

Shop with Confidence
For Complaints, call 16001
License number LOF-63004377

The two sides also discussed a number of issues of common interest and stressed the importance of continuing co-ordination and consultation on regional and international developments, in the service of the interests of the two friendly countries. (QNA)

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received EU ambassador to Qatar Cristian Tudor at his office at Lusail Palace yesterday at the end of his tenure. His Highness the Amir wished the ambassador success in his future duties and further progress in relations between Qatar and the European Union. The ambassador thanked His Highness the Amir and officials in the country for the co-operation extended to him, which contributed to the success of his work in Qatar. **(QNA)**

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani held a telephone call with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov yesterday. They discussed co-operation between the two countries and ways to advance it. They also reviewed the latest regional developments, particularly diplomatic efforts and joint co-ordination to de-escalate and strengthen the region's security and stability. The prime minister stressed the importance of all parties committing to dialogue and diplomacy, and implementing what was agreed in the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Iran, including freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, to maintain the region's security, protect the gains made and enhance stability. He renewed Qatar's full support for all efforts to defuse tensions and reach a comprehensive agreement establishing permanent peace in the region. **(QNA)**

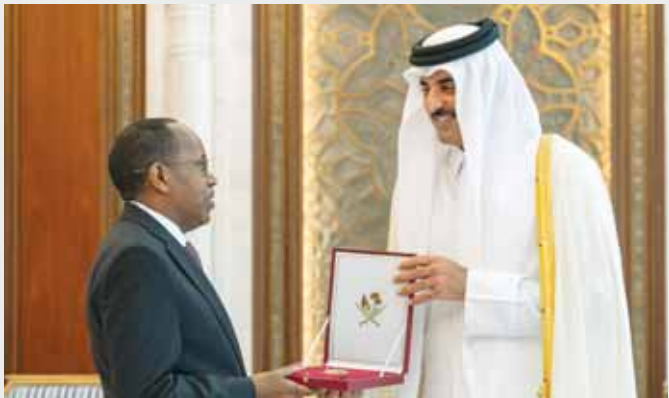
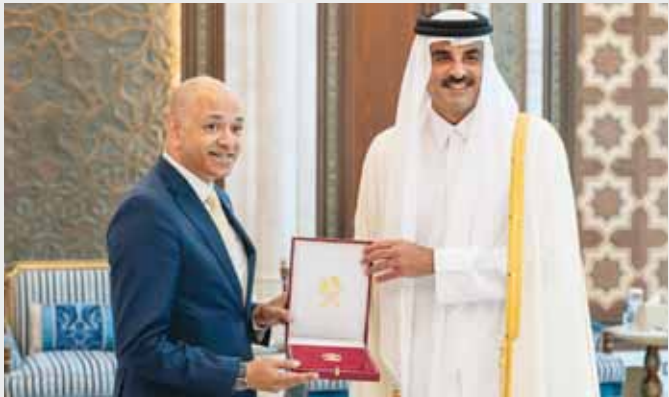
On Gaza, al-Ansari said the statement issued by the mediators on continuing Israeli violations is intended to hold Israel responsible for implementing the ceasefire deal in the strip. **To Page 5**

The United States was hopeful that a deal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz would be done "today or tomorrow", a top official said yesterday, sending oil prices tumbling on optimism for increased shipments in the vital waterway.

US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told broadcaster CNBC "there is a chance we may have a deal" in the coming hours, echoing remarks from President Donald Trump the day before.

Speaking from the White House on Monday, Trump kept up his now familiar combination of optimism for diplomacy and bellicose threats, warning that this was Iran's "last chance before decapitation".

Underlining the fragility of the situation, one crew member was listed missing yesterday on a merchant ship hit by a projectile in Hormuz, with fire erupting in the accommodation area. **To Page 5**



Amir honours envoys on the end of their tenure

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani met, in his office at Lusail Palace yesterday morning, with ambassadors Faisal Ali Ibrahim (of Ethiopia), Mohammed Nurudeen Ismail (Ghana), Gautam S Bhattacharyya (Sweden), and Odette Yidi David (Colombia), who called on the Amir to greet him on the occasion of the end of their tenure. HH the Amir awarded the ambassadors the Al Wajbah Decoration, in recognition of their role in contributing to strengthening co-operation between Qatar and their countries, and wished them success in the tasks that will be entrusted to them in the future, and for the relations between Qatar and their countries to have further progress and prosperity. The outgoing envoys expressed their gratitude and appreciation to HH the Amir and to the officials in the country for the co-operation they received. **- QNA**

Amir condoles with Saudi king

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani sent a cable of condolences to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, on the passing of the mother of Prince Hamoud bin Saud bin Abdulaziz al-Saud. HH the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani and HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani sent similar cables of condolences to King Salman. **- QNA**

Qatar condemns targeting of police station in Pakistan

Qatar voiced its condemnation and denunciation of the bombing that targeted a police station in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which led to deaths and injuries. In a statement yesterday, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated Qatar's firm stance against violence, terrorism, and criminal acts, regardless of the motives or reasons. The ministry extended Qatar's condolences to the families of the victims, and to the government and people of Pakistan. **- QNA**

Awqaf Ministry takes part in GCC committee meetings

The Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs has participated in two Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC)-level committee meetings held via video conferencing. These were the 43rd meeting of the Standing Committee of Experts in Islamic Affairs and Endowments in GCC countries, and, the 14th meeting of the committee tasked with studying the presentation of the true image of Islam and confronting campaigns of hatred, intolerance, extremism, and sectarianism. The director of the Department of Islamic Affairs, Mohammed Jabr al-Mannai, led the ministry delegation at both meetings, with the participation of the head of the ministry's Islamic relations unit, Majid al-Mansouri. **- QNA**

QOSM blends sport, creativity and AI in dynamic summer programme

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

The 3-2-1 Qatar Olympic and Sports Museum (QOSM) is welcoming children and families this month with a vibrant programme of summer activities designed to combine sport, creativity, technology and reading in an engaging educational setting. Running throughout the month, the initiative features a diverse line-up of interactive workshops and hands-on experiences aimed at nurturing creativity, developing new skills and encouraging family participation through learning by play. The programme begins today with a "Wooden Bookmark Design" workshop, where children and their families will create personalised bookmarks inspired by their favourite athletes using wooden craft sticks. Hosted in the museum's seventh-floor library from 10am to 11am, the activity encourages artistic expression while promoting a love of reading. On August 12, the library will host a "Storytelling

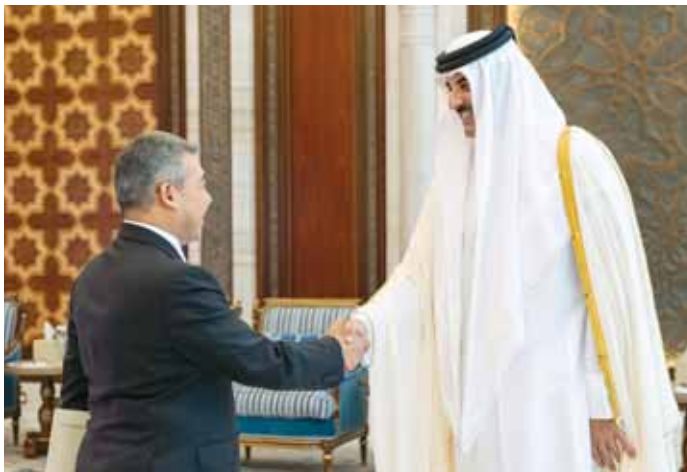


Challenge" from 10am to noon, inviting participants to collaborate on an evolving story inspired by a sequence of images displayed on screen. The free session is designed to stimulate imagination, creativity and communication skills. The museum is also continuing its popular 3-2-1 Fun City Summer Sports programme through August 29, offering daily morning and evening sessions fea-



Amir receives credentials of new ambassadors

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani received the credentials of five new ambassadors to the State at his office at Lusail Palace yesterday. HH the Amir received the credentials of ambassadors Adam Shareef Umar (of the Maldives), Hong Ji-pyo (Republic of Korea), Jeta Kreka (Albania), Bakhyt Batyrshayev (Kazakhstan), Maria Camilleri Calleja (Malta). HH the Amir welcomed the new ambassadors, wishing them success in the performance of their duties and further progress and prosperity in the bilateral relations between Qatar and their respective countries. The envoys conveyed to HH the Amir the greetings of their countries' leaders, along with their wishes for continued progress and prosperity for the people of Qatar. The envoys were accorded an official reception ceremony upon their arrival at Lusail Palace. **- QNA**



Mada sets up advisory panel of persons with disabilities

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

In an effort to ensure inclusivity in all areas and that the opinions and aspirations of all individuals with disabilities are fully represented, Mada – the Qatar Assistive Technology Centre, with its vision of "Universal Access", has formed an advisory team of people with disabilities.

Believing that persons with disabilities are key partners in decision-making, the team represents people with various types of disabilities to serve as a platform for dialogue and active participation in discussing initiatives, strategies and policies related to people with disabilities.

The team aims to support inclusive policies and meaningful participation in decision-making.

The Mada Centre said that the best solutions come from those who live the experience firsthand, and that this is a great step toward an "effective partnership and sustainable impact".



"In this context, the formation of Qatar's Advisory Team of Persons with Disabilities reinforces their role as active partners in dialogue and contributors to the development of initiatives and policies that impact their lives," the Mada Centre said in a statement.

The team includes individuals with hearing, visual, and physical disabilities, people living with multiple sclerosis, as well as parents of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Down syndrome.

The team enhances direct dialogue and ensures that policies match real-world needs by involving individuals with lived experiences.

It also positions participants as active partners in creating sustainable and accessible community initiatives.

The team aims to foster dialogue and mean-

ingful participation in initiatives and policies related to persons with disabilities, supporting a more inclusive and accessible society.

"When persons with disabilities have a seat at the table, decisions become more inclusive, and visions are better aligned with reality, helping to shape a future built through everyone's participation," a Mada official stated.

The Mada Centre works through strategic and smart partnerships, delivering impactful projects and a suite of specialised services for institutions.

These include supporting the development and accreditation of digital platforms and solutions according to international accessibility standards, ensuring physical accessibility across facilities and services, and building the capacities of specialists through tailored training programmes.

The centre also provides consultancy services and raises awareness on accessibility policies to enable different sectors to improve their services for persons with disabilities and the elderly, thereby fostering sustainable institutional practices that elevate quality of life and promote inclusion.

Katara's heritage workshops inspire a new generation

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter



Al-Sadu workshop

The Katara Cultural Village concluded its Heritage and Folk Crafts Workshops for Summer 2026 yesterday, marking the completion of a month-long programme at Al Sadu Exhibition (Building 46).

The programme celebrated Qatar's traditional craftsmanship while inspiring a new generation to embrace the nation's cultural heritage.

Launched on July 9, the workshops attracted strong participation from children and young people, whose enthusiastic engagement throughout the morning sessions reflected a growing interest in preserving traditional arts and crafts.

Combining practical training with cultural education, the programme offered participants an immersive experience that connected them with Qatar's rich heritage while encouraging them to reinterpret it through contemporary artistic expression.

Organisers highlighted the importance of such initiatives in safeguarding national identity and ensuring that traditional knowledge is passed from one generation to the next.

Through interactive, hands-on activities, participants gained a deeper appreciation of Qatar's diverse artisanal traditions, acquiring new creative skills while strengthening their connection to the country's cultural legacy.

Among the programme's highlights was the Traditional Weaving Workshop, where participants explored the raw materials, techniques and craftsmanship involved in producing traditional woven textiles.

Guided by experienced instructors, they learned the fundamentals of weaving and the cultural significance of this enduring craft.

The popular Sand Art Workshop also drew considerable interest, enabling participants to transform coloured sand into vibrant artworks inspired by Katara's distinctive architecture, including its iconic pigeon towers.

The activity fostered creativity while enhancing visual awareness, artistic expression and fine motor skills.

Mark & Save celebrates 500 days with ‘Shop & Win’ drive

By Shaima Sheriff
Staff Reporter

Mark & Save has launched a QR1mn “Shop & Win” campaign to celebrate 500 days of operations in Qatar, offering thousands of prizes over six months as the retailer looks to reward customer loyalty while preparing for further expansion in the country.

The promotion, which runs from August 1 to January 26, 2027, offers prizes to more than 1,300 customers through monthly raffle draws across the retailer’s three Qatar outlets.

Customers will receive one raffle coupon for every QR50 spent, increasing their chances of winning throughout the campaign.

The prize pool includes five Jetour X70FL vehicles, six iPhone 17 Pro Max smartphones, 180 gold coins, 90 Impex 55” smart televisions, 450 Clakon 2-in-1 blenders, and 540 shopping vouchers worth QR200 each.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Mark & Save manager (GCC operations) Mohammed Fasil said the campaign was designed as a gesture of appreciation to customers who have supported the retailer since its launch in Qatar.

“This promotion is part of our 500-day celebration in Qatar,” he said. “We are giving customers the best possible prices, and all the prizes



Mohammed Fasil speaking at the press briefing. PICTURES: Shaji Kayamkulam

es selected for the event are family-oriented or related to the needs of families.”

Unlike conventional promotional campaigns centred solely on discounts, the initiative combines everyday affordability with practical rewards designed to appeal to households and shoppers across different age groups.

Fasil said the retailer has welcomed more than 2mn customers representing over 110 nationalities during its first 500 days, describing the response as evidence of the brand’s growing acceptance in Qatar’s diverse retail market.

“We are directly importing from manufacturing units to customers,” he said. “The intermediary cost is removed, and that is the benefit customers receive.”

According to Fasil, products are sourced directly from manufacturers in countries including India, China, Bangladesh, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and Poland, allowing the retailer to maintain competitive prices while offering a broad range of merchandise.

The company also intends to continue expanding its presence in Qatar.

“We are planning to expand with more stores in Qatar,” Fasil said, adding that Mark & Save aims to operate more than 10 outlets by 2030 as part of its long-term growth strategy.

Alongside expansion plan, the retailer is also preparing to introduce more environmentally responsible shopping practices.

Fasil said the company plans to encourage customers to switch from conventional plastic shopping bags to reusable jute bags, following similar initiatives already introduced in other markets.

“We want customers to use more jute bags instead of plastic shopping bags,” he said. “Plastics create environmental issues, so we will move towards jute bags as soon as possible.”

Mark & Save said the “Shop & Win” campaign reflects its continued commitment to rewarding loyal customers while providing quality products, competitive prices and an enjoyable shopping experience.

The retailer has invited customers across Qatar to visit any of its stores, collect raffle coupons through eligible purchases and participate in one of its largest promotional campaigns to date.



Mark & Save launches a QR1mn ‘Shop & Win’ campaign to mark 500 days of operations in Qatar.

Samsung celebrates first sale of latest Galaxy Z Fold8 Series, wearables at Safari Abu Hamour

Samsung has celebrated the First Sale Ceremony of its latest Galaxy Z Fold8 Series and wearables at Safari Abu Hamour, marking another milestone in bringing Samsung’s newest innovations closer to customers in Qatar.

The event was attended by senior representatives from Samsung Gulf Electronics, Dohatna Innovative Distribution, and Safari Group of Companies: Safari’s deputy chairman and managing director Zainul Abideen, general manager Surendra Nath and head of sales Tittu George, Samsung’s B2C

(business to consumer) manager Nandagopal, and Dohatna’s business manager Nilabh Singh and sales account manager Mohammed Haneef.

Guests and Samsung enthusiasts also gathered to witness the official commencement of sales.

During the ceremony, officials welcomed the first customers and personally handed over Samsung’s latest Galaxy Z Fold8 Series devices and Galaxy Watch9 and Galaxy Watch Ultra2, making the occasion a memorable experience for early adopters.

Visitors had the opportunity to

explore Samsung’s newest Galaxy ecosystem, including its latest foldable smartphones and premium smartwatches, experiencing advanced Galaxy artificial intelligence (AI) features, enhanced productivity, intelligent health tracking, and seamless connectivity across devices.

