



**Identity Card Centres open on Saturdays**

TDT | Manama

Identity card centres at Isa Town and Muharraq (Seef Mall) will remain open on Saturdays during summer holidays for Bahrain nationals.

Working hours are from 8 am to 2 pm. The move is as directed by the Minister of Interior, General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, to reduce congestion.

Before visiting book an appointment through the National Portal *bahrain.bh* and ensure all necessary documents.

The branches will continue operating at their regular hours during the rest of the week.

From Sunday to Wednesday (7 am to 6 pm) and on Thursday (7 am to 2:30 pm).

**Clashes kill more than 80 fighters in northwest Syria**

Beirut, Lebanon

More than 80 fighters were killed in clashes yesterday between regime and forces in northwest Syria.

In nearby Afrin, a car bombing killed 13 people in the latest violence to hit the city that Turkey-backed rebels seized last year from Kurdish fighters.

Syria's civil war has killed a total of more than 370,000 people and spiralled into a complex conflict since starting in 2011 with the repression of anti-government protests.

Russian and regime aircraft have since late April ramped up deadly bombardment of the Idlib region of some three million people in northwest Syria.



**03** Bahrain is packing a big punch

**04** GDP will feel the heat

**05** Pakistan train collision kills 11

210 fils (includes VAT)



**Iran guards driven off**

UK warship fends off Iran bid to 'impede' its tanker in Gulf



British Royal Navy's HMS Montrose, a Type 23 Frigate, performing turns during exercise "Marstrike 05", off the coast of Oman

**Three Iranian boats tried to "impede the passage" of a UK commercial vessel**

**UK warship then trained its guns on the Iranian boats**

**US surveillance aircraft captured video footage of the episode**

London, United Kingdom

London said yesterday that armed Iranian boats tried to "impede" a UK supertanker before being warned off by a British warship in a dramatic escalation in the Gulf.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards denied involvement but also

cautioned both the United States and Britain that they would "strongly regret" the UK Royal Marines' detention of one of the Islamic republic's own tankers off Gibraltar last week.

The Gibraltar police brushed aside the warning and announced the arrest yesterday of both the Indian captain and officer of the seized Iranian tanker.

And President Donald Trump raised the US pressure by tweeting on Wednesday that sanctions against Iran over its stepped-up nuclear activities would be "increased substantially" soon.

The rapid chain of events further complicates Britain and other European allies' efforts to salvage a 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran from which Washington pulled out more than a year ago.

The UK defence ministry said three Iranian boats tried to "im-

pede the passage" of a commercial vessel called British Heritage. The 274-metre (899-foot) tanker is owned by the British energy giant BP and can carry a million barrels of oil.

"HMS Montrose was forced to position herself between the Iranian vessels and British Heritage and issue verbal warnings to the Iranian vessels, which then turned away," the ministry statement said.

UK defence sources told British media that the Revolutionary Guards boats attempt to first stop and then divert the supertanker towards the Iranian shore. The UK warship then trained its guns on the Iranian boats and delivered a "cease and desist" message by radio.

CNN reported that a US surveillance aircraft captured video footage of the episode from above.

"We are concerned by this ac-



tion and continue to urge the Iranian authorities to de-escalate the situation in the region," a Downing Street spokesman said.

The Times newspaper reported that Britain is now considering whether to send other naval resources to the Gulf.

Sky News said the transport ministry had issued new guidance to all British-flagged commercial ships in recent days to go to a heightened state of security in the area.

**US plans escort ops**

The Pentagon said it was discussing military escorts for vessels in the Gulf. Washington was attempting to put together a coalition "in terms of providing military escort, naval escort to commercial shipping," said the White House's nominee to become chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Mark Milley.vv

**Back to the sea**

**Orcas loaded onto trucks as Russia releases more from 'whale jail'**

Nakhodka, Russia

Three orcas were loaded onto trucks at a controversial facility in Russia's Far East yesterday as the country continues to release animals from what the media have dubbed a "whale jail".

The secluded facility near the port town of Nakhodka contains dozens of orcas and beluga

whales which were caught to be sent to aquariums, but are now being set free after a global outcry and intervention by President Vladimir Putin.

Last month two orcas, also known as killer whales, and six belugas were released after a six-day trip north to their original habitat in the Sea of Okhotsk. They were first driven in trucks with a police es-



Employees load a killer whale into a special tank on a truck

cort and then shipped on a barge.

The three whales loaded onto trucks on Thursday, one male and two females, are expected to be released following a similar journey.

A correspondent at the scene observed employees removing the transparent roof of the floating dock housing the killer whale pens.