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Qatar also ranked first globally for its balance of trade and recorded the world's lowest unemployment, youth unemployment and long-term unemployment rates, while maintaining one of the highest national savings rates. **To Page 7**



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Valid only on 30 July 2026 QAR 8.75 تفاح بينك ليدي فرنسي ١ كيلو Apple Pink Lady France 1kg	QAR 24.75 أعواد الكرفس أمريكي ١ كيلو Celery Sleeves USA 1kg	QAR 6.50 خيار عضوي قطري ١ باكييت (تقريباً ٥٠٠ غرام) Organic Cucumber Qatar (Appx 500gm) 1pkt	QAR 52.75 لحم ساق خروف بالعظم أسترالي ١ كيلو Lamb Leg Bone In Australia 1kg
QAR 39.75 مكعبات لحم بقري برازيلي ١ كيلو Beef Cubes Brazil 1kg	Valid only 30 - 31 July 2026 QAR 29.75 أنشوجة ذهبية بدون رأس هندية ١ كيلو Anchovy Golden Head Less India 1kg	QAR 84.75 فيليه سلمون نرويجي ١ كيلو Salmon Fillet Norway 1kg	QAR 15.00 وجبة سلطة الدجاج بالكينوا Quinoa Chicken Salad Meal
QAR 11.50 فرانجوسول دجاج كامل ١.١ كيلو Frangosul Whole Chicken 1.1kg	QAR 28.50 كيك ريد فيلثت صغير Red Velvet Cake Small	QAR 12.00 جبن مش عربي طازج ٥٠٠ غرام Fresh Arabic Mish Cheese 500gm	QAR 15.00 سلطة خضار غنية بالبروتين Veg Protein Salad Meal
QAR 21.50 بن أند جيري آيس كريم بنكهة تشيز كيك الفراولة / فيش فود / هاف بيكد ٤٧٣ مل / ١ حبة Ben & Jerry's Strawberry/Cheesecake/ Phish/Half Baked Ice Cream 473ml x 1pc	QAR 11.00 بلانيت واي مويسلي منوع ٤٠٠ غرام / ١ حبة Planet-Y Muesli Asstd 400gm x 1pc	QAR 7.50 أميكا شيبس بلانكا رقائق بطاطس ١٦٠ غرام Amica Chips Blanca Potato Snacks 160gm	QAR 13.50 شار بسكويت دايجستيف ١٥٠ غرام Schar Digestive Biscuits 150gm
QAR 7.50 فورنو بونومي بسكويت ساموياردي ٢٠٠ غرام Forno Bonomi Savoiardi Biscuit 200gm	QAR 14.75 كوهينور نواب ارز برياني ٤ كيلو Kohinoor Nawab Biryani Rice 4kg		

QAR 29.50 تايد مسحوق غسيل منوع ٥ كيلو Tide Washing Powder Asstd 5kg	QAR 89.00 سيرافي جل مرطب فائق الخفة ٥٢ مل CeraVe Ultra-Light Moisturizing Gel 52ml	QAR 12.00 إم. بوستو خل التفاح ٥٠٠ مل M.Busto Apple Cider Vinegar 500ml	QAR 17.50 كناديان برايد زيت الذرة ١.٥ لتر Canadian Pride Corn Oil 1.5Ltr	
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PARTICIPATING BRANDS

Lekhwiya joins key US explosives drill as observer



Qatar's Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya) participated as an observer in the 20th edition of the Raven's Challenge explosives disposal drill in the United States. Lekhwiya's Explosives Group joined the exercise at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, to gain international expertise, exchange best practices and strengthen professional co-operation. Held annually, the exercise is one of the largest specialist explosives ordnance disposal drills in the United States, bringing together experts and specialised units from federal, local and international agencies to test the latest technologies and operational procedures in realistic security scenarios. (QNA)

Mol receives delegation from Saudi ministry

The General Directorate of Penal and Correctional Institutions at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) received a delegation from the Ministry of Interior of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia within the framework of strengthening co-operation and exchanging expertise. The delegation was received by Director of the General Directorate Major General Nasser Mohammed Essa al-Sayed along with a number of officers. During the visit, the delegation was briefed on the Directorate's key programmes and initiatives and toured several departments and units to learn about the operational mechanisms, procedures, and services provided to inmates. The visit also provided an opportunity to exchange expertise, review best practices, and discuss the implementation of modern correctional philosophy. (QNA)



'Fire incidents fall amid stronger safety compliance'

Qatar's General Directorate of Civil Defence has intensified fire prevention efforts during the summer season, focusing on public awareness campaigns and compliance with safety requirements to reduce risks to lives and property.

Despite increased awareness, officials said some unsafe practices continue to contribute to fires, including leaving flammable materials inside vehicles, ignoring signs of faults, overloading electrical systems and neglecting safety measures.

Staff Major Engineer Ghanem Salem al-Nuaimi, Director of the Prevention Department at the General Directorate of Civil Defence, told the Qatar News Agency (QNA) that preventing fires in residential buildings and shopping centres starts with public commitment to safety rules, alongside regular maintenance of fire detection and suppression systems by building owners.

He urged residents to avoid overloading electrical connections and to regularly check wiring and household appliances.

For commercial buildings, he stressed the importance of keeping emergency exits and corridors clear, training staff on fire response procedures, and immediately reporting incidents through the emergency number 999 or the "Contact Us" service on the Metrash application.

Staff Major al-Nuaimi said common violations include blocking emergency exits, using them for storage, failing to maintain fire protection systems, overloading electrical networks and leaving cooking or heat sources unattended.

Staff Major al-Nuaimi said co-operation with government and private sector entities is being



Staff Colonel Mohammed Abdul Karim al-Qahtani

strengthened to promote safety as a daily practice rather than a set of instructions.

He said many fire incidents could have been prevented through regular maintenance, noting that some cases began with minor electrical faults that could have been detected earlier. Other limited incidents involving kitchens or vehicles were controlled because people acted calmly and contacted emergency services quickly.

He highlighted the importance of the first minutes of a fire, saying having a functioning extinguisher and knowing how to use it can help reduce losses. He also stressed the need for rapid evacuation and avoiding returning to danger zones.

Regarding swimming pool safety, Staff Major al-Nuaimi said Civil Defence places strong emphasis on safety requirements, especially in homes, due to risks to children and elderly people.

He advised installing secure barriers around pools, providing basic rescue equipment, ensuring safe electrical installations and lighting, supervising children at all times, avoiding electrical devices near water and maintaining pools regularly.

Meanwhile, Staff Colonel Mohammed Abdul Karim al-



Staff Major Engineer Ghanem Salem al-Nuaimi

Qahtani, Assistant Director of the Operations Department at the General Directorate of Civil Defence, told QNA that vehicle fire incidents recorded during the first half of this year declined significantly compared with the same period last year.

Motorists' awareness level has improved noticeably, especially with the spread of public awareness campaigns and carrying out regular vehicle maintenance, Staff Colonel al-Qahtani said.

He noted, however, some of the risks that still do not receive sufficient attention, these include: fuel leaks, unusual odours, and engine overheating.

By delaying having their vehicles checked despite clear warning signs of a malfunction, motorists let a minor issue turn into a serious accident, Staff Colonel al-Qahtani added.

The Director of the Operations Department stressed the importance of routine maintenance.

Staff Colonel al-Qahtani urged drivers not to leave flammable materials inside their vehicles, especially during periods of high temperatures, and emphasised the importance of keeping a suitable fire extinguisher in their vehicles and knowing how to use it before an emergency occurs.

He also noted a number of common mistakes, one of which is attempting to extinguish a fire without first ensuring personal safety or stopping in a location that creates a hazard for other road users.

He pointed out that the correct course of action is to stop the vehicle in a safe place, switch off the engine, evacuate all passengers, contact emergency services, and then use a fire extinguisher only if it is safe to do so. If the fire has already become well developed, motorists should move away from the vehicle immediately and go to a safe location.

Another frequent error is continuing to drive after noticing smoke, the smell of something burning, or an abnormally high engine temperature, he said.

Staff Colonel al-Qahtani also noted that some drivers immediately open the hood completely, which can increase the flow of oxygen to the fire and cause it to spread more rapidly.

The General Directorate of Civil Defence carried out awareness campaigns through media outlets and social media platforms, in addition to participating in exhibitions and community events, with the aim of promoting a culture of prevention and encouraging safe practices, he added.

Staff Colonel al-Qahtani concluded his remarks to QNA highlighting that the Operations Department has a modern fleet of vehicles and equipment to respond to all emergency reports across Qatar.

He emphasised that public and personal safety is a shared responsibility and that protecting lives and property remains the Operations Department's primary objective. (QNA)

Amir condoles with emperor of Japan

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent ables of condolences to the Emperor Naruhito of Japan over the victims of the earthquake that struck Kumamoto City in southern Japan, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent a cable of condolences to the Prime Minister of Japan Sanae Takaichi over the victims of the earthquake that struck Kumamoto City in southern Japan, wishing the injured a speedy recovery. (QNA)

Win a car in just 14 days – at Safari



Safari Hypermarket's expanded outlet at Ezdan Mall Al Gharafa is set to be inaugurated today (July 30). With the aim of making shopping more convenient and offering customers a wider variety of high-quality products, Safari has expanded its department store to the first floor and is set to commence operations. As part of the inauguration, Safari is introducing a promotion unlike anything previously seen in Qatar's retail history, or even in the GCC. Through the Visit and Win Mega Promotion, anyone who visits Safari Hypermarket at Ezdan Mall Al Gharafa will have the opportunity to win a brand-new 2026 MG 3 car, without making any purchase. The most attractive feature of the promotion is that the winner will be selected within just 14 days of the inauguration. The Visit and Win promotion will be available exclusively at Safari Hypermarket's Ezdan Mall Al Gharafa outlet from the opening day (July 30) until August 12. The raffle draw will be held at the same outlet on August 13. Safari had previously made history at the inauguration of its Ezdan Mall outlet on December 10, 2025, by giving away two Tesla cars via free coupons to visitors, without requiring any purchase. Following the

tremendous success of that campaign, Safari is once again offering a brand-new 2026 MG 3 car without any purchase conditions as part of the inauguration of its newly expanded outlet, the company stated in a press release. The department store on the newly expanded floor will feature a wide range of products from leading international brands, including ready-made garments, fashion apparel, footwear, stationery, toys and other essential items. Customers will be able to explore extensive collections at highly attractive discounted prices. In addition, Safari management announced that exceptional inaugural offers and major discounts, specially arranged for this outlet, will be available to customers during the opening period. Safari management spokesperson stated that the new, high-quality department store is opening on the first floor in response to the overwhelming popularity and strong customer support at the Ezdan Mall outlet. Customers will also have the opportunity to win one of 30 Bestune cars through Safari's ongoing e-raffle promotion. Shoppers receive an e-raffle coupon for every QR50 purchase at any Safari outlet.

Qatar Photography Center to hold workshop on portrait photography today

The Qatar Photography Center, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, is holding a workshop today focused on portrait photography, within its ongoing efforts to develop photographers' skills, attract global talents, and organise professional training programmes that feature the latest trends.

The workshop, presented by international photographer Cesar Parroco, aims to introduce participants to the fundamentals of portrait photography, one of the most in-demand genres in the field. It is set to mix both practical and theoretical approaches.

Director of the Qatar Photography Center, Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain, stated that the workshop sheds light on one of the most important fields of commercial photography. The participants will be introduced to the basics of professional portrait photography, such as developing a concept, professional lighting, and managing photoshoots.

Al-Buainain explained that the workshop will include practical practices by using professional studios and co-operating with makeup artists to better understand all aspects of portrait photography. The Director of the Center called on enthusiasts and professionals to participate in the workshop to gain experience with the most renowned international talents, aligning with Qatar Photography Center's vision in spreading photography, enriching creativity, and developing national capabilities. (QNA)



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39.00

THURSDAY 29th July 2026

2.00 **13.50** **3.00**

7.25 **2.75** **14.25**

22.50 **239** **49.00**

59.00 **60.00** **70.00**

210 **1399**

3 **3** **39**

1 **50**

THURSDAY 29th July 2026

15.75 **2.50** **1.75** **36.50**

6.50 **13.75** **7.25** **9.75**

18.50 **21.00** **24.75** **9.75**

19.00 **30.00** **19.75** **26.75**

39.00

THURSDAY 29th July 2026

2.00 **13.50** **3.00**

7.25 **2.75** **14.25**

22.50 **239** **49.00**

59.00 **60.00** **70.00**

210 **1399**

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Qatar Charity empowers 380 families in Bangladesh

Qatar Charity has implemented an economic empowerment project in Bangladesh to support vulnerable families by providing income-generating assets and helping them build more stable, self-reliant lives.

The project benefited 380 families, or around 1,900 people. Beneficiaries received 140 motorised rickshaws, 140 cargo tricycles and 100 grinding machine tools designed to provide daily livelihoods and practical opportunities to break the cycle of poverty and need.

The distribution ceremony took place in Durgapur, Rajshahi, in the presence of the director of Qatar Charity's office in Bangladesh, along with officials, local representatives and civil society members.

Professor Nazrul Islam Mondol, Member of Parliament, lauded Qatar Charity's efforts to launch sustainable development initiatives that respond directly to people's



needs, noting that livelihood support is one of the most effective ways to combat poverty and unemployment.

He said: "Providing families with income-generating assets, rather than limiting support to temporary assistance, reinforces a sustainable approach to fighting poverty and enables vulnerable families to earn a dignified livelihood and build a better future. I extend my appreciation to Qa-

tar Charity and the generous people of Qatar for standing by vulnerable communities in Bangladesh."

Zakaria al-Mutairi, director of Qatar Charity's office in Bangladesh, said the project reflects Qatar Charity's vision of empowering vulnerable groups by helping them move from receiving assistance to owning productive tools and building stable sources of income. He added: "We do not

merely provide aid; we work to create sustainable income opportunities that enable vulnerable families to stand on their own feet. Through these livelihood assets, beneficiaries can earn a regular income, support their families, and regain confidence and dignity. We will continue implementing quality programs that make a tangible impact on people's lives and strengthen community resilience across Bangladesh."

The project aims to reduce poverty by equipping disadvantaged families with productive assets that enable them to start small businesses, expand existing activities, increase their income and achieve greater long-term economic stability.

Beneficiaries expressed their gratitude to Qatar Charity and the people of Qatar, saying the initiative was not only a form of assistance but also a new beginning toward dignified work, steady income and a safer life for their families.



The winner of Dukhan Bank's Thara'a savings account prize worth QR1mn.

