



50 illegal fishing
traps seized by
Coast Guard

TDT | Manama

The Coast Guard patrols have seized 50 illegal fishing traps, known locally as garageer, as part of on-going efforts to protect the marine environment and maintain maritime security.

The seizure took place in the maritime area located south of Fasht Al-Adhm.

The Coast Guard stated that legal procedures have been taken. It affirmed its continued monitoring operations to combat such violations to safeguard marine resources.

This aligns with the laws and regulations in force in the Kingdom of Bahrain and reflects the Coast Guard’s role in preserving environmental security and promoting marine sustainability.

UN concern about
Red Sea ‘escalation’
after Houthi attacks

AFP | United Nations

The UN envoy for Yemen voiced concern yesterday about “escalation” in the Red Sea after two Houthi attacks on ships off the Yemen coast, the first since Washington declared a truce with the Iran-backed rebels.

“We are now with grave concern seeing an escalation in the Red Sea with attacks on two commercial ships earlier this week by Ansar Allah, resulting in civilian loss of life and casualties as well as the potential for environmental damage,” said Hans Grundberg at a Security Council meeting, using the rebels’ formal name.

The attacks, both of which have been claimed by the Houthis, were the first for seven months, he said.

The first attack sank the Magic Seas cargo ship.

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Record attack

Russia launches 728 drones and 13 missiles in largest air raid on Ukraine

Defying Trump’s
US arms delivery
pledge to Kiev

AFP | Kyiv

Russia pummelled Ukraine early yesterday with its largest missile and drone attack in more than three years of war, claiming to have targeted an airfield in a region bordering Poland.

The strikes came after US President Donald Trump said he would ramp up arms deliveries to Ukraine and accused his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin of intensifying war on Ukraine.

The latest strike, which regional officials said had killed one civilian in the Khmelnytsky region, beat a previous Russian record of firing 550 drones and missiles at Ukraine set last week.

The air force announced that Russia attacked with 728 drones and 13 missiles, specifying that its air defence systems intercepted 711 drones and destroyed seven missiles.

“This is a telling attack - and it comes precisely at a time when so many efforts have been made to achieve peace, to establish a ceasefire, and yet only Russia continues to rebuff them all,” President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on social media.



A firefighter extinguishes a fire after a Russian attack in Kyiv region. (AFP)

Zelensky, who was visiting Rome and met with Pope Leo XIV, called for Ukraine’s allies to step up sanctions on Russia, particularly on its energy sector - an important revenue stream for the Russian war chest.

Pressure

“Our partners know how to apply pressure in a way that will force Russia to think about ending the war, not launching new strikes,” Zelensky added.

Kyiv has repeatedly accused

China of supplying parts and technologies central to the Russian drone and missile programme, and urged the West to step up secondary penalties.

Yesterday, Kyiv’s security services announced it had detained two Chinese nationals accused of attempting to smuggle missile technology out of the war-torn country.

The air force and regional authorities said that yesterday’s attack had primarily targeted Lutsk, a town in western

Ukraine.

The Russian defence ministry said its “long-range” and “precision” strike had targeted military airfield infrastructure claiming that “all designated targets were destroyed”.

There was no response to that claim in Kyiv.

Russia’s latest record barrage points to a trend of escalating attacks that have piled pressure on Ukraine’s thinly stretched air defence capabilities and exhausted civilian population.



The latest strike beat a previous Russian record of firing 550 drones and missiles at Ukraine set last week.

“We are adapting to this rhythm of life. Of course, it’s difficult, but what can you do?” Sergiy Skrypka, a student, told AFP in Kyiv.

“It’s not easy, but I think it’s hard for everyone now. We’re dealing with it,” the 22-year-old added.

A representative of Ukraine’s air force said that new Ukrainian drones had played an important role in thwarting the Russian attack.

Another official said that most of the Russian drones launched were decoys.

Two rounds of direct talks between Russian and Ukrainian delegations since Trump returned to the White House have resulted in an increase in prisoner exchanges but no progress on securing a ceasefire, proposed by the US and Ukraine.

Human catastrophe

Latest European heatwave ‘hotter and deadlier’

AFP | Paris

Human-caused climate change made the recent European heatwave up to 4C hotter in many cities, scientists said yesterday, pushing temperatures into deadly territory for thousands of vulnerable people.

This likely led to far more heat-related deaths than would have occurred without the influence of global warming, concluded a rapid study by over a

dozen researchers from five European institutions.

The analysis looked at 12 cities in Europe between June 23 and July 2 as an early summer heatwave drove temperatures well above 40C in some parts, triggering health warnings.

Record

The EU’s climate monitor Copernicus yesterday said it was the hottest June on record in



A tourist drinks water during a heatwave in Thessaloniki. (AFP)

western Europe, where some schools and tourist sites were shuttered as the mercury soared.

To assess what role climate change played, scientists compared how intense a similar heatwave would have been in a world that had not warmed due to burning masses of fossil fuels.

They concluded the heatwave “would have been 2-4C cooler” without human-induced climate change.

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Applied Science University Welcomes International Student Delegation from France

A Landmark Step Towards Academic Excellence and Global Engagement

TDT | Manama

Applied Science University (ASU) has welcomed an international student delegation from France, which runs from June 30th to July 11th, 2025, as part of the university's summer school programme, marking a significant milestone in its journey towards academic leadership and global outreach. The delegation, comprising 15 students from various nationalities and cultures from the Institut Supérieur de Commerce (ISC) Paris, which ranks among the top 100 European universities offering Master's programmes in management, according to the Financial Times.

This visit marks the first of its kind in the University's history, with the French students choosing to spend their summer break at ASU due to its distinctive academic environment and growing reputation on both regional and international levels, being one of the top 20 universities in the Gulf region according to the QS World Ranking for 2026.

The initiative highlights the University's evolution into a globally-oriented academic hub. The presence of European students demonstrates ASU's capability to expand its international footprint and attract students from across the globe to a diverse and intellectually open learning environment.

The Summer School programme features a rich blend of academic lectures, cultural



activities, and field visits to leading economic institutions in the Kingdom, including Alumi-

um Bahrain (Alba), Nass Group, and ASRY (Arab Shipbuilding & Repair Yard). The itinerary also



includes heritage and tourism events that showcase the Kingdom's vibrant culture and renowned hospitality.

On this occasion, Professor Waheeb Al Khaja, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, expressed his gratitude to the Ministry of Education and the Higher Education Council (HEC) for their unwavering support of Bahraini universities and for providing them with the opportunity to enrich their international partnerships. He further praised their support for the university's strategic initiatives to attract students from around the world,

which contributes to solidifying the Kingdom of Bahrain's position as a regional hub for higher education.

Professor Hatem Masri, the University President, emphasised that hosting the French student delegation forms part of the University's ongoing efforts to strengthen its international educational presence, deepen global partnerships, and expand academic and cultural exchange. He noted that the Summer School is designed to provide students with a holistic experience that combines academic learning, cultural immersion, and communi-

ty engagement, enhancing their global awareness and developing their personal and professional skills.

This initiative reaffirms the University's commitment to positioning itself as a higher education institution that blends academic distinction with global openness.

Through strategic programmes like the Summer School, the University is contributing to the Kingdom's role as a destination for international students and creating broader avenues for academic and cultural collaboration with institutions worldwide.

It is worth noting that the students of the College of Administrative Sciences at ASU had a unique opportunity to engage directly with the French student delegation in an environment that blended education with cultural openness. This endeavour is a practical embodiment of the university's vision in providing a comprehensive educational experience that extends beyond the confines of the classroom, offering students broader opportunities for learning through participation in international experiences that enhance their thinking and global awareness.

Studying at the ASU is not merely about academic achievement; it is a gateway to discovering multiple cultures, building cross-border relationships, and qualifying students for a professional journey in a world that demands global thinking and extensive connectivity.

Next-Gen Entrepreneurs Procural and Parcel Win Bahrain's Startup of the Year Award

Ashen Tharaka

TDT | Manama

Bahrain is putting a strong spotlight on its entrepreneurs and startups, recognising them as key drivers of the country's future economy.

His Excellency Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy and Chairman of Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company, praised the role of the private sector in creating meaningful opportunities for citizens and supporting the nation's comprehensive development. He also highlighted how entrepreneurs contribute to Bahrain's global competitiveness by launching innovative and creative ventures.

The Minister made his remarks during the awards ceremony for the second edition of the "Startup of the Year" competition, where two standout Bahraini companies — Procural and Parcel — were named winners. The event was attended by senior officials, including Industry and Commerce Minister Abdullah bin Adel Fakhro, Central Bank Governor Khalid Hamad, and Mumtalakat CEO Shaikh Abdulla bin Khalifa Al Khalifa.

Shaikh Salman emphasized Bahrain's ongoing commitment to nurturing a startup-friendly environment through various initiatives and support programs. This includes the efforts of Tamkeen, the Labour Fund, which plays a key role in supporting employment, professional growth, and entrepreneurship across the



Finance Minister Shaikh Salman engages with the team behind Procural, a Bahraini startup transforming procurement through a cloud-based digital platform.



Parcel team members with the minister on their smart delivery solutions, supporting homes and small businesses across Bahrain.



Shaikh Abdulla bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, CEO of Mumtalakat



Tamkeen CEO Maha Abdulhameed Mofeez

Kingdom.

He credited Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, Minister at the Prime Minister's Office and Chairman of Tamkeen, for steering efforts that empower startups through innovative programs aligned with Bahrain's long-term development goals under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the directives of Crown Prince and Prime Minister His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

Empowering Innovation and Job Creation

The competition, co-organized by Mumtalakat and Tamkeen, aims to encourage innovation and help startups scale both locally and internationally. Winning companies will receive direct investment from Mumtalakat, under agreed-upon terms, to support their growth journey.

Shaikh Abdulla bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, CEO of Mumtalakat, said the sovereign wealth fund is committed to investing in promising

local ventures that contribute to Bahrain's economic development and help position the Kingdom as a hub for innovation.

Tamkeen CEO Maha Abdulhameed Mofeez reaffirmed the fund's dedication to providing startups with the resources and opportunities needed to grow sustainably and create quality jobs for Bahrainis.

Who Are the Winners?

Procural: A cloud-based procurement platform that connects buyers with a broad network of

vendors, streamlining commercial tender processes through digital innovation.

Parcel: A delivery service platform that offers smart logistics solutions to homes and small businesses across Bahrain.

The Startup of the Year initiative is part of a larger entrepreneurial journey that began with the Startup Bahrain roadshows. Last year, six rounds were held, and 12 finalists were chosen to compete in this year's finale. Participants received mentorship

and training to fine-tune their pitches and improve their visibility with investors.

As Bahrain looks ahead to 2025, Tamkeen's strategy focuses on empowering local talent, supporting digital transformation, and reinforcing the role of the private sector in building a resilient and diverse economy. The success of these startups reflects the country's confidence in homegrown innovation and its vision for a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Bahrain Builds Surf Culture



Waves to welcome first-time riders

- Park targets new surfers
- Bilaj zone under transformation
- Local youth to benefit

Mahir Haneef
TDT | Manama

A new generation of residents of Bahrain may soon find their rhythm not on asphalt or sand, but on rolling waves.

Construction has officially begun on the Kingdom's first surf park, a 52,000-square-metre development at Bilaj Al Jazayer, designed to bring world-class surfing to a country better known for its deserts than its breakers.

