

Bahrain's 3x3 teams bow out at Asia Cup

Bahrain's women's and men's 3x3 basketball teams concluded their campaigns at the FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup 2026 qualifiers yesterday | P16

WORLD 8 Trump says Iran wants ceasefire

THE DAILY **tribune**



CELEBS 12 Britney Spears sober since DUI arrest

BUSINESS 6 India hikes jet fuel, commercial LPG cost

Bahrain Revises Fuel Prices for April 2026

Quick Highlights:

- Super 98 saw the biggest increase (+49 fils)
- Diesel rose by 20 fils, with subsidy still in place for Bahraini fishermen
- All fuel categories recorded price increases in April

Bahrain Chairs UN Security Council Talks

UN Security Council

Focus on hostile Iranian attacks

TDT | Manama

His Excellency Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, met with António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, at the UN headquarters in New York City on April 1.

The meeting took place during Minister Al Zayani's visit to participate in the UN Security Council sessions chaired by Bahrain for April.

Discussions focused on the latest regional developments, particularly the repercussions of Iranian attacks targeting Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and other Arab states.

The talks also addressed the potential risks of closing the Strait of Hormuz to international maritime traffic and its impact on global stability.

Lebanese President Denounces Terror Network Threatening Bahrain

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa received a phone call from Lebanese President Joseph Aoun, during which both leaders discussed recent regional security developments.

President Aoun strongly condemned the missile attacks tar-

getting the Kingdom of Bahrain, reportedly carried out by Iran, and reaffirmed Lebanon's full solidarity with Bahrain. He also expressed support for all measures Bahrain is taking to protect its sovereignty, security, and national achievements.

He further denounced the involvement of a terrorist cell linked



HM the King



President Aoun

to Hezbollah in plots aimed at undermining Bahrain's security and stability, stressing Lebanon's support for Bahrain's efforts to maintain safety and stability.

His Majesty King Hamad expressed appreciation for Lebanon's position and thanked President Aoun for his fraternal solidarity and support.

'Baseless Allegations'

- Bahrain Rejects Iran Claims in UN Letter
- Cites Repeated Violations and Security Threats

TDT | Manama

The Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations in New York has submitted detailed information to the international community rejecting what it described as "false and baseless allegations" made by Iran in recent communications to the UN.

In a ninth official letter sent on March 30, 2026, to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, Bahrain firmly dismissed claims contained in a March 18 letter from Iran's Permanent Representative (S/2026/198), stressing that the accusations have no factual or legal basis.

The letter reiterated Bahrain's categorical rejection of what it described as unjustified Iranian statements and reaffirmed the Kingdom's full commitment to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference, and good neighbourliness as enshrined in the UN Charter.

Operations

Bahrain stated that despite multiple diplomatic efforts by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)



H.E. Minister Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani meets António Guterres at the United Nations headquarters in New York



states to de-escalate tensions, Iran has continued military operations against GCC countries, including Bahrain.

It alleged that these operations deliberately targeted civilian infrastructure, including airports, seaports, energy facilities, oil installations, water desalination plants, residential areas, hotels, and logistics centres.

The correspondence referenced a series of regional and

"Bahrain's presidency of the United Nations Security Council marks a significant milestone in its diplomatic journey and reflects the international confidence in its balanced foreign policy and continued commitment to strengthening global peace and security."

H.E. DR. ABDULLATIF BIN RASHID AL ZAYANI, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

international positions condemning such actions, including statements by the GCC (February 28, 2026), the GCC Ministerial Council (March 1), the Arab League Ministerial Meeting (March 8), the Organization of Islamic Cooperation ambassadors in New York (March 5), and a joint GCC-EU ministerial statement (March 5).

It also cited UN Security Council Resolution 2817, adopt-

ed on March 11, 2026, which condemned attacks attributed to Iran against several regional countries and described them as violations of international law and a threat to international peace and security.

Bahrain stressed that continued attacks constitute a breach of the resolution.

The letter accused Iran of attempting to distort established facts by shifting responsibility

YOU KNOW WHAT

Despite multiple diplomatic efforts by Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to de-escalate tensions, Iran has continued military operations against GCC countries, including Bahrain.

for its actions, rejecting Tehran's claims that Bahrain bears international responsibility requiring compensation or reforms. Bahrain described these assertions as "completely unfounded" and an attempt to evade accountability.

It further noted that Iran had issued threats of force on February 19, 2026, which GCC states rejected, alongside calls for de-escalation and adherence to international law.

Bahrain maintained that it has been the victim of unlawful and unprovoked attacks, citing evidence it says the international community has acknowledged since February 28, 2026.

It also referenced a missile attack on Riyadh during a gathering of foreign ministers from 12 UN member states, stating that such actions cannot be justified under any circumstances.

220 fils (includes VAT)

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Interior Ministry Revises Night-Time Emergency Alerts

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Interior announced a new

adjustment to its wireless emergency alert system on smartphones, effective from today.

Under the revised system, emergency alerts issued during late-night hours—from 12:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m. will

now use only a notification tone instead of louder alert sounds.

The move aims to en-

sure critical warnings continue to reach the public while minimizing overnight disturbance.

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Committee oversees repairs to homes damaged by recent attacks



Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa



H.E. Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah chairs the meeting

● **Government remains committed to ensuring safe living conditions for affected families**

TDT Manama

Bahrain has intensified efforts to repair damaged homes and restore af-

ected areas following recent incidents, placing housing rehabilitation and infrastructure resilience at the forefront of its priorities.

The 297th meeting of the Ministerial Committee for Development Projects and Infrastructure, chaired by Deputy

Prime Minister, His Excellency Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, reviewed the progress of ongoing repair works for citizens' homes affected by recent attacks.

The committee reaffirmed the government's commitment, in line with directives from His

Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to fully address structural damages and ensure safe living conditions for affected families.

Efforts

Officials highlighted the Min-



The meeting reviewed the progress of ongoing repair works for citizens' homes affected by recent attacks.

istry of Works' efforts, in coordination with relevant authorities, to assess and document damage across impacted areas.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning was also commended for its field visits to Al Hidd Housing City, where repair operations are underway, and for ensuring that work progresses according to set timelines.

To support affected families during the repair period, the committee reviewed the readiness of fully furnished temporary housing units in Salman City, designed to accommodate residents until their homes in Al Hidd and Sitra are restored.

Infrastructure

In parallel, the meeting ad-

ressed infrastructure resilience during recent heavy rainfall, commending drainage response efforts by municipal and works teams.

It also directed the development of long-term solutions for unpaved roads to improve mobility during adverse weather.

Further discussions covered environmental rehabilitation plans for Tubli Bay, updates on building permit system reforms, waste management projects, and municipal development initiatives.

The committee also approved updated property valuation guidelines for public projects and reviewed national performance indicators across urban planning and surveying services.

National Guard Reviews Kingdom Readiness During Field Inspection

● **Move to ensure Bahrain safety**

TDT Manama

A senior inspection visit was carried out yesterday to review the readiness and operational duties of National Guard units responsible for safeguarding Bahrain's security in coordination with the Bahrain Defence Force and the Ministry of Interior.

The Commander of the National Guard, Shaikh Mohammed bin Isa Al Khalifa, accompanied by the Chief of



Shaikh Mohammed bin Isa Al Khalifa, accompanied by the Chief of Staff, Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Saud Al Khalifa, at the site

Staff, Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Saud Al Khalifa, received briefings on operational and logistical updates as well as the high level of preparedness and morale among per-

sonnel amid current regional conditions.

He praised the forces' professionalism and conveyed the leadership's appreciation and support from His Majesty

King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, stressing continued development of Bahrain's security and defence capabilities.

Three-Year Jail Term for Man in Domestic Worker Abuse Case

● **Deportation set to follow**

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

A 36-year-old Asian man has been sentenced to three years in prison and fined 3,000 Bahraini dinars by the High Criminal Court after being convicted of forcing a domestic worker into exploitative and abusive conditions.

The court also ordered him to pay for the victim's repa-



triation and ruled that he will be deported after serving his sentence.

The victim, a 24-year-old Asian woman, came to Bahrain in search of work but was instead subjected to forced labour without pay. She was

made to work in multiple households while being confined in an abandoned apartment with no electricity or running water.

According to court findings, she was beaten and slapped when she asked for her wages or requested to return home. She was also deprived of food and frequently moved between locations to prevent her escape.

Crying

The case came to light when a neighbour heard the victim crying for help. The witness provided her with water and

immediately contacted authorities after learning she was being held against her will.

Police later found the apartment locked from the outside, confirming she had been unlawfully detained. Investigations also revealed prior similar accusations against the defendant.

During questioning, the accused admitted to sending the victim to work in different homes to collect money. Prosecutors charged him with human trafficking, stating he exploited her vulnerability for forced labour without pay.

'Peace, reconciliation and unity'

TDT | Manama

A senior Catholic leader in Bahrain has used his Easter message to highlight the need for peace, reconciliation and unity at a time of global uncertainty, while also outlining the full schedule of Holy Week and Easter services across the Kingdom.

In his message, Aldo Berardi, Apostolic Vicar of Northern Arabia, said the themes of Easter remain "especially relevant" in a world facing conflict and instability. He pointed to hope, renewal and reconciliation as central to the season, urging communities to embrace dialogue, mutual respect and collective efforts toward peace.

He said Easter continues to carry a message of encouragement, reminding people that "periods of difficulty can give way to new beginnings," and

called on the faithful to reflect not only on faith but also on shared human values such as compassion, understanding and unity.

Berardi expressed hope that the season would strengthen a sense of community and support among people, encouraging optimism for a more peaceful future.

Alongside the message, the Apostolic Vicariate released the official schedule for Masses and liturgical services in Bahrain.

At the Cathedral of Our Lady of Arabia in Awali, Maundy Thursday services will be held at 7.30pm, followed by Good Friday observances at 2.30pm for the Way of the Cross and 7pm for the Liturgy of Darkness. The Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday will take place at 7.30pm, with Easter Sunday Mass scheduled for 7pm.

Public sector shifts to 50% in-office presence

Ashen Tharaka
TDT | Manama

The Civil Service Bureau announced an updated remote work policy limiting physical attendance at government workplaces to a maximum of 50% of staff across all ministries and public entities, effective Sunday, April 5, 2026, until further notice.

The policy excludes sectors requiring full on-site presence based on operational needs. Government entities must coordinate with the Bureau to determine appropriate staffing levels and identify roles eligi-

ble for remote work, ensuring service continuity.

The directive also reinforces emergency preparedness measures, urging compliance with safety instructions, alarm systems, and evacuation procedures in coordination with the General Directorate of Civil Defence.

Each government body must form a dedicated team to oversee coordination and conduct regular training and awareness programmes. They must submit weekly reports on readiness and compliance to the Civil Service Bureau.

Neutral Stance

Arab Interior Ministers Call for Unified Security Coordination

● **Strengthens Crisis Response**

TDT | Manama

“We maintained our position of not being drawn into a war in which we are not a party, and the Interior Ministry’s efforts focused on protecting lives and property, with Civil Defence and National Ambulance personnel working around the clock to address the repercussions of the aggression,” said Bahrain’s Interior Minister, His Excellency Lieutenant General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, during the 43rd session of the Council of Arab Interior Ministers.

Shaikh Rashid emphasized that Bahrain’s response has been guided by a firm commitment to safeguarding citizens and residents, while maintaining national cohesion under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

Measures

He also praised the government, led by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince



and Prime Minister, for implementing decisive and integrated measures to address the evolving situation.

He noted that since the escalation began on 28 February, Bahrain’s air defence systems have actively intercepted incoming threats, while the Ministry of Interior swiftly activated crisis management plans, transitioning from routine operations to full emergency response within a short timeframe.

The attacks resulted in casualties and damage to vital infrastructure, including airports, residential areas, and essential services such as energy, water, and electricity. Despite these developments, Bahrain has continued to prioritise stability and avoid escalation.



Since the escalation began on 28 February, Bahrain’s air defence systems have actively intercepted incoming threats.

The Interior Minister highlighted that civil defence teams and emergency services have remained on constant alert, reinforcing protection measures and enhancing communication with the public to ensure awareness and preparedness across all segments of society.

At the regional level, Shaikh Rashid stressed the importance of strengthening coordination

among Arab states, noting that current challenges require unified efforts to reinforce internal security and enhance joint responses.

He added that continued development of cooperation mechanisms among Arab countries is essential for addressing shared threats and achieving common security objectives.



We maintained our position of not being drawn into a war in which we are not a party

H.E. LIEUTENANT GENERAL SHAIKH RASHID BIN ABDULLAH AL KHALIFA, INTERIOR MINISTER

Bahrain’s Roses in Crisis

Ghadeer Alkumaish
TDT | Manama



Qasim Ahmed Abdullah

Bahrain’s flower market, once known for its abundance and variety, is now facing significant challenges due to global disruptions.

Fresh roses, symbols of love, celebration, and hope have become harder to source, impacting both sellers and customers across the Kingdom.

Talking to The Daily Tribune, Qasim Ahmed Abdullah, owner of Black Box flower shop with eight years of experience, explained how the situation has changed.

Shipments

“Before the current circumstances, we imported natural roses from countries like the Netherlands and Ecuador. Shipments used to arrive within one to three days, prices were stable, and all varieties were readily available,” he said.

However, logistical disruptions have reshaped the supply chain. With the closure of Bahrain International Airport affecting direct imports, suppliers now rely on alternative routes.

“Currently, roses are flown into Saudi Arabia and then transported by refrigerated trucks through the King Fahd Causeway. This has caused delays, and sometimes the flowers arrive in lower quality or damaged,” Abdullah noted.

Shortage

At the peak of the crisis, the market saw a complete shortage of roses.

While availability has since improved, uncertainty remains.

