

**Vessel traffic picks up**

Strait of Hormuz traffic has surged in recent days but remains around half its pre-war levels as shipping gradually resumes following disruptions from the conflict. | P6-7

**Ship Hit in Hormuz**



A cargo ship was damaged after an unknown projectile hit it off the Omani coast in the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday, a British maritime agency said, reporting no casualties. "A cargo vessel was hit on the starboard side by an unknown projectile, causing damage to the bridge. The master reported no casualties and no environmental impact," said the UK Maritime Trade Operations (UK-MTO), adding that the incident occurred 7.5 nautical miles (14 kilometres) southeast of Dahit in Oman.

**Extends Condolences to Venezuela**



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain expressed the country's solidarity and sympathy with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela following the devastating double earthquake that struck the capital, Caracas, and its surrounding areas. The earthquakes resulted in dozens of deaths, injuries, and disappearances. Bahrain conveyed its sincere condolences to the government and people of Venezuela, as well as to the families of the victims affected by the tragic disaster.

220 fils (includes VAT)



**Diplomacy Over Tensions**

HM King receives US Secretary of State

TDT | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa received US Secretary of State Marco Rubio during his visit to the Kingdom of Bahrain. Discussions focused on strengthening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation between the two countries. His Majesty welcomed Secretary Rubio and his accompanying delegation, while the US official expressed pleasure at visiting Bahrain and meeting with the King. The meeting reviewed the longstanding Bahrain-US partnership and explored ways to further develop cooperation across



various fields, particularly in the economic and defence sectors. Both sides emphasised the importance of continued coordination and joint efforts to enhance strategic ties and support mutual interests.

The discussions also covered regional and international developments, including an exchange of views on efforts aimed at promoting security and stability. His Majesty and Secretary Rubio also stressed the importance

of upholding the memorandum of understanding, describing dialogue and diplomacy as essential approaches to addressing regional challenges and supporting international peace and security.

**Football talent committee formed**



The President of the Bahrain Football Association Board of Directors, Shaikh Ali bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, has issued a decision to form a "Talent Committee" chaired by the Vice President of the association, His Highness Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Isa Al Khalifa. The committee includes several members of the federation's board and representatives from partner organisations. Members are Shaikh Ahmed bin Isa Al Khalifa, board member and national team supervisor; Shaikh Salman bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa, board member and head of the youth national teams committee; Abdullah Al Buainain and Ali Maayouf representing Tamoh; and Nasser Al Arabi, Chairman of the Players' Status and Transfers Committee, who will serve as rapporteur. The initiative aims to benefit from the expertise of leading coaches and technical specialists, strengthening the work of the Talent Committee and supporting its objectives in developing football talent in the Kingdom.

**Gulf and U.S. Draw a New Red Line**



Attendees of the joint ministerial meeting

In a defining moment for Gulf-American diplomacy, foreign ministers of the Gulf Cooperation Council convened with United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio in a high-level joint ministerial meeting, co-chaired by Bahrain's Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani on behalf of the GCC in Manama.

**Proven Resilient**

Opening the meeting, Dr. Al Zayani conveyed the greetings of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa before addressing the turbulence that has gripped the region. "Recent attacks on GCC states tested and revealed the true strength and resilience of our societies, institutions, and defense capabilities," Dr. Al Zayani said, noting that while physical damage can be repaired, the attacks had also disrupted the long-held sense of security enjoyed by the region's people. Far from weakening resolve, however, he said the events had only deepened the GCC's determination to work with international partners to prevent similar incidents and build lasting



**"The US will only support an agreement that is credible, verifiable, and enduring."**  
MARCO RUBIO

peace for future generations. **Road Ahead**

Dr. Al Zayani welcomed the US-Iran Memorandum of Understanding that brought a cessation of hostilities, supported by mediation from Pakistan and Qatar, as well as the restoration of safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz. He praised Oman's announcement of a temporary maritime corridor as an encouraging step. Yet he was clear that words alone are insufficient. Sustainable regional security, he stressed, requires Iran to fully honor all commitments — including ending missile and



**"The security of GCC member states is indivisible — a threat to one is a threat to all."**  
DR. ABDULLATIF BIN RASHID AL ZAYANI

drone attacks, halting support for armed militias, respecting the sovereignty of neighboring states, and ensuring it never acquires nuclear weapons. Secretary Rubio echoed that position firmly. "The US will only support an agreement that is credible, verifiable, and enduring," he said, adding that international waterways must remain open and cannot be controlled or subject to fees by any single nation.

**Partnership**

Rubio described recent events as a significant test of the Gulf-American alliance — one the partnership passed. "The



GCC Secretary General Jasem Mohamed AlBudaiwi attended the landmark session.

close coordination demonstrated throughout the crisis underscored the strength of this partnership," he said, expressing hope the region is entering a new phase oriented toward peace. Dr. Al Zayani reaffirmed Bahrain's strategic partnership with the US, anchored by the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement (C-SIPA), and called for expanded cooperation across security, economic development, and technology. Both sides concluded by reaffirming the indivisibility of GCC security, welcoming the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, and stressing that free and unconditional freedom of navigation remains essential to regional and international security. Developments in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza were also addressed.

**Geneva Nuclear Talks**



Bahrain's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Abdullah Abdul Latif Abdullah, participated in a high-level meeting hosted by Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, with accredited member state representatives in Geneva. The meeting provided a platform for discussions on key agenda items, including nuclear safeguards, safety and security, nuclear energy, and nuclear science and applications, as well as ways to enhance cooperation between the IAEA and its member states. Participants also engaged in an interactive exchange with the Director General regarding recent developments and challenges facing the agency.

# New Bahrain-US Deal Targets AI Growth

Agreement focuses on innovation, supply chains, and advanced computing infrastructure



- **Framework supports semiconductors and data centres**
- **Both countries commit to enhancing research**

TDT | Manama

The Kingdom of Bahrain and the United States have signed a Joint Statement on the Artificial Intelligence Opportunities Partnership, marking a significant step in expanding bilateral cooperation in advanced technology and innovation.

The agreement was signed on the sidelines of the official visit of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, National Security Advisor and Royal Guard Commander, to the United States.

On behalf of Bahrain, the statement was signed by Shaikh Abdullah bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Bahrain's Ambassador to the US, while Elbridge Colby, Under Secretary of War for Policy, signed on behalf of the United States.

The Joint Statement outlines a shared commitment by both nations to promote innovation, entrepreneurship, and technological collaboration, aiming to enhance economic prosperity and security for both countries.

It highlights the importance of trusted partnerships in building and developing artificial intelligence infrastructure, including key sectors such as energy, critical minerals, semiconductors, advanced computing, and digital connectivity.

The framework further strengthens cooperation on policies that encourage innovation, reinforce AI-related supply chains, support research and development, and attract private sector investment in emerging technologies.

Both sides emphasized that the partnership builds on longstanding Bahrain-US relations and reflects a mutual commitment to advancing technological progress, boosting compet-

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It also promotes cooperation in advanced data centres, trustworthy AI models, semiconductor systems, and the development of next-generation artificial intelligence applications.

itiveness, and creating new avenues for sustainable economic growth.

# Strategic Space Dialogue

Bahrain and NASA explore cooperation in space sciences and advanced technologies



His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, National Security Advisor and Commander of the Royal Guard, has underlined the importance of continued investment in future-focused sectors, particularly space sciences and advanced technologies, to support economic growth, open new development and innovation pathways, and strengthen Bahrain's position as a regional hub for knowledge and advanced technologies.

This came during his meeting with Jared Isaacman, Director of the NASA, held during his visit to the capital of the United States, Washington, D.C.

The meeting was attended by His Highness Shaikh Hamad bin Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Highness Shaikh Mohammed bin Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and Shaikh Khalid bin Ali bin Jaber Al Khalifa, Deputy National Security Advisor and Chairman of the Bahrain Space Agency, along with the accompanying delegation.

HH Shaikh Nasser emphasized that strategic agreements between Bahrain and the United States play a key role in strength-



ening cooperation and partnerships across vital sectors of mutual interest. He noted that these agreements support knowledge exchange and technology transfer in ways that serve the shared interests of both countries.

He specifically highlighted the Comprehensive Security Integration and Prosperity Agreement (C-SIPA), saying it provides broad opportunities for collaboration and integration across various sectors, enhancing scientific and technological partnerships and expanding expertise exchange.

During the meeting, both sides reviewed potential areas of cooperation in space sciences, research, and advanced technologies, and discussed mechanisms to further strengthen scientific partnerships and knowledge-sharing initiatives between the two countries.

# Shaping Energy Futures Together

Talks cover oil, gas, advanced energy technologies and joint investments

- **Reviewed progress of the Bapco Refining Modernization Program**

- **Discussed adoption of advanced refining technologies**

- **Focused on improving operational performance and efficiency**

TDT | Manama

Energy cooperation between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the United States took center stage during high-level talks held in Washington, where senior officials reviewed opportunities to expand strategic collaboration across the oil, gas, and advanced energy sectors.

The discussions took place between HH Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Representative of His Majesty the King for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs and Chairman of Bapco Energies, and US Secretary of



Energy Chris Wright, as part of HH Shaikh Nasser's official visit to the US capital.

