

Royal leadership congratulated

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, received cables of congratulations from members of the Royal Family and senior officials on the 24th anniversary of the adoption of the National Action Charter.

HM King greets Lithuania leader

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His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa sent a cable of congratulations to His Excellency Gitanas Naus da, President of the Republic of Lithuania, on the occasion of his country's Independence Day.

Cloudy skies and more rain ahead

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Scattered showers are expected to continue today and tomorrow, as forecasts indicate unsettled weather across Bahrain.

Today's outlook is for partly cloudy skies with the chance of occasional showers.

Winds will mostly blow from the north at 5 to 10 knots, picking up to 10 to 15 knots at times. Waves will range from 1 to 3 feet.

Temperatures will peak at 22°C, dropping to a low of 13°C overnight, while humidity levels could reach 90 per cent.

Chilly

Tomorrow is shaping up to be chilly with more scattered rain.

Winds will be inconsistent at first, shifting from 7 to 12 knots before settling into a northwesterly flow at 10 to 15 knots by evening.

The mercury will hit 21°C at its warmest, with a low of 13°C.

Humidity will top out at 85 per cent.

Looking ahead to Tuesday and Wednesday, 18 and 19 February, the cool spell is expected to continue across the Kingdom, with some cloud cover lingering.

Bahrain-Jordan growing ties



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa underscored the deep-rooted ties between Bahrain and Jordan and the strong historical relations between their leaderships and peoples. He noted the continuous progress in cooperation and coordination across various domains, benefiting both countries. HM the King was speaking as he received His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan bin Talal, President of the Arab Thought Forum (ATF), during his visit to Bahrain. His Majesty commended HRH Prince El Hassan's dedication to intellectual, cultural, and literary affairs, recognising his significant contributions in these fields.

New era of growth

Non-oil industries fuel 85% of Bahrain's economy as National Action Charter pays off

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's non-oil industries now drive 85 per cent of the economy, a sharp break from the days when oil ruled the roost.

The shift, years in the making, stems from a drive to broaden the country's income since the National Action Charter set the wheels in motion.

Finance and manufacturing are leading the charge, with government policies pushing their expansion.

Charter's launch

Since the charter's launch, Bahrain has steered itself away from oil dependence, spreading its bets across financial services, industry, and tourism.

The Kingdom has set its sights on building a sturdier economy by backing these key industries.

Bahrain has also made its mark as a financial hub in the Gulf, with banking — especially Islamic finance — at its core.

The country is home to a spread of financial institutions,



from traditional and Islamic banks to insurance firms.

Figures lay out the state of play.

The financial sector chips in 16.7 per cent of GDP, with 406 firms in operation.

Sectors

Manufacturing follows at 14.5 per cent, then transport and communications at 6.8 per cent, construction at 6.6 per cent, real estate at 4.1 per cent, and hotels and restaurants at 2.4 per cent.

Other service industries make up 18.7 per cent.

Oil, though still in the mix, now accounts for 20.8 per cent of GDP. Economic growth runs at an average of 5 per cent a year.

Non-oil industries

According to Sustainable Development Minister and Economic Development Board Chief Executive, Her Excellency Noor Al Khulaif, non-oil industries are now the backbone of Bahrain's economy.

Speaking during the Davos Forum, she pointed to manufacturing as the second-largest contributor outside oil, with aluminium playing a key role.

Data from Bahrain's Open Data Portal backs this up.

Manufacturing

In the first quarter of 2024, manufacturing made up 21.01 per cent of GDP, the second-highest contributor.

That dipped to 18.93 per cent in the second quarter before

climbing back to 20.08 per cent in the third.

The country's economic blueprint was set down in 2008 when His Majesty the King signed off on Economic Vision 2030.

It lays out a path for growth, with a sharp focus on lifting living standards.

Principles

At its core, the plan rests on three key principles: keeping government finances steady, making Bahrain more competitive on the world stage, and ensuring fairness across the board.

The first relies on sound spending and backing workers through training and skills development, especially in applied sciences.

Competitiveness hinges on making businesses more productive, cutting red tape, and giving the economy the push it needs to grow.

As for fairness, the plan calls for openness in both the public and private sectors, from hiring practices to land auctions and tendering deals.

MPs' open debate

Focus on Bahrain strategy for transit and tourism services

H Naser
TDT | Manama

MPs will hold an open debate on Tuesday to discuss whether Bahrain is doing enough to attract travelers and capitalise on its position as a regional stopover.

A formal request has been submitted to Council of Representatives Speaker Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam, focusing on the government's handling

of transit and tourism services.

The discussion will examine whether Bahrain International Airport is equipped to handle an increased number of transit passengers and what steps the Ministry of Tourism is taking to draw in more visitors.

Visa process

MPs will also explore ways to simplify the visa process for short-stay travelers, particularly through online systems.



MP Mamdooh Al Saleh

A significant part of the discussion will involve comparing Bahrain's tourism incentives with those of neighboring countries to assess its competitiveness in attracting travelers.

Additionally, the economic impact of expanding transit and tourism services will be on the agenda, particularly in terms of potential revenue growth.

Ideas

MPs are expected to propose

ideas to strengthen Bahrain's position in regional tourism and transit, making better use of its geographic advantages.

The role of Gulf Air will be scrutinised, with MPs seeking to determine whether Bahrain's flag carrier is effectively facilitating smoother travel experiences, from entry procedures to onward flights.

MP Al Saleh is anticipated to lead the MPs' case during the discussion.



Parking discount incentive joy for seniors, sickle cell patients at SMC

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Paid parking at Salmaniya Medical Complex (SMC) is here to stay, but plans are in place to introduce free spaces for staff, blood donors, and some medical cases, along with discounts for seniors, people with disabilities, and those with sickle cell disease.

In a written response to Parliament, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, His Excellency Ghanim Al Buainain, said the government had looked at the urgent proposal calling for free parking for Bahraini patients at Salmaniya and other hospitals and health centres.

While agreeing with its aims, he made it clear that charging a small fee had kept parking from being clogged up by those who did not need it, ensuring spaces remained open for actual patients.

“The government always works to make healthcare easier to reach while improving services to meet the public’s needs,” he said. “The current paid parking system at Salmaniya has helped keep spots available for those who really require them.”

Daily operations

To keep things running, authorities have brought in Bahrain Real Estate Investment Company (Edamah) to handle upkeep, upgrades, and daily operations at the parking facilities.

This, Al Buainain said, fits within a wider push to improve health services while keeping them competitive both locally and abroad.

As part of the next deal to run the car parks, the government will set aside free spaces for hospital workers, blood donors, and certain patients.

There will also be discounts for older people, those with disabilities, and people with sickle cell disease.

