



Bahrain Condemns Terror Plot Targeting UAE

TDT | Manama

Bahrain strongly condemned a recent terrorist plot targeting the United Arab Emirates, praising the swift action of Emirati security forces in thwarting the attempt and arresting those involved.

The statement was made by General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior during a meeting with UAE Ambassador Fahad Mohammed Kardous Al Ameri.

During the talks, the minister also reaffirmed the deep-rooted and long-standing ties between Bahrain and the UAE, highlighting the strong brotherly relations between the two nations and their peoples.

Airport Upgrade

Gulf Air has announced the relocation of its Frankfurt Airport operations to the newly developed Terminal 3, effective May 1, 2026.

The new terminal features modern, sustainable facilities designed to enhance passenger experience, including self-check-in and automated baggage drop services.

Resume Normal Work Sunday

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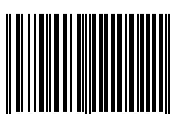
The Civil Service Bureau announced that normal working arrangements will resume across all government entities starting Sunday, April 26, 2026.

The decision follows an earlier measure that activated remote work.

Authorities confirmed that employees in ministries, government agencies, and public institutions will return to their workplaces and operate as usual starting that date.

The move signals a full transition back to standard in-office operations across the public sector.

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Security Review



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, chaired the 530th Government Executive Committee meeting, reviewing measures addressing the impact of hostile Iranian aggression against Bahrain.

Vision for Financial Services Expansion

Focus on investment growth and economic diversification in the Kingdom

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His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, met with Mohammed bin Mahfooth Alardhi, Executive Chairman of Investcorp, at Riffa Palace.

During the meeting, HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to expanding investment opportunities and enhancing the efficiency of the financial services sector, in line with the Kingdom's comprehensive development goals led by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa.

His Royal Highness highlighted the key role of the banking and financial sector in supporting national economic growth and creating quality opportunities for Bahraini citizens.

He also stressed the importance of continued development initiatives that strengthen sus-

tainable economic progress.

The Crown Prince further underscored the need to advance the financial services sector through improved regulatory frameworks, enhanced performance efficiency, and the adoption of advanced technologies to broaden service offerings and reinforce Bahrain's regional and international competitiveness.

Leadership

For his part, Mr. Alardhi expressed his appreciation for the meeting and praised the leadership's efforts in strengthening Bahrain's investment climate and financial sector development.

The meeting was also attended by His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Minister of the Prime Minister's Court, and His Excellency Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy.



HRH Prince Salman with Mohammed bin Mahfooth Alardhi

'Vaccines Work for All Generations'



H.E. Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa and H.E. Dr. Jalila bint Al-Sayed Jawad Hassan at the event

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The Ministry of Health officially launched World Immunization Week under the theme "Vaccines Work for All Generations," aiming to strengthen public awareness about the importance of vaccinations in preventing disease and protecting community health.

The event was inaugurated in the presence of Shaikh Mo-

ammed bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Health, and Dr. Jalila bint Al-Sayed Jawad Hassan, Minister of Health.

Officials highlighted Bahrain's continued progress in building a strong preventive healthcare system, supported by national leadership and aligned with international standards.

The country has achieved high immunization coverage rates and successfully limited

the spread of infectious diseases.

The Minister of Health also noted a major milestone: Bahrain was certified free of endemic measles and rubella in December 2025 by the World Health Organization's Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office.

The Kingdom continues to maintain high childhood vaccination rates, reflecting the effectiveness and sustainability of its public health programs.

Workforce Stability Plan

Shura to Consider Wide-Ranging Policy and Legal Changes

Mohammad Darwish
TDT | Manama

The Shura Council is set to debate a draft law that would temporarily allow Bahrain's unemployment insurance fund to cover the wages of Bahraini workers for April 2026, a move aimed at supporting businesses and protecting jobs amid regional economic pressure.

The Ministry of Labour said the initiative is designed to help companies across all sectors retain Bahraini employees.

It stressed that labour market conditions are being closely monitored and that the measure is not expected to significantly affect the unemployment insurance fund's financial stability.

Officials from the Social Insurance Organisation noted that similar measures have been used in the past during periods of economic strain.

They added that the fund remains financially sound, supported by investment returns and regular actuarial reviews.

If approved, the bill would expand the unemployment insurance fund's role from post-job-loss support to a preventive tool aimed at sustaining employment during temporary economic challenges.

Council to Decide on Renaming of Arab Petroleum Body

Dr Ali Al Rumaihi, Head of Shura Council's Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee

One of the key reforms is removing the organisation's judicial authority.

Dispute resolution would instead begin with amicable settlement, followed by arbitration if needed.

The proposal also cancels Bahrain's Decree-Law No. 15 of 1978 related to the previous



Dr Ali Al Rumaihi, Head of Shura Council's Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee



Sabeeka Al Fadhala, Rapporteur for the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee



Jameela Al Salman, Head of Shura Council's Services Committee

protocol framework.

Under the plan, Bahrain's annual contribution will remain unchanged at BD210,000, imposing no additional burden on the state budget.

The amendments follow a 2024 resolution by the organisation's Council of Ministers aimed at modernising its structure and expanding cooperation among member states. Kuwait will remain the headquarters, with the possibility of opening additional offices in other countries.

The revised agreement seeks to enhance Arab coordination in all energy sectors, support national companies, strengthen technical capabilities, and develop human resources.

Move to Replace Two-Thirds Requirement

Sabeeka Al Fadhala, Rapporteur for the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee

This proposed amendment would reduce the current requirement from a two-thirds majority to a simple majority of members.

Supporters say this change would remove a major procedural barrier and strengthen parliamentary oversight.

The bill has been endorsed by the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee, which said the reform would enhance the elected chamber's ability to use

ministerial questioning as a key accountability tool. It involves amendments to Decree-Law No. 54 of 2002, which governs the internal rules of the Council of Representatives.

Under the proposed changes, interrogation requests would also follow a clearer process, allowing referral either to the relevant committee or directly to the full chamber. It further clarifies whether such sessions should be held publicly or in closed sittings depending on the circumstances.

Bill to Shorten Wait for Private-Sector Pension Loans

Jameela Al Salman, Head of Shura Council's Services Committee

The proposal would amend Article 144 of Bahrain's Social Insurance Law, allowing private-sector retirees to apply for a new substitution loan two years after their last loan, aligning the timing with public-sector retirees.

Currently, private-sector pensioners must wait two years after completing their last repayment before reapplying, while government retirees are eligible two years from the date of their previous substitution. The bill seeks to unify this calculation method.

The Shura Council's Services Committee said the change

would help remove disparities between the two groups and provide clearer, more consistent rules for retirees.

It also noted that the amendment would improve financial flexibility for pensioners facing urgent needs.

The Social Insurance Organisation supported the proposal, describing substitution loans as part of the social protection system rather than commercial lending.

Foreign Lawyers in Limited Cases

Dalal Al Zayed, Head of Shura Council's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee

The Shura Council is set to debate and vote next Sunday on a major draft law governing Bahrain's legal profession, following its approval by Parliament and endorsement by the council's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee.

The proposed 68-article legislation, issued under Decree No. 16 of 2025, would fully replace the current legal framework and introduce wide-ranging reforms covering lawyer registration, trainee requirements, professional duties, legal fees, legal aid, and disciplinary procedures.

One of the key provisions would allow non-Bahraini lawyers to appear before Bahraini courts in limited and regulated

cases, subject to ministerial approval and specific conditions set by the Supreme Judicial Council. However, criminal, administrative, sharia, personal status, tenancy, and labour cases would remain excluded from this provision.

The draft also introduces stricter professional standards, including requiring lawyers who have been inactive for extended periods to requalify and retake entry exams. Trainee lawyers would be required to complete a two-year training period, followed by exams and certification before entering full practice.

Vote on Dangerous Animals Law

Dr Mohammed Ali Hassan, Head of Shura Council's Public Utilities and Environment Committee

The draft law, introduced under Decree No. 15 of 2025, seeks to close legal gaps by establishing clear rules for licensing, care standards, and enforcement measures.

It also expands the authority of the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture to inspect licensed facilities, review records, and take action against violations.

Under the proposed law, anyone who uses a dangerous animal to attack a person, resulting in permanent injury, could face three to seven years in prison.

If the attack leads to death, the penalty would be life imprisonment. Lesser violations, including keeping or trading such animals without a licence or breaching licence conditions, would carry fines between BD1,000 and BD10,000, or imprisonment, or both.

Companies could also be held liable, facing fines of up to BD20,000 if offences are linked to negligence or misconduct by senior officials.



H.E. Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma

3,000 Students Sit for First Step Toward International Baccalaureate

Bahrain has launched the first assessment examinations for government school students applying to the International Baccalaureate (IB) programme, with around 3,000 first-year preparatory students taking part across all public schools in the Kingdom.

Minister of Education Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma visited several examination centres to review the progress of the testing process, including student distribution and exam procedures. He also met with teachers, administrative staff, and parents during his inspection tour.

