

**World Bank unveils Water Forward plan**

The programme will expand reliable water services and strengthen resilience against droughts and floods, with funding support from development banks, governments and private partners. | P10



# Unified Bahrain Kuwait Vision

TDT | Manama

Bahrain and Kuwait continue to share a deeply rooted and historic fraternal relationship built on strong ties of cooperation, mutual respect, and shared Gulf interests.

Reflecting these close bilateral relations, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, received Kuwait's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al Sabah, and his accompanying delegation at Al Sakhir Palace during his official visit to the Kingdom.

At the start of the meeting, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister conveyed the greetings and best wishes of His Highness Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, expressing his hopes for continued progress and prosperity for Bahrain under His Majesty the King's leadership.

His Majesty warmly welcomed the minister and requested him to extend his greetings and best wishes to the Amir of Kuwait, wishing him continued good health and happiness, and further advancement and prosperity for the people of Kuwait.

The King praised the significant role played by the Kuwaiti leadership in strengthening Bahrain-Kuwait relations and in supporting joint Gulf Cooperation Council initiatives. He reaffirmed the depth of the historical ties and the strong fraternal bonds between the two countries and their peoples, which continue to grow through ongoing cooperation and mutual commitment.

The meeting also reviewed the latest regional and international developments, alongside issues of shared concern. His Majesty emphasized the importance of continued consulta-



tion and coordination between Bahrain and Kuwait to further enhance bilateral relations and serve mutual interests across various fields.

For his part, the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister expressed his appreciation to His Majesty for the warm reception and hospitality, commending Bahrain's efforts

in strengthening bilateral ties and praising the close fraternal relations between the two countries under His Majesty the King's leadership.

Foreign Minister welcomes Kuwait Foreign Minister upon arrival in Manama.



## UN Moves to Protect Libya's Oil Revenues



The UN Security Council has unanimously adopted Resolution 2819, extending the mandate of the Libya sanctions committee for 15 months until 1 August 2027.

Bahrain presided over the voting session and voted in favour of the resolution, which was submitted by the United Kingdom as the Council member responsible for the Libya file. Bahrain reiterated its support for Libya's stability, economic recovery, and protection of its national resources.

The resolution strengthens measures against the illegal export of Libyan oil and calls for continued efforts to prevent the exploitation of the country's oil wealth.

## Flights Gradually Resuming



Gulf Air confirmed that flight operations from Bahrain International Airport are steadily being restored, with services expected to expand to more than 50 destinations by June 2026. Until 30 April 2026, Gulf Air will continue operating an interim network from King Fahd International Airport.

As part of the phased roll-out, current destinations include major cities such as Riyadh, London Heathrow, Jeddah, Muscat, Dubai, Nairobi, Lahore, Dhaka, Islamabad, and Istanbul. Flights to Abu Dhabi are set to resume in April 2026.

Passengers can book tickets through Gulf Air's website, mobile app, or authorised travel agents. The airline reaffirmed that it is closely monitoring developments in coordination with authorities, with safety and passenger well-being remaining its top priority.

# Border Security Oversight

Interior Minister Praises Joint Security Operations at Causeway Base

Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Interior Minister visited the King Fahd Causeway Coast Guard Base on Wednesday to review operational readiness and security efficiency amid regional tensions linked to Iranian actions.

He commended the leadership's strategic vision, noting that directives from HM the King over recent years had helped develop an advanced national security system, enabling Bahrain to respond effectively to emergency situations. He also highlighted the government's coordinated approach under the Crown Prince and Prime Minister in enhancing national preparedness and ensuring public reassurance.

The Minister praised the close coordination between the Coast Guard, the Royal Bahrain Naval Force, and the National Guard in maintaining maritime safety and security across the Kingdom.

He further emphasized the Coast Guard's professionalism, noting its round-the-clock operations and continuous cooperation with relevant authorities to safeguard regional waters and strengthen strate-



gic capabilities.

During the visit, he called for the Coast Guard's continued development through advanced technology, training programmes, and internationally aligned security education. He also stressed the importance of improving joint operations, reviewing procedures, and enhancing inter-agency coordination.

At the King Fahd Causeway base, the Minister also

thanked Customs Affairs, Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs, and the General Directorate of Ports Security, praising their role in facilitating secure movement, protecting supply chains, and ensuring efficient services at the crossing point.



## Hidden Drugs in Parcel

TDT | Manama  
Rehab Mohammad

A man was sentenced to 15 years in prison and fined BD 10,000 after being convicted of importing 1.2 kilograms of marijuana hidden inside a postal parcel sent from an Asian country, in one of the most serious drug smuggling cases detected before delivery.

According to court records, customs officers became suspicious of a parcel during routine inspections at the airport using an X-ray scanner. The shipment was later opened and found to contain six transparent bags with colored packaging filled with marijuana, carefully concealed.

The following day, the defendant arrived to collect the parcel. He admitted the parcel belonged to him, leading to his immediate arrest and referral to the Anti-Narcotics Directorate. Authorities later obtained permission to search his residence.

During the search, officers found additional items in his room, including marijuana seeds, a precision weighing scale, packaging materials, and a container with suspected drug traces.

Investigations revealed that the defendant ordered the parcel for both trafficking and personal use, and used a false name to avoid detection.

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# Strong Signals of Security Unity

Washington reaffirms long-term military commitment to Bahrain

The United States has reaffirmed its strong defence and security partnership with the Kingdom of Bahrain during a high-level visit by CENTCOM Commander Admiral Brad Cooper.

In a statement, US Ambassador to Bahrain Stephanie Hallett said the visit this week reflected the deep military cooperation between the two countries, built over decades of joint training, integration, preparedness, and shared strategic interests.

She said she was honoured to welcome Admiral Cooper to Bahrain, noting that both sides expressed appreciation for the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, particularly in the face of regional security challenges.

The US ambassador highlighted the close coordination between US forces and the Bahrain Defence Force, stressing that the partnership remains central to protecting Bahrain's sovereignty and security.



HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa received US CENTCOM Commander Admiral Brad Cooper during his visit to Bahrain on April 13.



**“We are here. We have been here. And we are not going anywhere”**

STEPHANIE HALLETT,  
US AMBASSADOR TO BAHRAIN

“We are here. We have been here. And we are not going anywhere,” the statement emphasized, underscoring Washington's long-term

commitment to Bahrain. The visit comes as both countries continue to strengthen military cooperation and regional security coordination.

# Three Arrested Over BD4,700 Theft in Gudaibiya



The Ministry of Interior confirmed that the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation and Forensic Science arrested three individuals aged 32 to 36, for allegedly stealing BD 4,700 from a citizen in the Qudaibiya area.

Upon receiving the report, authorities immediately launched search and investigation operations, collecting evidence that led to identifying and apprehending the suspects. The stolen money was also recovered and seized as part of the case.

# Flags Risks to Maritime and Energy Security



Ahmed Salman bin Musallam, President of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly and Speaker of the Parliament

Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam, President of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly and Speaker of Bahrain's Council of Representatives, warned that recent developments in the Middle East mark a dangerous escalation threatening regional and global security.

Speaking in Istanbul during a coordination meeting of the Asian Parliamentary Group alongside the 152nd Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly, he said tensions have risen due to Iranian attacks on GCC states and Jordan.

He said these actions violate sovereignty and international law, risking further destabilization of the region.

Al Musallam also noted concerns over reported disruptions

in the Strait of Hormuz, warning of serious impacts on global energy, trade, and supply chains.

He urged stronger parliamentary action and called for support of an emergency proposal condemning the attacks and reaffirming respect for international law, civilian protection, and freedom of navigation.



## IPU Assembly in Istanbul

- Bahrain reaffirmed its focus on environmental innovation and youth empowerment.
- Leaders stressed climate cooperation and support for developing countries.
- Held talks with Ukraine and Germany to strengthen parliamentary ties.
- Bahrain and the UAE proposed an emergency item at the IPU on regiergardingal attacks.
- UN resolutions supported Bahrain's position.

# Fake Link Scam

TDT | Manama  
Rehab Mohammad

A man was sentenced to 15 years in prison and fined BD 10,000 after being convicted of importing 1.2 kilograms of marijuana hidden inside a postal parcel sent from an Asian country, in one of the most serious drug smuggling cases detected before delivery.

According to court records, customs officers became suspicious of a parcel during routine inspections at the airport using an X-ray scanner. The shipment was later opened and found to contain six transparent bags filled with marijuana, carefully concealed.

The following day, the defendant arrived to collect the parcel. He admitted the parcel belonged to him, leading to his immediate arrest and referral to the Anti-Narcotics Directorate. Authorities later obtained permission to search his residence.

Investigations revealed that the defendant ordered the parcel for both trafficking and personal use, and used a false name to avoid detection. Laboratory tests confirmed the presence of cannabis in the seized substances, and his urine sample also tested positive.

# Over 900 complaints exposed



TDT | Manama  
Hasan Barakat

More than 900 complaints from residents across Capital districts 8 and 9 have exposed growing pressure on roads, pavements and basic municipal services, according to a detailed presentation delivered during the Capital Municipal Council session.

Covering the period from January 2024 to March 2026, the report was part of a comprehensive review of municipal and service requirements, detailing daily challenges faced by residents across both districts.

District 8 recorded 625 requests, nearly double the 339 logged in District 9, pointing to heavier service pressure despite having fewer areas. The figures suggest a higher concentration of infrastructure-related issues, particularly in residential zones.

Across both districts, road and pavement maintenance accounted for the majority of complaints submitted to the Ministry of Works, confirming a consistent pattern of demand centred on deteriorating surfaces, uneven walkways and water accumulation.

In response, authorities processed hundreds of requests, achieving completion rates over seventy per cent in both districts. District 9 recorded a slightly higher rate despite covering a broader geographical area.

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The Ministry of Labour extends its gratitude and appreciation to companies that have employed Bahraini nationals during the period between (January 1 - March 31, 2026).

The Ministry also extends its gratitude to the following companies which have achieved the highest Bahraini employment rates during this period.



