



Terror Network Dismantled

Bahrain strongly condemned a terrorist plot targeting security and stability in the United Arab Emirates.

In a statement, Foreign Ministry praised UAE authorities for dismantling the Iran-linked network and foiling its plans.

Bahrain reaffirmed full solidarity with the UAE and support for measures to protect its security.

Hormuz Crisis

Diplomatic Push Grows Over Threats to Key Shipping Route

Rising concerns over global energy security and trade disruptions took center stage as Bahrain and Greece held high-level talks on the escalating situation in the Strait of Hormuz.

In a phone conversation, Bahrain's Foreign Minister, Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, and his Greek counterpart, Giorgos Gerapetritis, discussed the wider impact of Iran's reported closure of the vital shipping route.



H.E. Dr Al Zayani

This move is seen as a potential threat to global energy flows, food supply chains, and international commerce.

Amid the unfolding developments, both sides emphasized the importance of coordinated international action, highlighting their current roles on the United Nations Security Council. Bahrain's presidency of the Council this month was also noted as a platform to advance efforts aimed at maintaining stability and safeguarding global security.

Beyond the crisis, the ministers reaffirmed their commitment to deepening Bahrain-Greece relations, focusing on expanding cooperation across key sectors.

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'Shield the Nation'



HM the King with BDF senior officials

A strong message of stability and preparedness

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa emphasized the importance of military readiness in safeguarding national stability during a visit to a Bahrain Defence Force unit.

The visit, attended by senior commanders including His Excellency Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, highlighted the Kingdom of Bahrain's continued focus on maintaining a highly prepared

and coordinated defense system.

The King praised the unit's advanced level of preparedness and combat efficiency, noting the professionalism and dedication of its personnel.

He also commended the strong coordination between different branches of the armed forces.

His Majesty reaffirmed that Bahrain's military, security ser-

VICES, and civil defense serve as a strong shield protecting the nation, preserving its achievements, and addressing potential threats.

He pointed to their discipline, vigilance, and unity as key pillars of national security.

The visit comes amid evolving regional dynamics, reinforcing Bahrain's commitment to maintaining stability while remaining fully prepared.

Long-Term Security Ties Reviewed

Reflecting the close and historic relations between Bahrain and Jordan, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa received His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at Al Safriya Palace during his official visit to the Kingdom.

The meeting was attended by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, along with senior officials and members of the royal family.

The Jordanian Crown Prince conveyed greetings from His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan to Bahrain's leadership and people, wishing them continued prosperity and development.

Talks underscored the strength of Bahrain-Jordan relations, expressing appreciation for Jordan's supportive positions and consistent solidarity with Bahrain, highlighting the



HM King Hamad and HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa welcome HRH Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II

strong fraternal bonds between the two nations during this critical time.

In a separate meeting with HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince



and Prime Minister, discussions also covered the latest regional developments, their impact on

regional and international security, and a range of issues of mutual interest.

Clear Call to Begin Immediate Action

The Cabinet, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister His Excellency Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa at Gudaibiya Palace, issued key decisions focused on strengthening national security, economic preparedness, and institutional stability.

The Cabinet affirmed that the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, outline a comprehensive national roadmap.

The plan prioritises security and stability, reinforces development efforts, and promotes national unity and social cohesion.

In line with these directives, the Cabinet decided to immediately begin implementing urgent measures across government sectors.

These include addressing identified gaps in the defence and economic systems to en-



H.E. Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah

hance national readiness and resilience.

A key decision also involved initiating legal procedures against individuals found to have undermined national security and reviewing citizenship-related cases in accordance with applicable laws and national standards.

Cabinet Decisions

Approved decisions:

- New regulations for scholarships for government doctors pursuing residencies and specialised fellowships.
- MoU between Bahrain and Greece on tourism cooperation.
- Cooperation framework with Einride AB to enhance digital and automated transport solutions.

Reviewed reports:

- Outcomes of the Strait of Hormuz Maritime Freedom Summit.
- Results of the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister's visit.
- World Bank Group and IMF Spring Meetings.

The Cabinet stressed that these actions are part of a structured government approach

aimed at ensuring effective governance and continuity of national progress.

Reaffirming Bahrain's position on regional developments, the Cabinet condemned hostile actions attributed to Iran and called for an immediate end to hostilities, alongside reopening the Strait of Hormuz to ensure maritime security.

On the economic front, the Cabinet reviewed banking sector measures in coordination with the Central Bank of Bahrain, including launching a loan deferral and liquidity support programme.

The Cabinet also approved several decisions, including new scholarship regulations for government doctors, a tourism cooperation agreement with Greece, and a digital transport cooperation framework with Einride AB.

It further reviewed responses to parliamentary proposals and reports on international diplomatic and financial engagements.

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Art Legacy Struck

Juffair Landmark Sustains Severe Losses to Halls and Historic Collections from Iranian Attacks

TDT | Manama
Ghadeer Alkumaish

A cornerstone of the Kingdom's cultural heritage sustained significant damage following an Iranian attack that struck the Bahrain Contemporary Art Association in Juffair. The strike directly impacted the institution's artistic environment, causing extensive structural damage to several exhibition halls, ceilings, and internal facilities.

Beyond the architectural destruction, officials report that several exhibited artworks were damaged or ruined. These pieces hold immense cultural and historical value, as they document decades of Bahrain's national art movement. The disruption paralyzed several creative spaces, raising deep concerns among the association's 70-plus members, which include prominent painters, calligraphers, and ceramists.

Founded in 1970, the Bahrain Contemporary Art Association is the country's first official institution dedicated to visual arts. Established by a group of pioneering artists, it held its first milestone exhibition in May 1971. The association has long been recognized



Artworks damaged due to an Iranian attack



Proposal to establish the Bahrain Contemporary Art Association, August 1970.

for its contributions to the national landscape, most notably in 1984 when its members were honored by the late HRH Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa. Among those pioneers was the late Abdulkarim Al Orayed, a former chairman who received the Bahrain Encouragement Award for his role in elevating Bahraini art on the global stage.

Reports from inside the Juffair facility indicate that the upper halls and dedicated workshops were the most severely affected. Urgent calls now demand a

comprehensive damage assessment and immediate restoration measures to save the remaining collections. For the local community, the building is more than just a gallery; its traditional architectural character serves as a vital meeting point for the exchange of expertise and creative expression.

Today, the association faces its greatest challenge: restoring its physical facilities while preserving its vast artistic legacy. As the hub of the visual arts movement in Bahrain, the focus remains on ensuring that this vital institution can continue to support and inspire future generations of Bahraini artists despite the recent devastation.

Replace Foreign Workers with Bahrainis

TDT | Manama
Mohammed Darwish



Dr Munir Seroor, MP

An urgent parliamentary proposal has called for a temporary government-backed scheme to support the replacement of foreign workers with Bahraini nationals in roles that can be localised.

The proposal, submitted by MP Dr Munir Seroor, urges the Labour Ministry, the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) and Tamkeen to launch a targeted support programme linked directly to job replacement rather than new hiring.

Under the plan, financial and employment support would only be provided when an employer removes a foreign worker from a position and hires a qualified Bahraini to fill the same role. The support would aim to bridge salary differences and help ensure job stability for Bahrainis during the transition period.

Dr Seroor said the initiative responds to current economic pressures affecting some businesses, noting the need for practical measures that help firms reduce costs while increasing employment opportunities for citizens.

He added that the proposal

A parliamentary proposal calls for a temporary government-backed scheme to replace foreign workers with qualified Bahraini nationals, linking financial support directly to actual job replacement.

differs from existing schemes by making support conditional on actual replacement outcomes, describing it as a faster and more direct approach to labour market localisation.

The proposal also suggests using existing Tamkeen programmes in a more targeted way and limiting the initiative to a fixed period to achieve quicker results in the labour market.

Help is a Call Away

New reporting system aims to speed up animal welfare response

TDT | Manama
Ghadeer Abdulla

The Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture (Agriculture and Animal Resources Affairs) launched a dedicated hotline to enhance animal welfare reporting across Bahrain, aiming to improve response time for cases of abuse, neglect, and stray animals.

The initiative is designed to streamline public reporting and strengthen enforcement of animal protection regulations, while encouraging greater community participation in safeguarding animals and public safety.



Animal Welfare Reporting

Hotline : 17987227

Timing: Daily,

7:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Stray Dog Reports :

WhatsApp / Mobile:

38802487

Stray dog sightings and location tracking



"This issue is not new. It began worsening during COVID-19 when many people lost their jobs"

FATHIYA AL BASTAKI, FOUNDER OF THE "BAHRAIN STRAYS" INITIATIVE



"We have rescued more than 100 small breeds in less than a year, but adoption rates remain worryingly low."

BAYAN KHALID, FOUNDER OF THE INSTAGRAM ACCOUNT @STRAYSADOPTIONBH

Officials say public cooperation will play a key role in improving animal welfare outcomes and managing stray populations more effectively in residential areas.

Animal welfare advocates have long raised concerns about rising abandonment cases and limited shelter capacity. Volun-

teers working on the ground say they continue to handle increasing rescue cases, particularly involving small breeds, while calling for stronger structural support.

"This problem is not new, but it has been getting worse over the years," said Fathiya Al Bastaki, founder of the Bahrain Strays

initiative, noting that economic pressures and lack of facilities have intensified the challenge for volunteers.

Advocates have welcomed the hotline as a positive step but stress that long-term solutions, including shelters and medical support systems, remain essential to address the growing issue.

Mangrove Museum Proposal Gains Momentum



TDT | Manama
Mohammed Darwish

A proposal to establish a mangrove-focused museum in Madinat Salman is gaining momentum, with officials highlighting its environmental, educational and tourism potential.

Northern Municipal Council member Bassem Abu Idris said the project has received positive feedback from key government bodies, including the Ministry of Oil and Environment and the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture.

The proposed museum aims to raise awareness about mangroves' role in coastal protection and marine biodiversity, while creating a new destination for visitors and students. Plans include educational and visitor facilities such as an environmental cinema, a conference hall and waterfront services.

Abu Idris noted the project could become the first of its kind in the region, combining conservation, education and eco-tourism. He added that



"Mangroves are not just trees, they are a frontline defence for our coasts and a vital part of marine life."

BASSEM ABU IDRIS, NORTHERN MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBER

partnerships with private-sector firms and integration into school programmes are being considered.

The initiative aligns with Bahrain's broader push for sustainability and greening pro-

jects. Authorities have already identified suitable locations in Madinat Salman for mangrove planting, and technical studies are underway to ensure site viability.

The proposed mangrove museum will feature an environmental cinema, conference hall and waterfront visitor facilities, highlight the native *Avicennia marina*, integrate with school programmes, and could become the first mangrove-focused



Stability Rooted in the Rule of Law

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, the Speaker of the Shura Council emphasised that Bahrain's current national approach strongly focuses on governance, legal responsibility, and preserving state stability through clear principles of citizenship and accountability.

