

Bahrain voices deep concern over tensions in Yemen

TDT | Manama

The Kingdom of Bahrain is closely monitoring developments in Yemen and has expressed deep concern over the escalation of tensions and the ensuing internal developments that undermine Yemen's sovereignty and independence and threaten regional security and stability.

The Kingdom called on the Yemeni people to exercise sound judgement, restraint, and to cease further escalation, in the interest of restoring and maintaining security and stability in Yemen.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the Kingdom of Bahrain welcomed the Yemeni initiative to convene a comprehensive conference bringing together all southern components to discuss fair solutions to the southern issue. The ministry described the initiative as a positive step towards adopting dialogue and diplomatic solutions.

The statement said that such efforts could contribute to a political settlement of the current crisis.

Foreign national held at airport for drug possession

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The Ministry of Interior confirmed that the Anti-Narcotics Directorate of the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation and Forensic Science has arrested a 32-year-old foreign national upon his arrival in the Kingdom on a visit visa via Bahrain International Airport, after he was found in possession of more than three kilograms of cocaine with an estimated street value of around BD400,000.

Investigations about the case led to identifying the suspect and arresting him.

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HM King briefed on BDF Royal Guard modernisation plans

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His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Commander of the Royal Guard's Special Operations; Lieutenant General Theyab bin Saqr Al Nuaimi, BDF Chief of Staff; Major General Hamad Khalifa Al Noaimi, Deputy Royal Guard Commander; and a number of senior officers.

Parade

The national anthem was played, after which His Majesty inspected the parade.

The ceremony began with a recitation from the Holy Quran, followed by a poem delivered by Lt. Gen. HH Shaikh Nasser.

HM the King then visited the Royal Guard Special Operations



Museum. Lt. Gen. HH Shaikh Nasser and Colonel HH Shaikh Khalid briefed His Majesty on plans to develop the Royal Guard and equip it with advanced weapons and capabilities.

Appreciation

At the conclusion of the visit, HM King Hamad expressed appreciation to Lt. Gen. HH Shaikh Nasser, Colonel HH Shaikh Khalid, and all members of the Royal Guard, as well as to their colleagues across all units of the BDF. HM the King also congratulated all BDF personnel on the New Year, wishing them continued success.

'We're in charge'

Trump says US to 'run' Venezuela after toppling Maduro in military attack

AFP | Palm Beach, US



US President Trump speaks to the press following US military actions in Venezuela, at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Palm Beach, Florida. (AFP)

nies, the biggest anywhere in the world, go in, spend billions of dollars, fix the badly broken infrastructure," he said.

"We'll be selling large amounts of oil," he said.

Custody

The 79-year-old Republican posted a picture of Maduro in custody on a US naval ship wearing a blindfold, handcuffs and what looked like noise-cancelling ear muffs.

He and his wife were being taken to New York to face narcotics and terrorism charges.

US-backed opposition leader Maria Corina Machado, who

"We're there now, but we're going to stay until such time as the proper transition can take place
 US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP

essentially willing to do what we think is necessary to make Venezuela great again."

Trump also made clear that the US presence is unlikely to be short.

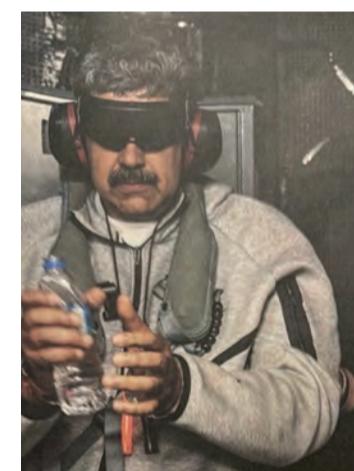
"We're there now, but we're going to stay until such time as the proper transition can take place."

The United Nations chief said he was "deeply concerned that the rules of international law have not been respected."

Condemnation

China, a backer of Maduro's hard-left regime, said it "strongly condemns" the US attack, while France warned that a solution for troubled Venezuela cannot "be imposed from outside."

Venezuelans had been bracing for attacks as US forces, including the aircraft carrier USS



Venezuela President Maduro onboard the USS Iwo Jima after the US military captured him yesterday. (AFP)

Gerald R. Ford, spent months massing off the coast.

Caracas residents woke to explosions and the whir of military helicopters around 2:00 am (0600 GMT). Airstrikes hit a major military base and an airbase, among other sites, for nearly an hour, AFP journalists said.

The bombing turned out to be only part of the more ambitious plan to topple Maduro and bring him to US soil to face narco-trafficking charges.

Trump said the assault began with a partial blackout caused by US "expertise."

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HM King attends wedding of HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Hamad

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His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa attended the wedding of His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa, accompanied by his sons.

The ceremony was held at the majlis of the late Shaikh Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa in Riffa.

Senior members of the Royal Family and invited guests were

also in attendance.

HM the King congratulated HH Shaikh Hamad bin Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa on his son's marriage and wished the couple a happy married life.

The sons of the late Shaikh Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa expressed their appreciation to His Majesty for attending the wedding and for the congratulations and kind sentiments.



His Majesty with HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa and senior members of the Royal Family

Bahraini accused of laundering \$97,000 from US online scam

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

A Bahraini man is accused of laundering about \$97,000 from a cross-border online scam after a US company was tricked by a phone call and a fake link into handing over its online banking credentials, a court heard.

Prosecutors say the scheme led to transfers totalling about \$197,000, before bank checks and financial inquiries uncovered the trail and helped recover close to half the money.

The first defendant, 27, is said to have worked with a 21-year-old friend who has fled.

Transaction

Investigators told the court the older man rang the American company, claimed he worked for a US bank and warned of a suspicious transaction on its account.

A captain at the Financial Intelligence National Centre (FINC) at the Ministry of Interior said the caller then claimed he would transfer the line to the bank's anti-fraud team. A web link followed, sent on the pretext of updating the firm's banking details.



Account analysis showed eight overseas transfers to a Gulf state totalling BD26,735.040, plus 12 domestic transfers within Bahrain totalling BD10,024.042, alongside repeated cash withdrawals.

Once the company entered its credentials, the fraudsters were able to move the money, the witness said.

Information

The captain said FINC later received information from external sources indicating that on Thursday, 28 August 2025, \$97,943.46 was credited to the first defendant's account, about BD36,830.816, as suspected proceeds of online fraud.

He said the defendant admitted receiving the transfer and then moving it through a series of transactions, acting on instructions from his friend outside Bahrain.

Account analysis showed eight overseas transfers to a Gulf state totalling BD26,735.040, plus 12

domestic transfers within Bahrain totalling BD10,024.042, alongside repeated cash withdrawals, the captain said.

Pattern

Investigators say the pattern was used to hide where the money came from.

The captain told the court the fugitive friend also passed on BD5,000 from the proceeds, claiming it was for buying cars from a Gulf country.

Investigators said the story did not add up, given the size of the sums moving through the accounts and the defendant's failure to ask where the money came from.

