

**New Ceasefire Talks**

Pakistan is working to arrange a new round of talks after an initial session ended without a deal, while international aid continues to move into Iran and maritime tensions escalate in the Strait of Hormuz. | P9

Doha: Strait of Hormuz stability is a shared duty



Tight Rivalry Sets Stage for King's Cup Final Thriller

Importers to benefit as VAT collection moves to deferred payment model

# Stability Remains Strong

Chamber leadership reaffirms commitment to economic growth and private sector development

**Historic Economic Role**

**Compensation for Affected Citizens Pledged**

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, affirmed the important role the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry plays in supporting and developing the commercial and industrial sectors, describing it as a key

partner in the Kingdom's economic progress.

This came as His Majesty received the newly formed Board of Directors of the Chamber, headed by Nabil Khalid Kanoo. The King congratulated the members on gaining the confidence of the commercial and industrial sectors, praising the Chamber's long-standing contribution to Bahrain's economy since its establishment in 1910.

His Majesty emphasized continued support for the business and economic community to strengthen its role in national development plans, stressing the importance of joint efforts to safeguard national achievements and further enhance the

national economy.

The King also commended the efforts of the previous Board of Directors, chaired by Sameer Nass, for their contributions to supporting and developing the commercial sector and advancing economic progress.

His Majesty noted that Bahrain had successfully overcome difficult circumstances and challenges, praising the unity of the Bahraini people and their confidence in the leadership and the Bahrain Defence Force. He affirmed that Bahrain will remain a country of security and stability, continuing its development through national cohesion and dedication.

He also stated that, God will-

ing, all citizens affected by property damage resulting from the recent Iranian attack on Bahrain and the region will be compensated. The attack reportedly targeted civilians, infrastructure, and public facilities.

For his part, the Chairman of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry expressed gratitude for the King's continued support, reaffirming the Chamber's commitment to strengthening the private sector's role in driving economic development in the Kingdom.



## Youth Empowerment Plans Strengthened



Youth development and national empowerment initiatives took centre stage as HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, led the latest meeting of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports.

Discussions began with an update on the National Project "La'aim," presented by Shaikha Dua bint Khalid Al Khalifa, Chairperson of the General Sports Authority. She highlighted the pro-

ject's achievements since its launch in 2021, noting its success in becoming a leading national platform for discovering and developing youth talent, as well as its growing participation rates and local and international achievements.

HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad praised the initiative and approved the launch of its sixth edition. The Council also reviewed the 2025 Youth Hope Index and broader

youth development frameworks, focusing on indicators such as safety, optimism, and confidence among young people amid ongoing social and economic changes.

HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad instructed the Ministry of Youth Affairs to intensify programmes and initiatives aimed at improving these indicators, supporting the psychological and social well-being of youth across Bahrain.

### Labour Systems Back Online



Ministry of Labour

The Ministry of Labour announced that its electronic systems have returned to normal operation after resolving a recent technical fault.

The statement added that appointments affected during the outage will be automatically rescheduled, ensuring minimal user inconvenience.

The ministry also reassured beneficiaries that their rights remain fully protected, stressing that the technical issue did not impact entitlements such as unemployment benefits or compensation.

### Five Years Jail in Malikiya Stabbing Case

TDT | Manama  
Rehab Mohammad

A man has been sentenced to five years in prison after being convicted of stabbing another man at Malikiya coastline, leaving the victim with a permanent 1% disability.

The First Major Criminal Court also ordered the confiscation of two knives used in the attack.

The incident took place on 20 October 2025 following a dispute that began over the phone. The victim agreed to meet the defendant at Malikiya, where the defendant later asked to speak privately before stabbing him in the chest.

## Hidden Birth, Silent Death

Neglect Case Ends in Jail Sentences

CASE OF NEGLIGENCE

TDT | Manama  
Rehab Mohammad

A tragic case of neglect has ended in prison terms after a Bahraini court convicted three individuals in connection with the death and secret burial of an infant born without medical assistance.

The High Criminal Court sentenced an Asian man and woman to three years in prison each after finding them guilty of neglecting their newborn child, who was less than seven months old, leading to his death. A female friend

of the mother was also sentenced to one year in prison for assisting in the secret burial of the infant. All three were additionally given one month in jail for unlawful residency and will be deported after completing their sentences.

According to case details, the mother arrived in Bahrain in early 2024 after an online relationship with the co-accused that began in 2022. She later moved

in with him in October 2024. In March 2025, she discovered she was pregnant but did not seek medical care due to her expired residency status, and the couple chose to continue the pregnancy without medical supervision.

On 23 August 2025, she went into labour inside an apartment while alone, delivering the baby without any medical assistance. The umbilical cord was

cut in an unsterile condition. The father and a friend briefly visited during the incident but did not take steps to secure medical help. Investigations revealed the baby was born alive but died shortly after due to lack of essential neonatal care. Despite attempts to feed the newborn, the infant's condition worsened rapidly.

The court found that the death was a direct result of severe negligence and failure to seek medical attention before and after birth. Authorities also noted that the birth and death were not re-

ported as required by law. Following the infant's death, the mother and her friend transported the body to the A'ali area, where they secretly buried the child near a mosque.

The Public Prosecution charged the parents with causing death by negligence, failing to provide medical care, and failing to report the incident. The mother and her friend were additionally charged with unlawful burial, while the father was charged with aiding the act through agreement and participation.



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# Italy Reaffirms Support for Bahrain

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His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa received Andrea Catalano, Ambassador of the friendly Republic of Italy to the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The King reaffirmed the depth of the strategic partnership and long-standing friendship between the two countries, expressing Bah-

rain's commitment to further developing cooperation across various fields.

He also praised the ambassador's efforts in supporting and enhancing relations, wishing him continued success.

### Appreciation

For his part, the Italian ambassador expressed his appreciation

to the King for his role in advancing relations between the two countries.

He reiterated Italy's condemnation of the recent Iranian attacks on the territory of Bahrain and reaffirmed his country's solidarity with Bahrain, supporting all measures taken to safeguard its sovereignty, security, stability, and the safety of its citizens.



HM the King receives H.E. Ambassador Andrea Catalano

# Regional Security Cooperation Discussed

### Focus on Iran attacks

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Recent regional developments, including concerns over Iranian attacks targeting Bahrain and other Gulf Cooperation Council countries—described as a serious threat to regional security and stability—



H.E. Dr. Al Zayani with H.E. Ambassador Stephanie Hallett

were at the centre of talks between Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani and US Ambassador to Bahrain Stephanie Hallett at the ministry's headquarters.

The discussions further highlighted concerns over the potential closure of the Strait of Hormuz and its implications for international maritime navigation.

The meeting also reviewed the long-standing historical

relations and close strategic partnership between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United States across various fields. Both sides explored ways to further strengthen cooperation in line with shared interests and mutual aspirations.

In addition, the talks covered ways to enhance coordination within the United Nations Security Council on issues of shared concern.

# Festive Resilience



Vishu reminds us of new beginnings, no matter where we are.

— P. V. RADHAKRISHNA PILLAI, PRESIDENT OF BAHRAIN KERALEEYA SAMAJAM

Neethu V  
TDT | Manama

Malayali expatriates across Manama marked Vishu, the Malayalam New Year, with smaller and more intimate gatherings this year, as families balanced festive traditions with ongoing regional challenges.



Young and old join the celebrations

Observed as a symbol of new beginnings, Vishu coincides with the sun's transition into Aries and the start of the Malayalam month of Medam. In Bahrain, many families celebrated at home, recreating traditions such as the Vishukkani and sharing Vishu Kaineettam, often connecting digitally with relatives in Kerala.

Retail outlets, festive essentials, offering Vishu Sadhya kits and ingredients to help families prepare traditional meals. P. V. Radhakrishna Pillai, President of the Bahrain Keraleeeya Samajam, said celebrations this year were largely home-based, with a small gathering organised for members and families.

## GCC Pushes Emergency Motion Against Iran

TDT | Manama

The Kingdom of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates jointly submitted the draft emergency proposal to the 152nd IPU General Assembly, denouncing "unjustified Iranian aggressions" against GCC countries and the Jordan. The proposal calls for condemning and rejecting attacks that targeted civilian facilities, infrastructure, and vital installations.

Speaker of the Council of Representatives and head of Bahrain's parliamentary delegation's executive committee, confirmed that the emergency item has been formally submitted to the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

# Satellite Image Unveiled

Al Munther continues successful operations in orbit



Shaikh Khalifa bin Abdullah with Dr. Al Aseeri and other Space Science Agency officials  
TDT | Manama

Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister, received Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Aseeri, CEO of the Space Science Agency and presented him with the first full satellite image of Bahrain captured by the satellite Al Munther.

During the meeting, Deputy PM highlighted that Bahrain's investment in future sciences reflects the vision of HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the directives of HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa to strengthen the Kingdom's global position in space science.

He described the establishment of the Bahrain Space Agency as a key achievement, praising efforts led by Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa to advance the sector and develop national talent.

Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah also congratulated the agency



The Deputy PM highlighted that Bahrain's investment in future sciences reflects the royal leadership's vision to strengthen the Kingdom's global position in space science.

on the first anniversary of the satellite's launch, noting its successful and precise operation in orbit.

He stressed the importance of using satellite data to support government projects, including urban planning, infrastructure development, and environmental monitoring.

## Vaisakhi Celebrated

The auspicious occasion of Vaisakhi Khalsa Sajjan Diwas was observed with deep devotion and spiritual fervour at The Sikh Community Center Salmabad Gurudwara in Bahrain. Hundreds of devotees gathered to mark one of the most significant days in Sikh history, symbolising faith, unity, and gratitude. Vaisakhi commemorates the formation of the Khalsa Panth by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699 and is also celebrated as a harvest festival in Punjab, expressing gratitude for nature's abundance. The celebrations concluded with Ardas (prayer) for peace, prosperity, and the well-being of humanity, followed by the distribution of Guru Ka Langar.



# Flex Learning Rolls

Students and parents welcome Bahrain's decision on learning options

● A hybrid approach supports diverse family needs

● Empowered to manage teaching methods

TDT | Manama  
Ghadeer Alkumaish

Parents and students across Bahrain have expressed strong support for the government's new decision allowing families to choose between online learning and classroom attendance for the remainder of the academic term, calling it a practical and balanced approach to education.

Many parents said the move restores confidence in classroom learning while still providing flexibility. "In-person learning is better for students because they stay focused and disciplined in school," said Subhash. "We trust the government and will send our children if schools are open."

His daughter shared her excitement about returning to school, saying, "I want to go back



**"We trust the government's decision,"**

SUBHASH & FAMILY

to school. I miss my friends."

Other students shared similar views, highlighting the benefits of face-to-face interaction with teachers. "Offline learning is better because you can directly ask questions and clear doubts," one student told The Daily Tribune, adding that classroom teaching improves understand-



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**"One-on-one interaction in the classroom makes understanding much easier than online classes,"**

- STUDENT



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**"I miss my school and want to return as soon as possible,"**

- STUDENT



”

**"They don't study properly and too much screen time can affect their eyes,"**

RESIDENT

ing compared to online lessons.

A Filipino child also expressed joy at the return option, saying, "I miss my school. I want to go back as soon as possible."

Her mother acknowledged the challenges of balancing work and home responsibilities but said in-person schooling remains the preferred option for many families.

An elderly resident also supported the shift, noting concerns that prolonged screen time and

remote learning may affect children's study habits and eye health.

The positive reactions follow a new policy announced by Education Minister Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, under which all public school students from Year 1 to Year 12 can choose between remote and in-person learning for the rest of the term.

Private schools have also been given flexibility to decide their own teaching and examination

arrangements based on their systems and capabilities.

The initiative aims to balance educational continuity with family needs, while allowing schools greater autonomy in managing learning delivery.

As Bahrain rolls out this flexible education model, families now play a central role in deciding the most suitable learning path for their children, marking a shift toward a more adaptable and inclusive education system.

## Cancer Survivor Flies Home



Dulce Bose Lloroso, a 48-year-old cancer patient and salon receptionist from San Fernando, Masbate, and Alberto Salalap Sumpay Jr., a 52-year-old florist and stroke survivor from Talisay, Iloilo, were part of the fifth batch of repatriation efforts for overseas Filipinos. This group consisted of 153 individuals, which included 107 overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and 46 dependents.

