

Top stables share victories at Al Raffa race
 The 27th race meeting of the 2025/26 season was held at Al Raffa Track under the patronage of Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. | P12

Over 100,000 worshippers perform Friday prayers at Al-Aqsa
 AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

More than 100,000 worshippers performed Friday prayers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque in east Jerusalem, the holy site's Islamic authority reported, after it reopened the previous day following a truce agreed between the United States and Iran.

Jerusalem's Old City is home to major holy sites for all three Abrahamic religions, which had been shuttered since the start of the war sparked by the US-Israeli attack on Iran on February 28.

Trump warns of fresh strikes if Iran talks fail: NY Post
 AFP | Washington, United States

President Donald Trump said yesterday that US warships are being reloaded with weaponry to strike Iran if talks in Pakistan fail to produce a deal, in an interview with the New York Post.

"We have a reset going. We're loading up the ships with the best ammunition, the best weapons ever made -- even better than what we did previously and we blew them apart," the Post quoted Trump as saying.

"And if we don't have a deal, we will be using them, and we will be using them very effectively."

In a brief and cryptic message on his Truth Social network earlier, Trump had spoken of the "WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL RESET!!!"

Vice President JD Vance headed to Islamabad yesterday to lead the US delegation in this weekend's talks with Iran, with a warning to Tehran not to "play" Washington.

African charity says suing Prince Harry
 London, United Kingdom

An African AIDS charity co-founded by Britain's Prince Harry said yesterday it had launched legal proceedings against him for "reputational harm", after a bitter dispute about its management.

Bahrain-led Gulf bloc warns Iran to end attacks and proxy support

● GCC nations said attacks violate international law and accused Iran of backing armed groups

TDT | Manama

Gulf states led by Bahrain have issued a stark diplomatic warning to Iran, urging it to halt ongoing aggression and support for armed groups across the region.

The warning came in a joint letter sent to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council by the



Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations in New York, on behalf of the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain.

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 Iran's continued unlawful and destabilising actions – whether through direct attacks or support for proxy groups – pose a serious threat to regional and global peace and security, while undermining the credibility of the international legal order.

LETTER TO UN

The correspondence said that missile and drone attacks attributed to Iran since February 28, 2026, targeting Gulf countries, constitute "a clear violation of state sovereign-

ty, international law, the UN Charter, and principles of good neighbourliness."

It added that these actions form part of a broader pattern, accusing Iran of backing armed groups and networks across the region, including al-Qaeda, the Houthis, Hezbollah, and militias in Iraq. According to the letter, these groups operate as part of a wider network receiving funding, training, weapons and operational guidance, enabling them to expand military activity beyond national borders.

The Gulf states warned that such support is undermining state sovereignty and fuelling instability across the region, calling for an end to these actions.

Police crack BD200,000 Hamad Town heist, arrest two suspects



TDT | Manama

A high-value heist in Hamad Town has been swiftly cracked, with police arresting two suspects over the theft of rare and valuable items worth BD200,000 from a residence.

The Ministry of Interior said the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation and Forensic Science launched an immediate probe upon receiving the report.

Authorities confirmed that all stolen items have been recovered, secured as evidence and placed in custody.

The case has been referred to the Public Prosecution.

Skies fall silent

No missiles or drones detected over Bahrain; defences on high alert

● Air defences have intercepted and destroyed 194 missiles and 515 drones since the onset of the crisis

● Military units remain on high alert as authorities urge the public to stay cautious

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's skies fell silent yesterday, with no missiles or drones detected



over the Kingdom, the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) said, marking a sharp break from weeks of sustained aerial threats and offering a crucial breather amid heightened regional tensions.

The General Command con-

194
 Kingdom's air defence systems intercepted and destroyed 194 missiles and 515 drones targeting Bahrain since the onset of "Iranian attacks"

firmated that the airspace remained secure throughout the day, even as all military units stayed on the highest level of readiness and defensive preparedness.

The lull follows an intense

phase in which air defence systems intercepted and destroyed 194 missiles and 515 drones targeting Bahrain since the onset of what it described as "Iranian attacks."

Authorities said specialised teams from the Royal Engineering Field Unit continue to secure affected sites and clear debris to ensure public safety.

Despite the calm, officials stressed the need for continued vigilance, urging the public to avoid impacted areas, stay clear of suspicious objects, and refrain from filming military operations or debris locations.

Safe Resumption

Bahrain airport resumes operations, reinforces aviation hub status

TDT | Manama

Operations at Bahrain International Airport have resumed following the reopening of Bahrain's airspace, Dr Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa said in a video statement highlighting a return to normal aviation activity.

Released by the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications, he said the airport plays a significant role in supporting the national economy, tourism, and trade.

The return of flights and services, he noted, reflects the effective coordination and pre-



paredness of the Civil Aviation Affairs under the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications, with passenger safety and security remaining the top priority.

The Minister expressed appreciation to the Bahrain De-

”
 What we saw today reflects strong coordination across the aviation and security sectors, with passenger safety remaining the top priority

DR SHAIKH ABDULLA BIN AHMED AL KHALIFA

fence Force, the Ministry of Interior, and other security agencies for their role in ensuring the safe restoration of airport operations.

He also highlighted the joint efforts of aviation stakeholders, including Bahrain Airport Company, Civil Aviation Affairs, Gulf Air, and Bahrain Airport Services.

He reaffirmed confidence that, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the support of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Bahrain will further strengthen its position as a regional aviation hub.

Starmer says NATO in US's 'interests' as Gulf tour ends



AFP | Doha, Qatar

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer insisted yesterday that NATO was "in America's interests" as he ended a three-day visit to the Gulf to discuss bolstering the "fragile" Middle East truce.

"It is in America's interests. It's in European interests," Starmer told UK broadcasters of the nearly 80-year-old security bloc.

"NATO is a defensive alliance, which for decades has kept us much safer than we would otherwise have been," he added, while reiterating European members "need to do more" financial burden sharing.

Starmer spoke before leaving Qatar, the last stop of his tour of the war-hit region which also included visits to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. The British leader said the UK was building a coalition of over 30 countries to work on a diplomatic and military plan to get vessels moving through the waterway.

Brigadier General Shaikh Khalid named to Supreme Defence Council

TDT | Manama

His Highness Brigadier General Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Commander of Special Operations at the Royal Guard, has been named a member of the Supreme Defence Council.

The appointment, published in Royal Decree No. (10) of 2026 issued by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, takes effect from the date of its publication in the Official Gazette.



HH Shaikh Khalid

HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa is a senior officer in Bahrain's Royal Guard and plays



H.E. Al Saleh

a key role in special operations command. Separately, the Speaker

of the Shura Council, Ali bin Saleh Al-Saleh, congratulated Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa following the Royal Decree. He said the appointment reflects his strong military capabilities, leadership skills and dedication to serving the nation.

Al-Saleh added that the trust placed in him underscores his continued contributions to supporting Bahrain's development, progress and national achievements under His Majesty's leadership.

Fuel card scam unravels as 10-year term faces appeal

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

A senior public sector employee sentenced to 10 years in prison for fuel card fraud and embezzlement of public funds will have his appeal heard by the First High Criminal Court of Appeal on Sunday.

Case files show that the defendant carried out repeated unauthorised fuel card withdrawals without actual refuelling, with the proceeds shared among those involved.

Investigations revealed that the total misappropriated amount reached BD7,280.75, involving 212 government vehicles. The fraud was uncovered during a routine semi-annual audit, which flagged irregular fuel transactions and invoices exceeding the fuel capacity of official vehicles.

The case also involves 11 other defendants, including fuel station employees, who received prison sentences ranging from six months to three years. The court also imposed fines equal to the misappropriated amounts, while five defendants are to be deported after serving their sentences.

The Anti-Corruption and



Representative picture

Economic and Electronic Security Directorate confirmed the coordinated nature of the scheme, describing it as a sustained abuse of official positions to siphon public funds over time.

The Public Prosecution had earlier ordered the defendants' pre-trial detention before referring the case to the criminal court, which issued the initial rulings. The upcoming appeal will offer a final opportunity to contest the verdicts, although prosecutors say the evidence is extensive and conclusive.

Actress duped in repair ruse, man gets two years

Rehab Mohammed
TDT | Manama

A routine car repair turned into a case of betrayal, as a man in his forties was sentenced to two years in prison for breach of trust and embezzling BD450 from a well-known actress.

The Third Minor Criminal Court heard that the actress had entrusted him with repairing her Hyundai Tucson in 2025, transferring the amount in two instalments. However, he spent less than BD100 on minor repairs and misused the remaining funds for personal purposes.

He also delayed returning the vehicle despite repeated requests. Authorities confirmed that he is a repeat offender with a history of similar crimes, including forgery and previous breach of trust cases.

The court based its ruling on the defendant's confession, the victim's testimony and his criminal record, while referring the related civil claim to the competent court.



Representative image



Bahrain envoy briefs French MPs on security concerns

Issam Abdulaziz Al Jassim, Bahrain's Ambassador to France, held talks with members of the French National Assembly in Paris. During the meeting, he briefed them on recent regional developments, including Bahrain's concerns over escalating security threats. Discussions also addressed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation and France's continued support for regional stability.

