



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. (AFP/File photo)

'Father Amir's legacy laid foundations for modern Qatar'

Qatari newspaper *Arrayah* yesterday highlighted the enduring legacy of the HH the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, describing it as a strategic vision that laid the foundations of the modern Qatari state, placed investment in people, knowledge and sustainable development at the heart of national progress, and paved the way for the country's comprehensive development, a journey that continues under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

In its editorial, titled "The Fa-

ther Amir's Legacy... A Vision That Shaped the Future', the newspaper said the legacy of HH the late Father Amir extends far beyond a particular period in history or a record of achievements. Rather, it represents a comprehensive national project that redefined the concept of development by affirming that nation-building begins with investing in people and that a clear vision can turn ambition into tangible achievements. It said this legacy has become a foundation on which future generations continue to build toward greater prosperity and confidence.

The newspaper said HH Sheikh Hamad instilled in Qataris the belief that lasting success depends not only on natural resources, but also on investment in knowledge, unlocking human potential and empowering people to shape the future. It said this vision fostered a national culture grounded in innovation and the value of hard work, with education, scientific research and sustainable development serving as the cornerstones of the modern state. *Arrayah* said Qatar's transformation extended well beyond economic growth and infrastructure development to

include institutional reform, stronger governance, and improved healthcare and education, while fostering an environment that encourages initiative and innovation. These efforts, it said, have strengthened society's ability to adapt to change, reinforced confidence in its capabilities, and enhanced its readiness to continue the country's development journey. The newspaper added that this approach had also strengthened Qatar's standing on the international stage, not only through its development achievements but also by offering a model that dem-

onstrates how sound planning, effective governance and investment in human capital are the true drivers of sustainable progress. It said the Qatari experience has earned widespread international recognition and become a source of inspiration for countries pursuing sustainable development. In conclusion, *Arrayah* said Qataris continue to move forward with confidence, inspired by the legacy of HH the late Father Amir and guided by dedication, sincerity and ambition under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani. (QNA)

Qatar participates in international conference on Jerusalem in Cairo

The State of Qatar participated yesterday in an international conference on Jerusalem, entitled "Jerusalem: The Frontline of Displacement and Annexation and the Key to Achieving a Just and Lasting Peace", held by the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (CEIRPP), in collaboration with the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation (OIC), in Cairo, Egypt. Qatar's delegation to the conference was headed by Minister Plenipotentiary, Deputy Ambassador of the State of Qatar to Arab Republic of Egypt and Deputy Permanent Representative to the League of Arab States Maryam bint Ahmed al-Shibi.

Addressing ways to protect the unique multi-religious character of Jerusalem and its importance as a symbol of coexistence, the conference focused on the pressing challenges facing the Palestinian people in occupied East Jerusalem, including displacement, dispossession, and violence, placing these issues within the broader context of the occupied Palestinian territory, while emphasising the importance of protecting the holy city, preserving the existing historical and legal status quo, and sup-



porting the rights, presence, and sovereignty of Palestinians in Jerusalem. The conference reaffirmed the historical and legal status quo in Jerusalem as the foundation for achieving peace, stability, and interfaith coexistence. It also highlighted the restrictions on freedom of worship and the threats to holy sites, as well as the impact of Israeli policies, including settlement expansion, on the city's identity and the Palestinian presence there. It emphasised the international com-

munity's responsibilities under international law to preserve the cultural and religious character of Jerusalem. Its agenda included two panel discussions that brought together religious leaders, policymakers, and experts on: Saving the holy city and protecting the historical status quo of the holy sites, and Preserving the Palestinian presence, rights, and sovereignty in Jerusalem and the occupied Palestinian territory in the face of displacement policies and illegal settlement expansion. (QNA)

Qatar resident, 6, paints his way into five record books

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"We noticed his interest when he was very small. He loved drawing everywhere," they said. Rather than turning his talent into a demanding routine, the family has focused on preserving the enjoyment that first drew him to art. "We encourage him by giving him time to paint and making it fun, not a task," they said. The family, originally from Perambra in Kerala's Kozhikode district, also credited Al-Ameen's school and Qatar's wider community for creating an encouraging environment. His father works with Qatar Airways, while his mother serves at Military Medical City Hospital in Doha. "His school and teachers gave him support. The community in Qatar is very supportive," his parents said. "Talented children need love,



encouragement and opportunities to grow." They hope the story will encourage other young people to pursue what they enjoy, regardless of their age. "We hope his achievement inspires other children to follow their passion," they said. The family is now considering



exhibitions and opportunities to use his artwork in support of charitable and community causes. For Al-Ameen, the achievement may be recorded in five books, but its larger message is simple: when children are given space, encouragement and joy, even the smallest hands can create something meaningful.

GCC secretary-general, Arab League condemn Iranian attacks on Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan

Secretary-General of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Jassem Mohamed Albudaiwi condemned in the strongest terms the Iranian attacks that targeted Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan, alongside the targeting of infrastructure and civilian facilities, which resulted in the injury of a number of civilian workers in Kuwait. In a statement yesterday, Albudaiwi said: "Iran's actions constitute a highly dangerous escalation, a grave violation of international law and the United Nations (UN) Charter, as well as war crimes requiring international accountability and prosecution, given the deliberate targeting of infrastructure and civilian facilities in flagrant violation of all international norms and conventions, and a persistent

determination to destabilise regional security and stability." The GCC secretary-general stressed that the GCC stands as one with Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan, supporting all measures they take to protect their security, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The Arab League warned of the grave danger posed by Iran's criminal and reckless attacks against a number of Arab states, particularly in the Gulf region. In a statement yesterday, Arab League Secretary-General Nabil Fahmy described the attacks as an attempt to widen the scope of the conflict and drive the region towards greater instability and insecurity (QNA)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

((يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتٍ))

صدق الله العظيم

We extend our sincere condolences and deepest sympathy to

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

His Highness
Sheikh Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Thani
Deputy Amir

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

His Highness
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))



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Effective investment in modern technology enables quicker transformation of Qatar agriculture sector

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The effective use of sophisticated technology as well as investment in innovative solutions has considerably improved agriculture production in Qatar, with government-backed private sector businesses that completely transformed the food production sector in the country

Faced with severe climatic constraints, including less than 2% arable land, average annual rainfall of less than 100mm, limited renewable groundwater resources, high soil salinity, and summer temperatures that frequently exceed 45C, the country has shifted away from conventional agriculture and invested heavily in sophisticated technologies that enable year-round production while conserving natural resources.

Since 2017, such transformation has been highly accelerated, stressing the importance of developing resilient domestic food production systems. Accordingly, Qatar has adopted an investment-led approach that prioritises smart agriculture, digital technologies, and sustainable farming methods. This commitment was reinforced with the launch of the National Food Security Strategy 2030 in December 2024. The strategy places strong emphasis on adopting advanced agricultural technologies, increasing local production through innovation, strengthening strategic food reserves, expanding scientific research, and encouraging greater private-sector participation.

The use of controlled-environment agriculture has been widely used to overcome the related environmental and climate challenges. Instead of relying on traditional open-field farming, the country has invested in thou-

sands of climate-controlled greenhouses capable of producing crops throughout the year despite the harsh desert climate. According to the Ministry of Municipality, the country has more than 8,400 active greenhouses, many equipped with Dutch and Spanish technologies adapted specifically for Gulf conditions. These greenhouses utilise computerised climate-control systems that automatically regulate temperature, humidity, ventilation, carbon dioxide levels, irrigation, and lighting.

Several Qatari farms have become regional examples of smart greenhouse farming. Agrico, one of Qatar's leading agricultural companies, has developed highly automated greenhouse complexes where environmental conditions are managed through digital control systems. Sensors continuously monitor crop health, temperature, humidity, and nutrient levels, allowing irrigation and fertilisation to be adjusted automatically according to the precise needs of each crop. This approach has significantly increased productivity while reducing water consumption and minimising fertiliser waste.

Hydroponics has become another cornerstone of the country's agricultural transformation. Unlike conventional farming, hydroponic systems grow crops in nutrient-rich water rather than soil, making them particularly suitable for Qatar's sandy terrain and limited freshwater resources. These systems reduce water consumption by up to 90% while increasing crop yields and shortening production cycles. So, hydroponic technology has been used extensively across many commercial farms to produce high-quality vegetables throughout the year.

A leading example is Baladna, which, while internationally recognised for transforming Qatar's



Dignitaries at 13th Qatar International Agricultural Exhibition AgriteQ 2026. (File photo)

dairy industry, has also invested in hydroponic fodder production to feed its dairy herd. Instead of importing large quantities of animal feed, Baladna produces fresh green fodder using automated hydroponic units that require only a fraction of the water used in conventional fodder cultivation.

Modern farms in the country are increasingly relying on the Internet of Things (IoT), where thousands of sensors continuously collect information on temperature, humidity, water quality, soil moisture, nutrient concentrations, solar radiation, and greenhouse performance. These sensors transmit real-time data to cloud-based management systems, enabling farm operators to monitor production remotely and make informed decisions based on continuously updated information.

Artificial Intelligence has further strengthened Qatar's agricultural capabilities. AI-powered management systems analyse data collect-

ed from sensors, cameras, weather stations, and historical production records to optimise irrigation schedules, predict disease outbreaks, detect nutrient deficiencies, and estimate harvest times. Drone technology is also becoming increasingly important in Qatar's agricultural sector. Equipped with multispectral cameras and thermal imaging systems, drones allow farm managers to inspect large production areas quickly and accurately. They can identify irrigation leaks, detect plant stress, monitor greenhouse infrastructure, and assess crop health without requiring manual inspection.

Smart irrigation networks combine soil-moisture sensors, weather forecasting data, evapotranspiration calculations, and artificial intelligence (AI) to determine exactly how much water each crop requires. Automated drip irrigation systems minimise evaporation losses, while many farms recycle irrigation water through filtration

and sterilisation systems, allowing it to be reused multiple times. Some commercial farms have also incorporated reverse osmosis treatment and ultraviolet sterilisation technologies to maintain water quality within closed irrigation systems.

Qatar has simultaneously invested in aquaponics, a technology that integrates fish farming with hydroponic crop production. In aquaponic systems, water from fish tanks provides natural nutrients for vegetables, while the plants purify the water before it is returned to the fish tanks.

Scientific research has become one of the principal drivers of technological innovation in Qatar's agriculture. Qatar University, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, the Qatar National Research Fund, and the Qatar Research, Development and Innovation Council work closely with the Ministry of Municipality to develop agricultural technologies specifically suited to arid en-

vironments. Research focuses on heat-tolerant crops, salt-resistant plant varieties, biological pest control, advanced greenhouse engineering, precision irrigation, renewable energy integration, and artificial intelligence applications for agriculture. These research programmes ensure that technological innovation remains aligned with Qatar's long-term food security objectives.

Thanks to the use of sophisticated technology and effective government-private sector collaboration, Qatar's agricultural sector produces around 120,000 tonnes of vegetables annually. The sector records an average annual growth rate of about 5.5% and includes date palms, cereals, green fodder, dairy, and poultry. The country meets over 70% of its vegetable needs and about 86% of its date consumption.

Further, Qatar's agriculture market size is valued at around QR1.34bn in 2026, growing at an annual rate of 7%. Greenhouse and hydroponic systems are valued at over \$216mn as investment in such technology is constantly increasing. Besides, agriculture analytics and smart farming are valued at around \$170mn, focusing on IoT and resource-efficient farming, while vertical farming is valued at \$15mn, deeply supported by government sustainability incentives.

In the meantime, effective investment strategies in this sector have produced excellent outcomes as the country has achieved 100% self-sufficiency in seasonal vegetables and around 99 percent self-sufficiency in fresh poultry and dairy products. Further, local food manufacturing has expanded to more than 138 factories, while the country ranks 30th globally in the Global Food Security Index and 19th in the Resilient Food Systems Index.

WCM-Q wins prestigious international edtech award

Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) has won ASPIRE award in recognition of institutional excellence in the field of technology enhanced learning.

The award - called the Certificate of Merit in Technology Enhanced Learning - was given to WCM-Q by the ASPIRE Academy, which is part of the AMEE, recognised as the world's leading international association for health professions education. This year's certificates will be presented at the AMEE Conference 2026 in Vienna.

WCM-Q was awarded the certificate after the ASPIRE Board concluded that the college demonstrates excellence in several areas of Technology Enhanced Learning and reflects a substantial institutional commitment to innovation, digital transformation, and educational quality. The award recognises effective use of educational technologies that are grounded in sound pedagogy, enhance teaching and learning experiences, and demonstrate clear educational value and impact.

Dr Douglas Bovell, adjunct professor of systems and computational biomedicine, said: "We are really thrilled to receive this prestigious award. Our philosophy at WCM-Q has always been to embrace the implementation of innovative learning where we can demonstrate that they truly enhance educational outcomes,



Mahmood Dualeh, Dr Thurayya Arayssi and Dr Douglas Bovell.

so it is very encouraging to receive recognition in this way. We believe it is essential to equip our students with both technical expertise and an ability to adapt to the changing technological landscape so that they can thrive in their careers as physicians."

Dr Arayssi professor of clinical medicine & vice dean for academic and curricular affairs said: "It is hugely pleasing to receive official recognition for our technology enhanced learning initiatives from such an esteemed international body as the AMEE, through its prestigious ASPIRE Academy Awards. I would like to thank my WCM-Q colleagues who are absolutely dedicated to rigorously testing and integrating new learning technologies for the benefit of our students, which has made this award possible."

Qatar's GSAS momentum has set a new green benchmark

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Commercial and institutional landmarks such as Vodafone's headquarters in Msheireb and The View Hospital further highlighted cross-sector engagement, alongside large-scale recognitions for the QIN Master Plan and Qatar Free Zones, particularly Umm Al Houl and Marsa Districts, collectively representing the wide-ranging integration of GSAS across Qatar's built environment ecosystem," he highlighted.

GSAS evaluates projects using eight main criteria. They are: Urban Connectivity; Site Selection; Energy Consumption; Water Use; Material Selection; Indoor Environment; Cultural & Economic Values and Management & Operations. Projects achieve certifi-

cation by scoring points across all categories. Developers and contractors use the GSASgate Platform to track project progress, manage assessments, and secure final accreditation.

Dr Alhorr said that Gord applies a truly 360-degree approach to sustainability. He stated: "Gord treats innovation as a continuous lifecycle that begins with ideation and extends all the way to regional and international scaling. Through the Gord Institute, we actively research and incubate proprietary, low-carbon intellectual property tailored for the harsh climate realities of the Mena region and the Global South."

The official pointed out that GSAS is increasing being adapted in several other countries in the region. He remarked: "Looking

beyond Qatar, we are witnessing an exciting new chapter for regional sustainability. With the GCC Standardisation Organisation officially adopting GSAS as a regional standard (GSO 3000:2025), we are expecting a significant spike in GSAS projects across the region. To support this momentum, our capacity-building activities have actively started to roll out, effectively driving the implementation phase forward."

"In terms of regional footprint, GSAS frameworks have already been successfully implemented in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, on an introductory and foundational level, our systems have expanded through targeted capacity building and strategic alliance levels into Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Algeria," added, Dr Alhorr.

