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Focus on tourism, aviation and transportation



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, chairs the 517th Government Executive Committee meeting. The meeting reviewed developments on the implementation of the 2022-2026 tourism sector strategy, topics related to the aviation sector, and the regulation of the transportation sector.

HM King thanked by Azerbaijan

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa received a letter of thanks from Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev, in which he expressed his gratitude for the letter sent by HM the King on the occasion of Azerbaijan's participation at the Bahrain International Exhibition “Mara’ee 2025”.

In the letter, President Aliyev thanked HM King Hamad for the high appreciation accorded to the Azerbaijani participants.

He noted that “Mara’ee 2025” was a distinguished event reflecting the Kingdom’s deep-rooted traditions, national values, rich history, culture, and contemporary vision.

Kingdom wins digital award

TDT | Manama

The Information and eGovernment Authority (IGA) achieved a digital milestone in the Arab World by winning in the ‘Excellence in Digital Transformation’ category at the 25th Sheikh Salem Al Ali Al Sabah Informatics Award.

The Award’s Board of Trustees announced five winners: two from Kuwait, and three at the Arab level for the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, recognised as leading Arab nations and classified in the ‘Very High’ category of the United Nations E-Government Development Index 2024.

Bilateral tech

HRH Prince Salman: Bahrain-Saudi partnership continues to go from ‘strength to strength’

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, has affirmed Bahrain’s commitment to leveraging modern technologies to enhance the competitiveness of the communications and information technology sector.

Speaking during a meeting with His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Khaled bin Al-Abdullah Al-Faisal, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Saudi Telecom Company (stc), at Gudaibiya Palace, HRH Prince Salman underscored the strong Bahrain-Saudi partnership in this vital sector and the shared determination to develop it further.

“Bahrain is committed to strengthening its competitiveness and fostering an attractive environment for technology and innovation,” he said, highlighting the Kingdom’s strategic vision for the communications



HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister meets with the Chairman of the Board of Directors of stc



and IT sector.

“Modern technologies play a pivotal role in supporting development efforts and advancing

economic growth.”

Emphasising regional collaboration, HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister stated: “The

Bahrain-Saudi partnership continues to go from strength to strength, reflecting our shared commitment to achieve mutual aspirations.”

The meeting also highlighted the depth of historical relations between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, with HRH Prince Salman noting the continued support of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud in advancing bilateral ties.

The discussion focused on co-operation across multiple fields, particularly under agreements facilitated by the Bahraini-Saudi Coordination Council, demon-

strating a framework for sustained collaboration between the two countries.

Appreciation

HRH Prince Mohammed bin Khaled expressed appreciation for HRH Prince Salman’s commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation, particularly in the communications and technology sectors, and wished Bahrain continued progress and prosperity.

The meeting was attended by His Excellency Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Minister of Finance and National Economy, along with several senior officials.

Urgent flood solution

MPs approve dedicated ‘rain emergencies’ budget proposal

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Waterlogged streets could see faster pump-outs after Parliament backed an urgent plan for a dedicated yearly ‘rain emergencies’ budget, designed to pay contractors straight away.

The Council of Representatives approved the urgent proposal during yesterday’s sitting.

Put forward by MP Hassan Ibrahim and four other MPs, it also calls for an approved register of water-suction tankers and operators, checked in advance for technical readiness

and safety.

Ibrahim grounded the request in constitutional duties on the state during public hardship, citing Article 5’s wording that the state “guarantees the necessary social security for citizens”, and Article 12’s provision that “the State guarantees society’s solidarity in bearing the burdens arising from disasters and public hardships”.

He said agencies already prepare ahead of the rainy season through operational plans, equipment readiness and coordination between bodies.

The lawmaker, however, ar-



MP Hassan Ibrahim

gued that pooling rainwater is dealt with as an emergency and

needs a dedicated pot of money that can be released without the usual financial steps slowing payments.

Under the current set-up, he said, contractors are often tied to other yearly operating contracts, which can limit their ability in some cases to supply the agreed number of suction tankers on time, especially when the need arises in more than one location at once.

That can leave standing water in streets and residential areas longer than needed, affecting access in and out of homes, disrupting traffic, and raising

concerns over public safety and damage to infrastructure, according to the proposal text.

The plan calls for an annual budget line to be activated when required and paid directly to contractors, alongside a pre-approved list of suction tankers owned by individuals or firms.

Those tankers would be registered only after technical inspection and safety checks, with prior coordination with owners and a clear, fixed service fee, under the supervision of the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture and the Ministry of Works.

Bahrain welcomes Yemen prisoner exchange deal
TDT | Manama

The Kingdom of Bahrain welcomed the agreement signed in Muscat on the exchange of prisoners and detainees in Yemen.

The agreement was concluded under the auspices of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, and was mediated by the Sultanate of Oman in cooperation with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom considers this agreement a positive step toward alleviating the humanitarian situation and advancing efforts to achieve a comprehensive and peaceful settlement in Yemen.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterated Bahrain's firm support for all international and regional efforts aimed at reaching a lasting political solution in Yemen.

The statement said this support is in accordance with the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, the outcomes of the National Dialogue Conference, and UN Security Council Resolution 2216, in a manner that preserves Yemen's sovereignty.

● Ministry oversees electronic draw, guiding citizens through the process

● Part of royal directives to deliver 50,000 new units

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has announced the start of draw procedures for housing units under Phase Two of the Sitra Housing City project, comprising 531 housing units.

It was carried out in implementation of the directives of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to accelerate housing projects to deliver 50,000 new housing units.

It was also in accordance with the instructions of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to commence the provision of 7,000 housing services.



Her Excellency Amna bint Ahmed Al-Rumaihi, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, supervises the draw procedures

This initiative coincided with the Kingdom of Bahrain's National Day and the 26th anniversary of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's accession to the throne, along with the accompanying national events.

Electronic draw

The ministry said that the electronic draw procedures for Phase Two are being conducted smoothly and efficiently, with ministry teams briefing beneficiary citizens on the process and explaining the available options during the draw.

The ministry emphasised that

it will continue to communicate with citizens in the coming period to complete the draw procedures, renewing its congratulations to beneficiaries of housing services.

Beneficiary citizens expressed their satisfaction upon completing the draw procedures, commending the smooth organisation and simplified processes.

They also appreciated the detailed explanations provided by specialists regarding housing units, conditions, and guarantees offered by the ministry, as well as the overview of the electronic draw mechanism and



contract details.

The Sitra Housing City project provides more than 3,000 housing services and spans an area of 243 hectares.

It features integrated infrastructure and advanced community facilities.

Infrastructure

Secondary infrastructure networks have been completed, including 19 kilometres of sewage networks, 14 kilometres of stormwater lines, 18 kilometres of water pipelines, 51 kilometres of electricity cables and lighting poles, in addition to all telecom-

munications network works.

The city is distinguished by its strategic location and extended waterfronts spanning more than six kilometres.

It incorporates modern urban standards, advanced transport networks, main and secondary roads, dedicated cycling and pedestrian paths extending 13 kilometres, and designated areas for 24 parks and open spaces covering a total area of 18 square kilometres.

The project also offers modern housing unit designs tailored to meet the aspirations of Bahraini families.

Support for research centres



His Excellency General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Minister of Interior and Chairman of the Ministerial Committee overseeing the implementation of the National Plan to Promote the Spirit of Belonging to the Nation and Reinforce the Values of Citizenship (Bahrainouna), received Dr. Jamal Sanad Al Suwaidi, Vice President of the Board of Trustees of the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR) and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Arab Think Tanks and Cultural Centers Alliance. The minister expressed his appreciation for the role of research centres in producing distinguished studies and contributing to the realistic, evidence-based formulation of public policies, thereby enhancing positive engagement with contemporary challenges.

Developing digital infrastructure

His Excellency Dr. Shaikh Abdullah bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Minister of Transport and Communications, received His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Khaled bin Al Abdullah Al Faisal, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Saudi Telecom Company (stc), to discuss ways to enhance cooperation in communications and develop digital infrastructure. The minister commended stc's efforts in supporting digital infrastructure projects in the Kingdom of Bahrain and its role in enhancing the country's digital readiness.



BDF top achievers honoured



Under the patronage of Field Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Commander-in-Chief of the Bahrain Defence Force (BDF), a ceremony was held to honour top achieving units in the 2025 Combat and Administrative Readiness Evaluation Test. The event was attended by His Excellency Lieutenant General Abdullah bin Hassan Al Nuaimi, Minister of Defence Affairs; H.E. Lieutenant General Theyab bin Saqr Al Nuaimi, Chief of Staff; and H.E. Shaikh Mohammed bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Financial and Technical Affairs Adviser at the BDF General Command.





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Budget for tourism faces tough scrutiny

● Heated discussion in Parliament

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

A demand for a full breakdown of public spending on tourism festivals and exhibitions since 2023 sparked a sharp exchange in Parliament. The debate followed comments by Tourism Minister, Her Excellency Fatima Al Sairafi, who said the private sector funds and runs a large share of events, making it unfair to focus solely on budgets managed by the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA). MP Basema Mubarak told the Council of Representatives that backing tourism should not weaken scrutiny, and asked for clear figures on budgets, out-

goings, payments to event firms and the measured return. “Our support for tourism does not mean disabling oversight, nor does it mean we close our eyes to the legitimate question about public funds,” she said.

Exhibitions

H.E. Al Sairafi said many events and exhibitions are carried out with private partners, with the ministry and the BTEA providing support alongside them. “A large part of the events and exhibitions held in the Kingdom are organised through cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism and the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority on one side, and the private sector on the other,” she said. The minister pointed to revenue growth since the tourism plan for 2022 to 2024 was launched.



“Since the launch of the tourism strategy for 2022–2024, tourism revenues have risen by around 27 per cent.”

– H.E. FATIMA AL SAIRAFI, TOURISM MINISTER



“Our support for tourism does not mean disabling oversight, nor does it mean we close our eyes to the legitimate question about public funds.”

– MP BASEMA MUBARAK

“Since the launch of the tourism strategy for 2022–2024, tourism revenues have risen by around 27 per cent,” the Min-

ister said, linking that rise to the Economic Recovery Plan announced in 2021.

She also cited tourism’s share of the economy, saying it stands at about 6.8 per cent of GDP, and said visitor numbers have climbed, with annual growth running between 15 and 20 per cent.

Mubarak said MPs had backed events that helped drive spending across hotels, restaurants, transport and retail, but said the figures still mattered.

“It is a right to ask: how much was spent, how much came in, and does the return match the cost?” she said.

Ceiling

She asked what budget was set for tourism events from January 2024 to December 2025, whether the approved ceiling was kept to, and if any overrun took place, how much it was and which budget line covered it.

The lawmaker also asked for the total sums paid to organising companies and if the economic return was measured.

“Transparency is not a luxury; it is a constitutional duty,” she said.

H.E. Al Sairafi said the state’s role is to regulate and ensure the needed groundwork is in place, while the private sector remains the main operator.

