

Al Ahli Hold Firm as Riffa Strike Late
 Matchweek 18 of the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League continued yesterday with Al Ahli edging Bahrain Club 2-1, while Riffa struck late to beat A'ali 1-0 and stay in the upper half of the table. | P12

Bahrain rebuts Iran allegations at UN
 TDT | Manama

Bahrain has firmly rejected allegations made by Iran in a letter submitted to the United Nations on April 13, 2026.

In a response addressed to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, Bahrain's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York reaffirmed the Kingdom's full commitment to international law while condemning what it described as unjustified Iranian attacks targeting Bahrain.

The communication marks the tenth in a series of official letters countering Iran's claims.

Bahrain said Iran continues to distort facts despite having used force against Gulf Cooperation Council states, noting that GCC members have collectively rejected such actions and called for de-escalation.

It also stressed that missile and drone attacks targeting residential areas and critical infrastructure in the Kingdom violate its sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the UN Charter, international human rights law, and international humanitarian law.

Sea Routes Protected
 TDT | Manama



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Dr. Abdullahif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain, has reaffirmed the Kingdom's commitment to safeguarding freedom of navigation across all international waterways, stressing the need to translate global consensus into concrete action.

Speaking at a high-level virtual summit on freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, Dr. Al Zayani said Bahrain will continue its diplomatic efforts and will submit a draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council aimed at securing maritime routes globally.

The summit, co-chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, brought together leaders and officials from around 50 countries.

Worst since 2nd World War

H.E. Shaikh Salman: 'economic terrorism' could shake global trade

● Over 5,000 missiles and drones launched in 40 days, targeting civilian and key infrastructure

● Bahrain warns of biggest global supply chain disruption risk in decades

● Strait of Hormuz flagged as critical chokepoint for global energy trade

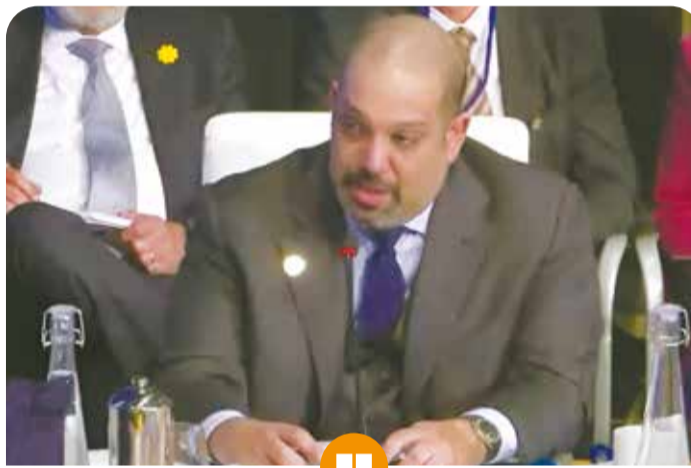
TDT | Manama

After 40 days of sustained missile and drone attacks that rattled regional security and disrupted global supply chains, Bahrain's Finance Minister warned that the crisis now poses the most serious threat to international trade since the Second World War.

Speaking at the Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund, H.E. Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa described what he called an unprecedented wave of attacks targeting Gulf Cooperation Council nations and the Kingdom of Jordan.

He said the assault lasted "40 days and 40 nights," involving more than 5,000 missiles and drones, with over 1,000 launched within the first 24 hours alone. According to the minister, the strikes—attributed to Iran—targeted both civilian and strategic infrastructure.

"Residential areas, educa-



Any attempt to obstruct the Strait of Hormuz is an act of economic terrorism

H.E. SHAIKH SALMAN BIN KHALIFA AL KHALIFA



U.S. Air Force F-16s conduct readiness patrols across the U.S. Central Command area, reinforcing the forward military posture in the Middle East.

tional institutions, commercial buildings, airports, ports, power plants, oil and gas infrastructure, and other critical facilities were hit," he said, noting that the attacks resulted in loss of life, injuries, and extensive damage. Despite the scale of the assault, Shaikh Salman praised the response of national institutions and the resilience of citizens and residents. "Today, we stand strong, proud of our armed forces, our security and civil defence institutions, and our communities," he said.

He also acknowledged the support of international part-

ners, expressing gratitude to regional allies as well as the United States and other global partners for standing "shoulder to shoulder" in defence of the region.

Turning to global implications, the minister issued a stark warning over maritime security, particularly any attempts to disrupt the Strait of Hormuz. He described such actions as "economic terrorism," stressing that the waterway carries more than 20 per cent of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas, along with significant volumes of aluminium and fertiliser exports.

He cautioned that any prolonged disruption could trigger the largest shock to global supply chains in decades.

Highlighting diplomatic developments, Shaikh Salman pointed to the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 2817, calling it a "historic" step that sends a clear international message.

He urged a coordinated global response to the unfolding crisis, calling for stronger international cooperation to address both security and economic risks.

The minister also stressed the need to advance broader regional diplomacy, including efforts towards a durable ceasefire in Lebanon and improved humanitarian conditions in Gaza. He framed the situation as a defining moment for the international community.

"This is a conflict between those who seek a peaceful and prosperous future and those who seek to drag the region backwards," he said.

Reinforcing the urgency of the moment, Shaikh Salman called on global institutions to step up support. "We call on the World Bank and the international community to support us," he added, underscoring the need for sustained cooperation to restore stability.

40

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Peace in Congo must go beyond promises: Bahrain
 TDT | Manama

Bahrain led a meeting of the United Nations Security Council on the ongoing crisis in Africa's Great Lakes region, stressing the urgent need for a ceasefire in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

UN officials briefed members on the latest situation, noting that while peace talks are showing some progress, tensions and violence on the ground continue.

Speaking for Bahrain, diplomat Soma Al Alaiwat said this is a critical moment. She called for armed groups in eastern DRC to withdraw from occupied areas and urged stronger protection for civilians. She also highlighted the need to allow aid to reach those in need and to address deeper issues like illegal mining and armed conflict.

Al Alaiwat emphasised that women must play a bigger role in peace efforts, praising initiatives that bring their voices into decision-making.

She concluded by saying peace should be judged not by agreements on paper, but by real improvements in people's lives, calling for faster and more effective action on the ground.



US says Israel 'prohibited' by US from bombing Lebanon
 Las Vegas, United States

President Donald Trump said yesterday the United States had "prohibited" Israel from bombing Lebanon following a ceasefire deal, adding that Washington would work with Lebanon to "deal with" Hezbollah. "Israel will not be bombing Lebanon any longer. They are PROHIBITED from doing so by the U.S.A. Enough is enough!!!" Trump said on his Truth Social network, a day after announcing the 10-day truce.



Toxic Profit

Five convicted in expired food scam, warehouses shut

● Owner fined BD103,000

Rehab Mohammad
 TDT | Manama

The Second Lower Criminal Court has convicted five defendants in a case involving the sale of expired food. The

company owner was fined BD103,000, while four Asian workers received prison terms of six months to one year, followed by permanent deportation.

Warehouses closed
The court ordered the destruction of spoiled goods and confiscation of tools used. Two warehouses were shut for six months, with the ruling to be

published at the defendants' expense once final.

The group was found guilty of repackaging expired food, altering expiry dates, and selling the items without proper licences.

Tip-off leads to raid
The case began with a complaint to Hamad Town Police Station. Inspectors from the Ministry of Industry and Commerce raided the warehouse,

seizing relabelled goods, and later uncovered a second site used for both food storage and unauthorised activities.

The Public Prosecution detained the suspects, seized the facilities, and assigned experts to trace affected products before referring the case to court.

Authorities warned that such practices pose serious risks to public health and food safety.