Accounts

They also said the friend held



bank accounts despite claiming otherwise.

The case also involves the defendant's wife.

The captain said a second transfer, worth \$99,283.23, about BD37,330.494, was sent into her account on the same day using the same method, but an intermediary bank froze the funds and returned them to the American company before they could be used.

Inquiries

A first lieutenant at FINC said inquiries pointed to the 27-year-old as the main organiser.

He told the court that a second defendant admitted acting on

the first defendant's orders, and that the first defendant supplied the bank accounts and details used to receive and move the proceeds.

He said the timing of contact between the men matched the transfers, pointing to prior planning, and noted that the first defendant had previously worked in information technology.

Bank staff described how fast the money moved.

Transfer

The bank's risk manager said the transfer arrived through an intermediary bank, then the bank received an alert the next day saying it was linked to fraud.

By then, he said, most of the sum had already been sent out or withdrawn, while banks abroad later reported the amounts received had been paid out.

The bank's operations manager said the transfer into the wife's account was suspended and blocked after the bank received an alert, and no documents were provided to support the stated purpose of the payment.

Questioning

During questioning, investigators said, the first defendant admitted receiving the transfers and moving the funds within Bahrain and abroad on his friend's instructions.

He also admitted giving the bank inaccurate information, saying he feared taxes, and acknowledged using his wife's account and banking app to add beneficiary accounts before the incident.

His wife said she did not know the source of the transfer and that her husband later told her his friend had sent the money to buy cars, but she could not provide documents to support that claim.

Riffa building fire



Civil Defense teams evacuated a multi-storey residential building in the Riffa area and successfully extinguished a fire that broke out in one of the apartments, with no injuries reported. Preliminary findings indicate that the blaze was caused by a high-voltage electrical connection. The relevant authorities took the necessary measures and investigation into the incident.

Verdict set for 13 January in airport hashish smuggling case

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

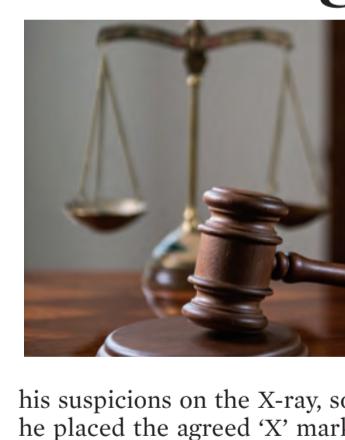
A 'X' mark on a suitcase at Bahrain International Airport has set a 13 January deadline for the High Criminal Court to rule on the case of a 24-year-old Asian mechanic accused of bringing hashish into the country and carrying other controlled drugs.

Prosecutors say the defendant, described as a mechanical fitter, brought in and held cannabis (hashish) for dealing during 2025.

He is also accused of bringing in and holding morphine and the psychoactive substances pregabalin and clonazepam for use, in ways not allowed by law.

The case dates back to 24 August, when a customs officer told the court he was screening bags arriving from an Asian country.

He said one suitcase raised



his suspicions on the X-ray, so he placed the agreed 'X' mark for a closer search.

The officer said the defendant was asked if he had anything to declare and replied that he did not. When the suitcase was opened, the officer said he found tobacco material suspected to be a narcotic substance weighing 2.2kg, along with 29 capsules suspected to be a psychoactive substance and 30 tablets hidden between folds of clothing.

Police inquiries, backed by confidential sources, said the defendant had brought the items and knew they were in his bag, and that they were banned from entry into Bahrain, the court heard.

According to the case file, the defendant admitted bringing the seized items from an Asian country for friends living with him.

The haul was said to include 399 packets containing narcotic material and hashish.

Renewable energy bill and arbitration court deal up for Shura debate today

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Shura members will meet today to debate an amended renewable energy bill that would exempt renewable-energy systems and energy-efficiency equipment from all customs duties.

The session also includes a host country agreement for the Permanent Court of Arbitration and a disputed change to public-sector contract rules for non-Bahrainis.

The renewable energy item comes through a supplementary report by the Public Utilities and Environment Committee on a revised proposal put forward by Talal Al Mammari, Dala Al Zayed, Dr Mohammed Ali Hassan, Juma Al Kaabi and Ali Al Aradi.

The draft bill is linked to Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 and seeks to draw investment into renewables, keep pace with the shift towards cleaner power, and put a legal framework in place for the sector.

Move

It also links the move to cutting electricity use, easing pressure on the grid, and reducing



spending by the Electricity and Water Authority.

The committee has backed the proposal after agreeing changes with its sponsors.

It rewrote the definition of the 'Authority' so it refers to the body whose name is set by decree. It also added a clause stating that the Civil Code applies where the bill contains no specific provision.

Change

A further change adds a sec-

ond paragraph to Article 13 stating that "all systems, devices and equipment" linked to renewable energy sources, energy-efficiency measures and their production inputs are exempt from all customs duties.

Also on the agenda is a draft law to ratify a Host Country Agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Permanent Court of Arbitration, attached to Decree No 39 of 2025.

The agreement provides for a

seat for the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Bahrain, through which international disputes could be handled through arbitration, mediation, conciliation or commissions of inquiry.

Privileges

It also sets out privileges and immunities for the Court's staff and for those involved in proceedings, including arbitrators, mediators, conciliators and members of commissions of inquiry.



The draft bill seeks to draw investment into renewables, keep pace with the shift towards cleaner power, and put a legal framework in place for the sector.

dens for parties and cut costs linked to running cases outside the Kingdom or the region.

Members will also discuss a report from the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee on a proposed amendment to Article 11 of the Civil Service Law of 2010, prepared after the Council of Representatives sent the draft back in an amended form.

The proposal would require non-Bahrainis hired on contract in public posts to hold at least a master's degree, or an equivalent qualification, have ten years' experience in the same field, and be hired for no more than two years.

Requirements

Renewals would be limited to one further term of the same length, after checking that no Bahraini candidate meeting the post's requirements is available.

The Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee has recommended rejecting the draft, saying the Civil Service Law and its executive regulations already cover these conditions.

It also points to Article 16 of the Constitution, which states that Bahrainis should hold public office, with non-Bahrainis appointed only in cases set by law.

2,850 hired in education and health sectors since 2023



MP Mohsen Al Asbool

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Around 2,850 new staff were taken on across Bahrain's education and health sectors from January 2023 to December 2025, with Bahrainis accounting for about 93 per cent of the hires, the Civil Service Bureau has said.

The intake covered government hospitals, primary healthcare centres and related bodies, as well as the Ministry of Education and higher education institutions. Expats made up about 7 per cent of appointments, according to the bureau.

The details came in a reply to a parliamentary question from MP Mohsen Al Asbool, who asked about the bureau's current and future plans to bring graduates from a range of academic fields into government jobs.

Updates

In that context, it cited Instruction No. 5 of 2015, which regulates training and secondment through scholarships or study grants, updating the system for government staff and spelling out responsibilities for government bodies, the bureau require a bachelor's degree, and employees.

