

Georgia hand Bahrain defeat in Tbilisi friendly

Bahrain's senior men's national team suffered a 2-0 defeat to Georgia last night in the first of their two international friendlies during their European training camp. | P12

Breaking barriers, building leaders



Bahraini women move from empowerment and progress toward leadership

TDT | Manama

Bahrain is stepping up efforts to expand women's leadership roles as the Kingdom moves beyond empowerment initiatives towards greater participation in decision-making and national development, according to the Supreme Council

for Women.

The move forms part of the National Plan for the Advancement of Bahraini Women (2025-2026), titled "Bahraini Women: From Empowerment and Progress to the Pursuit of Leadership."

The plan, launched by the Supreme Council for Women

under the chairmanship of Her Royal Highness Princess Sa-beeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, aims to strengthen women's leadership capabilities and enhance their competitiveness at regional and international levels across a range of sectors.

The council said Bahrain continues to build on policies

designed to support women's participation in public life, reflecting the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the support of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

According to statistics released by the Supreme Coun-

cil for Women covering 2025 and the first half of 2026, Bahraini women have continued to strengthen their presence across key sectors, including politics, diplomacy, finance, the economy and development.

The council said the figures demonstrate the impact of equal-opportunity policies and

national programmes aimed at supporting women's advancement and increasing their contribution to the Kingdom's development. A detailed analysis of the latest data is expected to provide further insights into the growing role of Bahraini women across various sectors of national life.

US sanctions Iranian LPG export and 'shadow banking' networks

Washington, United States

The United States yesterday imposed sanctions on a network allegedly exporting Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) from Iran to South and Eastern Asia by falsely flagging it as originating in Oman, the Treasury said.

The network used front companies in the United Arab Emirates and China and a "shadow fleet" of vessels, according to a Treasury statement.

The system, designed to evade existing US sanctions, moved LPG worth hundreds of millions of dollars, it added.

Bitcoin drops below \$60,000, a first since October 2024

Washington, United States

Bitcoin dropped below \$60,000 yesterday, its lowest level since October 2024, just before Donald Trump's election, which propelled it to a record high.

The currency fell by about 6% around 1615 GMT, to \$59,7709, before paring its losses slightly.

At 100 days, Gulf resilience proven

TDT | Manama

The Iran-US war is nearing its 100th day, a grim milestone in a conflict that has redrawn regional alliances, rattled global markets and heightened fears of a wider Middle East confrontation.

Even as a ceasefire has largely held since April, reports of fresh tensions in the Gulf of Oman and stalled negotiations between Washington and Tehran have underscored the fragility of the truce and the uncertainty surrounding a lasting settlement.

Yet amid the turbulence, the Gulf has demonstrated remarkable resilience. Despite disruptions to shipping routes and heightened security concerns, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have maintained stability, protected critical infrastructure and ensured the continued flow of trade and energy supplies.

Concerns over maritime security, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, have kept the Gulf at the centre of global attention. Nevertheless, ports, airports and logistics hubs across the region have continued to operate efficiently, reinforcing the GCC's reputation as a reliable



- STRATEGIC CHOKE POINT**
 The Strait of Hormuz is a vital energy corridor, through which around 20% of the world's oil passes daily.
- TALKS STALLED**
 Efforts to extend the ceasefire and resume talks between Washington and Tehran remain unsuccessful.
- TENSIONS PERSIST**
 Recent confrontations in the Gulf of Oman highlight the fragility of the truce.
- ENERGY AT STAKE**
 About 20 million barrels of oil and petroleum products transit the strait every day.
- GULF RESILIENCE**
 GCC countries continue to safeguard security, keep trade and energy flows steady and drive economic growth.
- DIPLOMACY ACTIVE**
 GCC nations advocate dialogue, restraint and de-escalation to prevent a wider regional conflict.

As the conflict approaches the 100-day mark, the Gulf's experience highlights the value of preparedness, cooperation and strategic planning.

economic and trading hub.

The region's economic resilience has been equally evident. While markets reacted to developments in the conflict, Gulf economies pressed ahead with

development projects, diversification plans and long-term reforms, reflecting confidence in their economic foundations.

The GCC has also played an important diplomatic role, con-

sistently advocating dialogue, restraint and de-escalation. Its balanced approach has helped preserve channels of communication at a time of heightened regional tensions.

Leak on space station triggers brief safety alert

Washington, United States

Astronauts working on the International Space Station briefly sheltered in a docked capsule yesterday as Russian colleagues assessed leak repairs, NASA said.

Five astronauts had briefly entered the docked Dragon spacecraft as a precautionary measure -- the capsule functions as a lifeboat of sorts in the case an evacuation is needed.

NASA gave the all clear and the astronauts were able to return to their stations.



Iran ex-PM hospitalised after years under house arrest: aide

AFP | Paris, France

Iran's former prime minister Mir Hossein Mousavi, who was the focus of a 2009 mass protest movement and has spent the last 15 years under house arrest, has been hospitalised after his health deteriorated, an advisor said yesterday.

Mousavi, the last person to serve as Iran's premier before the post was abolished, had claimed to be the rightful victor of the disputed 2009 presidential elections.



Bahrain celebrates youth as drivers of future growth

TDT | Manama

Bahraini youth's growing achievements in sport, innovation and development were celebrated as Bahrain joined Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states in marking Gulf Youth Day, with senior officials highlighting the vital role young people play in shaping the region's future.

His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, Chairman of the General Sports Authority and President



of the Bahrain Olympic Committee, described the occasion as an opportunity to recognise the ambition, talent and accom-



plishments of Gulf youth. HH Shaikh Khalid said Bahraini youth have become a leading example across vari-

ous fields, particularly in sport, thanks to the support of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the continued backing of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

Highlighting recent sporting success, HH Shaikh Khalid noted that Bahrain won 63 medals, including 25 golds, at the 4th GCC Games in Doha, reflecting the Kingdom's investment in young talent and athlete development.

His Highness also praised the

efforts of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty's Representative for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, in empowering young people and creating an environment that supports success and excellence.

Marking the occasion, His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty's Representative for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs, said Gulf Youth Day celebrates a generation that has helped

advance development across the GCC through innovation, creativity and determination. HH said Gulf youth have successfully transformed challenges into opportunities, ideas into impactful projects and ambitions into achievements that contribute to national progress.

HH Shaikh Nasser highlighted Bahrain's continued focus on empowering young people through initiatives and programmes designed to develop skills, enhance capabilities and strengthen their role in nation-building.

US Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander Adm. Brad Cooper held talks with senior officials in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Jordan during a recent Middle East tour aimed at strengthening regional cooperation and security partnerships. During the visit, Adm. Cooper also met deployed US service members, recognised outstanding personnel for their achievements and presided over a leadership transition ceremony for US Army Central.



CENTCOM commander visits Gulf partners



Energy, climate and innovation drive Bahrain-Japan talks

● Bahrain and Japan eye stronger cooperation on climate and environmental innovation.

TDT | Manama

Bahrain and Japan explored new avenues for cooperation in energy, climate action, technology and nuclear regulation during a series of



high-level meetings held on the sidelines of the Island States Ocean Summit in Tokyo.



Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak Bin Daina, Minister of Oil and Environment and Special Envoy

for Climate Affairs, held talks with senior Japanese officials aimed at strengthening bilateral collaboration across a range of strategic sectors.

During a meeting with Kenji Yamada, State Minister at Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, discussions focused on expanding cooperation in energy, industry and environmental fields, including investment opportunities and technological partnerships.

The minister also met Doi Kentaro, Vice-Minister for Glob-

al Environmental Affairs at Japan's Ministry of the Environment. Talks reviewed Bahrain's environmental and climate initiatives and explored prospects for collaboration in scientific research, marine monitoring and climate resilience.

In a separate meeting with Yohei Sasakawa, Honorary Chairman of the Nippon Foundation, both sides discussed strengthening cooperation on environmental sustainability and advancing innovative, science-based solutions

to support island and coastal communities.