House Full

A Magical Night with Andre Rieu at Beyond Al Dana Amphitheater



Andre Rieu's spellbinding violin performance leaves the crowd completely mesmerised (Pictures by Ashen Tharaka)

Ashen Tharaka
TDT | Manama

The Beyond Al Dana Amphitheater was transformed into a mesmerizing spectacle as world-renowned violinist Andre Rieu and his Johann Strauss Orchestra brought an unforgettable night of music, dance, and emotion to Bahrain.

The much-anticipated event was a sold-out success, drawing music lovers from across the region, including Saudi Arabia.

In a special tribute to Valentine's Day, this year's concert featured an extraordinary addition — a breathtaking performance by 300 dancers from the Maastricht Dance Company.

Their elegant movements added a touch of romance and grandeur, making the evening even more magical.

Grand entrance

The show opened in true Andre Rieu fashion, with a grand entrance by the maestro himself, accompanied by his orchestra of more than 30 international soloists representing various countries.

From the very first note, the audience was captivated, swaying between moments of joy and deep emotion as the music dictated the mood.



A huge crowd are captivated by Andre Rieu's magical performance



Bahraini artist Faisal Al Ansari takes center stage, captivating the audience

Adding a local touch to the international spectacle, Bahraini artist Faisal Al Ansari took the stage for a special collaboration with Andre Rieu and his team.

Highlight

His performance resonated with the audience, making it a truly memorable highlight of the night.

As the concert reached its peak, the 300 dancers took

center stage, joining in a breathtaking display of movement and rhythm.

The open-air theater, bathed in moonlight, came alive with a dazzling interplay of music, lights, and energy.

Magic

The audience couldn't help but be swept away by the magic, moving to the beats and celebrating a night of pure artistic brilliance.

For many, this concert was more than just a performance — it was an unforgettable experience.

Citizens, residents, and visitors from neighboring countries came together to witness a once-in-a-lifetime event that blended classical music with the beauty of dance, leaving a lasting imprint on Bahrain's cultural landscape.

Focus on proposal for Bahrainis' permanent positions in ministries

H Naser
TDT | Manama

The Council of Representatives will discuss on Tuesday a proposal submitted by MP Zainab Abdulameer aimed at securing permanent positions for Bahraini employees on temporary contracts working in the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour, and the Sunni and Jaffari Endowments Directorates.

The explanatory memorandum for the proposal indicates that it aims to mitigate potential harm to a significant segment of national talent and expertise holding temporary contracts, accelerate the replacement of expatriate workers by stabilising Bahrainis on temporary contracts, and achieve job security and stability for citizens by including them under the umbrella of social insurance, especially given rising prices and increasing financial burdens.

In its response, the Ministry of Health stated that its health sectors, in accordance with



MP Zainab Abdulameer

their plans for the Bahrainization of jobs and replacement of foreign workers, have taken the necessary measures to stabilise employees with temporary contracts, thus achieving the desired objectives of the proposal.

For its part, the Ministry of Information confirmed in its response to the proposal that it does not have any employees working on temporary contracts, and the Ministry of Labour gave a similar response. It is worth noting that the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee of the Council of Representatives recommended approval of the proposal.

Easing degree rules for sign language interpreters

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Responding to a shortage of sign language interpreters in schools and universities, Parliament will on Tuesday weigh up whether to drop degree requirements and instead train interpreters through hands-on programmes.

The proposal, originally put forward by MP Ahmed Al Salloom, aims to clear a path for more people with sign language skills to work in education while making classrooms more accessible for students with hearing impairments.

The Services Committee, after going through the plan, gave it the green light, saying the move would help fix the shortfall without lowering standards.

Rather than insisting on a



MP Ahmed Al Salloom

university degree, the plan would bring in training courses to ensure interpreters pick up the know-how they need.

The Ministry of Education says it already does its bit to support students with disabilities under the Education Law of 2005.

At the moment, sign language interpretation is handled by special education teachers, who must have a degree in specialized fields.

Government rejects push for more housing in Southern Governorate

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Plans to expand housing in the Seventh Constituency of the Southern Governorate have been rejected, with the government insisting its current schemes — taken up by 80 per cent of applicants who moved from waiting lists to housing finance schemes options — are already doing the job.

In a written reply to Parliament, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, His Excellency Ghanim Al Buainain, said the government had looked at the proposal but saw no need for extra housing in the area.

Existing projects, he said, were already providing homes through public and private efforts.

“The government has reviewed the request and finds that the goals it sets out are already being met through ongoing housing initiatives,” he wrote, pointing to a mix of direct construction, financial support and partnerships with developers as proof.

MPs had pushed for more housing, arguing that demand was outstripping supply.

But the government pushed back, saying that a range of options was already available to those in need.

The housing finance programme, one of the main schemes on offer, has seen 80 per cent of those who moved from traditional waiting lists secure homes through loans rather than relying on state-built housing.

Heritage fuels economy

Expo highlights Bahrain's thriving home businesses

TDT | Manama

Agrowing number of home-based entrepreneurs are proving that Bahrain's traditional crafts and culinary heritage are not just cultural assets but economic drivers, as showcased at Expo973.

The two-day exhibition, held to mark the 24th anniversary of the National Action Charter, brought together dozens of small business owners who are leveraging their skills in crafts, food, and design to generate income and strengthen the local economy.

Organised by MP Mohammed Janahi in partnership with the Capital Trustees Fund and Omni Society, the event aimed to connect local producers with



Key officials with business owners at the event

a wider audience.

“This is not just a celebration of heritage, but a statement that home-based businesses are a key pillar of economic growth,” said Mr Janahi. “By empowering productive families, we are fostering entrepreneurship

and helping diversify Bahrain's economy.”

The event featured handmade wooden dhow models, pottery, and traditional desserts, alongside interactive cultural experiences.

Among the attractions was a stall selling oysters, giving

visitors a chance to discover Bahrain's famed natural pearls.

With strong visitor turnout, organisers hope the exhibition will lead to greater recognition and support for Bahrain's growing community of small-scale entrepreneurs.

Proposal 'redundant and could put off investors'

Government dismisses Parliament push for half-Bahraini workforce in private hospitals

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

The government has rejected a parliament-backed proposal to force private hospitals to fill at least half of medical, technical, and nursing jobs with Bahrainis.

The proposal will be put to vote in the Shura Council today.

Backers say it will ease joblessness among medical graduates.

The government, however, says the numbers don't stack up.

Redundant

With a 70 per cent wage subsidy already covering new Bahraini doctors and dentists for three years, officials argue the law is redundant and could put off investors.

The bill would change Article 14 of Decree-Law No. 21 of 2015, making Bahraini professionals the default choice for private healthcare jobs unless a rare or unavailable specialisation is needed.

The Services Committee has backed the plan, saying it will keep more qualified locals in the field.

Rules

The Ministry of Labour is pushing back, saying the rules already on the books do the job.

The ministry points to Law No. 1 of 2019, which prioritises Bahrainis for medical work



Shura Council is set to vote on mandatory Bahraini hiring in private healthcare

while leaving room for exceptions.

