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Khalifa al-Thani, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, and HE Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanem alongside a number of their excellencies the sons of the late Father Amir and the Sheikhs. **(QNA)**

people of Qatar. HH the late Father Amir was a noble leader who dedicated his life to serving his country, advancing humanity and ensuring that Qatar would leave a lasting mark on the world. When I reflect on HH Sheikh Hamad's legacy, I think first of a leader who genuinely cared for his people. He cared about the Islamic world, believed in humanity and understood the importance of how Qatar was perceived internationally. Through his leadership, Qatar evolved from what many once regarded as a small Gulf state into a respected global player in diplomacy, economics and international affairs. One of his greatest achievements was transforming the global energy landscape. While much attention is often given to the North Field, the true breakthrough came from HH Sheikh Hamad's vision to establish Qatar as a leading exporter of liquefied natural gas (LNG). This fundamentally changed the global energy market and positioned Qatar among the world's strongest economies. **To Page 11**

nu and his accompanying delegation offered condolences at a reception additionally attended by HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani and HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani. **To Page 11**



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُسْلِمُونَ إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْأَئِمَّةَ وَالْمُرْشِدِينَ وَمَنْ يَدْعُ إِلَى هَدًى يَسْتَبِشِرُوا بِهِ إِنَّهُمْ فِي النَّارِ هُمْ أَهْلُهَا

صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ الْعَظِيمِ

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

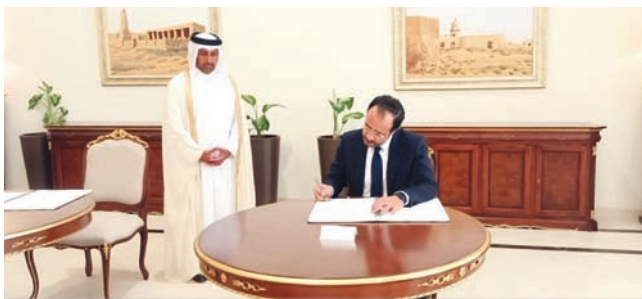
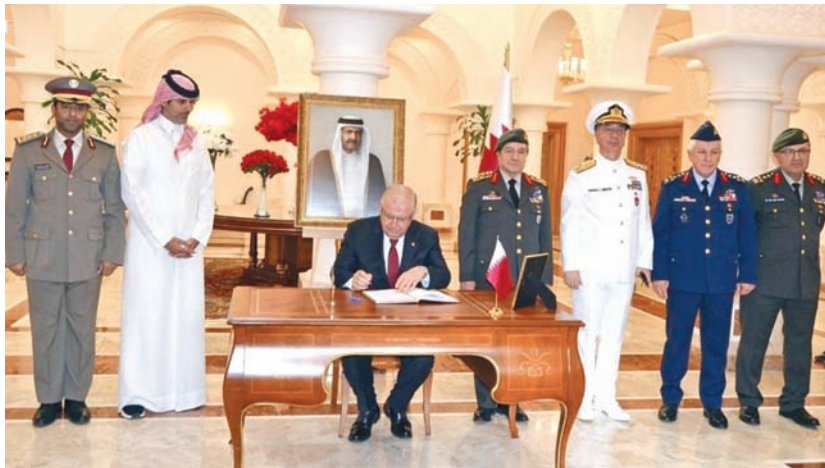
and the respected Al Thani family
and to the noble people of Qatar

on the sad demise of the nation's great leader

His Highness
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani
Father Amir

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

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ



Qatar's embassies abroad receive messages of condolence on passing of Father Amir

Qatar's embassies received an outpouring of condolences from mourners who extended their deepest sympathies following the passing of HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

In **Jakarta**, Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto offered condolences.

Indonesia's Vice-President Gibran Rakabuming Raka offered condolences and participated in the absentee funeral prayer for HH the late Father Amir, held at Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta.

In **Nicosia**, Cyprus's President Nikos Christodoulides, offered condolences.

In **Accra**, Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama offered condolences.

In **Bandar Seri Begawan**, Brunei's Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office Prince Al-Muhtadee Billah offered condolences.

In **Manila**, the Philippines's Vice-President Sara Duterte offered condolences.

In **Baku**, Azerbaijan's Prime Minister Ali Asadov offered condolences.

In **Riyadh**, the Governor of Saudi Arabia's Riyadh Region, Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdulaziz al-Saud, offered condolences.

The Undersecretary of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Protocol Affairs, Abdulmajeed bin Rashid al-Samari, also conveyed condolences on behalf of the Saudi foreign minister at Qatar's embassy in Riyadh.

In **London**, UK Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Yvette Cooper offered condolences.

In **Ankara**, Türkiye's Minister of National Defence Yasar Guler offered condolences.

In **Santo Domingo**, Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs for Bilateral Relations Francisco Caraballo conveyed condolences on behalf of the government and people of the Dominican Republic.

In **Mexico City**, Mexico's Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs Maria Teresa Mercado offered condolences on behalf of her government. — **QNA**



Father Amir's vision continues to shape environmental policy

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The enduring legacy of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, the architect of Qatar's modern environmental and urban renaissance, will continue to shape the nation's development for generations, experts, environmentalists, researchers, and engineering professionals said while paying tribute to his achievements.

They said HH Sheikh Hamad's visionary leadership laid the foundations for sustainable development through landmark environmental legislation, the establishment of key national institutions, the expansion of protected natural reserves, and transformative infrastructure projects that continue to define Qatar's progress.

The era of HH the late Father Amir marked a watershed in Qatar's environmental journey.

It witnessed the establishment of the Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves in 2000, the enactment of the country's first environmental law, the expansion of protected areas for iconic species such as the Arabian oryx and Arabian gazelle, and the establishment of Qatar's first Ministry of Environment in 2008, firmly placing environmental protection at the heart of national policy.

Experts said that Qatar's growing international environmental standing culminated in hosting the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP18) in 2012, alongside the World Conference on Sport and the Environment.

These milestones, they noted, reflected HH the late Father Amir's determination

to position Qatar as an influential voice in global environmental policy while embedding sustainability within the nation's long-term development vision.

Environmental consultant **Dr Mohamed Saif al-Kuwari** described HH the late Father Amir as a leader whose influence extended across every sector of national development.

"His Highness the late Father Amir firmly believed that protecting the environment and preserving Qatar's natural heritage were national responsibilities," Dr al-Kuwari said.

"He consistently emphasised safeguarding the rawdas, coastlines, vegetation, and natural resources for future generations," he said. "The National Day theme, *The Pastures of Our Ancestors Are*

Dedicated conservation programmes under HH the late Father Amir helped protect endangered species, particularly the Arabian oryx and gazelle

a Trust, perfectly reflects the environmental awareness that His Highness instilled within society."

Recalling a meeting with HH Sheikh Hamad at the Doha International Book Fair, Dr al-Kuwari said: "I presented him with one of my books on environmental issues, and he encouraged me to continue my research and writing. His passion for nature and trees was genuine and inspiring."

He added that dedicated conservation programmes under HH the late Father Amir's leadership helped protect endangered species, particularly the Arabian oryx and Arabian gazelle.

Environmental expert **Ahmed al-Mutawa** described the period's achieve-

ments as the cornerstone of Qatar's modern environmental framework.

"The establishment of the Supreme Council for the Environment and Natural Reserves, the issuance of the country's first environmental legislation, and the expansion of protected reserves laid the institutional foundations that continue to guide environmental policy today," he said.

Environmental researcher and activist **Ali al-Henzab** said HH Sheikh Hamad demonstrated an early commitment to environmental protection from 1996 through pioneering initiatives and policy decisions.

"He maintained direct communication with residents of desert areas and livestock owners, balancing environmental conservation with respect for local traditions," al-Henzab said.

He noted that HH the late Father Amir preserved the historic names of Qatar's rawdas while launching rehabilitation and irrigation projects, including groundwater well initiatives to conserve rainwater.

"The results of those efforts are clearly visible today in Qatar's advanced environmental system, the establishment of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, and the comprehensive legislative framework that has restored and protected the country's natural landscape while strengthening environmental awareness across society," al-Henzab said.

Environmental expert **Mohamed al-Jaidah** said HH Sheikh Hamad transformed the protection of Qatar's terrestrial and marine ecosystems.

"He regarded the environment as a national legacy that must be preserved for future generations," al-Jaidah said, adding that HH the late Father Amir person-

ally monitored environmental violations and directed authorities to address environmental damage, particularly in marine and southern protected areas.

Dr Saif al-Hajri described HH Sheikh Hamad as the founder of Qatar's modern environmental infrastructure.

"The environment was one of the core pillars of his comprehensive development project," he said. "He established advanced environmental institutions, introduced legislation capable of addressing emerging environmental challenges, and played a leading role in bringing global climate discussions to Qatar."

Dr al-Hajri also highlighted HH Sheikh Hamad's support for civil society organisations, including the Friends of the Environment Centre.

HH Sheikh Hamad maintained contact with residents of desert areas and livestock owners, balancing conservation with respect for local traditions

"His vision extended beyond government institutions," he said. "By empowering community organisations, he strengthened public participation in environmental protection while reinforcing Qatar's regional and international standing in biodiversity conservation."

Engineers said that the era of HH the late Father Amir also witnessed one of the most ambitious urban development programmes in Qatar's history, driven by strategic planning, sustainable growth, and long-term national development.

They cited landmark projects including Hamad International Airport, Lusail City, Msheireb Downtown Doha, Hamad Port, Education City, and major investments in transport infrastructure that

transformed Qatar's economic and urban landscape.

