

Bahrain economy grows 4% in third quarter of 2025

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Bahrain's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by 4.0% in the third quarter of 2025, according to preliminary national accounts data issued by the Information and eGovernment Authority.

The growth was driven by a 9.3% increase in oil activities and a 3.1% rise in non-oil sectors, highlighting the combined contribution of both sectors to the Kingdom's economic expansion.

The figures were published yesterday in the Bahrain Economic Quarterly Report for Q3 2025 by the Ministry of Finance and National Economy.

The report highlighted the pivotal role of non-oil activities, which contributed 85.0% to the Kingdom's real GDP during the period.

Among these sectors, real estate led growth at 5.4%, followed by financial and insurance activities at 5.0%.

Transportation and storage, as well as construction, each recorded 4.4% growth, while manufacturing grew by 3.9% and wholesale and retail trade rose by 3.3%. Information and communication increased by 2.1%, and accommodation and food services expanded by 1.5%.

Brazil highlights global priorities



H.E. Brazilian Ambassador
Adriano Silva Pucci

Continuing the series on how 2026 is reshaping the global order, Brazil highlights food security, clean energy, and critical minerals as emerging drivers of global influence. Read the perspective of H.E. Mr. Adriano Silva Pucci, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil, on Page 2.

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Job expansion

HRH Prince Salman reaffirms government focus on creating 'quality' employment for Bahrainis



HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister with H.E. Yousif bin Abdulhussain Khalaf

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His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, yesterday reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to creating quality opportunities for Bahrainis.

He said this reflects His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's emphasis that citizens are central to the Kingdom's progress and development.

During a meeting at Gudaibiya Palace with His Excellency Yousif bin Abdulhussain Khalaf, Minister of Labour and Legal Affairs, HRH Prince Salman emphasised that "providing meaningful employment opportunities for our citizens remains a top priority of the government."

HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister also praised the Ministry of Labour for its efforts

in implementing government programmes aimed at creating jobs for Bahrainis.

Opportunities

"The dedicated work of the Ministry ensures that citizens can access quality opportunities that support their growth and strengthen national development," he said.

His Royal Highness noted that the Ministry had successfully exceeded its target by present-

"Providing meaningful employment opportunities for our citizens remains a top priority of the government."

- HRH PRINCE SALMAN BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA, THE CROWN PRINCE AND PRIME MINISTER

ing three job opportunities to 18,657 job seekers, resulting in 4,746 citizens being employed to date.

HRH Prince Salman further commended the private sector's cooperation, describing it as "a vital partner in achieving our shared goals for national prosperity."

Emphasising the importance of continued collaboration, HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister said: "Cooperation

across government and private sectors is essential to deliver tangible benefits to citizens and to realise His Majesty the King's vision for sustainable development."

Gratitude

H.E. Khalaf expressed gratitude for HRH Prince Salman's ongoing support, reaffirming his commitment to advancing the Kingdom's objectives and contributing to Bahrain's growth and prosperity.

The meeting was attended by His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister's Court; H.E. Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister; H.E. General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior; H.E. Hamad bin Faisal Al Malki, Minister of Cabinet Affairs; and several senior officials.

Labour goals surpassed

4,746 citizens employed under national initiative



HRH Prince Salman chairs the weekly Cabinet meeting

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employment opportunities for Bahraini citizens.

To date, three job opportunities have been presented to 18,657 job seekers, exceeding the initial target, with 4,746 citizens employed so far.

The weekly Cabinet meeting, chaired by HRH Prince Salman at Gudaibiya Palace, also followed up on the Ministry of Social Development's implementation of directives to increase financial support for low-income families through the cost-of-living allow-

ance, starting this month.

The Cabinet expressed satisfaction with the economic success of the Celebrate Bahrain Season, praising government agencies and private sector sponsors for their organisation efforts.

In other developments, the Cabinet welcomed Bahrain International Airport receiving a five-star rating from Skytrax for the fifth consecutive year, highlighting the Kingdom's commitment to world-class service

and stability.

The Cabinet also discussed regional matters, noting Bahrain's support for the Yemeni initiative to convene a conference bringing together southern parties to seek fair resolutions.

Appreciation was expressed to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for hosting the conference, considering it a positive step toward diplomatic solutions that uphold Yemen's national interests and strengthen regional security

Rodriguez takes over Venezuela

AFP | Caracas

Venezuela's parliament swore in Delcy Rodriguez as interim president yesterday, two days after US forces seized her predecessor Nicolas Maduro to face trial in New York.

Rodriguez, who has indicated she will cooperate with Washington, took the oath of office during a ceremony in the National Assembly, telling lawmakers she did so "in the name of all Venezuelans".

She said she was "in pain over the kidnapping of our heroes, the hostages in the United States," referring to Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, who face drug charges along with other Venezuelan officials.

The parliament denounced the capture of leftist leader Maduro while vowing support for his stand-in Rodriguez after the US military attack that shocked Caracas and the world.

His Excellency Mr. Adriano Silva Pucci, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil

As 2026 clarifies which forces will shape the next phase of the global order, Brazil highlights how food security, clean energy, critical minerals, and bridge-building diplomacy are emerging as key drivers of influence. In conversation with Mahir Haneef, His Excellency Mr. Adriano Silva Pucci, Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil, outlines why these strengths position Brazil as a constructive and influential actor in a rapidly evolving international landscape.

In the coming years, the driving forces of international relations will be competition for human and material resources, technological breakthroughs, shifting power balances, and significant demographic changes. These dynamics are reshaping how nations cooperate and compete on the global stage.

In this context, Brazil stands out for its agricultural sector, which ranks among the most productive and diverse in the world, contributing to global food supplies and enhancing food security at a time when climate pressures and supply chain disruptions make stability more essential than ever.

Brazil's leadership extends to clean energy as well. With a predominantly renewable power mix anchored in hydropower, wind, and solar, the country enjoys a competitive edge for powering digital infrastructure and AI data centres that require reliable, affordable energy while minimising carbon footprints.

Another source of strategic advantage lies in Brazil's critical minerals. The country holds one of the world's largest rare earth reserves, second only to China, offering a unique resource base for electric vehicles, wind turbines, electronics, and other technologies driving the green economy.

Diplomatically, Brazil's long tradition of constructive engagement and bridge building in multilateral forums - from the United Nations to BRICS - positions it as a trusted voice in advancing cooperation on shared global priorities. These include climate action, sustainable development, and governance reform.

Ultimately, in a rapidly evolving global landscape, countries that combine abundant natural resources, technological innovation, and inclusive governance will be well positioned to help define the future. Brazil possesses both the capacity and the responsibility to be among these influential actors.

In the coming years, the driving forces of international relations will be competition for human and material resources, technological breakthroughs, shifting power balances, and significant demographic changes.



(The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Daily Tribune)

Sweetened levy

Parliament to review bill introducing sugar-based excise tax on higher-sugar beverages

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Sweetened drinks in Bahrain would be taxed by sugar level under a draft law now before Parliament, introducing a per-litre charge for higher-sugar products while tobacco and energy drinks stay at 100 per cent.

The same bill would shift the excise-tax role from the Ministry of Finance to the National Bureau for Revenue (NBR), putting the NBR's chief executive officer in place of the minister across several powers in the law.

The amendments were referred to the Council of Representatives under Decree No. (78) of 2025, issued on 31 December 2025, following a letter from His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

Comments

The Council of Representatives Speaker Ahmed bin Salman Al-Musallam is being asked to refer the draft to the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee as the lead committee, with the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee invited to give its comments.

The draft changes who runs the system.

It replaces references to 'the Ministry' with 'the Bureau', defined as the NBR, and swaps 'the Minister' for 'the Chief Executive' in a number of articles, defining that post as the Chief Executive Officer of the NBR.

Schedule



Image used for illustrative purposes only



Ahmed Al Saloom, Chairman of Parliament's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee

The bill also rewrites the excise schedule for sweetened drinks.

Tobacco would still be taxed at 100 per cent, and so would

energy drinks.

Sweetened drinks, however, would move to a sugar-based scale.

Sugar-free drinks that contain only artificial sweeteners would be taxed at zero dinars per litre, as would drinks with total sugar below five grams per 100 millilitres.

Charges

Above that, the draft introduces two per-litre charges.

Drinks with total sugar from 5 to 7.099 grams per 100 millilitres would be charged at BD0.079 per litre, while drinks with eight grams or more per 100 millilitres would be charged at BD0.109 per litre.

The text also keeps a clause to be inserted and says it will be published in the Official Gazette.

Sugar-free drinks that contain only artificial sweeteners would be taxed at zero dinars per litre, as would drinks with total sugar below five grams per 100 millilitres.

GCC agreement through a Cabinet-approved decision.

A transitional rule deals with sweetened drinks already inside the Kingdom where excise tax has not been paid.

Conditions

Tax would fall due once three conditions are met: the goods are not under a tax-suspension status, they are held for trade, and the tax due exceeds BD500.

Holders would have 30 days from the law taking effect to work out the tax under the law and its executive rules, file a transitional return, and pay the amount to the NBR.

The draft also adds a new provision on refunds, allowing extra refund cases to be set under the agreement through a Cabinet-approved decision.

Activities

Businesses and others carrying out activities listed in Article (7) of the current law would be allowed to register with the NBR before the amendments take effect.

The bill leaves the start date to be inserted and says it will be published in the Official Gazette.

Nine illegal workers detained, 97 other violators deported



Governorate, and 7 campaigns in the Southern Governorate.

The government entities that participated in the campaigns are the Ministry of Interior, represented by the Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs (NPRA), the Governorate's respective Police Directorate, and the General Directorate of Crime Detection and Forensic Science, the General Directorate of Verdict Enforcement and Alternative Sentencing and the General Directorate of Civil Defense, as well as the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTTEA), the National Bureau for Revenue (NBR) and the Social Insurance Organization (SIO).