She said support can include funding, as well as logistics and marketing help, alongside work to ensure venues and wider tourism facilities can support a fuller calendar.

Mubarak also raised the issue of jobs linked to events, saying MPs had seen young Bahrainis helping as volunteers.

She thanked them for their efforts and said they were “the real face behind the success of any event,” while pressing for clearer detail on costs and returns.

MP seeks detailed information on residential tourism violations

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

MP Hassan BuKhammas told Parliament yesterday that the Tourism Ministry had not provided the detailed information he sought about tourism venues operating in residential areas in Juffair and Adliya.

He warned that the Council could move to tougher scrutiny if the requested data is not supplied.

“After reviewing the response provided and listening to the general justifications it contained, I state before this Council that the ministry has not provided an adequate answer and has not assumed responsibility for the situation in Juffair and Adliya,” BuKhammas said.

Comfort

He added that “troubling tourism establishments are still operating within residential neighbourhoods”, affecting residents’ comfort and community considerations.



“Troubling tourism establishments are still operating within residential neighbourhoods.”

– MP HASSAN BUKHAMMAS

Tourism Minister, Her Excellency Fatima Al Sairafi, said the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA) had increased inspection visits in the Fourth Constituency this year, recording about 779 visits to date, up from 300 in 2024.

She said recorded tourism violations had also risen, to about 103 in 2025 compared with about 40 last year.

The minister said inspections were being carried out with other state bodies, rather than by the authority alone.

“Today, the Authority does

not carry out inspections on its own; joint inspection visits are also conducted with the relevant government agencies,” she said.

Licences

H.E. Al Sairafi also said tourism activity licences and tourism establishment licences were no longer issued for areas classed as residential, with applications routed through the commercial licensing system and the Sijilat platform for review by the authority and other government bodies under the relevant laws and regulatory

decisions.

“I would like to confirm that today we do not grant licences to operate a tourism activity or licences for tourism establishments in areas classified as residential,” she said.

BuKhammas said the Council had asked for detailed data, the names of the establishments involved, and specific steps taken, but that the response did not include the figures needed for effective parliamentary oversight.

Activities

The lawmaker said the continuation of the same activities in the same locations, alongside an admission of dozens of violations, required a review of licensing and inspection policy.

He said talk of future plans and studies did not address ongoing concerns, and told the Council that continued lack of a root solution, and failure to provide the requested data, would lead Parliament to take oversight steps in line with its constitutional powers.

Book fair delayed again for ‘missing private-sector partner’



“The matter has stalled at the search for a private-sector partner to come in with us as an investor or share part of the large cost of hosting a very large number of participants.”

– H.E. RAMZAN AL NUAIMI, INFORMATION MINISTER

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

“Starving minds while feeding stomachs” was how MP Eman Shuwaiter described the repeated postponement of Bahrain’s International Book Fair in Parliament yesterday, after the event was delayed again following an October 2025 announcement.

The fair was last held in 2018.

Plans

Shuwaiter told MPs that plans were announced year after year, only for the date to be pushed back again before it began.

“Each year, a plan is announced to hold the book fair and we feel hopeful, then we



“Each year, a plan is announced to hold the book fair and we feel hopeful, then we are surprised a few months later, before the launch date, by news of its postponement.”

– MP EMAN SHUWAITER

are surprised a few months later, before the launch date, by news of its postponement,” she said.

Restrictions

She pointed to the lifting of Covid restrictions on 28 March 2022 and said no international book fair had been organised since then, despite Bahrain continuing to host other exhibitions.

“This raises legitimate questions about how serious the government is about caring for the book fair,” Shuwaiter said.

Information Minister, His Excellency Ramzan Al Nuaimi, told Parliament the issue mattered because culture and literature fall within the remit of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities.

Developing national ambulance operations



The Chief of Police, H.E. Lt-General Tariq Al Hassan received the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Health, H.E. Dr Lulwa Al Showaiter and the Chief Executive of Government Hospitals, Dr Mariam Al Jalahma. The meeting follows the Cabinet’s decision to task the Ministry of Interior to coordinate with the Ministry of Health to explore ways to develop national ambulance operations. Lt-General Al Hassan commended the level of cooperation among the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Health, and health institutions.

Urgent proposal to review, verify expats' degrees

● Following reports about professional forgery groups

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

An urgent proposal to create a committee to review and verify the university degrees of expats working in ministries and other government bodies won backing in Parliament yesterday, with legal action sought where forged qualifications are confirmed.

The motion calls for a single committee to check credentials held by expats employed on permanent and temporary contracts across the public sector, and to refer cases for legal steps when fraud is proven.

MP Khaled Buanaq, one of the sponsors, said the proposal followed a run of reports about professional forgery groups.

He cited recent claims of counterfeit university degrees being produced with stamps, covering different levels and specialisms, including technical, vocational, medical and scientific fields.

Link

He said the committee would link the work of the Ministries of Education, Labour, Justice and Interior, so information can be shared and qualifications checked against



MP Khaled Buanaq



There are claims of counterfeit university degrees being produced with stamps, covering different levels and specialisms, including technical, vocational, medical and scientific fields.

recognised standards through one process, rather than separate checks by each body.

Buanaq said the committee would also draft clear rules and open procedures for checks, to reduce differing treatment of doubtful cases and give clearer ground for institutions and individuals.

Handle public affairs 'responsibly'

TDT | Manama

The Political Associations Affairs Office at the Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments said that a recent statement by several political associations included selective information on public finance reform initiatives, giving a misleading impression of these initiatives and their goals.

The ministry added that these initiatives are being discussed within the framework of cooperation.

Highway lane closure tomorrow

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Works announced that the laying of 400 KV electrical cables necessitates the closure of one lane in stages on the slip road leading from Shaikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah Highway to Shaikh Isa bin Salman Highway towards Mina Salman, and one lane will be provided for traffic movement.

The closure will be effective during the weekend from tomorrow at 11:00 pm to Sunday, December 28, at 05:00 am.

Education spending

Minister tells MPs: Public schools cost BD1,771 per pupil each year

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain spends about BD1,770.71 a year on each student in public schools, the Education Minister, His Excellency Dr Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, told MPs yesterday, putting the 12-year cost per student at BD21,248.48.

He said the ministry uses three ways to calculate the figure.

The first counts spending on items and services directly linked to the pupil, which he said is the method the ministry follows.

A second method adds running costs, taking the yearly amount to about BD1,800 and the 12-year total to more than BD22,000.

A third method counts the full education budget, including building schools and maintaining them, putting the annual cost at around BD2,000 and the 12-year total at roughly BD24,600.



"The idea of creating public schools that charge fees puts us in a constitutional breach, because the Constitution states that education is free in government institutions."

- H.E. DR MOHAMMED BIN MUBARAK JUMA, EDUCATION MINISTER

H.E. Dr Juma rejected calls for fee-paying public schools, telling the chamber: "The idea of creating public schools that charge fees puts us in a constitutional breach, because the Constitution states that education is free in government institutions."

On school buildings, he said there are 5,000 classrooms within full school facilities and 860 portable classrooms, making up 14 per cent of the total.

He put the cost of building one portable classroom at about



BD12,500, saying the units are now modular, air-conditioned and sound-insulated, rather than wooden as in the past.

Maintenance

Maintenance costs average about BD1,200 each time, he said, with each unit maintained three times over an expected life of about 16 years.

The minister said portable classrooms date back to the 1980s, when there was no plan to meet demand for school space.

He said a Cabinet-approved plan is now in place to build 18 schools across Bahrain, based

on student density, alongside 23 academic buildings within existing schools that have spare capacity, to remove manufactured classrooms at those sites.

Work

H.E. Dr Juma also referred to work to refurbish older and historic schools and return them to service.

Tenders are expected for four new schools either this month or early next month, he said, with two planned in Madinat Salman and two in East Hidd.

Construction is due to begin in the first quarter of 2026, with completion within two years.

MP Mohammed Mousa argued that the figures point to pressure on families paying for private schooling, saying: "People who are forced to send their children to private schools end up paying that cost... We want model public schools with reasonable fees, sitting between public and private, run by the ministry, with fewer pupils than ordinary public schools."

'Simbang Gabi' reflects faith of Filipino community



"Simbang Gabi" is a Filipino Catholic tradition of nine dawn Masses held before Christmas

TDT | Manama

Filipinos attended the "Simbang Gabi" Mass at the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, reflecting personal devotion and generosity.

Wilfred Dolormente, a service technician who has worked in Bahrain for 15 years, shared that "Simbang Gabi" is a cherished Filipino tradition and a spiritual preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

He noted that many Filipinos strive to complete the nine-day devotion in the hope that "their prayers and intentions will be fulfilled."

Blessings

Dolormente also took part in the offertory, sharing his blessings with those in need.



Jhoan Mendoza, residing in Adliya, said that attending the nine days of "Simbang Gabi" is more than just a tradition for her.

She shared that completing the devotion gives her "a deep sense of fulfillment", and serves as her personal offering of time

to God, strengthening her relationship with Him.

Determination

Mendoza expressed her determination to complete all nine days of the Simbang Gabi.

As the season of Advent begins, the Filipino community is reminded of the values it repre-

sents, hope, generosity, and joy.

Through the collective participation of organizations, leaders, and individuals, the "Simbang Gabi" celebration at Sacred Heart Catholic Church highlighted the strong faith, unity, and compassion of Filipinos in Bahrain during the Christmas season.

Seventh Derasat forum concludes successfully

TDT | Manama

The seventh annual forum of the Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat) concluded yesterday under the theme "The Arab Research Centers Consortium for Sustainability and Development".

The forum was held in partnership with the General Secretariat of the Arab League.

It was attended by representatives of Arab countries, heads of think tanks, diplomats,

experts, and researchers from across the Arab world.

The forum's conclusion held a series of in-depth dialogue sessions and discussions that addressed the growing role of Arab research centres in supporting sustainable development pathways, enhancing Arab knowledge integration, and employing future tools, which include big data, artificial intelligence, and strategic foresight, in policy analysis and decision-making.

These discussions were aligned with the outcomes of

recent Arab summits, notably the Jeddah Summit 2023 and the 33rd Arab Summit, hosted by the Kingdom of Bahrain, and their recommendation to establish a "knowledge incubator for research and studies in sustainability and economic development".

Participants emphasised that the forum reflects the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment, under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, and with the support and follow-up of His Royal Highness

Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to advancing joint Arab action and strengthening the role of thought and scientific research as a core pillar of sustainable development and future policymaking.

At the conclusion of its proceedings, the forum issued a final statement affirming that this intellectual and scientific gathering represents a foundational step toward building an integrated Arab research ecosystem.



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Service delays

MPs push action on unpaid fees in housing apartment blocks

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Parliament voted yesterday to back changes to the rules governing residents' associations in Ministry of Housing apartment blocks.

The move follows complaints that some residents have failed to pay maintenance fees, leading to delays and shortcomings in shared services.

