

Kingdom's senior men's national team defeats Gulf rivals by 14 goals to make winning start in main round of 2022 Asian Men's Handball Championship in Saudi Arabia | P16



Saudi-led coalition denies targeting detention centre in Yemen's Saada

Reuters | Cairo

The Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen denied targeting a detention centre in Yemen's Saada province, saying the facility hit was not a site restricted from strikes, the Saudi official news agency SPA reported yesterday.

"The coalition will inform the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Yemen (OCHA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) on the facts and details," the state news agency said, citing a coalition spokesman.

He said the target in Saada was not on no-targeting lists agreed upon with the OCHA, was not reported by the ICRC and did not meet the standards stipulated by the Third Geneva Convention for Prisoners of War.

Kuwait foreign minister visits Beirut

Reuters

Kuwait's foreign minister visited Beirut on Saturday in the first trip by a senior Gulf Arab official since a diplomatic rift last year, saying he had delivered confidence-building proposals to Lebanon in a message coordinated with Gulf states. Speaking after meeting Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said ties with Beirut had not been severed and relations were now in a phase of confidence-building measures.

For a better tomorrow

Bahrain rolls out strategies and initiatives to enhance Kingdom's long-term competitiveness

TDT | Manama

New strategies and initiatives aimed at developing the economy and creating quality opportunities for citizens were released yesterday by the Kingdom following the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

The ambitious plan revolves around five key pillars, as announced by the Cabinet chaired by HRH Prince Salman in October 2021.

These include creating quality



5

The ambitious plan revolves around five key pillars, as announced by the Cabinet chaired by HRH Prince Salman in October 2021.

jobs for Bahrainis to make them the 'employee of choice' in the labour market, launching major strategic projects, developing strategic priority sectors, simplifying and increasing the efficiency of commercial procedures and achieving fiscal sustainability and economic stability.

Sector-wise, the strategy focuses on Oil and Gas, Tourism, Logistics, Industrial, Financial Services, Telecommunications, IT and Digital Economy.

The plan introduces several initiatives and strategies to enhance the Kingdom's long-term competitiveness,

for which the concerned authorities are launching work strategies. The focus is on making citizens the first choice in the labour market, facilitating commercial procedures and increasing their effectiveness to attract investments, implementing major development projects,

and developing promising sectors with the aim of non-oil GDP growth.

The strategy also focuses on enhancing endeavours for financial sustainability and economic stability by achieving financial balance by 2024.

(continued on page 4)

Is my money gone for ever?



Victims of online banking scams 'hardly get their money back' amid rising number of online heists

Staff Reporter TDT | Manama

No one knows what to do now! It seems the fraudsters targeting the online banking and financial transaction networks in the Kingdom are on a rampage; scores continue to lose money from their bank accounts daily. The victims say banks and money wallet applications are not owning up the responsibility to safeguard their online accounts while attempting to engage in a blame game. And most interestingly, among those who lost money is an IT manager of a financial institution.

The Daily Tribune office has,

What has happened is hard to believe. One fine day I woke up to see that BD860 was robbed from my account through ten online transactions, mainly of BD99 and lesser amounts

until now, received tens of calls from the victims, who are at sea after losing bucks from their accounts. The hackers have also managed to steal from the accounts of many companies and organisations. It is high time the authorities take serious steps to contain the fraudsters and their seemingly vast networks

As the process to block the account was ongoing, the robber struck once again. Twenty-five transactions of BD99 were carried out by the robber, leaving the bank officials clueless as to what to do next

spreading worldwide. Speaking to *The Daily Tribune*, Ajeesh P K, a resident in the Kingdom, who and his employer lost BD4,500 to scammers, said he has yet to come to terms with the "nightmare". "What has happened is hard to believe. One fine day I woke up to see that BD860 was robbed from

my account through ten online transactions, mainly of BD99 and lesser amounts. I also saw two missed calls from a WhatsApp number not in my contacts.

"I could also see that 100 fils had been transferred to my account using an online payment app carrying the same number, from which the stranger had made WhatsApp calls. I suspect him to have hacked my account and stolen money and have filed a complaint against him with the local police.

"On the same day, I visited my bank branch to block my account. Suddenly, my employer called me, saying BD310 had been robbed from the company account. Since my account and

company account were with the same bank, I asked the branch manager to block both of them.

"As the process to block the account was ongoing, the robber struck once again. Twenty-five transactions of BD99 were carried out by the robber, leaving the bank officials clueless as to what to do next. Subsequently, both accounts have been blocked and are not being used now for any transactions."

Ajeesh said he has filed a complaint with Sitra Police and the CID Department but is unsure about getting the robbed money back, which is the case with most of the victims, who contacted *The Daily Tribune*.

(Continued on page 5)

BAHRAIN COVID-19

TOTAL TESTED
8544661

ACTIVE CASES
26939

DEATHS
1399

DISCHARGED
299128

NEW CASES
3162

CRITICAL
11

220 fils (includes VAT)





خطة التعافي الاقتصادي
Economic Recovery Plan



Economic Recovery Plan

Following the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and an announcement made by the Cabinet - chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister - Bahrain's government announced The Economic Recovery Plan in October 2021. The plan introduces several initiatives and strategies that will create opportunities for citizens and enhance the Kingdom's long-term competitiveness.

The ambitious plan revolves around **5 key pillars, which include:**

Creating quality jobs for Bahrainis to make them the 'employee of choice' in the labor market

Launching major strategic projects

Developing strategic priority sectors

Simplifying and increasing the efficiency of commercial procedures

Achieving fiscal sustainability and economic stability

Oil and Gas Sector Strategy

Tourism Sector Strategy

Logistics Sector Strategy

Industrial Sector Strategy

Financial Services Sector Strategy

Telecommunications, IT, and Digital Economy Strategy

Announcement of the Kingdom's Economic Recovery Plan

Launch of the Logistics Sector Strategy 2022 - 2026

Launch of the Financial Services Sector Strategy 2022 - 2026

Launch of the Industrial Sector Strategy 2022 - 2026

31 October 2021

17 November 2021

5 December 2021

30 December 2021

6 November 2021

24 November 2021

23 December 2021

12 January 2022

Launch of the Tourism Sector Strategy 2022 - 2026

Announcement of the Major Strategic Projects

Announcement of initiatives to Further Develop Government Services

Launch of the Telecommunications, IT, and Digital Economy Strategy 2022 - 2026

Announced on 6 November 2021

Tourism Sector Strategy 2022 - 2026

Objective

- Promoting Bahrain as an international tourism hub
- Increasing the number of target markets
- Increasing the tourism contribution to the GDP to **11.4%** by 2026
- Diversification of tourism products

Projects

- AlGhous Waterfront Completion date 2024
- Sa'ada Project Completion date 2023
- Al Dana Amphitheatre Completed 2021
- Qalali Waterfront Completion date 2022
- Bilaj Al Jazayer Beachfront Development Phase one completed 2019
- Jumeirah Gulf of Bahrain Resort Completion date 2022
- Bahrain Bay Beach Completion date 2022
- The New Exhibition Center Completion date 2022
- Mantis Hotel & Resort in Hawar Island Completion date 2023

Announced on 17 November 2021

Logistics Sector Strategy 2022 - 2026

Objectives to be achieved by 2030

- 1 million metric tons** Air Freight Capacity
- 10%** contribution of the logistics sector to the Kingdom's GDP
- 1 million containers** Cargo port capacity
- Increase the number of airline flights to **70+ destinations**
- To ensure Bahrain is one of the **top 20 countries worldwide** in the logistics sector

Announced on 24 November 2021

Implementation of Major Strategic Projects

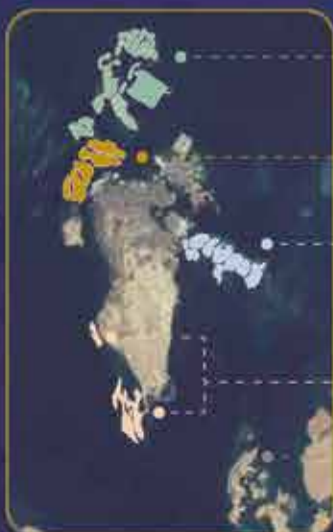
Major strategic projects valued at over USD **30 billion**

Planning five new cities

- Fasht al Jarim Area Plan
- Suhaila Island Area Plan
- Hawar Islands Area Plan
- Fasht al Adhm Area Plan
- Gulf of Bahrain Area Plan

Infrastructure and Telecommunications projects

- King Hamad Causeway
- Bahrain Metro
- Future International Marine Fiber telecommunication projects
- Northern road





خطة التعافي الاقتصادي
Economic Recovery Plan



Economic Recovery Plan

Implementation of Major Strategic Projects

Major strategic projects valued at over USD **30 billion**

Industrial Sector Aluminum Downstream Zone Bapco Modernization Program (BMP) US Trade Zone	Education Sector King Abdullah Medical City College of Engineering at the University of Bahrain
Tourism Sector Al Jazayer Beach (Tourist City) Jumeirah Bahrain Bay Resort and Spa Bahrain International Exhibition and Convention Centre The Address Marassi hotel and The Address Residence Vida Marassi Al Bahrain Hotel & Vida Residence Marassi Galleria South City	Health Sector Dilmunia Health Services Complex King Hamad AMH Hospital
Housing Sector Salman City Khalifa City East Sitra City East Hidd City Al Ramli District Government Land Development Project (Sharaka)	Youth & Sports Sector Sports City
Investment Platform 	

Announced on 5 December 2021

Financial Services Sector Strategy 2022 - 2026

- 20% gradual increase in the share of financing allocated to SMEs from the domestic financing portfolio by the end of 2025
- 20% increase in participation of individuals and institutions in public debt primary issuance
- Increase in the insurance sector's contribution to the GDP by end of 2026 to **8%**
- 5 companies to be listed on Bahrain investment market
- 3000 training opportunities annually in key areas of the financial sector by the end of 2024
- 25% decrease in volume of currency circulation
- Maintain a consistent annual growth of **10%** in the electronic fund transfers
- Maintaining the financial sector's GDP contribution in the range of **20%** until the end of 2026, and then increasing the contribution to 25%

Announced on 23 December 2021

Develop Government Services

Developments on the performance of government agencies within 3 systems

During the period from 13 September to 13 December 2021

Number of applications through the Portal (Sijilat) reached 44070	Number of requests for building permits through the portal (Benayat) amounted to 893	Number of suggestions, inquiries and complaints through the system reached 34964
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Announced on 30 December 2021

Industrial Sector Strategy 2022 - 2026

- 25.3% increase in percentage of Bahrainis from overall workers
- 14.5% contribution to the GDP
- 80.1% in total export contribution

Promoting local industries

Launching an In-Country Value program	Providing industrial incubation opportunities for SMEs	Expanding Export Bahrain solutions
Developing the "Made in Bahrain" trademark	Launching the Industrial Excellence Award	Promoting integration through analysing manufacturing gaps

Announced on 12 January 2022

Telecommunications, IT, and Digital Economy Strategy 2022 - 2026

Key performance indicators (KPIs) by 2026

- 100% national broadband network (BNET) coverage
- 20% increase in the number of IT sector start-ups
- 35% increase in national employment in the sector by 2022-2023
- 20,000 citizens - national capacity building in cybersecurity through awareness and training
- A minimum of **200** additional automated government services

Decoding the economic recovery plan



(Continued from page 1)

Bahrain announced its economic recovery plan with the launch of the Tourism Sector Strategy 2022-2026 on November 6, 2021.

