

Arteta challenges Arsenal to rebound

Gunners look to regain form after Champions League and league setbacks | P12

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Taylor Swift, tortured poet, exorcises demons with new double album

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BUSINESS 5 S&P cut its Israel debt rating to A+ on geopolitical risks

Bahrain regrets UN failure on Palestinian Membership

TDT | Manama

Bahrain expressed disappointment at the UN Security Council's inability to pass a resolution granting Palestine full membership in the United Nations.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs cited the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people due to occupation, ongoing conflict, and dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza as reasons for the regret.

The ministry reiterated the Palestinian people's right to international recognition and full UN membership, emphasising the establishment of an independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

This stance aligns with the two-state solution, the Arab Peace Initiative, and relevant international resolutions.

Bahrain emphasised that achieving Palestinian statehood is crucial for fostering just, lasting, and comprehensive peace in the region, promoting freedom, justice, prosperity, security, and peaceful coexistence among all inhabitants.

EU sanctions four 'extremist' Israeli settlers

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

The European Union yesterday imposed sanctions on four "extremist" Israeli settlers and two groups over violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, Brussels said.

The decision was the second part of an agreement among EU member states that saw Hamas last week sanctioned over sexual violence during the October 7 attack on Israel.

The EU put two "radical" organisations Lehava and the Hilltop Youth on its asset freeze and visa ban blacklist for their attacks on Palestinians.

It also included Hilltop Youth leaders Meir Ettinger and Elisha Yered, along with settlers Neria Ben Pazi and Yinon Levi.

"The listed individuals and entities are responsible for serious human rights abuses against Palestinians," said an EU statement.

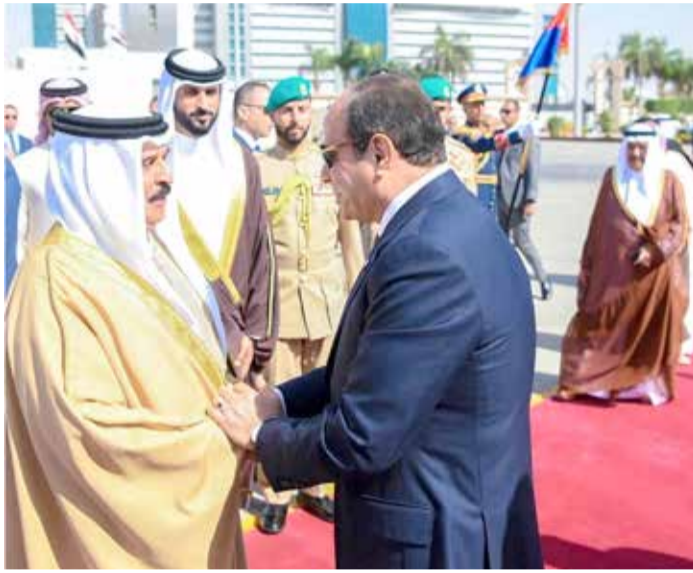
HM King concludes Egypt, Jordan visit, receives warm farewell

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa yesterday expressed gratitude to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi for the warm reception during HM's visit to Egypt, highlighting the enduring fraternal ties between nations.

Departing Egypt, His Majesty conveyed pride in discussions aimed at enhancing bilateral cooperation, preparations for the 33rd Arab Summit in Bahrain, regional developments, and efforts towards peace and stability. His Majesty emphasized support for Palestinian rights, including statehood.

King Hamad praised Presi-



dent El Sisi's efforts for regional peace, aid delivery to Gaza, and safeguarding Palestinian lands.

During the visits, HM the King also held talks with His Majesty King Abdullah II ibn Al Hussein of Jordan.

President El Sisi, along with Assem Al Jazzar, Egypt's Minister of Housing, Utilities and Urban Communities, Bahrain's Ambassador to Egypt, Fawzia bint Abdulla Zainal, and members of the Bahraini Embassy in Cairo, bid farewell to His Majesty the King.

HM the King prayed to Allah the Almighty to bless President El Sisi with abundant health, happiness and long life, wishing him continued success.

Blinken says US 'not involved in any offensive operation'



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken

AFP | Capri, Italy

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday refused to comment on reports of an attack by Israel on Iran, beyond saying Washington was "not involved in any offensive operation".

Speaking to journalists after a meeting with G7 counterparts in Italy, he declined to answer repeated questions about explosions in Iran, and reports that Israel had carried out retaliatory strikes.

"I'm not going to speak to these reported events... All I can say is for our part and for all the members of the G7 our focus is on de-escalation", Blinken told a press conference on the island of Capri.

"The US has not been involved in any offensive operation," he said.

Speaking to reporters earlier, G7 host Antonio Tajani, the foreign minister of Italy, said Washington had been informed in advance of the strikes, without giving details.

"The United States were informed at the last moment," he said, adding that "it was just information" passed on -- without saying who by.

The reports dominated the G7 Friday, with Tajani forced to change the agenda, but little public information emerged.

Blasts in Iran rattles world

Iranian ministry dismisses attack as "desperate attempt" to make a victory

- Nuclear sites in Isfahan safe
- Iran says several drones shot down
- Dismisses attack from outside
- Says possibly launched from inside Iran
- World leaders appeal for calm

TDT | agencies

Israeli micro-drones attacked targets in Iran yesterday in retaliation of Iran's first-ever attack directly targeting Israel, sparking fears of a significant regional escalation. However, these concerns were later downplayed by an Iranian minister, who described the attacks as a 'desperate attempt to portray victory amid



A man walks past a banner depicting missiles along a street in Tehran

repeated defeats

Reports of the attack also prompted global responses, with world leaders immediately appealing for calm.

Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the Israeli micro-drones used in the operation had caused no deaths or damage.

Israel had warned it would hit back after Iran fired hundreds of missiles and drones at it almost a week ago, in retaliation for a deadly April 1 air strike -- widely blamed on Israel -- that levelled the Iranian consulate

in Damascus and killed seven Revolutionary Guards.

Air defence systems over several cities were activated, official media reported, after state television said explosions were heard near Iran's third city of Isfahan.

"Strike" was retaliation

An unidentified Israeli official told The Washington Post the "strike" was retaliation for Iran's drone and missile barrage and intended to signal Israel was able to hit inside Iran.

Iran's Tasnim news agency,

citing "informed sources", denied that Iran had been attacked from outside.

"Contrary to the rumours and claims" made in foreign media, "there are no reports of an attack from abroad", Tasnim said.

Three Iranian officials told The New York Times that small drones carried out the "attack", possibly launched from inside Iran, and that its radar systems had not detected unidentified aircraft entering Iranian airspace.

Fars news agency reported "three explosions" close to Qahjavarestan, near Isfahan airport and the 8th Shekari army airbase.

Iran's space agency spokesman Hossein Dalirian said there was "a failed and humiliating attempt to fly quadcopters, which were shot down".

There were "no reports of a missile attack", Dalirian said on social media platform X.

"Reports indicate there was no major damage or large explosions caused by the impact of any air threat," the official IRNA news agency said.



On April 1, an air strike blamed on Israel against Iran's diplomatic mission in Damascus levels the embassy's consular annex. It kills seven Revolutionary Guards, two of them generals.

Nearly two weeks later, Iran sends a barrage of more than 300 missiles, drones and rockets at Israel. The attack launched overnight Saturday-Sunday is Tehran's first-ever direct assault on Israeli territory. It causes little damage, however, as Israel and other nations intercept most projectiles.

Iran characterises the attack as an act of self-defence and says it will consider the matter "concluded" unless Israel retaliates.

Oman condemns 'Israeli attack' on Iran: foreign ministry

Muscat, Oman

Oman, which has long mediated between Tehran and the West, condemned an "Israeli attack" on Iran yesterday after Iranian media reported explosions heard near the city of Isfahan.

Oman "condemns the Israeli attack this morning on Isfahan... it also condemns and denounces Israel's repeated military attacks in the region", said a foreign ministry statement released on X, formerly Twitter.

Extreme vetting for foreign doctors, minister confirms

Health Minister reveals key measures followed for appointing foreign health care professionals

TDT | Manama

Foreign job seekers eyeing positions within Bahrain's healthcare sector will face stringent vetting process, including passing a licensing exam where several applicants failed to pass recently, revealed Dr Jalila bint Sayed Jawad Hassan, the Minister of Health.

Minister stressed it's mandatory for foreign medical practitioners to successfully pass the vetting measures to find a position in the healthcare sector here. The minister made these remarks in response to a parliamentary inquiry from MP Mohammed Al Ahmed regarding foreign healthcare workers in Bahrain.

She affirmed the existence of measures to ensure the delivery of advanced medical services to both citizens and residents.

