

Keys sets up Sabalenka showdown

Madison Keys edges Swiatek in thriller to face Sabalenka in Australian Open final | P 12



Scarlett Johansson's TV role has been 'a complete dream'

Al Baraka Islamic Bank hosts annual staff Townhall

Saudi pledges \$600bn for US economic growth
 AFP | Riyadh

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman promised yesterday to pile \$600 billion into US trade and investments as he congratulated Donald Trump on his return to the White House.

Prince Mohammed made the pledge in a phone call following Trump's inauguration on Monday, Saudi state media said.

Trump forged close relations with Riyadh in his first term and is now expected to push Saudi Arabia, home of Islam's holiest sites, towards normalising ties with Israel as a major foreign policy objective.

(Detailed report on Word Page)

Hundreds leave West Bank amid rising tensions

AFP | Jenin, Palestinian Territories

A Palestinian official said hundreds of people began leaving their homes in a flashpoint area of the occupied West Bank yesterday as Israeli forces pressed a deadly operation there.

The Israeli military this week launched a raid in the Jenin area, a hotbed of Palestinian resistance, days into a ceasefire in its war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Since it began on Tuesday, the operation has killed at least 12 Palestinians and injured 40 more around Jenin, according to the Palestinian health ministry.

BD4,500 award for crash victim

TDT | Manama

A man injured in a traffic accident has been awarded BD4,500 by the High Civil Court, even though the driver involved was acquitted by the Lower Criminal Court.

The incident occurred in January 2023 at 4:40 pm, when the victim was crossing a road and was struck by a vehicle. He suffered a fractured pelvis and a disability assessed at 22 per cent.

Building silence

Shura Council set to debate law on residential construction noise restrictions

Mohammed Darwish
 TDT | Manama

A proposed law to curb the racket of drilling and demolition in residential neighbourhoods is set to be debated in the Shura Council on Sunday.

The plan aims to empower municipalities to impose restrictions on noisy construction work during rest hours, addressing long-standing grievances from residents over sleep-shattering disturbances.

At present, no rules exist to prevent contractors from operating at weekends, on public holidays, or late at night, leaving families to cope with sleepless nights and the constant stress of nearby construction activity.

Amendment

The proposal, reviewed by Shura's Public Utilities and Environment Committee, seeks to amend Article 20 of the 1977 Building Regulation Law.

If approved, it would allow municipalities to set specific times and days when disruptive work is banned in residential areas, with exceptions for emergencies like urgent pipe repairs.

The amendment is intended to give councils the tools to



Shura Council session in progress

protect residents' peace while managing growth demands.

Aims

The Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture has weighed in on the matter, stating that some of the aims of the proposal could already be addressed through the Labour Law for the Private Sector (Law No. 36 of 2012) and the Environment Law (Law No. 7 of 2022).

The latter, under Article 43, requires projects to keep noise levels from machinery and equipment within acceptable limits.

However, the ministry acknowledged that the amend-

ed proposal adds flexibility by granting councils the option to enforce restrictions on specific activities during certain times.

Needs

This, it said, would allow for tailored decisions based on the needs of local communities.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning echoed similar views, adding that the proposal aligns with Decree No. 44 of 2022, which places responsibility for enforcing Article 20 of the Building Regulation Law under the Housing Ministry.

They explained that the amendment would formalise the minister's authority to regulate

disruptive construction activities in residential areas.

Restrictions

The committee has argued that the law balances public comfort and construction industry demands, applying restrictions only to residential zones and activities like drilling, demolition, and excavation.

This ensures that broader construction projects in uninhabited areas remain unaffected.

If passed, violations of the restrictions could lead to penalties under Article 23 of the existing law, which imposes fines for non-compliance.



The proposal, if approved, would allow municipalities to set specific times and days when disruptive work is banned in residential areas.

Municipalities

The committee further stressed that municipalities, being closest to the affected communities, are best suited to enforce the rules while coordinating with other authorities.

Supporters of the proposal say it directly responds to public complaints about unchecked noise disturbances and provides much-needed respite for residents living near active construction zones.

Sunday's discussion will focus on how the rules might be enforced and the effects on contractors and nearby communities.

'Joint cooperation key to GCC development'

Davos

His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa has stressed the importance of fostering joint cooperation and economic integration among the GCC countries.

He noted how these efforts help achieve the Kingdom of Bahrain's comprehensive development goals in alignment with GCC leaders' far-reaching visions.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman, 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), was speaking as he attended the "Economic Diversification and Its Impact on Sustainability: The Role of the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries in Global Economic Growth" session yesterday at the World Economic Forum (WEF) 55th Annual Meetings in Davos, Switzerland.

This session, organised by the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, witnessed the participation of



HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa attends a session on economic diversification

the Minister of Finance and National Economy, His Excellency Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, alongside other GCC Ministers of Finance.

During the session, HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman affirmed the role of GCC countries in driving economic growth, emphasising how their economic and developmental visions have positioned them at the forefront of economic progress globally.

His Highness also highlighted the region's competitive environment as a driver for sectoral growth and sustainable development.

He underscored the significance of international conferences, like the World Economic Forum, in addressing global challenges, fostering knowledge exchange, and sharing best practices to promote sustainable economic growth.

HE Shaikh Salman stressed the importance of adopting innovative policies and strategies that align with climate objectives and development priorities.

Commitment

His Highness highlighted the region's commitment to strengthening Gulf unity and promoting economic diversification across vital sectors to achieve sustainable growth in line with the King-

dom's aspirations.

The strategic advantages of the GCC's geographic location, which positions it as a significant investment and trade hub, he noted, adding that the GCC is Asia's sixth-largest trading partner and the EU's second-largest.

The session addressed several key issues, including GCC nation's global economic achievements, innovative responses to challenges, and sustainable development commitments.

Policies

The discussion also covered the GCC's economic and development policies to integrate economic, environmental, and social objectives for long-term sustainability.

Technological innovation was highlighted as a driver of economic reform and diversification, particularly in emerging industries.

The session explored ways to enhance international partnerships to drive economic growth, attract investments, and promote competitive business climates.

(Related report on Page 2)



Bahrain reaffirms deep-rooted Oman relations

Davos, Switzerland

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), reaffirmed the deep-rooted relations and historical bonds between the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Sultanate of Oman.

He emphasised that these ties are further strengthened by the support of His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said, contributing to the realisation of the aspira-



HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa holds talks with key Oman officials

of both countries and their peoples.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman bin Hamad was speaking as he visited yesterday the Sultanate of

Oman pavilion at the World Economic Forum (WEF) 55th Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

During the visit, His Highness met with the Minister of Finance

of Oman, His Excellency Sultan bin Salem Al Habsi, and members of Oman's delegation.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of HH Shaikh Isa

bin Salman's leadership of a high-level Bahraini delegation at the WEF.

HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman noted that Oman's pavilion, visited

by several prominent participants of the WEF, serves as a valuable platform for exchanging expertise and sharing best international practices across various economic sectors.

The meeting also explored ways to further enhance the Bahrain-Oman relationship in alignment with mutual aspirations.

His Highness extended his heartfelt wishes for continued progress and prosperity for Oman.

The meeting was also attended by the Minister of Finance and National Economy, HE Shaikh Salman bin Khalifa Al Khalifa, along with several senior officials.

Tourism platform

Tourism Minister inaugurates 35th edition of Autumn Fair at Exhibition World Bahrain



H.E. Fatima Al Sairafi's presence elevates the prestige of the event's 35th edition
TDT | Manama

Her Excellency Fatima bint Jaffar Al Sairafi, Minister of Tourism and Chairperson of the Bahrain Tourism and Exhibitions Authority (BTEA), inaugurated the 35th edition of the Autumn Fair, in the presence of guests and officials, at Exhibition World Bahrain.

The event will take place until February 1, and is organised by Informa Markets Bahrain.

The Autumn Fair has been an anchor event of the retail sector in the Kingdom since its inception in 1989.

Annually, it attracts hundreds of exhibitors and thousands of visitors from around the world.

Unique experience

This year's edition will feature over 600 exhibitors from 20 countries, offering visitors a unique experience to explore a wide range of products, including fashion, accessories, books, perfumes, jewellery, handcrafts, souvenirs, and more.

This year, the Autumn Fair

introduces several new services and attractions, including a larger exhibition space of 22,500 square metres to accommodate the growing demand of exhibitors and visitors alike.

Additionally, dedicated international pavilions representing 12 countries, as well as sections for jewellery displays and locally produced products from Bahrain have been allocated.

Creativity and diversity

Dana Al Saad, Deputy CEO for Resources and Projects at the BTEA, said: "We are delighted to host the 35th edition of the Autumn Fair at Exhibition World Bahrain. This annual event has become a symbol of creativity and diversity in the retail and commercial events sector in Bahrain and the GCC region. The government is committed to supporting and promoting such fairs as part of its efforts to stimulate economic growth and enhance Bahrain's position on the global tourism map. This event represents a vital platform that reflects the spirit of innovation and diversity by at-

tracting a wide range of exhibitors and visitors from various countries."

