

Liverpool cruise into FA Cup 4th round

Captain Alexander-Arnold's stunning goal leads Liverpool to a 4-0 victory over Accrington Stanley | P12

S. Korea says Jeju Air jet black boxes stopped recording before crash

THE DAILY **tribune**



Jennifer Lopez's children can be 'brutally honest' with her about various things

FLOOSS signs agreement with LuLu Retail PLC

Bahrain world's 'fourth best travel destination'

TripAdvisor report

TDT | Manama

The Kingdom of Bahrain has been ranked fourth among the best travel destinations in the world, according to the renowned TripAdvisor index.

This prestigious ranking places Bahrain just behind Japan, Malaysia, and Argentina, based on the opinions of global tourists and travelers.

A report released by TripAdvisor highlights Bahrain's im-

pressive position, attributing it to the country's status as a global financial hub with a robust and expanding economy.

Cultural heritage

In addition, the report points to the kingdom's wealth of unique tourist attractions that showcase its rich cultural heritage. Manama, Bahrain's capital, stands out for its vibrant nightlife and diverse range of restaurants, cafes, and shopping centers, drawing visitors from around the globe.

The city's blend of tradition and modernity creates an in-

teresting atmosphere for tourists looking to experience both contemporary entertainment and cultural exploration.

Attractions

Among the standout attractions is the historic Bab Al Bahrain Souq, renowned for its narrow alleyways and eclectic mix of shops.

Visitors can find everything from oriental perfumes and spices to exquisite gold jewelry, making it a must-visit destination for those in search of authentic heritage alongside modern shopping experiences.



Bahrain offers travelers a mix of history, culture, and modern luxury

Stage set for Global Women Economic Forum

TDT | Manama

Under the patronage of Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa, Consort of His Majesty the King and President of the Supreme Council for Women (SCW), the Global Women Economic Forum and Exhibition will commence tomorrow at the Four Seasons Hotel in Bahrain Bay.

The event is organized by the Bahrain Business-women's Society to mark its silver jubilee, and will run until January 15.

The four-day forum will feature five key discussion panels focusing on diverse topics: "Innovative Diplomacy: Women Shaping Legal Landscapes", "Future-Ready: AI's Role in Shaping Education and Society", "Investing in Security - The Future of Cyber Ventures & Transactions", "Inclusive Growth: Financial Strategies for Entrepreneurial Success", and "Innovation: The Economic Impact of Creativity and Orange Economy".

LA fire engulfs more areas

AFFP | Los Angeles

The largest of the Los Angeles' fires spread toward previously untouched neighborhoods yesterday, forcing new evacuations and dimming hopes that the disaster was coming under control. Across the city, at least 11 people have died as multiple fires have ripped through residential areas since Tuesday.

Housing 'worries'

Soaring construction material costs in Bahrain alarm real estate experts

H Naser

TDT | Manama

Real estate developers and industry professionals in Bahrain are warning of a looming crisis in affordable housing due to soaring construction material prices.

The construction business is facing sharply rising costs for several key materials such as gravel and bricks, and leading business figures are sounding alarm bells.

Jasem Mohammed Kadhem, CEO of Dar Al Sultan Real Estate, notes a significant gap between available financing and market prices, hindering sales despite strong buyer interest.

He pointed to a sharp rise in the price of ready-mix concrete due to shortages, further driving up the cost of new housing units.

"This casts a shadow over the entire real estate development sector," he warned, expressing hopes that financial institutions will move to increase lending and raise financing limits to reflect current market realities.

Kadhem highlighted the difficulty for low-income fami-



Prices of gravel and bricks are rising sharply

lies to afford homes, even with existing programmes, as the cost of the cheapest units now reaches BD125,000, exceeding the BD100,000 financing limit many families can access.

Small plots

He also noted the high cost of land, citing small plots in Al Hamla reaching BD70,000.

While alternative pro-

grammes like land purchase assistance exist, these don't solve the housing crisis for many as land requires further investment in construction.

Price hikes

Another developer, who preferred to remain anonymous, confirmed the price hikes, noting a BD2 per square meter increase in the cost of concrete

(from BD5.5 to BD7.5), a BD12 increase (approximately 30%) in ready-mix concrete, and a 50% increase in brick prices.

These increases, he claims, are unjustified and affect not only social housing but around 30 other sectors.

He reported a 20% increase in overall construction costs, with the cost of basic construction rising from BD85 per square me-

”

A significant gap between available financing and market prices hinders sales despite strong buyer interest

JASEM MOHAMMED KADHEM, CEO OF DAR AL SULTAN REAL ESTATE

ter last year to over BD100 today.

Pessimism

The developer expressed pessimism about prices decreasing, citing a black market for ready-mix concrete and delays of up to 10 days for delivery, forcing contractors to rent formwork for extended periods.

Developers are calling on the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning to conduct a comprehensive study and adjust housing finance levels to reflect the increased costs.

They fear that without intervention, many low-income families will be priced out of homeownership.

Health Ministry plan

Bahrainis to replace expats in government hospitals

H Naser

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Health has a plan to replace foreign workers with Bahraini nationals in government hospitals, according to its response to the parliamentary committee investigating the nationalisation of jobs in the public and private sector.

As per the response, 36% of

the workforce in government hospitals (1,951 employees) are foreign nationals, including 111 doctors, 1,738 nurses, 85 support staff, and 17 administrative staff.

While 594 Bahrainis were hired between 2020 and 2023, 930 foreign nationals were also hired, resulting in a 44% increase in foreign employment.

However, 672 foreign employees left during the same period. The Ministry attributed in its

response the difficulty in replacing foreign workers to a lack of Bahraini applicants, insufficient graduates, retirements of Bahraini staff, and reluctance among graduates to work in government hospitals.

The Ministry's plan, focusing on replacing foreign workers in anesthesiology (29 employees), accident and emergency (21 employees), ICU (10 employees), internal medicine (10 employees),

general surgery (9 employees), radiology (9 employees), neurology (7 employees), gynecology (6 employees), orthopedic (4 employees), pathology (4 employees), and HBDC (1 employee), is contingent on securing sufficient budget, maintaining service levels, graduate availability, and accounting for employee turnover, the response stressed. **(More related reports on Page 3)**



Doctors performing a surgery at Salmaniya Medical Complex



Historic milestone

The Indian School unveils plans for 75th anniversary celebrations this year with exciting activities

TDT | Manama

The Indian School, Bahrain (ISB), is set to celebrate a significant milestone in its journey, marking its 75th anniversary this year.

As part of the celebrations, a series of events will be held to honour the school's rich history, achievements and its enduring commitment to the community.

The celebration details were announced by the school during a press conference held yesterday.

ISB Hon. Chairman Adv. Binu Mannil Varughese, Organising Committee Convener Prince S Natarajan, Hon. Secretary V. Rajapandian, Hon. Vice-Chairman & Hon. Member HSSE and Sports Dr. Mohammed Faizal, Hon. Asst. Secretary & Hon. Member-Academics Ranjini Mohan, Hon. Member-Finance & IT Bonny Joseph, Hon. Member-Transport Mohammad Nayaz Ullah, Principal VR Palaniswamy, Junior Wing Principal Pamela Xavier, Senior School & Academic Administration Vice-Principal G Satheesh, Middle Section Vice-Principal Jose Thomas,



ISB Hon. Chairman Adv. Binu Mannil Varughese speaks at the press conference

Junior Wing Vice-Principal Priya Laji and Staff Representative Parvathi Devadas, former Hon. Secretary Saji Antony, Vipin Kumar, and Shafi Parakatta attended the press conference.

The inaugural ceremony for this historic event will take place on Thursday, January 23, 2025, at the school's Isa Town campus, where the exclusive Platinum Jubilee logo will be unveiled.

Activities

The opening event will kick off a series of exciting activities, including a variety of competitions, workshops, and cultural programmes throughout the year.

In his announcement, ISB

Hon. Chairman Adv. Binu Mannil Varughese shared, "Our school is home to students from 18 nationalities, representing every state and union territory of India, creating a unique blend of cultures. As part of the celebra-



tions, students will showcase a wide range of art forms from dif-

ferent Indian states, reflecting the cultural diversity of our nation." One of the key highlights of the celebrations will be the Aalekh Painting Contest, a major event to be held at the Isa Town campus, where students from 75 schools across the Gulf will showcase their artistic talents.

Artistic skills

Additionally, workshops to develop students' artistic skills, including poster design and creative writing contests, will be organized.

The Education Conclave will bring together leading educators and experts to discuss the latest trends and developments in the

education sector. Other exciting events include quiz contests, inter-school competitions for students, teachers, and parents, as well as community sports events aimed at fostering teamwork and encouraging active participation from parents.

