

The UK Maritime Trade Operations reported an incident in southwest of Al Hudaydah, Yemen, where a sailing vessel was approached by a skiff carrying around 10-12 individuals | P9



All Units On High Alert



The General Command of the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) announced that all its units and weapon systems are operating at the highest levels of readiness and defensive preparedness. The BDF stated that since the beginning of what it described as “ongoing Iranian attacks,” it has successfully intercepted and destroyed 194 missiles and 516 drones that targeted the Kingdom.

Drugs Hidden in Food



The High Criminal Court has set April 28 to deliver its verdict in the case of an Asian woman in her twenties accused of attempting to smuggle around 2.5 kilograms of marijuana into the country by concealing it inside food packages. According to court records, the defendant was charged by the Public Prosecution with importing narcotics on December 10, 2025, with the intent to traffic. Customs officers at Bahrain International Airport became suspicious of the passenger while she was passing through the green channel and referred her to further inspection at the red channel. A search of her luggage reportedly uncovered six food-labeled packages containing approximately 2.065 kilograms of suspected narcotics. An Anti-Narcotics Directorate officer testified that the defendant was arrested at the airport and that investigations pointed to a wider drug trafficking network. She was allegedly recruited to smuggle the drugs into Bahrain in exchange for 15,000 Thai baht.

Post-Attack Restoration Begins

GPIC Restoration Efforts Continue Under Strict Safety Guidelines

The Ministry of Interior confirmed the implementation of precautionary and proactive safety measures ahead of resuming the second phase of technical remediation and repair work at the Gulf Petrochemical Company (GPIC) facility, which sustained damage in an Iranian attack.

In a media briefing on Bahrain TV, the Ministry highlighted the importance of adhering to safety instructions and civil protection guidelines available on the National Civil Protection Platform, particularly those relating to ammonia gas leak response procedures.

As part of enhanced public safety measures, authorities designated a 2-kilometre safety radius around the affected site. The precautionary zone includes several industrial facilities and a limited number of



“TEMPORARY HOUSING WAS PROVIDED, ALONG WITH ALL BASIC NECESSITIES AND THE SERVICES THEY NEEDED, UNTIL THE WORK IS FINISHED AND CONDITIONS CAN SAFELY RETURN TO NORMAL.”

BRIGADIER ISA HASAN AL-QATTAN, DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE CAPITAL GOVERNORATE POLICE DIRECTORATE



“ALL SAFETY STEPS WERE TAKEN TO ENSURE THAT NO MATERIALS LEAKED THAT COULD CAUSE HARM.”

CAPTAIN ABDULLAH AL-MANNAI, MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

Preventive instructions for ammonia gas leaks

- Stay indoors in an inner room. Close all doors/windows, switch off ventilation, and block gaps with damp cloths.
- Cover your body fully and wear an N95 mask or a clean cloth over your face.
- Watch for symptoms like breathing issues or irritation and call 999 if needed.
- If exposed, remove clothing, seal it in a bag, and wash thoroughly with soap and water.
- If in a car, stop safely, close windows, and turn off the AC immediately.

Source: National Civil Protection Platform

residential units within Block 619. Yesterday, Residents in the affected area have been notified of voluntary evacuation arrangements, with alternative temporary accommodation

made available. The Ministry confirmed that all necessary safety protocols are in place to ensure no hazardous material leakage threatens the public. Authorities reiter-

ated their call for full cooperation from residents, stressing that the measures are intended solely to safeguard public safety. Officials added that comprehensive precautions remain in place to protect both citizens and residents.

The Ministry of Interior said the reported strike on 5 April 2026 targeting the GPIC facility

in a populated area, constitutes a serious violation against lives, property, and critical industrial infrastructure.

They further noted that potential large-scale loss of life and property was prevented due to precautionary and preventive measures already in place under Bahrain’s civil protection framework.

Driver Claims Hunger

TDT | Manama Rehab Mohammad

A delivery driver told the High Criminal Court that he was “in a hurry to get breakfast” while defending himself in a case involving a fatal wrong-way motorcycle ride that caused a crash killing three people and injuring three others.

The defendant admitted during proceedings that he had been travelling in the wrong direction but said he was unaware the incident had resulted in deaths and injuries at the time.

Prosecutors said the accused is charged with causing a deadly traffic accident on March 14,

2026, by driving against the flow of traffic, which resulted in three fatalities and three injuries. He also faces charges of failing to assist victims, leaving the scene without reporting the incident, and not providing necessary aid despite being able to do so.

Additional charges include reckless driving that endangered lives and property, damage to others’ belongings, and operating a vehicle in a manner that posed a serious risk to road users.

According to case details, the incident occurred around 3:10 a.m. in the Sehla area when the defendant rode his motorcycle against traffic rules from a pedestrian crossing. A vehicle driven by



“I was in a hurry to get breakfast.”

DELIVERY DRIVER

one of the victims subsequently lost control, struck a pole and a public transport stop, and hit three pedestrians.

The impact threw the victims onto the pavement. The vehicle then collided with a parked car, while the motorcyclist fled

the scene without stopping or informing authorities. Two victims died at the scene, while a third later succumbed to injuries in the hospital, turning a moment of reckless driving into a deadly chain of events.

Labour Training Resumed



The Ministry of Labour in Bahrain has announced that in-person training at private training institutions will resume starting Monday, April 13, 2026.

The Ministry stated that private training centres will also retain the flexibility to continue delivering programs either in-person or remotely, depending on the nature of the training and the requirements of international funding bodies.

EU-MEDIATED NEGOTIATIONS

Bahrain urges Kosovo-Serbia progress in EU-led dialogue

- Cooperation on 1,582 missing persons cases
- Trust-building and peaceful coexistence.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has chaired a United Nations Security Council meeting focused on the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, emphasizing the importance of dialogue, diplomacy, and regional stability.

The session was led by Bahrain’s Permanent Representative



to the United Nations in New York, Ambassador Jamal Fares Al-Ruwaie, and included briefings from the Foreign Ministers of Serbia and Kosovo, along with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of the UN mission in Kosovo.

In its national statement, Bahrain welcomed constructive international and regional initiatives aimed at strengthening good relations, particularly in the Western Balkans. It also welcomed the formation of the Kosovo government in February 2026, stressing that political stability is essential for security,

development, and prosperity. Bahrain called on Serbia and Kosovo to engage constructively and in good faith in EU-mediated talks between Pristina and Belgrade. It also supported ongoing dialogue efforts, including trilateral meetings involving Serbia, Kosovo, and the European Union.

The Kingdom praised cooperation between the two sides in efforts to locate 1,582 missing persons from the 1998-1999 conflict in Kosovo, describing it as an important step in building trust and promoting reconciliation.

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Path to Recovery

Positive momentum builds across Bahrain's private sector

TDT | Manama
Neethu V

After a quieter stretch shaped by wider geo-political uncertainty, Bahrain's business landscape is beginning to recover. Across Manama, activity is gradually picking up across retail, services, and real estate, with customers and investors slowly returning to the market.

In an attempt to understand the road to recovery, The Daily Tribune spoke to several business owners, experts and entrepreneurs.

Real Estate

Eman Mohammed Al Mannai, a Certified International Property Specialist reflected on Bahrain's real estate journey from the onset of the conflict.

"The real estate market has shown notable stability in recent weeks, operating on a "two-speed" recovery of high-end scarcity versus mid-market oversupply." During recent regional tensions, activity saw a tactical pause rather than a sell-off, with buyers delaying decisions and sellers in areas like Juffair and Seef offering more flexible terms to secure deals.

By mid-April 2026, confidence is gradually returning, making it a more buyer-friendly market.



"The real estate market has shown notable stability in recent weeks, operating on a "two-speed" recovery of high-end scarcity versus mid-market oversupply."

EMAN MOHAMMED AL MANNAI



"In difficult times, success belongs to those who stay rooted in their community,"

DONA MARIA GEMAYEL



"We are hopeful conditions will improve, but it may take time to fully return to normal."

SUSHMA GUPTA



small factories return to full output.

He said keeping the sector productive calls for an immediate and focused support package, including delaying or rescheduling finance and bank dues without extra interest, speeding up payment of money owed to companies by state bodies, giving SMEs priority in government tenders and purchases, and easing running fees for a temporary period.



"These firms do not need years to recover, they need quick decisions that restore confidence and cashflow." - MP Ahmed Al Salloom

MP AHMED AL SALLOOM

Prime areas such as Bahrain Harbour, Reef Island, and Marassi Al Bahrain are recording price growth of 4%-7% due to limited supply, while Bahrain continues to offer strong rental yields of 8%-11% in select developments.

The progression of the Bahrain Metro and expansion projects in Manama seafront also acts as a floor for prices, preventing any significant "war-time" dip.

SMEs

Beyond real estate, small retail and community-driven businesses are reporting a gradual pickup in activity, supported by stronger neighbourhood-level

engagement.

Dona Maria Gemayel from Dona's Wonders—winner of the 20th StartUp Bahrain Pitch, known for gluten-free, clean-eating desserts and meals—said that small businesses are finding strength in going local and working closely with nearby suppliers to stay operational despite ongoing challenges. Supported by Export Bahrain and strong customer loyalty, she said the business is not just surviving but growing with its community. "In difficult times, success belongs to those who stay rooted in their community," she added.

And also Ashraf from Bake

Home Bakery, known for custom cakes, brownies, and fast-turn-around DM-based orders said, "While sales have dipped in recent weeks, we hope things will pick up in the coming weeks."

Meanwhile, Sushma Gupta, an event management entrepreneur and owner of Shining Rays Co. BPC, said the past week has been better. "We are hopeful conditions will improve, but it may take time to fully return to normal."

MP Ahmed Al Salloom, chairman of the Bahrain SMEs Development Society, said recovery starts when workshops, shops, restaurants, service offices and

AI Scrutiny Tightens in Classrooms



TDT | Manama
Hasan Barakat

Students in Bahrain are being encouraged to rely more on original thinking as schools strengthen efforts to curb academic plagiarism and the overuse of artificial intelligence in assignments.

The Ministry of Education has introduced practical measures to verify student work, including using tools such as GPTZero and Plagiarism Detector to check the authenticity of research and projects. The initiative comes amid growing concern that some students may be relying heavily on AI-generated content instead of developing their own ideas.

Educators say the technology helps them better understand student learning. "We started noticing a pattern: polished language, perfect structure, but when you ask the student to explain their work, they struggle," said one secondary school teacher. "The tools help us have an honest conversation about what learning actually means."

Officials stressed that the focus is not only on enforcement but also on promoting academic honesty, critical thinking, and deeper engagement with learning materials.

The move has also been welcomed by many parents who have raised concerns about the impact of artificial intelligence on independent thinking. The ministry has encouraged greater awareness among families to promote responsible use of technology beyond the classroom.

Back to School or Stay Online

TDT | Manama
Mohammed Darwish

Public and private school students in Bahrain will be able to choose between staying with online learning and returning to classrooms, as the Education Ministry moves to carry teaching and exams through to the end of the second term.

Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, Education Minister said in an Instagram video on Sunday that all pupils in public schools, from Year 1 to Year 12, will be offered two choices from next Sunday: to keep learning online or to return to school in person. Private schools, meanwhile, will be free to decide their own teaching and exam plans.