The minister expressed satisfaction with the launch of the initial assessment stage, describing it as a landmark moment for Bahrain's public education system. He wished all participating students success in achieving high levels of competitiveness in the programme.

The selection process is for 400 available seats, equally divided between male and female students. The exams began with mathematics and science, followed by an English language test in coordination with the British Council.

NHRA Launches Faster Digital Registration Service

Neethu V
TDT | Manama

The National Health Regulatory Authority (NHRA) has introduced an upgraded health product registration service, aiming to improve efficiency and

support Bahrain's broader digital transformation efforts.

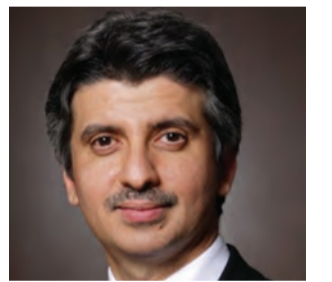
The revamped system is expected to benefit importers, pharmaceutical agents, and healthcare suppliers by offering a more streamlined and user-friendly application pro-

cess aligned with international standards. Processing times have been reduced from 20 to 15 working days, enabling faster approvals.

Under the new framework, electronic auditing measures have been strengthened to en-

hance data accuracy and ensure the integrity of procedures. The application process has also been simplified into key steps, including submission, document upload, fee payment, review, and final approval through the "Adwya" digital platform.

NHRA Chief Executive Officer Ahmed Mohammed Al-Ansari said the initiative reflects the authority's commitment to innovation and improving healthcare quality and safety, while reducing time and effort for applicants.



Ahmed Mohammed Al-Ansari

First Global Engineering Forum Opens

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The University of Bahrain has launched the First International Conference on Modern Engineering Trends, bringing together a wide range of academics, researchers, and industry experts from across the globe.

The event, held virtually, was inaugurated by Minister of Oil and Environment and Special Envoy for Climate Affairs Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak bin Dainah.

In his remarks, Dr. bin Dainah said the rapid evolution of engineering and technology calls for practical innovation that supports sustainable development goals.



H.E. Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak bin Dainah

He highlighted the need for stronger systems, improved industrial efficiency, and resilient infrastructure that can keep pace with global change.

The minister underlined the importance of collaboration between universities, government

institutions, and the private sector in developing national talent and equipping them to effectively use emerging technologies to support long-term development goals.

He praised the University of Bahrain for organizing the conference and commended the efforts of the College of Engineering and the organizing teams.

University President Dr. Fouad Mohammed Al-Ansari said the institution continues to strengthen its role in national development through research and innovation, adding that the conference reflects its commitment to global academic cooperation and preparing students for future challenges.



H.E. Dr. Bin Dainah with participants in the online discussion

“Paper Drug” Circulating in Region

Ministry Issues Warning Over Dangerous A4 Drug Substance

TDT | Manama
Ghadeer Alkumaish

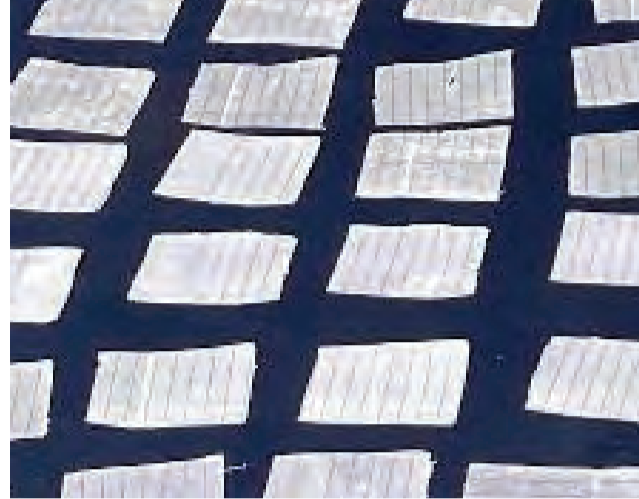
What appears to be nothing more than an ordinary sheet of paper could, in reality, be one of the most dangerous narcotics currently circulating in the region. This warning was issued by Colonel Dr. Osama Bahar as part of the Ministry of Interior's Al Aman Program, highlighting a substance known as “A4” that is reportedly linked to severe health risks, behavioral changes, and even death.

The warning underscores growing concern over a new form of synthetic drug that is difficult to detect due to its resemblance to ordinary paper. Officials say its deceptive appearance allows it to circulate unnoticed within homes, vehicles, and personal belongings, increasing exposure risk among families and young people.

Dr. Bahar described A4 as a chemically saturated paper that can cause severe harm. “Currently, in the region, there is a dangerous type of narcotic called A4. It is an ordinary paper saturated with chemicals and toxins, and this paper causes death,” he stated.



COLONEL DR. OSAMA BAHAR



He further explained how easily the substance blends into daily life. “The danger lies in the fact that this paper is scattered and present in the addict's room, in front of his family, in the car, and even in the phone cover without the knowledge of parents because it appears to be ordinary paper.”

Unlike traditional drugs, A4 does not have a distinctive form or packaging, making it extremely difficult for families to recognize. It can be hidden among books, inside wallets, notebooks, or personal items without

raising suspicion.

Officials also highlighted the various ways it is consumed. Users may smoke it directly, mix it with tobacco, or cut it into small pieces for use in a traditional pipe known as a “Midwakh,” increasing its accessibility and potential for misuse.

Beyond its physical dangers, A4 has been linked to significant behavioral changes. According to Dr. Bahar, “These A4 papers give the addict aggressive behaviours such as breaking things or assaults and a constant desire to get into physical fights with a malicious tendency towards those around him especially



- Anti-Drug Hotline (Bahrain): 996
- Availability: 24/7, around the clock
- Email for reports: 996@interior.gov.bh

Salon Owner Found Not Guilty



Lawyer Manar Janahi

The Minor Criminal Court acquitted a salon owner accused of withholding an employee's salary, citing insufficient evidence to support the claim.

An employee brought the case, alleging she was pressured into signing a contract termination and later discovered discrepancies in the value of a cheque issued for her dues. She claimed she did not fully understand the document because it was written in English.

In response, defense lawyer Manar Janahi argued that the employee resigned voluntarily and received all financial entitlements, denying any coercion or wrongdoing.

After reviewing the case, the court ruled that the accusations were not backed by conclusive evidence and that doubt remained over the claims. Applying the legal principle that doubt favors the accused, the court acquitted the salon owner and dismissed the related civil claim.

BD 800,000 Rolex and Gold Heist

Cameras Expose Luxury Heist Suspects

TDT | Manama
Rehab Mohammad

The Fourth Lower Criminal Court has begun hearings in a major theft case involving eight defendants accused of stealing luxury watches and gold bullion worth more than BHD 800,000 from a residential property.

According to the Public Prosecution, the alleged crime took place in March 2026, when suspects reportedly broke into the victim's home at night and stole 22 Rolex watches and around 1.5 kilograms of gold bars kept in a bedroom safe.

The Criminal Investigation Department launched investigations after the victim report-



Lawyer Reem Almahari's

ed the burglary. CCTV footage played a key role, showing a vehicle near the property and suspicious activity, including covered security cameras. This led to the identification and arrest of the suspects.



Authorities said some defendants confessed to the crime, while others admitted to concealing or handling stolen items. Authorities later recovered the stolen goods from multiple locations, including a farm and a garage, based on the suspects' statements.

Lawyer Reem Almahari's defense lawyer requested time to review the case and sought the client's release.

Military Units Fully Prepared



The Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defence Force held a meeting with senior officers, attended by the Chief of Staff and the Advisor for Financial and Technical Affairs at the General Command.

The start of the meeting, he received a briefing on the combat readiness and operational preparedness of all Bahrain Defence Force branches and units.

He reaffirmed that, thanks to continuous support from His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, and close follow-up from His Royal High-

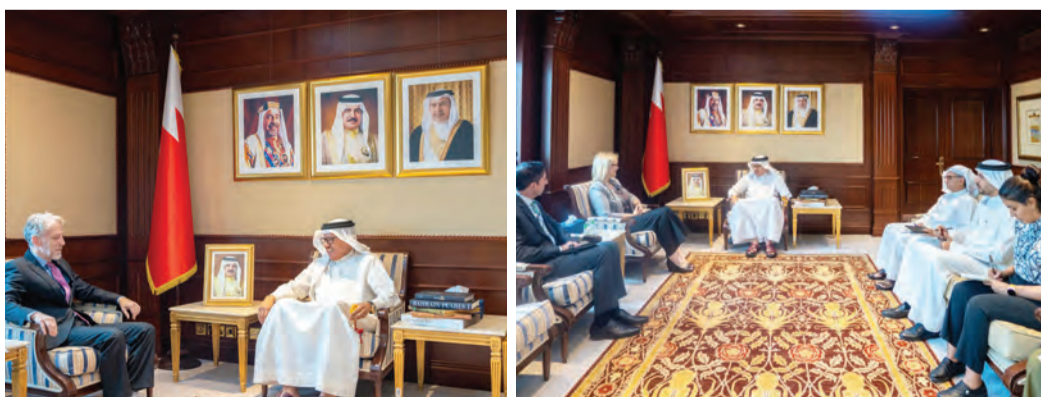
ness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister, all military units are maintaining the highest levels of readiness.