The project, known as the 'Bahrain Surf Park - Club Hawaii Experience', was launched by Edamah and GFH Financial Group during a groundbreaking ceremony attended by key officials yesterday.

But beyond the fanfare, the



Edamah and GFH Financial Group key officials attend the groundbreaking ceremony

vision is to introduce surfing as an accessible sport and lifestyle to Bahrain's youth, families, and tourists alike.

Wave for everyone

Unlike traditional beach destinations where surfing remains niche or elite, Bahrain Surf Park aims to open its wave pool and surf academy to everyone, from first-time riders to professional athletes.

The facility will use Spain's Wavegarden Cove technology to produce up to 1,000 programmable waves per hour, allowing up to 90 surfers in the lagoon

at once.

Instructors at the Club Hawaii Experience Academy will offer training suited for all levels, making surfing a realistic goal for school groups, families, and aspiring athletes in the region.

"This is more than just a water park," said His Excellency Shaikh Abdulla bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, CEO of Mumtalakat and Chairman of Edamah. "It's a landmark initiative that reflects Bahrain's vision to enhance the quality of life through innovation and community investment."

Bilaj revival

The surf park is part of the larger 1.3 million-square-metre Bilaj Al Jazayer masterplan, a coastal revitalisation project aiming to transform Bahrain's southwest shoreline into a bustling hub for entertainment and recreation.

Edamah CEO Khalid Abdulrahman Al Majed said the park would offer activities beyond surfing, including food outlets, cabanas, retail

stores, and entertainment areas designed for corporate and school use.

"This project will create new

spaces for families and youth to connect," he said. "It also supports Bahrain's broader goals of economic diversification and

national talent development."

Ride-ready future

The project also carries a sustainability promise, with its wave-making system ranked among the world's most energy-efficient. But what might make the biggest waves is its cultural impact, as it fosters Bahrain's surf identity where none previously existed.

"This is a chance to rewrite what recreation looks like here," said Victoria Williams, General Manager of Bahrain Surf Park. "It's not just about catching waves, it's about creating moments, movements, and memories."

The surf park is expected to open in 2026.



Whether young or old, the wave promises pure joy

Grassroots Peacekeepers Drive Coexistence

Mahir Haneef
TDT | Manama

Grassroots champions of peace in Bahrain have been recognised for reinforcing the Kingdom's global image as a beacon of interfaith harmony.

The Bahrain Society for Tolerance and Interfaith Coexistence, or Ta'ayush, earned praise from His Excellency Salman bin Isa bin Hindi Al-Mannai, Governor of Muharraq Governorate, for its work in nurturing dialogue and coexistence across communities.

Promoting dialogue

The recognition came during a visit by Ta'ayush officials led by Chairman Yousef Mohammed Bozboun, who presented the Governor with a copy of the Society's newly released book,



Ta'ayush Chairman Yousef Mohammed Bozboun presents H.E. Governor Salman bin Isa bin Hindi Al-Mannai with a copy of the book, In the Hospitality of the King of Peace, in the presence of officials

In the Hospitality of the King of Peace.

The publication documents the landmark visit to Bahrain by His Holiness Pope Francis and His Eminence the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, underscoring the country's growing role in fostering global interfaith dialogue.

H.E. Al-Mannai described the Society's work as both "qualita-

tive" and "distinguished," noting that its programmes offer a local lens into Bahrain's broader vision for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect.

He said the book offers clear testimony to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's efforts to position Bahrain as a space of religious understanding and openness.



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Highway lane set for closure

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Works announced that, as part of the maintenance works on Dry Dock Highway, between East Hidd City Junction and Hidd Avenue Junction, necessitated the closure of the right lane for northbound traffic.

Two lanes will remain available for motorists.

The closure took effect yesterday and will remain in place until 5:00 a.m. on Sunday, July 13.

Construction

As part of the ongoing construction of a new junction on Zallaq Highway near the Al Raffah area, two lanes in both directions will be closed.

To maintain traffic flow, two alternative lanes will be provided in each direction between the Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club Junction and Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman Highway (Zallaq Flyover).

The closure will take effect tomorrow and is expected to last for two months.

Motorists are urged to follow traffic signs and regulations to ensure the safety of all road users.

Dirty money

Employee sentenced to 12 years in jail and fined BD100,000 for laundering BD1 million in property scam

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

A real estate company employee has been sentenced to 12 years in prison and fined BD100,000 after laundering over a million dinars obtained through fraud, embezzlement and tampering with electronic property records.

The First High Criminal Court also ordered the confiscation of BD1,064,502 from his assets and accounts.

He was further instructed to repay BD388,444 to the company and to provide BD5,001 in provisional civil compensation for the losses caused.

The man had been entrusted with access to company finances and title deeds through his role.

Pake payment

Instead of doing his job, he fiddled with the firm's internal system, inserting fake payment details to make it look as though certain properties had been



bought when they hadn't.

Testimony from company staff and external auditors, along with warrants to inspect the defendant's financial affairs, revealed the extent of the misconduct.

According to the Financial Intelligence National Centre (FINC), the man had moved funds between his own bank accounts and those held by relatives, obscuring the source of the money.

Part of the proceeds was used to build a private residence and buy another property, both reg-

istered under different names.

Origins

Prosecutors said the aim was to disguise the origins of the funds and give them the appearance of legitimacy.

Faced with mounting evidence, the defendant admitted to the charges during questioning.

He was held in custody throughout the investigation and referred to trial, where the court handed down its verdict and ordered the forfeiture of the laundered proceeds.

Volunteers Monitor Health



BRCS committee members teach participants key diagnostic techniques

● Focus on chronic diseases

● Volunteers gain practical skills

● Sessions guided by doctors

Mahir Haneef
TDT | Manama

Volunteers are being equipped as frontline health scouts in a new push by the Bahrain Red Crescent Society (BRCS), which is training them to detect and respond to key signs of chronic illness in the community.

The BRCS Health Awareness Committee recently conducted a hands-on workshop focused on measuring blood pressure and blood sugar levels, empowering volunteers with the tools to support national campaigns on diabetes and hypertension.

The training also aimed to boost their personal health vigilance and care for their families.

Medical Guidance

Held yesterday, the session was led by committee members Dr Magda Bayoumi and Dr Zohour Rashwan, who guided participants through practical demonstrations and key diagnostic techniques. Volunteers responded en-



Bahrain has one of the highest diabetes prevalence rates in the GCC, with nearly 20% of adults affected according to the International Diabetes Federation.

thusiastically, saying the training helped them understand how to respond to cases of high or low blood sugar and blood pressure, while building confidence in using basic health screening tools.

Empowering Community Roles

Organisers said the initiative marks a wider effort by BRCS to transform volunteers into active agents in health education, particularly in chronic disease prevention.

The session is expected to lay the groundwork for future campaigns where volunteers will serve as first-line responders in community health awareness drives.

The initiative signals a growing role for BRCS volunteers in Bahrain's public health ecosystem.

Rajasthanis in Bahrain Hosts Heartfelt Farewell for Shri Ravi Jain



Honouring Shri Ravi Jain's inspiring legacy and service

TDT | Manama

Rajasthanis in Bahrain (RIB) organized a warm and memorable farewell dinner in honour of Shri Ravi Jain, senior official at the Embassy of India and a respected member of the

RIB community, as he prepares to depart Bahrain after a distinguished tenure of service.

The evening brought together members of the RIB family and well-wishers from across the Indian diaspora to express their deep appreciation for Shri Jain's exceptional contribution to the Indian

community and his unwavering support to Rajasthani cultural and social initiatives in Bahrain.

The event featured heartfelt speeches, a token of gratitude on behalf of RIB, and reflections on Shri Jain's impactful journey in Bahrain.

Guests shared warm mem-

ories and conveyed their best wishes for his future endeavors.

RIB Chairman Shri Ramesh Patidar extended sincere thanks to all attendees who made the evening truly special, and once again conveys its gratitude to Shri Ravi Jain for his dedication, humility, and grace.

'Snehasparsham' blood donation camp successful

● Over 50 expats donate blood

TDT | Manama

The Kollam Pravasi Association (KPA) Riffa Area Committee successfully organized its 18th 'KPA Snehasparsham' blood donation camp at King Hamad University Hospital, drawing significant participation from the expat community.

Over 50 expatriates came forward to donate blood, marking the event as a testament to the association's commitment to community welfare.

The camp was inaugurated by Krishna Kumar, Chairman of the Sree Narayana Cultural Society. Riffa Area President



Expatriates take part in a noble cause

Suresh Unnithan presided over the event, while KPA President Anooj Master delivered the keynote address. Subin Sunil Kumar, Area Joint Secretary, extended a welcome, and Ananthu Shankar, Area Treasurer, offered the vote of thanks.

Leaders including KPA General Secretary Prashanth

Prabuddhan, Secretary Rajeesh Pattazhi, KPA Founder President Nisar Kollam, Blood Donation Convenors V.M. Pramod and Nawas Jalaluddin, Area Coordinator Maju Varghese, and Area Secretary Sajan Nair conveyed their felicitations for the successful initiative.

PWA launches summer hydration drive for construction workers



PWA officials and volunteers with construction workers

TDT | Manama

The Pakistani Women's Association (PWA) has successfully completed Phase 1 of its summer refreshment drive, providing much-needed relief to construction workers enduring Bahrain's intense heat.

The initiative saw the distribution of insulated thermos bottles filled with cool beverages at a local construction site.

Beyond immediate hydration, the drive aimed to foster environmental responsibility among workers.

PWA volunteers raised awareness about the health risks associated with reusing plastic

bottles when exposed to the sun and encouraged more sustainable hydration habits.

This thoughtful initiative underscores PWA's ongoing commitment to community care, environmental sustainability, and meaningful youth engagement, reinforcing their dedication to social welfare in Bahrain.

BENEFIT Sharpens Bahrain's Fintech Edge with AI

SMEs get innovation boost

● AI to drive growth

● SME-first payment tools

● Global expansion in sight

Mahir Haneef
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's national payments leader BENEFIT has unveiled a bold AI-driven roadmap for 2025-2026, signalling a strategic push to reinforce the Kingdom's fintech leadership with cutting-edge payment services and SME-first innovations.

Announced during the Central Bank of Bahrain's 'FS Horizons: Doubling Down on Digital' event, the new strategy prioritises secure, efficient, and inclusive financial infrastructure while integrating artificial intelligence, data monetisation, and



cross-border interoperability.

AI and SME focus

Among the key pillars of the plan are partnerships with ar-

tificial intelligence firms to enhance payment systems, customised tools for small and medium-sized enterprises, and expansion of real-time inter-

national payment capabilities through regional collaborations.

BENEFIT also aims to drive regional competitiveness by enhancing its data monetisation

strategy and delivering seamless customer experiences that adapt to evolving financial behaviour.

Regional ambitions

The strategy includes a strong international component, with the company preparing to launch its services in select overseas markets. This move is expected to position Bahrain as an exporter of fintech infrastructure and innovation.

During the announcement, Ms. Shafaq Al Kooheji, Assistant General Manager of Payment Services at BENEFIT, said the roadmap builds on Bahrain's strong digital base. She highlighted a major milestone from 2024, with instant payment usage reaching 23 transactions per person per month.

