period, surpassing demand typically associated with other seasonal occasions.

Consumers are particularly seeking bracelets, necklaces, rings, earrings, and compact jewellery sets, while customised pieces engraved with graduates' names or initials have gained remarkable popularity due to their emotional and celebratory value.

The strong demand has also been supported by a decline in international gold prices over the recent weeks. After reaching record highs earlier in 2026, global gold prices experienced a substantial correction during the second quarter due to several related economic and geopolitical factors.



However, despite the recent decline, gold continues to be regarded as one of the world's preferred long-term stores of value. According to some local gold traders, many customers are taking advantage of the lower prices to buy graduation gifts in addition to gold bars as a safe investment.

The graduation season coupled with the start of the summer holiday has further stimulated retail activity, with many families purchasing gifts before travelling abroad.

Abdulleem Hussein, a trader in Doha's Gold Souq, noted that the decline in international prices has encouraged more customers to buy.

He said necklaces, bracelets and earrings remain among the best-selling items, while Qatar's jewellery market continues to distinguish itself through its wide variety of designs and its ability to produce customised pieces inspired by customers' preferences or social media trends.

Similarly, gold trader Ibrahim al-Ameri described the graduation period as one of the busiest times of the year for jewellery retailers. He observed a growing demand for personalised jewellery engraved with graduates'

names or initials, reflecting consumers' preference for gifts with lasting emotional significance.

He added that lower gold prices have also increased interest in gold bullion, which continues to be viewed as a reliable safe-haven investment during periods of economic uncertainty.

Ahmed al-Yafei, another retailer in the Gold Souq, confirmed that customer traffic has risen noticeably in recent weeks as buyers seek to capitalise on softer prices while celebrating school and university graduates. He indicated that lightweight jewellery sets, modern bracelets, necklaces and earrings remain the preferred choices among younger consumers.

Recent market data also shows that gold prices in Qatar have eased from their June peaks, improving affordability for local consumers and reinforcing buying activity during the current graduation season.

The combination of lower international prices, seasonal gifting traditions, and sustained investor confidence is expected to make this year's graduation period one of the most active seasons for Qatar's gold market over the recent years.

Demand rises for travel, outdoor essentials as holiday season starts

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar's retail sector is witnessing a significant seasonal boost as families prepare for summer holidays, driving strong demand for travel accessories, beach equipment, camping supplies, sun protection products, and outdoor leisure items.

Accordingly, many shopping malls and hypermarkets across the country have launched extensive promotional campaigns while dedicating prime retail space to seasonal merchandise.

The surge in consumer spending coincides with the conclusion of the academic year and the start of the summer vacation, when many

residents often travel abroad or organise local leisure activities.

Many retailers have established dedicated summer sections near the entrances of major shopping centres to provide customers with convenient access to travel and beach essentials.

These sections feature a wide range of products including folding chairs, portable tables, coolers, beach accessories, swimwear, travel organisers, insulated bags, and camping equipment.

Plastic beach chairs are priced between QR50 and QR100, while compact folding chairs start at around QR40.

Folding tables made from wood, plastic, or metal generally range between QR90 and QR250, depending on their size and material.



Portable coolers, which have become increasingly popular for beach outings and camping trips, are available from approximately QR120-300 or other prices, with larger wheeled models attracting growing interest among families seeking greater convenience during outdoor activities.

Health and beauty departments have also experienced a notice-

able increase in customer turnout, seeking products designed to protect against extreme summer temperatures, which frequently exceed 40C during the daytime. Sunscreen products are among the fastest-selling seasonal items, with prices starting from around QR30, while tanning oils retail from around QR80.

Retail staff report that custom-

ers increasingly prefer broad-spectrum, high-SPF, water-resistant sunscreens that provide extended protection during swimming, beach visits, and camping.

However, it is noted that many consumers are making more informed purchasing decisions by comparing prices and promotions through retailers' websites, mobile applications, and online marketplaces before making purchases.

The rapid growth of e-commerce and home delivery services has enhanced price transparency while intensifying competition among retailers. This shift toward digital shopping is supported by broader spending trends.

According to Visa's Retail Spend Monitor, premium Visa cardholders in Qatar increased their retail

spending by around 19% year-on-year during the 2025 summer travel season, while online spending rose by 20% and outbound travel expenditure increased by 27%.

In anticipation of the peak travel period, retailers also expect strong demand for luggage, backpacks, travel accessories, reusable water bottles, portable electronic devices, and children's travel products. Many stores have already introduced seasonal promotions and discounts on suitcases of various sizes as families finalise their holiday plans.

Besides, retailers have remained optimistic that consumer demand will continue throughout July and August, supported by school holidays, outbound travel, domestic tourism, and competitive promotional campaigns.