Lloroso, employed in Bahrain for 15 years, received a breast cancer diagnosis in 2024. She underwent eight chemotherapy sessions and subsequently had surgery in July 2025, necessitating ongoing medical support before her repatriation.

According to Lloroso, "I did not hesitate to make the decision; at last, I will be able to go home," as her 18-year-old daughter eagerly awaits her return.

## Walking Out Won't Be Easy

Parliament extends travel ban on debtors to three years



Hassan Barakat

Parliament approved legislative amendments extending travel bans on debtors for up to three years. This move aims to strengthen the enforcement of court rulings and prevent the evasion of financial obligations. The draft law was forwarded to the Shura Council for further review.

The amendment to Article 40 of the Civil and Commercial Execution Law empowers courts to impose travel bans on

individuals who may attempt to leave the country to avoid paying debts, particularly in cases where declared assets are insufficient to cover outstanding amounts.

Under the existing framework, travel bans can be imposed for a maximum of three months and renewed for up to nine months. The revised legislation increases this period significantly, allowing restrictions of up to three years, while maintaining full judicial oversight.

## Private school job cuts prompt Ministry intervention

The Ministry of Labour confirmed it intervened after social media reports suggested a private educational institution planned to terminate several national employees.

According to the ministry, it held a series of meetings with the concerned institution, the latest took place yesterday. These discussions resulted

in a preliminary agreement aimed at preserving the stability of national employees through a set of proposed solutions and corrective measures to be implemented by the institution's management.

The ministry added that it will finalize further details of the agreed solutions in the coming days.

# Toxic Gas Concern

Understanding Ammonia Gas Exposure and Its Health Impact

● A hybrid approach supports diverse family needs

● Empowered to manage teaching methods

TDT | Manama  
Neethu V

Ammonia, a key industrial chemical used in fertilizing global agriculture and supporting Bahrain's petrochemical sector, has come under renewed scrutiny following a recent industrial incident in Sitra.

Widely produced from natural gas and air under high pressure, ammonia plays a vital role in global manufacturing but is also a hazardous substance requiring strict safety controls.

Following the incident, the Ministry of Interior confirmed that the situation was swiftly contained with no major impact reported, crediting the prompt response of government teams and relevant authorities.

However, officials emphasized the importance of strictly following civil defense instructions during any chemical-related emergencies, particularly in industrial zones. The Ministry urged the public to rely on official guidance available through the National Civil Protection Platform, stressing that awareness and compliance with safety procedures—especially those related to ammonia gas leaks—are essential to protecting lives.



Authorities in Bahrain took swift safety measures, including temporary evacuations in eastern Sitra, after an ammonia gas incident.

Prevention (CDC) states that high levels of ammonia can severely irritate and burn the skin, eyes, throat, and lungs.

Speaking to The Daily Tribune, Dr. Iman Cheffi, General Practitioner and founder of Ebditar, said the strong odor of ammonia is often the first warning sign of exposure, with symptoms such as burning of the eyes, nose, and throat appearing almost immediately.

She warned that exposure to high concentrations in enclosed spaces can become life-threatening within minutes, poten-



**"The strong smell of ammonia is often the first warning sign, and symptoms such as burning of the eyes, nose, and throat can begin almost immediately."**

DR IMAN CHEFFI



**"In aquatic environments, ammonia contamination can disrupt ecosystems by contributing to eutrophication and harming marine life."**

KAI MEITHIG

Environmental and health experts have also highlighted the risks associated with ammonia exposure. Kai Meithig, a sustainability advocate and environmental consultant, noted that ammonia is a strong irritant even at relatively low concentrations and can quickly affect human health upon exposure.

"In the air, ammonia is a highly irritating gas and, in the environment, it is a reactive nitrogen pollutant that can contribute to

broader air- and water-quality concerns," Meithig said. He further warned that in industrial regions where ammonia is widely handled, accidental releases—though rare—can pose environmental and public health risks if safety controls fail. He also noted that aquatic contamination can lead to eutrophication, harming marine ecosystems and disrupting ecological balance.

Health guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and

tially causing airway swelling or laryngeal edema and leading to severe respiratory complications. While mild exposure may resolve, severe cases can result in long-term airway damage or chronic lung conditions.

Authorities and medical experts continue to stress that rapid response, public awareness, and strict adherence to safety protocols remain essential to minimizing risks associated with industrial chemical incidents.

# Shura Panel Backs Economy

Financial Committee praises recent economic directives under national leadership

Rehab Mohammad  
TDT | Manama

The Financial and Economic Affairs Committee of the Shura Council, chaired by Khalid Hussain Al-Maskati, has commended the recent economic directives issued under the leadership of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister. The committee said Bahrain continues to demonstrate a strong model of strategic governance that supports sustainable growth and strengthens economic resilience.

The committee noted that, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa



**Bahrain's continued economic strength reflects a clear vision of proactive governance**

H.E. KHALID HUSSAIN AL-MASKATI

and the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, Bahrain has adopted a proactive and forward-looking approach to economic management, focused on preparedness, stability, and effective response to challenges.

It welcomed the Cabinet's decision to begin legal and constitutional procedures for a draft law requiring the payment of April

salaries for Bahraini employees in private sector firms through the Unemployment Insurance Fund. The committee said the move supports private sector stability while protecting national employment and sustaining economic activity.

The committee also praised the Central Bank of Bahrain's announcement of a BD 7 billion liquidity support package, which

includes a loan deferral scheme.

It described the measures as a comprehensive response aimed at strengthening financial stability and supporting the national economy.

It further highlighted the decision allowing individuals and businesses to defer loan and credit card payments, including installments and interest, for three months. The committee said this would help ease financial pressure, especially in light of the domestic loan portfolio estimated at BD 11.3 billion.

It also noted that flexibility granted to financial institutions in loan classification would support risk management while maintaining stability.

## Parliament flags alleged pressure on fraud complainants



MP Hamad Al Doy

Hasan Barakat  
TDT | Manama

Parliament raised concerns after allegations emerged that complainants in a fraud case were pressured to withdraw their statements following the suspect's arrest.

MP Hamad Al Doy said that individuals involved in an electronics instalment fraud case were allegedly contacted after the arrest, with claims that a lawyer representing the suspect urged them to drop their complaints.

Al Doy described the situation as unacceptable, particularly because it involves victims who had already come forward after suf-

fering significant financial losses. He stressed that the legal profession must remain grounded in ethics and integrity, noting that lawyers are expected to uphold justice rather than influence or intimidate complainants.

According to him, many of the affected families continue to face serious consequences from the case, including mounting debts, loss of income, and in some instances, the risk of losing their homes.

The MP also called on all affected individuals to report any similar incidents, emphasising their cooperation is important for preventing further harm and ensuring accountability.

## Parliament approves legal profession law after 45 years



From left to right: Nawaf Al Maawda, Minister of Justice, Hassan BuKhammas, MP, Salah Al Madfa'a, Chairman of the Bahrain Bar Society, Ali Saqer Al Doseri, MP, and MP Mahmood Fardan during parliamentary debate and Bahrain Bar Society reaction session.

Mohammed Darwish  
TDT | Manama

Parliament approved a new law regulating the legal profession, replacing legislation in place since 1980, as a major step toward modernising the sector.

The approval came during the 26th ordinary session following a detailed review by the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee, which held multiple meetings and consultations with the Ministry of Justice and

**The new law establishes a tiered lawyer registration system according to court levels, designed to raise professional standards and ensure that only qualified lawyers can appear before higher courts.**

the Bahrain Bar Society.

Lawmakers said the updated framework reflects developments in the legal field, expanding lawyers' roles beyond court representation to include legal advisory and dispute prevention

services.

The new law introduces a tiered system for lawyer registration based on court levels, aimed at improving standards and ensuring only qualified practitioners appear before

higher courts.

MPs also discussed provisions related to non-Bahraini lawyers, with officials clarifying that their participation would remain limited and subject to strict conditions and approval.

The law is expected to strengthen regulation of the profession, improve service quality, and support Bahrain's broader efforts to develop its legal sector and position itself as a regional hub for legal and arbitration services.

## MPs approve new support measures for unemployment

Hasan Barakat  
TDT | Manama

Parliament approved urgent measures to support job seekers who lost unemployment benefits due to technical issues in the Ministry of Labour system.

Lawmakers said the disruptions led to interruptions in application processing and, in some cases, the suspension of benefits for individuals who were still actively seeking employment.

MP Hanan Fardan said many affected applicants met eligibility requirements and continued attending interviews and fulfilling obligations, but were impacted by system errors or administrative delays beyond their control.

MPs also raised concerns about reliance on older rejection

decisions to determine current eligibility, calling for a more updated and flexible approach in assessing cases.

During discussions, members highlighted that some job seekers face additional challenges such as illness, pregnancy, and family responsibilities, which are not always fully accounted for in existing procedures.

The approved proposal includes restoring support to affected individuals, reviewing suspended cases linked to technical issues, and strengthening safeguards to prevent similar disruptions in the future.

Lawmakers said the decision aims to ensure continued assistance for those dependent on unemployment support, particularly during unforeseen system failures.

## Fishermen, drivers to receive financial aid

Hasan Barakat  
TDT | Manama

Fishermen, taxi drivers and other affected private sector workers will receive wage support for April after Parliament approved an urgent proposal during its twenty-sixth ordinary session.

The decision extends support from the unemployment fund to cover groups whose income has been directly impacted, including professional fishermen, driving instructors, taxi drivers and bus operators.

MP Mohammed Al Alaiwi said the measure reflects national solidar-

ity during a challenging period, noting that many workers have seen their daily income disrupted.

He highlighted the wider national response, pointing to leadership engagement with citizens and directives to provide financial support to those affected.

The MP expressed hope that assistance would reach all impacted individuals, helping them manage the immediate financial pressure.

The approved proposal aims to provide direct relief to workers who rely on daily earnings, ensuring continued support during the current period.



Wage support serves as a lifeline for fishermen

## Sharia graduates for court representation

Hasan Barakat  
TDT | Manama

MP Mohammed Mousa called for allowing Sharia graduates to represent clients in Bahrain's Sharia courts, saying the move could expand employment opportunities and better reflect the judicial system's nature.

Mousa said Sharia court judges are typically trained in Islamic jurisprudence, suggesting that aligning court representation with similar academic backgrounds could support legal proceedings.

He pointed to Saudi Arabia as an example, where Sharia graduates are permitted to plead before Sharia courts.

# Housing Distribution Gathers Pace

## Infrastructure readiness reaches 50% as projects advance

● **BD13,000 grant apartments**

● **BD10,000 grant + BD70,000 loan packages**

● **BD40,000 loan-linked housing plots**

**Hasan Barakat**  
TDT | Manama

Parliament reviewed housing demand and allocation progress during its twenty-sixth ordinary session, where officials provided updated figures on applications and ongoing support programmes.

Housing and Urban Planning Minister Amna Al Romaihi informed lawmakers that 835 applications have been registered under a priority category covering divorced, widowed, and other eligible women, with 77 allocations completed so far through official housing draws.

The update came in response to a parliamentary question from MP Khalid Saleh Buanaq regarding the current status of housing demand and distribution.

The minister outlined that applicants are offered several housing options, including apartments supported by a BD13,000 non-refundable grant, as well as financing schemes combining a BD10,000 grant

### Housing Eligibility & Application Process

- **Income eligibility:** Increased from BD600 to **BD800**
- **Age limit:** Extended up to **60 years**
- **Temporary housing rent cap:** Maximum **25% of monthly income**, or **BD100**, whichever is lower
- **Application assessment:** Conducted by a **specialised committee**
- **Coordination:** Includes the **Supreme Council for Women**
- **Application tracking:** Available through the **Ministry's online platform**
- **Purpose:** Improve access, transparency, and efficiency in housing allocations

with a BD70,000 loan, with the government covering associated costs for eligible beneficiaries.

She also noted that housing plots linked to a BD40,000 loan are being provided; allocation depends on the completion of infrastructure works in designated areas.

According to the minister, infrastructure readiness currently stands at around 50%, a milestone that is enabling further



**Housing allocations are progressing in line with infrastructure readiness, which has reached around 50 percent**

— H.E. AMNA AL ROMAIHI, HOUSING AND URBAN PLANNING MINISTER

allocations and allowing beneficiaries to move forward with construction planning.