She added: "Our support for such events reflects our vision to enhance cultural and commercial exchange. We strive to provide an ideal environment to showcase and promote local products through the dedicated Bahrain Export pavilion, highlighting Bahrain's efforts to export products that are manufactured in our Kingdom. This contributes to expanding cooperation and economic partnerships with various countries. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with all partners to achieve even more successes in this year's edition, reinforcing the Kingdom's position as a leading economic and tourism hub."

Strategic event

On his part, Mohammed Ebrahim, General Manager of Informa Markets Bahrain, said: "We are pleased to organise a new edition of The Autumn Fair, a strategic annual event that provides an innovative retail

platform between exhibitors and visitors. It brings together the latest technologies and distinguished products from around the world. In the 35th edition, we have focused on enhancing the visitor experience by allocating more space and integrating new technologies for product displays and audience interaction, improving the experience for exhibitors and visitors of all ages and increasing attendance."

He added: "We look forward to continuing to offer a unique experience through this year's edition of the event, which has become one of the region's major shopping events. We are also excited to explore more opportunities to contribute to the development of the retail sector and promote trade exchange between Bahrain and the world. We express our sincere thanks and appreciation to Fatima bint Jaffar Al Sairafi, Minister of Tourism, for her support and encouragement of such events, which have a clear impact on enhancing the tourism and commercial sector in Bahrain."

Bahrain proud of providing 'quality education for all'

TDT | Manama

Bahrain has secured a distinguished international standing in the education sector, particularly in providing quality education for all, including individuals with special needs.

This was emphasised by the Minister of Education, His Excellency Dr. Mohammed bin Mubarak Juma, in a statement marking the International Day of Education, observed annually on January 24.

Dr. Juma highlighted Bahrain's pride in its accomplishments in advancing education, and the Kingdom's strong performance in global education development indicators, as reflected in international reports.

The Minister emphasised that Bahrain's educational progress reflects the support it receives from His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and follow up of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister.

He also cited the Kingdom's achievements in developing educational infrastructure across all levels and its success in ranking highly in various global indices, while continuing to earn notable regional and international accolades.

Efforts

Dr. Juma commended the efforts of all educational professionals, especially teachers, for their critical role in preparing future generations to contribute to comprehensive development.

He affirmed the Ministry's commitment to implementing



"The Ministry is committed to implementing innovative initiatives aimed at enhancing educational outcomes, developing students' skills and character, and providing opportunities for those facing challenges in completing their education."

H.E. DR. MOHAMMED BIN MUBARAK JUMA, MINISTER OF EDUCATION

innovative initiatives aimed at enhancing educational outcomes, developing students' skills and character, and providing opportunities for those facing challenges in completing their education.

The Minister reiterated the Ministry's belief in education as a fundamental right and its pivotal role in equipping individuals to contribute to the advancement of their communities.

Alba supports CPISP



Shaikh Mohammed bin Isa Al Khalifa, Advisor for Political and Economic Affairs at the Court of the Crown Prince, Board Member, and Head of the Financial and Administrative Committee of the Crown Prince's International Scholarship Programme (CPISP), received a cheque from Ali Al Baqali, Chief Executive of Aluminium Bahrain B.S.C. (Alba). Shaikh Mohammed bin Isa highlighted the support of His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, to the CPISP. He underscored the programme's role in equipping Bahraini youth with educational opportunities, empowering them to face future challenges and responsibilities. Shaikh Mohammed highlighted the role of CPISP sponsors in achieving the programme's goals.

Late HH Amir's huge portrait approved for Isa Town

TDT | Manama

A plan to install a huge portrait of the late Amir, His Highness Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa, at a key junction in Isa Town was approved by the Southern Municipal Council on Wednesday.

The project aims to honour the late Amir's nearly four decades of leadership and the role he played in building Bahrain's modern foundations.

The proposal was submitted by council member Mubarak Faraj, who suggested placing the portrait at the triangular junction on Al Quds Avenue, between blocks 813 and 814.

"This is a mark of respect for a leader who devoted his life

to his country and its people," Faraj said.

The Services and Public Utilities Committee assessed the proposal during its 11th meeting, recognising the location's practical advantages due to its visibility and the high population in the area.

The committee's report acknowledged the late Amir's efforts in driving Bahrain's development during his leadership.

His time in office saw Bahrain advance economically, socially, and culturally.

"This tribute will serve as a constant reminder of the late Amir's immense contribution to Bahrain's progress," said Dr Hamad Ali Al Zoubi, chair of the Services and Public Facil-

ities Committee. "The site is well-suited to ensure his legacy remains connected to the daily lives of the people."

Under Article 19 of the Municipal Law, the council is empowered to propose local projects



Late Amir HH Shaikh Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa



Proposed location in Isa Town

and coordinate with relevant authorities for their implementation.

The law also enables councils to act on suggestions from ministries or members concerning public services and amenities.

The committee stressed the

importance of ensuring the portrait's placement respects the area's character while making the most of its location.

The site was described as ideal due to its regular traffic flow and central position within a vibrant community.

The council agreed unanimously to contact the Minister of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture, requesting coordination with authorities to bring the proposal to life.

If approved, the portrait would become a new landmark in Isa Town, cementing the late Amir's enduring influence.

Faraj added, "This is more than just a gesture; it's a way to ensure future generations understand the legacy of a leader who shaped Bahrain's path. The location, surrounded by daily activity, is a fitting place for this honour."

The council's recommendation now awaits further review and action from the relevant authorities.

Man cleared of embezzlement accusation

TDT | Manama

Doubts over mismatched car details and ownership records have cleared a 29-year-old man accused of embezzling a rental vehicle and owing BD1,530 in arrears.

The court's decision followed a compelling defence by lawyer Hanan bin Hammouda, who dismantled the prosecution's claims by presenting evidence that contradicted the allegations.

The charges alleged that between 2023 and 2024, in the Southern Governorate, the man rented a car from a company but failed to return it or pay the daily fee of BD8, resulting in overdue charges of BD1,530.

However, Bin Hammouda argued that her client had returned the car and provided a criminal report to back up her claim.

An employee of the rental company filed a complaint, claiming the defendant had not returned the car.

Roads to recreation

Parks, markets and waterfronts across Bahrain set for overhaul

Mohammed Darwish
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's public spaces are being transformed as the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs rolls out a wide range of projects, including a new eco-park in Zinj, upgrades to major highways and intersections, and fresh sports facilities.

The ministry outlined its plans in response to a parliamentary question by Second Deputy Speaker Ahmed Qarata, emphasising its coordination with municipal councils.

The ministry said it had completed several projects between 2022 and 2024 in the Capital Governorate.

These included the refurbishment and improvement of parks in Qudaibiya, Sitra, Sanad, and Ras Rumman, alongside tree-planting and beautification



H.E. Wael Al Mubarak, Minister of Municipalities Affairs

work on King Faisal Highway, Shaikh Salman Highway, and the Al Farooq Junction.

Work is progressing on sports fields in Aker, Jurdab, Isa Town, and Sitra, as well as two neighbourhood parks in East Sitra (Block 619).

Eco-park

The ministry also highlighted



MP Ahmed Qarata, Second Deputy Speaker

plans for a landmark eco-park in Zinj (Block 332).

In addition to these new developments, existing parks are getting a makeover. Sites such as Ain Qassari Park, Al Khuder Park, the two Salmaniya parks (Blocks 309 and 326), Ain Umm Shuoom Park, Zinj Park, Abu Ghazal Park, Abu Asheera Garden, Qudaibiya Park, the Sitra

village park (Block 604), and Ibn Nafis Park are being upgraded.

Other projects include enhancements to Aker's sports field (Block 626), Tubli Walkway, and the irrigation system along Shaikh Khalifa Highway in Seef District.

Expansion

The ministry is also expanding mangrove planting, relocating saplings from its Tubli nursery to sites across Bahrain. Work on a waterfront project in Aker is also in progress.

Tree-planting and beautification plans extend to several key locations, including the junction of Shaikh Salman Highway with Shaikh Isa bin Salman Highway (Salmaniya Junction), Mina Salman, the bridge to Bahrain Bay, Block 338 in Adliya, the Capital Waterfront (King Faisal Corniche), the coastline near

Sitra Mall, and the Sitra Bridge Walkway.

The ministry is also focusing on markets and investment.

Revamp

Projects include revamping the Sitra Central Market, the Jidhafs Market (Arayaf Jidhafs), and the Tubli Bay Harbour.

Plans for Seef Downtown 1 and 2 are progressing, as well as the second phase of The Avenues project and the Lulu Shopping Centre.

For the Second Constituency in the Capital Governorate, Naim Park is being designed with a 54-metre walkway, play areas for children, warm-up stations, family seating spots, and public facilities.

The ministry is also set to redevelop the Manama Market and refurbish the Manama Central Market.

False university degree claims, health problems lead to marriage annulment

TDT | Manama

False claims about a university degree and hidden health troubles were exposed in court, leading a woman to successfully annul her marriage contract.

The Court of Cassation upheld the decision, rejecting the husband's last-ditch appeal and ordering him to foot the legal bill.

