

# UN resolution 'source of pride and honour' for Kingdom

TDT | Manama

The adoption of a United Nations Security Council resolution condemning Iran's unjustified and illegal attacks on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan reflects His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's leadership and strategic vision.

It also represents a source of pride and honour for the King-

dom.

His Excellency Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, emphasised this as he sent congratulatory cables to HM King Hamad and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

The Minister noted that the achievement strengthens Bahrain's diplomatic presence in



HM the King



HRH Prince Salman

international forums, including the United Nations Security Council, and underscores the Kingdom's role as a reliable partner in global efforts to promote peace and security.

He further highlighted Bahrain's active support for international initiatives aimed at fostering global stability.

H.E. Dr. Al Zayani added that this international achievement—led by Bahrain on behalf

of the GCC states and Jordan during its current UN Security Council membership and GCC chairmanship—reflects the Kingdom's high standing on the global stage.

He concluded that it also demonstrates Bahrain's enduring commitment to diplomacy, international cooperation, and joint efforts to promote security, stability, and peace worldwide.

## 114 missiles and 190 drones intercepted

Mohammed Darwish  
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's air defences have intercepted and destroyed 114 missiles and 190 drones since the start of Iranian attacks, according to figures cited in a National Communication Centre (NCC) briefing.

Yesterday alone, four missiles and nine drones were brought down.

The NCC said Bahrain's military and security bodies were carrying out their tasks around the clock within what it described as an integrated defence and security system.

## Focus on Iranian aggression and labour market



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, remotely chaired the 520th Government Executive Committee meeting. Plans implemented to address the impact of the hostile Iranian aggression towards the Kingdom of Bahrain, and initiatives to develop labour market procedures were reviewed.

## New measures for visit visas

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The Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs (NPRO) at the Ministry of Interior announced exceptional measures regarding visit visas in light of the current circumstances, the treacherous Iranian aggression against the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the resulting cancellation or suspension of several flights.

The NPRO Undersecretary, His Excellency Shaikh Hisham bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa, stated yesterday that holders of all types of visit visas who are currently inside the Kingdom and whose permitted stay expired on or after 28 February 2026 will be exempted from fines resulting from delayed departure from the country, for an additional period of one month following the reopening of the airspace.

## Arab Parliament backs steps taken by Kingdom to protect territory

Mohammed Darwish  
TDT | Manama

The Arab Parliament has expressed full support for Bahrain, condemning what it called blatant Iranian attacks on the Kingdom and backing all steps taken to protect its security, sovereignty and people.

In a statement issued by Mohammed Ahmed Al Yamahi, the Arab Parliament president, and addressed to Speaker Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam, the legislative body said the attacks amounted to a grave breach of Bahrain's sovereignty and posed a direct threat to its security, stability and citizens.

It said the acts were hostile, ran against international law and the principles of good neighbourliness, and damaged the basis of peace and security across the region.

### Escalation

The parliament said it condemned the attacks in the strongest terms, calling them

## Iranian attacks 'direct threat to Bahrain security, stability and citizens'



Civil defence teams successfully extinguished a fire at a fuel tank facility in Muharraq hit by an Iranian attack yesterday morning

part of an unacceptable course of escalation and hostile conduct aimed at destabilising the region.

It said the acts were a clear breach of the United Nations Charter and the rules of international law, which uphold the sovereignty of states and bar meddling in their internal affairs.

The statement said the Arab Parliament stood fully with Bahrain and backed all measures taken by the kingdom to protect its national security, its people, its sovereignty and the integrity of its territory.

### Right

It described that as a lawful right guaranteed by international

laws and conventions.

The Arab Parliament also praised the resolve of Bahrain's armed forces in facing what it called "these cowardly attacks" with firmness and strength.

The Arab Parliament warned that the continuation of what it described as provocative Iranian breaches and attacks posed a



Mohammed Al Yamahi

threat to Arab national security and harmed the chances of regional stability.

It called for a firm and responsible Arab and international stance to end such acts and enforce respect for international law and the principles governing ties between states, including sovereign equality and territorial integrity.

In its closing remarks, the statement prayed for Bahrain's safety, security and stability under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, describing them as a source of strength and support for Bahrain and the Arab world.

# Homebound help

Indian associations in Bahrain organise chartered flights to India

Neethu V  
TDT | Manama

In a strong show of community support, Indian associations in Bahrain - Kannada Sangha Bahrain, Bahrain Keraleeya Samajham, Nav Bharat, and the Indian Club Bahrain - have begun organizing chartered flights to India in collaboration with Gulf Air, with the initiative receiving an overwhelming response from Indian residents.

Bahrain Keraleeya Samajham has announced a chartered flight from Dammam to Kochi on March 14 or 15.

The BD300 ticket includes transit visa charges and transportation from Bahrain to Dammam.

## Transport

Similarly, Kannada Sangha Bahrain has arranged a flight from Dammam to Mumbai on March 16, with a BD280 ticket covering bus transport to Dammam and the Saudi transit visa.

Speaking to The Daily Tribune, Ajith Bangera, President of Kannada Sangha Bahrain, said, "During COVID, Kannada Sangha provided shelter homes and food. This time we are arranging flights as our contribution to the community."

The organization has received around 400 bookings and is considering a second round of flights. Nav Bharat has seen a surge in interest, receiving more than 500 inquiries, well above the expected 250, with 230 passengers registered so far.

Pregnant women, children,



BKS, Segaya sees heavy turnout



Indian residents line up at Saudi embassy

and the elderly are being given priority. Dammam to Mumbai flight priced at BD 280 is planned for March 16.

Highlighting logistical challenges, Indian Club Bahrain President Mr. Joseph told The Daily Tribune: "The challenge is that so far only one flight has been allocated from Dammam to Chennai on March 20 at BD325, despite the overwhelm-

ing demand and response. The Chennai flight is fully booked, while requests for Delhi, Hyderabad, and Kerala flights are under consideration."

## Sentiment

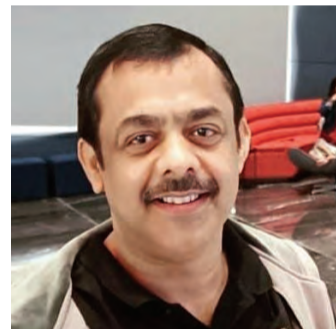
Reflecting the sentiment of many expats, Shaaji Palliyath, a long-time resident, said: "I have been in Bahrain for 28 years. Nothing matters more than the



Ajith Bangera



Joseph Joy



Shaaji Palliyath

safety of my family, especially my children. I am confident Bahrain will overcome this challenge, hoping to be back soon."

Organizers stressed that the initiative is primarily a community service effort, with minimal margins involved.

## Many Bahrainis choose to stay closer to home

### Eid travel plans shift

Hasan Barakat  
TDT | Manama

For many families in Bahrain, the Eid Al Fitr holiday has long been associated with travel.

It is a time when suitcases are packed, airport halls grow crowded, and families set off to spend the festive break abroad.

For years, travelling during Eid has become a tradition for a large number of Bahrainis seeking a change of scenery after the holy month of Ramadan.

A survey conducted by The Daily Tribune, with assistance from several travel agencies, shows that some destinations consistently rank among the most popular choices for Bahraini travellers during the Eid holiday.

### List

Turkey, the United Kingdom, Thailand, Egypt and Georgia often top the list, attracting visitors with their cooler weather, cultural attractions and family friendly experiences.

This year, however, the situation is different.

With the ongoing regional tensions and the closure of Bahrain International Airport, travel agencies say the usual

holiday rush has slowed significantly.

### Demand

Several travel offices told The Daily Tribune that even if the airport reopens and flights resume, demand may remain limited, as many travellers fear the possibility of sudden closures or disruptions at the last moment.

Instead, alternative travel plans are beginning to emerge.

Some travel agencies revealed that they are preparing to organise overland trips to neighbouring countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait, with a reasonable level of interest already being observed among travellers.

### Plan

During interviews conducted by The Daily Tribune with a number of residents, many said they plan to remain in Bahrain this Eid and celebrate the holiday close to family and community.

Others shared that they are considering travelling by road to the holy city of Madinah in Saudi Arabia or to Karbalaa in Iraq.

In a year marked by uncertainty, it appears that for many Bahrainis the meaning of Eid travel is quietly changing, shifting from distant destinations to journeys that remain closer to home and heart.

## Tailors and hotels feel economic strain



This Ramadan brings a quiet afternoon for a local tailor

Neethu V  
TDT | Manama

Tailors and restaurants among the worst hit by the economic impact following the current geopolitical tension.

For most other sectors, especially corporates, Ramadan is usually a slow period on its own.

But for tailors, quite the opposite. Ramadan is supposed to be a thriving, busy season for them.

Up until the last week of February, tailors were busy as usual for this time of year.

