

# Pilgrims perform stoning on second day of Tashreeq in Mina

TD | Manama

Hajj pilgrims performed the stoning of the three Jamarat yesterday, marking the second day of Tashreeq amid smooth crowd movement and extensive organisational measures in Mina.

Pilgrims began the ritual by throwing pebbles at the small Jamarah, followed by the middle Jamarah, before concluding at Jamarat Al Aqabah, in an atmosphere filled with spirituality and devotion.



Bahraini pilgrims celebrate the conclusion of their Hajj rituals



According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), movement across the Jamarat Bridge remained highly organised, with pilgrims able to travel easily to and from the ritual site.

Worshippers also moved smoothly between their accommodation in Mina and Makkah, where some pilgrims headed to perform the farewell Tawaf before departing early.

## Bahrain mourns former Yemeni president Hadi



Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi

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His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa has sent a cable of condolences to Dr Rashad Mohammed Al Alimi, Chairman of Yemen's Presidential Leadership Council, following the death of former Yemeni President and Field Marshal Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi.

HM the King expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy to Yemen's leadership and people, wishing them strength and solace during this time of mourning. His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, also sent a cable of condolences to Dr Al Alimi.

HRH conveyed heartfelt sympathies to the Yemeni leadership and people, and wished them patience and comfort in the wake of the loss.

## First confirmed Ebola recovery

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The World Health Organization yesterday announced the first recovery of a confirmed Ebola patient in the outbreak raging in the Democratic Republic of Congo. "The DRC has said that on May 27, a patient recovered and left the hospital and has been discharged into the community," the WHO's Anais Legand told reporters.

# Mercury hits 45°C, eyes on Al-Barah

Northwesterly winds are expected to bring slightly cooler temperatures

**Authorities warn of blowing dust, reduced visibility and choppier offshore waters as winds pick up.**

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Bahrain recorded its hottest day of the week on Friday, with temperatures reaching around 45°C, while strong seasonal winds are expected to bring a modest drop in temperatures today.

According to the Meteorological Directorate at the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, Friday's weather was hot during the day and relatively mild at night, with temperatures ranging between 45°C and 27°C. The peak followed a gradual warming trend during the week, with temperatures rising from around 39°C earlier in the week to about 41°C in recent days before reaching Friday's high.

**Relief expected as winds**

### AL-BARAH WINDS

BAHRAIN'S EARLY-SUMMER BREEZE

Al Barah (also known as Al Bawarih) are strong, dry northwesterly winds that occur seasonally in Bahrain and across the Gulf from late spring into summer.

WHAT ARE AL BARAH WINDS?	WHEN DO THEY OCCUR?	WIND CHARACTERISTICS	WHERE DO THEY COME FROM?
All Bahraini city, northwesterly winds created by regional pressure changes between a high-pressure system over Bahrain and a low-pressure system over the Arabian Peninsula.	They typically occur from May to August, with the strongest winds in June and July.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direction: Northwesterly</li> <li>Speed: 12-17 knots, often gusting to 20-25 knots</li> <li>Nature: Dry and gusty</li> </ul>	WEST-NORTHWEST SALALA ALBARAH BAHRAIN GASRA

**strengthen**

Forecasters expect temperatures to fall to around 40°C today as strong northwesterly winds, known locally as "Al-Barah" or "Al-Bawarih", sweep across the Kingdom. Winds are expected to blow at 12 to 17 knots, occasionally strengthening to between 20 and 25 knots.

While the winds are likely to bring some moderation in temperatures, they could also trigger blowing dust and reduce visibility in open and exposed

areas. Conditions are expected to remain hot during the daytime despite the stronger airflow.

**Dusty weekend forecast**

The same weather pattern is forecast to continue through the weekend, with temperatures holding near 40°C and northwesterly winds remaining active. Gusts could reach up to 25 knots at times, while intermittent dust activity is expected, particularly in open and desert regions.

**Marine caution advised**

Marine conditions are expected to remain moderately active, with wave heights ranging from one to three feet in coastal waters and rising to between three and six feet offshore. Fishermen and seafarers have been advised to exercise caution as strong winds and elevated wave activity are expected to persist through the weekend.



**The GCC's all-time heat record stands at 54°C, recorded in Kuwait in 2016 – hot enough to rank among the world's highest officially recognised temperatures.**

## Where Bahrain's policing journey began



The Police Fort, the historic headquarters of Bahrain's Ministry of Interior, stands as the birthplace of organised security work in the Kingdom since the establishment of the Bahrain Police in 1919. Deeply connected to the legacy of the Hajana Camel Corps, the fort reflects an era when camel patrols played a vital role in maintaining security, transportation, and monitoring stability across the country. Known for their endurance, discipline, and resilience, the Hajana personnel represented more than just a security force. They became a lasting symbol of Bahrain's national heritage, showcasing the strong bond between the Kingdom's security services and its rich cultural traditions passed down through generations.

## A'ali Fire Rescue



Above picture: A snapshot from a video shared by the Ministry of Interior shows Civil Defence teams during a rescue operation after a house fire broke out in A'ali on Friday morning. Five children were safely rescued after receiving emergency instructions over the phone while alone inside the home. (Read more on Page 04)

## Trump says now making 'final determination' on Iran deal

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump yesterday said he was now making a "final" decision on whether or not to strike a peace deal with Iran.

"I will be meeting now, in the Situation Room, to make a final determination," Trump said in a lengthy social media post, stressing that Iran must agree never to have nuclear weapons and to open the Hormuz shipping lanes.

In the post, Trump said that Iran "will complete the immediate removal" of mines in the strait and that the US naval blockade of Iranian ports "will now be lifted," allowing oil and other tankers to start moving.



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YEARS عاها

Written by You كتبت بايديكم

# From Mina to Makkah, a smooth Hajj journey

Justice Minister Nawaf bin Mohammed Al Maawda commends success of 1447 AH Hajj season

● **Bahrain's Hajj mission teams, healthcare workers, security personnel and tour operators were praised for their role in the season's success.**

TDT | Manama

**N**awaf bin Mohammed Al Maawda, Minister of Justice, Islamic Affairs



and Endowments and Chairman of the Supreme Committee for Hajj and Umrah Affairs, has hailed the success of the 1447 AH Hajj season, citing the smooth delivery of services and the coordinated efforts that enabled Bahraini pilgrims to perform their rituals with ease and comfort.

Al Maawda attributed the successful season to the continued care of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin

Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, which ensured comprehensive support for Bahraini pilgrims throughout their journey.

He also praised the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, led by King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, for the extensive arrangements that facilitated a safe, organised and seamless Hajj experience for millions of

pilgrims.

The minister commended Bahrain's Hajj mission committees, headed by Shaikh Adnan Abdullah Al Qattan, for their dedicated efforts during the pilgrimage season. He highlighted the contributions of the security committee from the Ministry of Interior, the medical committee from the Ministry of Health, scout teams from the Ministry of Education and other service and support teams deployed across the holy sites.

Al Maawda noted that Saudi

Arabia's advanced crowd-management systems and modern technologies played a key role in ensuring the smooth movement of pilgrims and maintaining high standards of safety and organisation throughout the season.

He also lauded Bahraini Hajj tour operators for their cooperation and commitment to approved plans and guidelines, saying their efforts contributed significantly to the overall success of this year's pilgrimage.

# New teacher hiring database moves forward

CSB objects, citing existing digital recruitment system



● **Platform to track specialisations and staffing needs**

● **Committee approval despite CSB reservations**

● **Future staffing gaps to be forecast**

Mohammed Darwish  
TDT | Manama

**A** proposal to create a dedicated teacher recruitment database has won the backing of Parliament's Services Committee, with supporters saying it will help Bahrain antic-

ipate future staffing needs and build a ready pool of qualified educators.

The proposal, submitted by MP Mohammed Al Olaiwi, calls for the Ministry of Education to establish a digital platform that tracks teaching specialisations, measures supply and demand, and forecasts future recruitment requirements linked to school expansion and demographic changes.

The committee unanimously recommended the proposal's approval, saying it serves the public interest and supports efforts to modernise recruitment practices in the education sector. Supporters argue that teacher hiring should move

beyond filling vacancies as they arise and instead focus on maintaining a database of qualified candidates ready for future appointments.