Sidra Medicine advances paediatric obesity care through sophisticated solutions

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Sidra Medicine has been offering sophisticated tailor-made treatment courses for the children suffering from obesity in Qatar, using the most sophisticated diagnostic equipment and innovative treatment programmes.

Over the years, Sidra Medicine has established itself as a leading centre for specialised children's healthcare, offering comprehensive services designed to address complex health challenges, including obesity and related metabolic conditions.

Childhood obesity is no longer viewed simply as a lifestyle issue but rather as a chronic medical condition requiring coordinated intervention. Qatar's rapid economic development, urban lifestyle, changing dietary patterns and reduced physical activity have contributed to increasing concerns about excess weight among children and adolescents. Recent data shows that obesity affects a significant proportion of young people as obesity prevalence among children aged 5-10 years reached 17.9%, while among adolescents aged 11-18 years it reached 27.5%. Among Qatari adolescent boys aged 11-18 years, obesity prevalence was reported at 40%.

The World Health Organisation (WHO)'s country data also highlights the scale of the challenge, reporting that obesity prevalence among children and



adolescents aged 5-19 years in Qatar was estimated at 23.9% in 2022.

Accordingly, Sidra Medicine's approach to childhood obesity focuses on treating the child as a whole, recognising that obesity can involve multiple medical, psychological, behavioural and social factors. The institution's children and young people's services provide specialised paediatric care across several areas, including endocrinology, adolescent medicine, mental health, nutrition-related conditions and general paediatrics. Specialists work to improve children's overall health outcomes, including metabolic function, physical fitness, emotional wellbeing and quality of life. Modern medical understanding indicates that childhood obesity can increase the risk of serious conditions such as type 2 diabetes, high

blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, sleep disorders and psychological challenges later in life. So, children dealing with obesity may require support from paediatricians, endocrinologists, dietitians, psychologists, nurses, exercise specialists and other healthcare professionals. Sidra Medicine's model is based on multidisciplinary care approach through bringing these experts together to create personalised treatment plans based on each child's medical history, growth pattern, and lifestyle and family circumstances.

Sidra Medicine's expertise extends beyond common obesity cases to include complex and rare forms of childhood obesity requiring specialised diagnosis and treatment. In 2026, the institution reported a significant medical achievement involving the treatment of a rare case of ac-

quired hypothalamic obesity in a young child.

The case, published in Frontiers in Endocrinology, renowned international endocrinology and metabolism journal, advancing understanding and treatment of hormonal disorders impacting health worldwide, highlighted the role of precision medicine in managing severe obesity caused by neurological injury. The report demonstrated how specialised endocrine evaluation and targeted treatment approaches can improve outcomes for children with unusual obesity-related conditions.

Besides, in 2025, the institution launched Qatar's first comprehensive adolescent eating disorders clinic, providing specialised care for young people aged 8 to 17. The programme brings together paediatricians, psychologists, dietitians and social workers to provide integrated support.

US loses two soldiers as renewed war escalates

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Firefighters and oil sector workers were among the wounded, and residents reported a rush on water and canned goods. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said it had targeted a US support centre at Camp Arifjan and a radar facility at Ali Al Salem Air Base.

In Bahrain, the army said air defences repelled a wave of attacks; Iranian media said the IRGC had struck Sheikh Isa Air Base, where US combat aircraft were gathered, and an intelligence data centre. In Jordan, state TV said fuel tanks at the Al-Azraq base had been hit and at least two US fighter jets destroyed; the Jordanian army said it shot down 10

missiles on Saturday and three the day before.

Iran also appeared to target Saudi Arabia for the first time in more than three months. Early-warning alerts urged residents of Al-Kharj, near a base hosting US troops, and the Red Sea oil terminal of Yanbu to seek shelter. Riyadh gave no explanation, and the IRGC did not claim the strikes.

US Central Command said its seventh consecutive day of strikes had hit surveillance sites, weapons stores and maritime capabilities. Iranian media reported that US raids on the southern province of Hormozgan, which borders the strait, killed three people and wounded eight, damaging two bridges and a tunnel. Iran's health ministry said

50 people had been killed and more than 500 injured over three weeks.

Foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei accused Washington of seeking control of the Strait of Hormuz, which normally carries about a fifth of the world's oil. Both sides have targeted shipping - the US enforcing a naval blockade, Iran policing navigation - and a merchant vessel and military forces were involved in an incident off Oman, UK Maritime Trade Operations said.

Oil prices rose more than 4% on Friday to a one-month high, adding to pressure on Trump as Republicans fight to hold Congress in November. (Reuters/AFP)



Tankers hit Hormuz mines: IRGC

AFP
Tehran

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said yesterday that two oil tankers exploded after hitting mines in the Strait of Hormuz, as the US and Tehran continued to trade drone and missile strikes.

"An hour ago, two oil tankers, which were trying to pass through the minefield south of the Strait of Hormuz by deceptive American intelligence agencies, exploded and caught fire," the Guards said in a statement published by state news agency IRNA, without identifying which tankers are being mentioned.

The Revolutionary Guards also said on state television they "stopped" four ships trying to transit the critical waterway.

US forces, meanwhile, reported striking Iran for the seventh consecutive night with attacks designed to "continue degrading Iranian military capabilities," according to a statement by US Central Command shared on X.

In the biggest escalation since the foes resumed hostilities, Iran accused US forces of targeting civilian infrastructure, including an airport, a railway station and two bridges, and said it had struck US assets across the region.

Major General Mohsen Rezaei, a senior military advisor to Iran's supreme leader, said Tehran will resume "full-scale offensive operations" if US strikes against it continue for another two or three days.

"Iran will no longer limit itself to



A vessel in Hormuz strait, as seen from Musandam, Oman. (Reuters)

retaliatory, like-for-like responses...and no political border will be safe," Rezaei said, according to the Iranian news agency IRIB.

The war began on February 28 with deadly US-Israeli strikes on Iran, which retaliated by effectively closing the Strait of Hormuz, a vital shipping channel for much of the world's oil, and launching attacks on Israel and American interests across the Gulf.

Iranian Revolutionary Guards aerospace force commander Majid Mousavi said "targeted strikes from across Iran against the enemy

will continue" until the US ends operations against Iran's coastal facilities in the south and around the strait.

David Khalfa, a Middle East specialist at the Jean-Jaures Foundation, a Paris-based think-tank, noted that a "widening range of strategic infrastructure" is now being drawn into the conflict.

"The paradox is that, while the conflict continues to escalate, neither side has a strategic interest in allowing this dynamic to continue. Yet both perceive any compromise as a form of capit-

ulation," Khalfa told AFP.

Iran's energy ministry urged citizens to reduce their electricity use and switch off air conditioners in peak hours — even as temperatures in some areas soared — after the power grid came under strain from what it said were US strikes on energy facilities.

Iran's military had threatened infrastructure across the region in the event of any attacks on its own, and on Friday launched widespread strikes.

Iran's Guards said they had attacked two US radar sites in Oman

and the Al-Tanf military base in Syria. A Syrian military source denied there had been an attack and US forces said they had withdrawn from the base earlier this year.

Jordan's military said it shot down three Iranian missiles.

In Bahrain, Tehran targeted US helicopters and planes at an airbase, Iranian state media reported, with the island nation urging citizens to take shelter.

Iran's health ministry said at least 38 people have been killed and more than 400 wounded in the country since fighting resumed.

Israeli strike kills four, injure several in Gaza City

QNA
Gaza

Three Palestinians were killed and several others were injured yesterday in Gaza, according to medical sources. It was reported that Israel attacked using drone that targeted a group of people in the Al-Zeitoun neighbourhood, east of Gaza City, .

A fourth Palestinian died of wounds sustained in an Israeli strike that targeted civilians at the Al-Shaabiya junction, also east of Gaza City, on Friday.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian was injured after being shot by an Israeli drone at a camp for displaced people in the Al-Shuja'iya neighbourhood, east of the city.

The latest casualties came after a deadly day in the Gaza Strip on Friday, when 14 Palestinians were killed, including seven in an Israeli strike that hit a funeral in the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza.

The death toll from Israel's ongoing aggression against the Gaza Strip has been rising since the war broke out in October 2023. It has estimated and reported that so far 73,250 Palestinians have killed, with 173,751 injured.

Iranian strikes hit power plant, oil facility: Kuwait

AFP
Kuwait City

Kuwait said yesterday that Iran struck a power and water plant as well as an oil facility, accusing it of targeting civilian infrastructure as the Middle East war escalates.

It followed a seventh night of strikes by the US on Iranian targets, which prompted attacks by Tehran on US-allied countries in the Gulf.

"Another electricity and water distillation plant was targeted by a hostile attack that led to a fire erupting in one of the plant's components," Kuwait's ministry of electricity and water said in a statement.

It said several power generation units were deactivated due to the attack.

The strike was the second on a Kuwaiti power and water plant in as many days, with the first on Friday also causing a fire and damage.

Yesterday's attacks sparked two blazes at separate locations that left several firemen and a worker injured, Kuwait's fire service added.

"The repeated targeting of these vital facilities reveals a systematic hostile approach targeting civilian sites and vital infrastructure that endangers the

lives and safety of civilians," the foreign ministry said.

Kuwait's state oil firm reported injuries and "significant material losses" after the attack on the oil facility, according to the state news agency Kuna. It said the site had been evacuated.

One Kuwaiti resident told AFP there were fears that basic goods might become unavailable if the escalation continues.

"The demand for water and canned goods has increased since this morning amid fears that services or supply chains will be affected," said Hassan Rayan, 61, a Lebanese media-person living in Kuwait.

The country's national carrier said air traffic at Kuwait International Airport had been temporarily suspended due to rocket and drone attacks, forcing most flights to be rescheduled.

Iran has stepped up attacks on Kuwait and Bahrain in recent days, both of which host major US military installations.

In Bahrain, the army said its air defences repelled a wave of "treacherous Iranian aerial assaults" yesterday, as an AFP journalist in Manama reported hearing blasts after sirens sounded. The interior ministry said air-raid sirens had sounded five times since dawn, urging residents to take shelter.

Hezbollah buries its fighters in Lebanon

AFP
Majdal Selm, Lebanon

Hezbollah held a mass funeral for dozens of people, most of them fighters killed in the most recent fighting with Israel, in southern Lebanon's Majdal Selm yesterday.

The Iran-backed group, which drew Lebanon into the Middle East war by attacking Israel on March 2, does not reveal the number of fighters it has lost.

But it has organised several funerals during the current lull in fighting, which followed the June 17 signing of a US-Iran memorandum of understanding.

In the heavily-damaged village, Hezbollah buried 44 people, 39 of them fighters and four civilians said to have been killed in Israeli operations, and one man who died of natural causes.

An AFP correspondent saw trucks carrying the coffins to the burial site as weeping women held portraits of the slain, late supreme leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei.

Many Lebanese have been unable to bury their loved ones in their home towns while the fighting was still raging.

Palestinian teen footballer dies after being shot in settler attack: officials

AFP
Ramallah, Palestinian Territories

A 17-year-old Palestinian footballer died yesterday a week after he was shot and injured during an attack by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank, according to officials and relatives.

Dozens of mourners dressed in black carried the body of Fadi Hamdallah al-Nassan — a player for Al-Mughayyir Club and a member of the Palestinian national youth team — from the Palestine Medical Complex in Ramallah to his village for burial.

The Palestine Football Association accused Israeli forces of shooting Nassan while settlers were attacking the village on July 11. The young player was reportedly shot in the thigh during the attack. His leg was amputated, but he later died from his injuries, the association said.

The Israeli military did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment yesterday.

"He loved football," his father, Hamdallah al-Nassan, told AFP.

"When the settlers attacked, he heard the screams of the girls and women," he said. "He went to the scene of the attack and was killed."

The Palestinian official news agency Wafa also reported details of the incident in which Nasser was wounded and the amputa-



A Palestinian girl takes a shot on goal as she plays football in Turmus Ayya, northeast of Ramallah, with the Israeli settlement of Shilo visible in the background. (AFP)

tion of his leg, adding that two other residents were hit by rubber bullets fired by Israeli forces, and 10-year-old boy was also hit on the head by a stun grenade.

Since the start of the war in Gaza in October 2023, the UN has reported a sharp increase in violence attributed to Israeli settlers in the West Bank.

Israeli soldiers or settlers have killed at least 1,088 Palestinians

in the West Bank since October 2023, including both militants and civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Palestinian health ministry data.

Official Israeli figures show that at least 46 Israelis, both soldiers and civilians, have been killed in Palestinian attacks or during Israeli military operations in the West Bank since the start of the Gaza war.

Lebanon's President Aoun departs for Washington to meet Trump

AFP
Beirut

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun left Beirut yesterday for Washington, where he is expected to meet Donald Trump, his office said, after the latest round of Lebanon-Israel talks wrapped up in Italy.

It will be the first trip to Washington by a Lebanese head of state since Michel Sleiman was received by Barack Obama in 2009.

Aoun will hold discussions "with several American officials on the situation in Lebanon and ways to strengthen the ceasefire," particularly in the south, as well as on "the withdrawal of Israel from the Lebanese regions it occupies," the presidency said.

Israel and Lebanon — which do not have formal diplomatic relations — began US-sponsored negotiations in April aimed at reaching a peace deal and permanently ending the Israel-Hezbollah war.

On June 26, they reached a framework agreement in Washington under which the Israeli military is to withdraw from southern Lebanon and the Lebanese army is to deploy, starting



President Joseph Aoun meeting senior members of US Central Command (CENTCOM), at the presidential palace in Baabda ilast month. (AFP)

with two "pilot zones".

The agreement is contingent on the disarmament of Iran-backed group Hezbollah, which has flatly rejected the deal and the

Israel-Lebanon negotiations.

Following the latest round of talks this week in Rome, Israel and Lebanon "agreed on the structure and guidelines" for implementing

the pilot zones, a US official said.

A Lebanese military source told AFP that the army had begun intensifying patrols in several villages adjacent to areas occupied

by Israeli forces, including Froun in Bint Jbeil district, in preparation for implementing the pilot zones provision.

Hezbollah held a rally in the coastal city of Tyre yesterday to reiterate its rejection of the plan.

Hezbollah pulled Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2, when it began striking Israel in support of its backer Tehran.

Israel responded with airstrikes and a ground invasion, and despite a ceasefire it continues sporadic attacks and holds territory in the south in what it describes as a "security zone".

Yesterday, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported fresh airstrikes against two towns located on the edge of the so-called security zone, in the Tyre and Nabatieh regions, and a large detonation near the town of Zawtar al-Sharqiyah.

The Lebanese military said that a soldier was killed "as a result of the explosion of a suspicious object in an army vehicle" in Mansouri, which was also subjected to several Israeli strikes.

The US embassy, meanwhile, renewed its call for Americans to not travel to Lebanon, citing "high tensions in the Middle East".

Israel clears way for using crocodiles at prisons

Israeli Environmental Protection Minister Idit Silman has reclassified crocodiles from wild animals to "captive-bred wildlife", a move that clears the way for the reptiles to be used for security purposes, including to deter prison escapes.