A Literary Festival is also planned, which will see a book exhibition in 75 languages, to celebrate the diversity of languages and cultures.

Dance performance

One of the most anticipated spectacles of the year will be a record-setting dance performance at the National Stadium, where students will perform 75 different dance forms representing the cultural heritage of India.

A Global Alumni Meet will be organized to strengthen the bond between the school and its alumni, with an invitation extended to former students to register via a Google form circulated through the media.

The alumni meet will be an important occasion to discuss how alumni can continue to support and contribute to the growth of the school.

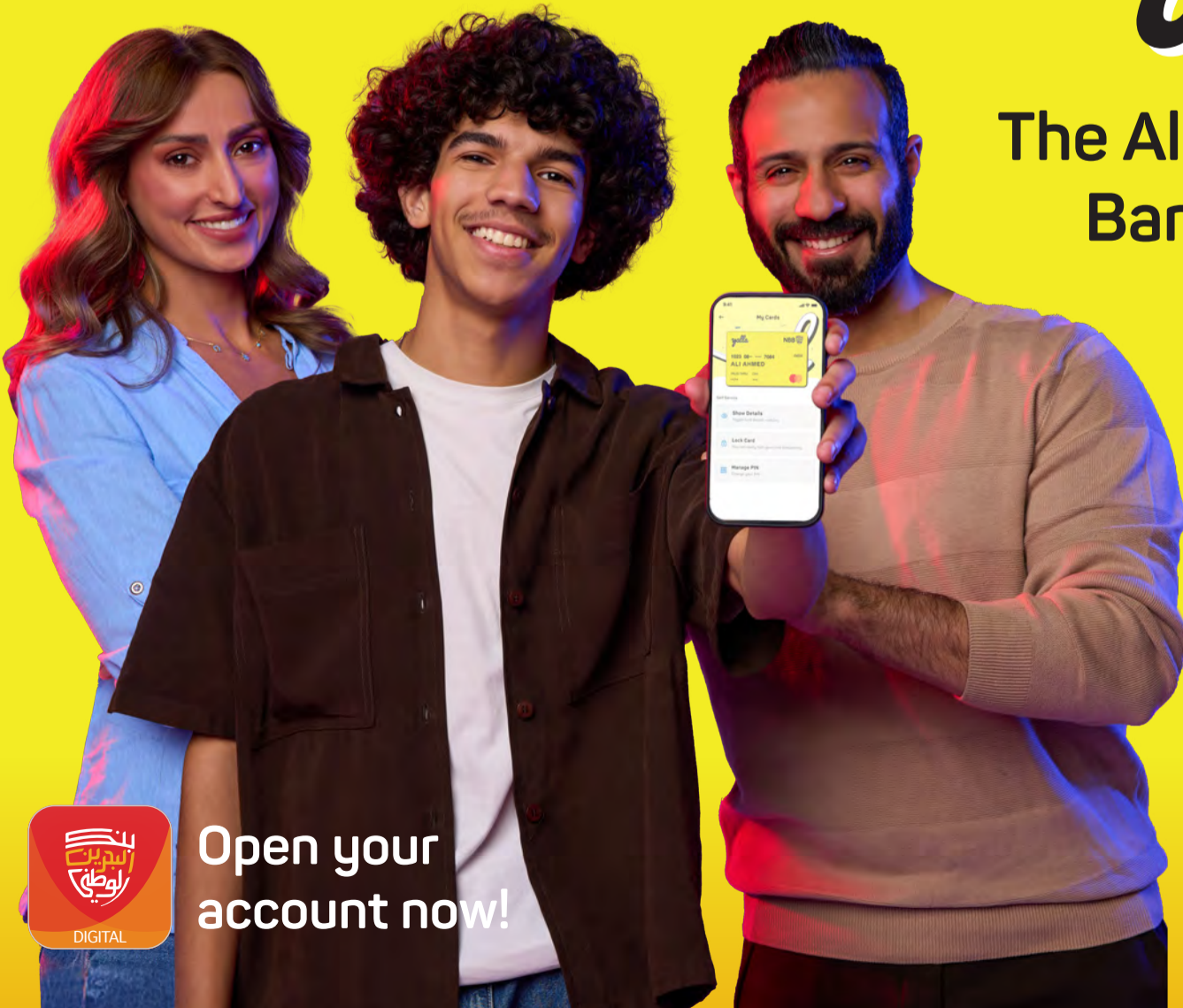


Organising Committee Convener Prince S Natarajan discusses the event's activities



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Bahrainisation a reality!

Local workforce success in 15 government entities

TDT | Manama

A report released by the parliamentary committee investigating job nationalisation in Bahrain reveals that 15 government entities have achieved 100% Bahraini employment.

The report highlights the significant progress made in these sectors towards complete nationalization of the workforce.

The 15 entities achieving full nationalisation are the following: Ministry of the Shura Council and Representatives Council Affairs, Ministry of

Labour, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Ministry of Electricity and Water, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Sustainable Development, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments, Ministry of Tourism.

Ministry of Youth and Sports Affairs, Capital Municipality Council, Muharraq Municipal Council, Northern Municipal Council, Southern Municipal Council, Real Estate Regulatory Authority and Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority.

GPIC hires more Bahrainis in 2023, aims for 95% by 2025



GPIC provides recently graduated Bahraini employees with intensive training programmes

TDT | Manama

Gulf Petrochemicals Industries Company (GPIC) has announced a significant increase in its Bahraini workforce, reaching 93.6% in 2023, up from 86% in 2021.

In a response to a parliamentary committee investigating job nationalisation, the company stated its aim to achieve 95% Bahraini employment by 2025.

Over the four-year period from 2020 to 2023, GPIC hired 1492 Bahraini employees compared to 284 foreign employees.

The company highlighted that the average salary for Bahraini employees is BD1,983, significantly higher than the BD 1423 average salary for foreign

employees.

GPIC further emphasised its commitment to nationalisation, noting that two of its contracting companies have achieved 100% Bahraini employment, while a third boasts a 57% nationalisation rate.

Strategy

The company detailed its strategy for replacing foreign workers with Bahraini nationals. GPIC acknowledged that a shortage of local technicians and engineers with specialised skills sometimes necessitates hiring foreign experts.

However, the company stated that it rigorously selects recently graduated Bahraini employees, providing them with intensive training programmes to bridge any skills gap.

Asry's nationalisation efforts face big challenges despite progress

TDT | Manama

A parliamentary committee investigating job nationalisation in Bahrain has released a report revealing that while Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard Company (Asry) has increased its Bahraini workforce, significant challenges remain.

The report shows that Asry's nationalisation rate reached 33.3% in 2023, up from 25.3% in 2020.

However, this progress is overshadowed by the continued high number of foreign employees.

The company reported 1344 foreign employees compared to 672 Bahraini employees.

The report highlights the long-term employment of many foreign workers, with



68 having had their contracts renewed five times, 169 four times, 118 three times, 92 twice, and 114 once.

Foreign workers are predominantly employed in manual labour, technical, and specialised roles requiring skills in electricity, mechanics, welding, maritime work, and quantitative surveying.

82% of expats work in jobs shunned by locals

● Most earn under BD200 a month

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Eighty-two per cent of expats in Bahrain are working in jobs avoided by locals, with most earning less than BD200 a month, the Ministry of Labour has revealed.

Responding to a parliamentary investigation into Bahrainisation, the ministry said the labour market depends heavily on foreign workers in low-skilled roles.

It pointed out that 72 per cent of expats earn below BD200, while only 7 per cent are in highly skilled jobs earning more than BD600.

Breakdown

The ministry provided a detailed breakdown, showing that 350,000 expats — making up 74 per cent of the foreign workforce — are employed in sectors such as construction, restaurants, hotels, workshops, and garages.

Most of these workers have qualifications no higher than high school.

In the public sector, the Civil Service Bureau confirmed that foreign workers are required by contract to train Bahraini counterparts, ensuring a transfer of skills and paving the way for locals to take over their roles.

Foreign expertise

This policy supports the government's efforts to prioritise Bahraini talent while benefiting from foreign expertise.

Currently, there are 6,390 foreign workers in government roles, representing 16 per cent of the public sector workforce.

Most are employed in education and healthcare.

Bahrainis have already fully replaced foreign staff in healthcare centres, with further re-



Ministry of Labour

placements planned.

Retirement scheme

Despite Bahrainis making up 82 per cent of government employees, their numbers have dropped to 41,000 due to a voluntary retirement scheme.

However, public sector recruitment remains focused on Bahrainis, with 6,036 locals employed between 2020 and 2023, including over 1,000 last year.

Foreign workers in the public sector are hired only when qualified Bahrainis are unavailable.

