

Vatican US Clash

Italian PM Giorgia Meloni has openly criticized US President Donald Trump, calling his remarks about Pope Leo XIV “unacceptable” in a rare and pointed rebuke. The comments come after Trump accused the Pope of being “weak on crime” | P8

REGION 13 20,000 seafarers stranded near Hormuz

THE DAILY **tribune**



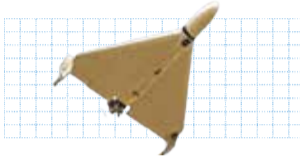
Muharrag close in on championship sweep as Manama fight to survive 16 SPORTS

BUSINESS 06 BHD 7 billion liquidity boost announced for commercial banks

Defence Ties Deepen

A longstanding strategic partnership built on trust

Seven Drones



The General Command of the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) announced that since the beginning of what it described as ongoing Iranian attacks, it has intercepted and destroyed 194 missiles and 516 drones targeting the Kingdom of Bahrain. Yesterday's latest update includes the addition of seven newly intercepted drones to the overall tally.

Two Remanded over BD 200,000 Antique Theft

TDT | Manama
Rehab Mohammad

The Head of the Northern Governorate Prosecution stated that the Public Prosecution concluded its investigation into a complaint filed by a homeowner reporting the theft of antique items stored in his residence, which he used as a storage facility.

Investigations revealed that the two suspects exploited the owner's absence and managed to enter the property, stealing its contents over several stages. The stolen items, estimated at approximately BD 200,000, were later recovered in their possession.

The prosecution ordered their referral to trial while in custody and the return of the recovered items to their rightful owner.

BD 70,000 Fine

The Court of Cassation has upheld a final ruling sentencing a 52-year-old Bahraini company manager to six months in prison and ordering him to pay approximately BD 70,000 after being convicted in a value-added tax (VAT) evasion case.

The case dates back to his failure to settle VAT dues amounting to BD 35,327.319 over a period exceeding three years, despite submitting tax declarations during that time.

Earlier rulings by the Court of First Instance and the High Criminal Court of Appeal had ordered him to pay the outstanding tax along with fines, before the Court of Cassation confirmed the verdict, making it final and enforceable.

● Defense, military, and multi-sector cooperation highlighted

● Focus on mutual security and stability concerns

● Advancing collaboration under CSIPA

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, received Admiral Charles Bradford Cooper II, Commander of the United States Central Command (CENTCOM), and his accompanying delegation during the Admiral's official visit to the Kingdom.

His Majesty welcomed the CENTCOM commander and reaffirmed the depth of the long-



standing strategic partnership between Bahrain and the United States, which spans decades. He emphasised that the bilateral relationship is founded on mutual trust, respect, and close coordination as trusted allies and partners.

Security Boost

The King highlighted the continued growth of cooperation between



the two countries across defence, military, and other key sectors, in line with shared interests and aspirations. He also reviewed with the US delegation the latest regional and international developments, along with a range of issues of mutual concern.

His Majesty further commended the important role played by the United States, alongside allied

nations, in promoting regional and global security and stability.

Security Alliance

Separately, His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa also held discussions with the CENTCOM commander during the visit, reaffirming the strength of Bahrain-US relations and their strategic cooperation

across multiple sectors. The Crown Prince highlighted the importance of advancing bilateral collaboration, particularly in defence and military fields, and building upon existing agreements, including the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement (CSIPA).

He also noted that Bahrain-US cooperation has played a key role in addressing regional security challenges and countering hostile threats, while underscoring the need for continued coordination to enhance stability and prosperity.

The visit was attended by Lieutenant General His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, National Security Advisor and Royal Guard Commander, His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister at the Prime Minister's Court, His Excellency Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy, and several senior officials.

“Model Of Unity”

Manama Talks Reinforce Bahrain-UAE Alliance

TDT | Manama

Strong bilateral relations and shared regional priorities took centre stage as His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa met with UAE President His Highness Shaikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, in the presence of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

The discussions highlighted the longstanding partnership between Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, with both sides underscoring the strength of ties built on mutual trust, unity,

and shared values. His Majesty described the relationship as a leading example of cooperation between brotherly nations.

During the meeting, HM the King commended the UAE's consistent support and firm stance in promoting unity across the region. He praised the UAE leadership's clear vision and principled approach, noting its role in reinforcing joint efforts during challenging times.

Tribute was also paid to the sacrifices made by martyrs from both nations, reflecting a shared commitment to defending common



principles and strengthening their collective future.

Amid evolving regional developments, His Majesty expressed appreciation for the UAE's continued support, which has contributed to Bahrain's ability to respond effectively to various challenges. He reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to further advancing cooperation and deepening coordination across multiple sectors.

Both sides emphasised a unified vision aimed at enhancing regional stability and prosperity, while building on the legacy of strong ties established by their leaderships.

CABINET MEETING

April Wage Support Approved

HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, chaired the weekly Cabinet meeting and reviewed key measures focused on strengthening economic stability, labour market performance, and national resilience.

During the meeting, the Cabinet approved referring a draft law aimed at ensuring the payment of insured Bahraini employees' salaries in private sector companies for the month of April through the Unemployment Insurance Fund. The measure intends to protect job continuity, support the private sector, and reinforce overall economic stability.



The Cabinet also reaffirmed Bahrain's position on regional security, condemning hostile Iranian actions that threaten stability in the Gulf and the reopening of key maritime routes including the Strait of Hormuz.

On the economic front, the Cabinet reviewed Bahrain's

Quarterly Economic Report for 2025, which recorded real GDP growth of 3.5%, driven by a 4.1% expansion in non-oil sectors. Labour market indicators also showed steady progress toward national employment and training targets for Bahrainis.

To support financial stability,

the Cabinet commended Central Bank of Bahrain initiatives including loan repayment deferrals, liquidity support measures, and the currency swap agreement with the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates.

(Continue on page 6)

Other Key Cabinet Decisions

Bahrain-Switzerland investment protection agreement approved

New regulations endorsed for Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs

Q1 2026 labour market indicators under National Labour Market Plan approved

Government responses reviewed on parliamentary draft laws and proposals

Quarterly economic report and international participation outcomes



Tharaa
Prize Account

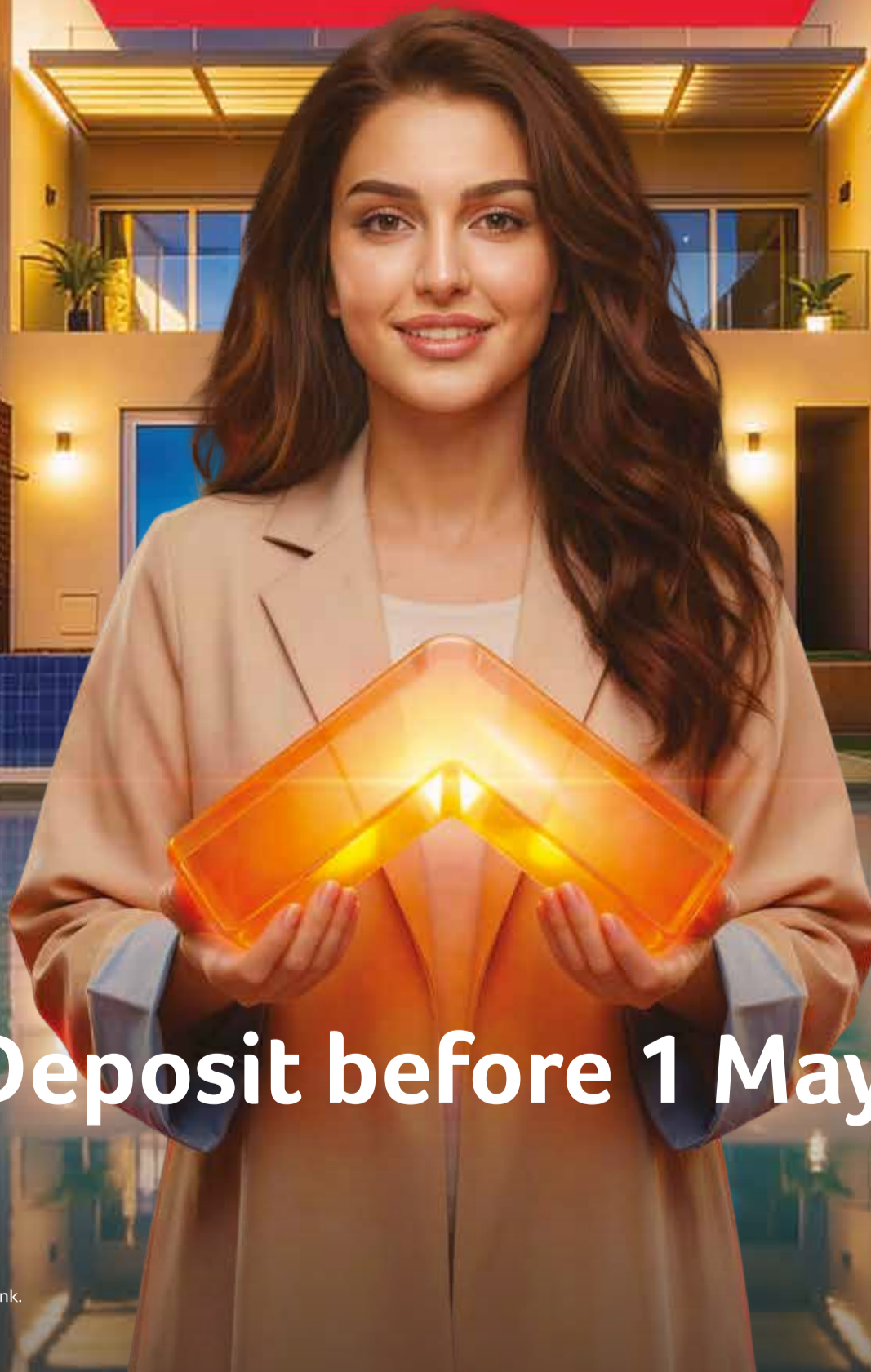
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Stagnant Water Fuels Mosquito

● Coastal neighbourhoods repeatedly affected

● Drainage issues and pressure on sewage systems

● Urgent expansion of mosquito spraying

TDT | Manama
Hasan Barakat

A rise in mosquito activity following recent rainfall has triggered growing public concern across several areas of Bahrain. Residents report worsening conditions in the evenings and an increasing presence of insects inside homes.

Stagnant rainwater left in open spaces after the downpours has been identified as a key factor behind the outbreak, particularly in low-lying neighbourhoods and coastal areas where water tends to accumulate. Residents say the issue recurs annually, with similar conditions leading to repeated



“We must expand spraying operations and increase field teams to respond faster to affected areas.”

ABDULLA ASHOOR,
MUNICIPAL MEMBER

infestations.

Municipal member Abdulla Ashoor said the post-rainwater accumulation has created ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes, warning that untreated

stagnant pools can quickly turn into persistent sources of infestation. He also pointed to added strain on drainage and sewage systems, which slows water removal in some locations.

Ashoor called for urgent and expanded action from the Public Health Directorate, including wider spraying operations and increased field teams to cover affected areas more quickly. He also proposed upgrading the reporting system to a 24-hour hotline to allow residents to report issues at any time.

The situation has highlighted the need for stronger coordination between municipal bodies

and public health teams. Officials noted that while priority is often given to reopening roads after rainfall, follow-up measures such as treating stagnant water must not be delayed.

Concerns were also raised about contributing factors within private properties, including improper water storage and drainage issues, calling for greater public awareness alongside official response efforts.

A formal letter has been submitted to the minister seeking urgent intervention and a comprehensive plan to contain the outbreak and prevent further spread.

Digital Revision Programme Goes Live Today

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Education has announced that the free remote evening revision programme ‘Imkan’ begins today, Tuesday, 14 April 2026, as part of preparations for second-term final examinations for government school students.

The programme targets Grade 9, secondary school, and technical and vocational education students, aiming to strengthen understanding of core subjects and support exam readiness.

Education Minister Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma said the programme will offer 82 online lessons covering 41 subjects via the Ministry’s Microsoft Teams platform. Each session will be delivered by three teachers, including a main instructor, a support teacher, and a dedicated facilitator to answer student questions.

For secondary students, subjects include mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, Arabic, English, financial mathematics, office management, and accounting. Grade 9 lessons will focus on mathematics, science, Arabic, and English.



