

Bahrain's next mission

Fresh off Gulf Cup win, Bahrain prepares for crucial World Cup qualifying matches | **PII**

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WORLD **6** Devastating quake in China's Tibet kills 126

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New directors named for CSB

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, yesterday issued Edict (2) of 2025, appointing directors at the Civil Service Bureau (CSB), based on a proposal by the Bureau's President.

Under Article (I), Amal Isa Abdullah Ateeq shall be appointed as Director of the Organizational Performance Directorate at the Civil Service Bureau, replacing Reem Hassan Marhoon, while Article (II), Rihab Ibrahim Ahmed Al Fadhel shall be appointed as Director of the Human Resources Operations Directorate at the Civil Service Bureau.

HRH Prince Salman also issued Edict (1) of 2025, naming the competent administrative authority and minister for private entities working in the youth sector and defining their roles, based on a proposal by the Minister of Youth Affairs and following the approval of the Cabinet.

Bahrain condoles with China over quake victims

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the Kingdom of Bahrain's sympathy and solidarity with China over the strong earthquake that hit the Tibet region in the Himalayas in the southwest of the country, which led to a number of deaths and injuries.

The Ministry expressed Bahrain's sincere condolences to the government and people of China, and to the families of the victims, wishing a speedy recovery to those injured.

Israeli strikes kill dozen in Khan Yunis

AFP | Palestinian Territories

Gaza health officials said a wave of Israeli strikes hit the territory's southern district of Khan Yunis on Tuesday evening, killing a dozen people, seven of them children.

Priorities on the table



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, chaired the 499th Government Executive Committee meeting. Discussions included developments regarding the National Social Health Insurance Program, the outcomes of the 2024 'Taqqeem' evaluation of government service centres, and priority draft laws.

Bahrain committed to bolstering Sakha ties

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, affirmed the Kingdom of Bahrain's commitment to developing bilateral relations and enhancing joint coordination with Sakha to achieve common aspirations.

This came as HRH Prince Salman met yesterday with the Chairman of the Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), His Excellency Kirill Bychkov, at Gudaibiya Palace.

During the meeting, discussions focused on ways to enhance bilateral relations and cooperation, as well as the latest regional and international de-



HRH Prince Salman with H.E. Kirill Bychkov

velopments and issues of mutual interest.

Bychkov expressed his appreciation for His Royal Highness' commitment to strengthening relations between Bahrain and Sakha and extended his wishes for the Kingdom's continued progress and prosperity.

The Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Isa bin Salman Education Charitable Trust, and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Minister of Finance and National Economy, H.E. Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, and a number of senior officials also attended the meeting.

Job security for imams, muezzins

TDT | Manama

Parliament has approved a plan to formalise the roles of imams and muezzins by incorporating them into the public sector's salary structure, aiming to tackle job insecurity and encourage young Bahrainis to take up these positions.

This means imams and muezzins will receive salaries, pensions, and benefits similar to public sector employees, addressing the longstanding challenges that have made the positions less attractive to locals.

Vote put on hold

Delayed decision as MPs remain divided over ban on visit visa to work permit conversion

Mohammed Darwish

TDT | Manama

Parliament has decided to put off a vote on a contentious draft law that seeks to ban converting visit visas into work permits.

The proposal has stirred heated debate among MPs, with some arguing it's a necessary step to secure job opportunities for locals, while others say existing measures already do the job.

The draft law aims to amend the 1965 Aliens (Immigration and Residence) Act by adding a new article that outright bans the practice of turning entry visas into work permits.

A second clause would void any conflicting laws, and a third provision outlines the law's implementation.

Hassan Bukhamas, chair of the Foreign Affairs, Defence, and National Security Committee, asked for a two-week delay to allow for further study, a request Parliament approved.

Fairness

"This is about fairness in our



Abdulnabi Salman, First Deputy Speaker



MP Hassan Bukhamas



MP Jalal Kadhem



MP Hasan Ebrahim

workforce," said MP Jalal Kadhem, who backs the law. "We need to curb the flow of cheap foreign labour, which has created unfair competition and reduced job prospects for Bahrainis."

The law, originally proposed in May 2023, is intended to shore up employment for locals and back the government's long-term labour market strategy, which puts Bahrainis first in hiring and supports them with training programmes.

checked conversion of visit visas into work permits fuels unemployment and undermines this national plan.

However, not everyone is convinced the law is needed.

Goals

MP Hassan Ebrahim, the committee's rapporteur, said the goals of the proposal have already been achieved.

He pointed to a February 2024 decision by the Minister of Interior, which restricts visa conversions to cases where the worker

stays under the same guarantor, with a BD250 fee.

According to Ebrahim, these changes have slashed visa conversions by 87 per cent, addressing the issue without introducing new legislation.

Top choice

"This law was drawn up before these rules came into force," said Ebrahim. "The current policies already ensure that Bahrainis remain the top choice for hiring while avoiding additional costs for locals. For instance,

Bahraini families would face greater expenses if workers in roles such as domestic help couldn't convert their visas."

Ebrahim also noted that neighbouring countries like the UAE and Oman allow similar conversions, making Bahrain's current approach less restrictive in comparison.

First Deputy Speaker Abdulla Nabi Salman dismissed the current situation as "meaningless", questioning whether such a system has any place in Bahrain.



Celebrating excellence

RCSI Medical University of Bahrain manager among Top 12 finalists of Lamea National Programme

TDT | Manama

Ms Pearl Wasif, Research Regulatory Affairs Manager at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) – Medical University of Bahrain, has been recognised as one of the Top 12 finalists in the 4th Edition of the prestigious Lamea National Programme.

Inspired by the vision of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, His Majesty the King's Representative for Humanitarian Works and Youth Affairs, the Lamea National Programme is dedicated to cultivating a generation of distinguished leaders capable of advancing Bahrain's comprehensive development agenda and was recognised as the Best Arab Government Project to Empower Young People in November 2024.

Ms Wasif and her team were recognised for their excellent work in crafting a policy aimed at improving mental health services in Bahrain in collaboration with a diverse range of esteemed organisations, including the Primary Healthcare Centres, Government hospitals, the Ministry of Youth Affairs, the WHO Country Office in Bahrain, and the United Nations Population Fund, by earning third place.



Ms Pearl Wasif, centre, presenting the Research Projects Award received at 2024 GHEDEX to University Executives

Lessons
Reflecting on her experience, Ms Wasif highlighted two key lessons from the programme's module on policy-making and strategic thinking: the critical importance of cross-sector collaboration to address complex societal challenges, and the transformative impact a well-designed health policy can have on the health and well-being of a population.

She expressed her enthusiasm for advancing initiatives that integrate technology and innovation into public services, alongside projects focused on social impact and community development.

Commenting on Ms Wasif's achievement, Professor Sameer Ootom, President of RCSI Medical University of Bahrain, stated: "We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ms Pearl

Wasif on this remarkable accomplishment and her exemplary leadership.

Full potential
"As part of the University's Equal Opportunities framework and Professional Development Unit's strategy, we remain committed to collaborating with local partners to empower our female talent to reach their full potential. We wish Ms Wasif continued success in all her future endeavours."

Aligned with Bahrain's national strategic vision for sustainable growth and development, RCSI Medical University of Bahrain remains committed to offering career development opportunities to Bahraini and female staff members, with the ultimate goal of nurturing local talent to assume leadership roles.

Strategic link to progress

HRH Prince Salman deputises Deputy Prime Minister to inaugurate Muharraq Ring Road project

The Muharraq Ring Road project is part of the government's broader plan to improve connectivity between Muharraq and the capital through the upcoming fourth bridge.



Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah is briefed about the various major development projects

ment's broader plan to improve connectivity between Muharraq and the capital through the upcoming fourth bridge.

The opening ceremony was organised by the Ministry of Works.

Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah highlighted Bahrain's ongoing efforts to upgrade infrastructure to keep pace with rapid demographic, economic, and urban growth while ensuring safe and sustainable land transport.

Development

He emphasised the importance of these projects in advancing Bahrain's comprehensive development under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the follow-up of HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

The Deputy Prime Minister noted that the expansion of strategic road projects reflects the government's commitment to its 2023-2026 plan to en-

hance infrastructure quality.

These projects aim to improve traffic flow, reduce travel time, and support economic and commercial activities.

Briefing

Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah received a briefing on the proposed fourth bridge project, which will improve traffic flow in northern Muharraq and create new access routes, including a sea bridge connecting Al Sayah to Bahrain Bay.

