

**EIGHT CHILDREN
KILLED, TWO HURT
IN SHOOTING**

Eight children, aged between one and 14, were killed and two others injured in a shooting. | **P10**

GCC doubles down on diplomacy and stability

United stay unbeaten in big tests under Carrick

10 Awards Cement Zain Bahrain's Network Leadership in Kingdom

**Bahrain Skies
Witness Rare
Celestial Show**



Skies over Bahrain and across the Gulf had witnessed a striking celestial event yesterday evening, as the waxing crescent moon aligned with the Pleiades star cluster.

Venus, the brightest object after the Moon, was also visible just below the crescent, completing the scene.

Scam Alert

Authorities have warned the public about a fraudulent text message circulating on social media that falsely claims recipients have been issued a traffic fine.

Officials urged residents to avoid interacting with suspicious links and to rely only on official channels for verification or payment, including the National Portal and the MyGov application.

**Airport Services
Growth Success**

Bahrain Airport Services announced its membership in the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Ground Handling Partnership Programme (GHP) for 2026, reflecting its commitment to global standards in airport ground operations.

The company said the move underscores its continued efforts to enhance operational efficiency, safety, and reliability in ground handling services at Bahrain International Airport, aligning with internationally recognised best practices in the aviation sector.

The GHP programme aims to strengthen cooperation between airlines and ground service providers, improve industry standards, and enhance overall operational performance across the aviation ecosystem.

Post-War National Action Begins

Launch Decisive Post-War Measures

Action on Security, Citizenship Cases

HRH Crown Prince Tasked With National Reform Drive

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa has directed a series of decisive national measures following a high-level meeting with senior officials, focusing on strengthening state resilience and addressing security and institutional gaps in the wake of recent regional tensions.

A central decision from the meeting was assigning His Roy-



HM the King



HRH Prince Salman

al Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to lead the implementation of comprehensive and urgent reforms. These include programmes to

address any identified gaps in the defence and economic sectors, alongside broader measures to enhance national preparedness and stability.

His Majesty also ordered the

immediate initiation of legal proceedings against individuals found to have betrayed the nation or compromised its security and stability. In addition, a full review of citizenship entitle-

ment cases will be conducted, applying legal procedures where necessary.

During the meeting, His Majesty stressed that the Kingdom is managing the challenges arising from recent developments through strong coordination between defence, security, and civil defence authorities, supported by national unity and effective government response systems.

Reaffirming Bahrain's position, His Majesty emphasized a continued commitment to resolving regional crises through peaceful and diplomatic channels that support stability and the interests of the wider region.

The directives reflect a firm state approach aimed at reinforcing national security, ensuring accountability, and strengthening institutional readiness for the next phase.

Strong Economic Shift

Non-Oil Growth Driving Economic Stability



We are focused on building a stable and prosperous future

SHAIKH SALMAN BIN KHALIFA AL KHALIFA

The Gulf economy continues to demonstrate structural resilience and growing diversification even amid persistent regional tensions, underscoring its expanding role in supporting global economic stability and supply chains.

Speaking at a dialogue session at the Middle East Institute in Washington, Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Bahrain's Minister of Finance and National Economy, said that while geopolitical developments remain a concern, the Gulf region's economic fundamentals remain strong and increasingly adaptive.

He warned that recent attacks on Gulf states and Jordan reflect broader attempts to destabilize

the region, noting that such actions extend beyond security implications and risk disrupting global markets, particularly energy flows and key industrial commodities including aluminum, fertilizers, and iron.

Shaikh Salman highlighted Bahrain's economic transformation as a central outcome of this resilience, pointing to the Kingdom's continued progress in diversification.

He noted that non-oil sectors

now account for more than 86% of GDP, marking a significant structural shift toward a more sustainable economic model.

He further emphasized the strong recovery capacity of key sectors such as tourism and financial services, which contin-

ue to support Bahrain's growth trajectory despite external pressures.

The Minister also pointed to proactive measures taken by the Central Bank of Bahrain to safeguard financial stability, including liquidity support of 7

billion Bahraini dinars, adjustments to reserve and liquidity requirements, and loan repayment deferrals for individuals and businesses—steps he said reflect a high level of institutional readiness to manage uncertainty.



Officials at the dialogue session at the Middle East Institute in Washington, D.C.



Unstable Weather

Bahrain is expected to experience a week of changing weather conditions, starting with relatively stable and partly cloudy skies today. From tomorrow onwards, conditions are expected to become more unsettled as humidity rises and northerly winds pick up. The Kingdom may see scattered showers through midweek, with humidity levels reaching up to 90 per cent and slightly cooler temperatures below 29°C.



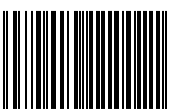
Unit officials discuss the complaints

Child Cyber Risks

Child Protection Unit in Cyberspace, under the General Directorate of Anti-Corruption and Economic and Electronic Security, has reported receiving 113 complaints between the start of 2026 and April 15.

The unit noted a noticeable shift in the nature of cases, highlighting a growing diversity in cybercrime patterns targeting children.

This, it said, reflects the evolving tactics used in the digital environment and underscores the need to continuously upgrade response mechanisms and readiness in line with best security and legal practices.



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Pay For Losses

Manama reiterates UN demand for redress over damages

TDT | Manama
Ashen Tharaka

The Kingdom of Bahrain reiterated its demand for the Islamic Republic of Iran to provide full compensation for damages and losses caused by “Iranian aggression,” according to its eleventh national communication to the United Nations.

In a formal letter submitted by Bahrain’s Permanent Mission to the UN in New York to the UN Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, Manama said it continues to update Council members on what it called “unlawful and blatant attacks” on its territory.

Fatal Incident

The document also referenced an incident on March 24, 2026, in which a civilian contractor of Moroccan nationality, working with the UAE Armed Forces, was killed during a mission in Bahrain following a missile strike.

On the same day, several members of Bahrain’s Defence Force and personnel from the



UAE Armed Forces were injured while responding to the attacks.

Cyber Threat Escalates

Meanwhile, Bahrain warned that recent targeted attacks on its technological infrastructure represent a serious threat to national security, following remarks by Eng. Mohammed Ibrahim Al Sisi Al Buainain, the Secretary General of the Council of

Representatives, in Istanbul.

Speaking at the Association of Secretaries General of National Parliaments during the 152nd General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Al Buainain said the attacks—linked to Iranian hostile activity—systematically targeted Bahrain’s digital and technological systems, disrupting electronic services and threatening civilian infrastructure.

He stressed that such incidents go beyond technical disruption and constitute a direct violation of state sovereignty and international principles protecting civilian and critical infrastructure. He warned that the increasing sophistication of such attacks requires treating technological infrastructure as a core element of national security.



“These cyberattacks cannot be treated as technical incidents; they are direct threats to sovereignty.”

ENG. MOHAMMED IBRAHIM AL SISI AL BUAINAIN

Al Buainain called for stronger cyber defense systems and stricter international frameworks to address growing digital threats, noting that artificial intelligence and smart systems must be secured as part of sovereign infrastructure.

“The continuation of these acts represents a clear violation of international law and Security Council resolutions.”

Expat Hiring Gets Costlier

Measures Reinforce Bahrainisation Targets in Private Sector

TDT | Manama
Hasan Barakat

Bahrain has increased fees on foreign labour starting in 2026 as part of efforts to narrow the cost gap between Bahraini and expatriate workers and encourage greater national participation in the private sector, the Labour Ministry said.

In a written reply to MP Hamad Al Doy, the ministry said the fee adjustment accompanies broader labour market policies including Bahrainisation requirements, wage support schemes, training programmes, and stricter enforcement against violations such as employing workers without valid permits.

The ministry said the reforms are designed to strengthen compliance, increase opportunities for Bahraini jobseekers, and improve monitoring of private-sector hiring practices.

Bahrainisation rules continue to apply across sectors at varying levels, requiring firms to meet national employment targets. Companies that fail to comply face monthly penalties per expatriate worker permit, while those achieving higher localisation rates benefit from preferential access to government tenders.

The ministry also stressed its ongoing role in labour inspections, compliance monitoring, and protecting Bahraini workers from unfair dismissal practices, especially concerning wage support schemes.



Hamad Al Doy, MP



Jobseekers (2025)

- Total registered: 15,433
- Majority age group: 25-29 years (5,612)
- Degree holders: 10,607

Private Sector (2025)

- First-time hires: 9,149
- Re-joined after long break: 7,166
- Private sector workforce: 105,000+

Support Measures

- Wage subsidy: up to 70% in first year
- Salary caps: BD800 (graduates), BD600 (diploma), BD450 (secondary)
- Entrepreneurship support through the “Sijili” program.

Learning Rollout Runs Smoothly

TDT | Manama
Neethu V

Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, Minister of Education praised the smooth rollout of Bahrain’s blended learning system as students returned to government schools under a flexible model combining classroom and remote education.

Speaking to the media, Dr. Juma said remote learning had continued without disruption since the start of the academic phase. The ministry is actively monitoring digital platforms across schools to ensure full readiness and stability.

He confirmed that students whose parents opted for in-person learning returned to classrooms yesterday following preparatory field visits to ensure schools were fully prepared for both modes of instruction.

The dual system offers families important flexibility, allowing them to choose between physical attendance and remote learning



The Education Minister joined a field inspection with ministry officials to ensure consistency across schools.

based on their needs and circumstances. “If only one option had been offered, many families would have faced difficulties,” he said, adding that the blended approach had already proven effective in previous phases.

Behind the scenes, schools spent weeks preparing for the rollout. Classrooms were reor-

ganised, student groups finalised, and teaching staff deployed on campus to ensure both systems could operate simultaneously without disruption.

Schools track daily attendance, coordinating closely with parents to monitor engagement whether students are in class or learning remotely.



“If only one option had been offered, many families would have faced difficulties.”

DR. MOHAMMED BIN MUBARAK JUMA, MINISTER OF EDUCATION

Verdict Due on Two Expat Death Cases

TDT | Manama
Rehab Mohammad

The High Criminal Court has set April 28 as the date to deliver its ruling in a case linked to a deadly early-morning traffic incident on Al Zallaq Road that resulted in the deaths of two Asian nationals and injuries to two others.

The case centers on a road collision involving cyclists, where the Public Prosecution has brought multiple charges against the defendant. These charges include causing death and injury through negligent driving, possession of a psychotropic substance for personal use, failing to render assistance, fleeing the scene of the accident, not reporting the incident to authorities, damaging property, and driving without due care and attention.

According to case records, the incident took place on March 21, 2026, at approximately 5:55 a.m., when the defendant allegedly lost focus while driving and struck four cyclists.

External Influence Stalls Indian School Growth



UPP representatives during the press briefing

TDT | Manama
Pradeep Puravankara

The United Parents Panel (UPP), representing parents of students at the Indian School Bahrain, has alleged that external interference and administrative inefficiencies are negatively impacting the institution’s functioning.

At a recent press conference, UPP officials criticized the school’s Executive

Committee for what they described as a lack of transparency and failure to address key concerns raised by parents. Among the issues highlighted was the absence of a clear response to repeated requests for a waiver of March transport fees amid prevailing regional conditions.

