

**Muharraq, Manama set for Khalifa bin Salman Cup final**

Muharraq's point-guard Yunes Kawaid has lifted the Khalifa bin Salman trophy with Muharraq, Manama, and Riffa | P16

# THE DAILY tribune

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Araujo header scrapes Liga leaders Barca win over Rayo **15** SPORTS

**BUSINESS 6** War more than six months would hit global economy, TotalEnergies boss says

**Bahrain condoles with Qatar and Turkiye over chopper crash**

TDT | Manama

The Kingdom of Bahrain expressed its deep condolences and sympathy to the governments and peoples of the State of Qatar and the Republic of Turkiye following the loss of seven personnel from the Qatar Armed Forces and the Qatar-Turkiye Joint Forces.

The fatalities occurred as a result of a helicopter crash involving an aircraft designated for personnel transport within the territorial waters of Qatar.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs underscored Bahrain's solidarity with Qatar and Turkiye during this incident.

**Israel to expand Lebanon offensive**

AFP | Jerusalem

Israel's military will expand its ground operations in Lebanon against Hezbollah, its army chief said yesterday, warning that the offensive against the group was still in its early stages.

Lebanon was pulled into the Middle East war when Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on March 2 to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in an Israeli-US strike.

"The operation against the Hezbollah terrorist organisation has only begun... This is a prolonged operation," Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir said in a statement.

**Talks progress**

AFP | Washington

US envoy reported progress yesterday during talks with Ukraine on ending the war launched by Russia, a goal President Donald Trump vowed to accomplish when he took office 14 months ago.

The two days of talks in Florida focused on "further closing gaps and addressing remaining issues, and included a breakthrough on a key humanitarian matter," Steve Witkoff, Trump's globe-trotting envoy, wrote on X.

# Peace prevails

Eid calm shows trust in Bahrain security despite regional tensions

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Eid Al Fitr in the Kingdom of Bahrain has been marked by calm and public trust.

Shura Council members said the holiday mood has shown faith in the Kingdom's defence, security services and state bodies.

This comes despite the strain caused by the Iranian attacks.

Dr Jehad Al Fadhel, Second Deputy Chair of the Shura Council, said the way people had marked Eid showed deep trust in Bahrain's ability to keep people safe.

She said the leadership had dealt with the attacks wisely, putting the safety of citizens and residents first.

**Prayer**

The lawmaker said His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's public Eid prayer, along with his field visits with His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, had given people a clear sense that matters were in hand.

"This field presence gives

**”**

The way people had marked Eid showed deep trust in Bahrain's ability to keep people safe

**DR JEHAD AL FADHEL, SHURA COUNCIL SECOND DEPUTY CHAIR**



**”**

Eid is not measured only by celebration, but by the deep-rooted feeling of security

**REDHA MUNFARIDI, SHURA COUNCIL'S YOUTH COMMITTEE HEAD**



people a feeling of reassurance and confirms that matters are under control, and that life in Bahrain is, praise be to God, moving forward," she said.

Dr Al Fadhel also said the flow of messages from state bodies through Bahrain TV and the National Communication Centre had cut down rumours and kept people aware of what was going on.

She added that work to keep food supplies and health services in place had added to the sense of calm.

**Obedience**

The legislator said people's obedience to public guidance

and their co-operation with the security services showed the closeness of Bahraini society in hard times.

"The cohesion and steadfastness of the Bahraini community in these exceptional circumstances is not new; it is an extension of the nature of the Bahraini society and its authentic values," she said. "We are living in a state of conscious reassurance, with a sense of security and stability."

Redha Munfaridi, Head of Shura Council's Youth Committee, also spoke of the readiness of Bahrain's public bodies during the Eid period.

He said this year's holiday had

come at a time when the need for safety was especially clear.

**Readiness**

The lawmaker said the armed forces, security services and other state bodies had shown a high level of readiness, adding that Bahraini staff had proved able to deal with hard tests with skill and discipline.

Munfaridi said the calm seen on Bahrain's streets, the smooth movement of people and the visible presence of the relevant agencies pointed to joined-up planning and close work across institutions.

He linked that to a leadership vision that puts human safety

and stability first, and said Bahrain had shown how to handle pressure and keep public life running even as the region faces strain.

**Safety**

He said Eid should be judged not by celebration alone, but by the settled feeling of safety people carry through it.

"Bahrain constitutes a role model in managing challenges and organizing events, even in light of regional and international challenges," he said. "Eid is not measured only by celebration, but by the deep-rooted feeling of security."

# Bahrain hails G7 support amid regional tensions

TDT | Manama

Bahrain has welcomed the joint statement issued by the G7 countries and the European Commission, reaffirming support for the security, sovereignty, and safety of partner countries in the region.

The statement strongly condemned "reckless and unjustified Iranian attacks" targeting civilians and civilian infrastructure, including energy facilities, across GCC countries, Jordan, and Iraq.

It also affirmed the right of nations to defend their territories and citizens in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 2817.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs praised the G7 statement, which includes the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, and Japan, for pledging to defend energy supplies amid rising maritime threats in the Strait of Hormuz.

The statement highlighted the importance of stabilizing



global energy markets, ensuring the safety of commercial transit, and addressing the growing

instability in this vital international shipping route.

The ministry also noted the G7's renewed assurances that Iran does not possess a nuclear weapon, and welcomed their call for Tehran to halt its ballistic missile program and end destabilizing activities both regionally and globally.

Bahrain affirmed that the G7's stance underscores the importance of collective security, regional stability, and the protection of international energy routes.

**Attacks on West Bank villages**

AFP | Jalud, Palestinian Territories

Palestinian residents said yesterday that Israeli settlers torched buildings and cars in attacks on several villages in the occupied West Bank, with Israel's army condemning "violence of any kind" after the fact.

The reported arson late Saturday came in the midst of a spate of killings of Palestinians by Israeli settlers in the West Bank since the start of the Middle East war.

AFP journalists saw the charred remains of a house and several vehicles in the village of Fandaqumiya, southwest of Jenin. In the village of Jalud, a medical centre had been torched and Hebrew graffiti daubed on the mosque.

Hassan Al-Zoubi, whose home in Fandaqumiya was destroyed, told AFP that some 200 assailants had come from the nearby settlement of Homesh.

"They set the house on fire right before our eyes using Molotov cocktails, throwing them through the windows," Zoubi said.

# Trump reposts video mocking Starmer on Truth Social

AFP | London

US President Donald Trump shared a video on his Truth Social network yesterday of a TV comedy skit showing a terrified British Prime Minister Keir Starmer hoping to dodge a phone

call with the American leader.

The skit, aired on the premiere of the new British version of Saturday Night Live - adapted from the long-running US show - shows Starmer, played by George Fouracres, panicking inside 10 Downing Street at the prospect

of a call with Trump. Starmer turns to a fake David Lammy, his deputy prime minister, and says, "What if Donald shouts at me?"

When Trump picks up the phone, Starmer immediately hangs up, asking why it is so difficult to talk to "that scary, scary,

wonderful president".

"Sir, just be honest and tell him we can't send any more ships to the Strait of Hormuz," Lammy says -- the vital shipping lane effectively blocked by Iran since the US-Israeli attacks that started the Middle East war.



# Pakistan School, Bahrain upholds 'faith, unity and discipline'

TDT | Manama

On this magnificent occasion of Pakistan Resolution Day, Pakistan School extends its warmest and most heartfelt wishes to all Pakistani nationals and our fellow compatriots living in Bahrain.

May this historic day remind us of the unity, resilience, and shared pride that bind us as a nation. Let it inspire us to continue striving for progress, harmony, and excellence.

As we commemorate this significant milestone, let us also honor the vision and sacrifices of our forefathers who made this dream a reality. May we remain committed to upholding the values of faith, unity, and discipline in all that we do. Let this day renew our sense of responsibility towards building a brighter future for our beloved country.

Wishing everyone a joyful, blessed, and prosperous Pakistan Resolution Day!

We are pleased to present a brief synopsis of Pakistan School, Bahrain on this joyous and memorable occasion.

## Visionary members

The foundation of Pakistan School dates back to the late 1960s, when visionary members of the community recognized the need for a dedicated schooling system for their children.

This noble initiative led to the establishment of a small primary school in 1968, housed in a rented building in the Fareej Fadhel area of Manama.

A few years later, the school was upgraded to the secondary level after securing affiliation with the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Islamabad, Pakistan.

In 1984, the new campus of the Pakistan School was constructed in Isa town, which was inaugurated by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Premier.

Two new blocks, Jinnah Block and Sir Sayed Block were con-

structed in Isa Town Campus, between 1994-95.

Today Pakistan school has two wings, Manama (Primary) and the main campus Isa Town.

## Activities

Pakistan School has laid down a well-defined, effective, practicable and productive network of extra and co-curricular activities for the personality and the character building of the students.

These activities are conducted on inter class, inter house and inter school levels.

Under the able leadership of Pakistan school, it has covered many distinctive landmarks during the previous couple of years in the academic and administrative areas. In the last few years, the school has brought about tremendous and unprecedented progress in all spheres. A lot of infrastructure development; modern facilities to the students and professional development programs for the faculty are a few to name here.



Mr. Attiq ur Rehman, Principal & Secretary, Board of Management, Pakistan School, Bahrain



Mr. Sami ur Rehman, Chairman, Board of Management, Pakistan School, Bahrain

Pakistan School's Federal Board results have shown consistent and remarkable progress over the past few years.

A total of 1,235 students have secured A and A+ grades in the Federal Board, Islamabad examinations—of whom 470 are Bahraini students. The school has awarded scholarships to these high achievers, many of whom later qualified for prestigious scholarships at the University of Bahrain as well.

In 2025, the students of Paki-

stan School once again upheld their proud tradition of excellence. Through their hard work and dedication, they achieved an outstanding overall result of 96.15% in the SSC First Annual Examination 2025 and 93.20% in the HSSC Annual Examination 2025, marking yet another remarkable milestone in the school's academic journey.

## Academic excellence

Besides the Federal Board Examinations, our students

have consistently demonstrated their academic excellence by participating in prestigious international competitions such as TIMSS, PIRLS, and the World Scholar's Cup.

Pakistan School students have achieved remarkable success at the World Scholar's Cup (WSC), showcasing outstanding performance on the global stage. From 2018 to 2025, they won an impressive total of 870 Gold medals and 623 Silver medals, along with numerous trophies. These achievements firmly establish Pakistan School as a leading competitor in international academic events.

Continuing this proud legacy, at the World Scholar's Cup 2026 - Bahrain Round, Pakistan School students once again outperformed their competitors and made history by securing an exceptional 127 Gold medals and 112 Silver medals, along with two prestigious trophies in the Team Challenge and Scholar's Challenge categories.

Furthermore, Pakistan School

proudly secured first position in the subjects of Media & Literature, Art & Music, and Social Studies at the Bahrain Round 2026.

## Commitment to excellence

Most of the participating teams have also successfully qualified for the Global Round of the World Scholar's Cup, reflecting the school's continued commitment to excellence.

Most participating teams from Pakistan School have qualified for the Global Round of the World Scholar's Cup, reflecting their exceptional preparation and dedication.

Pakistan School has earned a name of its own for participation in the national, cultural and social festivals to strengthen the bond of its deep love and affiliation with the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The sole aim of Pakistan school is to create a new generation inculcating in them qualities needed to be visionaries to lead their country in the future.