Tharaa
Prize Account

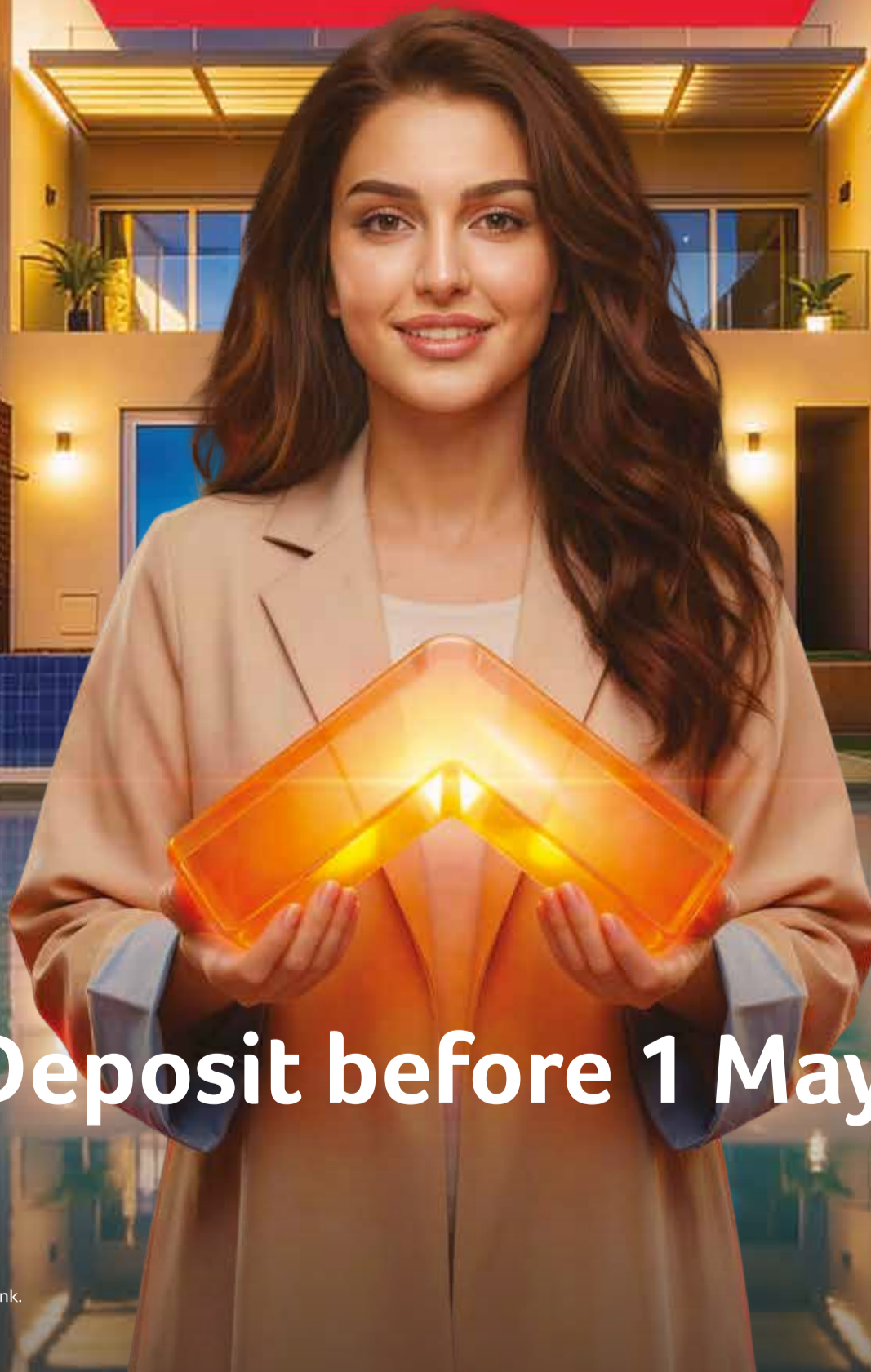
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Not just a cold

Doctors warn of growing spring allergy wave in Bahrain

● **Outdoor workers face higher exposure risks**

● **Misdiagnosed “summer colds” delay proper treatment**

● **Children, asthma patients among high-risk groups**

Neethu V
TDT | Manama

Bahrain is experiencing a familiar seasonal shift, with some residents noticing an uptick in sneezing, watery eyes, eczema flare-ups, and mild respiratory irritation — symptoms commonly linked to spring allergies.

Speaking to *The Daily Tribune*, Dr Eman Al-Asoomi, a family physician, noted that while allergies are often viewed as a minor nuisance, they can significantly affect sleep, productivity, and overall quality of life for many individuals.

“Currently, the region is entering a peak period where rising temperatures, pollen release from date palms and flowering plants, and recurring dust storms combine to create a high



“**Many patients mistake allergy symptoms for a mild cold and delay proper treatment**”
DR EMAN AL-ASOOMI



“**Patients prone to allergies may experience stronger reactions during this period**”
DR JALAL ABDULLAH KALAM

PREVENTIVE CARE

Both doctors emphasised that consistent preventive measures can significantly reduce symptom burden during the allergy season.

They advised patients to take practical steps at home and outdoors. At home, this includes keeping windows closed during peak pollen hours — such as early morning and late afternoon — and during dust storms; using HEPA air purifiers in bedrooms; vacuuming with HEPA filters twice a week; damp-dusting regularly; washing bed linens in hot water weekly; and

removing shoes at the door and showering before bed to reduce allergen exposure. Outdoors, they recommend wearing sunglasses and masks on windy or dusty days, avoiding early morning outdoor exercise when pollen levels peak, and using saline nasal rinses after returning home to clear allergens.

If symptoms persist despite these measures, non-sedating antihistamines or topical nasal steroid sprays may help. However, patients are advised to consult a doctor before starting regular medication.

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load of airborne irritants. This allergy season is expected to intensify over the coming weeks and may extend into early summer,” she said.

She added that there has been a noticeable uptick in allergy-related complaints over the past

four to six weeks, consistent with seasonal patterns as Bahrain transitions from mild winter to warmer spring conditions.

“Patients are presenting more often with nasal congestion, sneezing, itchy eyes, and dry cough — symptoms that are

often mistaken for a mild viral illness but typically persist without fever. A key challenge is that many patients attribute these symptoms to a recurrent ‘summer cold’ and delay seeking care until complications such as sinusitis, sleep disturbance, or worsening of underlying conditions develop.”

“Pollen allergy is common but often under-recognised,” said Dr Eman. “Many patients assume their symptoms are only due to dust exposure or recurrent colds. In my clinic, seasonal respiratory complaints during spring and early autumn often have a clear allergic component, confirmed by history or response to antihistamines. Pollen allergy is definitely not rare, but it is less frequent than perennial dust or pet dander allergy in Bahrain’s indoor-heavy lifestyle.”

Another family medicine consultant, Dr Jalal Abdullah Kalam, noted that during peak allergy periods, some individuals may experience heightened sensitivity overall.

“In clinical practice, patients prone to allergies may report stronger reactions to triggers such as certain foods, including shellfish or nuts, as the immune system appears more reactive during these periods. While evidence remains limited, this is a commonly observed pattern in practice,” he said.

He added that those who spend extended time outdoors, such as delivery personnel and other outdoor workers, are more frequently affected due to higher exposure to dust and airborne particles.

Dr Eman further highlighted that high-risk groups include patients with allergic rhinitis, individuals with asthma, children — especially preschool and school-aged — patients with eczema, and older adults with COPD or heart disease.



Tying expat licences to residency sparks debate

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Driving licences of non-Bahrainis could soon be linked to the validity of their residency permits, if lawmakers approve a new bill under consideration.

One of two proposals up for a vote would also allow executive regulations to set separate rules for foreign applicants.

Urging MPs to back the measures, the Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee said the changes could help ease traffic congestion by giving authorities greater control over the issuance of licences to non-Bahrainis.

Government flags practical concerns

The government, however, warned of implementation challenges. It noted that existing rules already require lawful residency as a basic condition for issuing or renewing a driving licence for non-Bahrainis.

According to officials, linking licences directly to residency permits could create complications related to fees, renewal timelines, and cases where residency periods are shorter or longer than the standard five-year licence term.

Ministers also argued that the proposal may not achieve its intended goal in all cases. For instance, Bahrain’s golden residency permit is valid for 10 years—double the duration of a standard

licence.

Despite these objections, the committee retained the core provisions of both bills. It did, however, propose a minor amendment to the preamble, replacing the reference to the 2018 amendment with the phrase “and its amendments” in citing the Traffic Law.

Hassan Bukhammas, Chairman of Parliament’s Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee

the same time, support schemes remain in place, offering housing loans, subsidised financing, and public-private partnership initiatives such as “Tas’heel” and “Mazaya”. Efforts are also underway to expand affordable housing through private sector collaboration, with major developments progressing in areas like East Sitra and Salman City as part of broader plans to build integrated urban communities.

any action or visit service centres.

The ministry said the move is aimed at ensuring uninterrupted processing of applications, allowing citizens continued access to housing finance services even after their certificates have lapsed.

Auto-renewal plan to ease housing finance delays

A new regulatory step is set to ease pressure on housing applicants, with expired housing finance eligibility certificates to be automatically extended by three months.

The measure covers all certificates that expired in March and April this year, with beneficiaries not required to take

any action or visit service centres.

The ministry said the move is aimed at ensuring uninterrupted processing of applications, allowing citizens continued access to housing finance services even after their certificates have lapsed.

any action or visit service centres.

Housing demand surges in Bahrain as applications near 47,000

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

Housing demand in Bahrain is surging, with applications nearing 47,000 and carrying an estimated value of BD10.8 billion, according to figures from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

The pressure continues to build. In 2025 alone, around 17,190 new applications were



MP Jalal Kazem Mahfoodh

liamentary query by MP Jalal Mahfoodh.

To keep pace, the government has ramped up spending, allocating up to BD900 million annually between 2023 and 2025 to accelerate housing projects and cut waiting times.

Officials say 23 housing projects have been rolled out in recent years, delivering thousands of homes to citizens. At

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Employment Drive

Key Labour, Welfare and Industrial Policy Decisions to Review

More than 4,700 jobseekers in Bahrain have secured employment through the government's "three job offers" initiative, according to the Ministry of Labour, which said the programme has shown steady results under the National Employment Platform.

By the end of 2025, the scheme presented 18,657 registered jobseekers with at least three job opportunities or interviews; 4,746 of these subsequently entered employment through platform-listed vacancies.

The Ministry of Labour said the figures reflect only those officially recorded as insured employees with the Social Insurance Organisation, meaning the total number of individuals entering private-sector jobs may be higher.