Eng. Badriya Kafoud said Qatar experienced an unprecedented construction boom during HH Sheikh Hamad's leadership.

"That period was distinguished by the remarkable speed of implementation and the scale of development across every sector," she said. "World-class museums, iconic towers in West Bay, modern road networks, and advanced infrastructure transformed Qatar into a global model for contemporary urban development."

Engineering expert and arbitrator **Mohamed Hassan al-Nuaimi** described the era as one of the brightest chapters in Qatar's modern history.

"HH the late Father Amir led a comprehensive development project built on long-term strategic planning, investment in people, and the creation of a strong economy capable of sustaining national development," he said.

He credited the development of Ras Laffan Industrial City and the liquefied natural gas industry with providing the economic foundation for Qatar's transformation.

Al-Nuaimi added that infrastructure projects reshaped the country's landscape, with Hamad International Airport strengthening Qatar's position as a global aviation hub, Hamad Port enhancing economic and logistical security, and the expressway network and Doha Metro creating a world-class transport system.

He added that Lusail City and Msheireb Downtown Doha became international benchmarks for modern and sustainable urban development.

Eng. Yousef Abdullah al-Jassim described the period as a defining chapter in Qatar's development journey: "Major infrastructure projects, comprehensive engineering reforms, and updated construction regulations elevated the building sector to international standards."

He said the development extended well beyond Doha, with public parks, industrial zones, border crossings, customs facilities, and nationwide road projects enhancing quality of life and supporting sustained economic growth.



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صَلِّهِ اللَّهُ الْعَظِيمَ

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deepest sympathy to

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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 great leader

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

"إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ"



Israel kills four people in Gaza, including a child

Reuters
Cairo/Gaza

An Israeli airstrike killed a man, his wife and their six-year-old daughter in the Gaza Strip yesterday, Palestinian health officials said as talks to advance the US-brokered Gaza ceasefire deal faltered.

The strike on an apartment building in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza killed Omar Abu Qassem, his wife, Asma, and their daughter, Habeeba, medics said. Their three-year-old son, Sami, survived, but was injured, medics said.

The Israeli military said the strike targeted a Hamas fighter. Friends and relatives arrived at the Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir Al-Balah where they paid farewell to the three white-shrouded bodies before burying them after performing special prayers.

"The child is the lone survivor. How (to live) without a father, without a mother? What kind of cruelty is this that the people of Palestine, the people of Gaza, are enduring?" Abu Anas Shahin, a relative, said to Reuters.

"Where is the mercy? Where is the humanity?" he said. More than 58,000 children in Gaza have lost one or both parents, according to UN figures as of November 2025. In Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood in Gaza City, an Israeli airstrike killed one person, medics said.

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

Hamas doesn't usually disclose information about its fatalities. The truce halted major fighting, but has failed to stop near-daily Israeli strikes. Four Israeli soldiers

Morocco inks agreement to join Gaza force

Morocco signed an agreement yesterday to participate in the International Stabilisation Force (ISF) for Gaza, state media reported. The agreement was signed in Rabat at a meeting attended by Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita, senior defence officials and Nikolay Mladenov, the Board of Peace envoy for Gaza, along with a delegation including the commander of the ISF, the state news agency MAP said. The agreement "reflects the shared determination to contribute, through concrete humanitarian and security

actions, to the establishment of a climate of peace and security in the region," MAP quoted a statement from the Moroccan defence administration. The Gaza Peace Council and ISF leadership welcomed Morocco's decision to join the initiative, citing its planned deployment of senior military officers, gendarmerie and police personnel and the creation of a military field hospital, MAP said. A close US ally, Morocco restored diplomatic ties with Israel in 2020 and supports a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict. (Reuters)

have been killed by fighters in Gaza over the same period.

The latest violence comes as Hamas leaders wrapped up another round of truce talks in Cairo on Tuesday. The discussions — mediated by Egypt, Türkiye and Qatar — were aimed at implementing the second phase of US President Donald Trump's Gaza peace plan.

The talks included the disarmament of Hamas and the Israeli military's withdrawal from the strip, according to sources close to the talks, who said there had been little progress amid deep distrust between the two sides.

The second phase also includes allowing a US-backed Palestinian technocratic committee to assume power from Hamas, the deployment of an international security force, and the start of the reconstruction of Gaza, which has been devastated by the war.

Five countries — Indonesia, Morocco, Kazakhstan, Kosovo and Albania — have committed to providing troops to the US-backed International Stabilisation Force.

However, none have yet been deployed as negotiations between Trump's Board of Peace and Hamas have stalled for months.

Speaking at an aid donor meeting in Brussels on Monday, Nikolay Mladenov said the October ceasefire was holding but "imperfectly" with violations continuing, adding that Hamas has yet to agree to what he called a "roadmap" for negotiations.

Hamas official Basem Naim accused Mladenov of supporting Israel's position in negotiations, and failing to hold the country accountable for violating the ceasefire and not upholding the terms of the first phase of the Trump plan.

The plan called for Israel to withdraw its troops to a demarcated "yellow" line, but Israel has been slowly moving its troops forward and now effectively occupies more than 60% of the strip.

Hamas has repeatedly said that it cannot advance to the second phase of the peace plan until the terms of the first phase are fulfilled.

Dozens arrested in Egypt for joining opposition group

Egyptian authorities have arrested about 60 people for joining a political opposition group on online platform Discord, a lawyer with a rights group handling some of the cases told AFP yesterday.

Detainees have over the past two months been charged with joining a terrorist group, spreading false news and misusing social media platforms, said Shorouk Sallam, the head of the legal unit at the Egyptian Front for Human Rights.

"Arrests began at the end of last year, but starting mid-May the pace has picked up, and now 60 people have been arrested," she said.

Those arrested had joined a Discord server known as GenZ002, which was "founded by an Egyptian dissident living abroad, Anas Habib, as part of a campaign in which he calls on Egyptians to express their opposition through methods such as graffiti or distributing pamphlets".

He has also launched an online poll to "remove (President Abdel Fattah) al-Sisi".

The Netherlands-based Habib was arrested twice last year, first in Amsterdam for an alleged assault on the Egyptian embassy, and then in Brussels for an alleged threat against al-Sisi during a visit.

Discord, popular among young internet users, was temporarily blocked in Egypt earlier this year.

It played a pivotal role in Gen Z protests that swept Nepal and Morocco last year, and has been banned in Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, North Korea and China. (AFP)

Syria says arrested Assad-era officer specialising in chemical weapons

Syrian authorities announced yesterday the arrest of a former officer they say was a chemical weapons specialist in charge of sarin gas depots and chemical weapons manufacturing during ousted president Bashar al-Assad's era.

Since al-Assad's fall in December 2024, authorities have arrested dozens of people they say committed crimes during the country's 13-year civil war, and started trials in April. The interior ministry said security forces had arrested colonel Ahmed Habib Ali, calling him "a chemical weapons expert". It also said he "was responsible for sarin gas storage facilities and chemical manufacturing within Unit 417", a key chemical weapons storage facility near the capital, Damascus. According to the ministry, Ali was "one of the officers who supervised the manufacture of about 20 bombs loaded with sarin gas, each weighing 250 kilograms, which were used in attacks targeting Syrian cities and towns in 2013 and 2017".

In the first and deadliest instance in August 2013, the army was accused of using chemical weapons to target areas then under rebel control, killing more than 1,400 men, women and children, according to US intelligence and rights groups.

With Syria at the height of its civil war, the Assad government agreed to hand over its chemical arsenal in order to avert US strikes. Between 2014 and 2017, Damascus was accused of launching four further attacks on towns controlled by opposition factions, using sarin and chlorine gas.

Ali's arrest comes after Syria was reinstated into the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) last week. The OPCW had stripped Syria of its voting rights in 2021 after finding its air force had used sarin and chlorine gas on its own people. (AFP)

'Farmgate' scandal puts Ramaphosa in a tight spot



Supporters of uMkhonto weSizwe Party protest outside the Western Cape High Court, where the court is hearing South African President Cyril Ramaphosa's urgent application to temporarily halt impeachment proceedings against him from the 2020 Farmgate scandal involving the theft of foreign currency at his Phala Phala game farm, in Cape Town, yesterday. (Reuters)

Kenya's goons: A world of political violence and desperation

AFP
Nairobi

Kenyan politicians are hiring armed thugs for as little as \$4 per day, as poverty and ruthless political competition threaten to unleash uncontrollable violence ahead of elections in the country next year.

So-called "goons" are increasingly being hired, dozens or even hundreds at a time, to break up the rallies of political opponents and protesters and attack civil rights groups — with police often turning a blind eye.

A recent study by Nairobi-based research firm Odipo Dev revealed a goons rate card, ranging from 500 shillings (\$4) to work for a local councillor to as much as 1,000 shillings for members of parliament.

Marius, 27, one of five goons who agreed to speak with AFP on

condition that their names were changed, has been doing the job since he was 17.

He lost five teeth in a brawl when a politician paid him to protest the opening of a hospital by a rival.

Talking to AFP, he initially insisted: "I'm a goon, and I'm proud to say that."

But his bravura weakened as the conversation continued, and he spoke of his lost dream of being a surgeon, thwarted because his family could not afford school fees.

Raised by a single mother in Korogocho, one of Nairobi's poorest informal settlements, Marius describes himself as "something like illiterate", and sees few options in a country where 40% live below the poverty line. "You end up being a goon to at least earn something," he said. Marius has a son he no longer sees. "I don't want to expose him to the bad things I do," he said. "I don't want him to follow in my shoes."