Bahrain urges end to attacks on aid workers, warns of rising risks in conflict zones

TDT | Manama

Bahrain has called for an end to attacks on humanitarian and UN personnel, warning that such acts amount to "an attack on humanity itself."

The remarks came as Bahrain chaired a UN Security Council briefing on protecting aid workers under Resolution 2730 (2024), led by Ambassador Jamal Fares Alrowaieci.

The Kingdom said emerging

The Kingdom said emerging threats such as drone use and misinformation are increasing risks for personnel in conflict zones.

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risks for personnel in conflict zones. It also noted that despite global commitments, 2026 continues to see serious incidents involving aid workers across multiple regions.

Bahrain, a co-sponsor of the resolution, stressed the need for stronger protection measures and warned that recent regional attacks and violations of UN resolutions have further disrupted humanitarian efforts worldwide.

Sand theft scheme ends in jail and deportation for two workers

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

Stealing sand and gravel from a Ministry of Works project site has landed two contracting company employees in jail, after their appeal was rejected.



Representative picture

The Court of Cassation upheld a three-month prison sentence and permanent deportation for both men.

The defendants, a project engineer and a manager, had agreed to sell the materials at BD30 per truck despite knowing they were government-owned.

They were caught in the act after authorities were alerted while the materials were being loaded. Both men confessed to the charges. Earlier rulings by the Lower Criminal Court and the Court of Appeal were upheld, bringing the case to a final close.

Nasser centre launches AI-powered platform to boost crisis readiness

● **Allows employee tracking, and workforce forecasting tools**

TDT | Manama

The Nasser Scientific and Technical Center has

launched a new "Smart Crisis Management Platform" aimed at boosting preparedness, resilience and business continuity using advanced artificial intelligence.

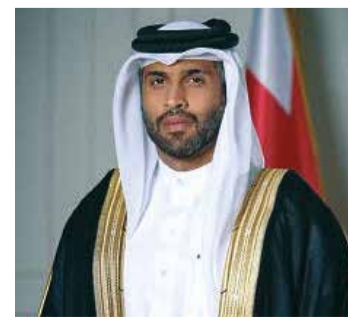
The platform features AI-powered virtual assistants that provide real-time safety guidance, monitor staff availability and support workforce

planning for critical roles. It also combines AI with the Internet of Things (IoT) to deliver intelligent alerts and user-friendly dashboards for decision-makers.

In addition, the system enables predictive management of energy and water use, while offering instant AI support during emergency situations. By linking

systems, sensors and communication tools, it improves coordination and streamlines crisis response across organisations.

The centre has invited interested entities to benefit from the platform as part of its efforts to support institutional development and continuity planning.



Chief Executive Officer Dr Abdullah Nasser Al Nuaimi said the platform reflects the centre's in-house AI expertise, describing it as a forward-looking solution that strengthens innovation and resilience across institutions.

Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Nasser Al Nuaimi

Stronger than ever

UK praises Bahraini people's resilience as symbol of national unity

Reaffirms unwavering security commitment to Bahrain during Starmer visit



Starmer departs Bahrain on Thursday Night after high-level meetings with leadership during his three day visit to the region

Ashen Tharaka
TDT | Manama

The United Kingdom has reaffirmed its "full and firm" commitment to Bahrain's security, saying Prime Minister Keir Starmer's visit underscored close bilateral solidarity during a sensitive regional period.

UK Ambassador to Bahrain Alistair Long said in a video message published by the embassy that the visit was part of a pre-arranged programme, which later coincided with regional de-



Starmer meets military personnel on a beach in Bahrain

velopments, including a ceasefire agreement.

He noted that the Prime Minister met His Majesty King



Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, adding that the timing of high-level visits

between close partners carries added significance during periods of heightened tension.

The ambassador said Starmer

praised the resilience of the Bahraini people and their strong sense of national identity, describing it as a reflection of unity and strength in the face of challenges.

He added that both sides

reaffirmed their support for a rules-based international order and stressed the importance of safeguarding freedom of navigation in global sea lanes, calling it essential to international peace and stability.



The United Kingdom's naval base in Bahrain, UK Naval Support Facility, is Britain's first permanent military base east of the Suez Canal since 1971 and can host up to 500 Royal Navy personnel.

No cap on renewal of travel bans for debtors

TDT | Manama

Travel bans imposed on debtors could be renewed repeatedly without a fixed overall limit, under proposed amendments to Bahrain's civil enforcement law that are set for a parliamentary vote on Tuesday.

The Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee has merged two draft laws into a single proposal, retaining the existing three-month travel ban period while allowing extensions to be renewed continuously as long as legal grounds remain valid. The amendment to Article 40 of the civil enforcement law also stipulates that travel bans will not override final deportation orders or prevent authorities from requiring foreign residents to leave Bahrain.

The government and the Ministry of Justice have raised concerns over legal balance and equal treatment, while the Bahrain Bar Society has supported the proposal, arguing it is necessary to prevent debtors from evading enforcement measures.



Who can hold your passport?

Draft law says no one without consent

● **Lawmakers propose replacing the term "house servants" with "domestic workers" in Bahraini labour legislation**

● **A 2012 Court of Cassation ruling confirmed that passports are personal property and cannot be withheld unlawfully**

● **Services Committee has recommended rejecting the bill**

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Employers in Bahrain could soon be prohibited from retaining domestic workers' passports or identity documents without consent under a government bill set for a parliamentary vote next Tuesday, but the proposal has drawn mixed views, with authorities backing the move while a key parliamentary committee argues existing laws already provide sufficient protection.



Mamdouh Al Saleh, Chairman of Parliament's Services Committee

The draft law proposes fines ranging from BD200 to BD500 for violations and introduces clear rules requiring employers to issue receipts for any documents held and return them immediately upon request.

The proposal also seeks to replace the term "house servants" with "domestic workers" in Bahraini law and place the regu-

lation of employer-worker relations in the sector under a Cabinet-issued framework.

Despite these measures, Parliament's Services Committee has recommended rejecting the bill in principle, arguing that existing legislation, court rulings and labour regulations already address most of the issues covered.

The draft law, linked to Decree No. 93 of 2024, proposes amendments to key provisions of the Labour Law for the Private Sector, including Articles 2 and 12, and introduces a new Article 184 bis outlining penalties.

The committee said domestic workers are already protected under around 56 provisions in the current labour law, cover-

ing contracts, wages, leave, end-of-service benefits and dispute resolution. It also cited a 2012 ruling by Bahrain's Court of Cassation, which affirmed that passports are personal property and cannot be withheld except by legal authority, along with references to Labour Market Law No. 19 of 2006 and LMRA regulations governing domestic worker permits.

In contrast, the Labour Ministry and the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) have backed the bill, saying it would provide clearer legal foundations, reduce disputes and better define the rights and obligations of both employers and workers. They added that formalising the ban would help



Bahrain had 73,222 domestic workers in 2024, marking a gradual decline from previous years. The largest category comprised domestic servants, followed by private drivers, gardeners, cooks, and personal care nurses.

address recurring violations and enhance Bahrain's international standing in labour rights.

Official data showed that 91 cases involving the retention of workers' documents were resolved amicably between 2022 and 2024, with most recorded in 2022.

The report also noted that Bahrain had 73,222 domestic workers in 2024, reflecting a gradual decline from previous years. The largest group comprised domestic servants, followed by private drivers, gardeners, cooks and personal care workers.

Muharraq Heritage Project to Deliver 300 Homes by 2026

- 300 Bahraini families to benefit from new housing units
- Construction of model homes reaches 92% completion
- Restoration of heritage buildings exceeds 60% progress



Amna Al Rumaihi, Housing Minister

The first phase of the Muharraq Historic City Development Project is set for completion by the end of 2026, providing housing for 300 Bahraini families, according to Housing and Urban Planning Minister Amna Al Rumaihi.

In a written response to MP Hamad Al Doy, the minister revealed that construction of new model housing units has reached 92%, while restoration works have surpassed 60%. The visitor centre is also progressing steadily at 82% completion. The first phase is fully funded by the government.

The project includes developing 300 homes alongside restoring 16 heritage buildings located

along the Pearling Path. These buildings will be repurposed for tourism and cultural use, supporting Bahrain's broader efforts to preserve its historical identity.

Future phases aim to expand the project to approximately 2,000 housing units through partnerships with the private sector.

Beyond housing, the development features extensive urban enhancements, including 48 kilometres of movement corridors, parking facilities, and 72 green squares covering a total of 12,000 square metres. Around 100,000 trees will also be planted, while five major streets are undergoing upgrades involving infrastructure, façades, and

street furniture improvements. The 300 homes in the first phase have been divided into three construction packages. The first package is expected to be delivered in the first half of 2026, with full completion of all units scheduled by the end of the year.

The minister noted that the project began with developing a comprehensive guide for building in heritage areas, particularly tailored for Muharraq. This guide outlines architectural and planning standards, including design, materials, building heights, and landscaping, ensuring the preservation of the city's cultural and urban character.

