

Djokovic stuns Sinner to set up Australian Open final with Alcaraz

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Overseas transactions not bound by domestic OTP rules

'Dire' conditions in Gaza: Red Cross
AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The world must scale up efforts to alleviate the human suffering in Gaza, building on the momentum from the ceasefire's first phase, the head of the Red Cross said yesterday.

"States must harness the momentum generated by the first phase of the agreement between Israel and Hamas to urgently improve the dire humanitarian conditions in Gaza," Mirjana Spoljaric, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said in a statement.

Man dies after falling from building in Al Suwayfiyah
TDT | Manama

A 44-year-old Asian man has died after falling from a building in the Al Suwayfiyah area, the Capital Police confirmed.

Authorities rushed to the scene and have begun the necessary investigations, the police said. The circumstances surrounding the incident are under review by the competent authorities.

Further details have not been released as investigations continue.

Nestle acknowledges delay before baby milk recall



AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

Swiss food giant Nestle has acknowledged that it waited days for a health-risk analysis before alerting authorities after detecting a toxin in its baby milk at a Dutch factory.

But in an open letter to campaign group Foodwatch France Friday it denied accusations of negligence.

The company in December recalled batches of its infant formula in 16 European countries after detecting cereulide, a bacterial toxin that can cause diarrhoea and vomiting.

220 fils (includes VAT)



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When the Ground Gives Way



The aerial view shows a part of a giant landslide in Niscemi, Sicily. A large area of the town of Niscemi is declared "red zone" after a 4km-long stretch of the hillside collapsed, forcing the evacuation of some 1,500 people. The town, built on unstable terrain, was battered by a powerful storm which hit southern Italy last week and experts say the chasm could widen further and swallow houses with the rains expected over the coming days.

Trump predicts Iran will seek deal to avoid US strikes



AFP | Paris, France

President Donald Trump predicted yesterday that Iran would seek to negotiate a deal rather than face American military action, despite Tehran warning that its arsenal of missiles would never be up for discussion.

"I can say this, they do want to make a deal," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office. Asked if he had given Iran a deadline to enter talks on its nuclear and missile programmes, Trump said "yeah, I have", but refused to say what it was.

"We have a large armada, flotilla, call it whatever you want, heading toward Iran right now," Trump said, referring to a US naval carrier group in waters off Iran. "Hopefully we'll make a deal. If we do make a deal, that's good. If we don't make a deal, we'll see what happens."

Bread prices to stay low



Free market applies to all goods except flour and bread

Subsidised flour is produced by Bahrain Flour Mills Company and supplied directly to registered bakeries

The ministry took action on 150 confirmed price-tampering violations in 2024

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama



Kuboos traces its origins to the ancient Middle East, where flatbreads were being baked more than 4,000 years ago in regions of Mesopotamia and the Levant, making it one of the oldest forms of bread still commonly eaten today.

Bread will continue to be affordable across the Kingdom, with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce reaffirming price regulation under the subsidy system.

The ministry said direct price controls apply only to government-subsidised flour and bread produced from it, stressing that there is no wider price-setting for food or consumer goods under the free-market approach.

The clarification was given in a written parliamentary response to MP Lulwa Al Rumaihi in response to a question on free-market trade practices.

According to the ministry, the

directly to traditional and automated bakeries registered with the ministry.

Bread made from subsidised flour is covered by a separate 1978 decision regulating sale prices. The products include local tannour bread, Lebanese (pita) bread, sliced bread, as well as samnoon and roll bread.

The ministry said it regularly monitors price displays and market trends and can intervene when abnormal conditions lead to unjustified increases in essential goods.

It also disclosed that the Consumer Protection Directorate received 217 complaints in 2024 related to tampering with announced prices, representing about three per cent of all complaints received during the year. Legal and administrative action was taken in all cases, with 150 confirmed as violations, while the remaining 67 could not be substantiated due to insufficient documentation or evidence from complainants.

Robo docs to the rescue

AI helps doctors spot breast cancer in scans: world-first trial

AFP | Paris, France

Artificial intelligence helps doctors spot more cases of breast cancer when reading routine scans, a world-first trial found yesterday.

The results suggest countries should roll out programmes tak-

ing advantage of AI's scanning power to ease the workload of short-staffed radiologists, the Swedish lead researchers said.

Well before the release of ChatGPT in 2022 raised global awareness about AI, scientists had been testing out the technology's capacity to read med-

ical scans.

But the new study published in The Lancet medical journal marks the first completed randomised controlled trial -- the gold standard for this kind of re-

search -- looking at AI-supported breast cancer screening.

The trial involved more than 100,000 women who received routine breast cancer scans across Sweden in 2021 and 2022.



Fishing limits tightened

Fewer Non-Bahraini Workers Allowed at Sea

Stronger enforcement: Expanded Coast Guard patrols, inspections, and penalties aim to prevent illegal fishing and protect marine resources

New monitoring unit: The Marine Monitoring Directorate, with additional staff and vessels, tracks violations and coordinates with the Supreme Council for Environment; over 927 breaches reported since early 2024

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama



The Kingdom is tightening rules on foreign workers in its fishing industry, limiting the number of non-Bahrainis allowed on vessels operating in territorial waters. The move aims to prevent overfishing, protect marine resources, and ensure that fishing activity

matches the capacity of each vessel. Under Decree No. 4 of 2025, a fishing vessel may employ up to two expatriate workers depending on its length, while a banoush can carry up to six, with the limit set according to gross tonnage.

To enforce the rules, the Coast

Guard will expand patrols and

conduct closer inspections, with

tougher penalties planned to

combat illegal fishing. Vessels

caught breaching registration,

safety, or monitoring rules can

be barred from sailing for up to

a month.

Minister of Parliamentary Af-

fairs Ghanim Al Buainain made

the announcement in response

to an urgent motion calling

for stricter oversight of

non-Bahraini labour

in the fishing sector.

The government ex-

pressed agreement

with both the Shura

Council and Parlia-

ment on increasing penalties

under Article 33 of Decree-Law

No. 20 of 2002, which governs

the regulation, exploitation, and

protection of marine resources.

A new Marine Monitoring Directorate under the Coast Guard has been established to tackle illegal fishing, monitor environmental violations, and coordinate enforcement with relevant agencies. The unit has grown by 89 personnel and added 20 new vessels to its fleet.

