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Farewell, Our Beloved Father Amir



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani
(1952 — 2026)

Sheikha Moza's heartfelt message for Father Amir



In a poignant and heartfelt message reflecting both profound personal grief and unwavering faith, Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser pays a moving tribute to HH the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, describing his passing as the loss of Qatar's "historic leader" and the architect of the nation's modern glory.

Sharing her thoughts in a post on social media, Sheikha Moza opened with verses from the Holy Qur'an:

"O you who are confident, return to your Lord satisfied and patient, and enter into My servants and enter My Paradise."

She then expresses complete submission to the will of Allah, writing that she drew strength from faith even in the face of overwhelming sorrow. "I draw inspiration from the greatest sadness and deepest grief by the departure of Qatar's historic leader, His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani," she writes, praying that Allah grant him mercy and eternal reward.

In words that underscored Sheikh

Hamad's enduring legacy, Sheikha Moza describes the late Father Amir as "the leader of the modern country of Qatar and the creator of its glories," saying that, in accordance with the Almighty's divine decree, he had now ascended to an eternal abode after a lifetime devoted to the nation.

With evident emotion, she offers a heartfelt supplication for HH the late Father Amir, praying to Allah to envelop him in His mercy and admit him into the vast gardens of Paradise.

She concludes her message with the Qur'anic declaration, "Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we shall return," encapsulating the spirit of faith, gratitude and acceptance that permeated her tribute.

The deeply personal message resonates widely as Qatar continues to mourn the passing of HH the Father Amir, whose transformational leadership reshaped the country's political, economic and global standing, leaving behind a legacy that has been remembered across the nation with admiration, gratitude and profound affection. — @mozabintnasser

EXCLUSIVE FROM THE *GULF TIMES* ARCHIVES



The Heir Apparent and Defence Minister HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, also chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth Welfare with the head of delegations and Guests of Honour taking part in the Eighth Arab Camp for the Blind in Doha. The director of the office of HH the Heir Apparent Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Attiyah and the executive director of the Qatari Red Crescent Society Hassan al-Suweidi also attended the meeting. **16/8/1988**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani at the opening of the 13th session of the Advisory Council. **25/11/1984**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani in Saudi Arabia to attend the GCC Defence Ministers Meeting. **23/10/1985**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani touring the Air Force Base during his visit to Kuwait. **26/5/1983**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani receiving well-wishers on Eid al-Fitr. **July 1984**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani touring the Sultan's Armed Forces Museum during his visit to Oman. **19/9/1990**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani with Pakistan ambassador to Qatar Haneef Gul. **6/8/1988**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani at an Iftar banquet at his palace at Al Rayyan in honour of religious scholars. (QNA). **31/12/1996**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani congratulating members of Al Ahli Club after they won the Amiri Cup 1981. **4/5/1981**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani in Manama during his visit to Bahrain. **30/12/1999**

EXCLUSIVE FROM THE *GULF TIMES* ARCHIVES



HH the Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani with the members of the ruling family at the Amiri Diwan. The audience was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister HH Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani. **24/2/1996**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani with Kuwait Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jabor al-Sabah in Kuwait City. **20/1/2002**



HH the Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani shakes hands with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and chief of the National Guards Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz looks on. **4/12/1997**



HH the Heir Apparent and Defence Minister Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani with British parliamentary delegation member Terry Dicks. **7/10/1993**



HH the Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani presiding over the second meeting of the Council of Ministers at the Amiri Diwan. **28/6/1995**



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani returned home after visits to Tunisia and the United States. HH the Amir was greeted upon arrival at Doha International Airport by HH the Heir Apparent Sheikh Jassim bin Hamad al-Thani and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Khalifa al-Thani. Their excellencies sheikhs, Ministers, Advisory Council Speaker and Deputy Speaker, undersecretaries and Advisory Council members were on hand to greet the Amir. The Tunisian and US ambassadors were also present at the airport. **28/6/1997**

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani
(1952 — 2026)

Father Amir: The leader who
taught a nation to dream big

By Kamran Rehmat

Nations, like men, are measured not by what they inherit but by what they dare to imagine. HH the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani imagined more for Qatar than geography or history had any right to promise — and then, with a builder's patience and a visionary's impatience, he delivered it.

Consider the country he assumed in June 1995: oil output in decline, a peninsula on the margins of the world's attention. Consider the country he handed over on June 25, 2013: the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas, its GDP multiplied 24-fold, its voice carried into every Arab home by a broadcaster he willed into being, its flag destined to fly over the first World Cup on Arab and Muslim soil. Eighteen years — one lifetime's ambition compressed into less than a generation.



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani raises the World Cup trophy as he stands with HH Sheikha Moza bint Nasser and members of the Qatar 2022 bid committee and FIFA president Joseph Blatter after Qatar was chosen to host the 2022 World Cup at the FIFA headquarters in Zurich.

The figures are staggering, but figures were never the point. HH Sheikh Hamad understood that gas beneath the seabed is merely potential; it becomes destiny only when converted into schools, hospitals, museums and moral standing. Ras Laffan was one monument. Education City another. The Museum of Islamic Art, rising from the water like a prayer in stone, a third.

And he understood something

rarer: that a small state's greatest export can be its conscience. The Doha Agreement that pulled Lebanon back from the abyss in 2008. The patient diplomacy between Djibouti and Eritrea, between Palestinian factions, between the Taliban and Washington. And in October 2012, when Gaza suffocated under siege and the world averted its gaze, he became the first head of state to walk its broken streets.

Today the flags hang heavy, and grief sits in every Qatari majlis. But grief must share the room with gratitude. The towers of West Bay, the trains beneath Doha, the very confidence with which this nation carries itself — all of it bears his signature.

The nation he taught to dream now owes him its finest tribute: to keep dreaming, and to keep building, exactly as he showed us how.

May Allah rest his soul in eternal peace.





بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ اجْبُرِي إِلَىٰ بَرٍّ مَرْضٍ وَأَمْرِ قَانٍ حَتَّىٰ عِبَادِي وَارْحَبِي

**We extend our sincere condolences and
deepest sympathy to**

His Highness
Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani
Amir of the State of Qatar

and

His Highness
Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Thani
Deputy Amir

**And to the honorable members of the Al Thani family
and the people of Qatar
on the sad demise of the nation's leader**

His Highness
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Father Amir

May Allah have mercy upon the deceased and grant him a place in his spacious paradise.

"إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ"

**Khalid Bin Ahmed Al Suwaidi
Trading & Contracting and
Industrial (KBAS) L.L.C.**



خالد بن أحمد السويدي للتجارة
والمقاولات والصناعة (قبس) ذ.م.م

Khalil Abu Al-Rubb, General Manager

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

((يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي))

صدق الله العظيم

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GULF ASIA



جلف آسيا



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جِئْ بِآيَاتِكَ ۖ وَإِن كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُتَكِبِينَ ۚ

صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَى الْعَلِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

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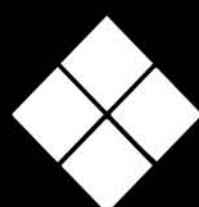
**and the respected Al Thani family
and to the noble people of Qatar**

on the passing of the leader of the nation,

**His Highness
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani
Father Amir**

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إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ



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تكنیکاس ریونیداس اس ایه
TECNICAS REUNIDAS QATAR BRANCH



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
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يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُسْلِمُونَ إِنَّ فِي رَأْسِ الْبَيْتِ رَأْسَ الْوَسْطِ فَارْتَدُّوا فِيهِ عِيَارِيَّ وَالْأَيْمَانِيَّ حَبْنِيَّ

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QATAR

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ELECTRICAL
ENGINEERING

أنوار الخليج
الهندسة
الكهربائية

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T A V
Construction



يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ الْوَطَنُ حَبْلٌ مَرْتَبُوتٌ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَالْإِسْلَامِ وَالْأَقْصَى
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Father Amir built modern Qatar and inspired the Arab world: *Gulf Times* Editor-in-Chief Faisal al-Mudahka

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Alaraby TV’s special coverage explored the enduring legacy of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani through the testimonies of leading scholars and media figures.

Gulf Times Editor-in-Chief Faisal al-Mudahka led Al Araby TV’s extensive coverage following the passing of HH the Father Amir, offering a sweeping assessment of the visionary leadership that transformed Qatar into a modern state while leaving an enduring mark on the Arab world.

Reflecting on HH the late Father Amir’s legacy, al-Mudahka described his life as “an inspiring and honourable journey”, saying that HH Sheikh Hamad was “an Amir for all Arab peoples” whose vision extended far beyond Qatar’s borders.

He said that HH the late Father

Amir consistently engaged with the Arab world’s most pressing challenges, from development initiatives in Mauritania to the civil wars in Afghanistan and Syria, while remaining steadfast in his support for the Palestinian cause.

Al-Mudahka recalled that HH Sheikh Hamad became the first Arab leader to visit Gaza in person and played a pivotal role in convening the Gaza Summit, underscoring his unwavering commitment to Arab solidarity and humanitarian causes.

“He always carried the concerns of the Arab and Muslim worlds, with Palestine at the heart of his priorities,” al-Mudahka said.

“For Qataris, he was a father to the nation,” he continued. “He built this country, transforming it from a small town on the shores of the Gulf into a modern global state with a distinguished presence in politics, the economy and international affairs.”

Al-Mudahka also credited the HH the late Father Amir with pio-

neering one of the Arab world’s most influential media landscapes.

“The freedom of the press we witness today in Qatar and across much of the Arab world is part of his legacy,” he said. “His vision for economic development was never confined to Qatar alone; it embraced the wider Arab region. At home, he also worked tirelessly to unite the diverse communities that make up Qatari society.”

Al-Mudahka’s reflections formed part of Al Araby TV’s comprehensive coverage, which the network described as an effort to document a legacy too significant to be captured in a single report or programme.

Throughout the day, the broadcaster hosted leading political thinkers, academics, senior officials and media figures to examine the transformative era associated with HH Sheikh Hamad’s leadership.

Among the most prominent guests was Arab intellectual Dr

Azmi Bishara, director-general of the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies, who described HH the late Father Amir as the leader who fundamentally reshaped Qatar’s trajectory.

Bishara said HH Sheikh Hamad’s leadership was characterised by an unwavering commitment to national sovereignty, independent decision-making and the rejection of external tutelage.

Recalling his personal experience, Bishara said HH the late Father Amir welcomed him to Doha after his forced departure from Palestine, describing the gesture as one of exceptional courage and humanity.

He added that the Palestinian cause became both a personal commitment and a strategic priority for HH Sheikh Hamad, whose leadership established Qatar as an influential regional and international actor while safeguarding its sovereign foreign policy.



Faisal al-Mudahka speaking on Alaraby TV.

The network also featured the former minister of energy and industry, HE Mohammed bin Saleh al-Sada, who examined how HH the late Father Amir’s strategic vision drove Qatar’s economic renaissance and laid the foundations of the modern state.

Political scientist and former Shura Council member Dr Yousuf Obeidan discussed the leadership that strengthened Qatar’s global standing, while Qatar Press Centre Director-General Sadiq Mohammed al-Amari reflected on how HH Sheikh Hamad elevated

the country’s international stature.

Faleh al-Hajri, editor-in-chief of *Al Arab* newspaper, described HH the late Father Amir’s legacy as the story of a nation shaped by visionary leadership.

Through exclusive interviews, expert analysis and special reports, Alaraby TV presented a comprehensive portrait of a leader whose vision transformed Qatar politically, economically, socially and culturally, while leaving a lasting imprint on the Arab region and securing the country’s place as an influential global actor.

Qatar among region’s top performers in waste management

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Qatar has been identified as one of the top-performing countries in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) in municipal solid waste management after becoming one of only two nations in the region to attain the highest development level in a recent World Bank assessment.

The report highlights the country’s progress in building an integrated waste management system while pointing to the next challenge of advancing a circular economy.

The World Bank’s report, *Waste Management in the Middle East and North Africa*, places Qatar and Oman in Development Band 5 (DB5) – the highest level achieved by any country in the study’s new benchmarking framework for municipal solid waste management.

According to the report, countries in DB5 have achieved universal municipal waste collection, comprehensive control over waste recovery and disposal processes, and fulfil the waste management component of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal Indicator 11.6.1.

“Currently, only Oman and Qatar achieve universal collection and comprehensive control over recovery and disposal processes,” the report states.

The World Bank explains that countries reaching this level have largely established the essential infrastructure needed to manage municipal waste safely and efficiently.

Their next priority is no longer expanding collection services but reducing waste generation, increasing recycling, recovering more valuable materials and accelerating the transition towards a circular economy.

Unlike many countries in the region that continue to focus on improving basic waste collection and controlled disposal, Qatar has already established an integrated waste treatment infrastructure, including the Domestic Solid Waste Management Centre in Mesaieed, which combines waste sorting, recycling, composting, waste-to-energy generation and sanitary landfill operations.

The findings are broadly consistent with previous assessments by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), which has highlighted integrated waste management and circular economy approaches as international best practice for improving resource efficiency and reducing environmental impacts.

Academic research has also recognised Qatar’s progress.

A peer-reviewed review published in the journal *Sustainability* concluded that Qatar has developed modern municipal waste collection systems supported by advanced treatment infrastructure and sustained government investment, while identify-



ing increased recycling, waste reduction and greater public participation as priorities for the country’s next phase of development.

The World Bank notes that municipal solid waste generation across the Mena region currently exceeds 155mn tonnes annually and is projected to increase substantially by 2050 because of population growth, urbanisation and changing consumption patterns.

Despite improvements in waste collection across much of the region, recycling rates remain low, prompting the World Bank to encourage governments to expand resource recovery, strengthen producer responsibility schemes, improve waste separation and encourage greater private-sector participation.

The report estimates that a large share of municipal waste generated across the Mena region could potentially be reused, recycled or recovered for energy, reducing pressure on landfills while creating new economic opportunities and supporting climate goals.

For Qatar, the report suggests that the foundations of an advanced waste management system are already in place.

The next stage will depend on how effectively the country transforms that infrastructure into a fully functioning circular economy in which materials remain in productive use for as long as possible rather than becoming waste.

UN chief offers condolences on passing of Father Amir



United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has offered his condolences to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani on the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

In a message penned in the condolence book opened at Qatar’s Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York, the UN chief extended his deepest condolences to the government and people of Qatar on the passing of an inspiring and influential leader who shaped the path of change in his country. – **QNA**

PM gets phone call from Saudi minister

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received a telephone call yesterday from Saudi Arabia’s Minister of Defence Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud.

During the call, Prince Khalid offered his condolences on the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. – **QNA**

Qatar condemns attacks on UAE oil tankers, Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait

Qatar has strongly condemned the repeated Iranian attacks on Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait, deeming them “an egregious violation” of the sovereignty of those brotherly nations and of the international rules-based order.

Qatar has also condemned the attack targeting two UAE oil tankers as they transited the Strait of Hormuz.

In statements issued yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stressed the critical importance of shielding the region from the consequences of unprovoked attacks and maintaining the path of dialogue, diplomacy, and de-escalation, which it said are essential to consolidating security and stability both regionally globally. – **QNA**

Qatar’s retail market growing with more opportunities for different business scales

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar’s retail market is estimated at around QR74.1bn and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.05% to reach \$23.69bn by 2031, underscoring the sector’s continued resilience and its growing role as one of the country’s leading non-hydrocarbon industries.