Dukhan Bank announces Thara'a savings account prize winner

Dukhan Bank announced that Manal AlHaddad has won the QR1,000,000 grand prize in the July draw of Thara'a, the bank's Shari'ah-compliant savings account.

The draw was conducted under the supervision of a representative from the Qualitative License and Market Control Department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. "Winning the grand prize in the Thara'a Savings Account draw came as a wonderful surprise and was truly an indescribable moment. I would like to thank Dukhan Bank for this special opportunity. I wish everyone luck for upcoming draws," AlHaddad said.

Talal Ahmed al-Khaja, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at Dukhan Bank, said: "We are delighted to congratulate Manal AlHaddad on

winning the QR1,000,000 Thara'a grand prize. Thara'a reflects our commitment to encouraging a culture of saving while rewarding our customers. Through its enhanced prize structure and convenient digital access, the account continues to offer customers a compelling Shari'ah-compliant way to work towards their financial goals." This year's campaign features a range of valuable cash prizes, led by four grand prizes of QR1mn each. It also includes a range of monthly prizes comprising two prizes of QR20,000 each and 60 prizes of QR5,000 each, with the draws taking place throughout the year. To participate customers can open a Thara'a account through the Dukhan Bank website or app, or by visiting any branch. For information, customers may call 800 8555.

Global winners compete in Doha at top Qur'an competition qualifiers

The preliminary stage of the third round of the Global Qur'anic Competition "Awal Al Awa'ael" ("First of the Firsts"), the international branch of the Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani Competition for the Holy Qur'an, got underway.

The contest features broader global participation, with a contingent of memorisers who have received top ranks in global Qur'anic competitions.

Participating in this round are Abdullah Hamad Salem Hamad Abu Shuraida and Abdulaziz Abdullah Ali Abdullah al-Hamri, alongside 82 competitors representing 33 nations from around the globe.

The procedures for identifying

the would-be qualifiers are being held virtually and will continue until July 30.

This participation embodies the State of Qatar's constant presence at international Holy Qur'an memorisation forums, highlighting national programs to prepare a top-performing generation of memorisers of the Noble Qur'an who are capable of competing in top-tier global contests.

This round has carved out a unique place among global competitions, with entry limited to elite winners from major international contests and past champions of the Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed bin Thani Competition's full Qur'an memorisation category.

This year's edition features an



elite lineup of Qur'an memorisers who have earned top honors at major international competitions, making the "First of the Firsts" title one of the most prestigious achievements in global Qur'an competitions. The preliminary

rounds are overseen by two specialised judging panels to ensure a fair and transparent evaluation process.

The first panel is chaired by Sheikh Hamada Jumaa Mohammed Hassan, who holds an Ijazah

in the Ten Minor Qira'at, while the second is led by Sheikh Mohammed Nizar Marwan Mareesh, who holds an Ijazah in the Ten Major Qira'at.

The panels will assess contestants based on approved academic standards and select the top 40 to advance to the next round, which will be held in person in November at the grand Imam Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab Mosque in the capital of Qatar.

The final round will feature the top 10 contestants competing before an international judging panel for the title and a QR1mn prize.

The competition tests Qur'an memorisation, recitation, and understanding through a comprehensive academic approach.

Overall, the contest is part of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs' efforts dedicated to honouring the Holy Qur'an and strengthening the State of Qatar's stature as a global hub for Qur'anic initiatives. This closely aligns with the nation's strategic objectives and its National Vision 2030 in terms of building people and human development.

Having launched its inaugural edition in 2016, this branch stands as a global platform that assembles a group of winners of top ranks in global contests, as the competition is a triennial event, underscoring Qatar's mission in recognising the memorisers of the Noble Qur'an and bolstering excellence in serving this Holy Book. (QNA)



Damaan Islamic Insurance Company – Beema (Q.P.S.C.)

Doha – Qatar

Beema reports 26.8% growth in takaful contributions and 16.2% growth in shareholders' net profit for the six-month period ended 30 June 2026

▪ **Recognised Takaful Contributions** rose 26.8% year-on-year to **QAR 325.2 million** (YTD H1 2025: QAR 256.5 million), with growth primarily in the Motor and Fire & General Accident segments

▪ **Shareholders' Net Profit:** Grew by 16.2% to **QAR 61.5 million** (YTD H1 2025: QAR 53.0 million)

▪ **Earnings Per Share:** QAR 0.308 (YTD H1 2025: QAR 0.265)

▪ **Shareholders' Equity:** Increased by 9.0% to **QAR 626.0 million** (YTD H1 2025: QAR 574.4 million)

▪ **Net Investment Income:** Increased by 28.1% to **QAR 30.0 million** (YTD H1 2025: QAR 23.4 million)

Six months ended Year-to-Date (YTD) H1 2026 key financial highlights:

Recognised Takaful Contributions	Shareholders' net profit	Total net investment income	Investments at fair value	Shareholders' equity
YTD Q2 FY2026 QAR 325.2 mm YoY +26.8%	YTD Q2 FY2026 QAR 61.5 mm YoY +16.2%	YTD Q2 FY2026 QAR 30.0 mm YoY +28.1%	YTD Q2 FY2026 QAR 1,034.7 mm YoY +16.0%	YTD Q2 FY2026 QAR 626.0 mm YoY +9.0%
YTD Q2 FY2025 QAR 256.5 mm	YTD Q2 FY2025 QAR 53.0 mm	YTD Q2 FY2025 QAR 23.4 mm	YTD Q2 FY2025 QAR 892.1 mm	YTD Q2 FY2025 QAR 574.4 mm

Damaan Islamic Insurance Company "Beema" (Q.P.S.C.) ("Beema" or the "Company"), a leading provider of Islamic insurance in Qatar, announced its financial results for the six-month period ended 30 June 2026.

Recognised takaful contributions for the period amounted to QAR 325.2 million, representing a 26.8% increase compared to QAR 256.5 million in the prior-year period of 2025, primarily from growth in the Motor and Fire & General Accident segments. The Motor segment increased to QAR 90.9 million from QAR 62.0 million in the prior year, while Fire & General Accident contributions rose to QAR 89.0 million from QAR 67.9 million. The Takaful and Medical segment also contributed to growth, rising to QAR 136.3 million from QAR 119.3 million, while Marine & Aviation contributions increased to QAR 9.1 million from QAR 7.3 million.

Takaful gross margin for the period was QAR

5.4 million, compared with QAR 20.4 million in the prior-year period of 2025, due to increased recognised takaful costs, principally attributable to increased claims, in the Fire & General Accident and Motor segments. This was partly offset by an improvement in re-takaful results, with the Takaful and Medical and Marine & Aviation segments remaining profitable.

Net Investment Income rose by 28.1% to QAR 30.0 million, compared to QAR 23.4 million in the prior-year period of 2025. Of this amount, QAR 19.4 million was attributable to policyholders, while QAR 10.5 million was attributable to shareholders. The increase reflected higher income from the Company's sukuk-based investment portfolio across both the policyholders' and shareholders' funds.

Shareholders' net profit rose 16.2% to QAR 61.5 million, compared with QAR 53.0 million in the prior-year period of 2025. The increase

reflected higher Wakala fee income, which grew in line with the expansion of the takaful portfolio, together with higher investment results. Earnings Per Share rose to QAR 0.308, up from QAR 0.265.

As at 30 June 2026, investments measured at fair value amounted to QAR 1,034.7 million, compared to QAR 892.1 million as at 30 June 2025. Shareholders' equity rose to QAR 626.0 million, supported by retained earnings. The Company maintains a debt-free balance sheet. The solvency ratio stood at 337% as at 31 December 2025, above applicable regulatory requirements.

Commenting on the results, Nasser Rashid Al Misnad, Chief Executive Officer of Beema, said: "Beema delivered solid growth in the first half of 2026, with recognised takaful contributions up 26.8% YoY and shareholders' net profit up 16.2% YoY to QAR 61.5 million. Contributions grew across our segments, while Wakala fee income and higher investment returns supported profitability. Our capital position remains comfortably above regulatory requirements, and we remain focused on growing the takaful business on a disciplined basis while balancing the interests of policyholders and shareholders."

Damaan Islamic Insurance Company Q.P.S.C. ("Beema") is a Qatari takaful operator listed on the Qatar Stock Exchange (Ticker: BEMA). It holds a Moody's A3 Long-Term Insurance Financial Strength Rating and an AM Best A- (Excellent) rating.

For the complete financial statements for the six-month period ended 30 June 2026 and additional information, please visit www.beema.com.qa. For any inquiries, please contact Beema's Investor Relations Department at investorrelations@beema.com.qa

Important information

This press release has been prepared by Damaan Islamic Insurance Company "Beema" (Q.P.S.C.) (the "Company") for informational purposes only. This press release does not constitute an offer or invitation or solicitation of any offer to subscribe for or purchase any shares or other securities or recommendation to invest in any shares or other securities. This press release is not intended to be relied upon as the basis for an investment decision, and is not, and should not be assumed to be, complete. It is provided for information purposes only. Any investment is subject to various risks, none of which are outlined herein. All such risks should be carefully considered by prospective investors before they make any investment decision.

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Statements contained in this press release that are not historical facts are based on current expectations, estimates, projections, opinions and beliefs of the Company. Such statements involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other factors, and reliance should not be placed thereon. In addition, this press release contains "forward-looking statements." Actual events or results or the actual performance of the Company may differ materially from those reflected or contemplated in such forward-looking statements.

This press release has not been approved by the securities regulatory authority of Qatar or any other state or jurisdiction.



Damaan Islamic Insurance Company – Beema (Q.P.S.C.)

Doha – Qatar

INTERIM CONDENSED FINANCIAL INFORMATION AND INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REVIEW REPORT

FOR THE SIX-MONTH PERIOD ENDED 30 JUNE 2026

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REVIEW REPORT

To the Shareholders
Damaan Islamic Insurance Company “BEEMA” (Q.P.S.C.) Lusail – Qatar

Introduction

We have reviewed the accompanying interim statement of financial position of Damaan Islamic Insurance Company “BEEMA” (Q.P.S.C.) (the “Company”) as at 30 June 2026, and the related interim statements of policyholders’ revenues, expenses and other comprehensive income, policyholders’ surplus, shareholders’ income statement and other comprehensive income, changes in shareholders’ equity and cash flows for the six-month period then ended, and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes. Management is responsible for the preparation and presentation of this interim financial information in accordance with FAS 41 Interim Financial Reporting issued by the Accounting and Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions (“AAOIFI”) (“FAS 41”). Our responsibility is to express a conclusion on this interim financial information based on our review.

Scope of review

We conducted our review in accordance with International Standard on Review Engagements 2410, “Review of Interim Financial Information Performed by the Independent Auditor of the Entity”. A review of interim financial information consists of making inquiries, primarily of persons responsible for financial and accounting matters, and applying analytical and other review procedures. A review is substantially less in scope than an audit conducted in accordance with International Standards on Auditing and consequently does not enable us to obtain assurance that we would become aware of all significant matters that might be identified in an audit. Accordingly, we do not express an audit opinion.

Conclusion

Based on our review, nothing has come to our attention that causes us to believe that the accompanying interim financial information is not prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with FAS 41.

Doha – Qatar
29 July , 2026

For Deloitte & Touche
Qatar Branch
Joseph Khalife
Partner, License No. 433
QFMA Audit Registration 120156

INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at 30 June 2026

	Notes	30 June 2026 QR (Reviewed)	31 December 2025 QR (Audited)
Policyholders’ assets			
Cash and bank balances	3	340,815,411	229,079,245
Investments at fair value through equity	4 (a)	599,530,556	597,155,015
Investments at fair value through income statement	4 (b)	6,499,525	6,418,117
Re-takaful arrangement assets	5	97,872,353	92,010,715
Takaful arrangement assets	5	669,038	19,768
Property and equipment		811,734	1,875,947
Other receivables		7,275,710	9,938,772
Total policyholders’ assets		1,053,474,327	936,497,579
Shareholders’ assets			
Cash and bank balances	3	49,640,891	94,363,204
Investments at fair value through equity	4 (a)	423,103,425	413,682,993
Investments at fair value through income statement	4 (b)	5,571,022	9,134,785
Prepayments and other receivables		5,149,470	4,851,275
Due from policyholders		164,436,568	120,153,859
Right-of-use assets		2,535,792	2,597,641
Property and equipment		105,898,439	106,495,139
Total shareholders’ assets		756,335,607	751,278,896
TOTAL ASSETS		1,809,809,934	1,687,776,475
Policyholders’ liabilities			
Takaful arrangement liabilities	5	664,289,265	578,398,196
Re-takaful arrangement liabilities	5	2,003,709	1,001,388
Other payables		12,280,308	12,384,013
Due to shareholders		164,436,568	120,153,859
Distributable surplus payable		78,899,323	66,864,527
Total policyholders’ liabilities		921,909,173	778,801,983
Policyholders’ surplus			
Fair value reserve		(7,111,345)	(123,031)
Equalization reserve		90,000,000	90,000,000
Retained surplus		48,676,499	67,818,627
Total policyholders’ surplus		131,565,154	157,695,596
Total policyholders’ liabilities and surplus		1,053,474,327	936,497,579
Shareholders’ liabilities			
Provisions and other payables		115,516,623	117,556,823
Due to related parties	6 (b)	6,093,342	6,093,342
Net Ijarah liability		2,838,164	2,865,558
Employees’ end of service benefits		5,866,876	5,562,457
Total shareholders’ liabilities		130,315,005	132,078,180
Shareholders’ equity			
Share capital		200,000,000	200,000,000
Legal reserve		200,000,000	200,000,000
Fair value reserve		(1,704,988)	2,988,954
Retained earnings		227,725,590	216,211,762
Total shareholders’ equity		626,020,602	619,200,716
Total shareholders’ liabilities and equity		756,335,607	751,278,896
TOTAL LIABILITIES, POLICYHOLDERS’ SURPLUS AND SHAREHOLDERS’ EQUITY		1,809,809,934	1,687,776,475
Sheikh. Jassim Bin Hamad Bin Jassim J. Al Thani Chairman		Nasser Rashid Al Misnad Chief Executive Officer	

INTERIM STATEMENT OF POLICYHOLDERS' REVENUES, EXPENSES AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For the three-month and six-month periods ended 30 June 2026