It aimed at raising the level of tourism indicators such as tourist spending to 2 billion Bahraini dinars, the average tourist nights to 3.5 nights, and the tourism sector's contribution to the GDP to 11.4%.

Tourists reaching Bahrain touched 14.1 million, and the average spending per visitor increased to 74.8 Bahraini dinars.

The strategy revolves around developing marine facades and activities, business tourism, sports tourism, Archaeology and history, entertainment tourism, media and cinema, and medical tourism.

Logistics Sector

On November 17, 2021, the Logistics Sector Strategy 2022-2026 was launched. It targets several areas, most notably the review of laws and regulations, the development of infrastructure facilities, the development of policies and procedures, and the provision of incentives to investors.

It also aims at enhancing regional and international communication, marketing and promotion of investment opportunities. The strategy aims to raise the amount of freight at the port to one million containers, and at the airport to one million metric tons by 2030.

Focus is also on increasing the number of air destinations to more than 70 by 2025, making Bahrain among the top 3 regional countries and 20 countries globally,

and raising the sector's contribution to GDP to 10% by 2030.

Strategic projects valued over \$30bn

On November 24, 2021, Bahrain announced the implementation of major development projects with a value exceeding 30 billion US dollars. The strategy calls for developing five cities - the Fisht El-Garm area plan, Suhaila Island area plan, Fasht Al-Azem area plan, Gulf of Bahrain area plan, and Hawar Islands Area plan.

These strategic projects also include infrastructure and communications projects: King Hamad Causeway, Bahrain Metro, Future international Marine Fibre telecommunication project, and Northern road.

Industrial sector

Industrial sector projects include the Aluminium manufacturing industries, the Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco) refinery modernization project, and the establishment of a commercial area with the United States of America.

The strategy also includes projects in the tourism sector, namely, the development project of Bilaj Al Jazayer beachfront development, the Jumeirah Bahrain Bay Resort project, the new Bahrain International Exhibition and Convention Centre, the Southern City project, The Address Marassi Al Bahrain Hotel, The Address Residences, Vida Marassi Al Bahrain Hotel, Vida Residences, and Marassi Galleria.

In the education sector, announced projects include the King Abdullah Medical City project, and the College of Engineering project at the University of Bahrain.

Health sector

The Kingdom has also announced major development projects in the health sector. These include the Dilmunia Services Complex Health, and King Hamad Hospital - AMH.

Sports sector

In the youth and sports sector, Bahrain will develop the Sports City, in addition to advertising the investment opportunities provided by major development projects within the economic recovery plan.

For developing a comprehensive strategy for the banking sector, the Kingdom had also launched a Financial Services Sector Development Strategy 2022 - 2026 on December 5, 2021.

Its priorities revolve around creating quality job opportunities for citizens, the development of the financial market sector, the development of legislation and policies, the development of the insurance sector, the development of financial services and financial technology.

Financial services sector

The performance indicators of the strategy for developing the financial services sector revolve around increasing the share of SME financing in a phased manner to reach 20% of the domestic financing portfolio of retail banks by the end of 2025.

Other priorities include the inclusion of five promising companies on the Bahrain investment market, reducing paper currency circulation by 25%, maintaining consistent annual growth of 10% in electronic fund transfers, in addition to maintaining the contribution of the financial sector to the GDP in the range of 20% until the end of 2026 and then increasing the percentage to 25%.

Strategy for the sec-

tor also include increasing the insurance sector's contribution to the GDP to 8% by the end of 2026, meeting the training needs of the most prominent areas of sector development by creating 3,000 trainees annually by the end of 2024, and a 20% increase in the participation of individuals and institutions in the primary market for public debt issuances of the Government of Bahrain.

Government services

The focus is also on developing government services that receive complaints most through the National Suggestions and Complaints System (Tawasul) and are frequently used.

The statistics showed an increase in the number of documented services from September to December of this year.

Authorities recorded a 57% increase at a rate of 742 documented services to 100% at an average of 1294 documented services, and translated services rose from 27% at a rate of 345 services to 68% at an average of 885 services, while work is still in progress on translating 409 services.

Statistics also showed an increase in the number of services for which a service level agreement was set during the period from September to December. This increased from 52% at a rate of 674 services to 97% at a rate of 1255 services.

Statistics also show that the number of requests through the commercial records system (Sijilat) amounted to 44070 during the mentioned period. Out of which 99% have been completed within the time specified in the Service Level Agreement and 1% af-

ter the specified time.

Records further show that the number of requests for building permits through the building permit system (buildings) amounted to 893 during the period. Various requests were answered within the time specified in the service level agreement while one transaction exceeded the specified time. The average number of days for the issuance of building permits was 2.25 days compared to the maximum service level of 5 days.

Industrial sector

On December 30, 2021, the Industry Sector Strategy (2022-2026) was launched. It revolves around the promotion of industries, improving investor experience, updating legislation and laws, orienting Bahrain professionally, and investing in infrastructure.

This strategy lays its foundations by supporting the sector's transformation towards the Fourth Industrial Revolution and applying the concept of a circular carbon economy, environmental and social governance. It also encourages investment in technological infrastructure, digitizing manufacturing, and increasing the efficiency of supply chains and supply through the integration of Gulf industries.

Performance indicators

Bahrain has also identified three performance indicators in the industry sector strategy (2022-2026).

The first indicator is Bahrainisation percentage of the total workforce in the industrial sector, which aims to raise the percentage of national employ-

ment (Bahrainis) in the industrial sector from 23% in 2019 to 25.3% in 2026.

The second indicator is the contribution of the industrial sector to the GDP, which aims at increasing the GDP contribution of the domestic industrial sector from 12.8% in 2019 to 14.5% in 2026. The third indicator aims at raising the contribution of the industrial sector to national exports, which aims at raising the ratio of industrial sector exports to the total national exports of 70.

On January 12, 2022, the Kingdom launched the ICT sector strategy and digital economy (2022-2026). It centres around developing the infrastructure of the telecommunications sector, enhancing e-governance, supporting the digital economy, and developing digital capabilities.

Indicators for measuring the performance of the ICT sector strategy and the digital economy have also been identified. This aims at increasing the coverage of the national broadband network in all parts of the Kingdom to 100% by 2026, raising the number of Startups in the information technology sector by 20%, and increasing the percentage of national cadres working in the sector of Communications and information technology from 30% to 35% over the next two years.

The strategy also calls for building national human capacities in cybersecurity by educating and training 20,000 citizens by 2026 and automating nearly 200 additional government services by 2026.

Banks struggle over 'growing complaints'

More pressure on bank staff who struggle to handle increasing complaints after online frauds

(Continued from Page 1)

Staff at all commercial banks across the Kingdom now find it challenging to handle the rising number of complaints from customers after fraudulent online money transfers.

"It's not easy to handle the increasing number of complaints, and we feel embarrassed to face our customers as we don't have genuine answers to deal with them," a bank official told *The Daily Tribune*.

Banks, money wallet apps should take more responsibility

On the other hand, an IT professional and cybersecurity expert said the Financial Institutions should collectively form a unit to tackle these online scammers. "In many developed countries, most banks and digital wallets compensate the customers for the lost amounts to scammers. And they have earmarked millions in this regard. In Bahrain also, I expect the banks to take more responsibility and at least share the risk along with the customers."

"I don't understand how money is stolen even after deactivating many accounts. The disease has progressed, and no treatment seems to be working now."

Hacking or buying accounts!

He said he had discussed the issue with many top bank officials. "What I could learn is that the scammers are either hacking the bank accounts or 'buying accounts from expatriates who are leaving the Kingdom'. The second one sounds quite strange, but I was told it's a reality, and 'these bought accounts' are used as the focal points to carry out scams."

"Many money wallets offer few procedural difficulties to make customers happy, which is not the right thing. Suppose a lengthy course of action ensures safety and keeps the scammers at bay. In that case, it must be adopted as the customers are now willing to bear procedural difficulties for keeping their money safe in the accounts."

He asked why the money

It's not easy to handle the increasing number of complaints, and we feel embarrassed to face our customers as we don't have genuine answers to deal with them

A BANK OFFICIAL

I don't understand how money is stolen even after deactivating many accounts. The disease has progressed, and no treatment seems to be working now

AN IT PROFESSIONAL AND CYBERSECURITY EXPERT

The hackers deploy their highest social engineering skills to get information, which is supposed to be kept secret, private and never shared, from their victims

ALI BESHARA, THE HEAD OF INFORMATION SECURITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT AT THE BENEFIT COMPANY

There is no automated system to de-link with the bank account upon installing or deactivating the app, which is worsening the situation, allowing scammers to steal more and more

IT PROFESSIONAL



Picture for representation only

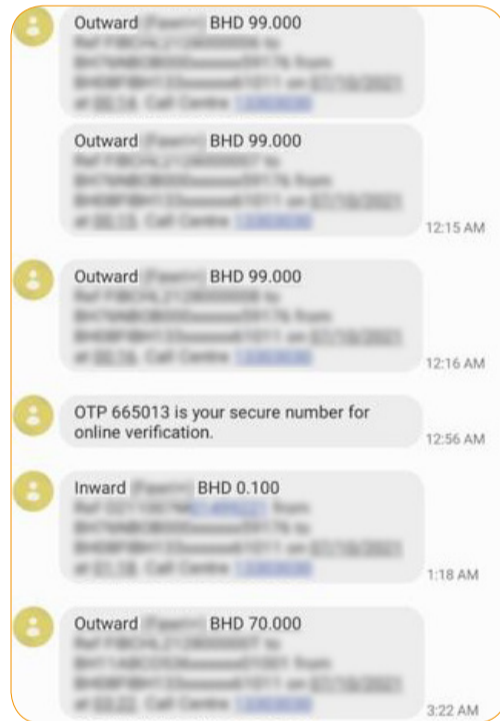
The Central Bank of Bahrain, many a time, has carried out campaigns and circulated messages alerting over the possibility of falling victims to online fraudsters.

wallets are permitting money transfers even after uninstalling and deactivating their apps. "There is no automated system to de-link with the bank account upon installing or deactivating the app, which is worsening the situation, allowing scammers to steal more and more."

