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THE PERFECT GIFT?

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BUSINESS | Page 1

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SCAN TO SHOP

PM, Saudi, Omani, Jordanian FMs stress diplomacy as way forward

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held a phone call with Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud. They discussed bilateral relations and ways to support them and explored the latest regional developments, particularly the diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination to de-escalate tensions and enhance security and stability in the region. The prime minister stressed the necessity for all parties to adhere to dialogue and diplomacy and to implement what was agreed upon within the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran, including guaranteeing freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz in order to maintain regional security, preserve the gains achieved, and enhance regional stability. He reiterated Qatar's full support for all efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and reaching a comprehensive agreement that achieves lasting peace in the region. The prime minister also held a telephone conversation with Omani Minister of Foreign Affairs Badr bin Hamad bin Hamood Albusaidi. They discussed ways to deepen and expand bilateral ties as well as the latest regional dynamics particularly the ongoing diplomatic efforts and closer co-ordination for de-escalation and reinforcing security and stability in the region. The prime minister stressed the importance of all parties committing to dialogue and diplomacy and implementing what had been concurred on in the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran. This, His Excellency said, includes freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, respect for the Sultanate of Oman's sovereignty over its territorial waters to safeguard the region's security and the achieved gains, as well as promoting regional stability. He reiterated that Qatar thoroughly backs all endeavours to de-escalate tensions and reach a comprehensive accord that achieves sustainable peace in the region. **To Page 2**



Amir meets Turkish FM

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met at his office in Lusail Palace yesterday with Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan. At the outset of the meeting, the Turkish foreign minister conveyed his condolences to His Highness the Amir on the passing of HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. His Highness the Amir thanked the Turkish FM for his sincere condolences. They addressed the close co-operation between the two countries and the latest regional and international developments, particularly those in the region as well as ongoing diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination aimed at de-escalation and enhancing regional security and stability. The meeting was attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani and HE the Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi. **(QNA)**

Amir, Iraqi PM hold talks on ties and regional situation



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani held official talks with Iraqi Prime Minister Ali Faleh al-Zaidi at Lusail Palace yesterday. At the outset of the talks, His Highness the Amir welcomed the Iraqi prime minister and his accompanying delegation, expressing hope that the fraternal relations between the two countries would continue to grow and prosper across various fields. The Iraqi premier offered condolences on the passing of HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. He also thanked His Highness the Amir for the

warm reception and expressed his hope that the visit would help expand bilateral co-operation and strengthen ties between the two countries across broader horizons. The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen and expand co-operation across various fields. They also discussed the most significant regional and international issues and developments, especially the evolving situation in the region. Both sides stressed the importance of all parties adhering to dialogue and diplomacy and implementing the agreements reached under the Memorandum of Understanding

between the United States and Iran, including ensuring freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and promoting regional stability. The talks were attended by HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani, HE the Chief of Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed al-Khulaifi, HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Khulaifi. Also attending from the Iraqi side were Minister of Foreign Affairs Fuad Hussein and a number of senior officials. **(QNA)**

Spain rule the world

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026 CHAMPIONS

Spain lifts the FIFA World Cup Winner's Trophy alongside US President Donald Trump and FIFA President Gianni Infantino. **(AFP)**

A solitary goal sinks Argentina in one-sided final

Ferran Torres scored an extra-time winner as Spain defeated holders Argentina 1-0 to win the World Cup yesterday and shatter Lionel Messi's dreams of a triumphant farewell to football's greatest stage. Barcelona striker Torres lashed home a thumping finish in the 106th minute to reward a dominant display by Spain against an Argentina team who failed to register a single shot on target in 120 minutes. A star-studded crowd of 80,663 that included US President Donald Trump packed East Rutherford's MetLife Stadium to see if Argentina captain Messi could crown his glittering career with a second World Cup victory. But the 39-year-old maestro — almost certainly playing in his final World Cup game — was reduced to irrelevance as Spain took control early on against an Argentina team who



Ferran Torres celebrates the winning goal. **(Reuters)**

committed a catalogue of cynical fouls throughout. The South Americans' skulduggery ended with midfielder Enzo Fernandez being sent off after a brutal challenge on Spain defender Pau Cubarsi in injury time. For long periods though it looked as if Argentina may somehow hold on for a penalty shoot-out as Spain struggled to make the breakthrough. But after Nico Williams had a goal controversially disallowed in extra-time, Spain struck. A lofted cross to the back post by Pedro Porro found Williams who nodded into the path



A Spanish fan waves the national flag as they watch the FIFA World Cup final in New York. **(Reuters)**

of Torres to crash home the goal that would clinch Spain's second World Cup title after their maiden 2010 triumph. Earlier, a clear sign of Argentina's frustration came in the 15th minute when Alexis Mac Allister went flying in with a studs-up challenge that struck Dani Olmo's ankle. Mac Allister escaped an early yellow card although after Slovenian referee Slavko Vincic only awarded a foul. **Sport Pages 1, 4**

Qatar regulates drone operations under new law

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Qatar has introduced a comprehensive legal framework to regulate the use of drones, placing their operation under the supervision of the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA). Law No. 10 of 2026 on the Regulation of Unmanned Aircraft empowers the QCAA to oversee drone activities in accordance with national legislation and applicable international conventions, in co-ordination with the relevant authorities in the country. Under the law, the authority will designate the areas in which drones may be operated and determine the maximum permitted altitudes. It will also specify authorised airspace and flight routes to ensure the safety of air navigation and protect Qatar's airspace. The QCAA will be responsible for issuing and renewing licences and operational permits. It will

also determine the types and categories of drones that may be used in Qatar and establish the technical requirements they must meet. Rules governing the import and export of drones will also be introduced, while the authority will supervise and monitor operations to ensure compliance with the relevant regulations. Environmental protection forms another key part of the legislation, with the QCAA tasked with establishing conditions and measures to safeguard the environment during drone operations. All technical regulations and instructions issued under the law will be published in Arabic and English on the QCAA's official website. The legislation comes amid the rapid expansion of drone use in commercial, research and recreational activities. It is intended to enable individuals and businesses to benefit from the technology while maintaining aviation safety, regulatory oversight and the protection of the country's airspace.





PM meets Turkish FM



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Turkiye's Minister of Foreign Affairs Hakan Fidan, who is visiting Qatar. They discussed bilateral co-operation, relations and explored ways to strengthen and enhance them, as well as the latest regional developments, particularly ongoing diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination aimed at de-escalation and promoting security and stability in the region. - **QNA**

PM, Saudi, Omani, Jordanian FMs stress diplomacy as way forward

From Page 1

The prime minister also held a phone call with Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Ayman Safadi.

They discussed bilateral co-operation and ways to strengthen it, and explored the latest regional developments.

The prime minister expressed Qatar's strongest condemnation of the renewed attacks by Iran against the territory of Jordan.

He stressed the necessity for all parties to adhere to dialogue and diplomacy and to implement what was agreed upon within the framework of the agreement between the US and Iran, including guaranteeing freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, in order to maintain regional security, preserve the gains achieved, and enhance regional stability.

The prime minister reiterated Qatar's full support for all efforts aimed at de-escalating tensions and reaching a comprehensive agreement that achieves lasting peace in the region. - **QNA**

Minister chairs first Police Academy Supreme Council meeting in 2026



HE the Minister of Interior and Commander of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Police Academy, presided over the Academy's Supreme Council's first meeting of 2026, held at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) headquarters. During the meeting, the Council discussed agenda items related to academic and training matters. - **QNA**

US, Iran trade fire as truce collapses

AFP/Reuters
Tehran/Washington

The United States and Iran exchanged missile strikes and airstrikes yesterday, as an interim ceasefire signed a month earlier collapsed amid an escalating struggle for control of the Strait of Hormuz, the waterway that carries a fifth of the world's oil supply.

The US military said it had completed an eighth consecutive night of strikes against Iran, aimed at degrading Tehran's ability to threaten shipping in the strait and to "swiftly punish" Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces blamed for attacks on American troops in Jordan.

The US Central Command (Centcom) said the latest wave hit Iranian coastal surveillance and air defence facilities.

The escalation followed confirmation that two US service members were killed in Jordan on Friday, with a third listed as missing in action.

That brought the confirmed US military death toll to 16 since the war began on February 28, when Washington and Israel launched strikes intended to disable Iran's nuclear and missile programmes.

More than 420 US personnel have been wounded. US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said the deaths would only "stiffen" American resolve. Iran's health ministry said 50 people had been killed and more than 500 wounded by US strikes over the past three weeks alone.

Thousands have died and several million been displaced across the wider conflict, which has also reignited fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Iran said it targeted two US bases in Kuwait, at Al-Adiri camp and Ali Al Salem Air Base, in retaliation.

Kuwait's electricity ministry reported a desalination and power plant had been struck for a second consecutive day, sparking a fire.

Bahrain's air defences said they intercepted a separate Iranian attack, while Jordan's military said it shot down three missiles after air raid sirens sounded nationwide.

Israel's military said it had detected missiles fired towards the Jordanian port city of Aqaba, near its border, and that Israeli and Jordanian forces intercepted at least one.

Jordan summoned Iran's charge d'affaires to pro-



Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah al-Ahmad al-Sabah visiting an injured person receiving treatment at a hospital in Kuwait city following the Iranian attack yesterday. - **Reuters**

test what it called "brutal and unjustified" attacks on its territory.

Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation accused the US of striking the under-construction Dargah nuclear plant in the country's southwest, calling it unlawful.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said it was investigating but noted the site held no nuclear material and remained in early construction.

IAEA Director Rafael Grossi renewed his call for military restraint near nuclear-related sites.

The Revolutionary Guards said it had stopped two vessels attempting to transit the Strait of Hormuz via an "unsafe route", while two others abandoned the attempt, as Washington enforces a naval blockade on Iranian ports and Tehran polices shipping through the strait.

In a statement carried by state media, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei - whose whereabouts remain unconfirmed since his father's killing in the war's opening strikes - said that Washington's commitments were "utterly worthless" and warned of "even heavier costs" ahead.

Senior military officials echoed the threat of a "decisive and devastating response" if US strikes continue.

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

Qatar joins high-level GCC education meeting

Qatar participated in the 96th session of the Executive Council of the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States (ABEGS) yesterday.

The event, held virtually, saw the participation of undersecretaries of the ministries of education in the GCC member states, and the assistant secretary-general for Economic and Development Affairs at the General Secretariat of the GCC.

HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi represented Qatar at the session.

The session discussed an array of items on the agenda, with the assistant undersecretary for Educational Affairs at the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE), Maha Zayed al-Qaqaa al-Ruwaili, delivering a presentation on energies that create achievement and capabilities that chart the future.

The session was inaugurated by remarks from the

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education of the United AE and Chairman of the Executive Council of the Bureau Mohammed Hamza Alqasim, who underscored the importance of envisioning the future of education and being ready for its mutations.

The assistant secretary-general for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC General Secretariat, Khalid bin Ali al-Sunaïdi, said the ABEGS's Strategy 2026-30 represents an ambitious framework aimed at fostering Gulf educational integration, charting the future of education and strengthening the Bureau's stature through advancing educational policies, capacity-building and the launch of high-impact initiatives that promote the quality of education and support the shared Gulf identity.

ABEGS director-general Dr Mohammed bin Saud al-Mogbel outlined the Bureau's career spanning over five decades, alongside its role in backing joint Gulf educational action. - **QNA**

246 attend QNA courses in first half of 2026

The Qatar News Agency (QNA) Training Centre has concluded its training programmes for the first half of 2026, which were organised as part of the centre's annual plan.

A total of 246 trainees from the QNA and several government entities participated.

The first half of 2026 saw the organisation of 15 specialised media training courses and workshops, in addition to the foundational programme for new staff and the training programme for students in the Department of Mass Communication at Qatar University.

The media training programmes were divided into 10 training

courses, attended by 163 participants - 126 employees from QNA and 37 participants from various government entities.

In addition, five specialised workshops were held, benefiting 50 participants.

The training courses covered a range of media-related fields, including editorial policy, photojournalism, video filming and editing, field news reporting, media monitoring and editing, multimedia journalism, social media monitoring, Arabic language for media professionals, advanced public relations skills, and news podcast production.

The QNA Training Centre also

implemented its orientation programme for new employees.

This year's orientation programme was attended by 22 staff.

As part of its commitment to developing promising national media talent, the QNA Training Centre welcomed 11 students from the Department of Mass Communication at Qatar University during the first half of the year.

The QNA Training Centre is scheduled to resume its training programmes in September.

Details of the training courses and their schedules can be found on the QNA Training Centre's website: <https://www.qna.org.qa/ar-QA/training-programs>

Qatar a model for natural resource conservation, environmental sustainability

Desertification and drought represent an increasing environmental and developmental challenge at the global level, in light of the accelerating pace of climate change and the continued pressures resulting from human activities, and the resulting degradation of land and natural resources, which threatens food security and biodiversity and undermines efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Qatar recognises these challenges by paying close attention to combating desertification and drought, given its geographical nature characterised by a hot and dry desert climate, limited surface water resources, and the unique nature of its vegetation cover.

Within the framework of Qatar National Vision 2030, the country has adopted an integrated strategic approach to address these challenges based on protecting natural resources and achieving sustainable development through developing afforestation programmes, planting drought-resistant plants, applying modern water-saving irrigation techniques, rehabilitating degraded lands and improving soil properties, along with enhancing the environmental monitoring and follow-up system using modern technologies.

At the regional and international levels, Qatar pursues an active policy in the field of combating desertification and promoting environmental sustainability through its commitment to relevant international agreements and its participation in global efforts to address environmental challenges, including joining the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and adhering to its requirements.

In addition, the state participates in the Conferences of the Parties negotiations on climate change, along with supporting and financing regional environmental projects through the Qatar Fund for Development (QFFD), enhancing co-operation with the Gulf Co-

operation Council (GCC) countries in the areas of joint environmental management, as well as hosting international conferences and events related to the environment and climate.

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) continues to contribute to its initiative to plant 10mn trees by 2030, which was announced by Qatar as part of the Middle East Green Initiative, with more than 4mn trees planted so far.

During 2025, 19,580 local wild and coastal seedlings were cultivated, and 31,275 wild and coastal seedlings were produced in the Al-Ghashamiya nursery to support propagation and environmental rehabilitation programmes.

To reinforce this trend, the MoECC launched the National Strategy to Combat Desertification 2025-30 as part of Qatar's efforts to protect its natural resources, enhance their sustainability, and mitigate land degradation and the impacts of drought, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 and the Third National Development Strategy 2024-30.

