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Labour minister meets Haiti’s ambassador



HE the Minister of Labour Dr Ali bin Samikh al-Marri met yesterday with Haiti’s ambassador to Qatar Pierre-Richard Cajuste. They discussed bilateral co-operation in the labour sector. - **QNA**

Qatar positioning as ME biotech hub

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He said Qatar has made sustained investments in research, healthcare, and scientific infrastructure, allocating between “0.5%” and “0.7%” of GDP to research and development in recent years, aiming to boost this figure to “1.5%” by 2030.

“At the same time, healthcare expenditure is projected to grow from approximately \$7bn in 2025 to \$12.5bn by 2030, supporting the continued development of an innovation-driven healthcare ecosystem,” al-Kaabi stated.

He said this spending supports a growing innovation network backed by institutions like Qatar Foundation, Qatar Biomedical Research Institute, Qatar Environment and Energy Research Institute, Sidra Medicine, and local universities.

Precision medicine and genomics remain key focal points, he stated.

“National initiatives, including the Qatar Precision Health Institute (QPHI), which is responsible for Qatar Biobank and the Qatar Genome Programme have collectively advanced population-scale research, with more than 40,000 Qatari and Arab genomes sequenced, creating one of the region’s most comprehensive genomic datasets,” al-Kaabi explained.

These initiatives back targeted medical research while opening avenues for scientific collaboration, according to al-Kaabi.

“Biotechnology is rapidly emerging as one of the defining industries of the 21st century. From developing life-saving therapies and strengthening food security to advancing sustainable manufacturing and addressing environmental challenges, its impact extends far beyond the laboratory,” he stated.

The global biotech market is expected to expand from “\$1.38tn” in 2025 to “\$4.33tn” by 2034, registering a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of “13.6%,” al-Kaabi said.

“Increasingly, policymakers recognise that leadership in biotechnology is not merely a scientific ambition but an economic necessity for competitiveness, resilience and long-term prosperity,” he emphasised.

While North America holds the largest market share and Asia-Pacific grows at the fastest pace, the MEA region is claiming greater prominence.

Regional market value is forecast to climb from “\$51.5bn” in 2025 to “\$125.9bn” by 2034, reflecting a “10.5%” CAGR, al-Kaabi stated.

“This momentum is being driven by rising healthcare demand, increased investment in research and development, a growing focus on food security and sustainability, and efforts to diversify economies beyond traditional sectors,” he said.

Al-Kaabi also said that GCC states are expanding their regional capabilities through targeted policies, including Saudi Arabia’s National Biotechnology Strategy and the UAE’s life sciences hubs.

“However, global competitiveness requires more than investment alone,” he added.

“Successful biotechnology ecosystems combine world-class research, access to capital, supportive regulation, industry collaboration and specialised talent,” he said.

Al-Kaabi also said: “As biotechnology becomes increasingly central to future economic competitiveness, the countries that successfully connect research excellence, investment capital and commercialisation capabilities will define the next generation of global biotech hubs.”

Alfardan Medical with Northwestern Medicine Strengthens Men’s Health & Urology Services with Leading Consultants

Continued from Page 1

The department provides comprehensive services including prostate health, kidney stone management, urinary tract disorders, minimally invasive urological procedures, male infertility assessment and treatment, erectile dysfunction management, testosterone replacement therapy, and advanced Men’s Health care.

Patients benefit from AMNM’s multidisciplinary approach, supported by advanced radiology and laboratory services, enabling accurate diagnosis and personalized treatment plans within a single facility.

“At AMNM, we are committed to providing patients with access to the highest standards of specialized care,” said Dr. Abdulla Al-Ansari, Chief Executive Officer and Senior Consultant Urologist at Alfardan Medical with Northwestern Medicine.

“Together with Dr. Riadh Al-Zubaidi and our multidisciplinary clinical teams, we offer comprehensive Men’s Health services supported by advanced diagnostics, modern treatment options, and a patient-centered approach designed to deliver the best possible outcomes.”

Located in Burj Alfardan, Lusail, AMNM offers state-of-the-art facilities designed to deliver exceptional patient care in a comfortable and private environment.

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Amir congratulates Peru’s president

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to Peru’s President Keiko Fujimori on the anniversary of her country’s Independence Day. His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent a similar cable of

congratulations to Fujimori on the occasion. Meanwhile, HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of congratulations to Peru’s Prime Minister Luis Enrique Arroyo Sánchez on the occasion. - **QNA**

HMC expands Lbaih with newer services

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“The new Lbaih functions are designed to make the outpatient journey more efficient for patients while also supporting improved operational efficiency across our facilities,” she said.

“Through Lbaih, we are continuing to expand secure, user-friendly digital services that give patients easier access to healthcare information and greater control over managing their care through a single integrated platform,” she added.

The HMC has encouraged patients to download the application and explore the full range of services now available through it.

Sidra in Qatar’s landmark SMA gene therapy

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“Our priority is to ensure that eligible patients and their families can access advanced therapies closer to home through a co-ordinated care pathway that supports them before, during, and long after treatment,” he said.

Prof Tawfeg Ben Omran, division chief of Genetics and Genomic Medicine, said the field had shifted decisively.

“For decades, spinal muscular atrophy was considered a relentlessly progressive disease with limited treatment options,” he said. “Gene therapy is changing that reality by allowing us to move beyond managing symptoms and toward addressing the disease at its genetic source.”

Dr Walid Mubarak, senior attending physician in Interventional Radiology, said the imaging-guided approach let clinicians position the needle precisely while maintaining patient safety throughout.

Khalid’s family had travelled abroad for years in search of options.

“Seeing Khalid receive this therapy here in Qatar is a dream come true,” his mother said.

A high-performing student at Qatar Academy Sidra, Khalid intends to study medicine.

“The first thing I want to do is take my mother to Makkah and Medina,” he said.

He will remain under scheduled follow-up covering laboratory monitoring, motor function, respiratory health and rehabilitation.

Father Amir’s legacy is... defined by his humanity

Qatar’s ambassador to Sweden Nadia bint Ahmed al-Shaibi honours memory of HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani



No matter how much is written, and no matter how eloquently words are crafted, they can never do justice to our father and leader, His Highness the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, may Allah have mercy upon him.

He was no ordinary man. He was an extraordinary leader who made history, shaped the future of a nation, and through his vision and wisdom stood years ahead of many of the world’s leaders.

Yet it was not his political achievements alone that defined his greatness.

His humanity was even greater than the world knew. Countless acts of kindness were carried out quietly, and countless hands were extended in generosity without ever seeking recognition, gratitude, or praise.

Among the most difficult moments of my diplomatic career, and indeed of my life, was standing at the embassy of Qatar to receive those who came to offer their condolences following the passing of HH the Father Amir, may Allah have mercy upon him.

It was far more than an official duty, it was an emotional test unlike any other.

I received words of sympathy while striving to remain composed before the magnitude of our loss.

With every handshake and every tribute, I felt that our grief was too profound to be captured by words.

We were not simply bidding farewell to a leader; we were bidding farewell to an era that transformed the history of our nation and to a man whose legacy touched the lives of millions.

Throughout the days of mourning at the embassy, I received politicians, parliamentarians, journalists, researchers, doctors, lawyers, and people from every walk of life.

What moved me most was that every single one of them, without exception, carried a personal memory, a humanitarian encounter, or an unforgettable story about HH the late Father Amir.

It was then that I truly understood that great men never depart with the passing of their earthly lives.

Their influence remains alive in the hearts of people, and their stories continue to be told by those who knew them or whose lives were touched by their generosity.

Those were days that weighed heavily upon the heart and burdened the soul, not because of the number of mourners, but because every story reminded us anew of the enormity of our loss.

Those who came did not offer condolences merely out of diplomatic courtesy or protocol.

They came with genuine affection and heartfelt gratitude for a man whose influence extended far beyond the borders of his homeland and whose generosity and humanity reached people across the world.

Just as HH the late Father Amir’s legacy did not end with his own generation, it has also reached the younger generation, many of whom did not personally witness the defining milestones of his leadership, yet inherited a deep love for him and immense pride in his legacy.

The sorrow we witnessed in the eyes of young people and children was not merely grief for a historical figure, but for a father and a leader who remained alive in their hearts through the stories they had heard of his justice, compassion, vision, and the profound impact he had on countless lives.

Our greatest source of consolation following his passing is his enduring guidance and testament, which will forever remain a beacon illuminating our path under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, may Allah protect him.

With unwavering loyalty and devotion, we shall continue preserving and building upon the remarkable legacy entrusted to us by HH the late Father Amir.

May Allah have mercy upon HH the Father Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, and may all that he offered to his nation, the Arab and Islamic worlds, and humanity be counted among his greatest good deeds.

His name will forever remain alive in the memory of generations, for the legacy of truly great leaders never fades.

They live on through the values they instilled, the institutions they built, the legacy they left behind, and the love and prayers they continue to inspire in the hearts of people.

QC launches health projects in Somalia

Qatar Charity (QC) has launched its 2026-27 health plan in Somalia, comprising 48 projects across nine major programmes and expected to benefit 49,834 people.

The plan seeks to expand access to essential and specialised healthcare services for the most vulnerable communities.

The announcement was made during an official ceremony attended by HE the Minister of State at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare Dr Mar-yam Mohamed Hussein, QC director (Development Operations) Ibrahim al-Janahi, and Dr Muna Hussein Hassan, the director-general of Banadir Hospital in Somalia’s capital Mogadishu.

The event also brought together officials from Somalia’s health ministry, representatives of health institutions, and international partners.

During the ceremony, Qatar Charity presented the plan’s main interventions, geographic coverage, and programmes scheduled for implementation over the next two years.

The initiatives address key health priorities, including malnutrition and blindness, the provision of medicines and medical supplies, pediatric heart surgeries, chronic disease treatment, and the rehabilitation of dialysis centres.

The projects are designed to ease the burden on low-income families and ensure timely access to appropriate healthcare services.

The malnutrition treatment programme accounts for the largest share of the plan, with 21 projects set to benefit 21,672 people.

Activities will include early detection of malnutrition cases, distribution of therapeutic foods, and awareness sessions for mothers and caregivers on proper nutrition and the prevention of related health complications.

The “Ibsar” programme encompasses 10 projects to

combat blindness, benefiting 10,000 people through eye examinations, necessary surgeries, and the distribution of prescription eyeglasses.

These interventions are expected to help patients restore their vision and resume their daily activities more effectively.

Under its treatment services component, the QC will provide medicines and medical supplies to around 17,300 beneficiaries, strengthening the capacity of health facilities to respond to growing needs and ensuring the continuity of essential medical services for vulnerable groups in targeted areas.

The “Merciful Hearts” initiative will carry out

Three projects to support 70 children with heart conditions by providing surgeries, medical care, and follow-up services.

The plan features the “Hope” project, which will provide life-saving treatment for 200 beneficiaries; chronic disease treatment for 500 beneficiaries; the “Smile Making” programme for 60 beneficiaries; and the rehabilitation of five dialysis centres, benefiting 32 patients.

Al-Janahi said the initiatives were made possible thanks to the generosity of donors who contributed to the 27th of Ramadan campaign for 2026.

He emphasised that Qatar Charity remains committed to implementing high-impact projects that respond to urgent health needs and improve beneficiaries’ quality of life.

Health Minister Dr Hussein commended the QC’s role in supporting Somalia’s health sector.

The ceremony also highlighted success stories from previous beneficiaries of the “Merciful Hearts” initiative, including Abbas Oweis, who recovered after undergoing heart surgery funded by the QC and was able to return to his studies and daily life.

Qatar Charity implemented 24 health projects in Somalia last year, benefiting more than 143,000 people at a cost exceeding QR9mn.



Ministry launches heat stress awareness drive

As Qatar continues to prioritise the protection of outdoor workers during the peak summer months, the Ministry of Municipality has stepped up its occupational health and safety efforts by launching a heat stress awareness initiative to help workers recognise, prevent and respond to heat-related illnesses.

Organised by the ministry's Mechanical Equipment Department under the Pub-

lic Services Affairs Sector in co-operation with the Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS), the programme was held at the Al Rayyan Municipality Theatre.

The initiative sought to raise workers' awareness of the dangers of heat stress, its symptoms and preventive measures, while reinforcing compliance with occupational health and safety procedures during the summer season.

The event was attended by Eng. Abdullah Ahmed al-Karani, the assistant undersecretary for Public Services Affairs at the Ministry of Municipality; Mubarak Freish al-Salem, the deputy speaker of the Central Municipal Council; Dr Mohamed Saif al-Kuwari, the vice-chairman of the National Human Rights Committee; representatives of supporting organisations, and department directors and section

heads from Public Services Affairs.

Speaking at the event, al-Karani said the initiative reflects the ministry's commitment to strengthening the culture of occupational health and safety while expanding partnerships with government entities, national institutions and charitable organisations.

Mechanical Equipment Department director Shareeda Sultan al-Rumaihi said the programme forms part of a series of awareness initiatives organised by the department in partnership with various organisations.

He noted that the initiatives not only enhance workers' safety and well-being but also improve workplace efficiency, reaffirming the ministry's commitment to protecting its workforce as a key pillar of the country's sustainable development.

The programme featured an awareness

presentation and a lecture explaining the risks of heat stress, its symptoms and prevention methods.

It also emphasised the importance of following approved occupational health and safety procedures and preventative measures to minimise heat-related risks at work sites during the summer.

Al-Karani honoured the supporting and co-operating organisations in recognition of their contributions to the programme's success and their continued support for the ministry's efforts to strengthen occupational health and safety awareness.

Workers also received gifts donated by the QRCS, Afif Charity Foundation, and the Jassim and Hamad Bin Jassim Charitable Foundation, highlighting the role of community partnership and social responsibility in recognising and supporting workers during the summer season.

WCM-Q study identifies gaps in research on falls among older adults in Mena region

A new study by experts from the Institute for Population Health (IPH) at Weill Cornell Medicine - Qatar (WCM-Q) has revealed major gaps in research on falls among older adults in the Middle East and North Africa (Mena) region.

Unintentional falls are a leading cause of injury and death among older adults.

Despite this, the availability, scope and geographic distribution of epidemiological evidence on fall-related outcomes in the Mena region remain poorly characterised, limiting policy development and prevention efforts.

Published in *BMJ Global Health*, the IPH study provides the first comprehensive mapping of observational epidemiological evidence on fall-related outcomes across the Mena region.

The study, titled *An evidence gap map of fall-related outcomes among older adults in the Middle East and North Africa region*, was authored by Dr Ravinder Mamtani, professor of population health sciences, vice-dean for population health and lifestyle medicine, and professor of medicine at the Centre for Global Health; Dr Sohaila Cheema, associate professor of clinical population health sciences and assistant dean for the IPH; Dr Karima Chaabna, manager of population health research; Anupama Jithesh, research projects co-ordinator; Salina Khawaja, former projects co-ordinator; and Jasmine Aboughanem, former research assistant.



Dr Ravinder Mamtani, Dr Sohaila Cheema, Dr Karima Chaabna, and Anupama Jithesh.

In the paper, the researchers identified 203 primary studies reporting on fall prevalence, frequency, risk and fear of falling, self-reported perceived reasons for falling and postfall consequences among 424,000 adults aged 60 and older in the Mena region.

The evidence gap map highlights substantial data gaps across several countries, with marked underrepresentation of rural, low-income and conflict-affected settings, and limited evidence on key fall-related outcomes such as fear of falling and self-reported perceived reasons for falling, both critical for designing effective prevention strategies.

The research builds on an earlier study published by the team in the *Journal of Global Health* in March 2025.