The motion was submitted by MPs Hassan Ebrahim, Bader Al Tamimi, Hamad Al Doy, Abdulwahid Qarata and Maryam Al Sayegh.

Rules

It calls for clearer rules and workable steps for beneficiaries' associations that manage and maintain shared parts of housing buildings, with fee arrears raised as a key source of disputes and deterioration.

During the debate, Ebrahim argued that the current frame-



“The current framework is organised on paper but without the force needed to make non-payers meet their obligations.”

- MP HASSAN EBRAHIM

Some residents have failed to pay maintenance fees, leading to delays and shortcomings in shared services.

work relies on a ministerial decision that lacks bite, saying it is “organised on paper” but without the force needed to make non-payers meet their obligations.

He gave a practical example of how the gap plays out in daily life, describing a resident on an upper floor who pays on time but still suffers when basic ser-

vices stop.

Treatment

“Why is the person who pays treated unfairly?” he asked, pointing to older residents, patients and people with disabilities who may be left struggling when a lift breaks down and repairs stall.

The Ministry of Housing and

Urban Planning told MPs it has been working over recent years on changes linked to the management of shared parts in vertical housing projects.

It said it has regulated the formation of associations, the selection of boards for each building, and guidance for boards through ministerial decisions issued from 2010 up to Decision No. 97 of 2014, later amended in 2016.

Review

It added that it has been working with Eskin Bank since the second half of 2023 to review the full set of rules and standards related to beneficiaries' associations.

The review includes testing the updated framework through newer vertical housing models, including a pilot linked to the Madinat Salman residential buildings project, ahead of issuing a revised regulatory decision.

Call to Bahrainise vehicle inspectors

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Parliament yesterday agreed to an urgent proposal urging the Bahrainisation of the vehicle technical inspector post.

MPs argued the role should be held by citizens because of its link to road safety and the right to work.

The proposal was put forward by MPs Bader Al Tameemi, Hassan Ebrahim, Mohammed Mousa, Dr Ali Al Nuaimi and Hamad Al Doy.

Request

Speaking during the sitting, Al Tameemi said the request rested on constitutional principles that support citizens' access to work, and on policies aimed at replacing expat labour with Bahraini staff in key sectors.

He said the vehicle inspector job is a “sensitive technical” role tied to the safety of lives and property.

The lawmaker added that, when the post was created under the General Directorate of Traffic, it was reserved for



MP Bader Al Tameemi

citizens and placed on a higher job grade.

Privatisation

Al Tameemi said privatisation later expanded the number of posts filled by non-nationals, which he said reduced job chances for Bahrainis in the field.

The proposal calls for restricting the inspector post to citizens, and for the relevant bodies and private firms to adopt a clear timetable for a gradual changeover, backed by approved training and qualification schemes to prepare Bahrainis to carry out the role to the required professional standards.

Recognition for academic, scientific contributions

American Mission Hospital announces Dr. Jameela Al-Salman's promotion to Professor from Arabian Gulf University

TDT | Manama

American Mission Hospital announced that Her Excellency Dr. Jameela Al-Salman, Member of the Shura Council, Consultant in Internal Medicine, Infectious Diseases, and Geriatric Medicine, and Head of the Quality and Infection Control Department and Director of Internships at the hospital, has been awarded the academic rank of Professor by the Arabian Gulf University.

This recognition comes as a culmination of nearly two decades of distinguished academic and scientific contributions, including extensive involvement in university teaching across specialized programs and the publication of numerous re-

search studies in leading international peer-reviewed medical



Dr. Jameela Al-Salman has extensive involvement in university teaching across specialized programs and the publication of research studies.



H.E. Dr. Jameela Al-Salman

and scientific journals.

Pride

American Mission Hospital takes great pride in this prestigious achievement, which reflects the excellence of its medical leadership and reaffirms the hospital's commitment to supporting academic advancement, scientific research, and the highest standards of healthcare quality.

On this occasion, the hospital extends its sincere congratulations to Her Excellency Dr. Jameela Al-Salman, wishing her continued success in her academic and professional journey, in service of the healthcare sector and the academic community in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Southern Governorate honours key supporters of programmes, initiatives



Deputy Southern Governor Colonel Hamad Mohammed Abdullah Al Khayyat with the honorees

TDT | Manama

The Southern Governorate hosted its annual ceremony to honour the key entities supporting its 2025 programmes and initiatives, with the support and guidance of His Highness Southern Governor Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Khalifa Al Khalifa.

It was held in recognition of an outstanding year of collaborative success.

The event was attended by Deputy Southern Governor Colonel Hamad Mohammed Abdullah Al Khayyat, and senior representatives from government, civil society, banking, and private institutions, at the Police Officers' Club.

On this occasion, HH the Southern Governor stated that its purpose was to honour leading sponsors and contributors whose efforts were fundamen-

tal to a series of achievements in security, development, and social fields.

He praised the impactful initiatives that met diverse citizens' needs, underscoring that these successful models of cooperation highlighted the vitality of sustained partnership throughout the year.

The Governor further emphasised the governorate's commitment to exemplary public

service, culminating in its recent accreditation as a Healthy Governorate, representing a significant milestone in its ongoing developmental progress.

On behalf of the honorees, the Vice President of the Bahrain Diabetes Society extended gratitude to HH the Southern Governor for cultivating sustained community partnerships and commended the enhanced cooperation.

Grade 10 Merit Scholarship Test set for launch next year

TDT | Manama

Amrita Edge, in collaboration with Zephyr Future Academy, has announced the launch of the Amrita Edge Grade 10 Merit Scholarship Test – 2026, marking the first time the initiative will be conducted for Class 10 students across Kerala and GCC countries.

The MCQ-based examination is scheduled for January 4, 2026, and aims to strengthen Class 10 board preparation while assessing students' conceptual understanding and readiness for higher studies.

The initiative is designed to familiarize students with MCQ-based evaluation, enhance analytical thinking, speed, and accuracy, and introduce them to preparation pathways for competitive examinations

such as NEET, JEE, CUET, Olympiads, and other national and international scholarship tests.

Awareness

It also seeks to raise awareness of merit-based academic opportunities available to students.

Open to students from Amrita Vidyalayams as well as other schools in Kerala and abroad, the examination serves as a platform to identify and nurture academically promising students within Amrita's value-based educational environment.

The scholarship test will also act as a selection gateway for Amrita Edge's upcoming residential integrated entrance coaching programmes for NEET, JEE, and Kerala Entrance examinations.

KPMG delivers 5.1% rise in global revenue

US\$39.8 billion global revenues driven by network-wide investment in key growth drivers

- **Network-wide investments deliver growth across all functions**
- **Tax & Legal Services up 7.5%, Audit up 6.0% and Advisory up 2.9%**
- **Growth across all regions amid challenging global market conditions**
- **Americas up 5.6%, Asia Pacific up 4.7% and EMA up 4.7%**
- **Global headcount grows by 1.8% to 276,030**

London

KPMG International yesterday announced globally aggregated revenues on a continued operations basis for KPMG firms of \$39.8 billion for the year ended 30 September 2025 (FY25), marking a 5.1% increase in local currency terms and 5.4% in US\$ from FY24. This reflects growth across all regions and functions, with the

Americas, Asia Pacific, and EMA regions each contributing to the firm's strong performance.

Bill Thomas, Global Chairman and CEO, KPMG International said:

"Our results show that the multi-billion dollar investments we've made are driving sustainable growth across KPMG globally. I am proud of our teams' commitment to delivering high-quality services and making a positive impact for clients, people, and society. At a time of unprecedented change and volatility, KPMG's combination of deep local presence and strong global connectivity means we are well positioned to support clients with highly complex, interconnected challenges - both now and into the future."

Multidisciplinary growth

In 2023, KPMG announced a 3-year US\$4.2 billion investment plan as part of its Collective Strategy, focused on technology, talent, and sustainability. These investments continued to drive growth across KPMG's multidisciplinary organization:

- Tax & Legal Services grew by 7.5%, driven by client demand for our AI-enabled managed service and transformation capability, and assisting clients in navigating global tax reform.
- Audit grew 6.0%, un-



derpinned by continued investments in audit quality and transformative AI capabilities, and growing demand for assurance services.

- Advisory grew 2.9%, with continued demand for our managed services and rapid growth in the number of client projects delivered jointly with alliance partners this year.

Regional growth

Despite challenging global market conditions, we saw strong growth across our regions, with Americas up 5.6%, Asia Pacific up 4.7% and EMA up 4.7% as we supported clients responding to the changing economic, regulatory and technology environment.

In AI

Over the last year, KPMG member firms have supported some of the world's largest organizations to help unlock the potential for AI to deliver growth and competitive advan-

tage.

Across our network, we are embedding AI into our platforms and offerings and deploying agents to improve client and employee experience. Our KPMG Trusted AI framework continues to drive our approach, with a focus on controls, governance and oversight, to enable the ethical and responsible implementation of AI.

- We launched KPMG Workbench - KPMG's foundational and single AI platform designed to scale global adoption and integration of AI. KPMG Workbench combines advanced AI agents with the insight, judgment and expertise of our people to help deliver smarter solutions for clients.

- We've worked alongside KPMG's global alliance partners to embed leading AI technologies into client and delivery platforms: KPMG Digital Gateway, KPMG Velocity and KPMG Clara, driving elevated value for clients.

- Our teams are expanding AI assurance services to provide independent, third-party assurance to help clients build trust as they use and scale AI ethically and responsibly.

- Our multidisciplinary approach has enabled us to maximize talent globally and share learnings across functions and member firms.

- We launched our landmark global study with the University of Melbourne: Trust, attitudes and use of artificial intelligence to explore the impact AI is having on individuals and organizations.

In talent

KPMG's global headcount grew to 276,030 over FY25, as we continued to invest in talent, with a particular focus on specialist hires in strategic growth areas like AI and Tax & Legal services.

Learning and development continues to be a significant area of investment. Given the critical importance of digital and AI skills, we have built a wide range of technology learning pathways that create a consistent framework and provide accessible content to support upskilling, career mobility and innovation across KPMG firms.

KPMG member firms have also continued to be recognized as

leading employers, recognizing our commitment to talent investment, professional development, and colleague wellbeing. We are proud that our commitment to being a leading employer was again recognized in the TIME magazine's - World's Best Companies of 2025.

In sustainability

KPMG member firms continued to support clients across the globe with sustainability services, driving strong revenue growth through the deployment of integrated solutions focused on turning climate commitments into business value, from science-based decarbonization roadmaps to ESG data transformation and regulatory compliance across multiple jurisdictions.

Through Our Impact Plan strategy, KPMG is advancing its own sustainability ambitions with updated and enhanced decarbonization targets, and continued momentum towards helping economically empower 10 million disadvantaged young people by 2030. Throughout FY25 we have expanded our global partnerships with UNESCO and WWF, working collaboratively to progress positive outcomes in education and placing people at the heart of the net zero transition.