However, the missile attacks that began on February 28 brought a sudden shift across the Gulf, turning what was expected to be a thriving season into one of the worst in years.

### Business

Speaking to The Daily Tribune, a local tailor says: "This has been the worst Ramadan I've seen in years for business.

Even COVID had an impact, but not like this. The last 10 days of Ramadan are usually our busiest, yet orders have dropped sharply since the conflict began. Normally, we make over BD1,000 during Ramadan, but this year it's fallen to less than BD350. We just hope things get back to normal soon."

As for restaurants, Ramadan comes with its own challenges, as most outlets remain shut during the day.

However, the nights, with their iftar and ghabga culture, usually make up for it.

Gatherings With many people coping with the new normal, nighttime outings and Ramadan gatherings have declined sharply.

Footfall has dropped significantly over the last 10 days, while high-end hotels and their ghabga business have also taken a severe hit since the beginning of the month.

## Sharing in grief



His Excellency Dr. Abdul Latif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak bin Daina, Minister of Oil and Environment, and H.E. General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior and Chairman of the Civil Defence Council, offered condolences to the family of a Bahraini citizen who died following an Iranian attack targeting civilian sites in the Kingdom of Bahrain. They noted that the Kingdom will remain safe and stable, united by strong social and humanitarian bonds and a shared national spirit under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Deputy Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. They also prayed that the deceased rest in peace and that her family be granted patience and fortitude.

## Show of compassion



His Excellency Ali Ahmed Al Derazi, Chairman of the National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR), visited the injured residents from the Sitra area following the hostile Iranian attacks that targeted residential neighbourhoods and civilian facilities. He was briefed on the health status of the injured and the level of medical care provided. Al Derazi commended the significant efforts of the medical and nursing staff in providing the necessary healthcare. He also affirmed the solidarity of the NIHR with the injured and their families, highlighting its commitment to monitoring their humanitarian and health conditions.

# Sovereignty, **safety** hit

Attack on Muharraq fuel tanks ‘hostile aggression’ against civilian infrastructure

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

An attack on fuel tanks at a facility in Muharraq has been described by lawyer Jassim Al Essa as a breach of Bahrain’s sovereignty and a threat to public safety, after what he said was a hostile strike on civilian infrastructure. Speaking to The Daily Tribune, Al Essa said the assault on the site in Muharraq was “blatant aggression” and said it struck at both the state’s sovereignty and the safety of the

public. He said fuel and energy sites that serve daily civilian needs could not lawfully be treated as military targets.

**Needs**

“These facilities are not military targets, but sites that serve society and secure its basic needs,” he said. “Any attack on them is condemned by every legal and humanitarian standard.”

Al Essa said the incident should not be seen as an isolated act, but as an attempt to shake public calm and unsettle



Bahrain. Even so, he said such

“**Such acts only make Bahrainis more united and more determined to protect their country and rally around their leadership and national institutions**

JASSIM AL ESSA, LAWYER

acts would not break the coun-

try’s resolve.

“Such acts only make Bahrainis more united and more determined to protect their country and rally around their leadership and national institutions,” he said.

He said the strike also breached the rule requiring respect for the sovereignty of states and non-interference in their internal affairs.

The lawyer added that this left the international community with a duty to speak out and take a stand in defence of regional stability and collective security.

**Response**

Al Essa also pointed to the response inside Bahrain, saying the speed and skill shown by the competent authorities in dealing with the incident showed a high state of readiness in protecting lives, property and key facilities.

“The safety of the homeland and the security of society are a red line that cannot be compromised,” he said.

Bahrain, he added, would remain protected by “the unity of its people and the vigilance of its institutions”.

**Muharraq fuel fire contained**



Civil defense teams successfully contained a fire at a fuel tank facility in Muharraq Governorate following an Iranian attack yesterday morning. The Ministry of Interior had initially urged residents in Al-Hidd, Arad, Qalali, and Samaheej to stay indoors and close windows and vents as a precaution. After completing cooling and safety measures, authorities confirmed it was safe for residents to resume normal activities and thanked them for their cooperation.

## Expats praised for loyalty during Iranian attacks

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Expats in Bahrain showed strong loyalty and deep feeling for the kingdom during the Iranian attacks, Dalal Al Zayed, head of the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee at the Shura Council, said in an interview with Bahrain TV.

She condemned the strikes as war crimes and said they hit civilian areas and key infrastructure.

Al Zayed said the response from residents stood out in the aftermath of the attacks.

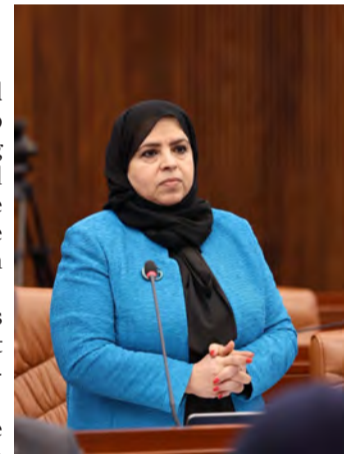
She spoke of the large number of expats who, she said, had shown loyalty and heartfelt concern for Bahrain during the strain.

**Authenticity**

“We were surprised by the number of residents who demonstrated a number of principles of loyalty and authenticity,” she said.

Many of them, she added, “grieved for the situation in Bahrain more than we grieved for losing things that passed in their lives”.

She said Bahrainis and residents had stood together behind the leadership, and praised



“**A large number of expats had shown loyalty and heartfelt concern for Bahrain during the strain**

DALAL AL ZAYED, HEAD OF SHURA COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

the reassurance given by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

**Calm**

Their words, she said, had helped bring calm to people across the country.

“The people of Bahrain stand solidly and firmly with the leadership,” she said, adding that both citizens and residents had played their part in protecting the country.

She also pointed to the role of residents on the national volunteering platform.

Turning to the attacks them-

selves, Al Zayed described them as “gross and blatant attacks” and said they amounted to ‘war crimes’ under international law.

**Breach**

She said they breached the UN Charter, international humanitarian law and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

She said the strikes amounted to a “violation of the principle of state sovereignty” and a “breach of the principles of good neighborliness”.

Missiles and drones, she said, had been fired into civilian areas, causing damage to infrastructure and public facilities.



**Announcement To the Shareholders of the National Bank of Bahrain B.S.C. (“NBB”) Regarding Participation in the Ordinary and Extraordinary General Meetings Via Virtual Means**

In light of the prevailing circumstances and in the interest of ensuring safety for NBB shareholders and stakeholders, the Board of Directors of NBB hereby announces that the OGM and EGM scheduled to be held on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 11:00 AM Bahrain Time, will now be conducted virtually through the eAGM Portal at:

<https://eagm.bahrainclear.com>

For any further enquiries, please contact NBB’s Board Secretariat Department by email at [boardsec@nbbonline.com](mailto:boardsec@nbbonline.com) or +973 17205779

# Profit push

Shura Council to debate plans to channel more state company earnings into general budget

## ● Finance committee urges rejection

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Plans to channel a greater share of profits from state-owned companies into Bahrain's general budget will be presented to the Shura Council on Sunday.

However, the chamber's finance committee has urged members to reject the two draft laws, warning that they conflict with existing legislation, undermine the independence of public bodies and companies, and could ultimately leave the Treasury facing higher costs.

The measures stem from proposals first passed by Parliament.

One of the proposals would amend Article 10 of Decree-Law No. 39 of 2002 on the general budget.

### Amendment

The amendment would require that the income of all public bodies and institutions be transferred to the public account, along with the State's net returns from wholly state-owned companies and its share of profits in other firms after the legal reserve has been set aside.

The other would require at least 50 per cent of the State's net profits from Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company and Bapco Energies to be entered in the budget.

After hearing from the Ministry of Finance and National Economy, Mumtalakat and Bapco Energies, the Shura Council's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee said the aim behind



Khalid Al Maskati, Head of Shura Council's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee

both bills was already being met under the laws now in force.

### Oversight

In its view, state-owned companies are already subject to oversight by the National Audit Office and must submit their budgets and final accounts to the Finance Ministry, so the draft laws would do little beyond repeating rules already in place.

The committee also said the plan runs against the system laid down in the budget law, which leaves some funds outside remittance where other laws provide for that.

It warned too that the move could cut into the financial and administrative independence granted by the Constitution to public bodies and institutions, leaving the bills at odds with

Bahrain's current financial system.

### Losses

The committee went further, saying the two laws might leave the State bearing the losses and costs of the companies in question.

That, it said, could drive up public spending and widen the deficit. Any such move, the committee said, should come only after a full study of the likely financial effect.

The committee said bodies with their own legal standing and special financial rules were given that status for good reason.

The point, it said, was to let them run their own affairs, grow the sectors under their care and meet their aims without leaning on the state budget to fund their



The amendment would require at least 50 per cent of the State's net profits from Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company and Bapco Energies to be entered in the budget.

work.