According to the committee, the platform would streamline recruitment procedures, reduce processing times and cut administrative costs in line with Bahrain's digital transformation goals. It would also improve governance by making recruitment processes more transparent, traceable and open to scrutiny.

**CSB differs**

The Civil Service Bureau, however, noted that government recruitment is already governed by the Civil Service Law and related regulations, which provide a unified framework for appointments across public sector bodies. It said existing rules are designed to ensure fairness, equal opportunity and transparency in the hiring process.

The bureau pointed to several digital systems already in operation, including the Shwaghir

government vacancies platform and the electronic employment applications system available through Bahrain's national portal. These systems allow job-seekers to apply for vacancies online while enabling government entities to access approved candidate lists and CVs electronically.

It also highlighted the role of Mohammed Jaber Al Ansari College for Teachers in supplying the education sector with qualified Bahraini teachers through specialised academic and practical training programmes.

While reaffirming its support for digital transformation and the wider government digitisation strategy, the bureau said it continues to work with government entities to enhance services through technology and artificial intelligence within the framework of existing laws and regulations. The bureau added that its reply was preliminary, with the final government view to be sent in a memorandum once the proposal is formally referred by Parliament.



## Chinese automaker wins trademark dispute

● **Lawyers representing the Chinese automaker argued that the two trademarks create different visual and symbolic impressions.**

Rehab Mohammad  
TDT | Manama

**T**he High Civil Court has dismissed a lawsuit filed by a global luxury car manufacturer against a Chinese automaker in a trademark dispute, ruling that consumers of high-end vehicles are unlikely to be confused by similarities between the two brands' logos.

The case centred on a challenge to a decision by the relevant government authority, which had rejected the luxury car maker's objection to the registration of the Chinese company's trademark.

In its ruling, the court said the key test in trademark disputes is whether an average consumer would likely be misled under normal buying conditions. It added

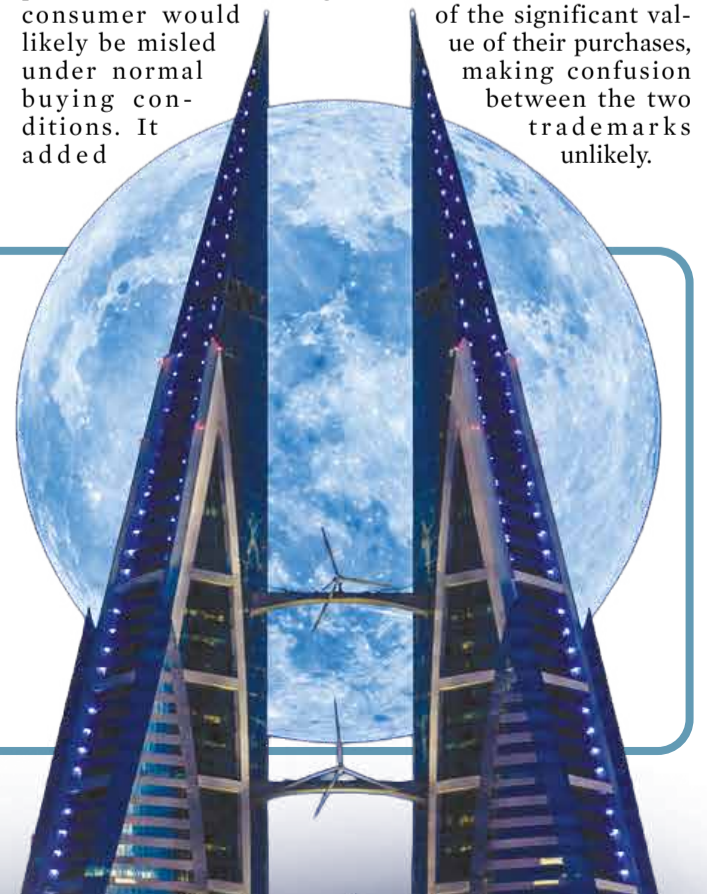
that the nature and value of a product play an important role in determining how carefully consumers assess brands before making a purchase.

Lawyers representing the Chinese automaker argued that the two trademarks create different visual and symbolic impressions. They said part of the disputed logo consists of a common geometric shape that cannot be exclusively claimed by any one company, and that the Chinese firm's logo also contains distinctive design elements that set it apart.

The defence further pointed to previous court rulings and international trademark registrations that have allowed both trademarks to coexist.

After reviewing the GCC Trademark Law, the court noted that trademark imitation should be judged on the overall similarity of the main elements of a mark rather than on minor details.

The court concluded that buyers of luxury vehicles generally exercise a high degree of care and attention because of the significant value of their purchases, making confusion between the two trademarks unlikely.



## Rare Blue Micro Moon to shine over Bahrain

TDT | Manama

**S**kywatchers in Bahrain will have a chance to witness a relatively rare celestial event tomorrow as a "Blue Micro Moon" rises over the Kingdom's skies, combining two unusual lunar phenomena in a single full moon.

Astronomer Mohammed Redha Al Asfoor said the full moon of Dhu Al-Hijjah 1447



Astronomer Mohammed Redha Al Asfoor.

AH will coincide with the moon reaching its apogee – the farthest point in its orbit from Earth. At a distance of about 406,000 kilometres, the moon will appear slightly smaller than a typical full moon, a phenomenon known as a "MicroMoon".

Al Asfoor noted that the combination of a Blue Moon and a MicroMoon is relatively uncommon. The event will

also mark the second full moon of May, which is why it is referred to as a "Blue Moon". Despite its name, the moon will not actually appear blue in colour.

The moon will reach full illumination at 11:45am local time while below the horizon. It is expected to rise over Bahrain at 6:46pm after sunset and remain visible until 5:07am the following morning.

# Five children pulled from burning home in Aali

## ● Bahrain's Hottest Season Brings Hazards

Ashen Tharaka  
TDT | Manama

Civil Defence teams rescued five children and extinguished a fire that broke out at a residential home in the Aali area, yesterday. Authorities confirmed no injuries were recorded, with emergency crews responding swiftly to contain the blaze and ensure residents' safety. Investigations are currently underway to determine the cause.

It was a close call, the kind that serves as a wake-up call for everyone heading into summer, the most dangerous season for house fires.

During the summer season in Bahrain temperatures routinely exceed 40°C, pushing residents to run air conditioners around the clock at maximum capacity. According to Bahrain's National Civil Protection Platform (NCPP), operating A/Cs at maximum capacity exposes units to damage, malfunction, short circuits, and fire.

The NCPP also warns that

### FIRE SAFETY AT HOME

Simple steps. Safer homes. Saved lives.

#### 1 IN THE KITCHEN

- Never leave food on the stove unattended. Stay in the kitchen while cooking.
- Turn off all cooking appliances and unplug electrical devices when not in use.
- Avoid loose-fitting, long-sleeved clothing when working near cookers.

#### 2 IMPORTANT EQUIPMENT

- WATER HEATERS**
  - Must be installed by a qualified professional.
  - Isolate the electrical current if water fails.
  - Ensure the safety valve is not blocked by sediment.
  - Place heaters in open, ventilated spaces.
- EXHAUST AND VENTILATION FANS**
  - Install fans at least four feet from gas cookers.
  - Do not let fans run for extended periods.
  - Clean regularly and remove dust and grease from intake vents.
- SMOKE AND GAS DETECTORS**
  - A smoke detector helps detect fire in its early stages and saves lives.
  - Water and carbon dioxide fire extinguishers help eliminate fires before they escalate.
  - A gas detector provides an additional layer of protection against leaks.

#### 3 IF TRAPPED IN A FIRE

- SEAL DOOR OPENINGS** with a blanket to block smoke from entering the room.
- CALL FOR HELP THROUGH THE WINDOW** to alert passers-by.
- CALL 999** and clearly report your location, the number of people present, and your general condition.

**STAY CALM. ACT FAST. YOUR SAFETY COMES FIRST.**

BE PREPARED. STAY ALERT. PROTECT YOUR HOME AND LOVED ONES.

999 EMERGENCY? CALL 999

running exhaust fans for extended periods — particularly kitchen fans clogged with dust and grease — is one of the most dangerous and overlooked fire triggers in Bahraini homes during summer.

Heat-stressed electrical systems, overloaded sockets, and

improperly maintained gas appliances form a deadly combination in the Gulf's most intense months.