The Commander-in-Chief emphasized the importance of continued dedication in carrying out military duties across all areas of service, praising the professionalism and achievements of Bahrain

Defence Force personnel.

He also expressed appreciation for the key role of the air defence systems, noting their strong performance during recent regional developments. He highlighted their ability to intercept and neutralize multiple aerial threats, underscoring the advanced capability and high readiness of Bahrain's defence systems.

US, UK Reaffirm Strong Partnership



Minister of Foreign Affairs, Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, met with U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain, Stephanie Hallett, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They discussed strengthening bilateral ties, enhancing strategic cooperation, and addressing regional developments impacting security and the global economy. Meanwhile, the Foreign Minister received the United Kingdom's Ambassador to Bahrain, Alastair Long. During the meeting, both sides reviewed the longstanding friendship and cooperation between Bahrain and the United Kingdom, discussing ways to further strengthen bilateral ties across various sectors to support shared interests.

Bahrain Umrah Travel Surges After Saudi Extension

Umrah travel from Bahrain has seen a significant surge in recent days following the decision by Saudi authorities to extend the permitted Umrah period for GCC citizens until May 2.

The extension triggered a sharp rise in demand, with thousands of Bahraini pilgrims departing on Wednesday via the King Fahd Causeway and Dammam Airport. Travel agencies reported a surge in last-minute bookings as residents rushed to take advantage of the extended timeframe before the upcoming Hajj season arrangements begin.

Local Umrah operators have responded by adding extra travel packages over the next two weeks, including scheduled departures on April 22 and 29,



to accommodate growing demand.

Industry workers noted that inquiries and bookings increased rapidly after the extension was announced, highlighting that GCC citizens can perform Umrah using only their

national ID, which has further simplified travel procedures.

Many travelers also pointed to the timing of the extension coinciding with the Labour Day holiday period, making it easier for families and individuals to plan short trips.

Beyond the Canvas

Pablo Picasso's Spirit Lives On in Bahrain's Art Scene

Ghadeer Alkumaish
TDT | Manama

More than a century after Pablo Picasso transformed the language of modern art, his influence continues to resonate far beyond Europe reaching into Bahrain's contemporary art scene.

For local artists with over a decade of experience, Picasso is not simply a historical figure, but a lasting force that continues to shape how art is created, interpreted, and understood.

Today, Bahraini artists reflect on how these ideas continue to influence their work, bridging global artistic movements with local identity and personal expression.

Bahraini artist Zahra Ahmed Ali, known for her emotionally driven portraiture, approaches art as a deeply personal narrative that captures both expression and story. With a background in art education and years of experience shaping her own visual identity, she sees Picasso not as a stylistic influence, but as a conceptual one. "Picasso didn't just change how art looks, he changed how artists think,"



Pablo Picasso in 1903



Guernica (1937) by Picasso

she said. For Ali Y Ahmadi, a practitioner of fine art and Arabic calligraphy who has participated in exhibitions across the region and internationally, Picasso's impact lies in challenging artistic boundaries while still allowing space for diverse approaches.

"Picasso's impact on art is stimulating artists to move beyond simply translating a subject, and instead inspiring thought and creativity in how that story is told," he explained.

Meanwhile, Bader Al'Aali, an artist with nearly 25 years of experience spanning local and international exhibitions, reflects on Picasso's influence as

something that extends beyond technique into philosophy. His work, which moves between realism and abstraction, mirrors this evolving mindset. "Picasso did not just change how we paint; he changed how we see the world by proving that art is a powerful medium that reveals the truth," he said.

This perspective reflects a deeper connection to Picasso's legacy—one rooted not in imitation, but in transformation.

Vision

It is this transformative vision that defined Pablo Picasso's career and continues to inspire artists across generations.

Born in 1881 in Málaga, Spain, Pablo Picasso revolutionized modern art through constant reinvention and a refusal to follow convention. His belief that "I paint objects as I think them, not as I see them" challenged the traditional role of art as mere



His legacy pushes artists to go beyond depicting subjects, encouraging us to explore deeper meaning

ALI Y AHMADI



Art can reveal truths about the world in ways words cannot

BADER AL A'ALI



Picasso didn't just change how art looks—he changed how artists think

ZAHRA AHMED ALI



representation, shifting it toward interpretation and intellectual expression.

One of his most powerful

works, Guernica (1937), stands as a global symbol of anti-war expression. Painted in response to the bombing of the Spanish town of Guernica, the monochromatic composition captures the suffering of civilians through distorted figures and fractured forms. Its absence of colour intensifies the emotional impact, transforming it into a timeless visual protest against violence.

From Spain to Bahrain, Picasso's legacy continues to



transcend borders and time. Through the voices of contemporary Bahraini artists, his ideas are not only preserved but reinterpreted proving that true artistic influence does not fade, but evolves with every new generation.

Field Visit Highlights Development Work in Isa Town

TDT | Manama

As part of ongoing field visits across the Southern Governorate, Southern Governor Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa conducted an inspection tour of Isa Town to review citizens' needs and follow up on key service and development projects.

The visit was attended by MP

Maryam Saleh Al Dhaen, Deputy Governor Brigadier Hamad Mohammed Al Khayat, and Southern Municipality Director General Eng. Isa Abdulrahman Al Buainain, Southern Municipal Council Chairman Abdullah Ibrahim Abdul Latif, Isa Town Police Chief Colonel Hamad Al Hamadi, and other officials along with residents.

During the tour, he was briefed on major ongoing projects, including the Central Market project, and reviewed the quality of services and facilities provided.

He also inspected the Isa Town Events Hall project, noting its importance in serving community needs for social occasions and enhancing local infrastructure.



Southern Governor Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa and MP Maryam Saleh Al Dhaen with key officials and residents



Reading Culture

Students of New Millennium School Bahrain celebrated World Book Day through interactive activities including character dress-up, storytelling, and creative sessions, as part of a hybrid event connecting both in-person and virtual learners.



Hamad Town Parking Relief Plan

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

A plan to create 16 new parking spaces in Hamad Town is moving closer to implementation after receiving initial approval from the Ministry of Works.

The project, proposed by Northern Municipal Council member Abdullah Mubarak Al Qubaisi, aims to address persistent parking congestion in the



Abdullah Mubarak Al Qubaisi

area, particularly along Road 1031 in Block 1210, where res-

idents have reported ongoing issues with overcrowding and disorganised parking.

Authorities say the initiative is part of wider efforts to improve infrastructure and traffic flow in residential neighbourhoods facing increasing population pressure.

The project has now entered the final stage of securing approvals from relevant authorities and allocating budget funds.

Golden Jubilee of Hanuman Chalisa Chanting



Devotees gather at Durga Mata Mandir on April 21, 2026, marking 50 days of continuous Hanuman Chalisa recitation that began on March 4 as a prayer for peace, safety, and the reopening of airspace. The milestone was observed with collective chanting, aarti for Lord Hanuman and Durga Mata, and distribution of langar prasad, symbolizing faith, unity, and gratitude within the community.



LuLu World Food Festival 2026 returns to celebrate Global Flavours in Bahrain

Manama

LuLu Hypermarket's much-anticipated World Food Festival (WFF) 2026 is back, transforming stores across Bahrain into a vibrant hub of global flavours, culinary creativity, and exceptional value.

More than just a promotion, the festival is a curated journey through international cuisines – bringing together premium ingredients, trending food experiences, and indulgent ready-to-eat delights under one roof. From everyday essentials to gourmet discoveries, there's something for every food lover.

Running from April 22 to May 6 across all 11 LuLu Hypermarkets in Bahrain, the festival features unmissable deals across fresh & grocery categories. Shoppers can enjoy



strong promotions on premium meats, fresh fruits and vegetables, seafood, poultry, and a wide range of global grocery staples – including Basmati rice, oils, butter, spices, biscuits, and chocolates.

Enhancing the experience are live culinary showcases and cu-

rated food sections. Highlights include a stunning Artisanal Bread Display with freshly baked sourdoughs, rye loaves, and flavoured breads paired with gourmet butters, alongside elegant charcuterie platters.

For added convenience, LuLu's expert chefs will prepare



takeaway meal combos at the Hot Foods section – featuring favourites like Arabic starters & salads, Seafood feasts, Biryani festival, Asian mean and fusion platters with chicken tikka, hummus, and kubus.

Sweet indulgences take centre stage with a Donut Festi-

val, offering 50% off on kids' favourite donuts and 30% off on medium cakes – perfect for family treats.

Adding to the excitement, shoppers can also participate in the ongoing Jetour T2 raffle draw, with two more cars up for grabs, making every shopping

experience even more rewarding.

Blending value, variety, and global culinary experiences, LuLu World Food Festival 2026 invites shoppers across Bahrain to explore, taste, and celebrate the world of food – all in one place.