### Change

Any change touching such bodies should, in its view, respect the laws that created them and leave intact the basis of their financial and administrative independence.

The Finance Ministry reached much the same view.

It said the aim of the two bills can already be met through laws now in place.

### Goals

It also argued that state-owned companies working on commercial lines need room to act if they are to meet the goals for which they were formed.

The ministry said both draft laws clash with the Commercial Companies Law, which governs the drawing up of accounts and the sharing out of profits.

## Shura to vote on nursery licensing amendment

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Shura members will be asked on Sunday to reject a draft amendment to the Child Law that would make nursery licences and official approval a clear legal condition for setting up, running or altering a nursery, after a new 2026 law covered the same area.

The Women and Child Affairs Committee has recommended voting the bill down in principle, saying the Private Educational Institutions Law, issued as Law No. 4 of 2026 on 28 January, now governs nurseries and kindergartens within a single legal framework that deals with licensing, approvals and penalties.

On that basis, the committee said the proposed changes to the Child Law have been overtaken.

The draft law was prepared to amend provisions of Law No. 37 of 2012 on the Child.

### Approval

It aimed to make clearer which acts linked to nurseries are banned unless a licence has been issued or the competent authority has given approval, so that any criminal penalty rests on a clearer legal footing under the constitutional rule that crimes and punishments



Ejla Bubshait, Head of Shura Council's Women and Child Affairs Committee

must be defined by law.

Under the proposal, the first paragraph of Article 63 would be replaced.

A new paragraph would be added to Article 20 to bar the acts referred to in the penal provision unless the licence or approval has been obtained.

The draft also updates disability-related wording in the Child Law by replacing older terms with "persons with disabilities" and "person with a disability". A fourth article deals with implementation.

## Quiet devotion fills Bahrain's Nights of Qadr despite tensions

**Hasan Barakat**  
TDT | Manama

As the last ten nights of Ramadan unfold, mosques and matams across Bahrain continue to welcome worshippers seeking the spiritual depth of Laylat Al Qadr, the Night of Decree.

Despite the tense atmosphere the country has experienced in recent days, the nights remain filled with quiet devotion, reflection and prayer.

In several areas across the Kingdom, worshippers gather after the evening prayers, carrying prayer books and Qurans, their voices rising softly in supplication.

The atmosphere is calm yet deeply emotional, as believers spend long hours in remembrance, hoping to witness a night described in the Quran as better than a thousand months.

During visits conducted by The Daily Tribune to several mosques and matams, worshippers said that the current circumstances have made these nights feel even more meaningful.

Many explained that prayer during times of uncertainty carries a deeper sense of sincerity and reliance on faith.

Families arrive together, while others come quietly on their own, seeking moments of reflection away from daily noise.



Praying for peace and protection for the Kingdom and its people

Some remain until the early morning hours, reciting verses of the Quran, offering additional prayers and asking for peace and protection for the Kingdom of Bahrain and its people.

Religious gatherings have continued in an organised and respectful manner, reflecting the community's commitment to maintaining spiritual traditions while remaining mindful of the broader situation in the region.

For many in Bahrain, the Nights of Qadr have always been moments of hope and spiritual renewal.

This year, however, the prayers seem to carry an additional layer of meaning, as worshippers ask not only for personal blessings but also for stability, safety and calm for the kingdom.

Even in uncertain times, the quiet glow of faith continues to light Bahrain's Ramadan nights.

## Lemon prices rise while other fruits stay steady

**Hasan Barakat**  
TDT | Manama

While fruit stalls across Bahrain continue to display a reassuring sense of normality despite the tense regional climate, lemons have quietly chosen a different path.

For shoppers moving between market aisles during Ramadan, the change is hard to miss.

Among baskets of apples, oranges and bananas whose prices have remained largely stable, the humble lemon has become noticeably more expensive.

The sharpest rise has been seen in Vietnamese lemons, whose price has climbed to nearly three times its previous level.

South African lemons have



also edged up, though only slightly, while other varieties have either remained steady or increased by amounts too small for most shoppers to notice.

The shift has drawn attention during a time of year when lemons hold a special place on the Bahraini table.

Their sharp flavour cuts

through rich Ramadan meals, squeezed into fresh juices at iftar, mixed into salads or pressed over grilled fish and other dishes shared by families after sunset.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Tribune, a fruit importer explained that the rise cannot be attributed to regional

tensions alone.

"As everyone knows, fruit prices depend on supply and demand," he said. "Every Ramadan the demand for lemons increases because people use them in drinks, salads and many main dishes at the iftar table."

### Supply

He added that this year carries an additional factor affecting one particular variety.

"Vietnamese lemons are usually imported through the UAE, arriving at Jabel Ali port before reaching Bahrain," he said. "Because that port has been affected by the ongoing tensions in the region, the price in Bahrain has also moved up. Our prices here are linked to what happens in Dubai."

## Psychiatric review ordered in drug parcel appeal

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

A Bahraini housewife jailed for 10 years after a drug-filled parcel was found hidden

among sweets and food from Europe is to undergo a psychiatric assessment after her lawyer told the appeal court she had been in treatment for 25 years.

The Fifth High Criminal

Court of Appeal ordered the 46-year-old to be examined to assess her mental state and decide if she was fully answerable for her actions.

The court fixed 18 March for

the next hearing.

She is appealing against a court ruling, which jailed her for 10 years, fined her BD5,000 and ordered the seized items to be confiscated.

## BisB Confirms Full Operational Continuity across Branches and Digital Services

Manama

Bahrain Islamic Bank (BisB), the leading provider of innovative Islamic financial solutions for simplifying money matters in the Kingdom of Bahrain, has confirmed that its branch network continues to operate smoothly, while strictly adhering to all approved precautionary and regulatory measures to ensure the safety of both customers and employees during this period.

BisB's digital channels remain fully operational around the clock, seven days a week. The Bank encourages customers to utilise these platforms to facilitate their transactions securely and at their convenience.

Commenting on the occasion, Fatema AlAlawi, Chief Executive Officer of BisB, stated, "Amid current developments, our priority is to ensure we are meeting our customers' needs with the same level of reliability they have always expected from us. This stability reflects the proactive measures taken by our leadership and esteemed government. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the frontline workers dedicated to the



Fatema AlAlawi

safety and well-being of our nation."

The Bank continues to monitor developments closely in coordination with the Central Bank of Bahrain and relevant authorities. With effective business continuity plans in place, BisB is maintaining the highest levels of readiness to navigate various circumstances. Clients are urged to monitor the Bank's official communication channels for any further updates and guidance.

## Bahrain Bourse's Board of Directors Holds First Board Meeting for 2026



Manama

The Board of Directors of Bahrain Bourse (BHB) held its first meeting for the year 2026 on Thursday, 12th March 2026 chaired by Mr. Yusef Abdullah Al Yusef, Chairman of Bahrain Bourse.

During the meeting, the Board discussed the topics on the agenda and reviewed the progress made in implementing its previous decisions and recommendations. The Board also discussed recommendations of the Board's Committees, and reviewed the progress of the projects and initiatives under the 2025 Operational Plan, along with Bahrain Bourse's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2025.

The Board approved Bahrain Bourse's consolidated financial statements as of 31st December 2025, and also agreed to reappoint the external auditors for the year 2026. Both items

were recommended to Bahrain Bourse's shareholder, HE Minister of Industry & Commerce, the Minister mandated to carry out the responsibilities of Bahrain Bourse's shareholder, for approval as part of the agenda for the 2025 General Assembly.

In line with enhancing governance and compliance, the Board approved the proposed amendment to the Anti-Money Laundering Policy, as well as the Bahrain Bourse Corporate Governance Report for 2025. The Board also reviewed the results of the Board and committee evaluations for the same year.

The meeting concluded with a discussion of the latest developments concerning Bahrain Bourse under the current circumstances, and the Board made the necessary decisions to support business continuity plans and enhance performance in line with best practices.

## Alba holds virtual AGM for 2026

Manama

Aluminium Bahrain B.S.C. (Alba), the world's largest aluminium smelter on one site, held its 16th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Thursday 12 March 2026, via virtual attendance, in accordance with applicable regulations. The meeting was chaired by His Excellency Mr. Khalid Omar Al Rumaihi, Chairman of Alba's Board and attended by Alba's Board of Directors, Executive Management, shareholders, and representatives from regulatory authorities.

During the meeting, the shareholders reviewed and approved the minutes of the previous AGM held on 12 March 2025, together with the Board of Directors' Report on Alba's business activities and the consolidated financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2025.