He also reviewed tree planting efforts along the road and directed the acceleration of these works to meet climate goals, including reducing carbon emissions by 30% by 2035 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060.

Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah commended the efforts of the national workforce that delivered this vital project eight months ahead of schedule, showcasing exemplary coordination across government entities.

TDT | Manama

His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, deputised the Deputy Prime Minister, H.E. Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, to inaugurate the Muharraq Ring Road, one of Bahrain's largest strategic road projects.

The Deputy Prime Minister emphasised that the Muharraq Ring Road project aligns with the ongoing development in Muharraq, particularly its northeast, covering investment, tourism, commercial, and residential sectors.

It is also part of the govern-

Education and innovation

AUBH, in collaboration with MIT and powered by BBK, launches two cutting-edge training workshops

TDT | Manama

The American University of Bahrain (AUBH) has announced its partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)'s International Science and Technology Initiative (MISTI) for the third consecutive year.

Dr. Bradley J. Cook, President of the American University of Bahrain, and Mr. Yaser Alsharifi, BBK Group Chief Executive, hailed the major partnership.

This collaboration, powered by Bank of Bahrain and Kuwait (BBK), will host two exclusive training workshops open to all university students across Bahrain, taking place from January 6 to 30, 2025.

BBK's sponsorship of this program reflects its commitment to enhancing the higher education landscape and cultivating a culture of innovation within the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Bahraini talent

By supporting educational



Dr. Bradley J. Cook



Mr. Yaser Alsharifi

institutions in the implementation of high-caliber academic and training programs, the Bank plays a pivotal role in nurturing Bahraini talent and fostering the development of a highly skilled workforce, thereby reinforcing Bahrain's position as a regional leader in education and innovation.

The first workshop, titled "MISTI Accelerator - Business Startup: Transforming the Future," will be held on the AUBH campus, and will offer a unique opportunity for students to engage deeply with the process of establishing and managing startups, guiding them from conceptualization to practical

implementation.

Learning journey

Under the mentorship of international experts and trainers from MIT, participants will benefit from hands-on experience and practical insights, ensuring a productive and enriching learning journey that bridges academic knowledge with real-world application.

The second workshop, titled "Actuated Experiences - Design & Fabrication for Interactivity: Unlock the Door to Innovation," will take place at the University's D-Lab, utilizing the latest tools and creative workspaces.

Are you looking to expand your team?

List your vacancies on **Jobs+** to get access to Bahraini talent and support with:

- + **Wage Support through the Labour Fund "Tamkeen"'s National Employment Program**
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- + **Screening, shortlisting and prepping relevant candidates for interviews**

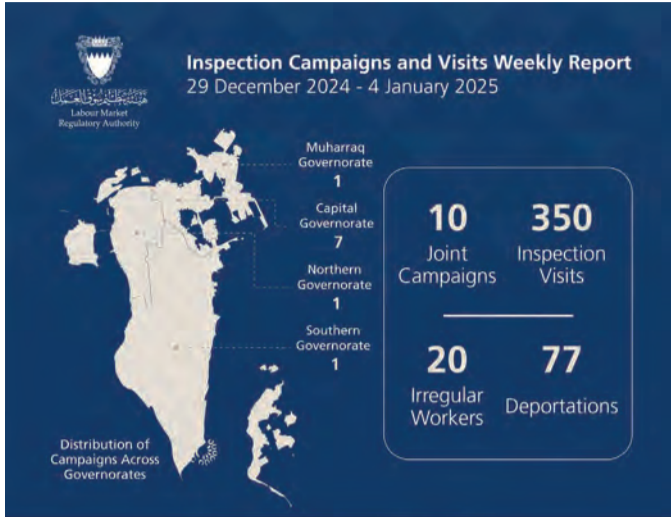
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LMRA conducts successful inspection campaigns, visits



TDT | Manama

The Labour Market Regulatory Authority (LMRA) announced the implementation of 360 inspection campaigns and visits, during the period of 29 December 2024 to 4 January 2025, which resulted in the detention of 20 violating and irregular workers, while 77 violators were deported.

The inspection campaigns and visits also resulted in monitoring a number of violations related to the provisions of a number of regulating laws, especially the Labour Market Regulatory Authority and the Residency Laws in the Kingdom of Bahrain, noting that legal measures were taken regarding the observed violations.

The authority pointed out that 350 inspection visits were carried out on various shops in all governorates, in addition to 10 joint inspection campaigns, that included seven campaigns in the Capital Governorate, one campaign in the Muharraq Governorate, one campaign in the Southern Governorate, and one campaign in the Northern Governorate.

participated in the campaigns is the Ministry of Interior, represented by the Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs (NPRA), and the Governorate's respective Police Directorate, and the General Directorate of Crime Detection and Forensic Evidence.

Joint coordination

The Authority affirmed the continuation of joint coordination with government agencies to intensify inspection campaigns in all governorates of the Kingdom, and to address any violations or practices that negatively affect the stability and competitiveness of the labour market or harm economic and social security of the Kingdom.

The Labour Market Regulatory Authority renewed its call on all members of the society to support the efforts of government agencies in addressing illegal labour practices, by reporting violations via the electronic form on the authority's website www.lmra.gov.bh or by calling the authority's call centre on 17506055 or via the government's Suggestions and Complaints System (Tawasul).

The government entity that

Bahraini businessman convicted of tax evasion

● Jailed for one year and fined

TDT | Manama

A Bahraini businessman has been sentenced to one year in prison and fined BD35,000, plus ordered to pay an additional BD35,700 in outstanding taxes.

The 50-year-old was convicted of evading taxes on four tax returns totaling BD35,700.

According to court documents, a legal advisor with the National Bureau for Revenue, acting with judicial authority,

discovered that the defendant's company had evaded taxes despite filing tax returns.

Stalled projects

The defendant admitted to the overdue payments, citing stalled projects as the reason for his inability to pay on time.

He claimed he would settle the debt once the market conditions improved.

The Public Prosecution charged the defendant with completely evading Value Added Tax (VAT) on taxable services, after more than 120 days had passed since the tax returns were filed with the National Revenue Agency.

Redesigning future

Al Rumaihi unveils strategic plans to meet housing needs for next 15 years

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

The Housing Minister, Her Excellency Amna Al Rumaihi, has laid out plans to redraw Bahrain's future, with a consultancy firm set to be hired to redesign the country's layout to meet its needs for the next 15 years.

She announced that 3,000 new housing units in Khalifa City will be capped at BD99,000, ensuring affordability for citizens.

Speaking during Parliament yesterday, Al Rumaihi emphasised the government's ongoing efforts to address housing challenges across the Kingdom.

"Our focus is on building housing cities, and Khalifa City is one of the largest projects. Last Thursday, we awarded a tender for 372 housing units,

and work will soon ramp up," she said.

Preparations

She explained that preparations are already underway in the southern region, with rocky land cleared to pave the way for construction.

"We've prepared plots in Buhair and Hoorat Sanad, with 250 plots in Hoorat Sanad and 125

Our goal is to design a Bahrain that caters to its people's needs while supporting economic growth

H.E. AMNA AL RUMAIHI,
HOUSING MINISTER



tracks, but my focus remains on housing cities," she said.

Private sector involvement has been key to speeding up housing development.

Al Rumaihi revealed that, over the past two months, the ministry has announced 3,000 housing units in Khalifa City in partnership with leading developers.

Clear conditions

"We've ensured that these units won't exceed BD99,000 by setting clear conditions for developers," she said.

These efforts, she added, are part of a broader strategy to meet Bahrain's housing and infrastructure needs while planning for the future.

"Our goal is to design a Bahrain that caters to its people's needs while supporting economic growth," Al Rumaihi said.

in Buhair set to be handed over once infrastructure is in place," she said.

The minister also highlighted daily coordination between ministries and other entities to ensure services are delivered without delay.

Focus

"We're working on three main

Housing land plan approved to end 20-year wait

TDT | Manama

After years of frustration for families waiting decades for housing, Parliament has approved a bold plan to set aside land for housing projects in every governorate, weaving the provision into the country's state budget.

The decision, made on Tuesday, is being hailed as a step towards easing the pressure on Bahrain's housing system and addressing the growing demand for homes.

Led by MP Hamad Al Doy, the proposal had the backing of fellow MPs Bader Al Tamimi, Zainab Abdulameer, Maryam



Al Sayegh, and Abdulwahid Qarata.

The group presented their plan as a way to tackle Bahrain's long-standing housing shortages, particularly for families who have endured wait times exceeding 20 years.