Accordingly, Qatar’s retail sector has continued to demonstrate remarkable resilience and steady expansion over the past few years, reinforcing its position as one of the country’s leading non-hydrocarbon industries.

Despite global inflationary pressures, supply chain disruptions, and sharp regional competition, the sector has benefited from strong domestic consumption, sustained government investment, rising tourism, expanding hospitality activity, and the continued implementation of various economic and business structural reforms in addition to the constantly updated legislation that eases conducting business transactions.

Food and grocery retail are considered the largest segment of the local retail market, accounting for around 42% of total retail sales in 2025.

The sector is supported by essential consumer demand, population growth, expatriate communities, hospitality expansion, and rising tourism numbers.

Such a sector often covers hypermarkets and supermarkets, convenience stores, speciality food shops, organic and health food stores, and premium grocery concepts, in addition to various online grocery platforms and apps.

While major operators dominate traditional grocery retail, considerable opportunities are available to smaller businesses, particularly in specialised categories such as organic and sustainable food products, local Qatari brands, speciality coffee and gourmet foods, healthy meal solutions, imported ethnic

food products, and premium bakery and confectionery concepts.

These opportunities are mainly supported by population diversity, as Qatar’s population is a broad mix of cultures, nationalities, and backgrounds, with different preferences, demands, and tastes for consumer products.

Further, the constantly improving digital infrastructure and expansion of online services offer numerous opportunities for retailers, including young entrepreneurs and startups.

Similarly, fashion retail remains among the most attractive consumer segments due to the country’s high income levels, well-off population, and strong demand for international brands.

Such market value is estimated at around QR8-10bn.

The sector covers luxury fashion, ready-to-wear clothing, footwear, accessories, jewellery and watches, modest fashion and boutique fashion labels.

Further, this sector consistently offers excellent opportunities for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with budget investments that can expand with performance, and online platforms that help them reduce operational costs and increase their ability to compete in such a tight market.

However, experts expect that luxury and premium retail would remain among the fastest-growing areas as the country continues positioning itself as a regional lifestyle and tourism destination.

Further, the electronics, technology and smart home retail sector value is estimated at around QR6-8bn, with consumer electronics representing a rapidly expanding segment, driven by technology adoption, high smartphone penetration, smart-home demand, and digital lifestyles.

Business opportunities for emerging businesses in this sector include gaming stores, mobile accessories, refurbished electronics, smart-home installation services, technology repair businesses and artificial intelligence (AI)-based retail solutions.

This sector is considered one of

the most promising business opportunities in the country due to the high incomes of most of the population, the large number of young professionals, and the rapid expansion of the education and educational services sectors.

Another essential and rapidly expanding retail sector in the country is restaurants, cafés and food service retail, with an estimated market value of around QR10-12bn.

This sector has expanded rapidly due to the growth of the tourism industry, population diversity, and changing consumer lifestyles.

The sector has benefited significantly from tourism growth, with Qatar welcoming more than 5mn international visitors annually during 2024 and 2025.

The sector constantly offers opportunities for businesses across various scales, fueled by a growing population and the simultaneous rise in demand for more options, flavours and related services.

In the meantime, the entertainment, lifestyle, and experiential retail sectors have strong potential, as consumers increasingly value experiences and spending time.

Market value is estimated at QR3-5bn, with further expansion projected over the foreseeable future, given the presence of many young families in the country.

Areas of expansion include family entertainment, children’s activities, gaming and fitness, and culture and arts events, among others.

Overall, digital commerce has become one of Qatar’s fastest-growing retail channels.

Industry estimates indicate that Qatar’s e-commerce market will reach QR28bn in 2031, driven by online shopping, digital payments, mobile commerce, and changing consumer behaviour.

The country’s digital economy provides a strong foundation for this as Internet penetration exceeds 99%, smartphone adoption ranks among the highest globally, and digital payment systems have become deeply embedded in everyday consumer activity.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **SHALINI SEENU SUNDARARAJAN PILLAI**

holder of

India Passport No. C4395091
QID No. 30035604073

hereby change my name

from

SHALINI SEENU SUNDARARAJAN PILLAI

to

SHALINI SEENU PILLAI

Any objection, please contact
THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE FOR NATIONALITY AFFAIRS
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Father Amir ‘laid foundations of modern Qatar’, say experts

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani led Qatar through an extraordinary national transformation that reshaped the country's development journey and laid the foundations of the modern state, experts, academics, and specialists who reflected on his historic legacy.

They said his leadership was guided by a long-term strategic vision centred on human development, education, knowledge, infrastructure, institution-building, and sustainable growth.

They stressed that the achievements realised during his era provided the foundation for Qatar's continued progress and its prominent regional and international standing.

The experts noted that HH Sheikh Hamad's legacy extends far beyond landmark development projects and economic achievements, emphasising that his greatest contribution was investing in the Qatari people and preparing generations capable of leading the nation's future.

Lawyer Ali al-Khelaifi said HH the late Father Amir would forever remain in Qatar's national memory for the enduring legacy he left behind, describing his leadership as a historic turning point that ushered the country into a new era of comprehensive development.

“His Highness made human development the cornerstone of Qatar's national project, based on the belief that people are the country's greatest asset and that investing in their capabilities is the strongest guarantee of sustainable development and prosperity,” he said.

Al-Khelaifi said that HH Sheikh Hamad regarded education, healthcare, and human development not merely as service sectors but as fundamental pillars of nation-building.

During his reign, Qatar witnessed significant expansion in educational institutions, universities, scholarship programmes, and professional training opportunities, producing a generation of qualified nationals capable of leading various sectors.

Al-Khelaifi also highlighted the transformation of the healthcare sector through the establishment of specialised hospitals and medical centres and the enhancement

of healthcare services, saying that these achievements reflected a development model focused on improving quality of life.

“The legacy of HH the late Father Amir is not limited to economic achievements or infrastructure projects; it is equally reflected in building the Qatari person and strengthening the values of knowledge, creativity, responsibility, and excellence,” he added.

Habib Mohamed al-Hajri said that HH Sheikh Hamad led a defining period in Qatar's history marked by unprecedented infrastructure development.

He said that HH the late Father Amir adopted a comprehensive development strategy that placed modern infrastructure at the heart of building a strong and competitive nation.

“Development cannot be achieved without advanced infrastructure capable of meeting the aspirations of the nation and the needs of future generations,” al-Hajri said.

He pointed to the extensive expansion of roads, bridges, tunnels, ports, airports, electricity and water networks, and communications systems, noting that these projects formed part of a long-term na-

tional vision rather than isolated construction initiatives.

The infrastructure established during that period later enabled Qatar to undertake major national projects, successfully host global events, and strengthen its position as a country with world-class facilities.

Fahad Abdullah al-Mulla, a member of the Central Municipal Council, described the passing of HH Sheikh Hamad as a profound loss for Qatar and the Arab and Islamic worlds, saying that the nation had lost a wise leader whose contributions left an enduring mark on development and progress.

He described HH Sheikh Hamad as “a leader of achievement and a statesman with a far-reaching vision who made long-term planning a national approach, human development a priority, and comprehensive growth a strategic objective”.

Education expert Sandeh Nasser al-Nuaimi said HH Sheikh Hamad's era marked a historic transformation in Qatar's education system, driven by a vision that placed education at the centre of national development.

He explained that HH the late Father Amir viewed education not simply as build-

ing schools and institutions but as creating an integrated system founded on quality, excellence, innovation, and preparing students to compete in a rapidly changing world.

“The development of education during that period will remain a defining milestone in Qatar's history and a testament to a vision that placed knowledge and human development at the heart of national progress,” al-Nuaimi said.

Abdullah Saeed al-Nuaimi, head of the Financial Affairs Department at Al Daayen Municipality, described HH Sheikh Hamad as an exceptional leader who created a comprehensive model of national transformation based on strategic planning and institutional development.

“His Highness the late Father Amir was not only a leader of change; he represented a complete school of strategic management,” the official said.

Dr Hussein al-Bouhlika, chairman of the Youth Committee at Al Ahli Club, said that HH Sheikh Hamad left an exceptional political and strategic legacy that reshaped Qatar's regional and international standing.

He noted that HH the late Father Amir strengthened state institutions while expanding Qatar's diplomatic and humanitarian role, establishing the country as an influential player in global affairs.

“The era of HH Sheikh Hamad represented a major turning point in Qatar's foreign policy, with an active and balanced approach that strengthened the country's role as a partner committed to dialogue and co-operation,” al-Bouhlika said.



Sri Lankan community extends condolences

Members of the Sri Lankan community in Qatar, represented by the Sri Lankan Community Development Forum (CDF Qatar), have expressed their deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathies following the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

CDF Qatar conveyed in a statement its profound sorrow over the loss of HH the late Father Amir, describing him as a visionary leader whose wisdom, dedication, and unwavering commitment to Qatar's progress have left an enduring legacy in the nation's history.

The community highlighted HH Sheikh Hamad's extraordinary role in shaping Qatar's remarkable development, noting that his tireless efforts and steadfast devotion to the prosperity and well-being of the Qatari people will be remembered with deep respect and gratitude for generations to come.

CDF Qatar extended its sincere condolences to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the al-Thani family, the government of Qatar, and the people of Qatar during this period of national mourning.

Sheikh Hamad's people-centred vision transformed Qatar

Qatar's transformation under His Highness the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani placed people at the heart of development and elevated the nation, *Hour and Hour* programme chief executive Tamani al-Yafei has said.

Al-Yafei said in a statement that the “wise policy” established by HH the late Father Amir transformed Qatar from a country dependent on limited resources into a pioneering nation with a significant economic, political and diplomatic presence regionally and internationally.

She said that his leadership, beginning when he assumed power in 1995, took the country into “a new phase of comprehensive development” through strategic programmes and projects that produced a qualitative leap across multiple sectors and established the foundations of sustainable development.

“The national renaissance witnessed by Qatar during his era extended to the political, economic, security, media, social,

educational and health sectors,” al-Yafei said, adding that sport also received exceptional attention.

She described sport as “one of the pillars of national development” and a means of strengthening Qatar's global standing.

The development of modern cities and sporting facilities, together with the hosting of major regional and international tournaments, helped pave the way for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the official said.

Al-Yafei described the tournament as a historic achievement for the Arab world and the region, reflecting the broader transformation achieved during HH the late Father Amir's reign.

She added that HH Sheikh Hamad strengthened Qatar's standing across the Arab and international arenas until it became “a developmental model to be emulated”.

That model, she said, balanced the preservation of the country's Arab and Islamic identity with openness to knowledge and

the adoption of the best global practices.

Al-Yafei stressed that HH the late Father Amir “placed human beings at the core of development” by investing in education, healthcare, infrastructure and the building of national capabilities.

She highlighted the launch of Qatar National Vision 2030 in 2008 under his directives, describing it as an ambitious roadmap for sustainable development and for balancing economic progress with the preservation of national identity and values.

Al-Yafei said that HH the late Father Amir crowned his developmental journey with the “historic step” of handing over power in 2013 to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

She said that HH the Amir has continued the march of construction, renaissance and prosperity, leading Qatar towards further achievements at regional and international forums while continuing the path of the forefathers towards a prosperous nation and a brighter future.



USQBC mourns the passing of Father Amir

The US-Qatar Business Council (USQBC) mourns the loss of His Highness the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

The USQBC extends its deepest condolences to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the al-Thani family, and the people of Qatar during this period of national mourning.

HH Sheikh Hamad is rightly remembered as the architect of modern Qatar.

From his accession in 1995 until his historic transfer of power to HH the Amir in 2013, he guided a transformation without parallel in the region.

Under his wise leadership, Qatar developed the North Field into the engine of its prosperity, becoming the world's largest exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and achieving more than twenty-fold growth in national output.

His reign saw the promulgation of Qatar's first perma-

nent constitution, the founding of Qatar Foundation and Education City, the establishment of the Qatar Investment Authority, and the launch of Qatar National Vision 2030 – institutions and initiatives that continue to define the nation's trajectory.

His vision extended to the global stage, from Doha's role as a trusted diplomatic mediator to Qatar's selection as host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup, the first held in the Middle East.

HH Sheikh Hamad was also a foundational figure in the US-Qatar relationship, which the USQBC remains committed to strengthening and advancing.

It was under his leadership that the strategic partnership between the two nations took its modern form through the deepening of defence co-operation anchored at Al Udeid Air Base, the welcoming of leading American universities to Education City, and landmark energy partnerships with US companies that helped establish Qatar's LNG industry as a global leader.

His visits to the White House and engagement with successive US administrations laid the groundwork for the flourishing commercial, educational, and security ties that bind our two countries today.

With its thoughts remaining with the leadership and people of Qatar, the USQBC continues its mission of strengthening the enduring economic partnership and advancing the business relationship between the US and Qatar.

Portuguese envoy offers condolences

Portugal's ambassador to Qatar Ana Filomena da Costa Rocha has expressed her profound condolences following the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, paying tribute to his exceptional leadership and enduring legacy.



The envoy conveyed her deepest sympathies on behalf of the embassy of Portugal in Qatar and in her personal capacity to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the esteemed al-Thani family, the government of Qatar, and its people.

Da Costa Rocha described HH the late Father Emir as a visionary leader whose wisdom, foresight, and unwavering dedication transformed Qatar into a modern, prosperous, and internationally respected nation.

She noted that his remarkable leadership laid the foundations for the country's extraordinary development while strengthening its role as a bridge for dialogue, co-operation, and mutual understanding among nations.

She affirmed that his vision and statesmanship have left an indelible mark on the history of Qatar and will continue to guide its future development.

Expressing Portugal's solidarity with Qatar during this period of national mourning, the envoy affirmed that Portugal stands alongside the Qatari people in honouring the memory of HH the late Father Emir with profound respect and gratitude for a lifetime devoted to serving his country and its people.

Community condolence meeting in honour of Father Amir today

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The Indian community will hold a condolence meeting today in honour of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, with a former Indian diplomat, longtime residents, and community organisations highlighting HH the late Father Amir's contributions in leading Qatar to great heights with his visionary leadership.

Under the aegis of the embassy of India, in collaboration with community organisations, the condolence meeting will take place at the Ashoka Hall of the Indian Cultural Centre from 7.30pm.

Officials of Indian Cultural Centre, Indian Community Benevolent Forum, Indian Sports Centre and Indian Business and Professional Council will lead the proceedings of the condolence meeting.

India's ambassador to Qatar Vipul will be delivering the condolence message while leading officials and dignitaries are expected to take part in the meeting.

Meanwhile, recalling his association with HH the late Father Amir, former Indian ambassador to Qatar Sanjiv Arora (2012-2016) paid tribute to him and said that the loss was an irreparable one for the country and the international community.

“Distressed by the passing of HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, a visionary leader with a global stature,” he said in a statement shared with *Gulf Times*.

“We would always cherish the audi-



Sanjiv Arora



K C Abdul Latheef



R S Abdul Jaleel

ences with His Highness and fondly remember his kindness,” Arora said.

“Deepest condolences to all the people of Qatar for whom the love of His Highness was boundless. Praying for him.”

K C Abdul Latheef, a longtime resident and a social activist who came to Qatar as a student four decades ago, said that he had the privilege of witnessing one of the most remarkable national transformations under the guidance of HH Sheikh Hamad.

Offering his condolences to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the ruling family, and the people of Qatar on the passing of HH Sheikh Hamad, Latheef said: “We mourn a great leader whose enduring vision and monumental legacy will continue to guide Qatar's journey for generations to come.”