Men armed with sticks and clubs chase a protester in an attempt to stop him from demonstrating. (AFP)

Politicians and police insist they want to stamp out "goonism", but analysts say it is deeply entrenched on all sides.

During anti-government protests last year, AFP saw first-hand how hundreds of goons appeared to work directly alongside police to

attack demonstrators, later looting and vandalising businesses in central Nairobi.

Last month CCTV footage seen by AFP showed uniformed officers moving alongside an armed gang as they swarmed into the well-known All Saints Church in Nairobi, violently interrupting a civil rights meeting.

This month an opposition rally in southwest Kenya was overwhelmed by armed men, leaving one dead, and several wounded. Videos showed police watching impassively on the sidelines.

Police spokesperson Michael Muchiri told AFP that claims the force works alongside goons are "preposterous", suggesting the incidents involved rogue officers who were now under investigation.

"The (National Police Service) is determined to ensure the 'goon culture' does not gain a foothold in this country," Muchiri said.

But analysts say politicians on

all sides hire thugs, often because they cannot count on police to protect them.

"There is a policing gap... and politicians feel the need to have this machinery either to defend themselves or to intimidate their opponents," said Odipo Dev researcher Darius Okolla.

Goonism has deep and poisonous roots. In the 1990s, authoritarian president Daniel arap Moi established the Youth for Kanu '92 (YK'92) to rally support for elections, and was accused of bribing voters and fomenting violence.

A key YK'92 organiser was William Ruto, now Kenya's president.

Ruto was charged with crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court for his part in election violence in 2007 and 2008, though the case stalled following alleged witness intimidation. Since Ruto won the presidency in 2022, the use of goons is again at its "peak", said Marius.

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Lebanon, Israel conclude two days of 'positive' talks, US official says

AFP
Beirut

Lebanon and Israel completed a new round of Washington-mediated negotiations in Rome yesterday, agreeing to implement the "pilot zones" in southern Lebanon agreed under a recent framework deal, a US official said.

"Talks concluded after two days of productive and positive discussions," the official said in a statement shared by the US embassy in Beirut, adding that the participants "agreed on the structure and guidelines for the pilot zone process, to be finalised and implemented in the coming days".

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

The deal seeks an end to the state of war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, disarmament of the Iran-backed militant group, the deployment of Lebanese troops in the south



An Israeli military vehicle drives past destroyed buildings in Lebanon. (Reuters/File Photo)

and for Israeli forces to steadily withdraw from the country, starting with two "pilot zones".

But the agreement, rejected by Hezbollah, does not set a timetable for Israel's withdrawal. Israeli officials have also vowed that their forces will remain in a "security zone" 10 kilometres deep along the frontier for as long as Hezbollah remains armed.

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

Lebanon and Israel, who have no formal relations, started negotiations after Hezbollah drew its country into the broader

Middle East war by attacking Israel in March.

The official said they will now "move to expanded technical talks, which will focus on implementing all areas of the Trilateral Framework with the aim of reaching a comprehensive agreement between Israel and Lebanon". The framework agreement was reached following a fragile ceasefire in the Israel-Hezbollah war.

Israel still launches occasional strikes in southern Lebanon and carries out detonations in villages it occupies. The talks precede Lebanese President Joseph Aoun's visit to Washington on June 21 at the invitation of US President Donald Trump.

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Leisure reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal, amend or cancel this RFP, and request additional information without liability.

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صدق الله العظيم

CONDOLENCES

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Amir of the State of Qatar

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Iran threatens to shut off energy exports after new US attacks

Reuters
Tehran

The US struck Iran's coastal defences and missile sites yesterday after reimposing a naval blockade of its ports, while Iran threatened to shut off more regional energy exports, saying it was engaged in an "existential war" with America. The latest escalation of attacks and counterattacks launched by the US and Iran has kept the region on edge days after a fragile truce collapsed, raising the spectre of a return to full-scale war, though analysts generally see that as less likely.

Brent crude oil, the international benchmark, closed at a one-month high at \$84.95 a barrel yesterday.

US Central Command said the military had attacked coastal defence systems and cruise missile storage and launch sites on Iran's Greater Tunb Island, and had completed the wave of strikes within around 90 minutes.

"At 6 am today, US Central Command forces began launching a wave of strikes against Iran," the US military said.

"The strikes are designed to further degrade military capabilities Iranian forces have used to attack commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz."

In a statement issued hours after Iran's *Mehr* news agency reported that US projectiles had hit a location on Iran's Hengam Island in the strait, Tehran's top negotiator Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf said Iranian security depended on maintaining what he called "Iranian arrangements" in the strait.

"We are in an essential and existential war with America," Qalibaf said in a statement.



President Donald Trump walks on his way to the Pennsylvania Defence and Innovation Summit yesterday. (AFP)

Prior to the war, Iran had not asserted the authority to act as a gatekeeper over the strait.

The war has killed thousands of people and displaced millions, mainly in Iran and Lebanon, where conflict restarted between Israel and Hezbollah.

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday renewed a threat he has made on several occasions to hit Iranian power plants and bridges next week unless Tehran resumes negotiations.

"I'll save the energy targets for last, but ultimately we'll hit energy targets," Trump said.

Yesterday, Trump was asked by reporters if Iran had a deadline before the US starts attacking its bridges, and replied: "I don't like giving deadlines, but they pretty much know, they know the story ... they better behave."

Trump said on Tuesday that US negotiators had been in touch with their Iranian counterparts to tell them "you better make a deal." Three US officials said that US strikes aimed at forcing open

the strait are also targeting Iranian military capabilities the US would want to destroy before executing more complex operations.

Iran has been trying to assert permanent control over Hormuz by imposing fees on vessels passing through it, in what would be a major shift in the balance of power in a region where the US has long acted as guarantor of security.

Shipping traffic through the strait has dropped to a fraction of its pre-war activity. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said yesterday it had struck US military targets in the region, including in Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan. It also threatened yesterday to shut off more regional energy exports, saying the US "must brace for the closure of all other export corridors that benefit the US and its allies."

Analysts say Iran is signalling it may use its Houthi allies in Yemen to shut Bab el-Mandeb, which would open a new front against Washington and put two of the world's most vital energy arteries at risk.

China blames US taking Middle East to 'precipice' with ensuing Iran war

AFP
United Nations

China accused the United States at the United Nations on Tuesday of taking the Middle East to "a dangerous precipice" with its war against Iran.

During a debate on Yemen's Houthi rebel group, China's envoy to the UN, Sun Lei, said "the US has irrefutable responsibility over the current situation in Yemen and the Red Sea."

"It is the US that is obstructing the efforts of the Council to end hostilities and allow the (continuation) of the crisis in Gaza and

the expansion of the tensions," Sun said.

"Without the authorisation of the Security Council, and amidst the negotiations between the US and Iran, the US launched military attacks against Iran, once again plunging the situation of the region into a dangerous precipice," Sun added, speaking at the United Nations.

Sun was responding to criticism of China by the US ambassador to the UN, Mike Waltz, who had just accused Beijing of violating the UN arms embargo in place on the Houthis.

"States like Iran and, to some degree, companies and entities in China have violated resolution

2216 with little consequence," Waltz said.

UN Security Council Resolution 2216, adopted in 2015, requires the Houthis to cease hostilities and withdraw from territory they have seized in Yemen.

It imposes a targeted arms embargo on the Iran-backed group and its allies, as well as individual sanctions including asset freezes and travel bans.

In a testy exchange between the two superpowers, Beijing's envoy said Washington "should reflect upon its own actions and take concrete measures to eliminate the negative impact of its actions and its rhetoric."

US says Americans returning from Congo must wait 21 days, citing Ebola

The US said yesterday that American citizens returning from the Democratic Republic of Congo must spend 21 days in a third country before entering the US, citing concerns about the Ebola outbreak in the region. The restrictions, issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, also apply to some travelers from Uganda and South Sudan. Other travelers from those countries will continue to undergo airport screening. (Reuters)

Nature's wrath



A backhoe removes debris in Catia La Mar, La Guaira state, Venezuela, following twin earthquakes. The death toll from the deadly earthquakes that hit Venezuela on June 14 has surpassed 4,700, while almost 17,000 people have been injured, an official report stated. (AFP)

Republicans unveil \$95bn pre-election spending push

AFP
Washington

US House Republicans unveiled a \$95 bn spending framework yesterday, launching their final major push to pass defense, farm and voting restriction measures before midterm elections that could cost them control of Congress.

The plan would provide \$73 bn for the military and intelligence agencies, including funding tied to the war with Iran, along with \$12 bn in aid for farmers hurt by President Donald Trump's trade war.

It would also direct \$10 bn toward election-related grants, as Republicans try to revive parts of Trump's SAVE America Act, a voting restrictions bill that would require proof of citizenship to register to vote and photo identification at polling places.

The House has passed a different version of the SAVE Act separately, but it has stalled in the Senate, where some Republicans have warned that it lacks support and may not qualify for the fast-track budget process party



The US Capitol is reflected in water in Washington, DC US. (Reuters)

leaders hope to use.

That process allows certain tax and spending bills to pass the 100-member Senate by a simple majority, avoiding the higher, 60-vote threshold usually needed to overcome Democratic opposition.

The budget resolution released Wednesday is only a framework. If adopted by the House and Senate, it would allow Republicans to assemble a fuller bill later this summer and try to pass it without Democratic votes.