A comprehensive list of the companies and organizations supporting national employment can be viewed by visiting the website [www.mol.gov.bh](http://www.mol.gov.bh)



# Secrets of Stones

From 130-Year-Old Ring to Bahrain's Gemstone Legacy

- Rare stones with included fossils
- Strong demand in Bahrain for pearls, agate, and turquoise
- Belief that gemstones carry energy



Every stone has its own energy and vibration, many visitors feel a positive change when they choose the right stone

- HUSSEIN AL DARAJI, OWNER OF ROOH AL AHGAR JEWELRY



A natural star ruby weighing more than 2.5 kilograms, and cost more than BD35,000



A 130-year-old agate

**Ghadeer Alkumaish**  
TDT | Manama

A 130-year-old family heirloom has shaped the life of Hussein Al Daraji, owner of Rooh Al Ahgar Jewelry in Manama's Gold Souq, who has spent more than 35 years in the world of gemstones.

The journey began in childhood when he received an agate ring passed down through generations—from his grandfather to his father and then to him. The ring, he said, opened the door to a lifelong fascination with stones, history, and heritage.

"My passion for gemstones began when I was young and saw my father caring for stones," Al Daraji said. "The first experience I remember clearly was when he gave me an old ring inherited from his father. From that moment, I realized every stone carries a story and a soul."

He recalled being told that the ring contained a stone believed in traditional lore to stop bleeding when placed on a wound. The stone, known as bloodstone or heliotrope, has been associated with ancient beliefs across various cultures, including Roman traditions where it was linked to healing practices in folk medicine.

In an exclusive interview, Al Daraji also shared rare examples from his career, including a natural star ruby weighing more

than 2.5 kilograms. After cutting and polishing, the stone was valued at around BD 35,000. He noted that similar high-quality stones, depending on rarity and size, have previously reached values in the millions globally.

Over the years, what began as childhood curiosity developed into a full profession, eventually leading him to establish Rooh Al Ahgar in the Manama Gold Souq.

### Criteria

He explained that gemstone valuation follows established criteria known as the "4Cs"—colour, clarity, cut, and carat weight.

Among the rarest pieces he has encountered, he highlighted stones containing fossil inclusions, including one with a fossilised insect preserved for millions of years, describing it as both a scientific and aesthetic rarity.

In Bahrain, he said, customers are particularly drawn to

natural pearls as well as stones like agate and turquoise, which are often associated with purity, calmness, and protection.

From a single inherited ring to a lifelong career, Al Daraji's

journey reflects a deep connection between heritage, belief, and craftsmanship—one that continues to evolve with every stone that passes through his hands.

# Rejections, Disputes and Delays Surface



There is no clear upward trend in bankruptcy cases

- DR HISHAM AL ASHIRI, MP



This mix-up misleads the public

- ZAINAB ABDULAMEER, MP

### Courts Reject Most Bankruptcy Filings

### MPs Clash Over Rent Law Mix-Up

### New System Proposed for Service Delays

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

### Most Bankruptcy Cases in Bahrain Rejected Since 2023

Most bankruptcy and re-organisation cases filed in Bahrain since the start of 2023 have been dismissed, according to the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Waqf, which is currently drafting amendments to the law.

In a written response to MP Hisham Al Ashiri, the ministry revealed that 48 out of 60 cases already ruled on by courts were rejected or dismissed.

The remaining cases ended in various outcomes, including settlements, withdrawals, closure of proceedings, or rulings that claims could not be heard.

A further 16 cases are still under review by the courts, while two have been suspended.

The data covers the period from early 2023 to the end of the first quarter of 2026.

The ministry said the cases were linked to different financial and administrative conditions faced by individual businesses.

It added that a joint study with the Economic Development Board found that bankruptcy rates in Bahrain remain relatively low compared to other countries, with no clear upward trend despite global economic pressures.

### Confusion Over Rent Law and Housing Proposal

Confusion emerged in Parliament over a proposed amendment to Bahrain's rent law and a separate issue concerning bachelors' housing.

MP Zainab Abdulameer said the Muharraq Municipal Council had mixed up two different proposals and failed to provide a written response on the draft law under discussion.

She clarified that MPs were debating an amendment to Ar-



People deserve answers, not delays

- DR MUNEEER SEROOR, MP



ticle 6 of the rent law proposed by MP Mohammed Al Olaiwi, not a separate housing-related proposal submitted by MP Mohammed Al Rifai.

Abdulameer criticised the confusion, stating that the council's comments in the media referred to a different proposal and not the draft law discussed in Parliament. She stressed the importance of accuracy and transparency in legislative discussions.

### Call for National Platform to Track Delayed Services

A proposal has been submitted in Parliament to establish a national platform to track delayed government services and projects.

MP Muneer Seroor said the initiative was prompted by repeated delays highlighted in reports by the National Audit Office.

The proposed system would monitor the progress of transactions and services, identify delays, and clarify responsibility.

It would also allow users to submit complaints and track cases where compensation may be required.

Seroor said the goal is to improve accountability and ensure that citizens receive services within a clear timeframe after meeting all requirements.

## Relief Flights



The Kerala Social Forum (BKSF) and the Bahrain Malayalee Business Forum (BMBF) have jointly launched special relief charter flights to support Indian expatriates facing travel disruptions amid the ongoing Middle East crisis. The initiative, organized on April 14 and 15 at the Golden Tulip Hotel in Manama, offered a historic all-inclusive travel package priced at BD 220, covering airfare, ground transport, and meals. (By Pradeep Puravankara)

## Society Praise



Members of the Bahrain India Society are seen during a recent Board meeting. They expressed deep appreciation and respect for the leadership of the Kingdom of Bahrain, commending its continued efforts in safeguarding national security, maintaining stability, and ensuring the well-being of citizens and residents. The Society also highlighted the vital role of Bahrain's security institutions—including the Bahrain Defence Force, National Guard, and Civil Defence—in preserving public safety and strengthening social cohesion. The meeting further reviewed ongoing community initiatives and discussed upcoming programmes aimed at enhancing cooperation and cultural ties between Bahraini and Indian communities, in line with the Kingdom's vision of unity, inclusiveness, and sustainable development. (By Pradeep Puravankara)

# BD500 Monthly Fines Proposed for Unfinished Buildings

Hasan Barakat  
TDT | Manama

Unfinished buildings left idle for years across Bahrain could soon face monthly fines of around BD500 under a new proposal discussed by the Capital Municipal Council.

The plan, submitted by council member Dr Bashar Ahmadi, aims to tackle long-delayed construction projects and improve the country's urban appearance.

Under the proposal, projects that remain incomplete beyond a set timeframe would be closely monitored.

Property owners would first receive official notifications, and if construction does not resume within the allowed period, monthly fines starting at BD500 would be imposed. The penalties could increase gradually if delays continue without valid reasons.

The framework is designed to introduce accountability, ensuring that stalled projects are managed under clear rules rather than being left unresolved.

However, the proposal also allows flexibility. Fines may be paused in special cases such as legal disputes, inheritance issues, or other exceptional circumstances.



Unfinished buildings, specially along main roads, have a direct impact on the country's image and overall appeal

- DR BASHAR AHMADI



Stalled buildings in Bahrain

Under the new plan, buildings left incomplete for more than a year—particularly those facing main roads—could have their façades temporarily used for licensed advertising under municipal supervision.

Officials say the move is designed to enhance the appearance of these areas while making practical use of inactive structures, turning them into regulated elements that contribute positively to the cityscape.



## Grandmothers Learn Life-Saving Skills

Ghadeer Alkumaish  
TDT | Manama

A group of senior women participated in a life-saving educational workshop titled "First Aid with Grandma."

The workshop was held at the Her Highness Shaikha Hessa bint Ali Al Khalifa Center for Senior Women in West Riffa, in collaboration with the She Medic Training Institute.

The initiative targeted women aged 50 to 70, with around 40 participants attending the session.

It aimed to raise awareness about basic first aid and strengthen their role in handling family emergencies.

Organisers highlighted the importance of equipping mothers and grandmothers with essential life-saving skills, given their central role in caring for children and grandchildren daily.

International life support trainer Husnia Karimi led the workshop, providing simplified



Basic first aid awareness can save a life

explanations and practical demonstrations on dealing with common household emergencies such as cuts, burns, and choking incidents.

The session also introduced the basics of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), emphasizing interactive learning tailored to the participants' age group.

The Center's Director, Haya Al Nuaimi, said the workshop is part of a broader series of awareness programmes aimed at empowering senior women and involving them in community health education initiatives.

She noted that the programme combines their life experience with practical skills that can

help protect families.

Participants expressed appreciation for the initiative, saying it boosted their confidence in responding to emergencies.

They also described the training as meaningful and hoped the knowledge gained would be passed down to future generations as a lasting family legacy.

## Expatriate Insurance Coverage Hits 473,323

Mohammed Darwish  
TDT | Manama

Number of insured Bahraini nationals across both the public and private sectors increased steadily

Number of non-Bahrainis covered in the private sector grew

### Social Insurance Figures

- Individuals who stop contributing to the insurance scheme are not tracked separately once coverage ends.
- Total pension benefits paid across both public and private sectors stood at **BD810.112 million in 2023** and **BD785.040 million in 2024**, covering both Bahraini and non-Bahraini beneficiaries.
- End-of-service gratuity for expatriates was included in the scheme only from **March 2024**.
- Q3 2025 wage breakdown:**
- 32% of insured Bahrainis in the private sector earned BD200-BD399
- 33% of Bahrainis in the public sector earned above BD1,000
- 71% of expatriates in the private sector earned below BD200

Insurance coverage for expatriates working in Bahrain's private sector has reached 473,323 by the end of the third quarter of 2025, according to figures provided by the Social Insurance Organisation in a response sent to MP Jalal Kadhem.

The data also shows that the number of insured Bahraini nationals across both the public and private sectors increased steadily over the same period, rising from 151,659 in 2023 to 154,894 in 2024, and reaching 157,213 by Q3 2025.