The panel also objected to students being barred from online classes over unpaid dues as low as BD 20, stating that this contradicts deci-

sions taken at the Annual General Body meeting.

Raising financial concerns, the UPP questioned continued references to “financial constraints” while seeking clarity on the future of the Infrastructure Fee, especially with the Riffa Campus loan expected to be cleared by March 2026. It also pointed to a decline in Mega Fair collections under the current administration.

The UPP further alleged that non-parents and former

committee members are involved in school operations, including handling sensitive IT systems, raising privacy concerns. It also criticized the reported termination of experienced staff, warning of potential impacts on academic standards.

Additionally, the panel disputed claims about reopening the JEE examination centre, emphasizing that it was a collective effort involving multiple stakeholders, including the Indian Embassy.

Is Bahrain's Date Palm Farming Using Excess Water?

Hasan Barakat / Neethu V
TDT | Manama

Some farms are cutting water. Others are still pouring in more than they need.

In Bahrain, where every drop counts, a new study forces a difficult question into the open: are we overwatering one of the Kingdom's most iconic crops?

Research led by Dr Abdelhadi Abdelwahab Mohamed, Associate Professor and Coordinator of Desert Farming Techniques and Soilless Agriculture, points to a clear answer. Yes, and by as much as half.

Over two years, Khalas date palms were tested under reduced irrigation. Water was cut by up to 50 percent. The result did not match expectations. Yields did not fall. For years, the belief has been simple.

More water means more production. This study directly challenges that idea, showing that excess water does not necessarily translate into higher output.

The scale of overuse is not minor. A single palm is often assumed to need around 50 cubic metres of water each year. The study indicates it may require far less. Cut that figure in half across farms, and the savings quickly multiply into thousands of cubic metres per hectare, every year.

System

The surprise lies not in the technology, but in the outcome. Whether using traditional bubbler systems or more advanced subsurface methods, yields remained largely unchanged.

In the second year, smart



Dr Abdelhadi Abdelwahab Mohamed

volume-based irrigation was introduced. Water was measured, controlled, and delivered exactly where needed. Yields rose sharply in some cases, not because more water was used, but because waste was eliminated.

During a field tour by The Daily Tribune across Bahraini farms, the shift was already visible.

These systems are no longer limited to date palms. Farmers are applying the same precision-based irrigation to vegetables and other crops, maintaining stable growth while using less water under the same harsh conditions. The change is no longer theoretical. It is happening on the ground.

Bahrain's conditions make the



A farm's reduced irrigation system

overirrigation wastes more than just water. It can damage the soil, weaken plants, and increase long-term costs.

Future

Experts and investors are exploring ways to scale date palm production using advanced technologies such as tissue culture, aiming to enter global markets and compete with leading producers.

But there is a line that cannot be crossed. If Bahrain wants to compete globally in date palms, it cannot afford to waste water locally. Researchers are calling for locally tailored crop coefficients and wider adoption of smart irrigation systems designed for Bahrain's climate.



This is not just about farming. It is about a simple truth. Using more does not always mean producing more.

issue more urgent. Much of the soil is saline and alkaline. Water itself often has a high salt content. Under these conditions,

Crackdown Clears 28 Illegal Structures



Illegal structures and waste materials removed by Southern Municipality and Ministry of Interior teams

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

A coordinated municipal operation in Dar Kulaib has cleared illegal structures, waste and environmental hazards affecting residents, as part of ef-

forts to improve public order and living conditions.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, the Southern Municipality removed 28 unlicensed animal pens and cleared 125 loads of waste and fertilizer from Block 1048 during a field campaign.

The action followed repeated complaints from residents about odours, insects and rodents linked to unauthorised structures and encroachments on public land.

Southern Municipality Director General Eng. Isa Abdulrahman Al Buainain said the opera-

tion is part of an ongoing inspection plan to address violations across the governorate through continuous field monitoring.

Public space regulations prohibit the unlicensed occupation of roads and open areas to ensure safety, traffic flow and urban order.

No Staff, No Breaks

Entrepreneur Runs Solo Daily

Ghadeer Alkumaish
TDT | Manama



A Bahraini entrepreneur, Sayed Ali Maher AlSadadi, 26, has turned his early passion for cooking into a hands-on business journey, launching his own restaurant Oda burger after gaining experience across food trucks, restaurants, and the hotel industry.

His interest began at age 14 and gradually developed into a clear ambition, pushing him to eventually take a bold step and resign from his job despite uncertainty about the challenges ahead. Rather than following a typical concept, he introduced a unique idea by naming his sandwiches after cars, reflecting his personal hobby and helping the brand stand

between him and his partner, he focuses on food preparation and quality, ensuring every order meets his standards. Despite the ongoing pressure of running a small operation, he remains committed to quality above all. Motivation, he says, comes from his parents' advice about hard work and self-reliance.

Looking ahead, he aims to expand the business and build a team of Bahraini staff. He reflects that, if given the chance, he would have started with a larger space that includes indoor seating, remaining optimistic about what the future holds.

This led him to take matters

“ I knew I had to take the step, even without knowing the challenges ahead ”

SAYED ALI MAHER ALSADADI



IPU Elects First Female Secretary-General



Anda Filip of Romania as the new Secretary-General of the IPU, third from left. Below, Bahrain's delegation.



The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) elected Anda Filip of Romania as its new Secretary-General, marking a historic milestone as she becomes the first woman to assume the role in the organisation's history.

Filip secured 229 votes during the election held at the 217th session of the IPU Governing Council, conducted alongside the 152nd IPU Assembly in Istanbul, Turkey.

The parliamentary delegation of the Kingdom of Bahrain participated in the voting process as part of the international parliamentary gathering. The delegation included First Deputy Speaker of the Shura Council H.E. Jamal Mohammed Fakhro, along with Shura Council members H.E. Hala Ramzi Fayeze and Dr. Bassam Ismail Al-Ban Mohammed.

Crucial Votes on Economic and Governance Bills

● Around 106,000 employees expected to benefit

● Informal Workers in Support Package

● Revamp Oversight Procedures

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

MPs to Consider One-Month Wage Relief Scheme

Parliament is set to debate a government proposal on Tuesday to use surplus funds from the unemployment insurance account to cover April wages for insured Bahraini workers, as authorities move to cushion businesses affected by the ongoing regional crisis.

The draft amendment would allow payments from the fund for one month, capped at each worker's insured wage and subject to existing legal conditions. Officials described the measure as a temporary step aimed at maintaining job stability, supporting employers and preventing layoffs.

Parliament's Services Committee has backed the proposal,



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Given the scale of economic pressure, we believe support should extend beyond one month if conditions persist

MAMDOUH AL SALEH, CHAIRMAN OF PARLIAMENT'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

noting it aligns with broader efforts to ease financial pressure on private-sector firms, provided no workers are dismissed.

Around 106,000 Bahraini workers are expected to benefit, with estimates placing the April wage bill between BD80 million and BD100 million. The unemployment fund reportedly holds about BD600 million in assets.

While business groups welcomed the move, they cautioned that economic strain could extend beyond April. Lawmakers have also suggested expanding support for up to three months,



MP Hisham Al Ashiri

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We welcome the initiative, but the economic impact is likely to last longer than a single month.

CHAMBER OFFICIAL

though officials said further measures remain under review.

Fishermen and Drivers Face Income Strain

Members of Parliament have



MP Mohsen Al Asboul

“
We will ensure the law is implemented to safeguard public funds and protect Bahraini workers.

LABOUR MINISTRY OFFICIAL

submitted an urgent proposal to expand April wage support to include fishermen, taxi drivers and other daily earners facing income loss.

The proposal, put forward by MPs Mohsen Al Asboul, Hish-



Mahmood Fardan, Chairman of Parliament's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee

am Al Ashiri, Jaleela Al Sayed, Mahmood Fardan and Mohammed Al Alaiwi, calls for broader access to government assistance through the unemployment fund.

Lawmakers say many workers who rely on daily or irregular income remain unprotected, even as private sector salaries are covered under existing support measures.

Fishermen have been affected by seasonal fishing restrictions in April and May, while driving instructors, taxi drivers and bus operators report declining demand and fewer customers.

MPS described these groups

as among the most vulnerable, noting that their earnings depend on daily activity rather than fixed wages.

Set to Ease Rules for Questioning Ministers

Under the proposed amendments, a motion to question a minister would be considered valid if supported by a simple majority of MPs, replacing the current two-thirds threshold.

The draft also introduces a mechanism allowing such matters to be discussed in a closed session upon request by the government, the Speaker, or at least 10 MPs.

The request would itself be voted in secret. If two-thirds of members reject it, the debate would proceed in public.

According to the government's memorandum, the changes intend to modernise parliamentary procedures while balancing oversight and efficient governance. It stated that the reforms are consistent with constitutional provisions governing parliamentary work.

A new paragraph added to Article 146 would regulate closed-door sittings in cases of ministerial questioning, aligning with Article 79 of the Constitution, which permits confidential sessions under specific conditions.

Big Policy Moves in Bahrain

Three Major Decisions Shape Economic and Social Agenda

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

Shura Sends Disability Jobs Bill Back for Further Review

The Shura Council referred a draft law back to committee for further review, postponing proposed amendments that would increase job quotas for people with disabilities in the private sector and introduce mandatory hiring priorities in selected government posts.

The bill, already approved by Parliament, sought to amend Articles 11 and 12 of Law No. 74 of 2006, raising the private sector employment quota for people with disabilities from 2 per cent to 4 per cent for companies employing 50 or more workers. It also proposed making it mandatory for the government to specify posts where qualified applicants with disabilities would receive hiring priority.

The decision followed a divided debate in the chamber, with lawmakers split between those arguing the current legal framework is sufficient and others insisting stronger measures are needed to address gaps in employment opportunities.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Ghanim Al Buainain said the proposed amendment conflicted with the Civil Service Law, particularly the shift from an optional ministerial power to a binding obligation in government hiring procedures.



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Bahrain has moved beyond care to empowerment and full social inclusion

DR JAMEELA AL SALMAN, HEAD OF SHURA COUNCIL'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Social Development Minister Osama Al Alawi supported the committee's position, stating that the existing law already provides flexibility to enhance employment rates through activation and cooperation with the private sector.

He also noted that Bahrain's latest figures show 15,644 persons with disabilities, including groups not currently eligible for work.

Supporters of the bill argued that many qualified individuals remain unemployed despite their readiness to work. They questioned labour market inter-pretations and cited long-standing job applications from qualified candidates with disabilities.

The Services Committee had recommended against approv-

ing the bill, citing concerns over implementation rather than legal gaps. It also pointed to compliance issues in the private sector, noting that a large majority of eligible firms have not met the existing 2 per cent quota.

Labour Ministry data presented during discussions showed varying annual employment figures for people with disabilities, alongside a limited number of registered jobseekers, raising further questions over the proposed quota increase.

Starting Pay for Graduates in Private Sector to BD500

Starting salaries for Bahraini jobseekers entering private companies have been increased to BD500 for university graduates, under updated labour market schemes introduced in November 2023, the Labour Ministry confirmed in a written reply to MP Jaleela Alawi.

