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## Global leaders voice solidarity with Qatar

DOHA: Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani continued receiving calls from world leaders yesterday in which the leaders expressed solidarity with Qatar while condemning targeting of Qatari territories by Iranian missiles and drones attacks.

Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani received a phone call yesterday from President of the Republic of Turkey H E Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

At the beginning of the call, the Turkish President expressed his reassurance regarding the situation in the State of Qatar in the aftermath of the Iranian wanton aggression, confirming Turkiye's strong condemnation of targeting the Qatari territories and those of Arab nations, as well as its flat-out rejection of anything that compromises nations' sovereignty and the security of their peoples.

For his part, H H the Amir expressed his thanks and gratitude to President Erdogan for his genuine sentiments, along with his show of solidarity and backing that underscore the depth of rock-solid ties between the two nations.

H H the Amir also received



phone calls from President of the Republic of Kazakhstan H E Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and President of the Federal Republic of Somalia H E Dr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. The Kazakh President expressed his country's solidarity with the State of Qatar following the

treacherous Iranian aggression.

H E the President of the the Federal Republic of somalia inquired about the situation in the State of Qatar following the Iranian attacks, voicing somalia's full solidarity with the State of Qatar.

H H the Amir received a

*Turkish President expressed his reassurance regarding the situation in Qatar in the aftermath of the Iranian wanton aggression, confirming Turkiye's strong condemnation of targeting the Qatari territories and those of Arab nations, as well as its flat-out rejection of anything that compromises nations' sovereignty and the security of their peoples.*

*H H the Amir also received phone calls from President of the Republic of Kazakhstan H E Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and President of the Federal Republic of Somalia H E Dr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud.*

*H H the Amir also received a phone call from Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of the Republic of Sudan H E Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah Al Burhan.*

phone call yesterday from Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of the Republic of Sudan H E Lt. Gen. Abdel Fattah Al Burhan. The Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council expressed the Republic of Sudan's solidarity and full support for the State of Qatar in the aftermath of the treacherous Iranian aggression.

For his part, H H the Amir expressed his thanks and gratitude to H E Chairman of the Transitional Sovereignty Council of the Republic of Sudan for the genuine sentiments he showed toward the State of Qatar, emphasizing the criticality of Sudan's security and stability in achieving stability in the region.

H H the Amir also received a phone call from Prime Minister of Libya's Government of National Unity H E Abdul Hamid Dbeibah. The Libyan Prime Minister expressed reassurance regarding the situation in the State of Qatar following the wanton Iranian aggression, affirming Libya's full solidarity with Qatar and its support for all measures that would enhance its security, stability, and sovereignty. — QNA → P3

### Authorities extend remote working for another day

THE PENINSULA/QNA

DOHA: The State of Qatar has extended remote working arrangements for employees across government institutions and private-sector entities for another day.

In a statement issued on yesterday, the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers said that remote working would continue on Monday for all staff in ministries, other government bodies, and public authorities and institutions.

The decision follows a previous announcement by the Secretariat regarding the implementation of remote work measures. The extension does not apply to employees in the military and security sectors, the health sector, or those whose duties require their physical presence at the workplace.

The General Secretariat also urged citizens and residents to obtain information from official sources and to follow safety and security guidance issued by the competent authorities in the country.

Meanwhile, in light of current circumstances and in line with the ongoing commitment to safeguard public

*The General Secretariat also urged citizens and residents to obtain information from official sources and to follow safety and security guidance issued by the competent authorities in the country.*

wellbeing and ensure smooth business operations, the Ministry of Labour, in coordination with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, recommends that all private-sector entities, wherever the nature of the work allows, implement remote working arrangements on Monday, March 2, 2026 (today).

Businesses and organisations whose operations require staff to be present on-site are exempt, provided that all approved health and safety measures are strictly observed to protect employees.

Exemptions also apply to retail and service operations involving direct engagement with the public, including shops, consumer cooperatives, and restaurants, to ensure the uninterrupted supply of essential goods and services to the community.

### Iranian attacks on GCC states serious violation of sovereignty: GCC Ministers

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) expressed its strongest condemnation of the heinous Iranian attacks on GCC states, as well as the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, describing them as a serious violation of the sovereignty of these states, the principles of good neighborliness, and a clear breach of international law and the United Nations Charter, regardless of any justifications.

The Council also emphasized that targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law.

This came during the 50th extraordinary meeting via video conference yesterday, chaired by H E Dr. Abdulatif bin Rashid Al-Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain and current Chairman of the GCC Ministerial Council.

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, participated in the meeting along with Their Excellencies GCC Foreign Ministers.

The meeting was convened to discuss the Iranian missile and drone attacks targeting the



Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani with Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi and Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs H E Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al Khulaifi during extraordinary meeting of GCC Ministerial Council.

*The Council reviewed the extensive damage caused by these treacherous Iranian attacks, which targeted civilian facilities, service sites, and residential areas, resulting in significant material losses, threats to the security, safety, and lives of citizens and residents, and widespread terror among the affected populations.*

United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, and the State of Kuwait, which began on Saturday, Feb 28.

The Council reviewed the extensive damage caused by

these treacherous Iranian attacks, which targeted civilian facilities, service sites, and residential areas, resulting in significant material losses, threats to the security, safety, and lives of citizens and residents, and widespread terror among the

affected populations. The Council discussed the necessary measures and steps to coordinate efforts to restore security and stability and achieve peace in the region.

The Council reaffirmed full solidarity among GCC member states and their unified stance in confronting these aggressions, stressing that the security of one member state is indivisible and that any attack against any member constitutes a direct attack on all GCC states, in accordance with the GCC Charter and the Joint Defense Agreement. → P2

### Emergency response plans in place to safeguard public safety: Mol

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Interior (Mol) has confirmed that, as part of continuous monitoring of field developments, security authorities and Civil Defence teams, in coordination with relevant entities, immediately activated approved response plans to safeguard public safety, ensure the continuity of services, and maintain full readiness to address any emergency.

According to field reports and assessments, shared by the Ministry of X platform yesterday, eight additional injuries have been recorded, bringing the total number of injuries since the onset of the attack to 16. The Ministry also reported limited material damage in various areas.

The Ministry clarified that alert and early warning messages are activated solely when

*Residents were further advised to refrain from approaching any unidentified objects or debris and to report them promptly by contacting (999).*

circumstances necessitate urgent precautionary measures to protect the public. It urged all members of the community to comply immediately with official instructions upon issuance, remain indoors, and limit movement to cases of absolute necessity.

Residents were further advised to refrain from approaching any unidentified objects or debris and to report them promptly by contacting (999). The Ministry emphasized

the need to ensure priority access for ambulance services, Civil Defence units, and security patrols, and to avoid heading to incident locations to allow emergency teams to perform their duties efficiently and effectively.

Security patrols and emergency teams continue to be deployed across various areas in accordance with approved readiness plans, in coordination with the relevant authorities, to address any potential developments.

The Ministry also stressed the importance of relying exclusively on official sources for information and refraining from circulating rumours or publishing images or videos of the aftermath to avoid legal liability.

In a public notice, the Ministry reiterated its call for

everyone to remain indoors and refrain from going out except when absolutely necessary, and to fully comply with official instructions issued by the competent authorities in the interest of public safety.

Specialised teams remain fully deployed around the clock to ensure rapid response, contain impacts, and safeguard the community.

Authorities further confirmed that security patrols and emergency teams remain deployed across various areas in accordance with approved readiness plans, in coordination with the relevant authorities, to address any potential developments swiftly and effectively.

Specialised teams continue to operate around the clock to contain impacts, maintain public safety, and safeguard the community.

### Fighter jets, air defense systems intercept drones, cruise missiles

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Defense announced that Qatar Armed Forces fighter jets, in addition to the use of air defense systems, successfully intercepted air attacks involving drones and cruise missiles launched by Iran towards the country's airspace.

The Ministry explained, in a statement, that early warning and detection systems identified the targets immediately upon their entry into the surveillance range, where they were tracked and intercepted according to established rules of engagement, to ensure protecting national sovereignty and airspace safety.

The Ministry confirmed that the interception

*Specialised teams have begun completing assessment and precautionary monitoring procedures.*

operations were conducted within an integrated air defense system with full readiness of the Armed Forces, without any human casualties.

Specialised teams have begun completing assessment and precautionary monitoring procedures. The Ministry emphasized that the State of Qatar continues to take all necessary measures to protect its land and airspace, and following up the latest developments through official channels.

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EDITORIAL

Full readiness, stable markets

THE State of Qatar has taken comprehensive steps to reassure residents and businesses about safety, market stability, and continuity of services in light of recent regional developments.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) reiterated that goods and products remain available in sufficient quantities across retail outlets nationwide, ensuring consumer needs are met regularly and market stability is maintained. The ministry urged the public to shop according to actual need and to adhere to official guidelines promoting responsible consumption. The MoCI also confirmed that 33 retail branches across all regions have transitioned to 24-hour operations to provide uninterrupted access to essential goods and services, underscoring that supply chains continue to function normally.

Field inspection teams have intensified rounds at markets and stores to monitor supply conditions, verify price compliance, and detect any violations, with legal action taken where necessary. Coordination with major retail partners has been central to these efforts, reflecting the government's commitment to preserving market balance and consumer confidence.

To further support public safety and continuity, the Ministry of Labour, in coordination with MoCI, have extended remote working arrangements, where possible, for private-sector organisations. Businesses whose operations require staff on-site remain exempt, provided all approved health and safety measures are strictly observed. Remote work for government employees was also extended.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defense confirmed that Qatar Armed Forces successfully intercepted incoming drones and cruise missiles launched towards the country's airspace. The Ministry confirmed that the interception operations were conducted within an integrated air defence system with full readiness of the Armed Forces, without any human casualties. Officials emphasised that Qatar continues to take all necessary measures to protect its land and airspace, reinforcing national security while maintaining public confidence.