The Bureau ensures this by conducting internal postings and checking its job database, which currently holds over 14,000 applications.

Contracts

Renewal of contracts for foreign workers is conditional on interviews to assess whether a Bahraini is ready to take over.

Foreign staff include 60 in advisory positions, alongside 3,525 in education, 2,157 in healthcare, 417 in engineering, and 231 in technical roles.

The Bureau stressed the need

for a steady approach to Bahrainisation to avoid disruption.

Temporary contracts are often issued to allow new Bahraini recruits time to meet job requirements, and part-time contracts are used for task-specific roles.

Clauses

All foreign workers' contracts include clauses mandating training for Bahrainis.

Budget constraints remain an obstacle in some cases, though the Bureau said it processes recruitment requests quickly when a clear need arises.

It also oversees Bahrainisation plans implemented by government entities to ensure compliance with legal requirements.

Since 2019, the number of foreign public sector workers has dropped by 15 per cent, from 7,000 to 6,390.

Challenges

The Ministry of Labour also addressed challenges in the private sector, noting that many Bahraini graduates struggle to find jobs due to a mismatch be-

The Ministry of Labour is working with the Labour Fund, Tamkeen, to train job seekers and support private companies in covering salaries for Bahraini employees.

tween their qualifications and market demands.

Fields like law, media, and literature were singled out as having limited opportunities.

This has contributed to Bahrain's 18,218 registered job seekers, 70 per cent of whom are university graduates, and 73 per cent are women.

Education Ministry employs 2,672 locals

● Reduces foreign employees by 986 in four years

TDT | Manama

A report investigating job nationalisation reveals that the Ministry of Education has made significant progress in replacing foreign workers with Bahraini nationals.

Between 2020 and 2023, the Ministry employed 2,672 Bahraini citizens while simultaneously reducing its foreign workforce by 986 employees.

Currently, 3,074 foreign nationals remain employed by the Ministry, primarily as teachers.

The Ministry clarified that these foreign teachers fill crucial roles in specialised areas currently lacking Bahraini expertise, including industrial



Initiatives are underway to develop new teacher training programmes

education, French language instruction, and music education.

A key challenge highlighted in the report is the reluctance of highly qualified Bahraini graduates, particularly those sponsored by the Ministry for overseas studies, to pursue teaching careers.

Positions

Many opt for other positions

in the public or private sectors instead.

"To address this, the Ministry is actively collaborating with the Bahrain Teachers College to increase its capacity.

All new students in the past two academic years have been enrolled in the Bachelor of Education programme to meet the Ministry's immediate needs and accelerate nationalisation.

The Ministry plans to reopen the Bachelor of Education programme for science, mathematics, Arabic, Islamic studies, and English, increasing student intake in the coming years," the Ministry's response stated.

"A new Bachelor of Science in Education (General Science) programme will also be launched in the 2024-2025 academic year.

Shura set to debate today tax treaty with Hong Kong

TDT | Manama

Government investments and income from natural resources will be exempt from taxation under a new agreement with Hong Kong, which Shura Council will discuss today.

The arrangement is part of a broader effort to encourage economic collaboration, as Bahrain looks to add to the 45 double taxation treaties it has signed with countries around the world.

The proposed agreement aims to eliminate double taxation on income and curb tax dodging.

According to the Financial

and Economic Affairs Committee of the Shura Council, the pact represents a shared ambition by both governments to deepen economic ties and ensure fairer tax practices.

Barriers

By removing barriers like overlapping tax obligations, the agreement is expected to benefit residents and businesses in Bahrain and Hong Kong alike.

The Ministry of Finance and National Economy stated that these agreements are part of a wider effort to bring fairness and transparency to the tax system.

They also aim to prevent profit-shifting to tax havens.

Court rejects claim for BD3.5m Manama hotel purchase refund



H Naser
TDT | Manama

A Gulf national's attempt to reclaim BD3.5 million paid for a Manama hotel three and a half years ago has been rejected by the High Civil Court.

The buyer claimed fraud in the sale agreement, citing a subsequent violation that led to the revocation of the hotel's license.

However, the court ruled that the violation, which occurred more than three years after the sale, was the buyer's responsibility and not grounds for a refund.

The buyer alleged that the seller concealed building code violations that prevented the renewal of the hotel's license.

He claimed he had cancelled the existing commercial registration in order to obtain a new one in his name, but was unsuccessful due to the outstanding violations requiring demolition of parts of the hotel, effectively rendering it unsuitable for hotel operations.

The buyer's lawyer argued that the seller had concealed these violations.

However, the seller's lawyer, Zuhair Abdullateef, presented evidence contradicting the buyer's claims.

He pointed out that the pre-

Zuhair Abdullateef, seller's lawyer

sale agreement was signed on March 7, 2019, while the buyer received the tourism license for the hotel on April 5, 2019, demonstrating that the violations were not concealed at the time of purchase.

Abdullateef highlighted that the agreement between both parties explicitly stated that the sale included the building, improvements, furniture, fixtures, and equipment, but not the tourism license itself.

License

"The buyer's attempt to obtain a new license in his name was a separate action and not related to the sale of the property," Abdullateef argued.

The court's decision stressed that the buyer had inspected the property before the purchase, accepted its condition, and paid the full price.

Ledger's revelations on drug distribution

Narcotics smuggling scheme exposed in Bahrain involving Asian man and girlfriend

H Naser
TDT | Manama

A meticulously kept ledger detailing drug transactions has become a key piece of evidence in the case against an Asian man and his girlfriend, both of whom are accused of smuggling and distributing narcotics in Bahrain.

The High Criminal Court, which heard the initial proceedings, adjourned the trial until January 13 to allow the defense time to respond to the evidence, which includes the ledger that allegedly documents sales, profits, and distribution methods.

The ledger, discovered during a search of the Asian suspect's residence, revealed a sophisticated operation spanning several years.

Intelligence

The Anti-drugs Directorate of the Ministry of Interior had received intelligence suggesting the man was involved in drug trafficking, using a network of "dead drops" to distribute the



Image used for illustrative purposes only

narcotics smuggled internally from his home country.

The ledger confirmed this information, detailing numerous transactions and providing crucial insights into the scale of the operation.

The accused Asian national allegedly smuggled drugs on multiple occasions between 2022 and 2024, earning between BD400 and BD1,700 per trip.

Operations

He confessed to years of drug use and admitted to smuggling, identifying others involved in

similar operations.

His female accomplice, who he met at a nightclub, allegedly assisted in the distribution network.

"He introduced me to this business and the idea of making money from it when we met. The money was good, so I continued," the woman told prosecutors, although she pleaded not guilty in the trial.

Search warrant

A search warrant, obtained from the Public Prosecution, uncovered drug parapherna-



The ledger details numerous transactions and provides crucial insights into the scale of the operation.

lia at the suspect's residence, including cutting agents, packaging materials, and various narcotics.

The prosecution alleges that the defendants operated as part of a larger international drug trafficking network.

The court will reconvene on January 13th to hear the defense's arguments.

Blow over Hajj registration system failures

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's newly introduced Hajj registration system has drawn criticism for causing disruption to long-standing campaigns, some of which have been operating for more than 80 years.

Five MPs are now calling for a parliamentary investigation to scrutinise the system's roll-out and address complaints of technical failures and a lack of fairness.

The MPs behind the request — Mohammed Al Olaiwi, Zainab AbdulAmeer, Abdulwahid Qarata, Hamad Al Doy, and Hanan Fardan — have pointed to the system's flawed introduction, which they claim caused widespread confusion among Hajj contractors and pilgrims alike.

Examination

The request for the inquiry,



MP Hanan Fardan

calls for a thorough examination of how the system was planned, implemented, and managed.

Campaign organisers have expressed frustration over the platform's technical issues.

According to the explanatory memorandum, the registration system crashed during its first hours of operation, and the electronic key required for access was deactivated on the opening day.



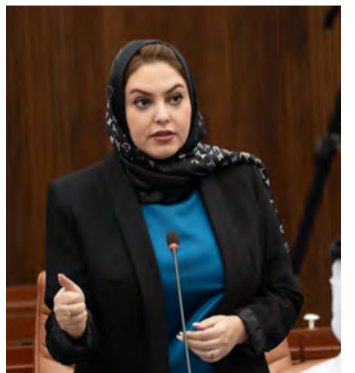
MP Mohammed Al Alaiwi

The platform reportedly went offline again at 9 a.m., reopening late in the night without prior notice to organisers or registrants.

Concerns

The request also raises concerns about transparency.

Hajj contractors were allegedly unable to view how many registrants were allocated to their campaigns, while discrep-



MP Zainab AbdulAmeer

ancies were found between the official registration records and applications submitted by pilgrims.