She added that several plots have already been handed over and are now occupied, while additional developments are underway following the awarding of infrastructure contracts. The pace of distribution is expected to increase as ongoing projects progress in coordination with applicants.

Temporary housing solutions have also been made available for eligible groups, with units provided in areas including Al Lawzi and Hamad Town.



**This is not about assigning blame – it is about recognising the scale of a challenge that has built up over many years.**

— MP MOHAMMED JASSIM AL ALAIWI

### Concerns over long-pending housing applications

Bahrain's housing backlog took centre stage in Parliament, as officials revealed that hundreds of families in Muharraq have been waiting decades for homes.

Lawmakers were told that 746 housing applications remain pending in one constituency alone, with some dating back to as early as 2001. The figures underscored the prolonged nature of the issue, with many families still awaiting permanent housing solutions after years of uncertainty.



**We held over 110 meetings with civil society organisations to reflect their views in the amendments.**

— H.E. OSAMA BIN SALEH AL ALAWI, MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

MP Mohammed Jassim Al Alaiwi said the discussion was not about placing blame, but about understanding the depth of a challenge that has built up over time. He acknowledged the efforts of Housing and Urban Planning Minister Amna Al Romaihi and ministry staff, noting the long-standing responsibilities carried by key service sectors.

He added that MPs play a role in reflecting citizens' concerns while supporting practical solutions to address the backlog.

In response, Minister Al Romaihi outlined measures

to address older applications, particularly those submitted in 2004 and earlier. These include financial support packages of BD70,000, land allocation tied to infrastructure readiness, and alternative housing options.

A dedicated committee continues to review humanitarian cases, and citizens are also received directly to explore suitable solutions based on their circumstances.

### Two reports pulled from Parliament

Parliament withdrew two proposed legislative amendments from discussion following a formal request by the government during its twenty-sixth ordinary session.

The decision covers amendments to the private sector labour law and the law regulating civil society organisations; both reports were set aside according to parliamentary procedures to allow for further review.

Osama bin Saleh Al Alawi, Social Development Minister explained that the proposed changes are designed to strike a balance between strengthening governance and ensuring the continuity of civil society organisations. Under the amendments, responsibility for violations would be limited to the individuals involved rather than the organisation as a whole, allowing entities to continue operating.

# Housing Loan Relief For Frontline Personnel

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Frontline members of Bahrain's defence and security services will benefit from housing loan relief following the parliament's approval of an urgent proposal in the parliament.

The initiative covers personnel from the Bahrain Defence Force, Ministry of Interior, and National Guard who have been serving continuously under demanding conditions, often requiring long periods away from their families.

MP Mohammed Al Marafi said the decision reflects official recognition of the sacrifices made



MP Mohammed Mousa



MP Mohammed Al Marafi

by frontline workers, noting that the measure intends to ease financial pressures during an exceptional period of service.

He added that many personnel remain on duty around the clock, placing significant strain on both them and their families.

MP Mohammed Mousa described the initiative as part of broader national efforts to support those responsible for safeguarding the country, stressing that while they do not seek rewards, their commitment deserves tangible acknowledgment.

ment. He also raised concerns regarding existing loan deferment schemes, including questions about whether interest would be applied, highlighting ongoing financial considerations for affected personnel.

Lawmakers said the proposal is designed to provide direct economic relief and help maintain financial stability for service members while they continue their operational duties.

The decision underscores continued efforts to support frontline personnel and recognise their role in maintaining national security during challenging conditions.

# Souq Waqif set for road upgrades

**Hasan Barakat**  
TDT | Manama

Drivers in Souq Waqif will benefit from road improvements after Parliament approved urgent upgrades, following concerns over congestion, damaged streets and limited access.

The decision comes in response to complaints about blocked narrow roads, insufficient parking, and difficult traffic movement in parts of the area, which residents say have also raised safety concerns.

MP Abdulhakim Al Sheno said vehicles frequently obstruct passage in tight streets, making it difficult for traffic to move smoothly and highlighting the need for better

organisation.

He urged traffic authorities to conduct an on-site assessment and introduce structured parking solutions as part of a broader infrastructure improvement plan.

Lawmakers noted that the upgrades aim to improve daily mobility, ease congestion, and enhance safety in one of Bahrain's busy community hubs.

The proposal also aligns with broader road development plans in surrounding areas, with calls for Souq Waqif to be included in future infrastructure projects. The approved measures are expected to improve road conditions, regulate traffic flow and enhance the overall quality of life for users of the area.

# Six-Month Fee Suspension Backed for Bahraini Businesses

● **SMEs, face rising costs**

● **Protect jobs and maintain economic stability**

● **Not a permanent waiver**

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Five MPs secured Parliament's backing on Tuesday for an urgent call to suspend electricity and water bills, municipal charges and labour fees for Bahraini business owners for six months, in a move aimed at easing pressure on firms facing economic strain after recent Iranian attacks.

The proposal, submitted by Jaleela Alawi, Mahmood Mirza Fardan, Dr Hisham Al Ashiri, Mohsen Al Asbool and Mamdouh Al Saleh, asks the government to halt the charges for a fixed period to support local businesses, particularly small

**Operating costs continue to rise while revenues decline, and many businesses simply cannot sustain these obligations without relief.**

JALEELA ALAWI, MP

and medium enterprises.

Speaking during the session, Jaleela Alawi said the request comes amid "exceptional cir-



cumstances" affecting Bahrain's economy, with effects seen across commercial activity and operating costs.

"Markets have slowed, some business activity has dropped, and operating costs have gone up in a way many firms cannot carry for long," she said. "Bahraini business owners rely on steady income. Any disruption places them under real financial pressure, especially when expenses continue without pause."

She said business owners remain bound by core payments, including electricity and water bills, municipal fees and labour charges, even as revenues come under strain.

"These obligations continue regardless of income," she said.

"They build up and may push some firms to scale down or stop for a period, which then feeds into the wider economy and affects jobs linked to these businesses."

Alawi said the proposed six-month pause is meant to give firms time to recover and adjust their operations without adding longer-term strain on public finances.

"This is temporary support," she said. "It gives business owners time to rearrange their affairs, restore activity in stages and continue operating during this period."

# Al Baraka Islamic Bank launches "alBarakat 2026" scheme

Announces fresh Identity and unveils enhanced "alBarakat Plus" account

● In 2026, "alBarakat" scheme continues to offer its signature Grand Prizes, led by the "Monthly Salary" prize of USD10,000 per month for a full year (totalling USD120,000).

TDT | Manama

Al Baraka Islamic Bank, one of the leading Islamic banks in the Kingdom of Bahrain, has announced the launch of the revamped alBarakat prizes scheme for 2026. This launch is part of a comprehensive update aimed at redefining the retail savings experience through innovative features and expanded winning opportunities.



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

Alongside the debut of the newly enhanced "alBarakat Plus" account, which offers additional integrated pathways to boost customers' chances of winning.

This launch aligns with Al Baraka Islamic Bank's long-standing commitment to rewarding its valued customers and showing appreciation for their trust and loyalty. By developing advanced savings and investment schemes that comply with Shari'a-compliant principles with genuine opportunities to win substantial cash prizes throughout the year, the Bank continues to deliver an integrated banking experience.

Additionally, the scheme will offer larger prizes of USD25,000 each for two winners in the August draw (totaling USD50,000). This diversity in prizes ensures the scheme's momentum, enhances its appeal, and provides customers with multiple avenues to win.

ence that meets customer aspirations and keeps pace with their evolving needs.

In 2026, "alBarakat" scheme continues to offer its signature Grand Prizes, led by the "Monthly Salary" prize of USD10,000 per month for a full year (totalling USD120,000). These will be awarded across three draws scheduled for June, July and August 2026. Simultaneously, the Bank will introduce dedicated draws for the "alBarakat Plus" account, offering additional cash prizes of up to USD10,000 for five winners during the June and July draws.

Additionally, the scheme will offer larger prizes of USD25,000 each for two winners in the August draw (totaling USD50,000). This diversity in prizes ensures the scheme's momentum, enhances its appeal, and provides customers with multiple avenues to win.



Mazin Dhaif, Chief Retail Officer at Al Baraka Islamic Bank

vides customers with multiple avenues to win.

As part of this development, the "alBarakat Plus" account introduces prominent advantages that significantly bolster winning odds. Account holders receive double entries into the "alBarakat" draw. Furthermore, customers can earn additional chances by maintaining their minimum balance for three consecutive months, with cumulative chances continuing to accrue for every subsequent month the balance is maintained, consistently increasing the probability of winning.

The account also allows participation in dedicated draws alongside the main draw. Customers have the flexibility to open both "alBarakat" and "alBarakat Plus" accounts simultaneously, maximising their potential to win through multiple channels within the same scheme.

It is worth noting that the "alBarakat Plus" account is characterised by its accessibility, requiring a minimum opening balance of BD500, while offering high flexibility in managing savings. This makes it an ideal choice for customers looking to enhance their savings returns



draws alongside the main draw. Customers have the flexibility to open both "alBarakat" and "alBarakat Plus" accounts simultaneously, maximising their potential to win through multiple channels within the same scheme.

It is worth noting that the "alBarakat Plus" account is characterised by its accessibility, requiring a minimum opening balance of BD500, while offering high flexibility in managing savings. This makes it an ideal choice for customers looking to enhance their savings returns

while benefiting from a comprehensive and growing prize ecosystem.

Commenting on this occasion, Dr. Adel Salem, Chief Executive Officer of Al Baraka Islamic Bank, stated: "The unveiling of the enhanced 'alBarakat Plus' account falls under our direction to expand our ecosystem of innovative savings solutions. By providing multiple options that cater to different customer segments, we strengthen our ability to attract new clients and solidify relationships with our existing ones, in line with our ongoing commitment to innovation and sustainable growth."

For his part, Mr. Mazin Dhaif, Chief Retail Officer at Al Baraka Islamic Bank, commented: "Through this update to 'alBarakat' 2026, we focused on delivering practical benefits that directly enhance the customer experience. 'alBarakat Plus' account provides double entries into draws, alongside dedicated draws that offer extra winning chances, thereby increasing the scheme's attractiveness and giving customers broader options."

## Ebdaa honours winners of "Celebrating Your Creativity" competition



● The event also featured a discussion session led by Acting CEO Prof. Badr El Din Ibrahim

TDT | Manama

Ebdaa Microfinance Company recently honoured the winners of its "Celebrating Your Creativity" competition, launched during Holy month of Ramadan as part of its efforts to support entrepreneurs and encourage the growth of emerging businesses within the community. Hassan Ghloom secured first place, while Mohammed Al Hayki came second.

The event also featured a discussion session led by Acting CEO Prof. Badr El Din Ibrahim, focusing on the winning projects and their potential for implementation, while also addressing the factors behind their success, the challenges facing entrepreneurs today and the scope for future col-

laboration between the company and the winners.

Prof. Badr El Din Ibrahim commented, "This initiative underscores Ebdaa's commitment to supporting promising Bahraini talent and cultivating an environment that enables start-ups and small businesses to grow and develop. Ventures of this kind play an important role in advancing economic development by bringing forward innovative ideas and practical solutions that enrich the local market, strengthen competitiveness and open up opportunities for Bahraini youth."

Ebdaa's Acting CEO said the competition brought forward several promising ideas that merit continued support, adding that the company will continue to provide advisory and development support while facilitating access to appropriate financing solutions. This will help entrepreneurs address operational challenges and turn their ideas into sustainable businesses capable of growth and competing at both the local and regional levels.

# Joyalukkas celebrates historic entry into Australia

With Bollywood actor and brand ambassador Kajol Devgan, in Sydney

TDT | Manama

Joyalukkas, the world's favourite jeweller, has achieved a landmark milestone in its global growth journey with the inauguration of its first showroom in Australia - marking the brand's official and celebrated entry into its 12th country. The grand opening took place in Sydney on 11 April 2026, welcoming Australia as the newest and most exciting chapter in Joyalukkas' ever-growing international story.