He said His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's vision reflects a structured national framework that strengthens the rule of law and reinforces citizenship responsibilities as a foundation for social and institutional stability.

Al Saleh noted that recent royal directives underline the importance of legal measures in safeguarding national security and ensuring that citizenship remains tied to clear eligibility criteria, accountability, and loyalty to the nation.

He also highlighted the Government's role, led by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, in maintaining the continuity of public services and efficiently managing national affairs during sensitive regional conditions.

The Speaker stated that Bahrain's institutional strength lies in its coordinated governance approach, where leadership directives translate into effective executive action that supports stability and public confidence.

Pension and Industry Laws Under Review

The Shura Council has progressed key legislative and economic initiatives aimed at strengthening social equity, boosting national industry, and enhancing Bahrain's investment environment.



“Citizens play a pivotal role in supporting state institutions and safeguarding internal stability”

H.E. ALI BIN SALEH AL SALEH, SPEAKER OF THE SHURA COUNCIL



Shura Council in session



Members during the Service and Finance Committee meeting



In its Services Committee, members reviewed a draft amendment to the social insurance law seeking greater parity between public and private sector retirees.

The proposal would allow retirees to access substitution loans every two years from the date of the previous loan, rather than waiting until the final installment is completed, aiming to improve financial flexibility and fairness.

Officials from the General Organization for Social Insurance affirmed cooperation with lawmakers, stressing the need to balance reform with financial sustainability and risk management.

Local Products Prioritized in Tenders

Separately, the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee approved the legal validity of an

amendment to strengthen national industries. The proposal includes forming a dedicated committee to oversee industrial development and introducing a national product list to prioritize Bahraini goods in government procurement, alongside clearer local content requirements in public tenders.

The Financial and Economic Affairs Committee also praised efforts to expand international cooperation and attract invest-

ment, highlighting Bahrain's participation in IMF and World Bank Spring Meetings and the recent investment protection agreement with Switzerland, seen as a boost to investor confidence.

The committee continued its review of the state's 2024 consolidated accounts and unemployment insurance financial reports, underscoring ongoing efforts to ensure transparency and fiscal discipline.

National Paths Program Strengthens

The Bahrain Institute for Political Development has concluded the first cohort of its "National Paths" program, designed for general employees from both the public and private sectors, held from April 12 to 16, 2026.

The program is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen national participation and enhance the efficiency of human resources across various sectors.

The training featured a comprehensive set of workshops and courses focusing on the leadership's vision for holistic development and its impact on national and institutional work.

It also aimed to build participants' professional skills and deepen their understanding of government priorities, policies, and current legislation.

Challenges

Sessions also addressed ways to engage positively with national developments and adapt to regional and international challenges, contributing to the preparation of qualified national cadres with stronger cultural and intellectual awareness.

The program included specialized training sessions delivered by experts and practitioners.

Certified trainer Ashwaq BuAli conducted a course on "Building National Competencies," while Sheikh Dr. Abdullah bin Ali Al Khalifa, former Director of the University of Bahrain's Historical Studies Center, led a workshop titled "The Great Year of Isa and its National Impact."

Gold Demand Turns Investment

22K gold in Bahrain rises to BD 54-55 from around BD 51

Neethu V
TDT | Manama

This year's Akshaya Tritiya, a festival associated with gold purchases within the Indian community, came amid fluctuating gold prices.

Gold has continued its upward momentum in recent days, following a period of mild fluctuations driven by shifting global cues and regional developments.

In Bahrain, 22K gold prices have risen from around BD 51 to the BD 54-55 range, reflecting broader strength across the precious metals market.

Speaking to The Daily Tribune on the occasion and in reference to recent gold price fluctuations, Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, said: "Gold prices have fluctuated in recent days due to global factors such as



“Gold remains a reliable long-term investment despite short-term price swings”

SHAMLAL AHAMED, MD, INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS, MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS



“Bahrain's gold market was relatively subdued this Akshaya Tritiya”

MUHAMED HUSSAIN MUALIM, MD, AL SARRAJ JEWELLERS



“Despite supply issues, we continue to see steady visits from loyal customers”

RIYAZ, A STAFF MEMBER AT A LOCAL JEWELLERY SHOP

economic uncertainty, inflation concerns, and strong safe-haven demand. Despite short-term movements, the long-term outlook remains steady, with gold

continuing to be seen as a reliable store of value and a preferred long-term investment."

Regarding Akshaya Tritiya, Shamlal noted that gold sales in

Malabar were encouraging, with a strong customer response.

"Demand remained resilient, supported by the festival's cultural significance and growing

awareness of gold's long-term value as both jewellery and an investment," he added.

Meanwhile, Riyaz from Adel Khalef Jewelry's, which caters to the local market, told TDT that despite a few supply issues last month, the store has continued to see regular visits from its loyal customers, reflecting steady support from long-time buyers.

However, reflecting on a broader gold buyer response, Muhamed Hussain Mualim, Managing Director of Al Sarraj Jewellers and advisor to the Jewellers Association, said market sentiment remains cautious on spending amid current business conditions, with gold prices fluctuating due to regional tensions and oil price movements.

Investor shifts between gold and oil-linked assets have added to short-term volatility, though prices have recently started stabilizing closer to earlier levels.

"Compared to previous years, Bahrain's gold market remained relatively subdued on Akshaya Tritiya, reflecting cautious consumer sentiment."

He added that once geopolitical and oil market conditions stabilise, investor confidence is expected to return to gold, which could support another upward movement in prices.

According to the India Bullion and Jewellers Association, demand remained weaker across most regions, with only select pockets in the south showing resilience.

Experts say buying patterns are gradually changing, with gold increasingly seen as an investment asset rather than only a festival-driven purchase. Data from the World Gold Council reflects this shift, showing a 24% year-on-year drop in jewellery demand in 2025, while investment demand rose 17% to its highest level since 2013.

Move to Stop Added Interest on Payment Deferrals

● **Charges undermine relief programs**

● **Warn of rising financial burden on citizens**

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Five MPs have submitted an urgent proposal calling on the Central Bank of Bahrain to instruct banks and finance companies to cancel extra interest charged on deferred instalments, saying the added sums run against the purpose of the relief programme announced recently.

The proposal was put forward by Khalid Buanaq, Zainab Ab-

dulAmeer, Hisham Al Awadhi, Ahmed Al Salloom and Mohammed Al Maarefi, with a request for immediate discussion.

In the explanatory note attached to the proposal, Buanaq said the move was meant to ensure the scheme gave real relief to citizens rather than leaving them with higher costs later.

"This proposal concerns directing the Central Bank of Bahrain to instruct banks and finance companies to cancel the extra interest resulting from the deferral of instalments under the programme announced recently," he said. "That would secure the main aim of the programme, which is to ease financial burdens on citizens in the current conditions."

He said some lenders had added extra interest to the deferred payments, leaving borrowers with heavier dues instead of the relief the scheme was meant to bring.



Charging extra interest on deferred instalments undermines the purpose of the initiative and places a heavier burden on citizens

KHALID BUANAQ, MP



At a time when families need support, financial institutions should be easing burdens, not adding to them

ZAINAB ABDULAMEER, MP

"Banks and finance companies are imposing extra interest on the deferred instalments, which

leads to higher financial obligations for citizens instead of easing them," he said. "It strips

the programme of its real purpose, so that the real benefit goes to financial institutions at the expense of the citizens who are meant to benefit."

The proposal says this runs against the social and economic purpose behind the scheme, arguing that deferring instalments should help citizens at a time of need, not leave them facing a longer burden through accumulated interest.

Buanaq also said banks had already gained from other support schemes and should now play their part.

"Banks have benefited from other support programmes, including the covering of staff salaries for a fixed period," he said. "That means they should play their part in supporting citizens, rather than placing extra burdens on them."

The MPs said the proposal

aimed to keep the instalment deferral programme focused on easing financial pressure on citizens, stop added interest from raising the burden on those using it, and push banks and finance firms to do more to support household stability.

They said it was submitted on an urgent basis because the extra charges were having a direct effect on living conditions.

"The continuation of these extra charges increases financial burdens and causes obligations to pile up on citizens, in a way that runs against the urgent aim of the programme, which is to provide support and relief," the note said. "This situation could deepen the strain on a wide section of citizens, making urgent action necessary to put the programme back on track and ensure it gives the relief it was meant to provide."

New Push to Grow Arbitration Education

The Secretary-General of the Bahrain Chamber for Dispute Resolution met with representatives from the University of Miami School of Law and the Miami International Arbitration Institute on the sidelines of an international arbitration course and the New York Convention programme hosted by the university.

Professor Marika Patrani Paulson held discussions with the delegation to explore new academic initiatives in international arbitration and to advance ongoing cooperation between the two sides.

The talks focused on expanding specialised arbitration training programmes and strengthening the institute's academic presence.

The meeting also reviewed ways to broaden enrolment opportunities in the Master's programme in International Arbitration Law, as part of wid-



Professor Marika Patrani Paulson with a representative from the University of Miami School of Law and the Miami International Arbitration Institute

er efforts to enhance academic collaboration and provide advanced learning pathways for students and legal practitioners.

The discussions reflect Bahrain's continued commitment to building effective international partnerships that support arbitration education, professional development, and

the advancement of specialised expertise in dispute resolution across the region.

The Master's programme in International Arbitration Law is considered one of the leading global academic programmes in this field, offering advanced training and contributing significantly to legal research and practice.



H.E. Speaker Ahmed bin Salman Al Mussallam with Bahrain delegation

Istanbul Declaration Adopted

Bahrain's parliamentary delegation concluded its participation in the 152nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), using the global platform to advance dialogue on international cooperation, development priorities, and regional security concerns.

His Excellency Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam, Speaker of the Council of Representatives and head of Bahrain's delegation, said the participation reflected Bahrain's strategy to strengthen parliamentary diplomacy and expand en-

gagement with international partners.

During bilateral engagements, the delegation raised concerns over regional security developments, describing recent attacks affecting GCC states and Jordan as threats to stability.

The Assembly concluded with the adoption of the "Istanbul Declaration," which called for stronger multilateral cooperation, renewed commitment to peace and justice, and greater inclusion of youth and women in decision-making processes.

Drunk Driver Faces Trial

Rehab Mohammad
TDT | Manama

The First High Criminal Court has begun hearing the case of an Asian man in his thirties accused of causing a fatal traffic accident while driving under the influence of alcohol.

The defendant admitted to the charges during the opening session and requested leniency from the court. According to the Public Prosecution, the incident took place at around 2:25 AM on Friday, April 3, 2026, on Shaikh Jaber Highway.