The strategy encompasses six key outcomes: protecting ecosystems and reducing factors contributing to desertification and drought; promoting sustainable management of natural resources; strengthening vegetation cover and rehabilitating affected environments; building capacity and supporting scientific research and innovation; developing legislation, policies, and effective governance; and enhancing community participation and national and international partnerships.

In this context, the ministry is implementing a number of programmes and initiatives aimed at reducing land degradation and enhancing vegetation cover.

This includes afforestation programmes and planting plant species adapted to the Qatari environment, environmental monitoring programmes that rely on advanced

systems to track indicators of land and vegetation degradation, in addition to initiatives to rehabilitate land, improve its quality and reduce the effects of desertification.

The ministry also attaches particular importance to employing technology and innovation in its environmental efforts through the use of geographic information systems and remote sensing technologies in monitoring environmental changes, developing smart irrigation and sustainable agriculture applications, supporting research related to adaptation to drought,



and improving the ability of ecosystems to cope with climate challenges.

These efforts are based on an integrated legislative and regulatory system aimed at protecting the environment and natural resources.

This includes laws and regulations governing the protection of agricultural lands, water resources and biodiversity, in addition to environmental assessment requirements for various projects.

In terms of awareness, the MoECC is keen to promote environmental awareness and community participation through the implementation of awareness and afforestation programmes, support for research initiatives, and encouragement of various segments of society and the private sector to contribute to protecting the environment and preserving natural resources.

Assistant Undersecretary for Protection and Natural Reserves Affairs Dr Ibrahim Abdul Latif al-Muslimani explained in a state-

at least 30% of degraded natural habitats.

Dr al-Muslimani added that nature reserves represent a fundamental pillar in the state's efforts to protect biodiversity and reduce land degradation.

He said that terrestrial reserves cover about 27% of the country's area, with work underway to raise the percentage of protected terrestrial and marine areas to 30% by 2030.

The official reported that the ministry carried out protection and rehabilitation works in 76 gardens and natural sites, with a total area of 16.72sq km from 2019-26, through fencing, regulating use, cultivating local plants and scattering seeds, with a plan to expand protection and rehabilitation programmes to include 500 gardens and natural sites by 2030.

Regarding modern technologies, Dr al-Muslimani pointed to the use of geographic information systems, remote sensing and drones in monitoring the condition of the land and vegetation cover, indicating that these efforts contributed to the inventory and documentation of 1,573 parks, and the establishment of the first integrated national spatial database for parks and natural sites, in addition to studying the use of artificial intelligence (AI) applications to enhance the efficiency of environmental monitoring and support decision-making.

Regarding national partnerships, he stressed that combating desertification requires the combined efforts of various parties.

He noted the participation of more than 25 national bodies in the relevant technical consultations, as well as the contribution of private sector institutions in supporting projects to fence, cultivate and rehabilitate the meadows within the framework of social responsibility.

Director of the MoECC's Wildlife Development Department, Khalid Juma al-Muhannadi, con-

firmed in a similar statement to QNA that Qatar is dealing with the challenges of desertification and drought through a long-term strategy based on the sustainable management of lands, the restoration of degraded areas, and the enhancement of local vegetation cover, which contributes to increasing the ability of ecosystems to adapt to climate changes.

He explained that the country's geographical nature as an arid environment makes it more affected by limited rainfall, high temperatures and scarcity of water resources.

He added that global climate changes impose additional challenges that require the adoption of proactive solutions based on scientific foundations.

Al-Muhannadi stressed that protecting the environment is a shared societal responsibility.

He emphasised the ministry's keenness to promote environmental awareness through the implementation of awareness campaigns and educational programmes targeting various segments of society, and involving volunteers, educational institutions and the private sector in initiatives to protect meadows, plant local plants and preserve natural habitats.

Head of the Nature Conservators Centre in Qatar, Dr Saif Ali al-Hajri, confirmed that the country indeed succeeded in transforming the barren desert environment into green lands and spaces within the framework of ambitious plans and programmes and effective regional and international co-operation and partnerships.

He told the QNA that there is close co-operation between the various ministries and state institutions.

Dr al-Hajri pointed out that Qatar organises and hosts many related events, including the annual International Agricultural Exhibition (AgriteQ), Expo 2023 Doha with its slogan *Green Desert, Better Environment*, and other activities, events and initiatives related to combating desertification and drought. - **QNA**

National Committee for International Humanitarian Law takes part in symposium organised in Morocco

The National Committee for International Humanitarian Law participated in the International Legal Symposium organised by Morocco's National Committee on International Humanitarian Law under the theme of *Multilateral Humanitarian Action at a Crossroads: Challenges and Issues*. The Committee's delegation was headed by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice and the National Committee for International Humanitarian Law Chairman HE Saeed bin Abdullah al-Suwaidi. The symposium brought together representatives from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) delegation, the Assistant United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and the Special Adviser



for Humanitarian Operations at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), along with a distinguished group of experts and specialists in the field of international humanitarian law. The symposium discussed the key challenges facing humanitarian action,

including the role of the international community in supporting field humanitarian operations, the challenges associated with humanitarian work in situations of forced displacement, and the broader obstacles confronting the international humanitarian system. The discussions aimed to produce practical, actionable recommendations that would facilitate humanitarian efforts. On the sidelines of the symposium, HE al-Suwaidi held a meeting with Moroccan National Committee on International Humanitarian Law President Dr Farida El Khamlichi. The two sides explored ways to strengthen legal partnerships and identify new opportunities for enhanced co-operation. - QNA

QatarDebate participates in 2026 World Schools Debating Championship

Team Qatar from the QatarDebate Centre, a member of Qatar Foundation, is competing in the 2026 World Schools Debating Championship (WSDC), currently underway in Nairobi, with the participation of more than 80 countries. The QatarDebate Centre said in a statement yesterday that Team Qatar's participation, under the patronage of the Ministry of Sports and Youth, reflects the centre's ongoing efforts to prepare national talent for international competition by developing critical thinking, analytical, and public speaking skills, while providing debaters with opportunities to compete against leading teams from around the world and gain experience in a highly competitive environment.

The team comprises Alanoud al-Kaabbi, AlGhalya al-Mejali, Fatima al-Rashid, Mohammed al-Humaidi, and Ameera al-Ishaq. The centre said the team is coached by Alanoud Hamad Saud al-Thani, while Fatima Marafi is serving as an adjudicator at the championship. Al-Mejali, a member of Team Qatar, expressed pride in representing Qatar at the championship, saying the team is fully aware of the responsibility of competing on the world stage. She said the championship provided an important opportunity to compete against some of the world's top debating teams and gain valuable experience. The QatarDebate Centre has participated in the World Schools Debating Championship since 2010. - QNA

QC inks deal with Morocco's Ibn Sina Hospital Centre

Qatar Charity (QC) has signed a framework co-operation agreement with Ibn Sina University Hospital Centre in Morocco to support life-saving treatment for children with congenital heart defects, expanding their access to specialised medical care that can improve their health and long-term quality of life. The agreement reflects the QC's strategic approach, implemented through its office in Morocco, to building effective institutional

partnerships that create sustainable humanitarian impact beyond immediate assistance. The organisation aims to develop co-operation models grounded in integration, knowledge exchange, and efficient resource use to better serve vulnerable communities. As one of Morocco's leading university healthcare institutions, Ibn Sina University Hospital Centre has specialised expertise and advanced capabilities in treating complex medical cases, making

the partnership a crucial step in strengthening paediatric cardiac care services. Under the agreement, support will focus on interventional cardiac catheterisation procedures for children with congenital heart defects, a highly specialised area of medicine. This advanced technique can treat certain heart defects without requiring open-heart surgery, reducing surgical risks, accelerating recovery, and improving chil-

dren's long-term quality of life. These procedures require advanced equipment and specialised expertise, making them costly and often beyond the reach of low-income families. The partnership therefore carries significant humanitarian value by helping ease this burden for families in need. The agreement is expected to enable children from underprivileged families to receive high-quality cardiac catheterisation



services, strengthen Ibn Sina University Hospital Centre's capacity to manage complex cases, and provide a practical model of co-operation between healthcare institutions and humanitarian organisations. Professor Raouf Mohsen, director of Ibn Sina University Hospital Centre, praised the initiative

as valuable support for Morocco's national healthcare system. Eng. Mohammed Abu Halloub, director of Qatar Charity's office in Morocco, said that the agreement reflects Qatar Charity's commitment to supporting child health in Morocco and expanding co-operation with national healthcare institutions.



Qur'anic Botanical Garden strengthens regional collaboration

A delegation from the Qur'anic Botanic Garden (QBG), a member of Hamad Bin Khalifa University (HBKU), concluded a scientific visit to Jordan, where it met with representatives from three leading regional institutions that specialise in plant biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration to exchange expertise and establish partnerships. The visit began with a tour of the Royal Botanic Garden Jordan (RBG), one of the region's top leading institutions for the conservation of wild

plants within and beyond their natural habitats. The delegation learned about the RBG's approach to documenting living collections, conserving seeds and threatened species, and propagating them in specialised nurseries. The QBG and RBG also exchanged botanical specimens, including herbarium and seeds of endangered species. The delegation also conducted a field visit to Wadi Association for Sustainable Ecosystems Development, where they toured advanced

nurseries dedicated to propagating native wild plant species in Al Salt. Discussions focused on rehabilitating degraded natural sites and restoring vegetation cover through collaboration with local communities and relevant agricultural authorities in Jordan. At the International Union for Conservation of Nature, Regional Office for West Asia (IUCN ROWA), the team explored the organisation's work across West Asia, particularly its programmes and activities in Qatar.

They also highlighted opportunities to enhance co-operation in dry-land conservation, prepare Red Lists for threatened species, and organise restoration initiatives under the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. QBG director Fatima Saleh al-Khulaifi stated: "We were delighted to learn from the pioneering experiences of the Royal Botanic Garden Jordan, Wadi Association, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature in plant conservation and ecosystem restoration." - QNA

malomatia recognized as a leader in the IDC MarketScape: Middle East Managed Security Services 2026 Vendor Assessment



We believe this recognition reinforces malomatia's commitment to delivering trusted, resilient, and always-on cybersecurity services for organizations across the region.

malomatia, Qatar's leading systems integrator and digital transformation provider, today announced that it has been recognized as a Leader in the IDC MarketScape Middle East Managed Security Services 2026 Vendor Assessment. The recognition marks an important milestone in malomatia's cybersecurity journey. We believe it reflects the company's continued focus on delivering trusted, resilient, and locally operated managed security services for organizations operating in complex and highly regulated environments.

Khalid Mohammed Al-Kubaisi, CEO, malomatia said:

"Being recognized as a Leader in the IDC MarketScape Middle East Managed Security Services 2026 assessment is a proud milestone for malomatia. I believe it reflects our continued investment in sovereign cybersecurity capabilities, advanced managed security operations, and trusted services that help customers protect critical operations and strengthen resilience."

"malomatia's recognition as a Leader in this assessment reflects sustained investment in sovereign AI delivery, proprietary platform development, and security depth that are closely aligned with the cybersecurity procurement priorities of Qatar's government and critical infrastructure sectors." Shilpi Handa, Associate Director Research, Security & Trust, IDC

As digital transformation accelerates across government, enterprise, and critical sectors, organizations require cybersecurity partners that can deliver continuous monitoring, proactive threat detection, rapid response, and governance-led security services. malomatia's cybersecurity capabilities are designed to support these needs through managed security services, advisory, monitoring, response, vulnerability management, cloud security, identity and access management, and governance and compliance support.

malomatia's cybersecurity practice brings together deep local understanding, operational security expertise, and 24/7 protection coverage to help customers manage risk and maintain trust in an increasingly complex threat environment. malomatia publicly positions its cybersecurity services around 24/7 protection, 100+ security experts, 80+ protected organisations, and AI-powered Cyber Fusion Center capabilities.

Khalid Mohammed Al-Kubaisi, CEO, malomatia said:

"Cybersecurity is now central to national resilience, operational continuity, and digital trust. Through our 24x7 SOC operations, managed detection and response capabilities, OT and ICS monitoring expertise, and our sovereign AI platform JASSAS, malomatia is focused on helping customers improve visibility, accelerate response, and operate with greater confidence."

To us, the IDC MarketScape recognition further supports malomatia's role as a trusted cybersecurity partner for organizations seeking managed security services that combine technology, skilled expertise, and operational discipline.

In addition to cybersecurity, malomatia's adjacent capabilities include enterprise architecture, data analytics and engineering, cloud managed services, and digital platform development, enabling customers to connect cyber resilience with broader digital transformation objectives.



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EAA fetes high-achieving Assalam Schools students

Education Above All (EAA) Foundation celebrated the outstanding achievements of Assalam Schools students during the 2025-26 academic year, reflecting advanced levels of academic excellence, distinction in scientific, cultural and sports competitions, and meaningful participation in national and community initiatives.

This year's national secondary examination results reflected strong academic performance by Assalam Schools students, with 32 students achieving scores of 90% and above, including 15 students who scored 95% or higher.

Waqar Yasser Abdullah from The Second Assalam School topped the list of high-achieving students with a score of 99.25%, while Amin Abdul Razzaq al-Fael from The Fifth Assalam School achieved 99.13%, and Mohammed Ammar Mubarak Mohammed achieved 99.06%.

Noora al-Sulaiti, Together Project director at EAA Foundation, said: "These results are a source of pride for Education Above All

Foundation. They not only reflect academic excellence but also demonstrate students' ability to achieve exceptional outcomes when they are provided with the right learning environment and sustained support."

Assalam Schools' achievements extended beyond national secondary examination results, with notable success at both national and international levels.

The Third Assalam School achieved distinguished academic recognition through Pearson Edexcel and Cambridge International qualifications, including Ali Kenawy receiving the Top in the World award in Arabic under the Pearson Edexcel International Advanced Subsidiary qualification, as well as the Cambridge Outstanding Learner Award in the Top in the World category for Integrated Sciences.

Juvairiya Kunhabdulla, Maths Coordinator at The Third Assalam School, was shortlisted for the 2026 Pearson International School Teacher Awards in the Teacher of the Year category.

In the areas of health and innovation,

Assalam Schools students continued to achieve outstanding results.

Students from The First and Second Assalam Schools participated in the Back to School awareness competition organised by the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC), securing first place among schools nationwide.

This achievement reflects their awareness and excellence in promoting health and awareness messages.

The First Assalam School also received a special award under Unesco's Youth Innovation Programme, in recognition of its leadership, sustainable innovation and innovation in water conservation.

In community initiatives and sustainability, the schools continued to achieve notable success.