Far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir — who reportedly proposed in December surrounding a prison for Palestinian detainees with crocodiles, welcomed the decision.

The regulation, signed into law last week, stipulates that Nile crocodiles may be bred provided that "they are held by a security body... under conditions determined by the Director (of the Nature and Parks Authority) to prevent their release into the wild, and subject to the Minister of Environmental Protection determining that their possession is required for security purposes". (AFP)

Wildfire: Canada prepares to evacuate Ontario community

Reuters
Ontario

The Canadian military was preparing yesterday to evacuate a remote community of 600 people threatened by forest wildfires that have spread, choking smoke across a broad swath of the US.

Federal Emergencies Minister Eleanor Olszewski said late on Friday that the armed forces would use aircraft to evacuate the inhabitants of Fort Hope in sparsely populated northwestern Ontario, where some of the most intense fires are burning.

The region has few roads and relies heavily on air travel. Thousands of people have already been evacuated from affected areas to cities farther south in Ontario.

Major forest fires have become a regular annual occurrence in Canada, home to some of the world's largest forest landscapes. Climate experts say rising temperatures have led to drier timber and increased fire risk.

The federal natural resources ministry on yesterday said 69 new fires had been reported overnight in Canada, bringing the number to 955.

The total area burned so far is almost 28,500 square km, well below the five-year average. But winds have carried the smoke south of the border, prompting authori-



Smoke from Canadian wildfires lingers over Washington, DC. (Reuters)

ties to issue air quality alerts and health warnings in parts of the US.

As of yesterday's morning, the US Environmental Protection Agency's AirNow site rated the air quality as "unhealthy" in an area including southern Ontario, eastern areas of Ohio and West Virginia, most of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, much of Virginia and all of Maryland, Delaware and Washington, DC.

Parts of western Pennsylvania,

including Pittsburgh, were rated "very unhealthy". AirNow predicted that the air quality in those areas would improve over the course of the day.

Smoke from the Canadian fires will have only a minimal impact on Sunday's soccer World Cup final at New York New Jersey Stadium, forecaster AccuWeather said on Friday.

President Donald Trump on Friday blamed what he called in-

competent Canadian forest management for the smoke and said he would add the "incalculable cost" of dealing with the pollution to existing tariffs on Canadian goods.

After Trump's comments, Olszewski said Canada has invested C\$12bn (\$8.56bn) in forest sustainability and fire prevention since the year 2020 as the country continues to confront increasingly drier and warmer weather conditions.

Thousands in Ethiopia rally against Tigray recruitment drive

AFP
Addis Ababa

Thousands gathered in the Ethiopian capital yesterday for a pro-government rally against an alleged forced recruitment campaign by authorities in the northern Tigray region.

AFP reported in June on the recruitment drive in Tigray — which fought a brutal civil war against the central government in 2020-2022 — citing youths who said they had escaped training camps or fled their homes to avoid roundups.

Human Rights Watch said earlier this month that security forces aligned with the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which has ruled the region for decades, were forcibly recruiting young men, including boys as young as 15.

"The Ethiopian government must fulfil its duty to protect the people of Tigray," read one banner carried by demonstrators in Addis Ababa.

Another read: "Stop trafficking combatants to Sudan!"

The Ethiopian government and some local media have accused the TPLF of forcibly sending Tigrayans to Sudan, though no evidence has been provided to support the claim.

"The TPLF is forcibly rounding up the youth of Tigray, selling them to neighbouring Eritrea, and exposing them to war," — Bahlbi Tsegaye, protester

Relations between Ethiopia and Sudan have become increasingly strained, as have those between Addis Ababa and the TPLF despite a 2022 peace deal that ended the devastating two-year war in Tigray that claimed at least 600,000 lives, according to African Union estimates.

The ceasefire has never been fully implemented, and now both sides accuse the other of preparing a new offensive, with troops massing on the region's border, according to security sources.

The TPLF "is forcibly rounding up the youth of Tigray, selling them to neighbouring Sudan through Eritrea, and exposing them to war," protester Bahlbi Tsegaye, 42, told AFP.

Former Tigrayan rebel leader Getachew Reda, who has since switched sides to join Ethiopia's federal government as east African affairs minister, was also at the rally.

Mali army convoy in north attacked by rebels

AFP
Bamako

A Malian army convoy leaving the strategic northern town of Anefis was attacked yesterday morning by Tuareg separatists, military and security officials said.

Fighters from the Tuareg separatist movement FLA and Al-Qaeda-linked group JNIM temporarily seized the town on July 4 in the latest in a series of coordinated attacks in the west African country.

"Our convoy that was leaving Anefis for Gao was attacked this morning near Tabankort. The fighting is ongoing. It is an ambush," a military source based in Gao told AFP.

A source within the FLA also confirmed the incident.

"The army suffered heavy losses, even though the rest of the convoy was able to continue," a security official explained,

The recent violent clashes in Anefis left around 30 Malian soldiers dead and about 60 wounded, according to the official toll released on July 12

requesting anonymity.

"There are many casualties," a local official added.

Images sent by the FLA show what they said were dozens of army prisoners.

The recent violent clashes in Anefis left around 30 Malian soldiers dead and about 60 wounded, according to the official toll released on July 12 by the general staff.

On July 10, the Malian army and Russian paramilitaries from Africa Corps regained control of Anefis after several days of intense fighting.

Mali has struggled to contain insurgency that has plagued the country since 2012.

Ghana, Nigeria condemn migrant attacks in S Africa

AFP
Lagos

Nigeria and Ghana condemn the ongoing anti-immigrant violence in South Africa and want the issue of "Afrophobia" discussed at the next African Union summit, Abuja said yesterday.

South Africa been swept by weeks of protests and unrest targeting undocumented immigrants, causing tens of thousands to flee the country. Nearly 150,000 people have left in recent weeks, according to an AFP tally based on figures provided by African countries that have repatriated their nationals.

On Friday, the foreign ministers of Ghana and Nigeria discussed the "recent Afrophobic protests and incidents targeting African nationals in South Africa", the Nigerian government said.

"(They) condemned all forms of xenophobia, Afrophobia, intolerance and violence against fellow Africans," it said.

The two ministers from west



Protesters march for the removal of undocumented immigrants in Soweto yesterday. (AFP)

Africa's largest economies were meeting on the sidelines of a gathering of west African economic bloc ECOWAS in Liberia.

Nigeria has evacuated 1,490 nationals from South Africa, while Ghana has repatriated at least 926. South Africa, the continent's wealthiest nation, has long been

magnet for migrants.

The ministers stressed the need for "urgent, coordinated regional and continental responses" to address the causes behind the anti-immigrant tensions.

Ghana's Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa and Nigeria's Sola Enikanolaiye said Afrophobia

should be raised at the next summit of the pan-African AU early next year. In May, Ghana requested an AU debate on "xenophobic attacks" in South Africa.

Earlier this month, Ghana said a visit to Accra by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa had been postponed.

In Egypt's 'Garbage City' recyclers reap gains from Iran war plastic squeeze

AFP
Cairo

In the labyrinthine alleyways of Cairo's Garbage City, recycling specialist Peter Romany finds himself fielding calls from factories scrambling for plastic to plug supply shortfalls caused by the Iran war.

The 25-year-old is among the hundreds of recyclers and manufacturers across Egypt benefiting from a war-driven surge in demand ever since the US and Iran choked off the Strait of Hormuz — a major shipping lane for the raw materials from which plastic is made.

At the heart of the boom is the sprawling eastern Cairo settlement of Manshiyet Nasser, where generations of garbage collectors have built one of the world's most sophisticated informal recycling systems.

"Before the war, we were the ones calling factories, trying to sell our material," Romany told AFP, standing beside towering bales of compressed plastic.

"But after the war broke out, the factories started calling us. They'd ask: How much do you have? Can you deliver today? That never used to happen!"

Home to more than 115,000 residents, Manshiyet Nasser is a predominantly Coptic Christian neighbourhood nestled beneath the Mokattam hill and facing Cairo's historic Citadel.

The settlement handles more than a third of the capital's waste, according to government figures.

Families live and work under the same roof, often separated from mountains of waste by little more than a staircase or curtain, exposing them to foul odours, plastic fumes and other health risks.

Downstairs, men sort plastics, cardboard, paper, metals and glass into neat piles destined for workshops and factories.

Upstairs, children pore over schoolbooks, mothers prepare lunch and television sets flicker in cramped living rooms, all against the constant background noise of shredders whining and baling presses pounding below.

The smell of rubbish hangs heavy in the air as pickup trucks and handcarts crawl through narrow alleyways, unloading the day's collections while



An Egyptian vendor leads his donkey cart loaded with watermelons past large bags filled with rubbish at the garbage city in the Manshiyet Nasser neighbourhood in Cairo. (AFP)

children weave between them chasing footballs.

It's a well-oiled machine, kicked into overdrive by a war more than a thousand kilometres away. Romany specialises in recycled polyethylene, one of the world's most widely used plastics and a key ingredient in packaging. According to the pricing agency Independent Commodity Intelligence Services (ICIS), the Middle East is a major global supplier of polyethylene, with around 85% of its exports passing through the strait.

Egypt imports around 40 % of its raw plastic materials, mainly from Gulf countries, Europe, China and South Korea, according to the Chamber of Chemical Industries.

Packaging and plastic prices have more than doubled for some products, three industry sources told AFP, pushing manufacturers towards locally recycled alternatives.

Factories that would normally delay payment

started putting down cash upfront "because they were so eager to secure material", said Rizq Yousif, who mainly recycles PET, the plastic widely used in beverage and food packaging.

Yousif told AFP demand had tripled, while prices for some recycled plastics increased by up to 60%. The disruption has been good for local business all along the value chain.

"We have been in this business for 16 years," said Fayrouz El-Sayed, chief executive of Sadat City Chemical Fibre Factory, which produces polyester fibres from used plastic bottles.

But only since the latest crisis have they managed to crack new markets as far away as Brazil, she said.

Nesma El-Areef, senior marketing and sales manager at Uflex Egypt, which converts plastic waste into new packaging materials, said demand for the company's recycled products rose by up to 40%.

FOR SALE Used Vehicles

SL#	Vehicle Type	Qty.	Model
1	Nissan Patrol	1	2013
2	Toyota Camry	1	2012
3	Toyota Camry	1	2015
4	Kia Picanto	2	2016
5	Hyundai County Bus 26 Seater	1	2016
6	Hyundai Tucson	1	2016

For inspecting the Vehicles, please contact: 7051 5249
Your offer can be sent by email to: **businessqatar2024@gmail.com**



Brazilian court says Argentina’s Milei cannot visit Bolsonaro

AFP
Brasília

Brazil’s top court yesterday denied a request by Argentine President Javier Milei to visit former Brazilian leader Jair Bolsonaro, who is under house arrest, a ruling obtained by AFP showed. Milei is expected to attend the convention of Bolsonaro’s Liberal Party on July 25 in Sao Paulo, at which Bolsonaro’s son Flavio, a senator, is expected to be named the conservative movement’s candidate for the upcoming October polls.

Bolsonaro’s attorneys had asked that Milei be able to see Bolsonaro at that time, but Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes banned all visits to the ex-president for 30 days late Friday, as punishment for publication of a letter transmitted by his son.

That violated a ban on his use of social media, including via third parties.

Moraes said yesterday that Milei’s request was moot due to the overall ban. Doctors, physical therapists and Bolsonaro’s attorneys are exempt and can still visit him. Bolsonaro, 71, is serving a 27-year sentence for plotting a coup to overturn the results of the 2022 election, in which he was defeated by President Luiz Inacio Lula da



Argentina’s President Javier Milei (L) and former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro who remains under house arrest. (AFP)

Silva. He is banned from public office, though he is appealing. He was moved to house arrest in March for health reasons.

Moraes said that additionally Bolsonaro cannot have any visits for “political or electoral purposes” until after the elections, nor can he disseminate any political messages.

Flavio Bolsonaro — who was specifically barred earlier this month from seeing his father for 90 days, or until after the election’s first round — has hit out at Moraes over his decisions, calling

them politically motivated.

The visit request had also included Argentine Foreign Minister Pablo Quirno, Milei’s sister Karina, who serves in his government, and a translator.

Since 2023, Milei and Bolsonaro have presented themselves as ideological allies in Latin America’s new political right. Lula’s relations with Milei are not as friendly. Bolsonaro’s attorney Joao Henrique de Freitas questioned the of the rulings on X, saying: “Brazil deserves transparency, not convenient co-incidences.”



A view as smoke from the wildfires is seen surrounding the New Jersey Stadium, New Jersey ahead of the World Cup final. (Reuters)

Argentina-Spain tickets soar near \$10K for WC final

Ticket prices for the World Cup final between defending champion Argentina and Spain continued to soar, approaching \$10,000 just 24 hours before today’s match in East Rutherford, N.J.

The get-in price has risen 34% over the past three days, reaching \$9,627 by 3 p.m. ET on Saturday, according to ticket tracking service TicketData.com.

After the get-in price dropped as low as \$6,636 on Monday, the three-day average rebounded to \$7,612 by Friday morning.

By comparison, the get-in price for Argentina’s semifinal victory over England settled at \$3,177 by kickoff, while France’s win over Spain commanded less than half that at \$1,315.

The get-in price for Saturday’s third-place match between

France and England in Miami closed at \$634, having plummeted 50% over the past three days.

Today’s final will kick off at New York New Jersey Stadium between a pair of global powerhouses. It will conclude the largest World Cup in history, with the White House confirming that President Donald Trump will attend.

The get-in price for tickets to the final peaked at \$13,650 back in October before dipping as low as \$6,336 a month later. They had risen back to above \$8,000 when the tournament began on June 11 and the get-in price reached \$12,129 on June 23 before declining again.

Through 102 matches across 16 cities, the median get-in price has been \$916. (Reuters)

Panama bids to regain control of strategic oil pipeline

The Panamanian government said Friday it would buy the remaining 41% private stake in Petroterminal from a US company, giving Panama complete control of the strategic oil pipeline.

Once the transaction is completed, “Panama will own 100 percent” of Petroterminal, “consolidating national control over one of the country’s most important strategic infrastructures,” the government said in a statement.

It said the acquisition would be funded “with the income and cash flows generated by the company itself,” without giving the value of the transaction. “Our goal is for this strategic infrastructure to generate increasing value and greater benefits for all Panamanians,” Panama’s Minister of Economy and Finance Felipe Chapman said.

Chapman said the acquisition was “in strict accordance with the law.”

Petroterminal was created in 1977 as a joint venture between Panama and the US company NIC Holding Corp to store and distribute hydrocarbons that could not pass through the Panama Canal on the way to the east coast of the US because of the size of the ships. (AFP)

The calm after the storm



General view of Santiago, Chile, yesterday, following heavy rains. Three people died and 76 were affected by a storm with heavy rains, swells, and winds that is impacting 10 of the country’s 16 regions, the government reported. (AFP)

Mayor Mamdani says still mulling Netanyahu arrest during UN meet

AFP
New York

New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani is in talks over whether to try to arrest Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during an upcoming UN summit, he said in an interview published yesterday — prompting a sharp rebuke from Netanyahu’s camp.