While the earlier study quantified the burden of falls and provided regional epidemiological estimates of falls, the new evidence gap map offers a comprehensive overview of where evidence is available, where it is lacking, and which populations, settings, and outcomes require greater research attention.

The findings highlight the urgent need to strengthen regional data systems across the region through standardised, context-specific surveillance, including the integration of fall indicators into national surveys and hospital-based registries.

The authors also recommend collecting data in regional languages to improve accessibility and cross-country comparability.

Oman proposes voluntary Hormuz fees

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Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said Tehran had proposed to Oman that Iran managed one-way shipping through its side of the strait and Muscat managed part but not all of the opposite direction.

Under the Omani proposal, Iran would not exercise sole control and fees would be voluntary, the Gulf source and Western diplomat briefed on the matter told Reuters.

The system would be analogous to one in place on Asia's Strait of Malacca, where Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore ask ships to pay voluntary contributions to fund navigation, environmental protection and search-and-rescue operations.

The Western diplomat compared it to a voluntary carbon tax for flights, where anyone buying a plane ticket can choose to tick a box if they want to pay to offset their emissions.

Iran's joint military command again rejected a plan put forward by Trump for damages to vessels to be paid from frozen Iranian assets, state media reported.

It said that any country or company that accepted such payments would be denied passage through the Strait of Hormuz by Iran's armed forces.

Adding to the challenges for shipping in the region, the Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen opened a new front against the US and its allies on July 20, when they declared a blockade of Saudi ports on the Red Sea.

Late yesterday, the Houthis said they had fired ballistic missiles at a Saudi oil tanker, which they said was forced to turn back.

Trump called off his latest campaign of airstrikes after receiving advice from military commanders that the strategy had run its course.

The 13 nights of renewed US bombing killed scores in Iran and destroyed bridges and tunnels across the south as well as military targets.

Iran had responded with attacks on US bases in neighbouring countries that killed four service members, and strikes on civil infrastructure in Gulf states that it said were in response to US strikes on civilian targets.

Aman Centre concludes events under 'Leaders of Tomorrow'

The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre (Aman) of the Qatar Foundation for Social Work has concluded its awareness activities under the "Leaders of Tomorrow" programme, held in co-operation with the Ministry of Defence and the National Service Academy.

The programme delivered awareness workshops for children to promote community understanding of cyberbullying and online extortion.

Acting Aman executive director Fadl al-Kaabi emphasised the importance of co-operation with the National Service Academy in raising awareness among programme participants, whose number exceeded 500 throughout July.

He said that the programme highlighted topics such as cyberbullying and online extortion and aimed to equip participants with social protection mechanisms and ways to prevent cyber extortion and bullying.

Al-Kaabi reaffirmed the centre's commitment to strengthening national identity and a sense of belonging among participating children, and continuing to support community service through awareness and interactive activities that develop leadership skills and build children's self-confidence.

The director of Aman's Community Awareness Department, Bakhita al-Ghayathin, highlighted the centre's commitment to participating in summer awareness events to highlight the most important steps to protect the child from harm and to provide appropriate solutions that contribute to building the child's personality and consolidate the values of protection and responsibility among children and youth. - QNA

A-G orders forgery probe following complaint from MoI

The Attorney-General Dr Issa bin Saad al-Jafali al-Nuaimi has ordered an investigation into allegations involving the forgery of official documents and damage to public funds.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Public Prosecution said it had launched the investigation following a complaint filed by the Ministry of Interior against a female Qatari.

Investigations found that she had allegedly conspired with individuals outside Qatar to facilitate the

issuance of forged medical leave certificates, falsely attributed to Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC), for several Qatari suspects, who then submitted the certificates to government entities in order to obtain leave.

The statement added that the Public Prosecution's investigation established that the suspect had also agreed with individuals outside the country to provide forged medical leave certificates to additional suspects, including students at educational institu-

tions and employees of several government bodies, in exchange for payments transferred to her bank account.

The recipients allegedly used the forged certificates to obtain leave from government entities without legal entitlement, despite knowing the documents were forged.

The Public Prosecution said the investigation is ongoing as it completes the necessary legal procedures related to the case.

QSCCB teaches how to handle emergency, evacuation situations

The Qatar Social and Cultural Centre for Blind (QSCCB) held, with the co-operation of the General Directorate of Civil Defence, an awareness workshop on handling emergency and evacuation situations for persons with disabilities (PWDs) at the centre's headquarters.

The workshop was organised to help increase understanding of safety when

it comes to PWDs and raise awareness of proper procedures when facing different emergency situations to best safeguard lives and properties.

First Lieutenant Khalil Rashid al-Naimi presented the workshop with affiliates from the General Directorate of Civil Defence.

They showcased the Civil Defence's role in protecting lives and properties

and key safety steps during incidents.

The officials emphasised the importance of maintaining calmness and making proper calls during such incidents.

The participants were introduced to safety and evacuation procedures in establishments, the most notable causes of fire, and fire extinguishers and blankets.

The instructors stressed the importance

of preparing safety tools ahead of time.

The workshop wrapped up with a question-and-answer session.

Workshop participants later expressed the importance of holding awareness programmes to better educate people on prevention and safety, as well as empower PWDs to handle emergency situations with confidence and understanding. - QNA

QGF, QADA organise workshop on 'Qudwah Educational Programme'



The Qatar Gymnastics Federation (QGF) has hosted a workshop on "Qudwah Educational Programme" in co-operation with the Qatar Anti-Doping Agency (QADA).

The workshop yesterday gave a comprehensive overview of key anti-doping topics, which included the dangers of prohibited substances, athletes' rights and responsibilities, doping control procedures, the Prohibited List, and the importance of protecting the integrity of sports through clean competition.

Attended by QGF athletes, coaches, and administrative staff, the workshop reflects the federation's commitment to enhancing its members' understanding and awareness alongside their technical development.

At the conclusion of the workshop, participants said that such workshops significantly enhance their knowledge, strengthen their awareness, and reinforce their commitment to the principles of clean sport. - QNA

Shifting edge of war forcing Gazans into nomadic life

Reuters
Cairo/Gaza

On a road in Gaza City's Zeitoun district, Palestinian resident Assem Dawla loaded mattresses and bags onto a truck as concrete yellow blocks marking the edge of Israel's expanding military zone stood amid the rubble nearby.

He said it was the seventh or eighth time since the war began that he and his family had been forced to leave a shelter because of Israeli evacuation orders and the advance of what residents call the yellow line.

Zeitoun is one of at least five locations across Gaza where residents and Hamas officials say Israel has expanded areas under its control in recent days by moving forward the yellow line, a military demarcation established under a US-brokered ceasefire reached in October.

As men hoisted belongings onto a waiting truck, elderly relatives picked their way through debris. Continued Israeli military activity made it too dangerous to remain, Dawla said. "We are taking our belongings out and going to leave the place because the occupation (Israel) has moved the yellow line," he said.

With the October ceasefire, President Donald Trump set out a peace plan for Gaza that largely halted major fighting after two years of devastating Israeli war in Gaza.

The plan called for a surge in humanitarian aid, governance by a civilian Palestinian administration, the disarmament of Hamas, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the deployment



Children play football amid the ruins of buildings in Gaza. (AFP)

of an international force to help maintain security.

But progress has stalled. Hamas has so far refused to disarm, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on May 28 that Israel intends to expand the area under its control to 70% of the enclave. Israeli forces have continued near-daily military strikes across Gaza.

Residents in Deir al-Balah, Khan Younis, Gaza City's Zeitoun, Tuffah and Shejaia neighbourhoods, as well as northern Rafah, told Reuters that Israeli forces have advanced the yellow block markers during the past 10 days, triggering new waves of displacement in areas already devastated by months of conflict.

At least seven people interviewed by Reuters said residents in some affected areas received warnings via text messages or drone-mounted loudspeakers before leaving once again.

The Israeli military said its

forces are deployed in Gaza to protect Israel from attack and that the yellow line was being clearly marked on the ground to reduce the risk of contact between troops and civilians.

"IDF's (Israel Defence Forces) defensive posture in the area includes a security zone, a physical barrier, intelligence capabilities, technological means, and operational activity by IDF troops," the military said.

For many Gazans ordered to move, the process has become painfully familiar: gathering whatever survived the previous displacement — a few blankets, a cooking pot, a child's schoolbag — and setting out, often after dark, for another area designated as safe by the Israeli military.

Near the shattered remains of buildings in Zeitoun, Dawla's mother, Umm Sami, limped through what was left of the family's property, collecting whatever could still be salvaged. "Why am

I leaving? They (Israeli army) became close, they put the yellow line here. The day before, they struck there, and we left."

Like most of Gaza's population, Dawla's family has been displaced multiple times since the war began, rebuilding temporary shelters only to be ordered to move again days or weeks later.

In a statement issued on July 20, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said an Israeli displacement order in Zeitoun forced 30 families from their tents, which were subsequently destroyed.

As trucks carrying the remnants of household lives rolled away and a child walked past yellow blocks protruding from the wreckage, residents faced yet another uncertain journey. "The whole war is displacement, displacement. You can't stay anywhere without (Israel) telling you, 'Get out of here, we want to come in,'" Dawla said.

Lebanon arrests man suspected of transferring money to IS in Syria

AFP
Beirut

Lebanese security forces have arrested a man accused of transferring nearly half a million dollars to the Islamic State group in neighbouring Syria, a judicial official told AFP yesterday.

Forces "arrested a man who had stolen \$400,000 from his father's safe, and investigations showed that he had transferred the money to Syria" for IS, the official said on condition of anonymity.

The inquiry also revealed that the individual was "part of a cell active between Lebanon and Syria" that included three members who are in prison in the Lebanese city of Tripoli and "handled coordination with IS in Syria", the official added.

Two other suspected cell members are believed to have crossed Lebanon's porous border into Syria after the matter was uncovered.

The group "was responsible for funding IS with the aim of carrying out terror acts, whether inside Syrian territory or in Lebanon", the official added.

Lebanese authorities previously said they had detained a Syrian IS commander in late June, accusing him of being the group's leader in central and southern Syria.

Last year, Lebanon's military

said it arrested the suspected leader of IS in the country, implicating him in planning several operations.

Once in control of swathes of Syria and Iraq, IS was territorially defeated in Syria in 2019, but remnants of the group are still there, particularly in the country's vast desert.

The group occasionally claims attacks mainly targeting Syrian security forces.

Syria's new authorities last year joined the US-led coalition against IS.

In Lebanon, groups that pledged allegiance to IS fought several battles with the army in the 2010s and carried out a series of deadly bombings targeting the Lebanese group Hezbollah and its supporters.

But they were largely defeated militarily in 2017.

Hezbollah fought in support of now-ousted Syrian ruler Bashar al-Assad during the country's civil war.

Also yesterday, authorities in Syria announced the arrest of an unspecified number of individuals accused of belonging to IS in the northern province of Aleppo.

Earlier this month, Syrian authorities said they captured an IS-linked cell responsible for two bomb blasts during French President Emmanuel Macron's recent visit to Damascus.



A woman walks past a destroyed building in the village of Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh in southern Lebanon. (AFP)

UN peacekeepers in Lebanon find explosives in south

AFP
Beirut

UN peacekeepers said yesterday they had found around four tonnes of mainly ammonium nitrate explosives this month in a south Lebanon border village under Israeli occupation.

On July 2 during a "routine route check" near Hula, "peacekeepers found 385 containers abandoned inside a building, containing approximately 4,000 kilograms of explosive material, consisting mainly of ammonium nitrate compounds", the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (Unifil) said in a statement.

Unifil specialists "later carried out on-site procedures to render the material inert, making it safe and removing the risk it posed".

A source with knowledge of the matter told AFP on condition of anonymity that the containers had Hebrew writing on them and were "likely used for demolitions".

Hula is part of a strip of territory running around 10km deep inside Lebanon along the border where Israeli forces, who invaded during the latest war with Hezbollah, have been operating and have warned residents not to return.

While violence has declined since last month's US-Iran memorandum on the regional conflict, and a separate framework deal between Lebanon and Israel, Lebanon has reported ongoing Israeli demolitions and detonations of buildings in border villages and towns. Lebanon's state-run National News Agency has reported Israeli detonations in Hula on four occasions this month.

On July 8, the Hula municipality condemned "in the strongest terms the crimes the Israeli enemy is carrying out of burning, blowing up and destroying homes, public buildings and private property".

Ammonium nitrate, used in fertilisers as well as in explosives, triggers grim memories in Lebanon of the 2020 Beirut explosion.

Qatar Goodwood Festival presented by Visit Qatar opens in style with Al-Shaqab Goodwood Cup

The Qatar Goodwood Festival presented by Visit Qatar has officially commenced, with the Al-Shaqab Goodwood Cup Stakes (Group 1) marking the first of several Visit Qatar sponsored races.

A world-class field of elite runners from leading international stables took part in the two-mile race, delivering an exhilarating showdown at Goodwood Racecourse. Scandinavia claimed victory in a hard-fought finish under Jockey Ryan Moore, for Trainer Aidan O'Brien. The trophy was presented by Rashid Nasser AlKaabi, vice president of QREC, in the presence of guest of honour, Eng Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi, CEO of Visit Qatar.

Visit Qatar once again brought the spirit of Qatar to West Sussex through an interactive experience designed to showcase Qatar's hospitality, unique culture, and tourism offerings to international festivalgoers.

The interactive Visit Qatar pavilion welcomes festival visitors by showcasing Qatar's tourism attractions, while offering traditional Qatari hospitality, featur-



ing a selection of distinctive local flavours curated by renowned Qatari chef Salman al-Jaida. Immersive visual elements throughout the space highlight Qatar's diverse tourism offerings, using striking imagery and compelling storytelling to inspire travel and bring the destination to life.

The Qatar Goodwood Festival presented by Visit Qatar continues throughout the week with more headline races, including the Qatar International Stakes, the highly anticipated Visit Qatar Sussex Stakes, the Qatar Nassau Stakes, the King George Qatar Stakes, and the Qatar Lillie



Langtry Stakes on the final day.

Visit Qatar continues to support world-class equestrian sport

while promoting Qatar's expanding global reputation as a leading tourism destination.

Seashore Impact Camp empowers girls with life skills, sustainability values

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The Seashore Sustainability Academy, in partnership with Al-Mutazah Club, has recently concluded the three-day Seashore Impact Camp, an interactive programme designed to empower girls with essential life skills while promoting sustainability, responsible living and personal wellbeing.

The camp forms part of the academy's ongoing efforts to prepare a generation capable of making informed decisions, embracing positive values and contributing to a more sustainable future.

The programme opened with the "Relationships and Social Energy" workshop, which focused on building healthy relationships, understanding personal boundaries, strengthening self-confidence and navigating the influence of social media.

The second day featured the "Rationalisation and Smart Consumption" workshop, led by a trainer, Buthaina al-Marai, introducing participants to the principles of mindful spending, distinguishing between needs and wants, and adopting sustainable consumption habits.

The camp concluded with the "Time and Digital Life" workshop, also facili-

tated by al-Marai, which encouraged participants to develop healthy digital habits, improve time management and achieve a better balance between the digital and real worlds.

Noura Radwa, director of the Seashore Sustainability Academy, said the camp reflects the academy's vision of investing in people as the foundation of sustainable development.

"We believe that making an impact begins with building people, and that empowering girls with life skills and positive values is the path towards a more conscious and sustainable society. This camp was designed to be a comprehensive educational experience, combining knowledge and application, leaving a lasting impact on the participants' lives and future."