“His Highness possessed an extraordinary ability to look beyond the present and prepare Qatar for generations to come,” he said. “Under his leadership, the country transformed from a developing nation into a globally respected state with world-class in-

frastructure, education, healthcare, communications, sports, and economic institutions.”

“His vision was never limited to economic prosperity alone; it was rooted in creating a knowledge-based society while preserving Qatar's identity, culture, and values,” Latheef continued.

He noted that HH the late Father Amir also established Qatar as a trusted voice in international diplomacy.

“Through principled leadership, humanitarian initiatives, and constructive dialogue, Qatar earned global recognition as a credible mediator committed to peace and conflict resolution,” Latheef said.

“The nation's natural resource wealth was wisely invested not only in the development of Qatar but also in education, humanitarian relief, poverty alleviation, healthcare, and development initiatives across the world,” he added. “This balance between national progress and global responsibility remains one of his greatest legacies.”

Latheef remarked that for the Asian expatriate community, particularly Indians, HH Sheikh Hamad will always

be remembered with deep gratitude.

“During his leadership, Qatar became a land of opportunity where millions of expatriates could pursue education, careers, and better lives for their families,” he pointed out. “The contributions of the Indian community were recognised and valued, fostering a relationship built on mutual respect, trust, and shared progress.”

Mourning the passing of HH Sheikh Hamad, Centre for Indian Community (CIC) Qatar president RS Abdul Jaleel said that it is a profound loss for Qatar and for all those whose lives have been touched by his extraordinary vision and leadership.

“His Highness laid the foundation for the modern State of Qatar, transforming it into a nation admired for its progress, stability, innovation, and humanitarian values,” he said. “His visionary leadership in education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic development has left a lasting legacy that will continue to inspire generations.”

Jaleel highlighted the establishment of landmark institutions and initiatives such as Qatar Foundation, Qatar Charity, the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy, and many other national projects as enduring examples of HH Sheikh Hamad's strategic vision and pioneering model of sustainable development.

“The Indian community in Qatar will always remain grateful for the opportunities, dignity, and sense of belonging fostered under his leadership,” he added. “His commitment to tolerance, inclusiveness, and peaceful coexistence made Qatar a second home for millions of expatriates from around the world.”

Liquidation Notice

For American Center for Services Company
CR. No. 55524

Announce that the above-mentioned company will be winding up their business for good.

Anybody having claims against the company should contact the legal liquidator:

Mr. Samer Ali Hassan
Samer Hassan & Partner CPA'S
Email: Samer@sahaudit.com
Fax: 44294807
with documented proof within 15 days from the publication of this notice.

The company will not be responsible for any claims after this period.



Tension brewing in Yemen as Houthis stir up ME conflict

AFP
Riyadh

Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis appeared on the brink of renewed war after the fighters claimed their first large-scale strikes on the kingdom since 2022, analysts and a Gulf source said.

The Houthis fired missiles at an airport in the southern Saudi Arabian city of Abha late Monday, after Yemeni government hit Sanaa airport to divert a flight coming in from Iran that had onboard a Houthi delegation returning from the late supreme leader's funeral.

For some analysts, the exchange likely marked a new era of hostilities and the end of a four-year uneasy truce that ended attacks between Yemen's government and the Saudi-led coalition that backs it, and the Houthis.

"I think it's huge," said Farea al-Muslimi, a research fellow at the London-based Chatham House think-tank, adding that the attacks "put an official closure to the (Yemeni) truce" that had mostly held despite expiring.

The truce had largely halted a conflict that killed tens of thousands of people and triggered a major humanitarian crisis, but ultimately failed to dislodge the Houthis from power.

A source in the Gulf familiar with the situation said Saudi Arabia was prepared to hit back after the Houthis targeted the kingdom's infrastructure.

"Saudi civilian infrastructure is a redline," the source told AFP.

Following Monday's exchanges, the Houthis boasted of firing ballistic missiles and drones at the kingdom and warned airlines against using Saudi airspace "until the blockade on Sanaa International Airport is lifted".

The coalition in Yemen later



Smoke rising from the airport in Sanaa on July 13. (AFP)

said its air defence forces had intercepted the projectiles.

Hostilities had been mounting for days as the Houthis accused Saudi Arabia earlier this month of targeting an Iranian plane that landed in Sanaa and took off carrying the delegation headed to Ali Khamenei's funeral.

The outbreak of fighting is an example of how the war between the US and Iran has spilled over and risks further destabilising the Middle East and rattling the region's precarious fault lines.

Iran had hit its Gulf neighbours repeatedly during the war, and now appears to have challenged — through its Houthi allies — the coalition's hegemony over Yemeni skies by sending a plane directly from Tehran and back without requesting permission.

For more than a decade, aircraft entering Yemeni airspace have needed prior clearance from the coalition that backs the government and says it enforces the restriction at its request.

The rebels continue to control Yemen's capital Sanaa and swathes of the north, including most population centres.

While the internationally recognised government holds much of the south.

For months, they have issued repeated warnings that if their forces were drawn into the war between Iran and the US, they would act decisively.

Although the rebels had fired at shipping they claimed to be linked to Israel in the Red Sea during the Gaza war, they did not hit Gulf targets and have largely stayed out of the US-Iran war.

Mohammed al-Basha, of the US-based risk advisory Basha Report, said both parties remained engaged in talks despite the latest escalation — though they were preparing for war, in case talks fail.

"Discussions on the Yemen file have continued without interruption since this latest round of escalation," he said.

From their mountainous strongholds overlooking the Red Sea, the Houthis could halt maritime traffic in the waterway and target Saudi export terminals on the coastline that provide millions of barrels of oil a day to the world.



A child reacts during the funeral of Palestinian child Muataz Abu Shaar, who was killed by Israeli fire in Gaza Strip. (Reuters)

Israeli fire kills nine in Gaza, including a child

Reuters
Cairo

An Israeli strike and gunfire killed at least nine Palestinians, including a 10-year-old boy, and a senior Hamas police officer, in the Gaza Strip yesterday, Gazan health and police officials said.

The deaths add to a toll of more than 1,100 Palestinians killed by Israeli attacks since an October ceasefire between Israel and Hamas took effect, according to health officials in the enclave.

The truce halted major fighting but has failed to stop sporadic violence. Four Israeli soldiers have been killed by fighters in Gaza over the same period.

Medics said Muataz Abu Shaar, 10, was shot yesterday by Israeli gunfire in Rafah, southern Gaza.

In Jabalia, in the north of the enclave, an Israeli airstrike on a post of the Hamas-led police force killed at least seven people, including a woman, and wounded several other people, medics and police officials said.

The Hamas-led interior ministry said in a statement the dead included the head of the Jabalia police force, Colonel Mohammad Marwan Salem, along with other officers.

Israel has stepped up its attacks against Hamas security men and police posts, killing dozens of them since October,

according to police sources.

Israel wants Hamas to cede control of Gaza and disarm, and while the group said it was ready to relinquish power, it has always resisted calls to lay down arms.

In Khan Younis, in the south, an Israeli airstrike killed a 36-year-old man and left three people wounded, medics said. The Israeli military said it struck a Hamas fighter.

The Israeli military did not comment on either of incidents.

The latest violence comes as Hamas leaders visited Cairo for further talks on implementing the second phase of US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan.

The discussions include Hamas disarmament and Israeli army withdrawals, according to sources close to the talks, who said little progress had been made in the past weeks towards reaching a broad agreement to end the conflict.

Hamas says Israel's violations of the ceasefire are a key obstacle to implementing the second phase of Trump's plan.

Nearly all of Gaza's 2 million people, most of whom have been displaced several times, now live on a tiny strip of land along the coast, mainly in makeshift tents or damaged buildings, under Hamas control. The Gazan health ministry said more than 73,000 Palestinians have been killed in the territory since the war began.

In Brief

PETRO-POLITICS

Iraqi PM calls for Opec fair share

Iraq's Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi said yesterday that Iraq needed a fair share within Opec after he was asked by reporters whether he was considering leaving the oil producer group. Al-Zaidi is on a trip to Washington as he aims to secure major US investment. "Iraq is one of the founding members of OPEC... Our right is to receive a fair share for Iraq," he told reporters at the White House during a bilateral meeting with US President Donald Trump. Al-Zaidi highlighted that Iraq's past conflicts with the Islamic State, had imposed enormous costs on the country and its infrastructure. (Reuters)

FRESH ATTACKS

MWL condemns Houthi attack

The Muslim World League (MWL) strongly condemned the ballistic missile attack launched by the Houthis towards the southern region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. In a statement yesterday, MWL Secretary-General and Chairman of the Organisation of Muslim Scholars Dr Mohammed bin Abdulkarim al-Issa denounced 'the cowardly terrorist attack', stressing that it violated all religious values, international laws, and humanitarian norms. Al-Issa expressed the MWL's full solidarity with the Kingdom. (QNA)

HOSTILITIES REVIVED

Houthis shot down Saudi spy drone

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis said they shot down a Saudi-operated reconnaissance drone on yesterday, a day after an exchange of hostilities erupted between the two sides for the first time in years. The fighters "succeeded in shooting down an enemy Saudi 'Wing Loong II' reconnaissance aircraft while it was carrying out hostile missions at dawn today over Al-Bayda Governorate in the centre of the country," Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said. (AFP)

EXPLOSIONS

Blasts in Kuwait, 'targets' intercepted

Explosions were heard in Kuwait City yesterday, an AFP journalist reported, as the Gulf nation's army announced for the second time in less than half an hour that it was intercepting "hostile" targets. "The General Staff of the Kuwait Armed Forces announces that any explosions are the result of the Air Defence systems intercepting hostile attacks," the army said in its statements, without providing further details. (AFP)

EKECUTIONS

Iran executes two men linked to IS

Iran executed two men convicted of being members of an Islamic State-linked militant cell and of armed action against the Islamic Republic, the Iranian judiciary's news outlet Mizan reported yesterday. Mizan said Mohieddin Abdollahi and Hossein Palani were sentenced to death after their convictions were upheld by the Supreme Court, adding that the cell had planned attacks in Iran after operating from the Bamho heights along the border. (Reuters)

AVIATION WARNING

EU reinstates Gulf flights warning

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) yesterday reinstated and toughened its warning to airlines operating in the Middle East, telling them to avoid the airspace of Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and over the Gulf of Oman as the US-Iran war flared up again. Just a week ago, EASA withdrew its previous advisory following a brief easing of regional tensions as a result of last month's interim ceasefire between Tehran and Washington. That warning had asked airlines to exercise caution when operating within the airspace of these countries, as well as Israel, Jordan, Oman, and Saudi Arabia. The new, more restrictive advisory is valid until July 29. Iran fired ballistic missiles at a US air base in Jordan yesterday, while US forces launched waves of attacks for the third successive night after Iran said Hormuz is closed. (Reuters)

Lebanon detains man with Hezbollah links for allegedly spying for Israel

Lebanese authorities have arrested a man close to Hezbollah, accusing him of spying for Israel and of providing intel that led to the killing of commanders in the Iran-backed group, a judicial official told AFP yesterday. The official, who is following the investigation and requested anonymity, said "a high-level Israeli agent was arrested last week in Beirut". He alleged that the suspect had been "involved in providing the Israeli side with precise information that led to the assassination of Hezbollah officials, including four top-tier security leaders". "He was very close to commanders in Hezbollah, and possessed a wide range of information due to his relationship with them," the official said. The man was detained last week in Beirut's airport as he prepared to board a flight to Iraq. The detainee hails from southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah holds sway, and has made several trips to Iraq, where his wife is from. From there, according to the same official, he used to go to Turkiye "to meet with officers and agents linked to the Israeli Mossad, and provide them with information about targets he was gathering data about in Beirut". The official did not specify the identity of the Hezbollah leaders targeted by Israel nor the date of their deaths. Scores of the group's senior commanders have been killed in Israeli strikes since Hezbollah fired at Israel in support of Palestinian group Hamas in the Gaza Strip in 2023, and again during the broader Middle East war last March. This includes former leader Hassan Nasrallah, killed by Israel in a major strike on Beirut's southern suburbs in September 2024. Lebanon and Israel have officially been at war for decades, and Lebanese security services have arrested dozens of people on suspicion of working for Israel, many of whom were recruited online following the country's economic collapse beginning in 2019. In October a judicial source told AFP that more than 30 people had been arrested on suspicion of providing Israel with precise information on Hezbollah facilities and the movements of its members during its previous war with Israel in 2023 and 2024. (AFP)

Israel allocates \$434mn for building new settlements in West Bank

Israel's security cabinet approved a budget of 1.3bn shekels (\$434mn) for establishing 34 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, right-wing Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said yesterday, adding to tensions over territory widely viewed as central to a potential Palestinian state.

UN bodies, Palestinians and most countries view the settlements as illegal under international conventions — a stance disputed by Israel — and a primary obstacle to peace.

Smotrich, who has long opposed Palestinian statehood, is head of the Religious Zionism party that draws much of its support from settlements and is running in the upcoming legislative election on October 27. The planned settlements would bring the total established under his four-year tenure to 103. Smotrich said another 1.075 bn shekels would be approved to pave roads to the new settle-



A Palestinian man carries an injured woman past Israeli security forces in the occupied West Bank. (AFP)

ments. Last month, government ministers referred the settlement funding plan to the security cabinet.

Smotrich called the cabinet's decision historic and a "day of celebration for Israel and settlements", thanking Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for his support. Opinion polls point to Netanyahu losing in the October election. "We are

strengthening the security of the State of Israel, killing the idea of establishing a hostile state in the heart of the country, and strengthening our hold on the homeland in Judea and Samaria," Smotrich said in a statement, using the biblical term for the West Bank.

There has been a rise in settler violence in recent months against Palestinians. (Reuters)

Israel says ready to move on pilot zones amid new Lebanon talks

Israel said it was ready to move forward with plans to withdraw troops from two areas of south Lebanon, as the two countries held a new round of talks in Rome yesterday.

US-brokered negotiations were taking place in the Italian capital over a framework agreement sealed last month after five rounds of talks in Washington, with Lebanese negotiators hoping for progress on an Israeli withdrawal.

The framework deal emerged after war broke out between Israel and Iran-backed group Hezbollah on March 2 against the backdrop of the wider Middle East war.

It calls for an end to the war in Lebanon, disarmament of the Lebanese movement, the deployment of Lebanese troops in the south and for Israeli forces to steadily withdraw from the country in two "pilot zones".

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar yesterday said that his country was "ready to move forward implementing these two pilot zones".

"I hope and tend to believe that this round of discussions in Rome will pro-

vide it." The Lebanese presidency had announced on Monday that its delegation to Rome had been instructed "to demand the immediate start of Israeli forces' withdrawal from the two pilot zones before any further discussion".

AFP journalists saw delegation vehicles entering the US embassy compound in the heart of Rome under tight security yesterday morning ahead of the talks, while the embassy declined to comment when asked.

According to a Lebanese diplomatic source familiar with the content of the talks, "the Lebanese army is ready to gradually take control of the localities from which the Israeli army would withdraw".

But Hezbollah rejects the agreement outright despite Lebanese government pressure, lowering expectations of success in the negotiations.

Orna Mizrahi of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) in Tel Aviv said Israel was "willing to withdraw gradually", but on the condition that "that there will be no presence of Hezbollah in

the areas that Israel is withdrawing from".

She added that Israel also seeks to ensure "that the Lebanese army will have the ability... to keep it as a neutralised zone and a neutralised place that Hezbollah cannot come in again".

A US military delegation began discussions with the Lebanese army in Beirut on Saturday on the process for Israeli withdrawal from one of these "pilot zones".