Al Salam Bank completes over 15,000 instalment deferment applications and reminds clients of 30 April deadline

● **Deadline for submitting applications for the instalment deferment service is Thursday, 30 April 2026**

Manama

Al Salam Bank announced the successful completion



of more than 15,000 applications for its 3-month instalment deferment service through the Al Salam Bank App, as part of the Central Bank of Bahrain's initiative.

This reflects the efficiency of the Bank's banking services and its ongoing commitment to enabling clients to manage their financial obligations with greater ease and flexibility. This milestone comes as

part of the Bank's continued efforts to facilitate clients' access to the program through a smooth and seamless banking experience.

The Bank enabled clients to apply easily through the app, providing full visibility on instalment schedules and all financing details, in addition to the option of applying by visiting any Al Salam Bank branch.

Al Salam Bank reminds its clients that the deadline for submitting applications for the instalment deferment service is Thursday, 30 April 2026, and encourages those wishing to benefit from the service to apply as soon as possible through the app or by visiting any branch, within a banking experience built on convenience, speed, and meeting diverse financial needs.

American University of Bahrain partners with ICANN to advance practical education in Computing and Internet Technologies

Manama

The American University of Bahrain has signed a co-operation agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers 'ICANN', the global organization responsible for coordinating the Internet's unique identifiers worldwide.

Specialised programmes

The agreement aims to introduce specialised programmes for faculty members in the College of Engineering and Computing, focusing on the Universal Acceptance (UA) Academic Curriculum. This addresses system compatibility with domain names and email addresses across different languages. As part of the agreement, ICANN will provide supporting educa-

tional and technical materials that enhance faculty members' skills and deepen their understanding of the curriculum.

The Universal Acceptance curriculum seeks to equip students with diverse knowledge and skill sets that enable them to develop high quality software systems and web applications that support the use of Unicode encoding and the technologies it enables, including internationalized domain names and email addresses in all languages.

The agreement also provides opportunities for final year

students to undertake graduation projects, with ICANN supervising and evaluating these projects. This is expected to enhance the quality of academic outcomes and strengthen their connection to real world applications within the global Internet ecosystem. In addition, ICANN will facilitate the participation of students in various conferences, competitions, training programs, and workshops.

It is worth noting that a recent AUBH graduate, Yousef Alatawi, has completed a 6-month

internship with ICANN, where he was involved in creating materials and tools related to the UA curriculum. This reflects the depth and quality of the practical learning experiences gained by students through training at ICANN.

Milestone

Commenting on the partnership, Dr. Marwan Hameed, Dean of the College of Engineering and Computing at the American University of Bahrain, said: "We are proud to sign this agreement with ICANN, which represents a significant milestone in the University's journey towards strengthening its position as a leading academic institution in the fields of computing and advanced digital technologies. This collaboration reflects our ongoing approach to delivering

high quality education based on the latest global standards and linking theoretical knowledge with practical application. Integrating the Universal Acceptance curriculum into our programs enhances the readiness of our graduates to keep pace with the rapid transformations in the Internet and technology landscape, while opening wider opportunities for them to contribute to the development of innovative digital solutions that serve communities at the local and regional levels."

"The American University of Bahrain's decision to offer the Universal Acceptance curriculum underscores their commitment to empowering students with the knowledge and practical skills that are aligned with fast-paced and globally relevant multilingual technol-

ogy advancements," said Dr. Sarmad Hussain, senior director of Universal Acceptance and Internationalized Domain Name programs for ICANN. "It is a pleasure to collaborate with the motivated staff and enthusiastic students of the university."

TRA

Notably, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) in Bahrain facilitated this collaboration with ICANN as the registry operator for the .bh ccTLD and the IDN "Bahrain." TRA Bahrain has consistently demonstrated a strong commitment in supporting digital development, promoting a multilingual internet and supporting youth development by enhancing the skills needed for the future digital market.



'No fear now': Kashmir sees tourist return before Pahalgam attack anniversary

ANI | Economic Times

Pahalgam: Visitors from across the country have started arriving in the Kashmir Valley, showing renewed confidence in the region's stability just days before the first anniversary of the Pahalgam terror incident.

Speaking to on Monday, Vishal, a tourist, "My father used to live here earlier, and he only suggested that we visit Srinagar... This place is really safe; earlier, there was an unfortunate incident, but we cannot judge a location from that. I felt very safe, people are also nice..."

Another tourist, while speaking to ANI, said, "We are feeling really good here... The city is clean, and it is peaceful here. There was no fear now, we have full faith in the Indian army and J&K police."

Meanwhile, in the aftermath of the ghastly Pahalgam terror attack on April 22 last year, authorities rolled out a QR code-based scanning system in the region to enhance security measures and restore public confidence.

This digital initiative enables real-time verification of tourists, service providers, and local businesses, ensuring better monitoring and accountability.

By integrating technology into daily operations, the system helps authorities maintain a secure environment, prevent unauthorised activities, and enhance transparency. It also reassures visitors about their safety while promoting responsible tourism, ultimately contributing to the restoration of confidence and normalcy in the region.

On Saturday, the director of the European Foundation for South Asian Studies, Junaid Qureshi, said that as one year passed since the deadly terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam, voices across Kashmir continue to express grief, concern, and a demand for decisive action against terrorism and its ecosystem.

"No matter how we try to

spin it, we must face the reality," he said, describing the incident as a targeted act of violence against tourists.

The April 22, 2025, attack at Baisaran Valley left 26 civilians dead after armed terrorists opened fire, reportedly targeting victims after confirming their identity. The attack was later claimed by Lashkar-e-Taiba and its offshoot, The Resistance Front.

Qureshi, who is also an analyst from the Kashmir valley, alleged external involvement behind such attacks, stating, "These organisations are sponsored, trained and funded by Pakistan," and warned that such incidents aim to disrupt peace and development efforts in Jammu and Kashmir.

He further highlighted the economic impact on the region, particularly on tourism. "Kashmir's tourism industry has suffered tremendously," he said, noting that businesses linked to the sector have faced losses, affecting employment and slowing investment in the region.

Referring to India's response, Qureshi pointed to shifts in bilateral dynamics following the attack, including developments around the Indus Waters Treaty and counter-terror operations like Operation Sindoor. "India can and will strike terrorism structure if it continues to be a victim of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism," he said.

At the same time, he stressed the need for collective responsibility within Kashmiri society. "As Kashmiris, while we condemn this attack, we must make it absolutely clear to the world that... Pakistan have nothing to do with us," he said, adding, "We Kashmiris do not subscribe to 'their' Islam."

Concluding with a strong message, Qureshi said, "It is time that we Kashmiris tell the rest of India and the world, 'Not in our name!' The anniversary serves as a moment of remembrance, reflection, and renewed calls for peace, unity, and firm action against terrorism in the region."



Iran media report blasts over Tehran

AFP | Berlin, Germany

Air defence systems were activated in parts of Tehran on Thursday evening amid reports of hostile aerial activity, Iranian state media said in the first such reports since a ceasefire began.

The IRNA state news agency said the "sound of air defence firing" was heard in western Tehran, while the Mehr news agency reported that the systems were activated in several parts of the capital to counter "hostile targets", without elaborating further.

Iran gets first Hormuz toll

A senior Iranian parliament official said on Thursday that Tehran has received the first revenue from tolls it imposed on the strategic Strait of Hormuz in its war with the United States and Israel.

"The first revenue received from the Strait of Hormuz tolls was deposited into the Central Bank account," said deputy speaker of parliament Hamidreza Hajibabaei, according to Tasnim news agency.

Peace talks in Islamabad remain stalled, with Iran not confirming its participation and the stand-off battering the world economy.

"Iran is having a very hard time figuring out who their leader is!" Trump added Thursday. He claimed the United States had "total control" over Hormuz and would only reopen it when Iran agreed to a peace deal.

Mojtaba Khamenei 'gravely wounded' but 'mentally sharp': NYT

AFP | Washington, United States

Iran's new supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei was seriously wounded in the US-Israeli airstrike that killed his father and predecessor Ali Khamenei but is mentally sharp, the New York Times reported yesterday.

Citing several Iranian officials which it did not name, the Times said Mojtaba Khamenei had "at least for now" delegated decision-making to generals in the Revolutionary Guards ideological army.

Mojtaba Khamenei has not appeared in public since

succeeding his father and only issued written statements, creating speculation over his condition and if he is still alive.

Although Mojtaba Khamenei was "gravely wounded (in the February 28 airstrike), he is mentally sharp and engaged," said the NYT.

"One leg was operated on three times, and he is awaiting a prosthetic. He had surgery on one hand and is slowly regaining function. His face and lips have been burned severely, making it difficult for him to speak," it cited the officials as saying, adding that "eventually, he will need plastic surgery."

Access for security reasons is extremely limited to Khamenei, who remains in hiding, with only handwritten messages passed on, it said.

Guards commanders do not visit him but President Masoud Pezeshkian, who is also a heart surgeon, has been involved in his care, it said.

It said the generals from the Guards who viewed the war with the US and Israel "as a threat to the regime's survival" that has now been contained.

