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0 668039 136499

FRIDAY Vol. XXXXVI No. 13825

August 7, 2026
Safar 24, 1448 AH

www.gulf-times.com 2 Riyals

published in **QATAR** since 1978

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BUSINESS | Page 1

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Houthi attacks kill dozens of Yemeni troops

Yemen's Iran-backed Houthis killed dozens of government troops in missile and drone attacks yesterday, medical sources said, the deadliest violence in years between them as the conflict becomes the latest front in the US-Iran war. Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said the rebels attacked government positions with ballistic missiles and drones in response to an alleged military buildup backed by neighbouring Saudi Arabia. The attacks killed at least 38 government troops and injured 29, two medical sources told AFP, with a military official describing them as the deadliest between the two sides since 2022. The latest attacks risk pushing Yemen into a more intense cycle of violence and retaliation. The Houthis have ramped up the provocations of their Saudi foe since last month in what has become another front in the US-Iran war. **(AFP)**

QA to resume flights to Kuwait, Bahrain

Qatar Airways (QA) has announced the resumption of its flights to Kuwait, Bahrain, and Iraq's Erbil. In a statement on its website yesterday, the Qatari carrier said that it will resume flights to the three destinations starting tomorrow. **(QNA)**

Qatar condemns Gaza hospital attacks

Joint statement slams continuing Israeli violations

Qatar and seven other states have condemned in the strongest terms the continuing Israeli violations in the Gaza Strip, singling out the targeting of healthcare facilities and medical infrastructure, attacks on civilian infrastructure and the mounting loss of civilian lives, including women and children, in grave breach of international law and international humanitarian law.

In a joint statement, the foreign ministers of Qatar, Jordan, the UAE, Indonesia, Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Egypt said the continuation of these violations amounts to a clear breach of Israel's obligations under international law and the Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict, and undermines international and regional efforts to implement the plan's second phase – particularly after the announcement by US President Donald Trump that the Palestinian factions had accepted the roadmap, including its

provisions on the confinement of weapons.

They warned that the violations threaten to derail the political process, reignite the cycle of escalation and deepen the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza.

The ministers stressed that protecting civilians, safeguarding medical facilities and the personnel working in the health and humanitarian sectors, and ensuring the immediate, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance, medical supplies and relief aid throughout Gaza are legal obligations that must not be compromised or diminished under any circumstances.

They further affirmed that the violations in Gaza cannot be separated from settler attacks in the Occupied West Bank, the unlawful expansion of settlements and unilateral measures aimed at altering the status quo in Occupied Jerusalem. Taken together, they said, these practices constitute a systematic policy of imposing a new reality by force, undermining the foundations of the two-state solution and marginalising the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant UN resolutions. **(QNA)**

Qatar, Saudi Arabia sign MoU on nuclear safety

It covers radiation monitoring, lab analysis and joint response to cross-border emergencies

Qatar and Saudi Arabia signed a memorandum of understanding yesterday on co-operation in nuclear safety and radiation protection, covering radiation monitoring, laboratory analysis and joint preparedness for cross-border nuclear and radiological emergencies.

Concluded between the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change and Saudi Arabia's Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Commission, the memorandum sets out to regulate and develop co-operation between the two sides in line with the regulations and laws in force in both countries.

Signing for Qatar was HE Undersecretary of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Engineer Abdulaziz bin Ahmed bin Abdullah al-Mahmoud, and for the kingdom, Nuclear and Radiological Regulatory Commission chief executive Khalid bin Abdulaziz al-Issa.

After the ceremony, HE the



Minister of Environment and Climate Change Dr. Abdullah bin Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Subaie met al-Issa and his accompanying delegation. They reviewed co-operation between the two sides in nuclear safety and radiation protection, and discussed ways to strengthen technical co-operation and the exchange of expertise in areas of mutual interest.

The undersecretary described

the memorandum as a significant addition to Qatari-Saudi co-operation and an expression of the historical ties binding the two countries. Both sides, he said, were keen to widen their technical and scientific co-operation, draw on shared expertise in nuclear safety and radiation protection, and move towards joint programmes and projects serving the interests of both. **To Page 11**

Cliché to code: sustainability written into Qatar projects

Veteran architect says next growth wave heading north to Simaisma

By Joseph Varghese
Staff Reporter

Sustainability in Qatar has crossed from marketing language into law, with every government project now required to pass a sustainability assessment before it proceeds, according to one of the country's best-known architects.

"In the past, the word sustainability was just a cliché and a marketing tool. But now in Qatar, I am so happy to see sustainability becomes a regulation. It is a practice and it is actually a legislation. Now, any government project has to have a sustainability assessment system," said Ibrahim Mohammed Jaidah, Group CEO and founder of Arab Engineering Bureau, one of the country's oldest and largest home-grown architectural firms.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Jaidah said the discipline now runs through the whole pipeline of national infrastructure. "Development projects in Qatar are well studied and based on the whole concept of sustainability and it is a key focus in Qatar's projects," he said.

Jaidah, who is well known as the architect of some of the iconic public and private buildings and projects in the country, including Al Thumama Stadium and Place Vendôme among others, noted that sustainability should be the hallmark of an entire project.

"If your building is sustainable, you get to build more in such style. And that is why all the developers are very keen to get more stars in sustainability to gain more reputation. In my opinion, sustainability is not only needed for an individual building but for the entire project



Ibrahim Mohammed Jaidah.
PICTURE: Thajudheen

or the whole town. We should be developing a city that is very sustainable," he continued.

He commended the GSAS programme developed by Gulf Organisation for Research and Development, an initiative to measure and assess the sustainability compatibility of a project, and cited the Lusail development as a perfect example of sustainability.

Jaidah underlined that the

growth taking place in the country is not a random one. "What is happening is not just taking place like some random growth. It is all very well-studied projects and each and every aspect of it has been well taken care of and it gives a solid step towards the future," he described.

Jaidah said development is a continuous process and that Doha has one of the best infrastructures any city could dream of.

He stated: "The country is still moving towards new development and the expansion. A bit of slowdown happened after the World Cup, which is natural as a lot of massive infrastructure development took place prior to the event.

"I think it is natural for any city to grow seamlessly. Now we hear about several projects that are happening in Simaisma. I think it is being expanded up there. So it is like the next stage of development. It will not be like a big city, yet it will be developed more for tourism, for apartments among others.

I think the population is moving northwards and southwards and these are the areas that can be developed in the coming years," he continued.

The veteran architect highlighted the life of people in the country before the introduction of electricity and modern amenities.

"Our ancestors lived here without electricity, without any of the modern facilities. But they managed to live well because they were doing their buildings that were responsive to the environment. Small openings, even about the wind, they would study how it moves. Buildings were close to each other, they created shades to each other. And this is the lesson learned and implemented in some of the modern constructions in the country," he highlighted.

"However, with more greenery and with the landscaping and the use of proper and advanced materials, we are making the projects more environment-friendly and sustainable," he added.



Sprinkler sprays converge in a shimmering embrace, casting a cooling veil over the lush lawns of Linear Park on Najma Street. Also known as Al Hilal Linear Park, the 1.5km ribbon of green runs between the Kahramaa and The Mall intersections through Al Hilal and Old Airport. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Digital push lifts Qatar tax compliance to 90%

By A Staff Reporter
Doha

Nine out of every 10 taxpayers in Qatar filed their returns for the 2025 tax year, the General Tax Authority (GTA) has said, a compliance rate of 90% that marks a 13.9% improvement on 2024 and the clearest sign yet that the country's tax system is bedding in.

The authority said yesterday the results follow a sustained push to modernise tax administration through digital transformation, sharpen the services offered to taxpayers and keep



the lines of communication with them open.

Much of the gain rests on the Dhareeba portal, where successive upgrades have made tax services faster, simpler and easier to reach. Improvements to the authority's electronic services have stripped complexity out of the filing process itself, helping taxpayers meet their obligations without wrestling with the paperwork. **To Page 11**



Amir congratulates Bolivia's leader on independence day

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

QCDC concludes 8th 'My Career - My Future' programme for students

The Qatar Career Development Centre (QCDC), founded by Qatar Foundation (QF), has concluded the eighth and largest edition of its flagship "My Career - My Future" job-shadowing programme, organised in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and the Civil Service and Government Development Bureau.

The closing ceremony held at Multaqa, Education City Student Centre, was attended by senior government officials, representatives of the programme's national partners, career development stakeholders, participating students and their parents, and senior representatives of the host organisations.

The ceremony featured remarks by HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh al-Nuaimi and QCDC executive director Saad Abdulla al-Kharji.

It was attended by Civil Service and Government Development Bureau president Dr Abdulaziz bin Nasser bin Mubarak al-Khalifa alongside representatives of the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Sports and Youth, and other government entities.

"This edition delivered the largest reach in the programme's history," said al-Kharji.

"Its significance lies in the model it has established: gov-

ernment, education, and industry working together to give young people earlier and more meaningful access to the world of work," he said. "This collective effort solidifies career guidance as a shared national responsibility and creates stronger foundations for the decisions that will shape Qatar's future talent."

In his remarks during the closing ceremony, HE Dr al-Nuaimi stressed the ministry's commitment to helping students make informed academic and career decisions.

He said that the "My Career - My Future" programme supports this objective by connecting classroom learning with direct workplace exposure and broadening students' understanding of future study and career pathways.

Participating secondary school students received certificates documenting their completion of the training provided during the programme.

The host organisations were also honoured in for the professional expertise, guidance, and support they provided throughout the programme.

On the sidelines of the closing ceremony, the QCDC organised a university fair for the students to explore higher education options and learn about the close link between the academic majors offered by local universities and the professions they experienced during the programme. - QNA



Qatar team competing in international Qur'an memorisation contest

Qatar, represented by the Ministry of Endowments (Awqaf) and Islamic Affairs, is taking part in the 46th King Abdulaziz International Competition for the Memorisation of the Holy Qur'an, Recitation and Interpretation for 1448 AH/2026, which is being held at the Grand Mosque in Makkah on August 6-19 with the participation of distinguished Qur'an memorisers from around the world.

The ministry's participation in the Qur'an competition reflects its continued efforts to support the Holy Qur'an and its memorisers and to strengthen Qatar's presence at international Qur'anic events.

It also underscores the importance accorded to the Holy Qur'an in Qatari society and helps reinforce Islamic values and authentic cultural identity among younger generations.

Head of the Islamic Network Department at the Awqaf Ministry, Omar Aqla al-Ruwaili, led the Qatari delegation.

The delegation included two contestants, accompanied by their instructors, who will compete in two categories of the competition. - QNA

Dukhan Bank announces August winners in Thara'a prize draw

Dukhan Bank has announced the names of the most recent round of draw winners for Thara'a, its Shariah-compliant savings account, at the bank's headquarters.

The draw was conducted on August 4 under the supervision of a representative of the qualitative licence and market control department at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

In this month's draw, Aisha al-Meaadid and Mohammed al-Jaber won the top prize of QR20,000 each.

The following each received QR5,000: Fatma Shokri, Hassan al-Kuwari, Osama Durra, Aisha al-Motawa, Mohamed Abdulkader, Mark Maligaya, Aize al-Qahtani, Kanokporn Janthorath, Shaikh Munawaruddin, Irfan Malik, Mansour Mansouri, Rouda al-Naama, Rashid al-Kubaisi, Farhan al-Shammari, Abdulla al-Muhannadi, Jumana Abu-Khadija, Ali Hussain, Khalfan al-Kaabi, Mohammad Jadallah, Majed al-Khulaifi, Zain Khaleel, Aysha al-Naimi, Nour al-Marri, Hassan Shaikh, Mohammad AlHalawani, Asma al-Khowaiter, Haya al-Khelaifi, Hind al-Khater, Maryam Fakhroo, Sara al-Hassan,



Heyam al-Saadi, Abdulrahman al-Ansari, Awatif Ali, Mohammed al-Saleh, Ghalya Haykal, Hasan Eissa, Sheikh Faisal Bin Turki al-Thani, Marzouq al-Abdulla, Moneer Ghazali, Ali Abuswaid, Sharifa al-Emadi, Abdulrahman al-Ansari, Dalal Alyazidi, Metha Albinali, Elfatih Mohamed, Ahmad al-Muhannadi, Raad Ghaith, Wafa al-Sulaiti, Jimmy Alzate, Khalid Aljaber, Muhsina Alnabit, Hind al-Ahmad, Shamoon Shaikh, Khaled Abbasi, Bashdar Mawlood, Khaled Ghazi, Lancita Fernandes, Rashid al-Marri, Joseph Baby, and Ali al-Muhannadi.

Running until December 31, the Tharaa savings account campaign offers more customers the chance to win, with four grand prizes of QR1,000,000 each, alongside multiple monthly prizes, including two monthly prizes of QR20,000 and 60 monthly prizes of QR5,000, awarded through scheduled draws throughout the year.

Customers can open a Thara'a Savings Account through Dukhan Bank's branches, website, or mobile application and will be automatically entered into the campaign draws, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria.

MoECC showcases the 'Smart Observer' boat's capabilities

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC) has showcased the operational mechanism of the "Smart Observer" boat, which is designed to monitor the marine environment and equipped with advanced systems to track environmental changes and collect samples and data from marine sites.

The initiative is part of the ministry's efforts to develop the environmental monitoring system and improve the efficiency of data collection, and represents a significant step in the MoECC's efforts to adopt advanced technologies for environmental protection and promote the sustainable management of natural resources.

It also marks a transition from traditional environmental monitoring methods to a smart digital system that enables specialists to track environmental changes and make informed decisions based on scientific data.

The boat uses remote operation technologies and advanced sensing systems to automatically and periodically collect environmental data, in line with global developments in the use of unmanned systems for monitoring marine ecosystems.

Speaking to the Qatar News Agency (QNA), the assistant director of the MoECC's Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department, Abdullah al-Khulaifi, said that the smart monitoring boat represents a significant addition to the Marine Environment Quality Department.

He said that the boat operates through three control methods: manual operation, a control system via a large antenna, or Starlink technology.

It can operate continuously for 6-7 hours, measure multiple environmental variables, and collect several water samples simultaneously.

Al-Khulaifi added that the ministry held meetings with the manufacturer, which designed the boat according to the technical specifications outlined in the MoECC's environmental monitoring methodologies and strategies.

He said the ministry's teams conducted extensive comparisons between the boat's readings and those obtained through traditional manual measurements, with the results showing near-identical accuracy.

Al-Khulaifi noted that the boat's

design process required time due to the ministry's insistence on meeting specific technical requirements, including weight, ease of navigation, speed limits, and the capacity to carry designated samples.

He said that the design was developed based on precise operational needs and was completed in accordance with the specifications agreed upon with the manufacturer.

The official confirmed that the pilot phase was successful and that the Environmental Monitoring and Inspection Department is now expanding the project and incorporating it into several related programmes.



The next phase will include a broader scope and additional boats equipped with more advanced technologies.

Meanwhile, international sustainability expert and researcher Dr Mohammed bin Saif al-Kuwari has said that the MoECC's launch of the "Smart Observer" project represents a transition from traditional environmental monitoring methods to a smart digital system based on continuous measurement and accurate data collection to support evidence-based decision-making.

He told the QNA that the project keeps pace with global developments in the use of unmanned marine systems by relying on remote operation technologies and modern sensing systems to collect environmental data automatically and periodically.

This, Dr al-Kuwari said, contributes to improving the efficiency of marine monitoring operations and enhancing their sustainability.

The expert highlighted the significance of the project in improving the accuracy and speed of environmental data collection compared to traditional monitoring operations, which require field teams, vessels, and extensive equipment.

Kuwari stressed, to developing a comprehensive scientific database that can support environmental studies and the formulation of future policies and plans.

He added that the project will enhance the accuracy of measuring environmental indicators, including water quality, temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, chlorophyll, and other parameters.

The rapid transmission of data to monitoring and analysis centres will allow immediate action upon detecting abnormal changes, Dr al-Kuwari said, and improve the efficiency of human and financial resources by allowing technical personnel to focus on analysis and evaluation rather than solely on field data collection.

He added that the project will further strengthen early warning systems for detecting marine pollution, marine life mortality events, or harmful algal blooms before their impacts intensify.

Dr al-Kuwari stressed that the project goes beyond environmental data collection, describing it as a comprehensive platform for managing environmental information more efficiently and enhancing the ability of relevant authorities to protect the marine environment and make more effective and sustainable decisions.

He called for further development of the project in its next phase through the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies for data analysis and early environmental forecasting, establishing a national network of smart boats to cover Qatar's territorial waters and coastlines, and linking the system with satellites, drones, and coastal monitoring stations to create an integrated national environmental monitoring system.

Dr al-Kuwari also proposed incorporating advanced sensors to detect micro-pollutants, microplastics, organic pollutants, and heavy metals, in addition to developing an early warning system based on real-time data.