The defendant was allegedly driving at 110 km/h, exceeding the speed limit by more than 30%, before running a red light and triggering a multi-vehicle collision.

Prosecutors have charged him with vehicular manslaughter, driving under the influence of alcohol, serious traffic violations, and property damage. The crash led to a chain-reaction collision involving several vehicles.

Civil Defense teams responded to the scene and rescued occupants trapped in one of the vehicles. One driver was pronounced dead at the scene, while a passenger sustained critical injuries and was taken to hospital.

The court has adjourned the case until April 27 to allow the defense to review case files.

Bahrain-UAE relations



Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Foreign Minister received UAE Ambassador Fahad Mohammed Kardous Al Ameri at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Manama. Both sides reviewed the strong Bahrain-UAE fraternal relations and discussed ways to further enhance bilateral cooperation. The meeting also touched on regional developments and GCC coordination efforts to safeguard security and stability in the region.

Expansion of Artificial Intelligence Initiatives

Dr. Hassan bin Abdullah Fakhro, Economic Advisor to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, met with Dr. Jassim Haji, Chairman of the Global Artificial Intelligence Group, to discuss developments in artificial intelligence and related projects.

The meeting highlighted ongoing efforts to advance AI initiatives and explore new sector opportunities.

Dr. Fakhro commended Dr. Haji's role in promoting artificial intelligence awareness and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship in the field.



Dr. Hassan bin Abdullah Fakhro with Dr. Jassim Haji

Dr. Haji expressed appreciation for the strong support given to research and development efforts.

He also stressed continued work on launching specialised programmes aimed at expanding AI literacy and enhancing its impact across Bahrain's key sectors.

Bahrain Bourse launches Listing Gateway platform

Manama

As part of Bahrain Bourse's (BHB) continuous efforts to develop the Capital Market in the Kingdom of Bahrain, BHB, a licensed exchange by the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB), announced the launch of BHB's Listing Gateway Platform, an online portal designed to streamline the filing of listing applications. The Listing Gateway platform will fully replace the current submission process, in line with BHB's digital transformation journey.

The Listing Gateway will deliver a more efficient, secure, and transparent process, enabling the Issuers to submit their listing applications for review to BHB in a streamlined and user-friendly manner. The platform aims to facilitate a seamless experience for all market participants.

The digital platform has been designed with an intuitive and



transparent interface to offer Issuers a straightforward submission process, along with better visibility into the status of their applications. This initiative marks another significant step in BHB's efforts to advance digitalization within the financial market, reinforcing its commitment to operational excellence and innovation.

Shaikha Al Zayani, Senior Director of Listing and Disclosure, stated: "The development of the platform is another step forward in BHB's continuous drive towards digital transformation. The Listing Gateway will enhance efficiency and transparency in the submission of listing applications, ensuring more streamlined and user-friendly experience for all stakeholders."

"This initiative reflects our commitment to leveraging technology to broaden market accessibility and enable Issuers to comply with regulatory require-

ments more efficiently. By introducing this platform, we aim to deliver a seamless experience for Issuers while promoting confidence and resilience within Bahrain's capital market," Shaikha added.

The Listing Gateway is now live and accessible to

all applicants seeking to list via www.bahrainbourse.com. For more information, please contact the Listing & Disclosures Directorate on 17108782 or email ld@bahrainbourse.com.

Shaikha Al Zayani,
Senior Director
of Listing and
Disclosure



EU to gauge member states' willingness to punish Israel

Foreign ministers from the 27-nation bloc are expected to discuss the matter

● Foreign ministers from the 27-nation bloc are expected to discuss the matter at a meeting in Luxembourg

● But so far none of the steps laid out by Brussels has garnered enough support from member states

● The recent ouster of staunch Israel backer Viktor Orban in elections in Hungary has also added to the likelihood of movement on measures.

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

The EU's top diplomat said yesterday the bloc will gauge the willingness of member states to take measures against Israel, after Spain re-upped demands to suspend a cooperation deal.

Foreign ministers from the 27-nation bloc are expected to discuss the matter at a meeting in Luxembourg Tuesday after a call from Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez.

Attitudes towards Israel among key EU member states, hardened over its conduct in the war in Gaza, stiffened further after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and a new law on the



Israeli security forces (R) forcibly remove Palestinians trying to reach their land after Israeli settlers reportedly attacked local farmers working on their land, spraying them with pepper spray, near the Palestinian village of Halhoul, south of the Israel-occupied West Bank city of Hebron,

death penalty for Palestinians in the occupied West Bank.

Facing alarm at the civilian toll exacted in the Gaza war, the EU last year already put on the table a raft of potential measures to punish Israel including cutting trade ties or sanctioning government ministers.

But so far none of the steps laid out by Brussels has garnered enough support from member states to be put into action.

Suspending the entirety of the EU's cooperation agreement -- as Spain is pushing for -- requires unanimity among the bloc's 27 countries and would almost certainly be blocked by

allies of Israel.

More feasible could be suspending the part of the deal facilitating closer trade ties, a move that only requires support from a weighted majority of EU countries.

That would require a shift in position from EU heavyweights such as Germany or Italy. Rome has already signalled a tougher line on Israel by suspending a defence agreement.

"We already have the measures on the table; some of them that require a qualified (weighted) majority," EU foreign policy Kaja Kallas said.

"First, I think it should be assessed whether it's possi-

ble to move with those, if the member states have the wish to do so, to put pressure on Israel."

The recent ouster of staunch Israel backer Viktor Orban in elections in Hungary has also added to the likelihood of movement on measures.

A separate proposal for sanctions on "extremist" Israeli settlers in the West Bank had been vetoed by Budapest for months.

Diplomats and EU officials say they hope to get the greenlight for those measures soon but that it could take until Hungary's new government comes to power in May.

Over \$71 bn needed over next decade to rebuild Gaza: UN-EU assessment

Geneva, Switzerland

More than \$71 billion will be needed over the next decade for recovery and reconstruction in war-ravaged Gaza, according to an EU-UN assessment published yesterday.

After more than two years of Israel's war in the Palestinian

territory, "recovery and reconstruction needs are estimated at around \$71.4 billion", said the final Gaza Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment developed by the United Nations and the European Union, in coordination with the World Bank.

Hungary's Magyar says would carry out ICC warrant against Netanyahu

AFP | Budapest, Hungary

Hungary's incoming prime minister Peter Magyar said Monday the country will execute International Criminal Court warrants against anyone, after he invited Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu -- wanted under just such a warrant -- to Budapest later this year.

In 2024, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Netanyahu over allegations of crimes against humanity and war crimes -- including starvation as a method of warfare -- in Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza.

Last week Magyar made clear he wants Hungary to reverse that decision -- but he also invited the Israel premier to visit Budapest again in October, according to an Israeli readout of a call between the two leaders.

Asked by a reporter to clarify, Magyar said he issued invitations to all prime ministers and presidents he spoke on the phone for the 70th anniversary of Hungary's anti-Soviet uprising of 1956.

But he also said that he had made it clear, "even to the Israeli prime minister", that it was his intention to stop the country's withdrawal from the

ICC. "If someone is a member of the International Criminal Court and a person who is wanted enters our country, then they must be taken into custody," the pro-EU conservative told reporters.

"I don't need to spell everything out over the phone. I assume that every head of state and government is familiar with these laws," he added.



Hungary's outgoing nationalist leader Viktor Orban announced last year that his country was withdrawing from the ICC, after meeting with Netanyahu in Budapest. The withdrawal was due to take effect by June 2 this year.

Oil jumps on Hormuz tensions, stocks retreat

Investors were on edge approaching the end of the US-Iran ceasefire

● The losses were sharper in Europe

● Asian shares rebounded as they were in catch-up mode

AFP | London, United Kingdom

US and European stocks reversed yesterday as oil prices surged over fears hostilities could resume in the weeks-long Middle East war after Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz following its brief reopening.

Investors were on edge approaching the end of the US-Iran ceasefire, with Washington saying it will send a delegation to Pakistan for a new round of talks "soon" and Iran saying it had yet to decide whether to attend.

"The market mood is very different at the start of the week compared to Friday," said Kath-

Key figures around 1530 GMT

West Texas Intermediate:	▲ 5.9% at \$87.42 a barrel
Brent North Sea Crude:	▲ 5.9% at \$95.74 a barrel
New York - Dow Jones:	▼ less than 0.1% at 49,403.15 points
New York - S&P 500:	▼ 0.3% at 7,105.52
Nasdaq Composite:	▼ 0.5% at 24,344.36
London - FTSE 100:	▼ 0.6% at 10,609.08 (close)
Paris - CAC 40:	▼ 1.1% at 8,331.05 (close)
Frankfurt - DAX:	▼ 1.2% at 24,417.80 (close)
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▲ 0.6% at 58,824.89 (close)
Hang Seng Index:	▲ 0.8% at 26,361.07 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▲ 0.8% at 4,082.13 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▲ at \$1.1785 from \$1.1776 on Friday
Pound/dollar:	▲ at \$1.3538 from \$1.3530
Dollar/yen:	▲ at 158.57 yen from 158.49 yen
Euro/pound:	▲ at 87.06 pence from 87.02 pence

leen Brooks, research director at trading group XTB.

Crude had plunged Friday after the Islamic republic said it would again allow ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas usu-

ally passes. But world oil prices bounced yesterday as Iran closed the waterway and said the US blockade and seizure of an Iranian cargo ship breached the two-week ceasefire.

"Renewed attacks on commer-

cial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz increased fears of supply disruptions and raised the risk of a broader escalation in hostilities between the US and Iran," said Trade Nation analyst David Morrison.

"Uncertainty also remains over whether negotiations in Islamabad will proceed after Iran said it would not attend talks while the blockade remains in place," he added.

Wall Street's main stock indices dipped, with the S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite falling from record closes.

The S&P 500 shed 0.3%, the Nasdaq Composite 0.5% and the blue-chip Dow less than 0.1%.

The losses were sharper in Europe. Frankfurt dropped 1.2%, Paris shed 1.1% and London gave up 0.6%.

That came after gains for Tokyo, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

"Asian shares rebounded as they were in catch-up mode, having missed the rally seen in the US and Europe on Friday," said AJ Bell investment director

Russ Mould. "European indices presented a truer picture of the market mood, with investor wariness and weariness amid the continuing tensions in the Middle East," he added before trading began in New York.

The blockade of Iranian ports has been a significant sticking point in negotiations between the two countries, with both accusing the other of ceasefire violations.

There has so far been only one negotiating session, held in Islamabad on April 11 that ended inconclusively, although groundwork for fresh talks continued afterwards.

"We're offering a very fair and reasonable deal, and I hope they take it," Trump said in a social media post Sunday, while also renewing his threats against Iran's infrastructure if a deal is not made.