The inauguration was graced by celebrated Bollywood star Kajol Devgan, who officially opened the showroom in the presence of distinguished dignitaries, including, The Honourable Dr. Andrew Charlton MP (Cabinet Secretary Assistant Minister for Science, Technology and the Digital Economy), Mr. Sameer Pandey- Councillor, Mr. John Paul Alukkas, CEO, Joyalukkas Jewellery and Ms. Sonia Alukkas, Director - International Operations.

### A DEFINING CHAPTER IN A GLOBAL STORY

Australia's entry into the Joyalukkas network is far more than a geographical milestone - it is a powerful statement of intent. With a legacy built over nearly four decades across the UAE, USA, UK, India, Singapore, Malaysia and other Gulf nations, Joyalukkas has earned a global reputation on an unwavering foundation of trust, certified quality and designs that honour life's most precious moments. Australia now joins that distinguished legacy.

The selection of Sydney as



Bollywood actor and brand ambassador Kajol Devgan inaugurated the Joyalukkas showroom in Sydney, marking the brand's official entry into Australia. She was joined by The Honourable Dr. Andrew Charlton MP (Cabinet Secretary Assistant Minister for Science, Technology and the Digital Economy), Mr. Sameer Pandey- Councillor, Mr. John Paul Alukkas, CEO of Joyalukkas Jewellery; Ms. Sonia Alukkas, Director - International Operations.

the brand's inaugural Australian destination is both deliberate and meaningful. As one of the Asia-Pacific region's most cosmopolitan and culturally rich cities, it is home to thriving multicultural communities and a significant South Asian diaspora - many of whom have been loyal Joyalukkas patrons across the globe for years. This expansion brings the brand to their doorstep, honouring relationships built over decades while opening doors to an entirely new generation of Australian jewellery lovers.

### WORLD-CLASS SHOWROOMS FOR A WORLD-CLASS MARKET

The new Sydney showroom has been conceived as a destination in its own right - a space where master craftsmanship, contemporary elegance

and exceptional customer experience converge. Designed to reflect Joyalukkas' signature aesthetic, the showroom features luxurious interiors, a spacious and immersive retail environment and curated displays showcasing over one million designs. From timeless gold jewellery that honours cultural heritage, to breathtaking diamond creations, opulent bridal collections and contemporary signature pieces, every collection has been thoughtfully curated to reflect both the enduring artistry of Joyalukkas' craft and the refined, discerning tastes of the Australian market. Each visit promises not merely a purchase, but an experience - defined by expertise, authenticity and the unmistakable joy of Joyalukkas.

### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Mr. John Paul Alukkas | CEO of Joyalukkas Jewellery

"Arriving in Australia feels like the beginning of something truly special - for us, for our customers and for the communities we are privileged to serve.

Australia is a nation built on openness, aspiration and the celebration of diversity - values that have always been at the soul of Joyalukkas. We have been watching this market closely and the remarkable communities here who have supported us across the world. Today, we are proud to say: we are here and we are here to stay. We are grateful for your loyalty and we are honoured to now serve you at home. For those discovering us for the first time, welcome to a world of exceptional jewellery and genuine care.

# Ebrahim K. Kanoo launches all-new **Toyota RAV4** in Bahrain

Developed around the philosophy that “Life is an Adventure”



TDT | Manama

**E**brahim K. Kanoo (EKK), the sole distributor of Toyota vehicles in the Kingdom of Bahrain, announced the launch of the all-new RAV4, marking a full model change for one of the brand's most consistently popular vehicles worldwide. The all-new RAV4 has been developed around the philosophy that “Life is an Adventure,” ensuring drivers can move confidently between their everyday routines and extraordinary moments, supported by comfort, safety, and peace of mind.

As one of Toyota's earliest and most successful platforms for hybrid adoption, the RAV4 has played a key role in advancing electrified mobility in line with the company's multi-pathway approach. The new model con-

tinues that journey through the adoption of Toyota's 5th generation hybrid electric system, delivering stronger acceleration, improved fuel efficiency, and a smoother driving experience without the need for external charging.

Commenting on the all-new RAV4, Yoshinori Futonagane, Chief Engineer at Toyota Motor Corporation, said: “The challenge we faced during development was exactly an adventure. ‘Life is an Adventure’ is the core philosophy behind RAV4, and in developing this new generation, we focused on the values of ‘Go anywhere’ and ‘Do anything.’ Our goal was to ensure that customers feel comfort and peace of mind in both their ordinary and extraordinary lives, while also designing a vehicle that captures the spirit of adventure from within.”

The model is offered in two

renewed styles: Core and Adventure, each expressing a distinct interpretation of the RAV4 character. The Core style emphasizes a clean, modern appearance suited to urban environments, while maintaining the robust proportions expected of an SUV. The Adventure style adopts a more rugged design language, highlighting RAV4's readiness for light off-road use and outdoor exploration.

Customers can personalize the all-new RAV4 through a wide range of carefully curated interior and exterior color options. Both styles are each offered with two distinctive interior color choices alongside nine exterior mono-tone finishes, including the all-new Urban Rock. Additionally, the Core style offers further customization with five

Bi-tone exterior combinations, allowing customers to express their individuality while enhancing the RAV4's dynamic design.

For more information about the all-new Toyota RAV4, customers can visit the Toyota showroom in Sitra, call 17730730, or visit [toyota.com.bh](http://toyota.com.bh). Guests are also invited to book a test drive and experience the vehicle's performance and features firsthand.

press their individuality while enhancing the RAV4's dynamic design. For more information about the all-new Toyota RAV4, customers can visit the Toyota showroom in Sitra, call

17730730, or visit [toyota.com.bh](http://toyota.com.bh). Guests are also invited to book a test drive and experience the vehicle's performance and features firsthand.

## BENEFIT celebrates graduation of second cohort of “Fintech Drivers” programme



Salah Alawadhi, Chief of Human Resources & Administration at BENEFIT

TDT | Manama

**B**ENEFIT, the Kingdom's innovator and leading company in Fintech and electronic financial transactions service, has announced the successful completion of the second cohort of its six-month “Fintech Drivers” Programme.

The initiative forms part of BENEFIT's broader efforts to equip Bahraini talent with practical, industry-relevant capabilities and to support the evolving demands of the financial

services and digital innovation landscape.

Designed to equip graduates with practical skills and specialized expertise, the programme offers a high-quality learning experience that supports a confident transition into the workplace and enables participants to contribute to innovation across the sector.

To mark the occasion, BENEFIT hosted a virtual graduation ceremony celebrating seven

graduate trainees who successfully completed the program and were onboarded across key business departments within the company over a six-month period. The initiative was delivered under Tamkeen's Furas Program, within a structured framework designed to bridge the gap between academic learning and industry requirements, translating theoretical knowledge into practical fintech applications.

Commenting on the milestone, Mr. Salah Alawadhi, Chief of Human Resources & Administration at BENEFIT, said: “The trainees demonstrated strong discipline and adaptability within a dynamic digital banking ecosystem, reinforcing the importance of investing in human capital as a key driver of sustainable growth, in line with the objectives of Tamkeen's Furas Programme to empower Bahraini youth”



## Bahrain eases upfront VAT for importers at entry points

Hasan Barakat  
TDT | Manama

**I**mporters of essential goods will soon get breathing space on tax payments, after Parliament here approved a measure allowing businesses to defer Value Added Tax (VAT) — a move aimed at easing cash flow pressures and keeping supply chains running smoothly.

Under the new system, importers will no longer have to pay VAT upfront at entry points. Instead, the tax will be settled later through regular filing cycles, giving companies time to sell their goods before making payments.

Previously, VAT was collected immediately at key gateways such as the King Fahd Causeway, Khalifa Bin Salman Port and Bahrain International Airport — often tying up working capital at a critical stage of trade.

The change, passed during Parliament's 26th ordinary session, shifts payments to align with tax filing periods. Small and medium-sized enterprises will typically pay



MP Abdulwahid Qarata

quarterly, while larger firms will settle annually.

MP Abdulwahid Qarata said the reform is designed to improve liquidity for businesses facing pressure from immediate tax obligations. By freeing up cash at the point of import, the measure is also expected to support the steady flow of essential goods into the Kingdom.

Officials see the move as part of broader efforts to bolster economic stability and make it easier for companies to operate, particularly at a time when maintaining resilient supply chains remains a priority.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

YOU MAY BE DISAPPOINTED IF YOU FAIL, BUT YOU ARE DOOMED IF YOU DON'T TRY.  
BEVERLY SILLS

**China vows 'countermeasures' if Trump tariff threat materialises**

AFP | Beijing, China

China vowed yesterday it would impose "countermeasures" if US President Donald Trump made good on his threat to impose new tariffs following reports Beijing has supplied or intends to supply weapons to Iran.

Trump -- who is scheduled to visit Beijing next month for talks with counterpart Xi Jinping -- said Sunday he would hit China's goods with a 50% tariff if it provided 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.



A man fixes the United Arab Emirates' national flag to the roof of his house in Dubai, after a call by the UAE' Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai urging people across the country to hoist the flag as a symbol of unity and pride

**Trump 'shocked' at Meloni's war stance**

US President Donald Trump criticised Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, a political ally, in an interview published on Tuesday for her unwillingness to help in the Iran war. "I'm shocked at her. I thought she had courage, but I was wrong," he told Italian daily Corriere della Sera.



**Red Cross sends aid**

The international Red Cross and Red Crescent said a shipment of medical supplies and other aid crossed the border into Iran on Sunday, its first delivery since the start of the war.

**Lebanon, Israel to meet**

Israel said it was open to peace with Lebanon ahead of the first direct talks in decades between the neighbours, but that Hezbollah remained the "problem" blocking an agreement on ending fighting.

The United States is pressing for a halt to the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, fearing it could derail the two-week ceasefire in Washington's war with Iran.

The Washington meeting will be mediated by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and include the Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors to the United States.

French President Emmanuel Macron said he had urged US President Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian to restart talks.

# Ships exit Gulf from Iran despite blockade

AFP | London, United Kingdom

At least two ships sailing from Iranian ports crossed the Hormuz Strait yesterday despite a US military blockade, maritime tracking data indicated.

They were among at least four Iran-linked vessels that used the route after Washington's blockade came into effect at 1400 GMT on Monday, according to maritime data provider Kpler.

The Liberia-flagged bulk carrier Christianna crossed after unloading 74,000 tonnes of corn at the Iranian port of Bandar Imam Khomeini, passing Iran's Larak Island in the strait around

## US seeking 20-year pause of Iran uranium enrichment

AFP | Washington, United States

The United States sought a 20-year suspension of Iran's uranium enrichment programme as part of a deal to end the war, according to media reports Monday.

Media outlets reported that Washington asked Tehran to agree not to enrich uranium for 20 years, citing officials close to

the negotiations held in Islamabad on Saturday. The 20-year pause would be accompanied by sanctions relief, the Wall Street Journal reported. Iran in turn proposed to suspend its nuclear activity for five years, according to The New York Times. Vance said that Washington had made its red lines clear in talks with Tehran, and that the "ball is in the Iranian

court" now. Earlier on Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Vance had told him the removal of all of Iran's 60% enriched uranium is a "central issue" for Trump. The Washington n also wanted to ensure "that there is no further enrichment in the years ahead -- even decades ahead -- no enrichment within Iran," Netanyahu added.

Island route. It was empty and heading to the Iraqi port of Khor al Zubair, according to its transponder signal, Kpler said.

It is sanctioned by the US for Iran-related trade and many of its past trips to the Gulf had been to Iran, picking up Iranian bitumen and asphalt to ship to Asia.

**US says stopped six ships**

The US military said yesterday that it successfully stopped six ships from sailing out of Iranian ports during the first 24 hours of a naval blockade against the Islamic republic.

Central Command (CENTCOM) -- which is responsible for American forces in the Middle East -- said more than 10,000 US troops, over a dozen warships, and dozens of aircraft are taking part in the mission.

"During the first 24 hours, no ships made it past the US blockade and six merchant vessels complied with direction from US forces to turn around to re-enter an Iranian port on the Gulf of Oman," CENTCOM said in a post on X. The blockade is being 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," it added.



About one-fifth of the world's oil consumption passes through this narrow chokepoint every day, making it one of the most strategically vital shipping lanes on the planet.

1600 GMT on Monday, Kpler data showed. A second ship, the Comoros-flagged tanker Elpis, was near Larak Island around 1100 GMT and cleared the strait about 1600 GMT.