	Notes	For the three-month period ended 30 June 2026 QR (Reviewed)	30 June 2025 QR (Reviewed)	For the six-month period ended 30 June 2026 QR (Reviewed)	30 June 2025 QR (Reviewed)
Recognised takaful contributions	7	184,483,986	141,144,030	325,210,219	256,500,745
Recognised takaful costs	7	(166,069,956)	(98,708,685)	(297,873,165)	(187,165,807)
Re-takaful net results	7	(1,699,937)	(27,086,431)	(21,898,879)	(48,981,016)
Takaful gross margin		16,714,093	15,348,914	5,438,175	20,353,922
Amortisation of deferred cost (related to provision of takaful arrangements)	7	(9,115,047)	(8,420,752)	(16,087,097)	(14,881,493)
Amortisation of deferred income (related to retakaful arrangements held)	7	1,179,225	1,451,454	2,410,951	3,248,021
Net amortisation of deferred cost		(7,935,822)	(6,969,298)	(13,676,146)	(11,633,472)
Net takaful result		8,778,271	8,379,616	(8,237,971)	8,720,450
Depreciation of property and equipment		(572,559)	(572,559)	(1,064,213)	(1,064,213)
Fair value gain/(loss) on investment at fair value through income statement		66,917	(67,331)	81,409	26,722
Reversal for impairment of investment at fair value through equity	4	--	27,037	91,717	78,818
Investment income		11,050,668	7,684,940	20,172,882	14,719,560
Investment expenses		(458,233)	(393,414)	(924,075)	(781,228)
Mudarib share		(6,244,975)	(4,755,444)	(11,751,558)	(9,327,183)
Other income		29,440	12,915	3,168,073	1,945,096
Other expenses		(3,771,194)	(3,007,743)	(5,320,767)	(6,110,825)
Net (deficit)/surplus for the period		8,878,335	7,308,017	(3,784,503)	8,207,197
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE (LOSS) /INCOME					
Items that may be subsequently reclassified to statement of Policyholders’ revenue and expenses					
Net change in fair value of debt-type instruments designated at fair value through other comprehensive income		4,643,310	1,436,795	(6,988,314)	5,311,727
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE (LOSS)/ INCOME FOR THE PERIOD		13,521,645	8,744,812	(10,772,817)	13,518,924

INTERIM STATEMENT OF POLICYHOLDERS' SURPLUS

For the six-month period ended 30 June 2026

	Retained surplus QR	Fair value reserve QR	Equalization reserve QR	Total QR
Balance at 1 January 2025 (Audited)	65,619,139	(13,847,169)	90,000,000	141,771,970
Net surplus for the period	8,207,197	-	-	8,207,197
Net change in fair value of investment at fair value through equity	-	5,311,727	-	5,311,727
Total comprehensive income for the period	8,207,197	5,311,727	-	13,518,924
Surplus distribution to policyholders during the period	(9,562,817)	-	-	(9,562,817)
Balance at 30 June 2025 (Reviewed)	64,263,519	(8,535,442)	90,000,000	145,728,077
Balance as at 1 January 2026 (Audited)	67,818,627	(123,031)	90,000,000	157,695,596
Net deficit for the period	(3,784,503)	-	-	(3,784,503)
Net change in fair value of investment at fair value through equity	-	(6,988,314)	-	(6,988,314)
Total comprehensive loss for the period	(3,784,503)	(6,988,314)	-	(10,772,817)
Surplus distribution to policyholders during the period	(15,357,625)	-	-	(15,357,625)
Balance at 30 June 2026 (Reviewed)	48,676,499	(7,111,345)	90,000,000	131,565,154

INTERIM SHAREHOLDERS' INCOME STATEMENT AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For the three-month and six-month periods ended 30 June 2026

	Notes	For the three-month period ended 30 June 2026 QR (Reviewed)	30 June 2025 QR (Reviewed)	For the six-month period ended 30 June 2026 QR (Reviewed)	30 June 2025 QR (Reviewed)
Income					
Income from shareholders’ investments		5,411,840	4,874,808	11,026,768	9,872,348
Wakala fee		42,579,653	39,644,640	77,488,314	69,535,720
Mudarib share		6,244,975	4,755,444	11,751,558	9,327,183
Other income		382,064	315,000	697,064	726,397
Total income		54,618,532	49,589,892	100,963,704	89,461,648
Staff cost		(10,340,096)	(11,184,968)	(22,662,749)	21,540,529)
Depreciation of property and equipment		(1,817,715)	(1,748,593)	(3,384,726)	(3,282,077)
Fair value gain/(loss) on investment at fair value through income statement		152,375	(73,728)	155,369	58,977
Reversal for impairment of investment at fair value through equity	4	-	11,018	67,823	63,123
General and administrative expenses	8	(6,156,267)	(7,216,268)	(12,824,546)	(11,066,491)
Finance cost		(79,027)	(6,440)	(86,376)	(87,383)
Investment expenses		(355,343)	(325,081)	(714,671)	(647,165)
Total expenses		(18,596,073)	(20,544,060)	(39,449,876)	(36,501,545)
Profit before tax for the period		36,022,459	29,045,832	61,513,828	52,960,103
Tax expense		-	-	-	-
Net profit for the period		36,022,459	29,045,832	61,513,828	52,960,103
Basic/diluted earnings per share in Qatari Riyal	12	0.180	0.145	0.308	0.265
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME					
Net profit for the period		36,022,459	29,045,832	61,513,828	52,960,103
Items that may be subsequently reclassified to shareholders’ income statement					
Net change in fair value of debt-type instruments designated at fair value through other comprehensive income		3,254,820	1,060,211	(4,693,942)	3,820,118
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD		39,277,279	30,106,043	56,819,886	56,780,221

INTERIM STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN SHAREHOLDERS' EQUITY

For the six-month period ended 30 June 2026

	Share Capital QR	Legal reserve QR	Fair value Reserve QR	Retained earnings QR	Total QR
Balance at 1 January 2025 (Audited)	200,000,000	200,000,000	(5,448,602)	163,042,255	557,593,653
Net profit for the period	-	-	-	52,960,103	52,960,103
Net change in fair value of investment at fair value through equity	-	-	3,820,118	-	3,820,118
Total comprehensive income for the period	-	-	3,820,118	52,960,103	56,780,221
Dividends paid*	-	-	-	(40,000,000)	(40,000,000)
Balance at 30 June 2025 (Reviewed)	200,000,000	200,000,000	(1,628,484)	176,002,358	574,373,874
Balance at 1 January 2026 (Audited)	200,000,000	200,000,000	2,988,954	216,211,762	619,200,716
Net profit for the period	-	-	-	61,513,828	61,513,828
Net change in fair value of investment at fair value through equity	-	-	(4,693,942)	-	(4,693,942)
Total comprehensive income for the period	-	-	(4,693,942)	61,513,828	56,819,886
Dividends paid*	-	-	-	(50,000,000)	(50,000,000)
Balance at 30 June 2026 (Reviewed)	200,000,000	200,000,000	(1,704,988)	227,725,590	626,020,602

*Dividend declared amounting to QR. 50 million at the rate of QR. 0.25 per share (2025: QR. 40 million at the rate of QR. 0.20 per share) was approved by the Shareholders at the Annual General Assembly meeting held on 3 March 2026.

INTERIM STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

For the six-month period ended 30 June 2026

	Notes	For the six-month period ended 30 June 2026 QR (Reviewed)	30 June 2025 QR (Reviewed)
OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Shareholders’ profit for the period		61,513,828	52,960,103
Policyholders’ (deficit)/surplus for the period		(3,784,503)	8,207,197
		57,729,325	61,167,300
<i>Adjustments for:</i>			
Depreciation of property and equipment		4,448,939	4,346,290
Amortization of right-of-use assets		61,849	61,849
Net reversal of impairment of financial investments		(159,540)	(141,941)
Realized gain from investments		(31,199,650)	(24,591,908)
(Gain)/loss on disposal of property and equipment		(200)	108
Amortization of deferred cost		73,936	75,023
Fair value gain on investments at fair value through income statement		(236,778)	(85,699)
Provision for employees’ end of service benefits		442,286	718,567
Operating profit before changes in working capital		31,160,167	41,549,589
Change in takaful and re-takaful arrangements		80,382,482	69,173,846
Change in prepayments and other receivables		2,364,867	5,161,821
Change in provisions and other payables		(2,143,905)	3,551,732
Net cash generated from operations		111,763,611	119,436,988
Employees’ end of service benefits paid		(137,867)	(127,913)
Net cash generated from operating activities		111,625,744	119,309,075
INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Acquisition of property and equipment		(154,686)	(1,178,902)
Proceeds from disposal of property and equipment		200	300
Investment in fixed deposits		(4,172,800)	(42,201,200)
Acquisition of capital work in progress		(2,633,340)	--
Net movement in investments		(19,599,556)	(45,407,452)
Realized gain from investments		31,199,650	24,591,908
Net cash generated from/(used in) investing activities		4,639,468	(64,195,346)
FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Policyholders’ surplus paid during the period		(3,322,829)	(3,365,275)
Dividends paid		(50,000,000)	(40,000,000)
Repayment of gross Ijarah liability		(101,330)	(142,460)
Net cash used in financing activities		(53,424,159)	(43,507,735)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		62,841,053	11,605,994
Cash and cash equivalents at 1 January		46,200,649	29,737,475
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT 30 JUNE (Note 3)		109,041,702	41,343,469

MoEHE unveils ‘Zad Al-Mobta’ath’ to guide students abroad

The Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) has launched the “Zad Al-Mubta’ath” National Program for the Preparation and Education of Scholarship Students.

It is the first comprehensive national programme aimed at preparing scholarship students set for travel, providing them with support and guidance throughout their studies.

Addressing an orientation workshop organised by the ministry in Doha, Acting Director of the Scholarships Department at MoEHE Noura al-Ansari said the programme is a cultural and awareness-strengthening system that supports those students.

She added that the programme – poised to kick off in August 2026 – wasn’t merely an orientation meeting that precedes travel, explaining that workshops and implementation mechanisms will be announced soon.

The workshop was attended by Assistant Undersecretary for Higher Education Affairs at the

Ministry Dr Hareb Aljabri, representatives of government entities and relevant institutions, alongside a host of ministry officials and students who had applied for government scholarships.

Al-Ansari outlined that the programme brings together a team of trainers and experts from government agencies and partner institutions and covers key areas needed by scholarship students, including cultural and religious guidance, financial matters, safety and security, and personal data protection.

This is alongside mental health, social, and academic support, al-Ansari highlighted, stating that the programme intends to help students navigate challenges throughout their study abroad journey.

The ministry will also launch a dedicated online platform for the programme, allowing students to create personal accounts, communicate directly with advisors and experts, and receive ongoing support and answers to their inquiries throughout their studies, she noted.

Al-Ansari remarked that the ministry is still accepting scholarship applications, noting that the number of applicants will be announced at a later date once the registration process is complete.

She noted that technology-related fields, particularly Computer Engineering and Computer Science, were drawing remarkable turnout from students in both domestic and international scholarship programmes.

Dr Abu Bakr Musa Abdullah, a consultant at the Ministry, for his part, emphasised that the programme came after the challenges encountered by scholarship students had been monitored and scrutinised throughout their years of study abroad.

He added that the objective was to prepare them for various situations in advance. Dr Abdullah highlighted that the programme revolves around three core pillars: prevention, empowerment, and response. It focuses on equipping students with the knowledge and skills they need before departure, providing them with the resources



necessary to succeed, and establishing an ongoing support system throughout their study abroad.

The programme, he noted, includes five key tracks: religious and cultural guidance, mental health and social support, safety and digital security, financial literacy, and academic excellence.

These tracks were developed based on the experiences of former scholarship recipients and a careful assessment of the key challenges they encountered while abroad, Abdullah underscored.

Abdullah went on to remark that the religious and cultural guidance track addresses faith-related considerations related to travel, residence, and engagement with diverse communities.

The mental health and social support track, he said, helps students adapt to life abroad and navigate challenges related to homesickness and integration, with the safety and digital security track strengthening awareness of personal data protection, cybersecu-

urity, responsible social media use, and compliance with local laws in host countries.

Dr Abdullah further explained that the programme also provides financial literacy training, along with academic success skills, including time management, research skills, and access to academic advisors, helping foster students’ opportunities for academic success and distinction.

He emphasised that the ministry would establish a dedicated support and advising line that safeguards students’ privacy and confidentiality, as well as a digital student portal featuring a training library, educational resources, answers to frequently asked questions, and important contact information for entities in host countries.

The programme will also create an online community for scholarship students and organise regular visits to their host institutions, ensuring ongoing support until graduation, Abdullah noted.

Dr Abdullah emphasised that the programme aims to bolster scholarship students’ readiness, raise academic success rates, achieve psychological and social stability, and build a leadership-oriented character capable of representing the State of Qatar outstandingly.

He added that the programme helps realise the objectives of Qatar National Vision 2030 by preparing scientifically and professionally qualified national talents capable of contributing to the nation’s future development.

The workshop wrapped up with an open panel discussion during which Dr Aljabri, al-Ansari, Dr Abdullah, and preacher Mohammed Yahya Tahir answered the inquiries raised by students.

They went over the most salient challenges students encounter throughout this scholarship journey, along with the mechanisms for utilising the services and paths this programme provides. (QNA)

Ashghal president inspects 14 schools construction project

The President of the Public Works Authority (Ashghal), Engineer Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al-Meer, said that Ashghal is committed to delivering more projects using the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

This came during Ashghal president’s visit to inspect the project of constructing 14 new schools, as part of the Qatar Schools Development Program’s second package adopting the PPP model, according to Ashghal’s press release yesterday.

This model strengthens the private sector’s role in implementing national development projects, in line with the objectives of the Third National Development Strategy (2024-2030), which aims to increase private sector participation in Qatar’s development journey, al-Meer added.

Al-Meer directed the project’s team to complete the remaining works according to the approved schedule, emphasising the importance of maintaining the same high standards of quality, efficiency, and commitment.

“The Authority also places great emphasis on adopting the latest innovations, advanced engineering solutions, and modern construction technologies across its projects,” he said, “To keep pace with global developments in the construction sector, enhance delivery efficiency, promote sustainability, and ensure the delivery of high-quality infrastructure that meets the country’s current and future development needs.” Under the PPP agreement, UCC Assets Consortium for Trading and Contracting (UCC Holding) is responsible for the design, construction, financing, operation, and maintenance of the schools for a period of 25 years, after which they will be handed over to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in good operational condition, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the educational facilities, improving operational efficiency, and maximising the value of these assets.

For his part, Chairman of UCC Holding Moataz al-Khayyat said: “Projects of this nature represent more than a construction achievement; they reflect the transformation taking place in the global construction sector toward more innovative, efficient, and sustainable models.” “At UCC, we are committed to leading this transformation by investing in advanced technologies, developing national capabilities, and building strategic partnerships that enable the delivery of landmark projects that support the vision for future-ready cities and facilities,” he added.