Under the revised structure, diploma holders will receive BD430, while those with secondary education or below will start at BD350. The ministry clarified that private sector wages are not uniformly fixed but vary depending on sector, job type, qualifications, experience and market demand.

It noted that the average monthly wage for Bahrainis in the private sector reached BD892 in the third quarter of 2025, based on Social Insurance Organisation data covering

around 105,000 workers.

The ministry linked the salary adjustments to national employment and career development programmes implemented through Tamkeen, aimed at supporting 50,000 Bahrainis annually through job entry, career progression and private sector development initiatives.

Bahrain Moves to Finalise Tax Deal with Jersey

The Shura Council approved a draft law ratifying an agreement between Bahrain and Jersey aimed at eliminating double taxation on income and curbing tax evasion and avoidance.

The Council also agreed to fast-track the legislation under urgent procedures, referring it to the Speaker of Parliament for onward submission to the Prime Minister and His Majesty the King for final approval.

The agreement, attached to Decree No. 66 of 2025, provides a legal framework to ensure that income is not taxed in both jurisdictions while strengthening cooperation in tax transparency and information exchange.

Abdullah Al Nuaimi, rapporteur of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee, said the deal would enhance trade, investment, and financial cooperation between the two sides. He noted that Bahrain currently maintains 49 double taxation agreements globally.

BD1 Million Fines Approved for Financial Crime



Dr Jehad Al Fadhil, Second Deputy Chair of the Shura Council

Bahrain has moved to strengthen its financial crime framework, with the Shura Council yesterday approving tougher penalties for violations linked to unlicensed financial activity and misuse of protected banking and insurance terms.

Under the approved decree-law, jail terms and fines of up to BD1 million will be imposed on individuals or entities found in breach of amendments to the Central Bank of Bahrain and Financial Institutions Law.

The changes, introduced through Decree-Law No. 37 of 2025, amend Article 161 of Law No. 64 of 2006 and target violations of Articles 40 and 41.

These provisions prohibit providing regulated financial services without a licence and restrict the use



Khalid Al Maskati, Financial and Economic Affairs Committee Head

of terms such as “bank” or other designations implying authorised financial operations.

Offenders may face imprisonment, a fine not exceeding BD1 million, or both, unless a harsher penalty applies under other legislation.

The Shura Council's Financial and Economic Affairs Committee said the reforms aim to reinforce Bahrain's defences against evolving financial crimes, including money laundering and terrorist financing, while ensuring alignment with international standards set by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

The committee warned that delaying the strengthening of such regulations could expose the Kingdom's financial sector to reputational and regulatory risks.

Services and tourism drive Bahrain GDP in 2025

Economy grows 3.5pc, led by services and tourism

● Among the fastest-growing segments were professional, scientific and technical activities

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's economy expanded by 3.5% in 2025 at constant prices, with non-oil sectors driving growth as services and tourism-related industries led the gains. Gross domestic product reached BD15.7 billion at constant prices and BD18.4 billion at current prices.

Non-oil activity grew 4.1% to BD13.5 billion at constant prices, accounting for 85.8% of total GDP, underscoring the kingdom's continued shift away from hydrocarbons. Oil activity, by contrast, edged down 0.3% to BD2.2 billion.

Among the fastest-growing segments were professional, scientific and technical activities and accommodation and food services, each expanding 6.4% over the year. Together,



the two sectors contributed 3.9% of non-oil GDP, worth BD612.3 million, and supported 105,100 private-sector jobs, including 12,600 held by Bahrainis.

Professional services led the

growth table despite accounting for just 2.2% of non-oil GDP, or BD345.4 million. Expansion was driven by head office and management consultancy work, legal and accountancy services,

as well as advertising and market research. The sector employed 37,500 people in the private sector, including 6,300 Bahrainis, with a median monthly wage of BD550 for nationals.

Accommodation and food services matched that pace, supported by stronger tourism performance. Overnight visitors rose 10.9% to 7.3 million, while tourist nights increased 5.2% to 20.2 million. Average daily visitor spending climbed 5% to BD72.6, helping push inbound tourism receipts up 7.2% to BD2 billion. The sector accounted for 1.7% of non-oil GDP, valued at BD266.9 million.

The accommodation and food segment employed 67,600 people in the private sector, including 6,300 Bahrainis, with a median monthly wage of BD350 for nationals.

Tourism momentum was further supported by new projects and partnerships during the year. Bahrain Marina Development signed a strategic agreement with NAD Holding Group to develop retail and restaurant space at Marina Walk within the Bahrain Marina project. Terminal 4 by Beyon was also announced at Exhibition World Bahrain, with capacity to host around 3,500 visitors for arts and entertainment events.

The latest figures highlight



GDP at constant prices measures economic growth after removing the effect of inflation, giving a clearer picture of real expansion in output. In contrast, GDP at current prices (also called nominal GDP) reflects the value of goods and services at prevailing market prices, meaning it includes the impact of inflation. As a result, current-price figures are typically higher in periods of rising prices, while constant-price data is used to assess the true pace of economic growth over time.

the growing role of non-oil sectors in sustaining Bahrain's economic expansion, with services and tourism continuing to anchor growth.

Seef Properties launches Smart Assistant "Sara" via WhatsApp to enhance operational efficiency

Manama

Seef Properties has announced the launch of its automated robotic assistant "Sara" via WhatsApp. This step underscores the company's accelerated digital transformation and commitment to adopting innovative solutions to streamline operational processes and enhance the quality of services provided to tenants and partners across its various projects.

This initiative is among the first of its kind in Bahrain's real estate sector. Coming as part of a strategic vision to enhance daily operations through artificial intelligence, it aims to deliver faster, more flexible, and efficient services.

Sara was designed and developed by a Bahraini team within Seef Properties to support the



Yusuf Rashdan, Head of IT at Seef Properties



Ahmed Yusuf, CEO of Seef Properties



Smart Assistant "Sara"

facilities management system and operational processes. It expedites work permit processing and automates data collection and input into approved systems, thus reducing application processing time, improving execution accuracy, and minimising reliance on traditional procedures. Consequently, this enhances team productivity and improves operational efficiency.

Accessible via WhatsApp,

Sara provides a user-friendly digital communication channel, allowing tenants and partners to submit, track, and manage applications around the clock. It responds instantly to operational inquiries, enhancing the user experience and ensuring continuous, high-quality service. Seamlessly integrated with existing systems, it supports information flow and accelerates decision-making.

Furthermore, Sara redefines daily work processes by systematically organising, directing and processing applications, fostering the development of a comprehensive operational database that improves the quality of outputs. The company's team is continuously developing Sara to expand its applications and smart features to keep pace with evolving business needs.

Commenting on this mile-

stone, Mr. Ahmed Yusuf, CEO of Seef Properties, stated, "The launch of the automated robotic assistant 'Sara' marks a significant advancement in our digital transformation journey. It reflects our dedication to leveraging artificial intelligence technologies to optimise operational efficiency and improve service quality. This is paired with our investment in national talent, who have proven their capability to develop and implement advanced technological solutions, demonstrating their readiness to lead the company's digital transformation."

He added, "Sara is the starting point for building a more integrated, flexible digital ecosystem. We plan to enhance its capabilities and expand its applications to support our teams, enhance response times, and

elevate the experience of our tenants and partners."

For his part, Mr. Yusuf Rashdan, Head of IT at Seef Properties, commented, "Sara was developed based on a comprehensive understanding of our teams' operational needs. We focused on simplifying and transforming procedures into seamless digital workflows that reduce reliance on manual processing, ensuring faster handling of requests and clear implementation stages."

He added, "We ensured Sara's full integration with existing systems to enable real-time, accurate data flow. This improves the quality of operational outputs and supports decision-making while continuously developing to keep pace with expanding business needs and enhance daily performance efficiency."

RCSI Medical University of Bahrain pioneers introduction of Casper Test to strengthen Admissions' Global benchmarking

TDT | Manama

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) - Medical University of Bahrain has announced the introduction of the Casper Test for North American applicants seeking entry to its undergraduate medical programme for the 2026-27 academic year, making it the first university in the Middle East to lead such an initiative.

The Casper Test is a situational judgment assessment designed to evaluate applicants'



Dr Declan Gaynor, Academic Director of Admissions and Senior Lecturer in Chemistry

non-academic attributes essential for success in healthcare

professions, including ethical reasoning, communication, empathy and professionalism. Developed through rigorous academic research at the renowned McMaster University (Canada) and delivered in partnership with Acuity Insights, the test provides valuable insights into candidates' personal and professional qualities.

The introduction of Casper aims to complement the University's existing admissions framework, forming part of a holistic evaluation alongside academic performance, extra-

curricular activities and interviews. The initiative supports a balanced, comprehensive review while serving as a differentiating factor, helping to identify candidates whose values and attributes closely align with the demands of modern healthcare practice.

As one of the regional leaders in medical and health sciences education, RCSI Medical University of Bahrain is also advancing a strategic collaboration with regional and international partners to adapt this evidence-based assessment for the

Gulf Cooperation Council and wider Middle East, strengthening its position at the forefront of innovative, globally aligned admissions practices.

Commenting on the initiative, Dr Declan Gaynor, Academic Director of Admissions and Senior Lecturer in Chemistry, said: "By introducing Casper in the admissions process, RCSI Medical University of Bahrain aims to offer North American applicants an additional opportunity to demonstrate their suitability for the medical undergraduate programme

beyond traditional academic metrics. This marks a significant step forward in advancing evidence-based and globally benchmarked admissions practices for future healthcare professionals."

This initiative further underscores RCSI Medical University of Bahrain's steadfast commitment to internationally recognised quality benchmarks, reflecting its positive global outlook toward leading North American and other internationally renowned universities.

NBB enters strategic partnership with Bank of London and Middle East

To offer UK Property Finance Solutions

Manama

The National Bank of Bahrain (NBB) has announced a strategic collaboration with Bank of London and The Middle East (BLME), a London-based Sharia-compliant bank, to provide tailored UK property finance solutions to NBB's eligible high net worth clientele.

The agreement was signed at NBB's headquarters in the presence of representatives from BLME. It opens access to residential, investment, and buy-to-let property financing across London and the wider United Kingdom through BLME's established and regulated offer. BLME's financing is Sharia-compliant, and dedicated guidance



will be provided throughout the financing process.

This initiative forms part of NBB's ongoing efforts to enhance its offering to HNWIs by providing clients with access to a broader range of international financial solutions. Clients will receive personalised relationship management and specialised structuring support aligned with both UK and Bahraini regulatory requirements, enabling efficient and compliant property acquisition.

Through this joint effort, NBB continues to expand its suite of cross-border financing solutions, further strengthening its position as a trusted partner to clients with international investment ambitions.

Zain Bahrain recognised as Kingdom's most awarded network by Opensignal

Recognised among global telecom leaders at last month's world's largest connectivity summit

● Opensignal recognized Zain Bahrain with 10 awards including the best network in coverage, quality, and overall gaming experience in Bahrain

● A direct result of Zain Bahrain's continued investment, focused on expanding network capacity, modernizing infrastructure, bringing content closer and enhancing overall performance quality.