It was loaded with 31,000 tonnes of methanol, having left the Iranian port of Bushehr on March 31, Kpler data showed.

US Central Command had said the blockade would target "vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas". A Chinese tanker, the Rich Starry, also crossed the

strait overnight from Monday to Tuesday via the Iranian-approved vetting route south of Larak Island.

Kpler said that vessel was carrying 31,500 tonnes of methanol and was bound for Sohar in Oman, according to data from its transponder.

Media including leading shipping journal Lloyd's List interpreted the Chinese ship's passage as a "test" of US President Donald Trump's blockade.

**Sanctioned ships**

The Rich Starry is listed by the United States' Office of Foreign Assets Control as being sanctioned for its ties to Iran.

The Elpis is also under US sanctions for ties to Iran, but the Christianna is not.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun on Tuesday called the US move "dangerous and irresponsible".

A fourth vessel, the Madagascar-flagged tanker Murlikishan, meanwhile crossed the strait westward into the Gulf on Tuesday morning through the Larak

1755

Samuel Johnson's "A Dictionary of the English Language" is published in London

1861

Federal army of 75,000 volunteers is mobilized by President Abraham Lincoln at the start of the American Civil War



1877

World's first home telephone is installed in Somerville, Massachusetts at the house of Charles Williams Jr.

1912

RMS Titanic sinks at 2:20 AM off Newfoundland as the band plays on, with the loss of between 1,490 and 1,635 lives



Displaced Palestinians carry boxes in a cart past the rubble of destroyed buildings at the Jabalia refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. Since the terms of a US-brokered ceasefire deal came into effect on October 10, Israel remains in control of nearly half of the Gaza Strip, including all its border areas. Nearly two million people in Gaza are living in makeshift shelters, and the humanitarian situation remains dire, according to aid agencies.

Washington and Tehran held historic face-to-face talks in Islamabad over the weekend, but failed to reach an agreement on ending the war.

# Pakistan working to set new round of talks

AFP | Islamabad, Pakistan

Pakistan was working to bring Iran and the United States together for a second round of talks, senior Pakistani sources said yesterday, with one noting efforts to secure an extended ceasefire to allow for diplomacy. "Efforts are underway to bring both parties back to the table, of course we want them back in Islamabad, but the venue is not final yet," said the source, who requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject matter.

"The meeting could take place soon though dates have yet to be

## Hormuz meeting Friday

France and Britain will co-host a video conference Friday of more than 40 countries ready to contribute to a "purely defensive mission" to secure the Strait of Hormuz,

officials said. France's Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer will co-chair the meeting to discuss a plan to "restore freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz

when security conditions allow", the French presidency said. The plan would be put in place "once the conflict ends", a spokesman for Starmer's office said.

### US VP says ball now in Iran's court on peace talks

confirmed," the source said. The source added: "We are also working to get the ceasefire extended beyond the current

deadline to allow for additional time."

#### Trump signals possible talks

US President Donald Trump told the New York Post yesterday that a second round of Iran talks could happen in Pakistan

"over the next two days," after a first round ended at the weekend without a deal.

"You should stay there, really, because something could be happening over the next two days, and we're more inclined to go there," Trump was quoted as saying in a phone interview with a Post reporter in Islamabad.

After saying in an initial call that talks were unlikely to return to Pakistan, the Post said Trump called back minutes later to say it was "more likely" they would go back to Islamabad because the country's army chief Asim Munir "is doing a great job."

## 17 nations urge Israel, Lebanon to seize talks 'opportunity'

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Foreign ministers from 17 countries, including the UK, yesterday urged Israel and Lebanon to "seize this opportunity" in a statement ahead of US-mediated talks between the two nations in Washington.

Britain's foreign ministry posted the ministers' joint statement saying "direct ne-

gotiations can pave the way to bring lasting security for Lebanon and Israel as well as the region".

The statement called "upon all parties to urgently deescalate and seize the opportunity offered by the ceasefire between the United States and Iran".

It was signed by ministers from Britain and Australia and European countries such as

France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain, but not Germany, Austria, Hungary or Italy.

Israel and Lebanon were set to hold the first direct talks in decades between the warring neighbours, mediated by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Since then Israeli strikes -- including an extremely heavy attack on Beirut on April 8 -- have killed more than 2,000



Lebanese President Joseph Aoun

people and displaced more than one million.

The statement said that signatories "condemn in the strongest terms" both attacks by Hezbollah on Israel and "massive Israeli strikes on Lebanon".

The countries said they welcomed the initiative by Lebanese President Joseph Aoun to open direct talks and were "ready to support" discussions.



TOP  
2  
TWEETS

01



After weeks of destruction & distress, it is clear that there is no military solution to the current conflict in the Middle East.

I call for resumption of talks for an agreement to be reached.

The ceasefire must absolutely be preserved. All violations must cease.

All parties to the conflict must respect the freedom of navigation, including in the Strait of Hormuz, in line with international law.

@antonioguterres

02



Yesterday, I spoke with Iranian President Massoud Pezeshkian, as well as with U.S. President Donald Trump.

I urged the resumption of the negotiations suspended in Islamabad, the clearing up of misunderstandings, and the avoidance of any further escalation.

It is essential, in particular, that the ceasefire be strictly respected by all parties and that it include Lebanon.

It is equally important that the Strait of Hormuz be reopened unconditionally, without restrictions or tolls, as soon as possible.

Under these conditions, negotiations should be able to resume quickly, with the support of the key parties concerned.

France and the United Kingdom will also host a conference in Paris this Friday, bringing together by videoconference non-belligerent countries ready to contribute, alongside us, to a multilateral and purely defensive mission aimed at restoring freedom of navigation in the strait when security conditions allow.

@EmmanuelMacron

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

# IMF cuts 2026 global growth forecast on Mideast war

The war has taken a bigger toll on the Middle East, warns IMF

● IMF expects higher inflation this year at 4.4%

● Higher energy and fertilizer costs could bring steeper food prices

● Saudi Arabia is set to see 3.1% growth this year

● IMF cuts eurozone growth forecast to 1.1%, warns of strong euro

● China's growth is anticipated to cool to 4.4%

AFP | Washington, United States

The IMF cut its 2026 global growth projection yesterday, warning that the world economy could be “thrown off course” by war in the Middle East -- as the conflict roils commodity markets and sparks higher prices.

The global economy is set to grow by 3.1% this year, said the International Monetary Fund in its World Economic Outlook report, released during its spring meetings in Washington.

This is down from 3.3% forecast in January before hostilities erupted February 28 with US-Israeli strikes against Iran that prompted Tehran's retaliation and sparked a broader conflict in the region.

“We were planning to upgrade growth for 2026 to 3.4%” if not for the war, IMF chief economist Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas told AFP.

## Global growth and inflation outlook (%)

Region / Country	2026 Forecast (%)	2027 Forecast (%)
World	3.1 (-0.2)	3.2 (0.0)
Advanced economies	1.8 (0.0)	1.7 (0.0)
United States	2.3 (-0.1)	2.1 (+0.1)
Euro area	1.1 (-0.2)	1.2 (-0.2)
Germany	0.8 (-0.3)	1.2 (-0.3)
France	0.9 (-0.1)	0.9 (-0.3)
Italy	0.5 (-0.2)	0.5 (-0.2)
Spain	2.1 (-0.2)	1.8 (-0.1)
Japan	0.7 (0.0)	0.6 (0.0)
Britain	0.8 (-0.5)	1.3 (-0.2)
Canada	1.5 (-0.1)	1.9 (0.0)
Emerging & developing economies	3.9 (-0.3)	4.2 (+0.1)
China	4.4 (-0.1)	4.0 (0.0)
India	6.5 (+0.1)	6.5 (+0.1)
Russia	1.1 (+0.3)	1.1 (+0.1)
Latin America & Caribbean	2.3 (+0.1)	2.7 (0.0)
Brazil	1.9 (+0.3)	2.0 (-0.3)
Mexico	1.6 (+0.1)	2.2 (+0.1)
Middle East & Central Asia	1.9 (-2.0)	4.6 (+0.6)
Sub-Saharan Africa	4.3 (-0.3)	4.4 (-0.2)
South Africa	1.0 (-0.4)	1.3 (-0.2)
Global inflation rate	4.4 (+0.6)	3.7 (+0.3)

# 1.9%

Growth projections this year for the Middle East and central Asia were cut by around half to 1.9%.

# 3.1%

The global economy is set to grow by 3.1% this year

Prices of oil, gas and fertilizers have surged, as Iran virtually blocked traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping waterway. US President Donald Trump has also ordered a naval blockade around Iran's ports. The IMF expects higher infla-

tion this year at 4.4%, 0.6 percentage points above its January forecast.

Still the impact of oil shortages could be worse.

Compared to the oil shocks of the 1970s, “the global economy is much less oil dependent now



Pierre-Olivier Gourinchas (R), Director of IMF Research Department, and Petya Koeva Brooks (C), Deputy Director of IMF Research Department, depart after speaking at an economic outlook briefing during the 2026 IMF and World Bank Group Spring Meetings in Washington, DC.

than it was back then,” Gourinchas said at a Tuesday press conference.

“There are many other sources of energy, renewables, nuclear and other things, and also the global economy has become much more efficient in terms of how much it needs oil to produce GDP,” he said. “That’s a source of resilience.”

After this the “disinflation path” of recent years should reassert itself, Gourinchas said.

But these projections assume a relatively short-lived conflict with temporary energy market disruptions.

In more adverse scenarios where energy prices remain steep, global growth could slow to 2.5% or even around 2.0%.

“This latest shock comes less than a year since the shift in US trade policies, and the transition to a new international trade system is still ongoing,” the IMF said.

A year ago, Trump unleashed sweeping tariffs on US trading partners, rocking financial markets and snarling supply chains.

Some of the tariffs have been struck down by the Supreme Court, but uncertainty lingers as Trump moves to reimpose duties via other means.

## Uneven impact

Although overall revisions to global growth and inflation appear modest, the IMF cautioned that the war has taken a bigger toll on the Middle East and “vulnerable economies” elsewhere.

“The impact on emerging market and developing economies would be almost twice that on advanced economies,” the fund said.

Higher energy and fertilizer costs could bring steeper food prices, mainly hitting low-income energy importers, Gourinchas said.

Growth projections this year

for the Middle East and central Asia were cut by around half to 1.9%.

Saudi Arabia, the Middle East's biggest economy, is set to see 3.1% growth this year, down 1.4 percentage points from January's expectation.

Among the world's two biggest economies, US growth is still set to accelerate to 2.3% this year, although the pace of growth was revised slightly lower.

“The US at the margin is benefiting from higher energy prices,” Gourinchas said. But gasoline prices have also jumped for consumers.

China's growth is anticipated to cool to 4.4%, a touch below the January forecast, too.

The IMF flagged an underlying “unevenness” in both economies.

Domestic activity lags behind exports in China, while a strong showing in the United States has been accompanied by low employment growth.

Euro area growth was revised 0.2 points down to 1.1% for 2026.

While the IMF does not expect inflation expectations to go off-track, there is concern they may not be as well-anchored as before.

Past inflation episodes remain fresh in the public's minds, and firms might act to restore margins more quickly than before.

“If that happens, then you can get much more persistent inflation going on, that would be reflected in higher inflation expectations,” Gourinchas said.

Central banks might then need to step in and raise interest rates to cool the economy, despite ongoing negative supply shocks.

## Boiler blast at Indian power plant kills 9: govt officials

AFP | Raipur, India

An explosion at a power plant in central India yesterday killed at least nine people and injured 15 others, officials said.

The blast occurred at a plant operated by Vedanta Limited, a subsidiary of London-listed Vedanta Resources, in Chhattisgarh, state industry minister Laxman Lal Dewangan told reporters.

“Twenty-four workers were seriously affected when a boiler exploded” at the plant in Sakti district, Dewangan said, with nine killed.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said an “impartial investigation” would be conducted.

“Strictest possible action will be taken against all those found responsible,” he said in a statement.

Vedanta, controlled by India-born billionaire Anil Agarwal, did not comment immediately about the blast.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi described the Chhattisgarh blast as “tragic”.

