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Other members of the team are: Ahmad Yaser Alhaddad, Ahmad Oadeib Alban Malek

Through a video, the professor noted that sometimes the first sign of distress is not a shout or a scream. **To Page 2**

Minister chairs Attorneys’ Admission Committee meeting



The Attorneys’ Admission Committee met yesterday under the chairmanship of HE the Minister of Justice and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Ibrahim bin Ali al-Mohammadi. During the meeting, three new lawyers took the legal oath after completing their training period. The committee reviewed applications from several professionals with equivalent experience seeking registration in the roll of practicing lawyers, as well as applications to register lawyers in the trainee lawyers’ roll. The committee also looked into requests from three candidates to complete their training period and qualify to practice law, approved the transfer of two lawyers from the non-practicing roll to the practicing roll, and reviewed applications to transfer lawyers to the roll of practicing lawyers eligible to appear before the Court of Appeal and the Court of Cassation. The committee also discussed several regulatory matters related to the legal profession, including reports submitted by its subcommittees and a proposed memorandum on administering the legal oath to non-Qatari lawyers. – QNA

Qatar formally notifies the UN over Iran’s continued attacks

Qatar has sent two identical letters to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations and President of the Security Council for the month of July, Zenon Mukongo Ngay, regarding the latest developments following Iran’s attacks on Qatari territory. The letters said that the attacks constituted a blatant violation of Qatar’s sovereignty, a direct threat to its security and territorial integrity, and an unacceptable escalation that jeopardises regional security and stability. The letters were sent by HE the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations

Sheikha Alya Ahmed bin Saif al-Thani. The letters referred to Iran’s targeting of the Qatari tanker Al Rekayyat while it was transiting the Strait of Hormuz on July 7, 2026. The letters also noted that Qatar’s Ministry of Defence announced that the country came under a missile attack on July 12, 2026, with the Qatari Armed Forces intercepting multiple ballistic missiles. The Ministry of Interior said three people, including a child, were injured by falling debris from the interception operations. The letters further noted that the Qatari Armed Forces intercepted another missile attack targeting the country on July 17, 2026, and

that measures had been taken to safeguard the country’s sovereignty, security, and the safety of its citizens and residents. The letters reiterated Qatar’s condemnation and denunciation of the blatant Iranian attack, calling it a dangerous and unacceptable escalation that poses a direct threat to the country’s security, as well as to regional and international stability. They said that the attacks constituted a flagrant violation of international law, including the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. The letters also cited UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026), which condemned in the strongest terms the brutal attacks launched by Iran against Qatar and other countries in the region, and demanded an immediate halt to all such attacks. They held Iran fully responsible under international law for the attacks and all resulting losses and consequences, and obligated Iran to provide full compensation for all damage suffered by Qatar. The letters reaffirmed Qatar’s right to respond in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and the inherent right of self-defence under international law, emphasising that it will not hesitate to take all necessary measures to protect its sovereignty, security, and the safety of its citizens and residents. – QNA

Qatar condemns Gulf attacks, backs Saudi over Houthi claims

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It called on the international community to uphold its responsibilities by implementing the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, particularly Resolution 2216 on Yemen and Resolution 2722 on freedom of navigation and navigational rights in the Red Sea, stressing that freedom of navigation through international waterways is a fundamental principle of international law and of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. The ministry reiterated Qatar’s full solidarity with Saudi Arabia and its support for all measures taken by the kingdom to safeguard its sovereignty and security, affirming that Saudi Arabia’s security is an integral part of the security of Qatar and the other Gulf Co-operation Council member states. – QNA

Tankers reverse course as war chokes routes

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A Singapore-flagged tanker and a Liberia-flagged tanker, both of which had just loaded crude at Yanbu bound for China and India, made U-turns and headed towards the Suez Canal, British maritime risk group Vanguard said – the first confirmed rerouting since the Houthi threat. With the war effectively closing Hormuz, the Red Sea has served as the main alternate route for millions of barrels of Saudi oil a day, piped to Yanbu. A full closure of that route could leave most Saudi exports trapped. US President Donald Trump said the Houthis had not yet shut the Bab el-Mandeb strait but threatened to act if they did: “If something like that happens, we take care of it.” US Central Command said its overnight strikes hit Iranian command centres, missile and drone launch sites, maritime capabilities and air defences. Explosions were heard near Shiraz, with Konarak, Chabahar, Khorramabad and a site outside Abadan also reported hit. An Iranian health ministry official said 50 civilians had been killed and 500 wounded in the recent US strikes. Iran struck across the Gulf, where earlier attacks on

desalination plants have raised fears of water shortages. Kuwait said it responded to a drone and missile attack and summoned Iran’s ambassador over the Hormuz strike. Bahrain reported intercepting attacks, with Iran’s Revolutionary Guards claiming they targeted an Amazon data centre there. The Guards also said they hit a complex “housing US terrorist forces” at Rukban in Jordan. The maritime agency UKMTO said a tanker in Hormuz was struck by a projectile, forcing its crew to abandon ship. The Guards said two tankers caught fire after explosions in the strait’s southern lane. Just four commodity vessels crossed Hormuz on Monday, down from seven. Trump said the US was “not finished” with Iran, projecting it would take Tehran 20-25 years to rebuild. The deaths of at least three US soldiers in recent days brought military fatalities to 17, with nearly 100 wounded since war resumed on July 7. Diplomacy continued, with Tehran said to have received a proposal for a 10-day ceasefire. Mediator Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif urged all sides to avoid actions that could further destabilise the region.

PM fields calls from Saudi, Oman, Bahrain, and Sudan

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He noted that this includes ensuring freedom of traffic in the Strait of Hormuz to protect the region’s security, preserve the recent diplomatic gains and promote regional stability. In the call with al-Busaidi, he added that this also entailed respecting Oman’s sovereignty over its territorial waters. Sheikh Mohammed reaffirmed that Qatar fully backs all endeavours to de-escalate tension and reach a comprehensive agreement that achieves enduring peace in the region. In his call with the Sudanese prime minister, the two discussed bilateral co-operation and ways to enhance it, along with a number of issues of joint interest. Dr Idris conveyed his condolences on the death of HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. (QNA)

QC receives QR100,000 donation from General Takaful

Qatar Charity (QC) received a donation of QR100,000 from General Takaful Company in support of its humanitarian and development projects. The contribution reflects the company’s commitment to social responsibility and its continued support for charitable and humanitarian initiatives. The donation was received during a meeting at the QC’s headquarters, where chief executive Yousef bin Ahmed al-Kuwari welcomed General Takaful Company chairman Jassim al-Kuwari and



general manager Faraj al-Omari in the presence of representatives from both sides. Al-Kuwari thanked General Takaful Company for its support, noting that contributions from private sector institutions play a vital role in strengthening humanitarian and development efforts. “We highly value this support, which reflects the spirit of social responsibility and the importance of effective partnership between private sector institutions and humanitarian organisations,” said al-Kuwari. “This contribution

will further strengthen our ability to implement more projects with sustainable impact.” He also called on national companies and institutions to support Qatar Charity’s projects and campaigns. “Supporting Qatar Charity means supporting a well-established humanitarian mission that creates hope and makes a real difference in the lives of those in need,” al-Kuwari said. Al-Omari affirmed that the contribution stems from the company’s commitment to social respon-

sibility and its keenness to support humanitarian and development initiatives that serve those in need and improve their quality of life. “Through this contribution, we look forward to supporting its efforts to implement impactful projects that make a tangible difference for beneficiaries,” he said. “We also believe that partnership between private sector institutions and humanitarian organisations is a fundamental pillar for advancing sustainable development and consolidating the values of social solidarity.”

QU team develops AI device to detect distress in autistic children

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“It can be a signal under the skin. Children with autism often face sudden meltdowns from sensory overload. These are not ways of misbehaviour. It is the way of their bodies asking for help. “Our team pairs wearable biosensors with social robots that sense rising stress in real time through heart rate, sweat response and movement which helps healthcare givers to act before a meltdown starts,” Cabibhan explained. He also narrated how in pilot sessions when the children’s stress spiked, the ro-

bot gently reengaged them to calm down helping the movement safely and quietly. “These robots build bridges back to human connection because when technology listens to the body, you can step in early with care,” he added. The SafeSignals system is a wearable and environmental sensor-integrated system. By combining machine learning algorithms, multimodal monitoring, and real-time alerts, it empowers caregivers and healthcare professionals to provide timely support, enhancing safety and wellbeing.

The main features of the device are multimodal monitoring as it integrates wearable and environmental sensors for holistic insights. It accurately identifies stress and challenging behaviours and provides real-time alerts by notifying caregivers and external devices instantly. It is reliable and scalable as it is designed to overcome limitations of current solutions with comprehensive monitoring system. Moreover, the wearable sensors track physiological indicators of stress and anxiety and the environmental sensors

monitor surroundings for potential triggers. With AI analysis, machine learning algorithms detect behavioural patterns and enables real-time intervention through immediate alerts to enable timely caregiver support. The researchers believe that the device offers value proposition as it empowers care with timely, actionable insights for caregivers. The device is future-ready and scalable for diverse healthcare and assistive applications. The development of SafeSignals is part

of collaborative research efforts by QU researchers to harness technology and innovation in advancing assistive technologies and strengthening healthcare-related fields. The team has already secured a patent for the device and is now seeking commercialisation opportunities. Through partnerships with healthcare providers, assistive technology companies and investors, the QU aims to expand the use of SafeSignals globally. With patent protection in place, the system is ready for licensing, co-development and integration into healthcare services.

Father Amir’s legacy will continue to inspire future generations: consultant

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter



Even in his final farewell, His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani continues to inspire Qatar with a legacy defined by extraordinary achievements and an enduring philosophy of leadership, responsibility and perseverance, according to therapeutic and community nutrition consultant Moudhi al-Hajri. Reflecting on the passing of HH the late Father Amir, al-Hajri described his life as “a school of leadership”, saying that his legacy extends beyond the milestones of his reign and remains a lasting source of inspiration for future generations.

“Greatness is not measured solely by what a leader accomplishes during his lifetime,” she said. “It is measured by the values and vision that guide generations after he is gone. Even his farewell has become a lesson in responsibility, determination and the importance of carrying the journey forward.” Al-Hajri said that HH Sheikh Hamad showed that nation-building is neither instantaneous nor accidental, but the result of strategic vision, meticulous planning, sustained effort and unwavering patience. Rather than allowing circumstances to dictate his course, she said, he pursued a defined path toward a future that placed people at the centre of Qatar’s development.

“He believed that the greatest investment is investment in people,” she said. “His vision was founded on empowering citizens while ensuring a dignified life for everyone who calls Qatar home, whether citizens or residents.” Al-Hajri said that the most meaningful tribute to HH the late Father Amir is not mourning alone, but a collective commitment to safeguard and advance the achievements he dedicated his life to building.

She called on professionals across every sector, including education, healthcare, media, security, public administration and business, to treat excellence in their work as the truest expression of loyalty to a leader whose vision transformed the nation. Under HH Sheikh Hamad’s leadership, Qatar witnessed progress across education, healthcare, government institutions, media, infrastructure and urban development, laying the foundations of a modern state that has earned global recognition for its stability, prosperity and human-centred development model.

Al-Hajri stressed that these accomplishments were more than ambitious projects; they formed part of a national vision that strengthened institutions, safeguarded human dignity, promoted security and stability, and expanded opportunities for future generations. “Our responsibility today is to continue this journey with the same ambition, the same quality and the same commitment to excellence,” she said. “We must preserve Qatar’s global standing while adding new achievements worthy of the exceptional legacy left by the Father Amir.”

She concluded that the influence of visionary leaders does not end with their passing. Instead, their legacy enters a new chapter through the men and women who embrace their principles and continue their mission. “The Father Amir will remain present in every national achievement, every successful institution and every step toward a more prosperous future,” al-Hajri said. “His physical presence may have departed, but his vision endures, his approach lives on, and his achievements will continue to bear witness to a remarkable legacy.” For al-Hajri, the greatest tribute to HH Sheikh Hamad lies in ensuring that Qatar remains faithful to the path he charted, one that continues to build a strong, prosperous nation where people remain its greatest wealth.

Applications open for Tasweer 2026-27 residency programme

Tasweer Photo Festival Qatar has opened applications for the 2026-27 Tasweer Residency, inviting photographers and visual storytellers aged 21 and above who are based in Qatar to apply for the programme’s second edition. Applications will be accepted from July 21 to September 3 for the five-month residency, which will be held at Bayt Al Wakrah in the historic Old Al Wakrah City. The programme will support each resident’s artistic development and culminate in the exhibition “As the Image Unfolds – The Language of Athar” during the 2027 Tasweer Festival. An online zine documenting participants’ creative processes and the outcomes of their collective journey will also accompany the exhibition. The Tasweer Residency encourages a broad range of photographic approaches, including documentary, conceptual and experimental image-making. Applicants are invited to propose projects offering thoughtful and authentic perspectives on the connections between people, culture, memory and the environment in Qatar and beyond.

Three selected residents will each receive a dedicated studio space, a monthly stipend of QR4,000 and comprehensive mentorship from photography experts. The programme emphasises experimentation, critical dialogue, and community engagement, guiding participants from research to realisation. Building on the success of its inaugural edition in 2025, the residency will continue to offer production and curatorial support, access to local cultural institutions and professional networks, and opportunities for public engagement. – QNA

Qatar Rail, QCA conclude fourth ‘Qatar Rail Chess Open’

Qatar Railways Company (Qatar Rail), in collaboration with the Qatar Chess Association (QCA), concluded the fourth edition of the Qatar Rail Chess Open on Monday (July 20), with Grandmaster Victor Bologan topping the final standings with 8 points.

The hosting of the tournament forms part of Qatar Rail's social responsibility strategy, which is centred on launching impactful community initiatives that enhance engagement and interaction among members of the community across the Doha Metro and Lusail Tram station network.

Coinciding with this year's World Chess Day celebrations, the fourth edition of the tournament witnessed broad participation and strong competition among elite professional and amateur chess players of various ages and nationalities. The preliminary rounds were held on July 17 at the Qatar Chess Training Centre, where participants were divided into two groups and competed under a knockout format to determine the qualifiers.

Al Bidda Station on the Doha Metro also hosted the final rounds on July 20, which featured a distinguished level of competition among the qualified players, alongside the ceremony honouring the tournament winners.



Fugar Asadli from Azerbaijan also scored 8 points, finishing second on tie-break. Saravanan Advait from India came third with 6.5 points, while Loyola Robinson from the Philippines placed fourth with 6 points, followed by Johan Gypsy from India in fifth with 6 points. His

compatriot Albin Sajjan finished sixth with 5.5 points. Erfan Mohammed of the Qatar national team placed seventh with 5 points, while Ryan Mendoza from the Philippines came eighth with 5 points. Khaled al-Jumaat of the Qatar national team finished ninth with 4.5 points.

On this occasion, Abdulla Alal-Mawlawi, director of Communications and Public Relations at Qatar Rail said: "We are pleased in continuing our partnership with the Qatar Chess Association in organising another successful edition of the Qatar Rail Chess Open,

reflecting the tournament's strong presence and continued success over previous editions. Our sponsorship of this tournament falls within Qatar Rail's commitment to supporting community and sports activities in Qatar, while also contributing to encouraging

different segments of society to engage in this intellectual sport. We look forward to continuing this cooperation with the Qatar Chess Association".

Mohammed Ahmed al-Mudahka, president of Qatar Chess Association, said: "We are delighted to continue this fruitful cooperation with Qatar Rail and value its ongoing support for efforts to promote chess in the community and encourage different segments of society to engage in the game.

"Our sustained partnership for the fourth consecutive year has resulted in another successful edition of the Qatar Rail Chess Open, which witnessed exciting competitive vibes and wide participation from talented players, reflecting the growing interest in this sport and its expanding presence at the community level".

Alongside its role in providing reliable travel experiences for residents and visitors to the country, Qatar Rail continues to work closely with various relevant stakeholders across the State to launch and implement a diverse range of community initiatives that help strengthen social engagement and build an interactive and inspiring environment that supports learning, entertainment and communication within stations across the metro and tram networks.

Sidra advances precision nutrition research

Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, is advancing the future of maternal and child healthcare through groundbreaking research in precision nutrition. The studies demonstrate how a mother's diet during pregnancy can influence not only pregnancy outcomes but also the long-term health of her child.