Students from The Second Assalam School won first place in the Destination Imagination programme organised by AlFaisal Without Borders Foundation, in recognition of their distinguished participation and creativity in the national



community service challenge.

The school also secured third place in the "Plant Your Nation" initiative, organised by the same foundation.

Assalam Schools also stood out in national and cultural initiatives by organising and participating in activities that promote identity, belonging and cultural diversity.

Among the most notable initiatives was the Culture Day, organised by The Fifth Assalam School, which showcased students' cultures and nationalities, with the participation of ambassadors, senior figures, and representatives of educational and international organisations.

In the area of values and identity, Assalam Schools achieved distinguished recognition under the "My Values Shape My

Identity" project, with the First and Fifth Assalam Schools receiving the Diamond Award, the Second Assalam School receiving the Silver Award, and the Fourth Assalam School receiving the Bronze Award.

In sports, Assalam Schools students achieved a range of accomplishments, including The First Assalam School winning second place and the silver medal in Athletics (Shotput) conducted by the School Olympic Programme, a student from The Second Assalam School winning first place in karate, and The Fifth Assalam School secondary team reaching the quarter finals in football.

Students also participated in school tournaments and sporting activities, including the Ooredoo Doha Marathon and athletics competitions.

Second edition of STEM 2026 Summer Programme launches



The Qatar Scientific Club (QSC), affiliated with the Ministry of Sports and Youth, in partnership with the Qatar Society of Engineers (QSE), officially launched the second edition of its STEM 2026 Summer Programme yesterday.

The programme will run until July 29, bringing together male and female students aged 14-16 for an immersive educational experience in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Now in its second consecutive year, the programme reflects the strategic partnership between the two organisations and their shared commitment to preparing a new generation equipped with the scientific, technological, and engineering skills needed to thrive in the future.

The initiative also supports the



objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 by contributing to the development of a knowledge-based economy and investing in human capital.

STEM 2026 offers participants a comprehensive learning experience that combines theoretical knowledge with hands-on application through specialised workshops, engineering challenges, and interactive activities across the STEM disciplines.

The programme is designed to strengthen critical and creative thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving skills while introducing participants to the latest advances in technology and artificial intelligence and their role in driving sustainable development.

Participants will also have the opportunity to engage directly with engineers, industry experts, and specialists, providing valuable exposure to future career pathways while inspiring innovation, creativity, and professional ambition.

Beyond technical learning, the programme seeks to foster a culture of science and engineering among young people, encourage entrepreneurship and initiative, and promote professional values rooted in Islamic identity and cultural development.



AUCTION

SALE OF VARIOUS MATERIALS

(As-Is Where-Is)

Black Cat Engineering & Construction Co. WLL
announces the sales of various materials, the details of which are listed below:

- SS304 Cable Tray
- Power Cables
- Vehicle spare parts
- Lifting & Safety materials
- Tools
- IS Phones and Walkie Talkies
- Steel Flanges and Ramp
- Consumables & General materials

Clarifications

- Materials can be inspected at the company's store located in the Industrial Area (Street No. 2004 - Building No. 95 - Area No. 91) starting from Monday 20/07/2026 until Monday 27/07/2026 from 8:00am to 4:00pm.
- Price offers must be submitted in a sealed envelope at the Company's main offices in Tornado Tower - 9th Floor by 30/07/2026.
- Applicants to bid must submit a temporary cash margin amounting to QAR 10,000 and the Company has the right to confiscate this amount if the winner of the bid withdraws.
- If the buyer does not pay the full sale price within two working days of closing the auction, the Auction Committee may re-offer the materials for auction again or sell it to another buyer. It is no permissible to claim the cash margin.
- For material inspection you may contact Mr. Stalin (Mob: 31455399).

Open Invitation

Black Cat Engineering and Construction W.L.L.

It aims to serve as an annual platform for discovering and nurturing Qatar's promising scientific and engineering talents.

Eng. Sheikha al-Sada, programme manager at the QSC, said: "We firmly believe that investing in young minds is the most valuable investment a nation can make."

"Through practical, future-focused programmes aligned with global developments, we strive to provide participants with meaningful opportunities to innovate and excel while supporting Qatar's transition toward a knowledge-based economy and advancing the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030," she said.

Eng. Saeed al-Mohannadi, member of the QSE and general co-ordinator of the programme, emphasised that the continuation of the STEM Summer Programme for a second year reflects both the success of the initiative and the importance of collaboration between national institutions in preparing future engineering talent.

"Our goal is to inspire students to develop a genuine passion for science and engineering while helping them appreciate the vital role engineers play in building society and achieving sustainable development," he said. "Ultimately, we aim to prepare a generation capable of leading the innovative projects of tomorrow."

The programme features advanced engineering workshops, practical training sessions, and innovation challenges that culminate in participant-led engineering projects.

It provides a stimulating learning environment that encourages creativity, critical thinking, initiative, collaboration, and meaningful interaction with professionals across various engineering and technology disciplines.

WISE Edtech Accelerator supports more than 40 ventures worldwide

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The Edtech Accelerator programme of the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) has supported more than 40 ventures globally in the last six years of its inception.

WISE, the global education initiative of Qatar Foundation, has been supporting edtech founders from around the world to come up with innovative solutions to key challenges within the world of education.

"So far, the WISE Edtech Accelerator programme has supported more than 40 ventures from over 22 countries with 100+hours of coaching and mentoring and three in-person bootcamps at major education conferences," WISE has announced.

"Each year, we deliver a bespoke innovation aimed at supporting startup growth through one-to-one coaching, masterclasses with industry experts, as well as access to a global network of investors and education specialists," WISE said on its website. "The WISE EdTech Accelerator is a key part of our edtech innovation that aims to support innovation and build an edtech community focused on revolutionising the way we teach and learn."

The WISE EdTech Accelerator is a catalyst for innovation in education - designed to equip startups with world-class mentorship, strategic support, and access to Qatar's thriving education ecosystem.

This year's cohort introduces two distinct tracks: a global track supporting impactful edtech ventures worldwide, and a local track focused on nurturing startups ready to scale within the Qatari market.

The 2025-26 cohort of the programme has eight selected edtech ventures, both local and global, who have recently joined the WISE EdTech Accelerator.

The Local Track - Qatar-focused - aims to unlock the edtech startup's potential in Qatar's thriving education ecosystem.

It can be done in collaboration with local partners, including Qatar Development Bank, Qatar Research and Development Institute, among others.

The local track of the programme is designed for early-stage, pre-series startups ready to scale and enter the Qatari market.

This track provides access to Qatar's rapidly growing education sector, offering the opportunity to get quick access to local funding and grants via our partners, and offering world-class innovation hubs and opportunities to accelerate your growth.

Furthermore, the Local Track helps to participate in high-level networking events, showcase the solution to a global audience of decision-makers and influencers and get quick access to local funding and grants through WISE partners.

It also offers world-class innovation hubs, and opportunities to accelerate the growth of the project.

The Local Track of the programme provides an opportunity for transforming education and establish a foothold in the Middle East, and become part of Qatar's visionary future in education.

The International Track of the WISE EdTech Accelerator welcomes innovative, early-stage edtech startups from across the globe, offering an exciting opportunity to scale without the need to focus on any specific market.

Each startup will receive \$50,000-worth of support, including leverage of the WISE global network of mentors, investors, and educational leaders to drive the product's international growth.

It also helps to participate in high-level networking events and showcase the solution to a global audience of decision-makers and influencers.

It enables to gain expert mentorship in product development, business strategy, and market expansion tailored to the unique needs of the project.

The International Track will also provide tools and connections to scale the projects faster and smarter.



المستشفى الأهلي
AL-AHLI HOSPITAL
A Division of
MediCare Group Q.P.S.C.

ANNOUNCES THE ISSUE OF THE FOLLOWING AUCTION BID

Auction Bid No.	Subject	Bid Security (QRS.)	Closing Date
AAH/TC/03/2026	Shop space for Three Years Lease at Al-Ahli Hospital - Block - A Main Lobby	25,000/-	2nd August 2026

- The complete Auction Tender Documents may be obtained by email upon payment of a non-refundable fee of QAR 2,000.00. Payment shall be made at the Cashier's Desk, Finance Department.
- A mandatory site visit will be held on 26 July 2026 at 10:00 AM (Contact: Security Department).
- Each Auction Bid shall be accompanied by an irrevocable and unconditional Bid Security issued by a Qatar-accredited bank and acceptable to Al-Ahli Hospital. The Bid Security shall remain valid for 120 days from the Auction Bid submission date.
- The successful bidder shall submit an irrevocable and unconditional Performance Bond equivalent to 10% of the contract value, valid for the entire contract period.
- The Auction Bid shall be submitted in two (2) sealed envelopes: one (1) containing the Technical & Commercial Offer and one (1) containing the Bid Security.
- The bid must be addressed to the Chairman of the Tender Committee, clearly indicating the Auction Number and Subject.
- The last date for purchasing the Auction Documents is 27 July 2026.
- The closing time for submission of Auction Bids is 12:00 PM on the closing date.

For further information please contact: **Purchasing Department**
Phone: **+974 4489 8663** - Fax: **+974 4489 8768**
Email: **mohiddens@ahlihospital.com**

MoJ issues latest edition of judicial journal

Journal of Judicial and Legal Studies highlights Qatar’s evolving response to AI, digital rights, and institutional governance

By **Ayman Adly**
Staff Reporter

The Centre for Legal and Judicial Studies at the Ministry of Justice has issued the latest edition of the *Journal of Judicial and Legal Studies*, Volume 20, Issue 1, which examines several emerging legal issues expected to influence legislative and judicial development in Qatar.

The peer-reviewed publication brings together research on artificial intelligence (AI) in judicial systems, the regulation of AI under Qatari law, the criminal protection of personal data, consumer rights in electronic commerce, disciplinary guarantees for university faculty members, and other related issues.

Such studies address the legal implications of technological advancement and institutional reform while evaluating the adequacy of existing legal frameworks in responding to new challenges.

A central theme throughout the publication is the increasing interaction between technological innovation and legal regulation. As Qatar continues to expand digital government services, strengthen cybersecurity capabilities, and promote a knowledge-based economy under Qatar National Vision 2030, the studies examine whether existing legislation can address emerging legal questions while preserving the fundamental principles of justice, accountability, and the rule of law.

One of the principal studies evaluates the role of AI in predictive justice, focusing on the extent to which AI can assist in judicial decision-making without replacing judges.

The research concludes that predictive AI systems can significantly

cantly improve judicial efficiency by analysing large volumes of case law (judge-made laws, identifying legal precedents, supporting legal research and enhancing consistency in judicial outcomes. Such systems may help reduce case processing times and improve administrative efficiency within courts. However, the study maintains that these technologies should remain decision-support tools rather than autonomous judicial actors.

According to the researchers, judicial decision-making extends beyond the application of legal rules. Judges are required to interpret legislation, evaluate evidence, assess witness credibility, balance competing interests and apply legal principles within specific factual circumstances. These functions require legal reasoning and discretion that cannot currently be replicated by AI.

One of the principal studies evaluates the role of AI in predictive justice, focusing on the extent to which AI can assist in judicial decision-making without replacing judges

Consequently, the study argues that the final judicial determination should continue to rest exclusively with human judges, while AI should be employed to improve procedural efficiency and analytical capacity.

The research also identifies several legal risks associated with predictive justice systems. Among the most significant concerns are algorithmic bias, lack of transparency in automated decision-making, accountability for erroneous recommendations and the quality of

datasets used to train AI models.

The study recommends that any future integration of AI into judicial systems should be accompanied by clear legal standards governing transparency, human oversight, responsibility for system failures and periodic evaluation of algorithmic performance. These safeguards, it argues, are necessary to preserve public confidence in judicial institutions while allowing courts to benefit from technological innovation.

A second study examines AI from a broader regulatory perspective by analysing the relationship between AI technologies and the rule of law within Qatar’s legal system. Rather than focusing exclusively on courts, the research considers AI applications across public administration, commercial activities and public services. It concludes that existing legal frameworks provide an important foundation but will require continuous legislative review as AI technologies become increasingly autonomous and capable of making complex operational decisions.

The study identifies legal liability as one of the most significant regulatory challenges. Traditional legal systems generally assign responsibility to identifiable individuals or organisations. However, AI introduces situations in which decision-making results from continuously evolving algorithms rather than direct human instruction. This creates uncertainty regarding liability among software developers, manufacturers, operators and users when AI systems cause harm or produce unlawful outcomes. The researchers therefore recommend developing legislative mechanisms that clearly allocate legal responsibility while maintaining incentives for technological innovation.

The study further argues that

A second study examines AI from a broader regulatory perspective by analysing the relationship between AI technologies and the rule of law within Qatar’s legal system

future AI regulation should preserve the core principles of the rule of law, including legal certainty, equality before the law, judicial accountability and procedural fairness. These principles, the researchers contend, should remain applicable regardless of technological advancement, ensuring that AI serves legal institutions rather than redefining their constitutional foundations.

Furthermore, the journal includes a comprehensive study of the criminal protection of personal data under Qatari and international legal frameworks. The research reflects the growing importance of data governance as government agencies, financial institutions and private companies increasingly depend on digital information systems. The study concludes that personal data protection has become an essential component of both individual privacy and national cybersecurity.

The researchers observe that the rapid digital transformation has significantly increased the collection, storage and transfer of personal information, exposing individuals to several risks, including identity theft, unauthorised disclosure, cybercrime and misuse of personal data. The study analyses the criminal provisions designed to address these offences and evaluates their effectiveness in protecting

individual rights while supporting legitimate data processing activities.

According to the study, effective personal data protection requires an integrated legal approach that combines criminal sanctions for serious violations with regulatory obligations governing data collection, storage, processing and disclosure. The researchers also emphasise the importance of harmonising national legislation with evolving international standards, particularly as digital transactions increasingly involve cross-border data transfers.

Another major area examined in the journal focuses on consumer protection in electronic commerce. As online commercial transactions continue to expand, the study analyses the legal principle of conformity upon delivery as a mechanism for protecting consumers purchasing goods through electronic platforms. Under this principle, products delivered to consumers must correspond to the specifications, quality and characteristics agreed upon in the sales contract.

The researchers explain that electronic commerce differs from traditional retail because consumers frequently complete transactions without physically examining products before purchase. This increases the importance of legal protections available after delivery. The study concludes that conformity obligations provide an effective legal safeguard by ensuring that consumers receive products matching contractual expectations and by establishing appropriate legal remedies when products fail to meet agreed standards.

The comparative analysis finds that the Qatari legislation broadly agree with the international developments in consumer protection while identifying op-

portunities for further legislative refinement as electronic commerce continues to evolve. The researchers suggest that strengthening legal certainty in digital transactions would contribute to consumer confidence and support the continued growth of Qatar’s digital economy.