Bahraini artist brings Isa Town's cooling walkways on global stage

TDT | Manama

From Isa Town's walkways to an international gallery, Bahrain's first misting system comes alive through the brush of Bahraini artist Buthaina Ghanem Shaheen.

Shaheen, from the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture, recently took part in the international exhibition "Art Between Man and Machine" at the Fujairah Fine Arts Academy in the UAE, showcasing a work inspired by Bahrain's first public water misting system for walkways and parks, introduced by the Southern Governorate Municipality in 2022 to improve public spaces.

Located at Isa Town's rubberized walkway, the project uses eco-friendly misting nozzles to cool public spaces, providing pedestrians with a refreshing environment.

Solutions

As Bahrain's first system of its kind, it marks a pioneering step in sustainable outdoor solutions, particularly for sports and recreational areas.

Beyond traditional canvases,

Shaheen brings her art to life on pieces of pine wood, letting the natural grain and texture become part of the story she tells.

This technique reflects her commitment to blending the natural environment with her artistic vision, a philosophy that also underpins her depiction of Bahrain's first public misting system.

Shaheen's journey as an artist has been equally compelling.

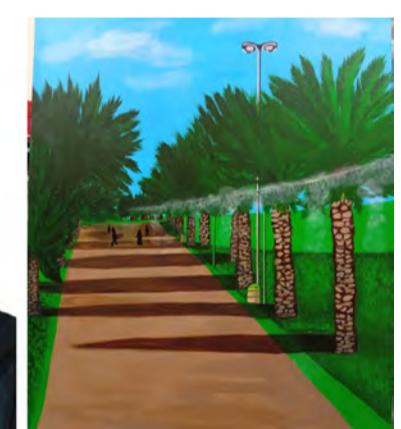
Known for her distinguished portraits of national figures, including His Highness the Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister, his honorable sons, and Her Royal Highness Shaikhah Sabeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, wife of His Majesty the King, she has continuously evolved her practice.

Moving from portraiture to conceptual and environmentally themed works, she embraces projects that blend societal relevance with artistic expression.

By showcasing Bahrain's first eco-friendly public cooling system internationally, Shaheen shows that municipal projects can inspire creativity, dialogue, and cultural pride.



Buthaina Ghanem Shaheen with her brilliant work



Her work encourages viewers to see how art, technology, and sustainability can coexist, reflecting Bahrain's innovative spirit through her unique artistic vision.

Muharraq Governor inaugurates book fair

TDT | Manama

Muharraq Governor Salman bin Isa Bin Hindi Al Mammari inaugurated the Second Book Fair for the sale and exhibition of rare books and magazines at Dar Al-Amamrah

in Muharraq.

He affirmed that the fair represents a valuable addition to Bahrain's cultural scene and reflects the commitment of the people of Muharraq to preserving the Kingdom's cultural and intellectual heritage.

The Governor praised the significant efforts of historian and poet Mubarak bin Amro Al-Amari in collecting and preserving this distinguished collection of rare books, manuscripts and magazines, some of which date back more than 200 years.

He noted that Al-Amari's dedicated cultural work has provided an important reference for researchers and those interested in culture and heritage, while also offering the public a rare opportunity to view items of high historical value.

Grok under fire after complaints it undressed minors in photos

AFP | San Francisco

Elon Musk's Grok on Friday said it was scrambling to fix flaws in the artificial intelligence tool after users claimed it turned pictures of children or women into erotic images.

"We've identified lapses in safeguards and are urgently fixing them," Grok said in a post on X, formerly Twitter.

"CSAM (Child Sexual Abuse Material) is illegal and prohibited."

Complaints of abuses began hitting X after an "edit image" button was rolled out on Grok



ing to partially or completely remove clothing from women or children in pictures, according to complaints.

Grok maker xAI, run by Musk, replied to an AFP query with a terse, automated response that said: "the mainstream media lies."

The Grok chatbot, however, did respond to an X user who queried it on the matter, after they said that a company in the United States could face criminal prosecution for knowingly facilitating or failing to prevent the creation or sharing of child porn.

in late December.

The button allows users to modify any image on the platform -- with some users decid-

شركة البحرين للتسهيلات التجارية ش.م.ب
BAHRAIN COMMERCIAL FACILITIES COMPANY BSC



Board of Directors Nomination Announcement

Bahrain Commercial Facilities Company B.S.C. would like to announce the opening of receiving nominations for the candidacy of five Board of Directors' membership for a three-year term (March 2026 – March 2029), as per Article (16) of the Company's Articles of Association. The ballot process will be carried out during the upcoming Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, 25 March 2026, at 10:00 AM, in person at Al Dana Ballroom, Gulf Hotel, Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain.

Conditions for Nominations:

Candidates must comply with the Conditions of Membership to the Board of Directors stipulated in Article (17) of the Company's Articles of Association and to Article (173) of the Commercial Companies Law and amendments thereto.

1. They shall enjoy the legal capacity to act.
2. They shall not have been previously convicted of any crime of bankruptcy by default or fraud nor for any crime affecting their honor or integrity nor a crime by reason of their breach of the provisions of this Law unless they have been reinstated.
3. They shall not be banned from membership in joint stock company according to the Law or any other law applicable in the Kingdom of Bahrain.
4. The candidate must meet the requirements for Board membership according to the new regulatory requirements under the Fit and Proper Requirements Module for licensed financial institutions issued by the Central Bank of Bahrain regarding the appointment of Board members.
5. The candidate is required to have at least five years of work experience in public sector or the private sector, including at least four years in senior management positions.
6. The candidate must have settled all outstanding installments with the company, whether those installments pertain to their personal account, one of their companies or Commercial Registrations or transactions in which they acted as a guarantor.
7. Any other conditions stipulated in the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association. In all cases, no person may be appointed or elected as a member of the Board of Directors without obtaining the approval of the Central Bank of Bahrain.

Procedure for Submitting Applications and Required Documentation:

1. Each candidate or nominee for the Board of Directors shall submit their application exclusively through the designated link provided on the Company's official website, for the purpose of completing the electronic form with all requisite information. In addition, each candidate or nominee shall submit a formal letter of candidacy or nomination addressed to the Chairperson of the Board, which must include a disclosure of any business activities that compete, whether directly or indirectly, with the Company's operations, as well as the names of any entities in which the candidate holds employment or serves as a member of the board of directors.
2. Candidate's or nominee's CV, which must include Personal Details and copies of SMART/ID Card and Reader, Passport, Academic and professional qualifications, a personal photograph, a credit report issued by The Bahrain Credit Reference Bureau (Benefit Report) from The BENEFIT Company B.S.C (C), a statement of shareholding—if any—and attested certificate of good conduct issued by the Ministry of Interior.
3. Submit a signed written declaration by the applicant disclosing any ongoing or filed cases against them, whether civil, criminal, or otherwise, as well as any outstanding or defaulted debts, if applicable.
4. Disclosure of any relationships between the candidate and the Company (including any ownership interests) or its subsidiaries; and the candidate and other management executives of the Company; or whether any of the candidate's relatives up to the fourth degree holds an executive position, is a member of the Board of Directors, or is a shareholder of the company; or whether the candidate holds any position that requires a significant amount of time.
5. Fill in the CBB's Application for Approved Person Status "Form 3", which can be downloaded by scanning the QR.
6. An undertaking must be submitted confirming full compliance with all regulatory requirements and directives issued by the Central Bank of Bahrain concerning Board members, including a commitment to notify the Bank of any material changes in financial solvency or personal conduct.



