

'Father Amir's historic transformation of Qatar will be recorded for generations'

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According to Sheikh Hamad, during the final years before the transition, the Father Amir gradually entrusted most major responsibilities to the then Crown Prince, H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. "When he stepped down, he did so with complete confidence and pride. After handing over power, he completely withdrew from the political scene and became an observer, watching Qatar continue its journey successfully."

Recalling Qatar's early development years, Sheikh Hamad said many of the Father Amir's ambitions initially appeared impossible. "He always dreamed big. Sometimes we tried to reduce those dreams because we believed they were unrealistic," he said.

He cited the development of Qatar's liquefied natural gas industry as one of the clearest examples of the Father Amir's strategic vision. At a time when Qatar faced financial constraints, heavy debt, and difficulty securing loans, officials believed that an annual LNG production target of six million tonnes would be ambitious. The Father Amir, however, insisted that Qatar should eventually exceed 30 million tonnes.

"We asked him how we could achieve that when we didn't even have the financial resources," Sheikh Hamad recalled. "He simply replied, 'We will find the money.'"

According to Sheikh Hamad, the Father Amir made a calculated strategic decision based on long-term national interests rather than short-term financial considerations. His

objective was not merely to increase gas production but to improve the lives of Qataris by generating the resources needed to provide better education, healthcare, infrastructure and living standards.

"He wanted every Qatari citizen to enjoy a higher quality of life. He wanted better education, better healthcare, higher incomes and greater opportunities. That required enormous investments, but he was prepared to make them," Sheikh Hamad said.

He explained that the Father Amir often spoke about accelerating development by compressing decades of development into just a few years instead of following conventional timelines. That philosophy, Sheikh Hamad said, became the driving force behind Qatar's unprecedented modernisation.

The Father Amir launched major projects simultaneously across virtually every sector, including the expansion of the gas industry, Hamad International Airport, Hamad Port, modern highways, railway networks, Education City, advanced healthcare facilities, power generation projects and extensive infrastructure developments. Those initiatives fundamentally transformed Qatar's economy while significantly improving living standards.

Sheikh Hamad noted that many of these landmark projects reached completion during the reign of Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, demonstrating continuity in national planning rather than a change in direction.

"The foundations were laid



Former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs H E Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jaber Al Thani speaking during an interview

by the Father Amir, while the current Amir completed and expanded them. The development journey remained one continuous path," he said.

He also highlighted the dramatic growth of Qatar's energy sector. Initial ambitions of six million tonnes of LNG production eventually expanded. "This demonstrates the strength of the foundations that were established. The vision was always larger than what many of us thought possible," Sheikh Hamad said.

Beyond energy, Sheikh Hamad pointed to the establishment of sovereign wealth investments, stronger financial reserves and long-term economic institutions. Qatar's overseas investments grew from only a few hundred million dollars in the early years to approximately \$280bn by the time the Father Amir left office, while foreign reserves increased dramatically from around \$500m to tens of billions of dollars.

Sheikh Hamad stressed that the Father Amir's vision

extended beyond economics. One of his greatest priorities, he said, was preserving Qatar's national identity while embracing modernisation.

"He constantly asked how to protect Qatari traditions, heritage, national dress and customs. He believed development should never come at the expense of identity," Sheikh Hamad said, adding that the late leader personally encouraged efforts to preserve the country's cultural heritage alongside rapid modernisation.

Describing the Father Amir's leadership style, Sheikh Hamad said he trusted those working with him and delegated responsibilities, but never blamed others when mistakes occurred.

"He always accepted responsibility himself. He never looked for someone to sacrifice. What hurt him most was not mistakes, but betrayal of trust," he said.

He also praised the Father Amir's confidence in reviewing decisions. Whenever new information became available, the

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late leader had no hesitation in changing course if necessary.

"He was confident enough to adjust his decisions because he believed that serving the country was more important than protecting his own opinion," Sheikh Hamad said.

Despite his demanding schedule, the Father Amir remained remarkably close to ordinary citizens. Sheikh Hamad said he frequently reminded officials that true leadership meant serving people with humility.

"He used to tell us that a strong person humbles himself before people, while a confident person serves people. He always urged officials to understand citizens' concerns, even when those concerns appeared small."

Sheikh Hamad recalled numerous examples of the Father Amir's compassion. He remembered how the late leader noticed the absence of a man who traditionally greeted him during Eid celebrations every year. Upon learning that the man was ill, the Father Amir immediately decided to visit him personally, saying, "He has come to see me all these years;

now I should go to him."

He also regularly visited patients, helped resolve family disputes and remembered personal details about citizens he had met years earlier. "He truly regarded himself as a father to everyone, without distinction," Sheikh Hamad said.

Reflecting on the Father Amir's extraordinary work ethic, Sheikh Hamad said his achievements came at considerable personal sacrifice. The late leader slept only a few hours each night, filled long flights with meetings instead of rest, personally inspected projects across the country and constantly sought to accelerate implementation.

"He worked tirelessly because he believed time was precious. Even during official travel, he wanted every hour to be productive. He always pushed everyone around him to achieve more."

Concluding the interview, Sheikh Hamad said history would ultimately give the Father Amir the recognition he deserved for transforming Qatar into one of the world's most prosperous, influential and respected nations.

"I believe history will fully recognise Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa's achievements," he said. "When he passed away, the people mourned him as though they had lost a father. That affection reflects the deep bond he built with his people throughout his life."

He concluded by describing the Father Amir as "a unique model of strategic leadership whose vision transformed Qatar and whose legacy will continue to inspire future generations."

Nation united in gratitude: Citizens and leaders honour Father Amir as mourning period concludes



A building in Doha displays a tribute to the late Father Amir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani. PIC: RAJAN VADAKKEMURIYIL/THE PENINSULA

VICTOR BOLORUNDURO
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: As the official four-day national mourning period for the Father Amir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani draws to a close, citizens and residents of Qatar have demonstrated profound respect and unity in honouring the legacy of the visionary leader who transformed the nation.

The mourning period, announced by the Amiri Diwan following the passing of the Father Amir on July 12, 2026, concluded with flags returning to full mast and a renewed sense of national purpose.

Throughout the observance, Qataris from all walks of life, alongside expatriate residents, fully complied with the directives, reflecting the deep affection and gratitude felt for the late leader who steered the country from its modest beginnings to a prominent global position.

Large numbers of citizens and local leaders flocked to Lusail Palace, where the Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani received condolences from July 13 to 15. Morning sessions and evening gatherings after Asr prayer until Isha saw a steady stream of mourners. Sheikhs, ministers, dignitaries, members of the ruling family, and ordinary citizens expressed their heartfelt sympathies, praying for Allah's mercy upon the departed and strength for his family.

Many visitors described the experience as deeply moving. "The Father Amir's vision built the Qatar we cherish today," said one citizen who waited in line to offer his

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condolence. "Paying respects was our way of saying thank you." Local leaders echoed these sentiments, highlighting Sheikh Hamad's role in modernising infrastructure, education, and Qatar's international standing.

Compliance with the mourning protocols was exemplary across the country. Government offices, ministries, and public institutions suspended operations from July 13, with employees set to resume on July 19. Flags flew at half-mast on all official buildings, while cultural sites such as Qatar Museums and the Qatar National Library closed temporarily. Essential services continued with adjusted hours to support the public.