“Most types are back, but we cannot guarantee consistent supply

in the future. Prices have also increased significantly due to higher shipping costs,” he added.

The price surge has been noticeable. Ecuadorian roses, which previously cost 350 fils per stem, now sell for around 700 fils.

Other popular flowers, such as tulips and gerberas, have risen from 1 Bahraini dinar to 1.5 dinars per stem an increase of nearly 70 percent.

Operations

To manage the situation, florists have adapted their operations.

“We now plan ahead with customers, confirming available types, suggesting alternatives, and setting expectations for delivery dates. At times, we even had to pause reservations because of uncertain shipment schedules,” Abdullah explained.

Despite these challenges, customer demand has remained relatively steady.

Demand

While some buyers have reduced purchases due to higher prices, demand continues, especially during special occasions.

Events such as Eid Al-Fitr and Mother’s Day were particularly affected, as high demand coincided with limited supply.



700 fils
Price of Ecuadorian roses, up from previous cost 350 fils per stem.

Unlicensed Tour Guides Face Ban: Tourism Ministry

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain is moving to bar tourism businesses from using unlicensed tour guides, with Bahrainis making up 72pc of the

Kingdom’s 74 licensed guides, the Ministry of Tourism said in a reply to MP Dr Mahdi Al Shuwaikh.

The ministry said 53 of the 74 licensed guides are Bahrainis. Dr Al Shuwaikh had asked about

the share held by Bahrainis, the number of foreign guides, the number of foreign guides living in Bahrain on family visas, the duty on tourism firms to hire Bahraini guides, and plans to grow the trade through local

talent. Travel and tourism offices must hire licensed guides when arranging tours for visitors to Bahrain, the ministry said, so tourists are shown sites and landmarks properly.

UN-Based Shipping Corridor Model Proposed for Gulf Region

● **Bahrain Visit Signals EU Solidarity, Says Gulf Envoy**

● **EU Floats Maritime Escort and Surveillance Plans**

Ashen Tharaka
TDT | Manama

European Union Special Representative for the Gulf Luigi Di Maio said his visit to Bahrain sends a “clear message of solidarity” with the Kingdom amid rising regional tensions, strongly condemning what he described as “unjustified attacks” targeting civilian infrastructure.

Speaking in an exclusive interview during his short visit to the Kingdom, Di Maio stressed that Bahrain is a “strategic partner” of the European Union and that the visit reflects support for both Bahrain and its regional allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council.

“We want to show solidarity to the Kingdom of Bahrain for these absolutely unjusti-



Shaikh Abdullah bin Ali Al Khalifa, Director General of Bilateral Relations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Bahrain), met with Luigi Di Maio during his visit to Bahrain, where he also held meetings with several European ambassadors resident in the Kingdom

fied attacks, particularly those targeting critical civilian infrastructure. This is totally unacceptable,” he said.

Partners

He added that the EU is working closely with GCC partners to support diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation and

conflict resolution. “We are promoting and supporting a UN initiative based on a model similar to the Black Sea Grain Initiative,” he noted, referring to efforts to secure humanitarian and commercial shipping corridors.

Di Maio warned that instability in the region particularly

around the Strait of Hormuz poses a serious global risk. He called for ensuring freedom of navigation under international law and urged the United Nations to take a central role in facilitating a diplomatic solution.

“The Strait of Hormuz is international waters. Free navigation must be guaranteed,” he



European Union Special Representative Luigi Di Maio

said, adding that any disruption could have major consequences for global trade, including oil, gas, fertilizers, and other essential goods.

Measures

He also revealed that EU member states are considering contingency measures in a de-escalation scenario, including maritime surveillance and escort operations to ensure safe

passage for vessels. “The main objective must remain diplomacy,” he said, emphasizing that military tensions are affecting not only regional stability but also global markets.

On broader geopolitical linkages, Di Maio said the EU sees increasing connections between conflicts in different regions, including Ukraine and the Gulf, particularly in relation to energy infrastructure attacks.

Attacks

“The same type of attacks against civilian infrastructure are happening in different theatres. That is why we must join forces,” he said.

He reiterated EU backing for international initiatives involving regional and global partners, including discussions with Gulf states, Egypt, Pakistan, and Turkey, and support for United Nations resolutions aimed at protecting regional security and stability.

Di Maio said unpredictability in global conflicts should not lead to inaction. “Even if the end of the war is uncertain, we must act now through diplomacy, de-escalation, and cooperation.”

Homes Rebuilt Under Approved Housing Support Plan

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

A new housing support plan has been approved to rebuild and restore homes for low-income Bahraini families living in unsafe conditions, offering long-awaited relief to those at risk from deteriorating structures.

The initiative aims to accel-

erate repairs and reconstruction through a coordinated effort involving government entities, charitable organisations, and the private sector.

It focuses on homes facing structural risks, ensuring urgent cases are prioritised and addressed without further delay.

Processes

Rather than introducing new

systems, the plan strengthens existing municipal processes.

Families can continue submitting requests through current channels, while inspections and assessments will determine the level of urgency. The most critical cases will be fast-tracked for immediate action.

The plan is expected to benefit vulnerable groups, including elderly residents, widows, and

families with limited income.

Assistance

Many have spent years waiting for assistance or have been forced to live in unsafe conditions due to financial constraints.

The new approach aims to bridge that gap by combining funding sources and speeding up execution.



A residential home undergoes reconstruction under Bahrain's approved housing support plan

Mosque Rebuild Stalled for Four Months in Muharraq

● Work began about three years ago

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

A Muharraq Municipal Council member called for urgent action to finish rebuilding Esmat Zain Al Abideen Mosque (formerly known as Al Tawba Mosque) after work stopped around four months ago.

This left bricks, equipment and other building materials in the street, adding to the load on nearby mosques.

Abdulqader Mahmood, who represents the third constituency, raised the matter during the council's session and said the scheme had been left hanging for too long while residents were still dealing with the mess around the site.

Pressure

"Work has been stopped for nearly four months," Mahmood told the council. "The bricks are lying there, the materials are lying there in a chaotic way, and this is putting pressure on the mosques around it for reasons



“The scheme had been left hanging for too long while residents were still dealing with the mess around the site

ABDULQADER MAHMOOD, REPRESENTING THE THIRD CONSTITUENCY

we do not know.” He said the rebuild began

about three years ago, when the mosque was demolished as part

of the project, but later ran into trouble with the first contractor before being handed to another.

Delay

Mahmood said the delay had dragged on so long that even returning to work would not bring a quick end to the scheme.

"Finishing the work will need more than a year," he said, urging members to refer the request to the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs to look into the matter.

One-Year Jail for Man in TikTok Loan Dispute Turned Violent Robbery



● Friendship broken over BD750 row

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

A 34-year-old Arab man has been sentenced to one year in prison, followed by deportation, after a financial dispute linked to a TikTok friendship escalated into robbery and assault.

The High Criminal Court ruled after a case involving a 30-year-old Bahraini woman and the defendant, whose online friendship later turned into a disagreement over a 750-dinar loan.

Prosecutors said the dispute intensified when the victim attempted to recover her money and retain evidence of the debt.

Audio

She had recorded the man admitting to owing her the amount, though she later deleted and recovered the audio.

The confrontation took place in Juffair, where the defendant allegedly attacked the woman in a public area.

He reportedly slapped her, threatened her with a knife,

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The dispute intensified when the victim attempted to recover her money and retain evidence of the debt.

and forcibly took her iPhone 16 Pro Max in an attempt to delete the recording.

Assault

When the victim refused to unlock her phone, the assault escalated further before the suspect fled the scene with the device.

Investigations showed the stolen phone was later sold, and authorities recovered the weapon described in the case. Records also indicated the defendant had prior accusations in similar cases.

Although he denied the charges in court, evidence presented led to his conviction.

Save Your Pet: First Aid Essentials

Ghadeer Alkumaish
TDT | Manama

“Pet first aid isn't just a nice-to-know; it's a true life-saver,” says Husnia Karimi, who holds a Recover CPR-BLS certification from the American College of Veterinary Emergency & Critical Care (ACVECC). “In an emergency, every second counts, and knowing how to act quickly can make all the difference.”

“Pet CPR begins with checking responsiveness and ensuring the airway is clear,” she explains. “If your pet is unresponsive, lay them on their right side and begin chest compressions using both hands for larger dogs



“With the right training, you not only learn the theory, but also build the muscle memory to respond swiftly. That awareness and preparedness can truly save a life

HUSNIA KARIMI

or one hand for smaller pets at a steady rhythm of 100 to 120 compressions per minute. After every 30 compressions, give two rescue breaths by gently blowing into the nose until the chest rises.”

Emergencies

On choking emergencies, Husnia notes: “Watch for signs such as gagging, pawing

at the mouth, or blue gums. If an object is visible and easily reachable, remove it carefully. Otherwise, perform the Heimlich maneuver by applying firm upward thrusts just below the ribcage. Once the obstruction is cleared, check breathing and be ready to start CPR if necessary.”

She stresses the importance of hands-on training: “It's not

just about knowing the steps; it's about being prepared to act confidently. Practical sessions help you practice CPR, handle choking incidents, and manage common emergencies. With the right training, you not only learn the theory, but also build the muscle memory to respond swiftly. That awareness and preparedness can truly save a life.”

Live Dashboard Keeps Watch on Bahrain Food Stocks

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Contingency plans are already in place for any shock to Bahrain's food supply, Industry and Commerce Minister,

His Excellency Abdulla Fakhro, said.

He gave assurances that stocks of staple goods remain safe and sufficient and that the ministry is tracking supply levels through a live dashboard.

In a written reply to MP Khalid Buanaq, H.E. Fakhro said the kingdom's stock of basic food goods was enough to meet local demand for “an appropriate period”, with imports still reaching the mar-

ket through different supply routes.

He said the ministry stayed in steady touch with the main traders and suppliers and would act if the data showed any sign of a gap.

Fixing roads, improving safety



Approved plans for District 10 address 109 resident requests, targeting recurring issues such as broken pavements, road maintenance, speed humps, and water pooling. New measures aim to improve safety and daily mobility across the area. (Reported by Hasan Barakat)

Iranian Aggression Threatens Education and Culture

Human Rights Report Warns UNESCO

● Attacks threaten future of entire generations by destabilizing social and academic foundations

Pradeep Puravankara
TDT | Manama

A comprehensive human rights report submitted to UNESCO highlights the severe impact of Iranian-linked military escalations on the educational and cultural landscapes of Gulf and Arab nations.

The report was presented by Faisal Folad, Secretary-General of the International Alliance to Counter the Aggression of the Iranian Regime, to H.E. Dr. Mohammed Jumei, Yemen's Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, on behalf of the Arab States.

The document analyzes the humanitarian consequences of



Faisal Folad presents the report to H.E. Ambassador Dr. Mohammed Jumei

recent ballistic missile and drone attacks, framing them through UNESCO's crisis response principles.

Warning

It warns that such aggression extends beyond physical destruction, threatening the future of entire generations by dest-

abilizing social and academic foundations.

The report documents the suspension of schooling in affected areas and the significant psychological toll on children and youth, emphasizing that disrupting academic continuity violates fundamental human rights.

Furthermore, direct and in-

direct threats to cultural sites jeopardize the community identity and social cohesion of the targeted regions.

Infrastructure

The targeting of vital civilian infrastructure, including airports and energy facilities, poses a direct threat to the safety of

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The document analyzes the humanitarian consequences of recent ballistic missile and drone attacks, framing them through UNESCO's crisis response principles.

the general public and the large migrant worker population in the Gulf.

The Alliance also noted a rise in incitement and misinformation during these conflicts, calling for responsible media to promote stability and social cohesion.

The International Alliance issued a strong condemnation of the attacks, classifying them as flagrant violations of the UN Charter and international humanitarian law.

Report

The report calls for an immediate cessation of military escalation and proxy attacks, alongside full legal accountability and fair compensation for damages caused to affected states.

It stresses the need for strengthened UNESCO intervention to protect educational institutions and heritage sites, concluding that protecting education and culture is a moral and legal obligation essential for securing sustainable peace in the region.

MP Defends Unemployment Fund Despite Falling Returns

● Call for review of investment policies to ensure the fund can meet future obligations

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

MP Hasan Ebrahim has defended Bahrain's unemployment fund, saying it remains financially strong despite declining investment returns in 2024.

He highlighted net assets of BD530.9 million and described the fund as a "successful national model," noting its key role during the COVID-19 period in supporting private sector wages.

However, Parliament's Financial Committee has urged rejection



MP Hassan Ebrahim

of the fund's 2024 accounts, citing weaker performance.

Income

Investment income dropped

by 38.5%, while assets fell 11% to BD546.4 million. At the same time, benefits paid rose 17%, raising concerns about long-term sustainability.



Ebrahim acknowledged challenges, including slower returns and rising payouts, and called for a review of investment policies to ensure the fund can meet future obligations.

He also praised the government led by HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa the Crown Prince and Prime Minister for efforts to support economic stability.

Inmates Offered Training, Study and Support



MP Mohammed Janahi

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Psychological support, addiction recovery, craft workshops, support duties and study up to university level already form part of the programmes given to inmates, Interior Ministry legal affairs director Colonel Hussain Salman Matar told Parliament, as MPs passed two government-drafted bills replacing compulsory prison work with rehabilitation and training.

One law, attached to Decree No. 68 of 2025, rewrites Article 55 of the Penal Code so that people serving custodial sentences are assigned rehabilitation and training programmes in reform and rehabilitation centres instead of prison work.

The other, attached to Decree No. 69 of 2025, changes Article 18 of the Reform and Rehabilitation Institution Law of 2014 so that inmates, apart from remand detainees and those unfit on health grounds, must take part in rehabilitation and training programmes instead of compulsory work.

