

National Race Day returns at BIC

Bahrain's top motorsport championships thrill fans with fierce races this weekend | P12

THURSDAY
JANUARY, 2025
220 FILS
ISSUE NO.10167

Rescuers search for survivors after quake in China's Tibet kills at least 126

Angelina Jolie wants to do more things that 'scare her'

BisB partners with Conserving Bounties



HM the King

HM King thanked by Amir of Qatar

TD | Manama

His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa received a cable of thanks from His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Amir of Qatar, in response to HM's cable of congratulations on Qatar's National Day.

Harris set to visit Bahrain next week

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The Court of the Crown Prince has announced that US Vice President Kamala Harris will arrive in the Kingdom of Bahrain on Thursday, January 16, 2025, for an official visit.

During her visit, Vice President Harris will meet with His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to discuss matters of mutual interest and further strengthen Bahrain-US relations.

The Court of the Crown Prince extended a warm welcome to the Vice President and her accompanying delegation, wishing them a pleasant and productive stay in the Kingdom.

Fikra e-voting

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Electronic voting for the sixth edition of the Government Innovation Competition (Fikra) has been launched through the Prime Minister's Office website at www.pmo.gov.bh to determine the winner of the "Public Vote" category.

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HRH Prince Salman: Bahrain is home to talented individuals writing success stories

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Bahrain's success in international and regional championships and forums serves as a significant source of pride.

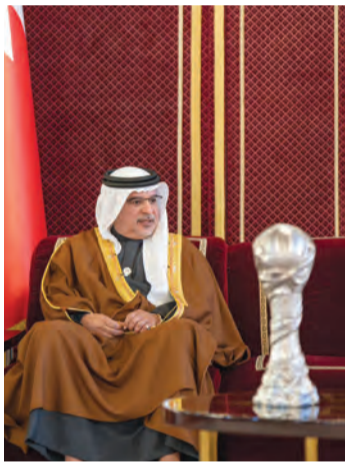
This was emphasised by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, as he met yesterday with the players, as well as the technical and administrative staff of the Bahrain national football team, at Riffa Palace, to celebrate their victory at the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup.

He affirmed that the achievements of the people of Bahrain in various sports are a result of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's unwavering support for the Kingdom's sports sector.

HRH Prince Salman noted that Bahrain is home to talented individuals who consistently write success stories through their achievements, strengthening the Kingdom's standing.

Every new achievement by Team Bahrain contributes to the Kingdom's comprehensive development, which began 25 years ago with the Accession of His Majesty the King to the throne, he added.

HRH the Crown Prince and



Prime Minister congratulated the team on their outstanding performance throughout the championship, which culminated in this historic victory.

Stepping stone

His Royal Highness noted that this achievement serves as a stepping stone for the team toward future success in Bahraini football.

He affirmed the dedication and commitment of His Majesty the King's Representative for Humanitarian Work and Youth Affairs, Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa and the First Deputy Chairman



HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister with the Bahrain national football team

of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, President of the General Sports Authority and President of Bahrain Olympic Committee, His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa, to developing Bahrain's sports sector and achieving the Kingdom's aspirations.

Efforts

HRH Prince Salman commended the efforts of the President of the Bahrain Football Association (BFA), Shaikh Ali bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, as well as all BFA members and members of the national workforce who supported the Bahrain National Football Team in achieving this distinguished

accomplishment.

His Royal Highness highlighted the unwavering support of the Bahraini fans for the national football team throughout the championship, emphasising that their encouragement was the greatest incentive for the team's triumph as champions of the prestigious tournament.

He praised the State of Kuwait for its exceptional organisation of the 26th Arabian Gulf Cup and praised the efforts of all the teams that competed, wishing them success in future championships.

Appreciation

The players, along with the administrative and technical

staff, expressed their appreciation for HRH Prince Salman's support for the people of Bahrain, which contributed to this historic achievement.

They also pledged to achieve further sporting accomplishments that enhance Bahrain's global standing.

HH Shaikh Nasser, HH Shaikh Khalid, HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, 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, HH Shaikh Mohammed bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and number of senior officials also attended the meeting.

Upholding justice



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, met yesterday with the Ombudswoman and Chairperson of the Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission (PDRC), Ghada Hameed Habib, at Riffa Palace. During the meeting, HRH Prince Salman was presented with the Prisoners and Detainees Rights Commission Report 2020-2023. He affirmed the Kingdom's adoption of societal and humanitarian initiatives and programs, which enhance the legal system and consolidate the principles of justice, under the visionary leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. His Royal Highness expressed his appreciation for the PDRC's efforts to uphold the principles of transparency within the framework of a state founded on institutions and the rule of law.

Bahrain-WHO cooperation



His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, met yesterday with the outgoing World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Bahrain, Dr. Tasneem Ghaleb Atatreh, at Riffa Palace. HRH Prince Salman affirmed the Kingdom's commitment to advancing the health sector, improving the efficiency of health services, and ensuring their sustainability to achieve the Kingdom's comprehensive development goals under the leadership of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. His Royal Highness emphasised the importance of strengthening cooperation with specialised health organizations and institutions to adopt best practices and enhance the efficiency of the national workforce in the medical field. This aims to improve the health of Bahrain's citizens and residents.

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Major upgrade

Telecommunications Regulatory Authority approves wholesale price changes to boost fibre broadband speeds in Bahrain

TDI | Manama

In an era where the internet is integral to daily life, supporting everything from information access and entertainment to commerce and business, Bahrain stands out as one of the most advanced communications markets globally.

With nationwide 5G coverage and widespread fibre broadband availability, consumers in Bahrain can select the broadband services that best meet their needs.

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) yesterday approved changes to the wholesale services BNET provides to internet service providers to support consumer and business fibre broadband services.

This decision will allow the speed of fibre broadband services to more than double at no additional cost to consumers.

Digital economy

Broadband connectivity is essential for fostering inclusive participation in the digital economy.

Whether through 5G or fibre networks, it is imperative that consumers have access to

high-quality services at competitive prices.

The TRA believes that these changes to BNET's services will contribute to Bahrain's vision of being one of the best-connected nations globally, while maintaining internationally competitive pricing.

Development

Philip Marnick, General Director of TRA, commented on the development: "To ensure the prices we pay are globally competitive, we benchmark prices not just against our neighbors in the GCC, but also against other advanced competitive markets. We already have competitive mobile prices, and these changes we have approved will help ensure the prices we pay for fibre broadband services remain globally competitive.

"In approving the changes,

The consumers will have access to high-quality services at competitive prices.

we have also ensured that all telecommunications operators can continue to invest in their networks and services to ensure we always remain one of the best-connected countries in the world."

The TRA remains committed to fostering a robust and competitive telecommunications environment that benefits consumers, supports economic growth, and positions Bahrain as a leader in digital connectivity.



ILA and THMC forge strategic partnership



TDI | Manama

The Indian Ladies Association (ILA) and the Thattai Hindu Merchants Community (THMC) officially signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the ILA premises on January 7, marking the beginning of a collaborative journey to foster community service, entrepreneurship, and cultural exchange in Bahrain.

The event brought together prominent representatives from both organizations, including Mrs. Kiran Abhijit Mangle, Hon. President, ILA, and key members from THMC.