The framework agreement was concluded after a fragile ceasefire came into effect last month in the war between Hezbollah and Israel.

The Israeli army has nonetheless continued limited strikes in the south and has been carrying out demolitions in villages it occupies, according to official Lebanese media.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported a strike on the southern town of Nabatieh al-Fawqa yesterday.

Israel's strikes and ground invasion have killed more than 4,300 people since the war started in early March, according to Lebanese authorities.

"The chances of a breakthrough in



Trump hails new Iraq PM amid pressure over Iran

AFP
Washington

US President Donald Trump praised new Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi as a “champion” in a meeting at the White House yesterday, even as Washington presses Baghdad to curb Iranian influence.

Trump hinted at making major oil deals with Iraq as he hosted al-Zaidi, a businessman who came to power this year with US blessing after Trump vetoed another candidate.

“We have a fantastic champion, a new champion,” Trump said as he welcomed the Iraqi premier to the Oval Office. “He’s been a great fighter and a great fan of America.” Trump said he had even decided to hold an unscheduled lunch with al-Zaidi because of their “tremendous chemistry.”

The Iraqi’s visit comes against the backdrop of renewed military escalation between the US and Iran. Washington and Tehran are Iraq’s main allies but have long fought a proxy war over the country. Al-Zaidi has vowed to boost Iraq’s fragile economy and disarm pro-Iran armed groups that have targeted US facilities.

He said he would not accept any armed groups outside state control once US forces leave Iraq on September 30, when the US-led coalition’s mission ends.

“On September 30th, American forces will leave, and American companies will enter,” al-Zaidi said. “After 30 September, we will not allow any entity to bear arms outside the state.”

Al-Zaidi arrived in Washington on Monday for his first international visit since assuming office



President Donald Trump shakes hands with Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi in the Oval Office. (Reuters)

— a week-long trip during which he will also meet US officials and representatives of oil companies.

Trump hinted at likely oil deals with Iraq — a long-time obsession for a leader who earlier this year asserted control over Venezuela’s vast reserves after toppling its leader Nicolas Maduro.

“We’re going to be doing a lot of deals,” Trump said. “We’re going to create a lot of jobs for both countries, and we’re going to be taking out a lot of oil.”

Al-Zaidi will however have to continue Iraq’s delicate balance between Washington and Tehran.

A senior Iraqi politician told AFP on condition of anonymity that even if the current government adopts a more US-friendly path, prioritising the economy, “it doesn’t mean that Iraq is turning against Iran.”

Last week, Iraq’s holy cities

hosted a massive funeral procession for Iran’s late supreme leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed in a US-Israeli strike on Tehran as the war began in late February.

While some armed groups said they will co-operate with al-Zaidi, others remain firm in their refusal to disarm. Iraq’s pro-Iran armed groups have seen their political and financial clout increase over the years, and have long called for the withdrawal of American troops deployed as part of the coalition.

During the Middle East war, they have intervened in support of Tehran, targeting US facilities in Iraq more than 600 times.

Oil-rich Iraq has been trying to move past decades of war and unrest, but it still suffers from poor infrastructure, failing public services, mismanagement and endemic corruption.

Trump, a long-term opponent of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, said that Washington had “attacked the wrong country,” implying that it should have invaded Iran instead.

In recent months, Iraq has signed several deals with US companies in the oil and gas sector.

In the US, al-Zaidi is expected to sign more agreements, including one to establish a fund into which Iraq will deposit half-a-million barrels of oil per day in exchange for help to boost the country’s electricity supply.

Like other oil producers, Iraq, a founding member of Opec, was greatly affected by the Middle East war. It is hugely dependent on oil exports, which make up about 90% of its budget revenues, and the vast majority of its crude travels via the disputed Strait of Hormuz.



Sunlight falls on the US Capitol in Washington, DC. (Reuters)

Conservation groups sue to stop gutting of species habitat protections

Conservation groups sued US President Donald Trump’s administration yesterday, accusing it of gutting a core protection in the Endangered Species Act by excluding habitat destruction from the legal definition of “harm” to vulnerable plants and animals. The Interior Department finalised the changes to its regulations last week, overturning five decades of precedent in how the law is interpreted.

The Trump administration has argued that actions that directly injure or kill plants and animals will continue to be prohibited, but said the prior definition of “harm” was overly broad and interfered with private property rights.

In their complaint, filed in federal court in Washington state, groups including the Center for Biological Diversity and the Sierra Club argued the government had blatantly violated “common sense, biological science, and federal law.” “When a dam blocks stream passage, threatened and endangered salmon suffer; when forests with nesting trees for marbled

murrelets are logged, threatened murrelets slide closer to extinction,” the complaint said.

“Destruction and degradation of habitat kills threatened and endangered species just as surely as shooting them.” The groups argued the rule changes could immediately harm wildlife including Florida manatees, grizzly bears, salmon and steelhead fish, bird species like rufa red knots and golden-cheeked warblers, and insect pollinators.

“Claiming that the Endangered Species Act does not protect the habitat of endangered species is beyond stupid, even for the Trump administration,” said Miles Johnson, legal director for Columbia Riverkeeper. The landmark Endangered Species Act — passed in 1973 and credited with saving the bald eagle, the American alligator and other iconic species — prohibits “taking” endangered species.

The law defines “take” to mean “harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.” (AFP)



European Union flags outside the European Commission headquarters in Brussels. (Reuters/File Photo)

EU blasts threats against ICC as US targets court

AFP
Brussels

The European Union yesterday slammed threats against the International Criminal Court, after the US vowed a sweeping campaign against the tribunal.

“We are strongly committed to international criminal justice and the fight against impunity. Attacks or threats against the court-elected officials, personnel or those co-operating with the court, are simply not acceptable,” EU spokesman Anouar el-Anouni said.

Washington on Monday menaced the court with further sanctions and other measures, accusing it of posing “an intolerable threat to US sovereignty.”

The Trump administration said it would pressure other countries to withdraw from the court, marking a sharp escalation in the US effort to isolate the Hague-based institution and starve it of political and financial support.

The State Department said in a statement that the campaign will

“systematically disable the ICC’s ability to operate, target American servicemen or officials, or otherwise threaten American sovereignty.”

The US has previously targeted individual court officials it deemed a threat to US interests.

In February 2025, shortly after President Donald Trump returned to office, Washington slapped asset freezes and travel bans on several ICC officials over an arrest warrant issued for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the war in Gaza.

The US, like Israel, has not ratified the international treaty that established the ICC and it has rejected the court’s jurisdiction in cases involving the US or Israel.

Three ICC judges sanctioned by the Trump administration filed a lawsuit in June against the president and other senior US officials, arguing that the measures imposed on them were unlawful.

Established in 2002, the ICC prosecutes individuals accused of the gravest atrocities, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Power-cut crisis: Cuba’s electric grid collapses for a third time in July

Reuters
Havana

Cuba’s national power grid collapsed yesterday, the energy ministry said, marking the third major blackout in nine days on the island of about 10mn people.

“There has been a total disconnection of the electrical system,” the ministry said on social media. The frequent outages come as a US-imposed oil blockade has crippled the island’s already aging energy infrastructure. US President Donald Trump imposed an oil blockade on the Caribbean island after Washington deposed Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on January 3.

Venezuela was Cuba’s primary fuel supplier, and subsequent US pressure also led Mexico to halt oil shipments to the island.



The reflection of pedestrians walking past the Havana Capitol is seen in a puddle in Havana. (AFP)

In the capital Havana, traffic lights were out and the hum of generators echoed through the streets.

Many residents, accustomed to blackouts, expressed frustration at their ever-increasing frequency and duration.

“My mother is bedridden with dementia, and because

of these blackouts I’ve had to throw away meat and fish from the refrigerator because it all spoiled,” said Julia Valdes, 70.

“This is already the third collapse of the national electricity system this week. How much longer is this going to last? We can’t go on living like this anymore.”

ICC prosecutor drops charges against Darfur rebel leader

International Criminal Court prosecutors yesterday recommended judges drop charges against a rebel leader in Sudan’s Darfur region over a deadly 2007 attack on African Union peacekeepers. Abdallah Banda had faced three counts of war crimes for his alleged role in an assault on the Haskanita military base in north Darfur, which claimed the lives of 12 AU peacekeepers. However, prosecutors said that “due to the significant deterioration of evidence over time, and the exhaustion of available investigative avenues, there are no longer substantial grounds to believe that Mr Banda is responsible.” Banda initially appeared before the ICC in 2010 and told judges that others accused of similar crimes should come to the court, based in The Hague, to plead their innocence. A trial, initially scheduled for 2014, was scrapped — a warrant issued for Banda’s arrest. Over a decade after he “absconded from justice” the case weakened. (AFP)

Dangote’s mega oil project threatens fragile Kenyan ecosystem: Greenpeace

Climate rights group Greenpeace Africa called yesterday for a halt to a proposed mega oil refinery project by Africa’s richest man, Aliko Dangote, in Kenya’s coastal region, warning of environmental risks.

The oil refinery, with a planned capacity of 700,000 barrels per day, was confirmed earlier this month to be located at Kenya’s Lamu port, ending months of speculation that Tanzania could host the project.

“This project threatens to damage one of East Africa’s most fragile coastal ecosystems while locking Kenya into a risky fossil fuel future,” Sherellee Odayar, Greenpeace Africa Oil and Gas campaigner, said in a statement. The group said the oil refinery,

which is expected to take about 30 months to build, will lead to “habitat destruction, marine degradation, oil spill risk and dangerous air pollution”.

“Lamu’s mangroves, coral reefs and seagrass beds are not expendable. They support fisheries, livelihoods and coastal protection,” the NGO said.

Greenpeace Africa called for the \$17bn project to be suspended pending an independent environmental assessment before any approvals are granted.

“No approvals should move forward without a full, independent environmental and social impact assessment, genuine public participation and transparent scrutiny of the long-term economic, health and ecological risks,” Odayar said.

Kenyan President William Ruto has praised the project, arguing it will create jobs.

About 800,000 Kenyans join the labour market each year, according to the World Bank.

But Greenpeace said the project will only “create temporary jobs while undermining existing livelihoods in fishing, tourism and small-scale local economies”.

“This refinery also risks becoming a stranded asset as the world moves toward cleaner energy. “It would also lock Kenya into decades of carbon-intensive development, worsening climate change and its impacts,” it said.

There are still many questions around the project in Kenya, not least where it will source the oil to refine and how it will be financed. (AFP)

US Russia sanctions bill eases looming threat of tariffs on China and India

Reuters
Washington

Republican and Democratic US senators yesterday unveiled an updated version of Russia sanctions legislation championed by the late Senator Lindsey Graham, seeking to impose sanctions on Russian officials and to use tariffs to pressure China and India to reduce their dependence on Russian oil and gas.

Graham, who died suddenly on Saturday, had announced during a trip to Ukraine just a day earlier that he had reached an agreement with Republican President Donald Trump to move forward with the bill, more

than a year after it was introduced.

Senate aides said there were 26 co-sponsors for the bill, both Republicans and Democrats, and they expected more within several hours, expressing optimism about its chances of passage. “We’re pretty confident on its path,” one aide said.

The bill is changed from the original version introduced by Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, and Richard Blumenthal, a Connecticut Democrat, in April 2025.

The new version of the measure eases tariffs that could be placed on third-party buyers of Russian oil and natural gas to a maximum of 100% on the top

five purchasers, from the previous proposal’s blanket 500%.

It also allows an exception for countries which import less than 15% of Russia’s natural gas exports and which are taking significant steps to reduce those imports, which could exempt Japan, France, Hungary and Belgium. The top five purchasers of Russian crude are China, India, Slovakia, Hungary and Azerbaijan, and the top importers of Russian natural gas are China, France, Japan, Hungary and Belgium, the aides said.

The new version of the bill also includes a provision that allows Trump to waive the sanctions if he deems it in the US national interest to do so.

Trump drops Hormuz fee plan, pitches Gulf deals

Reuters
Cairo/Dubai/Washington

US President Donald Trump stepped back from a proposal to charge a 20% transit fee to guard the vital Strait of Hormuz waterway as part of the conflict with Iran, saying yesterday he would instead seek investment deals with Gulf states.

US forces had carried out waves of attacks for the third night in a row after Tehran said it had closed the strait, prompting Trump on Monday to reinstate a blockade of Iranian shipping and propose the fee.

But just a little under five hours before the fee had been due to come into effect at 2000 GMT, Trump said the strait was open to all shipping traffic except that of Iran. “Based on highly productive conversations with Middle East leadership, I have decided to replace the 20% US Reimbursement Fee with Trade and Investment Deals that the various Gulf States will be making into the US,” he said in a post on Truth Social.

On Monday, Trump told the “Hugh Hewitt Show” that Iran would be hit “very hard tonight, and we’re going to hit them hard tomorrow. And there’s not a damn thing they can do about it”. The governor’s office of Iran’s Qeshm Island, on the Strait of Hormuz, said it was hit by a US projectile at around 7 pm yesterday, Iranian state media reported. Meanwhile, a US projectile exploded near a water and electricity facility on Iran’s Kish Island, the country’s



Ships sailing near the Strait of Hormuz off the eastern coast of the United Arab Emirates at Khor Fakkan on July 13. (AFP)

semi-official Tasnim news agency said. State media also reported an explosion heard in Andimeshk in southern Khuzestan province.

Iran had earlier hit back by attacking a US Army base in Jordan with ballistic missiles while Bahrain, which hosts a US naval base, said it had fended off an Iranian aerial attack.

Jordan said it had shot down four ballistic missiles and explosions were heard in Manama, Bahrain’s capital. In the early evening, Kuwait said its armed forces were engaging with “hostile” aerial targets, and the state news agency said sirens had sounded in the country. The worsening attacks had increased doubts that a memorandum of understanding signed

last month would lead to a permanent halt in the war, which has disrupted global energy supplies and raised fears of a rise in inflation globally.

The move to impose US fees had drawn sharp criticism. The UN shipping agency said it opposed any fees for straits used in international navigation and that there was no legal basis for introducing mandatory tolls on strait transits. Germany’s Hapag-Lloyd, the world’s fifth-largest container shipping company, said it would be “fundamentally wrong”.

Trump said later yesterday that he did not like the concept of a fee for using the strait and said countries had called him to say they wanted to invest in the US instead

of being charged a fee.

It was not immediately clear what Gulf states had agreed to, if anything. Trump did not mention any commitments by them, saying only in his post: “Investments will be MASSIVE but, at the same time, extraordinarily good for them, and their future.”

Oil prices rose about 2% to a one-month high yesterday after the US reimposed the naval blockade on Iran and as the renewed attacks between Washington and Tehran heightened concerns over energy flows.

Before the war, about a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas traffic passed through the waterway daily. If the US were to have imposed a 20% fee, it could have generated around \$240mn a day.

Despite the attacks, regional analysts said the hostilities remained within controlled boundaries, for now, with both sides seeking leverage for an eventual peace deal, but that there was still a risk of fighting spinning out of control.

“I doubt the two sides will resume a full war, especially as Trump will suffer – though there is also a distinct possibility that the Iranians will overplay their hand. That is true of Trump too, of course,” said Yezid Sayigh, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Center.

The conflict has proved unpopular in the US, where gasoline prices have risen since the start of the war and congressional elections are looming in November. Half of those surveyed in a Reuters poll said they believed the war had not been worth its costs.

Trump’s address to nation to focus on ‘free and fair elections’

AFP
Washington

US President Donald Trump said he would discuss “free and fair” voting in an address to the nation on Thursday, apparently doubling down on his false claims to have won the 2020 election.