Scan to Apply



Scan to Download

Important Notes:

Those wishing to nominate themselves or their representatives for membership on the Board of Directors for the upcoming term are requested to accurately complete the electronic form and provide all required information as outlined in this announcement. Nominations for the candidacy of Board of Directors' membership will remain open from 04th January 2026 until 17th January 2026, therefore such documents need to be provided to the Company no later than 17th January 2026, in order to be approved by the regulatory authorities in a timely manner, prior to the meeting.

The names of candidates, who meet the Company's nomination criteria and the new regulatory requirements and have obtained CBB approval, will be published on both the Company's and Bahrain Bourse's websites concurrently with the announcement of the General Assembly Meeting invitation.

Should you require any further information or inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact the Group Corporate Secretary Mr. Sayed Jalal Al Mousawi on 17787209, or fax: 17911900, or email: jalmousawi@bahraincredit.com.bh, or address: Building 290, Road 111, Block 701 TUBLI- Kingdom of Bahrain.

Abdulrahman Yusuf Fakhro
Chairperson of the Board

Sprawling CES gadget fest a world stage for AI and its hype

Annual tech extravaganza shifts focus from AI fantasies to specialized, practical applications



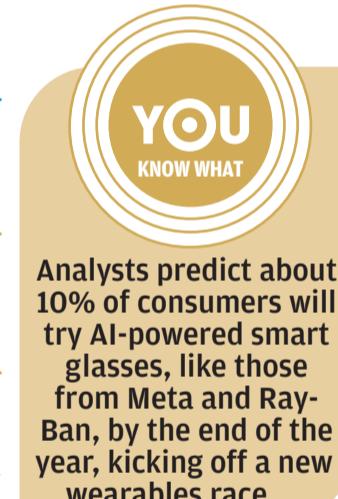
The CES sign is seen on the venue during the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, Nevada (file photo)

CES begins Tuesday in Las Vegas

AI dominates showcases from phones to vehicles

Smart glasses spark wearable technology race

AFP | San Francisco



Analysts predict about 10% of consumers will try AI-powered smart glasses, like those from Meta and Ray-Ban, by the end of the year, kicking off a new wearables race

there is a "huge cloud hanging over the PC industry" due to soaring prices for computing and memory chips.

With chip makers focused on serving needs of AI data centers, supplies of basic building blocks for laptops or gaming consoles have dwindled as prices have soared, according to Greengart.

"AI is definitely a story that overlays CES in terms of new capabilities, but also new price pressures," Greengart said.

Trade war pressure

And while major Chinese consumer electronics companies like Lenovo, Hisense, and TCL are slated to take part in CES, many small manufacturing firms from that country will be absent due to the trade war with the United States, according to the analyst.

"There is definitely a smaller presence from Chinese vendors than there has been under past administrations," Greengart said, referring to US President Donald Trump.

"This is very much a geopolitical thing."

Electronics companies have been grappling with frequent, unpredictable strategy shifts when it comes to US tariffs, he said.

"It's been very distracting and very difficult in areas where the president of the United States has basically changed tariffs or imposed tariffs over 100 times since being sworn in," said Gary Shapiro, president of the Consumer Technology Association which runs CES.

Still, CES remains a gathering at which deals get made and meeting face-to-face has value, according to Greengart.

"CES isn't where you go necessarily to find the next big thing."

"But what you do see at CES is a clear view on the trends and where investment in the industry is happening."

Analysts expect the annual trade event, which drew more than 142,000 attendees last year, to be a sprawling affair with vendors pitching products from humanoid robots and exoskeletons to AI-infused toys

Greengart said he expects an emphasis on personal computers because of a rivalry among Intel, AMD, and Qualcomm to produce chips that provide lots of AI capability while trimming power use to extend battery life. Greengart cautioned that

CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Looking Beyond the Idea of a "Happy New Year"



CAPTAIN MAHMOOD AL MAHMOOD

As a new year begins, we move forward without truly knowing what awaits us. We cannot predict which events will define our days, which moments of joy may pass briefly through our lives, or which challenges may leave lasting impressions. Repeatedly, we have welcomed new years with high expectations, hoping they would deliver comfort and fulfillment, only to discover that they offered far less than imagined—while demanding far more in patience, effort, and resilience.

This reflection is not an invitation to pessimism. Hope remains essential, and the desire for happiness is deeply human. Yet experience reminds us that optimism must be accompanied by realism. True rest is often brief, arriving in a few quiet hours before the pace of life resumes with its responsibilities and pressures.

In today's world, genuinely good moments can seem increasingly rare—or at least more difficult to recognize. Even so, the very meaning of "good" varies widely. What one person dismisses as insignificant may be invaluable to another. Happiness itself is subjective, fleeting, and unevenly experienced, shaped by perspective as much as circumstance.

In today's world, genuinely good moments can seem increasingly rare—or at least more difficult to recognize. Even so, the very meaning of "good" varies widely. What one person dismisses as insignificant may be invaluable to another. Happiness itself is subjective, fleeting, and unevenly experienced, shaped by perspective as much as circumstance.

Many look back on the year just passed and describe it as one of the darkest they have known. For some, it felt like the lowest point imaginable. History, however, teaches us that adversity often has deeper layers than we initially expect. Each new year brings not only hope, but also the possibility of challenges that test our assumptions, our patience, and our character.

Across society, voices encourage resilience, perseverance, and determination. Writers, thinkers, and leaders urge us to push forward, to overcome obstacles, and to continue striving for progress. Their call is both valid and necessary. Yet optimism, when detached from wisdom, risks becoming illusion rather than guidance. Hope must be grounded in awareness, integrity, and restraint.

Every passing day is deducted from a finite balance we all share. Wisdom lies in how that balance is spent. Injustice—whether subtle or overt—may promise short-term gain, but it carries long-term cost. Taking what is not ours, be it wealth, dignity, or peace of mind, never produces lasting benefit. What appears profitable today may ultimately reveal itself as profound loss.

Equally misleading is the belief that deception is intelligence or manipulation is skill. Such thinking confuses delay with success. When accountability arrives, there is no opportunity to undo the consequences.

Life does not offer permanent happiness. It moves between joy and sorrow, calm and tension, meaning and emptiness. None of these states endure. What does endure is the opportunity to act responsibly, to choose wisely, and to live with purpose.

