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BEYOND THE FUNERAL

What Ayatollah Khamenei's passing means for Iran & the Middle East



The eventual funeral of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei marks one of the most significant moments in the modern history of Iran and the wider Middle East. As the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic for more than three decades, his leadership has profoundly influenced Iran's political system, religious institutions, foreign policy and regional role. Whenever that moment arrives, it will represent not only the farewell to a prominent leader but also the beginning of a new chapter for the Iranian nation. Ayatollah Khamenei assumed the country's highest leadership position in 1989 during a period of considerable uncertainty. Over the years, he guided Iran through international sanctions, regional conflicts, economic pressures and changing global political dynamics. His supporters regard him as a steadfast defender of Iran's sovereignty, independence and revolutionary principles, crediting him with maintaining national resilience in the face of sustained external pressure. Others, however, have offered a different assessment. Critics have questioned aspects of his governance, including political restrictions, limitations on civil liberties and Iran's strained relations with several Western countries. These differing perspectives illustrate the complexity of his legacy, which will continue to be debated by historians, scholars and political analysts for generations. The passing of any long-serving national leader naturally prompts reflection beyond politics. It invites citizens to consider the institutions that endure beyond individuals and the values that shape a nation's future. In Iran's case, the constitutional mechanisms governing succession would become a central focus, attracting close attention from both domestic audiences and the international community. Leadership transitions in countries of regional significance often carry implications extending beyond national borders.

Iran occupies a strategic position in the Middle East, and its policies influence energy markets, regional security, diplomacy and international trade. Consequently, any future transition in Tehran would be closely monitored by neighbouring countries and global powers alike. At such moments, stability becomes the highest priority. Peaceful constitutional processes, institutional continuity and responsible leadership are essential for maintaining public confidence and regional security. Regardless of political viewpoints, transitions conducted through established legal and constitutional frameworks contribute to national stability and international confidence. The broader Middle East continues to face complex challenges, including armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, economic uncertainty and geopolitical rivalries. These realities underline the importance of diplomacy, dialogue and mutual respect among nations. Constructive engagement remains the most effective path toward reducing tensions and fostering long-term peace. Ultimately, the legacy of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei will likely be viewed through multiple lenses. Supporters will remember his commitment to preserving the ideals of the Islamic Republic and defending national sovereignty. Critics will continue to scrutinize policies they believe limited political openness or complicated Iran's international relationships. Both perspectives form part of the historical record. Whenever the era of Ayatollah Khamenei eventually concludes, it will serve as a reminder that the strength of any nation rests not solely on the leadership of one individual but on resilient institutions, national unity and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. The hope shared by many inside and outside Iran is that the country's future will be guided by stability, dialogue, prosperity and peaceful engagement with the wider world.

Ian Shepherd



City Montessori School, a benchmark of excellence in education



Lucknow's City Montessori School has earned a distinguished reputation as one of India's most respected educational institutions, recognized for its commitment to academic excellence, holistic development and value-based education. Established in 1959, the school has consistently set high standards in teaching, innovation and student achievement, making it a preferred choice for parents seeking quality education. Renowned for its disciplined learning environment, City Montessori School places equal emphasis on academic performance, character building and global citizenship.

The institution follows a comprehensive educational approach that encourages critical thinking, creativity, leadership and social responsibility alongside classroom learning. Its students regularly excel in national and international examinations, academic competitions, debates, science fairs and cultural activities. The school is also known for its highly qualified faculty, modern teaching methods and well-equipped campuses that provide students with access to advanced learning resources.

By integrating technology with traditional educational values, CMS prepares students to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive and interconnected world. Beyond academics, City Montessori School actively promotes peace education, environmental awareness, community service and international understanding. Through various educational conferences, exchange programmes and global initiatives, students are encouraged to develop a broader perspective and become responsible global citizens.

Over the decades, the institution has received numerous national and international recognitions for its contribution to education. Its unwavering focus on quality, discipline and continuous improvement has helped shape generations of successful professionals, scholars and leaders across diverse fields. With its strong emphasis on excellence, innovation and moral values, City Montessori School continues to serve as a benchmark for quality education, reinforcing its position as one of the country's leading educational institutions and an enduring symbol of academic distinction.



AYATOLLAH KHAMENEI'S FUNERAL

Global tribute to the martyred, a moment of mourning, diplomacy and regional signaling

BY MOHAMMAD TARQIUE SALEEM

The funeral of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, emerged as one of the most consequential political events in the country's modern history, extending far beyond the rituals of national mourning. The ceremony became a powerful display of Iran's domestic unity, diplomatic outreach, and institutional continuity during a period of heightened regional uncertainty. Millions of mourners filled the streets of Tehran, while high-level delegations from across the world attended the event, transforming it into a global geopolitical spectacle. The funeral reflected not only the legacy of a long-serving leader but also the Islamic Republic's determination to project resilience, stability, and enduring influence on the regional and international stage.

The funeral of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, if viewed through the lens of political analysis, represented far more than a state funeral. It evolved into a carefully observed geopolitical event that highlighted the intersection of domestic legitimacy, international diplomacy, ideological continuity, and regional power politics. The unprecedented gathering of millions of mourners alongside delegations from dozens of countries demonstrated that the occasion was not simply about commemorating an individual, but about reaffirming the resilience and strategic identity of the Islamic Republic at a time of heightened regional tensions.

The sheer scale of public participation carried significant political symbolism. For the Iranian establishment, the massive crowds projected an image of national unity despite years of economic sanctions, domestic pressures, and international isolation. In moments of political transition, public funerals often become demonstrations of collective identity, and Tehran appeared determined to present an image of continuity rather than uncertainty. Whether motivated by religious devotion, political conviction, patriotism, or a combination of these factors, the millions who filled the capital sent a message that the country's institutions remain deeply rooted in society.

Equally important was the international dimension of the ceremony. The arrival of presidents, parliamentary speakers, ministers, religious scholars, and political representatives from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East transformed the funeral into one of Iran's largest diplomatic gatherings in decades. The presence of senior officials from countries such as China, Iraq, Belarus, Bangladesh, and others reflected the breadth of Tehran's political



relationships despite persistent Western efforts to isolate the country.

China's high-level representation reaffirmed the strategic partnership that has steadily expanded in recent years through economic cooperation, energy agreements, and shared opposition to unilateral sanctions. Iraq's strong participation highlighted the depth of political, religious, and security ties between the two neighboring states. Meanwhile, delegations from countries across the Global South illustrated Iran's continued ability to cultivate diplomatic engagement beyond its immediate neighborhood.



The event also underscored Iran's emphasis on ideological leadership. Throughout his decades in power, Ayatollah Khamenei positioned Iran as a defender of resistance movements, national sovereignty, and opposition to foreign intervention. Many visiting officials and religious figures echoed these themes in their tributes, suggesting that his influence extended beyond Iran's borders into broader political and religious networks across the Middle East and beyond.

Domestically, the funeral served as an important display of institutional cohesion. President Masoud Pezeshkian, parliamentary leaders, senior judicial officials, military commanders, clerics, and members of key governing bodies appeared together in a carefully choreographed demonstration of state unity. Such symbolism carries particular importance during leadership transitions, reassuring both domestic audiences and foreign observers that governance structures remain intact.

The timing of the funeral, following the reported US-Israeli airstrike that killed Ayatollah Khamenei and other senior officials, further amplified its geopolitical significance. Rather than allowing the attack to project weakness, Iranian authorities used the ceremony to frame the deaths within the narrative of martyrdom, a concept deeply embedded in the country's revolutionary identity. This framing strengthens national solidarity while reinforcing Iran's longstanding political discourse of resistance.

Ultimately, the funeral marked not merely the end of one leader's era but the beginning of a new phase in Iran's political trajectory. It became a stage on which Iran projected resilience, diplomatic relevance, and institutional continuity. While regional dynamics may evolve in the coming years, the images from Tehran, millions of mourners alongside an extraordinary gathering of international dignitaries, will likely remain one of the defining political symbols of this historic transition, illustrating how state ceremonies can become powerful instruments of both domestic legitimacy and international messaging.



Brazilian cartoonist reflects on illustrating Iran's supreme leader



For more than three decades, Brazilian political cartoonist Carlos Latuff has used his pen to challenge dominant narratives surrounding the Middle East, particularly U.S. and Israeli policies. In an interview with the Tehran Times, Latuff described the assassination of Ayatollah Khamenei in coordinated U.S.-Israeli strikes as a defining moment that reinforced, rather than weakened, Iran's resolve. Latuff recalled learning of the news through social media, saying his immediate belief was that the attack would transform Ayatollah Khamenei into a martyr rather than intimidate the Iranian people. That conviction shaped his decision to focus his artwork on the Supreme Leader instead of the broader military assault. According to Latuff, Ayatollah Khamenei represented more than a political office; he symbolized the leadership and identity of an entire nation.

Reflecting on his decades-long career, Latuff said some cartoons evolve beyond satire to become historical documents. His illustrations on Iran, he argued, preserve an alternative perspective to what he believes is the dominant Western narrative. He accused mainstream Western media of applying a double standard in its coverage of Iran, describing it as "propaganda aimed at demonization" rather than impartial journalism. Latuff also linked the assassination to broader geopolitical trends, arguing that U.S. support has enabled increasingly aggressive Israeli policies under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu while shielding Israel from international accountability. He contrasted the sanctions imposed on Russia over Ukraine with what he described as the absence of comparable measures against Israel. When asked to produce one final illustration for the funeral period, Latuff said its message would be simple yet enduring: "A martyr never dies."

PM Modi inaugurates CG Semi OSAT facility in Sanand, boosting India's semiconductor mission



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the CG Semi Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facility in Sanand, Gujarat, marking another significant milestone in India's ambition to become a global semiconductor manufacturing hub. The state-of-the-art facility is expected to strengthen the country's electronics manufacturing ecosystem while reducing dependence on imported semiconductor components.

The CG Semi OSAT plant has been developed to undertake the assembly, testing, marking, and packaging of semiconductor chips before they are integrated into electronic devices. These processes represent a critical stage in the semiconductor value chain, ensuring that chips meet global quality standards before reaching industries such as consumer electronics, automotive, telecommunications, healthcare, and industrial automation.

Addressing the gathering during the inauguration, Prime Minister Modi described the facility as a symbol of India's technological progress and its commitment to building a self-reliant semiconductor ecosystem. He said that the country's semiconductor mission is not merely about manufacturing chips but about creating a complete value chain that includes design, fabrication, assembly, testing, packaging, research, innovation, and skilled manpower.

The Prime Minister highlighted that India's rapidly growing electronics sector, digital economy, and expanding demand for advanced technologies have created favourable conditions for semiconductor investments. He noted that the government's production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes and the India Semiconductor Mission have attracted both domestic and international companies to establish manufacturing facilities in the country.