A detailed social survey fol-



Hamad Al Doy, MP

“The restoration of buildings along the Pearling Path will strengthen Muharraq's position as a cultural and tourism destination.”

lowed, involving consultations with residents, families, and community representatives. Their feedback played a key role in shaping the planning and execution of the project.

Further stages included neighbourhood planning, technical assessments, and property evaluations, allowing authorities to determine which buildings would be restored and which could be redeveloped—striking a balance between heritage conservation and modern urban renewal.

Approximately 250 properties were acquired in phases under existing laws, with owners receiving compensation following valuation and review procedures.

WHAT'S NEXT ON PARLIAMENT'S AGENDA

By Mohammed Darwish



Low Uptake for BD40,000 Housing Option in Muharraq

Only 15 applicants in Muharraq's Third Constituency have so far benefited from the ministry's BD40,000 land-and-finance option, even though 61 households with files dating to 2004 and earlier asked to move to it, according to a written reply from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to MP Mohammed Al Olaiwi.



Mohammed Al Olaiwi, MP

811

Housing applications are still pending in the constituency.

2002, 17 from 2003 and 30 from 2004.

The year-by-year figures in the reply show that housing-unit requests make up nearly the whole backlog across the constituency. The highest totals among later years were 58 unit applications from 2014, 48 from 2012, 45 from 2011 and 43 from 2013.

Plot requests appeared in far smaller numbers and only in later years. The reply listed two from 2013, three from 2014, one from 2016, one from 2017, one from 2019, one from 2020, three from 2021, one from 2022, two from 2023, one from 2024 and one from 2025.

The reply also showed that 811 housing applications are still pending in the constituency. Of those, 746 are for housing units, 17 are for housing plots and 48 are for ownership flats.

The oldest pending files total 65 cases, all of them applications for housing units. They include 18 dating from

Outstanding Housing Requests Reach 29,000

Outstanding housing requests in Bahrain stood at 29,000 by the end of 2025, with 88pc falling in the first family category, 8pc in the second, 3pc in the third and 1pc in the fourth, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said in a written reply to MP Khalid Buanaq.

During the current parliamentary term, 17,190 housing services were allocated, while 2,520 applications were cancelled due to factors such as changes in social status, income limits, or property ownership.

Authorities noted that cancelled applicants can reapply within two years if they meet



Khalid Buanaq, MP

eligibility criteria.

The ministry added that efforts are ongoing to reduce waiting lists through expanded housing options, financing schemes, and partnerships with private developers.

BD800m Housing Plan to Deliver 50,000 Units

Bahrain launched an 800 million BD social housing plan aimed at delivering 50,000 housing units and services.

In a reply to MP Abdulwahid Qarata, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning said a 2025 royal directive had been turned into an executive plan prepared with Eskan Bank and cleared by the Cabinet. It stated the plan aimed to speed up housing access through several paths.

These include traditional housing services, expanded financing options such as Tas'heel and Mazaya, and partnerships with private developers to increase supply.

The ministry said 7,000 housing services are set for delivery



Abdulwahid Qarata, MP

by December 2025, with major projects already underway across the Kingdom. Among them is Madinat Khalifa, expected to provide over 3,000 units.

Officials added that the plan is designed to reduce waiting times, expand choices for citizens, and ensure quality through strict oversight and coordination with relevant authorities.

Limited Access for Foreign Lawyers

Another important debate on parliament's agenda is a 68-article draft law that would overhaul the regulation of the legal profession and, for the first time, allow foreign lawyers to appear in Bahraini courts in limited cases.

The government-backed bill, issued under Decree No. 16 of 2025, replaces the existing framework with updated rules covering registration, training, legal offices, fees, disciplinary action and professional conduct.

A key provision would permit the licensing of non-Bahraini lawyers to work alongside local

lawyers in specific specialised cases, particularly commercial disputes, while excluding criminal, administrative and Sharia matters. Foreign legal consultancy offices may also participate in cases governed by foreign law under strict conditions.

The draft also introduces tighter professional standards, requiring lawyers returning after five years out of practice to retake entry exams, and allowing inactive lawyers to move to a non-practising register if they fail to prove active work.

It further strengthens training requirements: trainee lawyers

must complete structured practice, pass exams, and work under supervision before qualifying.

Other provisions include mandatory annual registration renewal, new insurance requirements for lawyers, expanded oversight powers for inspections related to financial compliance, and stricter penalties for impersonating lawyers or practising without a licence.

Client confidentiality rules remain in place, but the bill introduces exceptions linked to serious crimes and legal obligations such as anti-money laundering laws.



Mahmood Fardan, Chairman of Parliament's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee

The Services Committee recommended approval in principle, while making several amendments, including changes to disciplinary timelines and fee assessments. The Supreme Judicial Council said it had no objections to the draft.

GCC Customs Law Changes Under Review

The government referred amendments to the GCC Unified Customs Law to Parliament under Decree No. 23 of 2026, aiming to streamline procedures and boost trade efficiency.

The proposed changes would simplify the transfer of goods between customs points by reducing documentation requirements and allow duty exemptions for imports by the armed forces and security agencies, including equipment and vehicles, subject to approval.

The bill also aligns with decisions by the GCC Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee and will take effect once approved and published in the Official Gazette.

Under the proposed new wording of Article 72, people moving goods from one customs office to another could be spared from filing a full cus-



Hassan BuKhammas, Chairman of Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee

tom declaration at the point of entry. The transfer would instead be handled under documents and conditions set by the Director-General.

Club and Association Penalties Bill

A bill introducing new penalties for board members of associations, clubs, and sports bodies will be on parliament's agenda, including fines up to BD50 and possible court-ordered removal in serious cases.

The draft law, linked to Decree No. 110 of 2024, replaces parts of the 1989 legislation and introduces a stepped system of enforcement starting with warnings, followed by fines and, if violations continue, referral to court for removal.

Under the proposed rules, fines would be capped at BD50, doubled for repeat violations, and collected funds would support associations and institutions. Offenders would also have the right to challenge penalties through a grievance process and then in court.

The Services Committee backed the bill in principle but



Ahmed Al Musallam, Parliament Speaker

amended it so that removal from office would only be carried out through a court ruling, not administrative decision, to ensure legal safeguards.

The Ministry of Social Development and youth and sports authorities supported the reforms, saying they improve governance while maintaining transparency. However, some civil society groups and the Bahrain Bar Society warned the changes could place additional burdens on voluntary organisations.

The bill also repeals Article 91 of the existing law and updates the penalties framework to improve clarity and enforcement.

Stocks mixed, oil steadies on guarded optimism for Iran ceasefire

● **The main international oil contracts were up around 1%, holding just under \$100 a barrel**

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Stock markets were mixed and oil prices steady yesterday with investors cautiously optimistic about the US-Iran ceasefire holding, and as a US inflation report was not as bad as feared.

A cloud of uncertainty hung Friday over the scheduled start of talks in Pakistan this weekend to turn a shaky two-week truce into a lasting accord that would reopen the key Strait of Hormuz.

But there has been no announcement yet on the arrival of negotiators and both sides have accused the other of failing to properly implement the ceasefire.

"Investors remained cautious as they kept a close eye on developments surrounding the fragile ceasefire between the US, Israel and Iran," said David Morrison, an analyst at Trade Nation, add-

Key figures at around 1545 GMT

Brent North Sea Crude:	▲ 1.0% at \$96.89 a barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▲ 0.9% at \$98.76 a barrel
New York - Dow Jones:	▼ 0.3% at 48,025.82 points
New York - S&P 500:	▲ 0.1% at 6,832.44
Nasdaq Composite:	▲ 0.5% at 22,939.17
London - FTSE 100:	▲ at 10,600.53 (close)
Paris - CAC 40:	▲ 0.2% at 8,259.60 (close)
Frankfurt - DAX:	▲ at 23,803.95 (close)
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▲ 1.8% at 56,924.11 (close)
Hang Seng Index:	▲ 0.6% at 25,893.54 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▲ 0.5% at 3,986.22 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▲ at \$1.1728 from \$1.1707 on Thursday
Pound/dollar:	▲ at \$1.3463 from \$1.3441
Dollar/yen:	▲ at 159.19 yen from 159.06 yen
Euro/pound:	▲ at 87.11 pence from 87.09 pence

ing that investors were pausing "to catch their collective breath heading into the weekend".

The main international oil contracts were up around 1%, holding just under \$100 a barrel even as only a trickle of tankers have so far transited the Strait of Hormuz, where a fifth of the world's oil passes in normal times.

Some two hours into trading on Wall Street the main US indices were mixed as the Dow stood

off 0.3% while the broader S&P 500 and the tech-heavy Nasdaq were barely in the green.

In Europe, London and Frankfurt closed virtually flat as Paris added 0.2%.

New York shares had rebounded late Thursday on news that Israel and Lebanon had agreed to talks, upping the chances for the ceasefire after five weeks of fighting.