Public schools will spend this week contacting parents and pupils to find out which option they want for the next stage.



"This approach ensures education continues while adapting to different circumstances."

DR MOHAMMED BIN MUBARAK JUMA, EDUCATION MINISTER

Mr Juma said the same room for choice would apply to tests. Students who return to school will be able to sit exams on campus or through remote learning. At school, they may take exams online using school devices or sit them on paper in the classroom. In special cases, exams may also be taken at home, as happened during the first evaluation period.

For students who return in person, school transport will restart, canteens will reopen and activities inside and outside class will carry on as usual. Those who stay online will continue under the same approach used in recent weeks, with teaching centred on the core parts of the curriculum and the main subjects.

Mr Juma said private schools would be free to decide whether they want to keep remote learning or return to classroom teaching. They will also choose

the date of any return and decide how assessments are carried out.

"These two options will provide the flexibility needed to deal with different circumstances while keeping the learning process going until the end of the second term," he said.

He added that higher education institutions would receive separate instructions through an official statement, which would also make clear that there would be flexibility in attendance and in how students are evaluated.

Mr Juma also said the ministry expects the academic year to end with graduation ceremonies open to any institution that wants to hold them, including public schools, private schools and early education institutions, especially kindergartens.



Public Schools

- Choice between online or in-person learning
- Schools to confirm student preferences
- In-person classes resume April 19

Private Schools

- Can choose online or classroom learning
- Must notify Ministry of Education if returning to in-person teaching

Month-Long Indian Network Outage Hits Expats in Bahrain

TDT | Manama
Pradeep Puravankara

Thousands of Indian expatriates in Bahrain are facing significant challenges because Indian mobile signals have been unavailable across the Kingdom for over a month. The prolonged disruption has cut off access to essential One-Time Passwords (OTPs) and critical SMS alerts required for various official and

financial transactions.

The issue has primarily affected those who rely on their Indian SIM cards to access net banking, government portals, and other digital services in India. Without the ability to receive OTPs, many residents cannot complete urgent fund transfers, pay bills, or update official records.

The situation has caused widespread concern in the community, as both common workers and prominent busi-



ness owners report being unable to manage their Indian accounts. "Important banking messages are not arriving, and we are worried about the se-

curity of our accounts and the inability to perform time-sensitive transactions," complained several affected residents.

While the exact technical reason for the month-long signal blackout remains unclear, NRIs are urging Indian telecom providers and authorities to intervene and restore roaming services to ensure they can manage their home-country affairs without further disruption.



1. Switch Networks Manually

Try changing your phone settings from automatic to manual network selection and connect to available providers.

2. Enable Roaming & Adjust Network Mode

Turn on data roaming and switch your device to 4G/LTE mode to improve connectivity and signal detection.

3. Use a Local SIM for Reliability

Consider purchasing a Bahrain-based SIM card for stable access to calls, SMS, and essential services, especially for urgent transactions.

Municipal Councils Advance Key Public Service Measures

Power Cut to Illegal Workers' Housing in Hoorat Sanad

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Electricity has been disconnected to a property in Hoorat Sanad following reports that it was being used as illegal workers' accommodation and is linked to unauthorised construction, illegal electricity connections, and fire safety violations.

Southern Municipal Council member Mohammed Darraj said the property at House 1278, Road 4559, Block 645, had been the subject of repeated complaints from residents, prompting investigations by relevant authorities.

He said the Electricity and Water Authority found that the property had been receiving government-subsidised electricity since November 2018 and that an electricity meter had been moved without approval. He added that outstanding electricity dues were estimated at around BD40,000, subject to recovery limits.

Darraj also said Southern Municipality was moving to recover municipal fees retroactively from July 2018, while



Mohammed Darraj, Southern Municipal Council member

Civil Defence confirmed safety concerns, including the storage of gas cylinders inside the building.

He added that authorities have classified the structure as unlawful and warned it could face legal action, including demolition, if violations continue.

The Housing Ministry had earlier indicated the land had been acquired in 2021 for planned housing development projects in Hoorat Sanad.

Darraj said the case was raised with multiple government bodies after earlier complaints did not lead to action, and confirmed that electricity was only cut after the matter was escalated to ministers.

The Southern Municipality is moving to recover municipal fees retroactively from July 2018, while Civil Defence confirmed safety concerns, including the storage of gas cylinders inside the building.

Call for 24-Hour Ambulance at Barbar Health Centre

Northern Municipal Council chairman Dr. Sayed Shubbar Al Wadaei proposed a round-the-clock ambulance for Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah Health Centre in Barbar. The council's Services and Public Utilities Committee recommended raising the request to the Minister of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture.

The proposal calls for stationing an ambulance at the centre 24 hours a day to handle emergencies more quickly, reduce medical danger inside the facility, provide a safer setting for patients and staff, and support the country's emergency care network.

The committee said keeping an ambulance permanently at the centre would shorten the time needed to deal with serious cases. It added that the first few minutes in an emergency can decide the outcome



Dr Sayed Shubbar Al Wadaei, Northern Municipal Council chairman

and help prevent grave complications.

The health centre serves many people in the area, increasing the chance of sudden medical cases such as fainting, strokes and accidents. The proposal also states that an on-site ambulance would increase the centre's readiness for unexpected cases and give visitors greater reassurance about the available level of care.

Proposal to Allow Extra Utility Meters

Abdullah Al Qubaisi, a Northern Municipal Council member, proposed allowing additional electricity and water meters in certain housing units to address rising utility bills in homes shared by more than one family.

The proposal targets specific cases, including married sons living in the family home, divorced women with separated sections, and married heirs residing in the same property. It aims to ensure fair billing, ease pressure on internal electrical systems, and reduce risks such as outages, wiring damage, and appliance failures, especially during peak summer demand.

It also highlights changing household usage patterns and suggests that separate meters would improve cost distribution where multiple households exist within one



Abdullah Al Qubaisi, Northern Municipal Council member

property.

Under the proposal, applicants would need to update their registered address annually through the eGovernment system, obtain municipal approval, and ensure proper infrastructure capacity upgrades. A deposit would also be required for new meters, with old meters removed when residents change addresses.



RHF Assistant Secretary-General for Social Care Ammar Sami Qambar and Director of Public Relations and Media Badr Ali Qambar during the signing of an agreement with social media influencer Mohammed Badee Kamal

RHF Launches "Media Ambassadors" Initiative

TDT | Manama

The Royal Humanitarian Foundation (RHF) has launched a new "Media Ambassadors" project aimed at strengthening its humanitarian mission and expanding its media presence across Bahrain and beyond.

The initiative is part of the "Rest Assured... Bahrain Is Well as Long

as You Are Its People" campaign and coincides with RHF's 25th anniversary celebrations under the theme "25 Years... A Humanitarian Legacy."

The project was officially inaugurated with the signing of its first agreement. RHF was represented by Assistant Secretary-General for Social Care Ammar Sami Qambar, in the presence of Director of

Public Relations and Media Badr Ali Qambar. The agreement was signed with social media influencer Mohammed Badee Kamal.

The initiative aims to promote awareness of RHF's humanitarian work, highlight its programmes, and build a network of media ambassadors to support charitable and social initiatives across digital platforms and public events.

Remote Hearing Rules Introduced

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain has introduced new regulations allowing economic, financial, and investment disputes before the Bahrain Chamber for Dispute Resolution (BCDR) to be heard fully or partially online.

The rules were issued by Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf Minister Nawaf Al Maawda and take effect following publication in the Official Gazette.

Under Decision No. 27 of 2026, remote hearings may be conducted at the request of parties or at the discretion of the tribunal, including dispute panels, judges, and case managers. Proceedings can take place from inside or outside Bahrain, although physical attendance



HE Nawaf Al Maawda, Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf

may still be required when necessary.

Claimants can choose remote services when filing cases online, while other parties may join later upon payment of a fee unless the tribunal initiates the process, in which case no fee applies.

All online hearings will gen-



Proceedings can take place from inside or outside Bahrain.

erally be public unless confidentiality is ordered, and existing legal procedures will continue to apply with adjustments for digital cases. The BCDR will also ensure technical readiness, record all proceedings electronically, and enforce strict rules on conduct and data security.

Emergency Teams Move Fast

● Rainfall sweeps across Kingdom

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

Emergency teams across Bahrain moved swiftly as sudden rainfall swept across the Kingdom, preventing potential disruption by clearing water and securing key areas within minutes of the downpour.

Municipal crews and relevant authorities were deployed immediately across the Capital Governorate, Muharraq, the Northern and Southern Governorates, working in coordinated operations to manage water accumulation and keep roads



Before-and-after scenes from Sanad show rapid response efforts tackling water accumulation.

open. A structured response plan prioritised affected locations, with pumps and tanker trucks used to quickly remove standing water before it could impact traffic or public safety. Officials

said work is continuing in open areas where rainwater continues to collect, with teams remaining on standby amid the ongoing sarayat season, which is known for unpredictable and heavy rainfall.

Penal Code Amendments Boost Human Rights Focus



“The amendments represent a qualitative shift in Bahrain’s human rights approach.”

— ALI AL SHEHABI



“Replacing ‘prison’ with ‘Reform and Rehabilitation Center’ is a significant legislative correction.”

— DR. JEHAD ABDULLA AL FADHEL



“The reforms mark a transition from punishment to reintegration.”

— SAYED HISHAM AL QASSAB



● “Prison” officially replaced with “Reform and Rehabilitation Center”

● Compulsory labour removed and replaced with training programs

● Strong emphasis on rehabilitation and reducing reoffending

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

Shura Council approved a draft law amending several provisions of the Kingdom’s Penal Code, originally issued under Decree-Law No. (15) of 1976. The amendments, submitted alongside Decree No. (68) of 2025, aim to modernize the country’s penal framework in line with international standards.

During the session, Shura Council member Dr. Jehad Ab-

dulla Al Fadhel described replacing the term “prison” with “Reform and Rehabilitation Center” as a significant legislative correction. She noted that the terminology has been formally recognized since 2014 under the Reform and Rehabilitation Institution Law, reflecting a broader shift toward viewing inmates as individuals capable of reform.

Al Fadhel also highlighted removing compulsory labour provisions, replacing them with structured rehabilitation and vocational training programs. She explained that such programs not only align with international expectations but also help reduce reoffending by equipping inmates with practical skills needed in the labor market.

“The cost of rehabilitation is far lower than the cost of repeated crime,” she said, describing these initiatives as long-term investments that benefit both individuals and society while enhancing public safety.

Dignity

Meanwhile, Ali Al Shehabi said the amendments represent

a qualitative shift in Bahrain’s human rights approach, emphasizing dignity and restorative justice over punitive measures. He noted that the reforms reflect the broader national vision led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, focusing on reintegration rather than isolation.

Al Shehabi added that adopting the term “Reform and Rehabilitation Centers” underscores Bahrain’s commitment to international conventions, including standards set by the International Labour Organization (ILO). He also highlighted the role of the Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission, which operates under the Ombudsman’s General Secretariat, in ensuring transparency and safeguarding inmates’ rights.