Dr. Bin Daina and the accompanying delegation also met officials from Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority to discuss technical cooperation, regulatory developments and the exchange of expertise in the sector.

Ahmed Mohammed Al Doseri, Bahrain's Ambassador to Japan, and Amna Hamad Al Rumaihi, Chief Executive of the Supreme Council for Environment, attended the meetings.

Groundwork laid for next GCC meeting



TDT | Manama

Preparations for the upcoming GCC Ministerial Council gathered pace as senior foreign ministry officials from Gulf Cooperation Council member states met in Bahrain to review key issues aimed at strengthening regional cooperation.

The meeting of the Drafting Committee was chaired by Ambassador Shaikh Abdullah bin Ali Al Khalifa, Director General of Bilateral Relations at Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as part of preparations for the 167th session of the GCC Ministerial Council.



Officials discussed agenda items for the forthcoming ministerial meeting and reviewed a range of topics related to advancing joint Gulf action and cooperation across the region.

The committee also finalised recommendations to be submitted to GCC foreign ministers

ahead of the ministerial session, helping shape discussions on issues of common interest to member states. Bahrain's delegation was headed by Ambassador Nawar Abdullah Al Mutawa, Acting Head of the GCC Affairs Sector at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



GCC labour ministers discussed ways to strengthen cooperation and coordinate unified positions on key labour issues during a meeting chaired by Bahrain in Geneva. Minister of Labour and Minister of Legal Affairs Yousef bin Abdulhussain Khalaf chaired the 46th coordination meeting of the GCC Labour Ministers Council on the sidelines of the 114th International Labour Conference, being held in Geneva from June 1 to 12. The meeting, held as part of Bahrain's presidency of the 46th GCC session, focused on agenda items before the conference, strengthening joint Gulf cooperation in labour affairs and enhancing coordination within international labour forums.

Youth can turn ideas into achievements, says minister

TDT | Manama

Young people are not defined by their age but by their ability to turn ideas into achievements that shape the future, Youth Affairs Minister Rawan bint Najeeb Tawfiqi said as Bahrain marked Gulf Youth Day.

The minister said the achievements of Bahraini youth reflect the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the support of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin



Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, in empowering young people and involving them as active part-

ners in development.

Tawfiqi said Gulf youth have demonstrated their ability to transform ambition into impactful initiatives, projects and achievements that contribute to community development and strengthen their presence on regional and international platforms. She noted that young people across the Gulf have excelled in fields such as innovation, technology, entrepreneurship and sustainability, proving that determination and hard work are key to success.

Bahrain checks into a new era of luxury

With 12 new five-star hotels in the pipeline, room capacity surpasses 24,000

● 7.4 million overnight visitors chose Bahrain in 2025.

● 20.1 million hotel nights recorded across the Kingdom last year.

● Major events, business travel and leisure tourism continue to fuel demand for premium accommodation.

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's luxury hospitality sector is entering a new phase of growth, with 12 new five-star hotels in the pipeline as the Kingdom's hotel room capacity surpasses 24,000 rooms, underscoring its rising prominence as a regional



tourism and business destination.

The expansion will add to Bahrain's existing portfolio of 39 five-star hotels and resorts

and further strengthen a hospitality sector that has seen steady growth in recent years. Nearly 140 hotels and resorts are now operating across the Kingdom,

up from about 135 in late 2023, reflecting continued investor confidence in Bahrain's tourism industry.

The growth comes amid

strong tourism performance. In 2025, Bahrain welcomed more than 7.4 million overnight visitors, who generated approximately 20.1 million overnight stays. January recorded the highest monthly total, with around 2.08 million hotel nights.

Visitors are also spending more time in the Kingdom, with the average stay reaching 2.76 nights. The trend points to Bahrain's increasing appeal not only as a weekend getaway destination but also as a hub for business travel, international events and leisure tourism.

A packed calendar of sporting competitions, entertainment events, exhibitions and conferences has helped drive hotel occupancy throughout the year, attracting visitors from across the Gulf region and beyond.

Global hotel groups

Bahrain's hospitality landscape is also becoming increasingly global, with many of the world's leading hotel groups

expanding their footprint in the Kingdom. International brands including Marriott International, Accor, Hilton, IHG Hotels and Resorts, Wyndham Hotels and Resorts, Rotana and Melia Hotels International operate properties across key tourism and business districts.

Among Bahrain's best-known luxury destinations are The Ritz-Carlton, Four Seasons, Sofitel, InterContinental, Westin, Le Meridien, Hilton and Art Rotana, offering a range of high-end experiences for leisure and corporate travellers alike.

Industry observers say the combination of rising visitor numbers, expanding room capacity and continued investment in premium accommodation highlights Bahrain's growing status as a competitive tourism destination in the Gulf. With more luxury hotels on the way and visitor demand remaining strong, the Kingdom's hospitality sector appears poised for another phase of expansion.

Why should rental firms pay for someone else's speeding?

Traffic fines may soon follow drivers, not rental companies

● An electronic link would be established between the Ministry of Interior and Cos

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Car rental firms could soon be spared from paying for traffic offences committed by their customers under a parliamentary proposal that would place responsibility squarely on the driver behind the wheel.

The proposal, submitted by MP Abdulwahid Qarata, is being reviewed by Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee. It seeks to ensure that traffic fines are recorded against the person renting a vehicle rather than the rental company that owns it.

Under the proposal, an electronic link would be established between the Ministry of Interior and car rental companies. Once a rental contract is signed, the customer



Abdulwahid Qarata, MP

would be registered in the traffic system as the vehicle's user until it is returned.

The move aims to address a longstanding challenge facing the car hire industry, where fines are often issued against vehicles registered in a company's name, regardless of who committed the offence.

According to the proposal's explanatory note, rental firms frequently find themselves paying penalties for violations committed by customers and then face difficulties recovering the money. The problem becomes more complicated when expatri-

ate renters leave Bahrain before settling outstanding fines.

The proposal also notes that accumulated fines can delay vehicle licence renewals and create additional administrative and financial burdens for rental companies.

To support the system, rental firms would be required to upload electronic contracts, including the renter's personal details, driving licence information and rental period. Any traffic offence committed during that period would automatically be recorded against the renter.

The proposal further calls for an online platform allowing rental companies to monitor fines linked to their vehicles and resolve issues before they accumulate.

Mr Qarata said the system would be based on a model already used in a neighbouring Gulf country, where legal responsibility for a vehicle is transferred electronically to the renter for the duration of the hire period.

Supporters say the change would clarify legal liability, improve fine collection and provide greater protection for Bahrain's vehicle rental sector.



Dr. Jaleela bint Al Sayed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health, during talks with Oleksandr Balanutsa, the newly appointed Ukrainian Ambassador to Bahrain, residing in Abu Dhabi. The Minister highlighted the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation in the health sector and expanding the exchange of expertise between Bahrain and Ukraine. The two sides also discussed topics of mutual interest.

Youth leading fight against hate and extremism

TDT | Manama

Bahraini youth are playing an increasingly important role in countering hate speech, extremism and violence while promoting values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications Dr. Shaikh Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Khalifa said yesterday.

Marking Gulf Youth Day, Dr. Shaikh Abdullah, who is also Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence, said young people are essential partners in building peaceful societies and strengthening social harmony.

He highlighted Bahrain's commitment to supporting youth-led initiatives and ex-

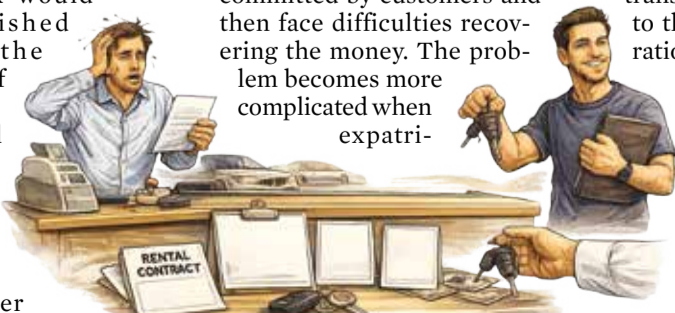


spect and understanding.