Pakistan School graduation ceremony

# Jordan Senate backs Bahrain 'sovereignty and security'

Mohammed Darwish

TDT | Manama

Jordan's Senate president has voiced full support for Bahrain's sovereignty and security, with its president Faisal Akef Al Fayeze sending a letter to Shura Council chairman Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh.

The message backs the kingdom as it faces what Bahrain described as Iranian attacks targeting Bahrain, Gulf states, and Jordan.

In the letter, Al Fayeze said Jordan stood by Bahrain's leadership and people, echoing the stance of His Majesty King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and backed Bahrain's right to protect its national sovereignty and defend its safety and sta-

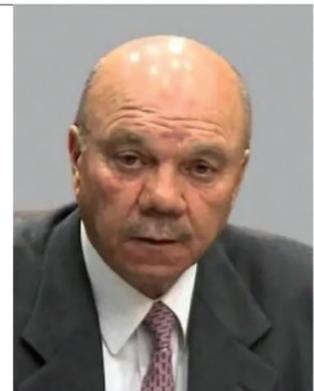


**Bahrain and Jordan are bound by strong fraternal and strategic ties, as well as deep-rooted shared links.**

Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, Shura Council chairman

**Jordan stands by Bahrain's leadership and people, and its right to protect its national sovereignty and defend its safety and stability**

Faisal Akef Al Fayeze, President of Jordan's Senate



port for Bahrain in the steps it is taking to protect its sovereignty and preserve its security and stability.

## Ties

He said Bahrain and Jordan were bound by strong fraternal and strategic ties, as well as deep-rooted shared links.

Al Saleh added that visits between the two kingdoms' leaders showed the depth of those bonds and a shared view on threats to regional security and stability.

The lawmaker also said Bahrain stood with Jordan against the Iranian attacks targeting its sovereignty, security and stability, and said the message from the Jordanian Senate president carried clear brotherly support for Bahrain under all circumstances.

that, he said, would amount to an unacceptable escalation and a clear breach of sovereignty and international law.

Al Fayeze also praised Bahrain's leadership for what he described as a responsible role in backing regional stability and

calling for dialogue and peaceful solutions.

He also urged the international community to take its duty seriously in preventing any attack or escalation that could endanger international peace and security.

He also prayed for Bahrain, its leadership and its people to remain safe and secure.

Al Saleh, in reply, thanked Al Fayeze for what he called Jordan's honourable stance and continued backing, and praised the Hashemite Kingdom's sup-

# 'Bahrain's community partnership key in crisis'

● **Dr Al Salman: Kingdom strongest when public bodies and community pull together**

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Dealing with a crisis cannot be left to the state alone, Dr Jameela Al Salman said, arguing that Bahrain is strongest when public bodies and the community pull together.

In an interview with Bahrain TV, the Shura Council member said community partnership must be seen as a lived practice rather than a loose social idea.

"It turns from a theoretical, awareness, or social concept into a true, real practice based on full and deep conviction," she said.

Dr Al Salman said meeting hard times calls for joined-up work between government bodies, citizens and residents, rather than leaving the task to one side alone.

**Effort**

She said that shared effort

Meeting hard times calls for joined-up work between government bodies, citizens and residents, rather than leaving the task to one side alone

DR JAMEELA AL SALMAN, SHURA COUNCIL MEMBER



on a clear sense of public duty. The lawmaker pointed to Bah-

rain's handling of the Covid-19 pandemic as a strong case of that spirit in action, saying the country's response won praise from bodies such as the World Health Organisation.

Speaking about recent strains, she said community partnership remains one of the main props of unity, with people standing together behind the leadership.

She described it as "a true indicator of the strength of the relationship between the leadership and the people" and said it showed the depth of trust between both sides.

Dr Al Salman also spoke warmly of steps taken by the Ministry of Interior to build trust and keep channels with the public open, saying such work helps keep security and stability in place.

She added that young people are the driving force in many of these efforts, bringing energy, ideas and reach that help shape answers fit for the needs of society.

For Dr Al Salman, that model points to a country with strong institutions and a public able to face hard moments with confidence.

## Only Bahraini citizens can manage recruitment offices under new rule

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Non-Bahrainis can no longer manage licensed recruitment offices in Bahrain under a new ruling issued by the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA).

The move came through Decision No. 1 of 2026, issued by His Excellency Yousif Khalaf, chairman of the Authority's board.

It adds a new Article 5 bis to Decision No. 1 of 2014, which governs licences for recruitment offices, after a submission by the Authority's chief executive and board approval.



H.E. Yousif Khalaf

Under the revised rules, the licence holder must run the office in person.

A manager may still be appointed with the Authority's consent, but only if that person is Bahraini, has not previously had a recruitment office licence revoked under the law, and has not been convicted of a felony or a misdemeanour involving dishonour or breach of trust, unless rehabilitated.

The decision was published in the Official Gazette and states that the Authority's chief executive is to carry out its provisions. It comes into force on the day after publication.

## 145 missiles, 246 drones destroyed

TDT | Manama

The General Command of the Bahrain Defence Force announced that through the unwavering vigilance of its personnel, the BDF's air defence

systems continue to successfully counter successive waves of the hostile terrorist Iranian aggression.

Since the onset of hostilities, air defences have intercepted and destroyed 145 ballistic mis-

siles and 246 drones targeting the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The General Command expressed its pride in the exceptional combat readiness and vigilance demonstrated by BDF personnel.

## Final day today for BCCI election applications

TDT | Manama

The Elections Committee of the Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) for its 31st session has announced that today is the deadline for submitting candidacy applications for membership to the Chamber's Board of Directors, as preparations continue for the upcoming elections.

The committee said the number of applicants has reached 25 so far, adding that it is continuing to review submissions to ensure all candidates meet the criteria set out in the Chamber's law and executive regulations.

The final list of approved candidates will be announced following the completion of this process.

**Nomination**

It urged members of the business and industrial community to complete their nomination procedures before the deadline, stressing the importance of active participation in the electoral process as a reflection of the private sector's awareness and its role in supporting the national economy.

The committee also confirmed that elections for the Board of Directors for the 31st



All set for upcoming elections

session will be held on Saturday, March 28, 2026, at the Bahrain International Exhibition Centre in Sakhir, calling on Chamber members to engage positively in the event.

## House fire



Civil Defense teams rescued two children, aged 10 and 16, and extinguished a fire that broke out in a house in the Janousan area. The National Ambulance transported the children to hospital for treatment, while authorities have launched an investigation into the cause of the blaze.

**2<sup>rd</sup> March**  
PAKISTAN RESOLUTION DAY

Congratulations and Best Wishes to  
The Government and people of  
Pakistan and the Pakistani  
community in Bahrain  
on the auspicious occasion of  
**Pakistan Day**  
from the Board of Management,  
Principal, Staff & Students of  
Pakistan School, Bahrain

**PAKISTAN SCHOOL**  
KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN  
Tel : 17682304, Fax: 17682320  
Email : [info@pakistanschool.org](mailto:info@pakistanschool.org)

# 'Protect fishermen's incomes'

MP Al Olaiwi urges government to act fast to repair state of Bahrain's fishing trade

Mohammed Darwish  
TDT | Manama

MP Mohammed Al Olaiwi has urged the government to move fast to repair the state of Bahrain's fishing trade, saying some recent rulings have hurt fishermen and seafarers and put their income at risk. The government said it agreed with the aim of the proposal and would keep going with schemes meant to help those working in the sector, keep fishing viable and support food supply.

Al Olaiwi said he had met fishermen and seafarers and found clear disagreement among them over a number of recent rulings.

Some, he said, had not been properly studied, leading fish to move away from Bahrain's territorial waters.

He said he was in favour of the ban on shrimp fishing by kraf,



Some recent rulings had not been properly studied, leading fish to move away from Bahrain's territorial waters

MP MOHAMMED AL OLAIWI



saying the method had damaged the seabed, fashts and traditional fishing grounds.

But he said kraf fishing could

be allowed in waters where there are no fashts.

The government said Tamkeen, under Law No. 57 of 2006,

helps Bahrainis build work skills and strengthen their earning power through schemes that also cover those in the fishing

trade. It said the aim was to raise output and help workers stay in the field.

It added that support also includes incentives for holders of commercial registrations, along with funding through Bahrain Development Bank for Bahraini fishermen to buy gear and operating supplies.

### Reply

The reply also referred to diesel support and funding for equipment as part of wider efforts to protect marine resources, grow fish stocks and lift production.

It said the bodies concerned were still studying the real needs of fishermen and seafarers, while looking at better ways to support them, give them more economic stability and preserve marine resources for future generations.

# Pakistan reaffirms unity, resolve on Pakistan Day

TDT | Manama

Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari has called for national unity, resilience and renewed commitment to stability and progress as the country marks Pakistan Day today.

In a message to the nation, he paid tribute to the historic Pakistan Resolution, describing it as the foundation of the country's creation, and honoured the sacrifices of those who fought for independence.

"Pakistan Day reminds us that unity and solidarity are the most important elements in transforming national resolve into reality," President Zardari said, urging citizens to draw strength from the nation's past achievements in overcoming challenges.



Pakistan had demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity, including conflicts and natural disasters, through collective effort and determination.

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT ASIF ALI ZARDARI

Reflecting on Pakistan's journey since independence in 1947, the president highlighted the country's progress in strengthening state institutions, enhancing defence capabilities and combating terrorism.

He noted that Pakistan had demonstrated resilience in the

face of adversity, including conflicts and natural disasters, through collective effort and determination.

Addressing security concerns, President Zardari reaffirmed Pakistan's stance against terrorism and external threats.

"We will not allow any group

to use foreign soil for actions against Pakistan and will completely eliminate those who sponsor terrorism," he said, underlining the government's commitment to safeguarding national security and stability.

### Institutions

The Pakistan leader also stressed the need to strengthen democratic institutions, uphold the rule of law and promote economic and social development, including reducing inequality and empowering women.

He called on the nation to uphold the guiding principles of unity, faith and discipline to build a stronger and more prosperous Pakistan, while paying tribute to national heroes and those who sacrificed their lives for the country.

# Pakistan-Bahrain relations continue to grow stronger

TDT | Manama

His Excellency Saqib Rauf, Pakistan's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain, has reaffirmed the strength of bilateral relations and called for renewed commitment to shared values of peace, cooperation and inclusion as Pakistan Day is celebrated today.

In his message, the Ambassador extended greetings to the Pakistani community in Bahrain and praised the Kingdom's leadership and people for their continued support, particularly during recent regional tensions.

He emphasised the importance of enduring partnerships, describing Bahrain as a key ally.

### Partnerships

"Our relationship with Bahrain stands as a shining example of such partnerships," he said, highlighting the close cooperation between the two countries.

H.E. Ambassador Rauf also expressed Pakistan's support for Bahrain's diplomatic role in addressing regional challenges.

"Pakistan strongly supports Bahrain's ongoing diplomatic efforts to de-escalate the current situation in the region," he said, voicing confidence in the leadership of His Majesty Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa.

Commending Bahrain's efforts to safeguard residents, the Ambassador added, "For Pakistanis, Bahrain has always been a second home, and in these challenging times, Bahrain has lived up to that sentiment by extending care and support to those in need."

### Cooperation

Looking ahead, H.E. Ambassador Rauf underscored grow-



For Pakistanis, Bahrain has always been a second home, and in these challenging times, Bahrain has lived up to that sentiment by extending care and support to those in need

H.E. SAQIB RAUF, PAKISTAN'S AMBASSADOR TO THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN

ing economic cooperation and the potential to expand bilateral trade and investment.