Researchers from Sidra Medicine's Precision Nutrition Laboratory have published two new studies that uncover how maternal nutrition shapes foetal development through epigenetic changes—biological mechanisms that regulate how genes are expressed without altering DNA itself. The findings reinforce growing evidence that nutrition during pregnancy plays a fundamental role in determining a child's health before birth and may influence disease risk later in life.

Dr Annalisa Terranegra, head of the Precision Nutrition Laboratory, Translational Medicine Department, Sidra Medicine, said: "Nutrition is one of the earliest and most powerful influences on human health, beginning long before birth. Our research shows that what a mother eats during pregnancy can leave measurable biological signatures that influence foetal development and potentially shape health across the lifespan. By understanding these mechanisms, we are moving closer to delivering personalised nutritional recommendations that help prevent pregnancy complications and give every child the healthiest possible start in life."

The first study, published in npj Science of Food, examined the relationship between maternal nutrition and preterm birth. Researchers found that women who delivered prematurely consumed significantly lower amounts of protein, vitamins, and essential minerals than mothers who delivered full-term pregnancies.

The study further identified distinct epigenetic changes in both the placenta and umbilical cord blood, particularly in genes involved in fetal development and immune function. These findings suggest that inadequate protein intake during pregnancy may contribute to biological changes associated with an increased risk of preterm birth and could eventually support earlier identification of at-risk pregnancies.

The second study, published in Molecular Nutrition & Food Research, focused on gestational dia-



betes mellitus, one of the most common pregnancy complications worldwide. Researchers found that mothers diagnosed with gestational diabetes consumed significantly higher amounts of saturated fat while having lower levels of vitamin D and folate compared with healthy pregnancies.

The research also revealed widespread epigenetic changes affecting genes involved in insulin regulation and glucose metabolism, including the gene ZFP57, suggesting that maternal dietary patterns may influence a child's future metabolic health and susceptibility to chronic diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

Clinically, these findings underscore the potential value of early nutritional assessment and targeted dietary intervention in pregnant women at risk of gestational diabetes to help improve maternal outcomes and support long-term metabolic health in their children.

Sidra Medicine is also investigating how the type and quality of dietary fats consumed during pregnancy may influence early brain development and the future risk of neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism spectrum disorder and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Dr Ibrahim Mamoun Ibrahim, senior attending physician, Endocrinology, and lead for Diabetes in Pregnancy, Sidra Medicine, noted: "Gestational diabetes is one of the most common complications of pregnancy, but it is also one of the most preventable when women receive the right support at the right time. These findings reinforce that nutrition is far more than lifestyle advice—it is an integral part of medical care during pregnancy."

Landmark Group announces winner of ‘Shukran Millionaire - Shop & Win’ campaign

Landmark Group, the region's leading retail and hospitality conglomerate, announced the winner of its highly successful "Shukran Millionaire - Shop & Win" campaign in Qatar, reaffirming its commitment to rewarding customers and creating exceptional shopping experiences.

The grand prize winner, Mooza Alnaemi, won 1mn Shukran Points, equivalent to QR50,000, following the electronic raffle draw conducted on July 5. The campaign, which concluded on June 30, gave customers the opportunity to enter the e-raffle draw by shopping for QR250 or more at participating Landmark Group brands, including Centrepoint, Babyshop, Splash, Shoemart, Lifestyle, Max, Home



Shukran millionaire winner.

Centre, Home Box, Shoexpress, Pablosky, and Emax. Commenting on the campaign's success, Shumalan Naicker, senior vice president & country head, Landmark Group Qatar,

said: "We congratulate Ms Mooza Alnaemi on becoming our Shukran Millionaire winner. The overwhelming response to this campaign reflects the strong connection we share with our customers. Through the Shukran loyalty programme, we continue to create rewarding experiences that provide real value to our members. We are excited to bring many more rewarding offerings and engaging experiences to our loyal members in the coming months."

The success of the Shukran Millionaire - Shop & Win campaign further reinforced Shukran's position as one of the region's most rewarding loyalty programmes, while continuing to create rewarding experiences and greater value for members across Landmark Group brands.

WCM-Q Grand Rounds discusses advanced treatment for gastroesophageal reflux disease

An advanced, minimally invasive, incisionless procedure for treating gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) was the topic for discussion at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q)'s Grand Rounds Live Webinar Series.

The procedure, called transoral endoscopic fundoplication (TIF), involves passing an endoscope and a specialised probe down the patient's throat into the stomach in order to repair the valve between the esophagus and the stomach, thus preventing acid reflux. The procedure removes the need to make an incision in the abdomen.

The webinar, titled "Endoscopic Fundoplication for GERD: Where do we Stand in 2026", was given by expert gastroenterologist and WCM-Q alumnus Dr Wassem Skef, assistant professor of medicine in the Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, McGovern Medical School at UTHealth Houston in the US.

In the talk, Dr Skef explained the anatomical components of the anti-reflux barrier, described how it works, and discussed how its dysfunction leads

to GERD. GERD, which is commonly referred to as acid reflux, is a chronic condition in which stomach acid frequently flows back up into the esophagus, which can cause heartburn, chest pain, a bitter taste in the mouth, difficulty swallowing, and cough. The condition is caused by a mechanical issue with the lower esophageal sphincter, a circular ring of muscle which, under normal conditions, works as a one-way valve, opening to allow food to pass into the stomach, and then closing tightly to prevent gastric juices from escaping into the esophagus.

In fundoplication, the surgeon folds a section at the top of the stomach, called the fundus, around the weakened valve and fastens it into place. This strengthens the valve so that it no longer allows gastric juices to escape, explained Dr Skef. In addition to describing the procedure, Dr Skef also discussed its efficacy, when it is warranted, and outlined relevant safety data. He also discussed the Lyon Consensus 2.0, the leading international medical framework for diagnosing and managing GERD.

QNL, Institute of Arabic Manuscripts explore boosting co-operation, holding joint research projects

Qatar National Library (QNL) and the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts held an extensive virtual meeting yesterday to explore prospects for co-operation in various fields related to Arabic manuscripts and manuscript studies.

This comes as part of their efforts to strengthen joint initiatives to preserve cultural and civilisational heritage and ensure heritage science sustainability. During the meeting, the two sides discussed a number of topics of mutual interest, foremost among them the exchange of scientific and technical expertise in manuscript-related fields, organising joint events and research projects, and developing action plans that contribute to preserving Arab and Islamic heritage and safeguarding historical legacy.

QNL Executive Director Tan Huism praised the productive exchange that took place with the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts and welcomed new avenues for bilateral collaboration and the launch of future projects to support the preservation of manuscript heritage.

For his part, Director of the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts Dr Musa al-Jubouri praised co-operation with QNL and emphasised the importance of strategic partnerships among Arab cultural institutions to protect the Arab manuscript heritage and make it more accessible to researchers and scholars. (QNA)

McDonald's Qatar Concludes Rahlatuna Blood Donation Drive in Collaboration with Hamad Medical Corporation

McDonald's Qatar successfully concluded its annual voluntary blood donation drive under Rahlatuna, its 'Our Journey' CSR platform, in collaboration with Hamad Medical Corporation's Qatar National Blood Donation Center. Held on July 9 at McDonald's Qatar Old Airport branch, the activation welcomed a total exceeding 190 voluntary donors from the public and McDonald's Qatar employees from restaurants and head office, resulting in over 135 units of blood collected to support Qatar's national blood supply.

Throughout the activation, HMC stationed its mobile blood donation truck outside the restaurant, enabling eligible donors to take part in the donation process on site. The initiative brought together members of the public and McDonald's Qatar employees from restaurants and head office in a shared effort to support voluntary blood donation and community wellbeing.

Following their donation, donors received a Feel-Good Recovery Meal voucher to redeem inside the restaurant. The complimentary meal, made up of a McChicken sandwich, Royal Salad, orange juice and water, was introduced by McDonald's Qatar as a simple gesture of appreciation for people who gave blood and contributed to a lifesaving cause.

By hosting the drive at its Old Airport branch, McDonald's Qatar helped make blood donation more visible and accessible in a familiar community setting. The activation reflected the company's belief that giving back can be both meaningful and human, creating a moment where donors were thanked, supported and recognized immediately after taking part.

The initiative also aligned with Qatar National Vision 2030 by supporting public health, encouraging



volunteerism and contributing to national healthcare resilience. Delivered under Rahlatuna, it further reinforced McDonald's Qatar's long-term commitment to community wellbeing and to initiatives that respond to local priorities.

Sara Abuobeid, Director of Marketing & Communications, McDonald's Qatar, said: "At McDonald's Qatar, our commitment to the community extends beyond our restaurants. Through Rahlatuna, we aim to support initiatives that create meaningful impact and contribute to the wellbeing of people across Qatar. This blood donation drive was a meaningful example of what can be achieved when community members, our teams and partners come together for a lifesaving cause. We are grateful to every donor who took part, and to Hamad Medical Corporation for their support in making this initiative possible. The Feel-Good Recovery Meal was our way of recognizing donors' generosity with a small gesture of appreciation after donation."

McDonald's Qatar is 100% locally owned, managed and operated by Al Mana Restaurants & Food Company W.L.L., and continues to strengthen its role as an active member of the community through meaningful CSR initiatives across the country.

‘I found him holding a sheet of paper on which only four words had been written: Gas, Education, Health, and Sport’

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He remained steadfast in his convictions despite challenges throughout his youth, his years as ruler, and until his passing.

Above all, HH the late Father Amir’s primary concern was always Qatar and its people.

He noted that HH Sheikh Hamad consistently placed the interests of the nation above his own health and personal time, believing he had a mission to accomplish for his country.

Recalling one memorable incident, he said that he once entered HH the late Father Amir’s office to discuss official matters and found him holding a sheet of paper on which only four words had been written: “Gas, Education, Health, and Sport.” Curious about their meaning, HE al-Attiyah asked HH the late Father Amir to explain.

HH Sheikh Hamad responded that all four sectors ultimately depended on natural gas, explaining that meaningful investment in education, healthcare, and sports required the financial resources that would be generated through the development and commercialisation of Qatar’s gas reserves.

Al-Attiyah explained that although the vision to invest in natural gas had emerged at an early stage, significant challenges stood in the way. At the time, the international gas market lacked the importance and commercial appeal enjoyed by the oil industry, and few companies were willing to invest in gas projects. Nevertheless, HH Sheikh Hamad remained committed to the vision, eventually overcoming those obstacles. The revenues generated from Qatar’s gas industry subsequently became the financial foundation for national development projects across education, healthcare, sports, culture, media, and numerous other sectors.

Turning to another defining milestone, al-Attiyah discussed the decision to abolish the Ministry of Information. He revealed that HH the late Father Amir had contemplated the decision for around a year before implementing it, discussing the proposal privately with a limited circle of trusted advisers.

He stressed that abolishing the ministry was far from a routine administrative reform, as it represented a bold transformation in the Arab media landscape. At that time, government ministries of information served as the principal source of news across much of the Arab world, making the decision to replace that model with a different media approach both unprecedented and highly significant.

Reflecting on HH Sheikh Hamad’s early ambitions, al-Attiyah said that even during preparatory school, HH the late Father Amir possessed a clear vision for Qatar’s future and expressed a strong desire to serve the country. He frequently spoke about Qatar’s development and believed that one day he would occupy a position from which he could influence the nation’s future and serve its people.

HE al-Attiyah also highlighted humility as one of HH the late Father Amir’s defining character-

istics, stressing that power and leadership never altered his personality. Whether in formal gatherings, public markets, or everyday settings, HH Sheikh Hamad remained approachable, greeting people of all ages warmly and using familiar local expressions that endeared him to citizens and residents.

The interview also included several examples illustrating HH the late Father Amir’s exceptional loyalty. Al-Attiyah recalled that upon learning of the death of his former teacher, Ahmed Mansour, HH Sheikh Hamad personally travelled to Egypt to offer condolences to the teacher’s family, describing the gesture as a reflection of his gratitude toward those who had influenced his life.

In another example, al-Attiyah recounted that when one of their former classmates passed away in Dubai decades after their graduation from secondary school in 1968, HH the late Father Amir immediately requested to travel there. Accompanied by al-Attiyah, he visited the deceased’s family, spent nearly an hour with his children, shared memories of their father, and recalled stories from their school days despite more than 20 years having passed since they had last met.

According to al-Attiyah, such deeply human gestures removed any sense of formality experienced by those meeting HH the late Father Amir for the first time. Despite being the nation’s leader, he treated everyone with simplicity and warmth, making people feel

they were speaking with an ordinary individual rather than a head of state. Whether interacting with family members, friends, employees, or members of the public, he maintained the same respectful and approachable manner.

Al-Attiyah stressed that Qatar and its people always remained HH Sheikh Hamad’s foremost priority. From an early stage in his life, he devoted every effort to advancing the country, often at the expense of his own health. He closely followed every issue concerning Qatar, consistently striving to improve citizens’ quality of life while also caring for the welfare of expatriate residents, although the people of Qatar always held a special place in his heart.

He further observed that the profound affection the Qatari people held for HH the late Father Amir became especially evident upon his passing, when families across the country felt as though they had lost one of their own. Al-Attiyah described HH Sheikh Hamad as someone who loved people without distinction and possessed an extraordinary memory for those he had encountered throughout his life. During public events, he would often recognise individuals from a distance, ask to meet them, and remember that they had studied together decades earlier, whether they were Qataris or members of expatriate communities.

This human touch was equally reflected in his daily work schedule. While serving as director of HH the late Father Amir’s Office,

HE al-Attiyah said official appointments would often be expanded at HH Sheikh Hamad’s request to include people he had not seen for many years. As a result, meetings frequently increased from four or five appointments to nine or 10 in a single day. Nevertheless, HH the late Father Amir would receive visitors continuously from early morning until the afternoon prayer without showing any signs of fatigue, demonstrating remarkable stamina, patience, and dedication to serving people.

Al-Attiyah described HH the late Father Amir’s personality as an exceptional model worthy of academic study, stating that future generations should examine his character, leadership, and achievements. He characterised HH Sheikh Hamad as a school of ethics, humility, political leadership, national accomplishment, and patriotism, noting that his achievements constituted one of the brightest chapters in Qatar’s modern history.

He also observed that HH the late Father Amir frequently reflected upon the legacy of Qatar’s founder, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohamed bin Thani, drawing inspiration from it.

Discussing HH the late Father Amir’s final advice urging the people of Qatar to remain steadfast in truth and righteousness, al-Attiyah said those words perfectly reflected principles that HH Sheikh Hamad had embraced throughout his entire life. He also recalled that HH the late Father Amir cherished memories of his preparatory and

secondary school years until his final days, maintaining an extraordinary memory that enabled him to remember faces, events, and friendships from every stage of his life.

Illustrating this loyalty, al-Attiyah recalled informing HH Sheikh Hamad that one of their former classmates had passed away years earlier and that his children had since lost contact with the community. HH the late Father Amir immediately replied, “No, that is not right. He was our friend. Ask about his children,” demonstrating that he never forgot those with whom he had shared life’s journey.

Speaking emotionally, HE al-Attiyah admitted that HH the late Father Amir’s passing was deeply painful and difficult to comprehend. For days afterward, he found himself instinctively referring to HH Sheikh Hamad as though he were still alive before realising the reality of his loss.

He added that although their educational paths later took them to different countries – with HH Sheikh Hamad attending military studies in the UK and al-Attiyah studying in the United States – their friendship never diminished, as they remained in contact through letters, some of which he still preserves today.

Concluding the interview, HE al-Attiyah described HH the late Father Amir’s passing as an irreplaceable loss. He also expressed his belief that HH Sheikh Hamad’s defining qualities of humility, generosity, and closeness to the people continue under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani.

Even during preparatory school, HH the late Father Amir possessed a clear vision for Qatar’s future



Gewan Island

taurants, wellness facilities and retail experiences within an open-air, climate-controlled setting.

Its pedestrian-friendly design encourages visitors to explore the district comfortably throughout the summer season, making it a growing lifestyle hub for the local community.

Katara Cultural Village brings together arts, culture and leisure in one of Qatar’s most recognisable destinations.

Within the cultural village, 21 High St combines luxury retail, dining and public spaces enhanced by advanced outdoor cooling technology.

This innovation allows visitors and residents to explore galleries, public art installations, cafés and cultural landmarks year-round while enjoying views of the Arabian Gulf.

Located in Lusail City, Place Vendome extends beyond its retail offering to provide expansive outdoor spaces where classical architecture, water features and landscaped surroundings create an enjoyable setting for afternoon and evening outings.

