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SPORT | Page 1

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Shura Council passes traffic and state property laws

Qatar's Shura Council has passed a new traffic law and an amended draft law on state property, drawing the curtain on a legislative year in which it reviewed 23 bills and turned particular focus onto family welfare, child protection and the coming challenge of artificial intelligence.

The two draft laws were approved and referred to the government at the Council's final sitting of its first ordinary session — its 54th annual session — held at Tamim bin Hamad Hall under the chairmanship of HE the Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem. Members signed off on both after weighing committee reports and debating their provisions.

The Council also extended the mandate of its Health, General Services and Environment Committee to keep studying a proposed general debate on regulating and governing artificial intelligence in Qatar — a sign the assembly intends to grapple seriously with the technology's oversight.

HE the Secretary-General Naif bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud then read Amiri Decree No. 30 of 2026, formally closing the session with effect from July 7, 2026.

In his closing address, al-Ghanem thanked His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani for his confidence in the Council, saying co-operation between the legislative and executive branches had deepened institutional integration behind Qatar

National Vision 2030. Over the year, he noted, the Council held 37 ordinary sessions and completed its review of 23 draft laws, alongside general debates and hearings with ministers and senior officials.

Social issues drew special attention, particularly family welfare and child development. The Council's permanent committees met 81 times, producing recommendations on strengthening parental care, supporting family cohesion, expanding the social and educational role of sports clubs, and tackling childhood obesity. Al-Ghanem also highlighted the Council's proposed law on digital child protection, aimed at shielding children as their use of online platforms grows.

On parliamentary diplomacy, the speaker said the Council's regional and international engagements reflected Qatar's long-standing support for dialogue, peace and Arab and Islamic causes, chief among them Palestine. He pointed to a notable win: securing backing for an emergency item, proposed by Qatar and partner countries, on the agenda of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Istanbul — the first such proposal by an Arab and Islamic country to gain sufficient support for inclusion.

Al-Ghanem closed by praising members, committees, the General Secretariat and local media, and thanked citizens for engaging with the Council's work. (QNA)



PM, Irish minister review ties



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence, Helen McEntee, who is currently visiting the country. They reviewed ways to support and strengthen bilateral relations and discussed the latest regional developments, particularly the diplomatic efforts to enhance security and stability in the region following a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

between the United States and Iran. They also exchanged views on a number of issues of common interest.

Following the meeting, the prime minister attended the signing ceremony of an MoU establishing political consultations between the two countries' foreign ministries.

The MoU was co-signed by HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi and McEntee. (QNA)

Sweet no more: New tax will make sugar the price to pay

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

Qatar has begun taxing sugary drinks. Starting yesterday, the General Tax Authority (GTA) began applying a new excise tax on sweetened beverages — and, in a notable twist, the more sugar a drink contains, the more it will be taxed. Under the new "tiered volumetric" model, the levy is calculated not by the size of a product but by the amount of sugar or added sweeteners packed into it.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Authority said the mechanism comes into force under Law No. 2 of 2026, which amends parts of the Excise Tax Law and, crucially, widens the list of goods that can be taxed. That list now takes in sugar-sweetened drinks — think soft drinks and juices with added sugar — along with products that can be turned

into a beverage and carry sugar or sweeteners, such as concentrates, powders and extracts.

For businesses, there is paperwork to file. The GTA said everyone holding excise goods must submit a "transitional declaration" through the Dhareeba platform, essentially a formal count of their taxable stock. The rules then split by volume. If a company is sitting on less than 200,000 litres, it simply files the declaration and pays nothing. If the stockpile is 200,000 litres or more, the business must submit an audited inventory report confirming the quantity held — and settle any tax owed.

Here is the part worth underlining: how much is owed depends on sugar, not size. The GTA stressed that the bill is not set by the

sheer volume of inventory but by the sugar or sweetener content of the drinks. In practice, a company could clear the 200,000-litre threshold and still owe nothing, provided all its products fall into non-taxable categories. The tax bites only on beverages carrying medium or high levels of added sugar.

The Authority has set clear deadlines. Taxpayers are urged to file their return through Dhareeba within 90 days of July 6, 2026, and to pay whatever is due within 30 days of filing.

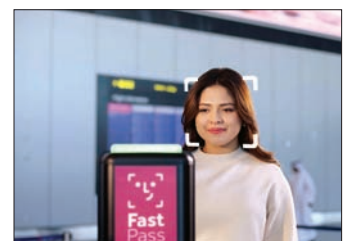
There is also relief for cafes and restaurants. The GTA clarified that the excise tax applies only to packaged products; drinks made fresh and handed straight to the customer without sealed packaging — a barista's latte, a freshly squeezed juice — fall outside its scope.



Just a face in the crowd: HIA introduces Fast Pass

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Hamad International Airport (HIA) and Qatar Airways have opened the door to a passport-free future. The two have jointly launched "Fast Pass," a biometric service that lets travellers glide through the airport's key checkpoints on facial recognition alone — sharply reducing the paper-based document checks that have long defined the departure ritual. Rolled out in partnership with technology firm SITA, it ranks among the largest deployments of biometric identity verification anywhere in the Middle East or, indeed, the world. According to a statement from Hamad International Airport, Fast Pass works by allowing passengers to move through critical airport stages with the fewest possible checks of physical travel documents, the face itself becoming the boarding pass.



The scale is striking: the system stitches together more than 700 touchpoints into a single, seamless biometric journey — one built for reliability and engineered to hold passengers to the highest standards of security and data protection at every step through the terminal. Signing up is deliberately simple. Registration for Fast Pass is available at the airport's self-service check-in kiosks and through the Qatar Airways mobile app. Once enrolled, passengers can pass through designated biometric-enabled points — check-in, baggage drop, security screening and boarding gates — using facial identification alone. **To Page 2**

Qatar opens first smart mosque in Muaither

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Qatar has switched on its first smart mosque. The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has inaugurated the Qais bin Ubadah Mosque in Muaither — a house of worship that runs on solar power, recycles its own ablution water and manages its electricity and cooling through intelligent control systems, marking a first for the country and a template for what is to come. The opening is more than a ribbon-cutting. It signals a deliberate shift in how Qatar builds its places of worship, folding sustainability and technology into architecture that has, for centuries, changed little in form. For Awqaf, the mosque is proof of concept — evidence that the Ministry's drive to modernise mosque infrastructure and services can keep pace with a fast-evolving nation without loosening its grip on tradition. The project is also a direct answer to demographics. As new residential districts rise and Qatar's population swells, the ministry has pressed ahead with an expansionist plan to plant mosques in emerging neighbourhoods — a forward-looking response to urban growth



that reinforces the mosque's dual role as both a spiritual sanctuary and a community anchor. At the heart of the Qais bin Saad bin Ubadah Mosque is a suite of technologies engineered to run lean. Smart systems

govern electricity and water use, squeezing maximum efficiency from every resource, while solar panels harvest clean energy to power the mosque's air-conditioning and lighting. **To Page 2**

Deputy PM meets N Macedonia minister



HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani met with North Macedonia's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Timco Mucunski and his accompanying delegation during their visit to Qatar. During the meeting, they explored the latest security developments in the region and discussed aspects of joint co-operation and co-ordination in light of current circumstances. Senior officers and officials from both sides attended the meeting. - **QNA**

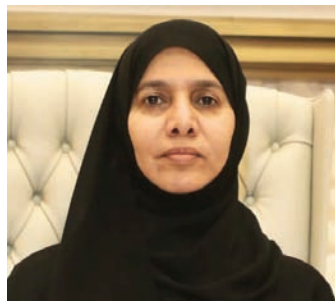
Deputy PM receives phone call from French minister

HE the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defence Affairs Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan al-Thani received a phone call yesterday from France's Minister of the Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Catherine Vautrin.

During the call, they reviewed the latest security developments in the region, discussed aspects of joint defence co-operation between the two countries, and explored ways to strengthen bilateral relations. - **QNA**

Legislative-executive co-operation lauded

HE the Shura Council Deputy Speaker Dr Hamda bint Hassan al-Sulaiti expressed pride in the continuous support, generous patronage, and valuable trust bestowed upon the council by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, saying that this confidence serves as a motivation to continue fulfilling the council's constitutional mandates, enhancing its role in serving the nation and its citizens, and contributing to national development.



and completed the study of 23 draft laws, in addition to general discussion sessions and hearings that hosted several ministers and senior officials.

This contributed to strengthening the council's oversight role and monitoring the performance and strategic plans of government entities.

HE the Deputy Speaker highlighted that social issues, particularly family and upbringing, were prominently addressed in the council's work.

In remarks marking the conclusion of the first ordinary session of the second legislative term, corresponding to the 54th annual session, she said the council had continued to perform its legislative and oversight responsibilities with a high national spirit and an institutional approach based on the supreme interests of the state, focusing on discussing issues that impact society and meet citizens' aspirations.

HE Dr al-Sulaiti commended the productive and constructive co-operation between the Shura Council and the government, which has reinforced the complementarity of roles between the legislative and executive branches.

This collaboration, she said, has supported the council's work in studying draft laws and following up on priority national files, thereby advancing development and aligning with Qatar National Vision 2030.

HE Dr al-Sulaiti noted that the current session featured intensive legislative and oversight work, during which the council held 37 ordinary sessions

She emphasised that this focus reflects the council's connection to societal issues and aspirations, citing the proposal of a law on digital protection for children as an important topic that keeps pace with rapid technological changes and enhances legislative protection for children from digital risks.

HE Dr al-Sulaiti pointed out that the work of the permanent committees was a key pillar supporting the council's activities, praising the co-operation, commitment, and active participation of the council members in both general sessions and committee meetings, as well as their dedication to studying presented topics in a responsible manner that serves the public interest.

She also hailed the important role played by the council's General Secretariat in supporting the work of sessions and committees, and in providing the necessary technical, administrative, and organisational requirements for the smooth functioning of parliamentary work. - **QNA**

Shura Council secretary-general pledges continued support for legislature's roles

HE the Secretary-General of the Shura Council Nayef bin Mohammed al-Mahmoud said that the General Secretariat will continue to strengthen its support for the Council by providing technical, administrative, and organisational services that enable members to carry out their legislative and oversight responsibilities efficiently.



Speaking at the close of the first regular session of the second legislative term, corresponding to the Council's 54th annual session, HE al-Mahmoud pointed out that the achievements of the session reflected the commitment of Council members, under the leadership of HE the Shura Council Speaker Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim, to reviewing legislation, discussing national priorities, and advancing the Council's legislative and oversight agenda.

He noted that the session included 37 regular sittings, during which the Council completed the review of 23 draft laws, alongside general debate and hearing sessions.

The Council's standing committees also played a central role in examining matters referred to them.

HE al-Mahmoud stated that the General Secretariat worked

throughout the session to provide an effective institutional framework by co-ordinating meetings and sessions, managing administrative and technical requirements, and supporting the Council's standing committees. These efforts helped ensure the smooth conduct of the Council's work.

He added that the Secretariat's role extends beyond administrative functions to strengthening parliamentary support through the development of work processes, improved institutional co-ordination, enhanced operational readiness, and modernised systems capable of meeting the Council's evolving legislative and oversight responsibilities.

HE al-Mahmoud highlighted the launch of the Shura Council General Secretariat Strategy 2025-30 at the beginning of the session, describing it as a major step

toward modernising institutional performance.

The strategy, he said, focuses on strengthening legislative and oversight support, improving administrative and operational efficiency, and advancing digital transformation and institutional innovation.

HE al-Mahmoud pointed out that the strategy provides a practical roadmap for transforming the General Secretariat into a more integrated support institution based on strategic planning, governance, performance measurement, and digital transformation, while enhancing the quality of services provided to Council members and committees.

The Secretary-General commended the staff of the General Secretariat for their professionalism and dedication throughout the session, attributing the smooth conduct of the Council's work to the co-ordinated efforts of its administrative and technical teams.

HE al-Mahmoud reaffirmed the Secretariat's commitment to further developing its capabilities and supporting the Shura Council's future legislative and oversight role in of the nation under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. - **QNA**

Just a face in the crowd: HIA introduces Fast Pass

From Page 1

Activation takes only a few seconds, doing away with repeated document checks and shaving down waiting times, a benefit felt most keenly during peak-season crush.

Crucially, the service is optional. Travellers who prefer the familiar can still complete their procedures the traditional way, presenting passports and boarding passes with the help of airport staff.

Fast Pass is an invitation, not an obligation.

The launch arrives as global appetite for biometric travel gathers pace.

The majority of passengers, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), now favour verifying their identity through biometric data over

paper documents – a shift in traveller psychology that the world's airports are racing to meet.

For Hamad International Airport, Fast Pass is part of a broader push to sharpen innovation and stay ahead of that global curve, while handing passengers a faster, smoother way to navigate the terminal.

The major expansion of the service underscores the airport's commitment to a genuinely paperless travel experience.

Nor is the rollout finished.

The airport says it will keep widening Fast Pass by adding further touchpoints and deepening its ties with technology partners to elevate the overall journey – with the prospect, in the near future, of extending the service to other interested airlines operating out of Hamad International Airport.

Minister of commerce meets UAE ambassador



HE the Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani bin Faisal al-Thani met yesterday with the United Arab Emirates (UAE)'s ambassador to Qatar Saeed Abdullah al-Qamzi. They discussed bilateral co-operation in terms of trade, investment, and industry, in addition to touching on topics of mutual interest. - **QNA**

Minister discusses security co-operation with EU envoy



HE the Minister of State for Interior Affairs Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Faisal bin Mohammed al-Thani met the European Union's ambassador to Qatar Cristian Tudor to discuss bilateral co-operation. Both sides explored ways to further strengthen relations between Qatar and the European Union, with particular focus on co-operation in the security sector. They also took stock of a number of issues of mutual interest. - **QNA**

Mauritanian PM meets Qatar's ambassador

Mauritania's Prime Minister El Moctar Ould Djay met Qatar's ambassador Shaheen bin Ali al-Kaabi to discuss bilateral relations between the two nations.

The meeting focused on co-operation between Qatar and Mauritania and explored ways to further strengthen ties across areas of mutual interest. - **QNA**



QC opens sewing workshop in Mauritania capital

Qatar Charity (QC), in co-operation with Mauritania's ministry of social action, childhood and family, has inaugurated a sewing workshop in Nouakchott to support female graduates of the Women's Empowerment Training Centre.

The project, implemented through the QC's Mauritania branch, targets breadwinners of vulnerable families and aims to enhance their economic empowerment through sustainable income-generating opportunities.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Lalla Fatimetou Mint Seddik Ould Larbi, adviser to the minister of social action, childhood and family; Fahd Salem al-Dosari, chargé d'affaires at Qatar's embassy in Mauritania; Akhyarhoum Ould El Mostafa, deputy governor of Nouakchott West; Eng. Omer Abdelaziz Mohamed, country director of Qatar Charity's Mauritania branch; Yent Agjereb, director of the Women's Empowerment Training Centre; and several officials from the ministry and QC.



Speaking at the event, Mohamed highlighted the strong partnership between Qatar Charity and the ministry, noting that the project reflects the organisation's commitment to promoting sustainable economic empowerment.

He said the workshop aims to provide Women's Empowerment Training Centre graduates with employment opportunities and a stable source of income.

Al-Dosari said the workshop is an example of the strong co-operation between Qatar and Mauritania and reflects their shared commitment to supporting vulnerable groups and advancing economic and social empowerment.

Meanwhile, Larbi said the project helps build the capacities of young women and enhance their economic independence by providing them with skills needed in the labour market.

She thanked Qatar Charity for its continued support and constructive co-operation with the ministry in serving vulnerable communities.

QRCS sends aid, medical teams to Venezuela

The Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) has dispatched humanitarian aid shipments and a field medical and relief delegation to Venezuela to provide emergency relief following the devastating earthquakes, as part of the Qatari airlift ordered by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

Qatar's ambassador to Venezuela Salman bin Nabit al-Khulaifi described the initiative as a manifestation of Qatar's leading humanitarian role and ongoing commitment to backing other countries in any part of the world.

"The arrival of this fully integrated medical and relief convoy reflects the strong bilateral relations and humanitarian ties between Qatar and Venezuela," the envoy said. "The embassy will be there to offer every possible form of support, to help the delegation successfully achieve the noble humanitarian goals of its mission."

The QRCS delegation comprises specialists, divided into three main groups that work together to ensure an optimal humanitarian response.

The relief group is responsible for needs assessment and emergency aid distribution.

Comprising consultants and surgeons from Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC) and the QRCS, the medical group members perform medical examinations, consultations, and surgeries for patients and affected people.

There is a psychosocial support (PSS) group, which implements rehabilitation programmes and offers mental health support for the affected communities, to enhance their resilience.

In preparation for the launch of humanitarian operations, representatives of the QRCS, Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), and the Venezuelan Red Cross held a co-ordination meeting to assess the humanitarian situa-



tion, identify priorities, and review mechanisms of relief co-ordination, especially in the health sector.

