

Trump says oil tankers are "starting to move" again through the Strait of Hormuz following reported peace deal developments. What happen next? | **P8-9**



## Shura Chairman Greets

The Chairman of the Shura Council, Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, extended his sincere congratulations and best wishes to HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa on the occasion of the Islamic New Year (1448 AH).



Al Saleh also expressed his aspirations that the new Hijri year would bring peace, security, and stability to Arab and Islamic nations, as well as harmony and goodwill across the world. He further wished the King continued success in leading Bahrain towards further achievements for its citizens.

## Government Graduates Reunion



The Prime Minister's Programme for Government Talent Development organized a reunion meeting for graduates from previous cohorts.

The event supports the programme's objectives: investing in national talent and empowering them to actively contribute to Bahrain's comprehensive development journey under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

The gathering served as a platform for alumni from various government entities to exchange expertise and professional experiences, while also strengthening professional networks among graduates. This contributes to sustaining the long-term impact of the programme and its out-

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# Step Toward Middle East Peace

HRH Crown Prince Chairs Cabinet Session; Bahrain Backs Diplomatic Push for Regional Stability

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, chaired the weekly Cabinet Meeting at Gudaibiya Palace on Monday. The session opened with ministers extending congratulations to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa on the upcoming Hijri New Year 1448 AH, wishing the Kingdom and the broader Arab and Islamic world continued progress and prosperity.

### Backing the US-Iran framework

The Cabinet reviewed a telephone call made by US President Donald Trump to HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, which addressed diplomatic efforts aimed at a memorandum of understanding between Washington and Tehran. Bahrain welcomed the agreed framework, which outlines a basis for negotiation and a ceasefire. Ministers described the MoU as a meaningful step toward de-escalation and confidence-building, with the ultimate goal of reaching a comprehensive agreement that reinforces security and lasting peace across the Middle East.

### Regional diplomacy praised

The Cabinet praised President Trump's efforts to advance regional peace and acknowledged Pakistan's constructive diplomatic mediation, supported by Saudi



Arabia and Qatar, in narrowing differences and encouraging dialogue. Bahrain called for a durable peace agreement that promotes economic sustainability, protects civilians and critical infrastructure, and safeguards international maritime and air navigation.

### Gulf cooperation

Ministers expressed gratitude to the Bahrain Defence Force, the National Guard, the Ministry of Interior, and all military and civil agencies for their vigilance during recent regional developments. The Cabinet also stressed the importance of deepening military cooperation among Gulf Cooperation Council member states and commended a recent statement issued by the GCC Ministerial Council.

The session concluded with a review of preparations for the Ashura season, with the Ministry of Interior and relevant authorities confirmed to be in place to ensure all requirements for a successful commemoration are met.

### Cabinet decisions and key updates

- Approved a draft law amending provisions regulating the use of groundwater.
- Approved the Charter of the Mangrove Alliance for Climate.
- Approved an agreement between Bahrain Customs Affairs (Ministry of Interior) and the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs of India on mutual recognition of the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programme.
- Approved the government's responses to draft laws and proposals submitted by the Council of Representatives.
- Reviewed outcomes of the fourth regular session of the sixth legislative term of the Shura Council and Council of Representatives, highlighting strengthened Executive-Legislative cooperation in lawmaking and oversight.
- Reviewed progress on healthcare sector priorities under the Government Programme (2023-2026), including work by national committees and task forces.
- Took note of Bahrain's participation in the 167th GCC Ministerial Council session and the Gulf-Canada Joint Ministerial Meeting.
- Noted the outcomes of the Foreign Minister's official visit to the Russian Federation.
- Reviewed Bahrain's participation in ILA Berlin 2026.
- Reviewed participation in the 114th International Labour Conference.
- Reviewed Bahrain's summer 2026 events calendar.

## Royal Messages



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa exchanged congratulatory messages with His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, on the occasion of the Islamic New Year 1448H.

HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister extended his sincere congratulations and best wishes to His Majesty, praying that the King remains a guiding leader for Bahrain's continued progress and prosperity. He also wished the Kingdom and its people continued security, stability, and blessings, as well as peace and prosperity for Arab and Islamic nations.

In a related exchange, His Majesty also sent and received congratulatory messages with the leaders of GCC, Arab, and Islamic countries—Their Majesties, Highnesses, and Excellencies—on the occasion of the Hijri New Year.

He also praised the unity and cohesion of Bahraini society, noting its strong social fabric and long-standing traditions of solidarity and mutual respect.

## Marine Zone Shift



The Coast Guard announced a change in the operational area designated for an ongoing three-dimensional marine survey project carried out by Bapco Energies within the territorial waters of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The updated work zone takes effect today and will remain in place for two months, in accordance with the coordinates outlined on the attached maritime chart.

The Coast Guard stressed the importance of all sea users, including fishermen, boat owners, and jet ski operators, adhering strictly to the issued guidelines and instructions. It also urged mariners to maintain a safe speed when navigating near the designated area and to avoid approaching the zone to ensure their safety and the smooth execution of the project.

## Calls for Sovereignty Guarantees and Open Strait of Hormuz

Kingdom commends Trump administration's efforts and Pakistan's constructive mediation role

Bahrain's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the development was an important confidence-building measure, with the potential to pave the way for a comprehensive agreement that strengthens security, stability,

and lasting peace across the Middle East while supporting broader international security goals.

Sovereignty and freedom

Manama stressed that any final peace deal must include an Iranian commitment



وزارة الخارجية  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

to international law, non-interference in the internal affairs of neighbouring states, and the protection of freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz — a vital artery for global oil trade.

Credit to Trump and Pakistan

The Ministry expressed appreciation for President Donald Trump's "tireless efforts" in supporting regional security through coordination with Gulf leaders. It also commended Pakistan for its constructive diplomatic mediation in bridging differences and facilitating dialogue between Washington and Tehran.

## Kyiv Cathedral Under Attack



This handout photograph taken and released by the Ukrainian Presidential Press Service on June 15, 2026, shows Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (R) and Ukraine's Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko (L) visiting Dormition Cathedral in the Orthodox complex of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra which was hit during a Russian missile and drone strike in Kyiv on June 15, 2026, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Russia fired a barrage of missiles at several major Ukrainian cities, setting fire to Kyiv's historic Dormition Cathedral at the UNESCO world heritage site Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra and killing eleven people, while Ukrainian strikes claimed three lives in a city south of Moscow.

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# Finance Minister praises national startup ecosystem

Ceremony celebrates student innovation and entrepreneurship

Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy and Chairman of the Bahrain Mumtalakat Holding Company, attended the closing ceremony of the “Startup Bahrain – University of Bahrain” competition.

In his address, Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa highlighted that Bahrain’s achievements in entrepreneurship and startup development reflect the forward-looking vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.



“The Startup Bahrain competition reflects our firm belief that the Kingdom’s greatest strength lies in its people—their creativity, ambition, and entrepreneurial spirit.”

- SHAIKH SALMAN BIN KHALIFA AL KHALIFA, MINISTER OF FINANCE AND NATIONAL ECONOMY

The Finance Minister noted that national strategies and initiatives focused on improving the business environment, encour-



aging innovation, and enhancing productivity have helped build an economy where creativity can flourish. He added that Bahraini talent is being empowered to compete globally and actively contribute to shaping the future.

He further stated that the “Startup Bahrain” competition

embodies the Kingdom’s strong belief in its most valuable asset—its people, particularly their creativity, ambition, and entrepreneurial potential.

The ceremony, hosted at the University of Bahrain, brought together ministers, senior officials, representatives of partner

organisations, academics, entrepreneurs, and participating students.

Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa also praised the Labour Fund (Tamkeen) for its key role in supporting national programmes that develop skills and promote entrepreneurship, under the lead-

ership of His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister’s Court and Chairman of Tamkeen’s Board of Directors. He noted that such efforts contribute significantly to building an innovation-driven and knowledge-based economy.



## Police Receive New Animal Abuse Complaints

TDT | Manama  
Mohammed Darwish

New complaints have been sent to the police after two videos shared on social media appeared to show animals being abused in Bahrain.

The clips brought the issue of animal welfare back into public view and led to calls for those involved to face legal action.

One video shows children in a residential area, with one child seen hitting a cat in a public street. The woman who made the complaint said this was not the first case in the area.

She said earlier attacks on cats by the same group had been caught on CCTV.

A second video shows a man whipping a donkey as it stands still. The footage was widely shared online.

A complaint has also been made in that case, according to accounts



“It was sad to see such scenes repeated, all the more so when children were involved.”

- MAHMOOD FARAJ, CHAIRMAN OF THE BAHRAIN SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS



Same group had been caught on CCTV

shared online, and the man has been called in to complete the legal steps.

Mahmood Faraj, chairman of the Bahrain Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, said the society had received a copy of the complaint and would follow the case with the police.

Mr Faraj said kindness to animals should be taught from a young age, with the family playing the main part in teaching children to respect living creatures.



He said the way a child treats animals can show much about what they learn at home.

Teaching children to be kind to animals, he added, was not only a way to shield animals from harm. It also helped raise children with a greater sense of care, duty and respect for life.

Mr Faraj said studies in child learning had linked early care for animals with better social conduct, lower levels of violence, and a stronger sense of mercy and duty in the wider community.

## Genesis Donates EV Fleet to Boost Emergency Response

Interior Minister General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa commended Genesis Middle East & Africa for its contributions to community service and its commitment to innovation and sustainability through advanced mobility solutions that support emergency response operations.

The remarks came during a meeting with Mr. Zayed Rashid Alzayani, Chairman of Zayani Investments Group, and Mr. Rashid Zayed Alzayani, Managing Director of First Motors, the official representative of the Genesis brand in Bahrain. The meeting was attended by Chief of Public Security Lieutenant-General Tariq bin Hassan Al Hassan.

At the meeting, the Interior Minister praised Genesis Middle East & Africa, represented locally by First Motors, for providing innovative and environmentally friendly mobility solutions that can offer critical support during emergency situations. He noted that such initiatives reflect a strong spirit of solidarity and commitment to



### Genesis Support for Emergency Services

- 8 Genesis GV60 electric vehicles
- National Ambulance Centre’s First Responder Service
- Enhance emergency response capabilities and operational effectiveness

supporting public safety efforts and strengthening civil protection measures.

The Minister highlighted that the company’s eco-friendly products and community-focused initiatives serve as a model for effective partnership and cooperation, contributing to sustainable development goals and reinforcing the values of social responsibility and community support.

Shaikh Rashid expressed his ap-

preciation to Genesis for donating eight Genesis GV60 electric vehicles, which can function as additional power sources.

He emphasized that the initiative will help improve the quality and continuity of emergency services provided to citizens and residents across the Kingdom.

For his part, Mr. Rashid Zayed Alzayani thanked the Interior Minister for his continued engagement and dedication to serving the nation and its people. He affirmed that the contribution reflects the group’s appreciation for the role of Bahrain Police in maintaining security and public safety, as well as its ongoing commitment to innovation, sustainability, and community service.

Also present at the meeting was Shaikh Salman bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Assistant Undersecretary for Administrative Affairs.

## AI, Drones and Defence: The Future Is Here

Bahrain Puts Security Tech on the World Stage

Under the patronage of HH Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the second edition of the International Sport and Security Exhibition (ISSE) opened Monday at the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre, running through June 17.

The event is jointly organised by the General Sports Authority and the Bahrain Shooting Federation, under the supervision of Diplomatic Protocol Commu-

Shaikh Salman bin Moham-



Deputy Police Chief, and representatives from government, the military, the private sector, and diplomatic missions.

Attendees toured exhibition pavilions showcasing cutting-edge technologies in AI, drones, robotics, smart security systems, facility protection, and airspace management.

ISSE is a global platform connecting industry leaders, decision-makers, and security experts to explore the intersection of advanced technology and international security.

## 12 Sentenced to 10 Years

For Supporting Iranian Terrorist Acts Against Bahrain

High Criminal Court sentenced 12 defendants to 10 years in prison across 11 separate cases involving support for Iran’s terrorist attacks against the Kingdom, according to the Head of the Terror Crimes Prosecution.

The defendants were convicted of supporting, encouraging and praising the attacks, as well as obtaining and publishing restricted sensitive information, filming prohibited locations, and spreading false news and rumours on social media during the period of

Iranian aggression against Bahrain.

In addition to prison terms, some of the convicted individuals were fined BD2,000, and the court ordered the confiscation of seized items.

The Public Prosecution said investigations began after receiving reports from the Cybercrime Directorate about social media accounts sharing content that supported the attacks and circulated sensitive information and misleading reports aimed at creating fear, harming public

morale, and undermining national security.

Authorities identified the individuals behind the accounts and launched investigations, which included questioning suspects, gathering witness statements, and conducting forensic examinations of seized electronic devices.