'Iranian attacks on GCC states serious violation of sovereignty'

The Council stressed the urgent need to immediately stop these attacks to restore security, peace, and stability in the region.

FROM PAGE 1

The Council confirmed that member states reserve the legal right to respond under Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which guarantees the right to self-defence, individually and collectively, in the event of aggression, and to take all necessary measures to preserve their sovereignty, security, and stability.

The Council praised the efficiency and readiness of the armed forces and air defense systems of member states, which confronted the missile and drone attacks with high professionalism, helping neutralize the threat, mitigate its effects, and protect lives, infrastructure, and vital assets. The Ministerial Council affirmed that in light of this unjustified Iranian aggression against GCC states, they will take all necessary measures to defend their security and stability, and to protect their territories, citizens, and residents, including the option to respond to the aggression.

Despite numerous diplomatic efforts by GCC states to avoid escalation, and their assurances that their territories would not be used to launch any attacks on the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iran continued to carry out military operations targeting GCC countries, affecting multiple civilian and residential facilities.

The Council stressed the urgent need to immediately stop these attacks to restore security, peace, and stability in the region.



Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani with Their Excellencies the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of GCC countries and GCC Secretary-General during an extraordinary meeting of the GCC Ministerial Council held virtually yesterday.

It also highlighted the importance of maintaining air and maritime security, protecting shipping routes, safeguarding supply chains, and ensuring stability in global energy markets, emphasizing that the security of the Gulf region is not only a regional issue but a cornerstone of global economic stability and maritime navigation.

The Ministerial Council called on the international community to strongly condemn these attacks and urged the UN Security Council to assume its responsibility by taking immediate and decisive action to prevent these violations, protect civilian lives, and prevent their recurrence, due to their severe implications for regional and international peace and security. The Council expressed its gratitude to GCC member states and appreciation to friendly and brotherly countries that condemned the Iranian attacks, expressed solidarity with GCC states, and supported measures taken to protect their sovereignty, security, and stability.

The Council noted that GCC states have consistently called for dialogue, negotiation, and resolution of all issues with the Islamic Republic of Iran, commending the role of the Sultanate

of Oman in this regard. The Council emphasized the importance of dialogue and diplomacy as the only path to overcome the current crisis, maintain regional security, and ensure the safety of peoples in the region, warning that any escalation could undermine regional security and lead the region into dangerous paths with catastrophic consequences for international peace and security.

The Council concluded by extending its sincere condolences and profound sympathy to the families of the victims, and its best wishes for a speedy recovery to the injured.

PM receives calls as nations condemn attack on Qatar

DOHA: Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani received a phone call yesterday from Prime Minister of Sudan H E Dr. Kamil Al Tayeb Idris.

During the call, they discussed the developments of the military escalation in the region and its serious repercussions on regional and international security and stability as well as ways to resolve all disputes through peaceful means.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs emphasised that the targeting of Qatari territory with Iranian ballistic missiles constitutes a blatant violation of national sovereignty and is inconsistent with the principles of good neighbourliness. He stressed that such

actions cannot be accepted under any pretext.

He noted that Qatar has always been keen to remain neutral in regional conflicts and has sought to facilitate dialogue between Iran and the international community. However, the renewed attacks on its territory do not reflect good intentions and threaten the foundations of mutual understanding upon which bilateral relations are built.

He further stressed the need for an immediate halt to all escalation, a return to dialogue, predominance of reason and wisdom, and working to contain the crisis in a manner that preserves regional security.

For his part, the Prime Minister of Sudan expressed his country's condemnation of the Iranian missile attack on Qatari territory, describing it as a blatant violation of Qatar's sovereignty, airspace and international law, as well as the Charter of the United Nations.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign also received a phone call from Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Norway H E Jonas Gahr Store.

During the call, the two sides discussed the recent military escalation in the region, its serious implications for regional and international security, and ways to resolve disputes through peaceful means. The Prime Minister and

Minister of Foreign Affairs also received a phone call on from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy H E Antonio Tajani.

During the call, the two sides reviewed developments in the military escalation in the region and its serious implications for regional and international security and stability as well as ways to resolve all disputes through peaceful means.

The Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister expressed his country's condemnation of Iranian missile attack on Qatari territory, describing it as a blatant violation of Qatar's sovereignty, airspace and international law, as well as the Charter of the United Nations.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs also received phone calls yesterday from Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada H E Anita Anand and Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom H E Yvette Cooper.

The two calls went over the developments of the military escalation in the region and its menacing impacts on regional and global security and stability, as well as avenues for resolving all disputes through peaceful means.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani also received yesterday a

phone call from Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

The call discussed the developments of the military escalation in the region and its serious repercussions on regional and international security and stability, as well as ways to resolve all disputes through peaceful means.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs also received phone calls from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism of Malta H E Ian Borg; Minister of Foreign Affairs of Cyprus H E Dr. Constantinos Kombos; Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia H E Gordan Grlić Radman; Minister of External Affairs of India H E Dr. Subrahmanyam Jaishankar; and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan H E Bakhtiyor Saidov. During the calls, they discussed the developments of the military escalation in the region and its serious repercussions on regional and international security and stability as well as ways to resolve all disputes through peaceful means.

The Ministers expressed their countries' condemnation of the Iranian missile attack on Qatari territory, considering it a flagrant violation of the sovereignty of Qatar and its airspace as well as a breach of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. — QNA

Deputy PM, UAE Defense Minister discuss security developments

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs, H E Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan Al-Thani made a

phone call yesterday with Crown Prince of Dubai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of the United Arab Emirates H H Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

During the call, the two sides reviewed the latest developments and security updates in the region and discussed areas of cooperation and joint coordination in light of the current circumstances.

Qatar condemns Iranian attack on Oman port

DOHA: Qatar has strongly condemned the Iranian attacks that targeted the commercial port of Duqm in Oman and an oil tanker off its coast.

Qatar described the attacks as a violation of the Sultanate's sovereignty, an unacceptable escalation, and a cowardly targeting of a country playing an active mediating role between

Iran and the international community to defuse the crisis and promote constructive dialogue to resolve outstanding issues.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs affirmed Qatar's full solidarity with Oman in all measures it takes to safeguard its sovereignty, security, and stability. — QNA

Deputy PM, Kuwait Defense Minister discuss regional developments

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Defense Affairs, H E Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman bin Hassan Al-Thani made a phone call yesterday with Minister of Defense of Kuwait H E Sheikh Abdullah Ali Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

During the call, the two sides reviewed the latest developments and security updates in the region and discussed areas of cooperation and joint coordination in light of the current circumstances.

Qatar Airways flight operations remain temporarily suspended

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Qatar Airways flight operations remain temporarily suspended due to the closure of Qatari airspace. Qatar Airways will resume operations once the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority announces the safe reopening of Qatari airspace. A further update will be provided today (March 2) by 09:00 Doha time (06:00 UTC). Passengers are advised to monitor the latest flight information via qatarairways.com or the Qatar Airways mobile app.



VODAFONE QATAR P.Q.S.C.

ANNOUNCEMENT

VODAFONE QATAR P.Q.S.C. DIVIDEND DISTRIBUTION

Pursuant to the resolution of the Vodafone Qatar P.Q.S.C. ("Vodafone Qatar" or the "Company") Annual General Assembly meeting held on 1 March 2026, approving the distribution of cash dividends to the Company's shareholders of 12% of the nominal share value, equal to QR 0.12 per share, for the financial year ended 31 December 2025 ("Dividends"); and in line with the provisions of the Offering and Listing, and Merger and Acquisitions Rules issued by the Qatar Financial Markets Authority ("QFMA") Board decision No. (8) of 2025, in particular part (8.7) on distribution of dividends, Vodafone Qatar announces to its shareholders that Edaa will manage the distribution of their dividends for the year ended 31 December 2025 on behalf of Vodafone Qatar, through Qatar Islamic Bank (QIB).

Shareholders who registered their bank accounts with Edaa will have their dividends transferred directly to their relevant bank accounts within the times specified in the aforementioned QFMA board decision. Shareholders who have not yet registered their bank accounts, are kindly requested to provide Edaa with their bank account through the Edaa website, the Edaa mobile application or through the banks collaborating with Edaa.

For further details, Shareholders may contact Edaa at 16014.

Vodafone Qatar P.Q.S.C

Msheireb Downtown Doha, Zone 3, Street 981, Building 2, 4th floor, PO Box 27727, Doha, Qatar. A Public Qatari Shareholding Company, by virtue of Ministerial Resolution number (160) of 2008 and in accordance with the laws of the State of Qatar, having Commercial Registration number 39656. Paid-up capital QAR 4,227,000,000.

# MoCI urges responsible shopping

JOEL JOHNSON  
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) has called on consumers to shop responsibly according to their actual needs and to avoid excessive stockpiling, reaffirming that goods and products remain widely available across retail outlets in Qatar.

In a statement published yesterday on X, MoCI stressed the continued availability of essential items at stores nationwide, assuring the public that consumer needs are being met sufficiently and on a regular basis. Authorities emphasised that supply chains remain stable and that the flow of goods into markets continues normally.

MoCI urged residents to rely exclusively on official sources for information and to avoid circulating rumours that could lead to unnecessary panic

buying. Consumers were also encouraged to adhere to instructions issued by relevant authorities and to promote a culture of responsible consumption.

As part of its guidance, the Ministry advised shoppers to purchase only what their families require for a reasonable period and to refrain from buying large quantities out of concern or speculation.

Officials highlighted the importance of preparing shopping lists in advance, focusing on essential goods such as food items, necessary medications, and children's supplies, while avoiding random or unnecessary purchases.

The Ministry further recommended distributing purchases across different retail outlets rather than concentrating demand at a single store.