The destination’s outdoor promenades surrounding the canal and fountain attractions feature integrated cooling systems, allowing visitors to experience the striking outdoor environment and fountain displays while enjoying a diverse selection of canal-side dining options.

Known for its elegant European-inspired design and refined atmosphere, Al Hazm combines premium retail experiences with shaded, climate-controlled outdoor spaces.

Thoughtfully designed public areas, Al Hazm’s courtyards, walkways and cafés provide a sophisticated setting for dining, shopping and social gatherings.

Located in the Al Waab district, West Walk has established itself as a popular lifestyle destination.

Its outdoor climate-controlled streets are lined with cafés, restaurants, retail outlets and community spaces, creating a vibrant environment for residents and visitors alike.

Designed with urban walkability in mind, the district offers a convenient setting to meet, dine and spend time outdoors throughout the summer months.

Tornado Dune Plaza provides a contemporary outdoor setting that brings together dining, entertainment and leisure experiences within a cooled environment.

Located in Doha’s West Bay district, its climate-controlled outdoor seating areas and relaxed atmosphere make it a popular option for professionals, families and groups seeking a comfortable open-air setting.

Stretching through the heart of Lusail City, Lusail Boulevard offers wide pedestrian avenues enhanced by state-of-the-art outdoor cooling technology.

Home to a growing mix of international cafés, restaurants and retail concepts, the boulevard is a dynamic gathering place that seamlessly combines urban energy, community events and seasonal activations with a comfortable outdoor experience.

In addition to these destinations, visitors and residents can also enjoy the Hala Summer 2026 programme, which runs until the end of September and brings together a rich calendar of entertainment, hospitality and leisure experiences across the country.

Alongside initiatives such as “Kids Go Free”, the programme adds to the variety of experiences available for families, friends and couples throughout the summer season.

Enjoy the outdoors this summer at Qatar’s climate-controlled lifestyle destinations

Visit Qatar is highlighting a growing range of climate-controlled outdoor lifestyle destinations across the country, encouraging residents and visitors to make the most of the summer season through open-air dining, shopping and leisure experiences.

From waterfront promenades and cultural landmarks to lifestyle districts and dining destinations, these spaces combine innovative cooling solutions with dynamic environments, making it possible to gather, stroll and dine outdoors year-round.

Located off the coast of The Pearl Island, Gewan Island offers a contemporary waterfront setting featuring cooled outdoor walkways, public spaces and a growing collection of retail and dining outlets.

Among its most distinctive attractions is Crystal Walk, which holds the Guinness World Record for the world’s largest outdoor air-conditioned mall, spanning 7,360sq m.

Featuring more than 100 retail and dining experiences alongside a striking crystal installation extending over 1km, the destination combines innovative design, advanced cooling technology and waterfront surroundings to create an appealing setting for leisurely walks and relaxed evenings by the water.

Situated in the developing hub of Rawdat Al Hama, Centro serves as a vibrant outdoor social and lifestyle destination.

This modern precinct brings together cafés, res-

Widam Food, Anaam sign MoU

Widam Food, a Qatari public shareholding company and the main operator of Al Wakrah Central Abattoir and private abattoirs in the country, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Qatar Livestock Society (Anaam).

The MoU aims to market livestock products from Qatari breeders by showcasing them at Widam’s pens at Al Wakrah Central Abattoir, Umm Salal Central Market, Al Shahaniya Central Abattoir, and the Abu Nakhla sales area.

In addition, these products will be available on the company’s online application throughout the year.

Under this MoU, Anaam will co-ordinate with breeders to import products based on required specifications and weights that are in high demand among consumers.

The MoU also covers studying requests to purchase breeding ewes from productive breeds, making them available for sale to breeders in co-ordination with Anaam, with the objective of contributing to the development and improvement of Qatar’s flock genetics.

Anaam focuses on supporting the livestock sector and breeders in Qatar, with the goal of improving local livestock production efficiency and serving as a bridge between breeders and government entities. (QNA)

Dividend Notice

In compliance with Qatar Central Bank’s instructions concerning dividends that have remained uncollected for more than 5 years & 10 years, and in order to protect the interests of its shareholders, Ahlibank announces that the list of shareholders with uncollected dividends is now available on the Bank’s website www.ahlibank.com.qa under the “Investor Relations – Unclaimed Dividends” section.

The shareholders whose name appear on the said list are kindly requested to contact the email or phone number below or visit the shareholder Department, Ahlibank Building, Salwa Road, to collect their shares’ dividends entitled since 10 years within a month from the date of releasing this reminder. The unclaimed dividends not claimed by this date will be transferred to the General Authority for Minors Affairs in accordance with Qatar Central Bank’s regulations concerning dividends that have remained uncollected for 10 years.

For more information and clarification regarding dividend payments or any other dividend-related issues, please contact Ahlibank’s Investor Relations Department at Shareholder.relations@ahlibank.com.qa or on the following numbers: +974 44232393 / 44232612 or call our Contact Centre +974 4420 5222 available 24/7.



ahlibank.com.qa
4420 5222

البنك الأهلي
ahlibank



شركة قطر للإضافات البترولية المحدودة
QATAR FUEL ADDITIVES COMPANY LIMITED

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Tender Committee of QAFAC invites qualified local suppliers to participate in the following Tenders in accordance with QAFAC tendering procedures:

No.	Tender No.	Description	Collection Fee Qrs.	Tender Bond Qrs.	Bid Closing Date
1	QTC/067/26	Construction of Temporary Material Storage Laydown Area Preparation Works for TA-2027 and Slope Preparation Works with Aggregate in the Sphere Area at QAFAC Plant, Mesaieed	300/-	100,000/-	17 th August 2026
2	QTC/068/26	Four (4) Year Call-off Contract for the Maintenance Services of York YD Chillers at QAFAC Plant, Mesaieed	300/-	40,000/-	17 th August 2026
3	QTC/069/26	Supply of Titanium Piping Material (Elbows, Blind Flange, Stud Bolts with Nuts, Eccentric Reducers, Pipes, Butterfly valves)	300/-	80,000/-	17 th August 2026
4	2000012235	Prequalification of Contractors for Execution of Major Maintenance Works during Turnaround 2027 for QAFAC Plant, Mesaieed	NA	NA	12 th August 2026

Interested companies are invited to collect the above tender documents as follows:

- **Collection Date** : From Wednesday, 22nd July 2026 (QAFAC working days from Sunday to Thursday only)
- **Collection Time** : 08:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m
- **Location** : The Gate, Bay Tower 2, 13th Floor, West Bay, QAFAC
- **Tender Fees** : As shown above, (*Non-refundable*) can be paid at QAFAC Doha Office
- **Validity** : Offers must be valid for 120 days from closing date.
- **Bid Bond** : Offers must include a Bid bond issued from a local bank and valid for 120 days from closing date.
- **Authorization** : Tenders will be issued to authorized company personnel with the following:
 1. Official authorization on Company Letter Head.
 2. Proper Identification.
 3. Copy of valid Company’s Commercial Registration.
 4. Focal Point of Contact (Name, Telephone, Mobile & Email)

Trump vows to help Lebanon pursue peace with Israel

AFP
Washington

US President Donald Trump vowed yesterday to help Lebanon “a lot” as its president, Joseph Aoun, sought Washington’s backing for a fragile effort to disarm Hezbollah and forge a path to peace with Israel.

Meeting Aoun at the White House, Trump said Lebanon had been “a very mistreated country” that had been “hit hard” for decades.

“It’s probably a dangerous place in a lot of ways,” Trump told reporters. “But they love the country... and we’re going to help it. We’re going to help it a lot.”

Aoun, the first Lebanese president invited to Washington since 2009, asked Trump for political support and continued backing for the Lebanese army, which has begun deploying in southern areas under a US-backed framework agreement with Israel.

“We need to support the LAF,” Aoun said, referring to the Lebanese Armed Forces. “Without the LAF, everything will collapse.”

The Lebanese president, a former army commander, said the military was “the backbone of security and stability” and the country’s most trusted institution.

His visit came as the Lebanese army moved into an area of the south under a deal with Israel aimed at proving Beirut can extend state authority and disarm Iran-backed Hezbollah.

But in a sign of the fragility of the agreement, the Lebanese army said Israeli troops fired near its soldiers deploying in a so-called “pilot zone” Israel is supposed to withdraw from.

Asked whether Washington would put additional pressure on Israel to withdraw, Trump said: “We’ll be looking at that.”

Lebanon is under pressure to prove that it can and will disarm Hezbollah, which Israel has set as



US President Donald Trump speaks during a meeting with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, yesterday. (AFP)

a precondition for ending its occupation in southern Lebanon.

The “pilot zones” where the Lebanese army is deploying are primarily located just outside territory Israeli forces invaded after Hezbollah opened rocket fire on Israel and drew Lebanon into the Middle East war in March.

The army said yesterday it had begun deploying to one of three pilot zones, the village of Zawtar al-Gharbiya. Israel’s military said it would be “adjusting its force posture” in one pilot area.

Hours later, however, the Lebanese army said Israeli forces “opened fire in the vicinity of these units,” adding that the incident would hinder the deployment.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said it had only fired “warning shots into the air” after Lebanese soldiers entered an area that was “not part of the pilot area.”

“The Lebanese Armed Forces personnel withdrew from the area, and no injuries were reported,” it added.

Aoun has staunchly criticised Hezbollah for forcing Lebanon into the war and has vowed since taking office in early 2025 to bring all weapons under state control.

But Hezbollah has repeatedly rejected laying down its arms, and the group has flatly opposed both

the deal and the Israel-Lebanon negotiations that underpin it.

Aoun said the framework agreement did not require parliamentary endorsement and was a presidential prerogative under Lebanon’s constitution.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said after meeting Aoun on Sunday that Lebanon would “never truly get peace” as long as Hezbollah remained armed.

Rubio also praised what he called the Lebanese government’s effort to reclaim sovereignty, disarm Hezbollah and dismantle its infrastructure.

Aoun’s push comes after Israeli strikes in the latest conflict killed more than 4,300 people in Lebanon, according to Lebanese authorities.

The violence has dropped off sharply since the signing of a framework agreement between the US and Iran last month and the Lebanon-Israel deal.

Trump also used the meeting to warn Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthis rebels against following through on threats to blockade Saudi ports.

“If something like that happens, we take care of it,” Trump told reporters. “We’ve done that with the Houthis before, and we haven’t heard from them in a while since we did what we did originally.”

Gaza civil defence says Israeli strikes kill 12, including family of six

AFP
Gaza City

Gaza’s civil defence agency and witnesses said Israeli strikes killed 12 people, including a family of six, in the Palestinian territory yesterday.

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

One air strike hit a house belonging to the Al-Masri family in central Gaza City in the north, according to the territory’s civil defence agency, which operates as a rescue service under Hamas.

Witnesses said six members of the family were killed, including four children. Gaza’s Al-Shifa hospital said it had received the bodies and the wounded.

An Israeli military source told AFP that a strike had targeted “a Hamas fighter” in the area, without elaborating.

At the site, AFP journalists observed extensive damage to the charred multi-storey house, whose roof had almost completely collapsed.

Relatives gathered at the hospital. Some wept as the body of a girl was placed in a white plastic bag and laid alongside the other bodies wrapped in thick blankets.

The “attack took us by surprise,” said Ahmed al-Masri, who identified himself to AFP as a survivor of the strike.

“I could hear the children crying out for help, yet I was unable to save them,” he added.

“My brother’s entire family was wiped from the civil registry: him, his wife and their four children.”



Palestinians attend the funeral of six members of the al-Masri family, who were killed after an Israeli strike hit their apartment, according to the health ministry, in Gaza City, yesterday. (Reuters)

He said he had helped his children escape through a window, while flames devoured the building.

Another witness, Youssef al-Masri, said the strike took place around 2:00am.

“While we were asleep, we heard the sound of a massive explosion and found that the house had been shelled, destroyed and engulfed in flames,” he said.

The civil defence agency said six other people were killed yesterday in another Israeli strike in Gaza.

The Israeli military said it carried out an air strike against “several armed fighters transferring weapons in a vehicle” in southern Gaza.

The UN said yesterday that Israeli attacks had killed at least 57 Palestinians from July 13 to 20.

“The Israeli military has intensified its attacks in Gaza in recent days,” UN rights office spokesman

Thameen al-Kheetan told reporters in Geneva.

“Nowhere is safe for Palestinians in Gaza.”

The Israeli army has in recent days announced a series of strikes in the territory targeting Hamas and Islamic Jihad members who it said were involved in the October 7, 2023 attack on Israel that set off the war, or in holding hostages after.

At least 1,168 Palestinians have 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.

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

US should lift Ebola travel restrictions on Uganda: Africa CDC

AFP
Accra

Africa’s top public health agency said yesterday it does not support travel bans in response to the continent’s worsening Ebola outbreak, urging the US to lift restrictions imposed on Uganda.

The appeal comes days after Washington tightened travel restrictions linked to the current Ebola outbreak, which originated in the Democratic Republic of Congo, on travellers from the DRC, Uganda and South Sudan.

Speaking at an African Union health summit in the Ghanaian capital, Accra, Africa Centres for

Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) director-general Jean Kaseya said the agency was “not advising” travel bans.

Public health experts have argued during previous Ebola outbreaks that travel bans hinder medical supplies and personnel and disrupt trade, instead pushing for disease surveillance and case isolation.

Kaseya said he had written to US health secretary Robert F Kennedy requesting the lifting of travel restrictions on Uganda specifically, arguing the country had gone three weeks without recording a new Ebola case and discharged its last patient on July 16.

“There is no reason for the US to continue with this travel restriction,” he said, adding that countries

should not be “punished” for being transparent about disease outbreaks.

Even as he opposed travel restrictions, Kaseya warned the outbreak itself was escalating rapidly.

“If we don’t stop this outbreak today, it will be the worst one that the world will be documenting,” he said.

There have been 2,344 confirmed cases of Ebola in the DRC, including 930 deaths, since the outbreak was declared in mid-May, according to the World Health Organisation.

Uganda has reported 20 cases and two deaths – mostly Congolese citizens who crossed the border.

The Africa CDC estimates it needs \$1.4bn to contain the out-

break, almost three times the \$518mn initially projected last month.

“If we don’t have this money, we will not stop this outbreak,” Kaseya said, adding African countries had so far pledged about \$110mn.

He said health authorities should be monitoring nearly 97,000 contacts linked to confirmed Ebola cases but were currently following only about 8,500 people.

The remarks came as ministers from across Africa met during the African Union summit, where leaders are expected to adopt a roadmap on Wednesday aimed at strengthening health systems, improving epidemic preparedness and accelerating progress towards ending Aids by 2030.

Senior Ghana politician jailed for 20 years over illegal mining

AFP
Accra

Ghanaian court jailed an influential opposition politician for 20 years on Monday after finding him guilty of illegal mining, the most high-profile conviction in the long-running battle against the crime.

The gold-rich country has been

batting an explosion in illegal mining, known locally as “galamsey” – as well as the environmental pollution, threats to cocoa production and political corruption that have flourished in its wake in recent years.

Authorities say galamsey operations have destroyed forests and polluted water courses, and cost the country about \$2.0bn annually.

The High Court in Accra found Bernard Antwi-Boasiako – the

leader in the Ashanti Region of opposition New Patriotic Party (NPP) – guilty on all six charges against him.

They include the unlawful assignment of mineral rights and the intentional facilitation of unlicensed mining operations in gold-mining areas.

His conviction followed the arrest in April 2025 of several miners and the seizure of excavators, fire-

arms and cash in a police raid on illegal mining operations.

“The allegation was never contested. The accused admitted that no ministerial approval was received,” said judge Audrey Kocuvie-Tay.

The 20-year sentence falls within the statutory punishment range of between 15 and 25 years provided for under the west African country’s laws.

South Africa’s anti-migrant unrest led over 160,000 to flee

AFP
Johannesburg

More than 160,000 foreign nationals left South Africa over the past two months as local groups increased violent hostility against undocumented migrants, according to an AFP tally based on figures from the repatriating governments.

The country has seen weeks of nationwide protests, several degenerating into violence that has claimed the lives of at least four migrants, although some foreign governments say the toll is higher.

As xenophobic groups pressed their demand for undocumented migrants to leave by June 30, citizens of other African countries flocked to consulates and community halls seeking transport home, many with only what they could carry and fearing for their lives.

The largest numbers to leave were from Zimbabwe and Malawi

but hundreds more were from countries including Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Mozambique, Nigeria and Uganda.