The prosecution said technical evidence confirmed the defendants’ involvement, leading to their referral to the High Criminal Court, which issued its final rulings after reviewing the cases and hearing the defence arguments.

# Lamea Junior returns under Youth City 2030

Workshops, challenges and field visits are included in the training model

Youth Affairs Minister Rawan bint Najeeb Tawfiqi announced the launch of the revamped Lamea Junior programme under the umbrella of the Lamea Association, as part of the Youth City 2030 activities.

The initiative represents a qualitative step aimed at developing leadership, communication, and teamwork skills among young people aged 12 to 14, while preparing a confident generation capable of self-expression and effective participation in society.

The Minister said the programme reflects the vision of Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His



**“The renewed Lamea Junior programme is designed to identify young talent early and equip them with essential leadership, communication, and teamwork skills through an engaging and structured journey.”**

- RAWAN BINT NAJEEB TAWFIQI, YOUTH AFFAIRS MINISTER

Majesty the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, which focuses on investing in national talent from an early age and enabling young people to explore and refine their capabilities in an environment

that promotes learning, experimentation, and creativity.

She noted that the programme returns this year in a renewed format inspired by the national Lamea project, with a dedicated track tailored to the targeted age group. It includes advanced selection stages designed to

identify promising talent and provide participants with a comprehensive training journey focused on character-building and strengthening skills in communication, presentation, public speaking, and teamwork.

The Minister added that Lamea Junior aims to instil leadership, responsibility, and commitment among youth, while enhancing their ability to express ideas confidently and clearly. The programme also features training workshops, interactive challenges, and field visits to leading national institutions, helping participants better understand work environments and achievement pathways in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

## Royal Support Praised Ahead of Ashura

Heads of matams and religious processions in Muharraq Governorate expressed their deepest gratitude and loyalty to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain, and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister. They praised the Kingdom's continued support for religious occasions and the provision of



all necessary requirements to ensure their success.

The remarks were made during a coordination meeting

chaired by Salman bin Isa bin Hindi Al Mannai, Governor of Muharraq Governorate, in the presence of Brigadier Jassim

bin Mohammed Al Ghatam, Deputy Governor, and Brigadier Sultan bin Ahmed Al Kaabi, Director-General of Muharraq Police Directorate.

Representatives from the General Directorate of Traffic, the General Directorate of Civil Defence, Muharraq Municipality, the Jaafari Endowments Directorate, and the Electricity and Water Authority also attended the meeting.

## Royal Humanitarian Foundation, UN Discuss Joint Relief Efforts



The Royal Humanitarian Foundation and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have discussed ways to enhance joint humanitarian and development cooperation during an online meeting.

Engineer Ibrahim Dilhan Al Doseri, Acting Secretary-General of the Royal Humanitarian Foundation, held virtual talks with Jocelyn Finard, Representative of UNFPA and Head of the Gulf Cooperation Council Office.

The meeting explored avenues to strengthen collabora-

tion in humanitarian and development fields, where both sides reviewed ongoing efforts to support vulnerable groups and those most in need.

They also discussed potential cooperation in priority regions, including Gaza, Syria, and Sudan, alongside exchanging technical expertise in the health sector and coordinating humanitarian aid delivery.

The two sides reaffirmed the importance of joint action to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian response and expand support to affected communities across crisis-hit regions.

## BKS Holds Loyalty Pledge in Support of HM King Hamad

The Bahrain Keraleeya Samajam (BKS) organized a gathering of its members in Manama, where participants signed a pledge of allegiance and reaffirmed their loyalty to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

The announcement was made in a joint statement by BKS President P.V. Radhakrishna Pillai and General Secretary Varghese Karakkal.

During the event, members of the Indian community voiced full confidence in His Majesty's leadership and supported measures aimed at safeguarding Bahrain's security, stability, and national interests. They also conveyed appreciation to Bahrain for providing a safe and inclusive environment for expatriate communities, highlighting the Kingdom's values of peace, tolerance, and coexistence.

Participants strongly supported government initiatives designed to protect national unity and stability, noting that such efforts reflect



a commitment to preserving Bahrain's sovereignty, sustaining its development achievements, and ensuring continued progress for all residents.

The gathering also expressed support for the King's recent national address outlining Bahrain's future development vision, praising its emphasis on unity and inclusive growth.

## Bahrain-US Cooperation



Interior Minister General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa received Bahrain's Ambassador to the United States, Shaikh Abdullah bin Rashid Al Khalifa. The Interior Minister welcomed the ambassador and praised his efforts in strengthening cooperation between Bahrain and the United States, as well as his commitment to providing the best possible services to Bahraini citizens residing in the US.

## 560 Volunteers Join Digital Cleanup Across Gulf Cities

10-day campaign spans Bahrain, UAE, Oman and Kuwait

The Dawoodi Bohra community across the Middle East marked World Environment Day with a large-scale "Digital Cleanup Drive," successfully removing more than 15.6 terabytes of unnecessary digital data in a coordinated 10-day campaign.

The initiative, organised by the community's global philanthropic arm Project Rise in partnership with Estonia-based Let's Do It World, spanned seven cities across Bahrain, the UAE, Oman and Kuwait, engaging over 560 participants.

Participants collectively deleted 15,685 gigabytes of redundant data from personal and professional devices, including old emails, duplicate photos, unused applications and digital trash files. Organisers estimate the effort could help prevent approximately 3.13 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

In Bahrain alone, more than 174 community members took part in the initiative. Volunteers also set up a tech support kiosk in Manama to assist residents in clearing device storage,

while outreach teams visited neighbourhood shops to raise awareness about digital sustainability.

Organisers highlighted that although digital data appears intangible, its environmental impact is significant due to the energy required for data storage and cloud infrastructure. They noted that the global technology sector contributes up to 4% of greenhouse gas emissions, comparable to the aviation industry, and that even one gigabyte of unnecessary stored data can generate around 200 grams of CO<sub>2</sub> annually.

The campaign also marked the first time the Middle East was officially included on the Digital Cleanup Day world map, reflecting growing regional participation in digital sustainability efforts.



## Road 96 Set for Major Development

Southern Governor Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa conducted a field visit to review the Road 96 development project in the Southern Governorate. He was accompanied by Southern Municipal Council Chairman Abdullah Ibrahim Abdulatif, Deputy Governor Brigadier Hamad Mohammed Al Khayat, Ministry of Works Roads Projects and Maintenance Director Engineer Hamad Badou, Southern Municipal Council member Ali Abdullhameed Al Shaikh, and several officials from the Southern Governorate and the Ministry of Works.

During the visit, the governor underscored that the service and development projects implemented across the Southern Governorate reflect the visionary leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa

Al Khalifa and align with the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to provide and enhance essential services. The inspection tour included a review of the planned phases of the Road 96 development project, which addresses the needs of local residents.



## NIS Wins Inter-School Title at ISB Chess Championship

The second edition of the ISB Platinum Jubilee Chess Championship concluded successfully in Bahrain, attracting strong participation from players across the Kingdom and reinforcing its status as one of the country's leading chess competitions.

Organised by The Indian School Bahrain (ISB) in collaboration with Arjun's Chess Academy as part of the school's Platinum Jubilee celebrations, the tournament brought together young talents and experienced players in a competitive setting that highlighted strategic depth and sporting discipline.

In the Inter-School Under-14 Team Category, featuring CBSE



### Chess Championship

schools across Bahrain, The New Indian School (NIS) secured the championship title. The winning team comprised Noel Abraham Punnoose, Sriram Palaniappan, Jairam Kannappan, and Dhanashree Mohanraj. The Bahrain Indian School (BIS) finished as runners-up with Arnav Singh Dewan, Trishan Moorkoth, Dhruv Trivedi, and Gunjan Pal representing the team.

The Open Category saw a closely contested battle, with Rudra Desai emerging as overall champion and claiming the USD 100 top prize. Dimitrios Dispinis finished second, earning USD 50, while ISB's Krishna Babu Lakshmanan took third place with USD 25. Aaryan Anil Jai Prabhakaran and Aditya Venkataraman placed fourth

and fifth respectively.

Uma Eswari Meenakshinathan of ISB was named Overall Girls Champion in the Open section. Age-category winners included Naga Mokshith Mamidi (Under-8), Pradhyumn Manipuzha (Under-10), Likilesh Amargandhi (Under-12), and Aarav Pandya of ISB (Under-14).

The championship was inaugurated by ISB Hon. Chairman Adv. Binu Mannil Varughese, who made the ceremonial first move in a game against Hon. Vice Chairman and Sports Member Dr. Mohammed Faizal. Matches were conducted under FIDE Rapid Chess Rules, supervised by Chief Arbitrator Arjun Kakadath and his officiating team.

## Council Backs Leisure-Only Barbar Park Phase

TDT | Manama  
Mohammed Darwish

Northern Municipal Council approved a proposal on Monday to keep the second phase of Barbar Park limited to leisure use, restricting any investment on the site to facilities serving families, young people and park users.

The proposal, brought by council chairman and First Constituency representative Dr Sayed Shubbar Al Wedaie, calls for guarantees that the next phase will not go beyond the recreational and community uses agreed with specialists at the municipal projects depart-

ment.

It recommends food stations, sports games, a walking and exercise track, seating areas and open green spaces. Any investment terms would require council approval and must serve the interests and rights of the local community.

The technical plan for the second phase shows proposed works covering about 10,000 square metres within a plot of around 18,484.5 square metres. The plan includes pitches, play



Dr Sayed Shubbar Al Wedaie, Northern Municipal Council Chairman



The proposed Barbar Park

areas, service buildings, food kiosks, seating areas, car parks and planted spaces.

The proposal stated that Bar-

bar Park has seen a rise in visitors from across Bahrain since the first phase opened on October 5, 2023, leaving the existing space unable to cope with large

numbers and strengthening the case for the second phase.

The council received the technical plan for the second phase on May 12, 2024, after meetings

with the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture.

The proposal said the remaining part of the land marked for leisure services should be used to complete the park and provide more room for visitors, especially children and young people seeking outdoor sport and activities.

It cited Article 19 of the Municipalities Law, which gives municipal councils the power to propose local projects linked to parks, roads and public services, agree priorities with the relevant bodies, and decide on the creation and development of public gardens, parks and leisure areas.

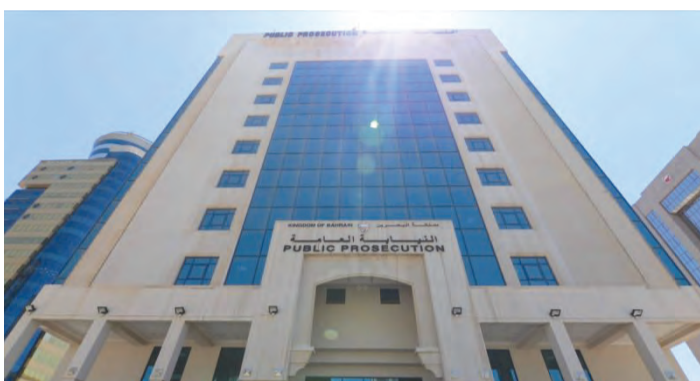
## Courts resolve more cases than filed in 2025

TDT | Manama  
Mohammed Darwish

Courts in Bahrain cleared 67,533 cases in 2025, outstripping the 66,190 new cases filed during the year, according to newly released judicial figures.

The data, published on the Open Data Portal, show that the courts dealt with a sharp rise in incoming cases while ending the year having resolved 1,343 more cases than were newly lodged.

New cases rose by about 15.5 pc from 57,311 in 2024 to 66,190



in 2025. Cases disposed of also climbed, from 59,280 in 2024 to 67,533 last year, an increase of

roughly 13.9 pc.

First-instance courts carried the bulk of the caseload, receiv-

ing 51,380 new cases, or around 77.6 pc of all new cases across the courts. They resolved 52,869 cases, giving the tier a clearance rate of 1.03, meaning it decided more cases than it received during the year.

The number of pending first-instance cases stood at 9,242 at the end of 2025, up by about 7.7 pc on 2024. The increase came despite a rise in completed cases, as the heavier flow of new filings added to the stock of live cases.

Appeal courts received 12,080 new cases in 2025 and cleared 11,789, giving them a clearance

rate of 0.98, close to balance between new filings and completed cases. Pending appeal cases reached 1,154 at the end of the year, compared with 1,109 in 2024.

The figures also point to quicker handling of appeal cases. The average age of an appeal case fell from 2.1 months in 2024 to 1.8 months in 2025, and remained well below the 2.8-month average recorded in 2022.

The Court of Cassation recorded 2,730 new cases in 2025 and resolved 2,875, producing the highest clearance rate among the

three court tiers at 1.05. This came despite a rise of about 16.4 pc in new cassation cases compared with 2024.

Pending cassation cases also fell sharply over the longer term, dropping from 1,029 at the end of 2022 to 541 at the end of 2025, a fall of nearly 47 pc.