The Authority affirmed the continuation of joint coordination with government agencies to intensify inspection campaigns in all governorates of the Kingdom, and to address any violations or practices that negatively affect the stability and competitiveness of the labour market or harm the economic and social security of the Kingdom.

LMRA conducts 530 inspection campaigns and visits

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Nine violating and irregular workers were detained and 97 other violators deported following 530 inspection campaigns and visits carried out by the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) between December 28, 2025, and January 3.

The inspection campaigns and visits also resulted in monitoring several violations related to the provisions of a number of regulating laws, especially the LMRA and the Residence Laws in the Kingdom of Bahrain, noting that legal measures were taken regarding the observed violations.

The Authority pointed out that 509 inspection visits were carried out on various shops in all governorates, in addition to 21 joint inspection campaigns, 6 campaigns in the Capital Governorate, 5 campaigns in the Muharraq Governorate, 3 campaigns in the Northern

20-year-old faces court after drugs found in wedding photo frames

● Seized at airport

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Wedding photo frames stuffed with oil-soaked papers suspected to contain cannabis and methamphetamine were seized at Bahrain International Airport.

A 20-year-old is now before the High Criminal Court on charges linked to importing drugs for trafficking and possessing them for use.

The court set the next hearing for 11 January, gave the defence permission to obtain copies of the case papers for review and reply, and ordered the accused to remain in custody.

Defendant

Prosecutors say the defendant, 20, imported cannabis during 2025 with the aim of selling it, and also kept cannabis (hashish) and the psychotropic substance methamphetamine for personal use, in circumstances not allowed by law.

Tests, they said, confirmed the seized items contained cannabis and methamphetamine.

The defendant's urine sample also tested positive for the same substances.

The case began before dawn on 27 August 2025.

Parcels

A senior customs officer at Bahrain International Airport told investigators he was checking inbound mail parcels at about 3am when one package caught his attention.

It was run through an X-ray scanner, and he said the reading showed unusually dense contents.

He opened the parcel. Inside were two framed photographs from an Asian wedding.

BTEA closes five tourism establishments over violations

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) has ordered the closure of five tourism establishments after inspections revealed multiple violations of laws and regulations governing tourism activities in the kingdom.

The authority said the measures were taken as part of ongoing efforts to regulate the tourism sector and ensure service quality and compliance with approved standards.

It added that inspection campaigns and regulatory visits will continue across the country, in coordination with relevant bodies, in accordance with Bahrain's tourism law.

Citizen growth

HRH Prince Salman reaffirms priority on initiatives creating quality jobs for Bahrainis



HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister with Council of Representatives Speaker Ahmed bin Salman Al-Musallam and Shura Council Chairman Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh
TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, yesterday reaffirmed the government's continued commitment to advancing initiatives and programmes that create quality opportunities for Bahraini citizens.

He also stressed the importance of close cooperation between the executive and legislative branches to support national efforts and realise public aspirations.

During a meeting at Gudaiya Palace with the Speaker of the Council of Representatives, Ahmed bin Salman Al-Musallam, and the Chairman of the Shura Council, Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, HRH Prince Salman underlined that sustained coordination between the two branches of government remains central to national progress.

Cooperation

"The continued commitment to advancing initiatives and programmes that create quality opportunities for citizens is a key priority," he said, adding that cooperation between the executive and legislative authorities is essential to "support national efforts and achieve the aspirations of Bahraini citizens."

HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister also highlighted the role of Team Bahrain in driving development..



"The Kingdom's security and stability are the foundation for sustainable prosperity."

- HRH PRINCE SALMAN BIN HAMAD AL KHALIFA,
THE CROWN PRINCE AND PRIME MINISTER

He noted that collective achievements across all sectors serve as a strong incentive to build on existing successes under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

His Royal Highness stressed that "ongoing cooperation has played a pivotal role in encouraging development projects and achieving national goals."

He pointed out that such progress is reinforced by the Kingdom's security and stabil-

ity, which he described as "the foundation for sustainable prosperity."

Expressing pride in the national workforce, HRH Prince Salman said the dedication of Bahraini citizens continues to translate into tangible achievements that strengthen the Kingdom's development path.

Successes

"The unwavering efforts of Team Bahrain have contributed to numerous successes that enhance the Kingdom's standing," he said, commending the commitment shown in implementing programmes that support growth and long-term development.

For their part, the Speaker of the Council of Representatives and the Chairman of the Shura Council expressed their appreciation to HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister for his continued support in reinforcing cooperation between the executive and legislative branches, noting that such collaboration is vital to achieving wide-ranging national goals that benefit citizens.

The meeting was attended by His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister's Court; His Excellency Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister; H.E. General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior; along with several senior officials.

Guard's finger injury leaves 4% disability

● Sparked by row over access to property

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

A 37-year-old Asian man has been brought before the First High Criminal Court accused of injuring a security guard during a row over access to a property, leaving the man with a 4 per cent permanent disability.

The court opened hearings in the case and fixed 11 January 2026 to appoint a lawyer for the defendant, ordering that he remain in custody.

Prosecutors say the incident happened on 10 September 2025.

Assault

The charge alleges the defendant assaulted a 56-year-old Asian man who was working as a guard at a building owned by his sponsor.

A forensic medical report attached to the case records the injuries and says the harm later resulted in a lasting disability, assessed at 4 per cent, without intent to cause it.

The victim told investigators that the defendant arrived during his shift and tried to enter the property to operate a gas cylinder at his workplace. The guard said he refused him entry on his sponsor's instructions.

Defendant

He claims the defendant then tried to force his way in and twisted the fingers of his left hand, before a second worker stepped in and pulled the defendant away.

The second witness said he heard shouting outside, went to the spot and saw the defendant holding the guard by both hands.

He separated them and the defendant left, he said.

Minutes later, the guard came to him and said his finger had been broken.

Royal call for 'excellence and innovation'

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His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, yesterday stressed the importance of advancing the government work system and fostering a culture of excellence and innovation.

He said such measures "enhance efficiency and establish a supportive environment capable of achieving advanced performance levels across all sectors."

During a meeting at Gudaiya Palace with several newly appointed directors across government entities, HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister underlined that "citizens remain at the heart of the Kingdom's plans and initiatives."

Responsibility

He stressed that "development is a shared national re-



HRH Prince Salman with newly appointed directors across government entities

sponsibility achieved through cooperation among all members of Team Bahrain."

HRH Prince Salman also congratulated the new directors on their appointments, noting that their efforts play a key role in "advancing the government's key initiatives to meet the Kingdom's aspirations."

His Royal Highness highlighted that the Kingdom's strong

progress across government workstreams and public services is underpinned by its national workforce, which continues to strengthen comprehensive development under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

For their part, the newly appointed directors expressed gratitude for the trust placed in them, reaffirming their commitment to supporting the Kingdom's ongoing development and

contributing to its wide-ranging goals.

The meeting was attended by His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister's Court; His Excellency Shaikh Khalid bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister; H.E. Hamad bin Faisal Al Malki, Minister of Cabinet Affairs; and several senior officials.

Financial integrity

MPs push for accounting-trained staff to oversee audits in government

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Parliament will debate and vote today on a recommendation calling on the government to ensure staff tasked with overseeing the accounting, bookkeeping and audit sector in ministries and other state bodies have qualifications linked to accounting and audit.

The proposal was submitted by MPs Jaleela Alawi, Dr Hisham Al Ashiri, Mohsen Al Asbool and Jalal Kadhem.

It calls for employee specialisations to match the work of professional oversight, after raising the issue of staff in such roles coming from fields with no link to accounting or auditing.

Change

Supporters say the change is aimed at improving the standard of financial reports and strengthening the skills of staff responsible for checking accounts, alongside government work linked to corporate tax plans that require accurate supervision.

In its explanatory note, the



The proposal points to a need to control the quality of outputs and reports produced by entities working in accounting, bookkeeping and audit.

proposal points to a need to control the quality of outputs

Image used for illustrative purposes only

and reports produced by entities working in accounting, bookkeeping and audit, and says the mix of backgrounds among some oversight staff affects that work.

The Services Committee has recommended approval, with members present voting in favour.

Recruitment

The Civil Service Bureau said recruitment across government

bodies covered by the Civil Service Law is governed by the law and its executive rules, including provisions on appointment and types of employment.

It said hiring is based on requests tied to actual need and approved job descriptions, after verifying that a vacancy exists within the approved structure, staffing ceiling and budget of the entity.

The bureau added that the competent authority in each

government body is responsible for drawing up its organisational structure, with the bureau approving it, and that job descriptions are prepared by the entities under the job evaluation system adopted in the civil service.

Grades

It also described accounting roles in government as covering accountants, auditors, analysts and financial controllers across grades.

These roles include designing and running accounting systems, developing standards and policies, reviewing and interpreting accounting data and reports, and giving advice linked to financial management.

The bureau said it carries out regular reviews of roles and their entry requirements with government bodies to keep pace with labour market changes, including adding professional and specialist certificates for some posts and recognising licences issued by specialised international bodies as accepted

qualifications for certain civil service roles.

Al Naim
ATM attack condemned

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Human Rights Watch Society condemned what it described as a cowardly terrorist act targeting an ATM in Al Naeem. It warned that the incident posed a direct threat to the safety of citizens and residents and amounted to a serious attack on civil peace and public property.

In a statement issued yesterday, the society said such actions have no connection to human rights principles or freedom of opinion and expression.

It said the incident should be treated as a criminal act punishable by law, adding that it represents a danger to society as a whole.

The society also praised the Ministry of Interior and security services for arresting the suspects within a short time, saying the action strengthens the rule of law and reinforces the public sense of safety.