House Republican leaders want to pass the framework next week before lawmakers leave Washington for a long summer break, leaving only a narrow window to complete the package before November.

But the plan faces resistance from fiscal conservatives inside the party because it does not pair the new spending with cuts elsewhere.

Representative Warren Davidson, a Republican fiscal hawk, has warned that the package could not advance without savings to offset the cost. After the framework was released, Davidson posted a blunt prediction on X: "DOA," shorthand for "dead on arrival."

The fight underscores the competing pressures on Republicans as they try to show voters action on national security, agriculture and election security while also maintaining their claim to fiscal discipline.

Trump had demanded far more defense spending than the House framework provides, but Republican leaders are trying to balance White House pressure with concerns from lawmakers wary of adding to the deficit.

Power grids restored across Cuba after third outage in two weeks

AFP
Havana

Power was restored across Cuba yesterday, authorities said, after the third nationwide outage in less than 10 days.

The communist island was already struggling to keep the lights on before US President Donald Trump cut off its oil supplies in January, depleting the dwindling supply of fuel for its power plants.

The latest outage began at about 11:05 am (1505 GMT) on Tuesday, according to the state-run UNE electricity company, leaving the country's 9.6 mn inhabitants without power.

Following a gradual restoration of power overnight, UNE said early yesterday that the electrical system had gotten back to full function in the morning.

The blackout was caused by a problem with a generating unit at a thermoelectric plant caused a "sudden frequency change," UNE said.

It was the third complete blackout on the Caribbean island since early July and the fifth since the start of 2026.

"I have no words," Maria Caridad Alvarez, a 62-year-old housewife, told AFP on Tuesday.

"When I woke up this morning, the power was back and I cooked some beans. Now, I went out and it's off again. It feels like there is no solution."

The energy crisis "is killing people's enthusiasm for life," she said.

David Matias Rodriguez, an 82-year-old retiree, said he was worried the few things in his refrigerator would be spoiled.

In both of last week's blackouts, it took more than 24 hours to restore power across the island of 9.6 mn people, a process made slower and more complex by fuel shortages.

Power outages in the capital Havana totalled more than 30 hours at a time, while in the outlying provinces, it was several days before electricity was restored.

Residents in the worst-affected areas have vented their frustrations by setting piles of trash on fire or banging on pots and pans.

Cuba is reeling from its worst economic crisis in decades — one made worse by the fuel blockade imposed by US President Donald Trump in January as part of a pressure campaign aimed at ending six decades of communist rule.

UNE says the fuel shortages have made the national grid more susceptible to outages, and made the use of emergency generators all but impossible.

"This situation is mainly due to the state of our electrical system, exacerbated by the decisions of the US," Energy and Mines Minister Vicente de la O Levy said Tuesday at a press conference.

"We are practically living through a war," he said, adding that there is a "total absence of fuel" and the government cannot obtain spare parts for its plants.

Relations between Washington and Havana have been tense since the start of the year, especially since US forces snatched Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro from his home in early January and brought him to the US to face federal charges.

Maduro had long been a staunch ally of Cuba.

Washington has authorised the arrival of only one Russian tanker — carrying 100,000 tons of crude — which came in March. Those reserves have since been exhausted.

In addition to its oil blockade, the Trump administration has ramped up sanctions against Cuban state-owned businesses, prompting many foreign businesses to suspend operations in the country.

The US has also indicted former president Raul Castro, brother of revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, over the downing of two civilian planes three decades ago.

Late last month, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez said "no progress" had been made in months of bilateral discussions.

Toronto air ranked among world's worst after wildfire

AFP
Toronto

Toronto had the worst air quality of any major city in the world yesterday, the Swiss firm IQAir said, as Canadian authorities urged people to stay indoors.

Toronto edged out New Delhi and the Democratic Republic of Congo's capital Kinshasa as wildfire smoke turned the skies a hazy yellowish-grey in Canada's largest city. "The biggest contributor to Toronto's spike in air pollution right now is wildfires, though the higher than average temperatures are also playing a role," Armen Araradian of IQAir told AFP.

While this year's wildfire season has been fairly muted compared to the devastation caused in recent years, there are more than 800 active fires nationwide.

Smoke from blazes in northwestern Ontario has filtered down to Toronto, the provincial capital.

City officials have closed pools,



People walk in downtown Toronto, amid poor air quality in Northern Ontario caused by wildfire. (AFP)

cancelled summer camp programs and closed the official FIFA Fan Festival ahead of Wednesday's semi-final match between England and Argentina.

Montreal saw a similar, though less severe impact from wildfires on Tuesday. Smoke from the wildfires also worsened air quality across the border in the US, with Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine and New

Hampshire particularly impacted. New Yorkers were warned by state authorities that they "may see visible smoke and hazy skies across the state and spikes in smoke-related pollution."

Canadians are enduring potentially hazardous air as a record-smashing North American heat wave persists. Extreme heat and humidity in the Mountain West spilled over to the densely popu-



A Canada Goose stands on the shoreline of the Toronto Islands, on Lake Ontario. (Reuters)

lated East Coast of the US and Ontario. The heat in Ontario is expected to ease by the weekend, but officials have warned of persistent risk from wildfires through the remaining summer months.

So far, Canadian wildfires have scorched 1.9 mn hectares this year, an area nearly the size of Slovenia.

That damage remains far off the pace of 2023, Canada's worst wildfire season on record.

Body of Indian sailor missing after Oman ship attack found

The body of an Indian sailor who went missing after his ship was attacked off the coast of Oman has been recovered, a seafarers' union official said yesterday. Heramb Karmarkar, a 30-year-old marine engineer from the western Indian city of Pune, had been missing since Sunday's attack on the Cypriot-flagged GFS Galaxy. "I got a call Tuesday evening from the company the ship belonged to informing me that Heramb Karmarkar's body has been found by the Omani coast guard," Manoj Yadav, of the Forward Seamen's Union of India, told AFP. "This was almost 60 hours after we first received news that he was missing." The other 23 crew members – including 10 Indian nationals

– were rescued Sunday. The US Central Command said the ship had been disabled by fire and damage to its engine room, accusing Tehran of attacking it. India is one of the largest contributors of sailors to merchant shipping worldwide, with more than 320,000 active seafarers in 2025, according to officials. The attack came as Tehran announced it was closing the Strait of Hormuz and launched missiles and drones at its Gulf neighbours in retaliation for US strikes. 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 US and Iran. **(AFP)**

Pakistan pledges more security for China-run mine

Reuters
Islamabad/Quetta

Pakistan said yesterday it was stepping up security around a Chinese-run copper and gold mine in Balochistan after insurgent violence disrupted supply routes, and the mine's operator denied a report that the project could be forced to shut down. Saindak Metals Limited's managing director, Raziq Sanjrani, called the closure report, first published by the Financial Times, factually incorrect. The mine has run without interruption for 25 years and "there is no possibility of its shutdown", he said in a statement. He said the company had asked

Pakistan's authorities for help moving furnace oil to the site after some transporters balked at using certain routes through Balochistan, and that security agencies had since assured the company the supply would continue uninterrupted. State Minister for Interior Talal Chaudhry said Islamabad had received the mine operator's security concerns in early July and ordered agencies to increase deployment around its installations, personnel and cargo. "We have directed the provincial authorities and all concerned security agencies to beef up deployment for all of their installations, personnel, logistics and transportation," Chaudhry told Reuters.

"It is our priority to safeguard all projects run by international companies in Pakistan," he said, adding that logistics and cargo shipments to the site would receive additional security protection. Balochistan, which borders Iran and Afghanistan, hosts several major Chinese-backed projects, including the deep-water port of Gwadar. Baloch separatists have sought an independent state for decades, arguing that Pakistan and its foreign allies have exploited the province's natural resources without adequately benefiting local communities. The Financial Times reported earlier yesterday that Saindak's managing director had warned

Pakistan's energy ministry that operations could become unsustainable within a month because deteriorating security conditions were disrupting supply routes. The Saindak mine is operated by the state-owned Metallurgical Corporation of China under a lease extended in 2022, and exports most of its output to China. China's foreign ministry said it was unaware of the situation but that Beijing would work with its close partner Pakistan to protect Chinese citizens, projects and institutions in the country. The unrest in Balochistan has also clouded the outlook for Barrick Mining's \$9 billion Reko Diq gold and copper project, about 50 km (31 miles) from Saindak.

Starmer bids MPs 'goodbye', vows to support Burnham

AFP
London

Outgoing UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday pledged his "wholehearted support" to his successor as he prepares to hand over to premier-in-waiting Andy Burnham. Facing his last weekly grilling from MPs in parliament, Starmer said he wanted to see the next leader of his centre-left Labour party succeed.

"I will give my wholehearted support to my successor. I want this Labour government to be a success," he said, when asked what advice he had for his successor. "I want our country to be a success. I shall give my support privately if asked for, not publicly when not asked for."

Starmer announced his resignation last month, bowing to months of pressure to step down after a series of scandals, missteps and policy U-turns. They blighted his two-year tenure, after he led his party to victory in 2024 elections following 14 years in opposition.

Burnham is expected to be crowned Labour's leader on Friday after securing overwhelming support from the party's 403 MPs and the backing of major trade unions.

The party's comfortable majority in the 650-seat House of Commons means he will automatically become the next prime minister.

Yesterday, the usual bad-tempered jibes and angry exchanges witnessed in the political theatre of the weekly Prime Minister's Questions, were replaced by gentle ribbing. Starmer was also relaxed, joking with his political foes.