As she outlined key steps in the vetting process, the minister emphasised, "There are several procedures in place to



Dr Jalila bint Sayed Jawad Hassan, the Minister of Health.



MOHAMED SALMAN AL AHMED, N. Governorate - 9th Constituency



Representative picture

ensure the qualifications and competence of foreign medical professionals."

Firstly, applicants must secure a job offer from a licensed healthcare institution, demonstrating their suitability for the role. "This guarantees that the applicant possesses the requisite skills and experience pertinent

to the designated position.

Additionally, non-consultant physicians must pass a licensing exam. This examination evaluates the applicant's clinical knowledge and skills, ensuring they meet the necessary standards for independent practice.

Furthermore, a specialised

committee evaluates applicants' credentials. The committee of medical experts meticulously assesses the applicant's educational credentials, training background, and professional licenses to ensure they are authentic and compliant with Bahrain's standards.

The Ministry also verifies applicants' training and experience

to guarantee they meet relevant criteria. Lastly, qualifications are classified according to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) standards (first, second, or third) and expert committee evaluations to ascertain their level of proficiency. These comprehensive measures aim to uphold the quality and integrity of Bahrain's healthcare sector.



Bahrain Medical Licensure Examination (BLE):

- All physicians must pass NHRA's BLE in order to obtain the professional license in the Kingdom of Bahrain
 - Interns (graduates from local universities) may apply for the licensure exam after completing six months of their internship year
 - Interns will not be issued a license to practice except after providing proof of successful completion of their internship
 - The validity of the licensure examination is five years only
- BLE Exemption Policy**
Only Bahraini or GCC nationals holding a valid GCC license will be exempted from the licensure examination

Game-changer: Mps calls for compulsory financial reporting for layoffs

● Parliament to debate compulsory financial reporting for layoffs

TDT | Manama

Lawmakers are set to discuss a requirement for companies to disclose financial reports to the Ministry of Labour before initiating any employee layoffs.

This amendment to Law No. (36) of 2012 concerning labour in the private sector, has stirred up a storm of opinions among stakeholders.

The move is spearheaded by MPs Mohammed Fardan, Dr. Hisham Al Ashiry, Mohsen Al



JALILA ALAWI SAYED HASAN

Asbool, and Jaleela Alawi.

Currently, companies are not obligated to file financial report before they downsize, close shop, or alter their production systems. However, the



MOHSEN ALI AL ASBOOL

proposed amendment seeks to flip the script by making it mandatory for companies to provide financial reports.

MPs say this move would empower the Ministry to scrutinise



HESHAM AHMED ALASHEERI

a company's financial health and validate the reasons behind any workforce reductions.

But that's not all. The proposed law aims to hold employers accountable by requir-



HANAN MOHAMED FARDAN

ing them to fully compensate employees if any discrepancies are uncovered in their financial reports. Gone would be the days of partial compensation; instead, companies would be compelled

to meet their financial obligations head-on.

Yet, not everyone is on board with this proposal. The Ministry of Labour and the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) are raising red flags, expressing concerns about the potential fallout for businesses and the chilling effect it could have on foreign investment.

In contrast, the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions (GFBTU) is championing the cause, emphasizing the proposal's pivotal role in protecting workers' rights, ensuring fair compensation, and putting an end to any attempts by companies to shirk their financial responsibilities.

Open House: Indian Embassy resolves majority of cases raised

TDT | Manama

The Indian Embassy in Bahrain has made significant strides in addressing concerns raised during its recent Open House session, with the majority of cases now resolved. Led by Ambassador Vinod Kurian Jacob, the session, attended by the Consular team and a panel of lawyers, facilitated solutions for various issues faced by Indian citizens in the Kingdom.

Efforts persist in aiding distressed housemaids with accommodation, emergency certificates, and travel arrangements through the Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF). Legal aid, provided on a means-tested basis, has also been ex-



tended to Indian nationals in need.

Ambassador Jacob expressed gratitude to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and Bahraini authorities for their role in the release of Indian prisoners through Royal pardon. Furthermore, he acknowledged the swift support from Bahraini government entities such as the Ministry of Labour, LMRA, and Immigration authorities in addressing consular and community welfare matters.

Appreciation was also extended to Indian associations, volunteers, and the Embassy's panel lawyers for their participation and support during the Open House session.

Nine months isn't cutting it!

MPs table proposal for longer unemployment support for job seekers

TDT | Manama

Finding a job has become a daunting challenge and is in no way an 'easy-peasy' affair in the fiercely competitive job market.

Yet, the current support, in terms of unemployment benefits, is limited to a mere nine months.

This, according to MP Ali AlNoaimi, leaves them stranded in financial uncertainty.

This, however, cannot go like this for ever and needs a change.

Stepping forward with a proposal to extend the duration of benefits, MP Ali AlNoaimi is advocating for a pivotal change that could transform the landscape for young job seekers.

In a compelling proposal pre-



This initiative aims to offer a consistent financial support system for individuals navigating the job market, thus alleviating stress and promoting the growth of a robust workforce.

ALI MAJED ALNOAIMI

sented before parliament, MP AlNoaimi emphasizes the urgent need for prolonged governmental backing until Bahraini youth secure employment.

"This isn't just about provid-

ing temporary relief; it's about fostering a resilient workforce," he asserts.

He explains that the proposal, slated for discussion this Tuesday, aims to alleviate the mount-

ing pressure on young individuals and cultivate a stronger, more sustainable economy.

MP AlNoaimi also draws attention to Article 5 of the Bahraini Constitution, underscoring the state's obligation to ensure social security for its citizens, including support during periods of unemployment.

"The State guarantees necessary social security to its citizens in cases of old age, sickness, disability, orphanhood, widowhood, or unemployment, a l o n g

with providing social insurance and healthcare services. It endeavours to protect them from ignorance, fear, and poverty," he reminds, reiterating the article.

By aligning his proposal with this constitutional mandate, he emphasizes not only the moral imperative but also the legal foundation for extending unemployment benefits.

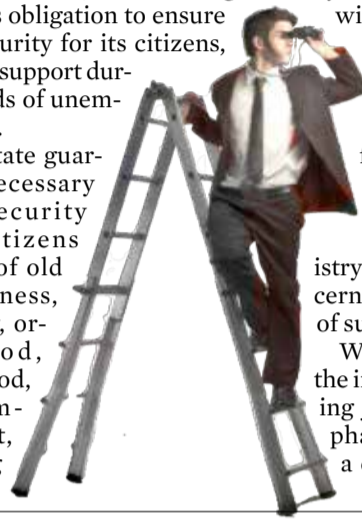
However, the Ministry of Labour raises concerns about the feasibility of such a measure.

While acknowledging the importance of supporting job seekers, they emphasize the necessity of a comprehensive study

to assess the financial viability of extending benefits. "As this is crucial to ensuring the availability of the funding," a statement by the ministry reads.

The ministry says this is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the social welfare system while meeting the needs of Bahraini youth.

The Unemployment Benefits Record Service, instituted to provide financial security to job seekers, the ministry says, stands as a testament to the government's commitment to balancing support with fiscal responsibility. Through careful management, the ministry seeks to uphold its mandate of ensuring the welfare of citizens without overburdening the national treasury.



Health comes at a price!

Health Ministry's monthly HQ rent exceeds 28,000 Dinars

● Ministry considers relocating HQ

● Explores using existing buildings for headquarters

TDT | Manama

The Health Ministry of Bahrain is currently paying a whopping 28,848 Bahraini Dinars every month for its headquarters.

Interestingly, this also happens to be the only building the ministry has leased, starting 2023.

But hold on, there's more.

The ministry is actively exploring other options, including the possibility of relocating its



headquarters to some of its own buildings.

Meaning, the very place responsible for safeguarding public health might soon call a different building its home.



MOHAMED MOOSA MOHAMED

According to the latest revelations, the ministry is in talks with the Ministry of Works to potentially transform some of its existing properties into suitable headquarters for its dedicated staff.

"This will be done in cooperation with the Ministry of Works,

according to the available resources and capabilities," the Ministry pointed out.

This move would not only optimise resources but also enhance operational capabilities.

Interestingly, the building currently housing the ministry, nestled within the Al Khair Towers in the Sanabis area, is owned by none other than the Royal Humanitarian Foundation.

These details came to light in response to a parliamentary inquiry by Member Mohammed Mousa Mohamed.

Furthermore, the ministry disclosed that it possesses several buildings catering to various departments and divisions, including Public Health, Health Promotion, Environmental Health, Medical Committees, and Overseas Treatment.

Compulsory education for children aged 5-17

TDT | Manama

Compulsory education will be mandated for individuals aged between 5 and 17 years in Bahrain.

This is according to a proposal that calls for lowering the minimum age for education to 5 years deviating from the global norm of 6 years.