In its parliamentary response, the ministry noted no clear evidence of jobseekers avoiding specific types of roles. It stated that application patterns show continued engagement across available vacancies.

It also clarified that all job listings are reviewed and presented with full transparency. "The jobseeker chooses the vacancies that suit his qualifications through the National Employment Platform," the ministry



Yousif Khalaf, Minister of Labour



Abdulhakim Al Sheno, MP

said, adding that applicants are given full details including salary, job type, employer name, and working conditions.

which uses the funds to support programmes aimed at boosting Bahraini employment in the private sector, including wage support, entrepreneurship, and business development initiatives.

In a parliamentary response to MP Abdulhakim Al Sheno, the ministry also outlined stricter enforcement measures against

labour market violations, including employing foreign workers without valid permits. It reaffirmed that Bahrainisation requirements apply across all sectors at varying levels depending on job demand.

It added that companies failing to meet Bahrainisation targets are required to pay BD500 per foreign work permit per month, while compliance is also mandatory for participation in government tenders.

Labour Fees & Bahrainisation

- 80% of foreign labour fees go to Tamkeen to support Bahraini employment programmes.
- Employers face BD500 monthly fee per foreign worker if Bahrainisation targets are not met.
- Wage support covers up to 70% in year one, reducing over three years.
- Support ceilings: BD800 (graduates), BD600 (diploma), BD450 (school level).
- Job platforms linked to qualification-based matching and verified vacancies.

4,746

Find Jobs via
Three-Offer Scheme

Foreign Labour Fees Support Bahrainisation Drive

The Ministry of Labour confirmed that 80% of fees collected from foreign labour are transferred to Tamkeen,

"The jobseeker chooses the vacancies that suit his qualifications through the National Employment Platform,"

72 Government Jobs Prioritised for Disabled Hiring

The Labour Ministry stated that while no formal ministerial decision has been issued under Article 12 of Law No. 74 of 2006 on disability employment, the Civil Service Bureau has already identified around 72 government job titles where people with disabilities will receive hiring priority.

In a reply to MP Mohammed Al Marafi during the fourth session of the sixth legislative term (2022-2026), the ministry clarified that the law allows, but does not oblige, the Labour Minister to issue a decision after Cabinet approval, and therefore the absence of such a decision does not constitute a legal breach.

The ministry added that creating a single fixed list of roles is complex due to varying disability types and individual skill assessments, stressing that recruitment decisions remain case-specific.

Despite this, coordination with government entities is ongoing, and support measures are already in place, including train-



"Ensure real employment opportunities that match the abilities of people with disabilities."

MP Mohammed Al Marafi

ing programmes with Tamkeen and a wage support scheme introduced in April 2025 offering up to 80% support in the first year for employees with disabilities.

According to official figures, 288 jobseekers with disabilities were registered up to October 2025, while 1,589 vacancies were made available for them. In the private sector, 1,302 persons with disabilities were employed as of November 2025.

Women Dominate Employment Rolls

Women made up the majority of Bahrain's registered jobseekers in 2025, according to figures the Labour Ministry released in response to an inquiry by MP Mohammed Al Olaiwi.

The ministry reported that 15,433 people were registered as jobseekers that year, including 10,950 women and 4,483 men, highlighting a significant gender imbalance across the employment database.

In the final months of the year, a large-scale employment drive placed 4,746 individuals into jobs between 28 September and 31 December 2025.

A total of 5,587 people registered between September-December period, while 2,863 businesses posted vacancies on the National Employment Platform for candidate nominations and hiring. The ministry noted that salaries under the scheme ranged from BD350 for entry-level positions to over BD1,000 for specialised roles.



Mohammed Al Olaiwi, MP

It also confirmed that women dominated higher education categories, accounting for 81 per cent of jobseekers with bachelor's degrees and above. Commenting on the findings, Labour Ministry officials said there is no fixed timeframe for placing all jobseekers, as employment depends on market demand, job suitability, and candidate preferences.

"The final choice rests with both the jobseeker and the employer," the ministry said, adding that applicants must actively apply for suitable vacancies through the national platform.

Committee Plan to Define Basic Living Needs

WHAT'S NEXT ON
PARLIAMENT'S
AGENDA?

By Mohammed Darwish



MPs in Bahrain are set to debate on Tuesday a proposal to amend the Kingdom's social security law by establishing a new committee tasked with determining the minimum cost of basic living.

The plan, originally introduced as a full replacement for Law No. 18 of 2006 on social security, has been significantly revised by Parliament's Services Committee. Instead of introducing a new framework, lawmakers recommended adding a single article to the existing law.

The amended proposal would create a committee chaired by the relevant minister, with representatives from government entities and the private sector. The body would define the minimum cost required for basic living needs and review it at least once every three years, or sooner if necessary, in line with price and living condition changes.

The original draft law included 19 articles covering eligibility for assistance, payment mechanisms, application procedures, and the establishment of a social security fund. It also proposed top-up support for Bahraini families whose in-



Mamdouh Al Saleh, Chairman of Parliament's Services Committee

comes fall below a defined minimum living threshold.

However, government authorities argued that a new law was unnecessary, stating that existing legislation already covers most provisions. They also raised concerns over constitutional compatibility, overlap with unemployment insurance rules, and the potential financial burden of expanded welfare coverage.

The Ministry of Social Development reported that 17,581 individuals were receiving social security benefits as of the November 2024 cycle, including elderly citizens, widows, divorced women, families, and persons unable to work.

The Services Committee recommended approval of the revised proposal in principle by unanimous vote, paving the way for Tuesday's parliamentary debate.

No VAT Relief for Clubs

The government urged Parliament to reconsider a draft bill seeking to introduce a zero VAT rate on social welfare services and related goods supplied to social, cultural,

youth, and sports associations and private bodies.

In its official memorandum on the proposed amendment to Article 53 of the VAT Law (Decree-Law No. 48 of 2018), the government said it understood the proposal's intent but argued that such a tax exemption was unnecessary.

It noted that these organisations already receive substantial state support through direct grants, access to land and facilities, training programmes, advisory services, and other institutional assistance.

The proposal, submitted by Parliament, aims to extend zero-rating benefits to services provided to civil society organisations. MPs argued that such



groups should receive support similar to the education and health sectors due to their public benefit role.

However, the government stressed that VAT policy must remain neutral and broad-based, and that social support objectives are better achieved through targeted state assistance rather than tax exemptions.

It further warned that introducing a zero rate could reduce public revenue and allow input tax recovery, creating an indirect fiscal burden. The government also highlighted the absence of a financial impact assessment detailing potential revenue losses or affected transactions.

Growth of Public Transport Network

Dr. Shaikh Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications affirmed that the Bahrain is continuing its efforts to develop and strengthen a sustainable public transport system that aligns with the best international practices, supporting its vision for more connected, efficient, and high-quality cities in line with sustainable development goals.

He noted that World Public Transport Day, launched by the International Association of

Public Transport, serves as an important occasion to highlight the vital role public transport systems play in supporting sustainable urban mobility, improving traffic flow, and enhancing community connectivity. He reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to participating in global efforts that promote sustainable urban transport and its objectives.

The Minister explained that the Ministry's strategic priorities focus on further



"We remain committed to building an integrated transport system that enhances mobility and efficiency in line with Bahrain Economic Vision 2030."

developing land transport infrastructure, diversifying public transport options, and improving operational efficiency, alongside supporting policies that encourage greater use of public transport. These efforts align with Bahrain Economic Vision 2030 and national plans aimed at building an integrated transport system that improves mobility, enhances traffic efficiency, and supports progress toward carbon neutrality by 2060.

The Minister added that the public transport system demonstrated its resilience under various conditions, continuing to operate efficiently despite what he described as "heinous Iranian attacks," ensuring uninterrupted service to the community. In March 2026 alone, the system recorded an 80% operational rate, with a total of 782,931 trips and an average of 25,256 daily journeys, helping ensure continuity of mobility and meeting daily transportation needs.



Bahrain Network Size:

- 600+ bus stations
- 26 bus routes
- Over 39,500 km covered daily

Passenger Usage:

- 116+ million passengers transported since 2015 redevelopment (up to March 2026)

March 2026 Performance:

- 782,931 total trips
- 25,256 average daily trips
- 80% operational rate

BisB announces deferral programme

For financing and credit card payments

TDT | Manama

In line with the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, and the guidelines issued by the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB), Bahrain Islamic Bank (BisB) has announced a three-month payment deferral programme for financing facilities and credit cards for both individual and corporate clients.

The programme applies to upcoming due instalments effective from 19th of April 2026 and is intended to provide immediate liquidity and help ease financial burden on customers, as part of the national measures to support the economy. Participation in the programme



requires customers to submit a request through the designated portal and confirm their consent, in line with the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) guidelines.

The Bank will continue to

apply profit on the outstanding balance during the deferral period, in accordance with the contractually existing profit rate. There will be no change to the monthly instalment amount; however, the financing tenor will be extended to accommodate the deferral.

Individual customers can benefit from the programme by submitting their applications between 23rd April and 26th April 2026. They are required to access the dedicated link available on BisB's official website during the stated period, log in using their CPR number and the generated One-Time Password (OTP), select the product they wish to defer payment for, review the impact of deferral, and provide explicit consent by accepting the applicable terms

and conditions.