The explanatory memorandum attached to the proposal laid bare the challenges faced by citizens, describing the backlog as a "weight that has destabilised families socially and economically".

It highlighted the ever-increasing demand for housing, which has left many applications gathering dust for decades without resolution.

Phone etiquette reform, accountability on the line

MPs propose mandatory self-identification for government employees answering calls



MP Mamdooh Al Saleh
H Naser
TDT | Manama



MP Basma Mubarak



MP Jalila Al Sayed



MP Dr Hesham Al Asheri



MP Ali Al Doseri

A group of MPs have submitted a proposal mandating government employees to clearly identify themselves by name and job title when answering calls.

The proposal, put forward by MPs Basma Mubarak, Mam-

dooh Al Saleh, Jalia Al Sayed, Dr Hesham Al Asheri, and Ali Al Doseri, aims to improve citizen services and enhance government efficiency.

According to the explanatory memorandum accompanying the proposal, the initiative seeks to align with the government's stated goals of increasing service efficiency and improving

communication between government agencies and citizens. The MPs argue that this measure will facilitate accurate performance evaluations of employees.

The memorandum further highlights the proposal's potential to foster internal competition within government bodies to provide better services.

By making employee names publicly known when answering calls, the proposal aims to improve accountability and enable more precise performance assessments, simplifying future follow-up procedures.

The MPs believe this will ultimately lead to a more responsive and efficient government service.

Two sentenced to life in jail for heroin smuggling attempt

TDT | Manama

The High Criminal Court has sentenced two men to life imprisonment for attempting to smuggle 79 capsules of heroin into the country.

The case highlights the vigilance of Bahrain's customs authorities and the sophisticated methods employed by drug traffickers.

An Asian national, arriving at Bahrain International Airport

from Pakistan, was apprehended by customs officials after arousing suspicion.

Initial searches yielded nothing, but a subsequent X-ray revealed numerous circular objects within his abdomen,

strongly suggesting the presence of drug capsules.

The suspect, upon questioning by the Anti-Narcotics Directorate, confessed to swallowing the capsules containing heroin and methamphetamine.

He admitted to being paid 50,000 rupees to transport the drugs.

Under medical supervision at Salmaniya Medical Complex, he excreted 79 capsules in total. Investigations by the An-

ti-Narcotics Directorate revealed the suspect was part of a larger network involved in trafficking drugs into Bahrain.

His role was to internally transport the narcotics.

From victim to victor

Court delivers justice for employee 'unfairly dismissed, assaulted and threatened' by employer

H Naser
TDT | Manama

The High Labour Court has ruled in favour of an employee who was unfairly dismissed, assaulted, and threatened by his employer.

The High Labour Court ordered the company to pay substantial compensation to the employee for wrongful termination, assault, and other related damages.

The case involved a marketing administrator who was employed by a company under a fixed-term contract starting November 29, 2023, with a monthly salary of BD150 plus a BD50 housing allowance.

His lawyer, Sadiqa Al Mawali, detailed how the company terminated his employment on May 20, 2024, without justification or prior notice.

Furthermore, the employer booked a flight ticket for the employee to return to his home country.

Text messages

When the employee refused, the employer physically assaulted him and sent threatening text messages.

The court noted that a criminal conviction had already been



issued against the employer for this assault.

The employer filed a countersuit, claiming the employee had resigned and provided a document alleging the employee acknowledged receiving his full salary until December 2023.

Absence notices

The employer also claimed the employee had used up his annual leave and that the company had issued absence notices before the employee's departure.

The company maintained that the employee had abandoned

his job rather than being dismissed.

Al Mawali refuted these claims, arguing that the employer had forcibly dismissed the employee, attempted to deport him, and assaulted him when he demanded his outstanding dues.

Countersuit

She emphasised the company's failure to prove the employee had resigned and requested the court to dismiss the employer's countersuit.

The court sided with the employee, ordering the company to pay BD333 in outstanding wages



Sadiqa Al Mawali, employee's lawyer

with 6% annual interest for the first six months, increasing by 1% per month of delay, up to a maximum of 12% annually.

Additionally, the court awarded the employee BD900 compensation for wrongful dismissal, BD150 for lack of notice, BD65.850 for unused annual leave, BD458 for severance pay, a certificate of service, and a replacement flight ticket.

Legal fees

The court also ordered the company to pay court costs and BD50 in legal fees.

The employer's countersuit was dismissed, with the employer also ordered to pay court costs and BD50 in legal fees.

Nutritional labeling 'mandatory' for all food



Dr Bassam Ismail Al Binmohammed

H Naser
TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Health has confirmed that nutritional labeling is mandatory for all manufactured food products, both domestically produced and imported, in accordance with local and GCC regulations and technical specifications.

Responding to a question from Shura Council member Dr Bassam Ismail Al Binmohammed, the Ministry, through its Public Health Directorate, emphasised its commitment to enforcing these regulations.

The Ministry stated that it works closely with relevant authorities to ensure all food products clearly display nutri-

tional information, including calorie counts and other key details.

Evaluation process

The Ministry detailed its product evaluation process, explaining that it relies on approved GCC technical specifications and regulations.

"Nutritionists assess products, reviewing laboratory analysis from accredited labs to verify the accuracy of the nutritional information provided on the label. This includes checking for the mandatory nutritional data in both Arabic and English," the Ministry's response stated.

"Furthermore, the Ministry's Food Control Section inspectors verify food safety, checking ingredients, allergen information, storage requirements, and product expiry dates."

Sale or import

Moreover, the Ministry stated that products lacking nutritional labels will not be permitted for sale or import.

"Continuous monitoring and regular market inspections ensure the safety of food products available to consumers and prevent the sale of non-compliant items," it concluded.

Urgent push to extend Bahrain's Celebrations Season gains approval

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

An urgent move to keep Bahrain's Celebrations Season running through January has been backed by Parliament, opening the door for events like Muharrag Nights and Retro Manama to stay alive a little longer.

The decision, taken during yesterday's session, aims to make the most of a wave of visitors from neighbouring Gulf countries currently on their mid-year school holidays, while boosting Bahrain's thriving tourism scene and supporting local businesses.

The proposal, brought to the floor by MP Ali Saqer Al Doseri, calls for the extension of popular attractions such as the Heritage Village and the Winter Market, which have already pulled in large crowds and brought in



MP Ali Saqer Al Doseri

hefty takings for shop owners.

Proponents of the move argue that keeping these festivities going will keep Bahrain's streets lively, attract even more tourists, and give locals another chance to enjoy the events.

"The Bahrain Celebrations Season has been a standout success this year, drawing in hun-

dreds of thousands of visitors and bringing in solid income for traders," the explanatory memorandum pointed out.

Major drawcard

It credited the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Information, the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA), and the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities (BACA) for organising the events, which have proven to be a major drawcard for visitors.

But with some events already wrapped up or on the verge of winding down, the proposal warned that Bahrain could miss out on valuable opportunities as travellers from Gulf nations continue to pour in during their breaks.

"Keeping these activities running during this time brings plenty of advantages, including

keeping Bahrain vibrant with life, boosting the local economy, and helping shop owners rake in more business," the memorandum stressed.

Experience

The move also aims to give locals — particularly those tied up with work or school commitments earlier in the season — the chance to experience the celebrations before they close.

"This extension would give them the time to visit and enjoy the festivities, adding even more to the celebrations' success," it added. The proposal has now been handed over to the relevant authorities for action, with supporters hopeful that extending the season will not only keep the energy alive but also solidify Bahrain's spot as a must-visit destination through the final weeks of January.

Security guard on trial for school equipment theft

TDT | Manama

The High Criminal Court has begun the trial of a security guard from a technical school who has been accused by the Public Prosecution of stealing 11 car engines and various tools and equipment intended for student training sessions during the summer break.

The head of security at the school was shocked to discover the theft of the equipment, which had been prepared by instructors in the automotive department for the upcoming academic year.

The equipment was organised and set up at the end of the previous school year, ready for student training.

During the July and August break, the accused was responsible for guarding these items, which were stored in the department's courtyard.

Surveillance camera footage tracked the theft back to the accused.

Confession

During investigations, the defendant admitted to taking

several pieces of equipment and selling them to a scrap shop, where the owner was contacted and confirmed that he was unaware of the stolen nature of the items.

The accused claimed he only took small items without realising their importance to the school.

