

All-in-One Ecosystem

Regulated by OCB

0 668039 136499

MONDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13814

July 27, 2026
Safar 13, 1448 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

published in **QATAR** since 1978

Travel connected
with **GCC**
Roam Like Home

Use your **local plan's data, minutes, & SMS** while roaming the **GCC** for QR 125 / week.

T&Cs apply.

vodafone

For telecom operators 103 and inquiries

Interior Paint with Low VOC
Exceptional Washability
Superior Stain Resistant
Obtained **Qatar Quality Mark**
Obtained International Green Mark

GORD

تصميم جدران
تصميم جدران

Robson Paints
Tel: 446016023

THE PERFECT GIFT?
THE ONE THEY CHOOSE

Doha Festival City

BUSINESS | Page 1

Commercial Bank reports net profit of QR1.08bn in H1

Ready to **GUAC** AND **ROLL?**

Only on **talabat**

pro FREE DELIVERY

6THSTREET.COM
IS NOW

AIVI

Authentic Fashion & Lifestyle Destination

Delivering In
90
Minutes

Scan the QR code & download the AIVI app

Retailers drive surge in instalment demand

By **Peter Alagos**
Business Editor

Qatar's retailers are increasingly approaching fintech providers directly to request faster instalment integration, rather than waiting to be pitched, the top executive of a Doha-based tech firm has said.

"Retailers increasingly see a trusted instalment option not as an add-on but as a core part of the modern checkout, whether at the point of sale, through dynamic QR codes, via payment links or embedded directly in e-commerce," according to PayLater CEO Dr Devid Jegerson.

The shift marks a reversal from just a few years ago, when providers had to explain the concept from scratch, Dr Jegerson pointed out. "Not long ago, we were explaining what Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) was; today, merchants approach us," he told *Gulf Times* in an exclusive interview

Retailers now treat a trusted instalment option as a standard part of the modern checkout rather than an extra feature, he noted, whether at the point of sale, through dynamic QR codes, via payment links, or built directly into e-commerce platforms.

Because PayLater was built specifically for the Qatari market, Dr Jegerson pointed out, integration moves quickly, whether the client is a flagship store in a major mall or an independent outlet.

Dr Jegerson explained that interactions with merchants have moved past whether to offer the service at all. "The conversation has matured from 'should we offer this?' to 'how soon can we go live?'" he further said. **To Page 3**



PayLater CEO Dr Devid Jegerson. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

Qatar rallies allies behind US-Iran deal

PM fields calls from Gulf, Turkiye

HE Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held separate telephone calls yesterday with senior officials from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Oman, urging all parties to honour the understandings reached under the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Iran and to guarantee freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

In each call, the prime minister stressed the need for commitment to dialogue and diplomacy, saying implementing the memorandum in full was essential to protecting regional security, preserving the gains achieved and reinforcing stability. He reiterated Qatar's full support for efforts to reduce tensions and reach a comprehensive agreement delivering lasting peace.

He spoke with UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan. They discussed advancing bilateral co-operation and recent regional developments, particularly stepped-up diplomatic efforts and close co-ordination for de-escalation and for strengthening regional security.

He also held a call with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah al-Saud. They

reviewed bilateral relations and ways of further strengthening co-operation between Doha and Riyadh, and discussed diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination aimed at easing tensions.

He also received a call from Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan. They discussed bilateral relations and avenues for deepening co-operation between the two countries, as well as diplomatic initiatives intended to contain tensions and promote stability.

The prime minister spoke with Omani Foreign Minister Badr bin Hamad bin Hamoud al-Busaidi as well. They reviewed bilateral relations and ways to support and strengthen them, and discussed diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination to de-escalate tensions and enhance security and stability.

He also spoke with Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi and National Security Adviser Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed al-Nahyan. They discussed bilateral relations and joint co-ordination to de-escalate tensions.

Qatar has played a central mediating role in efforts to lower tensions between Washington and Tehran, and has repeatedly warned that disruption to traffic through the Strait of Hormuz would carry consequences for regional and global energy security. The calls came after a lull in hostilities. **(QNA)**

Qatar, Saudi discuss security co-operation



The Ministry of Interior received yesterday a delegation from Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Interior as part of efforts to strengthen bilateral security co-operation and expand the exchange of expertise. The Saudi delegation was headed by Major General Dr Ibrahim Satam al-Anzi, director-general of the General Department of Legal Affairs at the General Directorate of Public Security. The delegation toured the Correctional Institutions Department, the Judgments Enforcement Department, the Police Academy, the Juvenile Police Department, the Police Rescue Department (Al-Fazaa) and the Capital Security Department to review best practices and exchange expertise across various areas of security and policing. **(QNA)**

Shading the walk from station to door in peak summer

By **Joey Aguilar**
Doha

For commuters stepping out of an air-conditioned Metro station into Qatar's summer heat, the most difficult part of the journey can sometimes be the shortest: the final few hundred metres on foot.

As Doha expands its public transport, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, Qatar's intense summer climate is placing greater focus on how routes connecting Metro stations, bus stops and other transport hubs to people's destinations can be made more comfortable and accessible.



Commuters use a shaded bus stop in Doha during the summer heat. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

The issue is already recognised in Qatar's official planning framework. The Doha Municipality Vision and Development Strategy, developed under the Qatar National Master Plan, calls for a "network of shaded routes" connecting key facilities and transit stops to enhance thermal comfort for pedestrians and cyclists.

The policy highlights an increasingly important consideration for cities in hot climates: shade is not simply an amenity or architectural feature, but an important part of making streets and public spaces more usable during periods of intense heat.

For Qatar residents, the differ-

ence between shaded and exposed routes becomes particularly noticeable during summer, when daily routines often shift indoors or towards the cooler hours of early morning and evening.

"Shaded areas help a lot during summer. But sometimes we have to wait several minutes for buses, so I hope more will be built for commuters," Doha resident Ramil R told *Gulf Times*, adding that tall buildings and the canopy of trees also provide useful protection from direct sunlight.

A frequent Metro commuter, he finds public transport practical, particularly as stations provide welcome relief from the heat. **To Page 2**

Amir, Burnham mull strategic ties, Iraqi SJC president pays homage

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received yesterday a telephone call from British Prime Minister Andy Burnham, who expressed his sincere condolences on the demise of HH the Father Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. His Highness the Amir expressed his gratitude for the heartfelt sentiments and congratulated the prime minister on assuming office, wishing him success and further development and growth in bilateral relations. Furthermore, discussion during the call, focused on strategic co-operation between the two friendly countries and ways to support and develop it across various fields. His Highness praised the strength of these historical relations, which serve their mutual interests and enhance the existing partnership.



The two sides also discussed the latest regional updates, particularly the developments in the Gaza Strip, as well as the diplomatic efforts to reduce escalation and consolidate security in the Middle East region. Both leaders stressed the importance of continuing dialogue and diplomacy to address regional issues and support international efforts aimed at consolidating peace. Meanwhile, His Highness



the Amir received President of the Supreme Judicial Council of Iraq Dr Faiq Zidan, at his office at Lusail Palace yesterday morning. He extended his condolences to His Highness on the passing of HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, praying to Almighty Allah to encompass HH the late Father Amir with His vast mercy and grant him a place in His spacious Paradise.

PM meets Ugandan Acting FM

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uganda Haruna Kasolo Kyeyune, who is visiting Qatar. The prime minister received a message of condolence from Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni on the passing of HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. The talks also reviewed bilateral relations and ways to enhance co-operation, in addition to issues of mutual interest. **(QNA)**



US, Iran pause attacks

AFP, Reuters
Tehran/Washington

Iran and the United States held their fire yesterday, handing Gulf shipping and the oil industry a respite from missile strikes as President Donald Trump's UN envoy said the president was "giving talks some space". Iran said it had halted retaliatory attacks against Washington's allies in the Middle East, and US ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz told Fox News that, while forces remained "locked and loaded", Trump would give negotiations "a little bit of room". Prior to Friday, the US military had carried out strikes on Iran for 13 consecutive nights, in the largest rekindling of the almost five-month-

old war since an April ceasefire. But two consecutive nights have now passed without bombing. "These attacks continued until two nights ago, but over the past two nights the Americans have stopped their attacks," said Iran's army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia. "Since... our strategy has essentially been retaliatory, we have also halted our retaliatory operations." A senior Iranian official told Reuters that Tehran would hold fire as long as Washington did. "Iran's position remains 'attack for attack'; if the attacks stop, Iran will also halt its operations.

That message has already been conveyed to the United States," the source said, adding that Iran was prepared to mount a broad response should the US launch another attack. **To Page 5**



Labour minister meets Singaporean, Nigerian ambassadors



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Samikh al-Marri met separately yesterday with Singapore's ambassador Pong Kok Tian and Nigeria's ambassador Dr Mahmood Yakubu. The meetings dealt with bilateral co-operation, relations in the labour sector, and ways to support and further enhance them. - **QNA**

Shura Council Speaker meets with EU, Azerbaijan ambassadors



HE the Speaker of the Shura Council Hassan bin Abdullah al-Ghanim met separately yesterday the European Union ambassador Cristian Tudor and Azerbaijan's ambassador Dr Adish Mammadov. During the meeting between HE al-Ghanim and Tudor, they reviewed relations between the Shura Council and the EU and ways to enhance joint co-ordination, in addition to discussing issues of mutual interest. At the meeting between HE al-Ghanim and Mammadov, the Shura Council Speaker received a written message from the Speaker of Azerbaijan's National Assembly Sahiba Gafarova, pertaining to bilateral relations and ways to enhance joint co-ordination between the two sides. - **QNA**

Minister meets Ukraine's envoy



HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad met yesterday with Ukraine's ambassador to Qatar Andrii Kuzmenko. They discussed bilateral co-operation, relations and ways to support and strengthen them, along with issues of mutual concern. - **QNA**

Supreme Judiciary Council launches lawyer-linking service via WhatsApp

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Supreme Judiciary Council (SJC) has announced the launch of a new electronic service that enables litigants to link a previously registered case file to a lawyer through the WhatsApp application.

The new service is designed to facilitate access to legal case-related services and provide greater convenience for litigants by allowing them to connect their existing

court case with a lawyer registered with an accredited law firm.

According to the SJC, the service provides access to a range of legal and case-management functions, including case management, reviewing hearing dates and memoranda, and submitting electronic applications on behalf of the concerned party.

The service is available through WhatsApp via the dedicated number 44597777, offering users a direct and accessible channel to complete the required procedures electronically.

QCAA shuts, deregisters non-compliant travel and air cargo agencies

The Civil Aviation Authority (QCAA) has taken decisive regulatory action against non-compliant travel and air cargo agencies, shutting down two agencies and deregistering 10 others for violating licensing requirements.

Following sustained inspection campaigns by its Air Transport Department, the QCAA identified multiple violations, resulting in the administrative closure of two travel and air cargo agencies and the deregistration of 10 others.

The measures were taken in accordance with Law No. 3 of 2025, particularly Article 3, which requires agencies engaged in such activities to obtain the appropriate licences.

Qatar reaffirms support for east Congo peace bid

Qatar has reiterated its support for peace efforts in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo) during high-profile talks in Botswana's capital Gaborone aimed at advancing the African Union (AU)-led peace process.

Qatar took part in a co-ordination and planning meeting in Gaborone for the AU Panel of Facilitators and the Independent Joint Secretariat tasked with preparing an implementation plan for the eastern DR Congo peace process.

Qatar was represented by the director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)'s African Affairs Department, Dr Ali bin Ghanem al-Hajri, alongside Qatar's ambassador to Ethiopia Saad bin Mubarak al-Nuaimi, who is also Qatar's permanent representative to the AU, and Abdullah bin Hamad al-Nuaimi, adviser at the Office of the Minister of State at the MoFA.

Addressing the meeting, Dr al-Hajri



reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to supporting peace in eastern DR Congo, saying that Doha would continue working with all parties in close co-ordination with the US and the Togolese Republic, acting as the AU's mediator, to map out solutions to the conflict.

He outlined progress under the Doha track, including the activation of a

ceasefire monitoring and verification mechanism, continued co-operation with the International Committee of the Red Cross on a detainee exchange mechanism, and ongoing negotiations on the remaining protocols under the Doha framework.

Dr al-Hajri said that the peace process is comprehensive and complex, encompassing humanitarian, political, security, economic and social dimensions, and stressed that achieving a durable settlement would require patience, gradual progress and the ownership of all parties involved.

He also underscored the AU's central role in leading mediation efforts, citing its regional legitimacy and ability to engage neighbouring states and oversee implementation on the ground.

Dr al-Hajri called for continued co-ordination among the various mediation tracks and international partners to ensure a unified approach to supporting peace efforts. - **QNA**

Shading the walk from station to door in summer

From Page 1

Online discussions and expatriate guides also frequently advise residents to use the Doha Metro and covered walkways during summer to minimise prolonged exposure to the sun.

Discussions about daily commuting similarly highlight the extent to which everyday movement in Qatar relies on transitions between air-conditioned cars, Metro stations, buses and buildings.

"Getting around Doha by public transport at this time of year can be challenging for many, but I think it is always better to plan ahead before leaving the house," said Aristotle, another Doha resident who enjoys going out with his classmates during summer.

A passenger, for example, may travel comfortably across Doha on the Metro only to face an exposed walk between the station exit and an office, home, shop or other destination.

This final stretch presents a challenge for public transport in a hot-climate city.

"We visit and hop from one mall to another via the Doha Metro, and it's fun, and we don't have to wait for the cold months to do this," Aristotle said. "There are several ways to avoid direct sunlight, and I think being exposed for a few minutes is manageable."

Qatar's planning framework has long recognised the importance of connecting public transport with pedestrian-friendly routes.

A similar policy to Doha's appears in the Al Rayyan and Al Shahhania Municipality Vision and Development Strategy, which also calls for shaded routes linking key facilities and transit stops.

Several developments across Qatar demonstrate different approaches to addressing outdoor thermal comfort.

At Msheireb Downtown Doha, climate-responsive design is integrated into the masterplan.

According to Msheireb Properties, buildings and streets were designed to increase shading, reduce direct solar exposure and incorporate principles drawn from traditional Qatari architecture.

Rather than treating individual buildings in isolation, the district uses the relationship between buildings, streets and



public spaces to create a more pedestrian-friendly environment while providing greater protection from the sun.

At Ras Bufontas Free Zone, Qatar Free Zones Authority has also incorporated climate-responsive features into pedestrian planning.

The authority says pedestrian and cycling networks connect key facilities, while ample shading and specific street orientations help improve airflow and outdoor thermal comfort. Other locations have gone further by introducing mechanical cooling.

At Al Gharrafa Park, the Public Works Authority (Ashghal) installed an integrated cooling and air-conditioning system serving pedestrian and jogging tracks.

According to Ashghal, the system is designed to maintain temperatures along the tracks at around 26-28° Celsius, with trees and climbing plants helping to retain cooler air.

Similar temperature-controlled outdoor facilities have provided residents with more opportunities to remain physically active during the hottest months.

A 2025 Xinhua report on Qatar's adaptation to extreme summer heat highlighted the use of cooled and shaded outdoor walking facilities at Umm Al Seneem Park, where residents were able to exercise outdoors despite high temperatures.

Other destinations across Qatar also offer cooled, air-conditioned or climate-controlled outdoor spaces where residents and visitors can stroll more comfortably during the summer, even during the daytime.

This includes Oxygen Park at Education City, Souq Waqif's Eastern Square, Centro at Rawdat Al Hamama, Crystal Walk at Gewan Island (Qatar's longest climatized outdoor pedestrian walkway), 21 High St at Katara, Al Hazm Mall and West Walk in Al Waab.

Qatar Charity implements hundreds of projects in Tanzania in first half of 2026

Qatar Charity (QC) continued implementing its development and humanitarian projects across Tanzania from January to June.

The projects covered a wide range of sectors, including water, mosque construction, social welfare, healthcare, economic empowerment, relief assistance, and food security, aiming to improve living conditions and promote sustainable development for vulnerable communities.

In response to climate-related challenges and recurrent droughts affecting water availability, the QC implemented 431 water wells of varying depths across Tanzania.

These were 347 wells at a depth of 20m, 48 wells at 30m, four wells at 60m, 24 wells at 80m, six wells at 90m, and two wells at 100m.

To enhance sustainability, 30 wells were equipped with solar-powered systems, particularly in rural areas with limited access to electricity.

In addition, seven reverse osmosis units were installed to improve water quality and provide safe drinking water in areas facing water contamination challenges.

As part of its efforts to support infrastructure and strengthen social cohesion, Qatar Charity constructed 69 mosques across Tanzania: 56 mosques measuring 70sqm, 12 mosques measuring 80sqm, and one mosque measuring 120sqm.

These mosques provide appropriate spaces for worship, Islamic education, and the promotion of positive social and moral values within local communities.

In the field of social welfare, the QC implemented 52 projects targeting persons with dis-



abilities and vulnerable groups.