## Xi calls for closer ties with Spain in face of global ‘chaos’

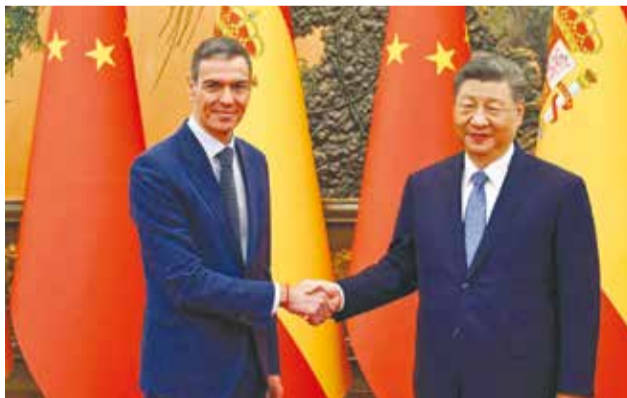
AFP | Beijing, China

China's President Xi Jinping warned against a return to the “law of the jungle” in international relations and called for closer economic ties with Spain as he met Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez on Tuesday, Chinese state media said.

The meeting in Beijing came on the second day of Sanchez's visit as he seeks to position Spain as a bridge between China and the European Union, whose relations with the United States are under strain.

Xi told Sanchez the two countries should strengthen cooperation in the face of global “chaos and turmoil” and “a contest between justice and force”, according to a readout of the talks from state broadcaster CCTV.

“Both China and Spain are principled countries



China's President Xi Jinping (R) shakes hands with Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez in Beijing

that stand for justice. They should strengthen communication, consolidate mutual trust, and cooperate closely to oppose the world's regression to the law of the jungle,” Xi said during talks in the Great Hall of the People.

“How a country treats international law and the international order reflects its worldview, its conception of order, its values, and its sense

of responsibility,” Xi said.

Spain and China should “seize opportunities” for cooperation in trade, new energy and technology fields, he said.

Sanchez welcomed China's role in seeking to resolve the conflict in the Middle East, after a first round of US-Iranian negotiations in Pakistan ended without an agreement.

## About 250 people feared missing after boat capsizes in Andaman Sea: UN

AFP | Dhaka, Bangladesh

About 250 people, including children, were feared missing after a boat carrying Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals capsized in the Andaman Sea, the United Nations said yesterday.

“The trawler, which departed from Teknaf in southern Bangladesh and was on its way to Malaysia, reportedly sank due to heavy winds, rough seas, and overcrowding,” the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a statement.

Thousands of Rohingya, Myanmar's persecuted Muslim minority, risk their lives every year fleeing repression and civil war in their country. They travel by sea, often aboard makeshift boats.

The Rohingya on board this latest boat were likely leaving huge camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, where more than a million refugees forced to flee Myanmar's western state

of Rakhine live in squalid conditions.

Rakhine state has been the scene of fierce fighting between the military and the Arakan Army, an ethnic minority rebel group, over control of the territory.

The exact circumstances surrounding the latest incident were unclear, but preliminary information indicated that the vessel was carrying some 280 people and left Bangladesh on April 4.

The Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) said one of its ships, which was on the way to Indonesia, managed to rescue nine people from the sea, including one woman, on April 9.

“The Bangladeshi flag carrier M.T. Meghna Pride... spotted several people floating in the sea using drums and logs and rescued them from deep waters near the Andaman Islands,” BCG spokesman Lieutenant Commander Sabbir Alam Sujon told AFP.

# Harvey Weinstein rape retrial begins in New York

Weinstein is accused of the third-degree rape of Jessica Mann

● Weinstein has hired a new legal team

● He has claimed to be under threat at the notorious Rikers Island jail complex

AFP | New York, United States

The retrial of disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein on a rape charge on which a jury was previously deadlocked started yesterday, although he will remain imprisoned for other offenses regardless of the verdict.

Weinstein is accused of the third-degree rape of Jessica Mann, who starred in the 2015 romantic comedy "This Isn't Funny."

The judge declared a mistrial last June after the jury foreperson refused to return to deliberate the case amid a jury-room



Former Hollywood film producer Harvey Weinstein appears in Manhattan Supreme Court during his retrial in New York City

feud.

Weinstein is being retried on that count in the Manhattan court, and the process of jury selection began Tuesday after a number of rulings by judge Curtis Farber, who said the defense had sought to delay the trial.

Jury selection to pick 12 jurors could last several days.

Weinstein's spokesman Juda Engelmayer told AFP ahead of Tuesday's hearing: "He is hopeful and expects a fair process where the facts will vindicate him."

Weinstein, 74, and wheelchair-bound by ill-health, is already serving a 16-year prison term in a California case for the rape of a European actress more than a decade ago. He is appealing that conviction with a hearing scheduled for April 23.

He appeared gaunt as he was wheeled in Tuesday. He wore a gray-textured tie and dark suit, and a court officer unshackled

him before potential jurors entered court.

Weinstein spoke in a slow, deep voice to confirm he agreed to a legal technicality.

The Oscar-winning Weinstein has faced a litany of prosecutions since sexual assault allegations against him exploded into public in 2017 -- helping to spur the "MeToo" movement.

The jury in June's proceedings convicted Weinstein of sexual assault against movie producer Miriam Haley. He is appealing that conviction. He was acquitted of sexual assault against Polish-born actress, Kaja Sokola.

Farber said Weinstein could not be cross-examined on the convictions that are being appealed.

Haley testified in Weinstein's original 2020 conviction, which resulted in a 23-year prison term, which was thrown out

in 2024 after an appeals court found irregularities in the way witnesses were presented.

"Threatened and derided"

Weinstein has hired a new legal team, including Jacob Kaplan as well as Marc Agnifilo who represents high profile figures including rapper Sean "Diddy" Combs.

Weinstein has claimed to be under threat at the notorious Rikers Island jail complex in the Bronx where he is being held, leaving him mostly in solitary confinement.

"I'm constantly threatened and derided. I wouldn't last long out there," he told the Hollywood Reporter at the start of the year.

He claimed to have been punched "hard in the face" while waiting to make a telephone call in the prison.

"I fell on the floor, bleeding everywhere. I was hurt really badly," he told the Reporter.

## US extends exemption of sanctions on Russia's Lukoil

AFP | New York, United States

US officials announced yesterday an extension of sanctions relief on Russian oil giant Lukoil for fuel stations outside Russia as the Trump administration seeks to mitigate spikes in crude prices.

The action by the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC) means Lukoil-branded stations in countries like the United States can continue to serve customers through October 29.

The measure allows the gas-

oline stations to conduct transactions "in the ordinary course of business" such as procuring motor supplies, making insurance payments and processing employee payroll, OFAC said.

Oil prices have surged since US and Israeli forces struck Iran on February 28, kicking off a Middle East war that has seen Iran launch reprisal attacks on several countries in the region. The license represents an effort to "mitigate the effects of Lukoil's OFAC designation on retail consumers," the agency said.

## Modi, Trump discuss Middle East tensions, stress Hormuz security



TDT | agencies

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump held a 40-minute phone call focusing on rising tensions in the Middle East and ways to deepen bilateral cooperation, in their first conversation since Washington and Tehran reached a ceasefire.

Both leaders underscored the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure, given its critical role in global energy supplies.

In a post following the call, Modi said the two sides reviewed "substantial progress" in India-US ties and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership across sectors.

"We also discussed the situ-

ation in West Asia and stressed the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure," he said.

US envoy to India Sergio Gor described the conversation as "very positive and productive," noting that President Trump regularly keeps Modi informed on key developments.

"They just got off the phone a few minutes ago. The president shared updates on the Middle East and major developments in Washington concerning US-India relations," Gor said.

He added that Washington would welcome a potential role for New Delhi in ongoing peace efforts.

Gor also revealed a personal note from the call, quoting Trump as telling Modi: "I just want you to know we all love you."

## Musk's father seeking Russian refuge for S.African farmers

● Nearly 5,000 white Afrikaners have entered the United States as refugees since Trump took office in January

● Musk, who regularly visits Russia and attended an April 12 Orthodox Easter mass in Moscow in the presence of President Vladimir Putin, did not give details of the project.

AFP | Johannesburg, South Africa

The father of tech billionaire Elon Musk is working on a project to provide refugee status in Russia for South African farmers, he told yesterday, in a project similar to one by the US government.

The initiative would resettle 50 families from the white Afrikaners minority, descendants of the first Dutch settlers, according to a Russian official.



Elon Musk, Errol Musk

The same group of South Africans have been offered refugee status by the government of US President Donald Trump, which has falsely claimed they face persecution under the post-apartheid government.

Nearly 5,000 white Afrikaners have entered the United States as refugees since Trump took office in January last year and all but halted refugee programmes for every other group.

The US programme has angered the South African gov-

ernment which denies any discrimination.

Contacted by AFP by telephone on Tuesday, Errol Musk told AFP from Moscow: "It's about providing refugee status to South African farmers."

50 families

Musk, who regularly visits Russia and attended an April 12 Orthodox Easter mass in Moscow in the presence of President Vladimir Putin, did not give details of the project.

In an interview with Russian media Gubernia 33, he justified the project by claiming white Afrikaner farmers were being targeted for murder, allegations strongly denied in South Africa.

Washington made similar claims in its justification for encouraging Afrikaners to resettle in the United States.

The governor of the Vladimir region which borders the Moscow region, Aleksandr Avdeyev, said last week that he had discussed the project with Musk.

"We discussed the development of agriculture and the prospects for settling 50 Dutch-origin families from South Africa," he said on Telegram.

While Afrikaners have been emigrating to Russia since at least 2018, according to reports, Musk's involvement appears to be new information.

Now in his late 70s, he is a polarising figure.

In an interview with CNN late last year, he rejected there had been racial oppression under apartheid, a harsh system of segregation which denied the black majority basic rights.

Elon Musk, who left South

Africa in his late teens, regularly accuses the government of racism, particularly over its failure to grant his Starlink internet provider a licence.

In a new outburst on social media this weekend, he said: "South Africa won't allow Starlink to be licensed, even though I was BORN THERE, simply because I am not Black!"

South African laws designed to rebalance apartheid-era discrimination require large companies to be at least 30-percent owned by people from previously disadvantaged communities.

Elon Musk was peddling "lies and disinformation", President Cyril Ramaphosa's spokesman responded on X.

Puzzling

Errol Musk's Russia project was "puzzling", said Friedrich von Treskow, a former researcher at the South African Institute of International Affairs, who has worked on Russian influence in southern Africa.

Pretoria and Moscow have close ties that date back to the struggle against apartheid, when the Soviet Union provided sup-

port to the African National Congress and its military wing.

"It could create tensions with Pretoria," von Treskow told AFP of Musk senior's scheme.

"Pretoria has been very reluctant to criticise Russia on any issue whatsoever."

Ramaphosa in February expressed "heartfelt gratitude" to Putin for agreeing to facilitate the return of more than a dozen men lured into fighting alongside Russian forces in Ukraine.

Fifteen of them have since returned.

Last month, the Forbidden Stories investigative media outlet reported that ANC secretary-general Fikile Mbalula had in December 2024 thanked Russian influence agents for their "assistance" before the general election earlier that year.

He also "requested" a secret meeting \$300,000 to fund an ANC party congress.

Mbalula, among the men tipped to replace Ramaphosa as head of the party, which could put him in the running for president, rejected the claims as "unfounded" and "part of a disinformation campaign."