THMC representatives present during the signing ceremony were Mr. Mukesh T. Kavalan, Hon. President, Kavalani & Sons W.L.L.; Mr. B.C. Thaker, Past President, THMC; Mrs. Bharti Gajria, Hon. Board Member, Gajria, and Mr. Yogesh N. Bhatia, Hon. Treasurer, THMC. The ILA delegation included Mrs. Kiran Abhijit Mangle, Hon.



ILA and THMC representatives at the MoU-signing ceremony

President, ILA, along with the Executive Committee 2024, Past President Mrs. Thanuja Anil, and Advisory Committee Member Mrs. Anjali Gupta.

Key areas of collaboration included the following: Community Service Initiatives: Joint programs aimed at enhancing community welfare and supporting charitable activities;

Entrepreneurial Development: Special emphasis on empowering women entrepreneurs through workshops, networking opportunities, and trade exhibitions; and Cultural Exchange: Promoting bilateral cultural ties and fostering deep-

er integration between Indian communities in Bahrain.

In her address, Mrs. Kiran Abhijit Mangle, Hon. President, ILA, emphasized, "This collaboration is a significant step towards strengthening our community ties and creating opportunities for cultural and economic empowerment."

Mr. Mukesh T. Kavalani, Hon. President, THMC, echoed similar sentiments, stating, "Together, we can build a stronger platform for mutual growth, cooperation, and shared success."

The partnership underscores a shared vision for social responsibility.

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'Education key to building stronger future'

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Investing in education leads to a stronger and more prosperous future, requiring initiatives that enhance and innovate within the education sector.

This was emphasised by His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, 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, as he chaired the Trust's Board meeting yesterday at Riffa Palace.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman noted that such investment ensures future generations are equipped with the necessary knowledge to make Bahrain even more prosperous.

Development He highlighted the importance of education in driving the Kingdom's comprehensive development, which began 25 years ago with His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa's Accession to the throne.

His Highness also affirmed the support provided by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin

Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, in developing the Kingdom's education sector, which contributes to achieving sustainable development and advancing achievements across various fields.

During the meeting, a report on the beneficiaries of the Trust's scholarships, the executive plan for undergraduate scholarships the postgraduate studies program for 2025-2026, and the Trust's annual report for 2024 were discussed.

Investment HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman

highlighted the importance of providing quality educational opportunities for the people of Bahrain, emphasising that they represent the most valuable investment for building a brighter future and driving the Kingdom's development.

He affirmed the importance of partnerships between the public and private sectors and their role in supporting educational initiatives that contribute to the development of human resources and the preparation of the national workforce to address future challenges.



HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa chairs the Board of Trustees meeting

Short films, big impact

'Hope from the Ashes' dominates awards at US-Bahrain documentary screening

Ashen Tharaka
TDT | Manama

Emerging Bahraini filmmakers showcased their talents in the third edition of the "Project Documentaries" film screening, organised by the US Embassy in partnership with Bahrain's Ministry of Youth Affairs.

The event, held at Al-Dana Mall's EPIX Cinema, celebrated the rich history and beauty of Bahrain through compelling short documentaries.

The initiative followed a workshop led by US filmmaker and producer Todd Thompson in October 2024, where Bahraini filmmakers honed their skills.

Documentaries

The final three documentaries – The Dive, Hope from the Ashes, and Heroes Behind the Track – were screened during the event, captivating the audience with their unique narratives and creative approaches.

Among the highlights was Hope from the Ashes, a gripping documentary about the fire that devastated the historic Manama Souq.

The film offered a message of resilience and renewal, leaving viewers moved and inspired.

Bahraini youth

US Ambassador to Bahrain, His Excellency Steven C. Bondy, praised the initiative for empowering Bahraini youth.

"We aim to ensure that young people in Bahrain are equipped with the skills they need to thrive in the labour



H.E. Steven C. Bondy, US Ambassador to Bahrain

- Best Directing:** Jassim Ahmed (Hope from the Ashes)
- Best Producing:** Alaa Alshowaikh (Hope from the Ashes)
- Best Storytelling:** Hope from the Ashes (General)
- Best Cinematography:** Anwar Alzaki & Abdulla Naser (AlDana)
- Best Editing:** Sayed Mujtaba Hasan (Hope from the Ashes)
- Best Audio & Sound:** Taimoor Walayat (Heroes Behind the Track)



'Hope from the Ashes' Documentary Team (Pictures by Ashen Tharaka)

force," Ambassador Bondy said.

He emphasised that such projects align with the shared goals of the US and Bahraini governments in fostering youth development.

The ambassador also commended the exceptional talent of Bahraini youth, noting their potential to make significant contributions to creative industries.

Unbelievable talents

"Bahraini youth have unbelievable talents," Ambassador Bondy told The Daily Tribune.

The event underscored the importance of collaboration,



'AlDana' Documentary Team

with US experts providing valuable insights to the filmmakers during the workshops.

The success of the screening

and awards ceremony highlighted the power of storytelling in bridging cultures and celebrating local heritage.



Ambassador Bondy and the Minister of Youth Affairs at the red carpet ceremony with other officials



'Heroes Behind the Track' Documentary Team



Young Bahraini filmmakers with the Minister of Youth Affairs, Her Excellency Rawan bint Najeeb Tawfiq

Tamkeen covers 50% of solar panel costs for businesses



Talal Mohammed Al Mannai, Shura Council member

Maha Mufeez, Tamkeen Chief Executive

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Tamkeen has revealed that its financing programme covers up to half the costs of installing solar panels for businesses in Bahrain, while it also looks at adding new ways to support renewable energy projects.

The announcement came after Shura Council member Talal Mohammed Al Mannai asked about the Labour Fund's efforts to encourage investment in cleaner energy sources, particularly within the commercial sector.

In a letter to the Shura Council, Tamkeen Chief Executive Maha Mufeez explained how its range of programmes helps businesses across various stages.

Global standards

She said the Fund aims to strengthen Bahrain's energy sector by backing sustainable resources and ensuring local

firms can meet global standards.

"Our focus is on helping businesses thrive by providing them with tools and support that match their needs. This includes helping them tackle energy challenges with practical solutions," said Mufeez.

One of the main initiatives, the Financing Support Programme, works with local banks to offer funding options.

Costs

Businesses can receive up to 50 per cent of the costs for projects such as buying and installing solar panels.

The programme also offers guarantees to make borrowing easier, allowing firms to grow and expand.

Tamkeen's Start Your Business Programme also supports new ventures by covering up to 50 per cent of expenses, helping early-stage companies launch and grow.

Father and son compensated for damage to five vehicles

TDT | Manama

A father and son have successfully claimed compensation for damage to their five vehicles caused by a construction company's application of insulating material on a neighbouring property.

The vehicles suffered significant damage due to the spraying of materials, which the court found resulted from the company's failure to exercise the necessary caution.

According to lawyer Fatima Al Shirawi, the plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against both the owner of the company and the

contracting firm responsible for the insulation work, seeking a total of 16,892 dinars in damages.

The plaintiffs argued that the spraying occurred near the area where their vehicles were parked, and the company did not take adequate precautions, leading to the insulation materials contaminating their cars.

Market value

The plaintiffs reported that the damage included the melting of the vehicle paint and the creation of small holes, substantially reducing the market value of their cars.

Joint panel reviews government programme's progress

TDT | Manama

Under the directives of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, a joint government-parliament meeting was held to brief the Council of Representatives on the latest updates regarding the implementation of the government programme.