Approvals were given to the distribution of cash dividends to shareholders at Fils 54.06 per share, equivalent to 54.06% of the paid up capital, amounting to BD76.5 million (inclusive of the interim dividends of Fils 10.55 per share distributed to the shareholders by 27 August 2025). The final dividend of Fils 43.51 per share will be paid to the shareholders - at the record date of 25 March 2026 - from 08 April 2026. In addition, the shareholders approved and authorised the Board of Directors



Alba Chairman - HE Khalid Al Rumaihi

to declare and pay interim dividends during future financial years, subject to defined conditions relating to profitability, solvency, and external auditor review.

Approvals were also given to the Board of Directors' total remuneration of BD420,000 for the year ended 31 December 2025 and the transfer of BD142,142,539 to the Retained Earnings. The Report of the Board of Directors for the year-ended 31 December 2025 was approved while the External Auditors' Report for the Financial Statements for the year-ended 31 December 2025 was reviewed during this meeting. In addition, the 2025 Corporate Governance Report was tabled before the shareholders for approval and Ernst & Young were reappointed as the Company's External Auditors for 2026.

During the AGM, the share-



holders approved the appointment of six Directors by Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Co. B.S.C. ©: HE Khaled Omar Al Rumaihi, Shaikh Isa bin Khalid Al Khalifa, Mr. Omar Syed, Mrs. Roselyne Renel, Mrs. Rasha Sabkar, and Mr. Riccardo Picca; the appointment of one director by Saudi Arabian Mining Company (Ma'aden) - Mr. Ahmed Al Shaikh. In addition, the shareholders elected 3 Directors, Mr. Bruce Cox, Mr. Khaled Al Rowais and Mr. Armando Martinez as independent board Directors for the next term of three years (2026-2029).

As part of the AGM agenda, the shareholders approved the proposed acquisition of 100% of Aluminium Dunkerque Industries France, subject to regulatory approvals. The shareholders further authorised the Board of Directors to execute all related transaction documentation, financing arrangements, and guarantees in connection with

the transaction.

Commenting on the occasion, His Excellency Mr. Khalid Omar Al Rumaihi, Chairman of Alba's Board of Directors, said:

"I take the opportunity to thank the former Board members for their valuable contributions during the last term, a period that reflected Alba's progress across operational excellence, financial strength, ESG leadership, and the execution of important growth priorities.

I also warmly welcome the new Board members and look forward to working alongside them and the Executive Management team as we advance Alba's strategic agenda, including the proposed acquisition of Aluminium Dunkerque. This transaction represents a strategic inflection point for Alba, expanding our footprint into Europe and advancing our ambition to build a geographically diversified, low carbon aluminium platform."

## Eskan Bank Affirms Service Continuity and Customer Commitment Amid Regional Developments

Manama

Eskan Bank (EB or the "Bank") has affirmed that its operations and services continue to run normally and efficiently across all channels, reflecting the strength and resilience of Bahrain's financial sector amid ongoing regional developments.

The Bank confirmed that all banking services remain fully available to customers, supported by robust operational systems and well-established business continuity plans that ensure uninterrupted service delivery. Eskan Bank continues to prioritize customer needs while maintaining high standards of operational stability and service reliability. The Bank reaffirmed that maintaining customer trust and service continuity remains a key priority, as it continues to support the



Abdulla Taleb, General Manager at Eskan Bank

stability and resilience of Bahrain's financial sector.

The Bank also noted that its digital banking platforms and online services remain fully operational, enabling customers

to access a wide range of banking services remotely and complete their transactions seamlessly. Eskan Bank's continued investment in digital infrastructure and operational systems has further strengthened its ability to provide secure and efficient services across multiple channels, ensuring individuals and businesses can access essential banking services with ease and confidence.

On this occasion, Eskan Bank praised the wise leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of the Kingdom of Bahrain, may God protect him, and the continued efforts of the Government of the Kingdom of Bahrain led by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, in safeguarding the security and stability of the Kingdom. The Bank also

commended the dedication of Bahrain's defense and security authorities in protecting the nation and ensuring the continued functioning of vital sectors.

The Bank also commended the role of the Central Bank of Bahrain in strengthening the resilience and stability of the financial sector through its robust regulatory and supervisory framework, which enables financial institutions to maintain operational readiness and respond effectively to evolving circumstances.

Furthermore, Eskan Bank highlighted the importance of collaboration across the financial sector to ensure preparedness and resilience during changing circumstances. The Bank reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining reliable financial services while supporting Bahrain's broader economic stability.

## Standard Chartered Confirms Uninterrupted Operations Across the Kingdom

Manama

Standard Chartered Bahrain has confirmed that its operations across the Kingdom remain fully functional and continue to run at full capacity. The Bank reaffirmed its ability to deliver seamless banking and financial services through both its branch network and digital platforms, ensuring that clients' needs are met without interruption and that service continuity is maintained at all

times.

Dr. Boutros Klink, CEO of Standard Chartered Bahrain, said: "The Bank remains committed to ensuring uninterrupted access to banking services for its clients and continues to operate with robust business continuity arrangements in place. These measures are supported by strong operational resilience, advanced digital capabilities and well-established contingency planning."

Dr. Klink further added: "Bah-



Dr. Boutros Klink

rain remains a strategic market for Standard Chartered, and the Kingdom's financial sector is resilient and well-prepared, supported by the strong regulatory oversight of the Central Bank of Bahrain and a highly robust financial infrastructure. We are steadfast in supporting our clients and contributing to Bahrain's dynamic financial ecosystem, which continues to demonstrate stability and strength even amid wider regional developments."

# Iran tightens Gulf oil grip

New Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei orders the continued closure of the world's most vital oil artery

AFP | Tehran

Iran's new supreme leader ordered his forces to keep the vital Strait of Hormuz shipping lane shut yesterday, as Tehran launched more devastating attacks on Gulf energy targets that sent global oil prices soaring.

The International Energy Agency warned the Middle East war could lead to "the largest supply disruption" in history but US President Donald Trump said stopping the Islamic republic's "evil empire" was more important than crude prices.

Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei, who was reportedly injured in an air strike, has yet to appear publicly since his nomination last Sunday as supreme leader, and his defiant first message was read by a newscaster on state television.

Khamenei, whose father and predecessor Ali Khamenei was killed in the first wave of US-Israeli attacks at the start of the war, called for Gulf countries to close their US military bases and vowed to avenge "the blood of our children and grandchildren".

"The lever of blocking the Strait of Hormuz must definitely be used," Khamenei said of the waterway through which a quarter of the world's seaborne oil trade usually transits.

The Revolutionary Guards reacted swiftly, with the force's navy commander Alireza Tangsiri saying: "In response to the order of the commander-in-chief, we will deliver the harshest blows to the aggressor enemy while maintaining the strategy of closing the Strait of Hormuz."

Under attack from Iran, shipping in and around Hormuz has



Rescue workers gather outside a damaged residential building as residents collect belongings from the rubble in Tehran

been at a near-standstill for days, with another three vessels targeted in the Gulf off the coast of the United Arab Emirates and Iraq.

Trump has faced intense political pressure as the global economic fallout of the crisis has mounted, and he has given repeated mixed messages on when the US air campaign might end.

As oil prices spiked above \$100 a barrel, Trump wrote on social

media that "of far greater interest and importance to me, as President, is stopping an evil Empire, Iran, from having Nuclear Weapons, and destroying the Middle East and, indeed, the World."

The Paris-based IEA, a world

authority on energy markets, warned yesterday the 13-day conflict "is creating the largest supply disruption in the history of the global oil market", which would surpass those of the 1970s.

With Gulf states slashing pro-

duction and oil tankers stuck in the Gulf, benchmark oil prices have risen 40-50 percent since the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28, threatening to crimp growth and stoke inflation.

● UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper arrived in Saudi Arabia yesterday on the first ministerial visit to the region since the start of the war

● Two crew on the USS Gerald R. Ford -- the world's largest aircraft carrier currently deployed for the war against Iran -- were injured Thursday in a laundry room fire, the US Navy said. "Two sailors are currently receiving medical treatment for non-life-threatening injuries and are in stable condition," a statement from US Naval Forces Central Command said

● Israel's military said it had struck a site in Iran it claimed was being used by the Islamic Republic to develop nuclear weapons

● The UN refugee agency says up to 3.2 million people in Iran have been displaced by the ongoing war

● An attack on an Italian base in Iraqi Kurdistan caused damage but no injuries, Italian authorities said

● 1,200+ killed in Iran per health ministry

Container ship near UAE struck, causing small fire: UK maritime agency

AFP | Dubai

A projectile struck a container ship near the United Arab Emirates, the UK maritime agency said yesterday, as Iran carries out a military campaign to disrupt global markets by choking trade in the Gulf.

"The container ship was struck by (an) unknown projectile causing a small fire onboard," the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said in a statement, adding the ship's crew had been reported as safe.