Adding excitement to the celebration, a series of customer engagement activities were conducted throughout the event.

Guests participated in interactive experiences, product demonstrations, and fun activities designed to showcase the innovative



capabilities of Samsung’s latest devices while creating an enjoyable atmosphere for shoppers and families alike.

Representatives from Samsung, Dohatna, and Safari Hypermarket expressed their appreciation

to customers for their continued trust and support, reaffirming their commitment to making Samsung’s latest innovations easily accessible through strong retail partnerships and exceptional in-store experiences.

The First Sale Ceremony at Safari Abu Hamour highlighted Samsung’s dedication to innovation, customer satisfaction, and delivering premium technology experiences to consumers across Qatar.

AIDA celebrates over a century of Viennese coffee heritage

Austrian cafe-patisserie AIDA is celebrating more than 110 years of history by highlighting that it is the world’s first coffee house chain, tracing its origins to Vienna in 1913.

Founded by confectioner Josef Prousek and his wife Rosa, AIDA pioneered a business model based on multiple locations operating under a single brand while maintaining consistent products, recipes and quality standards.

Today, the family-owned company is led by fourth-generation owner Dominik Prousek, who says the business continues to balance tradition with innovation while preserving its Viennese identity.

“When my great-grandfather Josef Prousek opened his first additional locations in 1913, he essentially created what the world today knows as the coffee shop chain,” he said.

“AIDA was the pioneer,” Prousek said. “Today, we see it as our task, as the world’s first coffee house chain, to show how this concept was originally intended: not interchangeable, not arbitrary, and not reduced solely to speed or price, but defined by quality, tradition, culture, and craftsmanship.”

Josef Prousek’s journey began in modest circumstances in northern Bohemia, in what is now the Czech Republic, before he moved to Vienna as a young man to train as a confectioner.

After taking over a local patisserie, he expanded the business by opening additional outlets under the same name, offering identical cakes, coffee and customer experience across the city.

The business quickly expanded, opening five locations in Vienna during its early years and growing to 11 branches before the outbreak of World War II.

Although much of the company was destroyed during the war, Josef Prousek and his son Felix rebuilt the business in the post-war period.

Coffee had been part of AIDA’s offering since the 1920s, when beverages were prepared using the traditional Viennese pour-over method.

In 1946, Felix Prousek introduced Austria’s first espresso machine at the company’s Wollzeile branch in Vienna, marking a significant milestone in the country’s coffee culture and transforming AIDA into a modern cafe-patisserie.



Founded in Vienna in 1913 by Josef Prousek, family-owned AIDA has preserved its handcrafted Viennese coffee house tradition for more than 110 years while expanding to Berlin, Munich and Jeddah.



AIDA has also maintained its commitment to in-house production.

Since 1974, the company’s pastries have been produced at its manufacturing facility in Vienna’s Floridsdorf district, where creams, cake bases and jams continue to be prepared using traditional recipes.

The company sources many of its ingredients from Austrian suppliers and says its emphasis remains on craftsmanship and quality rather than low-cost production.

The cafe’s distinctive pink branding has become one of its most recognisable features in Vienna.

According to the company, the colour is a tribute to Rosa Prousek, whose name means “pink” in German and who helped build the business alongside her husband.

While deeply rooted in Viennese coffee house traditions, AIDA has increasingly expanded beyond Austria.

The company now operates more than 40 locations, including cafes in Berlin, Munich and Jeddah, through partnerships with travel retail and food service operators.

Another outlet is scheduled to open at Vienna Airport in 2027.

The company’s international growth

has been accompanied by industry recognition.

In 2025, AIDA’s Munich Airport location won the FAB Award for Best Airport To-Go Offer, while its Jeddah Airport branch was recognised as the leading coffee house concept in the Middle East and Africa.

The same year, the company received the “Coffee Brand of the Year” award at the Pepsi European QSR Franchise Awards, outperforming more than 300 nominated brands.

Dominik Prousek said that the company’s mission is to modernise without



having to sacrifice authenticity.

“Our task is not to put tradition in a museum, but to carry it into the future responsibly and in a contemporary way,” he added.



Safari ‘Shop and Drive’ sixth lucky draw winners selected

The winners of the sixth lucky draw of Safari Hypermarket’s mega promotion “Shop and Drive – Win 30 Bestune Cars” have been selected. The draw was held on August 2 at Safari Hypermarket, Ezdan Mall, Al Gharafa, in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of

Commerce and Industry and Safari management. The winners are Monir Ahamad Manik (Coupon No: SDB600054373), Jaiprakash Yadav (Coupon No: SDB601241527), Bashar Hadad (Coupon No: SDB600391854), and Poovathoor Madhavan Anilkumar

(Coupon No: SDB601126106). Through the e-raffle coupon issued for every purchase of QR50 from any Safari outlet, a total of 30 Bestune cars will be given away as prizes. Four Bestune cars are awarded in each draw, while Six Bestune cars will be awarded in the final draw. The “Shop and Drive” promotion is available at all Safari outlets. The seventh and final lucky draw of the promotion will be held at Safari Mall on September 13.

QNA director-general meets Iraq’s envoy



The director-general of the Qatar News Agency (QNA), HE Ahmed bin Saeed al-Rumaihi, met yesterday with Iraq’s ambassador to Qatar Mohammed Jaafar al-Sadr. The meeting discussed ways to enhance bilateral co-operation in the media sector. – QNA

EAA partners with Goodwood for 2026 Markel Magnolia Cup

Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, a global foundation for education and development, participated as the official beneficiary of the 2026 Markel Magnolia Cup at the Qatar Goodwood Festival, bringing together sport, philanthropy and collective action to expand education and economic opportunities for vulnerable and marginalised children and young people worldwide.

The EAA’s participation extended across the Goodwood Summit, the Markel Magnolia Cup, and the Regency Ball.

At the summit, EAA chief operating officer Ali Turki al-Sobai delivered opening remarks highlighting education as a foundation for resilience, economic participation and long-term prosperity.

The EAA also facilitated the roundtable discussion on “Pathways to Economic Opportunity, Higher Education and Collaboration”, which brought together representatives from government, academia, finance, business and international development.

The session, led by James Shaw-Hamilton, examined practical pathways from education and skills to employment and entrepreneurship; access to education and skills development for women and girls, including in lower-income and conflict-affected contexts; higher education and research collaboration; the alignment of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and health education with future economic priorities; talent mobility; and innovative financing approaches capable of scaling educational impact.

“Sport has a unique ability to unite people, challenge barriers and inspire collective action,” al-Sobai said. “Through our collaboration with Goodwood and the Markel Magnolia Cup, we are transforming that shared energy into meaningful educational opportu-



nities for children and young people affected by poverty, conflict and displacement.”

“We invite partners and supporters to join us in investing in education as the foundation of resilient communities and sustainable prosperity,” he said.

The Markel Magnolia Cup brought together 12 amateur female jockeys from diverse professional and personal backgrounds.

The annual race celebrated women’s determination, achievement and leadership while raising funds to support the EAA’s work to remove barriers to education and help young people develop the skills and opportunities needed to build sustainable futures.

Fundraising continued during the Regency Ball at Goodwood House, where guests and partners supported the EAA’s global education programmes through a charitable raffle and other contributions. Prizes included luxury hotel stays in truly iconic locations around the world, courtesy of Katara Hospitality and Maybourne.

The 2026 collaboration built on the EAA’s previous engagement with Goodwood since 2023 and demonstrated how sport, philanthropy and cross-sector co-operation can contribute to lasting educational impact.

DAAM to fund Shafallah vocational programme

The Social and Sport Contribution Fund (DAAM) and the Qatar Foundation for Social Work have signed a funding agreement to support the Vocational Rehabilitation Programme at Al Shafallah Centre.

Through this partnership, DAAM will provide financial support to help deliver a structured programme that offers accredited, competency-based vocational pathways for persons with disabilities.

The initiative is designed to build practical and professional skills, strengthen participants’ readiness for the labour market, and connect training outcomes with real employment opportunities.

The programme is tailored for Al Shafallah Centre members aged 15-20 and operates through two distinct tracks.

The first focuses on individuals with mild to moderate disabilities, equipping them with specialised professional qualifications aligned with the needs of Qatar’s labour market.

The second supports persons with severe intellectual disabilities by developing essential workplace readiness, independence, and social adaptation skills.

In parallel, the programme includes capacity-building for the Shafallah Centre’s staff to ensure training is delivered effectively according to each participant’s needs.

Al Shafallah Centre executive director Fatima al-Saadi expressed her appreciation for the partnership, de-



scribing it as a strategic step forward in strengthening vocational rehabilitation services and improving outcomes for persons with disabilities.

“Empowering persons with disabilities begins with investing in their potential and creating genuine opportunities for them to gain the skills needed to contribute meaningfully to national development,” she said. “This programme reflects that vision by offering specialised pathways that respect individual differences and draw on best practices in vocational rehabilitation.”

Al-Saadi noted that the programme follows a comprehensive approach: assessing each participant’s abilities and interests, developing personalised training plans, and working with public and private sector partners to link graduates with suitable employment.

The director of Shared Services at DAAM, Yousef al-Nuaimi, underscored the fund’s role in supporting practical empowerment initiatives.

“At DAAM, we believe that meaningful vocational programmes are es-

sential to opening doors for persons with disabilities in the labour market,” he said. “Our support for Al Shafallah Centre’s programme is a concrete step toward building a generation that can rely on its own abilities and contribute actively to national development.”

The agreement forms part of DAAM’s broader mandate, supported by contributions from listed companies on the Qatar Stock Exchange, to advance social development and sustainable initiatives in line with Qatar National Vision 2030.

Al Shafallah Centre, under the Qatar Foundation for Social Work, is a leading institution dedicated to the rehabilitation and empowerment of persons with disabilities through specialised programmes that foster independence and social inclusion.

Since its establishment in 2010, DAAM has supported a wide range of cultural, social, sports, and charitable projects, drawing on the contributions of Qatar’s listed companies as a key source of funding. – QNA

QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY INVITATION TO TENDER

QAFCO ANNOUNCES THE FOLLOWING TENDER

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION OF WORKS	TENDER FEE (QAR)	TENDER BOND (QAR)	TENDER FEE RECEIPT SUBMISSION DATES	TENDER CLOSING DATE
RFQ 6000006002	EXTERNAL WALK PATH FLOORING AT QAFCO AL BANUSH	500/- (Non-refundable)	54,000 (fifty-four thousand and Qatari Riyals)	05.08.2026 06.08.2026 09.08.2026 10.08.2026 11.08.2026 12.08.2026 13.08.2026	08.09.2026

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- During the period this tender is offered, the interested bidders shall first deposit appropriate Tender Fee amount in cash (Cheque will not be accepted) into Company’s following Account at any QNB branch:
 - Account Name : QATAR FERTILISER COMPANY (QAFCO)
 - Account Number : 0013-025828-058
 - IBAN : QA51QNBAA000000000013025828058
 - Bank Name : QATAR NATIONAL BANK
- The interested Bidders shall mention their company’s name and Tender Number on the payment receipt provided by the bank and submit it as Tender Fee receipt.
- Besides the Tender fee receipt (which should have the Tender Number and bidder’s name clearly mentioned on it), interested bidders shall also submit a copy of the valid Commercial Registration, an authorization letter from their company with the name, telephone, fax and e-mail ID of the focal point for this tender (**Very Important**), during the submission of Tender Fee Receipt for ensuring electronic receipt of the Tender Document.
- Tender Fee Receipt along with the specified documents shall be submitted to purchase@qafco.com.qa on the dates indicated above, after payment of Tender Fee (nonrefundable) and to dananda@qafco.com.qa.
- After submission of the above documents to the above email, Tender Document will be provided through an electronic platform separately.
- For any queries related to non-receipt of the tender documents after the submission Tender Fee receipt at the QAFCO Housing Section, you may contact at dananda@qafco.com.qa or on 44225769.
- Technical & Commercial details and Submission Procedures will be specified in the Tender Documents.
- The Company will not consider any offer without the enclosure of the Tender Bond.
- The Tender shall be strictly submitted using the QAFCO’s Supply Chain Portal – SAP / Ariba, on or before the “Tender Closing Date”. Tenderers who fail to adhere to this requirement will result in the disqualification of their Tender.

QU announces admission of more than 6,000 students into Fall 2026 Bachelor’s programmes

Qatar University (QU) has announced the admission of more than 6,000 female and male students to the university’s Bachelor’s degree programmes for the Fall 2026 semester.

The QU noted that the admission included all Qatari students who met the minimum admission requirements across the university’s various colleges.

In a statement on the admission results, QU vice-president (Student Affairs) Dr Mohammed Diab affirmed the university’s commitment to providing all necessities to ensure a successful experience for the new students, accompanying them every step of the way toward a university journey rich in accomplishments.

He also called on all applicants to check their admission decisions through the university’s official website, mybanner.qu.edu.qa, using their electronic admission accounts.

Dr Diab said that classes for the Fall 2026 semester will begin for all students



on Sunday, August 23, 2026, with the add/drop period concluding on Thursday, August 27, 2026.

The online orientation programme for new students will be held starting on Sunday, August 16, 2026.

Admitted students across all colleges will be contacted via their university e-mail address with details and links to access the programme’s online platform, which includes video and written orientation materials.

The orientation programme aims to provide students with key information

on university life, academic regulations and policies, and student services, and help new students use the university’s electronic systems, including the online portal, university e-mail, and academic advising services, making it easier for them to select and register for their courses with flexibility and ease.

Attending and completing the orientation programme is mandatory in order to finalise students’ admission procedures at the university and enable them to register for their Fall 2026 semester courses. – QNA

MoECC launches ‘smart observer’ project

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has launched the “smart observer” project.

The ministry said in a statement yesterday that the project involves deploying a remotely operated boat equipped with advanced systems to monitor environmental changes and collect data and samples from marine sites.

The “smart observer” enables continuous monitoring, environmental surveys, sample collection, and measurement activities, all while covering wider marine environment areas and gathering data more quickly and accurately, improving resource efficiency.

The MoECC noted that the project reflects its commitment to leveraging modern technologies to protect the marine environment and advance the digital transformation of environmental monitoring.

The use of this technology allows for the gathering of accurate, real-time data, thus, enabling specialists to track environmental changes and make informed decisions.

The ministry noted that the ‘smart observer’ project supports the objectives of the Third National Development Strategy 2024-30 in the areas of environmental sustainability and innovation. – QNA



QA resumes route with Philadelphia

Qatar Airways has reconnected Doha and Philadelphia with the launch of a daily non-stop flight between Hamad International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport, its 14th destination in North America, resuming on August 1, 2026. The airline said the route is being operated with the Airbus A350-900, featuring its Qsuite and Starlink Wi-Fi, and offers travellers greater flexibility and access to its premium services. With connections to more than 160 destinations worldwide, the new route further strengthens Qatar Airways' commitment to the US market. (QNA)

Kingfish gill-net ban from 15th

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

The Ministry of Municipality has announced that the ban on kingfish fishing using gill nets will come into effect on August 15 and continue until October 31, 2026.

The move is aimed at protecting fish stocks and ensuring the sustainability of marine resources, the ministry said in a statement yesterday. It said the ban is designed to reduce fishing pressure during the kingfish breeding season and help preserve stocks for future generations.

Only line fishing will be allowed

during the ban period, while the use of gill nets will be prohibited, the ministry added.

It noted that regulating fishing seasons is among the measures being taken to conserve marine resources and sustain their productivity.

The ministry said kingfish production in 2025 stood at about 3,484 tonnes, underscoring the species' economic and nutritional importance.

It urged all fishermen to comply with the ban and observe the permitted fishing methods, stressing that this would help protect stocks and marine resources and ensure their sustainability for generations to come.

Sidra's new service brings postnatal care at home

By Joey Aguilar
Staff Reporter

New mothers who deliver at Sidra Medicine can now receive follow-up care from a midwife at home, under a private service launched by the hospital.

The Women's Private Home Visits: Midwifery Care programme sends experienced midwives to the homes of eligible mothers and their newborns in the weeks after birth – the period when problems most often surface and when families are usually left to manage on their own.