“The programme will offer 82 online lessons covering 41 subjects via the Ministry’s Microsoft Teams platform”

DR MOHAMMED BIN MUBARAK JUMA

Participation in the programme is optional, with students receiving scheduled links outlining lesson times and subjects. The sessions are designed to reinforce key concepts and encourage interactive learning through live chat support.

Bahrain Summons Iraqi Diplomat Over Drone Incident

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs summoned the Acting Chargé d’Affaires of the Embassy of Iraq in Bahrain, Ahmed Ismail Al-Karawi, expressing the Kingdom of Bahrain’s strong condemnation and denunciation of the continued hostile drone attacks targeting Bahrain and several other Gulf Cooperation Council states, which originated from Iraqi territory.

During the meeting, Shaikh Abdullah bin Ali Al Khalifa, Director-General of Bilateral Rela-



“Bahrain reaffirmed that it reserves the right to take all necessary measures and precautions to safeguard its security, stability, and the safety of citizens and residents.”

tions at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, handed over an official protest memorandum to the

Iraqi diplomat.

The Kingdom stressed the urgent need for Iraq to address these threats and attacks in a serious and responsible manner, in line with relevant regional and international laws and agreements.

Bahrain reaffirmed that it reserves the right to take all necessary measures and precautions to safeguard its security, stability, and the safety of citizens and residents. It also underscored the importance of protecting the security of all states within the Gulf Cooperation Council region.

MPs Seek Three-Year Travel Ban on Debtors

TDT | Manama
Mohammed Darwish

Five MPs have proposed allowing travel bans on debtors to be imposed for up to three years, arguing the longer period is needed to prevent some individuals from leaving Bahrain to avoid paying outstanding debts.

The proposal, submitted by Khalid Buanaq, Ahmed Al Salloom, Dr Ali Al Nuaimi, Zainab AbdulAmeer and Mahmood Fardan, seeks to amend Article 40 of Bahrain’s law on the enforcement of civil and commercial rulings.

Under the draft, an execution court judge could impose a travel ban of up to three months



“Extending the travel ban period helps prevent debtors from evading payment while keeping the process under judicial control.”

ABDULAZIZ AL NAAR,
MUHARRAQ MUNICIPAL
COUNCIL CHAIRMAN

at a time, renewable multiple times, reaching a maximum total of three years. The measure would apply in cases where there are concerns a debtor may flee and where available assets do not cover the debt.

The proposal allows the ban to remain in place while enforcement procedures continue and can be challenged before the courts within set legal deadlines. It would also not override deportation orders or residency termination decisions for foreigners.

The MPs said the change intends to strengthen debt recovery mechanisms and ensure courts have sufficient time to complete enforcement procedures in large cases.

5kg Meth Hidden in Sports Gear

TDT | Manama
Rehab Mohammad

A 30-year-old Asian man has been sentenced to five years in prison, fined 3,000 dinars, and ordered deported after serving his sentence for attempting to smuggle around 5 kilograms of methamphetamine into Bahrain hidden inside sports equipment.

The High Criminal Court convicted the defendant after Customs officers at Bahrain International Airport discovered suspicious cargo during routine screening of parcels arriving from an Asian country. X-ray scans revealed abnormal density inside sports bats, which were found to contain crystalline substances suspected to be meth.

A second parcel linked to the same identification number was later flagged and found to contain



similar concealed drugs.

Authorities coordinated a controlled delivery operation after the suspect requested collection of the shipments. He was arrested immediately upon receiving the parcels, and a precision electronic scale used for drug distribution was also seized during his arrest.

New Public Service Projects Move Forward

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

Separate Utility Meters Proposal

Inside many homes, a single electricity bill is becoming a quiet source of tension, often dividing families rather than uniting them.

In households where married sons, divorced daughters, or multiple heirs live under one roof, utility expenses are frequently registered under a single name. This arrangement often forces informal financial sharing, which can lead to disputes, delayed payments, and growing domestic strain.

A new proposal to allow additional electricity and water meters for individual housing units has now moved forward; officials describe it as a long-awaited solution to these recurring challenges.

Pressure

The Technical Committee approved the proposal unanimously, noting that separate meters could ease pressure on internal electrical systems, reduce the risk of overloads, and improve household safety by minimising faults that may damage appliances or infrastructure.

Beyond technical improvements, supporters say the change reflects evolving household patterns, where increasing reliance on electrical appliances has made shared utility systems more complex. Individual metering would also allow clearer monitoring of consumption,

Established in 1952, Budaiya Club is a key sports and community institution that hosts events beyond football.



“We have seen cases where a single property is divided into several units with separate meters, and later sold in that form.”

— ABDULLA ASHOOR

easier maintenance, and faster identification of faults within specific units.

Barbar 24/7 Ambulance Service Approved

The Services and Public Utilities Committee has approved a proposal to provide a dedicated 24-hour ambulance service at the Shaikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah Health Centre in Barbar.

The move comes in response to rising patient numbers and concerns over delayed emergency response times, particularly during late-night hours when ambulance availability from distant locations can slow critical intervention.

Response

Members said a permanent on-site ambulance would signif-



Shaikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah Health Centre

icantly improve response times, enhance emergency care outcomes, and strengthen the wider healthcare system.

The proposal has been referred to the relevant minister for further action, it aims to improve safety and ensure faster medical support for residents in urgent situations.

New Training Pitch For Budaiya Club

Services and Public Utilities Committee has reviewed a pro-

posal to establish an additional training pitch for Budaiya Club, amid growing pressure on its only available facility.

The club currently hosts five teams sharing a single artificial turf pitch, leading to overcrowded schedules, reduced training time, and extended sessions that often run late into the night.

Strain

Municipal member Mohammed Saad Al Doseri highlighted the strain on players and coach-

es, noting that limited access to the ground is affecting training quality. He also pointed out that nearby clubs benefit from multiple natural grass pitches, widening the gap in available resources.

The existing pitch is in constant use, accelerating wear and limiting opportunities for structured development across all age groups.

New Mosques Planned in Al Lawzi and Dumistan



“No individual should be left carrying the financial burden for others when it comes to essential service.”

— ABDULLA AL QUBAISI

committee reviewed a plan to allocate approximately 350 square metres of land for a new mosque's construction. Technical assessments raised no objections to the proposal, which intends to better serve a growing residential population. Authorities noted that existing facilities in the area are becoming more difficult to access, particularly for elderly residents.

Land

In Dumistan, Block 1017, officials discussed a separate proposal to convert part of an existing public park into a mosque after previous efforts to secure dedicated land were unsuccessful. The plan reflects ongoing challenges in balancing limited available land with community needs while maintaining the importance of public green spaces.

Both proposals were approved and referred to the relevant minister for further action, underscoring how rapid urban expansion continues to shape infrastructure and planning priorities across residential neighbourhoods.

Muharraq Council Rejects Removal of Falcon Monument

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

The Muharraq Municipal Council has rejected a request by the Works Ministry to remove the Falcon Monument on Airport Road, citing its cultural and sentimental value to the area.

Council members instead called for alternative solutions, including redesigning the road



“We are calling for solutions that protect both the monument and the development of the road project.”

— ABDULLAZIZ AL NAAR, MUHARRAQ MUNICIPAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN



layout to preserve the landmark or rebuilding the monument using more durable materials if relocation is unavoidable.

Symbol

Council chairman Abdulaziz Al Naar said the monument is a key symbol of Muharraq's identity and should not be removed, warning that relocation could damage the structure. He added that the issue will be revisited



“Heritage and development can go hand in hand.”

— ABDULQADER MAHMOOD, MUHARRAQ MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBER



after reviewing proposed alternatives.

Operational Readiness in Governorates



Security Committee meeting chaired by the Capital Governor

Shaikh Khalid bin Hamood Al Khalifa, Capital Governor, chaired a meeting of the governorate's Security Committee with representatives from various Ministry of Interior departments. The meeting reviewed meas-

ures to enhance public security and safety, focusing on improving coordination among authorities and boosting response efficiency during current conditions. Meanwhile, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa, Governor of the



Southern Governor reviews security readiness

Southern Governorate, chaired the fourth Security Committee meeting for 2026, which senior security officials attended.

The meeting reviewed ongoing security efforts and the implementation of directives from

the Minister of Interior, aimed at enhancing safety and stability across the governorate.

Discussions highlighted the importance of maintaining readiness and rapid response to emergencies.

High-Profile Bribery Case Heads for Final Verdict

Illegal 2023 transactions

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

The High Criminal Court of Appeal (First Circuit) is set to deliver its verdict on 27 April in an appeal involving a public employee and an Arab businessman, both previously convicted in a bribery case linked to the facilitation of official transactions in 2023.

The lower court sentenced the public employee to five years in prison, fined him BD 2,800, and ordered his dismissal

from public service along with a permanent ban from holding government positions. The businessman received a one-year prison sentence, deportation after serving his time, and confiscation of the bribe amount.

Procedures

According to case details, the employee was accused of requesting and accepting a bribe to expedite administrative procedures, despite no longer being officially authorized to handle the transactions following his transfer to another government department. Investigations showed he continued to intervene informally in related matters.

What's on the Council Agenda?

Key Local Issues Raised in Latest Session

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

Hamala Housing Delays

Residents in Hamala and nearby areas are still unable to begin building homes due to long-delayed road works and site preparation, despite owning plots of land.

During a Northern Municipal Council session, Mohammed Saad Al Doseri highlighted deteriorating infrastructure in areas such as Hamala 1010 and Jasra, saying repeated requests to the Ministry of Works have seen little progress due to budget constraints.

A formal recommendation has been submitted calling for urgent acceleration of road and infrastructure works to enable housing development.

Repeated flooding concerns

Blocked and poorly maintained rainwater drainage systems continue to affect areas such as Hamad Town, with residents facing recurring water accumulation after rainfall.

Northern Municipal Council member Abdulla Al Qubaisi raised the issue, saying repeated correspondence with authorities has not resulted in lasting solutions on the ground.



Abdulla Al Thawadi

He said responsibility continues to shift between agencies, while drainage channels remain unclear despite official assurances.

Call to Install 'Sahel' Waste



Bag Dispensers

A proposal has been made to install "Sahel" waste bag dispensers at a fuel station in Block 581, Salman City, to improve access to essential household

supplies.

Mohammed Saad Al Doseri said the locations would offer residents a convenient way to obtain garbage bags during daily errands.



Speed bump review

Residents in several neighbourhoods are calling for faster action on pending speed bump requests amid growing concerns over speeding vehicles in residential streets.

Abdullah Al Thawadi raised the issue in the Northern Municipal Council, stating that delays in implementation are leaving communities exposed to safety risks.

While officials stressed the need for technical standards and site inspections, members called for joint field visits to assess urgent cases.

Vandalism in public parks

Repeated vandalism at a Hamad Town park has raised concerns over the lack of security presence in public recreational areas.

Abdulla Al Qubaisi said the absence of a guard has contributed to ongoing damage to facilities, including children's play areas.

Municipal officials confirmed repair works are underway but highlighted the financial burden caused by repeated destruction of public property.

The discussion also saw debate over accountability, with calls for stronger preventive measures rather than repeated repairs alone.

Abdullah Al Thawadi raised the issue at the Northern Municipal Council, saying delays in execution are leaving communities exposed to safety risks.

He stressed that expanding such services helps improve everyday living conditions, especially in growing residential areas.

2,000 people a month

New disability complex nears launch

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

A phased opening of the Comprehensive Disability Complex is nearing; the new centre is expected to serve about 2,000 people a month in one place, Social Development Minister Osama Al Alawi said.

He said the complex will provide specialist care for people with autism of all ages, including a government rehabilitation centre, a leisure club, diagnostic services, physiotherapy, sports facilities and areas for beneficiaries to display their products.

He said 2,122 people with autism spectrum disorder are registered with the ministry, including 1,695 males and 427 females, adding that these figures align with regional and international rates.

All people with autism receive the doubled disability allowance of BD200 a month, he said, while some also receive social security payments and the cost-of-living allowance.

About 2,200 students with disabilities are enrolled at 55 rehabilitation centres, includ-



H.E. OSAMA AL ALAWI, MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

ing six government centres, 15 non-profit centres and 34 private centres. He said these centres provide vocational and behavioural rehabilitation, physiotherapy, transport and accompaniment services.