MPS Hanan Fardan, Hisham Al Awadhi, Abdulhakeem Al Shanu, Mohammed Al Ahmed, and Mohsen Al Asbool tabled the proposal.

They argue that this measure would enhance the quality and effectiveness of education, citing research showing that children possess a high capacity for learning at an early age. Additionally, they believe it will assist the Ministry of Education in achieving a 100% enrollment rate in primary education.

However, the Ministry of

Education has expressed reservations. They highlight that most countries worldwide set the minimum age for compulsory education at six years old for primary school, ending compulsory education upon completion of primary school. The Ministry also notes that the proposal diverges from regional and international practices related to compulsory education.

Despite these concerns, the Parliament's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee has recommended the proposal's approval. The Committee believes that lowering the minimum age for compulsory education and extending it to 17 would align Bahrain's education system with international best practices and improve educational outcomes for children.

MPS will vote on the proposal at its next session on Tuesday.

BD100,000 minimum investment call

Parliament set to discuss proposal: Minimum BD 100,000 Capital for foreign businesses

● Concerns raised over impact on economic growth and foreign investor sentiment

● Business associations advocate for reforms to address challenges faced by local SMEs

TDT | Manama

Lawmakers here are gearing up for a critical vote on a proposal set to reshape the landscape for foreign investors.

Spearheaded by MPs Mamdouh Al Saleh, Mohammed Al Ahmed, Ahmed Qarata, Jalal Hassan, and Mahdi Al Shuwaiikh, the proposal seeks to enforce



a minimum capital requirement of BD 100,000 for foreign companies looking to establish a presence in the country.

The proposed amendment targets Article 345 of Decree Law No. 21 of 2001, addressing concerns within the Commercial Companies Law.

This contentious issue is slated for debate and voting during Tuesday's session, promising a showdown among parliamentarians.

Proponents argue that the measure is crucial for safeguarding the national economy and bolstering the position of Bah-

raini investors. They contend that the absence of a minimum capital requirement for foreign entities has adversely impacted the economy, particularly by undercutting the vitality of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Fierce opposition

However, opposition to the proposal is fierce.

The Ministry of Industry and Commerce voices concerns over potential repercussions, warning of adverse effects on the financial services industry, foreign-capital companies, and overall financial activity. Additionally, it raises objections on the grounds of contradicting the government's strategic goals of attracting foreign investment and advancing economic reform.

Support for the proposal

comes from key business organisations such as the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) and the Bahrain Businessmen Association (BBA). Both advocate for the necessity of introducing a minimum capital requirement to curtail the negative impact on Bahraini SMEs and foster a more equitable investment landscape.

According to BCCI, the absence of an investment ceiling for foreign ownership of commercial registrations has adversely affected Bahrain's vision pillars of fairness, competitiveness, and sustainability. BCCI argues that this scenario has fostered an unhealthy parallel market, undermining the position of Bahraini SME owners.

BBA underscores the necessity of tackling the adverse effects stemming from the absence of

a minimum capital requirement for foreign companies and institutions.

Despite strong advocacy, the proposal faces an uphill battle.

The Parliament's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee recommends its rejection, citing potential conflicts with Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 and concerns over its implications for economic growth and foreign investment attractiveness.

The Committee is also worried that the proposal might hamper the Kingdom's economic growth trajectory and convey an unfavourable signal to international investors. This comes at a critical juncture when the national economy is in need of a dynamic investment environment to allure additional foreign direct investment.

Just two weeks to respond, MPs say

Lawmakers to set deadline for ministerial replies

● Primary objective is to expedite responses from authorities and timely proceedings

TDT | Manama

Two weeks max. Ministers or authorities will now have this much time to respond to questions by parliamentary committees.

MPs, however, say they are ready to allow another week, if they are stressed. However, that will be done on a case-by-case basis and on request.

Spearheading the proposal are MPs Jameel Malallah Hassan, Hassan Ibrahim Hassan, Hassan Eid Bukhamas, Hisham Abdulaziz Al Awadhi, and Hamad Farooq Al Doai.

It will come up for voting in the council's Tuesday's session. Through this move, MPs say



HAMAD FAROOQ AL DOI, Muharraq Governorate - First Constituency



HESHAM ABDULAZIZ AL AWADHI, Muharraq Governorate - Fourth Constituency



Hassan Eid Bukhamas, Capital Governorate - Fourth Constituency



HASAN EBRAHIM HASSAN, Northern Governorate - Fourth Constituency



JAMEEL MULLA HASSAN, Northern Governorate - Tenth Constituency



MPs advocate for a maximum two-week timeframe for ministerial or authoritative responses to parliamentary questions, with the possibility of a one-week extension on a case-by-case basis.

The primary objective of this amendment is to expedite responses from authorities and ensure timely parliamentary proceedings.

The proposal is to amend Article 162 of the Parliament's internal regulations.

Currently, it states, "All relevant authorities shall cooperate with those conducting the in-

vestigation in carrying out their mission, and they shall provide them with reports, data, documents, or papers."

Instead, it will be, "The relevant authority shall submit its response to those conducting the investigation within a period not exceeding two weeks from the date of receiving the request, and this period may be extended

for a period not exceeding one week upon the request of the authority." By setting clear deadlines for responses, the proposal aims to enhance the efficiency of parliamentary inquiry committees. Ultimately, it seeks to foster greater accountability and facilitate the timely completion of investigations within the legislative framework.

Upholding accountability

MPs call for reinstating BD100,000 threshold in contract reviews

● Parliament's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee shows green light

● Legislative and Legal Opinion Authority raises concerns

● It currently reviews approximately 450 contracts annually

TDT | Manama

In a bid to enhance transparency and oversight, Members of Parliament are advocat-



ALI MAJED ALNOAIMI, Southern Governorate - Seventh Constituency

ing for all contracts valued at BD100,000 to undergo parliamentary scrutiny by Legislative and Legal Opinion Authority.

Currently, only contracts exceeding BD300,000 are subject

to review - a practice established in 2010 after the threshold was raised from BD100,000.

The Legislative and Legal Opinion Authority reviews such contracts as per the Law on the Regulation of Tenders, Bids, Purchases, and Government Sales

At the time, the reduction was justified as a means to enhance flexibility in contracting processes and adjust to rising prices for goods and services.

However, the proposal by MP Dr. Ali Majed Al Nuaimi now argue that reinstating the BD100,000 threshold is essential for exercising better control over public expenditures.

Scheduled for discussion this Tuesday, the proposal has gar-

nered support from the Parliament's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee, which advocates its approval.

However, concerns have been raised by the Legislative and Legal Opinion Authority itself, expressing apprehensions over potential adverse effects on the efficiency and flexibility of government procurement processes.

The Authority says lowering the threshold could significantly escalate the Authority's workload, which currently reviews approximately 450 contracts annually. "This surge in workload poses challenges, potentially disrupting the seamless operation of government activities and services."

MPs mull exemption from court fees for low-income citizens

TDT | Manama

Citizens with low income could be spared from court fees in specific categories, if MPs say yes this Tuesday.

The exemption would apply to individuals eligible for social support and retirees with monthly pensions not exceeding BD 1,500.

Proponents argue that this measure would enhance access to justice for low-income individuals and ease the financial burden associated with legal proceedings for vulnerable groups.

The draft law, reviewed and endorsed by the Parliament's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee, focuses on Article

10 of Decree Law No. 3 of 1972 concerning court fees.

However, the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs and Endowments refrained from providing an opinion, stating their preference to await the government's official stance.

Article 10 stipulates that court fees could be determined and adjusted by the Minister of Justice, with Cabinet approval, not exceeding 3% of the financial claim exceeding BD 3,000. The maximum fee was set at BD 200,000. Furthermore, the Minister of Justice or their delegate could defer or exempt individuals from paying all or part of the court fees if they demonstrated their inability to pay.

Parliament to address critical issues

TDT | Manama

Traffic congestion, fisheries, living standards, and dilapidated housing will be among the most pressing issue that Parliamentarians will discuss this Tuesday in Parliament.

First on the agenda is a discussion on the government's strategies to tackle traffic congestion, a growing concern among citizens. MPs will inquire about the government's plans to improve traffic flow and reduce commute times.

Next, parliamentarians will delve into the decline of fish resources and rising prices in the local market, seeking answers on sustainable

fisheries management and ensuring affordable fish for consumers.

The third discussion will scrutinize the government's initiatives to enhance living standards, focusing on access to affordable housing, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.

Lastly, attention will turn to dilapidated housing and overcrowded dwellings, with MPs seeking clarity on the government's plans to assist affected families and renovate or replace unsafe housing.

These discussions are expected to prompt robust debate and scrutiny of the government's policies and actions.