The General Di-

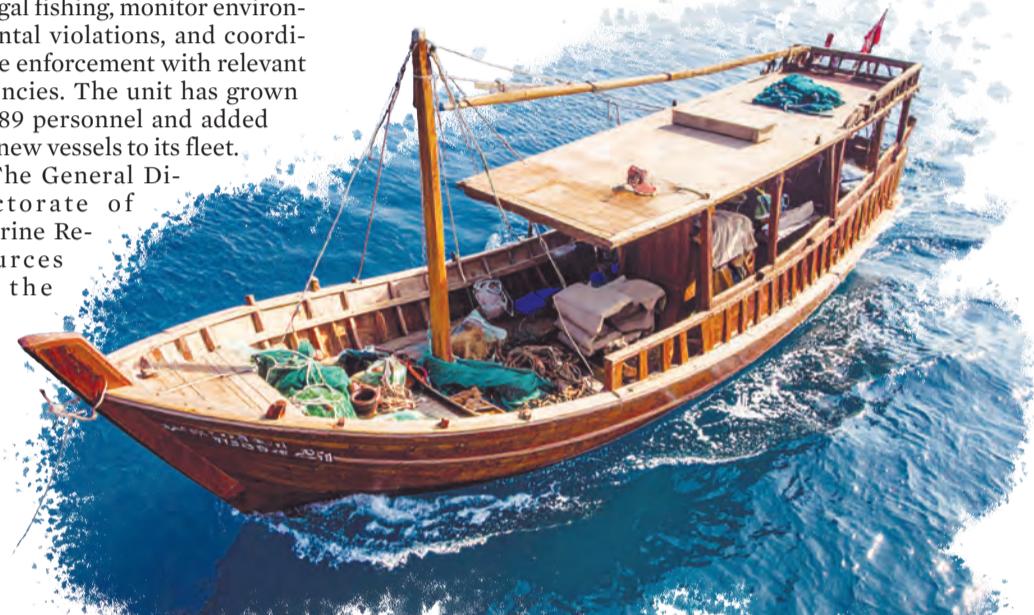
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Marine Re-

sources at the

Supreme Council for Environment is working alongside the Coast Guard to track overfishing and improper practices. Since early 2024, more than 927 violations have been reported, down from 2,465 in 2023. Between 2022 and 2025, 113 violations

were linked to expatriate labour. Criminal cases are handled under Decree-Law No. 20 of 2002 and referred to the Public Prosecution.



New rules steer worker housing away from family neighbourhoods

Stricter Standards for Shared Worker Housing Approved by Government

Industrial Zones to Host Most Worker Accommodation Under New Plan

Mohammed Darwish

The government is cracking down on shared worker housing in residential areas, aiming to protect family neighbourhoods while steering purpose-built accommodation into industrial zones. The move forms part of a broader effort to ensure safe, healthy, and regulated living conditions for migrant workers across the Kingdom.

Parliament approved the proposal, submitted by Second Deputy Speaker Ahmed Qarata and MPs Mohsen Al Asbool, Mahmood Fardan, Hassan BuKhammas, and Mamdouh Al Saleh, during its 5 November 2024 session. The measures build on Resolution No. 17 of 2020, which allows worker housing to be established within



Ahmed Qarata, Parliament's Second Deputy Speaker

industrial zones. Industrial plot tenants may also permit a limited number of workers to reside on-site for guarding or project management, with allowances tied to plot size.

Housing standards are guided by Minister of Labour Resolution No. 40 of 2014, requiring employers to provide accommodation with sufficient space, ventilation, kitchens,

bathrooms, and regular maintenance, while notifying the Ministry of Labour of the location, number, and gender of occupants. Minister of Health Resolution No. 76 of 2020 sets additional health and safety requirements to protect workers.

Oversight has been strengthened through field teams in each governorate, including

representatives from Health, Labour, Municipal Affairs, Civil Defence, and the Labour Market Regulatory Authority. These teams conduct inspections, record violations, and ensure compliance.

Other regulations include Resolution No. 35 of 2015, mandating property owners to notify municipalities within 30 days if a property is leased as shared worker housing and to register it while meeting space, safety, and health standards. Lease contracts cannot be registered without municipal approval under Law No. 27 of 2014, and certificates of compliance must be renewed at least every three years. Non-compliance can result in lease cancellation and disconnection of utilities.

The Ministry of Interior handles complaints related to housing violations and illegal residency, while Civil Defence enforces fire and safety standards. The government continues to review policies in coordination with Parliament to protect both workers and residential communities.

Family-joining visas for Bahraini spouses processed within five days, government says

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

The government has confirmed that family-joining visas for spouses of Bahraini citizens are now processed



within five days, providing faster and more efficient services to support family unity and social stability.

The announcement follows a review of an urgent proposal submitted by MP Jalal Kadhem, who

called for quicker visa and residency procedures for spouses of Bahraini men and women. The proposal was approved by Parliament in November 2024.

Ministers stated that routine applications are typically completed within the five-day timeframe. However, some cases may take longer if additional documentation is required, fur-

ther administrative checks are needed, or multiple authorities must conduct extra scrutiny.

The government emphasized that current processing times meet the objectives of the proposal, ensuring that Bahraini citizens and their families can benefit from timely and reliable visa and residency services.

vising BINUH's mandate to focus on six key tasks, including

promoting accountability and human rights, supporting electoral and political processes, reducing gang violence, and assisting Haiti's justice sector.

TDT | Manama

Bahrain voted in favor of UN Security Council Resolution, which renews the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) for another year.

The resolution, co-penned by the US and Panama, extends BINUH's mandate until Jan. 31, 2027 and was adopted unanimously by the Council.

Ambassador Jamal Fares Al-Ruwaie, Bahrain's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York, welcomed the Council's unanimous adoption, highlighting the ongoing humanitarian and security challenges in Haiti.

He reaffirmed Bahrain's commitment to international cooperation, stressing the importance of coordinated efforts with the UN and regional partners to enhance stability, security, and development in Haiti. Al-Ruwaie expressed Bahrain's solidarity with the Haitian government and people and called for international support to help the country overcome current challenges and build a safer, more stable future.

The resolution proposes re-

BETTER YOU KNOW

The United Nations Integrated Office in Haiti (BINUH) was established by the UN Security Council in 2019 to support political stability, strengthen the rule of law, promote human rights, and assist Haitian authorities in security sector reform. It serves as a follow-up to the earlier UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which operated from 2004 to 2017.

Dealers must honour warranties on imported cars

Work is also underway at the GCC level to unify car warranty

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

The government has confirmed that car dealers in Bahrain are le-

gally required to provide the warranties offered by manufacturers on imported vehicles. Authorities said work is also underway at the GCC level to unify car warranty and maintenance procedures across member states. Under the proposed framework, a warranty issued in one GCC country would be recognized in others on a reciprocal basis. The possibility of a single GCC-wide warranty, requiring manufacturers to provide the same coverage in all member states, is also being examined.

The clarification came in response to a proposal filed in January 2025 by MPs Khalid Buanaq, Hisham Al Awadhi, Abdulwahid Qarata, Moham-

med Al Ma'rafi, and Zainab AbdAlAmeer, calling for dealers to provide warranty and maintenance services for imported vehicles without charging extra fees. Lawmakers argued that buyers should have access to warranty coverage for manufacturing defects or vehi-

cles still under the manufacturer's warranty.

The government pointed to Decree-Law No. 10 of 1992, which obliges commercial agents to honor manufacturer guarantees, provide spare parts, tools, and re-

lated services for goods under their agreements. Law No. 35 of 2012 on consumer protection also requires traders to issue a dated invoice specifying the product, price, and warranty period, further safeguarding buyers' rights.