The interventions included the provision of wheelchairs, medical eyeglasses, and household items, helping improve beneficiaries' living conditions and meet their daily needs.

Qatar Charity also implemented nine healthcare projects aimed at expanding access to essential medical services.

These included six projects addressing non-communicable diseases, benefiting approximately 2,400 people through diagnostic and treatment services.

In addition, blindness prevention initiatives included 400 glaucoma surgeries and the provision of eye care services, medicines, and eyeglasses to more than 2,000 beneficiaries.

A cleft lip surgery project was also carried out, enabling 132 children to receive life-changing corrective procedures.

As part of its livelihood support programmes, the QC implemented three income-generating projects - one fishing boat project and two tuk-tuk transportation projects - creating employment opportunities and helping beneficiaries improve their household income.

The QC also implemented a relief programme on Mafia Island, benefiting 125 individuals from vulnerable families through the distribution of food supplies and essential relief items, helping alleviate the impact of difficult economic conditions.

In the area of food security, Qatar Charity launched six projects: four cattle farming projects aimed at improving nutrition and creating sustainable sources of income, and two vegetable gardening projects.

Amir congratulates Maldives president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to the Maldives's President Dr Mohamed Muizzu, on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent similar cables of congratulations to Muizzu on the occasion. - **QNA**

Amir congratulates Liberia's president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Liberia's President Joseph Boakai on the occasion of his country's Independence Day. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent cables of congratulations to Boakai on the occasion. - **QNA**

Minister holds phone call with Lebanese deputy PM

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi held a telephone conversation yesterday with Lebanon's Deputy Prime Minister Dr Tarek Mitri.

During the call, they reviewed bilateral relations and ways to support and develop co-operation. They also discussed the latest developments in Lebanon and the efforts undertaken by the Lebanese government to address the challenges facing displaced persons.

HE Dr al-Khulaifi affirmed Qatar's support for the efforts aimed at strengthening Lebanese state institutions and consolidating security and stability in Lebanon. - **QNA**

Al-Khulaifi gets call from Saudi minister's adviser

HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh al-Khulaifi received a telephone call yesterday from the adviser to the Saudi foreign minister on Lebanese affairs, Prince Yazid bin Mohammed bin Fahd al-Farhan.

They discussed deepening bilateral co-operation and the recent developments in Lebanon, as well as the Lebanese government's efforts to address challenges facing displaced people, including creating conditions conducive to their return to their areas. - **QNA**

Minister holds meeting with Saudi ambassador

Qatar and Saudi Arabia have discussed bilateral relations and the latest regional developments during talks in Doha.

HE the Minister of State for International Co-operation Dr Maryam bint Ali bin Nasser al-Misnad held a meeting yesterday with Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Qatar Prince Saad bin Mansour bin Saad bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud to explore ways to further enhance bilateral co-operation and discuss issues of mutual concern. - **QNA**

Minister receives copy of Kazakh envoy's credentials

HE the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Sultan bin Saad al-Muraikhi received yesterday a copy of the credentials of Kazakhstan's ambassador to Qatar Bakhyt Batyrshayev. HE al-Muraikhi wished the envoy success in his duties, emphasising utmost support to enhance bilateral relations and foster closer co-operation in various fields. - **QNA**

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has reaffirmed its commitment to protecting and expanding Qatar's mangrove forests, noting that the country is home to approximately 14sq km of mangrove coverage, including more than 7sq km within Al Thakhira Nature Reserve.

Marking the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, observed annually on July 26, the ministry said mangrove forests are found in several locations across the country, including Al Khor, Al Thakhira, Al Wakrah, Mesaieed, Al Aaliya Island, Fuwairit, Al Ruwais, Al Arish and Al Jemal.

The MoECC said it is working with national entities and institutions to protect

Ministry emphasises efforts to protect mangrove forests

mangrove forests, preserve their natural habitats, prevent overexploitation, and implement afforestation programmes based on scientific studies that assess the environmental suitability of planting sites.

Khalid Juma al-Mohannadi, the director of the MoECC's Wildlife Development Department, said that protecting mangrove forests "is not limited to expanding their area, but depends on the integrated management of their habitats, beginning with assessing site suitability in terms of tidal movement, soil characteristics and salinity, and extending to monitoring seedling growth and evaluating their condition after planting".

He stressed that the success of mangrove planting programmes "should not be measured solely by the number of



seedlings planted, but also by their ability to grow naturally and support marine habitats".

Al-Mohannadi added that the minis-

try's strategy focuses on protecting existing mangrove sites, encouraging natural regeneration, and carefully expanding plantations without disrupting the ecological balance of coastal areas.

He said successful mangrove cultivation depends on selecting appropriate locations, planting at the right time, and using suitable methods under the ministry's supervision.

The official urged individuals and organisations planning mangrove planting initiatives to co-ordinate with the ministry in advance to ensure site suitability and compliance with approved environmental requirements, helping safeguard coastal ecosystems and achieve long-term conservation goals.

The ministry also highlighted mangrove forests' contribution to climate

change mitigation, citing global estimates that a single hectare can store about 3,754 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO2), including carbon retained in both vegetation and soil.

In addition, mangroves play a vital role in protecting coastlines from erosion, reducing the impact of waves and coastal storms, and providing breeding, nursery and feeding grounds for numerous fish, shrimp and crustacean species.

They also serve as important habitats for resident and migratory birds, supporting marine and coastal biodiversity.

The ministry further underscored the tourism and economic value of mangrove forests, noting that destinations such as Al Thakhira Nature Reserve have become popular among nature enthusiasts and eco-tourists while contributing to fisheries and helping maintain the ecological balance of Qatar's coastal environment.



Dr Anees Alyafei

Obesity is a challenge requiring comprehensive community action: PHCC

An official from the Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) has highlighted the need for serious efforts to fight obesity as it is a public health challenge.

According to Dr Anees Alyafei, senior community medicine consultant and Wellness Centre in-charge at the PHCC, obesity is a complex chronic disease driven by high-calorie diets, physical inactivity, desk-bound jobs, increased screen time, and intensive marketing of unhealthy foods.

He added that sleep disorders, mental stress, and genetic factors also play significant roles.

The PHCC said that national and global studies confirm that rates of obesity and overweight in Qatar are among the highest in the region, both among adults and children, a matter that is reflected in high rates of chronic diseases, foremost among which are diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

The health complications of obesity extend far beyond excess weight, increasing the risk for type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, fatty liver, sleep apnea, certain cancers, and mental health challenges like depression.

In children, these cardiometabolic risks begin early, threatening long-term quality of life.

Qatar is actively addressing this challenge through integrated health policies, wellness centres, school health programmes, periodic health screenings, along with nutritional education programmes and the promotion of physical activity.

Dr Alyafei emphasised that quick crash diets are ineffective.

Sustainable weight management, he said, requires lasting lifestyle changes, such as adopting a balanced diet rich in whole foods, engaging in regular physical activity, managing stress, prioritising sleep, and fostering healthy habits early.

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Comprehensive maintenance works have been underway at different government schools across the country as part of extensive preparations for the start of the 2026-27 academic year.

The initiative is part of an integrated plan to ensure that educational facilities are fully prepared to provide a safe, modern, and supportive learning environment for students, teachers, and administrative staff from the first day of school.

The maintenance programme includes a wide range of preventative and rehabilitation works covering classrooms, science laboratories, air-conditioning, electrical and lighting systems, water and sewage networks, as well as safety and security systems.

Outdoor areas, sports facilities, and service amenities are also being upgraded to improve the efficiency and longevity of school infrastructure.

Mohamed Abdullah al-Dabbagh, principal of Mohamed Bin Abdulwahab Secondary School for Boys, said that summer maintenance is "a fundamental pillar in ensuring a stable and well-organised start to the new academic year", noting that carrying out rehabilitation and maintenance work during the summer break allows projects to be completed without disrupting teaching and learning.

He added that secondary schools have specialised educational facilities, including science laboratories, computer rooms, and

libraries, which require continuous inspection and maintenance to ensure operational readiness.

Al-Dabbagh stressed that the quality of school buildings has become a key component of educational quality, adding that school administrations regularly submit technical observations to the relevant authorities to ensure that all facilities are fully prepared before students return.

Fahad Ahmed al-Derham, principal of Mohamed Abdulaziz Al Mana Secondary School for Boys, described preventative maintenance as "a genuine investment in the quality of education and the sustainability of educational infrastructure".

He said that maintenance has evolved beyond repairing faults to include proactive planning aimed at preserving the efficiency of buildings and facilities while reducing future breakdowns.

The ongoing work includes upgrading educational facilities, maintaining air-conditioning, electrical, lighting, and water systems, as well as rehabilitating playgrounds, courtyards, and walkways.

Abdullah Mohamed Hassan al-Nuaimi, principal of Muath Bin Jabal Primary School for Boys, said that primary schools receive special attention during maintenance because of the direct link between facility readiness and the safety of younger students.

He said that maintenance teams are inspecting classrooms, corridors, schoolyards, and sanitary facilities while verifying the efficiency of air-conditioning and safety systems to ensure they meet the needs of primary school students.



Al-Nuaimi added that the school closely follows up on all observations related to facilities and equipment in co-ordination with the relevant authorities, noting that early preparedness gives parents confidence that their children will study in an environment that meets the highest standards of quality and safety.

Maintenance work is progressing according to a schedule designed to ensure completion before teaching and administrative staff return to schools.

This will allow school administrations sufficient time to finalise classroom arrangements, prepare laboratories and libraries, and complete all operational checks.

Preparations include testing fire alarm and suppression systems, surveillance cameras, Internet and communications networks, and inspecting school furniture and educational equipment to ensure full operational readiness before students arrive.

QT marks second edition of Purple Saturday in Qatar



Qatar Tourism (QT), through Visit Qatar in co-operation with the Ministry of Social Development and Family, and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, marked the second edition of Purple Saturday 2026.

The national initiative promotes the inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities while encouraging participating venues to provide more accessible and inclusive experiences.

First launched by the Authority for the Care of People with Disabilities in Saudi Arabia in 2021, Purple Saturday is observed annually on the last Saturday of July.

Since then, the initiative has expanded across the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), reflecting a shared regional commitment to inclusion, accessibility, and equal participation.

In Qatar, Purple Saturday brought to-

gether stakeholders from the public and private sectors to champion accessibility, raise awareness, and encourage greater community engagement.

As part of this year's edition, Qatar Calendar hosted a dedicated Purple Saturday celebration at the Qatar Toy Festival, with people with disabilities receiving complimentary access.

In recognition of the occasion, a number of prominent buildings and landmarks across Qatar were illuminated in purple, demonstrating the country's collective support for inclusion and accessibility.

Ahmed al-Binali, the director of Festivals and Events at Visit Qatar, said: "For the second consecutive year, Qatar Tourism, through its promotional arm Visit Qatar, is proud to support Purple Saturday as part of our commitment to making Qatar a more

inclusive and accessible destination."

"Through our collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development and Family, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and our tourism partners, we continue to enhance accessible experiences across the tourism sector," he said.

"The Qatar Toy Festival remains a key part of these efforts, offering complimentary access and an inclusive experience for people with disabilities," al-Binali added. "The strong turnout at last year's celebration reflects the growing momentum behind the initiative and the important role our community plays in advancing accessibility and inclusion."

Supporting the initiative, QT stakeholders, including hotels and retail outlets, offered exclusive discounts and enhanced accessibility services and experiences throughout Purple Saturday.

Art Mill Museum invites public to share what 'home' means ahead of Doha exhibition

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Art Mill Museum has launched a public call inviting people in Qatar and around the world to reflect on one of humanity's most universal questions: "What does home mean to you?"

The open call, titled "What Does Home Mean to You?" encourages participants to share personal stories and creative works that explore the idea of home beyond its physical definition.

Through videos, written reflections, photographs, drawings and other visual media, contributors are invited to capture the memories, re-

lationships, identities and emotions that shape their sense of belonging.

The initiative gains particular significance as the museum prepares to bring its acclaimed "My Home is Your Home" exhibition to Doha in autumn 2026.

A curated selection of submissions will be presented digitally within the exhibition's learning space, allowing visitors to encounter diverse perspectives from people in Qatar and across the globe while fostering dialogue on identity, culture and shared human experience.

Selected contributions will also become part of an evolving online publication and digital archive, ensuring the conversation continues beyond the exhibition and

remains accessible to wider audiences.

Originally launched in October 2025 alongside the "My Home is Your Home" exhibition at the Qatar Pavilion during the Venice Architecture Biennale, the initiative invited participants to reflect on the meaning of home in a rapidly changing world.

Since then, the Art Mill Museum's Learning and Public Engagement team has been building a growing digital archive of stories that reveal how the concept of home varies across cultures, generations and lived experiences.

The museum said the project is rooted in the belief that home is deeply personal.

For some, it is a place or a home-

land; for others, it is defined by family, memories, friendships or a feeling of comfort and security.

Bringing together these diverse narratives creates a collective portrait that celebrates both the richness of individual experiences and the values shared across communities.

Creative submissions will be accepted until September 30, with the museum encouraging artists, writers, photographers and members of the public of all ages to take part in the cultural initiative.

The project forms part of the Art Mill Museum's broader vision of placing public participation at the heart of cultural storytelling as it progresses towards its official opening in 2030.

vHe continued, "When a shopper reaches for an instalment option before reaching for a card, it tells you BNPL has crossed from novelty into habit, from something you try to something you rely on."

"That is a real signal of consumer confidence — not only in the category, but in the idea that paying over time, transparently and interest-free, is a sensible way to manage a household budget rather than a sign of fi-



Developed by Qatar Museums on Doha's Corniche, the future Art Mill Museum will transform the historic flour mill site into a major international centre for modern and contemporary art.

Designed by Chilean architecture firm Elemental, led by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Ale-

jandro Aravena, the museum will anchor Doha's cultural corridor alongside the Museum of Islamic Art and the National Museum of Qatar, offering expansive exhibition galleries, public gardens and creative spaces dedicated to artistic innovation and cross-cultural exchange.

Retailers drive surge in instalment demand

From Page 1

The partnerships themselves have also grown more strategic, Dr Jegerson noted, now extending to joint campaigns, shared conversion data and co-investment in the customer experience.

"When a merchant stops seeing you as a vendor and starts seeing you as a partner, you know the category has arrived," he emphasised.

Dr Jegerson further stated that malls and large retailers are also starting to view instalment options as a competitive tool to draw footfall, particularly among businesses paying closer attention to shifting consumer habits.

He explained that a trusted, Shariah-compliant instalment option can lift conversion at the till, increase average basket

size, and capture customers who might otherwise have delayed a purchase, calling this a meaningful edge for retailers competing for the same shopper.

"I would add a note of discipline, though: footfall driven by responsible flexibility is durable, while footfall driven by encouraging people to overspend is not...the goal is never simply more traffic; it is more satisfied,

returning customers," Dr Jegerson said, describing the approach as a loyalty engine rather than a discount gimmick.

Dr Jegerson pointed to a change in checkout behaviour as one of the clearest signals of where the category stands today. "It is one of the most telling shifts I have seen," he reiterated.

Dr Jegerson added, "When a shop-

per reaches for an instalment op-

nancial strain," he said.

Dr Jegerson linked the shift partly to younger, digitally native consumers who expect flexibility and control as standard rather than a bonus.

"Our job is to be worthy of that trust, with complete clarity on terms, no hidden costs and a product that keeps the customer firmly in control," Dr Jegerson emphasised.

"Confidence, once earned, is fragile, and we treat it that way," he added.

Qatar Olympic Academy advances sports education, capacity building

The Qatar Olympic Academy delivered a wide range of academic programmes, professional courses and community initiatives during the first half of 2026, strengthening sports education and professional capacity building in Qatar and across the region.

Between January and June, the Academy delivered a broad range of specialised education and training programmes for sports professionals, administrators, coaches, athletes, and sports enthusiasts. The curriculum covered

leadership and management, sports governance, event management, strategic planning, marketing, sustainability, innovation, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence, while strengthening participants' professional capabilities.

The Academy further expanded its strategic partnerships during the first half of 2026, deepening cooperation with sports organisations, academic institutions, national Olympic committees, sports federations, and educational bodies to advance

Academy delivered academic programmes, professional courses and community initiatives during the first half of 2026

Olympic and sports education in the region.

The Academy also stepped up its engagement in sports research through specialised conferences and seminars, while expanding its digital outreach to make its programmes and initiatives more accessible in Qatar and internationally.

Executive Director of the Qatar

Olympic Academy Khalil Ibrahim al-Jaber said the Academy's performance in the first half of 2026 highlighted its commitment to excellence and innovation in Olympic and sports education, adding that it would continue to strengthen national and regional capacities and promote Olympic values in line with international standards.

Al-Jaber attributed the Academy's achievements to the efforts of its staff and its strategic partnerships with sports and academic institutions, adding that growing demand for its programmes reflected confidence in its role in developing sports professionals.