“I believe that Prime Minister Netanyahu belongs in The Hague,” Mamdani told *The New York Times*. “He’s a war criminal who has been charged by the International Criminal Court.”

The leftist Mamdani, who has called Israel an “apartheid regime,” added: “That is an opinion that is held by many, purely because of what his actions have wrought over these last many years.”

Mamdani admitted he was not

sure if he has the power to order the New York Police Department to detain a foreign leader but is discussing the matter with the city’s legal team.

“Whatever the law allows me to do in New York City, that’s what we will do,” he said.

The UN General Assembly, a major gathering of world leaders, takes place in September at UN headquarters in New York.

Mamdani in the past has vowed to send the NYPD to enforce arrest warrants against leaders wanted by the International Criminal Court, including Netanyahu or Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The Hague-based ICC said in 2024 that it had reasonable grounds to believe Netanyahu was responsible for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity related to Israel’s offensive in Gaza.

Danny Danon, Israel’s ambas-

sador to the UN, quickly called out Mamdani.

“Instead of focusing on his responsibilities as mayor and confronting the rising wave of antisemitism in his city, he has chosen to incite hostility and generate headlines by attacking the State of Israel,” Danon wrote on X.

“It will not change a thing. Israeli Prime Minister @netanyahu will come to New York, address the UN General Assembly with pride, and stand before the world to state Israel’s truth and its unwavering right to defend its citizens,” Israel’s ambassador to the UN said.

“And if anyone should be arrested, it is @NYCMayor Zohran Mamdani.”

Netanyahu has accused Mamdani of supporting Hamas, saying on a recent New York radio show: “I think, secretly, he hates America.”

Delayed orders, confusion slowed Venezuelan military’s response to quakes

Reuters
La Guaira

Delayed orders from senior military commanders, a lack of basic equipment and overall confusion were among the issues that hindered the deployment of Venezuelan troops in the crucial first days after two devastating earthquakes struck the country’s coast last month, eight sources familiar with the response told Reuters, amid public outrage over the government’s response to the disaster.

The 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude quakes killed about 5,000 people, according to the government, though experts including the US Geological Survey have predicted a likelihood of a final death toll of nearly double that figure. The disaster was especially devastating in La Guaira state, home to the country’s main airport, a major port and hundreds of high-rise residential buildings that collapsed either fully or partially.

Acting President Delcy Rodriguez, who is backed by US President Donald Trump, has defended the government’s response amid criticism that military personnel and other officials arrived late and have done little to help victims of the quake, including people who were trapped in the rubble.

Though Rodriguez said 4,000 officials were deployed immediately, military personnel and police were scarcely visible during the first hours after the quake, according to residents, Reuters witnesses and several sources with knowledge of the matter.

Civilians spearheaded much of the response, especially during the first two days, bringing aid like food and using rudimentary tools to pull both the living and the dead from the rubble. They were eventually joined by international rescue teams, firefighters, civil protection officials and a limited number of Venezuelan soldiers, who told Reuters they volunteered for the often-gruesome work rather than being directly ordered to.

The limited presence of security forces was due to delays in deployment orders, uncertainty over who was responsible for coordinating the crisis and a lack of relevant equipment, said active and retired military officers, other sources familiar with the armed forces and sources in the diplomatic community. “We don’t act on our own; we receive direct orders,” said an active-duty officer who spoke on condition of anonymity. “I can’t tell my unit, ‘Let’s go help in La Guaira,’ if I haven’t been ordered to do so. We didn’t have a plan like the ones that exist for defending the nation. There was no plan for dealing with something like this.”

A group of soldiers from the officer’s unit traveled to La Guaira the day after the June 24 quakes after receiving orders for reinforcing personnel there.

“We weren’t going to leave without preparation or logistics because obviously nobody is prepared for something like this,” the officer said. “The troops in Caracas should at least have been sent to provide security and help however they could.”

Confusion prevailed, said a source familiar with diplomatic

circles. “There was no plan and the chain of command was weak; many people simply didn’t know what to do,” the source said. Delays in issuing orders also affected the deployment of international rescuers who had arrived within the first 48 hours, the source said, wasting critical time during which lives could have been saved.

“Everyone looks upward waiting for an order. They would rather do nothing than act and risk being reprimanded,” the source said, describing delays in assigning search sectors to rescuers. “The loss of those hours was enormously frustrating.”

“The Marine Infantry Brigade was ready to move but never received instructions to do so,” said one source with knowledge of military issues.

Another military source said their unit did not have enough vehicles to move personnel to the quake zone, while three other sources said units lacked equipment as varied as hammers, pickaxes and helicopters equipped with night vision.

Another source said the vice minister in charge of disaster response arrived in La Guaira around midnight the day of the quake without communications equipment needed to relay the scale of the disaster.

Venezuela’s Communications Ministry did not respond to a request for comment, but Rodriguez has vociferously defended her government’s response. Pressed by reporters on July 2 about who had given orders to the military, she said “media laboratories” had created a perception of chaos, though



People search for the bodies of their loved ones beneath the rubble in La Guaira yesterday. (Reuters)

she provided no evidence. Days later she told a public event: “I gave the order, and I take responsibility for our Bolivarian National Armed Force.”

Rodriguez named National Guard commander Juan Sulbaran Quintero as the “single authority” overseeing the response, while also issuing a decree granting powers to Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello. Four sources said that overlapping authority created confusion over who was directing military and police operations, including debate about whether to deploy military police or the national police.

When La Guaira was hit by a huge mudslide in 1999, the military carried out a full-scale deployment, using boats and helicopters to rescue and evacuate survivors.

Sources said years of economic crisis have reduced military readiness, with budgets focused on payroll rather than maintenance and equipment.

“The armed forces have a concept known as operational readiness — the capacity to respond to threats and emergencies — but that readiness is limited,” said one of the sources with knowledge of military issues. The Venezuelan earthquakes struck on Army Day, a

national holiday when many military personnel were off duty and away from their units.

“When the earthquakes hit, the strategic operational commander and the regional commander should have ordered an immediate recall of military personnel. That order never came,” the source said.

The earthquake “was the moment for the military to distinguish itself,” the active-duty officer said. “They should have been there at dawn with armoured vehicles and cables pulling people out. The psychological impact would have been enormous — people seeing the troops helping.”

China's Xi says AI should not be dominated by one country

AFP
Shanghai

Artificial intelligence (AI) should not be dominated by a single country, China's President Xi Jinping said on Friday at a major technology conference in Shanghai, urging international co-operation on its development.

Chinese AI models are catching up to the most powerful US offerings and attracting global users with lower costs.

But how to govern the sector has become a key question, as concerns grow over military AI deployment or its use by hackers and terrorists.

"AI development should not be a solo performance by a single country, but a symphony of international cooperation," Xi said at the opening of the World Artificial Intelligence Conference.

"We should jointly oppose overstretching the national security concept in the field of AI or placing one country's security over that of others," Xi added.

The US and European Union restrict tech exports to China over national security concerns, while tussles between Washington and American AI labs have raised the issue of who controls top technologies.

"China is trying to lead not only in terms of the technology develop-

ment, but also in terms of AI governance," said Shengyun Lu, AI entrepreneur and founder of Shanghai consultancy Praxis Advisory.

Lu told AFP that in his view, AI should be regulated "like we regulate nuclear power".

The four-day WAIC gathers more than 1,000 of China's tech firms, officials, researchers and industry figures.

Around 3,000 products are on display, from powerful semiconductor systems for AI computing to a smartphone that can autonomously operate apps.

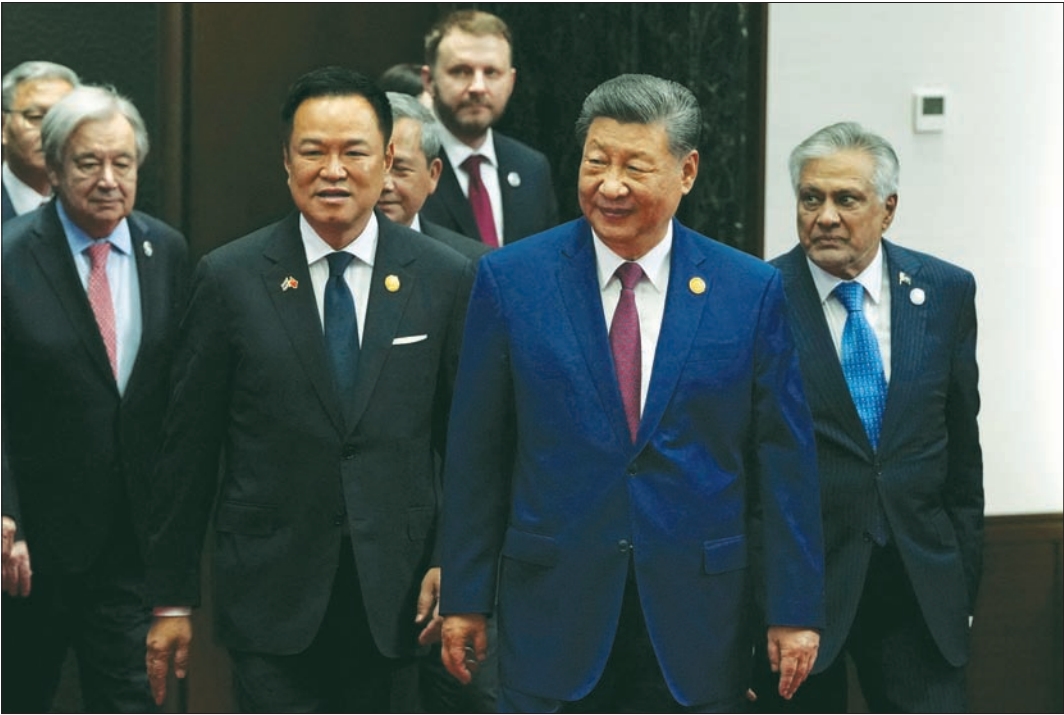
But eyes were first on Xi's vision of how the world should handle the potential impacts of AI.

"We should put in place laws and regulations, technological monitoring, early warning, and emergency response systems, in order to... ensure AI is always under human control," Xi told the conference, calling for a "people-centric" approach.

On Thursday, foreign minister Wang Yi and representatives from 29 countries including Russia, Pakistan and Indonesia agreed to establish an intergovernmental AI co-operation group.

The World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAIC), headquartered in Shanghai, aims to ensure the "healthy and orderly" development of AI, state media reported.

"I can understand Western



UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Thailand Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar arrive for a group photo before the opening ceremony for the World AI Conference in Shanghai, on Friday. (Reuters)

countries are absent from this initiative, because Europe already has its own AI act and the US is already defining their regulations," Lu said.

New York University business and technology professor Arun

Sundararajan said "small glimmers of recent cooperation between Presidents Xi and Trump" were encouraging, but it was "hard to imagine there being a single approach to AI governance globally".

Leaders including UN chief An-

tonio Guterres, Cambodia's Hun Manet and Thailand's Anutin Charnvirakul are attending WAIC, which showcases the cutting edge of Chinese tech.

Early Friday, the Beijing-based startup Moonshot AI released a

powerful new flagship model, Kimi K3, which it said "demonstrated frontier-level performance".

Other highlights this year include MiniMax's M3 model and Huawei's Atlas 950 "supernode", an AI architecture for learning and reasoning.

"The main theme will be the transition from AI models to systems that can be deployed at scale" in everyday life, Poe Zhao of analysis publication Hello China Tech said.

Daily consumption in China of "tokens" — the industry unit of AI usage — has increased a thousandfold over the past two years, according to state media citing officials.

A growing number of companies abroad, like Siemens, are adopting Chinese open-source AI models, attracted by their performance, lower cost and ability to customise, in contrast to the closed systems of US giants such as OpenAI and Anthropic.

Both those US firms had to temporarily withhold the release of their latest AI models because of government concerns that they could help hackers break into critical online infrastructure.

"Models these days are controlled by very few" so more cooperative governance could expand access to them, 34-year-old Mike Luan, who works for an AI research lab, told AFP outside the WAIC venue.

Floods, landslides kill at least 4 in Vietnam



Rescuers bringing a body back in Muong Than Commune in Lai Chau Province, northern Vietnam, yesterday. (AFP)

Severe flooding and landslides caused by heavy rains killed at least four people in Vietnam, state media reported yesterday.

More than 238 hectares of rice and other crops across four northern mountainous provinces had been damaged since Wednesday, with livestock or poultry killed or washed away by floodwaters, according to Vietnam's disaster and dyke management authority.

Authorities have deployed 500 rescuers to search for missing

persons and evacuate residents from areas at risk of landslides, state outlet Cong Ly said.

Natural disasters between January and June have left at least 30 people dead in the country and caused more than \$21.7mn in damage.

The southeast Asian nation is prone to heavy rain between June and September, but scientists have identified a pattern of human-driven climate change making extreme weather more frequent and destructive. (AFP)

UN expert, NGOs urge Thailand not to deport journalist to China

AFP
Geneva

United Nations expert and dozens of press freedom and rights groups on Friday urged Thailand not to forcibly return a detained journalist to China.

Chinese investigative journalist Bai Zhaodong fled China in November 2023 "having been persecuted and criminalised for exposing large-scale corruption and financial fraud implicating officials", the UN special rapporteur on rights defenders, Andrea Bolanos Vargas, said on X.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and nearly 60 other groups said on Friday the journalist, held in Thai immigration detention since January, faced an "im-

minent risk of deportation".

They said China issued an arrest warrant for Bai in September 2024 "on fabricated charges of extortion" and Thai authorities had since then stopped him from moving to another country.

They warned he faced a "real risk" of persecution in China.

"His forced return would therefore undeniably violate Thailand's obligations under international and domestic torture prohibitions (non-refoulement)," their statement said.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian told a regular news briefing Bai was suspected of extortion and bribery and an extradition request had been submitted.

"It is hoped Thailand will extradite him back to China soon," he said.

Rubio to visit Southeast Asia in bid to reaffirm partnerships

AFP
Washington

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio travels to the Philippines next week to meet with his Southeast Asian counterparts, the State Department said on Friday, as the rekindled war with Iran places traditional American allies under economic strain.

The trip comes as the pace of strikes in the Middle East shows no signs of slowing, and just days after US President Donald Trump launched a sweeping attack on Thursday on China — alleging Beijing carried out substantial meddling in US elections.

Rubio is due to attend a meeting of foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in Manila from Tuesday-Thursday. He attended last year's gathering in Kuala Lumpur.

State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said the trip "advances a clear US priority: a free and open Indo-Pacific that delivers safety, security, and prosperity for the region and for the American people".

For Washington, that means seeking to counter China's growing influence.

The State Department provided no details of his schedule, but last year Rubio met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Asean gathering. The two top diplomats spoke recently by telephone following Trump's visit to China last spring.

Iran will be on the agenda in Manila, with Asian countries — particularly those that do not produce oil — being hit hard by the conflict and its repercussions for traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.

About 80% of the hydrocarbons passing through the waterway are bound for Asian



countries, according to the International Energy Agency.