In cities and towns from Doha to Al Khor and beyond, everyday life reflected solemnity. Entertainment events were postponed, media broadcasts adopted subdued tones, and private businesses showed solidarity by limiting non-essential activities. Expatriate communities, integral to Qatar's fabric, participated respectfully, with many workplaces observing moments of silence and community gatherings offering prayers.

This widespread adherence underscored the unity that defines Qatari

society. "The mourning period brought us closer as a nation," noted a community leader in a suburban majlis. Residents shared stories of the Father Amir's humility, strategic foresight, and commitment to development, from the hosting of global events to investments in human capital. His voluntary transition of power in 2013 to Sheikh Tamim exemplified selfless leadership, a theme resonating strongly during condolences.

As the period ends, reflections turn to legacy and continuity. The Father Amir's contributions, economic diversification, cultural renaissance, and diplomatic influence, remain guiding lights. Citizens expressed optimism that his vision will endure forever.

In markets and neighbourhoods, conversations shifted from grief to gratitude. Families gathered to recount personal connections, while younger generations learned about the transformative era he inaugurated. Schools and community centres held informal sessions honouring his memory through discussions on national history.

The seamless observance also highlighted Qatar's resilience and social cohesion. No major disruptions occurred, and the spirit of collective mourning reinforced bonds between leadership and people. International tributes from world leaders further amplified the respect commanded by the late Father Amir.

With mourning concluded, Qatar looks forward with renewed determination. The outpouring of respect during these days reaffirms the nation's values of loyalty, unity, and progress.

Pakistani community in Qatar pays tribute to Father Amir

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DOHA: The Pakistani community in Qatar gathered yesterday to pay tribute to the late Father Amir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, remembering his transformative leadership, his enduring friendship with Pakistan, and his pivotal role in shaping modern Qatar.

The condolence and tribute gathering, held at TNG Al Wakra Campus in coordination with the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, brought together community leaders, professionals, business representatives and dignitaries to honour the Father Amir, who passed away on July 12 at the age of 74.

The event celebrated the legacy of Sheikh Hamad, widely regarded as the architect of modern Qatar. Speakers highlighted how, during his 18-year reign from 1995 to 2013, he transformed Qatar into a leading global player in energy, diplomacy, media, education and international investment while placing people at the centre of national development.

Participants recalled that under his leadership Qatar witnessed remarkable progress in education, healthcare, infrastructure and public services, laying the foundations for a knowledge-based economy and enhancing the country's regional and international standing.

The gathering also highlighted the long-standing friendship between Pakistan and Qatar. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1973 and have since grown into a strong partnership founded on shared Islamic values, mutual respect and close cooperation.

Speakers noted that the Father Amir consistently acknowledged the contributions of the Pakistani community to Qatar's development. Today, nearly 300,000 Pakistanis living in Qatar continue to play an important role across various sectors, including construction, engineering, energy, business and professional services, contributing significantly to the country's economic growth and infrastructure development.

Ambassador of Pakistan to Qatar H E Muhammad Aamer, who presided over the gathering, described the passing of the Father Amir as a profound loss for Qatar and for all those who witnessed his extraordinary leadership. He said Sheikh Hamad's wisdom, courage and foresight transformed Qatar, laying the foundations for the country's prosperity, global stature and

sustainable progress. He noted that the Father Amir's legacy lives on through the institutions he established, the generations he empowered and the international respect Qatar enjoys today.

On behalf of the people of Pakistan, the ambassador extended heartfelt condolences to Amir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Royal Family and the people of



Ambassador of Pakistan to Qatar H E Muhammad Aamer speaking at the gathering during the event.

Qatar, praying that Allah Almighty grants the late Father Amir the highest place in Jannah.

The programme began with a recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by the national anthems of Pakistan and Qatar. Attendees observed a moment of silence and offered prayers for the late Father Amir before watching a commemorative video showcasing key milestones of his life, achievements and his close ties with Pakistan. The event was moderated by Mahnoor Balooch and featured tributes from representatives of several Pakistani community organisations. Speakers included Abdul Razzak Sheikh of QSindh, Rana Awar Ali, Chairman of Sohni Dharti, Ghazala Zaman of the IBA Forum, Hamid Rasool, Chairman of the Pakistan Engineers Forum, Israr Malazai, President of the Pakistan Business Council Qatar, Fawad Rana, Chairman of the Pakistan Business Council Qatar, and Said Gul, Founder Executive Council member of the Pakistan Welfare Forum.

Each speaker reflected on Sheikh Hamad's visionary leadership and the lasting impact of his policies on Qatar's remarkable transformation.

During the ceremony, Badar Sohail Khan delivered a pledge on behalf of the Pakistani community, reaffirming its commitment to continue contributing to Qatar's development under the leadership of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of the State of Qatar.

Mohsin Qureshi, Community Welfare Attaché at the Embassy of Pakistan, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing appreciation to the embassy, community organisations and participants for coming together to honour the memory of a visionary leader.

Father Amir’s vision laid foundation for scientific innovation

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DOHA:: The late Father Amir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani played a pioneering role in nurturing Qatar’s culture of scientific research and innovation by encouraging young Qataris to pursue creativity and technological excellence, according to Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) Dr Ibrahim bin Saleh Al Nuaimi (pictured).

Speaking in an interview with Qatar Television yesterday, Dr Al Nuaimi said the late Father Amir firmly believed in investing in the capabilities of Qatar’s youth and was committed to creating opportunities for talented innovators

and inventors to develop their skills and contribute to the country’s future.

Recalling one of the earliest initiatives inspired by the Father Amir, Dr Al Nuaimi highlighted the establishment of the Qatar Scientific Club, describing it as one of the most significant milestones in promoting scientific research and innovation among young Qataris.

He said the idea for the club originated when Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani was Crown Prince and responsible for youth affairs. Recognising the need to provide a dedicated platform for talented young innovators, he directed the formation of a working team to study the feasibility of creating an institution that would bring together



gifted youth and encourage scientific creativity.

Dr Al Nuaimi said the planning process began around 1985, culminating in the official establishment of the Qatar Scientific Club in 1986. The

club has since become one of Qatar’s leading institutions for supporting scientific talent and innovation.

He also recalled that the late Father Amir personally visited the club twice, demonstrating his close interest in its progress. The first visit took place shortly after the club’s establishment, when it was operating from two villas in Al Sadd. During the visit, then-Crown Prince Sheikh Hamad toured the various sections of the club, met young members and encouraged them to continue developing their scientific ideas and inventions.

Following his accession as Amir, Sheikh Hamad visited the Qatar Scientific Club again during the 1990s, where he urged young Qataris to place greater

emphasis on scientific research and actively participate in local and international competitions.

According to Dr Al Nuaimi, the Father Amir consistently motivated young people to excel in science and innovation, instilling confidence and determination in them to pursue excellence in research and technological development.

He added that the achievements recorded by the Qatar Scientific Club over the decades reflect the enduring vision of the late Father Amir, whose commitment to empowering youth through science laid the foundations for one of Qatar’s most important institutions dedicated to innovation and creativity.

Nepalese community in Qatar pays tribute to Father Amir

SANAULLAH ATAULLAH
THE PENINSULA

DOHA: The Non-Resident Nepali Association, National Coordination Council (NRNA NCC) Qatar, organised a condolence gathering to pay tribute to the late Father Amir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, in recognition of his visionary leadership and immense contribution to Qatar’s remarkable progress and development.