He noted that both countries are working towards increasing trade to over \$1 billion in the coming years, with opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, information technology, manufacturing and tourism.

He also pointed to enhanced collaboration in education and workforce development, alongside investment initiatives such as Pakistan's Special Investment Facilitation Council, aimed at attracting foreign investors.

### Commitment

Rauf urged the Pakistani community to continue contributing positively to Bahraini society, while reaffirming a shared commitment to strengthening ties built on mutual respect, cooperation and a long-standing friendship.

# Sharif highlights unity, security and economic progress

TDT | Manama

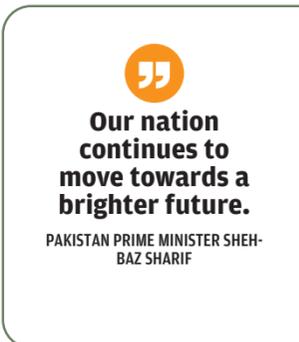
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has called for unity, resilience and sustained reform as Pakistan marked Pakistan Day today, reaffirming the country's commitment to economic stability, national security and regional peace.

In his message, Prime Minister Sharif described the occasion as a defining moment in the nation's history, rooted in the Lahore Resolution, which laid the foundation for the creation of Pakistan.

He paid tribute to the leadership of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the sacrifices of the country's forefathers.

### Milestone

"23rd of March holds the status of a significant milestone in the history of South Asia," he said, adding that the resolution "instilled such determination



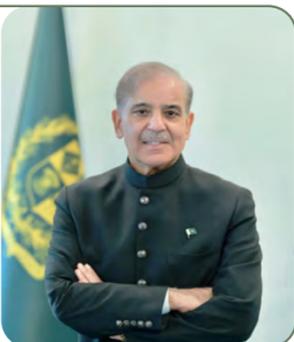
Our nation continues to move towards a brighter future.

PAKISTAN PRIME MINISTER SHEHBAZ SHARIF

among Muslims" that led to the creation of Pakistan within seven years.

Highlighting Pakistan's journey since independence, the prime minister underscored the country's resilience and progress.

"From a nascent state to becoming a nuclear power, our journey reflects steadfastness and iron resolve," he said, noting that the nation continues to



move towards a brighter future.

Prime Minister Sharif pointed to improving economic indicators as a sign of recovery and stability.

### Evidence

"A consistent decline in inflation, increased investors' confidence, and positive economic indicators are evidence that we are moving in the right direction," he said, attributing the

progress to reforms, prudent policies and public confidence.

On security, the prime minister praised the armed forces for their role in defending the country, referencing recent military operations.

He said Pakistan's response to threats demonstrated that its defence remains "impregnable" and its resolve "unshakable," particularly in countering terrorism and safeguarding borders.

### Peace and dialogue

Reaffirming Pakistan's foreign policy stance, Prime Minister Sharif said the country remains committed to peace and dialogue, while expressing solidarity with Palestine.

He urged national unity and collective effort to achieve long-term progress, stressing that a determined nation can overcome any challenge and build a strong and prosperous future.

# Eid brings strength

Filipinos in Kingdom celebrate annual occasion with gratitude, faith and unity amid challenges

TDI | Manama

Filipinos in the Kingdom of Bahrain celebrated Eid Al-Fitr 2026 with a blend of gratitude, resilience, and unity, despite ongoing regional tensions that continue to affect daily life and employment.

Eid Al-Fitr, which commenced on March 20, 2026, signified the conclusion of the sacred month of Ramadan and is customarily celebrated with prayers, family reunions, and charitable activities.

This year, however, the festivities took place under challenging circumstances impacted both local residents and expatriate communities.

Despite the situation, the Filipino community came together to observe the occasion in meaningful ways.

## Prayers

Many Filipinos gathered in smaller groups for prayers and simple meals, while others chose to celebrate quietly in shared accommodations and homes.

Julius Jude P. Mamacalay, president of Kaisahan ng Filipino Balik Islam sa Bahrain (KFBI - Bahrain), shared how their group marked the occasion despite the challenges.

"This morning, we had a simple breakfast with some of our members and my family. It was a modest celebration despite our current situation. We continue to practice the traditions and teachings of Islam, as this helps



Pinay Ikaw Na (PIN) president Dinah E. Sta. Ana with Cecilia Ancheta, Marife Reyes, Epifania Fuyoc and Lenila Estuche

strengthen our brotherhood," he said.

The Kaisahan ng Filipino Balik Islam sa Bahrain has recently conducted its Ramadan Iftar Distribution Program, providing iftar packages to fasting individuals in the community.

Meanwhile, Neverlyn Penturas Biona, 44, from Iloilo City, and a revert to Islam, shared how the Filipino Muslim community remained steadfast in faith.

"My friends and I were able to attend the Eid prayer at the mosque and celebrate Eid Al-Fitr with prayers for peace and prosperity," she said. "With sincere hearts, full of blessings and warm wishes, we marked this special occasion even amid the current situation. Alhamdulillah."

Biona, who has been working in Bahrain for 16 years currently

as a technician at RFI Bell Helicopters, also shared a message for fellow Filipinos.

"To all my kababayan, let us always stay safe and follow the government's safety precautions. Remain calm and be vigilant. Let us continue to pray to Allah for our protection and safety. He is our protector and controller of everything. All praises belong to Allah," she said.

## Traditions

For some Filipinos in Bahrain, Eid Al-Fitr offers more than just a public holiday; it serves as a chance to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of Islamic culture and traditions.

According to Ruth Apurado, president of Habi Pilipina, "On this blessed occasion of Eid, I am truly happy for our Muslim brothers and sisters as they cel-

brate this meaningful time. I hope that no matter what challenges may come our way, we will continue to stand together in unity, supporting one another for the greater good of all".

Apurado celebrated a simple get-together with her fellow Habi Pilipina officers following a meeting to discuss the direction of the organization's programs in light of the current situation.

## Attendees

The meeting was attended by Epifania Fuyoc, Lenila Estuche, Marife Reyes, and Cecilia Ancheta.

Pinay Ikaw Na (PIN) president Dinah E. Sta. Ana was also present during the gathering.

Habi Pilipina is a collective of talented women tailors and designers in the kingdom.



Filipinos uplift one another in times of uncertainty

# United front for Bahrain amid Iranian attacks

## Bahraini families and institutions express solidarity

TDI | Manama

Bahraini families, community leaders, business figures, along with sports and cultural

clubs and civil society organisations, have issued statements affirming their support for the Kingdom, national unity, and loyalty under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

This comes amid Iranian attacks targeting Bahrain and other Gulf countries.

Additional statements were issued by 1,000 Bahraini fami-

lies, community leaders, business figures, sports and cultural clubs, and civil society organisations, bringing the total issued statements to 24,500.

## Leadership

The statements confirmed their unity around the national leadership under His Majesty the King and expressed confidence in the measures

taken by the government, led by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to confront the Iranian attacks.

They commended the Bahrain Defence Force and its personnel for their high readiness, competence, and vigilance in responding to assaults targeting civilian sites and private

property, describing these attacks as serious violations of the principles of good neighbourliness and as a direct threat to regional peace and security. The statements also commended the Ministry of Interior and its personnel for their efforts in managing the consequences of the attacks, expressing pride in the dedication and professionalism of

national personnel working across various sectors in the service of the Kingdom.

## Pride

They expressed great pride in Bahrain's dedicated teams, who are leading the efforts with proficiency and a strong national spirit across multiple domains of work.

## Bahrain-Russia relations



His Excellency Ahmed Abdulrahman Al Saati, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the Russian Federation and Dean of the Arab Diplomatic Corps, met with Georgy Borisenko, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for the Middle East and Africa of the Russian Federation, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Russia. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral cooperation and explored means to further develop relations across various fields. They exchanged views on regional developments, including the ongoing and unjustified Iranian attacks against the Kingdom of Bahrain, GCC states, and other countries in the region.

## Noise violations



Several drivers were apprehended and their vehicles impounded for 60 days after causing excessive noise, spreading panic among citizens and residents, and disrupting public order. Legal action has been taken against them.

# War more than six months would hit global economy, TotalEnergies boss says

AFP | Paris, France

If the war in the Middle East drags out more than six months, economies around the world would suffer “real impacts”, the head of French oil giant TotalEnergies said yesterday.

“If it’s more than six months, we will have some real impacts. All the economies of the world will be damaged,” CEO Patrick Pouyanne said in an interview with Chinese state broadcaster CGTN.

Iran’s effective closure of the



A crude oil tanker is berthed at the crude oil terminal at the port in Qingdao, in China’s eastern Shandong province

Strait of Hormuz in retaliation for US-Israeli strikes against it has severely crimped the world’s oil supply and raised fears among governments of higher inflation and lower economic growth.

Pouyanne noted that, in peacetime, around 20 percent of global oil production passes through the strait, but with “what is stuck today, you have 10 million barrels of oil per day which cannot exit” the Gulf.

“And we cannot find the oil elsewhere in the planet,” said

the energy boss, who was interviewed on the sidelines of the China Development Forum in Beijing.

“If this conflict lasts three, four months, we can swallow it. Today we manage to amortise this shock because we have inventories,” he said.

But, he warned, a prolonged conflict going beyond six months would be a blow to the global economy.

“So again, I hope we’ll find solutions quickly for this war,” he said.

## Trump orders immigration agents to airports amid crippling budget standoff

AFP | Washington, United States

Immigration agents will be deployed in US airports beginning Monday, aiming to alleviate soaring congestion at security screenings amid a weeks-long budget standoff over President Donald Trump’s mass deportation drive, officials said.

Trump announced the extraordinary move in a social media post yesterday morning, sending officials racing to quickly develop a plan.

Tom Homan, the president’s senior border aide, confirmed to CNN that Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents would be shifted from their normal duties to airports on Monday, but they would not be doing jobs they were untrained for.

“I don’t see an ICE agent looking at an x-ray machine, because you’re not trained in that,” he said on CNN’s “State of the Union.”

Rather, the agents would help “wherever we can provide extra security,” such as monitoring exits.

“We’ll put together a plan today and we’ll execute tomorrow,” he said.

Funding has been lapsed since February 14 for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), as Democratic lawmakers demand reforms in the wake of Trump’s deadly immigration crackdown in Minnesota.



Travelers wait in line at a TSA security checkpoint at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, Texas

However, DHS also oversees the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the agency responsible for airport security screenings, meaning staff around the country have worked for weeks without pay.

Many TSA agents have begun calling out from work, prompting soaring wait times at screening lines, sometimes as high as multiple hours.

More than 300 TSA employees have quit since the shutdown began on February 14, accord-

ing to the DHS, while US media reported that unscheduled absences had more than doubled.

Some officers are taking on second jobs or relying on donations, union officials say, and several major airports are collecting gift cards and stocking food pantries for TSA staff struggling without pay.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said on Sunday he thinks the situation is “going to get much worse” in the coming days.

“As it gets worse, I think that puts pressure on the Congress to come to a resolution,” he told ABC’s “This Week.”

Democrats have demanded curtailed patrols, a ban on face masks and a requirement that ICE agents obtain a judicial warrant before entering private property.

While ICE is part of the Department of Homeland Security, it has nonetheless been able to maintain operations using funds approved by Congress last year.