At a Cebu summit in May, the leaders of the 11 Southeast Asian countries discussed creating a shared fuel reserve, according to Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, whose country holds Asean's rotating chairmanship this year.

Rubio is expected to meet Mar-

cos as part of a strengthened US partnership with the Philippines, with the contentious issue of the South China Sea certain to come up. The waters are disputed by several members of the bloc and China.

Incidents regularly occur between vessels in the area, nearly all of which Beijing claims, despite an international ruling that its position has no legal basis.

The situation in Myanmar is also expected to be discussed.

Asean foreign ministers on Sunday called on their Myanmar counterpart to make "concrete" progress on a peace plan aimed at ending the country's civil war.

Myanmar has been largely sidelined within Asean since a 2021 military coup.

China is Myanmar's main ally and one of the few countries to have backed the junta since the overthrow of Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government.

Chinese delegation visits North Korea's Wonsan Kalma resort

Reuters
Seoul

A senior Chinese party and government delegation visited North Korea's Wonsan Kalma coastal tourist area, state media agency KCNA said yesterday, in the latest sign of renewed high-level exchanges between the neighbours. The delegation, led by China's fourth-highest-ranked official, Wang Huning, toured the east coast resort on Friday during the delegation's visit to North Korea, which included a meeting with leader Kim Jong-un.

The visit to the resort caps a three-day trip by Wang and is the latest in a series of exchanges between Beijing and Pyongyang that have signalled a strengthening of ties.

Wang was accompanied by senior North Korean officials in-



Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Chairman Wang Huning tours the Wonsan Kalma Coastal Tourist Zone in Wonsan, North Korea, on Friday. (Reuters)

cluding Jo Yong Won and Kim Song Nam, KCNA said.

The visitors were briefed on the resort's facilities, operations and development prospects, and Wang praised the project as an example of North Korea's "people-first" policy, according to the report.

Wonsan Kalma is one of Kim Jong-un's most prominent tourism projects, a sprawling beach resort on the Kalma Peninsula that state media has said can accommodate about 20,000 visitors.

Kim has pushed the project for years as part of efforts to develop

North Korean tourism and showcase modern leisure facilities, with Wonsan holding particular significance as a coastal area associated with the country's elite and with Kim's broader drive to turn the city into a major tourist destination.

Opposition to data centres grows in cramped urban Japan

AFP
Tokyo

The more Yoriko Kitagawa learns of a massive data centre to be built near her home in Hino on the outskirts of Tokyo, the more she worries.

"This is a terrible plan," the 94-year-old told AFP.

The explosion in resource-hungry data centres — housing the hardware "brains" of artificial intelligence (AI) — is fuelling unease worldwide, with New York State and Australia the latest jurisdictions to announce new rules.

Opponents of data centres in the US have called for a "national day of protest" on Saturday to "protect our hometowns, our wallets, and our way of life".

Japan, with some of the most densely populated cities among advanced economies — 80% of

the country is mountains — has a particular problem: a shortage of suitable urban space to build the facilities.

One centre is even planned next to the famous Tokyo Tower.

In Hino, the height of two of the three planned buildings has been cut by a fifth to 63.5m (208 feet), but they still will tower over nearby houses, blocking the sun for some.

"As someone who lives next to the site, I'm most worried about a fire that could be triggered by the massive amount of batteries," said 69-year-old campaigner Yasuo Yamazaki.

"Heat from the data centre is also worrisome, as well as noise," he told AFP.

He also frets about a potential explosion due to a stockpile of fuel on site for a backup generator.

Developer Mitsui Fudosan plans a "green buffer zone" of up to 78m with trees and a stream, reducing

the noise, the heat and the "oppressive feeling", said an official in charge of the project.

"One approach is to set the building back from the street and... to arrange greenery so that, at eye level, its presence doesn't feel so overwhelming," he told AFP.

"It may be difficult to have a 100-percent consensus with everyone, but we will do our best," he said, noting that the company has held regularly held meetings with residents.

Trillions of dollars are being spent on data centres to train and run AI models and provide cloud storage for humanity's zettabytes — a unit equivalent to a trillion gigabytes — of digital information.

Japan has big plans in the field,

demand centres is limited, particularly because Japan is mountainous and major demand is concentrated around dense urban areas," Ghi told AFP.

Having data centres near end-users is important — not least for the ultra-speed of response needed for financial trading, streaming or gaming.

According to real estate company JLL, around 90% of Japan's data centres are concentrated in the greater Tokyo and greater Osaka areas.

Electricity is key though, and over time the "winning locations" may not be closest to cities but where there is "reliable, affordable and increasingly low-carbon power at speed," said Ghi.

"Power, grid, cooling, land-use, fibre, regulation and community engagement need to be planned together," he said.

Elsewhere, Tokyo commuter

town Inzai already has at least 10 data centres including one used by Google, but residents have launched legal action against a proposed new facility.

The lawsuit says that locals' "peaceful daily existence... will be destroyed by violations of their right to sunlight, the ruin of the landscape, a feeling of oppression, noise, vibrations, hot air, traffic hazards, and large-scale construction work".

Contacted by AFP, the defendant Japan ERI, which granted the certificate for the construction plan, declined to comment.

Critics say Japan also differs from many other countries by having out-of-date building regulations that can classify data centres as offices and not industrial facilities.

Japanese law "is not catching up with the situation", said Satoshi Oikawa, a lawyer for Inzai's residents.



The challenges facing UK's next PM Andy Burnham

AFP
London

Andy Burnham, who is set to become Britain's prime minister tomorrow, will face a roster of challenges when he steps into the office as the UK's seventh leader in a decade.

The former Greater Manchester mayor was on Friday overwhelmingly backed as leader of the Labour party after Keir Starmer resigned last month.

Experts say Burnham will now need to address a host of issues that have felled his predecessors in quick succession.

The priority will be boosting the economy and improving living standards for voters who have despaired over soaring energy and food prices since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Burnham will have little room for manoeuvre amid sluggish economic growth, high public debt and strict financial rules requiring him to balance government spending against tax revenue.

In a speech on Friday, Burnham said he wanted to "take us to a country where life is more affordable".

He has championed devolving power to regional hubs as a lever for growth.

"It's not just about driving local growth, it's about turning these places around so they drive national growth," explained Philip McCann from the research organisation Productivity Institute.

Burnham has said he will support smaller businesses, "reindustrialisation" and greater public control over water, transport and energy.

The *Financial Times* reported he



Newly elected leader of Britain's Labour Party Andy Burnham shakes hands with a man by Gravesend Town Pier in Gravesend, Kent. (Reuters)

could ease restrictions on oil and gas drilling in the North Sea to reduce energy bills.

His pick for finance minister, still unannounced, may well determine how left-wing or centrist his economic agenda is.

Another headache will be tackling ballooning welfare costs, which Burnham has acknowledged need to be reduced.

Starmer faced backlash from the public and his party over reforms to the benefits system, including cutting winter fuel payments for the elderly. He had to climbdown from the changes, contributing to his unpopularity.

Burnham, from the so-called soft left of Labour, will face pressure to resist slashing benefits.

He has also pledged to "fix" underfunded sectors like social care, which he attempted to overhaul as health secretary in 2009.

On Friday, Burnham, whose father has Alzheimer's, said he was "prepared to grasp the nettle" to make changes adding, "the system's broken".

Burnham will need to fill a £4.7-billion (\$6.3-billion) gap over four years in the country's defence investment plan.

The long-delayed plan was published by Starmer last month, but the task of delivering it will fall on Burnham. Burnham will likely also face pressure internally and from allies including the US to further ramp up defence spending, and meet the Nato target of spending 3.5% of GDP by 2035.

He previously said he would take "responsibility" to fund the defence plan and make "no compromise" on defence.

A key task will be stemming the runaway popularity of Nigel Farage's hard-right, anti-immi-

gration party Reform UK.

Labour has been bleeding supporters to the left-wing Greens and Reform, which made big gains in local elections earlier this year, piling pressure on Starmer to give way to a politician who could counter Reform's success.

In his speech Friday, Burnham vowed to build a new political direction "that is distinctly Labour", independent of the two fringe parties. "We win by being us," he said.

"We won't try to out-Green the Greens, or out-Reform Reform, or doing what we've done in the past of wearing too many Tory clothes."

Tony Travers, a professor at the London School of Economics, said it could mark a different approach.

"What this signals is that the Labour Party under Burnham will want to try to win back voters from Reform and the Greens with a different offer," Travers told AFP.

"In terms of international affairs, the big issue is dealing with Donald Trump," said Travers, noting Starmer had a relatively amicable relationship with the US president up until the US-Iran war.

Beyond finding his footing with the unpredictable American leader, who described Burnham as "extremely liberal", he will need to contend with wars raging in Russia-Ukraine and the Middle East.

Burnham has signalled he will not stray far from Starmer's generally well-regarded foreign policy, maintaining close ties to Nato and other allies.

"Our relationship with the US will remain critical as our most important defence and security ally. And Britain's support for Ukraine will not waver," Burnham wrote in *The Times* this month.

Farage to stand against 33 candidates in by-election

AFP
London

British anti-immigrant politician Nigel Farage will stand against a "record" 33 fringe opponents including longstanding joke candidate Count Binface in a snap by-election next month in eastern England he has triggered, local officials confirmed Friday.

Tendring District Council, which will manage the contest in Clacton — a seaside town and constituency which Farage has represented in parliament since 2024 — announced he and 33 candidates will be on the ballot after nominations closed Friday.

The council said that the total of 34 candidates "is believed to be a record for a parliamentary election".

Britain's mainstream parties have opted to boycott the poll after Farage contentiously said he would quit as an MP earlier this month and then re-stand, in a bid to stymie a growing furore around his finances.

The leader of the Reform UK party, which has led national opinion polls for more than a year, has been dogged for weeks by mounting pressure over the non-disclosure of gifts, including allegedly from a convicted fraudster.

The boycott by other parties means his most high-profile rival in the August 13 snap vote is Binface — the so-called "intergalactic space warrior" and alter ego of a stand-up comedian who wears a huge rubbish bin over his head, along with armour and a grey cape.

But he will be far from the only joke candidate: Alan "Howling



Reform UK leader Nigel Farage speaks during the inaugural Conservative Political Action Conference Great Britain (CPAC GB) in south-east London. (AFP)

Laud" Hope, the leader of the Official Monster Raving Loony Party will also be standing.

The long-established eccentric party is also fielding two other candidates: deputy leader Baron Von Thunderclap and treasurer Nick the Flying Brick, who calls for the abolition of gravity.

The list also includes British actor turned "anti-woke" activist Laurence Fox and other representatives of fringe parties and independents.

Addressing a CPAC conservative political conference in London on Friday, Farage said "the people of Clacton can decide whether they back me or whether they back the Establishment". "I've taken a punt because I like a gamble," he added. "I think they're going to come down on my side. I hope and pray that they do. Yes, let the people decide. Let the people be my judge, not the Westminster elite."

Diver injured in shark attack off Tasmania coast

Reuters
Sydney

A male diver was injured in a shark attack off the coast of Tasmania yesterday, police said, the latest in a spate of shark attacks in Australian waters.

The 31-year-old was diving around 50 metres (164 feet) offshore in the Adventure Bay area of Tasmania's Bruny Island when he was bitten by what was believed to be a 2-metre (6.6ft) broadnose sevengill shark, at about 09:10am (2310 GMT).

"The man was able to return to shore and was assisted by fellow divers," Police Inspector Darren Latham said in a statement.

The victim sustained non-life-threatening injuries to his forearm and was airlifted to hospital in a stable condition, according to the statement.

Police said there had been no further sightings of the shark in the remote area of the island state that is a one-hour flight from the mainland city of Melbourne, 445km (275 miles) away. About 40% of the island is wilderness or protected areas.

Last month, a shark attack in Australia's largest city Sydney left a 35-year-old woman critically injured and prompted a safety review at the country's popular shorelines.

Also in June, a man died after being attacked by a shark while fishing off the coast of Western Australia state, in the most recent fatal incident.

In May, a 39-year-old man died after being attacked while fishing on Queensland's Great Barrier Reef. A week earlier, a 38-year-old was fatally mauled off an island near Perth in Western Australia.

Dozens of beaches along Australia's east coast were closed in January after four shark attacks in two days.

While shark encounters remain statistically rare, a Reuters analysis of data from the Australian Shark Incident Database shows a gradual rise in encounters, with the country averaging nearly 29 incidents per year over the last decade, up from an average of roughly 16 per year in the 2000s.

NZ, Switzerland to begin talks on trade deal

New Zealand and Switzerland have agreed to begin talks in September to explore an agreement covering trade, economic security, investments and e-commerce, New Zealand's Trade Minister Todd McClay said yesterday.

The announcement followed a meeting between McClay and Swiss State Secretary for Economic Affairs Helene

Budliger Artieda in Auckland. "Switzerland is an important partner for New Zealand and one of the world's most innovative and advanced economies," McClay said in a statement. "At a time of growing global economic uncertainty, it is more important than ever that like-minded countries work together to strengthen trade and investment."

Two-way trade between New Zealand and Switzerland totalled NZ\$1.88bn (\$1.10bn) in the year ended December 2025. McClay said the dialogue would lead to closer economic ties through bilateral trade and international forums including the World Trade Organisation and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (Reuters)

Police shift fasting Indian activist to hospital against his will

Reuters
New Delhi

Authorities in India's capital Delhi moved social activist Sonam Wangchuk to hospital against his wish yesterday, after his condition worsened on the 21st day of a hunger strike launched to demand the resignation of the federal education minister.

Wangchuk, 59, had been fasting since June 28 in solidarity with India's youth Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), which is demanding Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan step down over exam paper leaks in May that affected millions of students.

Wangchuk's campaign has emerged as a rare public challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, drawing support across India and amplifying the activist's demands through millions of views and shares on social media.

Television footage yesterday



Authorities cover the stage with plain cloths as they prepare to take Sonam Wangchuk to the hospital during a sit-in protest called by Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) demanding the resignation of Indian Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi, yesterday. (Reuters)

showed dozens of security personnel, some in plain clothes, holding large white cloth sheets like a curtain on a stage that had been created for the protest before Wangchuk was taken away. Wangchuk had told gov-

ernment doctors on Friday that he did not wish to be moved to a hospital. Yesterday, he was refusing treatment, hospital authorities said.

"In compliance with the court's order, and based on health con-

ditions and medical advice, Mr Sonam Wangchuk has been moved from here to an appropriate government hospital for much-needed medical intervention," Deputy Commissioner of Police Sachin

Sharma told reporters at the site.

Wangchuk is weak due to prolonged fasting and dehydration, the state-run Safdarjung Hospital said in a statement.

"Although intravenous fluids were advised ... the patient has refused all intravenous fluids, oral rehydration fluid or any other medication," it said.

"He is being continuously monitored and counselled for treatment in (the) best interest of his health."

Satish Lamba, Wangchuk's personal physician, told reporters he had heard from the doctor monitoring him at hospital that the current concern was the risk of hypokalaemia.

Hypokalaemia refers to low levels of potassium in the blood, and a severe or sudden drop can be life-threatening. Potassium can be replaced in a hospital through intravenous therapy.