Adding to the frustration, the filtering results were published 12 days before the registration window closed, leading to what organisers described as misleading promotional efforts that damaged the reputations of campaigns with decades of service.

Youth Leadership 2024 grand finale



Palakkad Toastmasters hosted a grand finale event for its Youth Leadership Program (YLP) 2024, showcasing the remarkable talents of 21 young leaders. The event, held at Ahlia University, provided a platform for these young individuals to demonstrate the communication and leadership skills they developed throughout the program. The program was attended by Toastmasters District 20 officials and General Secretary of Palakkad Arts and cultural theatre (PAACT). The finale was a resounding success, with the young participants delivering impressive speeches, engaging in thought-provoking debates, and demonstrating their newfound confidence in front of an audience of parents, Toastmasters, and esteemed guests.

FLOOSS signs agreement with LuLu Retail PLC

To provide “Buy Now, Pay Later” services via “PIE” Point of Sale Systems



Officials following the deal signing
TDT | Manama

FLOOSS, the leading provider of digital financial solutions in Bahrain, has announced a landmark agreement with LuLu Retail PLC. This partnership will enable customers at LuLu hypermarkets in Bahrain to purchase items on an installment basis through the “Buy Now, Pay Later” service recently launched by FLOOSS as part of its innovative solutions designed to facilitate purchasing and enhance the shopping experience for its clients.

This service will allow customers to buy products immediately while providing them with

LuLu is committed to offering the best deals as part of its efforts to make quality lifestyle choices affordable to shoppers. The FLOOSS Buy-Now-Pay-Later option enhances responsible spending patterns and is a win-win choice for LuLu as well as our customers. We are also happy that LuLu is the platform for promoting a home-grown Bahraini financial App and service like FLOOSS because we take our corporate responsibility in supporting Bahraini enterprise seriously- and this is one cutting-edge example.

MR. JUZER RUPAWALA LULU RETAIL DIRECTOR

the option to pay in convenient instalments, thereby empowering them to acquire what they need without straining their budgets. Through this agreement, FLOOSS reaffirms its commitment to delivering flexible financial solutions that support

consumers and contribute to the enhancement of local trade.

Point-of-sale systems

The service will be available via the point-of-sale systems provided by PIE, a payment services provider licensed by the

Central Bank of Bahrain, which specializes in accepting commercial payments and serves as an exclusive sales arm for FLOOSS. PIE offers payment acceptance services to over 6,000 merchants, providing innovative solutions for transaction

processing. These point-of-sale systems will be available across LuLu hypermarkets Bahrain.

On this occasion, Mr. Fawaz Ghazal, CEO of FLOOSS, stated: “We are excited to announce our partnership with LuLu International Group, which represents a significant step forward in enhancing the shopping experience for customers in Bahrain. With the ‘Buy Now, Pay Later’ service, we aim to facilitate access to products and services, allowing customers to enjoy a seamless and convenient shopping experience. We believe that this service will make a substantial difference in the

local market, and we look forward to achieving further successes in collaboration with our partners.”

Mr. Ghazal added: “Our collaboration with PIE will enable us to expand our service offerings and drive further innovation in payment solutions. We are committed to providing the best services to our customers and are always striving to meet their evolving needs.”

FLOOSS will further this partnership by delivering new and innovative experiences that bolster local trade and satisfy consumer needs, thereby contributing to the development of the Bahraini market.

UK treasurer says London ‘natural home’ for Chinese finance

AFP | Beijing, China

British treasurer Rachel Reeves said Saturday that London was a “natural home” for Chinese finance during a visit to Beijing in the shadow of bond market turmoil back home.

Reeves, whose formal title is chancellor of the exchequer, is the most senior British government official to visit China since then-prime minister Theresa May held talks with President Xi Jinping seven years ago.

The trip comes as the yield on British government bonds reached a 17-year high this week, further complicating the ruling Labour Party’s sputtering efforts to revitalise growth.

The increase makes it more costly for the government to finance current operations and



British Finance Minister Rachel Reeves (L) shakes hands with Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng

repay debt, raising risks it will have to make spending cuts or hike taxes.

Speaking at the reopening of long-suspended finance talks between the two countries, Reeves said London was a “natural home for China’s financial services firms and your clients raising capital, and a launchpad

for Chinese firms seeking to build a global footprint”.

She hailed “opportunities to deepen connections” on capital markets, but said both countries needed to work more closely on “regulatory cooperation”.

At a later press briefing, Reeves said “common ground” had been found on financial services, trade, investment, climate change and other areas.

She said the total value of what had been agreed would be worth £600 million (\$732 million) for the British economy over the next five years, without giving specific details.

Her Chinese counterpart, Vice Premier He Lifeng, said experience showed that “as long as China and the UK respect each other... relations between our two countries can develop

in a healthy way”.

Reeves faced pressure from the parliamentary opposition to stay home and address the financial crisis, but a spokesperson for Prime Minister Keir Starmer said this week she had not planned to cancel her “long-standing” trip.

On a visit to British bicycle-maker Brompton’s Beijing showroom earlier Saturday, Reeves acknowledged “moves in global financial markets over the last few days”, but said the fiscal rules she set out in her October budget were “non-negotiable”.

“Growth is the number one mission of this government, to make our country better off,” she said, adding that her visit would “unlock tangible benefits for British businesses”.

Thousands of flights cancelled, delayed over US storm

San Francisco, United States

More than 3,000 flights were cancelled Friday and thousands more hit by delays due to a storm in the southern United States, airlines and tracking website FlightAware reported.

Delta Airlines said a “worse-than-expected mix of winter weather” prompted the shutdown of all five runways at Atlanta International Airport for more than two hours.

“Delta canceled approximately 1,100 flights across our network” Friday, the carrier said as it was “working to recover the airline heading into Saturday”.

A Delta plane also had to abort take-off at Atlanta be-



Representative picture

cause of an engine problem. More than 200 passengers and crew aboard the Boeing 757-300 had to exit via emergency slides, US media reported citing a company statement.

Dallas Fort Worth (Texas) and Charlotte Douglas (North Carolina) were also affected by the bad weather, with more than 1,200 flights cancelled across the two airports according to FlightAware.



News in brief

◆ **Ukraine said yesterday** that investigators were questioning two wounded North Korean soldiers after they were captured in Russia's Kursk region, saying they provided "indisputable evidence" that North Koreans were fighting for Moscow. It is not the first time that Kyiv has claimed the capture of North Korean soldiers during its Kursk incursion but it has not reported being able to question any before. In December it said it took several captives but they died from serious wounds. "Our soldiers captured North Korean soldiers in the Kursk region. These are two soldiers who, although wounded, survived and were brought to Kyiv, and are talking to SBU investigators." Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky wrote on social media.



Ukraine says questioning 2 captured North Korean soldiers

◆ **Four bodies recovered from flooded India coal mine**



◆ **Indian search and rescue teams** had recovered four bodies from a flooded coal mine by yesterday evening, days after gushing waters inundated the facility. At least nine men were trapped in the 90-metre (300-foot) deep mine in the northeastern state of Assam when it was flooded on Monday. Divers spent the following days scouring the tunnels for signs of any survivors. Rescuers retrieved the first body on Tuesday with three more taken out on Saturday. "The water level is receding inside the mine as pumps have been drawing out water," an official from the National Disaster Response Force told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to talk to media. "Waters are still very high inside. But we could see three bodies today and retrieved them."

◆ **The new Lebanese President Joseph Aoun** said yesterday his first official overseas trip would be to Saudi Arabia during a call with the Gulf kingdom's de facto leader, the president's office said. Lawmakers elected the 61-year-old army chief on Thursday, bringing to an end two years without a president for the multi-confessional, crisis-wracked country. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman called to congratulate Aoun on Saturday and invited him to visit his country, the Lebanese presidency and official Saudi news agency SPA said. Aoun responded that Saudi Arabia would be his "first destination", his office said. Analysts say Saudi Arabia's last-minute support was decisive in Aoun's election.

Lebanon's new president says to visit Saudi Arabia on first official trip



SPOTLIGHT

Malala Yousafzai at Muslim girls' education summit snubbed by Taliban



Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Malala Yousafzai (C) attends an international summit on 'Girls' Education in Muslim Communities', in Islamabad

Islamabad, Pakistan
Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai yesterday joined a global summit on the education of Muslim girls that was snubbed by Afghanistan's Taliban government. The two-day conference hosted by Pakistan has brought together education officials from dozens of Muslim-majority countries, but without Afghanistan -- the only country in the world where girls are banned from school. "The Muslim world including Pakistan faces significant challenges in ensuring equitable access to education for girls," Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said at the opening of the summit in the capital Islamabad. Pakistan Education Minister Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui told AFP that Islamabad had extended an invitation to Kabul, "but no one from the Afghan government was at the conference". Muhammad al-Issa, a Saudi cleric and secretary general of the Muslim World League -- which has backed the summit -- said religion was no grounds for blocking girls from school. "The entire Muslim world has agreed that girls' education is important, and those who say that girls' education is un-Islamic are wrong," he said. Roza Otunbayeva, the head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), urged leaders of Islamic countries to support Afghan girls. "I really call on all these ministers ... who came from all over the world, to offer scholarships, to have online education, to have all sorts of education for them. This is the task of the day," she told a panel.