US media reported that his speech would address newly declassified intelligence reports that the White House claims reveal plans by foreign nations to interfere in the vote won six years ago by Joe Biden.

Asked whether his address would involve “election machines and integrity,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office on Tuesday: “It will concern that subject, and we’ll have a couple of other things to say also. But I’d rather save it.”

“It’s really, really big news. Our country has to shape up,” he added.

“What we’re going to be talking about Thursday is – it doesn’t get bigger because without free and fair elections, you don’t have a country. We’ll be discussing other things too, but it’s going to be a very big announcement.”

Republican Trump, in office for the second time after previously serving as US president from 2017 to 2021, has long pushed false allegations that he won the 2020 election.

In the year 2021, Pro-Trump supporters violently stormed the US Capitol on January 6 in a bid to stop the certification of

‘What we’re going to be talking about on Thursday is – it doesn’t get bigger because without free and fair elections, you don’t have a country,’ – President Donald Trump

Democrat Biden’s victory.

Obsessed with the defeat, Trump has in recent months stepped up unproven accusations of alleged attempts by Democrats to rig November’s crucial midterm elections.

The Democrats have fired back at Trump, saying he has been taking steps to seize control of the midterms via gerrymandering election districts, as well as the past week’s sacking of the final two Democrats on a federal agency that oversees and ensures fair polls.

Republicans fear they could lose their grip on the House of Representatives and possibly even the Senate, with Trump’s approval nearing record lows in opinion polls.

The president could face a third impeachment trial if Democrats do seize control of the House. He was impeached twice in his first term – once over Ukraine and a second for alleged incitement of the January 6 riots.

Trump’s primetime address to the nation comes amid mounting hostilities with Iran, as a fragile ceasefire appears to have collapsed.

Argentina dreams on!



A man points at a mural depicting late Argentine football legend Diego Maradona during the 1986 Mexico World Cup match against England, in Villa Fiorito, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, yesterday. (AFP)

Venezuela president names new foreign minister

Venezuela’s interim president Delcy Rodriguez named a new foreign minister on Monday, nearly three weeks after devastating earthquakes that left more than 4,500 people dead and thousands missing. Writing on Telegram, Rodriguez said she had made Venezuela’s head of mission in the US, Felix Plasencia, her country’s new top diplomat, replacing Yvan Gil, who has held the job since 2023.

Plasencia, a veteran diplomat who previously served as foreign minister between 2021 and 2022 and has also served as ambassador to the United Kingdom and China, will head a new ministry that merges foreign affairs and trade.

He was appointed to Washington in February as part of a major

reset in US-Venezuelan relations following the US capture of socialist president Nicolas Maduro, a US arch-foe, one month earlier.

Gil will become minister of science and technology. The cabinet reshuffle comes as Venezuela begins the slow process of rebuilding after catastrophic back-to-back June 24 earthquakes. The US has pledged nearly \$400 mn in aid for Venezuela and deployed two warships to the region to help the reconstruction effort.

On Monday, Venezuela’s parliament chief Jorge Rodriguez updated the death toll in the disaster to 4,561. A further 16,740 were injured. The updated counts did not give an estimate for the number of people still unaccounted for. (AFP)

Why does Brazil’s PIX payment system bother Donald Trump?

AFP
Brasilia

Whether buying a chilled coconut at the beach or paying rent, Brazil’s free PIX system has become the dominant way of making payments in Latin America’s largest economy, with just a smartphone.

US President Donald Trump does not like it one bit.

The payment system, launched in 2020 by the central bank, has become a bone of contention between Washington and the government of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who is seeking re-election in three months.

The US argues that PIX amounts to unfair competition and hurts US credit card companies.

“You don’t have to pay any fees for PIX; with banks, you have to pay credit card fees, annual fees, banking fees, fees for this and that,” Paulo Ricardo Conceicao told AFP at his drinks kiosk on Copacabana beach.

The perceived unfairness of the PIX system and other alleged discriminatory trade practices has led the US to threaten a 25% tariff on some Brazilian exports.

A decision on this measure is expected in the coming days.

According to the central bank, PIX accounts for 54% of all payment transactions in Bra-

zil, with millions of transfers per day – just six years after its launch.

Major financial institutions are obliged to offer the service to their clients, who simply open their banking app and send a payment in seconds using an identifier such as an identity number, key, or email address.

Payments can be even easier using a merchant’s QR code.

PIX “successfully reached millions of Brazilians who were previously excluded from the traditional banking system,” Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira said in a letter to the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR).

The system is used by 80% of Brazil’s 212 mn people.

“Before, we had to carry cash and a bunch of stuff in our wallets. Now, you just grab your phone and make a PIX transfer. I think it’s made life a lot easier for everyone,” Ingrid Ferreira, a 32-year-old civil servant, told AFP in Brasilia.

– What is the United States’ complaint? –

Washington alleges that the central bank, as owner and regulator of PIX, faces a conflict of interest and puts US companies at a disadvantage.

The Trump administration complains about BCB requirements that banks feature PIX on the home screens of their apps and refrain from charging user fees.

The USTR said it was “forcing US providers to promote their Brazilian competitor, without compensation.”

The Trump administration has rebuffed calls in the US for it to create a similar electronic payment system.

A Brazilian government source told AFP that Washington’s grievance stems from credit card companies, whose share of transactions in Brazil has dropped from 23% to 15% since 2020.

“A large part of the Brazilian population works in the informal service sector. They are small business owners who were largely at the mercy of those major credit card operators, paying fees,” Professor Marco Sanfins of the Fluminense Federal University told AFP.

Brasilia has rejected Washington’s accusations, saying that PIX has expanded the entire digital payments system, which increases online activity and benefits US companies like Google.

And the central bank highlights that the number of card users has increased in Brazil since 2020.

Brazil believes that Washington sees PIX and other such payment systems as a potential threat to the international dominance of the dollar.

Kenya, Nigeria, India and Colombia have all developed similar systems.

Venezuela oil output ‘not affected’ by earthquakes

Venezuela’s acting president Delcy Rodriguez said

Monday that the country’s oil production was “not affected” by the double earthquakes that killed more than 4,500 people last month. Rodriguez said that Venezuela, which has the world’s largest proven reserves of crude, was pumping 1.2mn barrels per day – up around 10% in a year – and that the government remained confident of strong growth this year.

Crude oil production, the country’s main source of revenue, is concentrated in Lake Maracaibo in the northwest and the Orinoco Belt in the east. The area worst-hit on June 24 by quakes – the northern coastal state of La Guaira and nearby capital of Caracas – are situated between the two regions. Venezuela’s oil production tanked over the last two decades, falling from over 3 mn barrels per day in the early 2000s to a low of 350,000 in 2020 on the back of years of corruption and mismanagement.

Under pressure from Washington, Rodriguez, a former oil minister who took over as leader in January after the US overthrow of socialist president Nicolas Maduro, pushed through a major reform of the sector to boost foreign investment.

The reforms roll back two decades of state control over the sector. (AFP)

Venezuela’s interim government announces plans for talks with opposition

AFP
Caracas

Venezuela’s interim government will launch formal talks with some opposition members next month, more than six months after the US toppling of longtime leader Nicolas Maduro, the country’s assembly speaker announced yesterday.

Just days before the devastating twin earthquakes in Venezuela last month which killed thousands, exiled opposition figure Dinorah Figuera traveled to Caracas to hold meetings with representatives of interim president Delcy Rodriguez’s government.

On her US-backed trip, Figuera met with assembly speaker Jorge Rodriguez, the brother of Delcy Rodriguez, sparking hopes that momentum finally was building towards a democratic transition.

The devastating June 24 earthquakes had, however, appeared to

deal a setback to the process, which received scant attention from the US in the wake of Maduro’s ouster.

Washington has made clear its immediate priority in Venezuela is stabilization, followed by recovery and, only then, transition.

In the aftermath of the earthquakes it said it was “100 percent” focused on the earthquake response and brushed aside claims by exiled opposition leader Maria Corina Machado that she was being prevented from returning to help stabilise the country.

Jorge Rodriguez, in a statement on social media yesterday, cited the earthquake devastation and a need for “strengthening democracy” as catalysts for the launching of a joint working group with former opposition parliamentarians.

“Only through unity can we move forward with reconstruction and the maintenance of peace,” he added.

The earthquakes killed over 4,500 people, left thousands more



A rescue worker wearing protective gear pauses atop the rubble of a collapsed building in Los Corales, La Guaira state, Venezuela. (AFP)

unaccounted for, destroyed scores of buildings and damaged hundreds more, according to official figures.

Among the buildings affected was the Legislative Palace, which suffered “significant damage,” according to the government,

prompting lawmakers yesterday to hold a session in another building.

Figuera leads a group representing the 2015-2020 legislature – which was controlled by the opposition and was recognised by Washington as Venezuela’s legitimate legislative body, over a rival parliament loyal to the authoritarian leftist Maduro.

In a statement on her X account, Figuera said she would work “to promote a bilateral technical and political roadmap...to consolidate the path toward the recovery of democracy in Venezuela.”

On X she shared a statement from a group of opposition figures saying that talks would prioritise “strengthening democratic institutions, the electoral system, and restoring guarantees for political participation.”

Machado, the undisputed opposition leader for many Venezuelans, had yet to comment on Figuera’s initiative.

After being barred from running

in 2024 elections, Machado backed opposition senator Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia against Maduro.

The opposition’s tally of results showed a hands-down win for Gonzalez Urrutia but Maduro nonetheless claimed victory, with the support of only a handful of countries, including Russia.

Both Gonzalez Urrutia and Machado later went into exile.

With Maduro now behind bars in New York, awaiting trial on drug trafficking charges, they are now calling for new elections.

But despite Machado attempting to curry favour by presenting President Donald Trump with her Nobel Peace Prize last year, Washington has shown little support for the prospect of her return.

Trump has, by contrast, lavished praise on Delcy Rodriguez, who interestingly was Maduro’s former deputy. Rodriguez has appeared eager to comply with his agenda and sought his administration’s support.

Families claim bodies as Bangkok fire toll rises

AFP
Bangkok

Grieving relatives of the victims of a huge Bangkok bar fire claimed their bodies yesterday as the death toll rose to 30, even as others held out hope that missing loved ones were alive.

Flames tore through the Rong Beer Na Lat Phrao bar and restaurant in the Thai capital late on Sunday evening during a live music performance, sending people fleeing, several with their clothing ablaze.

Twenty-seven people were declared dead in the early hours of Monday, with another succumbing to their injuries later that day.

By yesterday morning, Bangkok's Chatuchak district office put the death toll at 30, with 75 people injured – 24 in critical condition.

Relatives of the dead gathered at Police General Hospital yesterday to claim the bodies of their loved ones.

At the rear of the hospital, grey coffins with gilded bas-reliefs emerged before the cameras of dozens of journalists.

Some coffins were loaded into the back of ambulances to be transported to the home provinces of the deceased.

Inside one, a man held an incense stick over a coffin. In another, a grey-haired woman laid one hand atop the coffin while she dabbed her eyes with a tissue.



Members of the emergency response team inspect the ceiling of the building, at the site of a deadly fire, in Bangkok, yesterday. (Reuters)

Nuttakarn "Mint" Sevoy, 30, came for her childhood friend Top Sarobol who, like many killed on Sunday night, is believed to have died from smoke inhalation.

Nuttakarn told AFP the family consider themselves "fortunate that they were able to verify his identity accurately because his body wasn't burned to the point of being unidentifiable."

But the family, particularly his grandmother, was struggling with his loss.

"She kept saying that it should have been him to cremate her... (he) should be the one attending her funeral, not her coming to pick up her grandson's body like this," Nuttakarn said.

Jarunee Phosawad came from Roi Et in eastern Thailand to oversee the cremation of her cousin Kochaporn Sotharat's body and the return home of her ashes.

"She was a joyful person," the 46-year-old told AFP, adding: "I felt cold when I heard she was dead."

Kochaporn was a single mother of a daughter who also came to Bangkok to do a DNA test, Jarunee said.

"I do not know how she will live after this; she had only her mum." For others, there is still hope.

Booyaporn Sermsiri was at the hospital searching for her 25-year-old daughter, Jarawee "Cartoon" Sermsiri, who remains missing.

"Since we haven't found her yet, we can only wait. We are holding onto hope," she told AFP.

She said Cartoon's friend had called her early on Monday morning, saying there had been a fire and she couldn't reach her.

Booyaporn, 51, said she had given a DNA sample and was told by police the result could come back later Tuesday.

"I am praying. Praying that she is alright," she said.

Forensic police have been scouring the wreckage as authorities seek to establish how the fire started and why it was so deadly, looking at a possible electrical fault and also whether emergency exits were blocked.

Several witnesses have said they saw smoke inside before midnight and the lights went out, followed by an explosion and intense flames that sent patrons fleeing.

Building safety expert Wasawat Kitsiriteeraphak, a consultant who visited the site with forensic police, said the venue lacked some basic safety systems that could have saved lives.

India summons Iranian diplomat to protest after two vessels attacked

AFP
New Delhi

India summoned Iran's senior diplomat in New Delhi yesterday to protest against attacks on two commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz that killed an Indian seafarer and wounded several others.

The Indian foreign ministry said it had summoned the deputy chief of mission of the Iranian embassy in the capital to register "a strong protest" against the attacks reported early yesterday.

The two vessels had a total of 46 crew members, including 30 Indians, one of whom has "tragically lost his life", it said in a statement.

"India is deeply concerned by the attacks on two vessels, MT Al Bahiyah and MT Mombasa, during their transit through the Strait of Hormuz today," it said.

The Iranian embassy declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

India and Iran share a longstanding relationship rooted in centuries of cultural and trade links, with modern diplomatic ties balancing strategic interests despite geopolitical pressures.

Yesterday's attacks came after the United States launched a fresh salvo of strikes against Tehran, marking a new escalation in the resumption of hostilities in the Middle East war.

India is one of the largest contributors of sailors to merchant shipping worldwide, with more than 320,000 active seafarers in 2025, according to its shipping ministry.

The foreign ministry also called for an immediate cessation of violence and a return to dialogue and diplomacy "in keeping with international law".

Another commercial vessel with 11 Indians on board was attacked off the coast of Oman on Sunday. Ten Indians were rescued, but one remains missing.

The Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping route through which about a fifth of the world's oil passed before the war broke out on February 28, is a major point of contention between the United States and Iran.

US President Donald Trump vowed on Monday to charge all cargo shipped through the waterway to pay for keeping it open, and to reinstate a blockade on Iranian ships lifted last month.

Ukraine's prime minister steps down; Zelensky's critics see little point

Reuters
Kyiv

Ukraine's parliament accepted the resignation yesterday of Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko after just a year in office, despite complaints from lawmakers that President Volodymyr Zelensky had failed to explain the point of his reshuffle.

The motion to accept the 40-year-old teconomist's resignation passed in parliament, but with Zelensky yet to name a successor lawmakers said it was hard to see what he aimed to achieve.

"Every day this year demanded difficult decisions and decisive action. I am deeply grateful for the trust and support I received. You also know that I have always believed results matter most," Svyrydenko said in her farewell speech.

Addressing the parliament dressed in all-white, she said preparing for winter would be the main challenge for the new government, as Russia is expected to double down on attacking Ukraine's electric grid and gas system.

"No one can even explain exactly why" the government was being dismissed, complained opposition lawmaker Oleksiy Honcharenko. Another, Kira Rudik, said she had little hope the new government would operate much differently from the last one.