On Thursday, the Delhi High Court asked authorities to watch Wangchuk's health closely and intervene if needed, in response

to a petition asking authorities to force-feed him as his health weakened. Police also moved some CJP supporters who were staging a sit-in at the venue, asking them to vacate the area. But a few hundred returned later in the day as CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke began an indefinite hunger strike after Wangchuk was taken away.

Protesters from the CJP said they would march to India's parliament on July 20, when the monsoon session begins, to press their demand for Pradhan's resignation and seek exam reforms.

Wangchuk had been at the centre of CJP's protests, lying on a mattress in the middle of a stage, as supporters and visitors to the protest site milled about.

On the third day of his fast, Wangchuk told Reuters his fast would last six weeks unless he died first.

"But hopefully, we don't have to go that far," he had said. "A sensitive government in a democracy listens to the pains of the people, and I hope they will take action."

Puri sand art celebrates World Cup final



Indian artist Sudarsan Pattnaik creates a sand sculpture at a beach in Odisha's Puri city yesterday, ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup football final between Argentina and Spain. (AFP)

Hungarian president signs amendment ending his own term

Reuters
Budapest

Hungarian President Tamas Sulyok has signed a constitutional amendment passed by Prime Minister Peter Magyar's ruling Tisza party that ends his term as head of state, Sulyok said in a statement yesterday.

The legislation was part of Magyar's drive to dismantle former prime minister Viktor Orban's bastions of power, for which Magyar says he received a strong mandate from voters after ousting the right-wing leader in an April election landslide.

The amendment will end Sulyok's term immediately, citing society's "serious loss of confidence"

in a leader elected in early 2024 by lawmakers from Orban's Fidesz party.

Sulyok said he had no choice but to rubber-stamp the legislation as it respected the letter of the law. However, the former Constitutional Court judge warned the reform has harmed the rule of law in Hungary.

"The seventeenth amendment to the Constitution has marked a watershed in Hungary's constitutional democracy," Sulyok said.

"By removing public office holders in a manner that openly violates the rule of law ... it sets a negative precedent that inflicts a deep wound on the constitutional values of democracy, the separation of powers, and the rule of law," Parliament, where Magyar's

centre-right Tisza party has a two-thirds majority that allows it to change any laws, will elect a new president until a new constitution takes effect, or for a maximum of five years.

The amendment also imposes a 12-year term limit on lawmakers and sets a retirement age of 70 for Constitutional Court judges, which will force the court's current president, Orban ally Peter Polt, to retire.

Since ousting Orban in April, Magyar has repeatedly called on Sulyok to step down, accusing him of failing to represent national unity on major issues and of serving the interests of Orban and his government.

Sulyok has so far resisted pressure to step down.

Evacuation after drug lab discovery in The Hague

AFP
The Hague

Authorities in The Hague evacuated residents from dozens of homes yesterday after discovering an illegal drug lab had been set up in their neighbourhood, Dutch officials said.

The operation was the second time in 24 hours the residents were asked to leave their homes over the lab, outside which barrels containing hundreds of litres of dangerous chemicals were stored.

The police investigation into the site led to the arrests of at least four men aged between 34 and 71.

Several media outlets in the Netherlands said some 150 residents were asked to evacuate while specialised teams safely removed the products and then dismantled the inside of the lab.



A Dutch police officer stands guard during a police raid after a clandestine drug laboratory was discovered in a house on Meidoornstraat in The Hague yesterday. (AFP)

One outlet, De Volkskrant, said the lab appeared to be used to make ecstasy and other forms of MDMA.

"It's not usual to see such a set-up in a residential neighbourhood," a police spokeswoman told AFP.

The local council said the dangerous products were taken away and "eliminated", and warned that dangerous substances could be released during the operation.

It said that it expected the residents would be allowed to return to their homes late yesterday night.

Spain braces for third heatwave with highs above 40C

AFP
Madrid

Spain is set to enter its third heatwave of the summer on Tuesday, with temperatures forecast to climb above 40C across large parts of the country, the national weather office said.

The heatwave will be fuelled by a persistent area of high pressure that will trap hot, dry air from North Africa over Spain for several days, pushing temperatures to exceptionally high levels, AEMET said in a statement.

The heat is expected to intensify through Thursday, which forecasters say is likely to be the peak of the event, with some isolated areas potentially exceeding 45C.

"The level of danger will be significant during the central hours of the day, especially for outdoor activities and vulnerable people," the weather agency said.

Spain has already endured two other heatwaves this summer —



This screen grab taken from handout aerial video footage released yesterday by Spain's Pegaso unit of the Guardia Civil shows the military fighting a massive wildfire, in Cinco Villas area, near Zaragoza, in a sparsely populated part of the Aragon region in northeastern Spain. (AFP)

one in late June that broke temperature records across Europe, and another in early July.

Mainland Spain recorded its hottest first half of summer since records began in 1961, AEMET said on Tuesday, with average tempera-

tures from June 1 to July 15 reaching 24.5C — 3.3C above the 1991-2020 reference period average of 21.2C.

Scientists say human-driven climate change is increasing the length, intensity and frequency of heatwaves, which dry out veg-

etation and raise the risk of wildfires.

A ferocious blaze in the southeastern province of Almeria earlier this month killed 13 people, making it Spain's deadliest wildfire in recent years.

Ex-spy jailed after French lodge murder trial

AFP
Paris

An ex-spy and a former journalist were among those jailed Friday after a blockbuster trial detailed a network of violence and criminality linked to a French masonic lodge just outside Paris.

A Paris court heard hundreds of hours of evidence of murder attempts, industrial espionage and outlandish plots over more than three months. Of the 22 defendants in the dock, 17 were convicted and five acquitted.

Among the most serious charges were the murder of a racing driver, the attempted murders of a business coach and a trade unionist, aggravated assault and criminal conspiracy

— all on behalf of a mafia network inside the former Athanor Masonic Lodge in the Paris suburb of Puteaux.

The mastermind of the operation, Daniel Beaulieu, had served in the French domestic intelligence agency and has described himself as a devotee of magic and mind control.

The former freemason used these tricks to convince a hitman that he was working on behalf of the state, rather than settling scores and carrying out contracts for Beaulieu.

The 72-year-old, now using a wheelchair after trying to take his own life, was handed a 30-year sentence on Friday — the longest term given to any of the defendants.

He confessed to all the charges he faced except for the murder of Laurent Pasquali, a driver who once competed in the Le Mans 24-hour race. His

remains were discovered in a forest in 2019.

While the fate of Pasquali was a key piece of the jigsaw, but the defendants shed little light on his demise during the trial.

The man accused of murdering Pasquali was acquitted, and a married couple accused of hiring the killer to recover a debt from the racing driver were also acquitted of criminal conspiracy.

In all, 17 defendants were given sentences ranging from a six-month suspended sentence to 30 years in jail.

They included former journalist Frederic Vagliio, 55, also an ex-freemason, who was jailed for 25 years.

Sebastien Leroy, a 36-year-old former security guard who acted as a hitman, was given 27 years behind bars — five years more than the prosecution had asked for.

Saab orders more than double on Poland submarine order

Swedish defence group Saab said yesterday that order bookings more than doubled in the second quarter, buoyed by a Polish order for three new submarines, and said it was focused on scaling capacity.

"Demand for defence and deterrence capabilities remained

strong during the quarter, as customers continued to invest in both immediate readiness and long-term capabilities," chief executive Micael Johansson said.

The group said order bookings rose 141% to 68.4bn kronor (\$7.1bn) in the period of April to

June, compared to a year earlier. Saab noted that this included an order worth 47bn kronor from Poland for three A26 submarines, the company's "largest export order to date".

Sales meanwhile rose to 25.5bn kronor, representing a 29-percent

increase, and net income rose 41% to 2.2bn kronor.

Johansson also said market interest in the groups Gripen fighter jets remained "strong".

In late June, Ukraine signed a contract to buy 16 of the Saab's latest Gripen E model aircraft. (AFP)

British Museum shows Bayeux Tapestry unfurled after 'titanic' efforts

AFP
London

The British Museum on Friday revealed some sections of the Bayeux Tapestry a week after its arrival, as the curator of the forthcoming exhibition told AFP he was "relieved" the fragile embroidery appeared to have "travelled well".

Michael Lewis, the curator of the landmark exhibition opening in September, said: "I'm relieved that the tapestry has travelled well" with "no obvious signs of damage".

The 11th-century tapestry depicting the 1066 Battle of Hastings and the invasion by William the Conqueror's Norman army, was brought to London last week.

It will be displayed from September 10 until July 11, 2027, with 100,000 tickets already sold to the public for the first four months of the exhibition.

On Friday, the tapestry was shown to officials and journalists laid out flat at full length on the table where it will be displayed, in a long gallery with dark walls.

Some sections of the embroidery were uncovered, including one showing the Anglo-Saxon King Harold, while others were protected with dark sheets.

Once the tapestry has been checked and is perfectly laid out, in the coming days, it will be placed inside a sealed glass case.

Seeing the tapestry being installed "was an amazing thing to witness", Lewis said in the gallery.

Museum staff and French colleagues will be "condition checking the tapestry over the next few weeks", he said, but "as far as I'm concerned it has worked really well".

French culture minister Catherine Pégard visited the museum Friday to see the 68-metre (224-foot) embroidery, telling AFP it "arrived in excellent condition, in very good shape".

"We are now carrying out all the checks to make sure that every aspect of the journey went smoothly," she added, praising the work in bringing over the tapestry as a "titanic undertaking" and a "technical feat".



France's Culture Minister Catherine Pégard (centre) listens to Michael Lewis (second left), lead curator of the exhibition, during a visit to the unveiling of the Bayeux Tapestry at the British Museum in central London. (AFP)

French teams will remain at the British Museum until mid-August to "oversee all the work involved in installing the tapestry", the minister said.

Transported to London under tight security by truck from western France, the tapestry was initially kept in a specially designed double case to limit vibrations and maintain constant temperature and humidity levels.

It was slowly removed from the case on Thursday and fully unfurled.

The final exhibition will include visual projections of small areas of the tapestry to help explain the story, as well as "some sound", Lewis told AFP.

"The idea is to bring the tapestry to life," he said.

"I think a lot of people coming to the Bayeux Tapestry think it's about the Battle of Hastings", he said, but in fact those battle scenes are "only the last third, so there's lots of events beforehand".

"Some of them people will be familiar with and others they won't be, and that needs to be explained to them to help them through that."

Qatar’s emergency medicine model shows value of planning

Qatar’s emergency medicine story is not just about hospitals, beds, or brand-new equipment. It is about a state choosing to build an integrated system that treats emergency care as a strategic public good, not a patchwork of last-minute fixes.

The new review in Qatar Medical Journal points to something more important than institutional pride: it shows how policy, training, and planning can reshape the quality of care. In a region where health systems are often tested by fast population growth, heavy reliance on expatriate professionals, and sudden crises, Qatar has moved with unusual coherence. Its achievement lies not only in what has been built, but in how it has been built — through central coordination, competency-based education, and a deliberate effort to connect clinical practice with national priorities.

That matters because emergency medicine is the

true stress test of any health system. It reveals whether hospitals can respond quickly, whether staffing is sufficient, whether training is credible, and whether different parts of the system can work together under pressure. Qatar appears to have answered those questions with a model that is increasingly specialty-led, operationally disciplined, and resilient. The transformation from a fragmented, generalist-driven approach to a cohesive emergency network is therefore more than an administrative upgrade; it is a statement of maturity.

The study’s emphasis on workforce development deserves particular attention. A healthcare system may invest in buildings and technology, but without a strong pipeline of trained physicians and multidisciplinary teams, such investments remain incomplete. Qatar’s residency programme, interprofessional education, and subspecialty development have helped create capacity from within

the system rather than simply importing it. That is the more durable path. It produces continuity, strengthens institutional memory, and gives the country greater control over standards.

Yet the report also highlights a familiar dilemma: retention. Graduating emergency physicians from more than 20 countries speaks to the attractiveness and credibility of the programme, but the migration of some graduates abroad shows that talent mobility remains a reality. This is not a weakness unique to Qatar; it is a global challenge. Still, it raises a practical question for policymakers everywhere: how do you train world-class professionals and keep enough of them to serve the public system that invested in them?

The answer may lie in making the system itself a destination. Professionals are more likely to stay where they see career progression, research opportunity, service stability, and a clear sense of mission. Qatar has already signaled many of those

conditions. The next task is to deepen them.

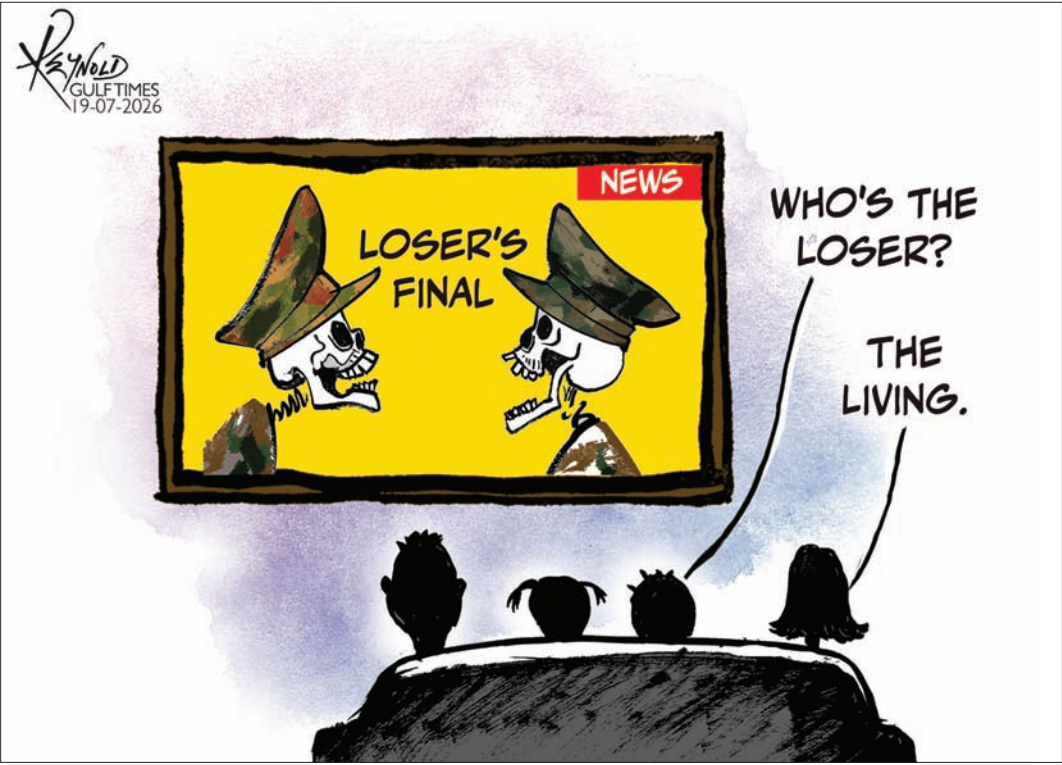
The system’s performance during the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2022 FIFA World Cup reinforces the broader lesson. Emergency medicine is often judged in ordinary times, but its real value emerges under extraordinary strain. Qatar’s ability to expand ICU capacity, deploy telehealth, reconfigure facilities, and maintain response standards during global events suggests a system that can absorb shocks without losing direction. That is the definition of resilience.