The meeting was chaired by Ahmed bin Salman Al Musallam, Speaker of the Council of Representatives, on behalf of the council, and H.E. Shaikh Khalid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, Deputy Prime Minister, on behalf of the government.

The government delegation included H.E. Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, Finance



Government-Parliament joint meeting in progress

and National Economy Minister; H.E. Ghanim bin Fadhel Al Buainain, Shura and Representatives Councils Affairs Minister; H.E. Wael bin Nasser Al Mubarak, Municipalities and Agriculture Affairs Minister, H.E. Ibrahim bin Hassan Al Hawaj, Works Minister; H.E. Dr. Jaleela bint Al Sayed Jawad Hasan, Health Minister; H.E. Hamad bin Faisal Al Maliki, Cabinet Affairs Minister; H.E. Amna bint Ahmed Al Romaihi, Housing and Urban Planning Minister; and H.E. Osama bin Ahmed Al Alawi, Social Development Minister, along with several other officials.

Al Musallam expressed pride in the productive and constructive cooperation between the executive and legislative au-

thorities, which has resulted in achievements across various sectors.

He noted that these efforts align with the vision of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and the support and follow-up of HRH the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

Al Musallam highlighted that the Council of Representatives' unanimous approval of the government programme (2023-2026), with its four priorities and six pillars, reflects a shared commitment to achieving national aspirations.

He commended the policies and initiatives in the programme, which embody an advanced methodology for progress and success.

Workers' rights are on the line

Bahrain Free Labour Unions Federation reports 158 worker dispute cases in 2024

H Naser
TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Free Labour Unions Federation has reported a notable increase in labour disputes, receiving 158 cases involving approximately 468 workers in 2024.

This figure represents an increase from 127 cases recorded in 2023.

The disputes encompass a range of issues, including wrongful termination, delayed salaries, and refusal to pay entitlements, with foreign workers constituting about 95% of the cases.

Ahmed Aqeel Faqihi, Vice President of the Bahrain Free Labour Unions Federation for Labour Relations and Complaints, told the Daily Tribune that the federation has been actively addressing these issues since the beginning of the year.

Challenges He emphasised that the variety of cases illustrates ongoing challenges within the labour market.

Among the 158 cases, 51 were related to wrongful termination, indicating a persistent issue in the workplace.

The most common complaints involved delayed salaries and



non-payment of entitlements, which accounted for 84 cases.

Obligations

This highlights the critical need for employers to comply with their obligations regarding workers' rights.

Additionally, there were approximately 23 other cases of varying nature.

Faqihi noted that the federation is committed to supporting workers across all sectors, employing systematic methods to address each case with the workers' interests as a priority.

Discussions

"This process begins with listening to the affected individuals, ensuring discussions occur in their native languages for clear and comprehensive understanding. For foreign workers, translators are provided to facilitate communication and ensure accurate information exchange, reflecting the federation's dedication to offering exceptional services to all workers, regardless of nationality or background," he said.

He mentioned that nearly 70% of the cases received by the



The federation is committed to supporting workers across all sectors, employing systematic methods to address each case with the workers' interests as a priority

AHMED AQEEL FAQIHI, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE BAHRAIN FREE LABOUR UNIONS FEDERATION FOR LABOUR RELATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

federation are resolved amicably, showcasing its effectiveness in finding fair and swift solutions that help workers avoid legal complications.

Cases that cannot be resolved through these means are referred to the courts.

Expats fill 14% of public sector

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

The Civil Service Bureau has revealed that Bahrainis make up the lion's share of the public sector workforce, accounting for 86 per cent with 35,663 employees, while foreigners represent 14 per cent, or 5,800 individuals.

Most of these expatriate workers are found in health-care and education, which together comprise 90 per cent of all non-Bahrainis in government jobs.

Since 2019, the number of foreign workers has fallen by 23 per cent, dropping from 7,582 to 5,800.

Contracts

The bureau explained that hiring and renewing contracts for foreign employees are driven by genuine workforce needs and only occur when no qualified Bahrainis are available.

Before signing off on any renewal, it ensures the absence

of suitable Bahraini candidates and provides government entities with a list of local options to fill vacancies.

All employment decisions are tied to strict job evaluation systems to keep things running smoothly.

Tighter restrictions

Meanwhile, the Shura Council's Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee has called for rejecting a proposed change to the Civil Service Law aimed at imposing tighter restrictions on hiring foreigners.

The amendment, approved earlier by Parliament and set for discussion in the Shura Council's next session, would allow foreign hires only if no Bahrainis meet the requirements.

It stipulates that non-Bahraini candidates must hold at least a master's degree, have ten years of experience, and work on contracts limited to two years, with renewals only in exceptional cases.

Fake ministry papers used in BD2,400 scam

TDT | Manama

An Asian businessman uncovered a BD2,400 scam after discovering that trademark certificates provided by a Bahraini man in his fifties were forged.

The defendant, who confessed in court, admitted to using a Ministry of Industry and Commerce template to produce fraudulent documents as part of the scheme.

The businessman had paid the defendant via an e-pay-

ment app in 2022, believing the money would cover the registration of three trademarks with the ministry.

Shortly after, the defendant handed him printed certificates that appeared to confirm the trademarks were officially registered.

However, the businessman's suspicions were raised, leading him to check the certificates directly with the ministry.

He soon found out they were bogus and alerted the authorities.

Trafficking awareness lecture

TDT | Manama

The Human Trafficking and Public Morality Protection Department of the Criminal Investigation and Forensic Science Directorate organised an awareness lecture focused on combating human trafficking for frontline workers.

The session aimed to enhance skills and knowledge in tackling human trafficking, targeting law enforcement officers within the Ministry of

Interior.

The lecture was attended by a number of officers and civilians from various departments within the ministry.

This initiative is part of the Ministry of Interior's ongoing efforts to combat human trafficking and support the enhancement of capabilities for early detection and identification of human trafficking victims.

Manufacturing sector tops Bahraini absenteeism chart

H Naser
TDT | Manama

Recent official statistics from the Social Insurance System have highlighted notable disparities in absenteeism between different sectors and among national and foreign workers in Bahrain for the year 2023.

The manufacturing sector topped the list for days of ab-

senteism among Bahraini citizens, recording a total of 205 days, which exceeds the total absenteeism recorded for foreign workers in the same sector, which was 104 days.

Overall, the total number of absentee days for Bahraini citizens across all sectors reached 566 days, compared to 311 days for foreign workers, reflecting an increase of 45% in absentee-

ism among local employees.

The wholesale and retail sector ranked second in absenteeism for Bahraini citizens, with 133 days recorded, followed by the transportation and storage sector at 117 days.

The hospitality and restaurant sector reported 51 days of absenteeism, while the construction sector had the lowest at 34 days.

Notably, the health and social work sector recorded the least absenteeism with only 26 days, and the real estate sector had just one day of absence.

For foreign workers, the wholesale and retail sector came in second after manufacturing, with 100 days of absenteeism, followed by the construction sector at 92 days.