The woman, represented by lawyer Ibtisam Al Sabbagh, argued that her husband had deceived her at the time of their 2020 marriage by claiming he had finished university.

In reality, he was still in secondary school, attending an adult literacy programme.

Deception

Adding to the deception, the husband failed to disclose his intellectual disability, learning struggles, and history of attending special education schools in a Gulf country.

Witnesses backed the woman's account, with the court accepting their statements as



Image used for illustrative purposes only

reliable.

Initially, the Court of First Instance sided with the husband, but the woman appealed, and the Court of Appeal overturned the ruling, agreeing that the fraud gave her grounds to annul the marriage.

The husband then turned to the Court of Cassation in an effort to reverse the decision.

Judgment

The court based its judgment on Article 116 of the Family Law No. 19 of 2017, which allows either spouse to annul a marriage if they were misled.

Courts have the power to weigh up evidence and arguments, as long as their decisions rest on sound reasoning.

Five men jailed for assault following parking dispute

H Naser
TDT | Manama

A seemingly minor parking dispute outside a private residence escalated into a violent assault, resulting in the sentencing of five men to one month in prison, according to the victims' lawyer, Abdulathem Abbas Hubail.

The five defendants were found guilty of assault following a confrontation with two victims near their home.

Hubail reported that the court handed down a one-month prison sentence for each defendant, although this sentence was suspended pending the payment of a BD100 bail for each individual.

Court records indicate that the altercation began when the first defendant allegedly punched the first victim in the face, initiating the assault.

The victim sustained injuries including a bruise, a laceration



Abdulathem Abbas Hubail, victims' lawyer

to the lower lip, and pain in the middle finger of his right hand.

The other four defendants then joined in the attack against the second victim.

The fourth defendant punched the victim in the back, while the fifth defendant grabbed and pulled him.

The second and third defendants also participated in the assault.

As a result, the second victim suffered injuries including a

scratch on his left cheek, swelling and bruising near his right eye, abrasions on his left arm, and contusions to the back of his head.

The severity of the injuries required medical attention, though the specific details of the treatment were not released publicly.

Following the initial ruling, three of the five defendants filed appeals.

The court, however, only partially granted the appeals.

The sentences of two of the appellants were reduced to a BD100, effectively overturning their prison sentences.

The third appeal was dismissed as it was submitted after the legally mandated deadline for appeals had passed.

Furthermore, the civil case related to the assault will proceed separately in the competent civil court without incurring any additional court costs for the victims.

Cost of unjustly terminating employee

TDT | Manama

The High Labor Court has mandated a company to pay more than BD10,000 to an employee who was unjustly terminated from her position as Operations and Human Resources Manager.

The court found that the company failed to fulfill its financial obligations to the employee.

According to the plaintiff's lawyer, Taqi Husain, the employee joined the company with a monthly salary of BD850.

In June 2023, she was dismissed from her job, and the company neglected to pay her dues, prompting her to file a lawsuit.

"I request the court to grant my client her outstanding wages totaling 7,523 Bahraini dinars, compensation for delayed payment of wages, annual leave compensation of 793.33 dinars," lawyer Taqi argued.

Model beachfront

Abu Subh coastline set for major half-a-million Bahraini dinar upgrade

H Naser
TDT | Manama

An important development project is underway to revitalise the Abu Subh coastline in the Duraz area, promising a major upgrade to the community's beachfront.

The ambitious plan, spearheaded by Northern Governorate Municipal Council member Basem Ali Abuidrees, representing the second constituency, boasts a projected budget of half a million Bahraini dinars.

Model beachfront

The project, approved unanimously by the Northern Governorate Municipal Council and endorsed by the Minister of Municipalities and Agriculture, Eng. Wael Al Mubarak, aims to transform Abu Subh into a model beachfront destination.

"This project is very important for the entire Northern Governorate as it will positively impact families and residents of this region, and Bahrain as a whole. Preliminary maps for the first phase are nearly complete, and budget discussions are underway to select a contractor," he told *The Daily Tribune*.

A key feature of the plan is its attraction to both domestic and international investors.

Comprehensive facility

Abuidrees revealed that a Gulf investor has proposed building a comprehensive facility including a swimming pool for train-



The project aims to transform the Abu Subh coastline into a tourist destination



"This project is very important for the entire Northern Governorate as it will positively impact families and residents of this region, and Bahrain as a whole."

- BASEM ALI ABUIDREES, NORTHERN GOVERNORATE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBER



ing, a padel court, and other recreational activities like billiards.

"A Bahraini investor has also expressed interest in constructing a football field to further enhance the area's appeal. Investment opportunities remain

open," Abuidrees added.

The proposed developments include the construction of approximately 50 kiosks to better organise vendors and support local craftspeople and families currently operating informally

along the coastline.

The Northern Governorate Municipal Council member highlighted the importance of providing these vendors, many of whom are women, with a proper space to conduct their business, aligning with the Kingdom's commitment to women's empowerment.

"Further improvements include resurfacing the walkway with colored asphalt, in alignment with the Northern Governorate's healthy cities initiative. The project will also feature the addition of shops and restaurants, and a comprehensive enhancement of the beachfront, involving the removal of existing rocks and the addition of new beach sand," Abuidrees concluded.

False promises and forced labour

TDT | Manama

Women lured to Bahrain with false promises of food service jobs were forced into nightclub work under threats and confinement.

The hotel's owner and operations manager, convicted of exploiting them, has appealed his sentences, with the High Appeals Court delaying its decision.

One victim, an Arab woman, explained how she was offered a BD400-a-month job as a food server.

The arrangement came through someone she trusted in Bahrain.

But when she arrived in the country with other women, the hotel's operations manager met them at the airport, took their passports against their wishes, and informed them they would be working in the

hotel's nightclub instead.

The woman described being forced to socialise with customers, dance late into the night, and push patrons to buy alcoholic drinks.

She said they were barred from leaving the premises, with guards constantly watching their movements.

After enduring long hours with no days off, she and another victim seized a chance to escape while visiting a nearby shop.

A guard chased them, but they resisted and reached the police to report what had happened. Investigators uncovered a deliberate scheme led by the hotel's owner.

He used his authority to direct the operations manager to bring in women under the guise of legitimate jobs, only to coerce them into nightclub work.

Cyber attack warning targeting routers and cameras in Bahrain

H Naser
TDT | Manama

A recent alert from the global cybersecurity firm Trend Micro has raised concerns over a series of concentrated cyberattacks targeting routers and IP cameras in Bahrain.

Since late 2024, the company has observed widespread attacks on businesses in Japan and other countries, orchestrated through a botnet composed of compromised Internet of Things (IoT) devices.

These attacks leverage malware derived from the notorious Mirai and Bashlite strains,

exploiting vulnerabilities that allow for remote code execution and weak passwords.

Once the malware infects a device, it connects to command servers to receive attack instructions, which include various methods of Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, among other functionalities like updating the malware and activating proxy services.

Analysis from Trend Micro's research division indicates that the attacks primarily target North America and Europe, with particular emphasis on the US (17% of attacks), Bahrain (10%), and Poland (9%).

Public transport hits 100 million users since 2015

TDT | Manama

The Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications announced that the number of public bus users in the Kingdom of Bahrain has exceeded 100 million since February 2015, a period of 10 years.

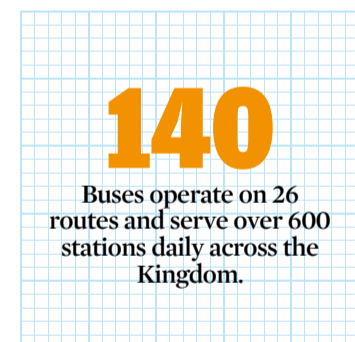
According to official statistics, the daily average number of passengers last December exceeded 33,000, with a total of over one million passengers during that month.

The Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications

operates the public transportation service 24/7, owning a fleet of 140 buses operating on 26 routes and serving over 600 stations daily across all governorates and regions of the Kingdom.

The buses feature low floors and driver-controlled ramps to facilitate movement for all passengers, including those with limited mobility and passengers with strollers.

All buses have priority seating for women, families, senior citizens, and wheelchair users, as well as free Wi-Fi, information displays, security cameras,



and wheelchair accessibility features.

The Ministry previously confirmed its collaboration with the



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operating company to develop strategic plans to encourage citizens to use public transport, aiming for sustainable transportation in the Kingdom.

These plans aim to provide a superior alternative to private vehicles, offering a high-quality and efficient transportation mode that meets user needs.

Bus stops are strategically located near residential areas, commercial centres, and health-care facilities to reach diverse segments of the population and provide clear and accessible routes.

Bahrain economy growing from strength to strength

H Naser
TDT | Manama

Bahrain's economy is demonstrating strong growth, according to a report by Travel and Tour World, fueled by the Kingdom's ambitious Economic Vision 2030.

This long-term socio-economic development plan, as detailed in the Travel and Tour World report, underscores diversification, innovation, and a robust private sector, attracting substantial foreign investment.

The report projects that Bah-

rain's GDP growth will exceed the 2014-2023 average of 1.9%, signifying accelerated economic momentum.