Over the same timeframe, the number of non-Bahrainis covered in the private sector grew from 458,768 in 2023 to 467,267 in 2024, before reaching 473,323 in 2025.

The organisation noted that expatriates working in the public sector are covered only for work injury insurance, with no separate headcount provided.

Combined insurance con-

tributions from both sectors stood at BD418.657 million in 2023 and rose to BD437.448 million in 2024, based on consolidated financial reporting after the merger of the two funds under Decree-Law No. 21 of 2020.

The number of living retirees receiving pensions also increased, from 84,612 in 2023 to 85,607 in 2024 and 86,003 by the end of Q3 2025.



Professor Marike Patrani Paulsson with a Young ICCA Board representative

## Arbitration Future Talks

The Secretary-General of the Council for International Dispute Resolution of the Kingdom of Bahrain, Professor Marike Patrani Paulsson, met with the newly formed Young ICCA Board in Madrid on the sidelines of the 27th ICCA Congress.

The meeting focused on strengthening cooperation between the two sides and reviewing Bahrain's initiatives aimed at supporting national talent and

promoting regional innovation in the field of international dispute resolution.

Both sides also discussed ways to expand youth participation in arbitration, alongside enhancing training and professional development programmes. The discussions highlighted efforts to strengthen the arbitration ecosystem and create wider opportunities for young lawyers and legal practitioners across the region.

# NBB announces three-month financing and credit cards deferral option

For customers via an innovative Digital Platform

TDT | Manama

The National Bank of Bahrain (NBB) has announced a three-month deferral option for its retail customers, effective from 15th April 2026. This initiative falls in strategic alignment with the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) directives, aimed at providing financial flexibility to the community during the current period.

The deferral applies to Per-



All applications are submitted through a simplified experience, allowing customers to avail the service without the need to visit branches.

sonal Finance, Mortgage Finance and Auto Finance instalments, in addition to credit card skip payments, offering customers a window to reallocate their monthly liquidity towards other priorities.

Commenting on the announcement, Subah Abdullatif Al Zayani, Chief Executive - Retail Banking at NBB, said, "This measure falls in line with the

directives of the Central Bank of Bahrain, reflecting our ongoing commitment to standing by our customers during the current period. Through an innovative digital platform, customers can easily and seamlessly apply for the instalment deferral option, without the need to visit the branch. Thereby enabling greater flexibility and convenience, allowing them to manage their

personal finances with greater confidence."

The last day for eligible customers to apply for the instalment deferral request is 18th April 2026 through a dedicated digital platform, which is available via a link on the Bank's website and its official Instagram page. Credit card skip payment requests will be accepted through the Contact Centre at

17214433, as well as through the upcoming digital platform, until 30th April 2026.

NBB has also ensured that all applications are submitted through a simplified experience, allowing customers to avail the service without the need to visit branches.

The announcement reinforces NBB's role as a national institution actively working to help safeguard financial stability for citizens and residents across the Kingdom.

# Zain Bahrain's OneCX launches new generation of AI-powered voice agent in Bahraini dialect

TDT | Manama

Zain Bahrain, through its dedicated customer experience portfolio OneCX, has announced the launch of Bahrain's first generative AI powered voice agent, marking a major advancement in AI-led customer engagement across the Kingdom.

The newly launched solution reinforces Zain Bahrain's com-

● **First Enterprise grade generative AI voice agent in commercial use in Bahrain, enabling natural, human like conversations in the Bahraini dialect.**

● **OneCX sets a new benchmark for how organizations connect with their customers**

mitment to innovation and customer-centric transformation by empowering organizations to engage with customers through

natural, human-like conversational voice experiences in the Bahraini dialect, delivering culturally relevant engagement

at scale. The AI voice agent is an enterprise-grade platform that uses AI to analyze customer sentiment, summarize calls, and automate workflows. It also connects with systems in real time to handle tasks such as ticket inquiries and service requests, with the ability to seamlessly transfer to human agents when needed.

Designed for inbound and outbound customer engagements,

the solution allows organizations to use multiple AI voice personas tailored to different business needs and customer journeys, allowing AI adoption to scale across operations while maintaining high service quality.

Abdulla Salmeen, Zain Bahrain's Chief Customer Care Officer commented: "With the launch of Bahrain's first generative AI voice agent speaking

the Bahraini dialect, OneCX is setting a new benchmark for how organizations connect with their customers."

This launch further reinforces Zain Bahrain's position as a trusted partner in customer experience and digital transformation, aligned with its vision to lead in innovative digital solutions and advance CX standards across Bahrain and the region.

## JOB VACANCY

Bahrain Aluminum Extrusion Company (BALEXCO)

Invite applications for the following positions: -

### PRIMO SYSTEM SALES MANAGER

Qualification:

- BSc, MTEC/BTEC in Mechanical / Civil / Architectural Engineering
- Minimum seven years' experience in reputed organization with good knowledge on façade systems, Auto CAD, accessories and aluminum profiles.
- Good knowledge of architectural aluminum systems (Orgadata-Autocad, windows, doors & skylight) designing, engineering drawing, and estimating

Job Responsibilities:

Supervise and perform estimation, design, projects, fabrication, quality requirements of department for Primo systems products and achieving the planned sales targets by strategic planning, leadership, direction and budget compliance. Provide technical services support to architects, consultants, quantity surveyors, contractors and customers and ensure adequate support for PRIMO products systems and engineered products. Develop Primo marketing strategies to identify prospective clients, establishing strategic partnership with key business accounts to achieve maximum sale order for PRIMO system.

Software skills

- ORGADATA
- Microsoft
- CAD & other design tools

### SALES & MARKETING HEAD/MANAGER

Qualification:

- Minimum Bachelor degree in Sales & Marketing, Business Administration, Mechanical Engineering, or related major. Preferably MBA in Marketing with a degree in Engineering.
- Minimum of 7 years' hands-on experience in Sales & Marketing managing lead position, preferably in the Aluminum Extrusion field or other Alumn. Downstream industrial organization.
- Familiar with GCC & middle east markets.

Job Responsibilities:

Take over, manage and lead the overall responsibility for sales department activities and operations. Planning, organizing, leading, controlling sales team to achieve organizational goals by setting objectives, delegating tasks, fostering development, monitoring performance, ensuring efficient operations and successful outcomes. Explore markets and prospective clients for BALEXCO's products in accordance with BALEXCO's long-term goal. Committed to achieve the agreed target.

Preferred Candidate profile would be

- Age between 35 - 50 years
- Preferably Bahrainis
- Good command in both Arabic and English language
- Travel without limitations for new markets and visiting customers.
- Sales experience in the aluminum downstream industry within the GCC.

Applicants to submit CV along with a covering letter stating the current and expected salary package, notice period for joining, a passport size photo within 7 days to email: [careers@balexco.com.bh](mailto:careers@balexco.com.bh) or in sealed envelope mentioning the applied position, addressed to - GM Office, Bldg. 267, Road 105 / Block 601/Sitra Industrial Area, Kingdom of Bahrain



## Joyalukkas celebrates historic entry into Australia

● **With Bollywood actor and brand ambassador Kajol Devgan, in Melbourne**

TDT | Manama

Joyalukkas, the world's favourite jeweller, has achieved a landmark milestone in its global growth journey with the inauguration of its second showroom in Australia - marking the brand's official and celebrated entry into its 12th country. The grand opening took place in Melbourne on 12 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 Ms. Kajol Devgan, who officially opened the showroom in the presence of distinguished dignitaries, including Mr. Lee Tarlamis MP, (Labor Member for the South Eastern Metropolitan Region), Mr. Anish Rajan- Consul General of India, Melbourne, Ms. Cassandra Fernando MP-Federal Member for Holt, Mr. Jim Memeti- Councilor(ex- Mayor), Mr. John Paul Alukkas, CEO Joyalukkas Jewellery; Ms. Sonia Alukkas, Director - International Operations..

**A DEFINING CHAPTER IN A GLOBAL STORY**

Australia's entry into the Joyalukkas network is far more



Bollywood actor and brand ambassador Kajol Devgan inaugurated the Joyalukkas showroom in Melbourne, marking the brand's official entry into Australia. She was joined by Mr. Lee Tarlamis MP, (Labor Member for the South Eastern Metropolitan Region), Mr. Anish Rajan- Consul General of India, Melbourne, Ms. Cassandra Fernando MP-Federal Member for Holt, Mr. Jim Memeti- Councilor(ex- Mayor), Mr. John Paul Alukkas, CEO Joyalukkas Jewellery; Ms. Sonia Alukkas, Director - International Operations.

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.

**WORLD-CLASS SHOWROOMS FOR A WORLD-CLASS MARKET**

The new Melbourne showroom has been conceived as a destination in its own right - a space where master artisanship, 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.

**IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

Mr. John Paul Alukkas | CEO of Joyalukkas Jewellery  
"Melbourne, we have arrived - and we couldn't be more excited. This city has a spirit all its own: creative, welcoming and full of life. It feels like the perfect home for our second showroom in Australia. Whether you've trusted Joyalukkas for years or are discovering us for the first time, our doors are open with the same promise - exceptional jewellery, genuine care and complete transparency. This isn't just another store opening. It's a promise to Melbourne. A promise that when life gives you a moment worth treasuring, we'll be here to help you honour it with something beautiful. Welcome to the Joyalukkas family."

# Limited-time staycation await at The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain

TDI | Manama

For a limited time only, The Ritz-Carlton, Bahrain unveils a collection of exclusive stay experiences designed to inspire last-minute escapes and unforgettable moments. Available for a short seasonal window, these curated offers invite guests to secure their getaway before availability slips away.

At the heart of the collection, the Villa Reconnect Offer presents a rare opportunity to indulge in privacy and space with a Stay 3, Pay 2 experience starting from BHD 700 net. Reserved exclusively for Bahrain residents and available on select days, this villa offer for up to six guests is expected to fill quickly—making early booking essential.

For those seeking a spontaneous city retreat, the Enhanced Staycation packages offer effortless luxury starting from BHD 125 net, while the upgraded option at BHD 160 net includes a confirmed room enhancement. With limited room availability



and high demand for weekend stays, guests are encouraged to

plan ahead to secure their preferred dates.