But despite this week's rebound, stock markets remain



Currency dealers monitor exchange rates as a screen shows South Korea's benchmark stock index (KOSPI) in a foreign exchange dealing room at the Hana Bank headquarters in Seoul

lower and oil prices significantly higher than before the war -- though oil was flat Friday after weeks of gyrations.

Investors were also watching US inflation and the prospects for interest rates in the world's largest economy as the Gulf war sends economic shock waves through myriad sectors.

US consumer prices rose 3.3% in March from a year earlier, ac-

ording to data released Friday, and while that was up sharply from the previous month as gas prices surged, it was below what some economists expected.

White House spokesperson Kush Desai responded by saying the US economy "remains on a solid trajectory."

Core inflation, which strips out volatile categories like food and energy, rose 2.6% from a

year ago, again lower than what some analysts had feared.

A higher rate might have ruled out any interest rate cuts from the Federal Reserve for several months.

"Although core inflation was seemingly subdued in March, the concern is that the energy price shock will bleed through more to core inflation in April," said Patrick J. O'Hare, an analyst at Briefing.com.

IMF to cut global growth forecast due to Mideast war

AFP | Washington, United States

The International Monetary Fund will lower global growth forecasts due to the Middle East war, its chief said Thursday, warning of the conflict's "scarring effects" despite a fragile ceasefire.

"Even in a best case, there will be no neat and clean return to the status quo ante," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva said.

Georgieva said that -- even in the fund's "most hopeful scenario" -- spiraling energy costs, infrastructure damage, supply disruptions and a loss of market confidence meant growth would be less than expected. The IMF also anticipates having to provide up to \$50 billion in immediate financial assistance to countries affected by the war, with food insecurity set to affect at least 45 million people.

"Given the spillovers from the war, we expect near-term demand for IMF balance-of-payments support to rise

by somewhere between \$20 billion and \$50 billion, with the lower bound prevailing if ceasefire holds," Georgieva said.

The IMF chief was kicking off the annual Spring Meetings co-hosted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington, which bring together top economic policymakers from around the world.

Speaking on Bloomberg TV on Thursday, World Bank President Ajay Banga said his institution could put up as much as \$25 billion

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Tehran and Washington have traded accusations of violations of the ceasefire terms, with talks aimed at a more durable peace slated for Saturday.

Georgieva highlighted the "asymmetric" effects of the crisis, hitting low-income energy importers much harder than others.

"Spare a thought for the Pacific Island nations at the end of a long supply chain, wondering if fuel still reaches them in the wake of such a severe disruption," she said.

Global inflation

Excluding Iran, overall regional economic growth was expected to slow to just 1.8% in 2026 -- a downgrade of 2.4 percentage points from before the war, the Bank said.

The IMF is also expected to revise global headline inflation upwards due to the oil price and supply chain shocks associated with the war.

On Wednesday, the heads of the IMF, World Bank and World Food Programme (WFP) met in Washington to discuss the economic and food security impacts of the conflict.

"Sharp increases in oil, gas, and fertilizer prices, together with transport bottlenecks, will inevitably lead to rising food prices and food insecurity," said a joint statement on the meeting.

The IMF and World Bank have also formed a coordination group to address the energy market impacts of the war. A top-level meeting of that body will take place on Monday.

As part of the meetings, the IMF will release its annual Fiscal Monitor report, which is expected to flag rising government debt as countries tackle repeated economic shocks.

In a new report this week, the IMF detailed the economic costs of war, estimating that output in countries where fighting takes place drops by three percent at the outset, "and continues falling for years."

An earlier report on the Iran war said "all roads lead to higher prices and slower growth," and highlighted the impact of a severely disrupted fertilizer supply chain on food security.

"Low-income countries are especially at risk of food insecurity; some may need more external support -- even as such assistance has been declining," the report said.

US consumer inflation surges 3.3% year-on-year as Iran war impact bites

Washington, United States

Consumer inflation in the United States rose sharply to 3.3% in March, government data showed Wednesday, as higher energy prices due to the war in the Middle East hit Americans hard.

The nationwide sticker shock put pressure on President Donald Trump, who has ordered peace talks with Iran.

By comparison, the consumer price index (CPI) rose only 2.4% year-on-year a month earlier.

Gasoline prices surged by 21.2% between February and March -- the largest monthly increase since the the government began publishing a gasoline price index in 1967, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) said.

Excluding volatile energy and food prices, inflation accelerated, rising 2.6% compared to 2.5 a month earlier.

Markets had anticipated the surge, according to the consensus published by MarketWatch.

Russian envoy in US for economy talks: Kremlin

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Kremlin envoy Kirill Dmitriev is in the United States for talks on the economy, Russia said yesterday, stressing that he would not be holding discussions on the Ukraine war.

"Kirill Dmitriev is not conducting negotiations on a settlement of the Ukrainian issue. This does not constitute a resumption of negotiations," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, including AFP.

"Kirill Dmitriev heads the economic affairs group and he continues his work within the framework of this group."

Dmitriev, who heads a Russian state investment fund, has been one of Moscow's main conduits for talks with Wash-



Kirill Dmitriev

ington since Donald Trump returned to the White House last year and has travelled to the US several times, including last month.

He is pushing for the US to relax sanctions and boost business ties with Russia, though has made little progress.

Talks on the Ukraine war have been stalled for weeks, with Moscow sticking to hardline territorial and political demands that Ukraine has ruled out.



The International Monetary Fund was established in 1944 at the Bretton Woods Conference to promote global financial stability, and today has 190 member countries.



Workers wave as a truck of The Red Cross and Turkey's Red Crescent leaves to send supplies to Iran, in Ankara



Security personnel stand guard near the expected venue of the US-Iran talks in the Red Zone area of Islamabad

Israel approves 34 new West Bank settlements: media, NGO

AFP | Ramallah

Israel has approved the establishment of 34 new settlements in the occupied West Bank, according to Israeli media reports and the watchdog Peace Now, which said the decision was taken "secretly" in early April.

"The security cabinet secretly decided to establish 34 new settlements," Peace Now said in a statement released late on Thursday.

The 34 settlements come on top of 68 others already approved since Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government came to power in 2022.

The decision has not been officially published by any government body, and the defense ministry, in charge of settlements in the occupied West Bank, declined to respond to questions.

"We are not addressing this issue," a spokesperson for the ministry said.

Vance warns Iran before talks

US vice president cautions Tehran as fragile ceasefire faces mounting strain

● Vance warns Iran against playing Washington

● US accuses Tehran of blocking oil shipments

● Two-week truce falters

AFP | Washington

US Vice President JD Vance warned Iran yesterday against trying to "play" Washington, as he set off for talks in Islamabad aimed at transforming a fragile ceasefire into a lasting peace deal.

Despite the temporary truce, deep divisions persist, with mounting concerns that Tehran has failed to uphold key commitments while attempting to deflect responsibility onto other actors.

Vance stressed that while the



US Vice President JD Vance speaks to reporters before boarding Air Force Two

United States remains open to diplomacy, any attempt by Iran to manipulate the process would be met with a firm response.

"If the Iranians are willing to negotiate in good faith, we're certainly willing to extend the open hand," he said, warning that any effort to "play" the United States

would quickly be rejected.

Since the ceasefire took effect, US President Donald Trump has repeatedly criticised Iran's handling of the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz, accusing Tehran of failing to restore normal shipping operations despite its commitments.

Trump says Iran has 'no cards' beyond Hormuz control

President Donald Trump said yesterday that Iran has "no cards" in upcoming talks with the United States -- apart from Tehran's effective stranglehold on the crucial Strait of Hormuz shipping channel.

"The Iranians don't seem

to realize they have no cards, other than a short term extortion of the World by using International Waterways. The only reason they are alive today is to negotiate!" Trump said on his Truth Social network.



If the Iranians are willing to negotiate in good faith, we're certainly willing to extend the open hand

JD VANCE

leverage in negotiations.

Rather than adhering strictly to the agreed framework, Iran has sought to broaden the scope of the ceasefire by linking its participation in talks to unrelated regional developments, particularly Israeli military operations in Lebanon -- a move widely seen as an attempt to shift focus away from its own obligations.

Iranian officials have also dismissed the Islamabad talks as "meaningless," further reinforcing doubts about Tehran's willingness to engage constructively in the diplomatic process.

The waterway -- a critical artery for global energy supplies -- remains heavily restricted, with only limited vessel movement, raising concerns that Iran is using its control over the strait as

Artemis astronauts gird for re-entry and splashdown

AFP | Washington

The Artemis II astronauts conducted a historic lunar flyby, gathered invaluable data and took in unprecedented Moon views, but one of the most crucial moments of their 10-day mission is still to come: yesterday's splashdown.

Earlier this week, Americans Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Christina Koch along with Canadian Jeremy Hansen voyaged further from Earth than any human before, in a mission considered a key stepping stone towards eventual crewed lunar landings, and more.

They are scheduled to splash down in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of San Diego at 5:07



Christina Koch (L), Jeremy Hansen (top), Reid Wiseman (R), and Victor Glover (bottom) posing for a group photo inside the Orion spacecraft

pm local time (0007 GMT), after which NASA and the military will help them get out of the capsule and fly them to a recovery

ship.