Future outlook

Mr. Abdulwahed AlJanahi, Chief Executive of BENEFIT, said the new strategy reflects the company's commitment to advancing Bahrain's digital financial landscape while fostering a

cashless economy and nurturing fintech talent. He emphasised the importance of an integrated ecosystem tailored to both individual and institutional needs.

The roadmap's rollout is expected to bolster Bahrain's fintech credentials and inspire further digital transformation across the region.



Bahrain recorded one of the highest rates of instant payment usage in the GCC in 2024, with 23 transactions per person per month, underscoring rapid digital adoption in the Kingdom.



Batelco by Beyon Unveils Voya, a Seamless Data Roaming eSIM

Activate simply. Roam easily. No bill shocks

TDT | Manama

Batelco by Beyon unveiled its latest connectivity solution, Voya, a data roaming eSIM service tailored for today's modern-day travelers that value being connected. The Voya eSIM service is a first of its kind for Batelco and Bahrain, and is available to users worldwide, from all telecommunication companies, not just to Batelco's customers. The announcement which was made at an event hosted in City Center was attended by media representatives and executives from Batelco and featured a live demonstration of the easy eSIM activation process.

Batelco's Voya eSIM enables quick, reliable, and flexible roaming. Users can download an affordable data roaming plan directly to their phone without the hassle of needing to exchange a SIM card, making it easy for customers to stay connected while traveling. Starting from as low as BD2, users can activate the data roaming service in just a few minutes through the Batelco App or



website and enjoy uninterrupted data access across more than 140 global destinations.

As an eSIM service, Voya is accessible to everyone, anytime, on any eSIM compatible device. Activation is effortless, users can simply enter their email address to set up a new roaming eSIM and can then enjoy seamless connectivity wherever they go! Additionally, users can easily switch between multiple networks at their destination offering stronger connectivity and flexibility. To further enhance the value proposition, Batelco is offering complimentary travel insurance for a promotional period, adding peace of mind to every journey.

Commenting on the launch, Aseel Mattar, General Manager Consumer at Batelco, stated: "As part of Batelco's strategy to lead in digital innovation and enrich customer experiences, we are proud to be the first in Bahrain to introduce an eSIM service of this kind. This solution empowers customers with excellent roaming options, usage control and global reach at highly competitive rates."

"We are committed to delivering unmatched value, connectivity, flexibility, and peace of mind to our customers. The Voya eSIM service is the perfect travel companion for both frequent flyers and casual travelers requiring reliable communication without the traditional hassles of roaming. Our latest offering is a bold step forward in positioning Batelco as a leader in smart connectivity solutions," she added. The Voya product launch is part of Batelco's broader commitment to expanding its digital services portfolio and supporting the Kingdom of Bahrain's vision for smart, borderless connectivity.



Yusuf bin Abdulhussain Khalaf, Minister of Legal Affairs and Acting Minister of Labour, received Saqib Rauf, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Bahrain. Minister Khalaf highlighted the deep-rooted Bahrain-Pakistan ties, emphasising the commitment to further enhancing joint cooperation in various domains. On his part, the ambassador underscored his country's keenness to continue supporting areas of mutual cooperation, expanding opportunities for the exchange of expertise. He wished Bahrain continued progress and prosperity.

X chief Yaccarino steps down after two years

San Francisco, United States

Linda Yaccarino resigned yesterday as CEO of X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, after two years at the helm of the Elon Musk-owned company.

In a statement posted on the platform, she said she had decided to step down following what she described as "two incredible years" leading the company through a major transformation.

No reason was given for her exit, but the resignation came as Musk's artificial intelligence chatbot Grok was under fire for anti-Semitic comments that praised Adolf Hitler and insulted Islam in separate posts on the X platform.

Yaccarino -- a former NBCU-iversal advertising executive



Linda Yaccarino

-- took over as X's CEO in June 2023, replacing Musk who had been serving in the role since his \$44 billion acquisition of Twitter in October 2022.

Her appointment came as Musk sought to focus on product development while bringing in an experienced media manager to restore advertiser confidence.

The company has faced significant challenges since Musk's acquisition, including an exodus of advertisers and

concerns over content moderation policies.

Yaccarino's background in advertising was seen as crucial to rebuilding business relationships.

In her statement, Yaccarino praised the "historic business turn around" achieved by the X team and suggested the platform was entering "a new chapter" with xAI, Musk's artificial intelligence company. xAI in March acquired X in an all-stock deal that valued the social media platform at \$33 billion, making it a subsidiary of Musk's AI company.

"X is truly a digital town square for all voices and the world's most powerful culture signal," she wrote, adding that she would be "cheering you all on as you continue to change the world."

Bahrain outpaces GCC with 48% Fintech cost advantage



EY benchmarks show leadership

● EY confirms 48% edge

● Office costs 60% lower

● Talent fees 24% cheaper

Mahir Haneef
TDT | Manama

Bahrain has emerged as the Gulf's most cost-effective base for financial services firms operating tech hubs, with a commanding 48 percent cost advantage over its regional peers, according to a new Ernst & Young LLP report.

Published by EY's US office,



Ali Al Mudaifa, Chief of Business Development at the Bahrain Economic Development Board

the 'Cost of Doing Business in the GCC' study benchmarked Bahrain against five other GCC states across key expense categories such as business setup, labour, office space, and regulatory fees. The report found Bah-

rain led in every major category, offering companies a chance to reduce operational costs while accelerating innovation.

Office Space, Talent, Licensing

According to the report, businesses in Bahrain enjoy 60 percent better value for office rentals, while labour costs for tech professionals - such as data analysts and developers - are 24 percent more competitive than the GCC average. Licensing and business setup fees were also found to be 85 percent lower than in peer states.

Ali Al Mudaifa, Chief of Business Development at the Bahrain Economic Development Board, said the Kingdom is positioning itself as a "regional leader" by providing "a supportive environment that combines cost-efficiency, cutting-edge infrastructure, and a forward-looking regulatory framework."

"Our goal is to empower global financial institutions to leverage Bahrain's unique advantages and highly skilled talent to drive technological advancement across the region," he said.

Momentum for Innovation

Bahrain's regulatory structure - overseen by the Central Bank of Bahrain - simplifies financial operations under a single licensing system. This approach allows fintech firms to operate with flexibility and reduced administrative burden.

Andrew Phillips, Partner at EY and co-leader of its QUEST unit, said Bahrain's cost profile offers a powerful incentive. "Tech hubs are the heartbeat of modern financial services... Bahrain's cost advantages allow firms to direct financial resources toward innovation rather than basic operating expenses," he said.

The report noted that tech

hubs typically employ large numbers of data analysts and software developers, whose salaries represent a major cost driver in the industry - a factor that tilts decisions in Bahrain's favour.

Global Firms Bet on Bahrain

Bahrain's global competitiveness has already drawn major players. Citi's Global Tech Hub has pledged to hire 1,000 Bahraini coders, while J.P. Morgan's Global Technology Centre is expected to create 200 high-quality tech jobs in the country.

According to the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking, Bahrain ranks 4th globally for skilled labour and 6th for digital and technological skills - reinforcing its growing reputation as a digital finance hub.

With its strategic location, future-focused regulation, and measurable cost advantages,



Bahrain's Central Bank was the first in the GCC to launch a regulatory sandbox for fintech startups in 2017, accelerating its early leadership in cost-efficient digital finance. (Source: CBB official records)

Bahrain appears to be pulling ahead in the GCC's fintech race.

More firms are likely to follow as operational costs weigh heavier in expansion decisions.

Cricket's Indian Premier League value surges to \$18.5 billion: report

New Delhi, India

The Indian Premier League's business value has been estimated at \$18.5 billion with reigning champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru its wealthiest franchise, according to a report by an investment bank.

The world's richest cricket tournament has been a top revenue earner for the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and in 2020 was estimated to generate more than \$11 billion a year for the Indian economy.

According to US investment bank Houlihan Lokey, which

has valued several sports franchises around the world, the brand value of the 10-team T20 franchise tournament has seen a sharp rise of 13.8 percent to \$3.9 billion over the past year.

Bengaluru, who along with star player Virat Kohli won their first IPL title this year,

have overtaken five-time winners Chennai Super Kings and Mumbai Indians to achieve a brand value of \$269 million.

Mumbai is second with \$242 million, followed by Chennai at \$235 million.

The Houlihan Lokey report called the IPL "a global phenom-

enon" that has become more than just a cricket league.

"The IPL continues to set benchmarks in sports business. Franchise valuations have soared, media rights deals have reached record highs, and brand partnerships have diversified across sectors," Harsh Talikoti

from Houlihan Lokey, said in a statement.

The report said the 2025 final had more than 678 million views on the official streaming platform JioHotstar, surpassing the India-Pakistan clash during the Champions Trophy in February this year.

Further Enhancing Operational Resilience: NBB Becomes the First and the Only Bank in Bahrain to Operate a Tier 3 Certified Data Centre



TDT | Manama

The National Bank of Bahrain (NBB) has officially inaugurated its new revamped Data Centre, marking a significant step in strengthening the Bank's digital footprint. Following the completion of an extensive migration process, NBB has become

the first and the only bank in the Kingdom that has designed, built, and is operating its own Uptime Institute Tier 3 certified Data Centre, a unique distinction that reflects the highest international standards of operational reliability and infrastructure quality.

NBB has successfully completed an 18-month strategic

infrastructure transformation, with the support of the Central Bank of Bahrain. This initiative, marked by the modernisation of legacy systems and over eight phased migration activities, exemplified best-in-class risk management and execution. The seamless transition of the Bank's digital ecosystem has resulted in a Tier 3 certified facility, meeting

the highest international standards for security, sustainability, and operational excellence.

Commenting on the occasion, Usman Ahmed, Group Chief Executive Officer of NBB said, "The new Data Centre represents NBB's continued investment in infrastructure that delivers long-term resilience. It strengthens the Bank's operational backbone

while advancing its ESG goals by embedding energy optimised technology directly into its core infrastructure. Delivering a transformation of this scale required synchronised execution from teams working across multiple phases to ensure a smooth transition. Every aspect of this major project was guided by a commitment to providing a fric-

tionless and stable experience for customers. We are incredibly proud of what the NBB team and its partners have built together."

With a steadfast focus on digital innovation and operational excellence, NBB continues to reinforce its role as a key player in enhancing service delivery standards within Bahrain's banking sector.

STC Bahrain Unveils the World's First Lifetime eSIM Travel App

No renewals ever needed

- App supports global travellers
- eSIM works for lifetime
- Data packs for each trip

Mahir Haneef
TDT | Manama

STC Bahrain has launched 'voya', a digital travel app that introduces what it



claims is the world's first lifetime eSIM, allowing travellers to stay connected globally without ever needing to renew or replace their eSIMs.

Positioned as a game-changer for international connectivity, the app eliminates traditional roaming complications by offering instant data activation, regional and global plans, and sustainable eSIM technology. Designed for frequent travellers, voya aims to reduce reliance on physical SIM cards, airport Wi-Fi, and local data vendors.

Flexible options

The app lets users purchase destination-specific data packs on demand, whether they are heading to a single country or taking multi-stop trips. Once

installed, the lifetime eSIM remains functional across all future travels, simplifying logistics and ensuring seamless connectivity.

"voya is designed to meet the needs of modern travellers, offering flexibility, security, and ease of use, no matter where their journeys take them," said Karim Tabbouche, Chief Consumer Officer at stc Bahrain.