The energy sector is recovering from production constraints experienced last year following the maintenance of Abu Sa'afa oilfield, while the non-energy sector, particularly tourism and financial services, continues to thrive, according to the Travel and Tour World article.

This diversification is crucial to Bahrain's economic resilience, mitigating the impact of global energy price volatility.

Bahrain's dynamic financial services sector plays a pivotal role in supporting private-sector diversification.

The Travel and Tour World report highlights the Central Bank of Bahrain's efforts in creating a business-friendly environment, especially for startups and SMEs, as key to this success.

"This strategic approach has been instrumental in maintaining economic stability," the report stresses, adding: "Ongoing investments in infrastructure and human capital solidify Bahrain's economy."

Early retirement option for parents of disabled children

● Proposal submitted by MP Al Ahmed

H. Naser
TDT | Manama

MP Mohammed Al Ahmed has officially submitted a legislative proposal aimed at granting valuable early retirement rights to one parent of a child with severe disabilities.

This important proposal seeks to amend the existing Social Insurance Law, which was established by Decree-Law



MP Mohammed Al Ahmed
No. 24 of 1976.

The amendment would introduce a new article specifically designed to empower the Minister of Finance to issue the nec-

essary regulations that would facilitate this early retirement option for eligible parents.

In the explanatory memorandum accompanying the proposal, MP Al Ahmed stressed that this amendment is fundamentally intended to provide much-needed support to families who are dedicated to caring for individuals with severe disabilities.

He pointed out that, all too often, one parent bears the full weight of caregiving responsibilities, which can be incredibly demanding both physically and emotionally.

Al Baraka Islamic Bank hosts annual staff Townhall

Reviews bank's strategy for the coming years



TDI | Manama

Al Baraka Islamic Bank (AIB), a leading Islamic financial institution in Bahrain, recently held its annual Staff Townhall at the bank's headquarters in Bahrain Bay. The event reviewed the bank's achievements in 2024 and discussed its strategy for the coming period. This meeting aims to foster transparency and participation among executive management and staff members, thereby enhancing the sense of



Dr Adel Abdulla Salem

belonging and cooperation within a unified team spirit.

The townhall witnessed significant participation from managers and employees from all departments and sections of the bank, focusing on discussing the achievements and excellence in performance during the previous year. The event also outlined the bank's strategy for the coming period, focusing on sustainable growth through innovation in banking services, employee training programmes and en-

hanced customer experience. Additionally, the activity included interactive sessions aimed at promoting communication between different work teams, thereby facilitating the exchange of new ideas that support the bank's vision.

Through these townhalls, Al Baraka Islamic Bank seeks to foster an integrated work environment that encourages creativity and creates opportunities for professional growth, reflecting the bank's commitment to

promoting collective work and contributing to the achievement of desired goals. Participants in the activity stressed the importance of providing platforms for employees to present their ideas and suggestions, which would contribute to the bank's development, expansion and diversification of its services.

On this occasion, Dr Adel Abdulla Salem, CEO of Al Baraka Islamic Bank, commented: "This initiative reflects the bank's constant endeavour to develop the

work environment and achieve a balance between individual and collective performance, as well as its commitment to innovation and providing distinguished services to customers, where we reiterate that employees are the core of this success."

He added: "Looking ahead, our strategic plan will focus on leveraging digital transformation and sustainable finance to drive growth and enhance the bank's position as a leader in the Islamic banking sector."

BisB's "Future Leaders" wins the "Most Innovative Islamic Banking Product" award in Bahrain 2024

TDI | Manama

Bahrain Islamic Bank (BisB) has been recognized at the 2024 International Finance Awards for its groundbreaking product, "Future Leaders", which has been named the "Most Innovative Islamic Banking Product" in Bahrain.

Designed exclusively for children and youth aged 7 to 18, Future Leaders exemplifies BisB's commitment to fostering financial literacy among younger generations. Developed in collaboration with Mastercard, the product serves as a digital prepaid, enabling young users to make secure in-store and on-line payments via NFC-enabled POS terminals.

A key feature of the Future Leaders product is its seamless integration of parental oversight. Parents can monitor their children's spending in re-



Fatema AlAlawi

al-time, transfer funds instantly, and receive immediate transaction notifications. This balance between empowering youth with financial independence and providing parents with control has been pivotal to the product's success since its launch. It is a 100% paperless onboarding, directly from the Mobile app done by Parents for their children. With this initiative, BisB is the 1st Bank



in Bahrain to launch Wearable solution to conduct transactions.

Ms. Fatema AlAlawi, Chief Executive Officer of BisB said, "This award reaffirms our vision to simplify financial matters for all segments of society while staying true to the principles of Islamic banking. It inspires us to continue pushing boundaries and reimagining banking for the next generation."

Tamkeen supports wage increments for 31 Bahraini employees at ART Hotel & Resort

TDI | Manama

The Labour Fund "Tamkeen" announced its support for the wage increments of 31 Bahraini employees at ART Hotel & Resort through the Wage Increment Programme, which aims to encourage enterprises to increase wages for Bahraini employees in the private sector while fostering clear pathways for their growth and career development.

On this occasion, Mr. Khalid Al Bayat, Chief Growth Officer at the Labour Fund (Tamkeen), stated:

"The hospitality sector is a key contributor to the national economy and employs over 30,000 individuals in various roles and specializations, and provides diverse opportunities for local talent. We continue



تمكين
Tamkeen

to support businesses across all sectors and developmental stages that seek to provide employment and career development opportunities for Bahraini talent, positively contributing to shared developmental goals."

In addition, Mr. Ramez Naama, General Manager of ART Hotel & Resort, commented:

"We are proud to support 31 Bahraini employees with expertise and competencies through Tamkeen's support, which has significantly enhanced growth opportunities for local talent and strengthened institutional loyalty among our employees. More than 63% of Bahraini employees at ART Hotel & Resort have benefitted from the Wage Increment Program, and we remain committed to empowering Bahrainis to assume leadership and managerial positions."

Tamkeen has launched a range of programs aimed at supporting the employment and career development of national talent, with the goal of making Bahrainis the preferred choice for employment and making the private sector the engine of economic growth in the Kingdom.

Alba promotes 2,082 employees over the past five years



TDI | Manama

As part of its ongoing commitment to developing its national workforce, Aluminium Bahrain (Alba), the world's largest aluminium smelter on one site, announced that it has promoted more than 2,080 employees over the past five years.

The Company held a special ceremony yesterday to celebrate the promotion of its national cadres (including 218 employees who were promoted in 2024). The event was attended by Chief Executive Officer Ali Al Baqali, Executives, management teams, repre-

sentatives from the two labour unions.

On this occasion, Alba CEO, Ali Al Baqali, stated: "Over the past five years, the Bahrainisation rate has jumped to 87% of Alba's total workforce, which today stands at 3,179 employees. During this period, the Company also hired 412 Bahrainis and prepared them to be active contributors in the national economy. We are committed to investing in our national cadres by empowering them, equipping them with necessary skills and opportunities to excel and drive Alba's future growth."

It is noteworthy that since

2020, Alba has enrolled more than 1,400 national employees in professional development programmes implemented directly by the company, such as the Training and Development Program (TDP) for supervisory level staff, and the 'Al Jisr' and Skill Matrix Programmes for non-supervisory employees.

Additionally, during the same period, Alba supported 241 Bahraini employees in pursuing academic studies in diploma, bachelor's, master's, and PhD programmes in collaboration with local and international universities.

China announces new plan to boost foreign investment in 2025

WAM | Beijing

China's Ministry of Commerce announced yesterday a new strategic plan to boost foreign investment in 2025, introducing initiatives to expand market access across vital sectors.

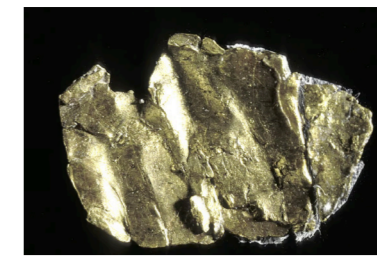
China Central Television (CCTV) reported that Ministry spokesperson He Yadong

revealed during a press conference that the plan builds on the success of 2024, which saw foreign direct investment reaching 826.25 billion yuan.

The spokesperson confirmed that the Ministry will work on broadening market access in crucial sectors, including telecommunications, healthcare, and education, while updating

the catalog of industries where foreign investment is encouraged.

He added that the plan includes enhancing the "Invest in China" initiative through various promotional events, alongside developing communication mechanisms with investors and ensuring equal treatment between domestic and foreign companies.



News in brief

◆ Billionaire entrepreneur Michael Bloomberg announced yesterday that his foundation will step in to fund the UN climate change body after President Donald Trump declared the United States would withdraw from the Paris Agreement for the second time. Bloomberg's intervention aims to ensure the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) remains fully funded despite the United States halting its contributions. Washington typically provides 22 percent of the UNFCCC secretariat's budget, with the body's operating costs for 2024-2025 projected at 88.4 million euros (\$96.5 million). The secretariat is tasked with supporting the global response to climate threats, and organizes international climate conferences, the next of which will be COP30 held in Brazil in November. "From 2017 to 2020, during a period of federal inaction, cities, states, businesses, and the public rose to the challenge to uphold our nation's commitments -- and now, we are ready to do it again," Bloomberg, who serves as the UN special envoy on climate ambition and solutions, said in a statement.