For eligible corporate clients, payments can be deferred for a maximum of three instalments. Companies wishing to avail the facility are required to contact their relationship managers directly no later than 23rd April 2026 to ensure the necessary procedures are completed within the specified timeframe.

BisB has further emphasised that contact details must be up to date to ensure confirmation notifications are received by the applicants.

The announcement reflects BisB's ongoing commitment to providing convenient banking solutions that respond to customers' needs and support them through evolving circumstances.

Oil plunges, stocks jumps

Key figures around 1330 GMT

Brent North Sea Crude:	▼ 9.9% at \$89.56 a barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▼ 10.2% at \$81.88 a barrel
New York - Dow Jones:	▲ 1.3% at 49,221.56 points
New York - S&P 500:	▲ 0.7% at 7,092.15
Nasdaq Composite:	▲ 0.9% at 24,317.32
London - FTSE 100:	▲ 0.5% at 10,64.51
Paris - CAC 40:	▲ 2.0 percent at 8,427.69
Frankfurt - DAX:	▲ 2.2% at 24,688.97
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▼ 1.8% at 58,475.90 (close)
Hang Seng Index:	▼ 0.9% at 26,160.33 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▼ N 0.1% at 4,051.43 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▲ at \$1.1833 from \$1.1784 on Thursday
Pound/dollar:	▲ at \$1.3579 from \$1.3529
Dollar/yen:	▼ at 158.41 yen from 159.14 yen
Euro/pound:	▲ at 87.17 pence from 87.09 pence

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Oil prices plunged more than 10% yesterday after Iran said the Strait of Hormuz would be "completely open" for the rest of the ceasefire with the United States, and stock markets surged.

Both the benchmark international contract Brent and its US equivalent WTI fell below \$90 per barrel.

"This news is having an immediate impact on markets," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB.

Wall Street's main stock indices jumped at the opening bell, with both the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq Composite building on record highs struck the previous evening.

"This is the biggest development so far during the ceasefire, and it gives hope that the war will end soon, and supply chains will return to some normality," Brooks said.

It was not clear whether Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi was speaking of the 10-day truce agreed by Lebanon and Israel that went into effect at midnight or an earlier

two-week truce between Iran and the United States that began on April 8.

French President Emmanuel Macron and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer were chairing a meeting of allies Friday to consider sending a multinational force to ensure free-flowing trade in the Strait of Hormuz once the conflict ends.

David Morrison at Trade Nation noted that the speed and the magnitude of the rebound of the S&P 500 -- nearly 12% in just over two weeks -- was reinforcing the rally.

European stocks were higher in afternoon trading, with both Frankfurt and Paris gaining 2%.

Asian stock markets mostly closed lower, with Tokyo among the biggest losers after reaching a record high Thursday, and Taiwan's TAIEX index dropped after hitting a market capitalisation of \$4.14 trillion.

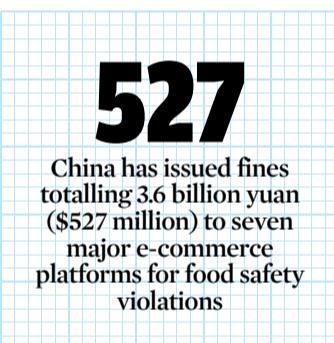
That put the index ahead of London's benchmark FTSE 100 and made the TAIEX the world's seventh-biggest index by value, according to Bloomberg data.

China hits food delivery platforms with 3.6 bn yuan fine for 'ghost' deliveries

AFP | Beijing, China

China has issued fines totalling 3.6 billion yuan (\$527 million) to seven major e-commerce platforms for food safety violations, the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) said yesterday.

The regulator said platforms, including Alibaba-owned Taobao, JD.com, Meituan, Temu-owner Pinduoduo and Douyin -- China's version of TikTok -- had failed to check the licenses of stores on their apps and allowed "ghost food deliveries" from unverified vendors. SAMR said in a statement it



had "ordered seven e-commerce platforms to rectify their illegal activities... and imposed fines and confiscations totalling 3.597 billion yuan".

The legal representatives of

the companies were also fined a total of 19.7 million yuan (\$2.9 million), the market regulator said.

An investigation showed the platforms had "not strictly reviewed and checked the licenses of food operators entering their networks, and failed to fulfil the obligation of qualification review in accordance with the law," SAMR said.

They had also signed agreements with order-transfer platforms, which infringed on consumers' rights, SAMR said.

"Ghost shops" do not have physical dine-in restaurants and are accused of unsanitary

conditions and bypassing food safety regulations while posing as regular restaurants online.

They often provide rented business licenses or use fake details to get listed on delivery platforms.

Order transfers see orders for one restaurant moved to another vendor to fulfil, normally without the customer knowing. The companies had violated food safety and e-commerce laws, SAMR said.

They were also prohibited from adding new cake shops to their delivery platforms for periods ranging from three to nine months.

Key Atlantic current could weaken more than expected: study

AFP | Brest, France

A key Atlantic Ocean current system that helps regulate the planet's climate could weaken more than expected by 2100, with potentially devastating consequences worldwide, a new study has found.

Known as Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC), this conveyor belt of currents plays a crucial role in redistributing heat by transporting warmer waters from the tropics northward.

An AMOC collapse could lead to harsher winters in northern Europe, droughts in South Asia and the Sahel region in Africa, and higher sea levels in North America, among other consequences.

Previous climate model projections have estimated an average slowdown of around 32% by the end of the century due to climate change.

The latest study, published Wednesday in the journal Science Advances, estimates that the system could slow by 51% by 2100 under a mid-range scenario for greenhouse gas emissions,

OCEAN CURRENTS AMOC, the Atlantic Ocean's conveyor belt

The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation is a system of currents, including the Gulf Stream, which regulates temperatures in the northern hemisphere



Sources: IPREMER, EPIC, NOAA, Laboratory for Ocean Physics and Satellite remote sensing

Schematic representation of currents

AFP

with a margin of error of plus or minus eight percentage points. "We obtained an estimate of a future AMOC slowdown that is more severe than we expected,"

climate scientist Valentin Portmann, the paper's lead author, told AFP.

"We are closer to a critical state that is worrying," Port-

mann said.

Predicting what will happen to AMOC in the future is a topic of debate in the scientific community.

"There is a kind of consensus on the fact that this circulation will slow down. But there is still quite a bit of debate about the intensity of this slowdown," said Florian Sevellec, research director at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) in Brest, France.

Refining predictions

In its 2021 report, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said AMOC will "very likely decline" over this century.

But the panel of international experts also expressed "medium confidence" that a collapse of AMOC would not take place before 2100.

The latest study, conducted by researchers from the CNRS and the University of Bordeaux in southwest France, seeks to "refine this estimate of the future slowdown" and "reduce uncertainty", Sevellec said.

While nearly all climate models predict an AMOC slowdown by 2100, the projections range widely: from as little as three percent to as much as 72 percent, depending on varying emissions scenarios.

Portmann said the new study seeks to narrow that uncertainty using "observational constraints" -- a statistical approach that combines real-world observations with results from climate models.

'The debate is not over'

Stefan Rahmstorf, an oceanographer at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK), said the paper showed that pessimistic models "are unfortunately the realistic ones, in that they agree better with observational data".

Rahmstorf, who was not involved in the study, said that this means AMOC would be so weak by 2100 that it would "very likely" be "on the way to full shutdown".

Fabien Roquet, a physical oceanography professor at the University of Gothenburg in

Sweden, said the study was interesting but he cautioned that another team using a similar method reached opposite conclusions last year.

"What is certain, however, is that the climate is warming rapidly," Roquet said.



The Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation -- often called the Atlantic current system -- acts like a giant conveyor belt in the ocean, moving warm water from the tropics towards Europe and returning cold water southwards deep below the surface.

More than 38,000 women, girls killed in Gaza war by end of 2025: UN

AFP | Geneva

Over 38,000 women and girls were killed in the Gaza war by the end of 2025, the UN estimated yesterday, amounting to over half of the 71,000 deaths recorded by the territory's health ministry.

"Between October 2023 and December 2025, more than 38,000 women and girls were killed in Gaza -- the result of Israeli air bombardment and land military operations," the UN Women agency's spokeswoman Sofia Calltorp told a press briefing in Geneva.

"This includes over 22,000 women and 16,000 girls, amounting to an average of at least 47 women and girls killed every day."

"On top of a staggering death toll, nearly 11,000 women and girls in Gaza have sustained injuries so devastating that they survive only with life-long disabilities," said Calltorp.

British PM says 'furious' after fresh revelations over sacked US envoy



Peter Mandelson

AFP | London

UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer said yesterday he was "furious" after it emerged his sacked US ambassador Peter Mandelson was appointed despite failing security vetting, as the scandal again threatens his hold on power.

The beleaguered British leader, who has been dogged for months by the controversy, claimed he and other ministers were not told Mandelson had failed the vetting process, branding that "unforgivable".