## N. Macedonia cuts fuel tax

North Macedonia has cut the value added tax (VAT) on petrol and diesel from 18 percent to 10, Prime Minister

Hristijan Mickoski told journalists after a government session to tackle surging prices fuelled by the war.

## Sri Lanka hikes fuel prices

Sri Lanka raised petrol and diesel prices by more than 25 percent, the second

increase in two weeks, as it prepared for more impact from the war.

## Vietnam, Russia to ink energy deal

Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh left for an official visit to Russia during which the two nations will sign several agreements, including on oil and gas cooperation, Hanoi

said. The trip, scheduled from Sunday to Wednesday, comes as Vietnam seeks to shore up its fuel reserves amid the global supply disruptions caused by the war.

## EU urges gas-storage target cut

The European Commission on Saturday urged European Union members to lower their target for filling natural gas storage in the coming months, to alleviate price pressures caused by the war.

EU energy commissioner

Dan Jorgensen sent a letter asking countries to “consider reducing your filling target to 80 percent as early as possible in the filling season to provide certainty and reassurance to market participants”, down from the usual 90-percent goal.

## Damaged Russian tanker to be towed to Libya: state-owned company

AFP | Tripoli, Libya

A damaged Russian gas tanker that was abandoned in the Mediterranean will be towed to a Libyan port, according to a state-owned oil company in the north African country.

The Arctic Metagaz was ferrying about 700 tonnes of fuel and a consignment of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Russia to Egypt when it was hit by a series of explosions on March 3. Russia accused Ukraine of trying to blow it up.

The 30 crew members were rescued, leaving the LNG-laden carrier to drift between Malta and Libya for nearly three weeks. Libya’s National Oil Corporation (NOC) announced on Saturday that it would collab-



The wreck of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) carrier Arctic Metagaz, which is adrift between Malta and Lampedusa.

orate with Italian group Eni to fetch the wrecked vessel.

“Managing this environmental threat is fully achievable,” NOC said in a statement. “It will be towed safely to one of the Libyan ports following coordination with the relevant authorities.” The company said it had already taken action to “reduce the risk of pollution”.

AFP footage taken from a plane earlier this month showed the carrier listing to one side, parts of it blackened and seriously damaged by fire, with two holes on either side in the middle of the hull. According to Italy’s Civil Protection Department, the carrier is located in international waters, but within the Libyan search and rescue zone. It said that towing the

wreck would be a “complex operation” due to the “large breach along its side”.



Oil spills can kill wildlife even in tiny amounts—just a small patch of oil can destroy the waterproofing of a bird’s feathers, leading to hypothermia and death

# Water emerges as a dangerous new war target

Bahrain's interior ministry said on March 8 that an Iranian drone attack damaged a water desalination plant

● The impact could range from short disruptions to far more severe consequences if outages last

● Water shortages could also ripple through the economy, hitting tourism, industry and data centres, which consume large amounts of water for cooling.

AFP | Paris, France

Attacks on water systems are uncommon in wartime, but Iran has threatened to target desalination plants after it said its own water and energy infrastructure had sustained damage in the ongoing war with Israel and the US.

## What has Iran said?

Iran's military renewed its threats yesterday against the region's infrastructure after US President Donald Trump vowed to "obliterate" power plants in the Islamic republic if the Strait of Hormuz was not swiftly reopened.

"Following previous warnings, if Iran's fuel and energy infrastructure is violated by the enemy, all energy, information technology and desalination infrastructure belonging to the US and the regime (Israel) in the region will be targeted," the Iranian military's operational command Khatam Al-Anbiya said in a statement carried by the Fars news agency.

The statement came after Trump gave Iran a 48-hour deadline to open the vital route in the Gulf to shipping traffic after it was effectively closed early in the Middle East war.

Who was previously targeted? Bahrain's interior ministry said on March 8 that an Iranian



Ras al-Khair water desalination plant, owned by the Saudi government's Saline Water Conversion Corporation

drone attack damaged a water desalination plant, accusing Tehran of "randomly" targeting civilian infrastructure.

The country's national communications office later said the Iranian attack had no impact on water supplies or network capacity.

The strike came a day after Iran accused the United States of setting a precedent by attacking a desalination plant on Qeshm Island that supplies 30 villages.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard force said the United States attacked Qeshm from a base in Bahrain.

Such attacks have been limited so far, but "the first side that dares to attack water triggers a war far more enormous than the one we have today", water economist Esther Crauser-Delbourg

told AFP earlier in March.

## Why does desalinated water matter?

The Middle East is among the driest regions in the world, with water availability about 10 times lower than the global average, according to the World Bank.

That makes desalination plants essential to the economy and drinking water supplies in the region.

About 42 percent of the world's desalination capacity is located in the Middle East, according to a study published in the journal Nature.

Desalinated water provides 42 percent of drinking water in the United Arab Emirates, 70 percent in Saudi Arabia, 86 percent in Oman and 90 percent in Kuwait, according to a 2022

report from the French Institute of International Relations think tank.

"Over there, without desalinated water there, there is nothing," said Crauser-Delbourg.

The supply is particularly strategic for large cities such as Dubai and Riyadh.

As far back as 2010, the CIA warned that disrupting desalination facilities in most Arab countries "could have more serious consequences than the loss of any other industry or commodity".

A 2008 US diplomatic cable published by WikiLeaks said Riyadh might have to evacuate within a week if the Jubail desalination plant or its pipelines were severely damaged.

## What threats do the plants

## face?

Besides military strikes, desalination plants are vulnerable to power outages and contamination of seawater, including oil spills, according to experts.

"We have strengthened access security and controls in the immediate vicinity of the plants," said Philippe Bourdeaux, regional director for Africa and the Middle East at French firm Veolia.

The company supplies desalinated water to regions including Jubail in Saudi Arabia, and Muscat, Sur and Salalah in Oman.

"The recent events are of course prompting us to be extremely vigilant," Bourdeaux said.

"In some countries, authorities have placed missile bat-

teries around the largest plants to counter the drone or missile threat," he added.

Operators also have tools to limit damage from oil spills.

What are the precedents?

There have been few other attacks on desalination facilities over the past decade.

Iran-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen have targeted desalination plants in Saudi Arabia in the past, while a Saudi-led coalition has struck back at water infrastructure in Yemen, according to the Pacific Institute, which tracks water-related conflicts.

Israeli strikes have hit water infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, according to the institute.

Before 2016, similar attacks date back to the Gulf War in 1991.

## What if attacks escalate?

The impact could range from short disruptions to far more severe consequences if outages last. "We could potentially see major cities facing an exodus. And rationing," Crauser-Delbourg said.

Water shortages could also ripple through the economy, hitting tourism, industry and data centres, which consume large amounts of water for cooling.

Some safeguards exist, Bourdeaux said. Desalination plants are often interconnected, which can limit the impact if one facility shuts down.

Most also hold reserves equivalent to two to seven days of water consumption -- enough to prevent shortages as long as disruptions are not prolonged.



Desalination provides drinking water to over 300 million people worldwide, especially in arid regions like the Middle East.

# Cuba readies for possible US attack, but ready to talk: diplomat

AFP | Washington, United States

Top Cuban diplomat said the communist-led island is making preparations in the event of a potential US attack, but insisted it has "no quarrel" with Washington, according to an interview that aired yesterday.

"Our military is always prepared. And in fact it is preparing these days for the possibility of military aggression," Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio told NBC, adding, however, "we truly hope



An old American car drives past a truck belonging to a private Cuban company (mipyme) parked in front of a gas station with an IsoTank of imported fuel in Havana

that it doesn't occur."

"Cuba has no quarrel with the United States. We do have the need and the right to protect ourselves. But we are willing to sit down," Fernandez de Cossio said.

The interview aired as Cuban authorities were scrambling Sunday to restore power to the island after the second nationwide blackout in less than a week, as the grid struggles due to aging infrastructure and a US oil blockade.

The breakdowns have intensi-

fied since Cuba's main regional ally and oil supplier, Venezuela's socialist leader Nicolas Maduro, was captured in a US military operation in January.

In the interview, which was taped before the blackout, Fernandez de Cossio continued: "We are acting as proactively as we can to cope with the situation."

"We do hope that fuel will reach Cuba one way or the other and that this boycott that the United States has been imposing does not last and cannot be sus-

tained forever."

Power went back on in some parts of Havana, but others were still dark early Sunday, a day after the energy ministry reported a "total disconnection" of the national electric system in the country of nearly 10 million people.

There have been seven nationwide blackouts since 2024, making life more difficult for Cubans who fear food will spoil in refrigerators, among other problems in a country in economic crisis.

**Iran military says to completely close Hormuz if US targets power plants**

**US may 'escalate to de-escalate' against Iran: Treasury chief**

AFP | Washington, United States

The United States may need to "escalate" its attacks against Iran to be able to wind down the war, Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said yesterday, after President Donald Trump gave seemingly contradictory trajectories for the US military campaign.

Asked on NBC's "Meet the Press" if Trump was winding down or escalating the war, Bessent said: "They're not mutually exclusive. Sometimes you have to escalate to de-escalate." "This is the only language the

Iranians understand," he argued.

Bessent, as part of efforts to abate market turmoil, has temporarily lifted US sanctions on Iranian and Russian oil that had already been loaded onto ships.

But the move has produced some backlash, with critics saying it will provide funding to Iran at the same time that the US-Israeli conflict is ongoing.

Asked on NBC about the contradiction, Bessent defended the move as helping alleviate pressure on US partners and lower the price Iran can receive for its oil.

"That Iranian oil was always going

to be sold to the Chinese. It was going to be sold at a discount... So which is better? If oil prices spiked to \$150 and they (Iran) were getting 70 percent of that, or oil prices below 100?"

Bessent on Sunday refused to put a timeline on when Americans should expect prices to moderate, while arguing that removing Iran's nuclear threat will be worth the temporary costs.

"I don't know whether it's going to be 30 days. I don't know whether it's going to be 50 days. I don't know whether it's going to be 100 days," he said.

"But to have 50 years of peace in the Middle East and know that the Iranian regime is defanged," will be worth it.



Picture courtesy of ANI

**Qatar chopper crash**

Three Turkish nationals, including a serviceman, and three Qatari military personnel were killed when a helicopter crashed in Qatar's territorial waters, the Gulf country's defence ministry said.

While Qatar has been targeted by several Iranian strikes since the start of the Middle East war, no connection has been made between the chopper and the conflict triggered by US-Israeli attacks on Iran.



**Trump gives Iran 48 hours to open Hormuz**

**War at perilous stage: WHO**

**Iran strikes Dimona, believed to host Middle East's only nuclear arsenal**

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The Middle East war has reached a "perilous stage" with strikes around nuclear sites in Iran and Israel, the World Health Organization warned Sunday, as it called for maximum restraint.

An Iranian ballistic missile ripped open residential buildings and left dozens wounded late Saturday in the southern Israeli town of Dimona.

Dimona hosts what is widely believed to be the Middle East's only nuclear arsenal, although Israel has never admitted to possessing nuclear weapons, insisting the site is for research.

Iran said the strike was in response to an earlier attack on its nuclear site at Natanz,

which hosts underground centrifuges used to enrich uranium for Iran's disputed nuclear programme, and was damaged in the June 2025 war.

"The war in the Middle East has reached a perilous stage" with the strikes on Natanz and Dimona, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X.

"Attacks targeting nuclear sites create an escalating threat to public health and environmental safety," he said.