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

About one-fifth of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas passes through the narrow Strait of Hormuz, making the conflict's disruption potentially the largest shock to global energy supply

**”**

The United States is the largest Oil Producer in the World, by far, so when oil prices go up, we make a lot of money. BUT, of far greater interest and importance to me, as President, is stopping an evil Empire, Iran, from having Nuclear Weapons, and destroying the Middle East and, indeed, the World

DONALD TRUMP



A policeman inspects the wreckage of a drone in downtown Dubai

## Kuwait reports damage after drone attack on airport

AFP | Kuwait City

Drone strikes caused damage at Kuwait's international airport, authorities said

yesterday, after the facility came under fire again during Iran's attacks against the Gulf.

"The civil aviation authorities that Kuwait International

Airport was targeted by several drones, resulting only in material damage," authorities said in a statement, adding that there were no casualties.

## Saudi defence ministry says intercepted drones headed to Shaybah oil field

AFP | Riyadh

Saudi Arabia intercepted three drones headed towards the Shaybah oil field yesterday. The Gulf kingdom's defence

ministry said an "unmanned aerial vehicle heading towards the Shaybah field... was intercepted and destroyed".

Earlier the ministry said

two drones heading towards the same field were similarly destroyed, announcing the interception in a separate post on X.

## Drone falls near Dubai financial district after Iran threats

AFP | Dubai

A drone fell near Dubai's financial district yesterday, an AFP journalist saw, a day after some companies evacuated the area following threats from Iran against economic targets linked to the US and Israel.

On Wednesday, US banking giant Citi, consultancies

Deloitte and PwC, as well as other firms closed their offices or told employees to leave, mainly in Dubai's financial district, sources told AFP.

It followed threats from Tehran in the wake of a reported US-Israeli attack on a bank in Iran.

Dubai is a major financial hub in the Middle East and the United Arab Emirates has

borne the brunt of Iran's attacks against its Gulf neighbours since the war erupted on February 28.

Authorities in the city said a drone attack in the Al Bada'a area caused falling debris to hit the facade of a building on Sheikh Zayed Road -- a key thoroughfare that runs close to Dubai's International Financial Centre.

Humanitarian aid is gathered on the tarmac to be loaded into an aircraft destined for Lebanon at Roissy-Charles de Gaulle Airport on the outskirts of Paris



A satellite image shows airstrike damage to Khavar Shahr military garrison in Khavar Shahr, some 40 kms (25 miles) southeast of Tehran, Iran



Mourners attend the funeral of four family members killed overnight by Israeli air strikes that targeted the southern Lebanese coastal city of Tyre in Lebanon



# US 'not ready' for escorts

US says navy escorts for tankers in Strait of Hormuz delayed as military focuses on Iran strikes

AFP | Washington

The US military is currently "not ready" to escort tankers through the critical Strait of Hormuz because all its assets are focused on striking Iran, Energy Secretary Chris Wright said yesterday.

Wright's comments came as an attack on two oil tankers off Iraq killed at least one person, and oil prices briefly soared past \$100.

Since launching the war on Iran, US President Donald Trump has sought to calm the markets by offering US Navy escorts for oil tankers and reinsurance facilities for shipping companies -- but no escorts have so far taken place.

"It'll happen relatively soon, but it can't happen now. We're simply not ready," Wright told CNBC. "All of our military assets right now are focused on destroying Iran's offensive capabilities and the manufacturing industry that supplies their offensive capabilities."

He added that it was "quite likely" such escorts would be

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

Wright sparked market chaos Tuesday claiming US escorts had begun—post swiftly deleted—before admitting yesterday no protection exists as military targets Iran's factories instead

taking place by the end of the month.

On Tuesday, Wright sent oil prices see-sawing when he said US ships had carried out an escort, before his social media post was swiftly deleted and the White House denied that such an operation had occurred.



Commercial vessels are pictured offshore in Dubai

**Iran security chief threatens reciprocal attacks in region if US targets electricity**

AFP | Tehran

Iran's security chief Ali Larijani threatened yesterday to target power grids in the region if the United States attacked the Islamic republic's electricity supplies.

"If they do that, the whole region will go dark in less than half an hour and darkness provides ample opportunity to hunt down US servicemen running for safety," said Larijani in a post on X.

US President Donald Trump had said US forces could knock out Iran's electricity supply "within one hour" -- leaving the country with reconstruction that could take a generation.

## Attacks on oil tankers off Iraq kills one

AFP | Baghdad

An attack on two oil tankers off Iraq killed at least one crew member, an Indian national, as Iran pressed a campaign to disrupt global energy markets in retaliation for US and Israeli strikes.

Farhan Al-Fartousi, from Iraq's General Company for Ports, told AFP that "all crew members of the two tankers were rescued," adding that the

51 workers were in good condition.

The attack killed at least one crew member, said Fartousi.

India's embassy in Iraq said yesterday an Indian national had died in the attack, with 15 other Indian crew members evacuated.

The attack occurred roughly 50 kilometres (30 miles) from Iraq's coast.

Iraq's State Organisation for Marketing of Oil (SOMO)

said that two tankers are Maltese-flagged oil ZEFYROS and the SAFESEA VISHNU which was sailing under the Marshall Islands flag.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said yesterday they had struck the Marshall Islands-flagged ship Safesea, which they claimed was US-owned, in the north of the Gulf "after ignoring and not complying with warnings and alerts".

## Iran accuses EU of 'complicity' in US-Israeli attacks: FM spokesman

AFP | Tehran

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman accused the European Union yesterday

of "complicity" in the US-Israeli attacks on the Islamic republic.

"The European Union's indifference and acquiescence

in the face of US and Israeli aggression, brutalities and atrocities amounts to nothing less than complicity," Esmail Baqaei said in a post on X.



A stepplejack assesses the damage after a building was hit by a reported drone strike in Dubai's Creek Harbour

## Turkey talking to US, Iran in bid to end war: minister

AFP | Ankara

Turkey is talking to both Washington and Tehran in a bid to end the Middle East war, Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said yesterday as the conflict raged.

"We have been experiencing the most intense moments of the war in the last few days," he told a news conference in Ankara alongside his German counterpart Johann Wadepuhl. "The question is, what chances are there for negotiation, to what extent is it possible?" he added.

"This war should end as soon as possible... We are talking to the Iranian side, and we are talking to the American side," he said.

"But there is an ongoing military operation, there are certain realities: this unprovoked attack on Iran is as unjust and unlawful as Iran's attacks on Gulf countries."

Since the war began, said Fidan, Turkey had engaged in "intense" diplomatic efforts to end the confrontation.

"The task now is to prevent a further escalation of this war," Wadepuhl said after the pair held talks in the Turkish capital.

"Then we will very quickly have to address the following questions: how can this conflict be resolved in a lasting manner, and how can a reliable security architecture be achieved in the region?"

**'A common interest'**

Fidan also called for an end to Israel's bombardment of Lebanon, saying it had forced the displacement of "nearly a million



Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan (L) and Germany's Foreign Minister Johann Wadepuhl attend a joint press conference following their meeting in Ankara

**We have been experiencing the most intense moments of the war in the last few days. The question is, what chances are there for negotiation, to what extent is it possible? This war should end as soon as possible... We are talking to the Iranian side, and we are talking to the American side. But there is an ongoing military operation, there are certain realities: this unprovoked attack on Iran is as unjust and unlawful as Iran's attacks on Gulf countries**

HAKAN FIDAN

people" and warning it could bring the country to its knees.

"Israel's attacks must end before the Lebanese state collapses," he said, warning that if that were to happen, it would "profoundly affect the entire region" especially the neighbouring countries.

"The displacement of nearly a million people from their homes is absolutely unacceptable," he said.

Some of Iran's neighbours have long feared that any prolonged strikes or internal chaos trigger an influx of refugees, such as Turkey experienced during Syria's civil war.

So far, that has not been the case with the Iran war.

"It is entirely right and prudent for Turkey to also consider the consequences that the current crisis could have on possible refugee movements from Iran to Turkey," Wadepuhl said.

"To date, we have not seen anything of the sort, but we have a common interest in preventing this from happening," he added.

# Strike on Beirut seafront kills 8 as Israel threatens to 'take territory'

Violence escalates in Lebanon after rockets and drones target Israel

● Israel threatens expanded offensive

● Hundreds killed in Lebanon conflict

● Mass displacement across the country

AFP | Beirut

An Israeli strike on central Beirut's seafront killed eight people yesterday, Lebanon's health ministry said, as Israel threatened to expand operations and seize territory if Hezbollah does not stop its attacks.

After Hezbollah announced a new operation against Israel on Wednesday night, Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said the following day he ordered troops to "prepare for expanding" attacks in Lebanon.

"I warned the President of Lebanon that if the Lebanese government does not know how to control the territory and prevent Hezbollah from threatening northern communities and firing toward Israel -- we will take the territory and do it ourselves," Katz said.