In turn, President and Group CEO of UCC



Holding Ramez al-Khayyat said: “This achievement reflects UCC’s commitment to investing in the latest global technologies and deploying them in projects that fulfil our partners’ vision while supporting their aspirations for more efficient and sustainable infrastructure.” He added, “It also demonstrates the capabilities of our teams to deliver complex projects by combining advanced engineering planning with precise site operations management and the application of modern technological solutions in accordance with the highest quality and safety standards.” Still according to the press release, the project, which is approximately 80% completed, is being implemented under the supervision of Ashghal, in co-operation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education.

This is being done in accordance with Law No 12 of 2020 regulating Public-Private Partnerships, and in line with the objectives of the Third National Development Strategy (2024-2030) aimed at enhancing private sector participation in the implementation of national development projects.

The project, valued at approximately QR4.5bn, includes the construction of 14 schools across 10 strategic areas throughout Qatar: Muaither, Al Gharrafa, Al Wajbah, Al Thumama, Ain Khaled, Al Aziziyyah, Al Meshaf, Rawdat Rashid, Al Sakhama, and Rawdat Al Hamama. The schools will have a combined capacity of more than 10,000 students.

As part of adopting the latest engineering innovations, the project incorporates 3D printing technology in the construction of selected

structural components in two schools, reflecting Ashghal’s commitment to embracing cutting-edge construction technologies and supporting the transformation toward a more efficient, sustainable, and innovative construction sector in Qatar.

3D printing is among the most promising technologies in the construction industry, accelerating project delivery, reducing construction costs, minimising reliance on on-site labour, reducing construction waste, and lowering carbon emissions, thereby supporting sustainability goals and improving resource efficiency.

The project also incorporates modular construction techniques using prefabricated structural systems and building modules for several school components.

This approach helps accelerate project delivery, improve construction efficiency, enhance manufacturing precision and construction quality, reduce material waste, and minimise on-site works.

The press release highlighted that approximately 70% of the electrical and mechanical materials used in the project, in addition to steel, glass, and various other construction materials, are sourced locally, contributing to strengthening private sector and supporting the national economy.

The schools have been designed in accordance with the highest local and international standards, incorporating the latest global trends in educational facility design, including enhanced external facades and interior spaces. (QNA)

Wifaq, Qatar University launch marriage support programme

Qatar’s Family Consulting Center (Wifaq) has launched the First Year of Marriage awareness and counselling programme in partnership with Qatar University (QU), targeting newly married students and promoting family well-being.

The programme aims to strengthen family values, enhance self-awareness and provide participants with practical skills to build healthy marital relationships. It focuses on communication, conflict management, understanding differences between partners, and encouraging dialogue and co-operation during the early stages of marriage.

Delivered by family and social counselling specialists, the initiative combines evidence-based guidance with interactive learning to help couples address common challenges, strengthen relationships and promote long-term family stability, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

Wifaq Community Outreach Department Director Lulwa al-Yazidi said the programme

reflects the centre’s preventive approach to supporting couples and highlighted the importance of building strong marital foundations from the start.

She added that the partnership with QU supports Wifaq’s efforts to work with national and academic institutions to expand family awareness programmes and reach students, while continuing to develop services to meet the needs of Qatari families.

QU Student Activities Department Director Abdulla Hamid Almulla said the initiative reflects the university’s commitment to supporting students’ psychological and social well-being alongside academic success.

He said preparing students for the future includes helping them build stable families that contribute to a cohesive society, adding that strong participation in the programme shows growing awareness among students of the importance of family preparation and balancing family life with academic commitments. (QNA)



Summer programmes help children unplug and reconnect, parents say

By Ayman Adly
Staff Reporter

Summer programmes for children across Qatar have become increasingly popular, with many parents calling for their expansion, describing them as an effective way to curb screen addiction, encourage healthier lifestyles, and support children’s social, emotional, and personal development.

Parents said the combination of sports, arts, educational workshops, theatrical performances, and interactive activities offers children meaningful alternatives to spending long hours on smartphones, tablets, and gaming devices. They noted that these initiatives have evolved beyond simple recreational entertainment into comprehensive learning environments that foster confidence, creativity, discipline, teamwork, and resilience.

Many parents also highlighted that structured summer programmes give children valuable opportunities to build friend-



ships, improve communication skills, and discover new interests through face-to-face interaction rather than digital isolation. They added that participating in group activities helps reduce anxiety and

social withdrawal while encouraging physical activity and healthier daily routines.

Parents further said these programmes allow them to observe their children’s behaviour in

different social settings, helping them better understand their strengths, interests, and developmental needs.

Talal al-Dosari described summer events as a practical response to one of the most pressing challenges facing families today – the growing dependence of children on digital devices. He said such activities provide youngsters with a healthy outlet away from prolonged indoor stays and excessive screen time, while expressing hope that permanent, year-round programmes would be introduced to ensure consistent recreational opportunities.

Saeed al-Hajri said the programmes reflect organisers’ commitment to children’s health and well-being by encouraging them to leave their homes and engage in physical and interactive activities. Reducing excessive screen exposure, he said, helps minimise both physical and psychological health risks while allowing children to discover hidden talents through theatre and creative workshops. These experiences also boost self-confidence and contribute to ef-

forts to address childhood obesity.

Abdulaziz al-Mohamadi praised the significant development of Qatar’s summer programmes in recent years, citing the growing diversity of activities and the wider range of age groups they now serve.

He said educational sessions, including drawing and reading workshops, together with theatrical performances, play an important role in identifying and nurturing young talent. Al-Mohamadi also noted the strong participation of visitors from across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), saying the popularity of these events enhances Qatar’s reputation as a family-friendly summer destination while supporting domestic tourism.

Mohamed Ali al-Hajri said the programmes provide safe and enjoyable spaces where parents and children can spend quality time together while encouraging youngsters to develop new skills. He added that affordable admission fees and easy accessibility have made the activities attractive to families from diverse back-

grounds. Interactive and movement-based activities, he said, also help combat childhood obesity and reduce excessive screen use, contributing to better physical and mental well-being.

Khalid al-Muhammadi called on organisers to continue designing programmes that cater to different age groups so that more children can benefit. He noted that movement-based entertainment helps reduce sedentary lifestyles, weight gain, and obesity, while appearances by popular cartoon characters and well-known public figures significantly increase children’s enthusiasm for participating in outdoor activities and socialising with others.

Yaqoub al-Yousifi described the summer events as a comprehensive recreational experience that combines games, family entertainment, and interactive activities. He said attractions such as climbing challenges, running games, puzzles, and other movement-based experiences encourage children to stay active and counter the inactivity often associated with the long school holidays.

Qatar reaches No 2 spot in labour market index

From Page 1

Economic expert Dr Abdullah al-Khater said Qatar's latest ranking resulted from sustained efforts to improve the working environment, implement labour market strategies and develop business incubators, research centres and educational institutions supporting skills and human capital.

He said Qatar's hosting of major sporting and economic events had equipped young people and public and private institutions with valuable practical, technical and organisational expertise. This had helped attract international talent, companies and investment.

Al-Khater added that Qatar's growing competitiveness would accelerate the adoption of modern management practices and digital transformation, saving time and resources while ad-

vancing the country's development agenda.

The milestone builds on Qatar's strong performance across several international indices. In the 2025 Global Peace Index, it ranked first in the Middle East and North Africa and 27th globally among 163 countries, improving by two places. It was also rated eighth globally and first in the Arab world among the safest and most socially peaceful countries.

Qatar entered the global top 10 of the IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook for the first time in 2025, ranking ninth overall. Its Business Efficiency ranking rose from 11th to fifth, while it retained seventh place in both Economic Performance and Government Efficiency.

The country also advanced three places in infrastructure and ranked among the top 20 of the 69 economies covered by the 2025 IMD World Dig-

ital Competitiveness Ranking. It has secured strong positions in indices covering innovation, healthcare, food security, digital transformation, public transport and soft power.

GCC-Stat said Qatar's second-place labour market ranking reflected the market's efficiency, attractiveness and ability to draw skilled professionals. It added that the wider GCC results demonstrated the success of economic policies and structural reforms aimed at improving business environments and promoting sustainable development.

The Switzerland-based IMD publishes the World Competitiveness Yearbook annually, assessing participating economies across Economic Performance, Government Efficiency, Business Efficiency and Infrastructure. The report is widely used by policymakers, investors and business leaders. (QNA)

Evolution Nation: The story of Islamic art through MIA

From Page 1

"Right now, I think in the midst of being part of a region that's been misinterpreted in the past decades, and Islam in particular, the role of art and culture is really even more crucial and more essential to tell the narrative from this part of the world and to really reclaim that story from the perspective of this region. And that's, I believe, what Qatar is trying to do as well in developing arts and culture."

MIA is part of Qatar's wider cultural landscape, where museums and cultural initiatives create spaces for audiences to learn about the country's history while engaging with stories from across the world.

The Evolution Nation campaign forms part of Qatar Creates, the year-round cultural movement by QM shaping how peo-

ple engage with art, design, food, fashion, film and sport in Qatar and beyond. As the national movement positioning Qatar as a global hub for art, culture and creativity, Qatar Creates brings together cultural initiatives, programmes and stories that showcase the country's creative landscape to local and international audiences.

Launched to mark 50 years since the establishment of the original National Museum of Qatar in 1975, Evolution Nation celebrates the individuals, institutions and ideas that have contributed to the country's cultural development.

Episodes of Evolution Nation are available on the Qatar Creates YouTube channel and across QM's social media platforms, sharing the stories of the people behind Qatar's continuing evolution as a cultural, creative and sporting nation.

Yemen govt accuses Houthis of planning Red Sea transit fees

AFP
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

A minister in Yemen's internationally recognised government told AFP yesterday that Houthi rebels were working with Iran to charge ships to transit the Red Sea, threatening another waterway after Tehran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

The Red Sea's narrow maritime artery has been a critical route for delivering Saudi crude to the international market after Iranian attacks and threats choked off Gulf energy exports via Hormuz.

Information minister Muammar al-Eryani told AFP that the move was "a dangerous escalation aimed at transforming one of the world's most strategic maritime corridors into a permanent source of funding for the militia's military and terrorist activities".

Al-Eryani said the assessment was provided by recently obtained "confirmed intelligence" indicating that Iran's Revolutionary Guards were helping manage the effort.

"The intelligence indicates that IRGC experts and advisers are directly involved in designing the technical and administrative framework of the project," al-Eryani added in comments exclusive to AFP.

He said this would include "the establishment of a dedicated entity responsible for collecting payments from shipping companies and commercial vessels".

The fate of Hormuz continues to be a sticking point between the US and Iran.

Tehran insists on its right to col-



A ship off the port of Aden, in Yemen. (Reuters/FilePhoto)

lect tolls for ships to use the waterway, which previously carried one-fifth of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas.

Anxieties are growing across the Gulf that the Houthis are hoping to copy Iran's playbook in Hormuz by monetising access to the Bab al-Mandab Strait at the mouth of the Red Sea — a move likely to send world energy markets into further disarray.

Houthi attacks on Israel-linked vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden caused cargo volumes to plunge during the Gaza war, with ships forced into a lengthy detour

around southern Africa.

Last week, the Houthis announced a maritime blockade of Saudi Arabia and have since claimed attacks targeting Saudi tankers and oil infrastructure.

The blockade has threatened Saudi Arabia's ability to export millions of barrels of crude a day, cutting off its only other maritime route following Iran's parallel stranglehold on the Strait of Hormuz.

Saudi Arabia has retaliated with strikes targeting Houthi positions.

The fighting marks the first time in years that Saudi Arabia and the

Houthis have traded heavy fire, and threatens a 2022 truce.

A Saudi-led military coalition had been at war with the Houthis since 2015, after the rebels seized the capital Sanaa and forced out the internationally recognised government.

The renewed hostilities between Saudi Arabia and the Houthis are an example of how the war between the US and Iran has spread.

Yesterday, the US and Saudi launched strikes on members of a paramilitary alliance in Iraq that includes pro-Iran groups, killing at least 20 people, the alliance said.

Test to pilot zones in south Lebanon lays bare difficulties

Reuters
Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh

A US-brokered plan for Israel to withdraw gradually from occupied areas of southern Lebanon in exchange for the disarmament of the Iranian-backed Hezbollah is off to a painfully slow start. To the US, the "pilot zone programme" is the centrepiece of a June 26 framework deal intended to end the war between Israel and Hezbollah, and establish peaceful ties between Israel and Lebanon.

But Hezbollah itself still refuses to give up its weapons. And on the ground, the rollout of the first zone in the south Lebanese village of Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh last week offered a glimpse of a strained and complex process that will be no easier to repeat elsewhere.

A senior Lebanese military official, who requested anonymity in order to speak freely, said it had taken weeks of US-brokered negotiations with Israel and days of military operations to establish the first zone in a single village.

The agreement links Israel's progressive withdrawal to the "verified disarmament" of Hezbollah — which is not a party to the deal, has refused to give up its arsenal, and has raised the prospect of internal strife if the state tries to disarm it by force.

With such operational and political challenges ahead, the Lebanese military official and two foreign security officials said they expected it to take more than a year to secure Israel's full withdrawal from Lebanon.

Two days after the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, Hezbollah pulled Lebanon into the war by firing at Israel. Israeli forces respond-



Smoke rises following an Israeli controlled-explosion on the village of Kfartibnit as seen from Nabatieh in southern Lebanon. (AFP)

ed with aerial bombardments reaching as far as Beirut, and by seizing a strip of land extending about 10km deep into southern Lebanon.

Even after a ceasefire last month, Israeli troops remained in the zone, razing villages and ordering residents who had fled not to return.

The US began mediating talks between Lebanon and Israel in mid-April, and setting out the pilot zone program in early June.

More than six weeks later, Lebanese soldiers deployed to Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh to implement the first zone after Israeli forces pulled back. Within hours, Israeli units still stationed hundreds of metres away in an adjacent village accused Lebanese troops of deploying too close,

and fired warning shots to keep them back.

An Israeli military official said troops were adjusting their "force posture" in the first pilot zone, without saying whether those who had withdrawn from Zawtar al-Gharbiyeh had left Lebanon altogether or redeployed to other parts of the south.

The Lebanese troops spent two days clearing rubble and accompanying paramedics into the village to recover the bodies of Hezbollah fighters.

On July 24, they finally allowed displaced residents to return, in carefully managed convoys. Most homes were too badly damaged from bombing for anyone to stay.

West Bank violence, annexation 'only getting worse': UN

Two years after the International Court of Justice said Israel's occupation of the West Bank was unlawful, settler violence and territorial annexation is "only getting worse", the UN said yesterday.

The United Nations' human rights office said that with attacks by Israeli settlers and the creation of outposts "hitting an all-time high", countries had to act to end the occupation.