Lawmakers consider financial clearance for departing foreign workers

TDT | Manama

Foreign workers and employers will be required to obtain a certificate of financial clearance before departing Bahrain, if lawmakers agree.

MPs assert that the proposal slated for voting this Tuesday is driven by the imperative to protect the rights of the state and its citizens.

The move would rectify the absence of a clear regulatory framework, and maintain equilibrium in labour relations, as outlined in its explanatory

memorandum.

Presently, there's no mandate for settling financial obligations by foreign workers or employers before departing Bahrain. This loophole has resulted in lost rights, a surge in civil and commercial lawsuits with unenforceable judgments, and challenges in recovering outstanding sums, the memorandum highlights.

The proposal seeks to redress these issues by mandating a certificate of financial clearance from the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) before

departure.

However, the LMRA has voiced reservations about the proposal, cautioning that it would burden the authority with verifying financial clearance for all foreign workers and employers. Moreover, it could restrict foreign workers and employers in Bahrain from traveling without a court order, potentially encroaching upon existing laws.

Despite the LMRA's reservations, the Services Committee reviewing the proposal has recommended its approval.



Presently, there's no mandate for settling financial obligations by foreign workers or employers before departing Bahrain.

AUB celebrates MyHassad special draw winner of BD100,000

Five more winners of BD 10,000 each, bringing total March prize pool to BD 150,000



In pictures, the winners during photocall

TDT | Manama

In a special ceremony held at its Seef headquarters, Ahli United Bank (AUB) has announced Fatema Said Mohamed Ali as the lucky winner in its first MyHassad Special Draw, worth BD 100,000.

An Additional five winners for

the month of March – Qassim Ali Radhi, Durra Sayed Adnan Ali, Wajeha Ali Faraji, Ebtehal Isa Al Ekri, and Afrah Ahmed Ebrahim took home BD 10,000 each. The Bank also welcomed the six winners with special Eid Gifts.

“We are delighted to congratulate our MyHassad Special Draw and Monthly Draw winners and

celebrate their along their side,” said Suvrat Saigal Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer, Retail Banking, at Ahli United Bank. “MyHassad continues to offer exceptional rewards and opportunities for our customers, and we encourage everyone to participate and be a part of this unique and special experience.”

MyHassad offers a multitude of opportunities to win beyond the monthly draw. Every week (except for weeks where Monthly, Special & Mega Draws take place) 10 lucky customers will take home BD 500 each, along with two exclusive Special Draws (for clients with deposits upwards of BD 5,000) offering

a special prize of BD 100,000 each – one that was conducted in March and another is coming up in May. The scheme culminates in a Mega Draw that will be held in July, presenting a life-changing opportunity to win BD 500,000.

The next Special Draw is only a month away, and now is the

perfect timing to increase deposits in order to qualify.

The MyHassad draws are held every Wednesday, offering participants the chance to win big on a regular basis. Customers are encouraged to start saving with MyHassad today to increase their chances of being among of the future winners!

S&P cut its Israel debt rating to A+ on geopolitical risks

Paris, France

The S&P global rating agency downgraded its rating on Israel's long-term debt amid regional tensions, it said in a statement issued late Thursday, just before reports of an Israeli revenge attack on arch-foe Iran.

The agency cut its rating from AA- to A+, and said the outlook was negative.

“The recent increase in confrontation with Iran heightens already elevated geopolitical risks for Israel,” S&P said in its statement.

The rating downgrade may add pressure on Israel's bonds and the shekel, which has fallen



Protesters block traffic along a road during a demonstration by the relatives of hostages taken captive by Hamas in the Gaza Strip during the October 7 attacks, and supporters, demanding action to set them free outside the Kirya base which houses the Israeli defence ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv

this year against the dollar. al conflict will be avoided, but “We expect a wider region-

confrontation with Hezbollah appear set to continue throughout 2024 -- versus our previous assumption of military activity not lasting more than six months,” it said.

S&P also said that it expects Israel's deficit to widen to 8 percent of GDP in 2024, “mostly as a result of increased defense spending.

“Higher deficits will also persist over the medium term, and we expect net general government debt to peak at 66 percent of GDP in 2026.”

S&P said it could “lower the ratings on Israel if the ongoing conflicts widen, further increasing the security and geopolitical risks that Israel faces.”

Nike's Germany kit deal 'inexplicable', says Adidas CEO



Bjorn Gulden

Paris, France

The sum reportedly paid by Nike to lure the German football team away from its historic partner Adidas was “inexplicable”, the CEO of the German sportswear giant Bjorn Gulden told AFP in an interview.

Defending the company's decision not to enter into a bidding war with its fierce US rivals, Gulden said the German sport outfitter would continue to go after major kit deals, including the franchise for France, but only if the price is right.

News of the breakup with the German football team came at a bad time for Adidas, which had slumped to its first annual loss in over three decades in 2023.

The German Football Association (DFB) said last month it would end its partnership of over 70 years with Adidas, selecting Nike as its kit provider from 2027.

The DFB said the decision was made in the interests of the domestic game and grassroots football.

But the shock announcement, just a few weeks before Germany is set to host the 2024 European football championships, prompted an outcry from politicians who accused the DFB of a lack of patriotism.

“Nike won with, by all accounts, a huge offer,” said Gulden, referring to reports that the US giant will pay around 100 million euros (\$106.5 million) a year in the deal that runs from 2027 through 2034.

Microsoft teases lifelike avatar AI tech

San Francisco, United States

Researchers at Microsoft have revealed a new artificial tool that can create deeply realistic human avatars -- but offered no timetable to make it available to the public, citing concerns about facilitating deep fake content.

The AI model known as VASA-1, for “visual affective skills,” can create an animated video of a person talking, with synchronized lip movements, using just a single image and a speech audio clip.

Disinformation researchers fear rampant misuse of AI-powered applications to create “deep fake” pictures, video, and audio clips in a pivotal election year.

“We are opposed to any behavior to create misleading or



People walk past a Microsoft Experience Center on Fifth Avenue

harmful contents of real persons,” wrote the authors of the VASA-1 report, released this week by Microsoft Research Asia.

an online demo, API, product, additional implementation details, or any related offerings until we are certain that the technology will be used responsibly and in accordance with proper regulations.”

Microsoft researchers said the technology can capture a wide spectrum of facial nuances and natural head motions.

“It paves the way for real-time engagements with lifelike avatars that emulate human conversational behaviors,” researchers said in the post.

VASA can work with artistic photos, songs, and non-English speech, according to Microsoft.

Researchers touted potential benefits of the technology such as providing virtual teachers to students or therapeutic support to people in need.

Oil jumps more than 3% on Middle East worries

Hong Kong, China

Oil prices surged more than three percent in early Asian trade on Friday following unconfirmed reports of explosions in Iran, Syria and Iraq, sparking fears of an escalation of the Middle East crisis.

West Texas Intermediate jumped 3.66 percent to \$85.76 and Brent rose 3.44 percent to \$90.11.

The reports come after a missile attack on Israel by

Iran last weekend that Israel's army chief General Herzl Haveli warned would be met with a response.

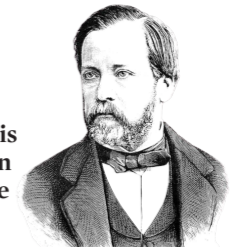
Tehran unleashed more than 300 ballistic and cruise missiles and attack drones late Saturday, most of which were repelled by air defences.

The country's leaders said the strike was a legitimate response to a deadly attack on an Iranian embassy building in Damascus that it blames on Tel Aviv.

QUOTE OF THE DAY EXPERIENCE IS SIMPLY THE NAME WE GIVE OUR MISTAKES OSCAR WILDE

TODAY IN HISTORY 1290 Round Table tournament held near Winchester, England, in imitation of King Arthur, to commemorate betrothal of daughter of Edward I, and attended by the king

1862 First pasteurization test is completed by Frenchmen Louis Pasteur and Claude Bernard



1902 Marie and Pierre Curie isolate the radioactive compound radium chloride
1999 Columbine High School massacre: Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold kill 13 people and injure 24 others before committing suicide at Columbine High School, Colorado

News in brief

Two detained in Poland for attack on Navalny ally: Lithuania president
Polish authorities have arrested two men suspected of attacking a close ally of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny in Vilnius in March, Lithuania's President Gitanas Nausėda said yesterday.

'Help me,' pleads Ecuador ex-VP at center of crisis with Mexico
A former Ecuadorian vice president captured during a widely condemned raid on the Mexican embassy in Quito has appealed to the presidents of Mexico, Colombia and Brazil for help.