A man stands on the rubble of a destroyed building as firefighters work at the site of overnight Israeli airstrikes in the Haret Hreik neighbourhood of Beirut's southern suburbs

Both Israel and Iran said Hezbollah on Wednesday launched a simultaneous attack with the Iranian military, while Hezbollah declared it was staging a new operation.

The Israeli military said the attack saw Hezbollah launch

"approximately 200 rockets, approximately 20 UAVs (drones)" in the biggest barrage from the group since the start of the war.

Israel's strike on Ramlet al-Bayda on Beirut's seaside killed eight people and wounded 31, according to Lebanon's health ministry.

An AFP correspondent at the scene saw a damaged motorcycle and two damaged cars, with the area, usually bustling with crowds, now sealed off by security forces.

Blood stains were on the pavement, with a small hole in the ground.



'We won't leave'

"We saw dead people on the ground," said Aseel Habbaj, a displaced woman who had been sheltering in a nearby tent after fleeing Israeli bombings in other areas of Lebanon.

"We were all asleep in my tent, when suddenly we heard a noise," Habbaj told AFP. "We jumped up and went to see what was happening," before a second strike wounded her husband.

Her 40-year-old neighbour

Dalal al-Sayed said she had opted to pitch her tent at the seaside after fleeing attacks in southern Lebanon "because the last thing we expected was Israel to hit Beirut".

Her family could not afford to rent apartments, she said.

"We won't leave, we will stay here even if we die," she added.

The seaside attack was the third in the heart of the capital since the Middle East war began.

Displaced people have been sleeping rough or in tents on the streets of Beirut, including in Ramlet al-Bayda, where some shelters were hit by shrapnel from yesterday's strike, according to the AFP correspondent.

Israel has also repeatedly hit the southern suburbs of Beirut, a Hezbollah stronghold, where the Israeli military said yesterday it had struck 10 Hezbollah targets.

Strikes on Aramoun, a residential area south of Beirut, also killed three people and wounded a child, according to the health ministry.

Lebanon's National News Agency reported several Israeli strikes on the south of the country, where Hezbollah has long held sway.

## Russian envoy reports 'productive meeting' with US negotiators

AFP | London

Russian President Vladimir Putin's envoy said Wednesday that he had joined a "productive meeting" with US negotiators, the first talks between Moscow and Washington since the start of the Iran war.

The discussions in Florida come after the United States lifted some sanctions on Russian oil earlier this week -- imposed because of Moscow's 2022 invasion of Ukraine -- to ease prices as war engulfed the Middle East.

"Thank you, Steve, Jared, and Josh, for a productive meeting," Russian negotiator Kirill Dmitriev posted on X, referring to US President Donald Trump's roving global envoy Steve Witkoff, Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, and White House Senior Advisor Josh Gruenbaum.

"The teams discussed a variety of topics and agreed to stay in touch," Witkoff posted earlier.

Trump said this week that Putin, to whom he spoke on Monday, wanted to be "helpful" in relation to the Middle East war.

Dmitriev said after the Florida meeting that Washington was "beginning to better understand" the importance of Russian oil.

"We discussed promising projects that could contrib-



ute to the restoration of Russian-American relations and the current crisis on global energy markets," he wrote in a Telegram post.

"Today, many countries, primarily the United States, are beginning to better understand the key, systemic role of Russian oil and gas in ensuring the stability of the global economy, as well as the ineffectiveness and destructive nature of sanctions against Russia."

The Kremlin said yesterday that it was too early to talk about cooperation between Russia and the United States on energy markets, but that the topic was "certainly being discussed".

## US says Iran campaign cost \$11 billion in six days: NYT

AFP | Washington

The opening week of the war against Iran cost the United States more than \$11.3 billion, lawmakers were told in a Pentagon briefing, according to a New York Times report underscoring the pace at which the conflict is consuming weapons and resources.

The Times, citing unnamed sources familiar with Tuesday's closed-door briefing, said members of Congress were told that the figure excludes many costs connected with the buildup to the strikes -- suggesting the final tally for the first week could rise substantially.

Defense officials had previously told Congress that roughly \$5.6 billion worth of munitions were expended in just the first two days of fighting, according to US media -- a burn rate far higher than earlier public estimates.

The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) independent think tank in Wash-



USAF military ground personnel load Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) into a US Air Force (USAF) B-1 Lancer bomber on the tarmac at RAF Fairford in south-west England

ington estimated that the first 100 hours of Operation Epic Fury cost \$3.7 billion -- or more than \$891 million per day.

Most of these costs, \$3.5 b, had not already been budgeted, the CSIS said.

The Iran War Cost Tracker

website, which estimates the cost of the conflict in real time, showed a figure of more than \$17 b on its counter yesterday.

## Iran arrests nearly 200 people over US-Israel war: rights group

AFP | Paris

Iranian authorities have arrested nearly 200 people nationwide on charges related to the US-Israeli war against the

Islamic republic, a US-based rights group said yesterday.

The charges relate to accusations including over activity on social media, sending content to foreign media out-

lets, espionage and disturbing public order, the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) said, adding its count was based on official reports.

It said at least 195 people had been arrested nationwide including in the capital Tehran and the northern hub of Tabriz as well as other cities and provinces across the country.

# Classifieds



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# Djokovic ousted by Draper at Indian Wells as Alcaraz marches on

Epic third-set point exhausts Djokovic before Draper triumphs in tiebreaker firefight

● **Draper to face Medvedev in quarter-finals**

● **Carlos Alcaraz beats Casper Ruud 6-1, 7-6**

● **Norrie sets up Alcaraz clash**

AFP | Indian Wells

Novak Djokovic was dumped out by Jack Draper in a slugfest Wednesday as the defending champion won 4-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) to reach the quarter-finals at Indian Wells.

World number one Carlos Alcaraz sailed into the last eight of the Masters 1000 event for the fifth straight year and there were straight-sets wins for Daniil Medvedev and Cameron Norrie.

But Britain's Draper did it the hard way, wearing down 38-year-old Djokovic in a punishing third set to deny the Serb superstar his first return to the quarter-finals since he won his fifth Indian Wells title in 2016.

"I came out here tonight and I won that match through determination and trying to problem-solve and do my best and have a great attitude," said Draper, who kept the former world number one on the move with multiple drop shots.

The margins were razor-thin over the first two sets. The tide turned on an epic point in the opening game of the third that saw both players chasing down drop shots and scrambling for



Jack Draper of Great Britain shakes hands at the net after his three set victory against Novak Djokovic of Serbia

lobs before Djokovic sealed it with an overhead for a 40-30 lead.

He flopped on the court exhausted and was on his knees again after Draper won the next point. Djokovic would go on to hold serve, but he said it was the difference in the match for him.

"One point," he said. "It was great winning that point in that game, but I just ran completely out of gas."

Draper broke Djokovic in his next service game, but couldn't close it out when he served for the match at 5-4.

The reprieve wasn't enough for Djokovic, who led 4-3 in the tiebreaker but couldn't hang on.

"One point. It was great winning that point in that game, but I just ran completely out of gas"

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

"He played a sloppy game to close it out 5-4, and, you know, I got the crowd, you know, backing me, and I felt the energy," Djokovic said. "It was, like, maybe I'm gonna take this one. It was so, so close."

Draper, playing just his second tournament since missing the better part of six months with an

arm injury, was delighted.

"To come out here against Novak, for me the greatest tennis player there is, I'm just incredibly proud of myself," he said.

He won't have long to savor the victory, with a quarter-final against two-time finalist Daniil Medvedev coming up on Thursday.

Medvedev beat American Alex Michelsen 6-2, 6-4.

**Alcaraz shines**

Alcaraz advanced with a sparkling 6-1, 7-6 (7/2) victory over Casper Ruud, extending his perfect start to 2026.

Alcaraz, who lifted the trophy in the California desert in 2023 and 2024, was untouchable in



An epic point in the first game of the third set saw both players chasing drop shots and scrambling for lobs before Djokovic won it—then flopped on court exhausted, which he said made the difference

the first set, conjuring winners from every angle of the court.

"My first set, I think I was unplayable to be honest," Alcaraz said. "I was really, really happy about playing at that level."

Ruud stepped it up in the second set, but even he could only smile when Alcaraz seized a 5-1 lead in the tiebreaker with another leaping volley, the Spaniard closing proceedings fittingly with a backhand winner.

Alcaraz, 22, became the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam with his victory at the Australian Open.

He followed that up with the Qatar Open title and with three wins under his belt in Indian Wells is now 15-0 on the season.

He next faces 29th-ranked Briton Norrie, who beat Australian qualifier Rinki Hijikata 6-4, 6-2.

Norrie, the 2021 Indian Wells champion, beat Alcaraz in the second round of the Paris Masters 1000 last year.