### A Month of Repeated Callouts

May alone has seen multiple fire incidents across the Kingdom. On May 12, Civil Defence

responded to a gas leak explosion caused by a domestic stove in Jurdab. Investigations confirmed the blast caused significant structural damage and injured one female resident. Civil Defence units secured the perimeter and prevented the fire from spreading to neighbouring

homes, while the National Ambulance Service transported the injured woman to hospital.

The Civil Defence Directorate used the incident to emphasise the vital importance of regular maintenance for gas appliances and checking connections to prevent hazardous leaks in residential buildings.

In a separate incident in Adliya, Civil Defence teams extinguished a fire in a flat inside a five-storey residential building, rescuing five individuals trapped inside without injury.

### What the Civil Protection Platform Says

Bahrain's NCPP stresses that fires can cause major disasters — but most can be avoided when preventive measures are followed. The best method is to eliminate the hazards before they ignite.

Saluting the Men and Women

Yesterday's rescue in Aali was not an isolated act of bravery; it reflected what Bahrain's Civil Defence forces do day after day and increasingly under the most demanding circumstances.

These are the men and women who respond when the phone rings at 2am. Who suit up in

suffocating heat to enter burning buildings. Who coordinate rescues, contain explosions, and protect families, all while the Kingdom navigates one of the most challenging security periods in its modern history.

From extinguishing fires triggered by regional aggression to responding to domestic emergencies in residential neighbourhoods, Bahrain's Civil Defence teams have demonstrated a standard of professionalism and courage that deserves far more than a passing headline.



# Driver ordered to pay **BD5,000** over restaurant crash

Mohammed Darwish  
TDT | Manama

A restaurant owner has been awarded BD5,000 in compensation after an appeal court ruled that a driver whose vehicle crashed into the front of the business was responsible not only for the physical damage but also for the disruption that affected the restaurant for months afterwards.

The court overturned an earlier ruling that had dismissed the claim and ordered the driver to pay material and moral damages, along with court costs, legal fees and annual interest of two per cent from the date the lawsuit was filed until full

payment is made.

The case arose when a woman drove her car into the restaurant's frontage, shattering the glass entrance and damaging part of the premises. The vehicle was insured by another defendant named in the case.

Lawyer Dr Nada Al Riyashi, representing the claimants, argued that the accident caused significant damage to the restaurant and disrupted its operations. The claim sought compensation for repairs, emotional harm, lost income and losses linked to the eventual sale of the business.

The restaurant was owned by the first claimant at the time of the accident before owner-

ship later transferred to a second claimant. An expert report commissioned by the claimants confirmed that the collision had caused material damage to the property.

The lower court had rejected the claim, ruling that the first claimant was not entitled to moral damages after selling the business. It also found that delays in repairing the frontage were linked to the need to import aluminium materials rather than any fault on the part of the driver. The court further said there was insufficient evidence that the restaurant had suffered financial losses as a result of the

damage.

However, the claimants challenged that decision, arguing that the restaurant's

frontage remained damaged for around 10 months and that the driver had contributed to delays in the repair process. They said aluminium supplied after six months failed to

meet the required specifications and could not be used because it would have voided the warranty on the frontage.

Dr Al Riyashi maintained that both the driver and the insurer were liable for the damage caused by the insured vehicle under the Civil Code's compensation provisions. She argued that the prolonged delay in carrying out suitable repairs left the restaurant operating with a damaged entrance, causing ongoing disruption to the business.

The appeal court accepted those arguments, set aside the earlier judgment and awarded BD5,000 in compensation to the second claimant.



# Kuwait Health Centre reopens after major expansion

Project completed to meet growing healthcare demand in Karzakan

## ● Larger laboratory and upgraded pharmacy now operational

## ● New dental clinics and expanded treatment facilities added

Mohammed Darwish  
TDT | Manama

Residents of Karzakan are set to benefit from expanded healthcare services after the completion of a major upgrade to Kuwait Health Centre, which now includes new dental clinics, a larger laboratory, an upgraded pharmacy and expanded treatment facilities.

The Ministry of Works announced that the project has reached 100 per cent completion, with the refurbishment and expansion aimed at increasing the centre's capacity and meet-



ing growing demand for primary healthcare services.

Shaikh Meshaal bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, Undersecretary at the Ministry of Works, said the project was undertaken to enhance the centre's ability to serve the community and improve the overall quality of healthcare services. He made the remarks during an inspection visit alongside Dr Ejla Al

Alawi, Chief Executive of Primary Healthcare Centres.

The project involved renovating part of the existing building and adding two new floors at the front of the centre. The ground floor now houses administrative offices, consultants' offices and a meeting room, while the first floor has been dedicated to a fully equipped dental clinics section and related services.

The upgrade also included renovation and expansion works covering the laboratory, doctors' clinics, blood-drawing room, maternity and child-care clinic, pharmacy, treatment section and nursing facilities.

Shaikh Meshaal said the centre had been redesigned in accordance with green building standards, incorporating measures to improve energy efficien-

cy, protect the environment and make better use of natural resources.

He added that the project forms part of broader efforts to upgrade health centres across Bahrain, increase service capacity and enhance the patient experience by providing more comprehensive healthcare facilities for citizens and residents.

Dr Al Alawi said the expansion reflects ongoing efforts by Primary Healthcare Centres to improve healthcare infrastructure and deliver higher-quality



Shaikh Meshaal bin Mohammed Al Khalifa, Works Ministry Undersecretary

services to the community. She noted that the upgraded facility would provide patients and visitors with a better experience while offering healthcare professionals a more advanced environment in which to deliver care. She also stressed the importance of cooperation between government entities in implementing healthcare projects that meet high standards of quality, efficiency and long-term sustainability.

# 100

Reached 100% completion, with the refurbishment and expansion aimed at increasing the centre's capacity and meeting growing demand for primary healthcare services.



# Bahrain promotes gateway role at **Thailand trade expo**

Supply chains and food security in focus at THAIFEX talks



TDT | Manama

A Bahraini delegation took part in the opening of THAIFEX – ANUGA ASIA 2026, one of Asia's leading food and trade exhibitions, as both Bahrain and Thailand explored ways to deepen commercial ties and strengthen regional supply chains.

The delegation included H.E. Khalil Yacoub Al Khayat, Bahrain's Ambassador to Thailand, H.E. Sumate Chulajata, Thailand's Ambassador to Bahrain, businessman Khalid Ali Al Ameen, members of a Bahraini trade delegation and representatives of Gulf Air.

The visit formed part of Thailand's efforts to expand exports to Bahrain and the wider Gulf

Cooperation Council region. Discussions focused on improving logistics integration, warehouse standards and consolidated shipping models to enhance container efficiency and strengthen distribution networks across regional markets.

The Bahraini delegation also held talks with Thailand's Food Industry and Future Food Committee under the Thai Chamber

of Commerce, where discussions centred on food innovation and evolving global consumer trends.

Meetings were also held with officials from Thailand's Department of International Trade Promotion (DITP) to explore opportunities for closer cooperation at the policy level, particularly amid ongoing geopolitical developments affect-

ing regional trade and supply chains.

During the visit, the Bahraini delegation encouraged Thai food producers and business leaders to consider Bahrain as a strategic gateway to Gulf markets and a regional base for operations.

Thai representatives, in turn, reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening Thailand's role in

global food security, highlighting the country's position as a stable manufacturing hub and a reliable supplier of food and consumer goods.

Both sides stressed the importance of maintaining resilient supply chains and expressed a shared commitment to expanding sustainable economic cooperation and trade partnerships across the region.

## Oil falls, stocks mixed on US-Iran truce prospects

AFP | London, United Kingdom

Stock markets were mixed while oil prices fell again yesterday on investor optimism that the United States and Iran would reach a deal to extend their ceasefire.

Oil markets have been up and down this week as investors assess the chances of a breakthrough between Washington and Tehran that could potentially resume shipping through the crucial Strait of Hormuz.

Those hopes had been briefly dashed by new US military strikes on Iran on Wednesday, countered by the Revolutionary Guard's targeting of an American airbase in the region.