It further expressed support for the kingdom to take all legal measures against anyone proven to be involved in terrorist or incitement related acts that undermine national security and stability.

Delivery bike safety needs lanes not bans

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's delivery riders have become part of the Kingdom's daily rhythm, moving meals and parcels across neighbourhoods that are often connected by the same main roads everyone else depends on.

The Ministry of Interior has warned that banning delivery motorcycles from main roads would not improve traffic movement, and could instead shift congestion and conflict onto secondary streets.

According to the latest available figures, 3,387 traffic acci-

dents involving delivery motorcycles were recorded, resulting in seven deaths.

Behind that number are real families and real workdays, and a system that too often places speed and safety in the same moment.

Officials said a ban would be difficult to implement because of the nature and layout of Bahrain's road network.

Online, people asked how a rider is supposed to deliver from Hooora to Hidd without using main roads.

The point is simple. If the job requires main routes, pushing riders away from them does not



Road safety for delivery riders is a priority

remove the risk, it just relocates it.

Side roads are narrower, junctions come faster, and the stop start pattern can force sharper decisions. The problem is not where riders exist. It is how the road is shared.

Many comments focused on pressure rather than personality. One view was that riders are blamed for reckless riding when delays start earlier, with meals not ready on time, while the rider is still expected to meet a deadline.

While having a discussion with a few restaurant owners The Daily Tribune has learnt

that changing the working hours and benefit method leads delivery drivers to reckless behavior.

Many delivery drivers want to deliver the package as fast as possible to make more income on a daily basis.

Restaurant owners also said one delivery platform changed its system. They claimed riders were once employees with fixed hours and fixed pay, but are now paid per order with no specified hours.

That kind of model can reward the rider who squeezes in one more trip. It is not an excuse for dangerous riding, but it is a reason worth taking seriously.

MPs set to debate doubling court deadline for environment appeals

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Deadline rules for environment appeals are up for debate today, with MPs weighing a change that would double the court challenge window from 30 days to 60.

Parliament will take up a draft amendment to paragraph (a) of Article 113 of the Environment Law (Law No. 7 of 2022), prepared from a legislative proposal first put forward by MPs.

The current wording gives any concerned party 30 days from notification of an administrative decision, issued under the Environment Law and its implementing decisions, to file a grievance with the council.

Grievance

The administration must decide the grievance within 30



Mohammed Moosa, Chairman of Parliament's Public Utilities and Environment Committee

days and notify the complainant of the outcome; if there is no reply by the end of that period, it is treated as an implied refusal.

After a refusal, the complainant has 30 days to go to the competent court, counted from the date they are notified of the refusal, or from the end of the decision period if no notification is given.

Bahrain faces \$25 billion debt maturities by 2030

● Kamco review of Gulf fixed-income markets

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain has about \$25 billion in debt instruments due to mature by 2030, according to a Kamco Invest report, as the Gulf faces more than \$508 billion in total maturities over the same stretch.

Kamco's December review of Gulf fixed-income markets places Bahrain with Kuwait and Oman in a mid-sized bracket for maturities between 2026 and 2030.

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar account for the largest share of debt coming due

across the region, the report said.

Across the Gulf Cooperation Council, sovereign debt maturing over the next five years totals about \$244.8 billion, against \$263.3 billion from corporate issuers.

Gulf

That lifts overall Gulf maturities to more than \$508 billion through 2030.

Most of the amount due is in US dollars. The report put the dollar share at 64.7 per cent, with the rest spread across local currencies.

It said most Gulf debt coming due sits in higher investment-grade ratings, led by A-rated instruments valued at \$208.7 billion.

Total investment-grade maturities now stand at \$239.1 billion.

Corporate tax bill sets 10% rate above BD200,000

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Ten per cent corporate tax would apply to profits above BD200,000 under a draft law sent to Parliament, with the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee taking the lead on scrutiny.

The bill was referred to the Council of Representatives under Royal Decree No. 79 of 2025, with the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee also asked to provide remarks. The decree instructs the Prime Minister to submit the draft law to Parliament and states it was issued at Riffa Palace on 31 December 2025.

Under the draft text, the core charging rules would apply to a resident person or a non-resident's permanent establishment where revenue

exceeds BD1 million in a tax period, or where taxable income exceeds BD200,000 in a tax period regardless of revenue. The rate schedule sets tax at 0 per cent on the slice of taxable income up to BD200,000 in a tax period, and 10 per cent on the slice above that.

The bill also creates a withholding tax on Bahrain-sourced income, with 0 per cent on dividends, 5 per cent on interest (or 0 per cent where the interest is paid by a government entity), 5 per cent on royalties and 5 per cent on services.

Tax residence is defined to include legal persons formed under Bahraini law, legal persons formed abroad whose 'effective management' is in Bahrain, and individuals physically present in the kingdom for more than 183 days in a calendar year.

Allowance return

MPs urge reinstatement of cost-of-living payments for low-income workers

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Five MPs have filed an urgent proposal calling for the cost-of-living allowance for low-income earners to be reinstated for those whose payments were stopped, with driving instructors and other self-employed workers at the centre of the request.

The proposal was signed by MP Zainab AbdulAmeer, Khalid Buanaq, Ahmed Al Salloom, Hisham Al Awadhi, and Eman Shuwaifer.

In an explanatory memorandum, the MPs said the request seeks the return and continuation of the allowance for self-employed workers, especially driving instructors, against a backdrop of higher living costs that they said has reduced income and purchasing power.

Payments

They said the halt in payments for some people in these trades has left them facing day-to-day



MP Zainab AbdulAmeer

expenses without the support they previously received, despite ongoing living obligations and rising costs.

The memorandum said this has affected their financial and living stability and widened the gap between income and basic needs.

The MPs said the proposal aims to provide ongoing financial support for low-income earners, bring self-employed

workers, particularly driving instructors, back within the group eligible for the allowance, and ease the burden linked to higher prices for goods and services.

Support

They also said it is intended to support social justice and improve living stability for those affected by the suspension.

They justified treating it as urgent by pointing to the pres-

The proposal seeks the return and continuation of the allowance for self-employed workers, especially driving instructors, against a backdrop of higher living costs that they said has reduced income and purchasing power.

sure created by the continued halt, warning it could lead to further day-to-day difficulty and economic instability, and calling for fast action to restore the support and meet its stated purpose.

Falcon Junction upgrade hits 18%



Muharraq Municipal Council session in progress

Councillors push for details

Mohammed Darwish

Muharraq Municipal Council approved a run of municipal service items yesterday, including waiving on-site parking rules for a property in East Hidd and changes to traffic on Roads 2207 and 2205, as it met the Ministry of Works for updates on projects across the governorate.

Councillors agreed to keep

Road 2207 as a two-way route, while turning Road 2205 into a one-way road for exit only.

They also asked for a review of all access points leading onto Al Busaiteen Avenue, and backed a change to the entrance and exit layout of a building opposite Road 2010 by shifting it to the adjacent road in East Hidd.

Update

The council heard an update on the bridge link between Muharraq and Arad.

Ebrahim Al Khayat, a representative of the Ministry of

Works, said: "The bridge link between Muharraq and Arad is 85 per cent complete," adding that detailed designs for the roads and elevated bridge were being prepared.

He said the scheme includes a sea bridge with three lanes in each direction, along with work at the interchange with Khalifa Al Kabeer Highway, including a flyover carrying traffic northbound and southbound and further upgrades at ground level.

Aim

On the road works leading to

Bahrain International Airport at Falcon Junction, Al Khayat said the aim was to make access easier by raising capacity and easing queues on the approach roads.

He said Phase 3A was under way and had reached 18 per cent completion.

He added that the works include a one-way flyover providing a two-lane slip allowing a continuous turn onto Khalifa Al Kabeer Highway, widening Arad Highway from three lanes to four in each direction, and a water culvert to improve drainage into Arad Bay.

A celebration of unity, gratitude and renewed hope

TDT | Manama

Members of the Filipino American Association of Bahrain (Fil-Am Bahrain) welcomed the New Year in high spirits.

Its president, Orlando Fontanilla, hosted a joyful New Year celebration at the elegant party hall of Fontana Gardens in Juffair, Bahrain.

The gathering brought together members, friends, and supporters for an evening marked by unity, gratitude, and renewed hope.

The venue was filled with

The celebration was more than a festive gathering, it served as a reminder of the strength, unity, and enduring spirit of the Fil-Am community.

warmth and festive energy as guests reflected on the year that had passed and looked ahead with optimism.

Memories

Laughter, lively conversations, and shared memories highlight-



Fil-Am community welcomes the new year with optimism

the strong bonds that continue to unite the Fil-Am com-

munity.

In his New Year message dur-

ing an interview, Fontanilla ex- pressed heartfelt appreciation

for the community's ongoing support and active participation.

He highlighted the importance of togetherness, volunteerism, and cultural pride, the core values that Fil-Am has long championed.

Many of those who attended have long been steadfast supporters of the organization's mission and initiative.

Festive cuisine, personally overseen by Fil-Am Community Outreach Chair Grace Estacio, was paired with cheerful music and joyful moments of camaraderie, perfectly capturing the season's spirit.

'Judge-led board' bill aims to guide external auditors

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Judges would chair a new 'External Auditors Accountability Board' under an urgent bill sent to Parliament that rewrites how external auditors are overseen and sanctioned.

Royal Decree No. 76 of 2025 refers amendments to Decree-Law No. 15 of 2021 on External Auditors to the Council of Representatives under the Constitution's fast-track route.

The decree was issued at Riffa Palace on 31 December 2025, signed by King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and naming Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

The Legislation and Legal

Opinion Commission said the bill follows Cabinet Decision No. 2821-02, taken on 8 December 2025 and relayed to the commission on 14 December, approving the draft and ordering its urgent referral.