Shopping at alternative branches, when available, can

*In a statement published yesterday on X, the MoCI stressed the continued availability of essential items at stores nationwide, assuring the public that consumer needs are being met sufficiently and on a regular basis.*

help reduce crowding and ensure that goods remain accessible to all consumers.

Earlier, the MoCI announced that retail operations have been strengthened to support market stability.

Coordination with sales outlets has enabled 22 major branches across various areas of the country to operate around the clock, ensuring continuous access to goods and

facilitating smooth replenishment. The Ministry reiterated that inspection field teams continue to conduct intensive monitoring campaigns at sales outlets and markets.

These inspection rounds are aimed at overseeing supply conditions, verifying product availability, ensuring price stability, and detecting any violations.

Authorities affirmed that legal measures will be taken against offenders in accordance with applicable regulations.

The MoCI reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to safeguarding consumers and maintaining market balance.

Residents were encouraged to report any observations or violations through official communication channels, underscoring the ministry's dedication to protecting consumer rights and preserving economic stability.

## Al Muraikhi discusses escalation in region with FMs of three nations

DOHA: Minister of State for Foreign Affairs H E Sultan bin Saad Al Muraikhi received a phone call on yesterday from Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Armenia H E Vahan Kostanyan.

The call discussed developments in the military escalation in the region, its serious implications for regional and international security and stability, and ways to resolve all disputes through peaceful means.

For his part, the Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister voiced Armenia's concern over the developments in the region, urging all parties to heed the voice of reason and return to negotiations and diplomatic means to avoid further chaos.

Al Muraikhi also discussed the recent military escalation in the region with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria, H E Nadezhda Neynski, and Minister of

Foreign Affairs of North Macedonia, H E Timcho Mucunski.

This came during phone conversations Al Muraikhi received yesterday from the two officials. The talks focused on the current situation and its grave implications for regional and international security, as well as ways to resolve disputes through peaceful means.

Al Muraikhi emphasized that the targeting of Qatari territory with Iranian ballistic missiles constitutes a blatant violation of Qatar's national sovereignty, contradicts principles of good neighborliness, and cannot be justified under any circumstances.

Al Muraikhi also called for the immediate cessation of any escalation, a return to dialogue, the prioritisation of reason and wisdom, and efforts to contain the crisis in a way that preserves regional security. — QNA

# Amir receives calls from global leaders voicing solidarity

FROM PAGE 1

H H the Amir also received a phone call from President of the Republic of South Sudan H E Salva Kiir Mayardit.

The President expressed his country's solidarity with the State of Qatar in the wake of Iran's flagrant aggression.

H H the Amir received a phone call from President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania H E Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani. The President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania emphasized Mauritania's solidarity and full support for the State of Qatar following the Iranian

attacks, stressing that Mauritania stands by Qatar in all the measures it may take to preserve its sovereignty, security, and stability.

H H the Amir also received phone calls from President of the Republic of Cyprus, H E Dr. Nikos Christodoulides, and President of the

European Commission H E Ursula von der Leyen.

The Cypriot President expressed his country's solidarity with the State of Qatar, affirming Nicosia's condemnation of the blatant Iranian aggression against it, as well as its support for all measures taken by Qatar to safeguard

its sovereignty, security, and stability.

The President of the European Commission said that she was seeking reassurance about the situation in the State of Qatar, affirming the European Union's (EU) solidarity and its condemnation of the blatant Iranian aggression against the

State of Qatar.

She also reiterated the EU's support for all efforts aimed at strengthening Qatar's security and stability and safeguarding its sovereignty, stressing the importance of restraint and de-escalation as to preserve regional security and peace. multifaceted.

# PHCC reinforces sustainability with GSAS recertification of health centres

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Primary Health Care Corporation (PHCC) continues to demonstrate national leadership in environmental sustainability and operational excellence through measurable improvements in facility management, operational performance, embedded-systems efficiency, and energy conservation.

A key milestone in this journey is the successful

renewal and acquisition of the Global Sustainability Assessment System (GSAS) certification for PHCC Health Centers under the second certification cycle, which is conducted every four (4) years. The recertification framework evaluates the performance across critical areas such as energy consumption, water efficiency, indoor environmental quality, and overall operational sustainability.

PHCC also holds a National

record as the first organisation in the State of Qatar to have all eligible buildings certified for GSAS compliance in 2021 by the Gulf Organization for Research & Development (GORD). This achievement reflects a consistent, organisation-wide approach that embeds the sustainability principles across all PHCC facilities.

PHCC leadership reiterates that sustainability is a continuous social, responsibility guided by accountability, transparency, and integrity and is closely aligned

with Qatar National Vision 2030. By optimizing systems' performance as well as reducing the energy consumption, PHCC directly supports National priorities for responsible resources management and broader sustainability objectives.

In conclusion, PHCC reaffirms its commitment to advancing its facilities in-line with leading international standards and strengthening healthcare service quality while sustaining public trust. The



Corporation will continue to adopt best practices, enhance environmental and operational

performance, and safeguard resources for future generations.

# Awqaf Ministry launches AI-powered FatwaTok app

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: As part of its digital transformation strategy and efforts to harness artificial intelligence and modern technologies, the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs has officially launched the "FatwaTok" application on Apple and Google platforms.

The new app marks a significant step towards enhancing access to reliable Islamic legal rulings (fatwas) through a modern, user-friendly format tailored to the needs of today's digital generation, while strengthening the presence of religious content across advanced technological channels.

In this context, Jassim bin Abdullah Al Ali, Director of the Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance, stated that the

launch of "FatwaTok" represents a strategic milestone in the Ministry's digital transformation journey. He emphasised the Ministry's commitment to presenting trusted Islamic legal guidance in a contemporary format that meets societal expectations, noting that the project contributes to achieving the goals of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

The launch comes within the Ministry's broader efforts to modernize the fatwa system and expand its reach to beneficiaries both inside and outside Qatar. "FatwaTok" combines authentic Shariah scholarship with advanced technological tools, offering seamless and fast browsing of a vast library of fatwas, articles, and multimedia content via its website and smartphone application.

One of the app's standout features is its semantic search

capability, powered by artificial intelligence. Rather than relying solely on keyword matching, the system understands the meaning and context of users' questions, delivering the most relevant fatwas even when phrasing or terminology differs. This significantly enhances both accuracy and speed of access.

The application also utilises AI to summarise fatwas for easier comprehension and convert text into audio files, enabling users to listen when reading is not convenient. Additionally, it provides personalised recommendations based on user interests and interaction patterns.

"FatwaTok" offers a contemporary digital experience built around infinite scrolling and concise content formats, aligning with modern content consumption trends. A sophisticated membership

system allows users to save more fatwas, create a personal library, and receive increasingly accurate recommendations as their engagement grows.

The app represents the latest service from the Islamweb network, affiliated with the Ministry's Department of Da'wah and Religious Guidance. Islamweb continues to strengthen its position as a global online platform for Islamic legal guidance, supported by a database containing hundreds of thousands of carefully reviewed and approved fatwas prepared by distinguished scholars and researchers.

All fatwas published through "FatwaTok" undergo scholarly review and formal approval to ensure compliance with Shariah standards and the highest levels of accuracy and credibility.

## Mol announces a ban on use, operation, launch of drones

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: In light of the current situation, the Ministry of Interior (Mol) has announced a ban on the use, operation, or launch of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) of all types, sizes, and technologies across all areas of the state, for any purpose, until further notice.

This ban applies to citizens, residents and visitors, as well as government and semi-government bodies, companies, institutions and others. The Ministry affirmed that any use, attempted operation or facilitation of such aircraft constitutes a clear violation and will result in legal accountability and the necessary measures in accordance with applicable legislation. The Ministry of Interior underscored the importance of remaining indoors and limiting movement to cases of absolute necessity, while strictly adhering to official instructions issued by the competent authorities in order to safeguard public safety.

# QF takes its students extra mile in learning about health and wellbeing

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: For medical students at Qatar Foundation's Education City, a typical day isn't limited to the classroom and the lecture theater. It takes them into hospitals and research labs, and to sports facilities and community spaces. It's an education where health is more than a subject to be studied; it's a way of life, defined by connections and interactions.

A senior student at Qatar Foundation partner university Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar, Haya Al-Kuwari (pictured) is among the learners whose academic journey and understanding of what caring for others really mean have been expanded by this unique landscape of knowledge and opportunity.

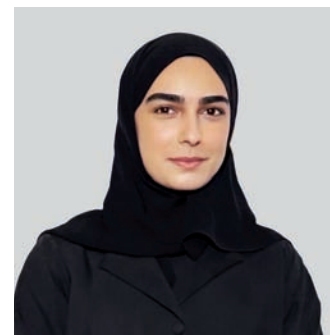
"My path into health and wellness has been shaped by both personal and academic experiences," she says. "From an early stage, I was drawn to medicine not just as a

profession, but to understand people during some of their most vulnerable moments. Seeing illness up close within my own family made health feel very real to me – it wasn't abstract or theoretical."

That early exposure to the importance of healthcare gradually evolved into a broader perspective on wellbeing. "Over time, that curiosity became a deeper interest in prevention, long-term wellbeing, and how science, compassion, and lifestyle all intersect to shape health outcomes," Al-Kuwari explains. "Health isn't just about treating illness. It's about understanding people's lives."

Thinking about her what her years as a QF student have taught her, she says: "My learning journey here has been demanding, purposeful, and deeply transformative. It pushed me to balance high academic standards with reflection, service, and personal growth.

Access to real-world



healthcare institutions – which QF's integrated ecosystem of education, research, and community development allows – has played a defining role. At QF's women's and children's hospital and medical research center Sidra Medicine, just across the road from her university, she witnessed medicine in action.