◆ UK probes Apple, Google competitiveness over mobiles

◆ Britain yesterday opened investigations into the competitiveness of technology used by US giants Apple and Google in mobile devices. The Competition and Markets Authority said its "strategic market status" investigations would assess "mobile ecosystems" that include operating systems, app stores and browsers. Apple and Google said they would work alongside the CMA, insisting that they support choice in the market. The regulator's chief executive Sarah Cardell said "more competitive mobile ecosystems could foster new innovations and new opportunities across a range of services that millions of people use". The regulator added in a statement that it would reach decisions on its investigations by the end of October. The CMA noted that "virtually all mobile devices sold in the UK are pre-installed with either" Apple's iOS operating system or Google's Android.

◆ The first Turkish Airlines flight in 13 years landed in the Syrian capital Damascus on Thursday, an AFP correspondent reported. The plane arrived from Istanbul carrying aid and 345 passengers, including Turkish Airlines CEO Bilal Eksi and Turkish officials, the correspondent said. "The first Turkish Airlines passenger plane landed at Damascus International Airport after a hiatus of some 13 years, with Syrian passengers on board," Syria's official news agency SANA reported. Eksi told reporters that Turkish Airlines would operate three flights to Syria a week. "I hope that the flights we have restarted will contribute to the relations between our countries," he said.



Billionaire Bloomberg to fund UN climate body after US withdrawal

Saudi crown prince promises Trump \$600 billion trade, investment boost

AFP | Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman promised yesterday to pile \$600 billion into US trade and investments as he congratulated Donald Trump on his return to the White House. Prince Mohammed, de facto leader of the world's biggest oil



exporter, made the pledge in a phone call following Trump's inauguration on Monday, state media said. "The crown prince affirmed the kingdom's intention to broaden its investments and trade with the United States over the next four

years, in the amount of \$600 billion, and potentially beyond that," the Saudi Press Agency reported. It did not give details of the source of the funds, which represent more than half of Saudi GDP, or how they are expected to be used. Prince Mohammed, 39, also passed on congratulations from his father, King Salman, during the call with Trump. Trump's first visit as president in 2017 was to Saudi Arabia, and this week he joked that a major financial commitment could persuade him to do the same again. "I did it with Saudi Arabia last time because they agreed to buy \$450 billion worth of our product," he said. Trump quipped he would repeat the visit "if Saudi Arabia wanted to buy another 450 or 500 (billion dollars) -- we'll up it for all the inflation".

Trump tells Davos: make your products in America or pay tariffs

Davos, Switzerland

US President Donald Trump told world business leaders yesterday to manufacture in the United States or face tariffs, in his first major speech to global leaders since returning to the White House this week. Since his inauguration on Monday, Trump has said that Washington could impose steep tariffs on major trading partners Canada, Mexico and China as soon as February 1. He has also signed a flurry of executive orders, pulling the United States out of the Paris Climate Accords and the World Health Organisation. "Come make your product in America and we will give you among the lowest taxes of any

Lower oil prices would end Ukraine war 'immediately'

Davos, Switzerland

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that lower oil prices could end war in Ukraine immediately, addressing the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, remotely. He said he would ask Saudi Arabia and OPEC to bring down the cost of oil, referring to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, adding: "If the price came down, the Russia-Ukraine war would end immediately." He added. In his speech, he added that he believed lower oil prices would help end war in Ukraine instantly. "I'm also going to ask Saudi Arabia and OPEC to bring down the cost of oil," referring to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries.

nation on earth," Trump said on Thursday, speaking remotely to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. "But if you don't make your product in America, which is your prerogative, then very simply you will have to pay a tariff,"

YOU KNOW WHAT When he arrived in Riyadh in 2017, he was treated to an elaborate welcome involving a sword dance and a fly-past of air force jets.

Palestinian official says hundreds leave Jenin as Israel presses raid

AFP | Jenin, Palestinian Territories

A Palestinian official said hundreds of people began leaving their homes in a flashpoint area of the occupied West Bank yesterday as Israeli forces pressed a deadly operation. The Israeli military launched the raid in the Jenin area, a hotbed of Palestinian fighters, days into a ceasefire in the war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said the objective of the operation, dubbed "Iron Wall", is to "eradicate them" in the area. He linked the operation to a broader strategy of countering Iran "wherever it sends its arms -- in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen" and the West Bank. The Israeli government has accused Iran, which supports armed groups across the Middle East, including Hamas in Gaza, of attempting to funnel weapons and funds to militants in the occupied Palestinian territory. "Hundreds of camp residents have begun leaving after the Israeli army, using loudspeakers on drones and military vehicles, ordered them to evacuate the camp,"



Israeli troops and military vehicles prepare to enter Jenin in the occupied West Bank, near the Israeli village of Muqeibila

Jenin governor Kamal Abu al-Rub told AFP. The Israeli army said it was "unaware of any evacuation orders for residents in Jenin as of now". "The army is in front of my house. They could enter at any moment." Israeli forces have also detained several Palestinians from the Jenin area, with an AFP photographer seeing a row of blindfolded men in white jumpsuits being transported out of the West Bank. Jaishankar said New Delhi was open to taking back undocumented Indians and was in the process of verifying those in the United States who could be deported to India. "We want Indian talent and Indian skills to have the maximum opportunity at the global level. At the same time, we are also very firmly opposed to illegal mobility and illegal migration," Jaishankar told a group of Indian reporters in Washington on Wednesday.

Palestinians and wounded 40 more, according to the Palestinian health ministry. "There are dozens of camp residents who have begun to leave," Jenin resident Salim Saadi said. "The army is in front of my house. They could enter at any

India says 'open' to return of undocumented immigrants in US

◆ Jaishankar was responding to a query on news reports that India was working with the Trump administration on the deportation of around 18,000 Indians who are either undocumented, or have overstayed their visas.

AFP | Washington, United States

India is prepared to take back its citizens residing illegally in the United States, foreign minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar said after meeting the top diplomat of President Donald Trump's new administration. Jaishankar's remarks came after a meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington on Tuesday a day after Trump's inauguration. Trump issued a raft of executive orders this week that aim to clamp down on illegal immigration and expedite his goal of deporting millions of immigrants. Jaishankar said New Delhi was open to taking back undocumented Indians and was in the process of verifying those in the United States who could be deported to India. "We want Indian talent and Indian skills to have the maximum opportunity at the global level. At the same time, we are also very firmly opposed to illegal mobility and illegal migration," Jaishankar told a group of Indian reporters in Washington on Wednesday.



“We want Indian talent and Indian skills to have the maximum opportunity at the global level. At the same time, we are also very firmly opposed to illegal mobility and illegal migration”

FOREIGN MINISTER SUBRAHMANYAM JAISHANKAR

"So, with every country, and the US is no exception, we have always taken the view that if any of our citizens are here illegally, and if we are sure that they are our citizens, we have always been open to their legitimate return to India." Jaishankar was responding to a query on news reports that India was working with the Trump administration on the deportation of around 18,000 Indians who are either undocumented, or have overstayed their visas. Rubio had "emphasized the Trump administration's desire to work with India to advance economic ties and address concerns related to irregular migration," State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said in a readout after Tuesday's meeting. India is the world's fifth-largest economy and enjoys world-beating GDP growth, but hundreds of thousands of its citizens still leave the country each year seeking better opportunities abroad. While its diaspora spans the globe, the United States remains the destination of choice. The most recent US census showed its Indian-origin population had grown by 50 percent to 4.8 million in the decade to 2020, while more than a third of the nearly 1.3 million Indian students studying abroad in 2022 were in the United States.

SPOTLIGHT

Japan man arrested for kicking rabbit as police probe 77 other deaths



AFP | Tokyo, Japan

also linked to the discovery of 77 rabbit carcasses on the island since late November. "The cause of death could be an infectious disease, cold weather, or a human-related factor, but it is not clear at this point," the environment ministry said on Monday. "We are investigating the cause in consultation with veterinarians and relevant organisations, while strengthening monitoring" of the situation, the ministry said. Okunoshima island was the site of a poison gas factory during World War II and now houses a museum. Thanks to rabbits' famously high reproduction rates, the island is now a "place to seek good fortune for your own family's fertility," according to its website. Japanese police said Thursday that they arrested a man for kicking a rabbit, as authorities probe the deaths of more than 70 bunnies on an island well-known for its large rabbit population. The incident took place on Okunoshima island in Hiroshima prefecture, where more than 1,000 rabbits frolic freely and are fed by tourists, according to its website. Riku Hotta, from east of Kyoto, was "arrested on suspicion of kicking a rabbit" on Tuesday, a police spokesman told AFP. The animal later reportedly died. Media reports said that police were investigating whether the 25-year-old man was

Saudi FM in Lebanon for first visit in almost 15 years: state media

AFP | Beirut, Lebanon



Saudi Arabia's top diplomat landed in Beirut yesterday to meet the country's new leadership in the first visit by a high-ranking official from the kingdom after more than a decade of strained ties. "The Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Fahhan, arrived at Rafic Hariri International Airport," Lebanon's official National News Agency reported. He is set to meet Lebanon's newly elected President, former military chief Joseph Aoun -- whose candidacy is widely believed to have been backed by Riyadh and Western countries. Prior to his visit, Prince Faisal called Aoun's election

"extremely positive", but said the kingdom was waiting for concrete change before engaging further with Beirut. "We will need to see real action. We will need to see a commitment to a Lebanon that is looking to the future, not to the past, in order for us to raise our engagement," he said. His Lebanon visit aims to "inform the Kingdom's approach" he said.