He also underscored the importance of representing Qatar and the Qatar Olympic Academy at international forums, saying participation in the National Olympic Academies Forum and cooperation with the Saudi Olympic

Academy had strengthened knowledge exchange, promoted Gulf cooperation, and supported the advancement of Olympic education and sustainable sports development.

Al-Jaber said the Academy would continue expanding its programmes and initiatives, adopting advanced educational technologies, and strengthening its regional and international engagement in support of Qatar's vision of becoming a global hub for sport, education, and human development. (QNA)

MoECC launches best illustrated short story competition for children

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has announced the launch of an environmental awareness competition for children to write the best illustrated short story on protecting the ozone layer.

Organised in collaboration with Qatar Reads, an initiative under Qatar National Library, the competition is open to children aged 10-14 years.

In a statement issued yesterday, the MoECC said that the competition reflects the State of Qatar's strong commitment to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, in addition to aligning with this year's World Ozone Day theme "Global Action for a Cooler Planet."

The competition aims to raise environmental awareness among younger generations and encourage children to highlight the importance of climate protection and positive environmental behaviours by combining storytelling with creative illustration.

The ministry outlined the competition's requirements, stating that entries may be submitted individually or by teams of up to three children, adding that

each submission must be: An illustrated short story consisting of 4-8 pages. Written entirely in Arabic. An original work created by the participating children. Produced without the use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. A story that has not previously been submitted to or won any other competition. Accompanied by illustrations or explanatory images.

The MoECC also specified several key themes that the stories should address, including:

The role of the Montreal Protocol in protecting the ozone layer. The importance of the ozone layer in safeguarding Earth. The role of individuals and communities in protecting the environment. Practical solutions and positive behaviours that support sustainable habits in daily life. Children may create illustrations either by hand or using graphic design software.

The Ministry pointed out that all submitted stories will be carefully reviewed and evaluated by a specialised judging panel based on specific artistic and technical criteria, including:

Creativity and originality. Relevance to the topic of ozone protection and environmental conservation. Clarity of the mes-

sage and its educational impact. Quality of the storytelling and language. Quality of the illustrations and visual design. Compliance with the competition's rules and general guidelines.

The MoECC has allocated cash prizes for the top three winners:

1st Place: QR4,000, as well as printing and publishing the winning story; 2nd Place: QR3,000; and 3rd Place: QR2,000.

The ministry underscored that all of those who submit their works will receive certificates of participation, while winners will also receive certificates of recognition.

It added that winners and outstanding participants will be honoured during an official ceremony held in conjunction with the marking of the World Ozone Day on September 16.

Regarding applications, the MoECC invited those interested in taking part to make sure to include their name, age, and contact details (phone number and email address), along with their submissions.

The ministry set the deadline for submissions on September 1, adding that entries should be sent directly to the Ministry via the dedicated email address: CHWD-mecc.gov.qa. (QNA)



NCSA hosts 3rd Cyber Security Youth Camp

The National Cyber Security Agency (NCSA) has announced the launch of the Cyber Security Youth Camp 2026.

Running for a period of three weeks, the youth camp is organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Sports and Youth.

Delivered by the NCSA's National Cyber Security Academy, the youth camp reaffirms the NCSA's commitment to creating a digitally aware generation capable of protecting its cyberspace.

The Cyber Security Youth Camp 2026 is taking place at the Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys and is involving 400 students (200 boys and 200 girls) aged between 13 and 17 years, who study in various public and private schools across the country.

The NCSA said that the Cyber Security Youth Camp is part of its ongoing efforts and strategic plans to develop national capa-

bilities and enhance cybersecurity awareness among young people.

It added that the camp provides students with a specialised educational environment that enables them to acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

This contributes to preparing a generation capable of addressing cyber challenges and supporting Qatar's digital transformation journey, the NCSA said.

Delivered via lectures and interactive workshops, the camp's programme covers six core pillars: Fundamentals, Networking, Ethical Hacking, Web Security, Systems, and Cyber Defense.

The youth camp features interactive discussion sessions with leading cybersecurity experts from the government, private, and academic sectors.

These sessions are designed to inspire young participants, provide them with practical professional insights, and highlight the evolving skills increasingly demanded by today's job market.

For the first time, the Cyber Security Youth Camp is offering registered students this edition, the option to participate remotely, allowing them to access the training programmes and educational content through the e-learning platform.

This move seeks to broaden the programme's reach and provide a larger number of students with the opportunity to take part, whether by attending in person at the camp or from their homes.

Students attending on-site engage in hands-on practical exercises supported by specialised tools, including the virtual "Try-HackMe" platform.

The programme adopts a game-based learning approach and goal-oriented progression, featuring collaborative challenges such as "Escape the Virus" and "Solve the Crime Mystery," which encourage students to complete complex tasks.

The camp also includes competitive tournaments, creative workshops, and educational field visits. (QNA)

Inspection campaign at Industrial Area



The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, in co-operation with the Environmental Security Group of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya), carried out an inspection campaign in Industrial Area 57 as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen environmental oversight and ensure compliance with environmental legislation and regulations. The campaign, carried out by the ministry's Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department, covered 120 facilities, where the inspectors conducted field visits to verify compliance

with environmental standards and requirements and took the necessary legal action against violators in accordance with applicable legislation. The ministry said the inspections form part of its continuous regulatory plans aimed at enhancing environmental compliance, reducing violations, and raising awareness among facilities of their environmental responsibilities. It stressed that the initiative supports efforts to protect the environment, preserve natural resources, and advance Qatar's sustainable development objectives.



QatarEnergy LNG Tender Invitation

No.	TENDER NUMBER / DESCRIPTION	TENDER ISSUE PERIOD	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER CLOSING DATE
1	LTC_C_MNT_7759_26 INSPECTION, MAINTENANCE AND OVERHAULING OF ON LOAD TAP CHANGER (OLTC) INCLUDING THE DIAGNOSTIC TESTING OF POWER TRANSFORMERS	23/07/2026 to 09/08/2026	0	75,000	12/08/2026

Scope of Work:
CONTRACTOR shall provide comprehensive inspection, maintenance and overhauling services for On-Load-Tap Changer (OLTC) including the diagnostic testing of power transformers and associated OLTC components, to be executed on a call-off basis.

Bid Validity: Bid Offer should be valid for **180** calendar days from the Tender Closing Date.

Place for Tender Collection and Bid Submission:
ITT document for this tender will be available in QatarEnergy LNG website under Suppliers tab >Current Open Tenders. The bids shall be submitted through the QatarEnergy LNG online platform (SMART by GEP).

Note: Local Companies (established under the Laws of State of Qatar with local Commercial Registration) are advised to refer to the tender documentation and In-Country Value (ICV) Digital Portal: - <https://icv.qa/en-US/> for details of ICV compliance that may be applicable.

Japanese embassy announces '2026 Illustration Contest'

The embassy of Japan in Qatar announced the return of the Qatar-Japan Illustration Contest for its second consecutive year, following the overwhelming success of its inaugural edition.

Organised in collaboration with leading local cultural partners Geekdom and Nakama, the contest celebrates the vibrant fusion of Japanese art and culture within the Qatari community.

Officially launched on July 19, this year's contest invites artists to create original works under the theme "Crossroads of Legends: My Original Japan-Qatar Hero/Heroine".

The competition, designed to deepen cross-cultural exchange, provides a platform for Qatari citizens and residents to showcase their creativity and passion for Japanese art across three distinct categories, including a dedicated category for children.

Artists of all skill levels are encouraged to apply before August 27. The winners will be selected by a distinguished panel of guest judges, and will receive amazing prizes sponsored by Teyseer Motors - Suzuki, Fnac Qatar, Daiso Japan, and Iwatani Corporation.

Details on the contest rules and submission guidelines are available on the embassy of Japan in Qatar's official website.

signed to deepen cross-cultural exchange, provides a platform for Qatari citizens and residents to showcase their creativity and passion for Japanese art across three distinct categories, including a dedicated category for children.

Artists of all skill levels are encouraged to apply before August 27. The winners

will be selected by a distinguished panel of guest judges, and will receive amazing prizes sponsored by Teyseer Motors - Suzuki, Fnac Qatar, Daiso Japan, and Iwatani Corporation.

Details on the contest rules and submission guidelines are available on the embassy of Japan in Qatar's official website.

Alreyada Girls Center launches summer camp in partnership with NMoQ

The Alreyada Girls Center yesterday launched a museum-themed summer camp in partnership with the National Museum of Qatar (NMoQ) as part of its summer activities programme.

The camp brings together 20 girls aged 12-18 and aims to introduce them to museum professions and the preservation of Qatar's national heritage, while highlighting museums as dynamic learning environments.

Head of the Alreyada Girls Center Najla al-Hajri underscored the importance of the partnership, saying the launch of the camp reflects the centre's vision of empowering young people and equipping them with the leadership and practical skills needed for the future.

Running through July 30, the camp features interactive workshops and activities on archaeology and heritage preservation, including hands-on sessions where participants can examine archaeological artefacts and learn about excavation techniques and collections management. The program also offers



practical training in visitor services and library operations, providing participants with behind-the-scenes experience in visitor reception and ticketing.

The programme concludes with workshops on crafting traditional tools and raising community awareness, as well as an exclusive film presented by Faisal Abdullah al-Nuaimi, Director of the Archaeology Department at Qatar Museums, on the production of flint tools and historic arrowheads. (QNA)

and raising community awareness, as well as an exclusive film presented by Faisal Abdullah al-Nuaimi, Director of the Archaeology Department at Qatar Museums, on the production of flint tools and historic arrowheads. (QNA)



A member of the Lebanese army sits on a military vehicle in Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh, after the withdrawal of Israeli forces. (Reuters)

Lebanon army condemns Israeli attacks preventing deployment in south

AFP
Beirut

Lebanon's army yesterday condemned ongoing Israeli military activities in the country's south that it said were preventing its full deployment under a framework deal reached with Israel last month.

"Israeli occupation forces continue their attacks and violations of current understandings and of international laws through the systematic destruction and bulldozing of homes, bombardment and sweeps with automatic weapons in several southern areas," an army statement said.

"The continuation of these attacks obstructs the army's full deployment according to current agreements and prevents the return of residents to their villages and towns," it added.

Under a US-sponsored agreement signed last month, Lebanon's army is to disarm Hezbollah and the Israeli military is to withdraw from "pilot zones" where Lebanese forces will subsequently deploy.

The deal came more than three months after Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East with rocket fire at Israel in support of Tehran, triggering major Israeli airstrikes and a ground invasion that Lebanese authorities say have killed more than 4,300 people.

Lebanon's army also accused Israeli soldiers of "opening fire near army positions in Kfar Tibnit,

Nabatieh al-Fawqa and Zawtar al-Garhbiya, which hinders the implementation of its missions".

While violence has declined since the signing of a US-Iran memorandum last month on the regional conflict, and the Lebanon-Israel framework deal, Lebanon continues to report intermittent Israeli strikes and artillery shelling on the south, as well as the detonations of buildings in southern villages.

This week, Lebanon's army began deploying to Zawtar al-Gharbiya, one of the "pilot zones" under the framework agreement, and in recent days local residents have begun checking on their homes there.

Israeli forces were previously present on the outskirts of the village.

An AFP correspondent yesterday saw heavy damage and Lebanese soldiers in the streets as some residents inspected their homes.

"When I entered my home, I felt sadness. The destruction hurt me," said resident Ihsan Yaghi, surrounded by walls blackened from fire and rooms strewn with debris and rubble.

"Our homes used to be filled with life," she told AFP, but vowed that "we will rebuild."

"We stand with the (Lebanese) army," she said, adding that "we want to feel safe. It's time for the state to take care of us, we're tired."

The army statement said its soldiers "continue to accompany the return of residents" to Zawtar al-Gharbiya.

Israeli settlers set fire to two mosques in West Bank

Reuters
Qusra, West Bank

Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian villages in the occupied West Bank early yesterday, setting fire to two mosques and scrawling graffiti on buildings, Palestinian officials said.

On Friday, four Palestinians and two Israeli soldiers - one of them acting as a local security coordinator - had been killed when a crowd of Israeli settlers made an incursion around the Palestinian village of Tal, southwest of Nablus.

Villagers came out of their homes to confront the settlers, officials said. The subsequent shootout joined a growing series of clashes involving settlers in which dozens of Palestinians have been killed this year and hundreds wounded, according to figures from the UN and the Palestinian Authority.

Abdel Azim Wadi, head of the village council in Qusra, southeast of Nablus, said settlers had torched a newly completed mosque in his village early yesterday.

He said they sprayed slogans in Hebrew on the walls, with messages including 'Jewish revenge' and the name of one of the Israelis killed near Tal.

"The village has faced repeated attacks since 2011, and these attacks have increased since the war," he told Reuters by telephone.

Most countries and United Nations bodies consider Jewish settlements in the West Bank illegal, a position Israel rejects, while the Palestinians seek to establish an independent state in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Since the war in Gaza started, settler attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank have increased sharply.

The Israeli military said troops sent to Qus-



Ahmed Abu Mahmoud, 64, sits at a mosque allegedly burned by Israeli settlers in the village of Qusra, south of Nablus in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. (AFP)

ra, which sits near several large Israeli settlements, had found graffiti and signs of arson and were searching for suspects. It said police officers would be sent to collect evidence.

"The security forces strongly condemn incidents of this kind, including harm to religious sites, and will continue to act decisively to maintain security and public order in the area," the military said.

Palestinian officials said settlers had also tried to burn a mosque near Kour, southeast of the city of Tulkarm.

Farid Jiyousi, a member of the village council, said three settlers had tried to set the mosque ablaze at dawn but worshippers had

put out the fire before it reached the main area of the mosque. "This is the first attack our village has experienced," he said, adding that the attackers had also sprayed graffiti in Hebrew on the mosque walls.

Following Friday's incident, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who faces an election in October, ordered a reinforcement of troops in the area and said more settlements would be authorised to increase security.

Right-wing politicians in his government, including the hardline finance minister Bezalel Smotrich, have called for accelerated moves to take over the West Bank, which was occupied by Israel following the 1967 Middle East war.

Israeli strike kills a top Hamas security official in Gaza

Reuters
Cairo

An Israeli airstrike yesterday killed a senior officer of the Hamas-run Palestinian internal security service in the Gaza Strip and an associate as they travelled in a vehicle through Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza, medics and police officials said.

The strike killed Colonel Wael El-Ledawi, head of the service in central Gaza, and Major Ramez Abu Zraiq, medics and the Hamas-run interior ministry said.

The Israeli military said it had carried out a strike against a Hamas fighter, without further details. Israel has killed dozens of members of the Hamas-led police force, including senior officials, in the past months, accusing many of them of being members of the Hamas armed wing who posed imminent threats to Israel and its forces inside Gaza.

Hamas says Israeli attacks on the police force and its headquarters are intended to sow chaos and anarchy in the enclave and violate the US-brokered October ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

The latest deaths add to a toll of more than

1,190 Palestinians, mostly civilians, killed by Israeli attacks since the ceasefire took effect, according to Gaza health officials.

The truce halted full-scale fighting but has not ended near-daily Israeli strikes.

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

Israel effectively controls an estimated 64% of the tiny coastal Strip, bombarded to ruins by Israel's two-year military assault.

Nearly all of Gaza's 2 million people now live on a sliver of land on the coast, mainly in makeshift tents or damaged buildings and facing dire conditions, under Hamas control.

Syria reports fresh Israeli incursion, shelling as it seeks recovery support

AFP
Damascus

Syrian state media said Israeli forces carried out an incursion into the country's south yesterday, a day after the visiting UN chief urged an end to Israeli violations and respect for Syria's sovereignty.

State news agency SANA said that "Israeli occupation forces carried out an incursion early yesterday into the villages of Maariya and Al-Aarda in the Yarmuk basin in the west of Daraa province".

It said the soldiers, accompanied by three military vehicles and a bulldozer, set up a checkpoint in Al-Aarda, and that forces "dropped leaflets in towns in the Yarmuk basin warning residents against closing roads or obstructing the advance of the vehicles".

After the December 2024 overthrow of longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad, Israel sent troops into the UN-patrolled buffer zone that had separated Israeli and Syrian forces on the Israeli-oc-

cupied Golan since 1974.

It has carried out strikes and repeated incursions deeper into Syrian territory.

Israeli officials have said they intend to keep forces in a "security zone" in southern Syria, where they seek a broader demilitarised zone.

Also yesterday, SANA said Israeli forces fired artillery shells at farmland near the Quneitra province village of Taranja, without reporting casualties.

Visiting UN chief Antonio Guterres on Saturday said that "violations of Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity are unacceptable and must cease."

"What is happening in the region around the Golan Heights is totally unacceptable," he said, emphasising that "the Golan Heights are Syrian territory."