S. Korea says Jeju Air jet black boxes stopped recording before crash

AFP | Seoul, South Korea

The black boxes holding the flight data and cockpit voice recorders for the crashed Jeju Air flight that left 179 people dead stopped recording four minutes before the disaster, South Korea's transport ministry said yesterday.

The Boeing 737-800 was flying from Thailand to Muan, South Korea, on December 29 carrying 181 passengers and crew when it belly-landed at the Muan airport and exploded in a fireball after slamming into a concrete barrier. It was the worst-ever aviation disaster on South Korean soil. "The analysis revealed that both the CVR and FDR data were not recorded during the four minutes leading up to the aircraft's collision with the localiser," the transport ministry said in a statement, referring to the two recording devices.

The localiser is a barrier at the end of the runway that helps with aircraft landings and was blamed for exacerbating the crash's severity. The damaged flight data recorder had been deemed unrecoverable for data extraction by South Korean authorities, who sent it to the United States for analysis at the US National Transportation Safety Board laboratory. But it appears that the boxes holding clues to the flight's final moments experienced data loss, leaving authorities trying to find out what happened. "Plans are in place to investigate the cause of the data loss during the ongoing accident investigation," the ministry said. South Korean and US investigators are still probing the cause of the crash, which prompted a national outpouring of mourning with memorials set up across the country.



Firefighters take part in a search operation near the site where a Jeju Air Boeing 737-800 aircraft crashed and burst into flames at Muan International Airport in Muan, some 288 kilometres southwest of Seoul



The cockpit voice recorder (CVR) retrieved from Jeju Air flight 2216

Investigators said the boxes were crucial to their probe but added they would not give up on trying to find out why the crash happened. "The investigation will be conducted through the examination and analysis of various data. The Committee is committed to doing its best to accurately determine the cause of the accident," the ministry said.

The pilot warned of a bird strike before pulling out of a first landing, then crashed on a second attempt when the landing gear did not emerge. This week, lead investigator Lee Seung-yeol told reporters that "feathers were found" in one of the plane's recovered engines, but cautioned a bird strike does not lead to an immediate engine failure. Authorities have raided offices at Muan airport where the crash took place, a regional aviation office in the southwestern city, and Jeju Air's office in the capital Seoul. They also barred Jeju Air's chief executive from leaving the country. Rival parties later formed a joint task force to probe the crash, while Transport Minister Park Sang-woo offered his resignation this week. "As the minister responsible for aviation safety, I feel a heavy sense of responsibility regarding this tragedy," he said.

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Indonesia's Mount Ibu erupts, spews hot lava and smoke



Mount Ibu spewing volcanic material approximately 4,000 meters high during an eruption

AFP | Jakarta, Indonesia

A volcano in eastern Indonesia erupted on Saturday, spewing hot lava and releasing a column of smoke and ash four kilometres (3.1 miles) into the air, an official said.

Mount Ibu, on Halmahera island in North Maluku province, erupted at 7:45 pm central Indonesia time (11:45 GMT), sending a tall flaming column soaring into the sky.

"The lava was spotted two kilometres away from the eruption centre," Geological Agency head Muhammad Wafid said in a statement.

Images from the volcano monitoring post showed a bright red column of flame and thick, dark smoke billowing high above the volcano crater. The volcano is currently still on the second highest alert level. There has been no new

evacuation order, but visitors and villagers have been told to vacate a zone four to 5.5 kilometres from the peak. The agency also urged people to wear face masks and protective goggles in case of volcanic ash rain.

Ibu is one of Indonesia's most active volcanoes, erupting more than 2,000 times last year. More than 700,000 people lived on Halmahera island as of 2022, according to official figures.

Indonesia, a vast archipelago nation, experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire". Last year, Mount Ruang in North Sulawesi province erupted more than half a dozen times, forcing thousands of residents of nearby islands to evacuate.

Eight students recovering after Japan university hammer attack



A police car sits at the entrance to Hosei University's Tama campus at AFP | Tokyo, Japan

Eight Tokyo university students attacked by a hammer-wielding woman in a classroom are recuperating and none required hospitalisation, their school has said. A 22-year-old student who identified herself as South Korea was arrested on the spot Friday on suspicion of assault, a Tokyo police spokesman told AFP.

Several reports had said people were seen bleeding from the head after the attack, which public broadcaster NHK said had been motivated by frustration over bullying, citing investigative sources.

The attacker began swinging a hammer in the classroom "all of a sudden", a student who witnessed the incident told Japanese broadcaster TV Asahi. "Everyone was panicking. I was so scared at first that my hands were shaking."

The eight who were hurt all received medical treatment and ended up requiring no hospitalisation, Hosei University said in a statement late Friday. "We will cooperate with police investigations and care for students and faculty shocked by the incident," the institution said, adding efforts would be made to "ensure campus safety".

Gaza rescuers say eight dead in Israel strike on school building

AFP | Gaza City, Palestinian Territories

Gaza's civil defence agency said an Israeli air strike on a school-turned-shelter yesterday killed eight people, including two children, while the Israeli military said it targeted Hamas.

Agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal confirmed eight people, including two children and two women, were killed by Israeli shelling on the Halwa school in the northern Gaza city of Jabaliya. Bassal said the strike would 30 people, including 19 children, and that the Halwa school housed "thousands of displaced people". The Israeli military, in a statement, acknowledged it conducted a strike on the facility.

It said the air force "conducted a precise strike on a command-and-control centre" that had previously served as the Halwa school in Jabaliya.

It said it targeted the premises because "the school had been used by Hamas to plan and execute attacks". The attack was the latest in a series of Israeli strikes on school buildings housing displaced people in Gaza, where fighting has raged for more than 14 months.

A strike on the United Nations-run Al-Jawani school in central Gaza on September 11 drew international outcry after the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said six of its staff were



Palestinians gather to receive aid food being distributed along the roadside at the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip

A strike on the United Nations-run Al-Jawani school in central Gaza on September 11 drew international outcry after the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said six of its staff were

YOU KNOW WHAT
At least 46,537 Palestinians, a majority of them civilians, have been killed in Israel's military campaign in Gaza since the war began.

among the 18 reported dead. The Israeli military accuses Hamas of hiding in school buildings where thousands of Gazans have sought shelter -- a charge denied by the Palestinian group. At least 46,537 Palestinians, a majority of them civilians, have been killed in Israel's military campaign in Gaza since the war began, according to data provided by the health ministry. The United Nations has acknowledged these figures as reliable. The October 7 attack that triggered it resulted in the deaths of 1,208 people on the Israeli side, most of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures, which includes hostages killed in captivity.

LA fires expand as winds forecast to pick up



Kyle Kucharski hugs his partner Nicole Perri as they stand on the ruins of their house destroyed by the Palisades Fire in the Pacific Palisades neighborhood of Los Angeles, California

AFP | Los Angeles, United States

The largest of the Los Angeles' fires spread toward previously untouched neighborhoods yesterday, forcing new evacuations and dimming hopes that the disaster was coming under control. Across the city, at least 11 people have died as multiple fires have ripped through residential areas since Tuesday, razing thousands of homes in destruction that US President Joe Biden likened to a "war scene."

Despite huge firefighting efforts, the Palisades fire's expansion prompted evacuation orders in ritzy neighborhoods along its eastern flank, which include the famous Getty Center art museum. Winds were forecast to pick up again on Saturday after a brief lull, posing the risk of new fires as embers are blown into dry brush. Los Angeles residents have increasingly demanded to know who is at fault for the disaster as they grapple with

the ruin and local anger rises over officials' preparedness and response. Residents like Nicole Perri, whose home in the upscale Pacific Palisades burnt down, told AFP that officials "completely let us down." "I don't think the officials were prepared at all," said James Brown, a 65-year-old retired lawyer across the city in Altadena. California Governor Gavin Newsom on Friday ordered a "full independent review," describing the lack of water supplies during the initial fires as "deeply troubling."

"We need answers to how that happened," he wrote in an open letter. As reports of looting grew, a sunset-to-sunrise curfew was imposed in evacuated areas. Around two dozen arrests have already been made across Los Angeles, where some residents have organized street patrols and kept armed watch over their own houses. The National Guard has been deployed to bolster law enforcement.