Pressure

The ministry provides BD1.2 million a year to 12 non-profit centres, he said, helping ease pressure on families.

Al Alawi said care for people with disabilities requires coordinated work from diagnosis through rehabilitation, education, health, employment and inclusion in society. He said this

also depends on cooperation between the legislative and executive branches, civil society groups, the private sector and the National Committee for the Care of People with Disabilities.

He said the ministry has a clear system for licensing and monitoring all rehabilitation centres under its supervision. Inspection visits are carried out regularly, and legal and administrative action is taken as soon as any breach is found. In some cases, preventive steps are taken before a breach occurs. He added that the ministry has seen better compliance by these centres with the rules and procedures in force.



Shaikh Khaled bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, General Director of Vatel Bahrain, accompanied by Fatema Ali Frutan, conducted an inspection tour to review the progress of final examinations for the current semester. During the visit, officials assessed arrangements across examination halls and engaged with students to gather feedback on the exams and their alignment with the curriculum. Shaikh Khaled commended the discipline and commitment demonstrated by students and by academic and administrative staff, highlighting the institution's readiness and professionalism in delivering assessments efficiently.

The Invisible Student

Digital Distraction and the Rise of 'Hacking Learning' in Online Classrooms

Dr. Nidhi Menon
Assistant Professor, UTB
Bahrain

The class begins on time. Students log in, attendance is marked, and everything appears to be in order. Names line the screen, microphones remain muted, and the session moves forward as expected. Then, within minutes, something shifts.

Responses slow down. Interaction fades. Questions are met with silence. What begins as a room full of students gradually turns into a one-sided conversation. They are present, but not truly there. This is the emerging reality of online education: the rise of the invisible student.

Today's learners are no longer engaging with a single stream of information. They are surrounded by constant digital activity, messages, notifications, multiple tabs, and parallel content competing for their focus. In such an environment, attention is not lost; it is divided.

Students listen, glance at other screens, reply to messages, and return intermittently to the class. Participation becomes fragmented, and concentration weakens without completely disappearing.

Alongside this shift, another pattern is becoming visible. Learning is increasingly approached as something to be managed efficiently rather than explored in depth. This can be understood as "hacking learn-



teaching.

Instead of expecting students to remain continuously focused, learning needs to be structured in a way that brings them back into the session repeatedly. Short shifts in pace, moments of pause, or even a simple change in activity can act as "attention resets," helping students reconnect with the content.

Equally important is reducing the gap between what is taught and how students experience the world outside the classroom. When learning feels distant or purely theoretical, attention drops quickly. However, when ideas are connected to real-life situations, students are more likely to return their focus even after distraction.

Another shift lies in how we interpret silence. In online classrooms, silence does not always mean disengagement, it may simply reflect delayed attention. Allowing space for re-entry, rather than expecting immediate responses, can make participation more natural.

The aim, therefore, is not to eliminate distraction, but to design learning that can work alongside it. When teaching aligns with how attention behaves today, engagement becomes more sustainable.

Students have not disappeared from our classrooms; they have simply become invisible. Recognizing this shift is the first step. Responding to it thoughtfully will shape how effectively we teach in an increasingly digital world.

ing." The emphasis moves from engaging with ideas to completing academic requirements with minimal effort.

This behavior is not always driven by disinterest. It often reflects pressure, overload, and the pace of a digitally connected lifestyle. However, the outcome is clear: understanding becomes surface-level, and meaningful engagement declines.

Tasks

Over time, this creates a disconnect between presence and learning. Students attend sessions and complete tasks, yet their grasp of the subject remains uncertain. What later appears as weak performance or dependence on shortcuts often originates from this earlier stage of fragmented attention.

The challenge, therefore, is not attendance, it is attention.

And attention today behaves differently. It comes and goes, rather than staying fixed for long periods. This requires a more realistic response from

CBB opens **liquidity taps**, offers loan breathing space

Loan and credit card repayments deferred for up to three months for individuals and businesses

● **Unlimited dinar liquidity to banks for six months, with repo operations extended**

● **Reserve and liquidity ratios cut to inject funds and support economic activity**

TDT | Manama

Bahrain has rolled out a sweeping financial relief package, offering up to three months' deferment on loan and credit card repayments to ease pressure on households and businesses.

In parallel, the Central Bank of Bahrain has unveiled a series of additional measures to inject liquidity and reinforce the banking sector, including unlimited dinar funding for banks, relaxed reserve requirements, and eased liquidity ratios to sustain credit flow across the economy.

Announced by the Central Bank of Bahrain, the move comes in line with directives from His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, aimed at safeguarding financial stability and sustaining economic momentum across the Kingdom.

The repayment pause will apply to both individuals and businesses, giving banks and financial institutions flexibility in delaying the reclassification of



11.3bn

The Central Bank noted that total domestic lending currently stands at around BHD 11.3 billion.

3.5%

Reduced reserve requirement ratio from 5 per cent to 3.5 per cent

7bn

Unlimited Bahraini dinar liquidity for commercial banks for six months against eligible collateral, estimated at nearly BHD 7 billion

affected loans. The Central Bank noted that total domestic lending currently stands at around BHD 11.3 billion.

In a further boost to the financial system, the Central Bank will inject unlimited Bahraini dinar liquidity into commercial

banks for six months against eligible collateral, estimated at nearly BHD 7 billion. It will also extend the maturity of repurchase (repo) operations to three months, providing banks with greater funding stability.

Additional measures have

been introduced to enhance liquidity, including a reduction in the reserve requirement ratio from 5% to 3.5%, alongside easing the Liquidity Coverage Ratio and Net Stable Funding Ratio from 100% to 80%.

The Central Bank reaffirmed

Shura Council backs bold economic support drive

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's financial relief measures have drawn strong backing from the Shura Council, with its Speaker hailing the package as a timely step to reinforce economic stability and national unity.

H.E. Ali bin Saleh Al-Saleh praised the announcement of the major financial support package issued under the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

Al-Saleh said the measures reflect a spirit of national solidarity and play a key role in strengthening the Kingdom's economic resilience.

"These proactive steps align with His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's vision to support citizens and safeguard their livelihoods. They help reduce the impact of recent economic challenges and reflect strong national unity," he said.

He reaffirmed the Shura Council's support for government efforts to assist the private sector and protect jobs,



These proactive steps align with His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's vision to support citizens and safeguard their livelihoods. They help reduce the impact of recent economic challenges and reflect strong national unity

H.E. ALI BIN SALEH AL-SALEH

adding that a proposed draft law linked to the measures will be prioritised once submitted for review.

that Bahrain's banking sector remains resilient, backed by strong capital adequacy and liquidity levels. It added that it will continue to closely monitor

developments and stands ready to take further action to ensure financial stability and the uninterrupted flow of credit in the Kingdom.

Oil surges, stocks drop as Trump threatens to **block Hormuz**

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Oil prices surged back above \$100 a barrel and stocks mostly fell yesterday as a US blockade of Iranian ports went into effect, ratcheting up fears for Middle East energy supplies.

The resurgent geopolitical tensions come after ceasefire talks between Washington and Iran broke down over the weekend, dousing hopes for a lasting end to a war that has threatened economies worldwide.

Traders say the prospect of widespread inflation from spiking oil prices and supply disruptions has also put a focus on corporate earnings, with a range of blue chips this week starting to report first-quarter results.

On Friday, the US reported that its consumer price index climbed to 3.3% in March, the highest level since May last year. "The stagflation word is being widely aired once again as geopolitical turmoil threatens to stymie international growth and stoke inflationary pressures," said Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell.

Such concerns have increased

Key figures at 1530 GMT

Brent North Sea Crude:	▲ 6.5% at \$101.38 a barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▲ 6.2 percent at \$102.58 a barrel
New York - Dow Jones:	▼ 0.6% at 47,642.89 points
New York - S&P 500:	■ at 6,817.69
Nasdaq Composite:	▲ 0.3% at 22,961.96
London - FTSE 100:	▼ 0.2% at 10,582.96 (close)
Paris - CAC 40:	▼ 0.3 percent at 8,235.98 (close)
Frankfurt - DAX:	▼ 1.3% at 23,742.44 (close)
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▼ 0.7% at 56,502.77 (close)
Hang Seng Index:	▼ 0.9% at 25,660.85 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▲ 0.1% at 3,988.56 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▼ at \$1.1704 from \$1.1728 on Friday
Pound/dollar:	▼ at \$1.3452 from \$1.3463
Dollar/yen:	▲ at 159.74 yen from 159.19 yen
Euro/pound:	▼ at 87.04 pence from 87.11 pence

with the United States beginning on Monday a partial blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-fifth of the world's oil and gas passes.

"The blockade will be enforced impartially against vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas, including all Iranian ports on the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of

Oman," US Central Command posted on X.

It will allow ships not coming or going to Iran to pass through the strait, however.

The threat comes as Tehran has already effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz to oil and other traffic since the start of US-Israel strikes on Iran in late February.

World oil prices jumped more



Stockbrokers react during trading hours at the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) in Karachi

than 6% Monday, Wall Street's main indices were mixed in late morning trade.

Asian and European markets ended the day mostly lower.

"Reopening the Strait of Hormuz remains the key requirement for reigniting a sustainable rally across risk assets," said

David Morrison, an analyst at Trade Nation.

"Yet there's also a conviction, rightly or wrongly, that the war will end relatively soon," he said, noting that oil futures contracts for deliveries later this year are currently priced well below current market prices.

"As far as oil traders are con-

cerned, this war may be in its seventh week, but it should be resolved by summer," Morrison said.

But Chancellor Friedrich Merz warned Monday that Germany, Europe's biggest economy, would feel the effects of the energy shock from the war "for a long time to come, even after it is over", as his government announced relief measures including a fuel-tax cut.

In Hungary, stocks rallied 5% after conservative Peter Magyar won a thumping majority in parliamentary elections Sunday, ousting Prime Minister Viktor Orban after 16 years in power and opening the way to improved relations with the European Union.

Economists at ING said that alongside economic reforms, Hungary's new pro-Europe government could set a target date for adopting the euro.

"If timed perfectly, this could boost market confidence and give the Tisza party more time to work on the Hungarian economy with some tailwinds," they wrote in a research note.

HRH Prince Salman puts **private** sector at centre of growth drive

HRH CP, PM highlights private sector's role in competitiveness, resilience and market stability

● **Private sector praised for ensuring supply stability and price control amid regional tensions**

● **New BCCI board backed to advance initiatives supporting growth and national prosperity**

TDI | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, has reaffirmed Bahrain's drive to accelerate economic growth by deepening public-private part-



His Royal Highness congratulated the Chairman and newly elected Board members on the Chamber's 31st session, wishing them success in delivering initiatives that benefit the Kingdom and its citizens.

nerships, during a high-level meeting with business leaders at Gudaibiya Palace.

Meeting Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Chairman Nabeel Khalid Kanoo and members of the Board of Directors, His Royal Highness stressed that closer collaboration between government and

the private sector remains central to advancing the Kingdom's comprehensive development, led by HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. Highlighting the pri-

private sector as a key engine of growth, HRH Prince Salman said its role is vital in strengthening Bahrain's global competitiveness and supporting sustainable economic progress.

His Royal Highness congratulated the Chairman and newly elected Board members on the Chamber's 31st session, wishing them success in delivering initiatives that benefit the Kingdom and its citizens. His Royal Highness also paid tribute to the outgoing Board for its contributions to the commercial and industrial sectors.

His Royal Highness emphasised that sustained coordination between the public and private sectors is essential to maintaining economic momentum, particularly in a rapidly evolving regional landscape.

His Royal Highness commended the private sector's active cooperation with authorities in monitoring market conditions amid ongoing regional tensions, helping to ensure the steady supply of goods and price stability, while reinforcing consumer confidence.

HRH Prince Salman noted that strong public-private partnerships are instrumental in turning challenges into opportunities, enabling Bahrain to achieve new milestones in growth and prosperity.

The BCCI Chairman and Board members expressed their appreciation for His Royal Highness's continued support, affirming their commitment to further strengthening the private sector's role in driving national development and economic progress.

Al-Amin welcomes new financial relief measures

TDI | Manama

Khalid Al-Amin, Chairman of the Food Committee at the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry in its 30th session, praised the Central Bank of Bahrain's announcement regarding the launch of a loan deferral program and the provision of liquidity support, which implements the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister. The initiative includes a set of measures aimed at supporting the Kingdom of



Bahrain's economy and financial sector.