Svyrydenko's year in office coincided with a major corruption scandal involving senior figures. Although she was not implicated, critics accused her of failing to take sufficiently decisive action to clean house.

Yaroslav Zhelezniak, a lawmaker from the opposition Holos party, mocked the outgoing government's record: "We were promised results every day. The government has kept that promise: presentations every day, conferences every day, and every day we had a new suspect in a corruption case."



Ukraine's Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko presents a report on government's action in the Ukrainian parliament, in Kyiv, yesterday. (AFP)

Lawmakers identified Serhiy Korytskyi, the head of state oil and gas firm Naftogaz, as a likely successor. Parliament is expected to vote for the appointment tomorrow.

Zelensky met with Korytskyi and Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov after announcing the shakeup. Replacing Fedorov would be seen as a major change at a time when Kyiv has been trying to gain the upper hand in the more than four-year-old war, by emphasising long-range attacks on Russia.

The prime minister is mainly responsible for domestic policy, which has meant shepherding the wartime economy, repairing infrastructure damaged in Russian attacks and pushing for economic reforms sought by Kyiv's Western donors.

Svyrydenko's government faced a particularly brutal winter trying to keep Ukrainians warm with the energy system under relentless Russian attacks. It also navigated a challenging relationship with

the US administration and opened technical consultations to join the European Union.

Overhauling the cabinet is one of the few ways for Zelensky to demonstrate renewal while elections are prohibited during wartime.

But Lesia Bidochko, policy fellow at the European Policy Institute in Kyiv, said such reshuffles showed the limits of a system highly centralised around the president which was useful early in the war but is increasingly obsolete.

"The real test of the reshuffle is therefore not whether Zelensky appoints different ministers, but whether he is prepared to delegate sufficient authority for them to govern effectively," she said.

In past reshuffles, Zelensky moved some of the same people through different roles. Svyrydenko's predecessor Denys Shmyhal, for example, stepped down as prime minister a year ago only to become defence minister and then energy minister.

"That may ensure political reliability, but it at the same time raises questions about institutional renewal and broadening the managerial base," Bidochko said.

Family seeks release of US seismologist held in China

AFP
Washington

An American seismologist has been detained in China on espionage charges since 2024, his family revealed yesterday, saying US President Donald Trump's direct appeal for his release to Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping had gone unanswered.

Youlin Chen – who has researched how to detect underground nuclear tests using seismological data – was detained on November 5, 2024, according to a statement from the NGO Global Reach, which is working with his family to secure his freedom.

Chen was formally declared "wrongfully detained" by the US government in March, but his family chose not to announce the designation in hopes it would help State Department efforts to have him released, the statement said.

Global Reach said that Trump urged Xi to free Chen during the US leader's state visit to China in May, and that the Chinese president reportedly agreed to work on the issue.

"We are now at the midpoint between the May commitment made by President Xi and his upcoming September visit to Washington, DC and the Chinese have made no apparent movement on releasing Dr Chen," said Eric Lebson, Global Reach chief strategy officer.

Chen's wife, Yufang Rong, said she had not been able to speak to her husband for over 600 days and

was "concerned for his health and well-being."

"Youlin has never held a US government security clearance and to suggest he was involved in espionage is both wrong and inconsistent with the public and collaborative nature of the work that he has done," she said. Chen has diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, according to a profile by the James Foley Foundation, which also advocates for wrongfully detained Americans abroad.

Global Reach said that Chen's arrest may be linked to the US government's accusation that China conducted underground nuclear tests in violation of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

"Chen's area of expertise – seismic monitoring and detection of underground nuclear tests – would give the Chinese government an opportunity to learn as much as possible about US seismic detection methodologies so they can establish countermeasures that allow them to circumvent" the treaty, Global Reach said.

The US military and State Department has funded some of Chen's research, Global Reach said, and he has authored studies on using data from across Asia, including in China, "to improve methods for nuclear-test monitoring and yield estimation."

China denies it has conducted explosive nuclear tests, saying the US is seeking a pretext to resume its own testing.

Asked for comment by AFP on Chen's case and his designation as wrongfully detained, the State Department and the Chinese Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond.

More than 260,000 evacuated as Typhoon Bavi brings severe floods

The most powerful storm to strike mainland China this year forced more than 260,000 people to evacuate their homes in northeastern Liaoning province, as Typhoon Bavi brought intense flooding. Heavy rain is expected to persist through yesterday, with extreme downpours in some areas, authorities said as Bavi draws vast amounts of tropical moisture northward, creating a sustained flow of humid air into northern China. In Shenyang, Liaoning's provincial capital, a lighthouse severed its high-voltage power line and began drifting through floodwaters along main roads and crossing under a

bridge, according to videos posted on Chinese social media.

All schools and training institutions have been ordered to suspend classes, while transport services have been largely disrupted in northeastern cities including in Shenyang and Jilin.

Bavi, covering an area the size of France, formed in the Pacific Ocean 13 days ago. Its structure remained largely intact on Monday even after making landfall in eastern China on Saturday night, making it the longest-lasting tropical cyclone in the Asia-Pacific region this year. (Reuters)

France flaunts firepower, unity with allies in huge parade

AFP
Paris

France yesterday showcased military power and unity with European allies in its largest-ever national day parade, as European rearmament gathers pace in the face of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

The final July 14 parade presided over by President Emmanuel Macron, the event brought together thousands of French troops, hundreds of European ones and two dozen foreign heads of state and government, including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

The parade, which marks the storming of the Bastille fortress in the French revolution and is by far the largest such event in any western European nation, was held a day after Macron hosted a new summit of Ukraine's allies, four-and-a-half years into the full-scale Russian invasion.

Other European leaders attending the parade included German Chan-



France's Armed Forces drive their motorised vehicles during the annual Bastille Day military parade on the Champs-Élysées Avenue in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

cellor Friedrich Merz and, on one of his last foreign engagements, British Premier Keir Starmer, who has spearheaded with Macron European efforts to support Ukraine.

With nearly 6,700 troops, 98 aircraft, 31 helicopters and 315 vehicles, a record number of military personnel were marching the traditional route between the Arc de



France's Air Force Elite aerobatic flying team "Patrouille de France" releases trails of France's national colours as they perform a flyover over the Champs-Élysées Avenue with the Arc de Triomphe in the background in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

Triomphe and the Place de la Concorde in Paris.

"What is marching past is a Europe united and determined to support Ukraine in the face of Rus-

sia – a Europe confident in itself," deputy defence minister Alice Rufo told RTL radio.

Tens of thousands of members of the public braved a scorching

heatwave to attend the celebrations, having obtained special QR codes to allow them to cross the security perimeter.

Around 500 soldiers from the so-called Coalition of the Willing of mainly European nations supporting Ukraine against Russia were marching. Symbolically, 25 Ukrainian soldiers followed the troops of coalition members.

Macron, who has pressed for a strategically autonomous Europe less dependent on the US, on Monday said Europe would fight for freedom, even if it required its own troops shedding blood.

"Yes, we cherish freedom and the rule of law. And yes, we stand ready to fight to defend them. Always, and at the cost of blood if necessary."

With threats growing to European security and US President Donald Trump regarded as an unpredictable ally, Chief of the Defence Staff General Fabien Mandon described the parade on X as "a physical embodiment of the strategic solidarity between our countries".



Burnham in sight of Downing Street, wins top UK union support

AFP
London

Andy Burnham was yesterday striding towards becoming the UK's next prime minister, winning the backing of the country's largest union and adding to an already unassailable lead in Labour's leadership contest.

The former Manchester mayor, so far the only candidate to be the party's new leader, had notched up 349 nominations from fellow MPs late Monday – meaning it is mathematically impossible for any challenger to defeat him.

The 56-year-old is bidding to replace Keir Starmer, who announced his resignation last month, bowing to months of internal pressure to step down after a series of scandals, missteps and policy U-turns in his two-year tenure.

Britain's biggest trade union, Unison, which has more than 1.3mn members, said yesterday it was throwing its weight behind Burnham.

"He has a tough task ahead but he is a strong, powerful voice who commands respect," said Unison chairwoman Linda Hobson.

Under party rules, Burnham, once dubbed the "King of the North" for his staunch backing of Manchester, must also win the support of two more Labour-affiliated organisations.

Centre-left Labour has 403 MPs in the House of Commons,

giving it a commanding majority in the 650-seat lower house of parliament. Its new leader will therefore become the next prime minister.

The nominations from MPs will close today evening, and be followed by a 24-hour vote from other groups affiliated to the party, including other unions, ending at 6:00pm (1700 GMT) tomorrow.

A special leadership conference is to be held on Friday to crown Labour's new leader, but details have been kept under wraps.

Burnham would then replace Starmer, earning the keys to 10 Downing Street on Monday, shortly after meeting King Charles III to be asked to form the next government.

He is set to become Britain's seventh prime minister in a decade.

Burnham has said he is "deeply grateful" for the across-the-party support from Labour MPs "who have put their trust in me".

"That is the circuit breaker I am offering: power out of Westminster, an economy rewired for ordinary people, and good growth in every postcode."

Bank of England boss Andrew Bailey said Tuesday that if he had one piece of advice for the next prime minister it would be that "the big issue is growth in the economy".

"We've had low growth in the economy now for the best part of 16 to 17 years," he told parlia-

ment's Treasury committee.

"We will not get growth if we don't have financial stability," he said, pointing to the upheavals caused by the US-Iran war.

Burnham told Labour MPs late Monday in an online party hustings that his priorities included devolving power to communities and improving growth across the country, UK media said.

Yesterday, he appeared in parliament with Starmer to hail the passage of a new law championed by the families of victims of the 1989 Hillsborough football stadium disaster.

It aims to prevent cover-ups by requiring public officials, such as the police and intelligence services, to be transparent during investigations and inquiries into state failures.

A total of 97 people died in the disaster after a crowd surge at one end of Sheffield Wednesday's ground hosting Liverpool supporters for an FA Cup semi-final tie.

Football fan and Everton supporter Burnham, who was born in Aintree near Liverpool, as sports minister in 2009 pushed for a fresh inquiry into the deaths.

Yesterday, he praised Starmer, sitting just a few seats in front of him, for steering the Hillsborough Bill through parliament, saying: "This truly is his legacy."

Burnham said he hoped the bill would end "the cover-up culture" and "plant the values of the city of my birth at the heart of this country".

Starmer given France's top honour by Macron

Reuters
London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has been awarded the Legion of Honour, France's highest national honour, by President Emmanuel Macron in Paris in recognition of his work on European security in the wake of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

Starmer, who is due to step down on July 20 having lost the confidence of his Labour Party, has worked closely with Macron during the war in Ukraine, including establishing the Coalition of the Willing group of countries supporting Ukraine.

The British leader was presented with the honour on Monday after attending his final meeting of that coalition.

Yesterday he attended Bastille Day celebrations, which saw British armed forces joining their French counterparts in the parade for the first time in more than 20 years. "Prime minister, dear Keir, I wanted to reiterate my gratitude and the gratitude of the French people, obviously for your years as a prime minister," Macron said, according to a



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer arrives for the annual Bastille Day military parade on the Champs-Élysées Avenue in Paris yesterday. (AFP)

statement released by Starmer's office. "But I have to say, beyond that, for your personal leadership and your commitments for obviously your country, but the security of our Europe, Ukraine, the bilateral relationship, your decency."

Britain to test readiness for hybrid attack in biggest defence drill in decades

Reuters
London

Britain said yesterday it would carry out its biggest home defence exercise in decades next year, seeking to test its ability to counter hybrid threats such as cyberattacks, disinformation and sabotage of critical infrastructure.

Britain and European allies have rapidly accelerated defence preparations since Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, with Nato warning that Moscow could be ready to attack Europe by

2030. Britain has said Russia has stepped up hybrid threats – from physical and cyberattacks to information warfare.

While the drill scenario would be kept secret, the government said it would test Britain's readiness for hybrid attacks and complement a Nato crisis-management exercise designed to test how allies co-ordinate political and military responses to major security crises.

Britain also updated its official list of the biggest threats it faces, adding attempts to interfere with democracy, such as election interference, disinformation campaigns

or foreign influence operations.

Overall, seven new risks were added, including cyberattacks on data infrastructure, water infrastructure and police systems, and a "digital resilience failure" risk based on lessons from the CrowdStrike outage in 2024, which crashed more than 8mn Microsoft Windows-based computers worldwide.

The government said it would also launch a national public awareness campaign later this year to encourage households to prepare for emergencies such as severe weather, flooding and cyberattacks.

Ukraine's brigade commander detained on murder charges

AFP
Rokytné

The commander of Ukraine's French-trained "Anne of Kyiv" brigade was remanded in custody yesterday, facing murder charges in an episode that has triggered a widespread outcry.

It is the latest scandal to hit the unit, which was supposed to be a flagship fighting force and symbol of French support for Ukraine, but has been beset by mass desertions, low morale and equipment shortages since it was formed in 2024.

Ukrainian police say the unit's commander, Stanislav Luchanov, is implicated in the kidnapping and murder of two brothers who disappeared from the Kyiv region in June after an altercation over noise complaints.

Yesterday, he told reporters that he denies the allegations.

A court in Rokytné, south of



Stanislav Luchanov attends a court hearing to determine a preventive measure in the Rokytné village, Kyiv Region, yesterday. (AFP)

Kyiv, ordered Luchanov be held in pre-trial detention for at least 60 days, an AFP journalist reported from the hearing.

Ten people have been arrested in the case, including other members of the unit, President Volodymyr Zelensky said.

Police say the brothers insulted

a woman during an altercation over loud noise, with the woman's husband then enlisting other soldiers to "take revenge" on the pair.

Some Ukrainian media reported the woman was Luchanov's wife, while the police said only that her husband was a serving

member of the military.

Luchanov was suspended when he left the unit without authorisation after the alleged murder.

The 155th Brigade is known as "Anne of Kyiv", named after a Medieval Kyiv princess who married into the French royal family.

Its creation was announced by French President Emmanuel Macron alongside Zelensky on the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in 2024.

Hundreds of its soldiers were partially trained in France.

But it has been rocked by several scandals, including hundreds of reports of desertion.

Amid a public outcry, Interior Minister Igor Klymenko acknowledged the case has "sparked a broader discussion about the behaviour of certain service members in the rear."

"It is unacceptable to resolve conflicts using gang-style methods," he said on social media.

Norway's crown princess discharged from hospital after lung transplant

AFP
Oslo

Norway's Crown Princess Mette-Marit has been discharged from hospital as she recovers from a lung transplant in June, the royal palace said yesterday.

"The Crown Princess's health is good under the circumstances," Are Holm, head of the Pulmonary Department at Oslo's Rikshospitalet, said in a statement.

Mette-Marit, 52, was diagnosed in 2018 with pulmonary fibrosis which causes scarring of the lungs and shortness of breath. The Norwegian palace announced on June 17 that she had undergone a successful lung transplant.

"I really appreciate the care and concern I've received during my illness from so many people all over Norway. It has given me strength when I've needed it the most," the crown princess was quoted saying in the statement.

She also thanked organ donors and the healthcare staff. Holm said that over the next six months the crown princess would "undergo rehabilitation and receive close follow-ups with regard to possible complications such as rejection and infections".

"In a good course of recovery, it often takes about a year before the condition progresses into a more stable phase," the physician said.

Crown Prince Haakon, expressed his "immense relief at seeing the Crown Princess return home from the hospital".

On July 6, the palace posted the first images of Mette-Marit after the procedure, showing her watching Norway defeat Brazil at the football World Cup.