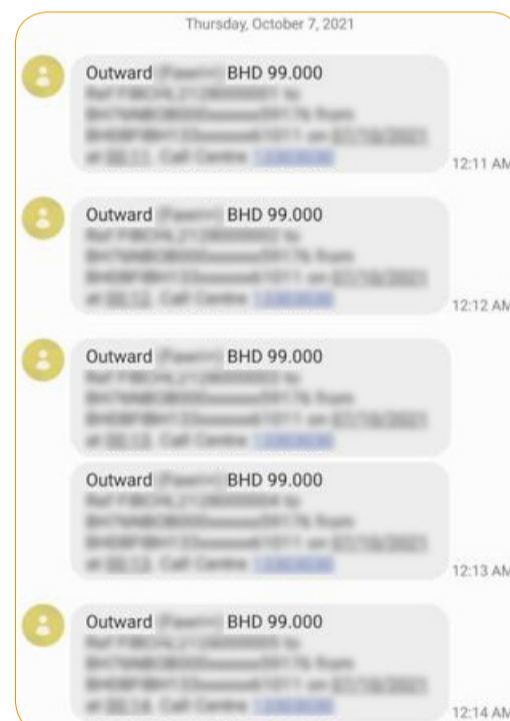
The Daily Tribune spoke to many victims who have lost their money. And all of them said they haven't "got a fils back".

'Social engineering'

In an exclusive interview, Ali Beshara, the Head of Information Security and Risk Management at The BENEFIT Company, which owns the popular online money transfer app BenefitPay,



A mobile screenshot showing the flood of money transfers from Ajeesh's account. The scammer brilliantly chose the amount BD99 as OTP is required for transferring BD100 as well as higher amounts.



attributed the rise in online fund transfer scams to lack of alert-

ness from the part of users.

Mr Beshara also pointed out

that this kind of cybercrime involves 'social engineering' - a

term used by information security professionals to describe the action from the part of hackers.

"The hackers deploy their highest social engineering skills to get information, which is supposed to be kept secret, private and never shared, from their victims."

"It is in these situations, the hacker gets the password of the BenefitPay application and the OTP (One-Time Password), which is sent to the user in case of device change and money transfer," he had said.

Mr Beshara stressed that users are almost totally protected if they don't click on links sent by fraudsters or share passwords with strangers.

Target through calls

Scammers generally target victims by making calls to their mobile phones or sending SMS. Upon receiving the call or SMS, data is leaked and money is either transferred to other accounts or used for purchasing various goods online through the payment app already installed on the mobile phone.

A few weeks ago, *The Daily Tribune* carried a report about fraudsters targeting the online banking and financial transaction network in the Kingdom.

The published article carried the plight of one Bangladeshi national, one Pakistani national, and an Indian businessman, who lost nearly BD1,500 to the scammers.

Stop responding to calls and text messages from strangers

Most victims have launched a complaint with the police department, pleading for an intense probe into the matter.

Cyber security experts have always highlighted the need to protect Unified Payment Interface (UPI) and online transactions from scammers in light of increasing online payments.

They include not responding to calls and text messages from strangers and putting up different passwords on different accounts and UPI apps.

The Central Bank of Bahrain, many a time, has carried out campaigns and circulated messages alerting over the possibility of falling victims to online fraudsters.

Court case

Drug peddler loses appeal, Court confirms 10-year jail term, BD5,000 fine

● The accused was caught red handed with 210 grams of narcotic substances and 32 narcotic medical tablets

● Police set the trap by calling the suspect through a source offering to buy Shabu worth BD1000

● The accused, however, denied the charges levelled against him

TDT | Manama



Representative picture

A 30-year-old drug peddler has had his 10-year prison term confirmed by the Court of Cassation, rejecting an appeal

filed against the verdict. The Court also confirmed a 5,000 dinar fine awarded to the appellant for selling Shabu,

hashish and Marijuana in the Kingdom.

Court files say police confiscated the drugs from his home, following a court order.

The Public Prosecution charged the suspect with possessing psychoactive drugs such as hashish and methamphetamine to sell. The prosecution also charged him with abuse of hashish and methamphetamine.

Incidents leading to the case occurred with the security authorities receiving a tip-off that a person having prior convictions had obtained narcotic substances.

After confirming the information, the public prosecution issued a warrant to detain him and search his residence.

Investigators managed to ar-

Incidents leading to the case occurred with the security authorities receiving a tip-off that a person having prior convictions had obtained narcotic substances.

rest him red-handed with the help of a confidential source.

Police set the trap by calling the suspect through the source and offering to buy Shabu worth BD1000.

The source also offered to pay him in advance, to which the suspect agreed.

Unsuspecting the trap set, the suspect arrived in his car as

agreed to the meeting place and called the undercover agent to meet him at the parking.

The suspect also handed out two bags of Shabu after taking the money, which the police photographed from another vehicle.

After completing the deal, the suspect drove off quickly. He was then tracked down by the police and arrested near his residence.

The police then searched his house and found a black bag with 210 grams of narcotic substances and 32 narcotic medical tablets.

The accused, however, denied the charges levelled against him and claimed that the drugs belonged to the confidential source.

CAPTAINS CORNER

Say no to selfish anti-vaxxers



CAPTAIN MAHMOOD AL MAHMOOD

After an 11-day ordeal, tennis star Novak Djokovic lost his bid to make sports history and defend his championship in the Australian Open. Worse, he was deported from Australia for being unvaccinated.

Djokovic's defense was that he has recovered from COVID-19 in June 2020 and the antibodies from that attack was as good as a vaccination. The back story to that illness was that he and his wife tested positive after he played in a series of exhibition matches that he organised in Serbia and Croatia with zero social distancing amid the height of the coronavirus pandemic. The competition's record-holder, was initially approved for a medical exemption by Tennis Australia and the state of Victoria but border officials rejected the exemption and revoked his visa.

If "vaccination" was a trending word in 2021, there was also an opposite word: "anti-vaxxer". Many people have refused to take the vaccination, saying that they were unsure of the efficacy of the shots and that they were opposed to injecting just anything into their bodies without knowing the long-term effects. Even in Bahrain, where vaccination to safeguard against the virus is free, there are people who adopt the 'wait-and-watch' attitude.

Consider some recent statistics in the UK, a study tracking more than 200,000 people, nearly every single participant had developed antibodies against the virus within two weeks of their second dose and the jabs helped to reduce hospitalisation rates by 92-96%. As many health practitioners have repeated, the risks of severe side effects from a vaccine are tiny in comparison to the risk of the disease itself.

Yet a sizeable number of people are still reluctant to get the shots. According to a recent report by the International Monetary Fund, that ranges from around 10-20% of people in the UK to around 50% in Japan and 60% in France.

Given the growing number of variants popping up everyday and numbers increasing here in Bahrain despite the government's best efforts, we have to deploy the entire arsenal of weapons at our disposal against the pandemic. Bahrain has robust vaccination numbers but there are still people holding out and they must set aside their prejudices or else face the opposition of the public. Look at it this way: did you wait till you understood the working of how electricity reached your home to enjoy its benefits? I could ask you the same question about the internet and your smartphone and your answer would be "No". All these things do not harm society but your not taking a vaccination hurts us all. So do us all a favour and get jabbed - for your own good and ours.

(Captain Mahmood Al Mahmood is the Editor-in-Chief of The Daily Tribune and the President of the Arab-African Unity Organisation for Relief, Human Rights and Counterterrorism)

Given the growing number of variants popping up everyday and numbers increasing here in Bahrain despite the government's best efforts, we have to deploy the entire arsenal of weapons at our disposal against the pandemic.



59th anniversary of the Elysee Treaty: German, French envoys to Bahrain call for boosting ties

TDT | Manama

Principles of cooperation, maintaining peace and the need to remain open with neighbours dominated the talks when the ambassadors of France and Germany to Bahrain sat together yesterday for discussion around a breakfast table.

The meeting, held at the residence of the German Ambassador, focused on the activities of the ambassadors in the Kingdom and future projects to boost ties as they celebrate the 59th anniversary of the Elysee Treaty.

Commenting on the treaty, the French Ambassador to Bahrain, Jérôme Cauchard, said the treaty have taken up one of the noblest but also one of the most difficult challenges that can exist, "that of building peace in the first stage, after many years of conflict and war".

He added: "Then we built, step by step, a permanent and structured cooperation. And nowadays cooperation became a kind of "reflex" as each country spontaneously seeks out the other's views on key issues".

"The underlying principle of



The meeting was at the residence of the German Ambassador

The treaty have taken up one of the noblest but also one of the most difficult challenges that can exist, that of building peace in the first stage, after many years of conflict and war

FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO BAHRAIN, JÉRÔME CAUCHARD

cooperation between Germany and France is never to exclude others, but to remain open for all European Union member states, to foster cooperation with neighbouring regions and to serve as a model of how cooperation can replace conflict," said Kai Boeckmann, the German Ambassador to Bahrain.

"Each generation must renew its understanding of this friendship, which is why youth is so important in our cooperation," he added.

The underlying principle of cooperation between Germany and France is never to exclude others, but to remain open for all European Union member states, to foster cooperation with neighbouring regions and to serve as a model of how cooperation can replace conflict

KAI BOECKMANN, THE GERMAN AMBASSADOR TO BAHRAIN

The treaty, a major symbol of Franco-German friendship, was signed by French President Charles de Gaulle and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer signed the treaty on 22 January 1963 in Paris. It aimed at increased cooperation between the two nations in international relations, defence and education.

Hidd sewage project 12% complete

TDT | Manama

Construction works of the BD 3,285,603 mainline carrying sewage water in Hidd Industrial Area had reached 12% completion, said a top works ministry official.

Fathi Abdullah Al-Farea, the Assistant Undersecretary for Sanitation at the Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning, said the project would take two years to complete.

Al Farea said this during an inspection visit to the project site



in the presence of the head of the company executing the project, Abdul Hadi Al-Afwa LLC and engineers in the ministry.

The project, Al Farea said, includes the construction of 3.3 km of sewage lines, of which works



over 1.1 km is underway by the Open Cut method. "For the remaining 2.3 km line, we will use micro tunnelling machines."

The officials also said they would reestablish three pumping stations and remove 12 stations

from service. The project, he said, aims to reduce the cost of operation and maintenance for the old pumping station and raise the capacity of the sewage network from 2,300 cubic meters per day to approximately 24,000 cubic meters per day.

The final treatment of the sewage water will take place in the Muharraq treatment plant.

The tender board had awarded the project that falls within the national strategic plan to Abdul Hadi Al-Afwa Company.

BCCI should adopt 'No fees, No service' principle

● Adopt qualitative initiatives that all chamber members, including SMEs owners, find beneficial, or abandon the membership obligation
TDT | Manama

Businessman Yaqoob Al Awadhi, a candidate for the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry's board of directors' elections, has emphasised the necessity of following the principle of "No fees, No service" at the chamber.