Manama

Zain Bahrain has taken the global stage by receiving a prestigious Opensignal trophy at last month's Mobile World Congress (MWC) Barce-



lona 2026 for the most awarded network in Bahrain. Hosted by GSMA, MWC Barcelona, the world's largest and most influential connectivity summit, the landmark event brings together leading telecom operators, technology pioneers, and digital innovators from across the globe, making this recognition a powerful testament to Zain Bahrain's network excellence and its growing influence within the global telecom ecosystem.

Recognized among global telecom leaders at this international platform, Zain received 10 awards, including being named the best network for coverage, quality, and overall gaming experience in the Kingdom in the latest Mobile Network Experience Awards Report by Opensignal. It has further won accolades for upload speed, video, and voice apps. This distinction has positioned Zain Bahrain as the most awarded network in Bahrain and played a pivotal role in propelling the Kingdom to

the #1 Overall Rank position in Opensignal's Global Network Excellence Index for the MENA region for "all devices".

The recognition reflects Zain Bahrain's sustained investment in expanding network capacity, modernizing infrastructure, and enhancing overall performance. As part of this strategy, the Company has accelerated the expansion and upgrade of its 4G and 5G networks across the Kingdom, reinforcing both mobile and fixed broadband services. These efforts reinforce mobile and fixed broadband services and enable advanced 5G use cases and deliver integrated digital solutions tailored to the evolving needs of individuals, businesses, and government entities — contributing meaningfully towards Bahrain's digital vision.

Commenting on the achievement, Amar Buali, Director of Access Network, IP, Cyber Security, and Facilities Management at Zain Bahrain, said:

"Receiving this recognition at MWC Barcelona 2026 — where the global telecom ecosystem gathers to shape the future of connectivity — reinforces Zain Bahrain's role as a transformative force driving digital excellence both locally and regionally. This milestone reflects our relentless pursuit of network excellence, our commitment to innovation, and our dedication to delivering superior experiences that empower our customers and enterprise partners. It also affirms our strategic investments in next-generation infrastructure and our long-term vision to power sustainable digital growth."

Through continuous innovation and infrastructure modernization, Zain Bahrain is building a future-ready digital ecosystem that empowers enterprises with scalable connectivity, cybersecurity, cloud-enabled services, and intelligent network capabilities, while simultaneously enhancing everyday digital experiences for consumers.

India pushes for regional energy hub in Sri Lanka

AFP | Colombo, Sri Lanka

Indian officials called for the swift implementation of a proposed regional energy hub in Sri Lanka, at the start of bilateral talks in Colombo yesterday.

The planned oil hub in the northeastern port of Trincomalee featured in a meeting with Sri Lankan President Anura Kum-



Sri Lanka's Trincomalee is already home to a 99-tank oil storage farm from the British colonial era, but only 14 containers are in use under a previous agreement with an Indian oil firm.

mara Dissanayake, India's visiting Foreign Secretary Vikram

Misri told reporters. The project, which also involves the United Arab Emirates, has been under discussions since 2023, he added.

"There is no further time to lose in making progress on strategic projects such as these," said Misri, who is visiting the Sri Lankan capital along with

India's Vice President C. P. Radhakrishnan.

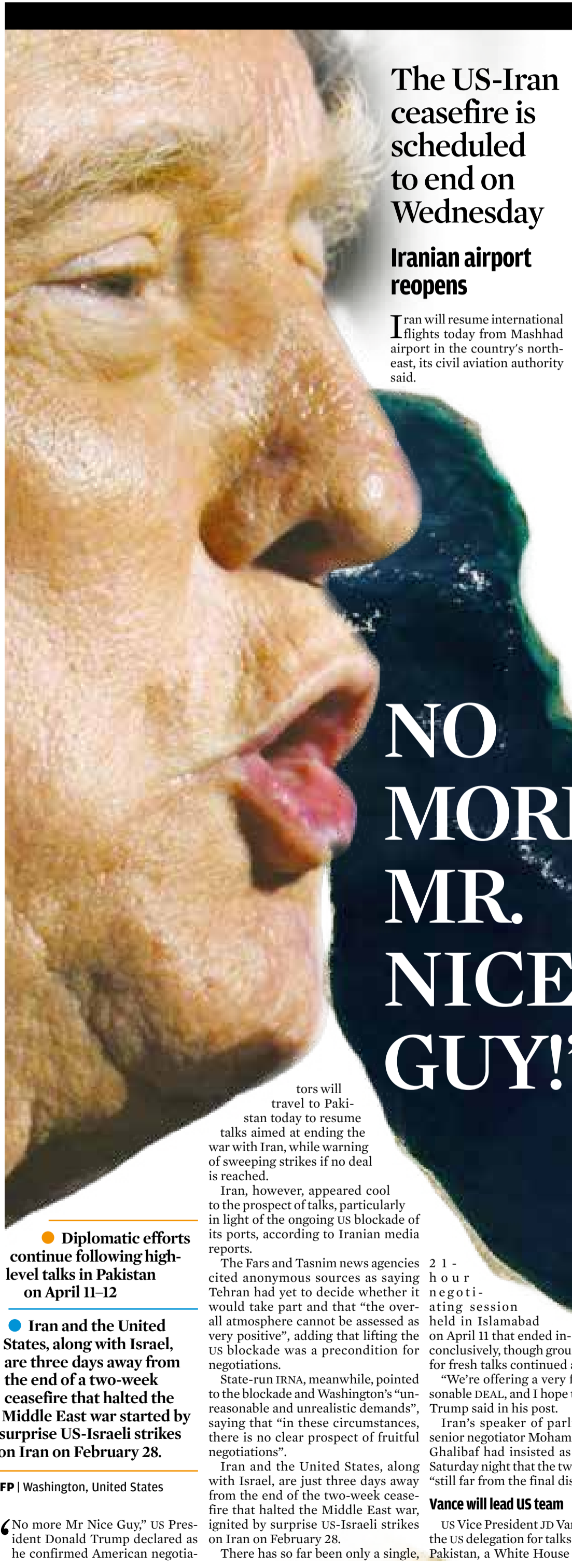
Sri Lanka, India and the UAE signed an agreement a year ago, following two years of talks, to set up a multi-product oil pipeline connecting the two South Asian neighbours and to establish the Trincomalee oil storage complex.

Had the energy hub been completed, it could have been useful "especially at a time like this", Misri added.

Last year, both India and Sri Lanka expressed hope of expanding the proposed hub to include a refinery. They also discussed a power line to share electricity between them.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

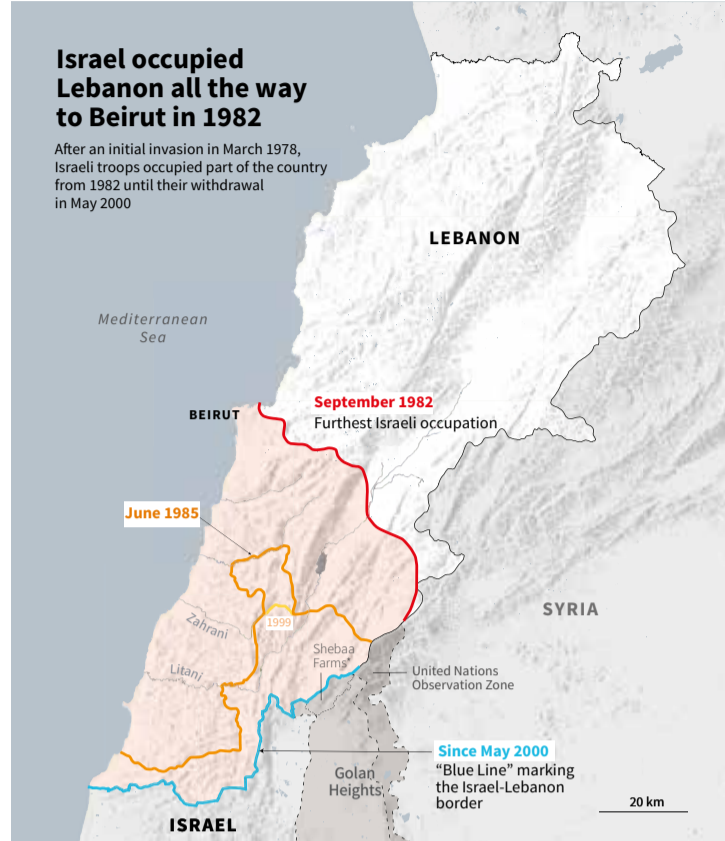
ALWAYS FORGIVE YOUR ENEMIES; NOTHING ANNOYS THEM SO MUCH
OSCAR WILDE



The US-Iran ceasefire is scheduled to end on Wednesday

Iranian airport reopens

Iran will resume international flights today from Mashhad airport in the country's north-east, its civil aviation authority said.



*Area captured by Israel from Syria in 1982, claimed by Lebanon. Source: article by Daniel Heiser and maps by Hisham Ashkar in the journal Espace politique, based on "The Israeli Experience in Lebanon" by George Solley. AFP

Lebanon PM to Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron will tomorrow meet with Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam in Paris, his office announced, a day after a French peacekeeper was killed in Lebanon and amid a fragile 10-day truce between Israel and Iran-backed militant group Hezbollah.

Israeli soldier killed

Israel's military announced the death of a second soldier during combat in southern Lebanon, where fighting has not stopped despite a temporary ceasefire that started Friday.

The Israeli army death toll in the six-week war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon is now 15, according to an AFP tally based on military figures.

Turkey hopes for extension

Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said yesterday he was "optimistic" that a two-week ceasefire between Iran and the United States that expires on Wednesday, would be extended, allowing more time for talks between the sides.

Trump orders negotiators to Pakistan, but Iran on the fence over talks

NO MORE MR. NICE GUY!"

tors will travel to Pakistan today to resume talks aimed at ending the war with Iran, while warning of sweeping strikes if no deal is reached.

Iran, however, appeared cool to the prospect of talks, particularly in light of the ongoing US blockade of its ports, according to Iranian media reports.

The Fars and Tasnim news agencies cited anonymous sources as saying Tehran had yet to decide whether it would take part and that "the overall atmosphere cannot be assessed as very positive", adding that lifting the US blockade was a precondition for negotiations.

State-run IRNA, meanwhile, pointed to the blockade and Washington's "unreasonable and unrealistic demands", saying that "in these circumstances, there is no clear prospect of fruitful negotiations".

Iran and the United States, along with Israel, are just three days away from the end of the two-week ceasefire that halted the Middle East war, ignited by surprise US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

There has so far been only a single,

21-hour negotiating session held in Islamabad on April 11 that ended inconclusively, though groundwork for fresh talks continued afterwards.

"We're offering a very fair and reasonable DEAL, and I hope they take it," Trump said in his post.

Iran's speaker of parliament and senior negotiator Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf had insisted as recently as Saturday night that the two sides were "still far from the final discussion".

Vance will lead US team

US Vice President JD Vance will lead the US delegation for talks with Iran in Pakistan, a White House official said

yesterday -- shortly after President Donald Trump said he would not make the trip.

Early in the day, Trump announced he was sending negotiators to Islamabad for meetings with Tehran about ending the conflict that has raged in the Middle East, with a ceasefire soon set to expire.

The president however said Vance -- who led the last round of talks with Tehran in Islamabad, but came away

with no deal -- would not make the trip, citing security concerns. "It's only because of security," Trump told ABC News. "JD's great."