"During my sub-internship, I saw first-hand how science, innovation, and patient-centered care come together," she recalls. "Multidisciplinary teams, family involvement, and prevention-focused approaches weren't just

concepts, they were shaping long-term outcomes for real patients."

Experiences like this have reshaped her understanding of health. Some of Al-Kuwari's most impactful learning moments happened far from traditional clinical settings. Volunteering at a medical outreach camp serving refugee communities in Jordan brought her studies into sharp focus.

"Being in a resource-limited setting made public health, prevention, health equity, and social determinants of health very real," she says. "I saw how displacement, limited access to care, and environmental exposures shape health outcomes far beyond what we see in hospitals." That experience changed her perspective on medicine.

This ability to move between learning environments is, for Al-Kuwari, the essence of QF's education model. "I've experienced integration through the constant flow between classrooms, research labs, clinical

environments, and community settings," she explains. "Concepts from lectures are reinforced through research projects, electives, and innovation-driven discussions."

Rather than absorbing information passively, she has been encouraged to question it. "QF taught me to ask how knowledge can be applied, improved, and used to better serve communities," she says.

And as Qatar marks National Sport Day this month, she believes physical activity is inseparable from education, especially in demanding academic fields.

"As a medical student, I've learned that physical activity and wellbeing are essential to sustainable learning," she says. "QF's emphasis on wellness, through sports initiatives, facilities like the Sport Lab, and supportive environments reinforces that caring for your body and mental health is foundational to academic success."

## Mol emphasises necessity of adherence to early-warning alerts

DOHA: The Ministry of Interior (Mol) emphasised the necessity of adhering to mobile Early-Warning System alerts and promptly complying with the instructions they contain.

The Mol added that the public is urged to remain in safe locations, as such compliance is vital to enhancing public safety and protecting lives and property.

The Mol also urged everyone to remain indoors and refrain from going out except when absolutely necessary, and to comply fully with official instructions issued by the competent authorities in the interest of public safety. The Early Warning System serves as an immediate alert mechanism used in emergency situations. — QNA

# Awqaf Ministry upgrades digital zakat services

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has announced a major upgrade to its digital zakat services, with the Zakat Affairs Department updating its Individual Zakat Calculator and launching a new Corporate Zakat Calculator as part of its ongoing digital transformation strategy.

The initiative aims to enhance calculation accuracy, strengthen financial governance, and facilitate the payment of zakat for both individuals and the business sector.

Saed Hadi Al Marri, Assistant Director of the Zakat Affairs Department for Administrative Affairs, stated that the update to the Individual Zakat Calculator followed a comprehensive analytical review of user experience and the needs of zakat payers.



Saed Hadi Al Marri

The upgrade includes a redesigned, more user-friendly interface, simplified data entry mechanisms, and improved calculation precision related to nisab thresholds, the completion of the lunar year (hawl), and various zakatable assets.

Al Marri explained that the

updated calculator enables users to better understand the components of zakat assessment in a systematic manner, thereby raising Shariah-based financial awareness and empowering individuals to fulfil the third pillar of Islam with confidence and clarity.

He added that the enhanced calculator accommodates a wide range of personal assets, including cash, savings, gold, silver, shares, agricultural assets such as palm trees, and other zakatable wealth. Built-in guidance features assist users in entering accurate data, ensuring reliable results and reinforcing the credibility of the calculation process.

Regarding the launch of the Corporate Zakat Calculator, Al Marri described the service as a qualitative leap in institutional zakat administration. The

*The initiative aims to enhance calculation accuracy, strengthen financial governance, and facilitate the payment of zakat for both individuals and the business sector.*

calculator has been developed in accordance with approved accounting standards for determining the zakat base, in alignment with Shariah regulations governing corporate zakat. It allows accountants and financial managers to input core financial data in an organised format, enabling the system to analyze the information and calculate due zakat with precision, thereby strengthening compliance and transparency within

institutions.

He emphasised that the new corporate service responds to the business sector's need for accurate and methodical calculation tools that help streamline zakat disbursement and promote a culture of financial governance. The department has also provided technical and advisory support to ensure smooth adoption and optimal utilisation of the service.

Both calculators are accessible through the department's official website and mobile application as part of a secure digital ecosystem that adheres to the highest standards of data protection and confidentiality. Users can proceed directly to electronic payment services and receive certified notifications upon completion, reducing processing time and improving procedural efficiency.

Al Marri noted that these developments align with the department's broader vision to establish an integrated digital environment that combines Shariah compliance, administrative discipline, and technological efficiency. He stressed that digital transformation is no longer optional but essential to enhancing service quality and increasing beneficiary satisfaction.

Concluding his remarks, Al Marri reaffirmed the Zakat Affairs Department's commitment to continuously advancing its smart services and electronic tools to facilitate zakat payment for individuals and businesses alike, strengthen trust in official collection channels, and uphold the principles of accuracy and transparency in managing zakat funds according to the highest professional and institutional standards.

## QRCS enhances medical services in River Nile State

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The representation office of Qatar Red Crescent Society (QRCS) in Sudan has completed the comprehensive maintenance and rehabilitation works at the Jabalab Health Centre in River Nile State, with a view to supporting health care services and ensuring the continuity of essential medical care in Jabalab and neighbouring villages.

The three-phase project involved premises maintenance and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) rehabilitation, thus providing a safe and suitable environment for medical services.

Also, some essential medical equipment was procured, including a complete blood count (CBC) analyser, a renal function analysis meter, a glycosylated hemoglobin (HbA1c) analyser, and other medical and laboratory supplies.

As part of the project, the centre was fully furnished with office furniture, chairs, cabinets, and medical hospital beds, which would increase operationality and enable health care providers to better



Jabalab Health Centre after completion of rehabilitation work.

serve the patients.

Dr. Salah Al-Din Daak, head of QRCS's representation office in Sudan, visited the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS), met President Abdul-Rahman Belaid, and congratulated the new Secretary-General Ahmed Al-Tayeb Solaiman for his position.

The meeting discussed the bilateral technical agreement, as well as the ongoing and planned projects. They emphasised the importance of continued humanitarian coordination. Regarding relocation to

Khartoum, Dr. Daak revealed plans to return to the capital in April.

In a statement, Mohamed Bader Al-Sada, Assistant Secretary-General for Relief and International Development at QRCS, explained with international health projects are important: "Health is our true wealth in life. Everyone must see a doctor for diagnosis and medical care. When illness strikes, it weakens the body, diminishes strength, and prevents one from going to work and practicing one's normal life.

The project primarily targets low-income workers and individuals unable to prepare their own iftar meals due to work or housing constraints, offering them a safe and welcoming environment.

As part of its educational dimension, the General Directorate of Civil Defence conducted awareness and guidance sessions in Urdu at the Al-Aziziya site, addressing common fire safety practices, proper use of fire extinguishers, and emergency response measures. Participants were also informed about the risks of electrical hazards and gas leaks, emphasising regular safety checks and adherence to preventive measures.

The Al-Aziziya tent exemplifies the integration of endowment work with awareness and service initiatives, reflecting Qatar's spirit of solidarity and compassion during Ramadan.

The General Administration of Awqaf highlighted that these programmes transform the "Iftar" initiative into a comprehensive community platform combining feeding, education, and awareness within an organised institutional framework.

The efforts reinforce the concept of endowment as a sustainable developmental tool, promoting public safety and preventive culture while maximising social and humanitarian impact during the holy month.

That is why QRCS allocates much of its humanitarian activities every year for supporting the health systems in the less fortunate countries, with a view to building the capacity of their health facilities, improving the quality of medical services, and expanding the outreach to remotely located and underserved communities".

According to the 'Paths of Benevolence' guide issued by QRCS as part of its #KeepYourBalanceOfGoodDeedsAlive Ramadan Campaign 1447 AH, a total of 57 health projects will be implemented during 2026.

At a total cost of QR85,618,656, these projects will serve 2,008,713 beneficiaries in 11 countries: Palestine (Gaza and the West Bank), Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Somalia, Niger, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Jordan, and Mauritania.

During 2025, QRCS implemented 76 health projects, at a total cost of QR53,946,918, for the benefit of 2,010,460 people in 12 countries: Bangladesh, Palestine (Gaza and the West Bank), Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Mauritania, Egypt, Afghanistan, and Niger.

## New residential building endowment in Al Mansoura dedicated to Al-Birr and Al-Taqwa Fund

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The General Directorate of Endowments at the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs has received a new real estate endowment consisting of a residential building located on Bin Dirham Street in Al Mansoura. The property was donated by a Qatari benefactress and placed under the supervision of the Directorate, with its revenues allocated to the Endowment Fund for Al-Birr and Al-Taqwa.

The initiative reflects a growing awareness of directing real estate assets toward sustainable charitable purposes that generate long-term community impact.

Real estate endowments are considered a cornerstone in developing and stabilising endowment resources. They are distinguished by their ability to generate relatively steady returns while preserving the original asset, with opportunities for future development to enhance yields.

According to the donor's stipulation, the endowment's revenues will support the Al-Birr and Al-Taqwa Endowment Fund, while granting her son the right to reside in the property if needed. This condition achieves a balance between legitimate family interests and the broader objectives of the waqf. Such arrangements are Shariah-compliant, provided the principal asset remains preserved and its benefits are directed according to the donor's terms.

Assistant Director-General of the General Directorate of Endowments Eng Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Meer, (pictured) emphasised that real estate endowments represent a fundamental pillar of the endowment system due to their revenue stability and long-term growth potential.

He affirmed that the



Directorate manages such assets within an integrated institutional framework based on governance, transparency, and high-quality management practices, ensuring the preservation of capital and sustainable development of returns.

Al Meer added that allocating the endowment to the Al-Birr and Al-Taqwa Fund will enhance the fund's capacity to expand its charitable and social initiatives, support eligible beneficiaries, and contribute to impactful community programmes, fulfilling the higher objectives of waqf in promoting righteousness and piety while ensuring sustainable giving.