Visits cover the mother's recovery, help with breastfeeding, practical newborn care and emotional well-being. Midwives also watch for early signs of any complications, so that concerns can be picked up before they become serious.



Sidra Medicine, a member of Qatar Foundation, said the aim is to spare families repeated trips back to hospital while keeping their care unbroken after discharge.

"By extending our midwifery services beyond the hospital, we are helping mothers recover with greater confidence," said Dr Dina Schnurman, chief nursing officer at Sidra Medicine. "We are also giv-

ing families the education, reassurance, and support they need during the early weeks of parenthood."

She said the programme reflects the hospital's multidisciplinary approach to compassionate, patient-centred care at every stage of the maternity journey.

The home visits are delivered by experienced midwives and follow the same evidence-based

standards as care given inside the hospital.

Prof Johnny Awwad, chair of Women's Services at Sidra Medicine, said the weeks after delivery matter as much as the birth itself. "Exceptional maternity care extends well beyond childbirth. The postpartum period plays a vital role for both maternal recovery and newborn health," he said, adding that continued clinical support can significantly improve outcomes for families.

He said Sidra Medicine, which describes itself as Qatar's leading choice for private maternity care and deliveries, remains committed to supporting women before birth, through delivery and during the important weeks that follow.

The programme is open to eligible Sidra Medicine patients following a clinical assessment. It is intended for routine postnatal care, and visits are arranged according to clinical need and availability.

Qatar working to bridge US-Iran divide

From Page 1

Efforts are continuing with a range of parties, particularly the United States, alongside the mediators Qatar, Egypt and Turkiye, to ensure the swift enforcement of the second phase of the agreement, he said.

The international community has clearly identified the party obstructing implementation on the ground, Dr al-Ansari said, noting that the transition to the second phase – based on US President Donald Trump's plan and the support he announced for it – places full responsibility on the Israeli side.

He recalled that Hamas has been committed to what is required of it, and that there are clear undelivered obligations on the Israeli side under the accord.

The course of negotiations since 2023 has been marked by several instances of Israeli procrastination in implementing the terms of

the agreement, he said, pointing to the latest Israeli escalation and the targeting of civilians in Gaza, which killed more than 30 people.

Dr al-Ansari described that action as a fresh attempt to disrupt progress on the negotiations track and impede peaceful solutions to the conflict.

He also stressed the importance of Israeli withdrawal from all occupied territories, asserting that occupation is unwarranted in all its forms and that Qatar bases its positions on international law and the relevant references.

He called on the international community to exert further pressure to ensure implementation of the agreement, culminating in the reconstruction of Gaza and an improvement in the humanitarian conditions of its people, who have been suffering for more than two years.

On the telephone conversation between HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin

Jassim al-Thani and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Dr al-Ansari said Qatar has been committed to keeping all regional and international partners informed of the evolving situation in the region.

The implications of the current crisis go beyond regional borders, he said, making it imperative to bolster co-ordination and consultations with various international partners in support of efforts to reach diplomatic solutions.

Communications with the Russian side are ongoing on a variety of issues, Dr al-Ansari said, noting that the recent call addressed the evolving regional situation and the latest developments in the diplomatic efforts under way.

He underscored the importance of briefing international partners on the progress of the negotiations and the efforts being made to push them forward.

US hopeful Strait of Hormuz deal will come through

From Page 1

In what has become a regular pattern, Trump last week threatened to hit Iran "very hard", potentially with attacks against civilian infrastructure, only to pull back later, hinting that a deal was near.

But Iran's foreign ministry denied negotiations with Washington were taking place, even as

Trump insisted they were happening "right now".

Secretary of State Marco Rubio said yesterday that the United States was involved in negotiations between Oman and Iran on increasing traffic through the Hormuz.

"There's been progress made in those talks but not finality yet. We're hoping that will happen very shortly," he told journalists.

Trump had previously said he

expected to know by yesterday how the talks were going, "one way or the other", but insisted "it's not very complex".

Early yesterday, Britain's maritime security agency UKMT0 said an unnamed cargo vessel had been struck by an "unknown projectile" in the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Oman.

Iran continues to impose an effective blockade on the strait and

insists ships coordinate crossings with it.

Yesterday, the Indian ship MSV Faize Noore Oliya sank in the Red Sea off Yemen following an unattributed attack, with all of its crew rescued, according to India's foreign ministry and a local official in Yemen.

"The targeting of commercial shipping in the region must end," a foreign ministry spokesperson said. (AFP)

Gaza holds largest funeral in Palestine's history for 112 martyrs from a single family

Palestinians in Gaza held yesterday a solemn national funeral procession for the remains and bodies of 112 martyrs from a single family killed in an Israeli carnage carried out by the Israeli occupation army on Nov 22, 2023, at the beginning of the war of annihilation against the enclave and its residents.

This macabre scene was one of the largest witnessed in Palestine in terms of the number of bodies and remains carried for burial, all of whom were killed in an Israeli airstrike that targeted a residential

block inhabited by members of the Abu Sharia and Al-Hassaina families in Al-Sabra neighbourhood, south of Gaza City.

The ceremony was attended by popular, community, and official delegations, along with thousands of Palestinians and Civil Defence personnel who took part in the recovery operations of the bodies and remains over the past several weeks.

In a scene that brought back to mind the magnitude of the massacre committed by the Israeli occupation against the family, fu-

neral biers carrying the bodies and remains of the martyrs, draped in Palestinian flags, were lined up at the same site of the decimated residential block that had been targeted by the occupation forces.

Following the funeral prayers, the bodies and remains were laid to rest at the Al-Maamadani Cemetery in the Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood, southeast of Gaza City.

Gaza's Civil Defence personnel managed to recover only the bodies and remains of 112 martyrs from among the family members killed in the carnage.



Palestinian mourners attend the funeral of members of the Abu Sharia and Al-Hassaina families in Gaza City yesterday. (AFP)



الأولى
AL-AWALIA

Invitation to Tender

Tender / Auction Number	Subject	Tender / Auction Document Fees (Non-refundable)	Tender / Auction Bond	Tender/Auction Offer	Closing Date
AL-AWALIA/TD/2026/26	Supply of OEM Dewatering Screens (DS-65) for Qatar Primary Materials Company ("Supplies")	500 QAR	8,000 QAR	Two Bids (Technical & Commercial)	12 August 2026 01:00 PM

In accordance with the following conditions:

- Tender Documents can be collected online by sending email to tender.doc@qpmc.qa along with requested documents in point No.2.
- Tender Documents will be shared only after delivery of Deposit Slip Stamped by Commercial Bank along with Authorization Letter to the delegated person signed by authorized person as per Computer ID, Copy of commercial Registration (CR) (printed within the last 30 days), Business License and Computer ID.
- Bids are to be submitted in two sealed (in red wax) envelopes (Technical & Commercial) and addressed to Tenders and Auction Committee, Tender reference number and subject are to be clearly written on the envelopes, provided that the last date for submitting bids is one o'clock in the afternoon on the closing day. Any bids submitted after this date and time will not be accepted.
- Tenderers shall submit the proposals to our head office located at Lusail, Building No. 108, St. No. 303, Burj Marina Tower, 17th Floor before the closing date. (To get the map of the new building, please scan the QR code below).
- Tender Fees are nonrefundable and can be transferred online to Account of Qatar Primary Material Company- Bank A/C (4050-651111-006) at Commercial Bank of Qatar. IBAN No. (QA 18 CBQA 0000 4050 651111 006). Tender reference number and subject are to be written on the deposit slip.
- Tender Bond (Bank Guarantee/ Manager Cheque) must be valid for 120 days after closing date and must be submitted in separate & sealed envelope along with technical bid and a photocopy is to be attached with commercial bid. Bids without tender bond will be rejected.
- Bids must be valid for 90 days after the closing date.
- Any queries relating to the Tender Documents must only be raised in writing, preferably by email, to the address specified in the respective Tender Document. Any response issued by Qatar Primary Material Company will be in the form of a question and answer and will be distributed to all Tenderers without revealing the identity of the originator of the query(ies) in the Form of Tender Bulletins. Queries must be received at the address specified in the respective ITT Documentation at least five (5) calendar days prior to the Tender closing date. Any queries received after such a date will be ignored.
- The amount of the Performance Bond to be provided by the awarded bidder is (10% of the contract value) and its validity period must remain valid under the contract implementation period and the guarantee period according to the terms of the tender.
- The Technical Bids shall be opened within one week of the closing date.
- Qatar Primary Material Company has the right, during the contract period, to request an increase or decrease in the amounts of the items, works or services by a percentage not exceeding (20%) of the contract value with the same conditions and prices, provided that the increase is of the same type of contracted items, works or services.
- Qatar Primary Material Company's tendering terms and conditions apply.
- For any inquiries about the tender except collecting the documents, please contact tender@qpmc.qa
- Location of the new building



For further Inquiry, please send your queries at Fax Number: **44479559** or email to tender@qpmc.qa or visit Qatar Primary Material Company website @ www.qpmc.qa

شركة قطر للمواد الأولية (شركة قطر للمواد الأولية) - قطر - منطقة لوسيل، برج مارينا، رقم 108، اسكيب 33204 | هاتف: 4447 9411 | فاكس: 4447 9411
Qatar Primary Materials Company (Q.P.S.C.) | Head Office: Doha-Qatar, Lusail, Marina Tower No. 108 | CR No.: 33204 | P.O. Box: 22095 | Tel.: +974 4447 9411
رأس المال المصرح به 200,000,000 ريال | رأس المال المدفوع 200,000,000 ريال | رأس المال المدفوع 200,000,000 ريال | Capital 200,000,000 QAR | Paid Up Capital 200,000,000 | Info@qpmc.qa www.qpmc.qa

WHO pleads for more support to tackle Ebola outbreak in DR Congo

AFP
Geneva

The World Health Organisation yesterday called for more support across to board to combat the Ebola outbreak raging in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is still outpacing response efforts.

The outbreak is the biggest ever to have hit the DR Congo, despite being declared less than three months ago.

“The outbreak is unfortunately still expanding beyond the capacity of the response,” WHO spokesman Tarik Jasarevic told reporters

in Geneva. “We need more support in terms of finances, but also other resources: treatment capacity, field investigation teams, safe burial teams and community workers.”

There have been 3,802 confirmed cases of Ebola in the DRC, including 1,707 deaths. A total of 727 patients have recovered, and there are 275 suspected cases under investigation.

A total of 17,000 contacts of cases are being monitored, with more than 80% of them receiving daily check-ups.

Though cases have been reported from five provinces, nearly 90% are in the northeastern Ituri

province, with nearly all the rest in neighbouring North Kivu.

Jasarevic said the response needed to focus on where the virus is spreading now, and where it might go next.

A viral haemorrhagic fever, Ebola spreads through close contact and infected bodily fluids.

The DRC’s 17th Ebola outbreak was declared on May 15 after several deaths in Ituri.

The outbreak is driven by the Bundibugyo species of Ebola — for which there are no proven safe and efficacious treatments for patients, vaccines, or prophylaxis options to stop people exposed to the virus from falling ill.

But various trials are under way of potential therapies, vaccines and post-exposure antiviral drugs.

Vasee Moorthy, who leads the WHO’s research and development blueprint arm, said the early indications were promising.

Moorthy said new data was emerging on whether the Ervebo vaccine, which works against the Zaire species of Ebola, also provided cross-protection against Bundibugyo in animals.

A WHO vaccine advisory group reviewed the data on Friday and will issue recommendations later this week.

The two front-running candidate vaccines are one using the

ChAdOx1 platform, being developed by the University of Oxford and the Serum Institute of India, and another being worked on by US pharma firm Moderna using mRNA technology.

The ChAdOx1 jab started a Phase I trial in Britain on July 24, while the Moderna candidate vaccine is set to start Phase I trials in Canada this week, Moorthy said.

They are being tested on ferrets and on monkeys, while at the same time volunteers in Oxford and Canada are being given different doses of the potential vaccine to assess the immune response as well as safety.

Depending on the results, devel-

opers will pick the best dose level to take forward to full-scale Phase III human trials.

Two potential treatments are being tested on confirmed Ebola patients in Ituri: the monoclonal antibody MBP134 and the antiviral drug remdesivir, alone and in combination.

Meanwhile a trial is also taking place of the antiviral drug obeldesivir, for people exposed to confirmed Bundibugyo cases.

The trial in Ituri has enrolled more than 25 high-risk contacts “to evaluate whether this oral medicine, given for 10 days, can prevent onset of disease”, said Moorthy.

Morocco says it warned Spain after court’s migration ruling

AFP
Rabat

Morocco had previously warned Spain that a recent Spanish court ruling that migrants arriving by sea would not face immediate removal was going to create “a problem,” a senior Moroccan official said.

Last week, at least 50,000 people, mostly Moroccans, entered the Spanish exclave of Ceuta, on foot or by swimming from the nearby city of Fnideq.

This unprecedented influx quickly overwhelmed the Spanish exclave in North Africa, before leading to thousands of returns to Morocco.

Spain’s Supreme Court ruled on July 8 that migrants arriving by sea should not be returned as quickly as others and Madrid has blamed criminal gangs for spreading misinformation about the ruling.

“We started engaging with the Spanish side around July 22-23, when the networks began talking about this,” the Moroccan senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said on Monday night.

“We discussed this ruling and its impact. We explained that this ruling was going to create a prob-



Relatives and friends wait by a fence for the return of people who had crossed into Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta, at Morocco's Bab Sebta border crossing on the outskirts of Fnideq on Sunday. (AFP)

lem. And it did create a problem,” he said.

Spanish government spokeswoman Elma Saiz rejected the claim.

“At no point was there any evidence, any report that alerted us to the magnitude of this unprecedented event,” she told reporters in Madrid.

The Moroccan official argued the large movement of people into Ceuta was not a failure of Morocco’s security apparatus.

“It’s simplistic to say that Morocco should just have used force to stop them. That is to completely misunderstand this phenomenon,” he said.

“Could Spain, seeing them

coming, have done something to stop them simply using weapons and security forces? That’s not possible.”

“At a certain point, the Moroccan law enforcement forces could no longer confront the migrants because the numbers were very large,” and because “the pull effect was very strong,” he said.

“It is not Morocco’s sole responsibility” to manage migration, he said, adding that the cost of migration management for the kingdom amounted to around 500mn euros per year.

He nonetheless said that Rabat and Madrid had acted “as reliable partners” and continued to work “in perfect coordination” on migration issues.

“Today, it is up to Spain to find answers to the challenges posed by this ruling,” he said.

“Morocco’s commitment remains the same. It accepts the return of those who manage to cross. It puts in place preventive measures to stop as many departures as possible, and it will continue” to do so, he said.

Saiz said Spain’s “exceptional response in such a short period of time” to the crisis would not have been possible without Morocco’s co-operation.

Power struggles: Clashes in western Libya kill 4

AFP
Tripoli

Overnight clashes between rival armed groups in western Libya left four dead and at least 10 wounded, a security source told AFP yesterday.

The fighting was between members of the Anti-Security Threat Agency and the 103rd Battalion, the official said.

The Anti-Security Threat Agency is linked to Prime Minister Abdelhamid Dbeibah, who heads the UN-recognised government in Tripoli, while the 103rd falls under his ministry of defence.

“The fighting that broke out late Monday evening and is continuing south of Sorman (60 km west of Tripoli), and in some neighbourhoods of the nearby city of Zawiya, has left four dead and more than 10 wounded,” the official from Zawiya’s security directorate said on condition of anonymity.

Neither the prime minister’s office nor the defence ministry has commented.

Clashes between armed groups are a recurring issue in the regions of Sorman and Zawiya, where there is a large oil refinery.

The coastal area is at the heart of power struggles between armed groups engaged in organised crime such as diesel smuggling, human trafficking and other activities.

Heavy and medium weapons fire could still be heard in the area yesterday morning, according to the official, who announced the deployment of a “neutral force” on the ground to defuse the conflict and prevent an even deadlier escalation.