The meeting, attended by Bapco Energies CEO Mark Thomas, and accompanying delegation members, focused on strengthening bilateral cooperation and exploring new investment opportunities in the energy sector.

Both sides reviewed Bahrain's ongoing and future energy initiatives, including major upstream and downstream de-

velopments and the company's expansion plans in partnership with global stakeholders. The discussions also highlighted the role of technological innovation in improving efficiency and supporting long-term sustainability goals.

HH Shaikh Nasser outlined progress in the Deep Gas Development and Evaluation Program at Bahrain's onshore field, which aims to unlock hydrocarbon potential in the southern region using advanced US technologies. The initiative is seen as a key step

in revitalizing exploration and development activities.

He also noted the resumption of Bahrain's three-dimensional seismic survey program, which will support more accurate resource mapping and exploration planning.

The meeting additionally reviewed updates on the Bapco Refining Modernization Program, including the adoption of advanced refining technologies designed to enhance operational performance and energy efficiency.

# KHGC Hosts High-Level Talks on Religious Diversity in Nicosia

TDT | Manama

Dr. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance (KHGC), met His Beatitude Georgios III in the Cypriot capital, Nicosia.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the High-Level International Conference on Coexistence and Religious Diversity, organized by the KHGC in partnership with the Republic of Cyprus.

During the meeting, Dr. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to strengthening partnerships with religious leaders and institutions that promote peace, mutual understanding, and dialogue among peoples.

He highlighted the importance of continued cooperation



with the Republic of Cyprus in advancing the values of tolerance and coexistence, noting that such initiatives contribute to social cohesion and support regional and international peace and stability.

For his part, Archbishop Georgios III expressed appreciation for Bahrain's efforts and for the initiatives led by the King Hamad Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance. He stressed the importance of sustained collaboration between religious and intellectual institutions worldwide to further promote peace and human coexistence.

# Interfaith Dialogue

Cyprus President Receives KHGC Chairman in Nicosia

TDT | Manama

The President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Nikos Christodoulides, received Dr. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the King Hamad

Global Center for Coexistence and Tolerance (KHGC), on the sidelines of a high-level international conference on coexistence and religious diversity held in cooperation between the KHGC and the Republic of Cyprus.

During the meeting, President Christodoulides conveyed his greetings and appreciation to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal



Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister. He also extended his best wishes for Bahrain's continued progress and prosperity.

Dr. Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed reciprocated by conveying the greetings of His Majesty the King and HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister to the Cypriot President, along with their wishes for continued development and prosperity for Cyprus and its people.

The two sides reviewed the longstanding bilateral relations between Bahrain and Cyprus, and discussed

ways to further enhance cooperation across various fields. Particular emphasis was placed on strengthening collaboration in promoting coexistence, interfaith dialogue, and intercultural understanding, as well as exchanging expertise and best practices in these areas.

President Christodoulides praised Bahrain's leading regional and international role in promoting openness, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence. He also commended the KHGC's initiatives in advancing a culture of peace and fostering dialogue between religions and civilizations while reinforcing mutual respect among peoples.

# Foreign Students Near 30pc in Private Universities

GCC and non-GCC enrolment growth pushes international presence higher

TDT | Manama  
Mohammed Darwish

Foreign students now account for almost three in 10 learners at Bahrain's private universities and colleges after their numbers jumped by 41.7 pc in a year, new data says.

Non-Bahraini enrolment rose from 3,432 in 2023/2024 to 4,864 in 2024/2025, adding 1,432 students. That made up above three quarters of the yearly rise in the private higher education student body.

Total enrolment stood at 16,283 in 2024/2025, the highest figure in the available run of data, up from 13,872 in 2018/2019. The rise over the period was 2,411 students, or about 17.4 pc.

The sharper change came from abroad. Non-Bahraini enrolment has grown from 1,976 in 2018/2019 to 4,864 in 2024/2025, a rise of about 146 pc. Its share of all students climbed from 14.2 pc to 29.9 pc.

The rise has come from both Gulf and non-Gulf students. Non-Bahraini GCC students rose from 514 to 2,214 between



2018/2019 and 2024/2025, while non-GCC students grew from 1,462 to 2,650.

Bahrainis remain the largest group, with 11,419 students in 2024/2025, equal to about 70.1 pc of the total.

The number of private higher education institutions rose from 13 in 2018/2019 to 15 in 2024/2025. Private universities increased from nine to 12 over the same span.

Private institutions now make up 83.3 pc of Bahrain's higher

education institutions, compared with 76.5 pc in 2018/2019.

The pull from overseas has also deepened at each institution. The average number of non-Bahraini students per private institution rose from about 152 in 2018/2019 to about 324 in 2024/2025.

The figures point to a private higher education sector still rooted in local demand, but with foreign enrolment now doing much of the work behind its latest growth.



## Six-year growth

- Total private higher education students:
- 2018/2019: 13,872
- 2024/2025: 16,283
- Growth: +2,411 students (17.4pc)

## International student rise

- Non-Bahraini students:
- 2018/2019: 1,976
- 2024/2025: 4,864
- Growth: +146pc
- Student mix

## Bahraini students:

- 11,419 (70.1pc)
- Non-Bahraini students: 4,864 (29.9pc)

## Bahrain Food Bank saves 300kg of Ashura food daily



TDT | Manama  
Mohammed Darwish

Bahrain Food Bank saved between 200kg and 300kg of surplus food each day during Ashura after some maatams, hussainiyas and homes cooked far beyond what they could store or hand out.

Waleed Ali, head of operations at Bahrain Food Bank, said the cases showed a need for better planning before large meals are made, along with clearer ways to pass on leftover food.

The charity dealt with many calls from maatams, hussainiyas and homes during the season. Food still fit to eat was collected, kept safe and shared with those in need under health rules.

Ali said the rescued food reached eligible groups, including members of foreign communities, through organised handouts.

Bahrain Food Bank urged groups and households not to cook beyond real need. It also warned people not to collect

Discarding food in public harms the environment, poses health risks, and goes against both religious and humanitarian values.

large amounts of food and then dump them in streets or public places.

The charity said throwing food away in public harmed the environment, brought health risks and went against religious and human values.

It added that dumping food or waste in public places was also against Bahraini law.

Public Health Law No 34 of 2018 and Public Cleanliness in Public Places Law No 10 of 2019 ban the dumping or leaving of waste in streets and public areas.

Those who breach the rules face legal action and fines of between BD50 and BD300.

The laws are meant to protect public health, keep the environment clean and uphold Bahrain's public image.

## Proposal seeks '28 February' name for Muharraq road

TDT | Manama  
Mohammed Darwish

MP Hamad Al Doy has called for Muharraq Grand Park to be renamed 'Bahraini Resilience Park' and for Muharraq's Ring Road and Fourth Bridge to be named '28 February', after a day of national unity during Iranian attacks on Bahrain.

The proposal, sent with an explanatory note, says the names would mark the stance taken by Bahrainis after a royal order by His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa to form a committee called 'The Epic of Bahraini Resilience'.

That committee, the note says, was formed to record the way Bahraini society stood together during the attacks and to keep that memory in public view.

The note says Bahrain was hit by missiles and drones in an Iranian assault. It says the Bahrain Defence Force intercepted and destroyed more than 194 missiles and 523 drones from the start of the attacks, citing the readiness of the country's defence and security bodies.



Hamad Al Doy, MP

Al Doy's proposal says Muharraq Grand Park was chosen because of its place near Bahrain International Airport.

That makes it one of the first public sites seen by people arriving in Bahrain, the note says. Renaming it would, in the words of the proposal, turn the park into a landmark linked to the country's unity and public resolve.

The MP also wants Muharraq's Ring Road and Fourth Bridge to bear the name '28 February', saying the date carries national meaning and is tied to the same story of public solidarity.

Muharraq, the note says, holds a special place in Bahrain's history and was among the main



The proposal says naming major public works after the date would help record national memory, link new landmarks with key moments in Bahrain's recent history.

targets of the Iranian attacks.

It says attempts to strike the governorate failed through the vigilance of Bahrain's military and security bodies, as well as the unity shown by Bahrainis behind their leadership.

The proposal says naming major public works after the date would help record national memory, link new landmarks with key moments in Bahrain's recent history, and pass on the values of loyalty, belonging and unity to future generations.

## Anti-Trafficking Model Takes Centre Stage at UN Working Group

Kingdom Showcases National Strategy Against Human Trafficking



### Labour reforms, legal measures and victim protection initiatives

### Integrated approach combining prevention, enforcement and international cooperation

TDT | Manama

Bahrain has reaffirmed its commitment to combating human trafficking through a comprehensive national approach focused on prevention, protection and prosecution, during its participation in the 16th annual meeting of the United Nations Working Group on Trafficking in Persons.

Held at the UN headquarters in Vienna, the meeting reviewed global efforts to implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children,

while discussing challenges and best practices in addressing the cross-border crime.

Represented by members of the National Committee for Combating Trafficking in Persons, Bahrain highlighted its integrated framework built on cooperation between government entities and relevant organisations, supported by legislative and procedural measures.