For other countries, the lesson is clear. Emergency medicine cannot be developed by improvisation. It requires national planning, linked education pathways, clinical governance, and a willingness to invest for the long term. Qatar has shown that a small state can build a large-scale model of competence when its institutions move in the same direction. The result is not just better emergency care, but a stronger health system overall.

The underbelly



This aerial photograph shows a view of the Merwede Bridge near Gorinchem yesterday. According to Rijkswaterstaat, research shows that the arch structure of the bridge, which carries the A27 motorway, is weaker at multiple locations than previously assumed. (AFP)



Of Türkiye’s triumph and everlasting bonds with Qatar



By Dr Mustafa Göksu, Ambassador of Türkiye

Throughout history, nations have experienced periods of turbulence and resilience, marked by both misfortune and triumphs. A decade ago, the attempted coup orchestrated by the Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation (FETO), on the night of July 15, 2016 stands as a stark example of such a moment in Türkiye’s recent history.

FETO aimed at toppling the democratically elected government and subverting the constitutional order. This insidious attempt was decisively thwarted by the foresight, unity, and unwavering resolve of the Turkish nation.

Turkish people, irrespective of political, religious, or ethnic differences, poured into the squares and streets, resisting tanks and confronting armed forces with nothing but their national flags and unyielding determination so as to prevent the heinous attempt.

On that dark night, as a result of the acts of terrorism committed by FETO, 253 of our citizens were martyred and more than 2,000 citizens injured.

Thus, July 15 has since become a symbol of national resilience and unity, declared as Democracy and National Unity Day. It serves as a stark reminder of the threats that countries may face and the extraordinary strength they can muster in response.

This critical juncture assisted to reinforce Türkiye’s institutional foundations and reaffirm the collective commitment of its people to

freedom, democracy and national sovereignty.

In response, the Turkish government launched a comprehensive and multi-faceted campaign domestically and internationally to dismantle FETO’s network and bring those responsible to justice in accordance with the principles of the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms.

Most of the FETO presence have been dispersed globally by means of international co-operation by friendly and allied countries.

Besides being a terrorist organisation, FETO also has an organised crime structure with a cult-like character that has rarely been seen in history. It consists of multi-layered international and secret cells that sometimes present themselves as non-governmental organisations, as educational institutions, sometimes as commercial entities and/or under the guise of a religious community to advance their hidden goals.

This shadowy and shady organisational structure, which abuses all universal values for its own secret agenda, poses a major national security threat to all countries and societies in which it operates.

Hence, the fight against FETO is one of the most important components of Türkiye’s national security at home and abroad. The death of the organisation’s ringleader Fethullah Gülen in the United States on October 20, 2024, will not make us complacent.

We are fully cognizant of the fact that the struggle against these types of devious organisations is not a 100-metre run but a marathon. Hence, we will continue our relentless fight with determination until this dark organisation is entirely eradicated.

Since the July 15 coup attempt, Türkiye continued to achieve remarkable success and has made noteworthy strides across multiple sectors by reinforcing its democratic governance, enhancing its economy,

advancing its industries, particularly defense area, expanding global humanitarian outreach, and becoming a key player in regional diplomacy, despite the challenges such as Covid-19 and February 6 earthquakes.

Turkish economy has demonstrated resilience and sustained growth, maintaining its position as 16th, with the total GDP of \$1.64tn in 2025, among the world’s top 20 economies. Our exports have reached to \$273.4bn in 2025 and is expected to be over \$400bn in the coming years.

Türkiye has not only completed its mega infrastructure projects (Eurasia Tunnel), also has added new ones (1915 Çanakkale Strait, Istanbul Airport etc.). Besides, impressive advancements in technology, especially in military field (advanced UAV’s), and automotive sector (first domestically produced electric car TOGG) has persisted since the failed coup attempt.

As the defence industry is an inevitable necessity for major countries, Türkiye has emerged as a global frontrunner, supported by a robust R&D budget approaching \$3bn, over 80% domestic production capacity, and a project portfolio valued at

more than \$100bn.

While maintaining its engagement with traditional allies such as Nato and the European Union, Türkiye reinforced its proactive and multidimensional approach in regional and global diplomacy. As one of the prominent members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), the Developing Eight (D-8), the Organisation of Turkic States, Asia Cooperation Dialogue and MIKTA, Türkiye has brought additional efficiency and dynamism to all institutions during its Term Presidencies.

Türkiye’s foreign policy, indeed, remains firmly rooted in a commitment to regional stability, multilateral engagement, and proactive peacebuilding. We uphold dialogue over division, prioritise partnerships rather than polarization, and advocate for diplomacy as the principal means of resolving disputes.

Through deepening and widening its comprehensive policies, Türkiye has spawned the 3rd largest diplomatic network globally with 264 missions.

Türkiye has a leading role in conflict prevention, peaceful resolution of conflicts and mediation. Under President

Erdogan’s leadership, Türkiye has solidified its role as a mediator in global diplomacy, facilitating key peace talks and leading efforts to resolve regional and global crises.

Türkiye has also adopted a value-based foreign policy that places human dignity at its core as it ranks first among the countries that provide the most aid in terms of its GDP.

Türkiye has remained committed to its ethical principles on just causes, foremost among them the Palestinian issue, and has consistently voiced its rejection of double standards in addressing the rights of peoples.

While commemorating tenth year of July 15, Qatar’s principled stance and solidarity with Türkiye should be remembered. In the immediate aftermath of the coup attempt, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani extended the first message of solidarity. HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani was among the first foreign officials to visit Türkiye in the aftermath of this night.

Qatar’s firm stance, its unequivocal support for Türkiye’s elected government, and its

deep empathy with the Turkish people have not been forgotten. And this brotherly gesture not only affirmed our mutual trust and solidarity but also further reinforced our already resolute ties and made the foundation even stronger that our strategic co-operation is based on.

Indeed, President Erdo an personally stated that any violations against brotherly country Qatar, in the wake of Iran – US/Israeli war, are inadmissible. He stressed that Türkiye always stands by Qatar in its difficult times.

The bonds between two countries are deeply rooted in a shared vision for a more stable, prosperous, and peaceful region. We collaborate with Qatar to promote peace, conflict resolution, and humanitarian assistance from Gaza to the Horn of Africa and elsewhere possible.

Besides having a shared vision for a better future, Türkiye and Qatar hold a shared destiny which was melded by the blood of our martyrs in the tragic accident of a helicopter crash that happened in March 2026.

On this solemn occasion, we cannot fail to remember His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, a steadfast supporter and sincere friend of Türkiye, who played a pivotal role in elevating Turkish-Qatari relations to the unprecedented level they enjoy today.

Through his visionary leadership, the enduring bonds of fraternity between our two nations were further strengthened, paving the way for a strategic partnership rooted in mutual trust, genuine respect, and a shared commitment to justice and common values. May Allah have mercy upon him.

As we commemorate the 10th anniversary of July 15 and celebrate Democracy and National Unity Day, we pay tribute to the martyrs and veterans who sacrificed their lives and well-being to defend our nation. We also express our heartfelt appreciation for those who stood by us.



Anıtıkabir — Atatürk’s mausoleum — in Ankara is the monumental resting place of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of modern Türkiye.

Ukrainian strikes on Russian warehouses kill eight

AFP
Moscow

Waves of Ukrainian explosive-laden drones yesterday pounded e-commerce warehouses in the Moscow and Tambov regions, killing eight people and causing large fires that blackened the skies with thick smoke for hours.

Kyiv has in recent months intensified its strikes on Russian territory, disrupting the lives of ordinary Russians — strikes it calls retribution for more than four years of bombardments against its territory.

The campaign, which Kyiv calls “long-range sanctions”, has mostly targeted Russia’s oil infrastructure and triggered a full-blown fuel crisis in one of the world’s biggest oil-producing countries.

This time, Ukraine struck two key warehouses of Russia’s biggest online retailer Wildberries, killing eight night-shift workers and sparking fires that all but destroyed the facilities.

“A terrible night, terrible events for our company and for our country. It is a pain that cannot be put into words,” said Wildberries CEO Tatiana Kim.

An AFP journalist saw thick black smoke rising over the Moscow region yesterday morning, which lingered until at least late afternoon.

“Seven night-shift employees were killed when enemy UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) hit a Wildberries logistics centre,” said Evgeny Pervyshov, the governor of the Tambov region, about 500 kilometres (300 miles) southeast of Moscow.

In the Moscow region — where an oil depot was struck in addition to another Wildberries warehouse — one person died in hospital, said regional governor Andrei Vorobyov.



Bystanders watch as smoke rises from a fire at the Russian e-commerce firm Wildberries’ logistics complexes in the town of Elektrostal outside Moscow yesterday. (AFP)

Firefighters were still battling the blaze in the Moscow region’s Elektrostal, while the fire in Tambov had been extinguished, regional authorities said. In Elektrostal, an empty kindergarten was also hit, without any casualties, added Vorobyov.

Almost 60 people were wounded in the attacks on the two regions and taken to hospital, authorities said.

More than 370 drones were launched toward the Moscow region overnight, said the mayor of the Russian capital, Sergei Sobyanin. Between July 11 and 18, almost 1,892 Ukrainian drones heading towards Moscow were in-

tercepted, he added.

“In response to Russian strikes on our civilian infrastructure and on our cities and communities, two major logistics facilities were hit — in the Moscow and Tambov regions,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on X.

He alleged the centres were used “to supply sanctioned components for drone production and navigation equipment”.

In Ukraine, Russian strikes left one person dead and 13 wounded in the Black Sea harbour of Odesa, in escalating bombardments of port facilities.

Intensifying Ukrainian strikes

on Russian oil infrastructure have disrupted daily life more visibly than at any point in the war, with fuel shortages hitting nearly 90% of Russian regions since June.

In recent weeks, lining up at petrol stations has become a staple of life in Russia — a country where fuel had until now been readily available and far cheaper than in Europe.

Fighting on the front line has largely stalled, with Ukraine appearing to have slowed Russia’s summer offensive.

US-led diplomatic efforts to end the conflict remains frozen since Washington has shifted focus to its war against Iran.

N Korean foreign minister on official visit to Russia

AFP
Moscow

The foreign minister of North Korea, which supports Russia’s war against Ukraine, was due in Moscow on Saturday for talks with her counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, the latter’s office said.

The Russian foreign ministry said North Korea’s Choe Son-hui would “arrive in the Russian Federation on July 18 for an official visit” at Lavrov’s invitation.

Pyongyang and Moscow have strengthened ties since Russia launched its military offensive against Ukraine in 2022.

The two countries signed a defence agreement when Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Pyongyang in 2024.

North Korea has sent missiles, munitions and thou-

sands of troops to assist Russia in Ukraine, and analysts say Moscow is sending financial aid, military technology, food and energy to the diplomatically isolated country in return.

In April, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un pledged to help Russia win its “sacred” war.

Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov and several other high-ranking officials visited Pyongyang in April for talks on strengthening military ties.

Belousov saying Moscow was ready to sign a co-operation plan for the period 2027-2031.

Republic of Korea and the European Union have condemned the partnership between the two countries.

North Korea’s foreign ministry has hit back, saying co-operation with Russia is an “exercise of sovereign rights”.

Turkiye arrests 119 accused of links to IS

AFP
Ankara

Turkiye’s interior ministry said yesterday that authorities had arrested 119 people across the country accused of links to the Islamic State group.

“(The) 199 suspects were arrested in a police operation carried out in 30 provinces against the Daesh terrorist organisation,” including in Istanbul and Ankara, the ministry said, using another name for the IS group.

Charges levelled against those apprehended included IS group membership, posting IS propaganda on social media and financing IS through intermediaries or “so-called charities”, the ministry said.

In late June, Turkish police killed a man suspected of IS links in an exchange of gunfire in the south of Ankara, two weeks before a Nato summit was held in the capital.

After that, 209 people suspected of links to the IS group or to far-left groups were arrested in Ankara on orders from the city’s chief prosecutor.

Minerals, military top agenda at France-Gabon meet

AFP
Libreville

Manganese and the future of a French military camp will be the two main topics when Gabon’s President Brice Clotaire Oligui Nguema visits France, both countries said on Friday.

Oligui Nguema, on his second official visit to France, will be joined by business chiefs and political officials from tomorrow on a three-day trip, during which he will holds talks with Emmanuel Macron.

Gabon presidency spokesman Théophile Nzame-Nze Biyoghe told reporters that the trip “will be an opportunity for the two heads of state... to follow up on the agreements

signed in Libreville last November”.

Oligui Nguema came to power in a coup in August 2023 which ended 55 years of rule by the Bongo dynasty and won nearly 95 percent of votes in elections in April 2025.

French influence is waning in francophone Africa, particularly in the Sahel region, but Libreville remains a close partner of Paris.

Beyond the formalities and a meeting with the Gabonese diaspora in France, talks will focus first on the local processing of manganese, which is used in steel manufacturing.

Gabon is one of the world’s biggest producers and announced last year that it wanted to ban the export of raw manganese from 2029 and develop a local processing industry.

Macron’s Elysee Palace office said there was “a convergence to move towards a timetable for local processing of part of the manganese production”.

France maintains a military base in Libreville but has reduced its presence from more than 1,000 to 100 or so soldiers, as part of an army restructuring.

Gabon is expected to take over the land, which it intends to use for training defence and security forces.

The Elysee said it was “ready to respond to the priorities and objectives set out by Gabon”.

Concerns have grown over repression in Gabon. Social networks have been cut off since February 17 while the country’s main opposition leader has been in jail since April over fraud and breach of trust allegations.

‘National March for Palestine’ in London



People carry a banner down Whitehall during a “National March for Palestine” calling on Britain’s next Prime Minister Andy Burnham to stand up for Palestine, in London, yesterday. (Reuters)

Thousands protest sacking of Ukrainian minister

AFP
Kyiv

Thousands of people turned out in Kyiv on Friday to protest Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky’s sacking of his popular defence minister Mykhailo Fedorov as part of a controversial reshuffle.

The protesters, many of them carrying the Ukrainian flags and placards expressing support for Fedorov, gathered in the capital for the second day running to protest the decision, an AFP journalist saw.

During his barely six months in the post, Fedorov repeatedly

clashed with the army’s top commander in his efforts to digitise and modernise an army fatigued after four years fighting off the Russian invasion.

A day after being forced to resign, Fedorov on Thursday accused Ukraine’s commander-in-chief Oleksandr Syrsky of dividing the country.

He criticised slow bureaucracy and a lack of flexibility, questioning whether Ukraine could defeat Russia with Syrsky in charge of the army.

Zelensky himself lamented that the two sides were barely on speaking terms.

“A president in wartime should

not have to choose in such a situation, honestly,” he said. “I would very much like unity”.

Following Fedorov’s removal, Zelensky announced Thursday he had appointed Yevgeniy Khmara — head of Ukraine’s SBU security service — as acting defence minister.