Located in Sanand, one of Gujarat's fastest-growing industrial centres, the CG Semi facility is expected to generate thousands of direct and indirect employment opportunities. Besides creating high-skilled technical jobs, the project is likely to support the growth of ancillary industries, logistics services, equipment suppliers, and research institutions in the region.

Industry experts believe that OSAT facilities play an essential role in strengthening semiconductor supply chains because they bridge the gap between wafer fabrication and finished electronic products.

With increasing global demand for semiconductor chips and efforts by several countries to diversify supply chains, India's emergence as an OSAT destination could significantly enhance its competitiveness in the global electronics market. The inauguration also reflects Gujarat's growing prominence as a preferred destination for semiconductor investments. In recent years, the state has attracted several major projects in electronics, chip manufacturing, and related infrastructure, supported by its industrial policies, connectivity, and skilled workforce.

The CG Semi facility is expected to complement other semiconductor projects currently under development across India, contributing to the government's long-term objective of establishing a comprehensive semiconductor ecosystem. Analysts say that while chip fabrication remains capital-intensive and technologically complex, investments in OSAT facilities enable countries to quickly integrate into global semiconductor supply chains and build technical expertise.

The project is also expected to encourage collaboration between industry, academia, and research institutions, promoting innovation and workforce development in semiconductor technologies. Training programmes associated with the facility are likely to prepare engineers and technicians for future opportunities in advanced electronics manufacturing.

As global demand for semiconductors continues to rise with the expansion of artificial intelligence, electric vehicles, 5G networks, and smart devices, the inauguration of the CG Semi OSAT facility represents an important step in India's industrial transformation. The project underscores the country's determination to strengthen technological capabilities, attract high-value manufacturing investments, and establish itself as a trusted partner in the global semiconductor industry.



Puri Gajapati Maharaja seeks President, PM's intervention over ISKCON Rath Yatra dates

The Gajapati Maharaja of Puri and chairman of the Shree Jagannath Temple Managing Committee (SJTMC), Dibyasingha Deb, has appealed to President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene and prevent International Society for Krishna Consciousness from organising what he described as untimely Snan Yatra and Rath Yatra celebrations of Lord Jagannath in various countries. In separate letters sent on July 4, Deb alleged that ISKCON has repeatedly deviated from sacred scriptures and centuries-old Jagannath traditions despite repeated requests from the temple administration and the Odisha government. He said these deviations have hurt the religious sentiments of millions of devotees. The SJTMC is the apex policy-making body of the 12th-century Jagannath Temple. Deb urged the Centre to help preserve the sanctity of Jagannath traditions worldwide, noting that previous efforts over nearly two decades had failed to resolve the issue.

He had earlier raised the matter with Prime Minister Modi in October 2025 and President Murmu in April this year. The SJTMC has also decided to send a delegation to New Delhi to explain the importance of safeguarding Jagannath culture. According to Jagannath culture researcher Harekrushna Satpathy, the delegation will seek support for preserving traditional rituals. Deb maintained that scriptures prescribe Snan Yatra on Jyestha Poornima and Rath Yatra within the nine-day period beginning on Ashadha Shukla Paksha Dwitiya. While ISKCON follows these dates in India, he claimed that many celebrations abroad take place outside the prescribed period, violating established Sanatan Dharma traditions. He stressed that while Rath Yatra may be observed on different days within the permitted nine-day window, arbitrary scheduling is inconsistent with long-standing Jagannath customs.

Arab Americans celebrate 250th Independence Day with pride despite challenges







Arab American leaders are celebrating the 250th anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence with pride despite concerns over continued discrimination and misunderstanding. Leaders of several Arab and Muslim organizations told the media that they have more freedoms in the US than anywhere else, but continue to struggle against racism, stereotypes and discrimination. They said the tens of thousands of Arabs and Muslims who have served in the US military prove that the community is strongly patriotic.

"Arabs and Muslims are very proud to be American, and we enthusiastically are celebrating this amazing achievement of 250 years since the founding of this great nation, which has been welcoming to immigrants from throughout the world, including from the Middle East," Hassan Nijem, president of the American Arab Chamber of Commerce of Illinois, told the media. "Thousands of our people have served this nation in the military, defending it in every war dating back to the Civil War, sacrificing their lives to ensure our country's survival.

"Just because we also love and respect the countries of our origin, doesn't mean we must constantly prove our loyalty and patriotism. Unlike others, we don't serve in foreign militaries and pretend we're patriotic." Nijem cited the documented military service of Arabs and Muslims showcased at ArabWarVeterans.com, which the chamber co-sponsors. Azhar Azeez, CEO of the Islamic Society of North America, told the media: "America is a great nation … America is our motherland. We're very patriotic. We take great pride in calling ourselves Americans. "In spite of all the challenges we face, this is one of the best places for Muslims and Arabs to live, thrive and grow.

This is one of the best places for Muslims to practice their religion freely." He said while racism and bigotry cannot be ignored, the benefits of this nation have motivated the many contributions that Arabs have made to the US in every profession. "Most Americans are very tolerant. They hold pluralistic values in a big way and accommodate every faith group. The very basic foundation of this nation is that people came to this nation for religious freedom, so that can't be compromised," Azeez said.

However, he warned: "Today, certain bigots, hatemongers and racists are spreading fear because they see the growth and advancement of the American Muslim and Arab community." Safa Rifka, chairman of the board of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, told the media that the community is very proud to be American but discrimination "has increased on all fronts." Warren David, co-founder of the Arab America Foundation, said Arabs have made "remarkable progress" in overcoming challenges and being accepted.

"As America celebrates 250 years of independence, the question isn't whether Arab Americans belong, they've answered that through generations of military service and civic engagement. The question is whether our nation fully recognizes them as an integral part of the American story. That's the work still ahead," he told the media. "Winning elected office has become more achievable, as demonstrated by the growing number of Arab American mayors, legislators, members of Congress and other elected officials.

"Yet candidates often face unique challenges, including stereotypes, misinformation, and questions about their identity that other candidates rarely encounter." Laila Alhusini, founder and CEO of US Arab Radio, the largest Arabic-language radio network in North America, told the media: "A critical gap remains in community political awareness. Despite continuous and exhausting grassroots efforts to educate our community, voter turnout and full comprehension of the political system remain somewhat frustrating. "There's a frequent tendency to overlook the immense impact of local elections, including city councils, school boards and mayors, which directly shape daily life, in favor of focusing solely on the federal level."

Mohammed Jaber, a former board member of Chicago's Consolidated High School District 230, in which nearly 35 percent of the 7,500 students are Arab or Muslim, said Arab and Muslim families will be celebrating at picnics and at many of the region's Independence Day events. "We're very proud to be American Arab and American Muslim. Yes there are some challenges, but when we come together we can resolve them," he told the media. "We see the world changing, recognizing our community and our engagement in society, government, and at every level of American society growing positively for the benefit of the community and the country."

Germany & Japan are rearming again, 80 years after World War II

Germany and Japan are strengthening military cooperation as both nations respond to growing security concerns posed by China, Russia and uncertainty over future U.S. security commitments. Once defeated as Axis powers in World War II, the two countries are now rebuilding their armed forces while presenting themselves as defenders of the rules-based international order. Germany has sharply increased defence spending following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while Japan is expanding its military capabilities amid regional tensions with China and North Korea. Despite domestic debate over rearmament, both governments are seeking closer defence partnerships with like-minded nations beyond their traditional reliance on the United States.



Omani thinkers urge conscious reading to foster critical thinking and creativity



In a world of accelerating events and an unprecedented multiplication of information sources, the challenge is no longer access to knowledge, but the ability to understand it and distinguish what builds genuine awareness from what adds mere intellectual noise. Amid competing notifications, overlapping digital platforms, and shrinking distances between events and their reception, conscious reading has emerged as a vital tool for restoring intellectual balance, cultivating critical awareness, and reshaping the individual's relationship with knowledge.

This question takes on deeper significance amid the transformations of contemporary society, where knowledge is no longer simply accumulated information, but a means of shaping the self, forming consciousness, and building the capacity for understanding, analysis, and engagement with the world. A central question arises: how can reading restore human equilibrium in an age of rapid content consumption, particularly among young people?

Writer and cultural enthusiast Labeed bin Mubarak Al Amri argues that conscious reading is no longer a cultural choice but an existential necessity for recalibrating inner balance. Reading, he says, is not merely consuming texts, but an act of "internal engineering" that helps repair the soul and reshape the mind. When one reads, they do not simply store words, but build a mental library that serves as a roadmap for understanding themselves and the world.

The rapid pace of modern life, with its constant notifications and accelerating content, drives people toward intellectual superficiality and diminishes their capacity for reflection. Deep reading becomes a necessary practice to resist fragmentation. Thoughtful reading is not a withdrawal from reality but a deeper engagement with it. It grants individuals the ability to view events from a wider analytical distance, fostering understanding over reaction, and awareness over consumption. A deep reader imposes their own intellectual rhythm rather than having it imposed upon them.

The solitude that accompanies reading is not emptiness, but a fertile space for reflection and self-reconstruction — in contrast to the "digital alienation" experienced amid abundant connectivity yet scarce meaning. Al Amri notes that the rise in psychological disorders in the modern era is partly linked to the accelerating digital pace, suggesting that conscious reading could serve as one of the most important tools for psychological and intellectual balance.

Visual artist Sanaa Said Al Humaidi views reading as a fundamental pillar of human development and a strategic tool for building a knowledge society, aligned with Oman Vision 2040, which places human beings at the heart and purpose of development. Reading, she explains, is no longer merely a means of acquiring information but a civilisational practice that shapes individual and collective consciousness, building the intellectual and cultural capital needed to keep pace with rapid global change.

It develops critical thinking, enhances creative capacities, and produces knowledge that moves beyond reception to creation and impact. Establishing a reading culture among young people requires an integrated system: beginning with the family as the primary incubator of knowledge, extending to educational institutions that foster thinking and innovation, and reaching cultural and media institutions responsible for entrenching reading as a sustainable societal value.

Reading clubs, intellectual forums, cultural initiatives, and exhibitions help transform reading from an individual activity into a productive community movement. Her experience as a visual artist and researcher reinforces that reading is the primary source of creativity. Any successful artistic work, cultural project, or community initiative is preceded by an accumulation of knowledge that enriches the imagination and deepens vision. Reading is not the consumption of knowledge but its reproduction in more innovative forms. A conscious reader reshapes, develops, and applies ideas in reality.

Al Humaidi stresses moving from traditional reading to interactive reading based on analysis, reflection, and connecting knowledge to real-world contexts. She affirms that reading serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity, enhances Omani soft power, and helps showcase national cultural achievements regionally and internationally. Reading is a means of building individuals capable of thinking, creating, and shaping the future.