The Bahraini delegation included Attorney General Assistant Dr Ali Abbas Al Shuwaikh, a member of the committee; the Head of the Human Trafficking Prosecution Office representing the Public Prosecution; Judge Jassim Mohammed Al Ajlan representing the Supreme Judicial Council; Noura Isa Mubarak, Deputy CEO for Legal Control and Protection at the Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA), along with representatives

from the General Directorate of Criminal Investigation and Forensic Science at the Ministry of Interior. During the discussions, the delegation emphasised that prevention and victim

“Protecting victims and reducing vulnerabilities remain at the heart of Bahrain's efforts to address human trafficking.”

protection remain central to Bahrain's efforts, supported by initiatives aimed at reducing vulnerabilities and strengthening safeguards for workers.

Key measures highlighted included the Wage Protection System, preventive monitoring programmes, the Migrant Workers Protection Centre, and continued efforts in investigation, prosecution and specialised judicial handling of trafficking cases.

The delegation also highlighted Bahrain's experience in protecting victims and witnesses, while stressing the importance of expanding international cooperation, exchanging expertise and adopting effective global practices.

## Woman arrested over offensive social media post

The General Directorate for Anti-Corruption, Economic and Electronic Security at the Ministry of Interior arrested a 47-year-old woman for misusing social media platforms.

According to the Ministry of Interior, the individual is accused of publishing online content that included offensive remarks directed at one of the



country's religious denominations and disparaging its religious rituals.

The authorities stated that they carried out the arrest fol-

lowing legal procedures, and they referred the case to the Public Prosecution for further investigation and legal action.

The directorate emphasized the importance of adhering to laws and regulations governing social media use, urging the public to exercise responsibility and avoid content that could undermine social harmony or violate legal provisions.

# Arab Leaders to Discuss Security, Digital Sovereignty

Lawmakers to develop joint parliamentary positions on emerging political and technological challenges

TDT | Manama  
Rehab Mohammad

Shura Council Speaker His Excellency Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh will lead a delegation from Bahrain's Shura Council to participate in the 8th Conference of the Arab Parliament and Speakers of Arab Councils and Parliaments, set to take place on Saturday at the headquarters of the League of Arab States in Cairo, Egypt.

The conference is being organised by the Arab Parliament in cooperation with the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union, bringing together speakers and representatives from Arab legislative bodies to discuss key regional and strategic issues.

The Bahraini delegation includes Deputy Chairman of

the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee Dr. Adel Abdulrahman Al Maawda and Services Committee member Dr. Ibtisam Mohammed Saleh Al Dallal.

The summit will focus on developing a unified Arab parliamentary position to support the security, stability and sovereignty of Arab nations in the face of challenges and external threats affecting regional peace and the safety of citizens.

Participants will also discuss developments in the Palestinian territories and ongoing challenges facing the Palestinian people,



H.E. Ali bin Saleh Al Saleh, Shura Council Speaker



Dr. Ibtisam Mohammed Saleh Al Dallal, Services Committee member



Dr. Adel Abdulrahman Al Maawda, Deputy Chairman of the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee

with the conference expected to highlight the importance of a coordinated Arab parliamentary response.

A key agenda item will be strengthening Arab digital sovereignty and protecting national privacy amid rapid technological transformation. The discussions will address emerging digital,

security and political challenges facing countries in the region.

The annual conference serves as a major platform for Arab legislative leaders to exchange views, coordinate positions and adopt joint visions aimed at supporting stability, development and cooperation across the Arab world.

# Bahrain, Cyprus Discuss Cooperation and Promoting Tolerance

TDT | Manama

Dr. Shaikh Abdulrahman bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Bahrain's Minister of Transportation and Telecommunications and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the King Hamad Global Centre for Peaceful Coexistence, met with Cyprus Foreign Minister Dr. Constantinos Kombos in Nicosia.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the High-Level International Conference on Coexistence and Religious Diversity, organized jointly by the King Hamad Global Centre and the Republic of Cyprus.

During the meeting, Dr. Shaikh Abdullah reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to



strengthening bilateral relations and expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The two sides also discussed efforts to promote peace, interfaith dialogue, and the values of coexistence and tolerance.

# Northern Council Member Seeks Shared Housing Data

TDT | Manama  
Mohammed Darwish

Northern Municipal Council member has asked for figures on shared housing in his ward after warning that family homes in some neighbourhoods are being used to house large numbers of workers and single men.

Abdullah Ashoor said overcrowding in homes had become a growing concern in parts of his area, with residents pointing to rows of delivery motorbikes outside some houses as one sign of the issue's scale.

Mr Ashoor asked how far Decision No 1 of 2023, which governs the filing of tenancy contracts for shared housing, had been enforced.

He also sought figures on licensed and unlicensed shared housing, inspection visits, breaches found and legal steps taken against homes found in breach.

Those steps, he said, include cutting electricity and water to offending buildings where the rules allow it.

Ashoor said the issue was not with expatriate workers or residents, but with the lack of order in some shared housing and the strain caused by packing too many people into homes built for families.

He said this could place pressure on public services, roads,



Abdullah Ashoor, Northern Municipal Council Member

**The problem is large numbers of people living in some homes beyond their capacity**

power and water networks, as well as the social make-up of family neighbourhoods.

Mr Ashoor asked the municipality to tell the council how many buildings in his ward had been licensed as shared housing, how many breaches had been logged and how many field visits and inspection drives had been carried out under the rules.

He said many families had raised fears over crowded homes, the pressure on nearby services and the effect on the family character of their areas.

He called for closer monitoring of shared housing rules, while meeting housing needs and protecting the privacy, calm and living standards of neighbourhoods.

# Indonesia Praises Bahrain's Parliamentary Role

TDT | Manama

On the sidelines of the 20th Conference of the Union of the Member States of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Parliamentary Union held in Baku, Azerbaijan, the Bahraini parliamentary delegation met with Indonesian Member of Parliament Syaehroel Edi Masat.

The meeting was led by MP Ahmed Sabah Al-Salloom, head of the Bahraini delegation, and attended by MP Mohammed Janahi, as well as Mohammed Ibrahim Al



Sisi Al Buainain, Secretary-General of the Shura Council and rapporteur of the parliamentary

delegation's executive committee.

The discussions focused on several issues of mutual interest, most notably the resumption of activities and meetings of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA), and ways to ensure the continuity of its

programmes and initiatives in the coming period. Both sides emphasized strengthening the APA's role

in promoting inter-parliamentary cooperation across Asia.

For his part, the Indonesian MP expressed appreciation for the efforts aimed at ensuring the continuity of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly's work. He praised Bahrain's role in supporting parliamentary coordination mechanisms and strengthening communication between member parliaments in a way that serves the Assembly's objectives and enhances its effectiveness in the next phase.

# Gulf prosecutors explore unified AI framework for legal work

Discussions include unified judicial guidelines and joint investigation teams

TDT | Manama

The Public Prosecution of Bahrain chaired the 52nd meeting of the Committee of Experts from the Public Prosecutors and Public Prosecution offices of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Senior Advocate General Counselor Fahd Khalid Al Buaineen chaired the meeting, with Chief Prosecutor Mohamed Yousif Al Zubari representing the Public Prosecution of Bahrain, alongside representatives from GCC prosecution and public prosecution authorities.

The session discussed several key topics on its agenda, most

notably a proposal submitted by Bahrain's Public Prosecution to develop a model or guiding law regulating the use of artificial intelligence applications in the work of public prosecution and legal authorities across GCC countries. The proposal aims to keep pace with rapid technological developments and enhance the efficiency of judicial processes.

The committee also reviewed a draft of unified judicial instructions for members of public prosecution offices across the GCC. The initiative seeks to standardise procedures and strengthen shared judicial practices among member states. In addition, participants dis-



cussed a proposal to establish a Gulf-wide mechanism for forming joint investigation teams, aimed at improving coordination and operational cooperation between judicial bodies in GCC countries.

Counselor Al Buaineen em-

phasised the importance of continuing to develop the GCC's joint judicial framework, strengthening cooperation and integration between public prosecution authorities, and ensuring alignment with modern legal and technological advancements.

From The Court

TDT | Manama  
Rehab Mohammad

## Life Sentence Upheld for Wife Attack

Court confirms punishment after man convicted of attempted murder in public stabbing

The Fifth Supreme Criminal Court of Appeal upheld a life imprisonment sentence against a man in his forties convicted of attempting to murder his

wife on a public street.

The court also ordered the confiscation of the weapon used and required the defendant to pay BD5,001 in civil compensation.

Court records stated that the man followed his wife, blocked her vehicle, attacked her, dam-

aged the car and threatened her with a knife.

The victim attempted to escape, but the defendant chased and stabbed her before bystanders intervened and stopped the attack. She was later taken to hospital for treatment.

Investigations found the attack was premeditated; the defendant had prepared the weapon before carrying out the assault. A forensic report confirmed the injuries sustained. The appeal court upheld the life sentence after reviewing the case details and evidence.

## Brothers Acquitted in Perjury Case

The High Criminal Court of Appeal acquitted two Bahraini brothers convicted of giving false testimony before a civil court, overturning a previous ruling that sentenced them to six months in prison.

The case was linked to a civil dispute involving a BD32,000

film production agreement. According to their lawyer, Shaikh Rashid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, one defendant signed an agreement with the complainant to produce the film, while the complainant was responsible for distribution, screening and marketing.