He explained that the chamber's board of directors has two options: either adopt qualitative initiatives that all chamber members, including SMEs owners, find beneficial, or abandon the membership obligation, and each merchant must pay a minimum of BD20 to renew his business registration.

The Chamber of Commerce, according to Al Awadhi, is ultimately a civil society institution whose function is to care for merchants and defend their interests, not to amass subscription funds in its treasury without all merchants, or at least most of them, feeling the Chamber's benefit to them.

The Chamber's role should not be limited to ceremonies, visits, and press releases; instead, those in charge should take the lead in doing fieldwork on the ground, getting to know the needs of small and large businesses, and putting the commercial sector at the centre of the Chamber's interests and activities.

YAQOOB AL AWADHI, A CANDIDATE FOR THE BAHRAIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS' ELECTIONS



"Is anyone able to answer from BCCI about the benefit of thousands of SMEs working in the car repair sector, for example in Salmabad and Souq Waqif? Or those operating in the food and beverage sector on Budaiya Street or the Jad Ali area or the old Manama and Muharraq markets? Or shops selling car accessories and abayas on Bukwara Street? Or entrepreneurs who own start-up companies in the e-commerce and applications sector?!, and many more," Al Awadhi wondered.

Al Awadhi pointed out that if the Chamber cannot provide its services to all its members, at least it can initiate the implementation of major projects that benefit the national economy, and whose benefit is reflected on Bahrainis by creating direct and indirect job opportunities, supporting GDP providing real support for the government's plans.

"The Chamber's role should not be limited to ceremonies, visits, and press releases; instead, those in charge should take the lead in doing fieldwork on the ground, getting to know the needs of small and large businesses, and putting the commercial sector at the centre of the Chamber's interests and activities. It should also endeavour to expand new markets for Bahraini goods and services, as

well as reactivate the committee's activity.

"If this occurs, the Bahraini merchant will go to the Chamber on his own to pay his subscriptions and renew his membership, motivated by his confidence in the Chamber's value in supporting and promoting his business," Al Awadhi added.

Al Awadhi noted that the issue of linking subscription to service was one of the goals he had set for himself in his campaign for the elections of the Chamber's Board of Directors' 30th session. "I raise this subject in my election platform to attract attention to its importance, and if I win membership on the chamber's board of directors, I guarantee every one will work on it," he concluded.

Illegal workers cannot get new work permits, they should leave: LMRA CEO

LMRA conducts 10,000 inspection visits and 100 joint campaigns in 2021

- Arrested hundreds of violating workers
- Closed establishments supplying domestic workers without a license
- Registered eight cases of forced labour

TDT | Manama

Workers caught for violations of labour market laws during inspection campaigns are not eligible to receive new work permits and legalise their stay in the

LMRA will never tolerate any action which violates the law, and will never stop detecting the violators. Those who have been arrested during the inspection campaigns according to the laws of the Kingdom of Bahrain will never receive any new work permits, and consequently will not be able to be transferred to regular labour, and their only option is to leave the Kingdom with no return again

JAMAL ABDULAZIZ AL ALAWI



Kingdom, said LMRA CEO. According to Jamal Abdulaziz Al Alawi, the only option left for them is to leave the Kingdom and not return.

The top LMRA official made these comments as revealed that the authority booked hundreds of workers during 2021 for violations of labour markets laws.

In 2021, Al Alawi said the LMRA's Law Enforcement Sector conducted more than 10,000 inspections to detect more than 900 criminal violations, despite

the pandemic.

"These inspections last year were in addition to the 100 joint inspection campaigns the authority held with relevant agencies," Al Alawi added.

The campaigns, he said, resulted in the arrest of hundreds of illegal workers and the detection of eight cases of forced labour.

The CEO also announced developing a comprehensive plan to intensify inspection campaigns to address illegal practices and enhance the competitiveness and stability of the labour market.

For this, the authority is working closely with the Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs of the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Industry, Commerce

and Tourism, the Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning, the Ministry of Health and security directors in the governorates, he added.

"These campaigns will be in addition to the daily inspection visits carried out by the legal control sector in commercial establishments in various sectors.

On the joint campaigns in 2021, he said 41 were with NPRA and 66 were with other government agencies.

Joint campaigns with the General Department of Investigation and Criminal Evidence and NPRA resulted in closing 13 establishments engaged in supplying domestic workers without a licence.



Foreign workers employment reached 531,447 workers by the end of the first quarter of 2021. Non-Bahraini employment decreased by 9.4% annually compared to 586,874 workers in the same quarter last year.

Bahraini employment was 153,757 workers by the end of the first quarter decreasing at an annual rate of 1.9% compared to 156,746 workers in the first quarter of 2020.

The number of new employment work permits issued by LMRA during first quarter of 2021 was 36,732 decreasing at an annual rate of 10.6%.

The share of small organizations, employing less than 10 workers, of employment work permits was 47.7% of total work permits issued during the first quarter of 2021.

531,447 Foreign employment reaches 531,447 workers by end of first quarter of 2021

Farmers' market a huge hit, gets international visitors

Market's popularity growing beyond borders, says top Works Ministry official

TDT | Manama

Bahraini Farmers' Market has witnessed a substantial turnout since its opening on the 25th of December last year, said a top Works Ministry official.

"In addition to Bahraini citizens and residents, visitors from other Arab Gulf countries also visited the market in large numbers," said Dr Abdulaziz Muhammad Abdulkarim.

"This reflects the growing popularity of the market, and it is no longer a local event limited to citizens and residents here, but rather goes beyond the borders of the Kingdom," said the Assistant Undersecretary for Agriculture Affairs at the Ministry of Works, Municipalities



Affairs and Urban Planning.

The ninth edition of the Bahraini Farmers' Market, ongoing at the Budaiya Botanical Gardens, opened doors after a one-year hiatus owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. This year's edition has the participation of 37 farmers and four farming companies.

Dr Addulkarim, who also chairs the Organising Committee of the Bahraini Farmers Market, said the entry to the market this year is only for those having Green shield on the BeAware application.

"Visitors also have to maintain social distancing and wear masks at all times, he added.

The market, he said, is an ideal opportunity for Bahraini farmers to market their agricultural produces in attractive ways while also enhancing Bahrain's food security.

Farmers, nurseries, agricul-

tural companies, productive families have separate sections at the market. "There is also a corner for dates and another for honey."

For the first time this year, the organising committee, he said, held an exhibition of historical photos of the agricultural sector and agricultural affairs.

"This is in addition to holding short training courses on ag-



2012

First introduced in 2012, the Farmers' Market was an initiative to support food production and the promote the sale of products produced sustainably.

ricultural production, modern soilless farming systems, agricultural pest control, and the safe use of pesticides."

"This step comes out of the keenness to develop and add diversity to the market's activities and remain attractive to visitors interested in supporting local Bahraini production," he said.

The Farmers' markets, he said, is also serving as a recreational outlet for visitors, especially during the winter.

Market doors are open from 7:00 AM to 1:00 PM every Saturday

Weightlifting champion honoured



Southern Governor His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Khalifa Al Khalifa honoured employee Eman Shakeeb, who won third ranking in the National Day Weightlifting Championship. The competition, held on December 16-18, was under the patronage of First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sport, Chairman of the General Sports Authority and President of the Bahrain Olympic Committee, His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa. Shakeeb had also won three gold medals in the Arab Weightlifting Championship held recently.



AMH supports Bahrain's National Down Syndrome Soccer team

TDT | Manama

American Mission Hospital is supporting Bahrain's First downs syndrome soccer team by providing free health checks and wellbeing assessments to all the footballers.

The new team was welcomed to the American Mission Hospital Manama where they were individually assessed by a team of specialists to determine their fitness level to be a part of the team.

Group CEO Julia Tovey, who was present at the occasion, said, "At American Mission

Hospital, we believe that we must strive to support the community on the whole and specifically the special needs community with the chance to enhance their quality of life and become valued members of the community."

"Keeping that in mind, the opportunity to support the first National Downs Soccer team is a matter of both honour and delight for us. We are looking forward to seeing the team achieve their best, and AMH will always be on the sidelines providing medical support when needed."



The annual event is organized by the Agriculture and Marine Resources (AMR) at the Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning in partnership with the National Initiative for Agricultural Development (NIAD).

News in brief

Blast hits western Afghan city of Herat, killing at least six ♦ A blast ripped through a minivan in the western Afghan city of Herat yesterday, killing at least six people, according to officials. Herat commander Mawlawi Ansari told Reuters that nine people had been injured. The cause of the blast was not clear. A health official in Herat, who asked not to be named, said an explosion hit a small van used for public transport just after 1800 local time and that three of the injured were in serious condition..

Strong rains in the town of Machu Picchu, next to the Inca citadel of the same name that is Peru's top tourist draw, washed away railroads and bridges, officials said. Flooding of the Alcamayo river interrupted train services, the regional government of Cusco department said. Houses near the river were flooded, and one person was injured with another missing, civil defense officials said. Peru Rail company, one of two that provides transport in the region, said in a statement that trains have been cancelled until further notice..

Two Canadians die in shooting at Mexican Caribbean resort ♦ Two Canadians died of gunshot wounds after an argument turned violent at a resort near Cancun on Mexico's Caribbean coast, authorities said. Both guests at the upscale resort on the Riviera Maya of Quintana Roo state had criminal records, said Mexican officials, citing information from the Canadian police. Mexican police are searching for another person thought to have fired the shots who had a "long" criminal record in Canada.

Former Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad is in a stable condition after being admitted to a specialist heart hospital for the third time in just weeks, his daughter said. The 96-year-old has been receiving treatment at the National Heart Institute in Kuala Lumpur for the past two days, Marina Mahathir said. Media descended on the hospital as news spread that Mahathir had been admitted again, and current Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob also paid him a visit.

Twitter suspends hundreds of accounts promoting Philippines' Marcos Jr ♦ Twitter has suspended hundreds of accounts reportedly linked to supporters of Philippine presidential frontrunner Ferdinand Marcos Jr, which the social media giant said had violated its rules on manipulation and spam. The son and namesake of the country's former dictator is drawing support from a massive social media campaign seeking to get him elected in May, which critics say is attempting to rewrite the family's history.