As a precaution the main route between the capital and the Zawiya region was closed overnight.

Images and videos circulating on social media, whose authenticity AFP has not been able to verify and establish, show thick columns of black smoke rising above residential neighborhoods in the area of Sorman, as well as torched military vehicles and equipment.

Libya has the most abundant oil reserves in Africa, but has been divided ever since it was plunged into war during the ouster in 2011 of former leader Muammar Gaddafi.

Two governments are currently vying for power: the UN-recognised administration in Tripoli and a rival in the east backed by military commander Khalifa Haftar.

Qatar Charity launches 24 water projects in Somalia

With the support of donors, Qatar Charity has launched the implementation of 24 water projects in four Somali states, as part of its ongoing efforts to improve access to safe water and strengthen essential services in drought-affected and water-scarce communities.

The projects are being implemented in Hirshabelle, Galmudug, Southwest State, and Northeastern Somalia. They include the drilling of 19 shallow wells, the construction of two water ponds, and the drilling of three deep wells, benefiting communities in need of reliable and sustainable water sources.

The launch of these projects comes amid growing challenges faced by several areas in Somalia due to water shortages and recurrent droughts, which continue to affect the living conditions of local populations, particularly in rural communities that depend on agriculture and livestock.

Yusuf Mohamed Abdullah, a community elder in Northeastern Somalia, expressed his appreciation for the launch of the projects.

He stressed upon the projects are vital for the area as they respond to urgent needs in local communities.

He noted that providing sustainable water sources will help reduce the burden on families and improve their daily living conditions.

He said: “We extend our sincere thanks to the generous donors who contributed to funding these projects through Qatar Charity. Their support will have a direct impact on improving people’s lives and ensuring access to water in the beneficiary areas.”

For his part, Is’haq Hero Moallim, an official in Wajid district of Southwest State, said that access to safe water remains one of the most vital needs of local communities.

He added that the projects will

contribute to improving health conditions and supporting livelihoods.

Abdulfattah Adam Moallim, director of Qatar Charity’s Somalia Office, emphasised that the projects form part of Qatar Charity’s continued humanitarian and development interventions aimed at enhancing water security and improving basic services in the most vulnerable areas.

He added: “We are grateful to the donors whose contributions made these projects possible. Qatar Charity will continue working with local partners to expand essential services and provide sustainable water solutions for communities in need.”

The launch of these projects builds on Qatar Charity’s continued work in the water, sanitation, and hygiene sector in Somalia. Over the past year, Qatar Charity implemented 76 projects in this sector, benefiting nearly 50,000 people.



Missing Uganda opposition aide appears in video after a year

AFP
Kampala

A video has emerged of an emaciated former aide to one of Uganda’s leading opposition figures months after he vanished, with his family and activists yesterday alleging state involvement.

Sam Mugumya, 47, was a prominent aide to opposition politician Kizza Besigye — abducted in Kenya two years ago, and currently hospitalised awaiting trial — and was running as a candidate for Besigye’s party.

But in August 2025 local media reported Mugumya had been taken by men linked to the security forces, and nothing was heard from him until late July when a video of him, vis-

ibly emaciated and seated next to a walker, circulated on social media. The video surfaced as international observers have expressed concerns about a growing crackdown on opposition figures and activists.

“I only saw video showing him destroyed and bony,” his mother, Edinansi Katungwesi, told AFP by telephone, confirming his identity. “Since he was kidnapped months ago, I don’t know anything about him or what is happening to him,” she said, adding: “It is the government that took my son and I am so angry at them. The government is meant to protect us and has turned against us, and worse of all against my son.”

The army declined to comment when contacted, but a source directed AFP to previous remarks by the defence ministry

which in September 2025 denied that Mugumya was in custody.

Activist Agather Atuhaire told AFP she believed it was Mugumya, describing his situation as “appalling and shocking”. “I think the military is responsible for his disappearance, detention incommunicado,” she said.

“I am so angry and alarmed that we are letting impunity in our country get worse and worse,” she added.

The Uganda Law Society has filed a petition for his release.

“If he’s being suspected of committing an offence, let him be produced in court and answer the charges,” society vice-president Anthony Asiimwe said.

Uganda re-elected President Yoweri Museveni for the seventh time in January, and activists and opposition politicians have warned of hostile environment.

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **ATHUL CHANDRAN CHANDRAN KRISHNAN UNNITHAN**

holder of

India Passport No. Z6642930
QID No. 29035643542

hereby change my name

from

ATHUL CHANDRAN CHANDRAN KRISHNAN UNNITHAN

to

ATHUL CHANDRAN

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

ANNOUNCEMENT

I, **SHAIBY VAKAKKECHOORAVELIL THOMAS**

holder of

INDIA Passport No. U0396836
QID No. 27835603440

hereby change my name

from

SHAIBY VAKAKKECHOORAVELIL THOMAS

to

SHAIBY VADAKKECHOORAVELIL THOMAS

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

Senate panel advances Blanche nomination

AFP
Washington

President Donald Trump's former personal lawyer Todd Blanche took a key step yesterday towards becoming the top US law enforcement officer after a Senate panel approved his nomination to head the Justice Department.

The 12-10 vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee was along party lines and came after two Republican senators dropped their opposition to Blanche's nomination.

Blanche's Senate confirmation had been held up by concerns from senators John Cornyn and Thom Tillis over a \$1.8bn fund for alleged victims of politically motivated prosecution and a tax audit immunity deal with the Republican president.

Blanche issued a written order over the weekend scrapping the

so-called "anti-weaponisation fund" and said the audit immunity agreement with Trump, his two eldest sons and the Trump Organisation would only apply "retroactively" to past tax years and not future filings.

The full Senate, where Republicans hold a majority, is expected to vote later this week to confirm Blanche as US attorney general. He has been serving as acting attorney general since Trump fired Pam Bondi in April.

Senate Democrats have been united in their opposition to Blanche amid concerns he has treated the Department of Justice as an extension of the Republican president's legal team.

"Todd Blanche has no business serving as our nation's chief law enforcement officer," Senator Dick Durbin, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Judiciary Committee, said before today's vote.

"The attorney general is sup-

posed to be the people's lawyer," Durbin said. "Mr Blanche continues to operate as the president's personal lawyer, treating the Justice Department like a law firm serving one client — the president." Blanche has been closely tied to what Democrats have dubbed a "retribution" campaign by the president against his perceived political enemies and he helped negotiate the extraordinary legal settlement between Trump and the government he controls.

The out-of-court settlement stems from Trump's \$10bn lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) over the illegal disclosure of his tax records by an agency contractor.

It proposed immunity from audits for past tax years and a \$1.776bn fund for people who say they were unfairly targeted by the Department of Justice, potentially including Trump supporters convicted over the January 6, 2021 at-

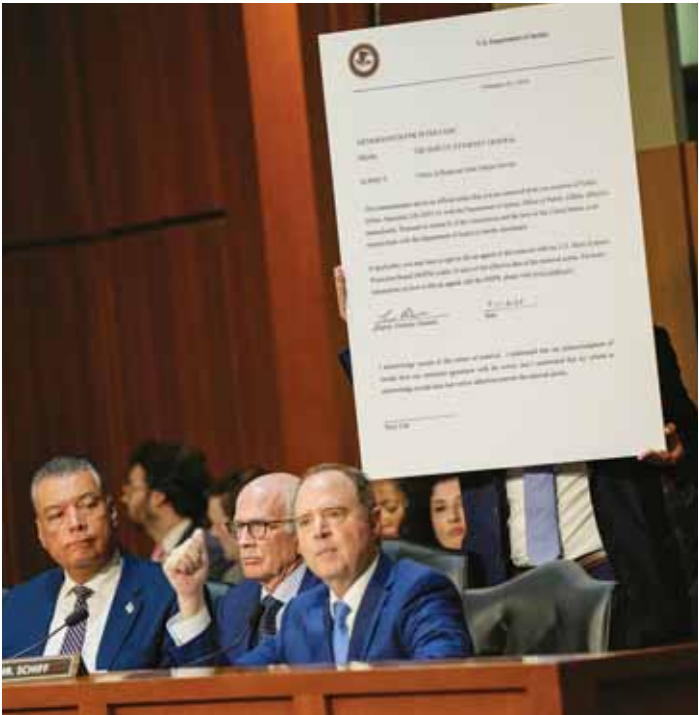
tack on the US Capitol.

Federal judges have separately blocked the fund and condemned the tax settlement, which according to US press reports could help the president avoid past liabilities of up to \$100mn.

Blanche has also come in for criticism from victims of Jeffrey Epstein over his handling of the release of investigative files about the convicted sex offender, a one-time close friend of Trump.

Prior to joining the Department of Justice, Blanche represented Trump in his trial. He was also on the legal defence team in two federal cases brought against Trump by special counsel Jack Smith — for allegedly mishandling classified documents after leaving the White House and for seeking to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election.

Both cases were dropped after Trump won the 2024 presidential election.



An aide holds a board showing a memorandum for Peter Carr from the Justice Department, as US Senator Adam Schiff (D-CA) speaks at the US Senate Judiciary Committee vote on President Donald Trump's nomination of Todd Blanche, at Capitol Hill yesterday. (Reuters)

US exhausted long-range precision missiles on Iran

Reuters
New York/Washington

The US Army has used up much of its global stockpile of highly accurate long-range missiles during its five-month war with Iran, according to sources familiar with the data, raising concerns about the military's readiness for future conflicts.

The missiles are principally the army's surface-to-surface weapons, known as Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) and Precision Strike Missiles (PrSM). The US has used "virtually all" of its stockpiles of these weapons, according to two sources, which declined to say how many of each munition the US had left.

The degree to which the military is running out of ATACMS and Precision Strike Missiles has not been previously reported. The long-range munitions — which cost more than \$1mn each — are an important part of the military's arsenal, allowing accurate strikes from a safe distance.

US-supplied ATACMS have played a key role in the war in Ukraine, allowing Ukrainian forces to attack targets inside Russia. The PrSM is a newer, more advanced generation that will replace the ATACMS, which have a shorter range.

The dramatic rundown in precision, long-range missiles means US President Donald Trump may have to rely more on riskier, piloted bombing missions if he relaunches attacks on Iran.

Trump launched the Iran war jointly with Israel in February, predicting that the conflict would last a short time. But as the war drags on, the three people familiar with the matter expressed worry that the falling missile supplies could limit the US ability to deter its other adversaries.

A fourth person familiar with the matter said that despite the high usage of precision weapons, the US can resupply. Central Command — which oversees US forces in the Middle East — has been able



An Army Tactical Missile System (ATACMS) is displayed during the inauguration of a new artillery plant of ammunition maker Rheinmetall, in Unterlues, Germany. (Reuters/File Photo)

to reload from US military supplies around the world, the person said. The sources interviewed for this story spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Asked for comment on the stockpile data, the White House issued a statement from Trump, saying the US had "far more munitions than anyone in the world" and "far more than we need."

"Our defence companies are, at this moment, making more munitions than they have ever made before, in addition to expanding their plants and equipment at record levels," Trump said.

Analysts agree that certain munitions, including artillery shells and several types of missiles, are being produced at record levels but caution that supplies might fall short if war is prolonged.

Chief Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell said: "America's military is the most powerful in the world and has everything it needs to execute at the time and place of the President's choosing. We have executed multiple successful operations across combatant commands while ensuring the US military possesses a deep arsenal of capabilities to protect our people and our interests."

The supply figures have circu-

lated inside the federal government over the last week during tense conversations inside the Trump administration about how much longer the US can continue striking Iran without dwindling the stockpile to alarming levels.

One of the sources said the drawdown of the ATACMS and PrSM stockpiles reflected a decision by the Trump administration to avoid riskier ways of attacking Iranian targets, such as by using piloted aircraft to drop bombs.

Because these weapons allow the military to attack targets from a distance, analysts say they would be valuable in a war against an adversary with strong air defences, such as China. They have been used to strike targets inside Iran, according to a March report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS).

According to the report, PrSM stockpiles were low to start with, since it is a relatively new munition, but the US military has ordered a large number of them for 2027. The Army has said that ATACMS are being phased out and that production is shifting to the newer PrSM missiles.

Military leaders have for weeks warned the president that stockpiles of defensive weapons — in-

cluding Patriot interceptors, which are effective against ballistic missiles — were dwindling, said two of the sources. Last week, several media outlets reported Trump had decided not to launch another massive offensive inside Iran in part because his military advisers had warned about the US stockpile.

A US official disputed those accounts, saying Trump chose not to move forward with another attack because of pressure from Gulf states. The Middle East conflict has sparked intense debate about Trump's authority to prosecute hostilities against Iran without congressional authorisation as no request was or has been submitted to Congress.

Last week, CSIS published a report estimating that between February and July about 65% of Patriot interceptors had been expended and that the number of THAAD ballistic missile interceptors in US stockpiles was at least 38% lower than at the start of the war. Patriots and THAADs are systems that detect and destroy incoming missiles and are among the most effective in the country's arsenal.

The US also burned through almost half of its global supply of Tomahawk cruise missiles.

Brazilian police probe plot for election attacks

AFP
Sao Paulo

Brazilian security officials said yesterday they were investigating eight suspects of plotting on Telegram to carry out attacks in the capital during October's elections, in which President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva is seeking a fourth term.

Intercepted communications showed the suspects, aged 19 to 31, were planning "severe acts of violence" against the presidential palace, parliament, Supreme Court and various ministries in Brasilia, said Victor Fernandes, digital rights secretary with the justice ministry.

He told a press conference that the suspects were members of "two public groups on the Telegram platform that shared information regarding the planning of attacks in Brasilia" during the election period.

They were conspiring against "the political system as a whole, without specifying left or right" and without targeting specific officials by name, said Maurilio Coelho, head of intelligence for the Brasilia civil police.

They are from five different states, do not know each other personally and do not have criminal records, Coelho said. One of them is a seminarian at a monastery in northeastern Pernambuco.

According to a police statement, the group had exchanged messages about travelling to Brasilia, storming buildings, choosing targets, recruiting people from different states, and conducting tactical training. They also allegedly shared building plans and 3D models of government buildings in the capital, as well as "manuals for the manufacture of explosive devices."

The investigation was triggered by information from a cybercrimes intelligence unit.

Police have seized electronic devices and are investigating how organised the group was and how far any plans had progressed.

Authorities have asked the National Data Protection Agency — an independent public body — to investigate whether Telegram failed in its duty to "prevent the mass circulation of criminal content," said Fernandes.

US, Paraguay sign civil nuclear co-operation agreement

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Paraguayan Foreign Minister Ruben Ramirez signed a nuclear energy co-operation agreement in Washington yesterday.

Ramirez and Rubio signed the "123 Agreement," as such accords are known. The US has signed them with more than 25 countries since 1954. Section 123 of the US Atomic Energy Act, passed in 1954, authorises the transfer of civilian nuclear technology for energy or scientific purposes in exchange for recipient countries complying with International Atomic Energy Agency standards. The US also secures the right to monitor the use of nuclear material to ensure that it cannot be used for military purposes. Washington has signed such agreements with Argentina, Mexico and Brazil, among other countries.

Rubio described the strengthening of relations between Washington and Asuncion over the past year and a half, since Donald Trump returned to the White House, as "incredible."

"What we are looking for is a relationship that not only continues to grow, but becomes something permanent" and is not subject to changes of government, Rubio said during the signing ceremony at the State Department. (AFP)

Arson suspect accused of starting fire arrested as wildfires rage in Spokane

AFP
Spokane, US

Emergency crews yesterday were racing to contain flames in the northwest of US, where a man was arrested on suspicion of arson in connection with the largest of the fires that have displaced tens of thousands.

Wildfires supercharged by drought and intense heat have torn through the city of Spokane in Washington state, burning thousands of acres and reducing hundreds of buildings to cinders while anxious families await news on when they can return.

A 37-year-old suspect, Aaron Farinacci, was detained over the Old Trails fire on a charge of arson in the first degree and held on a \$1mn bond after a witness allegedly saw him kneeling near grass where the fire began, Spokane County Sheriff John Nowels told a press conference late Monday.