### Key figures at around 1440 GMT

Brent North Sea Crude:	▼ 2.3% at \$90.59 a barrel
West Texas Intermediate:	▼ 1.86% at \$87.25 a barrel
New York - DOW:	▲ 0.8% at 51,052.87 points
New York - S&P 500:	▲ 0.3% at 7,588.61
New York - Nasdaq:	▲ 0.3% at 26,998.10
London - FTSE 100:	▼ 0.1% at 10,416.07 (close)
Paris - CAC 40:	▼ 0.1% at 8,183.34 (close)
Frankfurt - DAX:	■ at 25,104.70 (close)
Hang Seng Index:	▲ 0.7% at 25,182.39 (close)
Tokyo - Nikkei 225:	▲ 2.5% at 66,329.50 (close)
Shanghai - Composite:	▼ 0.7% at 4,068.57 (close)
Euro/dollar:	▲ at \$1.1681 from \$1.1647 on Thursday
Pound/dollar:	▲ at \$1.3478 from \$1.3441
Dollar/yen:	▼ at 159.18 from 159.25 yen

By Thursday evening, negotiators had edged towards a deal to extend their fragile ceasefire for 60 days, pending approval from President Donald Trump, US sources told AFP.

The reports sent the S&P 500 index to another record high on Thursday, and Wall Street indices gained further on Friday in morning trading. Europe's main indices were flat ahead of the weekend. While details of the possible agreement are scarce, "oil traders are taking an optimistic view that the end could be in sight for disruption in the region", said Derren Nathan, head of equity research at Hargreaves Lansdown. However, "the mar-

ket's patience may be tested if a deal is not agreed by early June, and this could have big ramifications for the oil price and the global stock market rally," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at XTB.

Concerns are also growing that the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank may have to tighten interest rates after a run of gloomy indicators.

The Fed's preferred inflation gauge rose in April to its highest since 2023 and first-quarter US economic growth was revised lower.

### European inflation

In Europe, French data

showed Friday that its economy contracted 0.1% in the first quarter, while inflation in May accelerated to 2.4%, above the ECB's target of 2%. Germany meanwhile saw inflation slow in May to 2.6%, though analysts still expect an interest rate hike for the eurozone, possibly at the next ECB meeting on June 11.

Global AI bullishness has driven a historic rally recently, this week pushing the market capitalisations of chipmakers Micron and SK hynix across the \$1 trillion threshold. Seoul's stock market led the charge in Asia on Friday, surging 3.6% while Tokyo's Nikkei closed at a record high.

**Eight students arrested over 'suspected arson attack' at Kenyan girls' school**

AFP | Nairobi

Kenyan police yesterday said eight students had been arrested over a suspected arson attack at a girls' school that killed 16 children and hospitalised 79 others.

The fire broke in the early hours of Thursday at Utumishi Girls Academy in Kenya's Nakuru County, about 120 kilometres (75 miles) north of the capital, Nairobi.

The upper floor of the two-storey building, which had 12 cubicles housing 135 bunk beds, was badly damaged, according to police.



Police and forensic investigators stand on the rooftop as they examine the location of impact (C) over a damaged apartment

**Poland leaders alarmed over Zelensky move on WWII unit**

AFP | Warsaw

Polish leaders yesterday warned that the Ukrainian president's move to honor a controversial World War II group accused of massacring Poles risked souring relations between the two neighbors.

The row was sparked after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky named a military unit after the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA).

Polish President Karol Nawrocki told the media yesterday he was "outraged" by the move and had proposed "the withdrawal of the Order of the White Eagle from President Zelensky."

**Photo and video journalists in Gaza to receive 'Golden Pen' award**

AFP | Paris

Professional photo and video journalists working in Gaza are to receive an annual press freedom award Monday for risking their lives to report on the war, an association of publishers has said.

The 2026 Golden Pen of Freedom will be handed to representatives of global news agencies still operating in Gaza - Agence France-Presse (AFP), The Associated Press and Reuters - "whose local journalists continue to provide consistent, professional coverage under extremely challenging conditions", said the World Association of News Publishers (WAN-IFRA).

**NATO, EU outrage as drone hits Romania apartment block**

Russian drone crashes into a residential building in Galati, wounding two people overnight

- Romania expels Russian diplomat
- F-16s scrambled during incident
- Alliance considers defensive measures

AFP | Galati

A drone hit an apartment building in NATO-member Romania early yesterday, wounding two people and drawing condemnation from the Atlantic alliance and the European Union, which blamed Russia and warned against further incursions.

Romania called the incident

-- the first crash into a residential building outside Ukraine since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 -- a "serious and irresponsible escalation" by Moscow.

The drone smashed into an apartment building in the centre of the city of Galati, close to the border with Ukraine, sparking a fire and sending a 14-year-old boy and 53-year-old woman to hospital with injuries, officials said.

Drone incursions in Romania, which neighbours Ukraine, have been detected dozens of times since the start of the Russian offensive, but the crash marked the first time a residential building has been hit in the country.

**Air defence response**

"During the night of May 28-29, the Russian Federation re-

**4** minutes was the window Romanian forces had to react before the drone crashed, according to military officials

sumed drone attacks on civilian and infrastructure targets in Ukraine, near the river border with Romania," the Romanian defence ministry said.

"One of these drones entered Romanian airspace, was tracked by radar as far as the southern part of the city of Galati, and crashed onto the roof of an apartment building, with the impact triggering a fire," it said.

Two F-16 fighter jets were scrambled after the drones were detected in Romanian airspace, the defence ministry said.

Romanian forces did not have enough time to shoot down the drone, a defence official said, adding there were "no realistic opportunities to engage it safely". "The time we had available -- four minutes -- was extremely short," General Gheorghe Maxim from the Joint Forces Command told a press conference.

Romanian President Nicușor Dan said the decision not to engage was made "because the conditions necessary to destroy it without significantly endangering the safety of the civilian population were not present".

**Diplomatic fallout**

Romania summoned the Rus-

sian ambassador, and Dan convened a national defence council meeting to discuss "the most serious incident to have affected our national territory" since Russia invaded Ukraine.

Dan also said Romania would expel the Russian consul general in the Black Sea city of Constanta and close the mission, prompting Russia to say it was preparing "retaliatory measures".

A response to the move "will not be long in coming," Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told the state RIA news agency, describing the Western reaction to the drone crash as a "fuss". Romania's defence ministry meanwhile said that Bucharest had "requested measures to accelerate the transfer of anti-drone capabilities to Romania".

**Israel PM says forces pushing into Lebanon as delegations meet in US**

AFP | Beirut

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday that his country's forces had pushed deeper inside Lebanon, even as Israeli and Lebanese military delegations were holding landmark security talks in Washington.

Israel also kept up its heavy bombardment of south Lebanon yesterday, with Lebanese President Joseph Aoun emphasising in a call with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio "the need to exert all efforts to reach a ceasefire" as an essential first step, his office said.

A ceasefire in Lebanon to halt



Destroyed buildings are pictured in the village of Odaisseh in southern Lebanon fighting between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah group was supposed to have taken effect on April 17, but has never been observed.

of violating it and justify their attacks by the other's alleged breaches.

Israel and Lebanon, officially at war for decades, began direct talks in April, with a fourth round expected next week in Washington following yesterday's meeting at the Pentagon.

A Lebanese military source told AFP the country's delegation would "emphasise the need for a ceasefire, and will present the army's plan for a state weapons monopoly and the extension of state authority across the country".

Hezbollah strongly opposes the talks and has refused to disarm.

**'Very difficult'**

This week, Israel said it would ramp up operations in Lebanon, including on the ground in the south.

"Our forces have crossed the Litani," Netanyahu said during a visit to troops near the border, referring to the river that runs around 30 kilometres (20 miles) north of the Lebanon-Israel frontier.

"They have moved up to the commanding terrain. We are operating in Beirut, in the Bekaa, across the entire front and are hitting Hezbollah head on," he added, in a video released by his office.

Both sides accuse each other

1431

Hundred Years' War: 19-year-old Joan of Arc is burned at the stake by an English-dominated tribunal in Rouen, France

1539

Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto's expedition of 10 ships and 700 men lands in Florida



1848

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between the United States and Mexico comes into force, giving California, Nevada, Utah, and most of Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona to the US in return for \$15 million

1868

"Decoration Day," later called Memorial Day, is first observed in Northern US states

# Trump says making final decision on proposed Iran deal

Deal would restore unrestricted shipping through the Strait of Hormuz

● Iran demands actions over promises

● Negotiations continue through mediators

● Truce violations accusations persist

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that he was making a final decision on a potential agreement with Iran, while Tehran maintained that any deal to end the Middle East conflict depended on Washington abandoning what it described as excessive demands.