Matar said the ministry places strong emphasis on rehabilitation programmes for inmates.



Colonel Hussain Salman Matar

Education

He said they include psychological support, religious guidance, recovery programmes for criminal behaviour and addiction, vocational and craft workshops, support duties inside the institution, and study programmes ranging from basic schooling in cooperation with the Ministry of Education to advanced study, including university education.

Quran memorisation programmes are also provided, he said.

He added that the alternative sentencing scheme runs through partnerships with public and private sector bodies, which provide programmes in cooperation with the General Directorate for the Implementation of Alternative Sentences.

Rewards

On payment, Matar said the law and regulations already provide for rewards linked to work carried out by inmates.

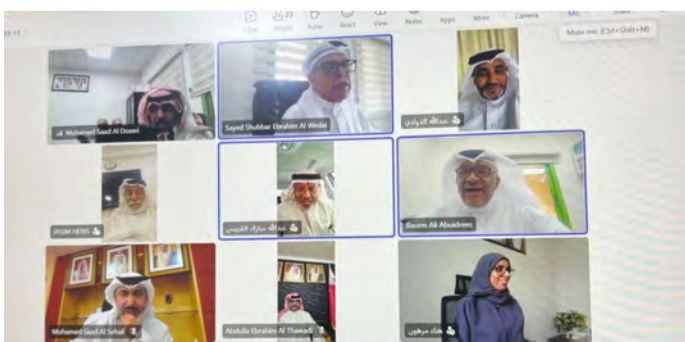
He gave the example of a carpenter making items during rehabilitation programmes and receiving payment for them, adding that such products can be sold at events and similar programmes.

Vandalism Crisis Hits Northern Governorate Public Spaces

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

Children visiting parks across the Northern Governorate are increasingly encountering broken benches, damaged walkways, and neglected corners, as public spaces continue to suffer repeated vandalism.

The issue has prompted Northern Municipal Council member for the Ninth Constituency, Abdulla Al Qubaisi, to call for urgent intervention, warning that the problem has moved



Northern Municipal Council members hold a virtual meeting

beyond routine maintenance and into the misuse of public

assets funded by taxpayers. Raising the matter during a re-

mote council session focused on park and walkway maintenance budgets, Al Qubaisi stressed that increasing expenditure alone will not solve the issue.

He cautioned that without stronger deterrents, repeated vandalism will continue to drain public funds through constant repair cycles. Director-General Mohammed Al Sahli acknowledged the scale of the challenge, noting that despite ongoing efforts to provide quality services, weak public compliance is undermining sustainability.

IndiGo lands IATA chief Willie Walsh as new CEO

AFP | Paris, France

IndiGo said yesterday it was appointing Willie Walsh as its new chief executive as India's leading airline sought to recover from an embarrassing spate of cancellations that threw the country's airports into turmoil.

Walsh currently leads the civil aviation industry's leading trade association, the IATA. But he also has two decades of experience leading airlines, including a decade at International Airlines Group (IAG), the parent company of Aer Lingus, British Airways, Iberia and Vueling.

Walsh's "experience in managing large scale air-



line operations and navigating complex market dynamics make him ideally suited to strengthen and lead IndiGo for continued growth in an ever-evolving and competitive international aviation environment," IndiGo's board chairman Vikram Singh Mehta said in a statement.

IndiGo's previous chief executive, Pieter Elbers, stepped down on March 10, months after mass flight cancellations by the carrier threw airports across India into disarray.

In January, India's civil aviation regulator imposed a fine of \$2.45 million on IndiGo for poor roster planning that led to large-scale cancellations in December.

The operational meltdown came even though IndiGo had two years to prepare.

Stocks rally, oil dips on Mideast war optimism

Wall Street's main indices pushed higher at the opening bell

Key figures at around 1530 GMT

New York - Dow:	▲ 0.8% at 46,721.42 points
New York - S&P 500:	▲ 0.9% at 6,585.52
Nasdaq Composite:	▲ 1.3% at 21,877.34
London - FTSE 100:	▲ 1.9% at 10,364.79 (close)
Paris - CAC 40:	▲ 2.1% at 7,981.27 (close)
Frankfurt - DAX:	▲ 2.7% at 23,298.89 (close)
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▲ 5.2% at 53,739.68 (close)
Hang Seng Index:	▲ 2.0% at 25,294.03 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▲ P 1.5% at 3,948.55 (close)
Brent North Sea Crude:	▼ 2.4% at \$101.46 a barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▼ 2.2% at \$99.14 a barrel
Euro/dollar:	▲ at \$1.1610 from \$1.1551 on Tuesday
Pound/dollar:	▲ at \$1.3321 from \$1.3236
Dollar/yen:	▼ at 158.61 from 158.77 yen
Euro/pound:	▼ at 87.16 pence from 87.28 pence

● Pezeshkian said the Islamic republic had the "necessary will" to end the war

● Netanyahu insisted that Israel would press ahead with its military campaign

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Global stocks rallied and oil prices fell Wednesday after US President Donald Trump said the Middle East war that has roiled markets could be over within weeks.

Wall Street's main indices were higher in midday trading, building on a rally from the previous day.

In Europe, Frankfurt and Paris both jumped more than 2%, while London rose 1.9%.

That came after Asian mar-

kets closed sharply higher, with Seoul soaring more than 8%, Tokyo up five% and Chinese stocks also rising.

Trump said Tuesday the United States would end operations in Iran "very soon", perhaps within "two weeks, maybe three".

The White House said he would address the nation on Wednesday "to provide an important update on Iran".

"Markets still seem to be betting on a resolution to the war and a reopening of the Straits of Hormuz," said Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at online trading platform IG.

Oil prices fell, with international benchmark Brent down

1% after falling as much as 5% earlier. The main US contract WTI dropped 2%.

The economic impact of the conflict is worsening, with average US gasoline prices topping \$4 a gallon for the first time in four years this week, European inflation spiking and governments unveiling a range of support measures.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the Islamic republic had the "necessary will" to end the war, provided its enemies guaranteed it would not flare up again.

But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted that Israel would press ahead with its military campaign and

that "we will continue to crush the terror regime".

Traders remained wary as fresh strikes hit Tehran on Wednesday, and an oil tanker off the coast of Qatar was hit by an Iranian missile.

Trump said Wednesday that Iran has asked for a ceasefire but that the United States wants the Strait of Hormuz to be clear for shipping.

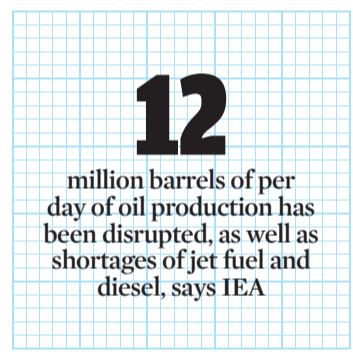
Iran's Revolutionary Guards insist that the strategic strait will remain closed to the country's "enemies".

"Despite today's relief wave on markets, deep problems remain," said Susannah Streeter, chief investment strategist at Wealth Club.

She said that elevated crude prices, still about 50% above pre-war levels, "signals that scepticism still remains about Trump's claims of progress, and worries persist about how extraction from the conflict is still set to be complex".

FOREX.com analyst Fawad Razaqzada noted that the head of the International Energy Agency had signalled that some 12 million barrels per day of oil production has been disrupted, leading to shortages of jet fuel and diesel.

"There's simply too much uncertainty, both in terms of supply disruption and geopolitical escalation, for prices to meaningfully reset lower just yet," added Razaqzada.



RAFIDAIN BANK BAHRAIN BRANCH



STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2025	2024
As at 31 December 2025	BD	BD
ASSETS		
Cash and balances with the Central Bank of Bahrain	10,095,766	5,962,201
Investments	21,638,515	23,640,620
Amounts due from banks and financial institutions	2,732,099	2,397,685
Loans and advances	29,741	20,436
Amounts due from the Head Office and other branches	1,225,471	1,225,471
Other assets	645,630	461,768
TOTAL ASSETS	36,367,222	33,708,181
LIABILITIES AND HEAD OFFICE FUNDS		
Liabilities		
Amounts due to banks and financial institutions	64,532	88,334
Customers' deposits	3,597,249	2,038,836
Amounts due to the Head Office and other branches	5,503,048	5,463,933
Other liabilities	1,328,138	1,272,482
Total liabilities	10,492,967	8,863,585
Head office funds		
Head Office account	17,500,000	17,500,000
General reserve	243,043	243,043
Unremitted profit due to Head office	8,131,212	7,101,553
Total Head office funds	25,874,255	24,844,596
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND HEAD OFFICE FUNDS	36,367,222	33,708,181

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

	2025	2024
For the year ended 31 December 2025	BD	BD
Interest and similar income	1,809,175	1,723,030
Interest and similar expense	(34,854)	(34,497)
NET INTEREST INCOME	1,774,321	1,688,533
Net gain on foreign currencies	8,336	1,532
Other income	2,235	2,051
TOTAL INCOME	1,784,892	1,692,116
Staff expenses	(238,304)	(240,638)
Other operating expenses	(314,196)	(288,659)
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	(552,500)	(529,297)
OPERATING PROFIT BEFORE EXPECTED CREDIT LOSSES	1,232,392	1,162,819
Allowance for expected credit losses - net	(27,192)	(15,348)
INCOME BEFORE TAX	1,205,200	1,147,471
Tax expense	(175,541)	-
NET PROFIT AND TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR	1,029,659	1,147,471

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

	2025	2024
For the year ended 31 December 2025	BD	BD
OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Net profit for the year before tax	1,205,200	1,147,471
Adjustments for non-cash items:		
Depreciation on equipment	35,017	27,908
Depreciation on right-of-use assets	21,749	20,220
Interest on lease liabilities	1,298	2,430
Gain on termination of lease	-	(237)
Allowance for expected credit losses - net	27,192	15,348
Operating profit before changes in operating assets and liabilities:	1,290,456	1,213,140
Mandatory reserve with the Central Bank of Bahrain	1,000	1,000
Investments	1,995,831	(2,957,617)
Amounts due from banks and financial institutions	(300,000)	(1,400,000)
Loans and advances	(12,932)	2,479
Other assets	(193,910)	(93,619)
Amounts due to banks and financial institutions	(23,802)	(22,239)
Customers' deposits	1,558,413	(124,813)
Amounts due to the Head Office and other branches	39,115	95,711
Other liabilities	62,678	(6,748)
Tax paid	(175,541)	-
Net cash flows from / (used in) operating activities	4,241,308	(3,292,706)
INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchase of equipment	(34,338)	(58,142)
Payment of lease liabilities	(20,700)	(22,840)
Cash used in investing activities	(55,038)	(80,982)
NET CHANGE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	4,186,270	(3,373,688)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	5,773,693	9,147,381
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE YEAR	9,959,963	5,773,693
Additional cash flow information:		
Interest received	1,643,326	1,645,038
Interest paid	34,854	41,245

Rafidain Bank - Bahrain Branch (The Branch) is licensed and regulated by the CBB as a retail conventional bank

Jasim Mohamed Abdulla
Acting Country Manager

Ernst & Young
Auditors

India hikes jet fuel, commercial LPG cost

AFP | New Delhi, India

India's oil ministry said yesterday that domestic jet fuel prices would rise as the Middle East war pushed up energy costs, but that it had cushioned airlines from an expected 100% jump.

Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) makes up a substantial chunk of airlines' expenses, and sustained increases could translate into higher airfares.

State-run refiner Indian Oil Corporation said that ATF prices rose by 8.5% in the capital Delhi,

with similar rises in other major cities.

"Due to the closure of Strait of Hormuz, and extraordinary situation in global energy markets, price of ATF for domestic markets was expected to increase by more than 100 percent on April 1," the Ministry of Petroleum

India is the world's fourth-largest buyer of liquefied natural gas (LNG) and second-largest buyer of LPG, which is used for cooking and predominantly sourced from the Middle East.

said in a statement.

But the ministry said it had "passed only a partial and staggered increase of 25%" to airlines in order to "insulate the domestic travel costs from the substantial increase in international prices".

Foreign travel routes "will pay

for the full increase in ATF prices consistent with what they pay in other parts of the world", it added.

Commercial cooking liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) gas prices have also risen.

For commercial LPG, 19-kilogramme (42-pound) cooking gas cylinder prices increased by around 200 rupees (\$2.13) on average across four key cities of Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai.

Domestic household LPG prices were left unchanged in this round of revisions.

Russia will keep helping Cuba, diplomat says after first oil tanker arrives

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Russia will keep providing assistance to Cuba, Russia's foreign ministry spokeswoman said Wednesday, a day after a Russian oil tanker provided the fuel-starved island with its first shipment of crude in months.

Cuba has been suffering from an energy crisis since January, when U.S. forces abducted Venezuelan president and Cuban ally Nicolas Maduro.

His removal deprived Cuba of its main oil supplier.

"Cuba is our closest friend and partner in the Caribbean and we don't have the right to abandon



The Russian oil tanker Anatoly Kolodkin arrives at the oil terminal in the port of Matanzas, northwestern Cuba

it. Assistance to Cuba will continue," Russian foreign ministry

spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said at a weekly briefing. A Rus-

sian tanker entered the Cuban port of Matanzas on Tuesday carrying 730,000 barrels of oil following a three-week journey from Russia.

Moscow historically maintains close ties to Havana and has criticized Washington for blocking fuel deliveries to the island.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Sunday he had "no problem" with Russia sending oil to the island.

"Cuba's finished. They have a bad regime. They have very bad and corrupt leadership and whether or not they get a boat of oil it's not going to matter," he said.