Across all court levels, pending cases stood at 10,937 at the end of 2025, up from 10,215 at the end of 2024, a rise of about 7.1 pc in one year. Compared with 2022, however, the backlog was lower, falling from 11,611 cases to 10,937, a drop of about 5.8 pc over the period.

### From The Court

TDT | Manama  
Rehab Mohammad

#### SIM swap scam leads to prison term Bahraini jailed 3 years over BD 2,490 banking fraud

A 36-year-old Bahraini man has been sentenced to three years in prison and fined BD 3,000 by the High Criminal Court after being convicted of hacking a businessman's financial application account and fraudulently transferring BD 2,490 from his bank account.

The court upheld an earlier ruling, finding that the defendant unlawfully accessed the victim's electronic banking services, used verification codes sent to a mobile number linked to the account, and executed unauthorized money transfers.

According to the Public Prosecution, the defendant illegally used the victim's electronic sig-



nature—represented by one-time verification codes used to activate the BenefitPay app and linked banking services—to carry out fraudulent transactions. He was also charged with unlawfully accessing an information system and transferring funds without authorization.

#### Power of attorney misused

Court documents show that the victim, a 42-year-old Gulf businessman, had granted the defendant limited power of attorney to manage specific administrative matters in Bahrain, including opening bank accounts. However, he was not authorized to manage funds or access the

victim's personal phone number. The defendant allegedly exploited the victim's absence from Bahrain to obtain a replacement SIM card registered in the victim's name. This allowed him to receive banking verification codes and gain access to the victim's account.

#### Unauthorized SIM replacement

The court heard that the victim later discovered his SIM card was not functioning upon arrival in Bahrain. A telecom provider issued a replacement SIM, but it later emerged that another replacement SIM had already been issued earlier the same day without the victim's knowledge.

Using the active SIM linked to the victim's banking services, the defendant carried out two

transactions totaling BD 2,490—transferring funds to his own account and to his daughter's account.

The victim realized something was wrong after attempting to use his banking application while abroad and finding insufficient funds. Upon contacting his bank, he was informed of transactions made through the mobile banking app using verification codes sent to his number.

### Banking investigation

A financial compliance official testified that the account was activated using SMS verification codes sent to the linked number. Within 30 minutes, two separate transfers were made—BD 1,490 and BD 1,000—each requiring authentication.

Investigators confirmed that both transactions were authorized using access to the victim's mobile-linked verification system, and records showed the beneficiaries were the defendant and his daughter.

### Two Arrested Over Cable Theft from East Riffa Homes

The High Criminal Court ordered the detention of two Asian nationals accused of stealing electrical cables from five under-construction residential properties in the East Riffa area.

stolen items without verifying their source.

Following the arrests, the Public Prosecution launched an immediate investigation, during which both defendants were interrogated and confronted with the available evidence. Both subsequently confessed to the charges.

Based on their admissions, the prosecution ordered their pre-trial detention pending referral to the competent court. It also directed the return of the recovered stolen items to their rightful owners.

The Public Prosecution reaffirmed its commitment to pursuing legal action against individuals involved in property crimes or dealing in illicit proceeds. It also commended the security authorities for their swift response, which led to the arrest of the suspects and the recovery of the stolen materials, helping safeguard public security and property rights.



النيابة العامة  
Public Prosecution

According to the Public Prosecution, four separate reports regarding the thefts were received from the Southern Governorate Police Directorate. Police investigations led to the identification and arrest of the suspects.

Authorities said the first defendant was apprehended possessing part of the stolen electrical materials, while the second suspect was arrested after allegedly purchasing some of the

### Court Jails Two for Trafficking Minors in Bahrain

The First High Criminal Court in Bahrain has sentenced two defendants to seven years in prison each and imposed fines of 2,000 dinars, in a human trafficking case involving the exploitation of two underage sisters.

The court also ordered the deportation of the victims to their home country after legal procedures conclude.

The case involves a 32-year-old man and a 40-year-old woman of Asian nationality, convicted of trafficking two sisters aged 16 and 17 and exploiting them for forced prostitution.

According to the Public Prosecution, the defendants were found guilty of trafficking the minors through coercion, threats, and deception, in addition to unlawfully detaining them for financial gain.

Investigations revealed that the victims were subjected to exploitation; the

accused benefited financially from their activities while denying the girls any access to the earnings. Authorities noted that the male defendant partially depended on the proceeds, while the female defendant relied entirely on them as a source of income.

The case emerged after police received information about a suspected trafficking network targeting minors. Investigations confirmed that the victims had travelled from another Gulf country after being misled with promises of employment by an unidentified individual.

Upon their arrival in Bahrain, the defendants facilitated clients and controlled the proceeds, while the victims received no payment. Prosecutors said the accused were aware that both girls were under the age of 18 and had exploited their vulnerable financial situation.

### Man Jailed Five Years for Setting Fire to Mother's Home

A man in his forties has been sentenced to five years in prison and fined 300 Bahraini dinars after the First High Criminal Court convicted him of setting fire to his elderly mother's home and threatening her.

The court found that the defendant deliberately started a fire in the ground-floor living room, causing property damage, including a burned chair and smoke damage.

Civil Defense confirmed the fire was intentional. The victim, a 79-year-old woman, said her son had previously threatened to burn the house. She reported him to police before the fire broke out.

Investigations revealed the incident followed a family dispute, and authorities later confirmed the arson caused material losses estimated at several hundred dinars.

## NBB Sponsors Best Academic Achievement Award at the 2026 American University of Bahrain Graduation Ceremony



TDI | Manama

The National Bank of Bahrain (NBB) participated in the 2026 American University of Bahrain (AUBH) Graduation Ceremony, held under the patron-

age of His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Abdullah bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

As part of its continued support for academic excellence, NBB sponsored the Best Academic Achievement Award for the valedictorian of the

College of Business & Management. The award, which included a cash prize, was presented by Hisham Abu Alfateh, Chief Corporate Communications Officer at NBB, to Mariam Madan, in recognition of her outstanding academic perfor-

mance.

NBB's participation in the graduation ceremony reflects its ongoing commitment to celebrating young talent and supporting the development of future business leaders across the Kingdom.

## Indian startup Sarvam AI raises \$234 million



AFP

Indian artificial intelligence startup Sarvam AI has secured \$234 million in the first close of its \$300 million Series B funding round, valuing the company at \$1.5 billion. The investment was backed by major players including HCLTech, Bessemer Venture Partners, Peak XV Partners, and Khosla Ventures.

The Bengaluru-based company gained national attention earlier this year after launching two large language models developed and trained entirely in India. Designed to support 22 In-

dian languages and voice-based interactions, the models aim to address the country's linguistic diversity while competing with leading AI platforms from the United States and China.

Co-founder Pratyush Kumar said the company plans to accelerate development across all areas, emphasizing the need for India to build its own advanced AI capabilities. The funding comes amid growing global interest in "sovereign AI," with countries seeking greater technological independence, data security, and compliance with local regulations.

## Bede Announces the Winners of "Win Your Finance" Campaign

The month of May featured three winners, increasing customers' chances of winning.

TDI | Manama

Bede, the innovative microfinance solutions app, has recently announced the winners of its ongoing exclusive "Win Your Finance" campaign, awarding customers with the full value of their Islamic financing. The three winners for the month of May are Hasan Mahdi AlSaffar, Majd Abdulrahman AlQaisi, and Hamad Juma Zaal.

The campaign gives Bede customers the opportunity to win back their full financing amount through a monthly raffle draw, with all applicants automatically entering upon applying with no additional steps required.

As part of the campaign's expansion, the month of May featured three winners, increasing customers' chances

of winning and reinforcing Bede's position as the only microfinancing provider in the Kingdom offering such a unique and rewarding initiative.

Bede offers a straightforward registration process with minimal requirements. Users can apply for Islamic financing in just a few minutes from anywhere and at any time throughout the week, making it a comfortable experience.

Customers can apply for financing through the App or find out more details via our website, www.bede.bh. Our dedicated customer

service team is available 24/7 at +973 13633333, ensuring that our users always have the support they need.



## Sweden Selects Rolls-Royce SMR for Major Nuclear Power Expansion

AFP

Swedish energy company Vattenfall has selected Rolls-Royce SMR to provide small modular reactors (SMRs) for a major nuclear power development, marking a significant step in Sweden's efforts to expand low-carbon electricity generation. The British company was chosen over U.S.-based competitor GE Vernova in a contract estimated to be worth several billion pounds, highlighting growing confidence in SMR technology and its role in Europe's future energy landscape.

The decision aligns with Sweden's long-term strategy to strengthen energy security, reduce dependence on fossil fuels, and achieve its goal of reaching net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. Demand for electricity is expected to rise sharply in the coming decades due to industrial growth, digitalization, and the increasing electrification



of transportation and manufacturing sectors. As a result, the Swedish government sees nuclear energy as an essential component of a reliable and sustainable energy mix.

Under the project, three Rolls-Royce SMRs will be constructed at the Ringhals nuclear site in southwest Sweden through Vattenfall's Videberg Kraft venture. Together, the reactors are expected to generate approximately 12 terawatt hours of electricity each year, supplying around 6% of Swe-

den's total electricity demand.

SMRs offer advantages over traditional nuclear plants because they use factory-built components that can be assembled more quickly and efficiently on-site. Energy Minister Ebba Busch said the project would boost energy independence, support economic growth, create jobs, and help stabilize electricity prices. The first reactor is expected to begin operating in the mid-2030s, pending regulatory approval.

## Oil plunges, stocks jump on US-Iran peace deal

AFP

Global markets rallied on Monday while oil prices recorded sharp losses after the United States and Iran reached a framework agreement aimed at ending months of conflict in the Middle East and restoring the flow of oil through the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important energy corridors.

The breakthrough agreement, described as a memorandum of understanding, is expected to be formally signed in Switzerland on Friday. Investors welcomed the development as a major step toward stabilizing a region that has experienced heightened tensions and military confrontations over the past three months.

The conflict had significantly disrupted global energy markets after Iran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz following US and Israeli strikes on Iranian

targets in late February. The strategic waterway handles nearly one-fifth of the world's crude oil shipments, making any disruption a major concern for global energy security and economic stability.

As news of the agreement emerged, oil prices fell by around five percent, moving closer to the \$80-per-barrel mark. The decline comes after crude prices had surged above \$110 per barrel during the height of the conflict, fueling fears of rising inflation and increased costs for businesses and consumers worldwide.

Financial markets responded positively to the easing of geopolitical tensions. Wall Street posted strong gains, led by technology stocks. The Nasdaq index outperformed broader markets, while SpaceX shares rose another eight percent following the company's landmark

\$75 billion initial public offering, further boosting investor sentiment.

Asian stock markets recorded some of the strongest gains of the day. Tokyo and Seoul surged by approximately five percent each, supported by increased investment in technology and growth-oriented sectors. European markets also advanced, with major indexes in Paris and Frankfurt ending higher.



However, London's FTSE 100 underperformed as falling oil prices weighed heavily on energy companies listed on the exchange.

Market analysts noted that while the peace agreement has reduced immediate concerns over energy supply disruptions, challenges remain. Russ Mould, Investment Director at AJ Bell, said markets had already recovered significantly in recent

weeks and warned that inflation concerns would not disappear overnight despite lower oil prices.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi described the agreement as bringing an "immediate end" to the conflict. He added that negotiations toward a comprehensive final settlement would continue over the next two months, suggesting that diplomatic efforts are far from complete.

US President Donald Trump celebrated the announcement on Sunday, declaring that the agreement with Iran had been finalized and calling for the resumption of global oil shipments. His remarks further reinforced market optimism that a prolonged regional conflict may have been avoided.

Attention is now turning to major central bank meetings scheduled for this week. The US Federal Reserve and the Bank of

England are widely expected to keep interest rates unchanged as policymakers assess whether easing geopolitical tensions will help reduce inflationary pressures.

Investors will closely watch comments from Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh regarding the future direction of monetary policy. Meanwhile, the Bank of Japan is expected to continue tightening policy by raising borrowing costs following recent moves by the European Central Bank.

Although questions remain about the details of the US-Iran agreement, global markets have welcomed the prospect of stability returning to a region that plays a crucial role in the world's energy supply. The development has raised hopes for lower fuel costs, reduced inflationary pressures, and stronger economic growth in the months ahead.

# New Business Classification System Strengthens SME Sector

Reform supports innovation, investment, and long-term business planning

TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry has welcomed the issuance of Ministerial Decision No. (23) of 2026 on the classification of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), describing it as a significant step toward enhancing Bahrain's business ecosystem and enabling enterprises to grow and expand within a clearer and more adaptive regulatory framework.