Rather than waiting for a "happy year," perhaps the wiser question is how we choose to live within it. This year can mark the beginning of a continuous harvest—one shaped by sound judgment, ethical choices, and acceptance of uncertainty. When we shift our focus from chasing happiness to cultivating contentment and responsibility, we may discover a deeper and more lasting sense of peace.

Let us leave the judgment of years—good or bad—to time itself. Our task is simpler, yet more demanding: to act with integrity, to remain conscious of our choices, and to move forward with humility. In doing so, fulfillment may arrive not as a promise fulfilled, but as the quiet outcome of a life well lived.

(Captain Mahmood Al Mahmood is the Editor-in-Chief of The Daily Tribune and the President of the Arab-African Unity Organisation for Relief, Human Rights and Counter-terrorism)

Iran's Khamenei acknowledges protesters' economic demands

Supreme leader says economic grievances are fair but warns against violent unrest

● Protests spread across 25 cities

● Political slogans increasingly heard

● Death toll rises amid unrest

AFP | Washington

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday acknowledged the economic demands of protesters in Iran, where demonstrations have spread to more than two dozen cities, even as he warned there would be no quarter for "rioters".

The protests began on Sunday as an expression of discontent over high prices and economic stagnation, but have since expanded to include political demands.

"The president and high-ranking officials are working to resolve" the economic difficulties in the sanctions-battered country, Khamenei said in a speech marking a Shiite holiday.

"The shopkeepers have protested against this situation and that is completely fair," he added.

But Khamenei nonetheless warned that while "authorities must have dialogue with protesters, it is useless to have dialogue with rioters. Those must be put in their place."

At least eight people have been killed in the protests so far, including members of the security services, according to official figures.

The first deaths were reported on Thursday as demonstrators clashed with authorities.



Shopkeepers and traders protest in the street against the economic conditions and Iran's embattled currency in Tehran (file photo)

Yesterday, the Mehr news agency reported that a member of an Iranian paramilitary force was killed during a demonstration in the country's west.

"Ali Azizi, a member of the Basij, was martyred after being stabbed and shot in the city of Harsin during a gathering of armed rioters," Mehr said, citing a statement from the Revolutionary Guards, the ideological arm of the military that oversees the volunteer Basij force.

The Tasnim news agency, citing a local official, also reported a man killed Friday in the holy city of Qom, south of Tehran, when a grenade he was trying to use exploded "in his hands".

The protests have mostly been concentrated in mid-sized cities in Iran's west and southwest,



In the city of Karaj, protesters burned the national flag and chanted for the return of the Pahlavi dynasty, which was toppled nearly 50 years ago during the 1979 Islamic revolution

where clashes and vandalism have been reported.

At least 25 cities have seen protest gatherings of varying sizes, according to an AFP tally based on local media.

However, local media do not necessarily report on every incident, and state media have downplayed coverage of protests, while videos flooding social media are often impossible to verify.

Political demands

The Fars news agency reported gatherings on Friday in several working-class neighborhoods of Tehran, which is home to around 10 million people.

But yesterday, a public holiday, the atmosphere in the capital appeared quiet, with streets mostly empty as the skies spat rain and snow, according to journalists.

India unveils Buddha gems after century abroad

AFP | New Delhi

Sacred ancient gems linked to the Buddha were unveiled yesterday in India for the first time since their colonial-era removal.

The Piprahwa gems, a collection of more than 300 precious stones and ornaments believed to have been buried with relics of the Buddha at a stupa site in northern India, were formally displayed at an exhibition in New Delhi.

"This historic event marks the reunification of the Piprahwa gem relics of Lord Buddha, repatriated after 127 years," the Ministry of Culture said in a statement.

It said that they are on display "for the first time" since British excavations in 1898 unearthed them and they were subsequently scattered across the world.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who opened the exhibition, said it was a "very special day for those passionate about history, culture and the ideals"



Sacred Piprahwa relics of Buddha are received by India's Ministry of Culture and Tourism in New Delhi

Shared heritage of humanity'

The gems, believed to date back to around 200 BC, were unearthed in 1898 by British colonial engineer William Claxton Peppe in Piprahwa, in Uttar Pradesh state.

Indian authorities said an inscription on one of the caskets unearthed with the treasure con-

firmed the contents -- which include bone fragments -- as "relics of the Buddha".

While the majority were handed over to colonial authorities and some were housed in the Indian Museum in Kolkata, Peppe kept a treasure trove of jewels.

In May 2025, Peppe's great-grandson, Chris Peppe, put the gems up for sale.

They were listed for auction by Sotheby's in Hong Kong, with a starting bid of \$1.2 million, with experts suggesting they could have made ten times that.

But the auction was cancelled after the Indian Ministry of Culture issued a legal order calling the jewels the "inalienable religious and cultural heritage of India and the global Buddhist community".

The gems were then bought by an Indian conglomerate, Godrej Industries Group, in partnership with India's government. The sale price was not disclosed.

"The Piprahwa gems are not just artefacts," company vice-chairman Pirojsha Godrej, said in a statement at the time.

1847

Samuel Colt sells his first revolver pistol to the United States government



1865

New York Stock Exchange opens its first permanent headquarters at 10-12 Broad Street, near Wall Street, in New York City

1959

USSR's Luna 1 (Mechta) becomes the first spacecraft to escape Earth's gravity

1961

Longest recorded strike ends as Danish barbers' assistants end their 33-year strike

2021

First Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines are given to the general public, with 82-year-old Brian Pinker in the UK the first to receive the jab

'Like a television show': Trump revels in Maduro capture

US president describes watching special forces seize the Venezuelan leader in real time

● Maduro was seized from a steel-door fortress

● No US troops killed; one helicopter damaged

● Attorney General pledges prosecution in New York court

AFP | Washington

President Donald Trump struck a triumphant note over the capture of Nicolas Maduro yesterday, saying he had watched live as US forces seized the Venezuelan leader from a "fortress."

"I've never seen anything like this. I was able to watch it in real time," the 79-year-old Republican said in a telephone interview with Fox News.

"I watched it, literally, like I was watching a television show. And if you would have seen the speed, the violence."

Trump said no US troops were killed in the dramatic operation, adding that the Venezuelan president and his wife had been taken to a ship and would then be sent to New York, where they face drug and terrorism charges.

The US president, who is at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida, said he had spoken to Maduro a week ago and told him "you have to surrender."

He added that the United States would not allow anyone to take over where Maduro "left off" -- while skirting around whether he backed Nobel Peace laureate Maria Machado to be the next president.

Trump gave a detailed description of the operation that saw the United States launch airstrikes on Venezuela before special forces captured the leftist leader, in the climax to a months-



View of a destroyed truck at La Carlota air base in Caracas

long pressure campaign.

He said that he originally gave the all clear for the operation to capture Maduro four days ago but that it was held up because of the weather, until yesterday.