The publication also addresses institutional governance through an analytical study of disciplinary guarantees available to academic staff at Qatar University. The research examines the legal procedures governing disciplinary investigations involving faculty members and evaluates whether existing regulations adequately protect procedural fairness while allowing universities to maintain professional and academic standards.

The journal includes a comprehensive study of the criminal protection of personal data under Qatari and international legal frameworks

Accordingly, such studies demonstrate that Qatar’s legal system is increasingly addressing issues that extend beyond traditional areas of legislation into fields shaped by rapid technological and institutional change. AI, cybersecurity, digital commerce, privacy protection and governance are no longer isolated policy areas but interconnected legal issues requiring coordinated legislative responses.

In the meantime, the latest edition of the Journal of Judicial and Legal Studies provides a detailed assessment of several legal issues expected to become increasingly significant as Qatar continues its digital transformation.

Poland sees growing tourism potential from Qatar, GCC

By **Joey Aguilar**
Doha

Poland, which welcomed 22mn international tourists in 2025, is looking to the Gulf as an increasingly important growth market, with rising interest from Qatar and other GCC countries adding momentum to the country’s expanding tourism sector, Polish ambassador to Qatar Tomasz Sadzinski told *Gulf Times*.

The envoy said tens of thousands of travellers from the Gulf visit Poland annually, with visi-

tors from Saudi Arabia and the UAE leading the way, while Qatar represents a smaller but steadily growing market.

“While tourists from Germany, Ukraine, the UK, the US, Czechia, Italy, Spain and France constitute the bulk of visitors, we are observing a steady increase in interest in Poland as a travel destination among residents of the GCC countries,” Sadzinski said.

He noted that Poland received 22mn international tourists in 2025, up 10% year-on-year, with tourism contributing around QR165bn to the country’s GDP.

According to the ambassa-

dor, destinations such as Zakopane and the Tatra Mountains in southern Poland are expected to receive 60,000–80,000 visitors from Arab countries annually, with particularly strong seasonal demand in summer.

Sadzinski said direct air connectivity has played an important role in strengthening tourism links between Qatar and Poland. The direct Doha–Warsaw service, operating since 2012, has significantly improved accessibility and supported a gradual increase in passenger flows, particularly in the leisure and family travel segments.

“Overall, GCC tourism to Poland is an emerging but fast-growing segment, driven by increasing awareness of Poland as a destination and changing travel preferences across the region,” he said.

Sadzinski noted that Poland’s appeal to travellers from Qatar and the wider Gulf stems from a combination of safety, accessibility and the diversity of experiences available within relatively short distances – qualities that particularly suit families, one of the region’s key travel segments.

For first-time visitors, he said Warsaw and Kraków remain among the most popular choices, combining rich cultural heritage with modern urban life.

Apart from the two major cities, travellers are increasingly discovering Wrocław, Gdansk and the Baltic coast, where seaside leisure is complemented by hospitality, wellness and spa offerings, as well as the region’s distinctive Baltic amber heritage.

Southern Poland, meanwhile, offers a markedly different experience. The Tatra Mountains and the resort town of Zakopane remain among the country’s most popular destinations, while Karpacz and other mountain resorts in the southwest are increasingly

appealing to families looking for quieter, nature-oriented holidays.

Poland also offers a range of distinctive heritage and natural attractions, Sadzinski said, citing the Wieliczka Salt Mine, one of the world’s oldest salt mines; Malbork Castle, regarded as the world’s largest castle by land area; and Białowieża Forest, one of Europe’s last remaining primeval lowland forests and home to a major population of European bison.

The envoy added that Poland continues to expand its family leisure offerings, including modern amusement parks featuring some of Europe’s tallest and fastest roller coasters, as well as spa resorts, recreational facilities, and outdoor attractions catering to different age groups.

For Gulf visitors accustomed to combining several experiences in a single holiday, Sadzinski said Poland offers the advantage of moving relatively easily between historic cities, shopping destinations, seaside resorts, and mountain landscapes.

“Visitors can combine historic cities, shopping, seaside resorts and mountain landscapes within a single itinerary, without spending long hours travelling,” he said.

“This flexibility is particularly appreciated by travellers from Qatar and the wider Gulf region, who often prefer varied, family-oriented holidays that combine relaxation, culture, shopping and nature.”

Sadzinski also pointed to Poland’s accessibility from the region, with direct air connections from Gulf cities including Doha, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh and Kuwait helping broaden its reach among GCC travellers.

Another factor distinguishing Poland from some of Europe’s more established tourism hotspots, he said, is the opportunity to experience destinations

that remain relatively uncrowded.

“Many parts of Poland remain less crowded than some of Europe’s most visited destinations, allowing guests to enjoy a more relaxed, comfortable and rewarding travel experience while benefiting from high-quality hospitality and excellent value,” Sadzinski said.

With stronger air connectivity, growing awareness and Gulf travellers increasingly seeking family-oriented destinations that combine culture, nature and leisure, Poland sees considerable scope for further growth from Qatar and the wider GCC market.



Polish ambassador to Qatar Tomasz Sadzinski.



Łódź, a city famous for its 19th-century textile-manufacturing heritage.



Baltic Sea coast.



Łazienki Królewskie



Warsaw



European bison in Białowieża National Park.



Panorama of Morskie Oko in the Mountains

UN’s nuclear watchdog calls for restraint

AFP
Tehran

The UN’s nuclear watchdog called for restraint yesterday after Iran’s Atomic Energy Organisation said the US had attacked an under-construction nuclear power plant in the country’s southwest.

The US and Iran have been trading escalating attacks for days, and Washington carried out fresh air strikes yesterday to “punish” Iran for the deaths of two US service members in Jordan on Friday – its first reported losses since the return to open hostilities in the Middle East war.

Tehran’s Atomic Energy Organisation said US forces “in an aggressive and brutal act contrary to international law, attacked the under-construction Darkhovin nuclear power plant... with a number of projectiles on

Sunday”, according to a statement carried by state TV.

The UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said it was looking into the reports, noting the plant “is in the very early stages of construction and contained no nuclear material when last visited by the IAEA”.

While the incident “is not believed to pose any radiological risk”, IAEA director Rafael Grossi reiterated his “call for military restraint in the vicinity of all nuclear-related sites”, the agency said, in a post on X.

Iran’s nuclear programme has long been a major point of contention between it and the West, including in negotiations aimed at ending the current war.

While foreign powers including the US and Israel suspect it of seeking a bomb, Tehran has always maintained its programme is peaceful, though it insists on its right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes.

Rubio hails Lebanon for peace efforts after meeting president

AFP
Washington

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio met with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun in Washington yesterday, praising the country for its “move towards peace” after the latest round of Lebanon-Israel talks.

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

Aoun and Rubio held talks at the State Department, and Lebanese officials said Aoun is due to meet with President Donald Trump on Tuesday.

Rubio commended the Lebanese government for its “determined effort to reclaim Lebanon’s sovereignty, disarm Hezbollah and dismantle its terrorist infrastructure, and move towards peace,” the State Department said following the talks.

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 with two “pilot zones”.

But the agreement is contingent on the disarmament of Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah, which has flatly rejected both the deal and the Israel-Lebanon negotiations that underpin it.

Following the latest round of talks last week in Rome, Israel and Lebanon agreed on the structure and guidelines for implementing the pilot zones, according to the US.

Rubio said Washington was committed “to supporting the successful implementation of the Trilateral Framework and to backing the Government of Lebanon’s efforts to deliver peace,

Death toll from Israeli aggression on Lebanon rises to 4,328

The Lebanese Ministry of Public Health’s Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) announced yesterday that the death toll from the Israeli Aggression on Lebanon since March 2 has risen to 4,328, with 12,229 people injured.

Lebanon and the Israeli entity signed a US-brokered framework agreement that provides for security arrangements, redeployment of the Lebanese army in southern Lebanon, reconstruction of affected areas, measures to support economic recovery, establishment of direct communication channels, and confidence-building steps aimed at achieving lasting peace. **(QNA)**

economic recovery, and a better future for the Lebanese people”.

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

Israel responded with air strikes 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”.

While in Washington, Aoun planned talks “on the situation in Lebanon and ways to strengthen the ceasefire” as well as on “the withdrawal of Israel from the Lebanese regions it occupies,” his office said earlier.

The US carried out air strikes yesterday to “punish” Iran after the first US military deaths since open hostilities rekindled the Middle East war.

Iran attacks Kuwait power and water plant, Bahrain

AFP
Kuwait City

Kuwait said Iran hit a power and water plant yesterday causing a fire, the latest attack on energy infrastructure in the small Gulf state, as Bahrain also accused Tehran of targeting civilian sites.

It was the third attack in as many days on a power and water facility in Kuwait, according to authorities, which also reported that an oil facility had been hit on Saturday.

Kuwait has asked residents to limit their power usage as repeated Iranian attacks add further strain to its power network.

Iran had earlier said it carried attacks on US assets in Kuwait, as tensions flared between the two foes over the Strait of Hormuz for more than week.

“As a result of the heinous Iranian aggression on Kuwait, a pow-

Jordan summons Iranian envoy

Jordan has summoned Iran’s charge d’affaires in Amman over what it called “unjustified and blatant Iranian attacks” and “provocative and inflammatory statements targeting the Kingdom’s territory.” Jordan’s ministry of foreign affairs said in a statement yesterday. Over the last week, Jordan has repeatedly said that it has intercepted Iranian missiles flying over its territory, including three that it shot down yesterday, according to the country’s military. **(Reuters)**

er and water distillation plant, for the second time in two days, has been subjected to an attack that

caused a fire in some facilities of the station,” the Kuwaiti ministry of electricity, water and renewable energy said in a statement on X.

“A large number of power generator units were affected, prompting an emergency protocol to be launched,” it added.

Firefighters are working to extinguish the blaze, it added.

Earlier, Kuwait and Bahrain’s militaries said they were responding to Iranian aerial attacks, and air raid sirens sounded in the two Gulf countries as Tehran pressed its retaliatory strikes across the region.

An AFP journalist reported warning sirens sounding in Kuwait City.

In Bahrain, a reporter said blasts could be heard in the country’s north after another AFP reporter said a warning siren rang out across the capital Manama.

Bahrain, which hosts the US Fifth Fleet, also accused Iran of targeting civilians in its attacks.

In the early hours of Sunday,

Iran’s army said it had targeted two US bases in Kuwait with drones in response to American attacks on Iranian territory.

Iran said earlier it carried out “large-scale attacks with kamikaze drones against the US military’s ammunition depot at Camp Udairi and the Patriot radar system and air surveillance radar at Ali Al Salem Air Base in Kuwait”, according to a statement on state media.

The small states of Kuwait and Bahrain, which host US military installations, have borne the brunt of attacks by Iran on its Gulf neighbours since hostilities resumed this month despite a ceasefire and memorandum of understanding between Washington and Tehran.

Central Command (CENTCOM) said two service members were killed on Friday as they “defended against Iranian ballistic missile and drone attacks”.

It said another service member was still missing in action.

Israeli strikes kill 11 in Gaza, including children

AFP
Gaza City

Gaza’s civil defence and hospitals said Israeli attacks on Saturday killed 11 people across the territory, among them three children and their parents.

A ceasefire remains in place between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas, but it has not halted the violence in Gaza, and efforts to secure a lasting agreement to end the war have stalled.

A family of five – three children and their parents – were killed when an Israeli strike hit a residential apartment in northwest Gaza City, according to the territory’s civil defence agency, which operates as a rescue service under Hamas.

“The family’s only surviving member is one child, who was not inside the house at the time of the strike,” Mahmoud Bassal, spokesman for the agency, told AFP.

Gaza’s Al-Shifa hospital confirmed it had received the five bodies.

An Israeli military spokeswoman said a strike had been carried out in Gaza City on Saturday “targeting a Hamas terrorist”.

She said the military was still assessing the results.

Gaza resident Mousa al-Aimawi said the strike came without warning.

“Suddenly there was a missile hitting the building. No one knew, no one, no warning, nothing,” he told AFP.

“They hit it without caring that there are civilians, children, women, girls.”

Mohammed Kali, who lives in the same building, said he saw several people lying on the ground.



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Deir Al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

“There were bodies scattered on the ground – women and children dead, and elderly people too,” he said.

AFP footage from the scene showed large sections of the building’s facade torn away, as rescue teams helped the wounded.

Onlookers picked through shattered concrete blocks and twisted metal, searching for any belongings that could be salvaged.

Three more people were killed when an Israeli airstrike hit a group of civilians in the Zeitoun neighbourhood of Gaza City, the agency reported.

Al-Shifa hospital confirmed it had received the three bodies.

Hours later, Bassal announced the death of a woman after “Israeli artillery shelling” struck “a tent sheltering displaced people” east of the Zeitoun neighbourhood.

Gaza’s Al-Ahli Hospital confirmed it had received the body

of the woman along with several wounded individuals, including her daughter.

Several people were wounded and three others remain missing in the targeted area, the spokesman added.

Health officials said two other people were killed elsewhere in Israeli attacks in Gaza.

The military did not offer an immediate comment on those attacks.

Violence has persisted despite the ceasefire.

Before Friday’s casualties, at least 1,144 Palestinians had been killed since the truce took effect last October, according to Gaza’s health ministry, which operates under Hamas authority and whose figures are considered reliable by the UN.

The Israeli military says it has lost five soldiers in Gaza over the same period, as well as one civilian contractor.



A Palestinian woman carries a chair at the site of an Israeli strike on a house in Deir Al-Balah, central Gaza Strip, yesterday. **(Reuters)**

Restrictions imposed on media outlets and limited access in Gaza prevent AFP from independently verifying tolls or freely covering the violence there.

Belgium’s move to ban imports from Israeli settlements welcomed

The State of Palestine has welcomed the Belgian government’s decision to ban imports originating from illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem. It described the move as a significant step that is consistent with international law.

In a statement on Sunday, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry said the decision underscores Belgium’s

commitment to the principles of international justice and respect for international law, affirming that it aligns with the advisory opinion rendered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding the unlawful Israeli occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem.

Subsequently, the statement said this emanates from the obligation

on states not to recognise the unlawful situation arising from the occupation and settlement activity, or provide any kind of aid in sustaining it, and calls for this obligation to include all commercial, economic, financial, investment and service-related activities linked to illegal settlements.

The statement added that this decision underlines the fact that

respecting international law is neither political rhetoric nor a theoretical obligation, but rather a legal duty that requires taking practical measures, legislation and policies to ensure that no contribution is made, directly or indirectly, to the system of occupation or colonisation.