Two humanitarian aid shipments from the QRCS were delivered by the Qatari relief aircraft, containing 16 tonnes of medical supplies and 24 tonnes of hygiene items.

Venezuela's Permanent Ambassador to UNESCO Ernesto Villegas Poljak has expressed his government's deep gratitude and appreciation to the Qatar government and humanitarian organisations. - **QNA**

Qatar opens first smart mosque in Muaither

From Page 1

The result is a sharp cut in reliance on conventional power.

Nothing is wasted: a dedicated system captures ablution water, treats it and channels it back to serve the toilets and to irrigate the green spaces ringing the mosque.

That single loop does quadruple duty – it conserves water, nurtures landscaping around the building, trims carbon emissions and lifts the surrounding environmental quality.

In other words, the mosque does not merely sit lightly on the land; it actively gives back to it.

Assistant Undersecretary for Da'wah and Mosques Affairs at the Ministry of Endowments, Mohammed bin Hamad al-Kuwari, said the project was born of constructive collaboration

between Awqaf and the private sector.

Such partnerships, he explained, had made it possible to embed smart systems and modern technologies into mosque construction, sharpening both the efficiency of the build and the quality of the finished work.

The ministry, al-Kuwari confirmed, is pushing ahead with the expansion, with more smart mosques slated for construction across the country in the next phase.

This, he noted, is woven into Awqaf's plan to move in step with urban development and answer the shifting needs of society.

The inauguration dovetails with the Ministry's Strategic Objectives 2025-30, which call for upgrading mosque infrastructure to top-tier standards, elevating the quality of religious services,

harnessing cutting-edge technology in mosque management, and locking sustainability into endowment and utility projects.

In the Qais bin Saad bin Ubaidah Mosque, that blueprint becomes brick and mortar – a structure that marries timeless Islamic architecture with the latest engineering to enhance both operational efficiency and the worshipper's experience.

The reach extends further still.

The mosque slots neatly into Qatar National Vision 2030, which places sustainable development and improved quality of life at the centre of national ambition – goals pursued here by building durable infrastructure, deepening religious principles and cultural identity, and fortifying the role of religious institutions in shaping both people and society.

Ferrari unveils the 12Cilindri Manuale, reviving manual driving with modern technology

Ferrari has introduced the 12Cilindri Manuale, a limited-edition version of the Ferrari 12Cilindri that blends the engagement of a traditional manual gearbox with advanced by-wire technology.

Designed for drivers seeking a more physical and immersive experience, the model draws inspiration from Ferrari's front-engined V12 grand tourers of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s while incorporating contemporary engineering.

At its core is the new Manuale by-Wire system, developed entirely in Maranello, which combines a manual gear lever and clutch pedal with Ferrari's proven eight-speed dual-clutch transmission (DCT).

Rather than relying on a conventional mechanical linkage, the system converts the driver's gearshift and clutch inputs into electronic signals while preserving the tactile feel, resistance and

feedback of a traditional manual transmission.

Ferrari said extensive development enabled it to recreate the analogue driving experience with high precision, repeatability and ease of use.

The car can be driven in manual mode through the first six gears and reverse, or switched to fully automatic operation, giving drivers the flexibility to choose between maximum engagement and everyday comfort.

Power comes from Ferrari's naturally aspirated 6.5-litre V12, producing 830hp, revving to 9,500rpm, accelerating from 0-100kph in about three seconds, and reaching a top speed of more than 340kph.

The Manuale by-Wire system introduces an entirely new gear selector, clutch-by-wire pedal, control unit and software while retaining the existing engine and transmission.

Sensors and advanced kinematic mechanisms recreate the clicks,

resistance and mechanical loads of Ferrari's classic manual gearboxes.

The system also prevents incorrect gear engagement if the clutch is not properly depressed or an invalid gear is selected.

Ferrari said the redesigned three-pedal layout plays a central role in the driving experience.

The clutch pedal digitally controls the DCT clutch while reproducing the progressive load and travel of a mechanical clutch.

Proper coordination between the clutch, throttle and gear lever delivers smooth shifts, while poor timing can result in jerks or even engine stalling, reinforcing the authentic character of a traditional manual transmission.

For the first time in many years, Ferrari has removed steering-wheel shift paddles, placing the emphasis entirely on the gear lever and clutch.

Drivers can also perform classic techniques such as heel-and-toe downshifts.



Inside, the cabin features a reinterpreted open metal shift gate inspired by Ferrari's iconic manual models, a round aluminium gear knob with illuminated gear indicators, a redesigned centre tunnel and a driver-focused pedal layout.

The shift gate retains the classic six-speed pattern with reverse positioned at the upper left.

Production is limited to 1,499 units, a figure referencing the displacement of Ferrari's first V12 engine introduced in 1947.

The model is aimed at enthusiasts of Ferrari's front-engined V12 berlinettas seeking a more involving driving experience.

Exclusive design touches include laser-etched side badges, five-spoke forged wheels, en-

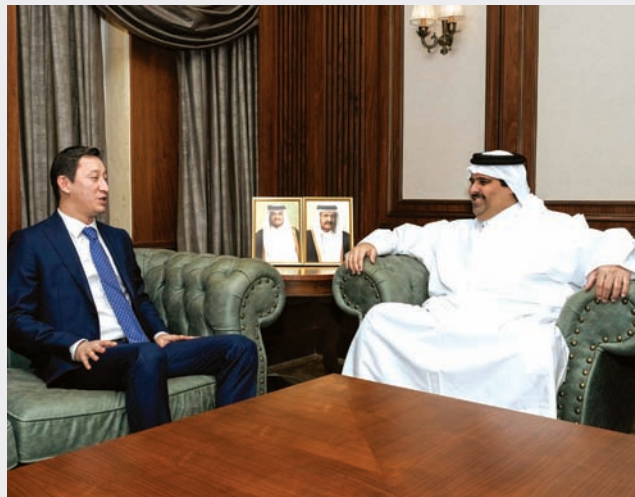


graved aluminium door sills, a tailor-made specification, and styling details inspired by the legendary Ferrari 365 GTB4.

Ferrari will also provide its seven-year Genuine Maintenance

programme, covering scheduled servicing every 20,000km or annually, genuine spare parts, factory-trained technicians, and access through the company's global dealer network.

QMC chief executive meets Uzbekistan's ambassador



Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) chief executive Sheikh Khalid bin Abdulaziz bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Uzbekistan's ambassador to Qatar Ashraf Khodjaev. They discussed ways to enhance joint cooperation in media and production fields. - QNA

Minister names international humanitarian law panellists

HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohannadi has issued a decision appointing the members of the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law (NCIHL).

Pursuant to the minister's decision, the NCIHL shall be chaired by HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice Saeed bin Abdullah al-Suwaidi.

The committee will comprise of Brigadier-General Abdullah Ibrahim al-Fadhala as the representative of the Ministry of Defence, Brigadier-General Saad Salem al-Dosari as the representative of the Ministry of Interior (MoI), Sarah Abdullah al-Saadi as the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Khalid Mohammed al-Khamis al-Obaidli as the repre-

sentative of the Ministry of Justice and Rapporteur of the Committee.

The membership includes Dr Abdullah Hamad al-Khaldi as the representative of the Ministry of Justice, Mohammed Iskandar al-Qadi as the representative of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Dr Ali Jaber Dharman as the representative of the Ministry of Public Health, and Maha Hamad al-Attiyah as the representative of the Ministry of Social Development and Family.

Also named to the committee are Ashwaq Saeed al-Sairi as the representative of the Ministry of Labour, Issa bin Arar al-Rumaihi as the representative of the Shura Council, Abdullatif Mohammed al-Jasmi as the representative of Qatar Museums, Dr Sarah Hamad al-Qarah as the representative of Qatar University, Rashid

Mohammed al-Hamda al-Nuaimi as the representative of Qatar Foundation (QF), and Faisal Mohamed al-Emadi as the representative of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS).

The NCIHL is the national mechanism meant to promote respect for the provisions of international humanitarian law and to coordinate among the relevant national entities.

Its function includes following up on the implementation of Qatar's international obligations in this respect, thereby helping to consolidate humanitarian principles and protect people during armed conflicts.

To mark this occasion, HE al-Suwaidi welcomed the new members, wishing them success in performing their missions and in steadfastly continuing to achieve the committee's mission and objectives. - QNA

Over the past 13 years, Qatar has built an integrated national satellite communications ecosystem centred on Es'hailSat, ending its reliance on foreign satellite operators and strengthening its position in the regional space industry.

The transformation has gone far beyond launching satellites.

Since placing its first satellite, Es'hail-1, into orbit in 2013, Qatar has steadily expanded its space capabilities through investments in satellite infrastructure, international partnerships and home-grown expertise.

The recent announcement of the high-throughput Es'hail-3/Turksat-Biruni satellite marks the latest milestone in that strategy, advancing the country's satellite communications capabilities and reinforcing its position as an emerging player in the global space industry.

Alongside expanding its satellite fleet to two spacecraft operating from the 25.5° East (25.5° E) and 26° E orbital positions, Es'hailSat has developed advanced ground infrastructure, forged strategic partnerships with leading international companies and built a highly skilled national workforce that now plays a central role in operating and managing Qatar's space assets.

The company's rapid evolution has made it a leading example of investment in the space sector as a driver of the modern economy, reflecting Qatar's broader ambition to establish itself as a regional hub for satellite communications and space services.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), economic expert Abdullah al-Khater said that Qatar has developed an advanced space and satellite communications ecosystem through sustained investment in national infrastructure and satellite projects that have strengthened the country's technological capabilities and strategic autonomy.

He said that the sector's growth has bolstered investor and consumer confidence, enhanced Qatar's appeal as a destination for advanced technology investment and opened new opportunities in the emerging space economy.

According to al-Khater, the progress reflects Qatar's broader strategy to diversify its economy and foster a knowledge-based growth model in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030, with the communications and space sectors serving as key enablers of the

From Es'hail-1 to Es'hail-3 - Qatar's evolution into a regional satellite communications hub

country's digital transformation.

He said that the national satellite programme, led by Es'hailSat, has significantly expanded Qatar's satellite broadcasting and communications capabilities while reinforcing the resilience and independence of its space communications infrastructure.

The launch and operation of Es'hail-1 and Es'hail-2, he added, marked the country's transition from relying on foreign satellite service providers to operating its own advanced satellite communications assets.

Al-Khater also noted that Qatar has kept pace with global developments in satellite communications, including the rapid growth of low-Earth orbit (LEO) satellite networks such as SpaceX's Starlink, positioning the country to better anticipate future industry trends and capitalise on emerging opportunities.

He said Qatar's continued progress in the communications and space sectors further strengthens its position as a regional hub for the digital and space economies while enhancing its ability to attract high-value investment in advanced technology and innovation.

Es'hailSat was established in 2010 with capital of approximately QR4.18bn as part of Qatar's strategy to achieve greater independence in satellite broadcasting and communications while supporting economic diversification through a knowledge-based economy.

From the outset, the company's vision extended beyond owning a satellite to building an integrated ecosystem encompassing satellite manufacturing, launch, operations, capacity management and the development of a skilled national workforce capable of sustaining the sector.

To achieve that goal, Es'hailSat forged partnerships with leading international companies to facilitate technology transfer and build local capabilities.

Es'hail-1 was manufactured by US-based SSL, while France's Arianespace launched the satellite from the Guiana Space Centre in French Guiana, reflecting the company's strategy of combining international expertise with domestic capacity building.

On August 29, 2013, Qatar entered the space age with the launch of Es'hail-1 to the 25.5° E orbital position, marking a milestone in the country's satellite communications sector.

The satellite provided extensive coverage across the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region and enabled Qatar to emerge as a regional satellite broadcasting hub after years of relying on foreign operators.

provide satellite communications network services and establishing a 24-hour satellite operations centre in Doha to monitor signals, manage satellite capacity and protect broadcast services from interference.

The company also expanded its partnerships with regional and international media and telecommunications providers, helping diversify its revenue streams and broaden its customer base.

two-satellite fleet from the 25.5° E and 26° E orbital positions, delivering services across the Ku-band and Ka-band frequency bands.

Beyond television broadcasting, the company expanded into high-capacity broadband connectivity, government communications, enterprise networking, maritime and aviation connectivity, and VSAT services, reinforcing its position as a leading regional provider of satellite communications solutions.

Alongside expanding its satellite fleet, Es'hailSat invested heavily in ground infrastructure, establishing an advanced satellite earth station in Doha spanning nearly 50,000sqm.

Among the most sophisticated facilities of its kind in the Middle East, the station provides telemetry, tracking and command (TT&C) services, satellite capacity management, backup broadcasting, uplink services, content management and enterprise communications solutions.

It has also earned Tier IV certification - the highest international standard for operational reliability - highlighting the robustness of Qatar's satellite communications infrastructure.

As the global satellite communications market evolved, Es'hailSat expanded beyond traditional broadcasting into advanced digital services, including intelligent capacity management, integrated broadcasting platforms, satellite-based digital news gathering (DNG) and enterprise connectivity solutions.

The company also broadened its international partnerships with leading operators, including Viastat, Marlink and Nilesat, extending the reach of its services across the Middle East, Africa, Europe and Asia.

Leveraging advanced Ku-band and Ka-band technologies, Es'hailSat provides Ultra HD broadcasting, broadband internet, and maritime and aviation connectivity, strengthening its position in the regional satellite communications market while steadily expanding its international presence.

Since its establishment, the company has also invested in developing national talent through specialised training programmes

From Es'hail-1 to Es'hail-3
Qatar's Strategic Evolution into a Regional Satellite Communications Hub

In Exusive Statements to QNA

2010
Es'hailSat was established as part of Qatar's strategy to achieve greater independence in satellite broadcasting

2013
Qatar entered the space age with the launch of Es'hail-1

2018
The launch of Es'hail-2 represents a qualitative shift in technical capabilities

Es'hail-3/Turksat-Biruni
Represents a new phase of expansion in space capabilities

Abdullah Al Khater - Economic expert

- Qatar has succeeded in the development of an advanced space and satellite communications ecosystem
- Qatar has proved itself to have an attractive environment for high-value investment in advanced technology and innovation
- The communications and space sectors serve as key enablers of the country's digital transformation
- Continued progress in the communications and space sectors strengthens Qatar's position as a regional hub for the digital and space economies

Following its entry into commercial service in December 2014, Es'hail-1 became a key broadcasting platform for leading regional and international media organisations, including beIN SPORTS and the Al Jazeera Media Network, as well as dozens of Arabic and international television channels, further strengthening Qatar's position in the regional satellite broadcasting market.

As commercial operations expanded, Es'hailSat strengthened its operational and commercial capabilities by securing licences to

A new phase of growth began in 2018 with the launch of Es'hail-2 aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket to the 26° E orbital position.

The satellite significantly expanded the company's capabilities by increasing data capacity, improving power efficiency and enhancing resistance to signal interference, enabling Es'hailSat to meet growing demand for satellite communications and broadcasting services across the region.

With Es'hail-2 entering commercial service in 2019, Es'hailSat began operating an integrated

for Qatari engineers in partnership with leading global satellite manufacturers.

The initiative has helped build a skilled workforce capable of operating satellites, earth stations and mission-critical systems, reinforcing the company's long-term operational resilience and technical self-sufficiency.

In what Es'hailSat described as the largest project in its history, the company announced a strategic partnership with Türkiye's Turksat and signed an agreement with France's Thales Alenia Space to design and manufacture the new Es'hail-3/Turksat-Biruni satellite.

The project represents Es'hailSat's largest strategic investment since its establishment in 2010 and marks a new phase in the expansion of Qatar's satellite communications capabilities.

The new satellite will operate in the Ka-band from the 50° E orbital position and feature advanced dynamic capacity management with coverage spanning the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and surrounding maritime regions.

It is expected to support government and mobile communications, aviation and maritime connectivity, and the energy, oil and gas sectors, significantly broadening the company's service portfolio.

In previous remarks to the QNA, Es'hailSat chief executive Ali Ahmed al-Kuwari said the project is valued at approximately QR295mn and is expected to take between three and four years to complete, with the satellite scheduled to enter commercial service by 2030.

He said the project responds to growing global demand for satellite communications services while reinforcing Qatar's position as a regional and international hub for the sector.

More than 15 years after its establishment, Es'hailSat has evolved from a national satellite operator into an integrated satellite communications provider with advanced infrastructure, international partnerships and expanding global reach.

As the company prepares to deploy a new generation of satellite technology, its focus extends beyond expanding technical capabilities to supporting Qatar's digital economy and reinforcing the country's role in the regional and global space and satellite communications industry. - QNA

QSchool 2026 to take students to quantum world

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

With the focus on nurturing the next generation of scientists, engineers and analytical minds, the Qatar Centre for Quantum Computing (QC2) at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, in collaboration with Qatar Foundation's summer camp programme, Mukhayamna 2026, has launched the third edition of its Quantum Computing Summer School: QSchool 2026.