Hajer Ali Al Masfari shifts the dialogue toward reading's capacity to transform knowledge into behaviour and shape a value system that guides daily decisions. While the world experiences an unprecedented flow of information, this does not necessarily translate into higher understanding. The essential difference lies between those who consume information and those who transform it into genuine awareness.

Conscious reading distinguishes fleeting information from lasting knowledge. Fleeting information is consumed and forgotten quickly, while lasting knowledge becomes conviction and principle, reflected in behaviour. It is based on reflection and asking fundamental questions: What is the author trying to say? Do I agree? Why? How does this relate to my reality? This requires taking notes, connecting meanings, and rethinking texts.

A conscious reader seeks meaning rather than quantity, and reads for transformation rather than mere entertainment. Transforming knowledge into an internal compass helps develop a value system for sound decisions, emotional regulation, and constructive interactions. Different fields of reading produce different behaviours, ethics reading fosters fairness, biographies build perseverance. The greatest obstacles are digital distraction and consumption without application. True reading becomes impact, not merely stored information.

Qais Yousef Al Seyabi emphasises that reading is an active force in shaping consciousness. The quality of books chosen helps map thinking and acts as a "magnetic field" guiding the intellectual compass, especially when following a clear plan rather than randomness. Random reading broadens horizons but often remains surface-level. Systematic reading builds a solid foundation, enhances analysis, and supports specialisation.

Setting reading goals directly affects comprehension quality and the ability to engage in discussion and form well-grounded opinions. It provides a broader linguistic foundation and enhances objectivity. A reader who consciously charts their path becomes more independent in thought and capable of building convictions based on understanding rather than fleeting influences.

How 140 new laws are redefining the nation's future

For decades, Kuwait has been recognized as a nation blessed with vast natural resources, a strategic geographic position and considerable financial strength. However, unlike some of its Gulf neighbours that pursued rapid economic transformations through mega-projects and sweeping policy announcements, Kuwait followed a more cautious path shaped by institutional oversight, parliamentary scrutiny and consensus-driven decision-making.

Today, that measured approach is producing visible results. In less than a year since launching one of the most ambitious legislative modernization programmes in its history, Kuwait has converted more than 140 decrees and new laws from policy initiatives into enforceable legislation. These reforms are reshaping the country's legal, economic and social environment, covering areas ranging from investment and finance to family protection, public safety, justice, housing and digital commerce.

Individually, each law addresses a specific national challenge. Together, they represent one of Kuwait's most comprehensive governance transformations in recent decades — an effort aimed at building a modern state capable of supporting sustainable economic growth while improving living standards for citizens and residents.

Since August last year, the Official Gazette Kuwait Today has published around 140 decrees by law, including amendments to existing legislation and entirely new legal frameworks designed to meet contemporary economic and social requirements. The central objective is aligned with Kuwait Vision 2035: creating a transparent, competitive and investment-friendly economy supported by strong institutions and effective governance.

Unlike reform programmes focused only on attracting foreign capital, Kuwait's approach recognizes that sustainable economic development depends on the strength of institutions, public confidence and a reliable legal environment. Economic competitiveness begins with a stable society. One of the most significant reforms has been the introduction of the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence, which came into effect in March.

The legislation strengthens mechanisms for protecting families while introducing procedures for mediation and reconciliation where appropriate. Official figures indicate that domestic violence cases registered with the Public Prosecution declined by 33 percent during the first three months after implementation, dropping from 486 cases to 328.

The reform reflects a balanced approach, encouraging reconciliation in suitable circumstances while maintaining strict criminal penalties for serious offences involving abuse, violence against children and vulnerable individuals. Such measures demonstrate that social protection is not separate from economic development; rather, it creates the stability and confidence required for long-term progress.

Among the most impactful reforms has been Kuwait's updated anti-drug legislation. Decree Law No. 159 of 2025 introduced stricter penalties against trafficking networks while expanding opportunities for addiction treatment and rehabilitation.



According to official figures, drug trafficking into Kuwait has declined significantly since the law's introduction. Security agencies have reported major reductions in trafficking cases, while increased enforcement has disrupted illegal supply networks. The legislation combines firm action against criminal organizations with a humanitarian focus on rehabilitation. Increased requests for addiction treatment indicate growing public confidence in confidential support programmes.

This dual approach, strong enforcement and public health support, represents a modern strategy for tackling one of society's most complex challenges. Traffic safety has long been a major public concern in Kuwait. The revised Traffic Law introduced tougher penalties for dangerous driving practices, including excessive speeding, ignoring traffic signals, mobile phone use while driving and failure to wear seat belts.

The impact has been immediate. Authorities have recorded substantial declines in traffic violations, including reductions in speeding and red-light offences. Most importantly, road fatalities have fallen significantly following the implementation of stricter regulations. Beyond saving lives, safer roads contribute to economic productivity by reducing healthcare costs, improving mobility and enhancing overall quality of life.

A strong judiciary is essential for investor confidence and economic growth. Kuwait's amendments to the Civil and Commercial Procedures Law and Criminal Procedures Law aim to reduce delays, improve efficiency and strengthen judicial performance. The reforms have already contributed to a decline in pending court cases, including a notable reduction in cases before the Court of Cassation.

Further judicial improvements include restructuring the Juvenile Court system. Appeals against juvenile judgments will now be reviewed through specialized judicial chambers, improving consistency, strengthening protections for minors and accelerating legal procedures. A faster and more efficient justice system provides businesses with greater confidence in contract enforcement and dispute resolution. Alongside social and judicial reforms, Kuwait has intensified efforts to stimulate private-sector growth and attract investment.

The implementation of the Real Estate Developer Law represents a major step toward modernizing the housing sector. The government plans to involve qualified developers in large-scale housing projects involving thousands of residential units across areas such as Al-Mutlaa, Saad Al-Abdullah and Jaber Al-Ahmad. The initiative is expected to increase housing supply, encourage private-sector participation and generate new economic opportunities.

Kuwait is also developing legislation to support a modern digital economy. Proposed e-commerce regulations aim to strengthen consumer protection, safeguard personal data and encourage technological innovation. New rules related to multinational taxation are designed to align Kuwait with international standards, providing greater clarity and confidence for global investors. These reforms recognize that competitiveness in the modern economy depends not only on infrastructure but also on digital readiness and regulatory transparency.

Kuwait has introduced stronger measures to improve transparency in financial and real estate transactions. Requiring property deals to move through traceable banking channels enhances accountability and supports international compliance standards. The restoration of the Public Debt Law further strengthens Kuwait's financial flexibility by allowing greater access to international capital markets for strategic development projects.

Combined with reforms in public-private partnerships, investment regulations and infrastructure development, these measures strengthen Kuwait's ability to pursue sustainable growth. Kuwait's transformation may not be defined by futuristic landmarks or headline-grabbing mega-projects. Instead, the country is focusing on something more fundamental: institution-building. Reliable laws, efficient courts, safer communities, transparent regulations and responsible financial management form the foundation of a successful modern economy.

Uzbekistan expands investment in Afghanistan with focus on mining, railways and agriculture



Currently, Kabul and Tashkent enjoy stronger economic relations than ever before, alongside their political ties. Since the rise of the Islamic Emirate in the 1990s, relations between Uzbekistan and the Islamic Emirate have gone through various phases. Like other countries around the world, Afghanistan-Uzbekistan relations have also been influenced by political developments, experiencing both positive and negative phases over time. Currently, Kabul and Tashkent enjoy stronger economic relations than ever before, alongside their political ties.

During the first rule of the Islamic Emirate, Uzbekistan expressed dissatisfaction with the situation. Tashkent believed that some of its opponents, such as Qari Tahir Jan Yuldash, Jumma Namangani, and other Uzbek dissidents, were among the ranks of the Islamic Emirate. As a result, Uzbekistan felt threatened and, in response, closed its only trade route with Afghanistan, Hairatan Port, to all forms of travel and trade. After the US invasion of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan weakened and reduced its ties with the Islamic Emirate.

However, in the second decade of the 21st century, with the establishment of the Islamic Emirate's political office in Qatar, Uzbekistan once again initiated diplomatic relations with the Islamic Emirate. Uzbekistan's special presidential envoys regularly met with officials from the political office of the Islamic Emirate in Qatar, and members of the Islamic Emirate's political leadership also made occasional visits to Uzbekistan. After the fall of Kabul, Uzbekistan was one of the first countries to accept the Islamic Emirate's ambassador, expanding its relations with the new government, especially in the economic sector.

These ties reached new levels with high-ranking visits between the two countries. On August 17, 2024, Abdulla Aripov, the prime minister of Uzbekistan, along with several ministers and technical teams, visited Kabul. He held discussions with senior officials of the Islamic Emirate on political and economic issues, and several agreements were signed. Following this visit, and at the official invitation of the Uzbek Prime Minister, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund, deputy economic chief of the prime minister's office, led a high-level delegation, including several ministers, on a two-day visit to Uzbekistan on February 22.

This visit was particularly significant as the delegation of the Islamic Emirate officially participated in formal meetings under its own flag and was recognized as an official representative by the host country. Afghanistan possesses vast mineral reserves and rare elements that form the foundation of modern industries worldwide. Because of this, the region and global powers are increasingly focused on Afghanistan's resources. Uzbekistan expressed its keen interest in investing in Afghanistan's mining sector, particularly in iron extraction.

The officials of the Islamic Emirate also assured full cooperation in this area. Uzbekistan needs to sell electricity, and Afghanistan is one of its major buyers. During this visit, both sides emphasized the urgent implementation of the 500 kV power transmission project from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan. Uzbekistan pledged to start the project within ten days of signing the agreement. It is noteworthy that all documents related to this project have already been finalized by Afghanistan and sent to Uzbekistan for final review.

Trade volume between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan has significantly increased in recent years. In this visit, besides other topics, the two sides discussed creating a balance in bilateral trade. The Islamic Emirate's delegation encouraged Uzbekistan to increase purchases of Afghan agricultural and industrial products to help establish a more balanced trade relationship. The Uzbek side agreed and stated that a preferential trade agreement would soon be signed between the two countries to address this issue.

In discussions between the officials of the two countries, the importance of establishing a joint market inside Afghanistan, similar to the Termez trade hub in Uzbekistan, was emphasized. This initiative would facilitate easier access for buyers to products from both countries and help create new business opportunities. Islamic Emirate's Plan for Expanding the Railway Network and Strengthening Economic Cooperation with Uzbekistan

The Islamic Emirate plans to expand its railway network from Hairatan to Herat and from there to Kandahar and Spin Boldak. This will connect Central Asia with South Asia, while also linking Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and Pakistan. According to preliminary research, this new railway route is more cost-effective and shorter than the Afghan-Trans railway network, which starts from Hairatan, passes through central provinces, and connects to Pakistan in the Kharlachi area of Paktia province.