The Ministry clarified that it continues to monitor the ongoing debates within the European Union and works with countries to implement similar measures aimed at banning trade with Israeli settlements.

It further welcomed the growing European support for these legal actions as a practical manifestation of the aforementioned advisory opinion and an essential step to ensure that the colonial settlement system doesn’t benefit from commercial relations with countries.

On Saturday, the Belgian government announced a ban on products imported from Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

Belgian media outlets reported that the Federal Cabinet made the decision during its final meeting before the summer recess, following discussions on the issue of imports from the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

However, the Belgian government hasn’t yet announced any mechanism for implementing the decision or set a date for its entry into force. **(QNA)**

Israeli settlers torch mosque, factory

Israeli settlers set fire overnight to a mosque in a village in the occupied West Bank, a Palestinian official said yesterday, as an AFP journalist saw the structure’s entrance scorched and Hebrew graffiti sprayed on its walls.

The incident came during a period of increased attacks against Palestinian communities by settlers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank since the start of the Gaza war in 2023.

More than two dozen settlers, some masked, attacked the Al-Taqwa mosque in the village of Al-Tuwani during the night and set it on fire, Mohammed Rabie, head of the village council, told AFP.

The settlers also set fire to two houses and a dairy factory, he said, adding the attackers spray-painted Hebrew graffiti on the walls of the mosque.

Rabie said the settlers fled after villagers emerged from their homes, adding that local volunteers managed to extinguish the flames before they spread further.

AFP photographs showed a child and an elderly man inspecting the charred entrance and windows of the mosque, where part of a prayer carpet had also been burned.

Rabie said the dairy factory, run by women from the Masafer Yatta community, suffered extensive damage.

“We thank God that this attack did not turn into a tragedy with loss of life,” he said.

The Israeli police said it deployed officers to the village last night “after a report of suspects who caused damage at the site, including a vehicle that was set on fire, damage to the door of a prayer structure, and graffiti sprayed on walls”.

“The investigation into the circumstances of the incident... is still ongoing.”

“The settlers’ attack took place in full view of the Israeli army,” Palestinian activist Osama Makhamra told AFP, noting that an Israeli military watchtower stands close to the mosque that was set ablaze.

Rabie, however, said Israeli army, police and fire service personnel arrived in the village about half an hour after the attack and inspected the damage to the mosque and other property.

The Palestinian religious affairs ministry condemned the attack.

In a statement, the ministry described the arson as “a full-fledged terrorist act”, accusing Israel’s “extremist occupation government” of encouraging settler violence in an effort to displace Palestinians from Masafer Yatta and turn the conflict into “a religious war”.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967. **(AFP)**

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **CHITRA MAHALINGAM MAHALINGAM**

holder of

INDIA Passport No. N9942644
QID No. 27735644225

hereby change my name

from

CHITRA MAHALINGAM MAHALINGAM

to

CHITRA YUUNUSH

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **SHARVI**

holder of

INDIA Passport No. V5133771
QID No. 31135607805

hereby change my name

from

SHARVI

to

SHARVI GILL

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

Sao Tome and Principe votes for president

AFP/Reuters
Sao Tome

Voters in the Atlantic archipelago of Sao Tome and Principe, regarded as a model of democracy in Africa, headed to the polls yesterday for a presidential election.

Outgoing President Carlos Vila Nova faces party rival Nito Viegas D'Abreu, a current member of parliament backed by former prime minister Patrice Trovoada, along with two independent candidates.

Polling official Wernick Capita told AFP that the first few hours had been very "calm" after polling stations opened at 7am (0700 GMT) because "most people prefer

to vote in the afternoon".

Olivia Fatima, who cast her vote in Sao Tome city, said the crucial point of the election was "to get people out of poverty".

A former Portuguese colony in the Gulf of Guinea, the island nation of 200,000 inhabitants has a history marked by attempted coups including one in 2022 that was promptly thwarted by the military.

The scattering of islands off the coast of western equatorial Africa is now viewed as a model of African parliamentary democracy.

The president has a largely ceremonial role, responsible for representation and the promulgation of laws, while most executive powers lie with the prime minister.



Presidential candidate Nito Abreu arrives to vote at a polling station in Sao Tome. - Reuters



Incumbent President Carlos Vila Nova puts ink on his finger after voting at a polling station in Sao Tome. - Reuters

more than 50% of the vote.

Legislative elections are planned for September.

On the international stage, Sao Tome and Principe is a partner of the European Union and of former colonial power Portugal, whose slave and sugar trade it once served.

It also has partnerships with China and Russia, signing a military pact with the latter in 2024.

The archipelago derives most of its revenue from agriculture, particularly the production of cocoa

and coffee, as well as vanilla and pepper.

Its unique landscapes also make it a prime tourist destination, especially for the ultra-wealthy.

Major international oil firms including TotalEnergies have acquired licences to explore for oil and gas reserves off the archipelago's shores.

However, the island nation remains heavily dependent on international aid, with a large majority of its population living below the poverty line.

ICE officers 'to wear body cameras during vehicle stops'

Reuters
Washington

In the wake of multiple fatal shootings involving US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers, the agency will require its officers to record vehicle stops with at least one body camera, Trump administration border czar Tom Homan said yesterday.

"They exonerate more law enforcement than they convict, and I want officers to wear body cameras because I want the American people to see what the officers saw when they took that action," he said on the Fox & Friends Weekend programme.

Homan's comments come after federal immigration agents fatally shot two men six days apart during traffic stops in Texas and Maine earlier this month.

There is no body-camera footage from ICE agents involved in those incidents.

In a separate interview on CBS's Face the Nation show, Homan said money for the cameras was held up during the partial government shutdown earlier this year.

"The cameras have been purchased right now," Homan said. "They're training the trainer in deploying the cameras nationwide."

The agency's tactics came under renewed public scrutiny in recent days after an ICE officer on July 13 killed a driver from Colombia in the coastal Maine town of Biddeford, about 15 miles (24km) south of Portland.

Six days earlier, another ICE officer in Houston fatally shot a Mexican national.

Homan said last week that the agency would temporarily suspend most vehicle stops around the country to review procedures.

Within 24 hours of Homan's comments, US President Donald Trump directed federal immigration agents to resume them.

The back-to-back shootings sparked protests in Maine, Houston and Boston and

raised questions over ICE agents' lack of body cameras.

The ICE launched a body-camera pilot programme in 2024 and deployed cameras to officers in five cities: Baltimore, Buffalo, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC.

The Trump administration moved last year to slow-walk the programme, urging Congress to cut funding by 75%, Reuters reported in January.

In February, after the killing of two US citizens during an immigration crackdown in Minnesota, then US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) chief Kristi Noem said that the body camera programme would be rolled out to ICE agents nationwide "as funding is available".

At least seven people have been shot dead during federal immigration enforcement operations since January 2025, when Trump launched mass deportations after returning to office following campaign promises of an immigration crackdown.

Cat rescued in Venezuela quake offers 'ray of hope'

AFP
Caraballeda, Venezuela

A weakened cat was pulled from under the rubble of a collapsed residential complex in Venezuela on Saturday in what a rescuer described as a "ray of hope" in the aftermath of deadly earthquakes.

More than 5,100 people were killed when back-to-back quakes struck the South American nation on June 24, with the coastal state of La Guaira hit hardest.

Volunteer rescue worker Andres Carvajal said he spotted the cat during a search in a La Guaira housing complex.

"We saw the cat, it got scared and went back inside, deeper into the building," Carvajal told AFP.

It was unclear when it had become trapped.

"I went in, took off my glove, put some cat food on my arm... It gradually came closer and, of course, ate with a bit of desperation," the 21-year-old university student said.

Carvajal had written "el gato" - "the cat" - on his helmet, which he said had been his nickname since elementary school.

He and other students from the Central University of Venezuela, in Caracas, formed an association to help with rescue operations.

Once rescued, the cat was handed over to a small camp where vets were on standby. It was given fluids and cleaned before being sent to a shelter.

"I'm very happy we found it," Carvajal said. "It's impossible not to feel empathy for any life that's here. And finding this little cat is obviously a ray of light, a ray of hope."



A volunteer rescuer holds a cat after it was pulled out from under the rubble of a building damaged by the June 24 earthquakes, in Caraballeda, state of La Guaira, Venezuela. - AFP

At least five killed in Peru quakes

At least five people were killed and 21 injured after two earthquakes struck a mountainous region of Peru, the country's civil defence chief said yesterday.

The quakes, measuring magnitudes 5.1 and 3.7, hit on Saturday night in Chupaca province in the Junin region, about 300km (186 miles) east of Lima, according to Peru's National Seismological Centre in a post on X.

The first quake struck at a depth of 24km (15 miles) and the second at 18km, the centre said.

The European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre earlier reported that the first earthquake had a magnitude of 5.6.

"So far, we have confirmed five deaths and 21 injuries," Luis Vasquez, head of Peru's National Civil Defence Institute, told local radio station Exitosa.

Because the epicentre was at a shallow depth and many houses in that area are made of adobe or a wood, cane and mud

blend called "quincha", some towns suffered significant damage, said Vasquez.

He added that preliminary reports showed about 48 homes had been destroyed and another 18 damaged, affecting around 300 people who are being provided with tents.

"The earthquake destroyed our home. Here there are many adobe houses that collapsed," an unnamed resident of the town of Chongos Bajo told the N television network.

Vasquez said emergency crews and firefighters arrived in the affected areas early yesterday to clear debris amid concerns that additional victims could be trapped.

Peru lies along the Pacific Ring of Fire, a zone that accounts for roughly 85% of the world's seismic activity.

Seismologists say Peru experiences at least 400 earthquakes per year, three-quarters of which are so weak people do not feel them. - Reuters/AFP

Attack in west Niger leaves 16 troops dead

Sixteen soldiers have been killed in an attack in the west of junta-ruled Niger, the country's ANP state news agency reported yesterday.

"A terrorist attack targeting a military deployment in the Tera area (in Tillaberi region) on Friday July 17 caused 16 martyrs, 23 wounded of which nine are serious," ANP said.

It added that there were also "15 terrorists killed".

The attack took place near the borders with Mali and Burkina Faso.

Niger has for the past decade faced attacks by religious militant groups affiliated with Al Qaeda and the Islamic State. - AFP

Mexico investigates major US outbreak of foodborne illness linked to Mexican farm

Reuters
Mexico City/Los Angeles

Mexico's health and agricultural ministries have announced that they are investigating a large outbreak of a foodborne illness in the US linked to iceberg lettuce grown in Mexico and sold at Taco Bell.

Cofepris, Mexico's sanitary regulator, and Senasica, the country's agricultural and food safety regulator, said in a statement that they have an interagency technical working group investigating the matter and adopting preventative measures.

The group has undertaken inspections and traceability analyses that "are strictly preventative in nature" and "aimed at

mitigating any potential health risk".

The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has reported around 100 hospitalisations of people becoming sick with cyclosporiasis, a parasitic infection that can cause severe diarrhoea and other gastrointestinal symptoms, after eating shredded lettuce at Taco Bell restaurants in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia.

On Friday, Taylor Farms, a California-based lettuce supplier, and food distributor Sysco, America's largest, said they are removing iceberg lettuce sourced from central Mexico, based on information provided by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

An industry source who requested anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media told Reuters that the

lettuce was produced as 5-pound (2.3kg) bags at Taylor Farms' facility in Guajuato, in central Mexico.

The source also said that Sysco widely distributes such bags to hospitals, ball parks and fast-food chains.

Mexico's health and agricultural ministries cautioned in their statement that "the investigation remains ongoing, and it is important to emphasise that identifying a product's country of origin through traceability does not, by itself, confirm that contamination occurred in Mexico".

Taylor Farms' growing and processing facilities in Mexico were the source of another major US cyclosporiasis outbreak.

A 2013 outbreak sickened more than 600 people in 25 states, according to the CDC, and was traced to salad mix from Taylor Farms de Mexico in Guanajuato.



This handout picture released by Peru's defence ministry shows collapsed houses on the outskirts of Huancayo, about 300km east of Lima, following an earthquake. - AFP



Statues of Myanmar’s founding father Aung San disappear

AFP
Yangon

Statues of independence hero Aung San are quietly disappearing across Myanmar in a contest over his legacy as father of both the nation and of detained democracy figurehead Aung San Suu Kyi.

General Aung San fought with and against both the British and the Japanese colonisers as he sought independence, but was assassinated on July 19, 1947, just months before his dream was realised.

Considered the father of modern-day Myanmar, his statues have dotted the country for decades.

Many were added while Suu Kyi’s party was in power – and many are now being taken down by the government of Min Aung Hlaing, the coup leader who ousted her in 2021.

In Yangon’s Thu Mingalar Park, an AFP reporter this week noted the absence of one towering likeness installed almost a decade ago, grass newly planted in its place.

The government has acknowledged taking down some statues it said had “incorrect proportions and shapes”.

But analysts say the removals may be an attempt to erase from public spaces a powerful symbol linked to Suu Kyi, the popular Nobel laureate who remains detained.

Aung San is “engraved in people’s memory” as Myanmar’s independence hero, and many see his legacy being continued by his daughter, according to Myanmar specialist Moe Thuzar.

While in power from 2016-2020, during Myanmar’s decade-long experiment with democracy, Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy (NLD) put up statues and also returned Aung San’s face to local currency notes.

They could be seen as “efforts to revive his historical legacy”, Moe Thuzar said.

Since the coup, which triggered a devastating civil war, the military has focused on making Suu Kyi and the NLD “politically irrelevant”, she added.

But erasing the memory of Suu Kyi’s father is unlikely.

The murder of Aung San and several of his colleagues by local rivals is marked each year as Martyrs’ Day, a public holiday when thousands pay their respects at the Yangon mausoleum that holds the victims’ remains.



Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing (centre) arriving for a ceremony marking the 79th anniversary of Martyrs’ Day at the Martyrs’ Mausoleum in Yangon, yesterday. Martyrs’ Day marks the anniversary of the assassination of independence leaders, including general Aung San, father of the currently deposed and imprisoned leader Aung San Suu Kyi. (AFP)

“They can remove the statues, but they can never erase Bogoyoke’s image,” one Yangon resident said, using the Burmese word for general to describe Aung San.

“They already hold power, and they have the weapons and the military. I don’t know what they are still so afraid of,” the 34-year-

old said, speaking anonymously due to security concerns.

After local media reported the removal of several statues, government spokeswoman Khaing Khaing Soe said earlier this month that only those with “incorrect proportions and shapes are being systematically reviewed and addressed”.