The ceremony was attended by Prem Prasad Pokharel, Diplomat at the Embassy of Nepal in the State of Qatar, as the Guest of Honor. Representatives from various Nepalese community and welfare organizations across Qatar also participated, reflecting the unity and solidarity of the Nepalese community during this period of national mourning.

The programme commenced with the recitation of the Holy Qur’an followed by a Dua led by Maulana Ghulam Nabi Rajbi, who offered prayers for the eternal peace of the late Father Amir and for the continued peace, stability, and prosperity of the State of Qatar.

Welcoming the distinguished guests and participants, Krishna Panthi, President of NRNA NCC

Representatives from participating Nepalese organisations shared messages of sympathy and solidarity, expressing their gratitude for the opportunities Qatar has extended to the Nepalese community and reaffirming their respect for the leadership and people of Qatar during this difficult time.

Qatar, expressed profound sorrow over the passing of the

late Father Amir. He conveyed heartfelt condolences to H H the Amir, the Royal Family, the Government, and the people of Qatar, while paying tribute to the late Father Amir’s extraordinary vision, statesmanship, and enduring legacy that transformed Qatar into one of the world’s most respected and progressive nations.

Delivering the keynote address, Professor Mohammed Ramzan Ali Mia highlighted the longstanding friendship and growing partnership between Nepal and Qatar. He praised the late Father Amir’s historic leadership, emphasizing his pivotal role in shaping modern Qatar



Participants observe a moment of silence during the condolence meeting.

through strategic investments in economic diversification, education, healthcare,

infrastructure, and international diplomacy. He also acknowledged Qatar’s generous hospitality and the opportunities it has provided to thousands of Nepalese citizens who continue to contribute to the country’s development.

Speaking on behalf of the Embassy of Nepal, Prem Prasad Pokharel conveyed sincere condolences and expressed Nepal’s deep respect for the late Father Amir’s remarkable legacy. He noted that the close and friendly relations between Nepal and Qatar have continued to strengthen over the years and reaffirmed the commitment to further enhancing

bilateral cooperation and friendship.

Representatives from participating Nepalese organisations also shared messages of sympathy and solidarity, expressing their gratitude for the opportunities Qatar has extended to the Nepalese community and reaffirming their respect for the leadership and people of Qatar during this difficult time.

The solemn gathering concluded with collective prayers and a moment of silence in honour of the late H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, whose vision and leadership will continue to inspire future generations.



Third Pakistani Mango Exhibition resumes with 20,665kg sale on day four

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DOHA: The 3rd Pakistani Mango Exhibition and its Products yesterday resumed at Souq Waqif with another successful day of business, recording sales of 20,665 kilograms of mangoes and related products on its fourth day while attracting 11,000 visitors, underscoring the event’s growing popularity among residents and tourists in Qatar.

Running until July 20, the exhibition is organised by the Celebrations Committee of the Private Engineering Office in cooperation with the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The event has become one of the most anticipated seasonal attractions in Doha, promoting Pakistan’s agricultural heritage and strengthening cultural and commercial ties between Pakistan and Qatar.

This year’s edition marks the largest participation since the exhibition was launched, featuring more than 30 Pakistani companies, including exhibitors travelling directly from Pakistan alongside locally based Pakistani businesses. Their participation offers visitors access to fresh premium mangoes and a wide selection of value-added products from Pakistan.

More than 30 restaurants are also taking part in the event, presenting an extensive range of Pakistani pickles, desserts, traditional dishes and specialty food products. The culinary offerings highlight the richness and diversity of Pakistan’s mango-based cuisine while introducing visitors to innovative recipes created by renowned chefs from Pakistan and restaurants across Qatar. Guests can enjoy mango-inspired desserts, beverages and signature dishes prepared especially for the exhibition.

Beyond mangoes, the exhibition showcases a variety of Pakistan’s seasonal fruits, providing visitors with a broader introduction to the country’s agricultural produce. Around 20 percent of the products on display consist of seasonal fruits such as apricots, peaches, jamun and chikoo, allowing visitors to explore the diversity of Pakistan’s fruit industry.

Although Pakistan is home to more than 400 varieties of mangoes, the Embassy of Pakistan has carefully selected a premium collection of the country’s most celebrated varieties for this year’s exhibition, placing emphasis on quality rather than quantity.

Visitors have the opportunity to sample some of Pakistan’s internationally renowned mango varieties, including Sindhri, Chaunsa, White Chaunsa, Azeem Chaunsa (Rati Wala), Black Chaunsa (Kala Chaunsa), Anwar Ratol, Dussehri, Fajri, Ratol No. 12 and Lal Badshah. These varieties are widely recognised for their exceptional flavour, aroma and superior quality, making them favourites in international markets.

Pakistan is the world’s fifth-largest producer of mangoes, with annual production exceeding 1.8 million tonnes. The country commercially exports 16 mango varieties, while premium cultivars such as Chaunsa, Sindhri, Anwar Ratol, Nawab Puri and White Chaunsa enjoy a strong international reputation for their taste and quality.

In addition to promoting trade, this year’s exhibition places greater emphasis on education and public awareness by introducing visitors to the unique characteristics of Pakistan’s famous mango varieties and their culinary uses.

Committee removed over 7,000 abandoned vehicles in 2025 as part of campaign

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DOHA: The Joint Committee for the Removal of Abandoned Vehicles, Machinery and Equipment removed 7,144 vehicles in 2025 from public areas as part of an extensive campaign to improve the urban landscape, enhance road safety and protect the environment.

The removed vehicles included 5,340 vehicles transferred to Al Mashaf Impound Centre and 1,804 vehicles moved to Umm Salal Impound Centre. The number of vehicles removed reflect the scale of operations undertaken throughout the year.

According to an annual achievements report issued by the Municipality of Municipality, the total value of the vehicles disposed of reached QR10.623m, highlighting the significant economic value recovered through the organised disposal and auctioning process.

To encourage public participation, the report highlighted several channels through which residents can report abandoned vehicles. These include the “Oun” smart application, the Ministry of Municipality’s official website, and the unified government contact centre by calling 184.

These digital services are intended to simplify reporting procedures and enable faster response by the authorities.

Among the committee’s notable accomplishments during 2025 were the holding of 48 committee meetings and the execution of 52 field inspection campaigns to identify abandoned vehicles across different municipalities.

The committee is responsible for coordinating the removal of abandoned vehicles, heavy equipment and machinery that occupy roads, public squares, residential neighbourhoods and other public spaces.

The committee’s mandate includes taking all legal and administrative procedures required to remove abandoned vehicles and equipment from roads, streets, public squares, parking areas and other public facilities in coordination with the competent authorities.

It also conducts inspections and classifications of abandoned vehicles and equipment, determines their estimated value in preparation for public auctions in coordination with the relevant municipality, and establishes regulations and conditions governing the disposal and sale of abandoned vehicles and machinery.

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The committee also worked on developing notification procedures and simplifying legal processes related to abandoned vehicles. These measures included facilitating ownership transfer and improving procedures associated with impounded vehicles in coordination with relevant government entities.