But the White House quickly flipped the script, when asked about those comments.

Iran decided to fire bullets yesterday in the Strait of Hormuz — A Total Violation of our Ceasefire Agreement!



The United States and Iran have never formally declared war on each other, but they have been in conflict for decades through military strikes, proxy wars, and political tensions since the 1979 Iranian Revolution.

● Diplomatic efforts continue following high-level talks in Pakistan on April 11-12

● Iran and the United States, along with Israel, are three days away from the end of a two-week ceasefire that halted the Middle East war started by surprise US-Israeli strikes on Iran on February 28.

AFP | Washington, United States

“No more Mr Nice Guy,” US President Donald Trump declared as he confirmed American negotia-

1792

US postal service created, postage 6-12 cents depending on distance

1873

British Naval Officer John Moresby is the first European to discover Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, claims it for the United Kingdom



1947 1962

Earl Mountbatten of Burma is appointed the last viceroy of India to oversee the move to independence

John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit Earth aboard Friendship 7

Vance will lead US team to Iran talks in Pakistan: W.House



A bulldozer clears the rubble from the site of an Israeli airstrike as people return to Beirut's southern suburbs

Israel says to use 'full force' if soldiers face threat

AFP | Sa Nur, Palestinian Territories

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said yesterday that the military had been instructed to use "full force" in Lebanon -- even during the ongoing ceasefire -- should Israeli troops face any threat.

"Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and I have instructed the IDF to act with full force, both on the ground and from the air, including during the ceasefire, in order to protect our soldiers in Lebanon from any threat," Katz said at a function in the occupied West Bank. He said that

the military had also been ordered to demolish any structure or roads that were "booby-trapped" and threatened soldiers.

The aim is "to remove the houses in the villages near the border that served in every respect as Hezbollah terror outposts and threatened Israeli communities," Katz added.

An Israeli soldier was killed in southern Lebanon on Friday -- the day a 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon came into effect -- when he entered a booby-trapped building, the military reported.

Katz has repeatedly said Israel would demolish houses along the border as part of efforts to establish a security zone in southern Lebanon.

On Saturday, Israeli forces carried out demolitions in the town of Bint Jbeil, the scene of intense fighting with Hezbollah prior to the recently agreed ceasefire.

"The overarching goal of the campaign in Lebanon is the disarmament of Hezbollah and the removal of threat to northern communities, through a combination of military and diplomatic measures," Katz said.

"If the Lebanese government continues to fail to uphold its obligations -- the IDF will do so through continued military action."

Iran's Revolutionary Guards warned that any attempt to pass through the strait without permission "will be considered cooperation with the enemy, and the offending vessel will be targeted".

Heightened security

● The previous delegation was led by Vice President JD Vance and included Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, who led the aborted pre-war talks.

AFP

In Islamabad, security had been visibly stepped up yesterday ahead of the expected talks.

Authorities announced road closures and traffic restrictions across the city, as well as in neighbouring Rawalpindi.

AFP journalists saw armed guards and checkpoints near Islamabad's most secure hotels -- the Marriott and the Serena.

requested to cooperate with the security agencies," a city official posted on X.

The previous delegation was led by Vice President JD Vance and included Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, who led the aborted pre-war talks.

A major sticking point of negotiations has been Iran's stockpile of near-weapons-grade enriched uranium.

Trump said on Friday that Iran had agreed to hand over its roughly 440 kilogrammes of enriched uranium. "We're going to get it by going in with Iran, with lots of excavators," he said. But Iran's foreign ministry has said the stockpile, thought to be buried deep under rubble from US bombing in last June's 12-day war, was "not going to be transferred anywhere", and surrendering it "to the US has never been raised in negotiations".

A UK maritime security agency said the Revolutionary Guards fired at one tanker, while security intelligence firm Vanguard Tech reported the force had threatened to "destroy" an empty cruise ship that was fleeing the Gulf. In the third incident, the UK agency said it received a report of a vessel "being hit by an unknown projectile, which caused damage" to shipping containers but no fire.

Citizens are earnestly re-
Trump said of the incidents: "That wasn't nice, was it?"

War of words Strait in focus



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



I strongly condemn Saturday's attack on @UNIFIL during which one French peacekeeper was killed & another three were injured. I extend my deepest condolences to the family, friends & colleagues of the fallen peacekeeper, and wish a full & fast recovery to the injured peacekeepers.

This is the third incident in recent weeks to have resulted in the deaths of peacekeepers serving in Lebanon.

These attacks must stop.

All actors must respect the cessation of hostilities & the ceasefire.

@antonioguterres

02



The continued easing of sanctions against Russia does not reflect the real situation in the war or in diplomacy and fuels the Russian leadership's illusion that they can continue the war. This week alone, the Russians have launched over 2,360 attack drones, more than 1,320 guided aerial bombs, and nearly 60 missiles of various types at our cities and communities.

@ZelenskyyUa

03



The ceasefire announced in Lebanon, however, offers cause for hope; it represents a glimmer of relief for the Lebanese people and for the Levant. I encourage those who are working toward a diplomatic solution to continue peace talks, so that the cessation of hostilities throughout the Middle East may become permanent.

@Pontifex

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

North Korea fires short-range ballistic missiles in latest weapons tests

AFP | Seoul, South Korea

North Korea test-fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles yesterday, South Korea's military said, the latest in a recent flurry of launches by the nuclear-armed state.

The Sunday launches add to a series of weapons tests Pyongyang has carried out in recent weeks, including ballistic missiles, anti-warship cruise missiles and cluster munitions.

"Our military detected several short-range ballistic missiles fired into the East Sea from the Sinpo area of North Korea at around 6:10am (GMT 21:10)," South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, referring to a body of water also known as the Sea of Japan.

"The missiles flew approximately 140 kilometres (86.9 miles), and South Korean and US intelligence authorities are conducting a detailed analysis of their exact specifications," it added.



Fire razes 1,000 'stilt' homes in Malaysia's Sabah

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

A huge fire destroyed about 1,000 makeshift homes, many of them built on stilts over water, and displaced thousands of people in a coastal village in Malaysia's Sabah state yesterday, authorities said.

The blaze broke out early on Sunday morning in a "water village" in Sandakan district in Sabah's northeast, where some of Malaysia's poorest residents, including indigenous and stateless communities, live in closely packed, wooden stilt houses.

Rat poison found in baby food jar in Austria

AFP | Vienna, Austria

Austrian police have found rat poison in a baby food jar in a probe that has seen the company HiPP recall the line over suspected tampering, with the firm stating yesterday its production process was not to blame.

The HiPP brand's German base announced the recall at SPAR supermarkets in Austria late Friday over the possibility that "a hazardous substance" was introduced into its "carrot with potato" puree through tampering.

As part of ongoing investigations in Germany, police have seized jars in Austria, as well as the Czech Republic and Slovakia, police in Austria's eastern Burgenland province said in a statement late Saturday.

"A sample of the seized product was examined on Saturday afternoon and tested positive for rat poison," they said.

HiPP said on Sunday that



its "production, quality, and control processes are fully intact" and the incident "is in no way related to product quality or production".

"According to the current state of knowledge, as officially confirmed by the authorities, the case concerns only clearly defined sales channels," a HiPP spokesman told AFP.

"Products and distribution

scheme. Customers were asked not to consume the product, which can be identified by a white label with a red circle on the bottom of the jar, and instead return it to the store of purchase. Czech police on Sunday on X also warned consumers. The scare is the latest to hit the baby food market.

Since December, several manufacturers -- including European giants such as Nestle, Danone and Lactalis -- have issued recalls of infant formula in more than 60 countries that could be contaminated with the toxin cereulide.

Several infants who consumed powdered milk containing cereulide -- which can cause nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea -- have died, according to French authorities.

French prosecutors said in March the death of one baby in January "does not appear to be linked" to the infant's consumption of contaminated formula.

Consumer warning

Austria's agency for food protection said on Saturday that rat poison may have been introduced as part of an extortion

Eight Children Killed in Louisiana Shooting



AFP

Eight children were killed in a shooting spree early Sunday in the southern US state of Louisiana, in what police said appears to have been an incident of domestic violence.

The gunman, who was not immediately identified, was fatally shot by police after a car chase, officials said.

The incident took place in the city of Shreveport, in northwestern Louisiana.

"This is a rather extensive crime scene spanning between two residences," police Corporal Chris Bordelon told a press conference, adding that a third residence was also part of the scene being combed by investigators.

The victims ranged in age from one to 14, Bordelon said.

"Some of the children inside were his descendants," he added.

Two other people were struck by gunfire, but their conditions were not immediately known.

The suspect carjacked a vehicle and led police on a chase before officers opened fire and the assailant was killed.

"We do believe him to be the only individual that fired gunshots at these locations," Bordelon said, calling the incident a "domestic disturbance."

The United States, where firearms are readily available, is a frequent scene of gun violence, with thousands of people killed every year.

"It's a terrible morning in Shreveport and we all mourn with the victims," Mayor Tom Arceneaux said at the press conference.

Experts carry out controlled blast of WWII bomb near Paris

AFP | Colombes, France

Bomb disposal experts carried out a controlled underground detonation of a World War II explosive near Paris on Sunday, an AFP journalist reported, after authorities evacuated more than a thousand residents.

Nearly 800 police cordoned off the site in the northwest suburb of Colombes, where the device was first discovered on April 10.

An AFP journalist heard the explosion around 3:20 pm (13:20 GMT) as experts detonated the bomb in a two-metre-deep (6.5-foot) pit.

Officials also confirmed the operation had been carried out.

The controlled explosion was ordered after specialists had failed in one bid to remove the detonator from the explosive,



members of the Explosive ordnance disposal unit (EOD) operating to neutralise a bomb from World War II partially uncovered near a residential area, in Paris' northwestern suburb of Colombes

which measured more than one tail section. Footage of the operation

showed rusted metal fragments at the bottom of a sand pit, reinforced with thick timber planks and concrete walls.

Residents within a 450-metre radius were told early Sunday to move to local reception centres. Authorities expect to allow them back into their homes later in the day. Some local roads were closed to traffic and public transport.

Local official Alexandre Brugere on Thursday had described the operation as "risky" and requiring a "high level of preparation".

Unexploded World War II ordnance is still found across Europe, particularly in Germany where bombs are regularly discovered on construction sites, 80 years after the conflict ended.

Blue Origin launches rocket with used booster for first time

AFP | Washington, United States

Blue Origin, the US space company of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, yesterday successfully reused and recovered a booster for its New Glenn rocket, confirming its mastery of a technical feat that could boost its launch cadence and expand its rivalry with SpaceX. But the uncrewed mission also suffered a partial setback: the satellite carried into space by the rocket did not settle into the right orbit.

The company has launched the New Glenn twice before, but only with new rocket boosters. It has previously launched its smaller New Shepard rocket, primarily used for suborbital space tourism, with reused components in a less technically challenging operation.

The novel recycling approach comes amid fierce competition between Bezos's firm and fellow tech titan Elon Musk's SpaceX,



This screen grab taken from a Blue Origin broadcast shows the booster of Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket landing on a floating platform in the Atlantic Ocean

which has also recovered a booster from a launched rocket.