Aid group sounds alarm about migrant health problems
Aid group Doctors Without Borders warned Thursday that migrants were suffering severe physical and mental problems on their way to the United States, calling for a more humane response to the crisis.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Japan doctors sue Google Maps over 'punching bag' reviews



The Google Maps app is seen on an Apple iPhone 4S (file photo)

which they are posted, it has become extremely difficult to get the reviews taken down," lawyer Yuichi Nakazawa told AFP. "This can lead to doctors doing their job under the constant fear of receiving horrible reviews", he said. The objective of many medical institutions is not to satisfy patients, but to deal with their illnesses from a professional standpoint, the plaintiffs' complaint said. "Clinics that give patients only a perfunctory diagnosis and prescribe medicines as requested would be inappropriate medically, but highly appreciated by patients," it said. The nature of the job can also sometimes leave doctors susceptible to ad hominem online attacks by patients holding a grudge, plaintiffs argued. "The situation remains unaddressed, doctors 'may find themselves hesitant to be firm and refuse medically unnecessary examinations or medicines requested by patients,' Nakazawa warned. That ultimately does society a disservice, he argued.

CIA warns Ukraine could lose war this year without fresh aid



Ukrainian gunners fire at the enemy in Kharkiv Region

AFP | Washington

The CIA chief warned Thursday that Ukraine could lose the war to Russia by the end of this year unless the United States sends more military aid.

The grim warning by Bill Burns came as the US House of Representatives is scheduled to vote Saturday on a \$61 billion aid package for Ukraine that has been held up for months by Republican lawmakers allied with Donald Trump as he seeks reelection.

The administration of President Joe Biden has been warning as it lobbied to send more ammunition and other materiel to Ukraine that the pro-Western US ally could lose territory to Russia's invasion forces unless it got more American help.

But on Thursday, in a speech at the George W. Bush Center, Burns said the stakes are now much higher.

Modi the favourite as India votes

Indians vote in the first phase of the world's largest election as PM Narendra Modi seeks a third term

Modi's popularity remains strong after a decade in office

Opposition parties face uphill battle against Modi's popularity and BJP's strong organisation

AFP | New Delhi



Voters queue up to cast their ballot outside a polling station during the first phase of voting of India's general election, in Dugeji village some 33 Km (21 miles) from Dantewada town in Chhattisgarh state

India began voting yesterday in a six-week election with an all but assured victory for Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as a weakened opposition is pushed to the sidelines.

A total of 968 million people are eligible to take part in the world's biggest vote. A long and winding queue was patiently assembled outside a polling station in the Hindu holy city of Haridwar, on the banks of the Ganges river, even before the booths opened.

"Modi had ensured our country as well as our faith is secure," 59-year-old Hindu ascetic Uday Bharti told AFP outside a polling station. "We have come here to make sure Modi keeps doing his good work." Modi, 73, remains resound-

ingly popular after a decade in office that has seen India rise in diplomatic clout and economic power, as well as efforts by his government to bring the country's majority faith in ever closer alignment with its politics.

"I urge all those voting... to exercise their franchise in record numbers," he wrote in a post on X as the election began. "Every vote counts and every voice matters!"

Modi has already led the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) through two landslide victories in 2014 and 2019, forged in large part by his appeal to the Hindu faithful.



Modi has led India to become the world's fifth-biggest economy, surpassing its former colonial ruler Britain, and is seen as a key ally by Western nations against China's growing assertiveness.

But Gandhi -- the scion of India's most famous political dynasty, whose father, grandmother and great-grandfather all served as prime minister -- was briefly disqualified from parliament last year after being convicted of criminal libel.

The 53-year-old has criticised the government for democratic backsliding, failing to create jobs for India's millions of out-of-work youth, and its chest-thumping Hindu nationalism.

"Your one vote can put an end to inflation, unemployment, hatred and injustice," his party said on X. But Gandhi has already led Congress to two defeats against Modi and his efforts to dent the premier's popularity have failed to register with voters.

growing assertiveness.

'Hatred and injustice'

Modi's BJP is challenged by an alliance of more than two dozen parties.

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"Your one vote can put an end to inflation, unemployment, hatred and injustice," his party said on X.

But Gandhi has already led Congress to two defeats against Modi and his efforts to dent the premier's popularity have failed to register with voters.

Published opinion polls are rare in India, but a Pew survey last year found Modi was viewed favourably by nearly 80 percent of the public. Voting yesterday was mostly without incident, but one polling station in conflict-hit Manipur was ransacked after unknown assailants let off gunfire outside.

A hundred pro-Palestinian protesters arrested at New York's Columbia University

AFP | New York

Police arrested more than 100 pro-Palestinian student protesters at New York's Columbia University Thursday, a day after the president of the prestigious school was grilled in Congress over accusations of anti-Semitism on campus.

"NYPD officers moved in to ensure the safety of the campus, the students and the staff made more than 108 arrests, and the NYPD ensured that there was no violence or injuries during the disturbance," New York Mayor Eric Adams said during a press conference. The arrests and dismantling of tents that had been erected Wednesday also attracted a crowd of other demonstrators in support, according to an AFP journalist. According to The New York



Pro-Palestinian protesters outside Columbia University in New York

Times, the daughter of Democratic Representative Ilhan Omar was among those detained and she has been ordered to appear in court.

Taiwan's TSMC founder Morris Chang receives medal of honour

AFP | Taipei



Morris Chang

Taiwanese tycoon Morris Chang received one of the island's highest medals of honour yesterday, in recognition of his achievements as the founder of semiconductor giant TSMC.

Known as the "godfather" of the island's chip industry, Chang founded Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company three decades ago, building it into a multi-billion-dollar company that today is a leader in making the microchips that power everything from smartphones to AI technology.

President Tsai Ing-wen called "The Order of Dr. Sun Yat-sen" the highest honour the government can confer on a person who is not a head of state, when she presented the medal to Chang yesterday. Describing the 92-year-old as a "great entrepreneur" and a "good friend", Tsai thanked Chang for "letting the world see Taiwan with technology, innovation and enthusiasm".

Indonesia on alert for more eruptions at remote volcano

AFP | Jakarta

Indonesian authorities were on alert yesterday for more eruptions from a remote island volcano that forced thousands to evacuate this week, as nearby residents began clearing debris after molten rocks rained down on their villages.

Mount Ruang erupted nearly half a dozen times in 24 hours beginning late Tuesday, stirring a spectacular mix of fiery orange lava, a towering ash column and volcanic lightning.

While officials said Ruang had started to calm yesterday, authorities maintained the highest alert level of a four-



Mount Ruang volcano is seen spewing smoke from Tagulandang island

tiered system, which indicates high volcanic activity.

Man self-immolates outside Trump trial as jury selected

AFP | New York

A man set himself on fire yesterday outside the courthouse where at almost the same moment, full jury selection was completed in the unprecedented criminal trial of Donald Trump.

It was not clear whether the self-immolation had anything to do with Trump's case, but the gruesome incident occurred on the street outside the building where the ex-president and current White House hopeful sat on the 15th floor. The full jury of 12 New Yorkers and six alternates had just been completed when live television images suddenly turned to smoke gushing from what was reported to be a person on fire.



A man sets himself on fire in a small park across the street from the lower Manhattan courthouse

A policeman could be seen hurrying with a fire extinguisher and CNN's reporter said there was a heavy stench of burning flesh and fuel. The fire appeared to be located at a park opposite the 100 Centre Street courthouse. We're still gathering details from the field," said a New York Police Department spokesman. The fire appeared to be located at a park opposite the 100 Centre Street courthouse.

Nine killed in overnight Russian strikes, as Ukraine downs bomber

AFP | Kyiv

Russian strikes on Ukraine in the early hours of yesterday killed at least nine people, including three children, as Kyiv said it shot down a Russian strategic bomber for the first time.

Moscow said a military plane crashed over the south of the country while returning to base from a combat mission after suffering a technical malfunction.

The downing of a Russian bomber used to fire cruise missiles at Ukraine would be a highly symbolic win for Kyiv, which has been pounded by hundreds of overnight Russian aerial strikes since Moscow invaded more than two years ago.

The latest overnight Russian strikes on the eastern Dnipropetrovsk region killed at least nine people and injured more than a dozen, Ukrainian officials said yesterday.

"A child who was heavily wounded during a massive enemy attack on the Dnipropetrovsk region today died in hospital. The death toll had now risen to nine, including three children," the office of Ukraine's Prosecutor General said in a statement on Telegram. He published photos showing emergency workers carrying injured people away on stretchers.

After the strike, President Volodymyr Zelensky repeated his calls for Ukraine's Western allies to supply air defence systems. "Every country that provides air defence systems to Ukraine, every leader who helps persuade our partners that air defence systems should not be stored in warehouses and deployed in real cities and communities facing terror, and everyone who supports our defence is a life saver," Zelensky said on social media.