During a meeting with Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa on Saturday, Guterres reaffirmed the UN's "commitment to Syria's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity, and expressed deep concern regarding

violations by Israel" of the 1974 disengagement agreement, a UN statement said.

Israel captured most of the Golan from Syria in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and later annexed the areas under its control, in a move not recognised by most of the international community.

Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani said Saturday that "the continuation of Israeli military actions and the unlawful occupation of our land beyond the 1974 line is a direct threat to the security of the region", demanding an "immediate and unconditional withdrawal".

Last month in the Yarmuk Basin area, state media and a local official said residents of the village of Abidin fled Israeli artillery fire after locals tried to block a road to stop an Israeli patrol that was advancing in the area.

Despite tensions between the neighbours, Israel and Syria's new authorities have held several rounds of direct talks and have agreed to establish an intelligence-sharing mechanism.

US, Iran pause attacks

From Page 1

The source said Tehran did not hold much hope that the decision represented a major shift in the US negotiating position. "There is more scepticism than optimism about the halt in attacks. The prevailing view is that the pause is tactical rather than genuine."

Fighting over the strategic Strait of Hormuz derailed diplomatic efforts between Washington and Tehran, but the conflict then expanded beyond the vital energy corridor to include attacks on US bases, regional shipping and Gulf allies. The two-week US campaign effectively torpedoed last month's interim agreement aimed at ending the war that the United States and Israel launched in February. Unconfirmed Iranian media reports yesterday said an

oil tanker had been damaged by a sea mine.

The New York Times and CNN reported that Trump had backed off plans to escalate after concerns were raised on Friday by some of his advisers, including over whether US missile defence stocks were running low from protecting bases in the region. Both identified Pentagon Chief of Staff Dan Caine; CNN said Vice President JD Vance also expressed reservations. Waltz dismissed the idea, telling NBC News: "I want to be crystal clear. The US military - and I've verified this every which way - has everything that it needs to conduct this campaign as effectively as it needs to be."

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is due at the White House tomorrow and is expected to urge Trump to maintain a tough line on Tehran's

nuclear programme, which Iran insists is civilian. "One way or the other, they have to end their nuclear programme, and with a deal or without a deal, that has to come to an end," Netanyahu said.

US forces have struck bridges and tunnels in southern Iran, prompting Iran to strike water desalination plants that nearby Gulf Arab states rely on. Iran-backed Houthi rebels said yesterday they downed a Saudi drone over northwestern Yemen, a day after claiming attacks on Aramco sites in Jizan and Yanbu. Their Red Sea blockade on Saudi oil pushed Brent above \$100 for the first time since May.

In Tehran, locals carried on with a normal morning, with shops and restaurants open as the city suffered a heatwave. (Reuters/AFP)

MWANI
QATAR



موانى
قطر

TENDERS AND AUCTIONS COMMITTEE

TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

The Tenders and Auctions Committee of Mwani Qatar hereby announces the below tenders with the following terms and conditions:

SL. NO.	TENDER FOR	TENDER NO.	TENDER BOND	DOC FEES	CLOSING DATE	Remarks
1	MAINTENANCE OF HVAC SYSTEMS IN HAMAD PORT (CHILLERS & CCUs) FOR (3) YEARS	MQ\TAC/TEN\445\2026	QRS. 125,000	QRS. 400	25.08.2026	Two envelope.
2	REPLACEMENT OF CHILLERS' CONDENSER COILS IN HAMAD PORT	MQ\TAC/TEN\446\2026	QRS. 40,000	QRS. 300	26.08.2026	Two envelope.
3	MAINTENANCE OF BUILDING MAINTENANCE SYSTEM (BMS) IN HAMAD PORT (RE TENDER)	MQ\TAC/TEN\429\2026	QRS. 20,000	QRS. 300	27.08.2026	Two envelope.

1 - Tender documents can be obtained (via Email) from the Finance and Accounting Department Tel No. (40453724/568) , after depositing the non-refundable amount mentioned above at MQ A/C No. (0850 - 102030 - 060) at QNB and submitting the bank depositing receipt and copy of the Commercial Registration to : (tender,secretary@mwani.com.qa) Tel. (40453724 / 568 - 31265655 / 30121037) .

2 - Offer should be accompanied with a Tender Bond / issued by one of the Banks operating in Qatar for the amount shown in the above table and valid for 120 days from the closing date. The offer which is not accompanied by the Tender Bond will not be considered. The successful bidder should submit a Performance Bond of 10% of the total Tender value, which should be valid for (90) days after the expiry of the contract period.

3 - Offers should be valid for ninety (90) days commencing from the tender closing date and MQ has the right (after Tenders and Auctions Committee approval) to increase or decrease the items/services by 20% of the contract value according to its conditions and prices.

4 - The deadline for submitting offers will be **02:00 pm** of the date shown above. Any offer arriving thereafter will not be considered.

5 - The offers should be deposited in the Tenders and Auctions Committee Box of MQ as per the address given above. It should be in closed envelopes, sealed with red wax and addressed to the Chairman, Tenders and Auctions Committee of MQ , writing the number and subject of the Tender. The tender submitting party should confirm that he has received the receipt for delivering the tender

6 - The offers must be submitted in **Two envelope system, (Technical original and copy one envelope + Commercial original and copy one envelope)** The envelopes should not bear any mark denoting the name of the Company. **The original Tender bond and copy of the ICV certificate must be attached with the Original Technical offer.**

7 - Every tenderer should attach document showing previous similar experience in the field of the required items/servicer.

8 - For more clarification, please contact Tenders Secretary .

 Mwani Qatar

 @Mwaniqtr

 Mwani.qatar

 Mwani.Qatar

 Mwani Qatar

www.mwani.com.qa

US lifts ban on imports of Mexican cattle imposed over New World screwworm

Reuters
Washington

The US Department of Agriculture said last week on Friday it is lifting a ban on imports of Mexican cattle that it imposed more than a year ago to keep out the flesh-eating livestock pest New World screwworm. The halt of imports drove US beef prices to record highs, hurting consumers and putting pressure on President Donald Trump's administration to lower costs. The ban also ultimately failed to keep out screwworm, which has moved north through Central America and was detected in June on Texas farms and in New Mexico. The US plans to resume importing Mexican cattle at a port

of entry in Douglas, Arizona, in 30 days, and then eventually open two additional ports of entry in New Mexico, the USDA said in a statement, adding it is now safe to start the reopening. The USDA said it would open southern cattle ports in phases, adding that the phased reopening was contingent on Mexico's adherence to a plan to control the screwworm. Screwworms are parasitic flies whose females lay eggs in open wounds and mucous membranes on any warm-blooded animal. Once the eggs hatch, hundreds of screwworm larvae use their sharp mouths to burrow through living flesh, eventually killing their host if left untreated. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said she had instruct-

ed local authorities to expedite preparations for the resumption of livestock exports to the US. Exports are due to resume in the last weeks of August, she said on social media. In Texas, the United States' biggest cattle-producing state, closing the border has forced the \$100 bn US beef industry to contract. Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller praised the Trump administration's decision to allow a limited resumption of cattle importation from Mexico but voiced continued concern about the ongoing disruption to the US cattle industry due to the screwworm. "Resuming cattle importation from Mexico is the right move for ranchers and American consumers, but it's a decision that should have been made sooner. While I'm

pleased to see this important trade relationship restored, the prolonged closure has already taken a toll on producers, disrupted supply chains and created uncertainty that could have lasting consequences for the cattle industry," Miller said in a statement. But Miller said the USDA's current approach to the screwworm threat has not gone far enough. "While there have been important steps in the right direction, the pace and scale of the screwworm response have not matched the threat," Miller said. Meat Institute President and CEO Julie Anna Potts said the industry group supports "a careful, phased reopening of the border that reflects both vigilance and confidence in our response plans." "Importing cattle from Mexico

allows beef packers to better meet consumer demand given the tight supply of US cattle," Potts said. Resuming imports will increase risks for more US infestations, added Bill Bullard, CEO of the US cattle producers' group R-CALF USA. "As long as the border is open, it will incentivise the northward movement of cattle from southern Mexico, where the pest is endemic, to the US," Bullard said. US beef prices set record highs this year as domestic cattle supplies dropped to a 75-year low because of the import ban and drought conditions that drove American producers to slash their herds. Tight supplies raised cattle costs for meatpackers, including Tyson Foods, which closed a massive

processing plant in Nebraska this year. Rival JBS also said it will close a Pennsylvania beef plant. The Texas Cattle Feeders Association, which represents the cattle feeding industry in Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico, said the US can resume imports safely with the correct protocols in place. "We think the science supports it," said Josh Winegarner, the association's director of government relations. He added that the halt had given the USDA time to work on its protocols and response to screwworm. Ports of entry in Arizona and New Mexico are farther away from screwworm infestations in Mexico, and resuming imports into those locations is considered less risky than restarting imports into Texas, according to livestock traders.

Trump faces midterm reckoning with only 100 days to US vote

AFP
Washington

One hundred days before the US midterm elections, President Donald Trump's Republicans are staring down polling that points to the loss of the House of Representatives and a ferocious battle to retain the Senate. Trump will not appear on the ballot on November 3, but the stakes for his presidency could hardly be higher. A Democratic House would give the party control of powerful committees and subpoena authority, likely subjecting Trump's administration to two years of investigations and potentially exposing him to a third impeachment drive. Republicans enter the final stretch with a historically narrow House majority, weak presidential approval ratings and an electorate increasingly unhappy about living costs and the grinding war with Iran. US elections website Decision Desk HQ predicts that the Democratic Party has a 59-percent chance of winning the House, forecasting a 224-211 majority. The president's party usually loses ground in midterm elections, and only a handful of seats need to change hands. Gasoline prices have climbed above \$4 a gallon as the Iran war disrupts energy markets, inflation remains elevated and interest rates are high. Polling cited by Democrats suggests voters now trust them more than Republicans on inflation, health care and even immigration, long considered a Republican strength. "Donald Trump and Repub-



President Donald Trump at Dover Air Force Base in Delaware. (Reuters)

licans have failed the American people," House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries said Thursday, announcing an affordability campaign built around groceries, gasoline, housing and health care. Republicans insist the election will offer a choice between what Speaker Mike Johnson calls "common sense" and an increasingly progressive Democratic Party. They plan to highlight border enforcement and tax cuts while portraying Democratic candidates as aligned with the socialist left. Trump is pressing every available advantage. He has waged a prolonged campaign for congressional Republicans to pass the SAVE America Act, which he portrays as essential to preventing election fraud but Democrats condemn as an attempt to suppress legitimate votes. Republicans have been considerably more successful in another effort to shape the electorate: redrawing congressional maps.

Both parties have tried to carve out new safe seats, but Republicans look likely to emerge with a net advantage of between five and 12 seats. That could offset the national political environment in a House contest expected to be decided by a similarly narrow margin. Sarah Binder, a politics professor at George Washington University, said the redistricting arms race had been particularly consequential in this cycle, with fewer than one in 20 House races genuine toss-ups. "Redistricting has really pared back the grounds on which Democrats can contest those seats," she told AFP. Republicans also hold a substantial financial advantage, with party campaign committees and allied groups entering the final months with tens of millions of dollars more than their Democratic counterparts. The Senate presents a different but equally dramatic contest. Republicans hold a 53-47 major-

ity, meaning Democrats need a net gain of four seats. Decision Desk HQ narrowly favours Republicans to retain control through a 50-50 split, with Vice President JD Vance casting tie-breaking votes. For Trump, even a divided Washington — with Democrats controlling the House and Republicans holding the Senate — would transform the remainder of his term. His legislative agenda would stall in the House, his officials would face inquiries and public hearings, and Democrats would gain a national platform from which to scrutinise the Iran war, administration ethics and the president's attempts to reshape elections. Political analyst Chuck Todd said in a podcast marking 100 days until the midterms that Republicans had gone from "clear favourites" in the Senate nine months ago to "very small favorites." House elections, he said, would likely yield a 10 to 25-seat Democratic advantage, pointing to Trump's persistent low polling. The president's popularity remains near record lows in a new Economist/YouGov survey, with 36% of Americans saying they approve of his performance. "There is no better predictor of a midterm than presidential job approval. A president's job approval under 45 guarantees their party is going to lose seats. It doesn't mean they'll lose chambers, but they definitely lose seats," the former news anchor said. "A president under 40 — they're going to lose chambers. The question is, how bad is it? How big is the wave going to be?"



Children receive meals from a charity kitchen at the Maghazi camp for Palestinian refugees in the central Gaza Strip. (AFP)

Israel to allow international force into Gaza, official says

Israel will allow a multinational security force to enter Gaza as proposed under US President Donald Trump's ceasefire plan for the enclave, an Israeli official said on Sunday, a day before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu heads to Washington. Netanyahu's security cabinet yesterday approved the legal framework that would allow the force's entry to Gaza, the official said. Netanyahu is scheduled to depart for Washington today and is expected to meet Trump tomorrow. The official said that the mission, called the International Stabilization Force, will include 200 members from "friendly countries such as Uganda and Morocco" deploying in areas that are not under Israeli control. Each contingent requires individual Israeli approval to enter Gaza. It was unclear when the forces would deploy. Much of Gaza remains in ruins from two years of full-scale war. After a ceasefire deal was struck in October, Trump set out a peace plan for Gaza that provided for a surge in humanitarian aid, civilian administration by Palestinian technocrats, Hamas laying down its arms and

Israeli forces withdrawing. But the plan has stalled and the group of technocrats — known as the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza — has remained outside Gaza. Israel effectively controls an estimated 64% of Gaza while nearly all of its 2 million people live on a sliver of land on the coast under Hamas control, mainly in makeshift tents or damaged buildings. Trump's plan included a Board of Peace as an overarching international authority responsible for implementing the peace framework. It would oversee the security force, among other functions. The board is planning a pilot humanitarian zone for Gazans as a way to kickstart the US president's stalled plan, a board official said this month. Nickolay Mladenov, Trump's Board of Peace envoy for Gaza, welcomed the Israeli decision. "It is a critical part of the agreed framework for stabilizing Gaza, supporting demilitarization, and enabling the transition to effective Palestinian transitional administration under the @NCAG," he said on X., referring to the Palestinian civilian administration body. (Reuters)

Senegal president launches new party, finalising rupture with prime minister

Senegal's president launched a new party Saturday, called Kiiraay, following his high-profile falling out with his erstwhile mentor and ex-prime minister, Ousmane Sonko. Sonko leads the Pan-Africanist party Pastef, to which both men belonged and which swept President Bassirou Diomaye Faye into office in 2024. Faye appointed Sonko prime minister immediately after becoming president, but the relationship eventually soured and culminated in Sonko's sacking in May.

Faye unveiled the new Kiiraay party, whose name is Wolof for "protection" or "shield", during a packed assembly of supporters in Dakar. Hundreds of supporters who could not fit inside the hotel conference room waited outside in searing heat, carrying signs and wearing decorative scarves that said "Vive Diomaye". Announcing the new party, which has the slogan "Republican Patriots", Diomaye said it was built on "republic, ethics, transparency, fraternity and work". With his pan-Africanist rhetoric,

Sonko won a following among young Senegalese after a power struggle with former president Macky Sall, who ruled from 2012 to 2024. He and Faye campaigned on a platform of change, pledging economic transformation and a fight against corruption. But the collapse in their relationship was reflected in the attitudes of some of Faye's supporters. Waiting outside the launch venue in the heat, Mamou Khady Sall, 43, who came to the assembly with a group of 15 other women from the Dakar suburb of Yeumbeul, de-

scribed Faye as a "man of peace". But she disliked Sonko so fiercely she refused to even say his name. Ibra Faye, an economist and financial engineer from Dakar, said he was hopeful Faye could implement some of those changes now that there is less discord in his administration. "After two years in power, we realize that the requested changes were simply not possible under the current setup of his party," the 54-year-old told AFP. "He could not implement the policies or actions he wanted to pursue," Faye added.

"Kiiraay is the majority party in this country", said Faye touted mayors, sector leaders and other high-profile members of society at Saturday's general assembly. While Kiiraay has yet to prove itself electorally, multiple Pastef officials and activists have recently announced their resignation to join the presidential camp. Yoor Yoor, a daily newspaper close to Pastef, played down the departures on its front page Friday. There were, it said "a few dozen high-profile resignations" against what it said was a

"tidal wave" of memberships for Pastef. Faye's communication team has said the new party will hold a congress after the country's summer rainy season. Faye essentially owes his position as president to Sonko, his onetime mentor, who would almost certainly have taken the top job had he not been barred from running in the country's 2024 presidential election due to a defamation conviction. The two men fell out over disagreements on how Senegal should battle its massive public debt. (AFP)

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **AAJNYAA P VASHISHT**
holder of
INDIA Passport No. V4975721
QID No. 32135605668
hereby change my name
from
AAJNYAA P VASHISHT
to
AAJNYAA VASHISHT

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **SALMA EJAZ SHEKNANI**
holder of
INDIA Passport No. Z3619108
QID No. 25335606472
hereby change my name
from
SALMA EJAZ SHEKNANI
to
SALMA EIJAZ SHEKHANI

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

Twilight in South Africa

The sun sets over Nkqubela township and informal settlement, home to many farmworkers in the area, in the town of Robertson, in the Western Cape Province. Similar scenes are playing out across South Africa as factories, farms and even ordinary households scramble for labour after thousands of foreign workers left in a matter of weeks to escape deadly anti-migrant protests and intensified immigration enforcement. Fringe anti-foreigner groups set June 30 as an unofficial deadline for undocumented migrants to go home, triggering the exodus of more than 160,000 people, according to an AFP tally based on figures from African governments repatriating their citizens. (AFP)

Cuban president blames US for ‘political genocide’ over sanctions

Reuters
Pinar del Rio, Cuba

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel issued a sharp condemnation of Washington's oil embargo and hardened sanctions in a speech yesterday, calling the policy of US President Donald Trump's administration “political genocide.”