The New Glenn rocket, standing at 98 meters (321 feet) tall, lifted off from Florida's Cape Canaveral with its reused booster at about 7:25 am (11:25 GMT) carrying a communications satellite for the company AST SpaceMobile.

After liftoff, the rocket's two stages separated, with the upper stage continuing its journey carrying the satellite into space. Its booster successfully landed on a floating platform in the Atlantic Ocean about nine minutes and 30 seconds after takeoff.

Blue Origin said later in a statement on X that the satellite turned on properly but was placed in "an off-nominal orbit." The gravity of this error was not immediately known. The company said it was assessing the mishap.

In November, Blue Origin recovered a New Glenn booster for the first time, succeeding in the complex technical challenge that culminated with a controlled vertical landing on a floating platform. A previous attempt in January 2025 to recover the booster was unsuccessful after its engines failed to reignite during descent. The booster used in Sunday's launch was refurbished after its previous flight. For this first reuse, the company replaced all of its engines and made several other modifications. The New Glenn is at the heart of Bezos's space ambitions as he competes with Musk in NASA's Artemis lunar programme, with their companies both developing lunar landers for the US space agency. The United States is doubling down on efforts to return astronauts to the surface of the Moon in 2028, before the end of President Donald Trump's second term and a deadline set by Chinese rivals.

Israel re-establishes evacuated West Bank settlement

Several cabinet members and lawmakers attended the ceremony near a cluster of white prefabricated homes arranged in rows on a hilltop.

AFP | Sa Nur, Palestinian Territories

Israeli ministers yesterday officially reopened Sa-Nur, a settlement in the occupied West Bank that was evacuated 20 years ago, marking the occasion with defiant declarations against Palestinian statehood and calls to resettle Gaza.

Several cabinet members and lawmakers attended the ceremony near a cluster of white prefabricated homes arranged in rows on a hilltop.



A group of Israeli settlers gather in front of the structure of a mosque at the end of the resettlement ceremony of Sa-Nur, south of Jenin in the Israeli-occupied West Bank

Excluding east Jerusalem, more than 500,000 Israelis now live in the West Bank in settlements that are illegal under international law, among some three million Palestinians.

"On this exciting day, we celebrate a historic correction to the criminal expulsion from Northern Samaria," Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said, using the Israeli biblical term for part of

the West Bank.

Sa-Nur's settlers were evicted in 2005 as part of Israel's so-called disengagement policy that also saw the country withdraw troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip.

The policy promoted by then-prime minister Ariel Sharon was framed as a security measure intended to reduce Israel's civilian and military footprint in densely

populated Palestinian areas.

Israel's current government, considered one of the most right-wing in the country's history, approved the reconstruction of all four northern West Bank settlements evacuated in 2005.

Authorities have approved 126 housing units in Sa-Nur alone.

"We are cancelling the shame of the disengagement, bur-

ying the idea of a Palestinian state and returning to the settlement of Sa-Nur," Smotrich said.

Smotrich, a far-right minister in the ruling coalition and a settler himself, also called for the resettlement of the Gaza Strip as a "security belt" for the State of Israel.

Israeli media reported that 16 families had moved into the re-established settlement in recent days, adding that the new residents included Yossi Dagan, head of the northern West Bank Settlements Council.

Dagan was among those evacuated from Sa-Nur in 2005.

"For me, this is both a national and a personal closing of a circle," Dagan said after cutting the ribbon at the ceremony.

"No more uprootings, no more retreats. We have returned to stay."

Israel has occupied the West Bank since 1967 and since then settlement expansion has been a policy under successive Israeli governments.

But it has accelerated significantly under the current coalition government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

More than 100 settlements have been approved since the government came to power in 2022, according to activists and authorities.

Pope Leo XIV calls for 'hope' before 100,000 faithful in Angola



AFP | Luanda, Angola

Tens of thousands of people attended a giant open-air mass by Pope Leo XIV outside the Angolan capital yesterday, where he delivered a message of hope to the resource-rich country marked by poverty and inequality.

Leo flew to Portuguese-speaking Angola on Saturday, the third leg of a whirlwind four-nation African tour on which he has condemned corruption and the plunder of the continent's resources -- and had a high-profile spat with US President Donald Trump.

Around 100,000 people attended the pontiff's first mass in Angola at Kilamba, around 30 kilometres (19 miles) from Luanda, the Vatican said, citing local authorities.

The pope encouraged the crowd "to look to the future with hope" in a "new beginning" for the nation still scarred by a 27-year civil war that ended in 2002.

500k

Excluding east Jerusalem, more than 500,000 Israelis now live in the West Bank in settlements that are illegal under international law

South Korea's chainsaw artist carves a name for herself at 91

AFP | Paju, South Korea

South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin wields a chainsaw with a quiet focus, refining a craft the 91-year-old has honed over decades spent far from home.

Long overlooked in her home country, Kim has more recently gained recognition as a pioneering artist, featuring in a sweeping retrospective at South Korea's esteemed Hoam Museum of Art.

The solo exhibition, titled "Two Be One", is the institution's first since its founding in 1982 to spotlight a woman artist, and includes some of her signature abstract sculptures hewn from hardwood with her tool of choice.

"The saw is my body," Kim told AFP in her studio in Paju, a city northwest of the capital Seoul.

"When I lift it and cut (the wood), it has to move exactly like me -- the saw has to become me, and I have to become the saw."

Hoam is exhibiting about 170 of Kim's sculptures and paintings, reflecting her reverence for nature and blending spirituality with meditations on existence, material and form.

Born in 1935 in Wonsan, now in North Korea, she grew up playing alone in the countryside, talking to trees and rice paddies, and making eyeglasses out of sorghum stalks.

At the time, Korea was under Japanese colonial rule. Kim saw her older brother disappear af-



South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin using a chainsaw to create a work at her studio in Paju

ter joining the independence movement, and pine trees in her town cut down for fuel.

"Those trees were my friends," she said, recalling the pain of seeing them uprooted -- and her drive to salvage and transform them into works of sculpture.

"I think I wanted them to endure -- to keep living on within that (art) form. Maybe that's why I've loved working with wood so much."

Chainsaw carving

Kim's family fled south during the horrors of the Korean War, and she later studied in France before returning to become an art professor in Seoul.

South Korea was then under a brutal military dictatorship. Authorities held artists in suspicion: a friend of Kim's was interrogated simply for using red, a colour associated with North Korean communism.

"Women, in particular, were virtually invisible," she told AFP, noting that her superiors would comment on the length of her

Visitors looking at works of South Korean sculptor Kim Yun Shin in her retrospective exhibition, titled "Two Be One", at Hoam Museum of Art in Yongin.

skirt and tell her to refrain from smoking on college campuses.

At 48, drawn by the abundant trees in Argentina, she made the unusual choice to move to the South American nation, then just restoring democracy after a dictatorship of its own.

She ended up staying for 40

years, taking up chainsaw carving.

Kim focused on dense, durable wood such as palo santo and "algarrobo", and also worked with quarries in Mexico and Brazil, experimenting with stone sculpture using materials such as onyx and sodalite.

She managed to forge her "own artistic world, nourished by the country's culture and nature", Tae Hyun-sun, senior curator at Hoam, told AFP.

Pave the way

Like many women artists of her generation, Kim has only recently gained global recognition, said Rachel

Lehmann, the

co-founder of

Lehmann

Maupin

which represents Kim

internationally and has

shown her work in London and New

York.

"Her perseverance and lifelong ded-

ication have helped pave the

way for subsequent generations

of women artists," she told AFP.

Kim returned to South Korea after a major 2023 solo show in Seoul that propelled her to the Venice Biennale the following year.

Among her former mentees in Buenos Aires is Korean-Argentine filmmaker Cecilia Kang, 40, an award-winning director who

is now making a film about her.

As the daughter of Korean immigrants, she felt pressure to follow a conventional path, but Kim -- whom Kang first met when she was 13 -- showed her "that pursuing a life doing what one loves is possible".

At 15, Kim, who was a war refugee, changed her name to Yun Shin -- "truth and faith" -- on the advice of a monk who urged her to spend her life discovering her "true colour".

Those words have always "stayed vivid with me", she said. "Sometimes I feel they are what have carried me through this life."



A striking fact: despite the tool's rough nature, skilled chainsaw artists can produce highly intricate works--such as lifelike animals, human faces, and even delicate textures like feathers or fur--often completing large sculptures in just a few hours, something that could take days or weeks with hand tools.

GCC Rejects Conflict Politics



Jasem Mohammed Albu-daiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), stressed that the region consistently works toward building a stable and secure regional environment through constructive policies focused on development and prosperity rather than conflict and war.

His remarks came during a session titled "The Middle East After Zero-Sum Politics," held on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Türkiye. The session also featured Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman

Safadi, and Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit.

Albudaiwi said the GCC has long been committed to diplomacy and dialogue, guided by principles of respecting state sovereignty, non-interference, and peaceful resolution of disputes, which have strengthened mutual trust with regional and international partners.

He also referred to recent Iranian attacks on GCC states, describing them as serious and unjustified, and noted their impact on regional security. However, he affirmed that these incidents have not changed the GCC's stra-

tegic approach, which remains focused on development, stability, and humanitarian support.

The GCC Secretary-General highlighted the Council's active role in regional issues, particularly its support for the Palestinian cause and the two-state solution, alongside humanitarian and political initiatives in various crises. He stressed that regional and global stability is a shared responsibility.

He further underlined that regional organisations are no longer optional but essential, noting that success is measured not only by internal cohesion but also by the ability to build



"Our achievements reflect the strength of collective Gulf action and our ability to deliver results that exceed expectations"

JASEM MOHAMMED ALBUDAIWI

partnerships and contribute to global stability.

In this context, he said the GCC has strengthened its international role through 28 strategic partnerships and cooperation with eight regional organisations, positioning itself as a key bridge for dialogue, peace, and prosperity.

Albudaiwi concluded that the GCC's achievements reflect collective Gulf strength and resilience, along with its ability to deliver outcomes beyond expectations, reinforcing its standing on the global stage and supporting a cooperative regional framework that advances security and stability.

Peace Dialogue Takes Priority



His Majesty King Abdullah II held talks with Alexander Stubb at Al Husseinia Palace, focusing on strengthening bilateral relations and addressing key regional developments.

The meeting, attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, highlighted opportunities to expand cooperation between Jordan and Finland, particularly in education and technology. King Abdullah II stressed

that Jordan's strategic location and regional role provide a strong foundation for deeper partnership and dialogue with Finland. He underscored the importance of joint efforts to enhance dialogue and pursue peaceful solutions to regional challenges.

The King also described President Stubb's visit as a key opportunity to explore new avenues of collaboration, reinforcing ties between the two countries.