A Tu-22M3 Russian bomber of the kind that Ukraine said was shot down

Unfortunately, the number of victims is expected to rise. The rubble of the damaged buildings is being cleared

"Unfortunately, the number of victims is expected to rise. The rubble of the damaged buildings is being cleared," Interior Minister Igor Klymenko said in a post on Telegram. He published photos showing emergency workers carrying injured people away on stretchers.

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In Washington, the US House of Representatives is gearing up for a crucial weekend vote on a long-stalled \$61 billion package of military aid for Kyiv that could deliver much-needed weapons to Ukrainian soldiers struggling on the front lines. In a boost for their forces, Kyiv said it had downed a Russian long-range strategic bomber for the first time in an overnight attack.

ASEAN 'deeply concerned' by escalating Myanmar violence

AFP | Bangkok



Myanmar nationals walk on the Thailand-Myanmar Friendship bridge to cross over into Thailand

Regional bloc ASEAN said it is "deeply concerned" about a recent upsurge in fighting in Myanmar, after fierce clashes over a key trading hub on the Thai border.

The foreign ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations urged "all parties for an immediate cessation of violence" in Myanmar, which has been roiled by conflict since the military seized power in a February 2021 coup. "The ministers' statement issued late Thursday said 10-member ASEAN was "deeply concerned over the recent escalation of conflicts, including in the area of Myawaddy".

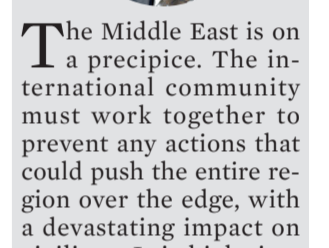
The military was last week forced to pull its troops out of positions in the valuable trading post after days of battling with the Karen National Union (KNU) -- a long-established ethnic minority armed group -- and other anti-junta fighters. It was the latest blow suffered by the junta, which has suffered a string of battlefield losses in recent months, with some analysts warning it is its most significant threat to date.

TOP 4 TWEETS 01



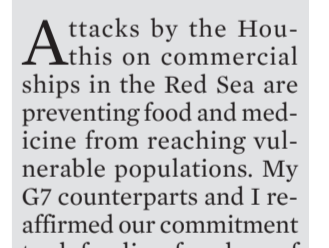
Any accounts doing engagement farming will be suspended and traced to source @elonmusk

02



The Middle East is on a precipice. The international community must work together to prevent any actions that could push the entire region over the edge, with a devastating impact on civilians. It is high time to end the bloody cycle of retaliation. It is high time to stop. @antonoguterres

03



Attacks by the Houthis on commercial ships in the Red Sea are preventing food and medicine from reaching vulnerable populations. My G7 counterparts and I reaffirmed our commitment to defending freedom of navigation. @SecBlinken

04



Russia's hybrid attacks Rare not just about Finland's security. This is about the security of the entire EU. This is why I was here today. To tell you that Europe stands by your side. For the security of the borders and to support the border regions. @vonderleyen

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

Classifieds



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Liverpool out of Europa League as Leverkusen advance to semis

Atalanta and Leverkusen reach Europa League semifinals, Roma and Marseille also advance

● Liverpool crashed out of the Europa League despite a 1-0 win against Atalanta

AFP | London

Liverpool crashed out of the Europa League after a 1-0 win against Atalanta that wasn't enough to overturn their quarter-final deficit, while Bayer Leverkusen's 1-1 draw at West Ham took the German champions into the last four on Thursday.

In Jurgen Klopp's last season as Liverpool boss, the Reds were hoping to give the German a memorable farewell in the final in Dublin.

But Liverpool had suffered a stunning 3-0 loss in the first leg against Atalanta at Anfield last week.

And although Liverpool have authored some of European football's greatest comebacks down the years against the likes of St Etienne, AC Milan and Barcelona, there would be no miracle escape this time.

Mohamed Salah converted a seventh minute penalty in the second leg in Bergamo after Trent Alexander-Arnold's cross hit Matteo Ruggeri's arm.

However, Klopp's men



Liverpool's Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah shoots and scores a penalty kick

couldn't breach the stubborn Atalanta defence again.

It has been a brutal week for Liverpool, whose Premier League title challenge was damaged by a shock home defeat against Crystal Palace on Sunday.

"It's mixed emotions. We are out but I'm happy with the game," Klopp said.

"It was clear we gave ourselves a massive hurdle. We wished we could have gone to Dublin but that hasn't happened."

While Klopp contemplates his failure to land the one major trophy to elude him during nine years with Liverpool, Atalanta can dream of winning the second silverware in their 116-year history after the 1963

Coppa Italia.

Bidding to reach their maiden European final, Gian Piero Gasperini's team will face Marseille in their first European semi-final since the 1988 Cup Winners' Cup.

Fresh from clinching their first Bundesliga title last weekend, Leverkusen survived a scare from West Ham before advancing 3-1 on aggregate.

In the semi-finals, Xabi Alonso's side will play Roma, who saw off Italian rivals AC Milan 3-1 on aggregate.

Leverkusen won the first leg 2-0 but West Ham made the perfect start in east London when Michail Antonio met Jarrod Bowen's pin-point cross with a close-range header in the 13th minute.

Leverkusen's 44-game unbeaten streak across all competitions positions them as treble contenders, shedding the "Neverkusen" tag for underachievement. This is only the third time in the 21st century that no English teams are in the last four of Champions League and Europa League



It's mixed emotions. We are out but I'm happy with the game. It was clear we gave ourselves a massive hurdle. We wished we could have gone to Dublin but that hasn't happened

JURGEN KLOPP

beaten run in all competitions has taken them to the brink of an incredible treble, finally ridding the club of the 'Neverkusen' tag that mocked their decades of underachievement.

Alonso's team, who face second tier Kaiserslautern in the German Cup final on May 25, beat Werder Bremen 5-0 on Sunday to win the Bundesliga title.

At the Stadio Olimpico, Gianluca Mancini put Roma head from close-range in the 12th minute and Paulo Dybala doubled their advantage in the 22nd minute with a blistering strike.

Daniele De Rossi's side were reduced to 10 men in the 31st minute when Zeki Celik was dismissed for a foul on Milan forward Rafael Leao.

Matteo Gabbia got one back in the 85th minute, but his header was little consolation for Milan.

West Ham eventually ran out of steam and Jeremie Frimpong struck in the 89th minute with a shot that deflected in off Aaron Cresswell.

"The momentum was with West Ham. To be honest, we were not at our best in the first half. I'm happy to go through. In the Europa League you always have tough moments," Alonso said.

Treble-chasing Leverkusen

Leverkusen are into their second successive Europa League semi-final, while West Ham's exit means for only the third time in the 21st century, England will have no teams in the Champions League and Europa League last four.

Leverkusen's 44-game un-

Martinez penalty heroics take Villa to Conference League semis

● Aston Villa advances to semifinals after a 4-3 penalty shootout win against Lille

● Villa goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez received two yellow cards during the match

AFP | London

Emiliano Martinez starred in a drama-filled penalty shootout as Aston Villa squeezed past Lille and into the Europa Conference League semi-finals on Thursday following a late Matty Cash goal in normal time.

Villa led 2-1 from last week's first leg but their quest for a first European trophy since 1982 looked doomed when goals from Yusuf Yazici and Benjamin Andre put Lille two up on the night and 3-2 ahead in the tie in northern France.

A defensive mishap allowed Cash to bring Villa even with three minutes left though before Martinez, displaying his trademark dark arts, saved twice in the shootout as Unai Emery's side won 4-3 on penalties.

"It has been a hell of a ride all of my career. I am a believer and a hard worker and it was my destiny today," Martinez told TNT Sports.

"I always say in all my ca-



Aston Villa's goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez (R) jumps to save a shot

reer, I owe my team-mates in those moments, even when we were watching Real Madrid last night the manager was saying we might go to penalties and in those moments I own my box."

The Argentina goalkeeper saved spot-kicks from Nabil Bentaleb and Andre after being whistled loudly throughout the game by a crowd that had not forgotten his provocative celebrations after the 2022 World Cup final win over France.

There was a confusing moment during the shootout when he was shown a second yellow card for more antics, including pressing his finger to his lips, but rules now dictate that any bookings picked up in the match are reset before penalties commence.

"It's all about reputation for time-wasting because the other

goalie was doing exactly the same thing," said Martinez.

"I got a yellow after 30 minutes and we were losing the game so I don't know what the ref wants from me.

"Then there was no ball in the penalty spot and I was asking for a ball from the ball boy and I get booked; I just don't understand the rules."

It was a compelling finale to an evening that began with Lille quickly erasing Villa's advantage, making full use of the extra rest afforded to them against a side who beat Arsenal 2-0 on Sunday.