The Chamber's Chairman, H.E. Nabeel Khaled Kanoo, praised the decision issued by the Minister of Industry and Commerce, H.E. Abdulla bin Adel Fakhro, noting that the updated classification system represents an important development in strengthening the Kingdom's economic framework and



improving the ability of national businesses to scale in line with evolving market conditions.

Kanoo said that an updated

enterprise classification will help businesses make more effective use of targeted support programmes and initiatives

aimed at business development. It will also support the design of services tailored to different stages of company growth, ulti-

mately improving productivity, expansion prospects, and economic contribution.

He added that the significance of the decision goes beyond categorising companies by size, stressing that it also facilitates smoother progression from one category to another as businesses grow. This, he said, encourages entrepreneurs and business owners to invest, innovate, and adopt long-term planning strategies, while strengthening the competitiveness of Bahraini companies and their ability to explore new growth opportunities.

Kanoo further explained that a clear classification framework builds greater confidence among enterprises when planning expansion or accessing support services. It also contributes to creating a more enabling environment for startups, family

businesses, and SMEs, which he described as a key driver of economic activity.

He reaffirmed that supporting the growth and expansion of national enterprises is a cornerstone of sustainable development, adding that continuous improvement of the regulatory and legislative framework enhances the competitiveness of the national economy and the attractiveness of Bahrain's investment environment.

The Chairman also commended the efforts of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Industry and Commerce for continuously updating business-related legislation, stressing that such reforms empower the private sector to play a stronger role as a key partner in economic development and the achievement of Bahrain's future objectives.

”  
Supporting the growth and expansion of national enterprises is a cornerstone of sustainable development, and continuously improving our regulatory and legislative framework strengthens the national economy's competitiveness.

H.E. MR. NABEEL KHALED KANOO, CHAIRMAN OF THE BAHRAIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

# Total CX Hosts Exclusive AI-Focused Enterprise Workshop Showcasing the Future of Customer Experience

TDT | Manama

Total CX, part of the Beyon Group, in collaboration with Batelco by Beyon Enterprise team, hosted an exclusive executive workshop titled “The Next Era of Experience – Powered by AI, Designed for People”, bringing together enterprise leaders, decision-makers, and technology experts to explore how Artificial Intelligence is reshaping customer engagement and transforming the future of customer experience.

Held exclusively for Batelco by Beyon Enterprise customers, the workshop highlighted the growing role of AI-powered customer engagement platforms, AI Agents, and Voice Intelligence in helping organizations deliver more personalized, efficient, and intelligent

customer experiences at scale. Through real-world use cases and live demonstrations, attendees gained valuable insights into emerging customer experience technologies and practical strategies for enhancing customer satisfaction, improving operational efficiency, and accelerating digital transformation initiatives. Total CX's comprehensive customer engagement platform is supported through the company's collaboration with DOO, which specializes in artificial intelligence customer experience technologies.

Companies today are looking at more intelligent engagement models with their customers. AI Agents and Voice Intelligence



are becoming essential tools for delivering more meaningful and personalised interactions while improving efficiency. This workshop provided an opportunity for business leaders to explore how these technologies can help organizations strengthen customer relationships, enhance operational performance, and support long-term growth.

The workshop also provided a platform for networking and knowledge sharing among industry peers, technology partners, and customer experience professionals, reinforcing the importance of innovation and collaboration in shaping the future of enterprise customer engagement.

Total CX continues to support organizations across Bahrain with innovative solutions that enhance customer experiences, improve business performance, and accelerate digital transformation.

# Al Salloom Backs New SME Classification

TDT | Manama  
Mohammed Darwish

A new ministerial decree on the classification of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises will help bring greater clarity to Bahrain's business sector and ensure support is more fairly targeted, MP Ahmed Al Salloom has said.

Al Salloom, chairman of Parliament's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee and chairman of the Bahrain SMEs Development Society, said Industry and Commerce Minister's Decree No. 23 of 2026 marked a key step in updating the way businesses are grouped, using clearer measures based on workforce size and yearly income.

He said the new rules align with recent business sector changes and would give a more accurate picture of each firm's scale, operating strength and financial standing.

The updated classification, he added, would help mi-



cro-enterprises receive services that better match their needs, while giving small and medium-sized businesses wider room to benefit from funding and development schemes suited to their size and capacity.

Al Salloom said the decree would also support fairer distribution of government benefits and incentives, while helping build a more accurate database for economic planning.

Such data, he said, would help shape policy and guide decisions based on real market

indicators, positively affecting private-sector competitiveness and its role in Bahrain's economic growth.

He said the move showed the Ministry of Industry and Commerce's keenness to update the SME classification system in line with economic changes and newer business practices, strengthening the sector's role in the national economy.

Mr Al Salloom said the decree did not rely on a single measure, but used both workforce size and annual income, giving a fuller view of a compa-

”  
By updating the SME classification system in line with evolving economic conditions and modern business practices, the Ministry has reinforced the sector's role as a key pillar of the national economy.

AHMED AL SALLOOM, MP

ny's economic activity.

He said some firms, particularly those built around technology, could generate high income with a small number of employees, while others needed larger workforces because of the nature of their operations.

Using both measures, he said, would allow for greater fairness and accuracy in classification, while taking account of the varied nature of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in the Bahraini market.

# SpaceX Raises Record \$85.7 Billion in Historic IPO



AFP

SpaceX has completed the largest initial public offering (IPO) in history, raising a total of \$85.7 billion after underwriters exercised their over-allotment, or “greenshoe,” option. The company initially raised \$75 billion, with an additional \$8.3 billion shares purchased by underwriters, including Goldman Sachs and Morgan Stanley.

The stock, priced at \$135 per share, surged 19 percent on its market debut and continued rising on Monday, pushing SpaceX's valuation

above \$2 trillion. CEO Elon Musk said the funds would support a major growth phase for the company.

A significant portion of the capital is expected to be invested in the development of Starship, SpaceX's fully reusable rocket system, and the expansion of its Starlink satellite internet network. The company also plans to pursue ambitious projects such as orbital AI data centers and a large semiconductor manufacturing facility in Texas.

Despite reporting a \$4.9 billion loss last year, investors remain highly optimistic about SpaceX's future.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

WE CAN EASILY FORGIVE A CHILD WHO IS AFRAID OF THE DARK; THE REAL TRAGEDY OF LIFE IS WHEN MEN ARE AFRAID OF THE LIGHT.  
PLATO

















- US and Iran to sign peace deal in Switzerland on June 19: Pakistan
- Iran says agreement with US immediately ends war
- Iran foresees US talks within two months on 'final agreement'
- US to release \$12 bn in frozen assets: Iranian media
- UK, France, Germany and Italy prepared to lift Iran sanctions: joint statement
- Iran's foreign ministry says maritime service fees will be charged in Hormuz

**Taiwan launches website to collect intelligence on China**  
AFP | Taipei, Taiwan

Taiwan said a website launched for Chinese citizens to leak intelligence was working "normally" on Monday, but analysts provided mixed opinions on its implications for the island's security. China claims democratic Taiwan is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to take it, while Taipei accuses Beijing of using espionage and infiltration to weaken its defences. Taiwan's National Security Bureau (NSB) introduced the platform Sunday with a one-minute AI-generated video showing a Chinese civil servant witnessing colleagues being removed and investigated, "reflecting a pervasive atmosphere that everyone is on edge under China's totalitarian regime", it said in a statement. The website invited Chinese nationals "who share the same values of democracy" to collaborate on reporting on Beijing.

## IRAN-US PEACE AGREEMENT: KEY POINTS

CEASEFIRE • NEGOTIATIONS • ASSETS • HORMUZ • WHAT'S NEXT

<b>1</b> IMMEDIATE AGREEMENT HIGHLIGHTS	<b>2</b> STRAIT OF HORMUZ	<b>3</b> 60-DAY NEGOTIATIONS: KEY FOCUS	<b>4</b> WHAT'S MISSING?
 <p><b>END OF WAR</b> Permanent and immediate cessation of war on all fronts, including Lebanon.</p>  <p><b>\$24 BILLION IN FROZEN ASSETS</b> To be released during a 60-day negotiation period – half before talks begin.</p>  <p><b>SANCTIONS SUSPENDED</b> Suspension of sanctions on the sale of Iranian oil, petrochemical products and their derivatives.</p>  <p><b>NAVAL BLOCKADE LIFTED</b> US to lift the naval blockade on Iran's ports and coastlines (in place since April 13) and withdraw its forces from the vicinity of Iran.</p>  <p><b>US MUST FULFIL COMMITMENTS</b> Iran will begin final talks only after the US ends the blockade, stops military operations and releases Iran's blocked funds.</p>	 <p><b>OPEN</b> US President Trump said the Strait of Hormuz will be open "toll free".</p>  <p><b>30 DAYS</b> Iran will reopen the waterway within 30 days under Iranian arrangements.</p>  <p>Iran added the imposition of maritime service fees in Hormuz in the final moments of negotiations.</p>	 <p><b>60 DAYS</b> Framework for 60 days of negotiations on key disputes.</p>  <p>Key issues: Iran's nuclear programme, enrichment activities, uranium stockpile, and sanctions.</p>  <p>Post-war reconstruction and economic development will also be discussed.</p>  <p>Trump says enrichment suspension could be for 20 years, or possibly 15.</p>  <p>Iran's enrichment levels can never be used for military purposes and can never exceed a certain amount.</p>	 <p><b>IRAN'S MISSILE PROGRAMME</b> Unclear whether negotiations will address Iran's missile programme.</p> <p>⚠️ Longstanding central concern for Israel.</p>  <p><b>SUPPORT FOR 'AXIS OF RESISTANCE'</b> Unclear whether negotiations will address Iran's support for resistance groups.</p> <p>⚠️ Longstanding central concern for Israel.</p>  <p>Mehr report: Iran's missile programme and support for resistance groups have been <b>definitively removed from the agenda</b>.</p>

# Trump says ships 'starting to move' **out of Hormuz**



AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that oil tankers are again exiting the Strait of Hormuz, following a peace deal, but uncertainty persisted over whether Iran will keep imposing tolls on ships in the vital waterway. Mediator Pakistan announced on Sunday that the United States and Iran had agreed to an "immediate and permanent termination" of military operations, but the text of their peace deal has yet to be released. The deal is expected to be signed on Friday in Switzerland and be followed by further "technical" talks on a long-term agreement. Trump said that with the signing, the Strait of Hormuz would be reopened and a US

**Iran says maritime service fees will be charged**

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran's foreign ministry yesterday said the country would charge maritime service fees on ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz, rather than imposing tolls, under a framework deal with the US. "We have always maintained that we do not seek to collect transit tolls, but fees for navigation services, environmental protection, ship insurance and other necessary services will be charged," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei during a press briefing.

naval blockade of Iran would be lifted. Yesterday, while flying to a G7 summit in France, Trump posted on his Truth Social platform that "ships are starting to move, many loaded up with Oil, out of the Strait of Hormuz." "They are going along the Southern 'Highway,' which is totally safe, secure, and pristine," he wrote, apparently referring to a shipping route nearer to Oman in the narrow waterway. Trump said last week that the US military had secretly helped more than 200 commercial ships carrying over 100 million barrels of oil pass through the Strait of Hormuz since May. "There are other areas of travel, also!!!" he posted Monday, without further details.

**Iran says to seek UN Security Council ratification after final deal with US**  
Tehran, Iran

Iran's foreign ministry said yesterday it would seek ratification from the UN Security Council after it negotiates a final agreement covering its nuclear programme with the United States. "The final agreement is expected to be endorsed by a United Nations Security Council resolution after a period of 60 days," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei in a weekly press briefing, adding that Tehran "will learn from past experience".