Pakistani firm wins auction for state airline PIA

Islamabad, Pakistan

A Pakistani firm won an auction yesterday with a \$482 million bid for a majority stake in the embattled national carrier



Europe and Britain allowed PIA flights to resume this year, but operations have not yet resumed for the United States. Just 18 of its fleet of around 34 planes are in active service, according to officials.

PIA, a deal seen as a litmus test of the government's pledge to sell off loss-making state companies.

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), long accused by critics of being bloated and poorly run, has been burning through cash as the government struggles with a balance of payments crisis.

Three Pakistani firms competed in the auction carried live by state broadcasters, with representatives placing their offers in a clear box during several rounds of bidding.

The Arif Habib investment group emerged on top with a bid of 135 billion rupees for the 75 percent stake on offer. It has an option to buy the remaining 25 percent in the coming months.

"It was essential to make this process transparent because the biggest transaction of Pakistan's history is about to take place,"

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif told his cabinet in a televised statement as the bidding began.

The rival bidders were a consortium led by Lucky Cement, which bid 134 billion rupees, and the private Pakistani carrier Air Blue, with 26.5 billion.

The sale offer comes after last year's failure to privatise PIA, with just one bid for \$36 million -- far below the \$300 million to \$305 million wanted by the government.

Before being delisted from the Pakistan stock exchange, the airline reported a net loss of \$437 million for the 2022 full year on revenue of \$854 million.

More sales on deck?

Islamabad has promised to divest dozens of its cash-burning enterprises in the finance, energy, industrial and retailing sectors by 2029 under a \$7 billion loan programme agreed with the International Mone-

tary Fund last year.

Many of the companies have incurred billions of dollars in losses because of mismanagement and corruption, forcing the government to inject funds to keep them afloat.

Founded in 1955, PIA was a symbol of national pride and rapid growth for years, with a pathbreaking international network and even flight attendant uniforms created by French designer Pierre Cardin in the 1960s.

But its reputation suffered after racking up heavy losses as well as serious safety lapses.

It was banned from flying to the European Union, Britain and the United States in June 2020, a month after one of its Airbus A-320 jets crashed onto a Karachi street, killing nearly 100 people.

A Pakistan International Airlines plane



US economic growth surges in 3rd quarter, highest rate in two years

New York, United States

US economic growth in the third quarter came in at 4.3 percent on an annualized basis, easily topping expectations, according to Commerce Department data released Tuesday.

The report, which also showed an acceleration in inflation, provides reassurance about the world's largest economy after other recent data showing a weakening labor market. It comes as worries have moderated over President Donald Trump's tariffs and as large tech companies advance massive investments to build new artificial intelligence infrastructure.

The gross domestic product report -- delayed for nearly two months due to a government shutdown -- reflects increases in consumer spending, exports and government spending, partially offset by a decrease in investment, according to the department's Bureau of Economic Analysis.

The reading, an initial estimate expected to be updated in early 2026, marks the highest GDP in two years. Analysts had expected 3.2 percent growth, according to consensus esti-



U.S. President Donald Trump

mates from MarketWatch and Trading Economics.

The report also showed the price index for domestic purchases rose 3.4 percent, a much higher inflation reading compared with 2.0 percent in the second quarter.

The data suggest faster growth and higher inflation than markets had expected -- potentially changing the calculus for upcoming US monetary policy decisions.

Other recent data has shown a weakening job market that has prompted the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates at the last three meetings, viewing the employment picture as its prime concern even as inflation has lingered above two percent.

Kuwait signs \$4.1 billion deal with China to build port

Contract for Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project

● China has been focusing on the Middle East as part of its Belt and Road Initiative

AFP | Kuwait City, Kuwait

Kuwait has signed a deal worth \$4.1 billion with China to complete the construction of a major port, as the oil-rich country seeks to diversify its economy with a bigger role in global trade.

The State Audit Bureau, a government oversight body responsible for monitoring public funds, on Monday said “the engineering, procurement, and construction contract to complete the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port project will cost 1.28 billion Kuwaiti dinars (\$4.164 billion)”.

Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attended the “ceremony for inking the engineering-supply-construction contract for building Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port on Boubyan island,” state media reported.

He said the key project would



Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad Abdullah al-Ahmad al-Sabah (C-L) and Kuwaiti minister of public works Nora al-Mashaan (L) touring the under construction Mina Mubarak Al-Kabeer port on Boubyan island, North of Kuwait City

“enhance Kuwait’s share in the regional and international trade and global supply chain”.

Chinese acting charge d’affaires Liu Xiang said the deal “constitutes participation in the ‘belt and road’ initiative”.

In 2023, Kuwait signed seven memoranda of understanding with China on projects including the Mubarak al-Kabeer Port, as well as housing, water treatment and renewable energy.

China has been focusing on the Middle East as part of its

Belt and Road Initiative is one of the largest infrastructure and investment programmes in modern history, spanning over 150 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, and covering projects worth trillions of US dollars – from ports and railways to power plants and digital networks – with the aim of reviving ancient Silk Road trade routes in a modern form.

Belt and Road Initiative, a vast global infrastructure project developed over the last decade under President Xi Jinping.

China launches WTO complaint over India solar, IT trade measures
Geneva, Switzerland

China has launched a complaint with the World Trade Organization over Indian measures on trade of solar cells and modules as well as information technology goods, the global trade body said yesterday.

The WTO said that Beijing had requested that it initiate so-called dispute consultations with India, charging it was breaching international trade rules.

Beijing is challenging certain subsidies granted to India’s solar sector as well as tariffs imposed by India on products such as phones or equipment for manufacturing flat screen display devices, according to the complaint dated on December 19 and circulated to WTO members yesterday.

“China said the measures in question include India’s tariff treatment and certain measures that China said are contingent upon the use of domestic inputs and otherwise discriminate against Chinese imports,” the WTO explained.

In the request, China charged that the Indian measures were “inconsistent with various provisions of the WTO’s General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994, the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures, and the Agreement on Trade-Related Investment Measures”.

WTO consultations give the parties an opportunity to discuss the matter and to find a satisfactory solution without proceeding further with litigation.

Is the United States after Venezuela’s oil?

AFP | Caracas, Venezuela

As US forces deployed in the Caribbean have zoned in on tankers transporting sanctioned Venezuelan oil, questions have deepened about the real motivation for Donald Trump’s pressure campaign on Caracas.

Is the military show of force really about drug trafficking, as Washington claims? Does it seek regime change, as Caracas fears? Could it be about oil, of which Venezuela has more proven reserves than any other country in the world?

“I don’t know if the interest is only in Venezuela’s oil,” Brazil’s leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who has offered to mediate in the escalating quarrel, said last week.

The US president himself has accused Venezuela of taking “all of our oil” and said: “we want it back.”

What we know:

Oil ties

Companies from the United States, now the world’s leading oil producer, have pumped Venezuelan crude from the first discoveries there in the 1920s.

Many US refineries were designed, and are still geared, specifically for processing the kind of heavy crude Venezuela has in spades.

Until 2005, Venezuela was one of the main providers of oil to the United States, with some monthly totals reaching up to 60 million barrels.

Things changed dramatical-



the Centuries crude oil tanker, last docked in Venezuela, as it is apprehended by the US Coast Guard on December 20, 2025.

ly after socialist leader Hugo Chavez took steps in 2007 to further nationalize the industry, seizing assets belonging to US firms.

And now?

Down from a peak of more than three million barrels per day (bpd) in the early 2000s, Venezuela today produces about a million barrels per day -- roughly two percent of the global total.

US firm Chevron extracts about 10 percent of the total under a special license.

Chevron is the only company authorized to ship Venezuelan oil to the United States -- an estimated 200,000 barrels per day, according to a Venezuelan oil sector source.

The South American country’s domestic industry has declined sharply due to corrup-

tion, under-investment and US sanctions in place since 2019.

Analysts say the high investment required to rebuild Venezuela’s crumbling oil rigs would be unappetizing for US firms, given the steady global supply and low prices.

According to Carlos Mendoza Potella, a Venezuelan professor of petroleum economics, Washington’s actions were likely “not just about oil” but rather about the United States “claiming the Americas for itself.”

“It’s about the division of the world” between the United States and its rivals, Russia and China, he added.

Venezuela exports about 500,000 barrels per day on the black market, mainly to China and other Asian countries, according to Juan Szabo, a former vice president of state oil com-

pany PDVSA.

Blockade

Trump on December 16 announced a blockade of sanctioned oil vessels sailing to and from Venezuela.

Days earlier, US forces seized the M/T Skipper, a so-called “ghost” tanker transporting over a million barrels of Venezuelan oil, reportedly destined for Cuba.

Washington has said it intends to keep the oil, valued at between \$50 and \$100 million.

Over the weekend, the US Coast Guard seized the Centuries, identified by monitoring site TankerTrackers.com as a Chinese-owned and Panama-flagged tanker.

An AFP review did not find the Centuries on the US Treasury Department’s sanctions list, but

the White House said it “contained sanctioned PDVSA oil” -- some 1.8 million barrels of it.

On Sunday, officials said the Coast Guard was pursuing a third tanker, identified by news outlets as the Bella 1 -- under US sanctions because of alleged ties to Iran.

The PDVSA insists its exports remain unaffected by the blockade.

This was critical, according to Szabo, as the company only has capacity to store oil for several days if exports stop.

Impact

Whatever Trump’s goal with Venezuelan oil, the blockade, if it continues, is likely to scare off shipping companies and push up freight rates.

Szabo expects Venezuela’s oil exports will fall by nearly half in the coming months, slashing critical foreign currency income from Venezuela’s black market sales.

This would asphyxiate the already struggling economy of Venezuela, piling more pressure on Nicolas Maduro.

The Trump administration has tip-toed around explicitly demanding for Maduro to leave.

While Trump has said he does not anticipate “war” with Venezuela, he did say Maduro’s days “are numbered.”

US Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem told Fox News on Monday that the oil tanker seizures send “a message around the world that the illegal activity that Maduro’s participating in cannot stand, he needs to be gone.”

US approves first GLP-1 pill for weight loss: Novo Nordisk
Washington, United States

Danish pharmaceutical giant Novo Nordisk announced Monday the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) had approved its popular GLP-1 anti-obesity drug Wegovy to be administered in pill form for weight loss.

“With today’s approval of the Wegovy pill, patients will have a convenient, once-daily pill that can help them lose as much weight as the original Wegovy injection,” Mike Doustdar, president and CEO of Novo Nordisk, said in a statement.

The FDA had already approved a pill to be used for treating diabetes, but the new development now allows doctors to prescribe the treatment for weight loss.

The new generation of appetite-suppressing drugs using GLP-1 agonists -- which include the brands Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro -- have exploded in popularity in recent years due to their ability to help people lose weight.