Representative picture



Mps mull delaying deportation over outstanding debts



Hassan Eid Bukhammas, Chairman of Parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and National Security Committee

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

MPs will vote on Tuesday on a proposed amendment that could delay the deportation of convicted foreigners if they have unpaid debts.

The draft seeks to amend Article 64 bis of the Penal Code, which currently allows courts to order the deportation of a foreigner permanently or for a minimum of three years following a conviction. The amendment would retain this power but require authorities to take creditors' rights into account before enforcing a deportation order.

Authorities also cautioned that the amendment could be abused through fabricated claims to block deportation. The Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Judicial Council opposed the draft, saying deportation serves a public interest that should not be subordinated to private disputes.

While the National Institution for Human Rights called for further study and the Bahrain Bar Society expressed conditional support, a parliamentary committee recommended rejecting the amendment, arguing that creditor protection should remain within civil enforcement laws.

MPs will decide whether to proceed with the Penal Code change or rely on existing civil law reforms to protect creditors.

determine criminal sentences, restrict judicial discretion, and delay removals indefinitely. Existing laws already allow courts to impose travel bans to prevent debtors from fleeing, while making clear that such bans do not override final deportation orders.

Authorities also cautioned that the amendment could be abused through fabricated claims to block deportation. The Ministry of Justice and the Supreme Judicial Council opposed the draft, saying deportation serves a public interest that should not be subordinated to private disputes.

While the National Institution for Human Rights called for further study and the Bahrain Bar Society expressed conditional support, a parliamentary committee recommended rejecting the amendment, arguing that creditor protection should remain within civil enforcement laws.

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Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Consumer complaints filed with the Ministry of Industry and Commerce fell for the third consecutive year, de-clin-

from 7,686 cases in 2023 to 7,153 in 2024 and 6,429 in 2025, according to figures submitted to Parliament following a question by MP

Mohammed Salman Al Ahmed

MPs said it enforces the Con-

Protection Law through inspections, market monitoring and legal action where violations are proven, aiming first to resolve disputes amicably before escalating cases when necessary.

Electrical and electronic goods accounted for the largest share of complaints across the three years, followed by vehicles, clothing and footwear, and contracting services. Delivery service complaints rose sharply in 2025, while food-related complaints continued to fall.

Mohammed Salman Al Ahmed, MP

Expat worker awarded BD627 after company fails to pay leave and end-of-service benefits

● The ruling also requires the firm to pay legal interest at one per cent per year

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

The High Labour Court has ordered a company to pay BD627 in compensation to an expatriate worker after finding it failed to settle his end-of-service benefits and annual leave pay when his two-year contract ended.

The ruling also requires the firm to pay legal interest at one per cent per year from the date the case was filed until the full amount is settled, in addition to covering court costs.

The compensation includes

During proceedings, the company denied any employment relationship with the claimant and alleged that the signature on the employment contract submitted to the court was forged, requesting that the original document be produced.



leave and BD376 as an end-of-service gratuity.

According to lawyer Zainab Al Halwachi, the work-

er was employed on a fixed-term contract for two years, earning a monthly salary of BD250, and had fulfilled his duties throughout the contract period.

During proceedings, the company denied any employment relationship with the claimant and alleged that the signature on the employment contract submitted to the court was forged, requesting that the original document be produced.

The worker told the court that the original contract was retained by the company, and the court also heard testimony from witnesses.

In its judgment, the court said the company failed to prove that the worker had taken his annual leave or that it had paid him cash in lieu of leave for the period claimed, leading to the award in the worker's favour.

New locations planned for food trucks after sudden removals

Move aims to protect livelihoods while easing traffic and safety concerns

● Owners' concerns addressed: MPs warned sudden removals could cause heavy losses for operators, many of whom rely on food trucks as their main source of income

● Clear rules set: New sites must meet traffic, safety, health and property permission requirements, with coordination ongoing between authorities and truck owners

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Plans are underway to identify suitable alternative locations for food trucks currently operating along National Charter Highway and in other areas, as part of efforts

to relocate them without disrupting livelihoods.

Mohammed Al Olaiwi, MP



The government has approved an urgent parliamentary proposal on the issue, with the municipality already searching for sites that offer adequate parking and necessary facilities. The move follows concerns raised by MPs that a removal decision by the Southern Municipality was taken without prior notice, risking significant financial losses for food truck owners.

Lawmakers said many operators had taken bank loans to launch their businesses, including individuals who were previously unemployed and turned to food trucks as a primary source of income. They stressed that sudden removals could place these businesses, and the families who depend on them, under severe financial strain.

The government said work is being carried out in coordination with food truck owners, taking their preferences into account when identifying alternative sites. It added that any new locations must meet specific criteria, including not posing risks to pedestrians, blocking visibility, obstructing entrances or exits, or impeding traffic flow. Food trucks must also not be stationed within road reserves or directly outside residential properties.

Additional requirements include the availability of parking spaces within property boundaries, compliance with health, safety and security

standards, and obtaining written permission from property owners.

The proposal was submitted by MPs Mohammed Al Olaiwi, Mohammed Al Rifai, Mohsen Al Asboot, Mohammed Moosa and Ahmed Al Saloom. MP Mohammed Al Olaiwi said alternative sites should be ready before any removals take place and called for support to help owners relocate their equipment to avoid extra costs. He noted that Bahrain has around 500 licensed food trucks, providing income for roughly 500 families.

Representative picture



Plot-plus-loan schemes

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

MPs will discuss a draft law on Tuesday that would make it easier for low-income citizens to build homes on government-allocated plots by pairing the land with affordable loans.

The bill proposes adding a paragraph to the existing housing law, saying the ministry responsible for housing must provide financing to citizens given plots, and the minister would set the rules for

awarding the funding. Supporters say this would help families who currently receive land but lack the means to construct a house, turning land allocations into actual homes.

Currently, the ministry already helps low-income citizens through housing programmes that provide homes to rent or buy, loans to build or renovate, and housing plots. The minister can also add services as needed.

Parliament's Public Utilities and Environment Committee

and Environment Committee supports the idea but suggested wording that avoids naming a specific ministry, so future government changes won't require amendments.

The government, however, says the law already allows financing under existing powers, and making it a legal requirement could slow down delivery and lengthen waiting lists. They also warn that specifying a ministry in the law offers little benefit and could cause extra paperwork if government structures change.

The draft law includes three main articles, covering financing, implementation, and ministerial responsibilities.



Parliament to discuss market upgrades and vendor regulations

Hasan Barakat
TDT | Manama

Parliament will discuss proposals on urban services, public markets, and small-scale commercial activity during Tuesday's session.

One proposal focuses on revitalising Manama Souq, aiming to improve facilities, organisation, and accessibility while preserving the market's traditional character.