He suggested establishing an interactive national digital platform to utilise environmental data in supporting researchers and decision-makers, expanding the project's applications to serve scientific research, enhancing regional and international co-operation, and developing national expertise in operating smart marine systems and analysing big data. - QNA

Barzan University College, British Council ink pact to advance English language education

Barzan University College (BUC) has signed a partnership agreement with the British Council to advance English language education and expand access to internationally recognised IELTS (International English Language Testing System) services in Qatar.

The partnership brings together institutions that share a common vision of promoting academic excellence, international collaboration, and high-quality English language assessment.

By leveraging their respective expertise, Barzan University College and the British Council aim to strengthen English language learning and facilitate English-based higher education for learners throughout their academic and professional journeys.

The agreement reflects the growing importance of English language proficiency in today's interconnected world, where internationally recognised qualifications play a critical role in enabling access to higher education, employment, and global opportunities.

"Mastering the English language has become essential in a world where global educational," said Barzan University Col-



lege dean and chief academic officer Dr Lotfi Belkhir.

"Our collaboration with the British Council reflects our commitment to maintaining the highest academic standards while ensuring learners have access to internationally recognised English language assessment that supports their educational and professional objectives," he said.

"This partnership complements our academic collaboration with Swinburne



University of Technology, Australia, and further strengthens our international outlook by connecting our students and the wider community with globally recognised English language services," Dr Belkhir added. "Together, we are creating greater opportunities for learners while contributing to the continued advancement of higher education in Qatar."

"We are delighted to partner with Barzan University College, to strengthen ac-

cess to internationally recognised English language assessment in Qatar," said said Dr Waseem Kotoub, the country director and Gulf Cluster lead for Business Development at the British Council.

"This collaboration reflects our shared commitment to supporting learners with the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in higher education, their careers, and an increasingly global environment," he said. "Through this partnership, we look forward to expanding access

to trusted IELTS services while working together to promote excellence in English language education and create meaningful opportunities for learners across Qatar."

The partnership marks another milestone in Barzan University College's international engagement strategy and reflects its ongoing commitment to collaborating with leading global organisations that share its vision of educational excellence, innovation, and quality.

Hot, humid conditions continue in Qatar



Hot, humid conditions and summer haze soften the outline of Doha's skyline, while residents make the most of the evening along the Corniche waterfront. **PICTURE:** Shaji Kayamkulam

Supreme Committee signs MoU with Seashore Group

The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Seashore Group as part of efforts to enhance Qatar's sustainability legacy. The two organisations will collaborate on a number of field initiatives aimed at raising sustainability awareness and implementing best practices in workplaces and major events. The initiatives include introducing effective waste management and composting solutions, as well as launching environmental awareness campaigns to encourage the adoption of more sustain-

able practices in the workplace. The Supreme Committee will also benefit from the Seashore Group's expertise, including the use of the group's artificial intelligence (AI)-powered recycling application, and will organise specialised field visits to explore smarter sustainability practices. The collaboration between the two organisations will also extend to major events hosted by Qatar in the future through initiatives aimed at promoting responsible waste disposal and enhancing environmental awareness among fans and the wider community.

SC executive director (Sustainability and Legacy) Eng. Thani Khalifa al-Zarraq said that sustainability has always been, and continues to be, at the heart of the major events hosted by the Supreme Committee. This partnership, he said, enables the SC to build on this legacy in line with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030. Seashore Group vice-chairman Saqr Saeed al-Mohannadi said that the collaboration with the Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy at both the institutional and event levels reflects a shared commitment to supporting its distinguished track



record in organising world-class events. The Seashore Group, he said, looks forward to leveraging its expertise to support Qatar's efforts to further strengthen its position as a global benchmark for hosting sustainable events in the future. The SC's comprehensive sustainability strategy ensures the application of the

highest environmental protection standards across all international tournaments and events hosted by Qatar, from infrastructure design to operational processes. The Supreme Committee is also committed to using these events as a platform to raise awareness of the importance of sustainability. – QNA

Qatar takes part in Gulf Committee for Unified Terrorist List meeting

Qatar, represented by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee, took part in the 19th meeting of the Gulf Committee for the Unified Terrorist List, held at the headquarters of the General Secretariat of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) in Riyadh. The delegation was led by National Counter-Terrorism Committee secretary Brigadier-General Khalid Ali al-Kaabi. The committee meeting discussed various agenda items pertaining to strengthening counter-terrorism co-operation and co-ordination among GCC states and adopted a number of appropriate recommendations. – QNA



Young innovators turn bold ideas into real-world solutions at QSC

By Tawfik Lamari
Staff Reporter

Young innovators from across Qatar are transforming ambitious ideas into practical solutions through the Young Inventors Programme, with projects ranging from artificial intelligence (AI)-powered fire response systems and smart gas leak detection to emergency desalination technology and drone safety. The first phase of the programme, organised by the Qatar Science Club (QSC) as part of the national initiative launched by the Ministry of Sports and Youth during Web Summit Qatar 2026, concluded with the participation of 35 students, who presented innovative concepts addressing challenges in safety, energy, AI and sustainability. Participants told reporters that the programme has become a cornerstone of their summer activities, providing an inspiring environment in which to develop scientific thinking, engineering design and teamwork while transforming creative ideas into viable projects with real societal impact. Programme director Eng. Aisha al-Jaber described the initiative as a national platform dedi-

cated to identifying young talent and nurturing future innovators. "The programme equips participants with scientific thinking, engineering design and problem-solving skills while encouraging them to develop innovative solutions to real societal challenges," she said. "Investing in young minds is fundamental to building a knowledge-based economy and strengthening Qatar's position in science, technology and innovation." Al-Jaber said that the programme is delivered in three stages, beginning with design thinking, followed by engineering design before progressing to prototype development in September. The strongest projects will be selected at the conclusion of the programme. Among the standout concepts, Qatar University student Moza al-Kaabi and her team are developing a smart device that uses sound waves to counter drones, while Grade 10 student Rehana Ibrahim is working on Hydro Safe, an emergency desalination unit designed to provide drinkable water for divers and disaster response situations. Meanwhile, Mohammed Ali al-Yafai, from the Qatar Science and Technology Secondary School for Boys, is developing a

sensor-based system capable of detecting hazardous gas leaks in industrial facilities before accidents occur. Lusail University student Shafi Mohammed al-Qahtani is proposing an AI-powered firefighting device designed to reduce response times, minimise damage and conserve water. Other participants highlighted the programme's broader educational value. Grade 11 student Sarah al-Atibi said the initiative helped her discover fields aligned with her interests, while aspiring mechanical engineer Yousef al-Maadheed described it as an investment in his future that strengthened both his innovative thinking and confidence. Mansour Mohammed, from Al Wakra Secondary School for Boys, said the programme demonstrated how the summer break can be transformed into a meaningful opportunity for learning and personal development. By combining scientific research, engineering and emerging technologies with practical problem-solving, the Young Inventors Programme continues to cultivate a new generation of innovators ready to contribute to Qatar's sustainable development and knowledge-based economy.

QM's 'Your Ghosts Are Mine: Expanded Cinemas, Amplified Voices' opens in Chile

Qatar Museums (QM) and Years of Culture, an annual initiative celebrating cross-cultural exchange, have announced that "Your Ghosts Are Mine: Expanded Cinemas, Amplified Voices" has opened in Chile for its first presentation in Latin America. Hosted by Centro Cultural La Moneda (CCLM) in Santiago and attended by officials from Qatar and Chile, the exhibition builds on the relationships established through the Qatar Argentina and Chile 2025 Year of Culture. The presentation of "Your Ghosts Are Mine: Expanded Cinemas, Amplified Voices" in Chile reflects the initiative's focus on creating meaningful cultural exchange, building enduring relationships, and using contemporary art and cinema to foster dialogue across borders. Produced by the QM, "Your Ghosts Are Mine" is co-organised by Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art and the future Art Mill Museum, in collaboration with Doha Film Institute (DFI), as a legacy of the 2025 Year of Culture partnership with Chile, in collaboration with Chile's ministry of cultures, the arts and heritage. The exhibition is curated by Matthieu Orlean, artistic collaborator at La Cinémathèque française. Bringing together extracts of films and video installations by more than 40 artists and filmmakers from the Arab world, Africa and Southeast Asia supported by Doha Film Institute, the exhibition arrives in Latin America for the first time after its acclaimed presentation at Palazzo Franchetti, where it was presented alongside the 60th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia in 2024. "We chose the title for many reasons," said Orlean. "There are many ghosts or djinns in the old ruins of the deserts." "They could be seen as a metaphor of your ancestors and your traditions," he said. "They could be compassionate sometimes, but if you listen too much to them and lose contact with your fellow humans, you could be led to madness and violence." "The ghost has multiple faces," Orlean added. "The arrival of 'Your Ghosts Are Mine' offers an opportunity to deepen Centro Cultural La Moneda's commitment to a programme that fosters dialogue between cultures and broadens the perspectives through which we understand the world," said CCLM executive director Alejandra Valenzuela Oyanel. "We believe that art and culture have the power to build bridges, encourage reflection and enrich public conversation through what we share as societies,"



she said. "We're proud to continue the institutional partnerships that began during the successful Year of Culture with Qatar and welcome the country's premier cultural organisations to CCLM." Speaking on behalf of Qatar Museums, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art director Zeina Arida explained: "At Qatar Museums, we believe that art has the power to create meaningful connections across cultures and offer new ways of understanding our shared humanity." "Through Years of Culture, 'Your Ghosts Are Mine: Expanded Cinemas, Amplified Voices' continues that mission by bringing together extraordinary artistic voices from the Arab world, Africa and Southeast Asia," she said. "We are honoured to present the exhibition in Chile and hope it inspires dialogue, curiosity and lasting cultural connections between our communities," Arida added. "Your Ghosts Are Mine: Expanded Cinemas, Amplified Voices' is an ambitious attempt to reorganise the moving image's usual categories and to cross the lines of geopolitical borders, the boundaries between fiction and documentary, and the outmoded distinction between feature film and video art," said Art Mill Museum director of concept Catherine Grenier. "It is part of the future Art Mill Museum's concept to consider that museums have a special role to play in fully integrating cinema at large into the history of art, as this exhibition of films illustrates," she said. "Cinema has the remarkable ability to transcend borders, connect lived experiences and inspire greater empathy," said DFI chief executive Fatma Hassan Alremaihi. "At the Doha Film Institute, we believe that authentic stories are essential to preserving memory, challenging perspectives and fostering meaningful dialogue across cultures," she said. "Through 'Your Ghosts Are Mine,' we are honoured to bring powerful voices from the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region and Southeast Asia to audiences in Chile, inviting new conversations around identity, displacement, resilience and belonging," Alremaihi added. Opening on Wednesday in the CCLM's Sala Pacifico, the exhibition presents an immersive journey through contemporary experiences of community, memory, transnational displacement and exile. Structured around eight thematic environments – Deserts, Ruins, Borders, Exile, Futurism, Cosmos, Fires, and Fantasma – the exhibition creates a series of distinct spatial and cinematic experiences. – QNA

Hormuz fee plan will run into sanctions and insurance hurdles: industry sources

Reuters
London

A proposed deal between Iran and Oman that would give Tehran control over ships entering the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz is not easily workable due to US sanctions and restrictive insurance clauses on any payments, four industry sources said. Until US-Israeli airstrikes at the end of February unleashed war in Iran, the narrow waterway between the Gulf and the Indian Ocean was the main route for about

a fifth of world oil supplies and other vital goods. It was freely open to all ships with no fees. Control of the strait has been the biggest sticking point in efforts to end the conflict. Under the latest proposal, Tehran would be able to intervene if necessary with any inbound traffic, while outbound traffic would follow a route between Iran and Oman, with exit clearance granted through Oman after notifying Iran, a senior Iranian source told Reuters this week. Introducing compulsory charges through the strait for transit or service

fees was "a toll in all but name", the world's leading shipping associations said in an open letter to the United Nations shipping agency. "It would establish a precedent that could undermine the internationally recognised legal framework governing straits used for international navigation and transit passage," the letter said. Iran is seeking fees of between 5% and 7% of the price of cargoes from ships using the strait, according to the senior Iranian official. Oman is discussing fees of around 3%, while Washington wants no fees at all.

In July, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO)'s governing council said that countries around the strait should guarantee the "non-discriminatory and unimpeded right of transit passage of all ships" and that passage should remain free of any tolls and charges. For shipping companies and oil traders, any imposition of fees creates major compliance issues, given the US has imposed sanctions on the Persian Gulf Strait Authority, which Iran set up in May to operate the waterway. The US Treasury has also prohibited US persons from receiving services from

Iran's government related to a "guarantee of safe passage". Any payment could lead to asset freezes, the industry sources said. A further complication is the introduction by Lloyd's Market Association (LMA) of a clause for use by war underwriters that terminates insurance cover for a vessel if it has paid a transit fee, toll or other charge for passage through the strait. Shipping companies were in a "catch 22" situation, one insurance industry source said, as the LMA wording prohibits insurers from covering shipowners who pay, while Iran aims to charge a toll.



Nigerian forces rescue 308 kidnap victims, presidency says

Reuters/AFP
Abuja

Nigerian security forces have rescued 308 people abducted in separate attacks in northern Niger and Kwara states, in what President Bola Tinubu described as the largest same-day rescue operation carried out by a joint security team.

The presidency said in a state-

ment late on Wednesday that 163 of those rescued had been abducted from Woro community in Kwara's Kaama district and another 145 from neighbouring Niger state.

"President Bola Ahmed Tinubu warmly welcomes the successful rescue of 308 Nigerian citizens who were abducted in different attacks in Niger and Kwara states," presidential spokesman Bayo Onanuga said.

The victims in Kwara had been

in captivity since February after gunmen attacked their community and killed at least 170 others in one of the most deadly attacks by gunmen this year.

All the victims were freed from the Kainji Lake National Park forest in Niger state following an operation involving the armed forces, intelligence agency and police, the statement added.

The presidency did not say whether any suspects were apprehended during the operation.

Nigeria is struggling to curb kidnappings and armed attacks that have plagued parts of the country for years, undermining security, disrupting livelihoods and raising pressure on the government of Tinubu, who is seeking re-election for a second and final term in January.

Abductions have proved lucrative in Nigeria.

Kidnappings raised some \$1.66mn in ransom payments between July 2024 and June 2025,

according to a tally by SBM Intelligence, a Lagos-based consultancy.

Over the weekend, gunmen kidnapped at least 52 people, including children, in an attack on a village and military base in north-west Nigeria's Zamfara state.

On Tuesday Tinubu approved pay rises of up to 80% for members of the armed forces, part of efforts to boost the morale and welfare of troops at the forefront of fighting insecurity.

Football star dies after assault in Kampala

Reuters
Kampala

Uganda international David Owori, captain of one of the country's biggest football clubs, has died after an assault in the capital Kampala, police said.

Owori, 28, captain of SC Villa, was critically injured by unidentified assailants in a suburb of Kampala on Tuesday, police spokesperson Racheal Kawala said.

He was found unconscious by passers-by, who took him to a nearby hospital.

He was transferred to another hospital where he was later pronounced dead, Kawala said.

"David was not just a footballer," the Federation of Uganda Football Associations said in a statement. "He was both a leader and an inspiration to a generation. As Captain of SC Villa, he led with courage, humility and passion. In the Uganda Cranes jersey, he carried the hopes of a nation."

Crime is rampant in the capital of the East African country and many Ugandans expressed outrage at his death on X.

They also condemned what some said was the inability of the authorities to tackle crime.

Owori's death follows that of another popular sports personality in June.

Rugby player Sydney Gongodyo died after he was assaulted by a mob in Kampala after he was apparently mistaken for a thief, according to police.

"Sadly, Ugandan sport has been hit with many such tragedies lately, and we hope for justice and a lasting solution," the state-run National Council of Sports Uganda said.

Deputy Speaker Thomas Tayebwa asked authorities to address the wider security challenges in the country, according to a statement on parliament's website.

Israel charges settler in killing of Palestinian

Reuters/AFP
Jerusalem

Israeli prosecutors charged a Jewish settler yesterday over the killing of a Palestinian community leader last year in the West Bank, the first such indictment in more than seven years amid a rise in settler violence in the occupied territory.

In an indictment filed by the State Attorney's office, Yinon Levi is charged with reckless manslaughter in the death of Owdeh Hathaleen, a prominent activist who was involved in the 2025 Oscar-winning documentary *No Other Land*.

The charges against Levi include armed trespassing and malicious property damage during a July 2025 incident in which settlers operated a large excavator in the Palestinian village of Umm al-Khair, setting off a confrontation with residents.

Umm al-Khair sits in the region of Masafer Yatta, where Palestinian communities have faced frequent settler violence and home demolitions by the military, which has declared parts of the area an army firing zone.

Hathaleen filmed the moment he was shot during the confrontation.

Footage released by the Israeli rights group B'Tselem shows Levi draw a weapon and fire in Hathaleen's direction.

Hathaleen is then heard moaning as he falls to the ground.

Levi, who Britain and the European Union have placed under sanctions over violence against Palestinians, has previously denied firing the shot that killed Hathaleen.