Al-Amin affirmed that this step will help alleviate pressure on commercial enterprises and enhance the stability of the local market, thereby contributing to the sustainability of economic activity in the Kingdom.

He added that the directives of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince and Prime Minister reflect a comprehensive strategic vision for efficiently managing the national economy amid current chal-

lenges. This vision establishes a forward-looking approach based on strengthening financial sustainability and stimulating growth. He noted that these directives enhance the national economy's resilience, reinforce the foundations of financial stability, and strengthen Bahrain's position as an attractive economic hub by improving supply chain efficiency and ensuring the smooth flow of goods—particularly essential commodities. This, in turn, supports market stability and enhances strategic stock levels.

Al-Amin further highlighted that creating a stable and competitive investment environment represents a fundamental pillar for attracting investments,

supporting sustainable economic growth, and improving overall economic efficiency.

He emphasized that the directives of His Royal Highness establish an integrated economic approach reflecting a national vision based on coordination between fiscal and monetary policies and strengthening synergy among various economic components. This enhances the ability to respond effectively to challenges and boosts overall economic readiness. He noted that launching the loan deferral and liquidity support program is a practical translation of this vision. It uses a package of tools aimed at supporting financial stability, enhancing market liquidity, and enabling key sec-

“
HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Leads Economic Growth Path and Strengthens Private Sector Empowerment

KHALID AL-AMIN, CHAIRMAN OF THE FOOD COMMITTEE AT THE BAHRAIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

the Food Committee, reflects a clear understanding of the priorities of the current economic phase. He expressed appreciation for the loan deferral and liquidity support program, viewing it as an integrated financing package designed to enhance the commercial sector's resilience in addressing operational challenges, particularly shipping pressures and rising insurance costs.

He concluded by affirming that these measures will ease financing constraints on traders and strengthen their ability to manage cash flows efficiently, thereby supporting the continuity of commercial activities and reinforcing local market stability.

tors to sustain their operations, thereby supporting national economic growth trajectories.

Al-Amin stressed that the Central Bank of Bahrain's response to the Bahrain Chamber's requests, represented by

Al Baraka Islamic Bank announces new board of directors chaired by **Akram Yassin**

TDI | Manama

Al Baraka Islamic Bank, one of the leading Islamic banks in the Kingdom of Bahrain, has announced the election of its new Board of Directors and the appointment of Mr Akram Yassin as Chairman of the Board, succeeding Ms Sabah Al Moayyed, as well as the election of Dr Khalid Abdulla Ateeq as Vice Chairman of the Board. The approval for the election and reappointment of the Board members for a new three-year term from 2026 to 2029 came as part of the outcomes of the Bank's 43rd Ordinary General Meeting for the financial year ended 31 December 2025, which was held last month. This step reflects shareholders'

Dr Adel Abdullah Salem, Chief Executive Officer of Al Baraka Islamic Bank



confidence in the Bank's future direction and their keenness to support its journey during the coming phase, as the Bank continues to implement its strategic priorities and strengthen its position in the Islamic banking sector in the Kingdom.

The newly elected Board of Directors comprises Mr Akram Yassin as Chairman, Dr Khalid Abdulla Ateeq as Vice Chairman, and board members Mr Houssein Ben Haj Amor, Mr Adnan Al Bassam, Mr Abdulla Edham, Mr Masood Al Bastaki, Mr Abdul Malek Mezher, Ms Sawsan Abulhasan, and Mr Faisal AlShuwaikh. The Bank also extends its sincere thanks and appreciation to Ms Sabah Al Moayyed for her valuable efforts and contributions during her

tenure as Chairperson of the Board.

The Board is chaired by Mr Akram Yassin, who brings more than 30 years of international banking experience, during which he held senior executive positions at a number of leading regional and international financial institutions, including National Bank of Abu Dhabi, Arab Bank, Arab Banking Corporation, Gulf International Bank, Riyad Bank and Bank of Montreal. Mr Yassin holds a Bachelor's degree in Structural Engineering from the University of Surrey and a Master of Business Administration from Southern Methodist University. He currently serves as

Mr Akram Yassin, the newly elected Chairman of the Board



an Independent Non-Executive Board Member of Falcon Group and as a Board Member of Al Baraka Türkiye, reflecting distinguished leadership and professional expertise that will support the Bank's direction in the coming phase.

Mr Akram Yassin, the newly elected Chairman of the Board, said: "I am honoured to assume the chairmanship of Al Baraka Islamic Bank at this important stage in its journey, and I extend my thanks to the shareholders for their valued confidence.

The new Board looks forward to continuing to support the Bank's plans and future directions in a way that enhances its competitiveness, advances its Islamic banking services and solutions, and meets the aspirations of customers and shareholders." For his part, Dr Adel Abdullah Salem, Chief Executive Officer of

Al Baraka Islamic Bank, commented: "The election of the new Board of Directors marks an important milestone in the Bank's journey and reflects the level of confidence that shareholders place in our strategic path and future aspirations. We are confident that the competencies and distinguished expertise of the Board, under the chairmanship of Mr Akram Yassin, will support the Bank's direction during the coming phase, strengthen our ability to build on the achievements made, and continue developing our business and services in line with the aspirations of our customers and

shareholders."

He added: "We also extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Ms Sabah Al Moayyed for her valuable efforts and highly regarded contributions during her tenure as Chairwoman of the Board, which had a clear impact on supporting the Bank and its journey. We look forward to working closely with Chairman Mr Akram Yassin, Vice Chairman Dr Khalid Abdulla Ateeq, and all Board members to continue achieving the Bank's goals and consolidating its position as a leading and trusted Islamic banking institution in the Kingdom of Bahrain."



Trump shares divine-style AI image amid fresh swipe at Pope

TDT | agencies

US President Donald Trump has stirred fresh controversy after sharing an AI-generated image of himself depicted in a Christ-like form on his Truth Social platform.

The image shows Trump draped in flowing robes, surrounded by a radiant glow, appearing to 'heal' a man, while being flanked by figures resembling angels or soldiers. Fighter jets streak across the sky overhead, leaving trails, as fireworks light up the scene.

The Statue of Liberty stands in the background, reinforcing a strong American motif.

The post comes shortly after Trump publicly criticised Pope Leo XIV, calling him "weak" and questioning his stance on key



Trump deletes Jesus post

Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump yesterday deleted a social media image apparently depicting him as Jesus after an outcry from religious leaders that he was being blasphemous.

Asked about the post, Trump denied that he was trying to look like Jesus Christ.

"I did post it, and I thought

it was me as a doctor and had to do Red Cross," he told journalists. "It's supposed to be me as a doctor, making people better. And I do make people better. I make people a lot better." The post generated an outcry from several prominent conservative Christians who are among Trump's biggest backers. The AI picture was posted late Sunday and removed Monday.

global issues.

Speaking to reporters at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland on Sunday, Trump said he was "not a big fan" of the pontiff, describing him as "a very liberal person" and

accusing him of failing to take a firm stand on crime.

Trump also alleged that the Pope was "toying with a country that wants a nuclear weapon," further escalating his criticism.

Israel military says struck 150 Hezbollah targets in past 24 hours

Blockade clock ticks



Last Wednesday, the US and Iran agreed a two-week truce to allow the negotiations to go ahead, and mediator Pakistan and Gulf state Qatar were still calling on Monday for it to be respected as diplomatic efforts continue.



the Natanz nuclear complex in Iran

Russia offers to take in Iran's enriched uranium

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Russia is ready to take in Iran's enriched uranium as part of a future peace deal with the United States, the Kremlin said yesterday.

Failed talks between Iran and the United States over the weekend dashed hopes of a swift deal to permanently end the war that has killed thousands and thrown the global economy into turmoil since it began in late February.

Russia, which possesses the world's largest stockpile of nuclear weapons, has repeatedly offered to host Iran's enriched

uranium as part of any peace deal.

"This proposal was voiced by President Putin in contacts with both the United States and regional states. The offer still stands, but has not been acted upon," the Kremlin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Monday in response to a question by AFP.

The Kremlin also criticised Trump's threat to blockade the Strait of Hormuz, a key waterway that has been at a standstill since the US and Israel began striking Iran in late February.

Trump vows US will sink any Iran boats that challenge blockade

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump warned yesterday that any Iranian attack boats that approach the naval blockade he has ordered around the country's ports will be destroyed, despite international calls for a ceasefire to be re-

spected and negotiations to resume.

The US military said the blockade would begin at 1400 GMT and apply to all ships leaving or seeking to dock at Iranian harbours, but as the deadline passed there was no announcement that the measure had come into effect, nor sign of

any interceptions.

In a social media post, Trump said the bulk of Iran's navy had already been destroyed during the war, but that if any of what he said were Tehran's few remaining "fast attack ships" approach the blockade "they will be immediately ELIMINATED".

Trump announced the blockade on Sunday after a delegation led by Vice President JD Vance returned from a meeting with Iranian officials in Pakistan without having secured a deal to end the war launched on February 28 with deadly US and Israeli strikes on Tehran.

"The blockade will be enforced impartially against vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas, including all Iranian ports on the Arabian Gulf and Gulf of Oman," US Central Command said, adding it would begin at 1400 GMT on Monday.

China, Washington's great power rival and a big importer of Iranian oil, criticised the plan.

"The Strait of Hormuz is an important international trade route for goods and energy, and maintaining its security, stability, and unimpeded flow is in the common interest of

the international community," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said, urging Iran and the US not to reignite the war.

Among Washington's NATO allies, much criticised by Trump for their reluctance to follow him to war, Spain's Defence Minister Margarita Robles said the

planned naval blockade "makes no sense".

"It's one more episode in this whole downward spiral into which we've been dragged," she said.

And in a BBC radio interview, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Britain would not join the blockade, adding the UK "is not

getting dragged in".

French President Emmanuel Macron said that France and Britain would host a conference with countries prepared to join a "peaceful multinational mission" to secure the strait, but it would be "strictly defensive" and only operational once circumstances permit.

The head of the International Maritime Organization, Secretary General Arsenio Dominguez, said no country could "prohibit the right of innocent passage or the freedom of navigation through international straits that are used for international transit".

Turkey says Hormuz strait should open 'as soon as possible'

Istanbul, Turkey

The strategic Strait of Hormuz trade route should open "as

soon as possible", Turkey's foreign minister said yesterday.

"Negotiations with Iran

should be conducted, persuasion methods should be used, and the strait should be opened as

soon as possible," Hakan Fidan told the official Anadolu news agency.

1014

Pope Benedict VIII crowns Henry II Holy Roman Emperor

1076

Pope Gregory VII excommunicates Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV for the first time



Battle of Cape St. Vincent: British fleet under Admiral Sir John Jervis defeats larger Spanish fleet under Admiral Don José de Córdoba y Ramos near Cape St. Vincent, Portugal. Captain Horatio Nelson distinguishes himself.

1797 1971

President Richard Nixon installs a secret recording system in the White House



A boat approaches the St Kitt's and Nevis-flagged container ship Marsa Victory while cruising in the waters of the Strait of Hormuz off the coast of Khasab in Oman's northern Musandam peninsula

US forces would not impede vessels transiting the strait to and from non-Iranian ports

Tensions rise @ sea

Trump says 34 ships crossed Hormuz Sunday, most since war began



This photograph taken from the southern Lebanese area of Tyre shows smoke as it rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the village of Qlailah

China calls reports it supplied weapons to Iran 'baseless smears'

AFP | Beijing, China

China yesterday called reports it had supplied or intended to supply weapons to Iran "baseless smears", after several outlets quoted US intelligence sources to that effect.

On Sunday US President Donald Trump threatened Beijing with a "staggering" new tariff of 50 percent if it were to provide military assistance to Tehran.

His comments came the same day US outlet CNN reported that US intelligence indicated China was preparing to deliver new air defence systems to Iran within the next few weeks, citing three people familiar with the assessments.

Over the weekend, The New York Times quoted US officials as saying US intelligence suggested Beijing might have already sent a shipment of shoulder-fired missiles.

China denied the reports, saying Monday it had "always adopted a cautious and responsible attitude towards the export of military items, implementing strict controls in accordance with its own export control laws and regulations and its international obligations".