Trump administration shuts White House Spanish language page

AFP | Washington, United States



President Donald Trump's administration has shut down the White House's Spanish language page. As of this week, visitors to whitehouse.gov/es now see an error message and the words "page not found" beneath an image of the White House. Below that, visitors can click on "go to home page" which directs to whitehouse.gov, where a video montage plays featuring Trump. The move was immediately met with criticism. "Put this back," Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer posted on X. "Deleting this resource makes it harder for fellow Americans to access essential information, and does nada to lower the costs of groceries for Americans," he said, referencing the wave of in-

flation that some voters said was their reason for voting for Trump. According to the Hispanic Council think tank, 43 million people in the United States speak Spanish fluently. The shuttering of the page comes as Trump leads a crackdown on immigration that heavily targets Spanish speakers from neighboring countries. While his Democratic opponent in the November election, former vice president Kamala Harris, carried the overall Hispanic vote, a majority of Latino men -- 54 percent -- voted for Trump, according to NBC exit polls.

S. Korea investigators recommend Yoon be charged with insurrection, abuse of power



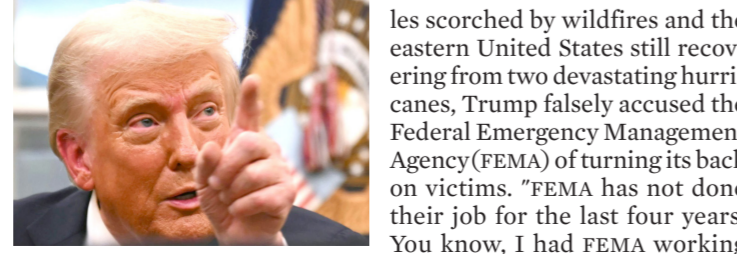
South Korea's impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol (L) attends the fourth hearing of his impeachment trial over his short-lived imposition of martial law at the Constitutional Court in Seoul

December 3 attempt to suspend civilian rule. The CIO said it had asked Seoul prosecutors to "file charges against the sitting President, Yoon Suk Yeol" accusing him of conspiring with his former defence minister and other military commanders to "disrupt the constitutional order." The leader, currently suspended from duties, "declared martial law with the intent to exclude state authority or disrupt the constitutional order, thereby inciting riots". Yoon should be charged with "leading an insurrection and abuse of power", the Corruption Investigation Office said after a 51-day probe into his

Trump mulls letting disaster-hit US states fend for themselves

AFP | Washington, United States

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday floated ending federal disaster relief and leaving states to fend for themselves during emergencies in his first Oval Office interview since returning to power. With Los Ange-



les scorched by wildfires and the eastern United States still recovering from two devastating hurricanes, Trump falsely accused the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of turning its back on victims. "FEMA has not done their job for the last four years. You know, I had FEMA working really well. We had hurricanes in Florida, we had Alabama tornadoes," Trump told Fox News. "But unless you have certain types of leadership, it gets in the way. And FEMA is going to be a whole big discussion very shortly, because I'd rather see the states take care of their own problems."

TOP 4 TWEETS 01

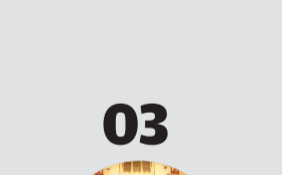
To the financial institutions & industries backtracking on climate commitments, I want to say loudly & clearly: You're on the wrong side of history. You're on the wrong side of science. And you're on the wrong side of consumers who are looking for more sustainability, not less.

@antoniogetteres 02



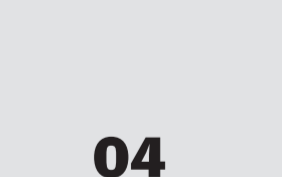
President Trump will NEVER back down. He's back in the Oval Office, already making America great again and leading the nation into a new golden age!

@VP 03



Happy 20th Anniversary to Melania! @realDonaldTrump

04



How many flies does it take to screw in a light bulb? Two, but how did they get in there?? @elonmusk

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

celebs



Jamie Foxx thought he was being pranked after waking from stroke

Bang showbiz | Los Angeles

Jamie Foxx thought he was “being pranked” when he woke up in hospital after suffering a stroke. The ‘Back in Action’ star “didn’t remember anything” after suffering a brain bleed in April 2023 that led to him being unconscious for almost three weeks, so when he woke, he was convinced he had fallen victim to an elaborate joke. Appearing on ‘The Graham

Norton Show’, he said: “I was very unwell but now I am back feeling good. It makes you realise that you need people that care and love you around to get you through. “I didn’t remember anything happening so when I came to 20 days later I thought I was being pranked. It was beyond crazy.” The 57-year-old star used humour to get through his ordeal - but admitted he told so many jokes, people began to worry he had gone “mad”. He added: “I knew I had to get back and realised the way to do it

was by being funny. I told so many jokes people thought I was mad, and then I would act as someone else - for three whole days I was Denzel Washington!” The ‘Creed III’ star previously expressed his belief that his 16-year-old daughter Anelise’s guitar playing saved his life. Jamie - who has Anelise with Kristin Grannis and is also dad to Corinne, 30, from a relationship with Connie Kline - revealed that staff at Atlanta’s Piedmont Hospital thought they were going to “lose” him in the first 13 to 15 days

of his hospitalisation as his “vitals” were all over the place, but they miraculously started going “down” when the teenager started strumming the instrument at her father’s bedside. He recalled on his Netflix special ‘Jamie Foxx: What Had Happened Was...’: “They said at one point, the first 15 days, they thought they were going to lose me because my vitals were out of control. “There was a 13- or 14-day period where they said, we’ve gotta keep him

calm and we’ve given him every medication that they could. It’s not working, we gotta keep him calm because his vitals are so high we’re going to lose him.” He quipped: “Do you know what the worst thing to have in a hospital room when you’re trying to keep calm? Black family members.” The religious star believes God “was in that guitar” and that it acted as his “spiritual defibrillator”.

Jamie Foxx

Benedict Cumberbatch: I’m not a typical movie star

Bang showbiz | Los Angeles

Benedict Cumberbatch is “not a typical movie star”. The 48-year-old actor has enjoyed huge success in Hollywood, starring in films such as ‘Star Trek Into Darkness’ and ‘Doctor Strange’ - but Benedict insists he’s not an archetypal movie star. Reflecting on his own fame and success, Benedict told Variety: “I’m not Brad [Pitt], I’m not Leonardo [DiCaprio], I’m not a typical movie star. “People were scrambling for ‘Why is he at all attractive to us?’ But for me to guess and try to understand that is so f***** weirdly navel-gazing. I’m not sitting around thinking, ‘Why am I sexy?’ I worry about myself in the mirror as I age, like every other f***** does.”



Benedict insists he’s “still discovering” himself as a person. And as a result, he doesn’t expect the public to fully understand him, either. The London-born actor reflected: “The older I get, the less of a s*** I give. “There’s this whole other audience that have these expectations of you, feelings about you, judgments of you. That’s theirs, and you can’t change that or shape it. “I’m still discovering who I am. So how the f*** are they supposed to know me?”

Benedict Cumberbatch

Benedict has also confessed to being confused by the concept of “celebrity”. The movie star is baffled by the idea that all celebrities, regardless of how they’ve achieved their fame, are grouped together. Benedict - who studied acting at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art - explained: “It’s so derogatory, and just lumps anyone famous together. “Am I a ‘celebrated’ person? Well, for what? For selling cheese? For being on a reality show? For doing something outrageous? For being an actor?”

Scarlett Johansson’s TV role has been ‘a complete dream’

Bang showbiz | Los Angeles

Scarlett Johansson is fulfilling a “dream” by co-hosting ‘Jenna and Friends’. The 40-year-old actress is currently co-hosting the NBC show alongside Jenna Bush Hager, and Scarlett has revealed that she’s relishing the experience. The Hollywood star told PEOPLE: “It’s a complete dream. “I was saying to Jenna earlier, it’s like that thing that I imagined as a ten-year-old: Some day I’m going to be on a daytime show and meet all of these amazing people.” Scarlett - who is married to comedian Colin Jost - has also admitted to being amazed by the show’s reach. The ‘Black Widow’ star said: “I’ve literally walked down the street and have gotten more traction from guest hosting the ‘Today’ show than any other project that I’ve done!” Scarlett has loved the “good vibe” on the show’s set. She shared: “I’ve done obviously morning shows and whatever for years and

years, publicising projects I worked on and whatever, [but] it’s always so fun to come on this show. And the opportunity to be on this show for an hour and get to know more people at the show? It’s just awesome. “It’s like, ‘Oh, yeah, we’re doing a fun thing. This is an upbeat thing.” Meanwhile, Jenna recently revealed that she was looking forward to working with Scarlett. The 43-year-old TV star observed that she has “so much in common” with her current co-host. Jenna told PEOPLE: “Scarlett Johansson is the queen! “First of all, I’ve been obsessed with her movies since forever. The ‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’, I mean that shows you I’m a nerd who loves to read. She’s also a big reader, which will be so much fun. We have so much in common.”