The "Afghan-Trans" route requires numerous tunnels due to its mountainous terrain, making implementation costly and time-consuming. In contrast, the new railway route passing through Afghanistan's northern provinces primarily crosses flat land, making it easier to construct. Survey and design work for the Herat-Kandahar phase of the project began in February. During the recent visit of the Deputy Economic Chief of the Prime Minister's Office to Uzbekistan, the Uzbek government committed to sending its technical team to Afghanistan to survey and implement the Hairatan-Herat phase at its own expense.

Afghanistan has long relied on trade routes through Iran and Pakistan for its imports and exports, with most of its commercial goods transported via these countries' sea routes to China. Some neighboring countries have used Afghanistan's trade dependency as a political tool. For example, during harvest seasons, some nations have blocked trade routes, causing Afghan farmers to suffer millions of dollars in losses. This railway project is part of a broader plan to connect Afghanistan with China and Russia via Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The new railway will reduce Afghanistan's dependence on Iran and Pakistan while offering a faster and more cost-effective trade route.

Currently, Afghan goods transported through Iran and Pakistan take at least 40 days to reach China, whereas the new route will cut this down to 12–15 days. Additionally, transportation costs will be reduced by 15–20%. Given its strategic importance, this railway project was one of the most critical topics discussed during the recent visit of the Islamic Emirate's delegation to Uzbekistan. During the visit, Uzbekistan requested land for agricultural investment in Afghanistan. The northern regions of Afghanistan contain vast, fertile lands irrigated by the Qosh Tepa Canal.

Officials of the Islamic Emirate expressed readiness to allocate land to Uzbekistan to attract investment and strengthen economic ties. It is still unclear what crops Uzbekistan plans to cultivate in these lands, but given the country's interest in agricultural investments, it is likely that Uzbekistan will grow cotton or alfalfa for its textile industry. These crops not only meet Uzbekistan's industrial demands but also serve as an alternative to poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. According to available information, Uzbekistan processes alfalfa for its own use and exports it to major markets in India.

UN human rights investigators begin work in Lebanon in 'first of its kind' mission



A team of UN human rights investigators is on the ground in Lebanon collecting evidence on violations committed by all parties to the conflict since March 2, after Beirut granted guarantees for the mission's deployment, a spokesman for the UN Human Rights Office told Arab Times. "Our team is currently working in Lebanon after having received the necessary guarantees from the government of Lebanon," OHCHR spokesman Thameen Al-Kheetan said. "Their work entails interviews with victims of human rights violations, witnesses, civil society representatives, human rights defenders and other relevant actors."

The mission, whose deployment was announced by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk on June 10, will seek access to areas hit by hostilities on both sides of the Lebanese-Israeli border, Al-Kheetan said, adding that "the security and safety of our team and our interlocutors are obviously paramount." Speaking to reporters in Geneva when he announced the mission, Turk called it a first for his office.

"It's the first time that we are sending this assessment mission, and the idea is, indeed, to look at violations by all parties, violations of international law, violations of international human rights law, and to document this, and eventually to report back to you on our findings," he said. In a statement issued the same day, Turk said that accountability "cannot be overstated," calling for "prompt and independent investigations into alleged violations." Al-Kheetan said the mission was conducted "upon agreement between the UN Human Rights Office and the government of Lebanon, which agreed to provide appropriate guarantees for its deployment."

He added that the team "will seek to collect information and evidence on alleged violations and abuses by all parties and will therefore seek access to victims on all sides of the conflict." The mission follows weeks of engagement between Beirut and Geneva. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam told a Cabinet meeting in May that it was important to continue documenting potential crimes and submit them to the UN. An OHCHR report published in April on deaths and displacement during the first three weeks of the escalation had already documented violations.

It found that Israeli operations "involved cases of direct attacks on civilians, including medical personnel," and documented incidents in which strikes "hit, and in some cases levelled, multi-story residential buildings, killing entire families." The report said such strikes "may constitute serious violations of international humanitarian law," and that in many cases "no warnings, or no reasonably effective warnings, were given, preventing many civilians from evacuating safely."

It also documented Hezbollah firing what it described as unguided rockets into Israeli residential areas, damaging buildings and other civilian infrastructure, attacks it likewise said may amount to serious violations of international humanitarian law. The death toll in the conflict continues to climb even as the situation shows signs of easing. The Lebanese Ministry of Public Health has recorded at least 3,798 people killed and 11,781 injured since March 2. Attacks on healthcare have been a recurring feature of the conflict.

The World Health Organization's surveillance system has recorded at least 203 attacks affecting healthcare in Lebanon since March 2, resulting in 135 deaths and 394 injuries among on-duty medical workers, with hospitals including Tebnine Governmental Hospital and Hiram Hospital in Tyre struck multiple times over the course of the war. Journalists have also been targeted. Lebanese journalist Amal Khalil was killed and photographer Zeinab Faraj wounded in an Israeli strike in south Lebanon.

At the height of the escalation, more than a million people were displaced nationwide, with tens of thousands sheltering in overcrowded collective shelters, schools, and open spaces across Beirut, Mount Lebanon, the South and Nabatieh governorates. Al-Kheetan made clear the assessment mission will not pursue prosecutions. "Our office conducts human rights investigations. It does not carry out criminal investigations," he said.

Information gathered will instead be "carefully and securely preserved" so it "can then be requested by future accountability processes, meeting international standards." He said the mission's existence "does not absolve the parties to the conflict of their own responsibilities under international law to carry out investigations of alleged violations and ensure accountability."

Adding that judicial and non-judicial accountability mechanisms remain "an essential part of the effective remedies that victims of serious violations are owed under international law." Al-Kheetan said the team will be in Lebanon for several months to collect information that will subsequently have to be "rigorously assessed and analyzed" before findings and conclusions are reflected in a report. The timeline "will depend significantly on the extent and kinds of information collected and requiring analysis," he said.

From Industry Experience to Entrepreneurial Vision The Journey of Feeroz Alam



In the dynamic and fast-evolving world of food, hospitality, and global trading, success is often shaped by years of experience, cross-border exposure, and a deep understanding of customer expectations. Few journeys reflect this evolution as clearly as that of Feeroz Alam, Founder of Foodco Gourmet General Trading, Selecta Global Trading, and Butcher & Steak.

Building Foundations in the Food and Hospitality Industry

Feeroz Alam's professional journey began in the food and hospitality sector, where he gradually developed a strong understanding of how the industry operates at its core. Over the years, he worked across different countries and diverse business environments, gaining valuable exposure to international markets, operational standards, and service expectations.

This global experience helped him build a practical understanding of how food supply chains, hospitality services, and client requirements differ across regions, particularly within the GCC market.

Commitment to Excellence and Service Quality

Throughout his career, Alam contributed significantly at the organizational level, particularly in areas related to service excellence, product development, and client support. His professional approach has consistently been guided by a simple principle — delivering quality, consistency, and trust in every engagement.

Customer satisfaction, he believes, is not just a metric but a responsibility that defines long-term business success.

Understanding the GCC Market Landscape

Working closely within the GCC region allowed him to gain deeper insights into the rapidly evolving hospitality, catering, and aviation catering sectors. He observed how these industries are becoming increasingly interconnected, driven by globalization, operational efficiency, and rising service expectations.

This experience enabled him to identify key market opportunities, operational gaps, and areas where innovation and better execution could add significant value.

From Experience to Enterprise

After nearly 15 to 20 years of industry experience and learning, Feeroz Alam reached a defining moment in his professional journey — the decision to establish his own business vision.

With a strong foundation built on practical knowledge and international exposure, he transitioned from operational roles to entrepreneurship, aiming to make independent strategic decisions and build enterprises aligned with his long-term understanding of the industry.

Establishing a Business Vision

This vision has now materialized into three business entities:

* Foodco Gourmet General Trading
* Selecta Global Trading
* Butcher & Steak

Together, these companies represent the culmination of years of experience, market understanding, and industry insight gained throughout his professional journey.

A Journey That Has Just Begun

What once started as a learning experience in the food and hospitality industry has now evolved into a fully established business ecosystem. With the companies already in place, the focus now shifts toward growth, expansion, and long-term impact.

For Feeroz Alam, this is not the end of a journey — but the beginning of a larger vision to build something meaningful, sustainable, and globally competitive.

UK-India trade deal set to transform bilateral economic ties from July 15



After more than three years of negotiations, the United Kingdom and India are poised to implement their most significant post-Brexit economic partnership. From 15 July, the UK-India Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) and the accompanying Double Contribution Convention (DCC) will officially come into force, marking a new chapter in bilateral relations between two of the world's fastest-growing economies. Described by both governments as a landmark agreement, the deal extends beyond conventional trade by promoting investment, innovation, technology cooperation and easier business engagement.

The agreement was reinforced during discussions in London between the UK's Secretary of State for Business and Trade, Peter Kyle, and India's Commerce and Industry Minister, Piyush Goyal, who reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening economic and strategic cooperation. Speaking about the agreement, Peter Kyle said its impact would be felt by businesses and consumers alike.

One of the most immediate benefits will be the removal of tariffs across a broad range of products, making trade more competitive while expanding market access for exporters in both countries. The automotive industry illustrates the agreement's potential. Britain is expected to benefit from India's growing demand for premium vehicles, while UK consumers could gain access to more affordable cars manufactured in India.

According to Kyle, the deal creates a mutually beneficial environment where manufacturers can expand sales while consumers enjoy greater product choice and better prices. The agreement also promises significant opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), startups and businesses led by the Indian diaspora. Governments on both sides plan to digitise trade procedures, reduce paperwork and simplify customs processes, making cross-border commerce faster and less expensive.

Stronger intellectual property protections are expected to encourage innovation and provide greater confidence for companies expanding internationally. A key component of the package is the Double Contribution Convention, designed to eliminate duplicate social security payments for employees on temporary overseas assignments. Under the arrangement, eligible workers and their employers will contribute only to their home country's social security system for up to five years, instead of paying into both systems simultaneously.

The provision is expected to generate substantial savings for Indian businesses and professionals working temporarily in the UK while reducing administrative costs for employers. Kyle clarified that the DCC is a standard feature found in many international trade agreements and should not be viewed as a broader social security reform. Similar arrangements already exist between the UK and countries such as Canada and Japan, while India has comparable agreements with several of its trading partners.

On the issue of labour mobility, Kyle emphasised that the trade agreement does not alter existing immigration policies. Instead, it focuses on improving the movement of goods and services. Existing visa arrangements and professional mobility frameworks between the two countries will remain unchanged, although the agreement includes provisions that simplify temporary entry for business visitors, intra-company transferees and selected professionals.

Beyond trade, the agreement reflects the expanding strategic partnership between the UK and India. Both countries are already collaborating in defence, critical minerals, science and technology, and diplomacy. Kyle expressed confidence that the strong working relationship between the two governments would create further opportunities for cooperation in emerging sectors as global economic conditions continue to evolve.