Another calls for the comprehensive redevelopment of Sitra Central Market, urging the government to upgrade the market to meet modern quality standards.

Lawmakers are also addressing issues related to vendors. Some proposals seek the removal of street vendors and



food trucks in certain areas, while others call for pausing the relocation of vendors at Jidhafs Market until suitable alternative sites are found. Additionally, MPs have requested a review of decisions affecting food trucks on In-

sitra central market dependence Street and other locations. The discussions reflect efforts to balance modernisation and regulation with support for small traders and the preservation of Bahrain's historic market areas.

Government rejects calls to lift seasonal fishing ban

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

A series of urgent parliamentary requests to lift a seasonal fishing ban and compensate Bahraini fishermen have been rejected by the government, which says the restrictions are lawful and necessary to protect declining fish stocks.

In a written reply to Parliament, the government said it reviewed calls to suspend Decision No. (2) of 2024, which bans the fishing of safi, sha'ri and 'andaq in Bahrain's territorial waters during April and May each year. It said the ban applied only in



May in 2024 and could not be halted.

The government cited Decree-Law No. (20) of 2002, which allows temporary fishing bans to preserve marine resources in the public interest. It said data showed a sharp fall in catches of the three species, linked to fishing practices that catch juvenile fish and to exports that reduce local supply and push prices up.

It said April and May are peak spawning months and noted that similar seasonal bans are used in neighbouring countries. Proposals to compensate fishermen or expand support during the ban

period were also rejected.

The government said the ban is limited in scope, covering only three species for two months, and does not stop fishing altogether. It added that support already exists, including fuel subsidies, boat and equipment support, Tamkeen wage schemes and aquaculture programmes.

Five MPs filed the proposals in April 2025, arguing the ban causes financial losses and calling for compensation and wider relief measures.

Dr Hisham Al Ashiri, MP



Overseas transactions not bound by domestic OTP rules

Banks cannot be forced to require OTP for overseas online purchases

● Domestic e-banking rules, customer authentication measures, and monitoring systems continue to safeguard against fraud

● Customers are urged to keep account details private, report suspicious activity immediately

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Banks cannot be compelled to mandate one-time password (OTP) verification for online purchases made with overseas companies, the government told Parliament.

The clarification came in response to an urgent proposal filed in April 2024 by MPs Khalid Buainan -

Dr Maryam Al Dhaen, MP



aq, Maryam Al Dhaen, Mohamed Al Ahmed, Zainab Abdulla Alamer, and Mohammed Al Ma'arifi, which called on the Central Bank of Bahrain to require OTP verification for all internet transactions and to ensure spending stays

within the card's credit limit. While OTPs already protect online payments within Bahrain, the same system cannot be applied to overseas transactions. "The central bank would study that point to find a solution that better protects consumers," the government said.

A one-time password (OTP) is a security feature used in online banking and digital payments. It is a temporary, single-use code sent to a user's phone or email to verify identity, helping prevent unauthorized access and fraud. OTPs are widely used for domestic transactions but are not always enforceable for international or cross-border payments.



Providers must also take steps to prevent third-party fraud, strengthen monitoring systems to detect suspicious activity, and alert customers to online scams.

The government emphasized that customers should keep account details private, contact banks only through official channels if fraud is suspected, and report incidents immediately to relevant authorities. Banks are also instructed to maintain unified communication channels, including mechanisms for sending website links and updates through licensed parties.

1,000-dinar fee to remain for registering older Gulf-plated cars

Government rejects MPs' call to cut charges for vehicles over five years old

● The government said the policy helps prevent Bahrain becoming a destination for unsafe vehicles and comes amid rising vehicle numbers

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

a 30-day grace period for citizens to regularise their vehicles. The proposal was submitted during an October 2024 sitting by MP Hanan Fardan and other

lawmakers, who argued that high costs were placing an unfair burden on low-income citizens.

The government cited traffic data showing the number of registered vehicles increasing by 3.26 per cent annually, or around 20,000 vehicles a year. Total registrations reached

749,376 in 2023, up from 545,155 in 2013 and 273,230 in 2003.

Under Article 98 of Decision No. 154 of 2015, imported used private cars, passenger transport vehicles and motorcycles more than five years

well as some heavy vehicles over ten years old, cannot normally be registered. Exceptions apply to vintage vehicles, diplomatic missions and government bodies.

However, Ministerial Decision No. 17 of 2021 amended Article 98 to allow the registration of imported private vehicles over five years old, provided

owners pay 1,000 dinars to open a registration file. The government said the policy is intended to prevent Bahrain from becoming a destination for vehicles that fail safety standards.

Additional examples

tions apply to vehicles belonging to diplomatic staff, Bahrainis working or studying abroad whose cars were exported from Bahrain, and government institutions when required. The government stressed that the fee is a regulatory restriction rather than a ban, applied only to those choosing to import older vehicles.

MPS said the fee, combined with 15 per cent taxes and customs duties, has forced some owners to remove their vehicles from Bahrain, arguing that a lower fee and grace period would help citizens regularise their status.



Representative image

The registration fee for Gulf-plated vehicles more than five years old will remain at 1,000 dinars, after the government rejected a parliamentary proposal to reduce the charge to between 300 and 700 dinars.

MPS had called for the fee to be lowered to 300 dinars for vehicles that entered Bahrain before October 2024, along with MP Hanan Fardan.

Workers can change employers after one year without consent, government tells Parliament

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Expatriate workers in Bahrain can transfer to a new employer after completing one year of service, even without approval from their current employer, the government has confirmed in a reply to Parliament.

The response came after MPS submitted an urgent proposal calling for stricter controls on worker transfers while contracts are still active. Authorities said the existing legal framework already addresses these concerns.

Under Article 25 of Law No. 19 of 2006, a worker may move

provided the transfer does not violate the employer's rights under the law or contract.

The law also provides a grace period after a work permit expires or is cancelled, allowing transfers to proceed while barring the worker from taking another job during that time.

The Labour Market Regula-

tory Authority (LMRA) requires workers to notify their current employer by registered letter within a three-month notice window.

Transfers are blocked in certain cases, including criminal convictions, violations of work permit terms, or failure to meet permit conditions.

The LMRA also reviews new employer applications to ensure fees are paid, rights are protected, and social insurance and Wage Protection System rules are met.

Employers retain the right to take legal action if a transfer harms their contractual or legal rights.

Government rejects MPs' call to freeze transactions over consumer law complaints

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

The government has rejected an urgent parliamentary request to freeze all government transactions for individuals accused of violating the Consumer Protection Law, saying a complaint alone does not prove wrongdoing.

In a written reply to Parliament, authorities explained that a breach is only confirmed after a final criminal judgment. Until then, the person involved cannot be treated as a proven violator, and suspending government dealings based solely on a complaint would amount to acting before the courts have ruled.

The proposal called for a blanket suspension of transactions under Law No. 35 of 2012 on Consumer Protection. The government said such a measure is unnecessary, pointing out that the law already imposes strong deterrents. Articles 18 to 22 set criminal penalties for proven violations, while Article 23 allows administrative action, including warnings, temporary closures, or removal from the commercial register for up to six months.