# Swiatek routs Muchova to reach quarter-finals

● **Rybakina advances after Kartal retires injured**

● **Pegula beats Bencic 6-3, 7-6**

● **Svitolina advances after Siniakova retires**

AFP | Indian Wells

Two-time champion Iga Swiatek barreled into the Indian Wells quarter-finals on Wednesday, beating in-form Czech Karolina Muchova 6-2, 6-0.

World number two Swiatek, who lifted the trophy in the prestigious ATP and WTA Masters 1000 in 2022 and 2024, won the last 10 games to halt Muchova's eight-match winning streak, which included her first title since 2019 in the Qatar Open last month.

"I felt great," Swiatek said after reaching her fifth straight Indian Wells quarter-final.

"I felt really solid and like I could really, from the beginning till the end, play my kind of game and just play how I wanted to."

That included being "proactive" with her forehand.

"I just chose the right balls to go forward or stay back and grind a bit more. I think the decision-making was good today. I didn't rush and I had comfortable situations to do what I wanted to"

IGA SWIATEK

"I just chose the right balls to go forward or stay back and grind a bit more," she said.

"I think the decision-making was good today. I didn't rush and I had comfortable situations to do what I wanted to."

Swiatek next faces ninth-seeded Ukrainian Elina Svitolina, who advanced when 44th-ranked Czech Katerina Siniakova retired with a right hip injury while trailing 6-1, 1-1.

"Of course very unlucky for her to finish a tournament like this," Svitolina said of Siniakova, a former doubles number one who ousted defending champion Mirra Andreeva in the third round.

"For me, it's a little bit more time to recover for tomorrow's big match," said the 31-year-old who has lost four of five prior encounters with Swiatek.



Iga Swiatek of Poland returns a shot to Karolina Muchova of Czechia

Australian Open champion Elena Rybakina, the 2023 Indian Wells winner, also advanced by retirement, with unseeded Briton Sonay Kartal calling it a day as she trailed 6-4, 4-3.

Kartal had received treatment for a lower back injury during

a medical timeout late in the first set.

She continued to receive massages on the changeovers in the second before finally calling a halt after going down a break.

"Definitely not the way I wanted to finish the match,"

Rybakina said. "It's not easy, this kind of injury."

**Over the hump**

Rybakina next faces fifth-seeded American Jessica Pegula, whose 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) victory over Belinda Bencic marked her first victory over the Swiss veteran after four defeats.

"Really happy being able to turn around my pretty poor record against Belinda," Pegula said.

"When you're able to figure that out and get over that hump it's always a good feeling."

Up 5-3 in the second set, Pegula thwarted a late comeback bid from Bencic, who produced a love service game then broke Pegula as she served for the match at 5-4.

Bencic then held serve to force the tiebreaker, saving a pair of match points before Pegula closed out the win on her third opportunity.

"She made me have to earn it today," Pegula said.

"I felt like in the second set, when I got up there, I had a little bit of a lull where I had a couple of game points and I could have maybe finished the match."

"But she's a really good player and when you don't quite finish those off that's where she can come in, and that's what she did."

# Real Madrid batter Man City as PSG sink Chelsea in Champions League

Federico Valverde scores three in first half as Madrid avenge league-phase defeat

● **PSG beat Chelsea 5-2 at Parc des Princes**

● **Arsenal draw 1-1 at Bayer Leverkusen**

● **Bodo/Glimt beat Sporting 3-0**

AFP | Paris

Federico Valverde scored an unlikely hat-trick as Real Madrid trounced Manchester City 3-0 in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie Wednesday, while holders Paris Saint-Germain beat Chelsea 5-2.

Premier League leaders Arsenal snatched a 1-1 draw at Bayer Leverkusen to preserve their unbeaten record in Europe this season, while Bodo/Glimt continued their fairytale run with a 3-0 win over Sporting.

Alvaro Arbeloa's record 15-time European champions avenged their loss to City in the league phase as Valverde struck three times in the first half to hand Madrid full control of the tie despite the absence of the injured Kylian Mbappe.

"(It was) incredible, you dream of nights like this," Valverde told Movistar. "It's been a long time since I enjoyed a game like this."

Valverde ran onto a long kick from Thibaut Courtois and dribbled past Gianluigi Donnarumma to slot home and give Madrid the lead at the Santiago Bern-



Real Madrid's Uruguayan midfielder #08 Federico Valverde scores his second goal

abeu against City as the teams met in a knockout tie for the fifth season running.

The Uruguayan midfielder arrowed a low drive into the far corner to double Madrid's advantage and then completed his hat-trick with a sublime touch and finish after linking up with Brahim Diaz.

City could have suffered an ever heavier defeat but Donnarumma saved a second-half penalty from Vinicius Junior after the City goalkeeper brought down the Brazilian.

"I had a feeling that we were better than the result said... but

the result is here," City boss Pep Guardiola told TNT Sports, refusing to write off his team's chances next week.

"In football you never know. We will try."

PSG have one foot in the quarter-finals after two late goals from Khvicha Kvaratskhelia at the Parc des Princes.

Bradley Barcola fired PSG in front but Malo Gusto's scruffy effort skipped past Matfei Safonov to bring Chelsea level.

Ousmane Dembele finished off a clinical counter to restore the lead for the hosts before half-time, only for Enzo Fernandez

to reply once more for Chelsea after excellent work from Pedro Neto.

A mistake from Filip Jorgensen saw Vitorino lob the Chelsea goalkeeper to put PSG on top for the third time, with Kvaratskhelia hammering in a superb fourth and then potentially applying the fatal blow for Luis Enrique's side in stoppage time.

"It is a special moment because we are maybe not quite as precise as usual..." said Luis Enrique, whose team have struggled to consistently replicate last season's form.

"There are all the comparisons

”(It was) incredible, you dream of nights like this. It's been a long time since I enjoyed a game like this

FEDERICO VALVERDE

with last year but it is impossible to be at that level... we are very resilient, I think that is a word which defines our team."

Chelsea boss Liam Rosenior admitted his team paid the price for losing their composure late on.

"A very disappointing result in an evening where for so much of the game I was really happy. The last 15-20 minutes were crazy," he said.

"We need to be better with setbacks and we need to stay calm and we didn't."

**Arsenal leave it late**

Despite an unprecedented six English teams featuring in the last 16, not a single one won and only two avoided defeat in Europe this week.

Arsenal needed an 89th-minute penalty from Kai Havertz against his former club to snatch a draw away to Bayer Leverkusen.

Robert Andrich headed in a corner for Leverkusen moments into the second half to leave Arsenal, who won all eight of their league phase matches, staring at defeat in Germany.

But Havertz came off the bench and converted from the



In a statistical anomaly for English football, not a single one of the record six English teams competing in the Champions League last-16 managed to secure a victory during this week's fixtures

spot after a foul on Noni Madueke to ensure Arsenal remain favourites to reach the quarter-finals.

"I know how hard it is to come here... and we knew what to expect," said Havertz.

"We didn't play our best today. But we're going home with a good result. We need to step on the gas next week."

Bodo/Glimt enjoyed another remarkable Champions League night as they swept Portugal's Sporting aside 3-0 to register their fifth win in a row in the competition.

Sondre Brunstad Fet put Bodo ahead from the penalty spot just after the half-hour mark and Ole Didrik Blomberg made it two in first-half injury time.

Kasper Hogn scored his fifth goal in as many European games with 19 minutes remaining to spark wild celebrations for the Norwegian underdogs.

## World champion Norris says McLaren must 'improve in all areas'

AFP | London

World champion Lando Norris said yesterday that McLaren have made some progress since a disappointing opening to the season in Australia but warned they still need to "improve in all areas".

Pre-season favourite George Russell led home a Mercedes one-two in Melbourne, ahead of both Ferraris, with Britain's Norris fifth -- 51 seconds behind the race winner.

All weekend Norris had railed against the latest version of F1 cars, which have a 50-50 split between conventional and electrical power, saying they were "probably the worst" the sport had produced.

Ahead of this weekend's Chinese Grand Prix in Shanghai, the second stop in the calendar, Norris struck a slightly more upbeat tone.

"It should be a little bit more simple and therefore we expect to be a bit closer," he told reporters.

"Even if we were to go back to Melbourne now, though, I think we would expect to be



McLaren's British driver Lando Norris arrives to the paddock at the Shanghai International Circuit

closer anyway from what we've understood and been able to learn and figure out.

"But at the same time we also know we have to improve in all areas, it's not just power unit, it's the car itself.

"It's decent, we're in a good starting position, but we still want it to be better than what it is currently."

Norris at least fared better

than his teammate Oscar Piastri, who crashed out of his home Australian Grand Prix before it even began.

Piastri, who qualified fifth fastest in the Melbourne season-opener, hit the kerb at Turn 4 and spun into the concrete barriers on the way to the grid.