"We oppose baseless smears or malicious association," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a regular news briefing.

Trump says Iranian officials called, want deal 'badly'

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that Iranian representatives had called to make a peace deal after talks in Pakistan ended at the weekend

without agreement.

"I can tell you that we've been called by the other side. They'd like to make a deal. Very badly, very badly," Trump told reporters outside the Oval Office, without identifying which officials had called.

Vessels stuck

Around 670 commodity vessels sent signals from west of the strait on Sunday, having apparently been stuck there since the end of February, according to data from maritime companies collated by Bloomberg.

Of those, 329 were oil or gas tankers. Kpler said last week that 172 million barrels of crude and refined products were at sea in the Gulf as of April 7. The latest vessels to leave the Gulf on Monday were the Auroura, owned by an India-based company and carrying 38,287 tonnes of naphtha from Iran, and the New Future, owned by a China-based firm and carrying 44,424 tonnes of gas oil from the UAE, according to Kpler.

The Auroura is under US sanctions for transporting Iranian petroleum products.

More than 50 very large crude carriers are stuck in the Gulf -- including nine

owned by Japanese companies and five each by companies from China, Greece and South Korea, according to Bloomberg data and other maritime companies. Just one empty LNG tanker has crossed the strait during the war.

Dozens of vessels targeted

No new attacks on ships have been reported since the ceasefire started.

The IRGC claimed three attacks on ships between Saturday and Tuesday, and one has been confirmed by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Some 29 commercial ships, including 13 tankers, have been attacked or have reported incidents in the region since March 1, according to the IMO, the UK Maritime Trade Operations Centre and Vanguard Tech.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Heartiest congratulations to Mr. Péter Magyar and the Tisza Party on your resounding election victory. India and Hungary are bound by deep-rooted friendship, shared values and enduring mutual respect. I look forward to working closely with you to further strengthen our bilateral cooperation and to advance the vital India-EU Strategic Partnership for the shared prosperity and well-being of our peoples.

@narendramodi

02



There is no military objective that justifies the wholesale destruction of a society's infrastructure or the deliberate infliction of suffering on civilian populations.

@antonioguterres

03



Reform is not optional for those of us in the global health system.

In February, Member States entrusted @WHO with a country-centred, inclusive and transparent reform process, drawing on our presence in 150+ countries. We are now shaping this joint process and will present it for consideration at the World Health Assembly in May.

Encouragingly, we are seeing engagement and convergence around key principles

@DrTedros

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

Pope says doesn't fear Trump

Has 'moral duty to speak out' against war

● **US president railed against Leo's comments calling for peace in the Middle East**

● **Trump had called the pontiff "WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy"**

● **Trump later doubled down on criticisms, saying there was "nothing to apologise for"**

AFP | Algiers, Algeria

Pope Leo XIV said yesterday he had "a moral duty" to speak out against war and didn't "fear" President Donald Trump while the US leader criticised his calls for an end to the conflict in the Middle East.

Before taking off from Rome headed to Algiers for a papal visit, the pontiff came under fire from Trump.

The US president railed against Leo's recent comments calling for peace in the Middle East, which is grappling with the war triggered by a joint Israel-US attack on Iran in late February.

Trump later doubled down on criticisms, saying there was "nothing to apologise for".

"Pope Leo said things that are wrong," Trump said. "He was very much against what I'm doing with regard to Iran, and you cannot have a nuclear Iran."

The pope had told reporters



Pope Leo XIV leaves the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa after a meeting with the Algerian Community, in Algiers

aboard the papal plane before arriving in Algiers that he had "no intention to debate with" Trump, adding that he was "not a politician".

"What I am saying is that the mission of the Church is very clear," he said. "The Gospel says... blessed are the peacemakers. I believe that the Church has a moral duty to speak out very clearly against war and in favour of peace and reconciliation."

The pope added: "I have no fear, neither of the Trump administration, nor speaking out loudly about the message of the Gospel."

Earlier, the US president had said Leo was "toying with a country (Iran) that wants a nu-

clear weapon", adding that he was "not a big fan of Pope Leo".

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni condemned Trump's criticism of Pope Leo XIV's comments as "unacceptable", saying "it is right and normal for (Leo) to call for peace and to condemn all forms of war".

'Forgiveness'

In his first speech in Algiers, Leo paid tribute to victims of the country's 1954-1962 war of independence from France and called for "forgiveness".

The remarks came amid heightened tensions between Algeria and France, and followed a meeting days ago with French President Emmanuel Macron at

the Vatican.

"In this place, let us remember that God desires peace for every nation," he said at the Algerian Martyrs Memorial in the capital.

Leo's two-day visit to Algeria was infused with personal significance for the pope. Algeria was the home of Saint Augustine (354-430), whose spiritual legacy permeates Leo's pontificate.

The influential Christian theologian laid the foundations for the 13th-century Augustinian order to which Leo belongs, one based on communal living and service.

In his very first speech as pope, Leo presented himself as a "son" of Augustine, whose writings he often quotes.

The pope called his trip to Algeria "a very precious opportunity" to promote "peace and reconciliation with respect and consideration for all peoples".

He had also criticised as "unacceptable" Trump's threats against civilians in Iran and he had also previously criticised the administration's "inhuman" treatment of migrants.

Trump had called the pontiff "WEAK on Crime, and terrible for Foreign Policy", suggesting that cardinals only elected Leo pope in May 2025 because he was American.

Trump also posted an AI-generated image seemingly depicting himself as Jesus Christ, later deleting it.

Speaking during his flight, Leo said: "We're not politicians, we're not looking to make foreign policy as he calls it with the same perspective that he might understand it."

Ancient Roman city

The papal visit to Africa takes in Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea, and will cover more than 18,000 kilometres (11,000 miles) between April 13 and 23.

On Monday, Leo visited the Great Mosque of Algiers -- home to the world's highest minaret -- and the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa, overlooking the Bay of Algiers.

On Tuesday, he will visit the northeastern city of Annaba -- formerly the ancient Roman city of Hippo -- the one-time home of the saint whose autobiographical "Confessions" is a seminal work within the Christian tradition.

Leo plans to pray privately in the chapel dedicated to 19 priests and nuns murdered during Algeria's 1992-2002 civil war.

The pope will not, however, visit the Tibhirine monastery, whose monks were kidnapped and murdered in 1996 in an event still shrouded in mystery.

Although Algeria's constitution guarantees freedom of worship, subject to conditions, human rights groups say the repression of religious minorities is continuing.

Three human rights groups called on Leo last week to push the issue during his visit.



The name "Leo" has historically been associated with strong and reform-minded leaders in the Catholic Church—most notably Pope Leo XIII, whose teachings on social justice and workers' rights still influence modern doctrine. This makes the use of "Pope Leo XIV" particularly striking, as it evokes a legacy of authority and reform despite no such pope ever existing.

Pro-EU Magyar vows 'new era' in Hungary after ousting Orban in vote

AFP | Budapest, Hungary

Hungarian pro-EU prime minister-elect Peter Magyar pledged yesterday to usher in a "new era" after defeating long-time nationalist leader Viktor Orban in elections seen as a blow to hard-right populism.

Orban, a self-described "thorn" in the European Union's side who was backed by US President Donald Trump and maintained close ties to Moscow, was ousted in Sunday's ballot after 16 years in power.

Hungarians fed up with corruption handed conservative former government insider Magyar a decisive victory, with a two-thirds majority in parliament. The vote saw a record turnout.

Magyar, 45, said he would do "everything in our power" to ensure the "beginning of a new era", adding Hungarians "didn't vote for a mere change of government, but for a complete regime change."

In power since 2010, Orban has transformed the central European country of 9.5 million people into a model of "illiberal democracy", making wide-ranging reforms that restricted civil rights and the independence of the judiciary, media and academia.

In that, he frequently clashed with Brussels, which has frozen



Peter Magyar, election winner and leader of the pro-European conservative TISZA party, delivers a press conference at the HUNGEXPO Congress and Exhibition Center in Budapest, Hungary,

billions of euros in funds over rule-of-law concerns.

'No time to waste'

Magyar said he was "willing to take on" reforms, including anti-graft measures, to seek to unlock the funds.

He urged President Tamas Sulyok, an Orban ally, to convene parliament "as soon as possible".

The president has 30 days, or until May 12, to do so.

Sulyok on Facebook said he had invited the leaders of parliamentary parties to a meeting on Wednesday.

"Our country has no time to waste. Hungary is in trouble in every respect. It has been plundered, looted, betrayed, indebted and ruined," Magyar told reporters.

Many EU leaders welcomed Magyar's win, while the Kremlin said Moscow hoped for "prag-

matic" relations with Hungary's new government and China -- which Orban also courted -- congratulated Magyar.

Magyar thanked both Moscow and Beijing for "being open to pragmatic cooperation, just as Hungary is."

Orban, 62, conceded defeat on Sunday, saying the message was "painful but unambiguous".

Magyar was a supporter of Orban for years before emerging

as his most serious challenger.

He stepped into frontline politics just two years ago, promising to fight corruption and offering better public services.

He garnered support against a backdrop of economic stagnation and despite an electoral system skewed in favour of Orban's Fidesz.

Ahead of the vote, US Vice President JD Vance, one of the most fervent supporters of far-right parties in Europe, visited Hungary last week to attend a rally with Orban.

His boss, Trump, had promised to back Hungary with the

Orban, a self-described "thorn" in the European Union's side who was backed by US President Donald Trump and maintained close ties to Moscow, was ousted in Sunday's ballot after 16 years in power.

United States' "economic might" if Orban's party won.

'Weight lifted off'

The election "could mark a real turning point for Donald Trump's culture war in Europe", said Pawel Zerka, senior policy fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations.

It gave "confidence (to) pro-European forces across the continent" and meant that association with Trump's culture war was now becoming "more of a liability than an asset", he said.

Orban, who repeatedly blocked EU moves to help Ukraine fight Russia's invasion, made Ukraine a central campaign issue, portraying Kyiv as "hostile" to Hungary.

Like Orban, Magyar opposes sending EU military aid to Ukraine or offering Ukraine a fast-track route to join the 27-nation bloc.

He reiterated that stance on Monday, saying: "We are talking about a country at war. It is completely out of the question for the European Union to admit a country at war."

On election night, jubilant supporters poured into the streets to celebrate in the capital, Budapest.

"At long last it feels so good to be Hungarian. It's like a weight lifted off our shoulders," Csilla Bekesi, 25, told AFP.

India patent filings FY26: Record 30% jump to over 1.43 Lakh

Deccan Chronicle | New Delhi

Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday that filing of patent applications has increased by 30.2 per cent to 1,43,729 in 2025-26 against 1,10,375 in the previous fiscal, on account of several initiatives taken by the government to strengthen the intellectual property rights ecosystem.

As India is the world's sixth largest patent filer, the minister also said that the country's



Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal.

patent filings soared to a historic 1.43 lakh plus in FY 2025-26, marking a 30.2 per cent increase over last year.

"With over 69 per cent of patents filed domestically, led by innovators from Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Maharashtra, we are showing the world that Made in India is powered by Invented in India," he said in a social media post.

The central government has undertaken several measures to strengthen the patent ecosystem in the country, particularly

aimed at start-ups, MSMEs and educational institutions.

The filings have been continuously increasing since 2016-17, when they were 45,444. It was 47,894 in 2017-18, 50,660 in 2018-19, 56,268 in 2019-20, 58,503 in 2020-21, 66,440 in 2021-22, 82,208 in 2022-23, and 92,163 in 2023-24.

These steps include the reduction of fees for startups, small entities, and educational institutions; providing expedited examination of patent applications; and pro bono facil-

itation to Indian startups for the filing and processing of patent, trademark, and design applications.

The patent applications are granted only after substantive examination to determine compliance with the requirements of novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability under the Patents Act, 1970.

The examination process follows a two-tier system, wherein applications are examined and subsequently reviewed by the controller.

UK Taylor Swift dance party stabbing spree 'avoidable'

● Axel Rudakubana was jailed last year for a minimum of 52 years for the July 2024 attack

● Taylor Swift fans Alice Da Silva Aguiar, aged nine, Bebe King, six, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, were killed in the attack.

● Viral misinformation that Rudakubana was a Muslim asylum seeker contributed to a week of anti-immigration riots in more than a dozen English and Northern Irish towns and cities.