Weekends become even more sought-after with the Brunch &

Stay experience, available from Thursday to Saturday. Starting

from BHD 179 net, this popular combination of vibrant dining at Cantina Kahlo and a relaxing overnight stay is expected to book out fast.

Wellness seekers can take advantage of the RC Spa Package, starting from BHD 175 net, combining a rejuvenating 60-minute massage with a restful stay. With limited treatment slots available daily, early reservations are highly recommended.

For a quick escape, the Daycation Offer provides a refreshing daytime retreat starting from BHD 90 net. Available exclusively for Bahrain residents, this experience offers access to the resort's facilities from 10 AM to 5 PM—ideal for those looking to unwind without an overnight stay.

With limited availability across all offers, now is the time to act. Whether planning a weekend getaway, a wellness retreat, or a day of relaxation, these experiences are designed to be enjoyed now—not later.

For reservations or more information, please call +973 1758 6868.

## Malabar Gold & Diamonds Unveils Hyderabad Artistry Store, Strengthens Play in Curated Luxury Jewellery

TDI | Manama

Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 5th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 445 showrooms across 14 countries, has unveiled its Artistry Store in Hyderabad at Jubilee Hills Road, positioning it as a one-of-a-kind curated luxury jewellery destination in India. The launch marks a decisive shift towards highly personalised, relationship-led retail where craftsmanship, exclusivity and consultation-driven experiences come together in a refined, immersive format.

The inauguration was by Bollywood actress and brand ambassador of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Kareena Kapoor Khan in the presence of distinguished guests from business, luxury and media circles. The occasion was further marked by the presence of Mr. M. P. Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group; Mr. Abdul Salam KP, Vice Chairman of Malabar Group; Mr. Mayankutty C, Senior Director of Malabar Group; Mr. Asher O, Managing Director - India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds; Mr. Nishad AK, Malabar Group Executive Director; Mr. KP Veerankutty, Malabar Group Executive Director; Mr. Siraj P K, Retail Head - Malabar Gold & Diamonds and Mr. Muhammad Shareef K, Zonal Head - Hyderabad, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Commenting on the launch, Mr. M. P. Ahammad, Chairman, Malabar Group, said, "This showroom reflects our strategic evolution towards a more curated and relationship-led



approach to jewellery retail. As customer expectations become more refined, the need for personalised engagement, craftsmanship and trust becomes even more important. This store has been designed to deliver on those expectations, while reinforcing our commitment to quality, transparency and long-term value."

Speaking at the launch, Kareena Kapoor Khan said, "Jewellery today is deeply personal. It reflects identity, milestones and legacy. What stands out here is the attention to detail and the way the entire experience is designed around the customer. It feels intimate, thoughtful and

truly luxurious."

Spanning over 20,000 sq. ft., the store has been designed as a high-touch luxury environment for discerning customers seeking privacy, personalisation and deeper engagement. Positioned as one of the most distinctive jewellery retail concepts in the country, it brings together curated design language, global craftsmanship influences and immersive buying experiences under one roof, moving firmly away from transaction-led retail towards a more considered and relationship-first approach.

The showroom presents a highly curated world of rare, narrative-driven jewellery,

positioned as a one-of-a-kind expression of craftsmanship in India. It functions as a living archive where heritage techniques, contemporary interpretation and global influences converge seamlessly. The Artistry format focuses on non-replicable signature collections shaped with intent, detail and storytelling. From modified old European cut diamonds to Royal Polki traditions and temple-inspired artistry, each creation offers depth, provenance and individuality. Every piece stands as a statement for collectors valuing rarity, design integrity and emotional legacy.

A curated world of signature

collections defines the one-of-a-kind positioning of the Hyderabad Artistry showroom. Vintage uses modified old European cut diamonds with Victorian elegance. Viraaz showcases royal polki crafted by master artisans. Temple Jewellery draws from sacred temple motifs. Victorian Reverie reimagines the era with multiple diamond cuts, anchored by a four-way convertible necklace with earrings and rings, designed by Malabar Gold & Diamonds for Alia Bhatt for Cannes Film Festival 2025.

The experience is built across multiple zones. The Bespoke and Design Zone enables end-to-end customisation through

private design studios and consultation suites, allowing customers to co-create jewellery with precision. The Artisan and Craftsmanship Zone brings live detailing and workmanship into view, reinforcing transparency and authenticity in the creation process.

The Product Discovery Zone offers access to over one lakh designs along with a curated selection of rare and high-value pieces, balancing scale with exclusivity. Assisted Luxury services including personal shopping and concierge-led engagement further elevate the experience, while a Private Luxury Lounge enables appointment-only consultations for high-value acquisitions in a discreet and elevated setting.

The showroom also reinforces Malabar's long-standing trust framework built on purity, transparency, certification-led assurance and structured buyback policies, positioning jewellery as both a legacy asset and a considered investment.

With this launch, Malabar Gold & Diamonds strengthens its presence in Hyderabad, a market with deep cultural affinity towards jewellery and strong participation from affluent families, professionals, collectors and influential networks shaping high-value consumption. The store at Jubilee Hills Road 10 stands as a calibrated milestone in the brand's premiumisation journey, redefining curated luxury retail in India through design-led storytelling, elevated craftsmanship and personalised engagement.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

TWO THINGS ARE INFINITE: THE UNIVERSE AND HUMAN STUPIDITY; AND I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THE UNIVERSE  
ALBERT EINSTEIN



TOP 4 TWEETS

01



In a world moving toward greater fragmentation & sharper power competition, international law is indispensable. Without it, instability spreads, mistrust deepens & conflicts spiral out of control. This applies everywhere – and it applies urgently to the conflict in the Middle East.

@antonioguterres

02



Good discussion with General Grynke-wich, @NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe. As war in Ukraine continues and Russian defence industry produces at scale, Europe must do more to boost investment, ramp up production capacity and increase speed.

We need an innovative industry to produce both high-end complex systems and cheaper new technologies. To this end, we can learn from Ukraine's expertise and experience.

In an increasingly complex security environment, a strong relationship between the EU and NATO is central to European security.

@vonderleyen

03



No amount of fraud is too big or too small. If you're defrauding the taxpayer, you ought to go to prison, and anybody who's helping you ought to go to prison too.

@VP

## Nine vessels turned back in 48 hours

AFP | Washington, United States

The US military said yesterday that it successfully stopped nine vessels from sailing out of Iranian ports during the first 48 hours of a naval blockade against the Islamic republic.

"Nine vessels have complied with direction from US forces to turn around and return toward an Iranian port or coastal area," US Central Command (CENTCOM), which is responsible for American troops in the Middle East, said in a post on X.

"No vessels have made it

past US forces," CENTCOM said.

However, maritime tracking data appeared to contradict the US assertion.

Tracking data from Tuesday indicated at least three ships sailing from Iranian ports crossed the Strait of Hormuz, though some vessels taking the route later turned back.

The three ships were among at least seven Iran-linked vessels that passed through the strait after Washington's blockade came into effect at 1400 GMT on Monday, according to maritime data provider Kpler.

## Israel army chief orders 'Hezbollah kill zone'

Israel's military chief of staff said he had ordered areas south of Lebanon's Litani River

to be turned into a Hezbollah "kill zone" as troops pressed a major offensive there.

# Shuttle diplomacy

Pakistani delegation arrived in Tehran bearing a new message from Washington, with President Donald Trump indicating talks could resume this week.

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran's military threatened yesterday to shut down Red Sea trade unless the United States lifted its naval blockade on Tehran's ports, saying the ceasefire was at risk.

US Vice President JD Vance, who led last weekend's abortive talks, said the Islamic republic was being offered a "grand bargain" to end the six-week war and address the decades-old

Speaking to the New York Post, Trump said a new round of talks could take place in Pakistan "over the next two days", while telling Fox Business the war was "very close to being over".

dispute over Tehran's nuclear programme.

But for now, both sides seemed intent on keeping up the pressure.

Speaking to the New York Post

on Tuesday, Trump said a new round of talks could take place in Pakistan "over the next two days", while telling Fox Business the war was "very close to being over".

A senior US official told AFP there was "continued engagement between the US and Iran to reach a deal", but denied reports Trump's administration had consented in principle to lengthen

the truce.

On the Iranian side, a foreign ministry spokesman said "several messages" had been exchanged via Islamabad since talks wrapped up on Sunday.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi welcomed in Tehran yesterday a Pakistani delegation led by army chief Asim Munir that Iranian state television said was to relay a new US message and discuss a second round of talks.

## Starmer says 'won't yield' to Trump's Mideast war threats

AFP | London, United Kingdom

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer yesterday said he would not "yield" to pressure to join the Iran war after US President Donald Trump threatened to scrap a UK trade deal.

"We're not going to get dragged into this war. It is not our war," Starmer told parliament.

"I'm not going to change my mind. I'm not going to yield. It is not in our national

interest to join this war," the Labour leader added.

In a phone interview with Sky News, Trump threatened to alter an agreement struck with Britain that limits the impact of his US tariffs blitz.

Trump, who has repeatedly slammed Starmer's policies, said strains in the relationship with the NATO ally would "not at all" negatively affect King Charles III's state visit to the United States this month.

In reference to the royal trip, Starmer told parliament that the two nations' "long standing bonds... are far greater than anyone who occupies any particular office at any particular time".

London and Washington concluded a trade agreement last year capping US tariffs at 10 percent on most British manufactured goods.

In return, the UK agreed

to open its markets further to American ethanol and beef, sparking concerns in the country. At the time, it was an advantageous agreement for London, which benefited from the lowest tariffs granted by the US.

This advantage has, however, been weakened since the US Supreme Court struck down some tariffs and Washington retaliated by imposing a temporary 10-percent tariff on almost all of its imports pending a new tariff regime by July.

No 'exit plan'

While Trump praised his good relationship with Starmer at the time of the agreement, ties have since deteriorated, particularly over the war in the Middle East.