Sayed Hisham Al Qassab described the amendments as a major step forward in developing Bahrain’s penal system in line with global best practices. He pointed to the Kingdom’s adoption of modern correctional policies—including rehabilitation programs, alternative sentencing, and the open prisons system—as evidence of its pro-

gressive approach.

According to Al Qassab, the reforms signal a clear transition from traditional punishment toward rehabilitation and reintegration, further strengthening Bahrain’s legislative alignment with international conventions.

The approved amendments mark a significant milestone in the Kingdom’s ongoing efforts to build a more humane, effective, and rights-based penal system, while promoting community security and supporting the successful reintegration of inmates into society.

Pension, Rental Law Changes



Lawyer Dalal Jasim Al-Zayed

Shura Council Legislative and

Legal Affairs Committee confirmed the constitutional and legal validity of three draft laws: amendments to the Social Insurance Law, the Real Estate Lease Law, and a tax agreement with Jersey.

Chaired by lawyer Dalal Jasim Al-Zayed, the committee reviewed the proposals and found them consistent with Bahrain’s Constitution and legal framework.

Among the key proposals is an amendment to Article 144 of the Social Insurance Law (Decree-Law No. 24 of 1976), submitted by the Council of Representatives. The amendment aims to ensure equal treatment between retirees in the private and public sectors regarding pension substitution loans. It allows retirees to apply for a new loan every two years from the date of their last loan, rather than waiting until the previous loan is fully repaid.

The committee also examined proposed changes to Article 6 of the Real Estate Lease Law (Law No. 27 of 2014). The amendment introduces administrative fines for landlords who misuse resi-

dential properties intended for family housing. If the landlord is unaware of the violation, the tenant will be held responsible. The fines and enforcement procedures will be set by the relevant municipal authority, subject to approval by the minister in charge of municipal affairs.

In addition, the amendment grants designated municipal officials judicial authority to monitor compliance, detect violations, and document offenses.

Clears Bahrain-Jersey Tax Deal

The committee further reviewed a draft law ratifying an agreement between Bahrain and Jersey to avoid double taxation on income and prevent tax evasion. The agreement is attached to Decree No. 66 of 2025.

Following its review, the committee concluded that all three draft laws meet constitutional and legal standards. The proposals have now been referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee, the Services Committee, and the Public Utilities and Environment Committee for further discussion.

Clean Audit for Fiscal Year 2025

● Effective financial management practices

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

The Shura Council yesterday approved its audited financial statements for the fiscal year ending 31 December 2025, following review by the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee and examination by the National Audit Office.

The Committee reported that the General Secretariat prepared the accounts in line with legal requirements, internal regulations, and International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), strengthening the reliability of the financial data. It also confirmed that the National Audit Office issued an unqualified audit opinion, stating that the statements were free



H.E. Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, Shura Council Speaker

The audited financial statements were free from material issues and fairly presented in accordance with international auditing standards.

from material issues and fairly presented in accordance with international auditing standards.

The report highlighted effective financial management practices that prevented budget overruns and ensured alignment between planned and actual spending, reflecting strong fiscal discipline and internal controls. It also praised the General Secretariat’s development and contributions to supporting parliamentary work.

Council members noted that the structured review process enhances transparency and oversight. They pointed to improved efficiency in resource management and expressed confidence in the Council’s financial approach.

Shura Council Speaker Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh thanked members and the General Secretariat, led by Secretary-General Karima Mohammed Al Abbasi, for their efforts, also acknowledging the National Audit Office for its role in strengthening institutional performance.

19-Year-Old Turns Passion Into Business

● Journey began at age 16

Ghadeer Alkumaish
TDT | Manama

Bahraini entrepreneur Alhareth Shaker Haji has transformed his early passion for baking into a growing business success with the launch of his brand Molt, founded when he was just 19.

Haji said his journey began at age 16 with a small cookie business, which

he later rebranded and refined into a more focused concept. The current recipe, he noted, took nearly five years to perfect through contin-



“The recipe currently in use took five years to develop.”

— ALHARETH SHAKER HAJI

uous development and experimentation.

Rather than expanding into multiple products, Haji chose to specialise in a single cookie offering, believing

that simplicity helps customers make clearer choices and strengthens brand identity.

His early entrepreneurial path involved significant challenges, including long working hours during events and balancing business operations with academic exams. He also recalled logistical difficulties, such as quickly setting up an entire event space with minimal preparation time.

Despite the demands, Haji said his age and circumstances encouraged him to take risks and explore entrepreneurship without hesitation. He described himself as still at the beginning of his journey rather than at a stage of major success.

He also launched a content initiative titled “100 Bahraini Businesses in 100 Days,” aimed at promoting local enterprises. Inspired by regional models, he said stronger support for Bahraini businesses can raise standards across the market and contribute to broader economic growth.

Global markets navigate uncertainty with resilience and opportunity, says Standard Chartered

TDT | Manama

Standard Chartered (“the Bank”) Wealth Solutions Chief Investment Office (CIO) latest Market View highlights a more complex and evolving macro backdrop, with geopolitical tensions in the Middle East continuing to influence market dynamics and investor positioning.

While escalation risks remain, particularly around energy supply and key trade routes such as the Strait of Hormuz, global growth has shown resilience, supported by steady activity in the US and improving momentum in parts of Asia.

The GCC entered this period from a position of strength, supported by large sovereign balance sheets in most cases. GCC sovereign wealth assets and foreign exchange reserves



“Periods such as these reinforce the importance of diversification, focusing on quality assets, and maintaining a long-term perspective. Investors who remain disciplined and well-positioned are better placed to navigate volatility and capture opportunities as they emerge

AYESHA ABBAS, MANAGING DIRECTOR AND HEAD OF AFFLUENT AND WEALTH SOLUTIONS FOR EUROPE, THE MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA, AND THE UAE AT STANDARD CHARTERED

provide a substantial buffer against both domestic and external shocks, helping underpin longer-term macroeconomic stability.

At the same time, inflation pressures, particularly in Eu-

rope, remain elevated, driven in part by higher energy prices. This has contributed to a repricing of interest rate expectations globally, with central banks expected to remain cautious as they balance growth and infla-

tion risks.

“Periods such as these reinforce the importance of diversification, focusing on quality assets, and maintaining a long-term perspective. Investors who remain disciplined

and well-positioned are better placed to navigate volatility and capture opportunities as they emerge,” said Ayesha Abbas, Managing Director and Head of Affluent and Wealth Solutions, Europe, Middle East and Africa, and UAE at Standard Chartered.

Against this backdrop, Standard Chartered continues to favour a disciplined and diversified investment approach. The Bank highlights five key considerations for global market investors:

- Add to diversified portfolios: Market volatility presents opportunities to build exposure to globally diversified portfolios, as the impact of recent developments remains uneven across regions and asset classes.

- Position for inflation risks: Investors may consider inflation hedges, including US

inflation-protected bonds and gold, in case disruption to energy prices persists longer than expected.

- Lock in attractive yields: Elevated yields in high-quality bonds offer opportunities to secure income and enhance portfolio resilience.

- Look to Asia for opportunities: In a scenario of stabilisation, Asian equities – particularly in India and China – could present attractive rebound potential.

- Prepare for US dollar weakness over the longer term: Structural factors continue to point towards a gradual weakening of the US dollar over time.

The Bank also notes that periods of elevated market volatility have historically been followed by strong recoveries, reinforcing the importance of staying invested.

BBK launches the Youth Advisory Council to empower youth and advance innovation



TDT | Manama

BBK, a leader in retail and corporate banking in the Kingdom of Bahrain, has announced the launch of the Youth Advisory Council (YAC), a new initiative aimed at bringing youth perspectives more directly into the Bank’s strategic thinking and future planning.

The move reflects BBK’s continued efforts to invest in emerging talent, strengthen its culture of innovation and create meaningful channels that enable young voices to contribute to the Bank’s long-term development. It also aligns with the objectives of Bahrain Economic Vision 2030, which places strong emphasis on empowering youth as active contributors to national progress and prosperity.

The Council brings together a carefully selected group of internal and external young talents,



Ms. Eman Deabil, Head of Strategy and Innovation at BBK



Mr. Mohamed Alaali, Group Chief Strategy & Transformation Officer at BBK

forming a distinctive structure that operates in the capacity of an advisory body operating under the BBK Spark (Innovation Management Office). This

integrated approach enables the incorporation of diverse, real-world perspectives directly into the Bank’s strategic ecosystem.

The initiative is also expected to serve as a vital link between youth and the Bank’s executive management, creating a more direct and constructive exchange of ideas that can support the decision-making process and contribute to a more future focused institutional outlook. By combining informed analysis with the ambitions and perspectives of youth, the Council is designed to support more dynamic thinking across the Bank and reinforce BBK’s readiness to the opportunities and challenges ahead.

This Council is a testament to BBK’s approach to innovation, which is grounded in harnessing internal capabilities while remaining open to perspectives from the wider community. It also reinforces BBK’s position as a forward-looking financial institution that recognizes the importance of youth in shaping

the future of the banking and financial services sector.

Commenting on the launch, Mr. Mohamed Alaali, Group Chief Strategy & Transformation Officer at BBK, said: “The establishment of the Youth Advisory Council affirms BBK’s belief that youth play a central role in sustainable development and represent a powerful force for progress within any institution that seeks to lead and evolve. We have strong confidence in the ability of youth to contribute high quality ideas and to play a meaningful role in enhancing the Bank’s services and products.”

Mr. Alaali further added, “Our commitment to listening to youth perspectives stems from a strategic approach that seeks to bring together the value of experience and the energy of young minds. Through this balance, we aim to help shape a financial fu-

ture that is resilient, sustainable and aligned with global developments in corporate growth and social responsibility.”

Ms. Eman Deabil, Head of Strategy and Innovation at BBK, commented: “At BBK, youth represent a vital source of fresh thinking and practical insight that can help shape the future of modern banking. We look forward to the Council serving as a dynamic platform for the exchange of ideas and for reinforcing a stronger culture of innovation across the Bank.”

Ms. Deabil further noted that the Council is expected to help turn challenges into opportunities by giving young people an active role in shaping the roadmap for future products and services, thereby supporting BBK’s efforts to remain at the forefront of innovation in the banking sector.

Saudi says east-west pipeline, energy facilities restored

AFP | Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia's energy ministry said yesterday that its key east-west oil pipeline and other facilities had been restored following attacks by Iran on targets across the Gulf.

"Energy facilities and the east-west pipeline damaged by attacks have recovered and regained their operational capacity, enhancing the reliability of supplies," the official Saudi Press Agency reported, citing an energy ministry statement.



The East-West Oil Pipeline in Saudi Arabia stretches about 1,200 kilometres, linking oil fields in the east to the Red Sea port of Yanbu in the west—allowing exports to bypass the Strait of Hormuz.

ing the war, with the 750-mile network of pipes connecting the Red Sea to the west with the Gulf in the east.

Before Tuesday's start of a fragile, two-week truce between Iran and the United States, the Islamic republic had targeted critical energy infrastructure belonging to its oil-rich neighbours.

Saudi Arabia said operational and technical work had led to "restoring full pumping capacity through the east-west pipeline, amounting to approximately seven million barrels per day".