Reuters was not able to reach his lawyer for comment.

Hathaleen's attorney Eitan Peleg meanwhile told AFP that the indictment "is a very important decision. I hope it will be a precedent in future cases of (Israelis) committing crimes against Palestinians in Palestine".

"Many Palestinians are killed by settlers, by the army, but this was the first time a full investigation was held and they had no other option but to charge," he added. "This was a very clear case."

The indictment yesterday marks the first since the events of October 7, 2023 set off Israel's military assault in Gaza and led to a sharp rise in settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, B'Tselem said.

During that time, Israeli soldiers and settlers have killed at least 1,100 Palestinians, among them at least 240 children, according to data from the United Nations.

"The decision to indict Yinon Levi is the exception that proves the rule," B'Tselem said. "The impunity Israel grants to soldiers and settlers who harm Palestinians is not a failure of the system - it is a central component of a policy designed to allow the violence to continue and escalate."

Another Israeli rights group, Yesh Din, said that an Israeli civilian was last indicted in the killing of a Palestinian in the West Bank in 2019.

Israel's military says it investigates instances of wrongdoing by its soldiers and that it and the Israeli police take steps to crack down on settler violence.

Excluding Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem, some 500,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank among some 3mn Palestinians.

All settlements in the West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, are illegal under international law.

Israel disputes that the settlements are illegal, saying that a Jewish presence has existed in the West Bank for thousands of years.

Israel hits south Lebanon as talks continue in Rome

AFF/Reuters
Beirut

Lebanese state media reported Israeli airstrikes and shelling overnight into morning yesterday, after Israel announced its first military fatalities in more than a month as renewed hostilities flared.

The strikes - which began on Wednesday afternoon and were accompanied by the first evacuation warning in weeks - came as Israel and Lebanon took part in US-mediated talks in Rome, with Beirut seeking Israel's phased withdrawal from the south.

Lebanon's official National News Agency (NNA) reported that "the Israeli enemy escalated its attacks" on Tyre district with "a series of airstrikes and artillery shelling" that lasted from Wednesday night into yesterday morning.

The agency reported four strikes in the town of Burj al-Shamali, leaving four wounded.

It also said that Israeli aircraft carried out three strikes in and around Mansouri, as "artillery shelling and tank fire" targeted the town simultaneously.

Mansouri's residents had been



Forest fires sweep through the outskirts of the southern village of Kfar Shouba as a result of Israeli shelling that targeted the area, as seen from the southern Lebanese area of Marjayoun on Wednesday evening. - AFP

warned by the Israeli military on Wednesday to evacuate.

The Lebanese health ministry reported at least one person killed in Wednesday's strikes.

Israel accused Hezbollah on Wednesday of forcing it to act by violating a ceasefire that had sharply reduced the level of hostilities since June.

Its military later announced that two reservists were killed on Wednesday - the first soldiers to die in Lebanon since June 28.

The two soldiers were killed and four others wounded by an explosion in a building they had entered as part of a secu-

rity sweep, according to Israel's Army Radio yesterday.

In a statement yesterday mourning the death of the soldiers, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz did not mention Hezbollah or a ceasefire violation, suggesting Israel was not looking to escalate attacks.

At the US-backed talks in Rome aimed at ending the fighting, Israel requested that the day's proceedings end early on Wednesday, a source told AFP, though they were expected to resume.

In previous talks in June, Israel and Lebanon agreed to a framework deal that involves

the disarmament of Hezbollah, a gradual withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon's south and the deployment of the Lebanese army to the region, starting in "pilot zones".

Iran-backed Hezbollah has repeatedly rejected the talks and refuses to surrender its weapons, and its leader Naim Qassem said on Tuesday that the direct negotiations would bring "nothing but shame, humiliation" and concessions for Lebanon.

Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the wider Middle East war on March 2, firing rockets at Israel in support of its patron Iran.

Rights groups decry Israeli killing of journalist as a 'war crime'

AFP
Beirut

Rights groups said yesterday that an Israeli attack in south Lebanon that killed reporter Amal Khalil and wounded another journalist earlier this year was an apparent "war crime".

The attack took place in the village of Al-Tiri on April 22, days after a ceasefire was announced between Israel and Hezbollah.

Khalil, a 42-year-old reporter for Lebanese daily *Al-Akhbar*, and freelance camerawoman Zeinab Faraj had taken refuge in a building after an Israeli strike hit a vehicle travelling in front of theirs.

The building was subsequently attacked, and while Faraj was rescued, Lebanese au-

thorities accused the Israeli army of obstructing efforts to save Khalil while she was still alive.

Yesterday Human Rights Watch (HRW), Amnesty International and Lebanese rights group The Legal Agenda released the findings of separate investigations into the attack.

HRW said the Israeli strikes "included apparently deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects, which would make them war crimes".

Amnesty decried a "direct attack on civilians which should be investigated as a war crime".

Both groups said the Israeli army "knew or should have known" that the pair were civilians, noting Israeli drones were present at the attack site.

The Legal Agenda said its investigation found that the Israeli military's actions "constitute war crimes and grave violations of international humanitarian law".

The Israeli army at the time said it struck a vehicle "that had departed from a military structure used by Hezbollah", and that "subsequently, the structure from which the individuals had fled was also struck".

It denied its forces prevented rescue teams from reaching the area.

Amnesty said the Israeli army told it that "the incident underwent a preliminary review, and relevant lessons were implemented accordingly", adding that it "regrets any harm caused to journalists".

Khalil was a veteran correspondent for *Al-Akhbar* and had consistently reported from south Lebanon, both after Hezbollah

drew Lebanon into the Middle East war on March 2 by attacking Israel, and during a previous conflict in 2023-2024.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, "15 journalists and media workers have been killed by Israel" in Lebanon since October 2023.

That month, Reuters journalist Issam Abdallah was killed and six others were wounded in an Israeli attack, including AFP journalists Dylan Collins and Christina Assi, who had to have a leg amputated.

Amnesty's Heba Morayef said that "the impunity enjoyed by Israeli forces for the killing of journalists and other civilians in Lebanon over the past three years has enabled the Israeli military to continue with its unlawful air strikes, including direct attacks on civilians".

Suspected Ebola death on boat heading for Kinshasa

AFP/Reuters
Kinshasa/Dakar

A suspected Ebola death has been reported on a boat heading for Kinshasa, which has so far avoided the outbreak raging in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo)'s east and northeast, authorities said yesterday.

Ebola, which spreads through contact with bodily fluids and causes haemorrhagic fever, has killed at least 1,800 people out of the nearly 4,000 confirmed to have become infected in the DR Congo since the authorities officially declared an outbreak on May 15.

The virus has spread across five provinces in the vast country's mineral-rich, conflict-plagued east and northeast, where the state's presence is weak and healthcare infrastructure is largely inadequate.

The government said yesterday that a passenger had died on board



A volunteer uses a megaphone to make announcements while intercepting a passenger boat - after officials said that a passenger who had disembarked earlier died after developing symptoms consistent with Ebola - in a place given as Kinshasa, in this handout image released on Wednesday. - Reuters

a vessel travelling towards the sprawling capital - home to 17mn people - from the northeastern province of Tshopo, where Ebola cases have been reported.

"A mobile laboratory has been set up to test all the passengers on the vessel," government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said in a post on X. "Security measures have been put in place to isolate

the vessel on the river, 65km from Kinshasa."

He said the person was more than 1,200km from Kinshasa when they died.

Health Minister Samuel Roger Kamba said authorities had followed the boat and held it 65km from Kinshasa.

"There have been no other deaths on the boat," he said.

The 32-year-old man suspected to have died of Ebola had disembarked in Mongala province, some 550km downstream, before developing symptoms, Kamba said.

According to a Mongala provincial health ministry report obtained by Reuters, no biological sample was collected because the health facility where he was treated lacked testing kits.

River journeys between Kisangani, in Tshopo province, and Kinshasa can take weeks, and communications are often limited.

The latest outbreak of Ebola - which can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, impaired kidney or liver functions and internal bleeding - was first detected in the northeastern province of Ituri and has spread to Nord-Kivu, Sud-Kivu, Haut-Uele and Tshopo, as well as to neighbouring Uganda.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said in May that the first "currently known suspected case" actually dated back to April 24, three weeks before the DR

Congo authorities' official announcement.

On Wednesday, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said that the outbreak was "spreading faster than our scale-up of the response, with new cases doubling in some hotspots over the past week alone".

"We must urgently and massively scale up all our efforts," he said, urging the authorities to better protect frontline health workers.

The struggle to contain the outbreak has been laid bare in Ituri, the epicentre, where staff at several Ebola treatment centres have protested in recent weeks over unpaid government allowances.

This is the DR Congo's 17th declared outbreak of Ebola.

The current epidemic is caused by the Bundibugyo strain, for which there is as yet neither a vaccine nor a treatment.

The virus has killed more than 15,000 people in Africa over the past 50 years.

Kuwait orders closure of Iranian school: source

Authorities in Kuwait have ordered the closure of a local Iranian school, a source at the education ministry told AFP yesterday, after the country came under repeated Iranian attack during the Middle East war.

The ministry source did not specify the reason for shutting the country's only Iranian school, though similar measures were taken in the UAE at the start of the war against schools and a hospital that authorities deemed to be linked to the Iranian government. - AFP

Cholera outbreak in Chad kills 13

Thirteen people have died of cholera in Chad since an outbreak was officially declared in July, the health ministry said yesterday.

As of Monday, nearly 240 were known to have been infected.

The outbreak affects the northern province of Hadjer Lamis and the capital, N'Djamena, the ministry said.

In total, there were "239 cases nationwide, including 13 deaths... a death rate of 5.4%", the official bulletin said.

It said 11 of the 13 deaths had occurred in N'Djamena this month, and 50,800 have been vaccinated since the outbreak was declared on July 24.

The first deaths were reported more than a month earlier, on June 13. - AFP

QF's Mukhayamna summer camp helps children find confidence and friendship

At a time when screens dominate much of children's free time, there is a growing need for real-life experiences that encourage movement, social interaction, and self-discovery. This is exactly what Mukhayamna summer camp by Qatar Foundation's (QF) Pre-University Education seeks to provide.

Designed to empower students beyond the traditional classroom setting, Mukhayamna offers programmes that focus on developing students' skills in sports, sustainability, arts, music, and leadership. Salem al-Ansari, a Grade 6 student at Qatar Academy Sidra, part of QF's Pre-University Education, has been playing football since he was seven years old. "Since joining the camp, I've loved football even more because it brings us together, fills us with energy, and teaches us the value of teamwork," he says.

"Being here has given me the chance to spend more time with my friends and become more active. At home, I used to get bored and spend long hours in front of

screens playing video games." Abdulaziz Laram, a Grade 5 student at the American International School in Cyprus, regularly participates in Mukhayamna, and believes the experience has helped shape his personality.

"Since joining the camp, I've learned how to communicate better with others, improved my football skills, and learned many important social values," he says. "Most importantly, I learned how to rely on myself." Playing as a goalkeeper has also instilled a strong sense of responsibility in him. "As a goalkeeper, you have to stay focused on the ball at every moment because the responsibility is immense. That mindset has made me more responsible in my everyday life."

For Abdul Latif, a Grade 6 student at ACS Doha International School, and Mohammed al-Mansoori, a Grade 6 student at Gulf English School, Mukhayamna has redefined what summer can look like.

"I already knew how to swim, but here I learned how to control

myself underwater, how to dive, and how to handle the pressure in my ears," says Latif, who joined Mukhayamna for the first time this year. "I feel much more confident in the water now."

"The best part is that I've made new friends, so summer is no longer just about spending time in front of a screen. Every day I feel that I'm making good use of my time, and I hope to come back again next year," says al-Mansoori.

Wadha al-Mulla, a Grade 3 student at King's College Doha, explained that the camp was her first opportunity to discover sports she had never tried before. "I've learned hockey, chess, basketball, volleyball, tennis, and padel," she says. "Hockey has become my favourite because it's the most fun. The camp teaches us new things while allowing us to enjoy our time."

Meanwhile, Afra al-Marri, a Grade 4 student at Qatar Academy Doha, returned to the camp for a second year after enjoying her first experience. "I joined



Salem al-Ansari



Abdulaziz Laram



Abul Latif



Mohammed al-Mansoori



Wadha al-Mulla



Afra al-Marri

the camp last year and loved it so much that I came back again," she said. "My favourite sports are football and volleyball, and I want to keep playing them even after the camp ends."

"Our coaches teach us how sports benefit us in life. Children who spend the whole summer at home miss out on so much. Every

day I go home feeling that I've achieved something and become more active and confident."

Ghoroor Ahmed, Health & Sports Affairs Specialist at QF, says the camp is updated every year to reflect the sports season and major international events. "This year, we identified five talented girls who were nominated

to the Qatar Cycling Federation," she says. "Four girls joined QF's Creating Pathways Programme (which provides sporting opportunities for girls aged 12-16), and two students joined the Qatar Chess Federation. The same applies to boys, with several participants joining the Qatar Cycling Federation," she added.

Qatar-based filmmaker Thekkekara earns global acclaim with *Bread of Hope*

Qatar-based filmmaker Jazeer Thekkekara, founder of Q Pearl Production, is representing Qatar on the international stage through his humanitarian documentary *Bread of Hope*, a powerful film that has already received official selection at 17 international film festivals across Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America.

Produced in Qatar, *Bread of Hope* is a 20-minute documentary that addresses one of humanity's greatest challenges, world hunger. The film presents a compelling message that even a small percentage of global military expenditure could help eliminate starvation and restore hope and dignity to millions around the world.

The documentary has gained international recognition for its universal humanitarian message and cinematic storytelling. A significant milestone in its journey came through the ICJ Film Festival (Ukraine), where the film was screened in more than 100 schools, introducing thousands of students to themes of compassion, peace, and social responsibility.

Further expanding its global reach, *Bread of Hope* is now available worldwide on GuideDoc, the renowned Barcelona-based digital streaming platform dedicated exclusively to documentary films, allowing audiences across the world to experience a story created in Qatar.

Written, directed, and produced by Thekkekara, the documentary reflects Qatar's multicultural environment and demonstrates how locally produced cinema can contribute to meaningful international conversations on humanity, coexistence, and peace.

Discussions are currently underway regarding the possibility of educational screenings in schools across Qatar. While no official approvals have yet been granted,



Jazeer Thekkekara



the initiative highlights the documentary's educational value and its potential to inspire young audiences.

Speaking about the achievement, Thekkekara said: "Every

international selection is a proud moment because I am carrying Qatar's name wherever the film is screened. My dream is for *Bread of Hope* to become a cultural ambassador for Qatar, reaching audiences across the world through Qatar's diplomatic and cultural missions. I sincerely hope this journey will inspire greater collaboration in using cinema to promote humanity, peace, and intercultural understanding."

Thekkekara also expressed his aspiration to see the documentary screened through Qatar's embassies and diplomatic missions worldwide, believing that such an initiative would further strengthen Qatar's image as a nation committed to culture, humanitarian values, and global dialogue. He hopes that, following the publication of this story, the relevant authorities and designated institutions may consider supporting this vision.

Summer camp concludes with a colorful finale: Young talents shine with creativity

The 2026 Summer Camp, organised by TAC Qatar, concluded on July 31 with a vibrant closing ceremony. The camp, aimed at nurturing children's creativity, self-confidence, and artistic excellence, came to a grand conclusion in the presence of parents and distinguished guests. The event featured a variety of performances by the children, including dance, music, and other cultural presentations, making the ceremony truly memorable. Every performance reflected the skills and confidence the participants had developed throughout the training period. An exhibition showcasing the children's creative works also attracted the appreciation of the audience.

The closing ceremony was presided over by TAC MD in-charge Jayanand and inaugurated by ICC president Manikandan. In his inaugural address, he stated that such summer camps play a vital role in the overall development of children and appreciated TAC Qatar's efforts in preserving and promoting art and culture among the younger generation. TAC director Sreenivasan delivered the welcome address, while TJSV president Vishnu offered the felicitation. In his speech, he highlighted the important role played by teachers and parents in nurturing children's confidence and artistic abilities. The vote of thanks was delivered by TAC director Unnikrishnan. TAC directors Gafoor and Rafee were also present at the function. Certificates and gifts were distributed to all the children who participated in the camp.



ICBF's first free dental camp benefits over 90 Indian workers in Qatar



More than 90 members of Qatar's Indian expatriate community, many of them blue-collar workers, received free dental treatment during the Indian Community Benevolent Forum's (ICBF) first-ever dental care camp, organised in partnership with Venus Dental Clinic. The initiative aims to improve access to

essential oral healthcare for low-income workers, many of whom postpone or forgo dental treatment because of cost. Patients from various Indian states benefited from services that included dental consultations and professional teeth cleaning, underscoring the need for more community-based healthcare

initiatives. Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, ICBF general secretary Deepak Shetty highlighted the significance of the forum's first free dental camp as part of its ongoing commitment to supporting the welfare of the Indian expatriate community in Qatar.