Dr. Shaikh Abdullah added that the King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence continues to empower young people through specialised programmes and partnerships with local and international institutions.

These include the King Hamad Fellowship for Peaceful Coexistence, the joint postgraduate diploma programme in coexistence, and support for the King Hamad Chair for Interfaith Dialogue at Sapienza University of Rome.

He stressed that investing in youth remains essential to advancing Bahrain's vision of promoting dialogue, coexistence and peace at both the regional and international levels.





A tribute to modern-day **Nightingales**

ILA honours 70 nurses for over 1,000 years of combined service

TDI | Manama

As part of its Platinum Jubilee celebrations marking 70 years of service to the community, the Indian Ladies Association (ILA), Bahrain, paid tribute to 70 distinguished nurses whose combined service to the Kingdom's healthcare sector exceeds 1,000 years.

The ceremony was attended by Chief Guest Mrs. Seham Bubbait, President of the Bahrain Nurses and Midwives Association,

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The "Nightingales of Bahrain - Service Award 2026" was organised to recognise healthcare professionals who have completed more than 25 years of dedicated service in Bahrain

tion, and Guest of Honour Dr. Amer Al-Derazi, President of the Bahrain Medical Association and Chief Medical Officer of Al Hilal Healthcare Group. Healthcare leaders, community representatives, members of the medical fraternity, media personnel, sponsors and well-wishers were also present.

ILA President Mrs. Smitha Jensen highlighted the significance of the Association's Platinum Jubilee year, describing it

as a celebration of seven decades of service, community spirit and commitment to the people of Bahrain. She said the milestone provided an opportunity to honour individuals whose lives exemplify service, compassion and dedication.

Referring to the awardees as the modern-day "Nightingales of Bahrain," Mrs. Jensen said that while Florence Nightingale's lamp illuminated the path of compassionate care genera-

tions ago, its light continues to shine through the nurses being honoured for their selfless service. She noted that the award recognises nurses from diverse backgrounds whose collective contributions have strengthened Bahrain's healthcare sector and touched the lives of countless patients and families.

Mrs. Jensen also acknowledged the pioneering role played by nurses from the Indian sub-continent, many of whom were

among the earliest members of Bahrain's expatriate community. The programme was launched through an open call for nominations from nurses across Bahrain. Honourees were selected based on a minimum of 25 years of service in the Kingdom's healthcare sector, with eligible nominations considered on a first-come, first-served basis. The ceremony concluded with the presentation of awards to the 70 honourees.



Over 155 donors join THC blood donation drive

TDI | Manama

The Thattai Hindu Community (THC), in association with the Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC), organised a blood donation camp yesterday at the Shrinathji Shri Krishna Temple in Manama.

More than 155 donors from six nationalities participated in the initiative, which has been a key community service programme of the THC for more than three decades. Held four times a year, the camp consistently attracts over 150 donors each quarter. THC Chairman



Mahesh Bhatia, on behalf of the Executive Committee, expressed appreciation to the Salmaniya Medical Complex team for their continued cooperation and support. He also thanked

the donors and volunteers for their generous contributions and reaffirmed the community's commitment to supporting humanitarian and life-saving initiatives in Bahrain.

World Environment Day



BIS students lead sustainability drive

TDI | Manama

Bhavans Bahrain Indian School celebrated World Environment Day on June 4 with a series of activities promoting sustainability and environmental awareness.

Students across all grade levels took part in eco-friendly initiatives, including crafts made from recycled materials, bird feeder creation, the "Trash to Treasure" project, a Tree Carbon Audit and environmental pledges. Kindergarten students planted saplings and partici-



ated in the "Earth Helpers" activity, promoting messages of conservation and cleanliness. The celebrations also featured plantation drives, vertical gardening, environmental displays and a "No Plastic Lunch

Day." BIS Directors Himanshu Verma and Ritu Verma, Principal Saji Jacob and Vice Principal Kripajah George joined students in planting saplings and encouraged them to work towards a greener future.

Turning the tide on marine waste

Coast Guard



TDI | Manama

Every piece of litter removed from Badiya Beach is one less threat to Bahrain's marine life.

With that goal in mind, the Coast Guard and community volunteers joined forces in a large-scale cleanup campaign aimed at protecting the Kingdom's coastline from marine

waste. Organized by the Coast Guard in cooperation with the Northern Governorate, the campaign brought together the Northern Governorate Police Directorate, the Northern Area Municipality, the Positive Hands Volunteer Team, the Paramedics Academy and volunteers from across the community.

Participants removed waste

from the shoreline, helping to protect the coastal environment and maintain its natural beauty. Organizers said the campaign was aimed at reducing marine litter while encouraging volunteerism and social responsibility. The cleanup also helped maintain the beaches' appearance and support efforts to protect marine ecosystems from pollution.

Open Prison Beneficiaries



The General Directorate for the Enforcement of Judgments and Alternative Sentencing marked World Environment Day with a cleanup campaign along the Malikiya coastline, involving beneficiaries of the open prisons programme.

The initiative aimed to raise awareness about environmental conservation while supporting the programme's goal



of helping beneficiaries positively integrate into society. Participants carried out waste collection and cleanup

activities along the coastline, helping preserve the area's natural beauty and promoting a sense of social responsibility.

36 million jobs at stake as tensions rise, says Bahrain business leader

Janahi urges action to protect jobs, trade and economic stability

● **Transport, energy and insurance costs continue to climb amid regional uncertainty.**

● **Investor confidence and global supply chains are increasingly affected by geopolitical developments.**

● **International dialogue and diplomacy remain key to safeguarding economic stability.**

TDI | Manama

Around 36 million jobs worldwide could be at risk by 2027 if geopolitical tensions in the Middle East continue to escalate,



Bahrain business leader Sonia Mohammed Janahi has warned.

Speaking during the 114th session of the International Labour Conference in Geneva, Janahi said rising regional tensions are increasingly affecting global trade, investment flows, energy

prices and transportation networks, placing growing pressure on economies and labour markets.

Representing Bahrain's private sector and employers at the conference, she said businesses are facing higher operating, energy, transport and insurance costs, along with supply chain disruptions and weaker investor confidence.

Janahi noted that small and medium-sized enterprises are among the hardest hit and require greater support, given their role in driving economic growth and job creation.

She stressed that the security and stability of the Gulf region remain vital to the global economy because of its central role in energy supplies and international trade routes. Maintaining stable maritime corridors and supply chains, she said, is essential for sustaining investor confidence, protecting jobs and

supporting economic growth. Janahi called for stronger international cooperation, dialogue and diplomacy to address current challenges and help economies adapt to changing conditions.

On the sidelines of the conference, she also chaired the General Discussion Committee on Advancing the Transformative Agenda for Gender Equality in the World of Work. Discussions focused on strengthening women's participation in labour markets and promoting more inclusive workplaces.

Janahi said empowering women economically remains a key pillar of sustainable development and improved labour market productivity.

She concluded by stressing that peace, stability and respect for international law are essential to building a more prosperous future and ensuring sustainable economic growth worldwide.

India growth beats forecasts but Iran war clouds outlook

AFP | Mumbai, India

India's economy grew at a faster pace than expected in the first three months of 2026, official data showed yesterday, even as the Middle East war clouds the outlook for the rest of the year.

Gross domestic product rose 7.8% in the January-March quarter from the same period a year earlier, helped by a robust services sector, according to data from the statistics ministry.

This was down from the 8% recorded in the previous quarter but still above market expectations of 7.3% growth.

"GDP growth has been resilient... despite geopolitical tensions," Teresa John of Nirmal Bang Institutional Equities told AFP, adding that the quarterly figures had also been helped by a solid performance in the industry and construction sectors.

A ministry news release said growth for the 2025-26 fiscal year, which ended in March, came in at 7.7% -- up from 7.1% the previous year.

Friday's reading reaffirms India as the world's fastest growing major economy and will be welcome news for policymakers who face a slate of challenges for the current fiscal year.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government started the March quarter on solid footing, with robust GDP growth and



the announcement of a framework for a much-delayed interim trade deal with the United States.