A joint system with the National Health Regulatory Authority (NHRA) blocks foreign specialists from getting work permits unless the NHRA confirms there's no Bahraini available.

Skill

The ministry argues that the law as it stands already gives Bahrainis a fair go, while keeping private hospitals and clinics free to hire on skill rather than quotas.

The government has pumped millions into training and wage support, pointing to existing

efforts that pay 70 per cent of new Bahraini doctors' wages, set pay floors of BD1,000, and offer up to BD30,000 in student loans for further study.

Tamkeen is covering training costs for 380 scholarships and professional development courses.

Tools

The Supreme Council of Health, the Ministry of Health, and NHRA are backing the government's stance, arguing that the tools are already in place to help Bahrainis break into the industry.

A letter dated 18 December

2024 confirmed support for existing policy.

The Minister of Health said Bahraini professionals are being placed through targeted training schemes, making them job-ready without the need for forced quotas.

Programmes

The Supreme Council of Health has rolled out programmes alongside Tamkeen to cover board certification costs, get doctors into international fellowship schemes, and expand residency training.

NHRA officials say non-Bahraini licences are only granted when no local candidate is

available.

Tamkeen backed the government in a 10 December 2024 letter, arguing the bill adds red tape without bringing real benefits.

Plan

The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) also weighed in, calling for the plan to be rethought, arguing that Bahrain's health sector needs flexibility, not fixed numbers.

It pointed to shortages in key medical fields, warning that a blanket 50 per cent Bahraini quota would handcuff employers, especially smaller clinics and hospitals with specialist needs.



The bill would make Bahraini professionals the default choice for private healthcare jobs unless a rare or unavailable specialisation is needed.

Private healthcare operators also raised the alarm, saying the bill would bind them to numbers instead of merit.

Incentives

The Society of Owners of Private Healthcare Institutions suggested incentives over enforcement, proposing that clinics meeting Bahrainisation targets be rewarded with lower NHRA fees.

It warned that the push for quotas could hurt Bahrain's reputation for medical tourism and water down healthcare quality.

It also flagged that licensing rules require at least five years' experience for foreign doctors, meaning the law could see junior Bahraini hires replacing seasoned professionals.

Government backs plan to tackle rising sea levels

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

The government has backed a parliamentary proposal to prepare for rising sea levels, describing the issue as a global concern while pointing out that Bahrain is less at risk than island nations in open waters.

Other measures being considered by the government include extending shorelines, setting up rock barriers offshore, and weaving protective features into urban development plans.

There are also proposals to build waterfront walkways that would serve both as coastal defences and business opportunities for shops and marine-related activities.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, His Excellency Ghanim Al Buainain, said the government had examined the proposal and supported its goals, noting that shifts in sea levels were driven by ocean expansion from warming temperatures and the melting of ice sheets at the poles.



"The government recognises the importance of tackling this issue and has already been working with all the necessary agencies to reduce the effects of climate change and protect the country's resources," he said.

A study carried out in 2020 by the Supreme Council for Environment (SCE), in partnership with a specialist consultancy, looked at how Bahrain's coastal areas could be affected based on projections by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

It assessed risks beyond 2050 and pinpointed key sites — such as infrastructure and tourism hubs — that might need pro-

"The government recognises the importance of tackling this issue and has already been working with all the necessary agencies to reduce the effects of climate change and protect the country's resources."

- H.E. GHANIM AL BUAINAIN, MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS

tection.

The government has since formed a team, led by the Supreme Council for the Environment, to put these plans into action.

Different scenarios were considered, bringing Bahrain's approach in line with international planning methods, although the likelihood of extreme sea level changes was said to be low due to the country's position in the Gulf.

Convicted fugitive extradited to Bahrain

H Naser

A fugitive wanted by Bahrain under an international arrest warrant has been arrested and extradited to the Kingdom, announced Attorney General Abdullah Al Dosari, who heads the International Cooperation and Human Rights Office at the Public Prosecution.

The individual in question had been charged with sexual assault and, upon being found guilty, was sentenced by the competent court to three years in prison.

After fleeing the Kingdom, the Public Prosecution issued an international arrest warrant for his capture.

He was subsequently arrested in another country and extradited to the Kingdom of Bahrain, thanks to coordination with the Ministry of Interior's International Affairs and Interpol Department.



Announcement

Closure of Nomination for Board Membership

Trafco Group B.S.C. announces that the period for accepting nomination to the Board of Directors Will end today Sunday 16th February 2025.

A list of candidates will be published on Bahrain bourse and company's website, simultaneously with publication of the General Assembly meeting agenda. The election will be carried out at the forthcoming AGM that is due on 26th March 2025

The Group by its notice published on 3rd February 2025 invited candidates to apply between 3rd - 16th February 2025 for next term of the board membership 2025-2028.

Ebrahim Mohamed Ali Zainal
Chairman

Takaful International achieves net profit of BD 1.65 m for 2024 with an increase of 9%

TDT | Manama

Takaful International Company yesterday reported quarterly and full year 2024 results reporting an increase in profits, thanks to strong performance of funds.

Financial Result for the three months ended 31st December 2024

The net profit attributable to the shareholders for the three months ended 31st December 2024 was BD 429K compared to BD 264K for the same period in the previous year, an increase of 62%, and a corresponding earnings per share of 5.05 Fils compared with 3.11 Fils for the same period in the previous year. Total comprehensive income for the three months ended 31st December 2024 declined to BD 201K compared to BD 548K for the same period in the previous year, a decrease of 63%.

The Company reported a total net profit of BD 487K for the fourth quarter 2024 compared to BD 363K for the same period in the previous year with an increase of 34%, which is mainly attributed to higher performance of the Shareholders' fund which reported a profit of BD 429K compared to BD 264K for the same period in the previous year, with an increase of 62%. The increase is ascribed to the improved income generated from the investment



Ebrahim Al-Rayes, Chairman of the Board

portfolio during the quarter. The participants' Takaful funds achieved a surplus of BD 58K in the fourth quarter 2024 compared to a surplus of BD 99K for the same period in the previous year, a decrease of 41%. This decline is due to the increase in the claims reserve during the period compared to the corresponding period of the previous year.

Recognized takaful contributions were BD 6.774m in the fourth quarter 2024 compared to BD 6.159m for the same period in the previous year, an increase of 10%. The recognized takaful cost decreased by 21.6% to BD 5.088m in the fourth quarter 2024 as compared to BD 6.489m for the same period in the pre-

vious year.

Results for the year-end 31st December 2024

As for the results of the full year ended 31st December 2024, the net profit attributable to the shareholders was BD1.334m compared to BD 937K last year, an increase of 42%, and corresponding earnings per share at 15.7 Fils compared with 11.03 Fils for the same period in the previous year. Total comprehensive income for the year ended 31st December 2024 increased to BD 1.231m compared to BD 969K last year, an increase of 27%.

