

# Jobless fund not meant for pension hikes, says government

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TDT | Manama

The government has urged Parliament to withdraw a bill that diverts unemployment insurance surpluses to fund annual pension increases, warning the move lacks actuarial backing and strays from the scheme's purpose.

The draft amends Article 8 of the 2006 Unemployment Insurance Law to let the fund pay

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yearly pension rises under any retirement scheme until the civil and military funds return to surplus. The government says this would turn a short-term job safety net into an open-ended

pension subsidy.

The unemployment fund, ring-fenced within the Pension and Social Insurance Fund, is financed by a 3% payroll contribution split equally between

the government, employers, and workers. Its role, the memo stresses, is to support those who lose jobs involuntarily or seek work for the first time—not to underwrite long-term pension

costs.

Citing the absence of actuarial studies, the memo warns the bill could deplete reserves meant for downturns, leading to payment delays or tighter eligibility

later. It also notes that military pensioners do not contribute to the unemployment account and should not benefit from its surplus.

The Legislation and Legal Opinion Commission echoes the need for actuarial and technical review before expanding spending beyond unemployment coverage. The government asks MPs to revisit the bill in light of these financial and legal concerns.

## GCC plant genetic material rules take root in Parliament

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Rules to regulate the exchange and ownership of plant genetic materials across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are moving closer to becoming law, with Bahrain's Parliament now reviewing the draft framework.

The proposal would align Bahrain with a GCC agreement adopted in December 2022 and has been referred to the Public Utilities and Environment Committee for study, with input from the Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee.

Under the draft, licences would be required for any work



Representative picture

involving plant genetic materials or their by-products, while import or export would need prior government approval. Travellers carrying such materials must declare them, present valid documents, and comply

with plant quarantine regulations.

A designated government authority would enforce the rules, supported by a national committee on plant genetic resources. Fees for licensing and

related services would be set with government approval.

The framework also lays out how benefits from the use of genetic resources and traditional knowledge are to be shared, recognises farmers' rights to participate in decision-making, and covers materials both in the wild and under cultivation.

Individuals would have 30 days to appeal official decisions, with the option to go to court if the appeal is denied or ignored. Violations—such as unlicensed handling or cross-border movement—could bring up to one month in jail or fines up to BD1,000, with courts empowered to seize or destroy materials obtained unlawfully.

### MPs to debate yearly pension hikes for retired military staff

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MPs are set to debate amendments to the 1976 Military Pensions Law that would introduce annual pension increases of 5% for retirees earning BD200–BD500, tapering to 1% for the highest pension bands, while revising contribution rates for members and the state.

The proposed changes, drawn from two revised MP submissions, will be discussed at Parliament's next sitting. Under the draft, member contributions would rise from 6% to 7%, while the state's share would drop slightly from 21% to 20%.

A new article introduces a sliding-scale yearly increase

linked to pension levels — starting at 5% for the lowest bands and gradually falling to 1% for pensions above BD4,000. The accompanying memorandum says the plan is designed to support lower-income retirees while maintaining funding balance through the fixed contribution shares.

The Legislative and Legal Affairs Committee has referred the bill to the Financial and Economic Affairs Committee to assess its impact on the state budget, noting that the proposal aligns with the Constitution and existing legal framework.

A lively debate is expected in Parliament, as the measure would affect a large segment of retired military and security personnel.

### Prison and deportation for driver in fatal red-light crash

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An appeals court has upheld a one-year jail sentence and permanent deportation for an Asian motorist who killed a cyclist after running a red light.

Court records show the accident occurred around 12:45 p.m. when the defendant drove through a signal-controlled junction without stopping. The cyclist, crossing on a green pedestrian light, was hit head-on, thrown onto the car's roof, and died at the scene.

The driver admitted being behind the wheel but claimed he braked too late. Based on technical reports and witness accounts, the court found him guilty of causing death by negligence and failing to stop at a red light. The appeals court confirmed both the conviction and sentence.

## Parliament to debate national policy for people with autism

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Parliament will hold a general debate on Tuesday to review Bahrain's policy for people on the autism spectrum, focusing on health, education, and social inclusion.

MP Hassan Ibrahim will open the debate, joined by First Deputy Speaker Abdunabi Salman, Mamdouh Al Saleh, Jameel Mulla, Hamad Al Doy, Dr Mahdi Al Shuwaikh, Jalal Kadhahem, Bader Al Tamimi, Dr Ali Al Nuaimi and

Jaleela Alawi.

Lawmakers will seek detailed data on the number of people diagnosed with



autism in Bahrain, the Health Ministry's diagnostic process, and the criteria used for confirmation. They will question why autism levels are not shown on the Smart ID card, which currently lists only "severe intellectual disability," and review early screening and treatment coverage in primary care.

Questions to the Social Development Ministry will centre on eligibility for disability allowances, the amounts paid, and the standards used to assess financial and social

support. MPs will also examine oversight of rehabilitation centres, plans for new government facilities, and preparations for the upcoming Comprehensive Disability Complex.

In education, MPs will ask how many public schools admit students on the spectrum, the availability of trained teachers, and whether tailored learning plans and inclusion methods are in place. They will also look into joint initiatives between the Education and Health ministries to provide psychological and medical support in schools.



Many well-known figures are believed to have been on the autism spectrum. For example, Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton are often cited by researchers as historical figures who likely showed traits of autism, such as deep focus on their work and difficulty with social interaction.

Among confirmed modern examples, Temple Grandin, a renowned animal behaviour expert and autism advocate, has openly discussed her diagnosis and how it shaped her career.

### Guru Nanak Jayanti Celebrations at Salmabad Gurudwara community center

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The Salmabad Gurudwara Community Center will celebrate Guru Nanak Jayanti with great devotion and enthusiasm. The Akhand Path will commence on Monday 3rd November and the Bhog ceremony will take place on Wednesday 5th November.

A special Gurbani Kirtan will be held on 5th November at 6:00 p.m. at the Gurudwara premises. Following the Kirtan, Langar Prasad will be served to all attendees.

All devotees are cordially invited to participate in the celebrations and seek the divine blessings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