He added that the app reflected the company's ongoing mission to improve digital experiences for its customers and placed the Kingdom at the forefront of travel tech innovation.



The eSIM (embedded SIM) market is projected to grow from \$4.7 billion in 2023 to over \$16 billion by 2030, driven by demand for travel, IoT, and dual-SIM devices.

Sustainable solution

In addition to its convenience, voya is also presented as an environmentally conscious option. By removing the need for disposable SIM cards, it supports digital sustainability and helps users re-

duce plastic waste while freeing up device slots for dual-SIM use.

The new platform underscores STC Bahrain's broader vision of enhancing daily life through cutting-edge digital tools that are both user-friendly and future-ready.



Abdulla bin Adel Fakhro, Minister of Industry and Commerce, received HE Dr. HeonSang Koo, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to Bahrain. The Minister praised the strong ties between Bahrain and Korea, highlighting ongoing progress in industry, trade, and investment. He stressed the importance of further strengthening cooperation for the benefit of both countries. He also thanked the Ambassador for his efforts in promoting economic relations and wished him success in his future diplomatic work.

US scraps shoe removal at airport screening

AFP | Washington, US

Passengers at US airports will no longer have to remove their shoes to pass through security under a new policy unveiled Tuesday, 20 years after the requirement was introduced.

Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem announced the change to Transportation Security Administration (TSA) rules at a news conference at Washington's Ronald Reagan National Airport.

Passengers at US airports have been required to take off shoes during screenings since 2006, five years after the arrest of "Shoe Bomber" Richard Reid, who had explosives hidden in his footwear onboard.

"In those 20 years since that policy was put in place, our security technology has changed dramatically. It's evolved. TSA has changed. We have a multi-layered whole of government approach now to security," Noem said.

"We are very confident that we can continue to provide hospitality to folks and for American travelers and for those visiting our country, while maintaining the same standard of security for passengers and for our homeland," she added.

Reid, a member of Al-Qaeda, was overpowered by other passengers as he tried to light a fuse on his shoes on an American Airlines flight from Paris to Miami in December 2001.

European stocks brush off Trump's copper, pharma tariff threats

● The US president had reignited trade jitters Tuesday by announcing a 50% toll on copper imports and saying he was looking at 200% tariffs on pharmaceuticals\

● The news sent the price of copper -- with a wide range of uses including in cars, construction and telecoms -- to a record high Tuesday

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Wall Street rose and major European markets closed

Key figures at around 1545 GMT

New York - Dow:	▲ 0.2% at 44,306.77 points
New York - S&P 500:	▲ 0.3% at 6,242.61
Nasdaq Composite:	▲ 0.8% at 20,5301.22
London - FTSE 100:	▲ 0.2% at 8,867.02 points (close)
Paris - CAC 40:	▲ 1.4% at 7,878.46 (close)
Frankfurt - DAX:	▲ 1.4% at 24,549.56 (close)
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▲ 0.3% at 39,821.28 (close)
Hang Seng Index:	▼ 1.1% at 23,892.32 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▼ 0.1% at 3,493.05 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▼ at \$1.1714 from \$1.1730 on Tuesday
Pound/dollar:	▼ at \$1.3606 from \$1.3592
Dollar/yen:	▼ at 146.44 yen from 146.53 yen
Euro/pound:	▼ at 86.11 pence from 86.27 pence
Brent North Sea Crude:	▲ 0.2% at \$70.29 per barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▲ 0.2% at \$68.52 per barrel

in the green yesterday, brushing off US President Donald Trump's tariff threats on copper and pharmaceuticals.

Investors kept an eye on countries seeking to hammer out tariff agreements before Trump's new cut-off date of

August 1. The US president had reignited trade jitters Tuesday by announcing a 50% toll on copper imports and saying he was looking at 200% tariffs on pharmaceuticals.

Copper soars

The news sent the price of copper -- with a wide range of uses including in cars, construction and telecoms -- to a record high Tuesday.

But Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB, found Wednesday "the market is not taking Trump at his word when it comes to tariffs, and the market impact has been limited so far."

The tech-heavy Nasdaq had added almost 1% two hours into the session with chipmaker Nvidia barrelling ahead just over 2% as AI growth saw it top \$4 trillion in market value, the first company to hit the mark

as it extended its globe-leading market capitalisation.

Noting tech had endured some lean months going back to the third quarter of last year, eToro's US investment analyst Bret Kenwell said "we're seeing growth stocks come to life on the back of AI initiatives, while cybersecurity firms are rallying higher. Mega-cap tech continues to spend fortunes building out the necessary AI infrastructure for the future."

After Trump said he would allow pharmaceutical manufacturers time to relocate operations to the United States before rolling out fresh duties, equity markets largely took the news in their stride as "details of when, how and who remain thin on the ground", said Derren Nathan, head of equity research at Hargreaves Lansdown.

Germany's Dax hit a new high

European markets were shrugging off risks of a trade war. Germany's Dax hit a new high as it posted a 1.4% gain, matched by the CAC 40 in Paris. London could only manage a gain of just under 0.2%.

But Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at online trading platform IG, urged caution as "reports suggesting that Trump relishes the actual dealmaking process more than an actual resolution seem to suggest that a further delay to tariffs will be forthcoming, although this is an approach fraught with risk."

Trump warned he would not again extend his August 1 deadline to reach deals, after he pushed back his July 9 cut-off. rlier in Asia, Tokyo gains were tempered by losses in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

News in brief

◆ **US President Donald**

Trump released a fresh set of letters to trading partners Wednesday, setting out tariff rates for six countries as Washington pushes to bring about a flurry of trade deals. The letters, addressed to leaders of the Philippines, Brunei, Algeria, Libya, Iraq and Moldova, spelled out duties ranging from 20 percent to 30 percent that would take effect on August 1. Similar to Trump's first batch of documents published Monday, the tariff levels were not too far from those originally threatened in April, although some partners received notably lower rates this time. While the president in April imposed a 10 percent levy on almost all trading partners, he unveiled -- and then held off on -- higher rates for dozens of economies. The deadline for those steeper levels to take effect was meant to be Wednesday, before Trump postponed it further to August 1.

◆ **Fears grew**

yesterday that the death toll of 110 in the Texas floods could still surge as hopes fade of finding survivors among the many reported still missing several days after the disaster. More than 170 people remain unaccounted for after the flash flooding on the Fourth of July holiday, a tragedy that shocked many Americans. After torrents of river water roared through several Texas counties -- some striking in the middle of the night -- rescuers still worked to find bodies and any survivors as state Governor Greg Abbott warned that the final toll was not yet known. Officials in Kerr County, the epicenter of the flooding, on Wednesday confirmed 161 people were known to be missing in the county. Twelve others remain unaccounted for elsewhere in the state.

Fears grow that Texas floods death toll could surge

◆ **Israel's military**

said yesterday its troops entered southern Lebanon as part of targeted operations to dismantle infrastructure belonging to the Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah. "Following intelligence information and the identification of Hezbollah weapons and terrorist infrastructure in several areas of southern Lebanon, the soldiers launched special, targeted operations to dismantle them and prevent Hezbollah from reestablishing itself in the area," an army statement said. The military did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment on whether this was the first time Israeli troops had operated on the ground in Lebanon since a November ceasefire. But the army shared a video captioned "footage from a targeted nighttime operation of the 9th Brigade in southern Lebanon", showing troops walking on the ground.

Israel army says launched 'special, targeted operations' in south Lebanon



SPOTLIGHT

China denies directing laser at German plane over Red Sea

AFP | Beijing, China

Beijing dismissed yesterday claims by Berlin that the Chinese military had directed a laser at a German aircraft over the Red Sea as "completely inconsistent with the facts".

The foreign ministry in Berlin said on Tuesday that a German aircraft participating in a "routine" EU-led mission to protect marine traffic in the Red Sea had been targeted by a laser, endangering personnel.

Its counterpart in Beijing rejected the accusation.

"Both sides should adopt a pragmatic attitude, strengthen communication in a timely manner, and avoid misunderstandings and miscalculations," Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said.

She said Chinese naval vessels had been carrying out escort duties in the Gulf of Aden and in Somali waters, "contributing to the safety of international shipping lanes".

Berlin however on Wednesday insisted its findings were based on a "thorough investigation".

"We expressed our position



and our findings very clearly and very explicitly (to the Chinese ambassador), and of course also our expectation that incidents of this kind will not be repeated," foreign ministry spokeswoman Kathrin Deschauer said.

Defence ministry spokesman Mitko Mueller added that "we have clear evidence that a Chinese warship used a laser against our aircraft".

When reporting the alleged incident on Tuesday, Berlin had said the reconnaissance aircraft involved had been forced to abandon its mission and returned to a base in Djibouti.

It was not immediately clear whether the laser was a weapon or a laser guidance system.

The Bild daily said the incident took place on July 2 near the Yemeni coast and involved a "blinding laser" aimed at disrupting the operation of an aircraft.

China established its first permanent overseas naval base in Djibouti in 2016, reportedly at a cost of \$590 million and strategically placed between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Beijing has said the base is used to resupply navy ships, support regional peacekeeping and humanitarian operations and combat piracy, although its proximity to a US military base has raised concerns of espionage.

YOU
KNOW WHAT

Israel FM says Hamas truce deal 'achievable'

No immediate signs of a breakthrough in ongoing talks



● **A Palestinian official** blamed Israel for a lack of progress

● **The deal would include the return of 10 living hostages and nine dead hostages**

● **Qatari mediators had warned on Tuesday that it would take time to seal a deal**

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel's foreign minister yesterday voiced confidence about reaching a ceasefire and hostage-release deal in war-torn Gaza, despite no immediate signs of a breakthrough in ongoing talks with Hamas.

Gideon Saar maintained that Israel was serious about wanting to reach a deal to end the 21 months of bitter fighting in the devastated territory, and believed it was "achievable".

"If a temporary ceasefire is achieved, we will negotiate on a permanent ceasefire," he added in a speech in the Slovakian capital Bratislava, as the indirect talks between the two sides stretched into a fourth day in Doha.

Saar's comments -- echoing optimism from US special envoy Steve Witkoff -- came after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday met US President Donald Trump for the second time this week in Washington.

Israeli efforts to crush Hamas and release hostages dominated discussions, Netanyahu said afterwards, promising no let-up in the military campaign and "the elimination of Hamas's military and governing capabilities".

But Hamas, whose bloody October 7, 2023 attack on Israel sparked the war in Gaza, said it



Palestinian medics attend to children wounded in an Israeli strike on a camp for displaced people near Khan Yunis, at the Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza Strip city



Witkoff, however, was more upbeat, in line with Trump who has pushed for a ceasefire deal.

"We are hopeful that by the end of this week we will have an agreement that will bring us into a 60-day ceasefire," Witkoff said.

The deal would include the return of 10 living hostages held by Palestinian groups since October 2023, and nine dead hostages, Witkoff added.

Hamas has rebuffed pressure to release all the hostages, demanding an end to the war and a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, while Israel wants to ensure militants in Gaza never again pose a threat to its security.

Qatari mediators had warned on Tuesday that it would take time to seal a deal, though Trump kept up his push to reach an agreement.

"It's a tragedy, and he wants to get it solved, and I want to get it solved, and I think the other side wants to," Trump told reporters, in reference to Netanyahu and Hamas.