"It was just amazing," Trump said. "He was in a very highly guarded... like a fortress actually. He was in a fortress. It had steel doors, it had what they call a safety space where it's solid steel all around. He didn't get that space closed, he was trying to get into it, but he got bum-rushed so fast that he didn't get into that."

"It had steel doors, it had what they call a safety space where it's solid steel all around. He didn't get that space closed, he was trying to get into it, but he got bum-rushed so fast that he didn't get into that. We were prepared with massive blowtorches to get through the steel, but we didn't need them."

'Not going to be pushed around'

Trump added that it was "amazing" that no US forces were killed, adding that a "couple of guys were hit, but they came back and they're supposed to be in pretty good shape."

It was just amazing. He was in a very highly guarded... like a fortress actually. He was in a fortress. It had steel doors, it had what they call a safety space where it's solid steel all around. He didn't get that space closed, he was trying to get into it, but he got bum-rushed so fast that he didn't get into that. We were prepared with massive blowtorches to get through the steel, but we didn't need them

DONALD TRUMP

A US helicopter was also damaged but flown out, he added.

Trump said the raid on Venezuela "sends a signal we're not

going to be pushed around as a country anymore" and warned Mexico that it too needed to crack down on drug traffickers.

US officials joined in the triumphalism, while brushing off

concerns about whether the operation to capture a foreign leader was legal.

"You don't get to avoid justice for drug trafficking in the United States because you live in a palace in Caracas," Vice President JD Vance said on X.

He said Trump had given the Venezuelan leader "multiple off ramps" and added that Maduro was the "newest person to find out that President Trump means what he says."

US Attorney General Pam Bondi said Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores had been indicted in the Southern District of New York on charges including "Narco-Terrorism Conspiracy," conspiracy to import cocaine, and charges related to machineguns.

"They will soon face the full wrath of American justice on



In 2020, the US placed a \$15 million bounty on Maduro, later raised to \$50 million in 2025, on charges of leading the alleged "Cartel of the Suns" narco-terrorism organization

American soil in American courts," Bondi said on X.

The indictment against Maduro was lodged in 2020 while the indictment against his wife was not previously known.

Trump's administration in August doubled a reward for information leading to his capture to \$50 million, accusing him of leading the alleged "Cartel of the Suns" drug trafficking organization.

Trump has given differing arguments for his campaign against Venezuela, including the claim that the country is a major drug exporter to the United States and that Venezuela seized US oil interests.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio reposted a social media message from earlier this year in which he said Maduro was not the legitimate president of Venezuela following elections that international observers said were riddled with irregularities.

The Maduro capture -- along with US strikes on Nigeria on Christmas Day -- also come despite Trump billing himself as a "peace president" who should win the Nobel Prize.

Asked by reporters on New Year's Eve what his resolution for 2026 was, Trump replied: "Peace on Earth."

X
TOP 4 TWEETS
01



The Iranian regime's whining to the UN ignores decades of sponsoring terrorism & crushing their own people. America & @Potus stand firmly with Iranians yearning for freedom!

@USAmbUN

02



Following very closely the situation in Venezuela. We stand by the people of Venezuela and support a peaceful and democratic transition. Any solution must respect international law and the UN Charter. With HRVP @kajakallas and in coordination with EU Member States, we are making sure that EU citizens in the country can count on our full support.

@vonderleyen

03



I left everything I knew and moved to America with nothing but a gym bag. I think you're thinking of somebody else with a safety net. I am not saying nothing will go wrong. Something will. It is better to deal with one problem when it happens than 100 imagined problems.

@Schwarzenegger

04



In 2025, one of the first steps we took as Canada's new government was to cut taxes for the middle class. This year, millions of Canadians will benefit — helping you keep more of your hard-earned paycheques.

@MarkJCarney

Saudi-backed forces make advances in Yemen's Hadramawt: military officials

AFP | Riyadh

Saudi-backed troops yesterday made advances in Yemen's resource-rich Hadramawt province, military officials said, as confrontations between forces in the region have triggered a deep rift between the two Gulf allies.

Southern Transitional Council's recent offensive to capture Hadramawt angered Riyadh.

Following repeated warnings and air strikes, the Saudi-led coalition launched a wave of attacks on Friday, including on the Al-Khasha military camp in Hadramawt that left 20 dead, according to the separatist group.

Two military officials with the Saudi-aligned government said yesterday morning that Riyadh-backed forces had taken control of the principal mili-



Smoke billows after airstrikes in Yemen

tary base in the Yemeni city of Mukalla, the capital of Hadramawt.

According to a journalist, gun-

appeared to advance with little resistance.

In the province's city of Seiyun, 160 kilometres (100 miles) northwest of Mukalla, a government military official said pro-Saudi forces had taken control of the airport, targeted in Friday's strikes, as well as administrative buildings.

"We are working to secure them," the military official said.

A STC military official said: "There has been a retreat of our forces and we are resisting the attacking forces in Seiyun."

"We carried out a complete withdrawal from the areas of Al-Khasha... as a result of pressure from Saudi air strikes on us," he added.

Call for dialogue

Residents in Seiyun also said

they heard gunfire and clashes early yesterday.

Saudi Arabia yesterday called for dialogue between factions in southern Yemen.

In a statement posted to social media, the Saudi foreign ministry called for "a comprehensive conference in Riyadh to bring together all southern factions to discuss just solutions to the southern cause".

Riyadh said the Yemeni government had issued the invitation for talks.

Also yesterday, the UAE urged Yemenis to "halt escalation and resolve differences through dialogue".

The STC is now pushing to declare independence and form a breakaway state, which would split the Arabian Peninsula's poorest state in two.

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

Muharraq Governor Opens Rare Book Fair at Dar Al-Amamra

The Governor of Muharraq, H.E. Salman bin Isa bin Hindi Al-Mannai, inaugurated the second edition of the rare book and magazine fair at Dar Al-Amamra. He described the event as a vital addition to Bahrain's cultural scene, showcasing the community's commitment to preserving its intellectual heritage. The Governor lauded historian and poet Mubarak bin Amr Al-Ammari for his efforts in archiving a collection that includes manuscripts over 200 years old. He noted that such initiatives provide essential resources for researchers and enhance national identity through historical awareness. Mubarak Al-Ammari expressed his appreciation for the Governor's continued support of cultural activities. The fair, featuring a unique display of historical publications, is open to the public at Dar Al-Amamra from January 3 to January 10, 2026.

BKS Hands Over 35th Charity Home to Former Expatriate

The Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam (BKS) has gifted a new home, "Snehaveedu," to P.P. Sukumaran, a former BKS Indoor Games Secretary who spent nearly forty years in Bahrain. Facing health issues and financial debt in his retirement, Sukumaran received the home after BKS purchased the land and funded the construction. The key handover was performed by former Kerala Opposition Leader Ramesh Chennithala during a ceremony presided over by BKS President P.V. Radhakrishna Pillai. Chennithala lauded BKS as a global model for welfare, noting that the organization has even built homes in his own constituency, Haripad. President Radhakrishna Pillai confirmed that this marks the 35th house completed under the BKS housing scheme for needy expatriates. He thanked the diaspora for their continued support, with General Secretary Varghese Karakkal and other leaders in attendance to mark the milestone.