Net profit for the year ended 31st December 2024 was BD 1.65m compared to BD 1.513m for the same period in the previous



Essam Mohammed Al Ansari, CEO

year, with an increase of 9%, which is mainly attributed to the improved performance of the shareholders' fund which achieved a profit of BD 1.334m compared to BD 937K for the same period in the previous year with an increase of 42%. The increase is mainly attributed to the improved income generated from the investment portfolio. The participants' takaful funds achieved a surplus of BD 315K compared to a surplus of BD 575K for the same period in the previous year, a decrease of 45%. This decline is due to the increase in the claims reserve for the year compared to the previous year. The increase is attributed to the heavy rain claims in April 2024 as well as

the inflation in medical claims, which the Company has taken corrective underwriting measures to address.

Cash dividends at 12.5%

The Company registered recognized takaful contributions of BD 25.981m for the year ended 31st December 2024 compared to BD 24.363m last year, with an increase of 7%. Recognized takaful cost increased by 10% to BD 22.624m for the year ended 31st December 2024 as compared to BD 20.551m last year.

Mr. Ebrahim Al-Rayes, Chairman of the Board, stated that the company's financial results for the year 2024 came in line with the financial projections approved by the

Board. He highlighted that the company achieved significant growth in income from its investment operations, which saw a notable improvement in the performance of shareholders' funds. The adoption of the new investment strategies has resulted in positive outcomes for the performance of the shareholder fund. This shift has led to improvements in both listed financial stocks and Islamic Sukuk portfolios, achieving full benefit from cash management.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors indicated that the Board decided to submit a recommendation to the General Assembly to distribute cash dividends at the rate of 12.5% of the paid-up capital, which is equivalent to 12.5 Fils per share, totaling BD 1,062,500, subject to the approval of the Central Bank of Bahrain and the shareholders in the upcoming annual general meeting.

Mr. Essam Mohammed Al Ansari, CEO, shared his insights on the company's financial performance, noting that the results demonstrate the company's resilience and ability to maintain financial stability, even in the face of challenging market conditions in the insurance sector, indicating that the company successfully retained its A- credit rating with a stable outlook from the international rating agency AM Best, positioning Takaful International as a leader among locally rated takaful companies.

OpenAI board rejects Elon Musk-led buyout offer

AFP | San Francisco, United States

OpenAI's board chairman on Friday said it has unanimously rejected an Elon Musk-



Elon Musk and Sam Altman

led offer to buy the hot artificial intelligence company for \$97.4 billion.

"OpenAI is not for sale, and the board has unanimously rejected Mr. Musk's latest attempt to disrupt his competition," chairman of the board Bret Taylor said in a statement posted by the company on Musk-owned X, formerly Twitter.

"Any potential reorganization of OpenAI will strengthen our nonprofit and its mission to ensure AGI (artificial general intelligence) benefits all of humanity," the statement continued.

Musk filed court documents on Wednesday saying that he would withdraw the offer to buy

OpenAI if its board returns the artificial intelligence pioneer to a non-profit "charity" model.

OpenAI currently operates a hybrid structure, as a non-profit with a money-making subsidiary.

The change to a for-profit model -- one that Altman considers crucial for the company's development -- had exacerbated ongoing tensions with Musk. Musk and Altman were among the 11-person team that founded OpenAI in 2015, with the former providing initial funding of \$45 million.

Three years later, Musk departed the company, with OpenAI citing "a potential future conflict for Elon... as Tesla con-

tinues to become more focused on AI."

Musk established his own artificial intelligence company called xAI early in 2023 after OpenAI ignited global fervor over the technology.

The massive costs of designing, training, and deploying AI models have compelled OpenAI to seek a new corporate structure that would give investors equity and provide more stable governance.

The transition to a traditional for-profit company requires approval from California and Delaware authorities, who will scrutinize how the non-profit arm of OpenAI is valued when it becomes a shareholder in the new company.

Current investors prefer a lower valuation to maximize their share of the new company.

Musk's bid, valuing the OpenAI non-profit at \$97.4 billion -- approximately \$30 billion above the level in current negotiations, according to The Information -- appears designed to disrupt the company's fundraising efforts.

OpenAI's Chief Global Affairs Officer Chris Lehane has said Musk's offer came from a competitor "who has struggled to keep up with the technology and compete with us in the marketplace".

Trump creates energy council to power AI race with China

Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Friday creating a "National Energy Dominance Council" that will be tasked with helping meet the vast electric power needs to win the AI race with China.

"We're going to be energy dominant like nobody else, and this doesn't even discuss all of the electricity that we're going to be producing for all of the AI plants," Trump told reporters as he signed the order.

"They need at least double the electricity we have right now," he added.

Trump's Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum, who also attended the signing, said, "The US is in an AI arms race with China. The only way we win is with more electricity."

According to the White House, the council will coordinate energy policy across federal agencies and streamline permitting, production and distribution of various energy resources.

The move aligns with Trump's campaign promise to "drill, baby, drill," boosting domestic oil and gas production, and reversing any concerns from the Biden administration about carbon emissions or impacts on climate change.

The aim is also to counter potential rising costs from Trump's trade wars that could see energy prices increase once



energy imports or US exports were slapped with tariffs.

The demands of the AI industry for electric power are acute, with data servers already putting a heavy strain on the country's overstretched electricity supply.

The supply of electric power in the United States has suffered from chronic underinvestment, exacerbated by aging nuclear plants being taken offline.

Tech CEOs have been intensely lobbying the Trump administration to focus on the need for power to meet their AI demands.

By as soon as 2028, officials expect that tech companies will have AI training energy needs of as much as five gigawatts, enough to power roughly 5 million homes.



AI can create completely new and unique works of art, music, and even poetry—some of which have been mistaken for human-made creations. In 2018, an AI-generated painting titled "Portrait of Edmond de Belamy" was sold at a Christie's auction for \$432,500, far exceeding its estimated value of \$7,000-\$10,000.



QUOTE OF THE DAY

I BELIEVE IN EVERYTHING UNTIL IT'S DISPROVED. SO I BELIEVE IN FAIRIES, THE MYTHS, DRAGONS. IT ALL EXISTS, EVEN IF IT'S IN YOUR MIND. WHO'S TO SAY THAT DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES AREN'T AS REAL AS THE HERE AND NOW? JOHN LENNON

TODAY IN HISTORY

1659

First known cheque written (£400), now on display at Westminster Abbey

1840

American Charles Wilkes discovers the Shackleton Ice Shelf in Antarctica



Howard Carter opens the inner burial chamber of Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamun's tomb and finds the sarcophagus

1923

Fidel Castro becomes the 16th Prime Minister of Cuba after overthrowing Fulgencio Batista

News in brief

The White House said Friday it was indefinitely blocking Associated Press journalists from Air Force One and the Oval Office, escalating a row with the US news agency over its refusal to call the Gulf of Mexico the 'Gulf of America'.