Their journey has been rich in milestones and already resulted in stunning photographs that have captivated the imaginations of people on Earth.

But until the astronauts are home safe, it's too early to talk about success, NASA's Associate Administrator Amit Kshatriya told a briefing Thursday.

"When we can start celebrating is when we have a crew safely in the medbay of the ship," the high-ranking official said. "That's really when we can allow the emotions to take over, and, you know, start talking about success."

"We need to have the crew home before we do that."

Vital heat shield

The stakes are particularly high given concerns that arose during Artemis I, a 2022 uncrewed test flight to the Moon and back that saw the Orion heat shield erode in unexpected ways.

The heat shield is vital: During their reentry, the Orion spacecraft will face temperatures peaking around 5,000 degrees Fahrenheit (2,760 degrees Celsius), or half as hot as the surface of the Sun.

The astronauts will come hurtling back at a maximum velocity of 34,965 feet (10,657 meters) per second -- more than 30 times the speed of sound.

The heat shield is meant to slowly erode -- "ablate," as NASA

puts it -- to protect the capsule, a process that during Artemis I was disrupted.

To minimize any risk to the crew, NASA has changed the reentry path they had used in that test mission, after determining it had played a role in the complications.

"We have high confidence in the system and the heat shield and the parachutes and the recovery systems we put together," Kshatriya said. "The engineering supports it, the Artemis I flight data supports it. All of our ground test supports it. Our analysis supports it."

"And tomorrow, the crew is going to put their lives behind that confidence."

1868

The Shogunate is abolished in Japan

1955

Chartered Air India plane "Kashmir Princess" is bombed and crashes into the South China Sea in a failed assassination attempt on Zhou Enlai by a Kuomintang secret agent

1968

US President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the 1968 Civil Rights Act



2015

Barack Obama and Raúl Castro meet in Panama, the first meeting of US and Cuban heads of state since the Cuban Revolution



First responders rush to the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the Lebanese State Security Center, in Nabatieh

Israeli strike in south Lebanon kills 10 security personnel: security source

AFP | Beirut

An Israeli strike, one of multiple on the southern Lebanese city of Nabatiyeh yesterday, killed at least 10 State Security personnel, a source from the government agency said, as Lebanon prepared to start ceasefire talks with Israel.

Naim Qassem, head of Iran-backed party and armed group Hezbollah, called on the Lebanese state to stop giving "free concessions" to Israel, with the two governments due to begin negotiations next week to end the war that has left nearly 1,900 people in Lebanon dead.

The government banned Hezbollah's military activities at the beginning of the latest war with Israel in March and is moving towards bilateral negotiations with Israel despite the opposition of Hezbollah, which is represented in the cabinet and parliament.

The state-run National News Agency (NNA) said "enemy warplanes launched a series of heavy strikes" on Nabatiyeh, including one in the vicinity of the government complex hitting the State Security office.

An AFP photographer saw extensive damage at the site, where a fire was still raging.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



When roads are cut, access is blocked, and we need to reach people where others won't go. @WFP_UNHAS flights are a lifeline. Irreplaceable. \$48M from our emergency fund for operations in Chad, DRC, Haiti, Kenya, Nigeria, South Sudan, Sudan and Syria.

@UNReliefChief

02



I've joined the heads of @IMFNews & @WorldBankGroup to sound the alarm: the Middle East crisis is sending shockwaves through global food and energy markets—and hunger will skyrocket if this conflict rages on. Together we're mobilizing to save lives & protect the most vulnerable.

@WFPChief

03



28 years ago today, the Good Friday Agreement was signed, one of Labour's proudest achievements. Working in Northern Ireland, I saw first-hand the transformation peace brought to communities. At a time of global instability, it reminds us that peace must be built and protected.

@Keir_Starmer

04



Investing in community health workers—especially women—and supporting their work is a game changer. Everyday heroes like Zamzam play a critical role in delivering life-saving health & nutrition services to millions of vulnerable women & children in #Somalia & around the world.

@unicefchief

Israel bars Spain from Gaza centre

Tensions rise as Israel excludes Spain from post-war coordination efforts

● Netanyahu accuses Spain of hostility

● Spain recognised Palestinian state in 2024

● Ambassadors withdrawn by both nations

AFP | Jerusalem

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday accused Spain of waging a diplomatic campaign against Israel after he barred Madrid from taking part in the work of a US-led centre created to help stabilise post-war Gaza.

Relations between Israel and Spain have deteriorated significantly since Madrid recognised a Palestinian state in 2024.

Both countries have withdrawn their ambassadors.

"I have instructed today to

1986
was the year Spain finally established diplomatic ties with Israel, following the death of dictator General Francisco Franco in 1975

remove Spain's representatives from the coordination centre in Kiryat Gat, after Spain has chosen repeatedly to stand against Israel," Netanyahu said in a video statement.

"Those who attack the State of Israel instead of confronting terrorist regimes will not be our partners in shaping the region's future."

The Civil-Military Coordination Center (CMCC) in Kiryat Gat, a US-led initiative, was set up after the Gaza ceasefire took effect on October 10, with the goal of monitoring the truce and

facilitating the flow of humanitarian aid into the Palestinian territory.

As part of the CMCC, military personnel and diplomats from several other countries including France, Britain and the United



A man uses a bucket as he attempts to extinguish the burning vehicle of Palestinian journalist Mohammed Washeha after a strike in southern Gaza City (file photo)

Arab Emirates are present and participate in meetings on security and humanitarian issues in Gaza, devastated by more than two years of war.

Representatives of Spain had also been taking part.

Earlier yesterday, Israel's foreign ministry announced Israel had barred Spain from the centre.

"Israel will not remain silent in the face of those who attack us," Netanyahu said.

"I am not prepared to tolerate this hypocrisy and hostility. I will not allow any country to conduct a diplomatic war against us without facing an immediate price," he said, referring to the decision to bar Madrid from the CMCC.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has been one of the most vocal critics of Israel's war on Gaza, which was sparked by Palestinian movement Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7, 2023.

He also opposed the US-Israeli war with Iran that began with strikes on February 28.

Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Sarr has previously accused the Spanish government of "standing with tyrants" by opposing the US-Israeli attacks on Iran.

Trump slams right-wing commentators who oppose Iran war

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump angrily lashed out at multiple well-known conservative commentators who have criticized his war against Iran, slamming his onetime allies as attention-seeking "NUT JOBS."

"They're stupid people, they know it, their families know it, and everyone else knows it, too!" Trump wrote in a nearly 500-word social media diatribe.

In the president's cross-hairs were Tucker Carlson and Megyn Kelly -- two former Fox News hosts turned independent podcasters -- as well as Candace Owens and Alex Jones, also podcasters and prominent conspiracy theorists.



US President Donald Trump and Tucker Carlson

All four have vocally criticized Trump over the war, slamming him for abandoning his anti-war campaign promises and -- to varying degrees -- accusing him of bowing to pressure from Israel to launch

the conflict.

Their criticism has highlighted a divide among Trump's supporters over the war, a potential major political risk for the Republican Party heading into the November midterm elections.

"They don't have what it takes, and they never did! They've all been thrown off Television, lost their Shows, and aren't even invited on TV because nobody cares about them, they're NUT JOBS, TROUBLEMAKERS, and will say anything necessary for some 'free' and cheap publicity," he complained.

While all four have been backers of the president's "Make America Great Again" movement, some have feuded with the president.

Ocean temperatures near record high in March: EU monitor

AFP | Paris

Ocean temperatures hit near-record highs for March, the Copernicus Climate Change Service said yesterday, signalling a likely shift toward El Nino conditions that can amplify heat extremes on an already warming planet.

Copernicus said average sea surface temperatures were 20.97C in March, the second-highest value ever for the month, and the hottest since 2024 during the last El Nino, when global heat records topped.

This reflected "a likely tran-

sition toward El Nino conditions", said Copernicus, the European Union's global warming monitor.

Several meteorological agencies had predicted the return this year of El Nino, a natural climate cycle that warms Pacific waters and can bring higher global temperatures and extreme weather.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said last month an opposite, cooling La Nina cycle was tipped to give way to neutral conditions before swinging into El Nino later this year.

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

Gulf Cooperation Council Backs Lebanon



The Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) welcomed Lebanon's government decision to restrict weapon possession in Beirut exclusively to legitimate state forces, describing it as an important step toward strengthening state authority.

The Lebanese cabinet on Thursday directed security agencies to enforce a strict state monopoly on arms in the capital, Beirut, following a recent escalation of Israeli strikes

across the country, including the capital itself.

Prime Minister Nawaf Salam said at the conclusion of a cabinet meeting that the army and internal security forces had been instructed to "immediately begin reinforcing the full imposition of state authority over Beirut Governorate and to monopolize weapons in the hands of legitimate authorities alone."