Iran's chief negotiator had earlier said Tehran would judge Washington by its actions rather than its statements, after US Vice President JD Vance said progress had been made toward extending the ceasefire and establishing a framework for broader peace negotiations.

US officials told AFP that a proposed agreement was awaiting Trump's approval following weeks of intermittent negotiations aimed at ending a conflict that has affected the Middle East and global markets.

"I will be meeting now, in the Situation Room, to make a final



US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and US President Donald Trump listens during a cabinet meeting

determination," Trump said in a social media post, repeating longstanding US demands that Iran permanently forgo nuclear weapons and restore unrestricted navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

Trump also said Iran would remove mines from the strait, that the United States would lift its naval restrictions on Iranian ports, and that both countries would coordinate efforts re-

garding Iran's enriched uranium stockpiles. He did not specify whether those provisions had already been agreed or remained under discussion.

Trump's comments came as Iran's top diplomat suggested that US negotiating positions were complicating efforts to reach an agreement.

Expectations of a possible agreement increased on Thursday after US officials expressed

optimism about diplomatic progress, with Vance telling reporters that "a lot of progress" had been achieved.

Optimism surrounding a potential agreement supported Asian stock markets yesterday, while oil prices eased slightly.

Energy markets have remained volatile as investors evaluate the prospects of an agreement that could restore normal shipping through the Strait of Hormuz,

which Iran has restricted since the conflict began.

Iran has not publicly confirmed any commitments, and Iranian media have reported that any agreement announced unilaterally by Trump would not automatically be recognised by Tehran.

Yesterday, Tasnim News Agency, citing a source, reported that the text had not yet been finalised and that the wording of the proposed memorandum of understanding had been revised in recent days.

The role of Qatar in mediation efforts has expanded, and the country's state news agency reported late Thursday that Trump had spoken with its ruler regarding the latest developments in efforts to end the conflict.



Qatar's role in the talks has grown, with Trump calling its ruler to discuss the latest updates on efforts to end the war

which Iran has restricted since the conflict began.

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## Blue Origin rocket explodes on launch pad

AFP | Washington

Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket unleashed a massive fireball into the sky as it exploded during a test on Thursday, in the latest blow to billionaire Jeff Bezos's space ambitions.

Footage shows the towering rocket erupt in an inferno, followed by a mushroom cloud of smoke as bystanders gathered to watch the launch gasp "Oh no!" and "Oh my God!"

Bezos's space company Blue Origin said in a brief statement posted to X that it had experienced an "anomaly" during the test in Cape Canaveral in the US state of Florida, and that "all personnel have been accounted for."

The explosion is the latest setback to the Amazon boss's position in the frenzied race between private companies pushing for space exploration.

"It's too early to know the root cause but we're already working to find it," Bezos wrote on X.

"Very rough day, but we'll rebuild whatever needs rebuild-



A video grab shows Blue Origin's New Glenn rocket exploding in a massive fireball

ing and get back to flying. It's worth it."

The New Glenn rocket, which stands at 98 meters (321 feet), is at the heart of Blue Origin's space ambitions, particularly in its battle against Elon Musk's SpaceX, which is currently developing the biggest rocket in history, Starship.

Musk offered his condolences, calling the accident "most unfortunate."

The disaster comes weeks after the New Glenn rocket failed a mission to deliver a

communications satellite into the correct orbit, prompting an investigation.

Although the company successfully reused and recovered a booster for the rocket, the uncrewed mission did not deliver the satellite from the company AST SpaceMobile.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said in response that it required Blue Origin to conduct a "mis-hap investigation," which was completed earlier this month.

## WHO chief in Ebola-hit DR Congo which sees first recovery



Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (L), the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), speaks with officials upon his arrival in Kinshasa

AFP | Kinshasa

The UN health chief was yesterday in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where authorities are struggling to contain the spread of a deadly Ebola outbreak but the recovery of a patient, the first since the crisis began, was confirmed.

World Health Organization (WHO) head Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus arrived in the capital, Kinshasa, late on Thursday, two weeks after the outbreak of the highly contagious hemorrhagic fever was declared.

He had been due to travel yesterday to Ituri, a remote

northeastern province that is the epicenter of the country's 17th Ebola outbreak but the trip has been pushed back by a day.

The DRC, a vast nation of more than 100 million people, is one of the poorest countries in the world and for more than three decades has been plagued by conflict from myriad armed groups in its mineral-rich east.

There have been at least 1,077 suspected cases of Ebola since the outbreak was declared on May 15, including 246 deaths, the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) said on Thursday.



TOP  
4  
TWEETS

01



Russia's war of aggression has crossed yet another line. A Russian drone incursion struck a densely populated area in Romania, injuring civilians. On EU territory. We stand in full solidarity with Romania and its people. As we continue strengthening our security and deterrence, especially on our Eastern border, we will keep increasing the pressure on Russia. We are preparing a 21st package of sanctions..

@vonderleyen

02



Full solidarity and support to Romania following the crash of a Russian drone on a residential building in Galati, injuring civilians. Russia's escalation on EU territory is reckless and irresponsible. I condemn in the strongest terms this violation of Romania's national airspace and of international law. The EU is united in stepping up pressure on Russia through sanctions and strengthening defence capabilities, in particular along our Eastern border.

@eucopresident

03



Three years of raising awareness and support for world's worst hunger crises—alongside the extraordinary people and partners working to end them. The fight against hunger is far from over, but I've seen firsthand what is possible when the world chooses to act.

@WFPchief

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

# UAE tops global ranking in AI talent growth

The United Arab Emirates ranked first globally in the growth of artificial intelligence talent concentration, recording a 121 per cent increase between 2019 and 2025, according to data cited by Lieutenant General Shaikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

In a post on X, Sheikh Saif highlighted findings from the 2026 Stanford AI Index Report, which placed the UAE at the top of a global list tracking AI talent concentration growth among LinkedIn members over a six-year period.

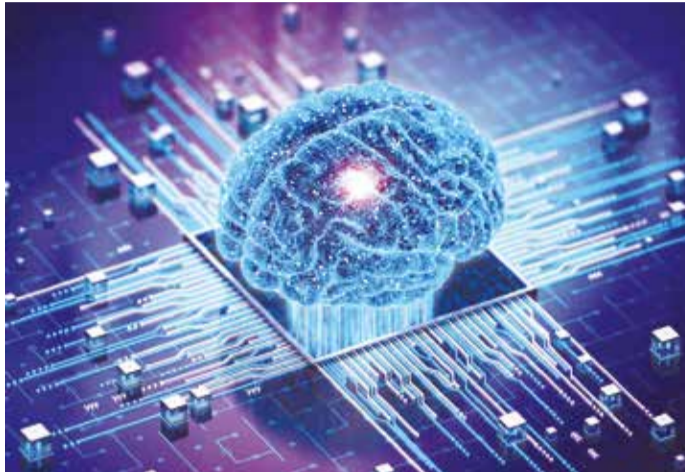
He said: "The UAE ranks first globally in the growth of AI talent concentration, at 121 per cent between 2019 and 2025."

He added that the achievement reflects more than tech-

nological progress, describing it as the result of a long-term national vision focused on human capital development, talent attraction, and future readiness.

"This figure does not merely reflect technological advancement. It embodies a leadership vision that has made human development, talent attraction and future-making a deeply rooted national approach. The UAE does not wait for the future, it creates it," he said.

The ranking comes as the United Arab Emirates continues to expand its investments in artificial intelligence, advanced technologies, and digital infrastructure, while also strengthening initiatives to attract highly skilled professionals and position itself as a global innovation hub.



According to the report, India followed closely with 120 per cent growth, while Saudi Arabia ranked third at 113 per cent. Cyprus recorded 112 per cent, and Portugal came in fifth with 111 per cent.

Other countries in the top

ten included Indonesia (108 per cent), Brazil (107 per cent), Iceland (93 per cent), Uruguay (90 per cent), and Denmark (89 per cent), reflecting rapid global competition for AI talent between 2019 and 2025.