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	8,526,027	226,319
2 India	7,670,537	116,068
3 Brazil	5,274,817	154,888
4 Russia	1,447,335	24,952
5 Spain	1,029,668	34,210
6 Argentina	1,018,999	27,100
7 Colombia	974,139	29,272
8 France	930,745	33,885
9 Peru	874,118	33,875
10 Mexico	860,714	86,893
11 UK	762,542	43,967
12 South Africa	706,304	18,656
13 Iran	545,286	31,346
14 Chile	495,637	13,719

Global tally
41,192,932
Deaths
1,131,568
Recovered:
30,709,840
New cases
+168,201
New deaths
+2,720

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	105,705		6,142		98,413	1,150
Saudi Arabia	343,373	+405	5,235	+18	329,715	8,423
UAE	119,132	+1,538	472	+2	111,814	6,846
Kuwait	118,531	+813	721	+7	109,916	7,894
Oman	111,484	+451	1,137	+15	97,367	12,980
Qatar	130,210	+266	225	+1	127,093	2,892

Figures as of closing

US studies highlight the need for COVID boosters to fight Omicron

Reuters | Washington

Three US studies show that a third dose of an mRNA vaccine is key to fighting the Omicron coronavirus variant, providing 90% protection against hospitalization due to COVID-19, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said. The studies, led by the CDC, are among the first in the United States to look at the impact of booster doses against the fast-spreading Omicron variant,



A worker from Chicago Family Health Center prepares a COVID-19 booster shot

Protection against infection and hospitalization with the Omicron variant is highest for those who are up to date with their vaccination, meaning those who are boosted when they are eligible

CDC DIRECTOR DR. ROCHELLE WALENSKY

which now accounts for 99% of all new COVID cases.

Overall, they suggest that boosters helped protect against both infection and symptomatic disease. Adults aged 50 and older saw the most benefit from an extra dose of the vaccines made by BioNTech SE with Pfizer Inc or Moderna Inc.

"Protection against infection and hospitalization with the Omicron variant is highest for those who are up to date with their vaccination, meaning those who are boosted when they are eligible," CDC Direc-

tor Dr. Rochelle Walensky said in a White House briefing on Friday.

As has been shown in other countries, vaccine boosters performed better against the Delta variant than Omicron, a highly mutated version of the SARS-CoV-2 virus that has been able to evade immunity from vaccines and prior infections.

One of the studies, published on Friday in the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, looked at rates of hospitalization, emergency department and urgent care visits in 10 states between Aug. 26, 2021, and Jan. 5, 2022.

It found that protection from two doses of vaccine fell to 57% in people who got their second shot at least six months earlier. Among those who received a booster, protection from hospitalization and urgent care visits was 90%.

In another study published in the JAMA medical journal, researchers reviewed data on 23,391 COVID-19 cases caused by either the Delta or Omicron

variant among people seeking testing between Dec. 10, 2021, and Jan. 1, 2022.

They found that among people seeking testing for COVID-like symptoms, those who had received three doses of an mRNA vaccine had the highest protection from infection compared with those who got two doses or were unvaccinated.

Because of the timing of U.S. booster recommendations, most people in the study had been vaccinated within a month of seeking testing, which likely contributed to the benefit.

Data from the UK has shown that the increased antibody protection gained from boosters wanes after 10 months, so it is unclear how long that benefit would hold.

Some countries have already started offering additional booster doses, but a recent study from Israel showed that while a fourth dose of an mRNA vaccine boosted antibodies, the level was not high enough to prevent infection by the Omicron variant.

French pet care firm stops selling fish bowls - they drive fish mad

Reuters | Paris

A leading French aquarium vendor has decided to stop selling round fish bowls because they drive fish mad and kill them quickly.

French pet care market leader AgroBiothers Laboratoire will no longer sell any aquariums with a capacity of less than 15 litres and only rectangular ones, as putting fish in small bowls without filtration and oxygenation is animal abuse, it said.

"People buy a goldfish for their kids on impulse, but if they knew what a torture it is, they would not do it. Turning round and round in a small bowl drives fish crazy and kills them quickly," AgroBiothers CEO Matthieu Lambeaux told Reuters.

Gold fish can live up to 30 years and grow to about 25 cm in big aquariums or outdoor ponds, but in tiny bowls they often die within weeks or months.

He said gold fish are social animals who need the company of other fish, ample space and clean water, and that having an aquarium requires a minimum of equipment and expertise.

France is Europe's number one market for red aquarium



A woman brings a goldfish to Paris aquarium as part of an operation launched to take care of hundreds of goldfish abandoned by French holiday-makers, in Paris

European countries have long banned fish bowls, but France has no legislation on the issue. "It is a French anachronism, that is why we decided to move. We cannot educate all our customers to explain that keeping fish in a bowl is cruel. We consider that it is our responsibility to no longer give consumers that choice," Lambeaux said. AgroBiothers, which has a French market share of about 27% in pet care products, sold about 50,000 fish bowls per year at about 20 euros a piece in previous years. "There is demand for fish bowls, but the reality is that what we offer children is the possibility to see gold fish die slowly," he said.

Germany and several other

Deadly IS, Kurdish forces

Islamic State prison b

US-led coalition carry out air strikes

Reuters | Damascus

Fighting raged for a third day yesterday between the Islamic State group and Kurdish forces in Syria after IS attacked a prison housing jihadists, in violence that has claimed over 70 lives, a monitor said.

The assault on the Ghwayran prison in the northern city of Hasakeh is one of IS's most significant since its "caliphate" was declared defeated in Syria nearly three years ago.

"At least 28 members of the Kurdish security forces, five civilians and 45 members of IS have been killed" in the violence, said Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

IS launched the attack on Thursday night against the prison housing some 3,500 suspected members of the jihadist group, including some of its leaders, said the Observatory.

The jihadists "seized weapons they found" in the detention centre and freed several fellow IS fighters, said the Britain-based monitor, which relies on sources inside war-torn Syria for its information.

Hundreds of jihadist inmates had since been recaptured but dozens were still believed to be on the loose, the Observatory said.

With the backing of US-led coalition aircraft, Kurdish security

WHO recommends Pfizer COVID vaccine

Reuters | London

The World Health Organization on Friday recommended extending the use of a reduced dosage of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine to children aged 5 to 11 years old.

The recommendation comes after the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on immunisation held a meeting on Wednesday to evaluate the vaccine. It is currently recommended for use in people aged 12 years and above.

The recommended dosage for the younger population is 10 micrograms instead of 30 micrograms offered to those 12 years and older.

"This age group (5-11) is in the lowest priority use group for vaccination except, for children who have co-morbidities," SAGE chairman Alejandro Cravioto said at a briefing.

Pfizer/BioNTech shots have already been authorised for use in the age group in several countries including the United States, Canada, Israel, and the European

1368

In a coronation ceremony, Zhu Yuanzhang ascends to the throne of China as the Hongwu Emperor, initiating Ming Dynasty rule over China that would last for three centuries

1556

Shaanxi Earthquake, the deadliest ever recorded, kills 830,000 in Shaanxi Province, China



1973

US President Richard Nixon announces an accord has been reached to end Vietnam War

2020

China locks down the city of Wuhan and its 9 million people, in a belated but ultimately successful effort to control the city's COVID-19 epidemic

Y fighting between rd forces in Syria

reak repelled by Kurdish-led forces in northeastern Syria



Islamic State group fighters, who were arrested by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces after they attacked Gweiran Prison, in Hassakeh, northeast Syria

forces have encircled the prison and are battling to retake full control of surrounding neighbourhoods, which jihadists have used as a launching pad for their attacks.

The Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) yesterday said it was continuing "operations to keep security in Hasakeh city and the perimeter of the Ghwayran prison," with the help of coalition allies and Kurdish internal security forces.

It said yesterday's clashes centred mostly in neighbourhoods north of Ghwayran, where it carried out raids and "killed a number of IS fighters that had attacked the jail."

The jihadist group said in a statement released on Friday by its Amaq news agency that its attack on the jail aimed to "free

'Fat target'

IS has carried out regular attacks against Kurdish and government targets in Syria since the rump of its once-sprawling proto-state was overrun in March 2019.

Most of their guerrilla attacks have been against military targets and oil installations in remote areas, but the Hasakeh prison break could mark a new phase in the group's resurgence.

It was not immediately clear whether the prison break was part of a centrally coordinated operation -- timed to coincide with an attack on a military base in neighbouring Iraq -- or the action of a local IS cell.

Analyst Nicholas Heras of the Newlines Institute in Washington said the jihadist group targeted

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KNOW WHAT

IS has carried out regular attacks against Kurdish and government targets in Syria since the rump of its once-sprawling proto-state was overrun in March 2019

the prison to bolster its numbers.

The Islamic State group "wants to move beyond being the terrorist and criminal network that it has devolved into, and to do that it needs more fighters," he said.

"Prison breaks represent the best opportunity for ISIS to regain its strength in arms, and Ghwayran prison is a nice fat target for ISIS because its overcrowded," he said, using another acronym for IS.

The prospect of a repeat of the attack remains very real, said Colin Clarke, research director at the New York-based Soufan Center think-tank.

"The SDF needs a comprehensive strategy to deal with this threat," he said.

The Kurdish authorities have long warned they do not have the capacity to hold, let alone put on trial, the thousands of IS fighters captured in years of operations.

Fire in residential building kills six, injures 15 in Mumbai

AP | Mumbai

A major fire in a 19-story residential building killed at least six people and injured 15 others yesterday in Mumbai, India's financial and entertainment capital, officials said.

The fire was caused by a short-circuit in an air conditioner in one of the apartments, Mumbai Mayor Kishori Pednekar said.

Residents said the fire started on the 15th floor and a big column of black smoke soon enveloped the building. More than 90 people escaped the building on their own or helped by neighbors, they said.

Ganesh Purnaik, a spokesman for the city government, said the fire left six people dead and 15 hospitalized with injuries.

Four of the injured were in critical condition, said police



Smoke raises after a fire in Mumbai

officer Saurabh Tripathi.

Nearly two dozen fire engines extinguished the blaze and controlled the smoke after a two-hour effort, media reports said. Firefighters rushed the injured to two nearby hospitals.

Pednekar said some of the injured needed oxygen support because they had inhaled smoke.

Southern Japan earthquake injures 13, no tsunami warning

Reuters | Tokyo

An earthquake with a magnitude of 6.6 jolted southwestern Japan early yesterday morning, injuring 13 people, the authorities and local media said.

No tsunami warning was issued after the quake struck with an epicentre 45 km (30 miles) deep at 1:08 a.m. (1608 GMT on Friday) off the coast of Kyushu, the southernmost of Japan's four main islands, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said.

The quake caused shaking in Oita and Miyazaki prefectures that measured 5+ on Japan's seismic intensity scale, which has a maximum of 7, the agency said.



A collapsed gate to the residential house caused by an earthquake is seen in Oita, southern Japan

Thirteen people were injured in nearby regions, including two people in their 80s who were seriously hurt, the Yomiuri newspaper reported, citing local authorities.

Multiple reports of damage to buildings, water pipes and roads have been confirmed, said public broadcaster NHK.

Commends reduced dose COVID vaccine for under 12s



A child is held by her mother as she gets the the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine



Increase in booster dose coverage for high risk priority groups will usually yield greater reduction in severe disease and deaths than use of equivalent vaccine to increase primary vaccination coverage

SAGE CHAIRMAN ALEJANDRO CRAVIOTO

Union.

The WHO's vaccine director, Kate O'Brien, said no safety concerns were raised for application of Pfizer's vaccine in 5 to 11 years old in clinical trials.