They have also been in charge of military strategy, including the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

An Israeli security source said the country was not carrying out airstrikes in Iran, following reports in Iranian state media of blasts over the capital Tehran.

Shoot and kill any boat'



AFP | Tehran, Iran

President Donald Trump ordered the US Navy yesterday to destroy any Iranian boat caught laying mines in the Strait of Hormuz, putting more pressure on a fraying ceasefire as disruption from the Gulf stand-off battered the world economy.

Trump's announcement came after the US fleet boarded a vessel in the Indian Ocean that was transporting oil from Iran and after a senior Iranian official said Tehran had banked its first proceeds from the tolls it exacts on shipping through the strait.

Israel awaiting US green light to 'return Iran to Stone Age': defence minister

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Defence minister Israel Katz said yesterday that Israel was "prepared to resume the war against Iran", adding that his country was awaiting a green light from the United States to return Iran to "the Stone Age".

"The IDF is ready both

new peace talks in Pakistan hanging in the balance, more fuel-hungry airlines cancelled flights, oil prices climbed higher once again and the keenly-watched S&P Global PMI index showed eurozone business activity shrinking for the first time in 16 months.

"I have ordered the United States Navy to shoot and kill any boat, small boats though they may be... that is putting mines in the waters of the Strait of Hormuz," Trump posted.

Iran vowed it would keep the strait closed to all but a trickle of approved vessels for as long as the US Navy blockades its ports, brushing off demands from Trump to both reopen Hormuz and surrender its enriched uranium.

defensively and offensively, and the targets have been marked," Katz said in a video statement.

"We are awaiting a green light from the United States -- first and foremost to complete the elimination of the Khamenei dynasty... and addi-

The US responded to Iran's action by imposing its own blockade of Iranian ports, and on Thursday the Pentagon announced on social media that US forces had "carried out a maritime interdiction and right-of-visit boarding of the sanctioned stateless vessel M/T Majestic X transporting oil from Iran, in the Indian Ocean".

The post included footage of US military personnel rappelling from helicopters onto the deck of a large tanker.

The statement said the US would "continue global maritime enforcement to disrupt illicit networks and interdict vessels providing material support to Iran, wherever they operate".

Dark Age and the Stone Age by destroying key energy and electricity facilities and dismantling its national economic infrastructure."

The Greeks enter Troy using the Trojan Horse (traditional date)

Russo-Turkish War: Russia declares war on the Ottoman Empire



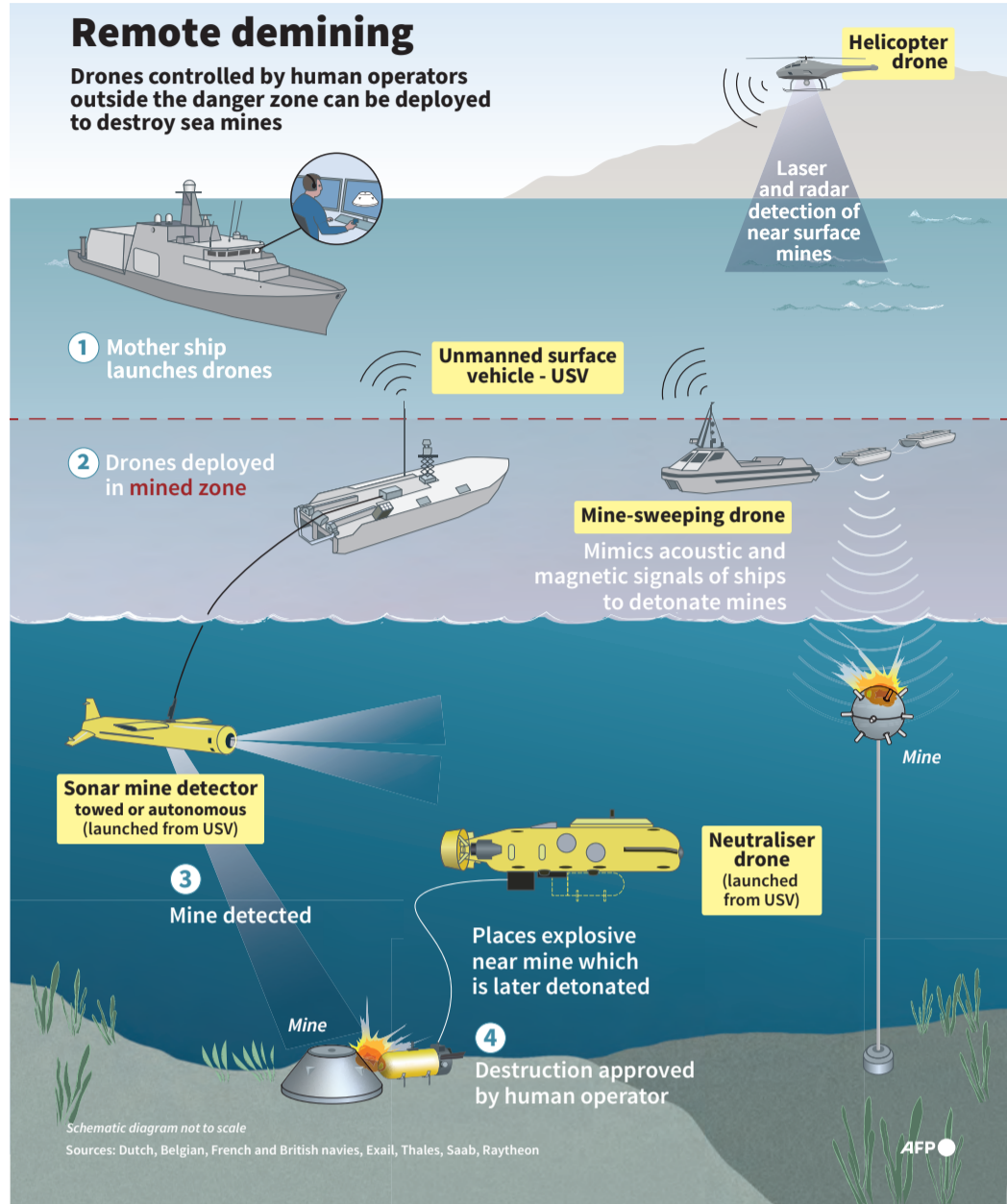
Spain Declares War Against the United States

Spanish-American War: Spain declares war after rejecting US ultimatum to withdraw from Cuba

India surpasses China as the world's most populous country according to UN estimates, with 1,425,775,850 people (estimated to reach 1.7 billion by 2064) [1]

Remote demining

Drones controlled by human operators outside the danger zone can be deployed to destroy sea mines



US turns back 31 vessels

US Central Command (CENTCOM) said late Wednesday that it had "directed 31 vessels to turn around or return to port as part of its own 'blockade against Iran'". It said on X "the majority of vessels have complied with US directions" adding that "most vessels turned around have been oil tankers".



A container ship attempting to cross the Strait of Hormuz in the midst of an operation to allegedly seize it by the IRGC's naval forces.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



I'm saddened to learn that a second French @UNIFIL_ peacekeeper has died from injuries sustained in a recent attack carried out by non-state actors, presumed to be Hizbullah, in southern Lebanon. My deepest condolences to the family, friends & colleagues of the fallen peacekeepers. This was one of several incidents in recent weeks that have resulted in deaths & serious injuries of UNIFIL peacekeepers. These attacks must stop.

@antonioguterres

02



Congratulations to the #Bahamas for eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV. This achievement solidifies years of political commitment, and the dedication of health workers. By ensuring that children are born free of HIV, we are securing a healthier, brighter future for the next generation.

@DrTedros

03



I leave #Africa with an immeasurable treasure of faith, hope, and charity. This treasure consists of stories, faces, and testimonies, both joyful and sorrowful, which will greatly enrich my life and ministry as the Successor of Peter. As in the early centuries of the Church, Africa is now called to make a decisive contribution to the holiness and missionary character of the Christian people. #ApostolicJourney

@Pontifex

Pentagon denies clearing mines will take six months

AFP | Washington, United States

The Pentagon blasted as cherry picking and false yesterday a news report saying that the department assessed it could take six months to completely clear the Strait of

Hormuz of Iranian-laid mines. The Washington Post reported on Wednesday that the Pentagon shared the six-month estimate during a classified briefing for the members of the House Armed Services Committee, citing three unidenti-

fied officials familiar with the discussion. Asked about the report, Chief Pentagon Spokesman Sean Parnell said "the media cherry picking leaked information, much of which is false, from a classified, closed briefing is dishonest jour-

nalism." "One assessment does not mean the assessment is plausible, and a six-month closure of the Strait of Hormuz is an impossibility and completely unacceptable to the Secretary," Parnell told AFP on Thursday.

Lawmakers were told that Iran could have placed 20 or more mines in and around the strait, some floated remotely using GPS technology that makes them harder to detect, according to the Washington Post.

Trump eyes mine-layers

Pentagon announced on social media that US forces had "carried out a maritime interdiction and right-of-visit boarding of the sanctioned stateless vessel M/T Majestic X transporting oil from Iran, in the Indian Ocean".