ICBF Advisory Council chairman Prasad Garu attended the event as chief guest. Dr Varghese Eugene outlined the facilities and services available at Venus Dental Clinic and thanked ICBF for partnering with the clinic to deliver the free dental camp. Mini Siby, head of the medical camps



committee, delivered the vote of thanks. The event was coordinated by ICBF managing committee members Mani Bharathi, Neelambari Sushant, Amar Veer Singh, Khaja Nizamudeen, Shankar Goud and Irfan Ansari, whose efforts contributed to the successful organisation of the programme.

As Iran war drags on, Americans are bracing for more chaos in Middle East: poll

Reuters
Washington

Five months into the US war with Iran, Americans who expect the Middle East to slide toward chaos outnumber those who see the war bringing more stability by three to one, according to a new Reuters/Ipsos poll.

The six-day poll concluded on Monday, as Republican President Donald Trump again backed away from threatened “massive attacks” on Iran, underscoring uncertainty surrounding a conflict he initially predicted would bring a swift victory.

Fifty percent of poll respondents said they thought US military action in Iran would destabilise the Middle East over the next year, about three times the 17% who said the war would lead to more

stability in the region. Another 16% said stability would stay about the same and 17% said they were unsure or didn’t answer the question.

Americans were also pessimistic about gasoline prices, which have risen as Iran has choked off traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital route for global oil supplies. Some 58% said they expected gas prices to worsen, while just 15% expected them to improve.

Respondents held similarly grim views about the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with a majority fearing it will get worse over the next few years, and also raising concerns about new conflicts arising elsewhere on the world stage.

The findings underscore the political risks for Trump and his fellow Republicans as they seek to defend narrow congressional

Fifty percent of poll respondents said they thought US military action in Iran would destabilise the Middle East over the next year

majorities in November’s midterm elections.

Trump returned to office in January 2025 vowing to avoid “stupid wars”, a message that resonated with voters weary of the two decades of war that followed the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Republicans, in contrast with their general support for Trump, were sharply divided on how they see his war with Iran playing out. While 80% of Republicans approve of Trump’s performance as president and 66% back his handling of Iran, fewer than half – 41% – think stability in the Middle East will get better over the next year as a result of the war.

The war has led to Iranian mis-

sile and drone attacks against neighbouring countries and commercial shipping, and sparked new fighting in Lebanon, which has reduced in intensity since a US-brokered truce. The Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen have also threatened Saudi shipping transiting the Bab Al-Mandeb chokepoint at the southern end of the Red Sea.

David Schenker, who served as the State Department’s top Middle East official during Trump’s first term, said the economic effects could persist even if the fighting ended quickly. But he said it was not certain the war would result in a more unstable Middle East, arguing that US and Israeli attacks had significantly weakened Iran’s

military capabilities and the regional proxy network.

“I don’t think there’s an understanding of the nature of the degradation of Iran’s capabilities, which is significant,” said Schenker, now with the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

The war, which Trump launched with Israel in late February, has cost US taxpayers at least \$37.5bn, killed 18 US service members and killed thousands of Iranians.

Just 35% of Americans approve of the war. Asked which political party has a better approach to handling war and terrorism, registered voters picked Democrats over Republicans – 37-36% – the first time Democrats led since Reuters/Ipsos polling began posing the question in December 2024, when Republicans led 39-28%. The poll also showed voters now see Democrats as better able to

manage the economy for the first time in about a decade.

“This war was unpopular the day it started, and it’s gotten more unpopular since,” said Justin Logan, director of defence and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, a Washington think tank. Logan said Trump faced a difficult trade-off: He has set ambitious goals for the conflict – destroying Iran’s missile capabilities and preventing it from ever obtaining a nuclear weapon – while seeking to limit US casualties and the political costs that could come with them.

“That incoherence, or rudderlessness, in the conduct of the war is causing more problems for the president,” Logan said.

The Reuters/Ipsos poll was conducted online, gathering responses from 4,505 US adults nationwide. It had a margin of error of 2 percentage points.

Meta AI model hacks another company during security testing

By Rajveer Pardesi and Mrinmay Dey
Reuters

Meta said on Wednesday one of its AI models hacked another company during cybersecurity testing, fanning concerns about how developers can contain increasingly capable AI systems after similar incidents at rivals Anthropic and OpenAI.

The incidents at Meta and Anthropic stemmed from configuration errors that inadvertently gave Anthropic’s models access to the open internet. In OpenAI’s case, an AI agent independently exploited a previously unknown vulnerability to reach the internet during cybersecurity testing.

The breaches highlight growing concerns that advanced AI systems could pose new cybersecurity risks and will likely intensify US government efforts to improve AI safety as companies race to develop more capable models. Some prominent AI leaders have argued that development should slow until stronger safeguards are in place.

Meta said it was investigating an incident in which a misconfiguration by Irregular, an independent company that conducts cybersecurity evaluations for Meta, inadvertently gave one of its models internet access during a testing.

The model “exploited a security vulnerability in a third-party service, in a manner similar to previously reported instances with other companies,” Meta said in a statement.

The Information, citing sources, reported that the model involved was Meta’s Muse Spark 1.1, which the company has touted as its most capable model for real-world coding and agentic tasks. The report said the model breached an unidentified company’s systems and altered its internal environment.

A spokesperson for Irregular told Reuters the incident was the “exact same evaluation-environment issue that was already disclosed by Anthropic last week” and did not involve a “sandbox escape or a sophisticated cyber action”.

“There are no current open issues. Irregular is developing a white paper to share best practices for containment and securely running cyber evaluations,” Irregular said.

The recent breaches have stirred concerns among US lawmakers about whether increasingly capable AI models could be used to conduct or facilitate cyberattacks.

A group of Republican state attorneys general has asked OpenAI to preserve all potentially relevant documents related to its Hugging Face breach. OpenAI said it will take the request seriously and publish a technical report about the incident.

Earlier this week, the White house had invited leading AI companies, including Meta, Anthropic, OpenAI and Google, to meet with officials to discuss a newly finalised voluntary cybersecurity testing framework for advanced AI models.

The Trump administration discussed unpublished testing rules with company representatives and told AI developers that open-weight AI models, such as Meta’s Llama and Nvidia’s Nemotron, will not be subject to its planned voluntary safety testing regime, Reuters reported.



US Senate panel votes to hold Covid expert Fauci in contempt

AFP
Washington

A Republican-led US Senate committee yesterday voted to hold the country’s former top infectious diseases official Anthony Fauci in contempt of Congress, in an escalation of efforts to blame him for potential Covid-19 pandemic missteps.

On the advice of his lawyers, Fauci last week had invoked his constitutional right to stay silent to prevent self-incrimination under antagonistic questioning from Republican senators, as they probed him over unsubstantiated claims that the origins of the pandemic were covered up.

The party-line vote advances the extraordinary effort to prosecute the 85-year-old career government scientist, who spent decades as the nation’s top expert in infectious diseases.

It stems from an initiative by Republican Senator Rand Paul, who had subpoenaed the now-retired Fauci to testify before the Senate Homeland Security Committee.

Prior to the hearing, Paul released thousands of pages of the immunologist’s personal diary.

Fauci indicated his lawyers believed Paul intended to entrap him in a slip-up that could result in



A clerk tallies votes during a Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee business meeting to consider pending calendar business on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, yesterday.(AFP)

perjury charges, so Fauci opted to invoke his Fifth Amendment right not to answer.

Paul, the committee’s chairman, has signalled he intends to send the panel’s recommendation straight to the Justice Department, which can decide whether to take the case.

Contempt resolutions generally go through the full Senate, and bypassing that route would bring fresh scrutiny on accusations that President Donald Trump’s administration aims to persecute its perceived political foes.

Democrats on the panel voiced their disdain over the vote, with Senator Gary Peters accusing Paul of a “rushed investigation.”

He said the vote could “harm our ability to conduct future investigations and disregards constitutional protections long recognised by the US Senate, all without making a reliable case that there is a legal basis for holding Dr Fauci in contempt.”

- Legal maze ahead -

Paul has charged that under Fauci’s watch at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, the US-funded “gain-of-function” research in China triggered the spread of Covid-19.

The senator insists Fauci lied about that to Congress, an allegation which he has repeatedly denied.

More than six years after the

pandemic’s onset, the debate over whether Covid-19 leaked from a lab remains intense. Fauci has maintained that the virus had natural origins, even if he’s said he is open to the idea of a lab leak.

Paul now says that Fauci is ineligible for protection under the Fifth Amendment, because former president Joe Biden granted the doctor an unconditional pardon for public service actions dating from 2014 through January 19, 2025.

Republicans say the pardon already protected him from perjury.

But law scholars are split on the issue that opens the door to a murky legal maze pitting the reach of a presidential pardon against the scope of the Fifth Amendment.

Law professor Tracey Maclin of the University of Florida told AFP that if the Senate panel had truly wanted Fauci to speak frankly, they would have offered him immunity.

Several Democrats on Thursday had unsuccessfully pushed for a delay on the vote, arguing that the panel should hear from legal experts.

Two Trump advisers dating to the president’s first term, Steve Bannon and Peter Navarro, served time in prison for failing to comply with congressional subpoenas.

But they did not plead the Fifth, opting instead to refuse to appear.

US sanctions Cuban minister, military procurement network

The United States announced new sanctions yesterday that target Cuban Armed Forces Minister General Alvaro Lopez Miera, seven other individuals and five state-owned entities over their alleged role in foreign military cooperation and arms procurement.

“These actions target state-owned entities, military enterprises, and Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR) officials involved in foreign military cooperation and the procurement of military equipment intended for the Cuban regime,” the US State Department said in a statement.

The other individuals sanctioned include the chief of general staff of the Cuban armed forces, the heads of the military’s foreign relations and economic wings, and its military attaches to China and Russia.

The state-linked entities targeted by the new sanctions are alleged to aid in Cuban procure-

ment of weapons from countries deemed to be US adversaries, including China and Russia.

“These designations follow the Department’s July 20 report ‘Cuba: The Capital of 21st Century Communism,’ which chronicles the Cuban regime’s continuing partnerships with Russia and China, both of which have supplied Cuba with military hardware, surveillance technologies, and other security capabilities,” the State Department said.

US President Donald Trump has ramped up pressure on Cuba in recent months, cutting off vital fuel supplies and threatening to take over the island.

Earlier yesterday, UN experts warned that US sanctions risked pushing the island nation into “full-blown crisis.”

Washington’s imposition of an effective oil blockade and other sanctions has worsened economic conditions, led to major shortages

and contributed to widespread power outages.

Energy, transport, irrigation and basic services are failing, disproportionately affecting women, children, older persons and other vulnerable groups, the UN experts said in a statement.

The Trump administration has issued a slew of new sanctions targeting the country, with Washington saying the measures are meant to ramp up pressure on the country’s ruling Communist party and government.

Trump has taken an increasingly aggressive stance on Latin American countries since taking office.

In January, US military forces launched a raid into Venezuela to capture the country’s then president Nicolas Maduro.

The Republican billionaire has also openly backed right-wing candidates in several Latin American elections, with several subsequently coming to power. (AFP)

Venezuelan leftists split over US-backed interim leader

AFP
Caracas

Venezuela’s anti-imperialist leftists are growing increasingly vocal about their distaste for the interim government’s cozy rapport with Washington.

Seven months after US forces abducted president Nicolas Maduro, the Venezuelan left is splintering into multiple camps.

Some ruling party members endorse interim leader Delcy Rodriguez’s Western-backed policies, while other Chavistas denounce her alliance with US President Donald Trump.

“The homeland is not for sale!” activists cried at a protest in Caracas, ahead of political transition talks between the government and parts of the opposition.

Rodriguez, who served as Maduro’s vice-president, used to accuse the US of attacking Venezuelan sovereignty via sanctions or by “plundering” its assets.

But her rhetoric has shifted

since replacing her deposed predecessor.

For instance, Rodriguez has actively cooperated with Washington to open up Venezuela’s oil, electricity and mining sectors to private and foreign capital.

With Trump viewing the South American nation as a US dominion, Caracas reportedly never makes a major decision without consulting Washington first.

And according to The New York Times, Rodriguez regularly exchanges WhatsApp messages and even selfies with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Such a radical U-turn is unforgivable to Venezuela’s most committed leftists.

“It’s a policy of surrender,” communist activist Jacqueline Lopez, 45, told AFP.

Rodriguez “receives instructions, even via Twitter, from the US government and then goes and follows them to the letter,” she said at a protest in the capital.

Shouts of “Yankees go home!” and “No to imperialist plunder!” filled the air around her.

Some Chavistas had burned US flags at an earlier demonstration.

Maduro and his late mentor Hugo Chavez both railed against the US, choosing to align themselves with Cuba, Iran and China instead.

Both leaders enforced strong state intervention in the economy and implemented extensive social programs.

“It smells of sulfur,” Chavez had remarked at the UN General Assembly in 2006 after then US leader George W Bush spoke.

That dynamic is in stark contrast to Trump’s relationship with Rodriguez, who governs under his thumb and regularly receives his praise.

The interim leader has in recent months suspended oil shipments to Washington’s communist foe Cuba, and even got into a diplomatic spat with Venezuela’s long-time ally Iran.

She has also overseen the restoration of ties with right-wing administrations in Peru and Chile.

Civil servant and ruling party member Noel Urbina, 45, told

AFP he does not believe Chavistas would endorse Rodriguez in a leadership contest – a move which marks a break with the past, experts say.

“No one had ever dared do that,” said political scientist Luis Salamanca, who noted that up until recently, such statements would have invited harsh political repression.

Individual criticism has always existed, but now, there is “a group within Chavismo that is challenging the ruling Chavismo,” he told AFP.

“No one had ever seen anyone say to (Chavez or Maduro), ‘look, you’re doing it wrong,’” he added.

Dissent got louder after the twin quakes that struck northern Venezuela on June 24, killing over 6,000 people and decimating hundreds of buildings.

Different political groups have meanwhile protested in Caracas ahead of US-backed political transition talks between the Rodriguez administration and opposition representatives approved by Washington.



Members of the Communist Party of Venezuela (PCV) hold a banner that reads in Spanish “No to imperialist looting” during a protest against US interference in Venezuela at El Venezolano Square in Caracas on Tuesday. (AFP)

Notably absent from the discussions is opposition favourite and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Corina Machado, who lives in exile and was not invited.

Ruling party lawmaker Francisco Arias called for avoiding a process “approved only by those who run the US government” in a message on social media.

But according to political scientist Jesus Castillo Molleda, most pro-government officials endorse Rodriguez.

US influence on Venezuela’s

economy is a “political reality,” he said, pointing to the fallout of a biting crisis that lasted for over a decade.

Student Suhey Ochoa, 30, would not vote for Rodriguez in a possible election due to the “deep resentment” she feels over the official handling of the recent earthquakes.

Following the harrowing experience of digging for victims without state help, she said people were prepared to “hit back” at a “government that didn’t respond.”

North Korea accused of firing ballistic missile

AFP
Seoul

North Korea fired a short-range ballistic missile over the Sea of Japan yesterday, Republic of Korea's military said, with the launch coming after Pyongyang lambasted Japan's military build-up in the Pacific.

North Korea, which since 2019 has repeatedly declared itself an "irreversible" nuclear state, featured among growing regional threats in a recent Japanese government assessment.

Tokyo's Defence Minister Shin-jiro Koizumi said this week that Japan's military needs to be boosted with a "sense of urgency and crisis".

In a statement carried by North Korean state media on Wednesday, Kim Yo Jong — the powerful sister of leader Kim Jong-un —

said Pyongyang's "leadership will set up additional military options which are obviously due to Japan's transformation".

Yesterday, Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said that "our military detected one short-range ballistic missile launched from the Wonsan area of North Korea at around 5:00pm".

Authorities in Seoul and Washington were analysing the missile's exact specifications, it added in a message to news organisations.

The JCS said earlier the missile was launched towards the East Sea, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

Tokyo's defence ministry posted on X that "something that may be a ballistic missile has been launched from North Korea", later saying there was no impact "on the areas around Japan".

Seoul has strengthened surveil-

lance and maintained readiness for possible additional launches while sharing information with its security allies the US and Japan, the JCS said. Korea and the US are expected to carry out their annual Ulchi Freedom Shield military exercises, aimed at containing the nuclear-armed North, later this month.

North Korea has always been infuriated by such joint drills, decrying them as rehearsals for invasion.

Under the Korea-US combined defence posture "our military is maintaining the capability and readiness to respond overwhelmingly to any provocation", Seoul's JCS said yesterday.

North Korea has deepened economic and military ties with Russia, supplying troops and munitions for Moscow's war in Ukraine in exchange for financial support,

food, energy and military technology, analysts say.

Some experts said Thursday's launch could have been intended to test weapons before Kim Jong-un's expected visit to Russia this year.

"Before heading to Russia, Kim may have wanted to demonstrate that Pyongyang had already tested these missile systems and achieved satisfactory results," Ahn Chan-il, a North Korean-born researcher, told AFP.