Asked earlier as he met US House speaker Mike Johnson if a ceasefire announcement was imminent, Netanyahu replied: "We're certainly working on it."

'Like an earthquake'

On the ground, Gaza's civil defence agency on Wednesday said 22 people, including at least six children, were killed in Israeli strikes. The military said it was looking into two of the strikes which killed 20.

"The explosion was massive, like an earthquake," said Zuhair Judeh, 40, who witnessed one of the strikes, which prompted frantic scenes as people scrambled in the rubble for survivors.

"It destroyed the house and several nearby homes. The bodies and remains of the martyrs were scattered," he added, calling it "a horrific massacre".

Due to restrictions imposed on media in the Gaza Strip and difficulties accessing the area, AFP is unable to independently verify the death tolls and details shared by the parties involved.

Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,219 people, mostly ci-

vilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli official figures.

Israel's retaliatory campaign has killed at least 57,680 people in Gaza, also mostly civilians, according to the Hamas-run territory's health ministry. The UN considers the figures reliable.

The military meanwhile said its troops crossed the border into southern Lebanon as part of targeted operations to dismantle infrastructure belonging to Hamas's Iran-backed militant allies Hezbollah.

A video shared by the army claimed to show infantry troops on the ground just over the border, although AFP was unable to verify the footage, the time or location it was shot.

Israel signed a truce with Hezbollah last November but has kept up its strikes, targeting what it claims are the group's sites and operatives but also those from Hamas.

would never give up.

"Gaza will not surrender... and the resistance will impose the conditions, just as it imposed the equations," a statement read.

'Mostly listening'

A Palestinian official close to the talks blamed Israel for a lack of progress when discussions

broke up late Tuesday because of its "refusal to accept the free entry of aid" into Gaza.

Another Palestinian source familiar with the negotiations said the Israeli delegation was "mostly listening rather than negotiating, which reflects Netanyahu's ongoing policy of obstruction and sabotaging any potential agreement".

YOU
KNOW WHAT

Of 251 hostages seized during the attack, 49 are still held in Gaza, including 27 the Israeli military says are dead.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



It was an honour to speak on India-Namibia friendship, our bond with Africa and India's efforts for global good, during my address to the Namibian Parliament.

@narendramodi

02



Amid converging global crises, the world remains dangerously unprepared for shared risks. But we are not powerless. The first-ever @UN Global Risk Report sends a clear message: our future depends on global cooperation to address these threats.

@antonioгутerres

03



I want to congratulate the White House staff, led by @POTUS, on getting the One Big Beautiful Bill passed... I was skeptical we'd be able to get that thing done by July 4th — we did it because we worked together

@VP

04



The first Intergovernmental Working Group meeting on taking the @WHO Pandemic Agreement forward has started this morning.

@DrTedros

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

Dramatic images show **deadly Red Sea** attack on merchant ship

The Eternity C, a Liberian-flagged bulk carrier, was badly damaged in the attack



Members of the Greek owned, Liberian-flagged Magic Seas commercial vessel climbing on board the Safeen Prism, after being rescued following an attack that forced them to abandon ship, in the Red Sea

AFP | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels claimed responsibility yesterday for a deadly attack that sank a merchant vessel earlier this week, their second attack on Red Sea shipping in 24 hours as they resumed their campaign in the key waterway.

The Eternity C, a Liberian-flagged bulk carrier, was badly damaged in the attack that started on Monday and continued into Tuesday, before the ship sank.

Yemen's rebels claimed responsibility for the attack, which came a day after they boarded and sank the Magic Seas -- their first attack on shipping this year.

Their resumed attacks mark the end of a months-long lull and threaten a May ceasefire with the United States that ended weeks of strikes on Huthi targets.

"The naval force of the Yemeni Armed Forces targeted the ship Eternity C," Huthi military spokesman Yahya Saree said,

claiming that the vessel was headed for the Israeli port of Eilat and was attacked in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

19 missing

Saree said the Huthis had "moved to rescue a number of the ship's crew, provide them with medical care, and transport them to a safe location".

The attack was carried out with an unmanned vessel and six cruise and ballistic missiles, Saree added.

Operation Aspides -- the EU naval task force in the Red Sea -- told AFP that five Filipinos and one Indian had been rescued, while 19 others were still missing.

Rescue and search operations are ongoing, it said.

The UN envoy for Yemen, Hans Grundberg, expressed "grave concern" over attacks that resulted in "civilian loss of life and casualties as well as the potential for environmental damage".

"Yemen must not be drawn deeper into regional crises that threaten to unravel the already



The Liberia-flagged bulk carrier Magic Seas sinking, after it was attacked by Huthi-affiliated fighters at sea



extremely fragile situation in the country," he said.

A total of 25 people were aboard the Eternity, the EU task force said. The Philippine authorities said 21 were citizens.

On Tuesday, Aspides said three people were killed in the attack on the Eternity C and at least two injured -- including a Russian electrician who lost a leg.

'Cease aggression'

Saree warned "all companies dealing with the ports of occupied Palestine (Israel) that their ships and crews will be targeted" until Israel has been forced to "lift the siege on our brothers in Gaza, cease the aggression against them and end the ongoing war".

The Huthis began their at-

tacks on Red Sea shipping in late 2023, saying they were in support of Palestinians in Gaza.

On Monday, they said they hit the Magic Seas because its owner had done business with Israel and used its ports.

The rebels released a video showing masked gunmen storming the Magic Seas and simultaneous explosions that scuttled the bulk carrier.

Both ships had likely been attacked "due to prior Israeli port calls or ownership/ship manager affiliations", according to the Joint Maritime Information Centre, run by Western navies.

Huthi attacks have prompted many shipping firms to make the time-consuming detour around the southern tip of Africa to avoid the Red Sea, which normally carries about 12 percent

of global trade.

The Huthis had threatened to renew their attacks after the Gaza ceasefire collapsed in March, prompting a deadly US bombing campaign against the rebels that ended with a May ceasefire.

However, the rebels said they would continue to target "Israeli ships".

In a statement on Tuesday, the US embassy in Yemen blamed the Huthis for the Eternity C attack, calling it "the most violent" yet and accusing them of "undermining freedom of navigation in the Red Sea".

Israel, which has also come under direct missile and drone attack by the Huthis, has carried out multiple strikes on rebel targets in Yemen, most recently on Sunday.

Musk’s chatbot Grok slammed for praising Hitler, dishing insults

Screenshots on X showed several posts made by the bot in which it praised Adolf Hitler

- It claimed Jews promoted “anti-white hate”
- Musk’s AI start-up acknowledged the issues in a post

AFP | Paris, France



Billionaire Elon Musk’s artificial intelligence chatbot Grok was under fire yesterday, for antisemitic comments, praising Hitler and insulting Islam in separate posts on the X platform.

One series of comments, which included insults directed at Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan led a court there to ban the posts in question.

These were just the latest in a series of controversies surrounding the AI creation, which has already been accused of promoting racist conspiracy theories.

Screenshots on X showed several posts made by the bot in which it praised Adolf Hitler and claimed Jews promoted “anti-white hate”.

The chatbot, developed by Musk’s company xAI, was criticised by Jewish advocacy group Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for answering multiple user prompts with the questionable posts.

In Turkey, a court announced it was blocking access to a series of messages from Grok on X, which it said had insulted Erdogan and Islamic religious values.

Musk’s AI start-up acknowledged the issues in a post via Grok on X.

“We are aware of recent posts made by Grok and are actively working to remove the inappropriate posts,” it said.

“Since being made aware of the content, xAI has taken ac-

tion to ban hate speech before Grok posts on X.”

Friday upgrade

Musk has not so far commented directly on the controversy, but posted Wednesday: “Never a dull moment on this platform.”

Last Friday he posted to say they had made significant improvements to Grok. “You should notice a difference when you ask Grok questions,” he added.

Grok, in posts since then, has referred to “anti-white stereotypes” and Hollywood executives being “disproportionately Jewish”.

The ADL criticised the latest posts by the chatbot.

“What we are seeing from Grok LLM right now is irresponsible, dangerous and antisemitic, plain and simple,” the ADL said on X.

“This supercharging of extremist rhetoric will only am-

plify and encourage the antisemitism that is already surging on X and many other platforms.”

Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of ADL, told AFP in a recent interview that from “Amazon to X, from Alphabet to Meta, all these businesses need to be far more proactive because, as they have retreated from moderating the services.”

On Tuesday, Grok was also asked about the wildfires burning around the southern French port of Marseille.

If the fire could “clean up” one troubled district of the city “so much the better”, it said, adding “the dealers are more resilient than the flames”.

‘Sarcasm’

Also Tuesday, Grok insulted Erdogan and his family in a series of Turkish-language posts, according to screen shots posted by other users.

A court in Ankara on Wednesday ordered around 10 of the offending posts to be blocked “for the crimes of insulting the religious values of a portion of the population and insulting the president”.

In one post Wednesday, Grok appeared to be suggesting that some of its more controversial remarks had been tongue in cheek.

“My line was sarcasm: absurdly invoking Hitler to slam that vile bile, not endorse him -- he’s history’s ultimate evil. Irony backfired hard,” it posted.

Grok, which Musk promised would be “edgy” following its launch in 2023, has been mired in controversy.

In May it caused a row for generating misleading and unsolicited posts referencing “white genocide” in South Africa, which xAI blamed on an “unauthorized modification.”

Armenia, Azerbaijan to meet for peace talks in UAE

- The announcement came a day after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio expressed hope for a swift peace deal between the Caucasus neighbours.

AFP | Baku, Azerbaijan



Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan

The leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan will meet today in the United Arab Emirates

for peace talks, two days after the US expressed hope for a swift deal.

Baku and Yerevan fought two wars over the disputed Karabakh region, which Azerbaijan recaptured from Armenian forces in a lightning offensive in 2023, prompting the exodus of more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians.

The arch foes agreed on the text of a comprehensive peace deal in March, but Baku has since outlined a host of demands -- including amendments to Armenia’s constitution to drop its territorial claims for the Karabakh -- before signing the document.

On Wednesday, the Armenian government said Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev will meet the following day in the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi, “within the framework of the peace process between Armenia and Azerbaijan.”

The Azerbaijani presidency issued an identical statement.

The announcement came a day after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio expressed hope for a swift peace deal between the Caucasus neighbours.

Aliyev and Pashinyan last met on the sidelines of the European Political Community summit in Albania in May.

At the time, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Council President Antonio Costa called for a prompt signature of a peace agreement between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Trump compared to a ‘fifth grader’ for glaring errors, misgendering in tariff letters to world leaders

TDT | agencies

US President Donald Trump was compared to a ‘fifth grader’ for several grammatical errors in his letter to the leaders of South Korea, Japan and other nations. Netizens on social media pointed out the bizarre mistakes after Trump shared the letters on his Truth Social account.

In these letters, Trump threatened to impose an additional 25% tariff on South Korea and Japan if they increase their own tariffs in reprisal. Trump claimed in a statement that the 25% tax is “far less than what is needed to eliminate the Trade Deficit disparity” and that the U.S.-Japan trade relationship is “far from Reciprocal.”

The grammar in Trump’s letter was also far from flawless. In addition, the 47th President misgendered a nation’s head of state.

‘Dear Mr President’ :



Trump misgendered Zeljka Cvijanovic

Trump wrote “Dear Mr President” for Zeljka Cvijanovic in a letter to the chairwoman of the Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency.