Scarlett Johansson



Jeremy Renner uses hyperbaric chamber amid recovery

Bang showbiz | Los Angeles

Jeremy Renner has used a hyperbaric chamber while recovering from his near-fatal snowplow accident. The 54-year-old actor broke 38 bones in his body in the accident in January 2023, and he’s now revealed via social media that he’s turned to oxygen therapy to help with his recovery. Alongside a photo of himself inside the hyperbaric chamber, Jeremy wrote on Instagram: “Taking care of business; this office of mine has been such a blessing and absolute champion for wellness.... Hyperbaric at 2 atmos has been a staple in my life for 20 months now. O2 is essential for our life and our longevity.... Pull up a chair and let’s discuss all things good in life today!!! #MyNextBreath (sic)” Earlier this month, Jeremy expressed his gratitude for the “army of people” who helped him to recover from his accident.

The Hollywood star took to social media to mark the two-year anniversary of his accident in Reno, when he was struck by a snowplow and left in a critical condition. Alongside a throwback photo of the doctors and nurses who helped him with his recovery, Jeremy wrote on Instagram: “Happy New Year blessings to you all.... Ringing in my second ‘ReBirthday’ today “I send out my love, respect, and gratitude for the army of people that it took to put me back together again. Thank you to each and every nurse, doctor, first responder...”

Jeremy Renner

SUDOKU

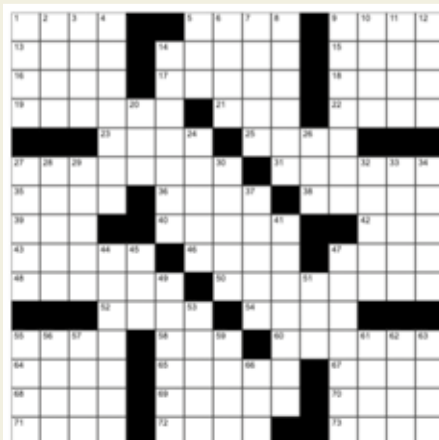
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	7					3	9	5
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6	5		4					9
		3				5		
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						8		3

Yesterday’s solution

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

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- Franklin D.’s mother; 5- Bluesy James; 9- Corn Belt state; 13- Rat...; 14- Remains of a fire; 15- TV horse; 16- For fear that; 17- Backpack part; 18- French father; 19- Conical shelters; 21- Mentalist Geller; 22- On the sheltered side; 23- Principal; 25- Sp. ladies; 27- College grounds; 31- Whole; 35- Blue-pencil; 36- Hardware fastener; 38- Polite refusal; 39- Maple Leaf’s org.; 40- Crystal ball users; 42- Hosp. section; 43- Printer refill; 46- Neb. neighbor; 47- Queue before Q; 48- Attractive route; 50- Power of vision; 52- Cut-price retail event; 54- Paint can direction; 55- Elvis... Presley; 58- Source of iron; 60- Boxes; 64- Repeated, an island of French Polynesia; 65- Mother of Isaac; 67- Make reference to; 68- Den of wild animals and dragons; 69- Short literary composition; 70- Singer Home; 71- Outer limit; 72-... precedent; 73- Memorable times;

Down

- 1- Shaker contents; 2- To... (just so); 3- File; 4- Try; 5- Cornerstone abbr.; 6- Drive... window; 7- Eye drops; 8- Have high hopes; 9- The laying on of paint thickly; 10- Baseball’s Hersher; 11- Used to be; 12- Zip... Doo-Dah; 14- Aids; 20-... de cologne; 24- Hawaiian state birds; 26-...Margret; 27- Pennies; 28- Kind of committee; 29- Pooiti’s creator; 30- Napped leather; 32- Of Thee...; 33- Big name in copiers; 34- Blow one’s top; 37- Cafeteria items; 41- Incomplete; 44- Trap; 45- Narrow inlet; 47- Extraordinary occurrence; 49- Shuts; 51- Baronet’s title; 53- Clear the boards; 55- Word that can precede bodied and seaman; 56- Highway; 57- Not a dup.; 59- Prefix for while; 61- Wedding cake feature; 62- Sicilian mount; 63- Oceans; 66- Towing org.;

Yesterday’s solution

A	C	N	E	M	O	S	S	A	L	G			
P	E	E	L	E	U	R	O	S	O	R	E		
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Jimmy Walker: A champion's journey to Bahrain

Hussain Almaskati
TDT | Manama

Jimmy Walker, a six-time PGA Tour winner and the 2016 PGA Championship victor, is no stranger to overcoming adversity. Reflecting on the toll of Lyme disease, which he contracted in 2016, Walker shared the mental and physical battles he faced: "It hit me physically pretty hard, and I know it affected my head a little bit. People say it's just me getting old, but I don't feel old—I've had to learn to deal with it and keep plugging along."

Walker emphasized his commitment to health and consistency, highlighting how dedication to exercise and nutrition has helped him rebuild his game after years of struggle.

Rekindling His Game

Following a summer of re-dedication, Walker's return to form began in Europe, with stand-out performances at the Irish Open and in Madrid. Despite his success, rust crept in after a significant break: "Last week, I wasn't real sharp with the irons, but I've worked hard this week. It's about dialing in my game and getting back to scoring," he



Jimmy Walker in action

explained.

Key areas of focus include chipping and putting, which have posed challenges since his illness. Walker remains optimistic, saying, "When that starts to feel better, it takes a lot of pressure off the rest of the game."

Discovering the Middle East

Walker's first competitive foray into the Middle East left him impressed. Reflecting on his experience, he praised the UAE, saying, "The event was first-class—the golf course, the field, the hotel, and even the nicest

Uber cars I've ever seen."

He found Bahrain's pace more to his liking: "It's laid-back and slower-paced, just my speed." Despite being unfamiliar with the course at Royal Golf Club, Walker looks forward to the challenge: "You go out, hit the shots, and make putts—it's the same everywhere."

Embracing a Global Stage

In recent years, Walker has embraced opportunities to compete worldwide, from iconic Royal County Down to the vibrant streets of Madrid. For him,

“Last week, I wasn't real sharp with the irons, but I've worked hard this week. It's about dialing in my game and getting back to scoring”

JIMMY WALKER

the chance to experience new cultures is invaluable:

"I've never been to this part of the world. The food has been amazing, and as a foodie, I'm loving it. Bahrain is next—I've heard good things and can't wait to experience it."

With Bahrain's winds expected to test players next week, Walker's Texas roots could serve him well: "I don't mind fighting the ball—it's something you work on at the range, and it's fun to challenge yourself."

Jimmy Walker's journey is a testament to resilience and passion.

As the Bapco Energies Bahrain Championship approaches, Walker's sights are set firmly on success, continuing his story as one of golf's most inspiring figures.

BRAVE CF's 2024 success sets stage for Asian domination in 2025

TDT | Manama

BRAVE Combat Federation has positioned itself as a global powerhouse in MMA. Its remarkable growth in 2024 has created a solid foundation for expansion into key Asian nations. With a strong presence in Europe, Brazil, and the Middle East, BRAVE CF has already expanded into larger markets in Asia, including India, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Pakistan.

BRAVE CF's ability to showcase diverse talent has been a driving force. The organization hosts fighters from over 80 countries, offering a global platform for emerging stars. This inclusivity appeals to Asian nations with vibrant MMA scenes. Fighters from these regions now see BRAVE CF as the ultimate stage to showcase their skills. Besides, the organization has successfully activated branding and sponsorship across the geographies giving crucial grassroots-level support for the sports ecosystem.

Golden opportunity

India, with its massive population and growing MMA fanbase, presents a golden opportunity. The success of IMMAF medalists like Mehboob Khan highlights the potential for future stars. BRAVE CF's partnership with Indian fighters can inspire a new generation and establish a strong foothold in the region. It is quite evident that BRAVE CF will provide opportunities for more MMA fighters from India to sign with the promotion creating global opportunities for Indian MMA fighters.

Unique challenge

Japan, a historic hub for martial arts, offers a unique challenge. BRAVE CF aims to merge its global appeal with Japan's deep-rooted love for combat sports. By integrating local talent with its international roster, BRAVE CF can create events that



A view of the arena during a BRAVE CF event

resonate with Japanese fans. While Japan remains among the key pillars that supported MMA in the initial days, reinforced focus from BRAVE CF will play a crucial role in globalizing Japanese MMA worldwide.