MPs from all parties wished Starmer well, thanking him for his public service and calling on him to ensure that England wins



This video grab taken from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit shows Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer (centre) speaking during his final Prime Minister's Questions as prime minister, in the House of Commons in London, yesterday. **(AFP)**

Wednesday's World Cup semi-final showdown against Argentina and go on to beat Spain in the final on Sunday.

Even opposition party Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch softened her tone, but could not stop herself from remarking: "He spent a long time laughing that I'd lost control of my party. I think he should have been paying attention to his backbenchers instead of mine."

But she warned: "Changing prime minister is not a silver bullet. Indeed, it may be that the Labour Party's troubles are only just beginning."

"Solving the fundamental problems in this country will require difficult decisions," she added. Burnham is to replace Starmer on Monday, shortly after he is expected to meet King Charles III to be asked to form the next government.

He will become Britain's seventh prime minister in a decade.

MPs broke into a loud round of applause as fervent football fan Starmer wished them an emphatic "Goodbye" from the despatch box in the middle of the parliament floor, saying he had a date with his television at 8:00pm for the World Cup match.

"This is the end of my political journey," he said, although he plans to stay on as an MP for the time being.

"In two years in government, I leave the country in better shape than I found it. I am proud of everything that we have achieved."

Sitting next to him finance minister Rachel Reeves, who seems set to lose her job in the next cabinet, was in tears.

Korean court acquits defector over money transfers to North

AFP
Seoul

Republic of Korea appeals court acquitted a North Korean defector accused of illegally sending money to relatives in the North, her lawyer told AFP yesterday, overturning a lower court's verdict in a case underscoring the legal grey area around humanitarian remittances.

About 34,000 North Korean

defectors live in Korea, according to Seoul's official data, and many are believed to stay in touch with relatives in the North and send them money. But there is no clear legal channel for such transfers because the two Koreas have no banking ties and remain technically at war as their 1950-53 conflict ended without a peace treaty.

Defectors typically rely on informal broker networks operating through China, with funds passing through multiple bank ac-

counts before reaching recipients in the isolated North.

An appeals court acquitted the defendant on Tuesday, recognising that the actions in question were taken to assist defectors without any profit purpose, Lee Hee-suk, a lawyer representing the defendant, told AFP.

The complex process of wiring funds into the North can cost as much as half of the original remittance in brokerage fees, according to the public interest foundation

Dongcheon, established by law firm BKL, which represented the defendant pro bono.

A lower court had acknowledged that the remittances had humanitarian motives and were effectively unavoidable under current circumstances, but ruled in February last year that they nonetheless violated the law.

"We welcome the acquittal... (we) hope it will have a positive impact on the cases that are still pending," lawyer Lee said.

EU extends Russia oil price cap in search of sanctions deal

AFP
Brussels

EU nations have agreed to keep a price cap on Russian oil for a week to buy time to strike a broader deal on new sanctions on Moscow, diplomats said.

The last-minute compromise came hours before a deadline that would have seen the price cap

shoot up from the current \$44.

Brussels was desperate to avoid that scenario as it seeks to restrict Moscow's oil revenues despite a surge in prices since the Middle East war erupted.

The EU had wanted to change its rules for the oil price cap in a new sanctions package to maintain the current level for several more months.

But the new round of sanctions

– the 21st the EU wants to impose on Russia since its 2022 invasion of Ukraine – has faced a rocky ride since it was proposed last month.

Various countries have objected to different parts and sought to water them down.

In a press conference with EU chief Ursula von der Leyen, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he was pushing for the "maximum" amount of sanc-

tions pressure on Russia: "We must be very persistent and remember that it's not only EU leaders who grow tired of adopting sanctions, of finding compromise and balance – Russia gets tired of every such package."

Despite days of talks, diplomats were unable to wrap up a deal.

EU diplomats said they were aiming to agree a final deal by July 23.

Zelensky endorses energy boss as new Ukraine prime minister

President Volodymyr Zelensky endorsed the head of the state energy company yesterday to be Ukraine's new prime minister, while giving no clear answer on the future of the defence minister at a pivotal juncture in the war.

Zelensky pushed out prime minister Yulia Svyrydenko this week after just a year on the job. Parliament accepted her resignation on Tuesday and is expected to vote on her successor on Thursday. Zelensky has given little explanation for the move so far, apart from saying the aim is to refresh the leadership.

Speaking to reporters in Kyiv, Zelensky said the CEO of the state-owned energy company Naftogaz, Sergii Korotshenko, was the best candidate for prime minister, because Ukraine's pri-

ority was preparing for the upcoming winter.

Parliament names the prime minister and is likely to accept Zelensky's preferred candidate as his party controls a majority.

"The priorities are clear – preparing for winter," Zelensky said. "Therefore, following all the consultations, Sergii Korotshenko is surely the most prepared candidate for the post of prime minister of Ukraine."

The prime minister's resignation automatically triggers the resignation of the entire cabinet, meaning a wider shakeup is expected.

Particular attention has turned to the fate of Defence Minister Mykhailo Fedorov, at a time when the tide on the battlefield has been shifting in Ukraine's favour as it presses a campaign of long-range drone attacks on Russia. **(Reuters)**

EU, Ukraine seal 'drone deal' to boost production, establish joint ventures

Ukraine and the European Union (EU) have sealed a "drone deal", aiming to combine Kyiv's expertise with EU industrial capacity to establish joint projects and scale up production, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday. "We need to combine our strengths," von der Leyen said in a speech in Kyiv at a ceremony to mark Ukraine's Statehood Day. "This deal will bring together Ukrainian ingenuity and Europe's industrial scale."

Von der Leyen said the EU could offer advantages to Ukraine such as "huge technological and industrial capacity" and "safe and secure production sites". Ukraine has signed a series of such drone deals with individual countries. At last week's Nato summit in Ankara, President Volodymyr Zelensky signed three more, saying that brought the total to nine.

But yesterday's deal is the first intended to cover countries and companies across the EU. It is part of a new EU-Ukraine defence indus-

trial partnership which the Commission, the EU's executive body, said would expand to include anti-ballistic missiles by 2028.

"We will do everything necessary to build Europe's anti-ballistic system by integrating all European anti-ballistic capabilities," Zelensky said in his speech to the ceremony.

The partnership reflects a growing desire among European politicians and companies to tap into Ukrainian expertise gained from the war that began after Russia's invasion as they seek to boost their own defences against Moscow.

In a statement, the Commission said it would work with 19 founding partners of the drone deal, including EU-based companies such as Indra Group, Fincantieri and Quantum Systems and Ukrainian firms such as LLC Skyfall Industries.

Von der Leyen said the new initiative would break down bureaucratic barriers and agree common standards that would make it easier for Ukrainian and EU-based companies to undertake joint ventures. Ukraine has developed



Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen pose for a photo during signing ceremony in Kyiv, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

a highly sophisticated drone industry after having only limited expertise in the sector when Russia invaded its smaller neighbour in February 2022. **(Reuters)**

Bangladesh seizes \$6.2bn in assets tied to ousted PM Hasina

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh has confiscated assets worth 760bn taka (about \$6.2bn) linked to ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, her family and 10 business groups, authorities said yesterday.

Since Hasina was toppled in a student-led mass uprising in 2024 and fled to India, authorities have investigated the former prime minister's wealth and looked into her relatives and major business groups accused of benefiting during her 15-year, iron-fisted rule.

The Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit said it had seized assets worth 570bn taka in Bangladesh and another 190bn taka overseas.

The agency's chief Ikhtiar Mohammad Mamun told reporters while presenting the annual summary of its activities that authorities had opened 98 cases as part of

the investigations into Hasina and those associated with her.

"We are still working to recover the money laundered overseas," Mamun said. "We hope to share positive developments by the end of this year."

Since she was ousted, Hasina has been convicted in absentia in several cases, including corruption cases linked to the allocation of plots in an upmarket area of the capital Dhaka.

A court has also sentenced her to death over crimes against humanity.

Hasina has remained in India since fleeing Bangladesh in August 2024, and recently said she intended to return by the end of the year.

Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed said that the government, which has sought her extradition, wanted to ensure Hasina returns to face justice.

"The verdict will be implemented. The court will decide whether there is any scope for an appeal," he said.

China opposed to US sanctions bill targeting Russia energy buyers

AFP
Beijing

China said yesterday it "firmly opposes" a sanctions bill proposed by US senators and supported by President Donald Trump that targets countries buying Russian energy.

The bipartisan legislation could potentially clear the way for the US to exert stronger pressure on Russia over its war in Ukraine.

US senators spearheading the bill said in a joint statement last week that they expected to unveil the updated legislation "very soon".

China, among the biggest buyers of Russian oil, hit back on Wednesday, accusing Washington of using "double standards and coercion".

"China firmly opposes illegal unilateral sanctions that have no basis in international law and are not authorised by the UN Security Council," foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a news briefing.

"China will take all necessary measures to resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of its enterprises and citizens," he said.

The legislation would give the president authority to impose

tariffs and sanctions on countries that continue purchasing Russian energy, a crucial source of revenue for Moscow's war effort.

The US Senators have not released details of the latest version of the bill, which they said on Friday had been agreed with Trump.

An earlier proposal envisioned tariffs of up to 500% on imports from countries purchasing Russian oil, gas, uranium and other products.

The agreement follows signs that Trump has become increasingly frustrated with Moscow's failure to negotiate an end to the conflict, which began with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

But administration support could remove the most significant political obstacle to a bill that has been under negotiation for months and has attracted backing from lawmakers in both parties – though its swift passage is not guaranteed.