"I urgently call on all parties to exercise maximum military restraint and avoid any actions that could trigger nuclear incidents. Leaders must prioritise de-escalation and protect civilians."

**Tedros said the International Atomic Energy Agency was looking into the strikes, and "no indications of abnormal or increased off-site radiation levels have been reported".**

**Israel launches wave of strikes on south Lebanon, hits bridge**

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon

Israel said it struck Hezbollah targets in south Lebanon on Sunday shortly after the military was ordered to destroy bridges used by the Iran-backed militant group across the Litani River.

Lebanese official media reported Israeli raids in several areas of the south, while an AFP correspondent saw smoke billowing from a key bridge that was hit outside the city of Tyre, in an escalation in violence in Lebanon after two days of relative reprieve. Israel's military said it began "a wide wave of strikes" against Hezbollah infrastructure in southern Lebanon.

Earlier Sunday, Israel said rocket fire from Lebanon killed one person, the first fatality there due to Hezbollah fire since the latest war erupted three weeks ago.

Two Israeli soldiers had previously been killed in southern Lebanon, according to the military.

Lebanon's health ministry said four people were killed on Sunday in two strikes in the south, while authorities have reported 1,029 dead in three weeks of conflict and more than one million displaced.



First responders inspecting the site of an Iranian missile strike in Dimona



First responders inspect the site of an Iranian missile strike in Arad

**Lebanon president calls Israeli bridge strikes 'prelude to ground invasion'**

**Projectile causes explosion near vessel in Gulf: UK monitor**

AFP | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

A projectile caused an explosion near a bulk carrier off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, a British maritime monitor said on Sunday, noting there were no injuries reported.

The UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said it received a report of an incident 15 nautical miles (28 kilometres) north of Sharjah that a "Bulk Carrier reported an explosion from an unknown projectile in close proximity to the vessel".

"All crew are reported safe," it added.

On Saturday night, US President Donald Trump threatened to obliterate Iran's power plants if the Gulf's vital Strait of Hormuz was not reopened within 48 hours.

**Iran says ready to help Japan ships through Hormuz**

AFP | Tokyo, Japan

Tehran is willing to help Japanese ships transit the Strait of Hormuz, a strategic chokepoint for global oil supplies, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Kyodo News in an interview published Saturday.

In a telephone interview with Kyodo News on Friday, Araghchi denied the passage was closed, insisting instead that countries attacking Iran face restrictions, while others were being offered assistance.

"We have not closed this strait. From our perspective, the strait is open," Araghchi said according to a Farsi transcript of the interview posted on his Telegram channel.

"It is only closed to ships belonging to our enemies -- countries that attack us. For other countries, (their) vessels can pass through the strait."

He added that Iran was prepared to ensure safe passage for Japan. "They only need to contact us so we can discuss how this transit can take place," Araghchi added.

**UAE says faced drone, missile barrages**

AFP | Dubai, United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates said on Saturday it faced aerial attacks from Iran after the Islamic republic warned its neighbour against allowing attacks from its territory on disputed islands near the strategic Strait of Hormuz.

"UAE air defences are currently responding to incoming missile and drone threats from Iran," the defence ministry said in a statement explain-

ing "the sounds heard are the result of the Air Defence Systems intercepting missiles and drones".

The Tasnim news agency reported the Iranian military's operational command had warned the UAE "if any further aggression originates from its territory against the Iranian islands of Abu Musa and Greater Tunb in the Persian Gulf, Iran... will subject Ras Al Khaimah in the UAE to heavy strikes".

Authorities in the northern emirate of Ras Al Khaimah,

which shares its name with the UAE's sixth-largest city, said later on Saturday the "sounds heard across parts of the city were the result of successful air defence interception operations".

Saudi Arabia, in a statement condemning the "repeated Iranian attacks", said it "decided to declare persona non grata the military attache" of Iran and three other embassy staffers, giving them 24 hours to leave the country, the foreign ministry said.

1700

Great Northern War begins in Northern Europe between Denmark-Norway, Saxony, Russia, and the Swedish Empire

1912

The last Qing Emperor of China, Puyi (age 6), abdicates after losing the support of the Chinese people and thus the "mandate of heaven"



1947 1999

French fashion designer Christian Dior presents his first influential collection, named the "New Look"

US President Bill Clinton is acquitted by the Senate in his impeachment trial



F/A-18E Super Hornet aircrafts, attached to Strike Fighter Squadron 31, taxiing on the flight deck of the world's largest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78), during Operation Epic Fury

**Iran speaker threatens to 'irreversibly destroy' region's infrastructure if own attacked**

Israel army will destroy more bridges in south Lebanon: defence minister



A fireball rises from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the Qasmiyeh bridge, located on a main highway linking villages in the Tyre district with others further north, after Israel said the bridge was being used by Hezbollah, in southern Lebanon

**Strikes caused 'heavy damage' to Iran water, energy infrastructure**

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran's critical water and energy infrastructure have suffered extensive damage due to US and Israeli strikes on tens of thousands of civilian sites, officials said on Sunday.

"The country's vital water and electricity infrastructure has suffered heavy damage following terrorist and cyber attacks by the United States and the Zionist regime," said energy minister Abbas Aliabadi, according to ISNA news agency. "The attacks targeted dozens of water transmission and treatment facilities and destroyed parts of critical water supply networks," he noted, adding that efforts were under way to repair the damage.

Iran's Red Crescent chief Pirhossein Koliwand said the total number of dam-

aged civilian sites "has reached 81,365 based on the latest field assessments".

He said the figure includes residential and commercial units, schools, medical centres and vehicles.

More than 1,200 Iranians have been killed in US and Israeli strikes, according to the latest toll from Iran's health ministry on March 8, which could not be independently verified.

On Sunday, ISNA news agency reported that strikes had damaged a hospital in the southern city of Ahvaz, in Khuzestan province.

Other media, including Fars news agency, showed images of rescuers pulling bodies from the rubble of destroyed buildings in the northern city of Tabriz.

It was not immediately clear when those strikes took place.

**Iran has fired 400 missiles at Israel**

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel's military said yesterday that Iran had fired more than 400 ballistic missiles at Israel since the start of the Middle East war, with around 92 percent of them intercepted.

The figures were announced a day after Iranian missiles struck two towns in southern Israel, leaving around 175 people needing medical treatment.

"Iran has fired over 400 ballistic missiles. We have had great interception rates. We have approximately a 92 percent successful interception rate," Israeli military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Nadav Shoshani told journalists.

One of the towns hit on Saturday was Dimona, widely believed to hold Israel's undeclared nuclear arsenal.

The impact of the missile was just five kilometres from the town's nuclear facility.

The other nearby town to be hit was Arad, which saw extensive damage to several buildings.

Shoshani said the missiles fired on Saturday were "not different from ballistic missiles" and that there had now only been four direct hits during the war so far.

The Israeli military has said it will investigate the failure to intercept the incoming fire on Saturday.

"We have intercepted in the past and will intercept in the future," Shoshani said.

**Energy and oil assets on target**

Trump has given Iran 48 hours to reopen the strait which has been effectively closed since the start of the war sparked on February 28 by US-Israeli bombardment of Iran.

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran's military threatened on Sunday to completely shut down the strategic Strait of Hormuz if US President Donald Trump acts on threats to target the country's power plants.

Trump has given Iran 48 hours to reopen the strait which has been effectively closed since the start of the war sparked on February 28 by US-Israeli bombardment of Iran.

"If the United States' threats regarding Iran's power plants are carried out... the Strait of Hormuz will be completely closed, and it will not be reopened until our destroyed power plants are rebuilt," the military's operational command Khatam Al-Anbiya said in a statement carried by state TV. The military said it would also strike Israel's "power plants, energy, and in-

formation and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure", along with power plants in regional countries hosting US bases and companies with US shareholders.

It added that the measures will be taken "to defend our country and the interests of our nation".

Traffic through the vital strait -- through which 20 percent of the world's crude oil and liquefied natural gas normally passes -- has been brought to a near-standstill since the start of the war.

A relatively small number of vessels have been able to transit it -- around five percent of its pre-war volume, according to analytics firm Kpler.

Iranian forces have attacked multiple vessels, saying they failed to heed "warnings" against transiting the waterway.



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



Safe water & sanitation play a critical role in supporting the rights & health of women & girls. Where water flows, equality grows. Let's make water a force for gender equality, and let the benefits flow to every community in the world.

@antoniogetterres

02



Over the past week, Russia launched nearly 1,550 attack drones against Ukraine, more than 1,260 guided aerial bombs, and two missiles. Over that same week, due to the easing of sanctions, Russia increased its crude oil sales to finance its war.

@ZelenskyyUa

03



The war in the Middle East has reached a perilous stage with strikes reportedly hitting the Natanz Enrichment Complex in Iran, and the Israeli city of Dimona, where a nuclear facility is located.

@DrTedros

04



10 years since Brussels was attacked in a way it will never forget. Today, we think of the victims and their loved ones who still carry a loss that time cannot heal. Today, as in 2016, we stand united. In solidarity and determined to protect our common value

@vonderleyen

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

# Iran missiles targeting **Diego Garcia** fell short, intercepted: UK minister

AFP | London, United Kingdom

UK minister Steve Reed on Sunday said one missile launched by Iran targeting a joint UK-US military base in the Indian Ocean “fell short” while another missile was “intercepted”.

“Our assessment is that the Iranians certainly targeted Diego Garcia,” a military base some 4,000 kilometres (2,500 miles) away from Iran, Reed told the BBC.

“As we understand it, one missile fell short, failed, the other was intercepted and prevented,” said the housing minister, who was representing the government on the Sunday morning shows.

“But I don’t think it’s a surprise this has happened, Iran has been recklessly firing missiles around the region,” he added.

On Friday, the UK government said it would allow Washington to use its bases in Diego Garcia and Fairford in southwest England to target Iranian “missile sites and capabilities being used to attack ships in the Strait of Hormuz”.

A UK official source confirmed that Iran’s “unsuccessful targeting of Diego Garcia” took place before Friday’s announce-



Diego Garcia, part of the Chagos Island group in the Indian Ocean, hosts a joint U.S.-U.K. military base that was targeted by Iran (LA Times)

trasting positions taken by the UK and the United States on the war, with British leader Keir Starmer attracting US President Donald Trump’s ire in recent weeks.

“It is not the first time in history that the United Kingdom and a British prime minister has taken a different view from the US president. It happened in Vietnam,” said Reed.



**Diego Garcia, part of the Chagos Islands archipelago, is one of two bases which the UK has allowed the United States to use for what the British government insists are “defensive operations” in its war against Iran. American forces have stationed bombers and other equipment at Diego Garcia.**

ment. Reed insisted that the “UK conflict”, adding that there was “no specific assessment that the Iranians are targeting the UK or even could, if they wanted to”. He also highlighted the con-

## Are Iran’s power plants the next targets in the war?

An Israeli Air Force AH-64A Apache helicopter flies along the Lebanon-Israel border



● Iran has more than 90 power plants, some of them on the Gulf coast at the heart of the hostilities that began on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes on Tehran.

● Despite its vast oil and gas resources, the country suffers from energy shortages due to ageing infrastructure and international sanctions.

AFP | Tehran, Iran

More than three weeks into the Middle East war, key infrastructure across the region -- from gas and oil facilities to nuclear sites -- has come under fire.

Now, the conflict could spill over to power plants.