## Kuwait Army Chief Inspects Military Sites During Eid Al Adha



The Chief of Staff of the Kuwaiti Army, Lieutenant General Khaled Draj Saad Al-Shreian, conducted an inspection tour of several military sites during the Eid Al Adha holiday, praising troops for their vigilance, discipline and dedication to national duty.

During the tour, Lieutenant General Al-Shreian extended Eid Al Adha greetings to members of the Kuwaiti Armed Forces and expressed pride in the high morale and operational readiness demonstrated by military personnel stationed across the country.

He said the commitment shown by army members in carrying out their duties reflected a strong sense of re-

sponsibility and unwavering dedication to serving the nation. He also highlighted the armed forces' continuous efforts to safeguard Kuwait's security and stability.

The Army Chief of Staff commended personnel for maintaining preparedness during the holiday period and reaffirmed the importance of their role in protecting the country and its people.

At the conclusion of the visit, Lieutenant General Al-Shreian prayed for continued prosperity, security and stability for Kuwait under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

## UAE Warns Against Extremism, Urges Stability Through Dialogue

The United Arab Emirates called for dialogue and de-escalation as the path toward sustainable peace and prosperity during an open debate at the United Nations Security Council on upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

Speaking during the session, UAE Ambassador His Excellency Mohamed Abushahab said lasting stability cannot be achieved through confrontational policies or ideological extremism, stressing the importance of diplomatic engagement and efforts to reduce



tensions.

The ambassador also highlighted what he described as illegitimate Iranian attacks over the past three months, saying

the incidents targeted civilian infrastructure and threatened freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

He warned that such actions

pose serious risks to regional security and international trade routes, particularly in one of the world's most strategically important waterways.

Ambassador Abushahab further stressed that the credibility of the international system depends on the willingness of the global community to enforce international rules and respond when violations occur.

He added that the UN Security Council carries a central responsibility in safeguarding the principles of the UN Charter and ensuring international peace and security are protected.

## Qatar, Japan Discuss Regional Diplomacy and



His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar, received a phone call from Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi. During the call, the two sides discussed bilateral cooperation and ongoing regional diplomatic efforts.

According to a statement, the officials reviewed relations between Qatar and Japan and explored ways to strengthen cooperation across various sectors.

The discussions also focused on mediation efforts

aimed at easing tensions between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Iran, including diplomatic initiatives involving Pakistan.

During the call, Sheikh Mohammed stressed the importance of all parties responding positively to the ongoing mediation efforts in order to address the root causes of the crisis through peaceful dialogue and diplomacy.

He said constructive engagement could help pave the way towards a sustainable agreement that would prevent further escalation in the region.

## Saudi, France Discuss Ties in Cyprus Meeting



Saudi Arabia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, His Royal Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, met with France's Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Jean-Noël Barrot, on the sidelines of his participation in the informal meeting of the European Council of Foreign Affairs held in the Republic of Cyprus.

During the meeting in Limassol, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations between Saudi Arabia and France, discussing ways to further strengthen coopera-

tion in a manner that serves their mutual interests across various fields.

The discussions also covered key regional and international developments, with both ministers exchanging views on their implications for security and stability in the broader region.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to the Republic of Cyprus, Mr. Fawaz bin Abdulrahman Al-Shubaili, who was present during the discussions.

## Zimbabwe President Receives Credentials of Qatar Envoy



President Emmerson Mnangagwa of the Republic of Zimbabwe received the credentials of Mr. Mubarak bin Nasser Al Khalifa as the non-resident Ambassador Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of the State of Qatar to Zimbabwe during an official ceremony held in Harare.

During the meeting, Ambassador Al Khalifa conveyed the greetings of His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Amir of the State of Qatar, to President Mnangagwa, along with wishes for his

good health and happiness and for the people of Zimbabwe to achieve continued progress and prosperity.

President Mnangagwa, in turn, asked the ambassador to convey his greetings and best wishes to the Amir of Qatar, expressing hopes for continued growth, development and prosperity for the State of Qatar.

The credential ceremony reflects the friendly relations between Qatar and Zimbabwe and their shared commitment to strengthening diplomatic ties and cooperation.

## Heavy Lift



A U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter lifts off from an airfield in the Middle East for a scheduled flight. The Chinook is both the U.S. Army's fastest and heaviest lift helicopter.

# Classifieds



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## McCullum urges England to 'box smart' like New Zealand



Brendon McCullum

AFP | London

England coach Brendon McCullum said his side can learn from a New Zealand side who "box smart" when they face his native country in an upcoming three-Test series.

Next week's opener against the Black Caps at Lord's will be England's first Test since January, when a woeful tour of Australia ended in a 4-1 Ashes series loss.

"They are probably a great example of where we're in scenarios where we can improve, where we can finesse and sharpen what we're trying to achieve," McCullum, a former New Zealand captain, told a press conference in London on Friday.

"They're very resourceful and they hang in games for a long period of time.

"They may not necessarily have as much knock-out power as some teams around the world but they box smarter than most teams in the world and hence why they've been as successful as they have for a long period of time."

McCullum was particularly admiring of a New Zealand attack that, even without the injured Matt Henry, skittled Ireland in this week's one-off Test in Belfast that also serves as a warm-up for the England series.

## Messi to lead Argentina again

Lionel Messi will play record sixth World Cup as Argentina unveils 26-man roster

- Argentina retain World Cup core

- Mastantuono misses final squad

- Romero returns from injury

- Young talents earn call-ups

AFP | Buenos Aires

Lionel Messi will captain Argentina at the World Cup, national coach Lionel Scaloni announced Thursday as he unveiled his 26-man squad.

Messi, 38, had not previously confirmed he would play in what will be a record-breaking sixth tournament for the Argentine superstar.

But it had been widely assumed the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner would again lead Argentina, four years after lifting the trophy in Qatar.

As well as confirming Messi's presence, Thursday's announcement notably excluded Real Madrid's Franco Mastantuono from the Argentina squad.

Eighteen-year-old Mastantuono is considered one of the brightest prospects in Argentine football.

The largest ever World Cup, co-hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico, kicks off June 11.

Argentina's first match will be five days later against Algeria in Kansas City.

Messi has been at the heart of an injury scare in recent days, with his club side Inter Miami this week saying medical tests diagnosed him



Lionel Messi of Argentina touches the World Cup trophy as he passes it after winning the golden ball award during the awards ceremony after the FIFA World Cup 2022 final

with muscle fatigue in his left hamstring.

The Major League Soccer club had provided no clear timetable for Messi's return after his abrupt exit from Miami's 6-4 victory over Philadelphia in the 73rd minute on Sunday.

But Scaloni had played down the seriousness of the injury this week.

## Romero returns

Center-back Cristian Romero, who suffered a knee injury last month and has not played since, was also named in the squad.

The Tottenham Hotspur captain was ruled out for the remainder of the Premier League season after he was shoved into his own goalkeeper by Sunderland striker Brian Brobbey.



Despite recent concerns over a hamstring issue, Messi's fitness fears eased after Scaloni publicly downplayed the seriousness of the injury

Argentina's roster retains 17 of the 26 players who won the title in Qatar.

Young players who received call-ups include 21-year-olds

Nicolas Paz and Valentin Barco. Palmeiras forward Jose Manuel Lopez, who only made his international debut last year, also features.

Other notable absentees include Emiliano Buendia -- currently in excellent form at Aston Villa -- and Roma star Paulo Dybala.

The South American giants will journey to the United States for pre-World Cup friendlies against Honduras on June 6 and Iceland on June 9.

Argentina's World Cup group also contains Austria and Jordan.

Along with Messi, Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo and Mexican goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa are also expected to appear in their sixth World Cups this summer.

Photos with Messi as World Cup debutants  
Jordan aim to prove they belong

AFP | Amman

Jordan play at their first World Cup determined to show they belong at football's top table and with Lionel Messi's Argentina presenting the most daunting of prospects.

Jamal Sellami's side face Austria in a tough Group J on their World Cup debut on June 16, followed by Algeria and then reigning champions Argentina in their final pool game in Dallas.

The tournament expanding to 48 teams from 32 helped propel Jordan, a country of 12 million people with a creaking football infrastructure, to their maiden finals.