### INTERNATIONAL REACTIONS TO THE IRAN-US PEACE DEAL

SUPPORT, CAUTION AND CALLS FOR STABILITY

 <p><b>UN</b> SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES</p>	 <p><b>'CRITICAL STEP'</b> Antonio Guterres welcomed the peace deal as a "critical step towards the peaceful settlement of the conflict."</p>
 <p><b>FRANCE</b> PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON</p>	 <p><b>'READY TO SUPPORT'</b> Called for "the urgent and unconditional reopening of the Strait of Hormuz," adding that France and the UK were "ready to support." France will also support "the determined efforts of the Lebanese authorities to restore the sovereignty of the State." The agreement "must address concerns related to Iran's nuclear and ballistic programs," he added.</p>
 <p><b>UK</b> PRIME MINISTER KEIR STARMER</p>	 <p><b>'MINE CLEARANCE'</b> Said "toll-free freedom of navigation must now be restored in the Strait of Hormuz," adding that the UK was ready "to offer support on mine clearance." "It remains the UK's firm and longstanding position that Iran must never have a nuclear weapon," Starmer said.</p>

 <p><b>QATAR</b> FOREIGN MINISTRY</p>	 <p><b>'REGIONAL SECURITY'</b> Qatar's foreign ministry expressed its "full support for all efforts and initiatives aimed at enhancing regional security and stability."</p>
 <p><b>TURKEY</b> PRESIDENT RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN</p>	 <p><b>'REMAIN VIGILANT'</b> Stressed "the need to avoid rhetoric, provocations, and actions that could escalate tensions in the period leading up to the signing of the agreement, and to remain vigilant against possible sabotage."</p>
 <p><b>JAPAN</b> PRIME MINISTER SANAIE TAKAICHI</p>	 <p><b>'FREE AND SAFE NAVIGATION'</b> Said she hopes that "free and safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz will actually be ensured, and that a final agreement on Iran's nuclear issue and other matters will be achieved as soon as possible."</p>
 <p><b>AUSTRALIA</b> PRIME MINISTER ANTHONY ALBANESE &amp; FOREIGN MINISTER PENNY WONG</p>	 <p><b>'LONGSTANDING CONCERNS'</b> Called for "continued restraint and constructive engagement" from the US and Iran. "Iran must address longstanding concerns about its nuclear program and the threat it poses to international security," they said in a joint statement.</p>
 <p><b>NEW ZEALAND</b> PRIME MINISTER CHRIS LUXON</p>	 <p><b>'GET FUEL FLOWING'</b> Said the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz "will help restore stable trade routes, get fuel flowing and keep our economy moving."</p>

**Trump, Vance and Iran speaker Ghalibaf electronically signed the deal: US official**  
AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance and Iranian parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf electronically signed a deal to end the Middle East war, a senior US administration official said yesterday. "The president wanted to sign it personally because he wanted to show his... dedication to bring this through to a successful resolution," the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told reporters in a call.

1779

Spain declares war on Great Britain in support of France and the USA, starting the Great Siege of Gibraltar, which lasts 3 years, 7 months, and 2 weeks

1858

Abraham Lincoln says "A house divided against itself cannot stand" accepting Illinois Republican Party's nomination for the Senate



1904

Bloomsday, the date of the fictional events in James Joyce's novel "Ulysses"

1963

Soviet space mission Vostok 6 launches with Valentina Tereshkova aboard, making her the first woman in space

# Deal met with hope, scepticism

Paris, France

The deal between the United States and Iran to end their war, negotiated in secret and still not revealed in detail, was greeted with scepticism but a measure of relief among ordinary people across the Middle East.

In Lebanon, AFP saw displaced people preparing to return to homes they fled in the south of the country, despite Israeli ministers declaring that they do not feel bound by the agreement to halt their own offensive against Hezbollah.

At the Qasmiyeh bridge, gateway to the Tyre area that Israel has pounded in recent weeks, dozens of cars packed with mattresses and suitcases were passing through a Lebanese army checkpoint, passengers flashing victory signs.

Alaa Merah, who was driving with his wife and children, told

## 'We'll set up a tent'

"Our joy is greater than the whole world," said Haifa Sherri, who was displaced from the town of Khirbet Selm near the border.

She said, however, she would hold off on returning until the situation became clearer.

Lebanon's army urged displaced residents to delay their return to southern border villages, while several municipalities told people to await instructions.

But in Sidon, Hanaa Jaffal said she planned to returning on Monday to Ansar, close to Nabatieh and the Israeli ad-

AFP: "We're returning to our south, to the free land... we can't do without the southern land."

Many expressed hope this



A shepherd displaced by the fighting leads his herd along a road in Tyre as he returns to his home village in southern Lebanon

turning to your land, even if the houses are no longer

There's nothing like re-

would be a "final return" after hundreds of thousands of residents were repeatedly forced to flee Israeli bombings and evac-

uation orders.

At a crowded school-turned-shelter in the coastal city of Sidon, displaced people sat in

there," she said.

"We'll set up a tent and stay in it," she said, paying tribute to Iran, which backs Hezbollah and which insisted Lebanon must be included in any peace deal.

On the other side of the border in Israel, reactions were more mixed, but many expressed scepticism that peace would ensue.

"I don't expect this ceasefire to last. I don't think that they considered Israeli needs and I'm personally upset about it," said Naomi Haddar, chief executive of a medical non-prof-

classrooms drinking coffee, waiting for official authorisation to return.

# Robot weapons no licence for atrocities

UN calls for regulation of autonomous weapons

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The United Nations rights chief yesterday called on countries to urgently regulate autonomous weapons systems to ensure they do not unleash widespread atrocity crimes.

Speaking before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Volker Turk cautioned that the dangers long warned about in connection with autonomous weapons were rapidly materialising.

"We are seeing a global shift in how war is waged," he said.

"The UN has warned for many years against the development of lethal autonomous weapons. This reality is now upon us."

He pointed to the rapidly escalating use of drones in warfare, "creating a new circle of hell" in places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Gaza, Israel, Lebanon and Myanmar.

In Ukraine, he highlighted how "relentless drone attacks have caused mass casualties and terrorised civilians".

And in Sudan, he said his of-

fice had documented that drone strikes had killed more than 1,000 civilians between January and May this year, while long-range drones had also destroyed aid convoys and vital energy infrastructure.

And with the rapid advances in artificial intelligence, experts have increasingly been sounding the alarm that humans could lose control of such weapons.

The UN rights chief said "the prospect of billion-dollar, AI-enabled weapons, brought down by billion-dollar, AI-enabled defensive shields, exposes the horror, emptiness, and futility of war. "Autonomous weapons cannot become a licence for atrocities."

Discussions have been running for a decade around a possible future treaty regulating the use of automated weapons, often referred to as killer robots.

Countries are due to decide later this year whether to launch full-on treaty negoti-

ations. "States urgently need to consider the moral and legal questions this raises," he said, also calling on them to "agree on a common approach that protects civilian lives, and recommit to diplomacy and media-



## Australia to probe Israel's alleged abuse of flotilla activists

AFP | Sydney, Australia

Australia's federal police said yesterday they are investigating claims of abuse by Israeli officials made by citizens who were detained following the interception of their Gaza-bound aid flotilla last month.

Some members of a group of Australian activists have alleged they were subjected to "physical, psychological and

sexual abuse" by their Israeli captors and demanded Canberra take action.

Following a meeting with Foreign Minister Penny Wong on Monday, the group said the Australian government had "committed to undertaking an independent investigation" into those allegations.

In a statement, Australia's federal police confirmed they had "begun inquiries into allegations made

by a representative of the group".

"The (police force) engages with a victim centric, trauma-informed approach," a spokesperson said, adding they would "provide an update at an appropriate time".

Foreign Minister Wong said this month she believed women who said they had been subject to sexual abuse and assault by Israeli forces.



## Macron and Modi meet in France for Indian tech showcase

Euronews

Bharat Innovates brings together Indian deep-tech startups, higher education institutions and investors. The 2026 edition is taking place in Nice from 14 to 16 June.

French President Emmanuel Macron met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday at the Palais des Expositions in Nice, where the "Bharat Innovates" Indian tech showcase opened.

The three-day event, backed by the Indian Ministry of Education and staged abroad for the first time, brings together 120 Indian deep-tech startups, 15 Indian higher education institutions and investors. It is designed to help build links between India's innovation ecosystem and global stakeholders.

Speaking at the opening of the event, Macron hailed India as a "major innovation nation," adding that he wanted to "convince" the investors present of "what France is".

He pointed out that France is the EU country that has created the most jobs in artificial intelligence - a claim backed up by a recent LinkedIn study, revealed by Les Échos at the VivaTech fair, a major French tech event.

According to this study, based on advertised vacan-

cies, nearly 20,000 AI-related positions have been created in Paris since 2023, more than in cities such as Berlin, Madrid, Munich or Dublin.

Modi's trip to France follows Macron's official visit to Mumbai in February.

The Indian PM was welcomed to Nice on Saturday by the local mayor, Éric Ciotti.

Ciotti said on X that the presence of the leaders at the tech event "confirms the growing place of our city in international exchanges, innovation, and economic development".

Macron and Modi are next due to go to Villa Kérylos, an Ancient Greek revival style mansion in Beaulieu-sur-Mer, for bilateral talks, the Élysée confirmed to Euronews.

The French and Indian delegations will then travel separately to Évian-les-Bains in Haute-Savoie, which will host the G7 summit from Monday 15 to Wednesday 17 June.

120

The three-day event, backed by the Indian Ministry of Education and staged abroad for the first time, brings together 120 Indian deep-tech startups



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



Held an excellent meeting with Prime Minister Fico. This is indeed a very special moment for the India-Slovakia friendship.

Considering the strong potential of our ties, we have elevated our relations to a Comprehensive Partnership. Our talks covered cooperation in sectors like automobiles, railways, advanced manufacturing and green technology. The India-EU Free Trade Agreement will also add momentum to our partnership.

@narendramodi

02



It is profoundly heartbreaking to witness another surge of xenophobic violence in #SouthAfrica this week. Hundreds have marched on Parliament, thousands of families have been displaced, and lives have been tragically cut short.

@DrTedros

03



Global imbalances are a key focus of this Summit. We all face overcapacity and export controls of minerals. Together, we have the scale and partnership to respond. Through critical raw materials agreements with partners around the world

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04



I warmly congratulate the US & Iran for having reached a peace deal that provides for an immediate & permanent ceasefire, the re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz, as well as a framework for further negotiations. This represents a critical step towards the peaceful settlement of the conflict.

@antoniogeterres

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

# Norway crown princess's son gets four-year sentence for rape

One of the rapes took place at official residence in 2018

● Hoiby acknowledged that jealousy sometimes made him lose control.

● The women themselves did not file rape charges against Hoiby.

AFP | Oslo, Norway

An Oslo court yesterday sentenced Norwegian Crown Princess Mette-Marit's son to four years in prison on two counts of rape and 32 other offences, in a high-profile scandal that has rocked the monarchy.

Marius Borg Hoiby, 29, Mette-Marit's son from a relationship prior to her 2001 marriage to Crown Prince Haakon, was accused of 40 charges, from rape to traffic violations, carrying a maximum possible sentence of 16 years in prison.

One of the rapes for which he was convicted took place at the crown prince couple's official residence in 2018.

Hoiby, who is not formally part of the royal household and has no steady job, was acquitted of two other counts of



A court sketch depicts Marius Borg Hoiby, son of Norwegian Crown Princess Mette-Marit during the first day of a trial in Oslo at the District Cour

rape, and convicted of repeated domestic abuse against an ex-girlfriend, traffic violations, issuing threats, a drug offence and others.

The prosecution had asked for a seven-year, seven-month jail term.

Hoiby, in custody since February, had denied the most serious allegations, including the charges of rape, which the prosecution said took place while the women were asleep or unconscious.

His lawyers had called for

him to serve 18 months for the charges to which he had pleaded guilty.

Hoiby was not present in court on Monday but followed the reading of the verdict by video link.

## 'Reign of terror'

The scandal erupted on August 4, 2024, when police arrested Hoiby on suspicion of assaulting his then-girlfriend in her Oslo apartment the previous night.

The media published photos

of a knife stuck in the wall and a shattered chandelier on the floor.

One of his former partners, influencer Nora Haukland, then came forward and said he had also subjected her to physical and psychological abuse -- described by prosecutors as a "reign of terror".

During the trial, Hoiby acknowledged that jealousy sometimes made him lose control.

The women themselves did not file rape charges against Hoiby.

Instead, police investigating the August 2024 incident discovered videos on his phones and computers which they said constituted rapes, and contacted the women, who were unaware of the events depicted.

The scandal has embarrassed Norway's monarchy and contributed to a fall in support, though it remains broadly popular.

It follows earlier revelations of Mette-Marit's friendship with the late convicted US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Mette-Marit, 52, suffers from an incurable lung disease that causes breathing difficulties and her condition recently took a turn for the worse. Doctors have placed her on a waiting list for a lung transplant.

## Thirty-four foetuses found in Polish doctor's garden



AFP | Warsaw, Poland

A Polish doctor has been taken into custody after 34 human foetuses were found buried in the garden of her former home, the authorities said on Monday.

Magdalena H. -- a 57-year-old medical pathologist with no previous criminal record -- is suspected of using the foetuses to perform experiments and now faces up to 12 years in prison.

Her case has whipped up a storm in traditionally Catholic Poland, with many questioning how she managed to obtain the unborn babies' bodies in a country with some of the strictest abortion laws in Europe.

But a spokesman for the prosecutor's office said that there is so far no evidence she had obtained the foetuses through illegal abortions.

Last week, prosecutors in southeastern Poland were tipped off that medical waste had been discovered during

construction work in her former house in the southeastern village of Lutorz.

Following a major search of the area involving dozens of police officers, radar and dogs, at least 34 foetuses were found buried in the garden.

"This waste was most likely used by the detained woman to perform tests," the spokesman for the District Prosecutor's Office in Rzeszow, Krzysztof Ciechanowski, said.