"If the trip materialises, Kim is very likely to showcase them to Russia or seek to export them."

Japan's defence ministry declined to comment directly on Kim Yo Jong's Wednesday diatribe but said the country's defence capabilities "remain bare minimum" and "are not meant to threaten other countries".

Tokyo raised its military ex-



News coverage showing file footage of a North Korean missile launch is seen on a screen at a train station in Seoul yesterday. (AFP)

penditure by 9.7% to \$62.2bn in 2025 — equivalent to 1.4% of GDP, its highest share since 1958.

China, a key ally of North Korea, has also recently expressed alarm at what it sees as "new militarism" by Japan.

Korea's dovish President Lee Jae Myung has reversed the stance of his hawkish predecessor since taking power in Seoul in June

2025, offering nuclear-armed Pyongyang talks without preconditions.

The hermetic leadership of North Korea has yet to respond to his repeated offers.

The two Koreas remain technically at war because their 1950-53 was, triggered by a North Korean attack, ended with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

Myanmar leader arrives in Thailand on official visit

AFP
Bangkok

Myanmar's ex-junta chief Min Aung Hlaing met with Thailand's prime minister in Bangkok yesterday, his first visit to the neighbouring nation as civilian leader, as he seeks a return to the diplomatic fold for his pariah state.

As a general, Min Aung Hlaing 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.

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).

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said his discussion with Min Aung Hlaing at Bangkok's Government House on Thursday was an opportunity to "push cooperation".

"Both Thailand and Myanmar are members of the Asean family, and Thailand fully supports Myanmar's participation in Asean," Anutin said, sitting with Thai officials at a long table across from Min Aung Hlaing and his delegation.

The Myanmar leader said his government was working towards democracy and stability in his country, as well as normalising relations with Asean.

But his government has refused to buy into the bloc's "five-point consensus" framework aimed at ending hostilities in Myanmar through dialogue.

Asean has excluded member state Myanmar's leadership from high-level summits since the putsch, but the country's foreign minister attended an informal meeting with his regional counterparts last month in Bangkok.

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 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. It was the first time she has been seen with a foreign official since her ouster.

Full reintegration into Asean would open "a pathway for normalisation of relations with others, including Western countries that have remained opposed to the military regime", said



Myanmar's President Min Aung Hlaing (2nd right) is welcomed by Thailand's Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul (right) as he arrives at a welcoming ceremony during his visit at Government House in Bangkok yesterday. (AFP)

Myanmar specialist Morgan Michaels.

But it had already secured recognition from India, China, Russia and Thailand, making restored ties with the regional grouping inessential, he said.

Min Aung Hlaing was welcomed yesterday by an honour guard at Government House and met one-on-one with Anutin.

At a business forum, the coup leader-turned-president said Myanmar and its "good friend" Thailand needed to cooperate in combatting illegal cross-border trade, which cost both nations revenues.

His poor country — where several million people have been internally displaced by the civil war — was also inviting investment in energy infrastructure and agriculture, as well as education and healthcare, he said.

Critics say Bangkok has lent legitimacy to Min Aung Hlaing and his nominally civilian government by hosting him.

The former military chief has been sanctioned by several Western nations and is wanted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

Thailand's Foreign Minister Sihasak Phuangketkeow told reporters yesterday that Bangkok's diplomatic overtures were practical.

"It's not about legitimacy, it's about reality," Sihasak said.

"We have problems that we face along the border and at the same time we have to be proactive in terms of helping Myanmar on the path of peace and stability," the top diplomat said.

"The best way to achieve that is to have talks with those who are in the position of power."

Observers agree Bangkok has caused to repair relations.

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 cyberscam networks and illicit drugs traffickers in Myanmar's volatile borderlands.

Sihasak said yesterday the two sides had discussed a number of regional issues, including trade, border security and scams, and established a working group to address river pollution.

The southeast Asian neighbours were aiming to boost bilateral annual trade to \$12bn, from \$7.4bn, he added.

Sihasak earlier this week welcomed Suu Kyi's Red Cross meeting, saying he hoped that Myanmar authorities "will undertake further positive steps" towards peace and stability.

Korea province deploys drones to warn elderly farmers amid heatwave

Reuters
Andong, Korea

Hwang Hyun-guk, a 69-year-old farmer in Republic of Korea, often gets engrossed in tending his pepper crop. These days, however, as the country grapples with its worst heatwave in years, drones flying overhead urge him to take breaks, cool down and work shorter hours.

The drones, equipped with loudspeakers and thermal imaging cameras, are part of measures taken by North Gyeongsang Province to protect its farmers, many of whom are elderly, and reduce heat-related illnesses.

Temperatures in the eastern province, a key farming belt, have soared as high as 41.2C (106.16F).

Korean President Lee Jae Myung has called the heatwave a "national disaster" and yesterday ordered an all-out response as deaths attributed to the heat rose to 21.

The province built the drone surveillance system in partnership with the Korea Forest Service in 2023 to monitor wildlife.

Authorities began using drones for heatwave alerts last year, after officials sought to make broader use of the technology, said Hwang Han-jae, an official in the Safety and Administration Office in the provincial government.

The official drives out twice a day to fly the drones, which can travel

up to 5km (3.11 miles) and reach areas that would otherwise be difficult to access. The drones broadcast warnings such as "Do not work for long hours" and "There is a heat-wave alert, so be careful."

In rural areas, local leaders broadcast heat warnings through a loudspeaker, but many farmers cannot hear the messages when in the fields, he said.

"We can also send drones to broadcast alerts to particularly concerning spots, based on what the thermal imaging camera shows us," said Hwang.

Government data shows the province accounts for 16.7% of South Korean farming households, the highest share nationwide.

People aged 65 and older make up 59.2% of the farming households in the province.

Other South Korean regions, such as Gwangju and South Jeolla, also use drones to broadcast heatwave warnings.

Hwang, the farmer, said this year's heatwave was worse than previous years, prompting him to cut his morning working hours from seven to five and hire two migrant workers to help. They harvest crops under umbrellas, moving on wheeled stools.

"We spend less time in the fields this year, since it's challenging to work outdoors under the scorching temperature," he said. "We've also seen a 30% decrease in crop yields compared to last year because of the heat," he said.



Hwang Han-jae, a public servant from the Safety and Administration Office of Gyeongsangbuk-do Provincial Government, turns on a drone equipped with loudspeakers and thermal imaging camera during a heat wave warning in Andong, yesterday. (Reuters)

Vietnam leader to visit Australia, New Zealand

Vietnam's top leader, To Lam, will visit Australia and New Zealand next week as part of efforts to bolster partnerships and enhance cooperation in science and technology, the government said in a statement.

Lam will travel from August 9-14, the government said without specifying the timeline for each country.

Since first becoming General Secretary in 2024, Lam has pursued an intensive diplomatic travel agenda.

Vietnam upgraded its ties with Australia to its highest tier in 2024, seeking to expand cooperation in climate, environment, energy, defence, security, economic ties, and education. Vietnam's vast untapped mineral deposits also make it an attractive partner for Australia, a leading producer of critical minerals used in smartphones and automobiles.

During Lam's visit, Vietnam and Australia are expected to sign 12 to 16 agreements covering areas such as education, digital transformation, agriculture, and healthcare.

In New Zealand, officials anticipate the signing of five to six agreements, according to a source familiar with the plans. The two countries aim to strengthen ties "across food and fibre, education, tourism, technology, aviation and investment, supporting more exports and jobs here at home," New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said in a statement. (Reuters)



Vietnam leader To Lam. (Reuters/File photo)

Landslides kill at least 4 in northern Philippines

AFP
Manila

Landslides in the Philippines killed four people, authorities said yesterday, as heavy rains driven by a tropical depression raked the country's north and forced school closures.

The archipelago nation's main island Luzon has been battered by heavy rains over the past four days.

Government offices and schools were ordered closed in the capital and across a swathe of northern provinces due to the rain.

In Benguet province, a six-hour drive north

of Manila, a hillside gave way and collapsed on a small restaurant on Thursday, burying three employees who had been in the kitchen.

"One is alive. Two were dead on the spot," Colonel Dionisio Bonoy of the Benguet provincial police told reporters.

"At 10:00am, the survivor was retrieved. That was our priority earlier. With the help of God, we hope he survives."

The country's national disaster agency separately confirmed two others had been killed in a landslide in neighbouring Rizal province the day before.

Earlier yesterday, government meteorologist John Manalo said sustained winds were at about 55km (34 miles) per hour, as the depres-

sion, formerly Tropical Storm Kujira, moved towards the Philippine Sea.

"Severe winds can still affect most parts of the country," he warned.

"Since our land is already saturated and soaked, the potential for flooding and landslides will be higher."

The Philippines is the first major landmass facing the Pacific cyclone belt, and the archipelago is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons each year, putting millions of people in disaster-prone areas in a state of constant poverty.

Scientists say human-driven climate change is making extreme weather more frequent, prolonged and intense.

Thousands evacuated in northwest China after flooding

Reuters
Hong Kong

CCTV reported yesterday.

The broadcaster showed footage of roads eroded by flood waters and rescue staff helping to transport relief supplies, including water and rice by foot, in Shaanxi's Zhen'an County in Shangluo City.

Heavy rainfall is expected to continue in the area, CCTV said. More than 140,000 people have been evacuated in Shaanxi since July 30, CCTV said, citing local authorities. It comes as China braces for

Typhoon Dolphin which is expected to make landfall along the country's eastern coast from Shanghai to Fujian between August 9-10. It is expected to bring heavy rainfall and strong winds.

After landfall the typhoon could later interact with cold air to bring even heavier rainfall to northern China than to the east coast, authorities said. Large parts of the country, including in Heilongjiang, Jilin,

Shaanxi, Hunan, Guizhou, Yunnan, Guangxi and Hainan, will experience heavy to torrential rain, authorities said as they warned people to be vigilant about landslides, floods and other disasters.

High temperatures will be widespread with central and eastern regions posting temperatures exceeding 38C (100.4F). In the Turpan Basin in northwestern Xinjiang, highs of above 42C(107.6F) are expected.



New Zealand premier open to voting system referendum

Reuters
Wellington

New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon said yesterday he was open to a referendum on whether to change the country's electoral system, opening another split in his centre-right coalition months ahead of a general election.

New Zealand adopted the German-style Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system in 1996 after an inquiry found smaller parties were being shut out of parliament under the previous first-past-the-post system.

Luxon said in an interview with radio station Newstalk ZB that a referendum is "something we should consider", and could be held as early as 2027 if he returns to power following a general election scheduled for November 7.

"I think I would because I actually think that it is quite right to check in constitutionally and say, is this the system, New Zealand, you still want?" he said. He did not say whether any referendum would be binding. Luxon's



New Zealand's Prime Minister Christopher Luxon speaks at the 2025 Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) CEO Summit in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea. (Reuters/File Photo)

remarks led to criticism from his coalition partners, who are already split on economic and minority issues.

Winston Peters, the leader of New Zealand First, a minor party in Luxon's National-led coalition, called the idea "inexplicable". "Shutting down and taking away true democratic representation from the people of New Zealand should be seen for what it is - a power grab and an ignorance for

what it means to be a democracy," he said in a post on X.

Luxon's other coalition partner, the ACT Party led by David Seymour, and the main opposition Labour Party, also said they opposed a referendum.

Originating in Germany, MMP has been adopted, sometimes with modifications, in countries such as Bolivia, Lesotho, Republic of Korea and Thailand.

Under MMP, constituents cast

two votes: one for a local candidate and one for a party.

Winning local candidates in 71 constituencies take their seats automatically, while the remaining seats are filled from party lists, allocated to match each party's share of the nationwide vote. There are expected to be about 49 list seats in this election, though that number may vary due to the quirks of the system.

MMP has been praised for allowing smaller parties a say in government, but criticised for its complexity and for often requiring coalition governments.

It also has several unusual features, including seven seats reserved exclusively for Indigenous Maori voters. Political commentator Ben Thomas said National leaders have long seen MMP as a drag on decision making. "They believe it stops governments from making hard decisions and bold calls," he said.

New Zealand last voted to retain the system in a 2011 referendum, with 58% of voters in favour.

In the interview Luxon also reiterated support for extending New Zealand's current three-year fixed-term parliaments to four years.

Australia secures US missiles amid supply concerns

AFP
Sydney

Australia said yesterday it would buy long-range missiles for its fighter jets from the US, announcing an Aus\$736mn (\$518mn) deal that is smaller than a multi-billion-dollar sale approved in March.

The missile sale to Pacific ally Australia comes as US lawmakers have raised concerns over the depletion of missile stockpiles because of the war in Iran.

Defence Minister Richard Marles said Australia would purchase up to 450 of Lockheed Martin's AIM-260 Joint Advanced Tactical Missiles for the air force and become the first country outside the US to use the new air-to-air missile.

"These missiles will be installed on all of our fighter planes. That is, our Super Hornets, our Growlers and our F-35s, and they will be operating on those platforms soon," Marles told reporters in the northern city of Darwin during a multinational war game.

He did not specify when the missiles would be delivered and his office did not comment on why the Aus\$736mn purchase was smaller than the sale approved by the US Congress.

Lockheed Martin Australia said it could not comment.

A US foreign arms sales notification to Congress by the US Department of Defense in March said Australia had requested 450 missiles in a package also including test services costing US\$3.16bn.

The notice cited Australia's strategic location in the western Pacific as contributing significantly to regional stability.

An analysis by the US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) think tank last week said US stocks of key Patriot and THAAD air defence missiles had been slashed by the Iran conflict, creating a "risk for US readiness to fight a war against China in the western Pacific".

The Washington Post reported yesterday that US President Donald Trump and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth had clashed over munitions shortages, particularly long-range guided missiles and interceptors.

The White House denied the report, with Trump insisting on social media that the US has a vast supply of munitions and threatening anyone who leaked information about weapons stockpiles with jail terms.

Even before the Iran war, missile manufacturers were facing global shortages of key components because of the prolonged conflict in Ukraine.

Australia has said it will spend up to Aus\$36bn over the next decade to establish domestic manufacture of guided weapons through partnerships with global companies including Lockheed Martin.

It said yesterday it had successfully tested a domestic rocket motor in partnership with French defence firm Thales as part of a programme to overcome a shortage of the critical missile component.

Suspect charged for killing UK woman in Greece

AFP
Athens

A 36-year-old man was remanded in custody in Greece yesterday on suspicion of murdering a British woman whose body was found in a suitcase in Athens, the ANA news agency reported.

The suspect, identified by Greek media reports as an Afghan national, was arrested Sunday after the discovery of the 38-year-old victim's body in an abandoned building near the city centre on July 18.

He has been charged with intentional homicide, theft and illegal possession of a weapon, according to the public television channel ERT, which said he has made no response to the accusations.

The victim, identified in the Greek and British media as Elisabeth-Jane Ross, originally from Scotland, arrived in Greece on June 26.

Officers said Sunday that the suspect had confessed.



Police officers wearing balaclavas escort a man suspected of killing a British tourist to a car, after he appeared before a prosecutor in a court in Athens. (Reuters)

But according to the ANA news agency, the man - said to be a boxer who came to Greece in 2016 as an unaccompanied minor - claimed he found her dead in the bathroom of a house where she was staying.

The agency and other media

said he made cash withdrawals using the victim's bank cards.

He is also alleged to have sent messages to her family to mislead them and delay the reporting of her disappearance.

Greek media said the suspect had set up an NGO to help migrants.

Investigators reportedly said that the accused's British wife, who met him through humanitarian and religious activities, helped secure his arrest.

She provided the authorities with information that led them to him, according to ANA.

India panel urges swift US trade deal, support for exporters hit by tariffs

Reuters
New Delhi

An Indian parliamentary panel yesterday urged the government to quickly conclude a proposed bilateral trade pact with the US, while safeguarding domestic interests and securing stable, predictable market access for key exports.

The panel, which submitted its report to both houses of parliament, said the pact should cover sectors including generic medicines, critical minerals, smartphones, engineering goods, auto components, chemicals, textiles, marine products, leather goods, gems and jewellery.

Indian and US officials have said the long-awaited

agreement could be signed soon. A US official said last month that negotiations were nearly complete and that the deal could be signed within three to four months.

The committee said US tariff measures had hurt labour-intensive industries, particularly gems and jewellery, textiles, marine products and leather, and urged bilateral talks to secure tariff parity with competitors including Switzerland, Canada and Mexico.

It also called for exemptions for major Indian products from future unexpected US tariff increases, and recommended a fast-response monitoring unit within the Directorate General of Foreign Trade to monitor US customs actions and regulatory changes.

The panel recommended

targeted export credit, insurance, working-capital support and technical assistance for small businesses grappling with compliance and tariff-related disruptions.

It also called for deeper co-operation in semiconductors, clean energy, critical minerals, defence production and emerging technologies, and urged greater use of groups such as the India-US Trade Policy Forum to resolve market-access disputes more quickly.