Lille start strongly

Yazici steered home 15 minutes in to haul Paulo Fonseca's team level over the two legs before Lille captain Andre glanced in a corner midway through the



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I always say in all my career, I owe my team-mates in those moments, even when we were watching Real Madrid last night the manager was saying we might go to penalties and in those moments I own my box

EMILIANO MARTINEZ

lier saved Bailey's attempt, with Villa moving on to face Olympiakos in the last four.

Olympiakos also had their goalkeeper to thank as Kostas Tzolakis saved three spot-kicks against Fenerbahce in another shootout, one the Greeks won 3-2.

Fenerbahce lost 3-2 away last week but Irfan Can Kahveci's early goal brought the tie all square in Turkey before Tzolakis' heroics.

Last season's runners-up Fiorentina sealed a return to the semi-finals with a 2-0 win over 10-man Viktoria Plzen after extra time.

Cadu was sent off in the second half for a foul on the edge of the Plzen box and Fiorentina made the extra man count when Nico Gonzalez struck in the 92nd minute.

Skipper Cristiano Biraghi added a second on 108 minutes as the Italians progressed 2-0 on aggregate.

second half.

But with the Ligue 1 club heading towards their first major European semi-final, a defensive mix-up in the closing minutes proved costly.

Cash hammered the ball home to bring Villa even at 3-3 on aggregate after Lille goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier spilled a looping cross following a collision with Bentaleb.

Chevalier redeemed himself with a sensational save from Douglas Luiz in extra time, reacting sharply to scoop the Brazilian's header over the crossbar after parrying a powerful shot from Leon Bailey.

But Martinez had the final say in the shootout after Cheva-

Norris snatches Shanghai sprint pole

Lando Norris denies Lewis Hamilton in wet qualifying session in Chinese Grand Prix qualifying

● **Alonso qualifies third, while Verstappen takes fourth**

● **Zhou Guanyu makes hometown debut, starting 10th**

AFP | Shanghai

A fearless “all or nothing” lap from McLaren’s Lando Norris in wet and wild conditions yesterday denied Lewis Hamilton pole position for the Chinese Grand Prix sprint race.

Hamilton thought he had claimed Shanghai pole in his Mercedes when Norris’s lap of 1min 57.940sec on intermediate wet tyres was deleted for exceeding track limits, only to be dramatically reinstated a minute later.

Fernando Alonso in an Aston Martin showed his experience and guile to come third in the treacherous conditions with championship leader Max Verstappen fourth.

It was a second career sprint pole for Norris.



McLaren’s British driver Lando Norris drives during the sprint qualifying session

“It was tricky, you are always nervous going into a session like this,” said the Englishman.

“You just have to risk a lot, push and build tyre temperature and what not.

“You only get three laps. The first two I aborted on both, so it was all or nothing.”

Verstappen’s Red Bull teammate Sergio Perez was sixth, splitting the Ferraris of Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc, who survived a big spin.

“It was just like driving on ice,” said Verstappen, whose final lap time was deleted after a

trip across the gravel outside the final bend.

“That is why also I think we deserved to be where we are in qualifying, it isn’t really working for me in the wet but it is not where we are in the dry.”

Hamilton has endured a poor start to 2024 but was clearly looking forward to starting from the front row.

“So happy, as soon as I saw the rain coming I was getting excited. In dry conditions we’re not quick enough.”

Alonso was also thankful for the late rain. “We were not super



It was tricky, you are always nervous going into a session like this. You just have to risk a lot, push and build tyre temperature and what not. You only get three laps. The first two I aborted on both, so it was all or nothing

LANDO NORRIS

competitive on the dry,” he said.

“In the wet it was difficult to judge the level of grip and risk we wanted to apply but in the end I am happy.”

Fifth-placed Sainz said the rain and cool conditions made it very difficult to get his intermediate tyres warmed up.

“We didn’t manage to switch on the tyres so we couldn’t push,” said the Spaniard, the only driver to win a race this season apart from Verstappen.

Formula One is back in China for the first time since 2019, when Hamilton won.

Hometown hero Zhou

A big crowd at the Shanghai



This is Lando Norris’s second career sprint pole, and he achieved it with an “all or nothing” lap in treacherous wet conditions

International Circuit let out a huge roar when their hometown hero Zhou Guanyu made it into the third qualifying session.

He will start Saturday morning’s sprint from 10th for Sauber. The 24-year-old Zhou was elevated to F1 in 2022, but has had to wait till his third season to make his home debut because of the pandemic.

Zhou is yet to score a 2024 championship point but has given himself a great chance with a near-flawless qualifying show.

Every lap in his bright green Sauber was greeted by massive

cheers from the grandstand opposite the pit lane as his times appeared on the scoreboard.

“We will give it everything,” Zhou said. “I am just happy with the first day and great to have everyone here.

“The pressure before the weekend was so extreme, like I felt when I made my debut.”

Verstappen, who has won three out of four grands prix this season, again looked quickest until the rain came near the end of SQ2.

It sets up an intriguing 19-lap sprint battle Saturday morning as the three-time world champion attempts to find his way past Alonso, Hamilton and Norris.

“We have to try and have the best start possible,” said Verstappen.

“And then I think it will be quite a long stint on one set of tyres in the sprint.”

Hamilton said his fate lay with the weather gods.

“It really depends what the conditions will be like,” said the seven-time world champion, who has won a record six grands prix in Shanghai.

“If they are like they were just now we have a chance of being up there.”

Thrilling encounters mark day 4 of Inter-Hotel Charity Cricket Tournament



Sreeraj Sreenivas (The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain) receiving “Man of the Match” certificate from Awais Rafiq (Financial Controller, The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain)

TDT | Manama

The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain Inter-Hotel Charity Cricket Tournament continued its exciting action on Day 4 with five thrilling matches played on April 18.

The day witnessed some brilliant individual performances and closely contested encounters.

In the first match, Address Beach Resort edged out The K

Hotel by a narrow margin of 14 runs. Amir Khan from Address Beach Resort was adjudged the Man of the Match for his outstanding all-round display.

The Ritz-Carlton B team secured a four-wicket victory over Swiss-Belhotel Seef in the second match. Sreeraj Sreenivas of The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain was awarded the Man of the Match for his match-winning contribution.

In the third encounter, The



Salman Nasir (The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain) receiving “Man of the Match” certificate from Awais Rafiq (Financial Controller, The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain)

Ritz-Carlton A team dominated Domain Bahrain, winning by a comprehensive 54-run margin. Salman Nasir from The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain was the star performer and claimed the Man of the Match award.

Gulf Hotel Bahrain emerged victorious against Le Meridien Bahrain in the fourth match, securing a commanding 52-run win. Dulanga Umesh of Gulf Hotel Bahrain was named the Man of the Match for his excep-

tional performance.

The final match of the day saw Diplomat Radisson Blu B defeating Movenpick Bahrain by 42 runs. Yasir Raja from Diplomat Radisson Blu was adjudged the Man of the Match for his crucial role in his team’s victory.

The Ritz-Carlton Bahrain Inter-Hotel Charity Cricket Tournament continues to provide thrilling cricketing action while raising funds for a noble cause.

Swiatek’s perfect 10 in Stuttgart as Vondrousova stuns Sabalenka

AFP | Stuttgart

World number one and defending champion Iga Swiatek took her Stuttgart winning streak to 10 matches yesterday with a straight sets victory over Emma Raducanu while Marketa Vondrousova stunned three-time runner-up Aryna Sabalenka to also make the semi-finals.

Top seed Swiatek, the 2022 and 2023 champion at the German clay-court tournament, saw off former US Open champion Emma Raducanu 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 in her quarter-final.

The 22-year-old Pole needed just over two hours to defeat Raducanu who was playing in her first quarter-final since 2022.

Despite her loss, there were encouraging signs of a return to form for the Briton.

Her two wins for Britain in the Billie Jean King Cup win against France last weekend followed by two victories in Stuttgart mark the first time



Iga Swiatek

she has won four matches in a row since her 2021 US Open title triumph.

The former world number 10 came into Stuttgart ranked at 303. Twelve months ago, Stuttgart proved to be her final event of 2023 before undergoing surgery on both wrists and her ankle.

Swiatek will face fourth-seeded Elena Rybakina, who defeated Jasmine Paolini 6-3, 5-7, 6-3, for a place in the final.

Catlin on cusp of Saudi Open Golf Championship title

TDT | Manama

John Catlin, the talented American golfer, showcased his dominance at the Saudi Open golf tournament, presented by the Public Investment Fund.