Aside from the bodies, tens of thousands of microscope slides, paraffin blocks and "fragments of documentation" were discovered during the search, he added.

The doctor was subsequently arrested on Friday and ordered to serve three months of pre-trial detention.

After hearing the charges, the doctor did not plead guilty, but "indicated that she herself brought and buried the human foetuses found on her property, as well as other medical waste", the prosecutor's spokesman said at a press conference.

## Somaliland opens embassy in Jerusalem

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Somaliland opened its Embassy in Jerusalem yesterday, Israel's foreign ministry announced, months after Israel became the first country to recognise the breakaway African state's independence.

"Honoured to host my dear friend President @Abdirahmanirro at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, during his historic State Visit to open Somaliland's embassy in Jerusalem," Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar posted on X, during the first-ever state visit of President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi.

"I'm proud of the privilege I had to write the first pages in the story of the Israel-Somaliland relationship," Saar added.

Somaliland is the eighth country to open its embassy in Jerusalem, following the United States, Guatemala, Honduras, Kosovo, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay and Fiji.

## Trump to hold political rally on July 4 to mark US 250th

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump announced plans yesterday for a major "rally" in Washington on the July 4 Independence Day, further imposing his political brand on celebrations of America's 250th anniversary.

The announcement comes a day after the Republican billionaire staged a mixed martial arts fight on the White House lawn -- on what just happened to be his 80th birthday -- with military honor guards and Air Force flyovers.



vers.

Trump had previously posted that another event on June 24 would be the "Greatest Rally, EVER!... A Rally to end all Rallies!" and include performances by military bands and some of his favorite singers.

That event was put together after several musical artists pulled out of a 250th anniversary concert series in the US capital, with some citing the politicized nature of the event.

But on Monday, Trump said the new July 4 event would be "the most spectacular TRUMP RALLY of them all."

The "TRIBUTE TO AMERICA" event would be held at the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial -- whose reflecting pool has recently been renovated under a multi-million dollar project ordered by the president.

"Starting at 7

P.M. EST, this HUGE Celebration will honor our Country's People, Spirit, Strength, Resolve, and Triumphs," Trump wrote on his Truth Social platform.

"There will be incredible Flyovers and Airshows featuring our Top Military Pilots and Equipment, and I will deliver keynote remarks that you will not want to miss," he said.



The United States will celebrate its 250th anniversary on July 4, 2026, marking 250 years since the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776. The milestone is officially known as the Semiquincentennial.

## Two legends, one final World Cup



An artist adds final touches to a painting featuring football players Argentina's Lionel Messi and Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo in Amritsar on the eve of the 2026 FIFA World Cup tournament.

## Palestinian leader Abbas announces presidential election in early 2027

Ramallah, Palestinian Territories

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas has issued a decree calling for presidential elections in early 2027 and for legislative elections to be held in November of this year, official Palestinian news agency Wafa reported, without saying if he would run.

Abbas, 90, won the last Palestinian presidential election in 2005 with a mandate of four years, meaning his term should have expired in 2009.

However his term was extended and no presidential election has been held since, with Abbas ruling by presi-

dential decrees, courting criticism at home and abroad.

"President Mahmoud Abbas announced that presidential elections will be held in early 2027," Wafa said, citing a statement from the presidency.

The nonagenarian leader's decree also calls for legislative elections to take place in November of this year, it added.

In his decree, Abbas emphasised he was "fully prepared to organise the Palestinian National Council elections scheduled for November, which include the general legislative elections in the homeland and elections abroad".

The Palestinian National Council (PNC) is the parliament of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which has over 700 members from the Palestinian territories and abroad.



## Bangladesh summons Indian envoy over adviser row

Dhaka, Bangladesh

Bangladesh summoned India's envoy yesterday to protest against the treatment of an adviser to Prime Minister Tarique Rahman in the latest

spat between the South Asian neighbours.

Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman called it an "unexpected and unfortunate incident".

Dhaka's state-run BSS news agency reported that the foreign

ministry had summoned Indian Deputy High Commissioner Pawan Badhe. BSS said that government strategy adviser Zahed Ur Rahman was stopped at New Delhi's airport, where he had travelled for a conference, and

questioned for several hours.

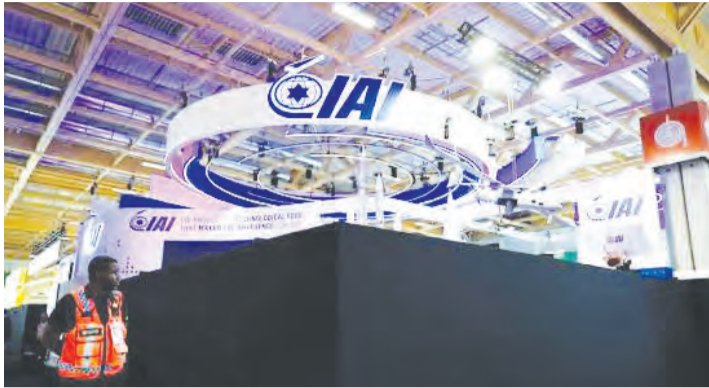
"Although Indian authorities later allowed him to proceed with his visit, he decided to return to Bangladesh," BSS said. India has not commented publicly about the incident.

# France shuts down dozen Israeli stands at defence trade show

AFP | Villepinte, France

A dozen Israeli company stands were shut down yesterday at a major international defence and security exhibition held outside Paris, sparking outrage from authorities in Israel.

The stands at the Eurosatory arms and security trade show were "closed due to non-compliance with participation conditions set by the French authorities," the organiser, Coges Events, said in a statement to



AFP.

It said it was required to enforce decisions of the French authorities.

"As a result, 12 booths had to be closed," Charles Beaudouin, head of Coges Events, said in the statement.

France has banned the display of Israeli offensive weapons at the 2026 edition of the exhibition and restricted the display of Israeli companies "to equipment and products exclusively relat-

ed to air defence and ballistic missile defence capabilities", he said.

The Israeli defence ministry argued the Israeli pavilions were boarded up "despite these companies having met the French government's outrageous demands".

The ministry accused France of trying "to conceal Israeli technological superiority from the world".

While the booths of three

major Israeli defence contractors including Israel Aerospace Industries and Rafael remained open on Monday, none displayed weapon models in public view, unlike exhibitors from other countries, an AFP journalist saw.

Eurosatory is taking place from June 15 to 19 at an exhibition centre north of Paris.

Israeli defence firms were banned from exhibiting at the trade show in 2024.

# Trump says Strait of Hormuz will be 'completely open' Friday

**A narrow strait. Global impact.**

**1 THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ: WHERE & WHAT**

The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow waterway between Iran and Oman that connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

**KEY FACTS**

- Length: ~161 km
- Width: 33 km at its narrowest point (Shipping lanes are ~3 km wide in each direction)
- Connects: Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea
- Borders: Iran (north) and Oman (south)
- Strategic importance: The only sea passage for most crude oil exports from the Persian Gulf

**2 WHY IT MATTERS TO THE WORLD**

Hormuz is the lifeline for global energy. A disruption here would send shockwaves across economies.

**BY THE NUMBERS (Daily Averages)**

- ~20-21 MILLION BARRELS of oil and condensate pass through Hormuz (20% of global oil consumption)
- ~20% of global LNG trade

**TOP EXPORTERS USING HORMUZ**

Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Iran

**TOP IMPORTERS RELYING ON HORMUZ**

China, India, Japan, South Korea, Europe

**WHAT A DISRUPTION COULD MEAN**

- Spike in oil prices
- Global supply chain disruption
- Higher shipping costs
- Slower global economic growth

**3 RISKS, TENSIONS & IMPACT**

**A HISTORY OF TENSIONS**

- The waterway has seen multiple crises, threats, and attacks over the years.
- Iran has, at times, threatened to close the strait in periods of heightened tensions.

**POTENTIAL RISKS**

- Military conflict in the region
- Attacks on tankers or infrastructure
- Mining or blockage of the strait
- Cyber threats to shipping

**GLOBAL IMPACT OF A BLOCKADE**

- Oil prices could surge to \$120-\$150 per barrel or more
- Energy shortages in importing countries
- Inflation rise and economic instability worldwide

**IN SHORT:** Hormuz may be just 33 km wide, but its impact is global. Its security is vital for the world's energy, economy and stability.

AFP | France

The Strait of Hormuz will be "completely open" from Friday after a deal between Iran and the US to end the Middle East war that limited shipping in the critical bottleneck, President Donald Trump said yesterday.

Speaking at the start of bilateral talks with French President Emmanuel Macron ahead of a G7 summit in France, Trump added, "I don't think we are going to need much help" on keeping the strait open, after London and Paris proposed a joint naval mission.

Trump said that the Strait was "already partially opened", although there was "hunting" going on to ensure it was demined.

He hailed the deal made with the Islamic republic, saying "the main thing is Iran will not have a nuclear weapon."

After the killing of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on the first day of the US-Israeli war on February 28, Trump declared Washington was getting on "well" with the new leadership in Tehran.

"The first set (of leaders) is gone, the second set is gone and we found the third set to be very smart... We ended up making a deal." He did not specify which leaders he was referring to.

"I think a lot of great things are going to happen in the Middle East right now," he said, adding that Vice President JD Vance would be attending a signing ceremony for the deal Friday but without specifying where.

# US says 'zero' frozen Iranian assets released so far

Washington, United States

The United States has released no frozen Iranian funds so far under a peace deal, a US official said Monday, dismissing an Iranian report that Washington would immediately unblock some assets.

"Zero," the senior administration official said in a call with reporters when asked how many Iranian funds had been released. "The very simple fact is \$0 of frozen assets have been released by the United States or any other country."

# UK PM announces ban on social media for under-16s

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Children under 16 will be banned from using social media in the UK, Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced on Monday, saying such platforms were making youngsters "unhappy".

Some children's charities welcomed the sweeping change, which is likely to trigger a major fight with US tech giants, but others warned it could make teenagers less safe online.

Starmer, likely to face a leadership challenge in the coming weeks, said social media sites were exposing children to content that is "dangerous" and "designed to be addictive".

The ban will "include platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and X" but not messaging services such as WhatsApp, the government said.

Some young people gave a mixed response to the move.

"I think it's a good thing, to be honest, because I don't even remember what age I was

when I got Instagram, but it was just way too early," student Connie Skitt, 19, told AFP in Buxton, central England.

"You're making friends with people you don't know. It's like, not that safe."

But 18-year-old tour guide Tom Warvell expressed concerns that 16 was "a little bit high", arguing younger teens were "a better age to focus on".

"Times have changed so it is important for people to still be able to use it."



Canada and France are among other countries considering similar bans, while Indonesia began enforcing its ban for users under 16 in March.

# Italy busts clandestine bank used by drug traffickers

Drug cartels, such as Albanian trafficking organisations active in Italy, and the Italian mafia, were clients

AFP | Rome, Italy

Italian police said yesterday they had dismantled an underground bank used by drug traffickers through which several hundred million euros are believed to have moved over at least three years.

The clandestine bank, whose logistical base was located in Prato, northwest of Florence, has been run since 2021 by a Chinese national.

The operation acted as a "global broker at the service of organised crime, offering secure



Representative image

channels for paying for huge drug consignments without any physical movement of cash and guaranteeing total anonymity of financial flows," police said in a

statement.

The circuit, which made it possible to "virtually transfer capital between Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Belgium and

the Netherlands through a network of intermediaries who retained a commission", managed to move between 80-100 million euros per year for at least three years, police said.

Drug cartels, such as Albanian trafficking organisations active in Italy, and the Italian mafia, were clients, it said.

Under-the-radar money transfers run by the Chinese mafia, known as Fei Chien or "flying money", are used by Italian criminal organisations for drug-related payments.

The hard-to-trace system allows someone to pay a broker in Italy who has an agent in another part of the world who will pay the same amount to the intended recipient.

Police said they had arrested 41 individuals in Italy and Spain linked to the network, with charges ranging from

criminal conspiracy and drug trafficking to money laundering and aiding and abetting illegal immigration.

A branch of the organisation managed a "lucrative illegal immigration network from China," which flew migrants to Belgrade before transporting them -- or forcing them to march to the Hungarian border through mountainous terrain -- to the European Union and the final destination of Italy, police said.

Migrants were charged up to 9,500 euros for the journey to Prato, Turin, or the province of Verona.

The heart of Italy's textile industry, the small city of Prato is home to one of the largest Chinese communities in Europe -- and in recent years a battleground for rival Chinese mafia groups warring to control the market for clothes hangers and

**2021**

The clandestine bank, whose logistical base was located in Prato, northwest of Florence, has been run since 2021 by a Chinese national.

freight transport.

The Chinese mafia, which is also engaged in illegal betting dens, prostitution and drugs, helps supply Prato's textile industry -- primarily the fast-fashion sector -- with workers of various nationalities.