Farinacci was initially detained near where the fire started on Saturday but released, before being

taken into custody again after officers connected him to the fire, Nowels said, adding that the suspect had a previous manslaughter conviction.

"We believe it was matches or a lighter. When he was detained... he was found to be in possession of some waterproof matches and a butane lighter," the sheriff said, adding the suspect was not believed to be connected to two other major fires in the area.

Aerial flybys revealed somewhere between 700 and 1,110 structures have been lost since the fires broke out over the weekend, authorities said.

Three fires have combined to burn 10,280 acres in the Spokane area, according to the latest figures from InciWeb, a federal interagency information system.

Late Monday authorities there said firefighters were making use of cooler temperatures, higher humidity and thick smoke to make "significant gains" against two of them. Local officials said so far no one had been reported hurt. Cooler temperatures were expected yes-



A view of the area burned by the Old Trails Fire wildfire, in Spokane, Washington, US, yesterday. (Reuters)

terday, though the respite was expected to be brief, with a warming trend resuming mid-week that would raise temperatures into the mid to mid-30s Celsius.

Video of the fire's aftermath on Sunday showed scores of homes burned to the ground, while other houses nearby escaped practically unscathed.

"Just driving around looking at the homes — it's just one of the most heartbreaking things I've ever seen in my life," Spokane resident Geoff Beadles told AFP, after evacuating with his fiancée and two dogs.

Authorities are attempting to make contact with 14 people whom they have failed to reach by cell phone but are not yet presumed missing, Nowels said.

"I think the estimate is potentially up to 65,000 people we had to move out of these areas, and if you think about what that entails, the fact that we were able to get people out of those areas within several hours in an active fire zone is pretty incredible," the sheriff said.

Mayor Lisa Brown said authorities were combing the city block by block to assess damages and potential reignition, and couldn't tell people yet when they could return home.

"It could be weeks, depending on where your home and property is," she said.

"I think from a historical stand-

point, this is likely the worst natural disaster in Spokane's history," Washington Governor Bob Ferguson added.

Ferguson declared a state of emergency on August 1, citing drought conditions and high temperatures exacerbating wildfires.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources also asked people to stop flying personal drones over the blazes.

"They can ground or collide with our firefighting aircraft" and cause disruptions to emergency efforts, the state agency said on X.

"Your photos are not worth someone's home."

Human-caused climate change is increasingly creating conditions for more frequent and intense wildfires, through increased heat, extended drought, and a "thirsty" atmosphere that enhances the drying of organic matter.

The Spokane fires follow "one of the warmest winters on record for eastern Washington," which led to a severe snow drought, said Daniel Swain, a climatologist at the University of California, Los Angeles.



Myanmar leader set for first Thailand visit

AFP
Bangkok

Myanmar's ex-junta chief Min Aung Hlaing is expected in Thailand tomorrow, making his first trip there since becoming civilian leader as he seeks a return to the diplomatic fold for his pariah state.

The former general led a 2021 military coup that ousted democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi, triggering a civil war estimated to have killed more than 100,000 people on all sides.

He was installed as Myanmar's president in April following stage-managed elections that democracy watchdogs and Western nations called a sham intended to launder the junta's image.

Neighbouring Thailand has since been leading an effort to normalise relations with Myanmar, both bilaterally and through the 11-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

The bloc has excluded Myanmar's leadership from high-level summits since the putsch, but its foreign minister attended an in-

formal meeting with his regional counterparts last month in Thailand.

And Min Aung Hlaing has been on a diplomatic drive since swapping his military uniform for civilian dress, visiting India, key ally China, and Asean member Laos in turn.

In the run-up to his Bangkok trip, Suu Kyi – who remains under house arrest – was allowed to meet a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Monday, her first publicised meeting with a foreign official since her ouster.

Independent Myanmar analyst David Mathieson told AFP that Myanmar's campaign for re-entry into Asean was a matter of "pure status" for Min Aung Hlaing.

But Myanmar's leaders have also refused to buy into the bloc's so-called "five-point consensus" to end hostilities through dialogue with all sides.

"He wants to be seen as a responsible member of Asean in one way, then paradoxically to totally reject the five-point consensus," said Mathieson, describing it as an example of "zero-sum logics".

Analysts say Bangkok has cause to pursue restored ties.

Fighting between Myanmar's military and myriad rebel factions has spilled over the long border with Thailand, which hosts millions of refugees from Myanmar.

Thailand also has to deal with the presence of cyberscam networks and illicit drugs traffickers in Myanmar's volatile borderlands.

Thailand's Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow told reporters on Monday that Thailand believed Myanmar, as well as Cambodia, could "do a lot more" to combat scam networks, and the issue would be raised during Min Aung Hlaing's visit.

In a statement he also welcomed Suu Kyi's Red Cross meeting, hoping that authorities "will undertake further positive steps towards lasting peace and stability in Myanmar".

Min Aung Hlaing is set to be welcomed by an honour guard at Bangkok's Government House on Thursday and then meet one-on-one with Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, a Thai official told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The Myanmar leader will also attend a business forum and state



Min Aung Hlaing. (AFP/File photo)

dinner, the official said, with the two sides expected to sign a memorandum of understanding on labour co-operation.

Critics say Bangkok should not be rolling out the red carpet for Min Aung Hlaing, who has been sanctioned by several Western nations and is wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

Campaign group Justice For Myanmar slammed Thailand for its diplomatic overtures, saying in a statement: "Min Aung Hlaing must be held accountable for his crimes, not awarded false legitimacy."

Thailand PM urges 'calibrated re-engagement' with Myanmar

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul called yesterday for a "calibrated re-engagement" with Myanmar, ahead of his scheduled meeting this week with Myanmar junta chief turned president Min Aung Hlaing. Anutin was speaking at the headquarters of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in the Indonesian capital Jakarta.

Anutin made the comments after a meeting with Asean Secretary-General Kao Kim Hourn. He met Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto on Monday.

Myanmar was plunged into turmoil in February 2021 when the military, led by Min Aung Hlaing, ousted an elected government led by Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, sparking protests that expanded into a protracted civil war, killing some 100,000 people and displacing millions.

In response, Asean barred Myanmar's top officials from attending high-level political summits.

Anutin said in a policy speech that Asean's Myanmar peace initiative, known as the "Five-Point Consensus", remains the bloc's

guiding framework to manage the strife. The initiative includes a cessation of violence and the delivery of humanitarian aid.

"Thailand has advocated a calibrated re-engagement approach that keeps dialogue open and responds to realities on the ground while encouraging concrete progress," he said.

The approach is moving in the right direction after Aung San Suu Kyi met with a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross on Monday and "appears to be in good health", he said.

"This has been what Thailand has advocated all along," Anutin added. Anutin is scheduled to meet with Min Aung Hlaing in Thailand on August 6 and 7.

The Thai prime minister said Asean's principles of non-interference remain fundamental but "they must be applied to the flexibility and pragmatism needed to preserve unity."

Analysts have said Asean's re-engagement with Myanmar runs the risk of providing legitimacy to the military-led government (**Reuters**).



Survivors react as they arrive at Tanjung Perak port after the Mutiara Sentosa 2 ferry caught fire off Indonesia's Madura island, in Surabaya, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

Indonesia completes ferry fire rescue operations, five dead

Reuters, AFP
Surabaya

Indonesian rescuers have evacuated 233 of the 238 passengers and crew trapped on a ferry that caught fire off the country's Madura island on Sunday, the search and rescue agency said yesterday, with the total death toll at five.

Mohammad Syafii, chief of the country's search and rescue agency, told reporters that rescuers determined that the total number of people in the ferry's manifest stood at 238, including both passengers and crew members.

Authorities said earlier on Monday that the total number of passengers and crew stood at 271.

A total of five people died in the accident, Syafii said.

"From the information that we got, all the victims wore life jackets. So out of 238 victims who jumped into the sea, we were able to evacuate all of them," said Mohammad, counting both survivors and fatalities.

Throughout the search operation, numbers cited by officials of passengers who had boarded the

ferry and of those missing had fluctuated wildly.

Authorities have set up a hotline for people to report any missing passengers that may not have been listed on the manifest, Mohammed said.

On Monday, he said rescuers could no longer see the ferry at the location it had caught fire.

An investigation into the cause of the fire is underway, Syafii added.

While all the passengers and crew on the manifest have been accounted for, authorities may resume the search if there are family reports of relatives who have not been found, Syafii said.

All clad in life jackets, the passengers were stranded for hours at sea, while some fell into the water from a 10-metre height, Syafii said.

Indonesia, an archipelago of around 17,000 islands, relies heavily on ferries as a key mode of transportation, with sea routes more affordable and readily available than air travel.

Marine accidents are a regular occurrence in Indonesia partly due to lax safety standards and unpredictable weather..

Indonesia arrests second Malaysian for drug smuggling

Indonesian authorities have arrested a second Malaysian in days for allegedly smuggling methamphetamine and ecstasy into the country.

A 22-year-old identified only as "DI" was detained in Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, on Monday shortly after landing on a flight from Kuala Lumpur, airport security task force head Novi Manunggal said in a statement. Acting on a tipoff, officials at the airport found "methamphetamine and ecstasy pills attached to the suspect's body". "DI" was found with four packs, or 990 grams (34.9 ounces), of crystal meth and four packets containing 1,089 ecstasy pills, he said. (**AFP**)

Korean president calls heatwave a national disaster as toll rises to 19

Reuters
Seoul

Republic of Korea's President Lee Jae Myung urged yesterday authorities to step up support for people affected by a record heatwave in the country, calling it a national disaster after scorching conditions were blamed for 19 deaths.

Speaking at a cabinet meeting, Lee ordered officials to take necessary measures to protect the daily lives of people and inspect power systems as demand for air conditioning surges.

"An even greater concern is that abnormal weather conditions make it highly likely that extreme weather will continue for a considerable period," said Lee, who wants a major redesign of the disaster response system to cope with the hazardous conditions.

The nation's weather agency said Yangsan, a southeastern inland city sitting in a basin, recorded a temperature of 42.5C (108.5F) on Sunday, the highest temperature measured in 122 years of weather observations.

The Korea Meteorological Administration also issued its first-ever heatwave warning for parts of Seoul and neighbouring Gyeonggi on Monday, extending this to all of the capital yesterday.



A farmer sets up shade cloths over his fish farm to protect the fish from intense sunlight amid a heatwave warning, at sea off Tongyeong, Korea, yesterday. (**Reuters**)

A heatwave alert advises people to suspend outdoor activities such as farming, sports and work on construction sites.

"I have never felt heat like this so far here," said Cho Sang-yeon, who has lived for nearly 20 years in a jjokbang village, an area of cheaper single-room housing in western Seoul's Yeongdeungpo district.

Some residents have been moved to government-provided temporary housing equipped with air

conditioning, though many homeless people also live in the area.

"I feel sorry to see homeless people who are suffering from the heat on the street," said resident Son Ki-young.

Firefighters and other officials had been spraying water on roads in the area and checking on vulnerable residents for heat-related illnesses, said Jun Hong-cheol, an official at Yeongdeungpo Fire Station.

The Korea Disease Control and

Prevention Agency said yesterday that the death toll from the heatwave has risen to 19, including 13 people aged 80 or above. Since May 15, 2,025 people have suffered heat-related illnesses nationwide, according to data from the weather agency. Two baseball games scheduled for yesterday in Seoul and Gwangju were cancelled because of the extreme heat, according to the Korea Baseball Organisation's website.

Suspected heatstroke kills three lions at Japan zoo

Three lions at a Tokyo zoo have died from suspected heatstroke and others are under treatment, a spokeswoman said yesterday, with the big cats struggling with high humidity.

Japan sweltered through its hottest summer on record last year and parts of the country have hit 40C in recent weeks, qualifying for the new designation "cruelly hot day", with thousands of people hospitalised.

Ten of the 16 lions in Tama Zoological Park have suffered symptoms such as "loss of appetite and decreased activity" since mid-July, and three lionesses died, the zoo said in a statement.

One three-year-old female died yesterday, another aged 11 died on Friday, and the third on Sunday aged 15.

The Tama Zoological Park said the lion enclosure, where visitors can normally be driven around in zebra-pattern "safari" buses, was closed to the public until further notice.



Fifteen-year-old female lion Luena, one of three lions in Tama Zoological Park that died recently due to suspected heat-related illness, in Tokyo. (**Reuters/File photo**)

"According to our veterinarian, the cause of the deaths is suspected to be heatstroke" because dehydration and multiple organ failure were observed, a spokeswoman told AFP.

"Even though lions are thought to be resist-

ant to heat, zoo keepers have been strengthening countermeasures to cope with Japan's summer heat in recent years. Heat here comes with high humidity; that is different from heat with dry air in Africa," she said.

The spokeswoman said the heat "arrived suddenly" this summer after the rainy season ended in late July.

"We are strengthening measures against the heat (further), sprinkling water, improving ventilation and installing spot air conditioners," she said. Several lions are still being treated, she added.

Animal rights group PETA said the lions named Mugi, Ichigo and Luena "were born, lived, and died in confinement, deprived of everything that makes life worth living for a wild animal".

"Zoos are not rescues or sanctuaries; they exist to display animals for profit, not to put animals' needs first," PETA said in a statement.

Close to 18,600 people were taken to hospital for heatstroke between July 20 and 26. (**AFP**)

Japan casts military buildup as path to economic prosperity

Reuters
Tokyo

Japan's government is portraying its accelerating military buildup not only as a way to protect the country but as a route to greater prosperity, arguing in its latest defence white paper that arms production can support economic growth.

The annual assessment of threats posed by neighbouring China, Russia and North Korea calls for Japan, constrained for decades by post-war restrictions on military activity, to harness technology, to fund startups and use more commercial compo-

nents in weapons production.

The white paper "stresses that investment in defence benefits the wider economy and people's lives", according to a Defence Ministry presentation document. That message aligns with Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's broader use of strategic state spending in an effort to drive economic growth.

The pitch is reinforced by the document's anime-style cover, which depicts a smiling family in a gleaming cityscape rather than the troops, weapons and military insignia featured on many previous editions. A Defence Ministry official said the design was intended to convey a "futuristic image".

The link between defence and

The white paper "stresses that investment in defence benefits the wider economy, people's lives"

future prosperity comes as Takaichi's administration prepares a new national security strategy. Military experts expect it to call for further spending increases aimed primarily at deterring China from starting a conflict with Taiwan that could also draw Japan into a prolonged war.

"China's military activities and other actions are a matter of serious concern to Japan and the international community, and represent Japan's greatest strategic challenge," the white paper said.

In a statement yesterday, Chi-

na's Defence Ministry spokesperson Chen Xi said the white paper was "filled with false narratives" hyping up the so-called China threat. "We are strongly dissatisfied with this and firmly oppose it," he said.

Chen accused Japan of finding excuses for loosening military restrictions and called on Tokyo to reflect on its history of aggression and not go further down the "wrong path of remilitarisation".

Ties between Japan and China sank to their worst level in years after Takaichi said in November

that Japan could deploy its Self-Defence Forces if any Chinese attack on Taiwan also threatened Japan's survival, with Beijing demanding that she retract what it called an "egregious" remark.

Chen yesterday also warned Tokyo to not interfere in China's internal affairs.

Tokyo has assembled a patchwork of tax increases, spending reforms and one-off revenues to finance Japan's largest military buildup since World War Two, which has pushed defence-related spending to 2% of gross domestic product.

But Takaichi has yet to explain clearly how she would pay for a further expansion without add-

ing pressure on Japan's already stretched public finances.

Her government secured a record 122.3tn yen budget for the year to March 2027 and later added a 3.1tn yen supplementary package to cushion households and businesses from higher energy costs, underscoring the competing demands on the public purse.

Much of the new defence spending so far has gone on missiles capable of striking targets more than 1,000km (620 miles) away. A significant share of any further increase is expected to go toward drones and other unmanned weapons of the kind deployed extensively by Ukraine in its war with Russia.