Authorities warned that implementing the proposal could unfairly penalize people if complaints are unfounded or malicious. They added that the existing combination of criminal and administrative sanctions is more effective than freezing government transactions, and already achieves the intended protective measures.

News in brief

Trump says 'very dangerous' for UK to deal with China



US President Donald Trump said Thursday it was "very dangerous" for close ally Britain to deal with China, as UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer visits Beijing for talks with Chinese leader Xi Jinping. Trump made the remarks to reporters while attending the premiere of a documentary about his wife, First Lady Melania Trump. Asked on the press line for his reaction to Britain "getting into business" with China, the president said: "Well it's very dangerous for them to do that."

Indian police have arrested the owner and manager of a warehouse in Kolkata where at least 25 people died in a blaze, officials said yesterday.

Rescuers in the West Bengal state capital were combing through the debris for dozens more still feared missing after the fire that erupted on Monday engulfed two adjacent warehouses, including one belonging to a fast-food company. "The victims were burnt alive. Rescue teams are digging into the rubble and debris to find charred remains," Ranvir Kumar, the director general of fire and emergency services in the eastern state, said.

North Korea's Kim sets construction goals for underdeveloped regions



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un laid out ambitious plans Thursday for major construction projects across the country in the coming year, including public health facilities, leisure complexes and industrial plants to be built in 20 regions. "We are now standing on the starting line of our gigantic struggle for another year, aimed at transforming the regions," Kim said in a speech cited by the official KCNA news agency.



India arrests owner, manager after warehouse blaze kills 25

Kremlin says agreed to halt strikes on Kyiv until Sunday

Trump requested halt due to extreme cold

Energy infrastructure remains partly targeted elsewhere

AFP | Kyiv

The Kremlin yesterday said President Vladimir Putin had agreed to stop striking Kyiv for a week -- ending Sunday -- following a request by his US counterpart Donald Trump.

Trump had said he asked Putin to halt strikes on the Ukrainian capital and the surrounding area due to extreme cold weather.

Moscow, meanwhile, said the US leader had made the appeal in order to help the Washington-driven negotiation process to end almost four years of war between the neighbours.

Russia's battering of Ukraine's energy grid has left whole districts without heating, with temperatures expected to plunge to around -30C in Kyiv in the coming days, raising fears of a humanitarian crisis.

"I can say that President Trump did indeed make a personal request to President Putin to refrain from striking Kyiv for a week until February 1 in order to create favourable conditions for negotiations," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Neither the US leader nor Moscow clarified when Trump had asked Putin.

"I personally asked President Putin not to fire into Kyiv and the various towns for a week,"



A man holding flowers stands next to a building with its windows protected by sandbags against possible damage caused by air strikes in Kyiv

Trump told a cabinet meeting at the White House a day earlier, adding it was "because of the cold, extreme cold."

This week, Ukraine has not reported the usual large-scale barrage of drones and missiles that Russia has launched at Kyiv throughout the war.

"There were no strikes on energy facilities last night," Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelensky said on social media yesterday.

He added, however: "But yesterday afternoon our energy infrastructure in several regions was hit."

Zelensky had earlier welcomed Trump's announcement.

"If Russia does not strike our

energy infrastructure -- generation facilities or any other energy assets -- we will not strike theirs," he told journalists, including AFP, in comments released yesterday.

Freezing temperatures

Still, Ukraine's air force said Moscow launched dozens of drones and a missile at Ukraine at night.

The attacks damaged civilian infrastructure in the northern Chernigiv region and a residential building in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, officials said.

The worst of the cold spell in Kyiv is due to come after February 1, with Ukraine's weather agency warning temperatures could dip to as low as minus 30C in the coming days.

Trump had said he had appealed to Putin "because of the cold, extreme cold."

The Kremlin has been silent on Ukrainians left in the freezing cold amid warnings of a humanitarian crisis and has in the past blamed their suffering on Kyiv.

The pause in Russian strikes, due to end this weekend, comes before Russian and Ukrainian negotiators meeting for a second round of talks in Abu Dhabi.

This round of talks is expected to focus on the key unresolved issue of territory.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Nobel Institute confirms leak of peace prize winner



Trump
Oslo, Norway



Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Corina Machado

The Norwegian Nobel Institute yesterday confirmed that the name of the winner of the 2025 peace prize had been "illegally" leaked before the announcement, without ruling out that a state actor may have been involved.

On the night of October 9 to 10, the day of the announcement, the odds of Venezuelan opposition leader Maria Corina Machado -- who won the prize -- winning jumped from 3.75 percent to nearly 73 percent within less than two hours on the betting platform Polymarket.

Yet no experts or media outlets had mentioned Machado among the Nobel favourites, prompting the Nobel Institute to open an internal investigation.

"Given that several actors placed significant money on prediction market websites hours ahead of the announcement, we can say with certainty that there were actors who had been able to illegally acquire information on this year's decision," the institute's spokesman Erik Aasheim told AFP.

"Through our investigations, we have not been able to determine how the information was obtained. Neither have we been able to identify who acquired the information, or whether this was a private or a state actor," he added.

The institute said it had identified vulnerabilities in its IT system and had implemented fixes.

"It is not unreasonable to consider a state actor," director of the institute Kristian Berg Harpviken told newspaper Verdens Gang (VG).

Banned from running in Venezuela's 2024 presidential election, Machado won the prize "for her tireless work promoting democratic rights for the people of Venezuela and for her struggle to achieve a just and peaceful transition from dictatorship to democracy", according to the award citation.

The 58-year-old, who had dedicated her prize to Donald Trump, handed her medal to the US president at the White House in mid-January.

The Nobel Committee, which selects the laureate, the day after noted that the prize is inseparable from the winner regardless of who has the medal that comes with the prize.

Trump brands Minneapolis nurse shot dead by federal agents an 'agitator'

AFP | Washington

US President Donald Trump walked back his conciliatory tone yesterday after outrage over the killings of two American citizens in Minneapolis by federal agents, branding one of them, Alex Petti, an "agitator."

Footage shared online this week reportedly showed intensive care nurse Petti in a scuffle with federal agents 11 days before he was shot dead on Saturday by officers enforcing an immigration crackdown.

The White House has scrambled to stem widespread outrage over Petti's killing, which came weeks after Renee Good, another US citizen and mother of three, was fatally shot by agents in the same city.

Trump said he wanted to "de-escalate a little bit," and appointed a new point man in Minneapolis, border chief Tom Homan, who said on Thursday that some federal agents could be withdrawn from the city after weeks of protests against immigration raids.



Posters of Alex Petti and Renee Good are seen pasted to the wall of a building in Minneapolis

However, Trump said on his Truth Social platform yesterday that 37-year-old Petti was an "agitator and, perhaps, insurrectionist."