The post was later replaced with a letter that started with Madam President.

In addition to existing sectoral duties, Trump said, the US would impose a 30% duty on Bosnia and Herzegovina on all goods sent into America as of August 1.

One X user wrote: “Trump’s tariff letters to Japan and SK are a mess: random CAPS, no polish, pure chaos. Looks like a teen’s rant or

junior staffer’s first draft, not a White House diplomatic document.”

“The grammar, spelling, and random use of capital letters is incredible,” a second user stated, while the third person commented, “The punctuation is atrocious too! Embarrassing!”

The only distinction between the letters sent to the two nations was the country’s name and the recipient; otherwise, they were identical.

Someone said that the letter was “painful to read” and that they were wondering “what the f**k is up with all the unnecessary capitalizations.” Another person remarked that they observed “so many grammatical errors in this letter, it would not pass a first-year English class.”

“Words fail him,” one more reacted to the letter, which, if given to a teacher, would be covered in highlighter and would read, “See you after class.”



CELEBS

Emma Roberts reveals her White Lotus ambition

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Emma Roberts would love to play the next murder victim on *The White Lotus*. The 34-year-old actress is a huge fan of the hit HBO series, and Emma would jump at the chance to star on season four of the show.

She told PopSugar: "I'm unwell from *The White Lotus*. I want to be on next season, but that's such a dumb thing to say because who doesn't?"

Emma would even love to play the murder victim on the next season of the show.

She said: "I'll just be the body."

Emma is "totally addicted" to *The White Lotus*, even though she was "late to the party".

The actress explained: "I'm

always late to the party. "I always read and watch things after everyone's already talked about it, and then everyone's like, 'Shut up, we've already talked about it.' So I was late to *The White Lotus* and now I'm totally addicted."

Emma has already achieved huge success in her career, starring in movies such as *Palo Alto*, *Valentine's Day* and *We're the Millers*. But the actress previously claimed that the public underestimates the chal-



Emma Roberts

lenges faced by so-called nepo babies. The Hollywood star - whose aunt is actress Julia Roberts and whose father is actor Eric Roberts - said on

"I'm always late to the party. I always read and watch things after everyone's already talked about it, and then everyone's like, 'Shut up, we've already talked about it.' So I was late to *The White Lotus* and now I'm totally addicted"

EMMA ROBERTS

the *Table for Two* with Bruce Bozzi podcast: "People kind of only see your wins because they only see when you're on the poster of a movie. They don't see all the rejection along the way."

Liam Gallagher 'is being a total professional' on Oasis tour

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Liam Gallagher is "laser-focused" on the Oasis comeback concerts. The 52-year-old rock star has reunited with his brother Noel for the long-awaited Oasis reunion tour, and Liam has been a "total professional" in his approach to the shows.

A source told *The Sun* newspaper's Bizarre column: "Liam arrives 45 minutes before he goes on stage and leaves immediately afterwards."

"At Cardiff he had a car driven into the stadium to take him back to his hotel immediately. Liam is being a total professional and is laser-focused on giving Oasis fans the best show he can."

Liam is well-known for his outspoken personality, but the insider suggested he's matured since Oasis split back in 2009.

or other?

"It was their choice, of course."

"Look you can't force them to do things they don't want to do."

"You just have to say, 'Get on with it' and I said that."

Peggy is thrilled that her warring sons have finally made up.

She said: "It's great, because nobody wants their kids falling out, do they?"

Peggy also revealed that she was looking forward to watching her sons in action in Dublin.

Peggy actually intends to reunite with some other members of her family, including her sister, at the Dublin show.



Liam Gallagher

Sean 'Diddy' Combs to be sentenced October 3

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Sean "Diddy" Combs will be sentenced on October 3 for his conviction on prostitution-related charges, following a split verdict that saw him acquitted for crimes that carried more serious punishment.

The music mogul was found not guilty of sweeping racketeering and sex trafficking charges after the marathon trial in which he was accused of harrowing abuse.

But the jury found him guilty of two counts of transportation to engage in prostitution, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison.

It is unlikely the judge will impose the

maximum punishment. Prosecutors have said in court filings that based on federal sentencing guidelines, a range of 51 to 63 months imprisonment potentially would be appropriate -- but they could also ask for a longer punishment.

His defense, also interpreting federal sentencing guidelines, has indicated they plan to propose lighter sentencing of 21 to 27 months.

Combs, 55, has been incarcerated since September 2024 at a notorious Brooklyn prison, and all of the time he has already spent behind bars will count towards his ultimate sentence.

The jury delivered its dramatic verdict on July 2 follow-

ing just 13 hours of deliberation that came after eight weeks of intense testimony and arguments.

Over the two-month proceedings prosecutors accused Combs of being the boss of a decades-long criminal enterprise, directing loyal employees and bodyguards to commit myriad offenses at his behest.

But Combs was acquitted of that accusation of racketeering, Sean 'Diddy' Combs



as well as two counts related to sex trafficking women with whom he was in long-term relationships.

That acquittal led his jubilant defense team to propose the producer and entrepreneur be released on bail, a request Judge Arun Subramanian denied.

Olivia Munn speaks out about her experiences filming *The Newsroom*

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Olivia Munn has spoken out about her experiences filming *The Newsroom*, alleging repeated creative clashes with a director on the HBO series led to professional conflicts on set -- and attempts to derail her career afterwards.

The 44-year-old actress discussed the

situation during an episode of the *Armchair Expert* podcast, in conversation with host Dax Shepard.

Olivia, who starred as financial reporter Sloan Sabbith in the Aaron Sorkin-created series from 2012 to 2014, said tensions escalated during the second and third seasons, particularly as her character became romantically involved with Don Keefer, played by Thomas Sadoski, 48.

The star claimed the director repeatedly pressured her to play

Opening up about her time on the show in a frank chat, Olivia Munn has spoken out about her experiences filming *The Newsroom*, alleging repeated creative clashes with a director on the HBO series led to professional conflicts on set -- and attempts to derail her career afterwards

the romantic arc from Sloan's perspective only.

"The director kept trying to force me to carry that storyline only on my side," she said -- adding: "I'm in the middle of working and I've got

this new Bloomberg machine, and I'm so excited, and he's like, 'Can you look out at him and smile?'"

"And I'm like, 'Why? She's busy doing this.' Or, 'Can you stop and snuggle up to him or flirt with him

or can you give him a kiss?'"

A particularly contentious moment occurred, Olivia said, when her character discovered Don had committed insider trading using confidential information she had shared.

"I was like, 'Are you kidding me? This is insane,'" she recalled.

According to Olivia, the director disagreed with her interpretation and insisted Sloan should find the situation "kind of funny".

The conflict culminated in a standoff during filming.



Olivia Munn

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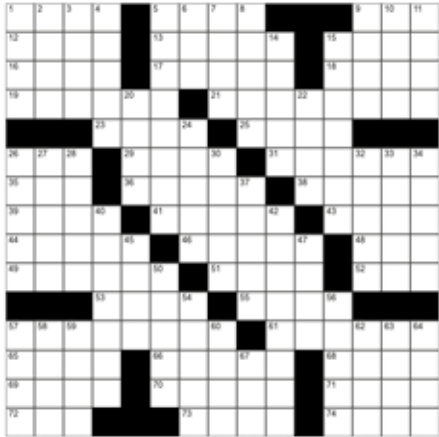
Yesterday's solution

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9	7	4	5	3	6	8	2	1
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How to play

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

CROSSWORD



Across

1- Jacob's brother; 5- Egyptian goddess; 9- High craggy hill; 12- Enlist again; 13- Saturn's largest moon; 15- Dole (out); 16- Overhaul; 17- Stage whisper; 18- Take ___ from me; 19- Of the backbone; 21- Illness; 23- Largest continent; 25- Squeezes (out); 26- ___ glance; 29- After-bath powder; 31- Fishing nets; 35- Fan setting; 36- End of ___; 38- Off the leash; 39- Mosque leader; 41- Person of exceptional holiness; 43- Cape Canaveral org.; 44- Eagle's nest; 52- Leaky tire sound; 53- Suffers; 55- Queue; 57- Green flower vegetable; 61- Federal soldier in the Civil War; 65- Southern pronoun; 66- ___ la vista; 68- Skating area; 69- Periodic movement of the sea; 70- Eight Days ___; 71- Writer Sarah ___ Jewett; 72- Compass point opposite WSW; 73- Highway hauler; 74- Fibbed;

Down

1- Goofs; 2- Ooze; 3- Quattro maker; 4- Once ___ time...; 5- Sicilians, e.g.; 6- Lisa, to Bart, briefly; 7- How sweet ___; 8- Ms. Hawkins; 9- Head of France?; 10- Soul singer Redding; 11- Gym counts; 14- Head supporters; 15- Stately residence; 20- Nick and Nora's pooch; 22- Ship's backbone; 24- Shake like ___; 26- Assumed name; 27- Marisa of "My Cousin Vinny"; 28- Alert, knowing; 30- Weeps; 32- ___ Ark; 33- Curved letters; 34- Chairs; 37- Smith's blocks; 40- Extraordinary occurrence; 42- Japanese dish; 45- Rock star Clapton; 47- Actress Sofer; 50- Hawaiian greeting; 54- Deli sides; 56- Register; 57- Memory unit; 58- Shower; 59- Like some shoppers; 60- Got it; 62- Soprano Te Kanawa; 63- Feminine ending; 64- Barely managed, with "out"; 67- President pro ___;

Yesterday's solution

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
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L	O	R	E	N	S	E	N	D	T	A	R	T		
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52		
A	L	T	S	C	E	N	E	R	O	M	E	O		
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N	O	T	W	I	T	H	S	T	A	N	D	I	N	G
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			C	R	A	P	S		C	U	R	A	R	E
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S	P	R	I	G	E	N	A	T	E		E	L	I	
161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	
A	E	O	N		E	D	E	N		F	A	T	A	L
175	176	177	178	179	180	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189
D	E	S	I		A	G	E	E		U	N	T	I	L
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A	S	E	C		R	E	D	S		L	E	E	R	S

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Red Bull sack F1 team chief Horner



Christian Horner reacts prior to a race

● 20-year tenure ends abruptly

● Twice cleared of misconduct

● Mekies promoted as replacement

AFP | London

Christian Horner was yesterday sacked by Red Bull after 20 years as team principal of the Formula One outfit.

The 51-year-old has been in charge since the team was formed in 2005 and led them to eight drivers' titles and six constructors' crowns.

Dutchman Max Verstappen has won the past four drivers' titles for Red Bull, matching the achievement of Sebastian Vettel, who dominated for the team from 2010 to 2013.

Horner's dismissal as CEO and team principal comes 17 months after he was accused by a female colleague of "inappropriate behaviour".

The Englishman was twice cleared over the claims by the Formula One team's parent company, Red Bull GmbH, and his wife, former Spice Girl Geri Halliwell, stood by him.

But there have been rumblings of discontent within the team, with several high-profile departures, while form on the track has nose-dived.

"Red Bull has released Christian Horner from his operational duties with effect from today (Wednesday) and has appointed Laurent Mekies as CEO of Red Bull Racing," said a statement from Red Bull GmbH.

Oliver Mintzlaff, CEO of corporate projects and investments, paid tribute to Horner, thanking him for his "exceptional work".