Releasing updated figures yesterday, Zimbabwe’s cabinet said 108,366 of its people had come home as of July 18, a majority of them self repatriating.

Malawi announced on Monday that more than 46,890 citizens had returned since early June, with the government providing 699 buses for the long journey home. Six people died in transit.

Nearly 2,000 Mozambicans also returned, according to South African government figures.

Some crossed the border with help from their government after two Mozambican nationals were killed at the end of May in violence following a protest in the southern town of Mossel Bay.

They were the first people to die in South Africa’s latest wave of xenophobic violence.

Authorities later confirmed the



Ugandan nationals gather with their luggage to be documented after arriving, as authorities repatriate citizens fleeing xenophobic attacks in South Africa, at the Kololo ceremonial grounds in Kampala. (Reuters)

deaths of an Ethiopian and a Malawian in “anti-foreigner sentiment”.

Nigeria has said two of its na-

tions were killed in “the ongoing xenophobic protests and attacks of migrants”.

Ghana said one of its citizens

died in a Cape Town township in “anti-immigrant demonstrations linked to ongoing xenophobic attacks”.

South African authorities have rejected both allegations, warning of disinformation being spread online.

Nigeria has repatriated around 1,490 nationals, while Ghana has flown home at least 926, according to government figures.

They have also demanded that the issue of “Afrophobia” be discussed at the next African Union summit, while Ghana has postponed a planned visit by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The wealthiest country on the continent, South Africa has long been a destination for documented and undocumented African workers searching for work they cannot find at home.

Vigilante groups claim migrants drive up crime and take jobs from locals, fuelling tensions in townships grappling with poverty, un-

employment and weak policing.

But analysts say they are being scapegoated for South Africa’s deep economic and governance challenges, including unemployment above 30% and massive failures in the delivery of basic services.

Demonstrations, initially low-key in the main, began last year when undocumented foreign nationals were blocked from accessing clinics and hospitals.

Protests intensified ahead of the June 30 “deadline” and have continued since.

The anti-immigrant March and March group has vowed to organise weekly demonstrations until local government elections in November.

Waves of xenophobic violence have swept South Africa over the past decades.

In 2008, 62 people were killed in anti-immigrant riots and thousands were displaced. Further outbreaks followed in 2015 and 2016.

US preparing new tariffs as Trump’s global levy expires

AFP
Washington

The US is set to impose new tariffs that could hit dozens of countries soon, trade envoy Jamieson Greer signaled yesterday, with President Donald Trump’s temporary global levies due to expire this week.

The Trump administration has prepared fresh tariffs targeting 60 trading partners over their alleged failures to act against forced labour, as officials push to rebuild the US leader’s trade agenda after legal setbacks.

“We expect to see some action soon,” Greer told CNBC when asked if new duties were incoming. He did not specify a timeline.

While Trump imposed a 10% global duty this year after a swath of his tariffs were struck down by the Supreme Court in February, this levy expires Friday.

Analysts expect that new tariffs over forced labour concerns – set between 10% and 12.5% – would replace these temporary duties.

They come as Trump makes a renewed push to use tariffs as leverage against US trading partners, sparking fears of retaliation and heightened tensions.

Washington announced a fresh 25% duty on certain Brazilian goods last week, and on Monday unveiled a 50% levy on many Canadian products to take effect in 30 days. Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney said yesterday that he was looking at “all options,” adding that he and Trump had agreed to “intensify discussions”



US President Donald Trump gestures before boarding Air Force One in Maryland, US. (Reuters/FilePhoto)

in the coming weeks on a possible deal. Greer said yesterday that new action on forced labour will cover the majority of US trade.

“The US has laws to prohibit trading goods with forced labour. Other countries, most don’t have a law, those that do don’t really enforce it,” he said. But these moves could reignite tensions.

A 10% tariff rate would hit US imports from partners such as Canada, the European Union, Mexico, Taiwan and the United Kingdom. They were found to have taken steps against forced labour. Goods from over 40 other major economies like China, India and Japan face a 12.5 % levy.

The EU previously said that it considers tariffs imposed on these grounds “unjustified.” Washington’s planned 50% tariff on Canada also comes as US-Mexico talks over a North American free trade pact intensify. Washington recently declined to extend the accord in its current form. Greer is set to travel to Mexico from today to Friday for discussions linked to a joint review of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

But negotiations with Canada have proceeded at a slower pace. Carney yesterday did not suggest that he would head to Washington for talks. Some lawyers see

Trump’s use of an untested legal provision – Section 338 of the Tariff Act of 1930 – as a means to gain leverage over Canada in US-MCA negotiations.

Trade lawyer Dave Townsend of Dorsey & Whitney added that higher tariffs “appear to be aimed at encouraging an agreement between Canada and the US, or in retaliation for the failure to reach such agreement, or both.”

The question, he said, is whether both sides will start a “cycle of escalation and retaliation.” Crucially, Trump’s latest salvo will not exempt affected Canadian products entering his country under the USMCA.

New Jersey reports voter roll error involving over 6,600 false registrations

AFP
New York

New Jersey mistakenly registered roughly 6,600 non-US citizens to vote ahead of the 2024 election, the governor said yesterday, while rejecting President Donald Trump’s renewed push for nationwide voting restrictions.

Governor Mikie Sherrill, a Democrat, said fewer than 400 of those registered due to the “serious software error” had voted, and that the registrations were across party lines.

“I am appalled by the reckless failures that allowed this to happen and the lack of transparency shown by those in charge at the time,” Sherrill said in a statement.

The incident occurred between June 2023 and June 2024, during the term of Sherrill’s Democratic predecessor, Phil Murphy.

The revelation comes after Republican Trump, who has never accepted his 2020 election defeat, revived unsupported allegations of mass voter fraud ahead of the November midterms that many expect him to dispute.

The president claimed in a televised address last week that more than 250,000 non-US citizens were registered to vote in four states, including New Jersey, as he urged lawmakers to adopt his SAVE America Act.

The bill would require proof of US citizenship to register to vote as well as photo identification at polling places, while also imposing new limits on mail-in ballots.

‘I am appalled by the reckless failures that allowed this to happen and the lack of transparency shown by those in charge at the time,’ – Governor Mikie Sherrill

“As the Trump Administration tries to weaponise elections for political gain, I am ensuring we protect our elections. Let me be clear: Donald Trump has zero credibility on the issue of election integrity,” Sherrill said.

“The difference is simple: when we find a problem, we don’t hide it, deny it, or invent conspiracies. We investigate it, we fix it, and we tell the public.”

Sherrill said the error meant around 6,600 people who indicated they were not US citizens when applying for drivers’ licenses and ID cards between June 2023 and June 2024 were registered anyway.

She added that she has ordered their removal from the voter roll and sought an investigation into the incident.

On Monday, a New Jersey judge denied a lawsuit by the Republican National Committee seeking access to the state’s voter rolls.

Trump’s claim that the 2020 election was “rigged” has never been substantiated. More than 60 lawsuits produced no ruling establishing fraud capable of changing the outcome, while recounts, audits and his own Justice Department found none.

US lawmakers write to Trump on EU tech rules

Reuters
Brussels

A group of 25 US lawmakers has written to US President Donald Trump urging him to act against Europe’s tech rules including launching trade investigations, saying EU digital policies unfairly target US Big Tech.

In a letter seen by Reuters, the lawmakers focused on the European Union’s Digital Markets Act aimed at reining in the power of Amazon, Apple, Booking Holdings, TikTok owner ByteDance, Google, Meta Platforms and Microsoft.

“We write to bring to your attention the many ways the EU continues to pursue anti-competitive acts, policies, and practices as a tool of economic extraction and regulatory coercion against American firms and to encourage your administration to take decisive action before the EU further entrenches this anti-American regime,” the lawmakers wrote in the letter.

The European Commission, which says its rules do not target any countries and seek to ensure a level playing field, did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

The lawmakers, all Republicans and seven of them members of the House of Representatives trade subcommittee, including Adrian Smith who chairs that committee, said the likely inclusion of Amazon and Microsoft’s cloud units under the DMA “would impose unprec-

‘If a dialogue does not deliver quickly, the US should use all available tools, including but not limited to Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974,’ – the lawmakers wrote in a letter

eded regulatory burdens that European and Chinese cloud competitors would not face.”

They also criticised EU regulators’ fine against Google expected to be announced this week for alleged breaches of the DMA, saying the sanction ignored the company’s significant changes to its search service.

They questioned the Commission’s designations of Apple, Meta and Amazon as gatekeepers under DMA rules while Chinese retail giants Temu and AliExpress are excluded. Such labels depend on the number of users in Europe.

“If a dialogue does not deliver quickly, the US should use all available tools, including but not limited to Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974,” they said, invoking an unfair trade practices statute that allows the US to impose tariffs or take other retaliatory measures.

“It is important to make clear that the EU’s access to the US market is not guaranteed and can be limited should the EU continue to pursue discriminatory acts, policies, and practices in the digital sector.”

The lawmakers cited European businesses’ unfettered access to the US market as a comparison.

Rubio to meet Wang with possible Xi visit on cards amid looming election meddling fears

Reuters
Manila

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will meet Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi this week ahead of a possible summit between President Donald Trump and President Xi Jinping, even as Trump said the US would raise concerns with China over alleged election meddling.

A US State Department official said yesterday that Rubio and Wang will meet in Manila, where foreign ministers from the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) and major partners have gathered to discuss global issues.

Analysts have said a Rubio meeting with his Chinese counterpart was likely to focus on preparations for a second meeting between Trump and Xi after the two met last May.

Trump has said Xi will visit the US at the end of September, and Rubio on Sunday said that the summit was still anticipated. China has yet to confirm Xi’s visit to Washington.

“I have no reason to believe that they won’t be coming. It’s important,” Rubio told reporters as he departed for Asean.

A fragile truce between the two global superpowers could be complicated by Trump’s renewed accusations last week of Chinese meddling in US elections – claims Beijing has denied.

Tense US-China relations



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and his wife Jeanette Dousdebbs Rubio arrive ahead of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, at Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila, Philippines yesterday. (Reuters)

have stabilised under a temporary trade truce reached by Trump and Xi in October, but deep differences still define ties between the two nations in what many analysts see as a new form of Cold War.

“There are always going to be things we don’t agree on, but I think it’s incumbent on powerful and important countries like ours to continue to talk and have a relationship,” Rubio said over the weekend.

A 2021 US intelligence com-

‘There are always going to be things we don’t agree on, but I think it’s incumbent on powerful and important countries like ours to continue to talk and have a relationship,’ – Marco Rubio on Xi’s visit to the US

munity assessment found no indications that China or other foreign actors attempted or succeeded in altering “any technical

aspect” of the 2020 presidential election vote.

Asked what consequences Beijing could face for his election meddling claims, Trump on yesterday said the issue would be raised but offered no specifics.

“We’re going to talk to them about it. It took place a long time ago. I think China is maybe a little bit different today than it was then. But look, they do things, and we do things to them,” he told reporters at the White House. “It’s not a one-way street.”

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MAHEDE HASAN SURUJ SARKER

holder of

BANGLADESH Passport No. A18024516
QID No. 28405000985

hereby change my name

from

MAHEDE HASAN SURUJ SARKER

to

MAHEDI HASAN SURUJ SARKER

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MASTER MUHAMMADAAHIL TANGTHONG

holder of

THAILAND Passport No. AC2399166
QID No. 30876400010

hereby change my name

from

MASTER MUHAMMADAAHIL TANGTHONG

to

MUHAMMADAAHIL TANGTHONG

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, SIMONE CARLETTI

holder of

Italy Passport No. YB2843030
QID No. 28138000218

hereby change my name

from

SIMONE CARLETTI

to

SIMONE ARMANDO MARIA CARLETTI

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

Tropical Storm Bertha spreads across Florida

Tropical Storm Bertha spread across northwestern Florida yesterday, where it was predicted to bring coastal flooding and heavy rainfall, the National Hurricane Centre (NHC) said. The second named storm of the Atlantic season was about 145km southwest of Panama City, Florida, packing maximum sustained winds of 60mph as it turned westward. Bertha was expected to begin weakening by today. Tropical storm warnings – as well as lower-grade watches – were in effect in parts of Florida and Louisiana. “Tropical storm conditions will continue spreading across portions of the warning area later today,” the NHC’s latest advisory said. A combination of storm surge and tide will cause normally dry areas near the immediate coast to be flooded, the NHC said. Bertha was expected to produce 2-4” of rainfall, with isolated totals around 6”, through Thursday, from western Florida into southern Louisiana, making flash flooding possible. Officials have forecast a below-normal Atlantic hurricane season this year, which runs from June 1 to November 30, because of the return of El Nino conditions that suppress hurricane activity in the Atlantic basin. (AFP)

China ally Solomon Islands invites US Coast Guard patrols

AFP
Washington

The Solomon Islands will sign a deal for the US Coast Guard to patrol its waters with local police aboard, Prime Minister Matthew Wale said on a visit to Washington.

The Solomons became China's closest security partner in the South Pacific after signing a secret security pact in 2022, blocking a US Coast Guard vessel from making a port call the same year.

Wale, who pledged to bring change after he was elected in

May, met with US Coast Guard vice commandant Admiral Thomas Allan in Washington on Monday.

He also met with US Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau on deepening bilateral ties, said a State Department readout.

A "ship rider agreement" will be signed in the capital Honiara next week to strengthen joint maritime enforcement and surveillance, a Solomon Islands statement said.

"Prime Minister Wale highlighted the urgent need to enhance security across the Pacific region, noting the increasing

threats of drug trafficking, human trafficking, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing," it added.

The US Coast Guard has expanded patrols of the South Pacific in recent years, assisting "ship riders" – local Pacific police – to cover millions of kilometres of ocean to inspect for illegal fishing fleets.

Ship riders on a US Coast Guard vessel boarded Chinese fishing boats in Vanuatu and Kiribati in 2024, prompting Chinese officials to protest when some vessels were found to be fishing illegally.

The Solomons has a vast 1.5 million square kilometre exclu-

sive economic zone and like many South Pacific countries counts tuna fishing as a major industry.

James Batley, a former Australian diplomat in the Solomons, said the US Coast Guard deal was a significant shift and showed Wale was acting on his pledge to deliver change.

"There is a lot of anxiety around the Pacific about transnational criminal movement of drugs, with 'narco subs' turning up in Solomon Islands, so I think the US could mount a persuasive case they could help on that front," he said.

Wales' meeting with Landau

included talks of potential investment, including Bina Harbour, where the Solomons wants to develop a factory to process tuna for export.

Reported Chinese interest in developing Bina Harbour has previously sparked concern from Australia about the potential it could be used as a dual-purpose military and civilian port.

Wale and Landau signed a letter of intent to return Peace Corps to Solomon Islands, the State Department readout said, adding that it would provide \$6mn in new funding to widen its unexploded ordnance removal programme.

Mexico says no evidence its lettuce caused US outbreak

There is no evidence as yet to suggest that lettuce sourced from Mexico caused a cyclosporiasis outbreak in the US, Mexico's health minister David Kershenobich said yesterday.

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported approximately 100 hospitalisations linked to the parasitic infection, which causes severe diarrhea and other gastrointestinal symptoms. The outbreak has been traced to shredded iceberg lettuce served at Taco Bell restaurants in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia. **(Reuters)**

Republicans move forward on Trump priorities, defence bill

Reuters
Washington

The Republican-controlled US House of Representatives voted yesterday to move forward on major legislation including a \$1.15-trillion defence policy bill, a stopgap measure to fund federal agencies through the November midterm elections and a \$95bn budget blueprint to fund a range of President Donald Trump's priorities including the Iran war and his partisan voter ID bill.

In a 214-211 vote roughly along party lines, lawmakers opened debate on the House's final agenda before leaving Washington on Thursday for a five-week August break that will be dominated by campaign events, as Republicans and Democrats vie for control of Congress in the final two years of Trump's presidency.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said he hopes to consider a Senate CR before his chamber leaves town for its own break on August 6. But he said that would depend on negotiations with Democrats.

Lawmakers are expected to vote on the defence policy bill, known as the National Defence Authorization Act, the budget resolution and a bill to ban stock trading by members of Congress today. If passed, all three would head to the Senate with portions of Trump's voter ID bill, the SAVE America Act, attached.

Thune told reporters that if the House passes the budget resolution, the Senate could hold it until



US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth testifies during a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing in the Dirksen Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill yesterday in Washington, DC. **(AFP)**

September as a possible funding vehicle to avert a government shutdown should Congress prove unable to agree on a bipartisan stopgap measure.