"Alex Petti's stock has gone way down with the just released video of him screaming and spitting in the face of a very calm and under control ICE Officer," Trump wrote, referring to the

Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency.

The video reportedly shows Petti kicking the tail light of federal agents' car, before they emerge and tackle him to the ground.

Government shutdown

Backlash over the deaths of Petti and Good, and the mass

deployment of ICE agents in Minneapolis, has landed in Congress, with the Senate edging closer to a vote yesterday on a funding deal to avert a government shutdown over the crisis.

Democrats have drawn a red line around funding for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), demanding it be stripped out and renegotiated to impose new constraints on immigration enforcement agencies.

Trump held a cabinet meeting on Thursday, but the Minnesota unrest did not come up while reporters were in the room, and he did not call on Homeland Security chief Kristi Noem when asking some officials to give remarks.

Trump sent Homan to Minnesota to take control of immigration operations there with orders to report directly to him, effectively sidelining Noem. Homan said at his first news conference there on Thursday that "certain improvements could and should be made," a marked difference from his predecessor Greg Bovo, who was removed.

1865

Congress passes, by a vote of 121-24, the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution, abolishing slavery in the United States except as punishment for a crime

1943

German Field Marshal Friedrich Paulus surrenders to Soviet troops at Stalingrad

1950

US President Harry Truman publicly announces support for the development of a hydrogen bomb

1985

South African President P. W. Botha offers to free Nelson Mandela if he denounces violence

Iran says defence capabilities 'never' up for negotiation

As Trump cools strike threats, Iran draws a firm line on its weapons

● Turkey offers to mediate between Iran and US

AFP | Istanbul

Iran's top diplomat said yesterday that his country's missile and defence capabilities would "never" be on the negotiating table, as US President Donald Trump appeared to cool on threats of a strike after a military build-up in the region.

Tehran and Washington have been trading warnings since Trump first threatened to intervene over a deadly crackdown on recent protests and sent a naval fleet to the Middle East.

But the US president brought the temperature down late on Thursday, saying he hoped to avoid military action and that talks with Iran were on the cards, having pressured Tehran for a deal on its nuclear programme, which the West believes is aimed at making an atomic bomb.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Tehran was "ready to begin negotiations if they take place on an equal footing, based on mutual interests and mutual respect", during a visit to Turkey, which has led a diplomatic push to mediate between Tehran and Washington.

But, he emphasised, "I want to state firmly that Iran's defensive and missile capabilities will never be subject to negotiation",



Commuters walk past an anti-US billboard installed on a building at the Enqelab Square in Tehran

adding that no plans were in place to meet with US officials about resuming talks.

The Axios news site on Monday reported that US officials say any deal with Tehran would have to include a cap on its stockpile of long-range missiles, along with the removal of enriched uranium from the country and a ban on independent enrichment.

Serhan Afacan, director of IRAM, the Ankara-based Centre for Iranian Studies, told AFP that trying to broker a deal now on the nuclear file along with other issues would likely "be impos-

sible".

"For now, the ballistic missile programme remains a red line, as it sits at the core of Iran's defence architecture," he said.

'Reducing' tensions

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said restarting talks between Tehran and Washington over Iran's nuclear programme was "vital for reducing regional tensions".

Speaking at a joint press conference in Istanbul with Araghchi, he said Israel was pushing for the United States to attack

Iran, and urged Washington to "act with common sense and not allow this to happen".

Iran has blamed the United States and Israel for the protests that erupted in late December over economic grievances and peaked on January 8 and 9, accusing the two countries of fueling a "terrorist operation" that turned peaceful demonstrations into "riots".

Araghchi was also due to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who told his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian by phone earlier yes-



A rights group reported that at least 118 children were among the 6,479 confirmed deaths during the recent protests in Iran, as internet restrictions continue to hinder the flow of information

terday that Turkey was "ready to assume a facilitating role between Iran and the United States to de-escalate the tensions".

Pezeshkian, meanwhile, said the success of diplomacy depended on the "goodwill of the parties involved and the abandonment of belligerent and threatening actions in the region", his office said.

As well as Turkey's diplomatic efforts to stave off a military confrontation, Erdogan has also been pushing Washington for a high-level trilateral meeting, a Turkish diplomat said, confirming local media reports.

Other regional actors have joined calls for diplomacy, including Gulf states, some of which host US military sites, and Tehran's ally Russia.

X
TOP
4
TWEETS
01



@NATO needs unity, not alignment to one capital. I expect @SecGenNATO Rutte to work for the Alliance, not as an American agent. Appeasement doesn't work. Flattering diplomacy leads to total failure.

@CharlesMichel

02



Nowadays, the law of power seems to be prevailing over the power of the law. International law trampled. Cooperation eroding. Multilateral institutions under assault. But the @UN is determined to continue working for peace, justice, responsibility & progress.

@antonioaguterres

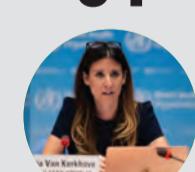
03



Kevin Warsh is a fantastic choice to lead the world's most important central bank at this crucial time.

@MarkJCarney

04



@WHO has just published an updated #MERS Global Summary and Risk Assessment. The risk of MERS-CoV transmission remains moderate at regional and global levels, reflecting ongoing but restricted patterns of circulation.

@mvankerkhove

Syria govt, Kurds reach comprehensive agreement



Members of Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) arrive at the Kurdish-held city of Ain al-Arab (file photo)

AFP | Damascus

Syria's government and Kurdish forces reached a comprehensive deal yesterday to gradually integrate the Kurds' military and civilian institutions into the state, which Washington described as a "historic milestone".

In recent weeks, the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have ceded vast areas of Arab-majority land to Syrian government forces.

It was territory they held for years, having seized it in fierce battles against the Islamic State jihadist group, while backed by a US-led coalition.

That made SDF key partners for Washington, but since the toppling of Bashar al-Assad in late 2024, the United States has drawn close to the new authorities in Damascus, declared the need for its Kurdish alliance largely over and sought to mediate talks between the government and the Kurds.

Israel to partially reopen Gaza's Rafah crossing on Sunday

AFP | Jerusalem

Israel announced it would reopen the crucial Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt on Sunday after months of urging from the UN, humanitarian organisations and ordinary Palestinians -- but only for the "limited movement of people".

Earlier yesterday, Hamas had called for the "immediate transition to the second phase" of the ongoing US-brokered truce in Gaza, namely its provision for the reopening of Rafah, as well as the entry of a technocratic Palestinian committee to administer the territory.

Israel had previously expressed its unwillingness to reopen the gateway until getting back the remains of Ran Gvili, the last hostage to be held in Gaza, who was recovered earlier this week and laid to rest in Israel on Wednesday.

"The Rafah Crossing will open this coming Sunday (February 1st) in both directions, for limited movement of people only," COGAT, an Israeli defence ministry body overseeing civil



Trucks loaded with humanitarian aid are parked on the Egyptian side of the Rafah crossing, waiting to get access to the Gaza Strip (file photo)

affairs in the occupied Palestinian territories, said in a statement yesterday.