The Public Prosecutor has charged the defendant, who is employed by the Ministry of Education as a school security guard, with embezzling funds, equipment, and tools that were in his possession.

Charges

The charges include the theft of 11 car engines, four transmissions, four engine heads, 12 rear axles, and eight rear differentials, valued at BD1,735 all belonging to the school.

The accused appeared in the first court hearing, denying the allegations of theft.

The court has adjourned the next session to January 13, allowing the defendant's lawyer to present their defense while the accused remains in custody until the next hearing.

KPF general body meeting



The Kozhikode District Jilla Forum (KPF) held its annual general body meeting to elect a new executive committee for the term 2025-26. The meeting, presided over by outgoing President Jamal Kuttikattil, featured the presentation of the activity report by General Secretary Harish P.K. and the financial report by Treasurer Shaji Puthukudi. In the presence of patrons U.K. Balan, K.T. Salim, and Sudhir Thirunilath, the general body unanimously selected the new leadership team.

'Al Badr 9' ceremony



His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, deputised His Highness General Shaikh Mohammed bin Isa Al Khalifa, Commander of the National Guard, to attend the concluding ceremony of the joint military exercise "Al Badr 9" between the National Guard and the Pakistan Army on his behalf.

Alba recognises 15 national employees with 'Inspirational Employee of the Year' Award



Aluminium Bahrain (Alba), the world's largest aluminium smelter on one site, held a special celebratory event yesterday to honour 15 national employees with 'Inspirational Employee of the Year' Award for 2024. Notably, seven of the awardees were women, reflecting Alba's commitment to gender diversity and inclusion. The event, held at the Oasis Hall, was led by Alba's CEO Ali Al Baqali, who honoured the awardees for their outstanding contributions. The winners were selected based on a rigorous evaluation process considering various criteria to include dedication to Safety excellence, fostering a culture of learning through coaching and volunteering initiatives, and cultivating a positive and supportive work environment through strong teamwork and a spirit of camaraderie. Initiated in 2020 by Alba CEO, this annual recognition has so far acknowledged a total of 42 exceptional national employees for their outstanding contributions and commitment to excellence.



Stock markets mostly rise on US optimism



Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (file photo)

AFP | London

Global stock markets mostly moved higher yesterday, with tech and tariffs in the spotlight.

Traders were still assessing the tariff plans of incoming US president Donald Trump following a report he may take a more targeted approach than previous stated.

"After a sluggish December, US stocks have kicked off the year in style, with tech and semiconductors stealing the spotlight," noted Matt Britzman, senior equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown.

He added there was also "tariff optimism despite mixed signals".

The Washington Post said

Trump's aides were weighing plans to apply tariffs to goods only in certain critical sectors -- a narrower definition than the president-elect previously proposed.

Trump, however, described the Post story as "just another example of Fake News".

The report comes after Trump warned last year that he would slap huge levies on China, Canada and Mexico.

Tech stocks surged on Monday as Nvidia -- which drove a rally in the sector last year thanks to its AI chips -- provided a positive outlook. Its shares popped more than 3.4 percent to close at a new record, giving the company a market valuation of more than \$3.6 trillion.

Hundreds of young workers sue McDonald's UK alleging harassment



Logo of McDonald's is seen outside a restaurant

AFP | London

More than 700 young workers are suing McDonald's UK after widespread harassment claims were exposed in the media in 2023, law firm Leigh Day said yesterday.

Leigh Day is seeking compensation from the US fast-food giant on behalf of current and former staff who were aged under 20 when working at McDonald's.

"Clients have described experiences of discrimination, homophobia, racism, ableism, and harassment," the legal firm said in a press release, saying more than 450 restaurants were involved.

It follows a BBC investigation in July 2023 highlighting the testimonies of those affected.

The fast-food chain is one of Britain's largest employers with around 170,000 staff, many of whom are young workers, including teenagers.

"Any incident of misconduct and harassment is unacceptable and subject to rapid and thorough investigation and action," a McDonald's spokesperson said yesterday.

Meta ends US fact-checking

Meta ends fact-checking, loosens policies, and embraces user-driven content moderation approach

● Community notes system will be implemented

● Trump's influence seen in Meta's policy shift, ties strengthening post-election

● Joel Kaplan, a Republican, named head of public affairs; Dana White joins Meta board

TDT | Manama

Social media giant Meta announced yesterday a significant rollback of its content moderation policies, including the termination of its third-party fact-checking program in the United States.

"We're going to get rid of fact-checkers and replace them with community notes similar to X (formerly Twitter), starting in the US," Meta Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg said in a post on social media.

Zuckerberg said that "fact checkers have just been too politically biased and have destroyed more trust than they've created, especially in the US."

Meta's announcement repeated many of the complaints made by Republicans and X-owner Elon Musk about fact-checking programs that many conservatives see as censorship.

The 40-year-old tycoon said that "recent elections feel like a

cultural tipping point towards, once again, prioritizing speech."

The shift came as Zuckerberg has been making efforts to reconcile with US President-elect Donald Trump, including donating one million dollars to his inauguration fund.

Zuckerberg also said Meta sites, including Facebook and Instagram, would "simplify" their content policies "and get rid of a bunch of restrictions on topics like immigration and gender that are just out of touch with mainstream discourse."

Trump has been a harsh critic of Meta and Zuckerberg in recent years, accusing the company of supporting liberal policies and being biased against



A logo of US company's Meta is displayed at the Porte de Versailles exhibition center in Paris

“We’re going to get rid of fact-checkers and replace them with community notes similar to X (formerly Twitter), starting in the US

MARK ZUCKERBERG

conservatives.

The Republican was kicked off Facebook following the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol, though the company restored his account in early 2023. Zuckerberg also dined with

Trump at his Mar-a-Lago resort in November, as he looks to repair the company's relationship with the incoming US leader following the presidential election.

In another recent gesture towards the Trump team, Meta last week named Republican stalwart Joel Kaplan to head up public affairs at the company, taking over from Nick Clegg, a former British deputy prime minister.

"Too much harmless content gets censored, too many people find themselves wrongly locked up in 'Facebook jail,'" Kaplan said in a statement, insisting that its current approach to content moderation has "gone too far."

BETTER
YOU
KNOW

Meta's decision comes after CEO Mark Zuckerberg donated \$1 million to President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration fund, signaling a shift towards reconciling with the incoming administration

Zuckerberg also named Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) head Dana White, a close ally of Trump, to the Meta board.

As part of the overhaul, Meta said it will relocate its trust and safety teams from California, where liberal views are commonplace, to more conservative Texas.

"That will help us build trust to do this work in places where there is less concern about the bias of our teams," Zuckerberg said.

Additionally, Meta announced it would reverse its 2021 policy of reducing political content across its platforms.

Instead, the company will adopt a more personalized approach, allowing users greater control over the amount of political content they see on Facebook, Instagram, and Threads.



News in brief

International flights resume at Damascus airport
International flights resumed at Syria's main airport in Damascus yesterday for the first time since rebels toppled President Bashar al-Assad last month, AFP journalists said. Excitement was in the air at the Damascus airport, where an AFP correspondent saw passengers arriving from Qatar chanting and cheering with some draped in Syria's three-star independence flag. "Today marks a new beginning," Damascus airport director Anis Fallouh told AFP. "We started welcoming outbound and inbound international flights," he said, adding that the first flight was bound for Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates. The first Qatari commercial flight in nearly 13 years landed in Damascus at around 1:00 pm (10:00 GMT).

Security forces clashed with gunmen on Monday in one of Mexico's most violent states, leaving 10 suspected criminals dead and three police officers injured, authorities said. The early morning shootout happened during a joint patrol by police and the military in the municipality of Yuriria in Guanajuato, a central industrial region that is also home to warring drug cartels. The Guanajuato state security department initially reported that eight gunmen had been killed, but later said two more bodies had been found with gunshot wounds.

10 gunmen dead in clash with Mexico security forces
US records its first human death from bird flu
Louisiana health authorities on Monday reported the first human death in the United States linked to bird flu, while noting the patient had underlying medical conditions and that general risks to the public remained "low." The patient, aged 65, had been hospitalized in the southern state since at least mid-December, when the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced it as the country's first serious case of human infection from the H5N1 virus. "While the current public health risk for the general public remains low, people who work with birds, poultry or cows, or have recreational exposure to them, are at higher risk," the Louisiana Department of Health said in a statement announcing the death.