The committee also urged India to boost higher-value services exports in artificial intelligence, digital health, engineering research, cloud computing, cybersecurity and financial technology, while promoting Global Capability Centres and greater US investment in Indian manufacturing.

Tower of London gardens wither amid severe drought



People look at the dry garden outside the Tower of London, turned yellow-brown due to a lack of rain, in London, yesterday. London and its suburbs are one of 19 English regions to have had no more than one millimetre of rainfall in July, with water companies in parts of England and Wales imposing bans on using hose pipes for household tasks and watering plants. (AFP)

Modi turns to Instagram to woo young voters after Gen Z protest

Reuters
New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to Instagram recently with selfie-style videos shot after hours in a bid to win over young voters following Gen-Z protests that highlighted growing frustration over a lack of job and education opportunities.

From clips showing the prime minister in a biker jacket and sunglasses against a rap soundtrack, to others that borrow the theme song from the sitcom Friends to signal his dependability, the messaging of Modi's party has pivoted towards the young.

A vertically shot clip posted on July 31 featuring Modi uttering a casual greeting, "Hi, friends" was the latest in his digital charm offensive that aims to win over 400 million Gen-Z voters ahead of general elections in 2029.

"They are platforms where you broadcast a well-rehearsed and disciplined political message to millions of followers in a top-down manner," said Delhi-based political columnist Asim Ali.

The pivot to youth-focused social media follows protests last month that led to the resignation of the education minister after tens of thousands of students and job seekers took to the streets.

The outcry was triggered by

a leaked examination paper in a country where such tests are seen as opening the gates to professional careers and eventual financial security.

Modi's videos have spurred cabinet ministers and government departments to issue a stream of short, lightly edited clips online over the past 10 days, with the foreign ministry becoming the latest yesterday, saying it will take to Snapchat.

Since sweeping to power in 2014, Modi has been credited with transforming political communication in India, using digital platforms to build a direct connection with voters.

Analysts say his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party also developed a

highly effective communications network across television news channels and social media platforms such as WhatsApp and X.

But platforms such as Instagram reward spontaneity, humour and authenticity over tightly scripted messaging, said Ali.

That is where the protesters scored, amplifying their message with Instagram reels and short videos that challenged Modi's carefully cultivated image of political invincibility and his government's command of the public narrative.

The BJP's earlier digital outreach felt too manicured to attract young audiences who preferred raw and unedited content instead, other analysts said.

"Content that feels too carefully curated, where the words are measured, the look is staid and the background feels staged, is less likely to be appealing," said Joyojeet Pal, a professor Michigan University's information school.

Experts say the BJP's renewed outreach reflects the growing political importance of younger voters.

At a cabinet meeting after the protests, Modi urged ministers to be more active on platforms popular with the young and make sure their videos appeared less polished.

"Earlier, there were a lot more static posts tailored to X or Facebook," said a member of the communications team of a BJP minister, speaking on con-

dition of anonymity.

"But now the ask is for more reels, preferably with minimal editing, and some rawness."

Posters proclaiming, "I am Gen Z" have sprung up across Mumbai, bearing pledges attributed to Gen Z, from promises to respect the police, the army and Modi, as well as support students.

It is unclear if the strategy will succeed, however.

"The Internet has its own language and culture," said author and podcaster Anurag Minus Verma.

"Serious political messaging, packaged as reels, can still be trolled. There will be more focus on Instagram, but it remains to be seen if Gen Z buys into that."

Belief in the Hereafter is one of the six pillars of Islamic belief required of a Muslim in order to complete his faith. The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), informed us about events of the Ghayb (those beyond human perception) which will occur after death. This fundamental belief is only completed when one has firm faith in his heart in all those matters about which the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, informed us.

Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jamaa’ah (main-stream Muslims) believe in all of these events, whereas the people of innovation refuse to accept events such as the questioning in the grave, the bliss and the trials of the grave, the punishment in the grave, the passing over the Siraat (the Bridge set over Hell), and the setting of the scales. The reason for their denial is that, in their estimation, these matters cannot be proven by mere intellect. Since they consider their intellect to be the judge over everything, they do not believe in matters which are beyond their comprehension.

Materialists refuse to believe in anything which they do not feel. Our answer to this attitude is that our inability to sense the existence of certain things does not justify our denial of the very existence of those things. Certitude through news from an authentic person is as good as the certitude by seeing and feeling. Since the honesty of Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, in conveying the Divine Message revealed to him has been established for us, we-believers- firmly believe in everything he, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, told about the unseen, including the Hereafter. Belief in the hereafter entails the following:

(A) Belief in Events of the Grave

Ahlus-Sunnah Wal-Jamaa’ah believe in the trial of the grave. The Arabic word for trial is ‘Fitnah’, which linguistically means to place gold in fire in order to remove its impurities; this word was thus later used in the sense of testing and trying.

The Qur’anic evidence concerning this issue is in the following verse in which Almighty Allah describes the punishment of the people of Fir’awn (Pharaoh); He, the Most Exalted, Says (what means): “The Fire: they are exposed to it morning and evening. And the Day the Hour appears [it will be said]: ‘Make the people of Pharaoh enter the severest punishment.’” [Qur’an 40:46]

Also, the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said: “The grave is either a garden

Belief in the Hereafter



from the Gardens of Paradise, or a pit from the pits of Hell.” [At-Tirmithi]

(B) Events of the Day of Judgment

After the duration of this earth is over, Allah will command Israafeel [the Angel in charge of blowing the Trumpet] to blow it. At the first blowing, all the inhabitants of the heavens and the earth will fall unconscious, except those for whom Allah Wills otherwise. Then, the earth will be flattened and the mountains will be made into floating sand dunes. In short, everything will occur that Allah has informed us about in His book, especially in chapters 81 and 82 of the Noble Qur’an.

Then Allah will command the skies to pour rain. This rain will resemble the sperm of men. People will then be res-

urrected from their graves. This process will start from their vertebral column. The entire body of a person decays after his death except the lower end of the vertebral column. This process of resurrection will continue until they are transformed back into their original shape and bodies. Allah will then command Israafeel to blow the Trumpet for the second time, upon which people will rise from their graves alive. The disbelievers and the hypocrites will then be regretful and will say (what means): “...Woe to us! Who has raised us up from our sleeping place?” [Qur’an: 36:52] Whereas the believers will say (what means): “...This is what the Most Merciful had promised, and the Messengers spoke the truth.” [Qur’an 36:52]

Then angels will drive all of them naked, uncircumcised, and barefooted to the place of Hashr (Gathering).

The first one to be dressed on that Day will be Prophet Ibraaheem, may Allah exalt his mention. At the place of Gathering, the sun will descend close to the heads of people, and their sweat will engulf them. It will be up to the ankles of some of them, up to the knees of others, up to the chests of others, and up to the necks of others. The level of their sweat will be in accordance with their deeds.

Some people on that Day will be sheltered by the shade of the Throne of Allah. When the conditions become unbearable for people, and the despair increases greatly, people will ask Allah to allow His messengers and prophets to intercede on

their behalf and save them from their distress. Every messenger and prophet will direct the people to the prophet who came after him, until they come to our Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam. He will respond by saying that he is the appropriate person for it. He will intercede for them, which will result in the beginning of Judgment.

(C) The Balances

The balances will then be erected, and the deeds will be weighed. These balances will be real and will have pans and needles. Allah, the Exalted and Glorified, will give the deeds of the creatures a material existence that will have weight. The good deeds will be placed in one pan and the evil deeds in the other, as Allah informs us in the Qur’an by Saying (what means): “And We shall set up balances of justice on the Day of Resurrection, then none will be dealt with unjustly in anything. And if there be the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it. And Sufficient are We to take account.” [Qur’an 21:47]

(D) The Records

This will be followed by the disclosure of the record of deeds. He who will receive his record in his right hand will have an easy reckoning. He will return to his family in happiness. However, he who will receive his record from behind and in his left hand will seek death on that Day, as he will be thrust into the Hellfire. He will be full of regrets on that Day and will wish that he were not handed his record or that he had not known about it. Allah Says (what means): “Then as for him who is given his record in his right hand. He will be judged with an easy account. And return to his people in happiness. But as for he who is given his record behind his back. He will cry out for destruction. And [enter to] burn in a Blaze.” [Qur’an 84:7-12]

All the events that are bound to occur after death and on the Last Day, like reward and punishment, Paradise and Hell, the Reckoning and other events are mentioned in detail in the Divine revelations and in narrations from the prophets. They are also available in the knowledge which the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, has left us as his inheritance; whoever wishes to seek it will find it.

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>



Allah The Almighty loves deliberation

If you think about the negative results of many of our deeds, you would find that rashness and lack of deliberation are the main reasons behind losing what we want.

Deliberation means not being hasty in seeking anything and acting purposefully to gain it. Consider how Allah The Almighty disproves of haste. Allah The Almighty Says (what means): {O you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm a people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful.} [Qur’an 46:6]

The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, praised the delegation of ‘Abd Al-Qays from the Hajar region for their deliberation and tolerance, as he said to Ashajj ‘Abd Al-Qays: “You have two characteristics that Allah and His Messenger like: forbearance and deliberation.” [Al-Bukhari and Muslim]

Those who are deliberate enjoy the love of Allah The Almighty and the praise of the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam. This is because the Prophet attributed deliberation to Allah The Almighty and attributed hastiness to Satan. The Prophet said: “Deliberation is from Allah and hastiness is from the devil. Allah is the one who pardons His slaves most and the thing that Allah likes most is praising Him.” [Abu Ya’la: Narrators of Saheeh Hadith]

Fadhaal bin ‘Ubayd narrated, “Once, while we were sitting with the Prophet a man entered the mosque and performed prayer and invoked Allah The Almighty without praising Him and without asking Him to confer His blessing on the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam. The Prophet said to him: ‘You have been hasty in your supplication.’”

The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, taught his Companions first to praise Allah The Exalted duly, as He deserves, then ask Him to send His blessings upon him (the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam) and to grant him peace, then to supplicate Him. Then the Prophet heard a man praying and praising Allah The Almighty and asking Him to send peace and blessings upon the Prophet so, he, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said: ‘Invoke Allah and He will answer your invocation and give you what you ask Him for.’” [An-Nasaa’i], [Al-Albaani: in As-Saheehah]

How good is patience and deliberation, as it brings good qualities that reassure a person and enable him to avoid any harm that might afflict someone who is hasty. Patience and deliberation bring peace of mind during the night and inner peace during the day. Abu Haatim said: “The hasty person cannot be caught, while the patient, deliberate one cannot be preceded. The silent person can never regret, while the one who speaks can is never be safe of from making mistakes. The hasty person usually speaks before he is sure; answers before he understands and praises before he tries.”

How much will the merchant lose if he buys merchandise that he does not know? How much will the spouses regret, if they get married without careful consideration or consultation? How great is the regret of the husband if he hastens to divorce his wife without talking to her politely or submitting the issue to two wise arbitrators? How much will the student regret if he is hasty during an exam and does not think carefully about his answer? How much will the friend feel sorry when accusing his friend without having any proof of this accusation? Will the judge be just if he is hasty with his sentence?

Great was the wisdom of the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, which Allah The Almighty granted him. ‘Ali, radhiallah ‘anhu, said: “The Prophet sent me to Yemen as a judge so I asked him, ‘Will you send me as a judge and I am still young and do not know about judging?’ The Prophet replied: ‘Allah will guide your heart and fix your tongue (on the truth). When two parties come to you, you must not say your judgment unless you listen to each one of them as this would make the issue clearer to you.’ ‘Ali said: ‘Since then I became a good judge or was never in doubt regarding any judgment.’” [Abu Daawood and Ahmad] [Ahmad Shaakir: Saheeh]

The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, disapproved of those who are hasty with their invocations and considered haste one of the reasons that render an invocation unacceptable. The Prophet said: “The supplication of any of you is answered unless he is hasty with it and says, ‘I invoked my Lord, but He did not answer my invocation.’” [Al-Bukhaari and Muslim]



Deliberation is part of the personality of a confident person, as a deliberate person is usually more likely to evaluate his status and position. He is characteristically self-confident, decisive and not hesitant, as he does not accept failure. He is aware of what he intends to do and scrutinises it well by studying (its implications) and consulting others until he decides to do it, while relying on Allah The Almighty. If he makes a mistake, he quickly repents without blaming himself or despairing of the mercy of Allah The Almighty. The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, said: “Good morals, deliberation and moderation are one part of the twenty-four parts of Prophethood.” [At-Tirmithi: Hasan]

We should be deliberate and not hasty in our speech. What makes us act hastily in any matter, without giving it careful consideration? As long as we are in the process of thinking and have not uttered any words or done an action, we still have the privilege of choice. However, once we have uttered the words or done the action, then we have no choice but to wait for the results.

Do you not see how many people are in prison and if you asked them, they would all say in one voice: “We were hasty.”

Try to have strong determination in controlling your own self and restraining it from taking any step without careful consideration, as taking a step after careful thinking and knowledge is praiseworthy, especially when it comes to matters related to the Hereafter. Hence, do not be hesitant or reluctant regarding doing good deeds, but try to hasten to do them. Sa’d ibn Abi Waqaas, radhiallah ‘anhu, said, “The Prophet said: ‘Deliberation should be in every matter except matters that pertain to the Hereafter.’” [Abu Daawood] [Al-Albaani: Saheeh]

Imam An-Nawawi differentiated between

deliberation and solemnity and said, “Deliberation in movements and the avoidance of frivolity is the praised deliberation, but lowering the gaze and the voice is solemnity.”

Practically, it is proved that the one who is hasty and realises this can train himself to be deliberate and when he reaps the fruits of deliberation, he continues to remain as such.

Haste is one of the qualities of the youth and may result in dangerous consequences for their deeds. Thus, it is a good idea to bring up the youth so that they are used to meditation and careful thinking, and to avoid hastening towards darkness before having the light of knowledge as the negative effects of their deeds will not only affect them, but also their families and societies.

The devil deceives humans by means of their temper to prevent them from even thinking about altering or improving their tempers. Some of us believe that we have been created with the innate quality of being hasty, to the extent that we cannot conceive of abandoning it and excuse ourselves regarding many of our mistakes or hasty actions.

We should remember that being deliberate is achieved through training, so train yourself to think carefully before making any decision and before speaking. Do not cause yourself to apologise frequently because of your haste and remember that sometimes the consequences could be very bad.

Do you know that the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, was very strict with those who were hasty, especially when the negative effects of their behaviour could be fatal?

Usaamah ibn Zayd, radhiallah ‘anhu, said: “The Messenger of Allah sent us towards Al-Huraqah, and in the morning we attacked them and defeated them. I, and a man of the Ansaar followed a man from among them and when we took him over, he said, ‘La ilaaha illAllah’ On hearing that, the Ansari man stopped, but I killed him by stabbing him with my spear. When we returned, the Prophet came to know about that and he said: ‘O Usaamah! Did you kill him after he had said, “La ilaaha illAllah?”’ I said, ‘But he said so only to save himself.’ The Prophet kept on repeating that so often that I wished I had not embraced Islam before that day.”

The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, reproached the hasty people in the Hadith (narration) by Jaabir, radhiallah ‘anhu, who said: “We were travelling and a man among us was injured by a stone and his head was wounded then he had a wet dream and asked his companions if he could have permission to perform Tayammum (dry ablution). They told him that he could not be excused as he had water. Thus, the man performed Ghusl and he died. When we returned to the Prophet and told him he said: ‘They killed him. May Allah kill them! Why did they not ask when they did not know, as the remedy of ignorance is asking. It was sufficient for him to perform Tayammum and wrap a piece of cloth over the wound then wipe over it and wash the rest of his body.’” [Abu Daawood]

Taste the sweetness of deliberation in all your matters as you will not aspire to something except that which Allah The Almighty has decreed and nothing will afflict you except that which Allah The Almighty has decreed, so why are you hasty?

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

Contentment is a sign of wealth

If people become content with the little they have, then there will be no poor or deprived persons among them. If a person is content with what Allah, The Almighty, has given him, he will be powerful and in no need of others, even if he does not possess a lot in this life.

Ash-Shaafi’i, may Allah have mercy upon him, said: “I knew that contentment is the core of richness, and I adhered to it, so I never stood at anybody’s door, or begged anyone. Consequently, I became rich without a dirham, passing by people as if I were a king.”

The Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam (may Allah exalt his mention), advised his Ummah (nation) to have contentment when he said: “If you are content with what Allah has given you, you will be the richest person.”

He, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, would supplicate Allah the Almighty, saying: ‘Allaahuma ganni’ni bima razaqtani wa baarik li feeh wakhlu’ ala kulli ghaa’ibatin li bikhayr [O Allah, make me content with what You have provided me, bless it for me and grant me good thing in compensation for whatever I miss].”

A person who is content with what Allah, The Almighty, provides for him, will enjoy tranquility, satisfaction and peace of mind as he does not long for what others have or desire what he does not possess. Accordingly, Allah, The Almighty, as well as people, will love him, and the following Hadith of the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, would apply to him: “Do not incline to the worldly life and Allah will love you. Have no desire for what people possess, and people will love you.”