The Joint Committee for the Removal and Disposal of Abandoned Vehicles, Machinery and Equipment was established under Cabinet Decision No. 15 of 2021. The committee comprises four representatives from the Ministry of Municipality, along with one representative each from the Supreme Judiciary Council, the General Directorate of Traffic at the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, and the General Authority of Customs. It also includes two representatives from the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya).

The report noted continued efforts to enhance coordination among participating

authorities to accelerate municipal transactions and improve operational efficiency.

The committee intensified public awareness campaigns through various media platforms to educate residents about the dangers posed by abandoned vehicles and the importance of complying with regulations.

Approximately 1,200 awareness leaflets and informational publications explaining procedures for dealing with abandoned vehicles were distributed during the year.

It also approved its 2026 operational plan, aimed at further improving executive procedures, expanding digital services and strengthening coordination among participating government agencies.

The report underscores Qatar’s ongoing efforts to maintain clean and safe public spaces by removing abandoned vehicles, improving the country’s urban environment and ensuring more efficient management of public assets through coordinated action among multiple government entities.



The removed vehicles included 5,340 vehicles transferred to Al Mashaf Impound Centre and 1,804 vehicles moved to Umm Salal Impound Centre.

Pakistan says encouraging US, Iran to resume talks

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan said yesterday it would encourage the United States and Iran to stop violence and resume talks under a memorandum of understanding (MoU) it helped mediate last month.

“While the implementation of the MoU is facing challenges, Pakistan will continue to encourage all sides to end violence and resume technical-level talks in accordance with the MoU,” Tahir Andrabi, Pakistan’s foreign office spokesman, told reporters in Islamabad.

“We express the hope for an early normalisation of the situation in Strait of Hormuz and underscore the importance of ensuring the continued safety, security and freedom of maritime navigation,” he added. The US has this week been

The United States has this week been striking Iran, drawing retaliatory Iranian attacks on US interest in the Gulf as they battle over the strategic Hormuz shipping route.

striking Iran, drawing retaliatory Iranian attacks on US interest in the Gulf as they battle over the strategic Hormuz shipping route. That sent global oil prices soaring and led to concerns of spikes in inflation even in nations far from the conflict.

The key oil and gas artery, which Iran insists it controls, is central to the rekindled fighting that has entered its sixth day

Kuwait and Bahrain respond to Iran drone attacks

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait and Bahrain faced renewed aerial attacks from Iran yesterday, their militaries said, as Tehran and Washington exchanged strikes in a battle for control of the vital Strait of Hormuz.

The Kuwaiti army said it was responding to a fresh salvo of drones, blaming “Iranian aggression”, while an *AFP* journalist reported hearing explosions near the Gulf state’s capital Kuwait City.

Kuwait and the island kingdom of Bahrain both said earlier yesterday that their air defences had dealt with a previous round of Iranian attacks, with warning sirens sounding in Manama, the Bahraini capital.

Iran said it targeted radar systems, an air

defence system, and fuel storage facilities at the Ali Al-Salem airbase in Kuwait, as well as US military installations at Sheikh Isa Airbase in Bahrain.

The two Gulf nations have faced repeated attacks from Iran since a July 7 resumption of hostilities between Washington and Tehran.

The renewed fighting comes despite a June agreement for a 60-day truce aimed at reaching a permanent end to the war and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has said it is attacking the US military in the region but both Bahrain and Kuwait have accused the Islamic republic of targeting civilian sites. — *AFP*

despite a preliminary deal in June aiming to end the war. “Pakistan recognises the

urgent need to address the impact of the current situation on global energy supplies and other

economic commodities including trade and food security,” Andrabi said. — *AFP*

UK unveils sanctions against Sudan gold networks

LONDON: Britain yesterday announced sanctions targeting what it said are “illicit gold and finance networks” propping up rival factions in Sudan’s devastating civil war.

The foreign ministry said the war-torn country’s gold trade worth billions of dollars was helping finance “weapons procurement, military operations and the activities of armed groups”.

The sanctions are aimed at 11 individuals and businesses suspected of being linked to the networks financing and supporting the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and the regular army. The war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the RSF, that erupted in April 2023, has killed 200,000 people by some estimates and displaced upwards of 11 million.

The sanction targets are all Sudanese, but trade internationally “including in the gold markets in Dubai and Hong Kong”, the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) said.

Among them is Sudanese national Abu Dharr, accused of financing the RSF through “a web of real estate, conflict gold and holding companies based in Dubai”. There are also three Sudanese United Arab Emirates-based companies and one Sudanese Hong Kong-based firm. Two Sudanese-state owned mining companies

were also sanctioned, suspected of generating gold revenues for the SAF.

A third state-owned firm, the Ariab Mining Company, was targeted for “channelling revenue from conflict gold to both the SAF and RSF”.

“The people of Sudan continue to pay the price for a war fuelled not only by guns and fighters, but by illicit flows of gold and finance to fill the war chests on both sides,” Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper said.

Africa’s third-largest country is one of the continent’s top gold producers, and the state Sudanese Mineral Resources Company reported a “five-year high” in production of 70 tonnes in 2025.

The United Nations on Wednesday said the rival factions were profiting from control over the country’s resources and that a “war economy” was sustaining the conflict. The UK has previously sanctioned senior commanders of the RSF, who have also been targeted by the European Union. The RSF has been accused of being a “proxy.”

On Tuesday, the European Council had said it was also boosting sanctions.

In measures designed to “curb sources of financing for the conflict,” the Council said it would ban “the purchase, import or transfer if gold originating in Sudan.” — *AFP*



Palestinians inspect the site of an Israeli strike at the Bureij refugee camp in central Gaza Strip yesterday. (AFP)

Five Palestinians killed in Israeli air strikes on Gaza

GAZA: Five Palestinians were martyred, and several others injured in Israeli occupation airstrikes on various areas of the Gaza Strip yesterday.

Medical sources said one Palestinian was martyred after an Israeli occupation drone struck a vehicle in Al-Mawasi area west of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip.

Medical sources also told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that another Palestinian was martyred, and several others injured in an Israeli occupation airstrike on a tent sheltering

displaced people in the port area west of Gaza City. A third Palestinian was martyred by Israeli fire in Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood southeast of the city.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said five people were injured in an Israeli strike on Al-Zaytoun neighbourhood, which coincided with an advance by Israeli tanks along Al-Sikka Street.

It added that two Palestinians were killed in a separate airstrike targeting Al-Tuffah neighborhood east of Gaza City. Overnight, Israeli occupation

forces issued evacuation orders covering residential blocks and neighbourhoods in the central Gaza Strip, including Bureij, Maghazi, and Nuseirat refugee camps, as well as the city of Deir al-Balah. The areas were later hit by intensive airstrikes that caused extensive damage and left several Palestinians injured.

According to health authorities in Gaza, the death toll from the Israeli military campaign in the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, has risen to 73,250, while 173,751 people have been injured. — *QNA*

Ebola spreading in DRC ‘faster than any previous outbreak’: WHO

GENEVA: The World Health Organization warned yesterday that Ebola was spreading in the Democratic Republic of Congo more quickly than during any previous outbreak of the deadly virus.

More than 2,000 cases including 796 deaths have been confirmed in the DR Congo since the outbreak was declared two months ago, making it “now the third-largest Ebola outbreak on record”, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters.