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CURIOSER & CURIOSER

North Korea's Kim says new missile will deter 'rivals'



A view shows the launch of a hypersonic missile at an undisclosed location
AFP | Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said a new hypersonic missile system tested this week would help deter the country's Pacific rivals, state media reported yesterday, as Washington's top diplomat visited the region. The test came two weeks before the inauguration of US president-elect Donald Trump, who has previously tried to woo North Korea, and coincided with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to the South. "The hypersonic missile system will reliably contain any rivals in the Pacific region that can affect the security of our state," Kim, who oversaw the launch, said in comments carried by KCNA yesterday. KCNA cited the use of a "new compound of carbon fibre" in the missile's engine, which experts warned could allow Pyongyang to hit further targets with technology only the United States, Russia and Chi-

Devastating quake in China's Tibet kills 126

6.8-magnitude earthquake in China's Tibet region killed at least 126 people and caused significant damage to buildings, with tremors felt in Nepal and India

Magnitude 6.8 quake struck Tingri, near Mount Everest

188 injured, over 1,000 homes damaged in rural Tibet

Temperatures in Tingri to drop to -16°C, adding urgency to rescue operations

Over 3,400 rescuers and 340 medical workers deployed to the quake zone

AFP | Beijing

A devastating earthquake in China's remote Tibet region killed at least 126 people and damaged thousands of buildings yesterday, state media reported, with tremors also felt in neighbouring Nepal's capital Kathmandu and parts of India. Videos published by China's state broadcaster CCTV showed houses destroyed with walls torn apart.



People stand amid damaged houses in the aftermath of an earthquake in Tonglai Village, Dingri in the Tibetan

Rescue workers waded through rubble strewn across the ruins in the aftermath, footage showed, while some gave locals thick blankets to keep warm in subzero temperatures. The quake struck rural, high-altitude Tingri county, about 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Mount Everest near China's border with Nepal, at around 9:00 am (0100 GMT) yesterday. "Here the houses are made from dirt so when the earthquake came... lots of houses collapsed," said 34-year-old Sangji Dangzhi, whose supermarket in Tingri suffered considerable damage. Speaking to AFP by phone, Sangji described the situation

YOU KNOW WHAT
Tingri, the quake's epicenter, lies in high-altitude terrain near Everest and is home to 62,000 residents, many living in traditional, vulnerable mud-brick homes

injured as of 7:00 pm, CCTV said. Twenty-eight people in critical condition were transferred to hospital for treatment and 3,609 houses had collapsed, it added. The China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC) measured the quake's magnitude as 6.8, while the US Geological Survey reported it as 7.1. When tourist Meng Lingfang arrived in the town of Lhatse, 65 kilometres from the epicentre, "the buildings had cracked open." "Some of the older houses collapsed, and a large part of the buildings made from bricks had cracked open, with big fissures,"



Damaged houses in Shigatse, southwestern China's Tibet region

rounded by mountainous terrain on the Chinese side of Mount Everest. Videos geolocated by AFP to Lhatse showed debris scattered in front of streetside eateries. "There were quite a few (rescue vehicles). One after the other they arrived," Meng added. "All-out rescue efforts" The area most affected is sur-

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alties to the greatest extent possible, properly resettling affected residents, and ensuring their safety and warmth through the winter", the state broadcaster said. Temperatures in Tingri are projected to drop to minus 16 degrees Celsius (3.2 Fahrenheit) overnight, according to the China Meteorological Administration. Authorities said more than 3,400 rescuers and over 340 medical workers had been deployed. Aid including cotton tents, quilts and cold-weather equipment had been dispatched by central authorities, state news agency Xinhua said. Tingri is under the administration of the prefecture-level city of Shigatse, home to the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important spiritual figures in Tibetan Buddhism after the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama said he was "deeply saddened." "I offer my prayers for those who have lost their lives and extend my wishes for a swift recovery to all who have been injured," the exiled spiritual leader said. Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed his "sincerest condolences", saying Russia "shares the grief of those who have lost relatives and close ones".

S. Korea investigators get new warrant to arrest President Yoon

AFP | Seoul

South Korean anti-graft investigators secured a new court-ordered arrest warrant yesterday for impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, whose failed martial law bid threw the country into turmoil. The former star prosecutor has refused questioning three times after his bungled December 3 martial law decree plunged South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades. As anti-graft officials and police got their fresh warrant from the same court that issued the first order, Yoon remained holed up in his residence surrounded



The residence (top) of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol is seen in Seoul by hundreds of guards preventing his detention. "The arrest warrant re-

Headquarters said in a statement. Seoul Western District Court declined to confirm when contacted by AFP. The Corruption Investigation Office (CIO), which is leading the probe into the president, has kept secret the length of the warrant it requested after the initial seven-day one expired. If investigators are able to detain Yoon, he would become the first sitting South Korean president to be arrested. But they would only have 48 hours to either request another arrest warrant, in order to keep him in detention, or be forced to release him.

Mediator Qatar confirms 'technical meetings' on Gaza truce ongoing

AFP | Doha

Talks aimed at cementing a truce in Gaza between Israel and Hamas are ongoing, with "technical meetings" taking place between the parties, mediator Qatar's foreign ministry said yesterday. "The technical meetings are still happening between both sides," ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said, referring to meetings with lower-level officials on the details of an agreement. "There are no principal meetings taking place at the moment." Mediators Qatar, Egypt and the United States have been engaged in months of talks between Israel and Hamas that have failed to end the devastat-



People look for their belongings amid the debris of destroyed buildings following an Israeli air strike on Bureij camp in the central Gaza Strip

Israel said it had authorised negotiators to continue the talks in the Qatari capital. A previous round of mediation in December ended with both sides blaming the other for the impasse, with Hamas accusing Israel of setting "new conditions" and Israel accusing Hamas of throwing up "obstacles" to a deal. In December, the gas-rich Gulf emirate expressed optimism that "momentum" was returning to the talks following Donald Trump's election victory in the United States. A month earlier, Doha had said it was putting its mediation on hold, and that it would resume when Hamas and Israel showed "willingness and seriousness".

Hundreds protest power outages in mountainous Pakistan



Residents stage a sit-in protest against power outages in Hunza Valley
AFP | Khaplu

Hundreds of people blocked a highway yesterday in Pakistan's mountainous northern region in protest against power outages lasting longer than 20 hours, as temperatures plunged to minus 15 degrees Celsius. Routine load-shedding is widespread across fuel-deprived Pakistan, but residents of the mountainous, snow-covered regions in Gilgit-Baltistan endure prolonged blackouts. "We have been facing the worst kind of power cuts, we get only one or two hours of electricity during the whole day," Baba Jan, a political activist who organised the protest, told AFP. Around 1,000 people have joined the demonstration in the picturesque valley of Hunza since Friday, blocking a section of the 1,300-kilometre (808-mile) Karakoram Highway and preventing dozens of freight trucks from crossing into China. People in the region usually rely on wood to keep warm as both gas and fuel-operated generators are too expensive. "People from all walks of life including the tourists are suffering in extremely cold weather due to the absence of electricity," Zahoor Ali, another protest organiser told AFP. The highway is part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in which China has invested billions of dollars, connecting the northern border to the southern coastal city of Gwadar. "The Karakoram Highway at Ali Abad in Hunza is completely blocked for traffic... business between Pakistan and China is suspended for days owing to the blockade," local trader Javaid Hussain said. "For the smooth running of business between Pakistan and China, the government should take steps to end the power crisis in the region."

Swedish navy recovers anchor of tanker suspected of Baltic Sea cable damage

AFP | Stockholm

The Swedish navy said yesterday it had recovered from the Baltic Sea the anchor of an oil tanker suspected of belonging to Russia's 'shadow fleet' and damaging four underwater telecom cables and one power cable on December 25. Sweden sent a submarine rescue vessel to assist Finland in the investigation last week. "The HMS Belos has located and lifted the anchor and handed it over to Finnish authorities," Swedish navy spokesman Jimmie Adamsson told AFP. The Eagle S, flying the Cook



Divers enter a flooded pit in a coal mine using a pulley
Islands flag, is suspected of land and Estonia in the Baltic having damaged the EstLink 2 on December 25, putting it out of electricity cable between Fin-

Indian divers race to reach miners inside flooded pit

AFP | Guwahati

Indian search teams including military divers worked yesterday to reach several coal miners trapped underground after water flooded the shaft a day earlier, rescue officials said. Nine men are reported to be trapped in the mine, with a rescue report saying three bodies had been spotted. Locals said at least 27 workers had entered the mine on Monday morning in the Dima Hasao region of India's northeastern state of Assam, with many managing to escape as gushing waters swamped the pit workings. State government minister Kaushik Rai told AFP that more



Divers enter a flooded pit in a coal mine using a pulley
port staff swiftly responded" to try to bring the miners out. Images released by the military showed divers in scuba kit being lowered into a deep shaft in a metal bucket.