He expressed appreciation to the benefactress and to all donors in Qatar for their continued contributions to charitable causes, noting that acts of benevolence, foremost among them endowments—are among the means of warding off harm and preserving the wellbeing of the nation and its people, strengthening social solidarity and shared responsibility.

The Al-Birr and Al-Taqwa Endowment Fund channels its returns toward charitable, humanitarian, and social initiatives through a comprehensive endowment system that promotes organised giving, reinforces social solidarity, and ensures sustainable long-term impact in service of the community.

## Over 1,200 people served daily through Al-Aziziya Iftar initiative

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, through its General Administration of Awqaf, implemented the Iftar initiative during the holy month of Ramadan, serving over 1,200 fast-breaking individuals daily at its Al-Aziziya site alone before the activity was suspended on Saturday amid ongoing developments.

This initiative, part of the Endowment Fund for Righteousness and Piety, aims to strengthen social solidarity, support workers and underprivileged individuals, and provide a dignified environment for performing the fast.

Beyond providing meals, the

project integrates educational, guidance, and awareness programmes for participants. These programmes are delivered in collaboration with government entities such as the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Public Health, and Ministry of Municipality, alongside private sector participation for the first time.

The initiative operated across multiple locations with precise organisational and health standards, ensuring smooth access, safety, and nutritious meals prepared according to approved guidelines. Ministry staff supervise operations on-site to manage participants effectively and provide all necessary services.

## 46 teams compete in WCM-Q's global high school research contest

THE PENINSULA

DOHA: Forty-six teams of ambitious high school students from Qatar, the US, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Jordan, and Bahrain took part in the latest instalment of Weill Cornell Medicine-Qatar's annual High School Research Competition.

The event brought a total of 165 high school students from 26 high schools in Qatar to the college to present research posters to an audience of their peers and a panel of expert WCM-Q judges. A further 12 teams from the international schools presented their research posters to the judging panel via Internet link.

The contest, organised by WCM-Q's Office of Student Outreach and Educational Development, is designed to give high school students opportunities to employ scientific research methods and enhance their presentation skills, while simultaneously inspiring them to explore careers in medicine and research. The suggested themes of the research posters were based on the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and their application in Qatar, with topics including health and wellbeing, water and sanitation, sustainable cities

and communities, and responsible consumption and production.

Each team comprised up to five students from grades 10 to 12, with each school represented by a maximum of four teams. Led by a science of math teacher from their school, the teams chose topics, conducted research, and created posters to present to the panel. The competition is part of WCM-Q's Doctors of the Future Conference, a gathering of educational leaders and future medical professionals scheduled to take place on April 10-11, 2026. The top teams will have the opportunity to present their projects during the conference, and one of the top three finalist teams will be granted the prestigious Doctors of the Future Conference award.

Associate dean for foundation, Dr. Rachid Bendriss student outreach and educational development programmes, said: "The High School Research Competition gives students excellent opportunities to engage with the scientific method while also discovering the many career paths that can be accessed by studying medicine at an elite medical college. We were very impressed by the quality of the posters, the confidence with which the

students presented their work, and the level of interest in medicine, healthcare and research demonstrated by the students."

Director of pre-medical administration, student outreach and educational development, Noha Saleh said: "We are very pleased that so many students took part and showed such aptitude for conducting their own research projects. We are confident that the event has provided great encouragement for students who wish to pursue studies and careers in the sciences, and we hope many of those who took part will one day apply to study medicine at WCM-Q."

In total, 38 schools took part. Participating schools from Qatar were Al Arqam Academy for Girls, Al Manar International School, American School of Doha, Belgravia High School, Birla Public School, DPS - Modern Indian School, Doha British School - Ain Khaled, Doha College, Edison International Academy, Education City High School (two branches), GEMS American Academy - Qatar, Hamilton International School, International School for Medical Science and Engineering, Mesaieed International School, Newton British Academy - Barwa City, Newton International



High school students present their research project to a panel of WCM-Q judges. The contest is part of WCM-Q's Doctors of the Future Conference.

Academy - Barwa City, Pakistan International School Qatar, Pearlman International School of Doha - Mansoura, Pearlman International School - Al Gharafa, Qatar Academy Al Wakra, Qatar International School, Qatar Science & Technology Secondary School for Boys, SEK International School Qatar, Swiss International School in Qatar, The Next Generation School, and Loyola International School. US schools:

Francisco Bravo Medical Magnet High School - Los Angeles, Hunter College High School - New York, and the Young Researchers Institute. Saudi Arabia: Riyadh International Schools, Bayan Gardens School. Pakistan: Lahore Grammar School - Defence Girls Branch, Lahore Grammar School - Johar Town Senior Boys Branch. Jordan: The Islamic Education College, King's Academy. Bahrain: Ibn Khuldoon National School.



# Islamic Cultural Center holds Ramadan programmes in multiple languages

The programme includes the "Ramadan Forum," which aims to introduce Islamic culture, and the "Ahlan Ramadan" programme for Muslim communities in various languages.

**THE PENINSULA**

**DOHA:** The activities of the "Ahlan Ramadan" programme were launched under the organisation of the Sheikh Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center.

The programme includes the organisation of the "Ramadan Forum," which aims to introduce Islamic culture, as well as the "Ahlan Ramadan"



programme for Muslim communities in various languages. The programme features lectures and religious exhortations for different communities.

Preacher Amrullah Dimbangan spoke in the "Ahlan Ramadan" programme for the

Filipino Muslim community about the importance of making good use of time in obedience and benefiting from the best season of the year.

The lecture was attended by 450 members of the Filipino Muslim community. He also

delivered the Friday sermon at the center's mosque before an audience of 1,000 people, addressing the opportunity for forgiveness in Ramadan and the vastness of Allah's mercy.

On the other hand, preacher Shahid Farooqi spoke before

750 Malayalam speakers about preparing for the Hereafter, explaining that death and one's appointed time are in the hands of Allah, and that one should prepare to meet Allah Almighty by drawing closer to Him and adhering to obedience and

worship. Preacher Aghar Abdul Hamid discussed the virtues of Ramadan with the Tamil-speaking community, attended by 250 people, emphasising the importance of making good use of time in worship and righteous deeds.



## Filipino community members attend Ramadan lecture

**THE PENINSULA**

**DOHA:** With the attendance of more than 200 members of the Filipino community in the country, the Sheikh Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center held the first session of the Ramadan Forum.

The center hosted the Filipino community as part of a programme that aims to introduce expatriate communities to the holy month of Ramadan and the positive

behavioural change it seeks to achieve. The center organises educational sessions on Ramadan for English- and Russian-speaking communities as well.

Preacher Amrullah Dimbangan addressed the topic of Ramadan, behavioural change during the month, and the key features of Islamic culture in this blessed time.

He spoke before 235 members of the Filipino community, who raised various

questions related to fasting, culture, and different Ramadan customs and traditions.

The preacher pointed out that fasting exists in most religions and cultures, noting that fasting in Islam aims to bring about positive behavioural change in the life of a Muslim. On the other hand, Ramadan traditions and customs add joy to life, provide an opportunity to break the routine of daily life, and add a spiritual dimension to it.

## English-language Ramadan lectures being held at The Pearl and Lusail mosques

**THE PENINSULA**

**DOHA:** The activities of the "Ahlan Ramadan" programme have been launched under the organisation of the Sheikh Abdulla Bin Zaid Al Mahmoud Islamic Cultural Center.

The programme includes two main initiatives: the "Ramadan Forum," which introduces Islamic culture, and the

"Ahlan Ramadan" programme for Muslim communities in various languages. The programme features lectures and religious exhortations tailored to different communities.

Lectures began at the Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani Mosque, where Sheikh Ahmed Jabr Al-Dosari spoke about the connection between the pillars of faith and Ramadan, attended by 85



English speakers. At the same mosque, preacher Mohammed Al-Haj addressed 89 attendees, discussing various aspects of Ramadan from jurisprudential, cultural, and behavioural perspectives.

The lectures at the mosque will continue every Thursday and Saturday throughout the holy month, covering diverse faith-related topics. In addition, the center is organising lectures at the Al-Manea Mosque, Ibrahim Al-Khalil Mosque, and Kull Mosque. All lectures are delivered in English, in line with the target audience.



# Complete Ramadan planning guide

**Spiritual maximisation**  
**QUALITY** over quantity in all worship: Ten verses of Quran read with deep reflection surpass fifty verses read hastily without contemplation. Pray with focused concentration rather than rushing through movements.

**Daily charity:** Give something every day, even small amounts. The Prophet (PBUH) was most generous during Ramadan. Set aside a charity budget and distribute it throughout the month.

**Guard your tongue:** Avoid gossip, backbiting, lying, and harsh words. Fasting isn't just from food—it's from all that displeases Allah.

**Practice gratitude constantly:** Reflect on blessings throughout your day. This positive mindset amplifies spiritual benefits and increases contentment.

**Wake for Tahajjud when possible:** The last third of the night is when Allah descends and asks who is making dua. Try waking 30 minutes before Suhoor for these powerful prayers.

**The last 10 nights**  
The final ten nights of Ramadan contain the most

blessed night of the entire year—Laylatul Qadr (the night of power).

**Intensify all worship:** These are the most sacred nights. Increase prayers, Quran recitation, dhikr, and dua.

**Seek Laylatul Qadr:** The exact night isn't known, but it's most likely on odd nights—the 21st, 23rd, 25th, 27th, or 29th. Worship every night seeking this blessing.

**Make I'tikaf if possible:** Spiritual retreat in the mosque for the last ten days allows complete focus on worship without worldly distractions.