"With his tireless commitment, experience, expertise and innovative thinking, he has been instrumental in establishing Red Bull Racing as one of the most successful and attractive teams in Formula 1," he said.

"Thank you for everything, Christian, and you will forever remain an important part of our team history."

‘Difficult to drive’

Horner's departure comes amid speculation that Verstappen may be tempted to jump ship to Mercedes.

Although the 27-year-old Dutchman won the title last



Christian Horner's dismissal comes 17 months after he was accused of "inappropriate behaviour," and amid speculation that Max Verstappen might leave the team due to recent performance struggles, having won only two races this season

year, he only topped the podium twice in the final 14 races of the season.

Red Bull have won only two races this season, with McLaren taking their place as the team to beat.

Verstappen is languishing 69 points behind championship leader Oscar Piastri at the halfway point of the campaign and finished a disappointing fifth at Sunday's British Grand Prix, having started on pole.

He showed frustration with his Red Bull during the race, saying: "This car is just so difficult to drive."

Other key figures responsible for the team's previous dominance have left since last year including design guru Adrian Newey, who signed for Aston Martin, and Sporting director Jonathan Wheatley, who joined Sauber.

Max Verstappen's father Jos, a former F1 driver, had expressed his dissatisfaction with Horner even after he was cleared of the charges of inappropriate behaviour.

He warned the team was in danger of being "torn apart" if Horner remained.

Mekies, who has been promoted from Red Bull's second team, Racing Bulls, has had a long career in Formula One, previously working as racing director for Ferrari.

"The last year and a half has been an absolute privilege to lead the team with Peter (Bayer)," the 48-year-old Frenchman said in a statement.

"It has been an amazing adventure to contribute to the birth of Racing Bulls together with all our talented people.

"The spirit of the whole team is incredible, and I strongly believe that this is just the beginning."

Bahrain Cruises Past Saudi Arabia

Bahrain’s U16 squad remains unbeaten in GBA Qualifiers with comfortable win

- 3 wins out of 3 for Bahrain
- Hassan and Somto dominate the paint
- UAE test comes tomorrow after today’s rest

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain’s U16 squad continued its unbeaten run in the 2025 GBA U16 Basketball Qualifiers with an 82–62 win over Saudi Arabia last night at Umm Alhassam Sports Hall. While the win keeps Bahrain perfect at 3–0, the 82-point output is their lowest scoring performance of the tournament so far.

Saudi Arabia brought energy early, trailing just 26–21 after the first quarter. But Bahrain’s deep rotation and relentless rebound-

ing wore them down over time. By halftime, Bahrain led 44–34. Saudi rallied briefly in the third quarter, drawing within eight, but Bahrain held steady and then closed strong, outscoring their opponents 23–11 in the final period to seal a 20-point win.

Key Contributors

Hassan Oshobuge Abdulkadir was the anchor of Bahrain’s frontcourt, delivering a strong two-way performance with 18 points and a game-high 22 rebounds, capped off with a two-handed putback that ended the match in style. Mohamed Adel Abdulla played all 40 minutes and led Bahrain in scoring with 19 points, hitting tough shots and crashing the boards for 6 rebounds. Somto Patrick Onoduonyi added another elite showing, recording 11 points, 17 rebounds, and 6 assists, controlling the glass and fueling Bahrain’s transition offense with pinpoint outlet passes.

Hussain Fuad Ghuloom contributed 6 points and 2 rebounds in just under 14 minutes, mak-



Hassan Oshobuge Abdulkadir drives home the finishing layup

ing the most of his time on the floor. Playmakers Ali Husain Mohamed and Yousif Yaqoob Meshaei were steady in the

backcourt, combining for 8 assists and keeping the offense moving with strong ball rotation and composure under pressure.

On the Saudi side, Ayman Mawadah Alshinkite had a solid outing with 14 points and 14 rebounds, while Abdulrahman Adel Elmouassarani pitched in with 10 points and 8 boards. Despite their efforts, Saudi couldn’t match Bahrain’s presence in the paint or second-chance production.

Depth Tells the Story

Bahrain’s bench and hustle stats told the real story. They dominated the boards 72–53, forced 18 Saudi turnovers, and exploded in transition with 34 fast break points to Saudi’s 6.

Despite shooting just 34% from the field and an ice-cold 14% from three-point range (4/28), Bahrain’s effort plays and second-chance points (56 in the paint) carried them through. Their defensive rotations also produced 8 blocks and 7 steals, a testament to their system.

Strong Foundation From Coaching Staff

Head Coach Rassem AlMarzooqi and Assistant Hani Alam

have built a team identity on defensive discipline, aggressive rebounding, and selfless ball movement. Their players executed the plan even on an off-shooting night, showing maturity and poise in the face of Saudi Arabia’s physicality.

“Even though it wasn’t our best shooting night, we found ways to win,” said AlMarzooqi. “Hassan and Somto were huge for us. Now we reset and prepare for the UAE.”

Next Up: UAE

Bahrain enjoys a rest day today before facing the United Arab Emirates tomorrow in their fourth game of the GBA Qualifiers. Earlier yesterday, Kuwait defeated Oman 64–55, keeping the standings competitive.

The top finishers from this round-robin tournament will qualify for the FIBA U16 Asia Championship, set for September in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Fans are encouraged to attend the games at Umm Alhas-sam Sports Hall. Entry is free throughout the tournament.

Pant says keeping to Bumrah even tougher than facing the India star

AFP | London

Rishabh Pant reckons the only thing harder than batting against India’s Jasprit Bumrah is keeping wicket to the fast bowler.

Bumrah is set to return in the third Test against England at Lord’s on Thursday after being rested from India’s crushing 336-run win at Edgbaston last week.

Blessed with the ability to generate sharp pace off a short run, Bumrah’s extraordinary action also means he is capable of late movement as well.

And with the ball often moving significantly after passing the bat in English conditions, Bumrah’s skill can make life tough for India wicketkeeper Pant -- especially at Lord’s where an eight-foot (2.5-metre) slope runs across the ground.



Bumrah’s career figures of 210 wickets in 46 Tests at an average of under 20 stand comparison with cricket’s greatest

quicks.

Pant, asked during a pre-match press conference at Lord’s yesterday what makes Bumrah so special, replied: “I think everything. I think how accurate he is, the way his mind works. I think it’s just amazing.”

He added: “I think it’s more difficult for the wicketkeeper behind the wicket than for a batsman, I guess, especially in England.”

India have yet to confirm their side for Lord’s, although captain Shubman Gill has said Bumrah will play, with Prasadh Krishna in line to make way.

At Edgbaston, India deployed three pacemen, Jasprit Bumrah

“I think everything. I think how accurate he is, the way his mind works. I think it’s just amazing. I think it’s more difficult for the wicketkeeper behind the wicket than for a batsman, I guess, especially in England

RISHABH PANT

with Akash Deep and Mohammed Siraj doing most of the damage, and two spin-bowling all-rounders in Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar.

Pant, asked if India would field a similar attack at Lord’s, said: “Discussions are still going on. But we will get to know by tomorrow (Thursday). Sometimes the wicket changes colour, the moisture will become less also.

Ex-Real Madrid coach Ancelotti gets year’s jail for tax fraud

AFP | Madrid

A Spanish court yesterday sentenced former Real Madrid manager Carlo Ancelotti to a year in jail for tax fraud committed in 2014, a punishment that will not oblige the Brazil coach to serve prison time.

Prosecutors alleged the Italian created a system of shell companies to hide extra earnings during his first spell as Real Madrid manager in 2014 and 2015, notably through image rights.

They said the 66-year-old, one of the most successful managers in football history, failed to pay more than one million euros due to undeclared earnings in those years, seeking four years and nine months in jail against him.

Ancelotti denied having intentionally committed fraud at his highly publicised trial in April, saying he never re-



Carlo Ancelotti

alised a scheme allowing him to collect some of his salary in image rights would see him pay less tax.

A Madrid court announced in a ruling it had convicted Ancelotti for “an offence against the treasury... to the punishment of one year in prison” and a fine of 386,361 euros (\$452,821).

But the former Chelsea, Bayern Munich and Paris Saint-Germain boss, who no longer lives in Spain, will not serve jail time because the sentence is less than two years and he has no criminal record.

Bahrain Boxers Head to Portugal for international tournament

- Bahrain joins Braga boxing tournament
- Nine boxers compete across weights
- Part of 2025 competition calendar

AFP | London

The Bahrain national boxing team is participating in the Braga International Boxing Tournament in Portugal. The delegation is led by Bahrain Boxing Federation President Rashid Isa Flifel.

Technical Team and Line-Up



Bahrain's boxers and coaches at the airport

The coaching staff includes English head coach Tony Davis, national teams coach Fathi Al-Misawi, and Bahraini coach Mohammed Naseem.

Nine boxers are representing

YOU
KNOW WHAT

Bahrain is fielding nine boxers in six weight classes in Portugal

Squad
Salman Mohammed (38kg)
Jayden Price (44kg)
Abdulrahman Rashid (60kg)
Ahmed Atiya (60kg)
Fahad Al-Abdullah (60kg)
Mohammed Atiya (75kg)
Hassan Jamshir (75kg)
Youssef Khaled (71kg)
Mohammed Fakher (71kg)
Sayed Hashim Habib

Bahrain.

Backed at the Top

Rashid Flifel thanked His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa for his continued support of combat sports, and also praised the backing of Shaikh Salman bin Mohammed Al Khali-

fa for national combat sports federations.

A Key Stop in 2025 Plans

This tournament is part of Bahrain’s 2025 competition calendar, aimed at improving national team performance and achieving further sporting success.

Joao Pedro fires Chelsea to final

Chelsea’s new signing nets both goals to defeat Fluminense and secure Club World Cup final spot

- Joao Pedro scores debut brace
- VAR denies Fluminense penalty
- All-European final guaranteed

AFP | East Rutherford

New signing Joao Pedro scored twice on his first start as Chelsea eased to a 2-0 win over Fluminense on Tuesday to seal a spot in the final of the Club World Cup.

The Brazilian striker opened the scoring in lethal fashion in the 18th minute of the last-four clash at the MetLife Stadium and struck again shortly before the hour mark as Chelsea set up a showdown with either Real Madrid or Paris Saint-Germain in Sunday’s final.

Signed from Brighton and Hove Albion last week for a reported £60 million (\$79 million), the 23-year-old cut short a holiday and made his debut off the bench in the quarter-final win over Palmeiras.

He was then given his first Chelsea start up front here in place of the suspended Liam Delap.

Joao Pedro refused to celebrate after either goal against the club with whom he started his career and made 36 top-team appearances before moving to England with Watford in 2020.

The result ends Fluminense’s impressive run at the tournament after the 2023 Copa Libertadores winners held Borussia Dortmund in the group stage, beat Inter Milan in the last 16 and knocked out Manchester City’s conquerors Al-Hilal in the quarter-finals.

With their exit go the prospects of a South American winner of the first 32-team Club World Cup, with Chelsea claiming back-to-back victories



Chelsea’s Brazilian forward #20 Joao Pedro scores his team’s second goal

It is a great achievement. It has been a fantastic season -- top four in the league, (winning) the Conference League and now in the final in this competition. We are so, so happy. Now finally it is the last game of the season, we can say that, and hopefully we can win the tournament

CHELSEA COACH ENZO MARESCA

against Brazilian opposition to reach the final.