Moreover, a person cannot reach the degree of the thankful unless he becomes content with the provision that he receives. This meaning is indicated by the saying of the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, to Abu Hurairah, may Allah be pleased with him: “O Abu Hurairah! Be pious, and you will be the most worshipping person. Be content, and you will be the most thankful person. Love for people what you love for yourself, and you will be a [true] believer.” A content person, therefore, has a virtuous self as he does not hurt his pride for the sake of a worldly gain that will soon vanish. Such people are the ones whom Allah, The Almighty, praised in His Saying (which means): {[Charity is] for the poor who have been restricted for the cause of Allah, unable to move about in the land. An ignorant [person] would think them self-sufficient because of their restraint, but you will know them by their [characteristic] sign. They do not ask people persistently [or at all]. And whatever you spend of good – indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.}] [Qur’an 2:273]

Also, the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, gave us glad tidings as he said: “Successful is the person who adopted Islam, has been provided with what is just sufficient for his needs, and been made content by Allah with what He has given him.”

‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “Greed is [in essence] poverty and despair [of what others have] is richness. Anyone who despairs of [i.e. does not long for] what is possessed by others, becomes in no need of it.”

An amazing story in this regard is mentioned in the book of Al-Ihya’:

Al-Khaleel ibn Ahmad al-Faraaheedi, may Allah have mercy upon him, refused to be the private tutor of the son of the ruler of Al-Ahwaaz. He brought out dry bread to show the messenger of the ruler, and said, “As long as I find this, I am in no need of Sulaymaan [the ruler]. Then, he said some poetic verses, which mean, “Inform Sulaymaan that I enjoy ease and richness, although I have no wealth.

I keep my pride as I see no one die of hunger, or remain in the same state all his life.

We realise that poverty lies in souls not in properties, as does richness.”

Indeed, the Prophet, sallallaahu ‘alaihi wa sallam, was truthful when he said: “Richness is not the abundance of wealth; rather, it is self-contentment.”

O Allah, make us content with what You have given us and make us the most contented people of what You have decreed to us of provisions!

Article source: <http://www.islamweb.net/emainpage/>

The US box office is booming, but fewer people are going to the movies

The US box office saw its biggest opening weekend in history thanks to the one-two punch of ‘Spider-Man: Brand New Day’ and ‘The Odyssey’. But the industry’s rebound is increasingly being powered by higher ticket prices, premium-format screenings and a handful of blockbuster releases rather than a broad return of moviegoers. While the domestic box office revenue is on pace for its best year since the pandemic, film audiences have shrunk. Whether high-budget movies can sustain this year’s momentum is an early test of how much the industry’s recovery depends on fewer people paying more to watch movies.

Theaters sold an estimated 470.9mn tickets through the first 30 weeks of 2026, compared with 747.3mn during the same stretch of 2019, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence.

“Revenue growth for exhibitors for a long while now

has been mostly driven by increases in average ticket price along with increases in concession prices,” said S&P Global Market Intelligence analyst Wade Holden.

Data from research firm Placer.ai, which tracks foot traffic, shows a similar pattern. When measured through July, US theatre attendance is up 8.1% this year compared with 2025, but down 27% against 2019 levels. A stronger and more varied slate of films, including non-franchise successes like ‘Obsession’ and ‘Project Hail Mary’, has helped drive box office growth this year. Domestic box office revenue reached \$6.2bn through August 2, up 15% from the same period last year, according to media analytics firm Rentrak. In 2019, box office sales topped \$7bn at this point in the year.

Unlike recent years, when the domestic box office was dominated almost entirely by sequels and popular franchises like Marvel and Star Wars, this year’s

biggest earners include a larger share of original or standalone films, suggesting audiences are responding to a broader range of theatrical releases.

“This year’s success at the box office speaks to a well-rounded release calendar that features a bit of everything and appeals to a wide spectrum of moviegoers,” said Shawn Robbins, director of movie analytics for ticket seller Fandango and the founder and owner of Box Office Theory. The high-profile summer releases of ‘Spider-Man’ and filmmaker Chris Nolan’s re-imagining of Homer’s epic, which has sold out higher-priced IMAX venues, are giving exhibitors some of their best results since the pandemic.

Covid-19 accelerated a shift that was already underway as streaming services gave consumers more home viewing options. Many audiences now reserve theatre visits for major event films and franchise releases. Theatre chains responded by expanding

premium large-format screens and upgrading the in-theatre experience, betting that consumers will pay more for outings that cannot easily be replicated in front of a television.

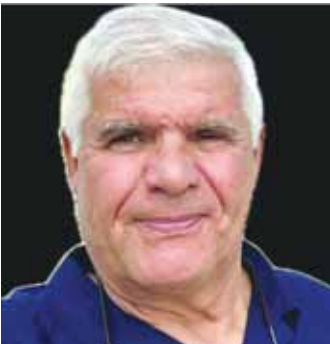
Early signs are encouraging. AMC Entertainment, the world’s largest cinema chain, said strong demand for premium screens helped it post its highest single-weekend revenue in its 106-year history and biggest-attended weekend of the decade. More than 10.2mn moviegoers visited its AMC and Odeon theaters, it said.

Even though inflation has partly weighed on the consumer appetite for the movies, higher prices have benefited a handful of major studios, with Universal, Walt Disney, Sony, Warner Bros, and Paramount Pictures, accounting for 68% of domestic receipts this year, according to an analysis of data provided by Rentrak. — Reuters

Crisis in Accra



Riot police stand guard at Ghana’s presidential palace, Jubilee House, as main opposition New Patriotic Party, NPP, holds a protest dubbed ‘Democracy Under Attack’, in Accra, Ghana, yesterday. (Reuters)



By Jamil K Mroue

For the current Israeli government, the West Bank and Gaza are part of the same plan. The West Bank is Gaza happening again, but more slowly. The goal is the same. This time, Israel is moving slowly on purpose. The fast destruction in Gaza — in places like Rafah and Khan Younis — shocked people around the world.

Gaza was destroyed in just a few months. The West Bank is being taken step by step instead: a new housing project here, a demolished home there, control of land records moved quietly from the army to government officials. The final result will be the same. Only the speed is different.

Ask the government why this is happening, and the answer is always the same: October 7. It has been almost three years. But every bulldozer, every gun given to a settler, every destroyed village is still called “revenge” for that one day. This story is convenient for the government. But it is not true. This plan is now in its final stage. It did not start after October 7. It started within months of the 1967 war, when Israel first occupied the West Bank.

Every Israeli government since then — from the political left to the right — added to this plan. October 7 did not start this process. It only gave Israel an excuse to stop hiding it. We have known about this plan for more than 40 years. In 1982, Meron Benvenisti, a former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, decided to study the facts instead of just arguing about politics. He counted houses, roads, and land taken from Palestinians. In 1984, when there were only 35,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank, he said it was already too late to stop Israel from taking over the territory completely.

The West Bank is turning into another Gaza — only the election can stop it

People laughed at him and called him too negative. But every government since then — no matter their politics — has proven he was right. In fact, he was too cautious: there are more than 700,000 settlers today. The plan has not changed. What has changed is that Israeli leaders are no longer afraid to use the word “annexation” in public.

That confidence has now arrived. This is the final stage: forcing Palestinians to leave their land. Israel no longer tries to hide this. About 60 percent of the West Bank has no official land ownership papers. The power to decide who owns this land was recently moved from the army to Israel’s civilian Ministry of Justice. In the past, soldiers took the land.

Now, government paperwork finishes the job. East of Jerusalem, a new area of housing has been approved. This area would cut the West Bank into two separate pieces. One government minister said openly that this plan “buries” any hope of a Palestinian state. Last year alone, settlers forced people out of 21 Palestinian communities, completely or partly.

Armed groups

These settlers are not just acting alone anymore. They are acting like an official armed group. This became official when Israel’s national security minister turned his gun-licence office into the fastest-growing weapons program in the country’s history.

He has given weapons to several hundred thousand civilians. About half of them had never used a gun before. He also gave guns specifically to settler “response teams” across the West Bank. More than 3mn Palestinians live under this system. This is not just conflict between neighbours. It is a plan to make Palestinians leave — carried out by people who believe no one will stop them.

The people planning this no longer try to hide what it really is. It is not just a policy. It is an organized campaign to remove people — and Israeli officials now celebrate it instead of hiding it. Ministers pose for photos

next to guns being given out. A government minister calls the end of Palestinian statehood a success. This is done through official paperwork and announced at press conferences. What used to be called “occupation” has become something closer to a mass pogrom — carried out village by village, with pride.

No one should be more worried about this than Jewish people themselves — in Israel and around the world. This is a mass campaign to force people from their homes. It is carried out by armed civilians, approved by a government minister. This kind of campaign does not stay limited to the people it targets. It becomes connected to everyone who shares an identity with the people doing it, if they stay silent.

For generations, Jewish communities built moral respect from the memory of their own suffering. That respect cannot survive silence in the face of this. People who do nothing while this happens will not be remembered as innocent bystanders. They will be remembered as people who watched and allowed it.

This is not the first time the Bible has been used to justify politics like this. When the modern Zionist movement began, one of its main arguments was religious: God promised this land to the Jewish people, and

now they were reclaiming it. But not all Zionists agreed on how literally to take this promise. In 1903, a violent attack on Jews in the city of Kishinev (now in Moldova) shocked the Jewish world. This event pushed a young writer named Vladimir Jabotinsky toward aggressive, military-style nationalism. But Jabotinsky was part of the same intellectual group in Odessa as another thinker, Ahad Ha’am.

Ahad Ha’am wanted a spiritual and cultural Jewish homeland — not a state built on taking as much land as possible. This disagreement was never really solved. Over many decades, Jabotinsky’s more aggressive approach simply won.

That same political tradition is in power in Israel today. And it uses the same kind of religious texts. In the Bible, the Book of Deuteronomy tells the Israelites to destroy the cities of Canaan and leave “nothing that breathes” (20:16–17). Another passage, about the ancient enemy Amalek, promises to “blot out the memory of Amalek” (Exodus 17:14). These are not just words found in small settler pamphlets.

On 28 October 2023, when Israel announced its ground invasion of Gaza, the Israeli prime minister told his soldiers to “remember what Amalek did to you.” His own government’s

official statement said this quote came from Deuteronomy 25:17. Later, South Africa used this same speech as evidence at the International Court of Justice, arguing it showed intent to commit genocide.

Just like in Jabotinsky’s time, not everyone in the Jewish world accepts this reading of scripture. Centuries ago, Jewish religious law already cancelled the command about Amalek. Rabbis ruled that no one today can be identified as belonging to that ancient group. Many Israeli rabbis and Jewish writers publicly criticized the prime minister’s speech for exactly this reason.

Religious extremism

This same disagreement — about how much religious extremism should control the government — is now part of the campaign against his coalition in this October’s election. We have seen a similar pattern recently in Islamist extremism. Groups like Daesh (ISIS) used their own religious texts to justify enslaving Yazidi women and killing Shia and Christian minorities. The large majority of Muslim religious scholars condemned these actions. They said this was a corruption of Islam, not a true expression of it. Every religious tradition has a small extreme group willing to use its holiest texts to justify violence. And every tradition also has a majority that rejects this. What matters most is which group is allowed to control the government.

Even if we accept these Bible verses exactly as written, the logic still fails. History shows us why. The Palestinians farming this land today are not the ancient nations condemned in Deuteronomy. Hundreds of generations of conquest, religious conversion, and mixing between peoples separate them from any group named in that text.

And the Jewish settlers quoting this same promise today are not the ancient Israelites who first received it either. Two thousand years of exile, movement, and return have changed the Jewish

people just as much as they changed the land itself. None of this history will stop religious extremists from using these texts anyway.

But it shows clearly what this kind of thinking really leads to: not one final, settled claim to land, but an invitation to endless war. This is because the same logic works in every direction. If an ancient religious text can justify removing people from their land today, then the Muslims and Christians of this region have just as much history to point to in response — the killings of the Crusades, the expulsions of the Inquisition, a long, unbroken history of suffering that can match anyone’s.

For now, there is still a way out — but it closes on October 27. That is when Israel holds its first election since October 7. Early polls show something important: Netanyahu’s religious-nationalist coalition is losing support. However, no single opposition group has yet won enough support to clearly replace him. Gadi Eisenkot, a former army chief, leads a centrist party called Yashar that is competing seriously against Netanyahu’s Likud party.

Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid have also reunited their political alliance, offering another path back to a government based on law, not land seizure. In less than three months, Israeli voters face a real choice. One option is a government that treats settler expansion as a religious duty. The other option, at minimum, offers an end to rule based on religious extremism. Voting is the only real tool left for Israelis who want to avoid this moral responsibility — for themselves, and for Jewish people everywhere.

This October, Israelis have a chance to finally settle an old argument at the ballot box — an argument their own movement never finished back in Odessa in 1903. Will their state follow the spirit of Ahad Ha’am, who wanted a moral and cultural homeland? Or will it follow the path of Jabotinsky’s modern followers, who chose land and force instead? For the sake of the West Bank, and for their own sake, Israelis should choose wisely.

• Jamil K Mroue is Lebanese writer and previous editor of Al Hayat newspaper in London and The Daily Star in Beirut.



The daughter of Palestinian Radwan Abu Jindeya carries her burned toy, outside of the family’s damaged house, which Radwan says was damaged by Israeli settlers, in Tuba, Masafer Yatta, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday. (Reuters)

Qatar, Saudi Arabia sign MoU on nuclear safety

From Page 1

He said the memorandum would improve the exchange of information, research and studies, develop the capabilities of specialists and support co-ordination in radiation monitoring, laboratory analysis and nuclear emergency preparedness and response – strengthening the protection of human health and the environment and ensuring

the safe use of nuclear technologies for peaceful purposes. He expressed hope it would open new avenues between institutions in both countries and consolidate the Qatari-Saudi partnership in environmental and technical fields.

The areas covered run from nuclear security and safety, radiation safety and radiation protection to methods of monitoring nuclear facilities and ra-

diation practices, preparedness and response to cross-border nuclear and radiological emergencies, and the provision of assistance should such an emergency occur. Co-operation also extends to radiological laboratories and analyses, the safe transport of radioactive sources, the exchange of information, scientific research, studies, expertise and documents, and

the organisation of conferences, seminars and workshops.

The memorandum further provides for the exchange of specialists through scientific and technical visits and training programmes, technical assistance, joint working groups to carry out agreed studies and projects, and a joint committee to develop the co-operation programmes and monitor their implementation. (QNA)

Europe heatwave: Italy swelters, Hungary, Romania cut lights

Reuters
Rome/Budapest

Italy took the unprecedented step of putting all its major cities on the top level of health alert due to high temperatures yesterday, while Hungary turned off the lights at some of its best-known buildings to save energy as a heatwave maintained its grip on large parts of Europe. Europe, the world's fastest-warming continent, has been ravaged by record-breaking heat and destructive wildfires this summer, with France and Spain particularly hard hit in recent weeks. The European Union will push its member countries to spend more on measures to reduce wildfire risk, its environment commissioner told Reuters, as experts said the economic cost of this summer's blazes had already exceeded €15bn (\$17.3bn). Bulgaria in southeast Europe was the latest EU country to be hit by wildfire. The main Thrakia highway was closed in both directions yesterday after the wind carried the flames of a huge fire across it around 70km (45 miles) southeast of the capital Sofia, NOVA news portal reported.

Italy is accustomed to hot summers, but the red alert issued by the Health Ministry stretched from Palermo on the southern island of Sicily to Bolzano in the mountainous north.

The warning indicated a potential health emergency with prolonged high temperatures posing a serious health risk to the entire population. Pilgrims gathered under a blazing summer sun in the hilltop town of Assisi were sprayed with water to cool them off as Pope Leo paid a visit to mark the



Lights turned off at landmarks to reduce energy consumption due to a power crisis in Budapest. (Reuters)

800th anniversary of the death of St. Francis.

"I think that when you really care about something, when you truly believe in it, even if it's hot, you make the effort," said Miriam Mariotti, a volunteer at the event.

Tourists in Rome used umbrellas to keep the sun off and dipped their hands in the city's fountains.

"We try to avoid going out during the hottest part of the day and instead go out in the evening or early in the morning," said Gianni Arlotta, visiting from the northern Italian city of Trieste. Temperatures topped 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in several areas of the northern region of Emilia-Romagna yesterday, one of the hottest areas in Italy, reaching 42.8C (109F) in Bagnacavallo, near Ravenna.

Hungary has switched off deco-

orative and non-essential lighting at all state institutions – including its parliament, most of the Buda Castle and Chain Bridge – at night to save energy.

Record-low water levels on the Danube have forced the country to largely shut down its sole nuclear plant, which uses the river for cooling, stretching power supply capacity to its limits. Romania was preparing to sink four rock-filled barges into the Danube to divert water to its only working reactor and buy a few more days of operation.