At gas stations, **Americans say** they're 'paying the price' of Iran war

AFP | Falls Church, United States

At a gas station in the Washington suburbs, drivers confronted the harsh domestic repercussions of the war on Iran, as spiking fuel prices hit household budgets hard.

Jeanne Williams, 83, had just driven 100 miles (160 kilometers) from Richmond, Virginia, where she was visiting her elder sister.

"That is horrible," she said, stunned by the prices visible on the Liberty gas station's LED board.

"I'm not angry. I'm just bewildered, confused, unhappy," she said. "Because we didn't ask for the war."

On Tuesday, the average US price of a gallon (3.78 liters) of regular gasoline crossed the psychological barrier of \$4.00, having increased 35 percent since the US-Israeli strikes that launched the conflict, according to data from the AAA motor club.

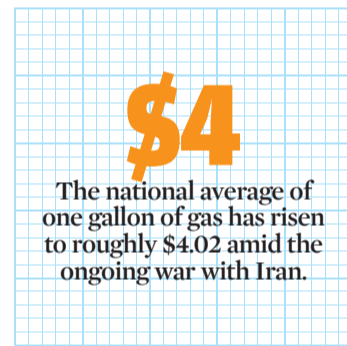
The station where Williams stopped is situated along a busy road in the city of Falls Church, nestled between an Anglican church, an auto repair shop and a dentist's office.

Prices there started at \$3.79 per gallon -- provided you pay in cash. Rates are higher if you use debit or credit cards. A little further down the road, the rate was as high as \$4.25 per gallon.

Williams, a retired civil servant who is undergoing cancer treatment, considers her pension to be "fairly decent," but



Gas prices over five dollars a gallon are displayed at an Exxon gas station near the US Capitol Building on March 31, 2026 in Washington, DC



as the US cost of living has risen, she has had to dip into her savings.

"Luckily, I have no children. I don't have a spouse, so it's just

me and whatever I have I help my sister with."

'Ridiculous'

US inflation has reduced from a peak of 9.1 percent in the pandemic, but prices have remained stubbornly high and analysts warn the world's largest economy has still not achieved price stability.

The years of higher-than-expected prices have battered US households.

Eliza Winger, a US economist with Bloomberg, said that an increase in fuel prices does not just hit people at the pump, it also re-

duces their overall consumption -- with possible knock-on effects for the economy.

"We estimate that 10 percent increase in oil prices reduces real consumer spending by approximately 0.2 percent," she said. US fuel prices have increased by more than three times that amount since the start of the war.

And on Tuesday, a new US consumer confidence report showed that people's inflation expectations had surged in March to levels last seen around seven months ago.

Luis Ramos, a 26-year-old

New York City resident, told AFP he was already feeling battered by the high cost of living.

"It's ridiculous, honestly. Seeing these gas prices skyrocket, it's incredible," he said at a gas station in New Jersey. "The cost of living is already skyrocketing."

'Should have cared'

David Lee, a 39-year-old at the suburban gas station outside Washington, fills up his tank twice a week.

"I feel like every time I fill it up, I probably filling up at least \$10 more than what I used to pay," he told AFP.

The anesthesiologist said he made enough to afford it, "but I've seen a lot of my friends complaining about it that they're not gonna drive as much as they used to."

Joseph Crouch, 77, finds himself in that situation.

"It's ridiculous," he said, lamenting how he has had to cut down on driving. "The prices are so high. I don't think government is knowing what it's doing."

"We are paying the price" of the war, he said. "They trying to say it's something else, but it's definitely a war."

Crouch, who walks with the aid of a cane, proudly wore a hat proclaiming that he was a veteran of the Vietnam war.

Fred Koester, 78, called the conflict a "stupid war" that was "totally unnecessary."

Kristen, a 36-year-old teacher who only gave her first name, said that while the fuel prices

Jeanne Williams, 83, had just driven 100 miles (160 kilometers) from Richmond, Virginia, where she was visiting her elder sister.

"That is horrible," she said, stunned by the prices visible on the Liberty gas station's LED board.

"I'm not angry. I'm just bewildered, confused, unhappy," she said. "Because we didn't ask for the war."

hurt, it was "selfish" of people to complain about the war only when it affects their household budgets.

"We should have cared long before it affects our pocket," she said.

Mobs send Nigerians fleeing in Jos following Palm Sunday shooting

AFP | Jos, Nigeria

Mobs formed across the Nigerian city of Jos Wednesday morning, an AFP reporter saw, appearing to lead to the deaths of two people, with others wounded by gunshots in the ensuing mayhem.

The chaos comes after unidentified gunmen killed around 30 people in a bar over the weekend, prompting accusations on social media -- without evidence -- that Christians were targeted on Palm Sunday, which marks the run-up to Easter.

With violence threatening to spill across the city, the University of Jos ordered the "evacuation" of its student housing over the course of Wednesday and Thursday, saying that the state government was providing transport.

Jos, the capital of Plateau state in north-central Nigeria, is home to a mixed population of Christians and Muslims, many of whom live peacefully side by side.

But the city is also riven with ethnic and religious tension that has sparked deadly sectarian riots in the past.

It's unclear who formed the mobs or who they were targeting.

Sani Danladi Marshall, a used



Picture for representation only (Courtesy of NYT)

car dealer, was at his house which doubles as his business premise, when he saw a group of youths appearing from different directions. They stopped a commuter taxi and pulled out two passengers.

"They hit one of them with stones, they hit him again till he died. They pushed his dead body into a ditch," he told AFP. The second person escaped.

Another resident, Usman Musa, 31, told AFP at the Ghambazi hospital, he was shot by unknown assailants.

"I was rushed to hospital and having regained my consciousness, I saw my other colleagues in the same condition," he said.

It was unclear if he and his

colleague, Jibril Nasir, were targeted intentionally or hit by stray bullets amid the wider chaos.

"I don't know who shot at us," said Nasir, 28, who works with Musa in the tin mining sector.

Earlier in the day, an AFP reporter in Jos saw a crowd of people form and smash cars, a "keke" tricycle taxi set ablaze, and crowds running for safety. Elsewhere, the reporter saw two bodies in the street.

Streets were largely deserted Wednesday afternoon as security forces including the military deployed around the city.

That morning they had at times shot into the air to disperse crowds.

The 'million dollar' Senna helmet bought at Japan GP

AFP | Suzuka, Japan

When Canadian collector Darren Jack discovered that an Ayrton Senna helmet he values at a million dollars was for sale in Japan, he jumped on a plane to acquire the piece of sporting history that the legendary Brazilian driver had with him during his fatal final Formula One Grand Prix.

Jack, who AFP met at the Japan Grand Prix last weekend, showed off the iconic yellow helmet in its original 'A.S.'-initialised bag, which both belonged to the three-time world champion, who was killed aged 34 in a crash at the Imola circuit in San Marino on May 1, 1994.

"(Senna) definitely wore it in Brazil during the race weekend. But it travelled with the team to round two in Pacific Grand Prix and to Imola in this final race weekend," Jack said.

"It was the only race weekend he had the Senna logo on. So this was added for Imola, which is significant because it means it was there. And it's quite a crazy moment to think that (it's a) part of life and part



Darren Jack, a Canadian motorsports memorabilia collector from Toronto, poses with the racing helmet worn by late Formula One legend Ayrton Senna, in Nagoya

of history." As evidence, Jack presented photos and videos from that period, which have been compared and analysed using recognition software, along with authentication letters, serial numbers, and letters from the manufacturer Bell and the Japanese seller.

Jack, the CEO of a motorsport memorabilia collection, refused to reveal how much he paid for the item, but insisted "it's clear that it's a million-dollar helmet".

However, despite already receiving lucrative offers -- including from inside the F1

paddock at Suzuka -- Jack said he won't sell the helmet... yet.

"I love having it. I'm proud to own it. I'm a passionate collector first. That's how I started the business," the 46-year-old said.

"So for me, it's a dream. What would I spend the money on?"

"There was a current F1 driver, who shall remain unnamed, who basically said, 'what if I gave you a million dollars now for it in the paddock this weekend?' And I said, 'no, not for sale'."



The Bell helmet is not the one Senna wore during that fatal race. But it is one of the three or four he had with him at the start of the 1994 season in Brazil, Japan and Imola, Jack claims.

Macron says France not 'taking part' in Mideast war after Trump criticism

Tokyo, Japan

President Emmanuel Macron said on Wednesday France had not been consulted and wasn't taking part in the war against Iran, after US leader Donald Trump criticised the country's overflight ban on planes carrying military supplies for the conflict.

"It is absolutely true that France, which has not been consulted and is not part of this military offensive launched by the United States and Israel, is not taking part in it," Macron said in an interview with Japanese broadcaster NHK during his visit to Tokyo, adding that had been France's stance since "day one" of the war.



Trump threatened earlier this week that if Iran didn't agree to a deal, US forces would "obliterate" its oil wells, its main Kharg Island export terminal, and possibly water desalination plants.



Israeli security forces gather at the site of a Hezbollah missile strike that targeted a house in the northern Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona near the border with Lebanon

In Lebanon, seven people were killed in strikes around south Beirut, the health ministry said yesterday, while the Israeli military said it had struck a senior Hezbollah commander. A Lebanese security source and a Hezbollah source both told AFP that the strike had killed Hezbollah's top commander for Iraq military affairs.

Strikes hit Russian Orthodox church in Tehran: Russian embassy
Tehran, Iran

Strikes in the Iranian capital on Wednesday hit a Russian Orthodox church, damaging the building, but there were no casualties, the Russian embassy in Tehran said.

"On April 1, two strikes were conducted near the Saint Nicholas Orthodox Church in Tehran. Main building, almshouse and several technical facilities were damaged. No victims," the embassy said in a post on X.

It posted images of the aftermath showing a ceiling partially collapsed, debris on the floor and blown out windows.

Trump says US to leave Iran 'very soon,' deal or not

Trump says Iran wants ceasefire

President Donald Trump said yesterday that Iran has asked for a ceasefire but that the United States would only consider this once the Strait of Hormuz is clear for shipping. Iran's president "has just asked the United States of America for a CEASEFIRE!" Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform. "We will consider when Hormuz Strait is open, free, and clear. Until then, we are blasting Iran into oblivion or, as they say, back to the Stone Ages!!!" There was no independent confirmation of Trump's claim to the ceasefire request.

Optimism sparked by Trump's comments on the end of the war pushed oil prices down yesterday, and stock markets rallied in Europe and Asia.

Lebanon says death toll tops 1,300

Lebanon's health ministry said Israeli attacks have killed 1,318 people in the country since war erupted between Israel and Hezbollah on March 2, raising a previous toll of 1,268 a day earlier.

Those killed included 91 women, 125 children and 53 health workers, said the ministry, with 3,935 other people wounded.

Israel kills Hezbollah commander

Israel killed a top Hezbollah commander, two sources said, in a Beirut strike that Lebanon's health ministry said killed seven people.

A Lebanese security source and a Hezbollah source said that the commander, Youssef Hashem, had been responsible for the group's military affairs in Iraq. Israel's military said Hashem was Hezbollah's commander for its south Lebanon front.

Huge explosions heard in west of Tehran
Tehran, Iran

An AFP journalist reported several huge explosions in the west of the Iranian capital Tehran yesterday af-

ternoon. It was unclear what the target was. Israel said earlier yesterday it had struck several targets in Tehran.

Swiss government eyes dropping purchase of US Patriot air defence

AFP | Geneva

The Swiss government is considering dropping the agreed purchase of the Patriot air-defence system from the United States amid severe delivery delays, Defence Minister Martin Pfister said yesterday.

"Cancellation is always an option in the event of a delay," he told the ATS-Keystone news agency.

Earlier yesterday, the defence ministry announced it would continue suspend-

ing payments for the system "until the United States has firmly announced new delivery dates and payment deadlines".

Switzerland, which is not in NATO, had ordered five Patriot systems in 2022, with delivery scheduled to begin this year and to be completed in 2028.



Qatar says Iran missile struck tanker in its waters

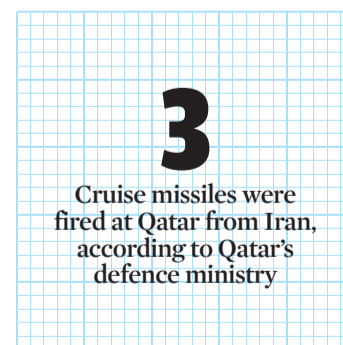
AFP | Doha, Qatar

Qatar said yesterday that a tanker leased to its state-owned energy company was struck by an Iranian missile in the Gulf country's territorial waters. "Qatar was targeted... by three cruise missiles launched from Iran," the Gulf state's defence ministry said in a statement.

The military "intercepted two of the cruise missiles, while the third missile struck an oil tanker leased to QatarEnergy in Qatar's territorial waters," it said.

"Coordination was established with relevant authorities to evacuate the tanker, which had 21 crew members on board, without any human casualties," the defence ministry added.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards



3 Cruise missiles were fired at Qatar from Iran, according to Qatar's defence ministry

later confirmed they had hit the tanker, the Aqua 1, claiming in a statement cited by state television the vessel was targeted because it belonged to Israel.

QatarEnergy said in a statement the Aqua 1, a fuel oil tanker, had been "the subject of a missile attack in the northern territorial waters of the State of Qatar in the early morning hours of

Wednesday". It confirmed no crew members had been injured and there was "no impact on the environment as a result of this incident". According to the British marine security agency UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO), the incident occurred 17 nautical miles north of Doha.

The agency later said "the vessel was struck by two projectiles" north of Ras Laffan, the world's largest liquefied natural gas (LNG) hub. "One projectile caused a fire, which was extinguished, and another "remains unexploded within the vessel's engine room", UKMTO said.

Private security firms Ambrey and Vanguard also reported unexploded ordnance within the tanker's engine room, adding that authorities were investigating.