News in brief

◆ **Defence Minister Israel**

Katz vowed yesterday that Israel would remain in Gaza and pledged to establish outposts there, but his office swiftly downplayed the remarks made at a settlement in the occupied West Bank. In comments reported across Israeli media, Katz said Israel “will never leave” the devastated Palestinian territory. His remarks come as mediators are pressing for the implementation of the next phases of a fragile ceasefire in Gaza, which would involve an Israeli withdrawal from the territory. US President Donald Trump’s 20-point plan for the truce stated that “Israel will not occupy or annex Gaza.” Speaking at an event in the Israeli settlement of Beit El in the West Bank, Katz said: “We are deep inside Gaza, and we will never leave Gaza -- there will be no such thing.” “We are there to protect, to prevent what happened” from happening again, he added, according to a video published by Israeli news site Ynet.



Israel defence minister vows to establish outposts in Gaza

◆ **UK man, five others accused of sex offences against ex-wife appear in court**

other men charged with various sexual offences against her, appeared yesterday in a UK court. Philip Young spoke only to confirm his name and other details when he appeared separately at Swindon Magistrates Court, west of London, for his first hearing. The 49-year-old, reportedly a former Conservative councillor, was remanded in custody ahead of the next hearing at Swindon Crown Court on January 23. He was not required to enter a plea at this stage. He is charged with 56 offences, including rape and administering a substance with intent to stupify his 48-year-old former spouse Joanne Young, who has waived her legal right to anonymity. Voyeurism, possession of indecent images of children and possession of extreme images are among the other charges filed against Young. The alleged offences occurred between 2010 and 2023. Later Tuesday, five other men -- aged 31 to 61 -- appeared in the same magistrates’ courtroom to hear the charges against them.

◆ **A British man** accused of drugging and raping his ex-wife over 13 years, and five

◆ **Egypt’s grand museum begins live restoration of ancient boat**



◆ **Egypt began** a public live restoration of King Khufu’s ancient solar boat at the newly-opened Grand Egyptian Museum yesterday, more than 4,000 years after the vessel was first built. Egyptian conservators used a small crane to carefully lift a fragile, decayed plank into the Solar Boats Museum hall -- the first of 1,650 wooden pieces that make up the ceremonial boat of the Old Kingdom pharaoh. The 4,600-year-old boat was built during the reign of King Khufu, the pharaoh who also commissioned the Great Pyramid of Giza.

SPOTLIGHT

Egypt high-speed trains to connect Red Sea, Mediterranean



A man walks with a suitcase at Cairo Central Station

AFP | New Administrative Capital, Egypt

Workers have started laying tracks in the desert east of Cairo for Egypt’s first high-speed train, which will link the Red Sea and the Mediterranean in the latest attempt to modernise transport in the vast country.

Described by transport minister Kamel al-Wazir as a “new Suez Canal on rails”, the project is slated to be completed in 2028, and will carry passengers and cargo the 660-kilometre (410-mile) distance in as little as three hours.

The Green Line, as it is known, is the latest of a long list of megaprojects undertaken by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi’s government in the past decade -- the crowning jewel of which is a still sparsely populated \$58 billion New Administrative Capital east of Cairo.

In 2021, Egypt signed a \$4.5

billion contract with a consortium that includes German company Siemens to establish the Green Line, which will form the first of three high-speed tracks across the country.

Authorities hope the nearly 2,000 kilometre-network will carry 1.5 million passengers per day.

Egypt’s existing train network -- used by a million people every day -- is plagued by infrastructure and maintenance problems that caused nearly 200 accidents last year, according to official figures.

The Green Line will run across the country’s north, from Ain Sokhna on the Red Sea to Marsa Matrouh on the Mediterranean, crossing two Cairo satellite cities -- the New Administrative Capital to the east, and to the west 6th of October City, home to Egypt’s only dry port.

Israel tightening control over West Bank with new settlements

More than 500,000 Israelis live in the West Bank

● **19 newly approved settlements were located**

● **Five of the 19 settlements already existed**

● **Israel has occupied the territory since 1967**

AFP | Ramallah, Palestinian Territories

The Palestinian Authority condemned yesterday Israel’s recent approval of 19 settlements in the occupied West Bank, accusing it of tightening its control over Palestinian land.

On Sunday, Israel’s far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announced the authorities had greenlit the settlements, saying the move was aimed at preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state.

The Ramallah-based Palestinian foreign ministry decried the approval as a “dangerous step aimed at tightening colonial control over the entirety of Palestinian land”, calling it a continuation of “apartheid, settlement, and annexation policies that undermine the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people”.

“The decision provides political cover for accelerating the plunder of Palestinian lands, expanding settlement infrastructure... alongside an escalating pace of settler terrorism against members of our people and their properties,” it said in a statement.



Israeli bulldozers break ground on land belonging to Palestinian Etaf jaradat from Silat al-Harithiya to reportedly make way for the construction of settlements in the Sarouj area, located between the towns of Silat al-Harithiya and Yamoun, west of Jenin in the occupied west bank

A Palestinian woman, Etaf jaradat from Silat al-Harithiya, watches from a hill as Israeli bulldozers work in her land



The latest move brings the total number of settlements approved over the past three years to 69, Smotrich’s office said.

Excluding east Jerusalem, which was occupied and annexed by Israel in 1967, more than 500,000 Israelis live in the West Bank, along with about three million Palestinian residents.

Smotrich’s office said the 19 newly approved settlements were located in what it described as “highly strategic” areas, adding that two of them -- Ganim and Kadim in the northern West Bank -- would be re-established after being dismantled two decades ago.

Five of the 19 settlements already existed but had not previously been granted legal status under Israeli law, the statement said.

Israel’s decision came days after the United Nations said the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank -- all of which are illegal under international law -- had reached its highest level since at least 2017.

US President Donald Trump recently warned that Israel “would lose all of its support from the United States” if it annexed the West Bank.

Israel has occupied the territory since 1967, and violence there

has surged following the outbreak of the Gaza war in October 2023 with Hamas’s attack on Israel.

Israeli troops or settlers have killed at least 1,028 Palestinians in the West Bank -- both militants and civilians -- since the start of the fighting in Gaza, according to an AFP tally based on Palestinian health ministry figures.

At least 44 Israelis have been killed in the West Bank in Palestinian attacks or Israeli military operations during the same period, according to Israeli data.

Greta Thunberg arrested at pro-Palestinian protest in London

AFP | London, United Kingdom

London police yesterday arrested Swedish activist Greta Thunberg at a demonstration in support of pro-Palestinian hunger strikers, Palestinian activist groups said.

Thunberg’s arrest makes her the highest profile person to be detained by police since the government banned the Palestine Action group under anti-terror laws.

“Greta Thunberg was arrested under the Terrorism Act at the Prisoners for Palestine lock-on protest,” Prisoners for Palestine said in a statement.

Thunberg was holding a sign reading “I support the Palestine Action prisoners. I oppose genocide”, it added.

The 22-year-old was among hundreds of people who boarded a flotilla in October that tried to break through the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

City of London Police said officers had arrested three people on suspicion of criminal damage



Swedish activist Greta Thunberg before her arrest by Police officers outside the offices of Aspen Insurance at Plantation Place on Fenchurch Street.

at a building in London’s financial quarter.

It said the arrests came after “hammers and red paint were used to damage a building”.

“A man and a woman have been arrested on suspicion of criminal damage. They glued themselves nearby and specialist officers are working to

release them, and bring them into police custody,” a statement said.

“A little while later, a 22-year-old woman also attended the scene. She has been arrested for displaying an item (in this case a placard) in support of a proscribed organisation (in this case Palestine Action) contrary



Greta’s global climate movement began entirely on her own: in August 2018, at just 15 years old, she sat alone outside the Swedish Parliament with a handmade sign reading “School strike for climate.” Within months, that solitary protest inspired millions of students across more than 150 countries to take part in what became the Fridays for Future movement -- one of the largest youth-led climate actions in history.

to Section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000,” it added.



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



In Nuuk, I reaffirmed France's unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Denmark and Greenland. Greenland belongs to its people. Denmark stands as its guarantor. I join my voice to that of Europeans in expressing our full solidarity.

@EmmanuelMacron

02



In the Nativity scene, popular imagination has often inserted many figures drawn from daily life, populating the space around the grotto. They remind us that all our activities, all our daily occupations acquire their full meaning within God's plan, which has its center in Jesus Christ.

@Pontifex

03



I had a very warm and good conversation with the President of the European Commission, @vonderleyen. I am grateful for all the support, assistance, and maximum engagement not only this year, but from the very beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion.

@ZelenskyyUa

04



Americans can find peace this Christmas season, knowing the men and women of the United States military are standing watch to protect our nation.

@SecWar

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

New Epstein files dump contains multiple Trump references

Epstein cultivated a wide circle of powerful friends, including Trump

● A first batch was made public last Friday

● The latest slew of documents contains 8,000 files

● On Monday, Trump again said he didn't approve of the file dumps

AFP | Washington, United States

A new batch of files released yesterday by the US government in relation to the notorious late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein contains numerous references to Donald Trump, including documents detailing flights he took on his then close friend's private jet.

The Justice Department swiftly issued a statement defending the 79-year-old Republican president.

"Some of these documents contain untrue and sensationalist claims made against President Trump that were submitted to the FBI right before the 2020 election," the Justice Department said on X, without specifying which allegations were false.

"If they had a shred of credibility, they certainly would have been weaponized against President Trump already," the department said.

Epstein cultivated a wide circle of powerful friends, including Trump, and was alleged to have run an underage sex trafficking ring before his 2019 death in jail.

Trump, who is not accused of any wrongdoing, fought for months to prevent release of the vast trove of documents collected during years of investigations into the disgraced financier.

A rebellion inside Trump's Republican Party forced him to sign off on a law mandating release of all the documents. The extraordinary move reflected intense political pressure to address what many Americans, including Trump's own supporters, have long suspected to be a cover-up.

A first batch was made public last Friday amid fierce criticism that the Justice Department was deliberately slow-walking the release and excluding any references to Trump.

The latest slew of documents contains 8,000 files, including hundreds of videos or audio recordings. This includes surveillance footage from August 2019, the month Epstein was found dead in his jail cell -- and declared to have committed suicide.

Private jet trips

Trump was friends for years with Epstein and the two of them were photographed together at parties.



This undated and unlocated handout image released by Democrats on the House Oversight Committee on December 18, 2025 shows late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein (R) cooking with CEO of DP World Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem.



late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein (2L) sitting next to women whose faces have been redacted.



US businessman and philanthropist Bill Gates (R) posing with a woman whose face has been redacted.



late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein (R) speaking to US professor and political activist Noam Chomsky.

The Republican has given different accounts of how he ended their relationship. He has said they fell out when

behavior.

One is in a handwritten letter attributed to Epstein and written from jail to Larry Nassar, the former US gymnastics doctor who was imprisoned over rampant abuse of female athletes.

The letter has Epstein purportedly complaining to Nassar that they were incarcerated while the "president shares our love of young, nubile girls. When a young beauty walked by he loved to 'grab snatch.'"

On Monday, Trump again said he didn't approve of the file dumps, saying innocent people would be tarnished.

"Everybody was friendly with this guy," he told reporters.

Delays

Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche has blamed delays in releasing the files on the need to redact the identities of Epstein's more than 1,000 victims from the hundreds of thousands of documents and photos in the government's possession.