QSchool 2026 is a weeklong programme held at the multipurpose hall of the research complex at Education City, consisting of various workshops to introduce high school students to the world of quantum computing. Mukhayamna 2026 is the flag-

ship summer programme organised by Qatar Foundation's Pre-University Education, featuring a wide variety of specialised camps for boys and girls, focusing on sports, computing, entrepreneurship, and sustainability.

"QSchool 2026 opens a window for high school students into the quantum future, giving them early exposure to ideas and technologies that can help shape Qatar's next generation of scientists, innovators, and technology leaders," Dr Saif M al-Kuwari, associate professor at the College of Science and Engineering HBKU told *Gulf Times*.

Started this Sunday, the workshop has specific themes and topics meant for each day of the programme. There will be a number of engaging interactive lectures, hands-on activities and laboratory



Dr Saif M al-Kuwari.

sessions during the programme. At the workshop, students will explore the foundations of quantum mechanics, learn how quantum computers process information and experiment with quantum circuits, algorithms, teleportation and cryptography using simulated

and real quantum platforms.

During the QSchool 2026 there will a special guided tour of QC2 Lab, offering students first-hand exposure to quantum experiments and research environments supporting emerging quantum technologies. The programme focuses on high school students from across Qatar and aims to inspire the next generation of quantum scientists, engineers, and innovators.

The programme started with an introduction to quantum computing and quantum mechanics. It explored the basic principles of quantum mechanics and how they enable quantum computing, with a focus on superposition, entanglement, measurement and wave-particle duality.

The programme then moves on to quantum circuits, learning how

quantum computers process information using qubits, quantum gates and quantum circuits, and experimenting with basic quantum operations through simulated environments and quantum hardware platforms.

The workshop also discusses quantum algorithms and discovering how quantum algorithms can be used to approach certain problems in new ways, and why quantum computers may offer advantages for selected computational tasks.

Furthermore, another topic discussed during the workshop was quantum teleportation. It explores quantum teleportation and learning how entanglement and classical communication can be used to transfer quantum information, while also simulating simple teleportation protocols.

The next topic during the workshop is quantum cryptography. This enables participants to learn about quantum key distribution and how the principles of Quantum Physics can support secure communication. In addition, there will be a guided tour of the QC2 Lab facility.

QC2 is a pioneering research hub at HBKU, and it focuses on advancing theoretical and experimental research in quantum computation, communication, and sensing. QC2 has a dedicated quantum laboratory, driving national digital resilience.

It aims to establish a vibrant quantum ecosystem in Qatar, fostering collaboration among government, academia, and industry and is expected to cultivate, sustain, and propel the advancement of quantum technologies while addressing potential challenges in Qatar and around the world.

3-2-1 QOSM launches second edition of Olympic heritage programme

QNA
Doha

From September 1 to December 1 2026, Greek-British former competitive skier-turned multimedia artist Lucinda Dilworth will be the Olympic Heritage Artist in Residence for the 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum (QOSM), with full access to the museum's collection and the Olympic Media archives.

Dilworth was selected by an eminent international jury for the second edition of the programme run in partnership with the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The residency builds on QOSM's position as a sports and culture platform in Doha. Since opening in March 2022, the museum has hosted a rich programme of exhibitions and international collaborations, extending its reach well beyond its permanent galleries.

The Olympic Heritage Artists-in-Residence programme, launched in 2025 in partnership with the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, pairs emerging digital artists with the two museums' collections and will run annually until the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Welcoming an artist-in-residence is a natural extension of that ambition, embedding contemporary creative practice directly into the museum's ongoing work.

"Doha has become a place where ambitious creative work gets made, and QOSM is proud to be part of that growth," said Abdullah al-Mulla, Director of 3-2-1 QOSM.

"Welcoming Lucinda into the museum this autumn reflects ex-

actly the kind of cultural exchange we set out to build alongside the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, and the role we want Qatar to play in it."

Lucinda Dilworth is a Greek-British multimedia artist based in Colorado who creates large-scale paintings that she transforms through projection-mapped animation. A former competitive alpine skier, she brings a deep understanding of movement, timing, and spatial precision into her artistic practice. Years of training in speed and control continue to influence how she works with rhythm, balance, and physical space.

"Joining the Olympic residency programme in Doha is a meaningful opportunity to create Fall Line, a new body of work that connects my roots as a former skier with my practice as an artist," said Lucinda Dilworth.

"I'm excited to explore skiing through a creative lens, learn from the people and culture surrounding the residency, and create work in dialogue with the spirit of the Olympic movement."

A parallel residency will be hosted at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne will be undertaken by Paris-based artist Isabella Hin. Born in 1993, Hin works across photography, video and installation – explores water's more elusive qualities and its ties to memory and the unconscious.

Following the success of last year's inaugural edition, the residency programme has been extended from two months to three this year. Dilworth's resulting artwork will be exhibited at the LA28 Summer Olympic Games as part of the Cultural Olympiad and will enter QOSM's permanent collec-

MoECC, Qatar Rail partner on noise monitoring, environmental compliance

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC), represented by the Monitoring and Inspection Department, has conducted a joint visit to the railway network lines.

This tour was carried out in collaboration with Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail) as part of deepening technical cooperation and sharing of expertise to ensure the enforcement of best environmental practices that reinforce sustainability in infrastructure projects.

The visit included field measurements of noise levels by the ministry's engineers, with the objective of monitoring environmental indicators to be recalibrated based on approved requirements and criteria, thereby helping to enhance environmental quality and the environmental monitoring system.

The outcomes of these measurements were



outlined and discussed by technical teams from both sides, in addition to exploring the best measures required to maintain noise levels within approved environmental limits.

This action will significantly strengthen compliance with environmental requirements and support the continued operation of the

railway network lines.

The MoECC emphasised that such visits embody its partnership-based approach with a wide range of national entities, contributing to achieving sustainable development in alignment with Qatar's vision of preserving the environment and quality of life. (QNA)

Ashghal commences works on Package 1 of Izghawa, Al Thumaid Project

QNA
Doha

The Public Works Authority 'Ashghal' has announced the commencement of construction works for Package 1 of the Roads and Infrastructure Project in Izghawa and Al Thumaid, with a cost of approximately QR688mn, as part of its ongoing efforts to develop infrastructure and provide integrated services across the country.

Engineer Abdullah al-Nuaimi, Head of the Northern Areas Section at the Roads Projects Department, highlighted the importance of the Izghawa and Al Thumaid Project, noting that it represents a significant investment in modern, sustainable infrastructure that supports the population and urban growth of both areas while enhancing the quality of services provided to residents. He explained that the project will develop the internal road network, improve road safety, and implement comprehensive infrastructure facilities designed to meet both current and future needs.

Engineer Talal al-Mughaiseeb, Roads Engineering Specialist

at the Roads Projects Department, stated that the project will provide integrated infrastructure services for 669 citizen plots and several service facilities in Izghawa and Al Thumaid. He added that the project is also designed to support future population growth and the commercial developments currently under construction.

Engineer Talal al-Mughaiseeb explained that the project includes the construction of a modern internal road network aimed at improving traffic flow and enhancing connectivity with main roads and public facilities. It will also deliver advanced infrastructure services, including sewage networks, surface and rainwater drainage networks, and other utility networks.

Package 1 of the Izghawa and Al Thumaid Roads and Infrastructure Project includes the construction and development of 27km of roads, in addition to 50km of pedestrian and cycling paths, complete with road safety features, traffic signs, and road markings. The project will also include the installation of 856 street lighting poles and the provision of 3,890 parking spaces.

The works will also include the construction of 39km of rainwater drainage networks, 18km of treated sewage effluent (TSE) networks for irrigating landscaped areas, and 23km of sewage networks.

Package 1 of the Izghawa and Al Thumaid Project is located on the Northwestern outskirts of Doha and covers a total area of approximately 2.71mn square metres. To minimise disruption and accelerate project delivery, the project has been divided into four geographical zones, with construction works being implemented sequentially in each zone.



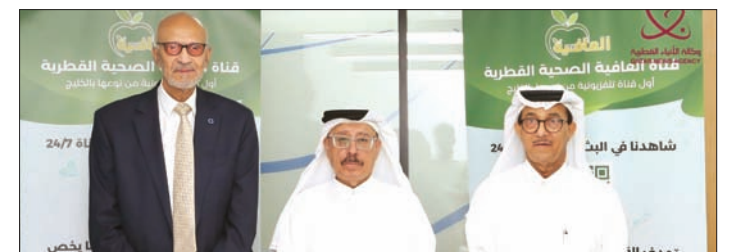
IDF, Qatar's AI Afiyah Health Channel partner to boost diabetes awareness


The International Diabetes Federation (IDF) and Qatar-based AI Afiyah Health Channel have signed a memorandum of understanding to strengthen cooperation on public health awareness, with a focus on preventing obesity and diabetes.

The agreement aims to support community initiatives, produce evidence-based health content, run joint awareness campaigns and promote healthier lifestyles to help curb the spread of chronic diseases. Dr Abdulrahman bin Salem al-Kuwari, founder and director general of AI Afiyah Health Channel, said the partnership

reflected the growing role of health media in changing behaviour and encouraging disease prevention. Dr Adel El Sayed, the IDF's representative, said working with specialised media platforms would help deliver evidence-based health messages and support efforts to reduce obesity and type 2 diabetes across the region.

Dr Abdullah al-Hamaq, chief executive of the Qatar Diabetes Association, said collaboration between health and media organisations was essential to achieving lasting community impact and strengthening awareness of healthy lifestyles. (QNA)





QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY


INVITATION TO TENDER

QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-6000005496	COMPREHENSIVE PHYSICAL ASSET VERIFICATION SERVICES	500/- (Non-refundable)	(N/A)	07.07.2026 08.07.2026 09.07.2026 12.07.2026 13.07.2026	31.07.2026

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
 - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
 - IBAN : **QA51QNB000000000013025828058**
 - Bank Name : **QATAR NATIONAL BANK**
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company's name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder's name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender. (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to rpodila@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the submission of Tender Fee receipt, you may contact at rpodila@qafco.com.qa or on 44227786.
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- The Tender shall be strictly submitted using the QAFCO's Supply Chain Portal – SAP Ariba, on or before the "Tender Closing Date". Tenderers who fail to adhere to this requirement will result in the disqualification of their Tender.



QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY

INVITATION TO TENDER

QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ-6000005514	SUPPLY OF VENDING MACHINES FOR FOOD, SNACKS AND BEVERAGES	500/- (Non-refundable)	(N/A)	08.07.2026 09.07.2026 12.07.2026 13.07.2026 14.07.2026 15.07.2026	30.07.2026

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company's following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : **QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)**
 - Account Number : **0013-025828-058**
 - IBAN : **QA51QNB000000000013025828058**
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- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to purchase@qafco.com.qa and dde Souza@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable).
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the submission Tender Fee receipt at the QAFCO Housing Section, you may contact at dde Souza@qafco.com.qa or on 44225761.
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- The Tender shall be strictly submitted using the QAFCO's Supply Chain Portal – SAP Ariba, on or before the "Tender Closing Date". Tenderers who fail to adhere to this requirement will result in the disqualification of their Tender.



Aspire Zone Summer Camp 2026 kicks off

Aspire Zone has launched the Aspire Summer Camp 2026, welcoming children to a promising summer season expected to be one of the most exciting and engaging yet.

Since opening its doors on July 5, the camp has been filled with enthusiasm and energy from day one, reflecting a strong start to an exceptional summer packed with memorable experiences.

Children aged 6 to 14 years are taking part in a diverse daily programme, featuring sports activities, fitness challenges, creative workshops, and team-building activities, all held at the Aspire Dome and the Aspire Ladies Sports Hall.

Whether participants are trying a new sport for the first time or enjoying their favourite activities, they have demonstrated remarkable enthusiasm, growing self-confidence, and a strong eagerness to take on new challenges every day.

The Summer Activity Programme offers a variety of interac-



tive activities tailored to different age groups and skill levels. Boys can take part in football, basketball, volleyball, esports, swimming and self-defence classes, while girls can enjoy gymnastics, arts and crafts, swimming, esports, self-defence, basketball and volleyball.

In addition to sports and recreational activities, the programme

includes educational workshops on reading and drawing every Tuesday, providing participants with opportunities to develop their creativity and learning skills. On Thursdays, campers will join cultural and educational field trips to some of Doha's most prominent landmarks, giving them a chance to explore the city's heritage and attractions.



The summer camp runs until July 30, with daily sessions from 8am to 1pm at Aspire Dome and

the Aspire Ladies Sports Hall.

This year's programme is supported by its official sponsors: Je-

tour, Qatar Sports for All Federation, Qommunication, Baladna, and AlHadaf.

Extensive field cleanup campaign across meadows and desert sites

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has carried out a largescale field cleanup campaign targeting several natural meadows (Rawda) and wilderness sites across Qatar.

The initiative forms part of MoECC's ongoing efforts to protect the country's land environment, promote the sustainability of vegetation cover, and reduce the environmental impacts of waste and irresponsible practices.

The campaign was implemented over the past six months and included extensive cleaning operations and the removal of waste from several prominent rawdas, including Rawdat Umm Ashkhout, Rawdat Al-Shafala-



hia, Rawdat Muqaitna, Rawdat Al-Nu'man, Rawdat Al-Maida, and Rawdat Aisha.

It also covered a wide range of camping locations, including Al-Mazrouah, Al-Jemalliya, and Al-Sanaa.

The campaign resulted in the removal of significant quantities of various types of waste and the rehabilitation of the targeted sites, contributing to the preservation of their natural ecosystems, enhancing the environmental landscape, and mitigating

the negative impacts of pollution on wildlife and vegetation.

The MoECC called on all visitors to Qatar's desert and natural areas to adopt environmentally responsible practices, maintain the cleanliness of natural sites, and dispose of waste only in designated locations.

It stressed that protecting the environment is a shared responsibility requiring the cooperation of all members of society to preserve Qatar's environmental heritage for future generations.



Ministry wraps up 4th 'Ummah Symposium' season

The Department of Islamic Research and Studies at the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs will conclude the fourth cultural season of its "Ummah Symposium" today. The season has been held under the theme "Knowledge of Revelation".

Today's closing session at the Imam Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab Mosque will examine the intellectual and civilisational dimensions of "Knowledge of Revelation" as a pathway to cultural continuity, with the participation of a group of researchers and academics.

The first theme will explore civilisational inheritance in the light of the epistemology of divine revelation through three topics: the inheritance of prophethood and scripture as a foundation for civilisational continuity, civilisational inheritance as a form of divine selection oriented towards development and renewal, and civilisational inheritance outside the framework of revelatory knowledge, including questions surrounding the

وزارة الأوقاف والشؤون الإسلامية
Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs
دولة قطر • State of Qatar



possibility of its realisation.

The second theme will highlight civilisational inheritance, its requirements and conditions, focusing on three issues: the presence of righteousness among God's inheritors, scholarly specialisation across the disciplines of knowledge coupled with recognised Islamic scholarly authority, and civilisational engagement with others guided by the values of divine revelation.

Director of the Department of Islamic Research and Studies Sheikh Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Ghanem al-Thani said the symposium is one of the department's flagship cultural initiatives.

He said the symposium reflects the

ministry's steadfast commitment to advancing knowledge derived from divine revelation.

Sheikh Dr Ahmed said the symposium is part of a quarterly scholarly initiative organised by the department, bringing together leading scholars to examine a broad range of intellectual and cultural issues, while exploring potential solutions to contemporary social challenges and negative trends within the community.

He added that the department inaugurated the current season in October 2025 with a symposium on "Knowledge Derived from Divine Revelation" as a reference framework for "Knowledge Derived Through Reason."

The symposium focused on examin-

ing the relationship between the two forms of knowledge and the horizons that knowledge derived through reason can attain within the framework of knowledge derived from divine revelation, Dr Ahmed said.

He said the Cultural Seasons initiative will continue uninterrupted, adding that the fifth cultural season will begin on October 6 under the theme "Knowledge and Faith: Foundations of Development and Pillars of Renewal".

The opening symposium will examine the methodological foundations for integrating knowledge and faith in Islamic thought.

Subsequent symposiums, scheduled for Jan 12 and April 6 next year, will explore the integration of knowledge and faith in the development of Islamic civilisation and its role in fostering a balanced civilisational identity.

The season will conclude on July 6 next year, with a symposium examining the implications of separating knowledge from faith and the obstacles such separation poses to renewal. (QNA)

SJC launches upgraded version of e-litigation on Mahakim platform

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) has launched an upgraded version of its electronic litigation procedures through the Mahakim platform, reinforcing the country's commitment to digital transformation in the judicial sector and enhancing the efficiency, accessibility, and transparency of court services.

The enhanced system was officially introduced during a specialised workshop held recently, which was attended by judges, legal professionals, judicial stakeholders, among others.