The panel also recommended that booster doses of Pfizer's vaccine should be administered 4 months to 6 months after the completion of the primary series, in high-priority groups like older adults and health workers.

Pakistani convicted murderer takes top school score, wins scholarship

Reuters | Karachi

A Pakistani inmate serving a life sentence for murder in an overcrowded Karachi prison has won a scholarship for further study after taking one of the highest scores in the city's higher secondary school exams last year.

Syed Naem Shah, 35, scored the highest in the general high school exams among private candidates - that is, among non-traditional students - last year in Pakistan's largest city, winning a scholarship for further studies from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP).

"What I have achieved while languishing in jail is not possible if one does not have conviction," Shah told Reuters in an interview in Central Prison Karachi, built by the British in 1899 in the port city in south-eastern Pakistan.

Speaking in a classroom inside the prison grounds, Shah said he enjoyed school as a child but that his family could not af-



Inmate Syed Naem Shah outside his classroom in the Central Prison, Karachi



What I have achieved while languishing in jail is not possible if one does not have conviction

SYED NAEEM SHAH

ford to continue his education. In jail, older inmates who were also taking classes motivated him and helped him prepare for exams. Shah is one of 1,200 inmates studying in Central Prison Karachi, but his suc-

cess is unparalleled, said Saeed Soomro, deputy superintendent of the prison.

"His results are (also) tantamount to our success," Soomro said, in giving him the opportunity to study and providing him with books and materials.

Shah was sentenced to life - 25 years in Pakistan - in 2018 for the shooting and killing of another man in a personal disagreement in 2010. Years spent as a prisoner on trial, plus time off for academic achievements, good behaviour and blood donations, leaves him with about six years to serve.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



We need to go into emergency mode to bring peace to a world that sees too little of it. The @UN will always stand with and protect those caught up in fighting & work to build stronger, more resilient & peaceful communities.

@antoniogetterres

02



The UN has a terrible record of tracking aid funds (e.g., Syria), but donor governments can set up an independent monitoring mechanism to ensure that humanitarian assistance actually reaches the many Afghans who urgently need it.

@KenRoth

03



The American people should not have to fight tooth-and-nail against wealthy and powerful corporate interests for decent wages, health care, pensions and safe working conditions.

@BernieSanders

04



Canada's support for Ukraine's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity is unwavering and unequivocal. That's why, as they face unwarranted Russian aggression, we're providing a loan that will help support their economic resilience and their governance reforms.

@JustinTrudeau

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

Lebanon to start virtual talks with IMF next week

● IMF to start virtual talks tomorrow

● Kuwait foreign minister in Lebanon for talks

● Gulf states deliver confidence-building proposals

Reuters

Lebanese officials will start talks with the International Monetary Fund tomorrow, an official government source told Reuters.

An IMF spokesperson also told Reuters yesterday that a team will start virtual talks with Lebanese authorities next week.

The Lebanese government has said it hopes to reach an initial agreement with the fund for financial support between January and February. Lebanon is in the grip of an unprecedented financial crisis and an IMF deal is widely seen as the only way for it to secure aid.

The fund said in December it was assessing a \$69 billion figure announced by Lebanese officials for losses in the coun-



Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati in Beirut, Lebanon

try's financial sector.

Disagreements in Lebanon over the size of the losses and how they should be distributed torpedoed IMF talks in 2020. The central bank, banks and political elite rejected figures set out in a government plan that was endorsed by the IMF at the time.

Lebanon's Prime Minister Najib Mikati said in September that the financial recovery plan to be drawn up by his cabinet will include a fair distribution of losses suffered by the financial system, but the cabinet hasn't convened since October.

It will convene again on Mon-

day to discuss the 2022 budget, but no clear details have been released about the recovery plan. The Lebanese financial system collapsed in 2019 because of decades of corruption and waste in the state and the unsustainable way it was financed. The trigger was slowing inflows of hard currency into the banking system, which lent heavily to the government.

Several reforms the IMF would likely seek, including cutting subsidies and unifying the numerous exchange rates in Lebanon's chaotic cash economy, are already becoming realities as hard currency dries up,

political sources say.

Kuwaiti minister visits Beirut

Meanwhile, in an effort to thaw the diplomatic rift, Kuwait's foreign minister, in the first trip by a senior Gulf Arab official since last year, delivered confidence-building proposals to Lebanon in a message coordinated with Gulf states.

Speaking after meeting Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah said ties with Beirut had not been severed and relations were now in a phase of confidence-building measures.

He said he had delivered proposed confidence-building steps to Mikati and the Lebanese foreign minister and "the brothers in Lebanon should study them and know how to deal with these matters".

"All the GCC states are sympathetic and in solidarity with the Lebanese people ... the Kuwaiti move is a Gulf move," Sheikh Ahmad said.

Sheikh Ahmad said the visit was "to support Lebanon and bring Lebanon out of all that it is going through, to help it overcome these difficulties, and to restore, God willing, the measures to build confidence with Lebanon".

26,000 citizens found jobs in 6,642 private institutions: minister

Labour minister meets IMF delegation



Minister Jameel Humaidan during a meeting with IMF delegates

TDI | Manama

The second edition of the National Employment Programme landed jobs for more than 26,000 nationals in about 6,642 private institutions, said Labour and Social Development Minister.

Minister Jameel Humaidan also pointed out that the labour ministry had trained over 12,000 nationals in 2021 in cooperation with the relevant authorities.

The minister announced the figures during a virtual meeting with the advisory mission of the International Monetary Fund, led by Dr Mahmoud Mohieldin.

Discussions also focused on Bahrain's experience in confronting the repercussions of the novel Coronavirus pandemic, the Economic Recovery Plan and programmes that support the stability of the labour market.

Humaidan highlighted Bahrain's swift response to the

pandemic by launching an economic stimulus package worth more than BHD 4.5 billion in March 2019, as directed by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

"Such measures had maintained the stability of the national workforce in the labour market and distanced the private sector from layoffs," the minister said.

On the Economic Recovery Plan, the minister said the ambitious five-pillar plan is a roadmap for a brighter economic and fiscal future for the kingdom.

The plan launched by the government, led by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, targets to employ 20,000 Bahrainis and train 10,000 others annually.

He affirmed that the positive results prove the ability of the local labour market to generate more job opportunities for the national workforce.

India's Reliance reports hefty profit on energy, retail boost

Reuters | Bengaluru

Reliance Industries Ltd (RELI.NS), India's most valuable company, on Friday posted a better-than-expected 41.6% jump in profit in the third quarter, boosted by strong performance in its oil-to-chemicals and retail businesses.

Its retail business benefited from a rebound in consumer demand in the festival season and as coronavirus-related curbs lifted towards the end of 2021, while higher refining margins and improved price realizations bolstered its mainstay energy business.

The company, led by Asia's richest man Mukesh Ambani, said its consolidated profit rose to 185.49 billion rupees (\$2.50



A customer wearing protective mask pushes a trolley with grocery items past Reliance Jewels and Reliance Digital stores of Reliance Industries Ltd, in Mumbai

bn) in the quarter ended Dec. 31, beating analysts' expectations of 154.74 bn rupees.

"The recovery in global oil

and energy markets supported strong fuel margins and helped our O2C (oil-to-chemicals) business deliver robust

earnings," Ambani said in a statement.

Revenue from Reliance's O2C operations - comprising the world's biggest refining complex at Jamnagar, and petrochemicals plants - surged 57% to 1.31 trillion rupees, while the retail segment revenue jumped more than 52% to 577.17 bn rupees.

The company said overall revenue from operations rose 54% to 1.91 trillion rupees.

The conglomerate also recorded a one-off gain of 28.72 bn rupees from the sale of its shale gas assets.

Reliance, which produces gas from an ultra deep water block in the country's east coast, expects revenue from gas sales to rise from April.

Bitcoin falls 5.6% to \$34,448

Reuters

Bitcoin dropped 5.6% to \$34,448.94 at 18:10 GMT yesterday, losing 1,878.27 from its previous close.

Bitcoin, the world's biggest and best-known cryptocurrency, is up 1.8% from the year's low of \$34,000 on Jan. 22.

Ether, the coin linked to the ethereum blockchain network,



dropped 8.4% to \$2,352.72 on Saturday, losing \$189.64 from its previous close.

Intel's \$20 billion Ohio factory could become world's largest chip plant

Reuters | Washington/San Francisco

Intel Corp said on Friday it would invest up to \$100 billion to build potentially the world's largest chip-making complex in Ohio, looking to boost capacity as a global shortage of semiconductors affects everything from smartphones to cars.

The move is part of Chief Executive Officer Pat Gelsinger's strategy to restore Intel's dominance in chip making and reduce America's reliance on Asian manufacturing hubs, which have a tight hold on the market.

An initial \$20 billion investment - the largest in Ohio's history - on a 1,000-acre site in New Albany will create 3,000 jobs,



Chief Executive Officer Pat Gelsinger

Gelsinger said. That could grow to \$100 billion with eight total fabrication plants and would be the largest investment on record in Ohio, he told Reuters.

Dubbed the silicon heartland, it could become "the largest semiconductor manufacturing location on the planet," he said. While chipmakers are scrambling

to boost output, Intel's plans for new factories will not alleviate the current supply crunch, because such complexes take years to build.

Gelsinger reiterated on Friday he expected the chip shortages to persist into 2023.

To dramatically increase chip production in the United States, the Biden administration aims to persuade Congress to approve \$52 billion in subsidy funding.

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said on Friday the House of Representatives would soon introduce a bill on competitiveness to help bolster semiconductor investment and supply chains. That would include the \$52 billion funding.

US President Joe Biden touted

Intel's investment on Friday at a White House event with Gelsinger and again made the case for congressional action.

"China is doing everything it can to take over the global market so they can try to out-compete the rest of us," Biden said.

US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo said at the event the current semiconductor supply chain is "far too dependent on

conditions and countries halfway around the world."

Gelsinger said without government funding "we're still going to start the Ohio site. It's just not going to happen as fast and it's not going to grow as big as quickly."

Construction of the first two factories is expected to begin late in 2022 and production in 2025.



Overall demand for semiconductors of all stripes - from basic microcontrollers and memory chips to the most sophisticated high-performance processors - has grown over the past decade, as smartphone usage and computing power boomed. A steady rise in semiconductor sales faltered in 2019, but was then boosted 5.4% by 2020's shelter-in-place demand for home gadgets, IDC data shows.

Rashford sends Man Utd into Premier League top four

Manchester United snatch victory over West Ham after Marcus Rashford's late winner

● **Ralf Rangnick's side claim huge win in race for Champions League berth**

AFP | London

Marcus Rashford struck with virtually the last kick of the game to take Manchester United into the Premier League top four at West Ham's expense with a 1-0 win yesterday.

United were insipid as an attacking force for 93 minutes at Old Trafford, but found the breakthrough at the death as all three of Ralf Rangnick's substitutes combined when Anthony Martial and Edinson Cavani teed up Rashford for a tap in at the back post.