Starmer angered Trump by refusing to allow British bases to be used for the US's initial strikes on Iran last month.

He later agreed to a US request to use two British military bases for a "specific and limited defensive purpose".

"It's a relationship where when we asked them for help, they were not there," Trump told Sky News.

"When we needed them, they were not there. When we didn't need them, they were not there. They still aren't there," he insisted.

Starmer's Labour government, which has sought to build bridges with Trump since his return to the White House in January 2025, has recently hardened its rhetoric toward its historic ally. Finance Minister Rachel Reeves on Tuesday hit out at the "folly" of Trump launching a war with Iran "without a clear exit plan".

Starmer told parliament on Monday that Trump was wrong

to threaten to destroy Iranian "civilisation", while on Sunday Health Minister Wes Streeting criticised Trump's language as "incendiary, provocative, outrageous".

Against this backdrop, Reeves was to see US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent in Washington on Wednesday as part of an International Monetary Fund meeting to

detail the economic impact of the conflict.



An aerial photograph shows a destroyed statue of the late Syrian president Hafez al-Assad, as a long line of Iraqi diesel-laden tanker trucks line up along the Tartus-Baniyas highway waiting to unload their cargo at the Baniyas port refinery on the Mediterranean Sea

## Sri Lanka repatriates 238 stranded Iranian sailors: minister

AFP | Colombo, Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka has repatriated 238 Iranian sailors stranded in the South Asian country after one of their warships was torpedoed by a US submarine, a minister said yesterday.

Deputy Defence Minister Aruna Jayasekara said 32 sailors rescued from the IRIS Dena -- a

frigate attacked on March 4 just off Sri Lanka -- and another 206 from the IRIS Bushehr left on Tuesday.

"A few sailors from the IRIS Bushehr are staying back to operate the vessel, but 206 joined those rescued from the IRIS Dena and returned home last night in a chartered aircraft," Jayasekara said.

Official sources said 15 Iranian sailors will remain in Sri Lanka to operate the IRIS Bushehr, which is anchored off Trincomalee in the northeast of the island.

The attack on the IRIS Dena brought the Middle East conflict into the Indian Ocean, killing 104 sailors in the early days of the US and Israeli war against Iran.

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



1457 BC

Battle of Megiddo: Egyptian forces of Thutmose III defeat a large Canaanite coalition under the King of Kadesh. First battle recorded with a reliable account.

1705

Queen Anne of England knights scientist Isaac Newton at Trinity College, Cambridge



1900 1948

US Post Office issues its first stamp booklets containing 12, 24, or 48 two-cent stamps [1]

Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC) forms in Paris

## 11 nations urge 'coordinated' economic support amid Mideast war

AFP | London, United Kingdom

The finance ministers of 11 countries including Britain and Japan called yesterday for "coordinated emergency support" to help countries hit by disruptions from the war in the Middle East.

"We call on the IMF and World Bank to provide a co-ordinated emergency support offer for countries in need, tailored to country circumstances and drawing on the full range and flexibility of their tool-kits," the ministers said in a joint statement issued by the UK government.

"Renewed hostilities, a widening of the conflict or continued disruption in the Strait of Hormuz would pose serious additional risks to global energy security, supply chains, and economic and financial stability," said the statement.

"Even with a durable resolution of the conflict, impacts on growth, inflation and markets will persist."

"We reaffirm our unwavering support for Ukraine and

our determination to maintain economic pressure on Russia," it said.

"Russia's war in Ukraine, now in its fifth year, continues to negatively impact the global economy. Russia must not benefit from this conflict, and as market conditions allow to avoid exacerbating disruptions to supply chains and energy prices, we will continue collaborating on ways to increase pressure."

The countries that signed the statement were Australia, Finland, Ireland, Japan, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom.

Britain's finance minister Rachel Reeves, who was attending the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's spring meetings in Washington, reaffirmed her country's willingness to play its part to ensure free navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

"My Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, and the French President Emmanuel Macron are hosting talks in Paris on Fri-

day this week about how we can, when there is a ceasefire, a proper ceasefire, how we can help that navigation through the Strait of Hormuz," she said at a forum organised by CNBC television.



A striking fact about the Middle East conflict is how critical one narrow waterway has become: nearly a fifth of the world's oil supply passes through the Strait of Hormuz, making it one of the most strategically sensitive flashpoints in any regional war. Even minor tensions there can send global energy prices sharply higher.

## China supports 'momentum of peace talks'

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Iranian counterpart that Beijing "supports maintaining the momentum of the ceasefire and peace talks" as Pakistani officials landed in Tehran to discuss a second round of US-Iran negotiations to end the war.

## Israel hails Lebanon talks as chance to end Hezbollah

Israel hailed the opening of direct talks with Beirut as a "historic opportunity" that could end Hezbollah's grip on Lebanon.

Israeli government spokesman David Mencer also said there was "no ceasefire discussion" with the Iran-backed militant group.

U-TURN WITH UK

## Words Really Matter!



P. UNNIKRISHNAN

The beauty of Bahrain lies in its ability to evolve. It is a nation that continuously embraces subtle yet significant change, reflecting the shifting mindset of a world constantly rethinking how societies grow, develop, and coexist.

Today, beyond the rhetoric of politics, ordinary people are becoming more conscious of how they speak, how they address one another, and how language itself shapes dignity.

It was therefore heartening to see recent discussions in Parliament proposing a shift in terminology—

from "housemaid" or "house servant" to "domestic worker." Bahrain is also restructuring its penal system to replace the term "prison" with "Reform and Rehabilitation Centres". These are not merely changes in vocabulary; they represent a deeper transformation in how we perceive roles, responsibilities, and even human worth.

Yet, even as we make these corrections, there remains room to go further.

Take, for instance, the term "blacklist." Why do we instinctively associate negativity with the colour black? Why not simply use "blocklist"? Language carries the weight of history, and often, unconscious bias. Perhaps it is time we question not just what we say—but why we say it.

In everyday conversations, we still encounter outdated and insensitive terms. Words like "spastic" or "mentally retarded" continue to surface, despite more appropriate and respectful alternatives, such as referring to someone as a person with cerebral palsy or a person with an intellectual disability. These are not merely semantic corrections—they are about restoring dignity.

As a media organisation, it is time for us to replace Terms like "illegal immigrant" with "undocumented migrant," and "juvenile delinquent" with "at-risk youth." Even commonly used words like "addict" can be reframed as "a person with a substance use disorder."

At times, we may have used "war victims" instead of "civilians affected by conflict," or casually described situations as "clashes" when "escalation" or "exchange" would have been more accurate. On social media, we often see words like "riots" used in place of "unrest," and "fake news" instead of the more precise "misinformation."

I have often questioned why we label individuals as "poor," rather than "economically disadvantaged" or "low-income." Why refer to "slums" instead of "informal settlements"? Why speak of the "Third World" when "developing countries" more accurately reflects growth and potential? Even in education, the term "dropout" carries a stigma that "early school leaver" does not.

Then comes the question of gender in language. Words like "policeman," "fireman," "stewardess," and even "mankind" are gradually giving way to more inclusive alternatives—"police officer," "firefighter," "flight attendant," and "humankind." It raises a personal question: should I continue to be called a "Chairman," or is "Chairperson" a more appropriate reflection of the times?

Change, after all, begins at home. I have consciously moved away from terms like "master bedroom" and prefer "primary bedroom." In the workplace, we have begun referring to "office boys" as "support staff," and "drivers" as "professional drivers" or "chauffeurs."

When I recently tried to bring this conversation home, inspired by all these changes, I jokingly called my wife a "generation changer." She smiled, paused for a moment, and then asked a question that completely disarmed me:

"Fine... but how do we women remove 'men' from 'women'?" While I was busy searching for an answer, she added, "Don't worry... men seem to have secured a permanent place—at least in 'mental'!"

(P. Unnikrishnan is the Chairperson & Managing Director of The Daily Tribune)

# 'Grand bargain'

Trump had pledged to "make Iran thrive" if it committed to "not having a nuclear weapon". "That's the kind of Trumpian grand bargain that the president has put on the table," The US vice president said adding: "Man, we're going to keep on negotiating and try to make it happen."

## Iran military warns will block Red Sea if US naval blockade continues

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran's military warned yesterday it would block trade through the Red Sea, along with the Gulf and Sea of Oman, if the US naval blockade on Iranian ports continues.

In a statement carried by Iranian state television, the head of the military's central command centre said if the US continues with its blockade and "creates insecurity for Iran's commercial vessels and oil tankers", it will also constitute "a prelude" to violating the ceasefire.



A US Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker aircraft refuelling a US Air Force F-35A Lightning II aircraft during Operation Epic Fury in the US Central Command area of responsibility

## Iran firm on uranium, keeps talking

Iran's foreign ministry said Tehran's right to enrich uranium was "indisputable" although the level of enrichment is "negotiable", as it said that exchanges with the United States had continued following failed negotiations over the weekend.

## Trump says China agrees not to arm Iran

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that China has agreed not to send weapons to its close partner Iran and that he has received personal assurances from leader Xi Jinping.

"They have agreed not to send weapons to Iran. President Xi will give me a big, fat, hug when I get there in a few weeks," Trump wrote on Truth Social, referring to his planned May 14-15 summit with Xi in Beijing.

Trump told Fox Business host Maria Bartiromo in a separate interview aired Wednesday that Xi had "essentially" promised not to deliver weapons.

"I had heard that China's giving weapons to, I mean -- you're seeing it all over the place -- to



They have agreed not to send weapons to Iran. President Xi will give me a big, fat, hug when I get there in a few weeks

TRUMP

Iran," Trump said.

"And I wrote him a letter asking him not to do that, and he wrote me a letter saying that essentially he's not doing that."

In his Truth Social post, Trump insisted that "China is very happy that I am

permanently opening the Strait of Hormuz. I am doing it for them, also - And the World."

Trump was asked in the Fox interview about reports that China had recently conducted a major cyber attack against the FBI. He did not directly confirm the report, but said: "We do it to them. They do it to us."

"China's China," he said. "They're never easy, but we're doing great with China."