Among the bills supporters, was the late Lindsey Graham, who was a staunch supporter of Ukraine in its fight against Russia, as well as Republican Roger Wicker and Democrats Richard Blumenthal and Jeanne Shaheen.

The White House did not immediately comment publicly on the agreement.

A nation’s quiet greatness, honoured by the world

The presence of presidents, kings, and prime ministers in Doha this week is more than protocol. It is a measure of how far Qatar has come, and under whose compass that journey began. Heads of state from across the Arab world, Asia, Africa and Europe have come in person to condole the passing of HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al -Thani, a rare tribute that speaks to a legacy written not only in Qatar’s skyline but in its standing among nations.

When Sheikh Hamad assumed leadership in 1995, Qatar was a small peninsula with big ambitions. What followed was a transformative era: the birth of Al Jazeera, the launch of Qatar Airways as a global carrier, the development of education and health cities, and a bold foreign policy that placed Doha at the centre of regional diplomacy. He handed power in 2013 to his son, HH the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al -Thani, in a rare peaceful transition that signalled confidence in a new generation.

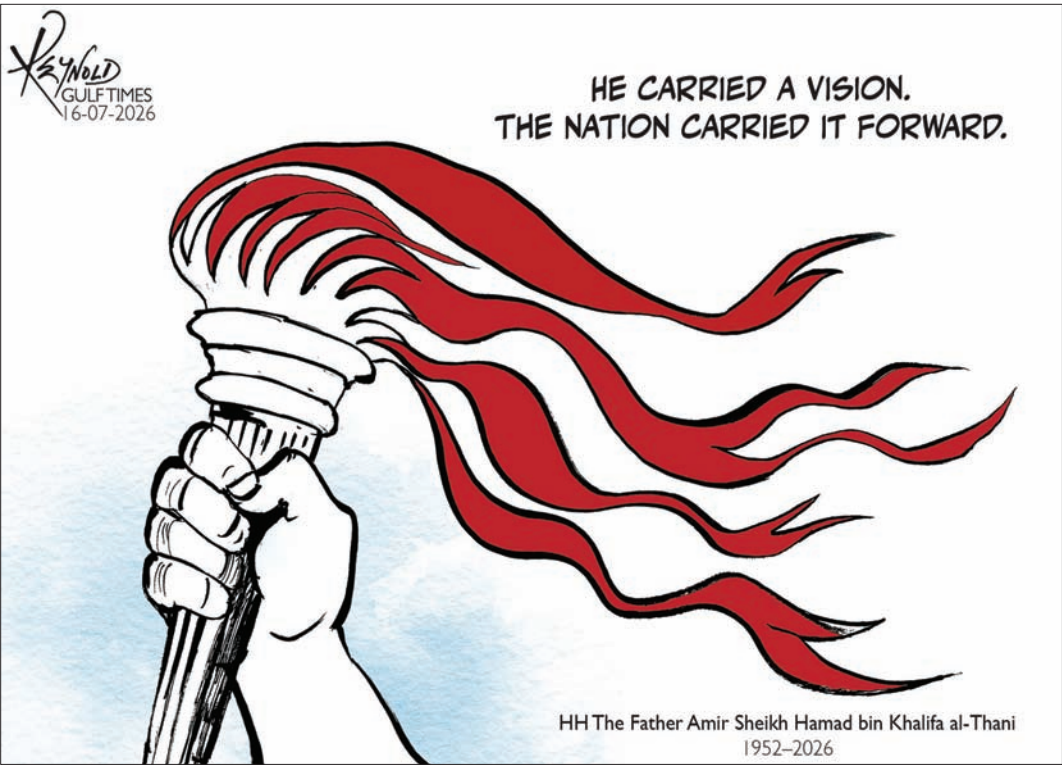
That confidence has been vindicated. Today’s Qatar is a country that hosts world cups, mediates conflicts, and shelters millions through its labour and humanitarian policies. It is a nation where global

leaders ring its phone before crises escalate, where major powers seek its voice, and where dignity, development and dialogue are woven into statecraft.

The mourners at al -Lusail Palace this week are not only grieving a leader; they are honouring a vision. From the Gulf to the Levant, from South Asia to Africa, leaders have recalled Sheikh Hamad’s wisdom, his selfless commitment, and the enduring impact of his work. Their presence is a quiet acknowledgement: what Qatar is today began with the foundations he laid.

Sheikh Tamim’s stewardship has carried that vision forward with resolve and restraint. He has deepened partnerships, expanded humanitarian reach, and defended principled positions even when costly. The continuity between father and son is not inherited rhetoric; it is policy made visible in projects, alliances and moral clarity.

As flags fly at half -mast and Doha stands draped in mourning, the world’s gathering here is itself a testament. A geographically small state, once peripheral, now commands respect because its leaders chose substance over spectacle, and service over self. In that choice lies the truest measure of greatness.



From unipolar moment to uncertain leadership, waning US influence

By Rory Miller



In a recent article marking America’s 250th anniversary, The Economist magazine made an interesting observation. Measured by several criteria, the US of 2026 is “richer, stronger and cleverer than ever”. Yet at the same time, as the piece points out, America’s “dominance appears to be eroding”.

Certainly, US military spending is unmatched and it has access to many more overseas bases than any combination of its rivals. On the economic front, though losing ground to China every year, its companies still dominate tech, it is the biggest player in oil and gas, and the dollar remains the world’s reserve currency.

Yet it is hard to disagree with *The Economist’s* conclusion. Time and again, from Afghanistan to Iraq, and during the current conflict with Iran, the US willingness to spend vast amounts on superior warfighting capabilities has not translated into strategic victory.

There is also a growing perception, even among long -time partners, that the US is an unreliable ally. It is no longer taken for granted that “American leadership is the one constant in an uncertain world”; as President Obama put it only a decade ago. Instead, in recent decades the US has struggled to demonstrate leadership by providing followers across the world with the security, stability and order they expect from their leader.

This point is important. It is far easier to get regional partners to follow you voluntarily when you take their interests into account and are committed to defending those interests. This is as much a matter of political will as material power. The absence of political will quickly translates into a loss of strategic influence that damages a leader’s standing with its followers. To take one example, despite its enormous material advantages over the Assad regime and its Russian patron, the Obama administration’s lack of resolve and strategic clarity in the Syrian civil war diminished America’s leadership. As one of many similar media headlines put it in 2016, “Russia’s grip on Syria tightens as brittle ceasefire deal leaves US out in the cold”.

Followers will continue to follow even when the leader ignores their interests or lacks the will to act in support of those interests. They do so because they have no better options or because they fear the leader will unleash punitive measures against them, such as tariffs and sanctions. But this form of leadership is coercive, expensive and consumes a lot of political capital to keep weaker and smaller states, including allies, in line. The result is a



US President Donald Trump steps out of Marine One for a visit to Fort Bragg to mark the US Army anniversary, in North Carolina, last year in this file photo. (Reuters)

downward spiral that undermines the leader’s legitimacy and makes it harder for it to shape the international system in line with its own interests – a key test of geopolitical dominance.

All this was evident in mid -April when US allies responded negatively to President Donald Trump’s call for a US -led Hormuz coalition after Iran closed the Strait. Unlike earlier post - Cold War coalitions, where participation was both broad and geographically diverse, the Hormuz initiative struggled from the outset to attract even a core group of committed partners among Washington’s traditional allies.

For example, none of the three countries who participated in the initial military invasion of Iraq in 2003 – Australia, the UK and Poland – agreed to get involved. Prime Minister Donald Tusk of Poland publicly ruled out sending troops. His Australian counterpart, Anthony Albanese, explained bluntly “This is not our war”. The UK’s Keir Starmer promised his country would “not buckle” under US pressure.

This refusal to follow Washington is notable because freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz is a shared interest of the entire international community. Nor can we put this non -involvement down to legitimate concerns about escalation with Iran or domestic political opposition. Similar risks and constraints were present in Iraq and Afghanistan yet did not prevent large numbers of states from contributing in various ways. A more persuasive explanation is that in the past America’s allies willingly followed the US more than today. They did so because they believed the relationship, despite real differences on some issues, was based on reciprocity, shared interests and even common values.

Spanish prime minister, José María Aznar, explained that he joined the US coalition in Iraq in 2003, despite huge popular opposition at home, because, “The strengthening of relations with the United States was a priority.” He added, “you cannot ask a friend for help and then later, when that same friend asks you for something, say no”. Contrast this with the position of Pedro Sánchez, Spain’s current prime minister. He called the attack on Iran an “absurd and illegal war”, denied the US access to his country’s military bases and stood up to President Trump when he threatened to cut off trade and kick Spain out of Nato.

This is not to say that the era of American power is over. Despite its much -reduced position, the US continues to be the “powerful outsider” at the centre of most regions. The procession of government leaders visiting the White House to pay homage attests to this. Even Sánchez has downplayed his disagreements with Trump. But the recent Hormuz episode, and the wider war with Iran, provide an important indication of how changes in perceptions of US power and leadership are reshaping the geopolitical order.

It is also a reminder of something else: that America’s “unipolar moment”, which began with its victory in the Cold War in the early 1990s, was always going to be just that – a moment. It is rare for one state to sustain indefinitely its position as the preeminent militarily, economic and diplomatic actor across all regions at the same time.

This state of affairs is always temporary. Eventually, another state or, more usually, a combination of states will, as Napoleon found out, put their differences aside, come together and overturn the unipolar order. Having lived for almost forty years in a world defined by an overwhelming concentration of power in a single state, the US, it is easy to forget that unipolarity is the exception not the norm throughout history.