The complainant later filed a

civil case, accusing the first defendant of providing false statements under oath and claiming his brother had assisted him.

The lower court convicted both men based on witness statements and evidence related to a forged document. However, the defence argued that the testimony was unrelated to the

disputed document and that no evidence proved the statements were false.

After reviewing the appeal, the court overturned the conviction and acquitted both defendants, ruling that the evidence did not meet the legal requirements to establish perjury or participation in the offence.

## Bahrain Extends Condolences to Thailand



Ambassador Dr. Shaikha Muneera bint Khalifa Al Khalifa, Director General of the Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa Academy for Diplomatic Studies, visits the Royal Thai Embassy in Bahrain to convey the Kingdom of Bahrain's condolences on the passing of Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol, the eldest daughter of the King of Thailand.

# Fresh **BD820,000** boost for sickle cell care

Contract went to Cigalah Pharmacy

● The procurement will help ensure a steady supply of medicines

● Cigalah also secured a similar **BD819,000** deal in September

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Bahrain is reinforcing its commitment to sickle cell care with a new **BD819,999.600** contract for medicines, bringing government spending on treatment for the inherited blood disorder to about **BD1.64** million in less than a year.



The latest contract, awarded by the Health Ministry and listed among the Tender Board's April awards, went to Cigalah Pharmacy, which also secured a similar tender worth nearly **BD819,000** in September last year.

The procurement will help ensure a steady supply of medicines for patients with sickle cell disease, a lifelong inherited blood disorder that requires continuous treatment





## SICKLE CELL DISEASE

An inherited blood disorder that affects red blood cells




**NORMAL vs SICKLE CELL**

NORMAL RED BLOOD CELL	SICKLE CELL
	
✓ Round and flexible. Moves easily through blood vessels.	✗ Hard and sticky. Can block blood flow and reduce oxygen supply.

**COMMON SYMPTOMS**

-  Pain crises
-  Anaemia (low red blood cells)
-  Organ damage (spleen, kidneys, lungs, brain, etc.)
-  Higher risk of infections

**TREATMENT & CARE**

-  **MEDICINES**  
Help manage pain, prevent complications and reduce crises.
-  **REGULAR CHECK-UPS**  
Routine medical care, blood tests and vaccinations are essential.
-  **HYDRATION & NUTRITION**  
Drinking plenty of fluids and a balanced diet support overall health.

WITH EARLY CARE, REGULAR TREATMENT AND SUPPORT, PEOPLE WITH SICKLE CELL DISEASE CAN LEAD HEALTHY, FULFILLING LIVES.

and regular medical follow-up. The condition can cause severe pain, anaemia, organ damage and other serious complications, making uninterrupted access to medication essential.

The investment comes as Bahrain continues to strengthen services for sickle cell patients through the Hereditary Blood Disorders Centre, updated treatment protocols,

regular follow-up programmes and improved emergency and inpatient care for severe cases.

The Kingdom has also expanded access to advanced therapies. The Royal Medical Services recently announced the successful treatment of a second sickle cell patient using gene therapy under the hereditary blood disorders gene therapy and stem cell transplant programme at the Bahrain Oncology Centre, following Bahrain's first successful case under the same programme.

While gene therapy and stem cell transplants are available only to selected patients, regular medication remains the mainstay of treatment for the wider sickle cell population.

Care is provided through the Health Ministry, government hospitals, the Royal Medical Services and the Bahrain Oncology Centre, with medicine supply contracts forming a key part of the healthcare system.

Alongside treatment, Bahrain has stepped up efforts to reduce inherited blood disorders through premarital screening and public awareness campaigns. It has also launched the country's first national sickle cell disease register to support healthcare planning, research and patient follow-up, while a dedicated transition clinic helps young patients move from paediatric to adult services without interruptions in care.

**Bahrain has launched its first national sickle cell disease registry to support improved healthcare planning, research, patient follow-up, and evidence-based policy development.**



## IBM unveils chip technology it says will deliver major performance leap

AFP | New York, United States

IBM unveiled new semiconductor technology Thursday that the company says could

deliver computer chips with 50 percent better performance while dramatically lowering power consumption.

The technology developed

by IBM is not yet ready for industrial use, but the Armonk, New York-based company said it "sees a path to production in as early as the next five years."

The breakthrough could mean a major leap forward as the industry races to cram more computing power into smaller devices.

## US revises 2026 first-quarter GDP growth up to 2.1%

Washington, United States

The US economy expanded at a higher rate than previously estimated in the first quarter, data showed Thursday, with a downward estimate of imports boosting the figures.

Gross domestic product in the world's largest economy rose at an annual rate of

2.1 percent in the first three months of the year, the Commerce Department said in its third estimate of growth data.

Its previous estimate had put growth at 1.6 percent, and the new figures were more in line with the government's first estimate of 2.0 percent growth in the first quarter.

## Amazon pledges additional \$13 bn in India AI investment

New Delhi, India

E-commerce giant Amazon announced on Thursday an additional \$13-billion investment by 2030 to expand its artificial intelligence footprint in India, months after declaring plans to invest more than \$35 billion.

The announcement was made following a meeting between company CEO

Andy Jassy and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The \$13 billion will target AI and cloud infrastructure in Mumbai and Hyderabad, the company said in a statement.

"Amazon's cumulative investments in India from 2010-2030 stand at over \$88 billion," the company said.

Jassy said he was "excited" about the future.

## Stocks rally on renewed AI optimism, oil price declines

Key figures around 1345 GMT

New York - Dow:	▲ 0.7% at 52,203.56 points
New York - S&P 500:	▲ 0.4% at 7,389.18
New York - Nasdaq:	▲ 0.1% at 25,511.18
London - FTSE 100:	▲ P 0.8% at 10,539.70
Brent North Sea Crude:	▼ 0.4% at \$73.59 a barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▼ 0.7% at \$69.83 a barrel
Euro/dollar:	▲ at \$1.1368 from \$1.1357 on Wednesday
Pound/dollar:	▲ at \$1.3193 from \$1.3162
Dollar/yen:	▼ N at 161.79 yen from 161.81 yen
Euro/pound:	▼ at 86.14 pence from 86.26 pence

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Stock markets advanced yesterday after bumper earnings from US chip titan Micron helped calm investor worries about promised payoffs from the massive AI investment boom.

The gains were boosted by further declines for oil prices to below levels seen before the US-Iran war, as shipping picks up through the Strait of Hormuz.

Markets have endured a roller-coaster run this week

amid concerns about when the eye-watering sums invested in artificial intelligence will reap returns.

Micron Technology helped turn around the mood by reporting fourth-quarter revenue forecasts of \$50 billion, which blew past expectations, and said its entire stock of high-bandwidth memory (HBM) chips for AI computing are sold out for this year.

The report reignited confidence in a sector that has been the key driver of a surge across equity markets this year.

# Online rumours over GTA 6 ban *miss a key detail*

**Mohammed Darwish**  
TDT | Manama

Claims that Grand Theft Auto VI (GTA 6) has been banned in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman have gone viral online, but the claims are based on a misunderstanding.

According to Bahraini gaming expert Abdulla Abdulrahman, the confusion stems from Sony's terms for digital pre-orders. The terms state that a free one-month subscription

to GTA+, the game's premium membership service, is not available through PlayStation Stores in Bahrain, China, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Russia and Taiwan.

Some users interpreted that list as evidence that GTA 6 itself had been banned. However, the restriction applies only to the free GTA+ offer and does not state that the game cannot be sold.

The game's availability in some Gulf countries, however, remains unclear. PlayStation Store pages for Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman list GTA 6 but currently show it as unavailable for purchase. This suggests that pre-orders have either not opened or are restricted to those local stores, rather than confirming an official ban.

In contrast, players in Saudi Arabia and the UAE can already pre-order the game through the PlayStation Store. The Standard Edition is priced at \$79.99, while the Ultimate Edition costs \$99.99.

Rockstar Games has scheduled the release of Grand Theft Auto VI for November 19, 2026, on PlayStation 5 and PlayStation 5 Pro.

So far, neither Rockstar Games, publisher Take-Two Interactive nor government authorities in Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait or Oman have issued any public statement confirming that the game has been banned.

Based on the information currently available, claims that GTA 6 has been banned across those Gulf countries are not supported. While the complimentary

GTA+ offer is excluded in several markets and the game is not yet available for purchase on some local PlayStation Stores, there has been no official announcement prohibiting its sale.



The first GTA began as a police-and-racing game called Race 'n' Chase. Developers accidentally discovered that causing chaos was far more fun than obeying the rules—and the game was completely redesigned.



## Venezuelans trapped alive after twin quakes kill at least 164



People search through the rubble around a car trapped beneath the collapsed remains of a residential building following an earthquake in Catia La Mar, La Guaira state, about 30 km northwest of Caracas

● **United States Geological Survey said magnitude 7.2 and 7.5 quake hit northern Venezuela within a minute of each other.**

● **Offers of rescue support and aid flooded in from around the world.**

AFP | La Guaira, Venezuela

Desperate Venezuelans battled Thursday to rescue loved ones trapped alive beneath the rubble of collapsed buildings after two major earthquakes that killed at least 164 people.