Representing Al-Mutazah Club, Shawq Abdulrahman highlighted the importance of national partnerships in supporting youth development: "We are proud of our partnership with Seashore Academy for Sustainability in organising the Seashore Impact Camp, which embodies our shared vision of empowering girls with the knowledge and skills that help them build balanced personalities capable of making informed decisions."

Salem bin Saeed al-Mohannadi, CEO of Seashore Group, reaffirmed the company's commitment to invest in human capital



A group photo taken after the event concluded.

through impactful educational initiatives.

"At Seashore, we believe that sustainable development begins with building human capacity before any project or initiative. We will continue investing in educational and awareness programmes that prepare a conscious generation equipped with the values and skills needed to build a better future," the CEO said.

The camp concluded with a recognition ceremony honouring participants and trainers, marking the success of the partnership in delivering an engaging educational experience.

Established under the Seashore Group's CSR programme, the Seashore Sustainability Academy has become a leading social platform for environmental education

in Qatar. Working in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the academy delivers camps, school programmes and national initiatives that help cultivate environmental awareness, practical sustainability skills and a culture of responsible citizenship among young people.

Netanyahu upsets Trump with his Iran messaging



People take part in a protest against Netanyahu near the White House. (Reuters)

Reuters
Washington

US President Donald Trump voiced irritation with Benjamin Netanyahu ahead of their White House meeting yesterday, complaining that details of the Israeli prime minister's planned talking points on Iran had surfaced publicly, in a fresh sign of strain between the two leaders.

Asked about reports that Netanyahu wanted to talk to him about Pickaxe Mountain, a fortified facility buried deep underground near one of Iran's main nuclear sites, Trump said, using Netanyahu's nickname, "I don't need Bibi to tell me that. Bibi's telling me that because he wants me to stay involved."

"Why don't you just tell it to me? Why do you have to announce it to the world?" Trump said in an interview with "Fox & Friends." *The New York Post* reported on Monday, citing a source in Jerusalem, that Netanyahu was expected to provide intelligence to Trump that Iran is building up its nuclear facilities at Pickaxe Mountain and is lying about wanting a peace deal.

But photos posted by Netanyahu's office on X showed the two leaders sitting beside each other in the Oval Office with wide smiles. They were joined by Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

Trump met Netanyahu after first having brief closed-door talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

White House spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt described both meetings as "positive and productive."

Relations with Zelensky have warmed as Ukraine has blunted Russian advances in their more than four-year-old war, while Netanyahu faces growing White House frustration over the lack of progress toward a broader settlement in the Iran conflict



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu with President Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington DC. (AFP)

and criticism from some of Trump's supporters who oppose deeper US involvement in the Middle East.

The Israeli and Ukrainian leaders were in Washington to attend a memorial service for Senator Lindsey Graham, a hawkish Republican who was an influential advocate for both Israel and Ukraine in Washington.

Both the Ukraine war and the widening Middle East conflict are at critical junctures. After the collapse of a ceasefire in the Iran war, Trump says he has paused US airstrikes to give diplomacy another chance. Netanyahu has run hot and cold with Trump, who at times has had to rein in the Israeli leader from attacking targets in Lebanon to try to weaken Iran-backed Hezbollah fighters.

An acrimonious phone call in June in which the president called the prime minister "crazy", first leaked to the media and later publicly confirmed by Trump

himself, laid bare the strains between the two leaders.

Sources familiar with the matter said Netanyahu aims to get Trump's support for his reelection campaign ahead of an October 27 vote.

A meeting with Trump that showcases what has traditionally been a close relationship between the two leaders could help Netanyahu at home where he is struggling in the opinion polls.

They are also expected to discuss the Abraham Accords, the series of agreements Trump brokered to normalise diplomatic relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan.

Trump wants to add Saudi Arabia to the accords and conditioned a civilian nuclear co-operation deal with the kingdom last week on Riyadh signing up. Riyadh has so far rejected joining the accords without a path toward Palestinian statehood.

Zelensky hails 'good' Trump talks on Patriot air defences

AFP
Washington

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky hailed a "good meeting" with US counterpart Donald Trump at the White House yesterday, saying they discussed licenses to produce Patriot air-defence interceptors and ways to revive negotiations with Russia.

Zelensky spent just over an hour with Trump, in talks that came with Kyiv and Moscow intensifying long-range strikes and US-led diplomatic efforts to end the war stalled.

"Thank you for everything we do together to protect the lives of Ukrainians and advance peace," Zelensky said afterward in a statement on X.

"The President and I discussed licenses for Patriot interceptor production and several other ideas that could help," he added. "We also spoke about diplomacy — it's important that the diplomatic process be reinvigorated," Zelensky said officials from the two countries would arrange further discussions, adding that he was grateful for Washington's "firm support."

Relations between Zelensky and Trump have warmed since the start of the US president's second term, with Trump suggesting earlier this month that Ukrainian strikes inside Russia could help end the war.

Ahead of the meeting, a senior Ukrainian official told AFP that Kyiv's priorities were fresh supplies of anti-ballistic missiles and ways to revive diplomacy, more than four years after Russia's full-scale invasion.

Last month was the deadliest for Ukraine civilians since April 2022, according to the UN, as Russia increased its use of difficult-to-intercept ballistic missiles.

"It is crucial that Washington approve the purchase of a package of Patriot missiles. That is super important," the Ukrainian official said.

Zelensky said he had offered Trump his condolences over Graham's death, calling the senator "a true friend of Ukraine." — "Amazing job" — Since returning to power last year, Trump has ended direct deliveries of US arms to Kyiv, instead allowing European countries to buy weapons for Ukraine.

Washington nevertheless remains a major ally, supplying intelligence and access to the Starlink satellite system used for battlefield communications.

Relations between the two leaders have recovered since their extraordinary Oval Office confrontation in February 2025, when Trump accused Zelensky of ingratitude and "gambling with World War III." At their latest meeting in Türkiye this month, Trump praised Zelensky for doing "an amazing job" and offered Kyiv licenses to manufacture Patriot missiles.

Zelensky spoke last week with Trump's envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner about how to "reinvigorate diplomacy" after the Middle East war pushed Ukraine talks down Washington's agenda.



President Volodymyr Zelensky arrives at the White House. (Reuters)

X **Thank you for everything we do together to protect the lives of Ukrainians and advance peace — Zelensky**

Previous US mediation efforts foundered over Ukrainian territory claimed by Russia.

After the White House meeting and Graham memorial, Zelensky was expected to address senators, shortly before an initial procedural vote on a bipartisan Russia sanctions bill.

Graham had spent more than a year championing the measure and reached an agreement with the White House on revisions shortly before his death.

The bill has 62 Senate co-sponsors, but some Democrats are uneasy about provisions that would expand Trump's power to impose tariffs on countries buying Russian energy.

Supporters hope a strong bipartisan vote will speed final passage and increase pressure on the House of Representatives, where the legislation faces deeper divisions. Relations between Moscow and Washington have meanwhile cooled since Trump met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska last August.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov denied Monday that talks on an aerial ceasefire were underway and has warned that increased Ukrainian attacks inside Russia will prolong the war.

Ukraine has recently stepped up strikes on Russian oil depots, refineries and shipping, contributing to fuel shortages.

Hours before Zelensky's meeting with Trump, Kyiv launched hundreds of drones at Russia.

Moscow, meanwhile, fired more than 100 drones at Ukraine overnight and has continued attacking the port of Odesa and ships carrying Ukrainian agricultural exports.

Congo court backs law that can give Tshisekedi 3rd term

KINSHASA : Democratic Republic of Congo's constitutional court yesterday approved a referendum law that critics say could open the way for President Felix Tshisekedi to seek a third term in office.

President Felix Tshisekedi, 63, came to power in 2019 and his second — and under the current rules — final five-year mandate is due to end in late 2028. DR Congo's constitution states the number and length of presidential terms cannot be revised.

But the opposition has rallied against a bill backed by the ruling majority that would change the rules for holding constitutional referendums.

Announcing the decision on state TV, Constitutional Court president Dieudonne Kamuleta Badibanga said the proposed law was in line with the constitution.

The court approved clauses that could allow the president to amend the constitution through a constituent assembly followed by a referendum in the event of a "major dysfunction" of state institutions.

However, judges expressed reservations about other provisions, including one allowing the president to call a referendum on any issue deemed of "fundamental" importance.

The bill was passed in June by parliament, where Tshisekedi's coalition holds a large majority. It still requires the president's signature to become law. Tshisekedi has denied seeking a third term, but told a rare press conference in May: "If the people want me to have a third term, I will accept." Opposition parties, weakened after the president's landslide re-election in 2023, have united against any attempt to change the constitution.

A planned protest against the reform was postponed this month after the government announced a long-demanded national dialogue, though it has yet to say who will take part.

The ruling comes at a sensitive time for the DRC, which is battling both a growing Ebola outbreak and offensive by the Rwanda-backed M23 group in the east. (AFP)

Senegal offers 'unwavering support' to Mali

AFP
Bamako

Senegal's President Bassirou Diomaye Faye offered "unwavering support" to neighbouring Mali yesterday as he visited its junta leader whose government is fighting a separatist insurgency.

Faye's visit to meet Assimi Goita is his first trip since being appointed chair of the west African regional bloc ECOWAS.

However the meeting was primarily bilateral and Faye was not accompanied by other ECOWAS members, diplomatic sources told AFP.

Fighters from the Tuareg separatist movement FIA and Al-Qaeda-linked group JNIM have carried out coordinated assaults against Mali in recent months.

Following their visit, Faye expressed "Senegal's unequivocal and firmest condemnation of these heinous, cowardly, and barbaric acts, which are becoming increasingly frequent".



President Bassirou Diomaye Diakharr Faye, sits with President Assimi Goita, upon his arrival for a working visit in Bamako, Mali, yesterday. (Reuters)

The rebels in April seized the strategic northern city of Kidal and also killed Malian defence minister Sadio Camara.

The fall of Kidal, a strategic town in Mali's desert north and an independence stronghold, was a particular blow for the ruling junta, which seized power in two coups in 2020 and 2021 promising to restore the country's territorial integrity.

"I reiterate that Senegal stands ready to support Mali through this ordeal, so that together we may confront the manifold challenges and threats to peace and stability across the region and the wider Sahel", Faye said.

Mali's junta leader Goita did not make a public comment.

Along with Niger and Burkina Faso, Mali quit ECOWAS in January 2025 after teaming up to create their own confederation, the Alliance of Sahel States (AES).

Under Goita's leadership, Mali has turned its back on former colonial ruler France, which had maintained a military presence, and pivoted to Russian paramilitaries from the Wagner Group, which has since been replaced by Moscow's Africa Corps.

But the junta has struggled to deliver on its promise to restore security after years of separatist unrest.

Democratic socialism poorly understood as Michigan contest looms, poll finds

Reuters
Washington

American leftists aligned with the democratic socialist movement have been defeating moderate Democrats in primary elections this year but large swaths of the country still don't know what the movement stands for, according to a new Reuters/Ipsos poll.

Michigan Democrat Abdul El-Sayed, who says he is a progressive candidate and not a socialist, will face moderate Democrat Haley Stevens next Tuesday in a party nomination contest. El-Sayed has been endorsed by democratic socialists like US Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont.

The winner of that contest will face former Republican Representative Mike

Rogers in November, in one of the races expected to play a critical role in determining which party controls the Senate for the last two years of President Donald Trump's term.

The three-day Reuters/Ipsos poll, which concluded on Sunday, found that 49% of Americans say they understand democratic socialist policies while 47% say they do not, underscoring the challenges ahead for America's insurgent left. Asked if democratic socialists have good ideas or not, some 27% of respondents said they have at least some while 51% said there were few, if any, and 20% said they weren't sure.

People have a similar assessment of the ideas of MAGA Republicans, Trump's "Make America Great Again" political base. Some 27% of poll respondents said MAGA Republicans have at least some good ideas,



US Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed. (Reuters)

while 57% saw few or no good ideas from MAGA and 13% weren't sure.

El-Sayed advocates progressive policies

including Medicare for All, a government-run universal health insurance system that would replace most private insurance. Stevens, his opponent in Tuesday's primary who has been endorsed by moderate US Senator Chuck Schumer, instead supports expanded insurance subsidies, while preserving private insurance.

El-Sayed has also been endorsed by US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who, like Sanders, is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, a left-wing organisation founded through the merger of two groups in 1982. Ocasio-Cortez, who some view as a potential 2028 presidential candidate, won an upset Democratic primary in 2018 for a New York-based House of Representatives seat. DSA-backed candidates have won Democratic House primaries this year in New York City and Colorado,

while DSA member Nithya Raman emerged as one of two finalists in the race for Los Angeles mayor. Other prominent DSA members include New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who was elected in 2025.

Trump has seized on the movement's rise to try to falsely paint all Democrats — including those unaffiliated with the democratic socialist movement — as "hardcore, godless communists." Democratic socialists advocate pursuing progressive policies through elections. In contrast, communism seeks to abolish private ownership of property and create a classless society — ideas that the democratic socialists seeking election reject.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll, which was conducted online, surveyed 1,248 US adults nationwide and had a margin of error of 3 percentage points.



IMF boss hails ‘much sounder’ Argentine economy under Milei

AFP
Buenos Aires

International Monetary Fund managing director Kristalina Georgieva late on Monday hailed Argentina's improved economic standing since ultraliberal President Javier Milei took power in 2023.

The IMF boss was visiting top debtor Argentina to meet with Milei, for whom the Washington-based institution has repeatedly voiced support since he took office.

“What we have today, by all indicators, is a much sounder picture” since 2023, Georgieva told a joint press conference with Argentine Economy Minister Luis Caputo.

Milei campaigned on a pledge to revive the economy by slashing public spending and reining in inflation, but the austerity measures imposed by his government have been deeply unpopular, prompting frequent protests.

Georgieva said Argentina's “much stronger position... is a result of the hard work of the government,” as well as “the sacrifice of the Argentine people.” Caputo later told reporters that Georgieva “had



A woman stands behind security barriers facing the Casa Rosada presidential palace in Buenos Aires. (AFP)

a very good meeting with President” Milei.

“She was extremely enthusiastic in offering her congratulations throughout,” he said, adding that she had also met with Milei's cabinet ministers.

During her two-day trip, Georgieva has more meetings scheduled with Argentina's central bank chief Santiago Bausili and experts from the business world and academia.

Yesterday, she visited Vaca Muerta, a vast oil and gas production site that is key to Argentina's export economy, located about 1,200 km from Buenos Aires.

IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack said the visit marked “an opportune time for us to take stock of the progress made under the current program with the Argentine authorities.” The trip comes at a mixed moment for Milei's economy, which

has seen inflation on a downward trend over the past three months — though it is still at 33.5% year-on-year.

But growth remains sluggish and well under the IMF's forecast of 3.5% in 2026, with 0.2% growth year-on-year. Growth was forecast to rise even higher in 2027, hitting 4%. Consumer activity is anemic while debt defaults are skyrocketing. Mortgage defaults have tripled over the past year, hitting 12.8%, the highest level in 20 years.

In 2025, Argentina concluded an extended fund facility agreement worth \$20bn over four years with the IMF. In May, the IMF greenlit a \$1bn tranche under the agreement.

Protests against the IMF in Buenos Aires on Monday sought to give Georgieva an “unwelcome” reception, with placards held up in the main square reading, “no to paying foreign debt.”

Another banner bore the slogan “English out of the Malvinas, IMF out of Argentina” — the first part referring to the British claim over the Falkland Islands.

After Argentina, the IMF director is expected to visit Uruguay to meet with President Yamandu Orsi.