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".

Chris Weston at Pepperstone said traders were assessing "whether the ceasefire can be salvaged through this week's diplomatic talks, with recalibration on the probability of military escalation".

"Without a comprehensive agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, the ceasefire remained fragile."



Oil has even been cheaper than bottled water per litre at times, despite the cost of extracting and transporting it

Outrage in China after streaming site debuts AI actor 'database'

Beijing, China

China's equivalent of Netflix, iQIYI, faced backlash yesterday over a new initiative that facilitates the use of actors' likenesses in artificially generated dramas and films.

More than 100 celebrities have joined a platform to connect with makers of AI-generated content interested in using their image, a senior executive told a conference in Beijing.

China's entertainment industry has rapidly embraced the use of artificial intelligence, with AI-generated films and shows a common feature on video platforms. A slate of Chinese actors took to social media to declare they had not or would not sign up to the "artist database", with fans decrying iQIYI's apparent move to reduce work for human actors.

The streaming site called the backlash a "misunderstanding" and insisted actors would retain control over how their image was used in AI-generated content. "We are not currently licensing the likeness of actors," iQIYI Senior Vice President Liu Wenfeng said. "Rather, we are enabling AI creators and actors to more quickly establish connections through Nadou Pro," he said.

India, South Korea target doubling trade by 2030

AFP | New Delhi, India

India and South Korea aim to double bilateral trade to \$50 billion by 2030, the leaders of both countries said yesterday following talks in New Delhi.

South Korea's President Lee Jae-myung, on his first visit to India, was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the presidential palace, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi standing alongside him as honour guards marched past.

In a speech following the talks, Lee said the two countries had agreed to speed up negotiations to upgrade their 2010 comprehensive economic partnership agreement.

"We agreed to upgrade our economic cooperation framework to create new drivers for mutual growth," the South Korean president said.

"We aim to increase the cur-



(L-R) India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung, India's President Droupadi Murmu and the wife of South Korea's President Kim Hea Kyung pose for photo during a ceremonial reception at India's presidential palace Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi



India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2nd R) and South Korea's President Lee Jae Myung (L) plant a tree during a meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi

rent \$25 billion level of annual trade volume to around \$50 billion by 2030."

Modi said that "we have taken several important decisions today" to double bilateral trade.

Both sides said the discussions focused on shipbuilding, artificial intelligence, finance and defence cooperation, as they seek to broaden a strategic partnership underpinned by trade and technology.

"From chips to ships, from talent to technology, from environment to energy, we will realise new opportunities for cooperation in every sector," Modi said.

Seoul and New Delhi are looking to work together as global supply chains and energy markets face disruption amid growing security tensions.

"In the era of hyper-uncertainty, we share the view that Korea and India can be the most ideal partners for comprehensive cooperation to promote mutual growth and innovation," Lee said in a statement on social media earlier Monday.

South Korea has faced rising risks to its energy supplies in recent months after US-Israeli strikes on Iran in late February prompted Tehran to effectively close the Strait of Hormuz, a key global oil shipping route.

EU proposes full resumption of Syria cooperation accord

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

Brussels yesterday proposed EU states fully restart the bloc's cooperation agreement with Syria, in the latest step to help bolster the country after the ouster of Bashar al-Assad.

The deal -- which abolishes customs duties on imports of most industrial products from Syria -- was partially suspended in 2011 when Assad's regime ruthlessly cracked down on protests at the start of the civil war. The 27-nation EU has launched a new chapter with Syria since Assad's ouster from power in December 2024 after over a decade of fighting that devastated the country and sent millions of refugees abroad.

European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen announced a 620-million-euro (\$730 million) two-year financial support package during a visit to Damascus in January.

The bloc has also dropped economic sanctions as it looks to help the authorities under President Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former jihadist who spearheaded Assad's expulsion, to rebuild the country and reintegrate internationally.

50

Lee said S Korea aims to increase the current \$25 billion level of annual trade volume to around \$50 billion by 2030.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND ALL THAT YOU ARE. KNOW THAT THERE IS SOMETHING INSIDE YOU THAT IS GREATER THAN ANY OBSTACLE.
CHRISTIAN D. LARSON

Iran reopens main airports in capital Tehran: aviation authority

Tehran, Iran

Iran reopened its main Imam Khomeini and Mehrabad airports in capital Tehran on Monday, the country's aviation authority said, after closures caused by the weeks-long war with the United States and Israel.

"Authorization for passenger flights at Imam Khomeini International Airport and Mehrabad Airport has been issued" from Monday, the Civil Aviation Organisation said in a statement, according to ISNA news agency.

It added that passenger flights from 10 airports across Iran "will also be possible from Saturday."

Qatar flights

Qatar's aviation authority said it would begin allowing flights from foreign airlines to land at its main airport for the first time since the start of the Middle East war.

"Qatar Civil Aviation Authority has issued a Notice to Airmen announcing the gradual resumption of operations for foreign airlines in the State of Qatar via Hamad International Airport," the body said in a statement.

'Israel talks separate'

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said planned talks with Israel aim to end "hostilities" and stressed they were "separate" from Iran-US negotiations.

"The choice to negotiate aims to stop hostilities, end the Israeli occupation of southern regions and deploy the (Lebanese) army all the way to the internationally recognised southern borders" with Israel, Aoun said in a statement.

Hezbollah MP tells group will break Israel's yellow line

Beirut, Lebanon

Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah said his group would work to break the "Yellow Line" that Israel established in southern Lebanon, adding that no one in the country or abroad can disarm the Iran-backed group.

Fadlallah said "we will bring down this Yellow Line through the resistance (Hezbollah)". "The attempt by the Israeli army to establish a buffer zone, under the title of a defensive line, a yellow line, a green line, and a red line... all these lines will be broken, and we will not accept any of them."

Israel says image of soldier striking Jesus statue in Lebanon is authentic

Israeli soldier vandalises Jesus statue in Lebanon

AFP | Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed "harsh action" yesterday against a soldier caught on camera vandalizing a statue of Jesus Christ in southern Lebanon, as the image spread online.

The photo, which the military determined was authentic, shows an Israeli soldier using a sledgehammer to strike the head on a statue of a crucified Jesus that had fallen off a cross.

The sculpture is located in the Christian village of Debl in south Lebanon, near the border with Israel, the local municipality told AFP, but officials could not say whether it had been damaged.

"I was stunned and saddened to learn that an IDF soldier damaged a Catholic religious icon in southern Lebanon," Netanyahu wrote on X.



An Israeli soldier damages the head of a statue of Jesus, in Debel, Lebanon. (Arab News/REUTERS)

"I condemn the act in the strongest terms. Military authorities are conducting a criminal probe of the matter and will take appropriately harsh disciplinary action against the offender," he added.

The military said it had determined after an investigation that the image circulating on social media was genuine and showed an Israeli soldier operating in southern Lebanon.

It said in a post on its official X account that it viewed the incident with "great severity," adding that the "soldier's conduct is wholly inconsistent with the values expected of its troops."

The army said "appropriate measures will be taken against those involved" but did not go into further detail.

It said it is working with the community to "restore the statue to its place."

Israel army warns Lebanese against returning to south

To talk or not?

Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Sunday he had spoken by phone with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian ahead of anticipated US-Iran talks in Islamabad, and reaffirmed his government's readiness to mediate the conflict. "I had a warm and constructive conversation with President Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian this evening on the evolving regional situation," Sharif said in a post on X.

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran insisted it has no plan to attend a new round of negotiations with the United States yesterday, as uncertainty grows over a push to stop the Middle East war from resuming.

US President Donald Trump said he was sending negotiators to Pakistan for talks on ending the war that engulfed the region and rattled global markets, while repeating threats to attack Iran's energy infrastructure if it did not make a deal.

"We have no plans for the next round of negotiation, and no decision has been made in this regard," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei. "While claiming diplomacy and readiness for negotiations, the US is carrying out behaviours that do not in any way indicate seriousness in pursuing a diplomatic process," he added, calling the US blockade and cargo ship seizure "clear violations of the ceasefire".

Iran says the US blockade and attack breached the two-week truce set to end overnight today and threatened to retaliate, while Trump says Tehran has breached the ceasefire in the

On Sunday, Trump announced that a massive Iranian-flagged cargo ship "tried to get past our Naval Blockade, and it did not go well for them," adding a US destroyer blew "a hole in the engine room" before US Marines seized the vessel. The ISNA news agency later cited a spokesperson for Iran's central command centre as warning that the military "will soon respond and retaliate against this armed piracy and the US military". Tasnim news agency reported Tehran had sent drones in the direction of US military ships after Tauska was seized and "attacked".

Iran military vows to 'soon respond'



US destroyer hits Iran cargo ship

US Marines boarding and seizing the Iranian-flagged vessel M/V Tauska after departing by helicopter from amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli in the Arabian sea on Sunday. A US destroyer fired on and seized an Iranian-flagged cargo ship in the Gulf of Oman that tried to evade a US naval blockade, the US president and the US military said.

crucial Strait of Hormuz, which it has all but shut.

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

Tight security

In spite of the uncertainty surrounding the talks in Pakistan, security has been visibly stepped up in the capital Islamabad.

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

Vance, Kushner

A White House official said Vice President JD Vance would lead the delegation after Trump said he would not, citing security concerns.

He would be joined by Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the official said.

Xi calls Saudi CP

Chinese President Xi Jinping told Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in a phone call yesterday that "normal traffic" through the vital conduit for oil and gas shipments "should be maintained", state media said.

Iran executions

Iran hanged two men convicted of having links to Israel's spy agency.

The People's Mujahedin (MEK), an opposition group banned in Iran, confirmed the executions of MEK members Mohammad Masoom Shahi, 38, and Hamed Validi, 48.