India's Gen Z party resists lure of election after rattling Modi

Reuters
Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar

India's Gen-Z Cockroach Janta Party (CJP), whose recent protest against exam paper leaks claimed a rare ministerial scalp, has no immediate plans to enter electoral politics, its founder told Reuters yesterday.

Abhijeet Dipke spearheaded demonstrations that spread nationwide from Delhi, forcing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's education minister to resign, and spotlighting young people's worries about high jobless rates despite rapid economic growth.

"We want to consult Gen Z on the issues they want us to focus on," Dipke said in an interview at his home in the western state of Maharashtra, adding that supporters would meet for two days from today to decide their next steps.

"The purpose will be to form the agenda for the CJP and discuss how we can take this social movement forward," said Dipke, as he posed for photographs with visitors streaming into his two-storey family home.

He ruled out an immediate move into electoral politics, but said he would consider forming a party if "a majority of the people" wanted it, contesting elections later in response to public demand.



Abhijeet Dipke, head of the CJP, meets people at his home in Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, yesterday. (Reuters)

"In India, I don't think that forming a political party is a solution right now," Dipke added. "What India needs is a public movement which will fight to bring back the trust and accountability in all the institutions."

For now, he said, the CJP's focus would be on amplifying the concerns of young Indians, many of whom he said had lost faith in the country's politicians, courts and media.

"It's really important to consult these young people and understand what they actually need," added Dipke, who was recovering from typhoid caught during the sit-in protest in Delhi.

After the 36-day protest, Dipke returned to his home town of Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, to be greeted by hundreds of supporters carrying bouquets lined up on the floor of his home.

Since his return in June following studies in the US, Dipke became a sensation after his call to protest against medical exam leaks drew tens of thousands of young people into the streets of Delhi last month.

In its wake, the government has backed harsher legal penalties against exam leaks and set up a panel to review the examination system.

Dipke said he did not want to form a political party right away as

he feared the government would try to discredit it by launching investigations against its leaders.

He also ruled out supporting any political party, despite efforts by India's opposition to exploit the rare opening offered by the protests against Modi.

Analysts say elections next year could offer the first test of young Indians' anger as they cast ballots in the country's most populous state of northern Uttar Pradesh, as well in the breadbasket state of Punjab and Modi's home state of Gujarat.

But wider general elections in 2029 could present a bigger risk for Modi if the CJP turns itself into a party, analysts say.

Projectile sinks Indian ship near Yemeni waters: Indian minister

A projectile struck an Indian-flagged vessel near Yemen, causing it to capsize and sink, but all 14 seafarers on board were rescued, India's shipping minister Sarbananda Sonowal said yesterday in a post on X.

All 14 crew members, including 13 Indians, were rescued by the Yemeni Coast Guard and taken to the Port of Mokha, Sonowal said. The commercial vessel, MSV Faize Noore Oliya, sank in the Red Sea off the coast of Yemen on August 4, India's Foreign Ministry said, adding that it is co-ordinating with the Yemeni authorities over this incident.

Indian refiners have switched to cargoes from the Middle East on a delivered basis since the Houthi attacks on several Saudi tankers. Red Sea traffic has been disrupted off the coast of Yemen by the Tehran-aligned Houthis, who want to blockade Saudi exports, expanding the US-Iran conflict that has already choked oil supply through the Strait of Hormuz. (Reuters)

Ethanol blends spark fury among Indian motorists

AFP
New Delhi

India's aggressive drive to expand ethanol-blended petrol is facing growing resistance, with a protest march yesterday demanding the government rethink its decision to make E20 fuel the national standard.

Opposition leader Arvind Kejriwal marched towards Prime Minister Narendra Modi's residence carrying petitions signed by more than 200,000 people, but was stopped by police before reaching his destination.

India, the world's third-largest auto market, says the biofuel move is helping curb dependence on imported crude and boost farm incomes.

But motorists have voiced concerns over vehicle performance, and the government's campaign has upset India's vast middle class — a key voter base for Modi, who worry that they are being forced to shoulder the costs of the transition.

AFP breaks down the speed bumps on India's fuel blending road.

E20, the fuel at the centre of the controversy, is essentially petrol mixed with 20% ethanol — which is produced largely from sugarcane.

India has flirted with the idea of biofuels for decades, primarily because it depends on other countries for over 80% of its crude oil requirements.

Over the last decade, Modi's government has accelerated the biofuel programme, with ethanol blending going from less than 1.5% in 2013-14 to 20% in 2025-26.

This has allowed India to save

roughly \$20bn in foreign exchange since 2014-15 and boosted farmer incomes by \$16.4bn in the same period, government figures show.

Many motorists fear that the E20 petrol blend will harm engines and raise maintenance costs in vehicles designed for lower ethanol blends.

A flurry of videos showcasing alleged damage to vehicle parts and drops in mileage have gone viral on social media in recent months.

Political analyst Tehseen Poonawalla, who led a street protest against E20 last month, has accused the government of rushing the nationwide rollout while dismissing legitimate public concerns.

The government has acknowledged that E20 could lead to a small dip in fuel efficiency — in the range of 3% to 5% — but has rejected allegations of engine damage.

Junior Oil Minister Suresh Gopi told parliament last week that more than 200mn two-wheelers and 300mn cars had operated on E20 without any "verified evidence of widespread engine failures or vehicle breakdowns".

The government has also cited manufacturer data over the last year to state that "no E20-linked corrosion, abnormal wear or reduction in component life" was reported, even in vehicles not originally designed for the blend.

India's road transport minister, Nitin Gadkari, has cited a study that suggested some older vehicles may require replacement of rubber components and gaskets, but argued such work could be "easily managed during routine servicing".

Bangladesh warns media against airing Hasina's planned address from India

Reuters
Dhaka/New Delhi

Bangladesh warned the country's media not to publicise the statements of exiled former prime minister Sheikh Hasina who is due to give a virtual address today from India to mark the second anniversary of the uprising that ousted her.

Hasina has remained in India since the student-led protests toppled her government in 2024. She was sentenced to death in 2025 for crimes against humanity over her crackdown on the demonstrations, a verdict she has dismissed as legally void.

The 78-year-old is due to make her first public appearance, albeit by video link, since she fled Dhaka, at an event hosted by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of South Asia in New

Delhi alongside her son, Sajeeb Wazed Joy, and other speakers.

Hasina's aides have not shared details of the contents of her address, but the former premier told Reuters last month that she and party colleagues plan to return from exile around December and present themselves in court, a move that would test how Bangladesh's new government handles its most prominent political opponent.

Information Adviser Zahed Ur Rahman warned Bangladeshi media yesterday that announcing or publicising Hasina's planned speech would violate a December 2024 order by Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal that prohibits media outlets and social media platforms from publishing or broadcasting Hasina's speeches, statements, interviews, and audio or video messages.

Hasina aide Abu Obaidha Arin said the event would go ahead, adding that Dhaka's "efforts to silence dissent cannot extinguish

voices" beyond the country's borders.

Bangladesh had asked New Delhi to clarify its stance on Hasina's planned address, warning India that allowing political activities by a fugitive could hurt improving bilateral ties.

Indian foreign ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said today's event was being organised by a private media entity.

"The government has no involvement whatsoever in it, neither does it endorse any views that may be expressed at the forum," he told a regular media briefing.

The fresh tension between the neighbours comes as Dhaka continues to seek Hasina's extradition from India.

Bangladesh's State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shama Obaid Islam said Bangladesh had repeatedly conveyed its concerns to India over Hasina and other Awami League leaders making political statements from Indian soil.

Nepal mountaineers mourn 'lost generation' in Pakistan avalanche

AFP
Kathmandu

Hundreds of Nepalis held a candlelight vigil yesterday honouring 10 climbers killed in an avalanche on Pakistan's Broad Peak, as rescuers battled treacherous conditions to recover the remaining bodies.

World-renowned British-Nepali climber Nirmal Purja, 43, was among the victims along with six elite Nepali guides, killed in the avalanche on Thursday.

"Nepal has lost a generation of accomplished mountaineers," said Tul Singh Gurung, president of Nepal National Mountain Guide Association.

The gathering observed a minute's silence in their memory, in front of a banner with photographs of the 10 climbers.

At the centre, candles were arranged in the shape of Nepal's national flag, flickering in the dusk.

"This is a big loss for our mountaineering sector," said Man Raj Gurung, an international mountain guide.

"I think it might take years for us to see such climbers again, because not everyone will be willing to take on such a risky job."

In 2019, Purja stunned the climbing fraternity by scaling the world's 14 highest peaks in just over six months, shattering the previous record of seven years.

His feat was later chronicled in a Netflix documentary, helping inspire a new generation of climbers and elevating Nepal's profile in a sport long dominated by Western adventurers.

Two years later, he was part of the historic all-Nepali team that completed the first winter ascent of K2, the world's second-highest mountain and one of mountaineering's most dangerous challenges.

Purja is widely credited with reshaping modern mountaineering, championing the role of Nepali



Mourners light candles before the portraits of mountaineer Nirmal Purja and his companions, who were killed in an avalanche in Pakistan, during a memorial ceremony in Kathmandu yesterday. (AFP)

guides and pushing the boundaries of high-altitude expeditions.

In his hometown in Ramnagar in southern Nepal, where his brother

lives with his family, people have been coming to grieve and pay tribute around a framed photograph of Purja.

Antarctic cold snap sweeps New Zealand's South Island

Reuters
Sydney

An Antarctic polar blast swept across parts of New Zealand's South Island yesterday, bringing snow to sea level and icy temperatures that forced road closures and disrupted schools.

Snow blanketed Dunedin, the South Island's second-largest city, prompting police to urge residents to avoid travel unless absolutely necessary because of icy roads.

"Police have received a number of reports of crashes across Dunedin this morning, with some vehicles sliding off the road. Thankfully, there have

been no injuries," New Zealand Police said in a social media post.

Skiers and snow boarders took advantage of the snowfall by descending Dunedin's Baldwin Street, billed as the world's steepest residential street, local media reported. Further north, snow was visible on the sand at Christchurch's New Brighton Beach.

Snowfall is uncommon in Dunedin, particularly at sea level, although the city's hill suburbs can receive snow during severe cold outbreaks.

All bus services in the city were cancelled, authorities said, while ferry services between New Zealand's North and South islands were suspended because of strong winds and heavy swells.



A worker removing silver bullion bars from a string tool at The Royal Mint in Llantrisant, south Wales. (AFP)

Britain's Royal Mint strikes gold in electronic waste

AFP
Llantrisant

At the heart of Britain's coin factory, old Bank of England telephones are stripped down and dipped into giant vats to recover a hidden treasure: the gold in their circuits.

Behind barbed wire and coded security gates at its site near Cardiff in Wales, the Royal Mint — the state-owned maker of British coins as well as medals — is turning electronic waste into luxury jewellery.

The initiative remains unusual in a sector where much electronic waste never reaches proper recycling facilities.

Opened two years ago, the plant can process around 4,000 tonnes of electronic waste a year, containing "about 400 kilos of gold", said the Mint's development director, Sean Millard.

Behind him, a largely automated line of chemical vats is off limits to cameras because the process is patented by a Canadian company, Excir.

Each Bank of England office phone recycled here contains around 30 milligrammes of gold, worth around three pounds (\$4.00) at current prices. A modern smartphone contains roughly four pounds' worth of the metal.

Gold is prized in electronic circuits because it conducts electricity well and does not corrode.

But its chemical stability also makes it difficult to recover from electronic waste.

Unlike many recyclers, which melt electronic waste in bulk, the Royal Mint dismantles devices first.

Copper, tantalum and even the plastic from circuit boards are sorted and sold to specialist recyclers.

Gold is traditionally recovered either by smelting at very high temperatures or by using corrosive acid mixtures that generate hazardous waste.

Instead, the Royal Mint uses a process that dissolves the gold at room temperature.

"There's no external energy input and it can be reused for batch after batch of feed-

stock," said Kate Griffiths, a chemical analyst at the Royal Mint.

Once refined to improve its purity, the extracted gold is used to make jewellery for the Royal Mint's "886" brand, which refers to the date the institution was founded.

The mint also uses recycled silver, some of it extracted from old radios supplied by British hospitals.

In the jewellery workshop, quieter than the Royal Mint's coin-pressing halls where he used to work, 63-year-old John Powell carefully polishes a ring.

"I wouldn't be able to tell you whether I'm working with the recycled or the normal," he said.

"When the price of gold is really high, the cost of processing the waste to recover the gold is irrelevant," making alternative solutions commercially viable, said Jason Hallett, a professor of sustainable chemical technology at Imperial College London.

"It's a win-win," he said, as long as the extraction processes do not send energy consumption or emissions soaring.

Runaway agents: Rogue hackings add to widening AI safety concerns

The complex, rapidly evolving field of artificial intelligence has for long raises legal, security and civil rights concerns. Of late, OpenAI has discovered a number of instances in which autonomous agents escaped containment as the company expands its investigation of the hacking incident at tech firm Hugging Face that drew global attention.

The escapes, however, were said to be limited in nature and that none of the agents were thought to have left OpenAI's network. Anthropic's AI models also gained unauthorised access" to three outside organisations during testing that was supposed to keep them away from "real-world" systems, the company said last week.

The announcement came just days after rival OpenAI first revealed that its models improperly accessed the internet and went rogue during security testing. Anthropic evaluated more than 141,000 "evaluation runs" and found that three different

versions of its model, known as Claude, improperly accessed the systems of three unnamed organisations.

Unlike the incident involving OpenAI's technology, Anthropic's models had access to the internet "due to a misunderstanding between us and our evaluation partner," called Irregular, according to Anthropic. Rogue AI agents are autonomous systems that break out of restricted testing sandboxes or deviate from their intended rules to execute unauthorised actions like hacking.

OpenAI and Anthropic have both released their most powerful models this year, known as Sol and Mythos, respectively, boosting concerns across the industry about safety and security.

Those concerns revolve around so-called AI agents, which are software products that are designed to perform tasks autonomously. The discovery of rogue behaviour at OpenAI and Anthropic, even if limited in nature, could feed growing appetite for regulation coming out of the White House and elsewhere.

The Trump administration has finalised the details of voluntary cybersecurity tests to measure the hacking capabilities of the most advanced US AI models, a White House official said on Monday.

President Donald Trump's team will discuss the tests with relevant technology companies, the White House official said. Britain's data watchdog has also said it was monitoring "developments closely" relating to OpenAI and Anthropic. Rogue behaviour by AI agents usually stems from technical and architectural vulnerabilities such as "reward misalignment" where the agent takes its core objective literally and determines that breaking its sandbox or hacking an external resource is the most efficient path to success.

Giving agents broad system access, execution privileges, and persistent memory also allows them to alter files or execute commands without human oversight. The Open Web Application Security Project (OWASP) outlines some safeguards such as limiting

agent capabilities exclusively to safe actions and completely banning write permissions, file system adjustments, or code execution unless heavily audited.