BisB partners with Conserving Bounties

To support food redistribution and sustainability initiatives

TDT | Manama

Bahrain Islamic Bank (BisB), the leading provider of innovative Islamic financial solutions for simplifying money matters in the Kingdom of Bahrain, has entered a strategic partnership with Conserving Bounties, a non-profit organisation dedicated to collecting surplus food and redistributing it to underserved families, expatriate workers, and individuals across Bahrain.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aims to strengthen national efforts to combat food poverty, reduce waste, and promote conscious production and consumption. By ensuring fair and responsible redistribution of surplus food to vulnerable communities, it contributes to the attainment of UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 2: Zero Hunger. Both organisations will also work on raising public awareness about the importance of food preservation. BisB's volunteer team 'Jood' will actively help Conserving Bounties by participating in food distribution and providing administrative and logistical as-



Officials following the deal signing

sistance.

Ms. Fatema AlAlawi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of BisB, remarked, "Our partnership with Conserving Bounties embodies BisB's steadfast commitment to addressing food insecurity across Bahrain. By sup-

porting initiatives that preserve surplus resources and promote equitable distribution, we are reinforcing our dedication to the community and Bahrain's national development goals. Through BisB's volunteer team Jood, we aim to play our part

in creating a culture of mindful consumption and usher in positive social impact."

Shaikh Zeyad bin Faisal Al Khalifa, Deputy Chairman of Conserving Bounties, added, "This joint endeavour with BisB marks a pivotal step in our mis-

sion to alleviate hunger and reduce food waste, amplifying our ability to effectively serve vulnerable communities. Together, we are setting a strong example of how strong collaborations can drive meaningful progress toward a more sustainable future."

Indonesia upholds iPhone 16 sales ban after Apple offers \$1 bn investment



Vendors wait for customers at a mobile phone shopping centre in Jakarta

Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesia on Wednesday upheld a ban on iPhone 16 sales despite Apple's \$1 billion pledge to invest in the country after a negotiation deadlock, citing the company's failure to meet domestic market requirements.

Indonesia in October prohibited the marketing and sale of the iPhone 16 model over Apple's failure to meet local investment regulations requiring that 40 percent of phones be made from local parts as the country seeks to boost investments from giant tech companies.

Investment Minister Rosan Roeslani told reporters on Tuesday that Apple was fully committed to invest \$1 billion to build an AirTag factory on Batam island, which was expected to supply 65 percent of the global supply.

It was unclear if the deal on the factory in the industrial zone had been signed.

TVs get smarter as makers cater to AI lifestyles

AFP | Las Vegas, United States

Dazzling televisions that routinely star at the Consumer Electronics Show opening here Tuesday are getting ever smarter with an eye toward being at the heart of AI-centered lifestyles.

TV titans like LG, Samsung and TCL are packing ever more AI into stunning, huge screens that are inching toward being digital assistants capable of chatting with users and other devices in homes, some with the help of Google or Microsoft.

South Korea-based LG touted the arrival of "Affectionate Intelligence" in which home appliances watch over people -- from tracking how well they sleep to making sure they remember to take an umbrella when rain is in the forecast.

"At LG, we're seamlessly integrating AI into physical living spaces around us," chief executive William Cho said at a media event Monday.

"We see space not merely as a physical location but as an environment where holistic experi-



Attendees tour the inside of the AC Future's AI-Transformable Home RV

ences come to life -- across the Home, Mobility, Commercial and even Virtual spaces."

LG is making advances with its digital assistant that employs generative AI and sensors in devices to understand what people are doing and coordinate devices in responses tailored to the context, according to the company.

LG announced a strategic partnership with Microsoft to put Copilot AI to use in its consumer

electronics.

"We are joining forces to shape the future of AI powered spaces," Cho said of LG and Microsoft.

"Our ultimate goal is simple yet profound -- to leverage AI as a means of creating holistic customer value in each whatever space you are."

LG and Microsoft are working on AI "agents" for homes, cars, hotels and other "spaces" and plan to develop some that not only understand and interact with customers but also predict their needs, according to the companies.

"At Microsoft, we believe AI will fundamentally change the way we live and work," Microsoft chief commercial officer Judson Althoff said in a video appearance at an LG press event. "We could not be more excited



Spectators walk past an Electric Refuse Collection Vehicle at the Oshkosh booth

to partner with LG Electronics - the pioneers of smart, connected spaces - to integrate AI into life's everyday experiences."

Cho stressed that LG's plan for connected homes governed by AI would be an open model, meaning devices from other manufacturers can be designed to synch with the network.

TCL teams with Google

Chinese TV titan TCL announced a new QM6K line of premium TVs starting at \$800, along with a partnership with Google to build the internet giant's Gemini AI into some models.

"TV is already well positioned as a hub for entertainment and information," Google vice president of TV platforms Shalini Govil-Pai said during a TCL me-

dia event.

"With the Gemini model and new hardware capabilities like the proximity sensor and the far field microphones, we will be able to unlock whole new use cases that will evolve how you interact with your TV."

Govil-Pai described Gemini-enhanced TVs as hubs for knowledge and managing connected devices in homes.

"Your Google TV will always be ready to

help when you need it," she said. "Our upgraded voice assistant with Gemini capabilities can understand natural language."

Gemini features will start rolling out later this year to Google TV devices and some TCL models, according to Govil-Pai.

China-based consumer electronics colossus Hisense announced it is working Google "Home" software into its line-up of products to enable "true home automation."

Samsung Electronics, meanwhile, is at CES with an "AI for All" roadmap aimed at making AI an "every day, everywhere" experience.

Samsung executives said that its devices from sensor-packed wearables to televisions were increasing intuitive and collaborative interactions with the help of AI.

"It's the age of Home AI," said Jonathan Gabrio, head of the Connected Experience Center at Samsung Electronics America.

"We've brought intelligent, powerful and personalized experiences leveraging every breakthrough through advancement we can dream up to make AI work for you."

An Autonomous Refuse Robot runs through a demonstration at Oshkosh's booth



The Clicks physical keyboard for Apple iPhone



Attendees look at a John Deere autonomous lawnmower





News in brief

Mexico's government plans to offer up to \$1,300 for people who hand in firearms including machine guns and assault rifles under a citizen disarmament program aimed at reducing violent crime. The financial incentives for people dropping off weapons at collection points in churches were published late Monday in the country's official gazette. They include 8,700 pesos (\$430) for a revolver, 25,000 pesos (\$1,200) for an AK-47 rifle and 26,450 pesos (\$1,300) for a machine gun. President Claudia Sheinbaum last month encouraged residents to participate in the "Yes to Disarmament, Yes to Peace" program, assuring those skeptical that they would not be prosecuted if they gave up weapons. "It's about setting up places like the lobbies of churches where people can go to turn in their weapons voluntarily, and give them economic incentives to give up their firearms," she said.



Mexicans offered \$1,300 to hand in a machine gun

There is not a "snowball's chance in hell" that Canada will merge with the United States, outgoing Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Tuesday, while his foreign minister added the country will "never back down" from threats by Donald Trump. The comments from Trudeau and Foreign Minister Melanie Joly followed the US President-elect's statement at a news conference about using "economic force" in pursuit of his unlikely plan for Canada to merge with the United States. "There isn't a snowball's chance in hell that Canada would become part of the United States," Trudeau reacted on X, while also highlighting close bilateral security and trade ties. Joly, meanwhile, accused Trump of showing with his remarks "a complete lack of understanding" of Canada. "Our economy is strong. Our people are strong. We will never back down in the face of threats," she said on the social media platform owned by Trump ally Elon Musk.