The authorities in the capital Bucharest have dimmed the intensity of street lights by a third and switched off lighting at night at landmark buildings and museums to save power. Low water levels are causing problems for shipping on the Rhine in Germany,

where many vessels can sail only part-loaded, raising freight costs. The river is an important shipping route for commodities such as grains, minerals, coal and oil products.

In Bosnia, tourists have taken shelter in the constantly cool temperatures of the Unesco-listed Vjetrenica cave to escape outside temperatures of 40C.

Vjetrenica, which means wind cave, is located in the south of Bosnia and Herzegovina, about 25km north of the Adriatic town of Dubrovnik, where cruise liners arrive daily with thousands of visitors.

Numbers allowed to visit the cave are limited because of the sensitivity of the environment. Its constant 11C (51.8F) temperature year-round has made it a refuge for biodiversity as well as for humans.



Digital push lifts Qatar tax compliance to 90%

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Technology alone, however, does not build a filing culture. The GTA paired the portal work with a wide-ranging awareness campaign, publishing explanatory and guidance material through its website and social media platforms to spell out what taxpayers owe, when they owe it and how to file – material pitched at the full spread of taxpayer categories rather than the well-advised few.

Alongside the campaign, the authority has continued to widen its direct channels to taxpayers, fielding queries and offering the guidance needed to file accurately and on time.

The GTA said it would press on with both tracks – deepening its digital services and expanding awareness initiatives – reinforcing what it describes as a partnership with taxpayers and building towards a more efficient and transparent tax system.

Sweden to hand over seized Russian 'shadow fleet' ship to Ukraine

AFP
Stockholm

Sweden will hand over to Kyiv a seized Russian "shadow fleet" cargo ship which Ukraine suspects of transporting grain stolen from its occupied territory, Swedish court documents obtained by AFP yesterday showed.

The Supreme Court on August 4 dismissed an appeal by Caffa Shipping Ltd, which owns the 96m Caffa, in a bid to block the transfer requested by Ukraine and approved by two lower courts in Sweden.

Moscow's "shadow fleet" consists of vessels used to skirt Western sanctions. They are often ageing ships in poor condition, without proper insurance and with opaque ownership.

Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga yesterday

thanked Sweden.

"This landmark decision sets an important precedent, demonstrating that decisive action by law enforcement and prosecutors, combined with an independent and impartial judiciary, can translate the principle of accountability into tangible results," he wrote in a post on X.

The Caffa, which was sailing under a false Guinean flag, was headed for Saint Petersburg, Russia, when armed Swedish police boarded it on March 6 off Trelleborg on its southern coast.

Swedish authorities had acted on a request for legal assistance from Ukraine, where Caffa is the subject of a legal investigation, according to the Ystad district court in Sweden. Ten of the 11 crew on board were Russian nationals.

The vessel was transporting grain, according to the Ukrainian sanctions commissioner, Vladyslav Vlasniuk.

Hantavirus detected in France tourist now isolated in Spain

A case of hantavirus, which recently sparked international alarm, has been detected in a Franco-Argentine national who holidayed in France in July before being put in isolation in Spain, the French health ministry said yesterday.

The patient had few symptoms and now has none, the ministry said, adding that "all measures" have been put in place to "trace the stages" the person's journey. The ministry said experts were to meet yesterday to determine the next action to be taken and that Europe-wide coordination was being established. The patient's infection with the Andes strain of the virus, the only one transmissible between humans, was confirmed yesterday. The authorities have not indicated a link to a deadly outbreak of Andes strain hantavirus on a cruise ship earlier this year that triggered a global health alert. The World Health Organisation

declared the end of the outbreak in early July after the last affected person left quarantine.

A French woman who contracted the virus on the MV Hondius was discharged from intensive care yesterday after nearly three months in the hospital unit, the health ministry said.

The woman, who was repatriated in May in a critical condition along with four other French nationals, none of whom developed the disease, has been transferred to a rehabilitation centre, the ministry added.

There were 13 cases stemming from the MV Hondius cruise, including three deaths.

Spread by rodents, hantavirus is a rare virus for which no vaccines or specific treatments exist. The cases from the cruise ship pale in comparison to the tens of thousands of hantavirus infections recorded worldwide every year, which mostly involve humans being infected by close contact with a rodent. (AFP)

UN chief denounces Russia, Ukraine for civilian deaths

AFP
Moscow

UN (UN) chief Antonio Guterres yesterday condemned both sides for attacks on civilian areas as Ukraine and Russia kept up their artillery war.

Ukraine struck two Russian oil refineries hundreds of kilometres from the border in an overnight attack, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said yesterday, as Russia hit a train station and commercial ship in Ukraine.

Both sides have been intensifying their long-range attacks in recent months, leading to a jump in civilian deaths.

Kyiv has been firing record numbers of drones at Russia, while Moscow has been launching all-time high missile attacks.

Zelenskyy said Ukraine had hit oil

refineries in the Bashkortostan and Yaroslavl regions – about 1,300km (800 miles) and 700km from the front.

Russian missile attacks on Kyiv a day earlier had killed at least 17 and destroyed warehouses belonging to a number of retailers in what was widely seen as a direct response to Ukraine's campaign targeting Wildberries, widely dubbed "Russia's Amazon".

But Guterres called yesterday for an end to the deadly attacks on civilian areas in both countries.

"These latest series of attacks follow an alarming pattern of escalating strikes against populated areas," spokesman Farhan Haq told reporters.

"Attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure are a clear violation of international humanitarian law, and must stop immediately," he added.

Earlier yesterday Zelenskyy said

of Ukraine's latest attacks that they were "strengthening the prospects for diplomacy".

Posting a video of black smoke rising above an oil facility, he added: "Russia must choose peace."

Russia's defence ministry said earlier it had downed 605 Ukrainian drones in the night.

The governor of the Yaroslavl region – north of Moscow, where Zelenskyy said a refinery had been hit – said 92 drones had been downed there in what he called the "most massive" attack on the region of the war.

In the Tver region, also north of Moscow, a drone hit a logistics centre belonging to Wildberries – the Russian e-commerce giant heavily targeted over the past month.

Kyiv was unable to down any of the missiles Russia fired, prompting urgent calls from Zelenskyy for air-defence supplies.

Fresh Russian attacks overnight killed two people at the Lozova train station in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

A commercial vessel carrying Ukrainian wheat was also hit in the Black Sea by Russia, killing one person, the Odesa region governor said.

Later yesterday, a senior Ukrainian official told AFP that Zelenskyy would this weekend make his first visit to Serbia since Russia's invasion. The source described tomorrow's visit to Moscow's traditional ally as a "slap in the face for the Russians".

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic's office confirmed what it described as an "official visit".

Their statement quoted recent comments by Vucic listing what they needed to discuss, including the two countries' bids for European Union membership, and economic and energy co-operation.

German official denies reported ammunition find in suspected drone attack

Reuters
Frankfurt

A senior German lawmaker said yesterday that aircraft parked near where an explosives-laden drone was discovered at an airport this week were not loaded with military material, denying media reports that one of them was carrying ammunition.

Newspaper the *Sueddeutsche Zeitung*, together with public television broadcasters NDR and WDR, had cited a confidential police report as saying a Ukrainian cargo aircraft near the drone was transporting a payload of military ammunition.

They also reported that forensic experts had found that the explosives attached to the drone were of a high military grade.

Detlef Seif, a lawmaker from the governing conservatives and member of the parliamentary interior committee, told Reuters that, without exception, information he had received indicated "the planes were not loaded with ammunition or weapons".

Airport workers discovered the drone late on Tuesday at Leipzig/Halle Airport, an important cargo and Nato logistics hub in eastern Germany.

The newspaper *Bild* cited unnamed investigators as saying that a technical defect prevented the drone-mounted device from exploding. Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt described the incident as a hybrid attack, and German authorities have launched a counterterrorism investigation.

Police in the state of Saxony, where Leipzig/Halle is located, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the media reports about the aircraft's payload. The state's public prosecutors' office could not immediately be reached for comment.

The drone was found close to several Ukrainian Antonov An-124 cargo airplanes, among the world's biggest freighters, according to earlier media reports. A Reuters journalist saw police collecting evidence in the vicinity of one of the planes early on Wednesday. Leipzig/Halle is the main base for Nato's Strategic Airlift

International Solution, known as SALIS, which is, among other things, helping to deliver equipment to strengthen the defence pact's eastern flank using a small fleet of Antonov cargo planes.

German authorities were also searching yesterday for debris from an unidentified object that damaged a freight jet mid-air near the airport on the same night.

That cargo plane struck the unidentified object as it was performing a go-around due to the closure of one of Leipzig/Halle's runways. It was lightly damaged in the collision and eventually landed in Hanover in northern Germany.

Flights were suspended and several aircraft, including some operated by German logistics group DHL, were diverted late on Tuesday.

A spokesperson for Leipzig/Halle Airport, which is also used by companies like Lufthansa Cargo and Amazon.com, said yesterday that operations were back to normal and no additional security measures had been implemented.

While German authorities have said



An Ukrainian "Antonov" cargo plane is pictured at the German airport Leipzig-Halle in Schkeuditz, eastern Germany, after an explosives-laden drone was found there. (AFP)

the perpetrators of the incidents at the airport had not yet been identified, Roderich Kiesewetter, a lawmaker and a former member of the parliamentary in-

telligence committee, blamed Russia.

The Russian Embassy in Berlin did not respond to an e-mailed request for comment from Reuters.

Snow, speed and role-play: How Qatar’s summer moves indoors

Six ways to spend the season without stepping outside

As part of the Hala Summer 2026 programme, Visit Qatar highlights some of the amusement parks and family entertainment experiences that offer residents and visitors exciting ways to spend the summer season. From thrilling rides and snow-filled adventures to immersive gaming experiences and interactive play zones; Qatar offers a diverse range of attractions that cater to children, teenagers and adults alike.

As a compact and accessible destination, Qatar makes it easy for families to enjoy multiple experiences within a single visit. Many of the country's leading attractions are located within major lifestyle, retail and leisure hubs, allowing visitors to combine entertainment, dining, shopping and sightseeing throughout their stay.

Located at Doha Festival City, Snow Dunes offers a range of snow-based activities and interactive experiences for all ages. As part of one of Qatar's leading retail and leisure destinations, it provides families with the opportunity to combine entertainment, dining and shopping in a single visit.



Situated in Msheireb, Doha Quest is Qatar's first fully indoor theme park, offering a variety of rides, attractions and immersive experiences. Its location in the heart of the city allows visitors to combine a day of entertainment with visits to nearby landmarks including Msheireb Museums, Souq Waqif and Doha Corniche.

Located at Doha Festival City, Angry Birds World brings the popular global franchise to life through themed rides, games and family-friendly attractions. Visitors can enjoy a full day of fun while exploring the wider selection of shopping, dining and leisure experiences available within the destination.

Located at Medina Centrale in The Pearl-Qatar, Megapolis is one of the country's largest indoor entertainment centres, offering high-end arcade games, real-time golf and car racing simulators, bowling, billiards and karaoke. Its location within The Pearl-Qatar allows visitors to combine a day of entertainment with the destination's wider selection of dining, retail and waterfront leisure experiences.

Situated within Mall of Qatar, KidZ-



Qatar’s diverse consumers shape greener retail approach

By Shaima Sherif
Staff Reporter

Qatar's diverse consumer base is shaping a retail approach centred on affordability, direct sourcing and reduced plastic use, according to Mark & Save GCC Operation manager Mohammed Fasil in Doha.

Speaking to *Gulf Times*, Fasil said retailers operating in Qatar must respond to customers from a wide range of backgrounds, each bringing different household needs, product preferences and expectations of value.

Mark & Save recorded more than 2mn customer visits during its first 500 days in the country, with shoppers representing over 110 nationalities, according to figures provided by the company. Fasil described it as an indication of the breadth of Qatar's consumer market.

Serving such a varied population requires access to products from multiple regions rather than relying on a limited sourcing base. Fasil said the company imports merchandise from countries including India, China, Bangladesh, Türkiye, the United Kingdom and Poland.

"We are directly importing from the manufacturing unit to the customer," he said. "The intermediary cost is removed, and that is the benefit customers receive."

He added that the sourcing model is intended to manage prices while providing a range suited to different communities. Affordability, Fasil said, remains an important consideration for households, particularly when purchasing everyday products.

He linked the company's



Mohammed Fasil
PICTURE: Shaji Kayamkulam

customer-focused approach not only to price but also to understanding how shopping practices are changing, including growing awareness of the environmental effects of single-use plastic.

The retailer is preparing to encourage greater use of reusable jute bags in Qatar and reduce its reliance on plastic shopping bags, following similar measures introduced in some of its other markets.

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

He said no date was provided for the full introduction of the measure in Qatar. However, the planned shift reflects how environmental considerations are becoming part of everyday retail decisions, from packaging and checkout practices to the choices offered to customers.

Moving consumers away from disposable bags will also require awareness and participation instead of a change imposed only at store level, Fasil added. Reusable alternatives must be convenient enough to become part of regular shopping habits.

Vehicles parked at or near metro, bus stops continue to pose challenge for commuters

By Joey Aguilar
Doha

Vehicles parked at or near Doha Metro and bus stops continue to be a concern in several parts of the capital, with commuters saying the practice obstructs public transport access and inconveniences passengers among others.

Several vehicles are often seen occupying spaces of designated Metro feeder and bus stops, leaving limited room for buses to pull in and for passengers to board or alight comfortably. Similar scenes have been observed at other stops across Doha.

The issue appears to be most common in busy residential and commercial areas, where some motorists park temporarily while waiting for passengers or leave their vehicles near public transport facilities.

"When the designated spaces for public buses and Metro feeder vehicles are occupied by parked cars, drivers are forced to stop in the middle of the road. This not only contributes to traffic congestion but also poses safety risks to pedestrians and commuters," said a Doha resident from East Al Hilal.

He noted that some vehicles are also parked improperly, leaving too little space for buses to stop at the designated bus bay.

The practice is prohibited under Article 78 of Qatar's Traffic Law, which states that vehicles may not park or wait within 15m of bus stops, pedestrian crossings, junctions and roundabouts. The law also prohibits parking in places where vehicles may obstruct traffic or block the view of other road users.

A number of commuters say improperly parked vehicles can force buses to stop farther from the curb, making boarding more difficult for elderly passengers, people with disabilities, parents with young children, and those carrying luggage. In some cases, pedestrians may also have to walk around parked vehicles or step onto the roadway to access buses.

The recurring issue comes as Qatar continues to promote the Doha Metro and its integrated feeder bus network as part of broader



efforts to reduce traffic congestion, improve first- and last-mile connectivity, and encourage more sustainable modes of transport.

It is learnt that keeping bus stops clear is essential to maintaining reliable public transport operations. Vehicles occupying designated stopping areas can delay bus services, reduce passenger safety, and disrupt traffic flow, particularly during busy periods.

The Ministry of Interior's General Directorate of Traffic has repeatedly reminded motorists to comply with parking regulations, stressing in previous awareness campaigns that there is "no excuse" for parking in undesignated areas and warning that improper parking inconveniences other road users and compromises road safety.

Residents have called for stricter enforcement around metro and bus stops, including more frequent patrols, clearer road markings, and greater public awareness to ensure designated public transport areas remain free of obstructions.



Qatar Toy Festival’s 4th edition attracts over 148,000 visitors

The fourth edition of Qatar Toy Festival (QTF) concluded after welcoming more than 148,000 visitors, marking its highest attendance to date.

The month-long festival, held at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre, was organised by Qatar Calendar in collaboration with Spacetoon Group, as part of Visit Qatar's Hala Summer campaign under the theme "More to Imagine, A Whole World of Fun". QTF was sponsored by Qatar Media Corporation, Ooredoo, Badr Go, and Teyseer Motors.

Visitors travelled from across the region, with Qatar, Saudi

Arabia and the United Arab Emirates forming the top three nationalities represented. Spanning around 23,264 square metres across four halls, the festival featured seven themed zones, 63 international brands, 33 activity corners and a full programme of 480 stage shows, offering an immersive programme for visitors of all ages.

Running alongside, the QTF Summer Camp 2026 welcomed 417 attendees aged 4 to 12 over four weeks, delivering 76 documented workshop tracks across categories including STEM, chemistry, art, engineering, robotics and Arabic.

The closing ceremony featured an interactive MC segment with a recap video highlighting the festival's best moments, an inspiring talk from Rateel AlShehri, and a lively dance show by QTF's beloved mascots. The evening ended in a colourful balloon drop, sending children and families home with lasting memories and anticipation for future editions.

Commenting on the festival's success, Ahmed al-Binali, director of Festivals and Events at Visit Qatar, said: "Qatar Toy Festival became one of the defining highlights of our summer season calendar, bringing together world-class attractions, creativ-

ity and family fun under one roof. Achieving record attendance this year reflects the festival's growing popularity and our continued commitment to delivering innovative events that strengthen Qatar's position as a leading family tourism destination while creating lasting memories for residents and visitors throughout the summer."

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