Since 2016, she said in a statement, a review of Aung San statues in more than 100 townships had found some had features “inconsistent with the dignity of such an important historical figure”.

“Systematic maintenance efforts are being carried out” to prevent “any disrespect toward the commemorative statues”, and to ensure “future generations can continue to study Myanmar’s historical heritage in a correct and appropriate manner”, she added.

One statue installed during the NLD administration was removed earlier this month from Mya Kan Thar Park in Yangon, a local resident said.

Another resident in the township said the statue had been “totally fine, with good proportions”.

In late June, authorities also removed a statue from a park in Mudon, in southern Mon state, said a resident speaking anonymously.

Authorities later covered the foundation of the 2019 statue with a plastic sheet, the resident said, adding: “No one has dared to complain”.

Despite his national hero status, Aung San is feted mostly by ethnic majority Bamar elites, rather than the ethnic minority groups who

have fought against central rule for decades, researcher Morgan Michaels said.

Under the Suu Kyi-led government, there were several arguments with ethnic minority groups over the NLD’s attempts to erect statues or name infrastructure after Aung San, said Michaels, a Myanmar specialist with the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The Kachin and the Karen, for example, “have their own heroes”.

“They don’t appreciate the imposition... of his likeness and the symbolism that is attached to him, because it’s also a symbol of the Bamar dominance of the state,” he said.

Since the coup, some of Myanmar’s myriad ethnic minority factions have banded with pro-democracy guerrillas to fight the armed forces.

A politician from one ethnic minority group, who declined to be named, acknowledged Aung San’s struggle for independence but accused the NLD of erecting statues “for their party’s interest”.

“It’s not necessary to keep many of his statues,” the politician said, adding of the NLD: “Their era is finished now!”

Children’s festival in Thailand



Residents participate in a parade during the Tadika Samphan festival, a local celebration for children in Thailand’s southern province of Narathiwat. (AFP)

Democratic Taiwan must not become ‘China’s Taiwan’

Reuters
Taipei

Taiwan must work together to protect its democracy and not become part of China, President Lai Ching-te said yesterday, calling on members of his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to oppose the “red terror” coming from Beijing.

Lai, who won election two years ago, and his ruling DPP, champion Taiwan’s separate identity from China, a position that frequently angers Beijing which views the island as an inviolable part of Chinese territory. Speaking to the DPP’s annual convention, Lai said Taiwan must remain vigilant in times of peace, pointing to what he said was China’s “legal warfare”, such as its new ethnic unity law which gives Beijing the basis to take action against people outside its borders. That has alarmed Taiwan, because it could give Beijing another legal basis to try and prosecute or arrest Taiwanese it views as separatists. China has rejected all criticism of the law. China’s legal system has no jurisdiction in Taiwan.



Taiwan President Lai Ching-te speaks at the annual congress of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party in Taipei yesterday. (Reuters)

“I also expect comrades within the party to stand on the front lines, unite as one, and jointly oppose the threat posed by China’s ‘red terror’ to Taiwanese society,” Lai added, speaking in Taiwanese, also known as Hokkien or Hoklo, rather than the main language of government, Mandarin.

“We must work together to protect our democratic and free way of life, and absolutely never allow ‘democratic Taiwan’ to turn back and become ‘China’s Taiwan,’” he said.

China’s Taiwan Affairs Office did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China has rebuffed Lai’s repeated calls for talks, calling him a “separatist”.

Lai, who is also DPP chairman, reiterated that Taiwan is already an independent country, whose constitutional name is the Republic of China, and it is not subordinate to the People’s Republic of China.

“Regardless of ethnic group, regardless of who came earlier or later, anyone who identifies with Taiwan is a master of the country. Taiwan’s future must be decided jointly by the 23 million people of Taiwan,” he said.

To this day neither government formally recognises the other and no peace treaty to end the civil war or armistice has ever been signed.

Over the past decade of DPP government, Lai said Taiwan had not backed down in the face of “authoritarian expansion”, disinformation attacks, military threats, and diplomatic pressure.

“Taiwan has shown the world that democracy is not a weakness; democracy is strength,” he added.

Survivors of Indonesia boat sinking found on island, floating at sea

AFP
Jakarta

Two survivors from a passenger boat that sank off eastern Indonesia were found on an uninhabited island yesterday, a rescue official said, a day after five others were rescued floating in the sea.

The vessel, which was carrying more than 70 people, sank on Wednesday as it sailed near Selayar, a small island south of the larger Sulawesi.

Yesterday, rescuers found a man and a woman who had made it to a tiny island by clinging to a makeshift flotation device.

The duo said four others who had been with them had not made it.

“Some of them became weak and could no longer hold on to the raft, and eventually drifted away,” local search-and-rescue official Muhammad Arif Anwar told AFP. “Hopefully we can still find their companions.”

Five other survivors, including a seven-year-old girl, were rescued on Saturday after floating at sea for three days.

“After the ship sank, each of them saved themselves using whatever equipment or makeshift flotation they could find,” Arif

told AFP earlier yesterday.

“They rigged together jerry cans and pieces of cork tied up with rope, then climbed on top of them.”

The group was rescued on Saturday afternoon by local fishermen, who radioed officials for help, he said.

The survivors, tired and weak after floating for days without enough food or water, had sustained themselves with packets of instant noodles and biscuits.

Five large ships, a reconnaissance aircraft and a helicopter are being used in ongoing search efforts for 18 people still believed missing, Arif said.

About 50 people were rescued on Thursday, officials said.

Rescuers said the vessel listed only 50 people on board, but further verification found there were 78 on the ship.

It is common in Indonesia for the number of actual passengers on a boat to differ from the manifest. Accidents are a regular occurrence, due in part to lax safety standards and inclement weather.

Three Spanish tourists died when their boat sank off eastern Indonesia in January. A 10-year-old boy was listed as officially missing after authorities ended the search.



Rescuers search for missing people during an operation after the passenger boat KM Nurul Salsa sank off Selayar island in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, on Friday. (Reuters)

Laos says cannot determine cause of deaths of six tourists in 2024

Laos authorities said on Saturday they could not determine blame or the cause of the deaths in 2024 of six tourists previously linked to methanol-tainted alcohol because their families had refused to allow autopsies.

Two Danish citizens, an American, a Briton and two Australians died following what media reports said was a night out on the town in Vang Vieng in November that year.

“To date, authorities do not yet have evidence that can establish whether the deaths... were caused by the actions of any individual or by any particular causes,” the Laos Ministry of Public

Security said in a statement on Saturday.

“This is because the authorities were not permitted to conduct autopsies on the bodies of the deceased, and therefore lacked the forensic evidence necessary to determine the cause of death,” it said.

The statement said, based on information provided by the Australian embassy and a Thai hospital, that “methanol had been detected in the blood of the two deceased Australian tourists”.

It said legal proceedings had been initiated against the owner of the Tiger distillery for “manufacturing or selling products hazardous to health” and “illegal commercial operation”. (AFP)

Japan imperial rules tweaked, but still no woman emperor

AFP
Tokyo

Japan’s parliament tweaked the imperial succession law on Friday but maintained the bar on women emperors – despite surveys suggesting wide public support for the idea.

The future of the imperial household – mythically descended from the Shinto sun goddess Amaterasu – depends currently on Prince Hisahito, the 19-year-old nephew of Emperor Naruhito, 66.

If Hisahito – a fan of dragonflies, who is currently studying biology and is not married – has no son, then under the rules as they stand he will have no heir and the bloodline will end.

There have been eight female emperors on the Chrysanthemum Throne in Japan’s imperial family, whose divine status was re-

nounced after World War II.

But an 1889 imperial house law stipulated that only men could become emperor, and only through the paternal line. This was carried over in 1947 into the current Imperial Household Law.

This rules out the popular Princess Aiko, 24, daughter of Naruhito, or any other royal woman ever becoming emperor.

The bill, passed by the upper house on Friday, allows the adoption of male distant relatives aged over 15 back into the imperial family – as long as they are single – and for their future sons to become eligible to ascend the throne.

They are members of 11 families that left the imperial register after Japan’s defeat in World War II.

The new rules also end the practice of women having to lose their royal status after marrying a commoner, although because of their gender their children still cannot become emperor.

The legislation passed after wrangling within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by Japan’s first woman prime minister, Sanae Takaichi, who opposes female succession.

Seichiro Murakami, a veteran of the conservative LDP, said after the bill passed the lower house on July 10 that it was “utterly outrageous” to rule out Aiko becoming emperor.

Asahi Kuni, 81, a member of one of the 11 imperial branches, has also said he would advise his grandchildren to refuse the opportunity of becoming royals.

“By the age of 15, a person has grown up breathing the air of freedom,” Kuni told the Asahi Shimbun daily.

A poll conducted by the Mainichi Shimbun last month found only 23% of people in favour of the sons of re-adopted imperial family members becoming emperor, and 34% against.

By contrast, more than 70% supported a woman emperor, and 40% a matrilineal one.

An Asahi Shimbun poll in May also showed 72% of respondents in favour of changing the rules to allow women to ascend the throne.

The imperial family now has 16 members in total, including five men – retired emperor Akihito, 92, his brother, 90, the emperor, his brother, and Hisahito.

Hideya Kawanishi, a professor at Nagoya University and expert in Japan’s emperor system, told AFP that the new bill “fails to reflect public opinion”.

“For the conservative camp of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and the likes, the overriding goal is to preserve the male-line, male-only succession to the throne, and that is precisely why they do not want to listen to the voices of the people,” he said.

“I believe these amendments carry the risk of undermining



A vehicle carrying Princess Aiko, the only child of Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako, arrives at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo. (AFP/File photo)

public support for the symbolic Emperor system.”

“Maybe it would have been good if they talked more about the possibility of female emperors and other stuff reflecting modern society,” office worker Yoshiki

Yaguchi, 66, told AFP while walking in the Yurakcho area of Tokyo.

“The male chauvinism has to be scrapped,” high-school student Yumi told AFP as she came out of a shopping mall with her like-minded friend, Misa, also 17.

Russia pounds Kyiv in major ballistic missile attack

Reuters
Kyiv

Russia battered Ukraine's capital Kyiv overnight with one of its biggest ballistic missile barrages of the war, killing at least one person and wounding 16 others, President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday.

A series of powerful explosions thundered across the darkened city in an attack that involved 41 missiles of various types, the air force said, ravaging buildings across several districts and sparking fires.

Residential buildings, warehouses, a supermarket and a dormitory were among the structures damaged, said Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko, adding that three people were in a serious condition.

Separately yesterday, four people were killed and 19 wounded in a strike on a postal depot outside the northeastern city of Kharkiv near the Russian border, the regional governor said.

At one location in western



A firefighting helicopter drops water over the site of a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv region, yesterday. (Reuters)

Kyiv, emergency workers picked through smouldering debris and doused bombed-out apartments.

A resident who identified himself as Vlad told Reuters he had been inside his apartment when a blast tore off his balcony door, which smashed him in the head.

"My grandmother lives with me, and she can't walk. How could I run away and leave her behind?" he said.

Closer to the city centre, the strikes damaged a frequently targeted metro station and destroyed an underground pedestrian passage nearby, leaving a pile of rubble.

Yesterday evening, rescuers in the southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia were digging for survivors after Russian bombs struck residential buildings there, authorities said, killing at least two people and wounding 14.

Russian forces have stepped up ballistic missile strikes on Kyiv and other cities in recent weeks as Ukraine struggles with a critical shortage of US-designed air defences.

Kyiv's military said it had shot down 18 missiles in yesterday's attack, which was aimed primarily at the Ukrainian capital. It added that 108 out of 125 drones had also been downed.

Last week, Zelensky said the US and Ukraine have reached a political agreement on licences to make Patriot interceptor missiles. He added that he hoped production could begin by the end of the year.

But the mounting Russian attacks in the fifth year of Moscow's full-scale war are heaping pressure on Kyiv's foreign partners to accelerate supply of anti-ballistic defences.

Wildfire scorches 13,000 hectares in Spain

AFP
Madrid

Firefighters were battling a wildfire north of Madrid yesterday that has burned around 13,000 hectares (32,000 acres) of land and forced some 700 residents to evacuate, authorities said.

Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said in a post on X that his government was closely monitoring the wildfire and thanked firefighters "working tirelessly" to protect lives and bring the blaze under control.

Around 300 firefighters, supported by 26 water-dropping aircraft, were working to contain the blaze, which broke out on Thursday amid scorching temperatures in Guadalajara province, the regional forest fire response service said on X.

The fire has been described as "difficult" by the head of the regional government, Emiliano Garcia-Page.

It broke out in a forest-covered mountainous area that includes the Sierra Norte Natural Park, home to endangered species including eagles, wolves and butterflies.

The wildfire comes after another blaze broke out on Wednesday near Zaragoza, in the north-

eastern region of Aragon, forcing around 1,000 people to evacuate their homes.

Firefighters, aided by improved weather conditions, had managed to curtail the fire's spread, Aragon's deputy regional president Maria del Mar Vaquero told Spanish public television.

"Emergency services will determine when the residents of the five evacuated villages can return home," she said.

The fire has burned around 14,400 hectares, Vaquero said, revising down an earlier estimate of about 16,000 hectares.

No casualties have been reported.

Earlier this month, Spain suffered one of its deadliest wildfires in recent history when a blaze in the southern province of Almeria killed 13 people and destroyed around 7,000 hectares.

Spain is on the front line of climate change and has experienced increasingly long and frequent heatwaves in recent years, with temperatures regularly exceeding 40C, creating conditions conducive to devastating wildfires.

Scientists say human-driven climate change is increasing the length, intensity and frequency of heatwaves, drying out vegetation and contributing to a greater risk of wildfires.

Greece braces for year's first heatwave

Greece, which was spared the record hot weather that ravaged most of Europe in June, is finally bracing for its first heatwave of the year.

Maximum temperatures in Thessaly, parts of the Peloponnese and the greater Athens area "may hover around or exceed 40C" (104F), with a fall likely on Thursday, prominent meteorologist Theodoros Kolydas said yesterday on Facebook.

He said data for today to Wednesday showed that "we are not dealing with a simple warm spell, but with a heat episode with heatwave characteristics,

mainly over the mainland." Weather website meteo.gr on Saturday said the first measurement over 40C for the season had been recorded in the northwestern town of Konitsa, with a reading of 40.4C. National weather service EMY yesterday forecast temperatures of 40C to 41C today and tomorrow in mainland Greece. It is unusual for temperatures to rise so late in July in Greece. Rain spells in June and strong winds this month kept heatwaves at bay this season while heat record after record was broken across most of Europe. (AFP)

Burnham scraps digital ID to tackle living costs

Reuters
London

Britain's next leader, Andy Burnham, will scrap government plans for a digital ID scheme when he takes office, signalling his intention to focus resources on kitchen table issues such as the cost of living, his allies said.