TOP 4 TWEETS

01

I will always fight for this country, and do what I believe is in the best interest of Canadians.
@JustinTrudeau

02

My warmest wishes to the ecclesial communities of the East who are celebrating Christmas today! I pray especially for those who are suffering due to ongoing conflicts. May Jesus, the Prince of Peace, bring peace and serenity to all!
@Pontifex

03

The men and women of Charlie Hebdo were murdered for what they represented. The values of France and Europe. Freedom of expression. Democracy. Pluralism. Let us honour their memory. And let us fight relentlessly against terrorism and religious fundamentalism.
@vonderleyen

04

Merry Christmas to all brothers and sisters celebrating today -- may your homes be filled with good health, hope and peace.
@DrTedros

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

celebs

Hollywood stars **glitter** at Golden Globes

Stars stun with bold styles, golden hues, and daring menswear at 2024 Globes



Yelena Yemchuk, from left, Ebon Moss-Bachrach, Jazz Charton, Kieran Culkin, and Ayo Edebiri, arrive at the Golden Globes



Elle Fanning



Zahara Jolie, left, and Angelina Jolie arrive at the 82nd Golden Globes

● **Several actresses wore gold gowns**

● **Red was another popular color choice for women**

● **Men opted for bolder colors like green and blue**

AFP | Los Angeles

Hollywood's top stars on Sunday made their first major fashion statements of this year's awards season at the Golden Globes, and the looks did not disappoint.

Here is a glance at what they wore on the red carpet at the Beverly Hilton Hotel.

Golden girls

Wearing gold to an awards show is basically an announcement that you are ready to



Emma Stone

win a golden statuette. And Cate Blanchett, nominated for her searing turn as a journalist with secrets in Alfonso Cuarón's limited series "Disclaimer" for Apple TV+, understood the assignment. The Australian actress wore a glittering Louis Vuitton gown with a demure neckline, bejeweled collar overlay and a train. She also is eco-friendly -- she wore the same dress at the Cannes film festival in May last year.

Ariana Grande, a nominee for best supporting ac-



Ariana Grande

trix in a comedy/musical film for her turn as Glinda in "Wicked," wore a strapless Givenchy dress with a jeweled bodice, a bow draping down the back and a signature high ponytail.

"It's yellow because 'Follow the Yellow Brick Road' and it's one of Glinda's favorite colors," Grande told Variety on the red carpet, putting an end to months of wearing candy pink gowns during the film's press tour.

The pop princess rocked opera gloves, an accessory also seen on actresses Ali Wong, Janelle James and Cristin Milioti.

Demi Moore, winner of best

comedy actress for her portrayal of an aging star seeking a way to remain forever young in the body horror film "The Substance," stunned in a strapless gold Armani ball gown with a sculptural asymmetrical neckline.

And Mikey Madison -- a nominee for her star-making turn in "Anora," the tale of a sex worker who marries a Russian oligarch's son -- was ready for her close-up in a strapless gold Bottega Veneta column gown.

Rock the Red

Fire engine red is a showstopper and nominee Isabella Rossellini, who plays a shrewd nun in the papal drama "Conclave," definitely turned heads in a floor-length red gown with a gauzy matching cape.

Dakota Fanning, nominated for best supporting actress in a television role for



Dakota Fanning



Cate Blanchett recycled her Louis Vuitton gown from Cannes, highlighting sustainable red-carpet fashion

"Ripley," stunned in a body-conscious red pleated gown with a high leg slit and one faux strap wrapped around her neck and flowing over her shoulder.

Emma Stone debuted a pixie cut with her belted crimson Louis Vuitton gown. Like many dresses worn on Sunday, it was strapless.

And Ali Wong, a winner for best stand-up comedy special, wore a playful Balenciaga red gown -- also

strapless, and cinched at the waist with a giant bow.

Daring colors for men

Basic black looks great on most men -- "Hit Man" star Glen Powell, a Globes nominee, for one.

But several male stars at the gala took a more daring sartorial approach.

Andrew Garfield and Adam Brody both opted for green tuxedos with black lapels, while Morris Chestnut went for an all-red look.

Jeremy Strong, a nominee for best supporting actor in a film for "The Apprentice," rocked up in a mint green suit and matching bucket hat.

And Andrew Scott, nominated for best actor in a limited series for his portrayal of a suave killer in "Ripley," donned a light blue Vivienne Westwood suit, shirt and tie.

Cate Blanchett

SUDOKU

4			6			1		9
7			2		5		4	
	2			8		5		6
5		2	8					
					6	2		8
1	7		4				6	
	4		9		2			5
2	3			1				4

Yesterday's solution

9	4	2	1	3	8	6	5	7
3	8	5	2	7	6	1	9	4
6	1	7	5	9	4	3	8	2
1	7	6	4	2	9	5	3	8
5	9	4	8	1	3	7	2	6
8	2	3	7	6	5	4	1	9
2	5	1	9	4	7	8	6	3
7	6	8	3	5	2	9	4	1
4	3	9	6	8	1	2	7	5

How to play

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

CROSSWORD

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14												
15												
20												
25												
34												
38												
41												
48												
52												
59												
64												
67												

Across

1- Former Russian ruler; 5- Jack Sprack could ... fat; 10- Greek vowels; 14- Church area; 15- European kingdom; 16- Microscopic arachnid; 17- What's left; 18- Office subs; 19- Zeno's home; 20- Tenth month of the year; 22- Abbreviate; 24- Whiskey grain; 25- Suffix with pay; 26- Methods; 30- Erin; 34- Breaks bread; 35- Strike; 37- Designer Christian; 38- Ask invasive questions; 39- Exist; 40- School of the future?; 41- Inactive; 43- Camel's cousin; 45- Tuneful Horne; 46- Neuter; 48- Scoffed; 50- Pompous sort; 51- ... man ... mouse?; 52- Send to school; 56- Endless; 60- Catalog; 61- Notre Dame's Fighting ...; 63- Evening, informally; 64- Like Nash's lama; 65- Gallows loop; 66- Baseballer Slaughter; 67- Meddlesome; 68- Dead duck; 69- Depression in a surface;

Down

1- Poi ingredient; 2- Blueprint detail; 3- Type of D.A.; 4- Snappy comebacks; 5- Values highly; 6- Impersonator; 7- Scot's topper; 8- Bites; 9- Like lighthouses; 10- Green beryl; 11- Slant; 12- Fit to ...; 13- Actor Connery; 21- Clao!; 23- Flamenco cry; 26- Early photo color; 27- Fenced areas; 28- Fashion; 29- Little; 30- Units; 31- Broadcaster; 32- Nary a soul; 33- Fear greatly; 36- 401(k) relative; 42- Precisely; 43- Enduring; 44- One more; 45- Having knowledge; 47- Country bordered by Canada and Mexico; 49- Before, in poetry; 52- North Carolina university; 53- Pebbles's pet; 54- Manipulates; 55- Switch ending; 56- "... quam videri" (North Carolina's motto); 57- Baseball team; 58- Like ... of bricks; 59- ... we forget...; 62- Cyclotron bit;

Yesterday's solution

D	E	A	F	B	R	I	E	H	O	P	S	
R	A	T	I	O	Y	E	N	S	A	M	I	E
I	S	I	N	G	P	A	D	S	S	A	L	E
P	E	T	R	O	A	M	E	I	T	H	E	R
E	E	L	S	I	N	R	O	A	D			
T	R	E	S	S	E	S	N	C	O			
O	A	S	T	S	S	C	E	N	A	R	I	O
R	I	T	E	O	A	T	H	S	P	E	S	O
E	N	S	E	M	B	L	E	E	R	V	I	N
P	O	I	N	T	Y	M	E	L	I	S	S	A
N	A	S	S	A	U	D	U	E	T	A	I	
A	R	C	S	A	D	O	S	E	R	E	C	T
B	E	A	U	R	U	E	S	D	E	A	R	S
S	E	R	E	Y	O	R	E	P	R	E	Y	

Classifieds

VACANCIES AVAILABLE CONTINUED

EAGLE FOR SAFE AND SECURITY W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of SECURITY GUARD, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17270140 or alialtmi@yahoo.com