Meanwhile, Johnson has already cleared a path for the NDAA to pass with Republican votes by arranging to merge it with Trump's SAVE America Act after House adoption. Republicans have also attached a SAVE America Act provision requiring voters to show photo IDs to the stock-trading bill.

The budget resolution, which has been championed by Trump, has drawn criticism from multiple factions including fiscal hawks who want the funding it

would authorise offset by spending cuts elsewhere and defence hawks who complain that its \$73bn outlay for defence and intelligence falls short of Trump's call for \$350bn over a decade.

Trump weighed in on the budget resolution debate on Monday, declaring in a social media post: "I am asking all House Republicans to VOTE YES this week on the Budget Resolution, which is an important first step towards getting a Budget Bill. House Republicans must UNIFY, and fight for THE SAVE AMERICA ACT!"

The House and the Senate would need to pass the budget resolution to unlock a parliamentary tool called budget rec-

onciliation, which would ease the Republican path to enacting a separate bill containing \$60bn for defence, \$13bn for intelligence, \$12bn for farm aid and \$10bn for voter ID restrictions including proof of citizenship for people registering to vote over a decade.

The legislative track would enable Republicans to circumvent Democratic opposition in the Senate, where most legislation requires a 60-vote supermajority to pass, and instead pass the bill with a simple majority.

Republicans have only a 53-47 seat Senate majority, and Democrats vehemently oppose the resolution.

US involved in fishing boat attacks off Ecuador, Human Rights Watch report claims

AFP
Washington

The US likely played a role in attacks on three fishing vessels off Ecuador's coast earlier this year that left at least eight people missing, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said yesterday.

The nonprofit group also criticised alleged instances of torture during Ecuador's US-backed military campaign against organised crime, particularly during an operation in March along the Colombia border.

The attacks at sea allegedly occurred between January and March, after the US military in September 2025 began controversial strikes on boats it claimed to be transporting drugs near Latin America, in attacks it publicly documented with video and purported casualty counts.

At least 215 people were killed in those strikes, which rights groups, including HRW, have condemned as extrajudicial killings because they have apparently targeted civilians who do not pose an immediate threat to the US.

HRW said the attacks it investigated were not among those announced by the US military.

"Between January and March, the fishing vessels La Negra Francisca Duarte II and the Don Maca came under attack in the Eastern Pacific. A third vessel, the Fiorella, disappeared on January 20 with eight of its crew members," HRW said in an investigative report.

"The US Department of Defence and Coast Guard have denied responsibility for the attacks," HRW said, but the inves-

tigation – which involved interviews with 62 people, including 13 survivors of the attacks – concludes the US "had some level of involvement in, or knowledge of, these attacks."

"On March 17 and 26, crew members of La Negra Francisca Duarte II and the Don Maca, respectively, said they were attacked by armed drones," according to the report, titled "A Dangerous Partnership: Abuses, Unanswered Questions, and US-Ecuador Security Co-operation"

"Survivors said that armed US nationals wearing military-style uniforms bearing US flag insignia as detained them aboard a nearby blue-and-white vessel, and then transferred them to the Salvadoran Coast Guard," it continued.

HRW also probed a joint US-Ecuador military operation in March, in the village of San Martin along the Colombian border – an area considered a hotspot for drug and arms trafficking.

"What we found is that what really happened is that the Ecuadorian military descended on the community, arrested four farm workers, arbitrarily detained them, tortured them – including waterboarding one – including beatings, electric shock, and mock executions," HRW deputy executive director Federico Borello told a press conference yesterday.

The detainees were allegedly taken to a military base, tortured and interrogated again, and then released without charges, according to the investigation.

"The US Congress should demand clear answers from the Trump administration to the many questions surrounding its security co-operation with Ecuador," the report concludes.

Carnage in Venezuela



Aerial view of residential buildings destroyed after the earthquake of July 24, in Caraballeda, Venezuela on Monday. The number of people killed in the powerful dual Venezuela earthquakes last month rose to 5,278, according to official figures updated on Monday. **(AFP)**

Senate panel backs Trump's top spy nominee

Reuters
Washington

The US Senate Intelligence Committee backed President Donald Trump's nominee, Jay Clayton, to become the top US spy, the committee's Republican chairman said yesterday, days after a confirmation hearing in which Clayton refused to acknowledge ex-President Joe Biden's 2020 election victory.

"The committee just voted to move Mr. Clayton's nomination to the full Senate," Arkansas Republican Tom Cotton told reporters.

Cotton said the vote was 9-8. He did not provide a party breakdown, but nine of the committee's members are Republicans and eight are Democrats or an independent who caucuses with Democrats.

The committee vote, which sends

A full Senate vote on Clayton's confirmation has not been scheduled. He will need just a simple majority in the 100-member Senate to be confirmed to the position overseeing the 18-agency US intelligence community

Clayton's nomination for the Director of National Intelligence post for consideration by the 100-member Senate, came after a confirmation hearing last week in which Clayton angered Democrats by refusing to directly acknowledge that Trump's loss to Biden 2020 presidential election.

Propelled by the Republican president's false claims that US elections

are "rigged" and his refusal to accept his 2020 electoral loss to Biden, the Trump administration has sought to increase federal oversight of US elections and change the way many Americans vote.

A day after Clayton's hearing, Trump gave an evening address in which he repeated his long-running attacks on election security.

A full Senate vote on Clayton's confirmation has not been scheduled. He will need just a simple majority in the 100-member Senate to be confirmed to the position overseeing the 18-agency US intelligence community.

Trump's Republicans control a 53-47-seat majority in the chamber.

Lawmakers also questioned Clayton during the hearing about his recent subpoenas of *New York Times* journalists in his current role as the US Attorney for Manhattan.

US appeals court raises prospect of pro-Palestinian advocate Mahdawi's re-arrest

Reuters
New York

A US appeals court ruled yesterday that a lower court lacked the jurisdiction to order the Trump administration to release pro-Palestinian advocate Mohsen Mahdawi from immigration detention, in a decision that could pave the way for his eventual re-arrest. Mahdawi, 35, was one of several non-citizen students who were placed in deportation proceedings last year after taking part in demonstrations against Israel's military campaign in Gaza. The arrests prompted court challenges that placed Republican President Donald Trump's crack-down on immigration against the right to free speech as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

Yesterday 's decision from a

three-judge panel of the Manhattan-based 2nd US Circuit Court of Appeals stopped short of backing the Trump administration's push to deport non-citizens in the US lawfully on the basis that their presence in the country runs counter to US foreign policy – a practice that rights groups say infringes on free speech.

But taken together with another decision earlier this year in the case of pro-Palestinian advocate Mahmoud Khalil, the ruling could make it more difficult for non-citizens detained in immigration jails to seek their release quickly on the grounds of an alleged violation of their First Amendment rights.

The panel, which included two judges appointed by Trump during his first term and a third appointed by Republican President George W Bush, did not order Mahdawi's immediate re-arrest.

Mahdawi could ask a full panel



Mohsen Mahdawi during the "People's State of the Union" event in Washington, DC. **(Reuters/File Photo)**

of all the 2nd Circuit's active judges to hear the case, or appeal to the US Supreme Court. The American Civil Liberties Union, which is representing Mahdawi, said there was no basis to deport or re-detain Mahdawi while the appeals process played out.

"The government is claiming the unprecedented power to detain people for months or even years on end to censor their speech, with no ability to challenge their detention in court," the ACLU's Michael Tan, who argued Mahdawi's case before the 2nd Circuit, said.

Mahdawi, a West Bank-born Columbia University student, was arrested in April 2025 upon arriving for an interview for his US citizenship petition. Vermont-based US District Judge Geoffrey Crawford ordered him released on bond two weeks later, ruling that he enjoyed the same First Amendment free speech rights as US citizens.

In overturning that ruling, the 2nd Circuit panel said Crawford did not have jurisdiction over the case because it should have been resolved in immigration court first. Crawford was appointed by Democratic President Barack Obama.

US immigration courts, which conduct deportation proceedings, are overseen by the Justice Department. District courts like Crawford's, by contrast, weigh constitutional issues and are independent of the executive branch.

A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security, which

handles immigration enforcement, in a statement called the decision "a win for public safety and the rule of law."

Earlier this year, the Philadelphia-based 3rd US Circuit Court of Appeals reached a similar conclusion in the case of Khalil, a Columbia University graduate who spent more than 100 days in immigration detention before his release on bond by a federal judge in New Jersey. Khalil has asked the US Supreme Court to review the divided 3rd Circuit's conclusion that his claims should have been heard through an appeal of a removal order from an immigration court.

Both Khalil and Mahdawi were authorised to be in the US, and neither has been charged with a crime. "I still have faith that the full court will correct the legal error and restore the constitutional principles that protect all people equally," Mahdawi said.



Philippines clash ‘has not changed’ hopes for South China Sea code: Chinese envoy

AFP
Manila

Renewed tension at sea between China and the Philippines “has not changed” Beijing’s desire to solidify rules of conduct in contested waters with Southeast Asian nations, its ambassador in Manila said yesterday. Filipino and Chinese sailors clashed at a disputed shoal in the South China Sea on Monday in what was their first serious encounter at sea in months. Beijing claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, a vital global trade route, despite an international ruling that found its claims have no legal basis. Southeast Asian nations have

long sought to reach a code of conduct (CoC) with China for the waterway, a quest analysts have warned is unlikely to result in a document with teeth. However, Chinese ambassador Jing Quan brushed aside suggestions that the clash, which had drawn condemnation of Beijing from Manila’s allies, could derail the goal of reaching an agreement by the end of the year. “No matter what happened bilaterally, I think our willingness to finish the CoC talk at the end of this year has not changed,” Jing told local reporters hours after meeting Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos for closed-door talks. Jing said the code was a separate matter from the territorial disputes that have seen the Philip-

pines and China clash repeatedly in the South China Sea. “I don’t think the CoC really addresses those bilateral disputes. It’s kind of rules of engagement among different relevant parties,” Jing said. China also summoned Manila’s envoy to Beijing on Tuesday “to lodge solemn representations” over the sea clash. The renewed hostilities between China and the Philippines come as Manila hosts the foreign ministers of the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) for several days of talks. They are joined by counterparts from the United States, China, Japan, Russia and numerous other countries. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang

Yi arrived in Manila yesterday and is expected to meet his Philippine counterpart today. “The South China Sea is a shared home for regional countries, and South China Sea issues should not become a stumbling block to China-Asean relations”, Wang said as he met Asean’s secretary-general, according to Chinese state news agency Xinhua. In a separate interview, Thai Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow told AFP the code would be “a stabilising influence” but said the broader issues would not be resolved easily. “Definitely, it’s going to take a lot of talks, a lot of diplomacy,” Sihasak said. “But let’s try to stabilise the situation, and perhaps the code of conduct can help in this direction.”

Philippines, China summon ambassadors over clash

The Philippines and China summoned each other’s ambassadors yesterday following a clash at a disputed shoal in the South China Sea, which sparked condemnation of Beijing by Manila’s allies. Beijing claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, a vital global trade route, despite an international ruling that found its claims have no legal basis. Multiple nations in the region, including the Philippines, have territorial claims that overlap with China’s, and altercations regularly occur in the heavily patrolled waterway. The Philippine military accused the China Coast Guard of clubbing a Filipino sailor with a baton on Monday as they approached a grounded vessel that has long served as a Philippine garrison.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos met with China’s ambassador to Manila yesterday after summoning the envoy over the incident at the flashpoint Second Thomas Shoal, presidential spokeswoman Claire Castro told reporters. She declined to give details of the meeting but said it had involved a matter of “national security”. Earlier in the day, China’s foreign ministry said it had “urgently summoned” the Philippine ambassador “to lodge solemn representations over the Philippines’ deliberate provocation and attack... at Ren’ai Reef”, using the Chinese name for the reef. “The Philippine side provoked first, yet it has turned the blame upside down, distorted the facts, and maliciously hyped the issue,” Beijing’s foreign ministry said in a statement. (AFP)

Japan protests China, Russia live-fire drill in nearby waters

Reuters
Tokyo

Japan said yesterday it had protested to China against live-fire drills in its exclusive economic zone, drawing an angry response from Beijing, which rejects Tokyo’s rights in the remote Pacific waters. The incident could further fray relations between Asia’s top two economies, strained since comments last year by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi on Taiwan, the democratic island claimed by China. The drills, which also involved Russian vessels, were held some 180km (110 miles) southwest of what Tokyo calls Okinotori Island early on Sunday, Japan’s military said in a statement. China argues that Okinotori is a reef, rather than an island, and Japan is therefore not entitled to claim the waters surrounding it as part of its EEZ. “The Japanese government lodged a protest with China through diplomatic channels, on the grounds that such activities could pose a danger to the navigation of nearby vessels,” top government spokesperson Minoru Kihara told reporters yesterday. In Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian called Tokyo’s concerns “completely unreasonable”, adding

that China firmly rejected them. “China’s activities on the high seas are in line with international law and practices,” he told a daily press conference. “Japan is smearing and hyping up the legitimate actions of other countries.” A spokesperson for Japan’s military said it was the first time Tokyo had publicly disclosed China’s live-fire drills in its EEZ, an area extending beyond territorial waters where countries claim rights to resources such as energy and fishing. China and Russia have stepped up joint naval and air operations around Japan in recent years, prompting Tokyo to increase surveillance and strengthen its defences across the archipelago. Japanese forces said they spotted four vessels - a Chinese Renhai-class guided-missile destroyer, a Luyang III-class guided-missile destroyer, a Fuchi-class replenishment ship and a Russian Steregushchiy-class frigate - sailing towards their EEZ before the livefire exercise by one of the Chinese destroyers. Nearby vessels were warned by radio immediately before the live-firing exercise, Kihara said. In another high-profile incident in December, Japan said Chinese fighter jets aimed their radar at Japanese military aircraft near its Okinawa islands, an account Beijing disputed.

Rubio arrives in Philippines as US condemns ‘dangerous’ China actions

AFP
Manila

The United States condemned “dangerous and aggressive actions” by China following a clash with the Philippine navy in the South China Sea, as US Secretary of State Marco Rubio arrived in Manila yesterday for a meeting of Southeast Asian nations. “China’s troubling pattern of provocations against the Philippines’ legitimate maritime operations undermines regional peace and stability and directly contradicts China’s repeated commitments to resolve disputes peacefully,” the US State Department said in a statement. The US secretary of state landed in Manila yesterday morning for a meeting of his counterparts from the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). While his entourage has not publicly confirmed talks with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi, who will also be in Manila today and tomorrow, Rubio has said he is open to the possibility of a meeting. The two met last year on the sidelines of the Asean summit in Kuala Lumpur and again in Munich in February. In an op-ed published in Philippine media outlets Tuesday morning, Rubio heralded Washington’s commitment “to free-



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio (left) and his wife Jeanette Dousdebbs Rubio arrive in Manila yesterday, ahead of the Asean Foreign Ministers’ Meeting. (AFP)

dom of navigation in Southeast Asia” while reaffirming the US defensive umbrella in the region. “This freedom is by no means guaranteed. If these waters were to fall under the control of a power willing to use trade as a geopolitical weapon, both the United States and the Asean states would face serious new threats to their sovereignty, security, and economic future,” he wrote, in a clear allusion to China. Beijing claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, a vital global trade route, despite an international ruling that its claims have no legal basis. Multiple Asean member states, including the Philippines, have territorial claims that overlap with China’s. The Philippine military accused

the Chinese coast guard of wounding a Filipino sailor on Monday near an outpost in a disputed area of the crucial waterway. The Chinese coast guard responded to the accusations in a statement, calling Manila’s version of events a “complete distortion of the truth”. Rubio is making his first visit to the Philippines as secretary of state, where he intends to reaffirm the strengthened partnership with the United States. The visit comes as the United States and Iran are once again embroiled in conflict, more than a week after the resumption of hostilities over another strategic waterway, the Strait of Hormuz. Speaking to the press before his departure from Washington on Sunday, he indicated that

‘Rubio to meet his Chinese counterpart’

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) gathering, a US State Department official said yesterday. The two will meet in Manila, where foreign ministers from the 11-member Asean and major partners have gathered this week to discuss a range of global issues. Analysts have said a Rubio meeting with his Chinese counterpart was likely to focus on preparations for a second meeting between US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping after the two met last May. (Reuters)

he would participate in a meeting with fellow Quad countries Australia, Japan and India on the sidelines of the Asean summit, as well as meetings with South Korea and possibly Vietnam. Rubio intends to raise the issue of US economic commitment to energy infrastructure, critical minerals, and artificial intelligence during these meetings, he said.