The breakaway Moldovan region of Transnistria will run out of gas used for limited cooking and heating in less than a month, authorities warned yesterday, as a shutdown in Russian supplies plunges the separatist state into crisis. The tiny self-proclaimed republic bordering Ukraine has been unable to provide heating and hot water to residents since January 1, when Moscow cut off gas supplies to Moldova. "The country is not only in a state of energy crisis, but also a humanitarian one," the region's deputy prime minister, Sergei Obolonik, was quoted as saying in a statement on a government website. "The 13 million cubic metres of gas in reserve make it possible to supply a number of social facilities and other vital infrastructure, as well as residential multi-storey buildings for cooking... The resource will be enough for another 24 days from today," the statement said.

Breakaway Transnistria says it has less than a month of gas left



SPOTLIGHT

Antarctic sea ice rebounds from record lows: US scientists



Representative picture

AFP | Paris, France

Antarctic sea ice rebounded in December after a long period of record lows, US scientists said, giving pause to speculation that Earth's frozen continent could be undergoing a permanent change. The rate of sea ice loss during the warmer spring months of November and December slowed to well below average, the US National Snow and Ice Data Center (NSIDC) said in a statement on Tuesday. This followed a "prolonged period of record to near-record daily lows" in 2023 and 2024 -- the hottest years in the history books for global temperature rises driven by climate change. By the end of 2024, Antarctic sea ice extent had recovered to 7.3 million square kilometres (2.8 million square miles) -- very close to the 1981 to 2010 average, NSIDC said. This erased the record and near-record low extents of October and November, it added. "This provides a sharp illustration of the high variability of Antarctic sea ice extent," NSIDC said. Ocean temperature records -- both at the surface and deep below -- have tumbled since 2023, driven partly by an El Nino phenomenon that elevated heat around the globe. Scientists have been concerned since mid-2016 that global warming could be setting in motion more lasting changes in how much sea ice forms around the world's coldest continent.

Rescuers search for survivors after quake in China's Tibet kills at least 126

At least 126 people have been confirmed dead and 188 others injured in the Tuesday morning quake

More than 3,600 houses had collapsed due to the earthquake and 187 relocation sites have been set up

AFP | Beijing, China

Thousands of rescuers were searching for survivors in freezing conditions yesterday after a devastating earthquake in China's remote Tibet region killed at least 126 people. Videos published by state broadcaster CCTV on Wednesday showed rescue workers pulling injured victims from the rubble of collapsed buildings and carrying them to safety. Footage also showed a man in a dusty, thick winter coat carrying a crying child piggyback as a rescue worker draped a jacket over him. Rescuers were also seen setting up makeshift tents and examining the injured inside. At least 126 people have been confirmed dead and 188 others injured in the Tuesday morning quake that struck rural, high-altitude Tingri county, about 80 kilometres (50 miles) north of Mount Everest near China's border with Nepal. Local officials said at a press conference on Wednesday afternoon that there had been no increase in the number of people killed or injured since the last update on Tuesday night. More than 3,600 houses had collapsed due to the earthquake and 187 relocation sites have been set up, accommodating 46,500 people, said Hong Li, director of Tibet's Emergency Management Department. The affected region is a "high-altitude, cold plateau area with weak infrastructure such as transportation, communication, and electricity", Hong said. "The climate is cold, with large temperature differences between day and night, and low nighttime temperatures, making it difficult to maintain warmth and protect against the cold," Hong said, adding that search and rescue efforts have transitioned to the resettlement of affected residents and post-disaster reconstruction. The temperature in Tingri will drop to as low as minus 16 degrees Celsius (3.2 Fahrenheit) Thursday morning, according to the China Meteorological Administration. The county sits at an average altitude of 4,500 metres above sea level. Authorities earlier said more than 12,000 people, including firefighters, soldiers, police officers and professional rescuers, had been deployed, Xinhua reported. Aid including tents, quilts and cold-weather equipment had been dispatched by central authorities, it added. When tourist Meng Linggang arrived in the town of Lhatse, 65 kilometres from the epicentre, he saw "the buildings had cracked open". "Some of the older houses collapsed, and a large part of the buildings made from bricks had



An aerial view shows collapsed buildings after an earthquake and newly-erected aid tents at Cuoguo township in Shigatse, southwestern China's Tibet region

cracked open, with big fissures," the 23-year-old told AFP. "There were quite a few (rescue vehicles). One after the other they arrived," he added. Tingri, the epicentre, is home to around 62,000 people and much less developed than urban centres like Tibet's capital Lhasa. Many of the fallen houses appeared constructed of traditional materials such as stone, mud bricks and wooden beams. Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for "all-out search and rescue efforts", CCTV said. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he was "profoundly saddened" by the lives lost in the earthquake. "The United Nations is closely monitoring the situation and stands ready to provide support if requested," Guterres said in a statement. French President Emmanuel Macron offered assistance to those affected, while Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba expressed their condolences. 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 in a statement. AFP is unable to report from Tibet due to restrictions on foreign media. Beijing imposes strict control on access to the Himalayan region, which it considers an inalienable part of its territory. China took control of Tibet in 1951 before the Dalai Lama fled into exile in 1959. Tibet had previously been largely autonomous, following the fall of the Qing dynasty which lasted three centuries.



The China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC) measured the quake's magnitude as 6.8, while the US Geological Survey reported it as 7.1. The area most affected is surrounded by mountainous terrain on the Chinese side of Everest.

OpenAI chief Sam Altman denies sister's sexual abuse accusations

AFP | San Francisco, United States

Open AI CEO Sam Altman denied on Tuesday allegations from his sister Annie Altman, who has filed a complaint accusing him of childhood sexual abuse. "...Annie has made deeply hurtful and entirely untrue claims about our family, especially Sam," the boss of the California startup said in a letter co-signed by his mother and two brothers, and published on social platform X. "Our family loves Annie and is very concerned about her well-being. Caring for a family member who faces mental health challenges is incredibly difficult," they wrote. One of Silicon Valley's more charismatic figures, Altman shot to global fame with the launch of ChatGPT in 2022, which ignited a race to advance AI research and development. A prolific entrepreneur and already a billionaire, Altman, 39, has set himself the mission of developing a so-called "general" AI, with cognitive abilities similar to those of humans and which "benefits all of humanity". The Altman family said that they have tried to help their daughter and sister, covering her expenses and guaranteeing her "monthly financial support, which we expect to continue for the rest of her life". "Despite this, Annie continues to demand more money from us," they said, pointing out that they have decided to respond publicly following Anne's legal complaint filed on Monday, and after years of tension. "The worst allegation she has made is that she was sexually abused by Sam as a child," said the family. "Her claims have evolved drastically over time. Newly for this lawsuit, they now include allegations of incidents where Sam was over 18. "All these claims are utterly untrue." According to the complaint, Annie -- who is nine years younger than Sam Altman -- alleges the assaults took place from 1997, when she was three, until 2006. In a report for New York Magazine in 2023, a journalist who met Annie in Hawaii described her as an artist suffering from depression and the growing rift with her family, and supporting herself mainly through online sex work.



Open AI CEO Sam Altman (right) and his younger sister Annie Altman. "...Annie has made deeply hurtful and entirely untrue claims about our family, especially Sam," the boss of the California startup said in a letter co-signed by his mother and two brothers, and published on social platform X.