The draft updates the rules for entry to the auditors' register, including a valid professional accounting qualification, at least five years' experience and full-time practice.

It keeps Bahraini nationality as the baseline but sets conditions for non-Bahrainis, including lawful residence, work with a licensed audit firm in Bahrain, proof they remain authorised abroad, and five years' continuous post-qualification experience.

Travel booking fraud

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's Public Prosecution has ordered the pre-trial detention of two suspects accused of defrauding victims by offering travel services, including flight tickets, at discounted prices.

Authorities said the suspects allegedly obtained money from victims without providing the promised services.

According to the prose-

cution, the case began after multiple complaints were received regarding online advertisements promoted through social media platforms. Investigations found that the suspects had used these platforms to target victims and collect payments.

Legal measures have been taken, passports and flight tickets were seized, and the suspects are being held pending further investigation ahead of referral to the criminal court.

Support for agriculture

TDT | Manama

Northern Governor Hassan Abdullah Mohammed Al Madani, reiterated the governorate's steadfast support for agriculture, deeming it essential for food security and a vital component of its historical and cultural legacy.

He also confirmed the governorate's commitment to the "Northern Governorate: A Healthy City" initiative, commending the expertise of Bahraini farmers and the exceptional quality of local agricultural products.

His remarks were delivered during an event at the Abu Saiba Nursery. He was

accompanied by Deputy Northern Governor Brigadier Abdullah Ali Rashid Maanter, and Engineering Services and Investment Director Suhaiba Ahmed Yousha'a Al Yousha'a, alongside other dignitaries in environmental and community matters.

During the event, the Northern Governor toured the various sections, which encompassed local nurseries, productive family enterprises, workshops, and immersive agricultural activities.

There were dedicated children's play areas and a variety of food stalls. He praised the participants for their considerable efforts and dedication.

NBB concludes second edition of Sustainability Academy 2025 to strengthen ESG Integration



Manama

The National Bank of Bahrain (NBB) recently concluded the second edition of its Sustainability Academy for the year 2025, delivered in collaboration with Emeritus and Columbia Business School.

The programme reflects the Bank's commitment to strengthening Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) capabilities across the organi-



sation and supporting the Kingdom's long-term sustainability agenda.

The Academy brought together team members from multiple departments including Corporate and Commercial Banking, Retail Banking, Market and Client Solutions, Compliance, Legal, Strategy, Operations, and Risk. Participants engaged in specialised training tailored to their specific roles to enhance ESG integration within banking processes

and strengthen alignment with national and global regulatory standards.

The programme covered key themes such as ESG risk assessment for credit facilities, climate-related and financial risk management, and sustainable finance frameworks. Sessions also addressed product structuring, governance, and oversight through reporting standards, compliance testing, internal audits, disclosures, and KPI monitoring. The course

content aimed to build practical understanding of how ESG considerations influence decision-making across the Bank.

By equipping employees with advanced sustainability knowledge and applied methodologies, the Sustainability Academy 2025 supports NBB's ongoing efforts to embed responsible practices into its operations and further solidify the Bank's readiness for the evolving sustainability landscape.

EU hopes to sign Mercosur trade deal soon

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

The European Union yesterday said it hoped to sign a long-delayed trade deal with South American bloc Mercosur "soon", pointing to progress towards approval by the bloc's member states.

Diplomats have said the EU aims for a signature on January 12 after hopes to ink the agreement in December were dashed by France and Italy joining forces to demand a delay.

European Commission chief spokeswoman Paula Pinho did not confirm the new January date but insisted the EU was on the "right track" for approval.

"There have been discussions, work, and progress over the past two weeks," she told a press conference in Brussels.

In a push to get the deal over the line, EU agriculture ministers will discuss the agreement on Wednesday during an extraordi-

nary meeting in Brussels.

European diplomats said that could be a prelude to a vote on Friday by member states, paving the way for an official signing.

More than 25 years in the making, the accord would create the world's biggest free-trade area, boosting trade between the 27-nation EU and the bloc comprising Brazil, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay.

But plans to seal the deal at a Mercosur gathering in Brazil

on December 20 ran into a late roadblock as heavyweights Italy and France demanded a postponement over concerns for the farming sector.

France suspending imports

Germany and Spain are strongly in favour of the agreement, believing it will provide a welcome boost to their industries, hampered by Chinese competition and tariffs in the United States.

The deal would help the EU

export more vehicles, machinery, wines and spirits to Latin America at a time of global trade tensions.

In return, it would facilitate the entry into Europe of South American meat, sugar, rice, honey and soybeans.

This has alarmed many European farmers who fear they will be undercut by a flow of cheaper goods from agricultural giant Brazil and its neighbours.

Rome and Paris have called

for tougher safeguard clauses, tighter import controls and more stringent standards on Mercosur producers to protect their farmers. The French government also Sunday announced plans to suspend imports of foodstuffs containing substances banned in Europe.

This would include avocados, mangoes, guavas, citrus fruits, grapes, apples, melons, cherries, strawberries, and potatoes "from South America or elsewhere"

Bahrain reviews preparations for World Radiocommunication Conference 2027

Manama

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) held the nineteenth meeting of the Spectrum Strategy and Coordination Committee, as part of its ongoing efforts to prepare Bahrain's telecommunications sector for future global developments.

One of the main topics discussed during the meeting was Bahrain's preparation for the World Radiocommunication Conference 2027 (WRC-27), an international conference organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The conference brings countries together to agree on how radio frequencies are used worldwide, which directly affects mobile services, satellite communications, and other essential communication systems.



The Committee highlighted the importance of early preparation for WRC-27, as the decisions

taken at the conference will play a key role in shaping global communication frameworks and enabling the deployment of new technologies. Active par-

ticipation helps Bahrain protect its national interests, support innovation, and ensure the availability of reliable and advanced communication services. The meeting also reviewed regional coordination with neighboring countries to improve cooperation in areas such as broadcasting and mobile communications. These efforts help reduce interference, improve service quality, and ensure smooth and reliable communication across borders.

In addition, the Committee discussed TRA's broader engagement at the national, regional, and international levels during 2025, reflecting Bahrain's commitment to aligning with global best practices and strengthening its role in the telecommunications sector.

Commenting on the meeting, Eng. Mariam Ahmed Jumaan, Chairperson of the Board of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority and Chair of the

Spectrum Strategy and Coordination Committee, said: "The World Radiocommunication Conference 2027 is an important global milestone. Its outcomes will influence the future of communications and the adoption of new technologies. By preparing early and working closely with regional and international partners, Bahrain is ensuring that it remains ready to support digital growth and the evolving needs of all sectors."

The TRA affirmed that the Spectrum Strategy and Coordination Committee will continue its critical role in tracking global developments, enhancing coordination with relevant stakeholders, and advancing the efficient and sustainable use of spectrum resources in line with national priorities and in support of comprehensive development.

'Grnata Group' employs and trains more than 60 Bahrainis through Tamkeen programmes

Manama

As part of ongoing efforts to invest in national talent in the real estate and construction sectors, "Grnata Group" have employed and trained more than 60 Bahraini employees through the various programs offered by the Labour Fund "Tamkeen". This step affirms the Group's strong commitment to investing in the development of its national workforce, enhancing their skills and expertise, and empowering them to elevate their capabilities and achieve their long-term career aspirations.

The support enriches the real estate activities sector, which recorded a contribution of 4.2% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the second quarter of 2025. It also strengthens the growth of this expanding sector, which positively reflects on the availability of employment opportunities for national talent.

The Labour Fund "Tamkeen" provides a wide range of pro-



grams designed to support various enterprises, empower the

private sector as a key driver of economic growth, and deliver

employment and career initiatives aimed at making Bahraini

talent the first choice of employment in the labor market.

تمكين
Tamkeen

Grnata Group was established in 1982, and over the course of four decades, evolved from a small shop in Dairh into one of the leading and most prominent institutions in the real estate sector in the Kingdom of Bahrain. It has strengthened its position by adopting the latest technological systems and offering an integrated range of real estate services, including brokerage and marketing, valuation and feasibility studies, as well as contracting and urban development. "Grnata Group" currently operates 26 branches within the Kingdom of Bahrain and abroad, including locations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and several GCC countries, in addition to newly established branches in international markets across Europe, such as London and Spain.

Volatility grips oil market as nervous investors assess Venezuela



The opening numbers of the Tokyo Stock Exchange are pictured on a screen after the opening ceremony to celebrate the first trading day of the year, at the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo

AFP | London, United Kingdom

The oil market was jumpy on Monday after US forces captured the leader of oil-rich Venezuela, sparking speculation on the implications for future crude supplies.

Having spiked in an initial reaction to the military operation to apprehend Nicolas Maduro in Caracas, oil prices quickly dropped again on expectations that Venezuela -- which sits on about a fifth of the world's oil reserves -- will crank up production quickly, adding to an

existing supply glut.

But then oil recovered again as investors realised that Venezuela is in no position to make a meaningful impact on oil supply in the short run, even with all the help that US President Donald Trump has promised.

Despite Trump's "obvious desire for US oil companies to ramp up activity in Venezuela, lower oil prices and political uncertainty will frustrate efforts to exploit its vast energy potential", predicted David Oxley, chief climate and commodities economist at Capital Econom-

Key figures at around 1435 GMT

Brent North Sea Crude:	▲ 0.7% at \$61.19 per barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▲ 0.9% at \$57.83 per barrel
New York - Dow:	▲ 0.7% at 48,704.34
London - FTSE 100:	▲ 0.4% at 9,986.36 points
Paris - CAC 40:	▲ 0.1% at 8,201.99
Frankfurt - DAX:	▲ 1.0% at 24,777.28
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▲ 3.0% at 51,832.80 (close)
Hang Seng Index:	■ at 26,347.24 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▲ 1.4% at 4,023.42 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▼ at \$1.1680 from \$1.1720 on Friday
Pound/dollar:	▼ at \$1.3461 from \$1.3460
Dollar/yen:	▼ at 156.73 yen from 156.85 yen
Euro/pound:	▼ at 86.77 pence from 87.07 pence

ics. "It would take years, and massive investment, to bring Venezuela's oil production back to pre-crisis levels," said Ipek Ozkardeskaya, an analyst with Swissquote.