The initiative is part of the country's efforts to modernise justice administration in line with the SJC's vision of judicial leadership and digital excellence.

Launched by SJC Information Systems Department, the new version of the PEXIP Secure Meetings for Justice electronic litigation programme supports the implementation of SCJ No. (9) of 2026, which regulates judicial procedures conducted electronically.

The system also facilitates the implementation of Law No. (5) of 2022 on the Protection of Victims, Witnesses, and Similar Persons, providing secure mechanisms for remote participation while safeguarding the confidentiality and safety of protected individuals involved in judicial proceedings.

The initiative is considered part of Qatar's broader digital government strategy, which seeks to improve the quality and efficiency of public services through advanced technological solutions.

The workshop further reviewed

the key features of the upgraded platform, highlighting its ability to manage judicial hearings through a secure digital environment supported by end-to-end encryption.

The system enables courts to conduct hearings remotely while allowing litigants, lawyers, judges, and other participants to join sessions through secure electronic links without the need to install additional software.

These enhancements simplify the litigation process, improve operational efficiency, reduce administrative burdens, and ensure that court proceedings remain secure and accessible regardless of participants' locations.

The upgraded Mahakim platform also introduces features designed to strengthen judicial transparency and improve access to justice

The upgraded Mahakim platform also introduces features designed to strengthen judicial transparency and improve access to justice.

The system allows lawyers who are not directly involved in a particular case to attend hearings through designated virtual rooms where permitted, while members of the public can remotely observe public court sessions via the SJC portal.

These measures support transparency in judicial proceedings while maintaining appropriate legal safeguards and procedural integrity.

Additional enhancements are currently under development to expand the platform's capabilities.

Planned updates include introducing instant translation services for both text and voice to facilitate multilingual judicial proceedings,

as well as integrating with the Fanar platform to improve interoperability among judicial digital services.

The Fanar platform is Qatar's flagship, sovereign Arabic Generative Artificial Intelligence ecosystem.

Developed by the Qatar Computing Research Institute at Hamad Bin Khalifa University and sponsored by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, it is designed to protect and promote the Arabic language and culture in the digital age.

Additional smart features are also being developed to address the evolving operational needs of Qatar's courts and further strengthen the efficiency, security, and reliability of electronic court management.

The launch of the upgraded Mahakim platform is another significant milestone in Qatar's path towards digital transformation.

Over the recent years, Qatar has invested heavily in the modernisation of government services under the framework of the Digital Agenda 2030, with the justice sector emerging as one of the leading beneficiaries of technological innovation.

The adoption of secure virtual hearings, encrypted communications, and advanced digital case management systems aligns with international best practices to improve access to justice, reduce case processing times, enhance judicial productivity, and increase public confidence in the legal system.

The enhanced Mahakim platform demonstrates the Council's commitment to delivering quick, efficient, and transparent judicial services while leveraging cutting-edge technology to support judicial excellence and meet the evolving needs of the country's legal system.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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



Sudan gold mine collapse kills 15 miners: state company

A partial collapse in a decommissioned gold mine in northern Sudan has killed 15 miners, a state company said yesterday. The miners had snuck into the shutdown Mohamed Tawfiq mine, in Wadi Halfa near the Egyptian border, when "parts of the mine collapsed... killing 15 miners and injuring one," the Sudanese Mineral Resources Company said. Since war erupted in April 2023 between the army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, both sides' war efforts have been largely funded by Sudan's gold industry, in addition to foreign backers. The war has devastated Sudan's already fragile economy. (AFP)

France pulls all diplomats from Burkina Faso: ministry

France has pulled all its diplomats from Burkina Faso, the foreign ministry said yesterday, after the military-led African nation last month broke off ties with its former colonial master. All French diplomats in Burkina Faso returned to France "late last week", the ministry told AFP. Burkina Faso's charge d'affaires was summoned to the French foreign ministry early last week and informed that Burkinabe diplomatic staff had to leave the European country by Monday evening, it added. "We regret this hostile and unfounded decision, which illustrates the worrying drift of the Burkinabe authorities," the foreign ministry said. (AFP)

Israel's detention of prominent Gazan doctor is arbitrary: UN

A UN human rights body yesterday called Israel's detention of Gazan doctor Hussam Abu Safiya arbitrary and sought his immediate release as rights groups and his lawyer warned that his life was in imminent danger. In its finding, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said that Israel's actions contravened multiple articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Israel Prison Service has rejected allegations that Abu Safiya and other doctors have been mistreated in prison. The Israeli Supreme Court has declined to comment on appeals. (Reuters)

Nigeria probes big tech firms for 'unlawful' content use

Nigeria's competition regulator said yesterday it was investigating major technology and AI companies over allegations of "unlawful exploitation of news content" and "unfair market practices". The Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC) said in a statement the investigation followed a directive from President Bola Tinubu after a joint petition to the presidency by the Nigerian Press Organisation (NPO), an umbrella body representing journalists, newspaper proprietors and online publishers. The regulator said the investigation would examine allegations of "market dominance and anti-competitive conduct". (AFP)

Macron in Syria for historic visit ahead of Nato summit

AFP
Damascus

French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in Damascus yesterday for the first visit by a Western European head of state since Syria's new authorities took power in 2024.

Macron, who will depart today, will advocate for "a free, pluralist Syria that respects each of its components" and plays a role in moderating Middle East tensions, the French presidency told journalists ahead of the visit.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani welcomed Macron upon arrival, according to an AFP journalist.

President Ahmed al-Sharaa has been rebooting Syria's international credentials and seeking to revive his struggling country after toppling longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December 2024.

The last French president to visit the country was Nicolas Sarkozy in 2009, before Assad brutally crushed pro-democracy protests in 2011, sparking a conflict that killed more than half a million people and devastated Syria's infrastructure and industry.

A deadly bombing at a Damascus cafe last week was the latest security challenge for the new authorities who are trying to reunify the country after more than 13 years of civil war.

Syrian state news agency SANA described yesterday's historic visit of the French president as "a pivotal step in the process of restoring



President Emmanuel Macron with Syria's Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani at the Damascus International Airport yesterday. (AFP)

Syria's international presence?"

"We hope this visit will represent a new start for Syria," said Faisal Azouz, 76, a retired teacher, noting that it could "open new prospects for economic, cultural and political relations" between the countries.

Dressmaker Diale Akkashe, 33, saw the visit as a vote of confidence. "If Syria wasn't safe and stable, no president or foreign official would take the risk of coming," she said.

In May 2025, Macron hosted al-Sharaa on his first official visit to a European country, a move that preceded the Syrian leader's trip to Washington last year to meet US President Donald Trump.

Macron is accompanied by several key economic players including Rodolphe Saade, chief executive of maritime transport giant

CMA CGM, and TotalEnergies head Patrick Pouyanne.

Discussions are expected to address Syria's reconstruction and investments, with French businesses still wary of returning to the country. Macron's programme includes "informal" talks with al-Sharaa ahead of official meetings to be held today.

The French president is eager for al-Sharaa to maintain his pledge to protect minorities, after sectarian bloodshed in Syria's Alawite and Druze heartlands last year.

Another key topic will be the fight against the Islamic State group and the ongoing presence of a handful of French fighters on Syrian soil. Syria joined the international anti-IS coalition last year. Bassam Barabandi, a Syrian diplomat and founder of the Nexus Mena think tank, called

Macron's visit "very important" and expressed hope it would shift France's Syria policy "to be more realistic", including on the Kurdish issue. With international support, Syria's Kurds were key to the fight against IS during the civil war, leading to the territorial defeat there in 2019.

But under military pressure, the Kurds this year agreed a deal to integrate their institutions into the state, in a blow to their long-held aspirations for autonomy.

Denis Bauchard, former ambassador and expert at the French Institute of International Relations, said Macron's trip reflects his "desire to consolidate the new regime in Syria at a time when Israel is doing everything it can to keep Syria weak and fragmented, distrustful of the shadow of Turkiye behind al-Sharaa".

Neighbouring Turkey is a key supporter of Syria's new authorities, while Israel has carried out repeated incursions and bombings in the country since al-Assad's overthrow. Macron is to travel to Ankara today in the evening for the Nato summit, and will hold talks there the following day with Turkiye's president.

The White House said Trump would meet al-Sharaa on Wednesday on the sidelines of the summit. France has disagreed with suggestions by Trump that Syria could tackle Hezbollah in Lebanon, where Israel and the Iran-backed group have been at war.

Al-Sharaa has denied that his country intends to intervene in Lebanon.



A woman sits at Tyre's seafront promenade, near the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli strike. (Reuters)

Israeli strike on Lebanon kills 4, including 3 women

AFP
Beirut

Lebanese state media said an Israeli strike on a car in the country's south yesterday killed four people, including three women, despite a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) said a school principal, her mother, a foreign female domestic worker and a male Syrian worker were killed when an Israeli drone targeted their car as they returned from inspecting their family home in Nabatieh al-Fawqa.

The Israeli military said yesterday that it identified "four suspects" approaching the area its forces occupy in southern Lebanon who posed a threat and so "conducted a precise strike in order to remove the threat".

Israel has kept up intermittent strikes on south Lebanon, particularly in the Nabatieh area, despite the two-week-old truce, usually saying it is targeting Hezbollah sites and operatives. Both sides accuse the other of violating the ceasefire.

A lawmaker for Hezbollah, Ihab Hamade, denounced yesterday's strike as "a heinous

crime against civilians" and blamed it "first and foremost" on the Lebanese state. His movement has been highly critical of an agreement signed last month by Lebanon and Israel aiming to pave the way for a permanent end to hostilities.

The framework agreement followed an earlier deal between the United States and Iran aimed at ending the wider regional war that also established a ceasefire in Lebanon, in effect since June 21. The Israeli-Lebanese deal calls for the disarmament of the Iran-backed group, a gradual Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon and the deployment of the Lebanese army there, starting with two "pilot" areas, but without specifying a timeline for the pull-out.

Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun said yesterday that Israel's occupation was preventing the Lebanese army's deployment to the south. A statement from his office said he emphasised the need to pressure Israel to withdraw because "the occupation undermines the legitimacy of the (Lebanese) state and prevents the army from deploying, and the laying of foundations for achieving a just and lasting peace".

Nato summit kicks off in Turkiye today amid regional crises

Nato heads of state and government will meet in Ankara, Turkiye today for a two-day summit of great importance amidst numerous regional crises and global challenges and transformations, particularly in the security and energy sectors.

Ankara is hosting the summit 22 years after the last one held on its soil in 2004. Turkiye occupies a strategic importance from geographical, political, and defence perspectives, as well as being a key transit corridor for energy supplies.

The summit is expected to discuss the alliance's defence spending and the Russia-Ukraine crisis. It will reaffirm the commitment to the principle of collective defence and the bonds between member states, in addition to addressing the developments in the Middle East, global challenges related to security, freedom of navigation, energy supplies, and other regional and international issues.

The summit will highlight Turkiye's prominent diplomatic role, its military contributions, the development of its defence industries, and its crisis management capabilities.

In this regard, Assistant Professor at Qatar University, Dr Abdulla Banndar al-Etaibi, noted that Turkiye has emerged as one of the world's leading producers of defence equipment, military technologies, and security and intelligence systems. He explained that the country's defence budget reached approximately \$22.8bn in 2024, representing 2.09% of its GDP.

When Turkiye meets Nato's newly agreed 5% defence spending target, its defence budget would rise to around \$70bn, an increase of approximately \$47bn. Al-Etaibi added that Turkiye's hosting of the summit carries significant political and strategic weight. It confirms that Ankara remains an indispensable player within the alliance, despite the disagreements that have strained its relations with

some Western countries in recent years.

He emphasised that Turkiye's role in mediation efforts is considered crucial within the alliance as it can communicate with parties hard to reach for other Nato members.

Thus, hosting the summit reflects the alliance's recognition that European security is no longer distinct from the Middle East security.

For his part, Professor of Critical Security Studies at the Doha Institute Dr Muhannad Salloum affirmed the key role that Turkiye occupies within Nato. He pointed out that Ankara is an indispensable ally, both geographically and militarily, for Nato, despite its disagreements with some Nato members.

Qatar is keen to strengthen its relations with the Nato, as the two sides have distinguished relations within the framework of the "Istanbul Cooperation Initiative," which Qatar joined on February 16, 2005. This includes the exchange of visits and political consultations, and participation in the study and training courses provided by Nato in the scientific and military fields.

Qatar-Nato relations witnessed significant development after the historic visit of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani to Nato Headquarters in 2006 – the first such visit by a head of state from a member country of the Istanbul Co-operation Initiative.

In 2014, relations between Qatar and Nato saw further progress, with the agreement to hold the Nato and Gulf Security Conference in Doha in December 2014 as part of the celebrations marking the 10th anniversary of the Istanbul Co-operation Initiative.

Additionally, the Nato Conference on Weapons of Mass Destruction arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation was held in Qatar in March 2015. (QNA)

Over 500 dead in DR Congo Ebola outbreak

Over 500 people have now died in the Ebola outbreak gripping the Democratic Republic of Congo, World Health Organisation figures showed yesterday.

A newly updated count issued by the UN health agency showed that there have been 1,561 confirmed cases in the DR Congo since the outbreak was declared in mid-May, including 506 confirmed deaths.

Two others have also died in neighbouring Uganda, where the situation is more stable.

The country has seen 16 patients recover out of 20 total confirmed cases.

The WHO's figures for the DRC, which come from the health authorities in the vast country, show that the outbreak there has a case fatality rate of 32%. A total of 254 patients have recovered, while 354 suspected cases of the viral haemorrhagic fever are currently under investigation.

The outbreak in northeastern DRC has hit four provinces but is heavily centred in Ituri. (AFP)

What is left of French fighters in Syria

Over a decade since IS fighters committed a massacre in Paris, France is keeping a close eye on French fighters still in Syria.

Damascus is meanwhile seeking to keep foreign fighters on its soil under control to avoid compromising international support.

As President Emmanuel Macron heads to Damascus on Monday, several dozen French men, women and children are thought to remain in Syria, according to expert estimates.

Thousands of foreigners joined extremists including the Islamic State group in Syria after civil war broke out in 2011, and some remain there after an al-Sharaa-led alliance toppled Bashar al-Assad in late 2024.

Hundreds of French citizens joined fighter ranks in Syria, with some IS members then returning to carry out attacks in France, including the country's worst-ever peacetime assaults on November 13, 2015, which killed 130 people.

"During the civil war, the French-speaking foreign fighters' group was quite important, but many of them died, or have been captured, or left the area," said Ido Levy, a researcher at the American University in Washington.

Dozens of IS-linked French women and their children are held in camps in northeast Syria after being detained in the battle against the group.

Around 50 male alleged fighters were transferred to Iraq earlier this year.

France has repatriated other French women and children linked to IS on a case-by-case basis.

Al-Sharaa, who once led Syria's Al Qaeda affiliate before it renounced ties and became Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), has integrated around 20 Frenchmen from its ranks into the new army's 82nd brigade, according to a source with knowledge of French fighters in Syria.

Others belong to a group not linked to IS called Firqat al-

Ghuraba (the Foreigner's Brigade), led by Franco-Senegalese criminal-turned-preacher Omar Diaby, also called Omar Omsen.

That group, estimated to include a few dozen to a hundred fighters accompanied by women and children, has a tense relationship with the Damascus government.

Syrian authorities in October last year encircled its camp near the Turkish border in a bid to arrest its leader, leading to clashes before a ceasefire was agreed.

Al-Sharaa is under pressure to "reassure potential foreign partners that he would not tolerate foreign fighters based on Syrian territory plotting operations outside the country", said Marc Hecker, a researcher at the French Institute of International Relations (IFRI).

Levy said al-Sharaa had ordered the arrest of an Egyptian called Ahmad al-Mansur in January 2025, after he allegedly published videos calling for the overthrow of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi.

"Al-Sharaa is trying to promote his image, to cultivate relations with other countries, showing them he's serious," he said. "So having all those radical fighters is a problem and he has to keep them under control, to keep them quiet."

Among the foreign fighters, "some of them don't like the idea of becoming integrated or might have more radical ideas than him", Levy added, creating a struggle as when the attempt to arrest Diaby ended up in clashes.

Laurence Bindner, co-founder of the JOS Project, which tracks extremist propaganda online, said several people have been identified in recent months after trying to join the French-Senegalese leader.

"Diaby is still active," she said – his group recently released a video denouncing France, "which it accuses of being behind the military operations against him". (AFP)

West Bank arts festival kicks off for first time since war

AFP
Ramallah, Palestinian Territories

Ramallah's Contemporary Arts Festival, one of the largest in the West Bank, started yesterday for the first time since the war in Gaza shut down most cultural activities in the Israeli-occupied territory.

Art, theatre and film festivals once held in Ramallah and elsewhere in the West Bank came to a halt after October 2023, amid escalating violence, Israeli military raids and settler attacks following the outbreak of the Gaza war.