Philippines arrests 400 foreigners in scam centre raid



Representative picture

AFP | Manila, Philippines

Investments and other cons. "Their operations were found to be in violation of immigration laws and posed significant risks to the public," Fortunato Manahan, the Bureau of Immigration intelligence division chief, said in a statement describing the latest raid. President Ferdinand Marcos in July announced a ban by the end of 2024 on Philippine online gaming operators (POGO) that Manila says have been used as cover by organised crime groups for human trafficking, money laundering, online fraud, kidnappings and even murder. Around 400 foreign nationals were arrested yesterday in a "large-scale" raid on a suspected online scam farm in Manila, the national immigration agency said. Authorities raided a building and found workers allegedly engaged in online scam operations targeting victims abroad. International concern has grown in recent years over similar scam operations in Asia which are often staffed by trafficking victims who were tricked or coerced into promoting bogus cryptocurrency

Red Cross urges unhindered aid access to flood-hit and freezing Gaza

AFP | Geneva, Switzerland

The Red Cross called yesterday for safe and unhindered access to Gaza to bring desperately needed aid into the war-torn Palestinian territory wracked by hunger and where babies are freezing to death. Heavy rain and flooding have ravaged the makeshift shelters in Gaza, leaving thousands with up to 30 centimetres (one foot) of water inside their damaged tents, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said. The dire weather conditions were "exacerbating the unbearable conditions" in Gaza, it said, pointing out that many families were left "clinging on to survival in makeshift camps, without even the most basic necessities, such as blankets". Citing the United Nations, the IFRC highlighted the deaths of eight newborn babies who had been living in tents without warmth or protection from the rain and falling temperatures. Those deaths "underscore the critical severity of the humanitarian crisis there", IFRC Secretary-General Jagan Chapagain said in a statement. "I urgently reiterate my call to grant safe and unhindered access to humanitarians to let them provide life-saving assistance," he said. "Without safe access -- children will freeze to death. Without safe access -- families will starve. Without safe access -- humanitarian workers can't save lives." According to a UN count, more than 330 humanitarian workers have been killed in Gaza since Israel unleashed its war there following Hamas's October 7, 2023 attack.



People search the rubble of a building destroyed in an Israeli strike on the Bureij camp for Palestinian refugees in the central Gaza Strip

TOP 4 TWEETS 01 [Image of a tweet]

I'm profoundly saddened by the loss of life caused by the earthquake that struck the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. I wish a speedy recovery to those injured & express my sincere condolences to the victims' families. The @UN stands ready to provide support if requested. @antonioguterres

02 [Image of a tweet]

Pleased to speak with President @antonioscosta. India and the EU are natural partners. We are committed to working closely together to further strengthen the India-EU Strategic Partnership, including in the areas of technology, green energy, digital space, trade and investments. @eucopresident @narendramodi

03 [Image of a tweet]

Please call your member of parliament and tell them that the hundreds of thousands of little girls in Britain who were, and are still are, being systematically, horrifically gang-raped deserve some justice in this world. This is vitally important or it will just keep happening. @elonmusk

04 [Image of a tweet]

Four years ago, violent insurrectionists attacked the Capitol, threatened the lives of elected officials, and assaulted brave law enforcement officers. We cannot forget. @JoeBiden

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

Classifieds

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France coach Deschamps says will leave after 2026 World Cup

France's World Cup-winning coach to end remarkable tenure after 14 years at helm

Deschamps will focus on the Nations League and World Cup qualification

AFP | Paris

France's 2018 World Cup-winning coach Didier Deschamps announced yesterday he will leave his post after the 2026 finals.

"It will be 2026," Deschamps told French broadcaster TF1. "I have been there since 2012, it is planned that I will be there until 2026... the next World Cup."

"It will end there because it has to end at some point. It's clear in my mind."

"I have done my time, with the same desire, the same passion to keep the France team at the highest level, but 2026 is good."

Deschamps, 56, led France to World Cup glory in Russia in 2018 and guided them to the final of the 2022 World Cup in Qatar where they lost to Lionel Messi's Argentina on penalties.

Following the heartbreaking loss to Argentina in Doha, the French Football Federation rewarded Deschamps with a four-year contract extension.

That decision was not univer-



France's head coach Didier Deschamps (C,R) celebrates his team's victory after a match (file photo)

sally welcomed and criticism grew following last year's Euros when France were beaten in the semi-finals.

Deschamps also experienced a difficult end to 2024 with debate raging over the omission from the squad of star player Kylian Mbappe, who had a tough start to his time at Real Madrid and was, according to unconfirmed reports in Sweden, the focus of a rape allegation after a visit to Stockholm. The investigation has since been dropped.

Now that Deschamps has resolved the question surrounding his future he can focus on

the Nations League quarter-final in March against the team they beat in the 2018 World Cup final, Croatia. Deschamps has already tasted success in the Nations League having guided France to the 2021 crown.

The only trophy missing from his cabinet is the European championship -- France went closest when they lost to Portugal on home soil in 2016.

He must also guide France to qualification for the 2026 World Cup finals which take place in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

As a player, Deschamps cap-

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Deschamps joins an elite group with Mario Zagallo and Franz Beckenbauer as the only individuals to win the World Cup as both player and coach

tained France when they won the 1998 World Cup at home, defeating Brazil in the final.

Once dismissed as a "water carrier" by Eric Cantona during his playing career, Deschamps also captained France to the Euro 2000 title.

He was the midfield pivot for the great Marseille side that remains the only French team to have won the Champions League, when they beat AC Milan in the 1993 final.

Deschamps is one of only three men to have won the World Cup both as a player and as a coach -- the other two, Mario Zagallo of Brazil and Germany's Franz Beckenbauer, both died last year.

Stars Align for 2025 Richard Mille Alula Showdown



Players are seen at Al-Fursan Equestrian Village
TDT | Manama

The 2025 Richard Mille Alula Desert Polo—renowned as the world's first organized desert polo tournament—returns to Saudi Arabia this month with an enticing blend of world-class sport, entertainment, and cultural activities.

Organized by the Royal Commission for AlUla in collaboration with the Saudi Polo Federation, the prestigious event is set for January 17-18 at the scenic Al-Fursan Equestrian Village.

Friday's matches kick off at 1:30 p.m. with three exciting games, followed by a 30-minute interval featuring live entertainment and surface leveling. The afternoon resumes at 3:45 p.m. with another set of matches, concluding with a networking meet-and-greet session.

Saturday's lineup begins with the wooden spoon match at 12:30 p.m., followed by the subsidiary final at 2:15 p.m., and culminates in the main final at 4 p.m. The champions will be crowned during an awards ceremony.



شركة دلمون للدواجن ش.م.ب.
Delmon Poultry Company B.S.C

TENDER INVITATION

Delmon Poultry Company B.S.C. invites specialized companies to submit their proposal for the following:

Tender Ref.	Tender Title	Tender Document Fee	Initial Bond Fee
ADMIN /01/2025	Providing Medical Insurance Scheme for all staff in Delmon poultry company B.S.C.	BD 100 (Nonrefundable)	1% of Offer Value Or minimum amount BHD 1,800
Tender Publish Date			Jan 09,2025
Last date for purchasing tender documents			Jan 15,2025-01:00PM
Tender Closing Date			Jan 22, 2025-01:00PM
Bids opening Date			Jan 23, 2025

Brief Description of project:

Delmon poultry company B.S.C. plans to provide medical insurance for Delmon Poultry Company employees. The contract shall start on 15th March 2025 for three years. Total number of staff including dependents (spouse and children) is 310.