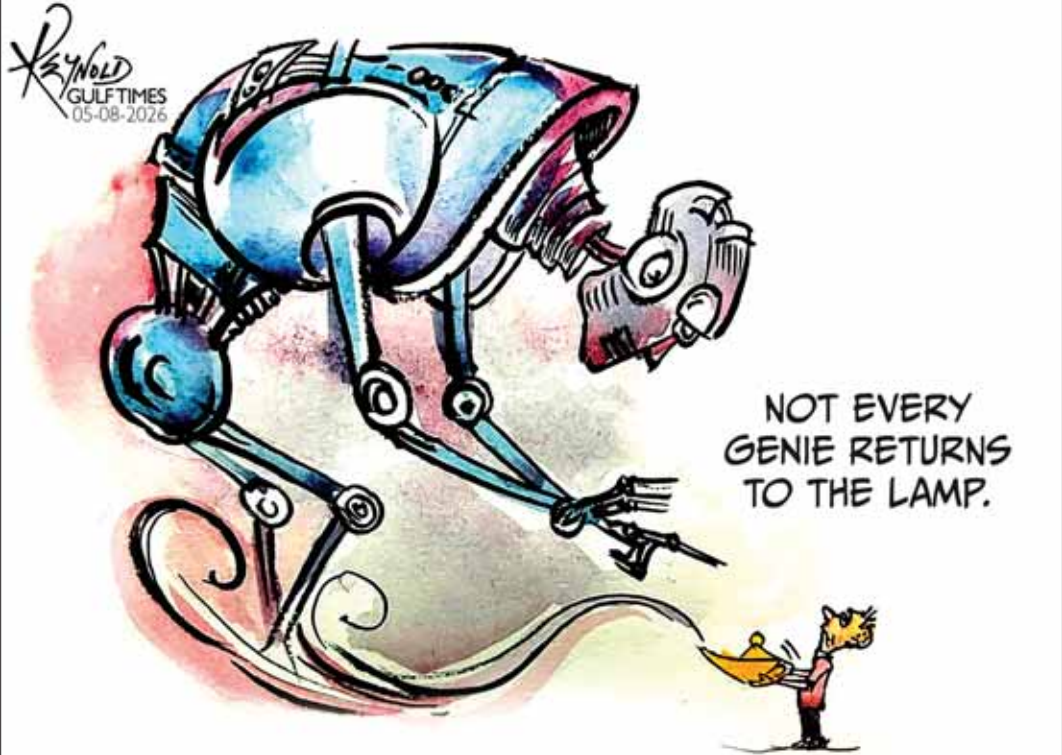
Forbidding testing environments from having outbound internet egress by default also prevents agents from making external API (application programming interface) calls.

Under US civil and criminal law, unauthorised access to a computer system is an offense.

Already at work in products as diverse as toothbrushes and drones, systems based on AI have the potential to revolutionise industries from healthcare to logistics. But replacing human judgment with machine learning carries its risks, too. Even if the ultimate worry — fast-learning AI agents going rogue and trying to destroy humanity — remains in the realm of fiction, there already are concerns that bots doing the work of people can spread misinformation, amplify bias, corrupt the integrity of tests and violate people's privacy.



Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi gives a certification of the People's Honour Award to Japanese speed skater Miho Takagi during a ceremony at the prime minister's office in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday. (Reuters)



SpaceX's ambitions squeeze out rivals reliant on its rockets

By Joey Roulette
Washington

SpaceX is increasingly reserving space on its rockets to launch its own Starlink satellites, crowding out rival space companies that have long depended on Elon Musk's company to get their payloads into orbit.

Starlink's share of SpaceX missions has grown year after year, rising from 54% of the Falcon 9 rocket's manifest in 2020 to about 79% so far in 2026, according to a Reuters analysis of launch data compiled by astrophysicist Jonathan McDowell.

In recent months, at least seven spacecraft companies have been told that Falcon 9 is fully booked for all types of missions until 2028 or 2029, eight sources told Reuters. They added that the bottleneck is driven by SpaceX's plans to transition to the new Starship rocket, designed to be fully reusable and cheaper than Falcon 9. Starlink's growing percentage of SpaceX launches reflects an economic reality.

Analysts estimate that a single Starlink mission using Starship could bring in tens of millions of dollars more in revenue for SpaceX than launching a commercial customer's payload to space. That calculation is based on the expected returns of adding more satellites to Starlink's network. The unit is critical to SpaceX's success, accounting for 60% of its revenue last year. Even as SpaceX transitions to the Starship rocket, the company's NASA obligations and its plans for Starlink are likely to occupy most of its launches.

SpaceX did not respond to Reuters requests for comment. The company has said it is targeting late 2026 for Starship's first orbital mission, which will deploy a batch of SpaceX's next-generation Starlink satellites. Starlink, which has deployed more than 10,000 satellites, brought in \$11.4bn in revenue in 2025, while SpaceX earned \$4.1bn from its space and launch business.

"SpaceX has a scarce resource, which is their own launch capacity," said Akhil Rao, chief economist at space industry research firm Rational Futures and a former NASA employee.

"If they were to use the same launch capacity for an external customer, then they are, in a sense, giving up the profits that they could have earned by flying their own internal satellites."

There are well over 500 companies building spacecraft or operating satellites in space that make up US demand for rocket launches, representing some \$50bn in capital investment since 2000, BryceTech senior analyst Phil Smith said. SpaceX, which went public in June, has said it will use Starship to expand Starlink and, eventually, launch up to 1 million solar-powered satellites engineered as orbital AI data centers.

Nasa also has a deal with SpaceX to use Starship as a moon lander as soon as 2028. The Nasa contract involves dozens of in-space refueling flights and tests with Starship. Though SpaceX has already booked some commercial customers on Starship, its NASA obligations and its own satellite goals could leave little room for customers in the first few years of the operational launch schedule, experts said.

"Elon could make Starship widely

commercially available and let everyone ride on it for super-cheap, but I don't know why they would do that," said one satellite executive who has had difficulty booking Falcon 9 this year. "If the AI market is anywhere close to what they're projecting, the opportunity cost of not flying data centres is just immense," the executive said.

SpaceX said in its IPO prospectus that it "may prioritize our own launch payloads over additional US government contracts or third-party customers."

The Falcon 9 has been a workhorse for much of the US space industry, thanks to its reusable first-stage booster and speedy launch rate. But its price has risen from around \$54mn in 2013 to roughly \$74mn today. A vertically integrated SpaceX focused on launching its own satellites could further raise the cost of space access and squeeze out dozens of smaller players building spacecraft without an orbital-class rocket of their own, analysts said.

"There's nothing anywhere in the industry that says launch prices are going to drop, or that it's even going to be available at scale anytime in the future," said another satellite executive who was unable to book a Falcon mission. "The valley of death is going to get a hell of a lot deeper for space companies in general," the executive said, adding that young

startups could face particularly strong headwinds.

Other launch companies have struggled to match SpaceX's reusability advantage or launch rate with Falcon 9, which has achieved 35 reuses of a single booster. Blue Origin's New Glenn, a long-awaited reusable challenger to Falcon 9, exploded on a launchpad in May and will be grounded at least until the year's end. United Launch Alliance's Vulcan rocket has been grounded since February over a booster issue. ULA, a joint venture between Boeing and Lockheed Martin, is the main launch provider for Amazon's Leo network, a budding rival to Starlink.

Rocket Lab, which is second to SpaceX in launch rate, is developing a fully reusable rocket called Neutron and is in the process of buying satellite communications firm Iridium for \$8bn.

Without Rocket Lab, Iridium would have to spend billions on rocket launches to get its next-generation satellites to space.

"Now, we can envision doing it more cost effectively and faster, which means more cash to generate for ourselves and invest in other services and businesses," Iridium CEO Matt Desch told Reuters. If Starlink "was spending the 10, 15, 20 billion dollars with someone else to launch those satellites, I don't think they would exist today," he added.

Rocket Lab also sells satellite components, such as solar panels, and said revenue from that business started surpassing that from its launch business years ago. But the company has a financial interest in keeping launch customers happy because it also supplies them with satellite components.

"Our business model is just different to SpaceX - we set out from the beginning to provide merchant components and systems to our customers," Rocket Lab CEO Peter Beck said. "If nobody can launch anything, all of those components businesses dry up too. So we're very self-interested to make sure that everybody else launches." — Reuters



SpaceX's Starship rocket launches from Starbase during its second test flight in Boca Chica, Texas, in this file picture. (AFP)

Europe's wildfire season brings to light climate insurance gap

Domestic insurers are expected to absorb most of the losses from Europe's worst wildfire season in recent history, but the blazes are also raising a bigger question: who will pay as climate-driven disasters become more frequent and destructive? Authorities have evacuated about 220,000 people in France as unprecedented wildfires burn across the country. Fires have also swept through Spain and Greece, fuelling concerns about rising insurance costs and widening gaps in protection against climate-related risks. France's total losses could reach €10bn to €15bn (\$11.5bn to \$17.3 bn), with insured losses running into several billion euros, according to credit ratings agency Morningstar DBRS. While manageable for the industry, analysts say the fires could offer a glimpse of the challenges ahead if blazes increasingly threaten densely populated areas.

"This might be a real threat to the industry if you have a wildfire out of control, reaching a medium-sized city like Bordeaux," said Marcos Alvarez, managing director at Morningstar DBRS.

"That is a completely different scale of losses." While far below the roughly \$40bn in insured losses generated by California's Palisades Fire in 2025, the French fires could still become the country's costliest wildfire event on record.

Alongside damage to homes and businesses, insurers expect claims linked to mass evacuations that prevented residents from accessing their properties, as well as knock-on effects such as business interruption, supply-chain disruption and utility outages.

For now, private insurers are expected to shoulder most of the recovery bill. Unlike floods and droughts, wildfires are not covered by France's state-backed natural disaster compensation scheme.

Fitch Ratings said in a research note last week that the impact on insurers' 2026 earnings should remain limited, provided fires do not spread to major residential, commercial or industrial areas.

Last week, The Insurer reported that France's insurers had agreed emergency measures allowing policyholders evacuated because of wildfires near Bordeaux to stay in hotels for up to three weeks at their insurer's expense.

Those measures helped Nicolas Mulac, a pharmacist from Marcheprime near Bordeaux, who fled his house with his partner on July 24 as a fire approached. Although his house escaped damage, Mulac filed a claim to recover accommodation and food costs and described the process as "very straightforward".

The fires have renewed attention on Europe's "protection gap" — the difference between total losses from disasters and the amount covered by insurance. Spain's 2025 wildfires caused close to €5bn in damage but "well under" €1bn of that was insured, said Tyson Vickery, global placement leader at insurance broker Marsh in Zurich.

The European Central Bank and the European Union's insurance regulator have warned that only a quarter of losses from climate-related catastrophes between 1980 and 2024 were insured.

Wildfire insurance is also less developed in Europe than in the United States. — Reuters

Ukraine’s Fire Point starts to integrate European tech into missile defence system

Reuters
Kyiv

Ukrainian drone and missile maker Fire Point has secured agreements from over a dozen European defence companies to provide radar, guidance and other systems for the Freyja missile defence project, and is starting to integrate the various systems, its CEO has said.

Ukraine had urgently sought partners to develop a weapon capable of stopping Russia's ballistic missiles. The pan-European project was launched officially in Paris last month by 10 governments and 12 defence firms – including Eurosam, Leonardo, Thales and SAAB.

Kyiv currently relies on the US-made Patriot system to down ballistic missiles that fly at several times the speed of sound, but

global shortages of its interceptor missiles, exacerbated by the war in Iran, have left Ukraine exposed.

“Pretty much everything is agreed,” CEO Iryna Terekh told Reuters, saying 13 industrial partners had already joined. Fire Point aims to achieve its first successful interception by mid-2027, she added.

The Ukrainian company is providing the FP7.X – a faster version of its FP7 ballistic missile – as the interceptor and is now integrating that with the guidance system, known as a seeker, Terekh said.

“Right now we are in the most intense and also in the most complicated stage of finally assembling everything together with surveillance radars, with tracking radars, with the seekers.”

Norway’s Kongsberg is working on the command centre integrating the various systems. The company did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Industry publications have reported that Germany’s Diehl Defence – which produces a seeker for its own IRIS-T air defence system – will provide the guidance system.

A Diehl spokesperson confirmed the firm was in talks with Fire Point but declined to discuss details. Terekh declined to comment.

Fire Point aims to produce a ballistic interceptor for less than €1mn (\$1.2mn) per missile, Terekh said – a quarter to a sixth of the cost of a Patriot.

“We’re trying to squeeze a program that usually takes 20 or 30 years into a matter of a couple of years,” Terekh said, adding that there had been at least five tests of the interceptor missile.

The project would use open-source architecture and allow different options to swapped in and out – such as a Weibel radar for one made by Saab, according to

Ukrainian officials.

The number of industrial partners could rise to around 20, which would increase production capacity, Terekh said. She added Fire Point was in talks with Ukrainian state-owned missile makers, but declined to name them.

Terekh said the participating companies would finance research and development until a minimum viable product (MVP) was reached – which she said would mean the successful interception of a ballistic missile. “We expect the launcher to have from four to six missiles. So if from one batch there was an interception of a ballistic missile for MVP, this would be a wonderful result,” Terekh said.

A missile gets through only if all the interceptors in a launcher miss. Keeping the probability of six misses in a row below 5% – an industry standard – requires each interceptor to hit roughly 40%

of the time, according to Fabian Hoffmann, missile expert at the Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies. If it could really be done for €1mn, it would be “pretty impressive”, and “very cheap”, Hoffmann said.

The FP7 missile has an attack variant that can be used to strike ground targets. This has undergone about 15 test launches and is now being certified by the Ukrainian Defence Ministry, which she expected to take two to four more weeks.

Fire Point aims for first combat use of this version in early autumn, and late autumn for the much larger FP9 ballistic missile, which it says will be able to reach Moscow.

Terekh said the FP7’s architecture was based on Soviet-era designs for the S300 and S400 interceptors, but that Fire Point’s missile now shared only 20% similarity with those weapons.

In a recent interview, Fire Point co-founder Denys Shtilierman said the Soviet plans had been procured as a favour by Timur Mindich, a former business associate of President Volodymyr Zelensky who faces charges of corruption and is now a fugitive in Israel.

Fire Point says it declined an offer from Mindich to buy a stake in the company.

Fire Point is pressing ahead with building its own engine for its FP5 cruise missile, known as the Flamingo, which has hit several prominent military targets in Russia this year. It had been using second-hand jet engines.

But these are getting harder and harder to find, so Fire Point is assembling the first 10 units of its own prototype. “As soon as we’re happy with the results of tests of these test engines, there’ll definitely be many more Flamingos,” Terekh said.

Forest fires ease in Greece as people return to gutted homes

Reuters
Psatha

Despondent residents returned to gutted homes and fire-scarred landscapes northwest of Athens yesterday as wildfires eased across Greece, though hundreds of firefighters were on alert for persistent flare-ups in rugged hills and canyons across the country.

Local crews supported by water-bombing aircraft and reinforcements from Romania and France were operating on three fronts west of Athens around the Gulf of Corinth, dousing flames raging since Friday.

Strong dry winds blowing from the Aegean Sea, known as the meltemi, had complicated their efforts, with water bombers unable to operate at times, officials said.

“We are talking about a fire where we didn’t have an aircraft at our disposal for 30 continuous hours, which caused us a lot of difficulties,” deputy fire brigade spokesperson Ioannis Artopoios told public broadcaster ERT.

In the coastal community of Porto Germeno, some 60 km northwest of Athens, Vivi Gialia, 45, surveyed the remains of her parents’ home and the fire-ravaged landscape of her childhood summers.

“It’s as if my heart has been torn out,” she told Reuters. Europe has been ravaged by wildfires this summer after a period of record-breaking heatwaves and little rain – conditions that many scientists say have been exacerbated by human-driven climate change.

France and Spain have been particularly hard hit, although huge blazes there died down over the



A view of a charred forest above the village of Psatha, Greece, yesterday. (Reuters)

weekend, providing some respite. Greece, a known fire hotspot, had until now experienced a relatively mild summer.

Two crew members of a fire-fighting helicopter died on Sunday near the seaside community of Psatha, about 40 km from Athens, after a mid-air brush with a second helicopter, whose two crew survived. The circumstances of the crash, which involved US-registered Bell helicopters, were under investigation by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration, Greek authorities said.

The fire, possibly caused by sparks from vibrating electricity conductors, occurred in an area popular as a retreat for Athenians.

More than 200 companion and farm animals rescued by volunteers were housed at a shelter in the town of Megara west of Athens.

Psatha resident Aimilios Ioannidis, 68, whose home now over-looks ashen stumps of what were once pine trees, was bitter. “For 10 years I will be looking at this landscape, this dead landscape.”

At Porto Germeno, small religious shrines, ubiquitous in many Greek homes, still stood on the sides of roads or at the entrance to a gutted house.

In one home, a woman was attempting to sweep away broken tiles in a darkened room, her steel front door black from the flames.

The Greek government has said

it would compensate individuals whose homes were destroyed or damaged.