AP barred from Air Force One in 'Gulf of America' row

The UK government yesterday named two Britons detained in Iran as Craig and Lindsay Foreman, with their family saying they are determined to ensure the pair's 'safe return'.

Iranian authorities said yesterday that several suspects had been arrested in the case of a student's murder that triggered a night of protest at Tehran University.

Iran makes arrests after student murder sparks protest



SPOTLIGHT

Trump admin fires CDC 'disease detectives' as bird flu fears rise: sources

AFP | Washington, United States

Nearly half of an elite US epidemiology program known as the "disease detectives" were dismissed by the Trump administration on Friday, according to sources familiar with the matter.

ing program whose officers have been on the frontline of investigating outbreaks from the first Ebola cases in Africa in the 1970s to the earliest case reports of Covid-19 in the United States.

"Without those officers we would not have eliminated smallpox from the globe," the official said. "We had people fanning across countries, wading through mud and navigating rivers on boats to eliminate smallpox."



Known colloquially as the "disease detectives," the researchers are hired annually through a competitive process that each year whittles down hundreds of applicants -- including doctors, nurses, scientists and more -- to a class of a few dozen.

"We're on the verge of potentially another pandemic and we're firing the people who have probably more expertise than anyone else in the country collectively."

Hamas, Israel complete sixth hostage-prisoner swap under Gaza truce

AFP | Khan Yunis, Palestinian Territories

Palestinians released three Israeli hostages yesterday in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian inmates freed by Israel, completing the latest swap despite fears the Gaza truce deal was near collapse.

An AFP journalist saw masked Hamas gunmen parade the hostages onto a stage in front of a crowd in Gaza's southern city of Khan Yunis, where they were made to make statements into a microphone before being handed over to the Red Cross and taken back to Israeli territory.

Clutching gift bags given by their captors and certificates to mark the end of their captivity, the three men, flanked by fighters, called for the completion of further hostage exchanges under the ceasefire deal.

Not long after, a busload of Palestinian prisoners departed Israel's Ofer Prison and was greeted by a cheering crowd in the occupied West Bank city of Ramallah, an AFP journalist said.

More buses took inmates from an Israeli prison in the Negev desert to the Gaza Strip, according to another AFP journalist.

Saturday's swap, the sixth since the truce took effect on January 19, came after Hamas had threatened to pause hostage releases over alleged Israeli violations, while Israel had threatened to resume the war if it did.

The three hostages -- Israeli-American Sagui Dekel-Chen, Israeli-Russian Sasha Trupanov and Israeli-Argentine Yair Horn -- had been held by Hamas since Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack on Israel that sparked the war 16 months ago.

Friends and family members of the hostages shed tears of joy at the sight of their loved ones on Saturday.

"Finally, Sasha can be surrounded by his loved ones and begin a new path," Trupanov's family said in a statement.

Dekel-Chen's wife, Avital, said in a call to her sister aired by Israel's Kan public broadcaster: "My breath has returned. He looks so handsome."

Next phase

Later in the day, hundreds of Palestinians freed by Israel reached Khan Yunis, where they threw up victory signs and waved to a jubilant crowd, an AFP reporter said.



Former Palestinian prisoners, released as part of the sixth hostage-prisoner exchange, are welcomed by friends and relatives upon arriving at the European Hospital in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip



A former Palestinian prisoner, released as part of the sixth hostage-prisoner exchange, is welcomed by friends and relatives

According to the Palestinian Prisoners' Club advocacy group, Israel was to release 333 Gazans who were taken into custody during the war, as well as 36 prisoners serving life sentences, 24 of whom were due for deportation under the terms of the truce deal.

Israel confirmed it had released a total of 369 prisoners. Images broadcast on Israeli media showed Palestinian prisoners ahead of their release wearing sweatshirts featuring the prison service logo, a Star

of David, and the slogan: "We will not forget and we will not forgive."

After the deal had appeared to be on the brink of collapse, a Hamas official on Friday said the group expected talks on a second phase of the ceasefire to begin early next week. Another source familiar with the talks offered a similar timeline.

The negotiations on the second phase are meant to lay out steps towards a more permanent end to the war.

United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio, whose country is Israel's top backer and one of the truce mediators, is due to arrive in Israel late Saturday ahead of expected talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on the truce.

An Israeli campaign group, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, warned in a statement against the "collapse" of the on-going agreement, calling on the parties to "continue to use this momentum to make a swift and



Hostages L to R: Israeli-Argentinian hostage Yair Horn, Israeli-American Sagui Dekel-Chen and Israeli-Russian Sasha Trupanov stand on stage next to Palestinian militants during their handover to a Red Cross team in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip



A former Palestinian prisoner, released as part of the sixth hostage-prisoner exchange

responsible agreement for everyone" still held in Gaza.

Massive strain

The ceasefire has been under massive strain since US President Donald Trump proposed a takeover of the Gaza Strip under which the territory's population of more than two million people would be moved to Egypt or Jordan.

Arab countries have come together to reject Trump's plan, and Saudi Arabia will host the leaders

of Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates on Thursday for a summit on the issue.

A joint statement from the heads of Christian churches in Jerusalem also said Gazans "must not be forced into exile".

The October 7, 2023 attack on Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,211 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally of Israeli official figures.

Hamas also took 251 hostages, of whom 70 remain in Gaza,

including 35 the Israeli military says are dead.

Netanyahu's office said shortly after Saturday's release that it was working with the United States to free the remaining hostages "as quickly as possible", without offering specifics.

Israel's retaliatory campaign has killed at least 48,264 people in Gaza, the majority of them civilians, according to figures from the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory that the United Nations considers reliable.

CAPTAIN'S CORNER

When Pope Francis supports immigrants



CAPTAIN MAHMOOD AL MAHMOOD

For millions of illegal immigrants across the world -- not just the US -- the actions of the Trump administration have sounded the death knell to their dreams for a better life. What happens when the so-called champion of human rights and a global superpower starts to herd and deport immigrants, many of them admittedly illegal and a big percentage of these awaiting formal legalization, having filed their citizenship papers?

Other countries begin to twist arms and adopt similar bullying practices in rounding up their own illegals.

Mind you, as a citizen of a part of the world where migrant workers contribute immensely to our well-being and development, I am very respectful of their right to earn a decent and legal living.

In a forceful and surprising letter, Pope Francis has himself supported illegal immigrants, saying "...the act of deporting people who in many cases have left their own land for reasons of extreme poverty, insecurity, exploitation, persecution or serious deterioration of the environment, damages the dignity of many men and women, and of entire families, and places them in a state of particular vulnerability and defenselessness."

It is ironic that His Holiness should voice such a stern opinion against President Trump's methods of managing illegals, given that the Christian Far Right is the bastion of Trump's victory.