‘Like a prisoner’: Haitian migrants in US face end of protected status

AFP
New York

Tens of thousands of Haitians faced the prospect of leaving the United States or being deported, with the special protected status allowing them to live and work legally in the country expired on Monday.

The Supreme Court said last month the Trump administration could end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians and some 6,000 Syrians without judicial review, although the impact of the decision could apply to migrants from many other backgrounds.

An estimated 350,000 Haitians live in the United States under the program, with many working in healthcare and construction.

The president of the New York Nurses Association Nancy Hagans told AFP that thousands of her members would be unable to work following the end of TPS for Haitians from the end of Monday. “What the government just did was take resources not only from the hospitals, from the nursing homes, from the underserved communities (but) also taking away economic value from our communities,” she said.

One Haitian healthcare worker in the US under TPS for many years said she was still deciding where to go next.

“You can't move. You're like a prisoner and you didn't do anything wrong,” she told AFP, saying that the woman for whom she cared would “have a broken heart.”

Hagans, the union leader, said she had been advising members affected by the Supreme Court ruling to get their affairs in order in case they were swept up by immigration raids.

“We're telling them to get their papers in order. If they have money in the bank to make sure

‘Many people in the Haitian diaspora are worried about what this means for their families and whether returning to Haiti is safe or realistic given the current conditions,’ — Lyne Lucien, Haitian American artist

they take the money. Some of them own homes. They've been here for 26, 27 years — they built a life here.”

TPS provides protection from deportation for people from countries designated as unsafe because of war, natural disasters or other extraordinary circumstances.

Last week on Wednesday, a Republican senator blocked an effort by congressional Democrats to extend TPS for Haitians.

Since Donald Trump's return to the presidency in 2025, as part of his fierce crackdown on immigration, his administration has revoked TPS for migrants from more than a dozen countries, including Venezuela, Nicaragua, Honduras and Somalia.

New York-based Haitian American artist Lyne Lucien said “one of the hardest parts of this decision is the uncertainty it creates.”

“Many people in the Haitian diaspora are worried about what this means for their families and whether returning to Haiti is safe or realistic given the current conditions,” she added.

“There is also concern about families being separated.”

Haiti for decades has suffered from abject poverty, corruption, political instability and natural disasters like a devastating earthquake in 2010. Its last president was assassinated in 2021 and has not been replaced. Haiti has not held an election of any kind since 2016. It is the poorest country in the Americas.

Brazil files request for WTO consultation over US tariffs

Brazil filed a request on Monday seeking a World Trade Organisation (WTO) consultation over tariffs imposed on several products by the US, the foreign ministry said.

President Donald Trump's government has imposed two rounds of tariffs on Brazil this month, which left-wing president and candidate for re-election Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has denounced as election interference.

“Brazil submitted, on July 27, a request for consultations with the US within the framework of the WTO dispute settlement system,” the ministry said in a statement, noting Brazil considers the US measures “unjustified and incompatible” with interna-

tional trade rules.

This month, the US put in place new tariffs on several Brazilian products, charging 25% for alleged unfair trade practices and 12.5% for alleged use of forced labour.

A request for consultation with another country is a preliminary step in opening a panel on the case in the WTO framework.

Brazil took the same step in 2025, when Washington imposed 50% tariffs in retaliation for the coup-related trial that sent former president Jair Bolsonaro to prison.

Now Bolsonaro's son, right-wing candidate Flavio Bolsonaro, is running against Lula in the October election.

That first round of tariffs was largely reversed later on. (AFP)



Teatro Amazonas which was designated a Unesco World Cultural Heritage site, in Manaus, Brazil. (Reuters)

Just one in three Americans back Iran war, Reuters/Ipsos poll finds

Reuters
Washington

Just one in three Americans support the war on Iran, the lowest reading in a Reuters/Ipsos poll since the five-month-old conflict's early days, with most respondents saying that President Donald Trump has failed to explain his goals. The poll, conducted Friday through Sunday, also showed the Republican president's approval rating ticking higher to 37%, up three points from last month when his rating tied the lowest of his presidency.

Trump has offered shifting objectives for the conflict such as aiding Iranians to topple their leaders, taking out Iran's ballistic-missile capabilities and preventing it from obtaining a nuclear weapon. The poll found that 69% of Americans — including four in 10 Republicans — think Trump has not “clearly explained the goals of US military involvement in Iran.”

White House spokeswoman Olivia Wales said Trump will not make decisions based on “fluid opinion polls” and reiterated the president's resolve to prevent Iran from ever acquiring a nuclear weapon. “What matters most to



Iranian women look at carpets in the carpet market in the Grand Bazaar, in Tehran, Iran. (Reuters)

the American people is having a commander in chief who takes bold action to keep them safe,” Wales said.

Approval of the conflict has been below 40% since the US and Israel launched strikes on February 28 — a stark contrast to the opening months of other recent conflicts. While each had different context, the Iraq War from 2003 to 2011 had the support of about 70%

of Americans in its early months. During the early days of the Afghanistan War, which lasted from 2001 to 2021, about 90% of the country backed the war, according to polling by Gallup.

Public disapproval of the war is weighing on Trump and his Republican Party ahead of the November midterm elections when the president's allies will defend slim majorities in the US Congress.

“It's not clear why we started a war with them. I have no idea,” said Alex Womack, a retired turbine repair specialist from Stockbridge, Georgia, who became a Republican in part because he liked how Republican President George HW Bush handled the Gulf War in 1991.

Womack, who served in the US Marine Corps during that conflict, said his support for Trump has ebbed because of the war. “I don't

think he's doing very well, personally,” he said.

To date, 18 American soldiers have died in the conflict while thousands have died in Iran and in Lebanon, where Iran-allied fighters have battled Israeli forces. The war has pushed gasoline prices sharply higher, a blow to the finances of many Americans. Gasoline prices are averaging just over \$4 a gallon nationwide, up from about \$3 a gallon just before the war started on February 28.

“This puts pressure on the party in a myriad of ways, all of them bad,” said Alex Conant, a Republican political strategist and a White House spokesman during the presidency of George W Bush.

“The White House officials have been saying since January that they need to win economic arguments. It's hard to win the economic arguments when you're clearly focused on foreign policy.”

Independent registered voters in the latest Reuters/Ipsos poll said they were favoring the Democratic congressional candidate over the Republican by 36% to 20%. Independent voters also favoured Democrats over Republicans on economic policy, the poll found.

In campaigning for the 2024 presidential election, Trump said

he would keep the US out of enduring conflicts. He initially estimated the Iran war would last four to five weeks. He has bristled over comparisons to other wars, including the Vietnam War, which lasted two decades and claimed the lives of more than 58,000 US soldiers.

Rhyan Anderson, an independent from Fairburn, Georgia, who voted for Trump in 2024, said he thinks Trump should focus on domestic problems rather than on helping Israel or other allies.

“My biggest thing is just focus on the people who are actually in the country,” said Anderson, who works two jobs in security and data collection and said he voted for Democrat Joe Biden in 2020.

“I know we have allies and things like that, but there's a lot of people here that really need help.”

Since mid-March, the Reuters/Ipsos survey has asked respondents whether they support or oppose military strikes on Iran. At that time, 37% said they supported the war. That compared to 27% approval on the day the war began, when the Reuters/Ipsos survey also gave respondents the option to choose unsure, which 29% did.

The latest Reuters/Ipsos survey, which was conducted online across the United States.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, GABRIELLA LOUISE ANTONIO CLAUOR

holder of

**PHILIPPINES Passport No. P2264664D
QID No. 29760800362**

hereby change my name

from

GABRIELLA LOUISE ANTONIO CLAUOR

to

GABRIELLA LOUISE CLAUOR CARANDANG

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, MUHAMAD RAFNAS RAFAEQUE MEETHAL

holder of

**INDIA Passport No. Y9282781
QID No. 29535604437**

hereby change my name

from

MUHAMAD RAFNAS RAFAEQUE MEETHAL

to

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

Not bridging the US-Canada gulf



A drone view of the \$4.7bn Gordie Howe International Bridge, connecting Windsor, Ontario and Detroit, Michigan, on its opening day in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. (Reuters)

Major quake hits southern Japan, workers missing after mall blast

Reuters, AFP
Tokyo

Emergency responders searched early today for people feared trapped in a shopping mall in Japan after a major earthquake reportedly killed one person and injured more than 100.

Private broadcaster TBS reported that a “considerable number” of people were feared dead inside the mall in the town of Kashima.

A 7.1-magnitude earthquake hit Japan’s southern Kumamoto prefecture yesterday, knocking out power to thousands of homes, rupturing roads and leaving some trapped and others presumed dead inside a partially collapsed shopping mall.

Speaking to reporters from her office in Tokyo, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said authorities were still assessing the full extent of the damage in the area, which was devastated by a deadly quake a decade ago.

“We have already been informed that people have been injured. Power outages and fires have occurred in some areas, and there has also been damage to roads and bridges and the collapse of buildings,” Takaichi said.

“I ask everyone to take action to protect themselves, including evacuating to a safe location.”

Around 300,000 people have been instructed to go to evacuation centres, and hundreds of soldiers have been deployed to help with rescue operations as aftershocks continued to rumble in the area, on Japan’s southwestern island of Kyushu.

Around 20-30 workers at the prefecture’s largest shopping mall were unaccounted for after it was rocked by an explosion in the aftermath of the quake, NHK said.

Fire services earlier said multiple people were trapped inside.

Local news outlets quoted police saying several had died or were presumed to have perished in the in-



An aerial view shows the damaged Aeon Mall shopping centre, where, according to local media, an explosion occurred after an earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 7.1 struck Japan’s southern Kumamoto prefecture, in Kashima Town, yesterday. (Reuters)

cident, although Reuters could not immediately confirm the reports.

One side of the mall, which houses around 200 stores, was torn away, exposing steel beams and strewn debris across a vast parking lot, footage showed. Several ambulances and fire engines were parked outside, as rescue teams searched for survivors.

A spokesperson for mall operator Aeon said customers and employees were evacuated right after the initial quake and that the exact cause of the ensuing explosion was unclear. Authorities are investigating a possible gas explosion, broadcaster NTV reported.

Kazuya Tsurunaga told TBS he was stunned by the blast while cleaning up dishes broken by the earthquake inside a pub about 300m from the Aeon mall.

“It was a huge impact,” he said. “A large cloud of smoke billowed up, and because the wind happened to be blowing and the wind direction was towards the shop, the area around us was in a state



An aerial view shows a collapsed chimney at Nippon Paper Industries' Yatsushiro Mill after an earthquake in Yatsushiro, Kumamoto Prefecture, yesterday. (Reuters)

like volcanic ash was falling.”

Multiple people were also unaccounted for after a chimney collapsed at a Nippon Paper Industries factory, broadcaster NHK reported, while two hospitals were each reported to be treating more than 50 people, some in serious condition.

Several passengers aboard high-speed trains at the time of the quake were also injured, operators said.

Authorities said they were responding to multiple incidents where buildings had partially collapsed or had caught fire. One person died in one such collapse in a

town near the epicentre, TV Asahi reported.

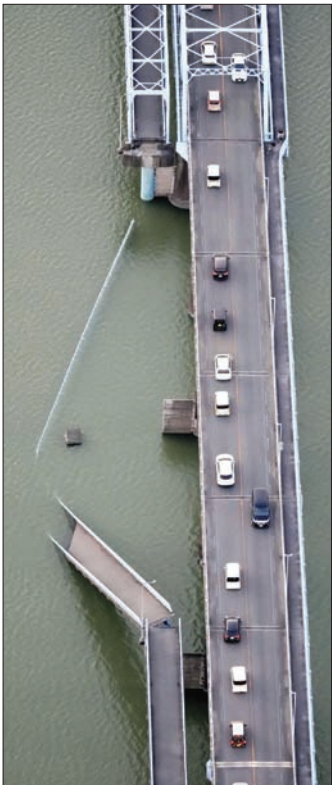
Some roads were also badly damaged, with large cracks splintering major highways, snarling traffic. Rail services were suspended and flights grounded.

TSMC, the world’s largest contract chipmaker, Sony and Fujifilm evacuated workers from their plants following the quake. TSMC said in a statement late Tuesday that its site was unaffected and operations were gradually resuming.

However, Tokyo Electron, a semiconductor equipment maker, said it was suspending operations at its two factories in Kumamoto through Wednesday, while Honda said it would also temporarily idle its motorcycle factory there.

The quake’s epicentre was about 20km (12 miles) south of Kumamoto city, central Kyushu’s largest city with a population of around 700,000.

Residents in the areas that felt the biggest tremors must be on alert for further strong quakes for



An aerial view shows a collapsed section of a bridge in Japan’s southern Kumamoto prefecture yesterday. (Reuters)

about a week, as well as for the risk of landslides, an official for the Japan Meteorological Agency said. About 100 small aftershocks have hit Kumamoto already since the initial jolt, JMA said.

A tsunami warning was issued immediately after yesterday’s quake, but was later lifted.

Kyushu Electric Power said 48,000 homes had lost power as a result of the latest quake, while railway company JR Kyushu said that it had suspended services, including its high-speed bullet trains. Kumamoto airport also shut its runway, as airlines diverted and cancelled flights.

Telecoms operators KDDI and Docomo said there was disruption to their mobile phone services due to power shortages and transmission-line failures.

There were no irregularities reported at the nuclear power stations in the area, Japan’s nuclear regulation authority said.

With thousands of homes still without power as night fell, authorities warned residents about the risk of heatstroke as temperatures were set to hit 34C (93F) today.

Southern, central China brace for flood risk after typhoon

The remnants of Typhoon Noul pushed deeper into China yesterday, threatening heavy flooding across a broad swathe of the country’s southern and central provinces as forecasters warned the weakened storm could linger inland longer than usual.

Torrential rain, fuelled by the effects of the southern monsoon, is expected through Thursday in Fujian, Guangdong, Jiangxi, Hunan, Hubei, Henan and Guangxi, according to the National Meteorological Center.

State media warned the storm’s northward-bound path across mountainous terrain raises the risk of floods, landslides and other disasters before it weakens further.

Noul intensified rapidly before making landfall in Guangdong over the weekend, becoming the strongest typhoon to hit China this year, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The authorities are bracing for overlapping typhoon and flood-season risks, with emergency and housing officials ordering stronger flood-control measures, inspections of critical infrastructure and the pre-deployment of rescue teams and equipment in vulnerable areas. They also called for safety checks on key industries such as mining, hazardous chemicals and fireworks production.

Gansu issued its highest warning for geological disasters late on Monday, flagging landslide and mudslide risks in numerous parts of the province after rocks and boulders rolled off mountain slopes onto roads.

Chinese authorities have been searching for 50 people missing after part of a mountain broke off and collapsed onto buildings in a hillside township developed along a river in Chongqing on July 17. (Reuters)

Myanmar approves death sentence for cyberscam offences

AFP
Yangon

Myanmar’s military-backed parliament approved a law yesterday authorising capital punishment for those who detain or violently coerce victims into working in online scam centres.

Internet fraud factories have flourished in war-torn Myanmar, part of Southeast Asia’s thriving scam economy, targeting web users worldwide with romance and cryptocurrency investment cons.

The multibillion-dollar black market attracts many willing employees, but repatriated foreigners have also reported being trafficked to sites in Myanmar and tortured by scam centre operators.

Under pressure from other nations, including the US and China, the Myanmar government of putschist-turned-president Min

Aung Hlaing has pledged to crack down on the illicit industry.

Myanmar lawmakers passed the “Anti-Online Scam Bill” at a joint session of parliament in the capital Naypyidaw on Tuesday, parliament speaker Aung Lin Dwe said during a live television broadcast.

Lower house MP Aye Chan told AFP the death sentence was included in the final version of the law.