"Culture and art historically play an important and distinctive role in our struggle... because they reflect our identity and reinforce

our role as a Palestinian society," Khaled Aliyan, the festival's director, told AFP.

Aliyan said the festival, previously limited to contemporary dance, was expanded to include Palestinian artists from all fields.

Aliyan regretted that the West Bank's cultural life experienced "a forced two-year suspension due to the genocidal war on the Gaza Strip".

Because of the war, many organisers in the field decided to pause cultural activities out of solidarity for their fellow Palestinians living in displacement and constant danger of airstrikes.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967.

The festival began yesterday at Ramallah's Cultural Palace with a showing of the musical play Al-

Sirah Al-Hilaliyyah.

Based on an Arabic poem of the same name, the play tells the story of the Banu Hilal tribe, one of the most famous Arab folk epics.

The Khashabi Theatre, a Palestinian acting company based in Haifa in northern Israel, performed the play for the first time in the Palestinian territories, after touring in Europe.

Ola Hanna, a secondary school Arabic teacher, attended the opening performance with her family from the Arab town of Rameh in northern Israel.

She said she hoped Palestinian cultural life would return to what it was before the war.

"Without music and joy, for me there is no life," she said.

The festival will continue until

July 16 and feature 48 artists and artistic groups offering audiences a mix of dance, theatre, circus performances and video art.

The festival will also host the Palestine Arts Forum, bringing together 22 artists, cultural programmers and arts institutions from 15 countries.

Art critic Youssef al-Shayeb told AFP that hosting such a large festival with a diverse programme of contemporary performing arts despite the hardships of life in the Palestinian territories was an achievement.

"Simply continuing life is, in itself, an act of resistance," he added, pointing to settler violence, increased checkpoints and Israeli military operations in the West Bank.

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PUBLIC FAREWELL

Colombia's Petro says he will give public farewell on July 20

Outgoing Colombian president Gustavo Petro said Sunday he plans to give a public farewell on July 20, as he called for mass protests and the continuation of social reforms. "I invite you this July 20th to accompany the public movement, and after their parade to hear my farewell as the head of state of Colombia," Petro said in a post on X. The highly unusual move comes ahead of the transition of power to president-elect Abelardo de la Espriella, a hard-right candidate backed by US President Donald Trump who won a narrow victory over Petro's political heir, Ivan Cepeda, last month. (AFP)

US-IRAN DEAL

There will be deal with Iran or US will 'finish the job': Trump

President Donald Trump said yesterday the US would either reach a deal with Iran or "finish the job," renewing his threat of military action as Tehran projects defiance following the funeral of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Indirect US-Iran talks ended last week without any public sign of headway toward a lasting peace, despite a 60-day ceasefire intended to create space for diplomacy. "We're either going to make a deal or we're going to finish the job. OK. And it won't be tough to finish the job. I'd rather make a deal, because I don't want to affect 91 million people," Trump told reporters. (Reuters)

DEFENCE DEAL

Canada picks German firm to build new submarine fleet

Canada has chosen Germany's Thyssenkrupp Marine Systems to build its new multi-billion-dollar fleet of submarines, Canadian media reported yesterday. Ottawa opened the bidding process for 12 new military submarines in 2024, warning its existing British-built Victoria-class vessels needed to be decommissioned by the mid-2030s. In August 2025, Carney's government named the two finalists: TKMS and Hanwha Ocean Co of South Korea. Multiple outlets, including public broadcaster CBC and *The Globe and Mail*, have reported that TKMS won the bid, citing unnamed sources. (AFP)

TWITTER FRAUD

US judge rejects Musk's bid to set aside Twitter fraud verdict

A federal judge yesterday rejected Elon Musk's bid to dismiss a recent jury verdict finding that the world's richest person defrauded Twitter investors when buying the social media company, despite finding that Musk was not liable for one of his challenged tweets. US District Judge Charles Breyer in San Francisco also denied Musk's motion to decertify the class of investors, and granted the investors' motion for prejudgment interest. Musk was found liable on March 20 for trying to drive down Twitter's stock price so he could renegotiate or back out of his \$44bn takeover of the social media company in 2022. (Reuters)

Winning Trump's support on Bolsonaro's US trip agenda

Reuters
Sao Paulo/Brasilia

Brazilian Senator Flavio Bolsonaro was expected to urge the Trump administration at a Washington hearing yesterday to delay a proposed 25% tariff on Brazilian goods until after the country's October election, seeking to distance himself from US levies blamed on his camp. In June, the Trump administration proposed tariffs on Brazilian goods over alleged trade violations, such as illegal deforestation and what it calls unfair electronic payment practices, shortly after presidential hopeful Bolsonaro, the son of former President Jair Bolsonaro, met with senior US officials.

The sequence of events prompted President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is expected to run for re-election, to accuse the right-wing senator of helping trigger the measure, which the senator denies. "It is deplorable that, once again, members of the Bolsonaro family are traveling to the US to advocate for foreign interference in Brazil," the government said in a statement shortly after the senator met with US President Donald Trump.

The younger Bolsonaro's push to make US-Brazil ties a campaign issue largely aligns with Trump's growing engagement with Latin



Senator Flavio Bolsonaro leaves the Federal Police headquarters where his father Jair Bolsonaro is being held, in Brasilia in 2025. (AFP)

America, which included capturing former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in Caracas, and supporting right-wing presidential candidates, such as Colombia's Abelardo De La Espriella, who won a narrow victory last month.

But new US tariffs on Brazilian products "would hand the current Brazilian government precisely the political victory it has been engineering," Bolsonaro argued in a filing with the US Trade Representative.

According to a survey published last month by polling firm Quaest, 47% of Brazilians agreed with Lula, who accused Bolsonaro of asking the US to impose fresh tar-

iffs on Brazilian goods, while 35% agreed with Bolsonaro, who said he requested the opposite.

"They are trying to do damage control," said Leonardo Paz, a professor of international affairs at Ibmeac and Fundacao Getulio Vargas, two academic institutions in Rio de Janeiro.

Brazilian officials have been negotiating with their US counterparts to try to avoid new tariffs for months.

But Bolsonaro argued Brazil had not done enough to find common ground with the US, and proposed a 180-day suspension before any decision on the levies.

"Brazil holds general elections

in October 2026, and the political landscape that determines the viability of any negotiated resolution will be redefined within roughly ninety days," Bolsonaro wrote in his submission to the USTR.

The US has until July 15 to decide whether to impose the Section 301 tariffs, which would still exempt products such as beef, coffee, rare earths, and aircraft parts.

Bolsonaro's latest trip to Washington is part of a broader push by his family to win support from the Trump administration, which includes negotiations last year to seek White House intervention in the trial of the elder Bolsonaro over his attempt to overturn his 2022 election defeat.

Trump imposed steep tariffs on Brazilian products last year as a response to what he called a witch hunt against Bolsonaro. The former president was convicted months later.

So far, however, the senator's efforts to avert new tariffs appear to have had little impact.

Responding to a letter Senator Bolsonaro sent last month urging Washington not to impose additional levies on Brazilian products, Secretary of State Marco Rubio wrote that US officials "continue to have substantial differences in resolving the issues" identified as justification for the proposed measures.



US President Donald Trump holds up a red card as he meets with FIFA President Gianni Infantino in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington in 2018. (Reuters/File Photo)

Trump 'asked FIFA boss for review of Balogun red card'

AFP
Washington

President Donald Trump confirmed Monday he asked FIFA boss Gianni Infantino to review the "horrible" decision to hand a red card to star US striker Folarin Balogun, but said he did not request it be overturned.

"I asked for a review because I didn't think it was a foul," Trump told reporters at the White House. "All I did was ask for a review, I didn't say you have to do this."

"That wasn't even an infraction. That was two guys running full speed that happened to crash into each other," Trump said.

The Republican president — who said "I understand sports really well" — acknowledged that he was initially unaware that the red card meant Balogun was barred from the next game, saying the rule is "very unfair."

Trump took aim at Raphael Claus, the Brazilian referee who made the call, describing him as "a little bit suspect if you check his past."

Balogun had been set to miss Monday's last-16 knockout clash against Belgium after receiving a straight red card following a video review for stepping on the ankle of a Bosnian defender in a round-of-32 clash that the US won 2-0.

Under FIFA rules, a straight red card automatically triggers a one-game ban, which cannot be appealed by the player's team.

US media reported that the red card kicked off multiple days

of lobbying by the Trump administration aimed at getting the decision overturned.

The effort involved officials including Andrew Giuliani, the executive director of the White House FIFA Task Force, as well as Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio also publicly called for the red card to be rescinded.

After the personal call from Trump, world football's governing body said Sunday the ban would now be suspended for a year, with Balogun only serving it if he commits another similar foul within that period.

"We're going to have a full team, and Belgium is going to have a full team, and you know what? If they beat us, then they can be really proud," the US president said Monday.

"The other way, if they beat us... I say it was rigged, just like the election was rigged in 2020," Trump said, referring to his false, repeated claim that he was the real winner of the election won by Democrat Joe Biden.

The decision to allow Balogun to play has been slammed by Belgian football officials, who released a statement saying they were "astonished" by a move that is in "direct contradiction" with FIFA's own rules.

Top scorer Balogun has been key to the US team's progress in the tournament, scoring three times, and his absence against Belgium would have been a major blow to the team in the upcoming game in Seattle.

The decision to suspend the ban was taken by FIFA's disciplinary committee.

Prosecutors present case against Kirk's murder accused

Prosecutors yesterday began playing out their case that a Utah man should stand trial for last year's killing of Charlie Kirk, the conservative activist credited with energising young voters behind Donald Trump in the 2024 US presidential election.

In a packed Provo, Utah courtroom, Kirk's widow Erika Kirk sat feet away from Tyler Robinson, the man accused of driving four hours from his Utah town of Washington to murder Kirk, 31, on September 10, 2025. Robinson's family were also present.

During the week-long preliminary hearing, prosecutors must convince District Court Judge Tony Graf that probable cause exists to believe that Robinson, 23, fired the single shot that killed Kirk in front of thousands of people in Orem, Utah.

Kirk, an influential US conservative, was appearing at Utah Val-

ley University, 65 km south of Salt Lake City, for one of his campus debates that drew crowds and propelled him to national prominence.

Prosecutors are expected to show graphic video of the killing, and Kirk's family may leave the courtroom when some evidence is presented, according to a person familiar with the situation.

If the judge finds probable cause, Robinson would enter a plea at an arraignment that could take place the same day, and the case would be set for trial at a later date.

He faces seven criminal charges including aggravated murder.

Prosecutors have said they would seek the death penalty for Robinson, who was studying to be an electrician and turned himself in to police the day after the shooting.

Kirk's killing, captured in cellphone video that spread widely on social media, is among a series

of attacks targeting US political figures in recent years that have fueled debate over political violence in a deeply polarised country.

He co-founded Turning Point USA when he was 18 in 2012, and the conservative youth organisation became an influential force in Republican politics.

During the hearing, prosecutors were expected to present video footage that they allege shows Robinson at Utah Valley University before and after Kirk was shot.

Prosecutors also planned to offer other evidence that they allege links Robinson to the crime, including DNA from the rifle that authorities say was used in the killing, a recorded statement from Robinson's former roommate and a handwritten message reading, "I had the opportunity to take out Charlie Kirk and I took it."

After the shooting, prosecu-

tors says, Robinson messaged the roommate, Lance Twiggs, saying, "I had enough of his hatred. Some hate can't be negotiated out."

Lawyers for Robinson are likely to highlight ballistics testing that proved inconclusive in matching a bullet fragment removed from Kirk's body with the alleged murder weapon.

Robinson surrendered to police after his parents saw images of the gunman and confronted him, according to court filings.

Erika Kirk, who took over Turning Point USA after Kirk's death, was in the courtroom yesterday.

Kirk's parents Kathryn and Robert were also present.

"Charlie was a beloved husband, son, brother, friend and father. Every court proceeding serves as a painful reminder of his death and the loss that has irrevocably impacted our lives," Kirk's family said. (Reuters)

Nasa rover takes a closer look at organic carbon on Mars

Using Nasa's Perseverance rover, scientists are getting a greater understanding of the nature of some of the organic carbon — the molecular backbone for all known living organisms — detected on Mars as they explore the question of whether Earth's planetary neighbour ever harbored life.

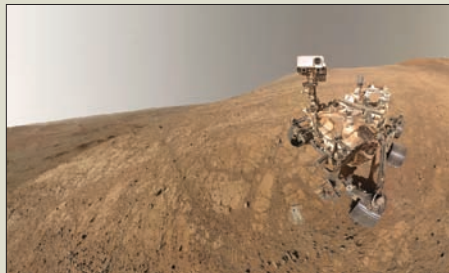
New research describes the structure of the organic carbon found last year by the rover in sedimentary rock that contained a potential biosignature — a possible sign of past microbial life.

This mudstone formed perhaps between 3.2 and 3.8bn years ago beneath a now-vanished body of water in Jezero Crater in the Martian northern hemisphere.

Organic carbon can be a clue as to whether Mars ever harboured life because it serves as the chemical underpinning for the molecules that build DNA, cells and proteins. But its presence is not proof of life because it also can arise in nonbiological processes such as chemical interaction between rock and water.

The detection of organic carbon in two rocks in Jezero Crater — given the names Cheyava Falls and Walhalla Glades — was disclosed last year when the researchers announced the discovery of a potential biosignature in one of them. The two rocks were sampled by the rover at locations about 100m apart, according to planetary scientist Ashley Murphy of the Planetary Science Institute in Arizona, co-leader of the new research published in the journal *Science Advances*.

Following last year's discovery, Nasa released an image of the Cheyava Falls rock showing a very fine-grained and rusty-red-colored mudstone bearing ring-shaped features resembling leopard spots as well as dark marks resembling poppy seeds.



Nasa's Perseverance rover took this selfie inside Jezero Crater in its northern hemisphere of Mars in 2025. (Reuters/File Photo)

Such features on Earth can be associated with microbial activity.

A potential biosignature is defined as a substance or structure that may have a biological origin but needs more data or further study before a conclusion can be made about the absence or presence of life.

Using Perseverance's Sherloc instrument, the researchers in the new study took a closer look at the complex carbon, called macromolecular carbon, present in the two rocks. They said this carbon bears similarities to carbon formed either through biotic or abiotic processes on Earth and to carbon formed through abiotic processes found in meteorites. This marks the first instance of macromolecular carbon being discovered in mudstones in Jezero Crater, where Perseverance landed in 2021.

Nasa's other rover operating on Mars, called Curiosity, previously found macromolecular carbon at another site called Gale Crater, located about 3,700km away. "These findings indicate that the habitability of Mars and the availability of organic materials

may have been widespread across the planet billions of years ago," said planetary scientist Kyle Uckert of Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California and a co-leader of the study.

"This strengthens evidence that ancient Mars had chemical ingredients and environmental conditions that could have supported life, but does not provide proof of life nor does it push the needle any further towards biotic or abiotic origins," Uckert said.

The rover's instruments do not have the capability to determine whether this carbon arose through biological processes possibly involving microbial activity.

"We need the return of these samples to Earth for more rigorous testing with higher sensitivity and higher resolution laboratory instruments," Uckert said.

Now cold and desolate, Mars during perhaps the first third of its existence possessed a thicker atmosphere and warmer climate, allowing for liquid water on its surface.

Like Earth and the solar system's other planets, Mars formed roughly 4.5bn years ago. Water is considered a key ingredient for life — an important reason why Perseverance has been exploring Jezero Crater since 2021.

This area of Mars once was flooded with water and home to an ancient lake basin. Scientists believe river channels spilled over the crater wall and created a lake.

These bodies of water potentially could have been habitats for microbes.

"The only place in the universe where we know life has emerged is Earth," Uckert said. "If life is discovered on Mars, it could indicate that the emergence of life is not restricted to Earth, assuming the right conditions and ingredients are available, which would be a profound discovery." (Reuters)

Castro's grandson open to negotiations with US

Cuba's Raul Guillermo Rodriguez Castro — the grandson of former Cuban leader Raul Castro — has said he is open to negotiating with US President Donald Trump, according to an interview published by *USA Today*.

"I can negotiate with anyone designated by the US," Rodriguez Castro told *USA Today* during interviews conducted over the course of two days in Havana.

"If given the opportunity, (of course with) Trump."

The highly unusual interview — Rodriguez Castro's first with a US media outlet — and the offer to negotiate directly with Trump stand out because the 42-year-old holds no formal government office in Cuba.

Rodriguez Castro serves as one of his 95-year-old grandfather's bodyguards and is known on the island as "El Cangrejo," or "The Crab," because he was born with six fingers on his right hand.

The interview comes just days after Cuba's Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez told reporters that Havana was "not interested" in the Trump administration's opinion on issues of sovereignty, including recent free market reforms announced by the communist-run government.