Already on Thursday, around a thousand people protested Fedorov’s removal in Kyiv and there were protests too in other cities.

During his tenure as defence minister, he boosted military salaries, announced plans for partial demobilisation and introduced game-like rewards systems for units that kill the most Russian soldiers.

Tbilisi to demolish unfinished landmark

AFP
Tbilisi

Authorities in the Georgian capital Tbilisi have approved the demolition of a half-finished futuristic cultural complex, rekindling a debate over one of the city’s most divisive landmarks.

Critics have long argued that the site — in the shape of two silvery steel and glass tubes — clashes with Tbilisi’s historic skyline, while supporters see it as an emblem of jailed former president Mikheil Saakashvili’s drive to rapidly modernise the ex-Soviet nation.

Its planned removal has prompted accusations that the ruling Georgian Dream party is seeking to erase architectural symbols associated with its imprisoned political rival.

Earlier this month municipal authorities ap-

proved the dismantling of the buildings designed by Italian architects Massimiliano and Doriana Fuksas that were put up in the historic Rike district in 2011-2012.

The owner, who plans to build a hotel on the site, has until December 25 to complete the demolition.

Saakashvili denounced the plan, describing the complex as a “world architectural and cultural masterpiece” and accused the authorities of destroying an asset built with public funds.

Intended to house a concert hall and exhibition space, the complex never opened. Work stopped after Saakashvili’s United National Movement lost power to Georgian Dream in 2012, leaving its interiors unfinished.

Around \$29mn in public money had already been spent on the project, according to Georgian fact-checking organisation FactCheck.ge.

Massimiliano Fuksas also condemned the decision.

Russian courts target two outspoken critics of war in Ukraine

Reuters
Moscow

Russian authorities have detained a blogger who criticised President Vladimir Putin and the war in Ukraine and fined an anti-war politician, as Moscow sends a warning signal to critics of the Kremlin ahead of September’s parliamentary election.

Although Putin maintains a near-total grip on power, he and the dominant United Russia party are under pressure in the lead-up to the vote as Russia grapples with an economic slowdown and fuel shortages

triggered by Ukrainian attacks on oil refineries.

The blogger, Ilya Remeslo, was detained on Friday on suspicion of the offence of spreading false information about the Russian army, the TASS state news agency reported.

Russian news agencies said Remeslo had been detained in St. Petersburg, Russia’s second largest city, brought to Moscow and remanded in custody by a court until September 16.

RIA news agency quoted Remeslo’s lawyer, Sergei Badamshin, as saying the blogger denied the charges.

Previously a pro-Kremlin figure,

Remeslo published a manifesto that went viral on social media in March entitled “Five reasons why I stopped supporting Vladimir Putin”. He was admitted to a psychiatric hospital, where he spent about a month. TASS said he could receive 10 years in prison if convicted.

Separately, Boris Nadezhdin, a politician who attempted to run against Putin in the 2024 presidential election on an anti-war ticket, was fined 1,000 roubles (\$13) for displaying “extremist symbols”.

While the amount was symbolic, the case was among a series of steps against Nadezhdin that could signal more serious consequences if he continues to criticise

the government on sensitive issues, including what he described this week as the “completely senseless fratricidal war”.

The 63-year-old, a liberal member of parliament from 1999 to 2003, was designated a week ago as a “foreign agent”, a Soviet-era label carrying connotations of spying that bars him from political office. He was detained and questioned on Monday, and later forbidden to leave Russia.

The Kremlin says strict censorship laws are needed to keep Russia united during what it calls an existential confrontation with the West.

Nadezhdin told Reuters this week that the authorities were acting to prevent him

campaigning and airing critical views on topics such as Internet restrictions, fuel shortages and the war.

His lawyer said the “extremist symbols” case stemmed from a social media post linking to a video that included a photo of the late opposition politician Alexei Navalny, whose Anti-Corruption Foundation is banned as an extremist movement. Nadezhdin called the case “ridiculous”.

The liberal Yabloko party, which opposes the war in Ukraine, has also had several members disqualified from elections. Last month, its deputy chair, Maxim Kruglov, was jailed for seven years, convicted of spreading “military fakes”.

HH Sheikh Hamad’s legacy lives on in Qatar and Bosnia and Herzegovina

By Dr Bisera Turkovic

Few leaders have ever possessed as much genuine love for their people as HH the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. He was not only the true father of his nation; he was far more than that. He was a visionary, a man of truth and justice whose compassion extended beyond the people of Qatar to all those who suffered from injustice. The people of Bosnia and Herzegovina will always remember HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani as a true and steadfast friend. He was the first Arab leader to visit Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war of aggression, standing beside its people in one of the darkest chapters of their history. In those most difficult times, he was a true friend of Alija Izetbegovic, president of Bosnia, on whom Bosnia and Herzegovina could always rely. His generosity lives on through countless acts of goodwill and his unwavering assistance to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He transformed a small desert nation of Qatar into one of the world’s most successful and



HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani (the then-Amir) with Bosnia's first president Alija Izetbegovic

influential countries, while never losing sight of his responsibility toward those beyond his own borders. His humility, simplicity, and openness towards ordinary people made him truly great. The love of his people and the respect of leaders from around

the world were reflected in the countless mourners who came to offer their condolences to his family. In the eyes of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser, one could see profound sorrow. The faces of those closest to him reflected the



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani receiving condolences from Dr Bisera Turkovic.

deep grief of losing a beloved father, a leader, and the father of the Qatari nation. The simplicity and dignity with which the family received thousands of mourners stand as a testament to their greatness and their closeness to the people of Qatar. In moments like these, no-one can remain untouched, and tears find their own way down our faces. May Allah grant you His eternal mercy, O great leader.

From the dust of the desert, you helped build one of the world’s most advanced nations. From a Bedouin society, you helped shape a proud, confident, and modern Arab nation. Education City stands as a lasting reflection of your vision and your faith – a living testament to the generations you prepared to lead the country into the future. Your son, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, is a source of pride for all of us

who love Qatar. Your children are a reflection of your life’s work and values, shining beacons of leadership, service, and devotion to their people. May Allah ease the pain of Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser and grant her many more years in good health and strength, for the joy of her family and all those who admire her. She is a motherly figure to many across the Ummah, a radiant star whose light continues to illuminate the difficult paths we walk. O blessed leader, your deeds bear witness to your righteousness. We pray that, by Allah’s boundless mercy, you are granted the highest ranks of Jannat Al-Firdous. The love with which your people bid you farewell stands as a testament to the purity of your path and the goodness you spread throughout the world. I pray to the Almighty to envelop you in His infinite mercy, to grant you His protection, and to reward you with the highest ranks of Jannat Al-Firdous. Ameen.

• The writer is former deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Qatar residents turn summer challenges into lifestyle changes

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

For many long-time residents, Qatar’s sweltering summer is no longer a season to endure, but one they have learned to embrace, adapting their routines as soaring temperatures and humidity reshape how they live, work and relax.

Rather than avoiding the heat altogether, residents have gradually changed not only when they go out but also where and how they spend their leisure time.

Air-conditioned gyms, shopping malls, cafés and indoor sports facilities have become central to daily life, while early mornings and evenings are reserved for outdoor activities.

Long-time Filipino expatriate Nad Dizon said Qatar’s summer has become an opportunity to adapt rather than a reason to stay inactive. “Summer is something we experience every year, so we’ve learned to adapt and make the best of the conditions,” Dizon told **Gulf Times*. “Many activities can still be enjoyed during summer.”

For Dizon, the gym has become a regular destination during the hotter months because it offers a clean, comfortable environment for exercise.

He noted that many gyms and fitness centres roll out seasonal promotions and discounted memberships during summer, making them more accessible and attracting more people to stay active.

Apart from fitness, he and his family have found other ways to enjoy the season, including taking long walks through the Doha Metro network and exploring different parts of the city while remaining largely indoors.

The seasonal migration indoors has become increasingly evident across Qatar’s fitness industry. Gym operators report higher attendance from existing members during summer, as many residents move their workouts indoors to escape the heat.

Group fitness classes, indoor sports and air-conditioned recreational facilities also experience

greater demand, particularly during the early morning and evening hours.

Outdoor runners often swap parks for treadmills or indoor mall running clubs, cyclists replace road rides with spin classes, walkers head to shopping malls instead of public parks, while families enrol children in swimming lessons and indoor sports programmes.

Recreational athletes increasingly favour indoor padel, badminton, squash and football facilities until cooler weather returns.

For others whose hobbies naturally take them outdoors, adapting has become part of everyday life.

Portuguese expatriate Amândio Nunes, a scuba diver and motor-cycle enthusiast, said experience has taught him to work with the climate rather than against it.

“As a long-time resident, I’ve learned that the key is adapting your routine to the weather,” he said. “During the hotter months, I shift outdoor activities to the early morning or late evening, stay well hydrated and take advantage of shade whenever possible.”

Nunes said remaining active outdoors throughout the year also allows the body to acclimatise gradually as temperatures rise.

Belgian archaeologist and scuba diver Margaux De Pauw shares a similar philosophy.

“For me, it helps to accept that the heat will be uncomfortable sometimes,” she said. “As an archaeologist and diver, I spend a lot of time outdoors, so I dress appropriately, stay hydrated and protect myself from the sun.”

She added that avoiding excessively cold air-conditioning also makes the transition back outdoors easier while reducing energy consumption.

For Sri Lankan expatriate Imran Anver, who has lived in Doha for 12 years, adapting to Qatar’s climate has become second nature.

“As a family, we plan our days around the climate,” he said. “Mornings and evenings become our window for outdoor time, while midday hours shift indoors.”

Anver believes Qatar’s investment in climate-adaptive infrastructure has made a significant difference over the years.

“Initiatives like shaded and cooled walkways, extensive indoor sports and leisure facilities, and the summer worker safety

regulations reflect a thoughtful, community-first approach to heat management,” he said.

Facilities such as indoor padel and football courts, along with covered public spaces, have enabled residents to remain physically active year-round without compromising comfort or health.

“It’s less about resisting the climate and more about adapting intelligently to it, which Qatar has made increasingly easy to do,” he added.

The shift extends beyond recreation. Indoor cafés have evolved into so-called “third places” where people spend hours working remotely, holding meetings, studying, reading or simply socialising.

Specialty coffee shops, particularly in Msheireb Downtown Doha and major shopping malls, report that customers tend to stay much longer during the summer months.

“Many customers spend several hours here,” said Alfie, a barista at a café in Msheireb Downtown Doha. “They often tell us they prefer working or studying here because it’s comfortable, and they feel more productive than elsewhere.”

Shopping malls are also taking a more active role in encouraging healthy lifestyles.

Some have begun hosting organised fitness activities during summer instead of simply serving as air-conditioned destinations.

One notable example is a running club that relocated its weekly sessions to Doha Festival City, where participants complete multiple laps inside the mall before gathering at a café afterwards, combining exercise with social interaction despite the outdoor heat.

Meanwhile, Qatar is expected to remain under typical peak-summer conditions over the coming days, according to forecasts based on data from the Qatar Meteorology Department and internationally recognised weather services.

Daytime temperatures are forecast to rise steadily from around 37C on Friday to as high as 45C by Tuesday, with some inland areas potentially approaching 46C.

Warm nights, persistent humidity along coastal areas, and hazy conditions caused by suspended dust are also expected, while no significant rainfall is forecast.

For many residents, however, such forecasts have become less of a deterrent than a reminder to adjust their routines.



Margaux De Pauw spends more time outdoors.



Qatar residents learned to adapt to the country’s summer conditions.



Amândio Nunes shifts his outdoor activities to early morning or late evening.



Nad Dizon at the gym.

Father Amir’s enduring legacy: The vision that shaped modern Qatar

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The legacy of HH the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani remains deeply woven into Qatar’s modern identity. Under his leadership, the country underwent a profound transformation that extended far beyond economic growth, laying the foundations of a knowledge-based society where culture, education, media and sport became pillars of national development.

His vision redefined Qatar’s place on the global stage, combining rapid modernisation with a steadfast commitment to preserving national identity and investing in human capital.

One of the defining features of HH the late Father Amir’s leadership was his commitment to culture as a driver of progress. Landmark institutions, including Qatar Museums, the Museum of Islamic Art, and the Arab Museum of Modern Art, established Doha as a regional and international cultural hub while celebrating Arab and Islamic heritage.

This vision also gave rise to Katara Cultural Village and the restoration of Souq Waqif, projects that successfully linked Qatar’s rich traditions with contemporary cultural life.

His influence extended to the media sector through the launch of Al Jazeera Media Network in 1996, a milestone that reshaped Arab journalism. HE Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer al-Thani, chairman of the Qatar Media Corporation and chairman of Al Jazeera Media Network, wrote and recalled the network’s beginnings: “One day, His Highness summoned me to his home and told me he intended to establish a news television channel called Al Jazeera. It would enjoy a broad margin of freedom and be different from anything the Arab media landscape had known.”

He noted that HH the Father Amir never interfered in editorial decisions if professional standards were upheld.

“HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani visited the channel, but he never interfered in its news coverage or programmes. His unwavering belief in free and independent media became a shield that protected both the network and its journalists.”

Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer added that even during his final meeting with HH the Father Amir, despite his illness, he remained keen to ask about Al Jazeera’s future, reflecting the special place the network held in his vision.

Education formed another cornerstone of HH the late Father Amir’s national project. Through the establishment of Qatar Foundation and Education City, Qatar attracted leading international universities while fostering research, innovation and academic excellence.



HH Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani



HE Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer al-Thani



Veteran Qatari actor Salah al-Mulla.

The expansion of higher education institutions such as Hamad Bin Khalifa University, reinforced the country’s transition toward a diversified knowledge economy.

HH the late Father Amir also viewed sport as a powerful instrument of national development and international engagement. His long-term investment in world-class infrastructure paved the way for Qatar to host the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, the first World Cup staged in the Arab world. That legacy con-

tinues through the sustainable use of World Cup venues and the growing international role of institutions such as Aspire Academy and Aspetar in sports science, talent development and sports medicine.

Alongside cultural and educational achievements, Qatar witnessed sweeping infrastructure development, including Hamad Port, the Doha Metro, Lusail City and Msheireb Downtown Doha, projects that reflected a vision of sustainable urban development while enhancing quality of life.

Veteran Qatari actor Salah al-Mulla told *Gulf Times* HH the Father Amir’s legacy was rooted in “a comprehensive vision that placed people at the heart of development.”

He added: “HH the late Father Amir played a major role in advancing Qatar’s artistic movement and addressing many of the challenges facing the cultural sector, particularly restrictions on theatrical works. He believed creativity requires freedom, and many productions that had previously faced censorship were allowed to reach the stage during his era.”

HH the late Father Amir’s achievements are measured not only by the institutions and landmarks established during his reign, but by the enduring philosophy he instilled: that a nation’s true strength lies in its people.

Today, Qatar continues to build on those foundations, with its cultural, educational, sporting and media institutions standing as lasting testimony to a leadership that believed investment in knowledge, creativity and national identity is the surest path to sustainable development and global influence.