The royal couple watched the match from the palace, but the royal household specified that Mette-Marit had not yet been discharged from hospital.

A single mother when she married Haakon in 2001, Mette-Marit's health woes have coincided with the trial of her 29-year-old son from a previous relationship, Marius Borg Hoiby, which has damaged the monarchy's standing in the public eye.

In June, an Oslo court sentenced Hoiby to four years in prison for two counts of abuse and 32 other offences. His lawyers have appealed the verdict, according to local media.

EU slams minister's wish to 'ethnically cleanse' Kosovo

AFP
Belgrade

The European Union yesterday condemned comments from a Serbian government minister who said she would "ethnically cleanse" Kosovo if she had been in power during the 1990s conflict.

Speaking to Serbian television station Kurir over the weekend,

Public Administration Minister Snježana Paunovic said she would strip Kosovo of Albanians if she had been in the place of strongman Slobodan Milosevic during the 1998-1999 war.

"Not by liquidating them in the way they have sought to ethnically cleanse Kosovo to this day, but by ensuring that anyone who feels less like a citizen... leaves and goes to their homeland," the minister, who

was born in Kosovo, said.

Responding to a journalist's question about the comment, EU spokeswoman Anitta Hipper said, "there is no place in Europe for rhetoric justifying and advocating ethnic cleansing".

"Such statements run counter to the values of human dignity, reconciliation, accountability," Hipper told a press briefing in Brussels.

The minister's comment triggered

calls from opposition parties for her resignation, but she remained unrepentant yesterday.

"I do not renounce SPS policy," Paunovic said, referring to her Serbian Socialist Party which was founded by Milosevic.

"We are a party that led Serbia in indescribably difficult historical circumstances, a party that made great sacrifices," she said in a statement quoted by local news outlet Danas.

New era for Gibraltar as border controls with Spain set to end

AFP
Madrid

Thousands of workers crossing daily between Spain and Gibraltar will enter a new era of easier travel today, as border checks that have long been a source of tension are lifted.

Home to only around 40,000 people, the tiny self-governing British territory at the southern tip of the Iberian Peninsula relies on about 15,500 daily cross-border workers from Spain, who make up nearly half of its workforce.

During rush hours, long lines can form at the land border and documents are checked – especially during periods of tension between Britain and Spain, which claims sovereignty over Gibraltar.

But under an agreement reached between Brussels and London following Britain's exit from the Eu-

ropean Union, border controls between Gibraltar and Spain will be eliminated from Wednesday.

The deal was signed yesterday in Brussels.

EU trade chief Maros Sefcovic took part in the signing ceremony alongside British and Spanish ministers as well as Gibraltar Chief Minister Fabian Picardo.

In a radio interview ahead of the signing, Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said the agreement "opens a new era" for Gibraltar and the adjoining region of Spain, that will create "enormous opportunities".

A smoother border will make it easier for Gibraltar businesses to recruit and retain workers who live in Spain, as the "hassle" of crossing the frontier can be "significant", said Owen Smith, head of the Gibraltar Federation of Small Businesses.

"It's been a big factor in retention, and certainly a fluid border is going



Vehicles queue at La Linea de la Concepcion at the border between Spain and Gibraltar. (AFP/File Photo)

to make life much easier," he told AFP, calling it "very, very positive".

The agreement will align Gibraltar with the rules of Europe's passport-free Schengen travel area.

It was reached after years of talks

between Spain, Britain and the EU.

Travellers arriving from outside the Schengen zone will still have to show their passports to officials at Gibraltar's airport and port.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro

Sanchez is set to visit the frontier zone today, where workers have in recent weeks taken down the old chain-link fencing between Gibraltar and Spain.

He has hailed the new arrangements as bringing down "the last wall" inside the EU, saying they would create a zone of shared prosperity.

Picardo has described the agreement as removing "the physical barriers of a bygone era of friction" while keeping "the keys to our own front door".

The border was closed by Spanish dictator Francisco Franco in 1969 after Gibraltar, which relies on London for defence and foreign policy, voted overwhelmingly in a referendum to remain British.

The closure, which lasted 13 years, cut off the daily movement of workers from Spain into Gibraltar and separated families.

Since then, long queues have repeatedly formed at the Gibraltar-

Spain border when diplomatic tensions over the territory's sovereignty have led to tighter controls by Spain.

"It is important that this sword of Damocles disappears," said Manuel Triano Paulete, secretary general of the CCOO trade union in Spain's Campo de Gibraltar region which surrounds the British territory, saying cross-border workers often did not know how long it would take them to get to work.

With an economy based on financial services and online gaming, Gibraltar – which covers just under seven square kilometres (2.7 square miles) – has one of the highest per capita incomes in the world.

It has long been a lifeline for people who live in Campo de Gibraltar, which has historically had one of Spain's highest jobless rates.

London and Madrid have disputed control of Gibraltar since the tiny territory was ceded to Britain in the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht.

UK approval for China’s mega embassy challenged in court

Reuters
London

Britain’s approval for China to build a vast embassy in London was challenged in court yesterday, as a group of local residents argue that officials failed to consider the impact on protests and potential targeting of dissidents.

China’s plans to build an embassy on the site of the two-century-old Royal Mint Court near the Tower of London were approved in January, shortly before Prime Minister Keir Starmer visited China, the first visit by a British leader since 2018.

The decision was taken with a view to improving ties with Beijing despite British and US politicians warning that it could be used as a base for spying. Britain’s intelligence agencies said any threat could be mitigated.

Local residents argue that officials failed to take into account the risk that the new embassy could curtail protests or be used



Police officers stand outside the Royal Mint Court, the proposed site of a new Chinese mega embassy, in London. (Reuters/File Photo)

to monitor and intimidate Chinese dissidents.

The Chinese embassy in London, which has previously vehemently denied allegations of espionage activities, did not immediately comment.

The case at London’s High Court is being brought by the

Royal Mint Court Residents’ Association (RMCRA), representing a group of families and businesses who live in and operate from leasehold properties built at Royal Mint Court.

The RMCRA’s lawyers said in court filings that ministers should have taken steps to “prevent the

property becoming a major base for ‘transnational repression’”.

They also argue that conditions imposed on the new embassy cannot be enforced as diplomatic premises are protected, citing a 2022 incident when a protester was beaten and dragged inside the grounds of the Chinese consulate in Manchester and an earlier breach of planning law at the consulate in Belfast.

But lawyers representing Britain’s housing minister Steve Reed said the RMCRA was simply trying to re-run arguments which were properly considered when approving the embassy.

The case comes amid concerns about alleged Chinese espionage, after two dual Chinese-British nationals were convicted in May of spying on Hong Kong dissidents and jailed last month.

The Chinese embassy in London has vehemently denied the allegations, previously describing the convictions as “a political move of abusing the law” and warnings of an espionage threat as “malicious slander”.

China expels ex-Xinjiang official from Communist Party over corruption

AFP
Beijing

China expelled a former top Xinjiang official from the ruling Communist Party and removed him from all his posts over corruption allegations, including nepotism, bribery, state media said yesterday.

Ma Xingrui, 66, was a member of the Communist Party’s Politburo, a top decision-making body headed by President Xi Jinping that effectively runs the country.

The Politburo approved a report by the party’s anti-corruption watchdog that set out a long list of allegations against Ma, who has been under investigation since April, state news agency Xinhua said.

The investigation found that Ma had “helped family members purchase homes at below-market prices, engaged in power-for-vice and money-for-vice transactions, and allowed family members to exploit the influ-

ence of his position to seek huge benefits”, Xinhua reported.

He also “sought benefits for others in business operations, project contracting and job promotion, and illegally accepted huge amounts of money and valuables”, it said, adding that his case was “particularly serious”.

Ma was in charge of Xinjiang between 2021 and 2025.

The northeastern region faced a series of deadly attacks on civilians until the mid-2010s that Beijing blamed on armed separatist and fighter groups.

Over the last decade, the region has been subject to a strict crackdown by Chinese authorities in the name of counter-terrorism, targeting primarily the Uyghur Muslim minority accused of involvement in the attacks.

Human rights organisations have condemned the crackdown.

An explosive 2022 report by former UN high commissioner for human rights Michelle Bachelet cited possible “crimes against humanity” in Xinjiang.

Asean envoy meets Myanmar opposition groups in Thailand

Reuters
Bangkok

Asean’s special envoy on Myanmar held talks with ethnic minority rebel groups and a government-backed negotiation committee in an effort to tackle a civil war, with both sides expressing openness to dialogue, the Philippines said yesterday. The talks took place in Thailand on Monday and followed a separate meeting a day earlier between foreign ministers of the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations and their Myanmar counterpart, their first face-to-face talks since a 2021 military coup in Myanmar that triggered nationwide conflict.

Myanmar’s army-backed lead-

ership has been barred from top-level Asean meetings over their failure to comply with Asean’s five-year-old “Five-Point Consensus” peace initiative, but some members of the bloc hope Sunday’s meeting can lead to progress. But some analysts have said that re-engaging with Myanmar’s new nominally civilian government, led by former junta chief turned president, Min Aung Hlaing, could weaken Asean’s leverage.

Asean special envoy Maria Theresa Lazaro, the foreign minister of the Philippines, met “to discuss the way forward on an inclusive national political dialogue” with representatives of some of Myanmar rebel groups and the military-formed National Solidarity and Peacemaking Negotiation

Committee, according to a Philippine foreign ministry statement.

“All sides expressed openness to the dialogue process and emphasised the importance of constructive dialogue,” it said.

Several ethnic armed groups contacted by Reuters declined to comment.

The National Unity Government, a parallel administration in exile formed by remnants of the party of Aung San Suu Kyi, whose elected government was toppled in the coup, said it was not invited and expressed concern over the talks.

“We have major questions about whether this meeting is intended to implement the Asean Five-Point Consensus, or if it is based on the military junta’s 100-day project

and their own peace plan,” the NUG’s foreign minister Zin Mar Aung told Reuters. After it took office in April, Myanmar’s military-backed government announced it was seeking peace talks with opposition armed groups within 100 days.

The 2021 coup led to nationwide protests against military rule that morphed into a civil war fought on multiple fronts between the armed forces and various rebel and militia groups. An estimated 100,000 people have been killed 3.6mn displaced. Min Aung Hlaing was elected president in April by a parliament dominated by a pro-military party following a one-sided election earlier in the year that human rights groups and Western governments called a sham.

Japan tightens social media rules for elections

AFP
Tokyo

AI-generated images and videos will have to be marked as such under new rules on the use of social media during elections in Japan, the internal affairs minister said yesterday.

The new rules, approved by parliament on Monday and which will take effect in March, also forbid Internet users and platforms from spreading fake or distorted information about candidates.

“We believe that this is extremely important from the perspective of ensuring the fairness of elections,” Yoshimasa Hayashi, whose ministry oversees

elections and telecommunications, told a press conference.

The new rules follow allegations about the use of AI-generated content to smear candidates in a 2025 leadership contest in the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and in parliamentary elections in February.

Unlike under laws on social networks passed by the European Union, Japanese authorities will not be able to impose penalties for non-compliance, prompting local media to question their effectiveness.

The *Nikkei* business daily said that this may be because Tokyo wants to avoid the friction seen between Washington and Brussels over fines imposed under the bloc’s Digital Services Act.

UK right-wing politician’s murder ‘targeted attack’, says police

AFP
London

UK police yesterday said the murder of veteran right-wing politician Ann Widdecombe was a “targeted attack”, as a 28-year-old man remained under arrest on suspicion of “terrorism” and murder.

“It is clear that this was a targeted attack,” head of Counter Terrorism Policing Laurence Taylor told reporters about the killing of the 78-year-old in her home last week, adding that officers were pursuing “multiple lines of inquiry”.

Widdecombe, a spokesperson for the hard-right Reform UK party and a former Conservative minister, was found dead in her home in Devon, southwest England on Thursday.

Counter-terrorism police took over the investigation on Monday as a 28-year-old white British man was detained on suspicion of “commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism” as well as suspicion of murder.

The man was first arrested on the weekend in Yorkshire in

northern England, about 300 miles (480km) from Widdecombe’s home on suspicion of murder, before being re-arrested as a terrorism suspect.

“It is clear that this was a targeted attack”

“We are still working to understand the extent of any planning or preparation and the motivation that sits behind that attack,” Taylor told reporters outside Scotland Yard.

He also said it was a “line of inquiry” whether the suspect was targeting other politicians who are part of Reform, the anti-immigration party led by pro-Brexit figurehead Nigel Farage.

Taylor urged the public to “think before sharing any unverified information” as the killing has garnered huge public interest.

Widdecombe, a Conservative MP from 1987 to 2010, was known for her staunch Christian faith and outspoken views, becoming a household name after appearing on reality shows in the 2010s.

Widdecombe is the third UK politician murdered in an alleg-

edly targeted attack this decade. Labour Party MP Jo Cox was murdered in 2016 by a neo-Nazi sympathiser, while Conservative lawmaker David Amess was killed in 2021 by an Islamic State group follower.

Labour politician Andy Burnham, who is likely to replace Keir Starmer as prime minister next week, called for a “serious review” of security for MPs.

“Politics has darkened in the last decade, there’s no getting away from that,” said Burnham yesterday.

Addressing parliament on Monday, interior minister Shabana Mahmood said the killing was a “dark day in our political life” and “raises questions about the security of those in public life” as well as that of former MPs.

Mahmood told MPs that the suspect was not known to Prevent, the UK’s programme for people at risk of being radicalised as extremists.

Mahmood also said she recognised “the particular concern that the Reform Party will feel today”, and offered Farage a meeting with the body that manages security for public figures.

Russia launches American, 2 cosmonauts to space station with rare Nasa chief visit

Reuters
Washington

Russia launched two cosmonauts and an American astronaut to the International Space Station yesterday from Kazakhstan, resuming crewed flights from a recently repaired launchpad with a rare joint attendance by the heads of Nasa and Russia’s space agency.

US astronaut Anil Menon and cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina lifted off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome aboard Russia’s Soyuz MS-29 spacecraft at 10:47am EDT (1447 GMT), bound for the ISS, where they will spend about eight months as the station’s 75th rotation crew.

The crew and their Soyuz spacecraft were placed into orbit some 10 minutes later, beginning a roughly three-hour orbital trek to the football field-sized space laboratory ahead of docking at 1:56pm EDT. Nasa Administrator Jared Isaacman travelled to Baikonur for meetings with Roscosmos director Dmitry Bakanov and to watch the launch, the first visit to Rus-



The International Space Station Expedition 75 crew of Nasa astronaut Anil Menon (Centre) and Roscosmos cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina – wave farewell as they board the Soyuz MS-29 spacecraft from the Russian-leased Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, yesterday. (AFP)

sia’s launch pad by a Nasa chief since 2018.

Tensions over the Russia-Ukraine war had largely prevented Bill Nelson, former President Joe Biden’s Nasa chief, from such talks.

The Expedition 75 mission was

the first spaceflight for Menon, 49. Isaacman, a billionaire private astronaut, flew on a SpaceX capsule in 2024 with Menon’s wife, SpaceX engineer Anna Menon, and two others in the Polaris Dawn mission, a private spacewalking voyage funded by Isaacman.

Indian activist urged to give up hunger strike over exam leaks

Reuters
New Delhi

A prominent Indian social activist demanding the education minister’s resignation over exam paper leaks entered the 17th day of a hunger strike yesterday as his condition worsened, prompting opposition leaders to urge him to call off the fast. Sonam Wangchuk has been fasting in central Delhi in solidarity with the founder of India’s youth Cockroach Janta Party, who is staging a sit-in demanding Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan step down over the leaks in May that affected millions of students, a rare show of defiance against Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s rule.