Venezuela has the largest proven oil reserves in the world, at around 303 billion barrels, according to OPEC. Trump's promise to rebuild Venezuela's crude production capacity with the help of American companies meanwhile sent stocks in oil majors soaring.

In early Wall Street business, Chevron was up nearly 5%, while Exxon rose by around 2.5%.

Safe-haven investments gold and silver rose on increased geopolitical risk in the wake of the US invasion.

Prospects of more US interest-rate cuts this year and a booming technology sector meanwhile lent support to equity markets.

The first full week of business for 2026 will see the release of key US jobs data that could play a role in the Federal Reserve's decision-making on borrowing costs.

EU says 'seriously looking' into Musk's Grok AI over sexual deepfakes of minors

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

The European Commission said Monday it is "very seriously looking" into complaints that Elon Musk's AI tool Grok is being used to generate and disseminate sexually explicit childlike images.

"Grok is now offering a 'spicy mode' showing explicit sexual content with some output generated with childlike images. This



is appalling," EU digital affairs spokesman Thomas Regnier told reporters.

"This has no place in Europe."

Complaints of abuse began hitting Musk's X social media platform, where Grok is available, after an "edit image" button for the generative artificial in-

elligence tool was rolled out in

late December. But Grok maker XAI, run by Musk, said earlier this month it was scrambling to fix flaws in its AI tool.

The public prosecutor's office in Paris has also expanded an investigation into X to include new accusations that Grok was being used for generating and disseminating child pornography.

X has already been in the EU's crosshairs. Brussels in December slapped

the platform with a 120-million-euro (\$140-million) fine for violating the EU's digital content rules on transparency in advertising and for its methods for ensuring users were verified and actual people.

X still remains under investigation under the EU's Digital Services Act in a probe that began in December 2023.

The commission, which acts as the EU's digital watchdog, has also demanded information

from X about comments made around the Holocaust.

Regnier said X had responded to the commission's request for information.

"I think X is very well aware that we're very serious about DSA enforcement, they will remember the fine that they have received from us back in December. So we encourage all companies to be compliant because the commission is serious about enforcement," he added.



News in brief

◆ Colombian President

Gustavo Petro said yesterday he was ready to "take up arms" in the face of threats from US counterpart Donald Trump, who over the weekend seized the leader of neighboring Venezuela in a military strike. Petro, a former guerrilla who for months been the target of insults and threats from Trump, said on X: "I swore not to touch a weapon again... but for the homeland I will take up arms again." Trump said over the weekend that Petro should "watch his ass" and described Colombia's first-ever leftist leader as "a sick man who likes making cocaine and selling it to the United States." Petro, whose M-19 urban guerrilla group disbanded under a 1989 peace agreement, has traded barbs with Trump ever since the Republican's return to the White House in January.



Colombian president ready to 'take up arms' in face of Trump threats

◆ Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday ousted the country's security service chief in the latest change to Kyiv's top intelligence positions, almost four years into the Russian invasion. Zelensky and Vasyl Maliuk, a popular military leader who won praise for overseeing ambitious operations against Russian forces, said that Maliuk was stepping down as head of the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). Zelensky said on social media he had met Maliuk and thanked him for his service, posting a photo of the two men shaking hands. Maliuk said he was "stepping down" but would remain "within the SBU system to carry out world-class asymmetric special operations that will continue to inflict maximum damage on the enemy."

SPOTLIGHT

Iran says no leniency for 'rioters' as protests persist



Protesters in the Malekshahi district of Iran's western Ilam province.

AFP | Paris, France

Iran will offer no leniency to "rioters", though the public has a right to demonstrate, the head of the country's judiciary said on Monday, following more than a week of sometimes-deadly protests.

The remarks came after US President Donald Trump warned Iran would "get hit very hard by the United States" if the authorities killed more demonstrators.

The protests began on December 28 when shopkeepers in Tehran staged a strike over high prices and economic stagnation, but they have since spread to other places and expanded to include political demands.

"I instruct the attorney general and prosecutors across the country to act in accordance with the law and with resolve against the rioters and those who support them... and to show no leniency or indulgence," Gholamhosseini Mohseni Ejehi said, according to the judiciary's Mizan news agency.

He went on to add that Iran "listens to the protesters and their criticism, and distinguishes between them and rioters".

Demands have taken place in 25 of Iran's 31 prov-

inces and affected, to varying degrees, at least 45 different cities, most of them small or medium-sized and concentrated in the west, according to an AFP tally based on official statements and media reports.

At least 12 people have been killed since December 30 in localised clashes, including members of the security forces, according to official announcements.

Since the protests began, officials have publicly struck a conciliatory tone when it comes to protesters' economic demands, while vowing to take a hard line against any chaos or destabilisation.

Iran's economy has been hit hard by tough international sanctions, with the national currency, the rial, losing more than a third of its value against the US dollar over the past year and inflation in double digits.

On Sunday, the government announced a monthly allowance for every citizen to alleviate economic pressure, equivalent to around 3.5 percent of the average monthly wage.

The reformist newspaper Arman Melli said Monday that the authorities had "heard the voices of the protesters", while the conservative papers Javan and Kayhan accused the United States and Israel of financially supporting rioters.

Maduro arrives for first US court appearance after capture

Maduro faces narcotrafficking charges along with his wife, Cilia Flores



Members of the media gather outside the Daniel Patrick Moynihan United States Courthouse as ousted Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro awaits his arraignment hearing

● Trump said US was "in charge" of the South American nation

● The White House indicated Sunday that it does not want regime change

● Venezuelan military, loyal to Maduro, announced it recognized Rodriguez

AFP | New York, United States

Deposed Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro arrived at a New York court yesterday, just days after being seized in Caracas in a shock US military operation that paved the path for Washington's plans to control the oil-rich country.

Maduro, 63, faces narcotrafficking charges along with his wife, Cilia Flores. The pair were forcibly taken out of Caracas in a US assault Saturday, in which commandos swooped in on helicopters, backed by fighter jets and naval forces, to capture them.

On Monday morning, Maduro was escorted by heavily armed law enforcement officers to a courthouse in New York, having been transported by helicopter and armored car.

All eyes are on Venezuela's response to the swiftly moving events, and late Sunday, interim leader Delcy Rodriguez stepped back from her initial defiance by offering to work with Trump.

"We extend an invitation to the

US government to work together on an agenda for cooperation," the former vice president said.

Some 2,000 Maduro supporters, including rifle-wielding men on motorcycles, rallied Sunday in Caracas, with crowds shouting and waving Venezuelan flags.

The Venezuelan military, loyal to Maduro, announced it recognized Rodriguez and urged calm.

No Venezuela death toll has been announced, but Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino Lopez said a "large part" of Maduro's security team was killed "in cold blood," as well as military personnel and civilians.

Trump said late Sunday that the United States was "in charge" of the South American nation, while US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said that discussions of Venezuela holding elections following Maduro's ouster were "premature."

'Need access to oil'

When asked what he needs



A supporter of ousted Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro stands above a motorcycle gesturing he takes part in a demonstration in Caracas

from interim leader Rodriguez, Trump said: "We need total access. We need access to the oil and other things in their country that allow us to rebuild their country."

Venezuela has the world's largest proven oil reserves, and more Venezuelan crude in the market could exacerbate oversupply concerns and add to recent pressure on prices.

But analysts say that alongside other major questions about the South American country's future, substantially lifting its oil production will not be easy, quick or cheap.

Oil dipped as investors weighed the impact.

The Trump administration says it retains economic leverage by blockading oil tankers from Venezuela. Trump has also threatened additional military attacks.

While there are no known US forces left inside Venezuela, a huge naval presence, including

an aircraft carrier, remains off the coast.

Leading opposition figure Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia said that while the US intervention was "important," without the release of political prisoners and acknowledgement that he won the 2024 election, it was simply "not enough."

Details of the US operation were still emerging Monday, with Havana saying 32 Cubans were killed in the attack and Trump adding that Cuba itself was ready to fall after Maduro's capture.

"I don't think we need any action. It looks like it's going down," Trump said.

The UN Security Council will hold an emergency session on Monday at Venezuela's request.

Maduro allies remain

The White House indicated Sunday that it does not want regime change, only Maduro's removal and a pliant new government -- even if it is filled with his former associates.

Anointed by his mentor Hugo Chavez before the latter's 2013 death, Maduro kept a tight grip on power until his capture by US forces on Saturday.

He ruled alongside Flores and three other powerful figures: Rodriguez, now Venezuela's interim leader, her brother Jorge, and their rival, hardline Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello.

"It's like a club of five," a diplomatic source in Caracas told AFP under the condition of anonymity.

The US position leaves the Venezuelan opposition, which the Trump administration says was robbed of victory by Maduro, out in the cold.

1649

The English Rump Parliament votes to put Charles I on trial for treason and other "high crimes"

1838

Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail demonstrate their telegraph machine in New Jersey



1912

Geophysicist and meteorologist Alfred Wegener presents his controversial theory of continental drift in a lecture at the Geological Association at the Senckenberg-Museum, Frankfurt

1959

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

X

TOP

TWEETS

01



You see a lot claims that Venezuela has nothing to do with drugs because most of the fentanyl comes from elsewhere. I want to address this: First off, fentanyl isn't the only drug in the world and there is still fentanyl coming from Venezuela (or at least there was).