But the focus on illegal immigration should not go unheeded even by us. As Indian Prime Minister Modi said during his visit three days ago to the White House, it is as important to bring laws into force to control human traffickers who loot desperate immigrants and trick them.

Whether we are sternly anti-illegal or vociferously pro-migration, one thing needs to be clear: we must all be anti-human trafficking.

(Captain Mahmood Al Mahmood is the Editor-in-Chief of The Daily Tribune and the President of the Arab-African Unity Organisation for Relief, Human Rights and Counterterrorism)

Column with 'TOP 4 TWEETS' and images of tweets from @narendramodi, @elonmusk, @DrTedros, and @VP.

Russia releases footage of US man detained at Moscow airport

AFP | Moscow, Russia

Russia yesterday published images of a US man that its customs officers arrested a day earlier at a Moscow airport for allegedly travelling with gummy candy laced with cannabis derivatives.



Representative picture

that a 28-year-old American was detained at Vnukovo airport after flying in from Istanbul.

The arrest came after a prisoner exchange between Moscow and Washington, and after Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin spoke by phone about settling the Ukraine conflict.

The press service of the Russian court system published a video on Telegram of a bearded young man in a white shirt behind bars.

The court service named him as "Calob Wayne Bayers", according to a translation from Cyrillic. "While passing customs, one of his suitcases drew the attention

of a service dog," the state TASS news agency reported Friday, citing Russia's Federal Customs Service.

"During the customs search, inspectors found two plastic jars and a zip-bag with the candy in it. Chemical analysis showed narcotic substances of the cannabi-

noid group in it." State media reported the man said the sweets were prescribed by a US doctor and that he needed them for travelling.

In 2022, Russia arrested US basketball player Brittney Griner at a Moscow airport for carrying medicinal cannabis, which she said

was prescribed by a US doctor. She was later exchanged for convicted arms dealer Viktor Bout.

Russia holds several US citizens in detention, including ballerina Ksenia Karelina, retired English teacher Stephen Hubbard and former US marine Robert Gilman.

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

autobuzz



Trump says auto tariffs to come 'around April 2'

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump said Friday that he planned to unveil tariffs on imported cars around April 2, adding to a cascade of levies he has threatened since taking office.

Trump's statement did not specify whether the tariffs would apply to all auto imports.

Since his inauguration on January 20, Trump has taken aim at allies and adversaries alike with threats of fresh duties.

He has referred to tariffs as a way to raise revenue, remedy trade imbalances and pressure countries to act on US concerns.

Experts have warned it is often Americans who pay the tariffs on US imports -- not the foreign exporter.

Asked when he might unveil auto tariffs, Trump said, "Maybe around April 2." He did not provide further details on Friday.

About 50 percent of the cars sold in the United States are manufactured within the country. Among imports, about half come from Mexico and Canada and the other half from other major auto-producing countries. This latter group is led by Ja-



Workers polish a piece of equipment in a factory which produces steel mining equipment for export in Jinhua, in China's eastern Zhejiang province

pan, South Korea and Germany, with Britain, Italy and Sweden a source of a smaller volume of imports.

In recent days, Ford CEO Jim Farley has blasted a proposed

Trump tariff of 25 percent on Mexico and Canada, noting that it disadvantages US companies that have integrated their supply chains across North America under trade agreements, including

the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) negotiated in the first Trump administration.

On February 3, the White House suspended the tariffs for

30 days following moves from

Canada and Mexico on border security and fentanyl policies.

Levies targeting the auto sector would come after the president recently firmed up plans for tariffs on all steel and aluminum imports beginning March 12.

He has previously promised tariffs on semiconductors, steel, oil and gas.

On Thursday, in a move broadening trade conflicts, Trump launched plans for "reciprocal tariffs" that could hit all US trading partners on a country-by-country basis.

The American Automotive Policy Council, which represents Detroit automakers General Motors, Ford and Stellantis, has called for Trump to drop proposed tariffs on Mexico and Canada.

"We support President Trump's efforts to consider the entire global trade situation, including both tariff and non-tariff barriers," said AACP President Matt Blunt on Thursday in response to the announcement.

ment on reciprocal tariffs. "In the meantime, Ford, GM, and Stellantis continue to believe that vehicles and auto parts that meet the USMCA requirements should not be subject to additional tariffs."

The AACP did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday.



Vietnamese YouTubers build Koenigsegg Jesko replica from scratch using a \$100 Camry

TDT | agencies

The Koenigsegg Jesko is a mid-engined supercar, limited to just 125 units worldwide. Naturally, it is highly sought after by collectors. Owning one, however, is a different challenge altogether. So, what do you do if you can't afford one?

The team at NHET TV's YouTube channel had an answer: build one from scratch. Their ambitious project took a year to complete—without the use of any high-tech equipment—making the result even more impressive. The entire build took place in Vietnam.

The process began with a skeletal frame, which was then covered in clay and sculpted, much like in an OEM car design studio. From this, individual fibreglass panels were crafted and later combined to form a single fibreglass body shell.

A custom steel chassis was fabricated, incorporating bushings, suspension arms, mounts, and specialty fasteners to hold everything together. The frame



features an inboard suspension setup, which was put to the test in a rather unconventional way—a 10-foot drop from a wrecker.

For power, the team sourced a Toyota Camry with a four-cylinder engine, purchased for just \$100. This, along with a manual gearbox, drives the replica. In contrast, the real Jesko boasts

a 5.0-litre twin-turbo V8, producing 1,280 hp and 1,000 Nm of torque.

The replica also utilises the Camry's steering and braking systems, though only the rear brakes are functional, as the engine and transmission were mounted at the back. This meant the front brakes had to be relocated behind.

The interior was crafted from fibreglass, and impressively, the doors open in true Koenigsegg style. A fibreglass body kit and spoiler complete the look. However, the car lacks air-conditioning and an audio system.

The entire build process has been documented in a video, showcasing the team's dedication and ingenuity.



Visitors look at a new Corolla Cross type hybrid car from the Toyota brand at the Indonesia International Motor Show 2025 in Jakarta



People take pictures of a Mercedes car displayed at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, in New Delhi



A model stands next to Suzuki cars displayed at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, in New Delhi



The Koenigsegg Jesko features the world's fastest nine-speed multi-clutch transmission, called the Light Speed Transmission (LST), which allows for near-instant gear changes in any direction without the need for traditional synchronisation.

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Fucsovcics claims MOI Tennis Challenger

Hussain Almaskati TDT | Manama

Hungarian Star Overcomes Vavassori to Claim the Title in Gudaibiya

Marton Fucsovcics delivered a commanding performance to claim the Bahrain Ministry of Interior (MOI) Tennis Challenger 2025 title, defeating Andrea Vavassori in an intense final on Centre Court. The top-seeded Hungarian was in top form, securing a 6-3, 7-6(3), 6-4 victory over the Italian wild card in a gripping showdown at the Public Security Officers Club in Gudaibiya.