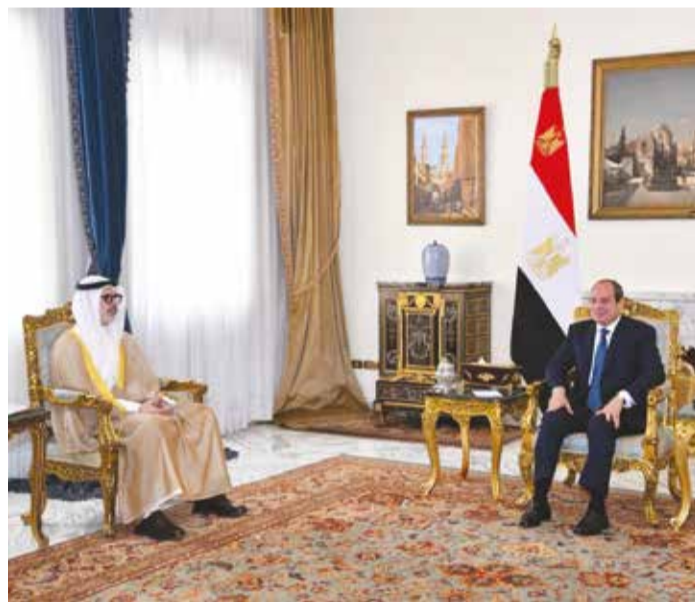
Egypt Rejects Sovereignty Threats

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi reiterated Egypt's firm rejection of any attack on the sovereignty of Kuwait or any other Arab state, stressing that the security of Arab countries is integral to Egypt's national security.

According to a statement by the Egyptian presidency, the remarks came during a meeting in Cairo with Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Jarrah Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in the presence of Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt and senior foreign ministry officials.

President El-Sisi affirmed Egypt's full support for Kuwait's security and stability, and backed all measures taken to protect its sovereignty and national interests. He also highlighted Egypt's continued commitment to supporting Arab security and stability.

He conveyed his greetings to



Kuwait's Emir Shaikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, praising the strong historical and fraternal ties between the two countries.

The talks also covered ways

to enhance bilateral relations, particularly in investment and trade, in a manner that serves mutual interests and reflects the growing momentum in Egypt-Kuwait relations.

Nations Welcome Libya Budget Deal

Saudi Arabia and several other countries have welcomed Libya's signing of a unified 2026 national budget, marking the first consolidated financial plan in over a decade and a significant step toward bridging divisions between eastern and western authorities.

The agreement, signed on April 11, is seen as a key milestone in strengthening economic coordination and restoring unified financial governance in the country.

In a joint statement, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United States, Türkiye, the UAE, the United Kingdom, Egypt, France, Germany, and Italy praised the move, calling it a constructive effort that could enhance unity, stability, and long-term prosperity for Libya.

The countries stressed that full implementation of the budget would be critical in stabilising Libya's economy, pro-



tecting the value of the Libyan dinar, and improving citizens' purchasing power. It is also expected to support development projects, attract international investment, and strengthen key institutions such as the Central Bank of Libya, the National Oil Corporation, and the Libyan Audit Bureau.

A major feature of the budget is the inclusion of the National

Oil Corporation's first operational funding in years, along with allocations aimed at boosting energy production under enhanced oversight mechanisms.

The statement highlighted that increased oil and gas output would not only support Libya's economic recovery but also contribute to regional and global energy stability.



Sailors and Marines aboard the USS Rushmore conduct blockade operations in the Arabian Sea.

Advancing Peace in South Sudan



The Bahrain highlighted the vital role of the UN Mission in South Sudan in advancing peace efforts, bridging divides, and promoting dialogue, while also expressing concern over escalating violence and worsening humanitarian conditions, and stressing the broader impact of regional instability on humanitarian access and essential supply chains affecting vulnerable populations.

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Is Carrick quietly winning the United job?

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Michael Carrick is rapidly shifting the conversation around Manchester United's long-term managerial plans. A 1-0 win over Chelsea has not only strengthened United's push for Champions League qualification, but also raised an uncomfortable question inside the club: is the interim manager doing enough to keep the job permanently?

Appointed on an interim basis following a turbulent managerial change, the Englishman inherited a squad lacking cohesion, confidence, and tactical identity. While United's hierarchy are still believed to be assessing more experienced candidates, his early results have forced internal discussions about whether continuity might now be the smarter option.

Controlled win at Stamford Bridge

Saturday's victory over Chelsea was not a statement of dominance, but it was a clear demonstration of control under pressure.

Liam Rosenior's side created the clearer chances and even struck the woodwork three times, yet United's defensive organisation and game management allowed them to absorb pressure. That ability to stay controlled without dominating possession ultimately shaped the outcome, as they took their opportunity when it arrived.

The decisive moment came when Matheus Cunha finished first time from a Bruno Fer-

5
matches remain for Manchester United as Carrick pushes for Champions League qualification

nandes cut-back. In that sense, the Blues were punished for failing to convert their dominance into goals.

What stood out most was not attacking fluency, but structure without the ball. This was something United had frequently lacked earlier in the season, and its return has been significant.

Tactical discipline

Carrick's most noticeable impact has been defensive stability. United looked compact in a mid-block, with improved spacing between midfield and defence. As a result, the transitional chaos that had previously exposed them against top sides was significantly reduced.

This improvement came under difficult circumstances. Forced changes before kick-off increased the challenge, with Matthijs de Ligt absent, Lisandro Martínez and Harry Maguire suspended, and Leny Yoro also unavailable late on. Carrick was therefore forced to improvise a back line featuring Nouisair Mazraoui and 19-year-old Ayden Heaven.

Even so, the response was encouraging. Heaven impressed on debut, showing composure in



Michael Carrick and Noussair Mazraoui share post-match celebrations

aerial duels and strong positional awareness. This also reflects Carrick's willingness to trust younger players in high-pressure situations rather than defaulting to caution.

The case in Carrick's favour

The strongest argument for Carrick is United's improved results in big matches. They have remained unbeaten in fixtures against "Big Six" opposition under his interim tenure, which represents a clear shift from ear-

lier inconsistency.

He has also simplified United's structure. Instead of complexity, the emphasis is now on clarity. There are fewer risky build-up patterns, more direct progression, and improved game-state management.

In short, United look harder to beat, even when they are not at their most fluent.

The case against him

However, there are still important questions about sustainabil-

ity and long-term ceiling.

United's performances under Carrick have often lacked attacking control. Even when results improve, dominance is not always present. Against Chelsea, they were second-best for long periods and relied heavily on defensive resilience rather than sustained control.

There is also the issue of sample size. A short-term uplift after a managerial change is not unusual, and elite clubs often see "new manager bounce" effects

YOU
KNOW WHAT
Michael Carrick is undefeated against the "Big Six" teams. His side will face Liverpool in 2 weeks.

that fade over time.

Most importantly, the club is still reportedly considering more experienced managers. These candidates bring proven long-term records at the highest level, something Carrick does not yet have.

Verdict: a genuine debate emerging

With five matches remaining, United are in control of their Champions League qualification hopes. Carrick has stabilised the team during a volatile period, and that stability should not be underestimated.

However, whether that is enough for a permanent appointment depends on what the club values more. The choice is between short-term stability in the dressing room or long-term certainty under an elite-level manager.

Right now, Michael Carrick has not fully won the job, but he has done enough to make this a far less straightforward decision for Sir Jim Ratcliffe and his INEOS team.

Messi scores winner as Miami down Colorado on coach debut



Lionel Messi in action

AFP | Miami

Lionel Messi gifted Inter Miami's new coach a 3-2 victory over the Colorado Rapids with a brace including a spectacular late winner in front of 75,000 Major League Soccer fans on Saturday.

Shifted to Denver's giant NFL stadium to accommodate the huge demand to see Argentina's World Cup-winning icon, the game appeared to be drifting Colorado's way after a spirited home team fightback from 2-0 down.

But Messi, having already converted a penalty, had other ideas. With just over 10 minutes remaining, the Argentine sprinted onto a through ball sent down the right by Rodrigo De Paul.

He dribbled into the box and somehow threaded a shot with his favorite left foot through three defenders and past the keeper into the corner.

It handed Messi's longtime friend Guillermo Hoyos a win on his debut as Miami coach, after Javier Mascherano departed the club for "personal reasons" Tuesday, just four months after guiding the club to its first MLS Cup title.

"We have the greatest player in history, someone who completely shifts the momentum of matches," said a delighted Hoyos.

Hoyos, 62, made few changes to the lineup, notably bringing in German Berterame to replace Tadeo Allende, who continues to recover from a muscle injury.

Portuguese Magnifico

Bruno Fernandes closing in on Premier League assist history

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bruno Fernandes is on the verge of etching his name into Premier League history. Despite missing three matches this season, the Manchester United captain has surged into contention for the single-season assist record — one of the most prestigious creative milestones in English football.

Fernandes registered his 18th assist of the 2025-26 campaign in United's latest outing, continuing a remarkable run of form that has seen him deliver six assists in his last six appearances. With five matches still to play, the Portuguese playmaker stands just two assists away from matching the all-time record of 20.

That benchmark is currently shared by two legends of the game. Thierry Henry first set the mark during Arsenal's 2002-03 season, reflecting the elegance and efficiency that defined his career. Nearly two decades later, Kevin De Bruyne matched the feat in Manchester City's 2019-20 campaign, underlining his status as one of the league's greatest midfield creators.

Fernandes' pursuit is made even more impressive by the



Bruno Fernandes celebrates passionately during Manchester United's victory over Chelsea

context. Missing matches typically derails record chases, yet he has maintained relentless consistency. His vision, passing range, and ability to unlock defenses have made him the focal point of Manchester United's attack throughout the season.

Reaching 18 assists already places Fernandes among an elite group. Only a handful of players have ever reached or surpassed the 15-assist mark in a single Premier League season. Notable names such as Mesut Özil, Cesc Fàbregas, Frank Lampard, and Mohamed Salah have all hit 18,

20
the Premier League single-season assist record, and Fernandes is two away

but none managed to surpass the 20-assist ceiling set by Henry and De Bruyne.

What sets Fernandes apart is

his versatility. He is not just a provider but also a goal threat, a leader, and a player who thrives under pressure. His recent performances suggest that he is peaking at precisely the right moment, with momentum firmly on his side heading into the final stretch of the season.

The remaining fixtures will determine whether Fernandes can make history outright or join the record holders at the top. Either way, his 2025-26 campaign is already one of the finest creative seasons the league has ever witnessed.

Liverpool snatch derby win

Last-gasp goal secures crucial victory as top-five race intensifies

● Van Dijk scores late winner

● Liverpool beat Everton 2-1

● Salah equals derby goal record

● Villa win dramatic 4-3 clash

● Forest boost survival hopes

AFP | London

Virgil van Dijk scored a last-gasp winner against Everton yesterday as Liverpool strengthened their push for a Champions League spot next season before the Premier League summit meeting between Manchester City and Arsenal.

On a pivotal day in the English top division, fourth-placed Aston Villa squandered a two-goal lead against Sunderland but scored in stoppage time to win 4-3.

At the other end of the table, Morgan Gibbs-White netted a hat-trick as struggling Nottingham Forest came from behind against Burnley to win 4-1 and heap the pressure on troubled Tottenham.

Just a few weeks ago the battle for the top five, which guarantees entry into the Champions



League, looked as though it might be tight.

But fifth-placed Liverpool's 2-1 victory in their first match at Everton's new Hill Dickinson Stadium takes them seven points clear of stumbling Chelsea, in sixth spot.