"We have the right to dream," the former Moroccan international Sellami told AFP.

"We are not thinking like a team satisfied with mere participation."

Jordan had eight wins, five draws and three defeats from their 16 Asian qualifying matches, coming second behind South Korea in their group to make a slice of history.

Huge celebrations erupted in Amman, fans driving through the capital honking their horns and chanting while others waved the national flag in triumph.



Jordan's forward Mousa Al-Tamari (L) runs with his teammates during a training session

It was a second major milestone for the national side in 16 months, having reaching their first Asian Cup final.

They were beaten 3-1 by hosts Qatar in the continental decider in February 2024 but were hugely impressive in getting there against all expectations under their much-admired previous coach Hussein Ammouta.

The exciting attacking duo of Yazan Al-Naimat and Mousa Al-Tamari were pivotal in that run, terrorising the South Korean defence in a 2-0 win over

Son Heung-min's side in the semi-finals.

But Naimat will miss the World Cup in North America with a serious knee injury, one of several injury blows to the Jordan squad.

Jordan's Asian Cup heroics and World Cup qualification came against the backdrop of deep-rooted problems in domestic football.

Jordan's top division, the Pro League, is professional, but outside the traditional big teams some clubs struggle to pay their

wages.

## 'Injuries number one opponent'

The undoubted star of the Jordan squad is the winger Tamari.

Dubbed "Jordan's Messi", he plays for Rennes in France's top flight, where he scored five goals and provided the same number of assists this season.

The 28-year-old is pacy, skilful and hard working, hitting 21 goals for his country in 70 games.

With the all-action Naimat out and striker Ali Olwan also under an injury cloud, Tamari will carry a heavy burden.

The 55-year-old Sellami, who played for Morocco at the World Cup in France in 1998, said: "Injuries are our number one opponent, but we will not use them as excuses."

"We will prepare properly and aim for a respectable performance."

"The whole world wants to see who we are, and that in itself is motivation."

As for facing Messi, Sellami said: "We don't know if football will produce another player like him."

"Of course the players will want to take pictures with him."

## Narvaez drops out of Giro d'Italia, points jersey bid over



Jhonatan Narvaez

AFP | Alleghe

Jhonatan Narvaez has dropped out of the Giro d'Italia, his team said on Friday, ending the Ecuadorian's bid for the points jersey currently held by Paul Magnier.

UAE rider Narvaez abandoned the race not long after the start of Friday's punishing 19th stage which will be key to Jonas Vingegaard's bid to win his first Giro.

"Yesterday (Thursday), the Ecuadorian suffered a small crash on the transfer back to the bus which left him in some discomfort on the challenging terrain today," said UAE in a statement.

"He goes home with three stage wins in the back pocket and two stints in the ciclamino (points jersey)."

# France headline tough World Cup Group I as Mbappe faces Haaland

AFP | Paris

Photos with Messi as World Cup debutants Jordan aim to prove they belong.

Les Bleus have won the World Cup twice and lost two further finals on penalties in the last seven editions, including last time in Qatar when they were beaten by Argentina in a shootout after Kylian Mbappe scored a hat-trick in an epic contest.

France now go into their last tournament under long-serving coach Didier Deschamps, who has been in charge since 2012 and is expected to be replaced by Zinedine Zidane.

Deschamps is wary of a tough group and France have stumbled as favourites before — they arrived at the 2002 World Cup as holders and were eliminated in the group stage without scoring a goal.

Back then they lost their opening game to Senegal in Seoul, and they will hope history doesn't repeat itself when they play the Lions of Teranga in their first fixture this time, at the MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on June 16.

Kylian Mbappe

"It is one of the most difficult groups, if not the hardest," said Deschamps.

"We have a fraternal relationship with Senegal because there are a lot of dual national players who have played for French clubs and know the French players.

"And Norway are one of the very good European teams."

France have a fearsome attack that is



the envy of world football, led by captain Mbappe — top scorer in La Liga this season with Real Madrid — and reigning Ballon d'Or Ousmane Dembele, but also featuring the likes of Michael Olise and Rayan Cherki.

## Senegal threat, Norway back

Senegal's 2002 win over France sparked a best-ever run for them to the quarter-finals, and they have ambitions of another deep foray.

Their build-up has been overshadowed by the fall-out from January's Africa Cup of Nations final, when they beat Morocco 1-0 after extra time.

But the chaos in that game, when Senegal players walked off the pitch in protest at a late penalty awarded to the hosts, led to Pape Thiaw's team later being stripped of their title by the Confederation of African Football. They have appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.



**16** goals were scored by Erling Haaland in just eight World Cup qualifying matches

Norway start against Iraq in Boston and play Senegal at the MetLife Stadium before returning to Boston to play France.

That showdown will see the Premier League's top scorer Haaland take on Mbappe. Haaland scored 16 goals in eight qualifiers, including wins home and away against Italy.

He is ably supported by the likes of Arsenal playmaker Martin Odegaard and Atletico Madrid centre-forward Alexander Sorloth.

"We believe that we have a strong squad...that has achieved great results over a long period of time," said Solbakken.

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"We believe that we have a strong squad...that has achieved great results over a long period of time," said Solbakken.

Those three sides will all aim to progress, with the eight best third-placed teams also reaching the last 32.

Simply being there is an enormous achievement for Iraq, who last graced the World Cup in 1986.

Their qualifying campaign took in 21 games, including a dramatic Asian play-off against the United Arab Emirates.

Iraq secured qualification with victory over Bolivia in an intercontinental play-off in Mexico in March.

"We qualified last. If you went through every individual player and every team, and the transfer price of all the players, we would probably be the lowest ranked at the World Cup," their coach Graham Arnold told AFP.

"But it's a World Cup. Anything can happen."



Erling Haaland

## Swiatek advances at French Open

AFP | Paris

Iga Swiatek booked her place in the last 16 of the French Open yesterday.

Four-time women's champion Swiatek beat Magda Linette 6-4, 6-4 to begin play on Court Philippe Chatrier, with temperatures set to climb to 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) later in the day.

Third seed Swiatek dug herself out of an early 2-0 hole against the 35th-ranked Linette, who won their most recent meeting at Miami in March.

Swiatek broke three times in the opening set to nose ahead, and then surged into a 4-1 lead in the second set.

She overcame a stumble as she tried to close it out, before sealing victory to set up an intriguing match-up with the in-form Marta Kostyuk.



Poland's Iga Swiatek plays a backhand return to Poland's Magda Linette

"It was a good match. I played much better than Miami," said Swiatek, who moved to appoint Francisco Roig, a longtime coach of Rafael Nadal, in the

wake of her loss to Linette two months ago.

Kostyuk, the 15th seed, continued her fine run with a 6-4, 6-3 win over Switzerland's Vik-

torija Golubic.

She is unbeaten in 15 matches on clay this season following titles in Madrid and Rouen.

"Marta is having a great season. She always had a game to play well," said Swiatek.

"So good for her. But I'm going to focus on myself, prepare tactically, as before any other match, and we'll see."

Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva swept into the last 16 with a 6-4, 6-2 victory over Czech 27th seed Marie Bouzkova.

The eighth-seeded Andreeva goes on to face either 2023 French Open runner-up Karolina Muchova or Jil Teichmann on Sunday for a place in the quarter-finals.

Andreeva's best Grand Slam run came at Roland Garros in 2024 when she reached the semi-finals.

## Rishabh Pant quits as Lucknow captain after IPL flop

AFP | New Delhi

The most expensive player of the Indian Premier League, Rishabh Pant, has quit as captain of Lucknow Super Giants after it finished last in the T20 tournament, the team said yesterday.

The India Test match star has had a woeful season after being bought for \$3.21 million at the 2025 IPL auction, making him the most expensive player in the lucrative league's history.

"Rishabh approached the franchisee with his request and we have respectfully accepted it," Tom Moody, Lucknow's director of cricket, said in a statement.

"These decisions are never easy," the former Australia all-rounder added.

"We are grateful for everything Rishabh has brought to this dressing room as captain. Our focus now is on



Rishabh Pant

the collective -- rebuilding and restructuring to reach the best standards."

Pant, 28, is the second India star to quit Lucknow captaincy after KL Rahul, who led the team from 2022 to 2024.