22

The ceasefire started on April 8, 2026 as a two-week deal. That means it is scheduled to expire around April 22, 2026 (midnight GMT)

1173

Pope Alexander III canonizes Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury

1804

World's first steam locomotive, built by Richard Trevithick, runs for the first time along the tramway of the Penyarden Ironworks in Merthyr Tydfil, Wales



1848

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels publish "The Communist Manifesto" in London

1972

Richard Nixon becomes the first US President to visit China, normalizing relations between the countries in a meeting with Chinese leader Mao Zedong in Beijing

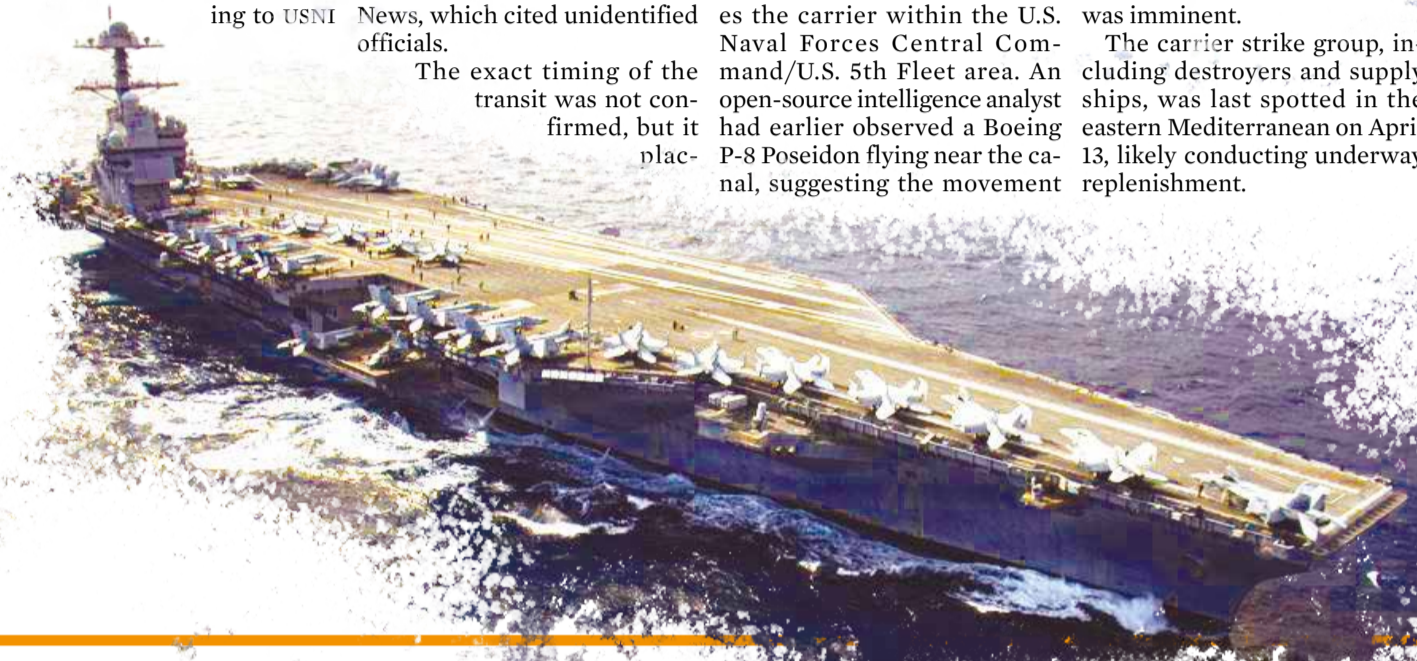
USS Gerald R. Ford enters Middle East after record 296-day deployment

TDI | agencies

The aircraft carrier USS Gerald R. Ford is now operating in the Middle East after spending nearly a month in the Mediterranean Sea, according to a report by Stars and Stripes.

The carrier, accompanied by the destroyers USS Winston S. Churchill and USS Mahan, departed the U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa/U.S. 6th Fleet area of operations late last week, a US official told Stars and Stripes on condition of anonymity.

With more than 4,500 personnel and its embarked Carrier Air Wing 8, the carrier transited the Suez Canal and is currently operating in the Red Sea, accord-



ing to USNI News, which cited unidentified officials.

The exact timing of the transit was not confirmed, but it plac-

es the carrier within the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command/U.S. 5th Fleet area. An open-source intelligence analyst had earlier observed a Boeing P-8 Poseidon flying near the canal, suggesting the movement

was imminent.

The carrier strike group, including destroyers and supply ships, was last spotted in the eastern Mediterranean on April 13, likely conducting underway replenishment.

Iran uncertain as US sends team

A US Air Force Boeing C-17A Globemaster III aircraft prepares to land at Pakistan's Nur Khan military airbase in Rawalpindi



The US president said his negotiators, whom he did not name, would arrive in Islamabad. A White House official said Vice President JD Vance would lead the delegation after Trump said he would not, citing security concerns. He would be joined by Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the official said.

Trump says Iran deal to be signed 'today' in Islamabad

TDI | agencies

Donald Trump said an agreement with Iran would be signed "today" in Islamabad, according to an interview with Maria Bartiromo on Fox News yesterday.

It was not immediately clear what timeframe he was referring to, as the timing of the interview was not specified.



Pakistan hosted the first direct high-level US-Iran engagement on April 11-12, the first such contact since the two countries severed diplomatic ties in 1979, but those talks ended without a breakthrough.

Trump also warned that if no agreement is reached, he would "blow up every single power plant and bridge in Iran."

Tehran has not confirmed the claim or announced any decision to send a delegation to Islamabad. However, Pakistani sources told New York Post that Iran may be open to a second round of talks, though no final decision has been taken.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Water is the foundation of all life & a basic human right. Improving access to water & sanitation could save over 1.4 million lives per year, reduce diseases, restore ecosystems & spur economic growth. Investing in water is investing in the future of communities & countries.

@antonioguterres

02



Glad to have welcomed President Lee on his first visit to India. His life and work are inspiring examples of service and dedication. Making this visit more special is the fact that this is the first visit by a President of the Republic of Korea in 8 years. Our nations are bound by shared values and a common outlook on the Indo-Pacific region.

@narendramodi



03



Congratulations to Anda Filip (@andafilip) on her election as Secretary General of the Inter Parliamentary Union (@IPUparliament). I look forward to continuing our strong partnership with the organization.

@DrTedros

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

Iraq reopens border crossing with Syria shut for nearly 13 years

All three border crossings between Iraq and Syria are now open

AFP | Rabi'ah, Iraq

Iraq reopened a once-bustling border crossing with Syria yesterday, more than a decade after it was closed to trade following the rise of the Islamic State group.

With the al-Rabia post -- known as al-Yarubiyah on the Syrian side -- back in operation, all three border crossings between Iraq and Syria are now open. Border Ports Authority chief Omar Al-Waeli told journalists during the reopening ceremony that al-Rabia "is a strategic border port" that had been shut for almost 13 years.

He added that the crossing "will play an important role on the Development Road", a mega-project aimed at providing a link between Asia and Europe via upgraded rail and road infrastructure through Iraq and Turkey.

Previously a major trade route between the two countries, the al-Rabia crossing in Nineveh province closed after the emergence of the Islamic State group,



Cars and trucks loaded with goods waiting to cross over into Syria at the al-Rabia border crossing

which seized large swathes of Syria and Iraq in a lightning offensive in 2014.

Although the jihadists were later defeated, the border cross-

ing remained closed and was only briefly used to deliver aid into war-torn Syria.

Until earlier this year, Kurdish forces controlled the post on

the Syrian side, before handing it over to the Syrian authorities, who overthrew former ruler Bashar al-Assad in December 2024.

US opens tariff refunds portal after court struck down Trump duties

AFP | Washington, United States

The US government yesterday launched a tool for refunding more than \$166 billion in revenue from tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump and subsequently struck down by the Supreme Court.

The conservative-majority high court in February ruled against a swath of Trump's tariffs, marking a stinging rebuke of his key economic policy and opening the door to refunds.

Yesterday, US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said it has activated the first phase of its processing tool, meaning that importers and customs brokers can start submitting documentation to recover their payments.

The agency estimated in March that more than 330,000 importers could be eligible for refunds on duties or deposits paid on over 53 million shipments.

In the new system's initial deployment, around \$127 billion in duty payments are eligible for electronic refunds, the agency said.

The Supreme Court ruling applies to duties imposed un-

der the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, which Trump used to target virtually all US trading partners with varying tariff rates since returning to the presidency in January last year.

But his sector-specific tariffs on goods like steel, aluminum and autos remain intact.

Thousands of companies have filed lawsuits with the Court of International Trade since the high court's ruling, to seek refunds.

The extent to which consumers who have borne the brunt of tariffs will be repaid depends on whether companies share the recovered funds, however. For now, FedEx for example said it plans to issue refunds for tariffs paid to "shippers and consumers who originally bore those charges."

330k

More than 330,000 importers could be eligible for refunds on duties or deposits paid on over 53 million shipments.

US begins 'biggest ever' Philippines war games

The war games will feature live-fire exercises in the north of the Philippines facing the Taiwan Strait

AFP | Manila, Philippines

Thousands of American and Philippine troops, joined for the first time by a significant contingent of Japanese forces, began annual military exercises yesterday set against the backdrop of the Middle East war.

The war games will feature live-fire exercises in the north of the Philippines facing the Taiwan Strait, as well as a province off the disputed South China Sea, where Philippine and Chinese forces have engaged in repeated confrontations.

In one drill, the Japanese military, which is contributing



A US army High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS) is fired as part of a live fire exercise during a joint army-to-army exercise between the Philippines and the US at Fort Magsaysay, Nueva Ecija province north of Manila

about 1,400 personnel, will use a Type 88 cruise missile to sink a World War II-era minesweeper off the coast of northern Luzon island.

More than 17,000 soldiers, airmen and sailors are taking part in the 19-day Balikatan, or "Shoulder to Shoulder," exercises -- about the same number as last year's edition, including contingents from Australia, New Zealand, France and Canada.

Balikatan comes as Iran and the United States, along with Israel, edge towards the end of the two-week ceasefire that halted the Middle East war, ignited by surprise US-Israeli strikes on the Islamic republic.

"Regardless of the challenges elsewhere in the world, the United States' focus on the Indo-Pacific and our ironclad commitment to the Philippines remains unwavering," US Lieutenant General Christian Wortman said at Monday's opening

ceremony. Philippine military chief General Romeo Brawner added that US Indo-Pacific Command chief Admiral Samuel Paparo had assured him at the war's outbreak that this year's Balikatan would be "the biggest ever".



Among the high-end weapons expected to be used is a US Typhon missile system that has been in the archipelago since visiting US forces left it there in 2024, provoking outrage from Beijing.

Whale stranded on German coast swims off, gets stuck again

AFP | Berlin, Germany

Efforts to rescue a humpback whale stranded for weeks on Germany's Baltic Sea coast were complicated yesterday when the animal unexpectedly swam away but then appeared to have got stuck again.

The 13.5-metre (44-foot) whale and its struggle for survival have captured the hearts of the German public, with some of the press calling him "Timmy".

Rescuers had cleared sand away from the spot where the whale had been stuck for around three weeks off the island of Poel, near Wismar, and sent a tugboat to be used in the rescue



Divers try to help the whale free itself

effort.

The plan was to lift the whale from the seabed using inflatable cushions and transport it with pontoons back to the North Sea or possibly as far as the Atlantic Ocean.

However, the animal swam free on its own on Monday, before coming to a halt on a different sandbank nearby, said Till Backhaus, environment minister for the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Rescuers see the escape attempt as a sign that the whale is still relatively healthy and plan to try again, the Bild daily reported.

