

Premier thanked

HIS Royal Highness Prime Minister Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa yesterday received a cable of thanks from his Jordanian counterpart Abdullah Ensour in reply to a cable of congratulations marking his country's National Day.

New BCCI board congratulated

DEPUTY Premier Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa yesterday received Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry board led by chairman Khalid Almoayed and congratulated them on their election, commending the pivotal role of the chamber in boosting the national economy and revitalising the trade sector. Shaikh Mohammed stressed the importance of co-operation between the government and the chamber to overcome impediments hampering trade and investments.

Military co-operation discussed

BDF Commander-in-Chief Marshal Shaikh Khalifa bin Ahmed Al Khalifa yesterday received US Marine Corps Forces Central Commander General Kenneth F McKenzie and discussed military co-operation.

Relations reviewed

FOREIGN Minister Shaikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa yesterday received British Ambassador Iain Lindsay and reiterated Bahrain's resolve to further bolster bilateral ties. He also hailed outstanding relations between the two countries, which he said was witnessing progress and development in various fields. Shaikh Khalid separately received Russian Ambassador Victor Smirnov and discussed bilateral ties and issues of common concern.

Tourism in spotlight

CULTURE Minister Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al Khalifa yesterday received Mumtalakat chief executive Mahmood Al Kooheji. The meeting focused on ways to boost the tourism sector with the minister calling for the need to join ranks to promote tourism and create a solid cultural and tourism infrastructure in Bahrain. She updated Mr Al Kooheji on the Culture Ministry's activities in Bab Al Bahrain and functions related to Manama being named Capital of Asian Tourism for 2014.

South Korean envoy received

LABOUR Minister Jameel Humaidan yesterday received South Korean Ambassador Joon Ha Yu and discussed efforts to develop human resources.

Veterinary laws hailed

MUNICIPALITIES and Urban Planning Affairs Minister Dr Juma Al Ka'abi hailed His Majesty's approval of the laws on veterinary practice and veterinary products. The laws constitute a quality addition to efforts aimed at developing legislation which regulate veterinary and agricultural business in the kingdom.

Awareness drive launched

THE Ministry of Human Rights has launched a series of initiatives and activities to increase public awareness, develop a culture of tolerance, co-existence and respect for others across community spectrum. The ministry has sent public awareness messages through social networking sites, besides organising lectures, training courses on human rights and field tours. It also allocated a BD50 daily prize for the ministry's Ramadan contest. Answers can be sent directly to the ministry's official accounts.

Power supply for project reviewed

MINISTER of State for Electricity and Water Affairs Dr Abdulhussain Mirza yesterday received Kuwait Finance House managing director and chief executive Abdulhakeem Al Khayyat and real estate projects senior director Abduljalil Mohammed Janahi and discussed supplying Diyar Al Muharraq housing units with power. Electricity and Water Authority chief executive Shaikh Nawaf bin Ibrahim Al Khalifa attended.

Israel's assault on Gaza condemned

MINISTER of State for Foreign Affairs Ghanim Al Buainain took part in an Arab League emergency meeting in Cairo, in response to a call by Kuwait to discuss Israeli assault on Gaza. He expressed Bahrain's condemnation of the Israeli aggression, and said the heinous crimes being committed against brothers in Gaza have violated the 2012 ceasefire agreement signed by the two sides.

The Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs also condemned Israel and expressed sorrow over the massacres and humanitarian disasters in the Gaza strip. The council said the aggression highlights Israel's brutality, lack of humanitarian values and transgression of international laws and conventions. It also denounced the double-standards of Western countries in dealing with Arab and Islamic issues, especially the Palestinian cause.

Campaign to protect tents from fire

THE General Directorate of Civil Defence launched its annual Ramadan tent campaign to create awareness among the public on fire-related accidents. A special team from the Civil Defence public relations office has been visiting tents to highlight some common errors and ensure people are complying with safety measures.

IAA hosts ghabga

THE Information Affairs Authority (IAA) hosted its Ramadan ghabga for staff in the presence of Minister of State for Information Affairs and government's official spokeswoman Sameera Rajab. The event was attended by IAA president Ali bin Mohammed Al Rumaihi, directors, media professionals and journalists.

Law on civil defence amended

HIS Majesty King Hamad yesterday issued a law amending some provisions of the law on civil defence.

The General Directorate of Civil Defence in the law was replaced by the Directorate of Civil Defence. The law also stipulates that civil defence work will be funded by the state.

The Directorate of Civil Defence will issue or renew certificates, reports and licences and the Interior Minister will issue an edict to determine the

fees required.

The directorate will set conditions and instructions to prevent radioactive, chemical and biological contamination in times of peace and war, and implement them. It will prepare media plans to reach out to the public and ensure prevention from all dangers.

The law stipulates that the directorate will oversee all national committees and sides in charge of confronting public disasters.

According to the law, a pun-

ishment will be enforced on whoever destroys or damages equipment used for civil defence purposes, and the perpetrator will have to pay the value of the damaged equipment in all situations.