That momentum quickly unravelled because of the Middle East conflict and the latest threat of additional US tariffs potentially delaying a pact with Washington.

India's trade minister, Piyush Goyal, said yesterday that he hopes to "execute" the first

tranche of a deal next month, but the effects of the Iran war remain a pressing concern.

New Delhi depends heavily on imports for its oil and gas needs, making it particularly vulnerable to the global energy shock caused by the conflict.

Higher oil prices not only threaten to raise input costs and stoke inflation but also drive up India's import bill, potentially widening the current account

deficit to a 14-year high.

The first casualty, analysts say, would be India's growth trajectory.

Investments and agriculture

"Given the uncertainty around the resolution of the conflict, elevated energy prices for an extended period poses a downside risk to growth in the near term, including muted prospects for investment demand, negative

impact on corporate profitability and dampening consumer sentiments," Aditi Nayar of ratings agency ICRA said in a note.

Nayar added that a weak monsoon forecast and "potential development of El Niño conditions" also have dulled India's agricultural output projections.

India's central bank cut its GDP growth forecast for the 2026-27 financial year to 6.6% on Friday, down from an earlier

projection of 6.9 percent, even as economists warn that New Delhi may overshoot its budgeted fiscal deficit target for the current year.

Adding to policymakers' woes, foreign investors have offloaded well over \$20 billion in Indian shares so far this year, putting pressure on the Indian rupee, which has been among Asia's worst-performing major currencies in 2026.

Among measures aimed at bolstering the rupee and boosting foreign inflows, the Reserve Bank of India unveiled on Friday amendments that would make it easier for overseas investors to buy stocks and government bonds.

The government also said it would cut capital gains taxes on investments made by foreign institutional investors in government bonds, a move it said would "attract stable long-term foreign capital flows".



India's economy is now worth more than \$4 trillion, making it one of the world's largest economies.

China's Xi to visit North Korea next week

AFP | Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit North Korea next week, state media said yesterday, the latest in a series of high-level summits as Beijing asserts its position as a diplomatic superpower on the world stage.

State broadcaster CCTV said that Xi would visit from June 8 to 9 at the invitation of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, his first trip to Pyongyang in seven years.

Beijing is a vital source of political and economic support to North Korea, which is one of the most diplomatically isolated countries in the world and under heavy international sanctions.

The upcoming meeting will be Xi's first official trip abroad this year, and comes after he hosted back-to-back summits with US President Donald Trump and Russia's Vladimir Putin last month.



People inspect the aftermath at the site of an Israeli strike that hit the previous day in the southern Lebanese coastal city of Tyre

Lebanese leaders rebuke Iran as Israel, Hezbollah trade attacks

Beirut insisted diplomacy remains the only path to ending the conflict

● New ceasefire collapses quickly

● Aoun backs negotiations with Israel

AFP | Beirut

Lebanon's leaders issued pointed calls for Iran to stop interfering in their country's affairs yesterday, as Israel and the Tehran-backed Hezbollah traded attacks after a new truce deal collapsed before it even began.

Lebanese state media reported fresh Israeli strikes on around 40 locations in southern Lebanon yesterday, with some causing casualties, while Hezbollah claimed new attacks on Israeli troops who have invaded the south, including with drones and

rockets.

Lebanon was drawn into the wider Middle East war when Hezbollah attacked Israel on March 2 to avenge the February 28 killing of Iran's supreme leader.

Iran, in its peace negotiations with Washington, has repeatedly insisted that the fighting in Lebanon and the war in the Gulf are inextricably linked.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam addressed Iran's leaders in frank terms during a press conference yesterday, telling them: "Have mercy on our south, stop treating it and its people as merely a bargaining chip to improve the terms of your negotiations."

"We are the people of a sovereign nation that refuses to serve as a mailbox for the messages of others or as an open battlefield for their wars," he added. "The south is not anyone's reserve



We are the people of a sovereign nation that refuses to serve as a mailbox for the messages of others or as an open battlefield for their wars. The south is not anyone's reserve front

LEBANESE PRIME MINISTER NAWAF SALAM

front." Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun, echoing Salam's "bargaining chip" remark, offered a similar message for Iran in an interview with CNN.

"It's not your country, it's our country," he said. "It's not your job to interfere into our country."

Lebanese and Israeli envoys in Washington agreed to a truce this week that according to a statement is conditional on a "com-

plete cessation" of Hezbollah fire, without mentioning a halt to Israeli attacks.

Hezbollah flatly rejected the deal on Thursday, demanding instead a comprehensive ceasefire and full Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon.

Lebanese parliament speaker and Hezbollah ally Nabih Berri said yesterday that the group would withdraw from the area south of Lebanon's Litani River if these conditions were met.

Hezbollah had vehemently opposed the government's direct engagement with Israel, with its leader Naim Qassem describing the talks as a "farce and humiliation" -- a stance Aoun took issue with yesterday.

"Hezbollah must understand that (there is) no other way but to sit and talk, no other way to solve this problem and to save what's left except through negotiation and diplomacy," he told CNN.

'How long will this go on?'

Israel has staged its deepest incursion in two decades into Lebanon, and yesterday it warned residents of nine towns and villages, including Sarafand on the coastal road between Tyre and Sidon, to immediately evacuate.

Lebanon's official National News Agency reported mass displacement from some of the villages, and subsequently reported strikes there.

An overnight Israeli strike near the city of Tyre's Jabal Amel hospital killed four people, wounded seven and lightly damaged the facility, while another in a residential area killed three and wounded five, including two children, according to a civil defence source.

An AFP correspondent saw a heavily damaged bank near the hospital, one of only three in the city.

Ireland bans two Israeli ministers from entering country

AFP | Dublin

Ireland announced yesterday it has banned Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and finance minister Bezalel Smotrich from entering the country, slamming their behaviour towards pro-Palestinian activists.

Justice Minister Jim O'Callaghan "has instructed immigration officers to refuse entry to Itamar Ben Gvir -- Minister for National Security of Israel, and Bezalel Smotrich, Minister of Finance of Israel -- should they seek to enter the state," a justice ministry statement said.

Madonna stuns fans with New York pop-up concert

AFP | New York

To the delight of hundreds of lucky fans, the Material Girl... suddenly materialized in New York's Times Square for a pop-up concert.

Madonna, 67, strutted her stuff in a pink corset, blue bra, thigh-highs and blue shades Thursday night to promote her upcoming album "Confessions II" and kick off Pride Month.

Fans had short notice to show up in the landmark Manhattan plaza to catch the impromptu 15-minute set sponsored by gay dating site Grindr, which also livestreamed the show.



Madonna during the event concert

Performing from a stage set inside one of Times Square's huge LED displays, Madonna sang six tracks including "Hung Up," "Get Together" and "I Love New York" from her 2005 album "Confessions on a Dance Floor."

Australia seizes 100,000 cockroaches in bug-breeder bust

AFP | Sydney

Wildlife officers have busted an illegal cockroach-breeding operation in rural Australia, seizing a skin-crawling haul worth more than \$100,000 on the black market for exotic bugs.

More than 100,000 contraband cockroaches were found in a raid on a commercial breeder in the town of Bathurst, west of Sydney, Australia's environment department said yesterday.

They found Madagascar "hissing" cockroaches, a bulky insect named for its noisy de-



One of the 100,000 contraband cockroaches found in a raid on a commercial breeder in the town of Bathurst

fence mechanism, and dubia cockroaches, an invasive critter bred as a snack for pet lizards.

Photos showed one of the seized Madagascar cockroaches was almost big enough to completely cover the palm of

an adult hand.

"We take our job protecting Australia's unique biodiversity and breaches of national environment law very seriously," an environment department spokesman said.