660 BC 1858

Traditional date for the founding of Japan by Emperor Jimmu

First vision of the Virgin Mary to 14-year-old Bernadette of Lourdes, France



1929 1975

Vatican City, the world's smallest country, becomes an enclave of Rome

Margaret Thatcher defeats Edward Heath for leadership of the British Conservative Party

Israel medics say 14 wounded after missile fire

AFP | Bnei Brak, Israel

Israel's emergency services said 14 people, including an 11-year-old girl, were wounded near Tel Aviv yesterday during a missile attack that the military blamed on Iran.

Later in the day, medics said they were treating a 61-year-old man in mild condition with blast injuries in the north following fire from Lebanon, where Israeli forces are fighting Iran-backed Hezbollah.

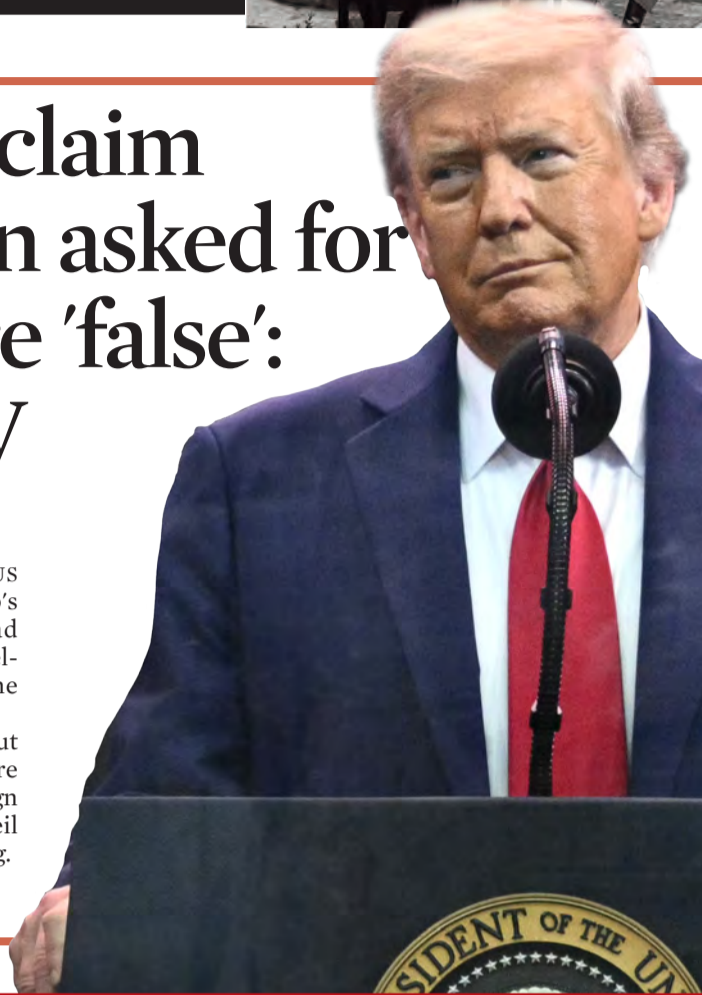
On Wednesday morning, the military said it had identified a missile launched from Yemen, as well as four rounds of Iranian missiles, which activated air raid sirens across large parts of central and northern Israel

Trump claim that Iran asked for ceasefire 'false': state TV

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran yesterday denied US President Donald Trump's assertion that Tehran had asked for a ceasefire, state television reported, citing the foreign ministry.

"Trump's statements about Iran's request for a ceasefire are false and baseless," foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei was quoted as saying.



Lebanon says death toll from Israel-Hezbollah war rises to over 1,300

'Two weeks, maybe three'

AFP

Trump, whose statements on the war have swung from combative to conciliatory, said late on Tuesday that the fighting could be over in "two weeks, maybe three".

The White House said he would give "an important update on Iran" to the nation at 9:00 pm Wednesday (0100 GMT Thursday).

Tehran has insisted there are no ongoing negotiations, and that it has not responded

to a reported 15-point proposal from Washington to end the war.

But Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said the Islamic republic had the "necessary will" to end the war, provided its enemies guaranteed it would not flare up again.

The Israeli military confirmed it had carried out strikes on the capital yesterday. Meanwhile, emergency services said an Iranian missile attack wounded 14 people including an 11-year-old girl.

Israel also said its air defences had responded to a missile fired from Yemen.

A Bangladeshi national was killed by falling shrapnel from an intercepted drone in the United Arab Emirates. Strikes in Kuwait caused a large fire in fuel tanks at its international airport and Saudi Arabia said several drones were intercepted.

Meanwhile, a drone strike caused a massive fire at the storage facilities of an engine oil firm in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan.

\$4

Average US gasoline prices topped \$4 a gallon for the first time in four years this week, while European inflation spiked and governments around the world started to unveil support measures.

Washington has not said who it is speaking with in Iran, which has denied it is in talks.

The White House said Trump would give "an important update on Iran" to the nation at 9:00 pm Wednesday (4:00 AM Thursday in Bahrain).

Indonesian peacekeeper's family shocked by his death in Lebanon

AFP | Cimahi, Indonesia

The father of an Indonesian soldier killed amid fighting between Israeli troops and Hezbollah in Lebanon said Wednesday he was shocked that peacekeepers were losing their lives.

Zulmi Aditya Iskandar was one of the two Indonesian peacekeepers killed Monday in "an explosion" that blew up their vehicle, the Southeast Asian country's defence ministry said.

"We were really sad and regretful, because this is a UN troop, a peacekeeping troop, not deployed for war," 60-year-old Iskandarudin told report-



Zulmi Aditya Iskandar

ers at his house in West Java province, with photos of his deceased 33-year-old son on the wall. Iskandarudin, who like many Indonesians has one name, said he was not worried when he learned his son was being sent to Lebanon.

His oldest son had also been deployed to the country as a

peacekeeper in 2012.

The 60-year-old said he would have been more concerned had Zulmi been sent to Papua where Indonesian security forces battle a low-key separatist insurgency in the country's easternmost region.

"His mission was a peace mission, not (to fight the) enemy," said Iskandarudin, himself a retired soldier. He said the family was hoping to receive the fallen soldier's remains soon to perform the necessary rites before he is laid to rest.

The UN Security Council convened Tuesday following the deaths in recent days of three Indonesian peacekeepers from the United Nations Inter-

im Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in two incidents in the country's south.

A UN security source told AFP on Tuesday that Israeli fire had killed an Indonesian peacekeeper -- not Zulmi -- at the weekend. The UN force said it was investigating the incident.

The source told AFP on condition of anonymity that investigations had shown the fire came from an Israeli tank, adding "debris from a tank round has been recovered" at the site.

Israel's military said it was investigating the incidents to "determine whether they resulted from Hezbollah activity or from IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) activity".

Historic return to the Moon begins

AFP | United States

Four astronauts went on a trip around the Moon marking humankind's deepest venture into space, an odyssey that aims to launch the US into a new era of interstellar exploration.

The NASA mission dubbed Artemis 2 has been years in the making after facing repeated setbacks and massive cost overruns, but is finally scheduled to take off from Florida as early as 6:24 pm (2224 GMT).

The team featuring Americans Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen will set forth on the approximately 10-day mission and hurtle around Earth's nearest celestial neighbor without landing -- much like Apollo 8 did in 1968.

The journey marks a series of historic accomplishments: it will send the first person of color, the first woman and the first non-American on a lunar mission.

If the mission proceeds as planned, the astronauts will set a record by venturing farther from Earth than any human before.

It is also the inaugural crewed flight of NASA's new lunar rocket, dubbed SLS.

The mammoth orange-and-white rocket is designed to allow the United States to repeatedly return to the Moon, with the goal of establishing a permanent base that will offer a platform for further exploration.

"It's a stepping stone to Mars, where we might have the most likelihood of finding evidence of past life, but it's also a Rosetta Stone for how other solar systems form," Koch told reporters on the weekend.

Repeated setbacks

Under bright Florida sunshine, four giant tanks on the rocket started filling with liquid hydrogen and oxygen at 8:35 am.

A full load of fuel will boost the rocket's weight by 1,000 tons, for a total of more than 2,600 tons.

The mission was originally due to take off as early as February.



But repeated setbacks stalled the mission and even necessitated rolling the rocket back to its hangar for analysis and repairs.

As of Tuesday afternoon, NASA officials voiced confidence that engineering operations and final preparations were proceeding smoothly.

If Wednesday's launch is canceled or delayed, there are more liftoff opportunities through Monday, although weather later in the week was looking slightly less favorable.

About 400,000 people were expected to watch the launch, local media reported.

"We're looking forward to it, we've never seen anything like this," 76-year-old retiree Melinda Schuerfranz of Ohio told AFP.

But Schuerfranz remembers the Apollo era, and thinks some of the magic might be lost in today's fragmented media environment.

"I think it was way more exciting then," she said. "Everybody tuned into it."

'Astronauts for Halloween' Artemis is facing pressure from President Donald Trump, who has pushed the pace of the program that's aiming to see boots hit the lunar surface before his second term ends in early 2029.

Artemis 2's objectives include verifying that both the rocket and the spacecraft are in working order to pave the way for a Moon landing in 2028.

The astronauts will require a second vehicle to descend to the moon's surface, a lunar lander that remains under development by rival space companies owned by billionaires Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos.



Canadian Space Agency (CSA) astronaut Jeremy Hansen, Artemis II mission specialist, NASA astronauts Victor Glover, Artemis II pilot, Reid Wiseman, Artemis II commander, and Christina Koch, Artemis II mission specialist, walk out before traveling to the launch pad to board the Space Launch System (SLS) rocket for the Artemis II crewed lunar mission at Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral, Florida

Three go on trial in **Germany** over plot to overthrow government

The men are accused of backing the self-styled "United Patriots" group

● Four members of the "United Patriots" group were jailed in March 2025 over plans to trigger civil war-like conditions

AFP | Munich, Germany

Three men went on trial in Munich yesterday over allegations they had ties to an extremist group that plotted to overthrow the government and kidnap a minister.

The men are accused of backing the self-styled "United Patriots" group, part of Germany's Reichsbuerger scene.

The term "Reichsbuerger" (Citizen of the Reich) refers to a loose grouping of extremists and conspiracy theorists who reject the legitimacy of the modern German republic.

Long dismissed by critics as malcontents and oddballs, they have become increasingly radicalised in recent years and are seen as a growing security threat.

Two of the defendants held up laptop sleeves to hide their faces from photographers as they filed into the courtroom on Wednesday afternoon.

Four members of the "United



Defendants 71-year-old Joachim K (sitting, L) and 62-year-old Rainer S (sitting, R) hide their faces as they wait at the courtroom prior to the start of a trial against both of them and a third man for backing the self-styled "United Patriots" group, part of Germany's extremist Reichsbuerger scene, on April 1, 2026 at the higher Regional court of Munich, southern Germany.

Patriots" group were jailed in March 2025 over plans to trigger civil war-like conditions in Germany through violence with the aim of taking over state power.

They were also found guilty of plotting to kidnap then-health minister Karl Lauterbach, a figure of scorn for many opponents of Covid-era restrictions.

The men who went on trial Wednesday, identified by the court as 60-year-old Achim M., 71-year-old Joachim K. and 62-year-old Rainer S., are accused of supporting the group and backing its coup plans.

According to prosecutors, the men had all been earmarked to serve as government ministers in a re-established "Kingdom of Prussia" after Germany's current republic had been overthrown.

The group, referred to by investigators as the Kaiserreichsgruppe or "Imperial Group", was allegedly committed to forcibly establishing a new authoritarian Germany based on the old 1871 Imperial Constitution.

The three men and one woman convicted last year over the plot were sentenced to between five years, and nine months and

eight years, in jail by the Koblenz higher regional court.

Sabotage attack

Their plan had included a sabotage attack to disable the power grid in an operation they dubbed "Silent Night" in the hope they would seize power in the ensuing chaos, the court said.

Two further people, a man and a woman, were also jailed in April 2025 for being accomplices in the plot.

The trial in Munich is one of several currently targeting alleged members of the Re-

ichsbuerger movement, whose members adhere to conspiratorial narratives and reject the legitimacy of the modern German state.

There were around 26,000 Reichsbuerger in Germany in 2024, according to the federal domestic intelligence agency (BfV) -- up from around 25,000 in 2023.

In the most shocking case so far, a group of Reichsbuerger led by the self-styled aristocrat Prince Heinrich XIII Reuss are currently on trial in three separate courts for plotting to over-



The Reichsbuerger movement is a loose network of individuals in Germany who reject the legitimacy of the modern German state. They claim that the historical German Reich still exists and therefore refuse to recognise government authority, laws, taxes, or official documents.

throw the government.

In addition to Reuss, defendants in that case include an ex-army officer and a former lawmaker from the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party. In November, German police arrested a man loosely linked to the Reichsbuerger movement who allegedly made calls on the darknet to kill politicians, including former chancellors Angela Merkel and Olaf Scholz. The man, named as Martin S., is accused of running an online platform where he published lists of names and death sentences, gave instructions for building explosives and solicited donations in cryptocurrencies to be used as "bounties".

Prosecutors in those proceedings on Wednesday said they had charged Martin S. with financing terrorism and providing instructions for the commission of a serious act of violence endangering the state.

Macron lauds Europe's 'predictability' in seeming contrast to Trump

AFP | Tokyo, Japan

French President Emmanuel Macron praised Europe's "predictability" during a visit to Japan on Wednesday, contrasting it with countries that "could hurt you without even informing you" in an apparent swipe at Donald Trump.

The US president lashed out at France on Tuesday, writing on social media that Paris had been "very unhelpful" during the war with Iran, which has since spread across the Middle East.