India to Supply BrahMos, Astra Missiles to Indonesia as Defence ties deepen

India and Indonesia have significantly strengthened their strategic partnership with New Delhi agreeing to supply the BrahMos cruise missile system and Astra air-to-air missiles to Indonesia during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to the Southeast Asian nation. Modi held wide-ranging talks with Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto in Jakarta, focusing on defence, trade, maritime security and technology cooperation.

India-Russia joint venture BrahMos Aerospace signed a contract with Indonesia's Defence Ministry for the BrahMos missile system, while India's Bharat Dynamics Limited signed an agreement with Indonesia's Republikorp for cooperation on Astra air-to-air missiles. Although financial details were not disclosed, earlier reports estimated the BrahMos deal to be worth between $200 million and $350 million.

The two nations also signed agreements to strengthen supply chains for critical minerals and steel, agriculture, and maritime cooperation. Steel Authority of India Limited and Krakatau Steel will establish a joint venture to manufacture stainless steel slabs in Indonesia. They also agreed to accelerate negotiations on a preferential trade agreement and jointly develop the strategically located Sabang Port.

During the visit, Modi was conferred Indonesia's highest civilian honour, the Bintang Adipurna of the Republic of Indonesia, in recognition of his contribution to strengthening bilateral ties. He dedicated the award to the people of India and described the expanding India-Indonesia partnership as the beginning of a "golden chapter" in relations between the two democracies.

- Mr. Walid Kunafa:



A global name in the hotel and events industry, specializing in increasing sales for companies, restaurants, hotels, real estate offices, transaction processing offices, and general stores in the UAE through his company, Mr. Walid Kunafa Marketing Management, based in Dubai and the Arab world.

- If you intend to increase profits, production, or operations in your restaurant, company, or office, you should contact Mr. Walid Kunafa Marketing Management in the UAE.

- Mr. Walid kunafa owns a marketing management company in the UAE and is the owner of Lux Media Production for film production and distribution.

- He also serves as the General Manager of the MR KUNAFA SWEETS brand for Turkish sweets in Dubai, a renowned outlet specializing in Turkish and Arabic baklava, Nabulsi knafeh, Turkish delight, dragees, and all types of Turkish tea.

- WALID SHELIWA , better known as Mr. WALID KUNAFA, is a well-known public figure and influencer in the hospitality sector, boasting over two decades of comprehensive experience that goes beyond mere expertise. Born to an Egyptian father and a Turkish mother, Waleed is married to Iranian fashion designer Samira Hosseini. Fluent in 6 languages, his diverse background enriches his perspective. Currently holding a prestigious position as General Manager of an international group based in Dubai, Walid's journey is nothing short of remarkable.

Early Passion Turns into a Thriving Career
Walid Sheliwa's passion for the restaurant and hospitality industry ignited in his early years, leading to an unwavering commitment to the sector. Eventually, he decided to embark on a small business venture that would set him on the path to success. Throughout his rise, Waleed has firmly believed in the values of perseverance and hard work.

- From Italy to Dubai: A Global Journey
His journey began in 2004 in Italy, where he honed his skills at Stefano's restaurants. After gaining invaluable experience in Italy, he moved to Dubai in 2010, where he has since become a prominent figure.

- From Italy to Dubai: A Global Journey A Legacy of Successful Ventures
Walid Chliwa boasts an impressive portfolio of international restaurant openings and projects in Dubai, UAE. His notable establishments include Stefanos Italian Restaurant, Zahrat Al-Laymoun Lebanese Restaurant, Emirgan Sutis Turkish Restaurant, Tayba Restaurants Management Group, and Mr. Kunafa Sweets, encompassing over 16 international restaurants in Dubai. He has also been recognized for his pivotal role in the successful launch of the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel.

- An Inspiring Vision for the Future:

In a candid discussion, Walid Chliwa shared insightful perspectives on his professional philosophy and his outlook for the future of the restaurant industry. “My journey, though long, has been rooted in a commitment to fostering a culture of excellence. Ambition and a relentless pursuit of knowledge have been my guiding lights.”

Embracing Technology and Innovation
Regarding the future of the industry, Walid emphasized the fundamental role of technology and innovation. "Continuous evolution and innovation are my guiding principles. In my restaurants, customers can expect a new experience every time. While I specialize in authentic Italian and Turkish cuisine, innovation has never been relegated to the background."

Innovative New Ideas
Walid Shlewa is dedicated to introducing groundbreaking concepts to the global restaurant industry in Dubai. His vision includes expanding the existing Mr. Kunafa Turkish restaurant chain.

- If you intend to increase profits, production, or operations in your restaurant, company, or office, you should contact Mr. Walid Kunafa Marketing Management in the UAE.

Contact us through the following social media pages or WhatsApp:

Social Media
(MR WALID KUNAFA)

TikTok
https://www.tiktok.com/@walidmrkunafa

Instagram
https://www.instagram.com/walidmrkunafa

In the West Bank, Israeli settlers take over Palestinian's dream home



JALUD, West Bank : Palestinian Mohammad Salameh was building a home for his family in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where his recently engaged son was meant to start married life. Instead, before construction was complete, a group of Israeli settlers seized the property.

Video filmed earlier in the week and verified by Reuters showed at least six settlers moving around on the roof of the two-story house, which sits below a nearby hill. Salameh said appeals to the Israeli military and police brought no help.

Now he fears his home, which like many others in the Palestinian territory is surrounded by Israeli settlements and smaller outposts, is lost forever. Other houses in the area could suffer the same fate, he said. "Only God knows, if there is law and order then they will leave," Salameh said. "If they succeeded with taking one, then the rest will follow." Reuters was unable to reach the settlers for comment. One of them could be seen walking on the house's roof on recently.

Israeli military said it received a report regarding the house earlier this week and that "soldiers arrived to the area and quickly acted to disperse the gathering." It did not comment on the settlers' continued presence in the house. The military said law enforcement regarding actions by Israeli settlers in the West Bank is the responsibility of Israel's police, which did not respond to a request for comment. The seizure of Palestinian land by settlers is a longstanding feature of life in the West Bank, where about 500,000 Israelis live among roughly 3 million Palestinians.

Palestinians have for years reported damage to farmland, vandalism and attacks linked to settlement expansion. A UN inquiry reported last month that Israeli settler attacks on Palestinian villages and agricultural land had surged since 2023, rising by 130 percent. Residents of Jalud, Salameh's village, say this week's incident marks another troubling escalation because the settlers seized a house that was still under construction. "They have now moved down to within no more than 100 meters from the last house in Jalud, which is also a house under construction belonging to a resident," said Raed Al-Hajj Mohammad, head of the village council.

Jalud has faced five major settler attacks, he said, including the burning of homes, damage to vehicles and the uprooting of trees. Most countries and the United Nations regard Israeli settlements in the West Bank as illegal under international law, citing the Fourth Geneva Convention's prohibition on transferring a civilian population into occupied territory. Israel rejects that position, saying the West Bank is disputed territory where there has been a Jewish presence for thousands of years. Palestinians consider the West Bank, together with Gaza and East Jerusalem, as part of a Palestinian state.

Settlement building and settler violence have long been among the biggest obstacles to peace efforts between Israel and the Palestinians. Even Israel's staunchest allies, including the United States, have condemned settler actions. Nevertheless, settlement expansion has accelerated under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, which relies on hard-line pro-settlement parties to maintain its parliamentary majority. For Salameh, the dispute is painfully personal. Construction on the house stalled after the Gaza war erupted in 2023, when his son could not find work and the family's finances came under strain. "The neighbor close by has built a two-story house, which they will probably take too, if we lose this house (his) they will lose theirs," he said.

Qatar strongly condemns targeting of Saudi oil tanker 'Wedyan'

Qatar has strongly condemned the targeting of the Saudi oil tanker Wedyan while it was transiting the Strait of Hormuz, describing the incident as a serious violation of international maritime safety and a direct threat to global energy security. In a statement issued recently, Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar said the attack represents a dangerous escalation that threatens regional peace and stability, undermines international navigation, and jeopardises global energy supplies. The ministry warned that continued attacks in the strategic waterway could reverse recent progress achieved through the Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Iran aimed at reducing tensions and strengthening maritime security.



Qatar urged Iran to immediately halt any actions that could endanger regional security, international shipping, and the uninterrupted flow of energy supplies. It also called on Tehran to fully comply with international law and United Nations Security Council Resolution 2817, while taking urgent measures to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. Reaffirming its commitment to regional stability, Qatar stressed the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation in one of the world's busiest maritime routes and called for collective efforts to preserve peace, protect global trade, and ensure the security of international energy corridors.

UAE-Based Entrepreneur Muhammad Nabeel Shahid Expands Regional Agricultural Trade Through Global Bridge Enterprises



Dubai: Muhammad Nabeel Shahid, Founder and CEO of Global Bridge Enterprises FZ-LLC, is strengthening the UAE's position as a regional hub for agricultural trade by developing cross-border supply chain solutions that connect producers with markets across the Gulf and South Asia.

Headquartered in the UAE, Global Bridge Enterprises FZ-LLC specializes in the international trading of agricultural commodities, with a particular emphasis on sourcing and distributing fresh produce. The company has established a strong presence in the regional market, focusing primarily on the export of premium-quality Pakistani potatoes while supporting efficient and reliable supply chain operations.

With more than five years of experience in international trade, Shahid has overseen the company's expansion into key markets, including the UAE, Oman, Qatar, and Sri Lanka. His leadership has been centered on building long-term business partnerships, maintaining consistent product quality, and ensuring timely logistics to meet the evolving demands of regional buyers.

Operating in an increasingly competitive agricultural sector, Global Bridge Enterprises has positioned itself as a trusted trading partner by emphasizing transparency, dependable sourcing, and customer-focused service. The company's business model reflects the growing demand for integrated supply chain solutions that facilitate the movement of fresh agricultural products across international markets.

Looking ahead, Shahid aims to further expand the company's footprint throughout the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) while strengthening its international network. His long-term vision is to establish Global Bridge Enterprises among the region's leading agricultural trading companies by investing in quality sourcing, operational efficiency, and sustainable commercial relationships.

As food security and supply chain resilience continue to remain strategic priorities across the Gulf, businesses such as Global Bridge Enterprises are contributing to stronger regional trade connectivity and supporting the uninterrupted flow of essential agricultural commodities.

AT 53 AKHILESH YADAV'S NEXT CHAPTER

Shaping the future of progressive politics in Uttar Pradesh



In contemporary Indian politics, where instant outrage often replaces long-term vision and spectacle is mistaken for leadership, longevity is measured not merely by electoral victories but by the ability to remain politically relevant across changing public moods. On the birthday of Samajwadi Party chief and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, it is worth examining not the milestones of his political career, but the distinct political grammar he has attempted to introduce into one of India's most fiercely contested states.