“There were not many significant changes to the proposed draft bill... the important parts of the bill remained the same,” Aye Chan said.

A draft text published in May included sentences of 10 years to life in prison, as well as capital punishment, for “violence, torture, unlawful arrest and detention, or cruel treatment against another person for the purpose of forcing them to commit online scams”.

For scam offences causing death, it said, “the death penalty shall be imposed”.

The draft bill also featured a maximum sentence of life in prison for those who “run an online scam centre” or convicted of cryptocurrency scams.

The anti-scam law is the first legislation passed by Myanmar’s new government, headed by former junta chief Min Aung Hlaing.

As one of his first official acts since becoming civilian leader, Min Aung Hlaing commuted all death sentences in a blanket order in April – a turnaround after his junta had resumed executions following the coup.

The return to executions after decades targeted anti-coup dissidents, rights groups said.

By 2022, more than 130 people had been sentenced to death, according to the UN.

This year China – which reported more than \$5bn in scam

losses in the past two years – has executed at least 15 people convicted of fraud offences linked to Myanmar scam compounds.

Myanmar’s government has vowed to combat Internet fraud alongside neighbouring nations. But law enforcement actions in the region have “displaced and dispersed” scam networks rather than dismantled them, the UN-ODC said.

Crackdowns on established scam hubs, including KK Park and Shwe Kokko in Myanmar near the Thai border, have pushed operators to facilities in Cambodia, it noted.

Upper house MP Naw Yuzana Wah told AFP that international pressure was spurring Myanmar officials to tackle the scam scourge.

“As many armed groups and organisations are involved” in the industry, “we have many challenges to address”, she said.

MH370 families want ‘facts’ as China court hears appeal

AFP
Beijing

Relatives of Chinese passengers of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, which went missing 12 years ago in one of aviation’s greatest enduring mysteries, showed up at a Beijing court yesterday to demand answers.

The court began hearing their appeal against an earlier ruling to order compensation, which the families say disregarded crucial questions.

The Boeing 777 carrying 239 people – two-thirds of them Chinese – vanished from radar screens on March 8, 2014, while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

Despite multiple searches, including the largest in aviation history, the aircraft, passengers or black boxes have never been found.

A court in Beijing ordered Malaysia Airlines in December to pay eight families of Chinese passengers 2.9mn yuan (\$410,000) each.

Frustrated by what they say is a lack of substantive answers about their tragedy, two families have lodged an appeal.

“When I received the judgement and read the first-instance ruling, my first thought was that the court was insulting the families of the passengers, that it was mocking us,” Li Eryou, 69, whose son was on the flight, told AFP outside the court yesterday.

The hearing was closed to the media.

“In 12 years, no one has ever apologised to us. I feel immense anger,” he said.

“This is an international case... but the first-instance judge treated it like nothing more than an ordinary local traffic accident,



People walk past the courthouse where families of the plane MH370 have a hearing in Beijing yesterday. (AFP)

which is why the compensation amount ended up being so pitifully small.”

“The main reason why some families are appealing is that the first-instance court did not clearly establish the facts of the case, nor did it criticise or correct Malaysia Airlines’ inaction” since 2014, said Jiang Hui, whose mother was on the plane.

The court had “merely ruled on the amount of compensation, which is not everything we, the families, are looking for”, he told AFP.

“What matters to us is the establishment of

the facts. That’s our biggest demand.”

Nationals of 14 countries were on board the flight, including 50 passengers and crew members from Malaysia, where there were no pending cases against the airline.

Jiang Hui said he was thankful to the Malaysian authorities for the extension the search for flight MH370, and asked that families be allowed to organise their own search missions.

“The plane isn’t going to rise to the surface all on its own,” he said. “Only by searching would we be able to find it.”

Malaysian police raid online scam centres in Forest City, arrest 335

Reuters
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian police have raided 32 premises hosting online scam activities in Forest City in the state of Johor, arresting 335 people and seizing assets worth about 1mn ringgit (\$245,000), the state police chief said.

The operation was carried out on July 15, targeting two areas that had been identified as hubs for call centres running online fraud activities, Johor police chief Ab Rahman Arsad said in a video posted on Facebook yesterday.

Those arrested were aged between 20 and 58 and included 309 Chinese nationals, 19 Indonesians, 3 Malaysians, and 4 Myanmarese, Ab Rahman said.

Equipment and devices worth about 1mn ringgit that were used to carry out the fraud activities were also seized, he said.

“The fraud activities were carried out through investment and love scams, targeting victims from

abroad, particularly from China and Indonesia,” he added.

The Forest City development is a \$100bn project on reclaimed land backed by embattled Chinese developer Country Garden Holdings and a private Malaysian company linked to Malaysia’s King Sultan Ibrahim.

The project, located in southern Johor state on the border with Singapore, has been beset by a variety of environmental and regulatory issues since its launch in 2016, prompting the government to introduce tax breaks and incentives in 2024 to try to lure investment and spur economic growth in the area.

Forest City was also recently home to the Network School, the “digital nomad” community run by US investor Balaji Srinivasan, which was embroiled in controversy after allegations surfaced that it included participants from Israel, leading to Malaysian authorities revoking its business licence.

Ab Rahman said there was no connection between the scams and the Network School.



Slovak president in China



Chinese President Xi Jinping and Slovak President Peter Pellegrini inspect a guard of honour at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday. (Reuters)

China's premier travels in Xi's stead for 1976 quake anniversary

China's No 2 leader, Premier Li Qiang, visited the city of Tangshan yesterday for the 50th anniversary of a 1976 earthquake that killed a quarter of a million people - a trip usually made by Chinese presidents. Li paid his respects on President Xi Jinping's behalf, state media said, while Xi hosted Slovak President Peter Pellegrini in Beijing. The magnitude 7.8 earthquake was one of the deadliest in recorded history. Li laid a wreath to honour the victims and rescue workers who lost their lives at a memorial in the city. Li also went to a sanatorium visited by Xi in 2016 to meet survivors left paralysed by the disaster. "General Secretary Xi Jinping cares deeply about all of you, and has kept your health and living conditions in mind," said Li. "This time he specifically entrusted me to come and visit you." (Reuters)

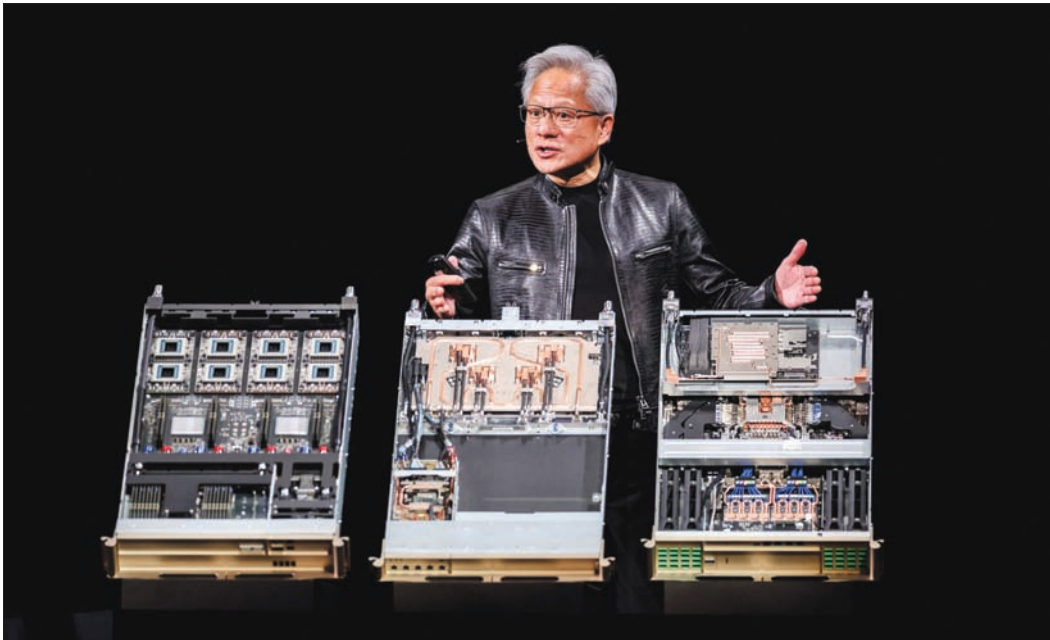
Taiwan detains Nvidia worker in chip smuggling probe: source

AFP
Taipei

Prosecutors in Taiwan have detained an Nvidia employee as part of an investigation into the smuggling of the US tech giant's AI chips to China, a source familiar with the case told AFP yesterday. The man was detained after investigators raided his home and workplace on July 24, the Keelung District Prosecutors Office said in a statement without mentioning Nvidia. He is suspected of offences including "the falsification of business documents under the Criminal Code", prosecutors said in a statement. The US restricts exports to China of the most cutting-edge silicon chips used to power artificial intelligence systems, designed by industry leader Nvidia. Officials said in May they were investigating the shipment of "high-end" AI servers made by Nasdaq-listed Super Micro Computer and containing advanced Nvidia chips to China, Macau and Hong Kong, in violation of US export controls. "This Nvidia employee was identified as a person involved in the case after investigators analysed the relevant evidence following the previous round of searches targeting Super Micro," the source told AFP. In response to AFP's request for comment, an Nvidia spokesperson said: "We primarily sell our

products to well-known partners, including OEMs, who help us ensure that all sales comply with US export control rules," the spokesperson said, using the acronym for original equipment manufacturers. "Even relatively small exporters and shipments are subject to thorough review and scrutiny on both sides of the globe, and any diverted products would have no service, support, or updates." Prosecutors said the detained person is "strongly suspected of having committed the offences, and that there is a risk of flight,

destruction of evidence, and collusion with accomplices or witnesses". Seven people are now being held as part of the probe, including the Nvidia employee, two from Super Micron and one from Taiwan-listed Albatron Technology. They are accused of forging documents to ship roughly 50 servers made by Super Micro to China. Some of the servers were cleared by Taiwan customs and sent to China via Japan, an official previously told AFP on the condition of anonymity.



Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang delivers his keynote speech at Computex 2026 in Taipei. (AFP/File photo)

Myanmar military escalates civilian killings, monitor warns, amid diplomatic push

Myanmar's military has sharply escalated attacks on civilians since a new administration took office in the war-torn country, a conflict monitor said on Monday, even as regional governments ramp up diplomatic engagement. The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) said the onslaught was a result of the tactics deployed by Myanmar's new military chief who took over in late March as his predecessor prepared to become the country's president. "Since the ruling junta in Myanmar reconfigured its military command structure in March, civilians have been subject to the military's worsening repression

and intensified aerial bombing campaign," ACLED said. "These adjustments included the regular deployment of specialised groups of two to five jet fighters executing sustained airstrikes against single targets." A Myanmar government spokesperson did not immediately respond to questions from Reuters. ACLED gathers data on Myanmar's ongoing conflict from media reports and local partners, as well as reports by the UN, international monitoring groups and local human rights organisations. Myanmar was plunged into turmoil after the military ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government in February 2021, spark-

'Since the ruling junta in Myanmar reconfigured its military command structure in March, civilians have been subject to the military's worsening repression and intensified aerial bombing campaign' ing a civil war that has killed some 100,000 people and displaced millions. Days before becoming president after an election that banned most opposition, Min Aung Hlaing appointed long-time loyalist and former spymaster Ye Win Oo as the military's new commander-in-chief. Under his command, the military has launched renewed offensives into several border regions, including a frontier area with critical rare earth deposits and other vital trade routes. "Reprieve for civilians is unlikely as the junta focuses its efforts on consolidating control following coup leader Min Aung Hlaing's transition from commander of the military to civilian president in April," ACLED said. During the first half of 2026, ACLED said it recorded more than

a dozen mass killings, resulting in over 450 civilian fatalities, around 40% of them in Myanmar's central dry zone known as the Anyar region. In May, hundreds of junta troops swept through parts of Myit Chay township, across the river from the ancient temples of Bagan, killing at least 40 people, three residents of the area told Reuters. "About 700 soldiers came into the town, grabbed the belongings of the people here and then beat them and killed them," said Ye Naung, 35. Reuters could not independently verify accounts of the incident at Myit Chay, which is part of ACLED's event database with at least five fatalities

and was reported by local media. "The military's tactics in 2026 so far show merely shifting modalities of civilian repression rather than any reduction in its severity," ACLED said. The political transition in Myanmar has triggered a flurry of diplomacy, with Min Aung Hlaing travelling to key neighbours India and China. There has also been tentative re-engagement with the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations bloc, which barred Myanmar's ruling generals from its summits after the coup. Min Aung Hlaing will make an official visit to Thailand on August 6-7, as he pushes for further legitimacy. (Reuters)

Malaysia FM calls for review of UN refugee agency's presence

Reuters
Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia should reconsider whether to allow the UN refugee agency to operate in the country unless it imposes stricter controls on issuing refugee documents, state media cited the foreign minister as saying yesterday. Minister Mohamad Hasan's comments came a day after authorities detained more than 100 Rohingya asylum seekers who had gathered outside the agency's premises in Kuala Lumpur to seek assistance after being evicted

from their homes in Penang state. He said the government, through the home ministry, was currently working to ensure that the screening process for refugees was carried out jointly by the UNHCR and local authorities when issuing documentation, according to state news agency Bernama. "We want cooperation and strict screening. If they do not want to cooperate, in my opinion, it is time for us to reconsider the presence of UNHCR in the country so that we do not continue to be burdened," Mohamad was quoted as saying. The UNHCR office was attracting more refugees to Malaysia, including Rohingya Muslims, he said.

Amnesty condemns Malaysia for detaining Rohingya asylum seekers

AFP
Kuala Lumpur

Rights group Amnesty International voiced concern yesterday after Malaysian police detained more than 100 Rohingya asylum seekers at a UN facility in Kuala Lumpur. The group had travelled by bus to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) compound in the capital early Monday, after being threatened with eviction from their informal settlement in northern Penang state the previous day, according to local media reports and UNHCR. Police rounded up 110 men, women and children and transported them by truck to national police headquarters on Monday night, before moving them yesterday to a "location designated by a non-governmental organisation" elsewhere in the capital, authorities said.

"Malaysia cannot build a credible refugee protection system while simultaneously treating refugees as people to be rounded up, detained, and removed," Amnesty International's Malaysia branch said. "Refugees and asylum seekers should be treated with dignity and in accordance with their human rights, as people who need protection," it added. UNHCR said it supported dialogue among stakeholders to find longer-term solutions to Malaysia's refugee challenges. The Rohingya, Myanmar's mostly Muslim persecuted minority, face mounting pressure in Malaysia, including an online campaign that rights advocates say is fuelling xenophobia and intimidation. Malaysia currently hosts more than 215,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR. Of these, more than 126,000 are

The UNHCR office in Kuala Lumpur did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the minister's remarks. The agency said in an earlier statement on Tuesday that it was working with authorities to protect the detained Rohingya and verify their documentation. "These efforts contributed to their transfer to alternative accommodation, which is ongoing," it said. The detained Rohingya all possess valid UNHCR documentation and would be temporarily sheltered at the Kuala Lumpur police headquarters pending further action by the

refugee agency, Bernama reported on Tuesday, citing a top police official. Muslim-majority Malaysia has long been seen as a safe haven for Rohingya fleeing persecution in the largely Buddhist Myanmar, but online hate speech and misinformation have exposed the group to greater harassment and scrutiny in recent months. Though Malaysia is not a signatory to the UN refugee convention and regards asylum seekers as illegal migrants, around 126,000 Rohingya Muslims were registered with the UNHCR in the country as of the end of February, according to the agency's website.