"I'm well aware that sometimes Europe can be seen as a continent that is slower than others," Macron told an audience of Japanese business leaders and investors in Tokyo.

"But predictability has value, and we have demonstrated that over all these past years and, dare I say, even these past weeks: we are where you know we will go," he added.

"That's not bad, in times like these, believe me."

Macron criticised countries that said they were "going much faster" than their allies, but "you



Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and French President Emmanuel Macron review honour guards during a welcome ceremony at the Akasaka Palace State Guest House in Tokyo

don't know whether the day after tomorrow they will still be in that position, and whether tomorrow they won't make a decision that could hurt you without even informing you".

The remark was a reference to the month-long US-Israeli war on Iran, which has responded by virtually closing the vital Strait

of Hormuz, through which a large share of the oil imported by Japan normally transits.

Macron's office had expressed surprise at Trump's criticism of France for not letting planes carrying military supplies for the conflict fly over its territory.

"It is absolutely true that France, which has not been

consulted and is not part of this military offensive launched by the United States and Israel, is not taking part in it," Macron said in an interview with Japanese broadcaster NHK later on Wednesday, adding that had been France's stance since "day one" of the war.

Energy crisis

Macron earlier met with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi in Tokyo and spoke of their cooperation in the face of the "current energy crisis".

"We share a belief in international law and in the international order based on the United Nations Charter, and we also believe in the democratic values that we defend. This is why... we both advocate the return to peace, to a ceasefire, to calm, and to the free movement of people and goods through the Strait of Hormuz," he said.

Takaichi echoed his words, saying the two leaders had agreed "on the importance of ensuring the safety of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, main-

“
I'm well aware that sometimes Europe can be seen as a continent that is slower than others. But predictability has value, and we have demonstrated that over all these past years and, dare I say, even these past weeks: we are where you know we will go. That's not bad, in times like these, believe me

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON

taining a stable supply of essential materials, and calming the situation as soon as possible".

Japan depends on the Middle East for 95 percent of its oil imports and has had to dip into strategic stockpiles to temper the impact of rising fuel prices

since the start of the war.

The two countries signed a roadmap on access to critical minerals and another on defence cooperation, while joint projects are being showcased during the visit, including initiatives to tackle space debris.

But they also shared a lighthearted moment during a news conference, turning to each other and cupping their hands in a gesture known as a kamehameha, taken from globally beloved Japanese manga, anime and video game franchise "Dragon Ball".

Macron's visit, his fourth to the country, comes as China-Japan ties worsen following Takaichi's suggestion in November that Tokyo might intervene militarily in any Chinese attempt to take Taiwan.

Macron visited China in December.

He and his wife Brigitte are due to have lunch with Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako on Thursday but a hoped-for outside viewing of Japan's famous cherry trees in full bloom was cancelled due to heavy rain.

Could NATO be collateral damage from Trump's Iran war?

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

“Paper tiger”. “Cowards”. As US President Donald Trump grapples with the fallout of his war on Iran, much of his anger has been redirected onto another target: the NATO military alliance.

Enraged by European allies who have refused to back his fight, rejected demands to help reopen the Strait of Hormuz, or denied access to US jets, Trump's tone has grown increasingly menacing.

“I was never swayed by NATO. I always knew they were a paper tiger,” Trump told British newspaper *The Telegraph* Wednesday, suggesting he was strongly considering pulling the United States out.

The ire from the president -- who has also blasted NATO allies as “cowards” over Iran -- is just the latest existential crisis to grip the 77-year-old alliance since his return to power last January.

A few months ago he rocked NATO's foundations by threatening to seize the vast Arctic island of Greenland from fellow member Denmark -- before abruptly backing off.

That followed him repeatedly pulling the rug from under Ukraine in its war against Russia, threats not to protect allies if they don't spend more on defence, and warnings Washington could yank troops from Europe.

But while previous storms have blown over, there is increasing anxiety among some US allies that this time the damage



The ire from the president -- who has also blasted NATO allies as “cowards” over Iran -- is just the latest existential crisis to grip the 77-year-old alliance since his return to power last January.

might be harder to recover from. “Day by day it is getting more serious,” one European diplomat at NATO told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Trump has long railed against NATO, calling it “obsolete” in 2017 and mulling withdrawing during his first term in office.

Fuelling the worry is that this time round it is not only Trump that is sounding off about the alliance from Washington, but other traditional supporters.

Secretary of State Marco Ru-

bio warned Tuesday the United States “is going to have to re-examine” its relationship with NATO after several European countries restricted the US military from using bases on their soil.

“When we need them to allow us to use their military bases, their answer is ‘No?’ Then why are we in NATO? You have to ask that question,” he told Fox News.

Former US ambassador to NATO Ivo Daalder argued that while NATO members have han-

dled many disagreements in the past, this standoff threatened the vital glue of trust holding the alliance together.

“The last two weeks have brought relations between the president and European allies to a boiling point,” Daalder, who served under President Barack Obama, wrote in an online post. “This is by far the worst crisis NATO has ever confronted.”

Stronger than ever?

After bending over backwards

repeatedly to keep Trump happy -- including a pledge to ramp up spending at NATO's summit last year -- European allies seem unwilling to play ball this time on Iran.

As Trump didn't consult them before launching the war there is little appetite to help clear up the problems it has unleashed and risk becoming further embroiled.

But while doomsayers see an unbridgeable rift opening up -- others insist that NATO will pull through yet again.

“It has kept us safe for many decades, and we are fully committed to NATO,” British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Wednesday.

Alliance chief Mark Rutte -- dubbed a “Trump whisperer” -- is central as he has managed to keep the president outside, thanks in large part to his unbridled flattery of the US leader.

He has praised Trump for tackling the threat from Iran and continues to insist he has made NATO stronger by cajoling Europeans to up defence spending.

“NATO is stronger today than it has ever been,” he said last week.

‘Roller-coaster’

A major test looks set to come when Trump comes face-to-face with NATO's 31 other leaders at a summit in Ankara in July -- with some hoping the bad blood might have cleared by then.

“The only good news on Ankara is that there is still some time -- three or four months in Trump terms is a lot,” the NATO diplomat said.

Even if this row passes, the alliance needs to brace for further tumult as long as Trump is in charge.

“I wouldn't say it's in permanent-crisis, but rather on a kind of roller-coaster for the next three years or so,” John Deni, a non-resident fellow at the Atlantic Council think tank, told AFP.

Meanwhile among European allies there is a growing sense that Trump has once again reinforced the fundamental fact that they need to take their defence more into their own hands.

“What we want to do is to strengthen Europe's defence within the Atlantic alliance,” French armed forces minister Alice Rufo said.

“That creates reliability and trust.”



NATO operates under a principle called collective defence, meaning an attack on one member is considered an attack on all. This is defined in Article 5 of its founding treaty--and it has been formally invoked only once in history, after the September 11 attacks.

UK to host multi-nation meeting on Hormuz shipping today

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Britain will on Thursday hold a virtual meeting of about 35 countries to discuss how to reopen the strategic Strait of Hormuz which has been crippled by the Middle East war.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced the meeting earlier Wednesday, while a UK official told AFP the meeting would be virtual and held on Thursday.

UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper will host the discussions, Starmer told reporters during a Downing Street news conference.

The meeting will “assess all viable diplomatic and political measures that we can take to restore freedom of navigation, guarantee the safety of trapped ships and seafarers and resume the movement of vital commodities”, he added.

“Following that meeting, we will also convene our military planners to look at how we can marshal our capabilities and make the strait accessible and safe after the fighting has stopped,” he added.

The discussions will include countries who recently signed a statement saying they were



Indian-flagged oil tankers Kashimasan (L) and Swarna Brahmaputra remain docked near an offloading terminal at Butcher Island, off the coast in Mumbai

ready “to contribute to appropriate efforts to ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz”, said Starmer.

Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands are among those to have signed it.

“Will not be easy”

Iran has virtually closed the vital strait since the US-Israeli strikes that started the war on February 28, causing global oil and gas prices to soar.

A fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes through the strait in peacetime.

“I do have to level with people on this. This (reopening) will not be easy,” Starmer said.

The UK leader also backed NATO following renewed criticism of the eight-decade-old alliance by US President Donald Trump.

“NATO is the single most effective military alliance the world has ever seen, and it has kept us safe for many decades, and we are fully committed to NATO,” Starmer said.

Trump told Britain's *Telegraph* newspaper in an article published Wednesday that NATO was a “paper tiger”.

Asked whether he would reconsider US membership, he replied: “Oh yes, I would say (it's) beyond reconsideration,” the paper reported.

Last month, Trump told the *Financial Times* that it would be “very bad for the future of NATO” if members fail to help reopen the vital waterway.

On Tuesday, he said that countries which had not joined the war but were struggling with fuel shortages should “go get your own oil” in the Strait of Hormuz, adding that the US would not help them.

SpaceX files securities documents to go public

AFP | New York, United States

Elon Musk's SpaceX has filed confidential papers with US securities regulators for what could be the largest-ever public stock offering, a source familiar with the matter told AFP on Wednesday.

The filing puts SpaceX on track to list on a public exchange by July, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, which cited people familiar with the matter.

SpaceX did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Officials at the Securities and Exchange Commission declined comment.

US media have reported that the IPO could be valued at a whopping \$75 billion or more for a venture with stratospheric ambitions.

The IPO looks set to blow past the biggest public offering on record from 2019, when the oil group Saudi Aramco raised \$25.6 billion.

SpaceX, which dominates the space launch market with its reusable rockets, is owned by Musk alongside several investment funds and tech companies including Google's parent Alphabet.

The company's rockets vastly reduce the cost of putting



Elon Musk

satellites into orbit. SpaceX is also the owner of the Starlink satellite constellation.

In February, Musk announced that SpaceX was taking over his artificial intelligence outfit xAI, a step in the billionaire's plan to use SpaceX's rockets to launch solar-powered, satellite-based data centers to develop and run future AI models.

\$75bn
SpaceX IPO could be valued this much or more, according to US media

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CELEBS

celebs

Britney Spears sober since DUI arrest

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Britney Spears is three weeks sober. The 44-year-old popstar has been making positive changes since she was arrested earlier this month in Ventura County, California, on suspicion of driving under the influence of a combination of alcohol and drugs.

According to Us Weekly, Britney has been sober since her arrest.

It was claimed she was "driving erratically" before an hour-long police pursuit that ended with the singer being taken into custody on suspicion of DUI.

A 911 caller reportedly described her as "all over the road," prompting officers to track her vehicle until she eventually stopped.

Police sources said Britney appeared "dis-

oriented" when approached, and she was later booked before being released.

Following the incident her team insisted the arrest was a wake-up call that would lead to "long overdue change" in her life.

Her rep told Us Weekly at the time: "This was an unfortunate incident that is completely inexcusable. Britney is going to take the right steps and comply with the law, and hopefully this can be the first step in long overdue change that needs to occur in Britney's life. Hopefully, she can get the help and support she needs during this difficult time."

"Her boys are going to be spending time with her. Her loved ones are going to come up with an overdue needed plan to set her up for success for wellbeing."

Spears shares sons Preston, 20, and

Jayden, 19, with her ex-husband, Kevin Federline.

Britney is set to appear in court on May 4 following her arrest.

The DUI incident has sparked renewed concern among fans, especially as Britney - who has struggled with her mental health and was freed from the constraints of a lengthy conservatorship in 2021 - has been largely out of the public eye in recent months.

Her ex-husband Sam Asghari - who she started dating in 2016, got married to in June 2022 and split 13 months later before getting divorced the following year - has called for privacy for the pop star.



Britney Spears

Ryan Gosling urges Hollywood to hire Carlo Mendes

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Ryan Gosling urged film and TV bosses to give his brother-in-law Carlo Mendes a job during a promotional event for Project Hail Mary.

The actors were at the Directors Guild of America headquarters in Los Angeles on March 21, and Ryan, 45, took the opportunity to big up Carlo, 48, in front of the writers, directors and pro-

ducers in the audience.

In a video shared to TikTok on Monday, the moderator was wrapping up the talk as Ryan jumped in with: "Can I stop you one second? Carlo, are you in the audience? Where? Carlo Mendes, can you stand up for a second?"

The camera then panned to Carlo as he stood up in the room.

Ryan - who is believed to have been married to Carlo's 52-year-

old sister, former actress Eva Mendes, since 2022 - then proceeded to ask if there were any film bosses in the audience who could give his brother-in-law a job.

Ryan said: "OK, how many of you are directors? Raise your hand. How many producers? How many writers?"

The Nice Guys star then introduced his guest, who has ap-

peared in TV shows and films since the mid-2000s.

Ryan explained: "OK, this is Carlo Mendez. He's Eva Mendes' brother. He is the hardest-working non-working actor in this town that I have ever met. So my Hail Mary is, please, hire this man! He deserves it."

Ryan Gosling



Blake Lively still adores Ryan Reynolds as she still takes 'sneaky photos'

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Blake Lively still takes "sneaky photos" of her husband Ryan Reynolds.

The 38-year-old actress shared multiple shots from her recent trip to Wales to support Wrexham AFC - which he has co-owned with fellow actor Rob McElheney, 48, since February 2021 - to Instagram on Saturday. Blake said she is

much in love with Ryan, 49, and finds him attractive.

One picture showed Ryan standing in the bleachers as he chatted to some people, and Blake penned over the image: "After 14.5 years together I still take sneaky photos of him. I have such a crush. (sic)"

Other pictures showed the couple - who got married at Boone Hall Plantation and Gardens in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, in September 2012 - enjoying quality time in the UK, as well as a rare photo of one of their

daughters sitting on Ryan's shoulders.