Starmer has faced repeated calls to quit since his 2024 decision to appoint Mandelson as Britain's top diplomat in Washington backfired spectacularly over the envoy's longstanding ties to late US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Trump signals Iran deal near, hails 'brilliant day for world'

US president claims major progress on Hormuz and nuclear negotiations

● **Talks in Pakistan ongoing**

● **US blockade still enforced**

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump signaled yesterday that an Iran peace deal was all but done, trumpeting agreements on the Strait of Hormuz and Tehran's nuclear program.

In a rapid-fire stream of social media posts, Trump hailed a "GREAT AND BRILLIANT DAY FOR THE WORLD!" but without specifically announcing a deal with Iran.

The celebratory tone continued with a series of shout-outs to mediator Pakistan and Gulf allies -- and a rebuke to NATO to "STAY AWAY" as he rejected an offer from the Western alliance to help secure the strait. Iran had earlier said it was opening the Hormuz strait for the duration of a Middle East ceasefire.

"Iran has agreed to never close the Strait of Hormuz again. It will no longer be used as a weapon against the World," Trump said in one of around a dozen posts on his Truth Social network.

Touting further progress towards a deal, Trump also said that Iran was removing sea mines from the strait, with US help.

The US leader had earlier said "THANK YOU!" to Iran over the Hormuz reopening, while insist-



Despite reports suggesting a \$20 billion exchange for Iran's enriched uranium, President Trump used social media to vehemently deny that any money would change hands, referring to the material as "Nuclear Dust."

ing that an American blockade of Iranian ports would remain in "full force" until completion of a peace deal.

"This process should go very quickly in that most of the points are already negotiated," Trump said yesterday.

US-Iran talks led by Vice President JD Vance last weekend in Pakistan failed to produce a deal, but Trump has repeatedly hinted that a breakthrough was close.

He had said Thursday that Iran had agreed to give up its uranium stockpile, that a second round of talks in Islamabad was likely, and that he himself might go to Pakistan to sign an eventual deal.

Yesterday, Trump again talked up the likelihood of a nuclear deal while insisting that no money would change hands after an

Axios report that Washington was considering a \$20 billion cash-for-uranium exchange.

"The U.S.A. will get all Nuclear 'Dust,' created by our great B2 Bombers - No money will exchange hands in any way, shape, or form," Trump said in another post.

Trump meanwhile also talked up a 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon.

Referring to a possible Iran deal, Trump added: "This deal is not tied, in any way, to Lebanon, but we will, MAKE LEBANON GREAT AGAIN!"

Trump's hints at a deal continued as he thanked Pakistan's "fantastic" Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and powerful army chief Asim Munir for brokering the Iran negotiations.



Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni (4thL), British Prime Minister Keir Starmer (C-L), French President Emmanuel Macron (C-R) and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (6thR) attend an international summit on efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz at the Elysee Palace in Paris

France, UK to lead Hormuz mission

Multinational force to escort ships and clear mines but awaits hostilities end

● **Over dozen countries pledge assets**

● **Mission awaits full regional peace**

● **US and Iran absent from talks**

AFP | Paris

France and Britain said yesterday they will lead a multinational mission ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, while emphasising the force would be entirely defensive -- and only deployed once a peace in the region was agreed.

"I can confirm that, along with France, the UK will lead a multinational mission to protect freedom of navigation as soon as conditions allow," British Prime Minister Starmer said after co-chairing a meeting in Paris

on the issue alongside French



The proposed multinational mission is specifically designed to be defensive, focusing on reassuring commercial shipping and performing mine clearance operations only after a formal cessation of hostilities has been reached in the region

President Emmanuel Macron. The event brought together over 30 other heads of state and government, most of them main-

ly attending by video link. Neither the United States nor Iran participated.

"This will be strictly peaceful and defensive as a mission to reassure commercial shipping and support mine clearance," said Starmer, adding that "over a dozen countries have already offered to contribute assets".

As the Paris talks were being held, Iran announced that the key shipping route would be open to commercial vessels as long as a ceasefire in the Middle East lasts.

US President Donald Trump responded by saying his navy's blockade just outside the Strait of Hormuz of ships going to or from Iranian ports remains "in full force and effect".

Iran imposed its blockade on the Strait of Hormuz -- a critical shipping bottleneck through which 20 percent of the world's oil passes in peacetime -- immediately after the US and Israel launched their war against the Islamic republic on February 28.

Trump followed up with his US



I can confirm that, along with France, the UK will lead a multinational mission to protect freedom of navigation as soon as conditions allow. This will be strictly peaceful and defensive as a mission to reassure commercial shipping and support mine clearance. Over a dozen countries have already offered to contribute assets

KEIR STARMER

Navy blockade of vessels visiting Iranian ports after April 11-12 talks aimed at failed to yield any breakthrough.

The Paris talks' participants welcomed Tehran's announce-

ment of the strait's reopening, but urged a "full, unconditional reopening by all the parties", Macron said.

He said the announcement made the multinational mission "all the more important because it is what will allow these announcements to be consolidated in the short term and, above all, to have a chance of lasting."

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who also attended the meeting in person, emphasised that such a force would need to await a "cessation of hostilities" but added: "Italy is ready to participate".

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said in Paris it would be "desirable" to have US participation in any mission.

Merz said Germany would "take part in the further military planning discussions that are taking place, and we would also welcome, if possible, the participation of the United States of America".

1025

Bolesław I the Brave is crowned in Gniezno, becoming the first King of Poland

1506

The cornerstone of the current St. Peter's Basilica is laid in the Vatican by Pope Julius II

1906

San Francisco earthquake and fire kills nearly 4,000 while destroying 75% of the city



1938

Superman first appears in DC Comics' Action Comics Series Issue #1, dated June 1938

Iran declares Hormuz **open** as Lebanon ceasefire begins

President Trump maintains the naval blockade despite Iran reopening the strategic Gulf shipping route

● 10-day truce begins in Lebanon

● Displaced families return to damaged homes

AFP | Tehran

Tehran announced yesterday that the Strait of Hormuz would be open to commercial shipping during the ceasefire period, as a truce came into effect in Lebanon amid ongoing efforts to secure a broader agreement between the United States and Iran.

In Lebanon, displaced families loaded belongings onto their vehicles and took advantage of the 10-day truce to return to damaged homes in south Beirut and other affected areas.

Following the ceasefire, Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi said restrictions on commercial shipping through the key Gulf route would be lifted for the duration of the truce.

"In line with the ceasefire in Lebanon, the passage for all commercial vessels through Strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of ceasefire," Araghchi said.

A senior Iranian military official said military vessels would remain barred from the waterway.

US President Donald Trump acknowledged the announcement but said the US naval blockade targeting Iran would remain in place.

Restrictions and Ongoing Pressure

"The naval blockade will remain in full force and effect as it



People walk past destruction at Hezbollah's Sayyid al-Shuhada complex in Beirut's southern suburbs

pertains to Iran, only, until such time as our transaction with Iran is 100% complete," Trump said, referring to ongoing negotiations.

Oil prices had been declining amid expectations of a possible agreement and fell further following the announcement.

Israel's military said it was lifting wartime restrictions, allowing civilian movement and economic activity to resume, though Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned operations against Hezbollah were not over.

"We have not yet finished the job," Netanyahu said, adding that efforts would continue to ad-



Pakistan has been quietly working to facilitate renewed face-to-face talks between Washington and Tehran as part of broader regional diplomatic efforts

dress remaining threats.

Trump rejected the prospect of further Israeli strikes, stating that the United States would work with Lebanon to address Hezbollah.

Minutes before the ceasefire took effect, Israeli strikes in the southern city of Tyre killed at least 13 people and destroyed several residential buildings, according to a city official.

Despite the risks, large numbers of displaced civilians began returning to their homes.

Ceasefire Terms and Regional Tensions

Under the ceasefire terms,

Israel retains the right to act against Hezbollah to prevent attacks and will maintain a security zone along the border.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said areas near the border had not yet been cleared of militants and weapons and warned that operations could resume if necessary.

"If the fighting resumes, those residents who return to the security zone will have to be evacuated," he said. According to details released by the US State Department, Lebanon, with international support, is expected to take steps to prevent Hezbollah from carrying out attacks.



Pope Leo XIV (C) waves to the crowd from the Popemobile as he arrives to lead the Holy Mass at the area in front of Japoma Stadium in Douala on the fifth day of an 11-day apostolic journey to Africa. More than 120,000 people attended the celebration, the Vatican said based on local authority figures, with some travelling far or arriving the previous night for a chance to see the leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics

Myanmar ex-president freed from post-coup detention, Suu Kyi's sentence cut

AFP | Washington

Myanmar's former president Win Myint, detained since a 2021 military coup, was freed yesterday under a mass amnesty which, according to a source close to pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, also reduced her sentence.

Win Myint and Suu Kyi, the 80-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate, led Myanmar during a decade-long experiment with civilian rule that was abruptly halted by the coup.

The former president, who served from 2018, was pardoned of convictions handed down during the post-putsch period of mil-



Win Myint

itary rule and released yesterday, a spokesman for his party told AFP.

Suu Kyi meanwhile remains detained, serving a sentence rights groups decry as a politically motivated move to hobble the National League for Democracy (NLD) party.