Indonesia sentences leader of baby trafficking ring

A woman who led a baby trafficking ring in Indonesia was sentenced yesterday to seven years in prison, a judge said. Lie Siu Luan, 70, was the leader of a group of 19 people accused of trafficking babies in Indonesia and Singapore. She was found guilty of committing crimes “for the purpose of exploitation”, said presiding judge Gatot Ardian Agustriono. The sentence was lower than prosecutors’ demand of 10 years for Lie, who previously told the Bandung district court in West Java province that she had sent at least 12 babies to Singapore. According to the indictment, Lie trafficked a baby to Singapore for adoption in 2022, pocketing around \$517,000. Lie had decided against appealing the sentence, her lawyer Sendi Sanjaya told reporters. “She accepted the decision,” Sendi said. Another defendant, Astri Fitriika, was found guilty of a similar charge and received six years and seven months in prison, Gatot added. The court jailed the rest of the accused to terms ranging from three to six years. (AFP)

North Korea reaffirms support for Moscow

AFP
Seoul

North Korea reaffirmed its support for Russia’s war on Ukraine as the nations’ foreign ministers met in Moscow, Pyongyang’s state media reported yesterday, increasing speculation Kim Jong-un may soon visit the Kremlin. Diplomatically isolated North Korea and Russia have rapidly expanded co-operation since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in early 2022. Pyongyang has sent troops to Russia’s embattled Kursk region and supplied Moscow with weapons systems, in return securing financial assistance, food, energy supplies and military technology, analysts say. Following a Moscow meeting between North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui and her Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov, Pyongyang’s state media said the nations had “reaffirmed their steadfast political will to accelerate the long-term multi-faceted development of the bilateral relations”. “The DPRK side expressed invariable support for all the internal and external policies of the Russian Federation to eliminate the root cause of the Ukrainian dispute and defend its national sovereignty, territorial integrity and international justice,” state news agency KCNA said. The agency reported that Russia, meanwhile, expressed full support for North Korea’s efforts to defend its sovereignty and security. “I would like once again to express my gratitude for the support provided to the special military operation we are conducting,” Putin said in a video released by the Kremlin on Sunday. Choe laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers by the wall of the Kremlin on her visit, KCNA said yesterday. Kim Jong-un last travelled to Russia in September 2023, and Putin made a rare visit to Pyongyang in June 2024.



Russia’s President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with North Korea’s Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui during a meeting in Moscow on Sunday. (AFP)

Choe’s visit to Moscow could have been aimed at discussing a trip to Russia by Kim later this year, according to South Korean media reports. “Putin has repeatedly invited Kim to visit Russia since his trip to Pyongyang in 2024,” Park Won-gon, a professor of North Korean studies at Ewha Womans University, told AFP. Chinese president Xi Jinping made a rare trip to Pyongyang last month, where he and Kim pledged to bolster ties. While Pyongyang has drawn closer to Moscow, China remains North Korea’s largest economic partner, accounting for nearly 98 percent of the country’s foreign trade in 2024, according to official figures. “After hosting Chinese President Xi Jinping this year, Kim would have a strong incentive to visit Russia as well,” Park said. “It would showcase North Korea breaking out of diplomatic isolation while highlighting support from both China and Russia, reinforcing the image of a North Korea-China-Russia alignment.”

Malaysia shuts under-fire digital nomad campus

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian authorities ordered yesterday the closure of a startup campus founded by US investor Balaji Srinivasan, saying the site - already the focus of an immigration probe - was in breach of regulations. The Network School founder announced last week he was freezing investment projects in Malaysia after authorities had raided the campus serving hundreds of digital nomads to investigate claims that it was hosting foreigners illegally. Onn Hafiz Ghazi, chief minister of Johor state where the campus is located, said a local municipality had revoked Network School’s business licence and ordered

it to cease operations effective Wednesday. One Network School site was operating without a licence and another “carrying out activities different from those allowed under its office-use permit”, according to the Iskandar Puteri City Council. “When non-compliance is identified, action must be taken without compromise,” Onn Hafiz said in a statement. Network School was not available for comment. Authorities raided the campus last week after unsubstantiated online claims it was flouting immigration rules. The allegations centred on accusations that Israelis with dual citizenship were being allowed to work there. Muslim-majority Malaysia has no diplomatic ties with Israel and bars entry to Israeli passport holders, but does not have spe-

cific laws about second-country passport holders. Srinivasan, a former Coinbase senior executive, said Malaysian officials had inspected “hundreds of passports” at his nearly \$25mn development, a residential campus for startup founders, software engineers, investors and digital entrepreneurs. He said that authorities confirmed all travel documents were in order. After the raid, Srinivasan announced he was freezing all projects in the southeast Asian nation “until we get sufficient assurance that such issues won’t recur”. Onn Hafiz said yesterday that his state, which bordering Singapore, “always welcomes high-quality investments”. But “no investor, company or organisation can be placed above sovereignty of the country’s law”, he said.

Korea promises free homegrown AI chatbot this year

AFP
Seoul

Republic of Korea plans to launch this year a free artificial intelligence chatbot service powered by domestic technology, Seoul said Tuesday, seeking to reduce reliance on foreign platforms. Roughly half of Korea’s population of 51mn used generative AI applications in February, according to market research firm Wiseapp-Retail. The vast majority - nearly 23mn - used ChatGPT, developed by US firm OpenAI. As the technology has spread, countries have become increasingly concerned with so-called “AI sovereignty” - developing domestic models serving their own security, privacy and business interests.

A spokesperson for Korea’s science ministry told AFP yesterday that a government initiative aims to roll out a general-purpose AI chatbot as well as an AI agent capable of more complex tasks by the end of the year. “To persuade users to move away from foreign AI services they already pay for, we need to provide services that are even better,” Science Minister Bae Kyung-hoon told reporters on Monday. “We want Korea to move quickly into the era of AI agents and compete in that field,” he told a news briefing. The government’s first priority under its “AI for All” scheme is to integrate public AI agent services that would provide functions unavailable on existing foreign platforms, the minister said. The plan is also designed to overcome the digital divide by

providing AI service for free, compared with many existing models which require monthly subscription payments. From 2027, Seoul plans to expand the system into personalised AI agents capable of assisting users with tasks such as asset management, learning support and retirement planning. “Providing free domestic AI services encourages users to adopt Korean platforms, allowing demand and data to accumulate and helping the domestic AI market grow on its own,” Kim Yong-beom, senior presidential secretary for policy, said in a Facebook post yesterday. A public AI agent could also help Koreans identify and apply to relevant government services, according to Kim. The initiative comes as Korea’s AI Basic Act took effect yesterday.,

Burnham targets lower energy bills in first move as UK PM

AFP
London

Andy Burnham told the inaugural meeting of his cabinet yesterday that he would lead a “cost-of-living government”, after unveiling an energy tax cut on his first full day as prime minister.

Burnham, who replaced Keir Starmer in Downing Street on Monday, announced he was cutting value-added tax (VAT) on consumer electricity bills – his first significant policy announcement as UK leader.

But a Starmer loyalist, one of several to be culled from ministerial positions by Burnham, questioned how the Labour government would fund the cut, suggesting the new premier’s call for party unity may go unheeded.

From October 1, electricity bills will be VAT free, saving an average household around £45 (\$61) a year, the government said in a statement.

In opening remarks to his cabinet in front of media before the private meeting, Burnham told ministers that they must give the public “a sense that help is coming”.

“We need to be a cost-of-living government, getting that cost of living down, looking at all possible ways of doing that,” he added.

But he also stressed “we’ve got to show fiscal discipline” and vowed to always “show how we’re going to pay” for policies.

The tax cut will cost the government about £850mn (\$1.143bn) in the current UK financial year.

The government said it would be funded by cancelling Starmer’s plan for a digital ID scheme that would have cost the taxpayer £1.8bn.

But in a post on X, former minister Darren Jones said the ID programme had been “unfunded”.



British Prime Minister Andy Burnham holds his first Cabinet meeting, in London, yesterday. (Reuters)

“The government will have to set out how it will pay for its new policies at the budget,” he wrote.

Burnham, parachuted into No. 10 by Labour MPs after they lost confidence in Starmer, insisted during the cabinet meeting that he would always “show how we’re going to pay” for policies.

He is currently mulling rent control measures and caps to bus fares.

Burnham became Britain’s seventh prime minister in just over a decade Monday and signalled a new left-ward direction for the Labour government during his first speech outside No. 10.

He pledged to re-industrialise the country, push through greater public control of utilities and build more public housing, vowing to unveil a 10-year-plan later this year.

Burnham also intends to decentralise power away from London to other cities and regions.

Despite vowing to end factionalism in Labour, one of his first acts as prime minister was to cull most of Starmer’s supporters from his

new 23-member cabinet.

Rachel Reeves was axed as finance minister, replaced by John Healey, while David Lammy left his role as deputy prime minister, as Burnham promoted his own allies and reshuffled the existing pack.

Ed Miliband became foreign minister, Wes Streeting – who abandoned plans to run against Burnham for the Labour leadership – was named defence minister, and left-wing figurehead Angela Rayner returned to government.

The new cabinet has 12 women, and 11 men, although women have been cut from two of the top posts.

On Monday’s busy afternoon, Burnham also held calls with numerous foreign leaders, including US President Donald Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and French leader Emmanuel Macron.

Burnham, a long-time critic of Starmer’s more centrist approach to governing, only returned to parliament four weeks ago following a nine-year stint as Greater Manchester mayor.

Labour MPs hope his down-to-

earth persona can stem support for the anti-immigrant Reform UK party, led by Nigel Farage, before the next general election, due in 2029.

But Burnham faces multiple challenges, not least an anaemic economy, high government borrowing costs, a ballooning welfare bill and irregular migrants arriving in small boats.

Unpredictable energy prices due to the US-Iran war and volatile relations with Washington under Trump also threaten to buffet his premiership.

Burnham, an MP between 2001 and 2017, has little room to manoeuvre amid high public debt and strict financial rules requiring him to balance government spending against tax revenue.

His swift appointment as Labour leader, and prime minister by virtue of Labour’s huge parliamentary majority, came without him putting forward a clear plan for how he will achieve his aims.

Farage has questioned Burnham’s mandate and called for a snap election.

Russian warship carries out live-fire exercise in Channel

AFP
London

A Russian naval ship carried out a live-fire weapons exercise in international waters off southern England, Britain’s defence ministry said yesterday.

The ship, in the Channel around 40 miles (74km) south of the UK port of Plymouth, on Monday informed a British naval patrol vessel, HMS Tyne, of its intention to fire and asked it to move to a safer position, the ministry said.

“The exercise was subsequently carried out in international waters and lasted for 30 minutes.”

The British Navy monitored the exercise and was continuing to track the vessel closely, the ministry added.

Newly appointed UK defence minister Wes Streeting described the incident as “performative and irresponsible”, at a press conference in London.

“Russia should be in no doubt about the resolve of this govern-

ment and this prime minister, our resolve to stand against Russian aggression in Ukraine but also Russian aggression against all of our allies,” he added.

British media named the ship as the Neustrashimy, a frigate in Russia’s Baltic Fleet, noting the incident happened on the first day in office of Britain’s new prime minister, Andy Burnham.

In June a Russian warship fired warning shots to a yacht in the English Channel.

Russia said that boat was on a dangerous course and Britain’s defence ministry downplayed the incident at the time, insisting it was an “isolated” event “to prevent a possible collision”.

Russian warships are reportedly being used to escort tankers through the Channel that are associated with Russia’s “shadow fleet” of sanctions-breaking ships.

Last month, around the time of the yacht incident, British armed forces intercepted a sanctioned Russian tanker in the first such UK-led operation.

15 Indian workers trapped after tunnel blast kills 10

Reuters
Guwahati

Fifteen Indian workers were feared trapped yesterday after a blast caused by a suspected gas leak in a tunnel at a hydroelectric project in the rugged state of Sikkim killed ten, authorities said.

Monday’s incident took place at state-owned National Hydroelectric Power Corp Ltd’s project on the Teesta river in the northeastern state’s village of Samardung, district official Subash Ghimirey told Reuters.

A sudden burst of gas suspected to be methane trapped or

embedded in rocks in the tunnel caused an explosion that sent out dense fumes and toxic gas, NHPC said in a statement.

Survival chances for the trapped workers were slim, state disaster management official Rajiv Roka said, as rescuers had to battle the fumes, making their task difficult.

At least 25 project workers and officials were trapped in the tunnel, NHPC said, a tally that includes the 10 bodies retrieved.

Photographs on the state government’s Facebook page showed rescuers wearing orange hazard suits unloading oxygen cylinders, ropes and other emergency equipment from a vehicle.

India summons senior Russian diplomat over deaths of Indians on ship in Black Sea

Reuters
New Delhi

India said it had summoned a senior Russian diplomat yesterday and expressed “grave concerns” after a missile strike killed four Indians on a Black Sea cargo ship that was leaving a Ukrainian port. Ukraine said Russia hit the Golden Leo – a Guinea-Bissau-flagged ship manned by a crew from India and Syria – with three cruise missiles on Sunday, killing 10 people, including four Indians.

Vladimir Ladanov, Russian chargé d’affaires, was summoned to India’s Ministry of External Affairs, a statement from the ministry said on Tuesday.

Ladanov was asked to convey India’s strong con-

cerns and told that the targeting of commercial shipping and the resulting loss of civilian lives was “unacceptable”, the statement said. “Such attacks undermine the safety, security, and stability of international maritime commerce,” it said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters that Moscow was in touch with India on the matter.

“We are explaining our position. Most importantly, our armed forces are striking – and will continue to strike – vessels involved in transporting ammunition, weapons, and so on for the purposes of the Kyiv regime,” Peskov said.

The Golden Leo is owned by Mumbai-based Ocean Grace Shipping Ltd, according to LSEG data. India has also lost seafarers in the Iran war, and protested to both the US and Iran over the losses.

India court hands 44 Somalis life imprisonment

AFP
Mumbai

An Indian court has sentenced 44 Somali nationals to life imprisonment for crimes committed while hijacking vessels off the coast of the east African nation.

In two separate incidents, pirates had hijacked a bulk carrier and a fishing ship, taking their crew hostage before Indian navy ships rescued them and apprehended the attackers in 2024.

During their trial, all 44 Somali defendants have admitted guilt, according to the judgments in both cases handed by a special court in Mumbai on Monday.

“The act of piracy on high sea by hijacking a vessel and keeping crew members hostage for ransom by attempting to kill them and to keep them as human shield are very serious things which cannot be taken casually,” judge SB Dige said.

The first hijacking in December 2023 saw 35 Somalis attack the Maltese-flagged bulk carrier MV Ruen. In March 2024, nine others hijacked the Iranian-flagged fishing ship Al Kambur.

The group, who have been held in Navi Mumbai’s Talaja jail since 2024, were present in the court when their life sentences were announced, local media reported.

They had petitioned the court to be sent back to Somalia to face legal proceedings there.

India, North Macedonia presidents meet in Skopje



India’s President Droupadi Murmu is welcomed by North Macedonia’s President Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova upon her arrival in Skopje yesterday. (AFP)

Thousands protest in India after clashes, despite Modi assuring action on exams

Reuters
New Delhi

Thousands of supporters of India’s youth-led “cockroach” movement protested in Delhi yesterday, a day after violent clashes with police, and in spite of Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vow to punish those behind damaging exam leaks.

More than 5,000 protesters gathered at Delhi’s Jantar Mantar protest site, after their march on parliament to demand the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan ended in violent clashes with police on Monday.

Modi’s comments, reported by a cabinet minister, were his first on the subject since the leaking of question papers for a national entrance test to medical school in May.

The leaks affected 2mn young people and led about a dozen students to take their own lives, according to local media.

Youth anger and protests over the exams have become the biggest challenge for the prime minister in his third term. Delhi Police said nearly 180 people, including 118 security and police personnel and 60 protesters, were injured when they clashed in central Delhi. The founder of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), a movement that began as an online satire, said more than 150 protesters were undergoing treatment in hospital.

Reuters could not independently verify the numbers of injured, after police beat protesters with batons and fired tear gas rounds to push them back.

A few dozen members of India’s main opposition Congress party, including Rahul Gandhi and his sister Priyanka, protested against Monday’s crackdown outside Modi’s house yesterday.

One protester held a poster that read, “Democracy bleeds when voices are beaten”, and some Congress members were detained by police, television footage showed.