Victory lifts United a point above the Hammers and sees the Red Devils leapfrog Tottenham and Arsenal in the battle for Champions League football



Marcus Rashford shoots to score

next season.

Rangnick has lost just one of his 10 games since taking temporary charge till the end of the season, but once again the result was more impressive than the performance from the German's side.

Bruno Fernandes looked back to his best with two goals and

two assists in the past week and the Portuguese nearly created the opener with a fiercely struck cross that just evaded Cristiano Ronaldo in the most dangerous moment of the first half.

Alphonse Areola was drafted in to the West Ham goal in the absence of Lukasz Fabianski due to a positive test for coronavirus,



It is obviously an important goal and such late on is an amazing feeling. We have to use that winning feeling

MARCUS RASHFORD

but the Frenchman was forced into just one serious save when he turned Fred's driven shot behind early in the second half.

Fernandes dragged another effort wide from the edge of the box as United toiled to the frustration of the 75,000 crowd.

However, Rangnick's changes made the difference.

Rashford has looked devoid of confidence in recent months, but his first goal since October in a 3-1 win at Brentford on Wednesday gave the England international a lift.

Rangnick claimed that Anthony Martial had refused to be part

of his squad for last weekend's 2-2 draw at Aston Villa as he looks for a move away from the club for more game time.

The Frenchman publicly denied that accusation and was given his first minutes under the interim boss when he was introduced along with Cavani in the final 10 minutes.

David de Gea was nearly caught out by a long-range effort from Declan Rice as the game entered stoppage time.

But rather than snatch a winner, West Ham were hit with a sucker punch on the counter-attack.

Martial played in Cavani on the left of the box and the Uruguayan's cross just required a touch from Rashford at the back post.

The wild celebrations survived a VAR check against Cavani for offside and there was barely time for West Ham to kick-off in what could be a fatal blow to their outside hopes of reaching the Champions League for the first time.

Xavi maintains tough Barcelona stance on Dembele



Ousmane Dembele
AFP | Barcelona

Barcelona coach Xavi Hernandez said yesterday the club would not soften their stance on Ousmane Dembele's contract situation, despite the Frenchman's angry riposte on social media on Thursday.

Dembele wrote he would not "give in to blackmail" after Xavi left him out of his squad to face Athletic Bilbao in the Copa del Rey on Thursday night, following a breakdown in talks over a new deal.

The winger's contract expires in the summer, when he will be able to leave Barcelona for free.

The club's director of football Mateu Alemany said on Thursday morning "it seems obvious to us that the player does not want to continue at Barcelona" and "therefore we hope that a transfer will take place before January 31".

BRAVE CF releases list of nominees for 2021 Knockout Of The Year

TDT | Manama

The past 12 months have featured plenty of epic battles inside BRAVE Combat Federation's cage, but the spectacular finishes have always taken the spotlight and have compelled fans to tune in every fight night.

With multiple incredible knockout victories to choose from the 11 live shows in 2021, compiling a definitive list of the very best proved a tough task. With that said, here are the nominees for Knockout of the Year.

The card was aptly-entitled Brave CF 47: Asian Domination in March saw a pair of insane stoppages that are definitely worthy of Knockout Of The Year consideration.

In one of the evening's early bouts, India's Mohammed Farhad scored a fantastic one-punch knockout of Pakistan's Uloomi Karim.

Meanwhile, two super welterweights clashed in a featured bout that ended--with Uzbeki-



BRAVE CF Awards 2021 KO Of The Year Nominees

Mohammed Farhad def. Uloomi Kareem - BRAVE CF 47

Ruziboev def. Ibrahim Mane - BRAVE CF 47

Anton Turkalj def. Konstantin Soldatov - BRAVE CF 50

Denis Maher def. Rinat Sagyntay - BRAVE CF

Valeriu Mircea def. Ayub Gaziev - BRAVE CF 52

stan's Nursulton Ruziboev putting France's Ibrahim Mane to sleep with a thunderous slam in the opening round.

On the other hand, one knockout win stood out at the historic BRAVE CF 50 last April when Anton Turkalj of Sweden got the job done in 13 seconds against Konstantin Soldatov of Kazakhstan, becoming the record-holder for fastest-ever KO in the promotion's history.

At BRAVE CF 51: The Future Is Here, Belarusian rising star Denis Maher's star shined the brightest by trouncing Rinat Sagyntay of Kazakhstan via first-round knockout.

To round up the list of nominees, Moldovan standout Valeriu Mircea had a short night at BRAVE CF 52; Bad Blood in August as he triumphed against Ayub Gaziev, finishing off his Austrian counterpart in only 43 seconds.

Fans will get the chance to determine the winner of this category by casting their votes through BRAVE CF's official Instagram account @bravemmf.

Eira barges through to girls' U16 semis

TDT | Manama

Eira Corral booked her ticket to the semi-finals of the girls' under-16 singles in the ninth EK Kanoo Juniors Open Tennis Championship 2022, being played at Bahrain Tennis Club (BTC) in Juffair.

Eira defeated Jood Kadoura 6-0, 6-0 in their round of eight match to power through to the last four.

Eira is next set to face off with Leanne Sinocruze, who also advanced to the semis following her own 6-0, 6-0 triumph against Chloe Elkara.

The other contest in the last four will be between Salma Faragallah and Zaidan Hajar. Salma beat Mona Khazindar 6-2, 6-0 to earn her berth in the next round while Zaidan defeated Latifa Abdulla 6-1, 6-2 to march through.

The girls' under-16 semi-finals are scheduled to take place today at BTC.

Meanwhile, also yesterday, Salma qualified for the semi-finals of the girls' under-12 singles following a 6-1, 6-3 win over Mariam Ahmed. Naila Abdulla joined her in the last four, beating Rhea Pradhan 6-1, 6-0, as did Fatima Albaajari, who was a 6-0, 6-1 winner against Heer Bavra.

The last semi-final place will be decided between Alanna Cifra and Lara Ahmed.

On the distaff, Rayyan Ahmed and Alston D'Souza made it through to the boys' under-16 doubles semi-finals following a 6-1, 6-1 win against James Thomas and Rion Jay. Rayyan and Alston next meet Clark Sayago and Hamza Mousa, who also advanced via walkover.



Eira Corral in action yesterday in her girls' under-16 singles quarter-final match

In the other final four clash, Rohan Mukherjee and Shadi Kallel will play Mohamed Al Huda and Anthony Ghosn. Rohan and Shadi defeated Mohammed Al Jishi and Mohammed Hossam 7-5, 6-4, whereas Mohammed and Anthony beat Mohamed Al Shehabi and Yousuf Al Shehabi via walkover.

In the boys' under-12 doubles, Abdulrahman Al Dosari and Nasser Al Saeed beat Ebrahim Mohammed and Shaheer Khalid Rajput 6-1, 6-0 to march through to the semis. There they will face Mohammed Nasser and Ahmed Murtadha.

Ali Alkhasyat and Abdulla Al Dosari also made it through with a 6-0, 6-1 win over Ishan Ravi and Aryan Upponi. They will then take on Mohammed Salman and Hamad Al Jishi for a berth in the title match.

Action continues today at the BTC hard courts.

Stokes, Archer, Gayle missing from IPL auction

AFP | New Delhi

England's Ben Stokes, Australia's Mitchell Starc and veteran West Indies big-hitter Chris Gayle are among the stars missing from the upcoming auction for the Indian Premier League, media reports said yesterday.

More than 1,200 cricketers from India and 18 countries across the world have registered to go under the hammer in Bangalore on February 12 and 13 for the 15th edition of the world's most lucrative cricket tournament.

10

teams will bid and participate in this year's IPL after the addition of two new franchises, Ahmedabad and Lucknow



Rajasthan Royals' Ben Stokes and Jofra Archer during a match (file photo)

disastrous Ashes tour of Australia. Captain Joe Root -- who has never played in the IPL -- is also sitting out the auction although fast bowler Mark Wood is on the list along with Australian stars David Warner and Pat Cummins, the reports said.

Ten teams will bid and participate in this year's IPL after the addition of two new franchises, Ahmedabad and Lucknow.

India's opening batter KL Rahul will captain Lucknow after he was signed as the joint-highest-paid player, for 170 million rupees (\$2.3 million), in the history of the tournament.

Other notable absentees from the long list of players in the bidding pool for the IPL -- expected to begin in April depending on the Covid situation in

India -- are the English trio of Jofra Archer, Chris Woakes and Sam Curran, the reports said.

Stokes and Woakes both participated in England's recent

Bahrain's Abdo finishes second in Houston Marathon



Bahrain's Abdi Ibrahim Abdo celebrates after crossing second the finish line of the 24th edition of Rome Marathon, on April 8, 2018 in Rome (file photo)

● **Bahraini elite athlete narrowly misses out on impressive victory after leading from race start before going off course momentarily**

TDT | Manama

Bahraini elite athlete Abdi Ibrahim Abdo finished a close runner-up in the men's race of the Houston Marathon, held in the US.

Abdo completed the 42-kilometre race distance in two hours 11 minutes 11 seconds, just eight seconds behind winner James Ngandu of Kenya.

It was a tough result for Abdo, who was leading from the start. But he went off the course momentarily after following the timing car by mistake, costing him the victory.

Elisha Kiprop Barno, also of Kenya, came third in 2:11:16, while Kenta Uchida of Japan came fourth in 2:11:19.

Kelkile Gezahegn of Ethiopia, Frank Lara of the US, Luke Caldwell of Great Britain and Josh Izewski, also from the U.S., completed the men's top eight.

Abdo was competing in his first marathon of the season. The 24-year-old currently boasts a personal best of 2:08:32 in the distance—a time he set in 2018 in Rome.

Bahrain national team kick off training gathering



Bahrain head coach Jelio Sousa, right, and assistant coach Jose Alexandre Carneiro during training

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's senior men's national football team kicked off their latest local training period yesterday under chilly conditions.

The session was held at the Al Ahli Club stadium in Zinj.

The nationals are getting set to play two international friendlies during this coming fortnight, first against Uganda on Thursday before facing DR Congo on February 1. The

tune-up games are part of their preparations for their upcoming competitions, particularly the start of the third round of qualification for the AFC Asian Cup 2023, which will be held in June.

Head coach Helio Sousa has named a 23-player squad for training. The roster includes Hamad Shamsan, Hashem Sayed Isa, Hazza Ali, Jassim Al Shaikh, Komail Alaswad, Mohammed Jassim Marhoon, Sayed Redha Isa, Abdulwahab Al Malood, Amine Hasan, Hasan Karrani,



Bahrain's Jassim Khulaif dribbles the ball during drills yesterday

Waleed Al Hayam, Sayed Mohammed Jaafar, Sayed Shubbar Alawi, Mahdi Humaidan, Mohamed Adel, Mohammed Hardan, Ammar Abbas, Mahdi Abduljabbar, Ebrahim Khattal, Jassim Khulaif, Abdulrahman Salem, Ali Madan and Abdulla Hazaa.