Information Minister Paul Morcos noted that the decision faced objections from two min-

isters affiliated with Hezbollah during the cabinet session. The move comes after Lebanon previously announced a ban on Hezbollah's military activities earlier in March. However, the Iran-backed group, which remains represented in both parliament and the cabinet, has continued its operations despite government directives.

On Wednesday, Israel launched its most extensive wave of strikes since the latest phase of the conflict began on March 2, resulting in more than 200 deaths, according to

reports. Lebanon's health ministry says the overall death toll has exceeded 1,700 in just over a month.

Following the strikes, Prime Minister Salam said Lebanon would submit an "urgent complaint" to the United Nations Security Council, condemning what he called a "dangerous escalation in defiance of all regional and international efforts to stop the war in the region."

Minister Morcos added that the government is continuing diplomatic efforts to secure a ceasefire, especially after statements from the United States and Israel suggesting their truce with Iran does not extend to Lebanon.

Major Strikes on Saudi Oil Infrastructure Cause Production Losses



An official source at Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Energy said that several major energy facilities across the Kingdom have recently been subjected to multiple attacks, affecting production, transportation, refining, petrochemical operations, and the electricity sector in Riyadh, the Eastern Province, and Yanbu Industrial City.

The source said the incidents resulted in the death of one Saudi national working in industrial security at a national energy company, while seven other Saudi employees were injured. The attacks also caused disruptions to operations at several critical energy installations.

Among the affected infrastructure was a pumping station on the East-West Pipeline, which led to a loss of approximately 700,000 barrels per day

in throughput. The pipeline is considered a key route for supplying global energy markets.

Production facilities were also impacted, including the Manifa field, which saw output reduced by around 300,000 barrels per day. Earlier disruptions at the Khurais facility had already lowered production by a similar amount, bringing the total reduction in the Kingdom's production capacity to approximately 600,000 barrels per day.

Refining operations were also affected, with facilities including SATORP in Jubail, the Ras Tanura refinery, SAM-REF in Yanbu, and the Riyadh refinery reporting disruptions that impacted refined product exports. In addition, processing facilities in Ju'aymah experienced fires, affecting exports of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and natural gas liquids.

Airfares Surge Across Dubai Routes



Airfares from Dubai have surged sharply in recent weeks due to rising travel demand, higher jet fuel costs, and limited seat availability, according to aviation experts, with prices expected to remain elevated in the coming months.

Passengers departing from the UAE are already experiencing significant increases, with last-minute ticket prices climbing far above levels seen just two months ago.

A return flight from Dubai to Mumbai for travel this week is currently priced at around Dh4,230, compared to about Dh730 less than 60 days ago. Similarly, fares to London have risen sharply to Dh4,380, up from Dh1,209 previously.

Other long-haul destinations have also recorded steep increases, including Barcelona at Dh6,380, Lisbon at Dh3,667, San Francisco at Dh7,140, and New York at Dh7,770.

Even bookings made about a week in advance remain expensive, with Dubai-Mumbai fares around Dh1,560 and Dubai-London approximately Dh3,400, indicating sustained

pressure on pricing.

Travel planned between April 18 and 25 shows slightly lower fares compared to last-minute tickets, but prices remain high overall. During this period, Dubai-Delhi is priced at Dh2,731, Dubai-London at Dh3,400, and Dubai-Barcelona at around Dh5,940.

Industry experts say the combination of strong demand, constrained capacity, and higher operational costs is likely to keep airfares elevated in the near term.

"Airfares from Dubai have surged due to strong demand, higher fuel costs, and limited seats, with last-minute prices far above recent levels. Experts say fares are likely to remain high in the coming months."

Japan Condemns Attacks on Saudi Energy Facilities



The Embassy of Japan in Saudi Arabia strongly condemned recent attacks targeting the Kingdom's energy facilities, which resulted in the death of one Saudi national working for an energy company and injuries to seven others.

In a statement, the embassy expressed its "deepest condolences" to the family of the deceased and conveyed "sincere sympathies" to those injured in the incident.

The statement also denounced the damage caused to key energy infrastructure, warning that such attacks

could further worsen pressures on the already strained global energy market.

"We deplore that these attacks damaged important energy facilities in the Kingdom and could potentially add to negative impact on the already strained energy market in the world. We appeal that such attacks on civilian energy facilities should never be repeated by any party," the embassy said.

The attacks also disrupted several operational activities at major facilities within the Kingdom's energy sector, according to the statement.

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer Visits Doha



The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Keir Starmer, held discussions with His Highness the Amir of the State of Qatar during an official meeting at Lusail Palace, focusing on the latest regional and international developments.

The talks took place at Lusail Palace, where both sides reviewed key issues of mutual concern and exchanged views

on strengthening bilateral relations between the United Kingdom and Qatar.

Earlier upon his arrival in Doha, the British Prime Minister and his accompanying delegation were received at Doha International Airport by Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Dr. Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al-Khulaifi, alongside the British Ambassador to Qatar, H.E. Neerav Patel.

Qatar and India Discuss Energy Security

Qatar's Minister of State for Energy Affairs, Saad bin Sherida Al Kaabi, met in Doha with India's Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Hardeep Singh Puri, to discuss developments in global energy markets and the impact of regional conflicts on energy security.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed the implications of ongoing regional tensions on the global energy



industry and explored ways to ensure the stability and se-

curity of energy supplies worldwide.

The Qatari minister reaffirmed Qatar's commitment to remain a reliable global energy supplier and expressed his

country's interest in further strengthening energy cooper-

ation with India.

Both ministers welcomed the ceasefire agreement reached on April 8, stressing the importance of swiftly removing any disruptions to global energy flows and returning to normal market conditions.

They also emphasized the need to safeguard freedom of navigation, ensure uninterrupted global trade, and protect the resilience of international supply chains.

celebs

Coachella kicks off with headliners Sabrina Carpenter, Bieber and Karol G

AFP | Los Angeles

Thousands of fans have gathered in the California desert for the hotly anticipated Coachella Festival, which kicks off Friday with pop princess Sabrina Carpenter in the headliner spotlight.

The star-studded line-up -- which also includes headliners Justin Bieber and Colombia's Karol G -- will grace the stage in Indio on two consecutive weekends, kicking off the US music festival circuit for 2026.

Friday's acts include standout emerging talent Teddy Swims and girl group KATSEYE, as well as established artists like Moby.

But the highlight of the opening night will be Carpenter, who promised "the most ambitious show" of her career in an interview with Perfect Magazine.

The "Manchild" singer made her Coachella debut in 2024, the year she released her catchy summer hit "Espresso."

Closing out the first day will

be Italian DJ Anyma, who is set to premiere his new production, "ÆDEN," which promises to be an immersive audiovisual experience that will hit the road after Coachella for a tour including stops in Milan, London and Seoul.

Bieber Fever

The party continues across Coachella's nine stages on Saturday, with the highly anticipated appearance of Bieber, who will close out the night.

"Bieber fever" seems to have returned after a decade and already spread across the Coachella Valley, after the singer made a comeback at the Grammy Awards this year.

Fans of the 32-year-old artist posted videos on social media this week of what appear to be rehearsals that included hits such as "Sorry" and "Where Are U Now."

The night will also feature performances by techno stalwarts like Armin van Buuren and Adam Beyer, K-pop stars such as Taemin and British dance sensation PinkPantheress.

French DJ and producer David Guetta returns to the desert in Indio, and David Byrne, the legendary co-founder of Talking Heads, will make an appearance.

Another highly anticipated act is Nine Inch Noize -- a collaboration between

the industrial rock band Nine Inch Nails and German producer Boys Noize -- which has just announced a joint album.

As a testament to the diversity of genres on display at Coachella, the festival's main stage will host influencer-turned-singer Addison Rae, as well as New York rockers The Strokes.

Led by Julian Casablancas, the band returns with a new album slated for June, following a six-year hiatus.

'Tropicoqueta'

The cherry on top for Sunday will be reggaeton star Karol G, the first Latina to headline the festival.

The winner of eight Latin Grammy Awards made her Coachella debut in 2022 with a performance that paid tribute to Latin music icons such as Selena, Celia Cruz, and Daddy Yankee.

For this year's show, the "Provenza" singer is expected to embrace the "Caribbean showgirl" aesthetic of her latest project, "Tropicoqueta."

Sunday also promises the festival debut of K-pop kings BIGBANG, who are celebrating their 20th anniversary with a highly anticipated return to the international stage.

Also appearing will be the godfather of punk, Iggy Pop, and Fatboy Slim -- the British DJ and producer who dominated the electronic music scene in the 1990s.

Sabrina Carpenter



Keanu Reeves offers advice to aspiring movie stars

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Keanu Reeves has urged aspiring actors to respect their colleagues.

The 61-year-old actor - who stars alongside Cameron Diaz in Outcome, the new black comedy movie - has offered some words of wisdom to those hoping to follow in his footsteps.

He told E! News: "Go to work and respect who you're working with until they prove they don't get your respect. Try not to be [an a*****]. It might not work out, but try."

Cameron, on the other hand, noted that every person who encounters fame and success experiences it differently.