AFP | London, United Kingdom

A UK teenager's 2024 frenzied stabbing spree in northwest England which killed three young girls and sparked nationwide anti-immigration riots was "foreseeable and avoidable", a public inquiry concluded Monday.

The attack on a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport, which seriously wounded 10 others, including eight chil-

dren, could have been prevented if the killer's parents and various agencies had acted sooner over his "escalating behaviour", it found.

Axel Rudakubana was jailed last year for a minimum of 52 years for the July 2024 attack, which triggered a wave of shock and revulsion in the UK as well as the worst mass disorder seen on the streets in decades.

Taylor Swift fans Alice Da Silva Aguiar, aged nine, Bebe King, six, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven, were killed in the attack.

Viral misinformation that Rudakubana was a Muslim asylum seeker contributed to a week of anti-immigration riots in more than a dozen English and Northern Irish towns and cities.

The public inquiry, led by retired judge Adrian Fulford and which last year held nine weeks of hearings, identified failures by Rudakubana's parents and agencies including in health, education and the police.

The teenager's parents were at fault for not reporting his behaviour and other issues to authorities, while the public bodies failed to manage the risk he represented, according to its 776-page report.

It was "highly likely" the attack would not have occurred had they acted.

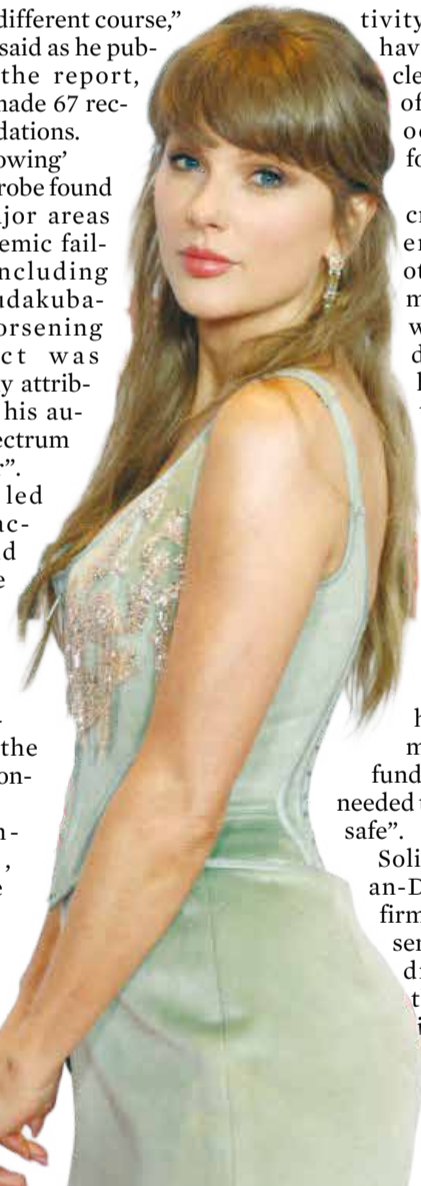
"History simply would have

taken a different course," Fulford said as he published the report, which made 67 recommendations.

'Harrowing' The probe found five major areas of "systemic failure", including that Rudakubana's worsening conduct was "wrongly attributed to his autism spectrum disorder".

That led to "inaction and a failure to address a dangerous behaviour", the report concluded.

Meanwhile, there was a lack of oversight of his online ac-



tivity, which would have "provided the clearest indications of his violent pre-occupations", it found.

The report also criticised his parents for, among other things, permitting knives and weapons to be delivered to the home and failing to report crucial information in the days leading up to the attack.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer called the report "truly harrowing and profoundly disturbing" and said he was "determined to make the fundamental changes needed to keep the public safe".

Solicitor Nicola Ryan-Donnelly, whose firm Fletchers represents 22 of the children affected by the attack, urged individuals and agencies to "take action now".

ASEAN urges Iran peace talks, reopening of Hormuz



AFP | Manila, Philippines

ASEAN encouraged the United States and Iran yesterday to press ahead with talks to end the Middle East war and ensure safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz.

Southeast Asian nations like the Philippines and Malaysia rely heavily on oil from the Middle East, much of it exported through the key strait that's been effectively closed during the conflict.

Foreign ministers of the 11-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations met online to discuss the US-Israeli war against Iran, hours before the US Navy was to start a blockade of Iranian ports.

ASEAN foreign ministers agreed to urge the United

States and Iran to "continue negotiations that will lead to the permanent end of the conflict and lasting peace and stability in the region", said a joint statement issued after the meeting.

They also called for the "full and effective implementation" of an ongoing two-week ceasefire and the "restoration of the safe, unimpeded, and continuous transit passage of vessels and aircraft in the Strait of Hormuz".

The Philippines, which holds ASEAN's rotating chairmanship, last month adopted a four-day work week for civil servants in a bid to conserve fuel, while Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam encouraged public employees to work from home.

Judge tosses Trump defamation suit against Wall Street Journal

● Trump sued media magnate Rupert Murdoch and the Journal in July after it published a report about a birthday letter he allegedly sent to one-time close friend Jeffrey Epstein.

AFP | Miami, United States

A US federal judge yesterday tossed out a \$10 billion defa-

mation lawsuit filed by President Donald Trump against The Wall Street Journal.

Trump sued media magnate Rupert Murdoch and the Journal in July after it published a report about a birthday letter he allegedly sent to one-time close friend Jeffrey Epstein.

District Judge Darrin Gayles, in a 17-page ruling, said Trump had failed to prove the Murdoch-owned newspaper had knowingly published false statements, the legal standard to prove defamation.

"Because President Trump has not plausibly alleged that

defendants published the article with actual malice, both Counts must be dismissed," Gayles wrote.

The judge, who was appointed by former president Barack Obama, gave Trump the opportunity to amend his complaint and refile the suit by April 27.

A spokesman for Trump's legal team said the suit would be resubmitted.

"President Trump will follow Judge Gayles's ruling and guidance to refile this powerhouse lawsuit against the Wall Street Journal and all of the other Defendants," the spokesman said in

a statement.

"The President will continue to hold accountable those who traffic in Fake News to mislead the American People."

Trump has intensified his long-established hostility toward the media since his return to the White House, and the suit against the Journal is one of numerous attacks against news organizations he accuses of bias against him.

Trump's attacks on media outlets have seen him restrict access, badmouth journalists critical of his administration, and bring lawsuits demanding

huge amounts of compensation.

According to the Journal, Trump wrote a "bawdy" birthday letter to Epstein in 2003 to mark his 50th birthday, part of an album of messages from rich and well-known figures.

Trump's alleged missive included a hand-drawn illustration of a naked woman and referred to their shared "secret."

Trump has said he broke off his friendship with Epstein prior to the wealthy financier's 2008 guilty plea in Florida to solicitation of prostitution with a minor.

Epstein was found dead in a New York prison cell in 2019

as he awaited trial on sex trafficking charges. His death was ruled a suicide but like much else around Epstein is the subject of lurid conspiracy theories.

The Epstein case has repeatedly overshadowed Trump's second presidency and led to the downfall of a number of powerful figures around the world who were associated with Epstein.

The US Justice Department has over the past year released huge tranches of files related to Epstein. Trump, 79, figures prominently in the files but has not been formally accused of wrongdoing.

Britney Spears checks **into rehab** following **DUI** arrest

AFP | Los Angeles, United States

US pop superstar Britney Spears has checked herself into rehab following her arrest last month on suspicion of driving while intoxicated near Los Angeles, US media reported on Sunday.

The 44-year-old singer was arrested in early March and booked into custody by the Ventura County Sheriff's Department on suspicion of DUI.

She was released soon after, and a representative for Spears at the time described the incident as "completely inexcusable" and said Spears would "take

The cover of Britney Spears' book "The Woman in Me" from an online retailer in front of a picture of Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake at the American Music Awards



the right steps and comply with the law," according to the entertainment outlet Deadline.

On Sunday, multiple US news outlets reported that Spears had voluntarily checked herself into a treatment facility.

It was not immediately clear when Spears entered the facility. She is scheduled to appear in court for her DUI arrest on May 4, according to the Los Angeles Times. In her 2023 memoir "The Woman in Me," Spears insisted she never did hard drugs and that she did not have a drinking problem, but she admitted that she was taking Adderall, the ADHD medication.

Following a public breakdown in 2007, Spears was placed under the conservatorship of her father Jamie Spears, who controlled her money and her personal life,

even as she continued to perform high-profile concerts.

The conservatorship was dissolved by a Los Angeles court in 2021, after a groundswell of public support to "Free Britney."



Spears had phenomenal early music success in the late 1990s with hits like "...Baby One More Time" but has largely stepped back from music in recent years.

Russian FM to visit China April 14-15: Beijing

AFP | Beijing, China

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov will visit China this week, Beijing said on Monday, as the two sides hope to boost cooperation.

"Russia's foreign minister Lavrov will pay an official visit to China from April 14 to 15," foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told a news conference.

Lavrov will hold talks with China's top diplomat Wang Yi in which the two will "exchange views and coordinate positions on the development of bilateral relations, cooperation in various fields, and international and regional issues of common concern", Guo said.

The Russian foreign ministry said in a statement that the



Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov

pair would discuss the war in Ukraine and the situation in the Middle East.

Beijing and Moscow are close economic and political partners, and the relationship has deepened further since Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Wang held a call with Lavrov on April 5, when the pair agreed Beijing and Moscow would work together to deescalate tensions in the Middle East.

EU chief touts electric power strategy as energy crisis bites

Crisis has already cost the 27-nation bloc more than 22 billion euros

● Oil and gas prices have surged since US-Israeli strikes on Iran began on February 28

● Details are to be unveiled as part of a package to be presented next week

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

Brussels will present next week plans to tackle high energy costs caused by the Iran war and before the summer will unveil a broader package to boost Europe's electrification, EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday.

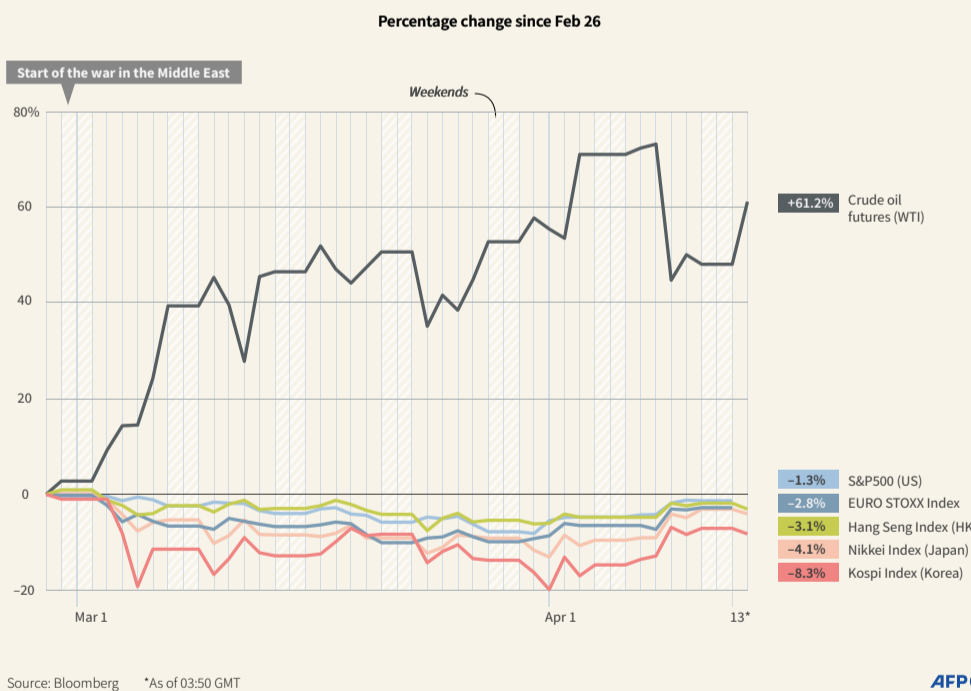
The energy crisis has already cost the 27-nation bloc more than 22 billion euros (\$26 billion) in higher fossil fuel bills, von der Leyen said after a meeting of the EU's top executive body dedicated to the issue.

"These events make clear we are paying a very high price for our over dependency on fossil fuels," the European Commission chief told a press conference in Brussels, calling for a faster switch towards renewables and nuclear power.