Akhilesh Yadav inherited a legacy, but inheritance has never guaranteed permanence in democratic politics. The challenge before him was not simply to succeed his father, but to redefine a party rooted in traditional social coalitions for an India increasingly driven by aspirations, technology, and demographic change. His political journey has therefore been less about preserving an old identity and more about negotiating between continuity and reinvention.

Unlike many contemporary leaders who thrive on ideological absolutism, Akhilesh's politics has often revolved around the language of governance. During his tenure as Chief Minister, infrastructure emerged not merely as a development slogan but as a political statement. Expressways, metro rail projects, modern hospitals, IT initiatives, and urban renewal reflected an attempt to reposition Uttar Pradesh from being viewed solely through the lens of caste arithmetic to becoming part of India's developmental conversation.

Yet governance alone does not define his political significance today. Perhaps his greatest strength lies in his ability to adapt without abandoning the ideological foundation of social justice. While the vocabulary of Indian politics has changed dramatically over the past decade, Akhilesh has gradually expanded the Samajwadi Party's appeal beyond its conventional support base, speaking simultaneously to farmers, students, youth, women, entrepreneurs, and marginalized communities. This broadening of political communication has allowed the party to remain competitive despite operating against a formidable electoral machine.

His critics frequently describe him as measured, even understated. Ironically, these very qualities distinguish him in an era dominated by aggressive political theatre. Akhilesh rarely seeks to dominate every news cycle; instead, he has increasingly relied on sustained public engagement, data-driven criticism of governance, and issue-based campaigns centred on unemployment, inflation, education, healthcare, reservation, and constitutional values. Whether one agrees with his politics or not, this approach reflects confidence in democratic debate rather than dependence on perpetual confrontation.

The evolving image of Akhilesh Yadav is also closely tied to generational transition. Millions of first-time voters have little memory of the political battles that shaped Uttar Pradesh in the 1990s, when his father late Mulayam Singh Yadav was the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh. Their expectations are defined less by identity politics alone and more by employment opportunities, digital access, quality education, environmental sustainability, and urban mobility. Recognizing this shift, Akhilesh has increasingly framed politics through the language of future possibilities rather than historical grievances.

As Uttar Pradesh prepares for another phase of political competition, his role extends beyond that of an opposition leader. He represents one of the few regional leaders attempting to reconcile welfare politics with economic modernisation, social justice with technological progress, and regional identity with national aspirations. Birthdays in politics are rarely about personal celebration; they invite reflection on leadership and direction.

US legal experts expect Court to approve dismissal of Gautam Adani criminal case



US legal experts believe it would be highly unusual for a federal court to reject the United States Department of Justice's request to dismiss the criminal case against Indian billionaire Gautam Adani. Under Rule 48(a) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, prosecutors must obtain court approval to withdraw charges, but legal experts say judges rarely compel the government to pursue a case it no longer wishes to prosecute.

The Justice Department recently submitted a detailed 10-page filing to the court, arguing that the case should be dismissed because the alleged conduct occurred primarily in India, involved foreign nationals, presented significant evidentiary challenges, and did not align with current US enforcement priorities. The filing was made in response to a request from Nicholas Garaufis seeking an explanation for the proposed dismissal.

Corporate investigations lawyer Adam Goldberg said the department had presented well-supported legal and policy reasons, making court approval of the dismissal the most likely outcome. Legal expert Chris Man added that there is virtually no modern precedent for a judge forcing the executive branch to continue a criminal prosecution it has decided to abandon.

The case, filed in 2024, accused Adani and others of involvement in an alleged bribery scheme linked to Indian government officials and misleading investors. However, the Justice Department now argues the prosecution is legally flawed, diplomatically sensitive, and difficult to prove, citing findings by Indian authorities, the absence of investor losses, and the overseas location of key evidence and witnesses.

Noor Naik demands transparency on Muslim delegation's meeting with PM Modi, raises concerns over rising Islamophobia



Amid growing concerns over hate speech, communal polarization, and the increasing sense of insecurity among sections of India's Muslim population, social activist Noor Naik has issued an open letter seeking transparency regarding a recent meeting between a Muslim delegation and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

The letter, addressed both to the Indian Muslim community and the distinguished members of the delegation that met the Prime Minister and NSA on June 10, 2026, raises important questions about the outcomes of the high-level interaction. While acknowledging the stature and credibility of the approximately 15 prominent Muslim representatives who participated in the meeting, Naik emphasized that ordinary citizens remain unaware of what was discussed and what assurances, if any, were provided by the government.

"We write this letter with deep anguish but also with hope," Naik stated, highlighting what he described as a disturbing rise in hate speeches, targeted misinformation campaigns, and incidents of Islamophobia in different parts of the country. According to the letter, anti-Muslim narratives have increasingly found space across social media platforms, public gatherings, and televised debates, creating an atmosphere of suspicion and division.

The open letter calls for greater transparency from the delegation, urging its members to publicly share the agenda of the meeting, any memorandum submitted to the government, and the commitments received from the Prime Minister's Office and the National Security establishment. Naik argued that transparency would strengthen trust between community representatives and the people they seek to represent.

One of the key concerns highlighted in the letter is the gap between high-level discussions and the realities experienced by many Muslims on the ground. It notes reports from several states of social boycotts, economic exclusion, discrimination, and fear associated with practicing religious traditions openly. The letter stresses that Islamophobia is no longer merely a theoretical concept but a lived experience for many families across the country.

At the same time, the appeal remains firmly rooted in democratic values and constitutional principles. Rather than promoting confrontation, the letter calls for constructive engagement between the government and citizens. It urges Prime Minister Modi and NSA Ajit Doval to take visible and impartial action against hate speech, regardless of the identity or political affiliation of those responsible.

The appeal also references the Prime Minister's vision of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas," arguing that the principle can only be strengthened through consistent enforcement of the law and public messaging that promotes unity and mutual respect. It further advocates for broader consultations that include civil society organizations, youth leaders, academics, and affected citizens alongside established community representatives.

Mbalula stresses the need for legal clarity before Parliament acts on Ramaphosa



The African National Congress (ANC) has called for a measured approach to the parliamentary process under Section 89 of South Africa's Constitution, arguing that lawmakers should wait for ongoing judicial proceedings to conclude before deciding whether President Cyril Ramaphosa committed any impeachable offence. Speaking at a media briefing on July 2nd , ANC Secretary-General Fikile Mbalula said the party's stance was one of "procedural neutrality" and stressed that Parliament should avoid rushing a constitutional process that could have significant legal and political implications.

Mbalula said the Section 89 inquiry was progressing in accordance with a binding Constitutional Court judgment, with the committee's draft terms of reference currently open for submissions from political parties until July 10. "The ANC's posture on the Section 89 measure is one of procedural neutrality," Mbalula said, adding that the party would participate in the process only as amicus curiae on issues relating to parliamentary procedure and sequencing, rather than on the merits of the allegations against the president.

He also rejected suggestions that President Ramaphosa had influenced discussions surrounding the process, insisting the head of state had remained completely separate from the deliberations. "President Ramaphosa is not part of this discussion. I wish to place it again on record," Mbalula said. Addressing concerns over the role of National Assembly Speaker Thoko Didiza, who also serves on the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC) and National Working Committee (NWC), Mbalula said she had deliberately been kept out of internal discussions to avoid any perception of political interference in parliamentary proceedings.

He cautioned against portraying differing opinions expressed during ANC meetings as official party policy, saying internal debate was a normal part of democratic decision-making. A discussion where there are different points of view cannot be elevated to a position of the ANC, he said, adding that the party had issued a statement to correct what it viewed as inaccurate portrayals of its internal deliberations.

A key issue raised by Mbalula was the standard of evidence that should guide any Section 89 inquiry.

Repatriation process continues as over 2000 Zimbabweans seek safety in Epping



The repatriation of foreign nationals continued across South Africa on July 1, with hundreds more transported to the Department of Home Affairs processing centre in Epping, Cape Town, as authorities worked to assist migrants seeking to return to their home countries. Since the operation began on Sunday, more than 2,000 people had passed through the Epping office, which served as a temporary processing centre for Zimbabwean nationals who had fled various parts of the Western Cape ahead of planned nationwide anti-immigration protests.

The facility also received Malawian and Mozambican nationals seeking assistance. To support the humanitarian response, Gift of the Givers erected four temporary tents at the site and provided meals for those awaiting processing. The organisation had been assisting the group since they were relocated from an area near the Zimbabwean Consulate in District Six. Department of Home Affairs provincial coordinator Almien van der Berg said 481 people had been transported on seven buses, while officials sought additional buses to speed up the repatriation process.

She said authorities hoped to clear the processing centre by the following evening and noted that approximately 3,205 people had been processed during the previous three weeks. Gift of the Givers spokesperson Ali Sablay said more people continued to arrive by taxi, with the organisation providing meals for around 1,500 people daily. He praised Home Affairs officials for efficiently managing the operation but acknowledged that the limited availability of buses remained the biggest challenge.

He added that the organisation was also conducting large-scale humanitarian operations in Robertson and Bredasdorp. Meanwhile, several foreign national-owned shops and market stalls cautiously reopened after many businesses in Cape Town's city centre had remained closed amid fears of violence. In Villiersdorp, GOOD Party councillor and Theewaterskloof municipal speaker Weldon Wells condemned the reported looting of spaza shops, urging residents to respect the rule of law and warning that those responsible for criminal acts would face arrest.

AL SUMOOD RADIO : A platform where knowledge meets public service



Military radio stations are often associated with defence news and programmes designed for armed forces personnel. However, Oman's Al Sumood Radio, operated by the Sultan's Armed Forces, has evolved into a unique platform that extends far beyond traditional military broadcasting by promoting education, intellectual dialogue and public engagement.

The station's impact is reflected in the experience of one of its English-language presenters, who joined Al Sumood despite having no previous background in radio. Encouraged by the confidence and support of Commodore Abdulnasser Al Abri, Head of Morale Guidance and Military Protocol, the presenter launched "Within the Path," the first English-language programme on the station. The series explored subjects including leadership, diplomacy, psychology, Islamic thought, identity and moral philosophy, offering listeners thought-provoking discussions and personal reflections.

Producing the programme required extensive research, writing and preparation, ultimately resulting in 32 episodes across two seasons. The journey highlighted that meaningful broadcasting is built upon continuous learning, curiosity and intellectual discipline.

Beyond a single programme, Al Sumood Radio offers a diverse range of content covering economics, ethics, history, strategy, coexistence and even cinema through its programme "Aflam Al-Harb", which examines international war films and their historical significance. These programmes create an educational archive that appeals not only to military personnel but also to the wider public.