The co-sponsors of the bill requiring release of the files -- Ro Khanna, a Democrat, and Thomas Massie, a Republican -- threatened over the weekend to bring contempt of Congress charges against Attorney General Pam Bondi for failing to comply.

The tranche of materials released on Friday included photographs of former Democratic president Bill Clinton and other famous names, such as pop stars Mick Jagger and Michael Jackson, who were in Epstein's social circle.

Clinton urged the Justice Department to release any materials in the files related to the former president, saying he had nothing to hide.

Maxwell, Epstein's associate and former girlfriend, remains the only person convicted in connection with his crimes.

Epstein "stole" young women working in the spa at his Florida golf club. He also says he threw Epstein out of his Florida golf club for being "a creep."

But despite Trump's repeated claims that he was not close to Epstein, there is considerable evidence to the contrary.

The latest documents include a January 2020 note from New York federal prosecutors who were investigating Epstein's associate, Ghislaine Maxwell, detailing Trump's repeated travel on the financier's private jet.

It says "records we received yesterday reflect that Donald Trump traveled on Epstein's private jet many more times than previously has been reported (or that we were aware)."

Some of the references to Trump in the documents are impossible to verify and there are no indications of criminal



An interesting fact about Jeffrey Epstein is that despite being a convicted sex offender, he continued to move within elite political, financial and academic circles for years, even donating millions of dollars to universities and hosting influential figures at his private properties -- a contradiction that later raised serious questions about how wealth and connections can shield individuals from scrutiny.

Southern Governorate Honors Partners Following Landmark "Healthy Governorate" Recogniti



His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa, Governor of the Southern Governorate, hosted an annual ceremony to honor government and private entities for their vital support of the governorate's 2025 initiatives. Held at the Police Officers Club, the event celebrated milestones in security, development, and social welfare. A key highlight was the official accreditation of the Southern Governorate as a "Healthy Governorate" by the World Health Organization. His Highness praised the community partnerships that made this national achievement possible, noting its positive impact on public health and service delivery. The ceremony featured a short film showcasing 2025's achievements and speeches from officials highlighting the strength of joint cooperation. The Governor concluded by presenting awards to sponsors, media institutions, and the Healthy Cities Committee for their dedicated contributions to the governorate's progress

Northern Governor Discusses Food Security and Agricultural Initiatives with Bahrain Agricultural Cooperative Society



His Excellency Hassan Abdullah Al Madani, Governor of the Northern Governorate, met with the Bahrain Agricultural Cooperative Society to discuss enhancing food security and supporting local farmers. Accompanied by Deputy Governor Brigadier Abdullah Ali Rashid Maantar, the Governor highlighted that agricultural growth is a key pillar of the "Healthy Cities" initiative. He emphasized the importance of promoting healthy production patterns and strengthening the local market for Bahraini products through community partnerships. Governor Al Madani noted that such support is vital for the sustainability of the sector. Vice President of the Society, Mr. Yousef Al Bouri, thanked the Governor for his commitment, stressing the importance of continued collaboration to empower Bahraini farmers and advance the Kingdom's agricultural development goals.

Interior and Health Ministries Coordinate to Enhance National Ambulance Services



Chief of Police, Lt. Gen. Tariq bin Hassan Al Hassan, met with senior Health Ministry officials and Dr. Mariam Al Jalahma, CEO of Government Hospitals, to discuss the modernization of national ambulance services. Based on a Cabinet directive, the meeting focused on enhancing emergency response readiness and improving the quality of medical services for citizens and residents. The Chief of Police highlighted that integration between security and health sectors is essential for community development. The discussions centered on optimizing first aid delivery, refining emergency medicine, and strengthening coordination between national ambulance units and health centers. By streamlining these operations, the authorities aim to ensure a swifter, more effective response to injuries and medical emergencies across the Kingdom, supported by the ongoing oversight of the Supreme Council of Health.

KSCA Makes History: Dr. Bindu Nair Appointed First Female General Secretary



In a landmark moment for government-approved expatriate associations in Bahrain, Dr. Bindu Nair has been appointed as the first-ever female General Secretary of the Kerala Social and Cultural Association (KSCA). She was elected unanimously during the association's Annual General Body meeting and officially assumed office by receiving the constitution from President Rajesh Nambiar. Dr. Nair's vision includes a strong focus on financial discipline, youth and women's empowerment, and initiatives aligned with Bahrain Vision 2030. President Nambiar noted that her leadership would bring fresh energy to the organization. During the meeting, Acting General Secretary Satheesh and Vice President Anil Kumar U.K. presented the activity and audit reports. The event, attended by former leaders and executive members, concluded with a strategic discussion on the association's future social and cultural roadma

Pakistan Embassy Hosts Interactive Session to Strengthen Welfare for Overseas Diaspor



The Pakistan Embassy in Bahrain hosted an interactive session with an Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) delegation, led by Managing Director Mr. Muhammad Afzal Bhatti. The meeting, which included prominent business figures and diaspora members, focused on welfare initiatives and enhancing facilitation for Overseas Pakistanis. Discussions highlighted the Embassy's commitment to community support and the vital role the diaspora plays in the development of both Pakistan and Bahrain. Participants celebrated the strong bilateral ties between the two nations and expressed gratitude to the Bahraini Government for its continued support.

Bahrain Police Parade at Heritage Village Celebrates National Holidays



In celebration of Bahrain's National Holidays and the anniversary of His Majesty the King's accession, the Ministry of Interior held a grand police parade at the Heritage Village in the Southern Governorate. Attended by Governor His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa, the event featured a disciplined display of efficiency by the Bahrain Police and patriotic performances by the police band. The parade saw a large public turnout, with attendees expressing deep appreciation for the masterful performance and national identity on display. The Ministry noted that the event aligns with its mission to enhance community partnership and communication with the public.

campus

RCSI Medical University of Bahrain Sets Foundations for Stem Cell Clinical Trials with the Cell Therapy Centre in Jordan

Manama

The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) – Medical University of Bahrain visited the Cell Therapy Center (CTC) at the University of Jordan to strengthen research ties and explore collaborative opportunities in stem cell and regenerative medicine. The delegation comprised Professor Stephen Atkin, Head of the School of Postgraduate Studies & Research, Professor Alexandra Butler, Professor in Pathology, and Dr Manjula Nandakumar, Manager of the Stem Cell Unit.

The delegation was welcomed



by Professor Abdalla Awidi Abadi, Founder and Director of the CTC, and senior colleagues,

including Ms Hanan Jaffar, Assistant Director; Ms Nida Ababneh, Associate Researcher; Dr

Walhan Ashaer, Specialist in Liposome-Mediated Drug and Gene Delivery; alongside the

Centre's Quality Control Manager and Genomics Expert. The team provided a tour of the centre's advanced laboratories and an overview of the centre's wide-ranging research activities, including treatments developed from specialised stem cells, the use of laboratory-grown stem cells to study diseases, advanced drug delivery techniques and molecular studies related to cancer and regenerative medicine. Discussions explored several promising areas of collaboration, including the potential development of a clinical trial examining exosome therapy for diabetic complications, joint optimisa-

tion of iPSC (Induced Pluripotent Stem Cells) differentiation protocols and cooperation on future animal studies to support therapeutic innovation.

Professor Atkin highlighted: "The discussions between RCSI Medical University of Bahrain and the University of Jordan Cell Therapy Centre have demonstrated our shared commitment to progressing innovative therapies, particularly those with the potential to reach clinical application. We anticipate a productive partnership that will drive forward impactful research for the region and beyond."

Al Noor International School Student wins GOLD in the Shaikh Khalid Bin Hamad Chess Championship 2025



Manama

Al Noor International School is delighted to celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of Grade 3 students of the CBSE Section, Hridik Shetty and Gauri Pillai at the His Highness Shaikh Khalid Bin Hamad Chess Champion-

ship 2025. This prestigious tournament, organised by the Ministry of Education, took place on 24 and 25 November 2025 at the Shaikh Khalifa Stadium, Isa Town. Competing in the Under 06-08 (Boys & Girls) Sub-Junior category, both students displayed outstanding strategic skills, confidence, and perseverance.

Hridik Shetty achieved an exceptional milestone by winning all his matches, earning the GOLD MEDAL—a testament to his impressive focus and mastery of the game. Gauri Pillai also delivered a strong performance and won the BRONZE MEDAL, further enhancing the school's presence at this national competition.

Mental health awareness workshop at NMS Bahrain



Manama

New Millennium School Bahrain organized an impactful Mental Health Awareness Workshop which was conducted for the students of Grades 9 to 12, by an esteemed alumna of the school, Ms Mannya V Sharma, from 2022-23 batch who is currently pursuing B.Sc. in Applied Psychology at Amity University, Noida.

The session aimed to equip senior students with essential knowledge and strategies to maintain emotional well-being, manage

academic pressure, and foster resilience during one of the most crucial phases of their schooling years.

The resource person Ms Mannya, drawing from her academic training and personal experiences, highlighted the rising need for open conversations around mental health. She explained the importance of recognising stress, understanding emotions, and seeking timely help. Interactive activities, real-life examples, and engaging discussions kept students involved throughout the session.

Annual Day Celebrations of BIS: A Night of Culture and Excellence



A scene from the dance drama on Classical Indian Literature Kannaki



A traditional Indian Folk dance in action



Lighting of the lamp by Chief Guest and School Management

Manama

Bahrain Indian School (BIS) showcased its educational vision through its Annual Day, "SAMRAJYA," presented on Day 2 for the senior classes, a grand confluence of culture, artistic expression, and social awareness that underscored the school's commitment to shaping globally

minded learners.

The 12th Annual Day Celebration on 11th December 2025 at the Bahrain Cultural Hall, marked a significant occasion for the school community and its senior students.

The event was graced by the esteemed presence of Mrs Ahlam Eid Sager, Chief, Private Educational Institutions Develop-

ment & Follow-Up, Directorate of Licensing and Follow-up of Private Schools, Ministry of Education who served as the chief guest. BIS Directors Mr. Himanshu Verma & Mrs. Ritu Verma also graced the occasion and received the Chief Guest.

The evening commenced with a warm welcome from the

Principal Mr. Saji Jacob who expressed gratitude to all attendees and highlighted the importance of cultural events in fostering unity and creativity within the school.

The audience was then treated to a beautiful welcome song performed by the students, setting the tone for a night filled with artistic expression.

The cultural program featured a range of performances, including classical songs, vibrant dance routines, and an engaging skit based on the theme "Samrajaya" unfolded.

Each act showcased the immense talent and hard work of the students, leaving the audience captivated and inspired.

The audience was then enthralled by a compelling dance drama on Kannagi, portraying strength, justice, and moral integrity drawn from classical Indian literature.

The evening was further dazzled with a dynamic Fashion Show, showcasing creativity, confidence, and cultural diversity.