The energy ministry explained the prior attacks had led to the "loss of approximately 700,000 barrels per day of pumping capacity through the east-west pipeline".

An energy ministry official told the SPA news agency that one of the pumping stations on a vital east-west pipeline was hit in the attacks.

Saudi Arabia's Petroline proved an economic lifeline during the war, with the 750-mile network of pipes connecting the Red Sea to the west with the Gulf in the east.

Facilities in Riyadh, the Eastern Province and the industrial city of Yanbu as well as infrastructure for oil and gas production, transport and refining, and petrochemical plants and power facilities were targeted in the Iranian attacks on Saudi Arabia, the official said.

Imagine Dragons frontman chases childhood video game dream

AFP | Paris, France

A childhood dream of making video games is becoming a reality this week for Imagine Dragons' singer Dan Reynolds, as his company's debut title "Last Flag" is released Tuesday.

Games had been a passion of Reynolds and his brother and band manager Mac long before the group became a global name.

Now the pair have used some time away from music to build a team-based shooter inspired by the games of Capture the Flag they played in the woods as young Boy Scouts.

"Last Flag" is "not a passion project, (we've) been working on it now for five-plus years," Reynolds told journalists during a virtual news conference.

Their roughly 30-strong studio, Night Street Games, has been working on "Last Flag" since its 2020 founding.

The game sorts players into two teams of five who can battle online, competing to hide their own flag and snatch the oppos-



American singer Dan Reynolds

ing team's banner.

"I grew up in a family of eight boys and one girl, and we were all nerdy kids," 38-year-old Dan Reynolds remembered.

Creating their own game had been "this dream that we talked about all the time" as they learned skills such as programming and 3D modelling.

But when Imagine Dragons "just blew up" while they were at university, Dan, a fan

of "Starcraft" and "League of Legends", went with the flow, enlisting Mac along the way as manager.

Tracks such as "Believer", "Thunder" and "Radioactive" have made the band one of the most popular pop rock groups worldwide.

It has sold 74 million albums and racked up 160 billion streams, according to record label Warner Music Group.

The band's ride has been "just incredible", Dan said.

"But we talked all the time during that about 'what if?'" the brothers had gone through with their gaming dream, he added.

When the time finally came, they devised a brightly coloured world filled with seventies stylings.

"Last Flag" bears visual similarities to the genre juggernaut "Fortnite", but the Reynolds say their title stands out from the pack with a focus on playing the objective -- not simply eliminating opponents.

Several high-value productions in the team shooter genre have fallen flat in recent years, with titles such as "Concord" or "Highguard" quickly taken offline after failing to win a loyal player base.

"Even though there's a ton of competition, I think we've seen even recently that a new game... can break through if it provides something different," Mac Reynolds said.

Boarded Panama-flagged vessel released: Swedish coast guard

AFP | Stockholm, Sweden



The Panama-registered bulk carrier Hui Yuan

guard aircraft monitoring mission in a violation of the Nordic country's Environmental Code.

A Panama-flagged vessel which the Swedish coast guard boarded yesterday morning suspecting it of an environmental offence has been released after the master of the vessel admitted to a crime, the coast guard said.

The Panama-registered bulk carrier Hui Yuan had been on its way from Russia to Las Palmas in Spain when it was boarded off the southern port of Ystad, the coast guard said in a statement.

The 225-metre-long vessel had been discovered flushing coal residues into the Baltic Sea on Saturday during a coast

guard aircraft monitoring mission in a violation of the Nordic country's Environmental Code.

A preliminary investigation was launched and the master of the ship interviewed.

Later Sunday, the coast guard said the ship master "has admitted violating the Swedish Environmental Code" and "has deposited money for future fines."

"The ship is therefore allowed to leave Sweden," it said.

"The shipping industry should know that Swedish authorities are working close together to maintain order at sea," said Daniel Stenling, deputy head of the coast guard's operations department.

'Stop hiring humans'? Silicon Valley confronts AI job panic

AFP | San Francisco, United States

AI industry insiders want workers to code smarter, think harder and lean into their humanity -- but still dodge the question of how many jobs artificial intelligence will destroy.

The reassurance rang out across HumanX, a four-day conference drawing some 6,500 investors, entrepreneurs and tech executives, even as a blunt advertisement at the entrance set the tone: "Stop hiring humans."

On the main stage, May Habib, chief executive of an AI platform called Writer, told the audience that Fortune 500 bosses are having a "collective panic attack" on the subject.

The anxiety is well-founded. More and more companies are directly citing AI in announcing job cuts.

High-profile examples are on the rise: Salesforce laid off 4,000 customer support workers, saying AI now handles 50 percent of its work.



Praveen Neppalli Naga speaks during the "Q&A with Praveen Neppalli Naga, CTO at Uber" segment at the HumanX Conference San Francisco 2026 at Moscone Center South

Block chief Jack Dorsey announced plans to cut the company's headcount nearly in half, citing "intelligence tools" that have fundamentally changed how companies operate.

Not all claims have gone uncontested -- some economists say firms are pointing to AI to rationalize layoffs that are really about past overhiring or cost-cutting ahead of massive

infrastructure investments.

OpenAI's Sam Altman has spoken of "AI-washing," and most speakers at the San Francisco event similarly dismissed the invocation of AI as a false pretext for job cuts -- even as they freely predicted disruption was just around the corner.

AI is going to "transform every single company, every single job, every single way that we do

work," said Matt Garman, chief executive of cloud computing giant Amazon Web Services.

'Pretty unsettling'

The debate remains heated. Two years ago, Nvidia chief Jensen Huang declared that the ultimate goal was to make it so "nobody has to program" or code.

"We will look back on that as some of the worst career advice ever given," Andrew Ng, founder of training platform DeepLearning.AI, shot back on Tuesday.

In his view, coding is not an obsolete skill -- AI has simply made it available to more people.

Another argument has taken hold in Silicon Valley: interpersonal skills will become more valuable than ever, with some voices going so far as to tout a humanities education as sound tech career preparation.

"As AI can do more of a job, the things that will distinguish and differentiate a given employee are going to be the human skills -- critical thinking,

communication, teamwork," said Greg Hart, chief executive of training platform Coursera, which has seen enrollment in its critical thinking courses triple over the past year.

Florian Douetteau, chief executive of Dataiku, a French company specializing in enterprise AI, agreed.

The real human added value, he told AFP, is the "capacity for judgment."

He described a world in which an AI agent works through the night, its human counterpart reviews the results in the morning, and then the agent resumes working autonomously during the lunch break.

But the entrepreneur nevertheless expressed unease.

"We are going to have a generation of people who will never have written anything from start to finish in their entire lives," he said. "That's pretty unsettling."

'Mistake was not preparing'

All of this advice risks ringing hollow for a generation already struggling to land a first job.

AI has automated entry-level tasks that once served as on-the-job training. Hiring of candidates with less than one year of experience fell 50 percent between 2019 and 2024 among America's major tech companies, according to a study by investment fund SignalFire.

"We should be preparing for the loss of knowledge work jobs in a number of categories," warned former US vice president Al Gore.

As the week's lone genuinely dissenting voice, Gore called for a real action plan to map threatened jobs and prepare workers for career transitions, so as not to repeat the mistakes of the globalization era.

"The mistake was not globalization. The mistake was in not preparing for the consequences of globalization," he said, drawing a parallel with the de-industrialization that followed the offshoring wave of the 2000s.

"Maybe we don't want to talk about it," he added, "because it may slow down the enthusiasm for the technology."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

WAR AND TERRORISM NOT ONLY PERPETUATE THE RIFT BETWEEN THE TWO PEOPLES, THEY POLARIZE SENTIMENT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO STRENGTHEN THE DETERMINATION OF EACH TO SURVIVE AT ANY COST.
IRENE L. GENDZIER

Diplomacy 'essential' to resolve Middle East war: EU

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

Diplomacy is "essential" to resolve the war in the Middle East, a European Union spokesman said Sunday.

Noting failed US-Iranian talks hosted by Pakistan, EU foreign affairs spokesman Anouar El Anouni said "we salute Pakistan for its mediation efforts" and added Brussels would contribute to further efforts to reach a settlement in coordination with its partners.

Putin says ready to help peace efforts in call with Iran president

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin told his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian on Sunday that he was ready to help mediate efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East, the Kremlin said.

"Vladimir Putin emphasised his readiness to further facilitate the search for a political and diplomatic settlement to the conflict, and to mediate efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East," the Kremlin said in its readout of the call.

All US negotiators left failed Iran talks in Islamabad

AFP | Ramstein Air Base, Germany

The entire US negotiating team has left the failed Iran talks in Islamabad, a US official said Sunday, leaving nobody in the Pakistani capital to pursue back-channel discussions.

During a refuelling stop in Germany's Ramstein Air Base for Air Force 2, carrying Vice President JD Vance back from negotiations on ending the Middle East war, a US official told reporters that no team members stayed behind in Islamabad, including chief negotiators Steve Witkoff and President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Speculation had risen that one or both of Trump's envoys might stay behind to pursue further discussions, after the marathon talks failed to produce any substantive progress over the conflict with Iran.



US Vice President JD Vance (C) walks with Pakistan's Chief of Defence Forces and Chief of Army Staff Field Marshall Asim Munir (L) and Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar after arriving for talks with Iranian officials in Islamabad

Peace talks broke down without agreement

Mideast prepares for more fighting

The failure of the talks raises concerns that a return to fighting could drive world energy prices higher and further damage shipping and oil and gas facilities in the Gulf, while civilians in the region were concerned that air strikes could resume with no political endgame in sight.

Iran says talks hinged on avoiding 'excessive demands'

The success of peace talks between the United States and Iran depended on Washington avoiding "excessive" and "unlawful" demands, the Iranian foreign ministry's spokesman said. "The success of this diplomatic process depends on the seriousness and good faith of the opposing side, refraining from excessive demands and unlawful requests, and the acceptance of Iran's legitimate rights and interests," Esmail Baqaei wrote on X.

'No other way' as talks fail

The failure of the talks however did not surprise many in the region

AFP | Doha, Qatar

A sense of dread spread across the Middle East after talks between the US and Iran collapsed.

Following more than 20 hours of talks in the Pakistani capital Islamabad, US Vice President JD Vance admitted the yawning differences between the US and Iran proved to be insurmountable for the moment.

Questions about what would come next and whether the two sides would continue to respect a two-week ceasefire was anybody's guess as both the Iranian and American delegations departed Pakistan without a deal. "Things could change at any moment," said Aishah, a

32-year-old economic consultant based in Doha.

"It's more about taking each day as it comes."

The failure of the talks however did not surprise many in the region.

"I didn't have a lot of hope for them going in, because the two sides want completely opposite things," Laura Kaufman, a 38-year-old school teacher in Tel Aviv, told AFP.

"There didn't seem to be anyone willing to actually negotiate."

A recent poll found that only 10 percent of the Israeli public believe the war against Iran had constituted a "significant success, compared to 32 percent who view it as a failure".

In Iran, a brief spell of hope that talks would end the hostilities between the long-time foes were quickly dashed.

"I really wanted them to make peace," said Mahsa, a 30-year-old employee of an export company in the Iranian capital.