BEYOND OIL

Kuwait's education transformation begins delivering global recognition



For any nation aspiring to thrive in the twenty-first century, classrooms are just as important as boardrooms, laboratories are as valuable as oil fields, and knowledge has become the most strategic national asset. Kuwait appears to have embraced this reality. While the country's economy has long been associated with energy wealth, its future increasingly depends on how effectively it invests in people. Recent developments suggest that this investment is finally beginning to pay off.

The most visible sign of this progress came when Kuwait University recorded a remarkable rise in the 2026 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings, jumping from the 801–1000 category to the 401–600 band. Rankings alone cannot capture the full quality of an education system, but such a dramatic improvement rarely happens by accident. It reflects years of patient reforms aimed at strengthening governance, encouraging research, improving sustainability, and raising academic standards.

More importantly, the university's achievement is not an isolated success. It reflects a broader transformation unfolding across Kuwait's education sector. From primary schools to universities and vocational institutions, the emphasis is gradually shifting away from memorisation and outdated practices towards critical thinking, innovation, digital literacy, and practical skills. The objective is no longer simply to produce graduates, but to prepare confident, capable citizens who can contribute to a diversified economy under New Kuwait Vision 2035.

One of the most significant changes has been Kuwait's determination to restore credibility to its examination system. For years, incidents of paper leaks and organised cheating damaged public confidence in academic qualifications. Recognising that genuine excellence cannot exist without honesty, the government introduced Decree-Law No. 77 of 2025, imposing strict penalties on those involved in examination fraud. Enhanced monitoring, tighter supervision, and stronger enforcement now send a clear message that academic success must be earned through effort rather than shortcuts.

Equally important is the renewed focus on teachers. Educational reforms rarely succeed unless they begin inside the classroom, and Kuwait has acknowledged this reality by introducing a professional licensing system for educators. Teachers are now expected to meet internationally recognised standards and participate in continuous professional development. Developed in consultation with organisations such as the OECD, the initiative aims to ensure that every student benefits from qualified, well-trained professionals capable of delivering modern education.

The reform agenda extends beyond government schools. Private educational institutions are also facing higher expectations through mandatory teacher licensing, stronger quality assurance, and closer regulatory oversight.

THE MUSCAT PLAN



Oman's quiet diplomacy offers a blueprint for a fractured world

At a time when public discourse is increasingly shaped by division, mistrust and polarisation, the Sultanate of Oman is proposing a different vocabulary for international relations, one rooted not in power projection, but in human connection. The launch of the Muscat Plan, a global Omani initiative dedicated to humanitarian diplomacy and peacebuilding, arrives at a moment when the world is grappling with overlapping crises. From armed conflicts and forced displacement to the rapid spread of hate speech and online disinformation, the social fabric of many societies is under unprecedented strain.

Against this backdrop, Oman is placing a simple yet powerful idea at the centre of global conversations: peace is not merely the absence of conflict; it is the presence of trust. Developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Oman and key United Nations bodies, including the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), the Muscat Plan seeks to strengthen the ability of countries and communities to confront hatred, discrimination and social fragmentation before they escalate into crises.

The initiative reflects a diplomatic philosophy that Oman has cultivated over decades. While many nations define their influence through economic weight or military reach, Oman has earned international respect through a quieter form of leadership: patient mediation, open dialogue and the ability to build trust across political divides. The Muscat Plan transforms this diplomatic experience into a practical global framework. Its vision extends beyond conference halls and policy documents.

The initiative brings together governments, international organisations, educators, civil society groups and local communities, recognising that peace cannot be imposed from above. It must be built collectively, sustained locally and owned by the people it is meant to serve. At its core is a human-centred approach that prioritises inclusion and participation. Young people are viewed not as passive beneficiaries of peacebuilding efforts, but as active contributors to social cohesion.

Educators are recognised as essential architects of understanding. Communities are encouraged to become spaces where dialogue replaces suspicion and diversity becomes a source of strength rather than division. The Muscat Plan is built around several interconnected priorities: expanding international partnerships, promoting intercultural dialogue, countering misinformation and discrimination, strengthening mediation mechanisms and enhancing national capacities to prevent conflict and respond effectively to crises.

Its official launch at the United Nations Headquarters in New York underscores the initiative's global ambitions. More importantly, it signals a growing recognition that traditional approaches to conflict prevention are no longer sufficient in a world where digital platforms can amplify hostility as rapidly as they can spread hope. The Muscat Plan aligns closely with the broader goals of sustainable development by acknowledging a fundamental truth: peace, human dignity, social justice and inclusive governance are inseparable.

In an age of uncertainty, Oman is offering more than a diplomatic initiative. It is offering a method, a reminder that lasting peace is built through listening, empathy and shared responsibility. The Muscat Plan does not promise quick fixes to complex global challenges. Instead, it invites the world to invest in something more enduring: the patient work of understanding one another.

Malaysia targets 50% cut in food imports by 2050 to boost food security



Malaysia has set an ambitious goal of reducing its dependence on imported food by 50% by 2050 as part of a long-term strategy to strengthen national food security and lower the country's growing food import bill. Deputy Prime Minister and Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi announced that the government plans to implement the initiative in phases over the next three decades. Malaysia currently spends around RM80 billion annually on food imports, a figure the government hopes to reduce through greater domestic agricultural production.

Under the roadmap, the government aims to cut food imports by at least 15% by 2030, exceed a 30% reduction by 2040, and ultimately achieve a 50% reduction by 2050. Ahmad Zahid said the strategy would rely heavily on making productive use of idle and underutilized land managed by agencies under the Rural and Regional Development Ministry. The land will be developed into Agro Madani projects and livestock farming hubs through collaboration involving the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (Risda), Felcra, the Veterinary Services Department and state agricultural agencies.

The initiative seeks to increase local production of essential food items while enhancing the country's resilience against global supply disruptions. According to Ahmad Zahid, the food security programme, first introduced nationwide three years ago, has already delivered encouraging results. Poultry and egg production projects supported by the ministry have helped stabilise market prices and improve supply. He emphasized that the government's role is not to compete with private livestock producers but to complement existing production capacity. By ensuring a stable supply of staple food products such as chicken and eggs, the initiative aims to keep prices affordable for consumers while reducing Malaysia's reliance on imported food.

Islamic Emirate Deputy PM says rising tensions benefit no one

Abdul Salam Hanafi, the Deputy Prime Minister for Administrative Affairs of the Islamic Emirate, has stressed that escalating tensions are in no one's interest and that their continuation will harm both sides. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Fifth National and International Industry and Mining Week Exhibition in Kabul, Hanafi said the Islamic Emirate's policy is based on peaceful relations with all countries, founded on mutual respect and non-interference. We want to live in peace, security, and stability with our neighbors, all countries in the region, and beyond, Hanafi said. We seek good and friendly relations with one another based on mutual respect, non-interference, and win-win cooperation. The senior Islamic Emirate official also assured participants that Afghan territory would not be used to threaten the security of others. Other Islamic Emirate officials, including Noor-ul-Haq Anwar, Director General of the General Directorate of Administrative Affairs, described Afghanistan's current policy as beneficial for both the region and the wider international community. Apart from other nations of the world, Afghans also have the right to lasting security, Anwar said. It is regrettable and surprising that some parties deny Afghans this right and seek to undermine Afghanistan's security, even though Afghanistan considers the security of others to be its own security. Although relations between the Islamic Emirate and Pakistan have deteriorated significantly in recent months, the Islamic Emirate maintains positive relations with other countries in the region.





China's DeepSeek plans proprietary AI Chip amid U.S. export restrictions

DeepSeek is developing its own AI inference chip in a bid to reduce dependence on hardware supplied by Nvidia and Huawei, according to people familiar with the matter. The custom chip will be designed to power AI models during the response-generation stage rather than for training new models. The initiative reflects China's broader push for technological self-reliance amid U.S. export restrictions on advanced AI chips. DeepSeek has reportedly increased private hiring of chip-design engineers and is working with foundry, memory and semiconductor partners. If successful, the project would mark the company's expansion from AI software into semiconductor development.



Royal Arab Excellence Awards 2026 Honors Global Achievers in Mumbai

Presented by Royal Arab Events

Mumbai, June 21, 2026: The prestigious Royal Arab Excellence Awards 2026, presented by Royal Arab Events, was successfully held in Mumbai, bringing together distinguished personalities, entrepreneurs, artists, social leaders, and professionals from diverse industries to celebrate excellence, achievement, and leadership.

Founded by Mr. Amjad Khan, Boxer and Founder of Royal Arab Events and the Royal Arab Excellence Awards, the platform continues to recognize individuals who have made remarkable contributions in their respective fields while inspiring future generations through their dedication and success.

The grand ceremony was graced by Chief Guest Asharaje Gaekwad, whose presence added prestige and significance to the event. The evening also welcomed an esteemed lineup of Guests of Honour, including veteran Bollywood actor Ranjeet, actor Akbar Khan, Dr. Jaan Nisaar Lone, Farooq Shaikh, Khalid Babu Qureshi, Dilshad S. Khan, Raj Suri, Shail Peerrzada, Swaraaj Kapoor, Meera Kapoor (Upadhya), Hanif Pathan , Abhay Sinha, Sunil Mehra, and Dr. Sergei Dvoianov.

The awards recognized outstanding achievers including Challa Prasad, Ajail Shaik Rahman, Altamash Khan, Ar. Sanjeev Sharma, Dr. Arpit Chopra Jain, Qazi Touqeer, Rani Hazarika, Dr. Uttam Jaju, C.B. Raman, Shadab Faridi, Vishnu Sharma, Vladimir Kedrinsky, Shahzad Ali, Anas Asgar Khan, Pradeep Ghule, Alisha Jameel Ahmed Khan, Muddaser Mohammed, and Sargam Khan.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Amjad Khan emphasized the vision behind the awards: creating a global platform that celebrates excellence, encourages innovation, and honors individuals whose achievements contribute positively to society. He highlighted the importance of recognizing talent across industries and fostering meaningful connections among leaders, professionals, and changemakers.

The evening featured inspiring speeches, award presentations, networking opportunities, and cultural celebrations, reflecting the spirit of excellence and international collaboration that defines the Royal Arab Excellence Awards.

As the event concluded, guests applauded the organizers for creating a prestigious platform that continues to honor exceptional achievements and inspire future leaders. Under the leadership of Mr. Amjad Khan, the Royal Arab Excellence Awards has emerged as a respected international recognition platform dedicated to celebrating excellence beyond borders.

Lomé strengthens role as African diplomatic hub with major ministerial conference



Togo's capital, Lomé, has further strengthened its reputation as an important centre for African diplomacy after hosting the Extraordinary Ministerial Conference of the African Political Alliance (APA) on July 3-4. The high-level gathering brought together foreign ministers, senior diplomats, policymakers and experts from across the continent to develop a coordinated African response to the wide-ranging consequences of the ongoing crisis in the Middle East.