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A hidden pipeline brings Amazon and Walmart to African shoppers

By Jessica Donati
Dakar

No bank card? No address? No problem. Shoppers in Africa increasingly are buying online from big brands such as Amazon or Walmart even though they have no physical presence on much of the continent.

Among those benefiting from the shift are local and foreign package - forwarding companies that use technology and increasing internet penetration in Africa to overcome hurdles, including a lack of formal street addresses and customers with no access to traditional banks.

One is Senegalese startup, Afrety, which provides a snapshot of how Africa’s shoppers can rely on intermediaries to buy from the United States, Europe and China and receive the package at their doorstep.

Delivering without an address

Afrety’s service provides shoppers with delivery addresses at warehouses in France, the United States and China. Multiple purchases can be consolidated for each customer and repackaged for dispatch to West Africa. On arrival, customs duties are paid, benefiting local governments.

Customers without bank cards can pay by digital, mobile money accounts that can be charged with cash at kiosks. Mobile money is used widely in Senegal, along with other parts of Africa, instead of conventional banking.

Once the packages arrive in Senegal, motorbikes and vans parked outside Afrety’s depot deliver using GPS across a major city like Dakar.

“You have to be very, very, very flexible. That’s the key word,” Souane Diop, the 34 -year -old CEO, told Reuters, outside his depot filled with packages labelled Amazon and other international brands.

Diop said the company started in 2018 with the aim of connecting informal networks of air travellers between France and Senegal.

From small beginnings it has grown to four to five metric tons by air and two to three containers by sea each week. To keep costs low, Afrety rents its warehouse in France and uses partners in the US and China to handle trade there.

A revolution in online shopping in Africa

Global logistics company Aramex is a much bigger rival, operating two platforms with overlapping services.

Whereas Afrety grew out of the deep connections between Senegal and former colonial power France, which has a large Senegalese diaspora population, Aramex in Sub -Saharan Africa relies on MyUS, which began by providing goods for US expatriates living in Africa.

Aramex acquired MyUS in 2022 and in addition runs a platform that it created, Shop and Ship, which also delivers to many countries on the continent.

Aramex Group Chief Executive Amadou Diallo told Reuters the company aims to serve African customers that want choice and brands otherwise unavailable to them.

Angola is one of its main destinations, but it also operates in difficult environments, notably Somalia, which has been riven by war for decades.

Online growth funds are finite

Aramex says Sub -Saharan Africa is one of its fastest growing regions.

The products most in demand are electronics, apparel, toys and machinery for agriculture and auto parts. The company says it plans to double revenue from shipping these and other goods there by 2030.

However, constraints on growth remain. For Aramex and also Afrety, customers mostly live in or near major cities, where relative wealth is concentrated.

That is because e -commerce in Africa is largely

driven by economic hubs, according to Tech Cabal Insights, a consultancy.

Internet penetration has reached around 43% of Africa’s 1.5bn people, but only a small fraction have enough income to shop online, it says. Even in Nigeria, West Africa’s economic powerhouse, only 1 in 3 internet users shop online.

In poorer regions like Central Africa, only about 1 in 20 people shop online, the consultancy says.

The exception of South Africa

South Africa, the richest economy in sub -Saharan Africa, dominates the continent’s internet use and stands alone in Africa for its level of online shopping.

Online retail volumes in South Africa have grown by close to 35% annually over the last five years to about 140bn rand in 2025 (\$7.26bn), Mastercard figures show.

The growth has drawn big brands to set up their first operations in sub -Saharan Africa. Amazon launched its first online marketplace in South Africa in 2024, competing with local e -commerce giant Takealot.

The first Walmart -branded stores in Africa opened in Johannesburg last year.

When asked, neither Amazon nor Walmart commented on whether they were considering expanding to other parts of sub -Saharan Africa. They also did not respond to requests for data on sales volumes to intermediaries.

Competition intensifies in strong markets

Even if the online giants remain absent from much of Africa, the intermediaries face other competition.

Nigerian retail company Jumia, often known colloquially as the Amazon of Africa, operates in eight countries in sub -Saharan Africa, selling consumer goods ranging from fashion to electronics to home appliances. It has yet to make a profit, but says it expects to break even this year.

Its Chief Executive Francis Dufay told Reuters that the company is fending off competition from Chinese retail giants including Temu and Shein by tailoring its services to each country, including opening local help centres and pick -up points in rural areas.

Executives at both Jumia and Aramex said Nigeria was among the African e -commerce markets with most potential.

The Nigerian government does not routinely publish e -commerce figures but has cited United Nations figures estimating the total at around \$75 billion in 2025.

Aramex opened a warehouse in Nigeria in April this year. Jumia’s Dufay said business there has grown by around 50% over the last quarter of 2025.

“It’s still totally underpenetrated We’re just at the beginning of our transformation In Nigeria,” he said.



Bouba Mane organises packages at Afrety headquarters in Dakar, Senegal. (Reuters)

Lebanese officials pay tribute to Father Amir

Lebanese political figures have praised the legacy of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, describing his leadership as instrumental in elevating Qatar's regional and international standing while underscoring his longstanding support for Lebanon during pivotal moments in its modern history.

In remarks to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), current and former Lebanese officials said HH Sheikh Hamad's political and humanitarian legacy remains deeply appreciated in Lebanon, citing his contributions to dialogue, stability and post-conflict reconstruction.

Former Lebanese foreign minister Adnan Mansour said HH the late Father Amir oversaw a period of significant development in Qatar following his accession to power in 1995, with advances in education, healthcare, infrastructure and public services helping transform the country into an influential regional and global actor.

Mansour also highlighted Qatar's diplomatic role in mediating regional conflicts, particularly its involvement in Lebanon, Palestine, Libya and Sudan.

He recalled HH the late Father Amir's sponsorship of the 2008 Doha Agreement, which ended a prolonged political crisis in Lebanon and helped restore the country's political process.

Mansour further pointed to HH Sheikh Hamad's visit to Lebanon following the Israeli aggression on Lebanon in 2006 and Qatar's financial support for rebuilding villages and towns in southern Lebanon, saying the assistance left a lasting impression on the Lebanese people.

MP Hadi Aboul Hessen, secretary of the Democratic Gathering parliamentary bloc, praised HH Sheikh Hamad's role in Qatar's development and his support for Lebanon.

MP Melhem Riachy of the Strong Republic bloc said Lebanese people continue to remember HH Sheikh Hamad's efforts to encourage dialogue among political factions and his contributions to reconstruction, describing Qatar's engagement as an example of diplomacy aimed at building trust and reducing divisions.

Former social affairs minister Hector Hajjar also commended HH Sheikh Hamad's role in modernising Qatar and supporting Lebanon, saying his efforts to bring together Lebanese leaders and back the 2008 Doha Agreement were central to strengthening the country's security and stability.

Former MP Khaled Zahraman said HH Sheikh Hamad's support for Arab countries, particularly Lebanon, had left a lasting legacy.

MP Ghassan Atallah told QNA that it was important to remember HH the late Father Amir's contributions and his support for Lebanon and the wider Arab region.

He said HH Sheikh Hamad's support for Lebanon had consistently focused on strengthening the Lebanese state and its institutions without intervening in the country's internal political affairs.

He added that Qatar had pursued a policy of supporting Lebanon's state institutions rather than siding with any domestic political faction.

MP Ghassan Hasbani told QNA that HH Sheikh Hamad's leadership had played a key role in Qatar's development and in strengthening its regional and international standing, while also reinforcing the close ties between Lebanon and Qatar.

He added that HH Sheikh Hamad's support for the Lebanese state, its institutions and the principles of dialogue and national consensus would remain appreciated by the Lebanese people. — QNA

Visionary leader who transformed Qatar, reshaping the region

From Page 1

Yet, what made this achievement truly remarkable was how that prosperity was invested.

The wealth generated through LNG was channelled into education, research and human development rather than simply infrastructure.

The establishment and growth of Qatar Foundation, under the leadership of Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser, created opportunities for generations of Qataris and residents alike.

International universities, research institutions and centres of innovation became pillars of a knowledge-based society that continues to shape the country's future.

HH the late Father Amir also understood that a nation's identity cannot be measured solely by its skyline.

He believed that culture is the soul of a country.

Through sustained investment in museums, heritage and the arts, Qatar established itself as a regional and international cultural destination.

These achievements reflected his

conviction that great nations preserve and celebrate their identity while embracing the future.

Equally significant was his vision of Qatar as a platform for dialogue, peace and mediation.

Under his leadership, Doha became synonymous with diplomacy, bringing together leaders from across the world to address complex global challenges.

Initiatives such as the Doha Forum demonstrated Qatar's growing role as a trusted venue where dialogue could prevail over conflict.

His humanitarian commitment was equally evident.

HH Sheikh Hamad consistently stood with the Palestinian people and supported reconstruction efforts in Gaza and Lebanon, believing that leadership carried responsibilities beyond national borders.

His compassion and commitment to helping communities affected by conflict earned Qatar respect throughout the region.

His vision also extended to global diplomacy.

By facilitating dialogue among Afghan parties, Qatar laid the foundations

for peace negotiations that would later gain international recognition.

These efforts reflected HH Sheikh Hamad's belief that even the most difficult conflicts could be addressed through engagement and dialogue.

Sport was another pillar of his long-term vision.

He recognised that sport is a form of public diplomacy capable of changing perceptions and bringing people together.