1523

Gustav Vasa is elected King of Sweden, ending the Kalmar Union



1716

French transport the first African slaves to Louisiana

1916

The death of Yuan Shikai, ruler of much of China since 1912, causes central government to virtually collapse in the face of pressure from warlords, and from political reformers including Sun Yat-Sen

1982

30,000 Israeli troops invade Lebanon to drive out the PLO

Iran says fired 'warning missiles' at US destroyers in Gulf of Oman

Washington denies any attack occurred and rejected Tehran's account

● US destroyers allegedly left area

AFP | Tehran

Iran's military said yesterday that it had fired what it described as "warning missiles" toward two US destroyers in the Gulf of Oman, claiming the vessels subsequently left the area, according to state media.

The military said the destroyers departed the Gulf of Oman following the missile launches, according to a statement carried by state news agency IRNA.

Iranian authorities said the operation was conducted in response to what they described as maritime interference and the seizure of commercial vessels and oil tankers by US naval forces.

The US military's Central Command denied that any such incident had occurred.

"Iranian forces did NOT attack or fire at US Navy warships. Doing so would be a gross violation of the ceasefire."

It added that US forces "continue to operate freely in regional



Iranians swim at Suru Beach in Bandar Abbas along the Strait of Hormuz

waters" and were enforcing restrictions on Iranian maritime traffic.

The incident is the latest dispute involving a ceasefire announced on April 8 that has largely halted hostilities between Iran, the United States and Israel

following the outbreak of war on February 28.

Efforts to end the conflict through direct and mediated negotiations have so far failed to produce a final agreement.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Wednesday that

Washington was "no longer conducting sustained strikes" against Iran and that Operation Epic Fury, the US designation for its military campaign, had concluded.

He added that the United States had significantly degrad-

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KNOW WHAT

While Iran alleged maritime misconduct, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio noted that previous operations had already successfully wiped out Iran's entire conventional navy and remaining air force assets

ed Iran's remaining air and naval capabilities.

Iran has imposed restrictions on shipping through the Strait of Hormuz since the start of the conflict.

The United States later introduced measures targeting Iranian ports and maritime commerce.

Ukrainian sea drone explodes in Romanian port, no casualties

AFP | Bucharest

Ukrainian sea drone explodes in Romanian port, no casualties.

The sea drone was "of the type used in the war in Ukraine" and not part of the Romanian military's inventory, Bucharest's defence ministry said in a statement, adding the device "self-destructed around 10:30 am local time (0730 GMT) without causing any casualties".

Ukraine confirmed the device was one of its naval drones, saying it had been knocked off course by Russian electronic interference.

"While carrying out missions in the Black Sea operational area, one of the Ukrainian Navy's unmanned surface vessels came under the influence of the enemy's electronic warfare systems, lost control, and ended up near the coast of Romania," Ukraine's navy said.

Ukrainian foreign ministry spokesman Georgii Tykhyi said Kyiv had "informed the Romanian side in a timely manner of a naval drone that had lost control because of Russian jamming", adding effective coordination had ensured the taking of "necessary measures to prevent harm to civilians".

Tykhyi added: "This incident shows once again that Russia's ongoing full-scale aggression poses a threat not only to Ukraine, but to the entire region."



A view of Romania's Constata port

"These are Ukrainian unmanned maritime vehicles," the Russian embassy in Bucharest said earlier on Telegram.

"Attempts to link these drones, directly or indirectly, to Russia and to attribute responsibility for the incident to Russia are completely unfounded," the embassy added.

The incident came a week after a Russian aerial drone injured two people when it crashed onto an apartment building in Galati, near Romania's border with Ukraine.

Romania, a European Union and NATO member, has reported dozens of airspace breaches since the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022, blaming Russia.

It has asked the Atlantic alli-

ance to bolster air defences.

Romanian President Nicusor Dan said on X that yesterday's "significant security incident" represents "the direct consequences of the war of aggression launched by Russia against Ukraine", which requires "a high level of vigilance".

The president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, also said the incident was a direct consequence or Russia's war in Ukraine.

"It is increasingly becoming a direct threat to countries on our Eastern border," she wrote on X.

NATO said it was monitoring the situation after Romania informed it of the incident.

"We continue to closely coordinate with the Romanian authorities," a NATO official said.

'Extremely intelligent' bear at large in Japan after hurting four



A "Bear in Area" warning sign displayed near a forest in Akita Prefecture

AFP | Tokyo

A bear that injured four people in northern Japan remains at large as of yesterday, after apparently unlatching a window while evading capture and turning on a water tap, officials said.

A record 13 people were killed by bears in Japan last year, and there has been a jump in sightings as the animals emerge hungry from hibernation.

After attacking four people at two factories in Fukushima on Tuesday, the bear took shelter inside one of the buildings, local media reported.

It dodged capture despite efforts by hunters and respond-

ers equipped with traps and anaesthetic guns, and escaped late Wednesday.

The bear remains at large as of yesterday morning, a Fukushima official said.

Fukushima city mayor Yuki Baba told reporters Thursday that evidence suggested the animal "unlocked the window on its own" to flee, adding that claw marks had been found near the exit.

It is also believed the bear "turned on the water tap" to drink, he added, describing it as "extremely intelligent".

"With the cooperation of hunters, police and firefighters, I believe we took all possible measures available to us" to catch it, Baba said.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



We are building a more independent European Union. A Union that's more secure, resilient and complete. And it will not be complete without the Western Balkans
@vonderleyen

02



The Western Balkans are an integral part of the European Union's future. Their accession remains our priority and a crucial geopolitical investment.

@eucopresident

03



At Barakah NPP, I met the team that responded to the May 17 drone strike. Trained by the @IAEAorg, they demonstrated the professionalism, skills and preparedness that nuclear safety demands every day.

@rafaelgrossi

04

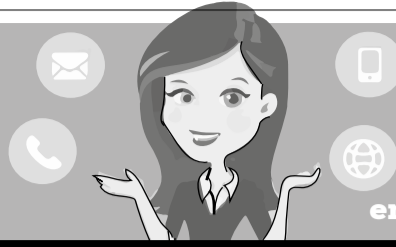


UNICEF delivers #ForEveryChild, thanks to our partners, donors and supporters around the world. Last year, we responded to over 100 emergencies, saving and improving the lives of millions of children. As a global community we must do even more. Children are counting on us.

@unicefchief

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

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Kuwait Condemns **Attack on UNIFIL Position** in Lebanon

The State of Kuwait strongly condemned an attack targeting a position affiliated with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which resulted in the death of a peacekeeper from the Republic of Serbia and left several others injured.

In a statement issued on Friday, June 5, 2026, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed Kuwait's firm rejection of any actions that threaten United Nations personnel or compromise the safety of international peacekeeping missions.

The Ministry emphasized the importance of ensuring the protection of UN forces so



they can effectively carry out their mandate under relevant Security Council resolutions, particularly Resolution 1701, which governs the peacekeeping framework in southern

Lebanon.

Kuwait also called for a transparent and thorough investigation into the incident, urging that those responsible be held fully accountable.

Extending its condolences, Kuwait expressed sympathy to the Republic of Serbia, the United Nations, and the family of the deceased peacekeeper, while also wishing a swift recovery to those injured in the attack.

The statement underscores Kuwait's continued support for international peacekeeping efforts and its opposition to any escalation that endangers humanitarian and UN operations in conflict zones.

Doha, Paris Push for De-escalation in Middle East



The United Arab Emirates has announced the successful mediation of a new prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine, resulting in the release of 185 prisoners from each side.

According to the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the latest exchange brings the total number of prisoners swapped through UAE-mediated efforts during the conflict to 7,471, underscoring Abu Dhabi's continuing role as a neutral facilitator in humanitarian negotiations.

The ministry praised the cooperation of both countries in enabling the latest deal, describing it as a reflection of mutual appreciation for the UAE's role as a trusted interna-

tional mediator. It also noted that this exchange marks the 24th successful mediation initiative undertaken by the UAE since the start of the conflict.

Officials said the latest development highlights the strength of the UAE's diplomatic relationships with both Moscow and Kyiv, which have helped facilitate ongoing humanitarian outcomes despite the broader geopolitical tensions.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reaffirmed that the UAE will continue to support initiatives aimed at achieving a peaceful resolution to the war in Ukraine, while also working to reduce its humanitarian impact, particularly regarding displaced civilians and prisoners of war.

