

Lawmakers call for urgent debate to address Iran's actions and Kingdom response

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TDT | Manama

Ten MPs have asked for an extra sitting of Parliament to discuss the Iranian aggression against Bahrain, saying the matter needs urgent debate in

the chamber so its effects can be weighed and a united response agreed.

The request was made under the second paragraph of Article 47 of Parliament's Rules of Procedure, which allows Parliament to meet before its usual date at

the request of the government or at least 10 members.

In their submission, the MPs said the attack on the kingdom called for urgent debate under the Parliament dome, so members could look at its effects on many fronts and weigh the steps

needed to deal with it through one national line.

They said the rules gave Parliament this exceptional path so the legislative branch could meet when events called for it, without having to wait for the normal sitting date, helping the

chamber keep pace with emergency developments.

The MPs added that holding such a sitting would help bring public efforts together, support the state's move in dealing with the effects of the attack, and strengthen the related legislative

and watchdog role.

The request was signed by Abdulwahid Qarata, Hamad Al Doy, Mohammed Al Rifai, Mohammed Mousa, Ali Al Doseri, Hassan Ebrahim, Ali Al Doseri, Mohammed Al Ahmed, Mohammed Al Olaiwi and Abdulla Al Dhaen.

Fiscal discipline

Audit report debate focuses on spending, debt and work permit breaches

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Calls for stricter spending control, firmer governance, better revenue collection and quicker follow-through on audit findings shaped debate in Parliament yesterday as MPs took up the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee's report on the National Audit Office's 2024-2025 findings.

Opening the case for the committee, its chairman Ahmed Sabah Al Salloom said the 10 recommendations were meant to "double efforts to strengthen governance and control spending".

He said 84.9pc of recommendations had been carried out or were under way, but added that "financial and administrative challenges still require follow-up and treatment".

Meetings

Al Salloom told MPs the report, covering 81 government bodies, had been studied through a series of meetings with the bodies concerned, with legal and economic advice brought in before the committee settled on its final view.

The committee called for closer checks on project spending by ministries and public bodies, with actual outlays measured against approved sums.

It also urged the government to examine why spending on some projects remained low and to deal with that in a way that improves budget planning and the use of public funds.



Image used for illustrative purposes only

Checks

It also pressed for stronger internal checks across ministries and public bodies, with penalties where breaches occur, and said repeated remarks from past audit reports should be dealt with in full after follow-up reviews found earlier recommendations still pending.

MPs were urged to weigh ministry replies to audit findings and decide 'either to accept those replies, or use the oversight tools available to them' against ministers answerable for breaches linked to their portfolios.

During yesterday's sitting, Al Salloom said the report pointed to financial warning signs that needed close attention, including "a deficit of BD1.026 billion, public debt of BD19.3 billion, and



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— MP ZAINAB ABDULAMEER

a rise in debt service costs".

The audit text bears that out.

Gap

It says the gap between state income and spending rose from BD774 million in 2023 to BD1.026 billion in 2024, while public debt stood at about BD19.3 billion by 31 December 2024 and interest payments climbed to BD945 million from BD843 million a year earlier.

He also pointed to borrowing outside the recorded public debt framework, spending above approved limits and returns due to the Treasury that were not transferred on time.

The audit says borrowing by some ministries and public bodies that was not included in the public debt balance recorded by the Ministry of Finance and National Economy came to about BD4.9 billion in 2024, against BD3.9 billion in 2023.

Spending

It also says recurrent spending overshot the approved 2024 budget by BD375 million.

During the debate, MP Zainab Abdulameer said the overspending recorded at the Ministry of Education should be seen "in a positive light" where it was linked to hiring Bahrainis and pushing ahead with replacement policies.

She also criticised delays by the Ministry of Works in carrying out service projects, including sewerage schemes, and said Bahraini workers were able to meet labour market needs while helping to cut costs.

Bid to curb subsidised flour abuse passed



MP Basema Mubarak
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MPs yesterday passed an urgent proposal calling on the relevant authorities to rein in the price of subsidised flour and stop abuse and profiteering during what MPs described as exceptional conditions.

The motion was put forward by Basema Mubarak, Abdulhakim Al Sheno, Ahmed Al Salloom, Bader Al Tamimi and Jalal Kadhem.

It calls for stronger checks on the sale and movement of state-subsidised flour, harsher rules against price tampering and misuse, and legal steps to make sure the support reaches those it is meant for.

MP Mubarak told the chamber that the state gives special care to basic goods, with subsidised flour near the top of the list, because it helps keep bread and other staple foods within reach.

She said the aim was to shield people from extra living costs and keep food supplies stable.

But she said the current regional and global economic climate, with food prices rising and supply chains lurching from one strain to the next, had made closer market checks unavoidable.

Thumbs up for one-year housing loan payments pause

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Parliament yesterday passed an urgent proposal calling for Eskin Bank loan instalments for all Bahrainis using housing services to be deferred for one year.

MPs pointed to the financial strain linked to the fallout from the Iranian attacks.

The proposal, submitted by Khalid Buanaq, Ahmed Al Salloom, Hisham Al Awadhi, Zainab Abdulameer and Mohammed Al Maarefi, was put forward as a way to leave families with extra cash as prices come under pressure from shipping costs, insurance charges and supply disruption.

Buanaq said the aim was to give households "pre-emptive



MP Khalid Buanaq

financial protection" by keeping money in their hands in case basic goods rise in price.

Debt

"Providing this surplus prevents families from falling into debt or failing to meet living needs," he said, adding that it would help keep food and social stability in place during the eco-

nomical strain caused by military threats in the region.

He said the one-year pause would also help local trade, with markets and shopping centres already hit by weaker buying activity as fewer expats and residents visited commercial areas.

Costs

Buanaq told MPs that families were also facing higher household costs because many had stayed indoors for long spells as a precaution.

That, he said, was likely to drive up electricity and water use and add to pressure on monthly budgets.

"The citizen finds himself forced to bear extra costs resulting from circumstances beyond his control," he said.

MP files urgent proposal to speed up King Hamad Bridge project

● Move to deepen Bahrain-Saudi defence links

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An urgent proposal has been put forward in Parliament to press for faster action on the King Hamad Bridge project linking Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

MP Abdulhakim Al Sheno said the scheme is now a "strategic necessity" in light of current regional pressures.

Al Sheno said the project should move ahead without delay, arguing that it would strengthen national security,



MP Abdulhakim Al Sheno

help shore up regional stability and improve logistical readiness between the two countries.

He said the bridge would also deepen defence links between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia at a time of fast-moving regional change.

The lawmaker pointed as well to the bridge's economic value, saying it would support

trade, ease the flow of goods and services, back joint investment and give tourism a lift.

Trade between the two countries reached around 44 billion Saudi riyals in 2022, he said, adding that the planned link could open the way to wider economic gains.

Al Sheno said the presence of thousands of Saudi firms operating in Bahrain showed the depth of economic ties between the two sides and underlined the need to get on with the project.

He argued that faster execution would help push Gulf economic integration further.

The MP also said the bridge would help improve infrastructure and raise its efficiency in line with national development plans.