**Iran and Russia signed a \$25-billion deal in September 2025 to build four nuclear plants in southern Iran, each with a capacity of about 1,255 MW, according to IRNA.**

US President Donald Trump has threatened to strike those located in Iran if Tehran does not reopen the strategic Strait of Hormuz, vital to global oil supplies, by Monday night.

Iran has more than 90 power plants, some of them on the Gulf coast at the heart of the hostilities that began on February 28 with US-Israeli strikes on Tehran.

About 38 percent of its electricity comes from combined-cycle plants, followed by gas-fired stations (26 percent). Renewables make up 13 per-

cent of output and nuclear energy only about one percent, according to the state IRNA agency, citing officials in December 2024.

Iran currently has just one operational nuclear power plant at Bushehr, with a capacity of 1,000 megawatts -- only a fraction of the country’s needs.

Russia helped build the plant.

### Rationing electricity

An arid country, Iran regularly faces drought and sweltering summers, which push up electricity demand for air

conditioning.

Despite its vast oil and gas resources, the country suffers from energy shortages due to ageing infrastructure and international sanctions.

Iran therefore sometimes has to ration electricity for lack of sufficient gas and fuel to run its plants.

The country’s largest power plant is in Damavand, on the outskirts of Tehran province.

It covers around 193 hectares and generates roughly 2,900 megawatts of electricity, according to MAPNA, a company involved in the construction of power plants and energy infrastructure.

The second largest is the Shahid Salimi Neka plant, in northern Mazandaran province, with a capacity of 2,214 megawatts.

The third, the Shahid Rajaee Combined Cycle Power Plant, is in northern Qazvin province, with a total capacity of 2,042 megawatts.

## Israel says probing if own forces killed civilian on Lebanon border

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel’s military said it was investigating whether its own fire killed an Israeli civilian near the Lebanese border on Sunday, after Hezbollah claimed an attack in the same area.

Israeli emergency workers said earlier Sunday that a man was killed in a “direct hit” on his car by a rocket from Lebanon, making him the first fatality in the country’s north

since the latest round of fighting with Hezbollah broke out. The Iran-backed militant group said after the incident that its fighters had attacked Israeli soldiers in the same area. But the Israeli army later announced it was “conducting a comprehensive investigation” into the death.

“The possibility that the incident involved fire originating from IDF soldiers is being examined,” the military said in a statement.

## Cuba scrambles to restore power after new blackout

AFP | Havana, Cuba

Cuban authorities scrambled yesterday to restore power to the island after the second nationwide blackout in less than a week, as the grid struggles due to an ageing infrastructure and a US oil blockade.

Some parts of Havana began to have electricity again, a day after the energy ministry reported a “total disconnection” of the national electric system in the country of nearly 10 million people.

The outage comes as Cuba’s communist government has faced growing pressure from US President Donald Trump, who imposed the de facto oil blockade in January and mused this week about “tak-

ing” the Caribbean island.

A top Cuban diplomat said the country’s military was “preparing these days for the possibility of military aggression.”

“We truly hope that it doesn’t occur,” Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernandez de Cossio told NBC’s “Meet the Press” in an interview taped before the blackout and aired yesterday.

He said Havana was willing to talk with the United States but discussing changes to its political system was off the table.

“Cuba has no quarrel with the United States. We do have the need and the right to protect ourself. But we are willing to sit down,” Fernandez de Cossio said.

# Classifieds



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# Mideast **war** has no clear end in sight after three weeks

● **Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday claimed that Iran no longer had the capacity to manufacture ballistic missiles**

● **The number of Iranian strikes on Gulf countries has dropped since the start of the war.**

AFP | Paris, France

The Middle East war has entered a new phase with regular attacks on globally important energy infrastructure, but there is still no obvious way out, with Washington's objectives and Tehran's ability to maintain long-term pressure both unclear.

## Expansion

The conflict sparked on February 28 by US-Israeli bombardment of Iran is grinding into its fourth week, with Iranian attacks on energy infrastructure in the Gulf and Israeli strikes reaching the Caspian Sea.

Tehran has vowed to retaliate after an Israeli strike on Wednesday damaged Iran's South Pars gas field, which draws on the world's biggest known gas reserve and is vital for domestic supplies.

On Friday, drone attacks hit Kuwait's giant Mina Al-Ahmadi refinery, a day after a direct hit on Qatar's vital Ras Laffan natural gas facility.

Geographically, too, the conflict has spread.

Iran on Friday tried and failed to hit a joint UK-US military base in the Indian Ocean, a UK official said, after the Wall Street Journal reported Tehran fired two ballistic missiles at it.

On Thursday and Friday, Isra-



Soldiers of an Israeli artillery unit are deployed at a position in the Upper Galilee in northern Israel near the Lebanon border

el said its jets hit several Iranian naval vessels in the Caspian Sea and Iran's Noor region on its shores.

Iran's de facto blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, through which 20 percent of the world's oil and gas normally flows, and the attacks on energy infrastructure have sent crude oil prices soaring. A barrel of North Sea Brent crude was up more than 50 percent over the past month and now comfortably more than \$105.

## Way out?

A diplomatic solution to the conflict seems unlikely.

The United States and Israel are pursuing their campaign to take out members of the Iranian leadership, after killing supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the first hour of the war.

On Wednesday, they killed national security chief Ali Larjani, in what was

likely the biggest loss to the Islamic republic since then.

Israel seems to be aiming for regime change in Tehran, while US Donald Trump has given shifting goals for the war, including ousting Iran's clerical leaders. But on Friday he said he was considering "winding down" military operations, listing the objectives as ensuring Iran could never get a nuclear weapon, protecting Gulf oil and destroying Tehran's missile arsenal, navy, air force and industrial base.

The White House press secretary said the Pentagon was looking at four to six weeks to complete its mission.

Trump earlier rejected the idea of a ceasefire, claiming the United States and Israel were "literally obliterating" Iran.

As for Iran, by extending the conflict to the whole region, it may have alienated Gulf countries who could have acted as mediators to bring about a truce.

## Can Iran keep it up?

Day after day, US and Israeli air power pound Iranian military sites to destroy



## Reopening Hormuz

Reopening the Hormuz Strait to tankers would be risky for the United States.

It "will require the United States to concentrate its forces in a relatively small area", said Martin Sampson, executive director of IISS-Middle East.

"For Iran, this will be a target-rich environment," he said.

Beyond unblocking the actual chokepoint, any power wishing to secure maritime traffic would have to control four islands at

the entrance of the Gulf, analyst Pierre Razoux said.

But Iran had turned Siri, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Moussa into "mini-fortresses, with anti-ship missiles", he added.

US media last week reported that the Pentagon has dispatched the amphibious assault ship USS Tripoli and around 2,500 Marines to the region.

They "can clearly be used to land on these islands" in order to "secure the shipping lane,"

Razoux said.

Daniel Schneiderman, of Penn Washington, said he thought scenarios likely being studied included using the marines "to land on and hold Kharg Island, the site through which 90 percent of Iran's oil exports pass" further north inside the Gulf.

Another would be establishing "a beachhead on the Iranian coast to restore freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz", he added.

The Wall Street Journal said

on Friday Washington was deploying between 2,200 and 2,500 US Marines from the California-based USS Boxer Amphibious Ready Group and 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Any of these missions "will almost certainly come at significant costs in terms of troops killed and equipment lost," Schneiderman added.

Trump on Friday demanded allies help to secure the strait, saying the United States did not use it.

## Houthis

The conflict could widen still if the Iran-backed Houthi rebels controlling the Yemen capital joined in.

"The Houthis have yet to enter the expanding regional war," said Betul Dogan Akkas of Ankara University.

"But their ability to disrupt shipping, strike Gulf energy infrastructure, and pressure regional rivals makes them the conflict's most unpredictable actor."

## Israel to 'advance targeted ground operations' in Lebanon: army chief

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel's military will expand its ground operations in Lebanon against Hezbollah, its army chief said Sunday, warning that the offensive against the group was still in its early stages.

"The operation against the Hez-

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun



zbollah organisation has only begun... This is a prolonged operation,

Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir said in a statement.

"We are now preparing to advance the targeted ground operations and strikes according to an organised plan," he added. Zamir's comments came as Israel struck more targets in south Lebanon on Sunday, including a key bridge, triggering a warning from the Lebanese president that it could be launching a full

ground invasion.

Lebanon was pulled into the Middle East war when Hezbollah began firing rockets into Israel on March 2 to avenge the killing of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in an Israeli-US strike.

Israel has sent troops into Lebanon and carried out extensive airstrikes, while Hezbollah has launched rocket barrages.

"In recent weeks, we have achieved significant accomplishments: we have struck more than 2,000 targets, dozens of weapons storage facilities, and struck and eliminated hundreds of terrorists," Zamir said.

"We will not stop until the threat is pushed away from the border and long term security is ensured for the residents of northern Israel," Zamir said.

# Sinner, defending champ Mensik advance to third round at Miami Open

Coco Gauff roars back, Andreeva and Mboko set up third meeting of season

● Jannik Sinner beats Damir Dzumhur 6-3, 6-3

● Alexander Zverev cruises, Ben Shelton ousted

AFP | Miami

World number two Jannik Sinner made a smooth start Saturday at the Miami Open, where defending champion Jakub Mensik shook off a "horrible" first set to win his opening match.

Six days after he lifted the Indian Wells trophy, Sinner launched his pursuit of tennis' "Sunshine Double" in confident style with a 6-3, 6-3 victory over 76th-ranked Damir Dzumhur.

"First-round matches are never easy," said the 24-year-old Italian, who won the 2024 Miami crown.

After beating Daniil Medvedev for his first Indian Wells title, Sinner is trying to become the first to sweep the Indian Wells and Miami ATP Masters 1000 titles since Roger Federer in 2017.

He pocketed the first set against Dzumhur in 34 minutes and broke the Bosnian for a 2-1 lead in the second set before breaking again on match point with a backhand winner.

"Starting off with a break straight away, I tried to be a bit aggressive," said Sinner, who dropped just eight points on his serve. "At times it worked very well, at times I made couple of unforced errors. But I didn't have a lot of time to adjust here. It's very different than in Indian Wells."



Alexander Zverev of Germany returns a shot to Martin Damm of the United States

Former number one Medvedev also had little time to adjust, but he managed to fight back for a 6-7 (10/12), 6-3, 6-1 victory over 19-year-old Japanese wildcard Rei Sakamoto.

Mensik, who fell in the third round at Indian Wells, was feeling the after-effects of illness as well as the pressure of defending his title in a rocky first set but righted the ship to beat Australian Adam Walton 3-6, 6-2, 6-4.

"The first set it was horrible from my side," the Czech said.

After surrendering his serve twice in the first set Mensik regrouped to break Walton in the opening game of the second set

Starting off with a break straight away, I tried to be a bit aggressive. At times it worked very well, at times I made couple of unforced errors. But I didn't have a lot of time to adjust here. It's very different than in Indian Wells

JANNIK SINNER

on the way to forcing a third and with a break in hand for a 3-1 lead rolled home.

"It was really difficult to come back to the match rhythm," Mensik said. "I'm really happy that mentally I stayed focused and tough. The pressure that was around, I tried not to focus on that, tried to focus on my game."

Fourth-seeded German Alexander Zverev cruised into the third round with a 6-2, 6-4 victory over 133rd-ranked American Martin Damm. But eighth-seeded home hope Ben Shelton was ousted by Kazakhstan's Alexander Shevchenko 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

## Gauff fight-back

Fourth-seeded Coco Gauff led the way into the women's fourth round, roaring back for a 3-6, 6-0, 6-1 victory over fellow American Alycia Parks.