Ministries and other government bodies will have to allocate special budgets for civil defence work. They will also devise special plans to protect their installations, equipment, facilities and staff at times of peace and war.

● His Majesty issued a decree reappointing Mohammed Al Qaed as e-Government Authority chief executive for a three-year renewable term with the rank of Under-Secretary.

● He issued two other decrees reappointing Labour Market Regulatory Authority chief executive Ausamah Al Absi and naming Shaikh Azza bint Abdulrahman bin Rashid Al Khalifa as assistant under-secretary for culture and national heritage.



■ Twenty-four students suffering from mild mental retardation and Down Syndrome have been honoured. Education Minister Dr Majid Al Nuaimi attended the ceremony organised by the special education directorates. The honoured students, aged above 11 years, will be transferred at the start of the new school year (2014-2015) to the Academic and Rehabilitation Centre run by the Social Development Ministry. Dr Al Nuaimi said 542 students with mild mental retardation and Down Syndrome have been integrated so far into 57 schools while 40 autistic students have been enrolled in eight schools.

Visa system goes hi-tech

BAHRAIN'S visa and passport renewal system has gone hi-tech.

Nationality, Passports and Residence Affairs (NPRA) in co-operation with the Central Informatics Organisation has launched a new system that will make use of the latest technologies to improve flexibility, speed and accuracy in provision of services.

It will also provide a wide-ranged database instead of the traditional method of storing documents and data in paper forms.

"This will replace the old system for issuing visas which lasted for 29 years from 1985 till 2014,"

NPRA electronic frontier division head Thabet Al Sherouki said.

He said this year will witness the launch of system that will reduce paper documents to the minimum.

He indicated that new systems will link NPRA and governmental authorities to form an integrated network for issuance and extension of visas, renewal of passports and submission of family requests via the electronic passport system.

It will also enable embassies of Bahrain to issue direct visas without going back to the directorate in Bahrain via the Foreign Ministry.

Mr Al Sherouki added that renewal of visas electronically is one of the newest services available, as a citizen will be allowed to renew his passport through the new system by submitting a request.

He can also define the branch which he will receive his service from – this after a prior registry through the electronic key system defined for the service.

"The new system will enable follow-up of all services internally to track the course of the service and to know the reason in case of delay. This will encourage employees to work hard, as long as they are responsible," Mr Al Sherouki said.



■ Mr Bjornsson

Actor to take part in show

AN actor from hit television series *Game of Thrones* will make an appearance at this year's IGN Convention in Bahrain.

Hafthor Julius Bjornsson who plays The Mountain will share exclusive insights into the fantasy drama during the event, which will be held at the Bahrain International Circuit on October 24 and 25.

The event is expected to attract thousands of gaming and comic fans. Ticket sales will be announced closer to the date.

Alcohol ban 'forcing hotel owners into distress sales'

SEVERAL Bahraini and foreign hotel owners are offering to sell their three and four-star hotels at 25 per cent less than their price a month ago.

A Bahraini investor who owns a chain of three and four-star hotels said he was ready to sell at 50pc of their cost, if he can find a buyer who is willing to pay cash.

He is now considering moving to Morocco or Egypt or a GCC country, sources told our sister paper *Akhbar Al Khaleej*.

Bahrain Real Estate Association chairman Nasser Al Ahli said hotel prices in Bahrain have recently dropped by 30pc to 40pc as a result of the latest decision banning alcohol, nightclubs and bars in three-star hotels.

Teenage maid flies home 'empty-handed'

By RAJI UNNIKRISHNAN

A 16-YEAR-OLD girl who came to Bahrain illegally to make money as a housemaid has flown home virtually empty-handed.

Ethiopian Yusra Abajihad Abadidu left on Monday after spending more than a month at a shelter operated by the Migrant Workers Protection Society (MWPS).

Society chairwoman Marieta Dias told the *GDN* that the teenager's Bahraini employer refused to pay Yusra her last month's salary of BD60, provide a plane ticket home or even hand over her personal belongings.

Yusra travelled to Bahrain six months ago on a forged passport that stated she was actually 22.



■ Flashback ... 16-year-old Yusra, second from right, with Ms Dias, second from left, and MWPS representatives

However, she expressed a desire to leave after allegedly being forced to work in two hours from 4am to 11pm.

Her employer then claimed she attempted suicide and reported her to police.

"Ever since the employ-

er would not respond to calls from the police station and finally the Labour Ministry officials came to our help," said Ms Dias.

"Most of the time this is the case, employers simply refuse to respond to calls after they

leave the employee with the police and we (the MWPS) end up fighting the case.

"Finally, he (the employer) handed over her passport to the ministry, but refused to pay her or give her a plane ticket saying that she did not complete her two-year contract.

"How is this fair, and how does it justify the non-payment of wages?"

The MWPS helped foot the bill for the BD130 plane ticket, while members contributed another BD150 for her travel expenses from the airport in Addis Ababa to her home.

It previously voiced concerns about increasing numbers of foreign teenage girls coming to Bahrain to work as domestic staff and called for tighter controls on manpower agencies.