Blake and Ryan - who met when they were working together on 2011's Green Lantern - have four children, daughters James, 11, Inez, nine, and Betty, six, as well as three-year-old son Olin.

The It Ends With Us actress captioned the sweet upload: "So grateful for the best week with my loved ones. Thank you @wrexham_afc and all the players and everyone who works at that stadium for the performance of a lifetime."



Blake Lively and Ryan Reynolds

Lisa Kudrow wanted to 'preserve' Mad About You role in case Friends flopped

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Lisa Kudrow wasn't convinced Friends would be a hit so she wanted to "preserve" another role just in case it was cancelled.

The 62-year-old actress played Phoebe Buffay for 10 years on the beloved comedy series, but when she was first cast in the role, she had a recurring role as a sarcastic and indifferent waitress in NBC's already-established comedy series, and so approached the

chance of appearing in Friends with caution in case it put her stability at risk.

She told Vanity Fair magazine: "I was really proud to be able to have a role on Mad About You."

"Honestly, when I shot the pilot of Friends, I thought, 'Yeah, I mean, this is a good show. But good shows don't get picked up all the time.'"

"Thank God for Mad About You, which was my favourite show on TV. I mean, I thought that was such a great show. It was a quality multi-camera show..."

"If there's any hope of me being able

to stay on Mad About You, after the [Friends] pilot doesn't get picked up or they pick it up for, you know, 12 more episodes, and then that's it... like after this fails, because there's no telling what's gonna happen, something can be great, and still, it gets cancelled, I'd still have Mad About You."

"I was preserving Mad About You for myself."

But after Lisa was cast in Friends - which debuted in 1994 and also starred Jennifer Aniston, Courteney Cox, David Schwimmer, Matt LeBlanc and the late Matthew Perry - NBC bosses had a

dilemma as to how to explain away the fact the same actress would be appearing in two primetime shows as different characters.

And so the actress was delighted when her Mad About You character, Ursula Buffay, was introduced as Phoebe's twin sister, adding depth to her back story.

She said: "Friends found that they had to justify why this same face and voice is gonna be on at 8:00 p.m. on Mad About You once in a while, and then there she is at 8:30 p.m. on Friends."

"They had to cope with that. And incorporate Ursula into Friends."



Lisa Kudrow

Brazil down Croatia 3-1 in warm-up

Late goals from Igor Thiago and Martinelli seal comeback win

- Danilo opened scoring on counter-attack
- Majer equalized for Croatia in 83rd minute
- Igor Thiago converted 88th-minute penalty
- Martinelli added third in stoppage time
- Brazil open World Cup against Morocco June 13

AFP | Orlando



Brazil's forward #10 Vinicius Junior and Croatia's forward #09 Andrej Kramaric vie for the ball

Brazil bounced back from last week's friendly defeat to France to score a 3-1 victory over Croatia in their World Cup warm-up game in Orlando on Tuesday. Goals from Danilo, Igor Thi-

ago and Gabriel Martinelli secured victory in what was Brazil's final game before coach

Carlo Ancelotti names his World Cup squad. The Brazilians took the lead

with a superb goal on the counter-attack in first-half stoppage time, Botafogo attacker Danilo

3 goals in the final seven minutes turned the game for Brazil after Croatia equalised

finishing emphatically after a blistering run from Real Madrid's Vinicius Jr.

Croatia equalized through Lovro Majer in the 83rd minute, but second-half substitute Endrick turned the match back in Brazil's favor.

The Lyon forward earned the penalty converted by Igor Thiago to equalize in the 88th minute, then set up Martinelli for Brazil's third in added time to seal the win.

The result offered a measure of revenge for Brazil, who were knocked out by Croatia on penalties in the quarter-finals of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.



Brazil's win offered a measure of revenge for their 2022 World Cup quarter-final exit, when Croatia knocked them out on penalties after a 1-1 draw in Qatar

Brazil, seeking a sixth world title after last lifting the trophy in 2002, will open their Group C campaign against Morocco on June 13, before facing Haiti on June 19 and Scotland on June 24.

Croatia begin their World Cup in Group L with a high-profile clash against England on June 17, followed by matches against Panama on June 23 and Ghana on June 27.

Portugal down US 2-0 as World Cup hosts again fail to shine

- Bruno Fernandes assists both goals
- Trincao scores from Fernandes backheel
- Felix heads second from corner

AFP | Los Angeles

Bruno Fernandes picked apart the United States defense to hand Portugal a 2-0 win Tuesday over the World Cup hosts, who again failed to deliver against top-tier opponents ahead of this summer's tournament.

Manchester United playmaker Fernandes had two assists, setting up Francisco Trincao with a cool backheel, before finding a totally unmarked Joao Felix from a corner to double the lead.

For the US, who face rising expectations as they prepare to co-host the World Cup with Mexico and Canada, it was a second underwhelming friendly in three days at Atlanta's Mercedes-Benz Stadium, after a 5-2 thrashing by Belgium at the weekend.

In his final game before picking his tournament squad, coach Mauricio Pochettino's experiment of playing Christian Pulisic as a striker fizzled out, as the US talisman missed several chances before being substituted at the break.

It was an eighth defeat in a row for the US against European sides. But Pochettino insisted his players can break that curse when it really matters this summer.

"Always [it] is the hope the

“We put a lot of pressure on them in the first half of both the games, and we were able to create chances. If I finish a couple chances -- which I know I'm going to -- things are going to be a bit different**”**

CHRISTIAN PULISIC

first time is going to be in the World Cup," he said, after the game.

The US started brightly. Given license to rampage forward in the absence of striker Folarin Balogun, Pulisic shot from a narrow angle in the game's sixth minute, but his tame effort was blocked.

Timothy Weah sent in a dangerous cross for Pulisic midway through the half. But Pulisic, who has yet to score for AC Milan in 2026, and has not found the net for the US since 2024, totally failed to connect with the ball.

A better Pulisic effort from 25 yards flashed just wide of the post, before Fernandes -- played through with an incisive Vitorinha pass -- cleverly backheeled it to Trincao, who slotted home.

In the final moments of the first half, Pulisic found himself in a one-on-one race with Henrique Araujo, but could not get past the defender and earned himself a booking for lashing out, before being substituted off.

"We put a lot of pressure on them in the first half of both



Bruno Fernandes of Portugal is challenged by Austin Trusty of United States

8 straight defeats against European sides highlight US struggles before home World Cup

the games, and we were able to create chances," Pulisic said after the game.

"If I finish a couple chances

-- which I know I'm going to -- things are going to be a bit different."

For the second half, Pochettino reverted to a more traditional formation with the arrival of striker Patrick Agyemang, who had scored against Belgium.

The Portuguese made seven substitutions. It did not appear to upset their rhythm, and the Europeans' lead soon doubled.

Fernandes pinged a corner to Felix, who somehow had time to control the ball, let it bounce and loop up for a volley, which he

YOU KNOW WHAT

The defeat marked a worrying trend for the World Cup co-hosts, as Christian Pulisic continued a difficult goal drought, having failed to find the net for his country since 2024 or for AC Milan in 2026

buried in the bottom left corner.

A string of further substitutions from both sides slowed down the game. US goalkeeper Matt Freese was forced into two excellent saves -- one from a blistering long range by Ruben Neves, and off Francisco Conceicao in stoppage time.

The World Cup kicks off on June 11. The US will face Paraguay, Australia and Turkey, with high hopes of reaching the knockouts.

Despite back-to-back friendly losses, Pochettino said the only way to improve before the intense pressure of a home World Cup was to test his less vaunted side against daunting opposition.

"We are the USA. And we are competing against Belgium, Portugal," he said.

"I think for sure, Belgium and Portugal have in the top 100, a few, or some players playing in that top 100. I think we don't have."

"That is why it is good to play against this type of team."

Son under scrutiny ahead of World Cup after South Korea friendly woes



Son Heung-min

AFP | Seoul

Captain Son Heung-min admitted South Korea have work to do after losing two friendlies in Europe without scoring a goal and with his own form under scrutiny ahead of the World Cup.

South Korea lost 1-0 to Austria in Vienna on Tuesday, with the out-of-sorts Son failing to convert several chances in front of goal, after suffering a 4-0 drubbing against Ivory Coast in England on Saturday.

The games were the final chance for players to impress coach Hong Myung-bo before he names his squad for the World Cup in the United States, Mexico and Canada in June-July.

"The result is certainly disappointing but I think we need to focus on the positive aspects and prepare better for the upcoming World Cup," said Son.

"I know fans may feel disappointed compared to their expectations, but the real stage is the World Cup." South Korea have been grouped with co-hosts Mexico, South Africa and the Czech Republic in the 48-team tournament.

"What we do there will shape those expectations again," said Son.

Messi on target as Argentina down Zambia in World Cup send-off

Argentina thrash Zambia 5-0 at La Bombonera before World Cup title defence

- Argentina beat Zambia 5-0 in Buenos Aires

- Messi scores 116th international goal

- Sets up Julian Alvarez for opening goal

- Messi hands penalty to Otamendi for 3-0

AFP | Buenos Aires

Lionel Messi scored one goal and set up another as Argentina thrashed Zambia 5-0 on Tuesday in the South Americans' final game on home soil before launching the defence of their World Cup crown.

Messi, restored to the starting line-up by coach Lionel Scaloni after Argentina's lackluster win over Mauritania last Friday, made an instant impact in Tuesday's friendly at La Bombonera in Buenos Aires.

The 38-year-old superstar set up the opening goal for Julian Alvarez before bagging his 116th goal for Argentina with



Argentina's forward #09 Julian Alvarez (C) celebrates scoring his team's first goal with teammates midfielder #24 Enzo Fernandez (L) and forward #10 Lionel Messi (R)

an individual strike just before half-time.

Tuesday's game marked a World Cup send-off for the reigning world champions, who will face Algeria, Austria and Jordan in Group J of the finals

in June.

Argentina will also play a friendly against Serbia in June, and are seeking to arrange another warm-up fixture before the tournament.

Messi is firmly expected to

captain Argentina into what will be a record sixth World Cup finals as the South American giants target back-to-back titles.

The Inter Miami playmaker once again demonstrated his enduring influence on the Albice-

leste with a typically decisive contribution in a comfortable win.

Alvarez fired Argentina into the lead after just four minutes when Messi effortlessly controlled a lofted pass on the edge of the area and then threaded a pass into the feet of the Atletico Madrid striker to score.

Messi doubled Argentina's lead with the 902nd goal of his career two minutes before half-time, working a clever one-two with Liverpool midfielder Alexis Mac Allister before tucking a low finish past Zambia goalkeeper Willard Mwanza.

Messi could have added to his goals tally just after half-time when Argentina were awarded a penalty following Albert Kangwanda's foul on Thiago Almada.

902

career goals have now been scored by Lionel Messi following his clinical individual strike against Zambia just two minutes before the half-time whistle



In a show of veteran camaraderie, Lionel Messi declined the chance to extend his own scoring record from the penalty spot, instead handing the ball to 38-year-old defender Nicolas Otamendi to tuck away the team's third goal

But rather than take the spot kick himself, Messi handed the ball to veteran defender Nicolas Otamendi, and the 38-year-old made no mistake from the spot for a 3-0 lead.

An own goal from Dominic Chanda in the 68th minute put Argentina 4-0 up, before rising star Valentin Barco completed the scoring in stoppage time to make it 5-0.

Morocco 'focused on World Cup' amid AFCON controversy



Morocco's players celebrate after beating Paraguay in a friendly in Lens, France

AFP | Lens

Morocco coach Mohamed Ouahbi insisted Tuesday that his side was fully focused on the upcoming World Cup after a 2-1 friendly win over Paraguay, despite the ongoing controversy of January's Africa Cup of Nations final.

"We are focused on the World Cup. We have had 10 days together where I honestly haven't felt as though anyone has been distracted," the recently-appointed Ouahbi said of his team in Lens, in northern France, where Tuesday's game took place.

Morocco beat Paraguay thanks to goals by Bilal El Khannouss and Neil El Aynaoui, with Gustavo Caballero replying for the South Americans.

The win for Morocco came

on the back of a 1-1 draw with Ecuador in Madrid on Friday, as the Atlas Lions prepare for the World Cup in which they will go into Group C along with Brazil, Haiti and Scotland.

"Our job, as a staff and as players, is to prepare for the World Cup," added Ouahbi, who was appointed in early March to succeed Walid Regragui.

"The federation's job is to protect the team. We are in good hands and we are very confident."

Morocco lost 1-0 to Senegal after extra time in the AFCON final, but Senegal were stripped of the title by the Confederation of African Football in mid-March as a punishment after several of their players walked off the pitch during that game in protest at a penalty awarded to the hosts.

Gattuso asked to stay on as Italy coach after World Cup disaster

- Italy lose to Bosnia on penalties

- First champions with three absences

AFP | Zenica

Gennaro Gattuso has been asked to stay on as coach of the national team, Italy's football chief said moments after Tuesday's play-off defeat to Bosnia and Herzegovina which meant the Azzurri will miss out on a third straight World Cup.

Italy lost the penalty shootout 4-1 after drawing 1-1 in Zenica, and became the first World Cup winners to miss three consecutive editions of the tournament, which this year will be held in the United States,

to Italian broadcaster RAI by saying it "wasn't important".

our goal," said Gattuso. A World Cup winner as a play-



Italy's defender #21 Alessandro Bastoni (C, bottom) receives a red card from the referee

Canada and Mexico.

"I've asked him to stay and asked (Gianluigi) Buffon to stay in charge of the football side," Gabriele Gravina, president of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC), told reporters.

Buffon has a role within the FIGC which involves overseeing the senior and youth national teams, and he said he would wait until the end of the current season in June before making a decision on his future.