Backhaus, speaking at the

scene, insisted the animal this time had not become fully stranded and was instead "resting".

The creature was first spotted stuck on a sandbank on March 23 near the city of Luebeck before freeing itself and then becoming stuck again several times.

On April 1, regional officials said they were convinced that the badly injured and distressed animal was going to die and could no longer be saved.

But local authorities last week approved a last-ditch rescue attempt proposed by two entrepreneurs, one of whom founded a major electronics retail chain.

Residents return to **ravaged homes** months after Hong Kong fire

● The city's deadliest fire in decades killed 168 people when it ripped through seven of the eight apartment blocks at the Wang Fuk Court complex in November.

● For the first time since then, around 6,000 residents are being given three-hour windows to enter their homes

● Officials have advised residents to prepare mentally, and required them to wear face masks

AFP | Hong Kong, China

Hong Kong residents who lost their homes in a massive fire at an apartment complex last year began returning on Monday for the first time to collect what is left of their belongings.

The city's deadliest fire in decades killed 168 people when it ripped through seven of the eight apartment blocks at the Wang Fuk Court complex in November.

For the first time since then, around 6,000 residents are being given three-hour windows to enter their homes from Monday and get their belongings.

Around 1,400 of them over the age of 65 are expected to visit the buildings.

Officials have advised residents to prepare mentally, and required them to wear face masks, hard hats and gloves before entering their apartments.

Steven Chong, 50, who retrieved a computer uploaded with family photos from his flat, told reporters he had used the time to bid farewell to his cat, who died in the fire.

"I don't know where he died,



The aftermath of a fire, which killed 168, inside an apartment block at the Wang Fuk Court residential estate in Hong Kong.



A view of the towers of Wang Fuk Court residential estate in Hong Kong



Hong Kong officials have offered to buy the apartments back around the pre-fire market price, despite the damage, but said that rebuilding the complex on the same site was "not feasible"

but I went to the spot where he usually liked to sleep and told him to reincarnate soon," Chong said.

"It was strange, there were many things that I stopped noticing while living there, going back now, it was like, oh so that's how I had decorated it, I

forgot," he added.

Another resident, who did not give his name for privacy reasons, said his whole house had burned down after the fire entered through an open window.

"There is nothing to go back to," he said, after visiting his flat. "We hung around to take a look, commemorated it, and left."

More than 920 homes were damaged and some completely destroyed by the blaze, according to the fire department.

Images released by government officials show the ceilings and walls of some flats have collapsed or been charred black, and the interiors littered with debris.

Damaged areas of the residential complex in Hong Kong's Tai Po district have been cordoned off as "danger zones", while reinforcement works have been carried out where the building structure was compromised.

"I don't really have any mental preparation, I just tell myself...



Steven Chong, a resident of Wang Fuk Court estate, shows the media items that he retrieved from his fire damaged apartment in Hong Kong

let the past stay in the past," Tam Tung-ling, who plans to return to her flat at a later date, said outside the complex on Monday.

With 1,700 flats to pick through, authorities hope the belongings retrieval process will be completed by early May.

'Wouldn't want to leave'

Survivor Harry Leung, one of the last residents to leave the complex on the day of the blaze, told AFP that he had mixed emotions about his return.

While keen to see the flat where he had spent most of his life, the three-hour slot, Leung said, was not enough time.

"I believe there are actually quite a few people who don't want to accept (the government's offer), but have no other options. They've been forced to accept it," Leung told AFP.

"If I had a choice, I really wouldn't want to leave (Wang Fuk Court)," he said.

Former resident Vincent Lee also said the slot is too short. "I'm just going back to a place

that belongs to me, but I have to be so humble, like I'm begging," he said.

"Don't I have the right to stay in my home and pack up my things?"

Betty Ho, who plans to return in May to the flat she lived in for more than 30 years, told AFP that what she wants most to retrieve are the photo albums of her childhood.

Her family's "entire life's possessions are inside that building", Ho said.

After the fire -- the world's deadliest residential building blaze since 1980 -- Ho relocated to temporary housing set up for Wang Fuk Court residents near the estate.

For now, she is allowed to stay there until the end of the year, but she told AFP she felt anxious and powerless when faced with the uncertainty of her future accommodation.

"Will we be evicted?" she asked. "Where will I find somewhere to live?"

'No reason' for US intervention in Cuba: Germany's Merz

AFP | Hanover, Germany

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said yesterday there was no evident justification for the United States to attack Cuba, following months of mounting pressure from President Donald Trump on the communist-ruled island.

"Despite all the domestic political problems that this country has with its communist regime, there is no discernible threat emanating from Cuba towards other countries," Merz said.

Cuba has been bracing for a possible attack following repeated warnings from Trump that Cuba is "next" after he toppled Venezuela's leader Nicolas Maduro and went to war against Iran.

Speaking at a news conference beside Brazilian President



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (L) and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz attend a joint press conference

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Merz said the US should settle its differences with Cuba "peacefully and through diplomatic means and not needlessly start a new conflict in the world which will only cause more problems".

"The ability to defend oneself does not mean the right to intervene militarily in other states when their political systems do not match what others might have in mind," he said.

UAE says dismantled Iran-linked group plotting 'terror' operations

● The group had collected funds and transferred them to "suspicious foreign entities"

● They had tried to recruit and indoctrinate people during secret meetings

AFP | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Authorities in the United Arab Emirates said yesterday they arrested members of an Iran-linked group plotting "terrorist" acts in the country, attempting to recruit Emiratis and funnelling funds to "suspicious" foreign entities.

"The State Security Department announced the dismantling of a terrorist organisation and the arrest of its members," it said, adding they were "planning systematic terrorist and sabotage operations" in the UAE.

"Investigations revealed the organisation's ties to the Velayat-e Faqih (Guardianship of the Jurist) in Iran," it added in a statement published on X.

State security also shared mugshots of 27 men and their names, without specifying their nationality.

Group members were handed charges including "establishing and operating a secret organisation, running it from the UAE, pledging allegiance to foreign entities, and harming national unity and social peace," it said.

The group had collected funds and transferred them to "suspicious foreign entities".

They had tried to recruit and indoctrinate people during secret meetings that aimed to "infiltrate sensitive positions", it said.

The group also aimed to "spread misleading ideas among Emirati youth and recruit them to serve foreign interests, incite against the state's foreign policy and internal procedures, and attempt to portray the country negatively," state security said.

27

State security also shared mugshots of 27 men and their names, without specifying their nationality.

Eighteen Nations Defend Somalia

Coalition condemns Israeli envoy appointment as a violation of sovereignty.

A powerful coalition of 18 nations, spanning the Middle East, Africa, and Asia, has issued a joint declaration strongly condemning Israel's recent announcement to appoint a diplomatic envoy to the self-declared region of "Somaliland." In a rare show of unified diplomatic force, the foreign ministers of these states characterized the move as a flagrant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

The coalition—which includes regional heavyweights such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and Pakistan, alongside others like Qatar, Indonesia, and Algeria—categorically rejected all unilateral measures that undermine the unity of sovereign states. The ministers emphasized their unwavering support for the central government in Mogadishu, affirming that legitimate Somali state institutions remain the sole entity representing the will of the Somali people.

Legal concerns featured heavily in the joint statement, with the ministers asserting that Israel's actions constitute a clear breach of international



law, the United Nations Charter, and the Constitutive Act of the African Union. By bypassing the federal government to engage with a breakaway territory, the group argued that a "dangerous precedent" is being set that could destabilize the delicate political balance within the Horn of Africa.

The statement concluded with a stern warning regarding the broader consequences of such diplomatic shifts. The

ministers noted that these actions carry significant negative repercussions for regional peace and security, potentially fueling further division in an already sensitive geopolitical landscape. The 18 nations involved are Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Somalia, Sudan, Libya, Bangladesh, Algeria, Palestine, Turkey, Indonesia, Pakistan, Mauritania, Jordan, Oman, Lebanon, Qatar, and Yemen.

UAE Dismantles Terror Cell Planning Sabotage



UAE security authorities dismantled a terrorist organisation accused of planning systematic sabotage operations inside the country.

Investigations revealed the group held secret meetings both within the UAE and abroad, while attempting to recruit young Emiratis by spreading misleading ideas aimed at securing foreign allegiances. The organisation was also accused of inciting against UAE foreign and domestic policies by portraying the state negatively.

Security reports further stated that the group collected funds through unofficial channels and transferred them to suspicious external entities. It is also charged with establishing a covert structure, pledging loyalty to foreign powers, and undermining national unity and social stability.

Authorities said recruitment activities were carried out through secret meetings coordinated with external actors, targeting sensitive locations inside the country.

The State Security Department also linked the organisation to Iran's "Wilayat al-Faqih" system, a political-religious doctrine established after the 1979 Islamic Revolution.

The announcement comes amid heightened regional tensions. The UAE has previously reported intercepting hundreds of missiles and drones during recent escalations, while also confirming earlier dismantling operations against networks allegedly linked to Hezbollah and Iran.

Saudi, China Leaders Call for Maritime Security

His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Saudi Arabia, held a phone call with President Xi Jinping of China to discuss bilateral relations and regional developments.

During the call, both leaders reviewed the strategic partnership between Saudi Arabia



and China, highlighting areas of cooperation and exploring ways to further strengthen ties across multiple sectors.

They also exchanged views on the latest regional and international developments, particularly their security and economic implications. Discussions focused on de-escalation efforts, maritime security, and the stability of vital global supply chains.

President Xi underscored the importance of ensuring the Strait of Hormuz remains open to navigation in a way that supports regional stability and the broader interests of the international community.

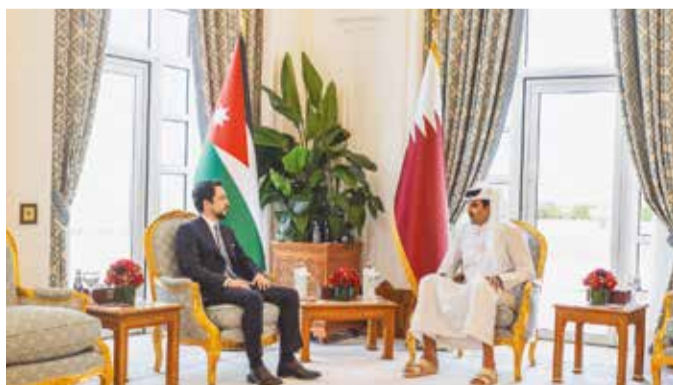
Expanded Talks Between Jordan and EU Leaders Underway

Jordan's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates Affairs, Ayman Al-Safadi, held expanded talks in Brussels with the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Kaja Kallas.

The discussions focused on strengthening cooperation between Jordan and the European Union, and reviewed regional developments and shared diplomatic priorities. The meeting took place as part of ongoing efforts to enhance political and security coordination between both sides.