Rohingya refugees inside a truck as they are taken by police, in front of the office of the UN Refugee Agency, after being evicted from their homes, in Kuala Lumpur, on Monday. (Reuters)

Rohingya who fled persecution in Myanmar, making them Malaysia's largest refugee community. Despite sheltering one of Southeast Asia's biggest refugee populations, Malaysia has not signed the 1951 Refugee Conven-

tion and does not formally recognise refugee status. According to the UNHCR, this leaves Rohingyas in Malaysia exposed to arrest, detention and deportation, and with limited access to work, schooling and healthcare.

'White phosphorus leaks at US air base in Korea'

Reuters
Seoul

Republic of Korea authorities ordered brief neighbourhood evacuations yesterday after a leak of white phosphorus inside the US Osan Air Base south of Seoul, the Safety Ministry said. No casualties were reported and the evacuation notice for residents was lifted after about half an hour, as Korean fire authorities and US forces carried out decontamination work, Yonhap news agency reported. "At 1708 (0808 GMT), due to a ground mishap and out of an abundance of caution, Osan AB

(Air Base) established a 1,000-foot safety cordon to protect base and local populace," the base said in a statement. "Our emergency response professionals are currently managing an isolated situation on the installation. We are handling this matter with the utmost care and expediency." A spokesperson for the air base said there was a munitions-related accident and it was assessing the situation, in response to a request to confirm the nature of the leak. White phosphorus is a highly toxic substance that can ignite on contact with air and is used in battlefield smoke screens and incendiary weapons.

Top North Korea official blasts Asean for urging denuclearisation

The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un attacked the bloc of Southeast Asian nations on Monday for seeking a denuclearised Korean peninsula, blasting the position as "stupid and foolish". At its annual regional forum last week, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) expressed "grave concern" over Pyongyang's ongoing nuclear weapons development and stressed the importance of dialogue "to realise lasting peace and stability in a denuclearised Korean Peninsula." North Korea has long insisted on its right to nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programmes, although they are forbidden under the terms of UN Security Council

sanctions. It enshrined its nuclear status in its constitution in 2023. Kim's sister Kim Yo Jong said in a statement carried by state news outlet KCNA that she expressed "strong dissatisfaction with the forum's undisguised hostile attitude of going along with the US trumpeting about 'denuclearisation'" and ignoring North Korea's constitution. "It is a failure in strategic thinking and logic and a manifestation of a stupid and foolish wild dream to still adhere to the 'denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula' which had already lost its meaning conceptually and practically," she said. Asean should guard against "being misused as a hired mouthpiece for the US," she added. (AFP)

India's SC orders no coercive action against protesters

Reuters
New Delhi

India's Supreme Court yesterday ordered the release of under-18s arrested during the youth protests over exam leaks and said authorities must ensure surveillance footage is preserved after petitioners alleged police brutality against demonstrators.

Indian media reports said Chief Justice Surya Kant also directed authorities to preserve the digital and personal data of people who participated in the demonstrations and barred any coercive action against them.

The reports said Kant took interim steps in response to petitions filed by student protesters and activists seeking action against police and paramilitary forces for what they said was the use of excess force and pellet guns during the weeks-long demonstrations in the national capital and other cities.

He called for the preservation of all footage, including from drones, body cameras, and CCTV footage, and directed authorities to ensure protesters' data was not made public.

"Whoever has committed excess ... atrocities on innocent people, the law will take care of them. For that, there needs to be a completely



Cockroach Janta Party supporters wave national flags a day after the resignation of India's Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Mumbai. (AFP/File Photo)

independent and fair investigation," Kant said, according to legal website Live Law, one of several outlets reporting the ruling.

"A probe is meaningless if no responsibility is fixed," he said, before ordering the interim steps.

The government has defended police action during the protests as lawful crowd control.

The Solicitor General of India,

Tushar Mehta, was cited by media reports as having said in court that while the matter of students being attacked could not be taken lightly, about 250 police officers were also injured, adding that the government had no objection to an investigation into the matter.

Tensions erupted between protesters and security forces in several parts of the country during

the demonstrations, including in New Delhi, where people attempting to march on parliament were met with tear gas and baton charges.

Indian authorities have also suspended a policeman in an eastern state for firing rounds in the air from an assault rifle to disperse student protesters over the weekend.

India mulls tougher punishment for exam paper leaks

India's government proposed yesterday longer jail terms and hefty fines for examination paper leaks, seeking to restore confidence after youth-led protests focused on education reforms rocked the country.

Under the proposed legal change submitted to parliament, the maximum prison term for those involved in paper leaks would be doubled to 10 years, while fines could exceed \$1 million and court proceedings would be fast-tracked.

The legislative push follows weeks of protests over exam paper leaks and other irregularities, which culminated in the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan last week.

The protests, spearhead by the online Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) movement, drew massive support from young students across the country and presented a major challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government.

The proposed amendments reaffirm "this government's deep commitment to safeguard the welfare of the students and the youth of this country", senior minister Jitendra Singh told the lower

house of the parliament. The changes seek to make the legislation "more stringent and to ensure speedy justice", Singh said, "so that the credibility of all these exams gets enhanced and gets reinstated". The parliament reconvened last week for its monsoon session, with the first few days repeatedly disrupted by opposition lawmakers seeking accountability over a police crackdown on the student-led protests. Examination paper leaks have long plagued India's highly competitive education system. The intense pressure to succeed has fuelled a vast network of coaching centres and created opportunities for criminal groups to profit by selling leaked question papers. Despite repeated government crackdowns, paper leaks have remained a recurring problem in both national and state-level examinations. Demonstrations in New Delhi turned violent on July 20 when huge crowds attempted to march towards parliament from the Jantar Mantar protest site. Police fired tear gas and used batons to disperse the protest, triggering clashes and a wave of detentions. (AFP)

Australia's Labor party replaces Victoria state premier ahead of November election

Reuters
Sydney

Australia's Victoria state gained a new premier yesterday after the centre-left Labor Party chose Ben Carroll as its new leader in the state, preparing for a November election that is being widely watched as a test of the right-wing One Nation party's popularity.

Carroll, the deputy leader of Labor in Victoria — home to Melbourne and the country's second-most populous state — was elected unopposed after the resignation of Jacinta Allan earlier in the day.

Allan, who came to power in 2023, has seen her approval ratings steadily decline amid a weak economy and as voters tire of Labor which has governed the state for 12 years.

Most polls conducted before her resignation predicted the centre-right Liberal Party would take power in November, though some show the party may be reliant on One Nation to form government.

"That remains the biggest risk at this election: a One Nation-Liberal coalition government," Al-



Victorian Deputy Premier Ben Carroll arrives at a caucus meeting at Parliament House after Jacinta Allan stepped down as Victoria premier, in Melbourne, yesterday. (Reuters)

lan told a news conference.

Founded in 1997, One Nation was long seen as fringe but Hanson's hard line on immigration has drawn more support and some polls have shown her personal popularity exceeds that of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

An Australian court on Monday rejected an appeal from Hanson to overturn a ruling that she racially

discriminated against a Muslim senator.

Allan said she had been prepared to fight a possible leadership challenge from within the party, but did not want to destabilise Labor months before the election.

"I believe I would have won, but doing so this close to an election takes up valuable resources, including the most precious one: time," she said.

Indian minister sues Meta, others over posts

India's road transport minister Nitin Gadkari sued Meta and other tech giants yesterday, seeking \$1.14 million in damages over what he said were defamatory social media posts linking him to the country's ethanol-blending fuel programme. The lawsuit comes as the Indian government pushes ahead with its E20 biofuel strategy aimed at reducing its dependence

on imported oil and lowering emissions. E20 petrol, a fuel containing 20 percent ethanol, has come under scrutiny after viral social media posts alleged it harms engines and raises maintenance costs in vehicles designed for lower ethanol blends. Gadkari filed the suit in the Bombay High Court, alleging that content circulated online falsely

portrayed him as being personally responsible for the government's E20 policy, his office told AFP. The suit also claimed the posts accused Gadkari and his family of profiting from the initiative. Gadkari is seeking 110 million rupees (\$1.14 million) in damages, arguing that the "deepfake" posts and videos were causing "irreparable harm" to his reputation. (AFP)

New Zealand intelligence casts doubt on Russia spy accusation

AFP
Wellington

New Zealand's intelligence service cast doubt yesterday on Russia's claims that Wellington recruited a man to pass on sensitive information under Moscow's nose.

The Russian Federal Security Service — commonly known as the FSB — said a man living in the southeastern city of Khabarovsk had been arrested after passing information to New Zealand spies.

The Russian citizen had proactively contacted the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, the FSB said in com-

ments published by local media.

New Zealand then convinced him to pass on information that could damage the security of the Russian Federation, the FSB added.

New Zealand's Security Intelligence Service said it had a "long-standing practice of not commenting on what may or may not be operational matters".

But it added: "It should also be noted that Russian state media are often not the most reliable source of accurate reporting."

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said he would follow the convention against commenting on intelligence matters.

"I don't comment on security

intelligence issues," he told reporters.

While New Zealand is not typically associated with sophisticated subterfuge, it is part of the Five Eyes intelligence alliance alongside the US, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia.

Foreign affairs expert Alexander Gillespie said Russia's accusations should be taken with "a large bucket of salt".

"New Zealand has some history of spies and espionage, but it is nearly always with us being spied on," said Gillespie, a professor at New Zealand's University of Waikato.

"The history is of Russia spying on us, not the other way around," he told AFP.

Bangladesh detains senior army officer in staged killing case

AFP
Dhaka

Bangladesh has detained an active army brigadier general over the alleged extrajudicial killing of a local politician during an anti-narcotics crackdown that left hundreds dead, officials said yesterday.

At least 466 people were killed during the nationwide anti-drug campaign launched in 2018, according to rights groups, with many deaths alleged to have occurred in staged gunfights involving security forces.

Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) last week accepted a complaint against 11 officials, including former prime minister Sheikh Hasina, a former police chief and six serving and retired military officers, over the killing of Akramul Haque, a councillor in the southeastern district of Cox's Bazar.

The officer's detention marks one of the most significant moves yet by the ICT against those linked to actions taken during the rule of Hasina, who was ousted in 2024.

"Brigadier General Miftah Uddin Ahmed was taken into custody for further judicial proceedings," army officer Sami-

ud-Dowla Chowdhury told AFP.

ICT chief prosecutor Aminul Islam said investigators had submitted a report detailing the alleged involvement of the accused.

The case centres on the killing of Haque, whom Hasina's government had described as a "meth kingpin".

The incident sparked outrage after Haque's wife, Ayesha Akhter, released an audio recording that she said captured her husband's final moments and contradicted official claims that he had died in a shootout.

In the recording, Haque can be heard speaking with his wife and children shortly before his death,

while his young daughter asks: "Dad, why are you crying?"

Critics alleged at the time that authorities sought to suppress reporting on the case.

"We have been waiting for this day to come for the last eight years," Akhter told AFP.

"My family and I suffered immense pain, slander, neglect and mental distress, but we never lost hope," she said. "We want to keep faith in our judicial system."

Rights activists welcomed yesterday's arrest announcement as a test case for accountability over alleged abuses committed during the anti-drug campaign.

Burnham outlines youth training overhaul as AI reshapes jobs market

Reuters
London

Britain's new Prime Minister Andy Burnham yesterday outlined plans to align technical education and training for young people with local employment needs, seeking to tackle rising youth unemployment by preparing people for an AI-driven future. Britain has faced a worsening youth employment crisis since the Covid-19 pandemic, with more than a mn 16-to-24-year-olds not in education, employment or training.

For 18-to-24-year-olds, the percentage of so-called NEETs is 15.8%, more than triple that in the

Netherlands, a country ministers have increasingly cited as a model for reform. Burnham's government, seeking to produce results quickly after a decade of political instability and stagnant living standards, says advances in artificial intelligence are changing the types of jobs available, increasing demand for new technical skills and giving "new life" to traditional trades.

In an article for the *Times*, Burnham said Britain had become too focused on university as the main route to success.

Under his plans, pupils in England will be able to study core subjects such as English, maths and science alongside technical qualifications, work experience and

employer-led projects. He hopes that regional authorities, schools, colleges and businesses will help design programmes around local labour market needs, with a national rollout planned for 2028. A government-commissioned review warned in May that Britain risked creating a "lost generation" of young people.

Last month, Work and Pensions Secretary Pat McFadden visited Dutch youth employment centres, known as Jongerenpunt, before announcing plans to open almost 180 new "Youth Hubs" to bring together employment, education, welfare and health support in a single location.

McFadden told Sky News yesterday the advance of AI meant

that a country that had traditionally lagged its northern European peers in creating vocational routes into employment needed to change.

"Perhaps the assumptions about what was a safe and secure job in the past no longer apply today," he told Sky News. "This is a general-purpose technology. It will both destroy jobs and create jobs."

Burnham's plans build on efforts by previous governments to strengthen technical education, including T-level qualifications introduced under Theresa May, skills and apprenticeship reforms under Boris Johnson, and measures under Keir Starmer aimed at improving links between employers and education providers.



Britain's Prime Minister Andy Burnham uses a ratchet spanner, as he visits French run rail transport systems manufacturer Alstom in Derby, central England yesterday, on the day he unveils new technical educational routes aimed at tackling youth unemployment. (AFP)



What the finger has carried: A small watch against a large burden

Somewhere between 18.1% and 24.6% of adults in this country live with diabetes. The gap between those two figures – the Ministry of Public Health’s survey estimate and the International Diabetes Federation’s modelled one – is itself a statement about how hard the disease is to count. What is not in dispute is the scale. On any of the available measures, Qatar carries one of the heaviest diabetes burdens in the world, and the 2021 primary healthcare data showing Type 2 prevalence among Qataris at 19.2% makes clear that the burden falls hardest on the citizen population.

Against that, a wristwatch developed at Qatar University may seem a modest thing. It is not. Consider what monitoring actually asks of a patient. Not the annual clinic visit, not the medication, but the daily arithmetic: a lancet, a strip, a drop of blood, repeated before meals, after meals, before sleep, for decades. Every clinician knows what

happens next. Adherence decays. People test less than they should, and then less than that, and the readings that would have caught a dangerous swing are simply never taken. Poor glycaemic control is rarely a failure of will. It is a failure of tolerability – a treatment regime that demands a small act of self-injury several times a day, indefinitely.

GlucoWatch, developed by a team led by Dr Khalid Abu al-Saud with four computer engineering students, proposes to remove that friction entirely. It estimates glucose by reading heart rate signals, blood pressure and demographic inputs through an AI model, and pushes the results to a phone. No blood. No consumables. Alerts when readings drift outside approved ranges, and the option to share data with a family member or a physician.

The significance is not the convenience. It is what continuous, effortless data does to the disease. Diabetes is currently managed as a series

of snapshots; a passive wearable turns it into a continuous record, which is the difference between reacting to a crisis and seeing it approach. It also changes who can realistically be monitored – the elderly patient who dreads the lancet, the newly diagnosed adult still negotiating with the diagnosis, the rural or housebound patient for whom every reading is currently a chore.

There is a national dimension too. A Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar modelling study put new Type 2 cases at roughly 25,000 in 2021, with obesity the principal driver. Prevention will do most of the work in bending that curve, but detection is not a minor partner. A device unobtrusive enough to be worn by people who do not yet know they are ill is, potentially, a screening instrument as much as a management one.

Caution is owed. The device is an estimator, not a laboratory. It is at the validation stage, with a published patent application and a gold medal in Kuwait –

encouraging markers, but not regulatory approval. The history of non-invasive glucose monitoring is littered with promising prototypes that could not survive clinical scrutiny. Accuracy across varied physiology, and across the exact edge cases where a wrong reading is most dangerous, is the entire test.