**Increase duas dramatically:** Ask for forgiveness, Paradise, protection from Hell, guidance, and every need. The Prophet (PBUH) taught us to say: "Allahumma innaka 'afuwun tuhibbul 'afwa fa'fu 'anni" (O Allah, You are Forgiving and love forgiveness, so forgive me).

**Give generously:** Charity during these nights is multiplied tremendously. Give as much as you can afford.

**Health and wellbeing**  
Maintaining health during Ramadan ensures you can worship fully throughout the month.

**Hydrate properly:** Drink water consistently between Iftar and Suhoor. Aim for 8-10 glasses spread throughout non-fasting hours.

**Avoid overeating:** Eat until 80% full, then stop. Overeating causes lethargy and reduces your ability to worship effectively.

**Balance rest and activity:** Don't exhaust yourself, but don't become completely sedentary either. Light activity aids digestion and maintains energy.

**Monitor your health:** Be aware of warning signs like severe dizziness, extreme fatigue, or dangerous headaches. These might indicate you need medical attention.

**Remember exemptions exist:** Pregnant women, nursing mothers, the elderly, those with chronic illnesses, and travellers may be exempt from fasting. Islam prioritises health and safety.

**After Ramadan: Maintaining the momentum**

Eid Al-Fitr: The celebration marking Ramadan's completion is a joyful occasion with important religious duties.

Pay Zakat Al-Fitr: This obligatory charity purifies your

fast and must be paid before Eid prayer. Calculate the amount (typically equivalent to one meal) for each family member and distribute to those in need.

**Attend Eid prayer:** Gather with your community for this special congregational prayer. The unity and joy of Eid prayer creates powerful memories.

**Celebrate with gratitude:** Exchange gifts, visit relatives, share special meals, and enjoy the festivities. Islam encourages celebration after worship.

**Maintain moderation:** Celebrate joyfully but avoid extravagance or wasteful spending. Balance enjoying Eid with Islamic principles of moderation.

**Remember those less fortunate:** Include the needy in your Eid celebrations through charity and invitations.

**Continuing good habits**  
The biggest challenge post-Ramadan is maintaining your spiritual progress. Fast six days of Shawwal: The Prophet (PBUH) said fasting Ramadan plus six days of Shawwal equals fasting the entire year in reward. This practice helps transition gradually from daily fasting.

**Maintain regular Quran recitation:** Don't let your Quran connection fade. Continue reading at least one page daily to preserve the habit you built.

**Keep up voluntary prayers:** If you started praying Tahajjud or additional Sunnah prayers in Ramadan, continue with whatever amount you can sustain.

**Sustain charitable giving:** Make sadaqah a regular practice, not just a Ramadan activity. Even small monthly donations maintain your generous spirit.

**Preserve the spiritual high:** Don't immediately return to time-wasting habits, negative behaviours, or spiritual laziness. Consciously maintain the positive changes Ramadan created.

**Pro Tip:** Identify 1-2 specific habits from Ramadan that you'll maintain permanently. Trying to keep everything is overwhelming, but preserving a few key practices ensures lasting transformation.

**Reflection and growth**  
Evaluate your Ramadan honestly: What went well? What would you improve? Which goals did you achieve? This reflection prepares you for an even better Ramadan next year.

**Set long-term goals:** Based on your Ramadan experience, what spiritual areas need growth? Make specific plans for improvement over the coming year. Document your experience: Write notes, journal entries, or voice recordings about your Ramadan journey. These become valuable references for future preparation.

**Plan for consistency:** Focus on sustainable spiritual practices rather than perfection. Small, consistent actions throughout the year outweigh sporadic intense efforts.

**Make dua for acceptance:** Ask Allah to accept your fasts, prayers, and good deeds from Ramadan. Worry about acceptance should motivate continued righteousness.



### TEST YOUR ISLAMIC KNOWLEDGE & WIN QR300

**Weekly Islamic Knowledge Contest**

Think you know Islam? Put your knowledge to the test and win QR300 shopping voucher every week!

**How to Join:**

- Every Monday, a new Islamic question will be published.
- Scan the QR code to submit your answer.
- One lucky winner will be selected from the correct entries.
- Submission deadline: Thursday at 11:59pm

**This Week's Question:**  
Which Prophet was known as a king and was given control over the wind?

- (A) Prophet Dawud (AS) — (B) Prophet Sulaiman (AS)  
(C) Prophet Musa (AS) — (D) Prophet Ibrahim (AS)



**Know the answer?**  
Scan, submit, and win!

A new chance to win every Monday - Don't miss out!



### Qatari students complete Quran course

23 Qatari students have completed a Quran course in Madinah, Saudi Arabia, organised by the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. (PHOTO: ARCHIVES)

# Iran launches fresh strikes across region, vows revenge

**DUBAI:** Iran launched strikes across the Gulf yesterday after vowing to avenge slain supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, defying a threat from President Donald Trump to strike with unprecedented force.

As crowds gathered in Tehran with some grieving, explosions rang out and the Israeli military announced it was again striking targets in the heart of the capital.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced a fresh "large-scale" attack yesterday, and blasts were heard in Riyadh, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Manama, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, with Israeli rescue services reporting four people killed in the latest missile attack.

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian declared Khamenei's killing a "declaration of war against Muslims" and warned: "Iran considers it its legitimate duty and right to avenge the perpetrators and masterminds of this historic crime."

Israel described Khamenei's death as a "first step", and military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani boasted that the joint operation "eliminated 40 senior commanders, including Khamenei, in one minute in two different

*Iran's judiciary confirmed that Ali Shamkhani, a top adviser to Khamenei, and General Mohammad Pakpour, the head of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards, were among those killed.*

locations over a thousand miles from Israel in broad daylight".

In a social media post that adopted Trump's style and rhetoric, Ali Larijani, the powerful head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, declared: "Today we will hit them with a force that they have never experienced before."

International reactions to conflict have been mixed, with Pope Leo XIV urging both sides to end "the spiral of violence", while China condemned Khamenei's killing as a "serious violation of Iran's sovereignty".

Blasts were heard in northern Tehran and smoke was seen emanating from a building, an AFP journalist reported. It was not immediately clear what the target was.

As crowds demanded revenge — and Iran's army announced strikes targeting US



A smoke plume rises following a missile strike on a building in Tehran yesterday. (AFP)

bases in the Gulf and Iraqi Kurdistan — Trump threatened to unleash "force that has never been seen before" and urged Iran's people to rise up and seize power.

Iran's first retaliatory strikes yesterday had hit all the Gulf states apart from Oman, which had sought to mediate US-Iran talks.

But yesterday the country's commercial port of Duqm was

hit by two drones, injuring a foreign worker, the Oman News Agency said. Outrage at Saturday's wave of US and Israeli strikes against Iran spilled over into neighbouring Iraq and Pakistan, where crowds attempted to storm US diplomatic missions.

In the Pakistani megacity of Karachi, at least nine people were killed by gunshot wounds during pro-Iran protests at the

US consulate, according to a hospital record seen by AFP.

Britain urged UK citizens in the Gulf region to "shelter in place", and the US mission in Jordan urged citizens to stay away from the embassy, and in Bahrain told them to avoid hotels after one was damaged in a strike.

In Iran, the Red Crescent said strikes had left 201 people dead and injured hundreds

more.

Iran's judiciary confirmed that Ali Shamkhani, a top adviser to Khamenei, and General Mohammad Pakpour, the head of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards, were among those killed.

Iran's retaliatory strikes across the Middle East killed at least two people in Abu Dhabi and another in Tel Aviv on Saturday.

Iran had already seen intense speculation on a successor to Khamenei, given his age of 87. Upon his death, many observers expected greater power for the Revolutionary Guards, which are deeply entrenched in the Iranian economy.

Iran named yesterday Ayatollah Alireza Arafati to join Pezeshkian on an interim leadership council to lead the country while a permanent successor is found for the supreme leader.

Reza Pahlavi, the son of the late pro-Western shah deposed in the 1979 Islamic revolution, said any successor within the system would be illegitimate.

Hailing the demise of Khamenei, Pahlavi said: "With his death, the Islamic Republic has effectively come to an end and will soon be consigned to the dustbin of history." — AFP

## Türkiye steps up diplomatic efforts amid attacks on Iran

**ANKARA:** Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan yesterday held his second phone call with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi since the United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran, the state-run TRT broadcaster reported.

The two sides exchanged views on the latest developments, according to sources from the Turkish Foreign Ministry.

Fidan had already engaged

in intensive diplomatic contacts on Saturday, the day the attacks began, holding separate phone calls with the foreign ministers of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Syria, Egypt and Indonesia to discuss the unfolding situation.

In a statement released Saturday, the Turkish Foreign Ministry called on all parties to immediately end the attacks and expressed Türkiye's readiness "to provide the necessary

support for mediation."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has also conducted a series of phone conversations since late Saturday as part of Ankara's diplomatic outreach.

He spoke with US President Donald Trump and separately with the Amir of Qatar H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and UAE President H H Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. — XINHUA

## Iran welcomes Indonesia offer to mediate

**JAKARTA:** Iran's embassy in Jakarta said yesterday it welcomed Indonesia's offer to mediate between Washington and Tehran, following US and Israeli strikes against Iran.

Indonesia's foreign ministry said on Saturday that President Prabowo Subianto was willing to travel to Tehran to carry out mediation if agreed by both parties.

The Iranian embassy welcomes "the readiness of the

President of the Republic of Indonesia to mediate in this conflict", the mission said in a statement.

The embassy also "emphasised the importance of taking a firm stance by Indonesian officials in condemning the aggression and crimes of the United States and the Zionist regime of Israel".

Iranian state television confirmed the death of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

yesterday, hours after US President Donald Trump said he had been killed.

The confirmation came after the United States and Israel launched waves of air strikes on Saturday against targets in Iran, prompting retaliation by the Islamic republic.