Held under the theme "Africa and the Middle East Crisis: Impacts, Challenges and Strategic Responses," the conference examined the impact of regional instability on African economies, energy security, trade networks, food supply chains and overall continental stability. Delegates discussed practical measures to enhance Africa's ability to withstand external shocks and protect its development priorities amid increasing geopolitical uncertainty.

The timing of the conference highlighted Lomé's growing importance as a platform for international dialogue and strategic consultations on issues affecting Africa's future. By hosting discussions involving key diplomatic stakeholders, Togo demonstrated its commitment to strengthening multilateral engagement and promoting African-led solutions to global challenges. The meeting also reinforced the expanding role of the African Political Alliance as a mechanism for building common African positions on major international issues.

Participants emphasized the importance of deeper cooperation among African nations in areas such as energy security, economic resilience, diplomatic coordination and crisis management. Speakers stressed that Africa must move beyond a reactive approach and develop stronger systems to anticipate and manage global disruptions. They called for greater continental unity and strategic planning to ensure that African countries can safeguard their interests while navigating a rapidly changing international environment.

By convening the extraordinary ministerial meeting, Togo reaffirmed its commitment to dialogue, cooperation and collective action. The conference is expected to contribute to the development of a more coordinated African strategy for addressing the effects of the Middle East crisis while supporting peace, stability and sustainable development across the continent. The discussions concluded with a call for Africa to adopt a forward-looking diplomatic approach that strengthens its influence and ensures that the continent plays a more active role in shaping responses to global challenges.

India's EAM Jaishankar, Bahrain Deputy PM discuss bilateral cooperation

Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar recently met Bahrain's Deputy Prime Minister and held discussions on further strengthening the partnership between the two countries. Sharing details in a post on X, he said that they also discussed the regional situation. "A pleasure to meet Deputy Prime Minister of Bahrain H.E Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa this morning. Discussed taking forward our bilateral cooperation across various sectors. Also exchanged views on the regional situation."

Earlier, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Monday met Bahrain's Foreign Minister Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani and held discussions on further strengthening the relationship between the two countries. Sharing details in a post on X, Jaishankar expressed deep appreciation for ensuring the well-being of the Indian community and said, "Discussed deepening our bilateral cooperation. Exchanged views on ongoing developments in the region."

On Sunday, he met with his Qatari counterpart and Prime Minister of Qatar Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani as part of his multi-nation visit in Doha, during which both sides explored new opportunities for deepening the strategic partnership. In a post on X, Jaishankar described the meeting as "a pleasure" and thanked the Qatari leadership for ensuring the safety and well-being of the Indian community in the Gulf nation.

He said the discussions covered a wide range of areas of bilateral cooperation, including energy, trade, investments, connectivity, security and people-to-people ties. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar is on a multi-nation visit to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, US and Belgium, the Ministry of External Affairs.. As per the MEA, Jaishankar will be on an official visit to Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman from July 5-10. During the visit to these countries, he will be meeting with his counterparts and the leadership.

The visit will focus on enhancing our bilateral relations with the four countries and also provide an opportunity to exchange views on regional developments and issues of mutual interest, the press release by MEA noted. For the US-leg, EAM will visit New York on July 13 to launch India's official campaign for the UN Security Council tenure 2028-29. Later, he will attend the 3rd India-EU Trade and Technology Council meeting and interact with his EU and Belgian counterparts in Brussels on July 14-15.



Egypt coach creates ripples with Palestine flag after win



Egypt created history by reaching the FIFA World Cup Round of 16 for the first time after securing a landmark victory on Saturday, but head coach Hossam Hassan's post-match gesture attracted global attention beyond football. Carrying both the Egyptian and Palestinian flags onto the pitch, Hassan dedicated the win to the Palestinian people, saying, "May God grant them victory and have mercy on their martyrs," while also dedicating the achievement to Egyptians. The symbolic display came during a match at AT&T Stadium in Dallas, drawing widespread support across the Arab world amid ongoing tensions surrounding the Israel-Palestine conflict. Although FIFA generally prohibits political statements during its tournaments, the governing body had not announced any disciplinary action against Hassan. Following the historic victory, Egypt's players celebrated with a collective prostration on the field. Palestinian supporters, particularly in Gaza, welcomed Egypt's success as a shared triumph, with many describing the emotional celebrations as a rare moment of joy amid the hardships of war.

ALSAYER Group honors Kuwaiti student winners of clean energy competition



ALSAYER Group has honored outstanding Kuwaiti student teams for their achievements in the Horizon Educational Regional Race, held at the company's KFTZ 1 office on June 24, 2026. The competition, part of a global initiative promoting clean energy innovation and hydrogen fuel cell technology, encourages students to develop practical engineering, design, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. Chairman Faisal Bader Al-Sayer praised the event as an international platform that inspires creativity and technical excellence among young people. He emphasized that the participation of schools, Kuwait University, and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training reflects a united national commitment to advancing science and technology education. The national qualifiers produced several winners who will represent Kuwait at the H2 Grand Prix Pro Finals in Switzerland. Sonic from Al Sabahiya School claimed first place in the school category, while Kuwait University led the university division. ALSAYER Group reaffirmed its commitment to supporting educational innovation and sustainability by continuing to back Kuwaiti teams competing on the global stage.

Egypt storm into World Cup 2026 round of 16 after Australia victory



Egypt scripted history by defeating Australia in a dramatic penalty shootout at Dallas Stadium to secure their place in the Round of 16 of the 2026 FIFA World Cup. The victory marked the Pharaohs' first-ever win in the tournament's knockout stage and made them the second African and Arab nation, alongside Morocco, to reach the last 16. Emam Ashour gave Egypt an early lead with a well-taken header in the 13th minute, but Australia responded after the break when Mohamed Hany inadvertently turned a free-kick into his own net. Despite several chances for Mohamed Salah and Omar Marmoush, neither side could find a winner in regulation or extra time. The contest was ultimately decided on penalties, where Egypt held their nerve. Salah confidently converted a Panenka, while Australia's Harry Souttar and Lucas Harrington missed from the spot. Egypt sealed a memorable victory and will now face either Argentina or Cabo Verde in the Round of 16 in Atlanta on July 7.

Egypt coach creates ripples with Palestine flag after win



The 2026 FIFA World Cup is set to offer fans far more than world-class football, with North America's rich culinary diversity becoming a major attraction throughout the tournament. Co-hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States, the event gives supporters the chance to explore iconic local dishes alongside unforgettable matches. In Mexico, visitors can enjoy authentic tacos al pastor, birria, tamales and other celebrated street foods. Canada's multicultural cities, particularly Toronto, will showcase favorites such as poutine alongside a wide variety of international cuisines, including South Asian, Middle Eastern and Caribbean specialties. Across the United States, each host city offers distinct regional flavors, from Texas barbecue and Houston's Tex-Mex to Philadelphia cheesesteaks, Miami's Cuban sandwiches, New York pizza and Boston's seafood classics. Official FIFA Fan Festivals will feature food trucks, local specialties and global cuisines, creating vibrant gathering spaces where football supporters can celebrate together. By blending sport, culture and cuisine, the 2026 World Cup promises a memorable experience both on and off the pitch.

Kuwait eyes new era for Green Island, Jahra Entertainment Hall



Kuwait's iconic Green Island could undergo a major transformation as the Ministry of Finance reviews a proposal to demolish, rebuild and expand the popular tourism destination. In a letter to the municipality, Ministry of Finance Undersecretary Asil Al-Munaifi referred to the existing agreement with the Tourism Projects Company for managing state-owned tourism facilities. The company has requested approval to redevelop Green Island and increase its building ratio to meet future development needs. The proposed plan includes allocations of 5 percent for services, 5 percent for commercial activities and 10 percent for support facilities aimed at improving the island's tourism and operational capabilities. The municipality has been asked to review the proposal in line with planning regulations. The ministry has also supported amendments to the Jahra Entertainment Hall project, allowing changes to its components. The revised plan includes recreational, cultural, educational, commercial and administrative facilities, reflecting Kuwait's wider efforts to modernize tourism infrastructure and enhance entertainment options for residents and visitors.



Taylor Swift & Travis Kelce plan wedding at Madison Square Garden

Pop superstar Taylor Swift and American football player Travis Kelce are reportedly set to hold their wedding at Madison Square Garden in New York during the upcoming US Independence Day holiday weekend, according to media reports and city permit documents. The couple, both 36, have not publicly confirmed the plans. Some reports have suggested they may have already legally married in a private ceremony attended by a small group of family and friends. The reported celebrations are expected to begin with a rehearsal dinner, followed by the main event on July 9 evening. Security preparations and temporary arrangements have reportedly been made around the venue. The wedding is expected to attract a star-studded guest list, with celebrities and Kelce's Kansas City Chiefs teammates among those reportedly invited. The event coincides with New York's busy Independence Day celebrations and is expected to draw worldwide attention if officially confirmed.

Oman expands music and entertainment sector with growing events calendar



Oman's music and entertainment sector is witnessing steady growth as the Sultanate continues to develop its tourism and cultural landscape through concerts, festivals and major entertainment programmes. As part of broader economic diversification efforts, Oman has increasingly opened its doors to international artists, regional performers and large-scale cultural events, attracting audiences from across the country and abroad. The expansion of the entertainment sector supports Oman's vision of creating new tourism experiences while providing more recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Live music events, cultural festivals and creative programmes are becoming an important part of the country's tourism offerings. With improved infrastructure, growing interest from international organisers and rising audience demand, Oman is emerging as a promising destination for entertainment activities in the region. The continued development of the sector reflects the Sultanate's commitment to strengthening cultural engagement and enhancing its appeal as a vibrant tourism destination.



Rajkummar Rao's Sourav Ganguly Biopic 'Dada' to Release in 2027

Bollywood actor Rajkummar Rao's upcoming biopic on former Indian cricket captain Sourav Ganguly, titled "Dada," is set to hit theatres on May 14, 2027. The makers announced the release date on Wednesday, coinciding with Ganguly's 54th birthday. Ganguly shared the film's first-look poster on Instagram, praising Rao's portrayal and expressing excitement to see the actor recreate his iconic cricket moments. The poster features Rao recreating Ganguly's famous shirtless celebration at the Lord's balcony following India's historic victory over England in the 2002 NatWest Series final. Directed by Vikramaditya Motwane, the film will explore Ganguly's journey in Indian cricket, from his early career to becoming one of the country's most influential captains. The cast includes Tanya Maniktala as Dona Ganguly, along with Aparajita Adhya, Saswata Chatterjee and Rahul Dev Bose portraying key members of Ganguly's family. Rao has already begun filming portions of the movie in Kolkata, where his transformed cricketing appearance has attracted attention among fans. The film is expected to showcase the challenges, achievements and legacy of one of India's most celebrated cricketers.