"We are alarmed by the Israeli government's announcement to further increase the number of settlements and outposts, and open calls by Israeli leaders for revenge and collective punishment against Palestinian communities, accompanied by threats to turn the West Bank into another Gaza," rights office spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani said in a statement.

In a sweeping, non-binding "advisory opinion" issued in July 2024, the UN's top court said that Israel's decades-long occupation of Palestinian territory was "illegal".

Israel is "under the obligation to bring to an end its unlawful presence as rapidly as possible", presiding judge Nawaf Salam said.

Violence in the West Bank has surged since the Gaza war began.

The West Bank has seen nearly daily attacks by Israeli settlers and regular raids on Palestinian villages.

Shamdasani said that since last Thursday, eight Palestinians, including a boy, as well as two members of the Israeli military had been killed in the West Bank, which has been occupied by Israel since 1967.

"Settlers and Israeli security forces, often acting together, have attacked local communi-

ties, assaulting families, destroying and confiscating property, and burning mosques," she said.

"Movement restrictions are now tighter, blocking Palestinians from reaching essential services." Last Friday, deadly clashes broke out last between Israeli settlers and in the village of Tell that left four Palestinians and two Israelis dead.

The Israeli military subsequently raided the city of Nablus and several nearby towns, announcing the arrest of dozens of Palestinians as it launched what it described as a "counter-terrorism" operation in the West Bank. Overnight Sunday, Palestinian officials said Israeli settlers set fire to two mosques.

"With attacks by Israeli settlers, and the creation of settlements and outposts, hitting an all-time high, third states must act urgently and in unison to halt the continuing killing and dispossession of the Palestinian people, and to bring an end to the Israeli occupation," Shamdasani said.

The comments came after Ramiz Alakbarov, the UN's deputy special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, warned the UN Security Council on Tuesday that the situation in the West Bank was "rapidly deteriorating".

Since the start of the Gaza war, at least 1,097 Palestinians, have been killed by Israeli troops or settlers, while at least 48 Israelis, civilians and security personnel, have been killed. Excluding annexed east Jerusalem, around three million Palestinians live in the West Bank alongside more than 500,000 Israelis residing in settlements that are illegal under international law.

Escalation after drone hits US-owned tanker in Egypt

From Page 1

The joint US-Saudi attacks also mark the first time Riyadh has publicly joined strikes alongside Washington. Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces, powerful Iran-backed paramilitary groups incorporated into the Iraqi security forces, said at least 20 members were killed and 32 wounded in US-Saudi strikes targeting several bases across Iraq. Iraqi men shouted sectarian slogans and "Death to America!" as they carried the bodies of slain fighters in body bags. Washington and Riyadh said they struck the Iran-backed armed groups in Iraq in retaliation for drone attacks on Saudi oil targets launched from Iraq.

It was the first major US military action in the Middle East since last Friday, when Trump abruptly suspended an intensive bombing campaign after 13 days, having been advised by commanders that the strategy had run its course. US officials have privately cautioned that resuming major combat operations against Iran would carry risk given the negative impact on stocks of munitions.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank, estimated this week that the US military has fewer than 1,000 Patriot interceptor inventories and fewer than 250 THAAD interceptors—two key air defense systems.

Though Iran denies its forces have directed strikes from Iraqi territory, Iranian newspaper Hamshahri reported that four Iranian Revolutionary Guards advisers had been killed in the strikes on Iraq.

The strikes on Iraq expose a dangerous rift in that volatile country. The government is one of the few in the world to balance close military and diplomatic ties with both Tehran and Washington, but those divided loyalties are a constant source of tension and frequent domestic unrest.

The office of Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi, who took power just two months ago, urged the parties involved to avoid escalation and said he wanted to keep the country out of regional conflicts.

The Iraqi presidency denounced the strikes on the paramilitaries as "an unacceptable attack and a flagrant violation of Iraq's sovereignty", while also calling for a halt to attacks by armed groups against Iraq's neighbours.

Hours before launching the joint attacks with Saudi Arabia on Iraq, the US military said its air defences had averted a surprise Iranian attack on US troops in the region.



Israel’s decades-old US support risks losing Democrat backers

Reuters
Washington

For generations, support for Israel united Washington. Now Israel’s attacks on Gaza, the Iran war and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s close ties to US Republicans are eroding Democratic backing, threatening to turn one of America’s closest alliances into a partisan divide.

Support for Israel among Democratic voters has plummeted, candidates critical of Israel are winning Democratic primaries and even moderate lawmakers are increasingly willing to challenge decades of US support for Israel.

The shift is evident in Congress. This month, nearly half of House Democrats voted for a failed amendment to cut off aid to Israel, legislation that once likely would have been defeated by an overwhelming bipartisan majority. Israel receives \$3.8bn annually in US military aid and received billions more in emergency funds in recent years.

House Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries and some of his lieutenants opposed the measure, calling it overly broad. But former Speaker Nancy Pelosi and House Democratic Whip Katherine Clark were among those voting yes.

Democrats are increasingly divided over whether military aid should continue unchanged, be restricted to defensive weapons or be halted altogether.

US Senator Chris Coons of Delaware, the leading Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said he hopes Israeli elections in October help restore bipartisan US support while opening a new chapter beyond Netanyahu’s leadership. “New governments get to change direction,” Coons told Reuters, adding, “Netanyahu has kept Israel at war for years now, partly to avoid the political consequences of his choices.”

Overall sentiment towards Israel is declining. A June Quinnipiac University poll found 48% of voters and 66% of Democrats believe the US is too supportive of Israel, up from 16% and 20% when the question was first asked in 2017.

“Yes, there is a vigorous debate, but across broad segments of the parties, support for Israel remains firmly in the mainstream,” said Danny Danon, Israel’s ambassador to the UN, in an interview.

The shift faces a major test in



Palestinians inspect buildings targeted by Israeli strikes in Deir al-Balah, the Gaza Strip yesterday. (AFP)

Tuesday’s Democratic US Senate primary in Michigan where voters will weigh competing visions of US support with growing numbers of congressional Democrats questioning longstanding US military aid.

The race between progressive Abdul El-Sayed and US Representative Haley Stevens will determine who faces Republican Mike Rogers in November and reflects the wider Democratic debate over Israel and longstanding US military support.

Stevens made a video with AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, a major donor to her campaign, arguing that a close relationship with Israel “yields trade, that yields economic growth and that keeps our freedoms safe.”

By contrast, El-Sayed, a former public health official, told Fox News: “The question is whether we want a politics where our money is sent over to Israel to fund genocide and apartheid instead of investing in our own kids.”

A UN inquiry and several human rights groups have accused Israel of committing genocide in its military’s devastation of Gaza, an allegation Israel rejects, saying it is fighting Hamas and taking steps to reduce civilian harm.

Israeli policy has been a factor in other battleground congressional races, including New York, Florida and Colorado. Strains with Democrats deepened 11 years ago, when in a speech to Congress at the request of the Republican majority

Netanyahu attacked a deal crafted by then-President Barack Obama, a Democrat, on controlling Iran’s nuclear programme.

Sentiment critical of Israel grew after Israel launched its war in Gaza. Israel’s bombardment of Gaza has reshaped Democratic politics, fueling a backlash among younger voters and deepening a generational divide within the party.

Campus protests in 2024 intensified pressure on Democrats to reassess support for Israel. Some analysts say President Joe Biden’s refusal to do so contributed to Democratic nominee Kamala Harris’ loss to Trump later that year.

This primary election cycle, some establishment candidates have been defeated by more progressive challengers who have questioned support for Israel, mostly in congressional districts dominated by Democrats.

Jeremy Ben-Ami, president of J Street, a progressive pro-Israel rival to AIPAC, said the debate within the Democratic Party reflected a backlash against the right-wing Netanyahu and AIPAC, calling it “a toxic brew that really has helped to make Israel, unfortunately, a real wedge issue in the Democratic Party.” AIPAC did not respond to requests for comment.

Shibley Telhami, a University of Maryland professor of government and politics and senior non-resident fellow at the Brookings Institution, called it a “paradigm shift that sees Israel now as a villain,

even a genocidal villain, in a way that was never the case before.” While some conservative influencers have joined the attack, the Republican Party will support Israel as long as evangelical Christians and Trump stand firm, Telhami said in an interview.

The divide over Israel is spilling into congressional campaigns elsewhere. Republican Representative Mike Lawler, who represents a district outside New York City with a large Jewish population, has used the Democratic shift on Israel to attack challenger Cait Conley in a battleground fight for control of the House.

In southern Florida, moderate Representative Jared Moskowitz, a consistent supporter of Israel aid, is being challenged in the August 18 Democratic primary by democratic socialist Oliver Larkin, who campaigns on his belief that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza and supports an suspension of US military aid.

Longtime US Representative Diana DeGette was defeated in the Colorado Democratic primary by Ethiopian-born Melat Kiro. Kiro has called for ending wars, including by stopping military aid to Israel, while DeGette said she supported sending only defensive weapons to Israel.

US Senator Mazie Hirono, who has advocated for a two-state solution, said, “I think the support for Israel’s right to exist, all of that is there. It’s just the (Israeli) leadership we seriously question.”

Lebanon seeks arrest of businessman accused of meeting Netanyahu

AFP
Beirut

Lebanese judicial authorities after tasking the security forces yesterday with investigating a meeting between influential Lebanese Christian businessman Antoun Sehnaoui and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, issued a warrant seeking the arrest of Sehnaoui.

Lebanese law criminalises contact with Israel, despite the countries beginning direct talks under US sponsorship in April, a month after the latest fighting erupted between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah.

Axios journalist Barak Ravid had reported that, on Monday night in Washington, Sehnaoui and former US envoy Morgan Ortagus hosted a dinner attended by high-profile officials including Netanyahu.

The dinner was in memory of Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, who died this month.

An accompanying photo showing Sehnaoui, a Lebanese Christian, and Netanyahu at the same table sparked uproar on social media in Lebanon across the political spectrum.

The judicial official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that Lebanese security forces had established that the photo was authentic and had not been altered.

In another image, posted

on Netanyahu’s X account, Sehnaoui is visible behind the Israeli premier.

The judicial official said that several lawyers had also submitted a report demanding “the prosecution of Sehnaoui for crimes related to dealing with Israel and communicating with Netanyahu.”

The prosecutor is to examine the matter and decide whether to refer it to the military court.

Sehnaoui, who is in favour of normalising ties with Israel, is chairman of Lebanon’s SGBL bank and involved with Lebanese media outlets. He is also a movie producer and philanthropist.

Lebanese lawyer Wassef El-Harakeh said he had lodged a personal complaint against Sehnaoui for “dealing with the enemy”, saying the matter required a “serious, transparent judicial investigation, free of any political, financial or clientelist immunity.”

In April, at an event at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in which Sehnaoui was recognised as a donor, Ortagus said Sehnaoui and his family “come from generations of committed Lebanese Christian Zionists”, according to footage of the event.

“I’m going to brag on him because I love him... What Antoun is doing today is technically illegal in Lebanon,” she said, in reference to Lebanese laws banning contact with Israel.

Acting attorney general Blanche’s bid for Senate confirmation hits snag

Todd Blanche’s bid for Senate confirmation as US attorney general faced a potential setback yesterday when Republican Senator John Cornyn cited unresolved concerns over a controversial \$1.8bn fund tied to Trump allies. Cornyn’s concerns centre on provisions of President Donald Trump’s settlement with his own administration, including a proposed \$1.8bn “anti-weaponisation fund” for Trump’s allies and an agreement that could give Trump and his associates protections from tax audits unavailable to ordinary taxpayers.

The dispute prompted Cornyn to cancel a meeting with Blanche ahead of a Senate Judiciary Committee vote scheduled for Thursday, with the Texas Republican saying he was not prepared to support the nomination until the Justice Department provided written assurances addressing his concerns.

Blanche, who served as Trump’s personal defence lawyer before his second term, is already serving as acting attorney general, but he needs the backing of every Republican on the Senate Judiciary Committee to advance his nomination. (Reuters)

Canada condemns West Bank violence, annexation

Reuters
Ottawa

Canada yesterday condemned worsening violence by Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank and demanded a halt to the expansion of Israeli settlements there. According to United Nations figures, 18 Palestinians have been killed in incidents linked to settler attacks so far this year, compared with 17 in the whole of 2025.

“Canada condemns the ongoing violence in the West Bank. The expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank must stop. These settlements are illegal under international law,” the foreign ministry said in a post on X.

Crisis-hit Cuba opens pharmacies, gas stations to private firms

Cuba yesterday moved to open several key crisis-ravaged sectors of its state-run economy to private firms, as the communist government tries to ease acute shortages resulting from a US energy blockade.

In a lengthy decree, the authorities lifted restrictions on a swath of sectors including petrol distribution, electricity generation, rubbish collection and the manufacture and sale of medicines. For months, daily life in Cuba has been upended by rolling blackouts, water cuts and shortages of necessities like food and medicine. The reforms — decreed on July 22 but detailed Wednesday by state media — seemed to target sectors linked to the most affected parts of daily life.

With piles of rubbish lining the streets of Old Havana, private firms will be able to operate waste collection and recycling services. And with few buses or cars on the roads due to petrol shortages, private firms will also be able to import and construct electric vehicles. Oil and mining operations will also be liberalised. Details of reforms emerged as Cuba’s National Assembly met, with delegates denouncing imperialism and chanting “socialism or death!”

Despite the rhetoric, the decree represents a loosening of decades-old communist doctrine as the party tries to withstand its biggest crisis since the death of longtime leader Fidel Castro and the collapse of the Soviet Union. (AFP)

US issues fresh Iran-related sanctions

Reuters
Washington

The US yesterday issued another round of Iran-related sanctions, taking aim at Iran’s efforts to “monetise the Strait of Hormuz” with designations of 10 entities and eight more tankers, the US Treasury Department said.

Six of the entities targeted for sanctions were based in China, it said. The sanctions followed a vow by US President Donald Trump earlier yesterday to hit Iran hard, after the US military said it had intercepted multiple ballistic missiles launched by Iran toward American forces in the Middle East. The US and Saudi Arabia jointly struck Iran-backed groups in Iraq yesterday.

Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control designated two firms,

the Persian Gulf Marine Insurance Co and HormuzSafe Marine Services Authority, which it said were integral to an Iranian scheme to extract digital assets and other revenue from ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz through various insurance policies.

“With its economy in freefall and inflation in the triple digits, the regime is desperate for cash,” said Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent.

“The US will not allow Iran to hold global commerce hostage or use international shipping to finance the IRGC’s terrorism, aggression, and repression,” Bessent said, referring to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

The new sanctions are part of a broader push by the Trump administration to leverage both economic tools and military strikes to intensify pressure on Iran and end a deeply unpopular war that has

dragged Trump’s approval ratings lower.