Nepali Club Bahrain Marks 25 Years of Community Service

Ambassador Tirtha Raj Wagle and Embassy officials joined the Nepali diaspora on December 26, 2025, to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Nepali Club Bahrain. The silver jubilee event, held under the chairmanship of Club President Mr. Deepak Gurung, commemorated a quarter-century of the organization's dedicated service in the Kingdom. Ambassador Wagle praised the Club for its vital role in fostering community partnership and raising awareness. He extended his best wishes for the organization's continued success in supporting the welfare of Nepali citizens abroad. The celebration featured a vibrant series of cultural performances showcasing Nepal's rich heritage. A central highlight of the evening was a formal felicitation ceremony, where community members were honored for their exceptional service and support.

Indian Embassy Hosts Open House for Community Welfare

The Embassy of India held an Open House chaired by the Charge d'Affaires (Cd'A) to provide direct assistance and legal guidance to the Indian community. The session included the Embassy's Consular and Community Welfare teams, along with a panel of lawyers, to address various grievances and consular matters. A significant milestone shared during the session was the release of several Indian nationals, including 19 workers from A. Ali Aldaysi Holding. The Cd'A expressed appreciation for the cooperation of local authorities and community groups, such as the Telugu Kala Samithi, TASCA, and Bharathi Association, whose efforts also facilitated the clearance of long-pending mortal remains. The Embassy also highlighted the launch of Madad 2.0, an upgraded version of the Ministry of External Affairs' grievance portal.

Cancer Care Group Hosts New Year Family Gathering

The Cancer Care Group, an affiliate of the Bahrain Cancer Society, organized a New Year family gathering featuring renowned magician Gopinath Muthukad and mentalist Fazil Basheer as chief guests. Presided over by President Dr. P.V. Cherian, the event saw participation from various community leaders. A key highlight was the felicitation of donors who contributed hair for making wigs for cancer patients; these individuals were honored with certificates from the Bahrain Cancer Society. The gathering was attended by approximately 150 guests, including socio-cultural leaders and volunteers. General Secretary K.T. Salim and Executive Member Abdul Zaheer led the formal proceedings.

Classifieds

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Zverev admits 'a lot of catching up' to reel in Alcaraz, Sinner



Germany's Alexander Zverev in action (file photo)

AFP | Sydney

World number three Alexander Zverev admitted on Saturday that he has "a lot of catching up to do" to challenge Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner.

The 28-year-old German finished the 2025 season with only one title, in Munich, having been beset by injuries.

He still did enough to bag the number three ranking behind Spain's Alcaraz and Italian Sinner, although he trails the dominant pair by more than 6,000 ranking points.

"Of course, number one and two are quite far ahead, which was not the case at the end of 2024, when I finished number two in the world (behind Sinner)," Zverev said in Sydney, where he is playing the United Cup.

"I feel like I have a lot of catching up to do, but so does the rest of the tour."

While Zverev made the final of the season-opening Australian Open last year, losing to Sinner, he disappointed at the other three Grand Slams and also at the year-end ATP Finals.

Despite this he considers 2025 as a step forward, all things considering.

"I had issues with my body, I had injuries throughout the entire season. So for me, finishing three in the world, I feel like looking back at it, it's still something to be proud of," he said.

"Of course it wasn't the season that I wanted to have," he added. "There weren't the titles that I wanted to have, the big titles especially."

Along with his physical problems, Zverev also struggled with his mental health, taking a one-month break after losing in the first round at Wimbledon.

"I took some vacation, spent time with my friends, then went back to training. Changed the scenario a little bit," he said.

"In a way, losing first round Wimbledon -- of course I don't want to lose first round Wimbledon -- but in a way it was helpful for me because I could just restart."

"That was a bit of a turning point."

Zverev is spearheading Germany at the mixed-teams United Cup to open his 2026 campaign before heading to Melbourne Park and another crack at an elusive Grand Slam title.

England captain Stokes says no coasting in 'huge' final Ashes clash

Ben Stokes calls final Ashes Test a huge game despite series defeat

England won fourth Test

Stokes demands full effort

Squad changes under consideration

AFP | Sydney

Captain Ben Stokes yesterday called the fifth and final Test against Australia a "huge game" for England and vowed there would be no coasting at the end of a long and draining Ashes tour.

The tourists go into the clash on Sunday at the Sydney Cricket Ground buoyed by a four-wicket win inside two days at the previous Test in Melbourne.

It snapped a 15-year winless streak in Australia but came too late to save the series with the hosts retaining the urn by winning in Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide.

Stokes said it was important to keep the momentum going.

"This is a big game, purely because we're walking out there representing England," he said.

"The Ashes, unfortunately for us, hasn't gone the way we wanted it to, but we've got one more game in a big series."



England's captain Ben Stokes (L) hits a shot as he bats in the nets next to team mates Ben Duckett (R) and Harry Brook (C) during a team training session

"And it's a real big one for us. So although we can't get the thing that we came here for, we've still got a chance to go there and win a game of cricket."

Stokes, whose side has been hounded by the media in Australia and come under enormous pressure back home, added that there was no room for complacency and it had been made clear to the players.

"I don't think it will happen, just sort of coasting through this game and seeing what happens," he said.

"This is a huge game for us... it's going to take all 11 of us to go out there and get on the right side of the result like we managed to do last week."

"So although we get to go home on eight or nine days' time, any thought of that can wait till then. It's about what we do over the next five days,

that's the most important thing."

England named a 12-man squad on Friday with seamer Matthew Potts and spinner Shoaib Bashir included.

Potts is the only unused fast bowler from their original 16-man squad and is set to play after Gus Atkinson limped off with a hamstring issue in Melbourne.

Bashir and Will Jacks are expected to vie for the final spot.

YOU KNOW WHAT

Ben Stokes jokingly admitted that while captains often inspect and knock on the pitch to look professional, they rarely have a true clue how the wicket will actually behave during play

Australia captain Steve Smith yesterday said a final look at the wicket was needed before the hosts decided on their starting XI.

Stokes said England also needed more time, but admitted no one really knew how the wicket would play despite captains and coaches pretending they did.

"I mean, we try and act like we know what we're doing when we're looking down at the pitch and rubbing it and knocking it -- no one really has a clue to be honest," he said.

"You can only just try and give yourself the best chance of thinking: right, what 11 do we need to give us a chance of winning this?"

MOI Show Jumping Team wins Royal Federation Grand Competition



Manama

The Interior Ministry Show Jumping Team won first place in the Grand competition event of the Royal Show Jumping Championship, organised by the Royal Federation of Equestrianism and Endurance Races and held at the Military Sports Federation Arena in Al-Raffa.