Classifieds



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SHARY JAN CONTRACTING W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of CONSTRUCTION WORKER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 35605503 or MRMJANNATUL@GMAIL.COM

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MUBEEN SAFDAR INTERIOR DECORATION CO W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of SALES WORKER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 35467837 or ehtishammuhammadriaz@gmail.com

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ALMOAYYED CONTRACTING W.L.L. has a vacancy for the occupation of WORKER(CONSTRUCTION).GENERAL, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17404949 or proffice@almoayyedcg.com

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SULU CARE & BEAUTY has a vacancy for the occupation of BEAUTICIAN, suitably qualified applicants can contact 35577377 or JAFFAR.FW@GMAIL.COM

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INTERIOR SOLUTIONS COMPANY has a vacancy for the occupation of TECHNICIAN(MAINTENANCE), suitably qualified applicants can contact 17832022 or hamida.alhubail@havelockone.com

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38180001 or JAVEDSHAFI3818@GMAIL.COM

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England seek pride after Ashes blow

After 3-0 series defeat, McCullum says England got their warm-up strategy wrong

- McCullum concedes England's preparation was flawed
- Ashes lost in just 11 days
- McCullum rejects seeking outside squad replacements

AFP | Melbourne

Coach Brendon McCullum concedes England got their preparations wrong heading into the Ashes, but believes they can salvage some pride in the final two Tests at Melbourne and Sydney.

The tourists arrived in Australia bullish that they could win a series in the country for the first time since 2010-11.

But their hopes imploded with heavy defeats in Perth and Brisbane before a closer contest at Adelaide, leaving the ultra-aggressive “Bazball” style of cricket McCullum and skipper Ben Stokes pioneered in tatters.

Their Ashes demise in just 11 days was the joint-second quickest in more than a century.

England had just one warm-up fixture in Australia, against



England coach Brendon McCullum (C) kicks a football before play (file photo)

their second-tier Lions side, and lost the opening Test in Perth inside two days.

Former captains Ian Botham, Michael Vaughan and Graham Gooch all criticised the limited preparation, with disgruntled skipper Ben Stokes sparking a backlash after calling them “has beens”.

They then opted to skip a pink-ball opportunity in Canberra before the day-night second Test at the Gabba, instead spending five

days in the Brisbane nets.

Like Perth, that Test was lost by eight wickets and McCullum bizarrely claimed they had “overprepared”.

“What did we get right? What did we get wrong? Probably we go back to the preparation, that’ll be something that gets questioned,” McCullum told TNT Sports after the 82-run Adelaide defeat.

“And when you’ve lost 3-0, you need to put your hand up

and say ‘maybe I didn’t get that preparation right’.

“It’s not just leading into the first game. It’s could we have done more leading into game one and could we have done less leading into game two?”

“I didn’t get that right because we lost 3-0. Lots to digest, look through and be better next time.”

The fourth Test starts in Melbourne on December 26 and England could freshen up the side.

“What did we get right? What did we get wrong? Probably we go back to the preparation, that’ll be something that gets questioned And when you’ve lost 3-0, you need to put your hand up and say ‘maybe I didn’t get that preparation right’

BRENDON MCCULLUM

‘Great opportunity’

An under-performing Ollie Pope is facing the axe with Jacob Bethell waiting in the wings, but their options are limited and McCullum said they would not be looking outside the squad they have.

“We’ll have a look at the conditions (in Melbourne) and, as we always do, we’ll try and work out what we think will give us the best chance in that game,” he said.

“If that’s changes, it’s changes. If it’s not, it’s not. We’ll assess that when we get to Melbourne.”

England at least showed more fight in Adelaide as they chased what would have been a world record 435 to win.

McCullum admitted they had been outplayed across all three

YOU KNOW WHAT

After losing the first Test quickly, England spent five days in the nets before the second—a move McCullum later bizarrely called “overpreparing” as they lost that match by eight wickets as well

Tests, but said he saw encouraging signs in Adelaide and “we do have a great opportunity in the next two Tests”.

“We need to find something out of this tour, salvage some pride and play for all the people who have come to Australia to support this team and all the people back in England who have supported this team as well,” he said.

“If we get into that state where we just play the game and immerse yourself in the state of what needs to be done and allow your talent to come out in pressure situations, then you’ve got every opportunity.”

Key to probe England’s ‘stag-do’ drinking on Ashes beach break

AFP | Melbourne

England managing director Rob Key pledged yesterday to investigate whether players’ drinking on a mid-Ashes beach break went too far, after reports said it had been like a “stag-do.”

The England team headed to Queensland tourist playground Noosa after heavily losing the first two Tests in Perth and Brisbane.

They spent several days on the sand and around restaurants and bars, followed by TV crews, photographers and reporters before travelling to Adelaide where they lost the third Test and the Ashes.

Britain’s Daily Telegraph reported that “after drowning their sorrows after the Brisbane Test, it is no exaggeration to say some, certainly not all, players drank for five or six days”.

It added that players “did nothing outrageous in Noosa” but there was concern over the level of drinking, with England’s professionalism already under question after their limited preparations.

“If there’s things where people are saying that our players went out and drank excessively, then of course we’ll be looking into that,” Key told English media in Melbourne ahead of the Boxing Day Test.

“Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol for an international cricket team is not

YOU KNOW WHAT

Rob Key said he supports beach breaks for players to “throw the phone away,” but warned that any hint of a stag-do atmosphere would be completely unacceptable for an international team

something that I’d expect to see at any stage.

“It would be a fault not to look into what happened there,” added Key, who did not travel with the team to Noosa.

“From everything that I’ve heard so far, they actually were pretty well behaved. Very well behaved.”

He admitted that he did not mind players having the occasional drink, but “if it goes past that, then that’s an issue as far as I’m concerned.”

“I have no issue with the Noosa trip if it was to get away and just throw your phone away, down tools, go on the beach, all of that stuff.

“If it goes into where they’re drinking lots and it’s a stag-do, all of that type of stuff, that’s completely unacceptable.”

Salah, Foster take Egypt and South Africa to AFCON Group B summit

AFP | Rabat

Premier League pair Mohamed Salah and Lyle Foster were match-winners as Egypt and South Africa began their Africa Cup of Nations Group B campaigns with victories in Morocco on Monday.

Unsettled Liverpool star Salah struck in the first minute of added time to snatch a 2-1 win for record seven-time champions Egypt over gallant Zimbabwe in Agadir.

Earlier, second-half dominance by one-time title-holders South Africa paid off when Burnley striker Foster netted on 79 minutes to deliver a 2-1 victory over Angola in Marrakesh.

The stage is now set for a top-of-the-table showdown between the Pharaohs and Bafana Bafana in Agadir on Friday. They have met three times in AFCON tournaments, with Egypt winning twice.

Salah, whose unhappiness at being a substitute recently at Liverpool led to an outburst against manager Arne Slot, worked tirelessly for an Egyptian team rattled at falling behind.

Prince Dube scored on 20 minutes and one of the title favourites had to wait until the 63rd minute for Omar Marmoush from Manchester City to equalise.

Relentless pressure from the Pharaohs paid off in the first of five additional minutes when the perseverance of Salah grabbed them all three points.



Egypt's forward #10 Mohamed Salah scores the team's second goal

Earlier, South Africa dominated the second half against Angola in Marrakesh and Foster scored in 79 minutes to deliver a 2-1 victory in the same mini-league.

The winner came after Tshepang Moremi had a goal ruled offside and Mbekezeli Mbokazi rattled the crossbar with a shot that rebounded into play.

Oswin Appollis put 2024 AFCON bronze medallists South Africa ahead on 21 minutes and, as Angola took control, they levelled through Show after 35 minutes.

Victory ended a six-match winless run in their opening

AFCON match since 2006 by South Africa. The win also confirmed their dominance over Angola with three victories and two draw in five AFCON meetings.

Belgian coach Hugo Broos, who guided Cameroon to the AFCON title in 2017, admitted he was unhappy with the first-half Bafana performance.

“We had to avoid losing tonight because next up for us are Egypt. We led in the opening half and then we fell asleep,” said Broos.

“We let Angola back into the game so we put something right during half-time. In the second half we applied more pressure,

there is more movement and we had chances.

‘Very painful’

“Tshepang (Moremi) was wonderful when he came on, suddenly there was speed in our team, we were dangerous. He was a threat and he did it very well in the second 45 minutes.”

Mali coach Tom Saintfiet admitted that conceding a late equaliser in a 1-1 Group A draw with Zambia in Casablanca was “very painful”.

After El Bilal Toure had a first-half penalty saved by Willard Mwanza, Mali took the lead on 61 minutes through Lassina Sinayoko.

Mahrez backs Algeria revival at AFCON

Captain says team ready to move past two poor tournament showings

- Mahrez calls past failures finished
- Algeria open against Sudan
- Fourth in Africa rankings

AFP | Rabat

Algeria captain Riyad Mahrez is confident his side can make up for poor showings at the last two editions of the Africa Cup of Nations as the 2019 champions prepare to begin their campaign in Morocco on Wednesday.

The Desert Foxes won their second AFCON title the last time it was played in North Africa, six years ago in Egypt.

However, their title defence three years later in Cameroon ended in first-round elimination with just a single point, and they also failed to win a match in going out in the group stage in Ivory Coast in 2024.

“There is no doubt that we



Algeria's forward #7 Riyad Mahrez in action (file photo)

were not good at the last two AFCONs but that is in the past now. All that is behind us,” Mahrez said yesterday in Rabat, where Algeria play Sudan on Wednesday.

“Now we have the opportunity

of a lifetime, the chance to make up for what has happened and do better. Tomorrow it is time for this generation.”

Algeria will be aiming to live up to their billing as the fourth-best side in Africa according to

the FIFA rankings.

A strong showing in Morocco will also set them up for the World Cup in North America in six months, after Algeria qualified for the first time since 2014.

Former Manchester City

YOU
KNOW WHAT

Algeria's squad features goalkeeper Luca Zidane, son of French legend Zinedine Zidane; though born in Marseille, he debuted for his father's ancestral homeland in October to solve Algeria's long-standing goalkeeping issues

winger Mahrez, now playing for Al-Ahli in the Saudi Pro League, turns 35 in February and so these tournaments may mark his swansong at international level.

But he is excited about Algeria's new generation, including VfL Wolfsburg forward Mohamed Amoura and the goalkeeper Luca Zidane.

Son of France legend Zinedine, Luca Zidane was born in Marseille and plays for Granada in the Spanish second division.

He made his Algeria debut in October and it is hoped he can be the solution to what has been a problem position for coach Vladimir Petkovic.

“Luca has integrated well into the squad and is trying to give everything for the team,” said Mahrez, who was born in France to an Algerian father and a Moroccan mother.

“I know his name is a big weight to carry but he is not letting that get to him.”

After Wednesday's game Algeria will also play Burkina Faso and Equatorial Guinea in a tricky Group E, and their path in the knockout phase could be complicated too.

Winning the section would mean a last-16 tie against the runners-up in Group D which includes Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Meanwhile, finishing second would mean a clash with the winners of Group F, which includes reigning champions Ivory Coast and Cameroon.