"It's been almost 45 days now that I've seen everyone stressed. It's a bad situation."

'Worried'

Elsewhere in the Middle East, the negotiations' failure only seemed to guarantee more uncertainty.

"I am worried about the continuation of the situation and the return of attacks again, because they were causing me tension," said Imam, an Egyptian

housewife living in the UAE capital of Abu Dhabi.

"I was making a great effort not to pass my tension on to the children."

With nerves already battered, President Trump on Sunday ordered an immediate naval blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, vowing to intercept any ship that pays tolls to Tehran while also preventing Iran from earning future oil revenues.

"Any Iranian who fires at us, or at peaceful vessels, will be BLOWN TO HELL!" he wrote.

The news came as many in the region were hoping for a return to normality.

Earlier Sunday, Saudi Arabia's energy ministry said its

key east-west oil pipeline and other major energy facilities had been restored following attacks by Iran on targets across the Gulf.

"Of course I am worried that the war will return again," said Amin, a pharmacist living in Saudi Arabia's eastern province, who asked to use a pseudonym for security reasons.

Back in Iran, a sense of the inevitable had begun to sink in for many there.

"I would have preferred peace, but I think there is no other way but war and confrontation," said Hamed, 37.

"Based on what I see and hear, unfortunately we are going to war again and it seems like we will have a long war."

1250

The Seventh Crusade is defeated in Egypt, and Louis IX of France is captured

1598

Edict of Nantes grants political rights to French Huguenots



1860

First Pony Express rider reaches Sacramento, California

1868

Abyssinian War ends as British and Indian troops capture Magdala and Ethiopian Emperor Tewodros II commits suicide

"I think that we were quite flexible. We were quite accommodating. The president told us, You need to come here in good faith and make your best effort to get a deal. We did that and, unfortunately, we weren't able to make headway."



JD Vance

"We leave here with a very simple proposal, a method of understanding that is our final and best offer. We'll see if the Iranians accept it. The simple fact is that we need to see an affirmative commitment that they will not seek a nuclear weapon and they will not seek the tools that would enable them to quickly achieve a nuclear weapon. The simple question is, do we see a fundamental commitment of will for the Iranians not to develop a nuclear weapon -- not just now, not just two years from now, but for the long term? We haven't seen that yet. We hope that we will."

Vance said that the core dispute was on nuclear weapons

Trump says US Navy to block Hormuz

Effective immediately, the United States Navy, the Finest in the World, will begin the process of BLOCKADING any and all ships trying to enter, or leave, the Strait of Hormuz. Any Iranian who fires at us, or at peaceful vessels, will be BLOWN TO HELL!

TRUMP

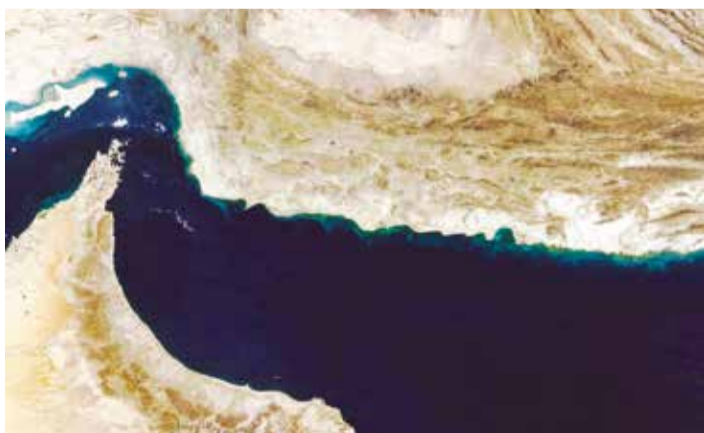
"THIS IS WORLD EXTORTION. I have also instructed our Navy to seek and interdict every vessel in International Waters that has paid a toll to Iran. No one who pays an illegal toll will have safe passage on the high seas. We will also begin destroying the mines the Iranians laid in the Straits."

"I have always said, right from the beginning, and many years ago, IRAN WILL NEVER HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON!" Trump said. "The Blockade will begin shortly. Other Countries will be involved with this Blockade. Iran will not be allowed to profit off this Illegal Act of EXTORTION."

Trump did not name the other countries he expects to join the US Navy cordon and, before his post, many international capitals had called for the temporary truce in the Gulf to be preserved while Washington and Tehran seek a diplomatic solution.

Vance left Pakistan after the talks -- the highest-level meeting between the two sides since the 1979 Islamic revolution -- and warned that Washington had made Tehran its "final and best offer" for a deal, adding: "We'll see if the Iranians accept it."

Commit to ceasefire: Pakistan



Pakistan, which hosted the talks and whose leadership had ushered the rival sides to the table, said it would keep facilitating dialogue and urged both countries to continue respecting the temporary truce. "It is imperative that the par-

ties continue to uphold their commitment to ceasefire," Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said.

50% tariff on Chinese imports

Later, in a Fox News interview, Trump threatened to impose a 50% tariff on Chinese imports if Beijing tries to help the Iranian military, and added: "I could take out Iran in one day. I could have their entire energy everything, every one of their plants, their electric generating plants, which is a big deal."

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer called the Sultan of Oman, Haitham bin Tariq, and both leaders agreed it "was vital there was a continua-

tion of the ceasefire, and that all parties avoided any further escalation".

An EU spokesman said diplomacy would be "essential" to securing peace and hailed Pakistan's mediation efforts, while Russia's President Vladimir Putin called Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian to offer his services to the diplomatic effort.

"Vladimir Putin emphasised his readiness to further facilitate the search for a political and diplomatic settlement to the conflict, and to mediate efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East," the Kremlin said, in its readout of the call.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned they have traffic in the strategic waterway under full control and would trap any enemy who try to challenge it "in a deadly vortex in the Strait if it makes the wrong move".



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



I am deeply saddened by the passing of Smt. Asha Bhosle ji, one of India's most renowned and versatile voices. Her unique musical journey spanning decades has enriched our cultural heritage and touched the hearts of countless people around the world. From soulful melodies to spirited compositions, her voice carried a timeless brilliance. I will forever cherish the memories of my conversations with her. My heartfelt condolences to her family, fans, and music lovers. She will continue to inspire future generations, and her songs will forever resonate in people's lives.

@narendramodi

02



The simple fact is that we need to see an affirmative commitment that they will not seek a nuclear weapon, and they will not seek the tools that would enable them to quickly achieve a nuclear weapon.

@VP

03



Today, many Eastern Churches celebrate Easter according to the Julian calendar. In communion of faith in the Risen Lord, I extend my heartfelt wishes for peace to all these communities. Let us #PrayTogether for all those suffering due to war, particularly for the dear people of Ukraine. May the light of Christ bring comfort to afflicted hearts and strengthen the hope for peace. May the international community's attention to the tragedy of this war not waver!

@Pontifex

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

What next for Trump?

Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Sunday pledged that Tehran's enemies would be trapped in a "deadly vortex" if they were to make a wrong move in the strait.

AFP | Washington, United States

The failure of US-Iran peace talks has left President Donald Trump with several unpalatable options, as analysts say his order to blockade the strategic Strait of Hormuz could further complicate his next move.

Any hopes that US Vice President JD Vance would emerge from the marathon day of negotiations with top Iranian officials with a deal to end a war that has rippled across the Middle East were dashed when he left Pakistan empty-handed.

Protract-ed talks would undermine

Trump's insistence that Iran has "no cards" left to play, while ramping up military action would expose US forces to heightened risk and could alienate voters -- already angry with surging gas prices -- ahead of midterm elections.

And the blockade of the strait through

which a fifth of the world's oil moves would do little to ease global economic jitters.

For Brian Katulis, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, Trump's propensity to talk off the cuff and make threats -- what he called the president's "carnival barker" style -- leaves his close aides scrambling to chart a path forward.

"He may be simply buying more time to move in more military assets or because he doesn't know what else to do. I wouldn't call it a strategy; it is a military-centric approach without strategy," Katulis told AFP.

Shibley Telhami, a professor of peace and development at the University of Maryland and a fellow at the Brookings Institution think tank, says the threat of a blockade was "bewildering and seems self-defeating."

"Iran already has no trust in Trump," Telhami told AFP.

More than 80 percent of respondents said the United States should seek to reopen the strait and improve global access to oil, which would bring gas prices down, and make sure that the Iranian people are "free." But fewer than 10 percent said they believed those goals had been achieved.

"Hard to understate what this makes of what's left of America's global credibility."

'Untrustworthy and duplicitous'

Iran's Revolutionary Guards on Sunday pledged that Tehran's enemies would be trapped in a "deadly vortex" if they were to make a wrong move in the strait.

Danny Citrinowicz, a fellow at Israel's Institute for National

Security Studies, said a naval blockade would indeed expose US forces to increased risk.

"There is little reason to believe that a blockade would force Iranian capitulation. If anything, Iran's demonstrated resilience thus far suggests the opposite," Citrinowicz wrote on X.

"Iran's geographic scale and military capabilities mean that sustaining such an operation would demand substantial and prolonged allocation of American resources."

And such a prolonged military engagement may not sit well with Americans who say they are worried and stressed about the conflict, which began in late February.

A CBS News poll published Sunday revealed that worry, stress and anger far outweigh safety and confidence, when those polled were asked how they feel about the war.

More than 80 percent of respondents said the United States should seek to reopen the strait and improve global access to oil, which would bring gas prices down, and make sure that the Iranian people are "free."

But fewer than 10 percent said they believed those goals had been achieved.

"I don't see how, 40-plus days into this war, that we are safer, that our allies are safer. I'm not even sure Israel is safer," Democratic US Senator Mark Warner said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union" talk show.

"I don't understand how blockading the strait is going to somehow push the Iranians into opening it. I don't get the connection there."

So if the blockade is not an answer, what about more negotiations?

Democratic Senator Tim Kaine suggested that would not be an easy path, given that Trump removed the US from a 2015 accord reached by Tehran and world powers on restricting its nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

"This is not going to be an easy negotiation because the last negotiation that led to a control of Iran's nuclear program, the US made the decision to tear it up and walk away from the deal," Kaine told CNN.

Katulis echoed that idea.

"Iranian officials are also untrustworthy and duplicitous, but the Trump administration is providing the mirror image of that," he said.

"If I were an Iranian official leaving Islamabad, I would wonder if I am back on the Israeli kill list."



The current tensions between United States and Iran have repeatedly threatened the Strait of Hormuz—a narrow waterway through which around one-fifth of the world's oil supply passes, making it one of the most strategically critical chokepoints in the global economy.

World urges more negotiation

AFP | Paris, France

World figures urged the United States and Iran to keep negotiating after marathon Washington-Tehran talks in Islamabad ended yesterday without a deal to end the war in the Middle East.

Pakistan urges ceasefire

"It is imperative that the parties continue to uphold their commitment to cease fire," said Pakistan's foreign minister Ishaq Dar, whose government hosted the talks and acted as a mediator.

"Pakistan has been and will continue to play its role to facilitate engagement and dialogue between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America in the days to come," he said in a brief statement broadcast by state media.