Rodriguez Castro also told *USA Today* that Cuba was willing, under the right conditions, to release "people deemed political prisoners."



Raul Guillermo Rodriguez Castro (Reuters/File Photo)

In May, the US announced murder charges against his grandfather Raul Castro.

The US has sanctioned several Castro family members, including Raul's only son, Alejandro Castro Espin, but not Rodriguez Castro.

His grandfather's indictment in the US marked a new low in relations between the long-time Cold War rivals and came as Trump is pushing for regime change in Cuba, where Castro's communists have been in charge since his late brother Fidel Castro led a revolution in 1959.

Also in May, Cuba released the names of thousands of prisoners granted freedom in a decree issued last month as the government held negotiations with the US on a range of disputes including political prisoners.

The April decree granted "full and definitive pardon" to an extensive list of prisoners, describing the move as a "humanitarian and sovereign gesture." (Reuters)

UK fighters intercept Russian plane near aircraft carrier

AFP
London

A Russian patrol aircraft staged “unsafe” activity near the UK’s flagship aircraft carrier as it conducted Nato air defence operations off Iceland, Britain’s defence ministry said yesterday.

The Bear-F plane “repeatedly approached” the carrier group last week, passing the HMS Prince of Wales aircraft carrier “unnecessarily close” at low altitude and dropping numerous sonar devices nearby, according to the ministry.

Two UK F-35 warplanes were dispatched from the carrier to intercept and escort the patrol plane until it departed, it added.

“This activity was unsafe and unprofessional,” an ministry spokesperson said of Thursday’s incident in the Norwegian Sea in the so-called High North.

The allegations emerged as the ministry said Defence Secretary Dan Jarvis and Icelandic Foreign Minister Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir had visited HMS Prince of Wales over the weekend.

The Royal Navy carrier is leading



A sonobuoy is deployed from a Russian Tupolev Tu-142 maritime reconnaissance and anti-submarine warfare military aircraft by parachute as a British Royal Navy F-35B fighter aircraft flies nearby, northwest of Norway in the Norwegian Sea. (Reuters)

the group on a mission to defend the North Atlantic “against increasing Russian threats”, according to the ministry.

The mission has seen F-35 jets conduct Nato air defence operations from a European aircraft carrier for the first time, and comes

amid heightened tensions with Russia.

Military experts and European leaders say Russia has ramped up its “hybrid war” tactics in the strategic region.

“We live in an increasingly dangerous and uncertain time, and it’s

deployments like this, supported by allies and partners including Iceland, that improve our deterrence and defence as part of Nato,” Jarvis said in a statement.

In the statement, Gunnarsdottir added the deployment was “a clear demonstration of Nato’s enhanced presence in this strategically important region”.

Jarvis only took up his post less than a month ago after predecessor John Healey quit, accusing the government of failing to commit enough money in a modernisation plan to protect Britain.

The shock resignation prompted further last-minute wrangling for extra money for the 10-year Defence Investment Plan.

Outgoing Prime Minister Keir Starmer unveiled the plan last week, announcing the government was aiming to spend almost £300bn (\$397bn) over the next four years.

The proposals see an extra £15bn being pumped into defence spending up to 2030, the year by which UK intelligence has suggested Russia could attack a Nato country.

But it fell far short of the reported £28bn the MoD had requested.

Britain sanctions seven Russian scientists, labs behind chemical attacks

AFP
London

Britain yesterday unveiled sanctions against seven Russian scientists and two research labs said to have helped develop chemical weapons used in two attacks.

The sanctions target those involved in developing the Novichok nerve agent used in a 2018 attack on a former Russian spy hiding in England and a chemical believed to have fatally poisoned Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny in Siberia in 2024.

“These new measures directly hit two leading scientific research centres and key individuals involved in the development and production of toxic chemicals,” the UK foreign ministry said in a statement.

Russian agents have been accused of poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter in the southern city of Salisbury in March 2018 us-

ing the Soviet-developed nerve agent Novichok.

The Salisbury attack, the first offensive use of chemical weapons in Europe since World War II, caused an international outcry and prompted a mass expulsion of Russian diplomats by Western nations.

The Skripals survived, but a British woman died later after her partner picked up a discarded perfume bottle believed to have been used to carry the Novichok. “Russia’s repeated use of chemical weapons is a sickening violation of international law and a direct threat to global security,” British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said.

The institutions hit were SC Signal, a Russian state scientific research institute and GNIII VM, the country’s Scientific Research and Testing Institute for Military Medicine.

The individuals who were sanctioned included directors and technical specialists at the two research institutes, according to the foreign ministry.

China fires missile into Pacific, alarming regional powers

Reuters
Beijing/Sydney

China’s military test-fired a missile from a nuclear-powered submarine into the Pacific yesterday, state media reported, drawing criticism and concern from Japan, Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan.

A People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Navy submarine launched the missile, carrying a dummy warhead, toward international waters in the Pacific at 12:01pm (0401 GMT), the official Xinhua news agency said.

Xinhua described the launch as a “routine arrangement” of China’s annual military training and not directed against any specific country or target. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the launch was conducted “safely, in a standardised and professional manner throughout.”

“We hope relevant countries will not over-interpret the matter,” she said at a briefing in Beijing.

Xinhua did not specify what

type of missile China had launched. State-controlled tabloid Global Times, citing a military expert, said it was likely to have been the JL-3, China’s most advanced submarine-launched missile, which debuted at a military parade last year. That missile could reach the continental US from Chinese coastal waters, according to a Pentagon report.

“The US and others will be watching and analysing the test launch closely for any insights into PLA capability,” said Meia Nouwens, a senior fellow for Chinese security and defence policy at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies, referring to the Chinese military.

SHORT NOTICE

Pacific regional powers Australia, New Zealand and Japan were given only a short period of advance notice about the test, which coincided with the signing in Fiji of a mutual defence pact between that island nation and Australia.

The test came “in the context of a rapid military buildup by China, which is lacking in the transpar-

ency and reassurance as to intent that the region expects,” Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong told reporters at a news conference in Fiji.

The Ocean of Peace alliance commits Australia and Fiji to defend each other if attacked. Beijing and Western powers led by the US and Australia have competed for years for influence in the strategically located island nations, and some analysts suggested the timing could be linked.

Mark Douglas, an analyst at New Zealand-based ship-tracking firm Starboard Maritime Intelligence, said the test would have been planned long in advance but the timing of China’s notification was “interesting, to say the least”.

Nouwens said China could be seeking to send a signal of its discontent about the Australia-Fiji agreement: “That said, the launch could be counterproductive and negatively affect China’s image among countries in the South Pacific.”

Taiwan’s presidential office called the test an attempt by Chi-

na to intimidate the international community.

The democratically ruled island, which China says is part of its territory, has long warned of increased military activity from Beijing. A senior Taiwanese security official said yesterday that Taiwan was tracking an “upward trend” in Chinese naval movements during the peak military exercise season, including joint drills with Russia.

New Zealand Foreign Minister Winston Peters called the test “an unwelcome and concerning development. We, like our neighbours in other Pacific countries, have no interest in China using the South Pacific as a testing site for missile capability.”

Japan said that when it was notified of the upcoming launch it had “expressed our grave concern over the Chinese military’s increased activity” and urged China to reconsider.

China last tested an intercontinental ballistic missile in 2024, a launch that highlighted the country’s increasing military capabilities.

Building collapse kills six in Mumbai

AFP
New Delhi

Six people including five children were killed when a building collapsed in Mumbai, officials said yesterday, as monsoon rains pounded India’s financial capital, flooding roads and leading to school closures.

A dilapidated residential building collapsed Sunday in the megacity’s east, trapping residents under the debris, Mumbai Mayor Ritu Tawde said in a statement.

The deaths came as heavy rainfall paralysed parts of the city, with the India Meteorological Department recording more than 200mm (7.8 inches) of rain within 24 hours.

Hundreds of millions of people in India rely on the annual monsoon winds to bring vital rains that sustain agriculture and industry.

However, climate change is shifting weather patterns and

making the world’s most populous country hotter. This year’s El Nino weather phenomenon has prompted warnings of lower rainfall.

The weather office has issued a red alert warning for Mumbai yesterday, forecasting continued heavy rain and gusty winds.

With roads inundated, Mumbai authorities declared yesterday a holiday for all schools and colleges.

Mayor Tawde called on people to stay indoors if possible, warning of falling trees and branches due to strong winds.

The downpours in Mumbai follow weeks of sweltering heat, with authorities imposing restrictions on water use last month and cutting supplies to swimming pools and construction sites.

The city of over 20mn people is grappling with concerns over pressure on water resources from expanding data-centre infrastructure, whose large cooling requirements could exacerbate supply strains.

Australia signs defence alliance with Fiji

AFP
Suva

Australia and Fiji signed a major defence treaty yesterday, bolstering ties as Canberra seeks to outmanoeuvre China in the South Pacific.

The Ocean of Peace pact elevates Fiji to one of Australia’s few treaty allies and binds each nation to come to the other’s “mutual defence”.

China sent waves through the region in 2022 when it signed a secretive security pact with the Solomon Islands, stoking fears it could one day lead to a permanent military presence.

Australia has greatly upped its diplomatic efforts in response, securing deals with the likes of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Tuvalu.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese signed the pact with his Fijian counterpart Sitiveni Rabuka during a trip to capital Suva.

The pair also signed a second comprehensive treaty covering everything from climate action to economic cooperation.

“When it comes to security issues the Pacific family need to look after our own security,” Albanese told reporters.

“The significance of these agreements cannot be underestimated.”

Photos showed Albanese sipping Fiji’s traditional kava drink at a welcome ceremony before the pact was signed.

Fiji joins the US, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea as Australia’s fourth treaty-bound ally.

Under the deal, the two nations agree to consult each other over any “security-related development” that threatens their sovereignty.

Rabuka tried to quell concerns that China could see the treaty as a snub.

“I do not expect China to have



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese drinks traditional kava alongside Fiji’s Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka during a welcome ceremony at the Grand Pacific Hotel in Suva yesterday. (AFP)

any severe pushback,” he told reporters.

“It does not threaten Fiji’s relationship with China.”

The Chinese foreign ministry said yesterday that it hoped the pact would not harm Beijing’s interests.

“It is hoped that relevant countries will genuinely respect the independence and sovereignty of the island nations, focus on their sustainable economic and social development and refrain from targeting third parties or harming their interests,” spokesperson Guo Jiakun told reporters.

Fiji grew closer to China under former prime minister Frank Bainimarama, who seized power in a coup in 2006.

Bainimarama turned to Beijing for economic support after his coup resulted in damaging trade sanctions against Fiji.

But China’s influence has waned since Rabuka entered office in 2022, favouring Fiji’s traditional partnerships with Australia and New Zealand.

Rabuka condemned suggestions in 2025 that South Pacific nations such as Fiji might one day host a permanent

Chinese military presence.

“If they want to come, who would welcome them? Not Fiji,” he said at the time.

“And I think that China understands that well.”

The treaty between Fiji and Australia included a clause that allowed other Pacific nations to join up later.

Pacific affairs expert Tess Newton Cain said this was clearly aimed at Pacific nations with standing militaries such as Papua New Guinea and Tonga.

“It’s significant because it’s very much focused on the countries that have military capacity,” she said.

“It provides a very clear point of entry to have further security conversations down the track.”

China in response warned Australia against playing “geopolitical games”.

Beijing has spent hundreds of millions of dollars building sports stadiums, presidential palaces, hospitals and roads in Pacific island nations.

Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Nauru have in recent years severed longstanding diplomatic links with Taiwan in favour of China.

Sri Lanka prison riot kills 26

AFP
Colombo

Clashes in a Sri Lankan jail killed 26 people, including seven guards, and wounded more than 100 in the country’s deadliest prison riot in years, officials said yesterday.

Victims with cuts and gunshot injuries were rushed to Negombo Hospital, north of the capital Colombo following overnight fighting between inmates from two drug gangs, police said.

Hospital director Pushpa Gamalath said there were 23 bodies at the state-run facility, as well as more than 100 wounded inmates and guards from Negombo Prison.

“There are some victims with gunshot injuries, some with cuts and severe bruises,” Gamalath told AFP by telephone. “We transferred 18 of the more seriously wounded to the Colombo National hospital.”

Justice Minister Harshana Nanayakkara later said three more people had died, raising the toll to 26.

He expressed “profound shock and grief”, and said authorities were working to separate the rival gangs in the prison.

“Whether they were inmates, or associated with the underworld, is not relevant to us at this moment,” Nanayakkara told reporters in Colombo.

“Human beings have died, and there is a deep shock regarding that. This is something that should never have occurred.”

He said fighting began on Sunday evening at Negombo Prison, which houses several thousand inmates.

As reports of the fighting spread, women inmates in an adjoining section climbed onto a roof and demanded their release.

Police said part of the roof collapsed, injuring some of the women.

The government announced it was setting up a three-member



Prisoners board a bus to be transferred to another prison following clashes between two groups of inmates at Negombo Prison in the coastal town of Negombo, yesterday. (Reuters)

team headed by a retired Supreme Court justice to investigate the riot.

Prison spokesman Chaminda Gajanayake said no foreign inmates were affected by the riots.

A 22-year-old British woman has been held at Negombo since her arrest in May last year at the international airport with 46 kilos (101.2 pounds) of kush, a highly potent form of cannabis.

Gajanayake said some inmates attempted to break out yesterday morning, as others clashed with armed guards during breakfast.

“They made a dash to the main gate, but we were able to hold them back,” Gajanayake told reporters outside the prison, where police and commandos were deployed.

Armed police or commandos were not sent into the prison, but only guarded the perimeter.

An AFP photographer outside the prison saw prison buses transferring some inmates out of the

facility. Officials confirmed they were being relocated to other prisons.

Large crowds of relatives of inmates gathered outside Negombo Prison yesterday as the air force deployed drones and a helicopter to monitor the area.

Local residents said they heard gunshots. The inmates had grabbed several guns from guards earlier in the day.

Seven guards were killed when they tried to break up the rioting yesterday, a police official told AFP. “The situation got out of hand this morning,” he added.

In December 2020, rioting at another prison in Sri Lanka killed 11 inmates and wounded 117 during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, leading the government to release hundreds of inmates from overcrowded jails.

Official data showed that prisons across Sri Lanka held 41,250 inmates as of Sunday, about four times their capacity.



Ronaldo: The star endures, but the scrutiny never lets up

There is a particular cruelty reserved for the very greatest. The higher a star climbs, the more relentlessly the world seems determined to watch it fall – and few have understood this arithmetic more intimately than Cristiano Ronaldo. On the eve of what will be his final World Cup last-16 tie, a 41-year-old at the twilight of an extraordinary career chose not to plead for kindness but to hold up a mirror to those who have spent a generation waiting for him to stumble.

“You have been trying to kill me for the past 23 years,” he told reporters in Texas, “but you must have seen that is not worth it, it’s a waste of time, but you try and try and try and try and try.” It is a remarkable sentence, and not only for its defiance. It is an indictment of an age in which scrutiny

has curdled into something closer to bloodsport, where the appetite for pulling down what was once lauded has become a spectacle in its own right.

Ronaldo did not pretend to be what he no longer is. “I am not the player I used to be,” he conceded – an admission that costs a proud man a great deal, and one that many of his critics would never grant themselves. Yet honesty about decline is treated, in the modern coliseum, not as grace but as an opening. The wounded lion draws the crowd. That he could add, in the same breath, “I am not doing too bad” – three goals into the tournament – speaks to a resilience that the daily churn of judgement rarely pauses to acknowledge.

What is striking is how early the hunt began. “It’s been like this since I was 18,” he observed, “it is not going to change.” Here is the quiet tragedy

beneath the glamour: the celebrated are never permitted an ordinary reckoning with time.

Every ageing athlete, every fading performer, must conduct their decline in public, narrated by voices that profit from the drama of the descent. The question of when he will stop – asked again and again – he answered with weary precision: “(I will stop) when I choose, not when you choose.”

There is wisdom in his refusal to be diminished by any single result. “I am not going to be more Cristiano Ronaldo or less because I win the World Cup,” he said, and in that line lies a rebuke to a media culture that measures a life’s worth by its final headline.

“Age gives you maturity and experience to see how relative things can be.” One suspects his younger self could not have said it.