Sudan army says entered key RSF-held Al-Jazira state capital



People displaced by conflict bid farewell to locals from Port Sudan in northeastern Sudan

AFP | Port Sudan, Sudan

The Sudanese military and allied armed groups launched an offensive Saturday on key Al-Jazira state capital Wad Madani, entering the city after more than a year of paramilitary control, the army said. The armed forces "congratulated" the Sudanese people in a statement on "our forces entering the city of Wad Madani this morning". Sudan's army and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitaries have been at war since

April 2023, leading to what the UN calls the world's worst displacement crisis and declarations of famine in parts of the northeast African country. A video the army shared on social media showed fighters claiming to be inside Wad Madani, after an army source told AFP they had "stormed the city's eastern entrance". The footage appeared to be shot on the western side of Hantoub Bridge in northern Wad Madani, which has been under RSF control since December 2023.



TOP 4 TWEETS

01



We have just endured the hottest decade on record. Individual years pushing past the 1.5 degree limit do not mean the long-term goal is shot. It means we need to fight even harder to get on track.
@antonioguerres

02



President Jimmy Carter's resolute and humble leadership saved millions of lives. I hope his legacy will serve as a guide for the world and generations to come.
@DrTedros

03



The Venezuelan people and world know that Nicolas Maduro clearly lost the 2024 presidential election and has no right to claim the presidency today. We stand ready to support a return to democracy in Venezuela
@SecBlinken

04



Federal disaster assistance is available for those who have been impacted by the wildfires in Southern California.
@KamalaHarris

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

celebs

Rihanna claps back at social media troll



Rihanna
Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Rihanna has hit back at a social media troll who referred to her as "forehead". The 36-year-old singer lashed out at the troll, after she posted a video of herself on Instagram celebrating her own sobriety and the start of 2025. In the video - which was filmed from inside a hotel room in New York City - Rihanna says: "Y'all I didn't drink all year. I didn't drink all year!"

But in response, one user - named Lorenzo - called on the chart-topping star to release her long-awaited new album, while he also mocked her appearance.

Lorenzo's message read: "We want an album forehead (sic)"

However, Rihanna - who hasn't released an album since 'Anti' in 2016 - was quick to fire back at the troll.

She said: "Listen, Lorenzo! You ain't cute enough to be calling me by my Black name, you dizzy f***! (sic)" Rihanna has largely focused on her fashion and beauty brands in recent years.

The singer has enjoyed huge success with her Fenty Beauty brand, and Rihanna previously revealed that she's very hands-on with the company's products.

The award-winning star - who founded the beauty brand back in 2017 - told TIME magazine: "I have 100 percent involvement in this process, which is what makes this so special and very fun."

"I have so much creative freedom from products to packaging, and that's really the only way this brand will stay true to my vision for it."

Ryan Reynolds insists women are 'held to different standards'

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Ryan Reynolds has insisted women are "held to a different set of standards".

The 48-year-old actor - who is married to fellow star Blake Lively - has claimed women both in the industry and in every day life have to "hide their strength" in order to succeed.

Speaking as he presented the best film of the year prize to 'Wicked' at the National Board of Review Annual Awards Gala on Tuesday, he said: "'Wicked' is indeed wicked, It dares to centre on two powerful women."

"It examines a nuanced, complex relationship which has resonated with people for over two decades on stage..."

"Stories about women seem to be held to a different set of standards, and that is to say that they're often held to the standards women are held to in life."

"You must be perfect. You must must hide your strength. You must shape-shift or placate."

Meanwhile, WME has rubbished the idea that Ryan Reynolds

old and Blake Lively pressured the talent agency to drop Justin Baldoni.

The 37-year-old actress recently accused her 'It Ends With Us' director and co-star of sexual harassment, and the talent agency has now denied claims made in Justin's countersuit that Ryan and Blake pressured the company to drop him as a client. In a statement given to The Hollywood Reporter, WME said: "In Baldoni's filing there is a claim that Reynolds



Ryan Reynolds

Dwayne Johnson welcomes the 'global embrace of Polynesian culture'

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson loves showcasing Polynesian culture through the 'Moana' franchise.

The 52-year-old actor voices Maui in the Disney animated film franchise, and Dwayne has admitted to being particularly proud of the movies, which are set in Polynesia.

The Hollywood star - whose dad was Nova Scotian and whose mother was Samoan - told E!

News: "The thing about 'Moana' - and I think the success about 'Moana' - and I wanna thank everybody out there, it's just been this global embrace of our

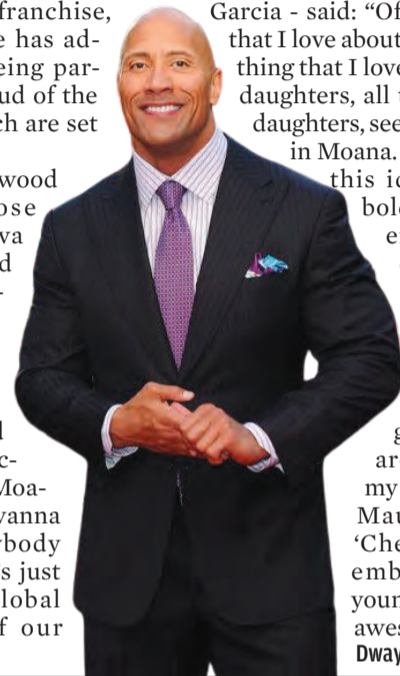
Polynesian culture, and it's really cool."

Dwayne also loves that the movies can inspire young girls.

The actor - who has Jasmine, nine, and Tiana, six, with his wife Lauren Hashian, as well as Simone, 23, with Dany Garcia - said: "Of everything that I love about Moana, the thing that I love most is my daughters, all three of my daughters, see themselves in Moana. And I think this idea of emboldening and empowering our young women and how important that is."

"And I get to run around, with my long hair as Maui, and go, 'Cheehoo,' and embolden our young girls - it's awesome."

Dwayne Johnson



Selena Gomez feels 'lucky' to work with Steve Martin and Martin Short

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Selena Gomez feels "so lucky" to work with Steve Martin and Martin Short.

The 32-year-old actress stars alongside the veteran comedy stars on 'Only Murders in the Building', and Selena relishes the experience of working with Steve, 79, and Martin, 74.

During an appearance on 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!', Selena shared: "I'm so lucky to be with Steve and Marty every day."

Steve actually congratulated his co-star on her recent engagement to Benny Blanco, the record producer, by sending a message to Selena's assistant.

The brunette beauty - who plays Mabel Mora on their hit TV show - explained: "Steve made sure he sent my assistant an email, so my assistant could tell me congratulations. That's how he communicates."

Asked whether Steve intended to send the message to Selena's assistant or directly to the actress, Selena replied: "Well, that's a good question!"

She added: "He always tries to be polite and it's very kind. But sometimes it's OK to send a little text."

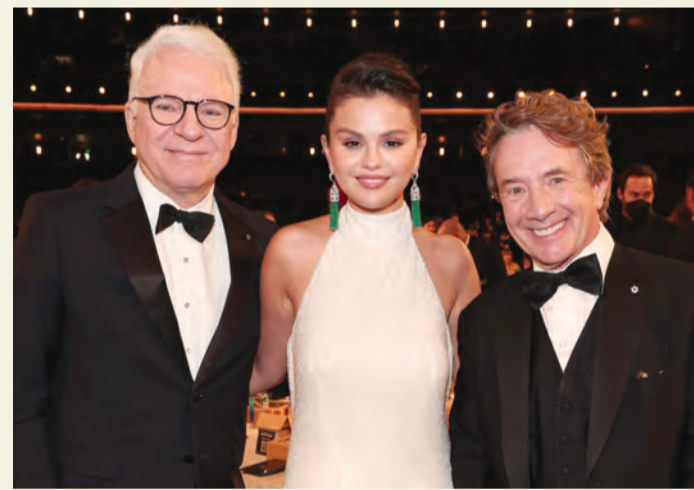
Selena has enjoyed significant success as a singer and as an actress during the course of her career.

But the former Disney star recently revealed that she plans to prioritise her acting career.

She told Variety: "I love storytelling, and my music career is separate. However, I don't see that being a forever thing."

Selena considers acting to be her "strong suit", and she conceded that she's now "a little too old for the pop-star life".

She explained: "I definitely think my strong suit is probably acting."



Selena Gomez with Steve Martin and Martin Short

Jennifer Lopez's children can be 'brutally honest' with her about various things

Bang Showbiz | Los Angeles

Jennifer Lopez's children are often "brutally honest" with her.

The 55-year-old pop superstar has twins 15-year-old twins Max and Emme with her ex-husband Marc Anthony and admitted that while they can be absorbed in their own lives some of the time, they are willing to give their opinion on her work.