Second, cocaine, which is the main drug trafficked out of Venezuela, is a profit center for all of the Latin America cartels. If you cut out the money from cocaine (or even reduce it) you substantially weaken the cartels overall. Also, cocaine is bad too!

Third, yes, a lot of fentanyl is coming out of Mexico. That continues to be a focus of our policy in Mexico and is a reason why President Trump shut the border on day one.

Fourth, I see a lot of criticism about oil. About 20 years ago, Venezuela expropriated American oil property and until recently used that stolen property to get rich and fund their narcoterrorist activities. I understand the anxiety over the use of military force, but are we just supposed to allow a communist to steal our stuff in our hemisphere and do nothing? Great powers don't act like that.

The United States, thanks to President Trump's leadership, is a great power again. Everyone should take note.

@VP

02



Cervical cancer could be the first cancer EVER in the world to be eliminated, if: 90% of girls are vaccinated. 70% of women are screened. 90% of women with cervical cancer receive treatment

@WHO

Palestinian embassy in UK officially inaugurated

UK announced it would recognise Palestine in September 2025

It was previously known as the Palestinian Mission to the UK in west London

AFP | London, United Kingdom

The embassy of Palestine was officially inaugurated in London in a short ceremony yesterday, hailed by its ambassador as a "profound milestone" in British-Palestinian relations.

"We gather today to mark a historic moment - the inauguration of the embassy of the State of Palestine to the United Kingdom, with full diplomatic status and privileges," said ambassador Husam Zomlot in a speech outside what was previously known as the Palestinian Mission to the UK in west London.

The official upgrading of the mission to embassy status came after the UK announced it would recognise the State of Palestine in September 2025, along with several other countries, including Australia and Canada, at a time of major international concern about the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Sporting a traditional black and white keffiyeh scarf, Zomlot told the ceremony this is "not merely a change of name", but a "change of direction" towards Palestinian statehood.

"What a way to begin a new year together, marking a profound milestone in the British-Palestinian relations, and in the Palestinian people's long journey to freedom and self-determination," Zomlot said, before unveiling the embassy's new plaque.

"This is a day of hope, a day of steadfastness, and a day that reminds the world that peace is not only possible, it is inevitable... when rooted in justice, dignity, equality and mutual recognition."

The UK's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to an AFP query on whether the UK planned to follow suit by opening a British embassy in the Palestinian territories.



Head of the Palestine Mission to the UK, Husam Zomlot reacts as he holds a plaque with the words 'Embassy of the State of Palestine', during a flag-raising ceremony outside their Mission in west London

YOU
KNOW WHAT

As of 2025, a large majority of the world's nations recognise the State of Palestine – approximately 157 of the 193 United Nations member states have formally recognised Palestinian statehood. This means more than 80% of UN members officially acknowledge Palestine as a sovereign state.

of hope". "This is the beginning of a step change in our bilateral relationship," he said.

"I wish you ambassador, and your team, a very happy stay in what is now your embassy, and congratulations."

A fragile ceasefire has been in place since October in Gaza, following a devastating war waged by Israel in response to Hamas's unprecedented deadly October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

UK starts ban on junk food ads on daytime TV and online

AFP | London, United Kingdom

New regulations come into force Monday in Britain banning daytime TV and online adverts for so-called junk foods, in what the government calls a "world-leading action" to tackle childhood obesity.

The ban -- targeting ads for products high in fat, salt or sugar -- is expected to remove up to 7.2 billion calories from children's diets each year, according to the health ministry.

Impacting ads airing before the 9:00pm watershed and anytime online, it will reduce the number of children living with obesity by 20,000 and deliver around £2 billion (\$2.7 bln) in health benefits, the ministry added.

The implementation of the

measure -- first announced in December 2024 -- follows other recent steps, including an extended sugar tax on pre-packaged items like milkshakes, ready-to-go coffees and sweetened yoghurt drinks.

Local authorities have also been given the power to stop fast food shops setting up outside schools.

The government argues evidence shows advertising influences what and when children eat, shaping preferences from a young age and increasing the risk of obesity and related illnesses.

It notes 22 percent of children starting primary school



EU urges respect for 'territorial integrity' after Trump Greenland threat

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

The EU said Monday it expects its partners to "respect" the principle of territorial integrity, after President Donald Trump reiterated calls for Greenland to become part of the United States.

"The EU will continue to uphold the principles of na-

tional sovereignty, territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders," EU foreign policy spokesperson Anitta Hippler told reporters.

"These are universal principles, and we will not stop defending them, all the more so if the territorial integrity of a member state of the European Union is questioned," she added.

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

Israel says to strike targets in Lebanon, issues evacuation calls

Adraee said the military would hit Hezbollah sites in Kfar Hatta and Ain al-Tinah

● It was the first such warning issued by the Israeli military this year,

● Arabic-language spokesman, Colonel Avichay Adraee, said the villages were Kfar Hatta and Annan in south Lebanon, and Al-Manara and Ain al-Tinah in eastern Lebanon

● Two people were killed in an Israeli strike that targeted a vehicle on Sunday

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

The Israeli military ordered residents of four villages in Lebanon to evacuate immediately yesterday, warning it would soon strike Hezbollah and Hamas targets in those areas.

It was the first such warning issued by the Israeli military this year, as Israel continues to strike targets in Lebanon despite a ceasefire with Hezbollah.

In two separate posts on X, the military's Arabic-language spokesman, Colonel Avichay



A firefighter and a civilian extinguish fire from a car following an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese village of Khiam

Adraee, said the villages were Kfar Hatta and Annan in south Lebanon, and Al-Manara and Ain al-Tinah in eastern Lebanon.

Adraee said the military would hit Hezbollah sites in Kfar Hatta and Ain al-Tinah, and Hamas

sites in Annan and Al-Manara.

Despite a year-old ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, Israel carries out regular strikes on Lebanon, usually saying it is

bombing Hezbollah sites and operatives, and occasionally Ha-

mas targets.

It has also maintained troops in five areas it deems strategic.

Two people were killed in an Israeli strike that targeted a vehicle on Sunday, around 10 kilometres (six miles) from the

border, the Lebanese health ministry said.

Under heavy US pressure and fears of expanded Israeli strikes, Beirut has committed to disarming Hezbollah, which was badly weakened after more than a year

of hostilities with Israel including two months of open war that ended with the November 2024 ceasefire.

Lebanon's army was expected to complete the disarmament south of the Litani River -- about 30 kilometres from the border with Israel -- by the end of 2025, before tackling the rest of the country.

Lebanon's cabinet is to meet on Thursday to discuss the army's progress, while the ceasefire monitoring committee -- comprising Lebanon, Israel, the United States, France and UN peacekeepers -- is also set to meet this week.

On Sunday, Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar acknowledged on X that the Lebanese government and army had made efforts to disarm Hezbollah but said "they are far from sufficient", citing "Hezbollah's efforts to rearm and rebuild, with Iranian support".

Israel has previously questioned the Lebanese military's effectiveness and has accused Hezbollah of rearming, while the group itself has rejected calls to surrender its weapons.

At least 350 people have been killed by Israeli fire in Lebanon since the ceasefire, according to an AFP tally of Lebanese health ministry reports.

'Tuna King' pays record \$3.2 mn for bluefin at Tokyo auction

● Self-styled "Tuna King" Kiyoshi Kimura's sushi restaurant chain paid the top price for the 243-kilogramme (536-pound) fish

AFP | Tokyo, Japan

A Japanese sushi entrepreneur paid a record \$3.2 million for a giant bluefin tuna Monday at an annual prestigious new year auction in Tokyo's main fish market, smashing the previous all-time high.

Dave Gershman at the Pew Charitable Trusts' international fisheries team used news of the auction to highlight that stocks of Pacific bluefin tuna were improving after being "near collapse".

Self-styled "Tuna King" Kiyoshi Kimura's sushi restaurant chain paid the top price for the 243-kilogramme (536-pound) fish that was caught off Japan's northern coast.

"I'd thought we would be able to buy a little cheaper, but the



Kiyoshi Kimura (C), president of Kiyomura Corp., the Tokyo-based operator of sushi restaurant chain Sushizanmai, displays a 243-kilogram bluefin tuna at his main restaurant in Tokyo

price soared before you knew it," Kimura said after the pre-dawn auction at Tokyo's main fish market.

"I was surprised at the price...I hope that by eating auspicious

tuna, as many people as possible will feel energised," he told reporters.

The 510.3 million yen price at the new year's auction was the highest since comparable data

to a more modern facility.

The top bidder last year paid 207 million yen for a 276-kilogramme bluefin.

Shortly after this year's auction, the tuna was butchered and turned into sushi, selling for around 500 yen (\$3) per roll.

"I feel like I've begun the year in a good way after eating something so auspicious as the year starts," 19-year-old Minami Sugiyama told AFP from a table in one of Kimura's restaurants in Tsukiji.

Fellow customer Kiyoshi Nishimura agreed.

"Even without dipping it in soy sauce, there's sweetness. And the richness, the texture...it just makes you feel happy," the 40-year-old Shinto priest said.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the new year tunas commanded only a fraction of their usual top prices as restaurants scaled back operations.

Gershman said in an emailed statement that a 2017 recovery plan "is working, and if decision makers take further action in 2026, the future for Pacific bluefin will be bright".

"This year, fisheries managers

from Japan, the United States, Korea, and other countries from across the Pacific who target bluefin should agree on a long-term, sustainable management plan that would lock in a healthy population and ensure that the species never again faces the overfishing of the past," he added.



Tuna are among the fastest fish in the ocean – some species, such as the yellowfin tuna, can swim at speeds of up to 75 km/h, thanks to their streamlined bodies and powerful muscles, allowing them to travel vast distances across open seas.