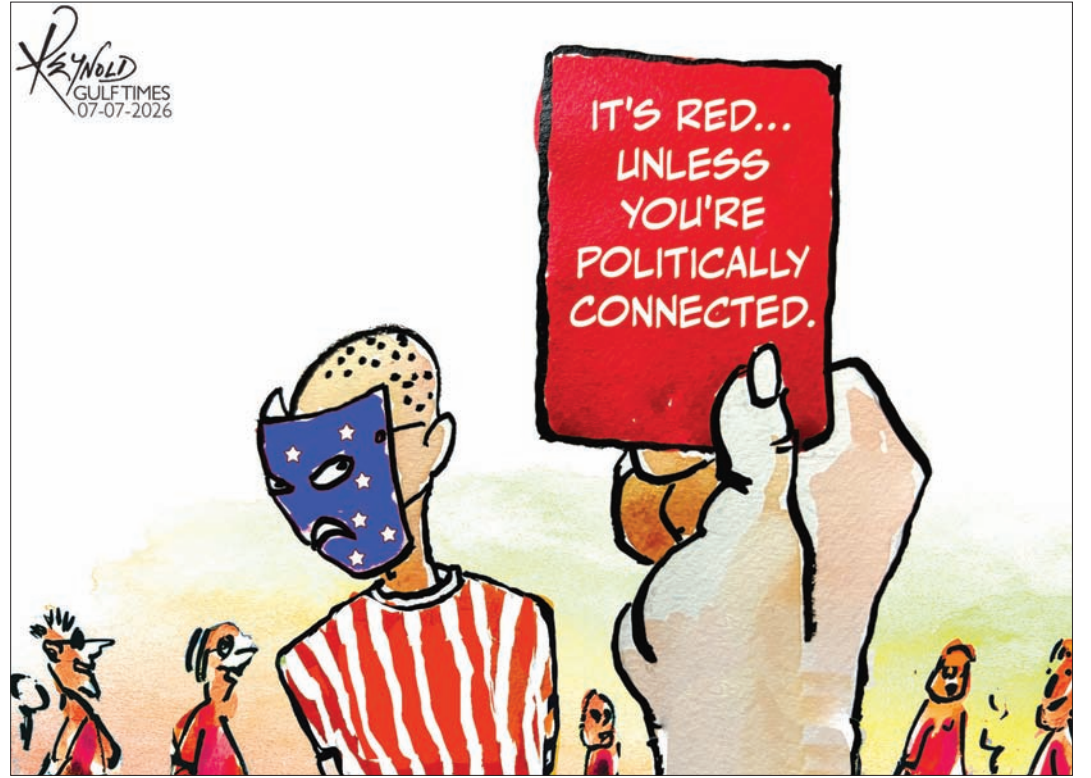
Most disarming of all was his gratitude. “I even say thanks for the attacks I feel after I turned 40,” he offered. “The criticism is how you grow, so thank you for doing this.” It would be easy to read this as sarcasm; it is more generous, and more damning, to take it at face value. He has metabolised a lifetime of hostility into fuel, and in doing so exposes the futility of the enterprise ranged against him.

The lesson is not that scrutiny should cease – accountability is the price of the platform. It is that we might learn to distinguish scrutiny from cruelty, and to remember that behind the caricature stands a person. Whatever unfolds against Spain, Ronaldo said he will leave “with a clear conscience.” His pursuers should ask whether they can say the same.

In the eye of a super typhoon



Strong wind brought by Super Typhoon Bavi hits Guam yesterday. (AFP)



Quiet Pakistani diplomacy that turned a corner

Ambassador Muhammad Aamer’s resonant pitch on the ‘2,100 hours the world never saw’



By Kamran Rehmat

When the history of this year’s Gulf war is written, a podcast recorded in Doha may prove one of its more revealing primary sources. In a rare interview on the CIRS Long View, the podcast of Georgetown University in Qatar’s Center for International and Regional Studies, conducted by the university’s Maryam Daud recently, Pakistan’s ambassador to Qatar, Muhammad Aamer, offered the fullest account yet from a serving Pakistani diplomat of how Islamabad manoeuvred two implacable adversaries – the United States and Iran – into the same room for the first time since 1979.

The conversation catches Pakistani diplomacy at the moment of its vindication, and the ambassador in a mood both expansive and studiously prudent.

The first puzzle put to him is the one that has exercised chancelleries everywhere: how did a country that exchanged missile strikes with Iran in 2024 become, two years later, the venue of which Tehran’s envoy could say, “We will negotiate nowhere else but Islamabad?” Ambassador Aamer’s answer was a deliberate widening of

the lens. Pakistan’s position, he insisted, “is not a one-off thing which just propped up because of the circumstances”. He invoked geography, a 900-kilometre shared border, cultural affinity and – pointedly – “the power structure of Pakistan, being a nuclear state”. As for the 2024 turbulence: “We sat down, we ironed out the differences, and we moved forward from that. We came out of that difficult situation very amicably and with a lot of trust developed at the end.”

The connoisseur will notice what is being done here. The 2024 clash is recast not as a liability but as a credential – proof that Pakistan and Iran possess a functioning machinery for de-escalation. In the grammar of mediation, having survived a crisis with one of the parties is worth more than never having quarrelled at all.

Equally instructive was the ambassador’s treatment of the vacuum question. When pressed on whether Pakistan rose because the conventional mediators were caught in the crossfire or sidelined, he was gracious but unambiguous. Qatar, he said, is “a powerhouse of mediation and negotiations”, yet “the situation became such that Pakistan had to come in. Pakistan had to fill the vacuum.”

Reading between the lines, the admission is significant: when Iranian strikes reached Gulf infrastructure, the region’s brokers became stakeholders in the war itself. Mediation migrated to the nearest credible actor standing just outside the blast radius – a nuclear-armed neighbour with equities on every side but wounds on none.

The Pakistani envoy recalled the early 1970s, when “it was Pakistan which brought both the countries together” and an American president (Richard Nixon) “flew from Pakistan to China”. The analogy is not idle.

Then as now, Pakistan’s utility lay precisely in the richness of its portfolio – a defence pact with Saudi Arabia, “people-to-people contact” and “cultural affinities” with Iran, security ties with Washington dating to the 1950s. “Diplomacy,” he observed, “is the game of maintaining balance and walking on the tightrope successfully.”

On the mechanics of the talks themselves – three rounds, 21 hours, delegations facing each other across a table in April – the ambassador declined the invitation to storytell, and in declining delivered the interview’s most quotable arithmetic. “You mentioned about 21 hours, but you don’t know how many hours went in before that particular event,” he said, estimating “2,100 hours – maybe before that, and many more hours after that – which did not let the process die down.” What the visible hours produced, in his telling, was almost physical in its symbolism: the two sides “entered the same room, sat at the same table, looked eye to eye with each other, and even shook hands after decades.”

His defence of the process against the charge of failure was equally deft. “I think negotiations never failed. I think the expectations of the people – and especially the detractors – they failed.” A conflict “rooted in history” and “layered” with technicalities was never going to be resolved “in one sitting... in a theoretical exercise, in a classroom”. Here he deployed Churchill: “Meeting jaw to jaw is better than war.” The line is doing real work. It reframes the metric of success from outcomes to contact – and by that metric, April 2026 was already historic before a word of the Accord was drafted.

Perhaps, the most analytically interesting stretch concerned what one might call the political



Pakistan’s ambassador to Qatar Muhammad Aamer.

economy of the memorandum. A contrast was drawn with the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and the US, UK, France, Russia, China, plus Germany, along with the EU) – a Western-led instrument backed by sanctions and the implicit threat of punishment.

The Islamabad Memorandum, by comparison, is the product of a mediator with no coercive leverage whatsoever – and Ambassador Aamer embraced the distinction as a philosophy. “Why not mediate with sincerity? Why not mediate with frankness?... And why not mediate without getting any benefit out of this?” Diplomacy of equals, in other words, offered as a structural

alternative to diplomacy of compulsion. Whether goodwill can substitute for enforcement over the long haul is the memorandum’s great untested proposition; but as an origin story, it is a genuine departure from the region’s recent treaty-making.

The ambassador was careful, too, not to let the rise of the so-called Middle East Quadrilateral – Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye – whose foreign ministers have met in Riyadh, Islamabad and Antalya in a relatively short span of time – be read as an obituary for multilateralism. Regional powers stepped in, he argued, because “the regional stakes were important” and they acted “in proximity” and “indigenously”, but “it doesn’t mean that

multilateralism has finished”. He reached for the famous consolation offered by Swedish diplomat and economist Dag Hammarskjöld, who served as the second Secretary-General of the world body: the United Nations “is not created to take mankind to heaven; it has been created to save us from hell”. It was a shrewd hedge – claiming the middle-power moment while keeping Pakistan’s UN credentials, including its own resolution on mediation, firmly in view.

Nor did the ambassador flinch from the question of self-interest. With millions of Pakistanis in the Gulf and heavy energy dependence on the region, Pakistan’s stake in de-escalation is existential as much as ethical. He converted the point into a closing flourish: “If you say our skin is into it – well, not only our skin; our mind and heart are also into it. And that’s why we are successful.”

His parting counsel to Washington and Tehran was that of a professional wearied by performative statecraft: open direct channels “rather than depending on somebody else, rather than using social media only for communication”, because diplomacy “needs a lot of thought before uttering even a single word”.

The Islamabad Accord will be judged by whether it holds. But this interview already establishes something durable: a doctrine of mediation – patient, unglamorous, uncoerced – articulated from Doha by the ambassador of the country that made the handshake possible.

• The writer is Deputy Managing Editor, Gulf Times

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DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR

Kamran Rehmat

📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar

✉ editor@gulf-times.com

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French PM survives no-confidence vote over heatwave response

AFP
Paris

French Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu yesterday survived a no-confidence motion brought by the Green party over the government's handling of recent heatwaves, including one in June that killed more than 2,000 people.

The motion followed five days of unseasonably high temperatures in May, then a record-breaking 11-day heatwave in June, which led to school closures and cancelled festivals throughout France.

Green party lawmakers behind the no-confidence vote accused the government of failing to implement measures to address rising temperatures linked to climate change.

The motion won the backing of just 132 members of the National Assembly, largely from the Greens and the hard-left France Unbowed party, who failed to secure the backing of the pivotal Socialist bloc or the far-right National Rally needed to reach the required threshold of 289 votes.

Before the vote, the prime minister accused the signatories of "exploiting the victims" of the extreme heat episodes, describing the motion as political manoeuvring ahead of the 2027 presidential election.

Although its defeat was widely expected, the motion reflected anger among some lawmakers over what they described as the government's inadequate preparedness for temperatures that topped 40C in many parts of the country in June.



France's Prime Minister Sebastian Lecornu. (AFP)

Green parliamentary leader Cyrielle Chatelain said last week the government's "lack of adaptation" to climate change was as responsible for the deaths as the high temperatures themselves.

The vote exposed divisions within the Socialist party ahead of a Thursday vote to decide how it will choose its candidate for the 2027 presidential election.

Twenty Socialist lawmakers, including party leader Olivier Faure, backed the motion, but a majority of the Socialist parliamentary group did not.

"Our responsibility is not to add instability to inaction," said Socialist lawmaker Fabrice Barusseau.

Lecornu had on Sunday responded to some of the Socialists' demands, saying he would put forth a new bill on climate change adaptation. France recorded its hottest June since records began in 1947, weather service Météo-France said, with the heatwave from June 17 to 30 seeing temperatures spike above 40C across more than 40 percent of the country.

Nato allies to unveil arms contracts worth billions

AFP
Ankara

Nato allies will unveil billions in new arms contracts at their summit in Ankara, Secretary-General Mark Rutte said yesterday, as they look to show US President Donald Trump they are delivering on a defence spending vow.

Trump will join leaders from the 32-nation alliance in the Turkish capital today after lashing out at Europe over its response to his war in Iran. The gathering comes a year after Nato members pledged to ramp up security-related spending to five % of GDP by 2035 under pressure from the US leader.

"Just one year later, we already see transformational progress," Rutte told journalists in Ankara.

Rutte said that "European Allies and Canada are already investing around four % of their GDP in defence and security" and would set out clear plans on how to reach the ultimate target. In a bid to display to Trump how allies are now putting their money where their mouth is, Nato allies have lined up a series of eye-catching arms deals to be announced at an industry forum on the sidelines of the summit.

"We will announce tens of billions in new contracts that will provide the crucial kit we need to deter and defend," he told a news conference in Ankara.

Last year, European Allies and Canada spent nearly 20% more on core defence than they had the year before, he said. "Looking at 2025 and 2026 combined, that's \$258bn in extra investment."

"We are investing in our own security. Ensuring we have what we need to safeguard our societies today and tomorrow. Because the threats we face are real — including from Russia."

Rutte said that beyond taking greater responsibility for their own defence, European countries were now "spearheading support to Ukraine".



Turkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan meets with Nato Secretary-General Mark Rutte at the Presidential Palace ahead of the 36th Nato Heads of State and Government Summit in Ankara, yesterday. (Reuters)

President Volodymyr Zelensky will attend part of the summit.

"Right now, Ukraine is changing the dynamics on the battlefield, thanks to the bravery, dedication, and ingenuity of their fighting forces. But they need our continued support, especially in air defence," he said.

"As Ukraine continues to defend its sovereignty, allies and Nato partners must continue to pledge at the summit to keep at least 70bn euros of military aid flowing to Kyiv each year in both 2026 and 2027, as Trump has largely halted US support."

Diplomats say Europe and Canada are set to pledge at the summit to keep at least 70bn euros of military aid flowing to Kyiv each year in both 2026 and 2027, as Trump has largely halted US support.

After his anger over their response to the Iran war, European leaders are aiming to avoid a bust-up with the mercurial US leader that could deal a further blow to Nato's credibility.

Diplomats are banking on Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan's good relationship with Trump to keep him in check.

But the Turkish authorities have been criticised for barring opposition media from attending the summit — in a row that Rutte refused to sidestep.

"When it comes to the media, it is very important for Nato that media can attend major events in person," he said.

Ukrainian drones hit Russia's largest refinery

Reuters
Moscow

Ukrainian drones struck Russia's Omsk refinery, the country's largest and located deep in Siberia, in what would be one of the longest-ranged Ukrainian strikes since the beginning of the war, Kyiv's military said yesterday, with local Russian authorities also confirming a strike.

In a statement, Ukraine's General Staff said that the strike had caused a fire at the Omsk refinery, which is located around 2,700km (1,700 miles) from Ukrainian-held territory and close to Russia's border with Kazakhstan.

Vitaly Khotsenko, governor of the Omsk region, said Ukraine had attacked the refinery and said that Russian air defences had destroyed most of the drones involved in the strike.

There were no casualties and emergency services were working at the scene, Khotsenko said in a post on the Russian messaging app MAX.

Sources told Reuters that the Gazpromneft-owned Omsk refinery processed around 23mn metric tonnes last year, or around 460,000 barrels per day.

Aside from Omsk, Ukraine's military overnight hit Russia's Ust-Luga and Vysotsk ports, which handle oil exports on the Baltic Sea, as well as targets in the Kaluga and Yaroslavl regions, local governors said.



Fire at Omsk oil refinery as the region's governor says the province came under attack from Ukrainian drones, in Omsk yesterday in this picture obtained from a social media video. (Reuters)

Russian strikes kill 24 in Kyiv region on eve of Nato summit

Russia fired missiles and drones into apartment buildings in Kyiv for the second time in a week Monday, killing at least 24 people on the eve of a crucial Nato summit, Ukrainian authorities said. The attack hit just days after another Russian strike killed more than 30 people in the Ukrainian capital. President Volodymyr Zelensky decried the "brutal strike", saying that "the Russians' tactics are unchanged: to inflict as much pain and damage as possible on Ukrainians and on Ukraine."

Zelensky - expected to hold talks with US counterpart Donald Trump at the Nato summit in Turkiye - pleaded for the alliance to boost Ukraine's air defence against Russia's ballistic missiles.

He said Kyiv was successful in shooting down drones and cruise missiles but had "not enough means of defence" against hard-to-intercept ballistic missiles. "It is simply absurd that in the modern world,

production has still not been organised to the extent that is necessary to protect people from ballistic terror," he said in the aftermath of the strikes. He said Kyiv expected "decisions" on Ukrainian air defence at the Nato summit in Turkiye.

Earlier, Nato chief Mark Rutte said in Ankara: "Allies and Nato partners must continue to ensure Ukraine gets what it needs."

The morning strike punched a crater into a multi-storey apartment block in Kyiv's Podilsky district, ripping its floors in two. AFP reporters heard more than 10 explosions during a ballistic missile alert at night, with flashes in the sky as the blasts rang out. Sixteen people were killed in the capital, and another eight in Vyshneve, a town just outside Kyiv, authorities said.

Officials said more than 100 people were wounded in the strikes.

Big defence spending, aid cuts: German cabinet approves budget

AFP
Berlin

The German cabinet yesterday approved a budget for next year that sets out vast new outlays for defence but drew criticism for cutting spending on climate action and aid.

The plans, which still need to be approved by parliament, envisage Europe's biggest economy spending more than projected just a few months ago and also taking on greater debt.

The 2027 defence budget rises by 33% from 2026, to almost 110bn euros (\$126bn), as Germany pushes ahead with a rearmament drive that began after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

But green groups have criticised plans to transfer billions of euros from a special climate fund to the regular budget. There has also been unease at a six-percent reduction in the budget for the development department, which disburses aid. Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil



German Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Finance, Steffen Meyer, and moderator Mathis Feldhoff attend a press conference on the 2027 federal budget and the financial plan through 2030 in Berlin, yesterday. (Reuters)

defended the budget, saying the government had managed to plug a 34-billion-euro hole, and insisting the focus on military spending was justified.