Diaz-Canel criticised a recent US State Department report, which accused Cuba of infiltrating the US government and of backing an “unprecedented wave of leftwing terrorism on American soil.”

The Trump administration has escalated its attacks on left-leaning groups inside the US.

“By accusing Cuba, they are not only looking for a scapegoat, an external agent. They are looking for someone to blame for the protests of the sectors hardest hit by an economy that makes the rich richer and the poor poorer,” said Diaz-Canel.

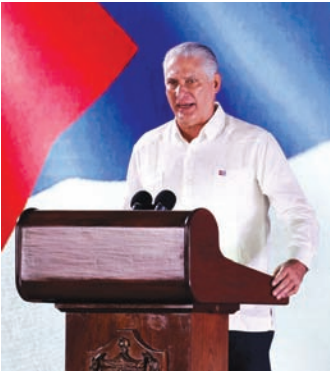
“They are looking for a new excuse to sustain their political genocide against Cuba.”

The speech underscored growing tensions between Havana and Washington as the Trump administration's oil embargo and expanded sanctions have deepened Cuba's worst economic crisis in decades, triggering rolling blackouts and fuel shortages across the island.

Diaz-Canel's speech at dawn was part of government celebrations to mark the 73rd anniversary of the first offensive by Fidel Castro's guerrillas against the army of US-backed leader Fulgencio Batista in 1953, starting a rebellion that brought down Batista more than five years later.



Cubans wave paper flags during the 73rd anniversary celebration of the guerrilla assault on the Moncada Barracks, led by Fidel Castro and considered the start of the Cuban Revolution, in Pinar del Rio. (AFP)



President Miguel Diaz-Canel speaks during a ceremony marking National Rebellion Day. (Reuters)

The most important holiday on Cuba's revolutionary calendar, yesterday's event also featured artistic performances before thousands of government supporters.

The island's unprecedented economic crisis has driven various international companies, particularly in the tourism and financial sectors, to end operations in Cuba. In addition to the rolling blackouts, the depleted fuel supply has triggered multiple national-level grid collapses.

The country's public transportation has also been crippled and the school year was cut short for lack of fuel.

Washington blames the Cuban

government for economic mismanagement and a lack of investment in its aging infrastructure.

In his speech, Diaz-Canel pleaded for an end to the sanctions and oil blockade and thanked international groups that have sent humanitarian aid and supplies to the island.

“Let Cuba live in peace, and also let the noblest of the American people, who have historically fought for the human rights of other peoples, without expecting recognition and often facing persecution, imprisonment, and risks to their lives, live in peace,” he said.

“Cuba is not a threat to the US or to any other country on earth.”



President Javier Milei attends the opening ceremony of the Rural Society's 138th annual exhibition, in Buenos Aires. (Reuters)

Brazil recalls ambassador to Argentina over Milei's Bolsonaro rally speech

AFF
Sao Paulo

Brazil recalled its ambassador to Argentina for consultations yesterday following “insults” levelled by President Javier Milei against his Brazilian counterpart Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and others at a recent political event organised in Sao Paulo, the foreign ministry said.

The libertarian leader of Argentina referred to Brazil's left incumbent president as a “convict” and a “thief,” without naming him explicitly, during an event formally nominating right-wing presidential candidate Flavio Bolsonaro to run in upcoming elections.

Milei also referred to – without naming him directly – Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes as “bald trash,” during the event.

Milei “insulted two branches

of government, the Brazilian people and Brazilian democracy,” a Brazilian diplomatic source told AFP.

The Argentine president joined the event with Bolsonaro and warned in a speech against a supposed “Lula risk” hanging over the country, urging Brazil to break free from “subjugation to the left.”

Meanwhile, Milei said that Moraes had prevented him from visiting his “unjustly imprisoned friend” Jair Bolsonaro – Flavio's father and the former president (2019-2022), who was convicted of plotting a coup in 2022.

Moraes, who oversaw the conviction of Bolsonaro, had previously denied Milei permission to visit the former president while he is under house arrest in Brasilia.

Brazil's ambassador, Julio Bitelli, is expected to arrive back home by today, a diplomatic source said.

Lula calls new US tariffs a mistake in his op-ed

Reuters
Sao Paulo

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva called new US tariffs unfair and a strategic mistake in yesterday's opinion column for *The Washington Post*, warning they would harm the countries' bilateral partnership and drive up costs for US consumers.

“This month, disregarding dozens of meetings between our teams, solid technical arguments, and documents I personally handed to President Trump, the US government imposed new tariffs on Brazil ranging from 12.5% to 37.5%,” Lula wrote.

The new duties follow the US Supreme Court striking down last year's 50% tariffs, Lula noted, adding that food, footwear, textiles, furniture, auto parts, and many other products will become more expensive for US consumers.

The US Embassy in Brazil did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the column.

Lula also cited Global Trade

Alert, an independent organisation, which is based in Switzerland, as saying that Brazil and Turkey are now the second most heavily tariffed countries by the United States, behind only China.

This is despite a US trade surplus with Brazil in goods and services that totaled \$428bn over 15 consecutive years, Lula said.

In the opinion piece, published the day after Trump ally and conservative presidential candidate Flavio Bolsonaro launched his campaign, Lula noted that Brazilian exports to the US have hit their lowest level since 1997.

“In the medium term, these tariffs will disrupt supply chains that are currently deeply integrated, and Brazilian companies will replace their US suppliers with partners elsewhere,” Lula said.

Brazil is open to a constructive dialogue with the US, Lula said, but the country must decide its own future.

“Brazil's destiny is for Brazilians alone to determine – without foreign interference or subservience,” he said.

Honduras ex-president Hernandez returns home

Reuters
Tegucigalpa

Former Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez returned to Honduras yesterday, eight months after US President Donald Trump pardoned him while he was serving a 45-year US prison sentence for drug and arms trafficking.

Hernandez, who served two consecutive terms as president from 2014 to 2022, landed at Palmerola International Airport, about 60km northwest of the capital, Tegucigalpa, on a private flight.

The former president was greeted by several members of his family, including his mother, daughters and wife Ana Garcia, the latter who ran unsuccessfully for his party's presidential candidature in 2025 but lost to current President Nasry Asfura.

Once on the runway, they knelt down on the asphalt to pray, then waved at hundreds of party supporters who arrived by bus to receive Hernandez before he takes another flight to Toncontin airport in Tegucigalpa.

He is expected to appear before



Former President Hernandez gives a thumbs-up from a vehicle upon his arrival at Palmerola International Airport yesterday. (Reuters)

a court on August 3 to face charges of fraud and money laundering. An arrest warrant issued against him was suspended in June, meaning he will not be detained upon arrival.

In an interview with Reuters on Wednesday, Hernandez, 57, said he would request the charges be dismissed.

“I cannot deny the profound emotion and joy I feel in my heart

to be returning home,” he wrote on X earlier this month, saying he was counting down the days to see his family.

“It wasn't easy. The process has been extremely difficult... and what I experienced in prison, I truly wouldn't wish on anyone,” he said.

Hernandez's legal challenges date back to his capture in Teguci-

galpa in February 2022 and subsequent extradition to the US two months later.

In 2024, a US judge sentenced him to 45 years in prison on charges related to drug and weapons trafficking – allegations he has always denied.

The pardon issued by Trump in late 2025, amid a closely contested presidential election in Honduras, led a presidential candidate and others to complain of US interference in the political process.

The pardon did not, however, impact the charges in Honduras.

A corruption investigation known as “Pandora II” has accused Hernandez and other high-profile officials of diverting nearly \$11mn in state funds to political campaigns between 2010 and 2013. Some of this money allegedly was used for Hernandez's first presidential campaign.

Charges against former President Porfirio Lobo and ex-finance minister Wilfredo Cerrato – both implicated in the investigation – were dismissed.

Hernandez told Reuters he did not rule out standing for office again, although he added it was not in his immediate plans.

‘Bathtub ring’ at Arizona’s Lake Mead



A white “bathtub ring” of mineral-stained rocks left by higher water levels in The Narrows upstream of the Hoover Dam is seen in this picture taken at the Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Arizona. This month, the combined water level of Lake Mead and Lake Powell, the United States' two biggest reservoirs, fell to their lowest level since 1957, when the Glen Canyon Dam was being built and before Lake Powell was filled. The unprecedented low in combined storage could mean water and power shortages for the seven US states and Mexico that depend on the Colorado River Basin, which supplies water to more than 35 mn people, irrigates about 5 mn acres of farmland, and generates hydropower from federal dams. The worsening water crisis could also influence ongoing negotiations between the seven states on water rights and usage. (AFP)

Trump giving Iran talks ‘some space’, no US ammo issue: UN ambassador

AFF
Washington

US President Donald Trump is giving negotiations with Iran “some space,” his UN ambassador said yesterday, while dismissing reports that the US was rationing munitions over supply concerns.

UN ambassador Mike Waltz told “Fox News Sunday” that the US remained “locked and loaded” for more attacks, with additional assets moved into the region.

But Trump is “giving talks some space – he's giving it a little bit of room,” he said.

Prior to Friday, the US military had announced strikes on Iran for 13 consecutive nights, in the largest rekindling of the war since an April ceasefire. No new strikes were announced over the last two days.

Waltz also appeared on NBC News' “Meet the Press,” where he was asked about reports that the US military was rationing some weaponry over supply concerns.

I want to be crystal clear. The US military – and I've verified this every which way – has everything that it needs to conduct this campaign as effectively as it needs to be,’ – UN ambassador Mike Waltz

The ambassador initially responded by pointing the finger at former president Joe Biden, noting that “a lot of stockpiles were depleted” when Trump took office last year.

Pressed on whether he would acknowledge a current shortage amid the Iran war, Waltz repeatedly denied.

“I want to be crystal clear. The US military – and I've verified this every which way – has everything that it needs to conduct this campaign as effectively as it needs to be,” the UN ambassador asserted.

“The people that are leaking this nonsense deserve to be in jail,” he added.



Strong winds, rain lash China after Typhoon Noul makes landfall

AFP
Beijing

Typhoon Noul lashed a stretch of southern China with strong winds and rain yesterday, prompting emergency relief in the fiercest storm to hit the country this year, state media reported. Prior to the storm's early-morning landfall, severe weather forecasts had spurred authorities to evacuate more than 340,000 people and suspend work and rail services, with major flight disruptions continuing throughout Sunday morning.

The centre of the typhoon crossed over land at around 3:50am near the town of Pinghai, Guangdong Province – about 80 kilometres northeast of financial hub Hong Kong – state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Maximum sustained winds near the eye of the storm at the time of landfall were 162 kilometres (101 miles) an hour, the report said.

That made Noul the strongest typhoon to strike the country so far in 2026, CCTV added.

Before gaining intensity on Saturday over the South China Sea, Noul had already left a path of damage, clipping the extreme northern islands of the Philippines.

Three people were killed and one was missing due to the typhoon, the Philippine government's disaster agency said yesterday.

More than 9,300 people had

been evacuated and 235 houses had suffered damage, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council added.

In southern China early yesterday, howling winds and heavy rains were seen in footage published by CCTV, with roads strewn with debris and some small structures including a basketball net toppled by the gusts.

Authorities in Guangdong elevated the province's disaster relief emergency response to its third-highest – then second-highest – level in successive updates yesterday morning.

At least 350 passenger flights departing and arriving from Hong Kong had been cancelled on Sunday, the airport's website showed.

Authorities in the city said 21 people were injured by the typhoon while 300 reports of fallen trees and eight reports of flooding had been received.

"Noul is moving steadily into inland Guangdong and weakening progressively, but gales are still affecting many places over Hong Kong, with occasional storm force winds over high ground," the Hong Kong Observatory said.

The Hong Kong government said it has received over 100 reports of fallen trees, and nine people were injured.

"After landfall, Noul will move inland, bringing strong winds and rain to Jiangxi, Hunan and Hubei provinces," CCTV said.

"Extreme" rainfall is possible in



A trike is seen overturned on a beach path by strong winds from Typhoon Noul which passed close to Hong Kong yesterday. (AFP)

parts of Guangdong, Hunan and Jiangxi, CCTV said, particularly in mountainous areas where flood prevention is "complex".

The flood-control emergency response in those three provinces had been upgraded to the third-highest level, Xinhua reported.

CCTV noted that precipitation caused by the typhoon could last through Tuesday, including in provinces as far north as Henan and Shandong.

The National Development and Reform Commission allocated 100mn yuan (\$14.8mn) to support Guangdong in post-typhoon recovery efforts, including reconstruction of damaged roads and infrastructure.



Workers clear fallen debris and obstacles from the road after Typhoon Noul, in Hong Kong, yesterday. (Reuters)

Flash flood at northwest China tourist site kills 10, leaves 23 injured, says state media

A flash flood caused by heavy rain struck a tourist site in northwest China yesterday, killing 10 people and injuring 23, state media reported. "A mountain torrent triggered by short-term heavy rainfall at a scenic spot in Weiyuan County, Dingxi City, trapped some campers" at the location in Gansu Province, state broadcaster CCTV said.

An earlier report by CCTV identified the location of the flash flood as the Shuangshimen Scenic Area in the rugged, mountainous stretches of southern Gansu – roughly 1,200 kilometres (745 miles) southwest of Beijing.

Shuangshimen is known for its natural stone arches, alpine meadows and mountain streams. It is a popular summer camping spot. "The injured have been sent to the hospital for treatment and another 174 people have been rescued," CCTV said. Large swaths of southern China are on high alert for floods on Sunday after Typhoon Noul made landfall early in the morning. Parts of Gansu – far from Noul's path – also experienced heavy rainfall on Sunday, with local authorities across the province issuing weather alerts. (AFP)

17 missing after Vietnamese ship sinks in South China Sea

AFP
Hano

Rescuers were searching for 17 missing people yesterday after a Vietnamese cargo ship carrying 62 sank during stormy weather in the contested South China Sea, Vietnam's foreign ministry said.

Vietnamese authorities arrived at the scene after the vessel Khoi Nguyen 18 "sank while operating in bad weather conditions in the East Sea", foreign ministry spokesperson Pham Thu Hang said in a statement to AFP.

Beijing claims the South China Sea, known as the East Sea in Vietnam, in nearly its entirety, despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis.

Vietnam, along with the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia and Taiwan, have competing claims to areas of the strategic waterway, including the Spratly Island chain, which are believed to sit on vast oil and gas resources.

Hang said Vietnamese rescuers, with "the support of Chinese

Six Chinese vessels and a helicopter as well as one Vietnamese vessel were conducting search and rescue operations in the area, according to Xinhua

rescue forces, including ships and helicopters", and other vessels in the area, rescued 45 of the 62 people, as of 12 noon yesterday.

Authorities and fishing vessels were "actively searching for the remaining people", Hang added.

The Khoi Nguyen 18 encountered trouble near Yongshu Reef, also known as Fiery Cross Reef, in the Spratly archipelago, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said.

Fiery Cross Reef is controlled by Beijing but also claimed by Hanoi and Manila.

A Chinese rescue vessel first spotted what was believed to be a distress signal from the endangered Vietnamese ship on Saturday evening, China's state news agency Xinhua said yesterday.

Six Chinese vessels and a rescue helicopter as well as one Vi-

etnamese vessel were conducting search and rescue operations in the area, according to Xinhua.

The Khoi Nguyen 18 is a Vietnamese-registered cargo ship measuring just under 70m in length, according to the Marine Traffic monitoring website.

In a separate incident on Friday, another Vietnamese vessel sank amid rough seas in the area of the Spratly Islands, with 33 fishermen rescued and three missing, Vietnamese state media said on Saturday.

The fishing vessel encountered strong winds, took on water and sank on Friday morning, according to the state-run Tuoi Tre News site, with other fishing vessels in the area mobilised to aid the rescue.

By around 9:00pm on Friday, 33 fishermen had been rescued about 15 nautical miles west of the loca-

tion of the sinking, Tuoi Tre said.