By comparison, he pointed

out that the big Ebola outbreak in the DRC in 2018-2020 “took more than 10 months to reach 2,000 confirmed cases”, warning that the virus was spreading faster than ever seen before.

“In the past month, it has expanded faster than any previous outbreak,” he warned.

The DRC’s 17th Ebola outbreak was declared on May 15 after several deaths in Ituri, a mineral-rich northeastern province, plagued by armed groups.

Cases of Ebola, which

spreads through close contact and infected bodily fluids, have so far been found in five DRC provinces, as well as in neighbouring Uganda, though the vast majority are in Ituri.

Tedros hailed the rapid ramping-up of the response to the outbreak, pointing out that treatment capacity in north-eastern DRC now stood at 800 beds, while laboratory capacity had jumped from a single lab to 16.

But he warned that “despite the progress we have made, the outbreak in DRC is continuing

to outpace the response”.

The WHO chief highlighted that over 80 percent of new cases were being detected “outside known contact lists, showing that transmission chains are still being missed”.

“About two-thirds of deaths are occurring in communities, among people who never receive care in a health facility,” he acknowledged. Complicating things further, the current outbreak is caused by the rare Bundibugyo species of Ebola, for which there is no approved vaccine or treatment. — *AFP*

Heavy west Africa rainfall now five times more likely: Scientists

ABIDJAN: Climate change has made extreme rainfall in west Africa five times more likely than in the late 19th century, scientists said yesterday, after regional floods killed nearly 100 people last month.

Intense downpours hit several west African coastal countries at the start of the rainy season in late June, triggering deadly floods in densely populated urban areas.

“The intense 3-day rainfall event is now about 5 times more likely to occur today compared to a pre-industrial climate,” the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group warned in a study.

Such events, once considered rare, are now expected every two or four years in the region, the researchers noted.

They found that climate change driven by human greenhouse gas emissions had increased the likelihood of the rains that caused the floods, while also boosting their

intensity by between four and 23 percent.

The heaviest rainfall was between June 20 and 22 when “exceptionally widespread and persistent downpours” hit coastal areas from Ivory Coast to Nigeria, the study added.

Some cities recorded more than 140 millimetres (5.5 inches) of rain in less than 24 hours, overwhelming drainage systems and triggering flash floods.

The floods killed at least 59 people in Ivory Coast, 34 in Ghana and five in Togo, the study said.

Researchers said fast-growing coastal cities were particularly vulnerable because of rapid urbanisation in flood-prone areas.

They called on Gulf of Guinea states to “urgently adapt for future extremes”, including investments in drainage infrastructure, early-warning systems and safer housing. — *AFP*

UN experts say migrants abused at Tunisia-Libya border

GENEVA: UN experts yesterday voiced alarm about thousands of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa who could be victims of arbitrary detention, collective expulsion and human trafficking on the Tunisia-Libya border and in Libya.

The group expressed their “serious concern” about reports that more than 7,400 people had been affected since at least June 2023 at the hands of Tunisian security forces, the Libyan state and non-state actors. Testimonies indicated that detainees have been “beaten and abused by uniformed personnel using tasers, iron bars, dogs, and threats of gunfire” as an intimidation and punishment tactic, they said in a statement.

They have also reportedly been denied access to proper food and medical care, while women are said to have been raped and men severely assaulted. — *AFP*

Orphanage fire kills 11 as Algeria struggles in heatwave

ALGIERS: A fire burning at an orphanage in Algeria’s capital has killed at least 11 people including children, authorities said yesterday, amid a heatwave that has sparked hundreds of blazes in the country’s north.

Firefighters had been battling to extinguish the flames since before dawn in the Mohammadia suburb of Algiers.

“At around 3am, we heard the fire engines arriving and the

children screaming,” said Abdessalam Merrah, 41, who lives nearby.

“We helped as much as we could, but unfortunately we were told that 11 people had already died.”

An *AFP* journalist saw black stains around the building’s windows on Thursday morning. A witness said firefighters had used a chainsaw to remove metal bars from a window.

The Algerian civil defence

said the toll was provisional and added that another 19 people were injured in the fire, the cause of which is unknown.

Rachid Belhadji, head of the forensic medicine department at Mustapha Bacha Hospital, told local television that some of the bodies were completely burned and required DNA tests to be identified.

Algeria’s President Abdelmadjid Tebboune later said “several children” were among the dead.

National television showed Prime Minister Sifi Ghrieb visiting the wounded at two medical facilities in Algiers.

Algeria has been sweltering under a heatwave for several days, and nearly 1,000 fires have been recorded in the space of a week.

From July 8 to 15, the civil defence reported 932 fires, according to state media. Most had been extinguished but a small number were still burning. One municipal worker died battling a blaze in the northern province of Setif, a local mayor said Wednesday. — *AFP*



Police officers stand guard at the entrance of an orphanage following a fire in the Mohammadia suburb of Algiers yesterday. (AFP)

3 killed, 29 injured as military convoy attacked in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Three security personnel were killed and 29 others injured after militants launched a coordinated attack on a security forces' convoy in Pakistan's southwest Balochistan province on yesterday, security sources said.

The attack took place in Mastung district when a Frontier Corps convoy was travelling from provincial capital Quetta to Kalat district via the N-25 highway, the sources told *Xinhua* on condition of anonymity.

"The convoy came under a coordinated attack by heavily armed militants at multiple locations, and a reinforcement party responding to the

The convoy came under a coordinated attack by heavily armed militants at multiple locations.

incident also came under attack when an improvised explosive device detonated nearby," the sources added.

During the ensuing exchange of fire, three security personnel were killed and 29 others injured, including 20 with serious injuries and nine with minor wounds, the sources said.

All the injured personnel were evacuated to nearby medical facilities for treatment, the sources said.

The attack also caused significant damage to security vehicles, with one Frontier Corps bus destroyed by fire, while three vehicles sustained tyre damage.

Following the attack, security forces fired mortar rounds toward the suspected escape routes of the assailants.

Authorities said the area has been secured, all casualties have been evacuated, and traffic on the N-25 highway has been fully restored.

No group has claimed the attack yet. However, the sources attributed the attack to the outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army. An investigation into the incident is underway. — *XINHUA*



South Africa anti-migrant protests continue

Protesters gathered in Alexandra yesterday demanding that property owners stop renting premises to foreign nationals as part of an ongoing campaign calling for tougher action against undocumented migrants. Organisers, who argue that illegal immigration contributes to crime and unemployment, said demonstrations will continue every Thursday, while rights groups have warned against xenophobic targeting of migrants. (AFP)

Bangladesh former PM Hasina to be arrested on return

DHAKA: Bangladesh's Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed yesterday said ex-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina would be arrested on her return as she had already been convicted by a court.

On her possible return, the minister told journalists in Dhaka that any opportunity to surrender or appeal would be determined by the courts.

He said the government wanted her extradited from India under the bilateral treaty and had sent reminders after the interim government first sought her extradition.

"We want her back, and we want her to face justice," said

the minister.

Meanwhile, he said Hasina's Bangladesh Awami League party will also face trial. Hasina resigned as prime minister amid nationwide political chaos and fled to India on Aug. 5, 2024. Bangladesh's previous interim government had subsequently sent a diplomatic note to New Delhi requesting the return of the country's former prime minister.