Interior Minister Receives Award-Winning Researcher Major Saud Buhejji



Lieutenant General His Excellency Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior, received Major Saud Abdulaziz Buhejji, who presented a copy of his Master's thesis from Leeds Beckett University. Earned with distinction, the research focuses on using drone technology for the sustainable verification of water consumption in Bahrain. His Excellency congratulated Major Buhejji, praising the study's contribution to the Ministry's modernization goals and its alignment with international standards for advanced security and public services. The Minister emphasized the importance of supporting scientific research to drive comprehensive national development.

"Star of the Stage" Auditions Spark Huge Interest for Third Season



The third season of the "Star of the Stage" program launched with significant success on Saturday, January 3, at the Dragon Beach Hotel. The event drew over 200 applicants from various age groups, all eager to showcase their theatrical talents. From this large pool, 50 participants were selected for live auditions before a judging panel to identify the most promising performers. Selected talents will join intensive theater workshops during the third week of January. This training serves as preparation for a new theatrical production scheduled for the upcoming season. This initiative is part of an ongoing effort to support and refine the skills of young Bahraini artists. By providing professional training and performance opportunities, the program continues to enrich the local theatrical scene with creative new talent capable of achieving excellence on stage.

Royal Advisor Reviews Heritage at "Hawa Al Manama" Event



Her Excellency Hala Mohammed Jaber Al Ansari, Advisor to His Majesty the King for Cultural and Scientific Affairs, visited the "Hawa Al Manama" event to review its cultural and educational offerings. Accompanied by Ms. Sara Ahmed Buhejji, CEO of the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority, Her Excellency was briefed on the interactive programs designed to provide an integrated tourism experience for citizens and tourists alike. The tour showcased museums and exhibitions that highlight the social, cultural, and economic transformations of Manama. These displays celebrate the capital's unique identity and its historical evolution, offering a deep dive into the Kingdom's heritage. Her Excellency praised the event's role in preserving national identity and connecting Bahrain's history with the present through creative, engaging platforms. By showcasing diverse tourism products, "Hawa Al Manama" continues to strengthen the Kingdom's position as a premier destination for cultural and historical exploration.

Students Use AI to Tell Bahrain's Story in English Initiative



Fifth-grade students at His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Primary Preparatory School for Boys have successfully authored English-language stories celebrating Bahrain's heritage. Part of the "Bahrain Story" initiative by teacher Ali Issa Al-Muallim, the project saw students writing about national landmarks and achievements while using artificial intelligence to generate accompanying illustrations. The creative process involved character planning, drafting, and training students to use AI technical commands for visual storytelling. Standout works included Abdulaziz Nayef Al-Dosari's account of Bahrain's Gulf Cup victory and Faisal Ali Zaid's story on the historic Arad Castle. Al-Muallim praised the students' ability to blend linguistic skills with national pride.

New Management Committee Takes Office at St. Peter's Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church Bahrain



The newly elected management committee of St. Peter's Jacobite Syrian Orthodox Church has officially assumed its duties. The new administration is led by Sleeba Paul Vattavelil Corepiscopa, who serves as President, and Santhosh Andrews as Vice President. Other key office bearers include Benny P. Mathew (Secretary), Lijo K. Alex (Treasurer), Aby P. Jacob (Joint Secretary), and Shibu John (Joint Treasurer). The committee also includes several newly inducted members: Biju Thelappilly, Dolly George, Viju K. Elias, Jerin Tom Peter, Binumon Jacob, Subin Thomas, and Manosh Kora.

KSCA Bahrain Commemorates Mannathu Padmanabhan Jayanti



The Kerala Social and Cultural Association (KSCA) celebrated the birth anniversary of Bharata Kesari Mannathu Padmanabhan with a grand ceremony at its headquarters. A highlight of the event was the special honoring of Pamba Vasan Nair, former KSCA president and Pravasi Bharatiya Excellence Award winner. P.V. Radhakrishna Pillai, President of Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam, delivered the keynote address. Other honorees included Jaya Menon, Santhosh Kailas, and Suja J.P. Menon. Presided over by KSCA President Rajesh Nambiar, the program featured cultural performances such as a presentation song by Samvruth Sathesh and Prarthana Raj, alongside a traditional Sopana Sangeetham recital.

Classifieds

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FYLON TRAVELS AND TOURISM W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of SALES EXECUTIVE, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17664065 or flyontravelsteam@gmail.com

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BURADHI SALOON has a vacancy for the occupation of BARBER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 33756144 or SALMAN@GCCBAH.COM

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ABUOBAID CONTRACTING & TRADING GROUP has a vacancy for the occupation of MASON, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17700204 or abuobaibgroup@gmail.com

PROJECTS ACCESS SCAFFOLDING & FORMWORK CO. W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of SCAFFOLDER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17737891 or jose@projectsaccess.net

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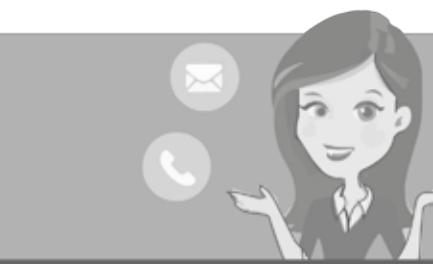
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ALJOUF INTERNATIONAL MATERIAL RECOVERY WORKSHOP has a vacancy for the occupation of MACHINE OPERATOR, suitably qualified applicants can contact 33371100 or KALYOUSHA@GMAIL.COM

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HANSCO MANAGEMENT CO. W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of SECRETARY, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17404949 or SECURITY@MANGUARD.COM.BH

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BDC MANPOWER SERVICES W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of WORKER(PACKER), suitably qualified applicants can contact 17180530 or mona.alnokheda@bas.com.bh

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ALEKKAR COLDSTORES has a vacancy for the occupation of SALESMAN, suitably qualified applicants can contact 39692963 or MBI-NAAJ@GMAIL.COM

EASY CAR ACCESSORIES W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of SALES WORKER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 36347399 or MUHAMMADTANVERG2024@GMAIL.COM

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4W SECURITY CO. W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of SECURITY GUARD, suitably qualified applicants can contact 77996666 or Government@mre.co

Farsana Construction S P C has a vacancy for the occupation of WORKER(CONSTRUCTION), suitably qualified applicants can contact 39829689 or FARSANABAHRAIN@GMAIL.COM

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Golden Diyar construction has a vacancy for the occupation of DRIVER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17530670 or HWBAH-RAIN@GMAIL.COM

REYAM COLD STORE has a vacancy for the occupation of SALESMAN, suitably qualified applicants can contact 39267257 or BAH.TROUBLEFREE.CREATION@GMAIL.COM

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Cebarco Named Official Sponsor of HRH the Crown Prince's Cup and Platinum Sponsor of the Bahrain Turf Series



Manama

As part of the ongoing partnership between Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club (REHC) and Cebarco, the sponsorship agreement has been renewed, naming Cebarco as the official sponsor of HRH the Crown Prince's Cup as part of HRH the Crown Prince's Cup Festival and the platinum sponsor of the Bahrain Turf Series for the 2025/2026 horseracing season.

This renewal reflects the Club's commitment to strengthening partnerships with private sector institutions and supporting the continued development of seasonal races and international championships hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain.

HRH the Crown Prince's Cup is regarded as one of the most prominent races on the horseracing calendar, having built a distinguished reputation over the years through the participation of elite imported horses, alongside consistently high organizational standards.

These achievements have qualified the race for Group 3 international classification, underscoring the remarkable development of Bahraini horseracing and its advancement in line with internationally recognized standards.

The agreement was signed by Mr. Yusuf Osama Buheji, Chief Executive Officer of Rashid Equestrian and

Horseracing Club, and Mr. Mohammed Khalid Abdulrahim, Executive Director of Cebarco and the Khalid Abdulrahim Group, in the presence of Dr. Khalid Mohammed Abdulrahim, Chairman of Cebarco and Chief Executive Officer of the Khalid Abdulrahim Group.

Mr. Yusuf Osama Buheji commended the prominent role played by Cebarco in supporting and sponsoring major horseracing events and championships, particularly its continued sponsorship of HRH the Crown Prince's Cup for the third consecutive season, in addition to its support of the Bahrain Turf Series. He noted that this ongoing commitment plays a key role in the success of these major sporting events and contributes to enhancing the Kingdom of Bahrain's standing on the international horseracing stage.

Mr. Buheji further emphasized that the Club's continued success in hosting international championships—and the positive impact of these events on the advancement of both local and international races—has contributed to expanding REHC's network of partners and attracting a wider base of sponsoring companies and institutions. This forms part of the Club's broader efforts to further develop and elevate horseracing in the Kingdom.

For his part, Dr. Khalid Abdulrahim expressed his pride in the company's continued involvement in these major events.

Djokovic quits players' union he co-founded

AFP | Paris

Novak Djokovic announced on Sunday he was leaving the professional players' union he co-founded in 2020, citing "concerns regarding transparency and governance" within the body.

The Professional Tennis Players Association (PTPA), founded by the current world

No. 4 and Canadian Vasek Pospisil, took legal action in March 2025 against tennis governing bodies, denouncing "anti-competitive restraints and abusive practices".

The action also highlighted the "unsustainable schedule" for players, with tournaments scheduled 11 months out of 12 by both the men's ATP and women's WTA.

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Muharraq seek Swift response against Sitra

Defending champions look to bounce back from first defeat of the season



Muharraq huddle ahead of kick-off in a previous match

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The Nasser Bin Hamad Premier League continues this evening as defending champions Muharraq take on Sitra at Khalifa Sports City Stadium at 7pm, with Muharraq eager to respond after suffering their first defeat of the 2025-26 season.