With an impressive performance extending over three consecutive days, Catlin achieved a remarkable feat by setting a new men’s record with a total score of 62. As the tournament nears its conclusion on Saturday, held at the esteemed Riyadh Golf Club, Catlin finds himself on the brink of clinching



A player in action

the championship title.

Commencing the penultimate round, the American sensation

Catlin held a lead over his main rivals, Scott Hend and Haotong Lee. Displaying his unwavering determination, Catlin embarked on a strong start, asserting his competitive spirit by securing an early advantage within the first five holes. His strategic maneuvers continued as he effortlessly navigated through the 10th and 11th holes, widening the gap in his favor on the leaderboard.

Thai golfer Kiradech Avinyarnath emerged as a strong contender, claiming the second-place position and posing

a formidable challenge to the prominent competitors Wade Ormsby, David Puig from Spain, Scott Hend, and Li Haotong from China.

Currently at the helm of the championship leaderboard, John Catlin seeks to secure consecutive victories on the Asian Tour, following his triumph at the Macau International Championship in March. However, the 33-year-old remains grounded, refusing to take anything for granted. He intends to persevere until the conclusion of the final round on Saturday.

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Arteta challenges Arsenal to rebound

Gunners look to regain form after Champions League and league setbacks

Arteta urges team to show mental toughness

AFP | London

Mikel Arteta has urged Arsenal to prove they have the mental strength to bounce back from a painful spell that wrecked their Champions League challenge and dented their Premier League title bid.

Arteta's side lost 1-0 to Bayern Munich on Wednesday as the German side earned a 3-2 aggregate quarter-final victory.

The end of Arsenal's attempt to win the Champions League for the first time followed a damaging 2-0 home defeat against Aston Villa in the Premier League.

Critics said the Gunners'



Arsenal's players react at the end of the UEFA Champions League quarter-final second leg football match against Bayern Munich

stumble over the last week reflected a lack of character and toughness in Arteta's squad.

But Arsenal can return to the top of the table by winning at Wolves on Saturday while leaders Manchester City are in FA

Cup semi-final action against Chelsea.

"It's been an experience, not the best one," Arteta told reporters yesterday. "We're fully focused on the times we have ahead of us with six games to go



Arsenal's quest for a first Premier League title in 20 years faces a crucial stretch as they look to rebound from an eight-point lead blown last season. Arteta remains optimistic, focusing on a final push for the championship

"The context is clear, if we win we go top of the league, you don't need anything else to be

motivated."

Arsenal are without a win in their last three games, having drawn their quarter-final first leg against Bayern.

Arteta claimed the first game against Bayern and the Villa clash could have produced different results if Arsenal had avoided key mistakes.

"It is what it is and we have to accept it. The Bayern one at home at the beginning, it could have been different," Arteta said.

"Against Villa we were the better team, but in the second half we paid the price for the chances we gave them and we have to move on from there.

"Now it is about showing against Wolves what we are made of and turning the situation around."

Chasing Arsenal's first Premier League crown in 20 years

after blowing an eight-point lead in the title race last season, Arteta knows the verdict will not be kind if his team finish empty-handed again.

But the Spaniard refused to blame his players for their wobble as he told them to make a final push for the title.

"I'm fully behind them. Thank you so much for the journey together, thank you for being in the quarter-finals of the Champions League and being so close," he said.

"Thank you for competing against the best team in Premier League history (Manchester City) and the best team in the competition in the last eight years with Liverpool and we're in with a chance to win it.

"Thank you so much for everything they have done, because it is unbelievable."

Rohit says India-Pakistan Test cricket would be 'awesome'

AFP | New Delhi

India captain Rohit Sharma has thrown his support behind any resumption of Test cricket against arch-rivals Pakistan, saying it would be "awesome".

The South Asian neighbours are bitter political adversaries and have fought three wars against each other since they were partitioned at the end of British colonial rule in 1947.

Their cricket teams have not faced off in a Test since 2007. Instead they play only occasionally in the shorter versions of the game and usually on neutral territory in international tournaments.

Rohit appeared Thursday on a YouTube chat show hosted by former captains Adam Gilchrist of Australia and Michael Vaughan of England.

Asked by Vaughan if playing Pakistan in a Test series would be beneficial for the five-day



India's captain Rohit Sharma (L) talks with Pakistan's captain Babar Azam during the toss before the start of their 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup match

India and Pakistan have not faced each other on either side's soil in a bilateral series since 2012

game, Rohit said: "I totally believe that."

"They are a good team, superb bowling line-up, good contest. Especially if you play in overseas conditions, that will be awesome," added the 36-year-old.

"I would love to. It would be

They are a good team, superb bowling line-up, good contest. Especially if you play in overseas conditions, that will be awesome. I would love to. It would be a great contest between two sides... so why not?

ROHIT SHARMA

a great contest between two sides... so why not?"

Australia has said it would be prepared to host a series between the rivals.

India and Pakistan have not faced each other on either side's soil in a bilateral series since 2012.

India last year refused to travel to Pakistan for the white-ball Asia Cup, prompting part of the tournament to be staged in Sri Lanka.

Man City suffer Haaland injury scare before FA Cup semi-final



Real Madrid's Spanish defender #06 Nacho Fernandez (L) clears the ball from Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland

AFP | Manchester

Pep Guardiola has revealed Erling Haaland could miss Manchester City's FA Cup semi-final against Chelsea at Wembley on Saturday.

Haaland was substituted before the start of extra time in City's Champions League quarter-final second leg defeat against Real Madrid on Wednesday.

Guardiola said after the penalty shoot-out loss that the Norway striker asked to be withdrawn but did not give a reason why.

The City boss has now confirmed Haaland suffered an injury against Real and suggested it was not certain his leading scorer would recover in time for the FA Cup holders' clash with Chelsea.

"We will see. It was a tough game, a lot of action, high intensity for both sides," Guardiola told reporters yesterday.

"Erling felt something, a muscular issue. That's why he told me he could not continue.

"The doctor said he had a little bit of niggles, a little problem, we will see how his evolution is in the next hours."

While Guardiola sweats on Haaland's fitness, City midfielder Kevin De Bruyne should be involved against

Erling felt something, a muscular issue. That's why he told me he could not continue. The doctor said he had a little bit of niggles, a little problem, we will see how his evolution is in the next hours

PEP GUARDIOLA

Chelsea after being taken off during extra time against Real due to fatigue.

Given City's hectic schedule, Guardiola conceded it is understandable that players are tired at this stage of the season.

"It's normal with the amount of games we are playing this season and the previous seasons and not much recovery, and extra time and high intensity," he said.

"We put a lot of pressure in our game and that's why the fatigue is there. They are human beings. They are not a machine. We are used to it."

The agonising shoot-out defeat by Real ended City's hopes of winning a Premier League, Champions League and FA Cup treble for a second consecutive season.

Rahul shines as Lucknow beat Chennai in IPL

AFP | Lucknow

KL Rahul's solid 82 runs off 53 balls helped Lucknow Super Giants comfortably beat Chennai Super Kings by eight wickets in the IPL yesterday.

Rahul's time at the crease, which saw him smash nine fours and three sixes, played a key role in pushing Lucknow past Chennai's 176-6 with six balls to spare.

"I felt that if we bat well, we could chase it down... when your partnership goes on, you can take a few more chances. Glad that it happened," said Rahul.

Chennai got off to a slightly jittery start after being invited to bat first, losing Rachin Ravindra (zero) and skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad (17) in the first five overs. Ajinkya Rahane looked to steady the side, with the help of Ravindra Jadeja, but fell in the



Lucknow Super Giants' KL Rahul plays a shot

ninth over after racking up a respectable 36 runs off 24 balls.

Lucknow's clinical bowling restricted Chennai in the middle overs, with Shivam Dube (three) not being able to pop off.

But Jadeja soldiered on for the rest of the game, getting his

half-century in the seventeenth over.

Reliable warhorse M.S. Dhoni, who smacked 28 runs off 9 balls, helped Chennai turn up the heat in the last three overs and pushed the team to 176-6.

Lucknow opens Quinton de

Scorecard

Lucknow Super Giants 180 for 2 (Rahul 82, de Kock 54, Pooran 23*, Pathirana 1-29) beat Chennai Super Kings 176 for 6 (Jadeja 57*, Rahane 36, Moeen 30, Dhoni 28*, Krunal 2-16) by eight wickets

Kock and KL Rahul set up the chase with a superb 134-run partnership, before de Kock, who hit five fours in his 43-ball 54, fell in the fifteenth over.

Rahul went onto smash an incredible 82 runs off 53 balls before being dismissed in the eighteenth over. A final push by Nicholas Pooran (23) helped seal the victory for Lucknow.

"We lost wickets regularly and were 10-15 short," said Gaikwad.

"Good to play them again soon, will come back with homework done."