“The Iran war demonstrates that this administration will use US economic and military power in concert,” said Jess Hoversen, a former OFAC official who is now chief economist at Column, a digital platform bank.

OFAC has moved quickly to designate maritime logistics, currency exchange infrastructure, and procurement networks, even as the US military has increased its strikes, she said.

“Treasury is moving at an operational tempo, and combining military strikes with targeted sanctions could be a template for future conflicts,” Hoversen said.

Since the start of 2026, OFAC has sanctioned over 100 vessels linked to Iran’s shadow fleet, which has been used to keep oil revenue flowing despite international sanctions.

US mulls scuppering French ambassador pick over human rights spat

Reuters
Paris/Washington

The US is considering delaying, or even blocking, President Emmanuel Macron’s choice for France’s next ambassador to Washington following public French criticism of the country’s human rights record, according to four sources.

While the sources said no decision has yet been taken, two said France’s criticism — delivered in a social media post by France’s mission to the UN in Geneva — had sparked genuine anger among some senior officials in President Donald Trump’s administration. Two other sources said officials were hoping to de-escalate tensions with France. “The US is very disappointed in the irresponsible and disrespectful rhetoric from the French,” a State Department official said. “We are responding

appropriately to their comments.”

A US move to delay or reject Macron’s nominee would be highly unusual and could widen the fissure between the allies, who have recently clashed over tariffs and the Iran war.

Macron has filed the relevant paperwork for Aurélien Lechevallier, a former Elysee aide who is currently Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot’s chief of staff, to become France’s next ambassador to Washington. France had hoped to have him installed by September, one of the sources said.

But the process has run into difficulties since a post on X by France’s mission to the UN in Geneva. In the post on Saturday, the mission criticised Washington for joining Russia, North Korea and seven other countries in voting against a proposal to extend the mandate of Volker Turk, the UN human rights chief, for another four years.

Turk is an outspoken critic of Israel’s conduct in Gaza who has also called for investigations into deaths in US immigration custody.

“The US used to be a beacon of human rights. Not anymore,” the French mission wrote. “The world no longer listens to it.”

One of the sources said the post had been reviewed and approved through official channels, dismissing suggestions that it was the work of a junior staffer acting independently.

Tensions flared further on Monday when the US delegation walked out as France addressed a UN Security Council meeting on Ukraine, accusing its ally of “disingenuous grandstanding.” France’s support for the renewal of Turk’s mandate “does not preclude close dialogue with the US,” a French diplomatic official said.

“Differences of opinion regarding a vote do not call into question the quality of our relationship or

our ability to work together,” the official added.

France has been a longstanding US ally, but relations have soured during Trump’s second term. While Trump and Macron speak regularly, that hasn’t stopped the US president from targeting France with tariffs, accusing European governments of suppressing right-wing voices, and threatening Nato allies over defence spending and Greenland.

Even before the latest spat, Washington had been riled by Barrot’s public comments about the US government, one of the sources said.

Earlier this month, Barrot posted on X about a State Department programme that offered funding of up to \$3mn to groups promoting “civilizational self-confidence” in Europe.

The funding was offered by the State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and La-

bor (DRL), whose officials offered to support far-right leader Marine Le Pen last year during her embezzlement trial.

“France and the Europeans will not tolerate any attempt at foreign interference in their electoral processes, regardless of where it comes from,” Barrot wrote.

French officials have also been irked by US Ambassador to Paris Charles Kushner, who is emblematic of a brash new breed of America-first diplomats causing consternation across Europe. Kushner, whose son Jared is married to Trump’s daughter Ivanka, has twice failed to appear to summons in Paris following diplomatic incidents.

The process of installing an ambassador in Washington is carefully prescribed. Before a foreign government can appoint its envoy, it must first secure the confidential consent of the US government. Washington rarely slow-

walks or rejects nominees publicly, diplomatic sources said, with concerns typically resolved privately before a formal decision is made.

Critics allege that a wave of recent Macron nominations and appointments to key jobs is part of an effort to install loyalists who can ensure his legacy and hedge against a potential victory by the far-right in next year’s election.

Macron, whose approval ratings remain low, cannot run again in 2027.

In recent months, he has appointed his former chief of staff, Emmanuel Moulin, as head of France’s central bank, while Richard Ferrand was chosen to lead the Constitutional Council and Amélie de Montchalin to head the Cour des Comptes, which certifies the public accounts. All are key Macron allies.

The Elysee had no immediate comment on that criticism.

Search for survivors after powerful Japan quake kills 13

AFP
Kumamoto

Rescuers battled through the tangled wreckage of a Japanese shopping mall yesterday searching for any trapped survivors after a big earthquake killed at least 13 people.

A massive explosion ripped through the mall around 50 minutes after the 7.1-magnitude tremor on Tuesday in the south-western Kumamoto region, where in 2016 twin quakes killed nearly 300 people.

The tremor on the island of Kyushu caused widespread damage, flattening homes, triggering fires and leaving left tens of thousands of residents without power and water.

Akio Yoshida, the president of mall operator Aeon, said three people died at the facility in the town of Kashima, with one more fatality feared and three others missing.

“The cause is still being investigated, but it’s likely that gas caused it,” fellow Aeon executive Keiji Ohno told a news conference where he and others bowed in apology.

Five people were also confirmed killed and four others were unaccounted for at the Nippon Paper Industries factory in Yatsushiro city, where part of a red-and-white smokestack collapsed, a government official told AFP.

“Extensive damage has been confirmed, including casualties, collapsed buildings, fires and



An aerial view shows rescue workers at Nippon Paper Industries factory after an earthquake struck Japan’s southern Kumamoto prefecture, in Yatsushiro City, Kumamoto Prefecture, yesterday. (Reuters)

damage to roads,” Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said in Tokyo as she announced 13 fatalities, describing a “race against time” to help those affected.

Government spokesman Minoru Kihara said that as of early yesterday more than 9,000 people had sought refuge in 506 shelters in three regions of Kyushu island.

Around 130 police, 450 firefighters and 170 military personnel were involved in the rescue operation at the Aeon Mall Kumamoto, he said.

Some stunned locals said the quake was the biggest they had felt

in their lifetimes, measuring at the top of Japan’s seven-level shindo scale of shakiness.

“It was the strongest quake I ever experienced,” Kanzo Matsumoto, 73, the operator of a luxury onsen hot spring inn in Yatsushiro, told AFP.

“I’m not sure if (the region) will be able to recover from the damage.”

One user on X who said that they worked inside the mall recounted the moments after the quake hit.

The user with the handle Palan said staff had guided customers

outside and then some employees went back to get their belongings.

“Since there didn’t seem to be any smoke inside the premises from what we could see, we felt reassured,” they said. “Then an explosion occurred.”

Footage from inside the mall showed rescue workers in orange overalls and white helmets picking their way through a mass of twisted steel, dangling cables and chunks of ceiling.

Initial reports had said that as many as 20 to 30 people were trapped inside.

Indonesians file complaint against Netanyahu for Gaza flotilla arrest ‘abuses’

AFP
Jakarta

Nine Indonesians among global activists detained while trying to take aid to Gaza in May filed a complaint against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday alleging crimes against humanity, their lawyer told AFP.

The men were part of the Global Sumud Flotilla intercepted by Israel and detained along with more than 400 other activists, some for days.

The group asked Indonesia’s Attorney General yesterday to

investigate Israel for offences including piracy at sea and crimes against humanity, lawyer Kafin Muhammad said.

“We are asking the Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia to conduct an investigation into crimes allegedly committed by Zionist Israel,” he told AFP.

Indonesia’s criminal code gives the country’s courts “universal jurisdiction” over cases that involve crimes committed beyond the country’s borders, he said.

The complaint mentioned Netanyahu by name as Israel’s commander-in-chief, Kafin said.

It includes testimony from the volunteers about abuses they

claim to have suffered during their detention by Israeli authorities, he said.

A spokesman for the Attorney General’s office did not reply to an AFP request for comment.

Israel’s treatment of the flotilla activists sparked an international outcry after an Israeli minister posted a video of the volunteers, who were made to kneel with their hands tied behind their backs.

Countries including France, Italy and Australia have opened judicial investigations.

Israel controls all entry points into Gaza, under blockade since 2007.



People walk up a hill past the Old Royal Naval College (behind centre) and the skyline of Canary Wharf (behind), as the dried out and yellow grass in Greenwich Park is pictured in south-east London yesterday. (AFP)

Drought declared across half of England after hot, dry weather

Reuters
London

Half of England has been declared in drought after exceptionally low rainfall and prolonged high temperatures depleted rivers and reservoirs, Britain’s Environment Agency said yesterday.

July has seen just 7% of its long-term average rainfall so far, falling to 1% in parts of southern England. Large areas of central, eastern and southern England are experiencing a rapidly developing “flash drought”.

Seven regions – London, East Anglia, the Thames Valley, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, Devon and Cornwall, the West Midlands, and Wessex, are now officially in drought.

Some 78% of England’s rivers are below normal levels and reservoir storage has fallen to 75.3% of capacity. Seven water companies have introduced water-use restrictions affecting about 23mn customers.

The Environment Agency said this was England’s third drought in five years, following those in 2022 and 2025.

The Met Office on Wednesday confirmed a new UK and England June temperature record of 38 degrees Celsius (100.4°Fahrenheit).

The figure exceeded the previously reported provisional reading of 37.7C and is now the highest June temperature recorded in the United Kingdom.

The Met Office also confirmed June temperature records for Wales and Northern Ireland, while rejecting some provisional records from stations that did not meet required standards.

Ukrainian drones strike across Russia

Reuters
Kyiv/Moscow

Ukrainian drones hit oil refineries and logistics facilities in the Russian cities of Perm, Ryazan and Taganrog, as well as the Crimean peninsula overnight, with the country’s top online retailer Wildberries evacuating its Ryazan warehouse.

While Ukraine’s air defences are running low on interceptors like Patriot missiles, leaving it more exposed to Russian strikes, its own deep-strike drone production has outpaced Russia’s, enabling it to hit Russian oil refineries and infrastructure and cause fuel shortages across its 11 time zones.

Drone strikes have damaged at least seven Wildberries warehouses in the past few days, destroying around 10% of the company’s storage capacity and inflicting losses on tens of thousands of small businesses that sell goods and services via the platform, according to the company and local authorities.

In a statement, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said his forces had struck oil refineries in Perm and Ryazan, a logistics centre in Ryazan, an export terminal and military plant in the Rostov region, as well as a naval base in Crimea.

In Ryazan, south of Moscow and around 500km (310 miles) from Ukrainian-held territory, Governor Pavel Malkov said industrial sites had caught fire and six people

were seeking medical help.

Wildberries said its Ryazan site had been evacuated and had stopped accepting deliveries of goods. Video footage on social media, verified by Reuters, showed a large blaze at Wildberries’ Ryazan facility.

Russian business daily *Kommer-sant* reported on Wednesday that Wildberries is seeking 100,000 square metres of storage space in neighbouring Kazakhstan to protect its goods from Ukrainian strikes.

In the Urals city of Perm, around 1,600km from Ukrainian-held territory, Governor Dmitry Makhomin said Ukrainian drones had hit an industrial facility but caused no casualties. He did not name the facility.

Spanish wildfire evacuees go home as France hit by new heat alert

AFP
Aldea del Fresno, Spain

Thousands of Spaniards evacuated from huge wildfires returned home yesterday while in France firefighters braced for worsening conditions in their own battle with raging flames.

The neighbouring countries have been gripped by some of the worst forest fires in living memory over the past week, burning vast areas and forcing the evacuation of tens of thousands of people.

Spain lifted remaining evacuation orders for the Avila province yesterday, a day after doing so for multiple municipalities west of Madrid.

“Twenty-four thousand evacuated individuals have been able to return to their homes, and another 20,000 have been released from confinement in the Community of Madrid,” central government delegate Francisco Martin Aguirre said on X late Tuesday.

Some returned to untouched homes, others found only devastation.

“I’m happy – I couldn’t wait to come home and have my coffee and breakfast,” said Maria Jesus Perez Blanca, in her sev-



Trees burn during wildfires in Artana, Spain, yesterday. (Reuters)

enties, who was one of about a dozen returnees at the cafes of Aldea del Fresno, west of Madrid yesterday morning.

But 12 kilometres (eight miles) away in Pelayos de la Presa, David Rodriguez was

knocking down the scorched remains of his home.

“It’s a disaster. Just look at it... All my memories, everything I had was here. My dad built it 40 years ago and everything

has been lost.” Authorities said yesterday that better overnight weather conditions had helped crews reduce the intensity of the fires and stabilise their perimeter.

Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said that firefighters aimed to stabilise and extinguish all the flames if possible yesterday.

And Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said yesterday that efforts to extinguish a major wildfire near Madrid were progressing “favourably”.

In France, the Gironde prefecture reported a second calm night and said the massive fire in the region west of Bordeaux was stable.

Nevertheless, conditions were set to worsen as the fourth heatwave of an already intense summer arrived.

“We fear today,” said Jeremy Presi, a local business owner volunteering to help firefighters at a water refilling station.

“The tourists can get in their cars and get out of here. Here, it’s our home,” he added, as fire trucks headed past towards the flames.

The Gironde and neighbouring Landes departments are under an orange-level warning, with temperatures of 41C forecast.

Firefighters fear strengthening winds could fan embers and reignite the blaze.

Authorities predicted winds gusting up to 45 kilometres (28 miles) per hour and falling humidity levels.

Yesterday “will be an important day that we will be watching very closely,” said Gironde fire chief Lieutenant Colonel Eric Pitault.

Despite those anxieties, authorities said 57,000 residents of three towns near Bordeaux, who were evacuated on Friday and Saturday, were to be allowed home.

The regional fire service said it was close to completing 127 kilometres (79 miles) of firebreaks, backed by a groundswell of public volunteering.

“We’re seeing this outpouring of solidarity – you can see it at the water points, you can see it at our command posts, where we have more to eat and drink than we could possibly need,” said firefighting Captain Wilfried Schneider, with audible emotion.

In Greece, firefighters battled a blaze on the Aegean island of Paros, where strong winds were fanning the flames. Two aircraft and five helicopters were deployed alongside about 100 firefighters to contain the fire, the Greek fire service said.

country, of the future generation of this country, and I feel that all political parties must respect this expression,” he said in a speech in the house.

Senior minister Jitendra Singh on Tuesday told parliament that the amendments, which the cabinet greenlighted last week, reflect a “deep commitment to safeguard the welfare of the students and the youth of this country”.