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# Four-point plan for peace

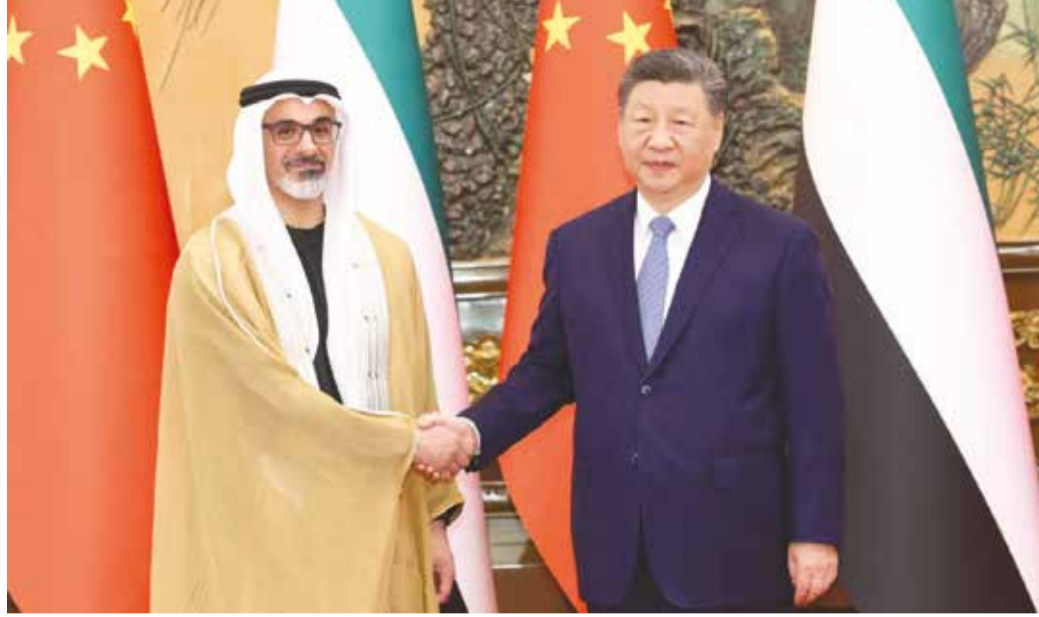
UAE-China strategic partnership grows

Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks in Beijing with Sheikh Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, to strengthen bilateral ties and discuss regional stability in the Middle East and Gulf.

Xi described the United Arab Emirates as a key comprehensive strategic partner of China, stressing that relations between the two countries have continued to develop steadily with deepening political trust, expanding cooperation, and growing people-to-people exchanges.

He said both sides should further align development strategies and expand cooperation in areas including energy, investment, trade, science and technology. They should also advance ties in education, aviation, tourism, and cultural exchange to strengthen public support for the relationship.

Xi also called for closer coordination between China and the UAE in multilateral platforms such as the United Nations and BRICS, saying stronger bilateral ties can help both countries respond to global uncertainties and promote a shared future for humanity.



During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on regional developments in the Middle East and Gulf. Xi reiterated China's position favoring dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes, stating that Beijing will continue to play a constructive role.

Sheikh Khaled, for his part, said the UAE values its relationship with China and is committed to implementing the consensus reached by both leaders, expanding cooperation

across sectors, and further deepening bilateral ties.

He also praised China's constructive role in international affairs, particularly its efforts to support political solutions to regional crises, and expressed the UAE's readiness to maintain close coordination with Beijing to help restore peace and stability in the region and safeguard global energy and shipping security.

## Xi's Four-Point Middle East Peace Proposal

- Promotes peaceful coexistence and a cooperative regional security framework
- Calls for respect of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, including protection of personnel and institutions
- Stresses adherence to international law and the UN-centred global order
- Emphasises coordination between development and security to ensure long-term regional stability

# Over one million people displaced in Lebanon



Lebanon's President Joseph Aoun told the UN High Commissioner

for Refugees and former Iraqi President Barham Salih that Israeli attacks on Lebanon have triggered a major humanitarian crisis, forcing over one million people to flee their homes in targeted areas. He warned that Lebanon urgently needs international assistance, stressing that the impact of displacement will remain severe even after a ceasefire is reached.

Speaking from the Presidential Palace in Baabda, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees of the UNHCR said he visited Lebanon to express solidarity with the Lebanese people and government during this difficult period. He noted that he had seen firsthand the scale of destruction in Beirut

and the suffering of civilians amid widespread displacement.

He confirmed that discussions with President Joseph Aoun focused on strengthening international support and reinforcing cooperation between UNHCR and Lebanese authorities to assist displaced families.

The UN official also emphasized the need to mobilize greater international funding to meet rising humanitarian needs. While stressing that aid is essential, he said the only lasting solution is an end to the conflict and the establishment of sustainable peace.

UNHCR said it is actively working with Lebanese authorities and international partners to deliver humanitarian assistance to displaced communities across the country.

## Security in the Strait of Hormuz must not be threatened

Qatar stated that no party must threaten the security of the Strait of Hormuz must not be threatened by any party, stressing that the vital waterway must remain open and stable without conditions.

Speaking at a media briefing, Qatar's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Majed Al Ansari said the strait's security is a shared regional responsibility that cannot be compromised.

He added that any resolution to tensions affecting the Strait of Hormuz must involve regional countries, particularly coastal states and nations dependent on



the passage for trade and energy flows.

Al Ansari noted that it is "still too early" to focus on a final solution regarding the situation, saying current efforts should instead prioritise stopping on-

going hostilities and reducing escalation.

He also confirmed that intensive regional diplomatic contacts are currently underway to support mediation efforts and promote de-escalation in the region.

## Jordan and UAE Call for International Action on Attacks



Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Safadi met with UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi.

The talks focused on the latest escalation in the region, particularly Iranian attacks targeting Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, and other friendly and allied countries. The ministers warned that such actions pose serious risks to regional and international security, threaten maritime safety and global energy supplies, and could further destabilise the global economy.

Both ministers strongly condemned the attacks, calling them a clear violation of national sovereignty, international law, and the United Nations

Charter.

Safadi reaffirmed Jordan's full solidarity with the UAE and its support for all measures taken to protect its sovereignty, security, and the safety of its citizens and residents. In return, the UAE reiterated its full support for Jordan against any attacks targeting its security.

The two ministers also reviewed developments following the Islamabad meeting and the announcement of a ceasefire between the United States and Iran. They stressed the importance of enhancing collective international efforts to establish lasting peace and security in the region, while addressing long-standing sources of tension and supporting economic development and prosperity.

In addition, they discussed the situation in Gaza, empha-

sizing the need to implement all components of former U.S. President Donald Trump's Gaza plan, strengthen humanitarian response efforts, and ensure urgent delivery of aid to the enclave. They also called for an end to escalating tensions in the occupied West Bank and a halt to illegal Israeli measures undermining the two-state solution.

Both sides highlighted the deep-rooted historical ties between Jordan and the UAE and expressed their commitment to further strengthening cooperation across various sectors in line with shared development goals and mutual interests.

The meeting concluded with an agreement to continue close coordination and consultation on regional security challenges and efforts to promote stability

## Saudi Arabia rolls out new Financial Control Law

Saudi Arabia has officially implemented a new Financial Control Law aimed at strengthening oversight of public sector finances and improving accountability across government institutions, in line with Vision 2030 goals.

The legislation replaces the previous Financial Representatives Law and introduces a more comprehensive framework to enhance efficiency in the management and monitoring of public funds.

### Broader coverage

The updated law extends to all entities financed through the Saudi state budget, as well as organisations receiving government support, subsidies, or grants. It also includes bodies



involved in procurement or project execution on behalf of government agencies.

This expanded scope brings a wide range of financial activities under a unified oversight system, covering both direct government spending and outsourced operations tied to public funds.

### Digital and layered system

The framework introduces multiple monitoring methods depending on the nature and size of each entity. These include direct supervision, internal self-audit mechanisms, digital monitoring tools, and periodic reporting reviews.

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## Rice misses training ahead quarter-final



Declan rice in action during the 1st leg TDT | Manama

Arsenal have been handed a late fitness concern ahead of their Champions League quarter-final second leg against Sporting CP tonight, with Declan Rice absent from yesterday's open training session at London Colney. Rice recently withdrew from England duty against Japan. He returned for Arsenal's first-leg win in Lisbon last week and also captained the side in their 2-1 Premier League defeat to Bournemouth at the weekend. This time, however, he did not take part in group training on the eve of the decisive fixture at the Emirates Stadium. Arsenal could also be without Bukayo Saka, Martin Odegaard, Jurrien Timber and Riccardo Calafiori, who were all missing from the session. Saka has now missed the last three matches. Odegaard has also struggled for consistency this season due to ongoing injury issues. Timber has not featured since the win over Everton last month. Despite those concerns, Mikel Arteta's side still carry a one-goal advantage from the first leg as they target a place in the Champions League semi-finals. They also head into the game looking to respond to their weekend defeat, which allowed Manchester City to close the gap in the Premier League title race to six points ahead of Sunday's trip to the Etihad.

## Carrick labels Martinez red card as 'worst decision' ever after United Fall To Leeds



Referee Paul Tierney speaks with Manchester United defender Lisandro Martinez (C)

AFP | London

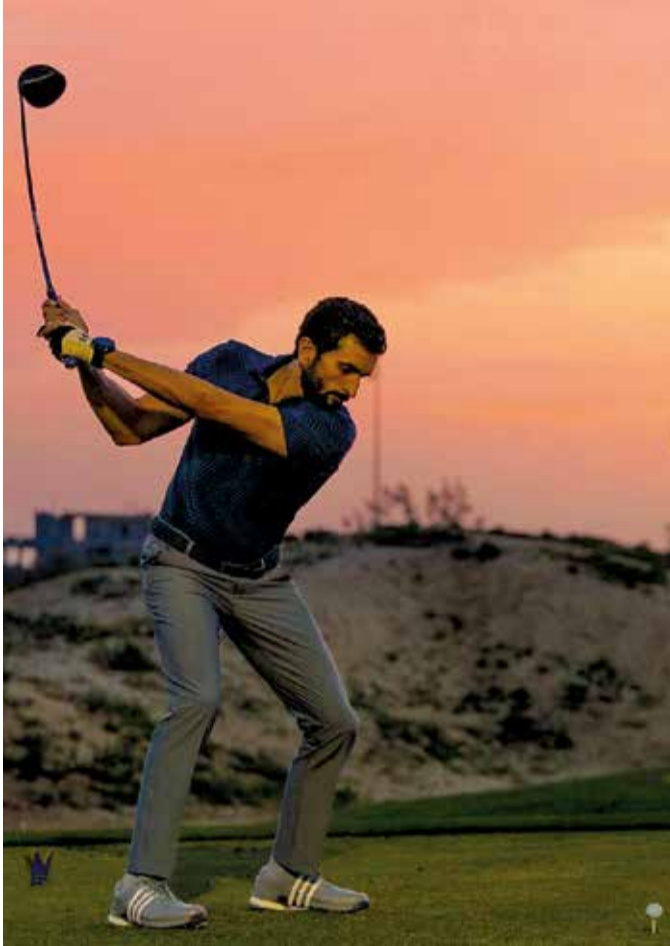
Manchester United interim boss Michael Carrick blasted referee Paul Tierney for sending off Lisandro Martinez in Monday's 2-1 defeat against Leeds. Martinez was dismissed in the second-half at Old Trafford after the United defender pulled the hair of Leeds striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin. Tierney showed the Argentine a red card after VAR officials told him to consult the pitch-side monitor. United were trailing to Noah Okafor's first-half double when Martinez was dismissed. And although Casemiro got one back for Carrick's side, they were unable to avoid the second defeat of his 11-match reign. "I thought the boys, the way they went about it, they stayed positive and fought to get something out of it after another shocking decision to send off Lisandro," Carrick said. "Two games in a row we've had decisions like that go against us but this one was one

**"I don't even know what it looks like. It's not a pull, it's not a tug, it's not aggressive. He touches it and he gets sent off. Worst of all, he gets sent to overturn it, a clear and obvious error. Shocking"**

LISANDRO MARTINEZ

of the worst I've seen." Claiming Calvert-Lewin's initial contact with Martinez had played a role in the centre-back's reaction, Carrick said: "You can throw your arm in Martinez's face and then as he's off balance because of that, he's half grappling, he half touches the back of his hair which pulls the bobble to come out. "I don't even know what it looks like. It's not a pull, it's not a tug, it's not aggressive. He touches it and he gets sent off. "Worst of all, he gets sent to overturn it, a clear and obvious error. Shocking."

## HH Shaikh Nasser tees off at Royal Golf Club opener



His Highness Shaikh Nasser plays shot at golf championship

TDT | Manama

HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa joined competitors at the opening round of the fifth Late Shaikh Abdullah bin Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa Golf Championship at the Royal Golf Club.

The tournament opened in a competitive nine-hole format.

Now in its fifth edition, the event honours the legacy of the late Shaikh Abdullah bin Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa. It recognises his contribution to the development of sport in Bahrain, particularly golf.

Shaikh Nasser's participation added a symbolic presence to the opening round. It also reflected his continued

engagement with the sport and his support for competitive golf in the Kingdom.