Trump said yesterday that Washington would hit Iran with "force that has never been seen before" if it retaliated against US and Israeli strikes. — AFP

## UAE closes embassy in Iran after four killed in attacks

**DUBAI:** The UAE said yesterday it was closing its embassy in Tehran and recalling the Emirati ambassador after Iran's retaliatory missile and drone campaign in the Gulf killed four people and wounded dozens more.

The move marks the strongest condemnation yet by a Gulf state since Tehran began targeting the region with a barrage of strikes after the US and Israel launched a massive air campaign against Iran that killed its supreme leader and other top officials.

"These hostile attacks against civilian sites, including residential areas, airports, ports, and service facilities, endangered innocent civilians in a serious and irresponsible escalation," the UAE foreign ministry said in a statement.

Iran's continued and unprecedented Gulf bombardment has raised fears of a wider conflict and rattled a region long seen as a haven of peace and security in the turbulent Middle East.

For a second day, AFP correspondents heard repeated, powerful blasts in Dubai, Doha and Manama, with explosions also heard in Riyadh, as Iran launched counterstrikes following US and Israeli attacks. — AFP

## Protesters angered over death of Ali Khamenei try to storm US missions in Pakistan and Iraq

**KARACHI:** Protesters angered by the death of Iran supreme leader Ali Khamenei tried to storm the US consulate in Pakistan's Karachi yesterday, leaving nine dead, and the fortified Green Zone hosting Washington's embassy in the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

Iranian state media confirmed the death of Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader since 1989 yesterday, after the opening salvo of a massive US and Israeli attack. In the Pakistani megacity of Karachi, hundreds of protesters tried to enter the US mission, an AFP journalist saw.

At least nine people were killed in the protests and at least 20 were injured, Muhammad Amin, a spokesman for the Edhi Foundation rescue service said, adding most had bullet wounds.

A crowd of young people climbed over the main gate and gained access to the driveway of the consular building, smashing some windows.

Police fired tear gas at the protesters who dispersed.

Videos on social media showed youngsters smashing the windows of the main building of the consulate as the American flag could be seen flying over the compound, whose perimeter is topped with barbed wire.

Thousands of people were

also taking to the streets in the eastern city of Lahore and in northern Skardu, with a demonstration expected in the afternoon near the diplomatic enclave housing the US embassy in the capital Islamabad.

In Baghdad, hundreds of Iraqis, many dressed in black, attempted to storm the compound housing the American embassy yesterday despite a heavy security deployment.

Ali, a masked protester, told AFP "the martyrdom of Sayyed Ali Khamenei has hurt us".

"We are here because we

US-led coalition troops who have recently reduced their presence and are now mostly stationed in northern Iraq.

Protesters, who had gathered in the Iraqi capital since early yesterday, hurled stones at security forces, who responded with tear gas.

A security source told AFP earlier that "their attempts have been thwarted so far, but they keep trying".

In Indian-administered Kashmir, several thousand Muslims joined street demonstrations in the main city Srinagar.



Policemen walk past a burning armoured vehicle set on fire by protestors outside the US consulate in Karachi, yesterday. (AFP)

want the withdrawal of the occupying American forces from Iraq," he said, referring to

Protesters holding red, black, and yellow flags converged on the main square. — AFP

## Two Palestinians killed by Israeli army in northern Gaza: Sources

**GAZA:** At least two Palestinians were killed yesterday in an Israeli shelling on the Jabalia area in the northern Gaza Strip, according to Palestinian local and medical sources.

Local sources said Israeli artillery targeted the Al-Jurn area, where displaced families live, in Jabalia town, north of the Gaza Strip.

Medical sources told Xinhua that the shelling killed two people and left a third seriously injured.

No immediate comment was available from the Israeli military regarding the incident.

Hamas has repeatedly accused Israel of violating the ceasefire through daily air and artillery strikes across Gaza, including attacks by ground vehicles and aircraft that have destroyed residential homes.

Since October 7, 2023, Israeli strikes have killed 72,096 Palestinians and injured 171,791 others, Gaza's health authorities said yesterday.

The authorities said 629 people have been killed and 1,693 wounded since the ceasefire came into effect on October 10, 2025. — XINHUA

## Afghan, Pakistani forces battle along border

**KABUL:** Afghan and Pakistani troops battled along their border, Afghan residents and officials told AFP yesterday, with the fighting coming alongside multiple strikes including the former US air base at Bagram.

Months of cross-border clashes have flared again since Thursday when Afghanistan launched an offensive along the frontier, with Pakistani forces hitting back on the border and from the skies.

Residents in multiple areas bordering Pakistan told AFP of fighting, while the Afghan government said three people were

killed overnight in drone strikes and shelling. North of the capital Kabul, air strikes "hit Bagram air base", according to a resident who AFP is not naming for security reasons.

A second resident said "it was very strong, which shook the area. There was smoke and fire coming out north of the airport", describing the dawn raid as "very terrifying".

The provincial spokesman, Fazl ul Rahim Maskin Yar, said Pakistani jets "attempted to bomb" the base, but there were no casualties or damage.

Pakistan acknowledged bombing key cities on Friday

including Kabul and Kandahar, which is home to Afghanistan's supreme leader, but has not commented on Sunday's strikes.

In Kabul, AFP journalists heard an explosion followed by successive gunfire.

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said "anti-aircraft fire is being directed at Pakistani aircraft".

There was an increased presence of security forces in Kabul on Sunday, with more checkpoints in the city centre.

Drones were also heard by an AFP journalist in the border province of Khost, while in Jalalabad city — between Kabul and

the border — an AFP photographer saw a jet.

The Afghan government's deputy spokesman, Hamdullah Fitrat, said Pakistani fire had killed 36 civilians across multiple provinces since Thursday, which Islamabad has not commented on. Multiple residents in Afghanistan's Khost and Nangarhar provinces told AFP the two sides were engaged in sporadic clashes yesterday afternoon. Afghan officials said Thursday's border offensive was a response to earlier air strikes that killed civilians, which Pakistan said targeted militants. — AFP



### World in brief

#### Italy says favours 'dialogue' on Iran after G7 talks

**ROME:** Italy said Sunday it would work with G7 partners to prevent the conflict in the Middle East from escalating for the sake of regional stability and trade.

A widening of the conflict pitting Iran against the United States and Israel "could compromise regional security and stability, as well as the freedom of trade in an area that is crucial for our exports", Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani said on X.

"We are working together with our G7 partners to prevent the conflict from escalating," Tajani said after talks with his counterparts from the Group of Seven powers.

The group includes Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States. — AFP

#### Thailand preparing evacuation of citizens: PM

**BANGKOK:** Thailand is readying to evacuate its citizens from the Middle East by military or charter flights, Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said yesterday, after the United States and Israel attacked Iran — which answered with its own missile strikes.

The government has "coordinated with the Royal Thai Air Force to prepare aircraft to evacuate Thai citizens, prioritising those in Iran", Anutin told reporters in Bangkok, adding that charter flights were also under consideration. — AFP

#### Lebanon, France postpone conference

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon and France postponed yesterday an upcoming conference to support the Lebanese army and security forces, a joint statement by both countries' presidencies said, citing unfavourable conditions in the region.

The statement said Lebanese President Joseph Aoun and his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron "decided to postpone until April the conference... which was to be held on March 5 in Paris" after discussing "the latest developments affecting the security of the entire region".

"The conditions were not met to hold the meeting on the scheduled date." The decision comes after the United States and Israel began strikes against Iran on Saturday, sparking swift retaliation from the Islamic republic. — AFP

# Trump agrees to Iran talks: Report

**PALM BEACH:** US President Donald Trump yesterday said he would "be talking" to Iranian leaders but was vague on the timing and noted that much of the country's leadership was dead.

"They want to talk, and I have agreed to talk, so I will be talking to them. They should have done it sooner," Trump was quoted as saying by The Atlantic, as US and Israeli forces press a war against Iran for a second day.

*"They want to talk, and I have agreed to talk, so I will be talking to them. They should have done it sooner," Trump quoted.*

Asked when such talks might take place, Trump said "I can't tell you." Trump did not indicate with whom he hoped to speak.

Referring to the Iranian leadership which has been in

years of on-and-off talks with US and other Western governments, Trump said "most of those people are gone." "Some of the people we were dealing with are gone, because that was a big — that was a big hit," Trump was quoted as saying, apparently referring to the strike that killed Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other top officials.

"They should have done it sooner," he said. "They could

have made a deal. They should've done it sooner. They played too cute." In a separate interview, Trump yesterday said that 48 Iranian leaders had already been killed in the war launched Saturday by the United States and Israel.

"Nobody can believe the success we're having, 48 leaders are gone in one shot. And it's moving along rapidly," Trump was quoted as saying in an interview by Fox News. — **AFP**



Members of the FBI perform an investigation near Buford's club in downtown yesterday in Austin, Texas. (AFP)

## Texas shooting that left three dead may be 'act of terrorism,' says FBI

**HOUSTON:** Three people were killed and 14 wounded in a shooting overnight at a club in Austin, the capital of the US state of Texas, police said yesterday.

The gunman, who was not identified, was among the dead, Austin police chief Lisa Davis said at a press conference.

The assailant was shot by police who responded to the shooting, which took place around 2:00 am at Buford's Backyard Garden in downtown Austin, Davis said.

She said the officers "were faced with the individual with a gun and three of our officers returned fire, killing the suspect." A motive was not immediately known.

"This is a tragic, tragic

incident," Davis said.

"Our federal partners are here, as well as others, and this will be a scene that will take several hours to process," she said.

The overnight shooting may have been an "act of terrorism," the FBI said yesterday.

"It's still way too early in the process to determine an exact motivation, but there were indicators on the subject and in his vehicle that indicate a potential nexus to terrorism," FBI special agent Alex Doran said.