"I have ordered the United States Navy to shoot and kill any boat, small boats though they may be... that is putting mines in the waters of the Strait of Hormuz"

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

Nationwide Upskilling Drive

The UAE has announced a major initiative to transform all federal government employees into artificial intelligence specialists through continuous, specialised training programmes.

Officials said the goal is to ensure the workforce is fully equipped to adapt to rapid technological change and become among the world's leading experts in government-driven AI transformation.

The government expressed pride in its national workforce, stressing that employees will be trained, developed, and upskilled to enhance their capabilities and support one of the largest governmental transformation projects over the next two years.

The initiative will be overseen by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed



Al Nahyan, in line with the UAE leadership's vision. A dedicated working team, chaired by Mohammed Al Gergawi, has been formed to monitor and implement the programme under his supervision.

Officials noted that while the world is changing rapidly and technologies are advancing at high speed, the core focus remains human development—creating an environment that enables people to realise their potential and improve their quality of life.

The move marks what officials described as a new phase of government work, aimed at making public services faster, more efficient, and more impactful.

Jordan PM Inspects Dead Sea Development Projects



Jordan's Prime Minister Dr. Jaafar Hassan inspected ongoing tourism and infrastructure projects at the Dead Sea Corniche being developed by the Jordan Free and Development Zones Group on the northern shore.

During the visit, the Prime Minister directed officials to take necessary steps to complete development works in preparation for inauguration during the upcoming Independence Day celebrations.

The project includes public recreation areas, parking facilities, commercial and tourism services, and public amenities designed to serve both local and international visitors. Once completed, it will cover more than 200 dunums.

Hassan stressed the importance of comprehensively developing the Dead Sea shoreline, highlighting its expected social and economic benefits for local communities and its contribution to Jordan's tourism sector.

He also called for ensuring continuous services, diversify-

ing activities and events, and maintaining the shoreline as a key recreational destination for citizens and tourists throughout the current tourism season.

The Prime Minister was briefed by Jordan Free and Development Zones Group Chairman Eng. Sakher Al-Ajlouni on the integrated development plan linking the "tourism beach" and "corniche" projects, aimed at enhancing the Dead Sea's competitiveness as a global tourism destination.

The first phase includes a 750-meter waterfront promenade, followed by a second phase extending 3 kilometers. The development will feature landscaped walkways, family seating areas, shaded spaces, sports facilities, swimming areas, playgrounds, restaurants, cafes, and green public spaces.

Saudi Arabia and Japan Review Maritime Safety

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman held a phone call on Thursday with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takachi, focusing on maritime security concerns and efforts to ease regional tensions.

During the discussion, the two leaders reviewed the latest regional developments and their broader security and economic implications at both regional and international levels.



They emphasized de-escalation efforts, strengthening regional stability, and ensuring the safety of maritime navigation, given its direct impact on global trade and essential supply chains.

The call also covered bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and Japan, both sides reviewed existing areas of cooperation and explored ways to further enhance and expand collaboration across multiple sectors.

Rome and Doha Push for Stability



Italy expressed strong solidarity with Qatar following recent regional tensions. Defence Minister Guido Crosetto conveyed the greetings of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during a meeting with Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.

The minister reaffirmed Italy's support for Qatar, describing

it as a friendly nation affected by unjust attacks linked to Iran. He highlighted the importance of unity and cooperation during a sensitive period for the region.

Both sides discussed the need to support diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalating the crisis and building a more stable regional security framework.

Both sides placed particular emphasis

on ensuring freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, a critical global shipping route.

The discussions also covered strengthening bilateral cooperation in defence, the defence industry, and energy security, reflecting a shared commitment to deeper strategic ties between Rome and Doha.

Talks Underway to Extend Ceasefire in Lebanon

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun said diplomatic efforts are underway to halt military escalation and extend the ceasefire, following recent communications with U.S. President Donald Trump and Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Addressing ministers at the start of a cabinet session, Aoun said discussions in Washington focused on stopping ceasefire violations and launching a broader negotiation track aimed at ending the state of war with Israel. This includes Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories, the release of prisoners, deployment of the Lebanese army along international borders, and resolving disputes along the Blue Line.

He clarified that some media reports were inaccurate, stressing that contact with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was never considered.

A meeting in Washington is expected to address the ceasefire extension, including protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure such as homes, places of worship, media, medical, and educational institutions. Lebanon's ambassador to the U.S. is expected to represent these priorities at the talks.

Aoun said Lebanon's file is "returning to the American table" at a high level, describing it as a positive development that could open pathways toward economic recovery and reconstruction. He also expressed hope for a future visit to Washington to meet President Trump directly.



The president thanked friendly and brotherly countries for ongoing humanitarian and relief assistance to support displaced civilians.

Reiterating his stance, Aoun said he remains committed to ending the war and destruction, noting widespread exhaustion among Lebanese citizens and families affected by the conflict.

On domestic matters, he proposed reviewing a possible increase in transportation allowances for public sector employees due to rising fuel prices, along with a one-time exceptional financial assistance. Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held a series of phone calls with senior Palestinian officials and an international envoy to discuss the latest developments in the Palestinian territories.

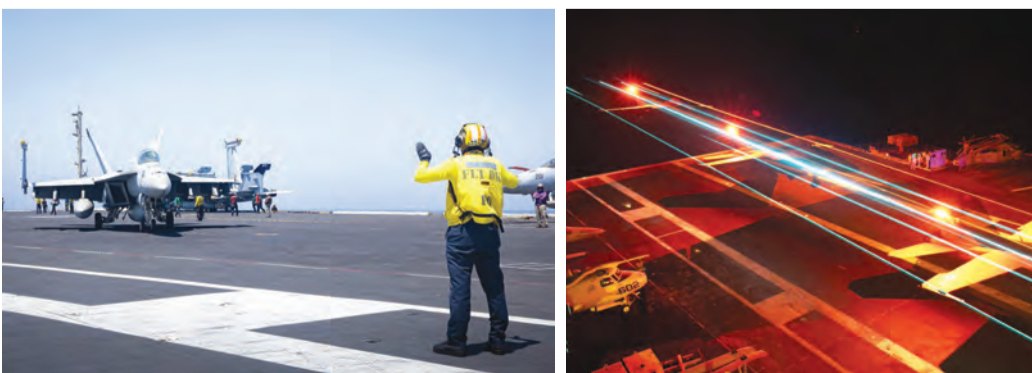
Abdelatty spoke with Palestinian Vice President Hussein al-Sheikh, Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa, and the senior international represent-

ative for Gaza, reviewing the evolving situation in Gaza and the West Bank.

According to Egypt's Foreign Ministry, Abdelatty stressed that ongoing regional escalation should not distract from implementing the second phase of a proposed peace plan, including deploying an international stabilization force, ensuring unhindered humanitarian aid delivery, and advancing early recovery and reconstruction efforts. He also reaffirmed Egypt's consistent position on the Palestinian cause.

The discussions also addressed the deteriorating situation in the West Bank amid continued Israeli military operations, repeated raids on Palestinian cities and camps, expanding settlement activity, and settler attacks on holy sites. These developments, the ministry warned, are further heightening tensions and undermining prospects for de-escalation and a return to political dialogue.

Continuous Operations



Day and night flight operations continue aboard the world's largest aircraft carrier, USS Gerald R. Ford (CVN 78). The Ford Carrier Strike Group continues to operate in the Red Sea, supporting maritime security in the U.S. 5th Fleet.

Classifieds



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Why Man City are best placed in Premier League title race

● **City's narrow 1-0 win over Burnley on Wednesday highlighted their ability to grind out results at a decisive stage of the season.**

TDT | Manama

The Premier League title race remains finely balanced, but Manchester City's recent form and squad resilience suggest they are in the strongest position to overtake Arsenal and defend their crown.

City's narrow 1-0 win over Burnley on Wednesday highlighted their ability to grind out results at a decisive stage of the season. With momentum shifting, Pep Guardiola's side have now moved above Arsenal in the table for the first time in eight months, underlining how quickly the picture has changed after a recent swing in form at

the top.

Arsenal had looked poised to take control of the title race in early April, when they had the opportunity to move 12 points clear of City with games in hand. Instead, a dip in form — including a damaging home defeat to Bournemouth — has seen their advantage evaporate, with pressure returning at a crucial stage of the campaign.

While Mikel Arteta's side still have a favourable run of fixtures on paper, their schedule is complicated by European commitments, including two demanding Champions League semi-finals against Atletico Madrid. That added workload could prove decisive in a tight run-in.

City, by contrast, have a more stable rhythm to their season and a squad built for sustained pressure. Despite injuries to key players, Guardiola's side have continued to deliver consistent results, losing just once in their last 18 matches across all competitions since January.

Both teams are remarkably level in the league in terms of wins, draws, losses and goal difference, highlighting how fine the margins have been this season. However, City's recent consistency contrasts with Arsenal's four defeats in their last six matches in all competitions, a run that has shifted momentum back towards the reigning champions.

History also favours City in tight title races. Their experience of closing out seasons under pressure — including dramatic late turnarounds in previous campaigns — gives them a psychological edge that Arsenal are still developing under Arteta.