Jordan Reaffirms Solidarity with Qatar



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Al Hussein met with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Doha, where both leaders discussed regional developments and efforts to strengthen stability.

During the meeting, the Crown Prince stressed the importance of intensifying efforts to achieve a comprehensive and sustainable de-escalation that restores calm across the region.

He reaffirmed Jordan's full solidarity with Qatar and other Gulf states, underlining that the security of Arab Gulf countries is central to the region's broader stability and security.



A U.S. sailor guides an F/A-18E Super Hornet during flight operations aboard USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72).



Helicopter departs USS Pinckney during regional maritime patrol operations

High-Level Visit to Jordan's Special Operations Training Center



His Majesty King Abdullah II, the Supreme Commander of the Jordan Armed Forces, and Finnish President Dr. Alexander Stubb observed a military training exercise at the King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center (KASOTC).

During the visit, the two leaders were briefed on the center's advanced training programmes and its role in preparing and qualifying special operations units.

Officials highlighted KASOTC's regional and international standing as a leading facility in specialised military training and counter-terrorism readiness.

Classifieds



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History haunts Arsenal as Man City take control of title race

Arteta's side pay price for missed chances

● Title race momentum shifts to City

● Pressure mounts on Arteta

● Gunners' winless April run continues

AFP | London

The spectre of a charging Manchester City haunts Arsenal once more after a 2-1 defeat at the Etihad Stadium on Sunday put a huge dent in the Gunners' hopes of a first Premier League title in 22 years.

Mikel Arteta's men remain on top of the table for now but could be knocked off their perch for the first time in 2026 when City, with a game in hand, visit doomed Burnley on Wednesday.

Arsenal had lost just three times in 49 games this season before last month's League Cup defeat to City.

But they have won just one of their past six games, including four consecutive defeats in domestic competitions, as they contemplate another trophyless season.

It is a case of history repeating itself for long-suffering Arsenal fans, who have seen their side finish second in the Premier League for the past three seasons.

In both the 2022/23 and

2023/24 campaigns, Pep Guardiola's relentless team reeled in Arteta's side while last season the Gunners finished behind a resurgent Liverpool.

Once again City have hit their stride when it matters most, just as Arsenal have run out of steam.

Guardiola has now won 31 of his 39 Premier League games in April as he eyes a seventh title during his decade in Manchester.

By contrast, Arteta has overseen just 11 victories in 27 April league fixtures during his six-and-a-half years in charge.

Arteta was keen to stress that fortune had not favoured his side in a game of fine margins at the Etihad.

While Arsenal clearly showed signs of nerves in losing at home to Bournemouth last weekend, they took the game to City and were undeterred by Rayan Cherki's brilliant opener.

Kai Havertz charged down Gianluigi Donnarumma's attempted clearance to level almost immediately and Arsenal

22

years have passed since Arsenal last won the Premier League title, with the Gunners now facing another season of frustration



Players tussle after Manchester City's Norwegian striker #09 Erling Haaland and Arsenal's Brazilian defender #06 Gabriel Magalhaes went head to head

had plenty of other chances.

Eberechi Eze's shot somehow came off the post and along the line rather than into the net when the score was 1-1 and Gabriel Magalhaes's deflected header also came off the post in a frantic finale.

But Arsenal have only themselves to blame for repeated failings that have not been addressed.

Twice Havertz missed huge chances in the second half -- the German international failed to beat Donnarumma when one-

on-one before heading over when unmarked deep into stoppage time.

Arteta fell to his knees in the technical area in despair.

After an injury-disrupted 18 months, Havertz was thrust into action for the full match as Arteta left Viktor Gyokeres on the bench until the final minutes.

The Swede was the man signed to solve Arsenal's need for a prolific number nine in last summer's transfer window.

Gyokeres is the club's top scorer with 18 goals in all competi-

tions, but he has rarely looked as if he is the answer against top-quality opposition.

Ruthless City

Arteta admitted that City were sharper in attack.

"We proved that we are there, but the reality is that in the two boxes there was a difference," said Arteta. "That's what we think is the difference between the two sides, the finishing in the boxes."

"There is an element of luck, there is an element of timing,



Arsenal had lost just three times in 49 games this season before last month's League Cup defeat to City

of execution. There are a lot of things that have to be your way. "At the end, winning or not winning is going to come down to this moment. There are certain individual moments that you need in order to achieve what we want."

For Guardiola, Erling Haaland proved the value of a world-class striker.

The Norwegian had been well-marshalled in a bruising battle with Gabriel, but stole ahead of his marker to slot home the winning goal and his 47th for club and country this season.

"You can see the difference today on the field and those top players made a difference today," former Arsenal captain Patrick Vieira told Sky Sports.

"They will feel the pressure more now. I always question the mental strength of the team and I will question it more now regarding the result today."

Arsenal still believe in title hopes despite City loss, says Odegaard

AFP | London

Martin Odegaard said he still believes Arsenal can win a first Premier League title since 2004 despite their devastating defeat.

Arsenal captain said the game against Manchester City was decided on small margins.

"We played a good game, I thought we pressed them really well, we had some really

good moments there on the high press," the midfielder told Sky Sports.

"And then, especially the second half, we looked a lot more dangerous, we had a few big, big moments there in front of goal.

"Small margins to decide a game like this, and we weren't sharp enough in front of the goals. That's why we go home with nothing, so I'm disappointed."

Liverpool boost top-five bid, Spurs in peril

AFP | London

Liverpool are closing in on a top-five finish and a place in next season's Champions League after a disappointing title defence, while Tottenham's relegation fears continue to deepen as the season nears its conclusion.

Here are some key talking points from the Premier League weekend:

Old guard ease Liverpool's pain

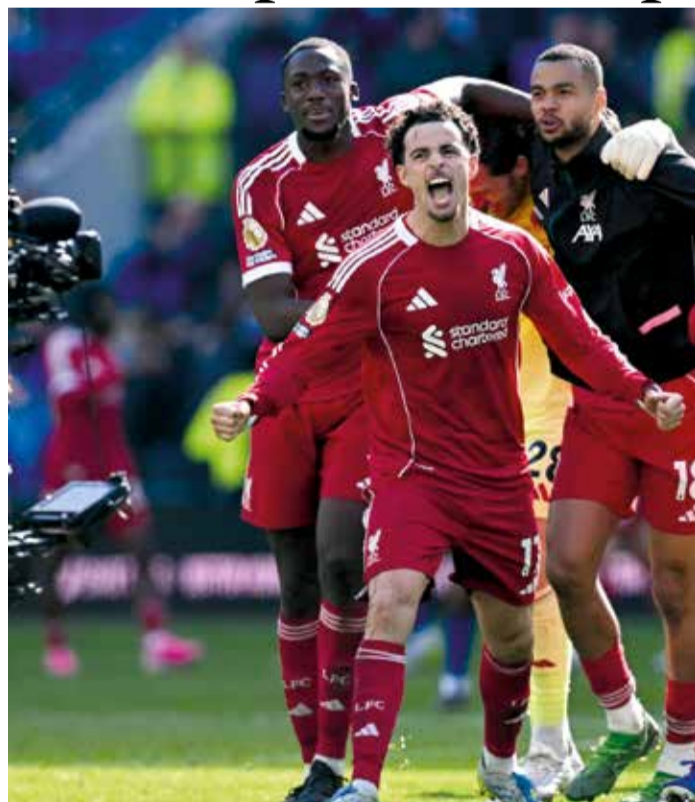
Everton started the Merseyside derby full of belief, but Virgil van Dijk's 100th-minute winner moved Liverpool a step closer to securing Champions League qualification.

Less than a year after winning the Premier League, Arne Slot is under pressure following a difficult second season at Anfield.

Heavy defeats in cup competitions have intensified scrutiny on the Dutchman.

However, Liverpool now look set to finish in the top five, sitting seven points clear of sixth-placed Chelsea with five matches remaining.

The inconsistent form of Mohamed Salah and Van Dijk has contributed to Liverpool's struggles this season, but both



Liverpool's English midfielder #17 Curtis Jones (C) and teammates celebrate on the pitch

delivered in the derby at Everton's new Hill Dickinson Stadium.

Salah opened the scoring before Van Dijk's late header effectively ended Everton's hopes of Champions League qualification.

Tottenham's woes

Roberto De Zerbi has urged his struggling Tottenham side to keep believing as they battle to avoid relegation.

However, the club's position looks increasingly dire, with



Tottenham's survival could hinge on a clash with bottom club Wolves, turning a routine fixture into a defining moment of their season

wins proving elusive while their rivals continue to collect points.

Spurs conceded a stoppage-time equaliser in a 2-2 draw against Brighton, marking De Zerbi's first home game in charge.

If West Ham defeat Crystal Palace, Tottenham could find themselves four points adrift of safety with only five matches left.

Nottingham Forest's 4-1 win over Burnley lifted them five points clear of the drop zone, while Leeds have opened up an eight-point cushion.

Tottenham's upcoming clash against bottom club Wolves is now a must-win if they are to keep their survival hopes alive.

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Treble-chasing Bayern delay celebrations despite title win

Bundesliga champions postpone traditional festivities as focus shifts to cup and Europe

● Bayern win 35th Bundesliga title

● Beat Stuttgart 4-2 after comeback

● Lead by 15 points at top

● Treble ambitions remain strong

AFP | Munich

Despite sealing their 35th Bundesliga title on Sunday, Bayern Munich put the celebrations, including the traditional beer showers, on ice as they continue to chase a treble this season.

Bayern came from a goal down to beat Stuttgart 4-2 to move into an unassailable 15-point lead over second-placed Borussia Dortmund with just four games remaining.

While images of players chasing each other across the grass holding large glasses of beer are synonymous with Bayern's almost annual celebrations, the club delayed the festivities with Wednesday's German Cup semi-final at Bayer Leverkusen



Rather than engaging in the traditional beer showers synonymous with a Bundesliga title win, Bayern players headed straight to the dressing room to begin recovery for their crucial DFB-Pokal semi-final against Bayer Leverkusen

en in mind.

Bayern are also through to the semi-finals of the Champions League, where they face holders Paris Saint-Germain.

Luis Diaz had two assists and Jamal Musiala one in the first-half, but both were subbed off at half-time ahead of the final phase of the season.

"I think it's coming -- yes, it's coming," Musiala told DAZN of the traditional beer shower celebrations.

"I think we're planning a proper celebration, probably at the last home game.



Bayern Munich's Belgian head coach Vincent Kompany celebrates after winning the match

"We're going straight to the changing rooms. I don't think much is going on right now, but definitely for the last game."

Bayern striker Harry Kane, who has two Bundesliga titles and a Supercup since joining the Bavarian giants in 2023, said the celebrations would be sweeter

with more silverware.