Buildings cracked and crumbled and residents fled into the streets after the quakes, which the United States Geological Survey measured as magnitude 7.2 and 7.5, hit northern Venezuela within a minute of each other.

Offers of rescue support and aid flooded in from around the world as interim president Delcy Rodriguez reported at least 164 dead and over 970 hurt.

The state of La Guaira north of Caracas was hit particularly hard, and residents stumbled through debris calling out the names of loved ones or tried in vain to rescue the injured.

"There's a spot where a young woman named Jennifer, from the 11th floor, answers me. However, we don't have any tools; we have no way to help," said Antonio Bermudez, whose building collapsed in La Guaira.

Elsewhere in the rubble, a father and his son were using a pickaxe and a crowbar to try and pry away massive slabs to get to two of his other sons, said Bermudez.

"They're still alive... there's nothing more we can do. We're telling them not to strain their voices, to take short breaths, in the hope that at least the three of them who are there will be rescued."

The coastal city was without electricity, and many residents

spent the night in the streets or searching for their relatives, according to AFP reporters.

The strongest quake to hit Venezuela in 126 years will require "massive collective efforts," the United Nations aid chief Tom Fletcher said in a statement. He said the UN was "fully mobilised" to send aid.

Threatening to complicate relief efforts, the international airport near Caracas was closed due to "serious damage," Rodriguez said.

### Tremors felt in Colombia, Brazil

Venezuela's northern coast sits on a boundary between Caribbean and South American tectonic plates. In 1812, a massive quake in the country killed an estimated 30,000 people.

Wednesday's 7.5-magnitude earthquake was the most powerful since October 29, 1900, when a 7.7-magnitude tremor struck offshore.

The quake was felt as far away as the Colombian capital of Bogota, where alarms sounded and some residents evacuated buildings as a precaution.

### 'We need help'

Many residential buildings in La Guaira -- around 40 minutes from the capital Caracas -- were left with large cracks or gaping walls. Dozens of others were destroyed.

"We thank God that... we are alive, but there are people suffering right now with family members trapped under the rubble or pinned down, unable to get them out," resident Yilmarris Blanco told AFP.

"There are people alive in there, there are dead people," Paola Sanoja, 31, told AFP, pointing to a building left tilted with its apartments exposed, where one of her relatives was missing.

Interior Minister Diosdado Cabello asked people to leave their homes, adding that gas supplies had been cut to some buildings as a precaution.

In Caracas, the quakes sent residents fleeing into the streets. Shoppers at a mall in the city screamed in panic.

"It was unbelievable, I don't even know how long it lasted," said shopkeeper Heidi Romero.

The strongest tremors in earthquake-prone Venezuela's recent history occurred in the northeast in 1997, killing 73 people, and in Caracas in 1967, when 236 people died.

row stretch of water between Iran and Oman that leads to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, making it a choke-point for crucial energy shipments out of the Gulf.

### 'We need help to come.'

Top US diplomat Marco Rubio warned on Thursday that a deal with Iran would not come at any price.

"While we want a deal, we don't want a deal at any price," Rubio told a Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in Bahrain.

"We want to ensure... that there is no part of this deal that's undertaken that in any way undermines the security, the stability, or the prosperity of any of our partners in the Gulf region."

Rubio also sought to reassure the energy-rich Gulf that the Hormuz strait, which they have relied on for decades to export oil and liquefied natural gas, would remain toll-free. Hormuz is a narrow



## Donald Trump to mark US 250th anniversary at Mount Rushmore

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump will travel to Mount Rushmore next week for an Independence Day celebration beneath the carved faces of four of his revered predecessors, organizers said Thursday, as the Republican puts his personal stamp on events marking America's 250th anniversary.

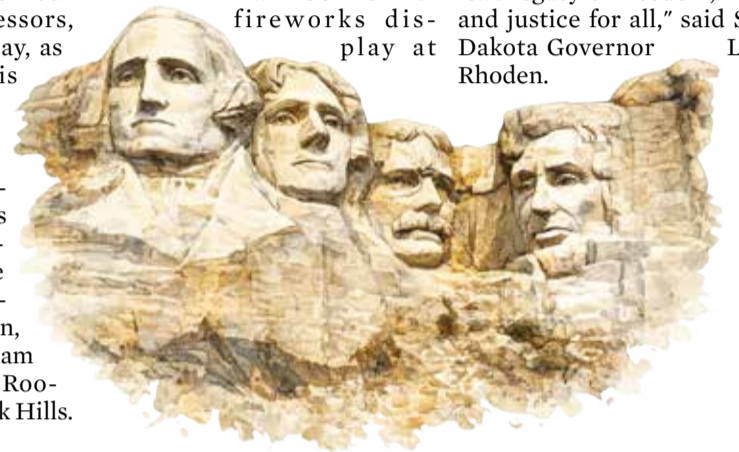
Trump is due to headline a July 3 fireworks display at the South Dakota memorial, where the massive, granite likenesses of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt loom over the Black Hills.

The event is expected to feature military bands, flyovers, tributes to the armed forces and a speech by the Republican president on the eve of the July 4 holiday.

It will be the first fireworks display at

Mount Rushmore since 2020, when Trump also attended during his first term.

"Together, we will throw the biggest birthday party ever for our nation and celebrate America's legacy of freedom, liberty, and justice for all," said South Dakota Governor Larry Rhoden.



# Wants the deal, but not 'at any price'

TDT | agencies

Top US diplomat Marco Rubio warned on Thursday that a deal with Iran would not come at any price.

"While we want a deal, we don't want a deal at any price," Rubio told a Gulf Cooperation Council meeting in Bahrain.

"We want to ensure... that there is no part of this deal that's undertaken that in any way undermines the security, the stability, or the prosperity of any of our partners in the Gulf region."

Hormuz is a narrow

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Rubio also sought to reassure the energy-rich Gulf that the Hormuz strait, which they have relied on for decades to export oil and liquefied natural gas, would remain toll-free.

Hormuz is a narrow

stretch of water between Iran and Oman that leads to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, making it a choke-point for crucial energy shipments out of the Gulf.



## Switzerland records hottest ever June day at 38C

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

Switzerland registered its hottest ever June temperature yesterday, with 38C measured in the northern city of Basel, breaking a previous record of 36.9C set eight decades ago, the Swiss weather service said.

"Temperatures exceeded 37C for the first time in Switzerland during the



month of June, breaking a record set in 1947," MeteoSuisse said on X.

It highlighted that "a temperature of 38C was even recorded at the Basel weather sta-

tion" -- the same place where the 1947 record was logged.

Records have tumbled as an increasingly deadly heatwave leaves western Europe sweltering with weather hotter than parts of Africa, throwing up numerous challenges from transport to emergency response.

In Switzerland, the highest heatwave alert level is currently in effect across much of the country.

Roman Emperor Julian is killed during retreat from the Sassanid Empire. General Jovian is proclaimed Emperor by troops on the battlefield.

The first 62 recipients receive the Victoria Cross for valor in the Crimean War from Queen Victoria



First US troops arrive in France during World War I

The United Nations Charter is signed by 50 nations in San Francisco

## US Supreme Court paves way for mass deportation of Haitians, Syrians

Washington, United States

The US Supreme Court on Thursday backed a Trump administration move to strip deportation protections from some 350,000 Haitians and 6,000 Syrians living in the United States.

The conservative-dominated court, in a 6-3 ruling, said the Department of Homeland Security's decision to end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitian and Syrian immigrants was not subject to judicial review.

TPS protects its holders from deportation and is granted to

people deemed to be in danger if they return home because of war, natural disaster or other extraordinary circumstances.

Lawyers for Haitian and Syrian TPS holders contended during oral arguments before the court in April that conditions in their home countries remained unsafe and the administration's move was motivated at least in part by racial hostility. Justice Samuel Alito, who wrote the majority opinion, rejected claims that race was a "motivating factor" in President Donald Trump's decision.

## Israel says will only withdraw troops from Lebanon after Hezbollah disarmed

AFP | Jerusalem, Undefined

Israel said yesterday that it would only withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon after Hezbollah was disarmed, as the two countries engaged in US-mediated talks in Washington.

The Israeli military has launched widespread airstrikes in Lebanon and sent troops into the country's south after Hezbollah, the powerful militia backed by Iran, entered the Middle East war on the side of its patron in March.

"We will not withdraw our forces from southern Lebanon as long as Hezbollah remains a threat, are not disarmed and



An excavator clears rubble from the site of a collapsed building, following Israeli bombardment in Nabatieh in southern Lebanon

are not demilitarised," David Mencer, a government spokesman, said in a briefing to journalists.

### Oman says 'no transit fees' in any future arrangement on Hormuz

# Hormuz tolls risk 'total chaos'

Rubio warns during meeting with Gulf ministers

TDT | agencies

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned yesterday that charging ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz would create "total chaos", as Oman confirmed it opposed imposing transit fees on one of the world's busiest maritime routes.

The remarks came after Rubio met Gulf foreign ministers in Bahrain at the close of his three-day regional tour, amid continuing discussions over the future of navigation through the strategic waterway.

Oman's top diplomat said no transit fees would be imposed in the Strait of Hormuz after Muscat and Tehran, which border the key waterway, had earlier said they were discussing service "costs".