Final Score:

Hungary – Marton Fucsovcics
6 - 63 - 6
Italy – Andrea Vavassori
3 - 77 - 4

Fucsovcics Overpowers Vavassori

From the outset, Fucsovcics stamped his authority on the match. His aggressive baseline play and precise shot-making forced Vavassori onto the back foot early. After taking the first set 6-3, the Hungarian found himself in a tense second-set battle, but he held his nerve in the tiebreak to edge it 7-6(3). The third set was equally competitive, with Vavassori fighting to stay in the contest. However, Fucsovcics' experience and composure proved decisive as he closed out the match to lift the trophy.



Hungarian Star Overcomes Vavassori to Claim the Title in Gudaibiya

Match Statistics:	Receiving Points
- Aces: Fucsovcics – 3 Vavassori – 4	Won: Fucsovcics – 39 Vavassori – 31
- Double Faults: Fucsovcics – 1 Vavassori – 3	- Total Points Won: Fucsovcics – 109 Vavassori – 102
- First Serve %: Fucsovcics – 70% Vavassori – 62%	- Games Won: Fucsovcics – 18 Vavassori – 14
- Win % on 1st Serve: Fucsovcics – 68% Vavassori – 71%	- Max Games Won in a Row: Fucsovcics – 3 Vavassori – 3
- Win % on 2nd Serve: Fucsovcics – 76% Vavassori – 59%	- Max Points Won in a Row: Fucsovcics – 6 Vavassori – 5
- Break Points: Fucsovcics – 3/13 Vavassori – 0/8	- Service Points Won: Fucsovcics – 70 Vavassori – 71
- Tiebreaks Won: Fucsovcics – 0 Vavassori – 1	- Service Games Won: Fucsovcics – 15 Vavassori – 13

The Road to Glory

Fucsovcics' path to the final wasn't without its challenges. Due to rain delays, he had to play both his quarter-final and semi-final on the same day. First, he dispatched Norway's Viktor Durasovic 6-4, 7-5 in a closely fought quarter-final. Then, in the semis, he dismantled Russian qualifier Marat Sharipov with a dominant 6-2, 6-1 victory.

Vavassori's journey was even more grueling. After breezing past Canada's Alexis Galarneau 6-2, 6-1 in the quarters, he faced an all-out war against American Brandon Holt in the semi-finals. The Italian survived a two-and-a-half-hour battle, edging Holt 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 in a physically draining encounter.

A Successful Chapter in Bahrain's Tennis Legacy

Now in its fourth edition, the Bahrain MOI Tennis Challenger has firmly established itself as a key stop on the ATP Challenger Tour. Sanctioned by the Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP), the tournament serves as a crucial platform for emerging talents looking to break into the higher ranks of world tennis.

With a \$200,000 prize pool, a world-class venue, and a growing reputation, Bahrain's premier tennis event continues to raise the bar—and with performances like Fucsovcics' in this final, fans are already looking forward to next year's edition.

Real Madrid held by Osasuna with Bellingham sent off

AFP | Pamplona, Spain

La Liga leaders Real Madrid dropped points in a 1-1 draw at Osasuna, with Jude Bellingham sent off in the first half.

Kylian Mbappé gave Madrid the lead before the England international saw red for dissent in the 39th minute. Ante Budimir equalised from the penalty spot after Eduardo Camavinga fouled him in the 58th minute. It was Madrid's third straight league match without a win.

Carlo Ancelotti rotated his squad ahead of Wednesday's Champions League clash with Manchester City, resting Rodrygo and starting Brahim Diaz. Madrid dominated early, with Vinicius Jr. missing two big chances before Mbappé clinically finished Fede Valverde's cross for his seventh goal in five La Liga games.

Osasuna threatened only once in the first half through Aimar Oroz, but Thibaut



Real Madrid's French forward #09 Kylian Mbappe (C) reacts to Osasuna's Spanish defender #24 Alejandro Catena's insistence for him to stand up

Courtois saved well. Budimir's penalty was his 13th goal of the season, trailing only Robert Lewandowski and Mbappé.

YOU
KNOW WHAT

Real Madrid is the most successful club in UEFA Champions League history, having won the competition a record 14 times. The club was also the first to win five consecutive European Cups from 1956 to 1960, a feat that remains unmatched.

denied Mbappé in stoppage time. Madrid now face added pressure with Atlético Madrid and Barcelona closing in, while Manchester City await midweek.

CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **ABDUL RAHIM SULTHAN IBRAHIM** S/O ABDUL RAHIM holding **Indian Passport No. Z 1987839** dated 12 May 2015 issued at BAHRAIN, having permanent residence at No, 2 -4 - 27 A/34, V.O.C NAGAR, BATLAGUNDU PO, DINDUGAL DT, TAMIL NADU PIN 624202. Presently residing at FLAT 21, BLDG 1058, ROAD 1815, BLOCK318 AL HOORA, BAHRAIN, will henceforth be known as (Given Name) **SULTHAN IBRAHIM**, (Surname) **ABDUL RAHIM** Objection(s), if any, may be forwarded to **Embassy of India**, P.O. BOX 26106 AL-SEEF, KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

Man Utd's Diallo could miss rest of season with injury: reports

London, United Kingdom

Manchester United forward Amad Diallo could be sidelined for the rest of the season after suffering ankle ligament damage, according to re-

ports yesterday. Diallo is believed to have sustained the problem in training, with United yet to confirm the extent of the damage as the 22-year-old awaits further tests.



Manchester City's Egyptian striker #07 Omar Marmoush (C) celebrates after scoring their second goal during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Newcastle United at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England

Arsenal close gap on leaders Liverpool

Marmoush treble lifts Man City

AFP | Manchester, United Kingdom

Arsenal ignored their injury woes to close the gap on Premier League leaders Liverpool as Mikel Merino inspired a 2-0 win against Leicester, while Omar Marmoush's hat-trick fired Manchester City's 4-0 rout of top four rivals Newcastle on Saturday.

Mikel Arteta's side were in danger of wasting a chance to put pressure on Liverpool in the title race as they laboured to make the breakthrough at the King Power Stadium.

With his attacking options limited by a host of injuries, Arteta sent on Spain midfielder Merino to act as a makeshift striker in the closing stages.

It proved an inspired move as Merino netted twice in the last nine minutes to extend Arsenal's unbeaten run in the league to 15 games.

In the 81st minute, Ethan Nwaneri swung a pin-point cross into the Leicester area and Merino found space to thump his header past Mads Hermansen from six yards.

Seven minutes later, Leandro Trossard whipped a cross into the six-yard box and Merino's well-timed run eluded the Leicester defence as he slotted home to move second-placed Arsenal within four points of Liverpool.