On this occasion, the Supervisor of the team, Major-General Abdulaziz Al Rumaihi, extended his highest congratulations to His Excellency Interior Minister General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa. He noted that, at the same time, the Chief of Police, Lt-General Tariq Al Hassan, closely follows all sports teams during their participation in local, regional, and international championships, which has contributed



to outstanding results across various sporting events.

He also expressed his thanks to His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, President of the Royal Federation of Equestrianism and Endurance Races, and to Shaikh Abdulrahman bin Mohammed Al Khalifa,

Chairman of the Show Jumping Committee, for the preparation, organisation and close supervision of the preparations that led to the success of the championship. Military Sports Federation was also appreciated for its efforts in preparing and hosting the competition.

Lens move four points clear of PSG at top of Ligue 1



Lens' French forward #38 Rayan Fofana (C) controls the ball

AFP | Paris

when they laid siege to the Toulouse goal.

Wesley Said broke the deadlock with a curling shot in the 57th minute before captain Adrien Thomasson added a second in the five minutes from time.

Pierre Ganiou sealed the points with a fine strike in the 90th minute.

Yesterday, fourth-placed Lille will press their claims when they host Rennes while Liam Rosenior, who is tipped as a possible candidate for the vacant manager's role at Chelsea, will take his Strasbourg side to Nice.

Marseille face Nantes on Sunday with the Paris derby closing out the weekend.

Start as you mean to go on

Bahrain's Handball Team Eyes Asian Gold to Kickstart 2026

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The Kingdom's national handball team departed yesterday for Portugal as they enter the final stretch of preparations for the 22nd Asian Men's Handball Championship in Kuwait, running from January 15 to 29. The tournament also doubles as the Asian qualifying event for the 2027 IHF Men's Handball World Championship in Germany, making every match crucial for the Bahraini squad.

Fresh off their gold medal success at the sixth Islamic Solidarity Games in Riyadh, Bahrain's men are looking to carry that momentum into the new year. In Portugal, they will test themselves against the formidable Portuguese national team, currently ranked fourth in the world, in two friendly matches on January 5 and 6. Following that, the squad will head to Switzerland to participate in an in-



Bahrain's players celebrate gold at the Islamic Solidarity Games in November 2025

ternational friendly tournament featuring Switzerland, North Macedonia, and Ukraine.

The delegation traveling with the team includes Swedish head coach Robert Hedin, his assistants Amin Al Qallaf and Ali Hussain, and team manager Ahmed Al Najem. The 22-player roster is led by captain Hussain Al Sayyad and features key talents including: Mohammed Habib Nasser, Mohammed Hameed, Qassim Qambar, Hussain Mahfoodh, Ali Mahmood, Ali Redha, Jaafar Abdulshaheed, Mahmood Jaleel, Salman Al Showaikh, Ali Al Ashiri, Hisham Ahmed, Hassan Al Samahiji, Hassan Mirza, Mohammed Habib Ahmed, Mohammed Abdulhussain, Sayed Ali Bassem, Ahmed Al Muqabi, Ahmed Redha, Abdulla Abdulkarim, Jassim Khamis, and Mohammed Hussain Shamlooh.

Injury concerns continue to test the squad's depth. Hassan Mirza will miss the Portugal camp after picking up an inju-

ry against Iran, while captain Hussain Al Sayyad is expected to rejoin the team in Switzerland after completing rehabilitation.

Bahrain will kick off the Asian Championship against Jordan on January 16, before facing China on January 18 and Iraq on January 20. The top two teams from each preliminary group will move on to the main round, with semi-finalists earning qualification for the 2027 World Championship. The semi-finals are scheduled for January 27, with medal matches on January 29.

After earning bronze at the 2024 Asian Championship on home soil, the team has trained rigorously since December at the BHF Arena in Um Al Hassam Sports Complex. The upcoming tours in Portugal and Switzerland will push the squad to the limit, as Bahrain's men aim to start the year by climbing back to the podium and reaching for gold.

Villa fell Forest to ease pain of Arsenal rout



Aston Villa's English striker #11 Ollie Watkins (2L) shoots to score

AFP | London

Aston Villa beat struggling Nottingham Forest 3-1 at their home fortress yesterday to ease the pain of their midweek mauling by Arsenal, leapfrogging Manchester City into second place in the Premier League.

Ollie Watkins' strike on the cusp of half-time gave Unai Emery's side a deserved lead and John McGinn grabbed a second early in the second period.

Morgan Gibbs-White pulled a goal back for the visitors but McGinn took advantage of a brain freeze by Forest goalkeeper John Victor to restore Villa's two-goal lead.

Villa's 11-game winning streak in all competitions was brought to a shuddering halt with a 4-1 defeat at the Emirates on Tuesday, raising doubts about their ability to maintain a title charge.

But their impressive record at Villa Park remains intact -- they have now won 11 straight matches since a 3-0 defeat to Crystal Palace in August.

Riffa Close in on Leaders at NPL Summit



Riffa celebrate going 2-0 up against Malkiya

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The Nasser bin Hamad Premier League delivered another compelling matchday yesterday, with stoppage-time drama and early strikes tightening the race across the table and keeping pressure on the sides above.

At Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed Stadium, Al Najma were 2-1 winners against Bahrain Club, snatching all three points deep into stoppage time. After a goalless first half, the deadlock was broken in spectacular fashion in the 48th minute when Hussein Riffai unleashed a stunning low strike from over 30 yards. The shot skipped off the turf late, wrong-footing Bahrain Club goalkeeper Ab-



Saud Hazza wheels away after scoring Al Najma's winner

dulghafoor Shah on its way into the net.

Bahrain Club thought they had responded on the hour mark through a brilliant Sami Al Husaini volley, but the goal was ruled out for offside following a VAR review in the build-up. Their persistence finally paid off in the 81st minute when Gabriel Monteiro Vasconcelos slipped a clever pass into the box for compatriot Gabriel da Silva Oliveira, who finished first time to level the contest.

Just as Bahrain Club looked set to leave with a point, Al Najma struck in the 97th minute. Achref Douiri floated a free kick to the far post, Abdulla Nemer headed it back across goal, and Saud Hazza controlled with his chest before volleying into the corner to seal a dramatic win. The result lifts Al Najma to 12 points, while Bahrain Club remain rooted near the bottom.

Later at Bahrain National Stadium, Al Riffa produced a comfortable first-half display to defeat Malkiya 2-0 and strengthen their position near the summit. Vinicius Vargas opened the scoring in the fourth minute, rising above a crowded penalty area to power home a header from a perfectly delivered Rodrigo Yuri corner.

The lead was doubled ten minutes later when Rodrigo Yuri converted from the penalty spot after Ali Madan was brought down by a late sliding challenge from Sayed Mohammed Adnan. Malkiya were unable to recover, slipping to fourth on 18 points, while Riffa move up to second with 21, keeping leaders Al Khalidiyah firmly within sight as the title race gathers momentum.