LAGOONA BEACH RESORT&SPA has a vacancy for the occupation of ROOM ATTENDANT, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17660383 or INTERMILAN_1984@HOTMAIL.COM

SARAB CONTRACTING CO. W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of STOREKEEPER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17622406 or sarabcon@gmail.com

AL BAHAA LIGHTING has a vacancy for the occupation of ELECTRICIAN(BUILDINGS), suitably qualified applicants can contact 17641786 or albahaa.lighting@gmail.com

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HIGH RIDER MOTORCYCLE SPARE PARTS & SERVICES W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of MECHANICAL HELPER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 33309492 or MAHBOOBTABASSUM786@GMAIL.COM

NASSER ABD MOHAMMED B.S.C(CLOSED) has a vacancy for the occupation of WORKER(CONSTRUCTION), suitably qualified applicants can contact 17700888 or NASSERAB@BATELCO.COM.BH

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METRIC MODERN CONSTRUCTION has a vacancy for the occupation of MASON, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17668584 or mmrobin@gmail.com

SHABEBA CONTRACTING has a vacancy for the occupation of CLEANER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17716710 or SHABEBACO@HOTMAIL.COM

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clean and green services has a vacancy for the occupation of CLEANER, suitably qualified applicants can contact 39922434 or cleangreenbh@gmail.com

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THE FACILITY MANAGEMENT W.L.L has a vacancy for the occupation of STOREKEEPER ASSISTANT, suitably qualified applicants can contact 17100190 or satish@cinqo-me.com

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Liverpool's Slot says contract issues not affecting Alexander-Arnold's form

AFP | London

Arne Slot stressed yesterday that contract issues for some of Liverpool's top stars are not a distraction following stinging criticism of Trent Alexander-Arnold for his performance against Manchester United.

The England defender, linked with a move to Real Madrid, was at fault for Lisandro Martinez's opener in Sunday's 2-2 draw at Anfield during a sub-par display.

The right-back's sloppy performance came during a long-running debate over his future with the Premier League leaders.

The 26-year-old's contract expires at the end of the season, meaning he can now sign a pre-contract agreement with an overseas club.

Spanish giants Real have reportedly made a bid to sign the former Liverpool trainee but the Anfield club are believed to have rejected their approach.

Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk and top-scorer Mohamed Salah are also out of contract at the end of the season.

Liverpool manager Slot, speaking before the first leg of his side's League Cup semi-final against Tottenham on Wednesday,



Liverpool coach Arne Slot speaks with Trent Alexander-Arnold (file photo)

admitted Alexander-Arnold had performed below his usual standards against United.

"He's played so, so, so many games well for this club," he said. "Now it wasn't his best, like for some others, it wasn't the best game."

"And we just pick it up, start training today again, because these players know if you play 50, 60 games in the season that once in a while you don't have your best performance."

The Dutchman said he was frustrated at the way the performances of his players were assessed.

"If we drop points, if Mo (Salah) misses the penalty against Madrid, he's distracted by his contract situation," said Slot.

"If Trent has not his best performance, he's distracted by the contract situation."

"If they play really well, nobody tells me, 'Yeah, that's because they have a contract situation'."

"We always try to find arguments, but nine out of ten times the best argument is the quality of the teams you face, or the game plan the other team has."

Slot also said he avoids the noise around the club after Sa-

lah's cryptic social media post on Monday featuring a picture of all three players who are nearing the end of their contracts.

"I talk to my players so if there is anything that worries them, then they share this with me. That has not happened until now," he said.

He added: "I'm not focused on social media posts or what has been said about us, because if you do that as a Liverpool manager, you have no life, because this is one of the biggest clubs in the world and every second of the day people talk about us."

ARNE SLOT

China's most successful team kicked out of professional football

AFP | Beijing

Guangzhou FC, China's most successful football team and former Asian champions, have been thrown out of the country's professional leagues because of "heavy historical debt", the club say.

The effective demise of the eight-time Chinese Super



Fans cheer for Guangzhou FC

League (CSL) winners, once

managed by Marcello Lippi and also Fabio Cannavaro, signals the end of an era in the domestic game in China.

Dozens of Chinese clubs, including fellow former CSL champions Jiangsu Suning, have folded in recent years in debt.

"The club tried various means to gain access to the professional league," Guangzhou FC,

formerly known as Guangzhou Evergrande, said.

"However, because of the heavy historical debt burden, the funds we raised were insufficient to clear them."

The Chinese Football Association (CFA) excluded Guangzhou from a list of 49 teams included in China's professional leagues for 2025.

Osaka splits with rapper Cordae ahead of Australian Open

AFP | Melbourne

Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka says she and her American rapper boyfriend Cordae have split up just days ahead of the Australian Open.

The couple have been together since 2019 and share a young daughter, Shai.

"Hi everyone, just wanted to say that Cordae and I are no longer in a relationship," the four-time Grand Slam champion wrote on Instagram late Monday.

"No bad blood at all, he's a great person and an awesome dad."

"Honestly really glad our paths crossed because my daughter is my biggest blessing



Naomi Osaka (R) with rapper boyfriend Cordae (L) (file photo)

and I was able to grow a lot from our experiences together."

She ended the post with a red heart emoji, without saying when they parted ways.

Osaka reached her first WTA final since 2022 at the Auckland Classic over the weekend.

But she pulled out with an abdominal injury after taking

No bad blood at all, he's a great person and an awesome dad. Honestly really glad our paths crossed because my daughter is my biggest blessing and I was able to grow a lot from our experiences together

NAOMI OSAKA

the opening set 6-4.

The 27-year-old was not thought to be badly hurt, with the Australian Open starting on Sunday.

USA striker Vazquez joins Austin in club record deal

AFP | Austin

USA international striker Brandon Vazquez has returned to Major League Soccer joining Austin FC from Mexican club Monterrey in a club record deal.

The 26-year-old has signed a four year contract with the Texas club and will be registered as a 'Designated Player' who can be paid outside of the MLS salary cap.

Austin did not disclose the

transfer fee but said it was a club record. Givemesport.com said the fee was in the region of \$10 million.

Vazquez played the first seven years of his career in MLS, making his league debut with Atlanta United in 2017 and he was part of the MLS Cup winning team in 2018 and the US Open Cup title in 2019.

The target man then moved to FC Cincinnati ahead of the 2020 season where he produced 26 goals and 12 assists in 62 MLS



Brandon Vazquez

regular season matches. Cincinnati transferred the

San Diego born Vazquez to Monterrey in January 2024 and he grabbed 14 goals in his year with the club.

"Austin FC is an organization with terrific fan support, with big plans for the future. I hope to make an immediate impact this season and help contribute to the success of the club for years to come," the striker said in a club release.

Vazquez has scored four goals in 11 appearances for the USA national team.

Bahrain's next mission

Fresh off Gulf Cup win, Bahrain prepares for crucial World Cup qualifying matches



Bahrain's players celebrate Gulf Cup final against Oman

● Bahrain face Japan in World Cup qualifiers on March 20

TDT | Manama

Fresh from their Gulf Cup success, Bahrain's national football team is already setting its sights on the next big test: the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers. There's little time to dwell on their victory as the road to global football's biggest stage

begins to take shape. It's been a whirlwind start to the year for the team. A 2-1 win over Oman in the Gulf Cup final set the tone for 2025, sparking nationwide celebrations. From the airport to the Bahrain National Stadium, streets

were packed with jubilant fans celebrating their heroes. The win was so monumental that a national holiday was declared, underlining the significance of Bahrain's second Gulf Cup title. But football rarely waits. In just over two months, Bahrain

Shaikh Isa bin Ali hails Bahrain's Gulf Cup Win as a Landmark Moment

Bahrain's recent success at the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup has been hailed as a defining moment in the nation's sporting history by His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, Vice President of the Bahrain Olympic Committee. The national team's hard-fought 2-1 win over Oman secured their second Gulf Cup title and also sparked celebrations across the Kingdom.

In a message brimming with pride, His Highness congratulated His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince and Prime Minister. He also acknowledged the pivotal contributions of His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al



HH Shaikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa

Khalifa and His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, whose unwavering support continues to elevate Bahraini sports on the regional and global stage.

"This victory is a testament to the resilience and determination of our athletes," Shaikh Isa noted, emphasizing how moments like these bolster Bahrain's reputation in the sporting world. He also highlighted the

role of visionary leadership in creating an environment where such achievements are possible, calling the win an inspiration for future generations.