"Peace in Europe is under threat from (Russian President Vladimir) Putin's imperialist delusions to a degree we haven't seen in a very long time," he told a press conference.

"We cannot defend ourselves against Putin with a balanced budget.

"We therefore have to make up, in the shortest possible time, for three decades during which our military was cut back."

Total spending in 2027 will come to 555.4bn euros, 12bn more than initially projected when draft figures were outlined in April.

New borrowing is nearly eight bn euros higher, at 118.7bn euros. Klingbeil pointed to the US-Israeli war against Iran as one reason for the extra borrowing.

The conflict and ensuing energy

shock, a huge burden for German manufacturers, has dimmed hopes the country's long struggling economy will rebound this year.

"(US President Donald) Trump's irresponsible war with Iran has cut in half the upswing we had expected for this year," Klingbeil said.

"This war is costing Germany money."

Environmental protection group BUND accused the ruling coalition of an "attack on climate protection" by shifting money from the climate fund.

The coalition is led by the centre-right Christian Democrats (CDU) party of Chancellor Friedrich Merz, with Klingbeil's centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) as junior partners.

"We've only just got through the first heatwave of the summer, the need for action couldn't be clearer," BUND climate expert Tina Loeffel said.

But Klingbeil rejected claims Berlin was "looting" the fund, while stressing cuts were necessary to help plug the hole in the budget.

Italy reacts to Trump jibe: 'People come and go'

Italy yesterday criticised US President Donald Trump's latest social media attack on Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni ahead of this week's Nato summit. Trump on Sunday published a doctored image on his Truth Social platform showing Meloni looking at him as if adoringly in a post accompanied by the words: "Restraining Order Needed".

"People come and go but relations must endure," Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto told the news channel Sky TG24. Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani also said he was "sure that transatlantic relations go well beyond individual comments". Meloni did not respond personally.

She was targeted by Trump last month after the G7 summit where he said that Meloni had "begged" him for a photo

opportunity and that he only agreed because he "felt sorry for her".

He also accused Meloni of trying to repair relations with Washington for domestic political reasons after Italy failed to support US action against Iran.

"These constant, unprovoked attacks are senseless", she said at the time.

"Being your friend certainly has not helped" her popularity, she said, adding: "I suggest you focus on yours".

Far-right leader Meloni had positioned herself as a European leader able to mediate between Europe and Trump but has increasingly distanced herself from him.

Trump has been highly critical of European Nato countries ahead of this week's meeting in Ankara of the 32-country alliance.

Thousands flee new wave of European wildfires

AFP
Iles-sur-Tet, France

Wildfires across southern Europe forced thousands of people to flee their homes and prompted authorities to ban spectators from yesterday's Tour de France stage that was threatened by one inferno.

Hundreds of firefighters are battling blazes that have devastated more than 20,000 hectares (50,000 acres) of land — an area nearly three times the size of Manhattan — across Portugal, Spain, France, Greece and other countries.

The fires are spreading as temperatures rise again — already reaching 43C in Spain — in a continent still scarred by the aftermath of heatwaves in May and June that have been blamed for thousands of deaths.

Scientists agree that climate change driven by humans burning fossil fuels is increasing the risk and severity of heatwaves and other extreme weather phenomena.

Some 10,500 people were told to evacuate their homes near Perpignan in southwestern France as firefighters battled a blaze in the Pyrenees that has devoured more than 4,600 hectares, authorities said.

"The fire came within 300 metres of the houses. We were taken aback by how fast it spread, it was staggering — bordering on panic," said Patrice, a 53-year-old resi-

dent of the village of Trevillach, who did not give his surname.

"We started seeing smoke around 10:30pm, then it kept coming closer and closer. Someone from the town hall knocked on our door around 1:00am to tell us to leave," said Charlotte Pignol.

Regional prefect Pierre Regnault de la Mothe told reporters: "I regret having to say this, it will be, in France at least, a stage of the Tour de France without spectators."

Three hundred French firefighters struggled to control another fire in a mountainous district of the southeastern Drome department.

In Greece, flames set off by a forest fire tore through two factories in Thessaloniki in the north of the country, forcing authorities to evacuate the surrounding area and to warn households to keep their windows closed.

A fire that threatened the tourist beaches of the Costa Brava in northeastern Spain burned more than 2,200 hectares in two days and was still being fought yesterday.

Rising temperatures in Spain fuelled fears of more blazes. The thermometer reached 43C in Andalusia and Extremadura on Sunday.

In Portugal, emergency services said they had controlled a wildfire that devastated some 13,000 hectares of forest and scrub land in a northern district. Four Portuguese regions remained on a heat alert yesterday however.

Mo Farah explains how Qatar became the perfect place to raise his family

Mo Farah, one of the most successful British track athletes in Olympic history, has revealed that a visit to Qatar during the 2022 FIFA World Cup convinced him that it was the ideal place to settle with his family after retirement.

Speaking about his decision, the four-time Olympic champion said he had long hoped to live in a Muslim country where his children could grow up connected to their faith.

"I've always said that when I do retire, I want to spend, you know, live in a Muslim country, enjoy myself, let my kids grow up knowing about the Deen, teach about the Deen, all that stuff," he said during a recent podcast.

Farah said his perspective changed after being invited to Qatar by Nasser al-Khelaifi during the World Cup, describing the experience as a turning point for his family.

"For me, the biggest thing was, as I said, the biggest change was, you know, I came here during the World Cup, I got invited by Nasser al-Khelaifi, the PSG chairman, and he really looked after me when I came out for the World Cup, because I came out for the England against USA," the 2012 and 2016 Olympic gold medalist in both the 5,000m and 10,000m added. "My two girls went back out, I brought my son for the semi-final and the final... bro, we loved it."

The 42-year-old, who relocated from the UK to Doha last year, added that returning to Qatar for holidays during the school break reinforced the family's decision to make the country their home.

"And then I said to my kids, kids, listen to December times, schools close, England's busy, come, could just come out here for holiday, we come out here holiday, and my kids absolutely love this country just because what it gives them, and they can be their self."



Mo Farah: Loves it here.

Art and wellness unite at AlHosh Gallery

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

AlHosh Gallery at Porto Arabia, The Pearl Island, drew art enthusiasts and families on Saturday (July 4) for a cultural event featuring contemporary art, wellness activities and interactive workshops.

Bringing together artists, creatives, and members of the public, the programme offered an immersive experience designed to make art more accessible and to encourage meaningful engagement with Qatar's growing cultural landscape.

The event featured a carefully curated lineup of activities that appealed to a broad audience.

Visitors enjoyed speciality pop-up coffee experiences alongside exhibitions and creative sessions, while one of the standout attractions was an innovative Pilates class held inside the gallery, where participants practised among contemporary artworks in an environment that merged physical movement with artistic inspiration.

Organisers from BE Pilates described the initiative as an encouraging first step in introducing wellness activities into cultural spaces.

"Pilates is a low-impact mind-body workout that emphasises core strength, flexibility, and controlled breathing," the organisers said. "It is an excellent way to improve posture, build lean muscle, and prevent injuries without putting heavy stress on your joints."

"The Pilates session welcomed 13 ladies and received an overwhelmingly positive response," they added. "Although it was an-

nounced as a mixed event because the gallery space was not fully private, the experience exceeded our expectations."

They said that the enthusiastic feedback has already prompted plans for future sessions.

"Following the success of the event, we are now working on covering the gallery space to create a completely private environment that will allow us to host dedicated ladies-only Pilates sessions in the coming weeks," the organisers said. "We believe combining movement with art offers participants a unique and inspiring experience."

Creativity also took centre stage through a contemporary Arabic Calligraphy workshop led by artist Kareemgraphy (Abdul Kareem), in collaboration with AlHosh Gallery, which introduced participants to the blending of Arabic calligraphy and graffiti to create custom art pieces.

The hands-on session explored the balance between heritage and innovation, encouraging attendees to experiment with contemporary calligraphic techniques and graffiti while celebrating Arab cultural identity.

The workshop generated significant enthusiasm among participants, many of whom expressed a desire to continue developing their skills through future sessions.

Organisers noted a growing interest in Arabic Calligraphy, particularly among younger generations eager to reconnect with the art form through modern creative practices.

The weekend programme forms part of AlHosh Gallery's ongoing efforts to establish itself as an open and inclusive cultural platform that encourages dialogue between



AlHosh Gallery blending art with wellness.

artists and the wider community.

By combining exhibitions with workshops, wellness activities, and lifestyle experiences, the gallery continues to redefine how audiences engage with contemporary art beyond the traditional exhibition format.

The diverse programme attracted a wide cross-section of visitors, drawn by the opportunity to experience art through multiple senses in an atmosphere that encouraged participation rather than observation.

The combination of visual art, movement, conversation, and speciality coffee created a distinctive cultural destination where creativity extended beyond gallery walls.

Committed to supporting local and regional artists, AlHosh Gallery regularly hosts solo and group exhibitions, as well as educational workshops and community events.



Artist Kareemgraphy in action.

Its open, experiential approach continues to contribute to Qatar's evolving cultural scene, positioning the gallery as a vibrant meeting point where art, innovation, and community come together.



QF opens applications for 3rd edition of Herfah

Qatar Foundation (QF) has opened applications for the third edition of Herfah at Al Khater House, a flagship programme in traditional crafts delivered in collaboration with The King's Foundation School of Traditional Arts, preserving Qatari and Islamic craft traditions through hands-on learning while linking heritage techniques with contemporary creative practice.

Held at the historic Al Khater House in Education City, the programme runs from September 6 to May 13, 2027, with classes taking place from 9am to 2pm, Sunday to Thursday.

Applications are now open, and interested candidates can learn more about the programme, view the full programme calendar, and register at <https://educationcity.qa/herfah-al-khater-house>

Designed for residents of Qatar with prior experience in creative or craft-based disciplines, Herfah provides an intensive studio-based learning environment where participants will work closely with specialist tutors to develop technical proficiency across a range of traditional craft practices.

The curriculum is structured across three progressive terms: Term 1, held from September 6 to December 2026 for 14 weeks, begins with the Foundation Modules of Geometry, Drawing, and Biomorphic Design, intro-

ducing participants to the core design principles of traditional arts through geometric systems and stylised natural forms.

The term concludes with Natural Pigments and Dyes, introductory Craft Modules in Ceramics, Decorative Painting, Textiles, and Gypsum Carving.

Term 2, held from January to February 2027 for eight weeks, builds on these foundations through Geometry 2, deepening participants' understanding of traditional geometric principles, alongside practical training in Marquetry and Woodcarving.

The term includes an additional Ceramics course, enabling participants to engage with a broader range of ceramic craft applications.

Term 3, from March to May 2027 for nine weeks, will be dedicated to students' final projects – both group and individual work – drawing on the design and drawing skills acquired in the Foundation Modules and applying knowledge from the various Craft Modules to develop their final outcomes.

Delivered in collaboration with The King's Foundation School of Traditional Arts, an internationally recognised institution renowned for excellence in teaching traditional arts, the programme aims to preserve and celebrate timeless practices while deepening cultural understanding and creative skills.

Skyline growth lifts facade maintenance demand

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

The rapid growth of Qatar's commercial and residential skyline is driving demand for facade and window cleaning services, with industry workers saying that the country's dusty climate and expanding stock of high-rise buildings having made regular exterior maintenance an essential part of building operations.

An employee at a facade maintenance company in Doha, operating since 2008, said demand has risen alongside the construction of new commercial and residential towers.

He expressed optimism that the industry will again experience the strong demand seen before and during the 2022 FIFA World Cup, when a surge in construction and the completion of major projects boosted business.

Depending on a building's size, use, location and exposure to dust, a facade cleaning project typically takes around 15 days to complete, he said.

According to the employee, safety remains every company's top priority, with ropes, harnesses and other equipment regularly inspected and double-checked before every operation.

He noted that demand is generally higher during the cooler winter months, while rising summer temperatures make scheduling more challenging.

Apart from safety, he said, timing is crucial to ensure work is carried out under suitable conditions. The employee added that cleaning schedules vary according to a building's location and purpose.

Prestige office towers, hotels and landmark buildings typically undergo facade cleaning and maintenance every 3-4 months, while most commercial and residential buildings are serviced every 5-6 months.

Buildings in less dusty or lower-traffic areas may require cleaning only twice a year or less. Qatar's climate also necessitates more frequent facade maintenance than in many other countries.

Windblown dust and sand, coastal humidity, salt deposits – particularly near waterfront areas – and high temperatures that bake dirt onto glass and exterior surfaces all accelerate the build-up of grime.

Most of Doha's skyscrapers are cleaned using rope-access technicians and building



Suspended high above the ground, rope-access workers clean a building's facade in Doha.

PICTURE: Joey Aguilar

maintenance units with roof-mounted cradles.

It is learnt that the sector sees a broader trend across the Gulf, where building maintenance is increasingly viewed as an investment in asset preservation rather than a cosmetic service.

Property owners are placing greater emphasis on maintaining premium appearances to protect asset values, attract and retain tenants, reinforce corporate image and support sustainability goals.

Dubai and Abu Dhabi have the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC)'s most mature high-rise facade maintenance markets, driven by their dense concentration of skyscrapers, luxury hotels and Grade A office buildings.

Qatar is following a similar trajectory, with its inventory of premium commercial and residential towers continuing to grow.

According to the October 2025 UAE Industrial Facade Cleaning & Maintenance Market Size, Share, Growth Drivers, Trends, Opportunities, Competitive Landscape & Forecast

2025-30 report by MarketResearch.com, the UAE's industrial facade cleaning and maintenance market is valued at about \$1.2bn, with Dubai and Abu Dhabi accounting for the largest share because of their extensive skylines and concentration of high-rise developments.

The report identifies high-rise facade cleaning as the market's largest segment, highlighting the recurring nature of the business.

Unlike construction, facade maintenance provides long-term revenue through annual maintenance contracts, multi-year facility management agreements, scheduled cleaning programmes, facade inspections and rope-access maintenance throughout a building's life cycle.

While Qatar's market is smaller than Dubai's, the business model is increasingly similar.

Areas such as West Bay, Lusail, Msheireb Downtown, The Pearl Island, and Marina District contain hundreds of premium towers that require ongoing facade maintenance.



Jalaluddin, a shoemaker from Quetta in Pakistan's Balochistan province.

PICTURE: Shaima Sherif

Traditional shoemaking endures in Qatar despite changing times

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

For many people, repairing a pair of shoes has become less common in an era of fast fashion and inexpensive replacements.

Tucked away in Qatar's traditional markets, however, skilled craftsmen continue to practise a trade that has served communities for decades, keeping alive an important part of everyday heritage.

One of them is Jalaluddin, a shoemaker from Quetta in Pakistan's Balochistan province, who has spent the past four years running his small workshop in Doha's Al Markhiya neighbourhood.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, he described the profession as one rooted in patience, resilience and necessity.

"It's a lot of work. It's an old profession," Jalaluddin said, reflecting on the trade that now supports his family back home.

His workshop offers shoe repairs, stitching, alterations and adjustments, serving customers who still value craftsmanship over replacement.

Although the profession has evolved little over the years, the market around it has changed considerably.

"Before, business was better. Now it's not as good as it used to be," he said, attributing the decline to changing lifestyles and advances in technology that have altered consumer behaviour.

Despite these challenges, Jalaluddin remains optimistic.

"It's all a matter of fate," he said. "Sometimes it's slow, but thank God it's good. Customers do come."

Like many small business owners, Jala-

uddin said obtaining the necessary licence requires determination.

"You need a licence," he explained. "You get it through the municipality, but it's not easy. It's very difficult."

Jalaluddin revealed that he entered the profession out of necessity after arriving in Qatar without work.

"When I came for the first time, there was no work. Out of necessity, I had to do this job," he said.

His daily routine reflects the commitment required to sustain the business.

He leaves for work at 11am, closes the shop around 10.30pm and travels across Doha by Metro.

His wife and children remain in Pakistan, where he supports a family that includes five sons.

Asked what advice he would offer people struggling to find employment, Jalaluddin

stressed the importance of persistence.

"You have to make an effort in everything," he said. "Trying is necessary. Without effort, you won't find work. Hard work is essential."

He acknowledged Qatar's regulations aimed at protecting workers during the summer months.

"The government says not to work during the hottest hours. They tell us to work after 3pm because it's very hot," he said, noting that although the restrictions can be challenging, they are intended to safeguard workers from extreme temperatures.

As modern lifestyles continue to reshape traditional trades, craftsmen such as Jalaluddin remain committed to preserving their skills, proving that dedication, resilience and honest workmanship still have a place in Qatar's evolving marketplace.