"It's certainly not going to be my favourite moment of my career, but I think I still tried

”It should be a little bit more simple and therefore we expect to be a bit closer. Even if we were to go back to Melbourne now, though, I think we would expect to be closer anyway from what we've understood and been able to learn and figure out. But at the same time we also know we have to improve in all areas, it's not just power unit, it's the car itself

LANDO NORRIS

to learn as much as I can from the race," he said in Shanghai, where he won the grand prix last year.

"There's definitely positives to take in amongst last weekend, but I think back to the start of last year, I'm only two points worse off even though it's a lot more embarrassing."

## Messi stuck on 899 goals after 0-0 Miami draw at Nashville



Argentine superstar Lionel Messi of Inter Miami reacts after a missed shot

AFP | Miami

Lionel Messi was denied his 900th career goal on Wednesday as reigning MLS champion Inter Miami played a 0-0 draw at Nashville in the CONCACAF Champions Cup.

The 38-year-old Argentine superstar striker was tightly marked throughout the match, a first leg showdown in the round of 16 in the North American club showdown.

Inter Miami will host the second leg next Wednesday.

Messi moved within one goal of the milestone 900th career tally after netting his

80th goal for Miami, and 899th of his career, last Saturday in an MLS triumph over DC United.

The eight-time Ballon D'Or winner, who turns 39 in June, scored 672 goals for Barcelona earlier in his career and 32 at Paris Saint-Germain, with a further 115 international goals for Argentina.

Rain arrived after a scoreless first half but defenders still dominated.

Messi was denied in the 57th minute by Nashville goalkeeper Brian Schwake's save on a right-footed shot from the right side of the box.

# Manama draw first blood against Al Najma

TDT | Manama

Record champions Manama struck first in their best-of-three semi-final series, defeating Al Najma 78-66 at Khalifa Sports City Arena in the 2025-26 Khalifa Bin Salman Cup. A strong first half and a composed finish in the closing minutes propelled.

Record champions Manama struck first in their best-of-three semi-final series, defeating Al Najma 78-66 at Khalifa Sports City Arena in the 2025-26 Khalifa Bin Salman Cup. A strong first half and a composed finish in the closing minutes propelled Manama within one victory of a championship berth.

The match on Wednesday night began tightly, with both teams trading baskets in the first quarter. Alex Young led Manama's offense as they edged ahead 23-20 by the end of the frame. The second quarter stayed close, with Al Najma briefly taking the lead, but Young and Ahmed Salman hit timely shots to regain control, allowing Manama to take a narrow 46-45 advantage into halftime.

Manama's defense in the third quarter limited Al Najma's scoring, while key baskets from Mohammed Buallay and Ali Jaber extended the lead to 57-53 by the period's end. Al Najma cut the deficit to just one early in the fourth quarter at 59-58, but Manama responded immediately with a decisive run. Young's scoring, coupled with contributions from Salman and Subah Hussain, kept Al Najma at bay and stretched the lead into double digits, sealing the 78-66 victory.

Young finished with 24 points, four rebounds and two assists, while Salman added 18 points and five rebounds. Buallay recorded 10 points, nine rebounds and six assists. Jaber contributed nine points and nine rebounds, with Subah Hussain chipping in seven. For Al Najma, Donovan Smith



Manama captain Ahmed Salman strikes his trademark celebration

led with 15 points, nine rebounds and four blocks, Mohamed Kuwayed had 14 points, and Ahmed Aldurazi added 13.

Game Two is set for Saturday at 10.30pm, with a deciding Game Three, if necessary, scheduled for next Wednesday at 8.30pm. In the other semi-final, defending champions Muharraq won their first game against Al Ahli to take a 1-0 lead in that series.

Looking ahead, Manama captain Ahmed Salman acknowledged the challenges that

lie ahead. He noted that Saturday's Game Two will be "even tougher" and emphasized the importance of staying focused, saying he expects the team to rise to the occasion and handle the pressure of a tightly contested series.

With three titles already to their name, tying Al Ahli for the most in Khalifa Bin Salman Cup history, Manama are building momentum for another championship push and look ready to extend their legacy.

## Early F1 leader Russell says 'championship means nothing at this point'



George Russell (centre R) and Kimi Antonelli celebrate in Melbourne

AFP | Shanghai

George Russell said yesterday the "championship means nothing at this point" as the Mercedes ace enters the second weekend of the Formula One season top of the pile following victory in Melbourne.

The Briton began the campaign as favourite to win a maiden world championship and showed why as he led home a Mercedes one-two with teammate Kimi Antonelli in Sunday's season-opener. The Australian Grand Prix heralded a new era for the sport with numerous rule changes, including a 50-50 split between conventional and electrical power.

Rivals had pinpointed Mercedes as the team to beat in the build-up to the season, but Russell was eager not to sound too triumphant going into the Chinese Grand Prix this weekend.

"It feels no different to any other day, to be honest, here in

China," the 28-year-old said in Shanghai.

"Preparing as usual, going about my business as usual."

"I'm most happy about the fact that the car is quick and reacting as we think."

"There's still room to improve and that's what I'm most pleased about."

"A championship means nothing at this point."

Ferrari were the closest challengers to Mercedes in Melbourne, with Charles Leclerc third and seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton fourth.

Russell believes the season will be "quite a close fight between ourselves and Ferrari", a view he said was shared by fellow Briton Hamilton.

The pair, former teammates at Mercedes, shared a flight to Shanghai together.

Russell warned it was not only Ferrari who posed a threat, even if they are shaping up as the prime challengers ahead of Red Bull and McLaren.

## Verstappen jokes new F1 cars 'more like Mario Kart'

AFP | Shanghai

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen said yesterday he was not having much fun driving the new era of Formula One cars, joking he was "practising with Mario Kart" because it was more realistic than his simulator.

The Red Bull driver crashed in qualifying in the season-opener in Australia last weekend before having to carve his way from 20th on the grid to finish a creditable sixth.

The new cars require battery management and energy harvesting with a 50-50 split between conventional and electrical power.

They also have features such as straight-line mode, active aero, overtake and boost buttons, which Verstappen reckons are nearer to a video game.

"I swapped the simulator for my Nintendo Switch. I'm practising with Mario Kart, actually. Finding the mushrooms is going quite well, the blue shells are a bit more difficult."

Verstappen announced this week that he would be driving in the Nurburgring 24-hour race this year.

"I wish I had a bit more fun



Max Verstappen

**"I swapped the simulator for my Nintendo Switch. I'm practising with Mario Kart, actually. Finding the mushrooms is going quite well, the blue shells are a bit more difficult"**

MAX VERSTAPPEN

for sure," he said of Formula One at the moment.

"I mean, I get to race the Nordschleife (Nurburgring) and I hope in the coming years I can do Spa and hopefully Le Mans."

## Tempers Flare as Muharraq Draw with Riffa

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

The Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier League returned last night after more than two weeks without action, with the title race tightening and Bahrain's fiercest rivalry producing drama. Riffa and defending champions Muharraq played out a 1-1 draw, while Sitra secured a vital 3-0 win over Budaiya.

At Khalifa Sports City, Santos' side struggled to break down Mashaan's men in the first half, which ended goalless. Riffa looked the more dangerous side and created the clearest opportunities, while the Red Wolves were largely limited to half-chances. The breakthrough arrived nine minutes into the second half when Serbian striker Dejan Georgijevic capitalised on a defensive mistake, slotting first time past goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaffar.

Muharraq responded in stoppage time after Edimar Ribeiro da Costa was taken down in the box, allowing Arthur Rezende to calmly convert the penalty. Tempers flared immediately after, resulting in two red cards: Ahmed Abdulhameed for Rif-



Riffa celebrate as Georgijevic fires them into the lead

fa and Abdulla Al Khalasi for Muharraq.

Meanwhile, at Bahrain National Stadium, Abdumajeed's Sitra impressed against Budaiya under ALSayed Hassan Isa. Captain Othman Al Hajj opened the scoring in the second minute, slotting home a low finish from Mauritanian winger Bekaye Wade's pass to mark his seventh goal of the season. He added a second in

the 18th minute with a towering header from a Wade corner, before Karl Namnganda curled a stunning counter-attack strike into the top corner in the 85th minute to seal a 3-0 victory.

Both matches were briefly paused with around 15 minutes remaining due to safety sirens, reflecting ongoing difficulties in the kingdom, before play resumed.

The results leave Muharraq on 37 points, temporarily top of the table before league leaders Al Khaldiya play today. Riffa remain third on 34 points. Sitra move up to seventh on 18 points, with Budaiya dropping to eighth.

Matchday 16 continues tonight as Al Khaldiya face bottom-placed Bahrain Club, while Al Ahli take on Al Shabab, both at 9:30PM.