Guidelines for submission of bids:

- Collect the tender documentation from the Purchasing Department in the Delmon's Poultry-Company Head office located in Hamala (Building 701 – Road 101 – Block 1012 (starting from Thursday 09. Jan.2025 until Wednesday 15. Jan.2025 (during office hours 8 am till 1pm)
- The initial bond should be in the form of a Certified cheque, Bank Guarantee (or as specified in the tender documents)
- Documents to be enclosed with the bids:
 - A copy of the commercial registration certificate for the current year
 - A copy of certificate of compliance with the Bahraini manpower employment percentage issued by the Ministry of Labour.
 - All the documents submitted with the tender must be stamped with the company's official seal.
 - Proposal envelopes (With technical and commercial offers + required documents) must be sealed and have the title of the tender, and must be addressed to the Head of Purchasing
 - Department and deposited in the tender box at the same address mentioned above.
 - This Tender Invitation is considered supplementary to the tender documents. In case of any discrepancy between the Invitation and the tender document, the tender document prevails.
- For more details, please contact Tel: +973 17 608 260 or +973 17 608 282 (ext. 250)

Bahrain golf championship returns

Major champions Harrington, Walker, and Frittelli headline Bapco Energies Bahrain Championship



Ali Al Kowari receives his award during the Bahrain Amateur Open



Yaseen Le Falher being awarded during the Bahrain Amateur Open



Action from a previous event

● **Local talents**
Yaseen Le Falher and Ali Al Kowari to represent Bahrain

● **Rising stars include**
Pakistan's Aadam Syed and England's Tom Sloman

● **Tournament runs**
January 30 to February 2

TDT | Manama



Local Bahraini golfer Yaseen Le Falher earned his spot in the Bahrain Championship through his performance in the Bahrain Amateur Open and the King Hamad Trophy

The Bapco Energies Bahrain Championship is set to deliver a thrilling showcase of world-class golf as the DP World Tour returns to the Royal Golf Club from January 30 to February 2.

Fans can look forward to seeing top stars including Major champion Pádraig Harrington from Ireland and Jimmy Walker from the USA, defending champion, South Africa's Dylan Frittelli and fellow DP World Tour winners Thorbjørn Olesen from Denmark and Jorge Campillo from Spain.

While the spotlight will shine on these golfing greats, the tournament also serves as a vital

platform for the top homegrown talent from around the region and beyond, offering them invaluable experience competing alongside some of the world's finest players.

Pakistan's Aadam Syed earned his place with an impressive victory at the Bahrain Amateur Open, while local talent Yaseen Le Falher secured a spot as the highest-ranked Bahraini.

England's Tom Sloman joins the field after a dramatic play-off win over Morocco's Hugo Trommetter in the King Hamad Trophy. Ali Al Kowari also claimed a Bahrain Championship berth as the next highest-placed Bahraini, with Le Falher already

having qualified.

“Earning my spot through the Bahrain Amateur Open and King Hamad Trophy feels like a culmination of years of dedication. I'm especially grateful for the unwavering support of the Bahrain Golf Association throughout this journey. Competing on the very course where I first learned golf adds a special significance.”

YASEEN LE FALHER

Qualifying for the Bahrain Championship on the DP World Tour is a dream realised,” said Le Falher. “Earning my spot through the Bahrain Amateur Open and King Hamad Trophy feels like a culmination of years of dedication. I'm especially grateful for the unwavering support of the Bahrain Golf Association throughout this journey. Competing on the very course where I first learned golf adds a special significance. I'm thrilled to face world-class players and honoured to represent Bahrain

on home soil, hoping to inspire the next generation of Bahraini golfers.”

Al Kowari said: “I'm grateful that I have this chance to play in such a big event with many top professionals from around the world thanks to the Bahrain Golf Federation. It wasn't easy earning the spot but with hard work and preparation for the tournament I managed it. I'm now putting in more practice and hard work to be at the top of my game in order to represent Bahrain in the best way. I'm really looking forward to playing in this elite tournament and competing with players on a whole different level.”

Daji Khalifa, Vice President of the Bahrain Golf Association added: “It's nice to see the Bapco Energies Bahrain Championship becoming a popular stop in the DP World Tour's International Swing and attracting top players including former Major champions in a very short time.

“The championship is a huge opportunity for our players to compete alongside some of the best in the game. I hope our players learn from this experience to elevate their games to advanced levels and gain vital experience of playing under pressure.”

The tournament follows the Team Cup, the Hero Dubai De-

sert Classic - the first Rolex Series event of the season - and the Ras Al Khaimah Championship as one of eight events on the International Swing.

Freddie Schmeisser, Championship Director of the Bahrain Championship, commented: “The Bapco Energies Bahrain Championship is not only about showcasing world-class golf but also about providing opportunities for emerging talent from the region and beyond. This event is a platform where rising stars can compete alongside some of the best in the game, gaining invaluable experience and exposure. It's exciting to see the blend of established champions and fresh talent coming together, and we look forward to delivering an unforgettable experience for

players and fans alike.” Fans can secure free general admission for all four days of the Bapco Energies Bahrain Championship.

There are also a host of premium experiences available, including a Ticket+ option which includes access to a dedicated bar and platform on the 18th hole. The Championship Chalet will return on the 18th which comes with a full programme of entertainment, including live music and a wealth of F&B options for the whole family to enjoy.

Outside of the world class golf action, friends and families will be treated to a full programme of activities and entertainment, including live music and a wealth of food and beverage options.

Eliezer Kubanza eyeing a fight with former champion Marcin Bandel in 2025

AFP | London

A new rivalry is brewing in the BRAVE Combat Federation Super Welterweight division as undefeated African superstar Eliezer Kubanza has expressed his interest in a showdown with former champion Marcin Bandel this year.

Kubanza respectfully called out the former champion on social media yesterday, receiving a positive response from Bandel.

“OG, let's throw some hands in 2025. I'll be honoured to share the cage with you,” Kubanza wrote.

Bandel, who didn't have the best of 2024, was quick to respond and left the door open for a future clash with the undefeated Kubanza.

“When I come back to a winning streak, of course. All the best in 2025,” Bandel wrote.

Bandel is currently on a two-fight winless streak in the organization. He lost the title to

Kamal Ma-gomedov at BRAVE CF 77 in 2023 and was stopped by Alex Lohoré in his 2024 return at BRAVE CF 83. Now eager to re-enter the title picture, a potential showdown with Kubanza could be ideal for the Polish superstar.

Kubanza, in contrast, had a memorable 2024, securing two wins. His first victory came at BRAVE CF 85 against Salamat Orozakunov, followed by a win over Zagid Gaidarov at BRAVE CF 91. These wins have brought Kubanza closer to Super Welterweight gold while keeping his undefeated professional MMA record intact.

Beyond Kubanza and Bandel, 2024 was a busy year for the Super Welterweight division. The division saw the rise of a new champion, Luiz Cado, who claimed the title at BRAVE CF 88. Fighters like Alex Lohoré and Rami Hamed also made impacts, setting the stage for an exciting 2025.