Trump said he was "the toughest person" on China.

## Measles jabs saved nearly 20 mn lives in Africa since 2000: WHO, Gavi

Geneva, Switzerland

Increasing vaccine coverage has helped avert nearly 20 million measles-related deaths in Africa since 2000, according to a report published yesterday.

In their first-ever detailed analysis of immunisation targets on the continent, the World Health Organization and the Gavi vaccine alliance estimated that 19.5 million measles deaths had been averted in Africa between 2000 and the end of 2024.

And during the same timeframe, routine immunisation had protected more than 500 million children across Africa against a range of other deadly diseases, the report found.

"This analysis, highlighting 24 years of remarkable progress on the African continent, demonstrates the immense life-saving power of vaccines when immunisation is prioritised as a matter of policy," Gavi chief Sania Nishtar said in a joint statement.

Since the start of the century, 44 African countries have introduced into their routine immunisation programmes a second vaccine dose against measles -- one of the world's most contagious diseases.



Representative image

# World Bank announces water security plan covering one billion people

AFP | Washington, United States

The World Bank announced a plan yesterday that aims to improve secure water access for a billion people within the next four years.

The "Water Forward" program will "expand reliable water services and strengthen systems against droughts and floods."

The Bank said its own funds and technical advice would help improve water supplies to about 400 million people by 2030, with the balance coming from partners.

Water "determines whether people are healthy enough to work, whether children have a childhood to learn and to explore, and whether businesses can operate and economies can grow," World Bank President

Ajay Banga said.

The program will see countries identify areas of priority, then "development banks, governments, philanthropies, most importantly, the private sector as well, align behind that plan," he said.

The global lender did not specify how much funding it was committing to the initiative.

Other participating institutions include regional development banks, OPEC's development fund, and the BRICS-aligned New Development Bank.

Fourteen countries had already voluntarily committed to reforming and strengthening their water sectors under the new program, the Bank said.

Some four billion people -- half the world's population -- face water scarcity, due in

part to "unclear policies, weak regulations, and financially unsustainable utilities that have slowed progress and deterred investment," the Bank said.

The focus on water governance issues -- not simply physical infrastructure -- is promising, said David Michel, senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"In many countries, the water sector fails to fully deploy the funds already allocated to it."

However, the Bank's initiative "faces a long and difficult road ahead," he warned, noting that countries with the greatest water insecurity often have the least capacity to reform.

The issue of access to safe drinking water has been highlighted during the war in the Middle East, with desalination plants in Iran and across the

region damaged in bombardments.

Beyond conflicts and immediate drinking water needs, the World Bank said better water security is needed to grow the global economy.

"Strong water systems are foundational to healthy economies that can attract private investment and create jobs," the Bank said.

## 400m

The Bank said its own funds and technical advice would help improve water supplies to about 400 million people by 2030

## Trump says will fire Fed chair if he stays beyond mandate

AFP | Washington, United States

President Donald Trump renewed pressure yesterday on Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell, with the US leader threatening to fire the central bank chief if he stays beyond his mandate.

Powell's term at the helm of the Fed ends in mid-May, and Trump has repeatedly lashed out at him for not cutting interest rates more aggressively.

"I'll have to fire him," Trump told Fox Business, if Powell "is not leaving on time."

The president added: "I've wanted to fire him."

The Trump administration has taken aim at the independent Fed on several levels, initiating an investigation into Powell over alleged renovation cost overruns at the Fed and seeking



Powell, Trump

to oust Fed governor Lisa Cook.

Asked if he would drop the Department of Justice probe involving Powell, Trump said: "I'm not playing. I have to find out."

Although Trump has named former central banker Kevin

Warsh to succeed Powell, he must be confirmed by the US Senate before taking up the role.

Warsh has a confirmation hearing before the Senate Banking Committee next Tuesday.

But his confirmation faces challenges with some lawmakers

criticizing the DOJ probe as political pressure on the central bank.

Senator Thom Tillis -- a member of Trump's Republican party who sits on the Senate Banking Committee -- has vowed to hold up the nomination as long as the investigation remains unresolved.

As long as Warsh's nomination process is stalled, Powell can legally remain in his role as Fed chairman.

Although it is not unheard of, it is rare for a Fed chair to remain on as a member of the board after their term as chief expires.

Powell first took the helm of the Fed during Trump's first presidency in 2018, and was reappointed to the position under Democrat Joe Biden in 2022.

## Azerbaijan, Russia reach deal over 2024 plane crash

AFP | Baku, Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan and Russia said yesterday they had reached a settlement over the deadly crash of an Azerbaijan Airlines jet, including compensation, that acknowledges the role of Russian air defences.

The announcement marks a significant step in easing tensions between the two countries after Baku accused Moscow of responsibility after the crash.

The AZAL Embraer 190 jet crash-landed in Kazakhstan in December 2024, killing 38 of the 67 people on board.

Baku's relations with Soviet-era master Russia soured after President Ilham Aliyev demanded that Moscow accept responsibility for mistakenly firing on the plane as it tried to make a scheduled landing at Grozny airport in south Russia.

On Wednesday, the two countries' foreign ministries said in a joint statement the crash resulted from the "unintentional action" of an air defence system in Russian airspace and confirmed agreement on compensation payments. It did not give details.

The agreement followed earlier talks between Aliyev and Russia's President Vladimir Putin, the statement said.



# French father who kept son in van faces 30 years in jail, says prosecutor

AFP | Mulhouse, France

A father who confined his child in a van for more than a year could face 30 years in jail, a French prosecutor said Wednesday, giving further details of his ordeal.

Officers opened the van last week to find the boy, now nine, lying in the foetal position, malnourished and no longer able to walk in the eastern village of Hagenbach.

A neighbour had sounded the alarm over sounds of a child coming from the vehicle in a shared courtyard.

The 43-year-old father, who has been remanded in custody, faces up to 30 years in jail on charges of confining the boy and depriving him of care, prosecutor Nicolas Heitz said.

He has admitted the charges and claimed he sought to



Police found the nine-year-old lying in the fetal position inside a van in the eastern village of Hagenbach

protect his son from his new partner who "wanted him to be admitted to a psychiatric ward".

The child has been taken to

hospital in the nearby city of Mulhouse.

The boy has told investigators he had a "very bad relationship

with his stepmother", describing her as "his worst enemy and as mean", Heitz said.

The boy claimed his father

had "no choice" other than to place him in the van in September 2024 as he did not want to go and stay with his mother, who has struggled with her mental health, the prosecutor said.

"His father would bring him water and food twice a day, usually cold meals," he added. He had a bundle of clothes and had to urinate into empty bottles.

His father regularly took out the trash. But the boy also said "that his dad no longer washed his clothes and that he no longer had pyjamas".

He slept on a mattress and no longer had a toothbrush. His toys were stored in a box in his room, the prosecutor said.

His 12-year-old sister, who stayed in the family home, reported that she "thought her brother had been committed" to a psychiatric hospital, the

prosecutor said.

She told investigators that his behaviour had changed after their father moved in with his new partner and her daughter, now 10. He had "become violent" and often insulted his stepmother.

The father's parents said the boy had become "difficult" and prone to "tantrums, having probably not coped well with his parents' separation" in 2022.

The mother said she had been treated at a psychiatric hospital between 2022 and 2024, then had last year been awarded the right to visit her children in the presence of a social worker, but had been unable to do so.

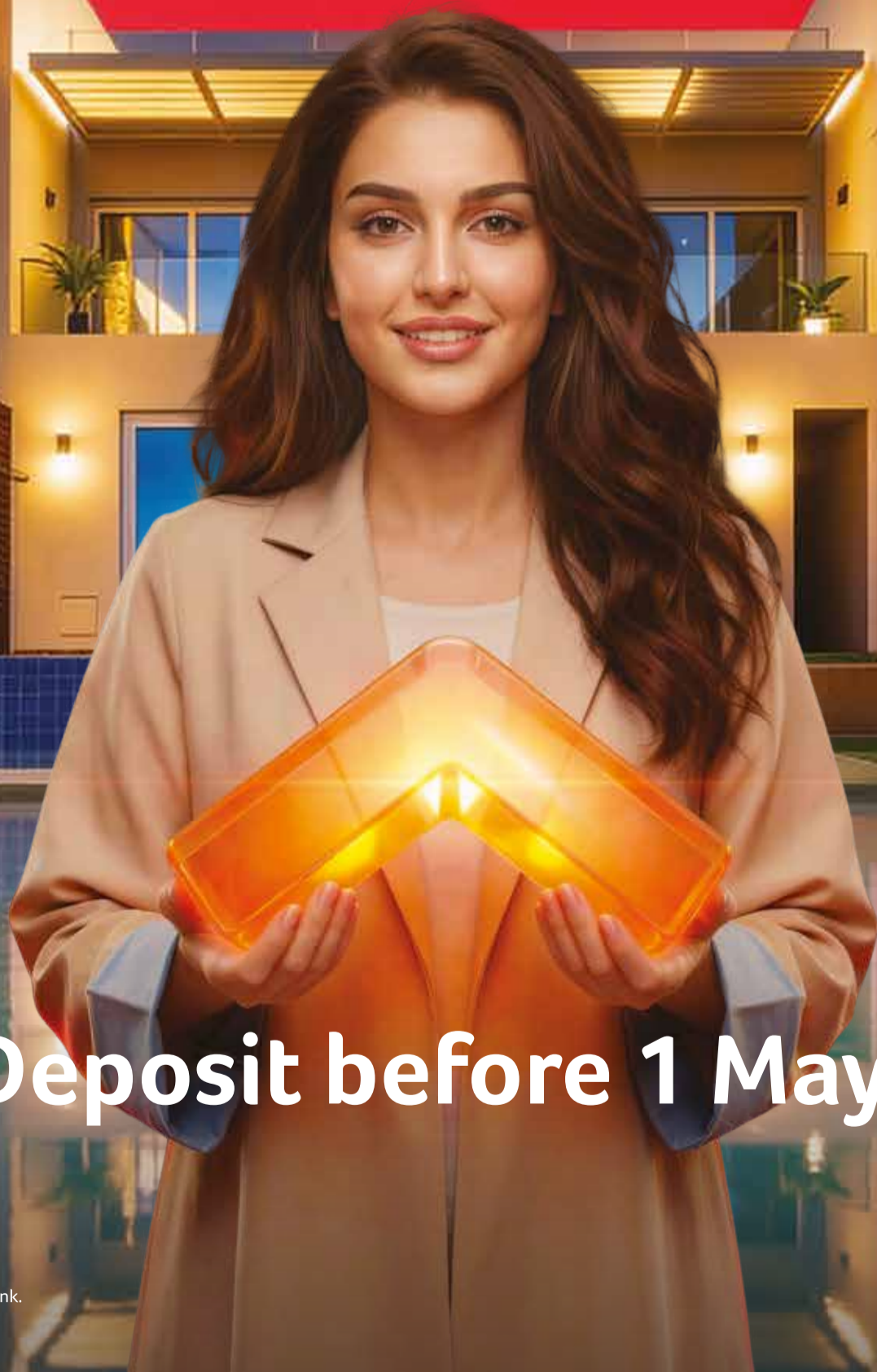
The stepmother faces up to seven years in jail, including for failing to help a child in danger, the prosecutor said. She has denied any wrongdoing.