"We need to scale up the homegrown, affordable, reliable energy," she said, adding the commission was hoping to get new rules aimed at accelerating grid connections across the bloc and present an "electrification strategy" before the summer.

Oil and gas prices have surged since US-Israeli strikes on Iran began on February 28, with Tehran retaliating by effectively blocking the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz and attacking Gulf energy infrastructure.

Oil and selected markets since the start of the Middle East war



22

The energy crisis has already cost the 27-nation bloc more than 22 billion euros (\$26 billion) in higher fossil fuel bills

To address the cost crunch, the commission is considering relaxing its state aid rules to give member states more space to support the "most exposed sectors", von der Leyen said.

Details are to be unveiled as part of a package to be presented next week before an informal meeting of European Union leaders in Cyprus, she added. The commission later said it

was consulting member states on a draft proposal that would allow governments to grant "calibrated temporary support" to affected sectors.

This would include enabling states to "cover part of the price increases for fuel or fertilisers", it said.

Upping the share of electricity costs that state aid could cover for energy-intensive industries was also on the table, the commission said.

Von der Leyen said the EU was looking to coordinate oil stock releases and the filling of gas storage across the bloc to avoid member

states competing against each other on the market, driving up prices.

Steps to support energy efficiency are also being considered, the commission president added, citing the "renovation of buildings" and "the renewal of equipment in industrial operations" without further elaborating.

"The least expensive energy is the energy that is not used," she said.

A proposal to reform electricity taxes and grid charges will follow in May, von der Leyen added.



IMF chief warns global monetary system not ready for AI cyber threats

AFP | Washington, United States

The global monetary system is not prepared to address artificial intelligence's rapidly escalating risks, the IMF managing director warned Sunday, as a new Anthropic model raises urgent cybersecurity concerns.

Kristalina Georgieva's comments came a day before the International Monetary Fund and World Bank kick off their annual spring meetings in Washington, and after US regulators last week convened an emergency meeting with top bank chiefs over the new AI model.

"We don't have the ability to -- us as a world -- to protect the international monetary system against massive cyber risks," she told CBS News' "Face the Nation" program.

"We are very keen to see more attention to the guardrails that are necessary to protect financial stability in a world of AI," she said, seeking global collaboration on the issue.

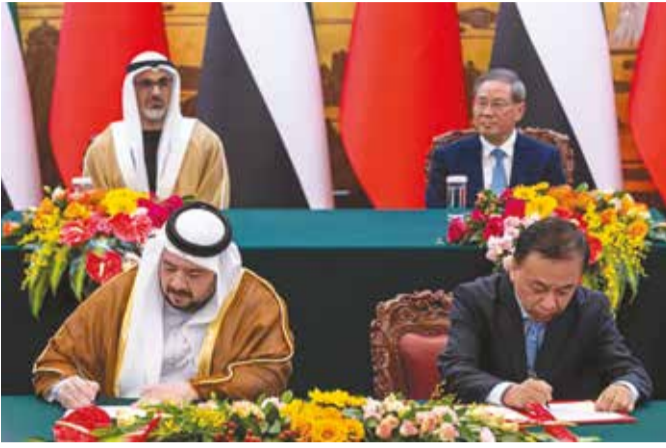
"Yes, this is an issue that has been addressed here in the United States, but it is an issue that easily can present itself in other parts of the world, and that is why we need people to cooperate."

Anthropic announced on April 7 that it was limiting the release of its new "Mythos" model over risks posed by its unprecedented ability to rapidly identify security vulnerabilities.

The company said it was working with a consortium of major US firms to test the model, raising concerns that foreign companies may miss out on vital safety preparations.



UAE, China target expanded trade and investment partnership



Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Li Qiang held wide-ranging discussions in Beijing focused on strengthening the comprehensive strategic partnership between the United Arab Emirates and China, and expanding cooperation across key priority sectors.

The meeting took place during an official reception hosted by the Chinese Premier in honour of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, as part of Sheikh Khaled's official visit to China.

At the outset of the talks, Li Qiang welcomed Sheikh Khaled and the accompanying delegation, extending his best wishes for a successful visit that would further enhance bilateral relations and deepen cooperation between the two countries.

Sheikh Khaled expressed appreciation for the warm

reception and hospitality extended by the Chinese side, reaffirming the UAE's commitment to further strengthening its long-standing partnership with China. He emphasised the importance of advancing cooperation across economic and development fields in a way that serves mutual interests and supports sustainable growth in both nations.

He further underscored the need to build on the strong foundations of UAE-China relations by moving towards a more integrated phase of cooperation, focusing on future investment opportunities, strengthening supply chain resilience, and reinforcing the role of both countries as key partners in the global economy.

The discussions came amid growing non-oil trade between the two nations, which reached approximately US\$111 billion in 2025.

Hajj Rules Tightened

- "No Hajj without permit" policy

- Residents must have official permits to enter Makkah.

- Umrah visa holders must exit Saudi Arabia

TDT | Manama
Ghadeer Alkumaish

The Ministry of Interior (Saudi Arabia) announced a comprehensive set of regulatory measures for the upcoming Hajj 1447 AH season, introducing strict entry controls for Makkah, updated visa timelines, and reinforced permit requirements aimed at ensuring pilgrim safety and efficient crowd management.

In an official clarification, the Ministry said the measures are part of ongoing efforts to regulate the flow of pilgrims and maintain secure and orderly conditions during one of the world's largest annual religious gatherings. Central to the policy is the enforcement of the rule: "No Hajj without a permit."

Starting Monday, 25 Shawwal 1447 AH (13 April 2026), all residents wishing to enter Makkah must hold an official entry permit issued through approved government channels. Individuals without valid au-



thorization will be denied entry. Exemptions apply to residents holding Makkah-issued identification, valid Hajj permits, or official work permits linked to the holy sites.

Permits are issued digitally through integrated platforms including Absher, Muqem, and the unified permit system Tasreeh.

The Ministry also outlined key deadlines for Umrah procedures. The final date for Umrah visa holders to leave the Kingdom is set for 1 Dhul Qa'dah 1447 AH (18 April 2026). On the same date, issuance of Umrah permits via the Nusuk will be

⌋
The entry into or stay in Makkah will be prohibited for all visa holders from 1 Dhul Qa'dah onward, except for those holding valid Hajj visas.

suspended for all categories, including citizens, residents, and visitors, until 14 Dhul Hijjah 1447 AH (31 May 2026).

Authorities further confirmed that entry into or stay in Mak-

kah will be prohibited for all visa holders from 1 Dhul Qa'dah onward, except for those holding valid Hajj visas. Officials warned that violating the regulations will result in strict legal penalties.

The Ministry emphasized that the measures are designed to enhance safety, improve logistics, and ensure smooth crowd management during the pilgrimage season. It urged full cooperation with security and regulatory authorities, stressing that compliance is essential for safeguarding pilgrims and maintaining order throughout the Hajj period.

Regional Food Planning

Focus on strengthening regional supply chains and food resilience

As part of the Kingdom of Bahrain's chairmanship of the 46th session of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Engineer Asim Abdul Latif Abdullah, Undersecretary for Agriculture and Livestock Affairs at the Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture, chaired an extraordinary meeting of undersecretaries responsible for agriculture and food security in GCC member states. The meeting was held via video conferencing.

The session focused on strengthening supply chains and enhancing food security across GCC countries, particularly in light of recent regional developments.

In his remarks, the Undersecretary highlighted the strong and longstanding relations among GCC member states, stressing the importance of continued coordination across various sectors in line with the aspirations of the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

He emphasized the significance of unified GCC efforts in addressing current challenges and en-



hancing the efficiency, resilience, and sustainability of food systems across the region.

He also noted the shared commitment to advancing Gulf initiatives in agriculture and food se-

curity, calling for the development of more effective mechanisms to strengthen the region's food security framework.

Furthermore, he underlined the importance of expanding

intra-GCC cooperation by increasing production capacity and improving resource efficiency, which contributes to a more resilient and sustainable regional food system.

UN: No military solution to the Middle East conflict

The United Nations stated that there is "no military solution" to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East, urging all parties to continue diplomatic efforts following recent talks between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran held in Islamabad, Pakistan.

According to a statement attributed to the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General, no agreement was reached during the Pakistan-hosted discussions. However, the UN described the engagement as a "positive and meaningful step" toward renewed dialogue between the two sides.

The statement emphasized that a comprehensive agreement cannot be achieved quickly, given deep-rooted differences. It called on both parties to continue negotiations constructively in pursuit of a lasting settlement.

The UN also stressed that the ceasefire must be fully respected and added that all violations should stop immediately.

Expressing appreciation for mediation efforts, the Secretary-General acknowledged the role of Pakistan as host, alongside Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Türkiye, and encouraged continued international support for diplomatic initiatives.

The statement further underscored the importance of respecting freedom of navigation under international law, including in the Strait of Hormuz.

It warned that ongoing maritime disruptions have left around 20,000 seafarers stranded on vessels, facing worsening conditions, while



António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations

also contributing to wider global economic instability.

According to the UN, disruptions to shipping routes have increased pressure on global trade, including rising costs linked to fuel, transport, and supply chain interruptions. It also noted that disruptions in fertilizer supply chains are worsening food insecurity for vulnerable populations worldwide.

In response, the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS), working with UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the International Chamber of Commerce, is advancing efforts to operationalize a mechanism aimed at improving conditions in the Strait of Hormuz, first announced on 27 March.

Separately, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy, Jean Arnault, continues regional engagement, consulting with key stakeholders to support efforts toward a comprehensive and durable agreement.



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Man City must respect Arsenal in title showdown: Guardiola



Manchester City celebrate during their win at Chelsea

AFP | London

Pep Guardiola insisted Manchester City must respect Arsenal when they face the Premier League leaders in a seismic title showdown next weekend.

Guardiola's side closed the gap on Arsenal to just six points with an emphatic 3-0 win at Chelsea on Sunday.

Second-half goals from Nico O'Reilly, Marc Guehi and Jeremy Doku ensured City capitalised on Arsenal's shock 2-1 defeat against Bournemouth 24 hours earlier.

They have a game in hand on Arsenal and victory in their crucial clash at the Etihad Stadium on April 19 would seize the momentum in a gripping title race.

City, six-time champions under Guardiola, are hitting peak form at just the right time, while Arsenal appear to be cracking under the pressure of chasing their first English

title since 2004. But Guardiola is well aware of the threat posed by Arsenal despite their recent run of three defeats in four matches in all competitions, including a 2-0 loss to City in the League Cup final.

"The respect I have for Arsenal, what they have done the last few years. I know the manager, the players, the quality, how they compete in every circumstance, that's the biggest job we have. There is a tactical issue, maybe we will adjust something," Guardiola said.

"They have been the best team in this country, in Europe, so far. Beating Arsenal once is so difficult, imagine beating them twice in a few weeks. We have to rest.

"I would like to say to my fans: respect Arsenal a lot, they are an extraordinary team. Come to join us from minute one because the players will do the maximum."

Rosenior admits Chelsea in 'difficult place'



Chelsea manager Liam Rosenior reacts during a match (file photo)

AFP | London

Liam Rosenior admitted Chelsea are in a "difficult place" after Sunday's dismal 3-0 defeat against Manchester City piled pressure on the Blues boss.

Rosenior's side conceded three times in the second half at Stamford Bridge as Nico O'Reilly, Marc Guehi and Jeremy Doku netted for title-chasing City.

Chelsea are languishing in sixth place in the Premier League, four points behind fifth-placed Liverpool in the race for a top-five finish.

With their hopes of qualifying for the Champions League hanging by a slender thread, Rosenior is facing pointed questions about Chelsea's struggles since he arrived from Strasbourg to replace Enzo Maresca in January.

Chelsea have lost five of

their last six games in all competitions, including three in a row in the Premier League.

In those three league defeats Chelsea have failed to score and Rosenior said they had fallen well short of the standards he demands.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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Liverpool seek Anfield miracle

Liverpool seek historic comeback against PSG as Anfield atmosphere becomes crucial

● Liverpool trail PSG 2-0

● Fifth in Premier League currently

● Champions League last hope

AFP | London

Liverpool have a mountain to climb to oust holders Paris Saint-Germain from the Champions League but are hoping the Anfield factor can salvage a bitterly disappointing season.

Crowned champions of England less than a year ago, the Reds sit fifth in the Premier League and fell short in both domestic cup competitions.