They are often exploited, paid about three euros an hour and working 13 hours a day, seven days a week, police investigations have shown.

# Classifieds



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## region

### UN welcomes US-Iran peace deal Immediate ceasefire and Strait of Hormuz reopening



The United Nations Secretary-General also expressed deep appreciation for the constructive role played by regional actors, including Pakistan, Qatar, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye, along with other countries in the region, for supporting the negotiations that led to the agreement.

The statement urged all parties to build on the current momentum and intensify efforts to reach a comprehensive and final resolution to the conflict.

Reaffirming the UN's position, the Secretary-General said the United Nations stands ready to assist in achieving a durable and inclusive peace settlement.

### Islamic Cooperation Body Backs US-Iran Deal



The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has welcomed the agreement on a Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran aimed at ending military operations and restoring security and freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

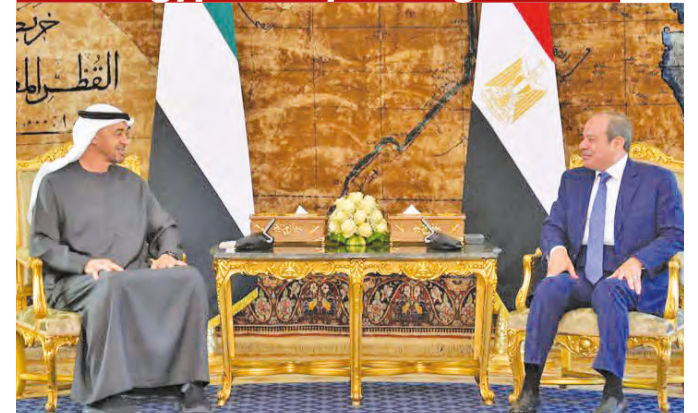
In a statement, the OIC praised the understanding reached by both parties, describing it as a positive step toward reducing tensions and enhancing stability in the region. The agreement seeks to return security conditions and maritime navigation in the strategic waterway to their previous levels.

The General Secretariat also commended the diplomatic efforts of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the State of Qatar, along with other countries that contributed to bridging differences between the parties and creating favorable conditions for the agreement.

The OIC expressed hope that the memorandum would be fully implemented and that all concerned parties would engage constructively in upcoming rounds of negotiations. It emphasized the importance of addressing outstanding issues through dialogue and cooperation to preserve regional security, stability and peace.

The Secretariat reaffirmed its support for diplomatic solutions and efforts aimed at promoting stability and safeguarding international navigation in one of the world's most vital maritime corridors.

### UAE-Egypt Unity Strengthened



UAE President His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, underscoring the strong UAE-Egypt partnership rooted in trust, unity, and shared goals for stability and development.



## Tunisian football bosses mull firing Lamouchi after World Cup thrashing

AFP | Paris

Tunisia coach Sabri Lamouchi's job is in the balance as federation chiefs are holding talks following the humiliating 5-1 defeat by Sweden in their opening World Cup match, a source said yesterday.

Lamouchi has only been in charge since January and could be replaced by Mondher Kebaier, who coached the national side from 2019 to 2022.

Kebaier is with the Tunisian World Cup delegation which is based in Monterrey, Mexico.

"Discussions are underway between members of the federation," the source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

He added that a decision "in one sense or the other" should be taken "in the next



Tunisia coach Sabri Lamouchi

few hours".

Several Tunisian media outlets claimed Lamouchi would be sacked.

After Sunday's loss, Tunisia now have a tough task to reach the second stage of a World Cup at the seventh attempt.

Their remaining group matches are against Japan in Monterrey next Saturday and the Netherlands in Kansas City on June 25.

Japan drew 2-2 with the Dutch in their opening game on Sunday.

Former France international Lamouchi, 54, had previous World Cup experience having coached Ivory Coast at the 2014 edition but he resigned after they failed to make the knockout stages.



Tunisia had been the first team to qualify without conceding a single goal—a record later matched by Ivory Coast and England

## Youth basketball team gears up for Arab Championship

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's national youth basketball team has intensified their preparations for the upcoming Arab Youth Championship in Sfax, Tunisia, scheduled to tip off on June 27.

They are currently undergoing daily training sessions under head coach Salman Ramadan as part of their build-up programme.

The tournament is viewed as an important stepping stone

in the team's long-term development programme and as preparation for the upcoming GCC Youth Championship, which acts as a qualifier for the Asian Championship.

Scheduled to be held in Qatar from July 17 to 22, the GCC Youth Championship offers the team another opportunity to test itself against the region's top emerging players.

The preparation reflects the team's focus on regional competition as part of its development ahead of key qualification stages this year.

# Japan fight back in 2-2 Dutch thriller at World Cup

Netherlands twice lead but fail to hold off resilient Japanese side

AFP | Arlington

Japan scored an 89th-minute equaliser as they twice fought back to rescue a 2-2 draw with the Netherlands in Texas on Sunday to open their World Cup campaigns.

A match in front of 69,285 spectators that had bubbled away in the first period sparked into life in the second half.

Netherlands skipper Virgil van Dijk scored with a fine header, only for Keito Nakamura to quickly level, before winger Crisencio Summerville's delicious curled finish into the bottom corner just after the hour.

The Dutch looked like they would hold on, but Japan levelled at the death with Crystal Palace midfielder Daichi Kamada credited with the goal after a deflection.

"We are not completely satisfied with the draw," said Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu, whose side face Tunisia on Saturday in a competitive-looking Group F. "But the Netherlands are a top-class team and we tried to compete at the same level.

"We were tenacious but patient and kept calm." Japan and the Netherlands are missing key players through injury, but on paper this was still one of the more attractive fixtures in the group stage.

Both have been touted as dark horses capable of going far at



Netherlands' goalkeeper #01 Bart Verbruggen (2nd R) dives and concedes Japan's second goal scored by Japan's midfielder #15 Daichi Kamada (3rd L)

the tournament -- the Dutch have been runners-up three times whereas Japan have never gone beyond the last 16.

Netherlands coach Ronald Koeman, the former defender charged with finally delivering World Cup glory, was given a grilling by Dutch media afterwards especially for his substitutions.

"I am disappointed that we did not win," said Koeman, who pointed the finger at his side's defending.

"But I am not that negative," he said to one line of questioning that he took exception to.

"I saw a team that has made great progress," he added of his men.

"Of course we can perform better and need to grow during the tournament."

### Game sparks to life

The Netherlands made a confident start and nearly took the lead after three minutes, Donyell Malen swivelling and

**We are not completely satisfied with the draw. But the Netherlands are a top-class team and we tried to compete at the same level. We were tenacious but patient and kept calm**

JAPAN COACH HAJIME MORIYASU

forcing a smart save from Zion Suzuki.

The impressive air-conditioned arena is usually home to the Dallas Cowboys, and at the hydration break the NFL team's cheerleaders were shown on the massive screen hanging over the pitch performing one of their routines.

The stoppage seemed to help the Dutch and Roma forward Malen again worked Suzuki with a header from a corner.

Japan's fans, who had hardly stopped singing and outnum-

bered the Dutch contingent, were briefly silenced.

The first real chance for Moriyasu's team came a few minutes before the break when a cross evaded the backtracking Summerville but Nakamura pulled his effort wide.

The Dutch had looked most threatening in the air, so it was no surprise when Liverpool talisman Van Dijk rose to plant a well-placed header into the bottom corner after a pinpoint cross from his club teammate Ryan Gravenberch on 51 minutes.

The lead lasted just six minutes, Nakamura wriggling free and firing low past goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen, the ball taking a small deflection off Jan Paul van Hecke.

In a madcap period of play, the Dutch forged ahead once more on 64 minutes when West Ham's Summerville beat his man on the right wing and curled into Suzuki's bottom-right corner with his left foot.

## Diallo strikes late as Ivory Coast stun Ecuador

AFP | Philadelphia

Manchester United's Amad Diallo struck in the 90th minute as Ivory Coast stunned Ecuador and their huge support to edge a tight affair 1-0 in their World Cup opener on Sunday.

The Group E encounter had looked set to finish 0-0, hardly a surprise given Ecuador's incredible defensive record during qualifying, and that result may well have suited both teams.

But the 23-year-old Diallo, who had been introduced in place of Bazoumana Toure shortly before the hour mark, had other ideas as he finished first-time from a right-wing cross right just as the game was heading for injury time.

It is Ivory Coast's first win at a World Cup in exactly 12 years, since they beat Japan in Brazil in 2014, and they can now be confident of making the knockout phase at the tournament for the

first time.

It was a disappointing way to start for Ecuador, who had the majority of the 68,274 crowd at the packed Philadelphia stadium kitted out in yellow and backing them.

They hit the bar twice in the first half, through John Yeboah and Alan Minda, while Elye Wahi struck the same crossbar for the Ivorians after half-time.

Ivory Coast, African champions in 2024, will now hope to build on this when they play Germany in their next game in Group E in Toronto on Saturday.

The Ecuadorians will look to bounce back when they head to Kansas City the same day to play Curacao, the debutant minnows who were hammered 7-1 by Germany earlier in Houston.

Ecuador, coached by Argentinian Sebastian Beccacece, had a remarkable record in South American qualifying as they finished second behind Argentina.



Ecuador's defensive record in qualifying was remarkable: 8 of their 18 matches ended 0-0, and they conceded only 5 goals in 18 games

With a defence marshalled by Paris Saint-Germain's Wilian Pacho and Chelsea's Moises Caicedo patrolling the midfield, they conceded a miserly five goals in 18 qualifying games, but scored only 14.

Remarkably, eight of their 18 matches ended in 0-0 draws, and six featured a single goal.

### Jay-Z in attendance

Ivory Coast were nevertheless confident of causing their opponents problems with exciting young RB Leipzig winger Yan Diomande a danger on the flanks and recent French-born recruit Wahi leading the line.

A match watched by US rap mogul Jay-Z was cagey at times but came to life midway through the first half as the frame of the goal was rattled for the first time.

Yeboah, the former German youth international who plays in Italy's Serie B for Venezia, pounced on uncertain defending at the edge of the box and crashed a shot off Yahia Fofana's bar.

The Ivory Coast goal was living a charmed life as Ecuador struck the woodwork again on the half-hour mark, Pedro Vite slipping in Minda to be denied this time.

Emerse Fae's Ivorians looked dangerous intermittently, no-

tably when Nicolas Pepe was denied by a last-ditch challenge after Diomande had raced away from Piero Hincapie.

The Elephants had never reached the World Cup knockout phase in their three previous appearances but surely knew a win here would practically secure their passage to the next round.

Wahi, who finished the club season at Nice in France, turned a Diomande cross from the right onto the bar shortly after the restart.



Amad Diallo



# Bahrain begin Asian volleyball title defence in India

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's volleyball team will begin their AVC Men's Cup 2026 campaign this Saturday in Ahmedabad, India, returning to continental competition as reigning champions.

The tournament, scheduled from 20 to 28 June, marks the start of Bahrain's title defence following their historic triumph last year on home soil — a breakthrough victory that delivered the kingdom its first-ever Asian Volleyball Confederation crown. That landmark success came after a four-set win over Pakistan in the final and secured Bahrain qualification for the AVC Men's Continental Championship later this year in Fukuoka, Japan.

Coached by former Olympian Arnaud Josserand, Bahrain face a demanding week in Pool A, where they will meet hosts India, Australia, Chinese Taipei, Kazakhstan and New Zealand in the preliminary stage.



Bahrain players and officials celebrate their title win last year on home court

Their campaign opens against Chinese Taipei on 20 June at 12:30pm, followed by a quick turnaround versus New Zealand on 21 June at 9:30am. A key clash with hosts India comes on 23 June at 6:30pm, before meetings with Kazakhstan on 25 June at 3:30pm and Australia on 26 June at 6:30pm complete their group-stage schedule.

Bahrain's path is widely regarded as challenging, with

Australia among the strongest sides in the pool, India boosted by home support, and both Kazakhstan and New Zealand bringing physical, experienced squads.

Despite the difficulty ahead, Bahrain arrive in confident form after a strong recent run and a clear upward trajectory in Asian volleyball. That momentum was reinforced last month when they claimed gold at the 4th GCC

Games in Qatar, winning every match in straight sets en route to the title.

The AVC Men's Cup 2026, the seventh edition of the competition, features 12 teams split into two pools. Traditional Asian powerhouses such as Japan, Iran, and China are absent due to their participation in the FIVB Nations League, leaving a notably more open field than usual.

# Africa makes history as three champions hold BRAVE CF world titles simultaneously



Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation has long positioned itself as the world's most global mixed martial arts organization, built on a commitment to showcasing talent from every region on the planet.

That vision has now reached a historic point, with Africa emerging as one of its most influential forces.

For the first time in BRAVE CF history, three African athletes simultaneously hold championship gold, marking a defining moment for the continent's presence in international MMA and within the promotion's international framework.