Captain Van Dijk was the hero for Arne Slot's Liverpool, heading Dominik Szoboszlai's corner past a helpless Jordan Pickford in the 100th minute.

"Today was massive in the situation that we are, in hunt for the Champions League spots," Van Dijk told Sky Sports.

"That is definitely not Liverpool-worthy, in my opinion, but it is the reality and it was important we got the win. I'm glad we did.

"We've got five more games left (some) against teams that are also fighting for the Champions League spots. Every game is a big one."

Mohamed Salah had opened the scoring for last season's champions, slotting home in the first half following a superbly weighted pass from Cody Gakpo.



Liverpool's Dutch defender #04 Virgil van Dijk (3R) scores their late second goal

The goal came just two minutes after Iliman Ndiaye's effort at the other end was cancelled by VAR, with Jake O'Brien ruled offside.

Salah, departing at the end of the season, has equalled Steven Gerrard's nine goals to become the joint top-scoring player in the Premier League fixture between the two Merseyside teams.

The goal took the wind out of the sails of David Moyes' team but they were level through Beto within 10 minutes of the restart.

Kiernan Dewsbury-Hall, on the left of Everton's attack, fired across goal for Beto to attack and he poked home ahead of an on-rushing Giorgi Mamardashvili, who was immediately stretched off, replaced by Freddie Woodman.

The game looked destined to end as a draw but the officials signalled 11 added minutes but Van Dijk had the last laugh.

Villa thriller

Ollie Watkins scored twice for Villa, who moved level on 58

points with third-placed Manchester United, three clear of Liverpool.

England forward Watkins' early opener was cancelled out by Sunderland's Chris Rigg but Watkins restored Villa's lead in the 36th minute with his second headed goal of the game.

Morgan Rogers gave Villa breathing space with a third shortly after the restart but Unai Emery's team nearly threw it away as Isidor Trai Hume and then Wilson Asifir scored within a minute for Sunderland.



But there was still time for Tammy Abraham to grab a dramatic late winner.

"What a position we are in, semi-final of European competition (Europa League) and pole position to qualify for top five," said captain John McGinn.

"We can go and achieve what not many Aston Villa players have done for a long time. We're keen to do that and we're driven, five big games left to try and get ourselves over the line."

Nottingham Forest, involved in a relegation scrap with West Ham and Tottenham, fell behind against Burnley but Gibbs-White put on a second-half masterclass to seal an ultimately comfortable win.

Forest are five points clear of 18th-placed Spurs, with Wolves and Burnley almost certainly doomed.

Tottenham could only manage a 2-2 draw at home to Brighton on Saturday to move a point behind West Ham, who travel to face Crystal Palace on Monday.

Evenepoel outsprints Skjelmose to win Amstel Gold Race

AFP | Valkenburg

Remco Evenepoel made up for his disappointment a year ago by outsprinting reigning champion Mattias Skjelmose to win the Amstel Gold one-day classic yesterday.

A year after Skjelmose had outwitted Olympic champion Evenepoel and world champion Tadej Pogacar to win a three-man sprint, the Belgian gained his revenge for his first major one-day victory in almost two years.

Evenepoel had not tasted victory in a major one-day race since claiming the Olympic crown in Paris in August 2024, finishing second to Pogacar at the world championships, European championships, and Tour of Lombardy last year, while he finished third at Amstel.

He was part of a small group



Remco Evenepoel (R), Romain Gregoire (C) and Mattias Skjelmose (L) in action

that went clear of the peloton when Frenchman Romain Gregoire launched an attack with around 40km left.

American Matteo Jorgenson and Frenchman Kevin Vauquelin crashed, leaving Evenepoel, Skjelmose and Gregoire out

front on their own.

They caught and passed the last remnant of the day's breakaway, Italian Marco Frigo, before an attack by Evenepoel dropped Gregoire.

The Olympic champion and Skjelmose then collaborated

to the finish, with Evenepoel launching his dash for the line first and easily holding off the Dane for his 74th professional victory.

It was a timely return to winning ways with tougher tests ahead, including next weekend when Pogacar and teenage French sensation Paul Seixas will be on the start-line for the year's fourth Monument race, Liege-Bastogne-Liege.

After beginning the season in fine form with six victories, Evenepoel had struggled in two stage races, finishing 10th at the UAE Tour and then fifth at the Tour of Catalonia.

However, he had taken an impressive third place behind Pogacar and Mathieu van der Poel on his debut at the Tour of Flanders two weeks ago.

Frenchman Benoit Cosnefroy pipped compatriot Gregoire in the sprint for third place.

Rinku blitz leads Kolkata to first win of IPL season



Rinku Singh plays a shot

AFP | Kolkata

Rinku Singh hit an unbeaten 53 to lead Kolkata Knight Riders to their first win of the IPL season as they beat Rajasthan Royals by four wickets in a low-scoring contest yesterday.

Rajasthan posted 155-9 as their batting faltered after 15-year-old Vaibhav Sooryavanshi top-scored with 46 at Kolkata's Eden Gardens.

Kolkata, who had five defeats and one point from a rained-off game coming into the match, slipped to 5-2 and 85-6 before the left-handed Rinku steered the team home with two balls to spare.

Rinku smacked five fours and two sixes in his 34-ball knock and put on an unbeaten 76-run stand with number eight Anukul Roy, who made

29, to steer the team home.

The left-handed Roy kept calm with his senior partner as he hit a six off Jofra Archer in the 19th over and Kolkata needed nine from the final six balls.

Rinku, who was dropped on eight by Nandre Burger, hit two fours and a winning six as he raised his fifty to bring cheer to the dugout and home crowd. England pace bowler Archer had Tim Seifert bowled for a duck on the first ball of the chase and South Africa's Burger dismissed skipper Ajinkya Rahane for nought to make it two down.

Kolkata's big-buy Cameron Green looked fluent in his 27 off 13 balls but fell stumped off Ravi Bishnoi with wicketkeeper Dhruv Jurel making a wide collection and a back flip onto the stumps.

Driver killed in seven-car accident during Verstappen race at Nuerburgring

AFP | Nuremberg

Veteran endurance driver Juha Miettinen was killed in a seven-car pile-up during a race at Germany's Nuerburgring on Saturday.

The race, which also featured

four-time Formula One world champion Max Verstappen, was halted after the accident with organisers suspending the event.

It was part of the Nuerburgring Langstrecken Series (NLS) qualifiers for a 24-hour race to

be held in May, in which Verstappen is set to take part.

AFP subsidiary SID reported that the Dutchman was not on the course at the time of the accident but is due to drive on yesterday.

The accident took place just

25 minutes into the four-hour event before an incline at the Klostertal stage of the track.

Miettinen, 66, died in the course medical centre, while six other drivers were hospitalised with non-life-threatening injuries.

Haaland Strikes as City Hunt Down Arsenal

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Erling Haaland once again made the difference as Manchester City defeated Arsenal 2-1 at the Etihad Stadium, cutting the gap at the top of

the Premier League to three points and tightening a title race that is now finely poised.

The Norwegian striker scored the winner in the 65th minute of a high-quality contest, rescuing City after a costly Gianluigi Donnarumma error allowed Kai Havertz to equalise shortly after Rayan Cherki's brilliant opener. The result marked Arsenal's second straight defeat with only five matches remaining. City, with a game in hand, continue to build momentum in pursuit of what would be a seventh Premier

League title in nine years. Arsenal remain top, but the setback significantly reduces their margin for error in the chase for a first league title since 2004.

Buoyed by strong recent form, including victory over the Gunners in last month's Carabao Cup final, City started brightly. Haaland forced an early save from David Raya and saw another effort blocked as the hosts applied early pressure. Cherki also looked lively, and

the game-winning moment came in the 65th minute. City broke down the left through Nico O'Reilly, with Rodri helping the ball into the danger area. It evaded defenders before Haaland controlled it in the box, turned sharply, and finished clinically for his 23rd goal of the season.

The Gunners pushed late for an equaliser. Gabriel saw a header deflected onto the post by O'Reilly, adding to their frustration. Tensions also rose during a heated exchange involving Gabriel and Haaland.

Deep into stoppage time, Havertz had one final chance but headed over from Leandro Trossard's cross, sealing Arsenal's defeat.

Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta admitted his side had "lost an opportunity in terms of the result," but insisted it is still "game on," pointing to City's game in hand and the narrow gap at the top.

Pep Guardiola described the match as "a good advert for the Premier League," adding that outcomes at this level come down to "fine margins."



Celebrations after the winning goal

Rybakina outclasses Muchova to win Stuttgart WTA title

AFP | Stuttgart

Australian Open champion Elena Rybakina picked up her second title of the year as she outclassed Karolina Muchova 7-5, 6-1 to win the WTA Stuttgart indoor clay-court tournament yesterday.

Top seed Rybakina, 26, snatched a tight opening set with two breaks against her seventh-seeded Czech opponent after 53 minutes on court in Germany.

The Kazakh never looked back in the second set rushing to a 5-0 lead as Muchova struggled with her serve, sealing victory and the 13th title of her career after 1hr 18 min.

Rybakina, who finished runner-up at Indian Wells last month, regained the title she won two years ago and drives off with a second Porsche



Elena Rybakina

sports car -- the coveted prize awarded to the champion in Stuttgart.

Muchova had lead Rybakina 2-1 in previous meetings heading into the title match having won their most recent clash on hard court in Brisbane in January.

Rybakina had a relatively smooth run this week dropping only one set and dispatching her toughest opponent world number six Mirra Andreeva by the same score

Rabiot fires AC Milan to verge of Champions League return

AFP | Milan

Adrien Rabiot boosted AC Milan's bid to return to the Champions League with the only goal in yesterday's 1-0 win at Verona, which moved his team back up to second in Serie A.

France midfielder Rabiot swept home the only goal in the 41st minute at the Stadio Marcantonio Bentegodi to give Milan an eight-point cushion on Como and Roma in fifth and sixth.

The 31-year-old calmly netted his sixth league goal of the season after snatching possession in midfield and exchanging passes with Rafael Leao, for the only real highlight of a largely drab encounter.

"The important thing is winning and getting the points we need to achieve our objectives, but we made a lot of mistakes today. We could have played a



AC Milan's French midfielder #12 Adrien Rabiot celebrates scoring his team's first goal

lot better," said Rabiot.

"We need to stay focussed on qualifying for the Champions League."

Milan took advantage of Como falling to a surprise defeat at Sassuolo on Friday and Roma

drawing with Atalanta on Saturday night, and with five matches remaining in the season, the Rossoneri are all-but sure of a top four finish.

The seven-time European champions have had no conti-

mental football this season after a disastrous previous campaign which led to Massimiliano Allegri retaking the reins as coach last summer.

Allegri said on Friday that he has already started planning for next season with Milan's management, and after Saturday's win the 58-year-old again ruled himself out of the vacant Italy job.

"No-one has contacted me (from the Italian Football Federation), and all my thoughts are on Milan: we've started something together and we'll continue it together," said Allegri.

Verona's fifth straight defeat means almost certain relegation, as Paolo Sammarco's team are bottom of the division and 10 points behind Cremonese, who sit just outside the drop zone and drew 0-0 at Torino in the day's early fixture.