



■ Princess Madawi, seventh from left, with members of the Rotary Club of Manama

New alarm over trafficking surge

MOST Bahrainis would rather turn a blind eye to human trafficking than report it, according to a new study.

The alarming discovery was made by the UAE-based Ibtissam Foundation, which was formed to combat human trafficking in the region.

In a study of attitudes, it found that 58 per cent of Bahrainis surveyed did not know what human trafficking was; 67pc didn't think human trafficking existed in the GCC and 64pc would not report an incident of human trafficking even if they were aware of it.

The data was revealed during a presentation for the Rotary Club of Manama at the Gulf Hotel, although it was not clear how many Bahrainis were surveyed.

It was shared by the foundation's Saudi founder Princess Madawi Abdulrahman Al Saud, who said human traffickers stood to profit almost as much as drug traffickers.

"Human trafficking is a form of slavery and is a direct violation of hu-

By AHMED AL OMARI

man rights," she said.

"It is a criminal activity that is related to forced labour, sexual exploitation and illegal trading of human organs. The criminal industry is a vast one, unfortunately, and is spreading worldwide."

"It is the second highest-paying crime after drug trafficking, according to United Nations statistics."

She said human trafficking was a \$31 billion industry and an average of 5.2 million people were enslaved around the world annually, 1.2m of whom were children.

"Nor is the GCC immune from this criminal activity where, according to evidence, human trafficking is spreading throughout the region," warned Princess Madawi.

She is now calling for more to be done to combat the trade in persons and hopes the Ibtissam Foundation



■ Ms Dias

will be recognised throughout the GCC.

One of her priorities is persuading GCC governments to introduce and enforce legislation that combats human trafficking, while building shelters to support victims - with plans to open her own such centre in Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain's Migrant Workers Protection Society (MWPS) concurred with the findings of the study, but said it thought the percentage of Bahrainis aware of human trafficking was even lower than the survey suggested.

"Princess Madawi's figures seem to represent the correct information, but I think it (lack of awareness) should be a little higher," said MWPS chairwoman Marietta Dias.

"People in Bahrain don't know that there is trafficking happening, as they don't really know how to define it."

"They generally don't report it be-

cause they don't understand what trafficking is."

"Princess Madawi mostly focuses on sex trafficking, but in Bahrain about 80-90pc of human trafficking is labour trafficking - and people don't realise how widespread it is."

"Of all the African women that are brought to Bahrain, 90pc are victims of labour trafficking."

"They are promised a job in an industry, but when they arrive, they are assigned to be housemaids. Anyone who agrees to do one job, but is tricked into doing another is a victim."

"The government is trying to stop it and in fact Bahrain was the first country in the GCC to enact a law against trafficking in 2008, but it is not being well enforced."

"Nevertheless, the government realises that one of the biggest challenges to combating human trafficking is raising awareness through the media, which it plans to increase, added Ms Marietta Dias."

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Teenage girl rescued from house on fire

FIREMEN yesterday rescued a 13-year-old girl from the terrace when fire ripped through a two-storey house in A'ali.

The incident took place at around 4pm and the girl was trapped in smoke, according to sources.

A passer-by called Civil Defence when he saw smoke billowing out of the house.

The cause of the blaze is under investigation.

The girl was said to be stable and no injuries were reported.

Bahrain jobs plan pays off

THE insurance against unemployment programme has generated more than BD51 million since it took effect in 2007, a report said yesterday.

The proceeds have so far benefited more than 50,000 Bahraini job-seekers, Finance Minister Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Khalifa said in his reply to a question submitted by MP Hassan Boukhammas.

More than 57,700 Bahraini and expatriate employees are paying the one per cent contribution, according to a report in our sister paper *Akhbar Al Khaleej*.

The investment returns of the insurance against unemployment funds have generated BD19,000.

Urban master plan backed

MUNICIPALITIES and Urban Planning Minister Dr Juma Al Ka'abi has approved the urban master plan for Al Ramli in the Central Governorate. The blueprint features development facilities in the zone located between Shaikh Isa bin Salman, Shaikh Khalifa bin Salman, Shaikh Zayed and Salmabad Highways.



■ Students in Manama Suq



■ Students gather information for their Geography Internal Assessment

A lesson on business districts

ST CHRISTOPHER'S School Year 12 International Baccalaureate students went to Financial Harbour and Manama Suq to gather information for their Geography Internal Assessment.

The purpose of this field trip was to see to what extent the Central Business District of Manama conforms to the 'core and frame' concept.

A wide range of methods such as infrastructure and environmental quality surveys, building height surveys, pedestrian and traffic counts, land use surveys, questionnaires and field sketches with pictures was

used to collect data and information.

After collecting data from Financial Harbour, student relocated to the suq.

"Despite the immense heat and orientation issues in the suq, the trip was definitely an experience, and improved our navigation, communication and team work skills," said student Tehniyat Baig.

"I feel that our geographical knowledge of Bahrain's Central Business District was truly enriched. We became more aware of the differences between the Financial Harbour and the suq."