Tunisian Aziz Al-Waqi wins Arab Elite Tennis title in Bahrain



TDT | Manama

Tunisia's Aziz Al-Waqi was crowned champion of the fifth Arab Elite Tennis Championship after defeating Jordan's Mohammad Qutb 7-6, 6-2 in the final on Sunday, organisers said. The title match was played at the Public Security Officers Club courts under the patronage and in the presence of Bahrain's Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa.

The closing ceremony was

attended by Arab Tennis Federation president Shaikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, Bahrain Tennis Federation president Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, heads of national federations and sponsors, alongside a large crowd.

Shaikh Ahmad praised the tournament's technical, organisational and media standards, saying the fifth edition reflected the event's growing stature on the Arab sporting calendar.

He thanked Bahrain's Interior Ministry and the Public Security Officers Club for hosting the event, as well as long-time sponsors including Ahli United Bank and KGL, noting that increased backing had allowed prize money to rise to \$50,000 from \$30,000 last year.

Shaikh Ahmad said the championship had become a leading Arab event, bringing together the region's top players and showcasing the sport's development.

Shaikh Abdulaziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa highlighted the importance of sustaining Arab tournaments to raise players' technical and physical standards, expressing hope for broader Gulf participation in future editions.

He also thanked the Interior Minister for his continued support of tennis in Bahrain and the Arab Tennis Federation for entrusting the kingdom with hosting the championship for a second consecutive year.

Thunder bounce back to down Grizzlies, Nuggets sink Jazz



Shai Gilgeous-Alexander #2 of the Oklahoma City Thunder handles the ball while being defended by Jaylen Wells #0 of the Memphis Grizzlies

AFP | Los Angeles

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 31 points as the Oklahoma City Thunder got back to winning ways with a 119-103 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies on Monday.

Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Gilgeous-Alexander led the scoring to give the Thunder a morale-boosting victory after their defeat in Minnesota on Friday.

“We weren’t at our best tonight but we did enough to win -- but we’ve still got to get better,” Gilgeous-Alexander told NBC television.

Memphis flirted with an upset after starting brightly, taking an early seven-point lead in the first quarter before Oklahoma City took control in the second quarter.

Gilgeous-Alexander was backed by 24 points from Jalen Williams while Ajay Mitchell had 16 off the bench.

Gilgeous-Alexander’s 31-point contribution extended his incredible scoring streak.

The Canadian star has now

scored 20 points or more in 100 consecutive games, making him only the second player to achieve that feat after Wilt Chamberlain.

“My teammates let me shoot whatever shots I want to out there,” Gilgeous-Alexander said.

“The coaching staff trust me and I put in the work to get better each and every day.”

The win improved Oklahoma City’s record to 26-3 at the top of the Western Conference standings. The Thunder were to play second-placed San Antonio yesterday.

In other games on Monday, the Denver Nuggets kept up their pursuit of Oklahoma City in the West with a 135-112 pummeling of the Utah Jazz in Colorado.

The Nuggets (21-7) led from start to finish with Nikola Jokic grabbing 14 points, 13 rebounds and 13 assists for his 14th triple double of the season and the 178th of his career.

Only Oscar Robertson (181) and Russell Westbrook (207) have scored more triple doubles than the Denver star.

Napoli beat Bologna to lift Italian Super Cup

AFP | Rome

Napoli won the Italian Super Cup on Monday as David Neres scored twice to secure the reigning Serie A champions a 2-0 win over Bologna in the final in Jeddah.

Brazilian winger Neres curled in a brilliant shot from distance to give Napoli the lead before half-time against last season's Italian Cup winners.

He struck again in the second half after intercepting a weak pass from Bologna goalkeeper Federico Ravaglia as he tried to



Napoli's players celebrate the win

play out from the back.

Neres finished with three goals in the Super Cup after also scoring in the 2-0 semi-final win over AC Milan last week.

It is the third time Napoli have won the competition, after 1990 and 2014.

“The lads deserve congratulations,” Napoli coach Antonio Conte told Sport Mediaset.

“They showed how much they wanted this trophy for the fans, and we’ll also have a great Christmas celebration now with a new trophy in the cabinet.”

Isak out months after fracturing leg

Liverpool forward faces two months out as Slot blames “reckless” Tottenham challenge

● Isak suffers fractured fibula

● Slot brands tackle reckless

● Injury occurred while scoring

AFP | London

Alexander Isak is expected to be out of action for two months after fracturing his leg against Tottenham, with Liverpool manager Arne Slot accusing Tottenham’s Micky van de Ven of making a “reckless challenge”.

The Sweden striker was injured in a tackle from the defender in the act of scoring the opening goal in Saturday’s 2-1 victory and limped off the pitch.

Liverpool said in a statement on Monday that the forward had had an operation on an ankle injury that included a fibula fracture.

“It’s going to be a long injury, for a couple of months,” Slot told reporters yesterday, “So, yeah, that’s a big, big, big disappointment for him. And as a result also of course for us.”

Slot described Van de Ven’s tackle as “reckless”.

“I think I said a lot about the tackle of Xavi Simons (sent off earlier in the game for Spurs),



Liverpool’s Swedish striker #09 Alexander Isak (C) is helped off the field by medical staff after picking up an injury

which for me was completely unintentional, and I don’t think you will ever get an injury out of a tackle like that.

“The tackle of Van de Ven, if you make that tackle 10 times, I think 10 times there’s a serious chance that a player gets a serious injury.”

Isak’s injury is the latest setback

for the forward after he signed from Newcastle for a British record £125 million (\$168 million) in September.

A dispute with Newcastle meant he did not have a proper pre-season programme and arrived at Liverpool well behind his team-mates in terms of fitness.

His season was then interrupted by a groin injury.

The 26-year-old has scored just three goals in 16 appearances since completing his protracted move to Anfield.

Isak’s absence will be a major blow for Reds boss Slot, with Mohamed Salah at the Africa Cup of Nations and Cody Gakpo not ready to return from a muscle injury until early in the new year.

BETTER
YOU
KNOW

Isak’s £125 million move has been plagued by misfortune: a disrupted pre-season, a prior groin injury, and now this fracture. He has scored only three goals since his British-record transfer

“I think I said a lot about the tackle of Xavi Simons (sent off earlier in the game for Spurs), which for me was completely unintentional, and I don’t think you will ever get an injury out of a tackle like that. The tackle of Van de Ven, if you make that tackle 10 times, I think 10 times there’s a serious chance that a player gets a serious injury

ARNE SLOT

kpo not ready to return from a muscle injury until early in the new year.

It leaves Slot with Hugo Ekitike, who has five goals in his past four games, and the little-used Federico Chiesa as his only senior forwards.

Liverpool, whose Premier League title defence collapsed after a shocking run of results, have climbed to fifth in the table after extending their unbeaten league run to five games.

Isak’s injury raises the prospect of Liverpool moving to boost their attack in the January transfer window, with Bournemouth winger Antoine Semenyo linked with a move to Anfield.

It may also change the conversation around Salah, who had been linked with a move to Saudi Arabia following his recent claim that he had been thrown under the bus by the club and no longer had a relationship with Slot.

Salah’s rant, which came after he was left on the bench for three successive matches, prompted Liverpool to leave him out of the squad for a Champions League match at Inter Milan.

But he returned to action as a substitute against Brighton before leaving for international duty.

Liverpool host bottom side Wolves on Saturday.

Australia captain Cummins out of rest of Ashes, Lyon to have surgery

AFP | Melbourne

Australia skipper Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon were yesterday ruled out of the final two Ashes Tests against England with the veteran spinner facing surgery and an extended period on the sidelines.

Quick bowler Jhye Richardson and spinner Todd Murphy were named as cover in a 15-man squad for the fourth Test starting on Friday at the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Australia have already retained the famous urn with eight-wicket wins in Perth and Brisbane and an 82-run victory in Adelaide.

Cummins “won’t play any part in the rest of the series”, coach Andrew McDonald told cricket.com.au.

He returned from a lower back injury to lead Australia to victory in Adelaide in his first Test since July, taking six wickets in the match.

“That was a discussion that we had a long time out around his return. Yeah, we were taking on some risk. We’ve now won the series, and that was the goal,” said McDonald.

Cummins will now target full fitness for the month-long Twenty20 World Cup in India and Sri Lanka, starting in early



Australia’s Nathan Lyon (R) catches a throw next to Pat Cummins (file photo)

February.

“To position him for further risk and jeopardise him long term is not something that we want to do,” said McDonald.

“Pat’s really comfortable with that. If he had any setback in the build-in as well, we would have shut him down straight away.”

Steve Smith, who captained the team in Cummins’ absence during the first two Tests, will lead the side again in Melbourne after missing Adelaide with vertigo symptoms.

‘Amazing’ Starc

His return means there will

be at least three changes.

Usman Khawaja replaced Smith at four in Adelaide scoring 82 and 40 and should he be retained then Josh Inglis is shaping as the fall guy.

Lyon, 38, damaged his right hamstring saving a boundary on day five in Adelaide fielding and hobbled off.

He claimed his 564th wicket in the match to move clear of fellow Australian great Glenn McGrath and into sixth on the all-time Test bowling list.

“Nathan Lyon will have surgery on a torn right hamstring which will sideline him for an

“To position him (Pat Cummins) for further risk and jeopardise him long term is not something that we want to do. Pat’s really comfortable with that. If he had any setback in the build-in as well, we would have shut him down straight away

COACH ANDREW McDONALD

extended period,” Cricket Australia said.

Lyon’s replacement, Murphy, is in line to play his first home Test.

His seven previous appearances for Australia all came overseas. His last was in Sri Lanka earlier this year.

Richardson was included after a four-year Test absence, during which he underwent three shoulder surgeries.

Scott Boland and Mitchell Starc are likely to lead the seam attack after recovering well from Adelaide, with Michael Neser, Brendan Doggett and Richardson battling to join them.

REHC to conclude 2025 racing year with Alba Cup Series



TDT | Manama

The Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club will host the final horse racing meeting of 2025 on Friday, December 26, as part of the 2025-2026 racing season, organisers said. The 11th race meeting will be held under the patronage of Aluminium Bahrain (Alba) and is expected to deliver strong competition as owners, trainers and jockeys seek to end the year on a winning note.

The meeting is regarded as one of the standout fixtures of the season, marking the last races of the calendar year and featuring eight contests all run for Alba Cups. Final declarations have confirmed a strong turnout of horses across the programme, raising expectations of closely matched and competitive racing throughout the afternoon.

Races will cover a range of classes and distances, including events for Bahraini-bred and imported horses, purebred Arabian horses, maidens and experienced runners. Distances range from 1,000 to 2,000 metres, with sprint races on the straight track and longer tactical contests expected to test stamina and race management.

Officials at the Rashid Equestrian and Horse Racing Club said the meeting reflects Alba’s continued support for Bahraini horse racing and promises an exciting finale to 2025, with competitive fields across all eight races and strong interest from racing fans and connections alike.