With both teams facing testing fixtures in the run-in, the title is far from decided. But with momentum and experi-

ence on their side, Manchester City appear best equipped to hold off Arsenal's challenge once again.



Pep Guardiola greets Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta

Lamine Yamal set for World Cup despite Season-ending injury



TDT | Manama

Lamine Yamal is expected to be fit for the 2026 FIFA World Cup despite being ruled out for the remainder of the domestic season with a hamstring injury, FC Barcelona confirmed yesterday.

The tournament, scheduled to run from June 11 to July 19 across the United States, Canada, and Mexico, remains firmly in sight for the 18-year-old, who will now begin a conservative recovery programme after tests confirmed a hamstring injury in his left leg.

The setback occurred during Barcelona's 1-0 win over Celta Vigo at Spotify

Camp Nou on Wednesday, a result that moved the Catalan side nine points clear at the top of La Liga. Yamal converted a 40th-minute penalty — his 16th league goal of the season — but immediately signalled to the bench and went down clutching his left hamstring.

He was unable to continue and left the pitch with medical assistance, heading straight down the tunnel after being substituted.

Barcelona head coach Hansi Flick said after the match that the forward would not have asked to come off without a serious issue. Those concerns were later confirmed following medical evalua-

tion.

The injury comes at a key stage of the campaign, with Barcelona closing in on the La Liga title and important fixtures ahead, including a decisive clash with Real Madrid.

Yamal has been one of Spain's most decisive players this season, with 16 goals and 11 assists highlighting his rapid impact at the top level.

While his absence is a blow for Barcelona in the closing weeks of the season, both club and country will take encouragement from the expectation that he will be ready in time for the World Cup, where he is set to play a key role for Spain national football team.

Shaheen Group clinches victory in BKS Seven-A-Side Cricket Tournament



Pradeep Puravankara
TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Kerala Samajam (BKS) Indoor Games Section successfully concluded a spirited seven-a-side

cricket tournament, which saw enthusiastic participation from various Indian expatriate clubs in the Kingdom. The matches were held under the lights at the Samajam Floodlight Ground, creating a vibrant atmosphere

for players and spectators alike. A total of 20 teams, divided into four competitive groups, battled for the top spot throughout the event. In the final showdown held on Sunday, April 19, the Shaheen Group team de-



livered a stellar performance to secure the championship title. The Spartans team finished as the worthy runners-up after a closely contested match.

Following the final, an award

ceremony was held where trophies and mementos were presented to the winners and runners-up. The awards were distributed by the BKS Assistant Secretary, Indoor Games Secretary, Membership Secretary,

and the Librarian. The event concluded with a vote of thanks by Tournament Convener Rajesh Kotho, who appreciated the sportsmanship shown by all the participants and the efforts of the organizing team.

Sabalenka fights rust to reach third round of Madrid Open

AFP | Madrid, Spain

Aryna Sabalenka shook off some rust to post her first victory of the season on clay and extend her winning streak to 13 matches on Thursday in Madrid.

The world number one, who was playing her first match since she completed the "Sunshine Double" by winning Indian Wells and Miami last month, committed 26 unforced errors in her 7-5, 6-3 win over American Peyton Stearns in the second round in the Spanish capital.

The defending champion, in search of a fourth career title at the Caja Magica, converted four of 12 break points against Stearns, double-faulted five times, and dropped serve twice, before she made it over the finish line to set up a third-round meeting with Romanian Jaqueline Cristian.

"I'm super happy to start with a win, even though maybe the tennis wasn't that good, but I

felt like with every game I was playing, the better I was playing, so I really hope in the next one I bring a better performance," said Sabalenka, who has won 24 of her 25 matches so far in 2026.

Earlier on Manolo Santana Stadium, Iga Swiatek made quick work of her opening test in Madrid, breezing past Daria Snigur 6-1, 6-2.

The Polish fourth seed needed just 61 minutes to move past Snigur, who was coming off the first tour-level main draw victory of her career on clay over Daria Kasatkina.

The Ukrainian qualifier saved four match points against Kasatkina on Wednesday, and secured the win by clinching the longest first-to-seven tiebreak at tour-level in eight years with a 15-13 scoreline.

Snigur had little fight left in her for her clash with Swiatek, who barring a brief blip early in the second set was in fierce form as she continues her quest for a first clay-court title since she claimed a fourth Roland Garros

crown nearly two years ago.

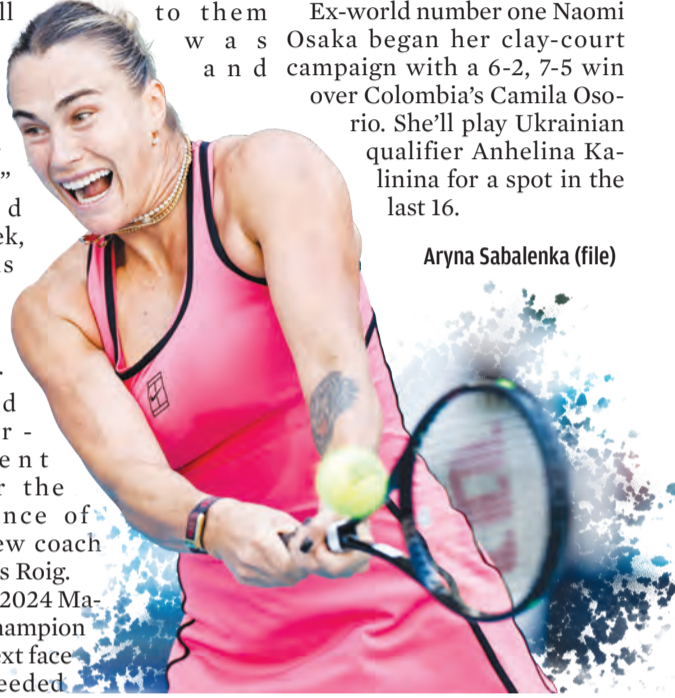
"I'm very happy. Madrid is a special place to play, because of how special the tournament is, but also because of the conditions, so I'm happy that I adjusted well to them and solid just playing my game," said Swiatek, who is contesting her second tour-nament under the guidance of her new coach Francis Roig.

The 2024 Madrid champion will next face 31st-seeded

American Ann Li in round three.

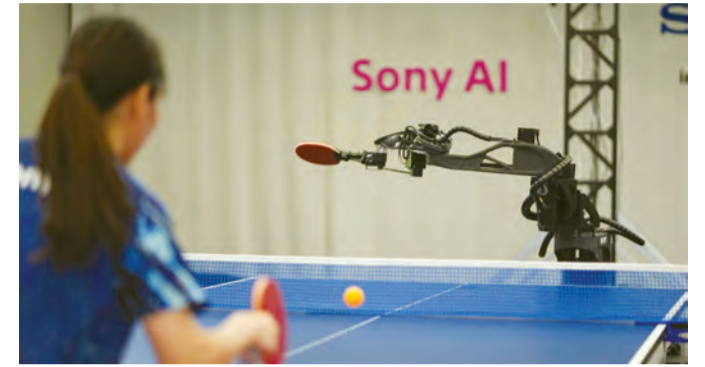
Meanwhile, Hungarian world number 63 Anna Bondar upset seventh-seeded Elina Svitolina 6-3, 6-4 to claim the first top-10 victory of her career.

Ex-world number one Naomi Osaka began her clay-court campaign with a 6-2, 7-5 win over Colombia's Camila Osorio. She'll play Ukrainian qualifier Anhelina Kalinina for a spot in the last 16.



Aryna Sabalenka (file)

AI table tennis robot can beat 'elite' players, Sony says



Tokyo, Japan

Robots can run a half-marathon, box, and now beat elite human table tennis players, Sony's artificial intelligence unit said in research published Thursday.

A team from the Japanese company built an AI-powered robotic arm clutching a ping-pong paddle that can perceive, react to and return the "blistering speed and spin of elite-level table tennis".

The research was published in the journal Nature.

"Ace" is a bulky industrial robot as big as the table tennis table, but is able to make split-second decisions and execute agile movements with power, according to Sony AI.

The noisy player, characterised by constant whirrs, rattles and a vigorously moving arm, faced five elite players and two professionals.

It won three out of five matches against the elite group, while other matches were "competitive," the com-

pany said.

But Ace continued to improve its performance even after the paper was submitted to Nature, winning more recent matches against professionals with higher shot speeds, more aggressive placement closer to the table edge, and faster-paced rallies, Sony AI said.

"By solving a problem that requires exceptional real-time sensing and control, this research lays the groundwork for AI systems that can safely and reliably operate in dynamic physical environments, ranging from safety-critical settings to real-time interactive domains," it said.

Previous table tennis playing robots could hold rallies, but never went beyond the amateur level, Sony AI said.

"Once AI can operate at an expert human level under these conditions, it opens the door to an entirely new class of real-world applications that were previously out of reach," said Peter Stone, Chief Scientist at Sony AI.