A source close to her legal case, requesting anonymity for security reasons, told AFP that Suu Kyi's 27-year sentence had

been cut as part of the amnesty.

The order announced by Min Aung Hlaing -- the coup leader who ousted Suu Kyi's government and was sworn in last week as civilian president -- to reduce the remaining terms of all sentences under 40 years by one-sixth "also applies to her", the source said.

It is unclear how much of her term was considered served before the commutation order.

UN rights chief Volker Turk said that "all those detained unjustly since the coup -- including state councillor Aung San Suu Kyi -- need to be released immediately and unconditionally".



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



I welcome the announcement of a ceasefire between Israel & Lebanon, and commend the role of the US in facilitating it. I hope this will pave the way for negotiations towards a long-term solution to the conflict & contribute to ongoing efforts toward a lasting & comprehensive peace in the region. I urge everyone to fully respect the ceasefire and to comply with international law at all times.

@antonioguterres

03



Morocco is a close, reliable, and strategic partner for the European Union. It was a pleasure to meet with Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita in Rabat. The EU is Morocco's largest trading partner and biggest foreign investor. This foundation of our partnership is already very solid. But we'll make it even stronger, including in areas such as maritime security and resilience against hybrid threats.

@kajakallas

04



I welcome the 10-day ceasefire in Lebanon. May it lead to lasting peace. All parties must honour it fully. EU stands with Lebanon & has allocated €100M to address urgent humanitarian needs. IHL must be upheld. Civilians & humanitarian workers must be protected at all times.

@hadjalahib

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

Air Taxi Era Begins

Dubai moves ahead with first air taxi station in major transport milestone

● It is the world's first eVTOL air taxi hub.

● The network will connect key areas across Dubai.

● The service is expected to launch this year.

● It serves around 170,000 passengers annually.



Transport Shift

Dubai has taken a significant step towards future urban mobility with the completion of its first air taxi station, a project described by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum as a defining moment in the emirate's transport evolution.

During an inspection visit to the electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) station, Sheikh Hamdan said the development reflects Dubai's ongoing push to lead globally in integrated and sustainable mobility solutions.

Marking World Public Transport Day on April 17, he said Dubai continues to build a transport system driven by innovation, linking traditional and next-generation modes of travel to improve efficiency and quality of life.

He added that the new air taxi infrastructure strengthens Dubai's vision of a fully integrated mobility network that includes metros, buses, and advanced air transport, offering residents and visitors faster and more flexible travel options.

Shaikh Hamdan also em-

phasized that Dubai is actively translating future-focused ideas into real-world systems, positioning the city as a global centre for testing and deploying advanced transport technologies.



Future Flight

The first air taxi station, located near Dubai International Airport, is the first of its kind globally and will serve as the central operations hub for the service. It is being developed by Skyports Infrastructure, which specialises in advanced air mobility facilities.

Officials said the station is expected to handle around 170,000 passengers annually once operations begin. Additional stations are planned across key areas including Downtown Dubai, Palm Jumeirah, and Dubai Marina, with the network expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Mobility Leap

Shaikh Hamdan was joined during the visit by Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum and senior officials from Dubai's aviation and transport sectors.

He directed that the air taxi service be made available to the public within this year, ensuring it meets the highest international standards. He said the project will help cut travel times and further enhance connectivity across the city.

The initiative reflects Dubai's broader strategy to turn innovation into practical solutions that support sustainable growth and future-ready infrastructure.

GCC States Push New UN Draft

During a United Nations General Assembly session held under the veto initiative mechanism, Kuwait presented a joint statement on behalf of Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan, and itself.

The statement was delivered by His Excellency Ambassador Tariq Al-Banai, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, following the use of vetoes by Russia and China on a draft resolution related to ensuring the security of maritime navigation in the Strait of Hormuz during a Security Council vote on April 7, 2026.

The group of countries firmly opposed any actions or threats that could undermine freedom of navigation in international waters. The statement warned that such risks could disrupt global energy flows and destabilize supply chains worldwide.

It further highlighted the importance of upholding interna-



Ambassador Tariq Al-Banai, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations

tional law and protecting key maritime corridors, stressing that maritime security remains essential for global stability.

The participating states also confirmed that coordination efforts will continue, with plans to introduce a revised draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council aimed at reinforcing maritime security frameworks and supporting international peace efforts through the United Nations system.

Riyadh Praises Lebanon Leaders

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs has expressed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's welcome of the announcement made by the President of the United States, Donald Trump, regarding a ceasefire in the Lebanon.

In its statement, the Foreign Ministry praised the significant and constructive roles played by Lebanese leaders in reaching this development, including the President of Lebanon, Jo-



seph Aoun, the Prime Minister, Nawaf Salam, and the Speaker of Parliament, Nabih Berri.

The Kingdom highlighted that these coordinated efforts reflect an important step toward stabilizing the situation in Lebanon and supporting regional security and peace.

Kimberley Process must "catch up," UAE warns at UN

At the United Nations General Assembly debate on the role of diamonds in fueling conflict, the United Arab Emirates highlighted progress made under its chairmanship of the Kimberley Process while acknowledging the failure to reach consensus on updating the definition of "conflict diamonds."

Speaking on behalf of the Kimberley Process, Ahmed Bin Sulayem noted that the UAE's 2025 custodial chairmanship—under the theme "Year of Best Practice"—focused on strengthening governance, improving compliance, and reinforcing leadership continuity within the global diamond certification scheme.

He recalled that the Kim-



berley Process, established to prevent the trade of conflict diamonds from financing armed groups, has continued to serve as a key international framework promoting transparency

and accountability in the diamond trade for over two decades.

The UAE official said that while significant progress was made through reforms, tech-

nical assistance measures, and structural reviews aimed at supporting artisanal and small-scale miners, member states were ultimately unable to agree on an updated definition of conflict diamonds after three years of negotiations.

He described the outcome as "regrettable," noting disappointment among African producers and other stakeholders, but stressed that dialogue must continue in good faith.

UAE-led initiatives such as "Verifico," a digital certification platform aimed at improving traceability and integrity in diamond trading, which is currently in the pilot phase and will be donated to the Kimberley Process framework.

Oman-Qatar talks focus on maritime security

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq of Oman and His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar, held a fraternal meeting at Al Barakah Palace. They discussed the latest regional developments and their implications for security, stability, and economic interests across the region.

The two leaders reviewed ongoing regional tensions and stressed the importance of safeguard-

ing the security of states and the well-being of their peoples amid evolving geopolitical challenges.

Both sides underscored the need to reach a comprehensive and lasting agreement that addresses the root causes of current crises. They also called for intensified international efforts to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, alongside the uninterrupted flow of maritime transport and energy supplies vital to global markets.



CELEBS



Tom Cruise

Cruise control: 'Top Gun 3' officially in the works

AFP | Las Vegas

If you still feel the need for speed, Paramount Pictures has good news for you -- "Top Gun 3" is officially happening, with Tom Cruise back as daring pilot Pete "Maverick" Mitchell. The announcement came Thursday at the studio's showcase at CinemaCon, an annual week-long summit at which Hollywood studios present their biggest upcoming movies to theater owners and press.

Paramount film co-head Josh Greenstein said "Top Gun 3" was "officially in development with a script well underway," adding that Cruise would reunite with

producer Jerry Bruckheimer on the project.

The original 1986 film helped propel Cruise to superstardom, and the 2022 sequel earned \$1.5 billion worldwide.

Legendary director Steven Spielberg publicly credited Cruise with helping to get moviegoers back into theaters after the Covid-19 pandemic with the long-awaited sequel.

Cruise was not present at the presentation, but did narrate a film used to open the event, which focused on the studio's commitment to releasing films on the big screen.

At the end, Cruise -- sitting atop the water tower on the

\$1.5B was the total worldwide earnings for the 2022 sequel, a massive success that Steven Spielberg credited with saving the theatrical experience after the pandemic

studio's lot -- says, "The future looks great from here."

Paramount Skydance chief David Ellison told attendees that the studio would guarantee a 45-day theatrical release window for its films before moving them

to streaming platforms.

"Once we combine with Warner Brothers, we're going to make a minimum of 30 films annually," Ellison said in a pledge to theater owners. "Long live the movies."

Paramount has launched a massive \$111 billion bid to take over Warner Bros, topping a rival bid from Netflix.

But many in Hollywood fear the mega-merger will lead to cuts that will forever change the film industry.

Also on Paramount's upcoming slate is a film adaptation of the popular video game "Call of Duty," due in theaters in June 2028.

Attendees also saw early footage from "Heart of the Beast," a thriller starring Brad Pitt as a military veteran who must survive a plane crash in Alaska with his combat dog.

And Johnny Depp showed up to offer a preview of "Ebenezer: A Christmas Carol," the latest adaptation of the classic Charles Dickens tale, in which he plays the grumpy Scrooge.

CinemaCon continues later Thursday with Disney's presentation.



Lana Del Rey takes on Bond with new game title track

AFP | Paris

Lana Del Rey has joined an exclusive club of pop greats by voicing a

new theme song for James Bond -- albeit for the fictional British superspy's video game incarnation in the upcoming "007: First Light".