They were brought to Da Tay, or West Reef, an atoll under Vietnamese control that is part of the Spratlys, for medical care and were in stable condition.

The three missing fishermen were "clinging to plastic containers" and not wearing life jackets when they left the ship, the report said.

More than 25% of all global trade passed through the vital South China Sea in 2024, according to the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Its islands and reefs are coveted by China and Southeast Asian nations situated around the strategic sea.

Beijing has expanded reefs it controls in the Spratlys, and set up air bases, naval facilities and other installations, including landing strips able to accommodate military planes.

Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia have asserted their own claims in the area by stationing troops in the Spratlys and building airstrips there since the 1970s.

Chinese university investigating girl's death in gene-editing trial

A Chinese university is looking into reports that a gene-editing trial caused the death of a six-year-old girl, which was not disclosed in the published research, the school said yesterday.

The girl, given the pseudonym "Mei", died last year around a week after receiving a spinal infusion of trillions of viruses designed to penetrate the brain for treatment, according to a joint investigation by Science and Retraction Watch.

The experimental gene therapy was meant to fix a rare genetic condition that caused a delay in cognitive development, the report said on Thursday.

Neuroscientist Zilong Qiu, the lead researcher, went on to publish a paper on related animal studies in the prestigious journal Nature that made no mention of Mei.

In response, the Shanghai Jiao Tong University School of Medicine said in a statement that it "attaches great importance to the matter and has set up a special working group to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the incident".

"The School of Medicine has always attached great importance to scientific research integrity and research norms, and firmly opposes conducting medical scientific research in violation of scientific research ethics," it said.

The statement added that "serious action" would be taken in accordance with the investigation's findings.

Mei's parents, who paid more than \$800,000 to fund the experiment, were not adequately informed about the risks, the report by Science and Retraction Watch said.

Qiu was aiming to offer the world's first gene-editing therapy directed at the brain, rewriting the mutated gene in her neurons so she could make a vital protein, it said.

The previously undisclosed death is a fresh blow to China's ambitions to rival the United States as a biotech power following the 2018 scandal around He Jiankui, a biophysicist who secretly produced gene-edited babies. (AFP)

China holds air, navy patrol in South China Sea

China said yesterday it organised a routine patrol by its naval and air forces in the South China Sea, accusing the Philippines of holding patrols with foreign countries in the disputed waterway that undermined regional peace and stability. The comments came from the Southern Theatre Command of the People's Liberation Army. Its spokesperson, senior navy Colonel Zhai Shichen, said the Philippines had "rallied foreign countries to

organise so-called joint patrols, disrupting the South China Sea and undermining regional peace and stability." Zhai said the forces of the command would "resolutely defend national territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interest, firmly maintaining regional peace and stability". China claims sovereignty over almost the entire South China Sea, despite overlapping claims by Southeast Asian nations (Reuters)

Fear, arrests keep Cambodians quiet decade after critic's murder

AFP
Phnom Penh

Union leader Chhim Sithar served two years in prison after going up against the Cambodian government. Today, she is still making her voice heard, but it is getting riskier.

"Freedom in Cambodia has been shrinking and it is very difficult to speak out," she told AFP at a demonstration this month marking 10 years since the murder of Kem Ley, a prominent government critic gunned down in the capital.

"We are really worried," said the 37-year-old, who was jailed after leading a strike at the nation's largest casino, which authorities deemed illegal.

Since Kem Ley's death, former Cambodian leader Hun Sen and his son, Prime Minister Hun Manet, have tightened their grip over the country they have led for more than 40 years, analysts and rights activists say.

Cambodia has four times as many political prisoners today as compared to 2016, the year Kem Ley was shot dead in a Phnom Penh cafe.

A popular political commentator, he was killed soon after giving an interview about an investigative report that detailed some of the millions of dollars allegedly amassed by the ruling family.

At the memorial rally outside the site of Kem Ley's murder,

Chhim Sithar said she feared being jailed again, but there was a wider issue at stake.

"What we fear more is the loss of our rights," she said.

Cambodia's main opposition party was banned and its leader Kem Sokha jailed the year after Kem Ley was killed, while several independent media outlets have since been shuttered.

The ruling Cambodian People's Party (CPP) swept the two general elections that followed without a viable challenger, making the country a de facto one-party state.

Opposition politician Rong Chhun said civil rights and political freedoms have been reduced to almost zero.

"Nothing has been improved," he told AFP, adding that while Cambodia still had public intellectuals, no one matched up to Kem Ley.

"There is nobody who has the courage to analyse or to speak the truth about society,"

Cambodians who criticise the government are regularly arrested – whether they are politicians, activists, farmers or tuk-tuk drivers.

Local rights group Licadho has documented at least 125 political prisoners jailed in Cambodia today, up from about 30 in 2016.

Among them are five members of outlawed environmental group Mother Nature imprisoned in 2024 for between six and eight years for plotting against the

state, charges condemned by the UN and rights campaigners.

Others have faced the same fate as Kem Ley, with veteran opposition politician Lim Kimya shot dead last year while visiting Thailand, allegedly by a hired killer.

A former soldier is serving life in prison after confessing to Kem Ley's murder, saying he was motivated by an unpaid debt, but some claim the commentator was killed for speaking out against government corruption.

The government has denied any role in his murder.

Rights watchdogs have long accused Cambodian authorities of using violence, arrests and the CPP-dominated courts to silence critics.

"Risks can happen anytime if we speak about something that makes politicians unhappy," analyst Meas Nee told AFP.

Meas Nee admitted that he too speaks more cautiously since Kem Ley was killed.

"It is not that we are not speaking about the truth, but we can only speak of the truth between 50-60% of the 100%," he said.

In a message to AFP, the government's Information Minister Neth Pheaktra said: "Cambodia does not criminalise criticism."

"The government welcomes constructive, evidence-based criticism, but all organisations must operate transparently, professionally and in accordance with Cambodian law."

Revisit Korea Programme for UN war veterans



Sherri Stewart, the niece of David D Stewart, of the United States, who was killed in the Korean War, touches his name before laying a flower at the Korean War Memorial in Seoul yesterday. Seventy-four participants from 21 countries, including 13 UN Korean War veterans and bereaved family members, are visiting Seoul as part of the Revisit Korea Programme for UN Korean War Veterans. (AFP)

Burnham says he would call out Trump if it's in Britain's interest

Reuters
London

Britain's new Prime Minister Andy Burnham "will always put Britain's interests first", he told the BBC in an interview when asked whether he was willing to call out US President Donald Trump. Burnham's predecessor Keir Starmer, who announced he was stepping down last month, had a fraught relationship with Trump due to differences over the US-Israeli war on Iran, immigration, energy and tech regulation.

While Trump initially described Starmer's successor as "extremely liberal", he said this week he had a "very good conversation" with Burnham, who became Britain's seventh prime minister in a decade last Monday.

In his first major interview since taking office, parts of which were released yesterday, BBC journalist Laura Kuenssberg asked Burnham if he was willing to call out Trump if he thought it was the right thing to do.

"All leaders have to do that. You have to defend your own national interest before anything else. That's what you're required to do if you're to do this job properly," he said.

The prime minister also said he would not call a general election before 2029.

"I'm going to rule it out. Yeah, there's no early general election. I don't think people want it," he said.



Britain's Prime Minister Andy Burnham speaks during an interview at No 10 North at Heron House, in Manchester, yesterday. (Reuters)

On Britain's national defence, Burnham said he was "absolutely committed" to what was promised to Nato partners. London has pledged to spend 3.5% of GDP on defence by 2035, in line with a new Nato target.

"We've got to work out the way of doing that," he said. "The first challenge ... is to ensure that the defence investment plan is fully funded, and that's the thing that's right in front of us, and we need

to work that through as we go towards the budget later this year," he said.

Burnham's newly appointed chancellor (finance minister) John Healey resigned as defence minister in the previous government after saying that, unless a commitment was made to spend 3% of GDP on defence by 2030, Britain would not be safe.

Burnham did not commit to the 2030 target in the interview.

When asked yesterday, Wes Streeting, who was appointed defence secretary by Burnham last week, said any timetable for increasing defence spending was the decision of the finance minister.

"It's for the chancellor to set out, both at the budget and future spending reviews, how we will achieve 3.5% by 2035," he told Sky News. The full interview with Burnham will air on the BBC's *Panorama* programme today.

Gatwick Airport suffers water supply issue

AFP
London

London's Gatwick Airport said yesterday it was suffering from "a water supply issue", with toilets reported to be out of order and restaurants closed at Britain's second busiest air hub.

The issue impacting both terminals at the airport south of the capital — served by several no-frills carriers including EasyJet — comes during the busy summer holiday period.

Flights were not reported to be affected, but passengers posted online that they were unable to flush toilets, get hot drinks, wash their hands or fill up water bottles.

"A water issue in the Horley

area is causing disruption at the airport this morning," Gatwick Airport said on X.

"The problem is affecting water supply in both terminals and is currently under investigation."

It added bottled water was being handed out to passengers and staff and "other contingency measures are being put in place to ensure the welfare of our passengers".

Regional water provider SES Water said a power outage at a nearby water treatment site had caused "a number of complications" and that some customers were "experiencing low water pressure or a temporary loss of supply".

The company said it was working with Gatwick Airport "to restore normal service as quickly as possible".

Irish police charge man over explosive device

AFP
London

Irish police said Saturday they had charged a man in his 40s arrested after an explosive device was found in a vehicle near the border with Northern Ireland earlier this week.

He was due in court in Dublin late Saturday, said Ireland's police force, known as the Gardai.

Police said on Friday they had charged the car's driver, a 25-year-old law student with possession of explosives.

Isobella Perrie Sullivan, of County Kildare west of Dublin, was stopped on the road and a bag was discovered in the back of her car containing the plastic explosive Semtex and a detonator, Trim District Court heard late Friday.

Her lawyer said she had been asked to take a bag north but had not been aware what was in it.

Officers flagged down the car as part of an operation targeting "dissident republican activity", police said. They have described the discovery as "extremely significant".

Northern Ireland was torn apart by civil conflict between the pro-Irish republicans and the pro-UK unionists until the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

The agreement required rival paramilitaries to decommission their weapons, but dissident factions persist on both sides.

Dissident republican groups are smaller than the Provisional Irish Republican Army, which ended its violent campaign in 2005, but have used improvised explosive devices and mortars in past attacks.

Earlier this year, Northern Irish police blamed dissident republicans for two separate attacks on police stations near Belfast which caused no casualties.

Residents to return to Scots village near Cairngorms wildfire

AFP
London

Evacuated residents of a village in Scotland threatened by a wildfire were to go back home yesterday, after authorities said a major incident had been ended.

Around 650 people from Nethy

Bridge in the Cairngorms national park were told to leave Friday "as a precaution", as authorities battled a blaze which spread across some 600 hectares (1,500 acres).

More than 500 firefighters with helicopters were deployed to battle the fire that had been burning for 11 days in the mountain park west of Aberdeen, which has long been a tourist attraction.

The region has seen weeks of dry weather, as much of Britain experiences an exceptionally hot summer with three heatwaves already recorded.

"Thanks to the efforts of fire crews... and many others over the past 24 hours, there is no longer the immediate threat which prompted the evacuation of properties in Nethy Bridge," Police

Scotland Superintendent Judy Hill said late Saturday.

She added that significant resources and volunteers were continuing to work in "challenging circumstances to extinguish the fires".

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service said late Saturday 75 firefighters remained on the ground tackling the remaining flames near Nethy Bridge.

Albanese to raise tariff concerns with Trump

Reuters
Sydney

Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday he would seek to raise the issue of tariffs with US President Donald Trump, after Washington this week imposed new tariffs on its trading partners including Australia.

The US on Friday imposed new tariffs on goods from 60 trading partners, alleging those countries failed to curb the trade of goods made by forced labour, just as a temporary 10% global tariff expired.

The PM Albanese-led Labor government has described the tariffs as unjustified and says it wants them removed.

PM Albanese, asked yesterday if he would seek to discuss the issue with Trump, said "absolutely".

"We'll raise it at every level in the Australia-US relationship, we've already done so," he said in televised remarks.

Australia has very strong provisions on modern slavery and was "strengthening those even further by going through the supply chain issues and making sure that indeed substantial fines and penalties can be paid", Albanese said.

Under the new Trump administration measures, imports from Australia, along with 37 other nations, are subject to a tariff of 12.5%. Seventeen nations are subject to a 10% rate, while five nations are subject to a mixed rate.

PM Albanese, who has previously said his focus is on "free and fair trade" with the US, made tariffs a key issue in a call in with Trump after the centre-left government was returned in a landslide election win last year.



Vehicles wait in a queue to refuel with compressed natural gas (CNG) at a filling station in Dhaka yesterday. (AFP)

Gas facility fire worsens Bangladesh energy crunch

AFP
Dhaka

Chronic gas shortages in Bangladesh, already compounded by the Middle East war, have worsened after an industrial accident disrupted supplies, affecting homes, businesses and key sectors such as the textile industry.

Bangladesh has long grappled

with an energy crisis, but the US-Iran conflict since February has exacerbated it, dealing a major blow to the South Asian country's economy.

And on Wednesday, things took a turn for the worse when a fire hit one of Bangladesh's two storage and regasification units in Moheshkhali.

Long queues have returned at the pump, with a popular ride-hailing app, Obhai, saying it has

been receiving complaints from drivers of gas-run auto-rickshaws about the time it takes to refill.

The interruption is also likely to hit electricity generation, which is largely dependent on gas.

Md Rafiqul Islam of state-run energy firm Petrobangla told AFP they were "not sure" when gas supplies would return to normal.

Bangladesh currently imports about 30 percent of its natural gas needs.

According to Petrobangla sources, total gas demand is around 3.8 billion cubic feet per day, while daily supply had stood at 2.7 billion cubic feet since last year.

Following this week's accident, supply has fallen further to 2.15 billion cubic feet a day.

Factories, especially the country's flagship export sector of ready-made garment manufacturing, appear to be among the biggest losers from the ongoing crisis.

India clears protest site after 'cockroach' movement scores a win

AFP
New Delhi

New Delhi municipal workers were busy painting over anti-government graffiti yesterday after the youth-led "cockroach" movement had left a landmark protest site, satisfied with the government acceding to their demands.

The social media-driven Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) had drawn thousands of demonstrators, mainly students, to the capital's Jantar Mantar site, forming one of India's largest anti-government protests in recent years.

Weeks of protests over exam irregularities and other issues affecting young Indians culminated on Saturday with the resignation of the education minister and the government accepting other key demands.

Yesterday, dozens of municipal workers were washing the pavements along the road leading to the site, where activists had camped for weeks and where just



Workers and police officials walk at the Jantar Mantar, after the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) ended their month-long protest, in New Delhi yesterday. (AFP)

hours earlier the crowd sang protest songs, chanted slogans and painted acerbic graffiti.

"We have been here since midnight when the protestors left," a municipal worker who declined

to be identified told AFP.

"The walls have been painted, but may require another coat of paint as some lines (from the slogans) are still visible," he said.

The movement sparked by a call

for education reforms evolved to include concerns over unemployment, opportunities for young people and what critics brand as PM Narendra Modi's increasingly authoritarian style of governance.

Modi announces panel to overhaul exam system

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced yesterday the creation of a task force headed by tech entrepreneur Nandan Nilekani to overhaul India's examination system, following days of youth protests about exam paper leaks.

"Our examination system should be trustworthy, should be transparent and the system should make maximum use of technology," Modi said on Instagram, adding that new legislation to deal with paper leaks would be introduced in parliament today.

The measures would tighten the law and toughen the penalties for culprits, Modi added.

It was Modi's first public

comment since Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resigned on Saturday following the protests by youth activists, who demonstrated for weeks demanding he quit over exam paper leaks in May.

The youth-led Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) movement, which spearheaded the demonstrations, called off its protests on Saturday after its demands were met.

The government also accepted the protesters' demands for reforms in the exam system, dropping police cases filed against protesters and compensating families of students who died by suicide after the exam paper leaks.

(Reuters)

QNL: Where the shelves end and the reader begins

There is a particular silence in a library that exists nowhere else. Not the silence of an empty room — that is only absence — but the populated hush of hundreds listening to something no one else can hear. Qatar National Library recorded 1.25mn visits last year, its highest since opening. A million and a quarter arrivals, hardly a sound.

The numbers deserve their due: a database of nearly 70,000 Qatar-focused research records, more than 25,000 openly accessible; a repository past 10,000 items; 1,423 open-access articles funded for 809 authors; 3.1mn digital checkouts. They describe something real — the steady removal of cost, distance and permission from the path between a person and what they want to know.

But no-one has ever loved a library for its throughput. What the figures cannot capture is the thing they exist to enable: one reader, one book, one afternoon that does not go as planned.