EU urges diplomacy

Diplomacy is "essential" to resolve the war in the Middle East, a European Union spokesman said.

Noting failed US-Iranian talks hosted by Pakistan, EU foreign affairs spokesman Anouar El



The motorcade of US Vice President JD Vance is seen after his arrival at the Serena Hotel in Islamabad

Anouni said "we salute Pakistan for its mediation efforts" and added Brussels would contribute to further efforts to reach a

settlement in coordination with its partners

Putin offers mediation

Russian President Vladimir Putin told his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezesh-

kian that he was ready to help mediate efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East, the Kremlin said.

"Vladimir Putin emphasised his readiness to further facilitate the search for a political and dip-

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif (R) greets US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner during their meeting amid the US-Iran peace talks in Islamabad

lomatic settlement to the conflict, and to mediate efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the Middle East," the Kremlin said in its readout of the call.

UK disappointed

"It's obviously disappointing that we haven't yet seen a breakthrough in negotiations and an end to this war in Iran that is a sustainable one," UK health minister Wes Streeting told Sky News.

"As ever in diplomacy, you're failing, until you succeed. So while these talks may not have ended in success, (it) doesn't mean there isn't merit in continuing to try," he added.

Australia urges more talks

"The priority now must be to continue the ceasefire and return to negotiations," Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said in a statement, adding it was "disappointing that the Islamabad talks between the United States and Iran have ended without agreement".



Lebanon says at least five dead as Israel pounds south

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Lebanese official media reported extensive Israeli strikes across the country's south yesterday as the health ministry said at least five people were killed and the war's overall toll rose to 2,055 dead.

Israel says the fragile Middle East ceasefire does not apply to its battle with the Iran-backed Hezbollah group and has kept up its attacks on the country, while the militants fight back.

The state-run National News Agency (NNA) reported Israel attacks on around 30 locations in the country's south on Sunday, with additional strikes on the adjacent West Bekaa area.

The health ministry said an Israeli strike on Qana killed five people, including three women, and wounded 25 others, while the NNA said the raid targeted "homes and infrastructure".

An AFP photographer in the southern town saw huge destruction as an excavator worked to clear debris and first responders carried a body out from under the rubble.

The ministry raised the overall toll in Lebanon to 2,055 dead, including 165 children and 87 health workers, since war erupted on March 2.

Pope Leo XIV, who visited Lebanon late last year, ex-



An excavator clears the rubble of destroyed buildings from the site of an Israeli strike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Qana

pressed his closeness to the Lebanese people on Sunday and said there was a "moral obligation to protect the civilian population from the atrocious effects of war".

In south Lebanon's Bazuriyeh, Hassan Berro, a rescue worker from the Risala Scout association -- which is affiliated with the Hezbollah-allied Amal movement -- said: "Our emergency centre was hit and completely destroyed, along with all its contents, including beds and

medical equipment."

The AFP photographer saw windows shattered and debris covering several hospital beds in the building, where walls and ceilings were also damaged.

Hezbollah said it launched attacks on Israeli targets across the border and inside Lebanon, including against troops in the southern town of Bint Jbeil, where the NNA reported heavy fighting.

Israel's army on Sunday accused Hezbollah of using the

town's hospital compound "for military purposes".

Officials from Lebanon, Israel and the United States are due to hold direct talks in Washington on Tuesday, a move Hezbollah has rejected.

Commenting on the planned talks, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday that "we want the dismantling of Hezbollah's weapons, and we want a real peace agreement that will last for generations".

Police say over 500 arrested at pro-Palestinian rally in London



An elderly man (C) is escorted away by police as protesters gather to call for the lifting of the ban on the Palestine Action group during a demonstration in Trafalgar Square in central London

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Police in London said they had arrested more than 500 pro-Palestinian protesters at a demonstration in support of the banned group Palestine Action on Saturday.

Officers carried away activists to cheers and clapping from other demonstrators who gathered for the sit-down demonstration in the capital's Trafalgar Square.

The protesters held placards in support of the banned group Palestine Action, making them liable for arrest.

London's Metropolitan Police said on social media platform X just before midnight that they had arrested 523 people aged between 18 and 87.

Palestine Action was proscribed as a terrorist organisation in July, making it a criminal offence to belong to or

support the group, punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

The High Court in London upheld a challenge to the ban in mid-February, saying it had interfered with the right to freedom of speech.

The government has been granted leave to appeal against the decision.

London's Metropolitan Police paused arrests in the wake of the High Court ruling before announcing in late March that they would resume.

"It's really important to continue to show up," said Freya, 28, manager of a London environmental organisation, one of those sitting towards the front of the crowd of protesters.

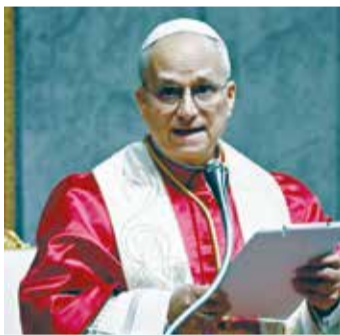
"It's important that we all continue to oppose genocide... The government might flip-flop in their legal argument but the morals of these people (here) do not change," she said.

Pope says he is 'closer than ever' to Lebanese people

AFP | Vatican City, Holy See

Pope Leo XIV expressed his closeness to the people of Lebanon yesterday, saying there was a "moral obligation" to protect them while calling on warring parties to seek peace.

"I am closer than ever, in these days of sorrow, fear, and unconquerable hope in God, to the beloved Lebanese people,"



the pope told the crowd at St Peter's Square following his Regina Coeli prayer.

"The principle of humanity, inscribed in the conscience of every person and recognised in international law, entails the moral obligation to protect the civilian population from the atrocious effects of war," he said.

As he has done in the past,

without citing names, the American pope called on the parties involved to seek a peaceful resolution.

The comments from the 70-year-old pontiff came as Iran and the United States failed to strike a deal during talks in Pakistan to end the war in the Middle East.

On Saturday during a prayer for peace, the soft-spoken Leo

made one of his most pointed criticisms yet of the war, imploring leaders to end the violence.

"Stop! It is time for peace! Sit at the table of dialogue and mediation, not at the table where rearmament is planned and deadly actions are decided!" he said.

"Enough of the idolatry of self and money! Enough of the dis-

play of power! Enough of war!"

The leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics has repeatedly urged de-escalation in the current US-Israeli war on Iran and a need for a diplomatic solution.

On Monday, the pope heads to Algeria for the start of an 11-day tour in Africa where he will bring a message of bridge-building with the Islamic world.

Legendary Indian singer Asha Bhosle dies aged 92

● Two-time Grammy nominee Bhosle breathed her last at the Breach Candy hospital where she was admitted with complaints of "extreme exhaustion" and chest infection.

AFP | Mumbai, India

Legendary Indian playback singer Asha Bhosle, whose voice defined Bollywood music through the 1970s and 80s, died Sunday in Mumbai aged 92, her family said.

Two-time Grammy nominee Bhosle breathed her last at the Breach Candy hospital where she was admitted with complaints of "extreme exhaustion" and chest infection.

"My mother passed away today (Sunday). Her last rites will be held tomorrow at Shivaji Park



Bollywood playback singer Asha Bhosle attends a press conference in Mumbai on August 8, 2023, to announce her 90th live concert in Dubai.

in Mumbai," her son Anand Bhosle told reporters.

Bhosle recorded more than 12,000 songs in multiple Indian

languages over a seven-decade career.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "deeply saddened" by her death.

"Her extraordinary musical journey, spanning decades, enriched our cultural heritage and touched countless hearts across the world," he said in a post on X.

"She will continue to inspire generations and her songs will forever echo in people's lives."

Born on September 8, 1933 to a musical family, Bhosle began singing as a child alongside her elder sister, Lata Mangeshkar, after their father's death.

Often compared to Mangeshkar --revered as "India's nightingale" who died in 2022 -- Bhosle forged her own path, embracing genres from pop to folk.

Her early life was marked by struggle, including a turbulent marriage at 16.

She went on to become one of Indian cinema's most versatile and celebrated voices, receiving the prestigious Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2001 and earning two Grammy nominations.

Bhosle continued collaborating with global artists well into her later years, including a recent feature on British virtual band Gorillaz's album The Mountain ("Parvat").

Beyond music, she nurtured her passion for food, launching her "Asha's" restaurant chain in Dubai and Britain.



Asha Bhosle has recorded over 11,000 songs in more than 20 languages, making her one of the most recorded artists in music history.

Trump ballroom renovation allowed to proceed, for now

Washington, United States

A federal appeals court has ruled US President Donald Trump's \$400 million White House ballroom renovation can proceed, albeit temporarily, and called for a district judge to clarify national security-related questions.

The project aims to construct a massive ballroom on the site of the White House's East Wing -- previously best known for housing the First Lady's offices. It was demolished in September.

A three-judge panel of the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit ruled 2-1 to give the administration until April 17 to continue working on the project and "seek Supreme Court review," in the court order released Saturday.

The order also calls on the federal district court Judge Richard Leon to clarify questions on White House safety and security raised in earlier proceedings.



The White House spans six floors and contains 132 rooms, making it one of the world's most recognisable residences.

Indonesian president to meet Putin in Russia for oil talks

AFP | Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto will depart for Russia yesterday for talks with counterpart Vladimir Putin on oil, Prabowo's office said.

The presidency in Jakarta confirmed to AFP that Prabowo would leave Sunday evening.

Foreign Minister Sugiono said Saturday that oil, which is "of strategic importance for the Indonesian nation", would be on the agenda.

"He will meet with President Putin and will also discuss global geopolitics and, certainly, the energy situation," said Sugiono, who like many Indonesians has only one name.

Prabowo, who recently travelled to South Korea and Japan, has defended his foreign travels.

"Brothers and sisters, it's to secure oil, I have to go everywhere," he said in an address to his cabinet last week.

Artemis crew urges unity on 'lifeboat' Earth

AFP | Houston, United States

Artemis II astronauts expressed awe on Saturday over their record-setting lunar flyby mission, urging unity on Earth after witnessing the planet's isolation like a "lifeboat" in space.

The crew spoke at a news conference as NASA took a victory lap following the success of the mission.

The astronauts did the first slingshot around the Moon in more than 50 years and traveled deeper into space than any humans before -- culminating in a smooth splashdown Friday off the coast of California.

Flanked on stage by mission commander Reid Wiseman, Victor Glover and Jeremy Hansen, astronaut Christina Koch called for people on Earth to embrace their shared humanity.

"What struck me wasn't necessarily just Earth, it was all the blackness around it. Earth was just this lifeboat hanging undisturbed in the universe,"



NASA's Artemis II mission astronauts Canadian Space Agency's Jeremy Hansen, Christina Koch, Victor Glover and commander Reid Wiseman react during a welcoming ceremony at Ellington Field Joint Reserve Base in Houston, Texas

said Koch.

"There's one new thing I know and that is: Planet Earth -- you are a crew."

Hansen called on fans of the Artemis mission to see themselves in the crew of four, who marked a series of milestones: Glover was the first person of color to fly around the Moon,

Koch was the first woman, and Hansen the first non-American.

"I would suggest to you that when you look up here, you're not looking at us. We are a mirror reflecting you," Hansen said. "And if you like what you see, then just look a little deeper. This is you."