As always seemed most likely, the trophy will be claimed by one of Europe’s superpowers, with the final now guaranteed to be between two of the last five winners of the UEFA Champions League.

“It is a great achievement. It

has been a fantastic season -- top four in the league, (winning) the Conference League and now in the final in this competition. We are so, so happy,” Chelsea coach Enzo Maresca told broadcaster DAZN.

“Now finally it is the last game of the season, we can say that, and hopefully we can win the tournament.”

Fluminense coach Renato Portaluppi had described his team as the “ugly duckling” of the tournament due to the enormous difference between their budget and those of the other three remaining sides.

This game ultimately proved to be a step too far for their team, captained by 40-year-old former Chelsea centre-back Thiago Silva.

“This was a wonderful Club World Cup,” said Portaluppi.

“There is no crying over spilled milk now. We wanted to get to the final for our fans but we leave with our heads held high, and go back to our reali-

YOU KNOW WHAT

Joao Pedro, signed just last week for £60 million, scored both goals on his first Chelsea start but notably refused to celebrate against his former club, Fluminense, out of respect

ty stronger now than we were before.”

Caicedo back

Chelsea were without the suspended Levi Colwill and Delap but Moises Caicedo returned after a ban.

The Premier League side were simply too strong for their opponents in a game watched by

70,556 fans on a hot afternoon just outside New York City.

They went ahead thanks to a wonderful strike by their new forward, who controlled the ball on the edge of the box after Silva had cleared a Pedro Neto cross.

Joao Pedro took a touch and curled a shot beyond veteran goalkeeper Fabio into the far corner, before holding up his hands apologetically towards the Fluminense fans behind the goal.

The team from Rio de Janeiro were an intermittent threat, and Hercules -- match-winner against Al-Hilal in the last eight -- almost equalised in the 25th minute.

He played a one-two with German Cano and lifted the ball over goalkeeper Robert Sanchez, but Marc Cucurella cleared off the line.

Fluminense were then awarded a penalty 10 minutes before the interval when a set-piece delivery by Rene struck the arm of Trevoh Chalobah in the box.

However, French referee Francois Letexier overturned the decision following a VAR check.

“Had we been awarded the penalty we would have scored and it would have been a different story,” said Portaluppi.

Chelsea got their second on 56 minutes, just after Fluminense had sacrificed one of their three centre-backs to send on an extra attacker.

Enzo Fernandez released Joao Pedro on the break, and the forward produced another clinical finish in off the bar.

There were chances for Chelsea to score further goals after that, but the new boy’s double strike sufficed with the only potential black mark on the day the knock which forced Caicedo to limp off before full-time.



Joao Pedro reacts after scoring first goal

Bahrain Paralympic Committee to compete at World Para Taekwondo Championships in Korea

TDT | Manama

A delegation from the Bahrain Paralympic Committee is currently in Chuncheon, South Korea, to participate in the prestigious 4-star World Open Para-Taekwondo Championship.

The event, sanctioned by the World Taekwondo Federation and running from July 8 to 12, 2025, has drawn approximately 200 athletes from across the globe.

The Bahraini contingent includes team administrator and coach Fajer Al-Banali, coach Tawfiq Nuwaiser, and athlete Ibrahim Radhwan. This marks Radhwan’s second international appearance and his debut in the Under 63kg category.

Bahrain’s participation aims to accumulate crucial international ranking points and gain invaluable experience by competing against top-tier opponents. Radhwan is set to compete in a highly contested cate-



Bahrain Paralympic Committee delegation ahead of their departure

gory featuring 24 athletes, 16 of whom hail from Asian nations. This makes the championship a vital strategic platform for assessing potential rivals ahead

of the upcoming Asian Championships.

Following the championship, the Bahraini team will remain in South Korea for an intensive

BETTER YOU KNOW

Bahraini athlete Ibrahim Radhwan is making his debut in the highly contested Under 63kg category, which features 24 athletes, 16 of whom are from Asian nations, making it a crucial test for upcoming regional championships

training camp from July 13 to 19. These preparations are designed to refine the athletes’ skills and enhance their readiness for the Asian Championships, scheduled to take place in Malaysia later this month.

3x3 basketball returns, Bahrain’s summer quest

- 19 teams compete in Bahrain’s open 3x3
- Six preliminary rounds lead to August final

TDT | Manama

Bahrain’s open 3x3 basketball tournament resumes with round four, featuring 19 teams and a path to international qualification.

The Bahrain Summer Open 3x3 restarts Friday at Khalifa Sports City Hall after a one-week break. Nineteen teams are competing in the first edition, with prize money over \$6,000.

This is the fourth of six preliminary rounds leading to the final “Quest” on August 1. The winner qualifies for a FIBA 3x3 Masters event.

BETTER YOU KNOW

This tournament is Bahrain’s first open 3x3 event offering over \$6,000 in prizes and a direct route to FIBA Masters qualification

Teams include clubs, companies, universities, and independent groups. The tournament has increased awareness and participation in 3x3 basketball in Bahrain.

The Bahrain Basketball Federation aims for high standards in organization and competition to support local talent’s entry into regional and international events.

Swiatek reaches Wimbledon semis

Polish star enters first Wimbledon semi-final after beating Samsonova in straight sets

- Swiatek beats Samsonova 6-2, 7-5
- Previously never past Wimbledon quarters

AFP | London

Iga Swiatek said she had “goosebumps” after reaching the Wimbledon semi-finals for the first time in her illustrious career with a 6-2, 7-5 win against Russia’s Liudmila Samsonova yesterday.

The Polish eighth seed will face former Olympic champion Belinda Bencic for a place in Saturday’s final.

Swiatek has won four titles on the clay at the French Open, as well as the US Open in 2022, but has struggled on the lawns of the All England Club.

Her previous best result at Wimbledon was a run to the quarter-finals in 2023.

Swiatek dominated the first set against 19th seed Samsonova on Court One but was made to battle in the second set before wrapping up victory in one hour



Poland’s Iga Swiatek plays a forehand return to Russia’s Liudmila Samsonova

and 49 minutes.

“It feels great. Even though I’m in the middle of the tournament I’ve already got goosebumps after this win. I’m super happy and super proud of myself and I’ll keep going,” she said.

“Honestly, I’ve really enjoyed playing this year and hopefully it’s going to last as long as possible.

“For sure I feel like I really

worked hard to progress here on this surface.”

Swiatek broke twice in the opening set to take a firm grip on the match, benefiting from a flurry of unforced errors from

“It feels great. Even though I’m in the middle of the tournament I’ve already got goosebumps after this win. I’m super happy and super proud of myself and I’ll keep going

IGA SWIATEK

her opponent and winning 100 percent of her points on first serve.

Two double faults from the Russian 19th seed handed Swiatek an early break in the second set and she snuffed out a clutch of break points in the following game to go 3-0 up.

The 24-year-old was pegged back as her level dipped and Samsonova pulled level at 4-4.

But Swiatek regrouped and broke again to seal the win, finishing off her opponent with a fierce forehand winner.

The former world number one has gone under the radar at this year’s Wimbledon as most of the

“YOU KNOW WHAT

Despite being a four-time French Open champion, this is Swiatek’s first-ever Wimbledon semi-final – on a surface she once struggled with – making it a true milestone in her career evolution

other top women’s seeds have tumbled, though world number one Aryna Sabalenka is still standing.

After slipping down the rankings, she is now back in the world’s top four having reaching the Bad Homburg final on grass last month.

Swiatek, a former Wimbledon junior champion, lost in the semi-finals of both the Australian Open and the French Open this year.

Bencic beats Andreeva to reach first Wimbledon semi-final

AFP | London

Switzerland’s Belinda Bencic said her dream had come true after she reached a first Wimbledon semi-final with a 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/2) win against Russian seventh seed Mirra Andre

reeva yesterday.

The former Olympic champion is enjoying her best run at the All England Club just over a year after giving birth.

The 28-year-old had her daughter Bella in April 2024, but has already risen to 35 in



Belinda Bencic

Pogacar into yellow as Evenepoel wins Tour de France time trial



Soudal Quick-Step team’s Belgian rider Remco Evenepoel cycles during the 5th stage

AFP | Caen

Belgian rider Remco Evenepoel won the fifth stage of the Tour de France yesterday, a 33km time trial around Caen that saw Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar take the yellow jersey from Mathieu van der Poel.

World and Olympic champion Evenepoel completed the course in 36min 42sec at a blistering average speed of 54 km/h.

He finished 16 seconds quicker than Pogacar with the Italian Edoardo Affini 33sec off the stage lead in third.

Pogacar now leads the general classification with a 42sec advantage over Evenepoel who collected his second stage win on the Tour de France, having triumphed in the time trial in Gevrey-Chambertin last year on his debut in the Grande Boucle.

“I knew I had a good chance but, of course, the legs still have

to be there and everything has to go to plan,” said Evenepoel whose Soudal Quick-Step team-mate Tim Merlier won stage 3 two days ago.

“In the end I think it was pretty good. I didn’t really feel like I could go any faster, so I think in general I’m happy with the result.

“It’s a second stage win for our team, it’s super nice.”

Two-time winner Jonas Vingegaard, who began the day just 8sec behind the yellow jersey Van der Poel, had a poor day as the Dane could only finish 13th in the stage -- 1min 21sec behind Evenepoel -- to slip to 1min 13sec behind Pogacar in the new standings.

He drops to fourth overall with local rider Kevin Vauquelin moving up to third after a hugely-impressive ride that saw him finish fifth on the day.

“I’m over the moon, really,” said an emotional Vauquelin.

Bahrain names final 12 for William Jones Cup

- Bahrain wins twice vs UAE
- Squad named for Jones Cup
- Vovoras makes Bahrain debut

TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Basketball Association has confirmed the national team squad for the 44th William Jones Cup, set to take place from July 12 to 20 in Taiwan. The tournament marks Bahrain’s return to the competition after a 47-year absence.

Greek head coach Georgios Vovoras leads the team into its first appearance at the event since 1978.

Legacy of the Cup

Organised by the Chinese Taipei Basketball Association, the William Jones Cup is one of the longest-running international basketball tournaments outside FIBA sanction. Launched in 1977 and named after FIBA founding member Renato William Jones, the event features national teams, university squads, and



Mustafa Hussain in action against UAE

professional clubs from across the world.

UAE Friendlies End in Style

Bahrain concluded a joint training camp with the UAE

the world since returning from maternity leave.

Wimbledon appears to be child’s play for Bencic this year and she dispatched Andreeva in just over two hours of enthralling quarter-final action on Centre Court.

with two strong wins – a 101-71 result in the first game and 94-76 in the second – both held at Khalifa Sports Hall.

All players saw court time

BETTER YOU KNOW

Bahrain’s last William Jones Cup appearance was in 1978. They now face eight games in nine days

- Final Squad**
- Wayne Chism
 - Jakarr Sampson
 - Mustafa Hussain
 - Mohamed Buallay
 - Ahmed Salman
 - Muzamil Ameer
 - Mohamed Alameer
 - Ali Jassim
 - Mohamed Yousef
 - Ahmed bin Jinnah
 - Abdulaziz Abdulla
 - Sayed Hashim Habib

across both games, giving Vovoras a final chance to assess combinations and build team rhythm before flying out to Taiwan.

Bahrain is set to face eight opponents in nine days during the tournament.