At the forefront is BRAVE CF Interim Super Welterweight World Champion Alex "Da King" Lohoré.

Representing a tri-national identity rooted in Côte d'Ivoire, France, and England, Lohoré earned the interim strap at the historic BRAVE 100 extravaganza in November 2025, reinforcing his standing among the division's elite.

His rise reflects the expanding reach of African heritage across the sport, carried by fighters competing on multiple continents while remaining anchored to their roots.

From Southern Africa, Zimbabwe's Nicholas "The Saint" Hwende continues to build a championship legacy.

A former BRAVE CF Bantamweight World Champion, Hwende achieved another milestone at BRAVE CF 105 this past May by capturing the undisputed BRAVE CF Featherweight World Title with a dramatic fifth-round submission

win over interim champion Omar "Cobra" Solomonov.

With that triumph, Hwende joined an exclusive class of fighters who have captured World Titles in two different divisions under the promotion's banner.

Hwende's accomplishments have elevated Zimbabwe's profile in MMA and established him as one of Sub-Saharan Africa's most accomplished representatives in BRAVE CF.

North Africa is represented by Algeria's Mohamed "L'Amibiance" Said Maalem, who claimed the BRAVE CF Light Heavyweight World Championship with a come-from-behind stoppage of former divisional king and rival Erko "The Bounty Hunter" Jun in a rematch at BRAVE CF 106 last June 6.

Competing with strong ties to both Algeria and Switzerland, Said Maalem's victory underscores the continued ascent of MMA across the Middle East and North Africa region, where BRAVE CF has played a central role in developing and elevating talent over the past decade.

Together, Lohoré, Hwende, and Said Maalem reflect the depth and diversity of African MMA within BRAVE CF.

Their individual paths differ in geography and background, but they converge in championship success, reinforcing Africa's growing impact on the global stage.

Africa is no longer just part of the BRAVE CF narrative. It is helping define it, with championship gold now spread across its regions and its influence firmly established inside the cage.

# Real Madrid confirm Cucurella signing from Chelsea

AFP | Madrid

Real Madrid announced the signing of Spanish defender Marc Cucurella from Chelsea yesterday, for a fee reported to be 55 million euros (\$63.8 million).

"Real Madrid and Chelsea have reached an agreement for the transfer of the player Marc Cucurella, who will join our club for the next six seasons, until June 30, 2032," said Los Blancos in a statement.

The 27-year-old left-back joined Chelsea from Brighton in 2022 after coming through La Liga champions Barcelona's academy and moving to Getafe.

Cucurella is at the World Cup



Marc Cucurella in action (file photo)

with Spain, and becomes the only Real Madrid player in Luis de la Fuente's squad. Real Madrid president Flor-

entino Perez was re-elected earlier in June, following two seasons without winning a major trophy and appointed Jose Mourinho as coach this week.

Los Blancos are set to sign Liverpool defender Ibrahima Konate at the end of his contract at Anfield and have been linked with Bernardo Silva and Inter Milan's Denzel Dumfries.

Chelsea finished 10th in the Premier League last season in a disappointing campaign, with Cucurella critical of the decision to sack Enzo Maresca in January.

Cucurella had two years left on his deal at Stamford Bridge, where he won the Club World Cup and UEFA Conference League in 2025.

# And new: Gane takes interim gold at UFC Freedom 250

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

Cyril Gane stopped Alex Pereira in the second round to win the interim UFC heavyweight title at UFC Freedom 250, denying the Brazilian a historic third divisional championship.

Held on the South Lawn of the White House, the event saw Gane deliver a composed and disciplined performance before securing the finish midway through the second round.

Pereira entered the bout attempting to make UFC history in his heavyweight debut. The former middleweight and light-heavyweight champion had already become one of the sport's most accomplished multi-division fighters, with additional world titles in kickboxing across two weight classes.

But Gane controlled key phases of the contest and capitalised



Cyril Gane holds the UFC Interim Heavyweight Championship and the commemorative UFC Freedom 250 belt

when the opening appeared, earning the stoppage victory and reclaiming interim heavyweight gold. The win marks Gane's second reign as interim champion. The 36-year-old has now competed in five UFC heavyweight title bouts across his last eight appearances, moving to 2-2 with

one no-contest in championship fights.

Gane first won interim heavyweight gold in 2021 against Derrick Lewis before losing a unification bout to Francis Ngannou. He later challenged Jon Jones for the undisputed title.

Pereira moved up in weight

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President Donald Trump hosted the UFC fight night at the White House marking America's 250th anniversary and his 80th birthday



US President Donald Trump, alongside UFC President Dana White, attends an unprecedented White House fight night

following an 80-second knockout win over Magomed Ankalaev in October and weighed in at a career-high 251 pounds, compared to Gane's 248.

Attention now turns to a potential clash with reigning heavyweight champion Tom Aspinall.

The two were previously

scheduled to meet in October, but the bout ended in a no-contest after Gane accidentally poked Aspinall in both eyes. Aspinall has not competed since, following multiple eye surgeries.

After the win, Gane called for

a rematch, targeting a return at UFC's expected September event in Paris.

For Pereira, the defeat ends his bid for a unique place in UFC history. For Gane, it brings him back into contention for undisputed heavyweight gold.



# 40-year-old Vozinha shuts out Spain in World Cup shock



Cape Verde goalkeeper produces a stunning save to deny tournament favourites

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

Cape Verde goalkeeper Josimar Dias, known as Vozinha, delivered a performance for the ages as World Cup debutants Cape Verde held European champions Spain to a shock 0-0 draw in their Group H opener yesterday.

The 40-year-old produced seven saves, repeatedly frustrating Spain's star-studded attack as Luis de la Fuente's side failed to turn dominance into goals despite 27 shots and an expected goals tally of 2.29. Even the introduction of Lamine Yamal after the hour mark could not unlock Cape Verde's disciplined defensive block.

Vozinha's first intervention came in the 15th minute when he comfortably saved Pedri's low effort, but his defining spell arrived late in the first half. Rodri's clipped pass in behind

was headed across goal by Marc Cucurella, allowing Ferran Torres to smash a close-range effort against the crossbar. Mikel Oyarzabal's follow-up header looked destined for the net until Vozinha acrobatically tipped it over.

Moments later, Torres was denied again by a sharp reaction save, before Aymeric Laporte saw a set-piece header kept out on the stroke of half-time. La Roja went into the break frustrated, dominant in possession yet unable to find a breakthrough. After the restart, the Spaniards continued to probe against Cape Verde's compact defensive structure. De la Fuente introduced Yamal and Mikel Merino in the 71st minute, with Merino immediately forcing another save as Spain raised the tempo and urgency.

The African side remained resilient throughout, with Pico Lopes producing a crucial block

to deny Oyarzabal late on. They also carved out a rare chance of their own, as Diney Borges' header was saved by Unai Simón.

Spain's frustration grew as passing sequences went unrewarded, extending a run of 2,500 passes since their last World Cup goal in 2022. Oyarzabal, usually reliable in front of goal, was kept unusually quiet in the final third.

At full time, Cape Verde celebrated a historic point on their World Cup debut, with Vozinha becoming the oldest player to appear in a nation's first World Cup. He now becomes one of the few goalkeepers aged 40+ since 1966 to register seven saves in a World Cup match.

Spain will face Saudi Arabia on June 21 at 7pm at Atlanta Stadium, while Cape Verde meet Uruguay the following day at 1am at Miami Stadium. Both times in Bahrain.

# Egypt Stun Belgium Early but Forced to Share Spoils in 1-1 Draw



Lukaku grabs the ball after forcing an own goal to draw with Belgium side level

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

Egypt opened their 2026 FIFA World Cup campaign with a hard-earned 1-1 draw against Belgium in Seattle, as Emam Ashour's first-half strike was cancelled out by a second-half own goal from Mohamed Hany following Romelu Lukaku's introduction.

The Group G opener at Seattle Stadium saw Egypt take the lead against the run of play, with Hossam Hassan's side showing early organisation against a Belgium team expected to control the contest.

Belgium dominated possession from the start but struggled to break down Egypt's compact defensive block, with Jeremy Doku frequently doubled up on and Kevin De Bruyne limited to long-range efforts. Egypt's midfield pairing of Marwan Attia and Hamdi Fathy worked tirelessly to shield the back line.

The breakthrough came in the 19th minute when Mohamed Salah found Emam Ashour in space outside the box. The midfielder took a touch and produced a powerful fin-

ish into the bottom-left corner, giving Egypt a shock lead and igniting the travelling support.

Belgium responded with increasing pressure but continued to lack a clinical edge in the final third. Mostafa Zico tested Thibaut Courtois with a low effort, while Youri Tielemans went close from distance, but Egypt held firm to reach half-time ahead.

The Pharaohs nearly doubled their advantage after the restart when Salah's header was saved by Courtois, with Ashour unable to convert the rebound. Omar Marmoush also threatened on the counter, using his pace to stretch the Belgian back line.

Belgium made a crucial change in the 66th minute, introducing Romelu Lukaku, and the substitution immediately altered the rhythm of the match. Within seconds, sustained pressure inside the Egypt penalty area led to confusion in defence, and Mohamed Hany turned the ball into his own net under pressure to level the score.

From there, Belgium pushed for a winner, with Lukaku



At just 18 years old, Hamza Abdelkarim became the youngest player to make a World Cup debut for Egypt

heading over and De Bruyne testing goalkeeper Mostafa Shobeir from set pieces. Egypt, however, remained dangerous on the break, with Marmoush and Salah continuing to threaten in transition.

Despite late pressure from both sides, neither team could find a winning goal, leaving the match finely balanced at full time.

Belgium will next face Iran on June 21 at 10pm at Los Angeles Stadium, while Egypt take on New Zealand the following day at 4am at BC Place in Vancouver. Both times are in Bahrain.

# Star-studded France meet Senegal again in echo of 2002 upset

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

Two-time champions France begin their FIFA World Cup 2026 campaign tonight against Senegal in a Group I clash at the New York-New Jersey Stadium, with kick-off at 10pm Bahrain time. The fixture brings together one of the tournament favourites and a side with a proven ability to cause major upsets.

The match revives memories of one of World Cup football's most famous shocks, when Senegal stunned France 1-0 in 2002 on their tournament debut. More than two decades later, the Teranga Lions return with renewed belief, while Les Bleus arrive as global heavyweights carrying high expectations.

France, coached by Didier Des-

champs, remain among the leading contenders after finishing runners-up at the 2022 World Cup, where they lost on penalties to Argentina in a dramatic final in Qatar. That match featured a standout performance from Kylian Mbappé, who scored a hat-trick and finished as the tournament's Golden Boot winner, though France ultimately fell short in the shootout.

Now at Real Madrid, Mbappé remains central to France's ambitions, having scored more goals (12) across the last two World Cups than any other player. The European giants are also chasing a rare

Senegal forward Sadio Mané celebrates with teammates



The France national team line up before a match

history, aiming to become only the third nation to reach three consecutive World Cup finals, after West Germany and Brazil.

Senegal, meanwhile, arrive as one of Africa's most consistent international sides, though their World Cup history has often featured defensive vulnerabilities. They have kept just one clean sheet in 12 World Cup matches — in the famous 1-0 win over France in 2002.

Head coach Pape Thiaw's side come into the tournament in confident form after a strong qualifying campaign and a successful Africa Cup of Nations run earlier this year. However, that triumph was later overshadowed by controversy after the Confederation of African Football overturned the result following a disputed penalty decision in the final against Morocco, with Senegal's players walking off in protest before the

## World Cup Schedule

Today			
Time	Match	Group	Venue
4:00 AM	Iran vs New Zealand	G	Los Angeles Stadium
10:00 PM	France vs Senegal	I	New York New Jersey Stadium
Tomorrow			
1:00 AM	Iraq vs Norway	I	Boston Stadium
4:00 AM	Argentina vs Algeria	J	Kansas City Stadium
7:00 AM	Austria vs Jordan	J	San Francisco Bay Area Stadium
8:00 PM	Portugal vs DR Congo	K	Houston Stadium
11:00 PM	England vs Croatia	L	Dallas Stadium

(All games in Bahrain time)

title was ultimately awarded to their opponents.

Sadio Mané once again leads their attack, and Senegal will also take belief from their 2022 World Cup run, when they reached the Round of 16.

The 2002 meeting remains one of the most significant results in World Cup history, when Papa Bouba Diop's goal condemned a star-studded French side — then defending champions — to a shock defeat that contributed to their group-stage

exit. Since then, France have also experienced occasional difficulties against African opposition in World Cup group-stage matches.

France, ranked third in the world, enter as clear favourites with one of international football's deepest squads. It is their 17th World Cup appearance and they have qualified for eight consecutive tournaments — their longest-ever streak. Senegal, ranked 16th, are making their fourth World Cup appearance.