Teenagers Mirra Andreeva and Victoria Mboko booked a last-16 meeting that will be their third clash of the WTA season.

Eighth-seeded Russian Andreeva defeated Czech Marie Bouzkova 7-6 (7/4), 6-2, while 10th-seeded Canadian Mboko downed Russian qualifier Anastasia Zakharova 6-1, 7-5.

Andreeva, 18, and 19-year-old Mboko have split their last two matches, Andreeva winning in

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Jannik Sinner is attempting to become the first male player since Roger Federer in 2017 to win both Indian Wells and Miami back-to-back, a feat known in tennis as the "Sunshine Double"

the final at Adelaide in January before Mboko sent her packing in the third round at Doha -- saving a match point in the three-set win and going on to reach the final.

Alexandra Eala, whose surprise semi-final run last year launched her rise from 140th in the world to her current 29th, reached the last 16 with a 6-3, 7-6 (7/2) victory over Poland's Magda Linette -- who had topped third-ranked compatriot Iga Swiatek in the second round.

Women's second-round play wrapped up as the rain-hit tournament got back on schedule.

Fifth-seeded American Jessica Pegula, runner up to Aryna Sabalenka last year, advanced when ailing British opponent Francesca Jones retired while trailing 6-1, 3-0 in their match.

Australian qualifier Talia Gibson -- coming off an impressive quarter-final run in Indian Wells -- took down four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka of Japan 7-5, 6-4.

## Kane backs Tuchel's call to rest him from England friendly

AFP | Munich

England captain Harry Kane backed coach Thomas Tuchel's decision to rest him and ten other players from the Three Lions' first March friendly against Uruguay.

Tuchel named Kane as part of a 35-man squad on Friday but said the Bayern Munich striker and several others would join the camp later ahead of the second Wembley friendly, against Japan.

Speaking after scoring his 31st league goal of the season in Bay-



Union Berlin's Danish goalkeeper #01 Frederik Ronnow, Bayern Munich's French midfielder #17 Michael Olise and Bayern Munich's English forward #09 Harry Kane eye the ball

ern's 4-0 win over Union Berlin on Saturday, Kane said the rest would help him and his teammates through the busy football schedule.

"I think it makes sense when we look at the April schedule, May and then going into the World Cup, trying to use this time now to be as fresh as possible in that period," the 32-year-

old said.

"I think it's a really sensible decision, when you're probably not going to play both games anyway.

"For me and the boys who get a bit of time off, you have to use it wisely, you have to stay fit, stay sharp, but just kind of mentally rest and get ready, like I said, for a really busy schedule when we

get back."

Tuchel said Kane, Dean Henderson, Dan Burn, Marc Guehi, Ezri Konsa, Nico O'Reilly, Elliott Anderson, Declan Rice, Morgan Rogers, Anthony Gordon and Bukayo Saka would be rested.

England play Uruguay on Friday and face Japan on Monday.

## Pakistan's T20 cricket league cuts venues, crowds due to Gulf crisis



Lahore Qalanders' captain Shaheen Shah Afridi (C) celebrates with the trophy (file photo)

AFP | Karachi

Pakistan's Twenty20 league will be held on schedule from March 26 but without crowds and only at two venues to save resources due to the Gulf crisis, the country's cricket chief announced yesterday.

Pakistan depends on oil and gas from the Gulf and the government has in recent weeks introduced a series of fuel-saving measures over fears of a drop in supply.

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi said

the decisions on the Pakistan Super League (PSL) were taken after consultation with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

"The prime minister has requested restricted movements of people because of the fuel crisis so we have decided that the PSL would continue as per the original schedule but without crowds," Naqvi told a press conference in Lahore.

To stop fans travelling, the eight-team league has also been reduced to two venues, and not the original six, meaning Faisalabad, Rawalpindi, Multan and Peshawar miss out.

I think it makes sense when we look at the April schedule, May and then going into the World Cup, trying to use this time now to be as fresh as possible in that period

HARRY KANE

# Spurs felled by Forest in relegation battle, Sunderland shock Newcastle

Spurs lose 3-0 to Forest, remain only Premier League side without 2026 win

● Tottenham only one point above relegation zone

● Villa beat West Ham to boost Champions League hopes

● Sunderland win 2-1 at Newcastle in derby

AFP | London

Tottenham slipped ever closer to relegation from the Premier League with a 3-0 defeat to fellow strugglers Nottingham Forest yesterday as Sunderland stretched their lead over local rivals Newcastle.

Spurs have not tasted life outside the English top flight since 1978 but remain the only side without a Premier League win in 2026.

Goals from Igor Jesus, Morgan Gibbs-White and Taiwo Awoniyi inflicted the latest in a series of damaging defeats on interim Tottenham boss Igor Tudor.

West Ham's 2-0 defeat at Aston Villa ensured Spurs remain one point outside the relegation zone with seven games remaining.

Vitor Pereira's first league win as Forest boss propels his side four points above the drop zone. Tottenham fans gathered in



Tottenham Hotspur's Austrian defender #04 Kevin Danso (L) vies with Nottingham Forest's English midfielder #10 Morgan Gibbs-White (C)

north London en masse before kick-off to line the streets in a show of support under the banner "all together, always."

But nerves quickly took over the state-of-the-art 63,000 capacity Tottenham Hotspur Stadium after Jesus rose highest to head in a corner just before

half-time.

Gibbs-White could have been starting in white rather than red had Forest not stood their ground after Spurs reportedly met his buyout clause last summer.

The Forest captain instead signed a new deal at the City

ground and has played a big role in leading his side away from trouble.

Gibbs-White was left completely unmarked to turn in Callum Hudson-Odoi's cross on the hour mark for his third goal in four league games.

No side has taken fewer points

at home in the Premier League this season than Tottenham and they failed to muster a response.

Awoniyi inflicted the final blow when he met Neco Williams' cross three minutes from time.

## No excuses for Newcastle

Villa took full advantage of defeats for Liverpool and Chelsea on Saturday to close in on a return to the Champions League next season.

Unai Emery's men had taken just one point from a possible 12 in their previous four league games.

But the return of skipper John McGinn from injury has been a timely boost.

The Scotland international curled in from outside the box to give Villa the perfect start.

Ollie Watkins then pounced after Mads Hermansen spilled Morgan Rogers' shot to bounce back from his exclusion from Thomas Tuchel's England squad on Friday.

Villa open up a six-point cushion on sixth-placed Chelsea with the top five set to qualify for next season's Champions League.

Newcastle's European ambitions and local pride were dealt a major blow as Sunderland came from behind to win 2-1 in the first Tyne-Wear derby at St. James' Park for 10 years.

Bryan Brobbey struck a 90th minute winner for the Black Cats, who have not lost to New-

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Despite a reported attempt by Tottenham to meet his buyout clause last summer, Forest captain Morgan Gibbs-White stayed, signed a new deal, and scored the second goal against them

castle in the league for 15 years.

Defeat compounded a miserable week for Newcastle, who were humbled 7-2 by Barcelona in exiting the Champions League in midweek.

"I've got very little to use as an excuse. Once you haven't performed and you know how much the game means you have to accept the criticism," said Newcastle boss Eddie Howe.

Defeat sees the Magpies slip below Sunderland in the table to 12th.

Newcastle also promised to identify and hold accountable anyone guilty after Sunderland defender Lutsharel Geertruida reported an incident of racist abuse from the crowd in the second half.

## American Gumberg triumphs in Hainan for second DP World Tour win



Jordan Gumberg in action

AFP | Haikou

American Jordan Gumberg fired a two-under-par 70 yesterday to win the DP World Tour's Hainan Classic in China, holding off fellow overnight leader Jorge Campillo of Spain by a shot.

Gumberg, 30, finished the four rounds at Mission Hills on Hainan Island at 19 under par for his second DP World Tour title, following victory via play-off at the SDC Championship in South Africa in 2024.

At 15 under par in a three-way tie for third were Chinese 17-year-old Zhou Yanhan, England's Marcus Armitage and

Spanish-born Adrian Otaegui, who now plays under the flag of the United Arab Emirates.

Gumberg started the final round with a birdie, but gave it back at the third before snagging further birdies at the sixth and 11th.

Campillo, 39, seeking a third DP World Tour win, had birdies on the first, eighth and 12th, but bogeys either side of the turn left him a shot shy.

Both Gumberg and Campillo traded pars for the last six holes as birdie putts continually refused to drop.

"I don't have words right now," Gumberg said beside the 18th green.

## Gilgeous-Alexander scores 40, LeBron breaks NBA appearance record

AFP | Los Angeles

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 40 points in a stormy Oklahoma City Thunder victory over the Washington Wizards on Saturday as LeBron James added another milestone to his career with a record-breaking 1,612th NBA regular season game.

Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Gilgeous-Alexander bagged his seventh 40-point game of the season to help the Thunder roll to an 11th straight victory, downing Washington 132-111 on the road.

Chet Holmgren added 18 points and 10 rebounds while Isaiah Hartenstein had nine points, 20 rebounds and 10 assists in a game that saw four players ejected during a first half brawl.

The altercation, which halted the game for 11 minutes, came with 27 seconds remaining in the second quarter just after Oklahoma City grabbed a 68-63 lead.

Thunder forward Jaylin Williams held the ball after the basket and twice bumped into Washington's Justin Champagnie.

Oklahoma City's Ajay Mitchell came up to confront Cham-



Shai Gilgeous-Alexander dribbles past Sharife Cooper on his way to 40 points

pagnie and was smacked in the face for his trouble to ignite the brawl.

Referee Nate Green pushed Champagnie back to try and ease tensions while Mitchell kept advancing and was pushed forward and into a camera and a wave of players tumbled into a pile behind the baseline, all trying to support their side in the melee.

After the mayhem was unraveled by the officiating crew, Champagnie, Williams, Mitchell

and Thunder teammate Cason Wallace were all ejected.

Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said while he disagreed with the ejections, he was pleased at how his team responded to the skirmish.

"Those are emotional situations, and everybody is competitive and amped up after that," Daigneault said. "But if you're a true competitor, you channel that into execution, and that's what I thought we did."

"We got better from that point on, which is how you have to handle those situations. I thought that was a good learning moment and good growth for us."

Wizards coach Brian Keefe praised his team's response to the confrontation.

"Our guys stuck up for each other, which I always love," Keefe said.

## LeBron record

Elsewhere on Saturday, the Oklahoma City's nearest pursuers in the Western Conference -- the San Antonio Spurs and Los Angeles Lakers -- extended their respective winning streaks in contrasting fashion.

The Lakers bagged their ninth straight victory with a thrilling 105-104 defeat of the Orlando Magic in Florida, with Luke Kennard's buzzer-beating three-pointer with 0.6sec remaining sealing a sensational win.

The victory ensured LeBron James' record-breaking 1,612th regular season game would be a cause for celebration for the Lakers, who are third in the West with a 46-25 record.

"It was a regular prep day," James said. "I know once I stepped on the floor that I was

# Araujo header scrapes Liga leaders Barca win over Rayo

Barcelona hold firm against Rayo pressure to open seven-point gap over Madrid

● Araujo scores decisive first-half header

● Garcia makes multiple crucial saves

● Garcia makes multiple crucial saves

● Yamal impresses with creative play

AFP | Barcelona

Ronald Araujo's header helped Barcelona extend their lead on Real Madrid at the top of La Liga to seven points with a tight 1-0 win over Rayo Vallecano on yesterday.

