

New bill on safety of light cargo vessels approved

A NEW law covering safety regulations for light cargo ships was approved yesterday by the Shura Council.

Under existing law, Coastguards

can only deal with ships below 150 tonnes while international maritime treaties do not come into force until a vessel reaches 500 tonnes.

The new law will enable the Trans-

portation Ministry to deal with ships that are between 150 and 500 tonnes.

It is designed to standardise safety procedures, protect the maritime environment and unify the issuance of the

appropriate certificates for such vessels.

Manning levels and the proper operation of such ships are also set to be enhanced.

Public utilities and environment af-

fairs committee vice-chairman Fouad Al Hajji said that the ships' safety and security was of utmost importance to all GCC states.

"The range to be covered by this law is not included in any international maritime treaty and with it we hope to enforce more safety and security," he said.

"Coastguards will continue their role with ships below 150 tonnes and soon the Transportation Ministry will be responsible for ships between 150 and 500 tonnes."

The new bill has been drawn up in line with a decision made at the GCC Leaders Summit in Riyadh in December, 2011 and will be now ratified by His Majesty King Hamad after being approved by parliament earlier.

Meanwhile, council members also yesterday approved an article in the new maritime code that differentiates between vessels that are registered with Bahraini authorities and those that are granted Bahraini "citizenship".

Voting was postponed on the bill earlier this month because councillors were confused about the terms used.

They opposed the amendment made to the code, which also stated that a Bahraini ship owner, shareholder or Bahrain-registered company could give their vessels a "nationality," meaning it would have to follow Bahrain's rules and regulations.

However, Transportation Ministry acting assistant under-secretary for ports affairs Hassan Al Majed said at the time that the confusion had been caused because the code had been translated from English to Arabic.

Key criminal law to be changed

BAHRAIN'S law is being changed so that multiple suspected criminals can be tried as masterminds in the same case.

Current law dictates that only one defendant can be charged as a mastermind, while their alleged accomplices face less serious charges and shorter prison sentences.

However, amendments to the Penal Code approved by the Shura Council yesterday mean several people could

By MOHAMMED AL A'ALI

be charged as masterminds for the same crime.

"We currently don't have the issue of multiple criminal partners and there is only one mastermind, who takes the

biggest punishment while the rest are support," said Shura Council foreign affairs, defence and national security committee vice-chairman and secretary Jameela Salman.

Meanwhile, the Shura Council approved ratifying the Protocol on

Rules of Origin for Trade Preferences System between member states of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation.

It aims to create appropriate conditions for the development of economic co-operation between members and to stimulate business, industrial and economic initiatives among them.

It also approved two air services agreements with Austria and Morocco. All four bills will now be ratified by His Majesty King Hamad.

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Career expo opens at BTI

A THREE-DAY career expo opens today at the Bahrain Training Institute (BTI) in Isa Town.

Aimed at Bahraini students, new graduates and job-seekers, the event is designed to offer a better understanding of the world of work and demonstrate a wide array of career opportunities available.

Ebrahim K Kanoo has announced its "gold-level" sponsorship of the expo, as part of company policy to hire qualified Bahrainis.



■ From left, BTI learning and development assistant manager Sumaya Yaseen, BTI career week co-ordinator Loai Khamis, BTI career week manager Dr Nahed Showaitar, E K Kanoo corporate services director Talal Kanoo and E K Kanoo chief executive Michael Brightmore at the sponsorship ceremony

Help for blaze-hit workers

MATTRESSES have been handed out by the Migrant Workers Protection Society (MWPS) to 30 Bangladeshi men who lost everything they owned in a deadly blaze earlier this year.

The fire, which ripped through a residential building in Mukharqa on February 28, killed three men as they slept and left dozens more homeless.

Immediately following the tragedy the MWPS supplied clothing, toiletries and blankets to the men whose belongings had been destroyed, but could not offer them anything more substantial until they had found alternative accommodation.

"It has taken them all these weeks to find somewhere else to live and even now they are not comfortable," said MWPS labour safety and welfare committee head Neelaja Shortre.

Many of the displaced Bangladeshis have struggled to find anywhere suitable, with eight of them crammed into one room "hardly big enough for four, costing BD120 per month which they had no choice but to share," said MWPS general secretary Beverley Hamadeh.

"Thousands of properties in the Mukharqa area of the capital – as well as in other areas – are unsafe for people to live in, in our view, and



■ The MWPS team delivers mattresses to the Bangladeshis

overcrowding exacerbates the problem.

"The MWPS has spent past 14 months working with members of the Rotary Club of Manama – who contributed funds towards the purchase of the mattresses – installing smoke detectors, which they donated, and giving brief safety talks in workers' housing."

Ms Hamadeh said the MWPS thinks the onus should be on employers to keep their workers in safe accommodation, such as the labour town in Hidd where work has stalled because of underuse, the GDN reported on Sunday.



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