A special tribunal in Bangladesh, in November 2025, sentenced Hasina in absentia to death for crimes against humanity during the country's July uprising in 2024. — *XINHUA*

Thailand mulls suspending nearly 6,000 officials over exam scandal

BANGKOK: Thousands of Thai civil servants face suspension over an exam cheating scandal, authorities said yesterday, as investigators widened a probe that has already led to three arrests.

Corruption and bribery cases regularly make headlines in Thailand, but it is rare for so many public officials to be affected.

The scandal began in June, when investigators said they had concluded that officials accepted bribes of up to 800,000 baht (\$23,847) to electronically alter candidates' results to allow them

to pass mandatory exams for government appointments or promotions.

Police found irregularities in the results of 5,814 civil servants who had taken these exams, interior ministry official Unsit Sampuntharat told reporters yesterday.

He said they could be suspended pending a committee decision as early as Friday.

"The damage is enormous, and it is unfair to those who obtained their positions honestly," Unsit said.

The ministry said it would review about 800,000 exam

papers as investigators seek to determine the full extent of the alleged fraud.

The alleged masterminds, two men and one woman, have been arrested on charges including destroying and concealing official documents, with one of them apprehended after fleeing to neighbouring Laos, police said.

If convicted, they could be fined and face up to five years in prison.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who has made tackling corruption a priority, condemned the alleged fraud as

"disgusting".

Speaking on Wednesday, he warned of a "vicious circle" in which officials used corrupt means to obtain positions of power and responsibility, which gave them further opportunities for corruption.

The arrests followed a 17-day joint investigation by police and anti-corruption agencies, during which officers seized computers and examination documents.

Civil servants in Thailand typically earn between about \$530-\$2,300 a month, depending on rank. — *AFP*

New Zealand downgrades tsunami alert after quake

WELLINGTON: New Zealand authorities withdrew a tsunami warning yesterday following a 5.9-magnitude quake on the western coast of the South Island.

"This advisory represents a downgrade from warning," the National Emergency Management Agency said, explaining that the quake was smaller than its initial estimate.

After first warning people in affected areas to "move immediately" to high ground, it now advised them to be careful of "strong and unusual currents" at the shore.

The earthquake was 76 kilometres deep and struck 83km west of popular South Island tourist centre Queenstown, the USGS said.

Authorities initially warned of possible land inundation and ordered people in the tourist hotspot Milford Sound to evacuate to high ground. New Zealand is formed where the Australian and Pacific plates meet, and is frequently rocked by large earthquakes and volcanic activity. — *AFP*



China reinforces river embankments as water levels rise

Emergency personnel and workers reinforced embankments along the Mudanjiang River in northeast China's Heilongjiang Province after rising upstream water levels increased flood risks. Authorities are strengthening flood barriers to protect nearby communities. (XINHUA)

Philippines lifts import ban on Hungarian livestock products

MANILA: The Philippine government lifted its temporary ban on imports of livestock and related products from Hungary after international animal health authorities restored the country's foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)-free status, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA) yesterday.

The decision allows the resumption of imports of FMD-susceptible animals, meat and animal by-products from Hungary. The DA said the ban was lifted after the World Organisation for Animal Health restored Hungary's FMD-free status. — *XINHUA*

Over 500 feared dead in two suspected shipwrecks off Myanmar: UN

GENEVA: The United Nations warned yesterday that more than 500 people were feared dead following reports of two large shipwrecks off Myanmar since late June.

The UN's International Organisation for Migration and its refugee agency UNHCR voiced alarm in a joint statement at reports "that two boats carrying more than 500 people may have capsized off the coast of Myanmar in recent days".

Preliminary information indicated that the two vessels

in question departed from war-torn Myanmar's Rakhine State in late June, with mainly members of the country's mostly Muslim Rohingya minority onboard, the statement said.

Some had reportedly travelled from the huge camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, where more than million Rohingya refugees who have fled from Rakhine live in squalid conditions.

The statement said that one boat, believed to have been carrying around 250

people, lost contact shortly after departure.

A second boat, reportedly carrying some 280 people, is meanwhile believed to have sunk off Myanmar's Aye-yarwady coast on July 8.

"While the incidents and casualty figures have yet to be officially confirmed, UNHCR and IOM are gravely concerned by the potentially devastating loss of life," the statement said.

The UN agencies highlighted that the journeys "took place outside the regular

sailing season, when maritime conditions are typically more hazardous".

"Recent torrential rain and flooding across the region have further increased the risks associated with such sea movements."

The statement cautioned that "if verified, this tragedy would add to the nearly 300 people reported to be missing or to have lost their lives in the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal so far this year, including Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals". — *AFP*



World in brief

Japan PM approval rating below 50% for first time

TOKYO: Approval ratings for Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's conservative government dipped below 50 percent for the first time since coming to power in October in a poll published yesterday.

The Jiji Press survey put backing for Takaichi's cabinet at 49 percent, with the sharpest drop among voters in their 60s, whose support went from 63.7 percent last month to 39.9 percent.

While supporters still cited the leadership and trustworthiness of Japan's first woman prime minister, top reasons for disapproval included "cannot hope for much" and "poor policies". — *AFP*

Australia to toughen modern slavery penalty

SYDNEY: Australia will make big companies criminally liable for modern slavery in supply chains, the nation's top lawyer said yesterday, weeks after the United States threatened trade tariffs over the issue.

Attorney General Michelle Rowland said laws would be toughened with a new criminal offence if companies with revenue over Aus\$100 million (\$70 million) fail to prevent modern slavery, including forced labour and debt bondage, in their supply chains outside Australia. "Australians rightly expect that the products they buy are not made on the back of modern slavery," she said. — *AFP*

Hong Kong issues warning to booksellers

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's security chief said yesterday that booksellers must ensure the items they sell "do not endanger national security", a day after authorities arrested five over "seditious" material.

National security police searched two bookshops on Wednesday and arrested five people under suspicion of displaying and selling "items with seditious intent", the latest in a string of crackdowns on independent bookshops.

The city's security chief Chris Tang told reporters yesterday: "If you are a bookseller, you have a responsibility to ensure that the books you sell do not endanger national security." — *AFP*

Suspect arrested in murder of Ziaur Rahman

DHAKA: Bangladesh police arrested yesterday a retired military officer accused of involvement in the assassination of former president Ziaur Rahman more than four decades ago, a senior official said.

Ziaur Rahman, a war hero who went on to become president, was killed in 1981 during a military coup.

Following his assassination, a martial law court convicted 18 military officers of murdering him, although the defence argued they had not been given a fair trial. — *AFP*

One dead, 24 missing after boat sinks in Indonesia: Rescuers

JAKARTA: A passenger boat sank off an Indonesian island, killing at least one person and leaving 24 others missing, the local search and rescue agency said yesterday.

An engine failure caused the boat to sink as it sailed near Selayar, a small island south of the larger Sulawesi, said the head of the local search and rescue agency, Muhammad Arif Anwar.

The crew was unable to repair the engine, prompting the skipper to call local authorities requesting evacuation, he told *AFP*. The boat was already partially sunken when rescuers reached it yesterday, according to Arif.