Following the vote, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh hailed “a significant step forward towards further strengthening the integrity of India’s examination system”.

“The Bill provides for stricter punishments, Special Fast Track Courts, time-bound investigations, Special Public Prosecutors and an expedited appellate mechanism to ensure that those involved in paper leaks and organised examination fraud are swiftly brought to justice,” Singh said on X.

Despite rapid economic growth in the world’s most populous country, millions of young people face a shortage of well-paid jobs and fierce competition for careers.

The intense pressure to succeed has fuelled a vast network of coaching centres and created opportunities for criminal groups to profit by selling leaked exam questions.

Despite repeated government crackdowns, such leaks have remained a recurring problem in both national and state-level examinations.



A gene, a needle and a boy’s first thought: Qatar’s rare moment

Qatar has become the third country in the world to administer Itvisma, a one-time gene replacement therapy for spinal muscular atrophy — and the sentence that matters most is not the one about rankings. It is this: a 13-year-old boy named Khalid, who has lived with a relentless neuromuscular disease since early childhood, received his treatment in Doha, in a single injection, in a hospital a short drive from his school.

Spinal muscular atrophy is caused by a missing or non-functioning survival motor neuron 1 gene. Without it, the body cannot make enough of the protein motor neurons need to survive, and those neurons die. Muscles weaken. Breathing weakens. For decades the vocabulary around the condition was the vocabulary of management: bracing, ventilation, physiotherapy, the careful husbanding of whatever strength remained.

Itvisma does something categorically different.

It delivers a working copy of the gene, addressing the cause rather than the consequences. As Prof Fawfeg Ben Omran, Division Chief of Genetics and Genomic Medicine at Sidra Medicine, put it, the field has moved beyond managing symptoms and towards the disease's genetic source. That is not incremental progress. It is a change of register.

The procedure itself was a study in institutional patience. Months of preparation across a dozen specialties — genetics, neurology, pharmacy, anaesthesiology, physiotherapy, orthopaedic spine services — preceded a single pass of a needle into the spinal canal. It was performed in interventional radiology so the team could work under real-time imaging, a decisive advantage in a patient with severe scoliosis, where the anatomy offers no easy path. Dr Walid Mubarak, senior attending physician in interventional radiology, described positioning the needle precisely while keeping the patient safe

throughout. Precision of that order is not luck. It is the product of a system built deliberately, over years.

What gives the milestone its weight, though, is the geography of it. Khalid's family spent years travelling abroad in search of options — the exhausting, expensive itinerary familiar to every family living with a rare disease in a small country. His mother called seeing him treated here a dream come true. Prof Ibrahim Janahi, Sidra Medicine's chief medical officer, framed the priority plainly: eligible patients should reach advanced therapies closer to home, through a co-ordinated pathway that supports them before, during and long after treatment. That last clause deserves emphasis. Gene therapy is a single injection. Care is a lifetime.

Khalid will remain under scheduled follow-up covering laboratory monitoring, motor function, respiratory health and rehabilitation. No-one at Sidra is claiming a cure, and the honest position

is that this medicine is young and the evidence still accumulating. Rare disease care in Qatar will be judged not by one case but by whether the pathway built for Khalid can be opened, reliably and affordably, for the next child, and the one after that.

Still, it is worth pausing on what has been achieved. A hospital that did not exist a generation ago, working inside a research and health ecosystem that did not exist a generation ago either, has delivered one of the most advanced therapies medicine currently possesses — and delivered it to a child whose family no longer had to leave home to receive it.

Khalid is a high-performing student at Qatar Academy Sidra. He intends to study medicine. Asked what he wanted to do first, he did not talk about walking, or about the future at all. He said he wanted to take his mother to Makkah and Medina. Whatever the science ultimately delivers, that answer is the measure of what has already been given back.

Body and mind: yoga lesson in Iraq



Iraqi women take part in a yoga session at a park in Arbil (Erbil), the capital of Iraq's autonomous northern Kurdish region, yesterday. (AFP)



Japan PM’s political doom loop worsens her fight with markets

By Leika Kihara and Tamiyuki Kihara
Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is fighting a losing battle in the polls, making a retreat from promised tax cuts more difficult and denying her officials the political backup they need to talk down yen and bond market bears. Takaichi's approval rating slumped in July to the lowest since she took office last year as rising inflation, blamed in part on high import costs from a weak yen, hit her standing with voters.

The prime minister's strong advocacy of fiscal stimulus and harsh criticism of higher interest rates have heightened investor concerns about worsening public finances in Japan, sending bond yields higher.

Those bond market anxieties have also blunted official efforts to talk down speculative bets against the yen, government sources said.

"Markets are gaining control over fiscal management, which hasn't happened in Japan for decades," one of them said, warning about the danger of being at the mercy of bond vigilantes.

Since becoming prime minister last year, Takaichi has sought to pursue a pro-growth agenda while also tempering investor concerns about fiscal discipline and central bank independence.

Those competing demands have created a communication challenge that has at times led to unwanted market volatility, which in turn makes policy implementation more difficult.

For example, her spending plans, aimed in part at easing rising household living costs, lifted bond yields to three-decade highs in July on concern over Japan's worsening finances. Mindful of such market pressures, Takaichi told a news briefing on Monday the administration would seek to gain market trust in Japan's finances through transparent communication.

"I would say communication



Japan's Prime Minister Takaichi responds to reporters' questions about the earthquake in Kumamoto Prefecture, in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday. (Reuters)

with markets would become more important," she said when asked what she could have done better. But when pressed about her administration's sliding approval ratings, Takaichi stressed her determination to break Japan's "excessive fiscal tightening" with big investment, a sign she had no plans to back down on expansionist policy.

"The sliding approval ratings would only solidify the premier's determination to cut tax and boost investment," another source said. "Pursuing her policies would jolt markets, while not doing so would hit her popularity. It's a dilemma." Those challenges could worsen ahead of a host of events that could ignite a renewed spike in yields. Despite reservations voiced even within her ruling party, Takaichi is set to proceed with a plan to cut by two years an 8% levy on food, domestic media reported. While the move would come as little surprise, a lack of funding clarity could further upset bond markets, analysts say.

The government also plans to avoid setting caps on spending requests for key growth areas in an overhaul of budget drafting

that could boost expenditure and debt issuance next fiscal year.

"Takaichi tried to explain how her administration was mindful of the need for fiscal discipline. But her policies themselves won't change much, so there's not much hope in bond markets that things could change," said Atsushi Takeda, chief economist at Itochu Research Institute.

"JGB yields have stabilised somewhat but that's because of falling oil prices. The premium markets are charging for Japan's fiscal situation hasn't changed," he said.

While the government focuses on rising yields, Takaichi's dovish fiscal and monetary approach has also caused headaches in the currency market with the yen sliding to a four-decade low.

Although Finance Minister Satsuki Katayama's repeated threats of "decisive" action have kept markets on edge, they have failed to give a sustained boost to the sagging currency. Top currency diplomat Atsushi Mimura, who decides how and when to intervene, has stayed quiet since the record \$72bn intervention conducted between

late April and early May that did little to arrest the yen's downtrend.

The communication strategy has shifted away from yen jawboning to giving the bond market more of the clarity it needs. Katayama said on Tuesday the government has no plan to set a ceiling for annual debt issuance, but would keep the amount "within a range investors would view as reasonable."

Takashi Fujiwara, chief fund manager at Resona Asset Management's fixed income investment division, said Katayama was positive for the JGB market as she could communicate with the market logically.

"The government's communication on the JGBs is increasing, and that is because every time the government announces something new, there is a 'shock' in the market, and that subsequently weakens the yen," Fujiwara said.

Takaichi and Katayama are now pitching the administration's expansionary fiscal policy as boosting Japan's growth potential, thereby helping enhance the appeal of the yen and JGBs. For now, markets remain unconvinced with yields on track for further rises amid looming prospects of bigger debt issuance that would strain Japan's already worsening finances.

And the yen could see more volatility this week when the US Federal Reserve and Bank of Japan hold policy meetings. While both are seen keeping rates steady, hawkish hints from the Fed could accelerate yen falls versus the dollar.

"The administration faces two big headwinds: slumping approval ratings, and declines in yen and JGBs caused by eroding market trust in its fiscal policy. I don't think Takaichi has succeeded in fixing either of them," said former BOJ board member Takahide Kiuchi.

"To recover market trust, the administration needs to show with specific facts and figures its focus on fiscal discipline." — Reuters

Germany’s sick-note crackdown may be treating symptoms, not the disease

By Francesco Canepa and Maria Martinez
Frankfurt

Germany's plans to tighten sick-note rules may be mistaking the symptoms of rising absenteeism for the underlying illness, researchers say, pointing to mental health strains and deteriorating working conditions in sectors such as healthcare and education.

Workers in Germany took an average of about 22 days of sick leave in 2024, among the highest levels internationally. That figure, from the association of company health insurers BKK, jumped sharply in 2022 after the introduction of electronic sick-note reporting, which improved the recording of short-term absences. Under plans agreed by Chancellor Friedrich Merz's coalition, telephone sick notes would be scrapped and employers could require medical certificates from the first day of absence, part of a broader push to raise productivity in an economy grappling with an ageing population and years of weak growth. But researchers studying sickness, mental health and labour markets increasingly point to deeper problems in professions where absenteeism is high, such as nursing, care work and teaching. They cite chronic understaffing, low pay, weak career prospects and high emotional demands as risk factors for poor mental health in those professions.

In 2024, the latest year for which sectoral data is available, women in healthcare and social work took on average 27 sick days and teachers took 24, compared with 18 in finance and 16 in communication, BKK data shows. "It doesn't need to be a full-blown depression," said Johannes Siegrist, an emeritus professor at the University of Duesseldorf. "It can also be a state of exhaustion or burnout as a result of problematic working conditions."

Mental disorders account for only 4.8% of sickness cases, but when they occur they lead to 28 days of absence on average, according to data from AOK, Germany's largest health insurance provider. The number of sickness leave days taken by AOK members due to mental health issues has risen by 47% since 2014, making it the second-biggest cause of absence after respiratory diseases. Healthcare, education and social services tend to have the highest proportion of mental health-related diagnoses.

"They have jobs with high responsibility, they need to combine task performance and social interaction and they have to deal with emotional problems, but also with physical stressors, including violence," Siegrist said. "And often these are low-paid people with a rather low socioeconomic status."

The combination of low pay, social status or security with high demands is what scholars describe as an effort-reward imbalance. A large body of international occupational health research has linked this imbalance to mental health issues and long-term absence. It also increases the risk of coronary heart disease.

Recent evidence from Germany's schools illustrates the problem. The 2024 German School Barometer found that nearly half of teachers reported psychological or physical violence among pupils at their school, while more than one-third felt emotionally exhausted several times a week.

Nursing tells a similar story. Despite acute staff shortages, recent German studies have found surprisingly limited wage increases, particularly in hospitals and public institutions.

The health ministry declined to comment when asked about absenteeism rates being highest in sectors with the biggest mental health and emotional pressures. (Reuters)

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AlRayan Bank launches Individual Development Plan programme to empower Qatari talent



The Individual Development Plan (IDP) programme was introduced during a dedicated Town Hall for Qatari colleagues, convened by the bank's Human Resources Division.

AlRayan Bank has launched its Individual Development Plan (IDP) programme, reaffirming its commitment to investing in the growth and long-term development of its Qatari employees. The programme was introduced during a dedicated Town Hall for Qatari colleagues, convened by the bank's Human Resources Division.

The Individual Development Plan provides Qatari employees with a structured roadmap that aligns their current skills, career aspirations and development needs through tailored learning opportunities, practical experiences and ongoing support.

Designed as a development tool rather than a performance appraisal mechanism, the programme aims to help employees build the capabilities needed for future career progression while further enhancing the Bank's leadership pipeline.

Fahad bin Abdulla al-Khalifa, Group CEO at AlRayan Bank, said: "At AlRayan Bank, we believe our people are our greatest strength. The Individual Development Plan reflects our long-term commitment to developing Qatari talent by providing every employee with a clear pathway to grow, acquire new capabilities and realise their full

potential. Investing in our people is an investment in the future of our Bank and in Qatar's national development."

Fouzia al-Ansari, general manager – Human Resources at AlRayan Bank, added: "The Individual Development Plan is designed to provide every participant with a personalised development journey that reflects their ambitions and supports their professional growth."

"Working closely with managers and our Talent Management team, we are creating meaningful development opportunities that help our colleagues continue learning, advancing and contributing to the Bank's long-term success."

As part of the programme, employees will work with their line managers and the Talent Management team to review and refine their development goals, align learning priorities with business needs and career aspirations, and regularly update their plans through structured review cycles.

The initiative builds on AlRayan Bank's broader commitment to advancing national talent through programmes and partnerships that support Qatar's human capital agenda and contribute to building the next generation of banking leaders.

QOC, Dreama promote orphan empowerment through 'Bader' initiative

Reinforcing its commitment to social responsibility and sustainable community development, the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC), represented by its Public Relations Department, joined forces with the Orphan Care Centre (Dreama) to organise an awareness seminar introducing the 'Bader' initiative at Lusail Hall, QOC headquarters.

The seminar showcased the initiative as an innovative community platform that connects experienced professionals and skilled volunteers with orphaned children, creating meaningful opportunities for education, mentoring, training, and personal development while promoting their full integration into society.

Khadija al-Kubaisi, International Relations specialist at Dreama, presented the initiative's vision and objectives, describing "Bader" as one of Dreama's pioneering programmes designed to mobilise community expertise in empowering orphaned children and nurturing their personal and professional growth.

She highlighted the initiative's strong alignment with Qatar National Vision 2030, emphasising its contribution to sustainable human development, social cohesion, volunteerism, and social responsibility. Through educational support, knowledge-sharing, and professional mentoring, the initiative equips beneficiaries with



the skills and confidence needed to become active and productive members of society.

Al-Kubaisi also explained that the initiative supports environmental sustainability through digital transformation while contributing to the Third National Development Strategy by strengthening community engagement and empowering beneficiary groups to participate in sustainable development.

Expressing her appreciation to QOC, she lauded the organisation's support in raising awareness of the initiative and encouraging wider public participation in "Bader" to maximise its positive and lasting impact.

Established in 2002 under the Qatar Social Work Foundation, Dreama continues to provide comprehensive care for orphaned children, ensuring family stability, social integration, and sustainable

development in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

The seminar reflects QOC's continued efforts to strengthen partnerships that create meaningful social impact and reinforce the values of solidarity, inclusion, and community engagement.

Mohammed Ahmed al-Romaihi, event co-ordinator at the QOC Public Relations Department, said the seminar reflects the Committee's strategy of expanding community partnerships and enhancing the role of sport in supporting sustainable social initiatives.