The Hollywood star said: "I would say there's no handbook or manual on being famous, so you have to write your own and follow your own manuscript. You got to just make it your own. You can't really do it - you don't know what it's going to be. Reach out to other people that you admire, the way that they do it, and ask them for some advice."

Meanwhile, Keanu previously revealed that he was encouraged to change his name when he first arrived in Hollywood.

The actor has enjoyed huge success in the movie business, but his manager thought Keanu's name might stunt his career prospects.

During an appearance on the New Heights podcast, Keanu explained: "I got paid when I was like 16, so I was a professional actor around 16, 17

”
I would say there's no handbook or manual on being famous, so you have to write your own and follow your own manuscript. You got to just make it your own. You can't really do it - you don't know what it's going to be. Reach out to other people that you admire, the way that they do it, and ask them for some advice

KEANU REEVES

[years old].

"I was in Toronto, Canada, and then I got a manager who lived in Los Angeles ... At 20 years old, I drove in my car to Los Angeles. Got out of my car and my manager said, 'We want to change your name.' So that's like, a welcome to Hollywood [moment]."

"I remember I was walking on the beach and I was just like, 'My name? What if I change my name? What?'"

Keanu actually considered changing his name to "Chuck Spadina" at one point in time.

He shared: "My middle name is Charles, so I was like, '... Chuck?' And I grew up on a street called Spadina, [therefore] Chuck Spadina. And then I was something Templeton. So then I became KC Reeves. Keanu Reeves



Keanu Reeves



The festival will conclude with a unique cinematic event: an outdoor screening of the first episode of Euphoria Season 3, marking the show's highly anticipated return to television after a four-year hiatus



Cameron Diaz

Cameron Diaz gives a 'career-best performance in Outcome'

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Jonah Hill thinks Cameron Diaz gives the "best performance of her career" in Outcome.

The 42-year-old actor wrote and directed the new black comedy film, which stars Cameron, Keanu Reeves and Matt Bomer, and he's heaped praise on the star-studded cast.

He told Extra: "Getting these guys together

was the greatest thing of all time. I'm the most blessed director on the planet."

Jonah was particularly effusive about Cameron, who he described as "an actual angel that fell from heaven."

He said: "Cameron is an actual angel that fell from heaven, and she is not only, like, an iconic classic movie star. When she came on the screen for her camera test or something, we're all back there like, 'Whoa, we're making a real movie.'

"As an actor, she gives the best performance of her career, in my opinion ... knockout performance. And as a

person, she just supported me and continues to support me in such a real way ... She is just the perfect friend and artist. Combination actually of those two."

Cameron was equally complimentary about Jonah, insisting there was nobody else who could have directed her performance in the film.

She said: "Jonah is the most earnest person."

"Like honestly, like, his words, like, he means them so much. To be on the receiving end of it, it's like ... when somebody who you feel the same way about says those things about you, it's like very heartwarming because

I think that all three of us here could just say all the same things about Jonah and who he is as a person, as a director, as an actor.

"I mean, my favourite thing is that ... there wasn't one single part of his performance in this movie that could be in the trailer and there's a reason. You will see it is absolutely stunning what he does... He is such a force in this movie... It was a free-for-all. Like, there's nobody who could have directed him in this performance other than himself. You know what I mean? And it's just incredible."

Jonah also singled out Keanu, 61, for praise.

Classifieds

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Sinner eases into Monte Carlo semi-final against Zverev



Jannik Sinner in action

AFP | Monte Carlo

Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz and his closest rival Jannik Sinner both cruised into the semi-finals of the Monte Carlo Masters with straight-sets wins yesterday.

Sinner extended his winning run at Masters 1000 events to 20 matches as he brushed aside Felix Auger-Aliassime 6-3, 6-4 in one hour 32 minutes.

Alcaraz was next on the centre court and extended his clay-court run of victories to 16 as he crushed Alexander Bublik 6-3, 6-0 in one hour three minutes.

The top two had both suffered second-set blips the day before when Sinner, who said later his energy level was not right had his record streak of 36 consecutive sets won in Masters tournaments snapped by Tomas Machac in the last 16.

"I feel like it was a step forwards today," said the Italian after beating Canadian Auger-Aliassime.

"It was a very tough match. I knew I had to get better in certain areas. The serve is not there yet, where I would love it (to be), but all things considered I'm very happy.

"But in any case, very happy to be back in the semis."

Sinner has never won one of the elite clay tournaments but will be a strong favourite when he plays Alexander Zverev af-

ter winning their last seven meetings.

The world number two, who completed the 'Sunshine double' with wins at Indian Wells and the Miami Open, is still on track for a possible first clash of the year with Alcaraz in the final.

Sinner dropped just seven points on serve in a dominant opening set which he took courtesy of a break in the sixth game.

The four-time Grand Slam champion also powered through the second set, wrapping up his fifth consecutive win over seventh-ranked Auger-Aliassime.

'Playing aggressively'

Alcaraz, playing Bublik for the first time, broke in the opening game and had four break points in the third game but could not take any.

Bublik broke back in the fourth game and led 3-2, but Alcaraz won the next 10 games as he raced to victory.

"I started the match pretty well," Alcaraz said.

"I had points to be two breaks up and didn't make it and then I lost a bit of the feeling on the ball.

"I had to run side to side a lot, had to defend and then a few games gave me a lot of confidence in the match. I was playing aggressively and I played a great and solid match against a player that you don't know what they will produce next."

Inter skipper Martinez suffers calf injury

AFP | Milan

Inter Milan will be without captain and top scorer Lautaro Martinez for Sunday's Serie A match against Como, the Italian league leaders said.

"Medical tests today (Friday) revealed a mild muscle strain in his left calf," Inter said in a statement, adding that the striker's "condition will be reassessed in the coming days".

Italian media reports suggested the 28-year-old could return as soon as next week's game at home against Cagliari.

Inter have a seven-point advantage over resurgent reigning champions Napoli with seven matches remaining in the Serie A season.

Martinez, the league's top scorer with 16 goals this term, was sidelined for six weeks between February and March with muscular injuries.

On his return last weekend, the Argentinian scored a brace



Lautaro Martinez

in a 5-2 win over Roma.

In his absence, Inter had a difficult March with two defeats and a draw in three matches to give hope to the chasing pack.

They face a tricky trip to face fourth-placed Como, desperate to not give any further encouragement to Napoli and third-placed AC Milan, who are nine points adrift.

Inter coach Cristian Chivu is expected to partner Marcus Thuram with Pio Esposito up front in Martinez's absence.

Riffa edge Khaldiya in King's Cup classic

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The King's Cup semi-final between holders Al Khaldiya and Riffa once again produced a dramatic contest, extending the recent rivalry between the two clubs. It finished 3-3 after extra time, before Riffa held their nerve to win 4-3 on penalties and secure their place in the final.

At Khalifa Sports City Stadium, the match unfolded as a series of shifting control rather than sustained dominance, with both sides repeatedly punished for brief lapses in concentration. Riffa created the first clear opening in the 22nd minute when Lithuanian Dejan Georgijevic was released on the counterattack, but he was denied in a one-on-one that would later carry added significance.

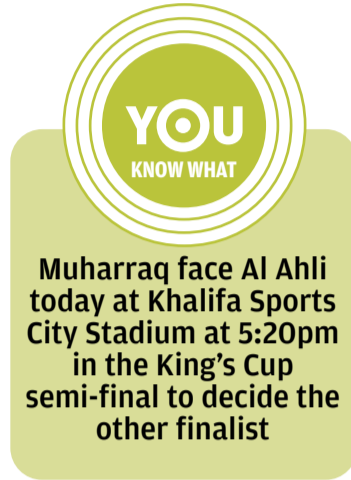
That miss was quickly punished. Al Khaldiya struck in the 26th minute when Clyde

O'Connell arrived unmarked at the back post to turn in a low free-kick delivery from Adem Taous. The goal exposed Riffa's failure to track second-phase movement in the box.

Riffa responded after the interval through sustained set-piece pressure, and it told in the 54th minute when 18-year-old Bader Al Asam reacted quickest in a crowded area to force the ball home and restore parity.

The decisive phase of normal time arrived in the final 20 minutes, where control swung repeatedly and discipline became decisive. In the 78th minute, Riffa were awarded a penalty after Ali Madan was brought down, with VAR confirming contact inside the box. Brazilian Rodrigo Yuri converted with composure to make it 2-1.

The match then spilled over on the touchline as well as on the pitch. Riffa's head coach Mohammed Mashaan was shown a red card after protests from



Muharraq face Al Ahli today at Khalifa Sports City Stadium at 5:20pm in the King's Cup semi-final to decide the other finalist

the bench, while Al Khaldiya's coach Lassad Al Chabbi was booked as tempers flared on both sides.

Deep into stoppage time, Al Khaldiya were awarded a penalty of their own after Bader Bashir was clipped inside the area during a sustained spell of pressure. Mohammed Al Romaihi stepped up and converted

calmly to level the match at 2-2 and send it into extra time.