Dubbed the 'King of the North' for his work as the mayor of Greater Manchester in northwestern England, Burnham will replace Keir Starmer as prime minister today, when he says he will also unveil his cabinet team of top ministers.

Burnham's office said one of his first moves would be to ditch a plan for all employees to hold a digital identity document, a scheme designed to tackle illegal migration

but deemed a "fiasco" by a cross-party committee of lawmakers.

Starmer dropped the requirement for the ID to be mandatory in January after criticism.

"All the time and resource that was going to be spent on a national ID scheme will go instead to where it's most needed, such as helping with the cost of living," Burnham's spokesperson said in a statement.

Identity cards were abolished in the UK after World War Two and Britons typically use documents such as passports and driving licences to prove their identity.

In November, Britain's Office for Budget Responsibility estimated the cost of the ID scheme at about £1.8bn (\$2.4bn) between financial years 2026/27 and 2028/29.

"Labour have wasted millions of pounds on this project and now

Andy Burnham is trying to pretend he's riding to the rescue," said Julia Lopez, a lawmaker from the opposition Conservative Party.

Lucy Powell, deputy leader of the Labour Party and a Burnham ally, said the savings from scrapping the scheme might not be large, but the move was "one small example of reprioritising".

"This is an opportunity to reset, to refresh, to look at those things that are perhaps not just taking resource but are taking attention away from government priorities," she told the BBC's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg programme.

In interviews with both the BBC and Sky News, Powell would not be drawn on other policies or details of Burnham's cabinet team, but she said he would stick to the previous government's commitment on new

oil and gas drilling in the North Sea.

The Labour Party's 2024 manifesto pledged to issue no new licences but to honour existing ones, such as the Rosebank and Jackdaw fields in Scotland, which regulators approved only for that to be overturned in 2025 after a legal challenge.

US President Donald Trump was quick to seize on a possible change, taking to his Truth Social platform to say "the people of Aberdeen, in Scotland, are dancing in the streets" because Burnham "has stated that he will be opening up, all the way, the invaluable North Sea Oil".

In another area where Burnham could act, Powell also said the government has powers to put struggling water companies, such as Thames Water, into "special measures".

Body of sports journalist found burned in Italy: prosecutors

AFP
Rome

A man's charred body found by firefighters in farmland in the southern Italian province of Salerno was identified as a local sports journalist, prosecutors said yesterday.

Firefighters extinguishing a fire in a farm plot in the municipality of Eboli, in the southern Campania region, discovered the

body, which was later identified as Luigi Esposito, the prosecutor of Salerno, Raffaele Cantone, wrote in a press release.

"Results of the initial investigative checks indicate that the incident is likely connected to homicidal conduct," he wrote.

Italy's national order of journalists confirmed that the 53-year-old man known as Luca was a registered journalist covering sports for various local news organisations as a

commentator and editor.

He had a day job at the regional environmental agency, the order said in a note.

"He was apparently killed by gunfire... and then set on fire amid the vegetation," wrote the order.

The national president of the order, Carlo Bartoli, said they were awaiting the investigation "to understand the context in which our colleague's brutal killing took place".

Man arrested over fire in Paris park

Officers arrested 23-year-old man in Paris after he allegedly admitted he intended to set fire to one of the French capital's largest parks, a police source said Saturday.

Police were called late Friday to a blaze at the Bois de Boulogne park and found a fire spreading from a pile of brushwood to a tree trunk, the source said.

Officers put out the flames with fire extinguishers before they could spread further, but around one square metre of vegetation was burned.

A man at the scene told police he had intended

to set the western Paris park alight and was taken into custody. Prosecutors said Saturday his detention had been extended.

Earlier this week, two 18-year-old men, including a volunteer firefighter, suspected of deliberately starting fires in two other locations in the area, were placed under formal investigation and remanded in custody.

Two workers from a construction company were also charged and placed under judicial supervision for unintentionally starting the first fire in the Fontainebleau forest. (AFP)

India bans march on parliament by 'Cockroach' activists, standoff looms

Reuters
New Delhi

Police in India have denied permission for a march on parliament by supporters of the youth-led "Cockroach" movement today, risking a standoff as calls grow for the sacking of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's education minister over exam paper leaks.

The movement has been galvanised since police forcibly moved hunger-striking activist Sonam Wangchuk to hospital on Saturday, with hundreds of supporters gathering at a protest site ahead of a planned march on the opening day of parliament's monsoon session.

While the movement initially drew support largely online — amassing 22mn followers on Instagram within days of its formation in May after exam paper leaks affected millions — it has since broadened its appeal, presenting a major challenge for Modi.

The 59-year-old Wangchuk said in a message posted by his wife on X yesterday



Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) supporters attend a sit-in protest demanding the resignation of India's Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged NEET examination irregularities in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

that the planned march would be "India's 2nd FREEDOM MOVEMENT" and would be for "freedom from injustice (like paper

leaks)" and "freedom from fear (my illegal detention)".

But police said orders are in force in

the New Delhi district prohibiting assemblies of five or more persons, except at a designated site — the Jantar Mantar observatory — where protesters have already been camping for more than three weeks.

"As parliament session is commencing from 20 July, strict security arrangements are in place to ensure public safety, security of protectees, and the protection of vital government installations," police said on X.

The Cockroach Janta Party said the march would go ahead as planned.

"The march is happening for sure. We are figuring out the rest," a spokesperson said, asking not to be named before finalising their plans.

Earlier in the day, a Delhi court said authorities were within their rights to move Wangchuk to a government hospital because he had not admitted himself despite his deteriorating health.

Judge Mini Pushkarna said doctors had administered only oral fluids and supplements with Wangchuk's consent, adding: "It cannot be said that any force is being

used against Mr Sonam Wangchuk or that his bodily autonomy is being violated in any manner whatsoever."

Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali Angmo, had sought permission to transfer him to the privately run Medanta Hospital and her lawyers argued that she was entitled to have him treated at a hospital of their choice.

The government opposed the request saying it had to be cautious about Wangchuk's health and that his wife and close family members had been given round-the-clock access to him.

Citing the heavy police presence in the hospital, Angmo said on X "it is not medical care. It is illegal detention".

Safdarjung Hospital said Wangchuk's vital parameters were stable, although his blood parameters remained "marginally altered", and he required round-the-clock monitoring.

The rise of the Cockroach movement reflects frustrations among young Indians over issues like high youth unemployment and frequent exam paper leaks.



The opening of the national memorial site at Johan Nygaardsvolds plass in the government quarter, in Oslo, yesterday. (Reuters)

The artwork was created by Norwegian artist Matias Faldbakken, who said he had seen the bird on Utøya.

The names of all 77 victims are engraved on the memorial.

Crown Prince Haakon also visited the new 22 July Centre, Norway's national memorial and education

centre dedicated to the attacks.

Breivik was sentenced in 2012 to 21 years in prison, then Norway's maximum sentence, which can be extended indefinitely if he is still deemed a threat.

Now 47, the far-right extremist said he killed his victims because they supported multiculturalism.

Building green, by design

There is a quiet revolution taking shape across Qatar's skyline, and its scale deserves pause. As *Gulf Times* reported the day before, more than 3.1bn square feet of built-up area – some 2,700 projects – has now earned recognition under the Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS). This is no niche achievement confined to a handful of showcase towers. It spans stadiums and schools, hospitals and parks, residential communities and free zones. Sustainability, in other words, is ceasing to be an aspiration and becoming a habit.

What makes the story significant is not the tally alone but what it signals about how Qatar builds. GSAS, developed locally by the Gulf Organisation for Research and Development, was the first green building rating system in the Middle East and North Africa. That a homegrown standard now measures the environmental worth of the nation's infrastructure – from the World Cup stadiums to the Qatar Rail network – is a matter of some pride. It reflects a conviction that the region need not import every benchmark of good practice, but can author its own.

Credit belongs, in large part, to public sector leadership. When bodies such as Ashghal and

Qatar Museums make sustainability a condition of construction rather than an afterthought, the private sector follows.

The spread of certification into luxury developments, corporate headquarters and healthcare facilities suggests the message has landed: environmentally responsible building is no longer a cost to be grudged but a mark of quality. That such momentum was sustained through 2025, with nearly 200 fresh projects recognised in a single year, shows this is a deepening commitment rather than a passing enthusiasm.

The wider promise lies beyond Qatar's borders. With the GCC Standardisation Organisation adopting GSAS as a regional standard, and frameworks already taking root in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, a Qatari innovation is quietly becoming a Gulf one. For a region acutely exposed to the pressures of a warming climate, that shared direction of travel matters.

Numbers, of course, are only a beginning. The true test is whether these standards endure through occupancy, maintenance and the decades that follow. But a benchmark has been set – and, encouragingly, it is one the country built for itself.



The deliberate campaign to undermine Doha's successful diplomacy

By Tawfik Lamari

A coordinated political and media campaign has sought to discredit Qatar's role as a regional mediator following its success in brokering the 2026 US-Iran ceasefire and advancing efforts to stabilise Lebanon, according to a new study published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS).

The study published on July, 16, 2026, "Don't Shoot the Mediator: The Campaign to Undermine Qatar's Role in the Iran and Lebanon Ceasefires," argues that the attacks are aimed less at Qatar's diplomatic performance than at the mediation model it has developed over the past three decades – one built on balanced relations, open communication with rival parties and sustained investment in dialogue and conflict resolution.

According to the report, Qatar's emergence as one of the region's most trusted mediators is the product of a long-term foreign policy strategy rather than ad hoc diplomacy. By maintaining channels of communication with both state and non-state actors, Doha has repeatedly succeeded in facilitating negotiations in conflicts where other mediators have struggled to establish common ground.

The study notes that Qatar did not initially seek to lead negotiations between Washington and Tehran. Instead, it supported mediation efforts led by other regional actors before assuming a central role after those initiatives reached an impasse.

Despite suffering direct consequences from the conflict – including attacks on its territory and disruptions to liquefied natural gas production – Doha ultimately became the principal intermediary because it retained the confidence of both sides.

Its previous diplomatic experience, including facilitating the 2023 US-Iran prisoner exchange, also helped build the trust needed to bridge differences over complex issues such as regional security arrangements, Iran's frozen assets and navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

However, the study argues that Qatar's diplomatic success triggered an intensified backlash. Rather than acknowledging Doha's contribution to preventing a broader regional war, critics portrayed its broad regional relationships as evidence of bias, questioning its neutrality as a mediator.

The report rejects that argument, stressing that successful mediation depends not on distance from the parties but on the ability to maintain dialogue with all sides. It argues that opponents deliberately sought to transform Qatar's greatest diplomatic asset – its access to competing actors – into a liability by presenting engagement as collusion.

The study places the campaign within the wider political context of the Gaza war, the US-Iran confrontation and regional efforts to contain escalation. It argues that criticism of Qatar intensified whenever its diplomacy contributed to ceasefires or political settlements that reduced

prospects for continued military action.

The report also highlights Qatar's efforts to support stability in Lebanon by linking implementation of the US-Iran understanding with mechanisms to reinforce the Lebanon-Israel ceasefire. Doha worked to encourage Israeli withdrawal from occupied areas, strengthen ceasefire monitoring and help prevent renewed hostilities in southern Lebanon.

According to the researchers, these efforts met strong resistance from Israeli political and media circles, which viewed the broader diplomatic framework as limiting Israel's military options. The study further argues that Qatar's previous initiatives in Lebanon – including reconstruction assistance following the 2006 war and sponsorship of the 2008 Doha Agreement – have increasingly been recast by critics as support for Hezbollah rather than efforts to preserve Lebanon's stability and prevent state collapse.

The report describes this interpretation as selective and politically motivated, arguing that it overlooks the broader historical and security dynamics behind Lebanon's crises while disregarding Qatar's long-standing support for dialogue and state institutions.

A significant section of the study examines what it describes as a coordinated digital campaign targeting Qatar's mediation efforts. Citing research by the fact-checking platform Misbar, it says more than 342,000 posts from over 160,000 accounts appeared on X during the decisive phase of the US-Iran negotiations in June 2026.

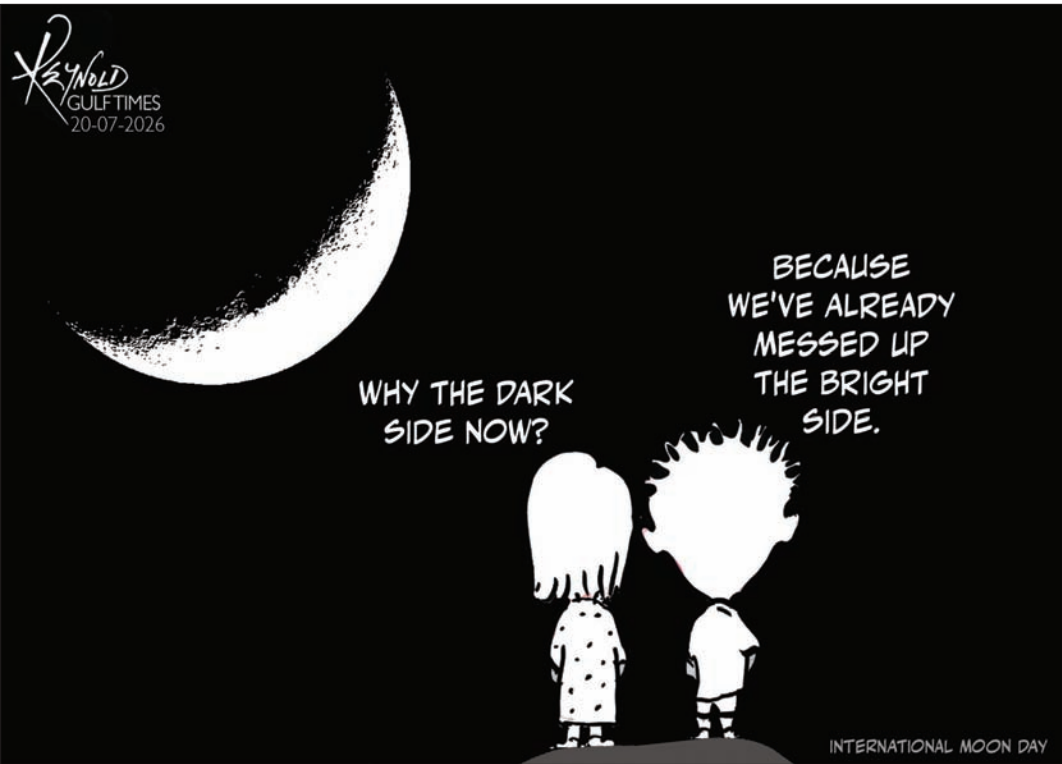
The analysis found that much of the activity originated from a relatively small network of accounts repeatedly amplifying identical narratives, suggesting organised online coordination. Most posts were published in English and targeted audiences in the United States and Europe, with the principal voices linked to pro-Israeli activists, the American conservative right and monarchist Iranian opposition groups.