Asked whether he would accept Gravina's invitation to stay, Gattuso repeated what he said

It's really painful. I would have given anything today, I would have given up years of my life, money, for us to achieve our goal

GENNARO GATTUSO

"It's really painful. I would have given anything today, I would have given up years of my life, money, for us to achieve

er in 2006, Gattuso was hired in June last year to replace the sacked Luciano Spalletti, with a contract which expires after the World Cup.

Gravina also said he would not step down, but his presence as the head of the FIGC would be discussed at a board meeting next week.

"We know that we're in a profound crisis, a crisis that requires serious reflection and not only by the FIGC but also from politicians who have only pushed for resignations," he said.



This defeat marks a grim historical milestone, as Italy is now the first-ever World Cup-winning nation to fail to qualify for three consecutive editions of the prestigious global tournament

Tuchel faces World Cup **selection dilemmas** after England falter

England boss admits “tough exam” as injuries leave World Cup preparations in disarray

● England lose 1-0 to Japan at Wembley

● Tuchel had seven or eight players withdraw

● Kane, Rice, Saka, Stones all unavailable

● Bellingham left on bench

AFP | London

Thomas Tuchel says he now has more “clarity” after England’s final home match before the World Cup, but there appear to be more questions than answers after a limp 1-0 defeat against Japan.

The England boss named a 35-man group for Wembley fixtures against Uruguay and Japan and took the unusual step of splitting his players into two training camps.

Friday’s 1-1 draw against Uruguay featured a largely second-string side, who failed to mount a strong case for inclusion in the World Cup squad.

Tuchel had hoped to bring in a clutch of first-choice players on Tuesday but had to tear up his plans due to a spate of withdrawals.

Arsenal pair Declan Rice and Bukayo Saka dropped out along with Manchester City defender John Stones while Harry Kane was watching the stands, nursing a minor injury, and Jude Bellingham was left on the bench.

The Euro 2024 runners-up



England's midfielder Elliott Anderson (L) shoots under pressure from Japan's midfielder Ritsu Doan (R)

dominated possession against Japan but lacked incision, spark and fluidity in their final game before Tuchel names his World Cup squad.

The match was decided by Kaoru Mitoma’s fine first-half goal which gave Japan a first win against England.

A disappointed Tuchel pleaded mitigating factors, underlining the demands of club football as the season nears its climax.

“We knew that we had a tough exam to play for in this window because our players are heavily invested in club football, they’re heavily invested in European football and in the physically

48
goals in just 40 matches is the prolific scoring record Harry Kane has maintained for Bayern Munich this season, highlighting why Thomas Tuchel labeled his captain “irreplaceable”

toughest league that there is,” he said.

“We played against two top-20 teams, well-drilled, very good opponents, who arrived in the best line-up.

“We had seven, eight injuries

who had to leave camp. It’s not an excuse, it’s just an explanation why things are not perfectly smooth and maybe perfectly on the highest level that we expect.”

Kane irreplaceable

England are one of the favourites as they attempt to win a first World Cup since 1966 and on paper Tuchel has a side equipped to go all the way.

But there remain major questions over key positions eight weeks before the German names his World Cup squad.

Harry Kane, who has scored 48 goals in 40 matches during a stellar season for Bayern Munich, appears irreplaceable.



Tuchel split his squad into two training camps and tested Phil Foden as a “false nine” without Harry Kane, but the experiment exposed England’s lack of cutting edge against Japan’s pressing



We knew that we had a tough exam to play for in this window because our players are heavily invested in club football, they’re heavily invested in European football and in the physically toughest league that there is

THOMAS TUCHEL

Rice was missed but Elliot Anderson probably did enough to show that he is a worthy partner for the Arsenal man in midfield.

In central defence, Marc Guehi and Ezri Konsa had some rocky moments against Japan, though they could be starters against Croatia in Dallas on June 17, while the left-back slot still appears up for grabs.

A bullish Tuchel said he now has “more clarity” over his squad despite the disappointing results, but admitted he would be watching nervously over the next few weeks.

“It will be scary to watch TV on the weekend because from now on every muscle injury can mean that a player misses out,” he said.

“This camp will not define us and we have two months to digest it, to take the learnings, to nominate our squads, to get the players back healthy,” he said.

“Hopefully they stay healthy, we have the full choice and then we will pursue our dream from June.”

Iraq beat Bolivia 2-1 to claim final World Cup place

AFP | Monterrey

Iraq became the 48th and final team to qualify for the World Cup on Tuesday, defeating Bolivia 2-1 in an intercontinental playoff in Mexico to seal their first appearance at the finals in 40 years.

Iraq, whose preparations for Tuesday’s playoff had been disrupted by the war in the Middle East, will play in World Cup Group I against France, Senegal and Norway.

Goals from Ali Al-Hamadi and Ayman Hussein secured a famous win for Iraq, whose last appearance at the World Cup came at the 1986 finals in Mexico.

The win marked a triumph for Iraq’s Australian coach Graham Arnold, who had initially sought to have Tuesday’s fixture postponed due to the disruption caused by the regional conflict triggered by US-Israeli strikes on Iran.



Iraq’s Australian coach Graham Arnold celebrates with substitute goalkeeper Kumel Saadi

Most of the Iraqi squad only reached Mexico after a gruelling three-day journey from Baghdad that began with an overland crossing into Jordan.

But there was little sign of weariness during a confident

start by Iraq, who took the lead after nine minutes through Luton Town striker Al-Hamadi — the 24-year-old who moved to Liverpool as a toddler following the outbreak of the 2003 Iraq war.

Iraq midfielder Amir Al-Am-

mari won a corner after a superb free-kick that was saved at full stretch from Bolivia goalkeeper Guillermo Viscarra.

From the subsequent set piece Al-Ammari curled a pinpoint corner on to the head of Al-Hamadi who nodded home for 1-0.

Iraq were well worth the early goal and looked in control until Bolivia, who had gradually grown into the game, equalized after 38 minutes.

Ramiro Vaca’s shot from the edge of the area was controlled with one touch by Moises Paniagua and the Morocco-based central midfielder swept into the roof of the net.

The goal stunned Iraq and Bolivia looked likely to grab a second after dominating the remainder of the half.

Iraq regained the lead eight minutes into the second half, when a long ball forward was nodded into the path of substitute Marko Lawk-Farji.

Doncic returns with 42 as Lakers down Cavs



Luka Doncic of the Los Angeles Lakers reacts after making a three-pointer against the Cleveland Cavaliers

AFP | Los Angeles

Luka Doncic returned from suspension to score 42 points as the Los Angeles Lakers defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers 127-113 to extend their impressive form with a fourth straight victory on Tuesday.

The Lakers, who have emerged as genuine title contenders after winning 15 of

17 games in March to climb up the Western Conference standings, took control with big quarters either side of half-time to cruise to victory.

The Lakers outscored Cleveland 33-19 in the second quarter and then erupted for 45 points in the third to put the game away.

Doncic finished with 42 points, 12 assists and five rebounds, shooting 6-of-13 from three-point range.

Bahrain's 3x3 teams bow out at Asia Cup

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's women's and men's 3x3 basketball teams concluded their campaigns at the FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup 2026 qualifiers yesterday, with both squads unable to advance past the pool stage. The tournament, now in its ninth edition and hosted for the fifth consecutive year at Singapore Sports Hub, tested the Kingdom's teams against some of Asia's toughest competition.

The women's team struggled to find rhythm in their opening game of qualifying draw C, suffering a heavy 21-4 loss to Chinese Taipei. The Taiwanese squad raced to an early lead, connecting on inside and long-range shots, while Bayan Salman kept Bahrain on the board with a two-pointer and Shirin Madwar added the team's only other basket. Despite the lopsided score, the experience offered valuable lessons against a top-tier opponent.

Bahrain bounced back in their second game, showing resilience against Hong Kong. Salman led the effort with 10 points, including four long-range shots,



Bayan Salman drives for a floater in Bahrain's final match against Saudi Arabia

while Madwar contributed four throughout, with Bahrain trading baskets and mounting a late

challenge, but Hong Kong ultimately pulled away to claim a



Bahrain's Salman Al Kaabi goes for a layup in their match against Hong Kong

20-14 victory. The women ended their qual-

ifiers on a high note, defeating Saudi Arabia 14-9. After a tight start, Bahrain gradually seized control, with Salman scoring eight points and Madwar adding five. The win, however, was not enough to progress, as only the top team in the pool moved on to the main draw.

The men's team faced a similarly tough path in qualifying draw D. Their opener against Hong Kong was a thriller, with Bahrain trailing 8-14 before rallying to tie the game at 14-14. Salman Ahmed Isa Alkaabi scored the equalizer, but Kwok Chuen Cheung delivered the decisive point in the closing seconds for a 15-14 defeat.

Bahrain's second game against Kazakhstan saw another strong push. Naser Al Musawi scored eight points and Mohammed Ghazwan added five, keeping the team close, but Kazakhstan's steady shooting earned them a 20-16 win.

In their final match, Bahrain fell 21-19 to India in a back-and-forth contest. Al Musawi and Ghazwan kept Bahrain within striking distance through several lead changes, but India edged ahead in the final minutes to seal the result.

Manama on brink as Muharraaq reach finals

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Manama moved within one win of the finals, while defending champions Muharraaq secured their spot in the Zain Bahrain Basketball League title series last night. Both games were played behind closed doors at Khalifa Sports City Arena in Isa Town due to regional conflicts, lending an unusual quiet intensity to the best-of-five semi-final series. 25-time record champions Manama edged Al Najma 95-92 in overtime in the first matchup, while Muharraaq later overwhelmed Al Ahli 102-63 to complete a 3-0 sweep. The results set up a finals matchup that promises a clash of experience and ambition.

From the opening tip, Manama and Najma played as if the margin for error had vanished. Manama, guided by Bahraini coach Salman Ramadhan, leaned on veteran poise, while Najma, still chasing a first league championship, brought relentless energy. Hasan Nowrooz struck from deep early, and Ali Jaber orchestrated the offense with calm efficiency, helping Manama build a 17-10 lead midway through the first quarter. Najma responded late, with Ahmed Aldurazi and Hassan Fahad finding key baskets to close the frame ahead 19-17, the quiet arena amplifying every shot and whistle.

Najma extended their grip in the second quarter. Aldurazi continued to score from long range, and Mohammed Abdulla Jaffar connected on consecutive triples, while Fahad's inside presence kept Najma ahead. Manama stayed close, with Emran Hasan repeatedly hitting from deep to keep his team within striking distance. Alex Young



Nick West throws down a powerful dunk for Muharraaq

briefly restored a Manama lead, but Najma still held a slim 42-39 advantage at halftime, the tension in the empty arena palpable as both teams retreated to the benches. Hasan's scoring and leadership in this stretch would ultimately earn him man of the match honors, finishing with 23 points, four rebounds, and an incredible seven of nine from three.

The third quarter saw Najma push their lead to 10. Mohamed Hussain hit free throws, Donovan Smith dominated the paint, and Mohamed Kuwayed added from distance. Manama chipped away

through Ahmed Salman's consecutive three-pointers and Romeo Enan's free throws, cutting the deficit to 62-57 heading into the final quarter. Every possession felt decisive, the silence magnifying the weight of each turnover and shot.

The fourth quarter became a tense back-and-forth. Najma led early, but Manama regained momentum through precise perimeter shooting. Hasan and Salman hit from deep while Jaber ran the offense. Enan gave Manama a narrow lead before Aldurazi tied it again. Hasan struck once more,



Manama's Mohammed Buallay during last night's match against Al Najma

Smith responded, and regulation ended at 83-83, forcing overtime. The quiet arena seemed to hold its collective breath as players set up for extra time. In overtime, Manama executed with clarity and composure. Hasan opened with a three, Mohamed Ghazi added a basket, and Salman extended the lead from distance. Najma threatened late, but a turnover by Aldurazi in the final seconds ended their push, and Mohammed Buallay's free throw sealed the 95-92 victory. Hasan's performance, combining sharpshooting and composure

in clutch moments, made him the standout and rightful man of the match.

Later, Muharraaq delivered a dominant statement against Al Ahli. The four-time champions, under German coach Peter Schomers, came out aggressively, setting the tone immediately. Nick West finished an alley-oop, and Mohamed Nasser stretched the floor with a three, helping Muharraaq build a 27-21 first-quarter lead. The Eagles stayed within reach briefly, but turnovers and defensive lapses allowed the Red Wolves to grad-

ually pull away.

By the second quarter, Muharraaq's depth and shooting began to tell. Nader Ali hit multiple threes, Michael Warren scored in transition, and Nasser continued his perimeter assault. Al Ahli struggled to contain the attack, falling behind 55-36 at halftime. The third quarter effectively decided the game. The Red Wolves' lead ballooned past 30 points as West scored inside, Nasser and Ali continued to connect from distance, and Wayne Chism dominated the boards. By the end of the quarter, Muharraaq led 87-45, leaving the Eagles unable to mount a comeback.

In the fourth quarter, Muharraaq maintained control, finishing 102-63. Five players scored in double figures, led by Nasser with 19 points, 14 rebounds, and an impressive five of six from three — a performance that earned him man of the match honors. Warren added 18, Mahmood Abbas Isa contributed 16, and West added 14. For the Eagles, Maitham Jameel scored 13 and Hesham Sarhan 11. The win secured Muharraaq's place in the finals and reinforced their dominance, a reminder that their depth and precision make them the benchmark in the league.

Manama's grit under Ramadhan stands in sharp contrast to Al Najma's drive for a first-ever title, while the Red Wolves keep proving their depth, precision, and championship pedigree under Schomers. Saturday will determine who earns the right to face the defending champions, with both experience and hunger on full display. The semi-finals have shown just how fine the margins are — every shot, every stop, every play could decide it.