She told E! News: "I think kids are like kind of wrapped up in their own lives a bit, but if you ask them, they will give you their honest opinion about everything, you know what I mean?"

"They're ready to be brutally honest"

The 'Unstoppable' star even noted that she enjoys hearing what her children have to say about what she has done and will even encourage it because she wants to get the perspective of those from a different generation.

She said: "like my kids to see my work and know what I'm doing, and I'll share certain things with them and say, 'What do you think of this?' or, 'What do you think of that?' And they always have an interesting perspective, because they're from a different generation."



SUDOKU

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

Yesterday's solution

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

Across
 1- Like __ of bricks; 5- Second-year students, for short; 10- Borscht ingredient; 14- Appraise, charge per unit; 15- Preminger et al.; 16- Singer Guthrie; 17- Gator's kin; 18- Melts; 19- Sly look; 20- Performs surgery; 22- Antipasto morsel; 23- Smell; 24- Dr. Zhivago's love; 26- Flip out; 29- Jerry Seinfeld, e.g.; 33- Gather; 34- Aristotle's teacher; 35- Mao ___-tong; 36- Extremely; 37- Removes wrinkles; 38- Tins; 39- Self; 40- Attire; 41- Sublease; 42- Tongue; 44- Reduces speed; 45- Letterman rival; 46- Gutter locale; 48- Characteristic; 51- Squeeze together; 55- Comedian Fox; 56- Spicy sauce; 58- "Cast Away" setting; 59- Arrow poison; 60- Once more; 61- Small batteries; 62- Transvaal farmer; 63- Medicinal plant; 64- Drinking vessels;

Down
 1- Sacramento's ___ Arena; 2- Waterproof cover; 3- Plains native; 4- Autopsy; 5- ___ voice (softly); 6- Alternate; 7- School orgs.; 8- ___ do you do?; 9- Puncture sound; 10- Simple song; 11- ___ saw Elba; 12- Hgt.; 13- Ripped; 21- Citrus drinks; 22- Sandwich cookie; 24- Bank offerings; 25- Tsp. and tbsps.; 26- Chairman's hammer; 27- Last Greek letter; 28- Home run King Hank; 29- Shut; 30- Author Calvin; 31- Good ___; 32- Bird homes; 34- Ragu competitor; 37- Teheran's country; 38- Root of Apium graveolens; 40- Tune for two; 41- Invitation letters; 43- Unpowered aircraft; 46- Red fluorescent dye; 47- Appliance brand; 48- Chicago paper, for short; 49- "All The Way To ___", song by REM; 50- Zip ___; 51- "Doo-Dah"; 51- Scottish social unit; 52- Jacob's brother; 53- Smack; 54- Cong. meeting; 56- Eur. carrier; 57- Word that can succeed old, ice and bronze;

Yesterday's solution

E	L	A	T	E	S	S	S	E	C	O	L
L	I	T	E	R	L	O	C	H	A	L	I
S	A	T	A	N	A	L	A	E	T	A	N
E	R	A	S	E	T	O	M	A	H	A	W
E	S	P	R	E	S						
R	A	P	S		R	E	I	L	L	A	M
E	T	A		R	E	A	L		S	E	A
N	O	T	W	I	T	H	S	T	A	N	I
E	N	T	I	C	E		I	O	T	A	N
W	E	I	G	H		R	E	N	E	C	O
N	O	N	S	E	N	S	E				
A	O	N	E	S				T	A	H	O
S	E	E	S		G	E	R	T		R	E
A	S	I	S		O	D	I	E		E	S

Sri Lanka crush New Zealand in finale

Sri Lanka salvages ODI series pride with a commanding 140-run victory in Auckland

- New Zealand collapsed to 21-5 early in their chase
- Nissanka top-scored for Sri Lanka with 66
- New Zealand won the three-match series 2-1

AFP | Auckland

Sri Lanka razed New Zealand's top-order yesterday to comfortably win the third one-day international in Auckland by 140 runs and salvage a lone victory in the series.

The home side's hopes of chasing down Sri Lanka's 290-8 nosided when they crumbled to 21-5 at Eden Park, before being dismissed for 150 off 29.4 overs.

Sri Lanka rebounded after suffering heavy defeats in the first two games to cede the three-match series.

It mirrored the pattern of the



Sri Lanka's Asitha Fernando celebrates a wicket

preceding T20 series, which New Zealand also won 2-1.

Sri Lanka captain Charith Asalanka was pleased his side could show what they are capable of.

"I think it's always great to make comeback like this but unfortunately, we lost first two of both series," he said.

"But today, this was a pleasure to watch."

The visitors were led by some lethal seam bowling from Asitha Fernando and Eshan Malinga, who claimed three wickets each, as did spinner Maheesh Theekshana.



Sri Lanka's Pathum Nissanka top-scored with 66 off 42 balls despite retiring hurt with an apparent hip injury, and then returning to add more runs

Fernando (3-26) was the chief destroyer with the new ball as New Zealand's first five wickets tumbled inside the first seven overs.

The victory margin would have been greater, were it not for Mark Chapman's 81 off 81 balls, the number three New Zealand batsman the last out when he was bowled by Theekshana (3-35).

No other New Zealander reached 20, with five of the top six dismissed for two runs or less.

Scorecard

Sri Lanka 290 for 8 (Nissanka 66, Kusal 54, Liyanage 53, Henry 4-55, Santner 2-55) beat New Zealand 150 (Chapman 81, Asitha 3-26, Malinga 3-35, Theekshana 3-35) by 140 runs

Earlier, injured opener Pathum Nissanka top-scored for Sri Lanka with 66 off 42 balls.

Nissanka, was on 50 off 31 balls when he retired hurt after suffering an apparent hip injury, having got his team off to a flying start at 66 without loss in 10 overs.

He recovered and returned in the 34th over to add a further 16 runs, hitting six fours and five sixes in total.

There were half-centuries from Kusal Mendis (54 off 48) and Janith Liyanage (53 off 52) in a vastly improved Sri Lankan batting effort.

New Zealand seamer Matt Henry continued a fine series, claiming 4-55 to lift him to 150 ODI wickets, while captain Mitchell Santner took 2-55 with his spin.

Lee McIlear claims back-to-back wins at Awali Golf Club



Tournament Director Rashed Al Qutami (L), Overall winner Lee McIlear (C), and Captain Steve Newall

TDT | Manama

Lee McIlear continued his hot streak, winning the Stableford competition at Awali Golf Club with 42 points, while also breaking par with a stunning round of 69.

Playing off a 5 handicap, McIlear showcased exceptional form, combining powerful drives, precise approach shots, and sharp putting to overcome the mental barriers of breaking par on the challenging course, where par is set



From left: Abdullah Al Hasan, Mohammed Sultan Faraj, captain Steve Newall, Susan Scott, Paul Mclean, Lee McIlear and Melanie Swain

at 70. The competition was fierce, with four players—Susan Scott, Abdullah Al Hasan, Paul Mclean, and Melanie Swain—posting impressive 41-point scores. Mclean achieved a personal best of 82, inching closer to the milestone

of breaking 80. Looking ahead, the Korean Cup will be contested next Friday, followed by the annual Royal vs. Awali "Green Brown Challenge" yesterday, a 9-hole match on each surface. Awali currently holds the Cup.

Bahrain Paralympic Committee celebrates achievements in 2024



Paralympic athletes celebrate after an event

TDT | Manama

The Bahrain Paralympic Committee marked a landmark year in 2024, achieving remarkable success and showcasing the nation's leadership in para-sports.

With a focus on inclusion and excellence, Bahrain secured 129 medals in international competitions, including 41 golds, 44 silvers, and 44 bronzes, underlining its commitment to global sporting prominence.

Founded in 2017 by decree from His Highness Shaikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Committee has grown

into a hub of expertise in para-sports.

Through comprehensive programs, the Committee prepared athletes to compete at the highest levels, including the Paralympic Games in Paris and major regional events such as the West Asian Para Games and the Fazza International Athletics Championship.

The Committee also established Bahrain as a prime destination for hosting international para-sports events, including the Arab and World Para-Badminton Championships and the inaugural World Para-Taekwondo Poomsae Championship.



Officials and athletes of Bahrain Paralympic Committee

Zain Esports racks up another year of success with impressive growth in gamers, viewers and social media fans

TDT | Manama

Zain Group, a leading provider of innovative technologies and digital lifestyle and ICT solutions operating in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announces the end of another successful year for Zain Esports, the e-gaming arm of the Group.

During 2024, Zain Esports undertook 50 tournaments and activations across Zain operations in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, and Iraq. Since first launching in 2021, Zain Esports has attracted around 70,000 participants and garnered over 160 million social media impressions regionally.