Both of Bahrain's upcoming friendly matches will be played at home. Their African opponents are both classified higher on the FIFA World Rankings, with Uganda currently 82nd and DR Congo 64th. Bahrain are

currently 91st. The nationals have yet to learn of their groupings for this stage of qualification. The draw is scheduled to be held on February 24.

Bahrain are one of 24 national teams competing in this third round of qualifying for the AFC Asian Cup 2023. These teams are to be divided into six groups of four to play a single round-robin. The group winners and the best five runners-up across all groups will qualify for the Asian Cup.

Medvedev, Tsitsipas march into last 16 as Halep fires warning

Clinical Daniil Medvedev cruises into Australian Open fourth round after beating Botic van de Zandschulp

● **Stefanos Tsitsipas beats Benoit Paire**

● **Ashleigh Barty braces for Amanda Anisimova test**

AFP | Melbourne

World number two and title favourite Daniil Medvedev won over the Australian Open crowd yesterday as the Russian "villain" eased into the last 16 along with Stefanos Tsitsipas.

After the drama of Friday, when defending champion Naomi Osaka exited Melbourne in the third round, the leading women's seeds were also mostly untroubled on day six.

Second seed Aryna Sabalenka overcame some of her serving yips and Simona Halep was an emphatic winner, the former number one now playing self-described "dinosaur" Alize Cornet on Monday for a place in the quarter-finals.

Medvedev, the de facto men's top seed after the deportation of defending champion Novak Djokovic on the eve of the Grand Slam, said some fans at Melbourne Park had a "low IQ" after they booed him in his second-round victory over Australian showman Nick Kyrgios.

The reigning US Open champion needed four sets and a large dose of composure to see off Kyrgios and silence Rod Laver Arena, and was branded a "villain" by local media for the way



Daniil Medvedev in action during his match

"I'll put it this way, it's easier to play a guy from the Netherlands than a guy from Australia in Australia in Melbourne"

DANIIL MEDVEDEV

he riled up the crowd.

But it was altogether more comfortable as he dismissed unseeded Dutchman Botic van de Zandschulp and he won some friends in the process.

The 25-year-old Medvedev kept his cool in sweltering conditions on Margaret Court Arena to roll through 6-4, 6-4, 6-2 in 1hr 55min and faces American Maxime Cressy in the fourth round.

"I'll put it this way, it's easier to play a guy from the Netherlands than a guy from Austral-

ia in Australia in Melbourne," said Medvedev, who has a similar love-hate dynamic with the crowd in New York.

"Every good relationship must have its ups and downs so I think it's good, it's entertaining and it's real, there is some relationship going on."

Greek fourth seed Tsitsipas, who is chasing a maiden major, was also largely untroubled in a 6-3, 7-5, 6-7 (2/7), 6-4 win over unseeded Frenchman Benoit Paire and plays American Taylor Fritz next.

Tsitsipas's serve was the foundation. He did not drop a service game despite losing a set and sent down 21 aces.

Medvedev and Tsitsipas, two of the generation coming up fast behind the "Big Three" of Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer, could meet in the semi-finals.

There was defeat however for Andrey Rublev, the Russian fifth seed, who lost in four sets to

2018 runner-up Marin Cilic.

Felix Auger-Aliassime sent home the last Briton left standing in singles, thrashing Dan Evans 6-4, 6-1, 6-1.

Auger-Aliassime is regarded as a serious upcoming talent in men's tennis and the 21-year-old Canadian warned his rivals that he was beginning to feel at home at the business end of majors.

"Now of course playing more and more Grand Slams and I have gone to semi-finals (US Open last year), I feel more in my place," he said.

Another burgeoning talent, the 20-year-old Italian Jannik Sinner, defeated Japanese qualifier Taro Daniel in four sets and will play Australia's Alex de Minaur.

'What else can I ask for?'

In the women's draw, Halep swatted aside Danka Kovinic -- conqueror of US Open champion



After missing Wimbledon and the French Open in an injury-plagued 2021, Halep is now back to peak fitness and has notched eight straight wins, including a warm-up title in Melbourne



Simona Halep in action during her match

Emma Raducanu -- 6-2, 6-1 in just 64 minutes to set up a date with Cornet of France.

The fit-again Halep came into the tournament full of confidence after her first title in 16 months earlier this month at a Melbourne warm-up event and was always in charge.

The 14th seed next meets unseeded Cornet, who celebrated her 32nd birthday by slugging



Ashleigh Barty

it out with Slovenian 29th seed Tamara Zidansek for a 4-6, 6-4, 6-2 victory.

The crowd serenaded her by singing happy birthday.

"It's definitely a very, very special victory being back in the second week 13 years after my first (time). It's quite special," she said.

"The day of my birthday, I mean, what else can I ask for?"

World number two Sabalenka overcame some of the serving problems that have been plaguing her early season, but still totted up 10 double faults and needed three sets to get past 31st seed Marketa Vondrousova.

The Belarusian now meets unseeded Estonian veteran Kaia Kanepi.

Also safely into round four and looking ominous is seventh seed Iga Swiatek, who swatted aside 25th seed Daria Kasatkina, 6-2, 6-3, but 10th seed Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova was a surprise loser to unseeded Sorana Cirstea.

Bahrain outclass Kuwait in Asian handball

Kingdom's senior men's national team defeats Gulf rivals by 14 goals to make winning start in main round of 2022 Asian Men's Handball Championship in Saudi Arabia

● Mahdi Saad continues impressive form to finish as Bahrain's leading scorer with six goals in the match

● Bahrainis rise to first place on Group II standings following result, ahead of Iran who beat Iraq in yesterday's other game

TDT | Manama

Bahrain outclassed Kuwait 29-15 last night to make a winning start to their main round campaign in the 2022 Asian Men's Handball Championship, being held in Saudi Arabia.

The Bahrainis and Kuwaitis are in Group II in this stage of the competition alongside Iran and Iraq. The Iranians won yesterday's other group fixture, 28-25 against their Iraq counterparts.

Both games were played at the Ministry of Sports Hall in Dammam.

Bahrain led 17-8 at the half



Bahrain's Ahmed Fadhl celebrates after scoring a goal against Kuwait

Group II standings

	P	W	D	L	+/-	Pts
Bahrain	1	1	0	0	14	2
Iran	1	1	0	0	3	2
Iraq	1	0	0	1	-3	0
Kuwait	1	0	0	1	-14	0

against Kuwait and continued their final play over the final 30 minutes.

Mahdi Saad continued impressive form in the tournament, top scoring for Bahrain with six goals. He was the team's lead-

ing scorer from the preliminary round.

Ahmed Fadhl added five goals and was perfect from the field, as was Ali Eid who finished with four goals. Mohammed Habib also contributed four, while skipper Hussain Al Sayyad chipped in three and Ali Abdulqader had two.

Bahrain goalkeeper Mohammed Abdulhussain was a rock for the Bahrainis, finishing with 16 saves in the contest.

The Kingdom's senior men's



Mohammed Habib in action for Bahrain during their match last night

national team will look to extend their fine start when they play Iraq tomorrow in their second game of this phase. Last night's win was also their fourth in a row of the competition, having previously swept all three of their games in the preliminary round.

Following their match with

Iraq tomorrow, they play Iran in their last main round game on Wednesday.

The Bahrainis must finish amongst the top two in their group to advance to the semi-finals. Should they finish third, they will play for fifth place overall, and if they finish last in the group, they will contend for



Olympian and national team goalkeeper Mohammed Abdulhussain was a rock for Bahrain in yesterday's contest, finishing with 16 saves

seventh place overall.

The teams in Group I are South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Uzbekistan.

The tournament also acts as the continental qualifying event for the 2023 IHF World Men's Handball Championship. The top five-ranked teams earn an automatic berth to the worlds.

The nationals are gunning for their first title in the Asian championship.

In the previous Asian championship held in January of 2020, the Bahrainis finished fourth overall. Bahrain have been runners-up four times in the last six editions and bronze-medallists once.

Manama, Hala play to goalless draw



Manama skipper Isa Moussa dribbles past his Al Hala marker

● Manama retain position in second place on league standings following fourth draw in 10 matches

TDT | Manama

Manama were held to a goalless draw by Al Hala in the final game of week 10 in the 2021/2022 Nasser bin Hamad Bahrain Premier Football League.

Both teams had chances to score in the contest, but neither could find the finishing touches.

This included Manama's

Mahdi Abduljabbar, who is currently the league's top scorer with nine goals and who also won last season's Golden Boot.

Following the share of the points, Manama improved to 19 points on the league standings, where they retained their position at the beginning of the week in second place, seven points behind table-toppers and back-to-back defending champions Riffa. The result was their fourth draw in 10 games.

Hala, on the other hand, also had their fourth draw, and they went to 10 points in sixth place. League action continues early next month following an international break.

Al Rumaihi takes home grand prize in showjumping round

● HH Shaikh Nasser's media office director and BREEF PR and media committee head Tawfiq Al Salehi crowns winners

TDT | Manama

Mayoof Al Rumaihi emerged as the grand prize winner of the sixth showjumping championship, held in Sakhr.

HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa's Media Office and Information Centre director and Bahrain Royal Equestrian and Endurance Federation (BREEF) PR and media committee head Tawfiq Al Salehi was on hand to crown the Ministry of Interior team member as the winner.

Al Salehi congratulated the top three finishers in the main race of the event. He praised the efforts exerted by the stables to achieve the best results and top places, and stated that such efforts are contributing to the development of showjumping in Bahrain.

Al Salehi added: "The showjumping sport is witnessing tangible improvement in the Kingdom, thanks to the support



An awarding ceremony from one of the categories

“
The showjumping sport is witnessing tangible improvement in the Kingdom, thanks to the support and backing of HH Shaikh Isa bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, President of BREEF

TAWFIQ AL SALEHI

and backing of HH Shaikh Isa bin Abdulla Al Khalifa, President of BREEF.”

He also hailed the endeavours of the BREEF showjumping committee.

Al Rumaihi defeated his competitors over 140cm fences, clocking 57.62 seconds. He was followed by Hussain Dadaallah, who posted a time of 58.73s. Both the first-place winner and runner-up committed eight faults each. Meanwhile, Al Rumaihi also occupied third place as he participated on two different horses. He finished in 66.05 seconds in his second



One of the participants in action

attempt.

Also, Al Rumaihi jumped to victory in the third competition for senior participants, which featured 110cm fences. He completed it in 22.15 seconds, leaving second place to his brother Sultan, whose time was 23.82 seconds. Third place went to Abdulla Al Awadhi, who crossed the finish line in 25.09 seconds.

In the fourth competition for seniors (120cm fences), Ahmed Al Hasheli topped the podium, while Haytham Al Bastaki triumphed in the joker event which featured 130cm fences.