Samson, Hosein star as Chennai hammer Mumbai by 103 runs in IPL

AFP | Mumbai, India

Opener Sanju Samson struck his second IPL century of the season to set up a thumping 103-run win for Chennai Super Kings in a battle of heavyweights against Mumbai Indians on Thursday.

Put in to bat first, five-time champions Chennai rode on Samson's unbeaten 101 off 54 balls to post 207-6 at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

Chennai's West Indies spinner Akeal Hosein then returned impressive figures of 4-17 to bundle out Mumbai, who have also won the IPL five times, for 104 in 19 overs.

The colossal winning margin boosted Chennai's net run rate and took them to fifth spot in the 10-team table. Mumbai slipped to eighth with five defeats from seven outings.

Chennai started their innings briskly, courtesy of skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad's 14-ball 22 before he fell to Afghanistan spinner A.M. Ghazanfar in the third over.

Samson then teed off with three fours and one six off Mumbai skipper Hardik Pan-

dya but kept losing partners at the other end, including Dewald Brevis for 21.

Undeterred, the 31-year-old took on the opposition attack, hitting 10 fours and six maximums across his well-crafted knock.

Mumbai bowlers struck regular blows as Ghazanfar and left-arm quick Ashwani Kumar took two wickets each before Samson's final assault took Chennai past 200.

Samson reached his fifth hundred in the T20 tournament with a four on the final ball of the innings and raised his bat to acknowledge the applause from the fans and the dugout.

In reply, Mumbai lost three wickets, including South African Quinton de Kock for seven, in the first three overs and slipped to 11-3.

Impact substitute Hosein, a left-arm spinner, took two of the three.

Suryakumar Yadav, who made 35, and Tilak Varma attempted to rebuild in a partnership of 73 but the asking rate kept rising with some tidy bowling by Chennai.

The wily Hosein returned to

break the stand as he got Varma to drag a delivery onto his stumps and out for 37.

Wickets kept tumbling as Noor Ahmad struck on successive balls to send back Pandya, for one, and Sherfane Rutherford for a duck, before Shardul Thakur avoided the hat-trick.

Hosein dismissed Suryakumar for his fourth and, with that, the batting fizzled out.

Chennai Super Kings' West Indian cricket player Akeal Hosein (L) celebrates with a teammate



Chennai Super Kings' Indian cricket player Sanju Samson celebrates after scoring a century

Real Madrid suffer double injury blow

AFP | Madrid, Spain

Real Madrid's faint hopes of overhauling Barcelona in La Liga suffered a further blow on Thursday with both Eder Militao and Arda Guler ruled out for the rest of the season.

Brazilian defender Militao has a left thigh injury, while Turkish attacking midfielder Guler is sidelined with a right thigh problem, the club said.

According to Spanish media, both players will be out of ac-

tion for several weeks and miss the last six matches, including the Clasico with Barcelona on May 10.

For now, neither Militao, 28, nor 21-year-old Guler is considered at risk of missing the World Cup finals, which run from June 11 to July 19 and will be co-hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Real Madrid trail defending champions Barcelona by nine points in the title race,

Starc cleared to play in IPL by Cricket Australia

New Delhi, India

Pace bowler Mitchell Starc has been cleared to play in the Indian Premier League after missing the first half of the season because of fitness concerns, Cricket Australia said Thursday.

The left-arm quick had been

recovering from elbow and shoulder injuries but will now belatedly join his Delhi Capitals team.

The date of Starc's arrival was not revealed, but CA said he was expected to take the field for Delhi's match at Rajasthan Royals On May 1.

'Big loss' for F1 if Verstappen quits, say McLaren rivals

AFP | Woking, United Kingdom

If four-time world champion Max Verstappen were to quit Formula One, as he has hinted on numerous occasions, it would be a "big loss" for the sport, his McLaren rivals Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri said on Wednesday.

The 28-year-old Dutchman, who won four consecutive ti-

tles from 2021 to 2024 and narrowly missed a fifth last season, has struggled at the start of this campaign with Red Bull against Mercedes, Ferrari and McLaren.

Verstappen has repeatedly voiced his frustration at the sport's sweeping 2026 rules overhaul, which places greater emphasis on

electric energy management in qualifying and races, as well as limiting car speeds.

"I think it would be a big loss for the sport as a whole. I

think for us as drivers we want to race against the best and try and prove ourselves against the best," said Piastri.

The 25-year-old Australian said Verstappen had "shown his calibre in the last 10 years" and added that the Dutchman had been the benchmark "for the last five or six".

Norris, the 2025 world cham-

pion, believes Verstappen's exit would leave F1 a poorer place.

"It would be a shame for the sport, it would be a miss for the sport if that does happen, because he probably is one of the best drivers you'll see in Formula One ever," said Norris. "He's always been very open to say what he thinks, whether you agree or not."

Verstappen has openly criticised his Red Bull car and likened the direction of F1 to "Formula E on steroids" or the video game "Mario Kart".

At last month's Japanese Grand Prix, he spoke of wanting to spend more time with his family and has increasingly turned his attention to endurance racing.



Bahraini flag raised as the team lines up before the start of the throw-off



Bahrain secure back-to-back wins at Beach Games

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's beach handball team extended their strong run at the 6th Asian Beach Games in China with a well-deserved victory over the Philippines in yesterday's Group A clash, securing back-to-back wins in Sanya.

The result followed their opening success against hosts China and further solidified their position in the group stage of

the tournament, which runs until April 30. The Filipinos, meanwhile, slipped to a second consecutive defeat

Komail Ghuloom and Ali Almawli share a passionate celebration



after also losing to Iran, leaving their side under pressure heading into the remainder of the group phase.

Guided by coach Hussain Al Qaidoom, Bahrain once again showed resilience and tactical maturity, recovering from a slow start to turn the match around in dramatic fashion.

The opening set saw the nationals struggle to settle into rhythm as the Philippines controlled key phases to edge it 17-16. However, the Bahrainis responded with greater organisation and efficiency in the sec-

ond set, narrowly claiming a 21-20 win to restore parity. The momentum gradually shifted in Bahrain's favour during the third set, with both teams exchanging leads in an intense back-and-forth. In the decisive moments, the national side held their composure better to close out a 18-16 win, forcing the match into a shoot-out.

In the decider, Bahrain's nerve under pressure proved decisive. Goalkeeper Abdullah Al Zaimour made a crucial save at a pivotal moment before stepping up confidently to convert the final attempt himself, sealing a dramatic comeback victory. The win was powered by a strong collective effort, led by Mahdi Ali, who top-scored with 19 points. He was well supported by Askani (10), Komail Mahfooth (8), while Alhayki and Adam Alnasheet added six points each. Ghloom contributed four points, including an important impact in the shoot-out phase. For the Philippines, Manuel Lasangue Jr. led all scorers with 24 points.

Al Zaimour credited the team's composure in key moments, espe-

cially given the limited familiarity with their opponents.

"We expected a tough game because we didn't know much about their style, but we stayed focused and finished it in the shoot-out," he said.

He also noted Bahrain's strong position in the group, adding that they are "about 75 percent" through to the semi-finals, while stressing the need for consistency in the remaining matches.

Teammate Sayed Ahmed Marzooq pointed to Bahrain's response after a slow start, highlighting tactical adjustments as the turning point.

"We didn't begin well, but the second set was much better after correcting mistakes," he said. "We stayed focused and showed strong fighting spirit to turn the game around."

Bahrain now face Sri Lanka in their next Group A fixture today at 1pm Bahrain time, before meeting Iran and Hong Kong. The semi-finals are scheduled for Tuesday, with the medal matches set for Thursday.

Riffa, Muharraq Chase Jackpot in King's Cup Final

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's football season reaches its climax today as Riffa and Muharraq meet in the 49th King's Cup final, with silverware, rivalry, and a major financial prize all on the line.

Beyond the trophy, both sides are also competing for a significant financial reward. The winners will earn BHD 100,000, while the runners-up receive BHD 50,000, bringing the total prize pool to BHD 150,000, according to the Bahrain Football Association.

The prize structure, unchanged for the fourth consecutive year, underlines the competition's continued importance



in Bahraini football and its role in maintaining high competitive standards. With both glory and financial reward at stake, the final is expected to be played at a high tempo.

Kick-off is set for 5:20pm at the National Stadium in Riffa, with a strong turnout anticipated for one of the standout fixtures on the domestic calendar.

The match brings together two of Bahrain's most successful clubs, adding another chapter to a rivalry that has often shaped key moments in the Kingdom's football history. The sides are already well acquainted this season, having drawn both league

AI-generated illustration of the teams' mascots eyeing the prize. @ mohamedalhawaj

meetings 1-1. They also met in the Khalid bin Hamad Cup final in February, which finished level after 120 minutes before Riffa prevailed on penalties — a result that adds further motivation for the "Red Wolves" in today's final.

Muharraq arrives with history in sight, aiming for a record-extending 34th King's Cup title while also hoping to end a competition drought that dates back to the 2019-20 season.

Riffa, on the other hand, are chasing their eighth King's Cup triumph. They will look to build on their 2020-21 success as they seek to reinforce their status as one of the country's leading cup sides.