He added that the "Bader" Initiative serves as an outstanding example of organised volunteerism, bringing together expertise and community engagement to empower orphaned children while reaffirming QOC's commitment to building a stronger, more inclusive, and sustainable society.



Katara concludes 2026 summer camps with 190 children taking part

Katara Cultural Village has concluded its 2026 summer camps after weeks of cultural, artistic and scientific activities involving nearly 190 children from different age groups.

Held from July 5-29, the programme featured 11 specialised camps across Katara facilities, offering hands-on activities designed to develop children's creative, intellectual and practical skills under the guidance of spe-

cialists in culture, arts, science, media and heritage.

The camps covered heritage and traditional crafts, theatre, literature, photography, ceramics, visual arts, science, astronomy, religious studies and other creative programmes, allowing participants to explore their talents through interactive learning and teamwork.

Children took part in activities focused on Arabic language skills, creative writing, public speak-

ing, acting, art, photography and scientific exploration, with organisers highlighting strong engagement and enthusiasm among participants.

Katara said the summer camps reflect its commitment to nurturing young talents, strengthening children's connection with culture and heritage, and providing an educational environment that combines knowledge, creativity and entertainment. (QNA)

Katara launches fourth Teen Art Awards 2026

Katara Cultural Village has launched the fourth edition of the Teen Art Awards 2026 in partnership with Art Connects Foundation and the British Council.

Submissions will be accepted from August 1-November 1, with winners to be honoured at a ceremony on December 3 at Katara Drama Theater. The programme includes an international open call, an educational programme, a special project for teenagers with disabilities, a discussion session and digital showcases.

Katara General Manager Prof Dr Khalid al-Sulaiti said the award reflects Katara's vision of culture as a responsibility and aims to provide young generations with a global platform to express their creativity. This year's theme, "Be-



longing", invites participants to explore identity, memory, culture and society through art while promoting diversity and dialogue.

British Council Qatar Director Dr Waseem Qutub said the initiative supports young people's creativity and provides a platform for emerging artists, educators and cultural institutions to engage in creative learning and cultural exchange.

Art Connects Foundation President and Teen Art Awards founder

Daria Kalinina said the award is based on the belief that creativity begins early and that young artists need opportunities to showcase their work internationally. More than 60 countries participated in the previous edition.

The international contemporary art prize is open free of charge to young artists aged 13-17 worldwide, aiming to support emerging talent and encourage cultural dialogue through art. (QNA)

Seminar guides Qatar's date farmers on Zakat calculation

Farmers participating in Qatar's Local Date Festival received practical guidance on fulfilling their Zakat obligations during a specialised seminar on Wednesday that brought together religious scholars, government officials, and farm owners to explain the Islamic rulings and calculation methods for Zakat on date palms.

Titled "Zakat on Date Palms: Shariah Rulings and Calculation Mechanisms," the seminar was organised by the Agricultural Affairs Department at the Ministry of Municipality, in co-operation with the Zakat Affairs Department of the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs.

The event was held at the Agriculture and Food Security Sector Tower and attended by Yousuf Khalid al-Khelaifi, director of the Agricultural Affairs Department, officials from both ministries, and Qatari farm owners.

The seminar sought to strengthen insti-



tutional co-operation and raise farmers' awareness of the Islamic rulings governing Zakat on date palms by providing practical and scholarly guidance to help them meet their religious obligations. Organisers said the initiative also supports Qatar National Vision 2030 by promoting Islamic values, social responsibility, and sustainable community development.

Dr Ali Shafi al-Hajri, assistant director

of the Zakat Affairs Department for Public Services, outlined the jurisprudential foundations of Zakat on agricultural produce, explaining the conditions for eligibility, nisab (minimum threshold), timing of payment, and the broader social and economic role of Zakat in promoting solidarity in society. He stressed the department's commitment to expanding public awareness and providing farmers with the

guidance needed to calculate and pay Zakat accurately.

Sheikh Dr Farid Amin al-Hindawi, Shariah expert at the Zakat Affairs Department, focused on the practical aspects of calculating Zakat on date palms. He demonstrated calculation methods using real-life examples based on crop type and production volume, while highlighting common errors made during assessment and explaining how farmers can avoid them in accordance with Islamic rulings.

The seminar concluded with an interactive discussion during which farm owners raised questions on both the religious and practical aspects of Zakat calculation. The speakers responded to participants' inquiries, highlighting the event's objective of improving farmers' understanding of Zakat requirements while strengthening co-operation among government entities to support the agricultural sector and promote Zakat as a pillar of social solidarity.

Qatar Toy Festival 2026 extended until August 4

Qatar Toy Festival 2026, organised by Qatar Calendar in collaboration with Spacetoon Group, has been extended until August 4, giving families more time to enjoy the festival.

Taking place at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Center (DECC), the festival continues to offer an immersive experience across its Studios, Inflatables, Young Adult, Kids, and Preschool zones, alongside daily entertainment on the main stage.

The Qatar Toy Festival forms part of Visit Qatar's ongoing efforts to deliver a dynamic, year-round calendar of experiences for residents and visitors alike, while reinforcing Qatar's position as a leading destination for family-focused entertainment and large-scale events. (QNA)

QNL closes out summer season with entrepreneurship and community events

Qatar National Library (QNL) invites entrepreneurs, librarians, artists, families, and lifelong learners in August to a full month of programmes spanning business mentorship, professional development, creative community meet-ups, and family connection.

QNL's Seventh Summer Camp continues starting on August 2 and runs throughout the month, offering children and teenagers ongoing opportunities for learning, creativity, and engagement. Specialised tracks include entertaining activities for toddlers, STEM programmes combining hands-on science and math for children and teenagers as well as art-making sessions.

Shifting focus to entrepreneurship on August 15, QNL hosts "Startup 101: Turning Ideas into Startups with QDB." This practical

session, presented in partnership with Qatar Development Bank, is designed for anyone with a business idea who is unsure of how to get started. The session covers the entrepreneurial mindset, rapid market-validation techniques, and realistic early-stage funding options, leaving participants with clear next steps for testing their concept, understanding customer needs, and positioning their venture for sustainable growth.

On August 16, QNL, in its capacity as the Ifla Mena Regional Office, continues its "Librarians for Libraries" programme aimed at developing librarianship skills across the region with a session on innovation in libraries and information services. The session explores how librarians can transform traditional services into innovative ones, equipping participants to discover modern



tools for attracting users, adapt artificial intelligence capabilities for library services.

QNL's creative community returns on August 18 with "Art Majlis," a gathering for artists held on the third Tuesday of every month. Participants are invited to bring their own tools and projects, work alongside fellow artists, and exchange ideas and inspiration in a shared creative space.

Later that week, "Chess for All"

resumes on August 20 as a weekly, informal gathering open to players of every age and skill level. Chess sets are provided, and newcomers are welcome to learn the basics alongside longtime players in an enjoyable environment for learning strategy, concentration, and problem-solving.

Family life and community take centre stage on August 25 when QNL hosts three separate gatherings. As part of the Ready for

School Initiative, the workshop "You Are the First Teacher" equips parents, caregivers, and teachers of children aged 3 to 6 for the transition into kindergarten or school.

That same evening, "Together on the Journey" offers parents and caregivers of people with disabilities a monthly meet-up, held on the last Tuesday of every month, to share experiences, exchange resources, and build connections in a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Rounding out the day's events, "Cultural Mosaic: Let's Talk Cultures" invites participants from diverse backgrounds to bring cultural objects and share traditions, customs, and personal experiences in a guided conversation about how culture shapes identity and daily life.

Returning to family programmes on August 27, QNL,

in collaboration with the Family Consulting Center presents "A Story from a Loved One: Family Cohesion and Storytelling Heritage." This event explores the role family stories play in strengthening relationships and passing values and heritage from one generation to the next. A panel of specialists will discuss the impact of storytelling on family life, complemented by an interactive program for children and parents.

On August 29, there will be a Book Chat workshop featuring author Ruby Kapoor and her book Let's Talk About Life, a handbook and journal for reflection and positive thinking. Through conversation and guided journaling activities, participants will explore personal growth, mindfulness, and gratitude, leaving with practical tools for a more intentional and meaningful life.



NU-Q to bring London-based artist collective to Qatar

internationally acclaimed Marshmallow Laser Feast set for debut in Doha



PICTURES: Eugene Hyland

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Northwestern University in Qatar (NU-Q) will be showcasing an exhibition by internationally acclaimed London-based artist collective Marshmallow Laser Feast (MLF) for the first time in Qatar and the wider region.

The Media Majlis Museum at NU-Q, in partnership with ACMI, Australia's national museum of screen culture, will host its 2026 Fall exhibition 'All That Is Unseen' created by MLE, marking the Middle East debut of the artist collective. The exhibition will open on October 5 and will last until January 21, 2027.

"At Northwestern Qatar, we believe that media are not merely technologies of communication, but powerful archives of memory, identity, and human experience," Marwan M Kraidy, dean and CEO of Northwestern Qatar, said. "This collaboration between the Media Majlis Museum and ACMI brings together stories, histories, and perspectives across continents, inviting audiences in Doha to reflect on how media shape the ways we see ourselves and one another."

MLF is an experiential artist collective rooted in telling stories that deepen our relationship with the living world. Working at the intersection of science, art and technology, they create sensory experiences that reveal the hid-

den systems connecting humans with the living world. Employing a wealth of creative disciplines, from large-scale installation and kinetic sculpture to film and live performance, MLF's practice is united by the purpose of inviting audiences into a deeper, enhanced understanding of the living world and our place within it.

MLF's Ersin Han Ersin said: "We are thrilled to present 'All That Is Unseen' at the Media Majlis Museum. This exhibition is a celebration of life, and explores our continued fascination with what sits just beyond the reach of our senses. Created through collaborations with scientists, researchers, and technologists, these artworks draw on everything from scanning trees in the Amazon and listening in on black holes to mapping the human body in microscopic detail."

"Together, they invite audiences to experience the invisible systems that connect us to one another, to the natural world, and to the wider universe. In bringing this work to Qatar for its first presentation in the region, we hope audiences feel these connections too," he added.

The exhibition premiered at ACMI in Melbourne before touring internationally, including presentations at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. With an international pedigree, the exhibition has earned recognition for its capacity to connect audiences with the natural world through the power of

screen culture and immersive art.

"ACMI is excited to have our survey exhibition of Marshmallow Laser Feast come to Qatar with Media Majlis Museum and Northwestern Qatar. This exhibition has had a transformational impact in Melbourne and most recently in New Zealand, and we hope the exhibition excites Qatari audiences in similar ways," noted Seb Chan, director and CEO of ACMI.

All That Is Unseen invites visitors to experience the hidden systems that connect all life. Moving between the microscopic and the cosmic, from the formation of a single cell to the birth of galaxies, the exhibition combines scientific research with immersive storytelling to reveal worlds that exist beyond the limits of human perception. Through large-scale video works, guided meditation and interactive experiences, MLF invites visitors into a deeply immersive encounter with the rhythms that cultivate and connect all life, asking where the human body ends and the world begins.

All That Is Unseen brings together artworks developed in collaboration with an extraordinary network of artists, filmmakers, musicians and scientists, including filmmaker Terrence Malick, the late producer Edward R Pressman, Cate Blanchett, Daisy Lafarge, Jon Hopkins, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Meredith Monk, Howard Skempton and Jonny Greenwood.

Moza al-Ishaq: Qatar's tourism success is a global story still being written

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

For journalist and writer Moza al-Ishaq, who received the Visit Qatar Outstanding Service Excellence Award and the Arab Union for Tourist Media Award for her book *Creative Qatar Tourism*, Qatar's rise as a leading tourism destination is reflected not only in visitor numbers but also in the way the country is increasingly portrayed by international media. She believes Qatar has successfully transformed its global image from an energy producer into a destination recognised for its achievements in tourism, culture and sports.

"Qatar has built a unique international identity by balancing authenticity with modernity," al-Ishaq told *Gulf Times*. "The world's media now view the country as a model for using culture, sports and tourism to strengthen its global standing while preserving its national identity."

According to al-Ishaq, this transformation is the result of a long-term national strategy rather than a single global event. While hosting the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 marked a historic milestone, she says international media consistently recognised that the country's success stems from years of investment in infrastructure, education, culture and human capital, all aligned with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Among the factors most frequently highlighted in international reports are Qatar's world-class infrastructure, including Hamad International Airport, Hamad Port, the Doha Metro and a growing portfolio of luxury hotels and resorts. Its strategic location, placing nearly 80% of the world's population within a six-hour flight, together with simplified visa procedures and world-class aviation connectivity, has further strengthened its appeal as an international destination.

Al-Ishaq also points to the diversity of Qatar's tourism offering as a key advantage.

"Qatar is no longer seen simply as a stopover destination," she says. "It offers a complete experience that combines culture, sports, leisure, business and family tourism, making it attractive to visitors from around the world."

The figures support that assessment. According to Qatar Tourism, as reported by Qatar News Agency, the country welcomed more than 1.13 million visitors during the first quarter of 2026, reflecting continued growth and rising international confidence in Qatar's tourism sector.

Beyond the statistics, al-Ishaq believes Qatar has successfully employed culture as one of its most effective tools of soft power. Through sustained investment in museums, heritage sites, traditional souqs, and the arts, the country has promoted cultural



Moza al-Ishaq presenting her book.

Journalist and writer says culture, sports and innovation have reshaped the country's international image

dialogue while safeguarding its Arab identity. This balance between heritage and innovation, she notes, is frequently highlighted in international media coverage.

Sport has been equally influential. International media continue to describe the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 as a turning point that showcased not only Qatar's organisational excellence but also an Arab nation's capability to host the world's largest sporting event to the highest international standards.

Looking ahead, al-Ishaq believes maintaining this momentum will require continued creativity and innovation. She calls for greater support for tourism entrepreneurs, stronger investment in the knowledge economy, wider recognition of the roles of writers and cultural figures, and more diverse visitor experiences. She also stresses the importance of empowering content creators and cultural ambassadors to communicate Qatar's story to global audiences.

"Tourism today is about far more than promoting destinations; it is about telling a nation's story. Qatar has earned worldwide recognition and sustaining that success will depend on continuing to innovate while remaining true to its identity."

Al-Ishaq concludes: "Maintaining this momentum requires continuous innovation in the tourism sector, diversifying the experiences Qatar offers to visitors, and further strengthening the knowledge economy. Writers, intellectuals and content creators also have a pivotal role to play in conveying Qatar's authentic story to the world by producing professional, creative content that reflects the country's cultural identity and achievements, extending far beyond simply covering events and activities."

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