"I think it's still important to celebrate, and I will with my family and friends and the guys in the players' lounge, but it's a little bit different to last year.

"We weren't in any other competitions, so we had the chance to really celebrate and enjoy a

big night together.

"That probably won't happen yet, but we'll find time for that... For now we enjoy tonight, but then obviously the full focus will be on Wednesday."

Before the game, Bayern coach Vincent Kompany told DAZN: "We're now at a stage in this sea-

35

Bundesliga titles have now been won by Bayern Munich, extending their domestic dominance

son where we can all live with waiting a little longer before we celebrate."

After the game, Kompany turned his attention to the two other trophies on offer.

"We've had very few losses this season. So many successes are possible. We're going to Leverkusen. We know it's a football match, anything can happen," Kompany said.

"But we simply have the belief that we can do it. That's worth a lot in football."

Joshua Kimmich, who was captain for the match with Manuel Neuer rested, praised his side's ruthless title defence, but warned rivals the Bavarian giants were not done yet.

"The way we won the title was special. We've rarely won as consistently and convincingly as we did this year.

"But we still have a few goals this season."

Magic shock Pistons as Thunder and Celtics win big in NBA playoffs

AFP | Los Angeles

The Orlando Magic stunned the Detroit Pistons 112-101 on Sunday as the reigning champion Oklahoma City Thunder and Boston Celtics opened the NBA playoffs with big wins.

The Thunder, trying to become the first team since Golden State in 2017 and 2018 to repeat as champions, came out firing in a 119-84 victory over the Phoenix Suns. The Celtics, seeded second in the Eastern Conference behind Detroit, dominated the Philadelphia 76ers 123-91.



Oklahoma City's Jalen Williams celebrates a dunk

And San Antonio star Victor Wembanyama made a triumphant playoff debut, scoring 35 points as the Spurs beat

the Portland Trail Blazers 111-98.

Oklahoma City looked rested and recharged after a week off since they locked up the Western Conference top seed and best record in the league.

But Eastern Conference top seeds Detroit looked rusty and the Magic, who battled through the play-in to bag their playoff berth, took advantage.

Paolo Banchero scored 23 points and Franz Wagner scored 11 of his 19 in the fourth quarter as the Magic withstood a 39-point performance from Pistons star Cade Cunningham.

Joksimovic Era Begins for Bahrain Volleyball



Joksimovic puts pen to paper as Bahrain head coach

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Volleyball Association has officially appointed Montenegrin coach Ivan Joksimovic as the new head coach of the national men's volleyball team for the upcoming period. The agreement was reached in coordination with the management of Dar Kulaib Club, where Joksimovic currently serves as head coach.

The appointment comes amid Bahrain's preparations for the 4th Gulf Games, set to take place in Doha from May 11 to May 22.

Joksimovic arrives in strong domestic form, having guided

ed Dar Kulaib Club through a dominant 2025-26 Isa Bin Rashid Bahrain Volleyball League campaign. The team remains unbeaten with 23 wins and is firmly positioned as one of the leading contenders for the national title.

Under his leadership, Bahrain will begin its Gulf Games campaign on May 16 against Oman. The team will return to action the following day against the United Arab Emirates, before facing Kuwait on May 19.

A key fixture in the group stage comes on May 20, when Bahrain meets hosts Qatar, before concluding its campaign against Saudi Arabia on May 22.

Bahrain Announce Basketball Squad for 4th Gulf Games

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Basketball Association has unveiled a preliminary 15-player squad for the men's national team ahead of the 4th Gulf Games, scheduled to take place in Doha from May 11 to May 22.

The selection draws on domestic talent from the Zain Bahrain Basketball League, which concluded earlier this week with Muharraq crowned champions after a dominant campaign. Several players from runners-up Manama also feature, alongside other standout performers from across the league.

The squad includes Mohamed Bu Ali, Ahmed Salman, Ali Hus-

sain, Ali Jaber, Ahmed Bindayneh, Mahmood Abbas, Nader Ali, Ahmed Al Durazi, Hassan Ghareeb, Omran Hassan, Nader Shaker, Mohamed Sami, Mohamed Ghazi, Hassan Fahad, and Mohamed Nasser.

Basketball is one of 19 sports featured at the Gulf Games, with competitions staged across multiple premier venues in Doha, including Aspire Dome, Qatar Sports Club, and the Khalifa International Complex, among others.

The multi-sport event will also feature athletics, swimming, boxing, fencing, taekwondo, squash, handball, volleyball, and several other disciplines, bringing together athletes from across the region.

Bahrain enters the tourna-



Ahmed Salman during Bahrain's 2021 Asia Cup qualifiers

ment with a strong recent record in regional multi-sport competitions. At the 2022 edi-

tion, the Kingdom secured 64 medals, including 20 golds, while it claimed 43 medals in 2015 and 19 medals in 2011, eight of which were gold.

The national team will use the Gulf Games as the opening stage of a busy competitive calendar. Following the tournament in Doha, Bahrain will compete in the Asian Cup qualifying rounds in the United Arab Emirates from August 24 to September 1.

Further international commitments include participation in the Asian Games in Japan from September 19 to October 4. Bahrain may also face a second qualification window for the Asia Cup later in the year, scheduled from November 23 to December 1, depending on their progress in the opening stage.

A reputation to honour

Bahrain targets success at revived Asian Beach Games

TDT | Manama

Bahrain returns to the Asian Beach Games in Sanya, China, with a 20-athlete delegation set to compete across four disciplines. The continental event makes its comeback after a decade-long absence.

Competition officially begins tomorrow, bringing together 45 Asian delegations and featuring 14 beach and water-based sports, including beach soccer, volleyball, jiu-jitsu, sailing, dragon boat racing, and aquathlon.

Bahrain will be represented in beach handball, 3x3 basketball, open water swimming, and beach wrestling, with competition spread across the full schedule.

Action for the Kingdom's representatives starts immediately with beach handball on opening day, offering an early chance to make an impact on the medal table. The 3x3 basketball team follows on Saturday, before William Balzano and Robert Bonsall compete in open water swimming the following Sunday. The campaign concludes on April 28-29, when four athletes take part in beach wrestling.

The staggered programme allows each squad to focus on preparation and recovery while maintaining coordination across the wider delegation.

In the final build-up, Bahrain's athletes completed training camps in China, splitting time



Coach Qaidoom leads his beach handball team in training

between Sanya and Hangzhou depending on their discipline. The basketball team refined tactics and conditioning in Hangzhou, while the remaining athletes acclimatised in Sanya to coastal conditions and competition venues.

The Bahrain Olympic Committee oversaw logistics and planning throughout the prepa-

ration phase, with federation officials on site to monitor progress and support teams ahead of competition.

The 20-man squad brings experienced international competitors. The 3x3 basketball lineup features Bogdan Dragovic, Milos Supica, Nasser Al Mosawi, and Austin Ajukwa, under coach Ahmed Elias, reflecting Bah-

rain's continued investment in the format.

In open water swimming, William Balzano and Robert Bonsall represent Bahrain in the endurance event, adding strength to the delegation.

Beach wrestling again looks like the Kingdom's strongest medal hope, led by Shamil Sharipov in the 90kg category.



William Balzano steps up his preparations in the pool

A world bronze and Asian silver medallist, he is joined by Magomed Sharipov, Magomedrasul Asluev, and Alibeg Alibegov, all bringing international pedigree.

The beach handball team, coached by Hussain Al Qaidoom, faces a demanding schedule starting against hosts China on April 21 and running through April 27.

The Asian Beach Games return after a 10-year break, with the last edition held in 2016

in Da Nang, Vietnam. Bahrain has historically excelled at the event, winning 11 medals including seven golds. Its standout performance came at Phuket 2014, where it claimed five gold and two silver medals, followed by further success in Da Nang.

As competition begins, Bahrain arrives in Sanya aiming to build on that strong legacy and convert preparation into podium finishes.

Rosenior says Chelsea owners supportive despite slump



Chelsea's head coach Liam Rosenior reacts during a match (file photo)

AFP | London

Liam Rosenior said yesterday that Chelsea's owners had been "magnificent" in their support despite an alarming slump that has left their Champions League qualification hopes hanging by a thread.

The Blues are seven points behind fifth-placed Liverpool after four straight Premier League defeats and their chances of finishing in the top five look bleak.

Boos greeted the full-time whistle following Saturday's 1-0 defeat to Manchester United at Stamford Bridge af-

ter some supporters staged a street protest against owners BlueCo ahead of kick-off.

Chelsea co-owner Behdad Eghbali last week said the club were still behind Rosenior and remained optimistic about long-term success under his management.

Asked yesterday if he felt that support, Blues head coach Rosenior, who replaced Enzo Maresca in January, said: "One hundred percent.

"They have been supportive of me in our daily conversations, the sporting directors involved, they have been magnificent in their support of me and the team.

Real Madrid coach Arbeloa launches stout defence of Mbappe

AFP | Madrid

RReal Madrid coach Alvaro Arbeloa mounted a strong defence of French superstar Kylian Mbappe, who was criticised for what some perceived as ignoring his defensive responsibilities in last week's Champions League defeat by Bayern Munich.

Arbeloa, who himself is under fire with Real all but certain to finish without a trophy this term, said Mbappe had nothing to reproach himself about and that aside from scoring in both legs of the quarter-final he had "given his all in defence".

Real lost 4-3 in a thrilling second-leg tussle with Bayern Munich -- who progressed 6-4 on aggregate -- with the Spanish side reduced to 10 men after Eduardo Camavinga was sent off in the 86th minute.

Bayern scored twice after the Frenchman's dismissal, which sparked the criticism of Mbappe.

Arbeloa, though, was having none of this at his eve-of-match press conference yesterday.

"I have nothing to reproach Kylian about," said Arbeloa,



Real Madrid's French forward #10 Kylian Mbappe (R) and Bayern Munich's French defender #02 Dayot Upamecano vie for the ball

whose side host Alaves on Tuesday.

"He was at the top of his game, he scored in both legs and was a constant threat to their defence. "He gave his all in defence, he worked really hard.

"I was thoroughly satisfied with his performance in that match," added the 43-year-old.

“He was at the top of his game, he scored in both legs and was a constant threat to their defence. He gave his all in defence, he worked really hard. I was thoroughly satisfied with his performance in that match

ALVARO ARBELOA

wounds by winning European club football's most prized trophy last term.

Whether Arbeloa, who replaced Xabi Alonso earlier this season, is the man still in charge next term is in doubt -- arch-rivals Barcelona lead Real by nine points in the race for the La Liga crown with seven matches remaining.

However, he refused to comment on his future, aside from saying it was not in his hands, but remarked that there was no need for a "huge revolution" at Real in order to turn things round next campaign.