Alvaro Arbeloa's Real Madrid host Atletico Madrid, fourth, later on in a derby clash.

Araujo nodded home Joao Cancelo's corner after 24 minutes to secure the three points at Camp Nou but goalkeeper Joan Garcia's superb display played just as big a part in their victory.

"We knew how important it was to get this win before the international break, we did it,



Barcelona's Uruguayan defender #04 Ronald Federico Araujo da Silva scores his team's first goal in spite of Rayo Vallecano's Argentine goalkeeper #13 Augusto Batalla

but it's true we suffered more than we would have liked," Garcia told DAZN.

"They knew how to cause us damage and we weren't at the level we have been with the ball above all.

"We knew we had to win and what the other teams do is not

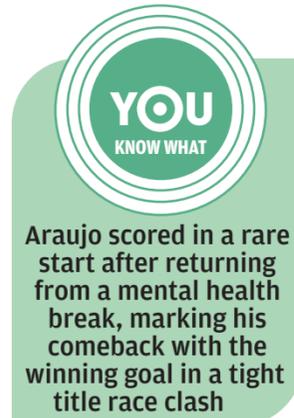
up to us."

Hansi Flick's side were caught snoozing in the opening stages but Garcia made a fine save to deny Carlos Martin from close range.

Called up by Luis de la Fuente to the Spanish national team for the first time upcoming friend-

lies, Garcia made several excellent saves to keep Rayo at bay, with the Madrid side dominant in the second half.

At the other end Raphinha was guilty of profligate finishing on numerous occasions. The winger scuffed wide after picking Pathe Ciss's pocket and



Araujo scored in a rare start after returning from a mental health break, marking his comeback with the winning goal in a tight title race clash

charging through on goal.

A few minutes later Ciss appeared to bring down teenage star Lamine Yamal in the area but the Barcelona player's appeals were ignored by the referee.

Yamal's superb cross, with the outside of his boot, created another fine chance for Raphinha

but the Brazilian's mis-hit effort was tipped over by Augusto Batalla.

The champions took the lead through Araujo's header from Joao Cancelo's corner midway through the first half.

Araujo has not featured much since taking a mental health

break late last year, but came on as a substitute in Barca's 7-2 Champions League rout of Newcastle in midweek.

With Eric Garcia rested following a muscle overload, Flick started the Uruguayan at right-back and was rewarded with what proved to be the winner.

**Barca cling on**

The Catalans came close to a second after the interval but Yamal dragged a low effort across the face of goal.

Rayo took control and started generating dangerous chances as they searched for an equaliser.

Joan Garcia denied Alvaro Garcia and then produced a spectacular save to push away Unai Lopez's header.

Pacha Espino should have pulled the visitors level but, after beating Barca's high defensive line and staying onside, curled over the bar.

Garcia pushed away a Jorge de Frutos drive before six minutes of stoppage time were added but Barca cling on to triumph.

"The second half was perfect but we lacked the goal," said Rayo coach Inigo Perez.

"(Joan Garcia) appeared in the key moments when we might have been able to draw."

## South Africa clinch 19-run win over New Zealand in fourth T20

AFP | Wellington

South Africa's spinners played a decisive role as the tourists won the fourth Twenty20 international against New Zealand by 19 runs yesterday to square the five-match series 2-2.

New Zealand were well placed to clinch the series midway through their chase in Wellington after the Proteas scored 164-5.

However, from 88-3 after 10 overs, they lost wickets in rapid succession to be all out for 145 off 18.5 overs.

It sends the series, played between weakened sides from both countries, to a decider in Christchurch on Wednesday.

The match swung in favour of South Africa when spinners Keshav Maharaj and Prenelan Subrayen turned the screws through the middle stages of the chase.

Captain Maharaj is comfortably the most experienced member of an experimental tour squad and proved hard to score from as he took 2-22 off four overs.

Subrayen, playing his first T20 international, bowled Dane Cleaver for 26 to spark New Zealand's middle order crumble and finished with 2-13 off three overs.

Maharaj said his side played with more energy than in de-



New Zealand's Cole McConchie (R) is bowled as South Africa's wicketkeeper Connor Esterhuizen reacts

feats in Hamilton and Auckland.

"It was a perfect response to two disappointing losses in a row," he said.

"Coming into this game, you could see there was a little bit more energy and hunger.

"We are a young team, finding our way in international cricket so it takes a little bit of time."

Opener Tim Robinson topped scored with 32 for New Zealand

### Scorecard

South Africa 164 for 5 (Esterhuizen 57, Jamieson 2-29) beat New Zealand 145 (Robinson 32, Coetzee 3-31, Subrayen 2-13, Maharaj 2-22, Baartman 2-30) by 19 runs

while Proteas paceman Gerald Coetzee took 3-31.

South Africa's innings were

dominated by 57 off 36 balls from wicketkeeper Connor Esterhuizen.

He was dismissed by a spectacular outfield catch from Katelyn Clarke, on his international debut, off Ben Sears' bowling.

Paceman Sears impressed, taking 1-22 off four overs, which included conceding just two runs off the last over of the innings.

## Verstappen runs foul of Nuerburgring stewards on F1 break



Max Verstappen steers his Mercedes GT3 car

AFP | Nuerburgring

Max Verstappen took a break from a frustrating Formula One season by driving in a four-hour race at the Nuerburgring in Germany on Saturday where he won only to be disqualified.

The Dutch four-time Formula One champion has said he plans to race in the 24 Hours of Nuerburgring in May.

Competing in the GT3 class, Verstappen grabbed pole position on the full 24.358-kilometre configuration of the Nuerburgring by nearly two seconds.

Splitting time with co-driv-

ers Frenchman Jules Gounon and Spaniard Daniel Juncadella at the wheel of a Mercedes sporting Red Bull livery and run by the Winward team, Verstappen helped steer his car to victory by almost exactly a minute before officials intervened.

The car was disqualified for using seven sets of tyres during the race. Only six are permitted.

"The disqualification is tough to take," Winward team principal Christian Hohenadel told Motorsport.com. "Unfortunately, we made an internal error that left the stewards with no choice but to exclude the winning car."

# Muharraq, Manama set for Khalifa bin Salman Cup final

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

The 2025-26 Khalifa bin Salman Cup reaches its climax tonight as holders Muharraq Club take on Manama Club at 7pm in Khalifa Sports City Arena. Both sides arrive in excellent form, having dominated their paths to the final, setting the stage for a fascinating final that will crown Bahrain's newest basketball champion.

Muharraq have been relentless throughout the tournament. They opened with a record-smashing 153-94 victory over Sitra Club and carried that momentum into the semi-finals, sweeping Al Ahli Club 93-87 and 96-80. Depth, precision, and consistency have defined their campaign, and they aim to extend their streak tonight.

Manama's journey has been marked by resilience and timely contributions. After victories over Al-Hala SC and Ettihad, they faced Al Najma Club in the semi-finals. Two tightly contested wins, led by Ali Jaber, Hasan Nowrooz, and Alex Young, secured their place in the championship and highlighted their ability to perform under pressure. This final also marks a personal milestone for coach Salman Ramadhan, who makes his debut as Manama's head coach in the Khalifa Bin Salman Cup



Captain Bader Malabes trains with Muharraq as tournament's all-time top scorer

final, having won last season's championship with Muharraq as a member of their technical staff. The head-to-head record favors the defending champions. The Red Wolves have claimed all three league meetings against Manama this season and also triumphed in the Super Cup before the league began. Confidence is high, but finals are always decided by fine margins.

The Khalifa Bin Salman Cup has built a rich legacy since 2017. Muharraq lifted the inaugural trophy, followed by Manama



Manama captain Ahmed Salman in high spirits ahead of final

in 2018, Riffa in 2019, and Al Ahli with three consecutive wins from 2020 to 2022. Manama returned with back-to-back crowns in 2023 and 2024, before Muharraq reclaimed the cup in 2025. Tonight, the 2026 champion will be determined, adding a

new chapter to this competitive history.

Roster strength and experience will play a key role. Muharraq, guided by German coach Peter Schomers, are anchored by captain Bader Abdulla Malabes, the tournament's all-time top



Muharraq's point-guard Yunes Kawaid has lifted the Khalifa bin Salman trophy with Muharraq, Manama, and Riffa

scorer with 464 points. Manama's Hasan Nowrooz is close behind with 461, adding an intriguing personal duel to the team rivalry. Muharraq will also rely on Mohammed Ameer, Mahmood Abbas Isa, and imports Nicholas West and Kris Clyburn. Manama field experienced locals including Ahmed Salman and Ali Jaber, complemented by Alex Young and Romeo Enan. The absence of forward Subah Hussain due to injury presents a significant challenge for Manama.

While the Red Wolves are favorites on paper, finals often hinge on execution and composure. Muharraq holds two Khalifa Bin Salman Cup titles and both Manama and Al Ahli have three. Tonight's clash gives Muharraq a chance to tie the leaders, or Manama a chance to extend their lead.

## Dortmund part ways with sporting director Kehl



Sebastian Kehl  
AFP | Berlin

Borussia Dortmund sporting director Sebastian Kehl has ended his tenure "by mutual consent", the club said in a statement released yesterday.

The surprise announcement, which sees Kehl leaving with immediate effect, comes amid rumours linking the former Dortmund player, who won three Bundesliga titles during a 13-year stint with the club, to the sporting director job at Hamburg.

Lars Ricken, Dortmund's board member for sport -- a position above Kehl's in the hierarchy -- said the decision came after a "very open discussion".

# Bahrain's 3x3 teams target Asia Cup success in Singapore

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's men's and women's national 3x3 basketball teams are preparing to compete in the FIBA Asia Cup in Singapore from April 1 to 5. The tournament not only crowns the best teams in Asia but also serves as a qualifier for the 2026 FIBA 3x3 World Cup in Warsaw, Poland, giving both squads a crucial opportunity to advance to the global stage.

The men's team, featuring Nasser Al Mousawi, Isa Jassim, Mohammed Ghazwan, Al Wathiq Ali, and Salman Al Kaabi, enters the tournament with growing confidence.

Earlier this month, Bahrain rose to 19th place overall in the FIBA 3x3 Men's Federation Ranking, reflecting the country's rapid progress in the sport.

This ranking gives the team momentum as they aim to make a strong impression in Singapore and secure a pathway to Warsaw, where 40 of the world's top national teams, including



Men's team in action ahead of next month's opener

20 men's and 20 women's, will compete from June 1 to 7 in the heart of Poland's capital.

Meanwhile, the women's squad, composed of Bayan Sal-

man, Shereen Abdulrahman, Noor Najaf, and Nouf Abdullah, carries ambitions to compete at a high level and further elevate Bahrain's presence in continen-



Women's team trains ahead the tournament

tal women's basketball.

Their inclusion in a competitive Group C alongside Chinese Taipei, Saudi Arabia, and Hong Kong promises challenging encounters from the start.

The men are drawn into Group D with Kazakhstan, Hong Kong, and India. Both groups are balanced and competitive, so

early performances will be pivotal in shaping each team's tournament journey. With 24 men's teams and 22 women's teams participating, this Asia Cup represents one of the strongest editions to date.

The event highlights the rapid growth of 3x3 basketball across Asia and its recognition as an Olympic sport.