"In terms of specifically what type of terrorism, we're just at this point prepared to say that it was potentially an act of terrorism," Doran told reporters. — **AFP**

## NATO says adjusting forces to counter 'potential threats' after Iran strikes

**BRUSSELS:** NATO's top commander in Europe is "closely" following developments in Iran and the Middle East and adjusting forces as needed to defend against "potential threats", the alliance said yesterday.

The commander, US General Alexus Grynkeiwich, "has and will continue to adjust NATO's very strong force posture to ensure the security of its 32 member nations and to defend the Alliance from potential threats," said a NATO statement. — **AFP**

## EU calls for 'credible transition' in Iran

**BRUSSELS:** EU chief Ursula von der Leyen called for a "credible transition" in Iran yesterday, after the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli strikes.

Foreign ministers from the EU's 27 nations most of which are NATO members were holding extraordinary talks to discuss the situation via video link yesterday afternoon.

Writing on social media after calls with several Middle East leaders, von der Leyen said Khamenei's death spurred "renewed hope for the people of Iran".

"At the same time, this moment carries a real risk of



instability that could push the region into a spiral of violence," the European Commission president added.

"The risk of further escalation is real. This is why a credible transition in Iran is urgently needed," she wrote on X, calling for a "lasting solution".

"This must mean the halt of Iran's military nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and the end of destabilising actions on air, land and at sea."

Likewise, the EU's top diplomat, Kaja Kallas, said she was in contact with regional partners "that bear the brunt of Iran's military actions" to find practical steps for de-escalation.

"The death of Ali Khamenei is a defining moment in Iran's history," she wrote on X.

"What comes next is uncertain. But there is now an open path to a different Iran, one that its people may have greater freedom to shape". — **AFP**

## UN nuclear agency to hold extraordinary meeting on Iran

**VIENNA:** The United Nations' nuclear agency will hold an extraordinary meeting on Iran today in the wake of the US-Israeli strikes on the Islamic republic, aimed in part at Tehran's atomic programme.

In a statement late on Saturday, the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said the meeting was at the request of Russia, a key ally of Tehran.

Iran had made the same request in a letter to IAEA

chief Rafael Grossi on Saturday following the strikes.

As a result, the agency will hold a "special session of the IAEA Board of Governors on matters related to military strikes of the United States and Israel against the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran", the IAEA said in a statement.

That extraordinary meeting will precede an already scheduled session of the board, which represents 35 countries. — **AFP**

## Texas port humming as Trump ramps up Venezuela oil

**HOUSTON:** A cargo ship teems with workers in hard hats at the Port of Houston, the latest US vessel headed to Venezuela after President Donald Trump lifted restrictions to boost oil production in the crisis-hit country.

US sanctions have crippled Venezuela for years, but Trump's administration has been working with interim president Delcy Rodriguez after toppling autocratic leader Nicolas Maduro.

At the Port of Houston this past week, a crane loaded trucks, generators and

machinery onto the Roibeira as it prepared to set sail to Venezuela, the second vessel from the shipping company International Frontier Forwarders to head to the South American nation.

Greg Diaz, the company's Venezuelan-American owner, said there were more than 8,500 cubic meters of goods onboard, equivalent to around 120 containers.

"Before, it took us six to eight months to accumulate enough cargo to go to Venezuela," he told AFP.

"And now, in 20 days, we're

able to complete the orders to fill our ship to max capacity and go to Venezuela and complete the orders right away." That demand, he said, comes from private companies in Venezuela that are investing massively something that was impossible under Maduro.

Venezuela was once a major crude supplier to the United States, and has the world's largest proven reserves with more than 303 billion barrels, according to global oil cartel OPEC.

This amounts to about a fifth of the world's oil reserves.

But in 2024, Venezuela produced only about one percent of global crude, its industry left haggard by years of underinvestment, mismanagement and US sanctions.

That all changed when US forces captured Venezuela's socialist leader Maduro in a deadly raid on the capital Caracas on January 3.

Rodriguez, who was vice president under Maduro, was accepted by Trump as Maduro's replacement on condition she submit to Washington demands for access to Venezuelan oil. — **AFP**



The seized 'Ethera' vessel docked at the naval base in Zeebrugge, yesterday. (AFP)

## Belgium special forces seize Russian 'shadow fleet' oil tanker

**BRUSSELS:** Belgium said yesterday its special forces had boarded and seized an oil tanker from the "shadow fleet" Russia uses to circumvent Western sanctions over the war in Ukraine, in an overnight operation.

The Belgian government said the vessel was intercepted in the North Sea, with aerial support from French military helicopters.

Defence Minister Theo Francken said the tanker was escorted to the port of Zeebrugge after being intercepted in Belgium's exclusive economic zone.

Prosecutors identified the ship, which was said to be on its way back to Russia, as the "Ethera".

A spokeswoman for the Belgian federal prosecutor's office said the ship captain, a

Russian national, was being questioned by investigators.

The tanker flew the flag of Guinea, but an on-board inspection confirmed suspicions that it was sailing under a false flag, the office said, adding that authorities have opened a criminal investigation.

"If a ship sails under a false flag, this means that it does not comply with several international regulations," the

statement added.

French President Emmanuel Macron confirmed on X that his country's naval forces assisted in the operation, calling it a "major blow" to Russia's so-called "shadow fleet".

Russia has used a flotilla of ageing tankers of opaque ownership to get around restrictions on its lucrative crude exports imposed over its 2022 all-out invasion of Ukraine. — **AFP**

## UK says missiles fired in direction of Cyprus

**LONDON:** Britain's defence secretary said yesterday that Iran's retaliatory attacks after US-Israeli strikes included "two ballistic missiles fired in the direction of Cyprus", but which were likely not targeting the Mediterranean island.

"We had two ballistic missiles fired in the direction of Cyprus," John Healey told the BBC, noting UK warplanes were involved in "defensive" actions in the region, operating from the UK's airbase on the island and from a base in Qatar.

"Now we are pretty sure they weren't targeted at

Cyprus, but nevertheless it demonstrates how our bases, our personnel, military and civilians at the moment are at risk," he said, without providing further details about the missiles and any interception of them.

Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides said he had spoken to British Prime Minister Keir Starmer and that the UK leader had "confirmed clearly and unequivocally that Cyprus was not a target".

"We are maintaining direct communication. All relevant authorities are fully engaged and monitoring developments

closely," Christodoulides added on X.

Healey had revealed the previously undisclosed missile incidents as pointing to "a really serious and deteriorating situation" in the Middle East.

He said the risk was rising of "indiscriminate" retaliatory attacks by Iran.

"Alongside the Americans, we've stepped up our defensive forces in the Middle East. We're flying those sorties. We're taking down the drones that are menacing either our bases, our people or our allies," Healey said. — **AFP**

## Death toll in Bolivia military plane crash rises to 22

**BOLIVIA:** The death toll in the crash of a Bolivian military cargo plane carrying banknotes near the capital La Paz has risen to 22, officials said Saturday, warning it may take more than a year to figure out why it happened.

The aircraft, a C-130 Hercules transport plane manufactured by Lockheed Martin crashed after veering off the runway at El Alto International Airport on Friday, destroying multiple cars and damaging trucks.

Authorities have not yet revealed the number of people on board, nor have they said

*"It may take more than a year to figure out why it happened", officials.*

if anyone survived the incident, but they have announced that rescue efforts are over.

Fatalities were recorded both at the airport and on the busy avenue where the plane crashed.

"We have 22 people dead," including four children, national police chief Mirko Sokol told reporters, adding: "Only nine of them have been identified because we have bodies that were completely

mutilated." Defence Minister Raul Salinas has said that the plane which departed from the eastern city of Santa Cruz had eight crew members, one of whom was killed.

The health ministry put the number of people injured at 37.

The government of Bolivian President Rodrigo Paz said that the cause of the incident was not yet known, and that a probe had been opened. Witnesses have cited bad weather.

The plane's black box cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder were recovered on Saturday. — **AFP**

## More flights cancelled as Iran conflict shuts Middle East hubs

**PARIS:** The biggest disruption to global air transport since the Covid pandemic continued yesterday, with thousands of flights affected and busy Middle Eastern hubs including Dubai and Doha shuttered as Iran lashed out after US-Israeli strikes.

Tehran hit both the Dubai International Airport the world's busiest for international traffic and Kuwait's main airport during its retaliatory strikes earlier.

Iran, Iraq, Israel, Syria, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates had all announced at least partial closures of their skies Saturday after the US and Israel

attacked Iran, bringing civilian air traffic over the Middle East to an abrupt halt.

Flight tracking site FlightAware said that more than 6,700 flights had been delayed and 1900 cancelled globally as of yesterday, on top of thousands the day before.

Notable airlines that cancelled services included Emirates, Etihad, Air France, British Airways, Air India, Turkish Airlines, and Lufthansa.

Other major airlines including Australia's Qantas and Japan's All Nippon Airways did not announce any flight cancellations. — **AFP**



## 14,000 skiers launch 90km marathon in Sweden

A total of 14,000 skiers set off yesterday in the men's 90km classic race at the Vasaloppet in western Sweden, taking part in one of the world's largest cross-country ski marathons as they began the gruelling journey from Salen to Mora along the historic course inspired by the legendary flight of Gustav Vasa. (AFP)

## French Foreign Minister condemns Iran's 'massive and unjustifiable' attacks on Gulf

**PARIS:** France slammed Iran's "massive and unjustifiable" attacks on the Gulf states and Jordan yesterday, with Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot saying they were being "drawn into a war they did not choose".

"I have expressed to each of them France's unequivocal condemnation, full solidarity and complete support," and reiterated our commitment to the stability of the region he added in a post on X. — **AFP**