Consider the smallest statistic. Children in the Family Reading Programme took home an average of 16 books each last year. Sixteen. Not

a database — a stack carried out of a building by a child who chose them, wobbling slightly under the weight, already deciding which to open first. A reading habit formed at six is a companion for eighty years.

This is what the shelves are for. A million titles is not a boast about warehousing; it is a promise that the improbable book is there. The novel nobody has borrowed since 2019. The volume you did not know existed until you saw its spine while looking for something else — which is, as every reader knows, how the important books arrive. Serendipity cannot be searched for. It must be walked past.

The digital offer extends this rather than replacing it: the point was never paper, but access — and access has learned new manners. Institutions are measured by what they produce. Libraries should be measured by what they permit — the unsupervised hour, the unassigned book, the reader who came in for one thing and left carrying another.

Somewhere in that 1.25mn is you, and the book you have not read yet.



A vessel at the Strait of Hormuz, as seen from Musandam, Oman, on Thursday. (Reuters)

The choreography of controlled escalation

By Jasim Al-Azzawi

Neither Washington nor Tehran wants the next world war. Both are making sure the world doesn't notice that. Since the ceasefire that followed the February 28 war effectively collapsed, the United States and Iran have settled into something more calculated than chaos. Call it controlled escalation. Each side hits harder. Neither side wants to be blamed for starting round two.

Look at the American side first. The strikes have widened well beyond military targets. Roads, bridges, power stations, industrial sites — all have been hit in the latest waves. There are unconfirmed reports of damage to desalination infrastructure too, a detail that deserves independent verification before anyone repeats it as fact. What Washington has conspicuously avoided is the Bushehr nuclear plant. That restraint is not sentimental. A leak into Gulf waters would poison the region for generations, and everyone in the Pentagon knows it.

President Trump's public posture has hardened with each American casualty. After Iranian strikes killed US service members in Jordan, he wrote on Truth Social that Iran would "pay for that killing many times over." He said he had given that as a direct order to "every Leader in the Military." The number of American dead since February has climbed past a dozen, with the latest round alone claiming several service members in Jordan. This is the American president's most dangerous threshold. Not battlefield maps — coffins draped in flags arriving at Dover.

Iran, for its part, has widened its own geography of retaliation to include Bahrain, Kuwait, and Jordan. The head of the Gulf Cooperation Council did not mince words, calling the strikes on civilian infrastructure in Kuwait and Jordan a "war crime" and a "highly dangerous escalation." Notably, neither side appears interested in stepping back from that description.

Iran's calculus is different from Washington's, but it points toward the same conclusion: keep the fire burning, don't let it become an inferno. Tehran cannot sustain a full war lasting months. Its oil exports are already strangled. Its economy is bleeding. And yet a controlled, chaotic middle ground — enough disorder to raise the cost of the war for Washington's regional partners, not enough to invite the kind of retaliation that could



finish the regime — may be the best hand Iran has left to play.

That is precisely why Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has staked out the Strait of Hormuz as non-negotiable Iranian ground. "The Strait of Hormuz is NOT international waters," he declared, insisting the waterway is shared only with Oman and governed by Iranian consent. Tehran has signaled it intends to charge for passage, dressed up as navigation assistance or cleaning fees, rather than call them tolls outright. Control of the strait is not a bargaining chip for Iran. It is leverage they intend to keep exercising with or without Washington's blessing.

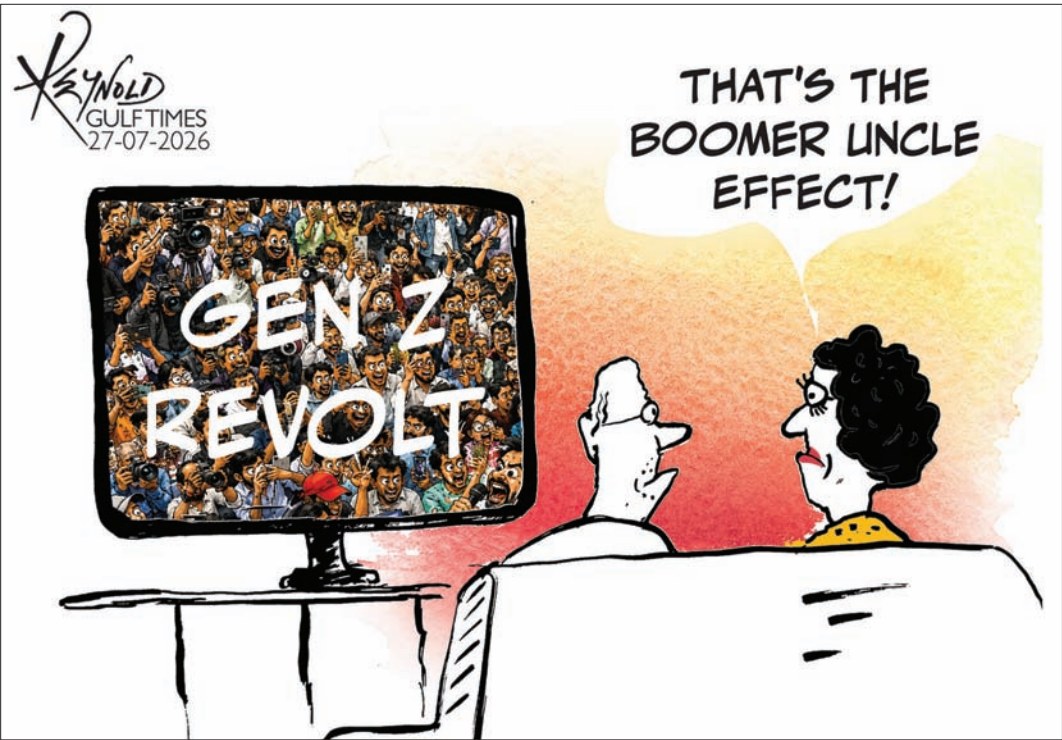
Then there is the Israeli variable, the one that could turn controlled escalation into an uncontrollable one. Fragments from an Iranian strike aimed at Aqaba, Jordan — a stone's throw from Eilat — have already landed on Israeli soil. For now, Israel is holding back, and the reason is instructive.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has told his own cabinet that Israel might eventually have to "deal with the Iranians alone, without US backing." Trump has been just as blunt in private, reportedly warning Netanyahu: "You better be careful, or you will be on your own very soon." Israel wants America standing beside it before it strikes Iran directly. Without that guarantee, Jerusalem knows it cannot absorb the retaliation alone. Iran, meanwhile, has made its own warning explicit: if Israel attacks, the response will not be measured.

So what tips this from managed conflict into open war? Two triggers stand out. The first is American casualties climbing high enough and fast enough that a president already stung by falling approval ratings and rising oil prices decides restraint has become politically unaffordable. The second is Iran deciding that full-blown regional chaos, rather than a slow bleed, is now the more useful strategy — since controlled escalation is already costing Tehran its oil revenue without buying it anything in return.

Qatar and Pakistan continue shuttling between the parties, trying to drag both back to the negotiating table. Nobody knows how long that will take. What is clear is that Araghchi and his negotiating counterparts have shown no appetite for compromise on Hormuz, and Washington has shown no appetite for absorbing more flag-draped coffins in silence. Controlled escalation, by definition, is a wager that both sides can keep their fires exactly as large as they want them. Wars have a way of proving that wager wrong.

• The writer is a prominent news anchor, programme presenter and media instructor.



The outsider inside No 10: Can Burnham rewire the state?



By Kristian Coates Ulrichsen

Pity the king. Charles III has been on the throne for less than four years, but Andy Burnham is already his fourth prime minister, a milestone it took his mother eleven years to reach when she invited Alec Douglas-Home to form a government in 1963. As the seventh prime minister in ten years settles into office, a British tradition of mid-parliament change of leadership has once again reared its head, offering a fresh start as so many have before.

While heads of government usually enter or exit office as a result of winning or losing an election, it is a curious feature of British politics that no prime minister since Edward Heath has seen their term in office begin and end with an electoral victory and defeat. Heath became Prime Minister after the Conservatives won the 1970 election and lost the job after the Conservatives failed to win a majority in the 1974 election. Since then, each prime minister has either come to office or left it mid-parliament, a streak that began when Harold Wilson handed over to Jim Callaghan in 1976, thirteen prime ministers ago.

Burnham entered 10 Downing Street last Monday promising to rewire the state and decentralise political and economic power in what he called the biggest shakeup in 40 years, a nod to the reforms of the Thatcher era in the 1980s that have held sway since. Time will tell whether the bold programme he outlined will breathe life into a Labour government that had drifted listlessly under Keir Starmer and still has three parliamentary years to run. Early opinion polls suggest that Labour has closed the gap to Reform UK to within a couple of points and that the Conservatives have also made noticeable gains in recent weeks.

Previous attempts to kickstart a flailing government by changing leader mid-term have a mixed record of success. After all, just as with football managers, the vacancy would not have arisen if the previous incumbent had been doing well and not been sacked. The most successful new start was John Major in 1990. By the time he succeeded Margaret Thatcher in November, the Conservatives had been behind in the polls for 18 months, but Major steadied the ship and won an unexpected victory in the 1992 election, helped by a Gulf War

bounce after the swift military victory over Saddam Hussein shortly after he took office.

Boris Johnson also performed strongly after he replaced Theresa May in July 2019 albeit only after he called a snap general election in December to break through the Brexit logjam that had caused May so much political difficulty. Like Burnham, whose nine years as Mayor of Greater Manchester meant he was less associated with Starmer's government in London, Johnson was able to fashion an image of an outsider capable of making a genuinely fresh start and avoiding blame for May's inability to govern. Johnson won a large majority that saw him finally deliver on the promise to take the United Kingdom out of the European Union in January 2020, but the Covid-19 pandemic intervened almost immediately and ultimately played a key role in bringing him down over personal failings in the 'Partygate' affair.

Other prime ministers have struggled to define a message of change that distinguishes them from their predecessor, especially as they come from the same party. This was a challenge for Gordon Brown when he took over from Tony Blair in 2007 after ten years of serving as Blair's right-hand man as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Blair and Brown famously fell out during the former's long premiership but Brown's attempt to start afresh was blown off course by the global financial crisis that began within months of his taking office. While Brown performed well in managing the fallout from the crash and playing a major role in coordinating international responses through the G-20 grouping he helped to create, he was unable to reverse Labour's slide in favourability that led to electoral defeat in 2010.

David Cameron's six years as Prime Minister seems unimaginable these days but his time in Downing Street came to an ignominious end in June 2016 when he stepped down when the Brexit referendum went against him. Theresa May immediately ran into trouble as parliament could not agree on the terms

of British withdrawal from the European Union, and for several years Britain effectively became politically ungovernable. May's dry, managerial style was ill-suited to the cut-and-thrust of Westminster politics, a failing she shared with Keir Starmer, whose hapless attempts to start afresh led critics to label him the Inspector Clouseau of British politics.

The next general election in Britain is not due until July 2029 although prime ministers can call early elections if they feel the political wind is in their favour. Here, again, the shadow of Theresa May's decision to call a snap election in June 2017 looms large, as the Conservatives lost the majority that Cameron had secured in 2015 and had to reach a deal with the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland to remain in office. While an early election worked well for Johnson two years later, Burnham is unlikely to consider holding one unless there is clear evidence that Labour has opened up a clear lead over Reform UK.

Attention is therefore likely to focus heavily on the by-election in Clacton on 13 August triggered by Nigel Farage's decision to resign and re-contest his seat. While Farage's re-election is likely a given, since all the main parties have declined to field candidates in what they regard as an unnecessary and costly political stunt, certain clues, such as voter turnout and the number of votes cast for other candidates, will be studied closely. The fact that Farage's highest profile competitor is Count Binface has already lent an air of slapstick unreality to the election, and memories of the 'Boaty McBoatface' victory in a competition to name a polar research vessel in 2016 are being revived in the annual 'silly season' of British politics.

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



British Prime Minister Andy Burnham holds a National Economic Council meeting at No 10 North at Heron House in Manchester, north-west England on Friday. Burnham opened his newly created northern office as he bids to launch his flagship move to reverse decades of centralising power over England in London. (AFP)

France, Spain confront ‘unpredictable’ wildfires

AFP
Bordeaux

France fought an “unpredictable” wildfire close to Bordeaux yesterday while Spain warned of “difficult hours” in its own fiery battle, with evacuations from danger zones in both countries mounting to well over 325,000 people.

The forest infernos, raging for days unchecked in France’s south-west and in central Spain near Madrid, were among the worst each nation has seen in peacetime.

France’s major fire has caused an unprecedented “pyrocumulonimbus”: a gigantic, untamable fire cloud that creates its own winds and packs lightning that causes more blazes, according to the National Firefighters Federation of France (FNSPF).

“It’s a David-versus-Goliath scenario: the idea is that, at some point, we’ll find a weak spot and strike there,” said FNSPF spokesman Eric Brocardi.

French President Emmanuel Macron has called a crisis cabinet meeting for today morning to discuss responses to the fires, his office said Sunday.

Spanish officials voiced optimism they were starting to get a grip on some of their fires — though on the weekend they were confronted with a new fire front, near the eastern coastal city of Valencia, which forced 15,000 people to flee.

“Difficult hours lie ahead,” Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said as he visited the fire zone in Avila province west of Madrid.

A Spanish cabinet member said the fire around the town of Avila was the largest in the country’s history.

Other EU countries have been sending help to Spain and France



An Air Tractor AT-802F Fire Boss aircraft dumps water over a wildfire burning near San Martin de Valdeiglesias, about 70km west of Madrid, yesterday. (AFP)

in the form of aircraft, fire crews and vehicles.

Scientists say that such weather emergencies are being made more extreme and frequent by climate change.

The disasters, coming at the peak of the summer vacation period when tourists flock to both countries, were fuelled by woodland parched to tinder by successive heatwaves and lack of rain since May.

“When we flew into Madrid we could see the fire very close to the airport,” said Pilar, a 69-year-old New Zealand tourist who declined to give her last name. She was carrying a mask in case the smoke situation in the city became worse.

Letisha Lucas, a 33-year-old tourist from Canada — which has

its own wildfires happening — said the smoke smell was obvious on arrival in Madrid “and very irritating on the throat”. She added that the proximity of the blaze left her “kind of nervous”.

The prefect of the Gironde department where France’s fires are concentrated asked tourists to stay away and look for “alternative destinations”.

France’s Interior Minister Laurent Nunez warned “the situation remains very unfavourable” for fires across the country, where more than 250,000 people had been evacuated.

The main fire in the southwest Gironde region, where Bordeaux is located, was “extremely intense and unpredictable... generating its own winds and advancing errati-

cally toward the Bordeaux metropolitan area”, he said on X.

Meanwhile, French weather forecasters say another heatwave could hit the country starting tomorrow, with temperatures reaching 40C in parts of the country.

At least 240 homes have been destroyed in surrounding areas, many of them in the village of Le Porge. But Bordeaux’s mayor said there were no plans to evacuate the city’s urban area, home to 850,000 people and currently sheltering thousands evacuated from zones close by.

Though the fire was 15 kilometres (nine miles) from Bordeaux’s suburbs, it “is largely to the south. It is not advancing on the western side,” said the mayor, Thomas Cazenave, add-



Smoke from nearby wildfires covering the skyline of the city of Bordeaux yesterday. (AFP)

ing that local officials remained “vigilant”.

But France’s defence ministry said it has taken special steps to protect industrial sites in the Bordeaux region, a key centre of the country’s aerospace industry.

The principal freeway to the south of Bordeaux and rail services have been cut.

Some 2,500 firefighters, 1,500 military personnel and around 1,200 police have been deployed to the Gironde region.

In Spain, the head of the civil protection service said the country was fighting a “monster”.

“Across this national wildfire crisis, we are dealing with a perimeter of 280 kilometres encompassing 77,000 hectares,” Virginia Barcones told state broadcaster TVE.

King Felipe VI, visiting an emergency shelter for evacuees on Madrid’s western outskirts, said the wildfires had caused “incalculable” damage to his country’s natural heritage.

Around 75,000 residents have been evacuated from the Madrid region, Avila, Toledo and from the eastern region of Castellon in Valencia.

Olga Congacha, 50, who had to flee her village of Robledo de

Chavala west of Madrid with hastily grabbed documents and clothes, told AFP she felt “panicked” when told to leave her home.

“I didn’t know whether to cry or what. It was a moment when you feel awful,” she said.

She added she was allowed a brief visit to her house yesterday to get medicine, to find it covered in ash and the streets deserted.

Authorities said winds were pushing the wildfires near Madrid to the south, away from the capital for now, but forcing more evacuations of villages in their path.

Hundreds of kilometres away, the new Valencia fire was proving “very intense”, Pilar Bernabe, the central government delegate to Valencia wrote on X.

On Saturday, one person was killed near Valencia in a separate, smaller fire.

That was the only civilian death so far reported in the wildfires. In France the death toll was two firefighters killed near Bordeaux on Tuesday.