"I was so excited to work with Lana, an artist who brought elegance, atmosphere and her totally unique character to this piece," co-composer David Arnold, who also scored a string of Bond movies in the late 90s and 2000s, said in a statement.

Published to streaming platforms Thursday, Del Rey's track "First Light" sticks to a familiar

formula of haunting lyrics and brassy hooks evoking the musical history of the Bond series.

Music has been a key facet of the franchise since its first film, 1962's "Dr. No", with the world-famous theme song composed by Monty Norman used in every movie since.

Later films' themes have been performed by stars like Shirley Bassey, Paul McCartney, Madonna, Adele and Billie Eilish.

Built by "Hitman" developers IO Interactive for PC, Playstation 5 and Xbox Series,

Marvel premieres first 'Avengers: Doomsday' trailer at CinemaCon

AFP | Las Vegas

Disney showcased the first theatrical trailer of the new Marvel franchise film "Avengers: Doomsday" on Thursday during the closing day of CinemaCon in Las Vegas.

The clip -- played twice for the enthusiastic audience at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace -- offered the first look at Robert Downey Jr. as the villainous Doctor Doom.

It marks the actor's return to the Marvel Cinematic Universe since the death of Iron Man in 2019's "Avengers: Endgame."

The footage also teased several dramatic moments from the movie, including a fight between Gambit and Shang-Chi



US actor Chris Evans (R), US actor Robert Downey Jr. (R) and US filmmaker Joe Russo (C) promote "Avengers: Doomsday"

-- played by Channing Tatum and Simu Liu, respectively -- and Patrick Stewart reprising his role as X-Men's Professor Xavier, warning: "Something's coming, something we may not

be able to deter."

At the very end of the trailer, Chris Evans returns as his character Steve Rogers, otherwise known as Captain America, appearing before a surprised-looking Thor (Chris Hemsworth) as the Norse god's Mjolnir hammer flies into Rogers' hands.

Both Evans and Downey Jr. were on the stage at CinemaCon to present the trailer alongside the film's directors, brothers Joe and Anthony Russo.

"I said I would only come back if there was a real reason," Evans told the crowd.

"And in Doomsday, there is a very real reason that these heroes need Steve Rogers."

'There's more truth than fiction,' Spielberg says of 'Disclosure Day'



Steven Spielberg

AFP | Las Vegas

Famed US director Steven Spielberg offered a sneak peek of his upcoming film "Disclosure Day" Wednesday, his latest movie about aliens and humanity since he first tapped into the genre 50 years ago.

Spielberg presented the film at CinemaCon in Las Vegas, the annual conference where movie studios present upcoming releases to movie theater owners.

The film shows humanity crossing paths with extraterrestrial life, a plot reminiscent of his 1977 film "Close Encounters of the Third Kind."

"A half a century later, I made Disclosure Day with a lot more certainty that there's more truth than fiction in the movie," Spielberg told the crowd at the Colosseum at Caesars Palace.

"Disclosure Day," which opens June 12 in the United States, stars Emily Blunt, Josh O'Connor, Eve Henson and Colman Domingo, among others.

"This movie is an experience, and all you need to get from the beginning to the end is a seatbelt," Spielberg said.

The 79-year-old veteran filmmaker said he's been curious about "what's happening in the night sky" since he was a child.

"This movie is an experience, and all you need to get from the beginning to the end is a seatbelt. I truly believe that this movie is going to answer questions, and cause you to ask a lot of questions"

STEVEN SPIELBERG

"I truly believe that this movie is going to answer questions, and cause you to ask a lot of questions," he teased.

The thrice Oscar-winning director received an award from the Motion Picture Association during his appearance at CinemaCon.

Spielberg also discussed the importance of long theatrical release windows, as streaming platforms continue to take a bite out of box office revenues.

"I am particularly excited that Universal has recently announced their commitment to a 45-day window for the wide releases," Spielberg said.

"But today I hear 60 days?" he joked.

CinemaCon continues Wednesday night with a presentation from Amazon MGM studios.

Classifieds



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His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa attends the REHC concluding round

Nine-Race Card Showcases Talent

● **Winners from multiple stables**

TDT | Manama

The Future Stars Series, sponsored by Singapore Gulf Bank (Bahrain Bred), concluded during the 28th race of the 2025/2026 season at the Rashid Equestrian and Horseracing Club racecourse in Al Raffa, Sakhir, in the presence of senior

members of the Royal Family and a large gathering of racing enthusiasts.

His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister's Court and Chairman of the REHC High Committee, attended the concluding round, alongside His Highness Shaikh Faisal bin Rashid bin Isa Al Khalifa, Vice President of the Supreme Council for Environment and Deputy Chairman of the REHC High Committee.

The race meeting featured the Palace Enterprises Cup in addition to several REHC Cups, forming part of an evening marked by competitive racing and strong public engagement. A number of Their Highnesses and Excellencies, as well as representatives of sponsoring entities, were also in attendance, contributing to the lively atmosphere.

Winners across the series were honoured during the closing ceremony. His Highness Shaikh Ali bin Mohammed bin

Salman Al Khalifa secured the SGB Future Stars Sprint Cup, presented by Singapore Gulf Bank Vice Chairman Ali Moosa, and also received the REHC Cup for the eighth round from Acting Chief Executive Officer Yusuf Osama Buheji.

The evening's programme featured nine races, with victories shared among multiple stables, reflecting the competitive strength and growing depth of Bahrain's horse racing sector.

Bahrain face demanding volleyball schedule

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's volleyball team face a demanding schedule at the fourth GCC Games in Doha, with a string of fixtures that will immediately test their medal ambitions.

The volleyball draw took place on Thursday at Lusail Hall at the Qatar Olympic Committee headquarters, alongside the handball competition. Representatives from all six GCC nations were present, with the final schedule confirmed yesterday following a series of adjustments.

Bahrain open their campaign against Oman on May 16, before quickly turning around to face the United Arab Emirates the following day. After a rest day, they resume against Kuwait on May 19, followed by a key clash with hosts Qatar on May 20. They close their group stage against Saudi Arabia.

The nationals arrive as one of the tournament's leading contenders, underpinned by strong recent form. Bahrain claimed silver at the previous edition in Kuwait City in 2022 and, before that, secured consecutive gold medals in Dammam and Bahrain, reinforcing their status as a consistent force in regional volleyball.

Much of that core remains in-



Coach Josserand and his players celebrate winning bronze at last November's Islamic Solidarity Games

tact. The squad retains its established group of Mohamed Anan, Hassan Al Warqaa, Mohamed Yaqoob, Ali Ebrahim, Mahmood Abdulwahid, Mohammed Jassim, and Sayed Hashim Isa, providing continuity, stability, and cohesion across the team.

That continuity is further boosted by the return of captain Nasser Anan, who rejoins the side after a disciplinary suspension. His presence adds experience and leadership at a

key moment in the campaign.

The team are led by French head coach Arnaud Josserand, with Bahrain continuing under an international coaching structure aimed at maintaining strong regional results.

The GCC Games feature 19 sports staged across multiple venues in Doha, with volleyball and handball among the headline team competitions. Matches will be spread across 10 venues, including Aspire Dome,

Qatar Sports Club, Khalifa International Tennis, Squash and Badminton Complex, Lusail Shooting Range, and Al Gharafa Sports Club.

Beyond the GCC Games, Bahrain will also use the tournament as preparation for the 2026 AVC Men's Volleyball Cup in India, which begins on June 20. Josserand's side enter that competition as reigning champions, having won the 2025 title.

Alcaraz withdraws from Madrid Masters after wrist injury

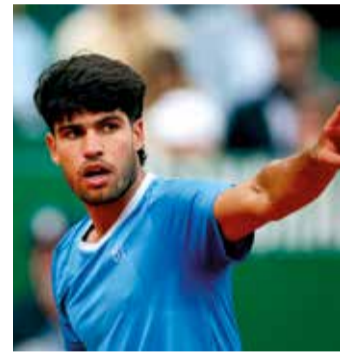
AFP | Madrid

Carlos Alcaraz withdrew from the Madrid Masters yesterday, increasing concerns over whether he will be able to defend his Roland Garros title.

The world number two played in the Barcelona Open first round before pulling out of the tournament on Wednesday because of a wrist injury.

"There is news that is incredibly hard to share. Madrid is home, one of the most special places on the calendar for me, and that's why it hurts so much not to be able to play here for the second year in a row," wrote Alcaraz in a post on X.

"It especially hurts not to be able to be there in front of my people, at a tournament that is



Carlos Alcaraz

so special."

Earlier yesterday 24-time Grand Slam winner Novak Djokovic also pulled out of the Madrid Open, which begins on April 21.

The French Open, which Alcaraz won back-to-back in 2024 and 2025, starts on May 18.

Slot backs Ekitike to recover from 'devastating' Achilles injury

AFP | London

Liverpool manager Arne Slot believes Hugo Ekitike can come back even stronger from a ruptured Achilles tendon that has ended the French striker's season, and his dreams of playing in the World Cup.

Ekitike suffered the injury against his former club Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday as Liverpool bowed out of the Champions League.