Forty-nine people were rescued, one woman was found dead, and "24 people are still being searched for", said Arif. The vessel's manifest listed 50 people on board, but further verification revealed there were in fact 74, he added. — *AFP*



Heavy rain floods roads in Kathmandu

Heavy rainfall inundated roads in Nepal's capital yesterday, forcing commuters to wade through floodwaters as monsoon rains continued to disrupt daily life in the city. (AFP)

South Africa's rooibos heads to space

CAPE TOWN: Seeds from South Africa's world-famous rooibos tea are headed to the International Space Station to see how they respond to space conditions, in the first such experiment for Africa, organisers announced yesterday.

Uniquely South African, the rooibos plant is used to make a sweetish, caffeine-free infusion that is high in antioxidants and sold across the world. The mission facilitated by MaxIQ Space is set

for October and the seeds are expected back on Earth by December or January, the South African Rooibos Council said.

"The seeds will be the first indigenous South African species, and the first seeds on the African continent, to go to space," director Dawie de Villiers told *AFP*.

They will be kept in a nanolab for at least six weeks with more than a dozen student experiments as part of a MaxIQ Space programme to encourage

STEM subject learning.

"The purpose is to expose the seeds to microgravity and space radiation to find out how these seeds adapt to space conditions and if there is a future for sustainable food production beyond Earth," de Villiers said.

The seeds back from space will be planted alongside controlled seeds and studied by school students for differences in factors such as germination and growth. — *AFP*

Court confirms graft trial for Spanish Prime Minister's wife

MADRID: A Spanish court yesterday confirmed Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's wife Begona Gomez will face trial for alleged influence peddling and embezzlement, dashing her final hope of avoiding the dock. Gomez's two-year-long legal saga is one of several corruption scandals jeopardising the leftist government of Sanchez, a global progressive hero for his clashes with US President Donald Trump and Israel.

Judge Juan Carlos Peinado opened an investigation in April 2024 to determine whether Gomez had exploited her position as Sanchez's wife for private gain, which she and the prime minister deny.

The case centres on the creation and management of a chair at Madrid's Complutense University that was co-directed by Gomez, as well as the alleged use of public resources and personal connections to advance private interests.

Peinado ended his probe in April and charged Gomez with embezzlement, influence peddling, corruption in business dealings and misappropriation of funds. — **AFP**

Ukraine awards UK's Starmer top medal on final visit to Kyiv

KYIV: Ukraine awarded Britain's Keir Starmer its "Order of Freedom" honour yesterday as the outgoing prime minister made his final visit to the capital, Kyiv.

Starmer is set to depart Downing Street on Monday and be replaced by former Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham, who only became an MP again last month.

"Britain has always been, and remains, with Ukraine, and we value this immensely," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky told Starmer at a press conference in Kyiv.

"I want to thank you personally and wish you good luck," he said.

Starmer thanked Zelensky and pledged continued support for Kyiv, saying that even though he was leaving, Britain's support for Ukraine "will never change."

"Your fight is our fight. Your security is our security. And the United Kingdom will not waver," he said.

Two of Starmer's Conservative party predecessors as prime minister, Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak, have previously been awarded the Order of Freedom.

Burnham will become leader of the ruling Labour party on Friday



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer (left) and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky shake hands after a joint press conference in the gardens of the Presidential Palace in Kyiv, yesterday. (AFP)

before taking over as prime minister on Monday after meeting head of state King Charles III.

He will be the UK's fifth leader since Russia invaded its neighbour in February 2022.

Starmer announced his resignation on June 22 after losing the confidence of Labour lawmakers, following several domestic policy U-turns that impacted his popularity and regional elections that badly bruised his party.

He is held in high regard by many foreign leaders though, including for his work on Ukraine and commitment to NATO.

Starmer, along with French President Emmanuel Macron, helped lead efforts to establish a peacekeeping force aimed at deterring Russia in the event of a peace deal.

On Monday, Britain joined the European Union's €90bn (\$103bn) support loan for Ukraine. — **AFP**

US renews Ebola travel rules for citizens leaving DR Congo

WASHINGTON: The United States expanded Ebola-related travel controls on Wednesday, adding new restrictions on Americans returning from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are currently working together on a DO NOT BOARD (DNB) process with regard to the DRC, DHS said in a post on X. "American citizens who are departing from the DRC may be subject to a DO NOT BOARD (DNB) order. Americans are able to return to the United States 21 days after leaving the DRC," it added. — **XINHUA**

Cuban govt links latest power grid collapse to US sanctions

HAVANA: The Cuban government said Wednesday that the latest collapse of the country's national power grid, the third nationwide outage in less than two weeks, occurred amid economic and energy pressure from the United States.

"Yesterday's blackout of the National Electric System comes at a time when the U.S. government is suffocating our economy and our electric power sector to the utmost," Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez wrote on X. — **XINHUA**

BiH issues warning as temperatures soar to 41 degrees Celsius

SARAJEVO: Parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) are bracing for scorching temperatures of up to 41 degrees Celsius, the country's Federal Hydrometeorological Institute (FHMZ) issued an orange weather alert yesterday.

According to forecasts, the Herzegovina region will see maximum temperatures reaching around 41 degrees Celsius, while northern regions of Bosnia are expected to climb to 36 degrees Celsius. The peak of the heatwave is anticipated between 12pm and 4pm on July 17 and July 18. — **XINHUA**

Russian strikes on Ukraine capital kill two people, wounds five

KYIV: Russian strikes on Kyiv killed two people and wounded at least five others, including a child, Ukrainian emergency services said yesterday, after explosions rocked the capital shortly after midnight.

The attack is the latest in Russia's near-daily bombardment of Ukrainian cities, as Moscow presses its invasion which is now in its fifth year.

AFP journalists in Kyiv heard a series of explosions after a Ukrainian air force alert reported the approach of several ballistic missiles. There were a number of bright flashes in the sky over Ukraine's capital, followed by half a dozen detonations, they said. — **AFP**

Trump says Iran has freed a detained US citizen

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that arch foe Iran has freed an American citizen detained since December 2024 and allowed her to leave the country.

"She is now safely outside of Iran, and in good condition," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform, adding: "The United States of America appreciates this gesture of Goodwill by Iran!" Trump — who in recent days has ordered a resumption of strikes against Iran and reimposed a naval blockade of its ports — did not name the woman or describe why she had been held, other than to say she had been "wrongfully detained."

Iran is holding several Western nationals and is accused of using them as bargaining chips in negotiations between governments. — **AFP**

Germany and France seek to 'bounce back' from fighter jet failure

BERLIN: France and Germany will seek to move on from the failure of a tortured fighter jet project and bolster other joint defence plans — including nuclear deterrence — at a joint government meeting on Friday.

After one-on-one discussions on Thursday evening, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz will chair Friday's annual meeting, held this time near Cologne.

There will also be a Franco-German Defense and Security Council at a Luftwaffe air base, symbolically underlining the need for European rearmament to ward off the threat from Russia and compensate for waning US commitment.

The French presidency says it wants

Friday's talks to advance "concrete" projects in order to "bounce back" from last month's implosion of the joint Future Combat Air System (FCAS) fighter jet project.

Macron said on Monday he "deeply regretted" the failure of FCAS, which fell victim to bickering between Airbus, which represented Germany and Spain, and France's Dassault. There are also fears for another joint project, the Main Ground Combat System (MGCS), which aims to replace battle tanks currently used by France and Germany.