Badr Albusaidi said "future arrangements regarding the Strait do not entail the imposition of any transit fees," during a meeting of Gulf foreign ministers in the Bahraini capital Manama with US Secretary Marco Rubio -- whose administration

has repeatedly opposed any fees or tolls.

Rubio said international waterways must remain free from charges imposed by individual states, warning that allowing countries to levy fees on shipping routes would set a dangerous global precedent.

"If we accepted that countries could charge for the use of international waterways simply because they lie near their territory, it would spread throughout the world like a contagion," he said.

Oman, however, distanced itself from the proposal. Foreign Minister Badr Albusaidi said future arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz would not include transit fees, according to a statement from his ministry.



**If we accepted that countries could charge for the use of international waterways simply because they lie near their territory, it would spread throughout the world like a contagion**

US SECRETARY OF STATE MARCO RUBIO

Rubio welcomed Muscat's position, saying there was "zero support" among Gulf countries for tolls on ships using the strait, which remains the primary export route for the region's oil and gas producers.

The future management of the waterway remains one of the unresolved issues in negotiations between Washington and Tehran. Although commercial vessels are currently allowed to pass free of charge under a 60-day memorandum of understanding reached after the recent conflict, it remains unclear what arrangements will apply once that period expires.

Adding to the uncertainty, Oman recently announced a tempo-

rary shipping corridor closer to its coastline, saying it had been coordinated with the International Maritime Organisation. Iran's Revolutionary Guards criticised the move, insisting that the only authorised route through the strait was the one designated by Tehran.

Rubio said the United States remained committed to securing a lasting agreement with Iran but stressed that any deal must provide long-term stability for the region and its allies.



## Heatwave bakes 100 mn Europeans at over 35C

Paris, France

At least 101 million Europeans were forecast to swelter in temperatures of over 35C on Thursday, as scores of people were thought to have been killed by the heatwave.

France and Spain, among the countries worst hit, began counting the toll from the extreme temperatures, including

a three-year-old boy who got trapped in his family's car.

AFP calculations based on forecasts from the German weather service and 2025 population projections from the European Joint Research Centre indicated that more than 380 million people would face temperatures of over 30C.

The UN's climate chief Simon Stiell said the heatwave

-- made worse by buildings and infrastructure unsuited to such temperatures -- "has the fingerprints of the climate crisis all over it".

"Until humanity stops burning colossal amounts of coal, oil and gas, extreme heat will keep getting worse," he added.

The deputy director of the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service, Samantha Burgess, said

the hot weather was due to a "heat dome" of trapped air from north Africa

in a low-lying high-pressure system, preventing cooler air from moving in.



Europe is the world's fastest-warming continent. Temperatures there have been rising at roughly twice the global average since the 1980s.



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



The clean energy future is already here. Renewables are the cheapest, fastest and most reliable source of new power. But the transition is still not fast & fair enough. This is our moment of choice, truth & opportunity to truly supercharge a global clean energy transition.

@antonioguterres

02



Now that we know the political significance of my \$8.75 coral maternity dress from Old Navy, can't wait to hear what the New York Times has to say about my elastic-waistband pants and compression socks! In the meantime, enjoy my pregnancy fashion (or lack thereof) and a good story with your kids on Storytime with the Second Lady.

@SLOTUS

03



A great meeting with Mr. Andy Jassy. I welcome Amazon's record \$48 billion investment in India. This will create new opportunities for our youth. At the same time, it shows the growing interest across the world to invest in India

@narendramodi

04



The @EU.Commission is coordinating the European response to the earthquake via our Civil Protection Mechanism. We stand ready to offer more, including medical assistance.

@vonderleyen

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



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## region

### UAE Opens Doors to Six More Nations

New entry measures apply to nationals holding valid residency permits from select countries



The United Arab Emirates has announced the expansion of its visa-on-arrival programme to include nationals of six countries and their family members, effective from June 25.

The updated policy allows eligible citizens of Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Kenya and South Africa holding ordinary passports to obtain an entry visa on arrival for either 14 or 60 days.

The measure applies to applicants who hold valid residency permits from a number of approved countries, including the United States, European Union countries, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

The UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the expansion reflects the country's commitment to strengthening relations with friendly nations and enhancing humanitarian, economic and cultural

partnerships.

The ministry added that the decision will provide more opportunities for visitors to experience the UAE's tourism attractions, business environment, infrastructure and economic opportunities, while supporting the country's position as a global destination for entrepreneurs, talent and skilled professionals.

The Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs and Port Security said the updated visa measures are part of ongoing efforts to improve services, expand access and align with global trends in travel, tourism and mobility.

The authority confirmed that applicants and their family members must be nationals of the listed countries and hold valid residency in one of the approved nations to benefit from the new visa arrangements.

Visa validity after entry will be 14 or 60 days, depending on the type of visa issued.

### Libyan Experts Race to Save Ancient Ruins

Archaeologists in eastern Libya are working to preserve the ancient UNESCO-listed ruins of Cyrene and Apollonia, which have endured years of conflict, looting and natural disasters. Following the 2011 uprising that toppled Muammar Qaddafi, local experts and volunteers protected thousands of valuable artifacts from theft by hiding smaller treasures and guarding major monuments.



The sites suffered further damage in 2023 when Storm Daniel triggered devastating floods across the region. Restoration teams have since cleared debris, recovered artifacts and

rebuilt damaged structures despite limited resources and outdated equipment.

Experts are also warning that Apollonia faces growing threats from coastal erosion, with urgent intervention needed to protect the historic port city. Archaeologists are calling for greater national and international support to safeguard Libya's rich cultural heritage.

### Diplomatic Engagement



His Highness the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, met with the United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Manama on the sidelines of the ministerial meeting between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the United States. The meeting took place as senior diplomats from the GCC and the US gathered for high-level talks focused on regional cooperation, security coordination, and ongoing diplomatic engagement across key Middle Eastern and global issues. Both sides are expected to have discussed strengthening strategic ties and advancing joint efforts in areas of mutual interest during the broader ministerial discussions hosted in the Bahraini capital.

# Bahrain prepares for Asian junior handball test with UAE friendly series

Hussain Almaskati  
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's junior handball national team will compete in a five-nation friendly tournament in the United Arab Emirates from June 27 to July 1 as part of its preparations for continental competitions.

The squad departs for the UAE today with a 20-player roster led by head coach Hussam Madan, assistant coach Jaafar Abdulqader, team manager Ali Redha, goalkeeping coach Makram Maissaoui and physiotherapist Karim Hassan.

The selected players are Salman Al Showaikh, Abudhir Jaafar, Hassan Khatem, Ahmed Eid, Mahmood Jalil, Mohammed Haitham, Abbas Hussain, Ahmed Abdullah, Sayed Majid Al Muhafadha, Mahdi Jaafar, Ali



Bahrain junior handball team during a local training session

Samir, Ahmed Al Samahiji, Sayed Ahmed Al Falahi, Fadhel Abbas, Haider Mohammed, Ali Al Mahroos, Mohammed Zuhair, Mohammed Taradah, Wadi Hilal and Hassan Saif.

The tournament features Bahrain, hosts UAE, Oman, Qatar and Morocco, with the nationals opening against the UAE tomorrow at 6pm. They will then face Oman on Sunday and Qatar on Monday, with both matches also scheduled for 6pm.

Bahrain will later turn their attention to the 19th Asian Men's Junior Championship in Chuzhou, China, from July 15 to 26. The tournament also serves as qualification for the 2027 IHF Men's U21 World Championship, which will be held in North Macedonia from June 23 to July 4 next year. Drawn in Group A, Bahrain will face hosts China, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Chinese Taipei and Hong Kong as they seek to build on a strong continental record that includes silver in 2022 and bronze medals in 2018 and 2024.

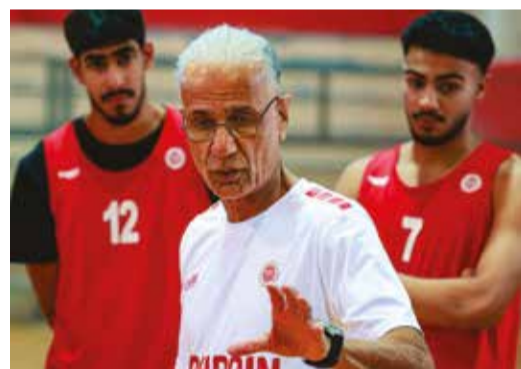
## U18 Basketball Team lands in Tunisia for Arab Championship Campaign

TDT | Manama

Bahrain's youth national basketball team has arrived in Sfax, Tunisia, to compete in the 23rd Arab U18 Basketball Championship 2026, which runs from June 27 to July 6 and features six Arab nations.

The tournament, organised by the Arab Basketball Confederation (ABC) and the Tunisian Basketball Federation, brings together Bahrain, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Egypt, and hosts Tunisia. All matches will be played at Sfax's Raed Al Bajawi Hall.