But the direction is right, and the provenance matters. This began as a student graduation project at a national university, aimed at a national affliction, with an explicit commitment to affordability. Qatar National Vision 2030 talks about building a knowledge economy that serves the population. This is what that looks like when it works: a local problem, local researchers, and a solution designed for the people who need it most.

If the validation holds, the finger prick becomes a thing this country’s children read about rather than endure. That is worth the patience it will take to get right.

Back in business



A drone view shows a vehicle crossing the \$4.7bn Gordie Howe International Bridge, connecting Windsor, Ontario and Detroit, Michigan, the day after it opened in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, yesterday. (Reuters)



Malaysia’s data centre boom faces scrutiny over power, water, community impact

By Clare Jim and Danial Azhar
Hong Kong/Johor

After leapfrogging Singapore to become the region’s fastest-growing data centre hub, Malaysia is facing intensifying scrutiny as the resources debate that has complicated the industry’s growth spreads to emerging Asia.

Protests over a data centre complex in Johor state’s southern tip – the epicentre of the boom – were the first of their kind in the country. In Selangor, the richest and most populous state, debate about the burden on communities has become politicised.

“Two years ago, it was just about building capacity,” said Cheam Tat Inn, managing director at the Malaysian arm of US data centre operator Equinix.

“The conversation today is more like, How will you use power? Are you looking at renewables? They want to see how you’re going to grow sustainably and responsibly.”

It’s a notable shift for a country – and a region – that has courted hyperscalers hard in a race to secure AI infrastructure investment, offering lower land costs and affordable power. It puts emerging Asia roughly where developed-market data centre hotspots such as Ireland, the Netherlands and Singapore were several years ago, when the industry’s breakneck growth began to stir concerns about competition for water and electricity with homes and farms.

Even so, global hyperscalers – in tandem with data centre developers and operators – are pushing forward with massive investments aimed at powering AI services requiring increasingly large amounts of computing capacity, but with a sharpened focus on sustainability to help secure a “social licence” from local communities. Governments are also tightening standards to retain public support.

In Johor, China’s ZDATA told Reuters its data centre operates solely on treated wastewater, and it is finalising a renewable energy deal with state utility Tenaga Nasional to ease strain on the electricity grid. Japan’s NTT said its data centre will employ a closed-circuit cooling system to limit water use. Bain Capital-backed Bridge Data Centres said solar energy accounts for more than half of the power supply at its operations in the state.

“Data centres have high abstract support because we’re all using more and more data and we all want high speed,” said Chris Howard, an executive director at consultancy JLL. “But this contrasts very sharply with acceptance of data centres in local communities due to the perception of increased energy prices and water usage – or even just ugly buildings.” JLL estimates that rising objections from residents were among factors – also including grid connections and infrastructure equipment – that contributed to delays of at least three months for 57% of projects globally last year.

Renewable energy, local content
New projects in Johor must show how they will

source electricity, with renewable energy increasingly a prerequisite for approval. Late last year, the state announced a blanket ban on two categories of extremely water-intensive data centres, requiring as much as 50mn litres daily, the capacity of 20 Olympic swimming pools.

Selangor isn’t banning any proposals outright, but is vetting them to meet global standards on energy and water efficiency, the state’s executive councillor for investment, trade and mobility, Ng Sze Han, told Reuters. A centerpiece of its approach is requiring 30% local content in areas such as integrated circuit design and cooling systems.

“These are highly capital-intensive projects, but historically they have delivered limited spillover to the local economy,” Ng said.

In April, the opposition Socialist Party singled out a 1.75bn ringgit (\$428mn) hyperscale project in the state for criticism, saying it prioritised corporations over communities. With Malaysia tightening scrutiny, investment may start flowing to other countries in the region, said Savills director Nicholas Tuan.

“We’re already seeing more activity and inbound requests for markets like Thailand, where there are larger scale campuses being built in the south,” he said.

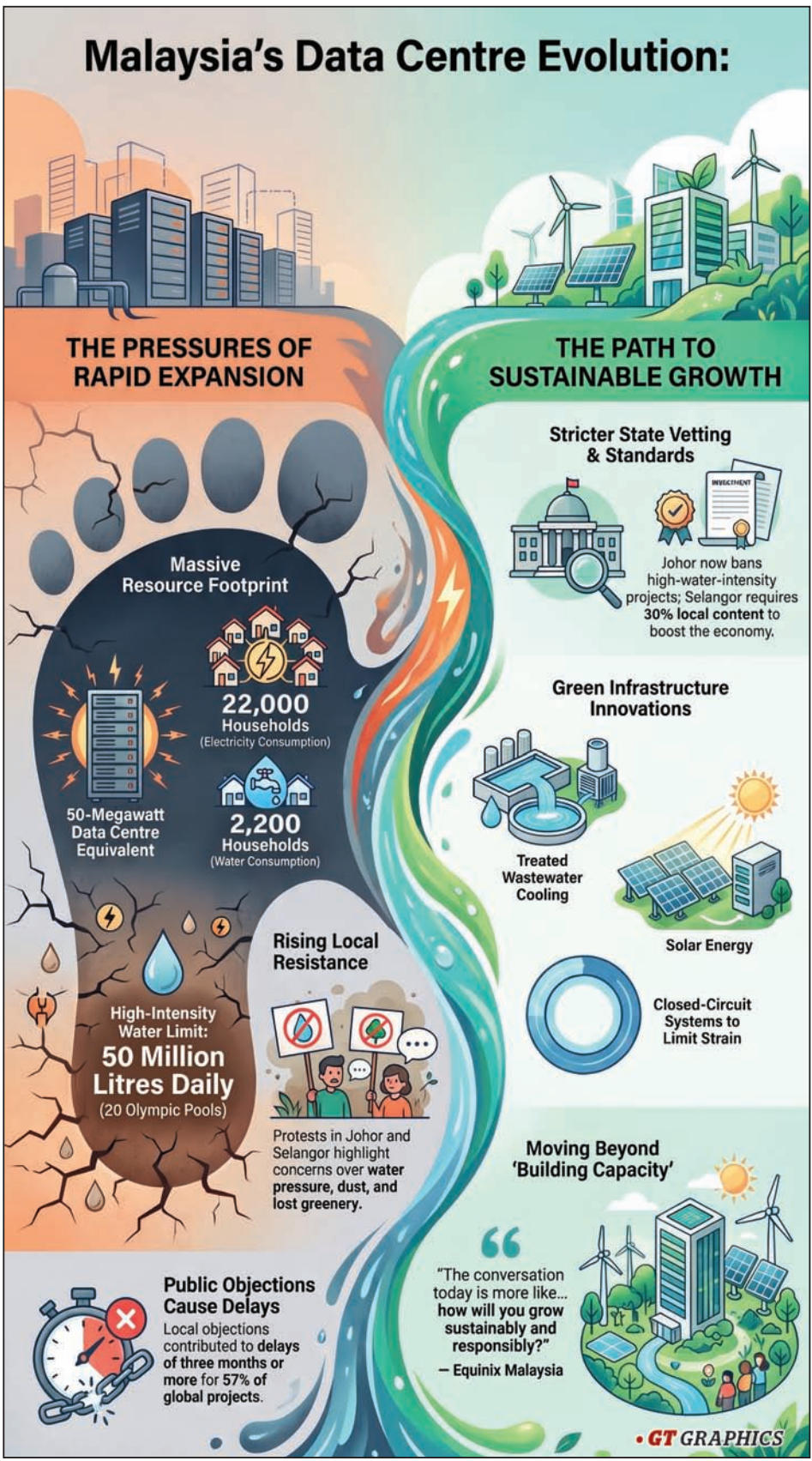
At the same time, Johor in particular retains its appeal as “amongst the most stable” in terms of infrastructure, government support and availability of resources, he added.

Singapore spillover
Johor was the overwhelming, \$35bn beneficiary of Singapore’s 2019-2022 moratorium on new data centres, after its own decade-long build-out strained land, water and electricity supply. Investment poured in from the likes of Amazon and Microsoft, as well as Chinese firms Tencent and Alibaba. Even with stricter vetting since 2024, the state’s planned data centre capacity – including projects both in the pipeline and under construction – will mean an eightfold surge from current levels to 7,000 megawatts, according to JLL. A 50-megawatt data centre can consume as much water as 2,200 households per day, and as much electricity as 22,000, according to Malaysia’s central bank.

Resistance to the build-out reached a watershed in February, when residents of southern Johor’s Iskandar Puteri protested construction of ZDATA’s data centre complex. Many vented worries about the potential strain on water supplies, with some complaining of a drop in water pressure even before the 300-megawatt facility came online. ZDATA told Reuters its compound was not the source of the water issues.

But not all the concerns were over competition for resources. Complaints about dust from the construction site spurred the land developer, Tropicana Firstwide, to set up two free car washes for residents.

But another common objection is harder to address. “I chose to buy a house here because of the greenery and the hills behind the property,” said another Iskandar Puteri resident. “Now the land has been levelled for the data centres.” – Reuters



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DEPUTY MANAGING EDITOR
Kamran Rehmat

📍 P.O.Box 2888, Doha, Qatar

✉ editor@gulf-times.com

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📞 44466636 (Home delivery)

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Spain evacuees return while France fears worsening flames

AFP
Navas del Rey

Spanish residents forced to flee some of the worst wildfires in living memory began returning to their homes yesterday, after the country lifted evacuation orders for more than a dozen areas.

But in France, thousands more people were ordered to flee, as fears grew that another searing heatwave would prevent containment of fires that have ripped through the southwest.

Swathes of tinder-dry forests, parched land and property have been destroyed west of the Spanish capital, Madrid, and in France's Gironde and Landes region, forcing tens of thousands to head to safety.

Spain's interior ministry announced the end of evacuation orders for 13 municipalities yesterday afternoon, in rare good news in the battle to stop the inferno spreading.

But in the evacuated village of Navas del Rey, AFP reporters saw scenes of devastation, with blackened debris, ash and burnt-out cars stripped of their tyres, seats and paintwork.

Maria Paz Bolanos, 62, returned with her family to their home and garden in a housing development in the town — and found it only slightly scorched.

"We've been here 50 years," she said. "It must have been grand-



A firefighting plane makes a drop during a wildfire in Onda, Spain, yesterday. (Reuters)

father, my father in heaven. He somehow made it so the fire just came in through and stopped right there.

"It's a miracle."

The mayor of nearby Pelayos de la Presa, Antonio Sin, described the scene for returning villagers as "a war zone".

"It has been a horrendous fire, a brutal one — It's a monster that has run over us," he told AFP.

In contrast, Marielle Mourgeon was among 4,000 people forced to cut short holidays in the French seaside village of Lacanau, in the Gironde area near Bordeaux, after camping sites were told to evacuate as a precaution.

"At first I thought my husband was joking, with the blue sky and

the fires dying down," she said.

French firefighters were "on the offensive", insisted commander Eric Pitault, standing in the middle of a firebreak 50 metres (165 feet) wide and 25 kilometres (16 miles) long that had been cut with the help of civilian volunteers on the Cap Ferret peninsula.

Over the past six days, the largest French wildfire since 1949 has raged west of Bordeaux, forcing more than 220,000 people to flee and destroying 240 houses.

Sophie Brocas, the government's top official in Gironde, told reporters the fire had "stabilised... meaning it is not advancing", authorising nearly 60,000 people evacuated from around the city to return



A helicopter crew member looks out at a fire burning near Ares, during wildfires in the area of southwestern France, yesterday. (Reuters)

Galia Borisova, a 55-year-old domestic helper, wanted to reach her animals in Picadas but had to wait.

"They say there's so much smoke that you can't breathe, even with a mask. And I believe it because you could see it from here," she said.

Europe has been gripped by successive heatwaves and a major drought this year, which scientists have attributed to human-caused climate change.

Extreme heat has parched vegetation that had grown vigorously during wet weather earlier in the year, creating tinderbox conditions.

UN climate chief Simon Stiell said "the climate alarm is blaring from every direction" and called for a quick end to the use of fossil fuels.

The focus is currently on western Europe but the European Union's head of crisis management

warned extreme heat could also trigger new fires in central Europe.

Spain's meteorological agency AEMET announced a new heatwave starting today and lasting until at least the end of the week, with temperatures forecast to hit 42C in the northeast and 39C in the centre.

French weather agency MétéoFrance also forecast more hot weather of up to 40C from yesterday with dry wind.

Near the southwestern French surfing hotspot of Le Grand Crohot, an AFP reporter saw violent gusts of wind whipping up flames as firefighting aircraft attempted to extinguish a rekindled fire.

Firefighting commander Matthieu Jomain warned that the conditions were similar to those when the fire started.

"We're not out of danger," added Michael EliceGUI, who returned to his home in Biscarrosse in the Landes.

Merz demands EU spend less, boost competitiveness

AFP
Dublin

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said yesterday the EU needs to save hundreds of billions of euros and show more "ambition" on competitiveness as haggling starts over the bloc's 2028-2034 budget.

The European Commission has proposed a two-trillion-euro (\$2.3tn) spending plan for that period but Germany and other members of the so-called "frugal" bloc within the EU have made clear this is too high.

"We need a budget proposal with cuts in all areas adding up to several hundred bn euros," Merz said at a press conference alongside Micheal Martin, prime minister of current EU presidency holder Ireland.

Merz said "we cannot afford exorbitant increases in spending" at a time when budgets are being consolidated at a national level.

Martin said the bloc needed a budget "that meets its future needs and ambitions" while "reflecting our current economic situation", adding that Ireland would work towards a "compromise".

"Ireland has made improving Europe's economic competitiveness a priority for our Presidency," said Martin.

"I believe that if we all approach the task in the right spirit, agreement should be possible by the end of the year."

Brussels had proposed funding new spending with a tax on big businesses but Merz said that while he was prepared to discuss "new resources" for the EU, "an additional tax on business at a Eu-

ropean level is not something we can consider".

Merz also said that the bloc's efforts to increase competitiveness had not yet gone far enough.

"I am worried that the zeal in the European Union and the level of ambition have noticeably declined," he said.

"We must do more," Merz said, adding that authorisation procedures for investments were still "too long" and calling for a "thoroughgoing reduction in bureaucracy" at the European level.

The European Commission recently drew the ire of green activists by proposing to soften its carbon pricing mechanism, a scheme criticised by big European businesses.

Merz said on Monday that competitiveness and climate protection had to "go hand in hand".

Arrest of alleged Nato spy extended, Belgian prosecutor says

Reuters
Brussels

A Canadian woman of Chinese origin accused of spying while working as an intern at Nato's military headquarters in Belgium will remain in pretrial custody for another month, a spokesperson for the Belgian Federal Prosecutor's Office said yesterday.

The Federal Prosecutor's Office declined to give further details about the woman, who is suspected of espionage on behalf of a third country and of membership in a criminal organisation.

The prosecutor's spokesperson added that the suspect now has 24 hours to lodge an appeal.

The woman worked as an intern at Nato's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) in the Belgian city of Mons.

An intelligence source said the woman is in her 30s and not a student. They also said she had been close to completing her internship, prompting authorities to accelerate the investigation.

Neither Nato nor Belgian authorities have speci-

fied what the suspect's work at Nato involved.

Responsibility for conducting security checks on interns lies with their countries of origin, which in this case was Canada. The Canadian government did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Minister of Public Safety Gary Anandasangaree said during a press briefing on Monday that Canada "will continue to investigate the processes we have and the security screening".

"In this particular case, I think it's important to get to the bottom of what happened," he said.