The Champions League represents one final chance of silverware but it is a long shot after the team were outclassed 2-0 in the first leg of their quarter-final at the Parc des Princes.

Six-time European champions Liverpool are still alive in the competition thanks to PSG's profligacy and they have overcome greater odds in the past under the lights at Anfield.

"It's down to us to be in the best shape possible to make a special evening on Tuesday," said captain Virgil van Dijk.

4-0
was Liverpool's famous Anfield comeback against Barcelona in 2019, overturning a 3-0 deficit — a feat Van Dijk hopes to repeat against PSG on Tuesday

"We are at home and we have to show belief that we can do it. It needs a special performance but I'm lucky I have been part of special performances so I will try and bring that across for the team."

Van Dijk was part of the side that beat Lionel Messi's Barcelona 4-0 in 2019, overturning a 3-0 first-leg deficit in the semi-finals on Liverpool's way to Champions League glory.

That night may have been the high point of Jurgen Klopp's glorious reign, which included three Champions League finals in five seasons.

Barring a miraculous fight-back, Tuesday could be the final Champions League chapter for the key figures in that Klopp side.

Slot's future in doubt

Mohamed Salah and Andy Robertson have both confirmed they will leave Anfield at the end



(L-R) Liverpool's Scottish defender #26 Andrew Robertson, Liverpool's Dutch defender #30 Jeremie Frimpong, Liverpool's Egyptian striker #11 Mohamed Salah and Liverpool's Hungarian midfielder #08 Dominik Szoboszlai come out to warm up

of the season.

Van Dijk and goalkeeper Alisson Becker remain for now, but there is no guarantee Liverpool will be in the competition next season despite five English sides being assured of qualification.

A 2-0 win over Fulham on Saturday gave Slot's men some breathing space from the chasing pack in the battle for Champions League football and also

snapped a three-game losing streak.

Adding to uncertainty, Slot's position remains in serious doubt towards the end of his second campaign in charge.

Liverpool fans chanted the name of former midfield favourite Xabi Alonso after last weekend's 4-0 demolition by Manchester City in the FA Cup quarter-finals.

Alonso, who left Real Madrid

in January, is the prime candidate to take over should Slot be dismissed at the end of the season.

The Dutchman issued a rallying cry after the Fulham win to try and get the fans back on side for the visit of the European champions.

"This was a massive win not only for the league but looking forward to Tuesday. Not only for the players but also for the



Liverpool fans chanted Xabi Alonso's name after a 4-0 FA Cup defeat to Manchester City, with the former midfielder now the prime candidate to replace Slot

fans. After a 4-0 loss and a 2-0 loss everybody could do with this win," said Slot.

"One thing is clear is that on Tuesday we need our fans. There were fans in Paris but we had a very hard time.

"Anfield has shown many times that it can lift the team to another level and we need that again. Half an hour before the game the players need that support and need to feel it is going to be another special evening."

At the very least Slot needs his side to salvage some pride.

Another embarrassment like the ones suffered recently in Manchester and Paris, but this time on home soil, could be the final straw for many fans.

Rashford with point to prove as Barca target Atletico comeback

● Barca lose 2-0 first leg

● Rashford's future depends on performances

AFP | Madrid

Marcus Rashford had his chance against Atletico Madrid, but failed to take it -- or any of the next five that came along on a frustrating European night.

On Tuesday the England international has another opportunity to try and inspire Barcelona to a Champions League comeback in the Spanish capital.

Rashford fired blanks as Barca suffered a 2-0 quarter-final first leg defeat, but the England international was also his team's brightest spark against the Rojiblancos, even though the killer finish eluded him.

The 28-year-old, on loan from Manchester United, has a point to prove in the second leg, particularly with his future at the club on the line -- as well as a potential World Cup spot in Thomas Tuchel's England squad.

Barcelona have not yet made a decision on whether to trigger the 30 million euro (\$35 million) clause in Rashford's loan deal to



Barcelona's English forward #14 Marcus Rashford shoots at goal during a match (file photo)

make his switch to Camp Nou permanent.

With Raphinha out injured, Rashford has been the natural choice on Barca's left flank.

Rashford burst beyond Atletico full-back Nahuel Molina on numerous occasions at Camp Nou but could not capitalise.

"This team is always going to create chances, there's so much quality in possession... today the goal didn't go in, but we can't shy away from the responsibility to take these chances," Rashford told CBS.

"On another day, on another night, they go in."

On Saturday, Flick began with Rashford on the bench for Bar-

celona's 4-1 thrashing of Espanyol in La Liga, likely to save the forward's energy for the visit to Atletico's Metropolitan stadium.

Rashford came on after 65 minutes and netted the fourth in the last minute with a cushioned volley, which Flick hopes will raise his confidence levels.

"I'm happy Marcus scored a goal today, it was very important for us," said Flick.

Rashford also scored against Atletico at the Metropolitan on April 4 in La Liga, with the second leg the third in a trilogy of clashes between the sides in under a fortnight.

The Englishman has six goals

in 26 La Liga appearances, with his finishing an area that could be improved.

In the Champions League, Rashford has netted five times in 10 games and, if the pattern of the first leg is repeated, could be Barca's main attacking threat again.

Talented teenager Lamine Yamal was double and triple marked, in the first leg, creating more room for Rashford to fly into.

'Unbelievable' mindset

Rashford believes Barca can mount a comeback to reach the semi-finals for a second season running.

"The mindset and the intent that we had to try to get back into the game is unbelievable, and we're going to have to use this, and we need all of this in the next game in order to come back," said Rashford.

"We know what we are capable of when we're playing at our highest level and we can take the game away from anybody. We have to look to do this in the next game."

Barca left the first leg furious at not being given a penalty when Atletico defender Marc Pubill touched the ball with his hand at a goal kick.

"It's a penalty, it's happened before and it's always given as a penalty," Rashford added. "It's common sense that it's a penalty."

Nuggets roll into NBA playoffs, Raptors clinch berth

AFP | Los Angeles

The Denver Nuggets, fueled by 23 first-half points from Nikola Jokic, beat the San Antonio Spurs 128-118 on Sunday, notching their 12th straight victory to clinch the Western Conference third seed on the last day of the NBA regular season.

On a day when coaches rested dozens of players in preparation for the looming playoffs, three-time NBA Most Valuable Player Jokic had to play at least 15 minutes to be eligible for end of season awards, including MVP.

The Serbian big man played just over 18, propelling the Nuggets to a 70-56 halftime lead that they wouldn't relinquish against

a Spurs team whose own MVP contender Victor Wembanyama sat out with a rib injury.

The Nuggets clinched the third seed in the West, behind the Oklahoma City Thunder and San Antonio, and will face the sixth-seeded Minnesota Timberwolves in the first round.

The Los Angeles Lakers settled for fourth despite a 131-107 victory and will face the Houston Rockets.

That series will pit Lakers superstar LeBron James against old rival Kevin Durant, but James could well be without the support of NBA leading scorer Luka Doncic, who is battling to recover from a hamstring strain.

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Muharraq eye historic **fifth** basketball crown

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The 2025-26 Zain Bahrain Basketball League finals reach a decisive moment tonight at 7pm as Game 3 tips off at Khalifa Sports City Arena. Holders Muharraq stand one win away from the title while Manama face a must-win situation to keep their championship hopes alive.

Muharraq, leading the best-of-five series 2-0, are now just a victory away from claiming their fifth league crown and completing a historic treble, having already secured the Bahrain Super Cup and Khalifa bin Salman Cup this season. They are guided by German head coach Peter Schomers while Manama are led by experienced Bahraini tactician Salman Ramadhan.

So far, the Red Wolves have controlled the series through composure in critical moments. Game 1 was decided in dramatic fashion when Michael Warren drained a step-back three-pointer with just 5.5 seconds remaining to seal a 74-73 win, instantly

setting the tone for a finals defined by clutch execution.

Game 2 followed a similar script, this time with captain Bader Abdulla Malabes stepping up. He finished with 18 points, including 14 in the second half and eight in the fourth quarter, taking command when the pressure peaked. His early burst in the third quarter shifted momentum firmly in Muharraq's favor before he closed the game calmly at the free-throw line.

Muharraq's supporting cast has also delivered. Mahmood Abbas Isa added 16 points while Michael Warren and Mohammed Juma'a contributed 14 and 13 respectively. Defensively, Wayne Chism anchored the effort with 10 rebounds and four steals, providing stability on both ends of the floor.

For Manama, the series has shown both promise and frustration. Donovan Smith has been a major boost since arriving, posting 25 points and 12 rebounds in Game 2 while Ahmed Salman and Emran Ashkanani combined for 38 points to keep their side competi-

itive throughout stretches of the game.

Yet despite staying within reach, Manama have been undone by late-game inefficiency. Across the final five minutes of the first two games, they have managed just nine points in total. Seven came from Salman while the team shot 4 of 17 from the field and 1 of 9 from beyond the arc during that span, turning close contests into missed opportunities.

Still, belief remains intact within the squad. Emran Ashkanani has insisted the series is far from over, emphasizing that the team continues to back itself despite the deficit.

Tonight's Game 3 will also carry a renewed atmosphere with fans returning to the stands after a suspension due to regional circumstances. The restored crowd energy is expected to amplify the intensity of Bahrain's biggest basketball rivalry at a pivotal turning point in the series.

Should the series continue, Game 4 will be played on Friday and Game 5 on Monday, with all games tipping off at 7pm at Khalifa Sports City Arena.



Action from Saturday's Game 2 clash

Shelton fights past Nava in Munich



Ben Shelton in action

AFP | Munich

American second seed Ben Shelton fought past his lucky loser compatriot Emilio Nava 7-6 (7/4), 3-6, 6-3 in the first round of the Munich Open yesterday.

After rallying from a break down in the deciding set, the world number six will next meet the winner of Alexander Blockx's meeting with Yannick Hanfmann.

"It's tough. Not just (playing against) another American, but probably my best friend out on tour, or one of a few," Shelton said.

"His trajectory has been steep lately, so I'm happy to see the way he has been climbing

(the rankings)," Shelton added of the 112th-ranked Nava.

"I know he wasn't feeling 100 percent today, so I feel bad about that. I hope he gets back to 100 percent quickly, because he's playing great on the clay."

The win improves Shelton's perfect record to six wins from six outings in 500-level events this year as the 23-year-old tries to go one better than last year on the Bavarian red dirt in pursuit of a career-first clay-court title.

Shelton lost the 2025 title-decider to Alexander Zverev, and the German is once again the top seed in this edition of the tournament. He will meet Miomir Kecmanovic in his opening match.

Asian champions Bahrain reset for GCC Games

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Handball Federation has named a 25-player squad for upcoming competitions, with attention now turning to the 4th GCC Games in Doha from May 11 to 22. The tournament is the team's immediate target as it steps into a new cycle defined by higher standards and heavier expectations.

That context follows the defining moment in Bahraini handball history, when the national team claimed its first Asian title at the Asian Handball Championship in January. Bahrain defeated Qatar 29-26 after extra time in a dramatic final in Kuwait City, a result that reshaped the regional hierarchy and confirmed its rise among Asia's leading sides.

The achievement came under Swedish head coach Robert Hedin, who now guides the transition from breakthrough success to sustained performance. A training camp beginning this week marks the start of that cycle, with preparation centered on maintaining intensity while absorbing increased external pressure.

The roster includes: Hussain Al Sayyad, Mohammed



Bahrain's handball squad celebrate their Asian title in January

Abdulhussain, Mohammed Habib Ahmed, Hassan Madan, Mohammed Habib Al Nasser, Mohammed Hameed, Jassim Khamis, Ahmed Redha, Ahmed Jalal, Ali Al Asheeri, Salman Al Showaikh, Ali Mahmood, Ali Redha, Jaafar Farsan, Sayed

Ali Basem, Hussein Mahfoodh, Hisham Ahmed, Qassim Qambar, Abdullah Abdulkarim, Ahmed Talib, Abudhir Jaafar, Mohammed Shamlooh, Mahmood Jalil, Ahmed Eid, and Mahdi Jaafar.

Once a squad defined by chas-

ing history, Bahrain now carries the burden of defending it. The team enters the GCC Games not as an underdog, but as a benchmark in regional handball, measured less by breakthrough moments and more by consistency at the top level.