Pope Leo IV, in his prayers yesterday, expressed solidarity with all those affected by the “devastating” Spanish and French fires and called on people to pray for them and for first responders.



Firefighters work at the site of a household item shopping mall which was hit by a Russian drone strike, in Kryvyi Rih, Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine yesterday. (Reuters)

Russian, Ukrainian strikes kill at least 10

AFP
Kyiv

Russian and Ukrainian strikes killed at least 10 people yesterday, with Kyiv saying Moscow attacked a supermarket in northern Ukraine and Russia accusing Kyiv of striking a bus stop in the occupied east.

The strikes come a day after 20 people were killed on both sides of the frontline, with both Kyiv and Moscow intensifying attacks while diplomacy to end the war — launched by Russia in 2022 — is at a deadlock.

Kyiv said Moscow attacked a supermarket in the northern city of Chernigiv.

“As a result of the strike, two people were killed, including a 10-year-old child,” the head of the

city Dmytro Bryzhynsky said on social media

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said 13 people were wounded in what he called a “deeply cynical drone strike on an ordinary supermarket.”

Officials published a photograph of a supermarket building with smoke billowing on it in Chernigiv — which lies close to Belarus and far from the frontline.

Zelensky also said Russia had launched ballistic missiles at Kyiv, wounding several people and that Moscow’s strikes killed one person in Zaporizhzhia and another in Kharkiv — where officials said Moscow targeted a residential building.

“This is deliberate Russian terror with absolutely no military justification,” Zelensky said.

In Moscow-held Gorlivka, Rus-

sian occupational authorities said a Ukrainian drone strike killed four people.

Russian-installed local authorities said the strike had hit a bus stop and that seven people were also left wounded.

Another person was killed in the occupied part of the Kherson region, Moscow said.

Authorities in Russia’s border Belgorod region said one person was killed by a Ukrainian drone in the village of Smorodino.

The attacks came a day after Moscow said a Ukrainian strike on an occupied town on the Azov Sea killed 12 people.

US-led talks on ending fighting have stalled. The Kremlin occupies swathes of eastern and southern Ukraine and has repeatedly said it intends to seize the rest of east Ukraine by force.

5 Bosnian climbers feared dead on Mt Elbrus

Reuters
Sarajevo

Five Bosnian climbers are feared to have died on Russia’s Mount Elbrus, the highest mountain in Europe, after being caught in a violent storm, a Bosnian climbing rescue service said yesterday, as Russian rescuers continued to search for the bodies.

Russia’s Emergencies Ministry said rescuers had saved two other

climbers, who were evacuated from the mountain and taken for medical care.

It said the bodies of two further members of the same group had been located on the mountain at an altitude of 5,350 metres (17,550 feet) and would be evacuated when weather conditions allowed. The search for the three other bodies is ongoing, the ministry added, without specifying their nationality.

Mount Elbrus, which rises to 5,642 metres (18,510 feet) just

north of the border with Georgia, is infamous for sudden changes in weather and climbing conditions.

Bosnian media reported that the seven members of the climbing expedition were residents of the central town of Zenica and included a married couple and a doctor who worked at the local hospital.

Russian media reported that adverse weather conditions including strong winds had complicated the search and recovery operations.

Romania slams Russia as third drone shot down

AFP
Bucharest

Romania yesterday said it was summoning Russia’s ambassador after the Nato member’s military shot down the third drone in as many days.

Romania, which borders Ukraine, has seen frequent drone incursions since Russia launched its 2022 invasion of Ukraine, but had not shot down any until Friday.

Yesterday, a Romanian F-16 fighter jet shot down a drone over the Black Sea, five minutes after it entered the country’s airspace, defence minister Radu Miruta said on Facebook.

Romania is summoning Russia’s ambassador following “repeated violations”, foreign minister Oana Toiu said on X.

President Nicusor Dan said according to an investigation, a drone shot down on Friday was a “Shahed model, used by the Russian Federation in its war of aggression against Ukraine”.

Investigations into drones shot down Saturday and yesterday were ongoing, he added.

“It is unacceptable and intolerable for the Russian Federation to continue violating Romania’s airspace, which is also the airspace of Nato and the European Union,” he said on X.

The drone shot down yesterday also “appears to be of Russian origin”, Martin L. O’Donnell, a senior Nato military spokesperson, said.

He added the shootdowns come as Romania and other Nato countries “actively acquire ground-based interceptors” to beef up their air defence.

At the end of June, Romania integrated into its defences the US — made MEROPS counter-drone system, which is AI-powered and designed to intercept small targets flying at low altitudes.

The country has reported dozens of drone incursions during the Ukraine war.

One smashed into an apartment building in Galati on the border with Ukraine in May, wounding two people.

In 2025, the Romanian parliament adopted a law allowing for the shooting down of drones that breach its airspace.

Several countries near the Ukraine conflict have shot down drones since the war started.

D-Day beaches inscribed on Unesco World Heritage List

AFP
Rennes

Unesco yesterday added the iconic D-Day landing beaches in Normandy to its World Heritage List, marking the culmination of a project launched nearly two decades ago.

Stretching for more than 80km of France’s northwestern coast, Allied forces landed on the beaches on June 6, 1944 to fight a decisive battle to liberate Europe from Nazism and end World War II.

The nomination included the five D-Day beaches known by their code names: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno, and Sword. A dwindling number of veterans visit each year and world leaders con-

gregate there on key anniversaries. “This decision places a responsibility upon us,” said Herve Morin, president of the Normandy Region.

“It compels us to preserve this property, to protect it, to cherish it even more, and to promote its value,” he added.

The D-Day landings join more than 50 French sites already inscribed on the list, alongside the spectacular Mont Saint Michel island in Normandy and the Palace of Versailles.

Recognition of their “outstanding universal value” brings international renown and commits authorities to work toward their preservation.

Greece meanwhile welcomed the inclusion of Mount Olympus, its highest mountain, a protected

nature reserve and, according to Greek mythology, home to the gods of antiquity, on Unesco’s list. The mountain is also one of Europe’s most biodiverse areas and home to rare wildlife.

“From today, the mythical Mount Olympus becomes a mountain belonging to all of humanity,” Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis wrote on Facebook.

Unesco also accorded World Heritage status to 18 historic 18th and 19th-century condominium-style theatres in the Italian regions of Emilia Romagna, Marche and Umbria.

Italian Culture Minister Alessandro Giuli Rome noted the decision to mark the theatres’ contribution to their regions’ cultural and social life “with pride and satisfaction.”



French troops disembark from a US landing craft during a joint US and French amphibious landing operation showcase at Omaha beach in Saint-Laurent-sur-Mer, northwestern France, ahead of the “D-Day” commemorations marking the 80th anniversary of the World War II Allied landings in Normandy. (AFP/File Photo)

Dedicated QNB First premium branch unveiled in Msheireb



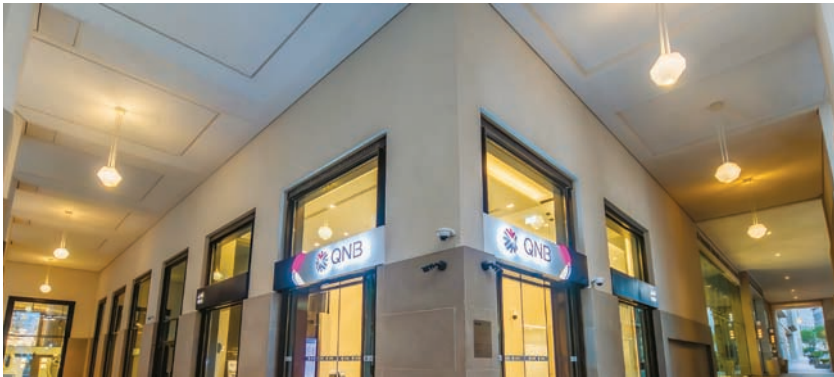
QNB Group has announced the opening of its newest dedicated QNB First premium branch in Msheireb Downtown Doha.

Following the launches of its Lagoon Mall and Al Sadd locations, the latest addition marks the third QNB branch entirely exclusive to QNB First customers.

The expansion reinforces the Group's strategy to build a distinct network of premium hubs situated in Qatar's most prestigious lifestyle and business destinations.

Located in the heart of the world's first sustainable downtown regeneration project, the Msheireb branch is thoughtfully designed to mirror the district's "smart city" ethos.

The Msheireb branch represents a convergence of cutting-edge banking technology and unparalleled luxury, offering affluent clients a digitally seamless yet



highly personalised environment.

The Msheireb location offers a holistic value proposition.

Rather than standard banking, the branch serves as an exclusive financial ecosystem offering advanced wealth and investment guidance from dedicated Senior Relationship Managers, priority private banking in a highly discreet setting, and seamless access to QNB First's signature global lifestyle privileges.

"Msheireb Downtown Doha is a global symbol of innovation, sustainability, and

the modern Qatari lifestyle, making it the natural home for our newest QNB First branch," said QNB Group senior executive vice-president (Group Retail Banking) Adel al-Malki.

"As our third fully dedicated premium space, this opening reflects our commitment to evolving alongside our affluent clients," he said. "We are moving beyond traditional transactions to deliver a sophisticated, smart-enabled financial experience that perfectly aligns with the ambitions of the QNB First community."

VCU-Q art and design camps witness packed sessions

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar (VCUarts Qatar, VCU-Q)'s Community Education Programme is attracting a large number of participants from diverse backgrounds, according to an official of the university.

"We have a large number of participants for the programme this year," VCUarts Qatar Community and Continuing Education programme manager Rasha Alkasab told *Gulf Times*. "The Children's Summer Programme has approximately 15 participants in each class. The Msheireb Museums Summer Programme accommodates approximately 30-40 participants per workshop, depending on the session."

The VCUarts Qatar's Community Education Programme 2026 is offering three summer initiatives to serve different age groups while fostering creativity, artistic skills, and design thinking.

The first is the Summer Art & Design Programme for High School Students.

"This flagship annual programme is designed for high school students who are considering pursuing art and design at the university level," Alkasab said. "The intensive three-week experience introduces participants to the academic environment and studio culture of VCUarts Qatar while helping them explore future educational pathways."

The programme begins with Foundation Week, where students are introduced to the creative process and a range of design disciplines before selecting one major which they will explore in depth for two weeks.

Participants can choose from the following four majors: Graphic Design, Interior Design, Painting and Printmaking, and Kinetic Imaging.



The second initiative is the Children's Summer Programme for young creatives aged 11-15.

The programme combines storytelling, digital creativity, and emerging technologies.

"Creative Chronicles introduces participants to visual storytelling, character design, digital art, and immersive world-building using Virtual Reality," Alkasab said. "Students learn how ideas evolve from sketches and narratives into interactive virtual environments while developing creative confidence and communication skills."

"Another programme, 'Beyond the Layer: From Digital Models to Physical Artefacts', bridges digital design and physical making," she continued. "Participants explore 3D modelling, 3D printing, and hands-on fabrication, learning how digital concepts can be transformed into tangible artworks."

In addition, VCUarts Qatar partners with Msheireb Museums Summer to deliver the Msheireb Museums Summer Programme, a community-focused initiative that celebrates Qatari culture through hands-on art experiences for both children and adults.

The programme consists of three workshops: Msheireb Museums Clay Pattern Relief - exploring architectural motifs through clay relief sculpture inspired by the geometric and floral patterns of Msheireb Downtown; Squeegie Dot Art Workshop, introducing participants to expressive painting techniques while drawing inspiration from the architecture, history, and identity of Msheireb Museums; and Karak Cup Painting (Karak Night), a family-friendly creative experience where participants decorate traditional karak cups while celebrating community and local culture.

According to Alkasab, the summer programmes serve a broad range of participants between the ages of 4-17, with additional workshops for adults aged 16 and above.



"Through the programmes, participants learn to build strong observational, artistic, and design skills; think creatively and solve problems through experimentation; develop confidence in expressing ideas visually; explore both traditional and digital creative tools; learn emerging technologies such as Virtual Reality and 3D modelling; strengthen communication and storytelling abilities through art; experience collaborative studio practice similar to university-level education," she said.

For high school students, the programme also provides valuable exposure to university-level art and design education while helping them prepare portfolios for future academic applications.

"Beyond teaching technical skills, these programmes nurture curiosity, innovation, and creative confidence while introducing participants to the broad range of career opportunities available within the creative industries," Alkasab said.

"By combining traditional artistic practices with emerging technologies and culturally inspired projects, the programmes encourage participants to see creativity as a powerful tool for communication, problem-solving, and positive social impact," she added.

Voice of the Gulf refreshes signature music sessions with new digital rollout

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Qatar's Voice of the Gulf Radio has unveiled a revamped approach to promoting its renowned music sessions, introducing a new digital announcement strategy designed to enhance audience engagement and make it easier for listeners to follow their favourite performances.

Launched in Doha in 2002, Voice of the Gulf has established itself as one of Qatar's leading radio stations, dedicated to preserving the artistic identity of the Gulf region, celebrating its rich musical heritage and delivering a diverse mix of cultural programming and exclusive musical performances.

The station operates under the umbrella of the Qatar Media Corporation alongside the country's other official television and radio outlets.

As part of its latest initiative, the station now publishes a daily schedule of its flagship Voice of the Gulf Sessions across its digital platforms, announcing broadcast times and the names of participating artists in advance.

The move allows audiences to plan their listening experience and stay connected with the station's exclusive content through both traditional broadcasting and social media channels.

The Voice of the Gulf Sessions

air daily from 8pm to 9pm, featuring exclusive performances by some of the Gulf and Arab world's most celebrated singers.

Meanwhile, the station's Oud (Arabic for lute) Sessions, broadcast every night from midnight until 1am, offer listeners an authentic musical experience centred on the timeless sounds of the oud, performed by distinguished artists renowned for their mastery of classical Arabic music.

The advance announcements have already generated strong interaction across social media platforms, helping listeners identify broadcast times and featured performers while expanding the reach of the station's artistic content to a broader audience.

The initiative forms part of Voice of the Gulf's wider efforts to strengthen its digital presence and deliver a more interactive media experience that seamlessly combines the intimacy of radio broadcasting with the accessibility of online platforms.

Over the years, the Voice of the Gulf Sessions have become one of the station's defining programmes, providing a distinctive platform where leading artists perform in a relaxed, live setting that showcases the spontaneity and authenticity of their music.

The sessions have also played an important role in preserving and promoting the Gulf and wider Arab musical heritage for generations of listeners.



Sawt al Khaleej (Voice of the Gulf) Radio Orchestra.

Anime collecting gains ground at Qatar Toy Festival

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Qatar's appetite for anime and pop-culture collectibles is broadening beyond established fans, as families and first-time buyers embrace licensed merchandise and shared experiences at the Qatar Toy Festival this summer.

The response at The Little

Things store has exceeded expectations, according to its team, which said the festival is revealing a growing and increasingly knowledgeable market for figurines and limited-edition pieces.

"The response has exceeded our expectations and reflects a market that is becoming increasingly engaged with licensed entertainment and collectible culture," store representatives told *Gulf Times*.

They said that the audience has included long-time collectors, families and people purchasing their first character figure, suggesting that collecting is moving beyond a specialist hobby and becoming a more accessible cultural interest.

One Piece, Dragon Ball, Naruto, Demon Slayer, Pokémon and Studio Ghibli collections have attracted the strongest interest, alongside detailed premium figurines and limited-edition items.

However, the team said that customers in Qatar are not simply following one dominant trend.

Instead, many are looking for pieces linked to stories and characters they value personally.

"What has stood out most is the diversity of interests among visitors," the representatives said. "Fans are actively seeking authentic, high-quality collectibles that reflect their personal connection to different stories and characters."

They added that this variety

points to a maturing fan community that values licensing, originality and exclusivity.

The store has sought to make the experience welcoming to different age groups and budgets by offering products across a range of categories and price points.

Staff members discuss visitors' favourite franchises and collecting goals before recommending items.

"Whether someone is purchasing their very first collectible or expanding a long-established collection, we focus on understanding their interests," the team said.

Authenticity has emerged as one of the most common concerns among visitors.

Customers regularly ask where products come from, whether they are officially licensed and what makes a particular item exclusive or limited.

The Little Things said it works with trusted suppliers and official licensing partners, while its staff members provide information about sourcing, quality and exclusivity to help customers make informed purchases.

"Transparency is equally important," the representatives said, adding that buyers should be able to purchase "with confidence and peace of mind".

Feedback during the festival has also shown that Qatar's fans want more than shelves of merchandise.

Visitors have expressed interest in exclusive launches, collector-



A figure of Uzumaki Naruto from the manga and anime series..

focused activations, community gatherings and opportunities to engage more closely with the brands and stories they follow.

The team said such interest demonstrates the potential for immersive destinations where retail, entertainment and community participation meet.

At the Qatar Toy Festival, collecting is becoming a shared experience: a child discovering a favourite character, a family exploring anime together, or an experienced collector finding the next meaningful addition.