While hurtling through deep space and zipping around the Moon, the Artemis astronauts took thousands of photographs, amassing a stunning portfolio of images.

They also witnessed a solar eclipse along with extraordinary meteorite strikes on the lunar surface.

"Artemis II will always be remembered. It was the moment we all saw the moon again, where childhood dreams became missions. You helped the world start believing again, and this is something no one's ever going to forget," NASA administrator Jared Isaacman said.

Artemis II was the inaugural crewed mission of NASA's program aiming to install a sustained presence on the Moon, including the eventual construction of a base that could be used for further exploration including to Mars.

NASA is hoping it can put boots on the lunar surface as soon as 2028.

War takes a bite out of Filipino street food vendors

AFP | Manila, Philippines

Filipinos like their "pares", a traditional beef stew, served hot -- but the soaring cost of liquefied petroleum gas has made that prospect increasingly difficult since war erupted in the Middle East.

To save a few pesos 20-year-old Eric Garcia delicately turned a knob to adjust the flame under his warming trays to the lowest setting as he grapples with fuel costs that have nearly doubled in price.

While sticker shock at petrol stations has garnered the biggest headlines since the war forced the partial closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the rising price of LPG has hit the import-dependent archipelago's humble street food vendors.

While sticker shock at petrol stations has garnered the biggest headlines since the war forced the partial closure of the Strait of Hormuz, the rising price of LPG has hit the import-dependent archipelago's humble street food vendors.



A day before speaking to AFP, Garcia said he had been forced to raise the price of a bowl of pares to 65 pesos (\$1.08) after fuel costs reduced his daily earnings by a quarter.

"I'm only earning 1,500 pesos (per day), because the rest is spent on LPG," he said.

Garcia, who begins cooking at 3 am every morning before hauling his stew to a middle-class neighbourhood on a converted motorbike, said an 11 kilo tank of fuel, which typically lasts four days, that once cost 870 pesos (about \$14.50) now costs 1,600 pesos.

"It's the highest price of LPG that I've ever seen since I started here," said Carlo Manalad, a supervisor at a store selling tanks of the gas, 90 percent of which is imported.

"If (our suppliers') prices are high, we also raise our prices. Our profit is still the same," the 64-year-old told AFP.

Many of the capital's street-side food sellers, however, have no such luxury.

"If we raise our prices, our customers will buy from other

stalls," said Ronilo Titom, who has run a curbside canteen that

caters call centre workers and jeepney drivers, for two years.

Even while holding the line on prices, Titom said he had noticed his customer base slowly shrinking since the war erupted.

"Many of them have started to bring packed lunches instead (to save money)," said the 48-year-old who, like Garcia, is using his LPG ever more judiciously.

"Sometimes we let the soup get cold," he admitted, noting that the cost of ingredients for his dishes had also been on the uptick since the war broke out.

'Very difficult for us'

The Philippines revealed Tuesday war-driven inflation figures that showed food prices had increased nearly twice as fast in March as the month before.

French fry vendor John Mark Abella, 25, who has also upped his prices by five pesos to compensate for LPG costs, told AFP he believed inflation was put-

ting the squeeze on his mostly student customers.

"I think we've got fewer customers ... because they're limiting their expenses because of the high prices of fuel and food," he said.

Sam Natividad, a 25-year-old call centre worker, said that was no illusion.

"I'm limiting my expenses because... I also have to pay bills at home. I don't have a big budget for my meals here," she told AFP at a roadside canteen, adding it was "understandable" if street vendors had to raise their prices.

Near Garcia's pares stall, Allan Palong, a driver for a motorbike ride-hailing app, said he understood the vendor's need to charge five pesos more for a bowl of stew, even if his own earnings were being crippled by fuel price hikes.

"It's very difficult for us now, all prices have gone up ... the five-pesos mean a lot," he said, while calling on the government to slash the excise tax on imported fuel.

Easter truce between Russia and Ukraine falters

AFP | Kharkiv, Ukraine

Ukraine's military command accused Russia of repeatedly violating a truce to mark the Orthodox Easter Saturday with nearly 470 incidents ranging from air strikes and drone attacks to shelling.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the ceasefire on Thursday, more than a week after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky first made the proposal.

Both sides had agreed to observe it.

The ceasefire had been due to last for 32 hours, from 4:00 pm (13:00 GMT) on Saturday until the end of the day on Sunday, according to the Kremlin.

Yet by late Saturday, Ukraine's military said in a Facebook post that "469 ceasefire violations were recorded, namely: 22 enemy assault actions, 153 shelling attacks, 19 strikes by attack drones... and 275 strikes by FPV drones."

In total, the Ukrainian military said Saturday had seen Russia carry out 57 air strikes and drop 182 guided aerial bombs, along with deploying 3,928 drones and conducting 2,454 shelling attacks "on populated areas and positions of our troops".

In Russia's Kursk region, which borders Ukraine, Governor Alexander Khinshtein also accused Kyiv of breaking the truce by attacking a gas station in the town of Lgov with a drone, injuring three people, including a baby.

In his evening address on Saturday, Zelensky called for a longer ceasefire.

"We have put this proposal to Russia, and if Russia again chooses war instead of peace, this will once again demonstrate to the world, and to the United States, who really wants what."

Residents of Kharkiv, a city near the Russian border and targeted by daily attacks, had been wary of the truce.

"It's not for long, a day and a half, so maybe it will hold," hoped Oleg Polyskin, 65.

"But even if you're going to church, there is no 100-percent guarantee that everything will be peaceful... you shouldn't trust Putin and his government," he added.



People hold photographs of their missing or captured relatives and friends as released Ukrainian prisoners of war (POW) arrive after a prisoner exchange in the Chernihiv region

Strategic Maritime Dialogue

- Risks to energy supplies and global trade flow

- Maintaining regional stability

- Broader implications for the global economy

Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates, received S. Jaishankar on Sunday for high-level talks focused on strengthening bilateral relations and addressing regional developments.

During the meeting, FM Jaishankar conveyed greetings from India's PM Narendra Modi, along with his wishes for the continued security and prosperity of the United Arab Emirates. Shaikh Mohamed reciprocated the gesture, extending his greetings to Modi and expressing hopes for further progress and prosperity for India and its people.

The discussions centered on enhancing cooperation under the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the



United Arab Emirates and India. Both sides explored ways to advance collaboration in line with shared development goals and mutual interests.

Regional issues were also high on the agenda, with both leaders reviewing developments in the Middle East and their implications for global security, maritime routes, en-

ergy supplies, and economic stability.

The talks further addressed recent attacks targeting civilians and infrastructure in the UAE and other countries in the region. These actions were described as violations of sovereignty and international law. Jaishankar reaffirmed India's solidarity with the UAE and its

support for measures aimed at protecting national security and ensuring the safety of its people.

The meeting was attended by several senior UAE officials, including Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, along with other ministers and dignitaries.

Jordan Reaffirms Support for Syria's Reconstruction



A historic day in Jordanian-Syrian relations saw the largest ministerial-level meeting between the two countries, highlighting the strength of their longstanding ties and a shared commitment to building comprehensive strategic cooperation.

The high-level discussions took place during the second session of the Joint Higher Coordination Council, where senior officials from both nations convened to advance bilateral collaboration across multiple sectors.

Jordanian ministers welcomed Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shaibani and his accompanying delegation, expressing pride in the steady progress of relations between the two neighboring countries.

Officials emphasized a clear and unified vision for fostering deeper cooperation, underscoring the importance of integration and joint efforts in addressing regional challenges.

Jordan reaffirmed its unwavering support for Syria, stressing that it will continue to stand by the Syrian people in their path toward reconstruction and recovery. Leaders noted that Syria's stability and success are vital not only for Jordan but for the broader region.

The meeting marks a significant step forward in reinforcing diplomatic and economic ties, reflecting both nations' determination to build a stronger, more interconnected future.

GCC Chief Holds Talks with Argentine Envoy



The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Jassim Mohammed Al-Budaiwi, received Facundo Vila, Ambassador of the Argentina to the Saudi Arabia, at the GCC Secretariat headquarters in Riyadh.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed various topics, focusing on relations between the GCC and Argentina and ways to enhance and develop them to support shared interests.

Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Arrives in Beijing



Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, has arrived in Beijing to begin an official visit to the People's Republic of China.

The visit is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen bilateral relations and further enhance the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations. Discussions during the visit are expected to focus on expanding cooperation across key priority sectors, reflecting both countries' shared commitment to deepening ties and exploring broader collaboration opportunities.

Riyadh Meeting Addresses Key International Concerns



In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, received Kang Hoon-sik, the Head of the Presidential Office and Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Korea.

The meeting took place as part of ongoing diplomatic engagements aimed at strengthening bilateral relations between the two countries. Discussions are expected to have covered key areas of cooperation and mutual interest, reflecting the growing partnership between Saudi Arabia and South Korea.

The visit underscores continued efforts by both nations to enhance coordination on regional and international issues, while exploring opportunities for deeper collaboration across various sectors.

Calls for Stronger Economic and Security Ties

King Abdullah II received a Syrian ministerial delegation in the presence of Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, during their participation in the second session of the Higher Coordination Council between Jordan and Syria.

During the meeting, King Abdullah II emphasized the importance of continuing efforts to strengthen economic and trade relations between the two neighboring countries. He also highlighted the need to enhance security cooperation in a way that serves mutual interests and contributes to regional stability.



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Tearful Van Aert finally wins Paris-Roubaix cycling Monument



Team Visma - Lease a Bike's Belgian rider Wout van Aert sprints ahead of UAE Team Emirates XRG's Slovenian rider Tadej Pogacar

AFP | Roubaix

Belgian Wout van Aert finally won one of cycling's cobbled Monuments as he outsprinted world champion Tadej Pogacar to take Paris-Roubaix victory yesterday.

The 31-year-old Van Aert collected one of the two prestigious cobbled classics after seven previous top-four finishes in either the Tour of Flanders or the 'Hell of the North'.

"It means everything to me. It's been a goal since 2018, when I first did this race," said a tearful Van Aert who dedicated the victory to his former teammate Michael Goolaerts, who died that day aged just 23 after suffering a heart-attack during the race.

"Ever since then, it has been my goal to come here and point my finger to the sky," added Van Aert.

"This victory is for Michael, but especially for his family, the staff, all my friends and teammates in the previous team."

"It was a really tough day, and ever since then, in some kind of way, I was unlucky in this race, but it brought me experience," he said.

It was Van Aert's second Monument victory after Milan-San Remo in 2020.

In crossing the line first at the famous velodrome in Roubaix, Van Aert prevented Pogacar from completing a sweep of the five Monument races, and stopped the 27-year-old Slovenian's run of four straight victories in these major classics.

Van Aert had a worrying moment with around 70km left as he suffered a puncture that dropped him out of the lead group, but he fought his way back.

Buttler keeps form as Gujarat ease past Lucknow in IPL



Jos Buttler plays a shot

AFP | Lucknow

England's Jos Buttler struck his second successive half-century in the IPL to guide Gujarat Titans to a comfortable seven-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants yesterday.