The CJP, founded by 30-year-

old Abhijeet Dipke, has caught the imagination of young Indians on Instagram, gaining 22mn followers within a few days of being set up in May. Wangchuk, 59, lying on a white mattress on a stage in front of a handful of people, gestured to Reuters that he was too weak to talk. He said earlier his fast could last six weeks unless he died first.

In a picture posted to X where Wangchuk can be seen surrounded by medics, CJP said he had lost 8.5kg of weight as of yesterday and his “health continues to deteriorate”.

“We have been trying to convince Sonam sir to withdraw his hunger strike but he is adamant to continue it,” Dipke said between talking to onlookers and YouTubers. “Sonam sir is asking us to



Sonam Wangchuk, an Indian education reformer who has been on hunger strike, rests on stage during a sit-in protest called by CJP demanding the resignation of Indian Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, yesterday. (Reuters)

keep preparing for the march to parliament on 20th July. I feel the government wants Sonam sir and other people on hunger strike to die.” A young person who was also on a hunger strike at the protest site, the Jantar Mantar observatory near parliament, fainted on Monday and was taken to hospital.

Pradhan, his ministry and the government’s chief spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Several senior opposition leaders also called on Wangchuk, an engineer turned activist who inspired a character in a blockbuster Bollywood film, to end his fast.

“His life is invaluable to the entire world because it embodies a commitment to humanity and the environment that is as profound as his commitment to democracy,”

Akhilesh Yadav, a former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh state, said on X.

CJP describes itself as representing “the lazy, the unemployed, and the chronically correct”. Its rapid online rise reflects frustrations among young Indians, who are estimated to make up more than half the country’s 1.42bn population.

India’s unemployment rate was 3.1% in 2025 for people aged 15 and above, government data showed, but nearly 10% among those aged 15 to 29, rising to 13.6% in urban areas.

Young people have also been angered by the question paper leaks, which led to the cancellation of a medical college examination taken by 2.3mn candidates. It was eventually held last month.



Climate change is getting worse, but financing faces challenges

The long-established consensus in the scientific world: Climate change is real, mostly caused by humans, and is getting worse

Almost \$200tn of investment is needed by 2050 to reach net-zero emissions, according to a BloombergNEF estimate in 2023.

The climate minister of Turkiye, which is hosting the COP31 talks in November, said in April that nearly \$1tn is needed to help developing countries meet climate targets, according to a Reuters report.

Interestingly, multilateral development banks (MDBs) committed a record \$162.5bn in climate financing last year, a report by the Europe Unions' lending arm showed on Monday.

But targets for poorer nations could be at risk after the World Bank's decision last month to abandon key goals.

Annual figures on the combined amount of climate financing provided by 10 of the world's biggest MDBs

showed they supplied a record \$162.5bn in 2025, almost \$103bn of which went to developing economies.

There are, however, questions whether those key targets might be at risk following last month's decision by the World Bank to abandon its goal to devote 45% of its annual financing to projects related to climate change. The bank, which had been under pressure from the Trump administration to scrap the climate lending target adopted during Joe Biden's presidency in 2023, said its shift was to focus on lending outcomes rather than input goals.

Rich countries, however, have again inflated the "true value" of the climate finance they provide to low- and middle-income countries, overstating it by around \$100bn in 2024, according to the latest analysis by Oxfam.

Higher temperatures are seen to worsen poverty and inequality.

A 1C increase in temperature causes headcount

poverty increases of 0.63-1.18 percentage points, using the daily poverty lines of \$2.15 (corresponding to 8.3% and 15.6% increases), and increases in the Gini inequality index of 1.3%-1.9%, according to the Nature journal. These poverty estimates equal a projected increase of global poor by 62.3mn-98.7mn people by 2030 compared with a scenario without climate change.

Poorer countries - particularly those in Sub-Saharan Africa - are more vulnerable to climate change, as are countries with higher agriculture shares in the economy, according to the journal.

Make no mistake, climate change is also a clear and present danger being felt across the world.

European countries reported more than 10,000 excess deaths during the record-breaking heatwave that engulfed the west of the continent in late June. Most scientists say the fires are driven by climate change, with large swathes of continental Europe parched.

Despite these worsening impacts, climate science is facing political pushback.

US President Donald Trump, who has called climate change "the greatest con job", has withdrawn from dozens of UN entities including the scientific Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Natural disasters caused \$220bn in global economic losses in 2025, according to projections by reinsurer Swiss Re, while Munich Re put the losses around \$224bn. Despite the proliferation of governments' and companies' climate targets, CO2 emissions remain stubbornly high.

Every 1C rise in global temperature is generally estimated to cause a 12% decline in global GDP, while in extreme scenarios - if temperatures rise by 3C by 2100, some studies predict global GDP could plummet by 40% to 50% relative to a world without climate change.

Protecting the planet is a global endeavour that only works if countries agree to take collective action.

Palestinians hail enduring legacy of Father Amir's support

QNA
Gaza

Palestinian officials, media figures, and researchers said that the late HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani left an enduring legacy of support for the Palestinian cause and the protection of Islamic holy sites in Palestine, describing him as an exemplary Arab leader whose contributions will remain etched in the memories of history and the Palestinian people.

In statements to Qatar News Agency (QNA), they highlighted the late Father Amir's distinguished leadership, steadfast political positions, and humanitarian and development initiatives, which had a profound impact on Palestinians, particularly in the Gaza Strip. They said his legacy will remain present through the positions he championed and the projects launched during his reign that contributed to strengthening Palestinian resilience.

They added that the passing of HH the Father Amir represents the loss of an Arab leader whose name became synonymous with unwavering support for the Palestinian cause, saying that the legacy he left behind reflects the deep ties between Qatar and Palestine and a political and humanitarian approach whose impact remains evident today. They noted that Qatar has continued to stand alongside the Palestinian people through humanitarian and relief aid, as well as political support for their legitimate national rights, including freedom, independence, and statehood.

For his part, Director of the Government Media Office in the Gaza Strip, Ismail al-Thawabta, praised the humanitarian and historic role played by the State of Qatar during the era of the late HH the Father Amir, particularly in helping break the siege imposed on the Gaza Strip. He said that amid the historic turning points and major challenges faced by the Palestinian people, the humanitarian and principled positions adopted by Qatar represented significant milestones, reflecting the pioneering role led by the State through initiatives launched and sponsored by the late HH the Father Amir.

No Palestinian or Arab can overlook the strategic contributions and profound humanitarian interventions established by Qatar's vision during the era of the late HH the Father Amir.



In this file photo, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat receives His Highness the Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani during the first visit of a Gulf Arab head of state to self-ruled Gaza Strip on August 8, 1999. (Reuters)

That vision served as a key pillar in strengthening the resilience of Palestinians and helping them remain steadfast on their land, he added.

He noted that the historic and unprecedented visit by the late HH the Father Amir to the Gaza Strip in 2012 represented the first official and practical declaration of breaking the political and economic siege imposed on the Strip. He said the visit was a bold step and a strong message of Arab solidarity that challenged efforts to isolate Gaza, restored hope among Palestinians, and paved the way for a new phase of reconstruction and development in the face of destruction and aggression.

Al-Thawabta said Qatar's genuine political will translated into concrete action through the launch of the Qatar-funded reconstruction grant, which brought about a significant transformation in the Strip's infrastructure. He highlighted several major development projects implemented under the initiative, including the construction of Hamad City residential complex, the rehabilitation and expansion of vital roads in Gaza, including Salah al-Din and al-Rashid streets, as well as the establishment of major medical facilities, most notably the Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani Hospital for

Rehabilitation and Prosthetics, which he described as a lifeline for those injured in conflicts and people with disabilities, among other projects.

The Director of the Government Media Office in the Gaza Strip stated that Qatar's vision during the era of the late HH the Father Amir extended beyond rebuilding infrastructure to strengthening human resilience. He added that the initiatives and projects launched under his leadership, and later continued and expanded under the patronage of HH the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, created a genuine social safety net.

Al-Thawabta pointed out that these projects and initiatives included support for the energy sector, the provision of fuel needed to operate Gaza's power plant, and regular financial assistance to hundreds of thousands of vulnerable families to help them cope with extreme poverty resulting from the blockade. They also covered support for education, agriculture, and the fishing sector, as well as the provision of temporary employment opportunities to assist young people and graduates.

Concluding his remarks to QNA, he emphasized that these development projects and relief interventions have had a profound and direct impact on the lives of Palestinians, forming a key

pillar in aiding civilians living under occupation and siege, and representing a unique model worthy of emulation internationally.

Editor-in-chief of Safa News Agency Mohammed Abu Qamar, said Palestinians remember with great pride the late HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani's stances and support he provided to strengthen the resilience of the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

Abu Qamar said, in exclusive statements to QNA, that these positions went beyond political statements and were reflected in practical projects that had a clear impact on the lives of Palestinians. He noted that His Highness was among the most prominent Arab leaders who defended the rights of the Palestinian people and translated that support into strategic projects, including Hamad Residential City, infrastructure initiatives, road network development, and support for the health sector. He said these projects continue to have an impact today, reflecting a practical commitment based on an understanding of Palestinian needs.

Abu Qamar stressed that the approach established by the late HH the Father Amir during his rule has continued under the patronage of HH the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, becoming an established Qatari policy whose benefits remain visible and ongoing. He added that Qatar continues to be a true partner of the Palestinian people and a supporter of their resilience, standing by them through humanitarian and relief assistance, as well as political positions supporting their legitimate national rights, foremost among them the right to freedom, independence, and the establishment of an independent state.

He concluded his remarks by saying that the passing of HH the Father Amir brought widespread sadness among Palestinians, particularly in Gaza, as they recognise the scale of his historic positions in support of their resilience and hold deep appreciation for the genuine support he provided to their cause.

Writer and political analyst Mohammed Mustafa Shaheen observed that HH the Father Amir is present in the Palestinian consciousness as one of the most prominent supporters of the Palestinian cause.

In remarks to QNA, Shaheen said the late HH the Father Amir's initiatives in support of Palestinians in Gaza came at a time when the Strip was facing an escalating siege and worsening

humanitarian conditions. He said these initiatives carried a political and moral message affirming that Palestine was a permanent Arab and Islamic responsibility.

The writer and political analyst added that HH the late Father Amir's visit to the Gaza Strip constituted a historic milestone that broke the political isolation imposed on the Strip, bringing hope to the Palestinians.

He noted that the name of the late HH the Father Amir remains engraved in the Palestinian national memory due to the reconstruction projects, roads, hospitals, housing, and everything that alleviated the effects of the siege and wars.

Researcher and political analyst Wissam Afifa affirmed that Palestinians remember a great leader whose name is synonymous with sincere support for the Palestinian cause and who left a political and humanitarian legacy still evident in the Gaza Strip to this day.

Afifa said that the Palestinian cause during the reign of His Highness was integral to Qatar's foreign policy. This support included defending Palestinian rights, sponsoring reconciliation efforts, hosting dialogues between factions, and working to keep the issue present on both the Arab and international agendas.

He recalled several key milestones during the late HH the Father Amir's era, particularly his call for an emergency Arab summit during the Israeli aggression on Gaza in late 2008, despite the political pressures facing Doha at the time. He emphasized that the late HH the Father Amir insisted that the events in Gaza required an Arab position that went beyond traditional statements of condemnation.

He described His Highness's visit to the Gaza Strip in 2012 as "the most vivid memory for Gazans", explaining that it was not a mere protocol visit, but rather one that carried with it a reconstruction program and a political message affirming that Gaza was not an isolated area and that its siege should not become a fait accompli.

The Palestinian researcher and political analyst pointed out that the impact of that visit was not limited to its political dimension, but extended to sustainable projects, most notably Hamad Residential City, major road projects, development initiatives, and the Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani Hospital for Rehabilitation and Prosthetics. These projects contributed to providing housing, services, and stability for thousands of Palestinian families, changing Gaza's landscape.

New Iraqi PM in Oval Office

US President Donald Trump takes questions from reporters during a meeting with new Iraqi Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday. (AFP)

SOME LEADERS LEAVE BEHIND MEMORIES.
SOME LEAVE BEHIND MONUMENTS.
A RARE FEW LEAVE BEHIND A VISION
THAT BECOMES A NATION.

HH The Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani
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World leaders continue to pay respects

From Page 1

Prince Mansour bin Miteb bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Adviser to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and Minister of State, conveyed condolences on behalf of Saudi Arabia, in a reception that brought one of the largest delegations of the day, with Prince Mansour accompanied by Prince Saud bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, Deputy Governor of the Eastern Province; Prince Turki bin Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud; and Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

His Highness Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani joined the Qatari hosts for this particular audience.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi also condoled the passing of His Highness the late Father Amir as he met His Highness the Amir, calling him a visionary leader.

Earlier, Italian Prime Minister Georgia Meloni arrived at the Lusail Palace to offer condolences to HH the Amir, praising HH the late Father Amir's rich legacy of a transformative change for Qatar.

Crown Prince al-Hussein bin Abdullah II offered condolences on behalf of Jordan, with HH Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani again present among the Qatari delegation.

President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud conveyed condolences on behalf of Somalia, also in the presence of HH Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev extended condolences on behalf of Uzbekistan, a visit that comes against the backdrop of steadily deepening ties between Doha and Central Asia in recent years.

Vice-President Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan conveyed condolences on behalf of the UAE, arriving with one of the day's larger delegations comprising Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs; Sheikh Zayed bin Hamad al-Nahyan, Chairman of the National Anti-Narcotics Agency; and Ahmed al-Sayegh, Minister of Health and Prevention – the neighbourly visit reinforcing the close ties.

General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council, offered condolences on behalf of Sudan, at a time when Doha has played an active role in Sudanese humanitarian and mediation efforts.

President Vahagn Khachaturyan conveyed condolences on behalf of Armenia, in a day that saw HH the Amir personally receive leaders spanning three continents at Lusail Palace. – QNA

Kuwait Cabinet hails Father Amir as great leader

The Kuwaiti Cabinet has offered its profound condolences and sympathy to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, the ruling family, and the people of Qatar on the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

At its meeting yesterday, chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the Cabinet emphasised that Qatar, the Gulf region, the Arab and Islamic nations, as well as the world, have lost a great leader known for his vision, wisdom, and statesmanship.

The Cabinet added that HH the late Father Amir had devoted his life to serving his country and its people while espousing the causes of the Arab and Islamic nations and defending their interests.

It reaffirmed that Kuwait and its people would always remember with appreciation the support shown by Qatar and His Highness the late Father Amir for Kuwait and its just causes.

The Cabinet also praised Qatar's achievements under His Highness the late Father Amir, citing the comprehensive development and significant advancement in various fields, which made Qatar among the vanguard of advanced nations. – QNA



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُسْلِمُونَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ زَيْدٌ بْنُ أَبِي هَرَبَةَ
صَدَقَ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمُ

CONDOLENCES

We extend our sincere condolences
and deepest sympathy to

His Highness
Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani
Amir of the State of Qatar

and to

His Highness
Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Thani
Deputy Amir

And to the honorable members of the Al Thani family
and the people of Qatar
on the sad demise of the nations great leader

His Highness
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani
Father Amir

May Allah envelop the deceased in His vast mercy,
grant him a place in His spacious Paradise,
and bless his family and loved ones with patience and solace.

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