Entry and exit "will be permitted in coordination with Egypt, following prior security clearance of individuals by Israel, and under the supervision of the European Union mission", it added.

The crossing, situated on the territory's southern border with Egypt, is the only route in and out of Gaza that does not pass through Israel.

It lies in territory held by Israeli forces since their pull-back behind the so-called "Yellow Line" under the terms of the ceasefire deal. Israeli troops still control more than half of Gaza.

The gateway is a vital entry point for aid, but has been closed since Israeli forces took control of it in May 2024 -- except for a limited reopening in early 2025 -- and past bids to reopen it have failed to materialise.

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

CAMPUS

campus

New Millennium School Bahrain reigns supreme at The World Scholar's Cup 2026

● 864 Medals & 29 Trophies

Manama

New Millennium School (NMS), Bahrain, once again etched its name in glory by delivering an extraordinary performance at the prestigious World Scholar's Cup (WSC) 2026 Bahrain Round, held from 23rd to 25th January, 2026, at The American School of Bahrain. Competing against more than 750 scholars from 20 schools, NMS emerged as the top-performing school, dominating across all major categories and securing Championship Trophies and Gold Medals in Debate, Writing, and the Scholar's Bowl. The students won 468 Gold Medals, 396 Silver Medals and 29 Trophies.

In the Junior Division the school emerged as the overall Champions with the outstanding performance of Nazeel Shamsudheen, Nihal Abraham Chaly, and Nabeel Alam Khan captured the 1st Place Overall Champion Trophy and Gold Medals across all events.

Mohammed Akbar Kutay, Tarush Kalihari, and Pratham Khopkar bagged the 2nd Place Overall Champion Team Trophy, demonstrating depth and consistency with their exceptional performance across the competition.

This resounding success stands as a testament to the relentless dedication, talent, and collaborative spirit of the NMS scholars and mentors.

Expressing his pride, Principal Dr. Arun Kumar Sharma stated that the school is immensely



WSC OVERALL CHAMPION: The NMS students secured 1st, 2nd and 3rd positions in Junior Category

1st Place Junior- Nazeel Shamsudheen, Nihal Abraham Chaly, Nabeel Alam Khan
2nd Place Junior- Mohammed Abban Kutay, Tarush Kalihari, Pratham Khopkar
3rd Place Junior- Safiya Dilshad Siddiqui, Nicolette Joe Francis, Sri Thasya Kamisetty
TEAM BOWL - A highly competitive subject based Quiz where scholars collaborate to answer questions from all WSC subjects, testing speed, teamwork, and subject mastery.
First Place Nazeel Shamsudheen, Nihal Abraham Chaly, Nabeel Alam Khan

TEAM WRITING CHAMPIONS - Collaborative Writing Challenge where teams brainstorm to write creative essays on various subject themes, NMS secured top overall positions, including the championship trophy and gold medals.
First Place - Individual Ayush Ajit Dumbre
First Place Team Mrinal Joshi, Bhavesh Pranav, Hiya Patel
Second Place Team Harsikha Alagu Mayil Vahanan, Vaishnavi Bishnupriya, Shanelle Nair
Third Place: Joseph Tomin

DEBATE CHAMPIONS - NMS Scholars demonstrated outstanding critical reasoning and communicative skills, earning championship titles and top honours.
First Place - Debate Champion (Senior) : Anika Jeevesh
First Place-Debate Champion (Junior) : Veda Nair
First Place - Team Debate - Senior: Atharv Dani, Anika Jeevesh, Jahanvi Kalesh
First Place Team Debate - Junior: Anmol Sharma, Kushal Prasad, Sambhav Sandip Sen
Second Place- Debate Champion (Senior) : Jahanvi Kalesh
Second Place Team Debate -

(Junior): Adriel Britto, Sounak Tung, Rajdruti Misra
CHAMPION SCHOLARS
2ND Place - Nabeel Alam Khan
3rd Place - Aaradhyaa Paalavadyala Sharma
ALPACA TOP TEAMS
Alpaca Top Team - Junior Division
First Place: Lavanya Gupta, Chloe Martin, Anvika Tripathi
ALPACA TOP SCHOLAR - JUNIOR DIVISION
1st Place: Emmanuel Fernandes
2nd Place James Gregory
3RD Place- Tarun Madhav Sivaraman
BARELY OLD SCHOLARS SENIORS
Second Place Team Debate -

2nd Place - Anjani Sharma
ASIMOV AWARD
2nd Place - Pavan Preetham Panchada
Challenge Medals (GOLD & SILVER): Special Area, Art, Social Science, History, Literature, Science
• Nabeel Alam Khan , Aditi Raghvendra Kulkerni, Aaradhyaa Paalavadyala Sharma, Pratham Khopkar, Kushal Prasad, Nihal Abraham Chaly
Top Challenge Teams (Across all Subjects) - Trophy Winners
Second Place - Nazeel Shamsudheen, Nihal Abraham Chaly, Nabeel Alam Khan

proud of its students for their outstanding achievements at the World Scholar's Cup 2026 Bahrain Round. He emphasized that these accomplishments reflect not only academic excellence

but also leadership, creativity, teamwork, and global citizenship. He appreciated the hard work of the students, teachers in charge and parents for their dedication and commitment.

Chairman Dr. Ravi Pillai and Managing Director Mrs. Geetha Pillai congratulated the students, mentors, and parents for their unwavering support and commitment, applauding their

collective efforts that led to this remarkable success.

The phenomenal performance of New Millennium School at the WSC 2026 Bahrain Round reaffirms its commitment

to holistic education and its mission to nurture confident, competent, and globally-minded learners who excel both academically and beyond the classroom.

Pakistan School Celebrates Outstanding Achievement at the World Scholar's Cup



Manama

Pakistan School has once again demonstrated exceptional academic excellence by achieving remarkable success at the World Scholar's Cup (WSC), reaffirming its strong presence on the international academic platform. Between 2018 and 2025, students of Pakistan School earned an impressive total of 870 Gold medals, 623 Silver medals, along with numerous trophies, establishing the institution as a consistent high performer in global academic

competitions.

Continuing this proud legacy, Pakistan School delivered an outstanding performance at the World Scholar's Cup 2026 - Bahrain Round, where its students surpassed rival schools by securing 127 Gold medals and 112 Silver medals, in addition to winning two prestigious trophies in the Team Challenge and Scholar's Challenge categories.

Furthermore, Pakistan School proudly achieved first position in the subjects of Media & Literature, Art & Music, and

Social Studies at the Bahrain Round 2026. The majority of participating teams from the school have successfully qualified for the Global Round of the World Scholar's Cup.

To mark this exceptional accomplishment, the Principal of Pakistan School hosted an appreciation ceremony in honor of the students' achievements. The Principal congratulated the students, the coordinator, the English Department, and all staff members involved for their dedication, teamwork, and relentless efforts.