Buttler hit 60 off 37 balls and put on 84 runs for the second wicket with skipper Shubman Gill (56) as Gujarat chased down 165 with eight balls to spare at Lucknow's Ekana Stadium.

Buttler's latest knock laced with 11 fours comes after his match-winning 52 in Gujarat's previous match to overcome an extended slump which included a disappointing T20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka.

"(I have) Been through a lean patch last couple of months but nice to get some

good games," the 35-year-old Buttler said after the win.

"A few technical issues crept into my game which were actually not allowing me to see the ball so well. So I've been focusing on everything pre-delivery."

"I've played for 15 years and I know what to do when I get in."

Buttler, a wicketkeeper-batter, scored just 87 runs in eight matches during this year's T20 World Cup as England lost in the semi-finals to eventual champions India last month.

In Lucknow, he looked fluent against pace and spin until his dismissal off Mohammed Shami, who got the prized wicket off a slower ball.

Earlier, Gill also registered his second straight half-century but his and Buttler's wickets in the space of six deliveries raised Lucknow's hopes.

REHC and Mazad to launch Bahrain's first online Horse Auction



- Auction to run between 26-28 April 2026
- Registration now open with entries closing 19 April

TDT | Manama

The Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club (REHC), in collaboration with Mazad—Bahrain's leading digital auction and market-

place platform and a Mumtalakat portfolio company—will stage the fourth edition of its Horse Auction between Sunday, April 26, and Tuesday 28 April 2026, marking its first digital sale.

First staged in 2023, REHC will once again host its annual sale of racehorses in training, now exclusively delivered via Mazad's digital platform where users will experience a seamless and transparent online journey.

Registration for the auction is now open, with entries closing on 19 April 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

The auction catalogue will be published on 21 April.

At the 2025 edition of the auction, 66 horses were entered, and 49 were successfully sold, representing 74.2% of the catalogue and generating a total turnover of BD 81,320.

The highest-priced lot sold for BD 8,200, marking a 197% increase in total auction value compared to the previous year and highlighting the growing confidence in the sale as a competitive marketplace for racehorses in training.

By comparison, the 2024

auction saw 41 horses entered, with 28 sold (68.3%), generating BD 27,350 and a top price of BD 3,800.

Yusuf Buheji, CEO of the Rashid Equestrian & Horseracing Club, commented: "The continued development of this auction reflects its growing importance within Bahrain's racing ecosystem.

With the valued support of Mazad and Tattersalls, we are providing owners and buyers with a professional platform that enhances transparency, liquidity, and participation within the

sport.

"We remain committed to strengthening this initiative and creating accessible entry points for both existing and prospective owners, supporting the long-term sustainability and growth of horseracing in the Kingdom."

Nezar Habib, CEO of Mazad, added: "Mazad continues to advance its collaboration with REHC through this strategic initiative by delivering specialised technology-driven solutions. Alongside our partners at REHC, we are delighted to offer the au-

dience a distinctive experience as the first ever online horse auction in Bahrain."

"We see significant potential in supporting the continued development of Bahrain's equine sector, in line with the Kingdom's long-standing emphasis on its heritage and development. Through this partnership, we remain committed to creating value through innovative auction services that contribute to a more dynamic, diversified, and digitally enabled national economy, advancing Bahrain's Vision 2030."

Spurs rue bad luck as relegation fears deepen

AFP | London

Tottenham's Premier League plight deepened with a 1-0 defeat at Sunderland yesterday in Roberto De Zerbi's first match in charge before Manchester City tried to close the gap on leaders Arsenal.

Spurs brought in the former Brighton and Marseille boss at the end of last month in a last-ditch bid to save themselves from a catastrophic relegation.

But the Italian failed to inspire his team in a tricky baptism at Sunderland and his team remain in the drop zone.

Tottenham, playing under their third manager this season, are without a Premier League win since late December as they contemplate the nightmare of a first relegation from the English top flight since 1977.

The visitors looked bright in the opening stages and were



Tottenham Hotspur's French midfielder #11 Mathys Tel fails to find the target with this headed attempt

awarded a penalty that was subsequently overturned by VAR.

De Zerbi's team were grateful to goalkeeper Antonin Kinsky, who was out quickly to smother a Brian Brobbey shot at point-blank range shortly before half-time while Robin Roefs denied Dominic Solanke at the other end.

Sunderland took the lead courtesy of a huge slice of luck on the hour, when Nordi Mukiele's shot took a massive deflection off Micky van de Ven and looped into the goal.

De Zerbi made three changes,

bringing on Joao Palhinha, Pape Matar Sarr and Mathys Tel and then lost captain Cristian Romero to injury.

Spurs pushed hard for an equaliser late on but Roefs tipped over a powerful Pedro Porro effort in stoppage time to ensure the win for Sunderland.

Tottenham, who parted ways with interim boss Igor Tudor at the end of last month, are two points behind 17th-placed West Ham and have six games left to save themselves from an almost unthinkable relegation.

They are the ninth-wealthiest club in the world, according to Deloitte's latest rankings, underlining the extraordinary nature of their predicament.

6 games remain for Tottenham to avoid their first top-flight relegation since 1977

Sinner beats Alcaraz to win Monte Carlo Masters, returns to No.1



Italy's Jannik Sinner celebrates with the trophy

AFP | Monte Carlo

Jannik Sinner beat Carlos Alcaraz in straight sets to win the Monte Carlo Masters for the first time yesterday and reclaim the world number one ranking from his Spanish rival.

Sinner downed Alcaraz 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to capture his third ATP 1000 title of the year after completing the "Sunshine Double" last month with victories in Indian Wells and Miami.

The 24-year-old Sinner joins Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal as only the third player to win four successive ATP 1000

titles. He also triumphed in Paris at the end of last season.

"We came here trying to get as many matches as possible, getting good feedback before other big tournaments coming up. Today was a high level from both of us," Sinner said.

"It was a bit windy, a bit breezy. Different conditions from what the tournament has brought. The result is amazing. Getting back to No.1 means a lot for me... I am very happy to win a big title on this surface, I haven't done it before and it means a lot to me."

It was the first meeting between Sinner and Alcaraz since the Italian prevailed at the ATP Finals in November.



Despite being among the world's richest clubs, Tottenham face a shock relegation battle rarely seen for teams with such financial power

Trial by fire in Mannheim

Bahrain's Youth Gain Valuable Exposure in Germany Campaign

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's first appearance at the Albert Schweitzer Tournament ended without a win, but with a clear picture of the standard that defines elite youth basketball.

The campaign, staged in Mannheim and Viernheim, concluded with hosts Germany defeating Slovenia in the final to secure the title and underline the tournament's reputation as one of the most competitive U18 basketball events in the world.

For the nationals, the final result came in a 58-75 defeat to China in the classification game, confirming

12th place after a week spent testing themselves against established international programs. Bahrain also attended the official closing ceremony following the final, marking the end of their debut campaign on the tournament stage.

Drawn into Group A, Bahrain faced an immediate rise in intensity. Germany, Slovenia, Sweden, Japan, and Türkiye arrived in succession, each bringing a level of pace, physical strength, and execution that punished small lapses. Bahrain had stretches where they held their ground and matched energy, but sustaining it across full games proved the

difference.

The win column stayed empty, but the value of the week sat elsewhere. The invitation from the German Basketball Federation reflected growing recognition of Bahraini youth basketball and placed the team in an environment that exposed the demands of top-tier international competition up close.

Attention now turns to the Gulf Basketball Association U18 qualifiers for the FIBA U18 Asia Cup 2026 in Doha. Bahrain's challenge is straightforward: take the lessons learned in Germany and convert them into results when qualification begins.



Bahrain players take part in the closing ceremony parade

Andreeva opens clay court season with title in Linz



Mirra Andreeva returns a shot to Victoria Mboko of Canada

AFP | Linz

Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva made the perfect start to her clay court campaign as she came from a set down to beat Anastasia Potapova 1-6, 6-4, 6-3 to land the WTA event in Linz yesterday.

It is a second title this season for the 18-year-old, ranked 10 in the world, who also won in Adelaide in January.

Broken in her opening service game, Andreeva piled up unforced errors, especially on

her forehand, and was swept aside by Potapova in just 29 minutes in the first set.

The top seed bounced back immediately, breaking the Potapova serve at the start of the second set and although she dropped her own service once, she broke again to level the match.

In the third set, the Russian-born Potapova, who has been competing this season under the Austrian flag, cracked under the power of Andreeva's raking shots into the corners.

Fans return to Bahrain sporting arenas

TDT | Manama

Crowds are set to return across Bahrain's sporting arenas, bringing life back to stadiums and halls at a decisive stage of the season.

Authorities previously suspended fan attendance as a precautionary measure amid unfortunate regional conflicts. Now, they are moving to restore normal sporting atmospheres.

The Bahrain Football Association confirmed that supporters will be allowed back into stadiums starting from Round 18 of the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League, ending the suspension that had been in place since March 12. The round gets underway on Thursday, April 16, with both the title race and relegation battle finely poised.

Basketball will also welcome fans back, beginning with Game 3 of the Zain Bahrain Basket-

ball League final between Muharraq and Manama. The game is scheduled for tomorrow at 7pm at Khalifa Sports City Arena, where the presence of supporters is expected to add intensity to an already exciting series.

In handball, fans return starting Sunday with the resumption of attendance in the Khalid bin Hamad Handball League. The comeback coincides with the final round of the preliminary stage, including a key meeting between Al Najma Club and Al Ahli where crowd support could play a significant role.

Volleyball follows the same path, with the Bahrain Volleyball Association announcing the return of spectators to indoor competitions from Sunday. The federation has urged fans to support their teams while maintaining a positive sporting atmosphere.



Muharraq fans in full voice during a previous match

BIC to host Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night this Thursday and Open Track Night on Friday

Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), 'The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East', has announced the organisation of Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night on Thursday, 16 April, followed by Open Track Night for cars and motorbikes on Friday, 17 April, as part of a series of activities aimed at motorsport enthusiasts and speed lovers.

The events will deliver an exciting atmosphere at BIC's world-class venue, featuring competitive action on the circuit's quarter-mile drag strip and offering participants a unique driving experience at a facility that hosts some of the region's premier motorsport championships.



Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night offers participants the opportunity to take part using their own cars or motorbikes on the National Hot Rod As-

sociation (NHRA)-sanctioned quarter-mile strip. Participants will begin their runs from a rolling start at 80km/h, offering an added level of challenge and



excitement within a safe and controlled environment.

The Rolling Drag Night will take place on Thursday from 6pm to 11pm. Registration will

be available at the circuit, with participation fees set at BD22 per driver or rider.

Meanwhile, Open Track Night will be held Friday from 5pm to

9pm, with 8pm to 9pm being for members. The experience will take place along BIC's Inner Circuit, offering enthusiasts the opportunity to drive their own vehicles in a structured and professionally managed setting.

Participation fees are BD71,500 for advance bookings and BD82,500 for registrations on the day of the event. Single sessions cost BD33 each. Instructor sessions are also available, while additional drivers and passengers can be a part of the action, all for an additional fee. For further information or to register for either activity, interested participants are invited to visit the circuit's official website at bahraingp.com or contact the BIC Hotline on +973 1745 0000.