UAE Joins Arab Group and OIC in Condemning Israeli Settlement Expansion



The United Arab Emirates, in coordination with the Arab Group and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, has strongly condemned ongoing Israeli settlement expansion and related developments in the occupied Palestinian territories.

During a joint press stakeout, the UAE expressed concern over

continued settlement activity, forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, and unilateral actions being carried out in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The statement also highlighted repeated incursions by extremist Israeli settlers into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound under the protection of Israeli forces.

According to the statement,

such actions are aimed at altering the historical, legal, and demographic status of the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem. The UAE warned that these measures violate international law, increase tensions on the ground, and further destabilize an already fragile situation.

The UAE and its partners stressed that continued escalation

undermines international efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace based on the internationally supported two-state solution.

They reiterated calls for restraint and respect for international law, emphasizing the importance of protecting civilians and preserving the status quo in Jerusalem's holy sites.

UAE and World Bank Align on Climate-Resilient



DPR Ambassador Ghasaq Shaheen held a productive meeting with Maria Dimitriadou, the World Bank's Special Representative to the UN and Head of Multilateral Affairs.

The discussions focused on the World Bank's ongoing economic research and development initiatives across the region, as well as its expanding engagement in artificial intelligence and digital innovation.

Both sides also reviewed preparations for the 2026 UN

Water Conference 2026, which will be jointly hosted by the United Arab Emirates and Senegal.

The UAE emphasized its commitment to working closely with the World Bank and international partners to advance the conference's "Investments for Water" agenda. The initiative aims to mobilize greater financing for water infrastructure, strengthen global cooperation, and accelerate progress toward SDG 6 and broader climate-resilient water solutions.

UAE mediates new Russia-Ukraine prisoner swap

185 prisoners were released from each side in the latest deal



Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani is the Prime Minister of Qatar received a phone call from Jean-Noël Barrot, during which both sides discussed bilateral relations and ongoing regional developments.

The two officials reviewed cooperation between the State of Qatar and the French Republic, and explored ways to further strengthen ties across

diplomatic and strategic areas.

A key part of the discussion centered on mediation initiatives involving the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran. Both sides emphasized the importance of supporting diplomatic efforts aimed at reducing tensions and preventing further escalation in the region.

Developments in Gaza and

Lebanon

The call also addressed the evolving situations in the Gaza Strip, the occupied Palestinian territories, and Lebanon. The officials exchanged views on recent developments and the urgent need for coordinated international engagement to support stability.

Call for De-escalation and Dialogue

During the conversation, the

Qatari Prime Minister stressed the importance of encouraging all parties to engage positively with ongoing mediation efforts. He highlighted that sustained dialogue is essential to addressing the root causes of current crises and achieving long-term, peaceful solutions.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to continued coordination in support of regional security and stability through diplomatic means.

Kuwait and U.S. Review Longstanding Strategic Cooperation

Shaikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met in Washington with Brian Mast, where both sides reviewed the long-standing and well-established relations between Kuwait and the United States.

During the meeting, the two officials discussed the strong strategic partnership defining Kuwaiti-American ties and the close cooperation between the two countries across various fields.

Both sides highlighted the depth of historical relations and reaffirmed their commit-



ment to further strengthening coordination and partnership at both bilateral and international levels.

Zverev eases past Mensik to reach second French Open final

Zverev's experience proved decisive against the first-time major semi-finalist

● Alexander Zverev chasing first Grand Slam title

● Cobolli advances after Arnaldi withdrawal

AFP | Paris

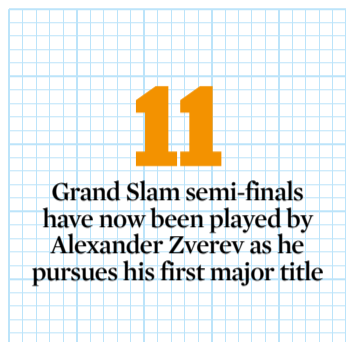
Alexander Zverev moved to the verge of a long-awaited first Grand Slam title as the second seed saw off Jakub Mensik in four sets yesterday to set up a French Open final against Flavio Cobolli.

The German will face 10th seed Cobolli on Sunday after securing a 7-5, 6-2, 3-6, 6-3 victory over Mensik.

Cobolli did not even have to play his first Grand Slam semi-final, as his last-four opponent and fellow Italian Matteo Arnaldi withdrew from the tournament shortly before the match due to illness.

Zverev has endured several near misses at the majors, with three previous final defeats, including against Carlos Alcaraz at Roland Garros two years ago. "This is a Grand Slam, it's best of five, things are going to happen, opponents are going to play better. I managed it," said Zverev.

"I hope to play another great match on Sunday."



Grand Slam semi-finals have now been played by Alexander Zverev as he pursues his first major title



Germany's Alexander Zverev hits a half volley to Czech Republic's Jakub Mensik

"Pure emptiness, there's absolutely nothing in my head," insisted a smiling Zverev in his on-court interview.

"We're athletes, very few of us have anything in our heads. Sometimes it's easier to be stupid and not to think too much."

The 29-year-old has been within one set of victory in two of his previous three Slam finals, when facing Alcaraz in Paris in 2024 and when he blew a two-set lead against Dominic Thiem at the 2020 US Open.

Zverev is also aiming to end

a 14-month title drought dating back to a clay-court event in Munich in April last year.

Mensik briefly threatens comeback

Zverev took a closely-fought first set courtesy of a break in the 11th game, having earlier saved three break points to deny Mensik a 5-3 lead.

The 26th seed could not keep pace at all in the second set, as Zverev broke twice and only dropped four points on his own serve.

Mensik called for a medical time-out just three games into the third set, appearing to struggle with a neck injury.

But he dragged himself back into the contest seemingly out of nowhere, breaking to take a 4-2 lead in the third set as his use of the drop shot started to make a greater impact.

That shot wrapped up a hold to love and the set -- only the second Zverev had lost in the tournament.

Mensik could not keep up his momentum, though, falling 2-0



This is a Grand Slam, it's best of five, things are going to happen, opponents are going to play better. I managed it. I hope to play another great match on Sunday

ALEXANDER ZVEREV

behind in the fourth set as consecutive backhand unforced errors gifted Zverev a break.

The three-time Grand Slam runner-up powered into the final from there, despite drawing the ire of some spectators for disputing two line calls and also receiving a warning for a time violation.

Zverev wrapped up victory on his first match point as Mensik netted a backhand.

Arnaldi withdraws

World number 104 Arnaldi had spent the most amount of time on court for a player en route to a Grand Slam semi-final, winning marathon matches in the third and fourth rounds.

His quarter-final opponent Matteo Berrettini retired injured in the second set of their last-eight tie.

But Arnaldi's dreams of a remarkable Slam title were ended by a virus.

Sooryavanshi, 15, in line for maiden India call-up: report



Rajasthan Royals' player Vaibhav Sooryavanshi in action

AFP | New Delhi

The 15-year-old batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is likely to be named in India's T20 squad while skipper Suryakumar Yadav could get the axe when selectors meet on Saturday, according to reports.

Sooryavanshi had a stellar IPL for Rajasthan Royals, finishing top of the batting charts with 776 runs, including a hundred and five half-centuries.

The left-handed opener is in line to be picked for two T20 matches in Ireland, followed by five games in England.

He would be the youngest

debutant for India in history.

"The manner in which 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi smashed bowling attacks in his first full IPL season, and the way in which he responded to match situations, have convinced the selectors that he needs to be given the opportunity to play T20Is," Indian website ESPNcricinfo said.

Batting great Sachin Tendulkar played his first Test for India at 16 years and 205 days in 1989.

Sooryavanshi has also been included in a 30-member of probables for the Asian Games in September-October in Japan, Indian media says.