The Bahrain Football Association, led by Shaikh Ali bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, was also commended for its meticulous preparation of the team. Shaikh Isa reserved special praise for the players, technical staff, and administrative team, whose collective commitment brought this historic moment to life.

As Bahrain basks in the glory of its Gulf Cup success, the achievement stands as a rallying cry for the Kingdom's continued ascent in international sports, with hopes high for even greater accomplishments on the horizon.

will face a tough opponent in Japan on March 20. Japan, with its proven World Cup pedigree, presents an entirely different challenge.

Yet, Bahrain is heading into the qualifiers brimming with confidence, buoyed by their re-

cent success and the unwavering support of a proud nation.

The stakes are high. Time will tell if Bahrain can harness the momentum of the Gulf Cup and take a step closer to the ultimate dream—a place on football's grandest stage.

Kyrgios set for Davis Cup return after five years

AFP | Sydney

Nick Kyrgios is in line for a return to Davis Cup tennis after five years with the mercurial Australian a shock selection by captain Lleyton Hewitt yesterday.

The 29-year-old has not played at the team competition since 2019, showing little interest in making a comeback while grappling with injuries.

But the 2022 Wimbledon finalist was among the nominations put forward for their tie with Sweden after his return to



Nick Kyrgios in action

the sport last week in Brisbane following wrist reconstruction.

Kyrgios lost in three tight sets to rising French star Giovanni Mpetshi Perricard and said he would need "a miracle" to be competitive at the Australian Open starting on Sunday.

Hewitt also named world number eight Alex de Minaur, Jordan Thompson and Thanasi Kokkinakis in his four-man outfit.

Australia, last year's Davis Cup semi-finalists, meet Sweden in Stockholm on January 31-February 1.

Loeb limps home as teenager wins Dakar stage



The Dacia of French driver Sebastien Loeb is seen after crashing

AFP | Al Henakiyah

Sebastien Loeb struggled to complete Stage 3 of the Dakar Rally yesterday after rolling his car near the start, a setback that is likely to cost him his dream of a first title in the event.

The nine-time World Rally Champion went off the road 12 kilometres into the 327-stage between Bisha and Al Henakiyah. After a nasty bounce his Dacia performed several impressive rolls, which seriously damaged the vehicle.

The 50-year-old Frenchman and his Belgian co-driver Fabian Lurquin set off again after a five-minute stop for repairs, but struggled throughout the rest of the stage.

Loeb, who has finished second three times in the Dakar Rally, ended the stage in 4 hours 20 minutes 12 seconds, more than an hour behind the day's winner, 19-year-old South African Saood Variawa.

"We were able to continue but suddenly the steering rod broke, I think because of the rollover," said Loeb at the finish.

"Then we had a problem with the engine overheating. We tried to finish the stage. We managed to do so, but we lost an hour."

Variawa, in a Toyota, finished 33 seconds ahead of Frenchman Guerlain Chicherit in a Mini.

Another South African Toyota driver, Henk Lategan retained the overall lead after finishing 12th on the day, 7mins 31sec behind Variawa.

Variawa is 41st, 7 hours 47 minutes 11 seconds behind after losing eight hours the day before following a head-on collision with team-mate and compatriot Giniel de Villiers.

Loeb sits 16th, almost an hour and a quarter off first. He also lost 30 minutes on Sunday when a fan problem caused his engine to overheat.

Ex-England skipper Vaughan backs shake-up 'to keep Test cricket relevant'

AFP | London

Former England captain Michael Vaughan threw his support yesterday behind a two-tier structure "to save" Test cricket with the ICC reportedly meeting this month to discuss the issue.

Vaughan joined former India coach Ravi Shastri in urging a shake-up which would include relegation and promotion to help ensure the survival of the red-ball game.

Both men were on commentary duties during the thrilling five-Test series between Australia and India which the hosts won 3-1 in front of huge crowds.

"It has been a series that has only served to strengthen my views on where the game is headed and what administrators should be looking at," Vaughan said in a column for The Telegraph in London and The Sydney Morning Herald.

"I believe it is a four-day prod-



Australia's Travis Head walks to the dressing room as Indian fans celebrate his dismissal (file photo)

uct with a set number of overs each day enforced, three matches minimum per series and two divisions of six, including promotion and relegation."

Shastri said the Australia-India series proved Test cricket continued to hold its own in

the face of ever-increasing T20 franchise cricket.

But, like Vaughan, it only reinforced his view that to survive, the biggest teams needed to be playing each other more often.

The Herald reported yesterday that Australia, England, In-

dia and the International Cricket Council's new chairman Jay Shah would meet this month to discuss a two-tier structure.

Any move to two divisions would kick in after the end of the current Future Tours Programme in 2027, it added, citing sources with knowledge of the talks.

"I was delighted to read in this masthead the ICC are considering a two-tier structure from 2027 which could see the Ashes staged twice every three years," said Vaughan.

"I have been saying for a long time this is the way to keep Test cricket relevant by ensuring the best play the best as often as possible, and we get fewer mis-matches.

"There is much to iron out before any major changes are made for 2027, but there is time."

The ICC has been contemplating a two-tier system for years but the plans have never got off the ground.

Fans invited to Darts Masters draw, autograph session

TDT | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), 'The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East', is inviting fans with tickets to the 2025 Bahrain Darts Masters to attend the official draw and autograph session the day prior to the two-day darts spectacle.

The world's biggest names in the game will learn of their match-ups in the competition's first round of play and meet with fans, take pictures, and sign autographs on Wednesday, 15 January, from 630pm at Bahrain Rugby Football Club (BRFC) in Saar.

The evening's events will be a fantastic preview of what's to come in this year's highly anticipated Bahrain Darts Masters, taking place Thursday and Friday, 16 and 17 January, at BIC in Sakhir.

Among the darts superstars who will be competing in the Kingdom are newly crowned, first-time World Champion and defending Bahrain Darts Masters champion Luke Littler.

Also set to thrill fans are last year's World Champion Luke Humphries and top star Rob



Action from a previous Darts Masters event

Cross. They are the first three Professional Darts Corporation (PDC) icons who have already been confirmed to be competing in Bahrain.

The PDC stars will be taking on eight Asian representatives in the first round. Among the continental talents set to hit the stage are Bahrain's very own Basem Mahmood and Abdulla Saeed, who recently won the right to fly the Kingdom's flag in the event after finishing as the top two in a national qualifying tournament.

This year's Bahrain Darts Masters will be the opening stop on the 2025 World Series

of Darts calendar.

Fans must act fast to secure their seats as there has been incredible interest for the event, with BIC needing to add more general admission tickets to satisfy demand.

All ticket and hospitality options can be found online on the circuit's official website or by calling the BIC Hotline.

The Bahrain Darts Masters is organised by BIC and CBX and supported by Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority. It will take place at the BIC Dome, which will be transformed for the weekend into an incredible darts venue.

Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night to light up the strip at BIC tomorrow

TDT | Manama

Bahrain International Circuit (BIC), 'The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East', hosts the latest exciting edition of Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night tomorrow.

Motorsport enthusiasts will have the opportunity to engage in head-to-head battles with fellow-speed lovers in a unique format down BIC's world-class quarter-mile drag strip.

Tomorrow's event is scheduled for 7pm to 12midnight.

Interested participants can invite their family or friends and bring their very own cars or motorbikes for an exciting one-on-one challenge. But instead of a traditional standing start, participants will begin their run down the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA)-sanctioned strip at a rolling speed of 80kph.

The cost to participate in Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night is BD22 for each driver or rider. Spectators can watch from the stands for a fee of BD2.

Just as in all activities at BIC, safety is paramount for all taking part. Cars and motorbikes must thus go through scrutineering before being able to hit the strip.

Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag



Action from a previous event at BIC

Night is the perfect opportunity for an engaging, yet friendly, duel. Both participants will be able to push their vehicles to their very limit within the secure and controlled environment at BIC.

Meanwhile, also available on Thursday as part of the Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night programme is BIC's most mind-boggling passenger ride: the Dragster Experience.

Known as 'The Fastest Ride on Earth', fans will have a chance to get a taste of pure

speed as they are taken from zero to 100kph in just one second while in the cockpit of a 10,500cc Top Dragster.

The Dragster Experience is available at BD44 for the first passenger while a second passenger can get 50 per cent off.

For more information on Kanoo Motors Rolling Drag Night, the Dragster Experience, or other events and activities at BIC, visit the circuit's website, call the BIC Hotline, or follow the circuit's official social media channels.

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