The 23-year-old had scored 17 goals in his debut season in England after a £69 million (\$93 million) move from Eintracht Frankfurt and was almost certain to make Didier Deschamps's France squad for the World Cup.

"Devastating for him," said Slot yesterday with Ekitike expected to be out for at least nine months.

"Missing out on so many special moments, but he's not the first and will not be the last player that experienced something like this in the start of his career.

"There are so many examples of players that came back even stronger and that's the challenge he has now.

"I'm 100 percent sure he will be one of those that in 10 to 15 years say, 'maybe this injury even helped me to become stronger and become even more ready to perform even at a higher level than I did before?'"

The loss of Ekitike was also a huge blow to Liverpool's hopes of securing a place in the Champions League next season.

Slot's men sit fifth in the Premier League, which will be enough to qualify, and enjoy a four-point lead over sixth-placed Chelsea.

Bahrain head to Tbilisi

TDT | Manama

Bahrain will face Georgia in a friendly in Tbilisi on 5 June, a fixture that comes as part of their wider preparations for a busy international cycle. The match is scheduled around the FIFA international window and offers them a chance to test themselves against European opposition away from home, adding variety to their build-up work.

That preparation is being shaped with several major targets in mind. Later this year, Bahrain will head into the Gulf Cup as defending champions and aim to retain the title they secured in the previous edition. That campaign is expected to set the tone for what follows, with competitive momentum



Bahrain's senior men's football national team

carrying into 2027.

Looking further ahead, attention will shift to the AFC Asian Cup, where Bahrain have already booked their place. They enter the draw in Pot 3, alongside teams such as Thailand,

China, Palestine, Vietnam, and Tajikistan. Across the wider field, Asia's leading sides — including Japan, South Korea, Iran, and Australia — are also confirmed, while hosts Saudi Arabia qualify automatically.

For the nationals, who are currently ranked 91st in the FIFA world rankings, the fixture against Georgia fits into a broader effort to expose Tala-jic's squad to different styles and conditions.

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Al Ahli Hold Firm as Riffa Strike Late

TDT | Manama

Matchweek 18 of the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League continued yesterday with Al Ahli edging Bahrain Club 2-1, while Riffa struck late to beat A'ali 1-0 and stay in the upper half of the table.

At the Bahrain National Stadium, the match started at pace. Al Ahli led in the 8th minute when Abdulla Al Hashash met a corner from João Victor Coutinho, heading in his 10th goal of the season and moving within two of the league's top scorer, Edimar Ribeiro da Costa.

Bahrain Club responded in the 12th minute. Mohamed Jamal's long throw was flicked on by Sultan Al Salatneh, and Jassim Khalil headed home with a deflection off Hamed Toure helping it in.

The game turned in the 17th minute when Khalil was sent off for a reckless two-footed challenge on Atton Paved Job Bah, leaving Bahrain Club with ten men for over 70 minutes.

Al Ahli thought they had retaken the lead on the half-hour mark when Hashash tapped in from Hussain Haroona's cross, but it was ruled offside. Their pressure told three minutes later as Atton Paved Job Bah reacted to a loose ball and set up Faisal Habib, who finished into



Abdulla Al Hashash in action during Al Ahli's victory

the bottom corner.

Al Ahli controlled thereafter, limiting Bahrain Club's chances. The win lifts them to seventh on 23 points, while Bahrain Club remain bottom on seven points, looking increasingly destined for relegation.

At Khalifa Sports City, Riffa dominated possession against A'ali but struggled to break through in the first half.

Riffa coach Mohamed Mashaan watched from the

stands due to a disciplinary suspension, as his side were repeatedly frustrated by goalkeeper Omar Rajab, who kept A'ali level with a series of saves. The pattern continued into the second half as Riffa pressed without reward.

In the 80th minute, Vinicius Vargas was denied from close range when Rajab tipped his effort onto the bar.

Just when A'ali looked set for a point, Riffa struck in the 89th



Ali Madan celebrates scoring Riffa's late winner

minute. A short corner opened space on the left, and Rodrigo Yuri crossed for substitute Ali Madan to head home.

The result keeps Riffa third on 37 points, six points off the top, while A'ali remain fourth on 25.

Matchweek 18 concludes today with Al Malkiya facing Al Shabab at 5:25pm, before Sitra meet Al Khaldiya at 7:35pm, with Lassad Al Chabbi's side looking to reclaim top spot.

Arsenal face defining Man City clash



Arsenal's Spanish manager Mikel Arteta (C) takes a team training session (file photo)

AFP | London

Mikel Arteta has urged spluttering Arsenal to embrace the "huge privilege" of facing Manchester City in a potentially decisive showdown in the Premier League title race.

Arteta's side are six points clear of second-placed City ahead of their blockbuster clash at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday.

But City have a game in hand on the Gunners and a victory for Pep Guardiola's men would tilt the balance of power in their favour heading into the final weeks of the season.

Adding to the drama of the do-or-die battle, Arsenal are enduring an untimely loss of form after losing three of their last five games in all competitions.

10

consecutive Premier League games have passed without an Arsenal victory at the Etihad Stadium

They were beaten by City in the League Cup final, suffered a shock FA Cup quarter-final exit at second-tier Southampton and slumped to a home league defeat against Bournemouth.

The Gunners were well below their best once again on Wednesday when they edged past Sporting Lisbon, drawing 0-0 to secure a 1-0 aggregate victory in the Champions League quarter-finals.

Renard sacked as Saudi Arabia coach ahead of World Cup



Herve Renard reacts during a match (file photo)

AFP | Paris

Frenchman Herve Renard said yesterday he has been relieved of his duties as Saudi Arabia coach, less than two months before the start of the 2026 World Cup.

Renard, 57, returned for a second spell as Saudi coach at the end of 2024, having led them at the last World Cup in Qatar, including to a famous win over eventual champions Argentina in the group stage.

"That's football... Saudi Arabia have qualified for the World Cup seven times, including twice with me," Renard told AFP via telephone.

"And there's only one coach who has led them through both the qualifiers and the World Cup; that's me, in 2022. At least there will be that sense of pride."

Renard, a two-time Africa Cup of Nations winner with Zambia and Ivory Coast, led Saudi Arabia from 2019 to 2023 before being replaced by Roberto Mancini.

He served as coach of the France women's team and reached the quarter-finals of both the 2023 Women's World Cup and 2024 Olympics.

Renard was later brought back by Saudi Arabia to succeed Mancini as the Italian left his role after an underwhelming 14-month stint.

Former Greece international Georgios Donis is reportedly being lined up as the man to take over from Renard.

A source close to the negotiations told AFP that talks are under way between the federation and Saudi club Al Khaleej, where Donis has been in charge since 2024.

Muharraq Finish Treble Run Over Manama

Hussain Maskati
TDT | Manama

Muharraq are champions again after an 89-81 overtime win over Manama in Game 4 of the 2025-26 Zain Bahrain Basketball League Finals last night, sealing a 3-1 series victory and completing a domestic treble. The treble includes the Bahrain Super Cup and the Khalifa bin Salman Cup, with all three titles coming at the expense of their rivals.

The addition of Deshawndre Washington from Shabab Al Ahli Dubai after an MVP season in the UAE proved pivotal for Peter Schomers' side. Arriving just a day before Game 4, he immediately stepped into the role of floor general, and his two-way impact helped steer the Red Wolves to their fifth championship.

Muharraq set the tone early in the series with narrow wins in Games 1 and 2 (74-73 and 88-80), taking control from the outset. Manama, coached by Salman Ramadhan and the record 25-time league champions, responded in Game 3 with an 89-83 win to extend the series.

Game 4 followed a familiar pattern, with Manama starting stronger before Muharraq gradually asserted control.

Manama opened well through new signing Donovan Smith, who provided immediate inte-



Muharraq players, officials, and fans celebrate with the league title at Khalifa Sports City

rior presence and efficient scoring. Alongside Ahmed Salman and Emran Hasan, he helped Manama move the ball effectively, while Muharraq stayed close through second-chance points despite early turnovers. Manama led 24-21 after the first quarter.

The second quarter remained closely contested. Smith continued to anchor the offense and finished with a game-high 31 points, consistently finishing inside. Muharraq responded through Nader Ali's perimeter shooting and improved execution, keeping the game within reach. At halftime, Manama held a narrow 35-34 lead.

The momentum shifted after the break. Washington took control for Muharraq, dictating tempo and attacking the rim to force defensive rotations. Muharraq became more organized at both ends and built a 67-59 lead by the end of the third quarter.

Manama fought back in the fourth. Alex Young increased his scoring aggression, Emran Hasan added key perimeter baskets, and Smith continued his inside production. Muharraq's turnovers under pressure allowed Manama to erase the deficit, and the game was tied 77-77 in the final minute, sending it to overtime.

In the extra period, the Red Wolves regained composure. Mohamed Nasser hit a crucial three-pointer to shift momentum, while Washington managed possessions with control and efficiency. Muharraq tightened defensively, limited second-chance opportunities, and pulled away to secure the 89-81 win and the championship.

Washington finished with 27 points, nine rebounds, and six assists, leading the decisive third-quarter surge and overtime control. Smith's 31 points led all scorers in defeat, but Muharraq once again delivered in key moments to secure another title.