Speaking during the event, he highlighted the commemorative significance of the championship. He said it stands as a tribute to the late Shaikh Abdullah's role in strengthening Bahrain's sporting landscape and supporting the growth of golf.

He praised the organisers for a well-run opening round. He said the conditions and atmosphere helped set a strong tone for the competition.

With the opening round complete, attention now turns to next week's final stage. Competition is expected to intensify as players compete for top positions.

# Future Stars Finale



TDT | Manama

Excitement and live spectators will return to the Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club as the 28th race meeting of the 2025-2026 season takes place on Friday, April 17. The event will feature the

Cup of Al Qasr Projects Company along with several club cups at the Al Raffa racecourse.

The meeting will also host the third and final round of the "Future Stars" Championship for Bahrain-bred horses, sponsored by Bank of Singapore Gulf.

The final two races of the series

### Race card highlights

Race 1: Arabian Purebred Horses, 1000m (8 horses)
Race 2: Handicap (Bahrain-bred), 1000m (13 horses)
Race 3: Al Qasr Projects Cup, Bahrain-bred, 1200m straight (8 horses)
Race 4: Rashid Equestrian Club Cup (Imported sprint), 1200m straight (14 horses)
Race 5: Future Stars Sprint Cup (sponsored by Bank of Singapore Gulf), 1000m (6 horses)
Race 6: Future Stars Champions Cup, 1600m (10 horses)
Race 7: Imported horses (Class 3 & 4 & maidens), 1400m (13 horses)
Race 8: Rashid Equestrian Club Cup (Imported handicap), 2200m (11 horses)
Race 9: Final handicap (Bahrain-bred), 2200m (12 horses)

will determine the champion of the championship's second edition.

The club welcomed the return of spectators to the stands, highlighting their key role in enhancing the racing season's success by creating a vibrant and competitive atmosphere that adds to the sport's excitement.

Racing fans can expect an action-packed evening featuring 95 horses competing across nine

competitions for the featured trophies and cups.

Tickets are available through the official website of the club, Bahrain Turf Club, or at the entrance gates on race days.

The Future Stars Championship reaches its decisive conclusion, promising a lively atmosphere and strong competition across all categories amid growing anticipation from racing fans.

## Iraola says now is 'right moment to step away' from Bournemouth

AFP | London

Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola said "this is the right moment for me to step away", as the Premier League club announced yesterday he would leave when his contract expires at the end of the season.

The Spaniard joined the south coast club in 2023 and led them to their equal highest top-flight finish of ninth last season, earning their largest points tally of 56, and reaching the FA Cup quarter-finals.

"It has been an honour to manage AFC Bournemouth and I am proud of what we have achieved together," said Iraola, who replaced Gary O'Neil as Bournemouth boss, in a club statement confirming his de-



Bournemouth manager Andoni Iraola reacts during a match (file photo)

parture.

"I'm thankful to the players and staff that I've worked with, as well as Bill (Bournemouth

chairman Bill Foley), who have all made my time here so special.

"As for the fans, you have con-

tinued to show your fantastic support to myself and the team, and for that I will always be grateful. I feel this is the right moment for me to step away, but I will always carry fantastic memories of this club."

Yesterday's announcement came just days after Iraola, who has six games left at Bournemouth this season, oversaw a superb 2-1 win away to Premier League leaders Arsenal last weekend.

Foley, in the same statement, said: "Andoni has been instrumental in shaping the direction of this football club over the past three seasons. He brought intensity, innovation, and a clear philosophy that elevated AFC Bournemouth both on and off the pitch.

# F1 reviews Gulf race schedule

TDT | Manama

Formula One's 2026 calendar has been thrown into turmoil after the cancellation of the Bahrain Grand Prix, scheduled for April 10 to 12, and the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, originally set for April 17 to 19. Both events were called off due to ongoing regional conflict, forcing the sport into a late re-think of how, or if, the Gulf will feature later in the season.

The immediate impact is significant. A five-week gap now separates the Japanese Grand Prix from Miami, while the overall schedule has been reduced from 24 races to 22. Formula One initially dismissed the idea of rescheduling, but discussions have now resumed, with Saudi Arabia emerging as the most realistic option for a late-season return.

Former driver and Abu Dhabi Grand Prix ambassador Robert



Action from the race at Jeddah Corniche Circuit (file photo)

Doornbos suggested December 6 as a possible date for a race at the Jeddah Corniche Circuit. That proposal would directly affect the closing stages of the season and could trigger a reshuffle of the final rounds.

The Abu Dhabi Grand Prix at Yas Marina Circuit is currently scheduled for December 4 to 6. To accommodate a revised Saudi round while keeping Abu Dhabi as the season finale, Formula One is considering moving it to December 13.

If approved, the final phase of the championship would become one of the most intense in recent memory. Las Vegas, Qatar, Jeddah and Abu Dhabi could run across four consecutive weekends.

The implications extend beyond the track. Abu Dhabi's Grand Prix is closely tied to tourism, hospitality and entertainment. Even a one-week delay would disrupt hotel bookings,

airline schedules and major event planning, highlighting how deeply Formula One is embedded in the city's wider economy.

Saudi Arabia's potential return also reflects its growing influence in global motorsport. Backed by long-term investment from Saudi Aramco, the country continues to position itself as a central player in Formula One's future.

While Bahrain has also been mentioned as a possible rescheduling option, its role within the sport remains secure. The Sakhir circuit is one of Formula One's most established venues and continues to serve as a cornerstone of the Gulf's presence on the calendar.

For now, uncertainty remains. As Formula One weighs its options, the shape of the 2026 season, particularly its closing weeks, is still very much in flux.

# BFA confirms King's Cup final

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Football Association (BFA) confirmed that the King's Cup final will take place on April 24 at 5:20 PM at the Bahrain National Stadium, with Riffa facing Muharraq in the 49th edition of the competition.

The final adds another chapter to a rapidly intensifying rivalry between Bahrain's two most successful clubs. Riffa already holds a psychological edge this season, having defeated Muharraq in the Khalid bin Hamad Cup final in February. Their league meetings have also been tightly contested, finishing level in two 1-1 draws, and highlighting how evenly matched the sides have been across all competitions.

Historically, the two clubs are also separated by fine margins



Riffa players celebrate during last month's league draw against Muharraq

in domestic cup success. Riffa are chasing an eighth King's Cup title, while Muharraq remains the competition's most successful club with 9 titles.

Al Ahli also holds 9, underlining the significance of silverware in Bahrain's elite football hierarchy.

Both teams reached the King's



The King's Cup on display, inscribed in Arabic as "the most prized of cups"

Cup final through dramatic semi-final ties involving late twists and VAR controversy.

Riffa secured their place after a 3-3 draw with ex-holders Al

Khaldiya, eventually winning 4-3 on penalties. After falling behind early, they responded through Bader Al Asam and later took the lead via Rodrigo Yuri's

penalty. Despite twice conceding equalisers, including a late spot kick that forced extra time, Riffa held their nerve in the shootout to progress.

Muharraq also endured a tense route to the final, beating Al Ahli 2-1 in a heated "Clásico" despite playing more than 50 minutes with 10 men. Arthur Rezende opened the scoring before being sent off for a high-boot challenge, but Soufiane Mahrouk doubled their lead soon after. Al Ahli pulled one back and pushed hard for an equaliser, but a stoppage-time penalty was overturned by VAR as Muharraq survived late pressure to seal their place in the final.

With both teams having navigated testing semi-finals and separated by fine margins across the season, attention now turns to a final between the Kingdom's most decorated clubs.

## Bauhaus leads Bahrain charge on Limburg

TDT | Manama

Phil Bauhaus leads Bahrain victorious at the Ronde van Limburg today, as the team targets a sprint finish in the 178km one-day race from Hasselt to Tongeren-Borgloon.

He is supported by Alberto Bruttomesso and Alessandro Borgo, while a young Development Team group also steps up to gain experience at World-Tour level.

Among them, Seth Dunwoody arrives in strong form after finishing second at Paris-Roubaix Espoirs. Meanwhile, Kasper Borremans and Mikita Babovich are expected to look for breakaway opportunities, with Leonardo Consolidani focusing on positioning Bauhaus for the finale.



Phil Bauhaus

The 178km route presents a varied challenge, combining climbs, cobbles and exposed sections across Limburg. Key difficulties include the Kolmontberg and Zammelenberg, which are expected to shape the decisive phases of the race. Speaking ahead of the start, sports director Enrico Gasparotto said the team is aiming to balance development opportunities for its younger riders with a strong sprint result for Bauhaus.

## FIBA 3x3 World Tour set for return to Bahrain

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Basketball Association has confirmed an agreement with the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) to host the FIBA 3x3 World Tour in the Kingdom for the fourth consecutive year. The event will take place on November 20-21.

The agreement continues Bahrain's recent run as a regular host on the international 3x3 calendar, following previous editions staged in Manama.

The event is being organised in coordination with the Bahrain Olympic Committee and the Ministry of Tourism as part of wider efforts to attract international sporting events and support tourism activity in the country.



Manama Finals at Bahrain Financial Harbour last November

Last year's edition in Manama drew around 7,500 spectators and was broadcast in more than 230 countries. It recorded over 3 million minutes of television viewing and 1.3 million

minutes on YouTube, with an estimated total economic and media impact of \$8.6 million, including \$2.6 million in direct and indirect economic activity.

3x3 basketball, which is now part of the Olympic programme, has been expanding globally in recent years, increasing its profile and commercial value for host nations.

# Manama Force Game 4 in League Finals

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

Manama kept their championship hopes alive with an 89-83 win over defending champions Muharraq in Game 3 of the Zain Bahrain Basketball League Finals at Khalifa Sports City Arena. Last night's result cuts the series to 2-1 and denies the Red Wolves an early title sweep. Game 4 is scheduled for Friday at 7pm at the same venue.

Muharraq, coached by Peter Schomers and chasing a domestic treble alongside a fifth league crown, started strongly and controlled stretches of the opening phase. They looked set to move within one win of the title but were unable to sustain their early momentum.

Manama found rhythm through Donovan Smith, who has impressed since joining after a strong semifinal series while playing for Al Najma. He

anchored the offense with consistent scoring through contact, while Ahmed Salman and Emran Hasan provided steady support.

The opening quarter was tight until Muharraq broke away with a 9-2 run, sparked by Bader Abdulla and Mahmood Abbas Isa from deep, with Wayne Chism controlling the paint. Manama responded quickly through Smith inside, supported by Ali Jaber and Mohamed Ghazi.

Momentum shifted late in the first half as Manama punished turnovers and pushed in transition. Jaber's defensive pressure and Ghazi's perimeter shooting helped disrupt Muharraq's rhythm.

The key stretch came between the second and third quarters, when Manama produced a 25-12 run to take control. Smith dominated inside and on the boards, drawing fouls and finishing efficiently, while Jaber fueled fast breaks and Ghazi hit crucial



Manama's Donovan Smith looks to beat compatriot Wayne Chism

**Manama defeat Muharraq 89-83 in Game 3 to cut Finals series to 2-1 and keep title hopes alive. Can Manama force a decider, or will Muharraq seal the title?**

three-pointers. Muharraq struggled to reorganize defensively.

Muharraq responded late in the third quarter through Chism inside and Abdulla's perimeter scoring, with Mahmood Abbas Isa adding range. Still, Manama carried a 71-59 lead into the fourth.

The final quarter turned tense as Muharraq mounted a 10-4 run behind Chism, Nick West's second-chance points,

and Abdulla's shooting. However, Salman Ramadhan's side closed it out strongly. Smith controlled the glass and free-throw line, Alex Young hit a key three-pointer, and Ali Jaber produced a decisive steal leading to a fast-break finish. Buallay stabilized late possessions as Manama held firm.

Smith finished with 29 points, 14 rebounds, and 3 blocks to earn Man of the Match honors. He was supported by Ahmed Salman (19), Mohamed Ghazi (10), Ali Jaber (9), and Emran Hasan (9). Muharraq were led by Bader Abdulla and Mahmood Abbas Isa with 16 each, Wayne Chism with 15, and Nick West with 10.

Manama's defensive intensity ultimately proved decisive as they forced Game 4 in pursuit of a record-extending 26th league title. History remains against them, as no team has ever overturned a 2-0 deficit in the league finals.