On behalf of the Chairman and the Board of Management, the Principal extended heartfelt congratulations to the students, parents, and teachers, acknowledging their collective support and commitment that contributed to this success. The Principal also reiterated a strong resolve to continue leading Pakistan School towards greater academic distinction and global recognition.

Pakistan School remains steadfast in its mission to nurture talent, promote critical thinking, and develop globally

competent learners equipped to excel in international forums.

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Newcastle still coping with fallout from Isak exit, says Howe



Alexander Isak
AFP | London

Eddie Howe admitted yesterday that Newcastle are still dealing with the fallout from Alexander Isak's protracted move to Liverpool in the summer transfer window.

The Sweden forward effectively went on strike in an attempt to join the Premier League champions, eventually securing a British-record £125 million (\$172 million) transfer on deadline day.

Newcastle spent the money on club-record £69 million signing Nick Woltemade and Yoane Wissa, who cost £55 million.

But Magpies manager Howe, whose team face Liverpool at Anfield on Saturday, said that integrating the new players was "an ever-challenging thing".

"You lose a player like Alex... and let's put this right, Liverpool paid the money they did because he's an outstanding footballer, an unbelievable talent," he said.

Arteta focuses on the positives despite Arsenal stumble



Mikel Arteta looks on during training

AFP | London

Mikel Arteta said his role was to bring "optimism and reality of where we are" as he seeks to end Arsenal's mini-slump at Leeds today.

The Gunners remain four points clear of Manchester City and Aston Villa at the top of the Premier League but have taken just two points from their past three matches.

Last week's 3-2 defeat by Manchester United, which came after goalless draws against Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, was their first home loss of the season.

But the Gunners beat Kairat

Hill's masterclass elevates Bahrain Championship

Freddy Schott Trails After Scintillating Second Round in the Kingdom

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Scotland's Calum Hill produced one of the rounds of the DP World Tour season yesterday, surging into a four-shot lead at the BAPCO Energies Bahrain Championship after matching the Royal Golf Club course record with a flawless 11-under-par 61. The two-time DP World Tour winner, who claimed his most recent title at the Joburg Open last March following a final-round comeback, now sits at 16 under par after two rounds. He is firmly established as the man to beat heading into today's third round, with the final round scheduled for Sunday.

Hill was in imperious form from the outset, carding 11 birdies without a blemish. "Today was really good," Hill said. "I started off really well and then had a few bonus putts from really long range go in. It just kept making birdies, which was nice." As his round progressed, he remained aware of the course record. "I knew the course record was 11 under, so I knew I needed to hole my last approach shot to break it. It looked very good in the air. I thought it had a chance, but just long. Still, it was nice to finish with a birdie."



Scotland's Calum Hill plays into the 18th green at Royal Golf Club

The performance echoed last year's opening-round 61, when England's Brandon Robinson Thompson set the same record at Royal Golf Club. Hill, who suffered an early exit from the Hero Dubai Desert Classic last week, now looks to regain form on a course that offered scoring opportunities in calm conditions.

Germany's Freddy Schott, the overnight co-leader, remains Hill's closest challenger after a composed second-round 67 left him alone in second at 12 under par. The 24-year-old got off to a flying start with a chip-in at the first hole and later added an eagle on the par-five 14th, showcasing his scoring touch.

Just behind him, France's Ugo Coussaud occupies third place at nine under following a steady four-under 68. Meanwhile, first-round co-leader Alejandro Del Rey slipped back after a one-over 71, joining a crowded tie for fourth at eight under alongside Andrea Pavan, Nacho Elvira, Julien Guerrier, Daniel Hilli-

er, Shubhankar Sharma, Casey Jarvis, JC Ritchie, and Joost Luiten. Former Masters champion Sergio Garcia also moved into this group with an impressive six-under 66 in his first DP World Tour appearance of 2026. Further down the leaderboard, defending champion Laurie Canter dropped to five under after a second-round 73, while Patrick Reed bounced back with a four-under 67 to reach six under par. Notably, 2024 champion Dylan Frittelli failed to make the cut, highlighting the challenge of the Royal Golf Club and the depth of the field this week.

The tournament, held under the patronage of HM King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, features 138 players from 28 countries competing for a \$2.75 million prize fund, with half the field eliminated at the cut after two rounds. The Championship Village also saw full attendance, with fans enjoying a vibrant atmosphere alongside the action on the course.

As Hill prepares for the remaining rounds, all eyes will be on whether he can convert his spectacular start into a third DP World Tour title. The packed stands and historic setting provide a fitting backdrop for a championship already producing memorable moments.

Real Madrid to play Benfica, PSG face Monaco in Champions League play-offs

AFP | Paris

Real Madrid were handed a quick rematch with Jose Mourinho's Benfica in the draw for the Champions League play-off round yesterday, while reigning European champions Paris Saint-Germain will face domestic rivals Monaco.

Benfica beat Real 4-2 in their final game of the league phase on Wednesday, with a 98th-minute goal by goalkeeper Anatoliy Trubin proving decisive in allowing the Portuguese side to snatch the last play-off spot ahead of Marseille, who were eliminated altogether.

The defeat also nudged Madrid out of the top eight places in the league standings, which give direct access to the last 16, forcing them into this extra round.

Benfica staged a remarkable recovery to take a play-off place -- they finished 24th in the 36-team league phase, the last qualifying spot -- by winning three of their last four matches after

"Certainly when you lose a game you have a lot of feelings, because especially the group of players are so competitive and they seek excellence," the Spaniard said.

"And when you don't reach it, you ask yourself questions, and we did that. But I think my role there as well is to bring optimism and reality of where we are."



UEFA Champions League Cup is displayed next to the results appearing on a giant screen

and one Copa del Rey while also taking them to the Champions League semi-finals in each of his three campaigns.

The clubs played each other in the 1962 European Cup final, with Benfica winning 5-3 to claim the last of their two titles to date.

PSG slipped out of the top eight after winning only one of their last five outings in the league phase and finishing in 11th place.

They will go to Monaco for the first leg and will be wary of

the principality side who beat them there in Ligue 1 in November. However, 2004 Champions

League finalists Monaco have

been in poor form, with just one

win in six games since the turn

of the year.

They are 10th in Ligue 1, 21

points behind leaders PSG. How-

ever, a 0-0 draw with Juventus on Wednesday allowed them to secure a play-off place in Europe.

PSG also beat French oppo-

sition in the play-off round last



Benfica staged a miraculous recovery to claim the final play-off spot, winning three of their last four matches after losing their opening four games of the Champions League league phase

season, hammering Brest 10-0 on aggregate before going on to lift the trophy for the first time in their history.

Elsewhere, Newcastle United will be strong favourites against surprise packages Qarabag of Azerbaijan, with the first leg to come in Baku.

Bodo/Glimt, Norwegian champions in four of the last six years, were also surprise qualifiers for this stage and have been rewarded with a tie against last season's runners-up Inter Milan.