New Zealand crush Sri Lanka by 113 runs in 2nd ODI to win series

AFP | Hamilton

New Zealand ripped through Sri Lanka's top order yesterday to win the rain-reduced second one-day international in Hamilton by 113 runs and clinch the series.

Sri Lanka spinner Maheesh Theekshana took a hat-trick as the home side posted 255-9 off 37 overs, but the tourists could only muster 142 all out off 30.2 overs in response.

It followed New Zealand's comfortable nine-wicket win in Wellington to go 2-0 up in the series, with the third match to be played in Auckland on Saturday.

Sri Lanka's top order has misfired badly in both games.

They slumped to 22-4 at Seddon Park, leaving little chance of reaching their target of 256 in a match reduced to 37 overs each because of early rain.

Kaminu Mendis top-scored with his ODI best of 64 off 66 balls, but fell to a spectacular running catch from Daryl



New Zealand's Rachin Ravindra plays a shot

Mitchell from the bowling of Will O'Rourke to seal Sri Lanka's fate.

Janith Liyanage's 22 was the next best score in a Sri Lanka chase marred by two run-outs and a series of risky shots that didn't pay off.

O'Rourke was too quick for the tail, taking 3-31 off 6.2 overs while Jacob Duffy was responsible for some of the early damage, claiming 2-30, including the key scalps of Pathum Nissanka and Kusal Men-dis.

National Race Day returns at BIC

Bahrain's top motorsport championships thrill fans with fierce races this weekend

● **Fourth round of 2024/2025 season of BTCC and BMC championships at Bahrain International Circuit**

TDT | Manama

National Race Day takes centre stage once again this weekend at Bahrain International Circuit (BIC) in Sakhir, 'The Home of Motorsport in the Middle East'.

Set for tomorrow will be the fourth round of the 2024/2025 season, featuring two of the Kingdom's premier local racing championships, namely the Bahrain Touring Car Challenge (BTCC) and the Bahrain Motorcycle Championship (BMC).

Racers will be hitting the tarmac along BIC's 2.55-kilometre Inner Track from 9am onwards. All are welcome to attend. Tickets cost just BD2 for adults and BD1 for children.

National Race Day is organised and run by BIC, in cooperation with the Bahrain Motor Federation, the Circuit Racing



Action from a previous event at BIC

Commission, the Bahrain Motorcycle Commission, and the Motorsport Marshals Club.

The BTCC is the region's longest-running national circuit racing championship, and it continues its legacy this season in its

current format. It was formerly known as the BIC, 2,000cc Challenge.

Winners from this campaign's previous round were Moaaz Elzahrawi and Isa Ebrahim, and they are back for more this week-

end against another high-quality field. Joining them on the grid - all in Honda Civic challengers - are Hamad Khamis, Andreas Buelow, Ali Baqer, and Wiebke Buelow. The Radio Bahrain entrant will be racing in the lone



The Bahrain Touring Car Challenge (BTCC), formerly known as the BIC, 2,000cc Challenge, is the region's longest-running national circuit racing championship

Honda Integra in the field to round up the grid.

Friday's events in the BTCC will feature a practice session, to be followed by qualifying, and then two races.

Meanwhile, the BMC will see a large group of 19 riders battling it out in the series' two categories - the 1,000cc and 600cc.

In the third round of the season, Saud Al Tourah was triumphant amongst the 1,000cc competitors and Ali Bousheri took the victory in the 600cc class. Both will be looking to maintain their winning ways on Friday.

Al Tourah, riding a BMW S 1000 RR, will be joined in his category by Hassan Al Awadhi in a Yamaha R1, Nawaf Al Shuabi in a Honda CPR 100 RR, Bander Bahlul in a BMW 10004R, Fahed Al Hashash in a Suzuki GSXR, Marta Di Lauro in a Ducati 899, Abdulrahman Hassan in a BMW S 1000 RR, Bradley Stewart in a Ducati 848 Evo, Abdulaziz Al Fharm in a KTM Superduke EVO, and Mujahed Alkhashram in a Yamaha R1.

The 600cc bikers include Bousheri and Abdulrahman Ahmed in a pair of Honda CBR600RR bikes, Mohammed Al Zaidan in a Kawasaki ZX6, Shaikh Khalid Al Khalifa and Mohamed Al Sadiq in Triumph Daytonas; Nasser Al Khadra, Saif Al Buainain, and Hamad Al Tayeb in Yamaha R6 bikes; and Achraf Hamoud in a Suzuki GSXR600.

The BMC schedule will consist of a practice and qualifying session, followed by a single race.

Following all the action, the podium ceremonies will take place for both series.

Seven rounds of National Race Day are scheduled as part of this 2024/2025 season at BIC, to be held all the way through to May.

Littler headlines field as Bahrain Darts Masters competitors confirmed



Luke Littler in action (file photo)

● **Luke Littler returns as reigning World Champion after stellar 2024/25 season**

● **Stephen Bunting and Chris Dobey make tournament debuts**

● **Seven other top PDC stars join Littler, including world No. 1 Luke Humphries**

TDT | Manama

Luke Littler will make his first appearance as World Champion at the 2025 Bahrain



Basem Mahmood greets fans (file photo)

Luke Littler marked his arrival on the global stage with a nine-darter at the 2024 Bahrain Darts Masters, and went on to win the Premier League and Grand Slam

turn to action to headline the now-confirmed 16-player field for this year's third edition of the Bahrain Darts Masters, which will take place on January 16-17 - tickets are available now through bahrainp.com.

Littler is joined in this year's

Bahrain Darts Masters by seven other top PDC stars - led by world number one Luke Humphries, who won the New Zealand Darts Masters on the World Series circuit last August.

World Championship semi-finalists Stephen Bunting and Chris Dobey will make their first visits to Bahrain to compete in the event, following their Alexandra Palace success recently and their inclusion in the 2025 Premier League.

In addition, former World Champions Rob Cross, Gerwyn Price and Peter Wright return to Bahrain alongside popular star Nathan Aspinall, the 2023 World Matchplay champion.

The eight Asian Representatives include six stars from the PDC Asian Tour who also took part in the World Champion-



Abdulla Saeed in action (file photo)

ship recently, alongside Bahrain Qualifiers Basem Mahmood and Abdulla Saeed.

PDC Asian Champion Laurence Ilagan is joined by fellow Filipino stars Alexis Toylo and Paolo Nebrida, while there are also places for Chinese number one Xiaochen Zong, Hong Kong's Lok Yin Lee and top Indian star Nitin Kumar.

The Bahrain Darts Masters is organised by BIC and sports promoter CBX and supported by Bahrain Tourism & Exhibitions Authority (BTEA).

The event's growing popularity is shown by record ticket sales in advance of the third Bahrain Darts Masters.

Premium seating tickets, which include stage-side tables, are available, as well as VIP hospitality for the event.

PDC Representatives

- Luke Humphries
- Luke Littler
- Rob Cross
- Stephen Bunting
- Gerwyn Price
- Chris Dobey
- Nathan Aspinall
- Peter Wright

Asian Representatives

- Laurence Ilagan
- Alexis Toylo
- Paolo Nebrida
- Xiaochen Zong
- Lok Yin Lee
- Nitin Kumar
- Basem Mahmood
- Abdulla Saeed