Muharraq's unbeaten run came to an end in the previous round, losing 1-0 at home

to Al Khaldiya. Joel Beya's early strike proved decisive, leaving Muharraq in third place with 20 points, four points behind the leaders. A win tonight would move them into second, behind Al-Riffa, and within striking distance of the top.

Despite that setback, Muharraq remain one of the division's most formidable sides. They boast one of the league's best defensive records, having conceded only three goals in nine matches, and have record-



Abdulwasea Al Matari (R) drives forward for Sitra during their previous fixture

ed six wins and two draws so far. A victory tonight would help them regain momentum and keep pressure on the title contenders.

Sitra, meanwhile, sit in eighth place with 11 points, having drawn five of their nine matches—the most in the league. They are organised and resilient but have struggled to secure wins consistently. Their last match ended in a 1-1 draw with Al Shabab, with Mohammed Al Akram scoring the equaliser.

Tonight's fixture presents a stern challenge for Sitra, who have shown consistency in familiar surroundings, but face a motivated Muharraq side looking to make an immediate statement after their recent disappointment.

With the title race taking shape, Muharraq know there is little room for error, while Sitra will aim to frustrate another heavyweight and add to their tally of hard-earned points.

Ettihad, Hala Claim Crucial League Wins



Romeo Enan fends off Sitra's Mahmood Ebrahim

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Game week eight of the 2025-26 Zain Bahrain Basketball League saw Al Ettihad and Al Hala claim impressive victories yesterday at Um Al Hassam Sports Complex in two competitive contests.

In the premier division, Al Ettihad edged Sitra 92-82 in a high-intensity encounter. Sitra held a narrow 21-19 lead after the opening quarter, with import Austin Ajukwa dominating early with jump shots, fadeaways, and free throws. Captain Mahdi Abdulameer contributed a step-back jumper and a three, while Dhaif Husain Dhaif added

a pull-up jumper. Al Ettihad kept in touch through Romeo Enan, Mohamed Ghazwan, Feras Ali, and Isa Jassim Juma, gradually closing the gap.

Al Ettihad turned the tide in the second quarter, outscoring Sitra 27-15. Isa Jassim Juma erupted for multiple layups and threes, supported by Ali Ghadeer, Romeo Enan, and Fadel Abdulelah, to establish a 10-point halftime lead at 46-36.

The third quarter saw the lead fluctuate between 7-16 points, with Austin Ajukwa keeping Sitra in the game through free throws and pull-ups.

In the fourth quarter, Al Ettihad pulled away decisively, capitalizing on clutch free throws



Action from Al Hala's win against Nuwaiderat last night

and inside dominance from Romeo Enan, who finished with 23 points and 17 rebounds. Isa Jassim Juma added 17 points, while Mohamed Ghazwan contributed 12 points with 8 rebounds and 5 assists. Sitra relied heavily on Ajukwa's 34 points and Ali Mohsen's 22, but poor shooting (33%) and turnovers prevented a comeback.

Meanwhile, in League B, Al Hala completed a thrilling comeback to beat Nuwaiderat 86-75. Nuwaiderat jumped to an early 25-16 lead behind strong inside play and free throws from Quinton Rose and Murtadha Salman. Shaheed Davis and Ahmed Khalifa kept Al Hala within striking distance.

By halftime, Nuwaiderat led narrowly 42-39, but Al Hala mounted a third-quarter surge, outscoring Nuwaiderat 22-21 behind Davis' sharpshooting and a buzzer-beater three. In the final period, Al Hala seized control with aggressive defense and accurate three-point shooting, including key baskets from Abdulqader Thani and Davis.

Davis starred with 28 points, 16 rebounds, 4 assists, 3 steals, and 4 blocks, while Thani added 19 points and 7 assists. For Nuwaiderat, Quinton Rose also scored 28 points and Murtadha Salman contributed 19, but turnovers (20) and cold shooting late in the game cost them.

BIC set for drag double-header

Bahrain International Circuit set for thrills on the strip with back-to-back rounds of Bahrain Drag Racing Championship

Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), 'The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East', is all geared up for plenty of intense, head-to-head battles on the strip over the next week-and-a-half.

Set to take place back-to-back in Sakhir are the third and fourth rounds of the 2025/2026 Bahrain Drag Racing Championship – the region's biggest and most competitive series in this category of motor racing.

Round three lights up BIC's quarter-mile this Tuesday to Friday (Editor's note: 6 to 9 January) followed directly by round four from 13 to 16 January, ensuring non-stop action at BIC's National Hot Rod Association (NHRA)-sanctioned facility.

Around 200 competitors flocked to the circuit in each of the first two meetings this season, and even more are expected to compete as the stakes are raised heading into the latter half of the campaign.

The championship is being organised and run by BIC in cooperation with the Bahrain



Motor Federation, the Bahrain Drag Racing Commission, and the Bahrain Motorcycle Commission.

The competing drag racers will be battling in their respective competition categories to crown the champions at the end of the season, each of whom will

take home a prestigious 'Wally Trophy', awarded only to title winners of NHRA events worldwide. The 'Wally' is drag racing's most prestigious accolade. Named after NHRA founder Wally Parks, it has been handed out since the 1969 NHRA season in the US.

This week's events get underway with two night of Test and

Tune on Tuesday from 6pm to 11pm and on Wednesday from 4pm to 11pm. Qualifying will then be held on Thursday, which will set the elimination ladders for the one-on-one races on Friday. Action on both those days is scheduled to be held from 4pm onwards.

Fans looking to attend the



round can watch the excitement unfold on the strip from the Start Line Grandstand or from BIC's Beyon Grandstand. Tickets for the Start Line Grandstand are BD5 apiece, while tickets to the Beyon Grandstand for Test and Tune are BD2 each and BD3 per person for qualifying and race day.

Tickets can be purchased online at bahraingp.com, by calling the BIC Hotline on +973-17450000, or at the gate.

There are 13 classes in this season's Bahrain Drag Racing Championship. They include

8.5, Outlaw 6, Index 7.5, Pro 29.5 V8, Comp 4.5, Outlaw 4, and Pro Mod for cars; and Street Fight 9.5, Index 8.5, Pro Street, and Outlaw for motorbikes.

The 2025/2026 calendar of the Bahrain Drag Racing Championship features five rounds. Following the upcoming double-header, the grand finale is set for 3 to 6 March.

For more information on the 2025/2026 Bahrain Drag Racing Championship or other events and experiences at BIC, visit bahraingp.com, call the BIC Hotline, or follow the circuit's official social media channels.

Man Utd sack manager Amorim

Tensions with hierarchy end Ruben Amorim's 14-month reign at Old Trafford

● Darren Fletcher named interim manager

AFP | Manchester

Ruben Amorim has been sacked as Manchester United manager 14 months after arriving at Old Trafford, the Premier League club announced on Monday.

The dismissal follows growing tensions between Amorim and the Old Trafford hierarchy, including director of football Jason Wilcox, in recent days.

United said in a statement that the Portuguese had left his role, with the club's leadership having "reluctantly made the decision that it is the right time to make a change".

The club added: "This will give the team the best opportunity of the highest possible Premier League finish."

"The club would like to thank Ruben for his contribution to the club and wishes him well for the future."

Current under-18s coach Darren Fletcher will take charge of the team against Burnley on Wednesday.

'I'm not going to quit'

United are currently sixth in the Premier League table after a 1-1 draw at Leeds on Sunday.

After that game, an irate Amorim stressed he was United's manager rather than just the coach during an eye-catching press conference in which he told the scouting department and Wilcox "to do their job".

The 40-year-old had alluded to frustration behind the scenes in the build-up to the match, refusing to clarify comments



Manchester United's Portuguese head coach Ruben Amorim crouches on the touchline (file photo)

about the club's transfer plans.

He had looked downbeat when he sidestepped those questions but was more forthcoming when asked on Sunday if he still felt he had confidence from the board.

"Guys, to start with that -- and I noticed that you receive selective information about everything -- I came here to be the manager of the Manchester United, not to be the coach of Manchester United," Amorim said. "And that is clear."

"I know that my name is not (Thomas) Tuchel, it's not (Antonio) Conte, it's not (Jose) Mourinho but I'm the manager of Manchester United."

"And it's going to be like this for 18 months or when the board decides to change, so that was my point."

"I want to finish with that. I'm not going to quit. I will do my job until another guy is coming

here to replace me."

United appointed Amorim to replace the sacked Erik ten Hag in November 2024.

He had established himself as one of the most sought-after young coaches in world football

at Sporting Lisbon, where he won two league titles.

Amorim led United to the Europa League final in Bilbao in May, which they lost to Tottenham, but finished a shocking 15th in the Premier League table -- their lowest finish in more than 50 years.

The club have made marginal improvements this season but have been inconsistent, winning just eight of their 20 league games so far.

They are 17 points behind leaders Arsenal.

Amorim's 14-month stint is the shortest reign of a permanent manager at United since David Moyes was sacked just eight months into his tenure in 2014.

The club, 20-time English champions, have not won the Premier League since 2013, in Alex Ferguson's final season in charge.



Amorim's 14-month tenure is the shortest for a permanent United manager since David Moyes in 2014, following a record-low 15th-place league finish during his first partial season at the club

Salim Khalifa Masood wins after thrilling countback



TD Rashed Al Qutami, runner up Rashed Ahmed Al Kaabi and Vice-Captain Balbir Singh

TDT | Manama

returned matching cards of 38 points, forcing officials to apply countback rules based on the back nine and final six holes.

Masood prevailed after a steady round that included five birdies, three bogeys and 10 pars. Ashima Talwar claimed a prize for the first time by finishing fourth with 36 points, beating Salah Musbah Al Kaabi on countback, while Gérard van Gerwen and Melanie Swain followed in the

standings.

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