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# Hormuz Disruptions Raise Hunger Risks

- UAE takes a strategic role in global food security
- UN warns millions could face acute hunger due to ongoing crisis
- Dubai's logistics hub strengthens humanitarian response worldwide



The United Arab Emirates has been elected to the Executive Board of the World Food Programme for the 2026–2028 term, at a time of escalating global food security challenges and ongoing disruptions in key maritime routes. The election highlights the UAE's growing role in global humanitarian efforts. Dubai hosts

the largest United Nations humanitarian logistics hub near Jebel Ali Port, enabling rapid redirection of aid during supply chain disruptions. The country also activated land corridors and established international air bridges, delivering vital supplies to over 100 countries during the

COVID-19 pandemic. The UN Humanitarian Response Depot in Dubai continues to deploy alternative land, sea, and air routes to ensure life-saving aid reaches affected populations across Asia and Africa, despite delays impacting tens of thousands of tonnes of

assistance. The UAE's new role marks a shift from being a major donor to a strategic partner, aligning humanitarian response with sustainable development and resilient food systems. UAE Ambassador to the UN, Mohamed Abushahab, said the

membership would strengthen the country's role in shaping WFP strategies, focusing on innovation, logistics efficiency, and resilient food systems. The appointment comes at a critical time as traffic through the Strait of Hormuz has dropped by more than 90% since February 28, 2026, amid rising regional tensions and threats to maritime security. The strait is a vital global route, handling a significant share of oil, gas, and fertilizer trade. Disruptions in the waterway pose direct risks to global food security, especially as Gulf countries account for a large portion of global fertilizer exports. The United Nations has warned that the ongoing situation could push an additional 45 million people into acute hunger, with millions more at risk of falling into poverty in the Arab region. The UAE has reaffirmed its commitment to working through international platforms to address threats to maritime

navigation and support efforts to reopen and secure the Strait of Hormuz. It stressed that protecting freedom of navigation is a shared global responsibility to maintain economic stability and ensure food supplies reach those in need. The country also emphasized that using maritime routes as a tool of economic pressure threatens global supply chains and violates international law. As part of its expanded role, the UAE aims to lead efforts to ensure food reaches vulnerable populations despite supply chain challenges. In a related development, the UAE was also re-elected on April 8, 2026, to the Executive Board of UN Women for the 2026–2028 term, reinforcing its commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. Additionally, the UAE was elected, alongside Saudi Arabia, India, and China, to the UN Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations for the 2027–2030 term.

## Jeddah Talks Focus on Security, Economy



His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, met with António Costa, President of the European Council, in Jeddah.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed the strategic partnership between Saudi Arabia and the European Union, highlighting ongoing cooperation across multiple sectors. They also discussed recent regional developments and their broader security and economic implications on the international stage. The two leaders emphasized the importance of coordinated efforts to strengthen regional security and stability, amid evolving geopolitical challenges. The meeting was attended

by Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs; Musaed bin Mohammed Al-Aiban, Minister of State and National Security Advisor; and Haifa Al-Jedea. From the European side, attendees included Christophe Farnaud, Anna-Maria Boura, Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to the European Council President, and Luigi Di Maio, along with several other officials.

**“The two leaders stressed the need for joint efforts to regional security and stability in light of shifting geopolitical dynamics.”**

## Iran Ceasefire, Gaza Plan Top Rubio Talks



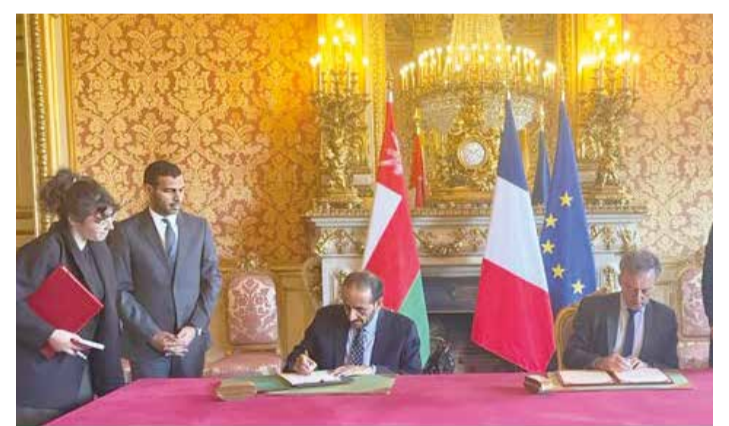
US Secretary of State Marco Rubio held talks with Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty focusing on regional security and ongoing diplomatic efforts in the Middle East. According to a statement from Rubio's office, the two officials discussed the ceasefire with Iran and emphasized the importance of securing long-term peace and stability across the region. The discussions also covered joint US-

Egypt efforts to disarm Hamas, in line with the US President's 20-point plan for Gaza. Both sides explored ways to strengthen economic and commercial ties between the United States and Egypt. Additionally, Rubio highlighted the importance of continued cooperation between Washington and Cairo to achieve a humanitarian truce in Sudan, where ongoing conflict has raised international concern.

## Oman, France sign spouse work permit deal

The government of the Sultanate of Oman and the government of the French Republic have signed an agreement allowing spouses of official employees to obtain work permits. The agreement was concluded during the first

round of the Omani-French Strategic Dialogue, held in Paris. On the Omani side, the agreement was signed by Khalifa bin Ali Al-Harhi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Political Affairs. Representing France, Martin Briens, Sec-



retary General of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, signed the deal. The agreement aims to enhance cooperation between

the two countries and support official employees' families by enabling spouses to work legally during their overseas assignments.

## Pakistan PM Begins High-Stakes Three-Nation Visit



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif arrived in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday, the first stop of his three-nation tour from April 15 to 18, where discussions are expected to focus on regional stability and cooperation. Makkah Region Deputy Governor Prince Saud bin Mashaal bin Abdulaziz, along with Saudi and Pakistani diplomats, received him at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah. According to the Prime Minister's Office, PM Shehbaz is scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed

bin Salman. The talks will cover strengthening Pakistan-Saudi relations and broader regional developments. The premier is accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar, Special Assistant Syed Tariq Fatemi, and Foreign Media Spokesperson Mosharraf Zaidi. Following his Saudi visit, PM Shehbaz will travel to Qatar and Türkiye as part of the same diplomatic tour. The Foreign Office said the visits will focus on bilateral cooperation and coordination on regional peace and security issues.

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# Bahrain International Circuit to open its doors this Friday for Batelco Fitness on Track

Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), “The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East”, is set to open its doors on Friday morning, 17 April, for the latest edition of Batelco Fitness on Track, a highly sought-after activity for fitness enthusiasts.

The event will take place from 6:00am to 10:00am, offering participants of all ages the opportunity to engage in physical activities, either on foot or by bike, within the safe and controlled setting of the circuit.



Runners and walkers will utilise BIC's 2.55-kilometre Inner Circuit, while cyclists will ride along the 3.543-kilometre Outer Circuit, with a separate dedicated area available for children's cycling.

The cost to participate is BD2 for cyclists and BD1 for runners. Registration and payment can be completed in advance via the circuit's official website bahraingp.com or by calling the BIC Hotline on +973 17450000. Children under the age of 12 can participate free of charge if accompanied by a paying adult.

# Bahrain eyes success at Asian Beach Games

TDT | Manama

Bahrain has named a 20-athlete delegation for the sixth Asian Beach Games, held in Sanya from April 16 to 30, with 45 nations competing under the Olympic Council of Asia.

The team departed on Tuesday via Doha, led by chef de mission Ahmed Abdulghaffar, with Maryam Mardana as deputy. Bahrain enters the competition aiming to build on its strong history at the Games across multiple editions.

As in previous years, beach wrestling stands out as Bahrain's main medal hope. The squad is led by Shamil Sharipov in the 90kg category, a world bronze and Asian silver medallist. He is joined by Magomedrasul Asluev, and Alibeg Alibegov, all of whom bring international podium experience and form a key strength of the delegation.

In aquatic events, Bahrain will be represented by Robert Bonsall and William Balzano in the men's 5km open water swim. They add endurance depth to the team, though they arrive with less international experience than the wrestling contingent.



Bahrain's delegation prior to departure

In team competition, Bahrain's 3x3 basketball side coached by Ahmed Elias features Bogdan Dragovic, Austin Ogukwa, Milos Supica, and Nasser Al Mousawi. Their campaign opens on April 25 against Qatar, followed by India later that day and Kazakhstan on April 27. If they progress, the knockout stage begins on April 28, with medals decided on April 29.

The beach handball team, coached by Hussain Al Qa-

idoum, also faces a packed schedule. They begin against hosts China on April 21, meet India later that day, and continue through matches against the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Iran, and Hong Kong until April 27. The semifinals are set for April 28, with the final on April 30.