Security personnel detain India’s Opposition Leader Rahul Gandhi (front second right) as he stages a sit-in protest calling for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s resignation outside the latter’s residence in New Delhi yesterday, a day after police crackdown against the protesting Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) supporters. (AFP)

Modi told lawmakers of his ruling alliance that the government acted immediately on receiving reports of exam irregularities and 13 people were arrested and jailed,

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said.

Modi also said a re-examination had been successfully conducted. “The prime minister said...that

to ensure the future of youth is not jeopardised...everyone should unite to ensure strict steps are taken, those guilty punished, and a foolproof system is created,” Rijiju said.

The CJP movement has said it would continue its anti-government protest but will not march on parliament as it feared its supporters would be beaten by police again.

The months-old movement has drawn the support of millions of young, Gen Z Indians who are demanding the resignation of Pradhan. CJP says the leaking of the papers in May was a sign of deep-seated corruption in education.

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke apologised to supporters, especially women, whom he said were beaten by male police officers.

Delhi Police said protesters had “displayed unruly, aggressive and violent behaviour” and “deliberately violated the prohibitory orders in force”. The movement was

galvanised after the support of activist Sonam Wangchuk, who began a hunger strike on June 28, but was forcibly moved to a hospital by police on Saturday.

Yesterday, the Delhi High Court allowed the Magsaysay award winner to be shifted to a private hospital following a petition from his wife that alleged he had been illegally detained.

The court order fulfils one of the three demands of the protesters.

CJP said Health Minister JP Nadda sought time to discuss their demands within the government after a meeting with two leaders on Monday.

The demands include the release of Wangchuk, Pradhan’s resignation and compensation of 10mn rupees (\$104,000) each for about a dozen students who died by suicide following the leak.

The CJP’s surge in popularity reflects frustrations among young Indians including job shortages as well as exam leaks, which they say happen frequently.



Data centres serve as flashpoints over energy, environment concerns

Data centres account for about 1.5%, or 415 Terawatt - Hours (TWh), of the world's total annual electricity consumption, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). This has grown by 12% over the last five years and is on course to more than double towards 945 TWh by 2030, primarily due to the substantial growth of energy-intensive computing driven by the artificial intelligence (AI) boom. Consequently, over the past year, social concerns around AI have also grown, with data centres serving as a highly visible flashpoint for concerns around energy prices and the environment. Governments worldwide are pushing to attract AI computing infrastructure, but must grapple with data centres' demands on resources and mounting local opposition. Opposition to data centres from the US to India tends to focus on three major themes: land, power and water. Data centres can occupy vast swathes of land, with

Meta's Prometheus site (the company's first gigawatt-scale AI supercluster) in Ohio measuring "a significant part of the footprint of Manhattan". In countries with weaker property protections, some have complained of being shouldered aside in favour of tech construction, including Indian farmers in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. Data centres filled with top-of-the-line chips can draw the energy of a city. At 630 megawatts, according to industry tracker Epoch AI, Prometheus is equivalent to around half a million American family homes. Bloomberg News found in a September 2025 analysis that electricity could be as much as 267% more expensive in areas of the US with high concentrations of data centres. And companies' off-grid generators — such as SpaceXAI's gas turbines at its Colossus facility in Memphis — have drawn complaints of their own. As the chips get hot while they work, data centres need cooling, mostly using water.

While the absolute amount of water used is small — around 0.3% of total supply in the US, according to electronics magazine IEEE Spectrum — many are built in areas already facing high water stress. American campaign group Humans First called for a "national day of protest" against "the unaccountable buildout of data centres" on July 18. Beyond America, campaigners across Europe have challenged data centre projects on grounds from environmental concerns to claims governments have granted undue favours, such as a legal action in Spain's Aragon region against a massive data centre buildout by Amazon. And in densely-populated Japan, a shortage of space has projects being planned in or near residential neighbourhoods. That has prompted legal action from some residents, such as against a proposed new data centre in Tokyo commuter town Inzai, which already hosts 10 facilities.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has vowed to pass laws requiring data centres to feed in to the power grid more than they draw and minimise water usage. To solve the energy challenges, the tech sector is adopting new approaches. It accounted for around 40% of all corporate power purchase agreements for renewables signed in 2025, and is also now a major source of momentum for the nuclear and advanced geothermal industries. For sure, data centres are a vital infrastructure supporting the ever-growing use of cloud storage, social media, AI, and streaming services. But they're also an increasingly hot topic of the clean transition. Looking forward, policymakers can also have tools on hand to manage affordability issues, including those that encourage the smart integration of data centres into grids and incentivise data centres to operate more flexibly, according to the IEA.

Belgian National Day celebrations

Belgium's Princess Eleonore, Prince Gabriel, Princess Elisabeth, and Prince Emmanuel arrive to watch a military parade during the Belgian National Day celebrations in Brussels yesterday. (Reuters)



Sharing dividends of Artificial Intelligence advancement

By Cao Xiaolin
China's ambassador to Qatar

The 2026 World Artificial Intelligence (AI) Conference and the High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance was held in Shanghai from July 17 to 20. President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China attended the opening ceremony and delivered a keynote address. Heads of state, heads of government, official representatives, business leaders, scholars and researchers from more than 100 countries and international organisations attended this event. President Xi Jinping said at the opening ceremony that all countries should uphold the people-centred and progressive concept, make AI an important driving force for promoting common prosperity and safeguarding common security, and jointly build a just and equitable system for global AI governance. During the conference, the signing ceremony of the Agreement on the Establishment of the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organisation (WAICO) was held. As the world's first intergovernmental international organisation for AI, WAICO aims to support Global South countries in accelerating their AI development and enhancing their comprehensive capabilities in innovation, application and governance. Meanwhile, the National Development and Reform Commission of China released the Action Plan for the Cooperative Development of Artificial Intelligence. This Plan puts forward eight key actions, including high-quality data supply, inclusive intelligent computing power, open-source ecosystem sharing, in-depth empowerment of artificial intelligence, joint cultivation of digital-intelligent talents, co-construction of rules and standards, collaboration on security governance, and the promotion of beneficial AI. These practical measures are designed to strengthen international cooperation in AI, bridge the digital divide, and advance the empowerment of AI for sustainable development. This year marks the 70th anniversary of the inception of AI. AI has emerged as a pivotal driving force behind the new



wave of global scientific and technological revolution as well as industrial transformation. China has maintained its position as the world's largest manufacturing economy for the past 16 years, and become home to the globe's most comprehensive industrial ecosystem. This has offered AI technologies an exceptionally large volume, broad spectrum and high frequency of application scenarios, a distinct competitive advantage that underpins China's AI development. China is now at the forefront of steering global AI governance and advancement. In recent years, China has taken concrete actions to work with all parties to promote the formation of a global AI governance system with broad consensus, so that AI can become an international public good that benefits all of humanity. This is mainly manifested in the following: First, we uphold openness and sharing, ensure AI for good. In October 2023, China took the lead in releasing the Global Artificial Intelligence Governance Initiative, which establishes the governance orientation of AI for good, safe and controllable, inclusive and equitable. Under the principle of extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, this initiative aims to build consensus on cooperation for the global development of AI. China has proposed and implemented the AI Capacity Building for All Initiative and the AI+ International Cooperation Initiative, put forward the Global Action Plan on AI Governance, and advocated for the establishment of WAICO. China has become an active advocate and practitioner in global AI governance, with firm commitment to ensuring that the benefits of intelligent technological development are shared more widely and equitably by people of all countries. A latest and most vivid example of China's AI initiatives and its international cooperation achievements is that the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference & the High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance has reached the highest professional level and industry influence, with over 3,000 exhibits on display and more than 300 products making their global debut. Second, we deepen innovation co-operation and unlock the dividends

of intelligence. Technology thrives on openness and flow. The development of AI must not lead to self-imposed technological monopolies, but should always anchor itself to the fundamental goal of enhancing human well-being. China's AI models are creating opportunities for countries around the world. Until now, the cumulative downloads of China's open-source large models have exceeded 10bn times, continuously opening up new and larger spaces for global AI innovation and cooperation. At the AI for Good Global Summit 2026 held in Geneva early this month, China fully demonstrated its Chinese wisdom in promoting the benevolent and inclusive development of AI through its cutting-edge technological products, inclusive governance solutions and open cooperation initiatives. Today, China holds 60% of the world's AI patents, and is working with all parties to elevate the development of AI to a higher level with an all-dimensional opening-up and co-operation. Third, we promote inclusive development and bridge the digital intelligence divide. China's AI innovations are taking firm root across Southeast Asia, Latin America, Africa and beyond, making farms smarter, factories sharper, and daily life more seamless. This has helped empower Global South nations to build stronger, self-reliant tech capabilities. In these countries, plant protection drones leveraging China's BeiDou Navigation Satellite System are widely deployed in field operations to improve harvest efficiency significantly such as farmland mapping, rice sowing and pesticide application. The State Grid Guangming Power Large Model empowers intelligent operation & maintenance of local power grids. It has resolved inspection challenges in complex operating environments. Huawei has rolled out smart railway systems for local lines, cutting safety incident rates and driving greater efficiency in inspection and maintenance workflows. Co-operation in AI between China and the Arab countries enjoys great potentials and broad horizons. We shall seize this historic opportunity, reinforce development strategy alignment, boost AI scientific innovation and scenario-based application, let AI empower all lines of business, extend smart terminals to every household, and share the dividends of AI advancement.



French lawmakers to put social media ban for under-15s in European first

AFP
Paris

France’s parliament yesterday was set to approve a bill banning social media access for children under 15, making France the first European country to bar children from apps such as TikTok. President Emmanuel Macron has championed the ban as a flagship reform of his final term in office and pledged to enforce it by September. The bill was overwhelmingly approved by the Senate yesterday, with 243 votes in favour and two against. The draft law was expected to be adopted by the National Assembly yesterday evening, barring surprises. A growing number of countries are taking steps to restrict social media access amid multiplying warnings over its harmful effects on children. “France will become the first country in Europe to introduce a digital age limit to better protect our children online,” French Digital Minister Anne Le Henanff said on X. The ban would be rolled out in two stages, with under-15s blocked from creating new accounts from September 1. The ban would apply to existing accounts from January 2027, according to the text. Le Henanff said ahead of the vote that the timeline was realistic, “because age-verification tools already exist” with others still in the works, and the onus was on the

platforms to impose the rule. “For four months, all of us in France will have to prove our age,” she told journalists. “If someone is under fifteen, the account will be closed.” The minister also gave assurances that users’ personal data would be protected. Enforcing the measure by September would also ensure that one provision of the bill – a ban on mobile phones in high schools – takes effect at the beginning of the French school year. France’s public health watchdog last year said platforms such as TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram were harmful to adolescents, particularly girls, though it was not the sole reason for their declining mental health. Lawmakers agreed on the need for regulation but the two chambers had disagreed on the approach. French senators had opted for a two-tier system distinguishing between blacklisted platforms flagged as harmful to a child’s development, and those that could still be accessed with parental consent. But the lower house’s blanket ban prevailed and was expected to pass, despite criticism from some on the left over the age verification process, the speed of its implementation and risks of circumvention as well as privacy concerns. Exceptions to the ban are provided for sites such as online encyclopaedias and educational platforms and the text does not

provide for any penalties for children or parents. “The major platforms are, in my view, largely ready,” lawmaker Laure Miller told AFP. The blacklisting system would have taken more time, including fresh consultations with the European Commission on the criteria, and carried a “small risk” of non-compliance with European law, said centrist senator Catherine Morin-Desailly. The EU has been mulling a social media ban after a push by member states, including France, Greece and Spain, for limiting access. Last week, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said children should have “phased and gradual access” to social media. The European Commission has also unveiled an age verification app that EU member states, including France, have begun testing in recent months. After Macron’s government suspended a flagship pensions reform last year, a social media ban could be his last major domestic change before he steps down next year. France will be closely watched by other European states – it is one of 20 countries worldwide to have proposed or introduced such measures. In December last year, Australia became the first country in the world to require TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat and other top sites to remove accounts held by under-16s, or to face heavy fines.

Pakistan seeks \$10bn in US backstop facility

Reuters
Washington

Pakistan has asked the United States for a \$10bn exchange stabilisation facility, according to a source briefed on the matter, which, if approved, could provide a lifeline for the cash-strapped South Asian economy. The request, which is being reported for the first time, follows Pakistan’s role in brokering talks over the Iran war, which raised its diplomatic profile and stirred hopes that it could seek economic gains from Washington and other partners. In the request to US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, Islamabad is seeking a Bilateral Exchange Stabilisation Support Facility between the US and the Pakistani government worth \$10bn with maturity of up to five years. The facility, if agreed to, would bolster Pakistan’s reserves, ease pressure on the rupee and reduce its reliance on multilateral financing, even as Islamabad undertakes tighter fiscal and monetary policies in line with its International Monetary Fund programme. Pakistan remains under \$7bn IMF discipline that has required politically unpopular tax increases, spending restraint and reforms. Pakistan’s finance ministry did not immediately respond to Reuters request for comment outside of Asia business hours. The US Treasury declined to comment. Exchange stabilisation facilities are rare US Treasury backstops, usually routed via the Exchange Stabilisation Fund, that provide dollars, swaps or guar-

antees to support reserves and steady currencies. These facilities are different from the permanent standing dollar swap lines that the US Federal Reserve has with some major central banks and acts as an international supply line of US dollars to underpin financial stability. A 2025 Argentina package was the first new foreign-government exchange stabilisation facility operation since Uruguay in 2002, aside from Mexico’s long-standing swap line, dating to the 1940s and now sized at \$9bn. Pakistan narrowly avoided default in 2023 with a \$3bn IMF standby deal and later secured a \$7bn Extended Fund Facility, along with a separate \$1.3bn loan to build up its resilience to climate change and natural disasters. But its reserves still depend on official financing, rollovers and deposits from countries such as China and Saudi Arabia, which are largely considered its strategic allies. That leaves Islamabad exposed to shifts in bilateral support and IMF disbursement delays, and that vulnerability got exposed in April when Pakistan repaid about \$3.5bn, one-fifth of its reserves, to the United Arab Emirates with Saudi Arabia providing \$3bn in fresh support. Pakistan’s central bank said in January that reserves could return to near their 2021 record, reaching \$20bn by the end of 2026. A US exchange stabilisation facility would carry weight as both a liquidity backstop and political signal, easing pressure on reserves and the Pakistani rupee, while considerably reducing the South Asian country’s dependence on IMF tranches and ad hoc rescues. IMF-backed reforms have sta-

bilised the economy at a political cost, including higher taxes, spending restraint and limited room for development or welfare spending. Global ratings agency Fitch said in April that Pakistan’s adherence to its IMF programme has supported the country’s funding capacity, while rebuilt foreign exchange buffers provide a cushion against economic shocks from the Middle East conflict. But deeper constraints remain. Fitch cautioned that rising energy costs and potential supply disruptions could sharply erode the country’s foreign exchange reserves. Foreign investment in Pakistan has remained thin, deterred by recurring external crises, policy uncertainty, security risks, past profit-repatriation curbs and a narrow export base, while the country’s credit rating remains deep in speculative-grade territory, keeping borrowing costs high and market access limited. Pakistan has sought to use its ties to the Trump administration to address some of these issues, with economic co-operation that has so far spanned crypto, real estate and mining. Pakistan has signed a stablecoin agreement for cross-border payments with an affiliate of World Liberty Financial, the main crypto business of President Donald Trump’s family. The country has also pursued a memorandum of understanding to redevelop the closed PIA-owned Roosevelt Hotel in New York with the US government, in addition to courting US mining investment, including in Reko Diq town in Chagai District of Balochistan, where the US Export-Import Bank has announced \$1.2bn in financing. of average seasonal consumption in early July after undershooting demand for a couple of months, according to industry sources. An attack on the Moscow Oil Refinery in mid-June caused fuel shortages and long lines at filling stations, but supplies in Moscow, and the wider region stabilised by mid-July, according to regional fuel traders and Reuters witnesses, with ample availability of gasoline and diesel for cars. The Moscow region is home to 22 million people, or more than one-sixth of country’s total population. Since Soviet times, authorities have prioritised supplies of various goods to the capital. The Energy Ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment on fuel supplies. Russia-annexed Crimea is now the worst-affected region. The peninsula has suspended tourism-related activities for children, introduced fuel rationing and declared curbs on social life, such as shorter working hours for shops. To replace lost gasoline volumes from the damaged refineries, shipments of motor gasoline produced in the Urals and Siberia, as well as imported supplies from Belarus, were redirected to the Moscow region, traders said. One of the traders said the Achinsk refinery in Siberia’s Krasnoyarsk region has been supplying Moscow with fuel. He estimated the additional fuel supplies to Moscow from other regions at several hundred thousand metric tons. The Moscow region consumes around 6mn tons of gasoline per year. To meet the demand, Russia has also started importing fuel from India. Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said yesterday Russia’s domestic fuel market had partly stabilised, although the situation was still difficult in some regions. (Reuters)

Netherlands reveals plan to ban Israeli settler products

AFP
The Hague

The Netherlands government announced yesterday that it would ban imports from Palestinian territories occupied by Israeli settlers from September 22. The Netherlands will join Ireland, Belgium and Spain among European Union countries that have imposed restrictions on trade with territories occupied by Israeli settlers. There have been growing calls for the 27-nation bloc to impose EU-wide restrictions over Israel’s military action in Gaza and increased violence in the occupied territories, but some EU members are reluctant. Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territories is considered illegal under international law. And the Dutch foreign ministry said: “With the proposed measures, the Netherlands is reinforcing its commitment to fulfilling its international legal obligation not to contribute to this unlawful situation.” The ban will apply to “the import, purchase, and sale of goods originating from illegal Israeli settlements located in the Palestinian territories”, the ministry said. Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 and more than 500,000 settlers now live in the territories alongside some three million Palestinians. Violence in the West Bank has increased since the eruption of the Gaza war. The Global Echo non-government group, which pursues legal cases for Palestinians against the occupation, said in a report released in June that the Netherlands accounted for a third of agricultural exports from Israel’s settlements and nearly half of the total sent to the European Union.