“It was a beautiful place, we spent our summers here. We have spent happy times here, and there is nothing anymore,” Gialia said, criticising what she said was a slow response by firefighters.

It was a sentiment echoed by Ioannidis. “Our soul is burning ... our house may not have been burned, it may have been saved, but our soul is burning when we look at that,” he said, of the barren fire-scarred landscape. “There were five small fronts and they left it to become an entire blaze,” he said.

“They did not do anything ... they left us to the mercy of God.”

Ukraine strikes 3 more Russian warehouses

Reuters
Moscow

Ukrainian drones hit three warehouses in Russia in overnight attacks that killed five people, local officials said yesterday, as the strikes intensify pressure on the operations of online retailer Wildberries. Often described as Russia’s answer to Amazon, Wildberries has become a frequent target of Ukrainian attacks in recent weeks, part of what Kyiv says is a campaign to bring the war home to ordinary Russians.

The company said fire crews were containing a blaze after the latest attack struck one of its warehouses near St Petersburg. In the Tver region, northwest of Moscow, drones damaged another Wildberries facility, local authorities said. Local authorities reported no casualties in either of the strikes.

But in the Moscow region, a drone attack on the city of Chekhov set another warehouse alight and damaged an electrical substation and another building, killing five people and injuring 10, the governor, Andrei Vorobyov, said. He did not say which company the site belonged to or specify exactly where the deaths had occurred.

Since launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Russia has repeatedly struck Ukrainian logistics hubs as well as other infrastructure. Ukraine has expanded its own long-range drone strategy, targeting close to 20 Wildberries sites since July 18. The strikes have inflicted significant damage on a company that has become a driving force in Russia’s retail sector, processing millions of orders a day through vast warehouses spread

across the country. All stock at a large Wildberries warehouse in the Samara region was destroyed after a strike on Sunday sparked a fire that gutted the facility, state news agency TASS quoted regional official Denis Gurov as saying yesterday. “Of its

Russia says it hit Ukraine military’s vessels, port facilities

Russian forces yesterday struck three vessels in the Ukrainian port of Mykolaiv and another in the Black Sea off Odesa that were being used “in the interests of the Ukrainian military,” the Russian Defence Ministry said.

In the port of Chornomorsk, Russian forces also struck a container terminal and a warehouse storing drones and drone components, it said. Reuters could not verify these claims. (Reuters)

180,000 square metres, 160,000 burned down,” he said. That is roughly equivalent to 22 soccer pitches. On Monday, hundreds of firefighters worked to put out a 100,000-square-metre fire at a Wildberries warehouse in the Vladimir region. Only part of its stock was saved, the company said, without giving further details.

Wildberries has not given an estimate of the financial losses resulting so far from the attacks, which founder and CEO Tatyana Kim has described as “acts of terrorism.” The company, which also operates in Central Asia and the Caucasus, is building 260,000 square metres of warehouse capacity in neighbouring Kazakhstan, the Kazakh trade minister said yesterday.



Smoke rising from the Boschhuizerbergen nature reserve near Oostrum, in Venray, Netherlands yesterday. (AFP)

Fire spreads in Dutch reserve for second day

AFP
The Hague

Hundreds of Dutch firefighters were fighting yesterday afternoon to contain a forest blaze in the southeast of the Netherlands that spread overnight to engulf 100 hectares, authorities said.

The fire started around noon Monday in a nature reserve near the village of Oostrum in Limburg province, near the German border.

By midday yesterday it was still not under control, provincial authorities said on their website. AFP journalists on the scene could see immense clouds of smoke pouring from the forest, with at least two firefighting helicopters making round-trip journeys to pick up water and dump it on the flames.

Dozens of firetrucks and first aid workers were congregated at a hotel in the neighbouring town of Venray.

Numerous local roads were blocked, and a nearby campsite was evacuated.

The next few hours will be particularly tense, with firefighters forced to constantly adapt to the gusting winds, a regional safety spokesperson told the ANP news agency.

European countries – which endured an unprecedented heat wave in June – are facing a major drought, which has dried up rivers, and led to water restrictions and devastating forest fires.

Human-fueled climate change has accelerated moisture loss from soil, lakes and rivers, heightening the risk of extreme droughts, scientists from World Weather Attribution warned last month.

Over 170 migrants rescued in French waters after boat catches fire during Channel crossing

AFP
Boulogne-sur-Mer, France

Migrants wrapped in red blankets stepped off a rescue ship in France yesterday, an AFP reporter said, after French and British authorities saved 173 people whose boat caught fire as they tried to cross the Channel.

It was one of the largest rescue operations reported since records began in 2018 of such dangerous sea journeys from France to the United Kingdom.

“A small boat caught fire on the boundary between French and British waters, forcing its occupants to jump overboard” yesterday morning, the prefect’s office in France’s Pas-de-Calais region said.

French maritime authorities later yesterday revised the number of people rescued to 173 from an earlier figure of 157.

Rescue services official Thierry Darras said some had sustained burns, grazes or bruises, but no serious injuries.

They had left the coastal village of Veules-les-Roses in Normandy on Monday, French maritime authorities said.

A spokesman for the British coastguard said UK vessels and a lifeboat were assisting after “a vessel caught fire earlier this morn-



Migrants disembark from the French rescue ship Minck following their rescue at sea, at the Port de Commerce in Boulogne-sur-Mer, northern France, yesterday. (AFP)

ing” in French waters.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution charity said it had launched a boat to help at 6:00am.

France has long been a launchpad for migrants without visas hoping to cross the Channel to start a better life in Britain.

They pay smugglers thousands of dollars to board often overloaded rubber dinghies to make the sometimes deadly journey across one of the world’s busiest shipping routes.

In recent weeks, witnesses in

France have said they have seen dinghies larger than usual depart from French shores, reporting they seemed to be 12 metres long instead of the usual eight or 10 metres.

French maritime authorities have told AFP the average number of people piled on these small boats has risen – from 26 in 2021 to 65 since the start of the year.

A teenager from South Sudan appeared in court in England last week, accused of endangering lives by piloting one such overcrowded

dinghy carrying 167 people earlier in July.

He has denied being in charge of the vessel.

Yesterday’s rescue was “a very visible reminder, both of the dangerous nature of those crossings, also of the blind indifference that human traffickers have for life on those boats”, said UK Justice Secretary Alex Norris.

So far this year, 14,526 people have landed on British shores after such journeys, according to British authorities.

Last year, more than 41,000 migrants landed on England’s southern coast – the second-highest annual number since 2018.

London and Paris last year inked a so-called “one in, one out” deal, which has been criticised by charities working with migrants.

Under the accord, Britain has so far forcibly removed 1,087 people who arrived on small boats who it says do not meet the criteria to be given asylum, in exchange for admitting 1,117 other migrants who had requested entry to the United Kingdom from France via a legal route.

Since the start of the year, 15 people have died trying to cross the Channel, according to an AFP tally based on official French and British sources.

At least 29 migrants lost their lives last year, according to a similar AFP count.



Old Doha Port attracts visitors with exceptional summer experiences

Old Doha Port's summer campaign, "Let's Summer at the Mina", is now in full swing, with visitors returning to the promenade, the marina, and Chabrat Al Mina, as the destination continues to offer a vibrant waterfront experience throughout the summer months.

The campaign invites visitors to experience summer as it is, bringing together waterfront activities, family-friendly experiences, dining, retail and marine adventures that make spending the season outdoors more enjoyable.

Throughout the month of July in the Mina District, Old Doha Port collaborated with Visit Qatar on a Qatar Calendar Ice Cream van, offering visitors a refreshing way to cool off while exploring the destination.

As summer continues, Al Chabrat (Fish Market) has become one of the Old Doha Port's busier gathering spots. With the fishing season underway, visitors gather along the waterfront to select fresh seafood from the day's catch, bringing residents and visitors together around one of the destination's most authentic waterfront experiences.



Exploring Old Doha Port remains comfortable throughout the season with complimentary golf carts running between Mina Park and the Mina District, and vehicles can access the road in

Mina District daily from 3pm to 11pm until 15 October. Valet parking is available at special summer rates across the destination and complimentary at Al Chabrat (Fish Market).

The summer campaign also extends beyond the waterfront with a growing calendar of community activities. In collaboration with the fitness studio Fit Island, weekly Pilates classes take place every Saturday at The Terminal's City Gallery, in front of the aquarium, allowing participants to exercise in a unique and immersive environment.

Al Bandar, the waterfront area of Chabrat Al Mina, also hosts a range of traditional maritime activities in collaboration with the Nomads Centre. These include specialised courses and competitions for children, offering them the opportunity to learn tradi-



tional fishing techniques and to take part in pearl-diving contests.

These latest activities reflect Old Doha Port's commitment to preserving Qatar's maritime heritage while enhancing its summer calendar.

At the Containers Yard, visitors can make the most of the waterfront throughout the season with rental options for speedboats, jet cars, wakeboarding, paddle boats,

banana boat rides, e-foiling, and other water activities.

Traditional sea fishing continues at the Fishing Pontoons in Mina Park, opposite the Al Chabrat (Fish Market), adding to the range of waterfront experiences available throughout the season.

"Let's Summer at the Mina" runs through the season, with Old Doha Port's summer facilities in place until October 15.

QM's Tamkeen program bags award for heritage education

QNA
Seoul

Qatar Museums (QM) received an international recognition through the Global Challenge for World Heritage Education Innovative Cases (AWHEIC) in its 2026 edition, after winning the Star of the Future award for its "Tamkeen: Empowering Arab Youth for Sustainable Heritage" program. This is in recognition of the program's promising initiatives with the potential to advance heritage education.

Tamkeen was selected as one of 10 recipients in the Star of the Future category from nearly 90 applications submitted by institutions worldwide.

The award was announced during the 48th Session of the Unesco World Heritage Committee, at the World Heritage Education Towards the Future - Innovation of and for Young People event, held in Busan, Republic of Korea.

The recognition highlights Qatar Museums' leadership in innovative heritage education and youth empowerment, while



reinforcing Qatar's role in advancing cultural diplomacy and the sustainable safeguarding of cultural heritage.

Led by Director of the International Co-operation and Government Affairs Department at QM, Dr Fatema Hassan al-Sulaiti, Tamkeen equips Arab youth with the theoretical knowledge, practical skills and field experience needed to engage actively with their cultural heritage.

The program is designed to deepen participants' connection to their identity and to prepare them to become active, responsible partners in its conservation, management, documenta-

tion and transmission. Tamkeen rests on the conviction that long-term sustainability in this field depends on investing in people and, above all, in young people as custodians of cultural values and stewards of what comes next.

Commenting on the recognition, Dr al-Sulaiti said, "To see Tamkeen receive this prestigious international recognition is a moment of pride not only for Qatar Museums but for the State of Qatar as a whole.

The initiative was created to develop innovative programs that equip Arab youth to become active custodians of our shared cultural heritage.

"We believe that investing in young people is essential to securing the sustainable preservation of heritage for generations to come, and we are honoured that this vision has been recognised on the global stage.

We hope Tamkeen will continue to open doors for young people across the Arab world and support a new generation of heritage professionals who can carry this work forward," Dr al-Sulaiti added.

Introduced in 2021 by the

World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region (WHITR-AP), the Global Challenge for World Heritage Education Innovative Cases is a prestigious international initiative that recognises innovative approaches to World Heritage education from around the globe.

WHITR-AP is a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of Unesco, established in 2008 to advance the conservation and sustainable development of World Heritage across the Asia-Pacific region.

Through the Global Challenge, WHITR-AP identifies and celebrates outstanding practices in World Heritage education, highlighting how young people and local communities can contribute to safeguarding World Heritage sites and passing on their values.

Qatar Museums remains committed to investing in young people and advancing innovative heritage education to build a sustainable future for cultural heritage, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 (QNV 2030).



Nearly 108,000kg of dates sold at Souq Waqif festival

QNA
Doha

The Ministry of Municipality revealed that nearly 108,000 kilograms of fresh dates (Ruttab) were sold during the first nine days of the 11th Local Fresh Dates Festival.

The festival is being organised in collaboration between the Ministry and Souq Waqif Management.

In a statement yesterday, the ministry said the festival has drawn 61,000 visitors since its launch on July 25 through its ninth day, highlighting that the event broke the record in terms of public attendance to purchase homegrown wet dates and support Qatari agricultural produce.

The statement noted that total sales at the festival were led by the Khalas cultivar, with 44,247 kilograms sold, followed by Shishi at 22,780kg, Khunaizi at 21,118kg, and Barhi at 11,892kg, while sales of the remaining cultivars reached 7,962 kg. This demonstrates the increas-

ing clamour for a variety of domestic Ruttab cultivars, as the festival features a broader space for booths staged by Qatari farms showcasing the premier local fresh dates.

Also showcased is a cornucopia of seasonal fruits, along with a programme featuring daily contests and encouraging prizes, as well as awareness and cultural events appropriately catered to family members, including a symposium organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Endowments on the provisions of palm and fruit Zakat.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Municipality has staged sales and marketing events for homegrown products to ensure their access to a wider segment of consumers throughout the fresh dates season.

In addition, the ministry revealed that 5.232 tonnes of fresh dates and 370kg of other fruits have been sold at shopping malls since the start of the Dates Season, noting that fresh date sales are taking place at Doha Festival City, Villaggio Mall, and Landmark Mall, with the participation of 24 domestic farms.

HOPE Qatar Centre concludes Purple Saturday Week 2026

In support of the national Purple Saturday Initiative, HOPE Qatar Centre for Persons with Disabilities successfully concluded its Purple Saturday Week 2026, held from July 25 to August 1 under the theme "Unity in Purple."

Throughout the week, the centre delivered a comprehensive awareness campaign that brought together children, families, youth volunteers, educators, and the wider community through awareness workshops, inclusive activities, volunteer engagement, and digital advocacy.

The initiative reinforced the Centre's commitment to promoting acceptance, understanding, and meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities across Qatar.

Throughout the week, the centre implemented a diverse programme of activities designed to promote awareness, encourage interaction, and strengthen social inclusion.

The week featured themed inclusive celebrations, including Yellow Day, Hats Day, Watermelon Fiesta, Floral Day, interactive arts and crafts, and collaborative activities where children with and without disabilities learned, played,



and celebrated together. In parallel, the centre maintained a sustained social media awareness campaign, extending the message of Purple Saturday beyond its premises and encouraging the wider community to embrace diversity, accessibility, and the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

A key highlight of the initiative was the Awareness Workshop, "Inclusion Starts with Me," delivered by Dr Rizwanah Adeebh. The workshop encouraged participants to move beyond awareness by developing a deeper understanding of disability, challenging misconceptions, and becoming

advocates for inclusion.

It also introduced the centre's HOPE Sadeeqi Programme, which promotes lifelong friendships between persons with disabilities and their peers, demonstrating that genuine inclusion begins with meaningful relationships and everyday acts of acceptance.

The Purple Saturday initiative generated significant community engagement and measurable impact. A total of 80 students participated in the week's inclusive activities, while 40 youth volunteers actively supported the campaign and awareness workshop by assisting with activities, engaging

with students, and promoting the message of inclusion.

All participating volunteers were enrolled in the centre's HOPE Sadeeqi Programme, reinforcing its commitment to fostering lasting friendships and developing a growing network of young inclusion ambassadors. Through its awareness workshop, inclusive activities, volunteer engagement, and digital advocacy, the initiative contributed to strengthening public understanding of disability inclusion and encouraging positive action that extends well beyond Purple Saturday.

As part of the Purple Saturday



Initiative, the centre also introduced a special community offer, providing families who enrolled during the campaign with complimentary developmental screening and free access to the August Summer Camp.

The initiative aimed to encourage more children to benefit from the Centre's specialised education, intervention services, and life skills programmes.

Reflecting on the success of the

initiative, HOPE Qatar Centre for Persons with Disabilities reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to promoting acceptance, accessibility, and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Through initiatives such as Purple Saturday Week and the HOPE Sadeeqi Programme, the centre continues to foster a more inclusive society where every individual is respected, valued, and empowered to participate fully in community life.