Bahrain are led by veteran coach Salman Ramadhan. Their final 14-player roster is spearheaded by standout prospects Somto Patrick Onoduenyi and Hassan Abdulkadir, and also includes Hussain Madan, Ali Al Haddad, Jock James, Mohammed Farhan, Ali Ayman, Mahdi Habib, Yousif Al Samahiji, Ali



Head coach Salman Ramadan gives a team talk during practice

Khalil, Mujtaba Rayyan, Mohammed Adel, Hussain Fuad and Ali Ferdousi.

Bahrain open their campaign against Algeria tomorrow at 3:15pm, before facing hosts Tunisia on Sunday at 5:30pm. They then meet Libya on Monday at 1pm, followed by a rest day on Tuesday. The team will resume action against Morocco on Wednesday at 1pm, before



Bahrain's frontcourt duo Onoduenyi (L) and Abdulkadir (R) in a training session

concluding their preliminary round against Egypt on Thursday at 3:15pm. All times are Bahrain time.

After the single round-robin stage, the top two teams will advance to compete for the gold medal, while the third- and fourth-placed teams will contest the bronze medal match.

Bahrain's participation in Sfax forms part of their wider devel-

opment programme ahead of the Gulf Basketball Association (GBA) U18 Championship 2026, which will be held in Doha, Qatar from July 17 to 22. The GBA competition will serve as a qualifier for the FIBA U18 Asia Cup 2026, with the top three teams securing qualification for the continental event set to take place in Ahmedabad, India from August 13 to 23.

## FIFA suspends Nepal over third-party interference

Kathmandu, Nepal

World football's governing body FIFA has suspended Nepal's football association, officials said yesterday, barring the country from all international competitions.

FIFA said in a letter to the All Nepal Football Association (ANFA) that the decision came after "undue interference by a third party", referring to arguments between ANFA and Nepal's National Sports Council, the country's authority for sports administration, over governance of Nepali football.

FIFA holds that a national football association must operate independently of government bodies.

FIFA decided on Wednesday "to suspend ANFA with immediate effect due to flagrant violations of the FIFA Statutes," FIFA's Secretary General Mattias Grafstrom said in the letter, shared by ANFA on Facebook.

The council had suspended

ANFA in March 2026 for three months as the association was preparing for an election process that FIFA and the Asian Football Confederation had agreed to. It was later lifted in May.

The suspension means Nepal can no longer participate in international competitions and the association will lose out on FIFA development programmes, courses or trainings.



Nepal is currently ranked 175th in FIFA's world rankings. The women's national team ranks 88th.

## Bahrain on the brink of AVC Cup semi-finals

Bahrain's men's national volleyball team produced a strong response to their previous defeat, overcoming Kazakhstan 3-1 in their AVC Men's Cup Pool A encounter yesterday in Ahmedabad, India. The defending champions won 22-25, 25-23, 25-17, 25-20 in a match played in front of 2,152 spectators and lasting 2 hours and 7 minutes, strengthening their position in the race for a semi-final spot in the 11-nation tournament.

Kazakhstan struck first, taking the opening set 25-22. Bahrain then regrouped to level the contest with a tight 25-23 second set before asserting control with a dominant 25-17 third set and closing out the match 25-20 in the fourth.

Bahrain's attacking unit

shared the workload effectively, with Mahmood Abdulwahed leading the scoring with 18 points, while fellow outside hitter Mahmood Abdulhussain added 12. Opposite hitter Ali Khamis contributed 16, and middle blocker Hasan Alwarqaa chipped in with 10 points.

For Kazakhstan, Vladislav Mastikhin delivered a standout performance with a match-high 27 points, while fellow outside hitter Azamat Seilkhanov added 13. However, the team were ultimately unable to maintain consistency after their strong opening set.

Coached by Ivan Joksimovic, Bahrain responded strongly after their 3-0 loss to hosts India in their previous outing, which ended their perfect start to the



Mohammed Abdulla rises at the net to attack against Kazakhstan

tournament. That defeat had followed back-to-back wins against Chinese Taipei and New Zealand, meaning Bahrain now hold three

wins from four matches and sit on nine points, behind group leaders India, who have maintained a flawless record so far. Kazakhstan

remain on five points.

The result puts Bahrain in a strong position heading into their final preliminary fixture

against Australia, scheduled for 6:30pm Bahrain time today. At the end of the single round-robin stage, the top two teams from each pool will advance to the semi-finals, scheduled for tomorrow, with the gold and bronze medal matches to follow on Sunday. Classification matches will also take place to determine final standings from fifth to tenth place.

Bahrain's historic title triumph in last year's AVC Men's Cup marked the kingdom's first-ever championship in any Asian Volleyball Confederation competition. That victory also secured their qualification for the AVC Volleyball Men's Continental Championship 2026, set to be held in Fukuoka, Japan, from September 4 to 13.



## Morocco advance as first Arab nation in knockouts



Yassine celebrates after scoring Morocco's fourth vs Haiti at Atlanta Stadium

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

The Atlas Lions finished level on seven points with Brazil, who defeated Scotland 3-0 in the group's other fixture, but had to settle for second place on goal difference. The result sends the Moroccans into the Round of 32, where they will face the winners of Group F.

Despite already being eliminated, Haiti produced one of the performances of their tournament and twice took the lead in an entertaining contest that featured four first-half goals.

The Caribbean side struck first after 10 minutes when Josue Casimir held up the ball before releasing Jean-Kevin Duverne down the flank. His cross into the penalty area

was met by Lenny Joseph, whose clever backheel found the net via an unfortunate deflection off goalkeeper Yassine Bounou.

Morocco dominated possession and created a number of chances, but veteran Haiti goalkeeper Johny Placide, making the final international appearance of a career spanning 15 years, repeatedly frustrated the North Africans with a string of impressive saves.

The pressure finally paid off in the 39th minute. Bilal El Khannouss delivered a dangerous ball into the box, and after Placide could only parry it away, captain Achraf Hakimi reacted quickest to force home the equaliser.

Haiti restored their lead just minutes later. Duverne again turned provider, finding Wil-

son Isidor, who unleashed a powerful long-range effort that stunned the Moroccan supporters and put Sebastien Migne's side back in front.

The advantage lasted only until the closing moments of the first half. Sofyan Amrabat released Hakimi down the right and the captain's cut-back was calmly converted by Ismael Saibari, who netted his third goal in as many World Cup appearances to make it 2-2 at the break.

As the second half wore on, Morocco's sustained pressure began to take its toll. The breakthrough arrived in the 78th minute when a poorly cleared corner fell kindly to substitute Soufiane Rahimi, who made no mistake from close range to give Mohamed Ouahbi's side the lead for the

first time.

The result was sealed deep into stoppage time, though not without controversy. Haiti's defenders paused, believing the ball had crossed the byline, but Rahimi kept the move alive before squaring the ball had remained in play, allowing the goal to stand and making Yassine Morocco's youngest ever World Cup goalscorer.

Morocco will now look to build on their remarkable run in the previous 2022 campaign in Qatar, where they became the first Arab and African nation to advance to the World Cup semi-finals.

## Bafana Bafana shock South Korea to seal historic knockout berth

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

South Africa stunned South Korea 1-0 on Thursday morning to reach the FIFA World Cup 2026 knockout rounds for the first time in their history, completing an extraordinary turnaround in Group A and securing a place in the round of 32.

Bafana Bafana, returning to the tournament for the first time since hosting in 2010, had opened with a 2-0 defeat to group winners Mexico but responded with a draw against the Czech Republic to set up a decisive meeting with South Korea.

The breakthrough came in the 63rd minute when Tshepang Moremi delivered a precise cross and Thapelo Maseko finished calmly inside the near post to secure victory at Monterrey Stadium.

Coach Myung-bo Hong's decision to leave captain Son Heung-min on the bench raised eyebrows, and although he was introduced at half-time, South Korea struggled to take control of the contest.

As news filtered through that Mexico were leading the Czech Republic, ten-

sion mounted, but South Africa held their composure and struck when it mattered most.

Post-match, South Korean media questioned their side's lack of intensity and speculated about possible food poisoning. Coach Hong Myung-bo quickly dismissed any medical issues and accepted responsibility, acknowledging that his tactical approach involving Son had backfired.

Mexico topped Group A with nine points, while South Africa finished second on goal difference, ahead of South Korea and the Czech Republic. Bafana Bafana will face co-hosts Canada in Los Angeles on Sunday at 10pm Bahrain time, while South Korea must rely on the remaining group-stage results to secure one of the eight best third-placed spots and progress to the round of 32.

Maseko scores South Africa's winning goal in the second half



## Vinicius fires Brazil past Tartan Army to top Group C

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

The five-time champions finished level on seven points with Morocco but topped the group on goal difference, while Steve Clarke's Scotland ended third with three points and remain in contention as one of the best third-placed teams.

Vinicius Júnior struck twice at Miami Stadium to lead Brazil into the knockout rounds.

The breakthrough

came in the seventh minute after Scott McKenna's mistake allowed Rayan to intercept and square for Vinicius, who finished calmly from close range. Brazil thought they had doubled their lead when Vinicius struck again following a turnover involving Jack Hendry, but the effort was ruled out by VAR for a foul in the build-up.

Just before half-time, Bruno Guimaraes delivered a dangerous cross that goalkeeper Angus Gunn failed to deal with, leaving

Vinicius a simple header into an empty net. Matheus Cunha added the third in the 60th minute, finishing off a slick move created by Guimaraes.