With Kai Havertz ruled out for the season after suffering a hamstring injury blocking a shot

English Premier League results on Saturday:

Aston Villa 1 (Watkins 69) Ipswich 1 (Delap 56)
Fulham 2 (Smith Rowe 15, Bassey 62) Nottingham Forest 1 (Wood 37)
Leicester 0 Arsenal 2 (Merino 81, 87)
Manchester City 4 (Marmoush 19, 24, 33, McAtee 84) Newcastle 0
Southampton 1 (Sulemana 72) Bournemouth 3 (Ouattara 14, Christie 16, Tavernier 83)
West Ham 0 Brentford 1 (Schade 4)
Playing later (all times GMT)
Crystal Palace v Everton (1730)
Playing Sunday
Liverpool v Wolves (1400), Tottenham v Manchester United (1630)
Played Friday
Brighton 3 (Mitoma 27, Minteh 38, 63) Chelsea 0



Arsenal's Spanish midfielder #23 Mikel Merino (L) celebrates with teammates after scoring their second goal during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Arsenal at King Power Stadium in Leicester, central England

during Arsenal's recent training trip to Dubai, Arteta was left with a threadbare attack.

Gabriel Jesus, Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli were already sidelined by injuries.

Having lost 2-0 at Newcastle in the League Cup semi-final second leg before an extended break due to their early FA Cup exit, the Gunners returned to action with a vital victory.

"The first half, we struggled to get momentum because we did a lot of simple things very wrong, but the second half was very different," Arteta said.

"Mikel obviously made a huge impact to score the two goals."

Liverpool can increase the lead back to seven points if they

beat lowly Wolves at Anfield on Sunday.

At the Etihad Stadium, Egypt forward Marmoush scored his first City goals since arriving from Eintracht Frankfurt during the January transfer window.

Marmoush ended a run of four games without a goal in the 19th minute as he sprinted onto Ederson's long kick and deftly lobbed Newcastle keeper Martin Dubravka.

Just five minutes later, Marmoush found the back of the net again with a powerful blast that took a deflection off Kieran Trippier as it whistled past Dubravka.

City sparkle

The 26-year-old wasn't done, and he completed his 14-minute hat-trick in the 33rd minute.

Savinho's pass found Marmoush in the Newcastle area and he was granted time and space to slot home for the first treble of his career.

James McAtee's 84th minute volley capped a much-needed boost for City after Tuesday's 3-2 defeat against Real Madrid in the Champions League play-off round first leg.

But there was a scare for City when Norway striker Erling Haaland was forced off with a potential knee injury in the closing stages.

Now fourth in the Premier League, Pep Guardiola's men head to Madrid on Wednesday needing a second-leg revival to avoid European elimination.

"The way we played, we remembered what we were and what we have not been this season," Guardiola said.

"I'm really pleased with the pace and intensity. Marmoush did really well in Germany, a player with quality and pace."

Seventh-placed Newcastle are three points adrift of the top four in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Third-placed Nottingham Forest slumped to a 2-1 defeat Fulham.

Emile Smith Rowe netted in the 15th minute for Fulham and although Chris Wood equalised in the 37th minute, Calvin Bassey's header sealed the points in the 62nd minute.

Bournemouth are up to fifth after goals from Dango Ouattara, Ryan Christie and Marcus Tavernier in a 3-1 win at bottom of the table Southampton.

Ten-man Ipswich held on for a 1-1 draw at Aston Villa.

Axel Tuanzebe was sent off just before half-time and Liam Delap put Ipswich ahead in the 56th minute before Ollie Watkins tapped in the equaliser in the 69th minute.

Kevin Schade's fourth-minute goal clinched Brentford's 1-0 win at West Ham.

Tennis world number one Sinner accepts 3-month doping ban

AFP | Milan, Italy

Jannik Sinner has accepted a three-month ban from tennis after the world number one admitted team mistakes led to him twice testing positive for traces of banned substance clostebol in March last year.

The February 9 to May 4 suspension means Sinner will be free to play in the French Open, the second grand slam of the season, which begins on May 25 at Roland Garros.

In a statement, Sinner said that the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) accepted that he "had no intent and did not derive any competitive advantage from the two positive tests".

Australian Open champion Sinner has always said that clostebol entered his system when his physiotherapist used a spray containing it to treat a cut, then provided massage and sports therapy.

"This case had been hanging over me now for nearly a year and the process still had a long time to run with a decision maybe only at the end of the year," Sinner said.



Italy's Jannik Sinner

"I have always accepted that I am responsible for my team and realise WADA's strict rules are an important protection for the sport I love. On that basis I have accepted WADA's offer to resolve these proceedings on the basis of a 3-month sanction."

WADA said separately that "Sinner did not intend to cheat" but that he would serve his suspension as he is responsible for the actions of his entourage.

The agreement between Sinner and WADA means that Sinner will be able to play in front of his home fans at the Rome Open which kicks off just after the end of his suspension and is the last big clay court tournament before Roland Garros.

Merino's Arsenal double a belated Valentine's gift



Mikel Merino and his wife Lola Liberal enjoy life together

AFP | Leicester, United Kingdom

Mikel Merino said his vital double in Arsenal's 2-0 win at Leicester on Saturday was a belated Valentine's Day present for his wife after he forgot to buy her a proper gift.

Just 24 hours after his Valentine's faux pas, the Spain midfielder cemented his love affair with Arsenal fans.

The 28-year-old came off the bench to serve as a makeshift striker for injury-hit Arsenal and rose to the challenge with goals in the 81st and 87th minutes. Serenaded by Arsenal fans in one corner of the King Power Stadium after his headed opener, Merino was quick to dedicate the goals to partner Lola Liberal, who he married in January 2024.

"I forgot to give my wife something for Valentine's Day so this goes to her. I think she will appreciate this more than a rose and some chocolate!" he said.

It was the first time Merino had scored twice in a game since playing for Osasuna

against Gimnastic Tarragona in the Segunda Division play-offs in 2016.

Merino was only used as a striker out of desperation by Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta after injuries to Kai Havertz, Gabriel Jesus, Bukayo Saka and Gabriel Martinelli left him with a threadbare attack.

Leandro Trossard, Raheem Sterling and Ethan Nwaneri made up Arsenal's starting front three without success, paving the way for Merino to make his super-sub impact after Arteta sent him on.

"Mikel told me to come in as a striker this morning. We were talking about it a little bit with one of the assistants. It is the first time in my career that I've played that position," Merino said.

"He told me to go with my strengths and luckily I could help the team with two goals today."

Merino's brace was crucial for Arsenal's title hopes as they closed to four points behind of Premier League leaders Liverpool, who host lowly Wolves on Sunday.



Arsenal is the only team in Premier League history to go an entire season unbeaten. In the 2003-04 season, Arsène Wenger's "Invincibles" went 38 matches without defeat, winning the title with 26 wins and 12 draws—a record that still stands today.