Russian attack kills three in Ukraine’s Zaporizhzhia

Reuters
Zaporizhzhia

A Russian guided-bomb attack on the southern Ukrainian city of Zaporizhzhia killed at least three people yesterday and injured more than a dozen, regional officials said. Seven floors of a nine-storey apartment block were engulfed by flames after the attack, the regional military administration said on the Telegram app. Two of the dead were in their sixties and the other was 49, regional governor Ivan Fedorov said. Officials say Russia makes heavy use of guided bombs – air-launched, often Soviet-era weapons fitted with wings and navigation – in attacks on regions close to the front line. Reuters footage from the scene showed one side of the apartment block had been blackened by fire and that emergency workers were working to put out the flames. Burnt-out cars were parked nearby. Moscow denies targeting civilians but has frequently hit residential buildings. Ukrainian firefighters work to extinguish a fire in a residential building in Zaporizhzhia. (AFP)



showed one side of the apartment block had been blackened by fire and that emergency workers were working to put out the flames. Burnt-out cars were parked nearby. Moscow denies targeting civilians but has frequently hit residential buildings.

Raids on Orban’s party servers in graft probe

Hungarian prosecutors yesterday raided the data servers of nationalist ex-leader Viktor Orban’s Fidesz party as part of an investigation into alleged corruption. Since ending Orban’s hardline 16-year rule, Prime Minister Peter Magyar’s new pro-European conservative government has rushed to loosen the self-styled “illiberal” leader’s lingering grip on the country. Magyar has also vowed to pursue figures who enabled corruption, which watchdogs believe became endemic under his predecessor, and recover public assets from those who “illegally acquired” them. “Investigators from the prosecutor’s office showed up unannounced at the data centre hosting Fidesz’s servers with the intention of seizing the party’s entire communications system and databases,” a statement from Orban’s party said on Facebook. Prosecutors in Bacs-Kiskun County in southern Hungary were “conducting an investigation in a criminal case initiated in connection with the National Cultural Fund regarding the crime of embezzlement and other criminal offences”, their spokeswoman Marianna Bodo told AFP. Bodo added that no further information would be provided, “as this would compromise the interests of the ongoing investigation”. Blikk, a tabloid close to the party, said prosecutors were conducting an investigation at the German-majority owned Hungarian Telekom’s data centre in Budapest. (AFP)



Wildfire in France
Fire trucks on a road as French firefighters battle a wildfire in the Fox-Amphoux communal forest near Ponteves in the Var department yesterday. (Reuters)

Russia reroutes Siberian fuel in the wake of shortages

Russian authorities are redirecting fuel supplies from Siberia and ramping up imports from Belarus to prevent shortages in the country’s most populous and wealthiest Moscow region amid nationwide disruptions caused by Ukrainian drone attacks on refineries, industry sources said. The fuel crunch has been felt in varying degrees across Russia’s 11 time zones since May, when Ukraine stepped up attacks on oil refineries in an attempt to undermine Russian war efforts. Russia’s overall gasoline output fell to the equivalent of around 65%

of average seasonal consumption in early July after undershooting demand for a couple of months, according to industry sources. An attack on the Moscow Oil Refinery in mid-June caused fuel shortages and long lines at filling stations, but supplies in Moscow, and the wider region stabilised by mid-July, according to regional fuel traders and Reuters witnesses, with ample availability of gasoline and diesel for cars. The Moscow region is home to 22 million people, or more than one-sixth of country’s total population. Since Soviet times, authorities have prioritised supplies

of various goods to the capital. The Energy Ministry did not immediately reply to a request for comment on fuel supplies. Russia-annexed Crimea is now the worst-affected region. The peninsula has suspended tourism-related activities for children, introduced fuel rationing and declared curbs on social life, such as shorter working hours for shops. To replace lost gasoline volumes from the damaged refineries, shipments of motor gasoline produced in the Urals and Siberia, as well as imported supplies from Belarus, were redirected to the Moscow region, traders said. One of the traders said the Achinsk refinery in Siberia’s Krasnoyarsk region has been supplying Moscow with fuel. He estimated the additional fuel supplies to Moscow from other regions at several hundred thousand metric tons. The Moscow region consumes around 6mn tons of gasoline per year. To meet the demand, Russia has also started importing fuel from India. Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said yesterday Russia’s domestic fuel market had partly stabilised, although the situation was still difficult in some regions. (Reuters)

Heavy rain dampens search for dozens missing in Afghanistan flood

AFP
Parun, Afghanistan

Heavy rain and warnings of further flooding dampened the search yesterday for dozens of residents missing in eastern Afghanistan, after a major deluge smashed through one province killing at least 23 people. Around 100 people are unaccounted for, the national disaster agency and the provincial governor’s office said, also updating the death toll from Monday’s flood. While dozens of rescuers searched for the missing in Parun, the capital of Nuristan province, an AFP journalist heard two distant gunshots which people upstream fired to warn of more incoming flooding. Farid Gul Zaheer, a 34-year-

old pharmacist, said that he had “never witnessed such a dangerous flood”. “It felt like there was an earthquake, and I heard children and people screaming,” he told AFP of Monday’s flood, after getting injured while trying to flee up the mountain. Toiling under heavy rain, rescuers used their bare hands and wooden poles to search for the missing, while a bulldozer was of limited use in clearing masses of debris. Those killed included Parun Mayor Sayed Ahmad Arhabi, the Nuristan governor’s office said. Describing a “tragic and serious incident”, Governor Zain-ul-Abidin Abid vowed that all bodies would be recovered by yesterday evening. Zakirullah Zaki, manager of the



An Afghan man sits near the rubble of a damaged house following flash floods at Parun town in Afghanistan's Nuristan province yesterday. (AFP)

Spogmai Hotel, said it felt like “an act of God struck us”. “The rest of the hotels, markets,

and shops were completely destroyed,” the 29-year-old told AFP. The Spogmai was still standing,

surrounded by destruction, and the manager’s missing younger brother was found. Juma Khan Nayel, communications chief for the Afghan Red Crescent Society, said the water rose to unprecedented levels. They have deployed dozens of volunteers who are working by hand, using shovels. “Right now, urgently, we are supplying some food,” water and tents for those whose homes have been destroyed, he told AFP. Afghanistan’s defence ministry said the military had also been deployed to the area to support the relief effort, while the UN said it was assessing the disaster. Zaheer, the pharmacist, said he had “lost everything”. “Everyone is traumatised, they didn’t sleep all night,” he said. With further rain and storms

forecast in multiple provinces including Nuristan, police officers in Parun warned people to stay away from the river. The weather has also affected neighbouring Pakistan, where 12 people were killed according to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s provincial disaster agency. More than 200 people were killed in flooding and rain that hit Afghanistan and Pakistan between March and April. Afghanistan is particularly vulnerable to climate change and flooding has increased, according to the head of the country’s environmental protection agency. Environmental problems “have severely affected the Afghan people and have contributed to a humanitarian crisis in the country”, Mawlawi Mati-ul-Haq Khalis said this month.

Custom designs, steady demand drive Qatar’s QR1.2bn jewellery market

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar’s jewellery and gold retail market has a total annual value estimated at around QR1.2bn, with the unique craftsmanship skills offered by many local gold retailers and workshops keeping the industry constantly expanding.

Gold jewellery alone accounts for roughly 41% of the total local jewellery market revenue, supported by constant consumer demand mainly due to cultural and heritage factors, population diversity, and attractive competitive retail prices supported by tax-free advantages.

In spite of the fluctuations in international gold rates, which are normally reflected on the local market, gold shop retailers, especially the outlets within the traditional markets (souqs), noted that demand has remained good, in particular during the holidays, special occasions, religious festivals and the summer time.

Retailers within Doha’s traditional markets, particularly the historic Souq Waqif and the Gold Souq, have continued to witness healthy footfall throughout the year.

These markets remain among the country’s most popular destinations for both residents and tourists seeking handcrafted jewellery, personalised designs, traditional Gulf ornaments, and internationally recognised brands.

Shop owners indicate that while customer purchasing patterns have evolved in response to higher global prices, transaction volumes remain strong, particularly during peak shopping seasons.

“We receive orders all the time for special custom-made ornaments such as pendants with names written in Latin or Arabic calligraphy,” said Abdulkreem, a jeweller at a traditional Souq. “We have ready-made designs to offer customers to choose from, but customers can also bring their own designs, such as names written in certain formats, pendants that



have particular designs and rings that have special patterns, and our skilled craftsmen will do them within a few days.”

He noted that customers often prefer designs inspired by traditional local patterns and scenery such as falcons, wings, palm tree fronds, traditional Arabic and Islamic geometric patterns and roses.

“The more intricate the requested design, the higher the labour charges, but the price of gold remains the same according to the daily market value and the calibre, with many people often go for 21K and 22K,” Abdulkreem said. “So, first the required amount of gold is estimated and a quote for the final cost is agreed upon, then the order will be ready within a few days.”

In the meantime, many retailers across the country noted that higher prices have done little to dampen the overall consumer interest and demand, but buyers have be-

come more selective, often choosing lighter-weight pieces or purchasing during promotional campaigns while continuing to prioritise gold as both an adornment and a long-term investment.

“There are some categories of customers who view gold as a solid investment, better than cash, as it keeps its value against potential inflation,” said Khalid, a gold retailer at a shopping mall jewellery outlet.

“Such customers often look for gold jewellery at the lowest possible labour charges,” he said.

“They usually do not pay much attention to the design and ornamental value, and look for things made of gold, without any stones or decorative material, Khalid added. “They mostly go for chains, bracelets and rings of 21K or higher.”

Meanwhile, a number of gold shop owners pointed out that younger customers are



Small gold shops and workshops are favoured by customers due to their flexibility in offering various designs and responding to special customer demands.



increasingly seeking personalised jewellery, custom-made pieces, and minimalist designs suitable for everyday wear, while traditional customers continue to invest in heavier, old-style ornaments.

Shopping trends are also experiencing a major transformation with the extensive use of digital technology, as many retailers post their updated collection catalogues and heavily use social media marketing to attract younger consumers.

However, small gold shops and workshops in key areas of Doha, especially at souqs, are expected to remain highly competitive and favoured by general customers due to their flexibility in offering various designs and responding to special customer demands, in addition to their willingness to tolerate aggressive bargaining of labour charges, which can be 10% to 25% lower than the well-established brands.



A sample of a variety of local dates.

100 local farms set to showcase finest harvest at date festival

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Nearly 100 Qatari farms are set to participate in the 11th Local Date Festival, opening on July 25 under the patronage of the Ministry of Municipality and Souq Waqif Management.

The event highlights the continued growth of Qatar’s agricultural sector and support for local farmers.

Farm owners said that preparations have been completed to showcase some of the country’s finest date varieties, including Barhi, Khunaizi, Shishi and Khalas.

They expressed confidence that this year’s harvest will be among the

best in recent years in both quality and quantity, attributing the strong season to improved cultivation practices and better palm tree care.

Participants described the festival as one of Qatar’s premier agricultural and heritage events, offering a direct link between producers and consumers while preserving the country’s date-growing tradition.

They said that it has become an important marketing platform for local farms and contributes to strengthening national food security.

Farmers also welcomed the Ministry of Municipality’s initiative to open dedicated sales outlets for locally produced dates at major shopping malls, including Villaggio,

Landmark and Doha Festival City, from July 30.

They said that the initiative will expand marketing opportunities and improve consumer access to Qatari produce.

Al-TaHER Farm will showcase traditional local varieties such as Khunaizi, Khalas, Shishi and Barhi alongside the internationally renowned Medjool, which continues to grow in popularity.

Some varieties are especially suitable for long-term storage, increasing their commercial value.

The farm will also present a heritage-themed basket highlighting sustainability and Qatar’s agricultural legacy.

Al-Barari Farm expects this year’s

harvest to surpass last season’s in quality, citing continuous improvements in palm cultivation and years of farming expertise.

Its desalination plant has ensured reliable irrigation despite high operating costs, while summer temperatures have not affected crop quality.

In addition to fresh dates, the farm produces date syrup and plans to expand its range of products.

Meanwhile, Asat Al-Ra’i Farm will display rare date palm offshoots from Iraq, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

With around 50 palm varieties under cultivation, the farm sees the festival as an ideal platform to showcase premium offshoots that are increasingly sought after by collectors and growers.

Pakistani Mango Fest 3rd edition makes a splash

Over 84k visitors, sales of over 174 tonnes

The third edition of Hamba Pakistani Mango Exhibition and Its Products concluded at Souq Waqif on Monday (July 20) after attracting more than 84,000 visitors and recording sales of over 174 tonnes of Pakistani mangoes, spotlighting its growing popularity as one of Qatar’s leading seasonal food events.

Organised by the Celebrations Committee of the Private Engineering Office in co-operation with the embassy of Pakistan in Qatar, the exhibition transformed the Eastern Square of Souq Waqif into a showcase of Pakistan’s renowned mangoes and mango-based products, offering visitors an experience that combined shopping, tasting and culinary discovery.

More than 30 Pakistani and local companies participated alongside over 30 restaurants and food producers, presenting a

wide selection of dishes, desserts, juices, pickles, ice cream and seasonal fruits imported from Pakistan.

Visitors sampled more than 10 of Pakistan’s best-known mango varieties, including Sindhri, Chaunsa, White Chaunsa, Anwar Ratol and Dussehri, while also exploring a range of innovative mango-inspired products and recipes that highlighted the richness of Pakistani cuisine.

To ensure food safety and product quality, organisers established an on-site laboratory in co-operation with the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Municipality and a commercial laboratory to carry out inspections and quality testing throughout the event.

Despite logistical challenges arising from the current regional situation, which affected the arrival of some mango shipments, the organising committee, working closely with the embassy of Pakistan and relevant stakeholders, ensured the uninterrupted availability of premium-quality Pakistani mangoes during the exhibition.

General supervisor Khalid Saif al-Suwaidi said that the third edition built on the success of its predecessors and further strengthened the exhibition’s standing as one of Souq Waqif’s premier seasonal events.

He said that the continued partnership with the embassy of Pakistan enabled broad participation from companies and restaurants, allowing visitors to experience some of Pakistan’s finest mango varieties alongside innovative food products that reflected the country’s rich culinary heritage.

Al-Suwaidi noted that close co-ordi-



nation among organisers and partners helped overcome logistical challenges caused by regional developments, ensuring the exhibition maintained its quality standards and continued to meet visitors’ expectations.

He said that the turnout of 84,600 visitors and sales of 174,152kg of mangoes underscored the exhibition’s growing reputation as a leading platform for promoting Pakistan’s premium mangoes and related products in Qatar.

Al-Suwaidi thanked the embassy of Pakistan, government and private sector partners, media organisations and all working teams for contributing to the exhibition’s success.

He also expressed appreciation to the public for their strong support, saying that the event’s achievements reflected the collective efforts and close co-operation of all partners.