The successful journey towards hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 was never solely about Qatar; it represented a defining moment for the entire Arab world.

It demonstrated that the region could successfully deliver an event of global significance while showcasing its culture, hospitality and capabilities.

As someone who has worked in the media sector, I also regard the establishment of Al Jazeera as one of HH Sheikh Hamad's most transformative achievements.

It reshaped the Arab media landscape by introducing a new model of journalism that expanded public discourse and gave voice to perspectives that had long been absent from regional media.

Its influence fundamentally changed

how news was produced and consumed across the Middle East.

Throughout his life, HH Sheikh Hamad sought to reshape the global narrative surrounding Arabs and Muslims.

At a time when the region was often associated with conflict and instability, he championed dialogue, understanding and co-operation.

He believed that Qatar could serve as a bridge between cultures and demonstrate the values of peace, progress and mutual respect.

His legacy cannot be measured only by economic growth or international recognition.

It lives on in Qatar's educational institutions, its cultural achievements, its diplomatic influence and the confidence with which the nation continues to look towards the future.

HH the late Father Amir was, above all, a leader of the people.

His vision transformed Qatar, inspired the region and earned admiration around the world.

His contributions will continue to guide future generations, and his legacy will never be forgotten.



Amir receives condolences

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received further condolences at Lusail Palace yesterday from mourners following the passing of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani on the third day of mourning.



More world leaders converge for homage

From Page 1

Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and his accompanying delegation also met HH the Amir, with the reception additionally attended by HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani and HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani.

Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq Masrour Barzani and his accompanying delegation offered condolences at a reception.

President of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council Rashad Mohammed al-Alimi and his accompanying delegation also called on HH the Amir.

President of Senegal Bassirou Diomaye Faye and his accompanying delegation offered condolences at a reception additionally attended by HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani and HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani.

Nepal's Vice-President Ram Sahaya Prasad Yadav and his accompanying delegation also met HH the Amir, with the reception additionally attended by HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani and HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani.

Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers of Kyrgyzstan Adylbek Aleshevich Kasymaliev and his accompanying delegation offered condolences at a reception additionally attended by HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani and HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani.

Prince Edward, Duke of Edinburgh, also called on HH the Amir to offer condolences.

This reception was additionally attended by HE Sheikh Khalid bin Hamad al-Thani and HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani.

President of Georgia Mikheil Kavelashvili and his accompanying delegation also offered condolences, with the reception additionally attended by HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani.

Deputy Prime Minister of Tajikistan Sulaymon Ziyozoda and his accompanying delegation were the last to call on HH the Amir.

This reception was likewise additionally attended by HE Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Khalifa al-Thani.

Praise for Father Amir's role in consolidating Qatar's regional and international standing

roles and reduce tensions in several crises.

He added that Qatar has played a prominent role in supporting Arab causes, foremost among them the Palestinian cause.

It also contributed, al-Ghurairi said, to the reconstruction of Lebanon following the 2006 war, in addition to its participation in mediation efforts on numerous regional and international issues.

He considered Qatar's policy, based on balance, openness, and dialogue, to be a model that can contribute to strengthening regional stability and reducing the risks of escalation.

Mahmoud Alloush, a researcher at the Policy Analysis Centre, stated that Qatar as a modern and contemporary state that has achieved a remarkable renaissance over the past decades would be

HH Sheikh Hamad holds a special place in the hearts of Palestinians for his political and humanitarian support of the Palestinian cause

incomplete without mentioning HH the late Father Amir.

Speaking to France 24 TV channel, Alloush added that HH Sheikh Hamad succeeded in transforming Qatar from a small state into one with an active and influential presence among the regional powers that have contributed to shaping the political landscape in the region over the past decades.

In an article in the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al-Qabas*, writer **Dr Abdulhamid al-Shayji** wrote that Qatar and the Gulf have lost one of their statesmen.

He noted that HH the late Father Amir represented a significant era in modern Qatar's history, during which the country witnessed major transformations in the fields of development, economy, education, and consolidation of its regional and

international presence, while maintaining its deep-rooted Gulf identity and fraternal relations with its brothers.

In an article published in the Kuwaiti newspaper *Alrai*, writer **Abdulrahman al-Otaibi** highlighted the role and stature of HH the late Father Amir.

During HH Sheikh Hamad's reign, al-Otaibi noted, major modernisation projects were launched, and the media presence was strengthened with the launch of Al Jazeera, which became one of the most influential media institutions in the Arab world.

Qatar also witnessed, he said, a comprehensive renaissance in infrastructure, culture, economy, and sports, becoming a model of rapid achievement and sound planning.

This culminated in hosting the FIFA World Cup 2022, an unprecedented and historic achievement.

In an article published in Oman's *Al-roya*, Omani writer **Nasser al-Abri** said that the legacy of great historical figures remains even after their passing, leaving behind their achievements as testimony of lives devoted to their nations and their conviction that investing in the people is the best path to building one's country.

Among these great figures, al-Abri said, is HH Sheikh Hamad, whose reign was one of the most significant transformative periods in Qatar's history, so much so that the country's development experience during that period is a case study worthy of appreciation.

In an article published in Lebanon's *Annahar* newspaper, journalist **Nader Ezzeddine** said that during HH the late Father Amir's reign, Qatar led mediation efforts involving Lebanon, Sudan, Palestine, and Yemen.

He pointed out that Qatar hosted conferences, negotiations, and diplomatic

initiatives, with mediation becoming one of the defining features of Qatari foreign policy as well as a means of strengthening the country's security by making it a sought-after party in crisis management.

Ezzeddine noted HH Sheikh Hamad's numerous achievements across various fields, including sports, education, and the economy.

Saudi writer **Mirza al-Khuwailidi** stated that HH Sheikh Hamad's name is synonymous with the greatest transformation in modern Qatar's history, as the country, during his reign, moved from a state with limited influence to an influential player in politics, economics, and media at both the regional and international levels, in an article published in the London-based *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper.

HH Sheikh Hamad led the modernisation of Qatar, transforming it into an influential player on the international stage

The Spanish writer **Eduardo Alvarez** considered the biography of HH Sheikh Hamad to be that of a leader with great political acumen.

In an analysis published in the Spanish newspaper *El Mundo*, he said that HH the late Father Amir was the architect of remarkable initiatives in an energy-rich region, transforming a remote location into an international hub in record time.

Spanish journalist **Alberto Ochoa** stated in a report published in the Spanish newspaper *Moncloa* that during the reign of HH Sheikh Hamad, far-reaching economic, social, and cultural changes took place.

Under his leadership, Qatar transformed into a global diplomatic and investment powerhouse.

HH Sheikh Hamad also leveraged its

vast natural gas reserves to finance unprecedented international expansion and successfully secured Doha's selection to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Indonesian researcher **Kurniawan Arif** believes that HH the late Father Amir was the architect of modern Qatar's renaissance, reshaping the foundations of the concept of sovereignty and proving that a small state can become a globally significant and indispensable player on the international stage, not through military might, but by redefining the true meaning of power in the 21st century.

In an article on the British website *Middle East Monitor*, he noted that HH Sheikh Hamad enabled Qatar to play a pivotal role in international relations, becoming an indispensable international mediator.

The researcher emphasised that the significance of these achievements lies in their integration.

Al Jazeera gave Qatar media power, Education City provided it with a wealth of knowledge, the FIFA World Cup 2022 enhanced its global presence, and LNG provided economic leverage.

The British newspaper *The Times* stated that HH Sheikh Hamad led the modernisation of Qatar, transforming it into an influential player on the international stage.

The newspaper considered him the architect of Qatar's modern renaissance, having led its transformation from a small peninsula in the Gulf into a modern, energy-rich, and stable nation that plays a significant role in international investment and diplomacy.

The **Anadolu Agency**, among other Turkish media outlets, also published a report describing HH Sheikh Hamad as the leader who spearheaded Qatar's transformation, making it more prominent regionally and globally through an economic shift based on natural gas revenues and infrastructure investments, as well as proactive foreign policy initiatives.

He also played an active role on both regional and international levels.

Arab and international media figures and writers have praised the legacy of His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani and commended his pivotal role in building modern Qatar and consolidating its regional and international standing, as well as lauded his experience in developing a foreign policy based on mediation, openness, and strengthening its diplomatic and economic presence.

They noted that HH the late Father Amir led Qatar's transformation and contributed to developing its political, economic, and diplomatic capabilities, making it an influential player on both the Arab and international stages.

Palestinian writer and political analyst **Ibrahim al-Madhoun** said that HH Sheikh Hamad holds a special place in the hearts of Palestinians for his political and humanitarian support of the Palestinian cause during what he described as critical and dangerous periods.

During an interview with Al Mayadeen TV, al-Madhoun said that Palestinians hold HH the late Father Amir in high esteem and deep affection, noting that one of the most prominent examples of this was during the siege of the late Palestinian president Yasser Arafat, when HH Sheikh Hamad maintained contact with him and provided political and moral support.

Al-Madhoun added that HH the late Father Amir played a prominent role during the 2008-09 war on Gaza, through his political stances and by hosting the emergency Arab summit at the time, in addition to his contribution to mobilising Arab and international support for the Palestinian cause.

Iraqi academic **Adel al-Ghurairi** meanwhile stated that the passing of HH Sheikh Hamad represents a loss of a figure who played a pivotal role in building the modern state, adding that Qatari policy over the past decades has relied on employing soft power and building a broad network of diplomatic relations with various regional and international parties, which enabled Doha to play mediating

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