Moreover, Zain Esports currently has 210,000 social media followers and during 2024, over 820,000 unique viewers watched Zain Esports tournaments streamed live on Twitch and YouTube.

Zain has invested heavily in



network upgrades in recent years, with gaming being one of the most significant business use cases for 5G and fiber-to-the-home (FTTH).

Notably during 2024, Zain Esports partnered with Riot games in more than 15 venues across eight countries to launch the League of Legend MENA servers that saw more than five-thousand gamers participate and received more than 45 million impressions.

Zain Esports partnered

with universities in Bahrain to launch the Zain University League within the Kingdom, seeing more than 300 up and coming gamers participate in various tournaments and workshops held in the recently established Zain Esports Lab within the Zain HQ offices. The Zain Esports Lab is the Kingdom's first dedicated Esports facility equipped with state-of-the-art technology to enhance the gaming experience. It regularly hosts events and tournaments,

providing a platform for youth to connect, develop their skills, and compete on both national and international levels.

Zain Esports conducted multiple offline FC (football) tournaments in Kuwait throughout 2024 with hundreds of gamers competing in the 62 matches that were played.

Zain Esports local arm PLAYHERA continued to support the Saudi gaming system

Malek Hammoud, Zain Group Chief Investment and Digital Officer said, "Gamers around the world are a passionate community, and in the Middle East this is no different. Zain remains committed to supporting the growth and development of this exciting, often youth-oriented activity, and we are extremely grateful to our partners and collaborators with whom we organize events, which capture the imagination and translate into successful opportunities for Zain Esports."

CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, (Surname) **Sathananthan Veeru Bala** - (Given Name) **Vengata Ragavan S/O Suruli Gowder Sathananthan** holding Indian Passport No:-**M4527584** dated 02/03/2015 issued at Bahrain having permanent residence at **14/6/83 Ramar Kovil Street, Moorthynayakkan Patti, Odaipatti P.O., Theni D.T., Tamilnadu, India** presently residing at Flat 401, Bldg 230, Road 318, Zubarah Avenue, Manama 307 will henceforth be known as (Surname) **Sathananthan** (Given name) **Veeru Bala Vengata Ragavan**. Objection(s) if any, may be forwarded to **Embassy of India**, P.O Box 26106, Bldg 1090, Road 2819, Block 428, Al Seef, **Kingdom of Bahrain**.

Liverpool cruise into FA Cup 4th round

Captain Alexander-Arnold's stunning goal leads Liverpool to a 4-0 victory over Accrington Stanley

● **Trent Alexander-Arnold scored a stunning top-corner strike**

● **Jota, Danni, and Chiesa also scored**

AFP | London

Trent Alexander-Arnold's stunning strike lit up Liverpool's 4-0 win over League Two Accrington Stanley to cruise into the FA Cup fourth round yesterday.

The England international was named captain in the absence of Virgil van Dijk in a much-changed side named by Arne Slot and led by example after a being criticised for his display in a 2-2 draw against Manchester United last weekend.

Slot made eight changes after suffering just his second defeat



Liverpool's English striker #76 Jayden Danni celebrates scoring the team's third goal

in charge of the Reds in Wednesday's League Cup semi-final first leg against Tottenham.

The Dutchman had warned the Premier League leaders that a trip to Anfield would be Accrington's "Champions League final."

A mammoth 86 league positions behind Liverpool in the 92-team English league system, Stanley held out for nearly half an hour.

Diogo Jota was left with a simple task to tap in from Darwin Nunez's low cross to open the floodgates.

Alexander-Arnold then stepped forward to double the lead with a sumptuous hit into the top corner from outside the box.

Jayden Danni made the most of just his second appearance of the season to fire in the third 14 minutes from time.

Federico Chiesa's Liverpool career has so far failed to get



Federico Chiesa scored his first goal for Liverpool with a long-range strike that went in off the far post

going due to injury problems.

But the Italian took advantage of some rare game time to net his first goal for the club with a long range strike in off the far post.

"It was surreal," said Accrington forward and Liverpool fan Josh Woods.

"They are world-class players and on the counter it is hard to stop."

Real Madrid must avoid mistakes from Clasico thrashing: Ancelotti

AFP | Riyadh

Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti said his players could avenge their thrashing earlier this season by Barcelona to win the Spanish Super Cup on Sunday, if they avoided making the same mistakes.

Hansi Flick's Barcelona routed Los Blancos 4-0 at the Santiago Bernabeu in October in La Liga, although a slump before the winter break helped Real Madrid overtake them.

"We have to think about that game obviously, they beat us, we had a clear evaluation of what happened," Ancelotti told a news conference yesterday ahead of the clash in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

"We started the game well, then had problems in the second half, so we have to try and repeat the good things we did and avoid the mistakes we made."

"The Clasico is even more pressured when it's a final, we've played a lot against Barcelona and playing a final against them is always something special."



Real Madrid's Kylian Mbappe shoots from an offside position

Madrid are still searching for a balance between attack and defence in their game after the arrival of French superstar Kylian Mbappe from Paris Saint-Germain last summer.

Along with Vinicius Junior, Jude Bellingham and Rodrygo Goes, the four players give Madrid a significant edge going forward but can hurt the team if they are not focussed defen-

sively.

"(In recent Clasicos) individual quality has prevailed over team balance," continued Ancelotti.

"An important aspect tomorrow will be balance and collective work -- defending."

"If you defend well, there's more chance of winning."

Ancelotti previously said his worst memory from a suc-

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CARLO ANCELOTTI

cessful 2024, in which Madrid won La Liga and the Champions League, was the beating by Barcelona.

"We're close to another trophy, we're thinking positively, but we know that in football anything can happen, above all when the opponent is strong and competes well like Barcelona," added Ancelotti, whose side have won the European Super Cup and Intercontinental Cup already this season.

Auger-Aliassime and Keys take out Adelaide titles ahead of Melbourne



Madison Keys holds the winner's trophy after her victory

AFP | Adelaide

Felix Auger-Aliassime and Madison Keys completed the perfect preparation for the Australian Open yesterday when they claimed top honours at the Adelaide International.

Keys upset top seed and world number seven Jessica Pegula to win the event for a second time in a major confidence-boost ahead of the opening Grand Slam of the year.

The world number 20 duplicated her 2022 trophy at Memorial Drive by defeating her American compatriot 6-3, 4-6, 6-1 for a ninth WTA crown.

Canada's Auger-Aliassime fired down 10 aces to beat American Sebastian Korda 6-3, 3-6, 6-1 in the men's final, earning his sixth career trophy.

He is on a five-match win streak which began last week with his victory over world number four Taylor Fritz at the United Cup.

"We've known each other for a while, we always push each other," said Auger-Aliassime of Korda, who was competing in his first tournament since undergoing elbow surgery in October.

Keys came back from a medical timeout in the second set

"Jess had an amazing week, coming out of the gates in the first week and making the final. I also got off to a good start and I'm looking forward for what's to come this season"

MADISON KEYS

after treatment on her left knee to watch her good friend Pegula, last year's US Open finalist, take the final into a deciding set.

But she rallied to deliver the win on her first match point, setting her up nicely for an Australian Open first-round clash against another American, Ann Li.

"Jess had an amazing week, coming out of the gates in the first week and making the final," said Keys, who won her last title in May at Strasbourg.

"I also got off to a good start and I'm looking forward for what's to come this season."

"I haven't been back here (Adelaide) since 2022 when I won the title. I feel I should be back every year in Adelaide."

Pegula admitted she was clearly outplayed.

Raducanu rejects insect bite treatment over doping fears

AFP | Melbourne

Doping fears prevented former US Open champion Emma Raducanu from treating insect bites on the eve of the Australian Open, she said, with players increasingly wary about ingesting contaminated substances.

The British player, who faces a tough first round match against Russian 26th seed Ekaterina Alexandrova, was speaking in the wake of high-profile doping cases involving Iga Swiatek and Jannik Sinner.

"I would say all of us are probably quite sensitive to what we take on board, what we use," said the 22-year-old, recalling



Emma Raducanu serves during a practice session

an incident on Friday.

"I got really badly bitten by, I don't know what, like ants, mosquitoes, something. I'm allergic,

I guess.

"They flared up and swelled up really a lot. Someone was giving me this antiseptic spray, natural, to try to ease the bites."

"I didn't want to take it. I didn't want to spray it. I was, like, I'm just going to tough it out because I don't want to risk it."

Five-time Grand Slam winner Swiatek's reputation was rocked last year when it was revealed she tested positive for a banned heart medication.

The International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) accepted that the violation was not intentional, and the Polish star escaped with a one-month sanction.