Gambhir tells struggling Pant to play natural game in Afghan Test

AFP | New Delhi

India coach Gautam Gambhir yesterday told struggling Rishabh Pant to stick to his natural attacking game after removing him as vice-captain for the one-off Test against Afghanistan.

KL Rahul will be Shubman Gill's deputy for the match starting on Saturday in New Chandigarh in place of Pant.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Pant has scored 3,476 runs at an average of 42.91 in 49 Test matches since his debut in England in August 2018.

But the 28-year-old stepped down as captain of Lucknow Super Giants last week, the team having finished last in the IPL.

The usually flamboyant Test match star scored just 312 runs from 14 innings in this year's IPL, at a strike rate of 138.05.

"The responsibility is to play for India -- the rest, everything else, is a by-product," Gambhir told reporters on the eve of the Test.

"When you start playing for



India's Rishabh Pant hits a boundary against England in July 2025

India, you don't think about being a vice-captain. You think about doing good for India."

Gambhir said that no player is told to "play a completely different game than his natural game".

"We will not tell him to 'curb your game', but in international cricket, it is very important to play the situation, to read the

situation," Gambhir added.

Gambhir's Test record as India coach is unimpressive with 10 defeats, seven wins and two draws in 19 matches.

India suffered a 2-0 defeat to South Africa at home in November in their most recent Test outing.

They were also whitewashed in 2024 by New Zealand on



The responsibility is to play for India -- the rest, everything else, is a by-product. When you start playing for India, you don't think about being a vice-captain. You think about doing good for India

GAUTAM GAMBHIR

home soil.

Gambhir is taking positives though from the 2-2 Test series draw in England last year, and performances against the West Indies.

India won 2-0 at home in October.

"We all know how well this young team played in England, and then we won against West Indies," he said, admitting that the South Africa series still "hurts".

Yamal named La Liga player of the year

AFP | Madrid

Teenage Barcelona striker Lamine Yamal was named player of the year in La Liga yes-

terday after spearheading the club's drive to the title.

The winger succeeds his Brazilian teammate Raphinha, who won the award in 2025.

Yamal missed much of the first half of the campaign with groin issues but still managed 16 goals and 12 assists in the 28 Liga games he played.



Lamine Yamal

Revived Hamilton leads Ferrari one-two in Monaco practice

Ferrari and Red Bull emerge as leading contenders before crucial qualifying

● Verstappen placed third fastest

● Mercedes pair close behind

● Norris suffer battery failure

AFP | Monaco

Seven-time champion Lewis Hamilton rolled back the years yesterday when he outpaced Ferrari team-mate Charles Leclerc to clock the fastest time in second practice for Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix.

The 41-year-old Briton, a three-time winner at the unforgiving Mediterranean street circuit and chasing his third pole at the event, clocked a best lap in one minute and 13.026 seconds to beat the local hero by 0.111 seconds.

After his strong second-place finish at the Canadian Grand Prix, this was proof that Hamilton has rediscovered his mojo and will seek a record-enhancing 105th pole position and 106th win this weekend.

He won in Monaco in 2008, 2016 and 2019 and is one of six former winners in the field.

Four-time champion Max Verstappen was third fastest for Red Bull, 0.168 adrift, ahead of the Mercedes of George Russell and championship-leading Italian teenager Kimi Antonelli, three-tenths and five-tenths off



Ferrari's British driver Lewis Hamilton takes part in the second practice session

the pace.

Hamilton will also seek an eighth Monaco podium on Sunday to draw level with Ayrton Senna's record of eight.

Isack Hadjar recovered from a crash during opening practice to finish sixth in the second Red Bull ahead of Oscar Piastri of McLaren, whose team-mate world champion Lando Norris suffered battery failure and

105th

pole position will be achieved by Lewis Hamilton if he tops Saturday's qualifying session

wound up down in 19th place.

The two Audis of Nico Hulkenberg and Gabriel Bortoleto were eighth and ninth ahead of Oliver Bearman of Haas while it was another dismal day for Aston Martin with two-time champion Fernando Alonso 20th and Lance Stroll 22nd.

The session began with Hadjar's car still up on axle stands, as Russell led the way, under a

blue sky with a mild 22 degrees Celsius. Verstappen set an early time before the Ferraris took over with Leclerc in front by a whisker ahead of Hamilton until Verstappen took over.

Everyone, bar the Aston Martins on softs, ran on mediums as the track ramped up, providing more grip and faster lap times as Hamilton proved by going top in 1:13.729, 0.279 clear of Ver-



Hamilton can equal Ayrton Senna's Monaco podium record of eight if he finishes in the top three on Sunday

stappen.

Hadjar joined the fray after 14 minutes. "Thank you, guys," he said as he pulled out shortly before a Virtual Safety Car (VSC) was deployed briefly when Norris pulled up at the Nouvelle Chicane with a battery-related electrical failure.

On resumption, Leclerc regained control, edging Hamilton by 0.058 seconds in 1:13.613 before Verstappen took softs and clocked 1:13.467. Both Mercedes men also took softs, too, but were unable to catch the top trio until Russell rose to second.

Ferrari finally took to softs with 26 minutes to go, Leclerc soon clocking 1:13.137 to take command by 0.057 before Hamilton, clearly in the mood, trimmed that in 1:13.026.

In the final minutes, Sergio Perez came to a halt in Casino Square in his Cadillac, the American marque racing in Europe for the first time, with smoke filling his cockpit from the front-right brake ducts.

FIFA ups payments to clubs who send players to World Cup

AFP | Lausanne

Clubs whose players go to the World Cup, or appeared in qualifying, will receive increased compensation this summer, FIFA, the governing body of world football, announced yesterday.

FIFA said it had increased the amount of money in its Club Benefits Programme to \$355 million (306m euros). It had already announced last September that it planned this increase of 70 percent from the amount distributed for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

While FIFA does not give total revenue figures for the World Cup, it estimates that its total revenue this year will be 56 percent up on 2022, and for the four years to 2026, a period which includes an enlarged Club World Cup in 2025, it will have taken in 72 per cent more than in the previous cycle.

On the other hand, this World Cup is bigger. The field is increased from 36 teams to 48, the number of matches will rise from 64 to 104 and the competition will stretch over 39 days, against 29 last time.

Furthermore, clubs will be compensated for appearances in World Cup qualifying for the



A view of the World Cup trophy

first time.

The total fund is divided into three parts.

A total of \$250 million is reserved for compensation for players at the finals. FIFA calculated that the minimum payment per player will be \$5,000 per day spent at the World Cup, "although the final figures will be confirmed after the conclusion of the tournament".

These payments, FIFA said, "will be calculated on a per-player, per-day basis, taking into account both squad inclusion and

the duration of each player's involvement".

Another \$100 million is earmarked for qualifiers.

FIFA calculates it will pay \$2,362 for each player in a match-day squad for the 905 qualifying games and for 10 friendlies for each of the three host nations, which did not need to qualify.

The remaining \$5 million will pay administrative costs with any balance "allocated to the benefit of global club football".

"This is another benefit from

the expanded FIFA World Cup – providing more support across the entire football ecosystem to the clubs that provide all the players who compete to shine on the global stage," said FIFA president Gianni Infantino in the press release explaining the programme.

The payments are based on a player's club registration when squads are announced but there are provisions for players who switch clubs during the tournament and for replacement players.

Man City chairman will 'say everything' after verdict on financial charges

AFP | London

Manchester City chairman Khaldoon Al Mubarak plans to "say everything" about the club's battle with Premier League chiefs once a verdict on their financial charges has been delivered.

City were charged with 115 alleged breaches of the Premier League's financial rules in 2023.

The alleged offences covered a nine-year period from 2009 until 2018.

City were also charged with failing to cooperate with the Premier League's investigation into their finances.

The case is yet to reach a conclusion, despite an independent commission hearing taking place a year and a half ago.

City have denied any wrongdoing and, as the wait goes on to discover if they have been cleared or found guilty, Khaldoon is looking forward to eventually telling his club's side of the story.

"Let me be as consistent as



Khaldoon Al Mubarak

"I've always been -- until we have a ruling, I can't say much," Khaldoon told the club's media channels.