The pattern continued after the restart, with brief control followed by immediate punishment. Al Khaldiya regained the lead at 3-2 when Ali Abdulla Al Sharqawi was brought down by Yaqoob Diara inside the box, and Gleison Moreira converted the resulting penalty.

But the game refused to settle. Al Sharqawi was later sent off for dissent, adding further instability to the contest. Riffa then capitalised on one final chaotic moment when a set-piece led to a collision between goalkeeper Ricardo Silva and Samuel Toscas. The referee judged the contact to be a foul and awarded a late penalty. Rodrigo Yuri converted again to complete his brace and force penalties at 3-3.

In the shootout, Riffa showed greater composure under pressure, edging it 4-3 to confirm their place in the final of the 49th edition of the King's Cup.



Riffa's Ali Madan (R) and Rodrigo Yuri (l) celebrate during yesterday's semi-final victory

Bahrain finish 12th after China defeat

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's youth men's basketball national team ended their debut campaign in the 31st Albert Schweitzer Tournament in Germany with a 58-75 loss to China yesterday. The result came in the 11th-place classification game.

The defeat confirmed a 12th-place finish for the Bahrainis, who went winless in the preliminary round after losses to hosts Germany, Sweden, Slovenia, Japan, and Türkiye in Group A.

Bahrain were on the back foot early against China, who opened with a dominant first quarter to take a 27-11 lead. That gap proved decisive, with the nationals unable to fully recover despite improved performances in the remaining periods.

They showed better resistance in the second quarter, narrowly edging it 16-14, but still trailed 32-41 at the break. China regained control in the third, outscoring Bahrain 20-13 to stretch their advantage to 60-45 heading into the final frame.

Bahrain continued to battle in the fourth and again outscored their opponents 18-14, but the early deficit remained too much to overturn as China secured a comfortable 75-58 victory.

Hassan Abdulkadir led Bahrain with 21 points and 15 rebounds in another standout performance, while Somto Patrick Onoduenyi added 17 points and 15 boards. Mahdi Baqer contrib-



Onoduenyi looks to attack as Yizhaojie Zhang closes the gap

uted eight points, but Bahrain struggled from long range, converting just five of 25 attempts from beyond the arc.

China had a balanced scoring effort, with Boxin Zhao leading the way with 14 points and seven rebounds. Yuxiu Chen added 13 points, while

Ziyi Zhang scored 10 as they controlled the contest from the outset.

Vovorras' side were competing in Germany as part of their preparations for the Gulf Basketball Association qualifiers for the Fiba U18 Asia Cup 2026. Despite finishing without a win,

the team gained valuable experience against some of the world's top youth sides.

They will now turn their focus to the upcoming GBA qualifiers, aiming to build on the lessons learned and secure qualification for the continental tournament in Doha.

De Zerbi urges Spurs to unleash attacking 'DNA' in survival fight

AFP | London

Roberto De Zerbi called Ron Tottenham to embrace their attacking "DNA" in their relegation battle as he prepares to take charge of the team for the first time against Sunderland on Sunday.

The former Brighton and Marseille boss has been hired with a brief to stop Spurs suffering a catastrophic first relegation from the English top flight since 1977.

The London club are languishing just one point above the Premier League drop zone, with seven games remaining.

De Zerbi, 46, replaced interim head coach Igor Tudor, who failed to win any of his five league matches after taking over from the sacked Thomas Frank.

"What I want to do, what I want to achieve immediately is the character, is the right spirit, the right courage to play,



Roberto De Zerbi

to attack because the DNA of this club, of this squad, is to find the goal, to score," said the Italian.

Tottenham have not won a league game in 2026, but De Zerbi, speaking on Friday at his first press conference, is convinced they have the quality to stay up.

"I'm sure about the level of the players because many players in the past I was very, very close to bringing them to my former teams," he said.

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Top stables share victories at Al Raffa race

TDT | Manama

Under the patronage and presence of HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister at the Court of the Prime Minister and Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club, the 27th race meeting of the 2025/2026 horse racing season was held. The event featured competitions for the Al Rawda Cup, Granada Cups, Empire Limo Cup, and Bahrain Airport Services (BAS) Cups at the club's Al Raffa track.

The event witnessed several winners crowned across the races. HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa presented the BAS Mile Cup to Nabeel Khalid Kanoo, Chairman of Bahrain Airport Services, after Al Aadiyat Stables' horse "Glorious Sassi" won the fourth race.

Shaikh Nader bin Mohammed bin Salman Al Khalifa received the BAS Sprint Cup from Nabeel Khalid Kanoo, while the seventh race cup was presented by Hassan Al Meshimi, Chairman of Granada Real Estate Group, who also awarded the second race cup to Abdullah Khalid Hilal Al Khathari.

The third race cup was pre-



sented by Mohammed Najeebi, CEO of Empire Limo, to winning trainer Adel Abdullah, while the sixth race cup was handed over by the company's General Manager Mohammed Amir Ibrahim to Khalid Al Harmas.

Louise Wharton, Arabian Stables official, presented the first race cup to Abdullah Fawzi Nas.

The meeting featured highly competitive races, with victories shared among several stables across the ten-race card, reflecting strong competition throughout the event.



Bahrain face tough title defence in Asia



Bahrain captain Nasser Anan lifts the inaugural 2025 AVC Men's Volleyball Cup on home soil

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain will enter the 2026 AVC Men's Volleyball Cup in India, beginning on June 20, as reigning champions, having won the inaugural edition in 2025. This time, they aim to prove their success was no one-off achievement.

Now competing in the second edition of the competition, the Kingdom faces a stronger field as they look to confirm their status at the continental level.

The draw has placed Bahrain in one of the tournament's most competitive groups. Group A includes hosts India, alongside Australia (ranked 33rd in the world), Chinese Taipei, Kazakhstan, and New Zealand, setting up a demanding test for the de-

fending champions from the outset.

Australia stands out as a proven powerhouse in Asian volleyball, while Kazakhstan and Chinese Taipei bring consistency and physicality. New Zealand's international experience and India's home advantage further intensify the competition, making Group A one of the tournament's most unpredictable pools.

Bahrain arrives under French head coach Arnaud Josseland, carrying momentum from their 2025 AVC Men's Volleyball Nations Cup triumph on home soil at Isa bin Rashid Hall. They are the reigning champions of the inaugural edition, having defeated Pakistan 3-1 in the final on June 24, 2025 to secure their first-ever AVC title. Qatar

finished third in that tournament. Mohamed Anan was the top scorer in the final with 27 points.

That campaign also delivered individual recognition, with Mohamed Abdulla Yaqoob named Most Valuable Player and selected in the Dream Team alongside teammates Mahmood AlAffia and Ali Khamis Ebrahim.

The current squad retains a settled core, including Mohamed Anan, Hassan Al Warqaa, Mohamed Yaqoob, Ali Ebrahim, Mahmood Abdulwahid, Mohammed Jassim, and Sayed Hashim Isa, ensuring continuity and cohesion.

A significant boost comes with the return of captain Nasser Anan after a disciplinary suspension, adding depth

and firepower to Bahrain's attack.

Beyond the Nations Cup success, Bahrain's rise is reinforced by their victory in the 23rd Arab Men's Volleyball Championship, reflecting steady regional progress. They now sit 40th in the world rankings and face a sharp rise in quality against higher-ranked opposition.

Group B features Qatar (ranked 21st in the world), South Korea (ranked 26th), Pakistan, Indonesia, Thailand, and Oman, completing a balanced but highly competitive 12-team field.

For Bahrain, the focus is no longer on breakthrough success, but on confirmation. The challenge in Ahmedabad is whether they can establish themselves as consistent Asian contenders.

Slot feels 'complete support' from Liverpool chiefs despite slump



Liverpool manager Arne Slot

AFP | London

Arne Slot says he feels "complete support" from Liverpool's hierarchy despite mounting pressure on the Dutch manager after a disastrous season.

Liverpool have lost three games in a row, including a 4-0 hammering by Manchester City in the FA Cup and a 2-0 defeat to Paris Saint-Germain in the first leg of their Champions League quarter-final.

Last year's Premier League champions, who host Fulham on Saturday, face a battle even to qualify for next season's Champions League.

But Slot told reporters yesterday he was confident he had the backing of the club's owners and fans despite a run of just two wins in eight games.

"I'm repeating myself a lot, but I've said it many times, I feel a lot of support, but not only from the owners and from Richard (Hughes, the sporting director) and Michael

(Edwards, CEO of football)," he said.

He added: "As weird as it might sound, I also feel the support of the fans. We were going out in Paris when the players went out for the warm-up, and the fans, after a 4-0 loss (to City), immediately started singing, 'We love you, Liverpool!'"

"And after we were, I think it's fair to say, outplayed over 90 minutes, we went to the away end and they were still singing for us and clapping for us, so that's support I've felt, we've felt constantly."

"And I think, but I've said this many times as well, the club knows in which period of time we are in, and in the meantime I feel complete support."

The Reds are fifth in the Premier League table, with the top five teams guaranteed Champions League football next season. They are just a point ahead of Chelsea, with Brentford and Everton also snapping at their heels.