Pant scored just 312 runs from 14 innings at a strike rate of 138.05 this season, with his team finishing last on the points table with 10 losses and just four wins.

In the last season, Lucknow finished seventh out of 10 teams under Pant's leadership.

## Vingegaard nears Giro triumph as teammate Kuss takes stage 19

AFP | Alleghe

Jonas Vingegaard took another step towards winning his first Giro d'Italia yesterday after emerging unscathed from a brutal 19th stage won by his teammate Sepp Kuss.

Pre-race favourite Vingegaard has one more stage to get through to ensure his overall triumph in the Italian Grand Tour, with Sunday's finale a procession around Rome.

The Visma-Lease a Bike rider stuck in the main peloton all day until the final, punishing climb to Alleghe after 151 kilometres of energy-sapping riding through the Dolomite mountains.

He then made sure that he stayed close to nearest rival Fe-



Jonas Vingegaard in action

lix Gall, who remains just over four minutes off the pace.

Attention now turns to Saturday's penultimate stage, which features two huge climbs to Piancavallo, with Vingegaard

knowing that he will reign supreme if he holds out.

"This is for sure one of the highlights of my Giro. It's in the top three," said Vingegaard.

"The big goal will be to stay

in the pink jersey after the end of the stage."

Vingegaard did concede the lead of the Mountains standings to Italian Giulio Ciccone, who was first over four of yesterday's six classified climbs but was denied a stage win by American Kuss who overtook him in the final two kilometres.

"It was never the primary goal (to win the stage). The main challenge was to win the pink jersey with Jonas," said Kuss, who's mother was watching on from near the finish line.

"When they told me the other night I had to go in the break, I knew I had to seize the opportunity. It's something I always dreamed of but every year it gets harder and harder.

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# Arsenal aiming to dethrone dynasty-chasing PSG

Luis Enrique targets back-to-back trophies as Mikel Arteta aims to conquer the continent

● Arsenal target their first European crown

● PSG boast tournament's best attack

● Arsenal own strongest defence

AFP | Budapest

Arsenal seek to finally conquer Europe by wresting the Champions League crown from holders Paris Saint-Germain, who are themselves targeting back-to-back titles in Budapest tonight.

Luis Enrique's French champions are favourites to defend the trophy and establish an era of dominance in their post-superstar age, with heavyweight attackers Lionel Messi, Neymar and Kylian Mbappe departed.

Homing in on a career third Champions League trophy as a coach, the Asturian cleaned house after arriving in 2023, and created a cohesive, hard-working and brilliant PSG side in his image.

Luis Enrique took them to the semis in his first season, then past Arsenal last year in the final four before crushing Inter Milan to claim the Parisians a first European Cup – 14 years and well beyond 1 billion euros (\$1.2bn) spent since Qatar Sports Investments took over the club.

By contrast Arsenal's team has been slow-cooked over near-



Combination of pictures shows Paris Saint-Germain's Spanish headcoach Luis Enrique (L) giving instructions to his players and Arsenal's Spanish manager Mikel Arteta reacting from the sideline

ly seven years by Mikel Arteta, without the overwhelming financial muscle of PSG or domestic rivals Manchester City.

Last summer they recognised their developing team was finally ready to triumph and the Gunners reinforced in key areas.

It brought a first Premier League title in 22 years and a return to Europe's grandest stage after two decades away, following their 2006 final defeat by Barcelona in Paris.

Both teams arrive in Hungary with different reputations in the

eyes of the world for the way they play.

PSG are the tournament's top scorers with 44 goals, while Arsenal are the team that has conceded fewest, shipping just six and are unbeaten.

Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele, likely to be fit after a calf problem, Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Desire Doue lead a thrilling attacking cast for a PSG side that edged Bayern Munich 6-5 in the semi-finals.

Beyond the class of winger Bukayo Saka, Arsenal stand out

more for their grit and defensive discipline, with centre-back pairing Gabriel and William Saliba their regular stand-out performers, as well as midfield powerhouse Declan Rice.

Arteta's team will embrace the underdog role, keeping the champions at bay and leaning on their superior set-piece quality.

## 'Two great teams'

Despite their contrasting styles, both sides have emerged as the competition's outstanding teams this season, shaped by two



of the game's most demanding coaches.

Luis Enrique showed his tactical flexibility in the second leg against Bayern and never likes his team to be predictable.

"I think we're talking about two great teams – along with Bayern Munich, the three best teams in Europe," the Asturian coach told UEFA.

"We'll have to adapt to play and defend in a different way compared to how we usually do if we want to get the better of them."

Along with Dembele the PSG right-back Achraf Hakimi is also expected to win his fitness battle for the game, while Arsenal defender Jurrien Timber is doubtful with a groin problem.

The French side's regular starters have largely played far fewer minutes than their Arsenal counterparts this season.

PSG play fewer matches in general and despite that, Luis

Enrique has rotated and rested players regularly.

Arsenal were pushed to the limit to claim the English title, while PSG were often able to leave their European starters on the bench domestically.

PSG matches against Nantes and Lens were also moved to suit the French club's European campaign.

Former Arsenal great Thierry Henry agrees his team enter the clash at the Puskas Arena as underdogs to a PSG side aiming to become the only side in the modern Champions League era to win the competition back-to-back, besides record 15-time winners Real Madrid.

"We're not at the level of those guys yet so you've got to be humble," Henry told CBS Sports.

"Paris Saint-Germain have the experience of knowing what it is to win it."

The Frenchman finished as a runner-up with Arsenal in 2006, but later won the trophy elsewhere, with Barcelona in 2009.

However Arsenal's eventual Premier League triumph, after three consecutive second-place finishes, might give them the confidence they need to write a new chapter in the club's history.

"They called us bottlers," gloated Arsenal's Myles Lewis-Skelly, brandishing a bottle of champagne during the team's Premier League celebrations.

"And now we're holding the bottle."

The Gunners hope to be uncorking many more on Saturday night.

## Bahrain end contract with basketball coach Vovorras



Georgios Vovorras talks to players (file photo)

TDI | Manama

The Bahrain Basketball Federation has announced the termination of its contract with Greek coach Georgios Vovorras and assistant coach Ioannis Tsousis by mutual agreement following their tenure with the national team.

Vovorras most recently guided Bahrain's senior national team at the Arab Basketball Championship, which was hosted in the kingdom. He also oversaw the national youth

team during its participation in the Albert Schweitzer International Tournament in Germany, one of the leading international youth basketball events.

The federation did not provide further details regarding the decision.

The Bahrain Basketball Federation is expected to announce a new coaching staff in the coming period to lead the senior national team in its upcoming qualification campaigns.



Abdullah Al-Hashash reacts during a match (file photo)

## East Riffa sign Bahrain international Al-Hashash

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East Riffa Club have completed the signing of Bahrain international striker Abdullah Al-Hashash from Al-Ahli Club ahead of the upcoming football season, the newly promoted club announced.

The move is part of East Riffa's recruitment drive as it strengthens its squad for the new campaign.

Al-Hashash was among the standout local forwards in the Nasser bin Hamad Premier League last season, scoring 12

goals for Al-Ahli. He finished second in the scoring charts, one goal behind Al-Khaldiya's Joel Beya, who claimed the league's golden boot award.

The 27-year-old is expected to bolster East Riffa's attacking line with his proven goalscoring record and experience in Bahraini football.

East Riffa will be hoping the addition of Al-Hashash helps the club mount a strong challenge in domestic competitions during the forthcoming season.

## Al-Ahli, Barbar set for Bahrain Handball League final

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Al-Ahli and Barbar will meet on Tuesday in the final of the Khalid bin Hamad Handball League for the 2025-26 season, with the championship title set to be decided in a highly anticipated showdown.

Al-Ahli booked their place in the final after defeating Al-Shabab 2-0 in their best-of-three semi-final series, continuing the strong form that has characterised their league campaign.

Barbar advanced in similar fashion, overcoming defending champions Al-Najma 2-0

in the semi-finals to secure a place in the title decider. The victory extended Barbar's impressive run this season and set up a meeting with Al-Ahli in the final.

The match is expected to attract significant interest given the stature of the two clubs and

their shared ambition to end lengthy waits for the league crown.

Both sides have produced consistent performances throughout the season, setting the stage for a closely contested final in Bahrain's premier handball competition.