Vinicius Júnior's brace took his tally to four goals at the tournament, placing him alongside Ronaldo (2002), Neymar (2014), and Jairzinho (1970) as Brazilians to score at least four goals in a single World Cup group stage. Guimaraes also enjoyed a standout evening, registering as-

sists for Brazil's second and third goals. Since 2000, only two Brazilians have recorded multiple assists in a single World Cup match — Kaká and Guimaraes.

Carlo Ancelotti's side will now face the Group F runner-up on Monday at 8pm Bahrain time at Houston Stadium.



Brazil's Vinicius Junior celebrates after scoring the opening goal against Scotland

## Mexico cruise past Czechia to top Group A with perfect record

**Hussain Almaskati**  
TDT | Manama

Co-hosts Mexico produced a commanding second-half display to beat Czechia 3-0 at a packed Azteca Stadium on Thursday morning, securing top spot in Group A and a place in the Round of 32 at the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

The result completed a perfect group stage "El Tri", who finished with three wins from three for the first time in their World Cup history. The Czech Republic, meanwhile, were eliminated at the bottom of the group after finishing with just one point.

After a slow first half in which Mexico struggled for midfield control and attacking rhythm, the hosts broke the game open with three second-half goals in

a six-minute spell.

Mateo Chávez opened the scoring in the 55th minute, finishing a sweeping counterattack. The move began with Luis Romo shrugging off pressure from three Czechia midfielders in central areas before driving forward and releasing Chávez in space. The 22-year-old carried his run into the box and placed a composed finish beyond goalkeeper Matej Kovar for his first international goal.

Julián Quiñones doubled the lead in the 61st minute after Mexico capitalised on defensive confusion inside the penalty area. A loose sequence following a low cross saw the ball fall kindly to Quiñones, who reacted quickest to steer his finish past the scrambling Czechia back

line from close range.

Álvaro Fidalgo added a third in stoppage time to complete the win. The goal came from a long, driven clearance by goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa, who had come on late in the match. The ball was launched into space, catching Czechia stretched at the back, and Fidalgo broke through before finishing calmly to seal the result and

spark the final celebrations.

With the result secured, Ochoa replaced Raúl Rangel late on to a standing ovation from the 80,000-plus crowd at Azteca Stadium. The 40-year-old, making his sixth World Cup appearance, was handed the captain's armband as fans chanted his name throughout his brief cameo.

He saluted supporters at full-time and kissed the goalposts before being lifted into the air by teammates in an emotional post-match celebration.

"It was a fitting tribute; he's a legend," Mexico coach Javier Aguirre said. "I felt

Memo should play, even if only for a few minutes. It was his night."

The only blemish on Mexico's night came in the first half, when sections of the crowd were heard chanting slurs despite repeated FIFA sanctions aimed at eliminating discriminatory behaviour.

Mexico goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa, top, celebrates with teammates





# Ecuador stun Germany to reach World Cup knockout rounds

**E**cuator produced one of the biggest shocks of the FIFA World Cup 2026 group stage, defeating Germany 2-1 in their final Group E match on Friday to secure their place in the Round of 32 as one of the tournament's best third-placed teams.

The South Americans finished third in the group on four points, two behind Germany and Ivory Coast, who claimed the automatic qualification places after a 2-0 victory over Curaçao in the group's other fixture. Ecuador's famous win ultimately proved enough to send Sebastián Beccacece's side through to the knockout rounds as one of the eight best third-placed nations.

Despite having already guaranteed top spot in the group, Germany named a strong starting XI and dominated possession during the opening exchanges.



Gonzalo Plata scored to give Ecuador a crucial lead

Ecuador, however, remained disciplined defensively and looked dangerous whenever they broke forward.

Their approach paid off in

the 27th minute when Moisés Caicedo won possession in midfield before releasing Pervis Estupiñán down the left. The full-back's low cross found

captain Enner Valencia, who calmly steered his finish beyond Marc-André ter Stegen to hand Ecuador a deserved lead.

Germany emerged with great

urgency after the restart and gradually began to impose themselves. Their equaliser arrived in the 58th minute when Florian Wirtz threaded a perfectly weighted pass into the path of Jamal Musiala, who skipped beyond his marker before firing into the bottom corner.

The goal swung the momentum firmly in Germany's favour, with Julian Nagelsmann's side pushing for a winner that would preserve their perfect group-stage record. Niclas Füllkrug and Kai Havertz both went close as Ecuador were forced deeper into their own half.

But with 15 minutes remaining, Ecuador struck decisively.

Substitute Kendry Páez ignited a rapid counter-attack before slipping the ball into the path of Gonzalo Plata. The winger cut inside onto his favoured left foot and curled a superb finish

beyond Ter Stegen and into the far corner, sending the Ecuadorian supporters into wild celebrations.

Germany pressed relentlessly in the closing stages and thought they had salvaged a point deep into stoppage time when Havertz headed home from Joshua Kimmich's cross, only for the assistant referee's flag to rule the goal out for offside.

Ecuador survived six nervy minutes of added time to record a famous victory, completing an impressive turnaround after opening the tournament with defeat to Ivory Coast before being held to a goalless draw by Curaçao.

The result sealed Ecuador's place in the Round of 32 as one of the World Cup's best third-placed teams, keeping alive their hopes of another memorable run on football's biggest stage.

## Must-Win Night Looms for Senegal and Iraq

**S**enegal were widely tipped as a side capable of going deep at the World Cup, but successive defeats have left them on the brink of elimination, and now in need of a convincing victory over Iraq tonight. Kick-off is at 10pm Bahrain time at Toronto Stadium.

Iraq, meanwhile, have also endured a difficult return to the global stage after a 40-year absence from World Cup qualification; the Lions of Mesopotamia also face a must-win scenario following back-to-back defeats. They opened with a 4-1 loss to Norway — a match defined by a clinical Erling Haaland on his World Cup debut — before falling 3-0 to last year's finalists France. The Arab nation sits

bottom of Group I, with their hopes of progression hanging by a thread.

France and Norway have already secured the top two spots in the group and booked their places in the last 32, leaving Senegal and Iraq scrambling to stay in contention for one of the eight best third-placed finishes across the 12 groups. Even victory in Canada may not be enough for either side. Both teams are likely to face an anxious wait until the end of the group stage later this weekend to discover whether three points will be sufficient to reach the knockout rounds.

Senegal opened their campaign with a 3-1 defeat to France before a 3-2 loss to Norway deepened the pressure on the



African side. The Lions of Teranga arrived with high expectations, fuelled in part by memories of their famous 2002 World

Cup victory over France, when they stunned the then-holders in one of the tournament's defining early shocks.

Coach Papa Thiaw's side have struggled to live up to that legacy so far, though belief remains within the camp despite a campaign undermined by defensive lapses.

For Iraq, Ayman Hussein's involvement is in doubt after the forward went off before the half-hour mark against Norway. His potential absence would be a significant blow, given he scored

eight times in qualifying and remains their leading scorer at these finals.

It also opens the door for a possible first World Cup start for Mohanad Ali under Graham Arnold. The Iraq coach may be forced into a reshuffle, with Ali's 27 international goals making him the second-most prolific scorer in the squad behind Hussein's 34.

### World Cup Schedule

Today			
Time	Match	Group	Venue
10:00 PM	Norway vs France	I	Boston Stadium
10:00 PM	Senegal vs Iraq	I	Toronto Stadium

## Haaland vs Mbappé headlines Norway-France Group Finale

TDT | Manama

**N**orway face France at Boston Stadium tonight in the final round of Group I fixtures at the 2026 FIFA World Cup, with kick-off set for 10pm (Bahrain time).

Both sides have already secured qualification for the knockout stages following Norway's 3-2 win over Senegal and France's 3-0 victory over Iraq. However, top spot in the group remains to be decided, with France currently ahead on goal difference.

The Vikings have been one of the tournament's most entertaining attacking sides on their return to the World Cup, producing a high-tempo, high-scoring group-stage campaign. They opened with a dominant 4-1 win over Iraq, where Erling Haaland scored twice to set the tone, before following it up with another



Erling Haaland, 25, after scoring in Norway's previous match



Kylian Mbappé, 27, after finding the net in France's World Cup opener

intense 3-2 victory over Senegal to maintain their perfect start.

France, meanwhile, arrive in excellent shape as two-time world champions and remain among the favourites for the title. Les Bleus began their cam-

paign with a 3-1 win over Senegal before a controlled 3-0 victory over Iraq kept their flawless record intact and placed them top of Group I.

Kylian Mbappé has once again been the talisman, scoring four

goals already to take his World Cup tally to 16, reinforcing his status as one of the defining players of the era.

Didier Deschamps' side only need a draw to finish first but will target a third straight win to

complete a perfect group stage. France also defeated Norway 4-0 in their last meeting in 2014, with goals from Loïc Rémy, Paul Pogba and Olivier Giroud.

Attention then turns to Haaland and Mbappé, with

a subtle Golden Boot subplot building between the two forwards. When asked about the significance of the match, the Manchester City striker played it down, saying: "Honestly, I don't care much. We're through, we manage



France's recent World Cup match against Iraq lasted 4 hours due to a thunderstorm interruption