MGCS has also been buffeted by internal tensions since Germany's Rheinmetall entered the project, with disagreements over the concept for the vehicle. — **AFP**

US unveils new 25% tariff on certain imports from Brazil

WASHINGTON: The United States announced on Wednesday a new tariff on various imports from Brazil, following a year-long investigation into the Latin American giant's trade and other policies.

The 25 percent tariff is set to take effect on July 22, as the Trump administration seeks to rebuild its tariff agenda following legal setbacks.

A range of products including beef, coffee and certain aircraft parts will be exempted, a senior US official told reporters. The exclusions also cover certain goods that the United States does not produce.

Brazil condemned the tariffs yesterday, promising that "reciprocal" measures would be taken.

"There is no justification for

unilateral measures against our country," President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's office said in a statement on X.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said Brazil's "unreasonable acts, policies, and practices" have hurt US commerce by unfairly benefitting Brazilian producers and "restricting access to one of the world's top export markets."

"We remain open to continuing negotiations with Brazil to bring about long-needed changes to the problems identified in this investigation," Greer said in a statement.

In earlier findings, the US investigation deemed that certain practices by Brazil were "unreasonable or discriminatory and burden or restrict US commerce." — **AFP**

Toronto air ranked among world's worst as wildfire smoke billows south

TORONTO: Toronto had the worst air quality of any major city in the world on Wednesday, the Swiss firm IQAir said, as Canadian authorities urged people to stay indoors.

Toronto edged out New Delhi and the Democratic Republic of Congo's capital Kinshasa as wildfire smoke turned the skies a hazy yellowish-grey in Canada's largest city.

"The biggest contributor to Toronto's spike in air pollution right now is wildfires, though the higher than average temperatures are also playing a role," Armen Araradian of IQAir told AFP. While this year's wildfire season has been fairly muted compared to the devastation caused in recent years, there are more than 800

active fires nationwide.

Smoke from blazes in northwestern Ontario has filtered down to Toronto, the provincial capital.

City officials have closed pools, cancelled summer camp programs and closed the official FIFA Fan Festival ahead of Wednesday's semi-final match between England and Argentina.

Montreal saw a similar, though less severe impact from wildfires on Tuesday.

Smoke from the wildfires also worsened air quality across the border in the United States, with Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine and New Hampshire particularly impacted.

New Yorkers were warned by state authorities that they



People walk in downtown Toronto as smoke from forest fires in Northern Ontario causes poor air quality over the city, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, on July 15, 2026. (AFP)

"may see visible smoke and hazy skies across the state and spikes in smoke-related pollution." Canadians are enduring

potentially hazardous air as a record-smashing North American heat wave persists. — **AFP**

UK launches hi-tech mission to study Greenland ice melt

HARWICH: A team of international scientists sets sail yesterday from Britain for Greenland to study its rapidly melting ice using drones, mini-submarines and autonomous swimming robots.

Greenland's ice sheet, made up of millions of cubic kilometres of freshwater, is melting rapidly due to global warming, and scientists believe it could disrupt key Atlantic currents that control the world's weather.

But because of the hazardous environment, where blocks of ice "calve" or fall off unpredictably, scientists have struggled to study the melt up close. The RRS Sir David Attenborough polar research ship, named after the famed British naturalist and television presenter, was leaving southeastern Harwich with dozens of international scientists on board.

The £20m (\$27m) project, led by the British Antarctic Survey, is funded by the UK government. For around five weeks, the scientists will sail in fjords that fringe southeast Greenland, studying glaciers from all angles.

They will fly drones with high-resolution cameras and lower autonomous robots that can dive hundreds of metres to the seabed and screw themselves to the ice wall.

"Marine robots can go right up against the ice... where people cannot go because it would be completely unsafe for them," said project leader Kelly Hogan, a marine geophysicist.

The team wants to capture granular details because scientists still "don't really understand how the ocean water melts the ice", said British marine physicist Mark Inall. — **AFP**

Four Greek MPs indicted in EU farm scandal

ATHENS: Four Greek members of parliament from the ruling party were among 22 people indicted yesterday over a multi-million-euro EU farm subsidy scandal that has rocked the government.

The indicted defendants included "several former high-ranked public officials and political staff, as part of an investigation into an alleged organised fraud scheme involving agricultural funds", the European prosecutor's office said.

They have estimated the bloc's losses from the alleged scheme at more than €19.6m (\$22.5m), while Greek authorities last year put damages at a minimum of €23m.

Italy court finds 32 people guilty over Genoa bridge collapse

GENOA: An Italian court sentenced 32 defendants yesterday, including the former head of motorway operator Autostrade, for their role in a deadly bridge disaster eight years ago that killed 43 people.

Autostrade's former chief executive, Giovanni Castellucci, was found guilty of vehicular homicide and negligence related to the collapse of the bridge in Genoa -- one of the country's worst infrastructure disasters.

The crowded courtroom was packed with relatives of those who plunged to their deaths when the Morandi Bridge — part of a key highway connecting

The scandal has led to the resignation of several Greek government ministers and other officials. Those indicted include a former political secretary of the ruling New Democracy party and several former officials of the state agency distributing the subsidies, OPEKEPE.

One is a former chairman of the agency. Among the lawmakers, accusations include instigation to commit abuse of trust, instigation to unlawful management of EU funds, and instigation to false attestation and attempted computer fraud, the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) said. — **AFP**

France and Italy — gave way in torrential rain on August 14, 2018.

Castellucci, who was accused of postponing key maintenance work, was sentenced to 12 years behind bars.

The former executive is already serving time for his responsibility in a 2013 accident in which a bus crashed through the barriers of a viaduct, killing 40 people.

"Today we can say there are those guilty of the murder of our relatives," said Michele Matti Altadonna, whose brother was one of the victims.

"We are here for our loved ones, in their memory," he told AFP. — **AFP**

Hegseth touts a high-testosterone military as doctors question his claims

WASHINGTON: The Defence Department will test the testosterone levels of service members 30 and older, and offer voluntary testosterone replacement therapy to those with low testosterone levels, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth announced.

"We must constantly look for new ways to optimize your performance, your resilience and your long-term health," Hegseth said of the country's military in a video on X that was captioned "The High-T Department of War."

Hegseth's announcement Wednesday raised immediate questions about its impact on female troops, and how this new policy would be folded into the Pentagon's bigger focus on more rigorous fitness standards that critics have said are meant to eliminate women from combat roles.

Low testosterone levels have been linked to deployments, where poor sleep, high-stress environments and poor nutrition can take a toll, according to a 2020 study conducted by the Defense Department and

other institutions.

Hegseth's promotion of testosterone comes amid a broader embrace of the hormone and the contested idea, particularly among younger men, that maximizing testosterone levels can boost your health and fitness.

Some physicians and researchers questioned the move and said some of Hegseth's statements on testosterone Wednesday were not backed by research. Testosterone levels vary naturally over time, and it is unusual to screen patients for low testosterone unless there are symptoms, they said.

"This is non-evidence-based and could cause harm," said Adriane Fugh-Berman, a professor in the department of pharmacology and physiology at Georgetown University.

The testosterone test will be added to the Periodic Health Assessment that active-duty military personnel must complete annually, Hegseth said. Service members 30 and older will all be screened, and those under 30 can voluntarily take the test. — **THE WASHINGTON POST**