Rather than debating the substance of the negotiations, the campaign focused on portraying Qatar as aligned with Iran or Hamas, supportive of terrorism or wielding undue influence over US decision-making, the report says.

The study concludes that the campaign reflects a broader struggle over the future of diplomacy in the Middle East. It argues that opposition to Qatar's mediation stems less from concerns about neutrality than from dissatisfaction with negotiated outcomes that constrain military escalation and promote political settlements.

Ultimately, the report says the attacks on Doha underscore the growing importance of its diplomatic role. By preserving communication with opposing sides and facilitating dialogue where others have failed, Qatar has established itself as a key regional mediator – one whose effectiveness has increasingly made it the target of coordinated political and information campaigns.

• The writer is a staff reporter.



Can US-Iran diplomacy survive the palpable collapse of confidence?



By Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

The resumption of military strikes between the United States and Iran has brought the spectre of conflict back to the region and laid bare the hollow nature of the Memorandum of Understanding reached in Switzerland in mid-June.

A major weakness of the MoU was that Iranian and American officials did not even appear to share a common interpretation of the document they had negotiated and signed. Subsequent actions, on both sides, have merely added new layers of mutual distrust and acrimony to an already combustible situation and make the task of resuming dialogue all the more challenging.

For agreements in politically sensitive settings to succeed, they require all participants to trust that the parties are negotiating with at least a baseline degree of good faith, accepting that in any dialogue there may be spoilers on both sides who want the talks to falter. It is for this reason that successful agreements often take months, if not years, of painstaking preparation, usually far away from the glare of publicity, that enables officials to take the measure of each other and build up relationships of trust.

A relevant example is the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland in April 1998 which was preceded by years of quiet outreach between British officials and the Irish Republican Army, followed by weeks of intense meetings which eventually produced a deal which has endured to this day.

The Northern Ireland example is illustrative of several factors which are essential to diplomatic success. Decades of IRA attacks in Northern Ireland and on the British mainland, and acts of violent reprisal by British security forces, meant that few people expected a diplomatic breakthrough as the 1990s began. Bitterness and hostility characterised both sides and had built up over many years. The IRA had blown up the hotel in Brighton where Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and most of her cabinet, were staying in

1984, in an audacious attempt to eliminate the British government, and had fired mortar rounds on Downing Street in 1991 during a cabinet meeting chaired by Thatcher's successor, John Major, forcing them to seek emergency shelter under the cabinet table.

And yet, while Tony Blair took the credit for the eventual passage of the Good Friday Agreement, it was John Major's decision to respond to an initial 'feeler' from the IRA and begin a discreet dialogue which laid the groundwork for the talks which followed. This took political courage on the part of both sides, from the IRA to reach out in the beginning and for the British to engage, especially as there was no guarantee of success at the outset. A calculation that there was more to be gained by political means than violence was critical in creating the space for talks and for outflanking more headline elements on both sides.



The initial backchannel took place in secret, and survived setbacks such as major bombings in London in 1992 and 1993 and also of a shopping centre in Manchester in 1996, which broke a ceasefire agreed in 1994. Once the agreement was signed, the trust that had built up during the process meant that the deal was robust enough to survive the Omagh bombing in July 1998 by a splinter group opposed to the agreement, an attack on a busy shopping street on a Saturday afternoon which caused one of the highest losses of life in the entire history of the Troubles. Widespread revulsion at the Omagh attack helped to drain residual support for a return to violence and cement the peace process in Northern Ireland.

Jonathan Powell was one of the key members of Tony Blair's negotiating team in 1998 as the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff (his brother, Charles Powell, had

been Margaret Thatcher's most trusted foreign policy aide in the 1980s). After leaving Downing Street, along with Blair, in 2007, Powell set up a mediation practice and engaged in hotspots such as Columbia before returning to government as Keir Starmer's National Security Advisor in 2024. Media reports in the United Kingdom have suggested that Powell was tangentially involved in the Omani-led attempts earlier this year to secure a US-Iranian agreement over Teheran's nuclear program that would avert the war which began on February 28.

It will take far more than individuals of Powell's calibre to restart the US-Iran talks and begin to rebuild confidence that has repeatedly been shattered and is now non-existent. Verbal jousting has taken place on both sides amid accusations that each party has used the period of the fragile ceasefire to take stock and plan for the next phase of conflict. Both in Iran and in the US policy hawks have taken succour from the failure of the memorandum of understanding to argue that it should have never been made. The hollowing out of the moderate middle ground has been years in the making, arguably stemming from the first Trump administration's withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action in 2018 and the Iranian regime's ramping up on enrichment thereafter.

The P5+1 negotiations with Iran that culminated in the JCPOA lasted for more than eighteen months and were themselves preceded by eight rounds of secret talks between senior US and Iranian officials in Oman. These took place in 2012 and 2013 and one of the U.S. officials involved, Bill Burns (who later became Director of the CIA in the Biden administration), recalled in his memoir (aptly entitled *The Back Channel: American Diplomacy in a Disordered World*) how the Iranian delegation, led by Abbas Araghchi, the current foreign minister, 'would sometimes confide that they had a Supreme Leader who was just waiting to say "I told you so" and prove that the Americans could not be trusted!'

Those words were written in 2019 and reflected a conversation held years earlier. So much has happened since to add fuel to the flames of accusations of bad faith on all sides. How to pull back from the brink is both an immediate and urgent challenge for the region and the world.

• The writer is a leading scholar specialising in Gulf politics and international political economy, and a fellow at the Baker Institute and co-director of the Middle East Energy Roundtable.

ColorVerse sparks creative summer learning in Qatar

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Visit Qatar’s immersive ColorVerse Experience is offering families an engaging summer attraction that combines creativity, storytelling and interactive play, giving children meaningful opportunities to learn, explore and stay active indoors.

As temperatures rise and schools close for the summer, families across Qatar often seek meaningful indoor activities that keep children entertained while encouraging creativity and learning.

Visit Qatar’s ColorVerse Experience, hosted at Katara Cultural Village, delivers exactly that, providing an immersive journey where storytelling, colour and imagination come together to create a memorable family experience.

Unlike traditional entertain-

ment attractions, ColorVerse invites children to become active participants rather than spectators. Throughout the experience, young visitors move through interactive environments inspired by the fictional world of “Colorama”, taking part in creative activities, games and hands-on experiences designed to stimulate both their imagination and problem-solving skills.

The attraction encourages children to stay physically active, work together and express themselves through play—qualities that many parents described as especially valuable during the long summer break.

Among those attending was Nesrine Gumus, who visited the experience with her daughter, Lena. “It was a very good experience,” Gumus said. “I liked it and my daughter liked it. It was amazing.”



Nesrine and Lena Gumus

She believes initiatives such as ColorVerse should become a regular feature of Qatar’s summer calendar.

“It is needed every year,” she said. “It is beneficial for their minds. The kids like it.”

Gumus also lauded the growing number of family activities available during the summer, saying she regularly attends Visit Qatar events.

“I visit everything here in the summer,” she said. “It is needed.”

Her daughter Lena’s excitement reflected the attraction’s appeal to young visitors. When asked about her favourite activities, she replied, “Sand... colour... painting,” highlighting the simple but mem-

orable experiences that the attraction offers.

Another parent, Anita, echoed similar sentiments after attending with her almost five-year-old daughter, Sara.

“It’s a really nice experience, especially for kids,” she said. “The most important thing is not only the show, but they let the kids be engaged during the show.”

She said the interactive format sets the experience apart from conventional entertainment, allowing children to remain involved while enjoying a variety of creative activities.

“My daughter really enjoyed it,” Anita said. “There are a lot of creative activities at the same time,



Anita and Sara

and I really appreciate these types of activities.”

She also stressed the importance of maintaining family-friendly events throughout the summer, particularly for residents who spend the holiday season in Qatar.

“I think such activities during summer are important, especially for those who are not travelling,” she said. “It’s a great opportunity for kids to still enjoy and have good memories.”

Affordability was another factor she welcomed.

“The price is fine,” Anita noted. “It’s just the entrance ticket, and then most of the activities are free.”



SEAsters-in-Action marks PADI Women’s Dive Day with community dive at Sealine

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

A small gathering of women divers at Sealine highlighted how support, safety and shared experiences can strengthen Qatar’s diving community as SEAsters-in-Action marked the 12th annual PADI Women’s Dive Day on July 18.

The group’s larger community event was cancelled out of respect for the national mourning period, but a simple fun dive was arranged for women who had registered earlier and still wished to commemorate the occasion together.

The gathering brought together eight divers, two snorkellers and one participant completing a Discover Scuba Diving experience, or “try dive”. Participants ranged from someone taking their first breaths underwater to Open Water and Advanced Open Water Divers, Rescue Divers, Divemasters and Instructors.

“The true strength of a diving community is not measured by the size of an event, but by how its members support and care for one another,” SEAsters-in-Action organiser and dive lead instructor Meech del Carmen said.

PADI Women’s Dive Day, launched in 2015, marked its 12th year under the theme “Celebrate Community. Create Change.” It was the second year that SEAsters-in-Action organised an activity in Qatar as part of the global initiative.

Del Carmen said SEAsters-in-Action grew out of her own experience of being supported by other women as she began her scuba-diving journey.

She recalled how fellow divers Lyn and Ellen encouraged her, shared equipment, helped arrange four-wheel-drive transportation to reach Sealine dive sites and spent weekends practising diving skills together.

“Their support was not only about becoming better divers. It was also about building confidence, forming friendships and creating a safe space where women could learn without feeling judged or left behind,” she said.

Those experiences inspired her to “pay it forward” by helping create a community where experienced divers support newcomers and women facing fears or practical obstacles can find encouragement.

“SEAsters-in-Action is not only about gathering women to dive. It is about creating a circle of support where experienced divers help new divers, confident swimmers assist those still



SEAsters-in-Action celebrates 12th annual PADI Women’s Dive Day on July 18 at Sealine.

overcoming fear, and everyone understands that progress becomes more meaningful when it is shared,” del Carmen said.

That spirit was demonstrated during the Sealine gathering, particularly when participants encountered challenges in and around the water.

During the surface swim towards the dive-site buoy, the women stayed close, slowing down at times, holding hands, or reassuring participants who needed support.

Underwater, one diver experienced difficulty equalising pressure in her ears during descent. The other divers stayed nearby and gave her time to adjust safely.

She eventually regained her confidence and completed a dive lasting almost an hour.

“Success in diving does not always mean reaching the bottom or finishing a planned route,” del Carmen said. “Sometimes, success means recognising a problem, making a safe decision and knowing that someone will remain beside you.”

She said such experiences capture the meaning behind the group’s message, #PassTheScubaDivingHappiness.

“Scuba-diving happiness is not only about what we see underwater. It is also about being present for someone, helping her through a difficult moment and making her feel safe,” she added.

Participants also received a double-ended bolt snap, or “double ender”, as a souvenir – the same symbolic gift given at the group’s first Women’s Dive Day celebration last year.

The piece of diving equipment, used to securely connect and organise gear, symbolises the buddy system and the values of



(From left) Meech, Lyn and Ellen.

trust, responsibility and mutual support.

“Just like the double-ender symbolises, we have got each other, no matter what,” del Carmen said.

This year’s Women’s Dive Day also coincided with PADI’s 60th anniversary. Founded in 1966, the organisation has played a major role globally in diver education, training, safety and ocean stewardship.

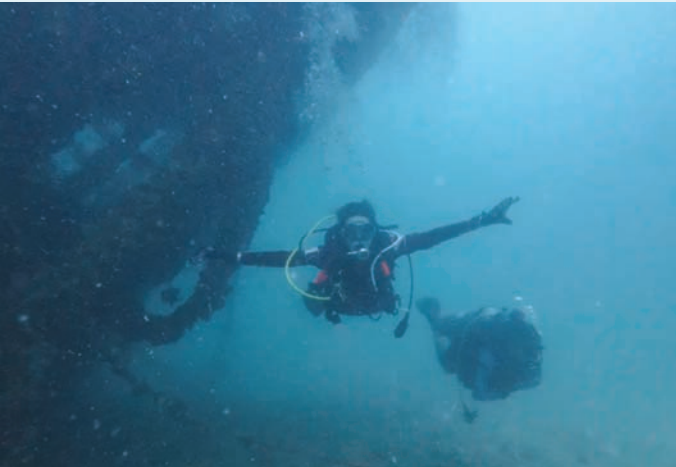
SEAsters-in-Action also underlined Sealine’s importance to Qatar’s diving community as an accessible place where residents can experience their first open-water dives, develop their skills and build friendships.

“What may appear to others as

a simple public beach has become a classroom, a training ground, a place of comfort and a second home for many divers,” del Carmen said.

Environmental responsibility remains part of the group’s activities. Since its first gathering in 2025, participants have been encouraged to use reusable water bottles, cups and containers, reduce single-use plastics and leave dive sites clean.

“Caring for the ocean does not begin only when divers enter the water,” del Carmen said. “It also means being responsible for what we bring to the beach, reducing unnecessary waste and leaving the area as clean as, or cleaner than, we found it.”



Organisers del Carmen, Margaux de Pauw and Anusha Kandaiah thanked the divers, snorkellers, learners and supporters who participated, as well as members of Qatar’s wider diving community who continue to share their knowledge and experience.

Although smaller than originally planned, del Carmen said the gathering fulfilled its purpose by bringing women of different backgrounds and experience levels together, helping them overcome challenges and forge new friendships.

“Sometimes, the smallest gathering can leave the deepest impact,” she said.

QOC honours HH the Father Amir’s enduring legacy in shaping Qatar as a global sporting hub



The Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC) paid tribute to His Highness the late Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, highlighting his enduring legacy in transforming Qatar into a global sporting hub. In a series of photographs, the QOC recalled landmark achievements under his leadership, including the growth of the Olympic movement in Qatar, the hosting of major international tournaments, the establishment of Aspire Academy and Aspetar, the 2006 Asian Games, and Qatar's historic winning bid to host the FIFA World Cup 2022. "Every championship, every sporting venue, and every athletic achievement bears the mark of a leader who believed that investing in sport is an investment in people and in the future," the QOC said. (PICTURES: QOC)