Beyond these core sports, the Games also feature beach football, kabaddi, jiu-jitsu, dragon boat, sailing, sport climbing, teqball, aquathlon triath-

lon, and beach volleyball. The event marks the return of the Asian Beach Games after a decade-long break since Da Nang 2016.

The Kingdom's history at the Games raises expectations, with a total of 11 medals including seven golds. Its strongest showing came at Phuket 2014, where it secured five gold and two silver medals, while at Da Nang 2016 it added two golds in bodybuilding and jiu-jitsu.

# Ekitike to miss world cup after injury



Hugo Ekitike goes down injured during Liverpool's match against PSG

TDT | Manama

French striker Hugo Ekitike will miss the 2026 FIFA World Cup after rupturing his Achilles tendon, an injury that is expected to sideline him for an extended period.

The Liverpool FC forward suffered the injury during his side's 2-0 defeat to Paris Saint-Germain in the second leg of their UEFA Champions League quarter-final in the 2025-26 season.

Liverpool were eliminated 4-0 on aggregate, with the setback compounded when Ekitike went down injured in the 22nd minute. He was stretchered off and unable to continue.

The 23-year-old is now set to miss the tournament,

scheduled for June 11 to July 19 across the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

France have been drawn in Group I alongside Iraq, Senegal, and Norway, and will begin their campaign looking to build on recent tournament success, having won the 2018 World Cup.

Ekitike joined Liverpool from German side Eintracht Frankfurt in a high-profile transfer and has enjoyed a strong debut season, registering 17 goals and six assists in 45 appearances in all competitions.

His absence is a significant blow for both club and country, with Liverpool losing a key attacking option during the decisive stages of their league campaign.

# Verstappen understands 'bigger picture' in power unit debate: F1 boss Domenicali

AFP | London

Formula 1 boss Stefano Domenicali yesterday called on drivers, including the outspoken Max Verstappen, to “be respectful” of the sport but said changes to this year's new power unit regulations needed to be made.

The Dutch four-time world champion has been the most vocal of the drivers criticising the new regulations concerning the hybrid engines, whose electric power management has posed problems for the drivers in the opening three races of the season.

Verstappen called the new style of racing “a joke” after the Chinese Grand Prix and has hinted he will take a break

from F1 in 2027 if it remains the same.

“We have spoken many, many times since the beginning,” Domenicali told Autosport.

“I understand his (Verstappen's) comments and he understands the bigger picture. I don't want to fall in to the trap of trying to create antagonism because that's not me.

“We're going to be together. He is the best driver, he is a multiple world champion and of course his voice has to be listened to. But he knows that his voice has a weight. And he needs to respect that weight (as) sometimes some people can take it the wrong way and this is something we shouldn't allow to happen.”

# Atletico 'ready' for Champions League success at last: Simeone

AFP | Madrid

Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone said that his team was ready to finally win the Champions League after knocking out Barcelona on Tuesday to reach the semi-finals.

The Rojiblancos fell to a 2-1 quarter-final second leg defeat at home but that was enough to progress 3-2 on aggregate after their 2-0 win at Camp Nou last week.

Atletico, who have never won the competition, will face Arsenal or Sporting Lisbon in the semi-finals.

“We'll go into it with all our hope, with total belief. We know the strengths we have and our flaws,” said Simeone.



Atletico Madrid's players celebrate at the end of the match

“We're ready. We're going to go after what we've been chasing for many years.”

Simeone led Atletico to the Champions League final in 2014 and 2016, with both ending in painful defeats by

cross-town rivals Real Madrid. The last time the Rojiblancos made the semi-finals was 2017.

“It's been fourteen years now (at the helm), it still excites me to see that the team keeps

competing,” said the Argentine coach.

“The players have changed, we've had to start over a bunch of times, and here we are again among the four best teams in Europe.”

Veteran Atletico forward Antoine Griezmann said that his team always believed they could find a way back after Barca's two early goals.

Lamine Yamal and Ferran Torres fired the five-time winners ahead on Tuesday but Ademola Lookman pulled one back for Atletico and it proved decisive.

“With our fans and the quality that we have, we could get (our) goal,” Griezmann told reporters.

# Mogeni credits fans after title-boosting victory



Enock Mogeni salutes the Dar Kulaib faithful

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

Dar Kulaib's Enock Mogeni praised the return of the fans after a crucial 3-1 victory over defending champions Muharraq in Tuesday's Isa bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League clash. The result tightened the title race and sent his side to the top of the standings.

"First, I want to thank God and the Dar Kulaib family," Mogeni said, dedicating the win

to the club supporters. The Kenyan star highlighted the impact of the crowd following their return after a previous suspension linked to regional tensions. "The energy from the fans was incredible. They carried us through the tough moments, and we will need them in the final three matches," he added.

At Isa Bin Rashid Arena in Riffa, Dar Kulaib recovered from a set down to claim a dramatic 19-25, 25-20, 25-20, 32-30 win in a closely contested encounter.

Muharraq struck first, tak-



Fans embrace the Kenyan star after his performance at Isa Sports City

ing the opening set 25-19 with sharp attacking play. Dar Kulaib responded immediately, raising their tempo and stabilising their reception to swing momentum.

Mogeni played a key role in the turnaround, contributing important points at the net, including a crucial block-out that shifted the rhythm of the match.

The challengers then controlled the third set, with Hasan Al Warqaa's spike helping them build a 15-10 lead. Hassan Abbas

later brought up set point, before a Muharraq error sealed it.

The fourth set developed into a tense, point-for-point battle. Dar Kulaib surged ahead 21-15 after an Abdulwahed spike, only for Muharraq to fight back and level at 24-24 following a Sayed Hashem Issa block on Abdulnabi. From there, the set became a test of nerve.

At 30-30, fine margins decided it. A Muharraq net fault handed Dar Kulaib match point, before a decisive block sealed the victory.

Mogeni led the attacking effort throughout as Dar Kulaib extended their perfect season to 23 wins from 23 matches, moving to 67 points and remaining top of the table. Muharraq stay second on 65 points after a costly defeat.

Dar Kulaib now face Al Dair tomorrow at 6:45 PM, before closing their season against Al Maamir and a second meeting with Al Dair. Muharraq take on Al Shabab and Al Ahli, with no margin for error remaining in the title race.

## Alcaraz pulls out of Barcelona Open with wrist injury



Carlos Alcaraz

AFP | Barcelona

Carlos Alcaraz withdrew yesterday from the Barcelona Open because of a wrist injury that troubled him in his first-round match, potentially casting doubt over his Roland Garros defence.

"I won't be able to continue in the tournament," Alcaraz told reporters a day after his win over Finnish qualifier Otto Virtanen.

"I felt my wrist give out on a return during the match. After the tests, we saw that it's a more serious injury than any of us expected, and I have to listen to my body so it doesn't affect me in the future."

It is the second time in three years injury has forced Alcaraz to withdraw from the Barcelona tournament. He won it 2022 and 2023, and finished runner-up to Holger Rune 12 months ago.

Alcaraz had been scheduled to face Tomas Machac on Thursday for a place in the quarter-finals.

## Bahrain Football League enters business end

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

Matchweek 18 gets underway tonight with two fixtures that carry major implications at both ends of the table. It also marks the return of supporters to stadiums following the lifting of restrictions introduced on March 12 amid regional tensions.

The evening begins at 7pm with the return of Al Ahli Stadium after a long absence, where Al Najma will face Budaiya. For Budaiya, it is also the start of a new chapter under fresh management, adding another layer of uncertainty to an already difficult campaign.

Al Najma arrive on the back of a 1-1 draw with Al Shabab and sit 8th on 19 points, just one point above the relegation play-off zone. Their season has lacked stability, with narrow results defining much of their campaign. With the margin so tight, every remaining fixture now carries survival value rather than routine importance.

Al Budaiya, meanwhile, are in transition in 10th place following the departure of Sayed Hassan Isa, with Adel Al Noami now in charge. Their 2-0 defeat in the last round exposed ongo-



Muharraq fans in full voice at a previous match

ing structural issues. The new coach's immediate task is to stabilise performances and rebuild confidence in a side needing points to move clear of danger.

The other fixture, also kicking

off at 7pm, sees holders Muharraq face Al Hidd in a clash between two in-form sides at the top end of the table.

Muharraq arrive in strong form under Portuguese coach

Fernando Manuel de Jesus Santos, following a 3-0 league win. Their progress to the King's Cup final has further boosted momentum, and with just two points separating them from top spot, their title challenge remains firmly on track.

Al Hidd, however, come in with momentum of their own following a 2-0 victory over Budaiya. Just one point off fourth, their structure and discipline make them difficult to break down, setting up a contest likely to be decided by midfield control and efficiency in key moments.

At the summit, Al Khalidiya lead on 42 points, with Muharraq close behind on 40 and Riffa still in contention on 34. The title race remains finely balanced, with little room for error as the season enters its final seven matchdays.

Tomorrow sees Bahrain Club take on Al Ahli at Bahrain National Stadium at 5:25 PM, followed by Riffa against A'Ali at 7:35 PM at Khalifa Sports City Stadium.

On Saturday, the round concludes with Malkiya facing Al Shabab at Bahrain National Stadium at 5:25 PM, followed by Sitra meeting league leaders Al Khalidiya at 7:35pm at Khalifa Sports City Stadium.

## Liverpool captain Van Dijk says PSG 'deserved' Champions League semi-final spot



Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk heads the ball

AFP | London

Virgil van Dijk had no complaints after Liverpool were knocked out of the Champions League by title-holders Paris Saint-Germain in a defeat compounded by a serious injury to Hugo Ekitike.

Six-time European champions Liverpool were, however,

still fortunate to be in the tie after escaping from last week's first leg at the Parc des Princes with just a 2-0 defeat after entering what Reds manager Arne Slot labelled "survival mode".

Premier League champions Liverpool were much improved compared to the first leg but that was scant consolation to club captain Van Dijk who, when suggested his side had at least given it a go on home soil, replied: "That's the bare minimum, isn't it?"

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