Passionate communities

The Philippines and Indonesia are thriving markets with passionate MMA communities. Both countries have a history of producing dynamic fighters. BRAVE CF's expansion can provide them with a platform to compete globally. Fans in these nations crave exciting matchups, and BRAVE CF delivers world-class events that match their enthusiasm. With multiple regional talents already signed with the organization, it is quite possible for the organization to revisit the territories and host global events reinforcing the presence.

Rising stars

Pakistan's MMA scene has grown significantly in recent years. BRAVE CF's focus on nurturing talent aligns perfectly

Solidifying position

The organization's global reputation gives it an edge in entering these markets. It is already broadcast in over 160 countries, reaching 1.7 Billion households. By highlighting Asian fighters and tailoring content for local audiences, BRAVE CF can solidify its position in these nations.

Storytelling

BRAVE CF's success in 2024 was not just about events. It also invested in storytelling through documentaries and short films. These initiatives have humanized its athletes and connected fans with their personal journeys. Expanding this approach into Asia can attract fans who value authenticity and inspiration.

The vision of His Highness Shaikh Khalid bin Hamad Al Khalifa drives BRAVE CF's relentless growth. With Asia as the next frontier, the organization is set to transform the region's MMA landscape. Its proven ability to deliver results ensures it will continue to thrive.

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BRAVE CF plans an India vs. Pakistan trilogy in 2025, aiming to reignite rivalry and set new broadcast records

Keys sets up Sabalenka showdown

Madison Keys edges Swiatek in thriller to face Sabalenka in Australian Open final

● Sabalenka cruises past Badosa

AFP | Melbourne

Madison Keys fought back from a set down yesterday to shock Iga Swiatek in a nail-biter and set up an Australian Open final against two-time defending champion Aryna Sabalenka.

The 19th seed battled through a thrilling semi-final on a final-set tiebreak against the world number two 5-7, 6-1, 7-6 (10/8) after Sabalenka swept aside Paula Badosa in straight sets.

Five-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek had not dropped her serve since the first round but was broken eight times by Keys, who saved a match point on her way to edging a titanic battle.

It will be the American's first final in Melbourne, and only her second in Slams, and she broke down in tears after finally getting over the line in 2hr 35min.

It was the first time an Australian Open semi-final had been

decided by a third-set 10-point tiebreak.

"That match was just such a high level and she played so well," Keys, 29, said.

"I felt like I was just



Aryna Sabalenka

fighting to stay in it and then obviously really kind of ran with the second and then the third was just a battle.

"To be able to be standing here and be in the finals is absolutely amazing and I'm so excited that I get to be here on Saturday."

Keys confessed she couldn't recall much detail about the final set where she saved a match point.

"In the third set, it was just so up and down. I feel like I blacked out at some point," Keys smiled.

"Just to be able to stay in it and just keep fighting and then a 10-point tiebreaker for a dramatic finish."

Earlier, Sabalenka put her close friendship with Badosa aside to stay on track for a 26-year first.

The Belarusian world number one romped home 6-4, 6-2 on Rod Laver Arena against 11th seed Badosa.

Keys predicted a slug-fest between two of the hardest ball-strikers in the women's game in Saturday's showpiece.

"Definitely some big hitting. I think that is going to hap-



Keys admitted to "blacking out" during the intense third set, which ended in a dramatic 10-8 tiebreak victory over Swiatek

pen," Keys said.

"Not a lot of long points but she is obviously going for her third Aussie Open and I'm excited to get to play here."

'So proud of myself'

Sabalenka is closing on a third consecutive Melbourne crown -- something that hasn't happened this century.

The last person to achieve the feat was Martina Hingis in 1999 and only four other women have completed the three-peat -- Margaret Court, Evonne Goolagong, Steffi



Madison Keys

Graf and Monica Seles.

Court was in the stadium watching.

"Honestly, I don't know. I'm so proud of myself. I'm proud of my team that we're able to put ourselves in such a situation," Sabalenka said of being on the cusp of a third Melbourne Park title.

"It's a privilege. If I'm able to put my name into history, it will mean a lot. It will mean the world to me."

Sabalenka last year described Badosa as her "best friend" and "soul-mate" and said she was "super hap-

"That match was just such a high level and she played so well. I felt like I was just fighting to stay in it and then obviously really kind of ran with the second and then the third was just a battle

MADISON KEYS

py" that they got to play each other on such a big stage.

"I hope she's still my friend. I'm sure she'll hate me for the next hour, day or two, but I'm okay with that, I can handle that," she added.

Despite losing, Badosa's run to the last four capped a remarkable comeback for the Spaniard after a brutal back injury in 2023 had her considering quitting tennis.

Instead, her Melbourne exploits will return her to the top 10 for the first time since

October 2022.

Keys will also return to the top 10.

India skipper Rohit among top stars to flop on domestic return

AFP | New Delhi

Some of India's top stars including Rohit Sharma yesterday faltered on their return to domestic cricket after being told by the sport's national board to play in home competitions.

India's Test series defeat in Australia earlier this month prompted the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to issue new guidelines to promote "discipline" in the senior men's set-up.

The latest rules include limited family time for players on long tours and mandatory participation for India's contract-



Rohit Sharma reacts after a match (file photo)

ed players in domestic tournaments.

But Rohit, Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Rishabh Pant all had forgettable outings for their teams in the Ranji Trophy, India's premier domestic competition.

Test and ODI skipper Rohit's first outing for Mumbai in nearly a decade proved to be disappointing as the opener got out for three in 19 balls.

The struggling Rohit, who made just 31 runs in three matches during the Australia Tests and stood down for the final match, mistimed a pull off Jammu and Kashmir pace bowl-

er Umar Nazir and returned to the pavilion.

Rohit's India opening partner Jaiswal fell for four after the left-hander was trapped lbw.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Pant, who last played a domestic match in the 2017-18 season, strolled out to bat for his team Delhi but his outing lasted 10 balls before he fell for one.

Opener Gill captained Punjab but got out for four after being caught behind.

Star batsman Virat Kohli missed the four-day match for his team Delhi due to a sprained neck, but is expected to turn out in the next match, starting January 30.

Man City step up rebuild with signing of Marmoush for £59 mln

AFP | London

Manchester City yesterday announced the signing of Eintracht Frankfurt forward Omar Marmoush, with Kyle Walker joining AC Milan on loan, as the club step up their rebuild during a disappointing season.

Egypt forward Marmoush has signed a four-and-a-half-year contract with the Premier League champions for an initial fee of £59 million (\$72.6 million) with add-ons worth a potential £4 million.

He is City's third signing of the January transfer window following the arrivals of defenders Abdou Diallo, Khushanov and Vitor Reis as manager Pep Guardiola reshapes his squad.

The 25-year-old, who scored 37 goals in 67 games for Bundesliga side Frankfurt, said signing for City was "an amazing feeling".

"With Pep, his technical staff and the world-class facilities here, players have everything they need to improve," he said. "That was really enticing for me when I had the chance to come here."

"And I cannot deny I also want to win trophies. City have

Omar Marmoush

Marmoush has scored 20 goals for Frankfurt this season, filling the void left by Julian Alvarez's departure

been the most successful club in England for many, many years, so I know I am joining a winning environment and winning culture."

Director of football Txiki Begiristain said Marmoush, who has 35 international caps, was an "accomplished and exciting forward".

"He's had an outstanding season, and every time we have watched him, he has influenced matches," he said.

"He has all the attributes a top-class attacker requires."

He has outstanding pace and awareness, and he is exceptional in front of goal.

He can also play a number of different positions, which is a really valuable asset."



'Best feeling' as Hamilton drives first laps for Ferrari

AFP | Milan

Lewis Hamilton drove a Ferrari Formula One car for the first time on Wednesday after the seven-time world champion took to the track at the team's test circuit and admitted it was "one of the best feelings" of his life.

The 40-year-old Briton shocked the paddock last February when he announced, after 12 highly successful years with Mercedes, he was departing for the iconic Italian team.

On a foggy morning at the Fiorano test track near Ferrari's Maranello base in northern Italy, Hamilton shot out in a test car wearing the classic red overalls and a distinctive yellow helmet.

"I've been lucky enough to



Lewis Hamilton in action in his Ferrari

have many firsts in my career, from the first test to the first race, podium, win and championship, so I wasn't sure how many more firsts I had," said Hamilton.

"But driving a Ferrari car for the first time this morning was one of the best feelings of my

life."

Groups of Ferrari's passionate fans, described as "awe-inspiring" by Hamilton, watched on in the wet weather from a bridge overlooking the track as Hamilton zipped round.

Fans are hoping Hamilton can end an 18-year wait for a drivers'

"I've been lucky enough to have many firsts in my career, from the first test to the first race, podium, win and championship, so I wasn't sure how many more firsts I had

LEWIS HAMILTON

F1 title which has been dominated by Mercedes and Red Bull.

Hamilton won just two Grands Prix -- his British GP victory in July ending a two-and-a-half year winless streak -- and finished seventh in the 2024 world championship, a mammoth 214 points behind title-winner Max Verstappen.