SHAPE is Nato's top military headquarters, the base of Allied Command Operations, which is responsible for planning and carrying out all operations of the 32-member transatlantic security alliance.

The suspect had come to the attention of SHAPE's security services, which reported her to Belgian intelligence officials after observing her behaviour, according to the prosecutor's statement.

A SHAPE spokesperson said there was no indication that Nato or SHAPE operational readiness, command and control arrangements or ongoing tasks had been affected.

Ukraine says wants to avoid 'escalation' with Iran

AFP
Kyiv

Ukraine and Iran's foreign ministers spoke by phone yesterday, Kyiv said, adding it wants to avoid an "escalation" after a Ukrainian attack on an Iranian vessel in the Caspian Sea.

Andriy Sybiga wrote on his X account that he had a "frank conversation" with his Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi.

"Diplomacy is about direct conversation, even when it's difficult. I stressed that our goal is to avoid unnecessary escalation."

Iran on Monday warned of "unforeseen consequences" after the attack last week that killed

one sailor and wounded several others.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky on Saturday said Kyiv had carried out long-range strikes in the Caspian Sea against vessels carrying military cargo involving Iran.

Sybiga said he reiterated to Araghchi that "all of Ukraine's actions are aimed solely at defending our country from Russian aggression and never intended to target civilian vessels or people".

On Iran's statement about the death of one of its citizens and the vessel in question, he said Russia was "the root cause of all incidents, and it is Russia who bears full responsibility for all provocations and casualties".

"I emphasised the necessity to refrain from any escalatory steps,

as well as to end any support for Russia's war against Ukraine," he added.

Ukrainian Foreign Ministry spokesman Georgiy Tykhyn confirmed that it was the first official contact between Sybiga, who has been in post since September 2024, and Araghchi.

Relations between Kyiv and Tehran are strained. Iran, which is Russia's main ally in the Middle East, notably supplied Shahed drone technology to Moscow at the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

For its part, Kyiv said it had provided support on counter-drone efforts to Gulf countries targeted by Iranian attacks after the start of the Middle East war launched by Israel and the United States at the end of February.

Several Russian regions ease fuel restrictions

AFP
Moscow

Several regions across Russia have started relaxing restrictions on the sale of fuel, imposed after Ukrainian strikes on refineries led to nationwide shortages, according to local media and officials.

Almost all Russian regions had imposed some limits on petrol sales since the start of June — mostly restricting the amount of fuel that could be sold to a single buyer.

Those limits have started to be eased in recent days, according to a string of announcements from regional officials and in local media outlets.

In Moscow and Saint Petersburg, two major chains — Lukoil and Teboil — removed all limits on how much drivers could fill up in a single transaction.

Ukrainian drones hit the Moscow oil refinery in June, pouring thick black smoke over the capital in one of the most dramatic strikes of Kyiv's campaign of counter-attacks.

Officials in Kyiv say the strikes are fair retribution for Moscow's nightly barrages of drones and missiles against its cities.

Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin, had tried to downplay the impact on the domestic market, urging customers not to panic buy.

But across the country there were hours-long queues of drivers waiting for fuel — with some of the lines even visible from satellite imagery captured from space.

Videos of forecourt fights between drivers trying to load up went viral across social media.

Russia is one of the world's largest oil-producing countries, previously isolated from global supply shocks where fuel had been plentiful and cheap for decades.

In the Omsk region of oil-rich Siberia — where another refinery was hit — the governor said yesterday all restrictions had been lifted.

Easing restrictions were also reported in the Rostov and Stavropol regions of southern Russia, among other places.

France needs more Canadair water bombers but building them is painfully slow

AFP
Calgary

As French firefighters struggle to contain the worst wildfires in living memory with just 12 aerial water bombers, production of the iconic aircraft creaks along half a world away in a Canadian factory.

Canadairs are a prime weapon in fighting blazes in rugged, often remote landscapes. But building the specialised aircraft is a time-consuming process, made harder by a nine-year production gap that left the complex supply chain in tatters.

Although manufacturer De Havilland restarted production in 2024, the first delivery — of just two aircraft — to France won't happen until at least 2028.

At a plant in Calgary that AFP visited, the fuselages of the aircraft — capable of scooping up almost 6,000 litres of water in 12 seconds

by gliding along a lake — were being drilled and riveted by hand.

The relative lack of automation compared to other manufacturers is part of the reason why the factory can only produce 10 planes per year.

"On the fuselage, everything is done manually, so every hole, every rivet you see on the fuselage is being done manually," Operations Director Victor Ocádiz told AFP.

The shortage of aircraft and long wait for more have kicked off a political ruckus in France, with opposition parties accusing the government of hindering firefighting efforts through budget cuts.

But the problems lie at least partly back in Canada.

Previous builder Bombardier halted production in 2015. Production was only restarted after an initial order for 22 planes in 2024 by the European Union, France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Portugal and Croatia, De Havilland Head of



A Canadair CL-415 aircraft (known as Pelican 33) drops water during a demonstration during a visit of French Interior minister as part of the launch of the national wildfire prevention campaign in Nîmes, southern France. (AFP/File Photo)

Strategy Jean-Philippe Cote said.

Since then, the order book has grown to 40 aircraft, with France ordering two next-generation DHC-515s in 2024 as part of the European order, followed by two more in June.

"We have two aircraft to deliver to France in 2028-2029 ... and the two aircraft announced last month for 2032-2033," Cote said.

A De Havilland spokesperson wouldn't be drawn on the exact month of deliveries, saying only that they were "in line with forecasts."

French Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said in June that the 2028 deliveries would happen in April and November of that year, while stressing that the timetable needed to be "respected."

The first DHC-515 — the modernised version of the water bomber — will go to Greece, Cote said, "in early 2028."



By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Qatar and Turkiye continue to deepen their strategic partnership through close co-operation in diplomacy, defence, humanitarian assistance and regional mediation, Turkish ambassador to Qatar Dr Mustafa Goksu has said, highlighting the two countries' enduring solidarity during times of crisis.

Speaking at the Turkish embassy in Doha during a ceremony marking the 10th anniversary of the July 15, 2016 failed coup attempt in Turkiye, the envoy paid particular tribute to Qatar's steadfast support during and after the attempted coup, describing it as a defining moment in the longstanding brotherhood between the two nations.

Dr Goksu recalled that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani was the first foreign leader to telephone Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on the night of the coup attempt.

He also noted that HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim

Qatar, Turkiye deepen strategic partnership through diplomacy, defence and regional co-operation: envoy

al-Thani was among the first senior foreign officials to visit Turkiye following the crisis.

The envoy added that Qatar subsequently worked closely with Turkiye in combating the Fethullahist Terrorist Organisation (FETO), a stance that Ankara regards as a significant demonstration of solidarity and mutual trust.

According to Dr Goksu, the relationship has continued to strengthen through successive regional and global challenges.

He cited the two countries' mutual support during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and Qatar's assistance following the devastating earthquakes that struck southern Turkiye in February 2023.

He said bilateral defence co-operation has also expanded significantly.

Joint activities under the Qatar-Turkiye Joint Combined Command Forces, including air and naval operations, have enhanced Qatar's defence capabilities, while co-operation on Eurofighter Typhoon



Ambassador Dr Mustafa Goksu.

fighter jets reflects the growing depth of military ties.

The envoy attributed much of the partnership's institutional strength to the

Qatar-Turkiye Supreme Strategic Committee, established in 2014, which meets annually and has facilitated the signing of 125 bilateral agreements.

He also highlighted a recent agreement to jointly develop and launch a satellite, saying it demonstrates how co-operation is expanding into advanced technology and the space sector.

Dr Goksu also lauded Qatar's growing role as a regional mediator, describing it as one of the pillars of the bilateral relationship.

He said the two countries have worked closely with regional and international partners to reduce tensions, secure cease-fires and promote regional stability.

He pointed to their co-ordination during the recent conflict involving the United States, Israel and Iran, saying Qatar and Turkiye played an important role in efforts that contributed to a ceasefire.

He also commended Qatar's longstanding mediation experience and prin-

cipled diplomacy in creating conditions conducive to dialogue.

The envoy said the two countries continue to adopt complementary approaches to major regional issues, including Gaza, Sudan, Libya, Somalia, Afghanistan, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Yemen.

On Gaza, he praised Qatar's mediation efforts under the leadership of His Highness the Amir, as well as its sustained humanitarian and financial support for the Palestinian people and efforts to achieve a permanent ceasefire.

Dr Goksu also underlined the Development Road project involving Turkiye, Qatar, Iraq and the UAE, describing it as an important initiative to strengthen regional transport connectivity and economic integration.

He noted that forums, such as the Doha Forum and the Antalya Diplomacy Forum, continue to provide valuable platforms for dialogue and policy co-ordination on regional and international issues.

Concluding his remarks, the envoy said Turkiye remains committed to advancing its development while working with partners such as Qatar to promote peace, stability and prosperity across the region.

Qatar eyes greater value from growing local dates sector

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

With more than 125 local farms showcasing their harvest at this year's Local Dates Festival at Souq Waqif, attention is shifting from record production to how Qatar can generate greater economic value from its growing date industry.

A recent study by the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) says that the country's date sector has reached a new stage of development, where future growth is expected to come less from increasing output than from expanding value-added processing, strengthening branding and developing higher-value products.

Qatar's current rutab season is expected to be among its strongest.

According to the Ministry of Municipality, the country produces around 24,000 tonnes of dates annually from approximately 638,000 date palm trees across more than 885 productive farms, meeting more than 72% of domestic demand.

While these figures underscore Qatar's progress in strengthening food security, the 2024 ICARDA study, *Assessing the Competitive Advantage of the Qatari Date Palm Sector: Challenges and Opportunities for Growth*, says the sector's next challenge is improving competitiveness by capturing more value from its harvest.

The report found that sustained government support, improved cultivation practices and investment in agriculture have helped modernise Qatar's date palm industry.

It says that future gains will depend on strengthening the value chain through processing, branding, marketing and product diversification.

According to the study, products such as date syrup, date paste, natural sweeteners and other processed foods offer greater commercial potential than fresh dates alone, enabling producers to reach new markets while responding to rising global demand for healthier food ingredients.

The findings complement Qatar's National Food Security Strategy, which accelerated after the 2017 Gulf blockade exposed vulnerabilities in regional supply chains.

Since then, the country has expanded domestic production of vegetables, dairy products, poultry and dates to improve



Producers showcase a number of products made from locally grown dates at the Local Dates Festival, taking place at Souq Waqif.
PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

Sales at Local Dates Festival top 41 tonnes

The 11th Local Dates Festival has created a buzz with roughly 20,000 visitors and sales of 41 tonnes of locally grown dates over the first three days, the Ministry of Municipality has said.

A ministry statement issued yesterday said the Khalas variety was the best-selling, with 17 tonnes sold.

It was followed by the Shishi and Khenazi varieties, each recording sales of 8.3 tonnes, while Barhi and other varieties accounted for 4.2 tonnes each.

Organised by the ministry in collaboration with the Souq Waqif management, the exhibition features 114 farms producing fresh dates and 11 farms offering seasonal fruits, providing visitors with a wide selection of locally grown produce.

The festival is being held at the eastern square of Souq Waqif and runs until August 10.

It is open from 4pm to 9pm from Sunday to Thursday, and from 4pm to 10pm on Fridays and Saturdays. – **QNA**



self-sufficiency and build a more resilient food system.

Date palms have become one of Qatar's strategic crops because they are naturally suited to the country's arid climate.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) describes date palms as among the world's most climate-resilient fruit crops, capable of thriving under high temperatures, drought and saline conditions while supporting food security and sustainable rural livelihoods.

Once established, they remain produc-

tive for decades and generally require fewer inputs than many other fruit crops.

Qatar's Ministry of Culture also notes that date palms tolerate temperatures approaching 50°C Celsius, help stabilise sandy soils, reduce dust and are deeply embedded in the country's cultural heritage.

More than 20 varieties are cultivated across the country.

The ICARDA report says these natural advantages provide a foundation for expanding Qatar's date-processing industry as global demand rises for products such

as date syrup, date sugar, date paste, energy snacks and confectionery ingredients made from natural sweeteners.

It recommends investing in premium branding, quality assurance, traceability and modern food processing to help distinguish Qatari dates in regional and international markets.

Government initiatives are already supporting that transition.

The Ministry of Municipality has introduced programmes to purchase locally grown dates from farmers for process-

ing into products such as date syrup and molasses, creating more stable marketing channels while helping reduce food waste, improve farmers' incomes and expand domestic value-added industries.

Instead of competing with major regional producers on volume alone, the study suggests Qatar could carve out a niche in premium markets by emphasising quality, innovation, branding and traceability, complementing the country's broader economic diversification goals under Qatar National Vision 2030.



QNL membership campaign ‘#Library4You’ aims to connect community with its resources

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

The Qatar National Library (QNL)'s recently launched summer membership campaign under the tagline #Library4You aims to highlight its resources with the community, according to an official of the library.

“The campaign reflects how we think about our relationship with the community,” Fatima H al-Sahli, head of the Stacks Maintenance Unit in the QNL's Public Engagement Department, told *Gulf Times*.

“Libraries have sometimes been seen as passive spaces, buildings where knowledge sits on shelves waiting to be found. #Library4You expresses the opposite: our active commitment to meeting every person where they are, with something genuinely useful to them,” she said.

Al-Sahli said that QNL is shaped around each person in the

country, and the summer membership campaign aims to benefit each one of them.

“It can be for a child preparing for school, a student facing a project deadline, a researcher seeking rare manuscripts, a parent looking for a quiet hour with a good book or a first-time reader discovering the joy of stories,” she stated. “The library is shaped around each person who walks through our doors or opens the QNL app. That is the promise of #Library4You.”

The official said the campaign was launched during the summer because summer is exactly when the library matters most.

“Schools are out, families have time together, and there is more room to explore,” al-Sahli noted.

“Qatar's summers are hot, and the library is a cool, welcoming, beautifully designed space, open to all and entirely free,” she continued. “It is also everywhere people are, through our app. Whether someone is a student or a retiree, a first-time reader or a seasoned



researcher, the library has something to offer.”

The official highlighted that the QNL mobile app is increasingly central to how people experience the library.

“The app extends the library's reach beyond its physical walls,” al-Sahli said.

audiobooks planned for patients in hospitals and passengers on public transport, because lifelong learning does not follow a schedule and neither does the library,” the official added. “The app puts a full library within reach at any moment, and it is only beginning to show what it can do.”

Al-Sahli emphasised that the library belongs to everyone and that principle shows up in its architecture, programming, and policies.

“In 2025, we served 1,108 children and adults with disabilities through tailored programmes,” she pointed out. “Our community programmes reach well beyond that.”

“We run sessions for new parents, writing workshops for domestic workers whose stories have appeared in a published book, mentorship programmes that connect students with the brightest minds and leaders, and creative-writing programmes,” the official said.

Al-Sahli said that through the QNL's app and other online plat-

forms, families can reach thousands of children's e-books, interactive stories, and early-learning resources that support a child's literacy from the very first words.

The Children's Library pairs hands-on innovation spaces with a full programme of themed activities, STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) workshops, information-literacy sessions, and creative challenges.

“That range is what #Library4You means in practice,” she said.

“For students and others working late, we introduced a dedicated late-night study area that stays open until 6am, keeping the library available when people most need a place to think,” al-Sahli added.

“Seasonal programmes such as Summer Camp, Winter Camp, and the Summer Reading Challenge turn school holidays into time for discovery,” the official said. “Our aim is for every child to leave with sharper curiosity and greater confidence.”