"Once we have a ruling, believe me, we're going to have a wonderful sit down together and I'll say everything I've wanted to say for the last three years."

City have enjoyed sustained success since the 2008 takeover by their Abu Dhabi-based owners, winning eight Premier League titles, the Champions League, four FA Cups and seven League Cups.

The club's valuation has soared in that time and Khaldoon said owner Sheikh Mansour has no intention of selling the City Football Group, which he values at around \$10 billion.

Georgia hand Bahrain defeat in Tbilisi friendly

● **First-ever meeting between the two national teams**

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's national team suffered a 2-0 defeat to Georgia last night in the first of their two international friendlies during their European training camp.

The match, played at Tbilisi's Mikheil Meskhi Stadium, forms part of Bahrain's preparations for two major upcoming competitions - the 27th Gulf Cup later this year, where they will defend their title, and the AFC Asian Cup 2027.

The hosts entered the contest as favourites and largely controlled proceedings against Dragan Talajic's side, who were looking to gain valuable experience against a strong European opponent.

The opening half was relatively subdued, although Georgia



Bahrain skipper Sayed Dhiya Saeed (R) and Georgia captain Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (L)

consistently appeared the more threatening team. Bahrain largely relied on counter-attacks

while trying to contain a Georgian side featuring several players from top European leagues,

including Paris Saint-Germain winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia. Saba Lobjanidze proved par-

BETTER YOU KNOW

Bahrain and Georgia have both failed to qualify for the upcoming FIFA World Cup

ticularly dangerous for the hosts, who enjoyed the better of the chances before the interval but were unable to find a breakthrough.

Georgia eventually opened the scoring six minutes after the restart through defender Luka Lochoshvili. Kvaratskhelia delivered a cross from the left flank, and Lochoshvili's run went untracked as he finished with a low volley to put the home side ahead.

The Georgians nearly doubled their advantage shortly afterwards when Kvaratskhelia rose

highest to meet a cross, only to see his header strike the crossbar in the 58th minute.

Bahrain struggled to create openings throughout the evening and did not earn their first corner kick until the 65th minute, reflecting the overall balance of the match.

The hosts then secured victory from the penalty spot after Ahmad Rabeea was adjudged to have fouled Giorgi Kvernadze inside the area. Several Bahrain players were shown yellow cards for protesting the decision before Georgia captain Kvaratskhelia stepped up and calmly converted the resulting penalty, sending goalkeeper Mohammed Al Gharably the wrong way to make it 2-0.

Bahrain were unable to mount a response and finished the contest without registering a shot on target.

The nationals will now travel to Antalya, Türkiye, where they are scheduled to take on Syria in their second and final friendly on Tuesday. Kick-off is scheduled for 5pm Bahrain time at the Gloria Sports Arena.

Serena Williams' comeback to continue in Berlin



Serena Williams in action (file photo)

AFP | Berlin

Serena Williams will take part in the women's doubles at June's WTA event in Berlin, organisers announced yesterday, the next stop in her comeback after a near four-year absence.

"Every tournament I add to my schedule right now is special, and Berlin is no exception," Williams, 44, said in a statement.

"I look forward to playing in front of the German crowd and continuing to build momentum for the grass-court season."

Her doubles partner will be announced at a later date.

On Monday, the 23-time Grand Slam singles champion confirmed her return to

the sport to play at London's Queen's Club tournament starting June 8.

The Berlin Tennis Open begins in the German capital on June 15 and is a traditional warm-up event for Wimbledon, which starts on June 29.

Nine of the WTA's top 10 players are set to take part at the tournament in Berlin's west.

Williams' third-round exit at the US Open in September 2022 was her final match on the tour.

The American's final opportunities to fine-tune her comeback will be in tournaments at Bad Homburg, in Germany, and Eastbourne, in England, before Wimbledon begins.

Williams has won Wimbledon seven times in singles and six times in doubles.

Spurs sign former Liverpool defender Robertson

● **Transfer completed on free**

● **Leaves Liverpool after nine years**

AFP | London

Tottenham signed former Liverpool defender Andy Robertson on a free transfer yesterday, ending the Scotland captain's nine-year spell at Anfield.

Robertson will officially join Tottenham on a free transfer on July 1 after his Liverpool contract expires.

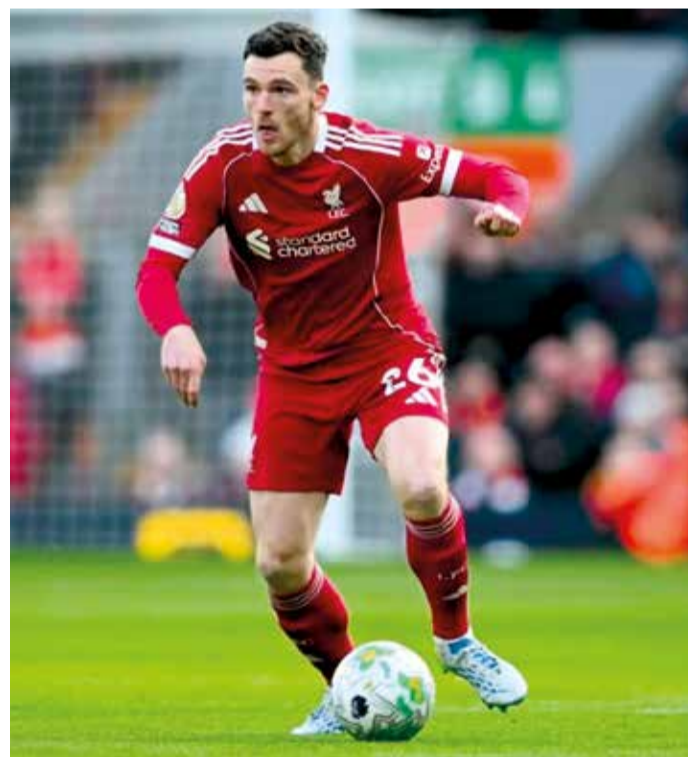
The 32-year-old nearly left Anfield for Tottenham in January, but Liverpool eventually halted the deal after they were unable to bring back Kostas Tsimikas from the defender's loan at Roma.

Tottenham boss Roberto De Zerbi was appointed after that aborted attempt to sign Robertson, but he has given the green light to the left-back's move to north London.

"Andy is someone I've admired for a number of years and he will bring outstanding technical qualities, experience, leadership and mentality to our team," De Zerbi said.

"He is a proven winner at the highest level over a long period and is someone who can be a big player for us, both on and off the pitch."

Robertson's immediate focus will be on captaining Scotland at



Liverpool defender Andrew Robertson in action (file photo)

”

Andy is someone I've admired for a number of years and he will bring outstanding technical qualities, experience, leadership and mentality to our team

TOTTENHAM BOSS ROBERTO DE ZERBI

the World Cup, before he links up with Tottenham ahead of the start of the domestic season

in August.

"I'm in America just now preparing for the World Cup, but I just wanted to send you a quick message to say I cannot wait to play for you guys," Robertson said in a video message from Scotland's camp.

"I cannot wait to meet you guys, I cannot wait to play in the stadium for the first time in front of you and I'm already looking forward to next season."

Robertson will compete with Destiny Udogie for the left-back role in De Zerbi's starting line-up.

YOU KNOW WHAT

Robertson nearly joined Tottenham in January, but Liverpool halted the move after failing to secure the return of Kostas Tsimikas from his loan spell at Roma

"First and foremost he is an outstanding left-back -- one of the best of all time in the Premier League, and someone who will improve our squad," Tottenham sporting director Johan Lange said.

"In addition, his quality, character and leadership have been evident throughout a career in which he has regularly competed for -- and won -- major honours.

"Andy's professionalism and commitment will also be invaluable to the development of our squad, and he shares our ambition and determination to bring success back to the club."

Robertson won the Premier League twice, the League Cup twice and the FA Cup once during his successful spell at Liverpool.

He was part of the Reds' 2019 Champions League-winning team.